



Parenting across Scotland Member Case Study
FAMILIES OUTSIDE
2024

Families Outside is the only national charity in Scotland that works solely on behalf of children and families affected by imprisonment. Our purpose is to improve outcomes for children and families affected by imprisonment, creating and promoting opportunities for families to uphold and defend their rights.

In our work, ‘families’ are self-defined, with no specific family structure, relationship, blood connection, or location required for people to receive support (other than anticipated, current, or recent placement of the so-defined family member in a Scottish prison). Families may or may not wish to continue contact with the person held in prison and are eligible for our support regardless.

To achieve our Strategic Aims, our work focuses on:

- **Short-term change** via immediate support to address the emotional, financial, and physical impact of imprisonment on the families left behind
- **Medium-term change** through increased awareness amongst universal services, key professionals, and interest groups likely to be in contact with families
- **Long-term change** through improvement of policy and practice

Following completion of a 20-month project last year on the financial impact of imprisonment on the families left behind, we have just launched a follow-up report focusing on travel and transport. [*No Easy Journey - The Costs & Barriers to Visiting Prison for Families*](#) found that:

- Barriers need to be removed for travel to help support meaningful contact between families and their person in prison.
- The only current financial support (Help with Prison Visits Scheme) available to families to help with travel costs for visits is failing.
- Local travel services do not effectively and fairly service all prisons, and families are making major sacrifices to be able to attend visits.

The report showed that families are moving area to be closer to the prison their loved one is in; they are racking up debts to be able to visit; and travelling to a visit can take all day, with some families travelling over 11 hours for a 30-minute visit.

Families in the Highlands and Islands are arguably the most disadvantaged, as one family shared with us:

A typical visit [for me] would mean either a 1-hour flight from Shetland, or a ferry trip. The flights can be over £400 return, depending on the time of year. The boat

takes 14 hours and is also expensive, at over £200 return. Meals on the boat and in hotels are expensive too. The minimum costs when travelling by boat and an overnight stay and additional costs are approximately £360. Flying is not reliable, and there are regular delays and cancellations, and depending on the season, flights are much more expensive, so travelling by plane and an overnight stay and additional costs can be as much as £560. To catch the first flight, I have to get up at 5.30 then get the bus to Sumburgh at 6.30, which is at least an hour. The ferry terminal is closer but still requires a taxi and is an overnight trip. Both options require an overnight stay in either Aberdeen or Peterhead due to limited options with flights and the time it took to get to Peterhead to be there for the visit time then have enough time to get the bus back to Aberdeen to catch the ferry. The bus to Peterhead takes an hour each way. As hotels don't allow you to leave luggage when you get off the boat, I had to take my luggage with me to the prison. The family centre was a godsend, and I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to use it as it gave me somewhere to rest before the visit.

Even for less extreme geographical distances, families were spending a third to a half their incomes to support someone in prison and on release, creating significant difficulties for the rest of the family.

As a member of Parenting Across Scotland, Families Outside raises such issues to reflect the impact on the children left behind when a parent goes to prison, or indeed the impact on parents when their adult child goes to prison – often requiring the parent to leave work or to take on extra work to care for their grandchildren as a result. Parenting doesn't end when a child becomes an adult; Families Outside is pleased to support parents on their journey, at whatever stage they are in their lives.