



PRISON
REFORM
TRUST

Prison Reform Trust The first 40 years

“ We set up the Prison Reform Trust as a short-term enterprise, with the goals of stopping the growth in prison numbers and the deterioration in prison conditions. With neither target achieved – even remotely – after four years, it was clear that prison reform would be a long-term and demanding process. In the 40 years since then, PRT has played a crucial role in that process, doing distinguished and often pioneering work. It has consistently fulfilled its objectives of addressing prison policy and practice, and educating politicians and the public on these so often neglected issues. ”

Dame Ruth Runciman DBE

Deputy Chair, 1981-2019 and founding trustee

Acknowledgements

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Cover image (reworked) and pages 3, 5 and 7: black and white photographs from the late 1970s taken in the prison estate by the late Jonathan Bayer. Part of an unrealised project devised by Roy King and Rod Morgan to mark 200 years since the publication of penal reformer John Howard's 'The State of the Prisons in England and Wales'. It was the first time that the Home Office had granted permission for such a photographic survey; Bayer's photographic collection is thus now of historical importance.

Pages 11, 17, 18, 20-21 and 24: colour photographs by Andy Aitchison www.andyaitchison.uk

Right: James Timpson and Ruth Runciman

“You probably don't realise what it means to us prisoners to know that regardless of what brought us here you guys have our backs and we can turn to you when our dark days feel even darker. Thank you so much for the care and support you offer us. The PRT is a real gift to us all!”

Prisoner's message sent to PRT's advice and information service, 2019



Prisons matter. They demonstrate the extremes in our society: from those who live in them, to the system they are governed by. A good prison system is one that cares for people within a culture of hope, kindness and decency.

As this short history illustrates, since 1981 the Prison Reform Trust has supported those locked into our prison system – the prisoners and their families – to ensure that those of them without a voice get heard. Prisoners' voices are no less important than those of others, but too often the odds are stacked against them.

PRT has tirelessly reached out the arm of friendship and hope to everybody in the criminal justice arena, and gained respect through our deep understanding and thoughtful advocacy. Latterly, having so many colleagues who have been through the prison system has also brought great strength and insight to our cause.

Each time I visit a prison, or meet a Justice Minister or a High Court judge, I am reminded of the magnitude of our work. On a prison wing, when I say that I'm from PRT I am always welcomed into prisoners' cells with open arms. Being a respected force for good in the justice space has been hard earned, and with it comes a responsibility to keep focused on positive outcomes when the system seems always to be against you.

None of this would have been possible without the kindness and generosity of so many individuals, trusts, foundations and, of course, trustees. Over the years, all have been a great source of inspiration and intellectual rigour for the charity.

In this 40th year, we are fortunate to have a brilliant team at PRT, led by Peter Dawson, who clearly understand the responsibilities they have to support those in our society who need our help the most.

Thank you for being part of this special organisation. It has grown over four decades to be a source of strength and support to prisoners, their families and to all of us interested in helping people live a life where hope and opportunity prevail.

James Timpson OBE
PRT Chair

In the beginning

“A new charity to promote public debate on prison reform”: that was how The Times of 15th September 1981 heralded the formation of the Prison Reform Trust. Backed by three-year funding from the Northmoor Trust and Avenue Trust, and with an office hosted by the Nuffield Foundation, our founders’ vision was for the charity to *‘win public support for prison reform’*. And they saw it as a short-lived enterprise, no more than three or four years. Within that time frame, they thought that their main objective – to secure a significant reduction in prisoner numbers – would surely be achieved.

The founding Chair was Sir Monty Finniston, an industrialist of distinction and former Chair of British Steel. He injected a blunt, tough pragmatism to the role, reflecting in his first Annual Report: *“A modern society has to have a penal system which reflects the age; and the more one learns about the conditions and practices in Britain’s prisons, the more convinced one becomes of the urgent need for change in a system which has lagged behind the conscience of the nation.”*

“A modern society has to have a penal system which reflects the age...”

Ruth Runciman was appointed Deputy Chair. It was a role that she would occupy until 2019, contributing invaluable continuity and reforming zeal to this charity that she co-founded. She brought with her extensive experience from Citizens Advice Bureau and significant intelligence on work with drug addiction and misuse.

Ruth would later establish the first ever full-time advice centre for prisoners. Located at HMP Wormwood Scrubs, initially it operated one day a week, rising to two; by 2020, 43 Citizens Advice service centres were operating in UK prisons. She would also serve as Chair of the UK Mental Health Act Commission from 1994 to 1998, the year in which she was appointed DBE.

The trustees recruited Stephen Shaw as inaugural Director. He established the charity

from start-up, with a tiny staff – **by 1984 the team had grown to just three** – and developed it into a high-profile campaigning organisation over the next 18 years. In autumn 1999, Stephen left PRT and was appointed Prisons Ombudsman (becoming Prisons and Probation Ombudsman in 2001) by the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw MP. As Ombudsman, he led sensitive, high profile investigations and oversaw the major change management programme that introduced independent investigations of deaths in prison custody. Stephen Shaw was the first of just three incumbents who would lead PRT over the next four decades.

Amongst the roll call of other founding trustees were Mark Bonham Carter, a former Chair of the Race Relations Board; Louis Blom-Cooper QC, Chair of the Howard League for Penal Reform; broadcaster Ludovic Kennedy, best known for re-examining the 1950s’ convictions for murder of Timothy Evans and David Bentley; and David Astor, publisher and former editor of The Observer.

It was those links with The Observer that enabled PRT to run a major public opinion poll sponsored by the newspaper within months of our launch. The results – later published in full in the PRT paper ‘The People’s Justice’ – revealed strong support for community sentences for non-violent offences and, by a ratio of 2:1, agreement to the proposition that there should be an amnesty for minor offences. The poll also revealed there was **very little public awareness of prisons and prison conditions**. Only one in three people could estimate – within 50% either way – the size of the prison population.

In reality, prison overcrowding was so dire that it compelled the Governor of HMP Wormwood Scrubs, John McCarthy, to write a letter to The Times, published in November 1981. In it, he portrayed graphically the desperate state of his prison, describing himself as *‘the manager of a large penal dustbin’*. John McCarthy was forced out of the Prison Service shortly afterwards. Subsequently, we invited him to deliver **the first Annual PRT lecture** entitled ‘The Future of the Prison Service’.



PRT in the 1980s

1980



Improving public awareness of prisons and prison conditions, alongside encouraging greater community involvement, was our main impetus in the months following launch. With Government consent, we devised and delivered a series of innovative and **distinctive Prison Weeks**. Combining prison tours, exhibitions, promotional material, meetings and media coverage, they aimed to stimulate local interest and lasting interaction. Launched to significant acclaim at HMP Oxford in February 1982, six more of these projects were staged at urban prisons across the UK until, in 1984, the Home Office summarily withdrew its approval for this groundbreaking initiative.



Our Prison Weeks raise public interest in prison conditions.



PRT promotes prison reform on BBC Radio 2's The Jimmy Young Show.



'Prison – Facts and Figures' will develop into our twice-yearly Bromley Briefings.



on The Jimmy Young Show. At the time it was the most sought-after slot on BBC Radio 2, with an audience that allegedly included HM The Queen.

We continued to witness a relentless **rise in prison numbers**; in one week alone during 1984, there was a 1,000 increase. This growth was to become a dominant theme throughout PRT's history, the nettle that successive politicians and parties have failed to grasp – with occasional and honourable exceptions.

Two PRT publications from 1985 stand out. We produced a specific report on the use of custodial remand for children 'Remanding of Juveniles', our first foray into the world of juvenile justice. Most notably, we also **published the first 'Prison – Facts and Figures'**. It later became the Prison Factfile and developed, almost two decades later, into the current Bromley Briefings. Read more on page 16.

In spring 1986, the Conservative Government began to formulate what the Financial Times called '*one of the largest criminal justice bills ever brought to Parliament*'. It was a move widely interpreted as preparing a battleground for the forthcoming general election. We positioned ourselves by describing the '*chaos and discord at the heart of penal policy*'. One manifestation of this came on 30th April 1986, with grave disturbances in 20 UK prisons. In the worst, half of HMP Northeye near Bexhill was destroyed. **PRT subsequently called for a fundamental reassessment of the use of custody** and highlighted practical steps that a new criminal justice bill could take to reduce prison numbers.

Our 1985–1986 Annual Report stated plainly that we remained a campaigning charity, true to our founders' aims. However, we also reported that individual casework – a forerunner of the advice and information service – was an increasingly important component to our work, as **PRT became more of a 'watchdog' on the prison system**.

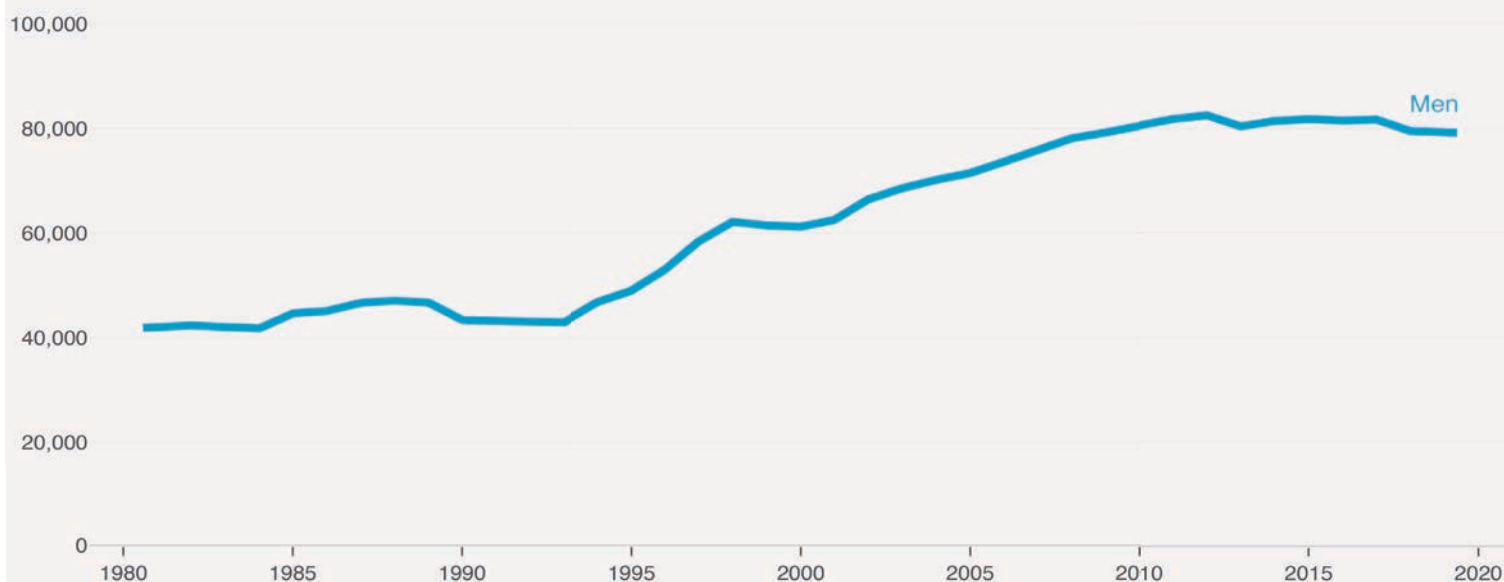
We courted controversy at the end of 1982 with our report 'The Bogus Numbers Game'. In it, PRT argued powerfully the cases against the prison building programme in general, and building more top security prisons in particular. Both points were cautiously acknowledged six months later in the first Annual Report of HM Inspectorate of Prisons.

As the '80s progressed, PRT encountered success and setbacks in equal measure. Despite our opposition to proposed changes to parole, and to the massive new prison building programme, both went ahead. Conversely, PRT's focus on remand 'Lacking Conviction', and the spotlight it provided on the increasing use of physical restraint 'Beyond Restraint', broke new ground.

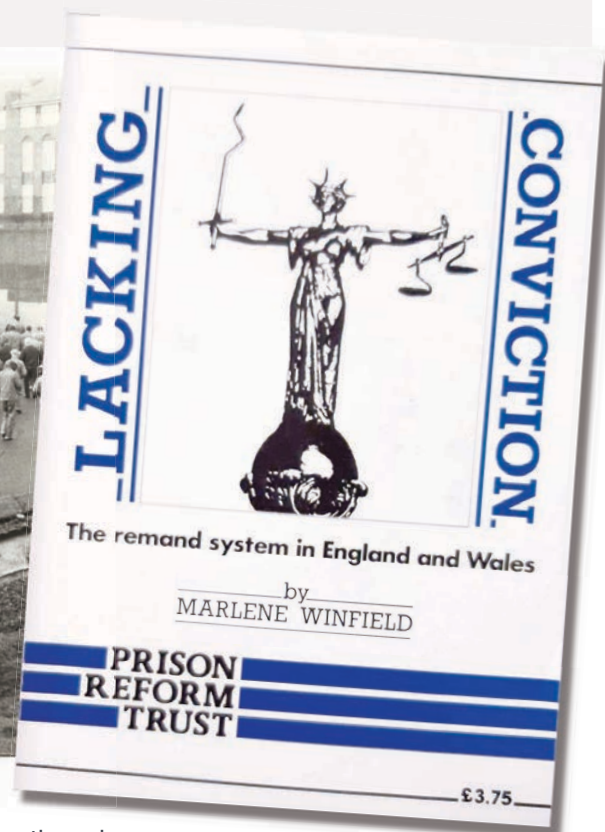
Keen to exploit popular daytime radio and to **promote the need for prison reform** to the widest possible audience, the Director appeared regularly

An initiative destined to become a signature element of PRT's history appeared in 1987, with the publication of our pioneering and well-

The male prison population has nearly doubled in the last 40 years



Source: Ministry of Justice Offender Management Statistics



received 'Prisoners' Information Pack'. This collaboration with the Prison Service was a major achievement, confirming PRT in the trusted critic and honest broker role. In 2021, our advice and information service continues to provide reliable, easy to understand information direct to prisoners and their families, and in the process keeps us in touch on a daily basis with the issues that matter most to them.

In 1988 Sir Monty Finniston stood down as Chair and was replaced by Edmund Dell MP,

a former Labour Party Cabinet Minister. Taking on the role, Edmund Dell echoed a recent comment by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons that prisoners were 'for the most part forgotten people'.

Our major publication of 1988 was 'HIV, AIDS and Prisons', which sought to allay unnecessary fears whilst promoting strategies to prevent the spread of HIV. This report added PRT's support to the pioneering work being done globally on harm reduction for those living with HIV and

1985

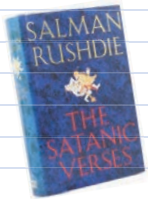
First focus on children in prison



Individual casework will grow into PRT's advice and information service.



'HIV, AIDS and Prisons' – an early example of PRT's advocacy.



Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, writes: "Custody should be reserved as punishment for very serious offenders."



PRT opposes entire institutions being run for profit.



Race will be a recurring theme.



Prison population rises to 48,500.

AIDS. It was an early example of PRT's advocacy, supporting brave and innovative work within the Prison Service of the day.

PRT's programme of research continued, highlighting that one in five people entering prison were fine defaulters. We also filled an acknowledged gap, producing three papers on juvenile justice. One of these, 'The Route from Care to Custody' identified the large number of adults in custody who had been brought up in care. We would return to this theme many times in the decades that followed.

In contrast to government plans to increase the number of prisoners, our published manifesto set out how prison numbers could be decreased and conditions and rights improved. And yes, we sensed that change might be in the air when the then Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd MP, wrote in the 1988 Green Paper 'Punishment, Custody and the Community' that: "*Custody should be reserved as punishment for very serious offenders, especially when the offender is violent and a continuing risk to the public*".

"Custody should be reserved as punishment for very serious offenders"

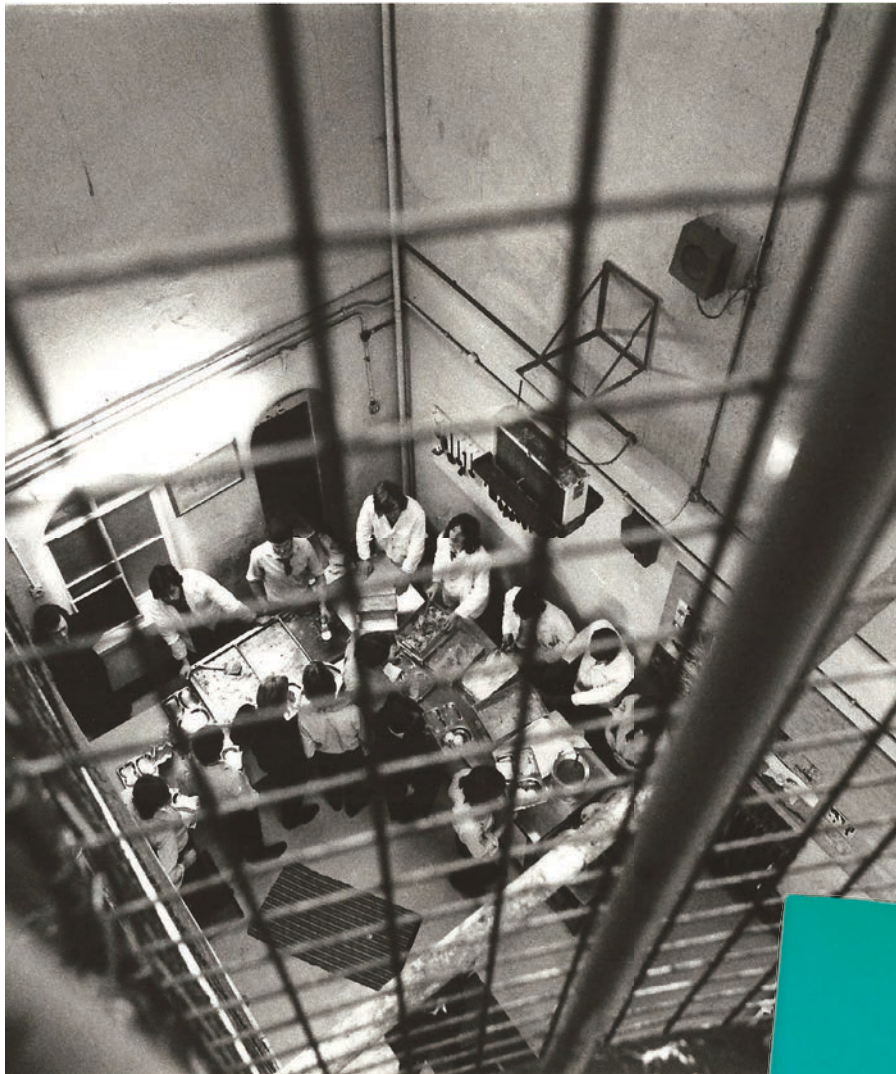
The size of the prison population briefly dipped and other reforms were announced, including the gradual elimination of slopping out – the manual emptying of human waste from buckets and chemical toilets. Morale in the Prison Service appeared to be improving, which led our Director Stephen Shaw to conclude in 1989: "*One can say with reasonable confidence that the system as a whole is in better shape than it was 12 months ago*". But where we parted company with the Government was on its insistence that punishments in the community were insufficiently tough or punitive.

PRT articulated a policy on proposed privatisation, which was gaining momentum at this time. We opposed the idea that entire institutions should be run for profit, whilst giving a cautious welcome to privatisation of



PRT quickly realised that prisoners and their families were rarely told what they should expect from prisons. To fill the gap, in 1987 we produced a set of information packs, describing the basics of prison life. Immediately, demand was high. Following a five-minute slot on Thames TV about the packs, we received over 1,000 letters and telephone calls from people in prison and their families.

In an early example of the way PRT has always combined our duty to hold to account with a willingness to work alongside officials, we struck a deal to get these Prisoners' Information Packs printed and distributed by the Prison Service. By 1993, 250,000 packs had been circulated, available in 14 different languages. In 2021, PRT still works closely with policy makers in the ministry to provide trusted and up-to-date information leaflets on demand, including an easy read version for people who will otherwise struggle to know their rights and entitlements.



“ Sentenced to life in 1984 I thought for me it was the end. For eight years my cell just contained a bed, a chair, a table and a toilet bucket. Ill-educated and inarticulate, if it hadn't been for teachers and others who care about the treatment of prisoners, I doubt I'd have found a better way to live. ”

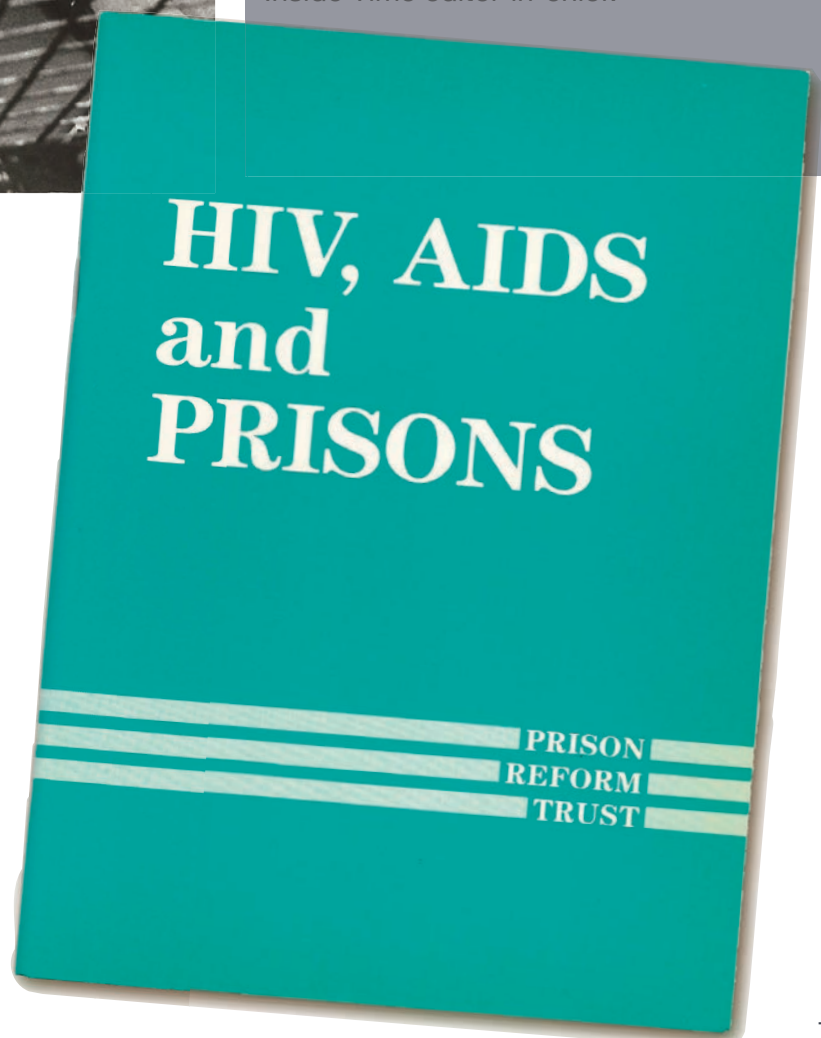
Erwin James

Former PRT trustee, journalist, author, Inside Time editor-in-chief.

some aspects of Prison Service provision. And for the first time, in 1989 we focused on **two issues that would become recurring themes.**

One was race, where we distinguished between impressive policies from the Prison Service and their delivery in practice. We highlighted the fact that the proportion of black people represented in the prison population was seven times higher than out in the community. The other issue centred on the **imprisonment of women**, mostly for property offences and often as a result of abusive relationships with men. Our then Deputy Director, Una Padel, took a lead role in this.

At the end of our first decade, there was an unmistakable if very cautious air of optimism about the prospects for prison reform.



PRT in the 1990s

1990



Post Strangeways, PRT submits detailed evidence to the Woolf inquiry.



By 1993 the PRT advice and help service is receiving 2,000+ contacts a year.



A serving prisoner wins our annual essay competition for the first time.



We press for a substantial reduction in the prison population as a precondition for reform.



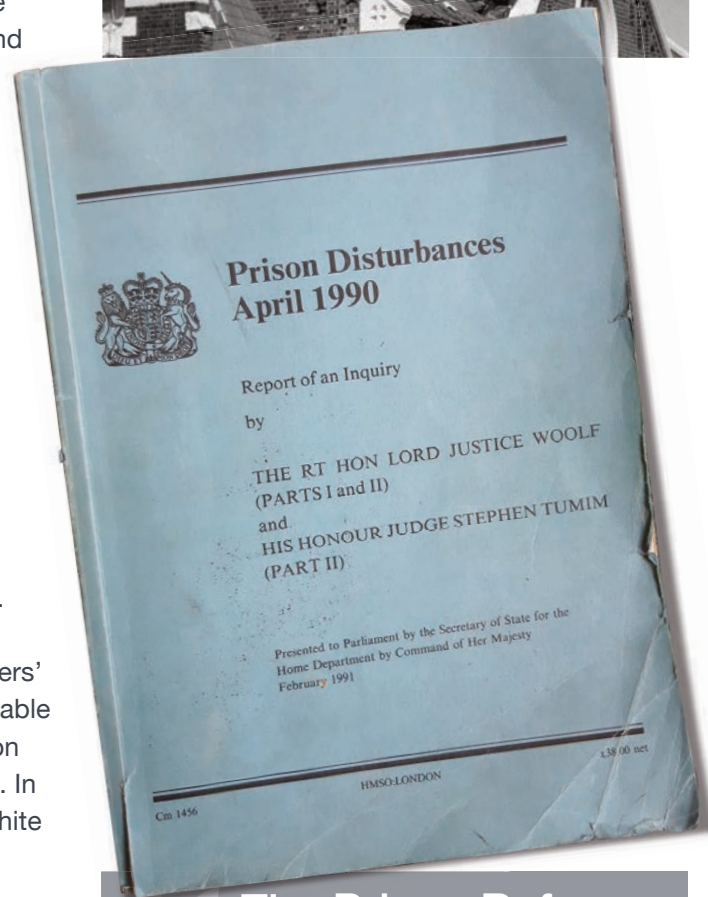
Four months into the 1990s, the prison riot at **Strangeways** was one of the most serious insurrections in British penal history. Erupting in a place that seemed to be improving, it immediately punctured any cautious optimism about the condition of prisons. Inevitably, the riot's consequences now became a main focus for our team.

The unrest lasted 25 days, left two people dead and 194 injured. Other riots and protests took place in 25 other prisons in immediate succession. Strangeways led to 51 trials and a public inquiry headed by Lord (Harry) Woolf, who would become our Chair in 2011. PRT submitted detailed evidence to his inquiry and **welcomed the subsequent Woolf Report** that proposed fundamental reforms to most aspects of the Prison Service. Its 12 main recommendations and 204 proposals for wide-ranging change echoed all the main issues that had occupied PRT in our first decade.

The Government largely accepted the recommendations. The Prison Service, with explicit support from Ministers, seemed determined to implement change. Improvements to leadership and a better system for handling and addressing prisoners' complaints followed, plus slow but appreciable progress in the treatment of people in prison and the conditions in which they were held. In the two years following the 1990 riots, a White Paper 'Custody, Care and Justice'; a new Criminal Justice Act; and a 10% fall in the number of people in prison – along with the Woolf Report – appeared to be ushering in a new and more enlightened era.

But when PRT reviewed progress in 2015 with our report '**Strangeways 25 Years On – Achieving Fairness and Justice in Our Prisons**' we were forced to conclude that the progress eventually stalled, largely because of the dramatic rise in the number of people in prison. On balance, most of Lord Woolf's vision had not been achieved.

The broadcaster and reporter, **Jon Snow**, replaced Edmund Dell as **PRT Chair** in 1993.



“ The Prison Reform Trust... is not some softy pinko bleeding-heart outfit but a hard-headed body which knows exactly how far prisons can and can't work. ”

Marcel Berlins Legal journalist and broadcaster; October 1995

The Channel 4 News presenter had played an off-stage role in the charity's foundation, believing *"that there was a real need for a new organisation to watch over the prison system, inform the public, and campaign for change"*.

Throughout the early '90s we pressed for a substantial reduction in the number of people in prison as a precondition for reform. For four years, numbers remained steady at 45,000.

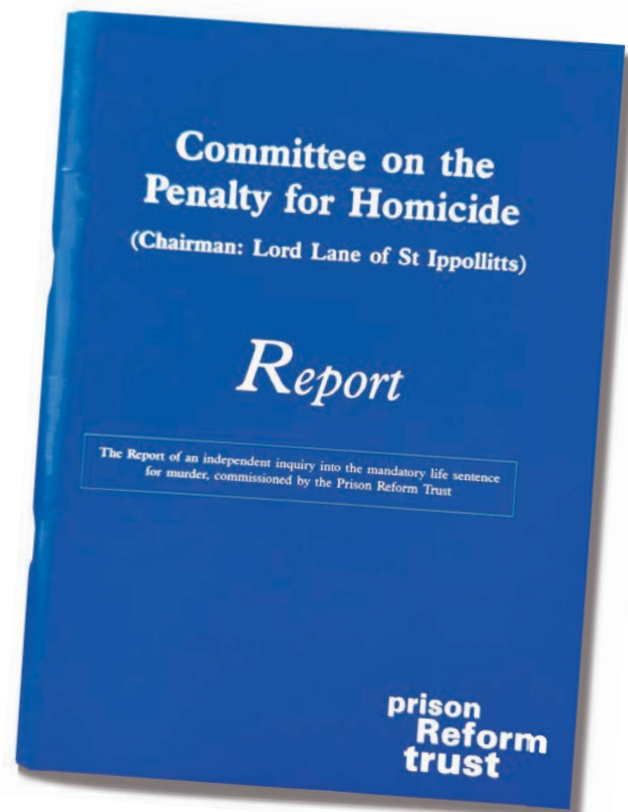
In 1993, a serving prisoner won the annual essay competition that had started life as our research prize in the previous year. Almost three decades later, **PRT's annual writing competition for prisoners** remains a fixture in the prison year, judged by a panel of writers and journalists, and supported by The Guardian and The Big Issue.

In 1990 we had cautiously started an **advice and help service**. By 1993 this was receiving more than 2,000 contacts a year, a third of whom asked us to take up their cases. One confided: *"I am writing in appreciation of the help and information you have given my husband over his years in prison. It has helped to keep him outward looking and positive, with an element of confidence and trust. When he needed to ask, you have provided. And that means so much to us."*

"It has helped to keep him outward looking and positive..."

As part of our advocacy for the radical overhaul of prisons, we also described new government initiatives to improve the system for handling grievances from people in prison as *'a considerable advance for prisoner's rights'*. At the same time, however, PRT expressed regret that these proposals failed to create a Prisons Ombudsman – an appointment we had called for over more than a decade. **The post of Prisons Ombudsman** was finally created in 1994 and today remains a key part of the system for protecting prisoners' rights and holding the system to account for their treatment.

PRT had set up the Committee on the Penalty for Homicide under the independent



chairmanship of Lord (Geoffrey) Lane, a former Lord Chief Justice. When the Committee published its Report in December 1993, it concluded that the mandatory life sentence was founded on a fallacy: that murder is a crime of such unique evil that the perpetrator forfeits for the rest of his or her life the right to be set free. Our accompanying call for the abolition of the mandatory life sentence attracted widespread attention and an unfavourable political response.

The debate on sentencing had shifted and, after a temporary decline, the prison population started to rise again – by 10% in 1994 alone.

The changing context for sentencing policy was not the only headwind confronting PRT in the mid 1990s. **The escape of Category A prisoners from HMPs Whitemoor and Parkhurst** in 1994-95 dominated the thinking of policy makers and led to the eventual dismissal of the Head of the Prison Service, Derek Lewis. PRT was critical of what we described as *'an orgy of new security restrictions'* introduced in the aftermath.

In 1995, as numbers of people in prison passed the symbolic 50,000 figure, there was much talk in policy circles of introducing 'boot camps' for younger prisoners – a British version of 'three

1995

We advocate successfully for a transformed prison health care service.



Jack Straw – longest serving Home Secretary (1997-2001) in our 40 years.



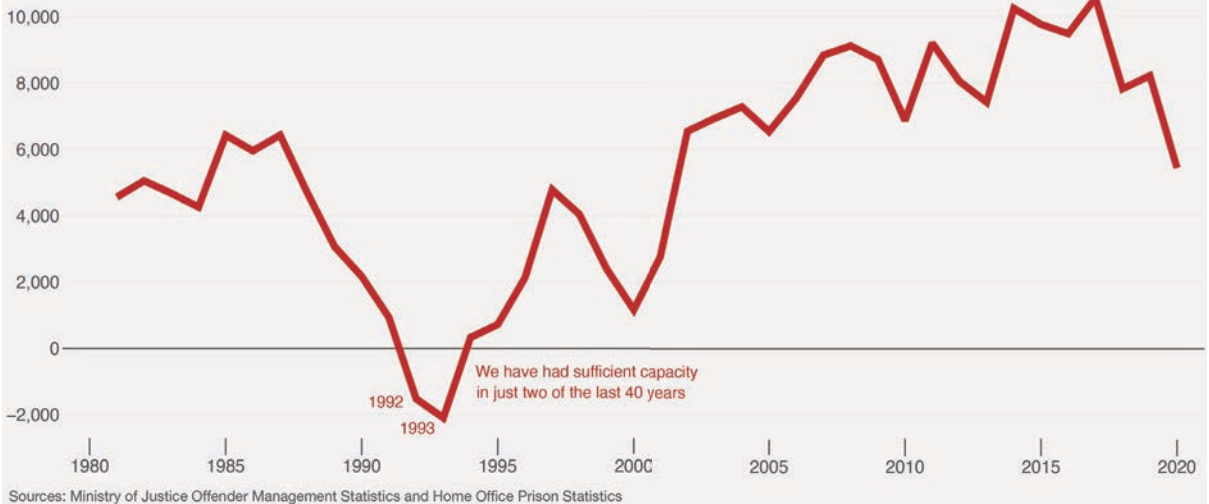
By 1999 the staff team at PRT has expanded to ten.

Prison population at 65,000, a rise of 16,500 over the past decade.



History shows that we cannot build our way out of overcrowding

— Shortfall of prison places



strikes and you're out' – and of **closing all open prisons**. PRT **speedily countered** with a paper that highlighted the international evidence against 'short sharp shock' regimes, and this contributed to the quiet abandonment of these regressive policies.

And there was other positive news, too, as the **Prison Service introduced a number of changes for which PRT had long advocated**. Adopting the measure of closeness to home, as one of the service's new performance measures, was one. There was substantial investment in prison regimes, including programmes to address offending behaviour and substance misuse. And at the end of this period, the Government finally adopted the principle that healthcare in prison should be delivered to a standard equivalent to the community outside prison, beginning a transformation in the provision of prison health. The obscene practice of chaining pregnant women prisoners in hospitals virtually up to the point they gave birth was withdrawn, following a public outcry in which we played our part. Slopping out was being brought to a close, and TVs installed in cells.

As the 1990s progressed, however, the rapid rise in imprisonment – without the money to fund this expansion – continued to put every aspect of prison life under pressure. **PRT documented the decimation of home leave** as well as the restrictions on what property prisoners were allowed, for example.

Crucially, ahead of the 1997 general election, a bidding war started between the two major political parties to appear 'tough on crime'. This caused our Chair, Jon Snow, to assert: *"There is nothing tough about talking tough on law and order... The real toughness will be shown by a quite different agenda: educating public opinion of the limited role of imprisonment, and developing a criminal justice system which aims to restore and renew those relationships which are fractured in the act of crime."*

Presciently, we campaigned vigorously against what we described as proposals to 'Americanise' British criminal justice policy. **This included the so-called 'truth in sentencing'**, where PRT challenged the claims that increasing use of imprisonment in America had been successful in reducing crime.

In 1997 Lord (Douglas) Hurd took over as PRT Chair from Jon Snow, who described his successor's *"rare sureness of touch"* and *"boldness in engaging with and leading public opinion rather than exploiting or pandering to tabloid prejudices"*.

Prison numbers were rising on an almost weekly basis. As a result, overcrowding became even more critical and the Prison Service imported HMP Weare from its former moorings off Rikers Island, New York. This was the first floating prison in England in 150 years. With much 'doubling up' in cells intended for single



occupancy, Lord Hurd's opening comments as Chair emphasised that overcrowding put other achievements of the Prison Service 'in jeopardy'.

Our report 'New Programme for Prison Reform' identified four key principles: that the criminal justice system could only play a limited role in controlling crime; there was little evidence that greater reliance on imprisonment would reduce offending; there should be greater emphasis on community penalties; and prisons should provide all possible support for people to lead crime-free lives on release.

We carried out a detailed research programme into the 'Lessons from America', while also publishing four papers on 'Achieving Prisons' to showcase the good work that took place in the UK. We called for convicted prisoners to be given the vote, and our reach steadily extended into submissions to Government about the treatment of women and of children in prison. For the first time, we highlighted a number of allegations that had been made about the abuse of imprisoned children.

Our growing focus on the position of women in prison was fuelled by the fact that in 1997 there had been more women in custody than in any year since 1905. This led us in 1998 to commission and service the independent Committee on Women's Imprisonment under the leadership of Professor Dorothy Wedderburn, former Principal of Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London. Authoritative and persistent advocacy by PRT on women in prison would follow over the next two+ decades.

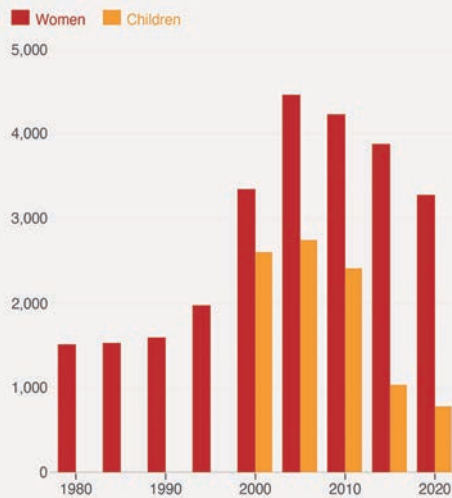
As Stephen Shaw, the charity's first Director, left us to take up his appointment as Prisons Ombudsman in November 1999, the PRT team could reflect on our first 20 years. We were clear that many aspects of the basic quality of life for prisoners had improved. But we also acknowledged that if, as our Chair Lord Hurd asserted, prison reform required a reduction in the use of prison overall, then the period between 1993 and 1998 had been a huge disappointment.

Women

It became apparent early in PRT's existence that converting a persuasive argument into actual change was far from straightforward. Forty years on, it turns out that it's a process that is never complete.

Two issues – the imprisonment and treatment of women, and children in prison – help to demonstrate the challenges PRT has faced, and what it takes to overcome them.

The number of children in prison has fallen significantly, but remains stubbornly high for women



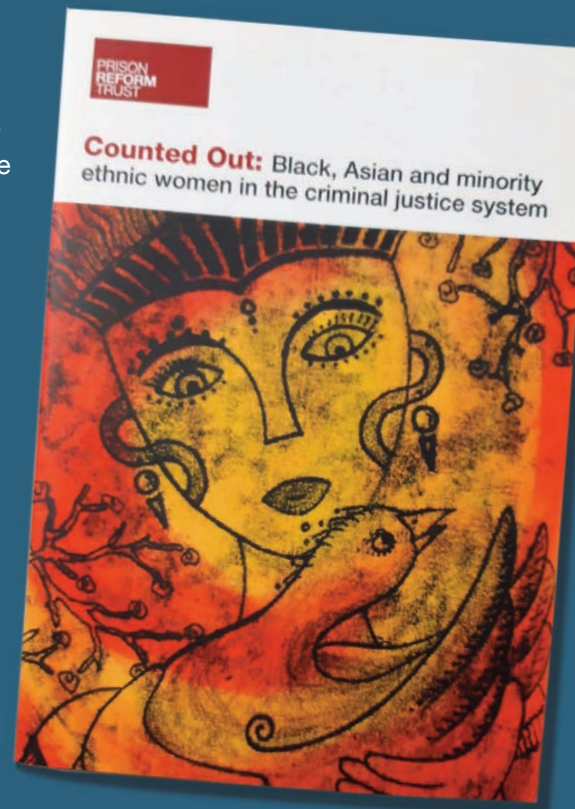
PRT's focus on the imprisonment and treatment of women began in the late '80s. But it was the decision in 1998 to commission and service the Committee on Women's Imprisonment, under the leadership of Professor Dorothy Wedderburn, which marked a step change in our advocacy.

Her Report showed that the number of women in prison had doubled in seven years. Nearly half had been abused; more than two in five had self-harmed or attempted suicide; one in five had been in care as a child; and a third had had serious problems at school. It led to radical policy change on women in the criminal justice system, but not in the allocation of funding or practice on the ground.

Over the following decade, we would publish further reports on the mental health needs of women in prison; on the situation facing women on remand; and on the economic costs of imprisoning women. In 2006 PRT was an independent member of Baroness Jean Corston's government commissioned 'Review of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system'. Her 2007 Report called for *"a distinct radically different, visibly-led, strategic, proportionate, holistic, woman-centred, integrated approach"* to women caught in the criminal justice system.

The Government's announcement of a commitment of £15.6m funding to community centres for women seemed to suggest that the battle might have been won. But numbers – and the system's attitudes – weren't shifting.

So in 2010 we launched a time-limited 'Women's Justice Taskforce'. It showed how women's imprisonment directly affected 18,000 dependent children each year and how women in prison accounted for nearly half of all instances of self-harm in prisons.



It led to a new three-year PRT programme to reduce the imprisonment of women, which would play its part in securing the first legislative foothold for women's support services in section 10 of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014.

A unique partnership with Soroptimists would underpin our report 'Transforming Lives' in 2015, which mapped criminal justice provision for women in all four nations of the UK. It paved the way for what would become a five-year programme with the same title, funded by the National Lottery. Egged on by our and many partners' indefatigable advocacy, in 2018 the Government would publish a comprehensive 'Female Offenders Strategy', much of which we were able to endorse.

But in 2021 we find ourselves publishing a detailed line-by-line progress report on that strategy because so much of it remains undone. And shoulder-to-shoulder with many others, we are arguing against a government decision to build more prison places for women, rather than to close them.

Children

In 2007 PRT launched 'Out of Trouble', a five-year programme intended to reduce the imprisonment of children in England and Wales. The immediate background for this programme was the 200% rise in the number of children in custody over the preceding 15 years.

A poll we commissioned from ICM highlighted that only one in ten members of the public thought prisons could turn children into law abiding citizens, while two in three thought of prisons as 'schools for crime'. We noted that three in four children who had been in prison reoffended within 12 months of their release, a figure which remains the case today.

Over the next five years the programme became a central part of a powerful alliance of champions, not only in the third sector but also in central and local government. We identified levers for change and developed a well-respected expert advisory group. Its members were regularly deployed to work alongside local services and the judiciary in 'high custody' areas to demonstrate ways of reducing the use of custody. And strategic work with Home Office officials led to telling changes in the use of police discretion.

We convened numerous training conferences and seminars. Seminal publications from the programme included 'Care: a stepping stone to custody' on the criminalisation of children in care (an issue to which we would return later) and the groundbreaking 'Punishing Disadvantage', by the institute for Criminal Policy Research, which profiled the needs of 6,000 children in the youth justice system and is still cited today.



This was one of the most effective programmes that PRT has run to date. During the five years of 'Out of Trouble', numbers of children in custody fell by almost half and more than 5,000 children were kept out of custody as a result. Numbers of offences by children also fell in this period, and the numbers of children in custody has continued to decline since 2012.

And yet... while the number of children in prison remains low, over half of those children now come from minority communities. Inspection reports repeatedly find institutions where the treatment of children falls catastrophically below acceptable standards. And the Government is taking through legislation that will increase the custodial sentences some children receive, and entrench the racial disparity that is only too obvious when you step through the doors of a children's prison.

So how does PRT make reform happen? These principles, guiding how we work, are set out in our strategic plan:

- Listening to and providing a voice for prisoners and their families; and promoting their role in making change happen.
- Organisational credibility, built on sound governance and finance, and exceptional colleagues with experience from multiple perspectives, knowledge and integrity.
- Knowing the limits of our strengths and expertise; and working closely with partners to have a bigger impact overall.
- Not accepting money directly from central government, to preserve our freedom to say whatever needs to be said.
- Influencing policy makers by gathering, analysing and publishing the facts; promoting good practice and celebrating success; understanding the realities but seeing the possibilities.
- Principled opportunism: seizing the chance to make progress when it's there.
- Retaining a memory for what has happened in the past; and drawing out the learning from it.

Perhaps above all, we remember that no battle is ever lost, but no victory is ever completely secured. We persist.

PRT in the new millennium

2000



From 1990 to 2001 purposeful activity only increases by 10 minutes a day.



In 2001 11,000 prisoners are held over 100 miles from home.



'Out for Good' campaign focuses public attention on homelessness after release



We spotlight the number of asylum seekers in prisons in England and Wales.



In January 2000, we welcomed the new PRT Director, Juliet Lyon. She joined us from the Trust for the Study of Adolescence where she had initiated and led the first ever specialist training for prison staff in work with young people. She came to PRT determined to reduce child imprisonment. Juliet remained our Director for the next 16 years, before being appointed by the then Lord Chancellor, Michael Gove MP, to chair the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody.

'Justice for Women: the Need for Reform', the final compelling report from Dorothy Wedderburn's Committee on Women's Imprisonment that we published in 2000, highlighted that the number of women in prison had doubled in seven years. It made eight principal recommendations, including a call for a complete review of the criminal justice system and a substantial reduction in the use of imprisonment for women. It was to herald a step change in PRT's advocacy for women in the criminal justice system over the next two decades, which we describe on page 12.

Our 2000 report, 'Troubled Inside: Responding to the Mental Health Needs of Children and Young People in Prison', was the first of a sequence of PRT 'Troubled Inside' reports and conferences; the mental health needs of women and men featured in 2003. Insights from the 'Troubled Inside' programme ultimately made a significant contribution to a major review by Government of court diversion and triage schemes.

'Sick nicks' was the phrase used by our Chair to highlight the appalling conditions in many prisons. A new PRT programme was launched to scrutinise the Prison Service's attempts to provide constructive prison regimes. Lowlights from its first report concluded that boys at Feltham Young Offenders Institution were allowed out of their cells for less than 3.5 hours a day, while purposeful activity at HMP Brixton took place for only nine hours a week.

On a more positive note, in 2001 we announced our involvement with a new two-year independent



advisory project at HMP Wandsworth, to support efforts to turn Wandsworth into a healthy community prison.

Douglas Hurd retired as Chair in 2001, but remained with PRT in a new honorary role as President, a position he continues to occupy in our 40th year. His successor as Chair, Lord Robert Fellowes, had served for nine years as Private Secretary to HM The Queen. His initial hope at PRT – that *"it can only be a matter of time before we turn the tide"* of penal reform – proved optimistic. The prison population started increasing rapidly once more.

In response, we published a widely publicised comprehensive study of prison overcrowding, in conjunction with the National Council of Boards of Visitors (the forerunners of today's Independent Monitoring Boards). And collaborating again – this time with The Big Issue and Nacro – PRT launched a new campaign, 'Out for Good'. Designed to focus public attention on homelessness amongst people released from prison, it also offered a series of practical recommendations on how this could be addressed.

“ I valued that PRT’s policies were based on evidence, and that integrity and a real determination to make a positive difference were obvious core values. The problems of prisons must never be hidden and PRT did a great job ensuring that uncomfortable truths had the publicity they deserved.”

Phil Wheatley CB 2003-2010 Director-General HMP Prison Service and NOMS



PRT’s ongoing focus on the plight of older prisoners included a specialist seminar with the Centre for Policy on Ageing; together, we would go on to produce a **scoping study in 2003 ‘Growing Old in Prison’**. This secured a commitment from the Health Secretary to develop a health policy for older people, including consideration of how to address their resettlement needs. PRT continued to press this case, with a series of reports in the years that followed articulating experiences and needs. In 2020, the Government would finally announce its intention to publish a strategy for older prisoners.

The invitation to PRT in 2002 to assume the secretariat role for the recently re-instated **All-Party Parliamentary Penal Affairs Group** was a significant acknowledgement of the Trust’s central place in penal affairs. It is a role we have maintained into our 40th year. The recently ennobled Lord Robin Corbett chaired the group for ten years until his death in 2012, when an award to celebrate charities supporting the reintegration of prisoners into local communities was established in his memory. Originally administered by PRT, it is now maintained by the Corbett Foundation.

Lord Robin Corbett chaired the Parliamentary Penal Affairs group for ten years

2003 was the first full year of **SmartJustice**, promoting community sentences and solutions to crime. Well-received initiatives from SmartJustice included the 2004 Revolving Door Tours, a visual representation using street theatre and public art to highlight the reconviction of offenders of all ages within two years of leaving prison. In 2006, SmartJustice released the findings of a national ICM opinion poll – produced in conjunction with Mirror Group newspapers – which showed little support for imprisonment as a solution for petty crimes.

Prompted by SmartJustice, PRT developed a strong partnership with the Women’s Institute (WI) in calling for the diversion of people with

2003



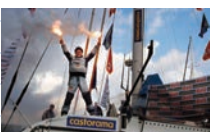
Seminar and PRT scoping study on 'Growing Old in Prison'.



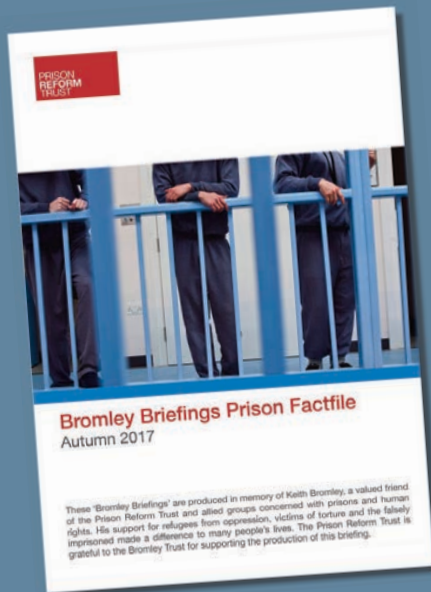
European Court rules against blanket ban on prisoners' right to vote.



PRT report reveals widespread racism experienced by minority ethnic prison staff.



PRT launches its SmartJustice for Women campaign via popular media.



Our longstanding publication 'Prison Factfile' was converted into the 'Bromley Briefings' in 2005. The annual 'Bromley Briefings' continue to be supported by The Bromley Trust and are produced in memory of Keith ('Toby') Bromley, a much valued friend of the PRT.

Keith had transformed his 150-year-old family shoemaking business Russell & Bromley into a fashion brand and combined this with support for refugees from oppression, victims of torture and the falsely imprisoned, in ways that have made a difference to many people's lives.

On his own visits to prisons, Keith had produced what he modestly called 'naive notes' and these provided some of the inspiration for our own evolution of the Factfiles. In the past 16 years of their production, the 'Bromley Briefings' have grown to be the PRT flagship publication and now achieve more than 7,500 downloads and a print run of 2,500 each year.

mental health needs from custody into treatment and care. This was inspired by the tragic death by suicide in HMP Manchester of a schizophrenic young man, the son of a WI member. The 2008 WI AGM provided a mandate for the creation of the Care Not Custody Coalition in 2011, eventually including 35 separate charities and member organisations, all calling for radical reform. **The collaborative work that PRT fostered with the national WI at that time laid strong foundations:** in 2021, there are seven established WI branches in women's prisons across the UK.

In 2004 we collaborated with the Prison Service and London Probation Service to produce a good practice guide, 'Going the Distance'. It aimed to **assist work with the previously much neglected group of foreign national prisoners;** their number had trebled in the previous decade. In response, the Prime Minister committed the government to increase the support for foreign national co-ordinators. In that same year, at the annual conference of RESPECT – the support network for black and minority ethnic prison staff – PRT launched a report, revealing the widespread racism experienced by minority ethnic staff members. The report also noted a particular focus on covert and structural racism. **Our work supported RESPECT as it improved its provision;** the Prison Service also invited us to **join the group** overseeing the introduction of mediation in response to racial incidents.

It was also in 2005 that the European Court ruled that a blanket ban on British prisoners exercising the right to vote was contrary to the European Convention on Human Rights. This was in response to a petition from serving prisoner John Hirst and **PRT provided expert evidence in support** of his case. Back in 1989, our then Director had given John a copy of the PRT publication 'Prison Rules: A Working Guide', which he referenced in 2001 when bringing this action. But the political resistance to changing UK law has proved implacable. To this day, the vast majority of prisoners are denied the right to vote.

'Out of Trouble', the programme that PRT launched in 2007, was aimed at reducing child



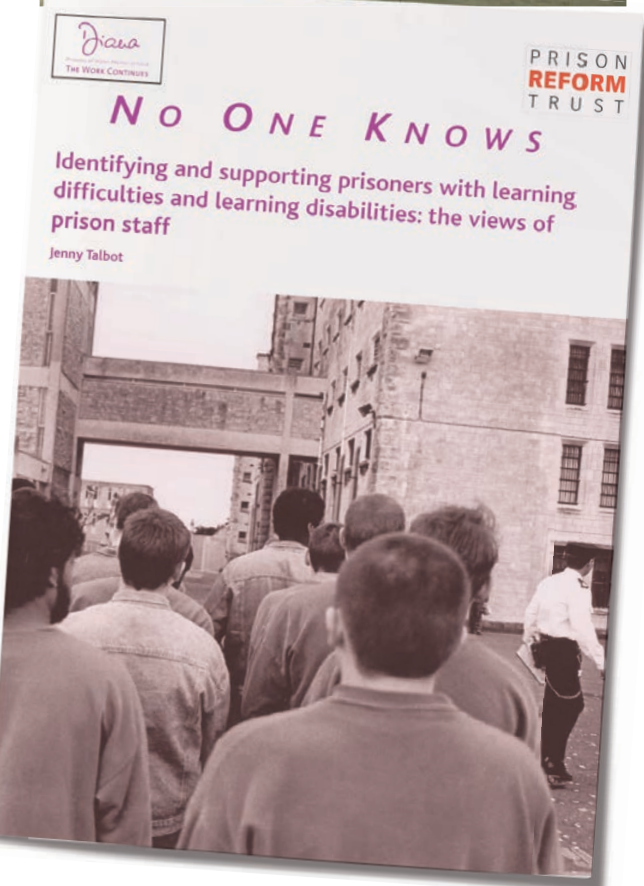
and youth imprisonment in England and Wales over the next five years. Judged by its outcomes, this is **one of the most effective programmes that PRT has run to date**. Read more on page 13.

On a similar theme, together with the (then) Rainer Foundation and Nacro we lobbied hard on the issue of distinctive treatment for 18 to 20 year olds in prison. The Government's decision to defer plans to abolish separate regimes for young adults was welcomed. In 2008, this underpinned the establishment by the Barrow Cadbury Trust of the **Transition to Adulthood (T2A) Alliance**; **PRT remains a key member**. The Alliance has brought to the fore the neurological evidence which supports the case for a different approach to young adults in the criminal justice system – a case strongly supported by Lord Harris's 2015 review of the deaths of young adults in custody, and latterly by the Justice Select Committee.

In December 2007 the Government announced its intention to build three new super-size TITAN prisons, each with a capacity of 2,500 prisoners – 1,000 more than the largest existing prisons. PRT issued a briefing paper that branded this idea '*a gigantic mistake*', highlighting that small prisons scored higher than larger institutions on a variety of measures used by prison inspectors. After opposition from a broad-based coalition, the proposal was quietly dropped in 2009.

Our 2008 report 'No One Knows: Prisoners' Voices' drew on interviews with over 150 **prisoners with learning disabilities or difficulties, to highlight how they were treated by the criminal justice system**. It started a programme of work that led to practical change in 80% of prisons, and a partnership with the Magistrates Association that included the development of specialist training. The programme had a profound influence on the 2009 government-commissioned review by Lord (Keith) Bradley, which would in turn pioneer a nationwide investment to reform the treatment of this vulnerable group.

The PRT senior team worked collaboratively with the think tank New Economics Foundation on its



2006

Government
commissioned Corston
Review of vulnerable
women in the CJS
includes PRT.



'Unlocking Value'
report shows value of
community sentences
for women.



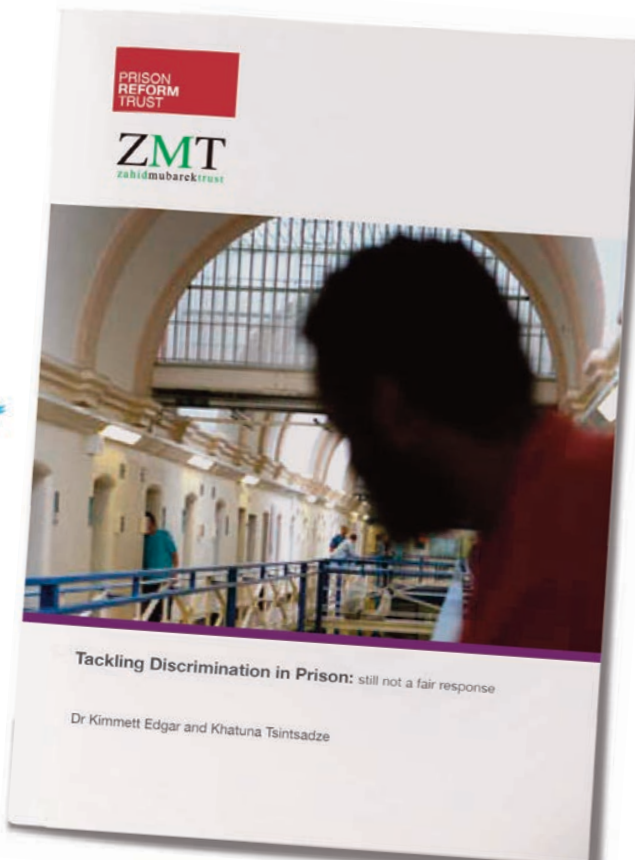
PRT supports
super-complaint to
Ofcom on cost of
prison payphones.



Dame Jo Williams
appointed as our first
woman Chair in
September 2008.



Decade sees
significant growth
in stature and
size for PRT.



2008 report 'Unlocking Value', to demonstrate the value of community sentences for the great majority of women. We were delighted when this case received some acknowledgement, with the Government's commitment of £15.6m to community centres for women, in response to the Corston Review recommendations.

PRT supported the National Consumer Council in a super-complaint to Ofcom about the excessive cost of payphones in prisons in June 2008. Ofcom found in our favour and reform followed, including an undertaking that BT would in future conduct annual reviews of costs. This was a significant achievement – one from which prisoners benefit to this day.

The PRT briefing published in 2010, 'A Fair Response', captured fieldwork undertaken with prisoners from black and minority ethnic backgrounds in four prisons. It made powerful recommendations about how they believed the prison complaints systems, in response to racist incidents, could become better trusted and utilised. As with so many issues, our challenge was to sustain the momentum. In 2017, PRT returned to this in partnership with the Zahid Mubarek Trust, publishing – with deliberate emphasis – a joint report entitled 'Tackling Discrimination in Prison: still not a fair response'. That report showed that prisoners had a 1 in 100 chance of having a discrimination complaint against a member of staff upheld. The battle continues to get a complaints system that commands the trust of all prisoners.

This was a decade in which we saw PRT grow significantly in stature and size. Our expenditure of £363k in 2000 had grown to £1.15m by 2010. We now combined our constant mission to hold Ministers and the Prison Service to account for the treatment of prisoners with an impressive ability to influence strategic policy issues, in particular the imprisonment of women and children. Some things in prisons had certainly improved. But the decade had also witnessed the introduction of highly punitive sentencing legislation. The resulting explosion in the number of people serving much longer in prison would dominate PRT's focus in the decade to follow.

Our fourth decade – the 2010s

2010



'Unjust Deserts' published – our report challenging indefinite imprisonment for public protection.

The new Justice Secretary, Ken Clarke, was astonished at the growth in the prison population in the two decades since he had been Home Secretary. Following the 2010 general election, we pressed the new Coalition Government – of which he was a member – for a rethink on penal policy. In an unprecedented move, Clarke committed to reducing numbers in prison by 3,000 in four years.

We published our report 'Unjust Deserts', which drew upon evidence from the PRT advice service to focus on people serving indefinite imprisonment for public protection (IPP), a sentence created in 2003. Influenced by the report, the Government would abolish this iniquitous punishment in 2012, but that provided no comfort for those already subjected to it. In 2021 PRT reported that 2,233 people were still in prison on IPP sentences; 9 out of 10 of these were past their tariff expiry dates. A further 1,206 people were back in prison, having been recalled on licence in the community.



PRT opposition helps ensure Chris Grayling's 'ban on books' is short-lived.

Crossbench life peer Lord (Harry) Woolf succeeded Dame Jo Williams as our Chair in March 2011. Lord Woolf had already featured prominently in the PRT story, first through his Review after the 1990 Strangeways prison riot. Subsequently, he had served as Master of the Rolls and then as Lord Chief Justice.



Three-year PRT programme launches, aimed at reducing the imprisonment of women

In 2012 we launched our next initiative, a three-year programme to reduce the imprisonment of women, which had almost trebled since 1993. It would help to secure the first legislative foothold for women's support services in section 10 of the Offender Rehabilitation Act 2014, and lead to the publication of 'Transforming Lives' the following year. This landmark PRT report, based on evidence collected by the Sorooptimists, mapped criminal justice provision for women in all four nations of the UK. Read more on page 12.



'Time Well Spent' starts the active citizenship and volunteering programme in prisons across England and Wales.



There was a noticeable change in the tone of penal policy following the appointment of Chris Grayling MP as Justice Secretary and the series of 'tough justice' reforms he implemented. Vigorous opposition from PRT and others to his ban on books being sent into prisons ensured the sanction was short-lived.

In 2012 we published 'Out for Good: Taking responsibility for resettlement', which identified effective ways for prison staff to enable prisoners to own decisions that affect their resettlement. In 2017, following the untimely death of our charismatic treasurer, Andrew Fleming-Williams, his widow and friends raised funds for a follow-up report 'Lessons for the Future'. It drew on learning from a PRT colleague embedded in the day-to-day work of HMP Brixton.

In 2013, with INQUEST, PRT persuaded the government to commission an independent review (the Harris Review) into the deaths of young adults in custody. This followed the publication of our joint report 'Fatally Flawed'. In other successful partnerships that year we helped to secure amendments to the Crime and Courts Act 2013 on pre-sentence restorative justice. This enshrined restorative justice in legislation for the first time and also ensured that the draft Care Bill would include a duty to assess the social care needs of prisoners.

We helped secure a commitment from the Secretaries of State for Health and Justice to establish from 2014 a network of liaison and diversion schemes across police stations and courts. This meant that people with mental health issues or learning disabilities could more often be diverted into health and social care and, where that was not appropriate, that information about their needs would go with them from court or police station to prison. This initiative followed the 2009 proposals contained in Lord (Keith) Bradley's report. By March 2020, with the constant prompting and encouragement of the Care not Custody coalition convened by PRT and the WI in 2011, and led by Keith Bradley, coverage of liaison and diversion schemes in England reached 100%.

2015 was a tumultuous year for prisons and people in prison. Unprecedentedly severe cuts to staffing in the two previous years contributed to sharp rises in violence, and disorder. The widespread use of new psychoactive substances was of particular concern. Political rhetoric from both the Prime Minister, David Cameron MP, and his new Justice Secretary,

2013



PRT twitter account launches in 2014 and by 2021 has 36,000+ followers.



Death rates in prison hit all time high and will rise by 50% by end of the decade.



First ever grant from the National Lottery enables PRT to extend our women's programme.



'Deep Custody' review gives 20+ recommendations on how segregation in prisons should be reformed.



Michael Gove MP, emphasised the need to reform prisons, and in 2016 the Government announced a £1.3 billion programme to build 10,000 'new for old' prison places. Four years later, just 206 of those spaces would have been delivered.

Our first ever grant from the National Lottery allowed PRT to continue our women's programme for a further three years, later extended to five. We renamed it 'Transforming Lives' in tribute to the report of the same name, which had helped pave the way for the Lottery's involvement. In June 2018, we welcomed publication of the Government's 'Female Offender Strategy' – a long-term objective of our programme – and celebrated that it contained a commitment to our core objective of reducing the number of women in prison.

We also published in 2015 an in-depth review of the use of segregation in prisons, 'Deep Custody', which made more than 20 practical but profound recommendations on how segregation should be reformed. Our research had revealed, among many other things, that two in five prisoners interviewed acknowledged that they had deliberately engineered a move to segregation to avoid violence and indiscipline on the wings or to force the prison to transfer them.

In 2016 we published the results of a year-long Care Review – commissioned by PRT and chaired by Lord (Herbert) Laming – into the criminalisation of looked after children. It showed that they were over-represented by a factor of six in the population of children in the youth justice system. Two years later a major recommendation of the review was implemented when, with our help, the Government produced a national protocol to reduce the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care.

Meanwhile there were changes at the top of PRT. Early in the year James Timpson replaced Lord Woolf as our Chair. James is Chief Executive of Timpson, the retailer that specialises in shoe repairs, key cutting, photo processing, dry cleaning and much more, and has for many years trained and employed prisoners before and after release.



“ The PRT is well-established as a constructive, informed and respected voice on criminal justice matters. Even where we disagreed – and as Justice Secretary I received my fair share of criticism from it – I greatly valued the PRT's thoughtful contribution to trying to deliver an effective and humane system. ”

David Gauke

2018-2019 Secretary of State for Justice and Lord Chancellor



With the smooth handover of Chair of trustees achieved, four months later Juliet Lyon retired and was replaced as Director by **Peter Dawson**, who had worked alongside her as **Deputy Director for the previous 15 months**. As a Home Office civil servant in the 1990s, Peter had collaborated closely with Stephen Shaw. He subsequently governed two prisons and worked for a private sector provider before joining the Prison Reform Trust.

November 2017 marked the creation of a new role: Head of Prisoner Engagement. This built on PRT's long history of listening to prisoners, for example in the long running series of Active Citizen workshops in individual prisons. It is designed to deepen our ability to make their expertise available through the channels of influence so carefully nurtured in the decades since our foundation. **The Prisoner Policy Network (PPN) we created as the central element of this change now has nearly 1,000 members**, the overwhelming majority of them serving prisoners. It has provided the evidence and ideas for a range of reports, as well as specific responses to policy consultations and draft operational instructions.

“we created a new role: Head of Prisoner Engagement ...”

A new team of David Gauke MP and Rory Stewart MP was appointed as Justice Secretary and Prisons Minister in January 2018. A concerted effort to make more use of home detention curfews provided some respite from the rise in the prison population, and the new Ministers showed a refreshing willingness to talk about some measures to reduce the demand for prisons, in particular on the issue of short prison sentences, which we described as ‘futile’. In a speech shortly before he departed as a casualty of the Brexit furore in summer 2019, **David Gauke was to borrow PRT's historic call for SmartJustice**, and bravely hinted at the need to look at sentence inflation – the process by which the same people and the same crimes have gradually received much harsher punishment. Average sentence



2016



PRT decamps to Canary Wharf for six weeks while Northburgh Street is refurbished pro bono by 30 different companies.



Assaults on prisoners and staff in 2019 are the highest ever recorded.



Prisoner podcasts launched with Prison Radio Association – the 'Secret Life of Prison' – downloaded more than 20,000 times.



Start of 'Building Futures', funded by the NLCF, to improve the experience of people serving the very longest sentences.

lengths for Crown Court cases had increased from under three years to nearly five years in a decade.

We also welcomed the announcement that in-cell telephony would be rolled out to at least half of the prison estate. At the same time, **PRT continued to press for the introduction of controlled internet access** and the significant relaxation in rules governing, and at times restricting, the release of prisoners on temporary licence.

We worked throughout 2018 and beyond to hold Government to account on its decision to issue an incapacitant spray (PAVA) to prison officers. More positively, the introduction of protected dedicated time for officers to act as key workers for named prisoners chimed with the messages from our Prisoner Policy Network (PPN) about the importance of individual relationships.

Nick Hardwick, Chair of the Parole Board, had been forced to resign in March 2018 after a successful legal challenge to the proposed release of John Worboys from prison. We spoke strongly in defence both of the outgoing Chair and the independence of the Parole Board, which the Justice Secretary's action plainly undermined. Those decisions still reverberate, with multiple overlapping reviews of the Board and its role in the years that have followed.

At the close of the year **we commented on the potentially bewildering number of policy commitments in respect of penal policy** – we counted 278 in barely three years – and the absence of any apparent commitment to deliver on them.

We remained specifically concerned about the plight of prisoners on indefinite detention for public protection (IPP). **We have continued to publish research highlighting the plight of people caught in the IPP trap**, most recently 'No life, no freedom, no future' which focused on prisoners recalled under IPP sentences. In late 2019 we set up the **Independent**



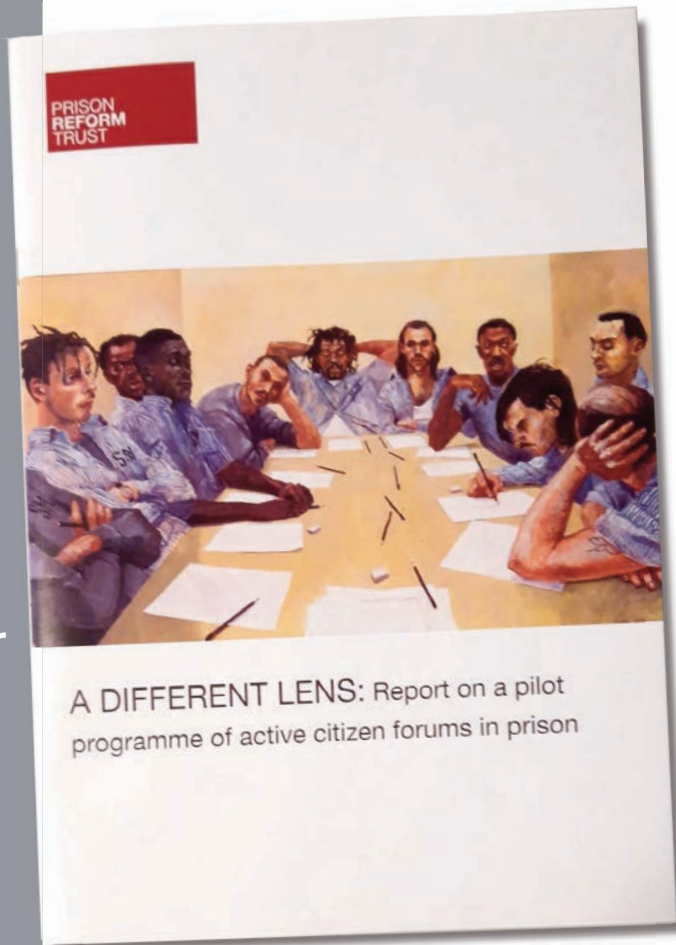
Commission into the Experience of Victims and Long-Term Prisoners (ICEVLP) under the chairmanship of Bishop James Jones, former Bishop of Liverpool, Bishop to HM Prisons and Chair of the Hillsborough Independent Panel inquiry. Our intention is to prompt a more measured and better-informed public and political debate about how the most serious crime is punished.

At the end of 2019, all at PRT were shocked and saddened by the terrorist attack at Fishmongers' Hall that resulted in the deaths of three young people, two of them already dedicated to the cause of penal reform. Three of our colleagues were present at the event, organised by Learning Together, an outstanding organisation and close ally.

Our five-year programme, 'Building Futures' began in January 2020. Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, it is examining the experience of people serving the very longest sentences, and their families.

“ Having been in prison for a long time and working now in criminal justice, I have seen the revolving door of imprisonment first-hand. Being invited to become a trustee was a big deal for me. It matters when people believe in you. Prison Reform Trust stands for the vital changes that we need to make for a better society. ”

Junior Smart OBE
PRT trustee



In a sign of our changing approach, **the programme's objectives will be largely determined by what prisoners living through those sentences identify to us** as their priorities; they themselves play a central role in the advocacy that comes from it.

PRT's 40th year was dominated by the Covid-19 emergency. We quickly adapted the Trust's plans for 2020 to devote our energies to listening to the people living through this ghastly experience. Whilst the initial prediction of a possible 3,500 deaths in prison thankfully proved wide of the mark, **we found the Government's reaction shockingly inadequate**. Its 'solution' was to restrict almost all prisoners permanently to their cells, in conditions that amounted to solitary confinement. In partnership with the Howard League, we threatened the Government with Judicial Review in an attempt to achieve a more humane response; its response to the threat of legal action proved wholly inadequate and led to the early conditional release of just 262 prisoners.

In June 2020 we launched CAPPTIVE (Covid-19 Action Prison Project: Tracking Innovation, Valuing Experience), our whole charity approach to listen to prisoners, their families, prison staff and others to build a picture of how prisons were responding to the pandemic. To date **CAPPTIVE has produced three rapid review reports**, providing a voice for those who might not otherwise be heard.

The Black Lives Matter movement presented a profound challenge to all in the criminal justice world. Writing in the Winter 2021 Bromley Briefings, Beverley Thompson, former National Race and Equalities Adviser to the Prison Service, wrote that there was a time when the Service led the way in its practical actions to tackle race discrimination, but it is clear that other priorities have gradually taken over. The problems have not gone away and **it is time the Prison Service put race equality back at the top of its agenda**.

Looking to the future

As ‘PRT The first 40 years’ goes to press, for well over a year most prisoners have spent almost all of every day locked in a cell. Yet the politics of prisons stay only too familiar, as politicians compete to appear ‘tough on crime’. The fundamental challenges of too many people in an inadequate estate, serving sentences that destroy hope, all remain.

So for PRT, the virtues this short history has described – principled, informed, persistent advocacy – have never been in greater demand. We are fortunate in the exceptional quality and eclectic mix of our colleagues and our trustees. So many good people have passed through the charity’s doors in 40 years that it would have been invidious to single out individuals – but they have all made change happen.

The same is true of those who support us. Whether their contribution is quiet encouragement or financial backing, PRT supporters are characterised by loyalty to the cause and a care for the

underdog. Everything PRT does, and the growth in its influence over four decades, has been made possible because so many individuals and organisations have stood behind us.

So what does the future hold? We shall certainly remain engaged on many of the policy issues that have recurred throughout our history. We will continue to remind the politicians and the policy makers about the evidence they have overlooked or the promises they have forgotten. The dramatic change in the make-up of the prison population, with so many people now serving sentences that would have seemed unthinkable when PRT was founded, will still deserve our particular attention.

But perhaps our greatest challenge is to continue to adapt our advocacy to give more power, access and influence to the people who know most about prisons – the people who live in them. PRT has always involved prisoners in its work – innovating in our own research, and highlighting the best and bravest practice in prisons. Over a third of the staff team, including half of the senior team, now has personal experience of having lived in prison. We know that prisoners will lead us unerringly both to the problems that matter most and, more often than not, to their solution.

Giving lived expertise the place it deserves – at the heart of policy making – requires humility and generosity on our part within PRT. But we can already see that its value is better understood in the corridors of power. Turning that realisation into ‘business as usual’ is a radical ambition worthy of our founders’ vision.

Peter Dawson
Director



“ I congratulate the Prison Reform Trust on its 40th anniversary. What it has achieved already is remarkable. Yet the challenges faced by the charity are still immense. I know it will strive to meet them. I wish it every success in doing so. ”

The Rt Hon Lord Woolf of Barnes, CH
“a proud Honorary President!”

“ Your service is exceptional. I have spent many years in prison and you always have supported me when requesting Prison Service Instructions and other general information. Your Bromley Briefings are like the ‘pulse’ at the heart of the CJ/prison system. ”

“ After months of banging my head against the pettiness, incompetence and buck-passing bureaucracy of prison life, it was a relief just to know that someone serious and connected wanted to listen. Seeing my contributions to Prisoner Policy Network reports appear in print gave me a sense of agency and value. Heaven knows, progress in prisons is slow. But at least no one in authority could pretend they didn’t know what the problems on the ground in prison were actually like. Thank you, PRT, and Happy 40th Birthday. ”

How you can support our work

The Prison Reform Trust values and needs support from people who share our aims of achieving a just, humane and effective prison system in the UK. To maintain independence and flexibility we do not accept government funding and rely on voluntary donations.

The charity needs unrestricted (core) funding to underpin the running of the organisation, enabling our unique advocacy work to take place. Your supportive backing in our 40th year will help ensure that the Prison Reform Trust can remain a key part of the framework of civic society over the next decades. We can continue to pro-actively demonstrate our concern for the rights and wellbeing of a group that many would prefer to ignore.

You can support our work by:

Becoming a Prison Reform Champion by pledging a major gift to the Prison Reform Trust.

Making a one-off donation to the Prison Reform Trust – you can do this via bank transfer, online, by debit/credit card over the phone or by cheque.

Leaving a legacy to the Prison Reform Trust in your Will. This will help us reform our prisons and work towards a better penal system for the next 40 years and beyond.

Please visit our website to sign up or donate online:
www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/GetInvolved/Donate

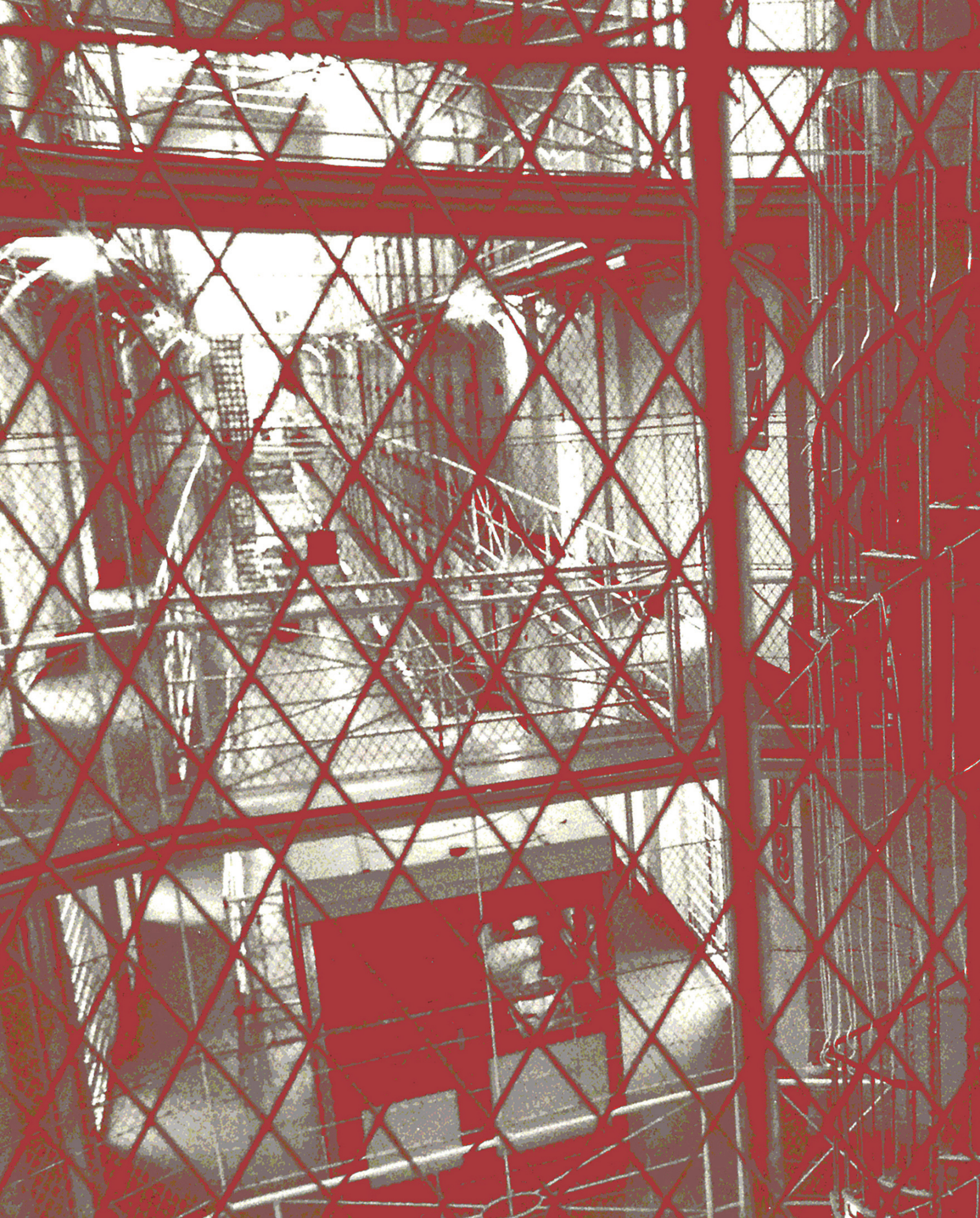
If you’d like to find out more:

charlotte.story@prisonreformtrust.org.uk
or telephone 020 7689 7731.

If you’d like to send a cheque, please send it to Charlotte Story, Development Manager, Prison Reform Trust, 15 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0JR.

Thank you for considering supporting the Prison Reform Trust. For updates on our work you can follow us on Twitter @PRTuk and sign up for our newsletter:
www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/GetInvolved/Newsletter

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