

Nearly 65% of prisoners at women's jail in England 'show signs of brain injury'

Nearly 65 percent of prisoners at a women's jail in England may have suffered traumatic brain injuries at some point in their lives, a study found.

Research by the Disabilities

theguardian.com wrote.

The symptoms of 96 percent of the women suggested that these arose from physical trauma.

The work adds to a growing body of research on the overrepresenta-

Research has suggested that traumatic brain injury (TBI) could increase the likelihood of violent behavior, criminal convictions, mental health problems and suicide attempts.

Disabilities Trust established a Brain Injury Linkworker Service in the prison to provide specialist support to women with a history of brain injury. A total of 62 percent of the women supported through the service said they had sustained their brain injury through domestic violence.

Nearly half (47 percent) of the women had been in an adult prison five or more times. The statistics revealed that 33 percent had sustained their first injury prior to their first offense.

The Disabilities Trust called for the inclusion of brain injury screening to be a routine part of the induction assessment on entry to prison or probation services, and for staff to be given basic brain injury awareness training.

Irene Sobowale, the chief executive of the Disabilities Trust, said the study built on over five years of research into male offenders and brain injury.

"For the first time in the UK, we have considered the specific needs and experiences of female offenders, who are some of the most vulnerable in the criminal justice system," she said.

"There is much more work to be done to ensure that women with a brain injury are provided with effective support to ensure that they can engage in rehabilitation programs and reduce the likelihood of reoffending. The Disabilities Trust looks forward to working with partners and government to achieve this."

"The needs of somebody in prison with TBI are likely to be complex, and the lack of understanding and identification of a brain injury results in a higher risk of custody and reoffending," said the Disabilities Trust.

As part of its research, the



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Trust and Royal Holloway, University of London, England, found that of the 173 women screened at Drake Hall prison in Staffordshire answering questions about blows to the head, 64 percent gave answers consistent with having symptoms of a brain injury,

tion of people with brain injuries in the prison population. In 2012, a University of Exeter, England, report described traumatic brain injury as a 'silent epidemic'. In 2010, a study of 200 adult male prisoners found 60 percent had suffered a head injury.

Smaller farm produce gains popularity in China



XINHUA
Photo taken on June 29, 2013 shows paddy fields in Tuguozhai village of Xinjie town in Yuanjiang, Southwest China's Yunnan province.

For generations, Chinese farmers have spared no efforts to increase the weight of their produce to boost profits, now they are turning in the opposite direction — making them slimmer.

Organic fathead fish, 20 percent to 30 percent lighter than those raised with fodder, were a big hit in the Shanghai market during the Spring Festival holiday that started on Monday, xinhuanet.com reported.

The organic fish, with a darker color and smaller stomach, is tastier than traditional fish and sells for double the price, ¥30 (\$4.4) per kilo, said Yang Peilin, the head of the Juijiang Zhelinhu Ecological Fishing Co., Ltd.

"Fodder is forbidden here and the fish are raised in net cages," Yang said. "It takes between two months and one year for the fish to lose weight."

Yang produced 500,000 kilograms of organic fathead fish in about 267 hectares of water last year, which is still not enough to meet the rising market demand.

"We now procure fish from other places and make them lose weight here," said Yang, who reaped about ¥5 million in profits last year.

Chinese people are willing to pay more for higher quality products, as they are getting rich and have higher expectation of food quality, said Yang, who has raised fish for more than 20 years.

"Keeping on a diet" is also popular in rice planting.

In Wannian County, the once undesirable paddy rice fields on the hillside, which have lower yields and temperature, have become farmer favorites.

"Those fields have no pollution, less pests and are perfect for organic rice planting," said Luo Huimin, who gave up his job at a factory in the southern city of Dongguan and returned to his hometown to start his own business.

The rice planted on the hillside fields is sold at ¥50 to ¥100 per kilo, a price 10 to 20 times that of ordinary rice as they have better taste and quality, said Luo.

From 'putting on weight' to 'losing weight', the change of China's farm produce planting reflects people's aspiration for a better life and is the future trend for China's agriculture, said Fu Huiyun, the head of the Jiangxi Provincial Fishery Sciences Institute.

UN sees poverty hope in African uptake of child welfare payments



THOMAS MUKOYA/REUTERS
Children enjoy a funfair ride at the Lunar Park Grounds during Christmas Day Celebrations in Nairobi, Kenya, on December 25, 2018.

The spread of state welfare for children around Africa has the potential to make a major dent in global poverty, the United Nations (UN) said on Wednesday.

Children account for the majority of those around the world in extreme poverty, living on less than \$1.90 per day, with half of them in Africa, where social security systems are weak, Reuters reported.

Globally, about a third of children are covered by social protection programs, but it ranges from 88 percent in Europe and Central Asia to 16 percent in Africa, said a new study by two UN bodies.

"The evidence shows clearly that social protection benefits, and cash transfers in particular, have a positive impact on poverty, food security, health and access to education — thus helping to ensure that children can realize their full potential, breaking the vicious cycle of poverty," it said.

Cash on its own was not a magic bullet and needed to be part of broader policies, supported by other benefits such as school meals, said the study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and children's agency UNICEF.

In sub-Saharan Africa, expected to have 90 percent of children in extreme poverty by 2050, 40 out of 48 countries have some form

of cash transfer program, but most pay too little and overall only 13.1 percent of children receive them.

"They aren't all huge programs but it's been a real growth in the region and it's moving very, very quickly," David Stewart, UNICEF's head of child poverty, told reporters.

Children up to the age of 14 make up 42.9 percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, where public spending on child welfare amounts to only 0.7 percent of GDP, compared to 2.5 percent in Europe, which has far fewer children.

Several African countries were to discuss expanding their coverage at a conference in Geneva this week, Stewart said.

Isabel Ortiz, the head of social protection at the ILO, said South Africa was making massive progress but still did not offer universal coverage, while Ghana was reallocating fuel subsidies towards child benefits and Zambia was increasing tax on mining, showing some of the options if governments were willing.

"Just saying we don't have the budget is not good enough," she said.

The ILO-UNICEF study also warned about the reemergence of poverty in Europe, where some governments are cutting back child benefits due to austerity.

More than 50,000 people have died in the UK waiting for care while ministers dither over long-awaited plans to overhaul the funding of social care, a charity claimed.

Age UK estimated that 54,000 people — or 77 a day — have died while waiting for a care package in the 700 days since the government first said in March 2017 it would publish its social care green paper, which has since been delayed several times, the guardian.com reported.

The claim came as a cross-party group of MPs warned that the government was 'in denial' about the perilous state of English local authority finances — a crisis driven by a growing demand for the care of vulnerable adults and children.

The Commons Public Accounts Committee (PAC) said that after eight years in which central government funding had halved, councils were under 'enormous pressure' just to maintain essential services. MPs accused ministers of having no meaningful plan to ensure local authority finances were sustainable in the future.

Overall spending by local authorities on services fell by 19.2 percent in real terms between 2010-11 and 2016-17, according to the report.

Meg Hillier, the committee chair, said, "Government needs to get real, listen fully to the concerns of local government and take a hard look at the real impact funding reductions have on local services."

Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond announced a funding boost for councils at last autumn's budget, amounting to £1.4 billion in 2018-19 and 2019-20. But the PAC said such short-term fixes failed to deal with the underlying challenges facing councils.

It urged the government to focus on assuring the long-term

sustainability of local authority finances, and be more ambitious than simply allowing them to 'cope'.

Age UK said tightening eligibility for council-funded social care meant 626,701 people — 895 a day — have had requests for social care refused since March 2017. More than a million older people had developed an unmet

need in their final weeks and months that might have been more comfortable and their families' lives made easier had they been given more support.

The charity said its helpline received calls daily from people struggling to get a care package in place, often putting great strain on their health and causing stress for loved ones.

Age UK: 50,000 elderly died waiting for social care package



JOE GIDDENS/PA

care need in that time, such as needing help with washing or dressing, it added.

Officials have admitted delays to the green paper are in part because of Whitehall's overwhelming focus on Brexit.

Caroline Abrahams, the charity director of Age UK, said, "These tragic new figures demonstrate just how many older people are now suffering from the government's failure to act decisively on social care."

"No one can say whether some of those who have died might have lived longer had they received care, but at the very least

Northamptonshire county council, which declared effective bankruptcy last year.

Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Andrew Gwynne accused ministers of having no new money, no ideas and no recognition of the dire situation facing councils.

"Under this conservative government we have seen unprecedented levels of cuts to our local councils," he told a Commons debate on Tuesday evening.

"Local government is under enormous pressure because of politically motivated cuts that have hit our poorest areas hardest," he said.

"Nine of the 10 most deprived councils in the country have seen cuts of almost three times the national average. And when you cut vital support services in such areas, social problems grow — and demand for those services only becomes greater."

MPs voted on Tuesday night to pass the 2019-20 local government settlement, which Labour condemned as a real-terms cut.

But Communities Secretary James Brokenshire said government funding plans would lead to "a fairer, more self-sufficient and resilient future" for local government. He said councils would have more control over the money they raise and a real-terms increase in their core spending power.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said, "We are committed to ensuring everyone has access to the care and support they need and have provided local authorities with access to up to £3.6 billion more dedicated funding for adult social care this year and up to £3.9 billion for next year to help meet people's needs."

"We are determined to make social care sustainable for the future and will publish our proposals in a green paper shortly."