

PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND
REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Dear Friend of PAS

As PAS gears up to welcoming both staff and much-missed volunteers back to our London office, we take a look at some of the case studies that have recently come to the fore.

We also take a look at last month's online launch of our toolkit for imprisoned fathers and at plans to create a further kit advising prisoners how to challenge over-zealous prison security when it prohibits contact with children.

As mentioned in our previous edition, this year marks PAS' 30th anniversary and we will be staging an extra-special event or two - hopefully in person - in November. Watch this space for details.

As ever, any donation that you can manage in support of our work will be most appreciated. [Please donate what you can here](#). Thank you.

PAS Helps Vulnerable IPP Prisoner Find Suitable Release Accommodation

Prisoner A was a lifer, who was 18 years over his original IPP tariff of three years for manslaughter. He had a history of childhood abuse and substance misuse and was a diagnosed schizophrenic. When he contacted PAS, he was being held in an Open Prison and had been hoping to be released in due course.

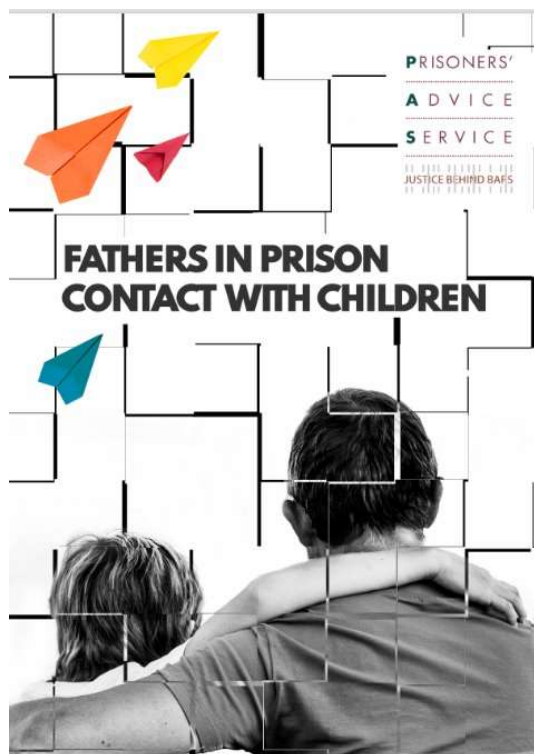
Despite his many years in prison, the Parole Board made a negative decision on his release by looking at his paperwork, parole dossier and the written recommendations of professionals, without having an oral hearing at which Prisoner A could speak. The reason for denial was that – as a result of the pandemic – he could not do Resettlement Overnight Releases (RORs) from

Open Prison to prove he had reduced his risk in conditions of lesser security. RORs had ceased due to Covid-19. This meant that Prisoner A would have to wait a further two-years until his next parole review.

We challenged the decision and requested an oral hearing as fairness demanded this. We located a suitable placement in the community for Prisoner A to be released to – with monitoring and 24-hour support for ex-prisoners who have become institutionalised – so that he might better rehabilitate in the outside world.

We obtained the support of his external Probation Officer for this placement and she agreed to back his release. Prisoner A was able to view the accommodation by video link and was very happy with it. Staff at the placement also provided a positive assessment for the Parole Board. We contacted the relevant local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) responsible for funding the placement. When funding was not forthcoming, we sent a Pre-Action Letter with a view to issuing Judicial Review proceedings against them.

The local authority and CCG then recognised their legal duties towards this vulnerable prisoner, under s117 of the Mental Health Act, and agreed to fund the placement. If PAS hadn't taken on Prisoner A's case and challenged the paper decision, he would have been detained further, for at least two more years, until his next parole review.



Sometimes the Smallest Intervention Can Make a Big Difference

Our Caseworkers take thousands of phone calls every year on our Advice Line. Often, we never know the outcome. This month, however, we received a letter of thanks from a non-binary prisoner who had been having issues with being made to shower in view of other prisoners, and, also, with not being included, as a non-binary person, in the

New Fathers Toolkit and Launch

Our online event on 10 June to launch PAS' new toolkit for imprisoned fathers, [Fathers in Prison: Contact with Children](#), proved to be a fascinating discussion of the importance of maintaining a connection with children for those in prison.

PAS is most grateful to all involved in creating and publishing the guide: Rose Harvey-Sullivan (Barrister at 7BR and author of the guide); Chris Atkins (best-selling author of A Bit of a Stretch: The Diary of a Prisoner, who provided the toolkit's foreword); Matrix Causes Fund and 7BR, who funded the project.

We are also much obliged to those who took part in the launch – Rose Harvey-Sullivan, Chris Atkins, Charlie Weinberg (Safe Ground) and Amanda Emerson (PACT) – and to Cooley LLP for hosting it.

The response to the toolkit has been very positive, with respected family lawyer and academic, Dr Shona Minson, whose recent research has focused on the experiences of children whose parents were in prison during lockdown, tweeting of the toolkit and launch,

"Great new resource from @PrisonersAdvice... Excellent launch event with informative

transgender community within the prison, who all had showers in their cells.

While most transgender people have a gender identity that is either male or female, some transgender people are non-binary and do not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between or as falling completely outside of these categories.

This prisoner had had a verbal agreement with the prison authorities to enable them to shower at 1:30 pm, outside of the usual times for prisoner ablutions, thus permitting a degree of privacy. Unfortunately, the arrangement was not being respected and the prisoner had made a formal, 'COMP1', complaint, receiving no response. As a result, they felt unable to shower, and degraded because of the inevitable, accompanying, odor.

They rang our Advice Line and our Caseworker gave them advice about resubmitting their COMP1 and escalating the complaint to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, should they need to.

As a result of this small intervention from PAS, the prisoner is now not only able to

speakers... Well done all”.

Bundles of the kits were sent out to all of the male prison libraries to coincide with the launch, while smaller bundles have also been sent to each of libraries in the women’s estate.

The launch was recorded and is available to view on our website and [YouTube](#) channel.

Upcoming *Child Contact and Prison Security* Toolkit

PAS is currently shoring up plans to publish a further toolkit *Child Contact and Prison Security*. This kit will advise prisoners how to challenge prison authorities when security is overreaching in prohibiting a prisoner’s contact with children, something we routinely receive queries about from anxious prisoners.

This high-handed treatment of prisoners is illustrated in a recent case study. We advised a prisoner, who had been convicted of the murder of an adult male. While he was remanded in custody, before trial, he received visits from family members of all ages. However, after his conviction and sentencing, he was told he could no longer have visits from his younger sibling and cousins, as he was a risk to children.

shower privately, but has also been included in transgender group meetings. In their letter to PAS, they write:

“I would like to thank you for your advice and for listening to me, it means a lot. I would like to thank everyone there at PAS as I have needed advice and help all [through] this sentence and you have all been there to deliver it so thank you!”



The rationale for this decision was that the index offence had been witnessed by someone under the age of 18. The prisoner was delighted when our intervention resulted in these visits resuming again.

The kit will be authored by a barrister who is highly knowledgeable in the area of prison security, and very kindly donating his expertise and time to us free of charge.



PAS' telephone Advice Line is run by caseworkers four days a week. Our telephone number is globally cleared within all prisons throughout England and Wales. **Please note: In order to assist a prisoner, we need to be contacted by them directly before we can discuss matters with family members.**

NUMBER: 020 7253 3323

OPENING TIMES

Monday, Wednesday and Friday
10:00-12:30 and 14:00-16:30;
Tuesday Evening 16.30-19.00

Freephone Service for women prisoners
NUMBER: 0800 024 6205
Tuesday morning 10:00-12.00

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