



HEADQUARTERS
 One Lochside
 1 Lochside Avenue
 Edinburgh
 EH12 9DJ

Our Ref: HQ23301

7 March 2024

Dear

Thank you for your request dated 9 February 2024 under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOI(S)A).

For reference, you requested:

RFI 1: "In 2012, the BBC released a news piece claiming that 80% of prisoners in Scotland are functionally illiterate or struggle with literacy. 12 years later, I would like to request an update on said statistic."

RFI 2: "Relating to the question above, what actions has the Scottish Government taken on board to improve the situation? Are there any new-found associations or focus groups which specialise in tackling the issue?"

We have now completed our search for the information you requested.

RFI 1 Response: The below information provides the existing data in relation to the recorded literacy provision position for those in our care.

Since 2017 learning provision within SPS has been provided by Fife College. As part of that learning provision, upon admission to an establishment, an individual within our care will be invited to the learning centre to engage in a screening process. It is during this screening process that their existing literacy & numeracy level is identified.

This screening process is voluntary, and approximately 50% of those in our care choose to take part. SPS' average daily population at Q1 23/24 was 7662.

Fife College then provide statistics identifying levels within Literacy and Numeracy. Please see detail below:

Level below –	
Literacy Level 2	461
Literacy Level 3	843
Literacy Level 4	1593
Literacy Level 5	899
Numeracy Level 2	1064
Numeracy Level 3	1252
Numeracy Level 4	1009
Numeracy Level 5	422

An additional mechanism SPS uses to measure elements of learning provision is our Prisoner Survey.

The SPS biennial Prison Survey is undertaken in each of the Scottish prisons and involves all those held in custody in Scotland. However, it should be noted that due to Covid restrictions, and subsequent Covid recovery measures, the last Prisoner Survey was carried out in 2019.

The Survey represents a self-reported snapshot which offers an opportunity for those in custody to express their point of view on matters of importance to them. It is focused intentionally upon the core elements of prison life: living conditions, family contact, healthcare, relationships, and atmosphere. However, the Survey also seeks views on such issues as perceived safety, drug and alcohol use and mental health.

Percentage of those reporting problems with reading, writing and numbers 2013-2019

	2013	2015	2017	2019
Do you have any problems with your reading?	13	12	12	15
Do you have any problems with your writing?	17	14	15	18
Do you have any problems with your numbers?	14	11	14	17
[Of those reporting problems]	71	73	68	70
Would you like help with your reading?				
[Of those reporting problems]	71	89	73	75
Would you like help with your writing?				
[Of those reporting problems]	75	92	75	75
Would you like help with your numbers				

RFI 2 Response: Literacy and numeracy programmes provide core activity and are often embedded within the fabric of vocational training courses to highlight the relevance of core skills within the context of delivery in practical activities and employment. Small group work, therapeutic arts and specific 1:1 tuition is also available to help learners enhance their communication abilities, improve confidence and self-esteem and to develop critical thinking skills.

In addition, within the screening process and wider induction within establishments, individuals, if presenting with behaviours and capacities indicative of neurodivergence, will be invited to participate in the Do-It Profiler.

The approach to screening allows the prison to capture strengths and challenges commonly associated with neurodivergent conditions alongside gaining information on the background and history, developmental, educational, and current functioning related to intellectual difficulties but also the social background. This takes a person-centred approach.

This concludes our response to your request.

If you are unhappy with this response to your request, you may ask us to conduct an internal review, by writing to The Chief Executive, One Lochside, 1 Lochside Avenue, Edinburgh,

EH12 9DJ. Your request should explain why you wish a review to be conducted and should be made within forty working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within twenty working days of receipt. If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Yours sincerely

Freedom of Information Manager