

## **Our prison system is failing. Here's why.**

**Annie Ashdown reports.**

As many people will know, criminals in the UK are placed in prisons located across the country and the conditions of these prisons are often dire, as is the treatment of the inmates. This, I believe, is wrong because, despite the fact they have committed a crime, they shouldn't lose their basic human rights, no matter the severity of their offence.

Although in the UK we have made some fundamental improvements to the system, for example the abolition in the death penalty, we still have a long way to go. Prisons are dirty, cold and grey places that no-one would wish to inhabit, so why is it that over 75% of ex-inmates reoffend within nine years of release, and 39.3% reoffend within the first twelve months. There is obviously something seriously wrong with our penal system!

Norway has one of the best prison systems in the world. The cells are spacious, comfortable and are not shared between multiple inmates. In fact, the cells are better than a lot of student accommodation in the UK and US, yet Norway has the lowest rate of reoffenders in the world, with only 20% of released prisoners re-offending. So why is the system so successful? Prisoners in Norway are given therapy, humane accommodation and help - something that our system is lacking. Norway believes in "Rehabilitation not recidivism" and this system, on evidence, seems to be succeeding.

Our prison system is, however, not succeeding, with one of the highest reoffending rates in the world yet our government still isn't doing anything to change it.

In the UK we still have many unhealthy and inhumane forms of punishment, one being solitary confinement. In solitary confinement prisoners are locked in a small box like cell. The majority of prisoners spend a few months in solitary, although a couple of thousand people have been in solitary confinement for six years or more.

Solitary confinement causes extreme suffering, particularly over prolonged periods of months or years. Humans are social animals and should not be

deprived of contact from other humans for longer than a few weeks as it can cause mental health issues such as Schizophrenia and depression and this could be one of the many reasons for our failing prison system.