

# Gate🔒lodge

The POA Members' Magazine

The Professional Trades Union for Prison, Correctional and Secure Psychiatric Workers

Winter 2020

## Hidden Heroes

Amazing staff doing an amazing job in the most challenging of circumstances



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WINTER 2020

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# Dear Reader



**Mick Pimblett**  
Editor

**W**elcome to the Winter issue of *Gatelodge*. Covid-19 continues to be the main focus of the National Executive Committee and indeed local branch officials. The fight against Covid-19 seems to be never ending but it is vital that we all continue to interrogate safe operating procedures within our workplaces to protect members' health, safety and wellbeing.

As well as Covid-19 related work the National Executive continue to engage with employers on health and safety, security, operations and human resources issues. This work has involved a new way of working, this has included the majority of meetings taking place remotely. As well as this work the National Executive and Full Time Officers have continued to visit branches (in a Covid safe way) that they represent in all areas of the Criminal Justice System.

The support staff at Cronin House, Linden House, Castell House, Calder Road and those working within Union Learning have also worked remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a credit to them that the work of the Union and assistance to members has not seen any

detriment to members. The service they have provided has been second to none and I would like to personally thank them for all their hard work.

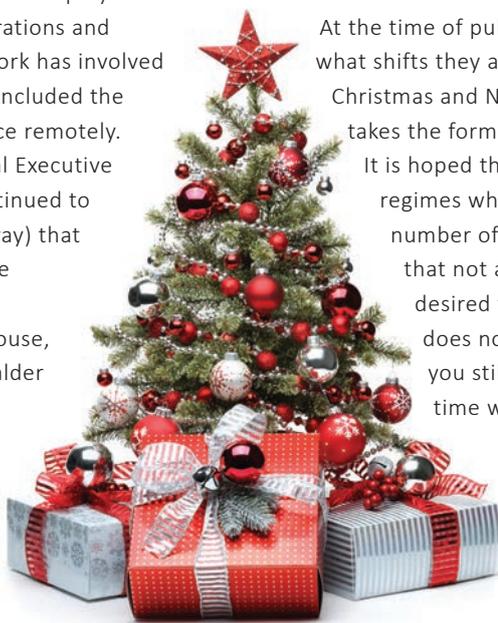
Recent *Gatelodge* publications have seen the 'Branch News' re-emerge. We have also re-introduced the puzzle page and articles from members about their personal interests. I know a lot of members enjoy reading the 'goings on' at other establishments and I would like to see more branches contributing. This is your journal, and it is only right that members should contribute.

At the time of publication staff should be aware what shifts they are required to work during the Christmas and New Year period. This usually takes the form of annual leave or shift swaps.

It is hoped that managers will put in place regimes which allow for the maximum number of staff to take time off. I know that not all of you will have got your desired time off but I hope that this does not ruin your holiday period and you still get to spend some quality time with your family and friends.

Finally, I would like to thank Helen for all her efforts in the production of the POA's official journal.

*Mick Pimblett*



Cover: Created by Ryan Gaston

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*Gatelodge* is published and printed on behalf of the **POA**, by:

**Century One Publishing**  
Alban Row, 27-31 Verulam Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL7 4DG  
**E:** enquiries@centuryonepublishing.uk  
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*Gatelodge* is circulated free to all members of the Union and is available on general subscription.

The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or The National Executive Committee.

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**Editorial**  
Contributions to the magazine are requested to send material for the **Spring 2021** issue by **Tuesday 16th February**



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# New Year - New Opportunities

## Much better to supervise 30 prisoners with 4 staff than 120 prisoners

**T**his year has given the service the unexpected opportunity to formulate safe, decent prisons where purposeful activity can replace pointless regimes, ensuring those in our care are given hope and those who supervise are supported when they challenge poor behaviour. Reform and rehabilitation must be meaningful words not political headlines.

### **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

As the year nears its conclusion it would be easy to think that our prisons have become safer places to live and work purely based upon the restrictions we imposed back in March. Although that played a part it must also be recognised that the herculean efforts of frontline staff, combined with a partnership working approach from the POA both nationally and locally, with senior leaders and the Government, have now given us the opportunity to devise safer regimes that encompass purposeful, meaningful activity as opposed to the age old assumption that time out of cell simply for the sake of being unlocked was the way to go.

If we are truly to make our prisons places of rehabilitation, then prison reform must be a priority for Government and the requisite funding must be allocated. A modern, fit for purpose prison estate in the public sector would go some way to ensuring prisoners could address their offending behaviour, learn new work skills and enter society with hope. It would be good if we could enjoy modern prisons on the same level as our private sector colleagues.

### **IMPROVEMENTS IN SAFETY**

The pandemic has reinforced to those in charge what the POA have been advocating for years. Unlock smaller numbers of prisoners who access purposeful regimes and have sufficient staffing levels in place to meet their needs and to cope with any conflict that may arise. Much better to supervise 30 prisoners with 4 staff than 120 prisoners.

If we are truly to reform our prisons, then we must ensure that we have full time work or education spaces for every prisoner in every prison. Those who need the basic key skills to progress and build confidence must be allowed to do so in our education departments that can offer so much if budgets do not get cut. Our workshops must be places that offer full time working providing skills that give prisoners the opportunity to gain qualifications that enhance employability upon release. At the moment we simply do not have the capacity or investment to facilitate this.

Imagine a prison where every prisoner works or attends

education for at least 30 hours per week. Where the minimum wage is paid and a prisoner learns meaningful skills or is educated to a standard that increases their employability. There would be an opportunity for those earnings to be divided equally between the victim surcharge, private spending and a savings account. I would much rather have prisoners being released into a job opportunity or further education with a lump sum of savings to access than being released with no hope, a discharge grant and wondering where they will sleep. It can be done if there is a will, desire and the investment to do so.

The pandemic has given staff the opportunity to do their job the way they have always wanted to. Those vital staff prisoner relationships have been forged and the stability of the regimes has ensured that prisoners are subject much less to threats and intimidation, whilst the supervision of smaller groups has provided a more substantial staff presence. The bullying and intimidation must be tackled if we are to continue with the improvements in safety and staff must be supported when they robustly challenge non-conformist, anti-social, violent individuals. The cessation of an incentive scheme means there are no consequences for poor behaviour.

### **PRISON REFORM**

One of the main concerns of the lockdown surrounds the potential long-term effects on everybody's mental health. That lack of social contact for both prisoners and staff must not be left unnoticed. Not being able to hug loved ones on a family visit or see family members outside of work will have an adverse effect. The effects of self-isolation cannot be ignored. We must adopt good practice and ensure mental health support is available on our wings for prisoners when the need arises and is accessible to staff when they require it. POA members have an abundance of support available to them if they need help. Prisoners rely on the healthcare provider. Maybe it is time to consider a peer mentor scheme that addresses mental health so we can all help each other.

Part of any prison reform must include the terms and conditions of prison staff. We must secure a retirement age of 60 and ensure all who work at the frontline are paid the same wage for doing the same job. The disparity between F&S and closed terms pay can only be rectified if the employer admits we need to negotiate a completely new, fit for purpose pay structure that adequately rewards staff, enshrines contractual increments and places everybody on the same pay. Although I agree that the pay scales are unfair, it is not illegal to have staff on different pay and terms

and conditions. A retirement age of 68 is neither practical nor acceptable. Our workforce makes up a minute percentage of the civil service pension scheme and we deserve to be treated uniquely.

**THANK YOU**

As we look into an uncertain future, I wish to conclude by passing on my sincerest thanks to all POA members who work within our secure settings. You have all done an amazing job and deserve every accolade that comes your way. I have managed to visit many prisons and cannot praise you enough.

Take no note of those who criticise. You have placed yourselves at risk to save the lives of those in your care and you have done so admirably. I will continue to support you and ensure your concerns are addressed.

I wish you, your families and friends the very best for the future.

Unity is strength.



Mark Fairhurst  
National Chair



**The pandemic has given staff the opportunity to do their job the way they have always wanted to. Those vital staff prisoner relationships have been forged and the stability of the regimes has ensured that prisoners are subject much less to threats and intimidation, whilst the supervision of smaller groups has provided a more substantial staff presence**



# 2020 a year of strength and resilience

POA members should rightfully be proud of their strength and resilience throughout this current year as keyworkers during this global pandemic

**A**s I write this article a second wave of COVID-19 is taking place and a National Lockdown will start in England on the 5th November until 2nd December 2020. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have their own restrictions but differ to England.

## POA MEMBERS PROUD KEYWORKERS

No matter where our members work in the United Kingdom they have shown strength and resilience against an unseen enemy and I am very proud of the actions of POA members up and down the country as keyworkers whether that is in a prison, immigration centre or the NHS in our secure hospitals.

Who could have foreseen a pandemic on a scale such as this and it has brought many challenges for POA members and their families. This Trade Union has worked collaboratively and diligently with various employers to ensure our members interests have been looked after during this horrific year. Never did I envisage as General Secretary that 2020 would be dominated by a global pandemic. The POA has demonstrated, as have our members, that there is a togetherness and resilience to see us through this pandemic. Unfortunately, no-one has a crystal ball and nobody can second guess how long this terrible pandemic is going to last. It is impossible to plan anything for the future. Like all other Trade Unions the POA reluctantly had to cancel its conference in 2020 and we can plan for one in 2021 but I cannot say with any confidence or certainty that it will actually take place and that concerns me greatly as our annual conference is our show piece where the members set policy for the union. It is our Parliament and the heart of our democracy and I would hope that we can indeed hold conference come 2021 but the most important issue is the health and safety of our members, their families and indeed those in our care. Safety and preserving life must come as a priority over everything.

## SECURING SAFETY MEASURES

I recognise that it is frustrating locking up offenders for long periods of time but if we are to ensure this pandemic does not get a grip of our establishments then employers and the POA must continue to work together to achieve the safety for all and put out joint messages and communications where we can. I have been impressed with all our employers where we have recognition arrangements in place. The POA NEC and our elected local committee's have done magnificent work on the members behalf to ensure your voice is heard with those respective employers and long may it continue as the POA always have been part of the solution and not the problem.



In times of crisis it is pleasing to note that industrial relations have been at its best with negotiations and consultation taking place at local and national level. That demonstrates to me that the POA are taken seriously by employers and Government and I want that attitude to continue long after this pandemic has gone.

But there can be no turning the clock back and pandering to return to what some described as normal prior to this pandemic. I do not want a return to the so called normal of budget cuts, austerity measures where pay and pensions were eradicated and staffing levels fell. Looking forward it cannot fall on POA members and other public sector workers to pay for this pandemic with further cuts to their living standards. POA members deserve far better, they have been tremendous during this difficult period but that didn't come as a surprise to me as over the last 30 years that I have been around our members wherever they work have been a success in the workplace.

## ILLNESS IN RESPECT OF COVID-19

In respect of this global pandemic sadly this year there have been deaths and serious illness for our members and their families and indeed those prisoners in our care. We are not out the woods as yet and that is why it worries me when I read about the conspiracy theorists stating this is a made pandemic and we are being ruled by fear. Whilst I will always respect everyone has the right to an opinion and be heard this pandemic is real it is not made up and I have visited some of our sick members who were recovering from this horrible

illness when they have been unfortunate to succumb to the virus. I have seen first-hand how it has affected them and their loved ones. It is real and a definite threat because there is no vaccine. Over 30 million individuals have caught the virus globally it is a real threat and must be taken seriously. I understand the effect it has on the economy but for any economy to thrive you need workers so the health of everyone is vital in having an effective economy.

### LEARNING ABOUT THE VIRUS

I sincerely hope that going into 2021 we will learn more about the virus and that an effective vaccine will be produced so that restrictions can be lifted not just in our Prisons, Secure Hospitals and Immigration Centres, where most of our POA membership work, but in our communities up and down the length of the country. The POA and other trade unions along with the TUC must play a leading role in shaping the future to ensure jobs, pay, terms and conditions are not affected.

### UNITED, MORE RESILIENT AND MENTALLY TOUGHER

As your General Secretary I understand that this has been a massively challenging year for POA members and your families and I cannot actually think of a tougher year than 2020 in modern times but I am sure we will all come out the other end more united, more resilient and mentally tougher. 2020 is a year that has taken up so much time on combatting the virus and since March 2020 not a day has passed without dialogue on policy in the workplace to ensure safety. It seems that other issues have been placed on the back burner and everything has been dominated by this virus and attempting to slow it down. Only time will tell if all our efforts are going to work.

I want all our POA members to have a safe Christmas with their loved ones and as we enter 2021 that it is healthy and prosperous for our fantastic POA members. Thank you for everything you do and your continued support to this trade union.



**Steve Gillan**  
General Secretary

# A year like no other: Covid changes everything

In a year like no other we should take time to give credit where it is due and take the opportunity to learn what we can change for the better

**T**he Christmas edition of the Gatelodge is generally full of good cheer and well wishes from one and all and where we pass on season's greetings to one another.

This one will be no different in that regard, but it is also usually the edition where we reflect on the year just gone. Apart from the odd notable exception one year tends to follow the previous one along similar lines, with not much changing and the 'war stories' pretty much a rehash of ones we are all too familiar with, either because we have been through similar ourselves, or we know others who have.

## 2020 VISION

A look back on this year is a bit different though, to say the least! No matter which organisation you work for, no matter what paper you choose to read, no matter which trade union magazine you pick up, there will not be one that won't be reflecting back on this year that will not focus on the impact COVID has had on working environments everywhere, as well as the toll and impact on all of our families and personal lives.

There are many major moments or single events throughout history that will forever be told as a part of history for centuries to come, such was their significance and impact at the time. There is no question that COVID will be one of those moments in history. It is one of those periods in life that touches everyone, by varying degrees of course. Some have been impacted and suffered loss in a way that most of us never will, and we are all thankful for that. I doubt there is anyone anywhere who has not had COVID impact in some way or other, both in their working environment and their ordinary day to day life, and in fact is continuing to do so even as we read this magazine today.



Because it has impacted us all, there is no need to rehearse in detail what that looks like or how it feels, we all share the same knowledge and understanding of that, having lived it together. The greatest loss of course is life itself, and there have been colleagues across the UK who are victims to that. We know first-hand how difficult that has been on their families and colleagues, and I am sure we will all have them in our thoughts at this time of year in particular. Given the numbers across the UK are in the 10's of thousands and still rising there will be many who have experienced loss themselves or be close to others who have. All those losses have a ripple effect impact on people, and we should spare a thought for anyone who has found themselves dealing with that as we see this year out.

In terms of the impact inside our prisons, much has changed there too. There has been lots of challenges for everyone inside the prisons. Staff and prisoners have faced very different challenges, but they have had to face them in the same space and coexist in a way that accommodated each other, which is never easy at the best of times. The staff have been working a shift pattern that is alien to them throughout the whole of this period, with little to no notice of the change when it happened. This meant a significant knock on effect to family life and a hurried reorganisation of those other elements of family life to accommodate childcare or partners working schedules etc. They have come back and forward from a working environment that everyone was concerned was a hot bed for transmission, and there has always been a genuine fear that once the virus found its way inside a prison there would be no controlling the spread. Thankfully, we went through a summer and Autumn where that did not transpire and enormous credit is due to everyone who played their part in planning for, and cooperating with, the strategy to manage the environment so successfully.

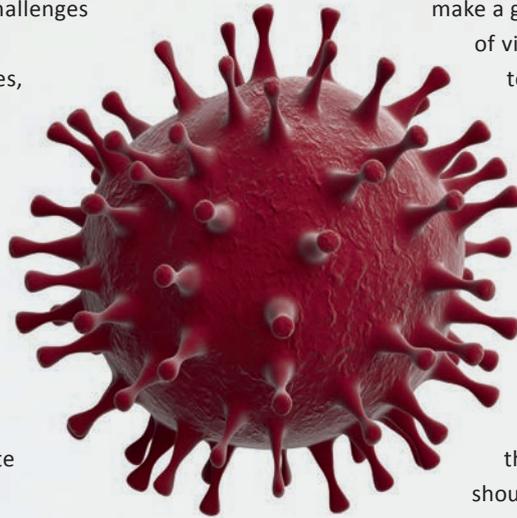
### FEAR AND ANXIETY

That does not negate the fact though, that staff were dealing with the fear and anxiety of that possibility every day that they went to work, and more so every night when they went home to their families and loved ones, fearful of what they were bringing home with them. As I write this the numbers of positive cases amongst staff and prisoners has risen quite sharply as we face the second wave, and nobody should underestimate the psychological effect on anyone being asked to go in and out of that situation on a daily basis as their place of work.

We are clearly still quite some time away from seeing the end of this virus and some of the changes we live with at the moment are with us for some time to come. What is also clear though, is that some of what has changed in dealing with the virus inside our prisons has led to discoveries, almost by accident, to things that provide the opportunity to revisit some of what we do or don't do inside our prisons, and change them for good.

### EVERY CLOUD

One of the impacts of the much reduced regime in the prisons has been the effects on the numbers of incidents involving violence, bullying, self-harm. The National Chair Mark Fairhurst has made reference to this several times to the media in recent months, which in some cases drew the wrong conclusion of the point being made, while ignoring the importance of what we had the opportunity to learn from at this time. Mark has corrected and clarified in the media that there is no call from us as a trade union for a permanent lock down of our prisons, and at no point has any elected official argued for that. However, COVID has provided prisons and those senior figures responsible for the management of prisons, with the opportunity to take stock of those environments and to learn what we can that will make a genuine difference to reversing the trends of violence, self-harm, organised crime and terrorism activities taking place inside our prisons, at levels that are simply unacceptable to any professional civilised penal system.



### OPPORTUNITY TO CHANGE

Everyone has their heads down working hard and battling our way through this pandemic, making the best of it and hoping it is going away sometime soon and everyone should be commended for their efforts. However, we (the collective we) should not lose sight of the opportunity we have just now too. To take that opportunity to lift the heads for a while, see clearly what we are getting wrong, what needs fixed as a priority in providing a safer, calmer environment for all, and put in place those changes to make it happen. Anything else would be a gross dereliction of responsibility, and a wasted opportunity to bring about real meaningful change in our prisons for the long term. Staff deserve a safer environment to work in than they are being offered in some places at the moment. Nobody has the right to ignore, or neglect to take the opportunity to improve that, now the opportunity exists.

As I touched on earlier we are not seeing the end of this virus and its impact in the immediate days and weeks ahead, and we will have to live with the effects that it continues to have on us all. It is for that reason I pay great tribute once again to the staff of the POA for the way in which they have managed and continue to manage their working lives throughout this whole episode.

Working from home is not all bad and has its advantages in some ways. I know that as someone who has been doing so since taking on this role in the Spring. In comparison to the front-line staff having to go in and out of the prisons every day I feel lucky in some ways by comparison.

But it is not without its own cost or impact. By nature, human beings are social creatures (most, at least!) and we should not underestimate the impact of the loss of that social interaction face to face and sharing of space that everyone took for granted with

► their colleagues prior to COVID. The ability to share and solve work problems, or on some occasions non work problems, the listening ear and advice being readily available across the desk or corridor, is an important element of what makes for good effective working environments. That is lost working from home, as is the ability to get out of looking at the same four walls every day, and then every night too.

### GRATEFUL FOR OUR STAFF

Despite the challenges the staff have done a remarkable job in keeping things going. They will be the first to tell you, it isn't all plain sailing and there are elements of the roles that simply cannot be done in the same way from home, but it is for that reason that they are due enormous credit for how they are coping at the moment.

### FAMILIES TOO

As a trade union we should also not lose sight of how much we owe their families in this. I feel lucky in that my wife and I both work for the POA, both share the same office space, and can work pretty much as we did prior to lock down apart from the location. We share that space with our 16-year-old who may well take a different view of course!

For the rest of the staff that is not the case. COVID is impacting on everyone's lives in all manner of ways. Our staff have families who are going out to their own changed working or school environment and contending with that, coming home looking forward to their own space back to unwind, only to find daily that it is not readily available to them due to us all working in that space on behalf of the POA. Their dinner tables are now office desks, and anyone lucky enough to have a spare room that was their haven, no longer do!

We are incredibly lucky and indeed grateful to all of the staff who have given over their family homes to allow the union to continue to function, and every bit as grateful to their family members who put up with that to accommodate us.

### HLM'S 'OLD' FRIENDS

Finally, I am writing this in the week that we would normally be at Scottish conference in Peebles. Conference is of course the landmark week in our diaries as trade union officials and I was looking forward to this one particularly, given it would have been my first time as the AGS in Scotland, and not having the responsibility of chairing proceedings for the first time in a decade.

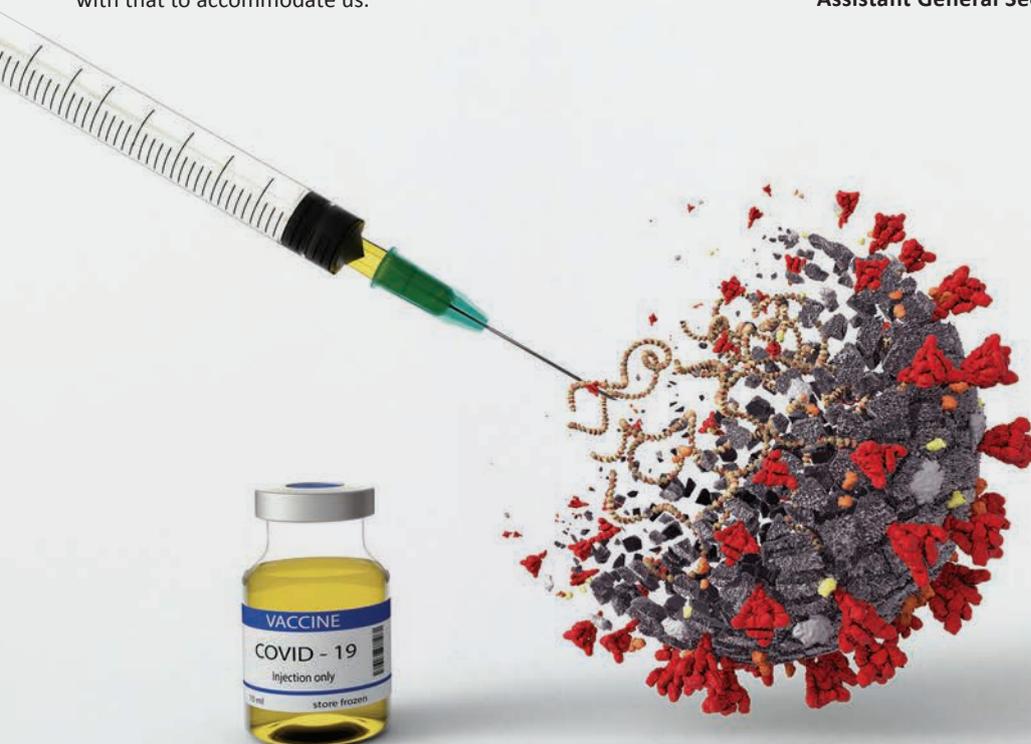
Unfortunately like the annual conference in May, COVID has seen that off too, and with it the most enjoyable part of proceedings. Conference, as well as being the event where we get together as officials to debate motions and form future policy on behalf of the members, it is also the only opportunity we get to catch up with previous colleagues and friends within our Honorary Life members and their partners. May and October are the only time we get to meet and catch up with people we have shared so much with over many years, and no matter what else is going on in conference, that is a genuine pleasure that I look forward to immensely. Collectively they represent an enormous amount of the history of our trade union and add significantly to the knowledge and experience that is ever present at conferences. It is an enormous disappointment that we have not had the opportunity to catch up at all this year. So, to our HLM's, I hope you and your families are all well and making the best of the situation we all find ourselves in.

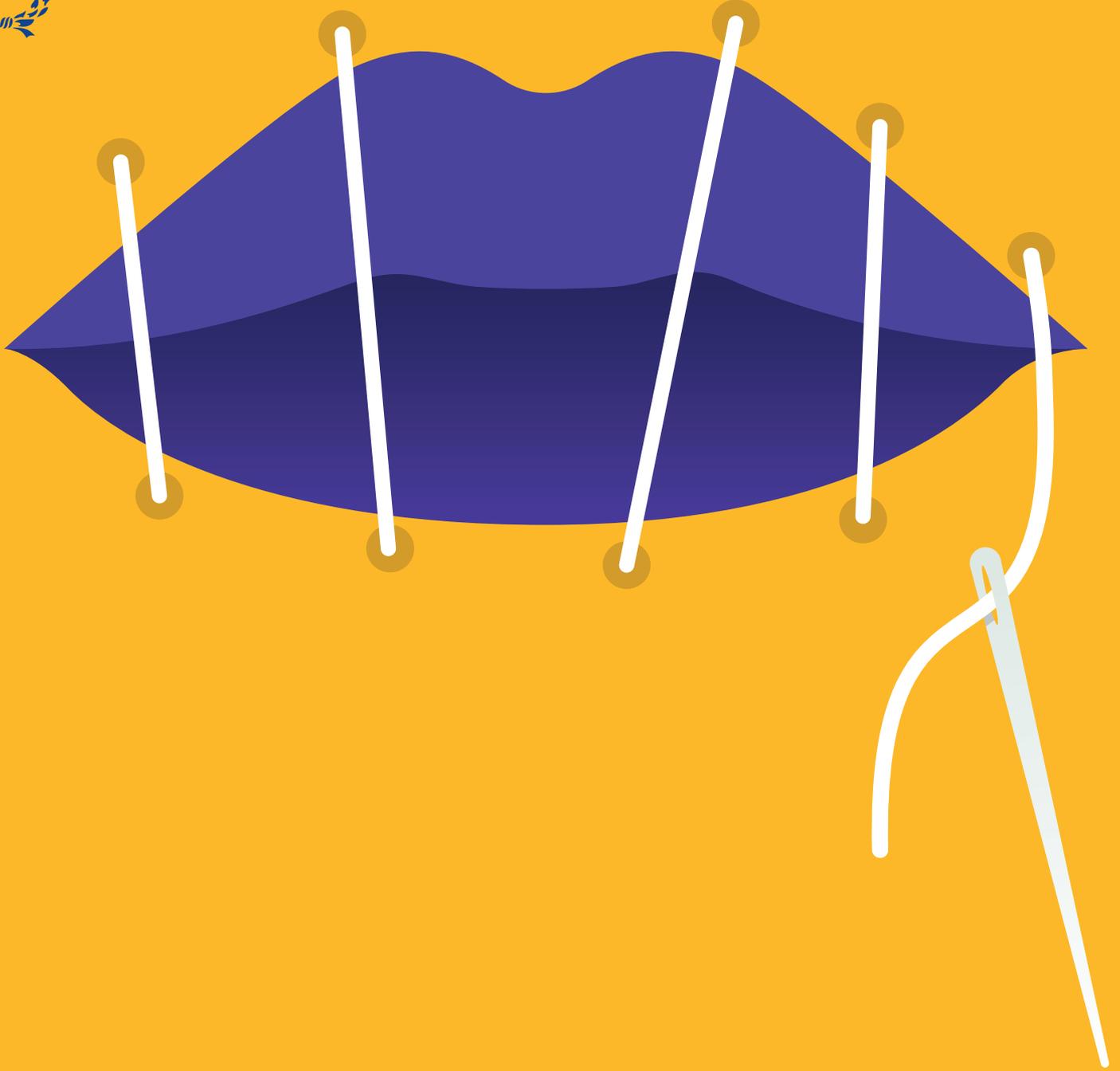
Let us all hope it is not for too much longer and that a vaccine is on its way soon for us all. Can I pass on the very best of Seasons Greetings to those of you who celebrate it, and hope to see us all safely into the New Year with a far brighter light at the end of the tunnel than has shone so far in this quite remarkable of years.

Stay safe and be kind to one another.

**Phil Fairlie**

**Assistant General Secretary, Scotland**





# **SPEAK OUT**

**Report all assaults to the police**

Remember  
you are the victim  
and you deserve justice

# Pensions and the retirement age: the time to change is now

68 is too late. This campaign applied to young staff as well as old

**F**irst a little bit about myself. I am a serving prison officer, band 3, on a “fair and sustainable” contract who has been in the service for five years. As a 27 year old when I mention the word pensions to my peers who are around the same age as myself I am often met with a look of blank expression and questioned as to why I would even be thinking of such a thing at a young age. This is quite a stark contrast to the many conversations I’ve had with my colleagues of a different generation. The generation that have gone through the trials and tribulations of seeing a once promising retirement turn sour.

Anger. The only word I can use to describe the feeling I share with so many of my colleagues who have been let down by the people we put our faith in to run our country.

## PENSION AGE AFFECTS EVERYONE

With a constant barrage of emails, circulars, updates and U-turns from the government it is easy to get lost in the world of pension changes; it is even easier, when coupled with the financial complexities, to understand why many people have given up trying to make sense of what is happening with our pensions and at a young age turn a blind eye to issues around them. However, one thing I have learned over the last few years is that this is something that MUST be addressed and a change MUST occur.

To give some background on our situation I must take you back to June 2010 when the Coalition Government established the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness. The Commission was asked to undertake a fundamental structural review of public service pension provision. The Commission’s final report in March 2011 recommended moving public service scheme members to reformed schemes with benefits calculated on Career Average Revalued Earnings (such as the new Alpha pension scheme) rather than final salary basis.

## LEGAL CHALLENGES

The adoption of the new schemes in the Prison Service (and other services) has been a cause for legal debate and challenges over the past few years. When the new schemes were adopted those within 10 years of retirement remained in their legacy pension schemes. This protection as part of the reform was believed to be unlawfully



discriminating against younger members of the scheme so a legal challenge was submitted. A legal challenge we the employees have won against the government and at the time of writing there is an ongoing consultation process with our government that members who are affected by the changes can take part in, and I strongly advise they do. Whilst I am glad we have won a legal challenge regarding unlawful discrimination during the transitional period of pension reform; there is a greater challenge we face. An issue that has not been addressed by our government and it is something that from 2022 (if the government adhere to their proposed plans) will affect every single one of us.

## EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE

Our pension age, between 66 and 68 years old, dependant on your year of birth. An age that will most probably also increase over the years to come.

I understand why the national pension age has increased over past years and why it will most probably increase again. Increases in life expectancy have led to increases in the cost of pensions of all kinds. For Great Britain, the total annual cost of paying out unfunded public service pension scheme benefits stood at £41.8 billion in 2018-2019. Most of this cost is met by taxpayers and it is important for the government that these costs are kept under control to ensure the schemes are affordable and sustainable for the long term. The introduction of the reformed schemes, with career average design and increased normal pension ages, were steps taken to protect against what the government deemed unsustainable increases in costs.

With all that being said I do believe there should have been some exceptions to the rise in pension ages and this is something that Lord Hutton who chaired the Independent Public Service Commission also realised at the time.

It is ridiculous to think that men and women over the age of 60 years old should be expected to be able to cope with the physical and mental demands of our job. I do not need to write about this notion as it is something that should be clear to anybody that has the slightest idea about the role that we as prison officers undertake



on a daily basis. That been said I will give just one example that I've no doubt we have all heard or used before and that is why is somebody in their mid-sixties expected to manage a volatile, aggressive, violent and physically fit individual in the prime years of their physical life that they could be possibly forced to attempt to restrain. The risk to the staff member of gaining injury could be significantly increased due to their age.

The idea of me and my colleagues, along with other uniformed services, working to the state pension age is purely and simply immoral and unacceptable. I am sure most readers would be pleased to know that Lord Hutton, the man in charge of the commission that would propose changes for the thousands of people in the civil service pension schemes, shared my concerns. Due to these concerns there was an important recommendation in his report...

**COME TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Now I would like to ask yourself a question. Do I work for a uniformed service? Yes, yes you do and we should pride ourselves on it. Within the prison walls we are the first on scene for all emergencies. We are the police officer having to ensure good order and discipline along with preservation of evidence. We are the firefighter donning respiratory equipment and extinguishing fires to then go in and retrieve men and women from smoke filled rooms. We are the paramedic giving CPR and

**“In principle the link to State Pension Age would apply across all public service workers, as this marks the end of a working life that may span professions and sectors. However, for the uniformed services – the armed forces, police and firefighters – where pension age has historically been lower to reflect the unique nature of their work a pension age of 60 is appropriate”**

attempting to stop someone bleeding out when an artery has been severed. We are all of these and more encapsulated in a white shirt, black tie and epilates.

We are a uniformed service. We are an emergency service. So much so that it is enshrined in law that if one of us is unfortunate enough to be assaulted in our line of duty the assailant can be charged and prosecuted under the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018. So why does our pension age not reflect this?

This is the question that has been running on repeat on my mind ever since learning about Lord Hutton’s recommendation. I searched the internet for any clarity and found nothing. So, I posed the question to the head of our union Mark Fairhurst asking (via my local chair of the union) why based on Lord Hutton’s recommendations we have not been included in the reduction of pension age and what we as a union have been doing about this. His response was as follows...

**“We are part of the Civil Service Pension Scheme and Hutton forgot about POA members in his recommendation along with MOD police and MOJ firefighters who are also in the Civil Service Pension Scheme.**

**This is something we have been trying to rectify since his recommendations were given to Government.**

**He has refused to meet with myself and others on the NEC to rectify this, but we will keep trying”**

To say I was appalled was an understatement. How can Lord Hutton’s excuse for putting my colleagues at risk in their final years of employment be him simply forgetting about us and how much of a coward is this man to refuse to meet with the men and women he has affected.

Upon learning all of the above it stirred something in me to take action. It has started by writing this short piece, but I hope eventually we will all share the benefits of a retirement age that is suitable for the job we do every day. But I cannot do this alone. As a union we must come together and make a difference. I refuse to accept Lord Hutton’s refusal to meet as an obstacle in our movement of change. As a union we need to focus our efforts and drive for fairness and equality. Our national, local and social media engagement needs to be heightened and simply because we work “behind the wall” does not mean we can be silenced behind it.

The time to take action has to be now. As the government plans to move everyone over to the reformed schemes in 2022 the time has come for us all to make our voices heard. I will not stand silently behind the wall about this, I hope going forward anyone who has read this no longer will do to. As a union we must formulate an engaging and meaningful plan of action to mobilise our members and gain the victory and change we all need and deserve.

**Jordan Coombs, POA Branch Official, HMP Hull**

# HMiP Short Scrutiny Visits

Absolutely no return to the old norm

**F**or a number of years I have looked on in dismay at the content of some HMiP reports which at best paint our members as unprofessional and at worst violent uncaring thugs, I have become increasingly worried that some reports contain references to prison life that are no longer applicable and that on occasion appear to delight in criticising our members without due consideration for the facts and without any consideration for the impact this can have on motivation and morale.

At the beginning of this year I decided enough was enough and following the report into Wealstun, which I considered unfair, I wrote to HMiP.

The most recent communication is included below for your information. I wrote the letter on behalf of members because I am worried that we have been promised no return to the old norm, I read this as “no return to the old norm”.

Unfortunately I am not sure that HMiP understands both the devastating impact the pre Covid violent and unstable regimes had on our members, nor am I sure that they understand that the lockdown has reinstated control in most of our establishments,

which I am informed has been welcomed by the majority.

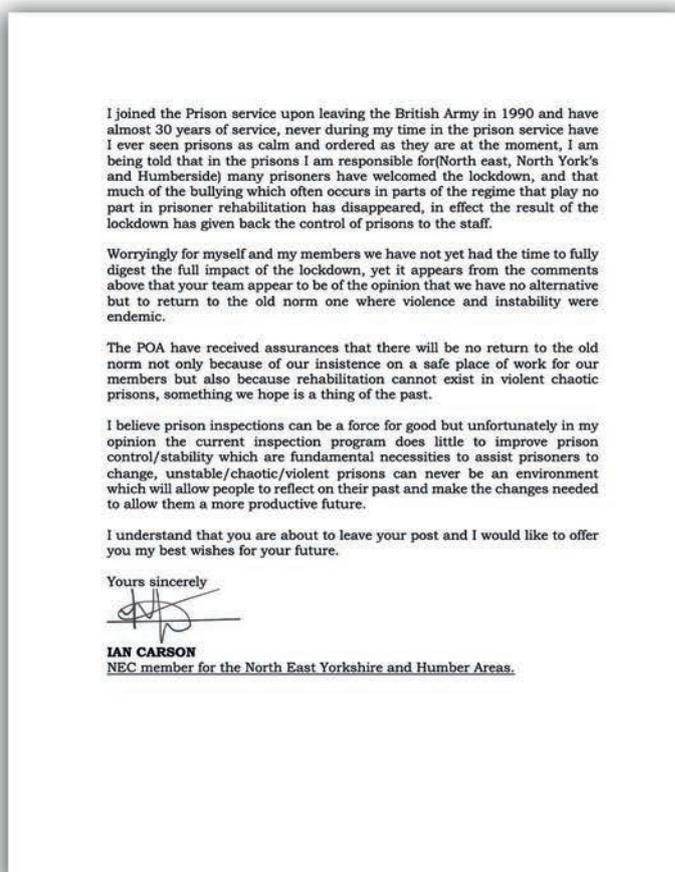
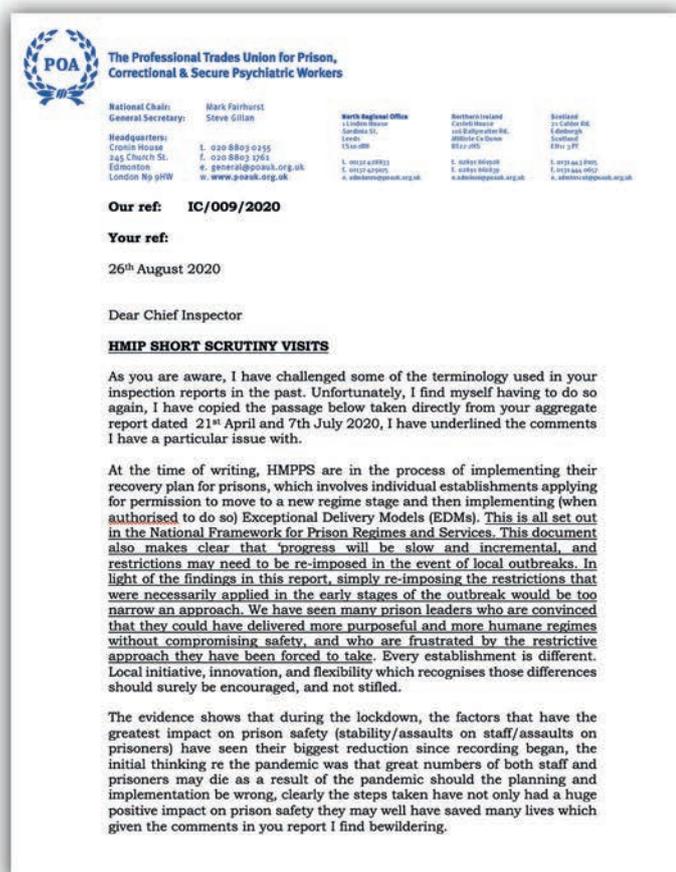
In my opinion the unicorn farm which is the description I use for the current rehabilitation revolution simply does not exist, having spent almost 30 years in the prison service I can say unconditionally that the people best placed to have a positive impact on prisoners are front line staff, we can make a difference, we often do.

Perhaps now is the time to put our resources into calling for the Royal Commission into the justice system which in my opinion is long overdue, the fact is we now have an opportunity to change peoples lives and make the workplace safe for those who are just embarking on their career, my hope is that the current pandemic does not become yet another lost opportunity.

In general POA members undertake their work in the most challenging of circumstances, they believe that they play a vital role in protecting society.

I offer you all my best wishes.

**Ian Carson**  
National Executive Committee



# Retired Members Branch

The Retired Members Branch is served by the NEC and a Retired Members Committee (RMC) this being enshrined in the POA Rules and Constitution

**W**elcome to the RMB section of the Gatelodge. The RMC hope that you are all keeping safe and well. We are sure that you would all agree how difficult this year has been for you and your families.

However, no matter how unsure we are of the future, we hope you remain optimistic like us.

In the Summer edition of the Gatelodge, there was an article from the Assistant General Secretary Mick Pimblett and the thanks he received from a Retired Member, who had help from the Risley Branch and the Welfare Fund. The RMC find this gesture as one of the reasons the POA exists. It is just a small example of what our Retired Members can achieve if put in similar circumstances, and the RMC would encourage you all to embrace what is available.

## UPDATE

Like many others the RMC has had to adapt it in its ways on how we carry on our business in representing the RMB. We have continued to have meetings, not in a physical contact manner, but by using technology available such as 'Zoom' via the internet and other IT devices.

The POA is about to launch its new website and the RMB will be

able to have its own section included on it. The RMC hope that it will be a useful aid in how we communicate to you.

## RETIRED FROM WORK BUT NOT FROM LIVING!

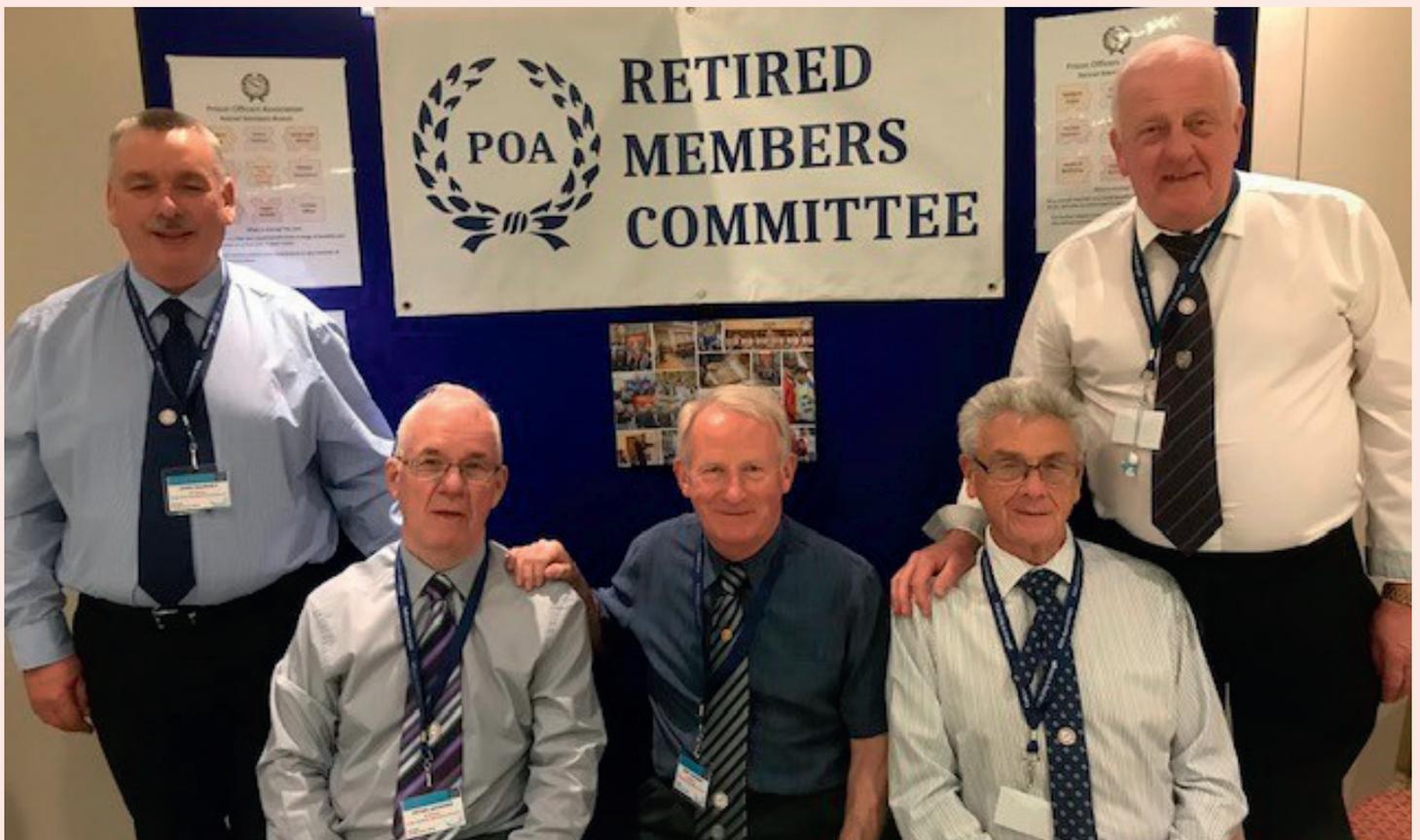
Once again, the RMC would like to thank you for taking time to read this article. We are still available for assistance and advice. If you know of anyone who has retired as a fully paid up member of the POA but did not apply to become a member of the Retired Members Branch, please encourage them to contact us.

Wishing you all the best. Keep safe and well.

## RMC MEMBERS

**Pete Hancox** p-hancox@sky.com  
**George Freeman** georgefreetheman@gmail.com  
**John Dauncey** jdauncey@me.com  
**Pete Jackson** jackson81@virginmedia.com  
**Tony Jackson** raymondojacko1952@gmail.com

Or contact Cronin House on tel. 0208 884 5687 or email membership@poauk.org.uk



# Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave – What are my rights?

Jo Seery, Professional Support lawyer at Thompsons Solicitors, explains the rights of POA members while on maternity, paternity and adoption leave – including the rules around ‘keeping in touch’ days

**F**amily friendly rights continue to develop and are especially important in these challenging times. There are a number of statutory rights that apply in the first year of birth or adoption. These include:

- Maternity
- Adoption
- Paternity
- Shared Parental leave\*

\**Shared Parental Leave* is where women and primary adopters who meet the qualifying criteria (see below) share maternity or adoption leave with their partners. Eligible parents can take up to 50 weeks of shared parental leave and up to 37 weeks shared parental pay. The right to shared parental leave (and pay) also applies to foster parents who are approved prospective adopters and intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement.

## WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS BEFORE CHILDBIRTH/ADOPTION?

Pregnant women can have paid time off for antenatal care. In the case of an adoption, the primary adopter is entitled to paid time off for up to five pre-adoption appointments.

Partners who are in a ‘qualifying relationship’ (see below) are entitled to accompany pregnant women to two antenatal appointments and to accompany the primary adopter to two pre-adoption appointments. The right to accompany also applies to foster parents and surrogacy parents as defined. However, the right to accompany is unpaid in all situations.

## WHAT LEAVE AM I ENTITLED TO?

The right to take statutory maternity leave is available to all pregnant employees, regardless of length of service or hours of work.

All pregnant employees are entitled to 52 weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave (SML), which is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) and 26



**T** THOMPSONS SOLICITORS

weeks of Additional Maternity Leave (AML). However, in order to qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), a woman must have completed 26 weeks’ continuous service by the beginning of the 14th week before the expected week of childbirth.

Primary adopters who are newly matched with a child for adoption are entitled to 52 weeks Statutory Adoption Leave (SAL) regardless of length of service or hours of work. As with maternity leave, this is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) and 26 weeks Additional Adoption Leave (AAL). Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) is only payable to employees with 26 weeks continuous service ending with the week the primary adopter is notified of having been matched with a child for adoption.

Currently, fathers and partners of the mother or adopter are only entitled to two weeks paid Statutory Paternity Leave (SPL) from the child’s date of birth or the day the adopted child is placed in the household. This is only available to employees who have been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks ending with either the 15th week before the expected week of birth or the week the primary adopter is notified of being matched with the child.

Partners who meet the qualifying conditions may also be able to take Shared Parental Leave as mentioned above and in some cases Shared Parental Pay. An employee is not entitled to take paternity leave if they have already taken shared parental leave in respect of the same child. They should therefore take the paternity leave first.

## WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS DURING MATERNITY / ADOPTION LEAVE?

During maternity, adoption and paternity leave employees are entitled to benefit from all the terms and conditions of employment, except for pay, that would have applied if they had not been absent. Paid annual leave



(both contractual and statutory under the Working Time Regulations) continue to accrue during SML, SAL and SPL.

Employers can make reasonable contact with the employee during SML and SAL to let them know about any changes that are happening at the workplace. They might also discuss the employees return to work.

An employee can go into work including training for up to 10 days (known as “keeping in touch” days) during their leave without bringing the maternity/ adoption leave to an end. However, there is no obligation on them to do so.

### ADDITIONAL RIGHTS

Since 6 April 2020 all employed parents also have a right to two weeks Parental Bereavement Leave if they have a stillbirth or lose a child under the age of 18. Parents who meet certain eligibility criteria are

also entitled to statutory parental bereavement pay.

### CHECK IF YOU ARE ELIGIBLE

To check if you are entitled to maternity, paternity and shared parental leave and pay go to <https://www.gov.uk/pay-leave-for-parents>.

### ACCESSING SUPPORT FROM THOMPSONS SOLICITORS

To keep up-to-date and for more information on family friendly rights, visit Thompsons Solicitors’ website.

Thompsons Solicitors has remained open throughout the pandemic, working from home and available to support POA members in personal injury claims and (on referral from the union) employment matters.

For more information, visit Thompsons Solicitors’ POA hub.

## Legal Results

Since the last edition of Gatelodge a number of Legal Claims have been progressed for POA members by Thompsons and the POA Legal Department. Compensation totaling £2,244,918.86 since June 2020 has included;

Garth	£2,000	Grampian	£10,000
Maghaberry	£5,000	Barlinnie	£1,000
Liverpool	£8,500	Bure	£4,500
Foston Hall	£1,825	Lancaster Farms	£9,768.75
Elmley	£4,000	Nottingham	£4,000
Kirklevington	£4,000	Shotts	£1,500
Foston Hall	£40,000	Styal	£1,350
Oakwood	£6,713.60	Highdown	£10,196
Low Moss	£2,400	Brook House	£10,000
Norwich	£2,000	Northumberland	£25,000
Hindley	£250,000	Bullingdon	1,180,000
Haverigg	£6,250	NTRG	£18,500
Foston Hall	£4,000	Mitie Care and Custody	£1,000
Leeds	£1,020.99	Addiewell	£10,000
Maghaberry	44,994.52	Hindley	£2,000
Hatfield	£8,000	Barlinnie	£1,000
Low Newton	£3,500	Kirklevington	£30,000
Low Moss	£2,400	Wymott	£510,000
Wakefield	£4,900	Holme House	£4,000
Wakefield	£7,000	Pentonville	£2,600

These damages recovered were 100% of what was awarded and there was no deduction for Thompsons or the POA fees. Unlike other companies, Thompsons are 100% committed to claimant only work and they will only represent the injured or mistreated person and never the people, organisations or insurance companies liable to pay out this compensation.

As well as the damages recovered, these cases should assist

Branch Officials and Health and Safety Representatives in the workplace and prevent similar incidents in the future. Cases such as those above also show the value of the Union’s Legal Service and our partnership with Thompsons, a well-established company.

**Mick Pimblett**  
Assistant General Secretary

# Step forward for safety

MPs across the aisle are helping prison staff blow the whistle on 'rogue governors', reports **Charley Allan**

**C**oronavirus has made every workplace in the world more dangerous – and with UK prison officers already enduring the most hostile working environment in Western Europe, major operational changes have been needed to protect their health and safety during this pandemic.

The Ministry of Justice was quick to realise this crisis could easily turn into a catastrophe and listened to the POA leadership about how to protect their members and prisoners in their care. But despite tough new restrictions on regimes, reports soon began to surface about management rule-breaking.

## RECKLESS BEHAVIOUR

Sharon Hodgson, Labour MP for Washington & Sunderland West, confronted Justice Secretary Robert Buckland in Parliament about the issue in April, revealing that, “while most prisons are taking every precaution to prevent the spread of Covid-19, union sources report that some rogue governors are attempting to return to business-as-usual practices, such as unlocking large numbers of prisoners and restarting training courses.”

Hodgson asked if Buckland would “condemn that reckless behaviour and agree that all governors should be following official guidance, without exception?” The Lord Chancellor agreed she was “right to point out the danger of over-enthusiasm going ahead of the guidance” and added: “My advice – my instruction – to everybody involved in this is to stick to the guidelines.”

Poor prison management was raised directly with Buckland again later that month at the Justice Select Committee, with Labour’s Paula Barker (Liverpool Wavertree) asking about “a number of rogue governors across the estate who have taken appalling risks during this crisis, which have led to unnecessary increases in cases of Covid-19.”

Buckland passed on the question to fellow witness HMPPS CEO Jo Farrar, who claimed to be “very surprised to hear that you feel there are a number of rogue governors” because “we have strict governance around the process,” adding that, “if you have specific examples, of course I am very happy to follow them up, but I think we have had quite a success in prisons because of the way we have operated.”

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Next it was former shadow justice secretary Richard Burgon’s turn to interrogate the Lord Chancellor, and he raised the multi-union Safe Inside recovery strategy for relaxing prison restrictions. The Leeds East MP explained that the POA and other prison unions “have asked if the Government can introduce a ‘know your rights’ campaign and, something I think is very crucial, a whistleblowing hotline, which would be alongside a commitment to intervene to prevent

contractors or rogue governors enforcing unsafe working practices.”

Burgon asked if Buckland would “make that commitment to workers and introduce the measures the unions are calling for, including very specifically the whistleblowing hotline”, to which the Lord Chancellor replied that he “would need to know the fullest details about the proposals” but was “always interested in and engaged in issues that will allow frontline workers to bring their concerns to the fore without fear or favour.

“Without having looked at the detail, which I will do, as an undertaking to you, I can say this. I absolutely share and endorse the aims of any campaign that leads to a culture of openness. It is only through openness that we improve the system.”

He added: “It disturbs me if there are examples and evidence of a failure of that approach, because I think that is a failure of leadership. I will consider very carefully what you have said, but you can rest assured that the aim of openness and the aim of freedom of complaint, to coin a phrase, are things that I very much share with the unions you have mentioned.”

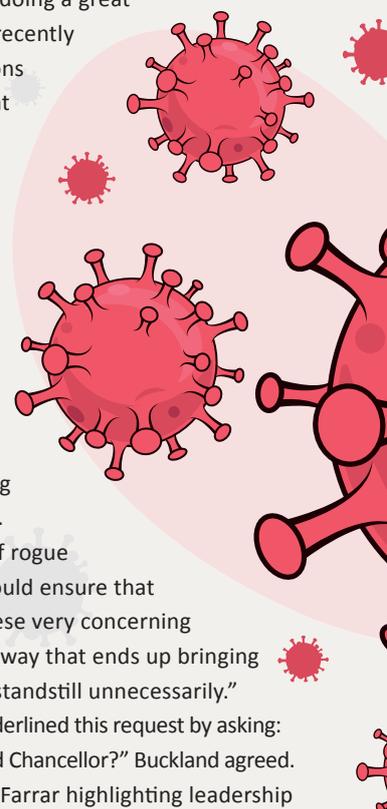
## PLAYING GOD

Burgon persisted, raising urgent concerns: “No one disputes the fact that the vast majority of governors are doing a great job in very difficult circumstances, but recently there was a meeting of the Justice Unions Parliamentary Group (JUPG), and at that group the national chair of the Prison Officers Association, Mark Fairhurst, referring to a particular prison, said, and these were his words: ‘The governor there thinks he can play God with people’s lives.’

“He gave a troubling case study of appalling risks being taken; for example, sessions were still being held in the chapel after lockdown – choir sessions, craft sessions, bingo – allowing prisoners to congregate in large groups. There are unrepresentative instances of rogue governors, and I think that a hotline would ensure that workers in those prisons could raise these very concerning issues quickly without it escalating in a way that ends up bringing the whole operation in the prison to a standstill unnecessarily.”

Select Committee chair Robert Neill underlined this request by asking: “Are you happy to have a look at that, Lord Chancellor?” Buckland agreed.

Using POA research, Barker wrote to Farrar highlighting leadership problems at a number of prisons. JUPG co-chairs Liz Saville Roberts



and Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede followed up on Barker's letter, citing the union's evidence and supporting the call for a whistleblowing hotline. Burgon also tabled Early Day Motion #667 on the issue, which was co-sponsored by Saville Roberts, Barker and other JUPG members.

### MEANINGFUL EXERCISE

The hotline was raised again in Parliament both by Labour's Alex Norris (Nottingham North) and Conservative Gordon Henderson (Sittingbourne & Sheppey) in July, with Norris telling MPs: "Ministry guidance is clear that a positive whistleblowing culture can save lives, jobs, money and more, yet unions consider the current procedures to be unfit for purpose and are calling for urgent changes, starting with a single dedicated hotline for reporting concerns." He asked: "Will the Secretary of State listen to his staff and take action to protect them?"

Buckland replied: "HMPPS is reviewing and updating the policy. We very much hope it will be published later this year, following close liaison with the trade unions."

His colleague Gordon Henderson pressed the point, asking: "Following on from that answer, does my right honourable friend accept that there are grave concerns among prison staff about the inadequacies of the current whistleblowing system? Will he undertake an urgent review to satisfy himself that it is fit for purpose? If it is not, will he set up a new whistleblower hotline which staff can use with the confidence that it is truly confidential?"

Buckland replied: "I want to get it right – I want whistleblowing to be a safe and meaningful exercise for all staff, and I am happy to undertake that review, which will be completed later in the year."

This represents a welcome shift – just a week earlier, Prisons Minister

Lucy Frazer had responded to written Parliamentary Questions (PQs) from Richard Burgon by stating that the MoJ "do not have any current plans to initiate a specific whistleblowing hotline or campaign."

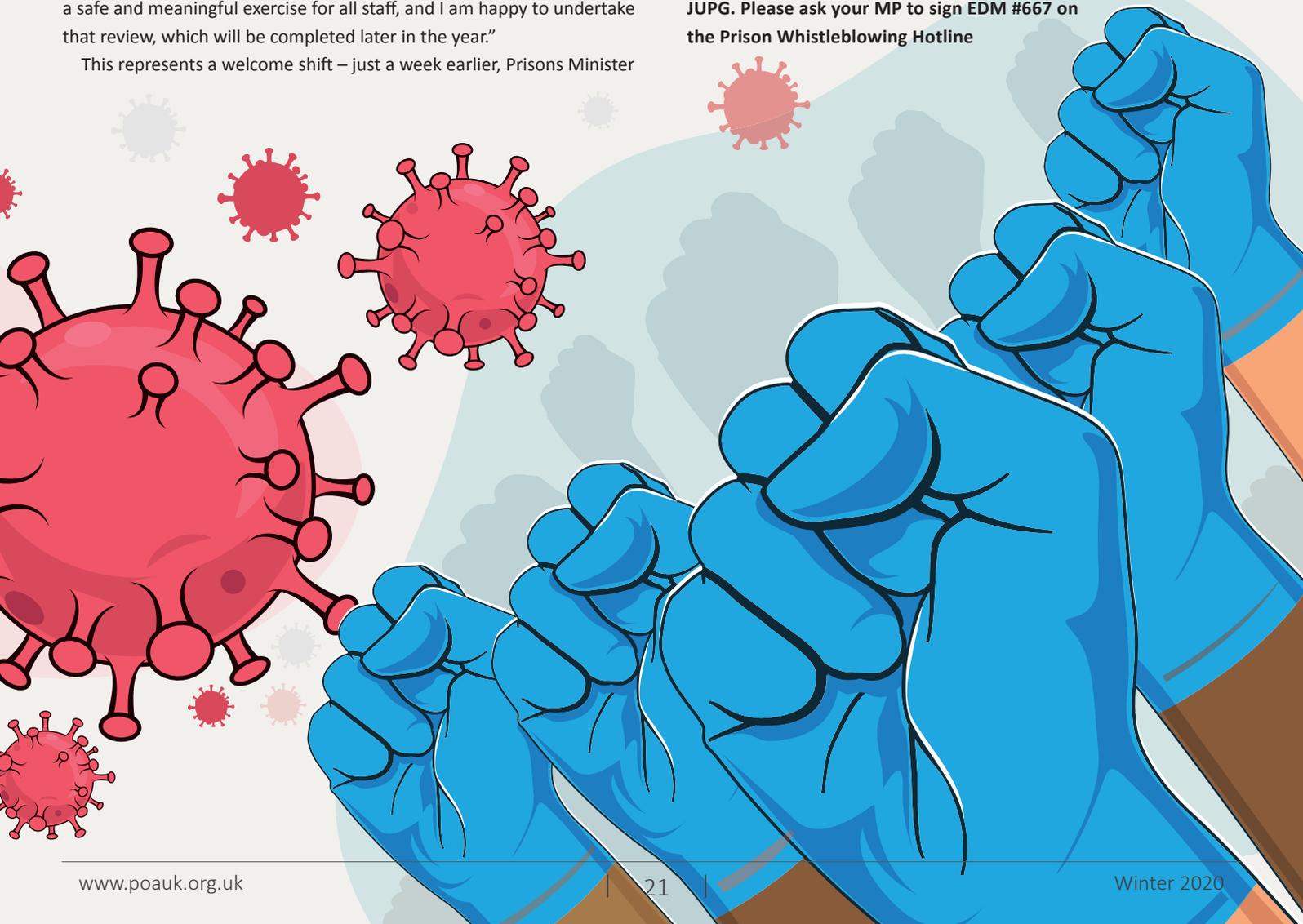
### AIM FOR AUTUMN

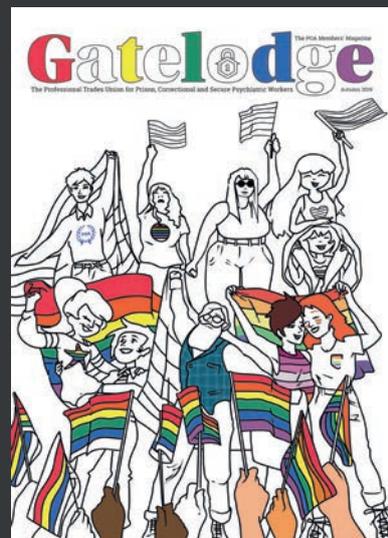
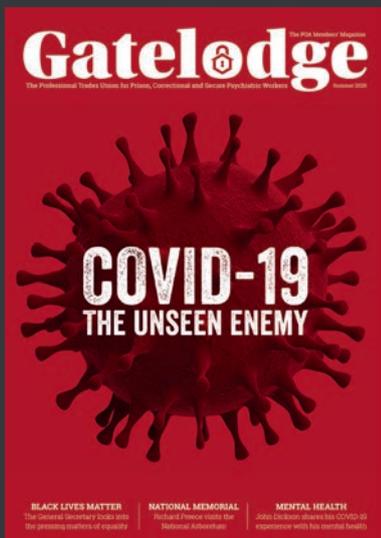
After his Commons questions, Henderson tabled PQs about the scope and timeframe of the new HMPPS review, to which Minister Frazer answered: "The existing Ministry of Justice whistleblowing policy is currently being reviewed by the MoJ HR Policy team. The changes being looked at are primarily extra resources and language changes to further encourage individuals to raise any concerns. We are aiming to conclude this and launch the new policy in the Autumn."

When Parliament returned from Summer Recess, Henderson asked what progress had been made with the review, with Minister Frazer replying on 14 October that "drafts of the updated policy and supporting guidance documents are currently with trade unions, as part of a wider consultation exercise" – which was certainly news to the POA!

Parliamentarians from across the political spectrum await the outcome of this review with interest, while continuing to demand a fully functional and confidential whistleblowing hotline available to all directly and non-directly employed staff – vital to keeping both violence and the virus under control as prisons move out of lockdown.

■ **Charley Allan works for Solidarity Consulting, which organises the JUPG. Please ask your MP to sign EDM #667 on the Prison Whistleblowing Hotline**





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# Disrespectful and deeply damaging

Kenny MacAskill, the SNP East Lothian MP and a former Scottish Justice Secretary, explains why prison officers must not be sidelined any longer

**T**he absence of a “clap for prison officers” despite the risks you've been enduring and work you've been carrying out during the coronavirus crisis was probably to be expected – though that neither makes it right nor eases the hurt for dedicated staff. A thank you from a Minister hardly equates to the gushing praise given, albeit rightly, to other public services, with even medals – never mind proper payment – remaining off the agenda. All that despite the risks and sadly even illness sustained by some officers.

I've long realised that the Prison Service is the forgotten service, yet it hasn't always been so. Reading a history of the Scottish Prison Service kindly given to me by a former Governor, I was astonished to discover that initially prison officers, or their early predecessors, had been on parity of pay with police constables. That operated for many years before the link was broken, and which has never been restored. Indeed, over recent years the gap has widened still further.

Pensions are another area where parity isn't shown with other uniformed services. Whilst it's accepted without question that police, fire and military are occupations that can be age restricted, no such regard is shown for prison officers. Instead it's simply assumed that officers can work until they drop – or at least reach the age of 68, if they can last that long. Yet some jobs are self-evidently age and capacity restricted, and it's absurd to accept it for other services but not this role, given the demands and even dangers of the job.

I've also discovered that it's sadly similar with advice and guidance as far as this Tory administration's concerned, though it seems to predate them. As Scottish Justice Secretary I always welcomed the input and advice of the POA and PGA. Indeed, even before taking office, the guidance of the former was critical in ensuring that plans



for privatisation were rolled back. During my tenure I was grateful for continued advice, as well as the remarkable efforts made. It was always insightful and thoughtful.

That's as it should be. Frontline officers with their knowledge and experience have so much to contribute. Yet they seem sadly sidelined, if not ignored. That's not right and it is damaging. It's inconceivable that major policing or criminal justice reforms wouldn't be run by the Police Federation or other staff reps, yet that's the norm in prisons.

For sure, the Government has acted on tougher sentencing for attacks on officers – but only as it suited their agenda. But no occupation – police, prison staff or any other occupation – should routinely expect to be assaulted at work. Whilst it may occasionally occur, it must never become the norm and certainly never be accepted with equanimity. Staff and their families who fear for them are entitled to no less.

But it's in the wider area of prison policy that the failure to consult, let alone seek advice, is shameful. Staff know who needs to be watched closely and yet who needs tender care. Equally, who shouldn't be there at all – or at least officers are equipped to provide the treatment and services required. But, shamefully, legislation and policy changes are made without a by your leave, let alone consideration for those who'll be required to deal with the consequences.

Privatisation of public services, increased incarceration and even whole life sentences all impact on those who have to deliver it. The least that should be done is to seek advice on the merits of it and certainly consider the impact upon those delivering it.

It's not just disrespectful to staff, it's deeply damaging to society.

# Invaluable Insight

Parliamentarians should learn more about what it's like to work in prisons, explains **Gordon Henderson**, Conservative MP for Sittingbourne & Sheppey

**I** have three prisons in my constituency, HMPs Elmley, Stanford Hill and Swaleside, so it is perhaps not surprising that since first being elected to Parliament in 2010 I have regularly raised the working conditions of the fantastic people who work in them, and the problems they face on a daily basis.

I am immensely proud of the professionalism, dedication and hard work of our prison staff, so make no apology for prioritising their welfare when undertaking my parliamentary responsibilities.

For instance, during the ten years that I have been an MP I have made regular visits to my three prisons, including holding quarterly meetings with local POA branch officials. Those visits have kept me in touch with the many issues that concern prison

staff and I have been delighted to highlight those concerns in Parliament.

The increasing level of violence in prisons; the number of assaults on staff; the failure to properly punish inmates who attack officers; the prevalence of illicit drug taking; gang culture; the problems caused by benchmarking; the loss of experienced staff; the difficulty of recruiting and retaining staff; the opposition by managers to allow the use of PAVA spray; the lack of appropriate PPE; and, perhaps most important to so many staff, the requirement for prison officers to work until they are 68 years old. These are all issues that I have raised in Parliament.

I am not alone, there are other MPs who care deeply about the working conditions of prison staff. However, there are not enough. Too many MPs, even those with prisons in their constituencies, take no interest in the welfare of prison staff.

In my view, the reason is because there are no votes to be won in promoting the Prison Service. As I have pointed out on a number of occasions in Parliament; you work in a forgotten service. I call it the Cinderella service.

As an example; during the COVID-19 crisis the public have been encouraged to show their appreciation of workers in the NHS and care workers by applauding them. The police service and fire fighters have been lauded for providing vital services during the pandemic. Even shop workers and lorry drivers have been thanked for the work they do.

I too applaud and thank all those people. But where was the applause and thanks for prison staff, who also worked throughout the coronavirus lockdown? Well, I for one applaud and thank you.

Of course, perhaps my colleagues in Parliament would begin to appreciate prison staff if they knew more about how prisons operate, and the challenges you face in your daily working life. Those with prisons in their constituencies really have no excuse.

Two years ago I agreed to take part in a pilot for a Prison Service Parliamentary Scheme. I did so because I thought such a scheme would provide MPs with a better insight into how prisons work. The pilot involved a visit to the Prison Service College at Newbold Revel, and then four full days working on the front line in different prisons.

Before the course started, I thought I knew how prisons worked. How wrong I was. I learned more about the prison service in those five days, than I had in the previous eight years as MP!

Sadly, since then the PSP Scheme has stalled. Very few MPs volunteered to take part.

So here is my plea to the POA members who are reading this article: Please write to your local MP and urge them to join the scheme. Getting as many onside really is in all our interests!



# Christmas Messages

*I would like to wish all members and their families a safe and happy Christmas. To the hidden heroes working over Christmas and New Year, massive respect!*

Best regards,  
Andy Baxter  
Assistant General Secretary



*Merry Christmas to all POA members across the country – and a huge thank you for all that you've done over the course of this past year #HiddenHeroes*



The Butler Trust

*I would like to thank all the POA members for their extreme professionalism and support during this year, especially within these challenging COVID times. Warm wishes to you and your families in this festive period and stay safe.*



Geoff Willetts NEC Midlands

*We have all been through a very testing year, we have lost colleagues and friends which makes this time of year even more challenging. Christmas is a time for families to come together, unfortunately we may not be able to that this year. I hope that you all manage to have some family time over the festive season, even on a smaller scale. I do hope that we get back to some sense of normality soon. Please enjoy what you can, it's been long year.*

Happy Christmas to you and your families  
Dave Todd  
POA National Vice Chair



*I would like to wish all members, their families and friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Stay safe and look after each other.*

Mick Pimblett  
Assistant General Secretary



*Wishing all members and your families a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Let's hope that 2021 sees the end of COVID and the chaos we are currently dealing with.*

Jackie Marshall  
National Executive Committee



*To all my friends and colleagues in the POA. Merry Christmas to you all! Thank you to all that are working through the festive season. Stay safe and look out for each other during this very trying period. Please talk to each other or someone that you trust if you need to.*

*Finally, let's hope that 2021 is a far better year for everyone!!*

Dave Cook  
National Executive Committee



*This Christmas may you have the fulfilment of seeing around you the people you love the most. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a joyful and prosperous New Year and remember, you can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle tangled Christmas tree lights! Best Wishes and Season's Greetings.*

Ian Carson, NEC member for the North East, Yorkshire and Humber areas

*For the best part of 2020, it has been very trying for most of us, but we hope the PSCF has been able to assist and shine a small light on quite a few of your charities that prison staff have been involved with. Our thoughts are with you and we look forward to a more positive 2021.*

Prison Service Charity Fund



*Wishing all POA members and their families a peaceful Christmas and prosperous 2021. This Covid-19 pandemic has seen our POA members go the extra mile in extremely difficult circumstances and I wish to place on record my admiration for their dedication. I would wish all our POA members in Northern Ireland, particularly in this stressful time, a safe and peaceful Christmas. I would also like to wish those who are ill at present a speedy recovery.*

Ivor Dunne, POA Area Chairman NI



*This Christmas, Thompsons Solicitors' thoughts are with every POA member who, this year, have worked so hard to maintain safety and good order in our prisons through the COVID-19 pandemic. At a time of such uncertainty POA members and their families can rest assured that we at Thompsons continue to work our hardest to ensure you have free access to the best legal expertise for any injury, illness or employment issues you face. We are committed to standing up for you and your families whenever you need us.*

Thompsons Solicitors



*Wishing you and your families a peaceful and Happy Christmas.*

Shannon Trust



*Season's Greetings to all our members and their families. Enjoy whatever time and contact you get together and here's to a better 2021.*

Phil Fairlie, Assistant General Secretary Scotland



*Season's Greetings to all. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.*

Retired Members Committee



*To all POA members, thank you for your strength and resilience during such a difficult year with the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope you and your loved ones have a safe and healthy Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2021. Thank you for your loyalty to the POA.*

Steve Gillan  
General Secretary



*I wish all POA members and their families a safe and peaceful Christmas and New Year.*

Joe Simpson  
Deputy General Secretary



*This year has been difficult for us all and I want to say thank you for all your efforts, my condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones and my best wishes to those of you recovering from Covid, injury, illness or assaults. Take some time to recuperate and appreciate your loved ones. My sincerest best wishes to each and every one of you, your friends and families. Wishing you all the best for Christmas and the New Year.*

Mark Fairhurst  
National Chair



*I am writing this 2 months before Christmas so nobody really knows what Christmas will look like for us all this year. I would like to wish all POA members and their families a happy and healthy Christmas and all the best for next year. Thank you to all the committees in the South West and Wales area for their support and hard work during this difficult year. Lastly a big thank you to all who continue to work through this pandemic – stay safe and look after each other.*

Sarah Rigby  
POA NEC, South West and South Wales Area



*We would like to wish you all a Joyous Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!*

POA Learning



# #HiddenHeroesDay 2020

The inaugural #HiddenHeroes Day was held on 29th September and prisons from all four corners of the UK knocked it out of the park!

**I**f you're one of the eight million or so listeners to Zoe Ball's Radio 2 Breakfast Show, you might have heard her kick off the first national #HiddenHeroesDay with a shoutout: "Today is Hidden Heroes Day, the 29th of September, celebrating the services of those working in our prisons, probation offices and youth justice services," she said, "a challenging job at the best of times, and I can imagine even tougher in these current pandemic days. So that's for all of you working in those industries. Hidden Heroes Day – celebrate yourselves today!"

## And didn't you just!

Even before the day itself, the buzz was building, and videos came in from HMPs Ashfield, Bronzefield, Bullingdon, Werrington and Wormwood Scrubs (with Newbold Revel PSC winning the Butler Trust's #HiddenHeroesDay Video 'Challenge Cup').

The idea of a #HiddenHeroesDay began early in the lockdown and emerged from the success of the #HiddenHeroes message board – [www.hiddenheroes.uk](http://www.hiddenheroes.uk). The board got many hundreds of messages, from HRH The Princess Royal to the



Archbishop of Canterbury, from prisoners to families, friends, and colleagues, current and retired.

As the #HiddenHeroes message board filled up, the Butler Trust decided that a National Day would be a good way to highlight the extraordinary role those working in prisons play up and down the country.

The Trust commissioned some advertising billboards and a double decker London bus to get the message out. A series of ads on National Prison Radio encouraged prisoners to share their thanks to those responsible for their care.

## RAISING THE FLAG

A special piece of artwork was commissioned from artist Nikki Dennington, a Butler Trust Award Winner, and sent out as canvas prints to hang up inside prisons, and as flags to fly outside. Meanwhile the Trust, with a little help from HMPs Stocken and Parc, sent out a '#HiddenHeroes' chocolate bar to every frontline officer.

#HiddenHeroesDay itself began even before Zoe Ball gave her shoutout: the #HiddenHeroes double decker bus was parked outside HMP Bullingdon as a surprise for staff, who were served breakfast by the senior management team



when they arrived for work.

As the day got going, the first of many hundreds of tweets started coming in from all four corners of the United Kingdom, including from Ministers, the CEO of HMPPS Jo Farrar, and understandably proud tweets from the POA's National Chairman Mark Fairhurst and General Secretary Steve Gillan.

This was a chance for colleagues to applaud each other, too, from the Governor at HMP Hewell clapping his staff into work to colleagues enthusiastically clapping each other up and down the country.

### ROYAL APPOINTMENT

Back at Bullingdon, HRH The Princess Royal made one of five visits to prisons in just five weeks, to personally thank #HiddenHeroes for their service – particularly over the difficult months of the pandemic – and to offer her support for the inaugural #HiddenHeroesDay.

Beyond the thousands of enthusiastic words and hundreds of pictures, there were reports from the front line about other stuff that was going down well: bacon butties, cakes, biscuits, goody bags, curries, cookies, Cadbury's Heroes chocolates, Krispy Kreme's, home-made 'little treat bags', Quality Street, snack packs, and 'a butty and a brew' were just some of the treats laid on. A number of prisons had also produced badges, lanyards, mugs and pens to mark the occasion.

Activities to celebrate the day included a chocolate treasure hunt, a charity cake sale, and many hundreds of nominations from offenders and colleagues alike for their own standout

#HiddenHeroes (also known as 'Good Egg Awards' at HMP Onley).

There were goody bags at HMP Stoke Heath and elsewhere, a "Hashtag BestOfficer" at HMP Drake Hall, personalised cards from the No.1 at HMP Huntercombe – as well as popcorn, a sweetie cart and a chocolate fountain at HMP Peterborough. HMP & YOI Bronzefield even had a trumpet player!

There were numerous 'Bake Offs', too – the finalists at HMP Long Lartin, for example, were judged by the Deputy Governor (the winning cake: 'a three-tiered lemon sponge with homemade macaroons').

### YOU WERE SEEN

Duncan Craig OBE, of Survivors Manchester, in a video tribute to prison colleagues, put it well:

"It's such an honour to be able to have a group of people that you can absolutely call heroes in your life and as your colleagues."

Read just a handful of the messages and tweets collected at @HiddenHeroesDay on Twitter and [www.HiddenHeroes.uk](http://www.HiddenHeroes.uk) and it becomes very clear that, to those in the know, these heroes aren't really hidden - and the feelings of mutual support, deeply felt gratitude, and sheer pride among colleagues across this sector is truly enviable.

This tweet, from HMP Woodhill, sums up some of the impact of #HiddenHeroesDay:

"...whether they served an E (early), M (main), L (Late) or A (Allllllll day & evening) shift, were in early count, lunch patrol, constant watch, escort, visits, exercise, clinics, kitchen or more, we sent everyone home knowing they'd been SEEN today."



# A message from Ian Merrill, Shannon Trust's new CEO

**Ian Merrill**, Shannon Trust's new CEO, joined the charity in October. From volunteer to CEO, Ian's charity sector background covers substance misuse services, criminal justice, homelessness, and mental health

**S**hannon Trust has achieved a great deal in the twenty years since our founder, Christopher Morgan, and Neil Lodge, a prison officer at HMP Wandsworth, set-up the first reading programme. Their determination and belief that learning to read could change lives of people in prison, remains a powerful example of how charities, volunteers, prison staff, and prisoners can make a real difference. Success has been made possible through unique relationships - between the charity, the POA and HMPPS; our volunteers and prison staff; and our learners and mentors. By working together to make our mentor-led approach possible, the skills and confidence of thousands of learners has improved each year, changing lives for the better.

I've joined Shannon Trust at a time that Covid-19 is changing the way we support people living and working in prisons. It's already clear to me how crucial POA members, and the support of your National Executive Committee, are to making Shannon Trust work on the wings, in education, libraries, gyms, workshops and workplaces; how your empathy and understanding helps people overcome the embarrassment of asking for help; and how your practical support opens doors to allow learners and mentors to meet. You make a difference as this learner explains.

'The officers on my House Block didn't mind getting me out in a morning and taking me to the room where my mentor was waiting. The Shannon Trust officer would also come and see me now and again to see that everything was ok. I have no complaints but plenty of thanks and they all went above and beyond to help me.'

Because of your support there are people in prison today who are reading letters from their loved ones, able to manage isolation and boredom better, and understand what is happening, because they've learned to read with Shannon Trust. But we know there are thousands more for whom Covid-19 has



Ian Merrill

“  
**You make a difference**

been more difficult simply because they can't read; that's why more than ever, we're determined to reach people who need help to unlock the power of reading.

Thank you to every one of you who is now helping us re-start Shannon Trust activity in prisons. And thank you to those of you who've been able to keep some activity going over recent months. Together, with the Shannon Trust team, I look forward to working with you, building on what we've already achieved and helping more people in prison make positive changes.

## READING ON THE MENU

Like every person and every organisation, COVID-19 is changing how Shannon Trust does things. Kerryn Huck, the charity's Head of National Service Delivery, explains the how they've responded to the crisis and how many of the changes they've made will last beyond it.

Covid-19 has been hard for everyone, but we know it will have been even more isolating for those that can't read. With letters replacing visits and a lot of regime information being on paper, reading has never been more important. In normal times, it is possible to ask for someone's help to read letters or complete an app, but Covid-19 made that much harder. Restricted movement, social distancing, and lockdowns are continuing to make 1-to-1 sessions a challenge.

As the crisis unfolded face-to-face learning sessions stopped. As 50% of people in prison have difficulty reading (around 40,000) there was still much to do. We made sure non-readers weren't left behind by creating activity packs aimed at lower-level readers, which followed the Turning Pages scheme. We contributed to a project run by PACT to help people write letters to loved ones. We also thought a lot about our mentors. They're committed and passionate about teaching people to read, and suddenly they had to put this on hold. We've written



monthly newsletters to keep them updated, and we've encouraged them to write to us too. We've also used prison radio to share regular updates with learners, mentors, and the wider prison community.

As restrictions lift, our focus is on getting people learning again. We've created a 'menu of options' so prisons can pick the best approach for them. We've increased the ways someone can train to be a mentor including a CD and self-study versions. The CD includes mentors and learners telling us how learning to read changes lives. It's an inspiring way to join our team and means Mentors can train without a Shannon Trust volunteer coming into the prison or without the need for people to meet as a group. Our goal is to have a mentor in every 'cohort' or 'bubble', so no one loses out on the chance to learn to read.

As well as our CD, our training is available on Virtual Campus 2. We're piloting laptop learning and developing other self-study options. These will be ideal for any future lockdowns or people in segregation. They'll also be a great option for people who want to top up their learning or prefer to learn on their own. These are in development and include digital and video options. Whilst we're excited by them, we won't lose the mentoring aspect of what we do. We're powered by volunteers and prison staff, but we remain 'by prisoners for prisoners'. It's the heart and soul of Shannon Trust. Every decision has been about 'what is best for our learners?'. I'm proud we have a whole set of new resources and a flexible programme to offer people as we emerge out



**“  
We've taken the opportunity to try new things, and we believe the Shannon Trust programme will be stronger for it**

of lockdown. We've taken the opportunity to try new things, and our programme will be stronger for it.

Alongside adapting our training, we've been sharing guidance for prisons to run Shannon Trust sessions in COVID safe way. And we're continually keeping our volunteers up-to-date and refreshing their training so they're able to support prisons remotely until they can start visiting prisons again.

Keeping in touch with learners and mentors has been key. We've talked to them via prison radio, newsletters and through prison staff and POA members. To anyone who had to stop learning our message continues to be: Please hang in there. What you learned before will still be there, and as soon as it's safe they can all get back to it. To our mentors our message is 'thank you for your dedication and your patience. You're our biggest advocates, and your role is vital. We look forward to resuming sessions in the coming month.'

To POA members and prison staff we'd like to say again, thank you for your support. We know how hard it's been and we know those challenges are continuing. We hope our programme will be something quick and easy to restart. Learning can happen anywhere, it doesn't need a classroom and it's relatively simple to set up. If you haven't seen our menu of options, please ask the Shannon Trust staff lead in your prison to tell you more. The key is that once a mentor has been trained it's possible to have a programme running in a matter of days. It's free and we've tried to make this as easy as possible. Together, let's get people learning again.

# NEURODIVERSITY WEBINARS

POA Learning are delighted with the success of their recent series of Neurodiversity webinars with almost 1,000 learners taking part in the event to learn more about the complex subject



Janette Beetham, a Workplace Dyslexia/ Neurodiversity Consultant with over 15 years' experience ran her sessions called "Dyslexia- So much more than problems with reading" giving a greater understanding of dyslexia and co-occurring neurodivergent/neurodiverse 'conditions'.

The subject certainly made a difference for one participant who said "I am dyslexic and have taken part in a lot of dyslexia awareness, dyslexia training courses and seminars. I was aware that dyslexia had an impact on self-confidence and mental health, however this session made me more aware that my mental health condition may be more related to my dyslexia than I had previously considered."

Another echoed the comment by saying "This was an informative and engaging webinar from a clearly very experienced and knowledgeable presenter. I really appreciated the opportunity for Q&As and the presenter giving practical tips."

Professor Amanda Kirby, a qualified GP, has worked in adult psychiatry and has delivered stress management to a wide range of professionals. Her session around the Autism Spectrum Condition provided an insight into the challenges that are relevant and provided

some practical guidance on how to provide understanding and support.

"I thought Prof Kirby was really knowledgeable and I was impressed by how easily she answered the range of questions asked. Her slides were easy to follow and she spoke at a nice pace. I also liked how she answered questions throughout rather than waiting until the end." said one learner, and it proved that the techniques given would be beneficial to another learner who said "This event was full of useful information that I can take away and use to help within my setting. It was also really useful to learn new facts and information that I did not already know but now that I do I use this information to change the way I work within my setting."

Finally, ADHD "Warrior", Bev Nolker built upon her already popular ADHD Awareness course with a highly praised session "Congratulations – You've got ADHD!" exploring the divergent and creative aspects of ADHD. It was a life changing session for many, including one learner who told us "This was by far one of the best training sessions I have ever watched (including in person training)!! I really want to watch it again and I can't wait to get all the helpful resources referenced.", she

continued "This was so eye opening personally and professionally. Fell in love with Beverly Nolker (reminds me of a warm, genuine, sincere, caring, passionate speaker like Brene Brown (TED Talk Speaker)) and would 'attend' any training of hers made available, thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Bev certainly received high praise, with others advocating the training, "It is testament to this that I think it might be helpful for people like me who need to take everything in in great detail and for whom the ADHD characteristics are really resonating."

Alison Manion, POA Learning National Coordinator said: "The response to this event was amazing, the speakers made the sessions interesting and relevant, I am so pleased that we helped so many participants gain a better understanding into Neurodiversity."

Overall, with such praise for all three of our speakers, this is another successful initiative from POA Learning supporting learners through the current global situation and shows how flexible Union Learning can be with all sessions being run through Zoom webinars.

The webinars are now available via our website [www.poalearning.org.uk](http://www.poalearning.org.uk)

# POA HATFIELD LEARNING CENTRE

Lockdown has been turned into a positive for one learner based in Doncaster with new learning opportunities being found during the enforced stay at home period

A regular at POA Hatfield Learning Centre, Renata Millar is an advocate for learning and has done several courses over the years as well as being a regular at the weekly IT group.

The IT group has continued to run on a weekly basis via Zoom and this has given the whole group extra learning opportunities using this new medium and in Renata's case, has given her an opportunity to further her learning and computer skills by enrolling onto the new POA Learning online platform where she has hundreds of courses at her disposal.

Having completed several of the courses across several subjects including communication and wellbeing, Renata was

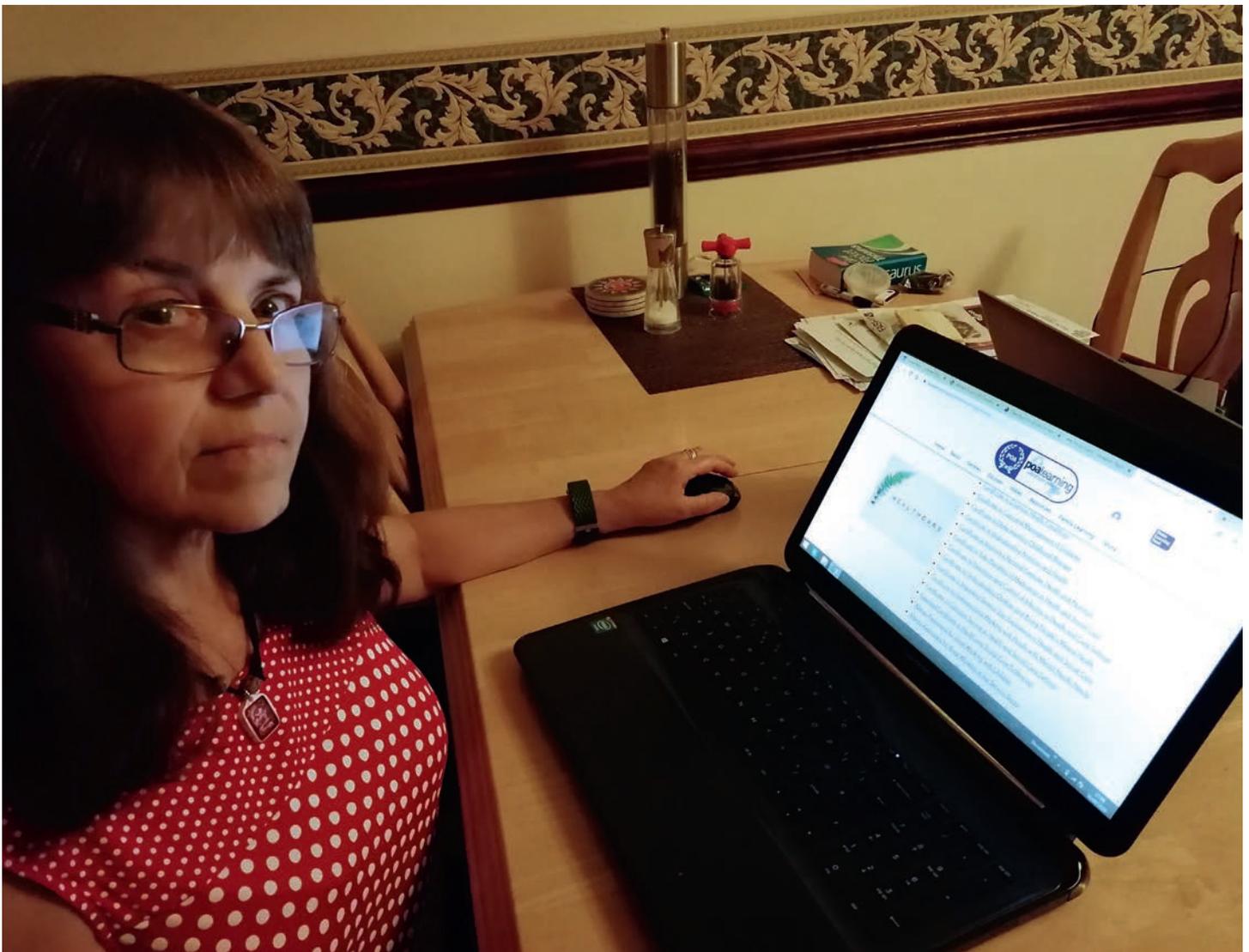
excited by the new platform saying, "I am enjoying using the POA learning online learning platform. It's easy to use, there is a wide choice of courses relevant to my interests, day-to-day use and beneficial to my job purposes."

She has been impressed by the support on offer by the staff at the centre, again all being provided remotely, "I'm grateful for the additional extra support from Jill to guide me through signing up and starting. I'm able to comfortably use the platform to explore and access courses or learning pathways to suit my lifestyle, work commitments, and time frame."

"One of my first courses was Allergen Awareness which has not only helped me but

also my family. I like the fact that there is a printable certificate of achievement with each course, which is a great added bonus."

Not only has Renata signed up for the learning platform, she has also started another level 2 distance learning course looking at infection control in healthcare settings and is happy with how she can amalgamate both as she goes through her assignments, "The easily accessible courses range from a choice of bite-size to learning pathways which includes courses on working in the care sector, which I can fit easily in with the level 2 distance learning course which I'm currently working on. I'm very happy to recommend signing up to the platform".



# Changes to Sick Leave Excusal Process

An update from Andy Baxter, Assistant General Secretary

**A**pologies for the delay in regard to putting this article together, the constant flow of Covid related consultation meant putting pen to paper was delayed.

In the Spring of 2020, the POA NEC HR Whitley Committee concluded a series of constructive meetings with the HMPPS HR Delivery Team, who are now the Ministry of Justice People Services, Policy & Reward Team.

The meetings originated from POA requests to Employee Relations for dedicated meetings seeking ways to improve the flow of sick leave excusal procedures.

The POA HR Committee had evidence that POA members were leaving the service either through IHR or more commonly through dismissal under medical inefficiency with applications for sick leave excusal outstanding at the point of exit.

Other members reported that some managers were not progressing sick leave excusal applications in a timely manner causing financial hardship at times of prolonged absence.

## WHAT IS SICK LEAVE EXCUSAL?

Someone who contracts a disease, illness or is injured or assaulted whilst on duty may qualify for sick leave excusal.

If excusal is granted all sick leave, up to a maximum of 6 months (182 calendar days), relating to that injury, assault, illness or disease is removed from reckoning against the individual's sick leave record for sick pay purposes and excluded from consideration under the Unsatisfactory Attendance Procedures. In certain severe cases sick leave excusal can be continuous.

Prior to these agreed changes only Governors were responsible for considering applications for sick absence excusal for staff who contracted a disease or were injured or assaulted whilst on duty.

If sick leave excusal is granted, the absence must still be recorded as sick for statistical purposes.

HMPPS sick leave excusal works to the principles of the Civil Service Pension Injury Benefit Scheme, in so far as the Civil Service Injury Benefit criteria is used as a trigger for a sick leave excusal to be considered.

Sick leave excusal is applied in addition to contractual sick pay arrangements.

## WHAT IMPROVEMENTS WERE NEEDED WITH SLE?

The POA became aware that members reported a significant variation amongst Governors as to how SLE should be applied and the procedures around its application.

One of those confusions was caused in part by the SLE application

form where it asks Governors to give an end date for the sickness period. Obviously in serious protracted cases this confusion was leading to members pay being reduced as some Governors believed they had to submit an end date for the period of sickness before giving a decision.

The POA HR Committee were concerned that this was putting our members income at serious risk during a crisis, at a time when they needed the greatest support.

The POA suggested a simple modification on the form by adding a section for the Governor to confirm a sickness absence as an ongoing absence to allow the process to proceed as opposed to awaiting the members return to work, obviously this confusion could be very detrimental to pay for members that had little prospect of returning to work.

Another issue causing delay was the stipulation that SLE could only be granted by the Governing Governor, this has now changed, and that authority can be delegated to Deputy Governors in the Governing Governors absence. This means that SLE applications can still be dealt with if Governors are on A/L or out of the establishment.

The POA were keen to make the process time bound as we had evidence of significant delays, including some cases where members exited employment on Ill Health Retirement or had been dismissed on medical inefficiency with sick leave excusal decisions left outstanding, clearly this was unacceptable, in a number of cases correct application of sick leave excusal was the difference between members notice periods or





**Where Governors/Deputy  
Governors believe SLE is  
appropriate they can grant  
without the need to seek a  
medical opinion**

PILON being at full pay, reduced pay or nil pay.

Governors and Deputy Governors within public sector prisons now have 14 days to either approve a sick leave excusal or submit it for medical advice.

In serious cases where the member would go on to seek a permanent injury benefit award the correct application of sick leave excusal was vital.

In the old process, MyCSP would always demand a SLE to have been conducted for Injury Benefit cases for absences under 182 days.

However, because SLE and Injury Benefit have now been separated out, a member can apply for either type of injury benefit whether they have previously applied successfully or unsuccessfully for SLE.

SLE should always be the first port of call for current employees though, but members can apply for Permanent Injury Benefit even if they may not have applied for SLE when employed.

The POA HR Committee were able to agree a position going forward that should speed up the process, the new process involves less parties and reduces the amount of paperwork involved.

The process can now be completed fully electronically, prior to these changes the SLE application form required a wet signature, applicants can now use the adobe fill and sign app to keep the process paper free.

Shared services and HML have now been removed from the application process and documents go directly and electronically to Optima Health for a medical assessment, obviously this reduces the level of document transfer and greatly

reduces the potential for sensitive documents to be lost in the process, and it can significantly speed up the process as Optima Health are often already in receipt of GP reports and some medical history within their role as occupational health advisor.

Where Governors/Deputy Governors believe SLE is appropriate they can grant without the need to seek a medical opinion.

Where Governors/Deputy Governors do not believe SLE is appropriate they must seek a medical opinion from Optima Health.

Previously where a member was turned down for sick leave excusal by the scheme medical advisor, they were then unable to apply for injury benefit award, either temporary or permanent.

The new system untangles that process and provides a more streamlined procedure by removing the Scheme Medical Advisor from the internal sick leave excusal process.

If a sick leave excusal application submitted after 1st June 2020 is refused by Optima Health on assessment, members can then begin an application for an injury benefit award, temporary or permanent through MYCSP to the Scheme Medical Advisor.

More importantly though is for those who have left the service and are applying for Permanent Injury Benefit, previously we have had cases of members applying for Permanent Injury Benefit, but because the Scheme Medical Advisor previously assessed them as part of SLE when they were employed and concluded that their injury didn't qualify, it ruled them out from applying for a permanent award.

This left members in the difficult position of having to appeal the original Scheme Medical Advisor decision, and then if successful, pursue an application for Injury Benefit, making it a protracted and stressful process.

The POA believe that by speeding up the Sick Leave Excusal and separating it from the Injury Benefit processes we should greatly reduce the scenario of members being exited from the service with incomplete SLE applications outstanding, also we believe the shortened time frame will go some way to reducing the stress and anxiety of POA members.

It can't be stressed enough to members and POA committee colleagues supporting members that members must apply for sick leave excusal at the earliest opportunity following illness or injury.

A combination of an early application and Governors working within the new 14-day guidelines should mean that no one exits the service with SLE applications outstanding.

We appreciate these processes can be complex and stressful and we would encourage branch officials to seek assistance from their NEC area representative where needed.



# Deaf Inside

## A Service Evaluation by the Deaf Prison In-Reach Team from the National High Secure Deaf Service, Rampton Hospital

**T**he National High Secure Deaf Service at Rampton Hospital provides inpatient assessment, treatment and rehabilitation for D/deaf\* males living with a range of difficulties including complex responses to trauma, mental health difficulties and/or learning disabilities. In 2011, the Deaf Prison In-Reach Service (DPRIS) was established in conjunction with Yorkshire Specialist Commissioning Group and Nottinghamshire NHS Trust aiming to provide specialist support to D/deaf prisoners. To date, 30 prisoners have benefitted from the DPRIS through receiving specialist mental health assessments, direct psychological and nursing interventions, signposting and consultancy. The team have also liaised with external services including MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements), probation and community psychiatric services to meet the needs of this specific population.

\* 'D' = Deafness as a culture, 'd' = deafness as a medical disability.

### BACKGROUND

Hearing loss affects 1 in 6 people across the UK with approximately 900,000 experiencing severe/profound deafness. Woodward (1972) described D/deafness as a continuum encompassing two perspectives: medical and cultural. This is useful to consider when working with D/deafness as it encapsulates how differently the D/deaf community can perceive themselves and how they can be perceived by others.

Research states that 90% of D/deaf children are born to hearing parents with statistics estimating under 10% of parents are fluent in sign language. It is therefore likely that increasing numbers of Deaf children are deprived of language during the critical period of language development. Language deprivation can contribute to socio-emotional developmental delays, identity confusion and increased likelihood of experiencing mental health difficulties in later life, almost twice as much as the general population. Similarly, it has been documented within mainstream literature that social isolation and a lack of meaningful occupation can contribute to deteriorating mental health. These difficulties are exacerbated within the D/deaf community when trying to live in a predominantly 'hearing world'. D/deaf individuals within hearing institutions including hospitals or prisons are at an increased likelihood of experiencing mental health deteriorations due to increased social isolation because of communication barriers and a lack of available or accessible occupational activities.

Despite some improvements, specialist knowledge and communication support for the D/deaf community remains sparse throughout the UK meaning D/deaf people within the Criminal Justice System (CJS) lack equal opportunities to engage in risk reduction work. This was highlighted in reports by the Howard League for Penal Reform and the British Deaf Association (BDA) which recommended various changes to

ensure alignment with the Equality Act (2010). Such changes could start dissolving existing barriers. The reports also recommended enhanced communication between prisons to share examples of good practice, offering consistent experiences for D/deaf prisoners. Despite these recommendations, anecdotal information suggests these are still not being met.

When considering parole requirements, individuals must be able to evidence risk reduction but for D/deaf prisoners this becomes almost impossible. Many interventions are linguistically inaccessible for D/deaf individuals due to being developed and delivered in English. The impact of being unable to access appropriate risk reduction work and having limited, if any, communication support whilst in prison should not be overlooked. Situations like these are likely to contribute to re-traumatisation of individuals whose community has previously been synonymous with oppression, bullying and communication deprivation.



### AIM

The primary aim of this service evaluation was to raise awareness of the specific needs of D/deaf prisoners by identifying and describing characteristics, demographics, trends and patterns within existing data as well as highlighting the nature of offences, prevalence of trauma and length of time over tariff. A secondary aim was to identify areas for development to adequately meet the needs of D/deaf prisoners.

Information was gathered from existing referral letters and assessment reports. It was approved by the Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trusts' Research and Evidence Department and the Clinical Audit and Service Evaluation meeting.

### OUTCOMES

After reviewing data for 29 prisoners (female = 3, male = 26), the most common source of support offered by the DPRIS was signposting (over 50%), followed by direct individual work (with nursing or psychology), assessment and consultancy.

Over 80% of the sample used British Sign Language (BSL) highlighting the need for linguistically and culturally appropriate interventions for D/deaf prisoners and the potential for increased social isolation, deteriorating mental health and possible re-traumatisation. 27% of these were unable to access interventions for reasons including the need for sign language interpreters (or lack thereof). Eight of these had exceeded their sentence tariff. This could be hypothesised as being a direct consequence of unintentional discrimination resulting from their

D/deafness and linguistic needs (BSL). This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that of the eight prisoners whose tariff was exceeded and who were unable to access interventions, four engaged with the DPRIS. Others were signposted elsewhere or did not meet the criteria for the service. Over 80% of the prisoners in this evaluation had documented trauma histories including war/conflict, loss, communication (deprivation), bullying and abuse.

Direct engagement with the DPRIS included: focussed risk reduction work, anger management, mental health monitoring, and 1:1 psychology work. Prior to involvement from the DPRIS, five individuals declined to engage in prison therapy. With support from the DPRIS, two were transferred to more appropriate placements, one was recommended for transfer (not transferred) and one received mental health monitoring (nursing). One continued to decline which could be attributed to potential (lack of) motivation/readiness.

Since 2011, the DPRIS has assessed 30 individuals and completed over 717 prison visits for assessments and interventions. Whilst this has been acknowledged as a small number, it has been attributed to the difficulties locating D/deaf prisoners and lack of awareness regarding the DPRIS. Currently, referrals to the DPRIS come from prison healthcare staff, but this fails to address the wider specialist needs of this population: basic communication needs, occupational needs and risk reduction work. It also excludes individuals unknown to healthcare.

This evaluation supports the need for specialist interventions to ensure equitable access to recovery and rehabilitation. It is hoped that the DPRIS continues to meet this need through direct and indirect work with the D/deaf prison population, working towards reducing the number of D/deaf prisoners exceeding their tariffs.

### WHAT NEXT?

It is hoped that the unique needs of this population will be communicated amongst professionals and steps will be made to address these as previously recommended in reports from the BDA (2016) and the Howard League.

When considering recovery and rehabilitation, communication and accessibility of interventions should be at the forefront of service development. It is anticipated that the continuation and possible expansion of the DPRIS will contribute to fewer D/deaf prisoners exceeding their prison tariffs through timely assessments and/or signposting to necessary interventions.

It has become apparent that a review of the DPRIS' referral process is required in order to improve accessibility of interventions and to raise awareness of the service within the CJS.

These outcomes will be used to raise awareness of the difficulties faced by D/deaf prisoners and provide opportunities for reflection regarding the need for accessible and culturally appropriate assessments and interventions. Additionally, we hope that it will open doors for working collaboratively with prison colleagues to support D/deaf prisoners in a way that best meets their needs.

*This evaluation has been submitted for publication. For further DPRIS information, contact Gurpreet.Kaler@nottshc.nhs.uk. Written by Leanne Race*

**Written by Leanne Race**

**Previous Assistant Psychologist within the National High Secure Deaf Service.**



# HMP WYMOTT

Returning to pre-Covid levels of violence and self-harm would be a failure

As things start to return to ‘normal’ you have to ponder what ‘normal’ will be for the Prison Service. During lockdown our prisons have been run how they used to be with control, order and discipline. Prisoners who never openly spoke to staff are now engaging with us, calmness and a proper sense of regime has occurred.

## WHO ARE THE EXPERTS?

No doubt educated boffins will argue that prisoners NOT languishing on big wings in large numbers, generally causing mayhem, will have a huge detrimental effect on their mental health. That may be how these people think but they are not the ones who have to deal with the aftermath.

The burning question is will this enforced lockdown unduly affect reoffending rates? No doubt time will tell. You never know there may be some benefits to prisoners spending long periods of time ‘banged up’ thinking of why they are incarcerated and not the ‘here and now’ conveyor belt mentality of mass rehabilitation or as it’s commonly known ‘Regime Regime Regime’.

For any kind of justice system to work at its heart it must fundamentally be respected. That is where our prisons have totally lost their way. The Prison Service putting all its eggs in the rehabilitation (and appeasement) basket created a runaway monster. In fairness the PS is pulled in all directions, criminologists, liberal minded Chief Inspectors, fluffy EU Laws, along with large pay outs for breaching them etc etc.

What’s interesting is when people from other countries come to view our ‘bells and whistles’ institutions. They are literally floored by them, ‘where’s the punishment?’ COVID-19 inadvertently has reset society, so it would be criminal not to take anything positive from it, as many other organisations have done.

If fluffy thinking is order of the day, if a prisoner is now caught with an illicit mobile phone (how many times has the recovery of these items meant staff getting hurt in the



process), the said punishment doesn’t automatically see added days to a prisoner’s sentence. Additional days are only awarded when there is a ‘pattern’ of behaviour.

Obviously, those running organised crime and the like will be overjoyed at hearing this welcome news, less so any victims of crime and their families. A cynical person would suggest that this years ‘within budget’ pay award was being partly delivered by the savings this policy creates.

## CONCEPTS LOST AMID THE FLUFFINESS

If fluffiness is capturing the imagination take an idea our local Police force had. They originally set up a community Facebook page dedicated to keeping us informed, using the community to keep the villains (our men) on the back foot.

Then (as in prisons) the original concept got lost along the way to such an extent that it became a self-indulgent site for the egos of



some of the officers (anyone watched *Police Interceptors*, enough said).

So, it ended up with them re-enacting numerous famous sketches of films. Dancing to music, arm wrestling, even jumping in puddles. This was a big hit judging the hundreds of comments on each post. “Stay safe blah blah blah”. In terms of safety, managing to answer their hundreds of ‘fans’ in real time. The only danger they actually faced was White Finger due to repetitive keyboard action.

In fairness it would be totally disrespectful to decry another tough job but the ego trip of some of these officers is breath-taking. As a by-product of this flawed approach we see kids driving uninsured motorbikes and low-level crime largely ignored. So, if the law isn’t respected that ‘thin blue line’ becomes ‘thinner’ each passing hour.

Of course, not all our Police have the opportunity of willowing away their shift answering ‘fans’ on social media. Some of the scenes in London and elsewhere this year

have been truly shocking. Simply when respect for the law breaks down mob rule takes over.

You really have to wonder who would ever want to be part of that ‘thin blue line’ organisation. We must never forget the Police are just average people (like us) doing an almost impossible job, which is made more difficult by external factors, from those who haven’t walked in those very dangerous shoes.

Steve Gillian’s article “Black Lives Matter” created much debate here, along with the address by Phil Cople direct to prisoners. Thankfully no staff could recall anything like what Steve described back in the day in the last issue of *Gate Lodge*.

### **PSPRB – INDEPENDENT?**

The general feeling is that as Civil Servants we shouldn’t bring politics into our working environment. We are politically neutral. If you google “Black Lives Matter UK” its agenda is about as political as you can get. It looks to overthrow any kind of authority, with the removal of Police Forces, with the aim of becoming self-governing, even striving to close all prisons.

The Prison Service wading into political agendas can cause a host of operational problems for frontline staff with the by-product being comments and actions not heard/seen for a generation re-surfing.

The Independent Pay Review Body have finally presided over this year’s award. This is being trumpeted as a ‘thank you’ for our efforts during COVID. As with most things in the Civil Service there’s usually a sting in the tail. All increases are coming from within current budgets.

One of the recommendations which wasn’t upheld, was to uplift pay of operational new T&C Band 3 officers by £3000 partially bridging the gulf between old officer’s pay scales, against new T&C’s. This hasn’t transpired. A lot of staff won’t know the history of the pay review body.

Many large organisations have Pay Review Bodies but ours differs in respect of it being so called ‘Independent’. This came about because as prison officers we are forbidden by law to

take any form of industrial action. The Prison Service gave up their right to set pay increases in exchange for the POA agreeing that it wouldn’t resort to strike action. The Government stated that the recommendations of the PSPRB are not binding in law, but in practice they would only be departed from in exceptional circumstances and are complied with in practice.

### **WHO CAN WE TRUST?**

So POA members have suffered again with external interference in the process. In 2007 prison officers staged their first national strike, which the PS took them to court. The judge as expected found in favour of the PS but was scathing the court room wasn’t to be used as an industrial relations battle ground.

At face value if you can’t have an agreement with Government who can you trust? The reality is these faceless people purport honesty, integrity and values while dipping their hands in your back pocket helping themselves to YOUR pay and pension. Legally of course, or not as the case may be.

As these notes are being written large swathes of the Northwest are once again going into lockdown. The logic of some of these decisions is frankly bizarre. You can still go to the pub or a restaurant, yet you can’t go to a neighbour’s house with the same set of people? By the time these jottings are published national lockdown will probably have recommenced and hundreds of thousands of jobs will be lost forever.

### **SECOND SPIKE**

Some people have even gone as far as saying sinister forces are at work, with hidden agendas. Originally this virus had teeth but with admissions to hospital remaining more or less static could the fear now be worse than the reality? Complacency isn’t lost on Wymott who have been hit hard by the invisible enemy. Hopefully any second spike doesn’t grace our doorstep again.

**Footnote: The views of the author do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the POA**

# Greetings from Belmarsh

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from all the staff at HMP Belmarsh

A lot has happened since our last article in the Spring edition of *Gatelodge*. Before I start, we have some sad news to pass onto the readers. One of our colleagues Jack Hawkins has suddenly passed away. It is really sad how cruel life can be as he was only a few months away from retirement. We as a branch pass on our condolences to his family. There is an article in the Obituary section for those who wish to read about Jack and his life. So, stay safe and look after your health.

For those of you who read the branch news from Belmarsh, you will be surprised to hear that our Governor Rob Davis decided to resign from his post. This was a bit premature and unexpected. In light of this we wish Rob all the best in his future whatever that may hold. Nevertheless, the Prison Service acted very quickly and have appointed Jenny Louis as Acting Governor and Paul Golder as Acting Deputy Governor (we are pleased to say that they are both members of the POA as well as most of our SMT). We as a committee on behalf of the branch wish them every success in their new positions in managing HMP Belmarsh.

On 21st July 2020 we as a branch committee invited Dave Todd, Joe Simpson and Terry McCarthy to Belmarsh to speak to our branch about Health and Safety, Long Term High Security issues within Belmarsh and Covid-19 latest news. In addition to these Joe Simpson was running a Pensions

Surgery which was well represented and supported by our members. Feedback from our branch was excellent and members were pleased that they had these opportunities to air their views and question the NEC representatives in either an open or closed forum. Our branch would like to thank these three representatives from the NEC for supporting and contributing to a successful day.

It is without doubt that we have similar problems to every prison in the country. However, one thing that is probably common amongst us all is COVID-19. I remember attending a Long Term High Security meeting a few years ago and it was suggested by us as a branch to Ed Cornnell that the best way of tackling violence and attacks on staff and prisoners was to have a restricted regime. Well that didn't go down well with the Prison Service representatives but was well received by all the High Security branches. Well, guess what! By some twist of fate Covid-19 has solved these issues to an extent that they have been reduced drastically. More than likely this is due to less movement and a controlled environment. It was also muted at the meeting by Mark Fairhurst that now might be the time to have a Supermax Prison, where all the difficult prisoners who continually fail to follow the prison rules should be in a more restrictive and controlled environment, which would then enable the rest of the prison estate to have a chance to manage prisoners who conform with the rules. These are

contentious issues and I understand there will be lots of groups opposed to this way of thinking. However, the statistics over the last few "COVID-19" months are a benchmark and an indication that assaults on staff and prisoners have reduced drastically. The figures also indicate that gang related violence and conflicts is at its lowest level since a record has been kept, especially here in HMP BELMARSH. In light of this, the argument and debate need to be discussed as there is evidence to suggest that there can be a NEW NORMAL WAY of dealing with prisoners that is totally safe. Whether we like it or not it is plain for everyone to see that prisons are safer now than they have ever been, many prisons have experienced these changes as well which is good news. Long may it continue. NEC it is over to you at the top table to fight tooth and nail, for a NEW NORMAL and continue to keep our prisons, prisoners and staff safe forever. So, I suggest let's start the debate and involve all agencies including MPs and create the NEW NORMAL that is safer for everyone.

On one final note the IPSA which is the independent body responsible for overseeing MPs pay have recommended a £3000 pay rise from next April. What an insult to all public sector workers. May I suggest that every Thursday we stand outside and clap our MPs just the way we did for the NHS and forfeit the MPs pay rise.

Best wishes from the cynical Belmarsh Committee.



# HMP HULL - #HIDDEN HEROES

HMP/YOI Hull is a Category B local holding in excess of 1000 prisoners

**W**e have all been going through some form of preparations in the last 3 months ready for what we are experiencing today as the result of Covid-19. It has been a challenging few months with an increasing level of anxiety for all.

Despite this and until 24th March life at HMP Hull had been very much "business as usual".

Things changed drastically overnight as of 24th March when all prison regimes were restricted to allow for safe isolation, shielding and social distancing. With this massive change came a growing level of reality, uncertainty and concern from all within the prison.

As we were all adjusting to a very new

world within the prison, the reality of life within a prison always catches you out.

On 26th March there was sadly a death in custody. Staff dealing with and responding to this incident spent over 1 hour doing CPR and trying to save this man's life. This man did not have any symptoms consistent with Covid-19, so this was not a direct concern, however in the current environment of heightened risk, uncertainty and concern all staff involved worked selflessly trying to save a life. Sadly, this was not achieved.

Staff working in prisons are not immune to emotion and grief. Staff involved were devastated and sad that their efforts failed. Death is a

traumatic experience at any time never mind actively trying for 1 hour to preserve it.

Paramedics attending following the incident commented that the prison officers and nurses' attempts were "exceptional" in trying to save this man's life.

I would personally like to thank all prison staff and nurses involved for the professional and selfless efforts on this day in addition to all other pressures relating to Covid-19.

You are truly #HiddenHeroes.

**Gary Sword**  
**Head of Residence & Safety**  
**HMP Hull**



# Frankland

Greetings from Frankland, the first jottings to be published in a long time

Let's get started with a roll of honour for colleagues who have passed away recently, some retired and some were in service at the time (apologies in advance if I've missed anyone as I don't want to cause distress in snowflake town): George Dunston, Shaun Wall, Brian Appleby, Danny Boland, Barry Cooper, Big John Clark, John Cowperthwaite, Mick Charlton, Billy Hunter, Dave Hillam, Billy Hassard, Billy Jarvis, Ritchie Liggins, Bob Mason (ex PO), Brian (salty) Mawer, Steve Mason and the voice of Frankland, Tommy Vinall. All legends sadly missed by all those with a conscience. The following have also left us recently via retirement and I'm sure we will wish them all the best: Jimmy Carroll, John Bainbridge, Gary Atwill, Mark Fowler, Colin Walker, Cliff Webster, Keith Snowden, Steve Christie, Guy Forster, Colin Harris, Steve Thompson and big Dave Cowie. They will be missed, and I am sure they will miss the ethic of the current workforce. A special mention must be made to the great Steve Jackson, who led Frankland POA for over 20 years. Steve deservedly received the Cronin Clasp upon his retirement and has quite rightly been described as "the best National Chair the POA never had". Thank you Steve!

## LEARNING THE BASICS

The following is based on conversations had with officers and OSGs over the last few months. No names are mentioned to protect the guilty, sorry, the innocent.

It has been a while so let us start by welcoming all the new staff young and old who have joined us at Frankland. We need to support these staff whilst they learn the bread and butter of the job i.e. landings and basic jail craft and with common sense built in we can naturally all be on the same side, whether its report writing or, report writing. Then maybe after a few years of doing that and earning respect they can, as you very well know, go on to specialist tasks, some office based.

Give them a few years and they may be in the position of joining other staff in

complaining about the detail. With being so young in service we doubt very much that new staff will be moaning after a day in the job as that would take cheekiness to a new level.

## CHRISTMAS DETAILING

It's that time of year again when all staff pull together and there is not one ounce of selfishness to get Christmas or New Year off. We need to remember as employees that we are the only "workforce" on the planet that have kids and families that we need to go home and spend time with. Many reasons are accepted to get Christmas off i.e. "my wife Mary is giving birth on Christmas day", or "we've got the kids coming round for dinner (ages 29 and 37)", better still, "we need more than 2 players for our family party games so I need Christmas off." The key thing for all of us to remember is that the Prison Service owes us a living.

No doubt there will be a Covid-19 spike during the Christmas and New Year period to follow the spike during October half term week. During these unique times we need to support these genuine staff because this could be round for a while. It doesn't help that some staff still can't work in certain areas of the prison due to the Bubonic plague a few hundred years ago, (however if that wing is first off then the virus will turn a blind eye) This affects all of us and not the usual suspects, never the usual suspects, never ever mind. Hopefully soon we can look back at all this and reflect on how it resulted in us being a tighter workforce.

## INNOVATION

Plans are in place to provide staff with graph paper so they can monitor each other's loan outs. Staff can then compile bar charts if they feel they are unfairly done to when they are sent to cover short falls on other wings. I understand some staff will say, "But surely this is part of our job as a Prison Officer to accept loan outs to help our colleagues etc especially when we are still getting paid regardless." Agreed, some staff will say that but at the same time we cannot have comfort zones threatened. We have all been in that position where our cuppas have just

been poured out and the bombshell phone call comes in asking for someone to go elsewhere for the ED. We reckon this argument will stand up at the European Court of Human Rights even when there are kettles.....on other wings.

We are looking for new ideas to keep staff in the landing offices, one of them is to provide a PS4 for each office. This will enable staff to ignore Governor's even more when they do their rounds. Also, to update the old-style landing offices, the new style of office will be based on a Love Island set with tanning tubes to replace the fluorescent ones.

On the other hand, to stop the same staff from answering the phone all the time we are going to install high tech voice recognition phones. These phones will recognise the same voice and therefore cut them off. The only downside is that some officers may have to go onto the landings.

In this current climate of XOD's staff need to be aware that they should be able to cancel any plans they have at a moment's notice. This enables the member of staff who



has agreed (committed) to do the shift to pull out last minute and let them down due to an excuse they may not have had time to make up. This has not happened yet at Frankland because as you know the place is overflowing with team players.

### **PAYMENT PLUS**

Has anyone joined the cake and eat it club lately? It is for those staff who have agreed to take the big bonus but then refuse to partake in the overtime that got them the bonus in the first place. Therefore, CAMMS are offering another attractive package to entice staff to fulfil that contract. On top of the already spent £1750 and the unearned £22 an hour they are now throwing a car into the mix.

Unfortunately for the staff who like to pick and choose i.e. bedwatches over constants you may have to accept whatever car you are given, sorry, but you did sign up.

### **TEA-BOATS AND SHIRTS**

Security in major supermarkets have agreed to turn a blind eye to officers leaving the

store without paying for tea/coffee/milk etc. This will help those staff who run tea boats to not constantly ask or expect other staff to contribute. This is an outrageous expectation from those staff who purchase everything all the time from their own pockets. However, what they do ask is those staff who were born with silver spoons in their mouths to keep them to use to stir their free cups of tea/coffee.

About parking, yes, the crane is still on order but in the meantime, we are getting more double yellow lines for staff to park on. This will save the arduous very short journey to the many still vacant spaces....On another plus note, scientists, on behalf of the Prison Service are working with car manufacturer's to build a car that can shrink to get through the tight spaces left in the car park.

If staff feel slightly itchy wearing the new white shirts, it is down to the microscopic irons that are built into the fabric of the shirt. These irons will work overtime keeping the shirt nicely presentable in the workplace and hopefully it will prevent staff from coming out with ludicrous statements such as, "can you not iron it before you come in like?" Also, the Prison Service is working with Hotpoint to remove the "whites only" setting from future washing machines and replace it with "whites with greys and yellows mainly" setting.

### **CAMMS GROUP**

There is an underground CAMMS group operating behind the scenes at Frankland. As they cannot hack Invision their only option is to alter the paper detail after it is published. This enables them to work with their friends and despatch to other jobs people that they do not like. This leaves the left-over team players no option but to follow Invision to see what jobs they are on rather than what friends group they belong to. However, measures are in place to cease the activities of this group by coating the back of the paper detail with lead. Once held up to the light the friend's reunited club will not be able to see what changes have been made.... If you noticed, we have substituted the words "work

colleagues" with the word "friends."

### **TEAMWORK**

And now the guess the wing competition. The ones' do their own thing and the twos do not speak to each other. Is this a "top end" wing or a "bottom end"? Or could it be a mixed wing seeing as the dynamics of the prison have changed over the years.

It was apparent that a lot of staff struggled with their long hairstyles during the early days of Covid, some resorting to having ponytails and Mohicans etc thankfully though this is on the recovery with staff looking smarter than ever with haircuts that conform to a uniformed disciplined service.

In the absence of basic radio procedure and courtesy, the ECR will be deploying drones to follow escorting staff to their destination. This will inform the staff in the control room that that move is complete as they may, funnily enough, need to move others around the prison. This enables the escorting officer to continue with their chat with other officers to save them time from informing the ECR that the move is complete.

Finally, a sombre note, bullying will not be tolerated in any workplace let alone Frankland. If anyone hears the following, they must report it immediately to the anti-bullying department:

"Could you help on the landing please if you're not needed elsewhere?"

"Any chance of you doing an early shift with you being minus hours?"

"I know you had a flyer yesterday, is there any chance you can finish at your scheduled finish time today? I'm trying to help you as it saves you from becoming too use to flyers."

"If there are six of you up there could someone harness a conscience and go and assist your colleagues please?"

"Is it ok if we look for solutions not problems?"

Well that is it for now from us, next month, "Frankland the Musical".

Any contributions to Darren Stafford or Dave Ferry.



# Poetry Readings

**My name is Chris Hawkins and I am serving officer at HMP Long Lartin where I have been for over 20 years. In January this year whilst seconded to the SCT (Standards Coaching Team) I endured an assault that made my head spin, literally.** It sent a missile across my bow for sure but just shows how dangerous and unpredictable prisons can be.

I am on the mend and live to tell the tale and have a life long scar for my troubles. During my time of recuperation I wrote some poetry as I love creative writing and wanted to share some with you, this is based on my assault. I am sure most will be able to relate to it.

## The Pain of a Punch

I stood there and faced him, his eyes were dark and cold,  
His face was coarse with anger, rage had taken hold,  
He stooped to grab a weapon, my eyes locked onto his hand,  
My gaze was broken for a moment, a fearsome punch he did land.

A searing pain ran through my face, and my head in turn did spin,  
His evil eyes and deathly stare were now an evil grin,  
As I hurtled back more pain I felt across my hairless head,  
My world turned into darkness I feared that I was dead.

They say your life flashes before you when faced with such events,  
It's fair to say it's true, of that there's no pretence,  
My brothers in arms broke my fall and dragged me from my fate,  
They battled on without me as I lay in my unconscious state.

When I started to come round, my head was spinning like a wheel,  
The taste and sight of blood, and pain was all that I could feel,  
My brain was saying get up man and help your brothers out,  
My body was saying screw you fella your down and out for the count.

As I lay in pain and coming round on grotty linoleum floor, a vision I did see,  
An angel known as Gracie who had come to tend to me,  
She soothed my brow and comforted me while in a bloodied heap I lay,  
The others were still working hard to keep my evil foe at bay.

Now whilst the scars have healed and the bruises faded and life I guess goes on,  
The mental scars are the scary ones, for those you struggle to outrun,  
So this smiling laughing clown you know and feel safe to work alongside,  
Is trying to win back in his darkest hours the part he feels has died.  
The moral here is an aged one, and one we can't forget,  
The band of brothers we work alongside are the best we ever met,  
So when your sat up on the 2's on your seventh cup of tea,  
Just remember the laughing clown and raise a brew to me.



# PSCF Committee Update

Welcome to all PSCF Members. In these totally unprecedented times, your Committee sincerely hope you, your family and friends, are keeping safe and well.

As 2020 draws to a close, we want you to know that although since March appeals have slowed down, we would like to take comfort from the fact the PSCF has continued to assist your chosen charities.

No matter how big or small your target is, providing it fits our criteria, we are still here to assist you and your charity in your fund raising and to hopefully reach your target.

It has been quite obvious to your Committee, that Mental Health Charities have played a big part this year and we are pleased to have assisted in these appeals.

Unfortunately, during 2020 we have lost quite a few of our representatives from establishments, area offices and training locations, which have a knock on effect to our recruitment of new members, which as you will appreciate is the only way we can continue to assist your charities.

So, if there are any members of staff out there that would like to take on this voluntary role within your establishment, please do get in touch with us at bob@pscf.co.uk.

Without the fantastic cooperation we have had from Helen and all the POA team working on the Gatelodge magazine, we would not be able to get our message out to all our members and beyond. On behalf of all the



PSCF Committee, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts and long may it continue.

With regards to our AGM advert, if we find the next issue of the Gatelodge is after the date we have set, we will endeavor to get a global email out to all our members informing you of the date.

Finally, we are not sure when our country will get back to some sort of normality, but one thing we can promise you is your charity is in very safe hands and your Committee really do wish you a Merry Christmas and we certainly hope 2021 will be a happier one.

**Thank you.**  
**PSCF Committee**

## CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

SYMPTOMS MAY SHOW UP 2-14 DAYS LATER

TESTS FOR DIAGNOSIS ARE AVAILABLE

IF YOU ARE SICK CALL HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND STAY AT HOME

### SYMPTOMS

FEVER

COUGH

SHORTNESS OF BREATH

### TRAVEL ADVICE

DO NOT TRAVEL TO AFFECTED AREAS

DON'T TRAVEL IF YOU HAVE FEVER AND COUGH

IF YOU BECOME SICK WHILE TRAVELLING SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY

### PREVENTION

WASH HANDS WITH WATER AND SOAP/SANITIZER, AT LEAST 20 SECONDS

DON'T TOUCH EYES, NOSE OR MOUTH WITH UNWASHED HANDS

PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

DON'T EAT RAW FOOD, THOROUGHLY COOK MEAT AND EGGS

AVOID CONTACT WITH ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PRODUCTS

### IF YOU FEEL SICK

STAY AT HOME

AVOID CONTACT WITH OTHERS

COVER YOUR NOSE AND MOUTH WITH TISSUE OR ELBOW WHEN SNEEZING, DISPOSE TISSUES

WEAR A SURGICAL MASK

KEEP OBJECTS AND SURFACES CLEAN

General

# Prison Service Charity Fund AGM

Springbridge Carriage Driving Centre  
Countesthorpe Road  
Willoughby Waterleys  
Leicestershire  
LE8 6UL

In early Spring of 2021

Due to current restrictions the date will be sent out as soon as possible

Any Member wishing to attend would be most welcome.

The itinerary for the day.

11:30 am arrival – coffee or tea.

12:30 pm lunch informal chat.

14:00 pm meeting starts.

16:00 approximately, meeting end

Coffee or tea before departure.

If you wish to attend the AGM would you confirm  
by email or in writing no later than Date TBA

PSCF Secretary  
15 Merepark Drive  
Southport  
PR9 9FB

E Mail – [bob@pscfc.co.uk](mailto:bob@pscfc.co.uk)

PRISON  
SERVICE  
CHARITY  
—fund—



# Thank You



I have just recently resigned from the Prison Service after thirty one years of service. I like many others who were employed for long lengths of service would have noticed the extreme changes in the Prison Service, some for the good others not so good. This along with personal problems and my PTSD flaring, the stress was too much for me and I had to think about how things were affecting my mental wellbeing and decided to call it a day.

## INVESTIGATIONS AND POA REPRESENTATION

I like many staff in the service was investigated for one thing or another over the years and without the support and backing from the POA my career might have ended sooner but thanks

to past POA reps, the likes of Ron Clements, Ron Adams and Mick Mullins, to name but a few, it didn't. My biggest thanks goes to Alex Leonard who has helped me immensely in the last fifteen years with some of the allegations from prisoners that lead to investigations, with his help they were all kicked to the side lines and no action was taken. When myself and two other colleagues were going through an arduous time when a prisoner killed himself and unbeknown to the Prison Service the way in which they investigated deaths in custody had changed and we found ourselves being interviewed under caution at a police station and was potentially going to be charged with gross negligent manslaughter, Alex helped us immensely when we had to wait for the CPS "as it was referred to them by the

police" to decide whether to charge us or not, two years later the CPS decided that the prisoner had committed suicide and dropped it. We were then subjected to coroner's court and again Alex helped us throughout the duration of the court proceedings which backed up the police with the finding of suicide.

The three of us with the help of Alex sued the Prison Service for the complete lack of support they gave us and for the negligence that got us taken to the police and corner's court in the first place and with his help and the POA solicitors we won our case.

I like many other staff who have left or retired have had the great pleasure of working with many great staff who I called "family" and will miss them immensely, but I would like to say to those that are still employed in the service, please stay safe and look after each other because while you are there in which ever establishment you work, your colleagues are the "family" you will have to rely on and if you fall out with people remember life is too short to bare grudges so please forgive each other and move on and look after each other you have enough stress with the job and prisoners.

I again would like to thank the POA reps that have helped me over the years, so thank you Ron Clements, Ron Adams and Mick Mullins but mostly Alex Leonard.

**Yours Anon.**

# Thank You POA Welfare Fund!

**Dear Carol**

Thank you so much for your letter dated 11th of August 2020, informing me of an award of £150.00 to me towards the purchase of a mobility scooter.

I am not too proud to say that when I read your letter it brought a tear to my eyes, the POA looked after me all through my service and now they are helping me in my old age.

I know that many members think that they are only paying for a diary each year, how wrong they are, the POA has assisted so many members over the years and don't

get the thanks they deserve.

Getting a mobility scooter will enable me to once again go out with my wife whereas now I am unable to do so, this will mean a great deal to both of us.

One last request Carol could you read this letter out to the committee at their next meeting and tell them I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their kindness. "GOD BLESS THE POA"

If the POA want to use any or all of this letter for recruiting purposes then feel free to do so, you have my 100% permission.

Thank you once again.

I remain yours faithfully

**Ron Clements**



# Gary (Jack) Hawkins



**F**or those of you that don't know me, my name is Lorraine and I have been a Prison Officer since 1989. Most of my career has been spent at Belmarsh, which is where I had the absolute pleasure of meeting, and then working alongside Officer Gary Hawkins, known to most of us as 'Jack'. Jack joined the Prison Service in March 1988 at Wandsworth. He trained at Wakefield and was allocated for duty to Wormwood Scrubs. Jack transferred to Belmarsh in February 1991 when it first opened and remained here.

It's funny, he always called me Lou, and was the only one who ever did that. Never quite knew why, maybe he thought that as he had an alias, then maybe I should have one too! But whatever his reason, it always made me smile.

And that's what Jack did, he made you smile!

He was the easiest going, most kind-hearted and humble man you could ever wish to meet, and he was a true gentleman. Once you met Jack, trust me, you would never forget him.

Like myself, Jack had done many years in the Prison Service but strangely, we both chose to remain at officer level rather than take promotion. I think we shared a special love and passion for being able to work on the ground floor and have that daily interaction with the prisoners and the staff, and whatever that may have brought us. He used to say it was the 'bread and butter' of our job, and I must say, he was extremely good at it. You have set the bar very high Jack, for those following in your footsteps.

He was a man that everyone loved to work with because he was funny, genuine and loyal, and there were no hidden agendas with him, what you saw is what you got. He always had your back no matter what, which in our line of work, is worth its weight in gold, trust me. Nobody quite wore their uniform beanie hat the way he used to, I think it eventually became his trademark and will be one of the lovely things I will always remember about him.

He was a great mentor and a great friend to so many staff over the years and was very respected by everyone that knew him. I am so privileged that I got to work alongside you my friend, you were one in a million, and I always knew I was going to have a great day whenever we got to work together, and I for one, will miss you dearly.

## FINALLY, I'D LIKE TO FINISH WITH A POEM FOR JACK:

Don't remember me with sadness,  
Don't remember me with tears,  
Remember all the laughter,  
We've shared throughout the years.  
Now I am contented  
That my life, it was worthwhile,  
Knowing that along the way,  
I made somebody smile.  
When you are walking down the street,  
And you've got me on your mind,  
I'll be walking in your footsteps  
Only half a step behind.  
So please don't be unhappy  
Just because I'm out of sight.  
Remember that I'm with you,  
Every morning, noon and night  
Sleep tight buddy, God Bless

# Andy Tanner



**I**t is with deep sadness that I learnt of the passing of Andy Tanner, on 20th August 2020, aged 62. Andy started his career in the Prison Service at Wormwood Scrubs in 1984, and transferred to HMP Bristol in 1987, and finally to HMP Shepton Mallet before it's closure.

I had the privilege to conduct Andy's funeral service at Bath Crematorium, and some of the words used to describe him were "lovely, sociable, clever, wise, funny and cheeky". Andy was one of life's characters, who was a pleasure to work with on the landings. He was always firm but fair, knowledgeable, dedicated but with a caring side to him.

Andy became Chairman of the POA at Shepton Mallet, where he supported his members with dedication and understanding. He was always willing to listen and give his advice whenever needed.

Andy leaves behind his heartbroken family, his partner Sharon of 25 years, his children James and Louise, grandchildren Callum & Dylan, his siblings Dianne and Alan also Jenn, Luke, Janet, Carol and Susan.

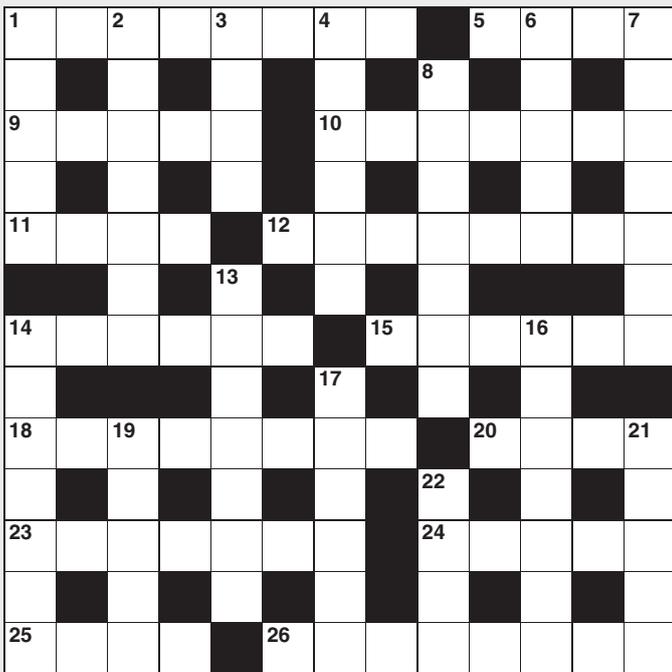
Andy was a friend to all who had the privilege to know him. He will be remembered as a great guy, a friend, workmate, comrade and a supporter to so many, above all someone who always had a story to tell!

RIP my friend.

Paul Maltby (Former Branch Chairman – HMP Bristol)



## Crossword



### ACROSS

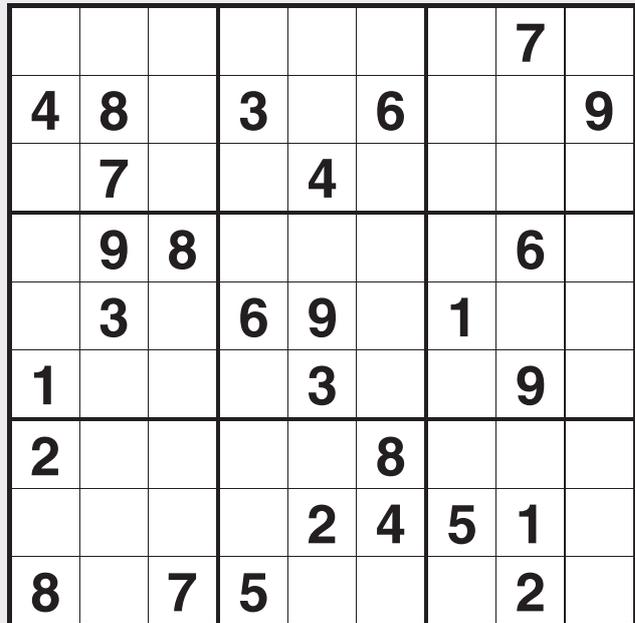
- 1 Resident (8)
- 5 Facts and figures (4)
- 9 Illuminated distress signal (5)
- 10 Discover (7)
- 11 Common rodents (4)
- 12 Party-goer (8)
- 14 Vessel for carrying liquids (6)
- 15 Fish-eating bird (6)
- 18 Advertising flyer sent by post (8)
- 20 Sum borrowed (4)
- 23 Physics, biology etc (7)
- 24 Strike (a door) (5)
- 25 *A Hard \_\_\_ Night*, Beatles film (4)
- 26 Not checked (text) (8)

### DOWN

- 1 Bid (5)
- 2 Muddled (7)
- 3 Fruit's skin (4)
- 4 Sickening disgust (6)
- 6 Fourth month (5)
- 7 Smoker's dish (7)
- 8 Set free, liberate (7)
- 13 Adds salt and pepper (7)
- 14 Perplexed (7)
- 16 Get rid of, eliminate (4,3)
- 17 Enter (4,2)
- 19 Frostily (5)
- 21 Unclothed (5)
- 22 Slide unintentionally (4)

## Sudoku

Have a go at this medium level Sudoku puzzle. Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 just once.



## Answers





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