

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL TRANSFORMING LIVES



SELECTION INFORMATION & CAMPAIGN TIMELINE

Residential Officer

We want to ensure you have access to all the information you need to feel prepared, confident and able to show us your best.

We've included details of the selection process and at which stage each criteria from the Person Specification will be assessed. We've also included key dates you'll want to keep in mind.

Selection Process

Our selection approach is based upon the principle of merit which means that we'll look to appoint 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. Performance against any published desirable criteria will only be considered where two or more candidates have performed equally against the essential criteria and there is a need to use the desirable criteria to identify the preferred candidate.

The selection process for this role will consist of the following stages:

- Situational Judgement Test
- Cognitive Ability Test
- Group & Written Exercise
- Interview

Competencies for Success

Please view our [Competencies for Success Framework](#) for information on the core behavioural competencies which apply to all our roles. During recruitment, you'll be assessed on up to four Competencies for Success, as outlined in the below Selection Information.

Selection Information

Criteria	Essential or Desirable	Stage of Selection Process Assessed
Core		
Numeracy & Literacy Skills An ability to comprehend written passages, perform basic mathematical functions, draw logical conclusions and identify patterns.	Essential	Cognitive Ability Test
Values Personal values which are aligned to and consistent with SPS Values. Belief - we believe that people can change Respect - we are inclusive, respecting the needs, rights and voices of everyone equitably Integrity - we have high ethical, moral and professional standards Openness - we work with others to achieve the best outcomes Compassion - we care about people and believe that positive relationships are a critical enabler of change Humility - we cannot do this on our own, we recognise that we need to work with and learn from others Innovation - we continually find ways to improve the delivery of prison services in Scotland	Essential	Situational Judgement Test
Knowledge, Skills & 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
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
Competencies for Success		
Develop Ourselves & Others	Essential	Written Exercise Interview
Relationships & Collaboration	Essential	Group Exercise
Solve Problems & Make Decisions	Essential	Group Exercise
Listen & Communicate	Essential	Group Exercise

Selection Process Key Dates

Date Vacancy Closes for Applications	20/09/2026	Time Vacancy Closes for Applications	23:59
Situational Judgement Test	You will have five days to complete your Situational Judgement Test from the initial invite. Failure to complete the test within the timeframe outlined will result in your application being withdrawn		
Cognitive Ability Test	If successful at the Situational Judgement Test, you will soon receive an invitation to complete an online Cognitive Ability Test. You will have seven days to complete this. Failure to complete the test within the timeframe outlined will result in your application being withdrawn from the process.		
Group and Written Exercise	Candidates successful at the Cognitive Ability Test will be invited to attend a Group and Written Exercise in person at one of our SPS sites.		
Interview Date*	Candidates successful at the Group & Written Exercise will be invited to attend the final assessment stage which will consist of a virtual online interview.		

Reasonable Adjustments

We recognise that people may have access needs or require adjustments to help them perform at their best. We refer to these as reasonable adjustments.

If you have a disability, whether visible or non-visible, or any access needs that would support your full participation in the selection process, please contact vacancies@prisons.gov.scot in the first instance to discuss how we can best support you.

Examples of reasonable adjustments we have provided in the past include:

- Offering additional time during interviews
- Adjusting how interview questions are asked
- Scheduling interviews at a time that works best for you
- Breaking multi-stage questions into smaller steps
- Providing written materials in alternative formats (e.g., different font, colour, or text size)
- Sharing extra information about what to expect during the selection process
- Printing resources on paper in a preferred colour

Situational Judgement Test

If you meet the minimum eligibility criteria, you will be invited to sit an online situational judgement test (SJT). This is a values based assessment, aligned to the SPS values. The test will give you an insight into different situations you may be faced with as a Prison Officer.

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.

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 & 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:

- Relationships & Collaboration
- Solve Problems & Make Decisions
- Listen & Communicate

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.

The exercise will last for 25 minutes in total.

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

- Develop Ourselves & Others
- 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 areas:

- Develop Ourselves & Others
- Supporting Others
- Making a Difference
- Resilience

At the beginning of the interview, the panel will also ask some questions to find out a bit more about your career history and skills relevant to the role applied for.

The panel will provide you with some context about why each 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.

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

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.

Further information on pre-employment checks can be found [here](#).

Assignment

Following successful pre-employment checks you will be allocated a place on one of our Officer Foundation Training courses. Your first week will be based at the establishment you are assigned to, followed by seven weeks at our training facility in Falkirk.

We have Residential Officer Foundation Programme training intakes planned for 2026 and 2027.

The planned start dates for these intakes are;

- **19/10/2026**
- **11/01/2027**
- **23/03/2027**

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

You will be assigned to HMP & YOI Grampian which will be your primary place of work following the training.

