

PRESS RELEASE

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London mum sees chance of justice for bipolar son to appeal his prison sentence at the Court of Appeal

Wednesday 12th December 2012 – A mother who is campaigning for justice for her 22 year-old son, will attend his appeal hearing hoping that his prison sentence will be changed to a hospital order.

Linda Morgan, from Hackney, set up the campaign after her son, Joe Paraskeva, then aged 20, was given an indeterminate prison sentence in April 2011. He was jailed after using an aerosol can and cigarette lighter during his attempt to escape from a mental health unit in which he had recently been sectioned, in October 2010.

Even though Joe had no previous criminal convictions and a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, he was sent to prison where his mental health deteriorated even further.

After more than a year in the Young Offenders Institution, he was moved to the John Howard Centre forensic unit in November 2011 and leave to appeal was granted in May 2012.

The campaign aims to overturn Joe's conviction, for him to continue to receive care in a therapeutic hospital until he is well enough to come home and calls on Government to review of the practice of criminalising mental health patients.

Ms Morgan said: "Joe thought he would be cared for at a time of mental crisis, in a place of safety, instead, he was not protected against behaviour which he could not control but was incarcerated in prison. This practice is inhumane and the campaign wants Government to address this huge injustice in both the NHS and the criminal justice system.

These failings allow the most vulnerable in society to be punished rather than helped. Prison is not a safe or therapeutic environment for people suffering mental health difficulties and should not be used as a dumping ground.

Joe's case is one of many similar cases, other families suffer similar trauma thinking their loved ones will be kept safe in hospital and then seeing them thrown into prison."

The Campaign is being supported by a number of major mental health and criminal justice organisations including SANE, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Bipolar UK, YoungMinds, The Howard League for Penal Reform and The Prison Reform Trust.

The Appeal will be heard at the Royal Courts of Justice, at 10.30am in Court 7.

For interviews or for more information, contact Linda Morgan at justiceforjoe@hotmail.co.uk.
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