# The role of custodial sentencing – Transcript

***What is the role of prisons in Scotland?***

**Colin McConnell, Chief Executive, The Scottish Prison Service**: The Prison Service plays a really important role within any justice system, of course in this case, Scotland.

When you think about a justice system, it has to be able to in a sense address the full range of behaviours that are dealt with by Police Scotland and the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts and then ultimately it’s us in prisons.

And the peculiar thing about prisons is really prisons are an option of last resort so only those who have committed the most serious offences or those who present the most risk to the public should find their way through to custody in the Scottish Prison Service.

So prisons really are at the more serious, the more weighty end of the criminal justice system. And although lots and lots of people enter the justice system, thankfully very few in reality find their way into prisons because courts have other disposals that are available to sheriffs and judges and those who don’t ultimately require the most serious sanction of prisons get filtered out along the way.

So we are essentially the disposal of last resort for our Scottish courts. When someone is sent to prison, that aspect of being taken out of your community and locked into somewhere that is fairly foreboding, where you can’t make your own choices, where things are heavily controlled, your name is taken away and you’re given a number, that impersonal aspect of it makes a big impact on you and you realise that this is so uncomfortable, it’s so in a sense de-personalising that you never want to come back into here again. So you come in, you do your time and you go back out thinking: 'My goodness, I don’t want to have to go through that again.'

[End of transcript]