

# PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND  
REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Dear Friend of PAS

With days slowly becoming longer and warmer, PAS brings you up-to date with recent events in the world of prisoner advice, beginning with an invitation to our annual event on 29 May.

The event will feature a panel discussion on the benefits of the arts whilst in prison and on release. It will feature contributions from charity [Red Tangent Records](#), which helps ex-prisoners enter the music industry, as well as others, to be confirmed. There will also be musical performances from ex-prisoners working with Red Tangent.

The event will run from 6pm, with a drinks reception before and after the discussion and performances. To reserve a place, please e-mail [list@prisonersadvice.org.uk](mailto:list@prisonersadvice.org.uk).

Also included in this letter, amid continuing fears that jails are running out of places, we explore recent legislative changes brought in to mitigate the overcrowding crisis, we present a previously unpublished success story; and we report on our financial year-end output figures for 2023-24, which reveal the sustained demand for, and uptake of, PAS' services throughout the 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.](#)

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## PAS Helps Vulnerable Woman Access Drug Rehabilitation Facility

We acted on behalf of Prisoner A, a vulnerable female prisoner who suffered acute mental ill-health as a result of her ongoing, chaotic, substance abuse issues. Then 53, Prisoner A had a long history of repeat offending, starting when she was 17 years old, and had herself been a victim of both physical and sexual violence. When she contacted PAS, Prisoner A had been recalled to prison once again, and was facing a Parole Board hearing to determine whether she could be released.

Prisoner A had been recalled – for relapsing into drug misuse – only weeks after her previous release. Historically, upon discharge from prison, she had typically been housed either in approved premises alongside many other, active, substance abusers, or in similarly non-supportive accommodation. She had also been released homeless. This cycle, coupled with a lack of opportunity to address her issues whilst in prison (the sentences she had served being mainly short, where this is not offered), meant that she was often recalled for the relatively inoffensive infraction of substance abuse.

PAS represented Prisoner A throughout her recall proceedings and recommended that she be released to a funded, residential rehabilitation centre in order to receive the support necessary to overcome her addictions.

In the run up to the Parole Board hearing, it became clear that funding for this residential placement was available only for a limited period; indeed, the funding offer would expire in a matter of days. Ordinarily, the Parole Board has up to fourteen days to issue a decision after a hearing, but this would have meant the loss of the placement for Prisoner A.

PAS corresponded with Prisoner A's community probation officer, the funding providers and the rehabilitation facility to impress upon them the necessity of securing the placement for her. We made submissions to the Parole Board, explaining the urgency of the matter, that their decision be delivered quickly.

Following PAS' involvement, the Parole Board was prompt in its response and Prisoner A was successfully released to the residential rehabilitation facility, where she was able to access the support needed to tackle her long-standing substance abuse issues.

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### **Government Implements Legislative Changes to Ease Prison Overcrowding**

The number of prisoners incarcerated across England and Wales currently stands at around 88,000 and chronic overcrowding continues to threaten the safety and wellbeing of prisoners and staff alike. The situation is now so serious that the government has implemented

### **PAS Announces Output Stats for 2023-24**

The financial year, 2023-24, saw the continued demand for PAS' services, and our Caseworkers work tirelessly to deliver these. Our Advice Line and Letters Clinic both remained vital lifelines for prisoners and, following the end of COVID restrictions inside prisons, we were finally able to

new legislation in order to reduce prisoner numbers and free up jail places.

In three key reforms:

- The End of Custody Supervised Licence (ECSL) scheme, launched last October to allow releases 18 days early from prisons which are near-full, has been extended so that releases will be up to 60 days early.
- Use of a separate early release scheme, Home Detention Curfew (HDC), will be expanded by lifting a lifetime ban on prisoners who have previously been recalled from HDC for poor behaviour. Instead, they will now serve a two-year ban then become eligible for HDC again.
- People on sentences of less than 12 months, who are recalled to prison for licence breaches, will now normally serve fixed-term recalls rather than standard recalls – meaning that they will be out again after 14 days, rather than potentially staying in custody for the rest of their sentence.

Though recent figures do show a slight reduction in the number of people in prison, the Ministry Of Justice estimates that the prison population could grow by as much as 30% over the next four years, putting prisoner rights in further jeopardy.

provide a full year's worth of Outreach Clinics, where PAS Caseworkers attend prisons to meet with prisoners face-to-face.

In 2023-24, we successfully answered an impressive 32,896 calls to the Advice Line, received 1,070 letters from prisoners and sent out 5,843 items in response. We delivered 71 face-to-face Outreach Clinics, which saw Caseworkers meet with 513 prisoners across 15 prisons, including 13 clinics in three women's prisons, seeing 106 women one-to-one.

Throughout the year, PAS opened 88 end-to-end legal cases on behalf of prisoners whose situations would benefit from this action.

Finally, our series of Toolkits, Guides and Information Sheets, a selection of which is available in prison libraries, were downloaded from our website on 30,455 occasions. These include recently updated editions of our Fathers in Prison Guide and A Prisoners' Guide to Trans Rights.

A big thank you goes out to all of our corporate legal volunteers, who helped us respond to queries from prisoners throughout the year, as well as a heartfelt acknowledgment to all of our funders and supporters, without whom PAS would not be able to continue its work.



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**

Prisoners' Advice Service is a registered charity (No: 1054495) and is a company limited by guarantee (No: 3180659).

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