



## **Cabinet Secretary launches HMP Low Moss Public Social Partnership**

A SERVICE which offers greater support to people leaving custody in order to reduce the likelihood of them reoffending officially has been launched at Her Majesty's Prison Low Moss.

The Public Social Partnership (PSP), entitled Prisoner Support Pathway, aims to address the root causes of offending behaviour among short-term prisoners at the Bishopbriggs establishment, and ensure those in custody can access a range of support services based on their individual needs, such as substance misuse and mental health issues.

The Low Moss PSP team, including prison officers and support staff from a variety of different agencies, will work proactively with offenders on a range of preventative measures over the course of the three-year pilot project; from their arrival in to custody, throughout their sentence and for up to a year after they have returned to their communities.

The network of agencies involved includes the Scottish Prison Service, North Strathclyde and Glasgow Community Justice Authorities, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Turning Point Scotland and other voluntary sector organisations.

Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Kenny MacAskill MSP, presented the keynote speech at the official launch of the PSP.

He said: "The Low Moss Public Social Partnership is a cutting edge example of partners working together with their focus on prisoners' individual needs.

"Crime is at its lowest level in 39 years but we are still seeing too many people, and often the same people, returning time and time again to our prisons. Without support when they return to the community, the problems of addiction, homelessness, mental health and unemployment are often too difficult for these individuals to deal with.

"This PSP provides the practical help and encouragement these often vulnerable people need to overcome whatever led them to prison in the first place, and to break the cycle of reoffending."

The creation of a Public Social Partnership is a first for the SPS, though the model has been used successfully elsewhere in the criminal justice sector.

Colin McConnell, Chief Executive of the SPS, said: "The Service is dedicated to transforming the lives of those people in our care in order to reduce reoffending across Scotland. However, we are also aware that we cannot conquer this considerable challenge alone.

"We need the support of our partners and the joint commitment that we will create as many opportunities as we can for those in our custody to embrace change, so they can return to their communities ready to use their newly discovered potential and contribute positively to society."

The initial months of the PSP at Low Moss have seen 237 people engage with Prisoner Support Pathway since it became operational in May 2013.

The PSP team currently have a case load of 134 people they are actively working with; 87 in custody and 47 in the community. Though at an early stage, the feedback received from those who have returned to their communities has been overwhelmingly positive.



Michael Stoney, Governor of Low Moss, has welcomed the introduction of the PSP at the prison, saying: "As the newest addition to the SPS estate, HMP Low Moss was an ideal site to pilot this exciting and life-changing initiative.

"Since making the PSP available, the initial response from those in our custody has been extremely encouraging, and I believe the scheme has the potential to make a real and lasting difference to the lives of those in our custody, and contribute towards a safer and stronger Scotland."

Martin Cawley Chief Executive of Turning Point Scotland, the lead voluntary sector partner of the PSP, describes the partnership as an "innovative way of working".

He continued: "The Public Social Partnership is an innovative way of working, by formally bringing together a range of skills and expertise among public agencies and the voluntary sector in partnership, to prepare people to successfully reintegrate into the community.

"People leaving prison often have nowhere to live, a lack of income to buy food or pay bills, or they have mental health and substance misuse issues they need to address.

Low Moss PSP staff will support people leaving prison in order to help them access a range of community resources such as suitable housing, welfare support and health care in advance of being released, which will greatly improve their chances of being able to make a fresh start."

The Public Social Partnership at Low Moss Prison became operational on May 8th 2013;

The three-year pilot project supports short-term convicted prisoners from the point of admission through to twelve months post-release in the community;

The PSP has received funding from the Scottish Government, the Robertson Trust and the Big Lottery Fund;

The Public Social Partnership is part of the response to Audit Scotland's 'An overview of Scotland's Criminal Justice System' which related directly to reoffending rates for the short term prisoner population;

In the first 3 months of the service being operational, 77 percent of assessments presented multiple issues, with accommodation and/or addiction being the most common problems requiring support.