



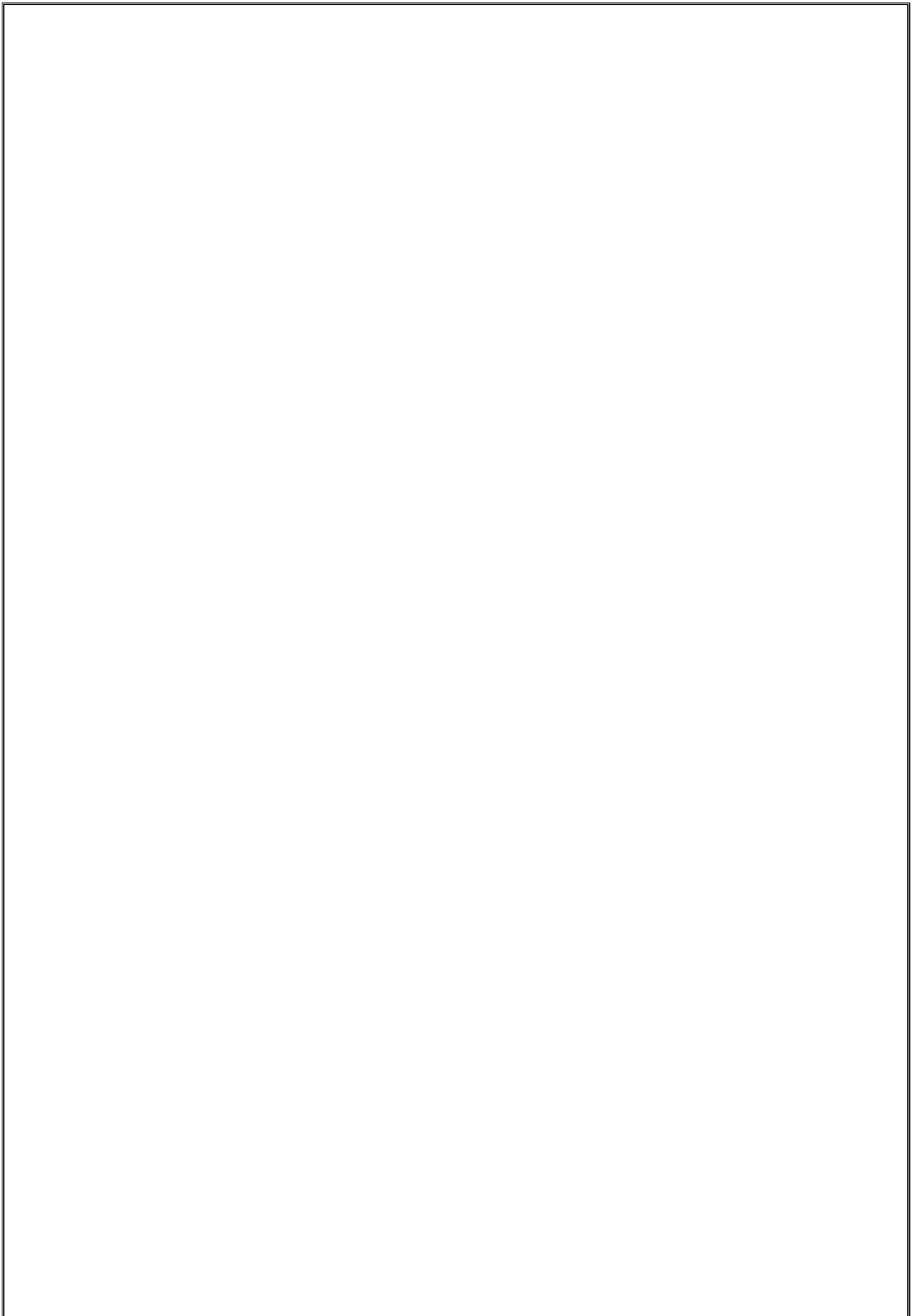
VISITORS SURVEY 2018



Róisín Broderick and James Carnie

**Research Branch
Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement**

March 2019



Executive Summary

The main findings of the 2018 National Visitors Survey are set out below.

Introduction

This Report describes the key findings of the Scottish Prison Service's (SPS) National Visitors Survey 2018. The Survey was undertaken in each of the 15 Scottish prisons. Questionnaires were distributed to visitors over in November/December 2018 as they arrived at the prison prior to their visit.

Type of visit

Four in ten of those reporting in the survey (41%) were visiting their partner, husband or wife. One quarter (27%) were visiting their son or daughter and one in five (20%) another family member. The remaining one in ten (12%) attended the prison to visit a friend.

Family Contact Officer (FCO)

Six in ten of those reporting in the survey (59%) knew about [Family Contact Officers \(FCO\)](#) and almost half were aware of what Family Contact Officers could help them with (48%).

Just over one third of respondents would like more information about Family Contact Officers (35%) and almost three in ten reported that they had been helped by a Family Contact Officer (28%). Two fifths of those reporting in the survey were aware of the '[Families Outside Helpline](#)' (42%).

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 (42%); of these a third (34%) reported that their children were aware that they were visiting a prison. One in ten (9%) stated that they would like information about talking to their children about imprisonment.



Visit experience

Nine in ten visitors reported positively in relation to 'present visit times' (91%). Three quarters of those reporting also rated the length of the visit session and the system of booking visits in positive terms (76% & 75% respectively).

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 (95% and 94%).



Visit room

Visitors were asked a number of questions relating to the visit room. The majority of visitors (94%) 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).



Visiting problems

A third of visitors (34%) reported experiencing 'visit problems'. Those respondents who identified a problem were asked to specify the nature of the difficulty experienced (Table 11). The problem reported most frequently by visitors was the distance of the prison from their home (53%), followed by the cost involved in getting to the prison (44%) and time limits (41%). Around one quarter of those reporting problems referred to a 'lack of transport', 'staff attitudes' and 'refreshment facilities' (28%, 28% and 26% respectively).

National Visitors Survey 2018

INTRODUCTION

This Report describes the key findings of the Scottish Prison Service's (SPS) National Visitors Survey 2018 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 2018. A 74% (n=812) return rate of those issued was achieved (66% in 2016).

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 fifth occasion on which the exercise has been consolidated as a National Survey (the previous sweeps being in 2008, 2011, 2013 and 2016). The National Visitors Survey is designed to inform and support 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

Four in ten of those reporting in the survey (41%) were visiting their partner, husband or wife. One quarter (27%) were visiting their son or daughter and one in five (20%) 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	41%
Son/daughter	27%
Other family member	20%
Friend	12%

Visitors were asked a number of questions regarding the type of visit session they attended. Three quarters (76%) reported visiting on a weekday and a quarter (24%) at the weekend. Six in ten visitors (62%) attended afternoon visits, a quarter (25%) evening and just on one in eight attended during the morning (13%).

Three quarters of those who received visits were convicted (77%) (Table 2 below).

Table 2. Is the person you are visiting untried or convicted?

Untried	17%
Convicted	77%
Convicted awaiting sentence	3%
Don't know	3%

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 3 below highlights the most common reasons for not using allocated visits. Distance and cost were key issues for families (38% and 29% respectively).

Table 3. What is the reason for not using your full allocation of visits?

Cost	29%
Distance	38%
Time Limits	20%
Children school	14%
Family commitments	17%
Other reason	35%

Family Contact Officer (FCO)

Six in ten of those reporting in the survey knew about Family Contact Officers (FCO) (59%) and almost half were aware of what Family Contact Officers could help them with (48%). Over one third of respondents would like more information about Family Contact Officers (35%) and over a quarter reported that they had been helped by a Family Contact Officer (28%). Two fifths of visitors reported being aware of 'Families Out-side Helpline' (42%).

"The Family Contact Officer is very kind and wonderful with the kids" (Visitor Dumfries)

Table 4. Family Contact Officer (FCO)

	Yes %	No %
Do you know what the Family Contact Officer is?	59	41
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer can help you with?	48	52
Would you like information about the Family Contact Officer?	35	65
Have you been help by the Family Contact Officer in the past?	28	72
Are you aware of 'Families Outside Helpline'?	42	58

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 (42%); of these a third (34%) reported that their children were aware that they were visiting a prison. One in ten (9%) stated that they would like information about talking to their children about imprisonment.

Visit experience

Nine in ten visitors reported positively in relation to ‘present visit times’ (91%). Three quarters of those reporting also rated the length of the visit session and the system of booking visits in positive terms (76% & 75% respectively).

Table 5. How would you rate the following?	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
The present visit times	27	34	30	6	3
The length of visit session	20	25	31	17	7
The system of booking visits	19	28	28	14	11

“One thing I would like is more late visits as I work shifts and the afternoon visit is in the middle of my shift” (Visitor Kilmarnock)

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 (95% and 94%).

“My experience on arrival today was good, helpful friendly staff. This wasn’t the case the last time though” (Visitor Barlinnie)

“This is a brilliant prison to visit and staff are very understanding and accommodating” (Visitor Dumfries)

Table 6. How would you rate the following?	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
Helpfulness of staff on arrival	48	30	17	3	2
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	48	31	15	4	2
Respectful behaviour shown by staff during security procedures (e.g. Searching)	47	31	18	3	2

“Every one of the staff are really nice and when you have a problem they are all there for you”
(Visitor Edinburgh)

Table 7 below measures positive ratings (‘ok’, ‘good’, or ‘very good’) over the last five Visitors Surveys between 2008 and 2018. It can be seen that, over the period, very high rates of visitor satisfaction have been consistently achieved.

Table 7. How would you rate the following? % Positive Rating of Ok, Good or Very Good	2018	2016	2013	2011	2008
The helpfulness of staff on your arrival	95	96	96	96	96
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	94	96	96	96	94
The cleanliness of the waiting room/toilets	96	91	92	91	87

“The staff are very inconsistent they always change the rules depending on what staff are on duty” (Visitor Low Moss)

Visit room

Visitors were asked a number of questions relating to the visit room. The majority of visitors (94%) 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 8. How would you rate the following?	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
Respectful behaviour shown by staff in the visit room	46	32	16	5	1
Facilities available in the visit room	33	29	25	8	5
The amount of privacy you had during the visit	18	26	37	12	7

Table 9 below measures positive ratings (‘Ok’, ‘good’, or ‘very good’) over the past five surveys, between 2008 and 2018. 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 9. How would you rate the following? % Positive Rating of Ok, Good or Very Good	2018	2016	2013	2011	2008
Respect shown by staff in the visit room	95	97	96	95	95
Facilities available in the visit room	87	88	87	88	87
The amount of privacy you had during the visit	82	81	81	77	74

Table 10 below measures positive ratings ('okay', 'good', or 'very good') over the last five visitors Surveys between 2008 and 2018.

Visitor satisfaction has remained reasonably consistent over the period although satisfaction with the length of visits has fallen back from its 2013 peak. Satisfaction with the system of booking visits has also fallen from its high of 86% in 2011 to 76% in 2018.

Table 10. How would you rate the following? % Positive Rating of Ok, Good or Very Good	2018	2016	2013	2011	2008
The present visit times	91	91	95	91	90
The length of visit session	76	76	84	74	74
The system of booking visits	76	82	81	86	80

Visiting problems

A third of visitors (34%) reported experiencing 'visit problems'. Those respondents who identified a problem were asked to specify the nature of the difficulty experienced (Table 11). The problem reported most frequently by visitors was the distance of the prison from their home (53%), followed by the cost involved in getting to the prison (44%) and time limits (41%).

Around one quarter of those reporting problems referred to a 'lack of transport', 'staff attitudes' and 'refreshment facilities' (28%, 28% and 26% respectively).

Table 11. Types of visit problems experienced	2018	2016	2013	2011
Distance	53	57	68	46
Cost	44	45	74	43
Time limits	41	34	46	40
Stress of Visit	31	24	35	35
Transport	28	34	37	31
Refreshment facilities	26	21	34	22
Staff attitudes	28	14	27	21
Facilities for children	13	15	18	14
Difficulties of travelling with children	14	12	18	16
Disabled access	2	8	6	3

“If a visit is cancelled I am often not told before I leave home. To contact me earlier would be helpful” (Visitor Edinburgh)

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 (41%) of those who participated in the visitors survey thought they would benefit from more information on prison life. Table 12 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’ (56%), education in prison (52%) and family support (50%).

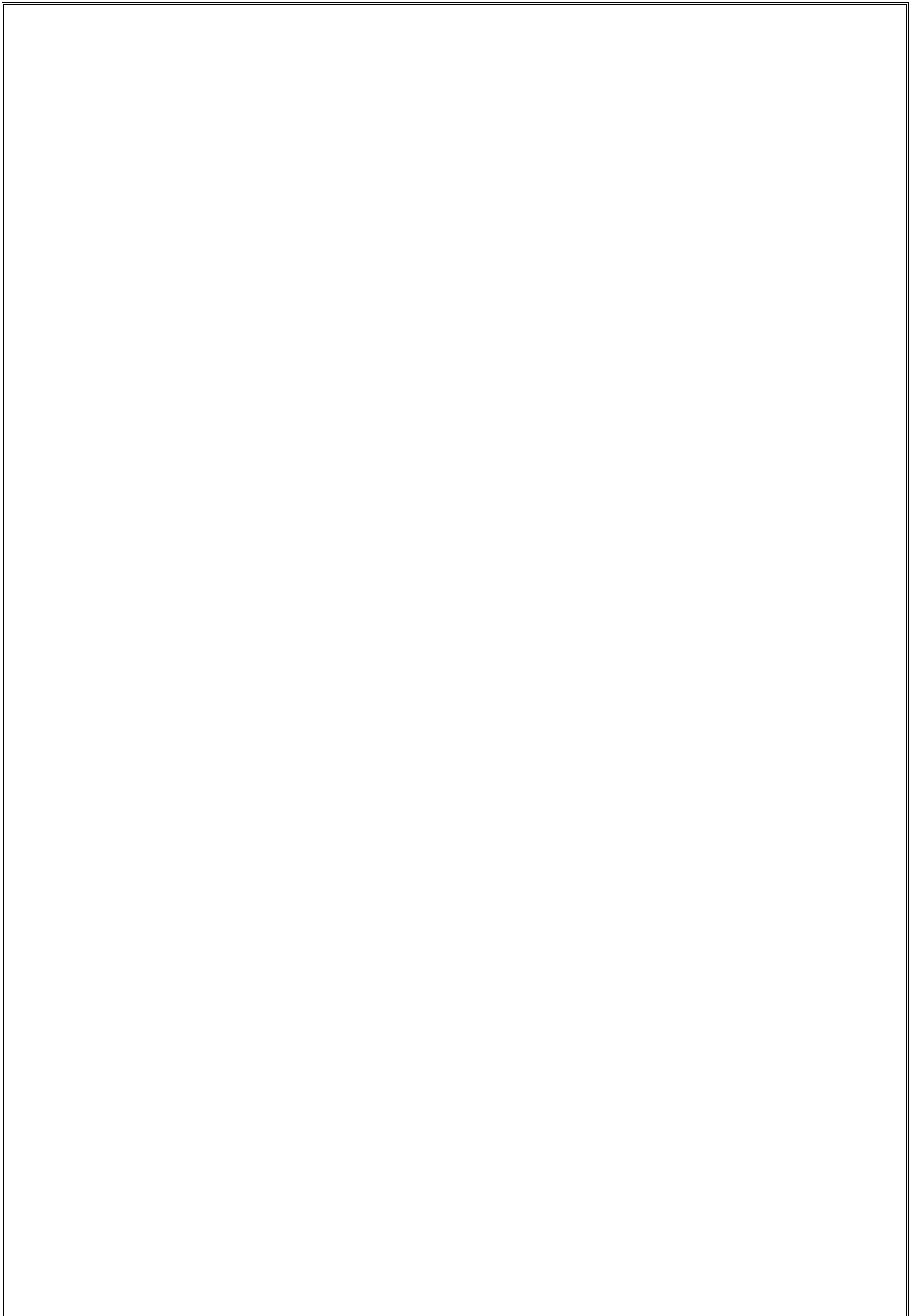
In the region of one third of those reporting were interested in receiving more information on preparing for release (38%) and the complaints process (35%). A quarter highlighted a need for more information on the [Assisted Prison Visits Scheme](#) (24%) and a fifth thought they would benefit from information about the benefits system (21%) and parenting support (19%).

Table 12. Which of the following would you like Information on?	Yes %
Conditions in prison e.g. food, clothing etc.	65
Prisoners average day	56
Education in Prison	52
Family support	50
Preparing for Release	50
Work in prison	48
After release	38
Complaints Process	35
Assisted Prison Visits Scheme	24
Benefits System	21
Parenting support	19

Comment

As in the last Visitors Survey in 2016, the vast majority of visitors reported positively on the visits experience with over nine in ten people appreciating the helpfulness of staff and the respect shown to them, a survey finding which obviously reflects well on SPS frontline gate and visits staff. The fabric of, and facilities within, the visit room were well rated (89% 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 were content with the level of privacy which is a much higher proportion than that of prisoners' satisfaction with privacy in successive Prisoner Surveys.

One third of visitors (34%) 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.



SPS National Visitors Survey Results 2018

Who are you visiting today?	Partner/Husband/ Wife	Son/Daughter	Other Family member	Friend	
	41%	27%	20%	12%	
What visit session are you attending?	Morning	Afternoon	Evening		
	13%	62%	25%		
When is the visit taking place?	Weekday	Weekend			
	76%	24%			
Is the person you are visiting?	Untried	Convicted	Convicted awaiting sentence	Don't know	
	17%	77%	3%	3%	
Over the course of the month do you use your full allocation of visits?			Yes %	No	
			67%	33%	
If NO, what is the reason for not using your full allocation of visits?					
Cost	Distance	Time Limits	Children at school	Family commitments	Other Reason
29%	38%	20%	14%	17%	35%
				Yes %	No %
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer is?				59	41
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer can help you with?				48	52
Would you like more information about the Family Contact Officer?				35	65
Have you been helped by a Family Contact Officer in the past?				28	72
Are you aware of the 'Families Outside' helpline?				42	58
Did you use a Visitors Centre today, either before or after your visit to the prison?				39	61
Have you ever visited the prison with children under 16?				42	58
If you bring children to the prison, have they been told they are visiting a prison?				34	66
Would you like information about speaking to children about imprisonment?				9	91

How would you rate the following?	Very Good %	Good %	OK %	Poor %	Very Poor %
The present visit times	27	34	30	6	3
The length of the visit sessions	20	25	31	17	7
The system of booking visits	19	28	28	14	11
Helpfulness of staff on your arrival	48	30	17	3	2
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	48	31	15	3	2
Respectful behaviour shown by staff during security procedures e.g. searching	47	31	18	3	2
Cleanliness of waiting room	46	35	15	2	2
Respectful behaviour shown by staff in the visit room	46	32	16	5	1
Facilities available in the visit room	33	29	25	8	5
The amount of privacy you have during your visit	23	26	33	11	6
Are there particular issues for you visiting in the prison?	Yes %			No %	
	34			66	
If YES, what are the issues you have visiting the prison? Please tick all that apply to you					
Distance	53%	Time limits	41%		
Transport	28%	Cost	44%		
Facilities for children	13%	Disability access	2%		
Stress of visit	31%	Refreshment facilities	26%		
Staff attitudes & behaviour	28%	Difficulties of travelling with children	14%		
Handling of complaints process	20%	Fairness of the complaints process	19%		
Do you think you would benefit from information on prison life?	Yes %			No %	
	41			59	
If YES, which areas would you be interested in finding out more information about?					
Prisoners average wage	56%	Parenting support	19%		
Conditions in prison e.g. food, clothes etc.	65%	Benefits support	21%		
Complaints process	35%	Work in prison	48%		
After release	38%	Assisted Prison Visits Scheme	24%		
Education in prison	52%	Preparing for release	50%		
Family support	50%	Other	4%		

National Visitors Survey 2018

This questionnaire asks about your experience of visiting the prison. No one can be identified from the information that you give. The survey is being conducted in all Scottish prisons over the next two weeks. We would be grateful if you could complete this survey. Please read each question and place an **x** in the box that best describes your answer.

Who are you visiting today?

Partner/husband/wife Son/daughter Other family member Friend

Which visit session are you attending?

Morning Afternoon Evening

When is the visit taking place?

Weekday Weekend

Is the person you are visiting

Untried Convicted Convicted Awaiting sentence Don't know

Over the course of a month do you use your full allocation of visits? **Yes** **No**

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 at school Family commitments Other reason

	Yes	No
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer (FCO) is?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know what a Family Contact Officer can help you with?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you like more information about the Family Contact Officer ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you been helped by a Family Contact Officer in the past?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you aware of the " Families Outside Helpline "?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did you use a Visitors Centre today , either before or after your visit to the prison?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you ever visited the prison with children under 16?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you bring children to the prison, have they been told they are visiting a prison?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you like information about speaking to children about imprisonment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many children under 16 do you have visiting with you today?

1 2 3 More than 3 None

How would you rate the following?

	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
The present visit times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The length of the visit sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The system of booking visits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



How would you rate the following?

	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
Helpfulness of staff on your arrival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respectful behaviour shown by staff on your arrival	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Respectful behaviour shown by staff during security procedures e.g. searching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cleanliness of waiting room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How would you rate the following?

	Very good	Good	OK	Poor	Very poor
Respectful behaviour shown by staff in the visit room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities available in the visit room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The amount of privacy you have during your visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Are there particular issues for you in visiting this prison? Yes No

If YES, what are the issues you have visiting this prison? Please tick all that apply to you.

Distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time limits	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cost	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disability access	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stress of visit	<input type="checkbox"/>	Refreshment facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff attitudes & behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulties of travelling with children	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handling of complaints process	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fairness of complaints process	<input type="checkbox"/>

SPS is keen that families understand what happens within the prison and how this impacts on each prisoner throughout their sentence. It wishes to offer support that a family may need during this time.

Do you think you would benefit from more information on prison life? Yes No

If YES, which areas would you be interested in finding out more information about?

Prisoners average day	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education in prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work in prison	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conditions in prison e.g. food, clothes etc	<input type="checkbox"/>	Family support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assisted Prison Visits Scheme	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complaints process	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parenting support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Preparing for release	<input type="checkbox"/>
After release	<input type="checkbox"/>	Benefits System	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, Please specify in the box below	<input type="checkbox"/>

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

