

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201300581, Scottish Prison Service  
**Sector:** scottish government and devolved administration  
**Subject:** work (in prison)  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, complained that laundry workers in his prison had their production bonus removed and their basic wage reduced. He did not believe that this was the case in other prisons across the estate. In responding, the prison said that Mr C was being paid in line with the national prisoner wage earning policy and that his role in the laundry did not attract any bonus payments.

Mr C said that the wage earning policy allowed for task related bonuses for certain tasks, including those classed as unpleasant activity. He said he considered that handling dirty laundry daily for over 700 prisoners could be classed as unpleasant activity, and should attract a bonus. He also noted that he had submitted a Freedom of Information request and the response indicated that the wage earning policy was not being applied consistently across the prison estate.

We contacted Scottish Prison Service (SPS) headquarters who confirmed that Mr C was being paid the appropriate level of pay for a laundry worker, that laundry work was not classed as unpleasant activity and did not attract a bonus payment. He explained that prisons had discretion to pay an additional amount if prisoners were required to work extra hours and also that, on completing an accreditation scheme and receiving a qualification, some workers may be entitled to an increased level of pay. However, outwith these scenarios, all laundry workers should be paid at the same rate as Mr C.

As Mr C's earnings appeared to be in line with the national policy, we did not uphold his complaint. However, the SPS recognised that the response to Mr C's information request suggested some variance across the estate and they, therefore, agreed to contact all prisons to ensure that the wage earning policy was being applied consistently.