



VISITORS SURVEY 2016



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National Visitors Survey 2016

Executive Summary

The main findings of the 2016 National Visitors Survey are set out below.

Introduction

This Report describes the key findings of the Scottish Prison Service's (SPS) National Visitors Survey 2016. The Survey was undertaken in each of the 15 Scottish prisons. Questionnaires were distributed to visitors over a one week period as they arrived at the prison prior to their visit.

Type of visit

Visitors were asked a number of questions regarding the type of visit session they attended. Over half of visitors (55%) attended afternoon visits, just over a quarter (28%) evening and almost one fifth attended during the morning (17%). Just under three quarters (72%) reported visiting on a weekday and over a quarter (28%) at the weekend.

Four in ten of those reporting in the survey (43%) were visiting their partner, husband or wife. One quarter (26%) were visiting their son or daughter and one in five (19%) another family member. The remaining one in ten (12%) attended the prison to visit a friend.

Two thirds of those reporting in the survey (67%) used their full allocation of visits over the course of a month.



Family Contact Officer (FCO)

In the region of half of those reporting in the survey knew about Family Contact Officers (FCO) (56%) and were aware of what Family Contact Officers could help them with (49%).

Almost one third of respondents would like more information about Family Contact Officers (31%) and one fifth reported that they had been helped by a Family Contact Officer (20%).

Visiting with children

Four in ten of those taking part in the survey reported that they had taken their children to the prison in the past (43%) and almost one fifth (21%) reported having children with them on the day of the survey.



Arrival at the prison

The majority of visitors rated the ‘helpfulness of staff on their arrival at visits’ and the ‘respectful behaviour shown by staff on their arrival’ in positive terms (96% and 96% respectively). Disability access (96%) and baby change facilities (94%) were highly rated as was the ‘cleanliness of the waiting room/toilets’ (92%).



Visit room

Visitors were asked a number of questions relating to the visit room. The majority of visitors (96%) reported positively in relation to ‘respectful behaviour shown by staff in the visit room’. Over eight in ten visitors were content with the ‘facilities available in the visit room’ and the ‘amount of privacy they had during their visit’ (87% and 81% respectively).



Visit experience

Nine in ten visitors reported positively in relation to ‘present visit times’ (91%). A majority of those reporting also rated the system of booking visits and the length of the visit session in positive terms (82% & 76% respectively).

Visiting problems

A third of visitors (32%) reported experiencing ‘visit problems’. The problem reported most frequently by visitors was the distance of the prison from their home (57%), followed by the cost involved in getting to the prison (45%).

Induction day

Four in ten (43%) of those who participated in the visitor's survey thought they would benefit from more information on prison life. The most common area of interest reported by visitors was 'conditions in prison e.g. food, clothes etc. (65%) followed by a 'prisoner's average day' (64%), work in prison (49%) and family support (46%).



In the region of one third of those reporting were interested in receiving more information on education in prison (32%) and assisted prison visits (30%). A quarter highlighted a need for more information on the complaints process (23%) and a minority (15%) thought they would benefit from information about parenting support.

INTRODUCTION

This Report describes the key findings of the Scottish Prison Service's (SPS) National Visitors Survey 2016 which was undertaken in each of the 15 Scottish establishments.

As visitors arrived at the prison prior to their scheduled visit, they were asked by visits staff if they wished to participate in the survey. Those visitors who agreed to take part were given questionnaires to complete. Each establishment received a quota of questionnaires proportionate to its size and was requested to distribute to visitors over a one week period in November/December 2016. A 66% return rate of those issued was achieved (63% in 2013).

For several years throughout the 1990s and 2000s SPS Research had conducted periodic ad hoc Visitors Surveys in various establishments to ascertain the views of families and friends visiting prisoners. These surveys included questions on visiting facilities, amenities for children and the disabled, waiting times, the attitudes and demeanour of staff, the quality and privacy of the visit experience, methods of travel utilised to attend, the distance covered and the costs involved.

This is now the fourth occasion on which the exercise has been consolidated as a National Survey (the previous sweeps being in 2008, 2011 and 2013). The National Visitors Survey is designed to inform and support the Offender Outcomes in respect to family contact and the maintenance of appropriate relationships. The maintenance of good family relationships is recognised as being a significant factor in promoting desistance from reoffending.

Type of visit

Visitors were asked a number of questions regarding the type of visit session they attended. Over half of visitors (55%) attended afternoon visits, just over a quarter (28%) evening and almost, one fifth attended during the morning (17%).

Just under three quarters (72%) reported visiting on a weekday and over a quarter (28%) at the weekend.

Four in ten of those reporting in the survey (43%) were visiting their partner, husband or wife. One quarter (26%) were visiting their son or daughter and one in five (19%) another family member. The remaining one in ten (12%) attended the prison to visit a friend (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Who are you visiting today?

Partner/husband/wife	43%
Son/daughter	26%
Other family member	19%
Friend	12%

Two thirds of those reporting in the survey (67%) used their full allocation of visits over the course of a month.

Visitors who did not use all their visits (33%) were asked to give the reason why. Table 2 below highlights the most common reasons for not using allocated visits. Distance and cost were key issues for families (37% and 24% respectively).

Table 2. What is the reason for not using your full allocation of visits?

Cost	24%
Distance	37%
Time Limits	17%
Children school	16%
Family commitments	17%
Other reason	34%

Family Contact Officer (FCO)

In the region of half of those reporting in the survey knew about Family Contact Officers (FCO) (56%) and were aware of what Family Contact Officers could help them with (49%). Almost one third of respondents would like more information about Family Contact Officers (31%) and one fifth reported that they had been helped by a Family Contact Officer (20%).

There are a number of agencies and helplines available to support prisoner’s families. Only four in ten visitors reported being aware of the prisoner’s family helpline (40%).

Table 3. Family Contact Officer (FCO).	Yes %	No %
Do you know what the Family Contact Officer is?	56	44
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer can help you with?	49	51
Would you like information about the Family Contact Officer?	31	69
Have you been help by the Family Contact Officer in the past?	20	80
Are you aware of the prisoner’s family helpline?	40	60

Visiting with children

Four in ten of those taking part in the survey reported that they had taken their children to the prison in the past (43%) and almost one fifth (21%) reported having children with them on the day of the survey.

Arrival at the prison

The majority of visitors rated the ‘helpfulness of staff on their arrival at visits’ and the ‘respectful behaviour shown by staff on their arrival’ in positive terms (96% and 96% respectively).

Disability access (96%) and baby change facilities (94%) were highly rated as was the ‘cleanliness of the waiting room/toilets’ (92%).

Table 4. How would you rate the following?	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	45	34	17	3	1
The cleanliness of the waiting room/toilets	40	33	19	6	2

Table 4 below measures positive ratings ('okay', 'good', or 'very good') over the last four Visitors Surveys between 2008 and 2016. It can be seen that, over the period, very high rates of visitor satisfaction have been achieved.

Table 4. How would you rate the following? % Positive Rating of Okay, Good or Very Good	2016	2013	2011	2008
The helpfulness of staff on your arrival	96	96	96	96
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	96	96	96	94
The cleanliness of the waiting room/toilets	91	92	91	87

Visit room

Visitors were asked a number of questions relating to the visit room. The majority of visitors (96%) reported positively in relation to 'respectful behaviour shown by staff in the visit room'. Over eight in ten visitors were content with the 'facilities available in the visit room' and the 'amount of privacy they had during their visit' (87% and 81% respectively).

Table 5. How would you rate the following?	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
Respect shown by staff in the visit room	47	34	15	3	1
Facilities available in the visit room	30	35	22	8	5
The amount of privacy you had during the visit	18	26	37	12	7

Table 6 below measures positive ratings ('okay', 'good', or 'very good') over the past four visitor's surveys, between 2008 and 2016. Very high rates of visitor satisfaction have been recorded regarding the respect shown by staff in the visit room. The level of perceived privacy during the visit has improved over the period.

Table 6. How would you rate the following? % Positive Rating of Okay, Good or Very Good	2016	2013	2011	2008
Respect shown by staff in the visit room	97	96	95	95
Facilities available in the visit room	88	87	88	87
The amount of privacy you had during the visit	81	81	77	74

Visit experience

Nine in ten visitors reported positively in relation to ‘present visit times’ (91%). A majority of those reporting also rated the system of booking visits and the length of the visit session in positive terms (82% & 76% respectively).

Table 7. How would you rate the following?	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
The present visit times	26	33	32	6	3
The length of visit session	19	26	31	16	8
The system of booking visits	20	29	33	9	9

Table 8 below measures positive ratings (‘okay’, ‘good’, or ‘very good’) over the last four visitors Surveys between 2008 and 2016.

Visitor satisfaction has remained reasonably consistent over the period although satisfaction with the length of visits has fallen back from its 2013 peak.

Table 8. How would you rate the following?	2016	2013	2011	2008
% Positive Rating of Okay, Good or Very Good				
The present visit times	91	95	91	90
The length of visit session	76	84	74	74
The system of booking visits	82	81	86	80

Visiting problems

A third of visitors (32%) reported experiencing ‘visit problems’. Those respondents who identified a problem were asked to specify the nature of the difficulty experienced (Table 9).

The problem reported most frequently by visitors was the distance of the prison from their home (57%), followed by the cost involved in getting to the prison (45%). These responses show a reduction in the concerns expressed in the 2013 survey.

Around one third of those reporting problems referred to a ‘lack of transport’ and ‘time limits’ (34% and 34% respectively).

Table 9. Types of visit problems experienced	% of visitor reporting 2016	% of visitor reporting 2013	% of visitor reporting 2011
Distance	57	68	46
Cost	45	74	43
Time limits	34	46	40
Stress of Visit	24	35	35
Transport	34	37	31
Refreshment facilities	21	34	22
Staff attitudes	14	27	21
Facilities for children	15	18	14
Difficulties of travelling with children	12	18	16
Disabled access	8	6	3

Induction day

Some prisons provide an induction day for visitors which allow families and friends to understand what happens within the prison and explains how this impacts upon prisoners throughout their sentence. It also enables visitors to access information regarding help and support for themselves.

Four in ten (43%) of those who participated in the visitors survey thought they would benefit from more information on prison life. Table 10 below highlights a number of areas where visitors would like to receive more information. The most common area of interest reported by visitors was ‘conditions in prison e.g. food, clothes etc. (65%) followed by a ‘prisoner’s average day’ (64%), work in prison (49%) and family support (46%).

In the region of one third of those reporting were interested in receiving more information on education in prison (32%) and assisted prison visits (30%). A quarter highlighted a need for more information on the complaints process (23%) and a minority (15%) thought they would benefit from information about parenting support.

Table 10. Which area of prison life do you think you would like more information on the following?	Yes %
Conditions in prison e.g. food, clothing etc.	65
Prisoners average day	64
Work in prison	49
Family support	46
Education in prison	32
Assisted Prison Visits	30
Complaints process	23
Parenting support	15

Comment

As in the last Visitors Survey in 2013, the vast majority of visitors reported positively on the visits experience with over nine in ten people (96%) appreciating the helpfulness of staff and the respect shown to them, a survey finding which obviously reflects well on SPS visits staff. The fabric of, and facilities within, the visit room were well rated (87% approval). However, within this corporate figure there is likely to be variation between establishments, as new build prisons are more likely to have fresher facilities. Eight in ten respondents were content with the level of privacy which is a much higher proportion than that of prisoners' satisfaction with privacy in successive Prisoner Surveys.

Just under a third of visitors (32%) identified problems when visiting, with distance and cost of travel, as is usually the case, being the biggest ones cited. These are issues largely outwith the control of SPS, but financial help is available from the Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU) to allow close relatives and partners on a limited annual income in to visit those in custody.

Half of those reporting in the survey knew about Family Contact Officers (FCO) (56%) and were aware of the various ways in which Family Contact Officers could help maintain relationships. (49%). Almost one third of respondents would like more information about Family Contact Officers (31%) suggesting the need for continuing endeavour on the communication of the FCO role through the implementation and promotion of the Family Strategy 2017-22.

National Visitors Survey 2016

Which visit session are you attending?				Morning %	Afternoon %	Evening %
				17	55	28
When is the visit taking place?				Weekday %	Weekend %	
				72	28	
Who are you visiting today?						
Partner/Husband/wife %	Son/daughter %	Other family member %	Friend %			
43	26	19	12			
Is the person you are visiting						
Untried %	Convicted %	Awaiting sentence %	Don't Know %			
22	69	5	4			
				Yes %	No %	
Over the course of a month do you use your full allocation of visits?				67	33	
If NO, what is the reason for not using your full allocation of visits? You may choose more than one.						
Cost %	Distance %	Time limits %	Children school %	Family commitments %	Other reason %	
24	37	17	16	17	34	
				Yes %	No %	
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer (FCO) is?				56	44	
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer can help you with?				49	51	
Would you like information about the Family Contact Officer?				31	69	
Have you been helped by a Family Contact Officer in the past?				20	80	
Are you aware of the prisoner's families helpline?				40	60	

National Visitors Survey 2016

Have you ever visited the prison with children under 16 ?	Yes %	No %			
	43	57			
Are you visiting with children today?	21	79			
How many children are visiting with you today?	One %	Two %	Three %	More than 3 %	
	66	26	6	2	
How would you rate the following? %	Very Good %	Good %	Ok %	Poor %	Very poor %
The present visit times	26	33	32	6	3
The length of the visit sessions	19	26	31	16	8
The system of booking visits	20	29	33	9	9
Helpfulness of staff on arrival	47	31	18	3	1
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	48	29	19	2	2
Respectful behaviour shown by staff during security procedures?	45	31	19	3	2
Cleanliness of the waiting room/toilets	40	33	18	7	2
How would you rate the following?	Very Good %	Good %	Ok %	Poor %	Very poor %
Respectful behaviour shown by staff in the visit room	43	36	18	2	1
Facilities available in the visit room	32	36	21	8	4
Amount of privacy you have during your visit	18	26	37	12	7
Are there particular problems in visiting this prison?	Yes %	No %			
If yes choose from the list below	32	68			
Distance	57%	Time limits	34%		
Transport	34%	Cost	45%		
Facilities for children	15%	Disability access	8%		
Stress of visit	24%	Refreshment facilities	21%		
Staff attitudes & behaviour	14%	Difficulty traveling with children	12%		
Handling of complaints process	9%	Fairness of complaints process	9%		

National Visitors Survey 2016

Do you think you would benefit from more information on prison life?		Yes %	No %
If Yes , which area would you be interested in finding out about?		43	57
Prisoners average day	64	Education in prison	32
Work in prison	49	Conditions (food, clothes)	65
Family support	46	Assisted Prison Visits	30
Complaints process	23	Parenting support	15