

Our Reference: HQ19201

25 November 2019

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) request of 30 October 2019 seeking a response to the following questions:-

1. How long on average does it take the prison service to inform the family of a dead prisoner of their cause of death?
2. How long on average does it take to determine a prisoner's cause of death?
3. If a prisoner's cause of death is determined, how long does it take to change this from awaiting determination on your records?
4. Can you please break down this information into each of your prisons?

In response to your first question, when someone dies in prison custody it is the responsibility of Police Scotland to inform the next of kin.

In response to your second question, SPS does not hold this information. The cause of death is determined by post mortem and this information is shared with the Scottish Fatalities Investigation Unit (SFIU). From October 2019 it has been agreed that the SFIU will share this information with SPS and the cause of death will be published on the SPS website.

In response to your third question, until October 2019 SPS only published the cause of death once the Fatal Accident Inquiry had concluded. This information was updated on a quarterly basis. SPS will now publish the cause of death as determined by the post mortem. The data published on the SPS website will also be updated on a quarterly basis.

In response to your fourth question, the SPS website holds information regarding deaths in custody for the past 10 years 2009-2019. [Prisoner Deaths In Custody](#) - This is a link to the website for ease of reference.

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you have the right to request a review. Your request should be made within 40 working days of the date of receipt of this letter and we will reply within 20 working days of receiving your request. Under section 20(3)(c)(ii) of the Act your request should outline your reason for seeking a review. If you remain unsatisfied following an internal review, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

If you require a review to be carried out, please write to the Chief Executive, Scottish Prison Service, Calton House, 5 Redheughs Rigg, Edinburgh, EH12 9HW. The review will be undertaken by staff not involved in the original decision making process.

Yours sincerely,