



Supporting Families and Friends of Prisoners

Action  
For  
Families  
Enduring  
Criminal  
Trauma



## AFFECT NEWS

### Sharing news and support for families

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### Notes from the Chair

Dear Ones,

A lot seems to have happened since I last wrote an update for the Newsletter. Wars continue to rage in various parts of the World, without anybody being able to put a stop to or control them in any way, despite intensive diplomatic intervention and public anxiety about these events. From a personal point of view, it is the feeling of powerlessness that is hardest to bear. I do the usual; ie letters to politicians, the media etc, and donations to relevant aid agencies. (coming from a health background, I tend to donate to medical charities, Médecins sans Frontières, etc)

Riots hit our streets earlier this year, with aggressive, violent action taken against asylum-seekers and our public servants who keep civil order. Those committing such offences often feel marginalised and powerless themselves, blaming immigrants for their grievances. They often have little trust in our political system, or faith that things will improve for themselves and their families. This sense of powerlessness and lack of control can be very familiar to members of AFFECT regarding influencing our loved ones’ experience of being in prison. AFFECT supporters have long experienced this, and our Telephone Support Workers work with people to inform and support action where it can be taken. It is hard for us to take on board the fact that, unless there are special circumstances, it is the prisoner, not the family member, who is in charge. The saying that I often refer back to when feeling overwhelmed with powerlessness is the AA Serenity Prayer:

**God grant me the serenity to accept  
the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference**

Following the Riots and incarceration of many of the protagonists, our Prisons became even more over-crowded. The Early Release Scheme saw thousands of low-risk individuals being released, with few problems. (although there was an issue with an old computer system not being updated, and inappropriate release of some people.) With the high turnover of prison staff, this was a problem which could have been anticipated and avoided. I was also heartened to wake up a few days ago to hear a discussion on the radio about improving the Criminal Justice System. I heard that

- there should be more emphasis on prevention
- that prisons should be a place of change with programmes aimed at early intervention and rehabilitation
- more community sentences should be given
- more resources should be channelled into Probation and Police services.

I profoundly hope that these initiatives are forthcoming.

Regarding AFFECT's internal business, we have had one TSW resign- thank-you, Debbie, for all your input, and one new TSW recruited- welcome, Kayla; we look forward to working with you.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024; details to follow. There are vacancies on the Board.

Bev has resigned after some considerable input- thank-you, Bev, we have really valued your input over the years.

So if anyone is interested in becoming a Board member, then you would be very welcome to come and discuss. It's not too onerous, I promise! Contact [affect01@hotmail.com](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com)

These seem to be busy times, particularly with winter and Christmas zooming in on us. It is therefore particularly important that we focus on our health, wellbeing and managing stress levels (me included.) There is a growing body of research that clearly demonstrates the healing power of nature.

Hope to see some of you at the AGM and/or the next Group Gathering on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

Love, Carol

## **The Prison Governor's Association Speech**

**Reported by GOV.UK 08.10.24**

Lord Timpson, Minister for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending, sets out why prison governors are at the forefront of efforts to drive down reoffending. Statics show 80 percent of offending in this country is re-offending.

Lord Timpson met with The Prison Governors Association (PGA) on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024. The Prison Governors Association was founded in October 1987 to represent the higher operational managers in the Prison Service in England and Wales.

Lord Timpson praised PGA work "You speak up for change, where change is needed. You push Government, where it needs to be pushed. And you do it not just for those you represent, but in the interests of public safety too. Your voice is valued, and we thank you for it... even when you say things we don't necessarily want to hear."

Tom Wheatley PGA president spoke about his former experience of being a Prison Governor at HMP Wakefield and heading the Timpson Group who employ 10 percent of ex- offenders. Wheatley shared "I realise that the CEO of a business and prison governor are very different roles – but there are similarities, too. Both manage complex organisations. Both need a strategic brain, excellent management skills, the ability to communicate, inspire and motivate." Lord Timpson spoke about 'the average person would have little idea about your day-to-day – what it really means to lead a prison in 2024, which requires working every hour, under extraordinary pressure, to run safe and secure regimes'. In addition to these everyday trials "dealing with self-harm, deaths and the scourge of drugs on a daily basis. Supporting your teams and trying to nurture them in an environment more stressful than most could imagine. Every challenge amplified because our prisons are full to bursting.

Wheatley spoke about a former prisoner Matt who he met 22 years ago whilst visiting prisons as a CEO. Matt was a bright individual who got into a fight a week after his A levels. Instead of going to university he went to prison. Matt was given the opportunity on release to work at Timpson. Matt is still working at Timpson today and is one of the most successful branch managers "he's travelled lightyears in terms of what he's achieved."

In 2016 Matt was honoured to become the Chair of Prison Reform Trust.

## **Order, order – it's the prisoners' turn to speak**

**Reported by Ben Leapman InsideTime 04.08.24**

Former House of Commons Speaker John Bercow told Ben Leapman why he is teaching prisoners public speaking. John Bercow was the Speaker of the House of Commons for 10 years, his cries of "Order, order" were heard by millions on television as he presided over MP's debates. Bercow, 61, began his career as a Conservative student leader and member of the Right-wing Monday Club. When first elected as MP for Buckingham in 1997, he praised Margaret Thatcher as "the world's greatest living statesman". But he drifted to the Left, and when he was elected as Speaker in 2009 it was with the backing of mostly Labour MPs.

From August Bercow will be going into HMP Pentonville to lead a class in public speaking. He will teach a class of 12 to 16 men, in six sessions organised in partnership with the prison's education department and the University of Westminster. He spoke to Leapman in the prison's chapel to explain why it's an important skill to master, including for prisoners.

Many people dread the thought of public speaking; whether it's a happy event like the Groom's speech at a wedding, or a grim occasion like addressing the judge and jury from the dock. (I've done both, so I'm speaking from experience.) You know that all eyes are on you. You worry that you'll be tongue-tied and forget what to say. Will you strike the right tone? What will people think of you? Will you get the result you want? Politicians and corporate leaders need to address large crowds, so why should a prisoner require such skills? Bercow says they applicable in a variety of scenarios. "It doesn't have to be a full speech that someone is expected to deliver, but more widely, it's how to prepare for a situation where you're going to pitch – like a job interview or an appeal to a Parole Board. Good communication skills also include good listening skills."

### ***Bercow's top tips***

- Tell them what you're going to say, say it, tell them you've said it, and sit down!
  - In a short speech, you should have one main theme.
  - Establish and maintain eye contact with your audience.

## **Four things Labour new taskforce must do immediately to end homelessness**

**Reported by: Rick Henderson Big Issue 08.09.24**

Angela Rayner will lead a cross-government initiative to combat record-high homelessness. According to Homeless Link's Rick Henderson, the group must immediately perform the following four things:

The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have announced that Rushanara Ali is leading on the homelessness brief, while Angela Rayner announced she will Chair an Inter - Ministerial Group on Homelessness and Rough Sleeping. With over 150,000 children currently confined in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping rising at an alarming rate, this clarity in responsibilities and direction is greatly welcomed.

### **1. Ensuring access to genuinely affordable housing**

Now and in the future, it is crucial people on low income have access to affordable housing most important action we can take to prevent homelessness. The Government has already made pledges on this, with Angela Rayner promising a 'council house revolution.' Alongside this, it's planned Renter's

Rights Bill must finally end section 21 evictions, one of the leading causes of homelessness in recent years, giving real protection for the ever-increasing number of individuals compelled to live in private rentals. Meanwhile, the local housing allowance rate, which determines how much housing benefit claimants can receive, is due to be re-frozen in April. Reversing this trend and ensuring that it at least covers the lowest 30th percentile of market rents would be critical in assisting low-income individuals in finding affordable housing.

## **2. Introduce a homelessness funding system that work**

Homelessness services work in communities across the country, providing accommodation and/or expert, holistic support to people who often struggle with issues such as substance misuse, mental health issues and offending behaviour. Homelessness service work in communities across the county, providing accommodation and expert holistic support to people who battle with substance misuse, mental health issues and offending behaviour.

## **3. Stop the flow of homelessness from institutions**

4. In the last five years the number of people leaving institutions has increased by 126%. The transition from institutions increases the likelihood of homelessness, therefore this should be a key area where we target to prevent this from occurring. From January to March 2024 the homelessness data showed the number of households owed a homelessness relief duty by local authorised after leaving Home Office-provided accommodation grew by 348% compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, the number of people approaching authorities as homeless after exiting prison has increased significantly. The previous Government changing the eviction procedure of reducing the time newly refugees had to find longer – term accommodation is a major factor for the sudden rise in homelessness. The first test for the new homelessness taskforce is the prison overcrowding crisis and the most effective way to approach this.

## **4. Create a national Housing First programme**

The Housing First strategy to homelessness is based on a set of seven key principles focused on people with multiple and complex needs. set forth that people should be provided their own home as well as unconditional intensive support, providing them with the stability and assistance they need to address the root causes of their homelessness. The previous Government funded three Housing First pilots in West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region. The short-term funding in other cities is having an immense strain on local authorities cannot provide long term open support to people. According to research, Housing First not only tackles homelessness, but it also helps to address health and social care needs, reduce offending behaviour, and saves the public money in the long run, with £1.56 saved for every £1 spent.

Developing a national Housing First programme, which delivers funding specifically to communities based on estimated level of need, with a program director who collaborates with organisations to ensure adherence to the approach's core principles, would go a long way towards expanding Housing First coverage across the country.

## **‘Places to heal, not to harm’: why brutal prison design kills off hope adapted from The Guardian Long Read by Yvonne Jewkes 24.09.24**

From razor-wire fences and crumbling cells to no windows and overcrowding, conditions in most jails mean rehabilitation is a nonstarter. Here’s how we can create better spaces for prisoners.

Yvonne is professor of criminology who has spent her career researching prisons and advising on their design. She had some success in persuading architects to create prisoner reception areas that are more humane – welcoming, even – and encouraged them to design comfortable waiting rooms with armchairs and TVs, with bright processing areas where prison staff can offer new prisoners a hot drink and something to eat after their long journey. She aims to civilise surroundings to encourage officers to extend a handshake and look prisoners in the eye, but some remain firmly of the opinion that it's demeaning to serve the people in their charge.

Arriving at a prison – any prison – still makes her heart race a little faster. She has been to more than 100 prisons for her research into how architecture and design can assist in rehabilitating offenders. But her first visit after 18 months of lockdown, to a prison deep in one of England's most rural counties, felt especially disorienting. She sat quietly for a moment looking up at the towering wall that encircles the car park. It's topped with coils of razor wire that unfurl like a giant, spiky Slinky, scaring off curious pigeons, but catching every plastic carrier bag that floats on the breeze.

Prison turns people into a homogenous mass, a shoal of indistinguishable grey fish. On arrival, every new inmate is given a bundle of prison-issue clothing that may have been passed down through generations and faded from wash and wear. In time, they may be able to wear their own clothes if they behave well. They're allowed to take to their cell enough personal belongings to fit into two reasonably large boxes. All other property must be left in storage.

All but the most recently built prisons are marked by filth and neglect – a symbolic as well as literal violation, and a reminder to prisoners that they've been rejected by society, that they themselves are viewed as waste. Even worse than the bare walls, thick bars and uncomfortable furniture are the traces of previous generations. Boredom, frustration, pain and despair are evident in the knocks, the scratchings, the gouging's, the graffiti, the grime, the burns, the stains, the remnants of body fluids. Prisoners are all too aware of the beatings, bullying and self-harm that have happened in the place they now must call home. In response to my question, "What colour is prison?" one young woman in an English establishment replied, "Purple, like a bruise."

It's easy to lose your own sense of humanity when all you can see is cages and bars and metal furniture and wire, and nobody calls you by your first name, and you're weighed, fingerprinted and body searched as if you're on an assembly line. This also goes for the staff processing new arrivals.

As the architect of HMP Oakwood in Staffordshire once told Yvonne: "It's just a cost-cutting exercise ... It's just reducing costs again and again. It's sad, but we've got to a stage where we're actually stripping back our designs. The only innovation of the last four or five years is how to do more for less."

Today, new prisons holding about 1,700 inmates are the norm in England and Wales, but HMP Berwyn in north Wales, which opened in 2017, has capacity for 2,106 men.

A former prison inspector, who spent much of her career working as a psychologist in the high-security estate, shared her view of the role of custodial environments: "Does the space continually say to them, 'You are a prisoner and a criminal,' not to be trusted or respected, or does the space say, 'You are a father,' in a well-designed visiting area? Or 'You are a cook,' in a homely residential unit kitchen, or 'You are a craftsman,' in a workshop where they are gaining qualifications? One environment allows hope to flourish, and another kills it off."

For the full article please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/4pd5wz3u>

## AFFECT needs your support

I urge you to consider a donation, particularly a regular monthly amount, however small, e.g. £2 or £5. Your contribution will help our service to continue to run efficiently and help others like you. Thank you for your generosity.

Please see bank details below:

**Affect Charity, sort code 20-69-40, account number 40893048**

### Thoughts for the day:

**Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives. –William James**

**In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity. –Albert Einstein**

**"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream." —C.S. Lewis**

### AFFECT needs you, could you become a Telephone Support Worker?

You spoke and we listened to your feedback about recruiting more TSW with personal experience of the Criminal Justice System. We are looking for friendly volunteers to offer free, confidential and non-judgemental support to families with a loved one in prison.

If you are interested, please email [affectcharity@outlook.com](mailto:affectcharity@outlook.com)

## Could you be an Affect Trustee?

Two years ago, I was asked if I could help Affect by becoming a member of the board. I have been happy to help, but for now, I need to step back because life is too full and challenging, and I am reducing my commitments. I wonder if you might be the next person to step forward?

**What is involved:** a commitment to attend the board meetings

**How often are meetings:** 4 a year, usually held on the morning of a group gathering by zoom

**Extra work:** Trustees may be asked to help occasionally with looking at policies or to help with interviewing. This is totally optional

I have helped with some interviews for telephone support workers and checked a couple of policies during my time. Sometimes we are asked to discuss an issue by group e-mail to help the core team make good decisions based on that consultation. I think my main contribution has been as a sufferer - someone who has a son in prison and is currently experiencing all those difficulties. It can help the core team to hear what is like and what are the current problems in prison, when that is relevant to the item on the agenda. Secondly, by attending you are helping to make the board quorate, which means that legally there is a minimum number of people who must be there to be able to make decisions. Just by attending, that means that the work and decisions of Affect can move forward. Of course, the board meeting is not the place to offload our personal situations, as we can share in the group gathering in the afternoon which I find so helpful and supportive to talk to others who are walking the same awful path as my family. I would like to thank the Affect team for everything they do, Affect has really helped me to cope through some dark times. The team is so dedicated to helping people in our situation - could you step forward and help this year?

Just send an e-mail to Carol at [affect01@hotmail.com](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com) and have a chat.

Love, Bev.

## Prisoner removed cell door at crumbling HMP Winchester

Reported by Insidetime 08.10.24

According to the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) latest report Winchester prison is so in despair, that its residents can chip away the walls and windows with plastic cutlery. In addition, the pest control experts are unable to eradicate the rodent infestation that plagues the Category B men prison in Hampshire.

On the jail Segregation unit, a prisoner once succeeded in removing an entire cell door. On other occasions they managed to remove bricks and windows. Some prisoners are convinced that these might have been escape attempts.

A report by the IMB alerted: "There have been at least 10 incidents of prisoners removing bricks and parts of window frames from cells, as well as one case of a prisoner removing a cell door. It is unsuitable for people to live in such conditions and the inadequate state of the fabric provides extra risk of escape."

The IMB stated the 178-year-old building is unfit for purpose. It added: "There are clear signs of dilapidation. This includes leaking roofs and ceilings, erratic heating and water systems, and degraded brickwork, which prisoners have been able to dig through using plastic cutlery. The control room remains infested with rats.

Pest removers have attended but to no avail."

The watchdog added: "The building's condition is deteriorating, with leaking roofs and ceilings, inconsistent heating and water systems, and damaged brickwork. Some workshops and cells have been non-functional for months as a result of this."

A Ministry of Justice spokesman said: "The new government inherited a prison system in crisis, and we are taking swift action to address concerns raised."

## Data shows just over one in four prisoners re-offend within a year

Reported in BBC News 10.09.24

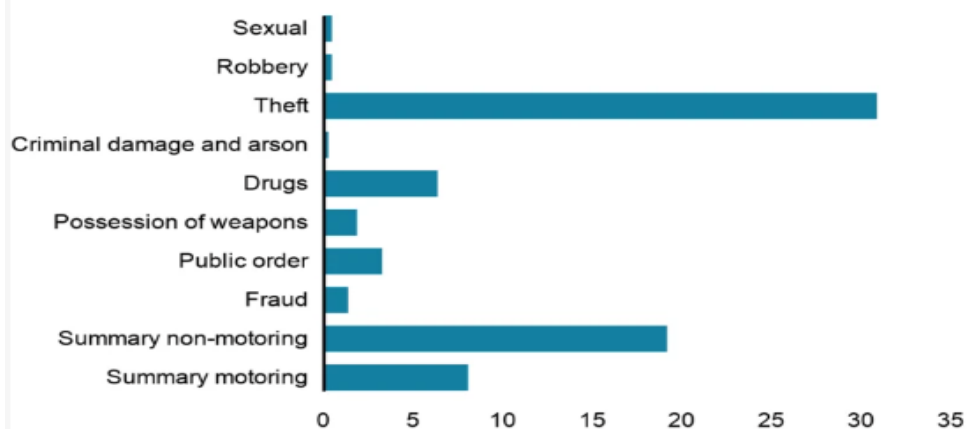
Martin Jones Chief Inspector of Probation told BBC, some released prisoners [will "certainly" reoffend.](#)

According to the latest official statics between July-September 2022, about 21,000 of the 79,000 offenders (adults and juveniles) in England and Wales offended again within a year of being released.

An increase of 26.5% reoffending rate and a 1.3%-point increase from the same period the previous year. The statics include if an offender commits a crime that leads to a court or caution conviction within the year.

### Theft was the most common reoffending offence in England and Wales

Percentage of offenders who reoffend by offence type, July to September 2022



Source: Ministry of Justice

BBC

**BBC News Prison summary:  
Reported in BBC News 10.09.24**

Today, around 1,700 convicts are walking out of prison in England and Wales after 40% of their sentence, as part of the government's early release scheme aimed at freeing up capacity.

Here's what you need to know before we close this page:

- The early release scheme was an "emergency decision," said business secretary Jonathan Reynolds, blaming the previous government
- There is a "risk of some re-offending," the inspector of prisons Charlie Taylor told BBC News
- Martin Jones, probation inspector, said the service is under a "huge amount of pressure"
- The union for probation workers said some people convicted of domestic violence and sexual offences [are being released early](#) - despite government assurances - but the Ministry of Justice denies this
- And prisoners who have been released have described the conditions inside jails - with one calling the cells "disgusting"

**Sexual offenders are being released early, probation union claims  
Reported in BBC News 10.09.24**

The Napo Statement says that despite the Government's guidance sex offenders are being released early.

"Members have shared examples where those with both domestic violence offences and sexual offences have been released because of this," says Napo General Secretary Ian Lawrence.

"When this has been challenged members have been directed to HMPPS [prison and probation service] guidance which has stated that the early release is correct and cannot be challenged.

"Members are extremely disappointed that this has been denied during several media appearances by government ministers and we have been challenging this in our media engagement.

The Ministry of Justice have responded that the eligibility for the scheme is based on the offence, not the offender, and that offenders may be released early from their sentence for a lesser offence when they have previously completed a sentence for a sexual or violent offence.



## Woman recalled for missing appointment 20 years ago

Reported in Insidetime 14.10.24

According to the watchdog a woman has been recalled to prison for missing a probation appointment 20 years ago.

She is a mother of school-age children and was said to have committed no crimes in her 20 years of freedom.

However, the law ultimately caught up with her, and she was sentenced to serve a 12-week recall period at HMP Downview in southwest London.

This has resulted in her losing her secure employment in the community. During her recall she was not allocated to any work or other activities.

The Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) annual report revealed the case, which said: "We query whether this is a sensible use of a prison place in the middle of acute population pressure, and also of HMPPS resources generally."

The IMB compared the decision to take the woman into custody with the rush by both Labour and Conservative governments to empty prison cells by use of emergency early release schemes, saying that the woman had been recalled "at the same time as we saw what might be construed as knee-jerk, short-term measures to deal with population pressure". "at the same time as we saw what might be construed as knee-jerk, short-term measures to deal with population pressure".

In response to the case, Andrew Neilson Director of Campaigns at the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "When someone moves on from crime and builds a new life with a secure job and a family, it makes no sense to disrupt that progress and send them back to square one. If the details in the Independent Monitoring Board's report are correct, this is an extraordinary and outrageous case that warrants further investigation."

The Ministry of Justice apparently defended the Probation Service decision saying: "Offenders released on licence are subject to strict conditions and they can be recalled to prison for breaching them.

## 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](mailto:affect01@hotmail.com)