

PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND
REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Dear Friend of PAS

With days becoming excitingly longer and warmer, PAS brings you up-to-date with recent events in the world of prisoner advice, including a previously unpublished success story.

Also included: PAS is delighted to report on our year-end (financial year) figures for 2021-22. These reveal the sustained demand for, and uptake of, PAS' services throughout the year.

We must thank all of our funders, whether long-established or new, for helping us to arrive at year-end with our finances hale and hearty for another year.

As ever, if you would like to make a donation towards our work, we would be delighted to receive it. [You can donate online here.](#)

PAS Wins Reasonable Adjustment for OCD Prisoner

A 33-year-old male prisoner suffering with severe, diagnosed, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) surrounding food preparation contacted PAS when his prison failed to make reasonable adjustments for his disability. Prior to the pandemic, he had been provided with raw ingredients and allowed access to cooking implements to prepare meals himself. After lockdown, the prison refused to grant him access to cooking equipment. As the prisoner's OCD related to the preparation and handling of food by other individuals prior to consumption, he requested the alternative of a microwave halal meal, in line with his religious beliefs. The prison refused to provide a halal or vegetarian microwave meal and, instead, continued to deliver to him raw ingredients, which he felt unable to eat without preparation.

For a period of six weeks, the prisoner ate only sealed snacks from the canteen. PAS persistently wrote letters requesting the prison make reasonable adjustments for his disability as per the Equality Act 2010, all of which were

ignored. PAS then threatened Judicial Review. In response, the prison agreed to provide vegetarian microwave meals as a reasonable alternative for the prisoner. Finally, PAS referred the prisoner to a number of Solicitors who could advise on any potential civil claim resulting from his treatment.

Year End Figures 2021-22

Throughout the pandemic, PAS has been prioritising its Advice Line, with caseworkers freed up to do extra sessions on the phones by the suspension of Outreach Clinics in March 2020. The advent of the pandemic also resulted in a huge increase in demand for the Advice Line service, with 42,842 successfully answered calls in 2020-21, an incredible rise of 75% on the previous year.

Advice Line

Figures for the year 2021-22 show that PAS successfully responded to an amazing 39,694 calls to the Advice Line, which, though slightly down on last year by 7%, constitutes a 90% success rate in answering prisoners' calls. The very high percentage of successfully answered calls is, in part, due to the expected lessening in demand for the service post-pandemic (which, nevertheless, remains high) and, in part, due to the sustained vigour with which PAS has responded to calls.

Casework

In 2021-22, PAS opened 63 cases on behalf of prisoners whose situations would benefit from the



PAS' New Advice Line Caseworker, Sabrina Boudra

All Change in the PAS Staffroom

PAS is delighted to welcome three new staff members to the PAS line-up.

In November 2021, Katie Knafler joined the team, taking over as PAS' second Community Care Caseworker from Laine Ritchie. Katie has a degree in Law with French Law, and is due to be called to the Bar in 2022. Before coming to PAS, she worked as a paralegal at GT Stewart Solicitors, specialising in post-conviction appeals.

In March this year, Sabrina Boudra took over from Harry Wade as the dedicated Advice Line Caseworker at PAS. Sabrina has a degree in English and French law. She was

step. In taking action against prisons, we ensure that they are made aware that they cannot get away with abusing, or ignoring, prisoners' rights, and we influence prison policy in the longer term. Over the last five years, 2016 to 2021, PAS successfully represented prisoners against 82 prisons across England and Wales, forcing them to acknowledge the rights of inmates.

Letters Clinic

Not permitted access to the internet, prisoners constitute one of the last groups of people who rely on physical mail. In the year 2021-22, PAS received 1,389 letters from prisoners, and sent out 6,278 letters or related items to prisoners in response.

Toolkits, Guides and Information Sheets

In 2021-22, PAS continued to update and disseminate our series of 11 Self-Help Toolkits and 33 Information Sheets, which are designed to help prisoners understand their rights and undertake some of the simpler legal processes themselves. Our four Family Law Guides for women prisoners and two guides for LGBT+ prisoners all remain available. These publications can be accessed in prison libraries, are sent out to prisoners and other charities, and are downloadable from our website.

Toolkits (and their Easy-Read versions) and guides were downloaded from the website a total of 3,972 times throughout the year,

previously a legal researcher at Cambridge University and then to a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers.

Our third newbie will be Erin Scannell, who takes over as Fundraising and Communications Officer before the end of April. Erin has a degree in Politics and has previously worked at the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children).

We wish all three the best of luck with their new roles – they're going to need it!

Finally, the Tuesday evening session on the Advice Line is to be withdrawn and replaced with a new system, designed to make it easier for prisoners who are known to PAS to make contact with specific caseworkers.

We often hear from prisoners who have had to try calling the Advice Line many times before being put through to a named caseworker. This is clearly adding pressure to the already stretched time and financial constraints experienced by prisoners.

Instead, each caseworker will do an extra Advice Line session (either morning, or afternoon) every week, specifically to speak to prisoners who are already known to them. Each of the six team members doing such a session, when

and Info Sheets, 7,885 times.

After receiving a self-help Toolkit from PAS, one prisoner recently sent us a thank you letter:

“I would like to say a big thank you for your recent help and assistance and especially for sending me the self-help Toolkit, which was an absolutely fantastic form of help and support, straightforward and easy to read information. I was able and confident to challenge an adjudication, which was then rightly dismissed.”



callers will know their caseworker is on duty, will give prisoners peace of mind and should also result in a drop in unanswered calls to the service.



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**

Freephone Service from Women's Prisons

NUMBER: 0800 024 6205

Tuesday morning 10:00-12.00

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