



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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Notes from the Chair

Dear Ones,

Andrew Malkinson

Andrew was one of the Guest Editors on Radio 4's Today programme in the New Year. You may remember that he was the prisoner convicted of rape, a crime he did not commit, yet was incarcerated in 2003 for a period of 17 years, whilst asserting his innocence at all times. I'm sure you can imagine the terrible turmoil and distress caused to him and his family for this unjust situation.

In his interview, he raised several issues which we Affect supporters are all too familiar with. Namely:

- prison does NOT prepare inmates for release
- there is little or no psychological support for prisoners or their families
- prison officers appeared not to support prisoners undertaking higher education and difficulty in prisoners accessing the internet which is essential for higher education.
- Chief Inspector of Prisons (Charlie Taylor) said that meaningful activities undertaken whilst inside can help on release.
- The barriers to appeal and significance of plea-bargaining when the courts are not functioning.

Andrew Malkinson also mentioned the families, "The Loved Ones", and how important is their role. Children suffer from being judged and losing friends. He finished by talking about the lack of trust so many have in British systems, including the Criminal Justice System, and including the Post Office scandal, the Contaminated Blood scandal, Windrush, Grenfell and so on. *(cont. overleaf)*

I want to highlight the issue of wrongful convictions, plea-bargaining, limitations to appeal, and the impact these have on prisoners, their families and wider society, through loss of trust.

Closer to home, AFFECT has held its 2023 AGM, received a favourable finance report, and appointed a Trust Board. Shannel has been included in the Board and her title has been changed to Project Development Manager to reflect the wider nature of her responsibilities.

The dates of the next Trust Board meetings are included in this Newsletter, and you are welcome to attend.

We continue to recruit Telephone Support Workers, two since the last Newsletter: welcome, Sarah and Valetta.

In regard to Group Gatherings, this was discussed at the AGM where it was decided to hold frequent Group Gathering Zoom meetings, interspersed with face-to-face meetings at a venue tbc. A face-to-face meeting was held in December, and the feedback was very positive.

The next GROUP GATHERING- will be on Saturday 2nd March at 1pm, via Zoom. This is a good opportunity to meet other supporters, share information, to give and receive mutual support in a safe, facilitated process.

Love to you all, and looking forward to Spring, Carol

Former chief inspector condemns 'panicky' capacity measures

Nick Hardwick a former Chief Inspector of Prisons has exclaimed for a radical shift on criminal justice policy, complaining that prisoners are trapped in filthy overcrowded cells for up to 23 hours a day.

Hardwick, now a professor of Criminal Justice at Royal Holloway University, accused the Government of a 'panicky' response to the ongoing capacity crisis in prisons- Specific measures include an early release scheme that allows some prisoners to leave 18 days early, a delay in sentencing for some convicted prisoners, and plans to send UK prisoners to live in hired cells in overseas jails.

Hardwick spoke to MPs last week at a Justice Select Committee hearing titled "Future prison population and estate capacity". He stated that the fundamental issue was an increase in average sentence lengths, and he called for a binding Prison Capacity Statement that would require people to be released early or wait before beginning to serve their sentences.

Alongside other experts providing evidence to the committee, Mark Day, deputy director of the Prison Reform Trust, said renting space in foreign prisons would be an "expensive and complicated" way of increasing capacity, raising "practical, moral and ethical questions about whether it's right that we should be sending people from UK jurisdictions to other countries."

Richard Garside, Director of the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies proposed to free up prison space by addressing the cases of more than 1,000 people serving the endless Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences who have never been released. He stated, "If the government would just do something rather more energetic to expedite the release of IPP prisoner who are over tariff I think that would have quiet a big impact on the prison population quite quickly."

A spokesperson for the Ministry of Justice said "Public protection is our priority which is why we're keeping the most dangerous offenders behind bars for longer while reforming short sentences and getting more prisoners into work to help break the cycle of reoffending. "We're also creating an additional 20,000 modern prison places – the biggest prison expansion programme since the Victorian era – with over a quarter already built, helping to rehabilitate offenders and keep our streets safe."

Prison Reform Trust Webinar 13/12/23

AFFECT was invited to a Meet PRT New CEO webinar in December. I represented AFFECT joined by many other organisations including Ungripped. Pia Sinha CEO, Mark Day Deputy Director, and Charlotte Development Manager hosted the webinar. Pia discussed the PRT aims and mission, which is to achieve positive change for people in prison and the criminal justice system in general. She introduced herself as PRT New CEO for 8 months and shared her background which she Governed 3 prisons. Mark Day discussed PRT's 5-year plan which focused on Prisoner engagement with the prisoner voice being front and centre. Multiple new projects one being Prisoner pay as prisoners are becoming incredibly poorer, spending up to 23 hours a day in their cells resulting in not be able to purchase the essentials. Mark spoke about PRT track record of success a major win was the reversal of Domonic Raab rejecting the Parole Board's recommendations. PRT debated the negative outcome of this which supported Alex Chalk reversing the open prison criteria. Charlotte thanked everyone for their attendance, support, and contributions. I found PRT Webinar insightful and together we are all contributing for positive change within the CJS and our communities.

Shannel Project Development Manager

Justice Secretary Alex Chalk joins prisoners on a Parkrun 16/12/23

The Justice Secretary, Alex Chalk visited HMP Onley in Northamptonshire. One of 20 prisons in England and Wales which participates in 5K races every Saturday mornings. Chalk accompanied by officials completed the course and spoke to Channel 4 News afterwards said "I'm new to it, but I'm a complete convert. Exercise is massively important to prisoner rehabilitation. "It's not about being 'wokey' or soft on criminals. Let's run decent regimes, let's rehabilitate people, let's do sport as we're doing it now, and instead of being an irretrievably bad person, they can be a person who did a bad thing."

Prisoners taking part in the run shared their views with Channel 4 News of the benefits from the weekly exercise. John serving 14 years said "You're stuck in a confined space for 23 hours a day and it's enough to send you kind of insane. That's why things like this Parkrun, and obviously the gym, keeps your mind active and keeps you going."

Parole (Documentary)

BBC iPlayer: An eye-opening look at Britain's parole boards, making complex, life-changing decisions for prisoners and their victims.

Research participants wanted

I am a freelance journalist researching for a story aimed at BBC Radio 4 regarding government plans to axe a probation behavioural programme for sex-offenders. I am looking to speak to an ex-offender about what rehabilitation should look like, in their view. If you would like to talk anonymously,

please

contact

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Positive quotes for the day:

"Be the change that you wish to see in the world." —Mahatma Gandhi

'Kindness is one thing can't give away it always come back' - George Skolsky.

"Only in the darkness can you see the stars." —Martin Luther King, Jr.

MoJ and Sentencing Council acknowledges the Justice Committee's request for a new national debate on sentencing 18/01/24

'Public opinion and understanding of sentencing' report was published in November 2023. The cross-party committee of MPs informed the public debate on sentencing is "stuck in a dysfunctional and reactive cycle" and recommended the Government should seek to actively engage the public on sentencing policy. This should only be performed in a structured and methodologically rigorous manner.

The MoJ responded to the Committee's recommendations for action, stating: "There are several ways that we engage on sentencing policy to ensure an inclusive, as well as robust policy making process. We are continually exploring ways to enhance current processes including ways to increasing public awareness of the existing avenues for engagement in sentencing policy discussions."

The Justice Committee said that members of the public should form part of the policy development process. It also advised for the Government to establish an independent advisory panel on sentencing to consider the proposed changes to sentencing policy and to advise ministers.

The Committee panel recommendations involved including representatives of victims and their families. The Ministry of Justice agreed this was valid and in align with principles of inclusivity. He stated "our Ministers use the views of victims, stakeholders and the wider public to help them make decisions and develop sentencing policy. Some of these mechanisms include manifesto commitments; the views of MPs, representing their constituents; victim-focused campaigns; consultations; and via e-petitions on parliament.uk."

In response to the Committee's recommendation that the government consider implementing a structured engagement plan to gather information on the public's views on sentencing, the Sentencing Council stated: "The Council will consider, as part of its ongoing work to encourage a greater range of responses to its consultations, whether structured deliberative engagement exercises, or similar, may be of benefit."

It included "The Government is continuing in its efforts to rebuild public confidence in the justice system. The publication of judgments and the accessibility of sentencing remarks are key components of the principle of open justice, helping to build understanding and confidence in sentencing."

To view the full report: <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/42938/documents/213506/default/>

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.

Data Protection

AFFECT keeps very limited information on our members, namely name, email, and telephone details. If you would like to be removed from our records, please email affect01@hotmail.com or ring Carol on 07833 458415

Promises, Medals and Heroes

Did they tell you when you went to war
There's nothing that's worth fighting for
Did they tell you when you signed your name
You would never come back the same.

What did they tell you, what did they tell you, what did they tell you?
What did they tell you, did they promise you medals?
Did they promise you heroes?
Did they tell you when you got on the plane
You would never come back the same

Did they say you'd kill women and children
Whose eyes have seen too much pain
What did they tell you, what did they tell you, what did they tell you?
What did they tell you, did they promise you medals?
Did they promise you heroes?
They gave you a helmet and a rifle
A pair of boots and a uniform
You've got a photo of your mother
She hopes you won't come to any harm

She hopes you won't come to any harm
Did they tell you when you got on the ship
That this was going to be a one-way trip?
What did they tell you, what did they tell you, what did they tell you?
What did they tell you, did they promise you medals?
Did they promise you heroes?

HM Prison Isle of Wight, Albany
Outstanding Debut Award for Song Writing 2022
koestlerarts.org