



Action
For
Families
Enduring
Criminal
Trauma

Sharing news and support for families

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Chair's Report

It was nearly a year ago that I was travelling back from France with my husband. The World Health Organisation had just announced that respiratory infections and deaths in China had spread to other parts of the world, and declared the outbreak a Pandemic.

Italy had locked down, and France followed suit, while we were there. This was a peculiar experience, with our lovely mediaeval village closing all restaurants and bars, becoming spookily quiet.

Our dilemma; should we stay, or go home? Did France and Europe have more intensive care beds than GB? (they do!) On the journey home our thoughts were turning to the UK government's response; what consideration were they giving to the BAME community, at higher risk, to care home agency staff going in and out, to the prison population and their care. To our astonishment, it was a further two weeks before the UK lockdown was announced.

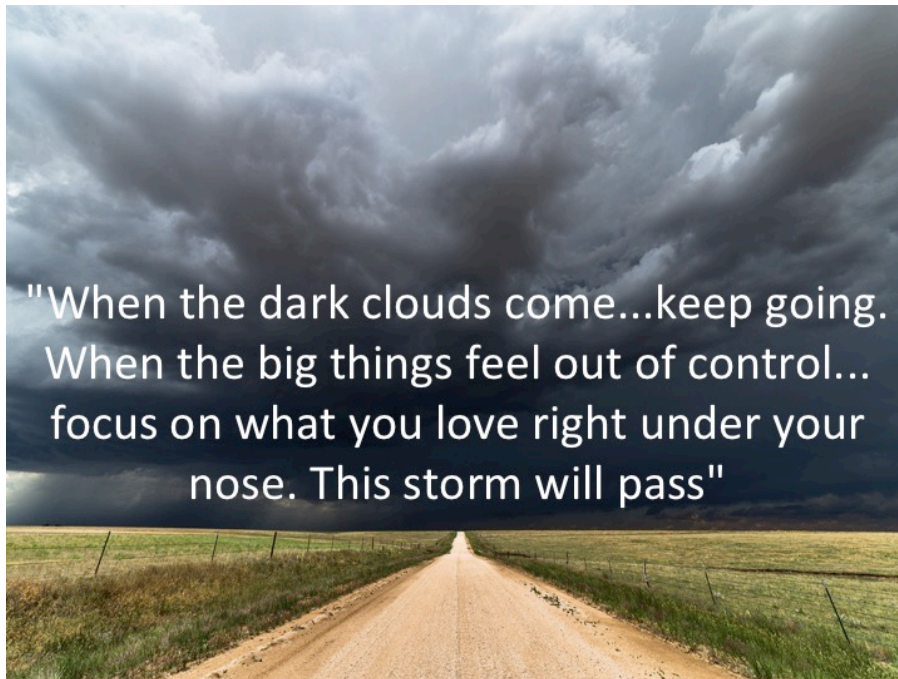
You, of course, will have your own stories and views about these events, but what unites us is the extremely strange experience we have had over the past year. One year on, 147,000 deaths, more than most other countries in the world, and the biggest economic hit. Health, and wealth being inextricably inter-twined. BAME communities being hit hardest, care homes suffering a terrible death toll, and prisoners, as report after report identifies, suffering an intolerable impact. This not only on those incarcerated, but on their families, denied any visits and human contact as you can see from the CAPPTIVE report.

The vaccination programme is rolling out- a tremendous success- thanks to our scientists and our wonderful NHS. A real triumph of unity of purpose and community spirit. If only the £39bn had been given to the NHS, instead of SERCO, who had no experience of running a Test Trace, Isolate and Support service, and whose executives have just received a multi-million pound pay-out. Then, we would almost certainly have had better outcomes.

There has never been a greater need for AFFECT, and the Lottery grant will enable our organisation to grow, and meet more need. You would be proud of our Trust Board in how they are rising to the challenge of the extra work. An advert has been placed in a forthcoming Big Issue, and police, probation, and prisons contacted. However, there is a lot more to be done. Any volunteers?

Keep well, keep safe,

Carol



"When the dark clouds come...keep going.
When the big things feel out of control...
focus on what you love right under your
nose. This storm will pass"



Supporting Families and Friends of Prisoners

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

AFFECT is a small charity which provides telephone support to families where a member is in prison. The advice is free and confidential. We particularly welcome volunteers who have experience of prisons and the Criminal Justice System.

We offer free induction, and may be able to fund training in counselling.
Contact Affect on 0300 365 3651
or via our website Affect.org.uk

Group Gathering

The next Group Gathering will be on Saturday 27th March, 1pm, via Zoom. If you would like to attend, please email affect01@hotmail.com, and we will send a link nearer the time.

M's Story

Before it happened, we were a happy family with nothing more than normal everyday things going on. Then my partner had a mental breakdown and the nightmare rapidly became an overwhelming event that left us shaken to the very core. From his arrest to the trial and sentencing all my energy was focused on what had to be done, the family were there the path was singular for all of us.

Once the sentencing was done, I reeled and struggled to hold my ground. I turned everywhere I could to find support and reach out. My most horrific memory was seeing my aged father near collapse as I sat unable to move on a bench in the street, I was just unable to function unable to walk unable to respond to any human contact my grief was so deep it was swallowing me and everyone around me. I sent him away realising I could not lean on the family who were themselves so traumatised, I could not see them suffer my pain as well as their own.

I had lost my very soul my friend my rock my love my life. I screamed loudly within not daring to speak what I really felt. I tried the Samaritans I tried the family support line. My doctor sent me to hospital they tried to commit me! I just wanted help not more problems. I was supposed to be the strong one, I was supposed to hold it together, I had to find a way to be functional. Close friends held me steady as much as they could, but I knew to survive this I had to find my own feet.

I then found Affect, I made contact. The person who counselled me was insightful, understanding and the fact that they dealt with lifer's families meant someone understood, it helped it was the same person talking to me each time. The phone support was great but, I was still seeking more human face to face contact. I was invited to come to a meeting. It was a long journey, but I knew I needed to do this I had to find something that would help pull the pieces of me, that were scattered to the four corners of the world back together.

From the start of the meeting to the end I was in a place I had needed to be, with people who had experienced similar events. I heard shared stories that made me weep and I was able to share my pain. AFFECT gave me the banister I needed to navigate the unstable staircase I was on. If I need them, they are there, I don't have to make contact, but I know I can if I need to. No other organisation gave me this face-to-face opportunity or the counselling that was geared towards lifer's family.

Everything is not fixed in my life, it cannot be but, I have a group I can turn to when I need to who know and understand the daily grief I endure.

Reforming the Mental Health Act

A government white paper is out for consultation. The proposed changes will affect prisoners and their families. Anne, an AFFECT Trustee, has produced a 3-page summary of the provisions of the proposed Act. It is available on the AFFECT website (articles), and is well-worth reading.

CAPTIVE

CAPTIVE stands for Covid-19 Action Prisons Project: Tracking Innovation, Valuing Experience. A briefing note is available on the AFFECT website (articles).