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'Jail closure has decimated mental health services'

MENTAL health services for jailed women have been "decimated" following the shock closure of Holloway prison four years ago, a leading psychotherapist has warned, writes *Emily Finch*.

Pamela Windham Stewart, a psychotherapist from Highbury,

spent 20 years offering treatment to hundreds of women at the former prison in Parkhurst Road.

She now treats women at HMP Downview in Sutton and HMP Bronzefield in Middlesex after the women from Holloway prison were moved there in

November 2015. There is no longer a women's prison in London.

"[Closing Holloway Prison] has decimated services. Now, I don't know the ins and outs of it because I don't know how a lot of them [services] have been funded. But there was a very

strong 12-person psychotherapy group at Holloway and that hasn't moved with the women," she said.

She estimated that there had been a 75 per cent cut in psychotherapy provision after the

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Frustration for borough's EU nationals denied a say in December poll

EUROPEANS: LET US VOTE IN ELECTION

by EMILY FINCH

EUROPEANS who live in Islington are demanding a vote in next month's general election and have claimed "there is no more democracy" amid Brexit uncertainty.

There are around 20,000 EU nationals in the borough who will not be able to vote on December 12. They are unable to take part in the poll even after being granted "settled status" – offered to Europeans who have lived in the UK continuously for at least five years.

Business owner Eglal Gomaa, who runs Italian café Girasole, in Seven Sisters Road, along with a delicatessen called Prickly Pear, said the fact that she couldn't vote was "really unfair".

"I've been here for 18 years," she said.

"I don't vote in Italy anymore because I don't follow Italian politics. I am part of this country.

"I have my own business, I hire people from the UK and I expect to be able to vote. As a taxpayer we should have a say."

Ms Gomaa, who lives in Finsbury Park, said she felt as if she was "part of the country and part of a community".

But she added: "If you don't have the ability to vote and you are part of a community there

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Frustration for borough's EU nationals denied election vote

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is no more democracy and there is no more opportunity for people to be equal. And people are distanced from having a say.”

She said the general election would shape how and if the country leaves the European Union.

“It’s going to be complicated for me as a business owner because if the UK goes out of the EU I will have a lot of complications in terms of what I stock, with most products coming from Italy. I have no say in this without a vote,” she said.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, alongside the Lib Dems and Greens, campaigned for EU citizens with settled status to be able to vote shortly after the election was



Eglal Gomaa, who runs popular Italian café Girasole in Seven Sisters Road, is among those who are unable to vote in the general election on December 12

announced. His plans were quickly shot down by Prime Minister Boris Johnson as the govern-

ment pointed to concerns over “administrative chaos”. Ms Gomaa was

backed by Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, who told the *Tribune*: “European Londoners

contribute so much to our society.

“They pay tax, they help run crucial public services, they should have a vote in the general election.

“The Tories might think differently about how they treat our EU friends living here in the UK if they knew they had a vote.”

Mr Khan also expressed his concern that there were still around 5,370 Europeans in Islington who have not yet applied for settled status.

He said: “It’s an absolute disgrace that so many European Londoners in Islington have still not been able to secure their right to remain in their home if Britain does leave the EU.

“The idea that we could go ahead with Brexit while so many

people are unregistered – which is this Tory government’s fault – should be seen as a national scandal.”

Nick Turton, from the Islington in Europe group which campaigns for the UK to stay in the EU, said: “We’re talking about our friends, family and neighbours who have lawfully made their homes here – and who statistically contribute more than British-born people.

“It’s shameful they were denied a vote in the EU referendum and they’re being denied a vote again now.”

He added that Islington Council has been “tremendously supportive of local EU nationals since the Brexit vote” and said not allowing them to vote next month was a national decision that should be changed.

Help us make a difference this Christmas

CHRISTMAS is fast approaching – in fact six weeks today, it will all be over.

Santa will have been, turkey dinners will have been polished off, all the presents will be ripped open and, just like last year, you won’t want to look at another mince pie.

While so many enjoy the excitement building and the party season ahead, not everybody is feeling so festive.

The *Tribune*, over the year, does not sugar-coat life in Islington and we know that sometimes our stories and campaigns can make depressing reading.

We know there is hardship out there, people are struggling to get by.

These are hard times, and if you have nobody to share life with or the money to enjoy it, Christmas can be no fun at all.

The winter celebration can just add to the strain.

Thankfully, our big-hearted readers have always done their bit to show that this is a community that cares.

And this year we ask for your help again, to make Christmas special for those who can’t afford to play Father Christmas or lay a spread on the kitchen table like the feasts you see on the supermarket television adverts.

We are collecting now to pay for special hampers to be delivered in the days before Christmas to the elderly who live on their own and families who have been through hardship this year.

This is our Christmas Hamper Appeal, a collection in which even a little goes a long way. We know everybody is feeling the pinch but even the smallest donation is a way of helping your neighbours. Kindness and generosity, after all, is what the season is all about.

As well as your donations, perhaps your school, social or sports club, choir or workplace would like to help us? If you have a fundraising idea in mind – or simply want to have a whip-round with your colleagues, and make us the benefactors perhaps of a Secret Santa game, please let us know. Every contribution, big or small, helps towards making someone in need know that others are out there and are looking out for them.

And we will make sure we write about everybody who comes up with a fundraising idea in the coming weeks. Email editorial@islingtontribune.co.uk

TO MAKE A DONATION
 PayPal donations can be made via the Christmas Hamper button at www.islingtontribune.com
 Or cheques (made payable to 'Islington Tribune Hamper Fund') to Islington Tribune Hamper Fund
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Prison closure health fears

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closure of Holloway prison.

The NHS describes psychotherapy as a type of talking therapy used to treat emotional problems and mental health conditions.

Ms Windham Stewart said: “In the presence of another person who is a trained professional, people start talking about themselves, and importantly, they start to understand their behaviour better and as a result of understanding they have more control over it, which is very, very important in criminal behaviour.”

Ms Windham Stewart continues to treat women who have committed “very serious crimes” including murder and paedophilia and offers a weekly therapy group for pregnant women at HMP Bronzefield.

She said: “It’s very, very important if we want to live in a safe world, that we help and support people who have very, very violent tendencies. It’s in our best interest for people to be happy in society.”

She said the reason for scant mental health provision in the two women’s prisons may be down to the long



Pamela Windham Stewart

commute for therapists who previously worked at Holloway prison – it is a three-hour round trip for her to commute to HMP Downview and HMP Bronzefield.

“If you’ve got women located in central London, it’s a lot more accessible not only for the women’s family and other support systems like that, but also for professionals and specialists to get access to them,” she said.

Ms Windham Stewart, who has written a book about her experiences of offering therapy in prisons called *The End of the Sentence*, praised the “excellent mental health support” offered at Holloway which “took a long time to build up”.

She is now campaigning for the proposed women’s building at the Holloway

prison site to “keep alive in people’s minds the fact of how much therapeutic work was done there”.

Housing association giant Peabody announced in March they had bought the 10-acre site to turn the space into 600 affordable homes and committed to creating a women’s building there which is to be designed by locals.

The then Tory chancellor of the exchequer George Osborne announced the closure of the largest women’s prison in Europe in November 2015 in a shock announcement that surprised staff and prisoners alike. Women were transferred out just a few days later.

Ms Windham Stewart said it was “very dangerous” to forget the plight of imprisoned women just because they were no longer in London and added: “The problem does not go away.”

She called on residents to join her at a vigil at the prison on November 24 to mark the four-year anniversary of its closure.

She said: “The idea of a vigil is about being vigilant, about keeping an eye on what’s not happening for women.”

The Ministry of Justice did not respond to our request for a comment.

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