



Supporting Families and Friends of Prisoners

Action  
For  
Families  
Enduring  
Criminal  
Trauma



Registered charity no. 1097087

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## AFFECT NEWS

*Sharing news and support for families*



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**September 2023**

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### Notes from the Chair

Dear Ones,

Autumn has arrived following a disturbing summer of climate-related disasters in parts of the world. You may remember that when I last wrote, I reported on one of our supporters, Giovanna, and her incarceration following her ‘contempt of court’. Her case has been taken up by the Good Law Project and they are awaiting a date for her Appeal hearing. Whilst in prison, Giovanna saw that many women were on remand awaiting trial. In other words, locked up without trial or verdict. On her wing of 48 women, she estimated a third were in such a position. National studies indicate that this is the situation for most prisons, with some on remand for 3 to 5 years. Clearly an injustice!

Also as previously reported AFFECT is linked to the Prison Reform Trust. This organisation has a new Chief Executive, (Pia Sinha), who writes “Prison-the Facts” that the prison population is due to rise by 7,800 to reach 93,200 by 2024. This will present a considerable challenge to a system with many inexperienced prison officers, leading to conditions of despair, hopelessness, poor mental health and fuel the demand for drugs. The Guardian editorial (10 Sep 2023) also looks at this challenge, and writes that the prison population is at 171% of its certified capacity, and a rapid turnover of staff.

AFFECT continues to provide an effective service. We have appointed a new Telephone Support Worker, Shamin. Welcome, Shamin- we look forward to working with you.

This is a full newsletter, which is mainly thanks to Shannel, our Project Development Worker. It’s great to have this dedicated time for AFFECT work.

Love to you all,  
Carol

### **Time for Change**

The new Justice Secretary, Alex Chalk, has introduced changes which should lead to a fairer, more transparent process. There has been an increase in people locked up for longer periods, rather than using community sentences. This should become quite a topical issue, with a General Election looming.

### **Chief Inspector of Prisons Report**

The Chief Inspector, Charlie Taylor, has stated that some prisons are “totally unacceptable” and that “overcrowding is a problem, and that purposeful exercise is crucial for rehabilitation” His predecessor had described prisons as being in a most dangerous state, with the highest number of prison population leading to overcrowding. Open Prisons are being used to manage this crisis, with Governors authorised to “fast-track’ men to open prisons who under normal circumstances would not be accepted.

### **Keeping Healthy**

Many of us with loved ones who are, or have been in prison are stressed and anxious a lot of the time. With autumn upon us, it is vital to maintain a healthy immune system. A healthy lifestyle begins with small changes which have a positive impact on our moods and overall health. The immune system is the body's defence against infection and disease; it fights everything from cold and flu viruses to serious disorders like depression and cancer. Eating correctly, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, getting enough sleep, not smoking, and avoiding excessive alcohol use are ways to enhance your immune system.

#### **Healthy Eating and vitamins**

Eating well provides a variety of nutrients that support optimal immune function. Having a well-balanced diet including fruits, vegetables, lean meats, whole grains and dairy products. Limit your intake of added sugars, cholesterol fats and salts. Vitamins A, B6, B12, C, and D, as well as copper, folate, iron, selenium, and zinc, help our immune system function properly. In autumn and winter, taking a daily 10-microgram vitamin D supplement is essential because of the lack of sun exposure during the cold months.

#### **Exercise**

Physical activity improves your moods, sleep quality and even reduces anxiety by releasing endorphins hormones. Eating well and exercising regularly helps you to maintain a healthy weight. Excess weight can affect how your body functions. Include activities into your daily routine. Try walking and setting a weekly target to walk further. Choose cycling instead of using the car to travel. Attend a local exercise class which may lead to new friendships. Providing you are moving enough to raise your heartbeat, breathe faster and feel warmer.

#### **Sleep quality**

A sleep routine should include a time when you begin winding down. An excellent sleep routine is going to bed and waking up at the same time every day. Each night, 7 to 9 hours of sleep is recommended.

#### **Smoking and Alcohol consumption**

Smoking can make the body less successful at fighting disease. Men and women are recommended to drink in moderation, with no more than 14 units a week consumed. Over time, excessive drinking can weaken the immune system.

### **Numbers**

Not a boy  
Not yet a man  
19 years spent  
Wondering this land  
Then a judge says  
with a law that's been Slayed  
he hands down a sentence  
IPP is its name  
All of my 20s  
gone in a flash  
A three-year tariff

How am I still here?  
They all ask  
Now just a number  
Shadows come and go  
through the walls and the doors  
forever hoping this sentence  
Is no more  
A numbers game  
My life spent in chains  
A law that's abolished  
with no one to blame

The system swallowed me whole  
the only thing left  
my heartbeat and soul  
We pray and we beg  
cry asking for help  
Crying out to the darkness  
In this time little  
One and 3000  
that's at this date  
But like my life, I'm all numbers  
and I have no name.

**By Simon Bolton**

**Next Group Gathering**

Will be on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 1pm by Zoom.

If you would like to attend, please reply to the invitation we send out, and you will be given 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.

**Thought for the Day**

I will appreciate that all of my instincts and feelings exist for a reason. Today, instead of trying to banish these feelings, I will strive to find a balance.

**DISCLAIMER**

From time-to-time, AFFECT is approached by media outlets, asking us to canvas our supporters for help with their studies and or programmes. We may forward their approach, and reasons, to our supporters, but ONLY by blind copy email. We NEVER divulge any contact details of AFFECT supporters.

**We leave it entirely to the discretion of you, our supporters to contact any such third party.** In keeping our distance from those interested in research and or programmes related to our supporters' concerns, we are drawing on long experience, that an approach initially presented as a genuine inquiry can turn out to be exploitative, and damaging.