Do Not Pass Go

Travel Links to Scottish Prisons

Families Outside Research Report

Malcom Higgenbotham

June 2007
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Families Outside

Families Outside is the only national Scottish independent organisation working on behalf of families affected by imprisonment.

We exist because imprisonment is a family experience. For prisoners, separation from loved ones is often the most painful consequence of incarceration. Families suffer the pain of separation but also feel the impact of imprisonment in other ways, such as loss of income, loss of home, anti-social behaviour by children in distress, and shame. An estimated 13,500 children a year in Scotland are separated from an imprisoned parent.

We provide a free confidential Scottish Helpline which aims to enable, empower and support families. We produce accessible information including factsheets on prison locations, visiting and travel.

We collate and analyse the themes from calls in order to influence and improve policy and practice in criminal justice, social care and other systems through comment, training and research.

We work in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service, Scottish Executive, Local Authorities and a range of other statutory and voluntary agencies.

In 2003 we undertook research into the travel problems faced by families getting to prisons in Scotland for visits. Since then progress has been made in some areas but a great deal remains to be achieved.

This report is the next step in taking the issue forward and Families Outside is immensely grateful to Standard Life for support through the secondment programme of their Community Investment Policy.

Our thanks to Malcolm Higgenbotham for his commitment to this secondment and for the work that resulted in this report. Malcolm quickly established himself as a valued member of the Families Outside team and he will be missed.

For information about our work visit our website: www.familiesoutside.org.uk or contact us:

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Edinburgh
EH1 3QN

0131 557 9800

Scottish Prisoners Families Helpline
0500 83 93 83
Mon – Fri 1pm – 5pm
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Foreword

One of the indicators in “Standards used in the Inspection of Prisons in Scotland” which I published in 2006 is Family members receive clear and helpful information about the visits system and there are special arrangements for transport to the prison if public transport is inadequate. So I rejoice that “Families Outside” have recognised the importance of this issue (if I am honest, I suspect it was Families Outside” which made sure that I recognised its importance!); and I am very glad that this Report has been made possible.

Like many prisoners, many members of the families of prisoners accept all too readily conditions and circumstances which more confident people would not accept. They need others to stand up for them and to speak for them. In this Report, not for the first time, “Families Outside” speaks up for them. In fact, this report is a follow-up to concerns raised by Families Outside years ago.

There are examples of good practice. Some of these I knew about already, but some of them are drawn from experiences other than the prison experience (e.g. hospital and business): these examples should encourage more good practice for the families of prisoners.

There are also examples of bad experience. Several of our prisons are quite inaccessible by public transport; and, of course, most people who visit prisoners are poor. The case study of Glenochil Prison illustrates very clearly the difficulties of travel which confront those who seek to visit relatives there.

Perhaps the key recommendations are about public policy. National Transport policies are challenged to take account of access to prisons; and Community Justice Authorities are challenged to do the same. I often say that it is all too easy to forget that prisoners are people; sadly their family members can be even more invisible. The recommendations of this report will make things better.

Andrew R C McLellan,
HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland
May 2007
1 Introduction

As part of the Standard Life Community Investment Policy, I was given the opportunity to undertake a secondment in the Voluntary Sector. Secondments are granted to individuals who are interested in the voluntary sector and want to share and develop their skills. This development of skills should then benefit Standard Life when the individual returns.

When the secondment to Families Outside was advertised along with other opportunities, it wasn’t one which stood out for me and I didn’t put my name forward initially. Some time later, I was approached by the Community Investment Department with some material to read on the background of the organisation and the project.

On reading the material, I was immediately impressed with Families Outside and the work they do for such a small organisation. The content of the material was well presented and its message, with quotes from calls and emails to the helpline, was extremely powerful. One report, quoted an email from a father whose son was in prison. The words written were from someone so desperate that he felt he was beyond help. The emotional impact this had on me is hard to describe: I just knew I wanted to find out more.

My initial apprehension about the post was probably indicative of the reaction of the general public today. Most people either have a negative view on criminal justice policies or just don’t want to get involved in any way. I was probably in the latter category. Most views seem to be driven by media coverage and party politics, but once you start to delve deeper under the surface, there is a complexity to the issues that are not mentioned in the news or the manifestos. I’ve seldom read anything about the desperation of families, like the father who sent the email. We should remember the families have not committed a crime and are not serving a sentence.

I wanted to get involved and the project to write a report on a major problem for families, travelling to prison visits, now seemed the perfect opportunity.

After applying for the secondment I was invited to be interviewed. Following the interview, I was offered the role. It is an exciting opportunity for me and I am very grateful to Standard Life for the chance to take it on.

Malcolm Higgenbotham
February 2007
2 Objectives

2.1 Scope
This report examines the current situation for families travelling to Scottish Prisons. It highlights issues faced by families getting to visits and outlines potential models of transport provisions to improve the situation.

Research on location, number of visits booked, number of visitors and number of visits not taken up has been carried out with each of the individual prisons in Scotland. The source of all the figures in the report is a survey undertaken by Family Contact Officers over one week between February and April 2007.

It was decided due to the timescale, the research would cover all the prisons but there should be a main focus on one, which was to be in the Central Belt and had issues with transport for visitors (and staff). HMP Glenochil met the criteria and was selected to be the main case study.

As a great deal of the research for this report covers public transport, the Scottish Executive Transport Strategy will be examined closely to determine the areas where prisons have been overlooked. Also, the Transport Strategy will be taken down to a local level to see how it is working in practice.

It is hoped that the report will raise awareness of the issue by documenting key findings and subsequently recommending solutions to the problems that currently exist.

2.2 Constraints
The main constraint for the project has been time. The secondment to Families Outside was only for 13 weeks and the first part of the secondment was to obtain background knowledge of the criminal justice system and the role of Families Outside.

Another constraint is that Families Outside has little authority or control over the recommendations detailed in the report. It is hoped that the report will have the desired effect and the success criteria is met but this is reliant on other bodies to ensure this happens.

2.3 Main Objectives of Report
The main objectives of this report are as follows:

- To provide a broad indication of the scope of the difficulties faced by visitors to Scotland’s prisons and raise awareness of this with all relevant agencies.
- To influence the Community Justice Authorities to add the issue of travelling to prisons for families to their agenda. Every Community Justice Authority has a prison in their locality.
- To highlight the need to improve links between Scotland’s Transport and Justice Policies specifically in relation to the issues with accessing prisons.
- To highlight practical improvements that can be made at local level without the need for policy change.
2.4 Success Criteria

What will success look like?

• All Community Justice Authorities accepting the issue onto their agenda with the appropriate local authorities and voluntary sector organisations.
• To get transport access to Prisons included in future National and Local Transport Strategies.
• For transport issues to be raised, where appropriate, in Prison Inspections and on the agenda of Visiting Committees.
• Gaining interest from the Commercial Transport Sector.
• Gaining interest in the issue from the public sector, voluntary sector and faith organisations.
• For the Scottish Prison Service to review visit times to take into account transport provisions to the individual establishments.
• For Local Authorities to review public transport timetables to take into account visit times at the individual establishments.
• Awareness being raised about the Assisted Prison Visit scheme amongst community based agencies who could promote it with families. Within the prison, Family Contact Officers and Visits staff have a critical role to play to ensure that travel and Assisted Prison Visit information is communicated to visitors and also crucially to the prisoners (who can play an important part in passing on information to each other and in turn, their families/visitors).

2.5 Overview of report

In 2003, following close examination of the type of calls to the Scottish Prisoners Families Helpline, it was clear that a major issue for families was the journey to the prisons for visits. A review of the situation was undertaken by Families Outside.

It is now four years down the line and the situation for families appears to be in no better state than it was in 2003. Public transport links to most prisons are still poor, voluntary sector transport providers have scaled down services and calls about transport issues to the Scottish Prisoners Helpline are still frequent. In 2005/06, there were 2197 calls to the Helpline. 328 (15%) of these calls were for the reason of travel or Assisted Prison Visit claims.

In their Prisoners Survey from 2006, the Scottish Prison Service notes: “Six out of ten prisoners reported that their visitors experienced problems when visiting them in prison. The problem reported most frequently by prisoners was the distance of the prison from their home, followed by the cost involved in getting to the prison”. Similarly, the same survey from 2004 states: “Prisoners most commonly cited distance as one of the difficulties their visitors experienced (67%), followed by cost of visiting (58%) and lack of transport (46%)”.

From the Families Outside research statistics reported in 2003, almost 50% of the visitors surveyed had not heard of the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme, which gives financial assistance to close family members on low incomes, subject to eligibility (The Scottish Prison Service contributed £265k in 2005/2006 to this scheme). A survey was carried out at HMP Glenochil in February 2007 and alarmingly, the figure was almost identical to the one in 2003: almost half of the families completing the survey did not know about the scheme. In the same survey just under 50% of the visitors paid over £15 in fares to reach the prison.

For this research, a survey completed by Family Contact Officers in every prison in Scotland cited travel issues as the main reason for visits not going ahead. Almost every prison had a point to make about problems with transport to the establishment. For example, Shotts Railway Station is closed on a Sunday, normally the busiest day for visits. Visitors to Noranside can only get public transport as far as Forfar: the last 10 miles of the journey has to be by taxi.
The same Prison Survey, completed early 2007, showed in a 7 day period there were 5,495 visits booked. (A booked visit can comprise a specific number of adults and children with variations between individual prisons.) 4,313 visits went ahead with 7,906 adults and 1,460 children travelling to visits.

1182 (22%) of the 5,495 booked visits did not go ahead. One of the reasons cited by those completing the survey was travel issues and distance to the prison.

To project these figures over one year equates to 285,740 booked visits and 487,032 people attending visits (many of this number will be repeat visitors). If 22% of booked visits do not go ahead per annum, this would mean approximately 62,862 booked visits not going ahead and 133,380 people not attending visits.

Research carried out by the Scottish Executive in 2006 shows that one in three Scottish households do not have access to a car, yet some prisons are almost impossible to reach without one.

This report will highlight the worsening situation for families travelling to visits, coming at a time when the number of prisoners in Scotland is currently at approximately 7461 and increasing every year (Scottish Prison Service projections from 2005 expect the figure to rise to 8100 by 2013). The impact of the Custodial Sentences and Weapons Bill, passed in 2007, will increase this further by around another 900 places. There are new prisons being built to accommodate the projected numbers. More prisoners, of course, mean that more families and children are affected by imprisonment. The Scottish Prison Service document, “Making a Difference” (2002), reports that as many as 13,500 children in Scotland have a parent in prison. For these children, the disruption to family life puts them at a greater risk of becoming offenders in the future. (Prison Without Bars – Families Outside and Tayside Criminal Justice Project (N Loucks 2003)) The document also states that “to reduce recidivism, the importance of the contribution of effective quality visits where family contact is actively promoted cannot be over estimated”.

Also, it should be noted that prison staff face a lot of the same issues as most work shifts and if there is no private car available they will also suffer from poor public transport links.

2.6 An opportunity?

The report produced 4 years ago made a number of practical and strategic recommendations (a summary is appended) Many of these remain unaddressed, with the fundamental problem being the lack of a strategic approach or responsibility.

However in re-examining the issue in 2007 a great opportunity is presented by the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders which aims to “reduce the amount of reoffending and the amount of serious harm caused by those already known to the criminal justice system”. The strategy recognises the role that families can play in supporting their family member to ‘go straight’ and has involvement of families in resettlement as a key outcome.

It is evident that maintaining relationships between the prisoner and their family while they are separated is essential if the family are to offer support on release. Visits are crucial for this.
2.7 Main Strategic Recommendations

The first strategic recommendation of this report is therefore that the new Community Justice Authorities include travel and transport arrangements for visits to prisons in their plans, drawing in relevant transport and planning departments from their member Local Authorities and working in partnership with prisons in their area and any other agencies which can assist. A template to assist with this is appended.

The second strategic recommendation is for the Scottish Executive. In the scrutiny of a range of national and local transport plans and policy documents the author could not find a single reference to prisons. Given that many of the underpinning principles of transport policy promote accessibility for disadvantaged groups there are clear overlaps. The new policy direction of the national strategy for the management of offenders points to the need to join up policy across the boundaries of transport and justice.

The full range of recommendations is detailed on page 29.
3 Key Policy Context

3.1 Policy Overview

The relevant policies for the purpose of this report are Justice and Transport. When looking through the policies there is a lack of synergy between the two areas even though the links between improved transport provision and easier visiting appears obvious.

The National Transport Strategy (2006) does not include any initiatives on helping families reach prisons despite the fact that this would support a key outcome in the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders (2006).

If a main outcome of the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders is to encourage family involvement, then maintaining good family contact by helping families reach prisons has to be part of that agenda. However links to transport are not part of the strategy or part of the framework for the first round of the Community Justice Authority plans.

3.2 National Strategy for the Management of Offenders 2006

The National Strategy for the Management of Offenders sets the direction for the work of the new Community Justice Authorities, the Scottish Prison Service and other agencies with a core responsibility for managing offenders with the aim of reducing reoffending. It also states very clearly that other bodies have a central role in reducing reoffending, namely Housing, Health, Benefits, Education & Training and Employment. It is clear from this and other research that another area should be added to this list: Transport.

The strategy highlights a set of shared objectives for all the agencies involved grouped into outcomes for communities, for offenders and for the system. For the community an outcome is:

“Timely information and where appropriate, involvement for the families of offenders”.

Of the nine outcomes for offenders in the strategy one is:

“Maintained or improved relationships with families, peers and community”.

The Strategy also highlights the need for Community Justice Authorities to work in new ways to add value and build on the good examples of joint working that already exist. There is an expectation that the Community Justice Authorities will:

“use the development of area plans to promote a problem solving approach between agencies, with an early focus on basic practical issues”.

For maintaining good contact, the main basic practical issue for families is getting from their home to the prison in time to register for the visit.

As part of the area planning, Local Authorities have a commitment to “agree priorities and align services to deliver the area plan”, also “ensuring all the relevant services they provide are taken into account”. Part of the services the local authority would need to provide would be the provision of good, affordable public or community transport to access the prison.
3.3 Scottish Executive Transport Policy

In the National Transport Strategy (2006), the Transport Minister, Tavish Scott stated: “We want to connect communities, improving access to jobs, education, health and leisure services”.

Throughout this very detailed 80-page document, there is a focus on accessibility, e.g. for health centres and education facilities, but there is no mention of the prison estate and how families can be better served in maintaining good family contact through visits.

Yet the National Transport Strategy recognises that there is a need for better public transport for disadvantaged communities. Research carried out by Glasgow Caledonian University in 2003 (R Houchin) has shown that, at that time, half of the prison population came from 155 of the poorest council wards in Scotland. One quarter of the prison population come from 53 of the poorest wards, 35 of these are in Glasgow. Also in 2003, 60% of people living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland had no access to a car for private use, these are the people most likely to use public transport.

Shotts have one bus service each, running every two hours, but the service does not link to visit times or for the latter, connect to the nearest national bus/rail link.

In the survey completed by Family Contact Officers at these prisons, it was reported that none of the visitors used the bus service due to the infrequency and unreliability. The survey also noted that the majority of visitors got to the establishment by private car, taxi taken from the nearest main transport link or walk of minimum 25 minutes.

The National Strategy acknowledges that: “although public transport may be available, this does not necessarily mean that individuals can reach the locations they need to at convenient times, or that they can afford to use the services, or that they are confident in the knowledge that they will enjoy a high quality journey”.

Those who do use public transport to access prison visits often travel long distances, and this can involve 3 or 4 different services to reach the destination. Families Outside Research in 2003 reported that over half of the prisoners families surveyed faced a round trip of at least 5 hours.

The Strategy highlights success stories in Transport which include providing key funded services to Hospitals, Schools and large Financial Organisations. One initiative in Glasgow details a project where unemployed people from disadvantaged communities are given a chance to train to be drivers taking patients to Beatson Hospital (see 8.2). This type of innovative project, properly run and adequately funded could be an opportunity to ease the burden of travel for families to prison visits whilst also helping other members of the community get their lives back on track.

Partnership working is also highlighted. The Transport Strategy concludes that: “We would like to see regional transport partnerships, local authorities and health boards working together to address issues with a view of maximising the contribution.
of the investment being made in transport services across a region, including social work transport, local authority subsidised bus services, non-emergency patient transport and community transport”.

A structure therefore exists which could integrate and overlap with the objectives of the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders.

Finally, one in ten people in Scotland are disabled and there is an ever growing over-65 population. One of the National Objectives in the Transport Policy is to ask the question: “How well transport meets the needs of disabled people/carers”. With the rising prison population, it is possible that more disabled and elderly people will be affected by imprisonment and will be accessing prison visits.

### 3.4 Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland

One of the main Indicators of the Standards of HM Prison Inspections is as follows:

**Good contact with family and friends is maintained**

The Prison Inspectorate recognises the importance of visits for the wellbeing of the prisoner and the effect this will have in the likelihood of reoffending. The Chief Inspector of Prisons, Andrew McLellan, has been quoted as saying: “The room for visits is such an important room in a prison - most prisoners would say the most important room. Good family relationships will keep prisoners out of trouble in the future - the cost of breakdown in family relationships will be paid for years to come.”

When inspections are carried out, there is a focus on Family Contact and from the Inspectorate Standards: “visitors should be asked by inspectors about their experiences of visiting”. As part of the interview of visitors, the question could be asked about travelling to the prison and any issues highlighted in the full inspection report. It would also be an opportunity to highlight and share any good practice for each of the establishments visited.

The following are examples where travel issues are noted in inspections under the heading of Family Contact. The first notes a serious concern for families in the main case study for this report, HMP Glenochil. The example quotes the 2006 inspection but it also refers to the same issue being reported in 2003.

**Inspection of HMP Glenochil 2006**

“The report of 2003 also commented on one other difficulty for visitors: A major problem for visitors was getting to and from the prison, particularly for those using public transport. Many have to take small children out of school early to get to the prison on time for an evening visit and they have to walk the two miles from Tullibody to the prison, sometimes in the dark, and in all kinds of weather. Family contact is recognised as very important in reducing reoffending. So everything that makes family contact more difficult has implications not only for a prisoner in Glenochil and his family, but also for what happens when the prisoner is released. There is evidence that prison staff have made strenuous attempts to provide transport arrangements to the prisons but they have been unsuccessful. Perhaps there are community groups or churches which might see an opportunity here”.

The second is an example of good practice from HMP & YOI Cornton Vale, where families are sent an information pack detailing important information about visiting, including how to get to the prison.

**Inspection of HMP & YOI Cornton Vale 2006**

“An information pack is sent to the families of prisoners shortly after reception. This provides details of visiting times, how to get to the prison, issues relating to property and money, information about the Assisted Prison Visit Scheme and other general information. Information is available in different languages. As part of this pack, family members are invited to attend an..."
informal meeting within the establishment. This meeting is an opportunity to meet with staff and obtain further information. This is an area of good practice”.

The third is a point made about parking and the distance to the train station at HM Young Offenders Institution Polmont.

**Inspection of HM Young Offenders Polmont 2004**

“However, some problems were encountered with travel arrangements. Some visitors travelling by car were unable to find a parking space close to the establishment and had to walk a considerable distance. This is not an ideal situation for anyone and is particularly difficult for those visitors with a disability. A new car park is being built and should address this. Similarly, the YOI is just under one mile from the train station. This is a long walk particularly in bad weather and consideration might be given to providing a subsidised shuttle bus”.

### 3.5 Visiting Committees

Visiting Committees are another body who have an independent role to play in Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions. One of the roles of a visiting committee is to provide assurance that prisoners rights are respected and that they are provided with opportunities to prepare for release in ways likely to reduce their reoffending.

In the Review of Prison Visiting Committees 2005 in the section on Reducing Reoffending it states:

“The group agreed that VC’s could contribute to the developing policy on reducing reoffending by specifically reporting on work in the prison on preparation for release. As a related issue VC’s should take specific interest in facilities and arrangements for visitors and should make regular contact with them”.

One of the most important “arrangements for visitors” is the accessibility of the prison to actually make the trip for the visit. This could be taken into account when Visiting Committees meet to report on current issues with the establishment.

### 3.6 Assisted Prison Visits

The Assisted Prison Visits Unit administers a scheme, on behalf of the Scottish Prison Service, to provide help with travel expenses and overnight allowances to prisoners close relatives, partners and in certain circumstances, a friend of the prisoner.

To qualify for assistance families must be in receipt of the following or hold a Health Certificate:

- **Income Support**
- **Income-based Job Seekers Allowance**
- **Tax Credit**
- **Pension Credit**

The standards set by the Assisted Prison Visits Unit state that all applications will be assessed within 8 working days of receipt. Also, all letters will be answered within 8 working days.

There is a Helpline in operation Monday–Friday and a full complaints procedure.

The Assisted Prison Visits scheme is examined further in the “Good Practice” section of this report.

### 3.7 Community Transport

Community Transport is the national body with which all local transport providers register. There is a fee to join and the Association provides Safety Inspections, Driver Training and an Advice & Information Helpline.

The Community Transport Association website states: “There are over 100,000 minibuses serving over 10 million passengers every year being operated for use by voluntary and community groups, schools, colleges and Local Authorities, or to provide door-to-door transport for people who are unable to use other public transport”. It further states that “The Community Transport Association has been
working very closely with the government’s Social Exclusion Unit over their transport study, stressing the importance of supporting local, community-based initiatives in transport provision”.

Funding is obtained from the Scottish Executive to help run Rural and Urban Initiatives.

“A budget of £500k per year over the period 2003-2006 has been made available to improve and develop community transport opportunities in urban areas that are not well served by public transport”.

Community Transport have one project for prison visitors in the UK at the moment. This is based in the West Midlands and is examined further in the “Good Practice” section of this report.

3.8 Commercial Transport Sector

Buses in Scotland operate in a de-regulated market, with the private sector providing the majority of services. However, there are significant public sector contributions with the Scottish Executive supporting through a range of funding mechanisms.

In the Scottish Executive document, An Action Plan For Buses In Scotland 2006, it acknowledges that: “Buses are flexible services, which can be developed and introduced very quickly where demand is identified”.

The same document recognises the need for “promotion of accessibility and social inclusion”. To achieve this, some of the actions that will go ahead are to review Scottish Government funding with operators and transport authorities and to expand Demand Responsive Transport.

It is hoped that the funding and new initiatives going forward recognise the issues presented in this report and consider improvements that are possible by good partnership working between Regional Transport Authorities and the Commercial Transport Sector.

There is an excellent example of partnership working between NIACRO “Family Links” project and the commercial bus company, Translink, in the “Good Practice” section of this report.

3.9 Other Research/Reference

During the research for this report, there were many references to transport issues and visits identified in various other reports in the Criminal Justice Sector. Below are examples of where the issues have been raised or commented on by criminologists, politicians, students and members of the public.

Scottish Executive Justice1 Committee Report (2002)

“The SPS believes that maintenance of family links is a major problem for prisoners at Peterhead given the distance and awkwardness of the journey for visitors”

Sentenced Families – Ormiston Children & Families Trust (G Pugh - 2004)

Quotes from family members:

“It’s very expensive to visit him – the only way you can get from the station is a taxi, which is £30 return, then you need stuff for the kids going up there and spend money in there – it’s a lot, so we don’t go much now”

“Everyone feels sorry for him but no-one thinks of me and the kids, it’s us being punished really. We are the forgotten people – we’re actually doing the sentence as well”

The Impact of Imprisonment on Family Relationships – University of Glasgow (K Peart/S Asquith – 1992)

“Even where there is public transport, this usually imposes an additional burden in terms of the cost in time and does not always take visitors directly to the prison e.g. Glenochil”
Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners (Social Exclusion Unit – 2002)

“It can be particularly difficult for those families relying on Public Transport as prisons are often located in remote areas not served by transport routes”.

“The Prison Service presumes all visitors will have access to private transport”

“Family should be contacted so they know where prisoner is, understand visiting arrangements, as well as supported visitors scheme”

During Custody - “Family should be informed if prisoner is moved and told of new visiting arrangements”


“Given that many prisoners come from marginalised and impoverished backgrounds, the cost of travelling long distances may mean it will not be possible for families to visit if the prison is a long distance from the area where the family lives”


“The long journey: visits to a parent in prison can take many hours and for many families public transport is the only option. With many prisons located in remote areas, children and accompanying adults can be tired, cold and hungry by the time they arrive”

Prison Without Bars – Families Outside and Tayside Criminal Justice Project (N Loucks 2003)

“The cost of travel and difficulty in obtaining forms for financial assistance are common frustrations”

“Visitors often face many difficulties to visit people in custody – long distances, short visits, expense, an unfamiliar and daunting environment, stigma, indignity and bureaucracy – and are likely to receive little encouragement to visit”

“Visitors may be turned away if they are late or do not have the required identification”

Quote from family member - “When I go to visit, I go through all kinds of emotions; I’m knackered, elated, frightened about the long journeys on my own. I am emotionally drained”


“As things stand, nearly half of all prisoners lose contact with their families when they go to prison”

“In Scotland, 20% of young offenders are parents”

“Good family relationships are beneficial to prison security. Prisoners with stable relationships outside are more likely to be stable prisoners inside”

“Whatever can be done to encourage good relationships between prisoners and their families should be done” – (Andrew McLellan)

“Encouraging family relationships should be done because of its effect on reducing reoffending” – (Andrew McLellan)

“Prisoners who were able to maintain good family ties were almost six times less likely to reoffend than those who did not” – (Holt and Miller 1972)

“There is every reason to believe that the nature of a prisoners relationship with his or her family will be an important factor in determining whether he or she will succeed in leading a useful and law-abiding life on return to the community” – (Woolf Report 1991)
4 Case Study - HMP Glenochil

4.1 Background to Case Study

HMP Glenochil is situated in Clackmannanshire at the foot of the Ochil hills. The prison has been going through renovations to add a new block and also a new visit room. The old visit room has 19 tables with each prisoner being allowed 3 adults and up to 4 children at one time. The new visit room has 32 tables with each prisoner being allowed 3 adults and 4 children at one time. There were 430 prisoners in April 2007, but this number will increase to 668 once the refurbishment is complete. Research carried out for this report notes that there were 240 visits booked in one week at Glenochil, with 60 (25%) not going ahead. In the same week the number of visitors attending visits was 468 (366 adults and 102 children). This number will increase when the new block is at full capacity.

The prison is located a mile and a half from the town of Tullibody and the majority of families travelling by public transport will disembark there. As previously stated in this report, most of these families will walk up to the prison from Tullibody after getting the bus from Stirling. Some families take a taxi and there is a discounted rate with a local firm. The footpath used is in a state of disrepair and is along a very busy, unlit road. As part of the research, the author walked the route on a sunny, calm day and it took 25 minutes. It was striking how many lorries and other construction vehicles were using the road. This situation has been highlighted by staff at HMP Glenochil and the Chief Inspector of Prisons, but there have been no improvements made by the local authority to improve access to the prison in recent years.

There are no transport provisions currently running to the prison by any voluntary organisation.

A new rail link is opening this Summer from Stirling to Alloa but this will not improve the situation as the only bus from Alloa that provides access to the prison runs every 2 hours (no service on Sundays) and does not correspond with visit times.
4.2 Visitors Survey

In February 2007, 63 visitors completed transport surveys at HMP Glenochil. The following points show the main findings from the survey:

- 68% used a private car to get to visits, with 32% using public transport.
- Of those travelling by car, 26% had borrowed a car to make the journey.
- 50% had difficulties with public transport with expense and no direct transport links being the main reasons.
- 25% of those surveyed had at some stage walked to the prison from Tullibody.
- 50% reported the cost of the travel to the visit being over £15, with 8% of this group spending over £50.
- 50% of visitors travelled with children, with 61% of the children under 10 years old.
- 50% had never heard of the Assisted Prison Visits Scheme.
- 50% said they would benefit from a transport provision from Glasgow or Edinburgh.

Half of those surveyed thought that a transport provision from Glasgow or Edinburgh would be beneficial. SACRO had previously run a bus from Glasgow but this is no longer available.

4.3 Clackmannanshire Council Transport Strategy 2006-2009

The local strategy for Clackmannanshire has been developed closely in line with the National Transport Strategy. It is clear there are budget constraints, restricting areas where improvements can be made.

There is no mention of HMP Glenochil and the problems with access. However, this omission is mirrored in the Transport Strategy at a National level, previously covered in this report. The strategy does focus on areas where social inclusion could be improved: “in order to alleviate social exclusion a number of subsidised bus services are provided”. There is also a focus on improvements in safety for pedestrians: “Further initiatives such as improving safety and the perception of safety for pedestrians and cyclists are being implemented by the council to increase access for all”.

The Strategy acknowledges: “Council resources are limited”. With a limited budget, it is essential that any improvements to services are making a real contribution to the overall objectives of the strategy.
It is reported that there are to be improvements made for the footpath alongside the prison but these improvements are on the East side of Glenochil village and will not improve the walk for visitors to the prison.

The walk from Tullibody to Glenochil is mainly unlit and the Strategy states it should: “increase the perceived safety for Clackmannanshire residents through improving the quality and quantity of lighting”. Unfortunately though, budget constraints mean that there are no plans to add any lighting to the walk.

The National Transport Strategy 2006 states: “Child pedestrians are a particularly vulnerable group, making it up to 37% of non-fatal injuries in 2005 and over 6% of all the people injured on Scottish roads”. It is a concern that a child or adult could be injured or killed whilst walking along this narrow footpath on a very busy road.

4.4 Meeting with Clackmannanshire Council – 7 March 2007

A meeting was arranged between officials from HMP Glenochil and Clackmannanshire Council to discuss the current issues for visitors accessing the prison. This meeting took place on 7 March 2007 in the councils buildings in Alloa.

In attendance:
- Malcolm Higgenbotham (Families Outside)
- Lesley Deans (Clackmannanshire Council)
- Derek Parry (Clackmannanshire Council)
- Wattie Reekie (HMP Glenochil)
- Louise MacDonald (HMP Glenochil)

The meeting was a positive indication that interaction between prisons and local authorities is possible, to highlight issues and agree improvements. The council officials were sympathetic to many of the issues raise but made it clear that any changes would be subject to budget constraints.

The following points are the outcomes taken from the meeting:

- Only bus to pass the prison is a 2 hourly service from Alloa to Alva. There are no plans to change this service other than to cut the service altogether on a Sunday. It was noted that no visitors were known to use the service.
- The latest Visit Times were passed to council officials. These will be taken into account when reviewing timetables.
- There is a car sharing scheme called TRIPSHARE promoted by the council. Information about the scheme will be passed to the prison.
- All relevant bus timetables are to be passed to the prison for the Visit Area.
- Enquiries were made about the possibility of improvements to the footpath from Tullibody to Glenochil and also some lighting. Correspondence received post-meeting confirm there are no plans to improve the footpath or light it. There may be a better route for a part of the walk through the new housing estate at Muirpark. It was also confirmed that the council were planning to situate a new bus stop outside the prison. However, this would only service the bus which is not used by visitors.
- Agreement was reached to meet again to keep the link between the council and the prison.

4.5 An Opportunity? Dial-a-Journey Community Transport

After contacting the Community Transport Association to discuss opportunities in this area, I was asked to provide details of the issues for visitors for HMP Glenochil and other prisons in the Central Belt.

Details were provided for Glenochil, Cornton Vale, Polmont, and Shotts. Following this I was contacted by a Stirling based Community Transport provider, Dial-a-Journey.

Dial-a-Journey is a door-to-door transport service for people who have a mobility problem, and who cannot use conventional public transport. The service is funded and fares subsidised within the operating areas of Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils.
After the initial contact a meeting was arranged and took place in April. The officials at Dial-a-Journey explained that there was a possibility they could provide a service to Comton Vale and Glenochil from Stirling. Funding would have to be secured to make the scheme possible.

In the first instance, a feasibility study would be carried out to look at possible passenger numbers, fares and visit times. HMP Glenochil have agreed to assist with the feasibility study.

It is hoped that this leads to a transport provision for visitors and it can be used as an example to other establishments of what can be done with partnership working between prisons, local authorities and community transport providers.

4.6 Summary

The location of HMP Glenochil means that most of the visitors using public transport will have to use 2 or 3 services just to reach Tullibody. They then have to face the walk to the prison, sometimes with small children in tow. In interviews with family members one young mother made it clear she would not visit her partner if she had to take public transport again, she was travelling from Aberdeen.

Some staff working at the prison have tried in the past to improve transport provisions to the prison. One officer explained how he used to cycle to work but had to stop due to the danger involved with cycling along the road leading to the prison.

Finally, I made contact with the local councillor for Glenochil via email. He explained that he was aware of the issue and had raised it with the council. However, all that was done at that time was to put up more signs directing people to the prison. This is an example of the presumption that every visitor accesses visits by a private car. From this research, it is clear that at least 32% of visitors would not agree.
# Overall Study of all Scottish Prisons

## 5.1 Background to Overall Study

The following table shows a snapshot of figures taken from a survey completed by Family Contact Officers in February/March 2007. The figures are based on a 7 day period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison (No of prisoners)</th>
<th>Visits booked in one week</th>
<th>No. of visits not taken up</th>
<th>Approx no of Adults</th>
<th>Approx no of Children</th>
<th>Total no of Adults and Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noranside (167)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3 (18%)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenochil (430)</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>60 (25%)</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle Huntly (277)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>28 (23%)</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Shotts (525)</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>119 (47%)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenock (330)</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>57 (9%)</td>
<td>1239</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inverness (150)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polmont (640)</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>84 (17%)</td>
<td>808</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth (500)</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>58 (19%)</td>
<td>466</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friarton (89)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>20 (25%)</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries (208)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>21 (25%)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterhead (305)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5 (10%)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Moss (300)</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>45 (27%)</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornton Vale (320)</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>19 (13%)</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilmarnock (641)</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>87 (21%)</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Aberdeen (230)</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>35 (15%)</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barlinnie (1550)</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>273 (19%)</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>1968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh (799)</td>
<td>904</td>
<td>268 (30%)</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>1334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (7461)</td>
<td>5495</td>
<td>1182 (22%)</td>
<td>7906</td>
<td>1460</td>
<td>9366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Points to note:

- *Figures for HMP Shotts and HMP Aberdeen are a weekly average based on 2 days of data.
- HMP Inverness do not have a booking system and therefore could not provide visit numbers, but they were able to provide number of visitors.
- A booked visit can comprise a specific number of adults and children with variations between individual prisons.
- Many of the approximate number of adults and children will be repeat visitors.
5.2 Analysis of data

The higher percentages of visits not going ahead are at prisons reported to be difficult to access e.g. Glenochil/Shotts, but there are exceptions where prisons with easier access, such as Edinburgh, also have a high figure.

HMP Greenock have by far the most number of visits per prisoner, with over 600 visits booked in one week for a prison with just over 300 prisoners.

The very low number of visits at HMP Noranside were to be expected due to the location of the prison and the home leave policy there.

Almost 2000 visitors attend Barlinnie every week. There were reports of problems with car parking at the prison where it is very difficult to get a space in the prison car park.

*These figures give an insight into the number of visits not going ahead. 22% is a high average and this must be having a knock on effect on the morale of the prisoners it concerns. It equates to over 61,000 booked visits per year not going ahead. Whilst we cannot state that all visits not taken up are due to travel problems, these figures are significant enough to indicate the need for this aspect to be recognised and addressed.*
6 Individual Family Case Studies

6.1 Telephone Interviews

As part of the research carried out for this report, two families agreed to take part in case studies through telephone interviews. The first person, Sue*, visits her husband with their young daughter on a regular basis in Castle Huntly using her own car. The second, Elizabeth*, has two sons in prison, one in Shotts and one in Edinburgh. She visits one, alternately, each week, using public transport. She has done this for 13 years.

The following are the questions and answers taken from the interviews:

(* names have been changed)

Means of travel?

Sue: I’ve always had a car. If I didn’t have a car I couldn’t get to Castle Huntly.
Elizabeth: Public transport, buses, trains and taxis.

What prisons have you travelled to for visits?

Sue: Barlinnie, Edinburgh, Castle Huntly.
Elizabeth: Barlinnie, Glenochil, Dumfries, Greenock, Edinburgh, Shotts.

Average cost of travel?

Sue: Approx £20 per visit (private car)
Elizabeth: Approx £20 per visit (public transport)

Do you use the Assisted Prison Visits scheme?

Sue: I have claimed twice now. I was working before so not eligible.
Elizabeth: I recently stopped working so have started to claim. Claiming at first was a nightmare.

Average length of journey (door to door, including visit time)?

Sue: Castle Huntly – 6 hours (private car)
Elizabeth: Edinburgh – 5 hours (public transport)

Ever had difficulties travelling?

Sue: I was once late as a bus had broken down and traffic was held up. I was 10 minutes late and was turned away from the visit.
Elizabeth: With public transport you can spend the whole day travelling. There is lots of waiting time and standing about waiting on connections. I can only get to Glenochil by taking 3 buses and a taxi.

Any other comments?

Sue: “It’s disgraceful there is no waiting area, some people come from England for a visit!”
“I was a complete culture shock, I had never been near a prison before”
“I didn’t recognise him”
“On the first visit I was terrified, I cried the whole visit and the whole journey home”
“Felt intimidated being new, like the new girl going to school”
“Being turned away from a visit for being 10 minutes late was the most distressing thing that has ever happened to me”
“Families are the forgotten victims of crime”
“You feel angry, sad, hurt and you don’t know what the future holds”
“The only thing that keeps us going is knowing he is coming home”

Elizabeth: “You get anxious about trains being on time so you don’t miss any of the visit”
“You just want to know they are coping”
“Things are beyond your control”
“Nearer the end of the sentence you are anxious that nothing goes wrong”

6.2 Summary

Although the method of transport is different for both the interviewees, the travel time and expense are similar. Sue made it very clear that she felt extremely lucky to be able to run a car, as without it visiting would virtually be impossible. Elizabeth has used public transport to get to various prisons every week for 13 years. It is not possible to imagine the anxiety this must cause due to the potential unpredictability of using public transport. The loyalty and determination of these family members to make regular visits really highlights the fundamental reason for this research to be completed, to reduce the likelihood of their loved ones reoffending in the future.
7 Examples of Good Practice

7.1 Scottish Prison Service

7.1.1 HMP Addiewell
In June 2006, the Scottish Prison Service awarded a contract for HMP Addiewell to be financed, designed, constructed and managed under a Public Private Partnership agreement. The new facility will provide 700 prisoner places from the latter part of 2008.

APL, the private company to be awarded the contract has agreed to work in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service, Community Justice Authorities and a range of other agencies and partner organisations.

As part of the finance agreement in the contract it states that: “In accordance with the planning conditions set by West Lothian Council, a £100k contribution towards the improvement of local public transport will be made by SPS to West Lothian Council. APL will also produce a Green Transport Plan to encourage sustainable transport use”.

This financial contribution will go towards the upgrade of the local railway station and improvements to the nearby footpaths. It shows a great example of partnership working with the local authority to make the new prison accessible to all visitors. As the published material on Addiewell states, it is “encouraging and providing opportunities for prisoners to maintain and improve their personal and family relationships”.

7.1.2 Assisted Prison Visits
The Assisted Prison Visits scheme is another example of good practice by the Scottish Prison Service to help families on low incomes travel to visits. In the last year the unit paid out £265k in claims and there were 4,469 claims paid out in total. There is no upper budget for this benefit and the unit will pay out expenses to all who are eligible and provide the relevant paperwork.

However, from research, there appears to be a need to make more families aware of the existence of the Assisted Prison Visits scheme and this should be something that is investigated in the future. As in the 2003 research, the Helpline reports continued significant numbers of callers who have difficulties filling in the forms and experience delays in payments.

7.1.3 Transport provided for Home Leave
The Open Estate prisons at Noranside and Castle Huntly are very remote. When the prisoners go on home leave, transport is provided by the Scottish Prison Service to specified transport hubs in Scotland. This service can only be described as a lifeline for those prisoners where public transport is the only option for a home leave visit.

7.2 England – West Midlands
Community Transport
In the West Midlands, a Community Transport initiative provides transport for families to get to prison visits. This came about from poor transport links to establishments and the cost of taxis to make the final leg of the journey. The project has 3 years of mainly National Lottery funding and this will take them into 2008.

The initiative has been so successful that they are branching out to Greater Manchester.

Further information on the project:
- Started due to poor transport links and price of taxi fares.
- 5 minibuses serving 10 prisons in West Midlands.
- Freephone number available for the computerised booking system.
- Users must be registered.
- Expanding to Greater Manchester.
- Project is part of Community Transport UK.
- Designated pick up points but also ad-hoc.
• The main funding is from the National Lottery.
• They use paid drivers. Currently trying to recruit volunteers, ex-service users.
• In a 3 month period (Nov-Jan) there were approx 500 passengers.
• 2230 registered users.

7.3 Northern Ireland – NIACRO “Family Links”

In Northern Ireland, NIACRO run a very similar scheme for the 3 prisons there. This has been running for many years now and is a very popular service amongst the families. There is also an agreement with a commercial partner, Translink, to run a service to an establishment and have discounted fares.

The relationship NIACRO have with Translink is an innovative example of how partnership working between the voluntary and commercial sectors can work in practice.

Further information on the project:
• 3 establishments
• 2 mini buses covering most areas with 3 paid drivers and other sessional drivers.
• 4500 passengers a year.
• Funded by NI Prison Service, £80k a year.
• Computerised booking system via Freephone (open Monday & Thursday)
• Agreement with Translink to run a service to an establishment and have discounted fares.
• Nominal fees for mini buses – approx £5.

7.4 Scotland – Project Happy

Project Happy started a bus service from Glasgow Central to HMP Kilmarnock in January 2006. After a slow start, this service has turned into a popular and well-used service for families. There are plans to extend the service to HMP Shotts this year.

Further information on the project:
• Main objective is to get children to visit a parent in prison.
• 32 seat mini bus runs to Kilmarnock Prison on a Saturday and Sunday.
• Bookings taken via a freephone number.
• One pick up point, Glasgow Central Station.
• 3 bus companies refused to deal with charity before present one was secured. There is no discount from the bus company.
• Passenger numbers for year – 2500 adults, 1800 children.
• BBC Documentary recently made about Project Happy. This resulted in much positive feedback from the public and approx £3k in donations.
• Future services planned for Shotts and Cornton Vale.

7.5 Scotland – SACRO

In 2003 SACRO were able to run transport services (through volunteer drivers) from Edinburgh to 9 establishments and from Glasgow (using buses) to at least 3 establishments. These services have significantly reduced since then.

More detail than the timescale this research has permitted is required on the exact services now offered by SACRO, how these services are promoted, the reasons for a service to be discontinued or cancelled and how this is communicated to visitors and the prisons.

The continued feasibility of the remaining SACRO travel services should be considered in the context of the key recommendation of the report for the CJAs.
8 Examples of Good Practice: Other sectors

8.1 Heriot-Watt University
In Edinburgh, Lothian Buses run many services to Health and Education Facilities. The company is publicly owned, with the major shareholder being The City of Edinburgh Council.

One of the Universities in Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt, is based in the outskirts of the city at Riccarton. Lothian Buses extended one of their bus routes (No. 34) to serve this facility and there are buses running to and from the University from 6am until Midnight.

8.2 Beatson Hospital Glasgow
There are many examples of good partnership working when it comes to transport provision in the Health sector. The following highlights the excellent project that is running at Beatson Oncology Centre. This innovative provision is not only providing a service to patients at the centre, but is also providing opportunities for long term unemployed individuals to get Training and Employment.

“The Patient Transport Service based in the Beatson Oncology Centre started in March 2004. It was grant funded (£414k over 2 years) and enabled it’s partners to run a small fleet of People Carriers to transport patients within the Greater Glasgow area. The project aims were to reduce health inequalities by addressing a gap in transport services for cancer patients in Glasgow, improve cancer care and create job opportunities for individuals living in recognised disadvantaged areas throughout Glasgow. An estimated 4000 patients were provided with quality and supportive transport to and from treatment centres over the two years of the project. In terms of creating employment, recruited drivers who delivered the service were all previously long term unemployed individuals and resident in social inclusion partnership areas throughout Glasgow. The drivers were given full professional training by the Scottish Ambulance Service and able to take advantage of promotion opportunities within the Ambulance Service. Twelve long term unemployed individuals were initially recruited on fixed term contracts. Eight have now attained full time permanent positions as drivers and one has been promoted to Ambulance Care Assistant.”

Source: Scotland’s National Transport Strategy 2006

8.3 Royal Bank of Scotland – Gogarburn
The following is an example where a large financial institution have worked closely with the local authority and bus companies to improve the services for their staff to reach the new facility on the outskirts of Edinburgh. It should be noted that RBS provided a subsidy for a non-profitable route and also built facilities for buses to stop on site.

“Gogarburn houses approximately 3,500 RBS employees, where they enjoy a variety of on-campus facilities including a Nursery, Health & Leisure Suite, a conference centre and business school. The office accommodation is arranged around a central “street” offering a range of retail outlets, including hairdresser, supermarket and pharmacy. Such facilities minimise the need for off-site journeys.

To inform the travel plan, a Sustainable Transport Access Study was undertaken. This revealed that only 21% of RBS staff had direct sustainable transport links to Gogarburn, and suggested a risk of high car dependency. To mitigate this, RBS worked closely with the City of Edinburgh Council and the major bus operators to increase the Sustainable Transport Access Zone to include 40% of staff by expanding the public bus network - including an RBS subsidy for non-profitable routes – and building facilities for buses to stop on site.
Car-sharing is actively encouraged and parking permits are needs-assessed. An annual appraisal considers where staff live in relation to public transport, their participation in car sharing, work/life balance issues and some elements of business need. Eligible vehicles are allocated a specific bay, to reduce car-park “cruising” and the associated fuel, congestion and emissions.

The Operational Travel Plan comprises:

- Excellent facilities for cyclists and motorcyclists
- 7 new bus services stopping on site, and 10+ services stopping next to the Campus
- RBS Taxibuses to transport staff commuting by rail to South Gyle and Edinburgh Park stations, as well as for journeys between Edinburgh sites and to the airport
- Interest-free loans for purchase of public transport season tickets and bicycles
- Needs-based parking criteria and on-line booking tool
- RBS Journeyshare software and priority parking for car sharers
- Up-to-date information via the Travel Information web-site and regular newsletter
- Regular Travel Clinics offering information and Personal Journey Planning
- Opportunities for flexi-working, including home-working and compressed hours
- The travel plan is controlled by a management system, is subject to annual audit and forms part of the ISO14001 accredited, Environmental Management System for Gogarburn.

Source: Scotland’s National Transport Strategy 2006
9 Key Findings

The following points are a summary of the key findings from the research.

1. Scottish Executive transport policies have a key objective of social inclusion and include access to Health, Education & Leisure facilities. None of the policies make reference to the existence of prisons and the need for access to them yet in a visitor’s survey for this report 32% of those surveyed used public transport.

2. Many transport services which do exist are poor and in some case getting poorer: most of the prisons in Scotland have poor links between the last public transport stop and the prison. There are examples of infrequent bus services and local railway stations being closed at weekends. The 2003 survey found that over 50% of visitors face a round trip of over 5 hours.

3. One of the key outcomes for offenders in the National Strategy for the Management of Offenders is to have: “Maintained or improved relationships with families, peers and community” but there appear to be no established communication channels between local authorities and prisons to discuss transport issues.

4. Over a 7 day period in early 2007 there were 5,495 visits booked with 7,906 adults and 1,460 children travelling to visits. 1182 (22%) of the booked visits did not go ahead. One of the reasons cited by those completing the survey was travel issues and distance to the prison.

5. To project these figures over one year equates to 285,740 booked visits and 487,032 people attending visits (many of this number will be repeat visitors). If 22% of booked visits do not go ahead per annum, this would mean approximately 62,862 booked visits not going ahead and 133,380 people not attending visits.

6. The Assisted Prison Visits scheme paid out 4,469 claims in one year up to 2006, paying out £265,000 in total. A claim is for one booked visit which could mean a number of adults and children.

7. Research at HMP Glenochil shows that 50% of visitors surveyed have not heard of the Assisted Prison Visits scheme. This is the same figure as the survey carried out by Families Outside in 2003.

8. There are variations between prisons in the time visitors have to check in before a visit. The variations can be confusing for family members of a prisoner transferred between prisons.

9. There are excellent examples of transport projects for prison visits run by the voluntary sector.
10 Recommendations

10.1 Recommendations: Strategic
The following points are a summary of the strategic recommendations arising from the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Community Justice Authorities to add transport issues and accessibility to prisons to their agenda and 3 year plans. This should include partnership working with transport and planning departments from their member Local Authorities, prisons in the area and any other agencies who can assist. (see Appendix A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Scottish Executive to ensure that accessibility for prisons is added to any future national transport policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Links should be established between Scottish Executive Justice and Transport divisions as both are dealing with social inclusion of disadvantaged groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Transport issues for visitors should be considered during prison inspections. As this report highlights, there are many references to travel issues and good practice in previous prison inspections. It would be beneficial for these high profile inspections to build on this practice and continue to highlight good practice as well as problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Prison Visiting Committees should monitor and assess “arrangements for visitors” in their meetings for individual establishments. This is another forum where the issues raised in this report can continue to be highlighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Opportunities in Community Transport should be investigated. The Community Transport Association have members providing transport provisions to disadvantaged groups. With funding these providers could also help prisoner’s families. At HMP Glenochil there are opportunities with the Dial-a-Journey group in Stirling to provide a link to the prison and HMP &amp; YOI Compton Vale. A pilot developed in this area could provide a benchmark for other parts of Scotland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.2 Recommendations: Operational
The following points are a summary of the operational recommendations arising from the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>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 for the establishment as well as Travelline publicity material. These details should also be available in courts for the families of those receiving custodial sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Scottish Prison Service website should have a “Visiting” template for each of the prisons. This would provide a consistent message for users to have information on visit times, how to get there and details of any transport provisions in place. This could also clearly state the time a visitor has to book in prior to a visit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Assisted Prison Visits scheme should be promoted by community based agencies and organisations as well as prisons and more awareness raised among families and visitors. This is a scheme that is reported as “good practice” in this report but it is concerning that only 50% of surveyed visitors had heard of it. There is a need to find a way to ensure that every family is fully aware of the scheme and the eligibility required to make a claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Partnerships working with local taxi firms. At HMP Perth there is a freephone line to a local taxi firm and at HMP Glenochil there is an arrangement with a local firm to provide discounted rates. These types of practical steps will assist families with their journeys.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11 Concluding reflections

One of the first tasks I took on when starting this secondment was to find out about the number of prisons in Scotland, the location of them and finally, the prisoners held within. The sixteen prisons in Scotland are almost evenly spread across the country, all with a very different story to tell. I presumed that prisons held locals, unless there were extreme circumstances. This presumption, in reality, is of course not the case. Only a few prisons hold local prisoners, with some holding a specific group e.g. women, young men, long term prisoners and sex offenders (with homes located anywhere in the country).

Overcrowding and changes to the prison estate also make it difficult to hold prisoners close to home. This profile underpins the problem this report tries to address of travelling to visits. There is no quick fix to enable prisoners to be closer to family members. However, if more prisons were able to take prisoners from the local area, this would lead to better family contact and improvement to the content of the visit itself.

The Assisted Prison Visits scheme is commonly known as APV (one of the many acronyms I had to quickly get used to). It is not clear to someone new to the criminal justice system what Assisted Prison Visits (or APV) actually means. There are posters and leaflets in visits rooms. However, anecdotal evidence told me that posters and leaflets are the last thing on family members minds when attending a visit. Maybe this is the reason that the survey reported 50% not having heard of the scheme. I think a new approach needs to be taken to help all those eligible for APV to make a justified claim. Verbal dialogue and possibly a change of title for the scheme could be a way forward.

An interesting thought I had was that to Local Authorities, prisons are separate or invisible to their area. There is no meaningful contact to discuss travel services between prisons and councils. This is the case even though prisons pay business rates and are significant employers in the local areas. The same cannot be said for large financial institutions where subsidies mean that anything is possible. More partnership working has to happen between prisons and councils. I hope that Community Justice Authorities will see the benefit in clear communication channels and make it happen.

Scottish Executive Transport Policy focuses on social exclusion and expresses the need to help people get out of poverty and all the surrounding issues poverty brings. The policy however, doesn’t go far enough to admit that there is a large section of society with a relative (or friend) who has broken the law and ended up in prison. It is recognised that many of these people being sent to prison have addictions and/or mental health problems. There is much debate about how the cycle can be broken and the Transport Policy tries to address this. What it does not accept is that making prisons more accessible will in turn, lead to better family contact and a section of society that might try and turn their life around for the sake of their family.

Finally, a sad figure detailed in this report is that in 2003, 13,500 children had a parent in prison (I can only presume this figure has increased in 2007). In HMP Barlinnie in one week, there were 363 child visitors. Research shows that these children are at a far greater risk of becoming offenders themselves in the future. To me, these are the most important people in this whole research. They are the ones who are most likely to reduce the parents reoffending, the parent just has to have the chance to see it.

Malcolm Higgenbotham
May 2007
Appendix A

The following template will be helpful with introducing the issue into the 2007 Community Justice Authority planning process.

**Planning Template:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Lead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Identify relevant contacts in transport and planning (possibly via Community Planning mechanism) and establish partnership working</td>
<td>CJA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyse local transport plans for points of potential overlap with CJA plans</td>
<td>LAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Map public transport provision to nearest points to prison (identify gaps end points to prisons)</td>
<td>LAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Regular Visitor survey to identify modes of travel and issues arising</td>
<td>SPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Compare visit times with public transport timetable</td>
<td>SPS/LAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider transport timetables in planning visit times</td>
<td>SPS/LAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consider visit times when planning transport timetables</td>
<td>LAs/SPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish forum for regular dialogue</td>
<td>SPS/LAs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify any existing non statutory providers of services to prisons</td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establish partnership working with them and review their provision</td>
<td>CJA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify local Community transport association members and open dialogue on potential role</td>
<td>CJA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop and implement a sustainable strategy for promoting awareness of the Assisted Prison Visiting scheme to families via prisons and relevant statutory and voluntary community partners</td>
<td>SPS/CJA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify priorities for further action in CJA plan</td>
<td>CJA and partners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Families Outside Travel Research Recommendations 2003

The following are the key recommendations from the research carried out by Families Outside in 2003. Progress has been made in some areas and relevant outstanding recommendations have been incorporated into the current report.

Scottish Prison Service (SPS)

Overall Strategy

The SPS to work with other agencies to identify a joint approach with the support of a transport sub-group to assess future demand and set standards for service delivery.

Family Contact Officers (FCO’s)

- FCO’s to maintain awareness of all transport provision to their prison.
- Publish, display and distribute such information.
- Promote Assisted Prison Visits scheme and ensure information is available to families.
- Material to be available for families at induction stage

Management

- To ensure FCO’s have the appropriate resources to carry out their tasks.

Assisted Prison Visits (APV)

- Review the APV scheme to ensure it is providing value for money and meeting the needs of families in Scotland. To ensure it is promoted appropriately throughout the prison estate.
- To have a Scottish base for APV claims for families in Scotland.

Training

- Provide specific training for FCO’s and new recruits on travel information and APV scheme.

Communication

- A standard leaflet to be produced with details of each prison and travel information for families.
- APV application packs to be available and accessible to families.
- Maintain communication channels with organisations with a role in the transport project.

Other Agencies

- To review existing transport services and assess demand for additional transport for prisons without a service.
- To establish contact with prisons to provide up to date information on the services available.
- Share experience and good practice knowledge.
Appendix B (cont)

Families Outside

Participation in Strategy Development
- Contribute to future discussions concerning a transport strategy between relevant organisations.

Policy and practice
- Work with the prisons to help them improve transport links.
- Work with prisons to review visit times against availability of public transport.
- Have a voice with SPS on behalf of callers to raise issues with travel and APV.

Communication
- Establish and maintain good communication with SPS and FCO’s.
- Pass transport report to Local Authority Criminal Justice Social Work Through Care Service.
- Helpline material to be distributed to each Scottish Prison.
- Facilitate contact between agencies to improve transport services.

Training
- Provide specific training for FCO’s and new recruits on travel information and APV scheme.
- Provide training for Community Transport Operators on issues of families.

Development
- Identify opportunities to gain more information on issues concerning travel and transport for families in future research work.
- Work with Community Transport schemes on development of provisions for transport to prisons.

Scottish Prisoners Families Helpline
- To identify potential development of the Helpline service to support and complement the strategy.