

Why are they falling in...?

Ina De

High Sheriff of Greater London 2023-24

It has been a very great privilege to serve as High Sheriff of Greater London. The response to 'Hello, I'm the High Sheriff' still remains for the most part 'What's that?', but much ground has been covered and many incredible Londoners thanked and recognised.

Superhuman efforts are being made to keep justice alive and the warm reception received at every court visit was humbling. In addition to Greater London's nine Crown Courts, I met and thanked people who are working hard to deal with whatever is thrown at them across the judicial arena, including Magistrates' and Family Courts, Tribunals, Coroners' Courts, prisons and probation. South London Coroners win the prize for the most unusual visit by virtue of including a post mortem on the agenda.

I thanked brave witnesses at our second Justice Awards ceremony held at the Supreme Court, where a large turnout of impressively robed judges enhanced the occasion. It is notable how many young people perform acts of bravery in often terrifying circumstances. The recognition we are able to give as High Sheriffs is vital and the support from our hosts dignified both ceremonies.

Southwark Cathedral deserves a special thank you for hosting my legal thanksgiving service in November. There are a great number of people who perform the vital role of delivering justice day in and day



With Jordanne Cliffe on a visit to Fine Cell Work, a rehabilitation charity that helped stitched the High Sheriff of Greater London cape



On a visit to Brixton Prison with members of the Pact team, Alastair Gordon (Pact trustee, centre right), Andy Keen-Downs (Pact CEO, second from right), and the Revd Raymond Baudon (High Sheriff's Chaplain) Photo: Andy Aitchison



With the Right Hon Lord Hodge (Deputy President of the Supreme Court) at the Justice Awards ceremony at the Supreme Court

out with tenacity, flair and integrity and it was wonderful to be able to bring them all together. Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester and Bishop for Prisons, asked the pertinent questions in her address. What is it we want prisons to achieve and how successful have we been at delivering that? Aside from dire conditions and an estate which isn't fit for purpose, finding a job after serving a sentence is a real challenge and reconviction rates within a year of release are high. I have had the pleasure of meeting many dedicated volunteers and charities who are working hard to break the cycle of reoffending, including PACT, Unlocked Grads, Shannon Trust, Give-a-Book, Beating Time, Bounce Back, and Onwards and Upwards to name a few. They are all unsung heroes and celebrating them, together with the justices in the wonderful surroundings

of Southwark Cathedral, felt joyful, uplifting and completely appropriate.

All this has reinforced for me how crucial it is to provide young people with a good start in life. Desmond Tutu nailed it when he said: 'There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in.' In that spirit, it was a proud moment when London-based DIVERT reached the finals of the National Crimebeat Awards, coming second overall. DIVERT's objective is to prevent reoffending by leading young people away from crime and into employment, education and training. The programme started in Brixton in 2015 and their young ambassadors now work in 13 of London's busiest police custody suites, turning around young people's lives. Compassion truly is alive and well in Greater London.



Outside Westminster Abbey for the RNLi's 200th anniversary thanksgiving service