



Press Release

19th November 2009

Rehabilitation law ‘forces ex-offenders onto benefits’

A bill to update offender rehabilitation laws from the 1970’s will be introduced in the House of Lords today

UNLOCK, a charity set up by reformed offenders, is campaigning for the reform, arguing that a change would benefit the tax-payer by reducing crime, increasing tax take and reducing benefits claims.

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is seen to be a major barrier to reducing re-offending as the ‘rehabilitation periods’ force people to declare past convictions long after their punishment is over. A day in jail attracts a seven year period and a court fine means five years of disclosure.

Last month the case of arson victim Michelle Barber hit the headlines after it emerged insurers were demanding £240,000 from her due to her non-disclosure of a £120 fine paid four years before she took out her home insurance.

People sentenced to more than thirty months must always declare their conviction. Bobby Cummines spent 13 years in prison for bank robbery but as UNLOCK’s Chief Executive has since advised schools, government and even a judge:

“No matter what we do, in the eyes of the law, people like me can never be rehabilitated,” He said. “There’s so much discrimination in the job market it essentially forces ex-offenders onto benefits. The Government has known about this issue for 10 years but has failed to act. People need hope.”

Government figures show there are over 8 million people in the UK with convictions.

[247 words including headline]

END.

Notes to Editor

- Lord Dholakia, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats in the Lords plans to introduce a Private Member’s Bill on reform of the Rehabilitation Act 1974 on Thursday 19th 2009.
- UNLOCK, the National Association of Reformed Offenders is a charity and membership organisation set up by reformed offenders in 2000 to achieve equality for reformed offenders. www.unlock.org.uk
- Summary of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act <http://www.unlock.org.uk/xoffenders.aspx?sid=62>
- Links to Michelle Barber press reports <http://www.unlock.org.uk/pressmedia.aspx?id=44>
- Bobby Cummines background & photo <http://www.unlock.org.uk//staticpage.aspx?pid=22>
- Government figures on people with convictions <http://tinyurl.com/yhw9sg5>
- Government acceptance of the need for reform <http://tinyurl.com/yz2mzgv>
- Campaign information and useful quotes <http://www.unlock.org.uk/staticpage.aspx?pid=69>