

views of hardline republicans was 'banned'. At the time Dr Marisa McGlinchey, who is an assistant professor at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University in England, said she was surprised that her book *Unfinished Business: The Politics of 'Dissident' Irish Republicanism* had not been allowed into the prison.

Prison chiefs later said that from now on books will be allowed into the prison "unless they breach specific guidelines which include the promotion of, or support for terrorism/paramilitaries, or overtly promote or encourage the commission of criminal acts". They said that if concern were raised about a book these would be reviewed by a deputy governor and if a ban is upheld there would be an appeal.

Meek Mill: US Rapper Gets New Trial After 11 Years

Meek Mill said the last 11 years had been "mentally and emotionally challenging" US rapper Meek Mill has been granted a new trial on drugs and weapons charges that date back to his teenage years after a long legal battle. Three judges in Pennsylvania ruled there were credibility issues with his original trial in 2008. The rapper, who was jailed in 2017 for a minor probation violation, now campaigns for criminal justice reform. Meek Mill, whose given name is Robert Rihmeek Williams, said that the past 11 years had been "mentally and emotionally challenging" but that he was "ecstatic that justice prevailed". Jay-Z, and the owners of the New England Patriots and Philadelphia 76ers, Robert Kraft and Michael Rubin, have joined Meek Mill in creating the Reform Alliance to help people who are "trapped in the system". What is the case about? The Pennsylvania Superior Court panel ruled on that Meek Mill had the "right to be tried before an impartial judge... because the trial judge heard highly prejudicial testimony at the first trial." The sole witness in the first trial was a now discredited drugs squad officer who is no longer with the Philadelphia force. He was sentenced in 2009 to between 11 and 23 months in county prison, but was released on parole after five months and given a 10-year probation. The decision by the court means prosecutors now have to decide whether to hold a new trial or drop the case. How did he begin campaigning for justice reform? While on parole he started to make his name nationally as a rapper, signing to Rick Ross's label and releasing a string of hugely successful mixtapes. Before long he was a platinum-selling artist. But he was arrested in August 2017 for reckless driving as he rode a dirt bike during filming of a music video. Although the charges were later dropped, a judge ruled the arrest itself was a breach of his probation and he was jailed that November for up to four years - prompting an outcry from Jay-Z, Beyonce and others who campaigned to free him. He was released after five months after Pennsylvania's top court granted him bail. His group, the Reform Alliance, says it aims to "dramatically reduce the number of people who are unjustly under the control of the criminal justice system, starting with probation and parole".

Serving Prisoners Supported by MOJUK: Naweed Ali, Khobaib Hussain, Mohibur Rahman, Tahir Aziz, Roger Khan, Wang Yam, Andrew Malkinson, Michael Ross, Mark Alexander, Anis Sardar, Jamie Green, Dan Payne, Zoran Dresic, Scott Birtwistle, Jon Beere, Chedwyn Evans, Darren Waterhouse, David Norris, Brendan McConville, John Paul Wooton, John Keelan, Mohammed Niaz Khan, Abid Ashiq Hussain, Sharaz Yaqub, David Ferguson, Anthony Parsons, James Cullinane, Stephen Marsh, Graham Coutts, Royston Moore, Duane King, Leon Chapman, Tony Marshall, Anthony Jackson, David Kent, Norman Grant, Ricardo Morrison, Alex Silva, Terry Smith, Hyrone Hart, Glen Cameron, Warren Slaney, Melvyn 'Adie' McLellan, Lyndon Coles, Robert Bradley, John Twomey, Thomas G. Bourke, David E. Ferguson, Lee Mockble, George Coleman, Neil Hurley, Jaslyn Ricardo Smith, James Dowsett, Kevan & Miran Thakrar, Jordan Towers, Patrick Docherty, Brendan Dixon, Paul Bush, Alex Black, Nicholas Rose, Kevin Nunn, Peter Carine, Paul Higginson, Robert Knapp, Thomas Petch, Vincent and Sean Bradish, John Allen, Jeremy Bamber, Kevin Lane, Michael Brown, Robert Knapp, William Kenealy, Glyn Razzell, Willie Gage, Kate Keaveney, Michael Stone, Michael Attwooll, John Roden, Nick Tucker, Karl Watson, Terry Allen, Richard Southern, Jake Mawhinney, Peter Hannigan.

Miscarriages of JusticeUK (MOJUK)

22 Berners St, Birmingham B19 2DR

Tele: 0121- 507 0844 Email: mojuk@mojuk.org.uk Web: www.mojuk.org.uk

MOJUK: Newsletter 'Inside Out' No 752 (31/07/2019) - Cost £1

Surge in Youth Prison Violence Sparks Call to Close Institutions

Pamela Duncan and Aamna Mohdin, Guardian: Assaults in youth prisons in England and Wales have risen by almost two-thirds over the last five years, a Guardian analysis has found. Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults rose by 43% and assaults on staff more than doubled, prompting fears the government is failing to respond to a growing crisis in youth prisons. Assault incidents per 1,000 prisoners in youth estates, including immigration removal centres, rose from 1,908 in the year to December 2013 to 3,102 in the year to December 2018. Assaults on staff per 1,000 prisoners increased from 321 to 824, according to figures from the Ministry of Justice. Over the same period, staffing at youth offending institutes, including immigration removal centres, fell by 25%, but from March 2018 to March 2019 an extra 300 staff members were added to youth estates. In May a prisons inspectorate report on Feltham prison said self-harm, use of force and levels of violence had increased significantly since the last inspection. It said 47% of boys there spent no more than two hours a day out of their cell on weekdays and 75% on weekends.

The shadow justice secretary, Richard Burgon, said the significant increase in violence in youth custody was "extremely disturbing". He said: "Holding young people in conditions where violence against inmates and staff is routine undermines not only their rehabilitation but ends up leaving our society less safe. Instead of offering excuses, the Tories must immediately put forward an emergency plan to make the youth estate safe for staff and inmates." A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said: "We are grateful for the continued hard work of our staff. We will never tolerate violence against them and will always push for the strongest possible punishment. "The number of young people entering the youth justice system continues to decline and as a result a higher number of those in custody have complex needs and might be prone to violence. We have responded to this by putting 400 frontline staff through degree-level specialist training and have employed additional psychologists and support staff to ensure the most vulnerable children are managed appropriately."

Prison reform campaigners rejected the suggestion that the rise of assaults was down to the changing needs of young prisoners and called for these institutions to be closed down. Frances Crook, the chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform, said: "The government's own figures show that the total number of assaults recorded in prisons holding children has rocketed while the number of children held in them has fallen significantly. To suggest that this alarming statistic has anything to do with a change in the cohort is misleading. "There have always been children with complex needs and damaged backgrounds in prison. Prison has always been used to hold damaged children. The correct interpretation of the figures is that these children require skilled support rather than being locked up behind a metal door for hours on end with little intervention or care."

Carolyne Willow, the director of Article 39, a children's rights charity, said high staff turnover and children being locked in their cells for up to 23 hours a day "inevitably leads to behaviour problems". She said: "It is ridiculous for the Ministry of Justice to suggest that child prisons are failing to protect children because they have fewer children to look after. This just doesn't stand up to intelligent scrutiny. "When numbers of children in prison were sky-rocketing, the same narratives were pushed out about children being complex and troublesome. The plain truth is that children respond to appalling living conditions and lack of sustained, expert care. It's time for these institutions to be closed. They cannot be saved."

When and How to Challenge a Parole Board Decision to Release An Offender.

This guidance applies to parole decisions made on or after 22 July 2019.

Overview: The Parole Board considers certain offenders for parole (release on licence) based on their risk of harm to the public. If the Parole Board decides it is safe to release an offender the decision is provisional for 21 calendar days. During this time the decision can be challenged if someone believes either: the correct process was not followed in the review of the offender for parole - for example, important evidence was not taken into account; the decision was irrational or unreasonable - the decision cannot be justified based on the evidence of risk that was considered. However, the Parole Board considers cases carefully so it will be unusual for a decision to change. If a parole decision is not challenged within 21 calendar days it becomes final and the offender must be released. This guidance applies to all sentence types where the Parole Board considers release. It does not apply to standard determinate sentences - sentences of a fixed length where the offender is automatically released on licence at the halfway point.

Routine Decision Checks: The Secretary of State (responsible for justice) has a Reconsideration Team that checks all provisional parole decisions. If there are grounds (relevant reasons) they will ask the Parole Board to reconsider the decision. If the Parole Board accepts this request the case will be looked at again and there could be a new hearing.

Your Right To Raise Issues: The Reconsideration Team checks every parole decision, whether or not a victim asks them to. However, if you think there is a problem with the parole decision you can ask the Reconsideration Team to take this into account. The Parole Board will not reconsider a case only on the grounds that a victim does not want the offender to be released.

Speak to Your Victim Liaison Officer: If you have signed up to the Victim Contact Scheme (VCS), your victim liaison officer (VLO) can support you through the parole process. If you decide to raise issues about the parole decision they can help you to contact the Reconsideration Team and will keep you updated. Your VLO can also tell you about support services available in your local area. You might be eligible to sign up to the Victim Contact Scheme now if you don't already have a VLO. If you sign up to the scheme you might also be able to ask for additional conditions to be added to the offender's licence if you are concerned about your safety. Licence conditions control things like who the offender can contact and where they can go.

Ask for the Parole Decision Summary: When deciding if you want to challenge the decision you might find it helpful to read the Parole Board's decision summary. The summary will explain how they reached the decision, including risk factors and the offender's behaviour in custody. You can request the decision summary by email. Victims who are part of the Victim Contact Scheme should ask for the decision summary through their VLO.

How to Challenge a Decision: You have 21 calendar days from the parole decision date to challenge the decision. 1. Speak to your VLO - they can explain the process. 2. Fill in Form CPD1: Challenge a parole decision. 3. Post your form to the Reconsideration Team.

Where to Send the Form. If possible you should email your form rather than post it because the time frame to challenge a decision is just 21 days. Your VLO might be able to email the form for you. Email: reconsiderationapplications@justice.gov.uk (preferred for speed) or by post: Reconsideration Team (PPCS) HMPPS, 15th Floor, Southern House, Wellesley Road, Croydon, CR0 1XG

Confidentiality: If you decide to raise issues with the Reconsideration Team your details will be treated with confidentiality. If the team decides there are grounds to challenge the decision, this will be done in the name of the Secretary of State - the offender won't be told that you personally raised issues about their parole.

is no recognition of the extensive and diligent work we do in cases that cannot be referred.'

By the end of March 2019, the CCRC has referred a total of 663 cases to the appeal courts since it was established in 1997 (at an average rate of around 30 cases per year for 22 years). This represents an average referral rate (i.e., the proportion of total applications that are referred) of 2.75% since 1997. However for the second time this year's referral rate was less than 1% – 0.9% this year and 0.77% in 2017. So far the CCRC has looked at 24,078 cases and, of those cases referred, 439 resulted in successful appeals and 200 resulted in appeals dismissed. Over the last year the Court of Appeal heard 21 CCRC referrals, 16 were successful and five were dismissed. The CCRC remains chronically underfunded. Its chief exec Karen Kneller identified securing enough money from the Ministry of Justice as 'a major threat' to the CCRC. Its budget was just £5.2m compared to £5.45m the previous year. To put this into an historical context, the CCRC's budget was £7.5 million when it was set up in 1997 and the CCRC only had to deal with 800 new cases; whereas now it receives about 1,400 applications a year.

The CCRC identifies as the main reason for the drop-off in referrals 'the absence of the automatically linked multiple referrals' such as cases relating to child abuse or the West Midlands police serious crime squad. One increasingly dominant 'theme' of the CCRC's work is the number of asylum seeker cases it now refers (nine a year for the last two years). So far the CCRC has received 130 applications in relation to joint enterprise cases citing the landmark 2016 Jogee ruling in which the Supreme Court ruled that the courts had taken a wrong turn. The CCRC referred its first post Jogee cases (Laura Mitchell, unsuccessful) plus three other joint enterprise murder cases. The annual report also reveals a major change in the tenure and remuneration of its commissioners. The role of the commissioner is crucial in terms of protecting the CCRC's independence from and in terms of referrals. The CCRC is required by statute to have 11 commissioners (but for long periods hasn't had the full set because of its financial pressures) and three are needed to refer a case back to the Court of Appeal.

Earlier this year the CCRC appointed five new commissioners on new terms. The new arrangements have fundamentally changed the commissioners' role at the watchdog body. They used to be employed on a salary basis with pensions now they are paid a daily fee with a minimum one-day-a-week commitment. Commissioners appointed before the changes received salaries at an equivalent full time rate of £93,796 per annum now they receive a daily fee of just £358 per day. Speaking at a conference at the end of last year, a former commissioner Dr Sharon Persaud explained that when she joined in 2013 there were 8.6 full-time equivalent commissioners compared to 2.6 as she stepped down. There is now just one full time commissioner.

HMP Maghaberry Republican Prisoners Launch Library Legal Action

Connla Young, Irish News: Republican inmates in Maghaberry have launched a legal challenge for access to the prison library. Prisoners held in the jail's Roe House wing are currently not allowed to visit the library or withdraw books. Roe House holds republican inmates at the high security Co Antrim prison. Solicitor Gavin Booth, of Phoenix Law, said the right to visit the library is guaranteed under prison rules. "This provides a prima facie entitlement to be permitted to go to the library, as a minimum every prisoner must have access to books or other such items from the library. The failure to permit either of this is contrary to prison rules and is unlawful."

A spokesman for the Department of Justice said: "The DoJ does not comment on any ongoing legal matters." The latest challenge comes just weeks after the Prison Service changed its policy on books allowed into the prison. That move came after an academic book featuring

tims and their families. Lives and reputations have been tarnished, some who have given a lifetime of loyal service to this country. They all deserved so much better than to have become the innocent victims of the deceitful, cruel, manipulative Carl Beech and his shameless entourage of fantasists, chancers and believers. British justice failed the victims of the despicable Beech for far too long. Shame upon him and his enthusiastic supporters.

And then there was the so-called Exaro news service, an online band of journalists, who often crossed the line from being objective reporters to enthusiastic believers in the grand VIP conspiracy theory. During the course of Beech's trial, evidence was given concerning the role that specific members of the Exaro team played in promoting and pushing their star source's increasingly outlandish claims. Indeed, we heard in court that it was Mark Conrad, one of Exaro's reporters, who actually made the first contact with the police concerning Beech's allegations. Likewise, evidence was given in court that Conrad also taught Beech in 2014 how to mask his identity online, use the TOR web browser and to communicate via the ProtonMail encrypted email service.

Beyond Exaro, Beech also amassed a hardcore group of cheerleaders and enthusiasts, who helped to give his allegations the oxygen of publicity, especially online, although public support from Tom Watson MP, currently Labour's deputy leader, gave Beech's noxious fantasies an unwarranted boost from a politician who was no doubt hoping that the 'VIP paedo ring revelations' could inflict serious damage on the Conservative Party. Will Mr Watson now make a public apology? Beech's most outrageous lies, that Britain's ruling class was infiltrated by murderous kidnappers, torturers and paedophile rapists, found fertile ground among certain sections of the Twittersphere. Some of these 'believers' helped spread Beech's lies because it all chimed with their own prejudices and fantasies. Their Twitter hashtag was #IBelieveNick. Anyone daring to challenge this cult risked being smeared as a 'paedo apologist' – or worse.

To date, none of these online reputation vandals has been brought to justice for the serious harm they have done, although the example of the infamous 'Hampstead troll' Sabine McNeill – jailed for nine years for her vicious campaign of false allegations against innocent people – may provide some hope that at least the very worst of Beech's twisted and malicious cheerleaders might yet face prosecution. Of course, Beech was the author of this vile, vicious scam, yet he was not alone in promoting it assiduously. There are several people in professional positions whose careers should now be ended in shame, if only to protect the public from their obsessions in the future.

History is the study of the past, in order to understand the present, and so prepare for the future. Let us hope that the story of the lying, selfish, ruthless paedophile Carl Beech is a lesson none of us should ever forget.

CCRC Miscarriage Of Justice Cases Being Referred Continues to Fall

Jon Robins, Justice Gap: The miscarriage of justice watchdog referred just 13 cases back to the Court of Appeal last year, representing the second lowest number of referrals in its 22 year history. Over the first two decades the Criminal Cases Review Commission (CCRC) sent 33 cases a year on average back to the Appeal judges however the number referrals collapsed with just a dozen in 2017 and still has not recovered. Earlier in the year, the CCRC's new chair Helen Pitcher in one of her first public pronouncements said that the number of cases it referred for appeal 'while clearly very important' should 'not be the be-all-and-end-all'. In her introduction to the annual report which was published on Friday, Pitcher acknowledges 'some controversy' over her words, but adds: 'I stand by the idea that I intended to convey which was that if we are judged solely on the number of referrals we make each year, there

What Happens Next: If the Reconsideration Team believes the decision should be reconsidered they will apply to the Parole Board within 21 days. If you asked the Reconsideration Team to challenge the decision, they will let you know if they have asked the Parole Board to reconsider the case shortly after the 21 days have passed.

If the Decision is Raised with the Parole Board: If the Reconsideration Team raises the decision with the Parole Board the offender's release will be put on hold. The Board will decide whether: the original decision was correct and the release should go ahead: the case should be looked at again, which could mean there will be a new hearing. If the Board finds that the original decision was correct but that it contained an error, they might correct the error and reissue the decision.

If the Case is Looked at Again: The Parole Board will reconsider the decision by looking at the case on paper or by holding a hearing in person. However the case is reconsidered, victims will have the opportunity to make another victim statement or to resubmit their original one. Your VLO will explain the timings and help you through the process. The Parole Board could decide that: the offender must be released as originally decided: the offender must be released but with different licence conditions: the offender is recommended for a transfer to open conditions: the offender must not be released at this time

Proof Magazine / Crime And Punishment

The UK has an 'obsession with imprisonment' and needed a more considered discussion about prison reform, according to Paula Harriott of the Prison Reform Trust. As reported recently on the Justice Gap, England and Wales has the highest imprisonment rate in western Europe with more than 140,000 admissions last year. The former prisoner and head of prisoner involvement at the group was speaking last week at the launch of the latest edition of the Justice Gap's Proof hosted where campaigners expressed concerns over a Boris Johnson government clampdown on 'soft justice'. The event was part of the Byline News Club and took place at the National Union of Journalists. Other speakers included ex prison governor John Podmore, Frances Crook of the Howard League, former prisons inspector Nick Hardwick and the artist Patrick Maguire and veteran crime correspondent Duncan Campbell.

Paula Harriott argued that the current prison system wasn't fit for purpose, and the government needed to reconsider its 'morality and humanity' in developing a system that prevented people from re-offending. According to the Prison Reform Trust, almost half of adults (48%) are reconvicted of another offence within one year of release. Flagging up the seemingly inevitable appointment of Boris Johnson as prime minister, Nick Hardwick, now Professor of Criminal Justice at Royal Holloway, suggested that the 'window of opportunity' for serious criminal justice reform had closed. Hardwick was effectively sacked as chair of Parole Board following the furore over the decision to release the Worboys.

In his column for the Daily Telegraph, the Tory MP attacked 'the Leftist culture of so much of the criminal justice establishment' and, in particular, slammed parole boards for being 'slaves to political correctness'. Hardwick (right) told the audience he had taken Boris Johnson's attacks on liberals personally. 'I am liberal, I don't find that an insult,' he added. Rather than the evidence-based policies suggested by the panel, he predicted a 'lurch (back) to penal populism'. One idea that Johnson floated in a recent interview in which he attacked 'Britain's soft justice' was a new requirement for all those sentenced to 14 years or more to serve their full sentence. Such a policy would mean 'another 4,000 people a year in prison', predicted Hardwick. 'The consequences of that is not merely the 4,000 people who will be

directly affected, but the effect that will have on sentence inflation,' he continued. 'It will pull sentences longer across the board and that will push up the prison population. Do you think they're going to pay for that increase in the prison population and pump in more staff to cope with it? I don't think so.' Not only are too many people going into prison but their exit ramp was blocked off, argued John Podmore. He flagged the chaos over the failed part-privatisation of probation which took place after 'key senior people were sidelined', giving the government the opportunity, with limited resistance, to 'nail the coffin lid down' on the probation services.

Frances Crook, chief exec of the Howard League for Penal Reform, proposed a ten step plan aimed at reducing the number of people going into prisons, and maximising the number coming out. She pointed approvingly to Scotland's recent abolition of short-term prison sentences, where prison sentences have been abolished for periods of under a year. Not only would this bring parity to sentencing policy across the whole of the UK, it would 'save money' and take 'women out of the system completely'. Crook echoed Podmore's suggestion that we need to focus on community responses to crime, which have become 'too long' and are 'poorly delivered', with community sentences needing to be made 'short, simple and effective'. She argued that 'punishing' offenders didn't work and the justice system needed to refocus so that those who have committed crimes 'make amends'. A better system would be one that required an offender to take actions to 'say sorry for what they have done', focussing on compensation and apology rather than punishment.

Pipeline to Prison: Paula Harriott said that society had ignored the fact that 'imprisoning people doesn't work' and that it had been a 'total failure'. She argued for a shift of focus to the causes of crime, rather than on the people who commit crime, saying that society has 'individualised crime' in such a way that it allows us all to avoid looking at 'our collusion and culpability on why people are on a pipeline to prison'. This individualisation has meant that we don't properly focus on the fact that four out of 10 prisoners are from a black and minority ethnic background, or consider how to redress the inequality within the social, economic and political arenas that underpins offending and re-offending. That the 'othering' of prisoners means that most prison reform charities (with the exception of the Howard League) failed to become properly involved in the political conversation, 'holding back' and choosing to 'hide behind the Lobbying Act' (which has been accused of stifling campaigners). Instead of this timidity, Harriott called for reform groups to be 'courageous', to 'talk about the causes of crime as a way of preventing the pipeline' and to 'involve prisoners in the debate'. The 'discrimination in the sector' means that even those supportive of prison reform are reluctant to call upon prisoners to speak for themselves, concerned that they may 'disrupt and disturb the narrative' which the organisations have established. More prisoner voices would emphasise their humanity and add persuasive force to the arguments for reform. Flagging up the prospect of a Boris Johnson-led government with a sustained attack on 'soft justice', Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform charity, added ominously: 'Be afraid, be very afraid.'

The Greatest Celebration We Can Make of Legal Aid is To Commit To It'

Will Bordell, Justice Gap: launch of the Justice Alliance's Legal Aid Matters, celebrating 70 years of legal aid. The shadow justice secretary Richard Burgon MP pledged that a Labour government would restore 'all of early legal help' in its first week in government at a Justice Alliance event to celebrate the 70th anniversary of legal aid. Richard Burgon described Lord Willy Bach's report on access to justice as 'our guiding star'. 'The greatest celebration that we can make of legal aid is to commit to it,' he said. Burgon was joined in Parliament by speakers including Andy Slaughter MP and the Secret Barrister (whose words were read by Hammersmith and

perhaps misguidedly, believed the claims that he'd made to the police to be the truth. They decided that, beyond reasonable doubt, he was a liar, a fantasist and a fraudster.

Beech could have entered a guilty plea. He could have spared some of his victims being forced to defend themselves in the witness box. He could have saved a substantial amount of public money being wasted during the trial – that is in addition to the more than two million pounds of public money already blown during Operation Midland, which was set up to investigate his lies and grandiose fantasies. He could have done the decent thing, but he didn't. He chose to maintain a grotesque charade in which he posed as the 'victim' – a role that he has been playing for years.

However, it is also important to point out that Beech (and others of his ilk) has been enabled in his grotesque falsehoods and deceptions by police and prosecutors, who were far too ready to believe even the most bizarre and unlikely of allegations. Who can forget the Met's Detective Superintendent Kenny McDonald proclaiming to the world in December 2014 that: "Nick [their pseudonym for Beech] has been spoken to by experienced officers from the child abuse team and from the murder investigation team and they and I believe that what Nick is saying is credible and true, hence why we are pursuing the allegations that he has made."

By September of the following year, the Met was left desperately trying to row back from one of the most damaging and expensive fiascos in modern policing history. Arguably, the lasting damage will be to public confidence in a police team that was so easily duped by liar Beech, who would lead them on, what was dubbed during his trial as, 'a merry dance.'

I believe that the sheer extent of the Beech deception was made possible only because of bad political and ideological decisions. Sir Keir Starmer, in his role as the Director of Public Prosecutions during the period 2008-2013, was an enthusiastic proponent of the 'you will be believed' dogma, as was his successor, Alison Saunders. This approach effectively discouraged police officers from investigating allegations of sexual offences in an even-handed way. It pre-empted proper detective work and reversed the burden of proof in sexual offences cases. Police often preferred to pass cases with little, if any, concrete evidence onto the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), content to let prosecutors authorise charges and then leave it to juries to guess who might be telling the truth. In particularly emotive trials – such as those for alleged rape or child abuse – this approach of charging with little, if any, real evidence was a recipe for wrongful convictions and miscarriages of justice.

In any sane world, Beech's fantastic claims about a 'murderous paedophile prime minister' and a group of ruthless, brutal paedophiles, including senior military men of impeccable reputation, would have been given short shrift. However, in the febrile atmosphere that surrounded the multiple allegations made against the late Jimmy Savile, no-one wanted the role of the boy who called out the obvious deception in the legend of 'The Emperor's New Clothes'. So Beech was left free to continue weaving his vast web of lies.

Yet, it was not just the police and CPS who indulged Beech's vile fantasies. Certain sections of the national media were only too keen to jump onto the 'VIP paedo' scandal bandwagon. Lengthy features were churned out that gave unwarranted credence to the lies of Beech and others, such as 'Darren' (another warped fantasist, now utterly discredited). It is to be hoped at least some of the authors of this tosh now feel suitably humbled by the total destruction in court of Beech's house of cards.

As Beech returns to his miserable prison cell – a convicted sex offender, a convicted perverter of the course of justice and a convicted fraudster – no doubt he will continue to see himself as the main victim in this disaster of his own making. During the week I sat in court watching him, I saw no evidence whatsoever that he had a shred of empathy for his many vic-

described only as the dregs of society, people who think nothing of trashing the careers, indeed lives, of committed, hard working professionals for their own nefarious, utterly selfish ends. But what I listened to at Newcastle Crown Court during Beech's trial has exposed a monster to surpass even those treacherous, greedy fantasists. Each time during the trial that the judge afforded us a break, I felt the need to take a shower, in a bid to cleanse myself of the wretched, sordid details I'd just heard.

Already proven to be a 'devious paedophile' himself at an earlier trial, Beech pleaded not guilty to twelve charges of perverting the course of justice after dragging the names of a host of totally innocent figures, comprising politicians and senior military officers, into his depraved, degenerate world, all in a bid for both financial recompense and also to assume some sort of heroic-figure status for himself. No doubt, had he succeeded in his imposture, a 'misery memoir' book and profitable lecture tours would quickly have followed. The thought is enough to turn the stomach of even the most experienced hack.

It's not within the scope of this blog to detail all the sordid, depraved activities of Carl Beech over the past few years but I am able to state with certainty that one wouldn't need a degree in psychology, having watched him in the witness box delivering his 'evidence', to come to the conclusion Beech is ostensibly in an advanced state of sociopathy. Just suppose he had been traumatically abused as a child and had opened up about it, as he persistently claimed, and was then hauled into a court of law on the charge of lying through his teeth: adding insult to injury would be an understatement. Surely the man would have been hopping mad.

On the flip side, as has now been proven, if he were making claims in a court of law that were nothing more than the province of fantasy in extremis, you'd expect the person in the dock to be highly emotional when giving his 'evidence', knowing it all to be a pack of lies which would wreck careers, potentially lives, of innocent men. Yet, Beech stood and delivered his testimony with barely a hint of any emotion. No wonder they say it's the sociopaths and the psychopaths who are most likely to deceive the lie detector test. On this evidence, Beech would certainly have done so!

This much is now certain: Carl Beech, disgraced ex-nurse and NHS executive – and a former school governor – is a convicted sexual abuser of children. He entered guilty pleas at his earlier trial (he could have hardly done otherwise), so there can be no rational doubt about his sordid offences. He collected a vile library of child abuse images (some of them in category 'A', the worst category imaginable). He amassed videos of horrendous child abuse, the titles of which alone are enough to sicken any decent person. He spied on his neighbours' children and covertly photographed them. And he betrayed the trust placed in every adult by secretly filming a friend of his own young son using the lavatory, while he was visiting the Beech family home. Who knows where his sickening fantasies would have taken him next, had he not been caught up in the web of his own making?

At his trial in Newcastle, however, Beech asked the jury to believe that, despite the evidence of his own sexually warped nature and the plethora of lies he had admitted spinning over a period of years, that he himself was the real victim in all this. He maintained his claims to have been sexually and physically abused by a long list of men, many distinguished soldiers or politicians, as part of a so-called 'VIP paedophile ring'. He continued to claim that he had witnessed young boys being raped and even murdered, regardless of the extensive police investigations that had exploded each and every one of his bizarre assertions.

In the end, it was a unanimous jury who found Beech guilty as charged. Its members had heard his 'evidence', as well as the testimony of the prosecution witnesses, and they reached their verdicts.

Those twelve men and women in the jury box rejected the defence case that Beech genuinely,

Fulham Law Centre's director, Sue James) at an event to launch Legal Aid Matters. The pamphlet tells the story of 70 legal aid cases that have pushed the law forward in areas as diverse as homelessness, sex discrimination, immigration and inquests. Legal aid was formally introduced in 1949 at a time of 'real austerity and post-war financial ruin', as Greg Foxsmith, veteran criminal defence lawyer and chair of the evening's discussion, explained.

Introducing the pamphlet, housing lawyer Simon Mullings described how Justice Alliance's aim was to 'bang the drum for legal aid as a crucial pillar of the welfare state'. The collection of cases contained within the pamphlet, he said, reads 'very much like a collection of folk tales'. He continued: 'Imagine if these cases were not taken. Imagine if the principles outlined by these cases were not argued. Imagine if development of the law was purely advanced by those who could afford to do so. The devastating news of the closure of Lambeth Law Centre reminds us that, actually, there's nothing counterfactual in contemplating the absence of legal aid. Behind these cases already lies an absence of the cases that never happened at all.' These thoughts were echoed in the pamphlet's foreword, in which Lady Hale emphasised that historic advances in the law 'might not have been achieved had it not been for the availability of legal aid.' Encouraging a renewal of awareness of just how vital legal aid is for the whole of society, the Secret Barrister called on those in Parliament to engage with the issue more seriously. 'For far too many MPs,' commented the Secret Barrister, 'legal aid has always been and will always be something that affects other people. The assumption underlying decades of attacks on access to justice is that legal aid isn't something that politicians will ever need. Miscarriages of justice don't happen to people like them. The criminal justice system doesn't chew up and spit out people like them.'

Pride for the NHS, apathy for justice: Several speakers recalled the pride on display at celebrations of the NHS's 70th anniversary last year, with Richard Burgon remembering seeing placards quoting Aneurin Bevan: 'No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a sick person is denied medical aid because of lack of means.' 'I think that quote could be applied to legal aid,' Burgon reflected. 'No society can legitimately call itself civilised if a person is denied access to justice because of lack of means. When people can't afford to defend their rights, they're not worth the paper their written on. The rule of law and equality before the law collapses.'

Jonathan Black, president of the London Criminal Courts Solicitors' Association, pointed out the Ministry of Justice had let the anniversary go by without mention. 'I looked on the MoJ website, looked on the Legal Aid Agency website, looked at Twitter feeds: not a single mention of this anniversary, no sense of pride from the Ministry of Justice or the Legal Aid Agency, no sense of history from its own department. They need not be ashamed of the fact that they're providing legal aid.' According to Black, the oft-repeated boast 'that £1.6 billion is spent on legal aid, a quarter of the Ministry of Justice budget' is empty rhetoric. 'Only 25% of the budget is spent on providing access to justice to people who are often involuntarily brought into the system,' he argued. 'No politician would ever boast that 25% of the NHS budget was spent on patient care.'

LASPO: Legal aid turned on its head: The 2013 LASPO (Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act) cuts inevitably came in for criticism. 'LASPO didn't just cut legal aid,' Hammersmith MP Andy Slaughter told the audience. 'It turned it on its head – from an inclusive system of access to justice to an exclusive one. All of this affects individuals in a profound way, but it does a lot more than that. It changes the behaviour of the state because whether you're an immigration officer or a benefits assessor or a homelessness review officer, you know there's no effective power of review – and don't tell me that doesn't change the way those decisions that are made.' He added: 'I think it goes a stage beyond that because

we've had hand in hand with this an attack on civil liberties and human rights in this country. We still have the Human Rights Act, but believe me that the ERG will put us on notice: once they've got rid of the European Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights will be next.' Cris McCurley, head of international family law at Ben Hoare Bell Solicitors, expressed similar concerns: 'When LASPO first happened, it felt like the political climate of the early 80s. But now the climate is starting to feel more like the 30s than the 80s. With Trump in the White House and Johnson soon in No. 10, we have never needed human rights and the rule of law more than we need it now – and it's never been more under threat.'

Talking about his personal and professional experience of legal aid in the asylum system, Kaweh Beheshtizadeh said that he had learned that 'the system isn't there to protect them; the system is there to refuse their cases.' Beheshtizadeh came to the UK as an asylum seeker from Kurdistan in 2004 and was named Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year for 2017 in the immigration and asylum category. He explained: 'When I came to the UK, I was amazed that we had these two marks of civilisation: the NHS and legal aid. Any attack on those is an attack on civilisation.'

Carol Storer, current interim director of Legal Action Group and former director of the Legal Aid Practitioners' Group, focused on the need to continue to campaign and engage with the government's consultations and reviews of LASPO: 'Many of us have responded to consultations pre-LASPO, post-LASPO, pre-post-implementation, post-post-implementation. Yet here we are again. Too many people are receiving no advice on life-changing events. They may receive limited help at a late stage, but in a democratic country, it is vital that people can receive assistance when they have a problem.'

Legal aid for bereaved families: 'Where is justice?' Talking movingly about her family's experience of the legal aid system, Marcia Rigg asked: 'Where is justice?' Rigg's brother, Sean, died in police custody in 2008. Following an intrusive legal aid means-testing process, his family was forced to pay £21,000 to help pay for legal representation to find out how and why he died. The inquest eventually took place four years later, in 2012. 'Why should any family have to pay the state to find out how their loved one died in their custody? It's completely unfair.' At the end of the day,' Rigg said, 'my family was completely let down by the state – and that should never happen. My case is not isolated. This happens to hundreds and hundreds of families. There's no way that we could have acted on our own without legal representation.' All of the state bodies, Rigg explained, had 'a sea of legal advisers funded by unlimited funds by the public purse. They were funded, but my family were not. Thank God that we had legal representation. Without that, we would not have been able to expose the reality.' She described how the means-testing forms required all of Sean's family members to give details of 'what jewellery we had under the floorboards.' When she first saw the forms, she says she 'just wanted to screw it up and throw it in the bin – we were so angry.'

Director of INQUEST Deborah Coles explained how inequality of arms is par for the course in the inquest system. 'Where families are represented,' she said, 'there is far more robust scrutiny. Every review and public inquiry that has considered this issue over the past 20 years have recommended that this injustice be addressed. Government has failed spectacularly to confront the reality of the uneven playing field that exists and the voices of bereaved people. INQUEST is currently campaigning for bereaved families to be granted legal aid automatically following a state-related death. 'Without funded representation, families are denied their voice and meaningful participation in the processes of investigation, learning and accountability. This is not what justice looks like. Families are denied opportunities to interrogate the facts and ensure that harmful practices are brought to light. Legal aid for inquests is a lifeline for bereaved people.'

ing an additional review for July. It was the latter review that led to the urgent notification being issued. Feltham A is on the same site as Feltham B, which holds young adults aged 18 to 21. The urgent notification was issued solely with respect to Feltham A, which holds up to 180 teenagers. In April, after an outbreak of violence that resulted in more a dozen prison officers being treated in hospital, campaigners called for the institution to be closed.

Prosecuting Carl Beech – Just the Start

Well, it's over. What should be seen as one of the most significant criminal prosecutions of the decade has finally ended with the conviction of Carl Beech, aka 'Nick', on twelve charges of perverting the course of justice and one of fraud. He has been found guilty as charged by a jury of his peers and now faces the prospect of what should be a very substantial sentence of imprisonment, given the utmost seriousness of his vile offences.

In fact, there can't be many more heinous crimes than deliberately and falsely accusing innocent people of torture, rape and child murder. Yet, this is what Carl Beech – aka 'Carl Survivor', aka 'Lucy Samuels', aka 'Sam Williams', aka 'Carl Andersson', aka 'Oskar Andersson', aka 'Samuel Karlsson' – has done repeatedly in recent years, in a cruel attempt to get his grasping hands on a substantial tranche of compensation money to which he had absolutely no entitlement. The fraud conviction related to the £22,000 he fraudulently claimed from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA), ostensibly to pay for professional counselling, which he immediately squandered on a luxury Ford Mustang Convertible car.

At length, in court one at Newcastle Crown Court, Beech's ludicrous, cruel claims have been revealed to be what they are. His despicable attempt to ride the historical sexual abuse gravy train has at long last hit the buffers. His trial exposed him to the world for what he really is: a loathsome liar obsessed with the topic of the abuse of children, a calculating fraudster and a man who is devoid of any form of moral compass. Utterly self-centred, to the point that he even attempted to throw his ex-wife and teenage son to the wolves, in a bid to blame them for some of his own vile, criminal, sexual perversions.

As someone who has become an active campaigner against the 'you will be believed' cult, and its close partner in encouraging crime, the compensation culture, which fuels the bogus sexual abuse industry by rewarding the most outrageous liars and fraudsters with sizeable cash payouts, I felt that I had a moral duty to attend the latter stages of the Beech trial in person. I wanted to see the man for myself – in the flesh – and to listen to the damning closing speech given by the prosecutor, Tony Badenoch QC.

I also took note of the valiant efforts of Beech's counsel, Collingwood Thompson QC, to try to salvage something for his client. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the material he had to work with, the end result was hardly in doubt. Even in his own evidence, Beech had repeatedly been compelled to admit to having lied and lied again. Mr Thompson did his best to defend the indefensible, but it should be clear that no-one, other than Beech himself, is responsible for his own public annihilation. Moreover, I wanted to hear for myself – and to tweet to the wider world – the key points of the judge's summing up and his directions to the jury. His Honour Sir James Goss QC was scrupulously fair in summarising the evidence that the jury had heard. In the end, as he rightly remarked, the whole case turned on one pivotal issue: that someone was lying. And, having heard details of the thorough police investigation into Beech and his plethora of lies and deceptions and aliases, the members of the jury reached their verdicts: Beech guilty on every single count.

I thought I'd experienced it all during the past seven years, since I myself was targeted by a couple of unscrupulous, lying chancers. Indeed, during this time, I've come across what can be

and in practice many RUI suspects are kept in complete ignorance as to their case's progression. Individuals – who may well be completely innocent of any crime – are forced to put their lives on hold in complete darkness, not knowing when their nightmare will end. The Law Society's proposed solution to the RUI problem is a central register of all RUI cases with an associated rule that any cases which are unresolved still months from a suspect's initial release be brought to court for the delay to be explained. This appears to be a dramatic first step, which will require further funding that we are told is not available. A more sensible solution would be to enforce the guidance set out by the NPCC back in January 2019, which sets out the following:

Once a suspect has been released, investigations must have a documented supervisory review at least every 30 days until the investigation has been completed and a disposal actioned. The supervisor will be responsible for reviewing and setting the post custody investigation EFD's. (High priority where safeguarding may be an issue – Sgt review every 10 days) At each review the Investigating Officer must ensure the victim, suspect and their legal advisor where applicable is provided with an update on the progress of the investigation. Subsequent reviews by an Inspector at 3 months and Superintendent at 6 months will ensure RUI suspects will be subject to appropriate review and management supervision. Inspectors and Superintendents will need to satisfy themselves that RUI cases are being managed expeditiously and is further investigation is appropriate. Whilst the NPCC provide this guidance, its status remains 'suggested good practice' and, in my experience, is not followed. The current situation is that whilst the 2017 changes to police bail were meant to end the injustice of people being kept in legal limbo for months on end as they waited for police to decide what to do, the fact is that the opposite has happened. This is a national scandal that is getting worse every day.

Minister Urged to Intervene Over Feltham Youth Jail Violence

Haroon Siddique, Guardian: Urgent intervention is needed at Feltham young offender institution, the chief inspector of prisons has warned, after a review uncovered rocketing levels of violence and self-harm. Peter Clarke said the inspection of Feltham A, the west London unit for boys aged 15 to 18, had identified an "extraordinary" decline in safety and care for inmates. As a result he has invoked the rarely-used urgent notification process, which requires the justice secretary, David Gauke, to respond publicly within 28 days with action to improve conditions. In a letter to Gauke, published on Wednesday, among the problems Clarke highlighted were: 40% of teenagers said they had felt unsafe at some point during their stay. The number of violent incidents had risen by 45% since January, despite the number of inmates falling. The number of assaults against staff had risen by around 150% since January. The level of self-harm had tripled since the previous inspection and was 14 times higher than in January 2017. 74% of teenagers reported they had been physically restrained by staff, with more than 700 incidents in the last six months. Clarke wrote to Gauke that there had been a collapse of "any reasonable regime" which "has prevented many children from getting to education or training, delayed their access to healthcare, isolated them from meaningful human interaction and frustrated them to the point where violence and self-harm have become the means to express themselves or gain attention". He said the problems stemmed from over-reliance on "keep apart" policies, designed to prevent clashes, particularly between children from rival gangs.

Feltham has long been notorious for high levels of violence but an inspection last year found the situation had improved. However, an inspection in January this year found safety and care to have deteriorated once again and as a result the unusual step was taken of schedul-

Trials Delayed as Police Files Arrive Riddled With Errors

Fariha Karim, The Times: Tens of thousands of files are sent back to police every year by prosecutors for failing to contain vital evidence. At least a third of police files prepared for prosecutors are returned because they contain significant mistakes, such as failing to include key witness statements or evidence such as CCTV, statements from victims, or details of special measures needed for vulnerable witnesses. In the Metropolitan Police, two thirds of files are sent back, according to figures from the Crown Prosecution Service. The force insists that the situation has improved in recent months. The mistakes often lead to delays in the court process, which criminal lawyers say is unfair to victims and defendants as well as placing an additional burden on the public purse.

The latest CPS figures obtained by The Times show that 33 per cent of files had significant errors in the first quarter of 2018-19 across England and Wales. In the Met, some 61 per cent of files sent to prosecutors had major errors over the same period, rising from 58 per cent in the last quarter of 2017-18, and 53 per cent the quarter before that. About half, or 48 per cent, of files sent by City of London police also contained errors. In some forces, such as Suffolk, only about one in ten files had errors significant enough to delay the next court hearing. The figures come despite police and prosecutors being told that they must reduce such mistakes. Sir Brian Leveson, the most senior criminal judge in England and Wales until his retirement last month, stressed the importance of "getting it right first time" in his Review of Efficiency in Criminal Proceedings published four years ago.

Richard Atkinson, chairman of the Law Society's criminal law committee, said that both alleged victims and defendants were affected by the delays. He added: "The public purse suffers because you've got the cost of a court hearing, the cost of the lawyers, the cost of the CPS looking at a file once and then police look at it again and then the CPS have got to review the file again. Everyone in the system suffers." Jo Farrell, chief constable of Durham and the National Police Chiefs' Council's lead for data quality, said: "Officers strive to ensure files are completed to the highest quality. We operate in an increasingly complex world and are dealing with a greater volume of digital evidence as a result. Errors do sometimes arise but are often dealt with in the early stages between police and the CPS, and do not impact on the outcome at court." Scotland Yard said that only 37 per cent of files were returned in May, dropping from 61 per cent in June last year after a dedicated team to review and address file quality was introduced.

CPS said: "Encouraging progress is being made in some areas. The overall error rate has decreased gradually over the last year. We recognise further work is needed so joint improvement plans have been agreed between forces and their local CPS areas to focus on key issues."

G4S Made £14m Profit From Scandal-Hit Brook House Removal Centre

G4S made a gross profit of £14.3m over a six-year contract running an immigration removal centre that faced allegations of abuse against detainees, the government spending watchdog has revealed. Brook House, near Gatwick airport, was the subject of a BBC Panorama exposé in September 2017 in which it was alleged that officials mocked, abused and assaulted detainees. In March this year, the Commons home affairs committee asked the National Audit Office to investigate claims that G4S had been inaccurately reporting its activities in order to generate profits of up to 20% of revenues. The NAO found G4S made a gross profit of £14.3m from its Brook House contract between 2012 and 2018, with gross profit rates of between 10% and 20% per year.

The watchdog said 84 incidents of physical and verbal abuse identified from the Panorama footage were not classified as a contractual breach and did not lead to any significant

penalties. It said G4S's profits fell when it started to spend more on delivering the contract after the Panorama broadcast. Yvette Cooper, the chair of the home affairs committee, said: "For G4S to be making up to 20% gross profits on the Brook House contract at the same time as such awful abuse by staff against detainees was taking place is extremely troubling.

"Given that profits reduced when G4S had to increase staffing and training after the Panorama programme, this raises very serious questions about G4S's running of the centre to make higher profits whilst not having proper staffing, training, and safeguarding systems in place." She continued: "We asked the NAO to look into this contract because the Home Office would not give us complete information about it or about the way they were managing it. This report shows we were right to do so. "The NAO's findings call into serious question the Home Office's management of this sensitive contract and raise real problems about the contract itself. They are right to say how worrying it is that Home Office monitoring did not reveal the gravity of the incidents taking place at Brook House." After the Panorama programme aired, the Home Office fined G4S £2,768 – less than 0.5% of the monthly fee – for eight incidents. The Home Office now considers the contract, which was extended for two years in August 2018, to be "not fit for purpose" and is procuring a new contract to manage Brook House from 2020 to 2028.

Specialist Jails Aimed at Stopping Radicalization Underused

Jamie Grierson, *Guardia*: Jails-within-jails designed to prevent extremists from radicalising vulnerable prisoners are undersubscribed, staff at the specialist units have told officials. The separation centres were launched in 2017 to keep the most influential extremist prisoners from radicalising the broader prison population but critics have accused them of making ideologies more entrenched and discriminating against Muslims. The Ministry of Justice estimates that about 700 to 1,000 prisoners are considered a risk owing to their extremist views and as of 31 March 2019 there were 223 people in custody in Britain for terrorism-related offences.

But staff at two of the three separation centres told MoJ researchers that referral rates to the units were too low. Frankland prison and Full Sutton prison each have the capacity to hold eight prisoners, but between June 2017 and December 2018 were holding only three to six prisoners on average, the study showed. A third facility at Woodhill prison is reportedly empty. One of the reasons given for the low number of referrals was poor recording of extremism behaviours across the prison estate. "It was also thought that selection for the separation centres was quite rigid, with few prisoners meeting the criteria, especially where all alternative management strategies had been exhausted," the paper added.

Prisoners were refusing to engage or cooperate with staff, the paper said, with some being actively encouraged by their lawyers to do so and a number challenging their detention in the centre through the courts. Some prisoners refused to take part in a care plan process because they had been advised against engaging by their solicitors, while others wanted to undermine the success of the centres. Some were happy and did not want to be returned to mainstream prisons, the paper said. Staff at both Frankland and Full Sutton reported that the prisoners felt they were being discriminated against by being placed in a separation centre, particularly as all those separated were Muslim. There were some reports of the men referring to the centres as "concentration camps", "Guantánamo Bay" and "Muslim centres".

All of the prisoners during the study period were considered to be Islamist extremists. The Islamist preacher Anjem Choudary was reportedly detained in one of the centres. At the time of the study, there had been no referrals made for extreme rightwing offenders. Prisoners

in both centres all used the same legal team and were using their solicitors to compare conditions between the two centres, as well as mainstream prisons, and lodging multiple complaints over any differences established, the paper said. There were 56 complaints made at Frankland over an 18-month period and 210 at Full Sutton over nine months. More than half of the complaints at Full Sutton were made by one individual.

"Complaints tended to centre around the regime being offered and were often duplicate complaints," the paper said. "When staff provided requested activities (where appropriate), the men did not always engage, suggesting to staff this was an attempt to challenge rather than for a genuine desire to take part. As a number of the men were legally challenging their separation on to the centres, some of the resistance to engaging was perceived to stem from this." The first centre was opened in June 2017 at Frankland and the second in March 2018 at Full Sutton. Fieldwork for the study was carried out between July 2017 and December 2018. Interviews with officers and managers were conducted, as well as interviews with staff involved in the delivery of psychology, chaplaincy, education, counter-terrorism (CT) and healthcare services. The prisoners refused to take part.

Released Under Investigation (RUI): 'a National Scandal Getting Worse Every Day'

Jenny Wiltshire, Justice Gap: The Law Society's recent Justice on Trial report on the state of our criminal justice system made for depressing – if unsurprising – reading. With grim and steady certainty the report enumerated the many different ways in which years of underinvestment is ruining our justice system and unfairly destroying lives. Some of the Law Society's criticisms are well known. Concerns about the impact on justice of the cuts to legal aid are so long standing that the problem is well understood even outside the legal profession. But there are some less well established legal concerns that in my view could prove equally malign.

None more so than the impact of the new Released Under Investigation (RUI) status. RUI entered law in the Police and Crime Act 2017 as part of a package of reforms designed to prevent suspected criminals from being kept on police bail (and subject to potentially onerous conditions) for months on end. Support for the legislation was informed, in part, by the troubling case of the DJ Paul Gambaccini who was kept on bail for a year before his case was dropped. His case was not exceptional and indeed many suspects were subject to more onerous bail restrictions, for far longer.

The benefit of being on bail, however, was that the police had a bail date to work towards. If bail needed to be extended, the police would need to provide an update and justify why they needed more time. Prior to the new bail reforms, my firm already had a large number of clients who were under investigation but not on bail as it was possible to challenge the necessity of an arrest. This meant however that it was very difficult to get updates from the police, with suspects having no idea what was happening. This is why I cautioned back in 2017 that new proposals did not go far enough as, without checks being put in place, more and more people were going to end up in legal limbo. Two years on and the problems that were clear from the very beginning have become obvious to all: as RUI has replaced police bail as the police's default 'bail' option, so the length of time that criminal suspects must wait before a charging decision has got longer. Freedom of Information data obtained by my firm earlier this year shows that over 80 percent of criminal suspects are now released under investigation. At the same time, the average RUI length is now 139 days compared to the average 90 day length of police bail prior to the changes.

But there's another serious problem. Despite National Police Chief Council guidance that RUI subjects be updated of their case's status every 30 days, the new legislation does not oblige this,