

Justice Committee visit Pilton

The Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee which is made up of MSPs from all parties visited Circle Scotland in Pilton today. Circle works with deprived communities across central Scotland trying to improve lives.



Members of the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee meet with members of Circle who supports prisoners and their families after release from custody. 17 April 2018. Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament

In relation to criminal justice they offer services which relate to criminals placed on remand in prison. While someone is awaiting trial or sentencing they can be placed in prison on a meantime basis. The rate of holding prisoners on remand is about 19% of the total prison population, but over half go on to receive sentences which do not involve a prison term. With an average period of 20 days on remand, the effects on families and jobs can be significant.



Daniel Johnson MSP a member of the Scottish Parliament's Justice Committee meets with members of Circle which supports prisoners and their families after release from custody. 17 April 2018. Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament

The Circle projects include Families Affected by Imprisonment (FABI) Women's Outreach Team and Shine Women's Mentoring Service.

The Shine service is offered to all adult females who are in prison, on remand or who have been served with a Community Payback Order.

Speaking about the visit, Justice Committee Deputy Convener Rona Mackay MSP, said: "Politicians considering complex issues need to be sure to hear the voices of people on the ground.

"We have heard gripping evidence today on our visit. We will consider this along with the testimony we have taken from a wide range of people working in the criminal justice system.

"Although the Committee has yet to produce its final report, it has heard that there are problems with the way remand is being used. In some circumstances remand may be causing more

problems than it solves.”



Ben McPherson MSP speaks with staff as Members of the Scottish Parliament’s Justice Committee meet with members of Circle who supports prisoners and their families after release from custody. 17 April 2018. Pic – Andrew Cowan/Scottish Parliament

Justice Committee members on the visit were: Deputy Convener: Rona Mackay (SNP, Strathkelvin and Bearsden), George Adam MSP (SNP, Paisley), Maurice Corry MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, West Scotland), John Finnie MSP (Scottish Green Party, Highlands and Islands), Mairi Gougeon MSP (SNP, Angus North and Mearns), Daniel Johnson MSP (Scottish Labour, Edinburgh Southern), Liam Kerr MSP (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, North East Scotland) and Ben Macpherson MSP (SNP, Edinburgh Northern and Leith)