



Action  
For  
Families  
Enduring  
Criminal  
Trauma

## *Sharing news and support for families*

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### Chair's Report

I am writing this at the time of the national Coronavirus Unlocking, with all the hopes and expectations that come with it. However the Indian "Variant of Concern" is also on the increase, spreading alarm, confusion, and making both personal and political decisions difficult.

2020 will be remembered as a terrible year for many people, particularly for those held in prison. Like the rest of society, prisons are beginning to open to visitors, some faster than others. Many family members have found it difficult, sometimes impossible to maintain contact with their loved ones. Arranging visits can be problematic, with some online booking systems not responding. Perseverance and patience is the name of the game! AFFECT continues to invest the Lottery grant funding on recruiting new volunteers- welcome Hope and Emma- and to promoting the service by an advert in the special Prisons edition of the Big Issue last March, and another planned for Inside Times, now that prisons and Visitor Centres are opening up.

More, virtual, Group Gatherings have been held this year, on average every 6 weeks, with good attendance and positive feedback. The next will be at **1pm on Saturday 10th July 2021; a zoom link will be sent out on request to [affect01@hotmail.com](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com)**

We are also considering a presence for AFFECT on social media- NOT my area of particular expertise!

The Trust Board next meets on Saturday 29th May, 10am via Zoom, at which arrangements for the AGM will be decided- more details to follow.

You may be interested to know that AFFECT has a fluctuating membership of around 50 people, comprising Board members, volunteer employees, support workers and you, our members. **New volunteers are always welcome**, particularly from those who have experience of prisons and the criminal justice system. AFFECT offers free induction, and may be able to fund training in counselling. Contact us on 0300 365 3651, or via [www.affect.org.uk](http://www.affect.org.uk)

Keep well, keep safe, and know that we are here for you, if you need us.

Carol  
(Chair)

### ***Prison Visits***

At a recent Group Gathering, it came to light that

1. Some prisons at least are taking in-person visits
2. Some people having issues with on line bookings - seems system may not be open but prisons are
3. Some people are having luck phoning prison booking lines direct

### ***Thought for the Day***

Q- when have you been at your strongest?

A- when I have dared to show my weakness.

Asking for help isn't giving up, it's refusing to give up.

## **Group Gathering**

The next Group Gathering will be on Saturday 10th July, 1pm, via Zoom. If you would like to attend, please email [affect01@hotmail.com](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com), and we will send a link nearer the time.

### **Prison Reform Trust (PRT) Report and Summary**

The Prison Reform Trust has been in touch with AFFECT recently, and reported that at the start of the pandemic, government ministers in England and Wales were told that up to 3,500 prisoners may die due to dilapidated, overcrowded prison conditions. To date, this has been an over-estimate. According to the Lancet\* there were 121 deaths related to COVID-19 among people in prisons in England and Wales between March, 2020, and February, 2021. However, this is over three times the rate of death due to COVID-19 among people of the same age and sex in the general population.

An early release programme could have been organised, but instead most prisoners were confined to their cells with very little or no face-to-face contact with loved ones.

The year 2020 will be remembered for the Black Lives Matter movement. The recent Race and Equality review of prisons found that over half of the children now in custody are from an ethnic minority background, that young black people receive unequal treatment when sentenced, and that BAME people are more likely to have disciplinary procedures taken out against them. The fair treatment of people who reside in prison must be at the centre of any meaningful "Build Back Better" initiative.

#### Note:

*This is a summary of the PRT report, and you may be intrigued to know why it is given such prominence in a family support newsletter. Family members are often shocked and astounded when first coming into contact with the Criminal Justice System. AFFECT has recently been joined by new members who find themselves in this position, and who have vented their anger and frustration at the injustices and indifference they have faced, and the sense of powerlessness. It has been a timely reminder for those of us with a longer association with the CJS. Thank-you, Prison Reform Trust, for keeping a watching, independent eye on prisons- and for giving us all hope.*

\* Braithwaite et al, 16/3/21 [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600\(21\)00137-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanres/article/PIIS2213-2600(21)00137-5/fulltext)

