

'InsideDoubt' - Start Campaigning Booklet

"As I didn't have any previous experience with Campaigning and with Miscarriages of Justice, I didn't have a particular order in which I completed tasks so I have tried to break my progress down in orderly sections, I hope this helps.

Please keep in mind that I can only speak of the work I have done and what I have learned; this may not be the way for you, however it may give you a structure and ideas of how to get started.

There are many innocent people in prison but there aren't enough "qualified hands" to help so be prepared to do as much as you can to get the case exposed."

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Index

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. You and Your Team | 2. The Prisoner |
| 3. Legal Team | 4. Case Study |
| 5. Your Website | 6. Organisations |
| 7. The Media | 8. MP Campaign |
| 9. Flyers I Stationery | 10. Events |
| 11. Prisoners who are Alone | 12. Warning |

The following is a detailed account of my personal experience.

1 | You and your Team

If possible, get a team together; trusted friends and family to help you work, understand the case, spread the word and support you.

Losing someone through a miscarriage of justice is extremely overwhelming and it can drain you emotionally and physically, particularly if it is someone close to you.

In my experience some people will try to distance themselves from you because they want to believe that the system is foolproof and always right. Don't take things personally. Though it can be very difficult not to let the rest of the world influence you, stick to your guns.

Your team doesn't need to be big, just make sure that you surround yourself with people you can trust and depend on and make sure they understand the case. Their true belief in the case will obviously strengthen their loyalty towards the prisoner and the campaign.

Your campaign is going to take time and you will need people who are prepared to go the distance. Be honest and realistic about the road ahead.

Don't ever be ashamed or scared to ask as you encounter new issues. Keep in mind the person who is inside. If you are going to be their voice on the outside you will need to keep strong and objective especially if you are going to gain credibility.

From now on you are a rock! Never doubt yourself.

You may need to obtain power of attorney from the prisoner to speak on their behalf. Try keep this limited to one person if you can; decide on a dedicated team member if you have one.

This will prevent miscommunication and will make it easier for people to work with you.

This is not to say that you won't share the work, just assign someone to act as your point of contact.

Confer with your team and exchange ideas, question each other. Try and meet regularly.

Note: Remember; 2 heads (or more) are better than one and so is a fresh pair of eyes, try not to isolate yourself.

Note: Take a rest in between working; overturning a wrongful conviction is a big piece of work and takes a long time.

2 - The Prisoner

Being convicted of a crime you haven't committed is an enormous burden to carry, some people lose everything in the space of a day. Bear in mind how the prisoner might be feeling.

Try be confident for the prisoner. Be strong and solid, use your friends and team to discuss your fears. Remind the prisoner that you believe them and that you will do all you can to change the circumstances.

Tell them that this is not uncommon and that people can and have been successful.

Be aware that the nature of the crime they were convicted of will have an impact on the prisoner's day to day life in prison; support the prisoner in maintaining their innocence.

Prisoners have much to gain by admitting to their offence; help them to not be influenced by the system.

Prisoners will be offered to take part in rehabilitation courses to address their alleged wrong behaviour.

These are not compulsory although their taking part will have an impact on their progress through the system.

Remind them that they are not guilty and that they need to consistently stick to the truth.

Note: Talk to solicitors and the organisations for more legal advice on rehabilitation courses issues.

Always involve the prisoner as much as you can, show them that they still have some control over their lives and future. They have!

Send them copies of everything you do and everything happening with their campaign; show them that they matter and that they are not forgotten.

Contact their friends and ask them to write and visit, keep in touch, remember birthdays and Christmas, none of these happens inside ...

Note: Some people may be frightened at the thought of visiting someone in prison, please bear that in mind and do not try to force people as it may make them run away, there are other ways for people to keep in touch.

Some prisoners will want to know what is happening with life on the outside, others won't, always consider their feelings and do not try to impose your way because you think it's best.

Remember that they are the people who have to cope with the isolation so always respect their wishes.

Note: Some prisoners will be on the ball and ready to fight with you; others may feel too beaten. This does not mean that you give up; it just means that you need more support for yourself on the outside.

Note: Remember that prisons have televisions and newspapers therefore anything which gets published and that is in the view of other prisoners and prison staff will have an impact on the prisoner and they will have to deal with the consequences. Always ask the prisoners for permission before you do anything.

Note: Although I was always unsuccessful, try and meet with the prison governor to explain the situation, you never know and it's always worth trying.

Remember that they are the people who have to cope with the isolation so always respect their wishes.

3 - Legal Team

Discuss and decide with the prisoner whether s/he is going to stay with the same legal team they had at trial and if so, discuss their experience in Miscarriages of Justice.

If you are going to find a new legal team, in my experience, the more concise the information you have to present a defence lawyer; the easier it will be for them to get an idea of the case and decide whether to represent the prisoner or not.

There are Law firms out there who specialise in MOJ and who are prepared to take cases on, write in for more information.

Note: Don't be deflated by rejection and keep knocking on people's doors!

Note: It can be very difficult to communicate with prisoners as prisons usually have a "volatile & unreliable" post system ... this is why obtaining power of attorney is a good idea; it will avoid a lot of duplication and save time. Also, please visit The Innocence Network UK

The Innocence Network UK (INUK) is the co-ordinating organisation for affiliated Innocence Projects based in UK universities.

Their aim is Educate to overturn and prevent the wrongful conviction of innocent people. (Under "Links", visit their website for more information)

4 - Case study

Talk to the prisoner about their case, if anyone knows they do; they are probably the only person who sat throughout the whole trial.

Gather as much as the case papers as you can and read through them as many times as you need. Read and understand the judge's summing up; this is the most important document you have as it should contain everything about the trial.

Research the case; look for things that don't "add up", try not to be bias, of course you believe they are innocent but if it helps, try and prove them guilty, it may bring out more of the evidence which shows that the conviction is unsafe. Write everything down and ask your legal team as many questions as you can think of, if you don't have one yet, there are people out there who can help, just ask.

Never feel stupid for asking!

Read up other cases (there are hundreds available online), compare issues, look for similarities, there are common patterns to miscarriages of justice, look for them.

Build up data, start putting together documents (see J4S), this will help you make sense of it all and see where "it went wrong".

Please see United Against Injustice for information on how to "present your case".

5 - Your Website

Once you are familiar with the case and the discrepancies and that you have built the documents required to put your case back in the public eye, building a webpage I website is going to be the best way for you to gather support.

Look at other sites, ask other campaigners for tips, what works, what doesn't.

What information can I put on my website:

Present the case briefly and in detail, the evidence against the Prisoner, the alibi, why you believe the prisoner is innocent, the Judge's summing up, start a petition, have a guestbook for people to keep in touch and make sure the prisoner has a space too so that they can write in and communicate with their supporters.

Have a news page to keep people informed of any developments.

Note: Please make sure you consult with your legal team or the organisations to check your site BEFORE you launch

it in case there is something on there which would be best kept out in case it could damage the future appeal of the prisoner.

This does not mean that you have something to hide, just be safe with the Law and never act without appropriate advice.

Once you are ready to launch your site, inform everyone you know so that they visit the site and start writing in, there is nothing like an empty site to make people turn away.

Note: Don't forget to put everything you do on your website, this can sometimes help put pressure on the people you are asking for help.

Make sure you have a contact page where people can write to you and don't be offended by people's questions, remember that most people have no idea that this goes on and most of the time they are trying to understand.

Note: Don't waste time on people who are only being vindictive for the sake of it, they'll soon get bored and move on to the next thing :-) and you have better things to do. Don't take things personally.

Once you start to have a list of supporters don't be frightened to ask for support, people want to help, imagine if everyone on your list brings 10 new people to the cause, your mailing list will soon start to grow.

Any ideas you have can work, sit down and make plans on how you are going to go about things.

Remember to always be objective and as "un-emotional" as you can about this, people need facts and the truth.

When someone writes to you, reply as soon as you can, stay aware that people soon move on to the next thing, grab their attention and publish as much information as you can as often as you can.

Anything to do with Miscarriages of Justice and the Justice System will interest and educate your readers; it will also help keep other cases in the news. Work together with other campaigners.

Always Be Honest and remember that you have nothing to hide.

Keep in mind that everyone has a past and just because someone has made mistakes, it does not mean they are guilty of this particular crime, in fact, it could be the reason why the Prisoner was picked on in the first place.

The system and the police have a tendency to use people's vulnerabilities against them and character assassination is a powerful tool with Jurors.

Use your website to tell people what happens to the prisoner in prison, don't be scared to speak up for them.

Once you are satisfied with your site, start to copy it onto other public medium such as MySpace, Facebook, Bebo, NowPublic, etc.

Please see under "Links", the more you can put your case out there the more chances you have of being noticed and you will be surprised of how many other people are doing the same.

Note: As much as you can, always ask the prisoner to contribute, this is the tool which is going to help you raise their profile and awareness of their case.

Make them feel involved in what happens with their campaign.

6 - Organisations

There are some excellent organisations out there (see Links) so please contact them and use them, no one minds and in my experience, as long as people see you help yourself, they will always have time for you.

(Remember that no one is going to run your campaign for you ...)

Make sure to read through what the agencies offer and what they have available on their websites so that you don't waste people's time, always be patient.

A lot of people have written articles on MOJ and these can be very helpful in your research, try spend time reading these before you ask questions.

Ask the organisations and other campaigners to link you on their website and in return, link them on your website.
Note: Remember to always read people's websites before you link them and if in doubt don't link them. Also make it clear to your readers that you are not responsible for the content of other webpages / websites. Always ask people for their permission before you do anything.

Note: Try not judge other people's work or question their beliefs, whether you choose to associate with them or not is down to your personal opinion, stick to your case, everyone who fights for MOJ believes in their cause. It is down to you who is on your website.

Always let the organisations know what you are doing so that they can publish it in their news, this will help bring more publicity to your case.

Contact MOJUK (see Links) and ask them to add the prisoner and you to their mailing list; this means the Prisoner will receive a regular newsletter and you emails of any news related to miscarriages of justice, including the updates you post on their case.

Information and Communication is key.

Note: Look into other cases where people have been freed and cleared, this will help you understand the system and the damage wrong convictions cause.

There are amazing people out there who have been victims of MOJ and in my experience, they are the best people to ask.

7 - The Media

Contact the local press and inform them of your new website I campaign.

The chances are that if they followed the case, they will be interested in this new development.

The prisoner's character would have been very damaged by the press during the investigation, it's time to turn this round and show the public the other side of the coin.

Try to build a rapport with your local journalists, meet with them if you can and discuss the case and what they can do to help.

Journalists are aware of Miscarriages of Justice so try and make them see the consequences their words can have on someone. They are the people's voices.

"Bad hair day" pictures of the Prisoners may have been published during the trial, the worst they look; the better the impact, try and show other photos on your website and contribute new ones to the press.

Always make sure that journalists are going to write an unbiased article, give you a chance to make a fresh start with the case, don't be afraid to negotiate and only offer input if they are prepared to work with you, not make the situation worse.

Note: Whatever journalists say they can help, so if they are not willing to do so, move on, don't settle for just anything just to get the case back in the news. Remember that it can be very damaging for the prisoner and for you.

Spend time on the internet when you can and look for anyone you think might help you, there are many investigative journalists specialising on miscarriages of justice out there waiting to write about your case! Private Eye is always a good one.

Remember you are not alone and these people have a lot of experience.

Some journalists may want to visit the prisoner (possibly undercover), this is fine and it will help them make a better assessment of the situation, particularly the investigative ones.

Unfortunately or not, the press is very much about sensationalism, most cases are and therefore are of interest; don't let your prisoner's wrong conviction be the last thing people hear about them.

Contact your local radio station; they may want to talk to you about the case.

Not many television programs are dedicated to MOJ anymore if any; be aware of people's motives if they approach you about making a documentary on your case.

Don't just trust anyone and make sure that you will be involved every step of the way, some journalists have their own agendas and unless they are prepared to make a program to "highlight" the inadequacies of the case and you are 100%

sure of the format and have a say on the outcome, don't agree to anything.

Don't sell yourself and the Prisoner short for the sake of having something on TV, there will always be another offer, especially as your campaign gathers momentum ... it may be about sensationalism, but the bottom line is that this is about someone's life.

There may be smaller companies out there interested in MOJ, look for them.

Explore possibilities such as Media students, contact Universities and remember; if you don't ask you don't get. Keep in mind that the Prisoner doesn't need anymore bad press; I personally do not believe that "it's all good as long as it's out there".

Work with people who have integrity and don't be defeatist; a lot of people enjoy their work and are passionate about what they do, take your time and look for the best.

Always keep in mind the victim (of the crime) and their family, however try not to let emotions get in the way of your campaigning, remember that an innocent person is in prison and that just because the police has done a good job of convincing the victim's family and most of the public, it's not to say that they are right.

This isn't a personal fight, you are campaigning against a wrong conviction, don't engage in vendettas and damage yours or anyone's reputation.

Someone is responsible for every crime but we have to make sure that the right person is in prison.

8 - MP Campaign

This is an idea of how to run a National Campaign to MPs and ask for support with your campaign.

Please feel free to use the templates on this site, amend as needed or write your own, these are just examples of how I did it.

Note that there are 2 different templates:

Letter 1 for YOUR MP - Letter 2 for MPs outside your constituency-

Also write a separate "brief account" of the case; Please see Justice 4 Simon, "In Brief" to see what I wrote.

This will be attached to your letter and it will help your MP get a quick, clear idea of the case.

Add that they can also visit your website for more details on the case and contact you with any questions; always leave your personal details on your correspondence.

Start with the prisoner's MP and yours if you live in a different constituency.

Outside constituency: Bear in mind that most MP's will not reply and if they do, they will often tell you that they are not able to act on behalf of someone who doesn't live in their constituency. Don't be disheartened, keep at it!

Note: Once your MP or the Prisoner's MP agrees to support you, there is no law stopping other MP's joining them so don't be scared to ask again.

Document this on your website, let your supporters and the press know what you are doing and ask your supporters to use the templates to write to their own MPs.

Always have a structure and inform your supporters of when you will announce the results of your campaign, have a date in mind so that you don't wait forever. (Be reasonable and check the MPs time tables, a lot happens in Parliament)

Note: Consistency is the key to running a campaign, don't start something that you will not finish, as small as you think it may be; your supporters will always follow your example.

Always follow up.

Do not take no news as being good news; follow up with your MP (and the Prisoner's).

You can also write another letter reminding them that you are still waiting for a reply and that you are due to publish your results soon.

A phone call doesn't hurt either and you can ask for a meeting.

Concentrate on your MP (and the Prisoner's) as they are the only ones who can help you initially, it will be easier to gather others once these are on board.

Always ask for their permission to publish any correspondence you receive from them.

Inform the press of your results, MPs who agree to support you will often agree to interviews with the press; more publicity for your case.

Send the letters to your MP by post, I emailed the others (it's cheaper and just as effective)

Visit The Parliament Website for email addresses, there are plenty of other websites where you can find emails for MP, just look for them.

Note: MPs change their email addresses so you will need to go through the list above and copy them to create your own list.

Create an email for other MPs entitled Miscarriage of Justice, attach your Letter and "In Brief" with a short note to ask them to take a look at your documents.

Remember to thank MPs who offer their support and add them to your mailing list so that they can see the progress of your case, always keep in touch and don't hesitate to ask them for advice. Make sure they sign your petition. Remember to always publish everything you do and tell the organisations.

We were very lucky to be assigned an MP's Aid who consistently worked with us and supported us, invite them to join you at Miscarriages of Justice day and other events I conferences you attend.

9 - Flyers I Stationery

Once your website is online, start using stationery that matches your site, use your means, have a logo and print it on the paper you use to write letters on. This just makes you look more professional.

Make yourself a word template with your logo, details, prisoner's details and website address.

Design a flyer that you can put on your website and that people can print and distribute if they want to.

Note: Remember that fancy designs and coloured flyers are expensive to print so a simple black and white A4 or A5 document is enough to start with.

State the case briefly and put your web address on.

Ask your friends to distribute it; stick it on your window, at the back of your car, anywhere you think someone might see it.

Once you can and if you have funds you can always look at doing something better but think of all the leaflets you see out on the streets and in bins ... use them wisely ...

10 - Events

Get into a habit and keep checking on the organisations websites for events to do with Miscarriages of Justice. Every year, United Against Injustice organises a Miscarriage of Justice day.

Try to attend if you can; they offer workshops and are full of people who can help you, it will also give you the opportunity to meet with other people in your situation, and build more support for yourself.

Make sure you take your flyers and anything else you have so that you can distribute them and spread the word.

Every year brings new speakers and you may be surprised of who you get to meet, solicitors, experts, journalists, etc. Everyone there has a common cause, they are involved with Miscarriages of Justice and you can learn from each other.

11 - Warning ...

Be prepared to be patient, this is not to say that you wait for things to happen, there are a lot of "alleged" miscarriages of justice out there and your case will soon be yesterday's news if you do not keep proactive.

If leave to appeal has not been granted the next step is the Criminal Case Review Commission (CCRC)

It took almost 5 years from the first application form being sent about the wrongful arrest to the case being assigned a case worker at the CCRC. (-see under "Links"for more information on this government body)

It took almost 2 years for the campaigning team to read the case papers, make sense of everything and discover evidence.

It took over 3 years of tenuous work, everyday to get recognition and to build momentum with the website and the campaign.

Research is paramount, read about other cases, watch documentaries, read books, look up the organisation's websites, ask questions and study whatever you need to study to understand the case better.

H.M forces and the Justice system are not keen to admit that they have made a mistake and they will make it as difficult as they can for you, be persistent and do not feel discouraged by closed doors, do not expect them to be helpful but keep knocking!

Correspondence needs to be followed up, make sure you keep copies of everything you send and do not hesitate to send forms 2 or 3 times, just in case one gets "lost in the post". Follow up with a phone call to ensure it has been received.

Our application to the CCRC was sent twice by the person inside and twice by us, yet they spent months claiming that they hadn't received it.

The police will undoubtedly monitor what you are doing, especially if you get a lot of press attention, they have the means to screen your website, phone calls, etc. ... this is not a certainty but be aware that it does happen! Be sure of who you speak to and what you talk about.

Beware of people who claim to know information about the case; people like to feel involved and have the best intentions at hearts, don't believe in hearsay.

Remember that not everyone will agree with you, you may get some strong opinions at times; rise above it and keep focused, everyone is entitled to their opinion and do not waste your time arguing pointlessly.

Be suspicious of people's "hidden agendas", criminal cases are delicate subjects; do not divulge information to just anyone because you think they might help you.

Always respect the victim's dignity and integrity.

If you do not have a lawyer, always confer with the agencies who will advise you if you are unsure about anything.

As frustrated as you may feel at times, remember that the system is designed to discourage you, the longer you go on, the more chances you have of succeeding, persistence and determination will get you there eventually.

Take one day at a time.

Unfortunately, miscarriages of justice do happen and therefore try and study previous cases closely, educate yourself, use the support groups and work with other campaigners, share your knowledge.

As time goes on and we learn how to fight the system, hopefully the time it takes to overturn wrongful convictions will shorten and eventually the judicial system might put appropriate procedures in place to allow people to defend themselves fairly and rapidly.

Stay patient, active and never give up.

Please contact us on the website if you have any questions.

Thank you for reading,

Insidedoubt