

## Footholds for Reform

Inspiring, excellent, fascinating, interesting were some of the words used by those who heard Juliet Lyon's prisons week talk this year, on evaluation forms. Juliet started with the downside: over 84,000 people are now in prison – a 92% rise since 1993; people in prison, prisoners and staff, are less safe than they were five years ago; 290 people died in prison in the 12 months to March 2016, the highest number on record; over a third of these deaths were self-inflicted; there were six homicides in prison in the 12 months to 2016, the highest number on record; serious assaults in prison have more than doubled in the last three years; the number of women in prison nearly trebled between 1993 and 2005; 46% of women in prison report having suffered a history of domestic abuse; more than double the number of children are affected by parental imprisonment than divorce in the family the proportion of prisons whose performance is “of concern” or “of serious concern” almost doubled from one in eight in 2012–13, to one in four in 2014–15. All these, and more horrifying statistics can be found at <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Summer%202016%20briefing.pdf> – published by the Prison Reform Trust, where Juliet was director until recently. Her new job will involve her in trying to reduce deaths in custody.

Juliet was able to point to some positive developments, for which the PRT has campaigned: the abolition of the IPP sentence; work with the Women's Institute to divert those with mental health needs or learning disabilities out of the criminal justice system; the 60% fall in the number of children now in prison since 2007. However, fewer than 1% of all children in England are in care, but they make up over half of children in secure training centres and almost two-fifths of children in young offender institutions. One in five children in custody reported that they had learning difficulties.

We were also privileged to see the award winning and inspiring 'Rubies' Quilt', made by women over 50 in Eastwood Park prison, which Alma Hageman spoke briefly about and displayed for us.