

PAP NEWS ISSUE 16 2014

Hello again from **PAP News**. The Penal Affairs Panel of the Unitarians sends you some news of current issues in criminal justice, Human Rights and in prisons.

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1 Secretary of State must appeal detention of 'incompetent' patient The patient was taken from her mother's house and detained in hospital under Section 2 of the Mental Health Act 1983. Her mother used her right to discharge her but this was blocked by the medical officer. Weeks later the mother's role as 'nearest relative' was removed by the County Court. Eventually, the ECHR criticised the British Mental Health system and found a breach of Article 5 – the patient had no right to take proceedings to a court challenging detention. Where the patient is not competent, the Secretary of State for Health should refer the case to a court for review. See <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-127107>

2 Whole Life Sentences without Review Breach Article 3 However serious the crime, the state cannot 'slam the cell door and throw away the key'. The UK has about 40 'whole life' prisoners whom the Secretary of State for Justice has announced will never be released. Three such prisoners appealed to the ECHR who, after looking at criminal justice systems around the world, found that such a sentence without the possibility of review is 'grossly disproportionate' and amounts to 'inhuman... or degrading treatment or punishment'. Every life prisoner should know what he or she must do to meet conditions of release and when review might be sought. See <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-122664>

3 Deaths in Prisons Highest for Six Years The Howard League has announced that deaths in UK prisons in 2013 rose to 199 of which 70 were suicides. Frances Crook, the Chief Executive, said "Each death in custody is a tragedy and almost all of them are preventable. The responsibility for an increase in the number of people who take their own lives in prison lies squarely with those who advocate putting behind bars more and more people who do not need to be there." Moreover, the four murders in prisons in 2013 was the highest figure in 15 years. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-25801336>

4 Prisons Incentives Scheme Hardened In November, the new incentives and earned privileges scheme announced by the Secretary of State for Justice last July came into force in prisons in England and Wales. It was announced as to remove many existing luxuries. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/.../major-shake-up-to-prisoner-incentive...>

5 Complaints Rising of Poor Food in UK Prisons The rising number of complaints from prisoners is drawing attention to what is alleged to be the deterioration of food standards in many prisons since the privatisation of food facilities. For a comparison of food and food standards in UK prisons with prisons in other countries, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/.../major-shake-up-to-prisoner-incentive...>

6 Increasing Detentions in Mental Hospitals Since amendments in 2007 to the Mental Health Act 1983, the numbers of persons detained under the statutory powers have risen. Ironically, it is suggested that in many hospitals, formal detentions of patients are being used to overcome the shortage of beds. The Parliamentary Health Committee is alarmed. For a discussion of the powers of detention, see <http://ukhumanrightsblog.com/2013/08/14/mental-health-detention-powers-must-be-reviewed-urgently-says-parliamentary-committee-lucy-series/>

7 Radical Overhaul of Sentencing – More Punishment The Secretary of State for Justice has announced that community penalties given as sentences must include “an element of punishment”. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/radical-overhaul-of-sentencing-continues>

8 Manchester Police Investigated for Racism The internal Standards department of Greater Manchester Police has been the subject of a complaint by the Association of Black and Asian Police Officers. It is alleged that BME officers have been suspended but then cleared of serious misconduct. The investigation is underway. See <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/greater-manchester-polices-internal-professional-6367720?>

9 Government Delays Report on Freedom of Movement As part of a series of reports on all Government departments, ‘Balance of Competence’, the issue of a report on Freedom of Movement has been delayed. It is suggested that the Home Secretary, Theresa May, has intervened because the report was too positive on the effects of immigration on the UK and has delayed the report for up to a year. See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/government-delays-eu-immigration-report-because-it-is-too-positive-8994264.html>

10 Transparency of Lobbying, etc., Bill Update About 200 charities and groups objected to the proposed provisions of the Bill, including the Unitarians, and a petition with 160,000 names was presented to the House of Lords. Well done, if you were among them. The Lords rejected the proposals restricting lobbying in the year before a General Election. The Bill has now returned to the House of Commons. Do write to your MP. See action@38degrees.org.uk

11 Simplegifts – Unitarian Social Responsibility for the Community The activities of the Mansfield Street Unitarian Chapel in Bethel Green are to be admired. Simplegifts is not only providing community lunches but is now running an after-school club for children and parents. To see a video and learn more of the work by Simplegifts, see <http://www.simplegiftsucsa.org.uk/index.html>

12 Forget-Me-Nots at Norwich celebrating Third Year Another social responsibility activity of Unitarians is enjoying success. The Forget-Me-Nots at the Octagon Chapel at Norwich are now celebrating its third year providing treatment for people with memory difficulties, including lifer prisoners in the hospital wing of HMP Norwich. See <http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/norwich/forgetmenot.htm>

13 Please Send Your News for PAP News Do you have news for publication for Unitarians and our friends? Please send it to bruce_chilton@hotmail.com