**APPG on Miscarriages of Justice**

**20 January 2025 - General Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance**:

Future Justice Project (secretariat) Jon Robins, Glyn Maddocks, Sam Dulieu

Charley Allan, Becky Boumelha, Fintan Mcdonnell, Abdallah Barakat, Kate Osbourne MP.

**Forthcoming public events:**

* Our public event marking 50 years since the Birmingham Six miscarriage of justice has been rescheduled for the 5 March 2025. It will be held in memory of Paddy Hill who passed away last month. The panel will include Michael Mansfield KC, Gareth Pierce, Chris Mullin, Paddy Maguire, Ros Franey, and Alistair Logan. The event will also draw attention to the ongoing case of the ‘Birmingham Four’. The secretariat will be sending out invites to parliamentarians and others shortly.
* An event to mark the anniversary of the miscarriage of justice of the Cammell Laird 37. In 1984 workers at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead occupied their workplace in defence of jobs. The occupation and the strike which preceded it lasted just over three months, and then on 3 October the occupiers were arrested. 37 of them were found guilty of contempt of court and jailed. There is now a campaign to lift the convictions. Kim Johnson and her office are in contact with the leaders of the campaign and they will be in touch soon regarding the legal action they are considering.

**Westminster Commissions:**

**Westminster Commission on Joint Enterprise**: This commission was launched with an event in the House of Commons in November. The first evidence-gathering session has been organised for the 11 February, 5-7pm in Portcullis House. The evidence-gathering sessions will then be as follows (all 5-7pm) - March 3, April 29, May 27, Sep 15, Oct 21.

**Westminster Commission on Forensic Science:** The report is being written by commissioners currently, so we need to fix a date for the launch of the report, Jon suggested April 28th or May 12th. There is already considerable media interest in the findings, including from R4 Today programme and the Guardian/ We need a tentative press list to ensure maximum media coverage, Sam will work on this and Carole McCartney and Angela Gallop will be able to assist. The commission’s next two meetings are scheduled for February. The report may need some presentational work once it is out of the drafting stage so we need to bear that in mind when considering the timing of the launch, as well as the timing of sending an embargoed report to members of the press.

**Westminster Commission on the Legal profession**: The Commission has an interim report – and a final report will be out before the summer. We will need to settle on a launch date, and to publicise.

**Westminster Commission on open justice and the media**: Discussed parliamentarians who may want to head up this commission, we will ask Lord Daniel Finkelstein.

**Future meetings:**

* Attendees briefly discussed the Lucy Letby case, that it is an important topic of the debate but of course there is caution around the approach to be taken. Glyn explained the immense problems with the use of expert evidence at the trial, and that this would be an important topic for MPs to learn more about (not just in relation to Letby). There is the potential for an APPG meeting dealing with this topic, with a guest speaker e.g. a statistician to discuss the Letby case, and/ or a criminal lawyer to discuss the problems with expert evidence.
* Prevent – Kim is interested in looking further into miscarriages of justice as a result of the prevent programme and pre-crime actions. The government are currently undertaking a rapid review of counter terrorism. Discussion of the Metropolitan Police Gangs Matrix – this was a secret list of individuals who were ‘predicted’ to engage in gang activity, but it was found to be unlawful and racist. Liberty brought a case against the Met and they were ordered to destroy the database – however, this means many people who wish to challenge convictions/ seek compensation as a result of being on the database or being unfairly criminalised will be unable to prove that were on it, or find out in the first place. This includes people convicted under joint enterprise. The database is due to be destroyed on 13th February but then miscarriages of justice won’t be able to be investigated – Discussed the possibility that it should be handed over to an independent body until these cases are investigated?
* Law Commission Report - The Law Commission has been asked to review the law about appeals in criminal cases, including the tests applied by the Court of Appeal and the Criminal Cases Review Commission; and laws governing post-trial retention and disclosure of evidence. The group should hold an event looking at this important report before summer.

**Other issues:**

* Compensation for miscarriages of justice – Ben Lake MP is due to table a Westminster Hall debate.
* We should hold a ‘briefing meeting’ on compensation for MPs ahead of this debate, explaining the current situation, maybe featuring a guest speaker (e.g. Matt Foot of APPEAL). The briefing meeting could be online, and could be done at a week’s notice. The secretariat can also produce a compensation briefing (action for Jon, Glyn and Sam). Ben Lake will want to focus on his constituents whose cases have been brought to his attention but the debate could also discuss Oliver Campbell, Sam Hallam and Victor Nealon as key cases.
* Criminal Cases Review Commission – Helen Pitcher resigned as chair of the commission last week, however there are still questions about the organisation’s leadership, including the CEO Karen Kneller. It will be important to draw attention to this at Justice Questions on 28 January. After this meeting Sam and Kim’s office to email all members of the group encouraging them to put in for a question: “what steps is the minister taking to replace the chair of the CCRC”.
* Westminster Hall debate on the Birmingham Four – Jon and Glyn discussed with Gareth Pierce this morning. We will consider this after the debate on compensation.