EGM of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Women in the Penal System

11.00am-11.30am
Wednesday 16 September 2020
Virtual meeting via Zoom

Minutes

Chair: Baroness Corston

Attendees
Debbie Abrahams MP
Baroness Bennett
Lord Bradley
Baroness Burt
Sarah Champion MP
Jackie Doyle-Price MP
Baroness Hamwee
Lord Judd
Lord Ramsbotham
Baroness Sater

Apologies
Lord Bishop of Gloucester
Lord Carlile
Baroness Fall

1. Welcome from the chair

Baroness Corston welcomed everyone to the APPG virtual meeting.

The minutes of the inaugural meeting on 4 February 2020 were approved.

2. Election of co-chairs and officers for 2020-21

The following officers were elected unanimously.

Co-chairs
Baroness Jean Corston
Jackie Doyle-Price MP
Debbie Abrahams MP

Officers
Baroness Hamwee
3. Brief update on the APPG inquiries and work during the pandemic

Frances Crook gave a brief update on the work of the two current APPG inquiries.

**Inquiry to reduce the arrests of women**

The APPG on Women in the Penal System launched its inquiry into reducing the arrests of women in May 2019. The aims of the inquiry were:

- To reduce arrests of women year on year
- To influence police policy and practice
- To share good practice in keeping women out of the criminal justice system
- To build on the Government’s Female Offender Strategy


To complement the APPG Inquiry and to prepare the second briefing for the APPG, the Howard League met chief constables and senior officers. Five police forces shared data on arrests of women and conducted analyses of the arrests for the APPG. It had succeeded in persuading the National Police Chiefs Council to appoint a lead officer for women.

**Inquiry to reduce the imprisonment of women**

The aims of this APPG inquiry were:

- To reduce the number of women remanded to prison
- To reduce the use of short prison sentences, with a particular focus on sentencing in the magistrates’ court


**APPG plans for forthcoming year included:**

- 28 September 2020 - publication of the second report on reducing arrests of women
- Winter 2020 - publication of a briefing on the abolition of the Victorian law to remand women for their own protection
- Winter 2020 and spring 2021 - oral hearings and evidence sessions
- Further publications for the two Inquiries

The co-chairs of the APPG planned to meet with ministers to discuss the APPG’s work.

Baroness Burt asked whether the APPG intended to look at the number of women leaving prison into homelessness. Baroness Burt said she would be asking a parliamentary question on women prisoners and homelessness.

Frances Crook said that the work of the two APPG inquiries was focussing on reducing the numbers of women coming into the criminal justice system. The work was having an impact and the APPG focus would remain on what could be done to keep women out of prison.

4. Thanks
Baroness Corston thanked everyone for attending. She also wanted to place on record her thanks to the two previous co-chairs, Kate Green MP and Victoria Prentis MP. Both Kate Green and Victoria Prentis had had to stand down due to their new parliamentary roles. Their work for the APPG had been invaluable.