

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL TRANSFORMING LIVES



APPLICANT PACK

Prison Officer - Residential

Thank you for your interest in the above role. Below, you will find the job description and person specification, outlining how the different criteria will be assessed throughout the recruitment process. You will also find information on the recruitment and selection process and key dates.

Job Description

Job Purpose
The Scottish Prison Service (SPS), established in 1993, is an agency of the Scottish Government whose principal objective is to contribute to making Scotland safer by protecting the public and reducing reoffending. The SPS aims to achieve this by ensuring delivery of secure custody, safe and orderly prisons, high quality standards of care, and opportunities for those in custody to build capacity to help them reintegrate into the community on release. Prison Officers are a principal agent of delivery of the SPS Vision of Unlocking Potential and Transforming Lives as they are a critical point of contact between those in custody and the organisation charged with their safety, security and personal development. Prison Officers have a positive and caring approach towards those in our care and adopt an asset-based approach, fostering effective relationships in order to help those in SPS care to desist from offending and help transform their lives. The role depends upon Prison Officers embracing the aims and ethos of the SPS Mission and their personal efficacy and professionalism are vital to developing and maintaining essential working relationships with those in our care. The design and delivery of person-centred services, requires staff who not only demonstrate SPS Values, but who believe in change and their ability to affect it. Newly appointed Prison Officers - Residential will undertake a block of training as part of a new professional development pathway which represents a significant and positive investment in the professional Prison Officer in Scotland. As such, the role requires a strong on-going commitment to personal and professional development.

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Prison Officers - Residential will spend the majority of their time in the residential (accommodation) area of the prison. The role can be physically demanding in that it involves walking and standing for a majority of the time and there will be frequent occasions where physical fitness and dexterity will be required to assist in the secure handling of challenging situations. The potentially intense nature of the interactions with those in our care and their families may exert emotional demands on Prison Officers.	
Key Responsibilities	
1	Encouraging positive behaviours in individuals in engaging with rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives and processes through a supportive, caring and inclusive approach, consistently demonstrating support and respect for equality, diversity and human rights
2	Contributing to the prevention and constructive management of challenging and/or difficult behaviours whilst demonstrating fairness and consistency in order to build positive relationships with individuals in custody.
3	Managing individuals' case work and exercising professional judgement in responding to particular needs and challenges, identifying changes in individuals' physical and mental health and initiating appropriate responses by others
4	Completion of all administration and communications relevant to the role, in line with local and national requirements and standards. This includes processing, analysing, evaluating and disseminating appropriate and relevant information, as well as production of high quality and accurate report writing and maintenance of paper and electronic records in accordance with SPS policies and relevant legislation.
5	Contributing to effective operational risk management by ensuring the safe and secure supervision of those in SPS care ensuring their needs and entitlements are consistently met in line with Prison Rules and Directives, SPS policy, Standard Operating Procedures, and relevant legislation.
6	Managing conflict, with a focus on de-escalation, and contributing towards local incident management using established and approved techniques whilst recognising and managing the impact of challenging behaviours on self and others.

Person Specification & Assessment Information

Our selection approach is based upon the principle of merit which means that we will look to appointment the person who best meets the requirements of the role as outlined in the person specification. In determining the most meritorious candidate, applicants will be assessed against the published criteria during the selection process, as detailed below. The most meritorious candidate will be the one who best meets the essential criteria for the role.

Criteria	Essential/Desirable?	When assessed?
Core		
Values Personal values which are aligned to and consistent with SPS Values. Belief - believe that people can change Respect - have proper regard for individuals, their needs and their human rights Integrity - apply high ethical, moral and professional standards Openness - work with others to achieve the best outcomes Courage - have the courage to care regardless of circumstances Humility - recognise that we can learn from others	Essential	- Situational Judgement Test - Group Exercise - Interview
Cognitive Ability An ability to comprehend written passages, perform basic mathematical functions, draw logical conclusions, and identify patterns.	Essential	Cognitive Ability Test
Qualifications		
Commitment to Professional Development Commitment to continuous professional development, including undertaking formal training and qualifications to support your own learning and development as well as the development of those in our care.	Essential	- Written Exercise - Interview

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Experience		
Supporting Others Experience of providing support, advice or guidance to others.	Essential	• Interview
Making a Difference Experience of making a positive difference to the lives of others	Essential	• Interview
Resilience Experience of managing challenging circumstances or behaviours, using your emotional intelligence to prevent or resolve conflict, regulate your own emotional reactions and positively influencing others to achieve desired results.	Essential	• Interview
Knowledge & Skills		
Building & Maintaining Relationships Ability to foster good relationships and work effectively and collaboratively with a diverse range of people, sharing knowledge and skills, and influencing others to achieve desired outcomes.	Essential	• Group Exercise
Problem Solving & Decision Making Ability to proactively identify issues, recognise themes and patterns in order to implement solutions and make decisions which are defensible, evidence-based, take account of risks, appropriate and timely.	Essential	• Group Exercise
Communication Skills Ability to manage situations, relationships and conflict through effective use of communication skills.	Essential	• Group Exercise
Managing Information Ability to use a computer and other digital devices to process, analyse, evaluate and disseminate information and produce high quality written reports and maintain effective and accurate records.	Essential	• Written Exercise

Selection Process Key Dates

Vacancy Closes for Applications	19 th November 2025	Time	10:00
Situational Judgement Test	You will have 5 days from the day of application submission to complete this online test. Failure to complete the test within the timeframe outlined will result in non-progression of your application.		
Cognitive Ability Test	If successful at the Situational Judgement Test you will be invited to complete an online Cognitive Ability Test on 25 November 2025. You will have 7 days to complete this test. Failure to complete the test within the timeframe outlined will result in non-progression of application		
Group and Written Exercise *	Candidates successful at the Cognitive Ability Test will be invited to attend a Group and Written Exercise. Testing sessions will be held on 11 and 12 Dec 2025 at HMP & YOI Grampian, South Road, Peterhead, AB42 2YY.		
Interview Date*	Candidates successful at Group and Written Exercise will be invited to attend the final assessment stage which will consist of a virtual online interview between 7 and 14 January 2026.		

***Please note no alternative dates will be available.**

If you have any queries regarding the vacancy or have a disability which you feel may affect your performance at any stage in the recruitment and selection process, please contact the Resourcing Team by email at: vacancies@prisons.gov.scot to allow reasonable adjustments to be made to assist you.

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Recruitment & Selection Process

The recruitment process has been designed to provide us with greater insight into the values as well as the skills and capability of candidates.

Why are values so important to us?

Juliet Hancock, an organisational development professional, describes the value of values and why they are important in the world of work.

Our personal values describe what is most important to us; they are individual and internal and we use them every day, often at an unconscious level, to make decisions and choices about what we do and how we do it – they are the reason why we do the things that we do.

Our values provide the motivation, drive and energy to get things done; they also determine when we feel frustrated, angry or lack the energy to do something because it doesn't fit the values that are important to us.

If there is alignment between our personal values and the prevailing environment at work, we will feel a sense of wellbeing. If there is a gap, we will 'disengage' and not be able to give our best or fulfil our potential.

It is for these reasons that values are so important to us as we recognise that a strong alignment between personal values and organisational values will support us in achieving our vision of unlocking potential and transforming the lives of those in our care.

Further details about the different selection methods used within the process can be found below.

Application Submission

You can apply by creating an online account. When you create your account you will need to create a password, which you'll need to remember for log in access in the future.

The application form will ask you to provide information including:

- Personal details
- Employment History
- Education and Qualifications
- Motivation for Applying
- Equal opportunities monitoring questions
- Socio-Economic background monitoring questions

You do not need to complete the application at once. You can save what you have completed and return at a later date to complete it. It may take around 30-40 minutes to fully complete.

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On submission of your application, we will review the content to ensure you meet the SPS minimum eligibility criteria.

Situational Judgement Test

If you meet the minimum eligibility criteria, you will be invited to sit an online situational judgement test (SJT). The test is designed to measure your values and behaviours against those identified as important within the role. The test will give you an insight into different situations you may be faced with as a Prison Officer.

You might find it helpful to familiarise yourself with the SPS values ahead of taking the assessment. You can find these within the Person Specification above.

You will be presented with 17 situations or scenarios, and you are required to choose from a list of options, which response you believe would be most effective and least effective in the given situation.

Some things to note about this stage:

- There is no time limit within the test, however you should allow around 30 minutes to complete this.
- Once you click 'Save your answer' you won't be able to go back and change it
- You will have to complete the test in one sitting.
- Once invited to undertake the test, you will have five days to complete the assessment.
- Following completion of the test you will receive the outcome within around two hours.

Cognitive Ability Test

If successful at the SJT stage you will be invited to take an online cognitive ability test. The test will be made up of three sub tests and will last 12 minutes in total. The test will assess your general cognitive ability across three areas:

- Verbal
- numerical; and
- abstract reasoning.

You will have four minutes to complete each test.

The tests are designed to assess your ability to understand written and numerical information and to draw logical conclusions.

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As the cognitive ability test is completed in unsupervised conditions (i.e. in your own time), you should be aware that if invited to the interview stage of the process, you may be invited to complete a second online assessment under supervised conditions (i.e. onsite at SPS).

We use a company called Cubiks for our assessment. You can access some practice questions on their website

[Ability Tests \(Intermediate\) | Talogy \(cubiks.com\)](#)

Group and Written Exercise

If successful at the Cognitive Ability Test stage, you'll be invited to participate in a Group & Written Exercise. You'll receive an invitation via your online recruitment account asking you to book a suitable date to attend the exercise. Don't worry if there isn't a suitable date available initially, we regularly release more slots.

The exercise will take place in person at our training college in Falkirk, unless advised otherwise.

Group Exercise

You'll work alongside up to 4 other candidates. You'll be presented with a scenario and as a group you will be required to work together to make decisions. You'll be given 5 minutes to read the brief provided, and 30 minutes to carry out the group discussion.

There won't be assessors present on the day, so the exercise will be recorded. The evaluation will be completed at a later date. We will require you to sign a disclaimer to confirm you are content for your participation to be recorded.

The criteria that you will be assessed against at this stage are:

- Building & Maintaining Relationships
- Problem Solving & Decision Making
- Communication Skills

Written Exercise

Once the Group Exercise has concluded, you'll then complete the Written Exercise.

You will complete the Written Exercise individually, and this will be completed using a PC. You'll be provided with a brief and will be required to draft a written response.

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The exercise will last for 25 minutes in total.

The criteria that you will be assessed against at this stage are:

- Commitment to Professional Development
- Managing Information

Interview

If successful at the Group & Written Exercise stage, you will be invited to attend an interview. You'll receive an invitation via your online recruitment account asking you to book a suitable slot. Don't worry if there isn't a suitable one available initially, we regularly release more slots. The interview will take place on Microsoft Teams, and there will be up to three assessors present. The interview will last for approximately one hour.

Each panel member will take a turn to ask questions. They will work through questions covering five competencies:

- **Commitment to Professional Development**
- **Supporting Others**
- **Resilience**
- **Making a Difference**

At the beginning of the interview, the panel will also ask some questions to find out a bit more about your interest and understanding of the role. This isn't an assessed area, but it will be helpful to come prepared to talk about what interests you about the role.

The panel will provide you with some context about why the competency is relevant to the role. You'll be asked a lead question first, followed by prompting questions. Don't be put off if you are asked a few prompting questions. This is to ensure the panel gains full insight into the example provided.

We will be looking for specific examples, so you should avoid using generic examples. We want to know what you did, how you did it, and what the outcome was.

We are happy for you to use some prompting notes on the day. However, please try to refrain from over reliance on notes.

After the interview, the panel will carry out an evaluation and will provide a score against the evidence provided for each competency. This score will be based on the evidence provided by you during the interview.

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You'll receive the outcome via your online recruitment account, usually within two working days.

Reasonable Adjustments

We know some people have conditions which require additional support for them to perform at their best. We call this support “making reasonable adjustments”. If you have a disability (visible or non-visible) and require reasonable adjustments to be made to support your participation in the selection process, please contact the recruitment team at vacancies@prisons.gov.scot in the first instance to discuss.

Some examples of reasonable adjustments we have made in the past are:

- Allocating additional time for the interview
- Assessors asking interview questions in a different way
- Scheduling the interview at a suitable time
- Asking multi-stage questions in steps
- Providing additional time to complete cognitive ability testing
- Providing written documents in different font, colour or text size
- Providing some extra information about what to expect through the selection process
- Printing resources on a different colour of paper
- Providing a longer break between exercises
- Providing time before the assessment for candidates to familiarise themselves with assessment paperwork
- Providing a reader/scribe for written exercises
- Scheduling additional time for written exercises

This isn't an exhaustive list, and we are willing to consider and discuss other requests to support you.

Pre-employment Checks

The final stage before appointment is the pre-employment checks. Due to the nature of our organisation, the standards we set are at times considerably higher than those that might be expected in other organisations. On average, pre-employment checks will usually take 6-8 weeks to fully complete. The checks required are:

- **Baseline Personnel Security Standards**

As a Civil Service employer, all candidates appointed to the SPS must satisfy Baseline Personnel Security Standards. These checks include:

- **Verification of Identity**

You'll be asked to provide official documentation to verify your identity

- **Right to Work**

You'll be asked to provide evidence of your right to work in the UK

As a Civil Service organisation, successful applicants also need to have the right to work in the Civil Service. Further information can be found on the [Civil Service Nationality Rules Guidance](#)

- **Employment History**

We'll verify your employment history. We'll do so by verifying your past employment through references and HMRC checks. If you have any gaps in your employment history, we will look for you to provide an explanation of the gap. If you have been self-employed, we will seek verification from HMRC, accountants or client references.

- **Criminal Record Check**

All new entrants to the SPS are subject to a Level 2 Disclosure Scotland check. Any convictions noted will be considered in conjunction with our [Criminal Convictions Guidance](#), to confirm suitability for employment.

- **Overseas Residency Checks**

If you have resided overseas for six months or more within the last three years, the following checks will be carried out:

- Proof of overseas residence
- Overseas employer references
- Official and verifiable overseas police certificates

- **Fitness Test**

You will be required to successfully pass a Fitness Test. The test is made up of four parts:

- Aerobic Run
- Grip Strength Test
- Dyno Seated Bench Press and Bench Pull
- Shield Hold

If you are unsuccessful at your first sitting of this test, you will be invited to attend one re-sit.

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Further information on the Fitness Test Standards can be found [here](#).

- **Health Declaration & Medical Examination**

You will take part in a medical with our Occupational Health provider. The first appointment will be a Telephone Consultation. If passed fit at this stage, you will be scheduled a face-to-face medical appointment. At your face-to-face appointment you may be subject to a substance misuse test.

- **Internal Vetting Checks**

We'll work with our Public Protection Unit to carry out internal vetting to confirm your suitability for employment.

Assignment

Following successful pre-employment checks you will be placed on our bank list awaiting assignment on one of our Residential Officer Foundation Programme (ROFP)* training courses.

We have intakes planned throughout 2025/26 and once you have completed pre-employment checks, we will contact you to find out your availability to attend the ROFP in line with business need.

The ROFP training will take place at our training facility in Falkirk. The training will last for seven weeks. The week before you start the ROFP, you'll have an induction week at the establishment you have been assigned to.

You will be assigned to a specific establishment which will be your primary place of work following the training. We will collect preferences of where you may like to be assigned, however we cannot make any guarantees, as offers of employment are subject to business need. We will, however, try to assign you to a prison within 30 miles of your home address.

* Please note 'Residential' does not mean that you need to stay on site, this is in reference to the title of the role you have applied for.

We have Residential Officer Foundation Programme training intakes planned across 2026. The planned start dates for these intakes are*;

- 05/01/2026
- 09/03/2026

More dates will follow in due course.

*Training start dates will be different for internal staff applying for promotion to Residential Officer

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