

Reporting back to you

John Bercow MP

Member of Parliament for Buckingham



Justice system must rehabilitate says MP

The prisons system is in crisis. Massive overcrowding is hugely reducing the resources available for managing offenders. However, the solution is not simply to build more and more prisons. To be effective, the justice system must rehabilitate prisoners.

HMP Springhill in Grendon Underwood has excellent programmes to help to resettle offenders and assist them in building a life away from crime. It costs £40,000 a year to keep someone in prison. To fail to use that money effectively to cut reoffending is an unforgivable waste of your money.

In November 2006, John established the All Party Parliamentary Group on Speech and Language Difficulties. A key aim of the group is to tackle the scandalous lack of Speech and Language Therapy provision in prisons and, in particular, in young offenders' institutions. A study in one YOI found that 100% of inmates had significant difficulties with either speech, language or communication sufficient to affect every day functioning, compared to 1% of the general population.

The impact of speech, language and communication disorders is devastating and is a major risk factor in offending. It damages

educational attainment, relationship formation, behavioural and emotional development, mental health, employment and training prospects and leads to youth crime. Moreover, many young offenders are so afflicted with communication difficulties that they are unable to engage in the education, training and social skills courses which are vital to cutting reoffending.

Lord Ramsbotham, the former Chief Inspector of Prisons and vice-chair of the APPG, said that 'I have never found anything so capable of doing so much for so many people at so little cost as the work that speech and language therapists carry out.' The APPG is campaigning for better access to speech therapy for prisoners. In February, John tabled an amendment to the Offender Management Bill to this effect. Unfortunately, despite widespread support for the measure, the Government refused to accept the amendment.

John said 'It is incredibly difficult to educate or train people who cannot communicate. The Government must realise that providing adequate therapy is both right in itself and will avoid the much greater costs to society, the individual and the public purse of reoffending. I shall keep battling for better policy in the future.'

April 2007

If you need help or advice about an issue that is concerning you, please get in touch

John Bercow MP
Your Member of Parliament

I can be contacted at my Parliamentary office:

John Bercow MP
House of Commons
Westminster, London
SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 6346

E-Mail: bercowj@parliament.uk

or at my constituency office:

34 Buckingham Road,
Winslow, Buckingham
MK18 3DY

Tel: 01296 714240

Reform of the House of Lords

In March, there was a two day debate in Parliament to discuss proposals to modernise the Upper House.

John spoke in this debate to support measures to make the chamber more democratic. One of the most controversial issues has been the composition of the reformed Chamber – whether its members should be elected or appointed. The result is likely to be a mixture of the two.

SPEAKING OUT | John makes his point on House of Lords reform in the debate in the Commons.

John said 'It is vital that we have a second chamber that is suitable to a modern democracy. It should be a House of review, scrutiny and deliberation. I believe firmly that we should have a predominantly elected second Chamber. However, there is merit in retaining some existing expertise from unelected members. We should seek to preserve the best assets of the Lords, such as the legal knowledge and wisdom of the law lords which has been vital in preserving civil liberties. Yet the status quo of a wholly appointed House would perpetuate a system of patronage which cannot credibly be defended in 2007.'



John says: "I have always believed that an MP needs to get out and about in his or her constituency as much as possible. This is the only way to get a feel for the issues that concern people. It is also a great opportunity as your MP to thank the many people who contribute so much to our communities, often with little recognition for their work".

If you would like John to visit your organisation then please call 0207 219 6346 to arrange a visit.



TRAFFIC CAMPAIGN GROUP | John meets the Bishopstone Against Traffic group to hear their concerns ▲

FAIRFORD LEYS CAMPAIGN | John meets mums from St Mary's CE School to receive a petition on school catchment areas ▶



WORK SHADOWING | John with a work shadowing student from Aylesbury High ▲



JUDO AWARDS | John presenting the prizes at Winslow Judo Club ▼



SCHOOLS FOR AFRICA | John taking part in the Schools for Africa project ▲

YOUNG CARERS | John meets up with Young Carers in the constituency ▼



SCHOOL MEETING | John with representatives from Padbury School and Bucks County Council ▼



ePolitix Charity Champion Awards

John receives award for his charity work

In a ballot of his parliamentary colleagues, John has been voted the Health Champion in the 2006 ePolitix Charity Champion Awards.

These prestigious awards honour the hard work done by Parliamentarians on behalf of voluntary causes and campaigns. John was nominated by Sue Farrington Smith of Ali's Dream, based in Padbury, for his work supporting brain tumour charities.

John said 'I am thrilled to bits to have received this award. Brain tumours are the biggest single disease killing children and they hit thousands of adults every year too. Unlike more high profile diseases, research into brain tumours has been desperately under-funded. Precisely because of this, survival rates have not risen in line with those for other cancers. I have worked in Parliament to raise the profile of the issue and to press Ministers to give it a much higher priority. The All Party Group of MPs which I chair has only just started its work. We shall now redouble our efforts on behalf of sufferers and their families so that this scourge is more effectively addressed.'



If you would like to help The Ali's Dream charity they can be contacted at the following address:

Sue Farrington Smith
Post: Ali's Dream Buckingham Team
c/o Padbury Hill Farm, Padbury,
Buckingham, Bucks, MK18 2BN
Telephone: 01296 730230
E-mail: sue@alisdream.org.uk