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Prisons: Investigations Reveal Homelessness Deaths on Release a Considerable Issue

In our second Learning Lessons Bulletin on post-release deaths, the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman highlight that homelessness is a considerable issue in post-release deaths. The first Learning Lessons Bulletin on post-release deaths was published in January 2023, highlighting the acute vulnerability of those being released from prison. The second bulletin in this series adds to these findings, stressing that more needs to be done to ensure that prisoners are released with suitable accommodation and support measures in place.

Key Findings to Note: Between 6 September 2021 and 31 December 2023, we started investigations into 137 post-release death investigations where we found: Just over 50% of the individuals died within the first four days of release. 72% of these deaths were drug-related. Of the 83 drug-related deaths, 20 occurred within one day of release meaning that more drug-related deaths occurred within the first day of release than any other day.

As part of our research, we did a further thematic analysis of 105 cases where the initial or final report was issued. These findings highlighted how acutely vulnerable prison leavers are, especially in the first few days after release: Homelessness was identified as a considerable issue in our research as 32% of the individuals who died within two weeks of their release were released homeless. When framed in the context of other Ministry of Justice research, it seems that prisoners who are released homeless may be overrepresented in our post-release death investigations. Those who are the most vulnerable due to experiencing mental health and substance misuse issues made up many of those released homeless. Our cases showed that some individuals were worried about being released into accommodation that might lead them back to substance misuse. "We know that prison leavers often have multiple risk factors" said Ombudsman Adrian Usher. "However, more must be done by HMPPS and community service providers to ensure that vulnerable prisoners have the right support in place so they are released with suitable accommodation and to protect them from substance misuse on release".

Minister Seeks to Sack Chair of Miscarriages of Justice Review Body (CCRC)

The justice secretary is to seek the sacking of the chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) following the publication of a review into the case of Andrew Malkinson. Shabana Mahmood said Helen Pitcher - who heads up the body responsible for investigating alleged miscarriages of justice - was "unable to fulfil her duties". An independent review published on Thursday found Mr Malkinson, who waited 20 years to be exonerated of rape, was completely failed by the key agency reviewing his case. The damning report concludes he could have been freed five years after receiving a life sentence for a 2003 rape. Mr Malkinson welcomed the news, saying Ms Pitcher had "proved herself utterly unfit to lead the CCRC". The report revealed the body's investigators and leaders failed to follow up evidence of innocence right up to 2022. The justice secretary said the findings were "sobering". "It is my firm view that Helen Pitcher is unfit to fulfil her duties as chair of the CCRC. I have therefore begun the process to seek her removal from that position," Ms Mahmood said. "My thoughts are with both Andrew Malkinson and the victim of this horrific crime." In response Mr Malkinson, who spent 17 years in jail, said he hopes "this will be followed with a complete overhaul" of the CCRC. "Ms Pitcher's discredited senior leadership team should also now go, and be replaced with people who are serious about fighting miscarriages of justice," he said. She has apologised in a statement. She is unavailable to be interviewed today for personal reasons.

Good Beer Making "Softens the Temper Cheers the Spirit and Can Get You Out of Jail

Social movement is a potential tool in solving UK prison crisis by helping ex-convicts learn new skills and readjust. It may also be a potential tool for helping solve the crisis in British prisons. A craft brewery set up to employ ex-convicts and train them in the art of ale-making has proved a success in cutting reoffending rates – and is now being hailed as a possible template for ways to ease the unprecedented overcrowding in UK jails.

Tap Social Movement in Oxford was co-founded by two former Ministry of Justice advisers, husband-and-wife team Amy Taylor and Paul Humpherson, who had become frustrated by the lack of practical help for prison-leavers, and soaring reoffending rates. "We felt we were part of a system that wasn't dealing with the structural issues that were leading to the kind of overcrowding we're seeing now," said Humpherson. "There are huge barriers for people wanting to turn their lives round after release – whether that's finding a house or employment, or even just having the self-confidence to re-engage with society – and all too often there isn't the help there for overcoming those barriers. We felt we were part of a system that wasn't dealing with the structural issues that were leading to the kind of overcrowding we're seeing now," said Humpherson.

"There are huge barriers for people wanting to turn their lives round after release – whether that's finding a house or employment, or even just having the self-confidence to re-engage with society – and all too often there isn't the help there for overcoming those barriers." The couple, along with Taylor's sister Tess, set up the brewery in an attempt to prove that businesses offering work to prison leavers could not only be part of the solution, but could become a commercial success, too. Of more than 50 prison leavers taken on by Tap since it opened in 2016, just 6% have reoffended. The equivalent national average figure is about 50%. The business has now expanded to open three bars and a bakery – all partially staffed by former convicts – to accompany the original brewery.

They are not the only company with such ambitions. A growing collection of businesses – including the Co-op, Greggs and Pret a Manger – now take on ex-offenders. James Timpson, whose key-cutting empire has been considered a model for providing employment for jail leavers, was appointed prisons minister last week. Humpherson, 37, said government incentives should be used to encourage more businesses, including smaller independent companies, to run similar schemes. "If you are leaving prison and you have a stable job with employers that genuinely care about your wellbeing, you immediately have the framework that enables you to rebuild your life," he said. "That means less crime, less victims and less money spent on prosecuting and punishing people. There are no losers. It's a no-brainer."

Rehabilitated staff, meanwhile, have gone on to work in a variety of careers, including construction, security, hospitality and car sales. Olsi Vullneteri worked at Tap as an assistant brewer for three years after serving a seven-year prison sentence for fraud. When he left the company in 2022, it was to set up his own sales business using the skills he had learned. You think you'll never be treated with respect again when you first get out [of prison]," the father of two said. "But Tap, they restored my faith. The people there get where you're from and understand you're re-learning how to be outside again. I loved every second. Especially days when we got to do the quality control tasting. I've always enjoyed a beer, but I never thought it would turn my life around."

The beer itself – including the aptly named Time Better Spent IPA – has been recognised by the Good Beer Guide, while the Inside Out stout was given a gold medal by the Society of Independent Brewers and Associates. "It's crucial to us that the product isn't a gimmick," said co-founder Tess Taylor, 33. What we've noticed is people often first buy the beer because they

want to support the social mission, but they keep buying it because it's great beer."

US Woman Freed After 43 Years in Prison for Murder She Did Not Commit

Tom McArthur, US-BBC News: Sandra Hemme was 20 years old when she was found guilty of stabbing to death library worker Patricia Jeschke from St Joseph, Missouri, in November 1980. She was given a life sentence. There was no evidence that linked her to the crime other than a confession she gave under heavy sedation in a psychiatric hospital, a review into her case found. Now 64, she is believed to have served the longest known wrongful conviction of a woman in US history according to her representatives. Her legal team at the Innocence Project said they are grateful that Ms Hemme is finally reunited with her family, and they will "continue to fight" to clear her name. While she is no longer incarcerated, her case is still being reviewed.

Circuit Court Judge Ryan Horsman's original 118-page ruling, external overturning her conviction came on 14 June. It said Ms Hemme's lawyers had clear proof of her innocence, including evidence that was not given to her defence team at the time. "This court finds that the totality of the evidence supports a finding of actual innocence," Judge Horsman concluded. The review found that local police ignored evidence that directly pointed to one of their own officers - Michael Holman - who later went to prison for another crime and died in 2015. Holman's truck was seen in the area the day of the murder, his alibi could not be corroborated, and he used Patricia Jeschke's credit card after claiming he found it in a ditch. A pair of distinctive gold earrings identified by Ms Jeschke's father were also found in Holman's home. None of this was disclosed to Ms Hemme's defence team at the time, the review said.

Ms Hemme was interrogated by police several times under the influence of antipsychotic medication and a powerful sedative after being involuntarily committed to a psychiatric hospital. She had been receiving occasional psychiatric treatment since she was 12 years old. Her responses were "monosyllabic" and she was "not totally cognisant of what was going on", court documents showed, and at times could barely hold her head up straight and was in pain from muscle spasms - a side effect of the medications. Judge Horsman's review noted that no forensic evidence linked Ms Hemme to the murder. She had no motive and there were no witnesses linking her to the crime. Sandra Hemme finally left prison on Friday 19th July 2024, and the Kansas City Star reports, that she will live with her sister. After her release she was reunited with family in a nearby park, where she hugged her sister, daughter and granddaughter. Her father had been hospitalised and was receiving palliative care this week. Her legal team said she was planning to visit him as soon as she can. Defence lawyer Sean O'Brien told the Star that she will still need help because she has spent most of her life in prison and was ineligible for social security.

Nurturing a Positive Mind-Set

Coach DazIn, Inside Time: The realm of personal transformation and growth, the power of the human mind-set reigns supreme. Mind-set is defined as the collection of beliefs, attitudes, and thoughts that shape your outlook on life. A mind-set plays a pivotal role in shaping your journey towards recovery, especially for individuals navigating addiction, trauma, and/or a troubled past. Understanding mind-set is the lens through which we perceive the world, influencing our interpretations of events, our emotional responses, and of course our behaviour. In the context of recovery, a positive mind-set is a mental state characterised by resilience, optimism, and a belief in your ability to change and grow. It is the foundation upon which the process of healing and transformation is built.

Cultivating a Positive Mind-Set: Achieving a positive mind-set is a journey that requires intention, effort, and self-awareness. Here are some strategies to help cultivate and maintain a positive mind-

set: Practice gratitude: Focusing on what you're grateful for can shift the focus from negativity to positivity. For example, writing a gratitude list. Set realistic goals: Setting achievable goals provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Keeping it simple is the key. Challenge negative thoughts: Learning to identify and challenge negative thought patterns can help reframe perspectives; as an old counsellor of mine would say, "Catch yourself thinking." Self-compassion: Treating yourself with kindness and understanding is crucial to fostering a positive self-image. Treat yourself once in a while.

The Role of Mind-Set in Recovery: For individuals on the path to recovery from addiction and trauma, cultivating a positive mind-set is transformative. Research in the field of psychology suggests that individuals with a positive mind-set are more likely to experience better outcomes in recovery, including lower rates of relapse and improved overall wellbeing. A positive recovery mind-set empowers individuals to confront their past, heal from trauma, and embrace a new way of life. By shifting their focus from limitations to possibilities, individuals in recovery can tap into their inner strengths, resilience, and determination to overcome challenges and create a brighter future for themselves. Expect at times to self-rescue.

Supporting Change and Inspiring Others: A positive mind-set not only benefits the individual but also has a ripple effect on those around them. By embodying resilience, hope, and perseverance, individuals in recovery can inspire others to embark on their own journey of transformation. Acts of courage, vulnerability, and self-improvement can serve as beacons of hope for those who may be struggling with their own demons. In a prison environment, where the weight of past mistakes and trauma can be suffocating, nurturing a positive recovery mind-set is an act of defiance against despair. By embracing the power of mind-set, prisoners can rewrite their narratives, reclaim their lives, and pave the way for a brighter, more fulfilling future beyond the confines of their current circumstances.

In Wrapping up: In the tapestry of human experience, the mind-set emerges as a potent force for change, growth, and resilience. For individuals in recovery from addiction, trauma, and a troubled past, cultivating a positive mind-set is not just a choice but also a lifeline to a better tomorrow. By harnessing the power of mind-set, individuals can transcend their circumstances, rewrite their stories, and inspire others to embark on their own journey of healing and renewal. As the saying goes, "Change your thoughts, and you change your world." May this mantra guide you on your path to recovery, empowerment, and redemption, illuminating the way towards a brighter, more positive future. Do it or don't ... it's your choice Coach Daz is a recovery coach and addiction support worker. Friends and family can contact him at [Aspiro Recovery and Resilience Coaching: darrenlinton@recoverylifecoaching.co.uk](mailto:darrenlinton@recoverylifecoaching.co.uk)

Are You Taking Inspired Action?

Jacqueline Hollows Inside Time (Prioritizing mental health alongside physical health and using diverse strategies to address the multiple factors that influence health). Do you ignore the things that life presents to you? Do you want to do better, but can't quite figure out what that looks like? Do you struggle with where to start, how to keep going, or how to finish your projects? Me too! But I've realised that life is always presenting opportunities and giving us hints about what step to take next. I call this 'taking inspired action'. It's where intuition meets productivity.

"When we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope - look for action. Then the hope will come." Greta Thunberg If you face the hurdles of procrastination, self-doubt, self-judgment, perfection, over-thinking, or the feeling that you're not ready, then this article is for you. Inspired action is about realising that you know what to do (inspiration) and how to do it (action).

What Are You ignoring? What I've noticed about inspiration is that it can be out of the blue. It might be something you know you want to be involved in or do, but the steps to get there don't appear to be available, and the things that are occurring to you don't seem to be connected. So, you must ask yourself, "What are you ignoring?" You may have wanted to always write a book, for instance, but you put yourself off, tell yourself you can't, or tell yourself you're not ready, or you don't think you know enough, or don't think people will want to listen to you. And yet you keep getting a nudge to sort out the bundles of paper or notepads you've got tucked away with all your scribbles in.

Your inspiration could come from something that has never occurred to you before, or seems completely random, so you ignore it, thinking it is irrelevant. For instance, people often ask me how I got inspired to work in prison. For the last 10 years, I've taught a wellbeing paradigm in prison and worked with hundreds of people. And yet the truth is I didn't get inspired to work in prison. It's not something I always wanted to do. It's not a system that I wanted to fix. I didn't have a clue. It all came to me in a roundabout way. It wasn't linear. I followed the steps that occurred to me along the way. I'd retrained as a life coach and thought I'd be working with high-paying executives. Then I got inspired by someone who'd been a heroin addict and in and out of prison, but had turned his life around. I started helping out in his new business. Then I found myself standing in his kitchen, sipping coffee, and talking to the people he was supporting about how life works from the inside out. The people I shared this with had insights and found an ease and resilience they didn't realise was already there.

"Inspiration on its own is just a daydream." JB Hollows - One of the reasons I present this story to you is that inspired action doesn't always have to feel like angels singing. It can just feel like the obvious next thing to do. It could be something that just keeps presenting itself to you. Life always knows what we need. *Reflection Time* I invite you to put on your favourite music, or next time you're in the gym or exercise yard allow yourself to see if there's something that keeps being offered to you that you are ignoring. (It will always be something wholesome when it is coming from inspiration). Or maybe there is a thought that nags at you? That you keep putting off? Allow the idea to have space to breathe. Play with attending to it, without attachment, without the need to make sense of it, without judgment.

If you took off the limitations, the doubt, the worry, what would be possible? Does one small step occur to you? If so, could you take that step? What would that look like? If you get a ton of thinking about why you can't take that step, then allow your mind to find a smaller step, one that's within your grasp right now. "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Lao Tzu I invite you to take action on the things that occur to you because life knows what we need. Life knows that we need to make money, socialise, and resolve problems. And yet, we don't trust life. Would you be willing to give life a chance?

Books Offer Novel Way to Counter Prison Overcrowding in the Philippines

A reading programme for prisoners in jails in the Philippines is supporting their education as well as enabling them to shorten their sentences. The initiative supported by the UN office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in the Philippines is also expected to help ease chronic overcrowding in detention centres across the Southeast Asian nation. Dave, who is one month into a six-month sentence, spends up to eight hours a day in the library of the Iligan City Jail. He's currently engrossed in a graphic novel called *El Filibusterismo*, an adaptation of a story by the revered Filipino intellectual and political activist José Rizal. "I like reading, especially historical fiction," he told UN News on a visit to the jail. "Reading is a distraction; it helps to pass the time and takes my mind off my problems. It also gives me a sense of freedom I cannot get in the jail."

Time off for good Behaviour: Reading does not only provide Dave with a release from the monotony of daily life inside this facility, it also will help him to get a reduced sentence. He is taking part in the Magbasa Tungo sa Paglaya or Read Your Way Out programme, supported by UNODC. For every 60 hours that prisoners in this jail spend reading each month, they can secure a 15-day reduction in their sentence. "This is a big advantage for me, as I love reading. The more I read, the shorter my sentence," said Dave. Working as a library assistant, he is also what is known as a reading buddy. His role is to encourage other prisoners to read and to help them choose books from the library. Between 10 and 20 prisoners borrow books on a daily basis and the hope is to increase that number to include other prisoners who are not generally attracted to reading.

The library is stocked with a selection of books, both fiction and nonfiction in English and Tagalog, the Filipino national language. There's a selection of self-help and law books, which prisoners in this jail find particularly helpful as the vast majority are in pre-trial detention awaiting their day in court. There are also religious texts, catering for both the Muslim and Christian population in the jail. The catalogue was researched in consultation with the National Library of the Philippines, which also provided training on running a library to corrections officers. Chad Diaz, the head of the training section said: "It is a perfect idea. Our mission at the National Library is to reach all people, especially marginalized groups. It is also an excellent way to build the capacity of our brothers and sisters who have been deprived of their liberty." The pilot project at Iligan City Jail was launched in April 2024 and is already making a difference, according to Jail Officer Reiaine Sulit. "It was overwhelming when we received so many books. The prisoners were so happy," she said. "I think reading brings a sense of calm to the jail."

The jail, like many detention centres in the Philippines, is severely overcrowded. There are some 550 prisoners currently accommodated in a facility designed for just 270 people. UNODC's Rafael Bareto Souza, a Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Officer, said the programme could help to reduce overcrowding in jails across the Philippines. "The main objective is the decongestion of facilities, but it has the added benefit of increasing literacy rates and educational levels as well as helping the reintegration of prisoners back into society following their incarceration."

Overcrowded Prisons: Decongesting prisons has become a key priority for the Philippines government following a shift in policy towards a more humane approach to treating prisoners. Easing the overcrowding improves the conditions for prisoners and reduces the drain on services like healthcare. The concept of reduced sentences based on reading is common in some Latin American and European countries, but "this incentive system for reducing sentences is the first in Asia," said Rafael Bareto Souza. "It's innovative and progressive and other countries in the region have expressed interest in the idea."

Human Rights Abuses in CAR Detention Centres Need Urgent Response: UN Experts

Immediate action is needed to address human rights abuses in detention centres across the Central African Republic (CAR) according to a new UN report released on Thursday. The report highlights torture of inmates, ill-treatment, arbitrary and illegal arrest and detention, malnutrition and poor healthcare. Thousands are being held in overcrowded facilities across CAR with little access to basics like food, water, sanitation and healthcare. This alarming situation is detailed in the report by the UN human rights office (OHCHR) and the UN Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). 'Crucial Opportunity' to Reform: High Commissioner Volker Türk said he was deeply troubled by the report's findings and called on national authorities to take urgent and concrete action. He noted "ongoing reforms in the penitentiary system pre-

sent a crucial opportunity for the Central African Republic to address these human rights violations." Covering the period from January to December 2023, the report lists numerous shortcomings, including non-compliance with legal custody time limits, excessive pre-trial detention and dire conditions prison conditions overall. It also notes the challenges faced by the judiciary - although it acknowledges some progress has made by the authorities. The report reveals a troubling pattern of illegal and arbitrary arrests and detentions by army and security forces in CAR with over 1,500 people affected in 2023 alone. By the end of the year, 1,749 people were in detention awaiting trial, some for nearly six years. It raises concerns that detention orders were issued without sufficient examination of whether incarceration was necessary and proportionate to the crimes many were charged with, the report highlighted.

Disease Outbreaks: Malnutrition, poor healthcare and hygiene conditions have led to disease outbreaks in prisons. The report calls for sufficient resources to meet detainees' basic needs. The report further urges authorities to respect legal time limits for detention and that pre-trial detention should be the exception, not the rule, and justified by principles of necessity and proportionality alone. Mr Türk also called for prompt and independent investigations into all cases of torture and ill-treatment and for those responsible to be held accountable. He appealed to all partners to support the Government in improving detention conditions. Both the High Commissioner and Head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza acknowledged the Government's efforts on human rights in detention. These include more frequent court sessions, the renovation and reopening of three prisons in 2023 and the recruitment of additional prison staff. In support of these efforts, they pledged continued UN assistance to the Government to enhance respect for human rights and the rule of law in CAR, particularly relating to the detention system.

Deported Cameroonian Asylum Seekers Returned to US

Human Rights Watch: Returnees Abused in Both Countries; US Breached Asylum Confidentiality. The United States government has, since May 2024, approved the return of 27 Cameroonian asylum seekers who experienced serious harm in Cameroon after their deportation from the US in 2020, a coalition of human rights groups said today. While the returns were permitted on humanitarian grounds, in part based on US asylum confidentiality violations that contributed to their harm in Cameroon, the asylum seekers had also experienced abuses in US immigration detention, including the use of excessive force, painful full-body restraints, solitary confinement, racial discrimination, and medical neglect.

In October and November 2020, amid reports of the mistreatment of Cameroonian asylum seekers in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, the administration of then-US President Donald Trump deported dozens back to Cameroon, despite the ongoing risks of danger there and the objections of advocates and members of Congress. Prior to the Cameroonians' deportations, ICE officials prevented many from accessing their luggage, which held sensitive asylum documents, leading to their discovery by Cameroonian authorities. A 2022 Human Rights Watch report documented that deported Cameroonians experienced abuses by Cameroonian authorities, including rape, torture, and other physical abuse, arbitrary detention, extortion, unfair prosecutions, restrictions on freedom of movement, and the targeting of relatives. The US Department of Homeland Security granted the 27 Cameroonians humanitarian parole, a mechanism that allows people to enter the US temporarily on humanitarian grounds. Their applications – submitted on their behalf by immigrant rights and legal groups – note that in denying them the ability to remove the documents from their bags, ICE officials violated US federal regulation 8 C.F.R. § 208.6 on asylum confidentiality. They are now permitted to remain in the US for one year. During this time, they may reapply for asylum.

US: Drug-Linked Deportations Soar Despite State Reforms

Hundreds of Thousands of Cases Cause Devastating Harm to Families, Communities: Thousands of people are being deported every year for drug offenses that in many cases no longer exist under state laws, harming and separating immigrant families. Punitive federal immigration laws separate families, destabilize communities, and terrorize non-citizens, all while overdose deaths have risen and drugs have become more potent and available. Congress should reform immigration law to give immigration judges discretion to make individualized decisions. States should ensure drug reforms apply to non-citizens as well.

(Washington, DC, July 15, 2024) – Thousands of people in the United States are being deported every year for drug offenses that in many cases no longer exist under state laws, harming and separating immigrant families, Human Rights Watch and the Drug Policy Alliance said today. The 91-page report, "Disrupt and Vilify," shows that the failure to reform disproportionately harsh federal immigration law has resulted in enormous numbers of deportations, splitting families apart, disrupting communities, and destabilizing people well-established in the US. For example, federal immigration law that treats some types of marijuana use as a deportable offense is at odds with many states' recreational marijuana laws, penalizing immigrants and non-citizens for activities that are legal for citizens at the state level. The groups found that 500,000 people whose most serious offense was for drugs were deported between 2002 and 2020.

"The uniquely American combination of the drug war and deportation machine work hand in hand to target, exclude, and punish noncitizens for minor offenses—or in some states legal activity—such as marijuana possession," said Maritza Perez Medina, director of federal affairs at the Drug Policy Alliance (DPA). "This report underscores that punitive federal drug laws separate families, destabilize communities, and terrorize non-citizens, all while overdose deaths have risen and drugs have become more potent and available. It's imperative that the US government revises federal law to match current state-based drug policy reforms to end and prevent the immense human suffering being inflicted in the name of the drug war."

Human Rights Watch and the Drug Policy Alliance interviewed 42 people affected by the deportations, including immigrants, families, and attorneys. The groups also analyzed new federal government data from 2002 to 2020 and found that 500,000 people have been deported whose most serious offense was drug-related. A previous Human Rights Watch report showed that from 2002 to 2012, 260,000 people were deported for drug-related offenses. This report updates that figure with an additional 240,000 people deported between 2013 and 2020, amounting to about one of every five deportations of immigrants with a criminal conviction during this period. Overdose numbers have drastically increased, even as the US has engaged in massive numbers of deportations over this period, underscoring the ineffectiveness of such policies and of approaches that vilify immigrants in connection with drugs.

Convictions for even the most minor drug offenses—for example, possessing a small amount of a controlled substance, including marijuana—carry devastating consequences that far outstrip the criminal sentence imposed. The groups found that between 2002 and 2020, the federal government deported at least 156,000 people whose most serious criminal offense was for drug use or possession, including over 47,000 for marijuana use or possession, even though marijuana has been legalized or decriminalized in most states. Often, the offenses that lead to deportation are decades-old or so minor they resulted in little or no prison time. Some would not be criminal offenses if committed today. "Why should parents or grandparents be deported away from children in their care for decades-old drug offenses, including offenses that would be legal today?" said Vicki Gaubeca,

associate US director for immigration and border policy at Human Rights Watch. "If drug conduct is not a crime under state law, it should not make someone deportable."

The report focuses on deportations from states with large immigrant populations that have advanced drug policy reforms, including California, Illinois, New York, and Texas, and includes cases of: 1) Refugees and US military veterans separated from their homes and families due to deportations for drug offenses; 2) Immigrants who have lived in the United States since childhood, but have been deported for drug offenses, sometimes for marijuana offenses that would be legal in their states today; 3) Immigrant women who were sexually abused by corrections officers during their imprisonment for drug offenses, in part because their abusers knew they would soon be deported; 4) Immigrants deported due to drug offenses to countries with dangerous human rights conditions.

Many of those interviewed faced automatic deportation because immigration law defines their offenses as "drug trafficking aggravated felonies," which bars them from almost all forms of immigration relief; these include several people whose convictions were for low-level offenses. In such cases, the judge is barred from considering individual factors, like evidence of US family ties, rehabilitation, military service, and other factors, and instead must order the immigrant deported. Some of those interviewed are legal permanent residents who have not been able to become citizens because they have engaged in drug conduct, including conduct that is legal in their states like working in the marijuana industry. "I'm not able to live and operate without fear because I'm not a citizen," said a lawful permanent resident in California, who was convicted for marijuana and paraphernalia possession. "I've lived here for more than 20 years now. This is my home. I have children here. I want to be a citizen, and I'm making every effort to do that. But it seems like that's not going to be possible."

There are significant racial disparities in the imposition of immigration penalties. Overall, the majority of people deported from the United States for criminal offenses are Black and Brown. Even within the category of non-citizens, Black immigrants are disproportionately impacted. More than one out of every five non-citizens facing deportation on criminal grounds before US immigration courts are Black. Black immigrants are more likely to be held in immigration detention longer and are less likely to be granted release. As the overdose crisis and immigration reform increasingly become a central focus of political debates and campaigns, the Drug Policy Alliance and Human Rights Watch emphasize the need for elected officials to show leadership by heeding the research and embracing evidence-based policies grounded in public health, safety, and human rights. "Deportation tears families apart, and the evidence is clear that despite the US deporting 2,400 people per month for a drug offense, overdose deaths have risen," said Perez Medina. "Our lawmakers must ensure that drug policy reforms prioritize public health policies to address the overdose crisis and problematic drug use. The exclusion and vilification of our immigrant neighbors is inhumane and fails to solve the issues our communities care about." The US Congress should reform immigration law to ensure immigrants with criminal convictions, including for drug offenses, are not subject to "one-size-fits-all" deportations. Instead, immigration judges should be given the discretion to make individualized decisions. As an important first step, Congress should impose a statute of limitations on deportations, so people can move beyond old offenses and get on with their lives. States, meanwhile, should ensure that reforms to reduce criminal penalties for drug offenses and facilitate treatment and health services for those struggling with substance use are designed to allow non-citizens to benefit as well. "Current and past administrations have recognized the disproportionate impact of harshly punitive drug policies on Black and Brown communities," Gaubeca said. "But through their immigration policies, Congress and the executive branch are perpetuating these harms and devastating many of these same communities."

Justice Served With a Slice of Pizza

Catherine Evans, BBC News: Justice was served extra hot when police seized a food delivery bike, then delivered the pizza. Officers from North Wales Police were on patrol when they spotted an uninsured driver on in Gwynedd. The driver's motorbike was seized and taken away on a recovery truck. Posting about the incident on Facebook, North Wales Police said the food was delivered by the officers. After finding out the driver's insurance had run out two months ago, police were keen to dish out law and (a pizza) order. They went from being officers of the peace to officers of the pizza, delivering it to the home address. North Wales Police said: "Stop check of a delivery motorbike, found to have had no insurance since May 24. SEIZED. "And yes, the food was delivered by the officers."

NGO's Call on P M to Address State Failures to Respond to and Prevent Deaths

A coalition of over 40 organisations have written to the new PM, asking him to address the lack of accountability, transparency and action on recommendations arising from deaths. INQUEST, alongside a wide-range of organisations such as Grenfell United, COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, and Liberty, are calling on the new Government to bring forward legislation to address this accountability gap and prevent future deaths. Public and corporate bodies have a duty to keep people safe from harm and protect lives. Yet every year INQUEST supports hundreds of families whose loved ones have died preventable state related deaths, often in very similar circumstances. Public inquiries, inquests, investigations and official reviews are processes which have been crucial in shining a light on failing systems and dangerous practices. They make vital recommendations that could save lives. These processes follow deaths of people in police custody/prisons, mental health settings, disasters like Grenfell and Hillsborough, as well as broader cases such as those involving NHS failures and the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is currently no framework to monitor compliance or actions taken in response. Instead, recommendations are forgotten or dismissed. This leads to yet more preventable deaths and harms. The coalition is calling on the Government to create a National Oversight Mechanism: A new independent public body responsible for monitoring recommendations arising from inquests, inquiries, official reviews and investigations into state-related deaths. A National Oversight Mechanism would: Collate recommendations and responses in a new national database - Analyse responses from public bodies and issue reports - Follow up on progress, escalate concerns and share thematic findings

Deborah Coles, Director of INQUEST, said: "We can all agree that when failures lead to preventable deaths, we must ensure that action is taken to keep people safe. Yet the preventative potential that inquiries and inquests can bring after state-related deaths is undermined by the lack of any mechanism for following up on their recommendations and action being taken. There is no central oversight in place to monitor action and progress can easily fall off the policy and political agenda, encouraging a culture of complacency. This fails bereaved people and the public interest. This new Government must act now to enact change and prevent deaths. We need a National Oversight Mechanism to address this shocking accountability gap and ensure that when recommendations are made following deaths they are not lost or left to gather dust. This would do justice to bereaved families and help protect lives."

Natasha Elcock, Chair of Grenfell United, said: "We wholeheartedly support the need for the National Oversight Mechanism. We have seen first-hand how recommendations from Grenfell have failed to be implemented. Seven years on, we now know that every single death at Grenfell could and should have been avoided. We've worked tirelessly to ensure our loved ones are remembered not for the way we were treated before the fire, but for the legacy that is created post the fire. But so little has changed. Bereaved and survivors should not have to fight to hold Government to account to ensure learning and change and that history is not repeated."

Criminal Proceedings Against Organized Sex Workers Violation of Articles 2, 3 and 8

In its decision in the case of *M. A. and Others v. France* (application no. 63664/19) the European Court of Human Rights has, by a majority, declared the applications admissible. The decision is final. The applications concerned the creation, under French criminal law, of the offence of purchasing sexual relations. According to the applicants, who engage lawfully in prostitution, the possibility of criminal proceedings being brought against clients pushes those engaged in prostitution into operating in a clandestine manner and in isolation, exposes them to greater risks for their physical integrity and lives, and affects their freedom to define how they live their private lives. They argue that, in consequence, it breaches their rights under Articles 2, 3 and 8 of the Convention.

Without ruling on the merits at this stage, the Court declared the application admissible after acknowledging that the applicants were entitled to claim to be victims, within the meaning of Article 34 of the Convention, of the alleged violation of their rights under Articles 2, 3 and 8. The decision does not prejudge the merits of the application, on which the Court will rule in a subsequent judgment. The applicants are two hundred and sixty-one men and women of various nationalities: Albanian, Algerian, Argentinian, Belgian, Brazilian, British, Bulgarian, Cameroonian, Canadian, Chinese, Columbian, Dominican, Equatorial Guinean, Ecuadorian, Spanish, French, Nigerian, Peruvian, Romanian and Venezuelan, who state that they “are habitually engaged in prostitution, in a lawful manner under the provisions of French law”. They complained about the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual relations, even between consenting adults, introduced by Law no. 2016-444 of 13 April 2016 “to strengthen the fight against the prostitution system and provide support to prostituted individuals”, and codified in Articles 611-1 and 225-12-1 of the Criminal Code. The applicants submitted witness statements to the Court, describing how their situation had deteriorated in the period since the purchase of prostitution services had been criminalised.

Complaints, procedure and composition of the Court: The application was lodged with the European Court of Human Rights on 6 December 2019. Relying on Articles 2 (right to life) and 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention of Human Rights, the applicants alleged that the French legislation criminalising the purchase of sexual relations seriously endangered the physical and mental integrity and health of individuals who, like them, engaged in prostitution. Relying on Article 8 (right to respect to private life), the applicants argued that the fact of making it a criminal offence to obtain sexual services in exchange for payment, even where this occurred between consenting adults and even in purely private places, radically encroached on the right to respect for the private life of individuals engaged in prostitution and of their clients, in so far as this included the right to personal autonomy and sexual freedom. The decision was given by a Chamber of seven judges

Ex-Police Watchdog Chief Not Guilty Of Raping Girls

Zac Sherratt & PA Media, BBC News: The former head of the police watchdog has been found not guilty of raping and molesting two 14-year-old girls 40 years ago. Michael Lockwood, 65, of Epsom, Surrey, was accused of sexually abusing the girls when he worked part-time at a leisure centre near Hull in his 20s. A jury at the Old Bailey, London, found him not guilty of all 17 charges relating to the women, who are now in their 50s. Mr Lockwood resigned from his job as director general of the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) in December 2022 after allegations first emerged. It was claimed Mr Lockwood repeatedly raped and indecently assaulted a girl in a storeroom at the leisure centre where he worked as a lifeguard in the 1980s. Following publicity about the claims,

a second woman told police he had indecently assaulted her in a male toilet and storeroom at the centre. He was accused of three rapes and six indecent assaults on the first complainant and eight indecent assaults on the second. Mr Lockwood denied any sexual activity with the first complainant and it was alleged she must have mistaken him for another lifeguard after seeing him on the news. He accepted having a relationship with the second girl, but said nothing sexual happened until she had turned 16. 'Absolutely shocked' - The first complainant said she naively thought she was in a “proper relationship” when he first kissed her, jurors heard. It was claimed Mr Lockwood indecently assaulted her as he dropped her home in his Ford Capri and repeatedly raped her in the storeroom at the leisure centre. It was alleged the second complainant’s relationship with Mr Lockwood overlapped his engagement to his university girlfriend and the alleged offences against the first woman, although the defendant denied it. It was claimed Mr Lockwood would pull her into a male toilet cubicle at the centre where he kissed and sexually touched her, later using the storeroom. Jurors heard it was “common knowledge” among fellow lifeguards who sang a nursery rhyme about them being “locked in the lavatory” together. Mr Lockwood said he was “absolutely shocked” when confronted with the allegations.

Increased profile: The jury deliberated for nearly 10 hours to find Mr Lockwood not guilty. Det Supt Craig Nicholson, from Humberside Police, said: “I would like to offer my assurance that we take all reports of sexual offences incredibly seriously and we will always thoroughly investigate.” Mr Lockwood was the first person to lead the IOPC after it replaced the Police Complaints Commission in 2018. In recent years, his public profile was heightened after the murder of Sarah Everard by a Metropolitan Police officer and riots in the wake of the fatal police shooting of Chris Kaba in London.

Prisoners Facing IDPs Not Included in Labour Government’s Sentencing Review

Prisoners facing indefinite sentences will not have their cases addressed as part of the new Labour government’s planned sentencing review, prisons minister Lord Timpson has said. The decision marks a blow for campaigners and criminal justice experts who had called for a swift end to the scandal of Imprisonment for Public Protection (IPP) sentences. The sentences were abolished in 2012, but almost 3,000 prisoners, given IPPs in the seven-year period they were in use, remain trapped under the indefinite jail terms. The last government produced an action plan to support these people to progress towards release, but many, including the original architect of the IPPs, Lord Blunkett, say this is not enough and have called for the resentencing of all prisoners serving indeterminate jail times. Speaking in the House of Lords on Wednesday, Lord Timpson said he was “well aware” of the issue and that it is of “great concern” to him, but said: “IPP prisoners are not caught in the changes that we’re putting forwards.” The minister added: “It would not be appropriate to make changes in relation to IPP prisoners, because they are a different order of public protection risk. “I’m determined to make more progress on IPP prisoners. We will build on the work done by the previous government; we worked constructively with the previous administration on sensible changes that could be made in the safest possible way for the public. Those changes were on the licence period and the action plan and we will crack on with that as a government. “Any changes that we make to the regime for that type of sentence, which has rightly been abolished, must be done while balancing the public protection risk, which we would never take lightly.” Lady Jones said: “Clearly there is an injustice that needs to be sorted as fast as possible and it was created by the last Labour Government and so it would be very appropriate for the current Labour Government to sort it out as quickly as possible.”