# Scottish prisons criticised for allowing inmates access to violent and X-rated films despite English ban



Amid mounting concerns over violence within Scotland's prisons, reports have surfaced revealing that inmates at HMP Barlinnie, one of the country's most notorious jails, have unrestricted access to a wide range of X-rated films and TV programmes featuring graphic violence, sexual content, and drug use. This practice contrasts sharply with policies instituted in English jails, which banned such content nearly a decade ago. According to details obtained through freedom of information requests, prisoners can choose from a staggering library of over 4,100 DVDs, including iconic yet disturbing films like "Silence of the Lambs," "Saw," and TV shows like "Dexter," which centres around the life of a vigilante serial killer.

The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) maintains that access to these films is a privilege that can be restricted by prison governors. However, the availability of such violent material has raised significant alarm among prison officials and politicians alike. The Prison Officer’s Association has urged the SPS to reassess the situation, citing an 'epidemic' of violence that has seen over 250 assaults on prison staff each year for the past decade. A representative expressed concern, stating that “Given all the factors such as overcrowding, drug use, bullying, and organised crime gang activities inside our prisons, the last thing we need is anything else adding to the tension.”

Furthermore, critics like the Scottish Conservatives have amplified their calls for immediate action. Justice spokesman Liam Kerr highlighted that regular citizens would be 'appalled' knowing that inmates convicted of violent crimes are allowed access to unsettling content that could incite more violence or impede rehabilitation. He pointed out that the practices in England and Wales, which have successfully prohibited the screening of similar materials, should be mirrored in Scotland. Kerr further stated that ongoing substance abuse recovery efforts would be undermined by such unrestricted access.

The issue is not isolated to Barlinnie. Inmates across the Scottish prison system are privy to a similar range of disturbing films and computer games, raising questions about the appropriateness of such content in a rehabilitative environment. Maximum-security prisons like HMP Shotts also feature extensive DVD libraries that include highly inappropriate titles such as "Blood Out" and "The Experiment." Critics have pointed out that allowing inmates to engage with material that glorifies violence and criminal behaviour could undermine any efforts towards successful reintegration into society.

In response to mounting external pressure, the SPS reaffirmed its commitment to governance of the programme, stating that the material available is funded through a common good fund meant for inmates. However, the ongoing accessibility of titles that promote violence and entrenched stereotypes has led to calls for a serious review of the policies in place. The stark difference in approaches between Scottish and English prisons has indeed become a focal point for debate about justice, rehabilitation, and the responsibilities of correctional facilities towards both inmates and the broader community.

As the discourse continues, the implications of such media consumption within prisons remain a complex and contentious issue, demanding a careful examination of the balance between rehabilitation and the potential reinforcement of negative behaviours.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-prisons-offering-library-of-violent-films-1557579)
* Paragraph 2 – [[3]](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/violent-inmates-maximum-security-scots-5084853), [[4]](https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/update/2013-11-01/prisoners-banned-from-watching-18-rated-films/), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/panewsfeeds/films-ban-amid-jail-perks-clampdown-8595659.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[7]](https://prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk/publications/report-hmp-barlinnie-follow-inspection-8-12-july-2013)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14768035/Criminals-allowed-watch-X-rated-violent-films-comfort-jail-cells.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/scottish-prisons-offering-library-of-violent-films-1557579> - Inmates at Scottish prisons have access to a vast library of violent films and computer games. Documents reveal that prisoners, including murderers and rapists, can choose from over 4,100 DVDs and 470 computer games across the Scottish prison system. Titles include violent horror movies and gang crime films. The Scottish Prison Service stated that these DVDs and games are funded by a common good fund and that access is restricted by governors. Critics have raised concerns about the appropriateness of such content for prisoners.
3. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/violent-inmates-maximum-security-scots-5084853> - Inmates at HMP Shotts, a maximum-security prison in Scotland, have access to a DVD library of over 370 films, including violent 18-rated movies. The most requested film is the 2010 horror film 'Black Death'. Other popular titles include 'Blood Out', 'The Experiment', 'Mercenaries', and 'Borstal Boy'. The prison holds many of Scotland’s most dangerous criminals, including murderers and gangland hitmen. Figures obtained under a freedom of information request show that prisoners in jails across Scotland can choose from more than 4,000 DVDs to watch in their cells.
4. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scottish-prison-inmates-have-access-to-violent-films-1557515> - Documents reveal that inmates at Scottish prisons have access to a massive library of violent horror movies and shoot-em-up computer games. Criminals, including murderers and rapists, can choose from more than 4,100 DVDs and 470 computer games across the Scottish prison system. Titles include controversial games such as 'Grand Theft Auto IV' and brutally violent gang crime movies such as 'Snatch'. The Scottish Prison Service stated that these DVDs and games are funded by a common good fund and that access is restricted by governors.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/update/2013-11-01/prisoners-banned-from-watching-18-rated-films/> - Prisoners in England and Wales have been banned from watching violent and sexually explicit films as part of a clampdown on perks behind bars. Certificate 18-rated movies, including 'Saw', 'Hostel', and 'Reservoir Dogs', will no longer be screened at jails under changes to the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme. The changes also include the removal of subscription channels from private prisons, and inmates will have to earn the right to wear their own clothes.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/panewsfeeds/films-ban-amid-jail-perks-clampdown-8595659.html> - Prisoners in England and Wales are to be banned from watching violent and sexually explicit films as part of a clampdown on perks behind bars. Certificate 18-rated movies, including 'Saw', 'Hostel', and 'Reservoir Dogs', will no longer be screened at jails under changes to the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme. The changes also include the removal of subscription channels from private prisons, and inmates will have to earn the right to wear their own clothes.
7. <https://prisonsinspectoratescotland.gov.uk/publications/report-hmp-barlinnie-follow-inspection-8-12-july-2013> - The report provides an overview of the follow-up inspection of HMP Barlinnie conducted from 8-12 July 2013. It highlights areas of good practice, including the production of a booklet showing pictures of canteen items in 10 different languages. The report also notes the availability of information DVDs in different languages, along with a TV and DVD player for prisoners to use in their cells in the First Night in Custody Centre. The operation of the First Night in Custody Centre is also highlighted as an area of good practice.