

Welcome to the latest newsletter from PAS.

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**Welcome to our December 2015 update.**

**If you would like further information please go to our [website](#) or contact us at [admin@prisonersadvice.org.uk](mailto:admin@prisonersadvice.org.uk).**

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### **Recent events**



#### **PAS pub quiz – 4 November**

Thank you very much to everyone who came to the PAS pub quiz on 4th November during National Pro Bono Week. We hope you enjoyed the evening. We are pleased to report that we raised £400 in donations (including Gift Aid) through the event, all of which will support our legal advice work with prisoners in advocating for their rights. We would like to congratulate all who attended, especially the prize-winning teams, and we thank you all for your support. It was great to have teams present from Doughty Street Chambers, Field Fisher, Herbert Smith Freehills, Kings College London, Leigh Day, Mayer Brown, The Legal Services Board as well as teams of PAS staff and volunteers.



### **PAS Annual Lecture – 24 November**

We would also like to thank everyone who attended our PAS Annual Lecture on 24th November and CMS Cameron McKenna for kindly providing an auditorium at their offices as the venue. It was fantastic to see new and old faces alike. We say a special thank you to PAS volunteer Kevin Pilgrim for a heartfelt speech on his personal experiences and to PAS Patron His Hon John Samuels QC for a thought-provoking lecture on the topic “Rehabilitation: starry-eyed idealism or a realistic aspiration?” If you were unable to attend the lecture, transcripts of John’s and Kevin’s speeches are available on our website:

[John Samuels’ transcript](#)

[Kevin Pilgrim’s transcript](#)



### **News**

#### **New outreach clinic in Surrey**

We are expanding our outreach into more prisons and this autumn we began running regular advice clinics at HMP Bronzefield in Surrey. Four clinic sessions have been run there so far. This new clinic is extending our work with women prisoners. In addition to this new clinic, we also run regular outreach clinics at a further ten prisons in London, Kent, Surrey, West

Yorkshire and Gloucestershire: at HMPs Belmarsh, East Sutton Park, Eastwood Park, Holloway, Leyhill, New Hall, Pentonville, Send, Thameside and Wandsworth.

### **University of Kent remote letters clinic**

We have recently continued the expansion of our remote letters clinics, the latest addition being the Law Clinic at the University of Kent. Students there will offer assistance with our letters advice service, under the supervision of a qualified solicitor and lecturer, Lucy Welsh. We visited the university in October to provide a training session for the Law Clinic students. We trained the students on prison law in order for them to draft responses to prisoners' letters and advice requests. The principal aim of the remote clinic is to provide assistance and increased capacity for PAS in the form of additional legal volunteers at remote locations, overseen by a qualified solicitor, in the context of growing demand for our services from prisoners. The remote clinic also benefits the students participating by giving them hands-on experience in prison law and the drafting of legal letters.

This new clinic at the University of Kent joins our existing remote letters clinics in Essex University and Sunderland University in the academic world, and in Simmons & Simmons, Herbert Smith Freehills and Mayer Brown in the corporate sector.

### **PAS gets Actions against the Police legal aid contract**

Following our recent application, we have received a legal aid contract in the 'Actions against the Police' category. In our case, this will allow us to take more cases against abuses in prisons (under the terms of the different legal aid contracts, the term 'police' can include prisons). This contract, together with our existing Public Law contract, will give us the potential to open up to 40 new cases per year in defence of prisoners' human and legal rights.

### **Guardian newspaper quotes PAS in article**

PAS recently commented in a Guardian online article entitled: "Children denied visits to fathers in jail after rule changes – charity." Our contribution read: "The lack of legal aid since 2010 means that prisoners struggle to challenge unfair or unlawful decisions, which can have a huge impact on their

access to family visits above the statutory minimum.” A link to the full article can be [read here](#).

### **Recent success stories**

#### **Securing funeral visit for prisoner**

A prisoner and various members of his family called our advice line as the prisoner was not going to be escorted to his father’s funeral because of prison staff shortage. We spoke to different members of the family, the prisoner himself and the prison chaplain. We contacted the prison and requested that the prisoner, who was risk assessed as being suitable for an escorted absence, as a minimum be allowed to attend the funeral home to pay his last respects to his father in person, even if he would not be escorted for the funeral service. Following our intervention, the prison arranged a short visit to the funeral home for the prisoner to pay his last respects to his father, before the funeral service. It also agreed to allow a short visit in the prison chapel for the prisoner and his immediate family before the funeral service.

#### **Reuniting mother and son**

We recently represented a female prisoner at a recall hearing where a panel of the Parole Board decided it was safe for her to be released back into the community and be reunited with her family. This was a particularly sad case as the woman had lost her child and was therefore very keen to reunite with her older son after a lengthy period in custody.

#### **Correcting release date in time for Christmas**

During a recent outreach clinic in a London prison, a prisoner told us that his remand time had been incorrectly calculated. The incorrect date of the prisoner’s conditional release was 30th December 2015. The prisoner had put forward an application and a complaint about this. However, they had been unsuccessful. So we wrote to the Offender Management Unit at the prison with regard to the miscalculated release date. Following our intervention, the prisoner was provided with a new Sentence Calculation Sheet with a release date of 13th December 2015. This enabled him to be released before Christmas.

#### **Securing a disabled prisoner’s release on parole**

A disabled female prisoner's release on parole had been delayed twice for over a year because no suitable supported accommodation had been identified. We acted for her in her recent parole case. We sent a pre-action letter to the Local Authority threatening judicial review regarding the accommodation and then liaised/negotiated with the Local Authority/National Health Service teams. They then offered her a place in a therapeutic care home with 24-hour support for the first 18 months, before potentially moving on to more independent living. The parole board deemed this accommodation was suitable to meet her complex needs and directed her release.

### **Christmas appeal**

#### **Matched funding offer!**

During December, Global Giving are kindly matching the first instalment of any new regular gifts (online monthly direct debits) through their website. If you would like to take advantage of this offer (to have your first gift doubled!), and to support our work with women prisoners and disabled prisoners, you can do so [here](#) (and the terms and conditions of the matched funding offer can be found [here](#)). Thank you for any support you can give.

### **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

Thank you all for your support of our work during 2015. We wish you all a happy holiday season and a prosperous 2016!

## **PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE**

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THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

### **Contact PAS:**

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