

PSAP News Issue 31 2019

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Here are current issues in criminal justice, Human Rights, prisons and social problems. Follow the links for fuller information.

1 Justice in trials threatened by inadequate forensics and Legal Aid The Forensic Science Regulator, Dr. Gillian Tully, has made a scathing report in her annual report for November, 2017-18. Standards of forensic science investigations have fallen to a point where experts both from the police services and from commercial sources often fail to give evidence or are doubted when they do. Cuts in legal aid are roundly criticised. The Government's own Forensic Science Service, often praised internationally, was privatised "as too expensive" in 2012. See https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/forensics-shortfalls-and-legal-aid-rates-jeopardising-trials/5069642.article?utm_source=dispatch&utm_medium=email

and for more on forensic standards see the **PSAP article** "Truth, Justice and Forensic Science" in **The Inquirer of 23 March, 2019**.

2 UK Top judge attacks Government's "austerity policies" Lady Hale, the President of the Supreme Court and the most senior judge in the UK, has voiced criticism of the benefits system and its harsh effects on families, women and minorities. The policies cause "some unusual problems for the courts." Such a statement by the leader of the judiciary is particularly unusual. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/austerity-disabled-people-families-women-supreme-court-judge-conservatives-a8719511.html>

3 Life expectancy of British people falling Actuaries to the UK pension industry have reported how life expectancy is now falling ever faster. Over a year ago it fell by two months and has fallen by six months in the last year. Whatever the causes might be, the falling trend has implications for individuals and political and financial implications for the Government's attempts to advance the retirement age. See <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/mar/07/life-expectancy-slumps-by-five-months>

4 Equality Trusts campaigns for Gender Pay equality The Adam Smith Institute may complain about the Equality Trust's "whinging about the poor" but the charity grows in influence on Government and others. It has now commenced a campaign against gender pay inequality. See <https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk>

5 Young Offenders in danger of sun deficiency diseases An inspection of HMP Feltham, a juvenile and young offenders prison in west London, by the Care Quality Commission reveals the inmates are at risk of Vitamin D deficiency for want of sunlight. This can cause rickets which leaves victims with bent and malformed legs. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/young-offenders-outside-daylight-bones-health-prison-cqc-feltham-a8825701.html>

6 Number of children using knives to kill rises 75% In 2016 there were 26 killings by under 18s using knives. In 2018 the figures rose by 75%. The use of knives in crimes not resulting in a death also rose greatly. Robbery with knives rose from 656 to 999 over the same period. The number of children under 16 treated for knife wounds rose by 93%. See https://www.aol.co.uk/news/2019/03/03/children-linked-to-fatal-stabbings-a-rises-77-in-three-years-a/?guccounter=1&guce_referrer_us=

There is a **motion before the 2019 General Assembly** from the **FOY Society** and the **PSAP** seeking more control over the sale and distribution of sharp knives. Do talk to your delegate.

7 Proposals for new divorce laws removing need for fault David Gauke MP, the Justice Secretary, has announced the Government's intention to end "the blame game" in divorce proceedings and reduce the waiting time "for reflection" to six months. See <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/apr/09/no-fault-divorce-law-coming-as-soon-as-parliamentary-time-allows>

8 Grenville fire-type cladding still covers homes for 40,000 people Two years after the fire at Grenville Tower which killed 72 people, 16,600 homes of 40,000 people are still clad with similar coverings. Most of these homes are in London and are privately-owned. Insurers are reported to be prepared to pay for replacement schemes. See <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/grenfell-tower-fire-acm-cladding-housing-a8859846.html>

9 Unqualified lawyer fined £337,000 An unqualified legal advisor who claimed to be part of a firm with qualified lawyers was instructed by a man who had been disabled by a hospital procedure. A payment was swallowed by costs. The advisor was negligent and ordered to pay, including costs, £337,000. The court decided that an unregulated and unqualified paid advisor should be required to meet the same standards of competence as a solicitor who must have insurance. See https://www.lawgazette.co.uk/news/unqualified-adviser-to-pay-337000-in-negligence-ruling/5069660.article?utm_source=

10 Dangers in DNA Testing – a growth industry DNA testing has become big business. There are worries about the use of DNA in court evidence (see **1** above) and now about DNA health evidence. Are the results correct? What are the controls on the sale or transfer to and use by others of DNA? How are the donors protected and supported? See <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/dna-testing-23andme-personal-data-a8859656.html>

11 Welcome Rucksack Project for asylum-seekers in Norwich The Octagon Unitarian Chapel's scheme is to give every new arrival, adult, teenager or child a rucksack full of essentials suited to them. Other local and faith groups are joining the collecting of items to fill them. The Chapel's new website is just opening. See <https://octagonunitarianchapel928549612.wordpress.com/>

12 Please Send Your News for PSAP News Send it with a link to fuller information to bruce_chilton@hotmail.com

Social responsibility is religion in action