



Action  
For  
Families  
Enduring  
Criminal  
Trauma

## *Sharing news and support for families*

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### our next

## GROUP GATHERING

is on **Saturday 11th September, 1pm**, by **Zoom**. This is an opportunity for you to meet other people in a similar situation to your own, but each with unique experience, and response to that experience.

Many years ago, a wise and experienced AFFECT member said that one never really begins to heal until your experience has been shared, and listened to. How right he is!

If you would like to attend, please reply in confidence to [affect01@hotmail.com](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com) or 07833 458415 and you will be sent login details close to the time.

### Chair's Report

I am keeping this report short, because I want to focus Members' attention on the Group Gathering, and a call for *all* Members to consider giving some of your time to offer telephone support to new Members.

In addition to the two new Telephone Support Workers (Hope and Emma) we have made another recruit- Kasey-welcome! We are investing some of the Lottery Grant in supporting all our 'staff' with further training.

This has been a steady couple of months for AFFECT, but with prison visiting re-opening, and the opportunity to promote our services in Visitors Centres, we expect to become very busy.

The Trust Board meets next on Saturday 4th September, 10am to 12, via Zoom.

In this Newsletter you will find Brenda's story. Brenda is a long-standing member of AFFECT, an active member of the Trust Board, and is the Co-ordinator for all new contacts. Her story is moving, and powerful.

Warmest regards,  
Carol (Chair)

### Volunteers

As mentioned above, the Trust Board is actively recruiting Support Workers. Experience has shown that individuals with listening/counselling skills AND experience of the Criminal Justice System are particularly effective. Clients appreciate this. Obviously, current Members are a potential field for recruits. This means you!!

If you are interested in making this valuable contribution,

please email [affect01@hotmail.com](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com), or ring 0300 365 3651

## Brenda's Story

In the 1980s, my son and his young family were involved in a horrific murder. My son had left for work, and on returning home found his wife dead, with multiple stab wounds. Their baby son was on the settee, where he had been unattended for several hours. My son was charged, put on remand and went to Court ten months later. He received a life sentence (14 years). The jury was repeatedly asked to pay attention by the judge, with one member even falling asleep. The first judge wrote to the Home Secretary saying simply, '*the jury got it wrong.*' Two years passed, and at an appeal hearing lasting just 20 minutes, my son was discharged with no case to answer. Lord Lane said "*Young man, it is time to go home to your Baba*". The defending QC has said that the whole trial and appeal was for him a career-maker, as the Appellant was freed and his name cleared, because the jury got it wrong.

I had attended the trial, with supportive friends, and found the experience of sitting close to the poor dead girl's family very difficult. As you can appreciate, this experience had a profound effect on our family. I was in denial, frightened, my brain froze and was 'stuck'. I was terrified, and deeply ashamed. My daughter and I changed our surname to my maiden name. Fortunately, I worked for a local authority who were encouraging and supportive.

The rest of the family also suffered. My father said he never wanted to hear such weeping again. My younger son was extremely angry with his brother, and with me, for continuing to love him. He eventually turned to drugs, still has health problems and can get angry at any hint of the 'family thing'. Prior to this incident, my daughter had been seriously injured in a car collision, needing a great deal of care and attention. I will go to my grave being so shocked when she said "*Mum, I am alive, while all you care about is the dead: don't I matter any more?*"

My first grandchild, Jeremy, went into the care of my son's in-laws, where I paid him weekly visits, which they must have hated- the mother of their daughter's 'murderer' visiting!

On the release of my son, he wanted to visit his now 3-year-old son, but the adoption process had already started. He found it extremely difficult to come to terms with that process. He was very unhappy, but now we are close. My three children do not have a lot to do with, and have little curiosity towards each other. I love them all, and find them kind and considerate, but wish they could be so with each other.

## Postscript

Brenda recently led an on-line training event for the Police and shared (a fuller version of) this story. It was so powerful that one of the attendees/organisers wrote and shared her own story, which she will share with police colleagues. This person concludes by saying

*"Despite being in the Police, I truly care about the person behind the crime. That is why I work in the Integrated Offender Management area, as I believe, with support, people can make good."*

## Prison Reform Trust (PRT)

The recent (July 2021) report is now out, and states

*"As prisons slowly emerge from the extraordinarily harsh restrictions of the last 15 months, the briefing shows how the same fundamental failings in our approach to imprisonment persist.....populist measures in legislation are currently before Parliament.....there are no plans to eliminate overcrowding, and the mental health consequences of prolonged solitude are likely to be profound."*

As a nation, we should hang our heads in shame.

## Quote

*"I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly, acutely miserable...  
but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be **alive** is a grand thing"*  
Agatha Christie