QUAKERS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE

WINTER 2022 EDITORIAL

For the Winter Edition we have a compact (slightly smaller than our usual size) but nevertheless informative and information packed 20 pages of articles, reports, poetry and updates

Finding artwork for the articles is always a bit of a challenge and so I'm particularly grateful to Debbie Rowell who submitted her own artwork. As soon as I saw it I knew exactly where I could use it and you'll find it illustrating an article from Quaker Service NI on Women Prison leavers and accommodation on page 17.

Once again Melanie Jameson, our clerk and a regular contributor to the newsletter provides us with two insightful articles on both Imprisonment for Public Protection sentences and concerning changes in Parole Board rules. Melanie is in many ways the glue that holds our group together and I'd like to express my thanks to her for all she does on a daily basis to keep us organised and informed.

With it being the winter edition that also means that it's almost time for our annual conference. This year it is being held in Hinley Hall in Leeds and focuses on Prejudice and Disadvantage: How marginalised and minority groups are disproportionally present in our Criminal Justice System. Having had a look at the draft programme, it is shaping up to be absolutely excellent. There is a booking form on page 19. I placed it there to allow for you to cut it off and complete with minimal damage to your newsletter.

Be sure to get your application forms completed and submitted to our membership secretary Simon as soon as possible as places are limited and Leeds is always a popular venue when we host it there.

Finally I would like to wish all of our members a peaceful and rewarding New Year. I'm looking forward to catching up with you at the conference and to meet some of our newer members for the first time. Thank you for all your contributions to the newsletter during 2022.



Jonathan Lamb Editor

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DEAR QICJ



Dear QICJ

I forward a piece by a prisoner I see in Coldingley Prison, AA. He wrote this when we were working our way through Becoming Friends. (We still are.)

Best wishes
Keith Scott

When so very many stand apart preaching Hate as Love, Exclusion as Inclusion, Aggression as Tenderness, Oppression as Compassion, Violence as Benevolence… When Tyranny, Brutality and Corruption pervert our everyday lives, do we have an obligation, the responsibility, the courage to stand apart ourselves?

If we are given Eyes to see, Brains to rationalise and reason, Tongues to speak, should we not question Right and Wrong?

Do our actions display Love, Compassion, Tenderness?

Do we persecute those characteristics we ought to protect - Age, creed, race, gender, sexuality?

Or do we hide behind books desperately clinging to doctrine, deceiving ourselves with the promise of glory?

Can we in good conscience ask an old man not to be old, a black man not to be black, a homosexual to be heterosexual?

Should our Love be conditional?

Let our Courage not fail us for fear that our words may offend.

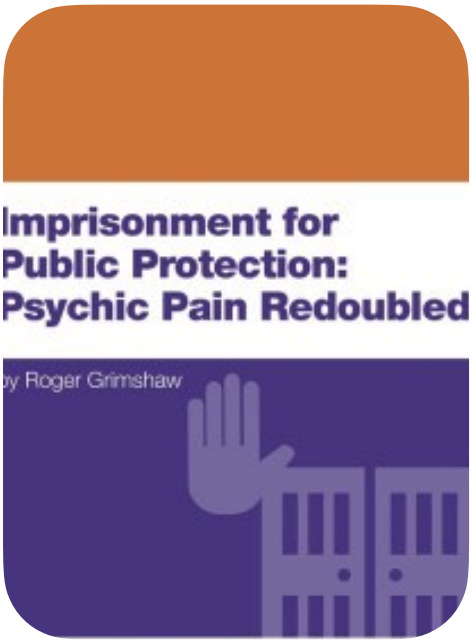
Cower not in the shadows, rather, step forward and join those walking in the Light.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Membership currently stands at 136 individual members and 27 group affiliates. 163 being total membership at the end of this year.
You will be receiving an appeal all to see if you can encourage more of our Local and Area Meetings to support us, now that we have taken up the work laid down by Britain Yearly Meeting (as much as we can). Can you help to spread the word?
We are pleased to report that most of you have paid up your subscription for this year. Please pay by standing order if at all possible in order to save our treasurer so much work.
Thank you to all. Simon Ewart Membership secretary.

IPP FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Melanie Jameson



QICJ members will have noticed that I have been carefully following the plight of prisoners with IPP sentences. A milestone was reached, or so we believed, on September 28th when the long-awaited House of Commons Justice Committee's Report on IPPs was finally published. To recap: IPP is a massively overused indeterminate sentence, introduced in 2005, which saw many prisoners serve far longer than the tariff handed down by the courts. Although government legislation formally abolished IPPs in 2012, around 3,000 people still remain subject to their original IPP sentence.

A recent Centre for Crime and Justice Studies report IPP: Psychic Pain Redoubled picks up on the distressing and damaging affects of living with this endless sentence. https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/publications/imprisonment-public-protection-psychic-pain-redoubled

The Justice Committee said it had never received so many submissions to an inquiry, such is the concern about this unjust sentence. Their recommendations are included in the October UPDATE on our QICJ website but it is worth highlighting the Committee's approach to resolving this shameful legacy, namely the re-sentencing of all remaining IPP prisoners - whether in prison or in the community - which would require new legislation.

The following link provides a useful summary to this important Report: https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/102/justice-committee/news/173280/justice-committee-finds-ipp-sentences-irredeemably-flawed-and-calls-for-comprehensive-resentencing-programme/

A debate in the Lords in October crucially took place while Dominic Raab had been replaced as head of the Ministry of Justice by Brandon Lewis. The Justice Minister in the Lords could confirm that the Secretary of State would meet representatives from the two IPP family organisations and respond to the Justice Committee's Report within the two month deadline; this expired on November 28. By then Dominic Raab had returned to his former post and took a different line. He did not keep to the agreed deadline, and then, in answer to questions during a session of the Justice Committee, said that he was not minded to follow their recommendations. Quoting the need to 'maintain public confidence', he favoured the established route via the Parole Board, gradually progressing to an Open Prison. My article on page 12 of this newsletter brings out new obstacles caused by changes to Parole Board criteria, affecting the progression of prisoners on indeterminate sentences but, just as critical, Raab made no mention about how the life-long licence would be terminated.

Watching the whole session (yes, I know I need to get a life!) I became increasingly concerned. In my mind throughout the event was a zoom call I attended with IPP families' organisations (hosted by the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies). Family members emphasised the intolerable stress that these prisoners live under and that further setbacks will lead some of them to take their own lives. They were clinging to the hope of a way out via re-sentencing.

In yet another twist, a QICJ committee member has received correspondence from an IPP prisoner (also a QICJ member) who was recently out on licence, being supervised by a very inexperienced Probation Officer. He writes that she was struggling with her caseload and determined that several ex-prisoners (including him) had increased their risk, leading to recall to prison, with no evidence to back this up. How widespread is this shameful practice, I wonder.

So, where are we now, as regards IPPs? In a sort of limbo, as I write in early December, still awaiting the governments' formal response to the IPP Report.

REFLECTIONS ON FORGIVENESS

Paul Funnell

This came to me during a walk in the woods near our home.

I was thinking about what I had learned from 15 years of prison chaplaincy work. What sprung to mind immediately was not being judgemental.

As a chaplain faced with meeting a new inmate for the first time, you could go onto the prison computer system and read about the man's background and his previous crimes. Most chaplains, no matter what their creed, usually choose not to do that.

Instead, we meet the man and take him at face value. Then, slowly over time we learn more about his background, the deprivations he may have suffered in childhood, the circumstances that lead up to his crime, his mindset and frailties and his vulnerabilities. In the Quaker tradition, I would also be looking for 'that of God' in him, which may be lying hidden there, albeit a few layers down. This all takes time of course and it also takes time for the man to begin to trust you with very personal matters.

Not being judgemental allows this process to happen and allows you to find the real truth in the person.

Peter the disciple asked Jesus: "How many times should I forgive my brother who has sinned against me? Seven times?" And Jesus answered him 7 x 77."

With some prisoners it may take more than seven jail terms and seven offers of forgiveness to achieve real redemption. I cannot tell you how many times I heard men, who had committed terrible crimes, say to me: "It's forgiving myself I find hardest".



ELIZABETH FRY & JOHN HOWARD



Jonathan Ranger

Members of QICJ might be interested in the John Howard Society, and the EFry organisation in Canada named after the famous and fearless Quaker woman Elizabeth Fry. I looked them up, saw the wonderful work they're doing day in and day out … and sent Efry a message, wondering if they were supported by Quakers in Canada.

I explained about my own Quaker membership, our relatives in Calgary and Vancouver, where EFry is very active, and told them about my friend at school, a Fry descendant and heir to the biscuit family – who brought his friends loads of free chocolates and biscuits every term and half-term!

This is from the Executive Director's reply:

Hi Jonathan,
We (EFry Galgary, Alberta) are part of 24 Elizabeth Fry Societies across Canada and have a National affiliation to the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. We know Elizabeth Fry's Quaker heritage, and her work as a prison abolitionist, visitor and untiring advocate, which is the rationale for the name of our organizations. We are the female version of the John Howard Societies. We have been in operation for 56 years, and were the second EFry to be established in Canada.
Our current work is focused on restorative justice and prevention, and addressing the over-representation of Indigenous Peoples in the justice system. We operate a transitional housing program for women reintegrating into the community, and a restorative justice program which assists Indigenous Peoples with 'healing plans' to identify and support the core issues of their criminalization and regain cultural identity.
We have no funding from the Canadian Quaker association, but have been supported and engaged with the local Quaker Society here in Calgary.
Katelyn Lucas
Executive Director

In my reply :
Over here, I'm part of Quakers in Criminal Justice, working for enlightenment and reform in the way our Justice System works – or more often doesn't work properly or effectively. With funding cuts and staff shortages, things are only getting worse and more dangerous, when the government should know they cannot keep cutting services! Same with our NHS, which is on its knees trying to cope with increasing demand with decreasing resources!
As a social psychologist ex-police officer, I sympathise with, and support, your work and aims. The big problem is that the entire system needs to be taken apart and rebuilt in a way fit for the 21st century, not the 19th! But who is going to bother to tackle that – effectively, or even at all?
The problems you have with indigenous people over-represented in prisons mirrors our experience here with the Black population and Gypsies & Travellers. Racism is still rife, even if it's more subtle these days! The issues around cultural identity need to be addressed by everyone in society – a huge task, but utterly necessary for mutual understanding, communication, co-operation and an end to unfounded and inherited prejudices.

Identifying and supporting the core issues leading to offending is the best thing we can do. If this is done in the community before, and instead of, shutting people away from their families and support (except where that's absolutely necessary), there's far less need to imprison so many people who just don't need it.

Katelyn's reply included:
Thanks Jonathan. Great to hear that you are doing this work in the UK as well. There are always synergies and opportunities to work together and share information. We just finished an evaluation of our Restorative Justice work with the province's Indigenous Court in Calgary. I will send you a copy. [And I will forward it to QICJ when received. Jonathan]

The Elizabeth Fry Society (EFry) of Canada offers pathways to healing through support and advocacy, for women, youth and marginalized populations, particularly Indigenous Peoples, who are affected by systemic social issues which can contribute to criminalization. Many have complex issues related to unresolved trauma, mental health issues, addiction or abuse. Others have family histories of poverty and crimes of survival. Each has a unique story of personal challenges that bring them to EFry.

For 56 years, EFry have offered a hand-up to thousands of people engaged with the legal and justice systems, by providing practical programmes, basic necessities and connections to community resources. Their goal is to build bridges and the skills necessary to create more hopeful futures, by removing the barriers their clients often face.

They help women transitioning from prison to the community and employment, assisting them to break the cycle of poverty and start again. Women are mothers, sisters, daughters and friends. They have faces, names, and stories and lives that matter. They are brave and resilient, but in many circumstances are unsure about their future. They are worth another chance.



Elizabeth Fry (née Gurney) was born in 1780 to a Quaker family in Norwich. From age 33, she worked tirelessly for the humane treatment of prisoners, visiting them in dark, dirty, dangerous conditions, successfully creating reforms, and greatly improving the way people were treated. She was instrumental in the 1823 Gaols Act which mandated sex-segregation in prisons, and female warders for female inmates to protect them from rape and sexual exploitation. She died in 1845 in Ramsgate, Kent (where I was born just over a century later).

The John Howard Society of Canada, based in Kingston, Ontario, is named after John Howard (1726 – 1790), an English prison reformer and philanthropist, and is operative throughout Canada. It dates from the Prisoners Aid Association of Toronto, 1867, surviving ups and down until incorporated nationally from 1946.

It exists to develop understanding of, and to provide effective, just and humane responses to, the causes and consequences of crime, working with adults, children, and youths to help rebuild their lives. It also advocates for change in the criminal justice process, and provides public education around the issues of sometimes appalling prison conditions, criminal law and its application (or misapplication).

The sixty-five offices across Canada specialise in the reintegration of individuals exiting the prison system back into society. They help people keep from making decisions that would increase their likelihood of contact with the law. In this way their work is similar to that of Circles of Support in the UK, a former Quaker activity which is now a national organisation.



John Howard, as High Sheriff of Bedfordshire, inspected the gaols around Britain, to find that prison officers were not salaried, but dependent on fees paid by the poor prisoners themselves – Would you believe it?! If they couldn't pay, they didn't get released!

Howard persuaded Parliament to enact laws reforming this state of affairs, making Justices responsible for the health of prisoners, and later beginning what became 'rehabilitation'.

Appalled by corruption, stench, filth, starvation and disease in jails, he dedicated his life to improving prison conditions throughout England, Wales and most of Europe. He travelled 50,000 miles over 15 years throughout Europe, Russia and Scandinavia inspecting prisons and writing a book about them (The State of Prisons in England and Wales, 1777), which changed public opinion and started reform.
His example is the credo of the John Howard Society of Canada –that citizens must be responsible for their criminal justice system. The Howard League for Penal Reform, UK, is also named after him.

He died in what is now Ukraine, while inspecting Russian military hospitals, studying means of preventing plague and limiting the spread of contagious diseases – but raging 'camp fever' (typhus) got the better of him.

It struck me that QICJ might like to consider developing into a more practical, hands-on 'John Howard Society / EFry organisation' …

If this might prompt thoughts or discussions about how to develop QICJ into something more practical, more high-impact, more public, with more potential for actually getting government and other authorities listening to us, and thus achieving reform … especially as we're no longer effectively supported by BYM … then let's go for it ! If we could really be 'out there, doing it' … we might well get support from Local Meetings, just as EFry does, and force BYM to give us proper national support !
What think you?

THE ACCIDENTAL ADVOCATE

Mark Read

In February 2022, I began working part-time for a charity as an advocate alongside patients with mental illness in hospitals and wards across Lancashire and South Cumbria. This was an eye-opening experience. My role was funded by the local NHS trust who wanted to find out more about the autistic patient experience. Autism had been identified by the Trust as a blind spot in their provision; correctly, as it happened. Autism was quite often seen as of salient importance by patients but only as a secondary consideration compared to the serious mental illnesses towards which their medicalised treatment was prioritised.

Almost by accident, however, I also I ended up advocating for individuals detained within the outermost reaches of the criminal justice system.

The Mental Health Act (1983) provides for the courts powers to order a person's detention in hospital rather than receiving a prison sentence. This means, for the individual, enforced detention in a different kind of institution compared to prison, namely a medicalised one where they are assessed and treated for perceived mental disorder. The parallels between these institutions are highly divergent in another important respect, too. Besides operating under the functional guidance of medical professionals, the sentence handed down by the court can include another, much more fundamental condition. If the court regards the individual as carrying a serious threat to public safety, Section 41 of the Mental Health Act provides for restrictions within a highly secure hospital setting which can effectively lead to an indeterminate sentence.

Individuals held under Section 37/41 of the Mental Health Act can only be released from their detention with the explicit agreement of Secretary of State for Justice. Normally, individuals detained in hospitals are assessed under Section 2 and then treated under Section 3 for a maximum of six months. This can in extreme cases be extended by a responsible clinician. But the assumption will normally be that release will be agreed before this point. Whilst those detained under Section 37/41 are also held under the auspices of the responsible clinician, their detention in these high security hospitals is much more opaque and indefinite. Clinicians do not ultimately sanction a detainee's release.



My job as an advocate was not to come to a conclusion about the exact mental state of any individual or to investigate, directly or indirectly, their criminal circumstances. Advocacy seeks ultimately to empower the individual to pursue their own best interests within the particulars of their situation. My job was also to support detainees within this process. Autistic traits might or might not assist in this pursuit and the highlighting of autism to the authorities within the context of detainees' rights was an important aspect of my role. My training and experience had not, however, prepared me for the intractability of the detention process under these sections of the act.

One can debate for some time, the rights and wrongs of an individual's detention. However, the purpose of this article is draw attention to the existence of these medicalised, highly secure institutions. If they exist in the public imagination, it is perhaps only in an almost nefarious and shameful sense. But there is another aspect which is also important for the reader to bear in mind. It will not take much ingenuity to work out the effects of these imposed restrictions: sentences which in practice do stretch over years and decades. Notwithstanding the exceptional reasons for any one individual's detention, it is important to remain ever mindful of these obscure corners of the criminal justice system and their potential effects on the individual. They need to be held publicly accountable when charged with protecting our common interests as well as our shared social justice.

NATIONAL PRISONS WEEK PATCHWORK

National Prisons Week runs from 9 – 15 October, 2022.
To mark this annual event, Quakers in Criminal Justice were asked to share reflections, experiences, impressions and key facts about prisons, enabling me to assemble a 'Prison Patchwork'. Quaker Prison Chaplains invited more serving prisoners to contribute.
The top line consists of insights relating to Meetings for Worship 'inside'.

Gathered worship Deep silences Supportive group.	'Thank you for a lovely afternoon' *Prisoner to Chaplain after worship*	'I am just so grateful to be here' *Chaplain at the Meeting for Worship*	This is where God is, in these prison corridors (whatever God means to us).
Just because we have done something bad, doesn't mean we are bad people. We want people to see we can change.	The lowest point for me in prison was receiving my COVID booster jab through the bars. I hung my arm out & was injected like an animal.	The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons. - *Dostoevsky*	Door unlocked *CLANG.* Door unlocked *CLANG.* *CLANG. CLANG.* Then, finally, the Peace of our Quaker Meeting.
I had a very kind-hearted teacher (ie Chaplain) who was patient enough to help me understand how to live a Quaker way.	I got an alright cellmate but he speaks no English. Then we got a pack of cards. We can't exactly talk, but we do have a laugh!	I never could draw anything till I got here. I started just colouring in, but now my stuff is all over the walls.	I've been making a treasure box with the matchsticks and glue. My mum died when I was here, I want to keep her letters safe and special.
The nights are the worst here, people cry, I go over the past, I panic. The radio is a diamond. I wind it up, put it by my pillow, escape into music.	In prison I was recognised as an interfaith theologian, became a Chaplain's Assistant three times. Thank you, Officers & Governors concerned.	Many prisoners who'd like to take a course & show they wish to make amends, have few opportunities to do so - or receive any help to start to feel positive.	When visiting prison, I became aware of how few 'ordinary people' like me I met i.e. married, with children, house, employment, education. Most of them never had a chance.
The prison population doubled after the closure of secure hospitals. Care in the Community?	Black young adults are 8.4 times more likely to receive a conviction & 1.5 times more likely to be sent to prison.	25% of male prisoners and 50% of female prisoners have been in care. 65% of boys with a convicted parent will offend.	60% of female prisoners are mothers, of whom 45% had children living with them at time imprisonment.
Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of our social problems.	You don't make people behave well by treating them badly.	There is a probation shortfall of 1,692 (full-time equivalent) staff.	1 in 7 prison officers left last year and many new recruits are teenagers who are unlikely to stay for long.

SCOTTISH QUAKERS CJG REPORT

Jennifer Copsey

Our wider network (Scottish Quakers Community Justice Group) continues to meet approximately once a month and in response to putting resulting plans into action the working group meet when required.

Our focus has been very much guided by Scottish Government's proposed bills regarding Restorative Justice and Bail and Release changes. We have continued the discussions around best practice for training in RJ and where it can be most effectively utilised. Use in schools appears to have had very beneficial effects for all involved, and for less serious adult crime, but members of the group have expressed concern around the complications of using RJ where sexual crime and domestic abuse is the issue.



Marion Liebmann came as a guest to one group and she was very insistent on the need for good and accredited training. Her experience was a prompt to consider whether the training already taken up by a couple of our members will be sufficient. We are however aware that since that training there has been no apparent avenue to use it. We have also had two of our Government's employees who are leading in the roll out of RJ, offering insights into the changes in Scotland's Criminal and Community Justice Systems. One of the actions of the working group as a result of these discussions has been to write to our representative MSPs and members of the SG Justice Committee enquiring as to the progress of their planned improvements to the criminal justice system. So far no response, but a lot of letters went out so we look forward to some replies. Of course our Quaker Parliamentary Liaison Officer is also keeping us up to date with any parliamentary discussions that are of interest to us, just as we keep our Area and General and Meetings informed of our experiences and thinking.

As Quakers in Scotland we do not get the same opportunity to offer our services as Prison Chaplains in other parts of the UK. There is a professionalised system here with all official chaplains being paid by the Scottish Prison Service. Access to the prisons for anyone outside this system is limited to a prisoner asking for a visit from a particular denominational chaplain. This concerns us, but as we can only see those people who ask for us, we have considered an alternative way of being helpful to others in the prison service. Our working group has been in touch with the leadership of the Scottish Chaplaincy service. We have offered to run an away

day for prison chaplains. Our suggestion is that we will provide space for silence and reflection through guided meditation and visualisation with time for sharing. Nurture and caring for those who have to continually provide spiritual and welfare avenues to the people who need them in prison. Our offer has been initially welcomed as a wonderful opportunity. When one thinks of the pressures that many chaplains will be under in their daily lives the words of John Woolman come to mind "The place of prayer is a precious habitation……I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world" We hope that this offer may be a reality next Spring to bring some time for truth and light in a safe space.

THINGS WE TRULY NEED

Poem by Prisoner in Hydebank Wood College & Women's Prison

I want to be heard
and to be understood
because sometimes when I talk
my words don't come out as they should -

I want to have a better life
not to be in the place I am
I don't want to be angry
I want to be calm -

I want to be sober
to see myself as strong
to turn over a new leaf
say hello to a new dawn -

I want the world..
to be a better place
to have dreams and hopes
and to feel safe -

I want to live forever
and stay twenty-two
I want to have a peaceful mind
that would be something new -

I want to be happy
but most of all
I want to be secure
and try not to fall.



Prison Arts Foundation

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CHANGES IN PAROLE BOARD RULES CAUSE ALARM

Melanie Jameson

As an irregular reader of the prison newspaper, Inside Time, I have been picking up on concerns about changes to the Parole system. It appears that these were introduced by Dominic Raab during his first stint as Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice, via a Statutory Instrument rather than with full parliamentary scrutiny.
So, what are these changes and how do they affect people?

At the heart of the matter are new criteria for progression of prisoners with an indeterminate sentence from closed to open conditions (ie to an open prison) which now comprise three tests:
- that the prisoner is assessed as having a low risk of absconding;
- that a period in open conditions is considered essential (rather than 'beneficial', as before) to inform future decisions about release / release on licence;
- that the transfer to open conditions would not 'undermine public confidence in the criminal justice system'.

There are inevitable consequences to these amendments, one of which is exacerbating the already intolerable situation of those serving an Imprisonment for Public Protection sentence (see my article on page 3).

The other change is causing even more concern: reports presented to the Parole Board must no longer contain 'a view' or 'recommendations' but simply summarise factual information. Moreover, in some of the most serious cases, only the Secretary of State (in practice, his officials) will consider whether the criteria of 'public confidence' have been met and present a 'single view' on the prisoner's suitability for release'. It goes further still: in these hearings, prison and probation staff are expressly forbidden to speak against the view of the Secretary of State. The justification for this change is to address the problem of conflicting expert opinions.
But isn't it the job of the Parole Board to work through conflicting opinions?



The issues arising out of these amendments were neatly summarised in a debate in the House of Lords on October 18, led by Baroness Prashar, a former Chair of the Parole Board, who highlighted this "self-defeating and unfair policy".

The Baroness phrased her motion as follows: That this House regrets that the Parole Board (Amendment) Rules 2022 introduce a 'single view' procedure which (1) will prevent forensic psychologists, prison and probation officers, and other specialists working for or commissioned by His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service from making recommendations to the Parole Board on the release or transfer of prisoners to open conditions, (2) has potentially profound implications for the sentence progression of individuals subject to Parole Board oversight, and (3) has been made with no external consultation or parliamentary debate.

In the debate itself, she made a number of key points, the first of which relates to (3) above: the lack of consultation. This excluded those who work in the prison system (and know it best) along with the Parole Board itself, from providing any input into the formation of these changes. She maintained that this "undermines confidence in the professionals and the system" and stressed that "these changes were expressly opposed by the Parole Board and the National Association of Probation Officers".
How can Raab think that he knows better than all this combined expertise?

Baroness Prashar then went on to point out that the Government has produced no evidence of the problem the changes claim to solve. In fact they might well make things worse, resulting in increased risk to the public, because the Parole Board is denied the benefit of expert opinion and fewer prisoners are given the opportunity to see how they cope in an open prison, pre-release.

The Baroness concludes that these "ill-judged" changes represent "a major interference with the Parole Board's ability to operate independently and undercuts the independence of this court-like body, also undermining the professional standing of experts to contribute to the process. You can read the full debate here



https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2022-10-18/debates/193337FC-D796-4C23-B428-314C204F8830/ParoleBoard(Amendment)Rules2022

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) has followed this matter up by communicating with the Parole Board. They begin with stark statistics: "Until the change to Parole Board directions on 6 June, 94% of recommendations by the Board that someone should progress to an open prison were accepted by the ministry. Since 6 June, 87% of such recommendations have been rejected". As fewer people move through the system, there are inevitable consequences for our already over-crowded prisons.

Deep concern expressed by the PRT in private emails to Dominic Raab was met with the following dismissive and disrespectful response from the Minister: “The fact the Parole Board is whining about this just strengthens my sense that this thing needs reform. It’s totally adrift from its moorings.”

Friends, we can expect no improvements under this Secretary of State; the sooner he goes the better.

LIFE AFTER PRISON - WITH SUPPORT FROM BREATHING & SILENCE

Chris at the Prison Phoenix Trust

Around 20,000 people in custody in the UK and Ireland have engaged with The Prison Trust in 2022. With support from the charity, they are using simple breath-based meditation and gentle yoga to help keep body and mind healthy, and sometimes to begin journeys of healing and rehabilitation.

Many listen to our meditation and yoga programmes on National Prison Radio; some take part in yoga classes in prisons; nearly 5,000 receive our quarterly newsletter or write to us to request one of our free books, CDs or DVDs. Everyone gets a personal letter back and the offer to continue corresponding as often and for as long as they wish.

Sometimes we only hear from a prisoner once, but for others it is the start of a life-long relationship of support. It is a huge joy when people stay in touch with us after their release and share their lives outside.

Here are the stories and words of three men who have told us about the challenges of being released from prison – and the resources they draw upon to make a success of their freedom.

Paul’s story

Paul first wrote to The Prison Phoenix Trust from prison in 2008. Through regular correspondence over the years – and studying with a Prison Phoenix Trust yoga teacher in HMP Leeds – he became a mentor for others, eventually teaching his own yoga classes to other prisoners.

“When I was in jail someone asked me if I would continue to teach when I got out. I replied that if I never taught a session again it wouldn’t bother me because what it’s done for me in jail has given me enough. It’s become my best friend. In jail you need that. It’s something they can’t take away from you. They can’t take away that inner strength.”

Paul has continued to teach yoga to others since his release from prison in 2019.
“If I see someone that is hurting, or struggling, I like to reach out,” says Paul. “I’ve struggled a real lot myself. This is my passion. It carried me and it’s still carrying me now.

“At age 66, with three and a half years left on my licence, I ask what do I want from life? The answer is, I want to wake up every morning with just my yoga mat and me. You can’t beat that peace. It’s a hard world. Yoga and meditation won’t change that, but it gives you an inner strength.”

Richard’s story

Richard first wrote to The PPT for help in 2011 and continued to get support through correspondence and regular classes in HMP Belmarsh and other prisons, including HMP Winchester.

He recalls: “As I got to the end of my sentence, yoga and meditation really helped. I’d do 12 rounds of sun salutations on the exercise yard every day and tell myself as I walked around, ‘Keep your feet on the ground.’

“I knew my challenges on release were going to be massive. I had no home, relationships or anything for five years and I knew this is going to be some journey. Whenever my mind started worrying, yoga helped massively, kept me in my body.

“I was lost and desperately looking for things to return to. I’d caused my family so much pain and when I came out it was difficult for them. I needed to be mindful of the suffering that I’d put my family through. It took about a year to start to rebuild those connections. I had to start a new life in a new town. I was 50 and had to start my whole life again.



“It’s quite emotional thinking about how difficult it was to rebuild. I was from the care system. Building family is a big thing you’ve got to learn. I had always been a giver, a provider and when you haven’t got that you feel a bit exposed.

“The PPT was a beacon of light that got me through some very difficult inner battles with myself during my

incarceration. But you stayed with me and still do to this very day. I want to give something back.

“Life has a way of slowing us down. When I had a prolapsed disc I had to stop yoga, but I carried on with the meditation. It helped me take every day as it comes.

“When you’ve done a long sentence you’re going to need many tools to keep going, to take responsibility and to keep your feet on the ground. Now I’m going to yoga classes again but I’m more about calm, meditation, reading, and listening.”

Pete’s story

Pete’s first time encountering yoga or meditation was while serving a 12-month sentence in HMP Edinburgh. He initially went along to the classes in the gym as an alternative to being locked in his cell on a Friday afternoon. But what he discovered was a set of tools to calm his mind and look after his body that he came to rely on during his time in prison.



The knock-on effects on the direction of his life were profound.

He explains: “It helped me reconnect to my family and myself. By the time I got to the end of my sentence, I had given up the idea of instantly reacting to situation and instead to stop and think. On the outside it was good to realise that if someone was abusive to me I didn’t have to snap back.”

“I was no longer allowed to work in my previous profession, but I realised I could be useful. Thanks to yoga and meditation I realised it wasn’t up to me to judge people any more than they had been judged already.“

He began volunteering with a charity that supports people coming out of prison, helping young people get back into work. He has kept working in this field and now through his organisation he is a valued stakeholder in the criminal justice system in Scotland.

“If asked how my time in prison was, I say my time inside was super positive. That wouldn’t be the case if I hadn’t been what I went through inside with meditation and yoga. Thank you to The Prison Phoenix Trust for all of that.“

If you wish to learn more about The Prison Phoenix Trust, or to support our work, visit www.theppt.org.uk

WOMEN PRISONERS & ACCOMMODATION IN NI

Article by Shane Whelehan
Artwork by Debbie Rowell

Quaker Service Northern Ireland have been engaging with women in Hydebank Prison outside Belfast to hear of their experiences in relation to housing and homelessness. Supported and funded by CFNI and Oak Housing and Homelessness Fund, the charity have been listening to women currently serving sentences, other women with lived experience of prison, as well as community activists, academics and others to understand the warning signs and impacts of housing issues amongst women in contact with the criminal justice system. Quaker Service assert that currently, no gender specific approach exists to accommodation, for people who have spent time in prison or who are coming into contact with the criminal justice system. This impairs the individuals' opportunities to move away from the circumstances which contribute to their offending. Secure and permanent accommodation for people returning from prison to community is difficult to access, more so for females as there are no female single sex hostel facilities. The psychology of female offending evidences just how vulnerable women are – often the root of their offending is a consequence of poverty and/or a history of domestic and sexual abuse. Prisoners returning to the community with limited family or agency support will quite often react to the difficulties of reintegration into society, by self-sabotaging their freedom in order to return to the perceived safety and security of the prison environment. This is more acutely felt by women prisoners in particular.



Though the work is due to complete and report later in 2023, a survey response with women in Ash House, Hydebank Wood is included here. In engagement with seventeen women in the prison, amongst other questions, the charity asked about the impact of the woman's imprisonment on relationships with their children. Amongst these women, they listened to C whose daughter is presently in foster care. C shared her gratitude for the foster parents she has been placed with - she is happy her daughter is kept safe and looked after well. In order to get her daughter back in her own custody, C needs help in getting a home of her own. Another woman A hasn't been allowed

to see or have contact with her children for 3 years now. Her three children are all staying with different grandparents, and A doesn't get on well with either set. After going to rehab for a heroin addiction, she was told if she was sober for a year, she would be able to be in contact with them again but this has not happened.

Of the seventeen women surveyed, five out of nine respondents stated they had no visits from their children whilst they were in prison with another respondent replying she wouldn't see her children for six months or more at time. The majority of respondents also indicated they needed a lot of help in finding suitable accommodation for them and their children upon their release.

A report from the Fawcett society in 2009 found that at least one third of women offenders at the time who had children were single parents. The gendered difference in terms of prisoners and children is further reenforced by a study carried out by Borrill et al (2003) which demonstrated from a sample of incarcerated women that more children went into care once their mother went into prison rather than living with the father. Of the nine respondents in Hydebank, over 75% of children were staying with family or in foster care.

In progressing this work and through further engagement with women with lived experience of prison, the charity hopes to further outcomes which present as safe, secure accommodation with support services attached for women in contact with the criminal justice system.

QICJ CONFERENCE 2023 (LEEDS)

Prejudice & Disadvantage: Groups over-represented in the criminal justice system February 24-26, at Hinsley Hall, Leeds.

We invite you to appoint a representative to join us in Leeds for our 2023 conference, at a time when the criminal justice system is under tremendous stress OR actually stretched to breaking point.

Why are some populations criminalised out of all proportion to their numbers?

How are victims faring and are their voices heard?

Is it time to move beyond hopes of reform to consider whether the prison system is fit for purpose, and if not, what is the alternative?

Explore these issues and many others with expert speakers and concerned Friends.

Further information is contained in the attached booking form.

Prejudice & Disadvantage:

Groups over-represented in the criminal justice system

QICJ 2023 Conference, February 24-26, at Hinsley Hall, Leeds

This overall title enables us to delve into the wider context relating to many people in our prisons. We begin with a group that must never be forgotten – the victims. **Bishop James Jones** will speak on the Commission he led to explore victims' views on sentencing and lack of closure. We shall have further input on victims from the point of view of the police.

We will have the opportunity to focus on the **discrimination experienced by black men**, who we know are disproportionally drawn into the CJS. Through the sad case of David Oluwale in Leeds, we shall learn about the intersection of multiple disadvantages.

Leeds' Gypsy/Roma/Traveller support will draw attention to a much smaller group but the one that, in proportion to its size, is the most likely to be incarcerated. We shall also touch base with the subject of a much earlier conference, provisions for older men in prison.

We shall take the opportunity to reflect on prison abolition, the subject of a wide-ranging Woodbrooke course, nearing its end by February**. Mike Nellis of QICJ**, course tutor, will share insights and draw participants into the emerging themes.

The cost of the weekend (Friday evening to Sunday Lunch time) will be £260 (resident) or £120 (non-resident). Single rooms are available for all.

Please complete the slip below and post or email to: - **Simon Ewart, QICJ Conference, Skewjack Barn, St. Levan, Cornwall TR19 6NB.** Email qicjmembership@gmail.com

Cheques to be made out to **Quakers in Criminal Justice** and sent to the above address. If paying by BACS: sort code **08 92 99** account number **65406034.** Please use your name as the reference. Bursary help may be available in certain circumstances, principally through application to your Local Meeting or Area Meeting.

Name	Address	Contact details	Particular needs?	Res /non-Res?
I agree to my contact details being circulated (*place a cross in the adjacent box if yes*)				

Details of expertise or interests
Please don't feel you have to have anything more than a wish to uphold our testimony to Criminal Justice

I will pay by cheque/BACS. (Please delete whichever is not your chosen payment method)

Your Committee Members for 2022 are: Simon Ewart (Membership Secretary), Rodney Mahon (Treasurer), Alice Audsley (co-clerk), Sinead Bailey, Melanie Jameson (co-clerk), Sue Barrance, Jonathan Lamb (newsletter editor) Hugh McMichael and Jennifer Copsey

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