



Action  
For  
Families

Enduring  
Criminal  
Trauma

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## *Sharing news and support for families* **WINTER 2021**

### our next **GROUP GATHERING**

is on **Saturday 11th December 2021, at 1pm**, by **Zoom**. If you would like to attend, please reply to your invitation and you will be given joining details. These gatherings are well worth attending as you will meet other people who have loved ones facing long periods in prison and you can talk in a safe place.

### **Notes from the Chair**

Dear Ones,

I am writing this at the beginning of the Christmas season. A busy time for many of us, and one which can bring unexpected highs and lows. It can be a particularly difficult time for families with a loved one in prison. Our thoughts go out to them, and a wish that "*this, too, shall pass.*"

Whilst unpacking the Christmas box from storage, I came across the words of David Merritt. You may remember, his son Jack died in the Fishmongers Hall incident three years ago. The Inquiry into the deaths has just reported, and I can recall Jack's dad's words:

*"Our society has failed those most in need. Jack wanted a world where we do not lock up and throw away the key, where we don't give indeterminate sentences, where we don't slash prison budgets and consistently undermine our public services. Never give up the fight."*

AFFECT continues to do its work supporting vulnerable families. The trauma and despair sometimes overwhelms, but it is important to remember that humanity and compassion do exist amidst difficult times.

The Trust Board joins me in wishing you a very happy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

Carol

Chair

**Only two months after he was sacked as Justice Secretary, Robert Buckland QC has claimed that some prisoners are victims of “barbaric” treatment in the justice system<sup>1</sup>.**

The former Cabinet minister, now a backbench Conservative MP, spoke out in a House of Commons debate about funding for research into autism and other neurodiverse conditions.

Buckland, a long-term campaigner on the issue who has spoken about his experiences as the father of an autistic daughter, said that the one million people with autism in the UK tended to die younger and were more likely to be unemployed than people without the condition.

He added: “Importantly, and deeply worryingly, disproportionate numbers of autistic people and people with brain conditions end up in mental health detention or, even worse, in our criminal and youth justice systems. They are being locked up by a system that represents barbaric practices from a generation ago.

“I have certainly found, from my professional and ministerial experience, far too many in our prison system, our young offenders’ institutions and our criminal justice system generally with those conditions.”

During his two years as Justice Secretary, Buckland commissioned a report by inspectors which identified problems with the way people with neurodiverse conditions are treated in the justice system. Based on the findings he committed to improve training for prison staff, while the Prison Service is developing a new policy framework concerning neurodiversity.

<sup>1</sup>(Inside Times)

### **Jim's Story**

I married into a family with a member in prison. It was a situation for which I had no training, which made it hard to support my spouse while respecting confidentiality. I recall the mixed feelings- shock, surprise and fear, when I realised that the police at our door, the squad car with lights flashing outside, were seeking my family member.

How to reconcile the desire to protect a loved one, with the lifetime belief that police are doing a valuable job which every citizen should support?

Over the years, my role became clearer- to support always my spouse, who was key to her offspring's long, faltering but eventual complete rehabilitation into society as a valuable, and valued member.

" ..and when, slowly, the rain and winds begin to subside, when the clouds become lighter, and at long last sunlight filters through...a new calm emerged. We look, with hope, to the future. Though clouds may gather again, and we may see another storm, we have realised, most of all, that we're stronger facing them TOGETHER". (Luke Adam Hawker, 2021)

<sup>1</sup> [www.insidetimes.org](http://www.insidetimes.org) November 2021

