

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF
WOMEN IN PRISON WRITTEN
AND LED BY WOMEN AFFECTED
BY THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

— SUMMER 2017

**READY
STEADY
GO!**

**HEALTH
HOPE &
HAPPINESS!**

**A ZILLION WAYS
TO FEEL BETTER
ABOUT YOURSELF**

LET'S GET FIZZICAL!

**WRITER DREDA
SAY MITCHELL
ON PLOTTING A
CRIME**

PLUS! all the regulars and your poetry, art and writing





Tell me and I forget
teach me and I may remember
involve me and I learn!!!

change is the end result
of all true learning!

Funding Available NOW!!

Distance Learning courses & College Fees

Additional materials i.e Books / Dictionaries / Equipment

Make an appointment to see WIP or write to us - NO stamp required

Freepost - WOMEN IN PRISON



nothing else is needed on the envelope
make sure WOMEN IN PRISON is in capitals


HM Prison &
Probation Service

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About Women in Prison

Women in Prison (WIP) is a national charity founded by a former prisoner, Chris Tchaikovsky in 1983. Today, we provide support and advice in prisons and run three community women's centres - the Beth Centre in Lambeth, London, the Women's Support Centre in Woking, Surrey and WomenMATTA in Manchester.

WIP campaigns to reduce the number of women in prison and for the greater use of sentencing in the community alongside significant investment in support services for women so they can address issues such as trauma, addiction, mental health, substance misuse, domestic

violence, debt and homelessness. These are factors that are often the reasons why women come into contact with the criminal justice system in the first place.

WIP's services are by and for women. The support available varies from prison to prison and depends on where a woman lives in the community. If WIP can't help because of a constraint on its resources, it endeavours to direct women to other charities and organisations that can. WIP believes that a national network of women's centres, properly funded, that provide holistic support, is the most effective and just way to reduce the numbers of women coming before the courts and re-offending.

WIP's services include...

- Visits in women's prisons
- Targeted "through the gate" support for women about to be released from prison
- Support for women in the community via our women's centres in London, Woking and Manchester
- Advice and support for education in prison; help to find appropriate courses and colleges for individual women; funding towards course fees for distance learning or at college; help to fund course materials, including books and stationery
- A Freephone line and Freepost address for women who wish to contact Women in Prison
- RSG! A quarterly magazine written by and for women affected by the criminal justice system
- Magazine groups in several women's prisons, with plans to expand further in order to provide women with a channel for their opinions, a way to exercise their rights as active citizens, and an outlet for their creativity.

Got something to say?

Please contact Women in Prison at the FREEPOST address below. We may be able to visit you in prison or write to you.

Write or call free:
WOMEN IN PRISON

Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON

National freephone line
0800 953 0125

info@womeninprison.org.uk

Women in Prison's services are open to all women affected by the criminal justice system in England. Women can choose to attend, leave, or return to our services. None are compulsory.

CONFIDENTIAL
Our service is confidential. Any information given by a service user to Women in Prison will not be shared with anyone else without the woman's permission, unless required by law.

COMPLAINTS
If you are not happy with the service we have provided and wish to make a complaint, you are welcome to do so. Just ask for a copy of our complaints procedure.

H

ello, in this edition we focus on health and wellbeing and how small changes in our lives can make us feel differently about everything. The subjects covered here reflect how we would like physical health and mental health to be viewed as well being issues for us all to address – not problems for an individual to solve. Evidence shows that everyday activities – sleep, exercise, fresh air and what we choose to do with our time – have profound effects on our minds and bodies. At Women in Prison, we hear from women what a difference “getting involved” makes to their outlook on life and the days ahead – especially when serving a prison sentence. On a recent visit to HMP Send, I saw the breathtaking display of spring flowers giving joy to so many as a result of the “green fingers” and hard graft of women there. On 21st June – the longest day of the year – we are looking forward to your reflections on your day in “My Diary” (see page 8). Wherever you are, I hope you have a good and peaceful summer.



Kate

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF WOMEN IN PRISON

The magazine you are reading is free for all women affected by the criminal justice system in England. We send copies each quarter to all women’s prisons and you should be able to find the magazine easily. If you can’t, write to tell us. If you are a woman affected by the criminal justice system and would like to be added to our mailing list for free, please contact us at Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON info@womeninprison.org.uk.

Editor Yvonne Roberts Art direction & production Henry Obasi & Russell Moorcroft @PPaint

Chief sub-editor Martine Lignon Production editor Helen Gooding Deputy Production editor Claire Cain

Funding

BIS | Department for Business
Innovation & Skills



Ministry of
JUSTICE



Registered charity number 1118727

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SOUNDBOX

Write us a letter. You don't need a stamp if you use our freepost address:

RSG, Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON

Dear RSG!

I was a healthy eater who weighed eight-and-a-half stones until I came to prison. After 12 months in jail, I have put on two-and-a-half stones. It's so hard to maintain your normal weight inside.

The prison diet consists mainly of carbohydrates, which are filler foods and cheap. On a daily basis, you have one piece of fruit, mainly oranges or apples, and at weekends, usually a banana and vegetables.

I believe that we lack a lot of vitamins, proteins, calcium and iron. We are prescribed vitamin D until levels reach normal. I now have high cholesterol, which I never had before prison. Meat is not given every day. Milk is given but in a small carton and it is the long-life variety. Cereals also need to be looked at. We are given small packets of Weetabix, coco pops, rice krispies, corn flakes, oats and muesli. These packs are not filling and are not very healthy, given the amount of sugar they contain.

I now have what is called a "prison body". I cannot wait to be released and one of my first steps will be to take control of what I eat!

Marion

Dear RSG!

At HMP Foston Hall, we have had a magazine group running to produce our own newsletter since summer 2016. Originally, a few women came together to bounce ideas, discuss the best format and consider how often we should publish, and Tell All at Foston was born...

Now, in addition to the newsletter, we also contribute to RSG! We have a variety of women who work in different areas of

the prison e.g. healthcare, resettlement, education, wing reps, gym and they come with diverse personalities! This combination, plus encouragement - and a few biscuits - seem to be the winning formula, as we have since produced four issues of Tell All, with the fifth currently in production.

The newsletter is constantly evolving. It includes poems, drawings, recipes and interviews with staff.

We also include details of useful services in HMP Foston and information about courses and programmes. Like RSG!, it is a platform for the women's work that acts as a confidence boost and, hopefully, will inspire and encourage others to try.

More recently, we celebrated International Women's Day. Our theme was: strong and inspirational women past and present. Personally, I think women should be celebrated daily not just once a year!!

Kind regards,

Narinder Panesar
Complex Mental Health Projects Coordinator,
Women in Prison

IT'S YOUR MAGAZINE SO JOIN IN AND HAVE YOUR SAY!

We would love to hear if you have any ideas about how the magazine groups are run and on the style and content of the magazine.

We look forward to making the magazine even better, brighter, bolder - and definitely all yours!

Yvonne Roberts, Editor & Chair of Trustees

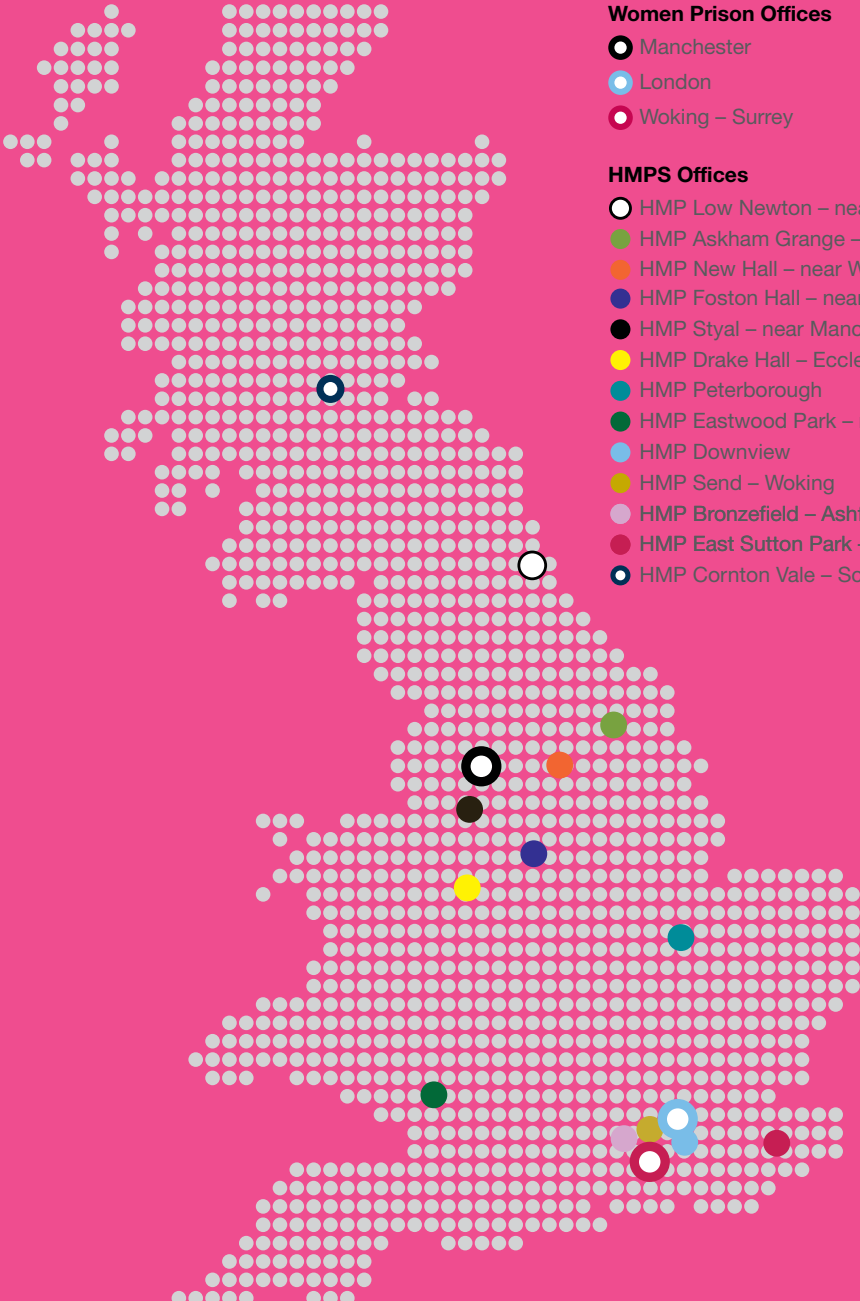
WHERE TO FIND OUR OFFICES

Women Prison Offices

- Manchester
- London
- Woking – Surrey

HMPs Offices

- HMP Low Newton – near Durham
- HMP Askham Grange – near York
- HMP New Hall – near Wakefield
- HMP Foston Hall – near Derby
- HMP Styal – near Manchester
- HMP Drake Hall – Eccleshall, Staffordshire
- HMP Peterborough
- HMP Eastwood Park – near Bristol
- HMP Downview
- HMP Send – Woking
- HMP Bronzefield – Ashford
- HMP East Sutton Park – Maidstone
- HMP Cornton Vale – Scotland



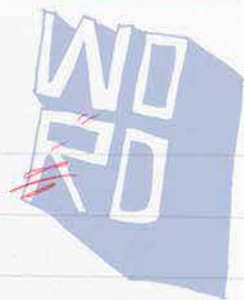
Dear
diary



THE SUMMER
SOLSTICE,
THE LONGEST DAY
OF THE YEAR,
21 JUNE 2017



diary



On that day, we would like everyone reading this magazine to make a diary entry. It can be in verse, in pictures, in bullet points, in prose. Any way you like.

It can be extremely detailed, from the minute you open your eyes in the morning, or a broad brush. It might be the most wonderful day of your life, or the worst, or just a run-of-the-mill, nothing-much-happens 24 hours. It doesn't matter. We want to hear from you all.

You can record your feelings, your hopes, your aspirations, your fears, your anxieties, your moments of joy. You can write a day in the life jointly with a friend, if that's easier, or in a reading group, if you belong to one. A member of your family might also want to take part, or a friend who visits you in prison, perhaps, or your son or daughter, too.

We hope that what will emerge is a wonderful tapestry, a window opening up onto your world. If you can send your diary entry with a full name and address, or just a first name, to the FREEPOST address in this magazine, or give your contribution to a WIP worker, if you are in contact with one, we would be delighted to receive it.

We will publish a selection of diary entries in the autumn issue of Ready! Steady! Go! Remember the date! My Diary, 21 June 2017!



STRO UP!

NEWS AND VIEWS

THIS ISSUE

- VISITS FROM OVERSEAS
- BEST ACT IN POLITICS
- GOVERNMENT SHAME
- WOMEN'S EQUALITY





BARONESS JEAN CORSTON WITH THE KNITTED BOUQUET MADE BY WOMEN AT HMP FOSTON HALL, HMP DOWNVIEW AND THE BETH CENTRE, LONDON



LIZ TRUSS, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE, PLEDGES CHANGE

A sparkling event at the House of Lords to launch Women in Prison's latest campaign

Women in Prison's new 2020 campaign, which aims to see a reduction in the women's prison population from almost 4,000 women to 2,020 (or fewer!) by the year 2020, had a very successful launch at the House of Lords at an afternoon tea reception co-hosted by WIP's patron, Baroness Jean Corston.

The reception assembled MPs, members of the House of Lords, prison governors, police and crime commissioners and the leaders of women's centres from across the country, including representatives from North Wales, Merseyside and, Yorkshire. Liz Truss, the Secretary of State for Justice, spoke, pledging to support change.

Most importantly, we also brought together women with experience of prison and the criminal justice system to share their experiences and ideas for change with those who can wield influence. Jennifer Joseph and Sarah-Jane Dent, from the theatre company Clean Break, performed a short play written by Deborah Bruce, inspired by workshops held in a women's prison.

A striking bouquet of knitted flowers (on the cover), made by women across the prison estate, was presented to Baroness Corston, in thanks for her long years of campaigning to radically overhaul women's experience of the criminal justice system.

Baroness Corston was visibly moved by the gifts that included an embroidered handkerchief and an embroidered cushion from Fine Cell Work, and sent her thanks to their creators.

Claire Cain, WIP's Policy and Campaigns Manager



BEAUTIFUL
BOUQUET KNITTED
BY WOMEN AS A
THANK YOU TO
BARONESS CORSTON



Celebrating International Women's Day

CARRIE DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED IN HMP FOSTON HALL

The gym became the place for activities, stalls and speakers. We also had an inspirational pin board. Women put the name of a person who had inspired them, or whom they regarded as a role model, on a piece of paper and pinned it to the board.

Among the speakers was Marie-Claire O'Brien, who had served time in prison and is now founder of The New Leaf Initiative, which offers "a rehabilitation revolution". Marie-Claire said the programme offers "a friendly ear and a can-do attitude". She told us, "You are worth more than you give yourself credit for... if you want something different, and do something different."

We had a quiz about inspirational women in which teams competed for a first prize of £5 phone credit and £2 credit for those in second place.

Women in Prison put together an excellent display of "Women who have changed the World", compiled by WIP workers Narinder and Perri. It was good to see a few male officers taking the time to browse



What do you think?

Send us your opinions via Freeport WOMEN IN PRISON for consideration for publication..

Make clear please whether you want your first name to appear in the magazine or you prefer to remain anonymous.

the stalls and talk to the women. Staff, women at HMP Foston Hall and WIP all deserve credit for creating such a successful event. Marie-Claire said: "If even one woman is inspired to change her life, then it would have been worth it." Being in prison doesn't mean we don't have successful futures ahead of us.

It's at times like this when we look back at the story of exceptional women and know we can be just as great.

STRO UP!

inspiring friendship. They are the building block of community and family life. As an organisation, run by women for women, we at Women in Prison (WIP) were thrilled to become involved and show the courage and resilience of the women that we work with - YOU!!!

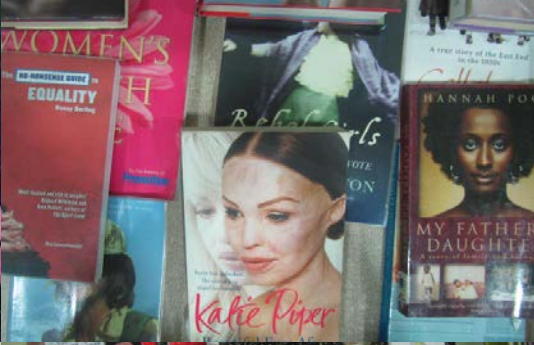
Women in Prison's WomenMATTA Project is a member of the Greater Women's Manchester Support Alliance. This is made up of seven local charities that provide support services to women, including those in contact with the criminal justice system. The Alliance works across Greater Manchester's 10 boroughs. The charities in the Alliance jointly celebrated IWD.

Initially, the Alliance delivered a series of workshops both in HMP Styal and at the different women's centres across Greater Manchester, asking women to create art-work celebrating the strength and diversity of Manchester women.

The participants were asked to run riot with their imaginations and employ different media to create visual representations of "Our Manchester Women"; women who have been an inspiration throughout their lives. The artists didn't disappoint! Their work appeared in many forms including paintings, poetry, audio and visual recordings and much more.

Women also nominated family members and friends as their inspirational women. The stunning results were displayed at a month-long exhibition at the Nexus Art Café in Manchester's city centre.

At the opening on 7 March, over 80 people attended, including colleagues from partner agencies such as Shelter, women with whom WIP works and representatives from HMP Styal. Women who were unable to attend will receive special-edition photo books, so that they can see their work on display. We can't wait for next year!



...AND IN MANCHESTER, KATE FRASER DESCRIBES A BLOOMING OF CREATIVITY ACROSS THE CITY

The theme for 2017's International Women's Day (IWD) was "Our Manchester Women". Manchester City Council felt that Manchester's biggest assets are the people of the city and women, in particular, are the city's backbone. They juggle a number of roles as neighbourhood leaders, mothers, sisters, carers and friends;

STR8 UP!

Launch of a new report charting the lack of progress on the groundbreaking 2007 Corston Report

Women in Prison has published a new report entitled Corston+10, tracking the outcomes of the recommendations made 10 years ago in the Corston Report. Corston+10 uses a traffic-light system – green for implementation, amber for some progress and red for no progress – to make fresh calls for accelerating radical change for women affected by the criminal justice system.

OUR KEY CALLS FOR CHANGE INCLUDE

- Expansion of, and sustained funding for, women's centres as "one-stop-shops" to support women in the community.
- Liaison and diversion schemes to be extended and rolled out nationally, to divert women away from custody into support.
- More investment in other specialist community support, including support for mental health and accommodation.
- Sentencing reform with greater use of alternatives to custody and women's community support services in preference to prison.

In 2007, the Corston Report made 43 recommendations for a women-centred, holistic approach for women affected by the criminal justice system. It called for a significant reduction in the women's prison population and an increased use of community sentences, and it helped to address issues such as addiction and trauma. The Corston Report forms the basis of Women in Prison's campaigning today.

Corston+10 will be the backbone of WIP's latest campaign to see a marked reduction in the women's prison population by 2020.

Claire Cain, Policy and Campaigns Manager Women in Prison



CORSTON+10
THE CORSTON REPORT
10 YEARS ON

*How far have we come on the road
to reform for women affected by the
criminal justice system?*

Produced by Women in Prison and supported by Barrow Cadbury Trust



Produced by Women in Prison

Court of Appeal announces groundbreaking ruling for prisoners

In a groundbreaking legal victory, three judges in the Court of Appeal have ruled that cuts to legal aid for prisoners are unlawful because they are “inherently” - meaning fundamentally - unfair. The result of the judgment is that it overturns the cuts in respect of three important areas, namely:

- Pre-tariff reviews before the Parole Board where the board does not have the power to direct release but advises the Secretary of State for Justice on whether a prisoner would be suitable for a move to open conditions;
- Categorisation reviews of Category A prisoners; and
- Placement in close-supervision centres.

Now the government must present plans to give effect to the judgment. The Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) intends to negotiate the widest possible range of legal aid for prisoners in those areas.

Calls to the PAS increased from 14,000 to 25,000 in the last year. PAS believes that the cause is cuts to legal aid and prisoners' limited ability to access justice.

The legal challenge by PAS and the Howard League for Penal Reform began in De-

ember 2013 when, as a result of government cuts, prisoners lost any possibility of obtaining legal aid for a wide range of issues.

The Court's judgment included the consideration of the range of cases that go through the system and whether existing alternatives, such as the internal complaints procedure, are capable of filling the gap left by the removal of legal aid.

The final paragraph of the judgment states: “... Almost no changes have been introduced to replace the gap left by the removal of legal aid. We have concluded that, at a time when the evidence about prison staffing levels, the current state of prisons, and the workload of the Parole Board suggests the system is under considerable pressure, the system has at present not got the capacity sufficiently to fill the gap in the run of cases in those three areas.”

This is a groundbreaking legal victory in which the vulnerability of the prison population is fully - and finally - recognised as a key factor in their limited ability to access justice.

By Deborah Russo, Joint Managing Solicitor at the Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS)



DEBORAH RUSSO



The
Royal
Courts
of
Justice

HAVE YOU RECEIVED AN UNFAIR SENTENCE?

The Centre for Criminal Appeals is a charity law firm. One of our missions is to challenge disproportionate sentences arising out of the courts of England and Wales. We do not charge our clients for legal representation.

Our projects provide legal representation for women who wish to appeal against their sentence, i.e. to ask the court to look again at their sentence. This can be done on a number of grounds e.g. failure to raise or take into proper account childcare responsibilities, a mental health condition or a learning disability, to name but a few.

If you are a woman who feels that your sentence was unjust and you are:

- in prison for a non-violent offence;
- you feel you were given inadequate advice about your right to appeal against the sentence or no explanation as to why an appeal against your sentence would be unsuccessful,

we invite you to write to us at the address below to see whether your case could be included in our Women's Sentencing Project.

We are not going to be able to help everyone who writes to us - but we will look carefully at each letter we receive to see whether we can make a difference to the case, for you and for the sentencing scheme at large.

When writing to us, you can mark the front of the envelope with "Rule 39" to ensure that prison staff do not open the letter.

Please note that, if a solicitor is already representing you in relation to an appeal, we will not be able to assist.

WOMEN'S SENTENCING PROJECT

**Centre For Criminal Appeals
2 - 10 Princeton Street
Holborn,
London
WC1R 4BH**

1 in 3

WOMEN ACROSS THE WORLD EXPERIENCE VIOLENCE IN THEIR LIFETIME

(London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)

ONLY **6%**

OF THE ENGINEERING WORKFORCE IN THE UK IS FEMALE

(Women's Engineering Society)

WOMEN MAKE UP **51%**

OF THE POPULATION BUT ONLY **30%**

OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AT WESTMINSTER

(Fawcett Society)

85,000

WOMEN AGED 16-59 ARE RAPED EACH YEAR IN ENGLAND AND WALES

(Home Office)

WOMEN HOLD

0%

of the highest three ranks in the army, RAF and navy

(Fawcett Society)

WOMEN

THE HIGHEST NUMBERS OF WOMEN ARE EMPLOYED IN THE LOWEST PAID SECTORS, INCLUDING CARE AND RETAIL

(Fawcett Society)

GLOBALLY, WOMEN INVEST

90%

OF THEIR EARNINGS IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES COMPARED WITH **30-40%** INVESTED BY MEN

(World Bank)

THE GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN'S EARNINGS WAS 17.4% IN 1997 - IN 2014 IT WAS

»

9.4%

(BBC)

IN A TYPICAL MONTH,

78%

OF NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ARE WRITTEN BY MEN

(Fawcett Society)

THERE ARE

130 million

CHILDREN IN THE WORLD WITH NO ACCESS TO EDUCATION - 70% OF THEM ARE GIRLS

(International Rescue Committee)



MS

Yvonne Roberts talks to best-selling crime writer and a favourite choice in prison libraries, *Dreda Say Mitchell*

GRIT

HAYLEY SWORE WHEN SHE GOT OUT OF prison that she would turn her life around. But living on the Devil's Estate doesn't make it easy. She spends... her nights collecting cash from people who can't get loans any other way. But someone has just robbed her and she has 24 hours to get her money back, or her boss will come for her... If she makes one false move, her life will be over."

Hayley Evans is the heroine of *One False Move*, Dreda Say Mitchell's latest book. Another, *Blood Daughter*, the third in a trilogy called *Flesh and Blood*, will be published in August, "...be careful what you wish for, and watch out for whom you trust..."

Dreda, 51, is an award-winning crime writer and one of the country's most popular authors; her books, including *Killer Tune*, *Geezer Girls* and *Vendetta*, are also borrowed, again and again, from libraries in women's prisons.

Smiling, energetic, passionate, warm and instantly likeable, Dreda has written 11 books in as many years; idle she isn't. But she immediately clears up a small mystery of her own – she doesn't work alone. Dreda's real name is Emma Joseph. Dreda was her Irish grandmother's name pronounced Dreedaa; Dreda's great grandmother was called Say Mitchell. Dreda, so far, has co-written all her thrillers, mostly in and around her home

patch, the East End of London, with her "life partner" Tony Mason, whose previous life was in computers. They have been together for 23 years.

They think up the plots and the characters together, then divide up the scenes, each

working in her/his own room in the house they share in

Walthamstow, east London. The target is a hefty 6,000 words a day, six days a week.

"Sundays we keep for doing something special," Dreda says.

By the time you read this, Dreda and Tony will be in Los

Angeles, discussing possible film options. Dreda also has

plans to strike out alone, writing a series featuring a mixed-race, female cop.

Success may have catapulted her into the middle classes, but the issues closest to her heart still come from her working-class background, the colour of her skin and the importance of aspirations, no matter how tough the life you live. >>>

"The issues closest to her heart come from her working-class background".

ONE GOOD GIRL.
ONE VERY
BAD FAMILY.

GANGSTER GIRL

DREDA SAY MITCHELL

'A great read written by a great girl' MARTINA COLE

An East End
woman scorned
will get her
revenge....

BLOOD MOTHER

DREDA SAY MITCHELL

IN A MAN'S WORLD,
IT'S THE WOMEN YOU
HAVE TO WATCH...

BLOOD SISTER

DREDA SAY MITCHELL

ONE FALSE MOVE

DREDA SAY MITCHELL

'Breathless from the first word
and thrilling to the last' LEE CHILD

“People talk about deprived communities and the lack of money, but there’s more to quality of life than how much you have in the bank. It’s about having a sense of who you are, your history and a belief in what you can achieve.”

If that’s Dreda’s creed, she lives by it daily. Her parents came from Grenada in the 1960s and she was born in London. Her father left school at 13 to become a fisherman. In London, he worked in a chicken factory in Tower Hamlets. Her mother was a “domestic” in Mile End Hospital. Dreda, a “bookaholic”, adopted the Whitechapel Library, now demolished, as her second home. “The whole family has always told stories; it’s part of our culture.”

Dreda is the baby in a family of four children. She attended a Catholic school and excelled at sports, “the normal route for black children”. But she rebelled and gave up athletics to concentrate on her studies, inspired by her history teacher, Miss Lewis. “We had lots of girls from Dominica, St Lucia, Grenada but there wasn’t a single picture of a black girl in the school.” During her A levels year, a book in the library caught her eye.

“She turned up to a new job as a teacher, and was asked if she was looking for the kitchen.”

It was called *The Black Jacobins*, written by a famous Trinidadian historian, C. L. R.

James, it tells the story of a slave uprising in Haiti in the 1790s.

“I was excited,”

Dreda, says, “I’d heard of the American

Revolution and the French

Revolution but not of this

black slaves’ revolt.” Inspired, she

went on to read for a degree in African

Studies at London University, keeping financially afloat with jobs as a chambermaid,

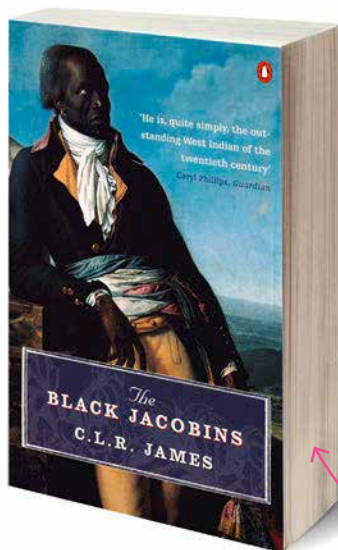
waitress and catering assistant. “My dad was ill and I realised that I couldn’t rely on anyone else; I had to apply self-help. I had to do it myself.” She eventually became a teacher and

rose to the position of deputy head of a primary school. Then, it was time for the first of her several switches of career.

“Initially, I would be in school before 7am

because I loved the job. The children I taught were like I had been, with a hunger to learn. But I became more and more disillusioned with the paperwork, the targets, and the way in which the creative arts have been pushed out of the curriculum and treated as a ‘hobby’, when they can be instrumental in firing up a child’s passion. And that matters for the achievement of working class kids in particular,” Dreda says.

She applied for a job as



C.L.R. JAMES' BOOK WAS AN INSPIRATION

deputy head of an ethnic minority achievement unit in London: “And I got it!” Dreda understands how corrosive racism can be. Once, she turned up to a new job as a teacher in a school, and a member of staff asked if she was looking for the kitchen.

Later, in 2000, Dreda decided to follow a long-held ambition. She signed up for an evening class in how to write fiction. She attended another course and the person teaching it became Dreda’s first publisher, Maggie Hamand. *Running Hot* was published in 2004; it tells the story of Elijah “Schoolboy” Campbell, who has seven days to raise the money to get out of London’s Hackney – and trouble.

“It was based on my brother who had got into difficulties with drugs. He’d been to detention centre, borstal, prison,” Dreda says. “Then, he found a place outside London to go into rehab. He had seven days to raise the fare and came to me to ask for the £30. I thought, ‘This is the same old, same old...’, but I did give it to him; he did go, and he’s been clean ever since and turned his life around. He said: ‘The problem isn’t going into prison, it’s coming out.’ I wrote the book because I was sick of plots in which the young black guy dies in the end.” *Running Hot* won the Crime Writers’ Association’s award for best first novel.

Now, Dreda frequently goes into prisons to talk about writing and to encourage prisoners to believe in themselves and their talents more. “Again and again, young black men read *Running Hot* and say to me, ‘That’s me, that is’. One told me in Wormwood Scrubs, ‘I could blame the school for where I am, I can blame friends, I can blame the prison officers but, in the end, the only one to

really blame is myself. And I can do something about it.’”

She says that, for a project that has since lost its funding, she went to a Young Offenders Institution to encourage a group to read and write rap as a route to literacy. One young man, not very tall in height, said he couldn’t read or write. He was given intensive support and, eventually, produced 33 poems, one of which, *I Might Be Small*, won three awards. Dreda smiles broadly.

She says her mother died of liver cancer at the age of 50, never having smoked or drunk. “So I feel that, at my age, I have to grab everything, do as much as I can, enjoy life.”

In addition to her writing, Dreda is a journalist, broadcaster and motivational speaker. Plus, she has a queue of material for future plots, one of which is to do with the curse of the body image and how it impacts black women. In many of her books, women are treated badly; life isn’t kind – but they fight back for the sake of their families and for themselves. Dreda says she takes delight in the attitude of her niece, Ria, aged seven. “She was standing in front of the mirror, the other day, saying, ‘Ria is looking really great today’. I love that.” She smiles again. “I love to see strong women.”

DREDA’S WORKS

Dreda’s books include *Running Hot*, *Killer Tune* and the *Gangland Girls* trilogy *Geezer Girls*, *Gangster Girls* and *Hit Girls*. Her latest trilogy, *Flesh and Blood*, includes *Blood Sister*, *Blood Mother* and, in August 2017, *Blood Daughter*.

www.dredasaymitchell.com

OILS, ESSENCES & OTHER GOODIES

“You don’t have to spend a fortune on a jar of cream,” says Rachel in HMP Downview, as she lists some health and beauty aids that are natural and a whole lot cheaper!

Illustrations by Lucy

HERBAL TEA

Put 1-2 teaspoons of dried or fresh herbs in a cup or jar. Pour 1 cup of hot water (not boiling) over the herbs. You may add lemon (peel included). Keep covered for 5-10 minutes, then strain. These extracts can be drunk and used as a gargle.



INFUSED OIL

To make infused herbal oil, fill a clean jar with dried herbs (do not use fresh). Cover the herbs

with oil, such as olive

oil, sunflower oil, almond, or coconut oil. Be sure to push the herbs down so they are completely covered in oil. Leave at room temperature for two weeks or more, shaking occasionally.

Strain out the herbs and use this oil directly on the skin.

LAVENDER

Used for bites, stings, cuts, acne and wounds to help the skin heal.



Helps soothe headaches and aids sleep.

CHAMOMILE

Soothes sore skin, eczema and eye infections.

Relieves nervous tension and aches.



LEMON

Combats cold and flu, reduces fever.

Good source of vitamin C to maintain general health and used in infusions and inhalations.

COMPRESS

Soak a washcloth in the infusion described above and apply directly to the skin and leave for several minutes. Chamomile is especially good for inflammation.

PIMPED OUT GINGER CAKE!

By Shahnaz in HMP Foston Hall

Illustration by Lucy



STEAM INHALATION

Steam inhalations are a great way to enjoy the benefits of herbs on the skin and in the lungs. Put about 2 teaspoons of dried or fresh lavender buds or leaves and the contents of 1 chamomile teabag in a large bowl. Pour hot water over the herbs and cover your head with a towel. Relax and inhale the steam. A steam facial can be an occasional addition to your cleansing routine.

HAIR CARE

Hair is an extension of the skin and can benefit from herbal treatments as well. After shampooing, rinse your hair with a herbal infusion. The herbs you use can help accentuate your hair colour.

Ingredients

- Jamaican ginger cake (£1)
- Angel Delight (85p)
- White chocolate (50p)
- Milk chocolate (50p)

Method

- 1 Cut the cake in half horizontally.
- 2 Melt half of the white chocolate and mix it with the Angel Delight. Spread the mix across the middle of the cake and sandwich two halves together.

3 Melt the milk chocolate and spread over the top of the cake and let it drizzle down the sides. If you wish, you can melt the rest of the white chocolate and drizzle that over, too.

4 Leave it to set then slice and enjoy!!!

Please send us your favourite recipe

We would love to publish your recipes. Please send yours to the Freepost address at the back of the magazine



Marilyn

A day in the life

Marilyn Carthy, a lecturer for Milton Keynes College based at HMP Foston Hall.

Illustration by Ulla

Thoughts swirl around my head. "Sam, our additional learner supporter, can work with these two. They can work together on that; I'll bring their skills up on this."

I am planning and preparing for my day teaching Functional English at HMP Foston Hall. But wait! It's 2am. I should be asleep.

I doze off then get woken up by Radio One at 6.27am precisely. Why Radio One? I'm middle aged. They are talking about how to handle the stress of GCSEs, which confirms to me that I'm really not its target audience. I listen to the news and weather, then get up at exactly 6.33am. I chose my outfit for the day when I was awake in the middle of the night.

I like to look professional and wear formal suits, usually colourful; red, turquoise, green, purple and pink. I rarely do black. I like to be colour co-ordinated - shoes, costume jewellery and Alice band MUST all match.

Arriving at Foston Hall, I walk through the well-maintained grounds and I often think myself lucky to work in such lovely surroundings.

The Grade II-listed hall stands proudly in the centre of the grounds. The chickens are scratching for worms and a moorhen scrambles for cover towards the rushes by the pond.

I walk past the two holly trees standing like sentries at what would have been the servants' entrance and I wind my way through the maze of corridors and climb the steep servants' stairs to the education department.

I've taught in the same room for 10 years, so I like to think of it as "my" room. It has raspberry-pink and cream-coloured walls with matching pink flooring. The prison was kind enough to let me choose the colours for this room when it was redecorated so, of course, it had to be colour co-ordinated.

Situated on the first floor, it looks out onto the football pitch and I have a wonderful view of the surrounding countryside. It's an ideal space for people to forget they are in prison.

I want learners to be so fully engaged, they lose track of time. Hearing, "Wow, is that the time

already, Miss?" is how I gauge whether I've done a good job.

Today, we are studying stereotypes of women and the Land Girls of World War II. Did I say Functional English? So why are we studying topics that are surely about equality, diversity and history? Give me any topic and I can turn it into an English lesson: the sinking of the Titanic, recycling, positive body images, happiness and the history of Foston Hall are just a few of the topics I cover.

Teachers are now expected to embed equality, health and safety, maths, English, employability, British values, social, moral, cultural and spiritual issues into their lessons, as well as teaching the subject they are tasked to deliver.

The learners arrive. Thanks to the Royal British Legion, I have a wonderful clip of the Land Army girls which gives my learners plenty of ideas to use when writing a diary imagining they were in the Land Army. Adjectives aplenty, the creativity in the room is infectious. The amount of writing is far beyond what is expected at their level, because they are engaged. We use damp teabags to age the paper.

Often, the work is put on display and I think it's important for my learners to show others what they have achieved in English.

At 4.45pm, it's time for us all to go. I put 100% effort in during the day. I love my job. I give respect and I get it back. I'm straight-talking, strict and if you are prepared to put in some effort, we'll get along fine.

One learner commented on her feedback form, "There's method in her madness" and it is certainly true.

Other learners tell me nobody likes me. My response is: "I'm not here to be liked. I'm here to teach."

I have taught many learners with whom I've had clashes but, because I start every day afresh and I don't hold grudges, these learners keep coming to class and make real progress because, in the end, they enjoy it.

I listen to Classic FM on the way home again, then nice cup of decaffeinated coffee and I'm ready to start my online learning course. Now, what topic can I focus on for my next course?



HEALTH HOPE + HAPPINESS!

- » **TURN THE PAGES TO DISCOVER WHAT COULD BE A PRESCRIPTION FOR A NEW YOU!**
 - » **HEAR ABOUT HEALTH MATTERS, WOMEN IN PRISON'S NEW THREE-YEAR PROJECT**
 - » **APPLY FIRST AID FOR THE FUTURE — AND DO IT NOW!**
 - » **READ 10 TIPS TO GET PHYSICAL — AND SHAPE UP!**
 - » **LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR MIND AND BODY AND OPEN THE DOOR TO CALMNESS**
-



HEALTH MATTERS!

Health Matters is a new, three-year scheme funded by the Big Lottery. Like all WIP's projects, it offers information, advice and support to women affected by the criminal justice system but, unlike others, it focuses specifically on health. Sofia Gullberg explains WIP's new project

Busy lives mean that the state of our health sometimes drops to the bottom of the agenda. We want to change that by encouraging women to give health the attention it deserves. We also want women to think about how their mental and physical health fit together. This "fit" – a necessary condition of wellbeing – covers a range of issues that include healthy eating, exercise and pampering yourself. All of which, in turn, can make you mentally better equipped to fight stress, anxiety or a low mood.

Health Matters has two health advocates: Julia and Charmaine. An advocate is someone who supports you to speak out

about an issue that concerns you, in this case, your health and wellbeing. An advocate can also support you to speak to someone else, for example another professional.

Advocates don't speak for you but they can help to put your views across, if you believe you are struggling to make yourself heard. They can also act as a bridge between you and another professional, for example by helping you set up appointments and attend them with you. Because we work both in prisons and in the community, we can also support a woman when she leaves prison, for example when registering with a GP or a dentist. We also run workshops that provide

information and educational material.

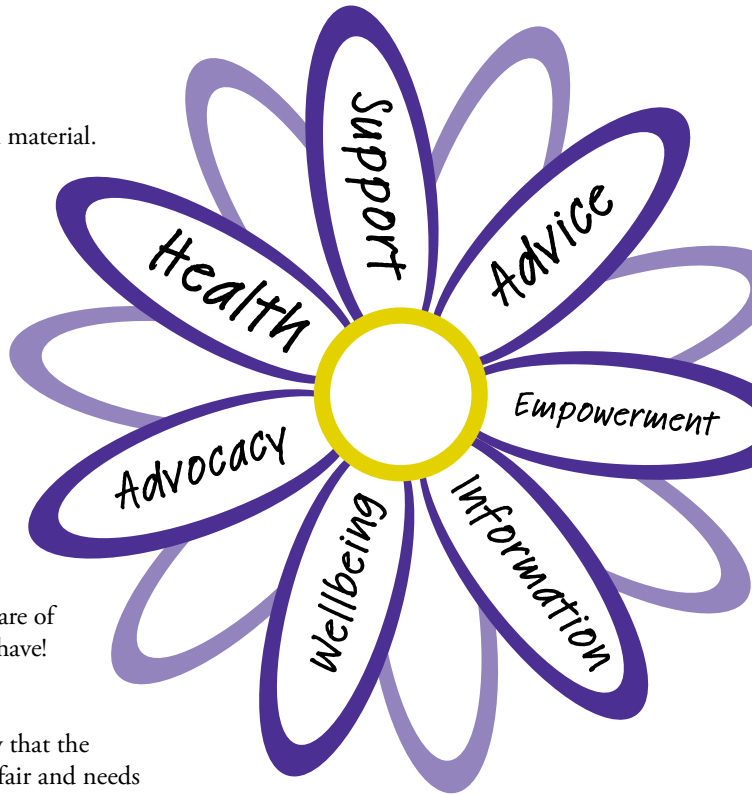
The Health Matters project works with women in HMP Downview, in HMP Bronzefield, and in the community, in London. Unfortunately, we are a small team and, as a result, are not able to work in all prisons or across the country. Instead, the Health Matters workers have helped put together this *RSG!* issue around the theme of health and wellbeing, hopefully to inspire you to take good care of yourself – the best asset you have!

...Anything else?

As an organisation, we know that the criminal justice system is unfair and needs changing. This is why we campaign for radical change. We tell politicians and other decision-makers that, for most women, prison is not the answer; they deserve a better chance and the support that can be provided through a community sentence.

As we work in prisons, we are able to speak to you directly, to hear your views and pass them on to those who have the power to actually implement change.

We know that healthcare provision in prisons is not perfect, largely as a result of staff



shortages. We also know that many women in the community don't receive the advice and support they need.

If there is anything regarding health that you think those in power should hear, let us know by writing to us at the Freepost address given in the magazine. We hope that we can help you directly through our work but also hope to make the entire system better by sharing what we learn from you.

Good health from the Health Matters team!

“Advocates can help to put your views across, if you are struggling to be heard”.

FIRST AID

FOR THE FUTURE

**INGREDIENTS FOR A BETTER
CHANCE OF A BETTER YOU...**

GIVING UP THE BOOZE
STUBBING OUT CIGGIES
KEEPING A CHECK ON
BLOOD BORNE VIRUSES
DEALING WITH STRESS
SLEEPING BETTER >>>>



LOVE LIFE IN CONTROL




Lucy Rocca, founder of Soberistas, an online social network site aimed at helping women who have problems with alcohol, explains what drinking did to her life and how she stopped six years ago.

I always drank to get drunk. I never understood people who would sip a glass or two of wine just to get a gentle buzz and then be happy to leave it alone. Even in my mid-teens, I was the one who routinely drank until I passed out, the one for whom friends would call a taxi to get me home early due to me being in a complete state of inebriation.

It can be a challenge to recognise alcohol dependence in yourself. We live in a society in which everyone (or so it seems) drinks and often to excess. When I was a young teenager, heavy drinking was something that everyone did. My friends and I would drink while hanging round on street corners and the school grounds, at house parties and discos, anywhere where booze was available and out of sight of anyone who might try and put a stop to it.

In the 1990s, I spent most of my time in a Sheffield pub called The Broadfield, drinking pints and playing pool, missing my university lectures and concentrating on having fun. And it was fun, most of the time. I had no responsibilities back then other than myself – no kids, no job. My partners always drank to excess, too, so they never cared that I was drinking myself into oblivion most nights.

When I got married and became a mum in my early twenties, I didn't put a stop to my hedonistic habits, I just swapped drinking in the pub for drinking at home. We had parties and cooked meals for friends, and always, always, there would be huge amounts of alcohol along with my inability to control the amount I consumed. I blacked out and threw up, argued with my husband, and muddled my way through the weekends,



LUCY ROCCA, FOUNDER
OF SOBERISTAS

**“During the
past three years,
I have rarely
contemplated
drinking”.**

trying to be a good parent but crippled by debilitating hangovers.

At 27, I got divorced and embarked upon a period of self-destruction lasting several years. I suffered from depression and attempted to self-medicate with wine. I pin-balled between bad relationships with the wrong people and found myself waking up countless times full of self-loathing and remorse because of something I had done when drunk the night before. As time went by, I began to hate myself more and more but concealed my feelings beneath an air of nonchalance. I was a party girl and had a reputation for being wild – laughing the drunken antics off was easy but, inside,

I was tortured by my increasing dependence upon alcohol.

When I was 35, I went through a period of unemployment which propelled me towards drinking even more booze. I was depressed and frustrated, and felt as though my life hadn't amounted to anything. One night when my daughter (then aged 12) was staying with her dad, I drank three bottles of wine and a litre of super-strength cider and collapsed on the pavement outside my flat. A passer-by found me and called an ambulance, and I woke up hours later in Sheffield's Northern General Hospital, covered in my own cold vomit and with no memory of how I had got there.

At that point, I finally accepted that I >>

couldn't control my alcohol consumption and it was unlikely I ever would be able to. I have never touched alcohol since.

I was emotionally and psychologically dependent upon alcohol, although not physically. Thus, I had no withdrawals and there was no need for me to undergo a medical detox to quit safely. However, adjusting to life without alcohol after more than two decades of using it to get through every occasion, every feeling, and every new relationship, and having to cope with boredom, stress, frustration, celebrations and everything in between was a challenge, to say the least. I had no confidence, was filled with shame and guilt for the fact that I hadn't always been the perfect mother to my daughter, and had a string of booze-related regrets as long as my arm to try and deal with.

After a year of living without alcohol, I started to think about creating a safe, non-judgmental online resource aimed at women who had gone through similar experiences to me – who might not want to attend Alcoholics Anonymous but who definitely needed help to get sober. I began writing a blog and it soon attracted hundreds of followers.

In November 2012, that blog became Soberistas.com, a social network website that allows its members to blog and interact with one another, to share their thoughts and feelings around drinking and getting sober, and to support one another through the tough times. In its first year of operation, the Soberistas community grew to more than 20,000 people, based all over the world but mostly in the UK (currently 65% of our membership is from the UK).

Soberistas has a live chat room, blogging section and forum discussions, monthly

expert webinars, an “ask the doctor” feature, motivational and informative articles on health and wellbeing, a book club, and a discount club for health and wellbeing products and services. The site now has approximately 40,000 members and the only requirement for signing up is that you want to resolve a problematic relationship with alcohol. Soberistas is non-judgmental and non-religious, and there's no set method for getting sober.

Since quitting alcohol, there have been a few occasions when I've thought about drinking; usually when I've felt stressed or nervous, especially in social situations. These temptations have occurred less frequently as time has gone on, and certainly during the past three years, I have rarely contemplated drinking – if at all. I equate my life now with not drinking and I know that if I started again, then I'd be back at square one.

Once you are out of prison and if you are concerned you may return to drinking, try Soberistas. Members of Soberistas get on top of their drinking issues by tapping into the website's peer support, through belonging to a community of friendly, understanding and like-minded people who all share a common goal – to become healthier and happier without alcohol destroying their lives. If I did it, so can you. “Love life in control”.

Soberistas is free to join and all new members receive a week's free membership, allowing full access to the website. At the end of this free week, membership options are £12 for three months or £34 for a year.

soberistas.com

10 SELF-HELP TIPS TO STOP SMOKING – SMALL STEPS TO STOP YOU LIGHTING UP

1 THINK POSITIVE

- You really are going to do it.

2 MAKE A PLAN

- Decide when you are going to stop and stick to the date. If the cravings come, distract yourself until they pass. Avoid situations when it might be difficult. Give yourself a reward when temptation has presented itself and you've stuck to your promise not to smoke a ciggie.

3 CONSIDER YOUR DIET

- Disconnect smoking from food. Many women have a cigarette after a meal. Break the habit by replacing that ritual with a new ritual - knitting, painting, meditation...

4 CHANGE YOUR DRINK

- The same study looked at drinks. Fizzy drinks, alcohol, cola, tea and coffee all make cigarettes taste better. So, drink more water!

5 IDENTIFY WHEN YOU CRAVE CIGARETTES

- A craving can last five minutes. Before you give up, make a list of

five-minute strategies to distract yourself from the cravings and remember the combination of smoking and drinking raises your risk of mouth cancer by 38 times.

6 GET SOME STOP SMOKING SUPPORT

- Get friends and family to help - buddy up with another woman who shares your goal. If you get a craving, she can encourage you to stick to your resolve and you can help her in turn.
- You can also call the NHS Smokefree Helpline on 0300 123 1044, open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm, and Saturday to Sunday 11am to 4pm.

7 GET MOVING

- A review of scientific studies has proved exercise - even a five-

minute walk or stretch - cuts cravings and may help your brain produce anti-craving chemicals.

8 MAKE NON-SMOKING FRIENDS

- Stick with the non-smokers. Share with new friends that, since you are all non-smokers, you have increased your chances of a healthy long life.

9 KEEP YOUR HANDS AND MOUTH BUSY

- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) can double your chances of success.
- As well as patches, there are tablets, lozenges, gum and a nasal spray.

10 MAKE A LIST OF REASONS TO STOP – AND NEVER START AGAIN

- Keep reminding yourself why you made the decision to give up - your children, your health, the money in your pocket, wrinkles... what's on your list? Read it when you need support.



YOU CAN DO IT!

LEARNING ABOUT A SILENT KILLER

Rachel Halford of the Hepatitis C Trust explains blood born viruses (BBVs)

WHAT ARE BBVS?

They are viruses that are carried in the blood, with infected people showing little or no symptoms of serious disease.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON BBVS?

- HIV is the virus that affects the body's immune system. AIDS is the most advanced stage of HIV infection.

HOW IS IT CAUGHT?

- HIV is spread through contact with the blood, semen, pre-seminal fluid, rectal fluids, vaginal fluids, or breast milk of a person infected with HIV. HIV is spread mainly by having anal or vaginal sex or sharing drug injection equipment with a person infected with HIV.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Most people who are infected with HIV experience a short, flu-like illness two to six weeks after infection. After this, there may be no symptoms for several years.

HOW IS IT TREATED?

- The use of HIV medicines to treat HIV infection is called antiretroviral therapy (ART). ART involves taking a combination of HIV medicines (called an HIV regimen) every day.
- ART can't cure HIV infection, but it can help people infected with HIV live longer, healthier lives. HIV medicines can also reduce the risk of transmission of HIV.

HEPATITIS A DISEASE AFFECTING THE LIVER

There are five types of hepatitis: A, B, C, D & E. The most common are B & C.

HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B, sometimes called hep B or HBV, is a virus carried in the blood and body fluids, which infects and damages the liver and is the most widespread form of hepatitis worldwide.

HOW IS IT CAUGHT?

- HBV is spread through blood and body fluids. The most common way to catch it is through unprotected sex and sharing drug paraphernalia or equipment.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Some people may only have a mild illness and feel they are not ill enough to see a doctor. There are many general symptoms, some of which may be confused with flu.

- A few people develop serious symptoms and will need to be hospitalised. These symptoms include: diarrhoea, dark urine, jaundice (a condition in which the whites of the eyes go yellow and, in more severe cases, the skin also turns yellow).

HOW IS IT TREATED?

- People with the mild (called acute) phase of hepatitis B do not require treatment. In most cases, the symptoms resolve and the person can “clear” the infection, usually within six months, meaning they are no longer infectious. Their

blood will always show the hepatitis B antibodies but they should never be infected again (they become “immune”).

- Long-term infection is chronic hepatitis B, which can need treatment to stop or reduce the activity of the virus from damaging the liver. Not everyone needs treatment straight away. If you have low levels of the virus in your blood (a low viral load) and there is little sign of liver damage, it is likely that regular monitoring will be recommended and treatment started only if there are signs of disease progression.

YOU CAN BE VACINATED AGAINST HEPATITIS B WHILE YOU ARE IN PRISON. Ask an officer or a healthcare staff member.

HEPATITIS C

Hepatitis C, sometimes called hep C or HCV, is a virus that is carried in the blood, which infects and damages the liver.

HOW IS IT CAUGHT?

- Hepatitis C is most commonly spread by blood-to-blood contact. It can only be passed by body fluids with contaminated blood in them.

- The people most at risk are those who are exposed to blood and blood products. These are:

- A person who injects drugs, especially if they have shared any drug paraphernalia, which includes spoons, buds or syringes.

- People who received blood products in the UK before September 1991.

- People who have received medical treatment or blood products in a country where hep C is common.

- People who were born in a country where hep C is common

- It affects about one in 200 people.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Hep C affects people very differently – many people with it may show no symptoms at all. They may never know, until their liver is seriously damaged by a condition known as cirrhosis, which can cause a number of health problems, including the need for a liver transplant. Symptoms are hard to pin down and are frequently blamed on other problems. They can include: mild to serious tiredness, anxiety, loss of appetite, discomfort in the liver area (place your right hand over your lower ribs and it will just about cover the area of your liver), and problems with concentration (brain fog).

HOW IS IT TREATED?

- Hepatitis C can now be cured with new oral treatments. Once you are diagnosed with hepatitis C, it is important to get a referral to a liver specialist. They can provide you with information about the risks and benefits of the treatment.

ALL PRISONS OFFER A BBV TEST – get tested! You have nothing to fear.

THE COST OF SPENDING WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE

Mindy in HMP Foston Hall gives advice on how to deal with debt and improve your peace of mind

Prison can be daunting for many reasons but an added stress can be worry about money issues and debt. You may already have debts and have concerns about them

building up while you are serving your sentence. At HMP Foston Hall, we have a specialist finance adviser within the resettlement team who helps with money concerns. Your prison should have someone in a similar role who can help. Here is some advice to give you a good start in tackling what many of us prefer to avoid – debts!

RENT ARREARS

If you were claiming housing benefit >>



(HB) before prison, generally speaking, the following applies:

- If you are on remand, you are entitled to claim HB for up to 52 weeks.

- If and when you are sentenced, you are only entitled to claim HB if you have 13 weeks or less to serve.

Your resettlement team can help you to notify the council and continue or cancel HB payments. If you are not entitled to HB and have no other way of paying the rent, you may have to give up your tenancy – the sooner the better. This will avoid arrears building up.

If you are already in arrears, you can set up a weekly payment plan from your benefits once you are released. This will work in your favour when trying to find accommodation.

If you had a payment plan before coming to prison, it is a good idea to contact the council/provider to inform them that, while you are in custody, you have no income but you will resume the payments upon release and, if you can, provide a release date.

OTHER DEBTS/ACCOUNTS

It is best to contact whoever you owe money to and inform them of your current circumstances. Explain you cannot repay whilst in custody but you will contact them on your release. It is worth asking that any charges/interest be suspended for the period you are in prison. You can also ask if the

“Seek help from a financial advisor – debts don't disappear if you ignore them”.

amount owed can be written off.

COURT FINES

It is advisable to contact the court to notify it of your release date and inform it that you are unable to pay while in prison. If you choose to do so, you may also request that serving additional days in custody clears the fine.

Always seek the help of a financial advisor while in custody.

Debts don't disappear if you ignore them! If you are in the community, or serving a short sentence, you can also seek help from the Citizens Advice Bureau.

ADDING UP THE SUMS

- Almost three-quarters of prisoners surveyed said finance, benefits and debt were a very significant issue on release – second only to accommodation.
- A third of prisoners reported they did not have a bank account, and 31% of these had never had one.
- Only a third of prisoners reported being in paid employment in the four weeks before custody and 13% reported never having had a job.
- Fewer than one in 10 women entered employment on release – making it much more difficult to pay off debts and rent arrears.

Bromley Briefings (2016)

TIPS ON DEALING WITH **STRESS**

IDENTIFY YOUR TRIGGERS:

- Keep a diary and identify issues that come up regularly i.e. ongoing stressful events.
- Try to work out how you operate under pressure and develop different coping mechanisms.
- Once you've figured out what your stress factors are, you can take steps to try to deal with - and reduce - them.

TAKE CONTROL:

- Empowerment and positive thinking are key.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can help reduce your stress and make you feel more positive.
- Take charge of how you deal with things.

CONNECT WITH PEOPLE:

- Laughter and social support can help to reduce stress.

TAKING TIME FOR YOURSELF:

- Take time to do something you enjoy or find relaxing, such as yoga, singing, drawing, reading, exercise. Find what you enjoy!

CHALLENGE YOURSELF:

- Set yourself goals and challenges.
- Getting involved in something positive.

TRY TO BE HEALTHY:

- Being more active and having a balanced diet.
- Try to minimise your caffeine intake and smoking.

ACCEPT THINGS YOU CAN'T CHANGE:

- Changing a difficult situation isn't always possible. Try to concentrate on the things you do have control over.

SUPPORT TO HELP DEAL WITH STRESS:

- Use your support network, friends, family, peer support, group support, services available.

PRESERVE GOOD BOUNDARIES:

- Maintain good boundaries.
- Time management.

CREATE A TOOL BOX OF TECHNIQUES THAT CAN HELP DEAL WITH YOUR STRESS:

- Healthy techniques that work for you.

EMBRACE MISTAKES AND LEARN FROM THEM:

- Facing up to your mistakes and attempting to sort them out will help to minimise anxiety about them.

Zzzzzz... WIP'S HEALTH MATTERS TEAM GIVE YOU 10 TIPS TO SEND YOU TO SLEEP

- 1** Minimise the amount of caffeine in the afternoon and evenings, as it can disturb your sleep. Instead, try herbal teas or warm milky drinks.
- 2** Avoid heavy/rich foods and drinks before bed, as these can keep you awake.
- 3** Try to get into a routine with your sleep times, going to bed

and waking up roughly at the same time daily to programme your body.

- 4** Exercising regularly can help improve your sleep and release any stress built up over the day.

- 5** Try some deep breathing and relaxation techniques to relax your body and clear your mind before bed.

- 6** If you smoke, try to reduce the amount you smoke before bed, as nicotine is a stimulant and can keep you awake.

- 7** Turn off your electronics a little while before you go to sleep, as these stimulate your brain.

- 8** Write a "to-do" list for the next day to help unscramble your brain

before you go to sleep.

- 9** Keep a sleep diary, to help you identify different influences that may be causing difficulties with your sleep.

- 10** Try to take some "me time" before bed, do things that you find relaxing and enjoy, such as yoga, listening to music, meditation or singing.

FIND
THE
FIZZ
IN

NO MATTER HOW
SMALL THE SPACE
TO EXERCISE YOU
CAN GET FIT!

- » NEELAM, GYM ORDERLY
AT HMP FOSTON HALL, AND
L.J. FLANDERS GIVE YOU
10 EXERCISES TO STAY FIT
- » **OVER THE PAGE, AUTHOR
OF *CELL WORKOUT*
L. J. FLANDERS EXPLAINS
WHY “THIS GIRL CAN!”**

PHYS

10 WAYS TO PUT SOME FIZZ INTO PHYSICAL

FIVE EXERCISES TO DO IN A CELL OR AT THE GYM

By gym orderly Neelam

1 DONKEY KICKS

● Kneel on the floor on all fours, knees below the hips and arms below shoulders. Lift one leg keeping it bent, core engaged, until hamstring is in line with the spine, squeezing gluteus, then return to the start.

2 ALTERNATE HEEL TOUCHES

● Lie on your back with your knees bent, slowly crunch up, core engaged, and alternately touch your heels with your hands.

3 AB CRUNCHES

● Lie on your back with your knees bent, slowly crunch forwards,

keeping your neck straight, shoulders down (not up round your ears!), using your abs to pull you up, then lower yourself down and repeat.

4 SEATED KNEE TUCKS

● Seated on the floor, knees bent in front of you, hands at the side (off the floor to make it more difficult), lean slightly back, extend legs off the floor and retract again. See how many you can do without lowering your feet to the floor!

5 REVERSAL CRUNCHES

● Lie on your back, hands under your bum or by your side, flex both legs off the floor, take your bum off the floor then bring your bum down keeping the legs straight, hover feet off the floor (don't touch the floor!) and repeat as often as you can.

Repeat each exercise, building up to 3 sets of 10 repeats.

...AND FIVE EXERCISES FOR BEGINNERS TO IMPROVE BODYWEIGHT STRENGTH

by L. J. Flanders

1 SQUAT

2 sets of 20 reps

2 INCLINE PRESS-UP

3 sets of 10 reps

3 GLUTE BRIDGE

3 sets of 10 reps

4 SEATED KNEE TUCKS

3 sets of 15 reps

5 BENCH DIPS

3 sets of 10 reps

30 seconds rest between each period of exercise.

(ASK A GYM ORDERLY FOR HELP, IF MYSTIFIED)

FIZZICAL!

THIS GIRL CAN

Fitness instructor and author L.J. Flanders challenges the notion that exercise is not for women

A national campaign, This Girl Can, is a celebration of active women enjoying their particular sport, not caring how sweaty they appear or what exercise might do to their image. Physical activity brings its own rewards!

So, while you may be behind the door, don't let that stop you keeping fit. If

anything, find the positive in the negative. Keep the mindset that you will try your hardest to leave prison in a better physical and mental state than when you went in.

Five years ago, when I was 21 and on remand in HMP Pentonville, locked up for 22 hours a day, the need to train was my way of coping. I served 16 months in total. Training meant I could wear myself out, go to sleep more easily, use up my energy and be optimistic in a negative and unknown situation. The "feelgood" factor that exercise gave me was crucial in the early stages.

Prison and fitness tend to go hand-in-hand and exercise, along with reading and faith, is the support to which many people turn. Exercise is known to have a positive effect on the mind, reducing stress, anxiety, depression and feelings of aggression. It can lead to a sense of self-achievement and improve chances of rehabilitation. During the Cell Workout workshops I now give, we look at how exercise and feeling energised can bring about a positive mindset and behaviour change.

When I went in to prison, I was "football fit". In prison, I studied to qualify as a personal trainer and then I had a job in the prison gym. I began to work on the book that became *Cell Workout*. It includes exercises for all the key muscles, meditation techniques and stretching. The book was published in 2015 and, since my release, I've worked in a gym, become a freelance fitness instructor and now deliver workshops in prisons, including the reform prison HMP Wandsworth.

Some people have suggested a version of Cell Workout for women. So, I asked myself: "What would be the difference?" Should women train differently?

LET'S LOOK AT SOME OF THE FACTS

● When designing a training programme for women, the basic principles are the same as those for men. Start with bodyweight exercises before moving onto external resistance i.e. dumb bells, barbells, and machines.

● Focus first on building a strong core, from abdominals, obliques and erector spinae. Erector spinae describe a group of muscles around the spinal column that help in a number of areas, including good posture. Favour multi-joint exercises, recruiting more muscle groups, over isolation movements.

● Spend equal time training the muscles that you can't see in the mirror, known as the posterior chain (back, gluteals, hamstrings), rather than over-train the muscles you can see in the mirror (chest and quads).

● There are, however, some differences between the genders to consider. Young females can begin strength training before young males, because females mature earlier than males. Also, the drop-off in strength after a period of not training is quicker in females than men, and women carry less muscle mass than men.

● You have no need to think, "Will I end up looking like a man if I lift weights?" Men produce 10 times more testosterone than females, which makes the

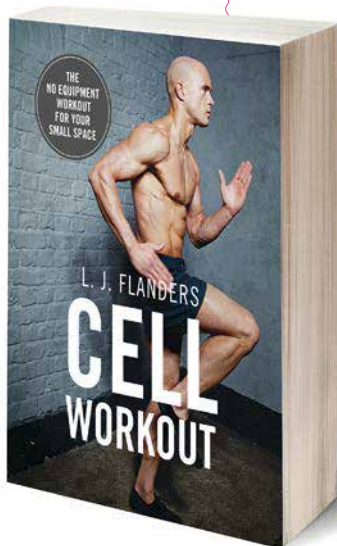
difference in muscle mass between the two genders. So, you won't be looking like Arnold Schwarzenegger anytime soon.

● Keep in mind the wise advice given by Jessica Ennis-Hill, the Olympic heptathlon – and go for it! "Strength doesn't come from winning," she said. "Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is true strength."

"Leave prison in a better physical and mental state than when you went in".

CELL WORKOUT

by L.J. Flanders



A bodyweight training guide designed for use in a prison cell. This 234-page book will guide you with step-by-step instructions performing 204 exercises with photographs and sample workouts. The exercises are suitable for any age, ability and fitness level and offers progression for everyone.

Price: £16.99

Publisher:

Hodder & Stoughton

www.cell-workout.com



HOW MUCH
DO YOU KNOW
ABOUT YOUR

MIND
+
BODY

...AND HOW TO OPEN THE DOOR TO CALM?

- » **THE POWER OF SINGING FOR FEELING GOOD**
- » **CREATING A QUIET SPACE – HOW MEDITATION HELPS**
- » **HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT YOUR BREASTS?**

- » **HOW ARTS AND CRAFTS WORK ON THE HEAD**
- » **THE POWER OF POETRY AND FICTION**
- » **ORGANISATIONS THAT CAN HELP WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES**

SING! SING! SING! AND REMEDY YOUR LIFE

Heather Phillips and Jane Evans of Beating Time explain how joining a choir can improve both your wellbeing and your chances in life

Let me tell you about a drug that inside prison and after release can help you to make the most of life and improve wellbeing – a remedy that is therapy. It’s called choir and it has five active ingredients: singing, other people, weekly practices, performance and music. Each has a specific function. Together, they can change lives.

Singing: a powerful natural high. It produces a healthy cocktail of “feel-good” chemicals: endorphins, dopamine and oxytocin. Endorphins lift us up, dopamine is the addictive bit that keeps us coming back for more and oxytocin takes the pain away. It is also a natural anti-depressant: suppressing our production of stress hormones, cortisol and cortisone (it’s so effective at doing this that cancer patients are prescribed singing to keep the stress hormones which deplete our immune systems right down, helping our bodies fight disease).

This “high” lasts for around 24 hours. That’s 15% of your time spent feeling calmer, happier and more able to cope. Goldsmiths University found that 86% of people that sing in our choirs experience this. As one told us recently: “Choir has kept me sane and calm. It helps me deal with my pent-up aggression. When I get back to the wing, I’m dancing.”

Other people/social bonding: Oxford



“This “high” lasts for around 24 hours, feeling calmer, happier and more able to cope.”

Professor Robin Dunbar has been studying “group singing” to find out why people who sing together bond so quickly. He has found singing breaks down social barriers between people seven times faster than any other activity. I have a personal theory as to why that is: when we take the decision to sing to one another, we make, and communicate, the decision to trust one another. Singing in public makes us feel vulnerable. But showing vulnerability is how we build trust. Trust is the foundation of every good relationship and part of our contract with the wider society. We need to model trusting, positive, productive communities in our prisons. A choir is the perfect model of a harmonious community.

Weekly practices: some things, history,

physics, law are learnt. Other things, parenting, music, leadership, languages are “practices” – long journeys we take to make one step at a time.

Most life skills are practices.

When we become proficient at something, through practice, our confidence grows. We prove to ourselves that we can improve, learn, master, grow... But to do that, we need time. Choirs practise together every week for YEARS. Relationships build, technical skills develop, creativity emerges, performance improves and we become people who can and do.

We’ve seen people who didn’t let themselves join in at all the first week, sing in the second week, then volunteer for a solo at a performance and even step in for someone else who couldn’t manage their solo – from outsider to valuable team player! >>>

Performance: no matter how much we plan, practise, and revise, there's always the moment when it all has to come together. The exam. The interview. The race. The trial. Performances are when we learn, ready or not, to focus and step up to the plate. They are the heat that forges us into something better and stronger than we were before.

Our choirs have performed for staff, fellow inmates, families, employers, government ministers... the reaction is always emotional; joy and sadness at hearing all that (wasted) potential.

Music: "There are events in life that stop us in our tracks or force us to get creative." Going to prison is one of those events. If we are to change our lives, we need first to imagine a different life. A life without drugs, destructive relationships, low self-esteem, quick fixes, drink, violence. The Arts – in all forms – enable us to do that. They help us process who we are. Where we have been. Why we are here. What we could be. That is the value of the Arts – and nowhere are they needed more than in our prisons.

So we got creative! We realised our choirs could draw employers into prison, to see the talent pool on offer and remove the barriers they put up to employing people with a "history". Employers can teach the hard skills they need – what they say is often missing are the soft skills:

commitment, focus, teamwork, confidence and meeting expectations. Choir builds these. Last November, 40 employers accepted an invitation to a concert from our HMP Birmingham Choir. They saw the potential and have decided to pioneer a 30-2-2 scheme in the West Midlands. An idea imported from the States whereby 30 employers offer two "returning citizens" employment for two years. A scheme we hope to see adopted in other prisons, including women's institutions.

How do the choirs work? We provide two music directors every week, 45 weeks of the year. We do 2-2.5 hours for up to 25 people. We organise concerts and family days. It costs around £350 a week.

About us: www.choirsbeatingtime.org

choirsbeatingtime.org was founded by Heather Phillips and Jane Evans, a City lawyer and accountant respectively, who successfully established other businesses, SingingWorks and Better Performance which use actual "performance" to build teams and develop leadership. Our extremely talented music directors come from the Royal Opera House Youth Company, the Chaps Choir, the Choir With No Name, and National Youth Choirs of Great Britain.

*If you would like to start a choir, contact:
Heatherphillips@choirsbeatingtime.org
0208 858 8080*



CREATING A QUIET SPACE

Rachel from HMP Downview encourages mindfulness:

Meditation brings calm. Don't underestimate the improvement and balance it can bring to your psyche, battered by prison pressures and old wounds that need healing.

For a beginner, the duration of meditation is a very personal matter. It all depends on the length of time you can maintain the body position without moving. Beginners are urged to be cross-legged on the floor, sitting on a pillow, or comfortably in a seat. A relaxed body can help the mind.

The ideal sitting time is in the early morning when we arise and the mind is free from distractions, thoughts and pictures.

The first few times, it is best to time yourself and see how long you can hold the position you are in without moving; e.g. if you can sit for 10 minutes quite still without pain, then sit for 10 minutes.

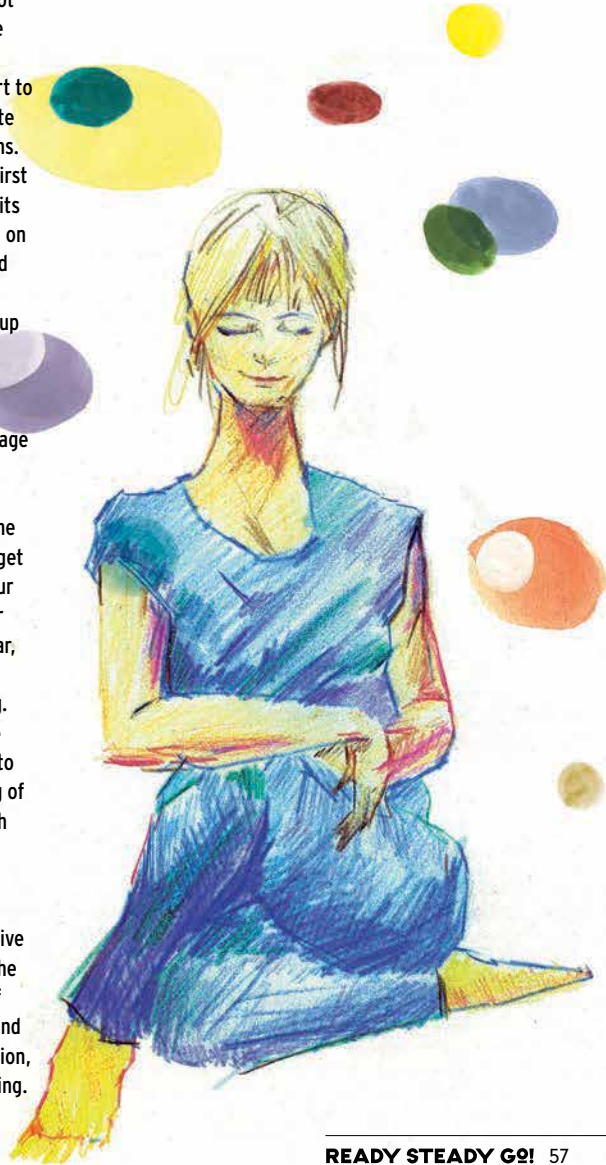
Once the body is in

an upright position, the eyes resting shut, the mouth closed, teeth not clenched, and with the tongue resting on the front upper teeth, start to unwind and concentrate on counting the breaths.

Count one on the first inhalation and two on its exhalation, then three on the next inhalation and four on its exhalation. Repeat this sequence up to 10, and then go back to one. It is said we can count to 10 in our first language without activating the mind too much.

Everybody has some distractions, so don't get discouraged! When your mind begins to wander and distractions appear, calmly put them aside and return to counting. Eventually, after some time, you will be able to eliminate the counting of breath and be one with your breath.

Silent meditation is very subtle but the positives you will receive from it will be worth the effort. After a while, if something comes up and prevents your meditation, you will miss your sitting.



TRUE OR FALSE?

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT YOUR BREASTS?

By the Health Matters team

1 Women with small breasts can't breastfeed.

2 The average cup size is a 36c.

3 Bras cause breast cancer.

4 More young girls than ever before are acquiring breast implants.

5 Breasts are meant to be perfectly symmetrical.

6 You'll wear the same bra cup and band most of your life.

7 Men have nipples and breasts because all foetuses are female at first.

8 Breast development ends in your early to mid-teens.

9 Most breast lumps are not cancerous.

10 Men do not get breast cancer; it only affects women.

11 Ancient Roman women would wrap bandages around themselves to keep their breasts in place.

12 Anti-perspirants and deodorants cause breast cancer.

ANSWERS:
1) False, 2) True, 3) False, 4) False,
5) False, 6) False, 7) True, 8) False,
9) True, 10) False, 11) True, 12) False



WHY ARTS AND CRAFTS ARE GOOD FOR YOU

It keeps your mind active

It passes the time

It's nice to receive some
homemade things, like cards

It's a great way of
decorating your house

It's a fabulous way to share
your ideas with friends

It's good to challenge yourself

» FINDING THE



Carrie in HMP Peterborough explains how finding her inner poet has triggered a dramatic change in her life...

It's been one hell of a fantastic year!

For the past 12 months, I have been involved in a creative writing group, PoetsIN, run at HMP Peterborough. When I began, I felt shy and uncomfortable. Through PoetsIN and the tasks and

challenges it set, I've not only found I have a talent and flair for prose; I have also found my voice. My self-esteem has soared and, now, the sky's the limit.

Poetry – there was no way I was going to enjoy that.

True life – I never had the urge to tell my story.

Fiction – Didn't think I could put down my ideas on paper.

Yet a year later, I excel.

For me, learning new techniques and styles of writing has helped me to express my feelings, deal with the unknown, and beat my demons of self-harming. Oh, I dip in and out of these negative, dark places; I wouldn't be human if I didn't. But, for me, the gaps of desperation and feelings of hopelessness are few and far between.

All of the work that is posted online on my behalf produces the most amazing feedback. It brings more encouragement, tips, and advice than I ever thought I'd receive. I expected criticism and belittling words at my perceived failures. I have had the opposite of both.

I have now got a book deal. I have the chance of a lifetime to write a novel that is published. It is a heck of a challenge and I love every second of it. The opportunities on offer push and drive me towards working hard for my parole.

Before all of this, I couldn't have cared

RIGHT WORDS

less about the future. I'm now in a different prison, still writing. I realise that I am worth more than rotting away behind bars. I have a purpose and can share with the world all that I can offer.

Every day I thank Sammie and Paul (founders of PoetsIN) for coming into HMP Peterborough. I thank those who are dedicated to reading my words each week.

Every task I am given, I put my all into it. I sit at my table, day in, day out, planning the next page, the next thought I can place on paper.

No longer does the razor blade speak for me upon my skin. The pen in my hand calls me day and night.

No matter how cramped my hand from all of the writing, I will still go on because I am someone of worth.

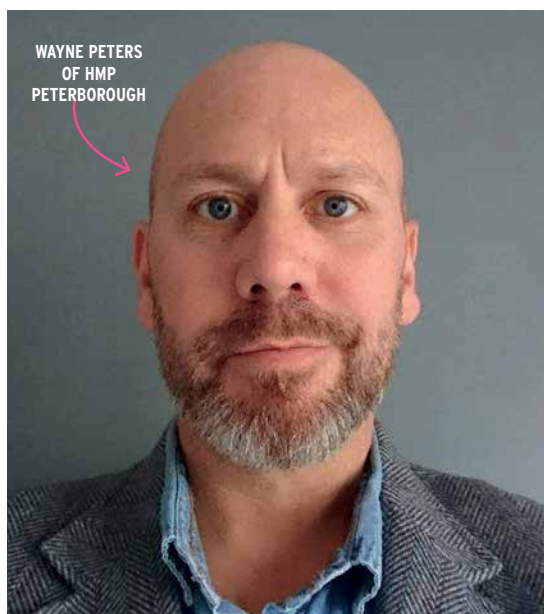
Wayne Peters, the director of education at HMP Peterborough, says:

“PoetsIN have added tangible value to our education department. In the year that they have been delivering the creative writing workshops, I've seen mental wellness increase, self-harm decrease dramatically, addictions handled, self-worth improve and marked, positive changes in the participants' behaviour and skills in preparation for their release.”

Paul Chambers and Sammie Thomas are co-founders of PoetsIN. Sammie describes it as, “a movement, not an organisation”.

“We aim to increase mental wellness by: teaching core skills, such as speaking and listening; improving communication, both spoken and written; language and grammar; and how to present an argument assertively and intelligently. We also encourage an appreciation of the views of others. All of which may help the women who come to our workshops to increase their self-confidence, become more employable and more able to maintain healthy relationships with those around them. As Carrie demonstrates, it works!”

Poetsin.com



WAYNE PETERS
OF HMP
PETERBOROUGH

MENTAL HEALTH

1 IN 4 PEOPLE IN THE UK WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM EACH YEAR... GET THE HELP YOU NEED AND DESERVE!

How to access Mental Health services:

- Free on the NHS but you will most likely need a referral from a GP
- Some services may allow you to refer yourself

Useful numbers and information:

MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

020 7803 1101
Improving the lives of those with mental health problems or learning difficulties.

RETHINK MENTAL ILLNESS

0300 5000 927
(Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm)
Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

DEPRESSION ALLIANCE

0845 123 2320
Provides information and support to those who are affected by depression via publications, supporter

services and a network of self-help groups.

ANXIETY UK

08444 775 774
Works to relieve and support those living with anxiety disorders by providing information, support and understanding via an extensive range of services, including 1:1 therapy.

MIND

0300 123 3393
(Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm)
Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

NO PANIC

0844 967 4848 (daily, 10am-10pm)
Voluntary charity offering support for sufferers of panic attacks and OCD. Offers a course to help overcome your phobia/OCD. Includes a helpline.

OCD ACTION

0845 390 6232 (Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm)
This organisation gives support to people with obsessive compulsive

disorder (OCD). Includes information on treatment and online resources.

SAMARITANS

116 123
(free 24-hour helpline)
Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

PANDAS FOUNDATION

0843 28 98 401
(every day 9am-8pm)
PANDAS Foundation vision is to support every individual with antenatal and postnatal depression, or postnatal psychosis, in England, Wales and Scotland. We campaign to raise awareness and remove the stigma. Our PANDAS Helpline and support groups offer advice to all and much more.

YOUNG MINDS

020 7336 8445
Provides information and advice for anyone with concerns about the mental health of a child or young person.

AGE CONCERN

0800 009966
Infoline on issues relating to older people.

LESBIAN AND GAY SWITCHBOARD

020 7837 7324
Provides information, support and referral services.

REFUGEE COUNCIL

020 7346 6700
UK's largest organisation working with refugees and asylum seekers.

RELATE

0300 100 1234
Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support.

REFUGE

0808 2000 247
(24-hour helpline)
Advice on dealing with domestic violence.

CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE

0844 477 9400
(Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm)



GIMMIE



1 What do you do to de-stress?

ANNI

- Clean

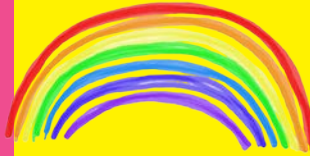
JOANNE

- Yoga on a Tuesday afternoon at the gym



2 If you could paint your cell walls, what colour would you choose?

- Rainbow colours



- Pink



3 What is your main advice for surviving prison?

- Keeping busy

- Take each day as it comes, do as much as you can. Speak to other people



4 What do you do to help yourself sleep?

- Television



- Breathing exercise - mindfulness



5 What is your top health tip whilst in prison?

- Gym



- Use a journal to get out all your feelings, so they aren't stuck in your brain

5!

Produced by women in HMP Downview.

Try out the questions on five women you know and send us your answers.

We'd like Gimme 5 from every one of the women's prisons and women's centres please!

BETHAN

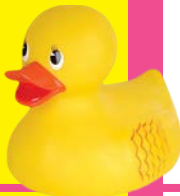
- Read a book

- Purple



- Keep busy

- Have a bath



- Stay active/
walking exercises

LIBBY

- Read

- Blue



- Take it a day at a
time and keep busy

- Read



- Baby steps. Try to not
become overwhelmed

SINDY

- Making things,
knitting and writing
poetry

- Lilac and aubergine

- Don't lose yourself
amongst the madness

- No coffee
after 6pm

- Gym, yoga, meditate.
Keep yourself busy.
Avoid bread



CHILD

BIRTH

THE PAIN AND THE PLEASURE, AND THE

OPPORTUNITY PREGNANCY

Laura Godfrey-Isaacs, midwife and birth activist, explains what influences your choices in pregnancy and shapes early motherhood

GIVES FOR CHANGE



WE LIVE IN AN AGE WHERE IMAGES OF BIRTH are everywhere, including popular TV programmes, such as *One Born Every Minute*, Hollywood pregnancy rom-coms like *The Back-up Plan*, and numerous websites, mobile phone apps and social media platforms.

Most of the portrayals in the mainstream media tend to reinforce certain dominant ideas, such as birth as a medical process, which is scary and very painful, with doctors making all the decisions. It is therefore very easy to become influenced by these images, feel fearful about birth, and expect that your experience may be similar, allowing you little room for choice.

However, every woman has an individual experience of pregnancy and birth, and you have the right to exercise your own choices. Increasingly, maternity services are moving away from a medicalised view of birth and towards the idea of birth as a normal, natural process. This means that women who have uncomplicated pregnancies would best be supported by midwives in as non-clinical a setting as possible, with the woman having as much control as she can over the process.

If you gain access to information and a wider depiction of birth, it should provide the opportunity for you to make your own decisions, whilst taking on board advice, and, ultimately, for pregnancy and birth to be an empowering, positive experience. In addition, pregnancy can provide the opportunity for change, where you consider addressing any lifestyle issues you feel are negative for you and the baby, and seek to use the time to turn over a new leaf and move towards healthier behaviour and choices in the future.

If you are out of prison, a number of the new media platforms about birth can assist, as they give easy access to trusted, free and supportive information and help, such as the Baby Buddy app (endorsed by The Royal College of Midwives). You can download it and use it throughout your pregnancy, or The Gas & Air Blog written by midwife Clemmie Hooper, which has an “Ask the Midwife” section. There are also some great new books on the market that are very user-friendly with lots of drawings and cartoons, which make it easy to access information.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO TAKE THE opportunity to share some of the principles of good maternity care and maternal health that we promote as midwives. They include:

- The importance of remaining active and well, during pregnancy and post baby, with good nutrition and mental health.
- During labour and birth, remaining as upright, in control, and as active as you can, so that you use gravity and your own body’s natural processes to aid progress. The old-fashioned practice of labouring women lying flat on their backs is not the best or easiest way to deliver your baby.
- In the early stages of labour, using natural sources of pain relief, such as water – either a bath or hot shower, or, if available, a birth pool. Also, using ways to distract from and

soothe away any pain, such as massage, moving around (or even dancing!) and watching your favourite TV programmes, music or films on a device.

● It has also been shown to increase a women's sense of control and improve her experience of birth to have a trusted birth companion. Therefore, if possible, make sure you can have the person you want with you. If you don't have a birth partner, or think you would benefit from someone else supporting you during birth, then it may be possible to use a doula or birth companion. These are professionally trained birth supporters who can be with you, providing emotional support and advocacy. There are a number of hospitals that provide doulas for women, such as the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London or organisations such as Birth Companions (www.birthcompanions.org.uk).

● Finally, the power and importance of early skin-to-skin contact with your baby, immediately after birth, cannot be

overestimated, as it aids bonding and facilitates the start of breastfeeding. Feeding your baby yourself, either via breastfeeding or with expressed breast milk, if you are separated, can be empowering, as only you can provide this nutritious, life-enhancing food and comfort for your baby, the process of which also aids your own health.

AS A PREGNANT WOMAN OR NEW mum in the criminal justice system, I hope that, after reading this article, you will feel more aware of the positive choices you can make around your pregnancy and birth of your baby, and the ways you can get support. There is a list of some of the organisations, free blogs, apps, books and social media sites recommended below.

If you are not in prison and you would like a right to reply to this article, please contact me:

Email: laura.godfreyisaacs@gmail.com

*Twitter: [@godfrey_isaacs](https://twitter.com/godfrey_isaacs) or write to *Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON**

WEBSITES/BLOGS

Gas & Air blog

gasandairblog.com
(with a Ask the Midwife section)

Tell Me a Good

Birth Story website
tellmeagoodbirthstory.com
(with a Find a Birth Buddy feature)

ORGANISATIONS

Positive Birth Movement
positivebirthmovement.org
(find a local Positive Birth Group, resources & blog)

Mumsnet

mumsnet.com (free Baby Bundle app, information, online forums, blogs)

Maternity Action

maternityaction.org.uk/
(info & advice about rights with a Free Maternity Rights Action Line)

FREE APPS

Baby Buddy Best Beginnings

bestbeginnings.org.uk/baby-buddy

Baby Bump babybumpapp.com/babybump/home

BOOKS TO BORROW FROM THE LIBRARY



The Positive Birth Book
by Milli Hill
(birth activist)
published by Pinter

& Martin (£12.99)



How to Grow a Baby and Push it Out
by Clemmie Hooper

(midwife), published by Vermilion London (£8)

“THE SUPPORT THAT I RECEIVED HAS BEEN AMAZING, BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE BIRTH OF MY CHILDREN.”

Naomi Delap, of charity Birth Companions, explains how her organisation helps and campaigns for women at an important time in their lives

Birth Companions is a charity set up over 20 years ago to support women giving birth in custody at HMP Holloway Prison, in London, now closed. Today, we run pregnancy and parenting classes and one-to-one support to women on release in London. Birth Companions also works to improve the care of pregnant women and new mothers in prisons and the community across the UK.

Many women have told us how much they value what we provide.

“Having a birth companion helped me to make the right decisions about what I wanted during my labour and I am sure it helped me to have a really positive experience and to give birth naturally,” one mother said.

“They gave me information which really helped me to make decisions. This was really important, as I felt under a lot of pressure from the midwife and the doctor to have lots of interventions, which I chose not to have. Having my baby was one of the most important moments of my life and someone there telling me I was strong and I could do it helped me to keep going.

“Every woman needs that kind of support.”

Another mother says, “I felt a huge amount of support. I was able to share my experiences with the other girls and the birth companions without fear of judgment. For the two hours of the group when we met in prison, I didn’t feel I was a prisoner. It just felt like we were all mums looking forward to our new arrivals with no stress.”

Before 1996, some women were shackled in hospital during labour. Thankfully, this no longer happens, but conditions still vary greatly from prison to prison and should be improved. We believe there needs to be a Prison Service Instruction covering pregnancy, abortion, mother and baby units (MBUs) and separation, so that prisons have very clear guidance on what’s best for women and their babies, and how to provide it.

THE GOOD NEWS...

“HMP Peterborough had an outside garden with space, grass and, at last, I could feel the sunlight... I would express milk and store it in the prison freezer. The prison and the

THE BIRTH CHARTER

senior officer were really good and let me hand my milk out. They also never forced me to go to education; they let me stay mostly on the unit, so I could breastfeed my baby.”

“At Askham [Grange], I was able to go out on solo shopping trips and have money in my hand. It made me feel normal, which helped; otherwise it would have been too much for me when I was released.”

“I think prison made me a better mum. It helped me concentrate fully on my daughter. I am extremely close with her and will be eternally grateful that she - who is she? - supported me through the most difficult time in my life...I have managed to fit back into life.”

... AND THE BAD

“You don’t know what’s happening, so you’re worried – are we going home, are we going to an MBU, what happens next?”

“While in labour, I had two prison officers at the end of my bed. I was having difficulties, which, I am sure, was partly because of being so stressed [by them].”

“When I came out, I didn’t have any additional support. My family was there but, although I was only there for six weeks, I felt like I was thrown out. I was literally standing on the Holloway Road with black bags.”

“I lost a lot of weight in there. I was trying to keep myself calm but I felt really guilty because I was pregnant and my son wasn’t getting what he needed. I knew I wasn’t getting enough food; I knew I was hungry all the time; I knew I wasn’t sleeping properly.”

The Birth Companions website presents very positive and successful services, www.birthcompanions.org.uk

Devised by Birth Companions, with the help of women in prison in England and Wales who shared their experiences.

PREGNANT WOMEN IN PRISON SHOULD:

1 Have access to the same standards of antenatal care as women in the community

2 Be able to attend antenatal classes and prepare for their baby’s birth

3 Be housed, fed and moved in a way that ensures the well-being of mother and baby

4 Be told whether they have a place on a Mother and Baby Unit as soon as possible after arriving in prison

5 Have appropriate support if electing for termination of pregnancy.

DURING CHILDBIRTH, WOMEN SHOULD:

6 Have access to a birth supporter of their choice

7 Be accompanied by officers who have had appropriate training and clear guidance

8 Be provided with essential items for labour and the postnatal period

9 Receive appropriate care during transfer between prison and hospital.

WOMEN WITH BABIES IN PRISON SHOULD:

10 Be encouraged and supported in their chosen method of infant feeding

11 Be supported to express, store and transport their breast milk safely, if they are separated from their baby

12 Be given the same opportunities and support to nurture and bond with their babies as women in the community

13 Be entitled to additional family visits.

ALL PREGNANT WOMEN AND NEW MOTHERS SHOULD:

14 Be able to access counselling when needed

15 Receive appropriate resettlement services after release from prison.

● Please write to us if you would like a copy of the Birth Charter. We would love to hear about your experiences and ideas, about how to improve care for pregnant women and new mothers, whether they are in prison or in the community. Of course, you can contact us for more information about pregnancy and birth.

You can write to us at:

Birth Companions
Dalton House
60 Windsor Avenue
London SW19 2RR
Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON
Email us at info@birthcompanions.org.uk

To download a full copy of the Birth Charter and register your support, please go to www.birthcompanions.org.uk/Birth-Charter

TUMBLEWEED JOKE WALL



(A DOSE OF LAUGHTER IS GREAT MEDICINE!)

PATIENT: "DOCTOR, I'VE SWALLOWED A SPOON."
DOCTOR: "SIT DOWN AND DON'T STIR."

"WHILE I WAS IN THE DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM, THERE WAS THIS TINY MAN, ONLY ABOUT SIX INCHES TALL. ALTHOUGH HE WAS THERE BEFORE ME, HE LET ME SEE THE DOCTOR FIRST. I SUPPOSE HE JUST HAD TO BE A LITTLE PATIENT."

"The worst time to have a heart attack is during a game of charades."

Q: DOES AN APPLE A DAY KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY?
A: ONLY IF YOU AIM IT WELL ENOUGH.

"I HAVE SOME GOOD NEWS AND SOME BAD NEWS, BUT DON'T WORRY. I'LL GIVE THE GOOD NEWS TO YOUR WIDOWER."



Skinny says,
"If you think these jokes

are seriously lame and you can do better, then let's hear them!"
Send your jokes in to:

WOMEN IN PRISON (magazine)
FREEPOST WOMEN IN PRISON
5 Stockwell Mews,
London
SW9 9GX

DOCTOR'S JOKE!



'DOCTOR MY HAIR KEEPS FALLING OUT
HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING TO KEEP IT IN ?'
'WHAT ABOUT A CARD BOARD BOX'

**MEET
THE
AGONY
AUNTS**

~~~~~  
MEET THE AGONY  
AUNTS, WHO  
CAN GIVE YOU  
INFORMATION  
AND ADVICE ON  
THE ISSUES THAT  
MATTER TO YOU  
~~~~~

MARTINE ON
EDUCATION,
TRAINING &
EMPLOYMENT

JACQUELINE
ON HEALTH &
WELLBEING

SOFIA ON
HOUSING
~~~~~



# EDUCATION, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

*By Martine Lignon, Women in Prison trustee Illustration by Aaron*

**Dear WIP,**  
**I am serving a long sentence in a closed prison and want to use this time to study for a degree. How should I go about it? I need to say that I do not have any A levels. Will this be a problem?**  
**Many thanks,**  
**Anna**

Dear Anna,  
 Congratulations for wanting to embark on a truly life-changing experience!

Your route to a degree will be through the Open University (OU), which offers specific "Offender Learning" facilities, and the Prisoners' Education Trust (PET), which provides financial and advisory support for the start of your journey.

OU study in prison is organised through your Education Department, which will deal with your study plans, choice of qualification, application and registration, fees and funding, tutorial visits, assessment and general study support. It will first present your request to the prison Governor, as his/her agreement is required for OU course acceptance. You must have an earliest release date within eight years of the first day of your OU studies.

The progression will consist of:

1. One OU Access module
2. OU Level 1 modules
3. A nationally recognised degree

The Open University Access modules receive funding from PET, under the Steps to Success route, but you will need to apply for a student loan to pay for tuition fees to go on to the OU level 1 modules and a full degree.

Please, don't worry about not having A levels. This is the case with the majority of OU students, inside and outside. You will start with an Access module designed to offer an introduction to higher education, with lots of support and no exams (four main written assignments, instead of exams). It will enable you to develop your confidence and study skills before deciding what you want to study with the university and committing to a student loan.

You can choose one from three Access modules:

- Arts and languages (Y031) covers art history, English literature, English language studies, history, modern languages and religious studies.
- People, work and society (Y032) covers health, law, management, psychology and social science over four themes: individuals; families and relationships; organisations and communities; society.
- Science, technology and maths (Y033) introduces science, engineering and design, environment, mathematics and IT in three study blocks - life, water and home.



Each module takes 30 weeks and requires about nine hours of study per week. They all start in October and February. You will therefore aim for October but, as this programme is extremely popular, you need to apply as soon as possible, through your Education Department.

All Access modules are available on the Virtual Campus (VC) and you will be able to view all the audio-visual material you need by logging on to a PC. You will be

able to take part in all quizzes and activities, complete your Interactive Computer Marked Assignments on screen and contact your tutor through a secure relay - exactly like any OU student outside. However, if you can't access the VC or don't enjoy online learning, you will receive a complete set of study materials.

Don't delay, Anna, prepare your application and start a journey of amazing discovery! You will never look back!



# YOUR HEALTH & WELLBEING

*By Jacqueline Spark, Substance Misuse Case Manager at the Beth Centre, London*

**Dear Agony Aunt,**  
**I am on a script and haven't been using anything else in prison. I really want to stay clean and stay on my script when I am released, but am really fearful that I will not manage this. What should I do? Thank you, Mary**

Dear Mary,  
 Speak to your Recovery or Rapt worker now about this. There will be programmes that you can go on while in custody which can support you with relapse prevention, managing your cravings and dealing with high-risk situations for when you are released. Additionally, you need to consider strategies such as not meeting people with whom you previously used drugs, not putting yourself in risky situations, managing feelings in a different way and talking to others about this issue.

Get information about which services are available in your area, including NA (Narcotics Anonymous), AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) and CA (Cocaine Anonymous); look at how you can refer yourself and start attending one of the groups. Unfortunately, support doesn't always come together quickly, and it may take you some time to get settled and linked in with positive influences. Be patient and keep your view focused on the goal you want to reach, rather than

reacting impulsively to life situations. It will all come together in time.

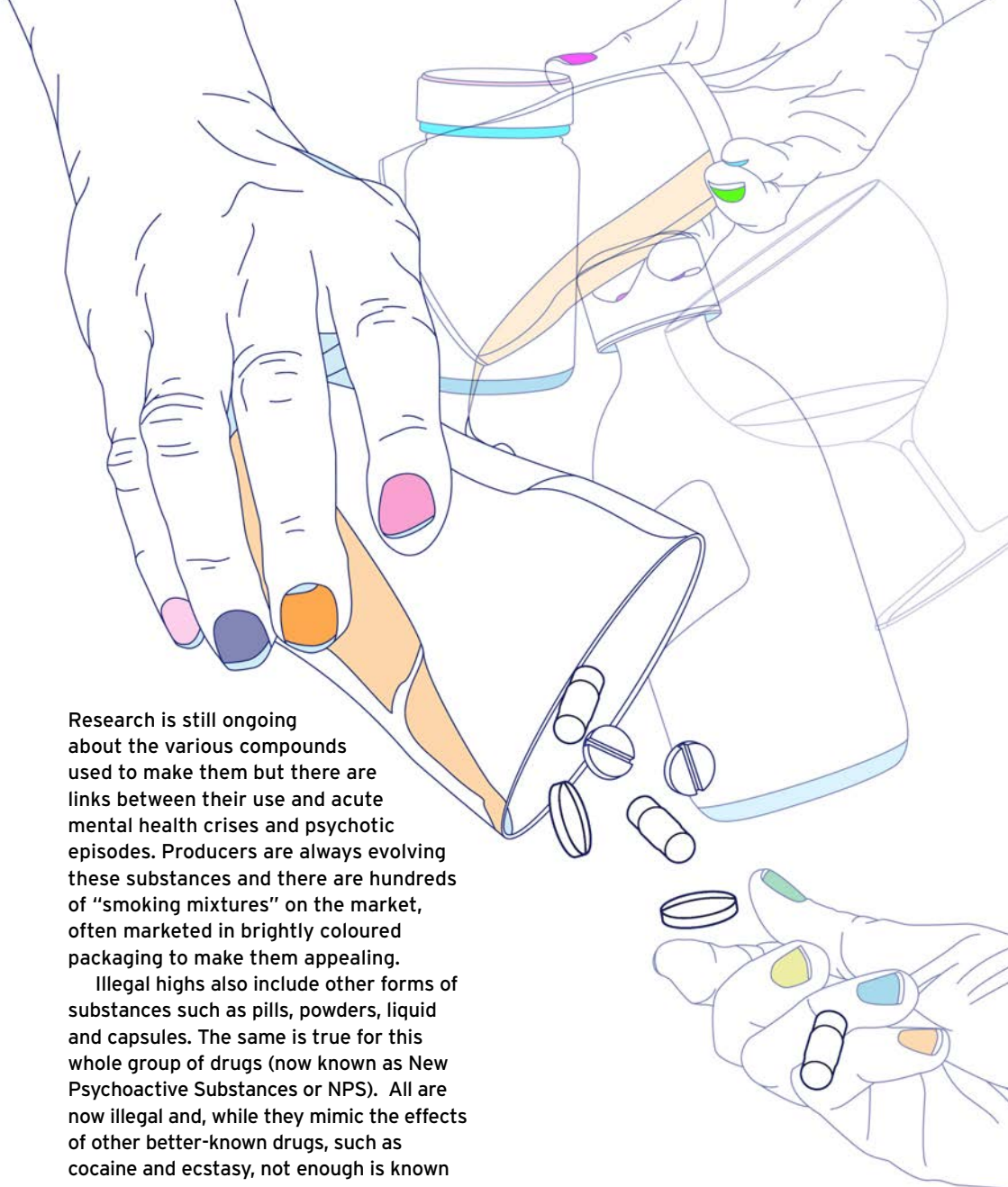
For your script, you should be given instructions on what to do when you are released. It is really important to attend appointments offered to you. Services have a duty of care to ensure that you receive your medication every day, so you should not have to miss any.

Good luck!!

**Dear Agony Aunt,**  
**I have been using cannabis for many years and have been smoking a lot of skunk, but don't always like the effects. Should I start using legal highs? After all, they are legal! Jane.**

Dear Jane,  
 Legal highs are no longer legal!! The law changed last May (The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016) and has now made substances such as Spice and Black Mamba illegal, to smoke, possess and supply. While the use of the word "legal" makes them seem quite innocuous, this is far from the case. The effects that you get from smoking them are cannabis-like effects, but can be a lot more intense, to the extreme of vivid hallucinations.

Smoking illegal highs has also been linked to several deaths across the UK.



Research is still ongoing about the various compounds used to make them but there are links between their use and acute mental health crises and psychotic episodes. Producers are always evolving these substances and there are hundreds of “smoking mixtures” on the market, often marketed in brightly coloured packaging to make them appealing.

Illegal highs also include other forms of substances such as pills, powders, liquid and capsules. The same is true for this whole group of drugs (now known as New Psychoactive Substances or NPS). All are now illegal and, while they mimic the effects of other better-known drugs, such as cocaine and ecstasy, not enough is known about the chemicals that are used in them to make them “safe” to use. Effects have been known to include, paranoia, seizures and coma.

Please, be careful and look after yourself!



# HOUSING

*By Sofia Gulberg, Women in Prison trustee Illustrations by Ulla*

**Dear Sofia,**  
**I have just been given a four-month prison sentence and I don't know what to do about my property. I have lived in a council flat for over 15 years. Now, I'm really scared I will get into rent arrears and lose it. I have always paid my rent in the past and the flat contains my whole life. I don't have anyone who can look after it while I'm away. Should I give it up? I don't want to get into any more trouble than I'm in already and I don't have any money to pay for rent, etc...**

**I look forward to hearing from you,  
 Sandra**

Dear Sandra,  
 I recommend that you do not give up your flat. Council flats are much more difficult to acquire now than they were 15 years ago and you will need a home once you are released.

On the rent question, you will receive Housing Benefit for 13 weeks while you are in prison. This will cover your rent for the majority of the time you are away. For the remaining time, you will get into rent arrears but this should only be for about a month or so. You may feel that you will never be able to pay this back but you should be in a position to set up a repayment plan as soon as you are out. This ought to be reasonable and based on your income, for example taking £1 per week off your benefits. The fact that you have been

in your flat for so long and always paid your rent counts in your favour.

The key is to be honest and upfront about the fact that you are in prison and to show willingness and commitment to the repayment plan, once you set it up. I would therefore recommend that you contact your local authority now to explain your situation and make sure you are in receipt of Housing Benefit for the next 13 weeks. As soon as you are out, get back in touch with the Housing Officer to agree on a repayment plan.

Good luck!

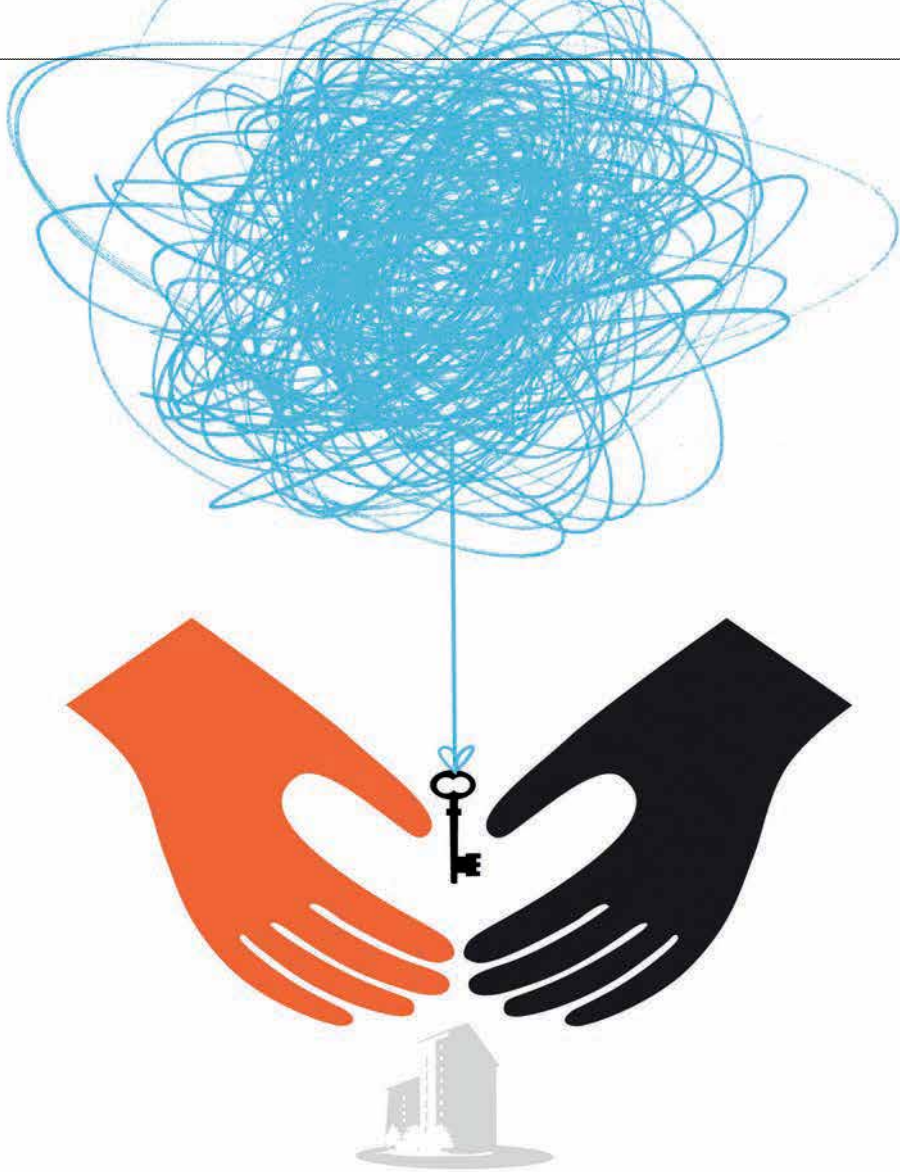
**Dear Sofia,**  
**I rent a flat from a private landlord but I have just been told he wants the flat back, so I am being evicted. Do I have the right to council housing as I am considered "vulnerable" because of my mental health diagnosis (I am also a UK citizen)?**  
**Many thanks, Annie**

Dear Annie,  
 Thank you for your letter. I'm sorry to hear about your eviction notice and I imagine you must be having a really stressful time.

Your local authority does have an obligation to house you, as you fulfil its priority criteria, even though priority allocation varies from one council to another.

However, and this is really important, do not leave your property until you receive a





court order. If you leave voluntarily, the council can say that you have made yourself “intentionally homeless”, in which case it will not help you.

Stay in the property until you receive a final eviction notice from the court telling you that you have to leave. Until then, you are still the legal tenant and your landlord does not have the right to come around, change the locks or send

bailiffs around to collect your possessions.

Remember to keep paying your rent throughout this period. You can also contact the council up to 28 days in advance of your eviction to let it know that you will be homeless soon, so that you are on its radar.

This may feel like a long and drawn-out process, but it should prove effective in the long run.

# IN PRISON FOR OWING COUNCIL TAX – NO WAY!

Rona Epstein explains the law on council tax debt

**E**arlier this year, a High Court judge ruled that the magistrates who had sentenced a woman to 81 days in prison for failure to pay her council tax had made an unlawful decision. Her sentence was quashed. The woman is a single mother who has two part-time jobs, working hard to provide for herself and her son. She has never committed a crime. She should never have been jailed. Why did this happen?

First, her story. Melanie, who lives in Wales, worked part-time and cared for her son and an elderly neighbour, then had a period of unemployment. She failed to pay her council tax; hence, magistrates ordered that she be sent to prison for 81 days. They suspended the imprisonment on condition that Melanie paid £10 every week towards the debt. She suffered some health problems and, again, failed to keep up with the payments. In August 2016, she realised that she had fallen behind in her

payments and made a lump sum payment of £100. The next day, she was arrested by bailiffs and taken to prison. She was told she had to serve the sentence as ordered by the magistrates.

People who are sent to prison for not paying council tax are given very little help. They never imagine that it is an error in law that has put them in a prison cell, as owing money is not a crime. No one tells them they can apply for bail and that the decision to send them to prison can be

---

challenged. They receive no advice. They do their time.

A few months ago, I wrote an article on council tax debt for this magazine in which I explained the law about owing council tax and what should happen if someone has difficulty in paying the tax they owe.

Melanie, while in prison, read the article and then wrote to Women in Prison asking for advice. Women in Prison put Melanie in touch with the Centre for Criminal Appeals. The Centre arranged for a lawyer to take on Melanie's case; his name is Sam Genen. He acted for Melanie and got her out of prison on bail. At the subsequent court hearing, the judge declared that sending Melanie to prison because she owed council tax was an unlawful decision. The magistrates had made a number of serious mistakes. They had failed to assess Melanie's financial means and had no basis for concluding her failure to pay was because of "culpable neglect".

Each year, around 100 people are imprisoned for non-payment of the council tax. In the vast majority of cases, the magistrates' decision to order them to prison goes unchallenged because those sentenced don't know how to challenge it and don't get the help they need. Yet, the decision to send someone for prison for owing tax can and should be challenged.

We all have to pay council tax. The council requires this money to carry out services we all need: dealing with rubbish, providing schools and care homes for the disabled and the elderly, fixing roads and pavements, running parks, leisure centres and libraries... the list goes on. If you owe some of the tax, the council may order you to appear before the magistrates because of the debt.

The magistrates must make an enquiry into your finances (income, outgoings, dependants). They then make a decision: are you guilty of "wilful refusal to pay" or "culpable neglect to pay"? If they find you are guilty of wilful refusal or culpable neglect to pay your council tax – this means that you have the money to pay but have refused to use that money to pay your council tax – the magistrates have a number of options. One is to impose a prison sentence of up to three months.

However, imprisonment should be a last resort. There should be no jail sentence if there is an alternative way to recover the money you owe. If there is an alternative, for example ordering that an amount be deducted each week from your benefits or from your wages or salary, then you should NOT be sent to prison.

In council tax cases, the magistrates have no power to punish anyone. Judges have said this since the 1980s, when people were being sent to prison for non-payment of poll tax.

If you are, or anyone you know is, in prison because you/they owe council tax, please get in touch with me as soon as possible. My details are at the end of this article. Expert legal advice is available and it could make all the difference.

**Please write to:**

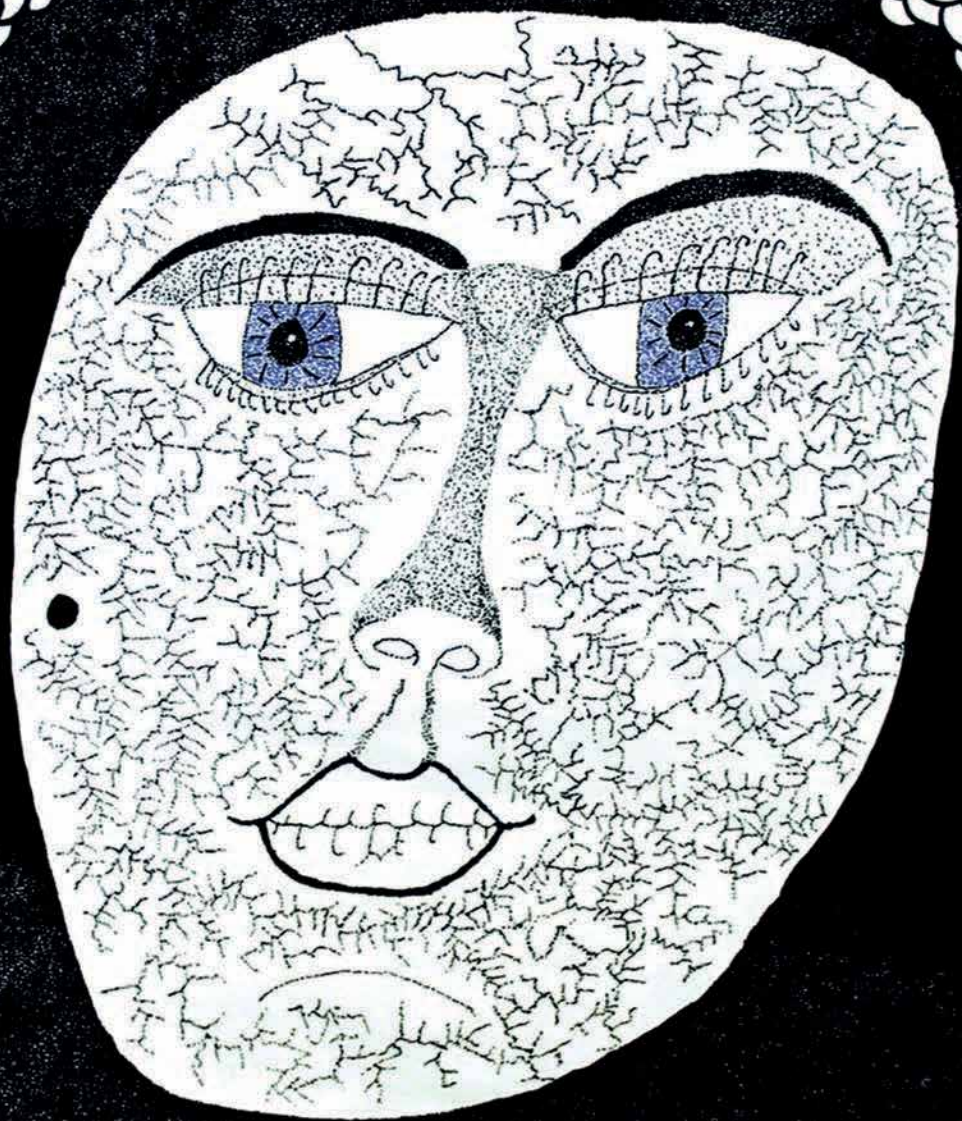
**Rona Epstein  
Women in Prison  
Freepost  
WOMEN IN PRISON**

Rona Epstein is a research assistant  
at Coventry Law School,  
Coventry University.  
You can contact her at  
[R.Epstein@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:R.Epstein@coventry.ac.uk)

# ALL YOURS!

PAINTINGS, POEMS,  
STORIES & MORE  
— ALL BY YOU





Drawing never  
makes  
YOU bored



... it found anything to drink, I can  
... joy to bubble again, she said.  
... Seriously, Marc. You'll  
... wouldn't get that or  
... about it if it

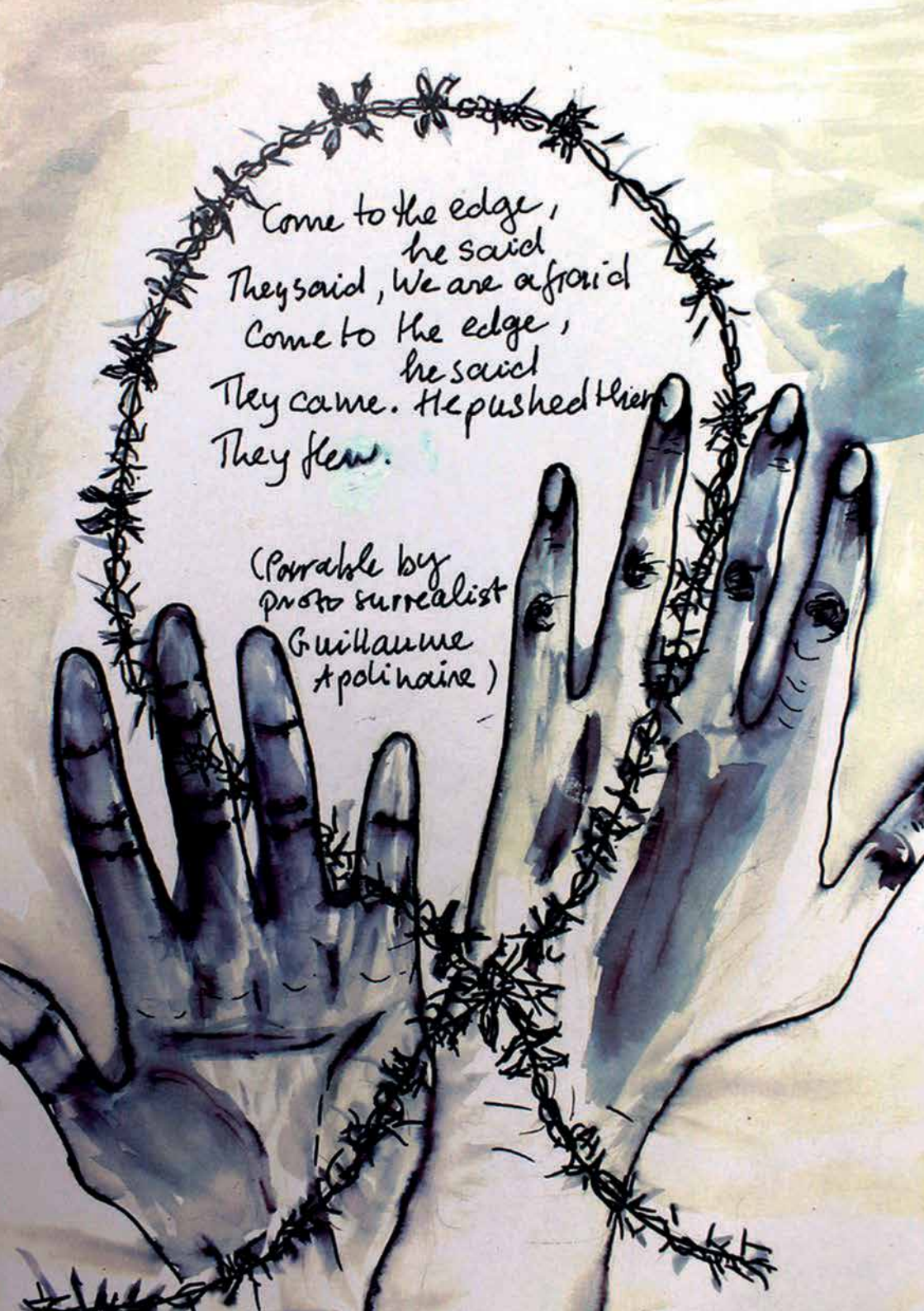
... (I'll be  
... You know, this is what  
... I didn't know it until I knew  
... He paused. "You're no  
... fully conscious of his joy when she  
... just flabbergasted. She sounds crazy  
... Absolutely  
... about it."





# FRUITY HEALTH





Come to the edge,  
he said  
They said, We are afraid  
Come to the edge,  
he said  
They came. He pushed them.  
They flew.

(Parable by  
proto surrealist  
Guillaume  
Apolinaire)

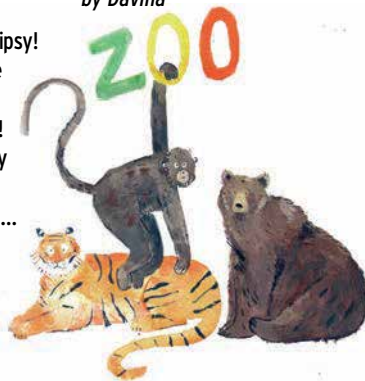


## A to Z of things I'm looking forward to...

As long as I want in the shower!  
 (Better still, a bath!)  
 Box sets with plenty of munchies!  
 Chewing gum  
 Duvet days  
 Earrings – big hoops if I fancy  
 Freak shake – can't wait to try one!  
 Get a phone!!  
 Heels and a handbag!  
 I choose! Who I wanna be around,  
 what I wanna eat, when I get up...  
 Jewellery! Necklaces, bracelets,  
 rings...  
 Kiss!  
 Live and love every second! Also  
 luxury toilet roll!  
 Mattress that's not as flat as a  
 pancake!  
 Nighttime star gazing in the  
 garden!  
 Overjoyed (if not a little over-  
 whelmed) at being able to choose  
 from more than three pairs of shoes!  
 PJs all day – and perfume!  
 Quiet lie-INS...no jingle jangles of  
 keys, flickering night-light  
 Restaurants and every kind of food  
 you can think of...  
 Shopping!!! Enough said!  
 Taking nothing for granted  
 Umbrella! No more using a T-shirt  
 to stay dry!  
 Very bad dancing when a little tipsy!  
 Walk for as long as I want in the  
 fresh air!  
 Xtra portions of mum's cooking!  
 Yell, "I'm free!" at the top of my  
 lungs!!  
 Zoo!! A trip to the zoo is a must...  
 tigers, lions, monkeys!  
*By Mindy in HMP Foston Hall*

## Love

There's that look that  
 he gives me that says it all  
 The panic runs through  
 me but who can I call?  
 I've called so many  
 they are all sick of me.  
 They all tell me to leave  
 and try to make me see.  
 I run down the stairs, I try  
 to reach the front door,  
 I can hear him behind  
 me then I'm on the floor.  
 I curl up in a ball and  
 try to cover my face,  
 He kicks me from head  
 to toe, all over the place.  
 I don't feel any pain,  
 I block it all out.  
 I'll be black and blue  
 all over I have no doubt.  
 I shout and I scream  
 and beg him to stop  
 The blood is pouring  
 all over my top.  
 He has me by the throat,  
 I'm gasping for air,  
 We are now eye to eye  
 and I see evil there.  
 I hope and I pray he does  
 not hold me too long.  
 I take a last breath and think,  
 "What have I done wrong?"  
*by Davina*



## Men on Pause!

Here it comes  
 Another hot flush  
 It's not George Clooney  
 But I continue to Gush  
 Sweating profusely  
 Wondering what's the cause  
 Oh my lord i think it's men on pause  
 Quite literally for us ladies  
 Who are already in pain  
 It's like i've turned on a tap  
 My body continues to rain  
 I'm dizzy, short tempered  
 This is all so unfair  
 Just glanced in the mirror  
 Looks like i've just washed  
 my hair What can I do  
 Locked behind closed doors  
 Now that what's you call  
 MEN-ON-PAUSE  
*By Anni*

I'm in so much pain  
 and it's all your fault  
 You've cut out my heart  
 rubbed in lemon and salt  
 I've cried enough tears  
 to fill a bath to the brim  
 You said it was business  
 and her looks like him  
 You lies, you cheated  
 yet still denying it's true  
 Yet the signs were all there  
 but I didn't have a clue  
 I've been so stupid  
 and incredibly naive  
 All the paperwork I read  
 and don't want to believe  
*By Anni*

*Illustration by Millie*

## My Door

As I walked along a forest path,  
I come across a door.  
Floating in midair,  
It was something to behold.  
Upon this door was my name  
An invitation to enter pinned upon.  
Hesitation filled my mind,  
As I looked around,  
Unsure.  
Why would a door be here  
Waiting just for me?  
I circled round this space,  
Looking for a clue,  
"How to get in?" I wonder,  
"When there is no key?"  
Scanning on the ground,  
Amongst the fallen leaves  
I find another note.  
Gently blowing in the breeze.  
"Discover in your heart,  
What you truly desire.  
Then the door will open  
And you will see why you are here."  
Sitting on the floor I  
Meditate.  
Thinking of what's important.  
I delve into my deepest loves  
And how and why they exist.  
Suddenly I hear a click.  
The lock does not resist.  
Opening my eyes,  
I see through my door  
Standing there on a shelf is a book  
I adore!

*By Carrie*

## For My Boys!

Sitting in my cell at night  
Wondering how to make  
things right  
All I do is think of the past  
Of how I made bad decisions fast  
Thinking of what I could do  
To make things better for you  
Knowing I'm the one who  
caused you pain  
How that drives me insane  
If you could only see  
How much you mean to me  
I miss you more with each new  
day  
How I wish I never came away  
You are all I thought you could be  
I'm prouder than could ever be  
So I'm thankful to the stars you  
see  
For bringing you to me  
Nothing more could ever be  
You're the only thing I did right  
My beautiful boys  
My sweetness and light.  
*By Zena*

## I have a voice

I have a voice screaming inside  
my head  
Can you hear it or is it only me  
The only way I communicate my  
distress  
Is through hitting out or hurting  
myself  
Cutting often is my release of  
coping with the pain inside  
Of the trauma of past abuse in all  
shapes and forms  
I have suffered mental illness  
from a very young age  
Sometimes I feel I'm coping  
other times it's obvious I'm not  
Medication may work for a while  
but is it a long-term solution  
Maybe talking is the key but will  
my voice just be a whisper  
Will anyone hear what I have to  
say  
I am afraid of speaking because  
will I be believed  
I have tried in the past but I have  
been ignored  
Told to go away  
My confidence has truly been  
knocked  
My self-esteem is at rock bottom  
But today I have a voice  
I am asking in my writing - will  
you help me!!  
*By June H*

# POETRY

### Useful contacts

#### WOMEN IN PRISON

Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON

Freephone: 0800 953 0125  
info@womeninprison.org.uk

#### HOUSING

##### Shelter Helpline:

0808 800 4444

##### NACRO Helpline:

0300 123 1999

#### LEGAL & GENERAL ADVICE

##### Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS):

Prisoners' Advice Service,  
PO Box 46199,  
London,  
EC1M 4XA  
0845 430 8923

##### PACT

(Prison Advice & Care Trust)

##### Helpline:

0808 808 3444

##### Prison Reform Trust Advice and Information Service

##### Advice Line:

0808 802 0060

#### SOMEONE TO TALK TO

##### Samaritans Freephone:

Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK,  
PO Box 9090,  
STIRLING,  
FK8 2SA  
Freephone: 116 123

#### MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

##### MIND:

Mind Infoline, Unit 9,  
Cefn Coed Parc, Nantgarw,  
Cardiff, CF15 7QQ  
0300 123 3393

#### SUBSTANCE MISUSE SUPPORT

##### Frank Helpline:

0300 123 6600

##### Phoenix Futures Advice

Line: 0845 600 7227

##### Action on Addiction Helpline:

0300 330 0659

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

##### Women's Aid Helpline:

0808 2000 247

##### Rape & Sexual Abuse

Support Centre

(Rape Crisis)

Helpline: 0808 802 9999

#### WOMEN'S CENTRES

##### Women's Breakout:

Upon release please go to the  
online directory run by  
Women's Breakout to find  
the nearest specialist  
women's centre to where  
you are based.  
[www.womensbreakout.org.uk/  
projects/](http://www.womensbreakout.org.uk/projects/)

#### FAMILY SUPPORT

##### National Offenders' Families

Helpline: 0808 808 2003



*Illustration by* **Chenna**



# WORDSEARCH

Find the words – time yourself!



READ

PEACE

FRUIT

SKIP

EXERCISE

ARTS/CRAFTS

FITNESS

MIND

FRUIT

CALMNESS

GYM

SLEEP





## Have you been moved or transferred?

We know women are often moved or transferred from prison to prison without any warning. You might have been working with Women in Prison in one prison and then been moved to another.

It is important for you to let us know if you have been transferred, so we can continue to give you support. We are not given information about where you are or whether you have been moved, and we don't have access to this information because we are independent from the CJS/Prison.

Please use this sheet to let us know if you have been moved and that you want to keep working with us. Tear it out and post it to:  
Women in Prison, Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON

Name:

Prison no:

Where you were:

Where you are now:

Your worker:

What we were supporting you with, if anything:

# WHAT DOES WOMEN IN PRISON BELIEVE?

# HOW DOES THAT INFLUENCE HOW WE WORK?

**Chris Tchaikovsky set up Women in Prison (WIP) over 30 years ago, after she had served a sentence in HMP Holloway. She lobbied tirelessly to improve conditions inside prison, to widen the knowledge and understanding of the judiciary about women affected by the criminal justice system, and to end the use of prison for all but a tiny minority of women.**

Chris said: "Taking the most hurt people out of society and punishing them in order to teach them how to live within society is, at best, futile. Whatever else a prisoner knows, she knows everything there is to know about punishment – because that is exactly what she has grown up with. Childhood sexual abuse, indifference, neglect – punishment is most familiar to her."

■ **Women in Prison** continues to campaign for a radical overhaul of female imprisonment. WIP aims to convince and demonstrate to policymakers that the majority of convicted women should serve sentences not behind bars, but in the community. They should remain close to home where their often complex needs can be properly addressed, recidivism ended and the connection with their children maintained.

■ **Women in Prison** recognises that every woman has her own assets and capabilities. These are valuable tools in making real and lasting changes to their lives, but they are too often undermined by the experience of prison.

■ **Women in Prison** is a women-only

organisation. It believes that the male and female experience of the criminal justice system has some similarities, but many more differences. Too often these differences, such as being a single parent and primary carer, fail to be properly acknowledged and understood, which adds to the punishment already exacted.

■ **Women in Prison** workers, inside and outside prison, endeavour to offer individual women a consistently professional relationship based on trust and mutual respect and kept within appropriate boundaries. Their aim is to work with women affected by the criminal justice system, so they can achieve the change they choose to make.

■ **Women in Prison** believes that most women pose no risk to the public and should not be incarcerated. For the very few who do, the design, location and regimes of our prisons are totally inadequate.

■ **Women in Prison** knows, from both research and experience, that prison is expensive and ineffective in breaking the cycle of crime.

■ **Women in Prison** believes that the most effective way to reduce women's offending is to deal with its root causes – which generally rest with gender inequalities and social injustice – in community alternatives.

**Women who come to WIP do so voluntarily. WIP is not part of the punitive system.**

# Got something to say?

If you need help, please contact us.  
We can visit you in prison, or write to you, or meet up if you are released.

WRITE OR CALL FREE

Women in Prison

Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON

5 Stockwell Mews

London

SW9 9GX

National freephone advice line

0800 953 0125

[info@womeninprison.org.uk](mailto:info@womeninprison.org.uk)



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ANYTHING TO TELL US ABOUT  
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WANT TO SUGGEST; OR IF YOU'D  
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