



## Travel, Transport, and Visiting Report

Maya Cohen

December 2019

# Travel, Transport, and Visiting Report

Maya Cohen

on behalf of Families Outside

July 2019

## Table of Contents

<b>Families Outside</b>	3
<b>Introduction</b>	4
<b>Scope</b>	5
<b>Main Objectives</b>	5
<b>Background</b>	6
National Strategy for the Management of Offenders (2006)	6
<i>Do Not Pass Go: Travel Links to     Scottish Prisons</i> (2007)	7
Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (2015)	9
National Transport Strategy (2016)	10
<i>Justice in Scotland: Vision and     Priorities</i> (2017)	11
Prisoners Survey (2017)	13
Transport (Scotland) Bill (2018)	14
Visitors Survey (2018)	15
<b>Travel and Transport Services</b>	17
AVPS	17
Sacro Travel Service	19
International services: Relais Enfants Parents Romands	22
International services: Treffpunkt Nuremberg	22
International services: Bedford Row Family Project	23
<b>Alternative Visiting Methods</b>	24
Phone visiting	24
Video visiting	25
HMP Parc Skype Visiting	27
Northern Ireland Prison Service	29
Apex Scotland Video Visits	30
<b>Key Findings</b>	32
<b>Strengths and Limitations</b>	33
<b>Recommendations</b>	34
<b>Conclusion</b>	36
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	38
<b>References</b>	39

## Families Outside: history and goals

Families Outside is the only national charity in Scotland that works solely on behalf of families affected by imprisonment. It is an essential social service which provides key support within the intersection of children and families and criminal justice work, with the aim of supporting positive outcomes for people who experience the imprisonment of a family member.

We provide a free, confidential Helpline for families seeking emotional support and impartial information surrounding the experience of imprisonment. We also manage a Regional Family Support team, which provides 1-to-1 support for family members for issues such as housing, finance, and emotional wellbeing.

We work with professionals in the legal system and prison services to advocate for the needs of people in prison and their families. We provide resources and training to prison staff, social workers, teachers, and other key professionals, which increase the awareness of the challenges families face and ensure they receive the support they need.

We work in collaboration with local authorities as well as with the Scottish Government and use the findings from our work with families affected by imprisonment to influence and develop policy surrounding criminal justice, social care, and the protection of children and families. Our vision is for families affected by imprisonment to be treated with justice and fairness so they can live lives free from stigma and disadvantage.

For more information about our work, visit our website: [www.familiesoutside.org.uk](http://www.familiesoutside.org.uk) or contact us:

Families Outside

13 Great King Street

Edinburgh,

EH3 6QW

T: 0131 557 9800

Helpline: 0800 254 0088

## Introduction

Imprisonment deeply affects families. The separation of people with convictions from their families, particularly their children, is a significant loss for both parties. This loss can manifest itself in a variety of forms, such as distress, shame, and loss of income or housing. Children are particularly affected by the experience of a parent being imprisoned. In Scotland, imprisonment affects an estimated 20-27,000 children per year, meaning that more children experience a parent's imprisonment than a divorce (Families Outside 2018). Parental imprisonment is one of the ten Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) known to increase the risk of poor longer-term outcomes (Mersky, Topitzes, and Reynolds 2013). Depending how the child is able to cope with this experience, it can hinder cognitive and emotional development and have life-long consequences (Scottish Government 2017).

For these reasons, the importance of consistent and accessible visiting to the development of parent-child relationships and the maintenance of the family unit cannot be overstated. However, a variety of obstacles often face family members and people in prison which hinder the effectiveness of visits.

This report focuses on the significant challenges facing family members of people in prison surrounding travel, transport, and the experience of visiting. First, it examines key policies that underlie Scotland's position on public transport, community planning, and the rights and experiences of people in prison and their families surrounding visits. It then discusses various services and methods of visiting currently in place in Scotland, and internationally. Finally, it makes recommendations to policy-makers and professionals within the Scottish Prison Service of the best ways to combat the challenges of prison visiting

Overall, this report highlights the role of a strong public transport system, and illuminates the importance of third sector organisations in the provision of travel and transport. Moreover, it argues for the development of alternative visiting methods, such as phone and video calls. The improvement of visiting methods and rights, the incorporation of accessibility needs into community planning and infrastructure, and the protection of children and families of people in prison are cornerstones of a more productive and equal society.

## Scope of Report

This report was written over a six-week period, between May and July of 2019. It makes use of a variety of secondary findings and primary research. In particular, this report draws on policies in areas such as Transport, Infrastructure, Community Planning, and Criminal Justice. Other sources include Prisoners and Visitors Surveys published by the Scottish Prison Service, informational leaflets published by public and third sector services surrounding travel and transport programmes for families, and articles on various alternative methods of visiting. In terms of primary sources, the researcher contacted representatives from various prisons around the UK and discussed travel and transportation needs and challenges, and interviewed workers from third sector organisations about the travel services they provide.

Although the timescale of the report somewhat limits the scope of its context and findings, it has sought to incorporate a variety of sources from diverse backgrounds. All of the research cited within this report has been chosen to raise awareness of the familial experience of imprisonment, to foster a comprehensive understanding of the current challenges and need surrounding transport and visiting, and to make recommendations for professionals and policy-makers.

## Main Objectives

The objectives of this report are:

- ❖ To provide an improved understanding of provision and demand for travel support to prison visits in Scotland
- ❖ To highlight the role of regular family contact in improving well-being for all parties involved
- ❖ To assert the need for improvements to community planning and transportation, with an emphasis on reduction of socio-economic inequality
- ❖ To illuminate the available alternatives to in-person visiting
- ❖ To influence professionals in the field of criminal justice and policy-makers to improve the links between Scotland's transport and criminal justice policies with an emphasis on accessibility for people in prison and their families

## Background

This section will elaborate, in a chronological manner, on various policies, publications, and documents that have had a significant role in shaping the challenges and needs surrounding transportation to prisons and visits, as well as the wider political contexts of community planning and criminal justice policies.

### ***National Strategy for the Management of Offenders***

In 2006, the (then) Scottish Executive published the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders. This policy, which has since been replaced by subsequent legislation, set out various recommendations and outcomes for the development of communities, the treatment of people with convictions, and the overall improvement of the Criminal Justice system. Within each of these areas, the Executive noted the role of family involvement in the reduction of crime and protection of the rights of people in prison:

- ❖ “Timely information, and where appropriate, involvement for the families of offenders” (Outcomes for Communities)
- ❖ “Improvements in the attitudes or behaviour which lead to offending and greater acceptance of responsibility in managing their own behaviour and understanding of the impact of their offending on victims and on their own families” (Outcomes for Offenders)
- ❖ “Processes and systems which facilitate the sharing of information [with families and the public]” (Outcomes in the System)

The National Strategy for the Management of Offenders therefore attempted to set a precedent for the inclusion and involvement of families in the processes of criminal justice. However, in many ways, it neglected the obstacles and challenges which prevent these visits from occurring. First, the report cites the importance of Housing, Health, Benefits, Education, and Employment in the reduction and prevention of crime, as well as the involvement of Children and Families services. However, it neglects the critical role of Transport and Community Planning.

The National Strategy for the Management of Offenders was an important foundation for the improvement of visiting options. It provided unique roles for various social services in developing safer communities and supporting people in prison. However, it failed to make an important connection surrounding family contact and rehabilitation: the role of a strong transportation network which aims to improve access to more rural areas and mitigate socio-economic inequality. Later, this report discusses the Scottish Government's current strategies surrounding criminal justice and compare how policy goals and priorities have changed in the past decade.

### ***Do Not Pass Go: Travel Links to Scottish Prisons***

*Do Not Pass Go* was a research report written by Malcolm Higgenbotham in collaboration with Families Outside. It was published in 2007, with the goals of raising awareness of issues surrounding transportation and access to prison visits, and to influence policymakers to take action on this gap between demand and provision.

This report drew on various research findings and policies, and used case studies and examples of good practice to recommend policy and procedural changes. For the most part, *Do Not Pass Go* captured the relationship between poverty, disability, and age, with accessibility of transportation. At the time of publication, one-third of Scottish households did not have access to a car, yet many prisons were, and remain, virtually inaccessible without a car (Higgenbotham 2007).

In Higgenbotham's case study of HMP Glenochil, he witnessed first-hand the lack of accessibility for families of people in prison. HMP Glenochil is located a mile and a half outside the small town of Tullibody. The remote location of HMP Glenochil means that the use of trains and buses was not an option beyond the limits of Tullibody. For many visitors, the use of a car was too much of a financial strain, meaning that they were forced to walk over a mile from Tullibody on a dimly lit footpath beside a busy road. For elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and those travelling with children, this made the journey visit a loved one in prison virtually impossible (*ibid.*). As of July 2019, there is now a bus service which travels between Tullibody and Glenochil three times per day, but only from Monday



to Friday (Bus Times 2019). This is an important step towards improved accessibility for HMP Glenochil visitors, but there remains a significant need for more regular service that is compatible with prison visiting schedules, particularly for HMP Glenochil's weekend visits.

Although twelve years have passed since *Do Not Pass Go* was published, the recommendations that it makes remain highly relevant for Criminal Justice policy-makers. Some of Higgenbotham's recommendations are listed below:

- ❖ "Community Justice Authorities (now Community Planning Partnerships) to add transport issues and accessibility to prisons to their agenda... This should include partnership working and planning departments, from their member Local Authorities, prisons in the area and any other agencies who can assist" (page 29, sec 10.1)
- ❖ "The Scottish Executive to ensure that accessibility for prisons is added to any future national transport policy" (page 29, sec 10.1)
- ❖ "All prison visit staff should consider public transport timetables when drawing up visiting sessions and produce a leaflet giving details of all transport arrangements in place... These details should also be available in courts for the families of those receiving custodial sentences." (page 29, sec 10.2)

*Do Not Pass Go* is a highly influential piece of research. It compiles evidence from Transport and Criminal Justice policies, findings of Prisoners Surveys, and concrete case studies of prisons in Scotland and their visitors. These findings culminate in various articulate recommendations to policy-makers, local authorities, and professionals, to place prison accessibility as a priority for public transportation. These recommendations led to some significant progress over the past decade. However, as will be discussed, many of Higgenbotham's advice and suggestions have not been resolved. Therefore, *Do Not Pass Go* remains acutely relevant, and highly applicable to the current challenges of prison accessibility.

### ***Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (2015)***

The Community Empowerment Act aims to identify the unique and intersectional relationship between community planning and the prevention of inequality. This law is therefore highly significant in cultivating the relationships between transport and prison visits. The Community Empowerment Act emphasises the key role of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) in facilitating the relationship between public transport and the empowerment of disadvantaged groups.

CPPs are services which independently and collaboratively undertake community planning and delivery of services such as public transportation. Their goal is to represent the interests of the different communities in Scotland, and there are 30 total CPPs – one for each council area, with the three Ayrshire council areas merged into one CPP.

The Community Empowerment Act illuminates the potential for improved public transport and accessibility for family members of people in prison, and the role of CPPs in enacting these changes. Firstly, Part 2, Section 4 discusses the importance of community participation in the development and delivery of public services such as transportation. Below are some of the key sub-sections of Section 4 which relate to community participation:

- ❖ “(3) In carrying out community planning, the local authority and the persons listed in schedule 1 must—
  - (a) participate with each other, and
  - (b) participate with any community body... in such a way as to enable that body to participate in community planning to the extent mentioned in that paragraph.”
- ❖ “(6) Each community planning partnership must—
  - a) consider which community bodies are likely to be able to contribute to community planning having regard in particular to which of those bodies represent the interests of persons who experience inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage,
  - b) make all reasonable efforts to secure the participation of those community bodies in community planning, and

- c) to the extent (if any) that those community bodies wish to participate in community planning, take such steps as are reasonable to enable the community bodies to participate in community planning to that extent.”
- ❖ “9) In this section, “community bodies”, in relation to a community planning partnership, means bodies, whether or not formally constituted, established for purposes which consist of or include that of promoting or improving the interests of any communities (however described) resident or otherwise present in the area of the local authority for which the community planning partnership is carrying out community planning.”

The interests of various communities can therefore be articulated through their CPP, in order to enact change to the provision of public services. CPPs, in turn, have a responsibility to collaborate with community bodies which work with disadvantaged groups, and in doing so, prioritise the unique and under-represented needs of these groups. Such a model of community participation and planning leads to more equitable delivery of public services of transportation, and a platform upon which the families of people in prison can advocate for better treatment and accessibility to prison facilities.

### ***National Transport Strategy (2016)***

The most recent National Transport Strategy was written with the aim of reflecting on recent changes to Scotland’s economy and infrastructure and building upon the progress made since the National Transport Strategy from 2006, both in legal and practical terms.

The National Transport Strategy of 2006 identified various strategic outcomes and objectives to improve the quality of Scotland’s public transportation network. Many of these objectives aimed to articulate the role of transportation in preventing inequalities:

- ❖ “Promote economic growth by building, enhancing, managing and maintaining transport services, infrastructure and networks to maximise their efficiency” (page 1)
- ❖ “Promote social inclusion by connecting remote and disadvantaged communities and increasing the accessibility of the transport network” (page 1)

- ❖ “Improve integration by making journey planning and ticketing easier and working to ensure smooth connection between different forms of transport” (page 1)
- ❖ “Improve quality, accessibility and affordability, to give choice of public transport, better quality services and value for money, or alternatives to cars.” (page 2)

The subsequent National Transport Strategy (2016) highlighted many changes to the Scottish economy in the past decade. The financial crisis of 2008, which led to the implementation of various austerity measures and cuts to public spending, represented a significant obstacle in the abilities of the Scottish Government, local authorities, and CPPs to fulfil the aforementioned objectives (Scottish Government 2016).

The implementation of austerity has also led to greater inequality, and subsequently, greater need for public services in Scotland. The National Transport Strategy of 2016 argues that the framework of austerity provides more incentive for the delivery of sustainable economic growth, the provision of public transport, and the eventual reduction of socioeconomic inequality. This has two significant benefits that are relevant for people in prison and their families. First, it will in theory lead to long-term, sustainable economic growth. Second, this economic growth and improvement of services could potentially lead to a reduction of inequalities and a foundation of accessibilities for individuals of communities from all backgrounds, with all types of travel needs, including those visiting prisons (*ibid.*).

### ***Justice in Scotland: Visions and Priorities (2017)***

*Justice in Scotland* is the current Community Justice Strategy published by the Scottish Government. It is a notable elaboration of previous policies, and prioritises the experience of Adverse Childhood Experiences and family relationships in its approach to policy development. Whereas the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders (Scottish Executive 2006) provided a foundation for the development of family-related strategy and policy, *Justice in Scotland* elaborates on the effects of Community Justice policies on childhood development and overall wellbeing. It also asserts the importance of partnership working between the prison system and third sector organisations in providing for the needs

of people in prison. Finally, it supports community engagement and a rights-based approach to justice policy which prioritise the experiences of vulnerable family members (Scottish Government 2017). Some of the key findings are listed below:

- ❖ “The immediate effects of parental imprisonment can include feelings of shame, social stigma, loss of financial support, weakened ties to the parent, changes in family composition, poor school performance and increased risk of abuse or neglect. Long-term effects can range from the questioning of parental authority, negative perceptions of police and the legal system, and increased dependency to impaired ability to cope with future stress or trauma, disruption of development and intergenerational patterns of criminal behaviour.” (page 18)
- ❖ “We will continue to develop genuine partnership with the NHS, Integrated Joint Boards, COSLA, Community Planning Partners (CPPs), third and private sectors at national and local levels. This includes working towards common purpose and outcomes, coproducing policy and programmes, strategic commissioning and playing to partners’ strengths.” (page 31)
- ❖ “All justice leaders will lead by example. The organisations they lead respect diversity, apply rights-based approaches and are committed to putting people and communities at the heart of decision making and co-production of opportunities. This is increasingly evident in the work of our justice community and we will prioritise this in the coming years.” (page 31)

In many ways, the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders was the basis upon which *Justice in Scotland* was developed. It is a clear development from the foundation of family involvement in the criminal justice system that had been established in the previous decade. More importantly, it represents clear progress towards a person-centred justice system which includes families in the justice process and protect the rights people in prison and their loved ones.

### ***SPS Prisoners Survey (2017)***

The Scottish Prison Service conducts regular surveys on the population of its fifteen prisons, the most recent being in 2017. This survey had a variety of objectives. For people in prison, it allowed them to self-identify the needs and challenges they face. For staff, it aimed to apply these needs to service delivery and establish a model of best practice. Below are some of the findings of the Prisoners Survey:

- ❖ 89% of respondents were in regular contact with someone outside the prison.
- ❖ 84% of respondents responded positively on ability to arrange visits.
- ❖ 80% were content with the quality of the visit, and 72% were content with the length of visits.
- ❖ 72% were content with access to Family Contact Officers.
- ❖ The most common forms of contact for people in prison were telephone (71%), letter (62%), and visits (52%).
- ❖ 33% of respondents received weekly visits, 13% received fortnightly visits, and 13% received monthly visits.
- ❖ 62% of respondents had children. Of these, only 35% received visits from their children.
- ❖ 20% of respondents had received help with family issues in prison. Of these:
  - 43% received help from their personal officer
  - 50% received this assistance from their Family Contact Officer
  - 26% received assistance from a religious professionals (ie Priests, Ministers, Imams, etc.)
  - 16% received help from a prison social worker
- ❖ 47% of respondents reported that their visitors experienced problems when visiting them in prison. Of these, the most common difficulties were distance (70%), cost (55%), location of prison (41%), and lack of transport (38%)

These findings show that the challenges of prison visits are experienced by both families and people in prison, and therefore these challenges must be combatted and prevented through a multi-faceted approach. A majority of people in prison were in regular contact with

someone outside, but only half had regular face-to-face visits. For people in prison with children, very few were receiving visits from their children (Carnie *et al.* 2017).

Therefore, the visiting issues identified in these surveys should serve as a call to action for professionals in the justice system and social services, local transport authorities, policy-makers, and the Scottish Government. Through policy change, visiting can be made more accessible, family-friendly, and beneficial for all parties involved.

### ***Transport (Scotland) Bill 2018***

The Transport Bill (2018) is Scotland's most recent proposal surrounding the development of infrastructure and public transport. The Transport Bill contains a section on the implementation of community planning partnership within transport, as seen below:

- ❖ “3A (1) A local transport authority may, if they consider it appropriate to do so, make a bus services improvement partnership plan (a “partnership plan”) in relation to the whole or part of their area.

3A (2) A partnership plan is a plan that—

- (a) specifies the area and the period to which the plan relates,
- (b) sets out for the area—
  - (i) an analysis of the local services,
  - (ii) policies relating to the local services,
  - (iii) objectives to be met within the period as regards the quality and effectiveness of the local services provided,
- (c) describes how the partnership scheme (or schemes) to be made at the same time as the partnership plan is intended to assist in implementing the policies and meeting the objectives, and
- (d) describes the intended effect of any such scheme (or schemes) on areas which are adjacent to the plan's area.

3A (3) A partnership plan must also—

(e) describe the proposals for obtaining the views of users of local services in the area about how well the plan and the partnership scheme (or 35 schemes) are working, and

(f) specify how the plan is to be reviewed and the dates by which reviews are to be completed.” (part 2, chapter 1 – page 12)

Therefore, the Transport Bill re-enforces the key role of community participation in the development of transport policy, which has promising implications for the future of public transport for families of people in prison who need it to be equitable and accessible.

However, aside from the section on Community Planning Partnerships, there are few other mentions of how service users can be more involved in the implementation and improvement of transport policy. The Bill makes little reference to other relevant equality issues, such as accessibility and coverage in rural and low-income areas. Therefore, in many ways, the Transport (Scotland) Bill is a departure from the equality-related aims of the National Transport Strategy of 2016. Although it solidifies the role of Community Planning Partnerships in advocating for the needs of vulnerable groups, it neglects other key issues which would establish a more equitable transport system.

### ***SPS Visitors Survey (2018)***

In 2018, the Scottish Prison Service conducted a survey of visitors to the 15 prisons in Scotland by distributing questionnaires to visitors on their arrival at the prison over a one-week period. The survey was conducted with the aim of finding out more about the needs and obstacles facing visitors and how the Prison Service could provide for these needs (Broderick and Carnie 2018). The key findings of this survey are listed below:

- ❖ 13% of visitors attended morning visiting sessions, 62% attended afternoon sessions, and 25% attended evening sessions.
- ❖ 42% of visitors reported that they had taken their children to the prison in the past. Of these, only one-third reported that their children were aware that they were



visiting a prison. 9% stated that they would like more information about talking to their children about imprisonment.

- ❖ Around two-thirds of visitors used their full allocation of visits over the course of one month.
- ❖ Of those who did not use their full allocation of visits, the reasons for doing so were distance (38%), cost (29%), time limits and constraints (20%), family commitments (17%), and childcare or school (14%).
- ❖ One-third of all visitors experienced visit problems. These problems included distance (53%), cost (44%), time limits (41%), stress (31%) and transport (28%).
- ❖ 59% of all respondents knew about Family Contact Officers (FCOs) and what they could provide for family members.
- ❖ 28% said they had been helped by an FCO.
- ❖ One-third of all respondents asked for more information on FCOs

These findings represent a strong basis for policy development. They identify key challenges facing people in prison and their families surrounding visits: notably, the distance and costs of visits, and the information and support provided to family members (for example through FCOs; Broderick and Carnie 2018).

For professionals working in the prison system, it is therefore essential to cultivate a model of visiting which ameliorates these problems. The travel and transport challenges must be taken into account when deciding visiting times and determining eligibility for financial aid programmes such as the Assisted Prison Visiting Scheme.<sup>1</sup> More importantly, the incorporation of feedback into prison and policy changes should lead to more frequent and meaningful visits and continued improvement of relationships between people in prison and their family members.

---

<sup>1</sup> E.g. People living in remote areas may need financial support even when they are not on qualifying benefits.

## Travel and Transport Services

Drawing on the key background texts and policies, this section outlines various travel and transport services currently available to families. First, it discusses two services in Scotland that I have identified as examples of good practice. It then introduces three international services in Europe. Overall, this section highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each service, their current demand, and the remaining gaps in service provision.

### ***Assisted Prison Visit Scheme***

The Assisted Prison Visits Scheme (AVPS, changed in August 2019 to 'Help With Prison Visits') is a UK Government service which reimburses low-income family members for their travel costs to English, Welsh, and Scottish prisons (Assisted Prison Visit Unit 2017). In order to receive assistance, claimants must be in receipt of:

- ❖ Income Support
- ❖ Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
- ❖ Employment and Support Allowance (Income-related)
- ❖ Universal Credit
- ❖ Working or Child Tax Credits
- ❖ Pension Credits
- ❖ Hold HC2 or HC3 Certificates

Visitors must be a partner, spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling, child, or next of kin of the person in prison. Friends may only visit if they are either the only social visitor in the four weeks before a visit is claimed, or an escort to an eligible visitor. For an adult applying on behalf of themselves and a child, the travel costs of the child will be included in the payment (*ibid.*).

Visitors can claim their travel expenses back within the 28 days prior to a visit or for up to 28 days following the visit. The scheme provides help for one visit every two weeks. The payment contributes to travel costs, petrol costs, or the cheapest method of public

transport (*ibid.*). For longer journeys, the payment includes a light refreshment allowance and/or a contribution towards overnight costs.

Those who qualify for the scheme can apply online and receive payment either directly into their bank account, or are given a payment voucher which they may exchange at the Post Office (*ibid.*). Below are the payment rates and limits for adults and children:

- ❖ Car mileage allowance: 13p per mile
- ❖ Light refreshment allowance:
  - Over 5 hours: £2.55
  - Over 10 hours: £5.10
- ❖ Overnight allowances
  - London and the South East
    - £34 per adult per night (maximum)
    - £17 per child per night (maximum)
  - Elsewhere
    - £28 per adult per night (maximum)
    - £14 per child per night (maximum)
  - For travel between prison & accommodation, the maximum payable cost is £10
- ❖ Care hire: £40 per day (inclusive) plus 13 pence per mile
- ❖ For public transportation, passengers will be reimbursed for the cheapest option available

Although the Assisted Prison Visit Scheme provides assistance to low-income families, this scheme often neglects the personal circumstances which would perhaps qualify these individuals for additional assistance. Family members who live in rural areas, such as the Highlands and Islands, experience substantial difficulty with distance, cost, and travel times required for visits. Often, these circumstances mean that APVS support is not sufficient for covering travel costs (Cooper 2019, personal communication). The closest prison geographically to these more rural, northwestern regions is HMP Inverness. HMP Inverness

has a design capacity of 103, but currently houses 117 prisoners (Scottish Prison Service 2019).

Due to these capacity issues, and also depending on the sentence and offence type, prisoners from the Western Isles as well as Shetland and Orkney are likely to be transferred to prisons that are further away, many of which are in the Central Belt of Scotland. For families in the Islands, travel to these more southern prisons can involve multiple modes of transportation, including ferries or airplanes. Travel can be over 12 hours one way, necessitating one or more overnight stays and multiple meals (Cooper 2019, personal communication).

This puts a substantial amount of financial stress on families and makes the visiting process more demanding and difficult. The APVS is not designed in a way that acknowledges the unique needs of families in the Highlands and Islands. Rather, it is a service which provides limited financial compensation, with a cap on the maximum support that can be provided for travel, accommodation, and food (Assisted Prison Visit Unit 2017). Although this scheme provides important support for low-income families, it does not take into account the unique travel needs of families in the Highlands and Islands who cannot otherwise make such a long and demanding journey.

### ***Sacro Travel Service***

Sacro is a national organisation, operating in 24 of Scotland's 32 council areas (Sacro 2019). The organisation operates a variety of services for the benefit of people in prison and their families. One such service, which is available to service users in Edinburgh and the Lothians, is the Travel Service. This is Sacro's longest running service, and supports family members and children with unique financial and personal needs to visit their loved ones in prison (*ibid.*).

The service is led by a Travel Service Coordinator who oversees a team of volunteer drivers. The drivers, using their own cars, pick up passengers at their home. They drive to and from any prison in Scotland, and provide emotional support for the duration of the journey (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication).

Sacro accept referrals from anyone for the travel service – this can be from within Sacro, from other third sector organisations, and from individuals. The eligibility for Sacro’s travel service is aligned with the Assisted Prison Visit Scheme (APVS) criteria. This means that any potential service users must be in receipt of certain benefits in order to qualify for service use. Furthermore, Sacro takes into account and prioritises service users with unique personal circumstances (Sacro 2019). Many of those who access the service have particular needs which disqualify them from visiting via public transport. These needs can include old age, disability, mental or physical ill-health, rural location, and travelling with children (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication).

The travel service is funded predominantly by the City of Edinburgh Council, which provides a salary for the service coordinator. Furthermore, the APVS provides partial reimbursement to Sacro for travel costs. Until 2017, Sacro was reimbursed at 45p per mile for each journey. However, following June of that year, the APVS stopped reimbursing Sacro for travel costs. Following negotiations between the two parties, Sacro is now reimbursed 13p per mile, and volunteer drivers continue to claim the standard HMRC rate of 45p per mile (Sacro 2019; Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication). This substantial cut to funding means that Sacro is losing funds each year in travel costs. Such drastic changes have forced Sacro to focus on sustainability of the service, rather than expansion.

Sacro has developed a Communication Plan to allow information on the travel service to be widely circulated. Information is distributed to various departments within social services, to housing teams, social workers and general practices, as well as in Visitors Centres of prisons (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication). The aforementioned limits to funding, however, have forced Sacro to take on a staggered approach to publicity – a strong and sudden influx of potential service users due to increased publicity would be disproportionate to Sacro’s current financial abilities, and Sacro would potentially be unable to accommodate this demand (*ibid.*).

The challenges facing the service therefore come mainly from funding, which is a significant constraint on Sacro’s ability to expand the geographical scope and staffing of the service (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication). Sacro, as a national organisation, provides key services to safeguard communities and prevent recidivism on a

wide scale. The ability to facilitate meaningful interactions between people in prison and their families is a key part of this process. A lack of funding means that the travel service cannot expand beyond Edinburgh and reach those in rural areas, such as the Highlands and the Islands - those who often need this critical outreach and contact the most (*ibid.*).

The current demand for the travel service is high. In the financial year 2018/2019, there were 264 journeys with 491 passengers. This is a substantial increase from the previous year, in which there were 162 journeys with 395 passengers (Sacro 2019). Most of the demand is for families travelling to HMP Glenochil. Although some passengers are from urban areas, many live in smaller, more rural villages in the Lothians where public transport is not as accessible (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication).

The demand for this service reflects the gaps in public transportation, and therefore the sustainability of Sacro's travel service is of utmost importance (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication). Furthermore, the benefits are profound for all parties involved. Drivers act not only as a provider of transportation but as a form of emotional support and a trusting relationship for family members and children of people in prison (*ibid.*).

The timeliness and door-to-door service allows for improved visit quality overall, with less time and costs for families hoping to access the prison. This, in turn, leads to a more productive visit for both family members and people in prison. For children, the interpersonal relationship with a driver and the consistency of service provides them with a feeling of stability that many do not often experience, particularly during visits (Travel Service Coordinator 2019, personal communication).

Overall, Sacro's transport service is true to its organisational aims – the protection of communities and the reduction of offending. It builds trusting relationships between volunteers and service users and provides key emotional support for family members, particularly children. While the service is therefore much broader in scope, it attempts in part to occupy a gap into that public transport has neglected; without substantial funding, this gap will deepen and broaden in magnitude. On the other hand, an increase in funding

and council support would allow for expansion of the travel service to a national level, and provision of outreach to those who need it most.

### ***International services: Relais Enfants Parents Romands (REPR) (Switzerland)***

REPR is a branch of the Francophone organisation Relais Enfants Parents based in Lausanne, Switzerland. This organisation offers a free shuttle service for family members of people in prison to ten prisons in the Lausanne area (Doko 2018; REPR 2019). Half of the service is funded by REPR, and the remaining half is funded privately. In order to qualify for use of this service, people in prison must first register via the Prison Service (Doko 2018). As a third sector travel service, REPR's travel service is highly similar to the Sacro travel service. In particular, feedback on the service emphasises the impact of staff and volunteer support on the overall visit quality (*ibid.*). However, a significant difference between these two services is that Sacro's travel service only transports individual families in cars, and REPR uses shuttle buses and often transports multiple families together (REPR 2019). Although this makes the experience of family contact and travel less private, it allows these families to form social connections with people who have similar experiences. Therefore, the differences between these two models highlight the varying strengths of different modes of transports used for prison visits.

### ***International services: Treffpunkt Nuremberg (Germany)***

Treffpunkt is a charity located in Nuremberg, Germany that works with people in prison and their families to provide support and counselling (Doko 2018). They operate a travel service specifically for children from infancy to age 14, funded by the Prison Service and local authorities. Staff members accompany these children to visit their parents. On their arrival, staff provide families with books, board games, and toys to make the visiting area more familiar and child-friendly (*ibid.*).

Although the focus on children may neglect the value of other adult relationships that the person in prison may have with their partner, friends, or siblings, the importance of the

relationship between a parent and a child remains perhaps one of the most significant, in terms of childhood development. The maintenance of a stable and constructive relationship with a parent throughout an experience of imprisonment makes a child less susceptible to the long-term detriments to health and wellbeing often associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences (Mersky, Topitzes and Reynolds 2013). Therefore, as a children's travel service, Treffpunkt works with some of the most vulnerable individuals who are impacted by imprisonment (Doko 2018). More importantly, this specialised service allows for increased family contact and the protection of children's wellbeing.

### ***International services: Bedford Row Family Project (Republic of Ireland)***

The Bedford Row Family Project, located in Limerick, Republic of Ireland is a charity that supports families of people in prison in partnership with local authorities and Community Welfare Officers (Doko 2018; Bedford Row Family Project n.d.). They provide various resources for families and children of people in prison, with the goals of improving hospitality at the prison, developing community education and public awareness, responding to children's needs, providing counselling and support, and re-integrating of people who have been in prison (*ibid.*).

Like the APVS, the Bedford Row Family Project provides financial support and reimburses families for their travel and food costs using receipts. This support is funded through Ireland's Department of Social Protection. There are no eligibility criteria, and any family members of people in prison can apply to receive this financial assistance from Bedford Row (Doko 2018; Bedford Row Family Project n.d.).

One of the weaknesses of this project is its feedback from family members, particularly in relationship to its collaborative work with local authorities. Although feedback is good for families working with Bedford Row staff, those who are supported more heavily by Community Welfare Officers and local authorities have generally worse feedback (Doko 2018). Bedford Row works in partnership with local authorities, and often the funding and support from these authorities is less than what is needed, which leaves family members



unsatisfied with the level of reimbursement for journeys as well as the overall visit quality (Doko 2018; Bedford Row Family Project n.d.).

However, the Bedford Row Family Project has other strengths. Unlike the Assisted Prison Visits scheme, it has no particular eligibility criteria (Doko 2018; Bedford Row Family Project n.d.). The universality of this support is therefore more accommodating of family members with unique personal circumstances relating to travel distance, childcare, and general prison accessibility. Overall, although the Bedford Row Family Project could benefit from more effective partnership working, it is highly effective: it focuses support into various significant categories and provides thorough, universal support which accommodates the diverse backgrounds and needs of family members.

## Alternative Visiting Methods

Although phone and video calls are not always preferable to in-person visits, they are viable alternatives for families with special circumstances. These options are particularly useful for family members who have mobility and health issues, small children, or who live in far-away or rural areas. This section discusses phone visiting and video visiting as potential alternatives to in-person visits, their strengths and weaknesses, and some examples of good practice with these methods.

### ***Phone visiting***

The ability for people in prison to make regular and frequent phone calls home has been highly linked with the improvement of mental and emotional well-being. In ten prisons in England and Wales, there are landline phones in cells which allow people in prison to contact family more regularly and in a private setting. This number will increase to 50 prisons by 2020 following a boost in prison funding (Alderson 2018). In Scotland, there are no in-cell telephones currently available, and people in prison can only use communal phones at certain times.

However, in 2019, following the suicides of two young people in custody at HMYOI Polmont, the Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland published two reports recommending the installation of in-cell telephones in prisons. Shortly after, Justice Secretary Humza Yousaf announced plans to pilot a scheme introducing in-cell telephones at Polmont. The importance of in-cell telephones was previously emphasised in a report published by Reform Scotland (2018), who recommended the implementation of a pilot scheme for increasing other forms of contact in Scottish prison, including the introduction of landline phones in prison cells. Therefore, although there are currently no in-cell telephones in Scottish prisons, there are concrete plans to introduce them, with substantial political support.

These forms of contact have benefits for those on both sides of the prison walls. For the person in prison, access to private and frequent phone calls leads to improved emotional and mental wellbeing, less interpersonal tension and conflict between people in prison, improved relationships with family and friends, and a reduced likelihood of re-offending. In-cell phones pose no additional security risks because prison staff can still monitor calls, and they reduce the incentive to smuggle in mobile phones and other similar contraband (Families Outside 2012). For family members, they too can maintain these relationships, keep their family member updated on important family events, and retain a sense of family “togetherness”, particularly on special occasions and holidays (Reform Scotland 2018).

### ***Video visiting***

Yet another viable alternative to in-person visiting is video visiting. This has been introduced to varying degrees in prisons across the UK, and internationally as well. However, there are a few issues surrounding the security and encryption of video visiting which must be resolved before it can be introduced on a wider scale.

Currently in Scotland, prisons host video calls with the help of third sector organisations, namely Apex Scotland, whose video visiting services will be discussed in detail later in this report. These video visits are available from a controlled facility in Aberdeen, where family members can make calls to Barlinnie, Polmont, Perth, and Grampian (Apex 2019). Other

organisations are developing similar services, including Action for Children (2019), which is piloting a video visit scheme at HMP Inverness. Some local authorities in Scotland will facilitate video visits for families, but this depends on cooperation from the relevant prison, which isn't always granted. In other parts of the UK, similar services are available, such as the Skype video visit service at HMP Parc in Wales, which will also be discussed later in this report. In other countries, including the United States, video visiting services have also been introduced, albeit with some contention surrounding the substantial costs charged to families by the private video calling companies (Radbury and Wagner 2015).

There are a variety of benefits of video visiting. Often, there is decreased stress and cost for the family surrounding travel. Furthermore, video calling centres in Scotland are in central locations in cities, whereas the prisons themselves are usually slightly more rural. Video visiting in an office setting allows for more anonymity, particularly for high profile cases, than in-person visits to prisons. Video calling facilities allow for more privacy than a conventional visiting hall, and allow for the ability to have multiple visits in the week with minimal disruption to school and working schedules.

For families of high risk or violent offenders, particularly where the violent crime affected the family, video visits create an opportunity to visit with the person in prison in a safe way and work on repairing the relationship. For these reasons, video visiting has been promoted by a variety of individuals, national and international authorities, and policy-making bodies, including former Conservative Party treasurer Lord Farmer (2019) and Children of Prisoners Europe (2016).

However, there are many limitations to video visiting as well. The first and foremost is that video visits, for many families, cannot, and are not meant to, replace the value of in-person visits. There is no physical contact and less emotional intimacy. When the internet connection is poor, the image is often frozen or pixelated, and the audio is garbled, which leads to a less meaningful conversation. Use of commercially available services such as Skype or Facetime allow for a better user experience, but these services are not secure and encrypted to the standards required by prison administrations. Conversely, the video calling services approved by prison administrations are often lower quality than those which are more widely available.

Finally, although most UK video visiting services are free to families, other countries have privatised the service. In the United States, companies such as Securus and Telmate have established video calling rooms in jails and prisons which charge families anywhere between \$0.20 and \$1.50 per minute for a video call (Radbury and Wagner 2015). These rates are notably high, particularly for low-income families. Additionally, some prisons and jails in the United States have completely replaced in-person visits with video visits, which has been met with widespread backlash. Restrictive models of visiting such as these violate the recommendations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (Radbury and Wagner 2015; Robertson 2012).

However, for those who cannot make an in-person visit, there is often no alternative. As it stands, privatised video visit models have not received political recognition in the UK.

However, the implementation of video visiting must be done with explicit prioritisation of people in prison and their families above profit. Below are two models of good practice for video visiting already established in the UK and how they can be implemented on a wider scale by the public sector and third sector organisations.

### ***HMP Parc Skype Visiting***

HMP Parc, a men's prison in South Wales, has implemented a Skype visiting programme as part of their family support project, Invisible Walls Wales. The project, led by Corin Morgan-Armstrong, the Head of Family Interventions at the prison, sought to provide meaningful opportunities for contact between people in prison and their family members, with an emphasis on their children and the goal of reducing reoffending (Clancy and Maguire 2017; G4S 2018). The prison provides classes in parenting skills as well as bonding opportunities such as homework clubs and Scouts meetings (Clancy and Maguire 2017).

Morgan-Armstrong (2019, personal communication) emphasises the importance of video visits in the intervention process. In HMP Parc, they serve a variety of purposes. Originally, they were implemented for family members of foreign nationals who were unable to visit in-person or make costly telephone calls (*ibid.*). Since then, HMP Parc has allowed for calls to countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Another use of the service was developed in partnership with the Youth Justice Bureau in Wales, which created a pilot scheme for the Young Persons' Unit. Whereas most of the adult population at HMP Parc are from local areas, the smaller size of the Young Persons' Unit and the specialised work that they do often means that the young people come from other parts of the UK (Morgan-Armstrong 2019, personal communication). HMP Parc and the Youth Justice Bureau therefore use the Skype service to put young people in detention in contact with their parents, siblings, and other family members.

A final purpose for the service is professional use – in particular, for children and family services. If a father or other guardian is in prison or has a child who is in care, the Skype service provides an easy and convenient way for professionals to conduct Looked After Child Reviews with the involvement of both parents, without the cost and logistics of holding the meeting in-person (Morgan-Armstrong 2019, personal communication).

The Skype visiting service has no additional staffing needs. However, for professional Skype visits, the Youth Justice Bureau provides funding for a staff member to support and monitor these calls (Morgan-Armstrong 2019, personal communication).

Any prisoner is eligible to use the service, and there is no cost of use for prisoners or their family members. Those outside the prison who wish to make a call must comply with the same security and clearance process as those who attend in-person visits: they must state the reason for their visit and provide identification (Morgan-Armstrong 2019, personal communication). Additionally, if anyone not authorized for the visit appears on-screen, the visit is terminated.

There is a high demand for the service, but given that most of the prison population is local to Wales, this demand is largely restricted to professional purposes and Youth Justice Bureau calls rather than domestic or social ones (Morgan-Armstrong 2019, personal communication). Families of local prisoners often prefer in-person visits due to the accessible location of the prison and the ease with which in-person visits can be conducted.

There are a few challenges facing the service. As noted above, Skype as a video calling programme is not currently up to the standard for cybersecurity and encryption established by the

Administrative Justice Council, who oversees and reviews standards of good practice in UK prisons (Morgan-Armstrong 2019, personal communication). However, programmes with the encryption and security needed for prison use are still being developed for the UK and are not yet ready for mainstream use (*ibid.*).

This prevents the expansion of HMP Parc's programmes to a regional or national level. The only way that such a programme can be politically viable on a wide scale is for it to balance these two requirements: complying necessary security protocol and providing a wholesome visiting experience for families. Despite these challenges, however, HMP Parc's Skype remains a shining example of good practice. It is a cost-effective programme which provides specialised services for families with unique circumstances. The Skype programme fits into a larger approach to reducing re-offending, which prioritises the maintenance of family relationships.

### ***Northern Ireland Prison Service***

Northern Ireland has three prisons: HMP Maghaberry, HMP Magilligan, and Hydebank Wood College. In 2015, the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) introduced a Skype programme for people in prison in HMP Magilligan, which became the first British prison to introduce this facility (Justice Department 2015). The demand for the service was originally limited but began to gain more traction with the prison population, particularly for foreign nationals who cannot otherwise make regular visits with family members (NIACRO 2019, personal communication). The Governor of the prison at that time implemented the pilot scheme with a cost-effective approach – aside from the cost of installing the video calling equipment, the service is free to use for people in prison and their families. Calls are made from a safe, secluded and sound-proof room monitored by security cameras (*ibid.*).

After being piloted at HMP Magilligan, NIPS expanded Skype visiting to HMP Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood College. The implementation of the service, however, differed greatly between the two facilities (NIACRO 2019, personal communication). HMP Maghaberry houses people who are considered high risk, whereas Hydebank Wood College is a low risk facility for young people and women. As such, the security needs and eligibility vary by

prison, and use of the service is approved on a case-by-case basis (National Preventative Mechanism 2018; NIACRO 2019, personal communication).

There are a few challenges facing the video visiting service. The reliability of technology has been identified as an issue, with the potential for interruption to calls depending on the strength of the internet connection or capabilities of the video calling equipment (NIACRO 2019, personal communication).

Furthermore, the eligibility for video calling is based on how these interactions could influence family relationships, and this is at the discretion of the prison staff. If someone is in prison for a crime committed against a family member, video visits and regular interaction may not be beneficial (NIACRO 2019, personal communication). However, for those in prison who desire contact with their families, where this desire is reciprocated, it can be of mutual benefit. Overall, although there are some challenges facing this service, NIPS has developed an individualised approach to video calling which prioritises the rights of people in prison and allows them to interact regularly with their families. The implementation of Skype visiting on a national level in all three NIPS facilities reflects their commitment to providing reliable and consistent points of family contacts for all people in prison – regardless of their offense or perceived risk level.

### ***Apex Video Visiting***

Apex Scotland is a third sector organisation that works with people who have criminal convictions or who are at risk of committing offences. They also play a key role in working with families of people with criminal convictions (Apex 2019). They offer a video visiting service available from their offices in Aberdeen, where families can visit with any person in prison at Perth, Barlinnie, Polmont, or Grampian (Apex 2019). The service is wholly funded through the Scottish Prison Service at each of these locations, and there is no cost for families or people in prison to use the service (Tripp 2019, personal communication). Apex staff are able to provide personalised support for family members for the duration of the visit.

The service is open Monday to Saturday in the afternoons, as well as in the evenings on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. This means that family members are able to choose a time that fits their personal needs, and they can schedule visits in a way that won't interfere with work and school (Apex 2019). The video visits have many of the same security restrictions as in-person visits. The person in prison must agree to the visit taking place, and the prison must be able to verify the identity of the visitor. Furthermore, visitors are prohibited from bringing camera equipment into the visit room to ensure no photos of the prison are available outside of the prison (Tripp 2019, personal communication).

The service is advertised internally within the four prisons, as well as to the public, through leaflets distributed by Apex. Apex hosts approximately 1400 of these visits annually, a figure which is increasing every year (Tripp 2019, personal communication). The service is growing rapidly and has strong connections to the prison system, connections which it hopes to strengthen in the coming years. However, there are two main challenges facing the service. The first and foremost is continued funding. The maintenance of the service can only be done through the continued collaboration between Apex and the Scottish Prison Service. If this partnership and the service continue to receive sustainable funding, it will be able to continue to operate at all of the four prisons, and potentially others (*ibid.*).

One final challenge facing the video visiting service is its location. Although Apex has multiple locations in Scotland, the video visiting service is only available from their Aberdeen location (Apex 2019; Tripp 2019, personal communication). This is helpful for families in surrounding areas, including the Highlands, with family members in prisons in the central belt of Scotland. However, for families in more remote locations, including the Islands, just travelling to Aberdeen can be a physically and financially demanding journey, and often the end result lacks the intimacy and value of a face-to-face visit.

Despite these potential shortcomings, however, the Apex video visiting service is another example of good practice for alternative visiting methods. Like the Skype service at HMP Parc, it provides an opportunity for family members with unique personal circumstances and accessibility needs to contact and visit with their loved ones in prison. As technology continues to develop, the presence of these alternative methods of contact has broadened, both in Scotland and in other countries. In many ways, a virtual visit cannot replace an in-



person one: there are aspects of an in-person visit, such as emotional intimacy and depth, the ability to reach out and hug a family member, which cannot be replicated through a video call.

Therefore, I would like to note that the aforementioned services cannot be used in lieu of in-person visits. Rather, except for cases where the prisoner is a foreign national, or other special circumstances prevent regular visiting, video calls should be treated in a similar way to letters or phone calls, as an alternative means of keeping in regular contact.

Supplementing in-person visits with consistent phone calls or video visits therefore provides an additional dimension of family support. This report therefore echoes the previous recommendations made by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (Robertson 2012) and Council of Europe (2018), who support a balance between telephone and video visits and contact visits.

## Key Findings

This report has sought to identify a variety of key issues surrounding the topics of travel, transport, and visits for family members of people in prison in Scotland. It has analysed various key policies and publications, and evaluated statistics from Scottish Prison Service surveys, as well as individual cases. It has given examples of travel services both in Scotland and abroad, and discussed potential alternatives to in-person visits. Below is a summary of these findings and their significance.

- ❖ Although previous policies reflect the Scottish Government's commitment to reducing inequality through transport, this has not fully been put into practice. Additionally, transport policy neglects the unique adversity faced by families of people in prison.
- ❖ The recent Prisoners Survey and Visitors Surveys published by the Scottish Prison Service reflect the magnitude and scope of the challenges that families face, with both people in prison and their families reporting significant difficulties surrounding the distance, cost, accessibility, and scheduling of prison visits.

- ❖ The data and research included in this report show the various dimensions of adversity facing family members of people in prison, particularly those in the Highlands and Islands. More importantly, they show that the imprisonment of a family member is a punishment not just for the person in prison, but for their loved ones as well, particularly those with unique needs that prevent frequent visits. Despite the work done by public and third sector organisations, there is a significant gap in existing demand and provision of visiting assistance, which must be addressed in order to more fully meet the needs of people in prison and their families.
- ❖ There are a variety of schemes which provide financial or travel assistance to family members travelling to prisons, including the APVS and Sacro's Travel Service. These services are highly valuable and require consistent funding to maintain their current level of service and to expand to accommodate families in rural areas with unique needs. Other international travel assistance schemes in Europe show the role of third sector organisations in providing for this broad demand.
- ❖ Alternative methods of visiting, such as in-cell telephones or video visits, are highly valuable for maintaining regular contact with family, especially for people in prison whose families cannot otherwise make in-person visits. For families who are able and willing to visit regularly, however, these video visits should be treated as supplemental, and not as a replacement to in-person contact.
- ❖ Finally, each of these points have a broader significance to the support and wellbeing of people in prison and their families. The imprisonment of a parent is an Adverse Childhood Experience which can have long-term impacts on the physical and mental health of a child (Mersky, Topitzes, and Reynolds 2013). An estimated 20-27,000 children in Scotland go through the imprisonment of a parent each year, more than the number of children who experience a parental divorce (Families Outside 2018). The ability to provide consistent and meaningful points of contact therefore has multiple dimensions of significance for the emotional development of the child both in the short and long term, and should be treated as a priority within the development of criminal justice and children and family policy.

## Strengths and Limitations

The aforementioned findings have been based off of six weeks of research during a student internship at Families Outside. During this time, the researcher was able to collect a variety of findings from different sources. Some of these include research papers, Transport and Criminal Justice policies, individual case studies, prison surveys and statistics, and interviews with representatives from third sector organisations. The combination of primary and secondary sources is one of the strengths of these findings.

However, the time constraints of the internship have been somewhat of a limitation for this research. A six-week internship, although substantial, is short enough that it prevents more in-depth analysis of these findings and how they can be implemented into policy. Despite this time constraint, the researcher conducted thorough research into the travel, transport, and visiting issues facing families and used this to inform conclusions and policy recommendations.

Furthermore, the status of Families Outside as a third sector organisation means that this report supports a wider agenda of political advocacy, but cannot guarantee policy change. Although this report informs the arguments that Families Outside will make to the Scottish Parliament and other policy-making bodies, the ability to make these changes rests with policy-makers, and local and national authorities.

Overall this report, despite its limitations, is a summary of the issues surrounding travel, transport and visits for family members of people in prison. Within the context of Families Outside's work, as well as the work of other third sector organisations, these issues are at the core of service provision. Further, more in-depth research on travel and transport issues is needed to promote comprehensive and successful policy change which meets the needs of prisoners and their families.

## Recommendations

Using the aforementioned findings, this report has developed a set of recommendations to support the advocacy of Families Outside and inform Transport and Criminal Justice policy change.

These recommendations are as follows:

- ❖ Future Scottish Government Transport policies, both local and national, should devise a concrete commitment to the reduction of inequality through the implementation of affordable and accessible public transport.<sup>2</sup> Local and national authorities should furthermore recognise the intersection between Transport and Criminal Justice policy, particularly relating to the travel and transport issues faced by family members of people in prison.
- ❖ The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (2015) and the Transport (Scotland) Bill (2018) assert the importance of community planning partnerships which focus on the alleviation of inequality. Scottish Government must ensure that these partnerships, particularly those between local transport services and prisons, continue to receive support from local and national authorities, for these partnerships are necessary for ameliorating the inequality faced by the families of people in prison.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ The Scottish Prison Service should ensure that subsequent Prisoner and Visitors Surveys further examine the obstacles facing visiting family members and use this feedback to modify visiting schedules and arrangements as necessary.
- ❖ The Assisted Prison Visits scheme (now 'Help With Prison Visits') should expand to accommodate and support the unique needs of families living in rural areas.

---

<sup>2</sup> The Transport Act 1985 limits local authority involvement in bus service provision to the subsidy of bus services deemed socially necessary that cannot be provided on a commercial basis, e.g. evening and weekend buses that serve hospitals or major employment sites.

<https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefings/Report/2018/9/3/Transport--Scotland--Bill--Buses#What-role-do-local-authorities-play-in-Scottish-local-bus-service-provision->

<sup>3</sup> The Transport Bill includes plans to give local councils and regional transport partnerships (RTPs) more flexibility to improve services, either by working with bus companies or by stepping in and running services themselves. Are RTPs meant to be working with Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs), or do CPPs have more power?

- ❖ Scottish Government should protect the role of third sector organisations and transport services, and local and national authorities should treat their funding needs as a priority.
- ❖ The expansion of digital communication and technology has paved the way for alternative methods of visiting, which are gaining traction in Scotland and other parts of the UK. These schemes are particularly important to expand in prisons where distance or cost of visits is a commonly reported issue for family members. The Scottish Prison Service should therefore widen its partnership with organisations like Apex Scotland and Action for Children and/or pilot a scheme similar to English prisons where prisoners are permitted to have in-cell telephones, as has been recommended by the Justice Secretary and HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland.

Each year, the experience of parental imprisonment is more common in Scotland than parental divorce. Parental imprisonment can also have profound, long-term effects of the well-being and development of children. The relationship between parents and children must be protected through policy and professional support, and the protection of the rights of children of their families must be at the forefront of Criminal Justice policy development.

## Conclusion

In the twelve years following the publication of Families Outside's last travel report, policies, prison visiting, and transport systems in Scotland have changed. This report seeks to elaborate on Families Outside's previous work – notably, Malcolm Higgenbotham's *Do Not Pass Go* report (2007).

In the decade following Higgenbotham's assessment of travel and transport options, there has been both massive change, and very little change. Scotland's policy instruments and priorities surrounding transportation have evolved considerably, and expanded to prioritise a commitment to the reduction of inequality, and the development of community planning partnerships. However, the unique needs of people in prison and their families as socially disadvantaged groups remain virtually untouched. The recognition of the necessary policy

responses for these families requires committed intersectional policy-making between Scottish Government Justice and Transport divisions.

Additionally, there has been abundant change and development surrounding alternative visiting methods. Multiple prisons in England have introduced in-cell telephones, and plans have emerged to undertake similar operations in Scottish prisons. Video visiting has also begun to develop a platform in the UK, but availability for families in Scotland remains somewhat limited, thus restricting the potential effectiveness and accessibility of these newly developed options, and preventing consistent and meaningful contact between people in prison and their families.

Some of Higgenbotham's findings, however, remain unchanged. This report has identified a significant role for third sector services in providing transport, and like Higgenbotham, has identified these services as examples of good practice. For many families, organisations like Sacro are the first port of call when seeking travel and transport advice. Funding and support for these services must therefore be protected by local authorities in order to allow them to maintain current levels of service and expand to reach rural and impoverished areas which need these services the most.

Furthermore, there remains little support for families in rural areas like the Highlands and Islands. The Assisted Prison Visits scheme has provided financial support for many families, allowing them to make regular and sustainable visits, but overcrowding of prisons throughout Scotland has led to prisoners from these areas being transferred to prisons in the central belt, meaning that regular visits are financially unsustainable for their families. This demand is critical to the goals of prison and transport accessibility, and remains unrecognised by the Scottish Government and the APVS. This issue must be accommodated in future policies, both by local and national authorities.

Finally, another aspect of this issue that remains unchanged is the importance of parent-child relationships in improving familial cohesion and individual well-being. The key to a progressive justice system and an equal, tolerant society is to empower those that are made most vulnerable: children. By supporting children to maintain relationships with their parent or guardian in prison, we pave the way for these children to have a brighter future, a

healthier outlook on family relationships, and a more comprehensive understanding of their rights and the criminal justice system.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their help in contributing to the report, and advising me throughout the writing and editing process.

### ***Families Outside***

- ❖ Nancy Loucks
- ❖ Elaine Stalker
- ❖ Caroline Cooper
- ❖ Jonathan Goodfellow
- ❖ Todd Henshaw
- ❖ Sam Jelf
- ❖ Chrystel Doko

### **Sacro**

- ❖ Carlene Jamieson
- ❖ Gavin Phillip

### **G4S (HMP Parc)**

- ❖ Corin Morgan-Armstrong

### **Apex Scotland**

- ❖ Helen Tripp

### **Scottish Prison Service**

- ❖ James Carnie
- ❖ Roisin Broderick

### **NIACRO**

- ❖ Donnie Sweeney and colleagues



## References

- Action for Children (19 June 2019) *Presentation on Pilot Video Visit Scheme at HMP Inverness*. Presented at Coming Home Visitors' Centre Conference (hosted by Families Outside).
- Alderson, R. (2018) *Cell phones 'would help prisoners maintain family links'*. [online] BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-46639639> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2019].
- Apex Scotland (2019) *Virtual Visits*. [online] Available at: <https://www.apexscotland.org.uk/services/virtual-visits/> [Accessed 3 Jun. 2019].
- Assisted Prison Visit Unit (2019) *Assisted Prison Visit Scheme*. [online] HM Prison & Probation Service and Scottish Prison Service. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/627024/APVU-guidance-for-visitors-GOVUK.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627024/APVU-guidance-for-visitors-GOVUK.pdf) [Accessed 12 Jun. 2019].
- Bedford Row Family Project (n.d.) *Bedford Row Family Project: Our Work*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bedfordrow.ie/our-work/> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2019].
- Broderick, R. and Carnie, J. (2018) *Visitors Survey*. Scottish Prison Service.
- Bus Times (2019) *C2 Bus Schedule*. [online] Available at: <https://bustimes.org/services/c2glenochil-tillicoultry> [Accessed 7 Jul. 2019].
- Carnie, J., Broderick, R., Cameron, J., Downie, D. and Williams, G. (2017) *Prisoners Survey*.
- Children of Prisoners Europe (2016) *Maintaining family ties: visits and other forms of contact*. [online] Available at: <https://childrenofprisoners.eu/familyties/> [Accessed 7 Jun. 2019].
- Clancy, A. and Maguire, M. (2017) *Evaluation of Invisible Walls Wales*. Invisible Walls Wales and University of South Wales.
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015*.
- Council of Europe (2018) *Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States concerning children with imprisoned parents*. Council of Europe.

Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/cm-recommendation-2018-5-concerning-children-with-imprisoned-parents-e/16807b3438> [Accessed 12 Jun. 2019].

Doko, C. (2018) *Travel and Transport Report*. Edinburgh: Families Outside (unpublished).

Families Outside (2012) *Consultation on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Prisons (Interference with Wireless Telegraphy) Bill*. Edinburgh: Families Outside

Families Outside (2018) *Families Outside Strategic Plan, 2018-2021*. Edinburgh: Families Outside.

Farmer, Lord M. (2017) *The Importance of Strengthening Prisoners' Family Ties to Prevent Reoffending and Reduce Intergenerational Crime*. Ministry of Justice.

G4S (2018) *Family focused reform at HM Prison Parc*. [online] Available at: <https://www.g4s.com/media-centre/our-views/all-news/invisible-walls-wales> [Accessed 13 Jun. 2019].

Higgenbotham, M. (2007) *Do Not Pass Go: Travel Links to Scottish Prisons*. Edinburgh: Families Outside.

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (2019) *Report on Expert Review of Mental Health Services, for Young People Entering and in Custody at HMP YOI Polmont*. HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (Inspecting and Monitoring).

HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland (2019) *Summary Report on HMP YOI Polmont (Full Inspection 29 October - 9 November 2018)*. HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland (Inspecting and Monitoring).

Justice Department (2015) *Prisoners using skype to contact families*. [online] Available at: <https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/news/prisoners-using-skype-contact-families> [Accessed 6 Jun. 2019].

National Preventative Mechanism (2018) *Report on an unannounced inspection of Maghaberry Prison*. Chief Inspector of Criminal Justice in Northern Ireland.

Mersky, J., Topitzes, J. and Reynolds, A. (2013) Impacts of adverse childhood experiences on health, mental health and substance use in early adulthood: A cohort study of an urban, minority sample in the U.S. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 37(11), pp.917-925.

National Transport Strategy (2006) Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

National Transport Strategy (2016) Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Radbury, B. and Wagner, P. (2015) *Screening Out Family Time: the for-profit video visitation industry in prisons and jails*. Prison Policy Initiative.

Reform Scotland (2018) *Prisons: Calling home from Christmas*. Reform Scotland.

Relais Enfant Parents Romands (2019) *Relais Enfants Parents: Qui sommes-nous?*. [online] Available at: <https://www.repr.ch/-Qui-sommes-nous-> [Accessed 14 Jun. 2019].

Robertson, O. (2012) *Collateral Convicts: Children of incarcerated parents – Recommendations and good practice from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion 2011*. United Nations

Sacro (2019) *Edinburgh Travel Service*. Edinburgh: Sacro.

Scottish Executive (2006) *National Strategy for the Management of Offenders*. Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Scottish Government (2017) *Justice in Scotland: Vision and Priorities*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government.

Scottish Prison Service (2019) *HMP Inverness*. [online] Available at: <http://www.sps.gov.uk/Corporate/Prisons/Inverness/HMP-Inverness.aspx> [Accessed 9 Jun. 2019].

*Transport (Scotland) Bill 2018*.

Yousaf, H. (2019) *Ministerial Statement: Response to the Expert Review of Mental Health Services for Young People Entering and in Custody at HMP and YOI Polmont*. [online] Scottish Government. Available at: <https://news.gov.scot/speeches-andbriefings/ministerial-statement-response-to-the-expert-review-of-mental-healthservices-for-young-people-entering-and-in-custody-at-hmp-and-yoi-polmont> [Accessed 17 Jun. 2019].