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# Supervised Bail in Scotland: Research on Use and Impact

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**SUPERVISED BAIL IN SCOTLAND:  
RESEARCH ON USE AND IMPACT**

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Scottish Government Social Research  
2012

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supervised bail in Scotland is a social work or third sector service whereby those who would otherwise be put on remand (that is, imprisoned while awaiting trial) are released on bail on the condition that they meet with a bail supervisor a specified number of times a week, with the aim of supporting accused to comply with bail conditions and reducing remand numbers.

This report outlines the findings of an evaluation of the impact of supervised bail in Scotland which comprised of: analysis of case level data, a workshop with supervised bail workers, surveys of members of the judiciary and Procurators Fiscal, interviews with people who had been on supervised bail, and economic analysis of supervised bail as an alternative to remand.

Supervised bail schemes are in place in most, but not all, Local Authority areas in Scotland, but uptake of the service has been declining in recent years.

Potential bailees (i.e. accused who are likely to be remanded) are screened by bail workers, either in the cells by court based bail workers, or by referral from other justice professionals, such as defence agents. Lack of appropriate and timely processes for getting information to bail workers about the people in the cells and Procurator Fiscal bail positions hinders this screening process where bail workers are court based, and awareness of supervised bail amongst justice professionals may affect referral rates where schemes rely on their referrals.

The primary target group of supervised bail is borderline remand cases. The findings suggest that there are some cases where supervised bail is applied where the accused would not have been remanded, but these are rare. This means that there is little 'net-widening' of supervised bail. A clear understanding that supervised bail is an alternative to remand is important to bailees' understanding of the purpose of the supervision.

Data shows that supervised bail is being targeted specifically, but not exclusively, at young people and female accused, and members of the judiciary surveyed were supportive of it being targeted at young people, single parents and carers, and those with mental health problems. This secondary layer of targeting was seen as less useful than the first.

The frequency, duration, and location of supervised bail meetings varied, and some bailee's contacts were reduced to fit around new employment or education, allowing them to take up these opportunities, or as a reward for good attendance and behaviour, which was the source of a real sense of pride for some.

Three quarters of bail supervision orders studied were completed successfully, and bail workers felt that breach rates were low. Some bailees described having previously breached regular bail or electronic tags, but talked with pride about fully complying with supervised bail. Members of the judiciary who believed that breach rates were low said that this influenced their use of supervised bail.

A fifth of cases where there had been a supervised bail order resulted in prison sentences, two fifths resulted in community sentences, and the remaining had

resulted in another disposal, or no disposal where the accused had been found not guilty or the case had been dropped. Evidence from case level data, bailee interviews and the judicial survey suggested that successful completion of supervised bail encouraged the use of community sentences over prison sentences.

Most bailees interviewed talked positively about supervised bail and its impact on their behaviour and lives in the short and sometimes also the long term, with some describing it as a catalyst for long term desistance from offending. This positive impact was due to being in the community rather than prison while on supervised bail, having a good relationship with their bail worker, flexibility around meetings and support, and receiving positive feedback throughout and at the end of an order. These four things were not experienced by the one bailee for whom supervised bail was not a positive experience.

The economic analysis found that the net benefits of supervised bail as an alternative to remand over the three years examined were between £2 million and £13 million, and that the average cost of a supervised bail case would need to rise by between 75% and 560% for supervised bail to no longer be cost effective.

There are ongoing issues which may explain the recent decline in the use of supervised bail. These could be addressed by ensuring good processes are in place for supervised bail screening and by tackling lack of awareness and buy in among the judiciary, Procurators Fiscal and defence agents. Dealing with these issues could reverse the decline in the use of supervised bail, though we do not know how many 'borderline' cases exist, so we cannot estimate with any certainty how far the use can be increased.

In conclusion, while supervised bail cannot guarantee that accused will not breach their conditions, it is a useful tool for encouraging and supporting compliance in a way not possible with standard bail conditions. And beyond its primary aim of reducing use of remand, and supporting compliance, supervised bail can in some cases assist bailees with their longer term process of desistance from offending behaviour.

This can only happen in the specific kind of 'borderline' cases for which supervised bail is appropriate, where there are good processes in place for the screening of potential bailees, and where there is good local awareness of and buy in to supervised bail. If there is to be optimal use of supervised bail in Scotland, it needs to be ensured that these three conditions are met throughout the country.

# 1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Supervised Bail in Scotland is a social work or third sector service<sup>1</sup> whereby those who would otherwise be put on remand are released on bail on the condition that they meet with a bail supervisor a specified number of times a week (usually two or three)<sup>2</sup>. The aim of this is to support bailees to comply with bail conditions, including attending court and not offending while on bail, thereby enabling them to remain in the community while awaiting trial. On an individual level this aims to avoid the disruptive experience of a period of remand, and give bailees support to deal with any problems they may have, and at a system level it aims to reduce the prison population.
- 1.2 Supervised bail was initially piloted in Glasgow and Edinburgh from 1994. Its aim was to reduce the number of people on remand, while providing support to bailees to address the risk of offending on bail.
- 1.3 Following an evaluation of nine months of the pilots (see McCaig & Hardin 1999), funding was made available across Scotland, which areas could choose to use for bail supervision, or for bail verification schemes, which confirm addresses for potential bailees. As a result, bail supervision was not introduced in all Local Authority areas<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.4 Research commissioned by the then Scottish Executive in 2004 on bail/custody decisions for females described a general consensus among judges interviewed that bail supervision “was an effective tool with some accused” (Brown et al 2004: 27). Many of the study’s respondents also felt remand numbers could be reduced by increased funding of bail schemes (Ibid: 31), however the study also found that there was a lack of awareness amongst judges and prosecutors about services provided by social work and the third sector.
- 1.5 A comprehensive evaluation of supervised bail for young offenders (also including bail information and accommodation) in England and Wales was undertaken in 2002. It found that the majority of those supervised adhered to their supervision order, nearly all attended their court hearing, and completing supervised bail could encourage the implementation of a community sentence rather than a custodial one (see Thomas 2005).
- 1.6 The operation and impact of supervised bail in Scotland has not been examined since the evaluation of the pilots in 1999. This report outlines the findings of a phased project designed to address this gap. The project focused on issues around uptake of bail supervision, its impact on the justice system and on the lives and behaviours of supervised bailees.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently the majority of supervised bail schemes are run by Criminal Justice Social Work, though some are run by third sector organisations, usually Sacro.

<sup>2</sup> This is different from ‘regular’ bail, where accused are released with conditions on their behaviour, but no further contact with the justice system until their court date. Supervised bail could be described as a further condition on regular bail, as supervised bailees still have regular bail conditions.

<sup>3</sup> A 2009 Audit found that the following areas had no bail supervision schemes in place or in development: Scottish Borders Council; East Renfrewshire Council; Renfrewshire Council; Western Isles Council; Moray Council; East Lothian Council

## Methods

1.7 This report draws together the findings of the different elements of this work. These were:

- *Analysis of data on supervised bail schemes:* case level data covering three financial years was requested from all Scottish supervised bail schemes in 2009, and analysed to examine uptake, use of capacity, targeting, breach and outcomes.
- *A workshop with bail workers from schemes across Scotland:* Bail supervision schemes were invited to send representatives to a workshop hosted by Scottish Government policy officers, at which good practice and barriers to supervised bail use were discussed.
- *Surveys of the Judiciary and Procurators Fiscal:* An electronic survey was emailed to all Sheriffs and Judges, and a separate one to Procurators Fiscal, asking about their awareness, experience, and views on supervised bail.<sup>4</sup>
- *Interviews with people who have been on supervised bail:* Qualitative interviews were undertaken with a small sample of people who had recently been on supervised bail. These interviewees were recruited through supervised bail schemes.<sup>5</sup>
- *Economic analysis of supervised bail:* All available relevant data were used to undertake a cost benefit analysis of supervised bail as an alternative to remand.

1.8 From these five strands a rounded picture of the operation and impact of supervised bail in Scotland emerges. We now turn to these findings, beginning with an examination of the availability and uptake of supervised bail across Scotland.

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<sup>4</sup> The survey of Judiciary was answered by 39 Sheriffs, 1 Judge, and 1 person who did not specify which role they occupied. This represents 27% of all Sheriffs across Scotland, and a higher proportion of Sheriffs who work in a court where supervised bail is available. There were 21 responses to the PF survey, a response rate of roughly 8%.

<sup>5</sup> This means that interviewees were likely to be those with positive experiences of supervised bail, and those who did not engage with their bail worker or attend meetings were not interviewed. A full account of the methodology for the bailee interviews can be found in the separate full report.



## 2 SCHEME AVAILABILITY AND UPTAKE

- 2.1 When data was requested from supervised bail schemes in 2009, the majority of Local Authorities (LAs) had a bail supervision scheme in place, many of them shared across LAs. However, some of these had experienced a very low uptake over the previous three years. There were some LAs where schemes were in development, and a small handful had no scheme in place.
- 2.2 According to the data provided by the schemes, there had been a very slight decrease in overall numbers of bail supervision orders countrywide over the financial years 2007-08 through to 2008-09. This was despite an increase in funding being made available in January 2008. However, much of this overall decline could be attributed to the Glasgow City Council scheme, which had experienced notable decline in recent years. Possible reasons for this decline are explored below. The numbers across the three years for all other schemes show no clear pattern beyond slight fluctuations, of the kind which would be expected from year to year.
- 2.3 Since this analysis was undertaken, national level data has been published which shows that there was a further drop in numbers of supervised bail orders between 2008-09 and 2009-10, which was a continuation of a downward trend since 2006-07, though there was a slight increase between 2009-10 and 2010-11 (Scottish Government 2010). Table 1 below shows that the drop between 2006-07 and 2010-11 was largely in the two criminal justice areas with the highest volume of supervised bail orders – Glasgow, and Fife and Forth Valley.

**Table 1 – supervised bail orders commenced by criminal justice area**

Criminal Justice Area	Number of bail orders commenced						
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Fife & Forth Valley	315	329	261	212	253	158	163
Glasgow	261	321	247	242	143	107	45
Lanarkshire	7	21	57	23	8	24	84
Lothian & Borders	57	88	74	69	56	73	58
Northern	37	56	8	19	47	60	75
North Strathclyde	0	6	2	1	0	1	0
South West Scotland	30	29	63	46	37	29	26
Tayside	91	67	70	117	39	29	47
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>798</b>	<b>917</b>	<b>782</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>481</b>	<b>498</b>

Source: *Criminal Justice Social Work Statistics: Courts and Bail* -

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/CourtBail>

- 2.4 Only seven of the schemes supplied a ‘capacity’ figure, either in terms of maximum number of supervised bail orders they could manage a year, or maximum number of orders at any one time. Of these schemes, only two were operating at over 50% capacity.
- 2.5 The survey of the judiciary explored possible drivers of this decline in uptake and apparent under-use of capacity. It revealed that some Sheriffs were not aware of the bail supervision schemes in their area. Overall, however, Sheriffs who responded were largely positive about supervised bail, whether they knew there was a scheme in their area or not. However, they also

emphasised that supervised bail was only suitable for a specific kind of 'borderline' case.

- 2.6 This suggests that lack of 'buy in' may not be an issue<sup>6</sup> among the judiciary, but both awareness of supervised bail and prevalence of potential supervised bailees may both have an influence on uptake of the service. As identification of such 'borderline' cases depends on many factors, it would be difficult at best to estimate the number of potential supervised bail cases going through the criminal justice system.
- 2.7 On the other hand, while some PFs surveyed were positive about supervised bail, others were more sceptical or did not know much about it. There was mixed experience of receiving updates on supervised bail, and mixed views on the utility of these or the need for improved communication with bail workers, though some felt it was important for potential bail reviews. This suggests that work could be done to raise awareness amongst PFs about the potential of supervised bail and their role in the smooth running of a supervised bail scheme (see below), and also to increase their level of 'buy in' to the aims of supervised bail and its value.
- 2.8 Bail workers in the workshop reported that awareness of the availability of supervised bail was essential among the judiciary, defence agents, the police, and PFs. It was felt that personnel change, especially among police and PFs, meant that it was difficult to maintain awareness of supervised bail, and that it was difficult to maintain regular dialogue with PFs and the judiciary as social work did not have a high enough profile. To combat this it was suggested that regular presentations and meetings with police, PFs, judiciary, and defence agents were essential.
- 2.9 Possible reasons, then, for the decline in uptake of supervised bail and under-use of capacity include:
- lack of awareness about supervised bail amongst the judiciary and other professionals involved in the supervised bail screening process, such as defence agents and PFs;
  - lack of 'buy in' to supervised bail by the judiciary and other professionals involved in screening; and
  - the size of the pool of potential supervised bailees (those deemed as 'borderline' remand cases by the judiciary);
  - issues around the screening process for potential supervised bailees (see the next section).

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<sup>6</sup> Although members of the judiciary who do not 'buy in' to supervised bail may have been less likely to fill out the survey.

### 3 SCREENING

- 3.1 The process for identifying potential supervised bailees differs from area to area, and so there is no 'standard' process that can be mapped out. In some places there are bail officers based in the courts who screen people in the cells before bail hearings, based upon information about PF bail positions<sup>7</sup>. In other places screening for suitability for supervised bail is more ad hoc, and is requested by other court actors, most often defence agents, but sometimes members of the judiciary. Of the bailees interviewed, some had been screened in the cells, some had been referred for screening by their defence agent, and one said they had requested it themselves. Of the members of the judiciary who responded to the survey, most believed that having a bail worker screening for supervised bail in the court does or would encourage the use of supervised bail, but in individual cases they felt that it was usually defence agents who proposed its use.
- 3.2 In-court screening by bail officers is the most comprehensive approach, as it is not reliant on other court actors knowing about supervised bail, recognising that an accused may be suitable for it, and referring the accused for screening. However, in-court screening relies on a process being in place whereby bail officers are notified by police and PFs at an early stage as to the number of people in the cells who may be suitable for supervised bail, and identification of those for whom PFs plan to oppose bail.
- 3.3 Bail workers in the workshop suggested that obtaining this information at all or in a timely fashion was problematic in some places, especially in busy courts, which hindered bail workers' efforts to undertake effective and targeted screening. Among the respondents to the PF survey, there was mixed experience of providing bail positions to bail workers, and some respondents said that defence agents do or should do this rather than PFs.
- 3.4 It is clear from these findings that for the maximum number of potential bailees to be screened in courts where there are court-based bail workers, there needs to be clear processes in place for timely communication of information about those in the cells and PF bail positions to bail workers. It seems that, at least at the time of the research, such processes were not always in place or successfully implemented.
- 3.5 Where there cannot be bail workers based in the court, it is important that defence agents, PFs and members of the judiciary are aware of the availability of supervised bail; are knowledgeable about the kinds of cases and individuals it is suitable for; and willing to refer accused to bail workers for bail supervision screening where appropriate. Again this reinforces the need for good lines of communication between supervised bail workers and other justice professionals.

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<sup>7</sup> Which allows them to screen only those for whom bail is opposed.

## 4 TARGETING

- 4.1 We turn now to the targeting of supervised bail. There are two levels of targeting of supervised bail. Primarily, as mentioned above, its is aimed specifically at 'borderline' cases where the individual would have otherwise been remanded. There is also a secondary level of targeting where, according to National Guidance on supervised bail produced in 2008, supervision should be prioritised for certain 'vulnerable' groups, namely "those with mental health problems, women accused, single parents, drugs misusers and young people aged between 16 and 21" as well as others "who would suffer extreme difficulties if remanded to custody" (Scottish Government 2008: 2)<sup>8</sup>.
- 4.2 One of the aims of this research was to ascertain whether there was any 'net-widening' in regards to supervised bail; in other words, whether supervised bail was indeed only ever used as an alternative to remand, and not in cases where an accused would have otherwise been released on standard bail conditions. It was found that some net-widening does occur, but that it is likely that it is quite rare. So, for example, all but one of the ten bailees interviewed were very clear that they would have been remanded if they had not been given supervised bail<sup>9</sup>, and in the survey responses from members of the judiciary, only one respondent seemed to advocate its use in cases with vulnerable accused where remand was not being considered.
- 4.3 It is important to note that, for the bailees interviewed who did think that they would otherwise have been remanded, this had a big influence on how they evaluated supervised bail and its impact on their life. For some this was expressed by relief that they had not been in a prison cell awaiting trial, with all the disruption to their lives that this brings, and were instead out in community where they could maintain family relationships, employment and/or education. For others there was also a feeling that being released on supervised bail was a 'second chance' or a 'last chance', which they should not squander by breaching. This seems to be particularly useful with those who had previously breached regular bail. Some bailees who were interviewed talked about having previously breached regular bail, or an electronic tag, but then stated with some pride that they had never breached supervised bail, or missed a single meeting.

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that since the research took place the wording of the guidance has changed from: *"Whilst priority should be given to those with mental health problems, women accused, single parents, drugs misusers and young people aged between 16 and 21, other accused e.g. individuals who would suffer extreme difficulties if remanded to custody, outwith these groups should, where capacity exists, also be targeted."*

to:

*"Consideration should be given to any individual who might experience extreme difficulties if remanded to custody, for example those with mental health problems, single parents, drug misusers or young people aged between 16 and 21."*

This change was made in order to highlight the fact that any individual can be considered for bail supervision rather than prescribing specific target groups.

<sup>9</sup> The remaining bailee did not know what would have happened otherwise, so without speaking to the Sheriff in question we do not know if this was indeed a case of net-widening.

- 4.4 On the other hand, one bailee who was interviewed was not sure what would have happened if she had not been on supervised bail because she had no basis for comparison. She described supervised bail as embarrassing, and went elsewhere for psychological support. For this bailee, supervised bail was simply one aspect of a larger experience with the criminal justice system which she felt was disproportionate and which she found deeply distressing. Whether this was a case of net-widening or a case where the remand alternative was not made clear, it shows that supervised bail may not be as effective without the comparison to prison. This is particularly likely to be the case for those with no previous experience with the justice system, who may then be more likely to see it as punitive and stigmatising, than as a source of support.
- 4.5 On the secondary level of targeting - of vulnerable groups - comparison of supervised bail data with remand and 'persons proceeded against' statistics seem to show that targeting of bail supervision at females and young people was being borne out in practice, with a larger proportion of supervised bailees being young or female, than with those who had been remanded, or the wider population of those with a charge against them<sup>10</sup>. Members of the judiciary responding to the survey unanimously agreed that supervised bail should be targeted at young people, and most were supportive of it being targeted at single parents and carers, and those with mental health problems. Respondents were equally split over whether it should be specifically targeted at women, most felt it should not be considered for drug misusers, and the majority felt that it should not be limited to these groups, rather it should depend on the individual circumstances of the case.
- 4.6 It is clear, then, that it is crucial that supervised bail is used as an alternative to remand and is understood to be so by supervised bailees. Caution should be used when considering its use with first time accused. Supervised bail appears to be targeted at some of the 'vulnerable groups' identified by the guidance, such as young people and carers, but it is also clear that members of the judiciary look more to the circumstances of the case than to whether a potential bailee belongs to any particular demographic group. And so, this 'secondary' level of targeting is perhaps less useful, especially in the light of low uptake of supervised bail, as it would only be in the context of high demand for the service where particular groups within the population of 'borderline cases' could usefully be prioritised. This is one of the reasons why the wording of the guidance has since been changed (see footnote 7 on page 8).

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<sup>10</sup> We cannot tell how far this is due to targeting, and how far it is the case that 'borderline' remand cases more often involve young people and/or females.

## 5 MEETING STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

- 5.1 There is some flexibility as to the frequency, duration, and location of supervised bail meetings. It was found in the interviews with bailees that most began by meeting their bail workers two to three times a week, usually at the bail worker's offices, with some holding one of these meetings in the bailee's home. For some bailees this was seen as non-negotiable, and this frequency of meetings was maintained throughout their bail order.
- 5.2 However, some bailees described a change to the frequency or location of their meetings, such as a reduction to two or one meetings a week, or a movement of location to the bailee's home, or even a shift to having meetings over the phone. There were two possible reasons for this change. For some, it was due to change in their own availability, for example, if they had started a new job. Clearly, this flexibility ensured that supervised bail did not restrict bailee's opportunities to develop non-criminal identities through employment or education<sup>11</sup>.
- 5.3 Meeting frequency and location was also changed for some bailees interviewed as a reward for good attendance and behaviour. These bailees talked with a real sense of pride at achieving such a reward, and this seemed in turn to encourage compliance with the order through a positive focus on achievements rather than a preoccupation with the crime they were accused of.
- 5.4 The length of these meetings ranged between bailees from 5 minutes to up to and over an hour, and some reported that their meetings lasted a set amount of time, for example 15 minutes. In this time bailees said that they talked to their bail worker about their behaviour, their lives and their problems, and some described taking surveys for their bail worker. Some said they received help and support from their bail worker, while others said they did not need or want to talk or receive any help. Some were sign-posted on to other services such as bereavement counselling or employment support services.
- 5.5 The length of meetings seemed to vary in part due to the level of engagement of the bailee: those with the shortest meetings tended to be those who said they did not need to talk. There were also other factors, such as how busy the bail worker seemed to be or the bailee was, and one bailee said that the meetings tended to be short because they always coincided with their children coming home from school.

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<sup>11</sup> See Farrall (2005) on the development of non-criminal identity through employment.

## 6 BREACH AND OUTCOMES

### *Breach*

- 6.1 Approaches to breach varied across schemes when information was requested in 2009. For example in one scheme breach proceedings began if bailees were 15 to 20 minutes late for appointments; whereas in others two warning letters were given for non-attendance before breach proceedings were begun. Overall, in the areas who supplied breach data, nearly three quarters of bail supervision orders were completed successfully, compared to around a quarter ending because of breach or the bailee being remanded<sup>12</sup>. The remaining ended because the order was revoked for a non-specified reason, or because the bailee had died.
- 6.2 There was no comparable population to contrast this breach rate with, but it was felt by bail workers in the workshop that breach was not a major issue with supervised bail. Furthermore, judicial survey respondents who answered the question on breach, 9 said breach rates were low, 5 said breach rates were average, and 4 said breach rates were high. Those respondents who said that supervised bail breach rates were low were most likely to say that perceived breach rates influenced their use of supervised bail.
- 6.3 As reported above, some bailees said that they had previously breached regular bail, but had fully complied with supervised bail, which suggests that supervised bail can encourage compliance for individuals. However, some bailees interviewed said that they had breached their supervised bail order, which, like the numeric data described above, shows that supervised bail can reduce breach, but it cannot eradicate it in every case.

### *Outcomes*

- 6.4 Across the schemes that recorded the outcomes of cases where there was a supervised bail order, around a fifth had resulted in custodial sentences, and around two fifths had resulted in community sentences. The remaining had resulted in a fine, admonishment, deferred sentence, or had resulted in no disposal, for example where accused were found not guilty or there were no further proceedings.
- 6.5 Custodial sentences were found to be less common when bail supervision was successfully completed than when it was terminated, suggesting that successfully completing bail supervision may encourage the application of community sentences over custodial ones. This was reflected in the judicial survey, in which only one respondent said that successful completion of supervised bail does not encourage the use of community sentences over prison sentences. It was also reflected in some bailee interviews where

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<sup>12</sup> There may be overlap between the categories 'breached' and 'remanded', because bailees may have been both breached and remanded for an offence allegedly committed while on bail. However, some may have been breached without being remanded, and some may have been remanded for offences allegedly committed before a bail order was imposed.

bailees talked about the positive report written about them by their bail worker for the judiciary.



## 7 IMPACT ON BAILEES

- 7.1 For the bailees interviewed, four things emerged as leading to a positive impact of supervised bail:

### *Being out in the community rather than in prison*

- 7.2 As outlined above, it was of central significance to bailees that supervised bail was an alternative to remand. It meant on the one hand that they were not in prison, which would be an unpleasant and in some cases a potentially criminogenic experience, and on the other that they were out in the community, able to maintain family relationships and pursue non-criminal identities as family members, employees, students and so on.

### *A positive relationship with the supervisor*

- 7.3 Bailees talked about their bail workers being someone to talk to, someone who managed to get the bailee to talk in a way they had not before, and about things they had not felt able to talk to anyone else about. Bailees explained that this was because they felt bail workers were truthful, 'had some skills' at breaking down barriers, were understanding, and interested, and talk was confidential. It was also significant that bail workers were felt to be like 'a normal person' rather than like a justice professional (the most common comparison was to a police officer) – someone who they could 'have a laugh' with as well as open up to.

### *Flexibility*

- 7.4 As mentioned above, flexibility around timing and frequency of meetings was useful to some bailees, as was flexibility around types of support provided, with bailees variously signposted to different kinds of services based on their needs, such as employability support, addiction services or bereavement counselling.

### *Positive feedback*

- 7.5 Direct praise, rewards for attendance in the forms of reduced contact, and positive feedback on completion of a supervised bail order all seemed to make a big impression on bailees, giving them a real sense of pride in themselves and their compliance with supervised bail, helping them to build or maintain identities as good citizens, rather than as criminals.
- 7.6 On the other hand, supervised bail did not appear to have a positive impact on bailee's lives and outlook when it was not seen as an alternative to remand, when meeting times were disruptive to their wider lives and meetings were short or unproductive, or when bailees did not feel they could relate to or talk to supervisors.

- 7.7 All interviewees except one<sup>13</sup> talked about a positive change in their behaviour over time. Common themes in describing this change were:
- A desire to avoid trouble or jail
  - Learning to avoid conflict situations
  - Stopping drinking or taking drugs
  - Growing out of bad behaviour (too old for jail)<sup>14</sup>
  - Having sustained good behaviour for some time
- 7.8 Some bailees talked about this behaviour change separately from their supervised bail, while others talked about how the relationship with their supervisor had enabled them to behave better because they:
- Regularly reminded them to behave
  - Were clear about consequences of bad behaviour
  - Provided support, both practical and psychological
  - Gave them something to do out of the house and off the streets
- 7.9 Some bailees believed that supervised bail had helped them to change their behaviour long term, while some felt that it only helped while they were on supervised bail, and some felt that their behaviour had not needed improving by supervised bail. One felt that supervised bail could not have impacted their behaviour because their life was too chaotic at that time.
- 7.10 Bailees also talked about supervised bail being good for family relationships, because they were not in jail so could still spend time with their family (children were mentioned most often here), but also because the support given by bail workers directly improved relationships, or the change in behaviour brought about by supervised bail was good for family as well as the bailee themselves.
- 7.11 On the other hand, two bailees described breaking up with their girlfriends because of the curfew<sup>15</sup>. Another talked about not being able to visit his family because of a curfew, and having to move house because of a bail condition. This chimes with a recent evidence review which concluded that curfews can place stress on family relationships (Armstrong et al 2011). This contrast with bailee's positive accounts of supervised bail's impact on family relationships.
- 7.12 When asked what was good about supervised bail, bailees talked about it being better than jail and about having someone there for them, who they could talk to honestly and in confidence. Few could think of anything bad about supervised bail, though one said that the meeting rooms could be nicer.

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<sup>13</sup> This was the bailee for whom the charges for which they had supervised bail were seen as a 'one off'.

<sup>14</sup> This is also a recurrent theme in desistance literature, where it has been shown that many 'criminal careers' come to an end as people age, due to increased maturity, or the influence of life events such as finding a partner or getting a job.

<sup>15</sup> For one of these bailees supervised bail was also partly responsible because some meetings took place at their girlfriend's parents' house, which caused tension.

- 7.13 The one exception was the bailee described above who had not had contact with the justice system before, who did not see it as an alternative to remand, did not relate well to her bail worker because the meetings were scheduled at an inconvenient time and did not feel her behaviour needed changed. This bailee saw supervised bail as simply one aspect of the larger traumatising experience of going through the justice system. Again, this shows the importance of careful targeting at borderline cases, and suggests that careful thought should be put into the use of supervised bail for first time accused.
- 7.14 The impact of supervised bail on the lives and behaviour of bailees therefore varied across the sample, from being inconvenient and embarrassing, to having a profoundly positive effect on behaviour and life ambitions, with almost all bailees reporting positive effects on their lives and behaviour. This varied according to the relevance of the four factors outlined at the start of this section, as well as depending on the attitude and circumstances of the bailee. It is clear, however, that supervised bail has the potential to support some bailees to make lasting positive change to their lives.

## 8 COSTS AND SAVINGS

8.1 This section will outline a cost benefit analysis of supervised bail as an alternative to remand, making use of the data collected specifically for this evaluation, including data on supervised bail expenditure, as well as other relevant publicly available statistics.

### *Average Expenditure Per Case*

8.2 Table 2 shows average expenditure per case using the financial data received from the operators. Seven of the twelve active schemes were able to provide financial details related specifically to bail supervision, while three schemes provided details of the more general criminal justice budget in which bail supervision was located, and Orkney Islands Council and Stirling Council were unable to provide either such information and are excluded from the analysis. All costs have been adjusted into constant 2009 prices using the most recent GDP Deflators.

8.3 These expenditure estimates may therefore be overstating the true expenditure on bail supervision as they include the 3 schemes with non-identifiable expenditure, but to what extent we are unsure.

**Table 2 – Total Expenditure of Active Schemes**

Year	Allocated Budget (2009£)	Actual Expenditure (2009£)	Number of Cases	Average Expenditure per case (2009£)
2006-07	661,029	794,022	599	1,326
2007-08	678,397	765,562	575	1,331
2008-09	799,117	832,780	520	1,602
<b>2006-09</b>	<b>2,138,543</b>	<b>2,392,364</b>	<b>1,694</b>	<b>1,412</b>

8.4 Over the three years total expenditure in real terms amounted to nearly £2.4 million, while nearly 1,700 bail supervision cases were dealt with. This resulted in an average expenditure per case of £1,412 across all active schemes over the three years. There were some substantial differences in the average expenditure per case across the different schemes, although these figures are not reported here.

**Table 3 – Average Costs per Day**

Scheme	Average Expenditure per Case (2009£)	Average Length (Days)	Average Expenditure per Case per Day (2009£)
<b>Scotland*</b>	<b>1,412</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>25</b>

\* 10 active schemes which provided financial details

8.5 Table 3 calculates the average cost per case per day for Scotland overall by dividing the average expenditure per case over the three years by the average length of cases in the different schemes. The average across Scotland is £25 per case per day.

### *Costs of Supervised Bail compared to Remand Costs*

8.6 We can estimate the costs and savings associated with the programme by comparing the total expenditure on bail supervision with the reduction in prison numbers owing to the schemes.

8.7 This is done using two methods to give an upper and lower range:

- First, by assuming that the average time each supervised bailee would have spent on remand would have been equal to the average length of a supervised bail case (Upper Limit Analysis),
- Second, by assuming the length of time they would have spent on remand is equal to the average length spent on remand in general for all prisoners (Lower Limit Analysis). In reality the length spent on remand would lie somewhere in between.

8.8 It was estimated that over the past three years between 157 and 41 remand prison places could have been saved at any one time assuming upper and lower limit conditions respectively, equating to between 471 and 123 places over the course of three years.

8.9 When an accused spends time on remand, and then is given a custodial sentence, the time spent on remand counts as part of the custodial sentence. This is not the case for time spent on supervised bail. Therefore there will be no savings in prison costs for those individuals on supervised bail who went on to receive a custodial sentence<sup>16</sup>. This applies in 22% of the supervised bail cases examined here, and the remand places saved are reduced by this amount in our analysis to reflect this. This results in a net saving of between 366 and 97 remand places over the three years.

8.10 Combining the remand prison places avoided with the average cost per prison place over the three years (adjusted for inflation) we can estimate the total costs which would have been incurred had the accused been on remand rather than bail, and hence the savings associated with bail supervision schemes.

**Table 4 – Net Benefits**

Period (2006-09)	Remand Days Saved	Average Cost per Remand Place (2009£)	Number of Annual Equivalent Remand Places Prevented	Saving on Remand Expenditure (2009£)	Expenditure on Supervised Bail (2009£)	Net Benefit (2009£)	Benefits to Costs Ratio
Upper limit	56	43,191	469.5	20,278,116	2,392,364	17,885,752	8.5
Lower limit	37		124	5,364,322	2,391,928	2,972,394	2.2

<sup>16</sup> Though we have seen above that successful completion of supervised bail discourages the use of custodial sentences.

8.11 For the past 3 years the reduction in remand places would result in a reduction of between £4 million and £16 million to prison costs. As total expenditure on supervised bail over the same period is around £2.4 million, this results in a net benefit of between £2 million and £13 million.

### *Sensitivity Analysis*

8.12 Given the costs and benefits calculated above are estimates based on certain assumptions, it is useful to examine to what extent the variables would have to vary to result in there no longer being a net-benefit (i.e. the cost of bail supervision being equal to the savings from reduced prison numbers). Table 5 shows the results of this exercise for two main variables and across both types of analysis, assuming all else remains equal in each case.

**Table 5 – Sensitivity Analysis**

Variable	Upper limit : Average SB case length			Lower limit: Average Remand length (excluding terminated)		
	Hypothetical Value Resulting in Costs=Benefits	Estimated Value at Present	Difference Needed	Hypothetical Value Resulting in Costs=Benefits	Estimated Value at Present	Difference Needed
Average Expenditure Per Case	£12,667	£1,412	£11,255 (+797%)	£3,167	£1,412	£1,755 (+124%)
Number of Remand Places Saved	18.5	156.5	138 (-88%)	18.5	41.4	22.9 (-55%)

8.13 We can see that for both variables there would have to be substantial shifts in their values to alter the fundamental outcome that supervised bail results in net-benefits, so long as all assumptions hold.

### *Conclusion*

8.14 Net benefits of supervised bail over the last 3 years are likely to lie somewhere in the range of £2 million to £13 million, with a benefit to cost ratio of between 1.7 and 6.6.

8.15 Based on our assumptions, the average cost of a supervised bail case would have to rise by between 75% and 560% for supervised bail to no longer be cost effective.

## 9 ONGOING ISSUES

9.1 We have seen, then, that supervised bail can have a notable impact on the behaviour and wider lives of bailees, as long as it is targeted effectively, and that it represents value for money as compared to remand. We have also seen, however, that the uptake of supervised bail has been reducing over recent years, particularly in the Glasgow and Fife and Forth Valley criminal justice areas. There are three potential reasons for this decline – process related issues, issues around awareness and ‘buy in’ and the size of the potential bailee population. We will now go through these in turn and consider what could be done to address these issues.

### *Process related issues*

9.2 For supervised bail to be offered in all ‘borderline’ cases, it is essential that supervised bail is available in all areas all of the time, and that processes for screening for supervised bail are in place and consistently adhered to.

9.3 When the case level data outlined above was obtained from LAs, not every area had a supervised bail scheme in place, meaning that access to supervised bail was inconsistent across the country.

9.4 Additionally, bail workers in the workshop and members of the judiciary surveyed highlighted issues with the screening process. Some members of the judiciary commented on the infrequency of supervised bail being proposed, and bail workers felt that communication about supervised bail between themselves and the relevant court actors (Procurators Fiscal, defence agents, police, the judiciary) was not sufficiently built in to the process. This was both in terms of making court actors aware of supervised bail in the first place, and also effective and timely communication to allow screening for supervised bail to take place before an accused appeared in court at a bail hearing. It was also felt that it was important to let bail workers know when a bail order had ended, particularly when a court case was not going ahead, and that this was not always happening.

9.5 Bail workers suggested that the following should be in place to allow effective supervised bail provision:

- A process whereby bail workers are informed as early as possible of PF’s bail positions
- Regular meetings with local criminal justice agencies to monitor processes
- Availability of bail workers and suitable facilities for screening of potential bailees
- A national (IT) system to notify all partners where a supervised bail scheme is in place, and to notify social work of case events e.g. case dropped or bailee remanded.

### *Awareness and buy in*

9.6 As well as smooth processes, it is vital that those involved in any way with supervised bail are both aware of the service, and of its benefits and

appropriate application. This research has found that not all members of the judiciary, or Procurators Fiscal, are aware of supervised bail in their area, and not all Procurators Fiscal are convinced of its effectiveness.

- 9.7 The suggestions outlined above for improving processes all involve an aspect of awareness raising, and this demonstrates how such communication could be built in to the day to day work of bail workers. There could also be other activities aimed solely at awareness raising, such as the development of a supervised bail induction pack for new and visiting sheriffs, Procurators Fiscal, and defence agents, or wider circulation of feedback on the positive outcomes of supervised bail orders, possibly using the national IT system suggested by bail workers.
- 9.8 The findings of this evaluation could be used to provide content for such awareness raising, in that they highlight the potential positive impact of supervised bail, and reinforce the importance of targeting at those who would have otherwise been put on remand.

#### *Population size*

- 9.9 It is important to remember that it is difficult if not impossible to estimate the number of cases going through Scottish courts for which supervised bail could be suitable, because it is a sum of many factors which lead to a case being deemed 'borderline' by a member of the judiciary. It is possible that the decline in supervised bail is due to a decline in such borderline cases, perhaps linked to the overall decline in the number of cases going through the courts overall.
- 9.10 However, the presence of issues around process, awareness and buy in outlined above suggests that there is some scope to increase the uptake of supervised bail by working to increase awareness and buy in amongst relevant justice professionals, as well as making sure that appropriate processes are in place to screen for supervised bail in individual courts.



## 10 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 We have seen that supervised bail was, at the time of the research, not available in every part of Scotland, and that the number of supervised bail orders has been declining nationwide in recent years. Nonetheless, we have also seen that supervised bail is a service which, by supporting people to comply with bail conditions, can keep people out of prison prior to their trial. This not only represents good value for money in terms of the relative costs of supervised bail and remand, but also has a positive impact on some bailee's short and long term behaviour, aspirations and family relationships, and where bail supervision is completed successfully, it can also encourage the use of community sentences rather than prison sentences. It thus potentially reduces both the remand prison population, and the sentenced prison population.
- 10.2 Clearly, supervised bail does not eradicate breach of bail, and we have seen that around a quarter of bail supervision orders are not completed successfully, for various reasons. However, we have also heard from people who had previously breached regular bail, but who had gone on to comply fully with supervised bail, and who expressed a strong sense of personal pride about this fact. So while supervised bail cannot guarantee that accused will not breach their conditions, it is a useful tool for encouraging and supporting compliance in a way not possible with standard bail conditions. And beyond its primary aim of reducing use of remand, and supporting compliance, supervised bail can in some cases assist bailees with their longer term process of desistance from offending behaviour.
- 10.3 This can only happen in the specific kind of 'borderline' cases for which supervised bail is appropriate, where there are good processes in place for the screening of potential bailees, and where there is good local awareness of and buy in to supervised bail. If there is to be optimal use of supervised bail in Scotland, it needs to be ensured that these three conditions are met throughout the country.

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Social Research series  
ISSN 2045-6964  
ISBN 978-1-78045-745-1  
web only publication  
[www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch)

APS Group Scotland  
DPPAS12780 (03/12)

