

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201507547, Scottish Prison Service  
**Sector:** Scottish Government and devolved administration  
**Subject:** escorting services  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Miss C complained about escorting services provided on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service on two occasions. Miss C said that on the first occasion, escort staff physically and verbally abused her and on the second occasion, staff undertook a lengthy diversion when taking her to a medical facility for assessment. Miss C also complained that her complaints about the escort service were not fully investigated.

The escort service did not agree with Miss C's account of the first journey and they provided escort logs and incident reports made at the time. We also obtained a statement from court staff whom Miss C said witnessed the events, which supported the escort service's account. We did not uphold this aspect of Miss C's complaint.

In relation to the second journey, the escort service explained that staff took a different route to pay for a petrol bill but that the diversion would not have added much time to the journey. They also said there was not enough time to catch the ferry (for the preferred route), due to the time that court finished. However, when we asked for further details about this, they said the reason for the diversion was to pay for the petrol bill. During our investigation, the escort service acknowledged that staff should have made other arrangements to pay for the petrol and they apologised to Miss C. We agreed with their assessment of this and we upheld Miss C's complaint.

We also upheld Miss C's complaint about complaints handling. There was no record of staff being interviewed, although the escort service said they have now addressed this. We were also concerned that the escort service gave us conflicting information about whether ferries were available, and that their apology was prompted by our investigation. We considered this reflected a lack of rigour in their investigation as they should have established the key facts and made any apologies when Miss C first complained. We therefore upheld this complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that Scottish Prison Service:

- ensure the escort service put in place an investigation planning tool so that officers investigating complaints are prompted to note and consider the evidence available on each complaint; and
- ensure the escort service share the findings of this investigation with relevant complaints handling staff for learning purposes.