

PRISONERS' ADVICE SERVICE

THE INDEPENDENT LEGAL CHARITY PROVIDING INFORMATION AND
REPRESENTATION TO PRISONERS

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Dear Friend of PAS

With the festive season almost upon us, the Criminal Justice System is once again in the spotlight.

Since our last newsletter, approximately 2,800 prisoners have been released early in an effort to reduce population pressure. Some 86,000 prisoners, however, still remain incarcerated across a 'crumbling prison estate', with 'cockroach infestations, rotting rodents, broken windows and leaking sewage' - as revealed in a recent [IMB report](#). Shockingly, these are the environments in which prisoners are expected to be reformed and rehabilitated.

To add insult to injury, the creation of 20,000 additional prison places by 2031 is now deemed insufficient to meet the [rising demand for places](#). As Andrea Coomber KC, Chief Executive of [The Howard League for Penal Reform](#) states:

'We cannot build our way out of the prison capacity crisis. Finding a solution is not simply a matter of supply; we have to reduce demand on a system that has been asked to do too much, with too little, for too long.'

Here at PAS, helping prisoners to assert their legal, human and healthcare rights remains our ongoing priority. If you - or someone you know - requires our advice over the coming month, [please consult our opening hours](#).

May we take this opportunity to thank you for your valued support and to wish all who celebrate it a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Case-Study: PAS Secures Childcare Licence for Foreign National Mother

PAS recently advised Prisoner A, a foreign national woman serving a 12-year custodial sentence for Conspiracy to Supply Drugs. Although her parents were Dutch, the prisoner had lived in the UK since she was a baby.

Prisoner A has a son who is nearly five years old and for whom she is primary carer. He currently lives with his maternal grandmother under a Child Arrangements Order granted by the Central Family Court. Prisoner A remains actively involved in her son's life: he regularly visits her in prison, and she is invited by her mother to participate in all decision-making about him. It is intended that he will return to the care of his mother when she is released from prison.

Given the above, Prisoner A had applied for Childcare Resettlement Licence (CRL) so that she could spend time with her son in the community. CRL – a type of Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) – is available to prisoners who have primary caring responsibilities for a child under 18 years of age in order to encourage the maintenance of ties between prisoners and their children, and to help prepare the prisoner for the resumption of their parental duties on release.

The prisoner's application was considered, but, following a ROTL Initial Risk Assessment, was not progressed to a ROTL Board for consideration. The reasons given for this included that she had previously received a prison sentence for drug related offences and had been issued with a Stage 1 deportation order on two separate occasions. Although Prisoner A had subsequently been given indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom, because she had been convicted of a further offence, she also fitted the criteria for deportation.

None of the grounds cited for refusing her application rendered the prisoner ineligible or unsuitable for ROTL. The order granted by the Family Court did not prevent her from returning to full time caring responsibilities upon release, and there was no evidence either to suggest that her son would not return to her care or that she would be removed from the UK.

At this point Prisoner A contacted PAS and we advised her that her application should have gone before the ROTL Board and that she could challenge the decision. We submitted representations on her behalf, stating that her application must be progressed to a ROTL Board. There is an expectation that ROTL should be widely used for those that are suitable – as the prisoner was – and CRL should be utilised throughout a sentence to assist with reducing any risk the prisoner may pose, to rebuild and maintain relationships with children and to prepare the prisoner for life in the community with his or her children.

As a result of our work, Prisoner A's application was finally heard and her CRL granted. She is now able to spend meaningful time with her son in the community.

Growing Old Inside

A new report, published by the [Prison Reform Trust](#), provides valuable insights into the age-specific experiences of men and women aged 50+ who are serving prison sentences of 10 years or more.

The report reveals the distinct challenges faced by older prisoners, who account for 15% of the prison population. These include the disconnect between activities aimed at reducing reoffending and preparing for a life after release, whilst simultaneously facing the prospect of their own death in prison; their desire to regain purpose and to support younger prisoners; and the importance of dignity when faced with growing health and social care needs.

“I have no home, no pension and no employment hopes (I will be retired upon release). My circle of friends on the outside is now virtually non-existent, there is a possibility that the few left might be in ‘homes’ or even dead because they are older than me. But that is made on the assumption that I will even leave prison alive! A very sobering thought, isn’t it?”

In 2023-24, older prisoners aged 50+ made up 21% of callers to our Advice Line, 41% of letter-writers, 19% of those attending Outreach Clinics and 21% of those for whom PAS undertook legal casework.

To read the full report, [please click here](#).



PAS Pub Quiz a Success

Many thanks to those of you who joined us for our annual Pub Quiz last month at the [Betsey Trotwood](#), organised by the [London Legal Support Trust](#) (LLST). Huge Congratulations to [The Family Rights Group](#), who won the coveted first prize.

The event raised over £6,600 and counting for LLST - who then redistribute the money amongst the organisations they sponsor - all in support of access to justice.

The evening was a brilliant opportunity to spend time with supporters from solicitor firms such as [Fieldfisher](#), [Herbert Smith Freehills LLP](#), [Leigh Day](#), and [Reed Smith](#), as well as our IT specialists [Blue Lizard](#). Thank you all again for coming along and supporting PAS.

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rules, what get violated
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KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK

Feedback from Service-Users

PAS is proud to make a meaningful difference to those in prison. The recent heart-warming thank you letters above and below make all of the hard work worthwhile...

The message above reads:

'Thank you for the stuff you printed out for me - it was a lot. It has really helped me, both via probation and release and here via the PSO1700 rules, what get violated every day here.'

Thank you for all you do and continue to do to help me. You do not know how much you all really help and how much it is valued and then appreciated.

You all make a positive contribution to the dark times we face in custody.

Thank you for your continuing help.



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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