

PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND
REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Here at Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS), we want to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy New Year and to thank you for your continued support.

In this Newsletter, we hear from new Chair of Trustees, Dominique Webb, who reflects on growing public awareness of our failing Criminal Justice System, we celebrate the success of our recent Panel Discussion and share a major press article for which PAS Consultant Anna Fairbank has recently contributed her expertise.

As always, this newsletter begins with a recent Case-Study, highlighting the value of our work and the ongoing need for our services. We've also included a poignant thank-you card from a prisoner who describes the positive difference we made.

If you feel inspired by the work we do and are in a position to make a donation, however big or small, [please do visit our website](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [YouTube](#).

From all of us at PAS, we wish you a wonderful 2024.

PAS Secures In-Cell Meals For Two Prisoners

Shortly before Christmas 2023, two prisoners called the PAS Advice Line independently of each other, reporting the same issue with the same prison.

In both cases, they had been self-isolating in their cells for some time, fearing attacks from other prisoners. Because they felt unable to leave the relative safety of their rooms, prison staff had initially been bringing meals to their cells for them, however they'd recently been told that this would no longer happen - if they didn't come out, they simply wouldn't eat.

PAS contacted the prison in question, pointing out that this was unlawful. Case law clearly states that if a prisoner acts against prison rules in whatever way, the prison can pursue them with disciplinary charges or put them on the most basic level of the Incentives Scheme - but it cannot withhold food.

On receipt of our second urgent email to this effect, the prison responded to confirm that food would no longer be withheld from either prisoner.



PAS Panel Discussion A Great Success

In November last year, Prisoners' Advice Service was delighted to host a panel discussion at [Doughty Street Chambers](#), which focused on the telling of prisoner stories.

The panel featured [Time](#) writers [Jimmy McGovern](#) and [Helen Black](#), as well as former PAS Co-Director Deborah Russo, who shared her experience of dramatising her recent Criminology PHD research. The panel discussed public interest in prisoner stories, the challenges involved in producing an authentic script and the role of TV in exposing the realities of prison life to a mass audience.

The event was moderated by former Chair of Trustees, Martine Lignon, who recently stepped down from the role after 10 years. She was thanked at the event close for her dedication to PAS by the charity's Director, Lubia Begum-Rob.

Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive, with one guest saying: *'I just wanted to say thank you for organising last night's event. It was so interesting and informative and we chatted with some great people afterwards, too.'*

To be notified of future events, [please join our mailing list.](#)



Chair, Dominique Webb

A Welcome From PAS Chair Of Trustees, Dominique Webb

It was with great pleasure, and more than a little trepidation, that I took over as Chair of Prisoners' Advice Service from the wonderful and ever-supportive Martine Lignon in November 2023. I have been a PAS trustee for four years, and if you believe (as I do) that the morals of a nation should be judged by how we treat the most vulnerable people in it, then you'll know how much PAS's work - with all its complexity and frustration and tenacity - is needed for us to feel that we can possibly live up to this.

Taking on responsibility for leading any organisation's direction is daunting, and the challenging times we are in show no signs of getting easier any time soon. However, the state of our prison system and the vulnerability of the people within it, are starting to gain a higher profile - especially with TV series' such as

Time - and it is my hope that as more people start to understand the reality of prisoners' lives, we may have the opportunity to raise awareness of how our work at PAS protects them, gives them access to proper redress, and holds the authorities accountable for their actions.

Ultimately, it will be my role and of my fellow trustees, to do our very best to ensure that we increase the sustainability and stability of PAS, to enable our talented and dedicated staff to continue doing this essential work.

‘Cell, street, repeat’: Thousands of prisoners being set up to fail with release into homelessness

About 600 people leave prison without accommodation every month

Andy Gregory • Thursday 28 December 2023 18:14 GMT • [64](#) Comments



PAS Contributes To Article Highlighting The Link Between Homelessness And Jail

PAS is pleased to have assisted with the researching and writing of an article, published in The Independent just last month, criticising the government's track record on releasing prisoners from jail with no home to go to.

PAS Consultant, Anna Fairbank, contributed to journalist, [Andy Gregory](#)'s piece, which describes how 600 people leave prison without accommodation every month, leading to a cycle of , 'cell, street, repeat'.

'Anna Fairbank, a solicitor at the Prisoners' Advice Service, said some recalled prisoners who had contacted the charity for help were "angry about the about huge problems they faced as a result of being homeless, about the lack of support and about being recalled for a minor breach".

One prisoner told the charity he was a wheelchair user who was released homeless with a licence condition preventing him from entering his home or his home town, where both his probation office and the housing centre were situated.

But he said after being "left on the pavement in his wheelchair, in the cold with no funds and nowhere to go", he decided to stay in his empty house until a meeting with probation several days later. Despite claiming to have seen no one while at his property, police arrived and arrested him the day before his meeting.'

To read the article in full, [click here](#).



*I just want to say:-
 Thank you for saving me when I was most
 vulnerable, about at my lowest I've ever
 been.
 Thank you for giving me hope when all
 was lost.
 Thank you for showing me there was a
 way out of my issues at the time.
 Thank you for just listening with empathy,
 when it wasn't even your job, or duty-bound.
 You're a bright light shining in a very
 dark place, a beam of hope to many peo-
 ple as myself.
 You are of a noble heart Markie, a
 big heart of Gold!
 I shall forever be indebted to you!
 David*

PAS was touched to receive a thank you card from a prisoner at HMP Pentonville recently, who received advice on appealing his adjudication - which was subsequently successful.

'I just want to say

Thank you for saving me when I was most vulnerable and at the lowest I've

ever been.

Thank you for giving me hope when all was lost

Thank you for showing me there was a way out of my issues at the time

Thank you for just listening with empathy,

When it wasn't even your job, nor duty bound

You're a bright light shining in a very dark place, a beacon of hope to many people such as myself'.



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 10:00-12.30

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