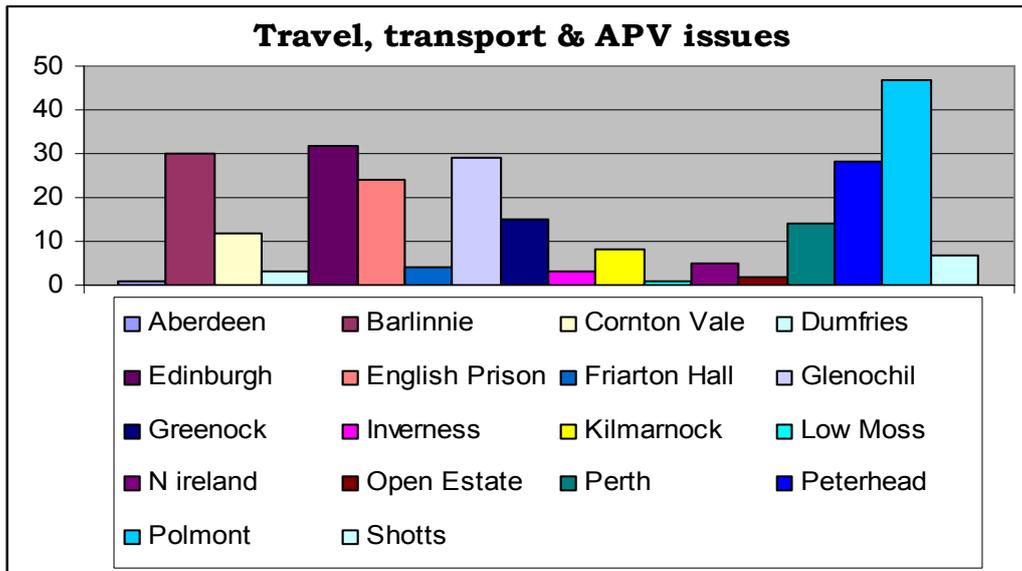


EXTENDED HOME LEAVE

With the impending introduction of Extended Home Leave (EHL) across the Open Estate in May this year, Families Outside, in partnership with the Scottish Government, produced a publication around this issue, aimed specifically at the families of prisoners about to experience the scheme. The leaflet gives information about Extended Home Leave, eligibility, the purpose of the scheme, how EHL is decided and what are the conditions surrounding. It was agreed that distribution of the leaflet would be via Families Outside, Criminal Justice Social Workers, Scottish Government and the Scottish Prison Service. Information is also available from the websites of Families Outside (www.familiesoutside.org.uk), the Scottish Government and SPS. Calls to the helpline relating to EHL have included experiencing difficulties in relationships following release on EHL, financial implications whilst having someone on home leave, heightened expectations for family members as soon as EHL is muted and discussion about EHL as part of a prisoner's progression within the system, and the implications that the end of the sentence is in view.



Parents and partners of prisoners continue to form a large proportion of the calls received to the helpline, which in this period totals **845**. The combined figures in fact represent **66%** of all calls received. We are increasingly seeing an increase in the volume of calls made by **professionals** – in comparison to calls from the same period last year that figure has increased by **13%**. A wide range of professionals are represented and these include contacts from statutory (health, education, social work, criminal justice) and voluntary organisations. This increase could in part, be due to the delivery of awareness training, regular publicity drives and conference work. The **unknown** category represents nearly **4%** of calls and relates to calls where either the caller does not disclose what their relationship is to the prisoner or their relationship is neither appropriate nor central to the call.



“Do Not Pass GoTravel Links to Scottish Prisons” is the recent research report commissioned by Families Outside and produced by Malcolm Higgenbotham, seconded to the organisation as part of Standard Life’s Community Investment Policy. In the research **Glenochil** was used as a case study due to the historically poor public transport network in the locality, and a summary of the key findings, along with both strategic and operational recommendations can be found in the report. Copies of this can be requested from Families Outside or downloaded from the website at www.familiesoutside.org.uk

Travel and transport, as well as financial assistance to Scottish prison establishments, continue to account for a large number of calls to the Helpline (**28%**), and the graph above shows this in relation to individual prison establishments over a six month period. It is not necessarily the central theme of a call but helpline staff will usually enquire, as a matter of course, about how easy it is for people to make a visit and the financial costs involved. It is surprising, despite efforts by Families Outside and SPS personnel, how many people are unaware of the Assisted Prison Visit Scheme (APVS) or have been traveling for sometime before realizing that they could claim for assistance.

Some issues around travel and transport are very difficult to address but the APV scheme is a practical, easily accessible benefit which can make a real difference for families and go some way to facilitating visits and supporting family relationships, albeit in a small way.

Some of the statistics shown above are atypical for the establishment they are relating to – for example, Peterhead still proves to be a challenge for many families trying to visit and for many this journey will be a long one. As mentioned earlier a large number of calls come from parents and this group is well represented in calls about Polmont. So it will come as no surprise that the greatest number of calls relating to travel, transport and APV are generated via this establishment.

These recent statistics from the helpline substantiates one of the report’s success criteria indicating that awareness about the Assisted Prison Scheme requires to be raised and promoted by both prison personnel as well as community based agencies. Information about APVU can also be accessed via our website at www.familiesoutside.org.uk.