

# READY STEADY GO!

**Bent Bars Project:**

**New resources**

**for LGBTQ+**

**people in prison**

**How to start**

**a magazine**

**group in prison**

**Rethinking society**

**in the face of**

**coronavirus**

**Mindfulness**

**exercises with Lee**

**Word search,**

**Sudoku puzzles**

**and more!**



**Women  
in Prison**

# Competition: We need your help to rename the magazine!

Over the past two years, we have been collecting your feedback about **Ready Steady Go!** Thanks to your countless submissions, we have found out what you like about the magazine, what you dislike, and how we can improve it.

So to kick off the new year, we are planning to rebrand the magazine and give it a new edge, starting with a name change. This is where you come in: we need your help selecting a new name for the magazine!

Previously, you have suggested new names for the magazine, and out of all the submissions three stood out to us. The options for the magazine name change are:

- **Still I Rise**
- **Together We Will**
- **Every Woman**

## **Competition guidelines:**

- Write to us with your preference from the list of names provided; please include a short explanation for why you have selected that option.
- We accept submissions via post. Please make sure you complete and attach a consent form (see page 63) with your competition entry and send it to FREEPOST – WOMEN IN PRISON.
- We may publish the reasons for your vote in the next magazine or on our social media (but only if you give us permission using the consent form on page 63).
- Everyone who votes will be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win £10!

**We look forward to receiving your votes and announcing a new name in the next edition!**

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**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 WomenMATTER in Manchester.

WIP campaigns to reduce the number of women in prison and for significant investment in community-based support services for women so they can address issues such as trauma, mental ill-health, harmful substance use, domestic violence, debt and homelessness. These factors are often the reason 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 is unable to help because of a constraint on its resources, it endeavours to direct women to other charities and organisations that can. WIP believes that a properly funded network of women's centres 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 some 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, Surrey and Manchester**
- **Ready Steady Go! A magazine written by and for women affected by the criminal justice system with magazine editorial groups in some women's prisons**
- **WIP's services are open to women affected by the criminal justice system in England. Women can choose to attend, leave, or return to our services.**



### Got something to say?

Please contact Women in Prison at the FREEPOST address below. Please include a completed consent form with your query; turn to page 63 for more details.

#### Write or call free:

Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON  
Call us free on 0800 953 0125  
Please note, we're experiencing disruptions to our services, including answering the freephone and post due to COVID-19.

#### Email us on:

[info@wipuk.org](mailto:info@wipuk.org)

Women in Prison  
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ELMFIELD HOUSE  
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LONDON  
SW9 9GX

WIP's freephone is not an emergency phone number. Please know that whatever you are going through, a Samaritan will face it with you, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call the Samaritans for free on 116 123.

#### 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.

# Thank you



so much to all of you who responded to our call in the last edition of WIP's magazine where we asked you to tell us about your experience of

the COVID-19 lockdown.

We received various poems, journal entries and essays from women across the country, expressing the importance of hope, imagination and community during the current pandemic. At a time when we are unable to meet in person and host our magazine groups in the prisons, your input has never been more crucial. Please keep sending us your thoughts on what you would like to see more (or less!) of in the magazine. I hope we can come together soon and begin to work collectively on the next edition.

This edition has been produced with the generous support of Greggs, who are doing great work to provide employment opportunities for people with criminal records (you can learn more about the opportunities Greggs offer on page 24!). We also have the regular Health & Wellbeing and Know Your Rights features and, as always, some inspirational art and writing from you in the All Yours section.

The painting featured on the front cover, titled *Japanese Cherry Blossom*, was produced by Ann, for the annual New Beginnings art exhibition organised by the Women's Support Centre in Woking.

At Women in Prison, we continue to campaign tirelessly alongside our partners, including Birth Companions, INQUEST and others, to make sure women in prison are not forgotten. We have also been working with women's centres across the country and the Women's Budget Group to advocate for better funding for specialist women's services that we know so many of you value. We know these are the hardest of times to be in prison, but we also know the strengths and talents of the women we work with – as demonstrated by your lockdown submissions.

I wanted to end with the opening line from a beautiful poem by the Irish poet John O'Donohue: 'This is the time to be slow, Lie low to the wall until the bitter weather passes.'

Wishing you a peaceful and hopeful year ahead.

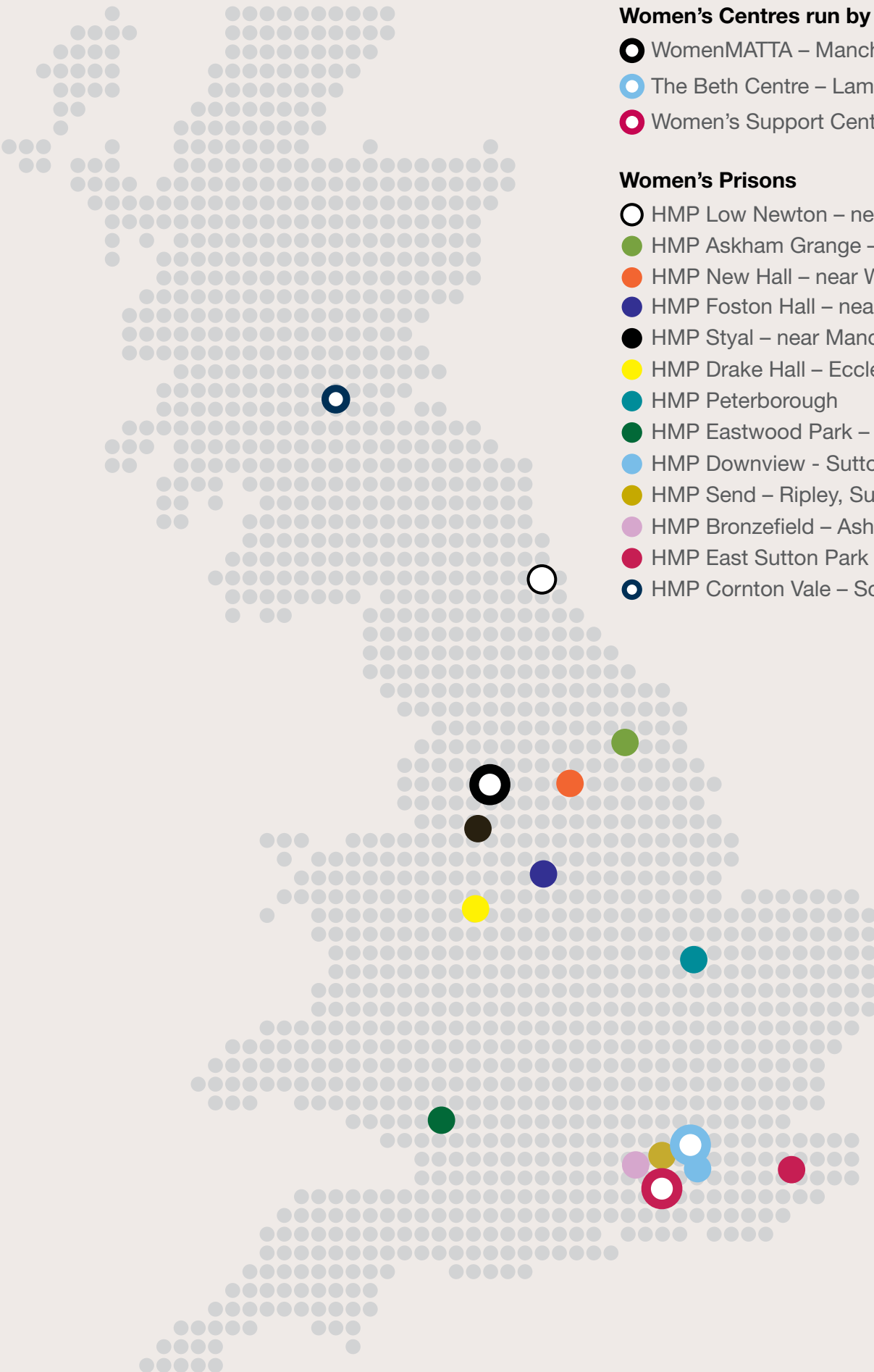
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The magazine you are reading is free for all women affected by the criminal justice system in the UK.

We send copies 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 or [info@wipuk.org](mailto:info@wipuk.org)

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Registered charity number 1118727



**Women's Centres run by WIP**

- WomenMATTERA – Manchester
- The Beth Centre – Lambeth, London
- Women's Support Centre – Woking, Surrey

**Women's Prisons**

- 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 - Sutton, Surrey
- HMP Send – Ripley, Surrey
- HMP Bronzefield – Ashford, Surrey
- HMP East Sutton Park – Maidstone, Kent
- HMP Cornton Vale – Scotland

A black and white close-up portrait of Maya Angelou. She is looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. Her hands are resting under her chin. She is wearing large hoop earrings. The background is a solid, bright yellow color.

**‘We delight in the  
beauty of the butterfly,  
but rarely admit the  
changes it has gone  
through to achieve  
that beauty.’**

**— Maya Angelou**

# New resources for LGBTQ+ people in prison

**Bent Bars Project co-founder, Sarah Lamble, introduces two self-help toolkits for LGBTQ+ people in prison; produced with the Prisoners' Advice Service, the resources provide practical information and advice for LGBTQ+ people in prison to better understand their rights.**

**T**he Bent Bars Project and the Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) are pleased to announce the publication of two new resources to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer and transgender prisoners:

- *A Prisoner's Guide to Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights*
- *A Prisoner's Guide to Trans Rights*

We know that life inside prison for LGBTQ+ people can pose difficulties and challenges that are related to your sexuality or gender identity. Whether it is questions around 'coming out', finding your way through intimate or sexual relationships, or dealing with harassment and bullying, it can be hard to know how to deal with these things. We know that LGBTQ+ concerns still often remain hidden or overlooked, and support can be limited (both inside and outside prison).

So, we've created these toolkits to provide information and advice around how to deal with some common issues that LGBTQ+ people in prison face.

These 'know your rights' guides are designed especially for LGBTQ+ people in prison in England and Wales to better understand their legal and human rights when in prison. The guides cover a range of issues, including:

- How to report homophobic and transphobic abuse
- How to make complaints if you think your rights are not being respected
- Sexual health and intimate relationships in prison
- Cell sharing among LGBTQ+ people in prison
- Access to LGBTQ+ content and materials in prison.





## ‘These toolkits deal with common issues that LGBTQ+ people in prison face.’

*A Prisoner's Guide to Trans Rights* also explains the Ministry of Justice's current policy around the 'care and management' of trans people in prison, and includes:

- How trans case boards work and how they make decisions around the care of trans people in prison
- How decisions are made about where individual trans people in prison are housed (i.e. in men or women's prisons)
- How to apply for a gender recognition certificate
- Trans rights with respect to body searches (including rub down and full body searches).

You can request printed copies of the toolkits by writing to **Prisoners' Advice Service at PO Box 46199, London, EC1M 4XA** or by writing to the **Bent Bars Project at PO Box 66754, London, WC1A 9BF**.

### About the Bent Bars Project

The Bent Bars Project is a letter-writing project for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, intersex, and queer (LGBTQ+) prisoners in Britain. We also support prisoners who are questioning or exploring their

gender or sexual identities (e.g. if you think you might be LGBTQ+ but aren't sure).

We match LGBTQ+ people inside prison with LGBTQ+ pen pals outside of prison in order to provide mutual support and friendship. We also produce a newsletter written for and by LGBTQ+ prisoners, which contains letters, artwork, stories and poems written by prisoners.

The Bent Bars Project is a small, completely voluntary-run group which has more than ten years' experience supporting LGBTQ+ prisoners. We aim to develop stronger connections and build solidarity between our communities outside and inside prison.

We will respond to all queries with a discreet letter, as we always aim to respect your privacy and confidentiality. Please

bear in mind that if you request a copy of either of the toolkits, they have visible LGBTQ+ content on their covers. ●

If you are an LGBTQ+ prisoner and would like a pen pal through Bent Bars or if you wish to request a copy of our newsletter or the toolkits, please write to us directly at Bent Bars Project, PO Box 66754, London, WC1A 9BF.

### About the Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS)

PAS offers free legal advice and support to adult prisoners throughout England and Wales. PAS' Advice Line is open four days per week and can be reached on 020 7253 3323.

# Starting your own podcast

## In conversation with Oonagh Ryder

**WIP's Jodie Beck and Hareem Ghani sat down with *The Lockdown* co-host Oonagh Ryder to discuss her motivations for creating a podcast and her advice on how to start your own!**

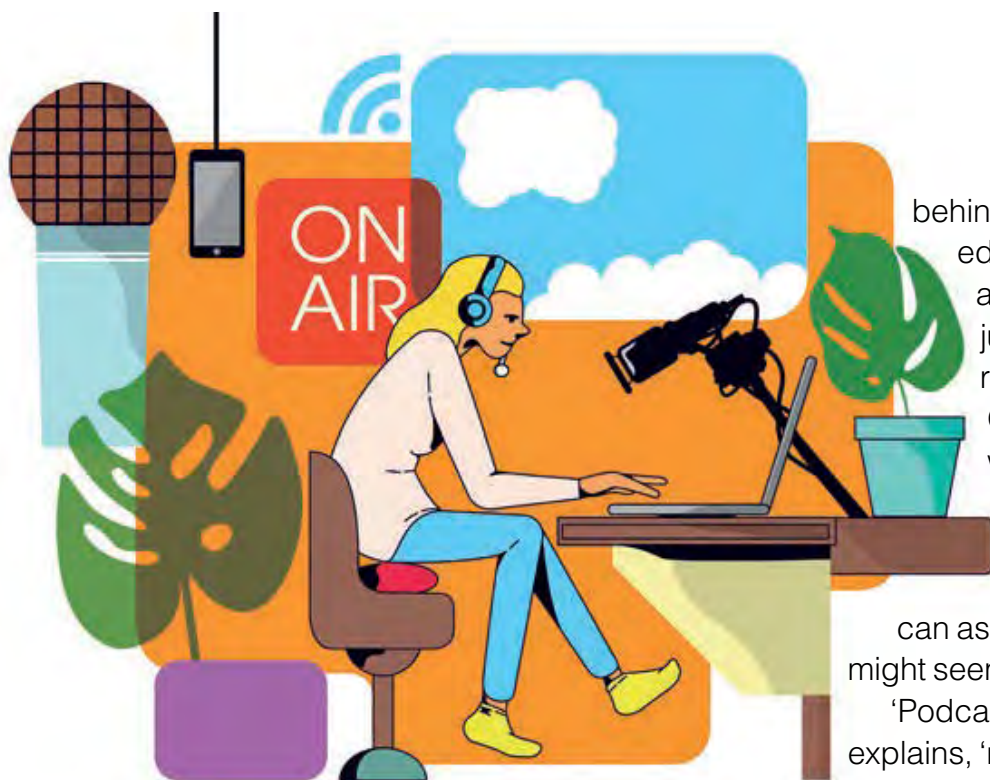
**‘W**hen I was at university, I got involved with a lot of anti-capitalist activism and climate activism,’ Oonagh Ryder recalls as we huddle around a wooden table in her kitchen. ‘Through that work I came into contact with the police,’ she says.

Oonagh, a 31-year-old Sociology graduate from Leeds, first became interested in the criminal justice system following violent clashes between the police and civilians at the Group of 20 (G20) protest in 2009 where 4,000 people took to the streets of London to protest about climate change and the global economy. ‘I was at that protest,’ she remembers, ‘the police were very violent and scary.’ In the aftermath of the two-day protest, more than 180 protesters – some suffering from concussions and broken bones – formally accused the police of excessive force and unprovoked assaults. ‘Those experiences at the protest,’ she recalls, ‘got me thinking this is really horrible, and I wonder what it is like for those communi-

ties where the criminal justice system and the police are really present.’

Graduating from the University of Leeds two years later, Oonagh began volunteering as an ‘Appropriate Adult’ for Catch 22 – someone who supports young people and adults with mental health problems in police custody. Having spent two years volunteering in Lewisham Police Station, Oonagh went on to work for various charities and frontline groups ranging from Clinks, an organisation representing over 500 voluntary organisations working in the criminal justice sector, to the West Yorkshire Community Chaplaincy Project, a small-scale community group located directly opposite HMP Leeds.

Subsequently, Oonagh became interested in prison abolition. Prison abolition, a concept popularised by former Black Panther Party member Angela Davis, academic Ruth Wilson Gilmore and activist Mariame Kaba, argues all prisons should be eliminated. Instead, abolitionists believe we should



behind the podcast was to educate the wider public about the concept of justice. 'Most people are really new to abolition,' Oonagh says, 'it's not a widespread worldview, so I was hoping to carry the listener and encourage people to feel like they can ask all those questions that might seem silly.'

'Podcasting is really DIY,' Oonagh explains, 'not many podcasts that I listen to are particularly polished,' she

says. Podcasts are an accessible way for people to share their stories; all you have to do is buy a basic recorder and start talking. 'When I came up with the idea for the podcast, I'd not really done anything like it before,' Oonagh laughs. 'If you're not inside [prison] and you've got access to the Internet, National Public Radio have this website where they tell you how to record a podcast,' she says. 'Anyone who has experience of, or thoughts on, the criminal justice system should be producing as much of this stuff as possible' says Oonagh. 'My advice [to anyone wanting to start their own podcast] would be to just do it and learn along the way.' ●

invest in education, healthcare and housing to ensure we are addressing the root causes of offending, often arising from poverty. 'Often, we talk about crime or offending as if it's a result of individual character flaws and not a result of social problems,' Oonagh concludes.

In 2017, Oonagh co-founded *The Lockdown*, a podcast all about prisons and the criminal justice system in Britain. With 26 episodes recorded so far, co-hosts Oonagh Ryder and Carl Cattermole (previously Sam Swann) explore a range of topics, from the spread of coronavirus in UK prisons to deaths in police custody and the experiences of gender non-conforming people in prison. The podcast often invites experts onto the show; previous guests include Marcia Rigg from the United Friends and Families Campaign (UFFC), Deborah Coles from INQUEST and actor Michael Balogun, who spent much of his youth in and out of prison. 'I'm not interested in having too many academics on [the show],' Oonagh states, 'I'm always interested in having people who are doing work alongside their thinking.'

So what motivated Oonagh to start the podcast in the first place? The intention

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A podcast is an audio show, usually spread across episodes, which can be downloaded from the Internet and listened to either on your computer, phone or tablet. Podcasting has become an increasingly popular medium since 2015. Well-known podcasts include *The Teacher's Pet*, an Australian true crime investigation of a disappearance, and *How Did This Get Made?*, where the hosts mock outlandishly bad films. There are now an estimated 660,000 podcasts in production globally.

# HOPE'S HOPE FOR 2021



HOPE'S SENTENCE IS COMING TO AN END.



THE WORLD SHE IS RELEASED INTO LOOKS VERY DIFFERENT



SHE IS HAPPY TO HAVE SOMEWHERE TO LIVE THOUGH!



THE COUNTRY GOES INTO ANOTHER LOCKDOWN!



HOPE IS BROKE, BUT HAVING EXPERIENCED LOCKDOWN IN PRISON, SHE KEEPS BUSY AND MAKES HERSELF MASKS OUT OF AN OLD COTTON SHIRT.



OUT SHOPPING SHE IS HORRIFIED AT THE AMOUNT OF DISCARDED MASKS IN THE STREET.



**HOPE  
GETS BUSY  
WITH HER  
SEWING  
MACHINE**



**HOPE HAS AN IDEA!**

**AND  
STRUGGLES  
WITH  
ORGANISING  
AND TECH!**



**FINALLY,  
PROUDLY  
SHE CAN  
LAUNCH  
HER IDEA....**



# Rethinking society

## in the face of coronavirus

Words: Maria

Illustration: PPaint

**Drawing on her lockdown experience in prison, Maria reflects on institutional treatment during the pandemic, highlighting the deeper ills of society and our collective responsibility to care for one another in times of crisis.**



**S**hortly before COVID-19 hit the UK, my friend Tom had his leg amputated. Like me, Tom was forced to watch the oncoming train that was the pandemic while confined in an institution. Prior to the operation, both of our lives had already taken catastrophic turns; the two of us had followed a downward spiral leading Tom to physical amputation and life in a care home, and me to the social amputation that was prison. Indeed, downward spirals are something of a trend these days. Alongside the devastating death toll due to coronavirus, the pandemic has also brought to light the severe inequalities in society.

Prior to the pandemic, few people would have associated the likes of cruise ships with care homes and prisons; but to the virus, they're all the same. For coronavirus, humanity is just one big herd: privileged people taking a cruise to somewhere exotic are exactly the same as those less privileged in care homes and prisons. All three environments are hotspots for the virus because they are overpopulated, offer limited time outside and have a tendency to be populated by the elderly – job done as far as coronavirus is concerned!

However, unlike the virus, society differentiates between people in prisons, care homes and cruise ships. We differentiate on the basis of value judgements – in other words, what is deemed good or bad, or right and wrong. But are these judgements useful? Or are they just another aspect of society which the pandemic has exposed as damaging and counterproductive?

As we compared our lockdown stories, Tom and I realised that our lived institutional experience of the lockdown had certain parallels. The most disturbing aspect was the lack of agency afforded to us. Knowing that a lethal virus was spreading rapidly was scary enough, but imagine how it felt

for all the protective measures – right down to food and sanitation – to be out of our hands. As a prisoner, control was (and is) taken from you because you are deemed undeserving of it. Similarly, as a care home resident, control was (and is) taken from you because you are deemed incapable of exercising it. Both are value judgements, and both are applied universally to everyone within the institution.

But there was one clear difference between mine and Tom's experience of the lockdown: Tom was not a prisoner (in theory, at least). As a 'non-prisoner', Tom was considered deserving of advance notice of restrictions on his already limited freedom; as a prisoner, I was not. Instead, I returned to my cell one night to be told that whatever I had planned for the next day wasn't going to happen. As the keys turned in the locks, a young woman cried hysterically and pleaded that she be allowed to phone home to keep her family informed. How exactly do you explain to your three-year-old child that, in spite of her promises, mummy wasn't going to be coming home this weekend?

In any hierarchy of values, it seems harsh to ask someone to sign away their right to life. Yet, Tom and I found that our respective institutions rapidly reached the conclusion that this was justified in the midst of a pandemic. I was asked to sign a disclaimer confirming that, while at high risk, I accepted that the prison could not be expected to shield me. Comparatively, Tom was presented with a 'do not resuscitate' notice, which he was expected to sign in advance of the possibility that contracting coronavirus might result in his hospitalisation.

Other similarities between mine and Tom's experiences of the lockdown included a lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), increased exposure to infection via constant staff rotation, and the curious way



**‘Alongside the devastating death toll due to coronavirus, the pandemic has also brought to light the severe inequalities in society. Coronavirus has taught us that everyone’s physical wellbeing depends on our ability to protect all equally.’**

in which the limits on our freedoms always seemed to serve the needs of the institution. These issues were widely publicised in the case of care homes, but I am yet to hear them being openly discussed in the prison context. Hazarding a guess, this news blackout may itself result from value judgements – judgements made at all levels, from political decision makers right down to the general public, about those in prison.

There were also clear differences in the way that the staff at our respective institutions treated us. Tom’s care home staff, for example, were visibly distressed when relaying information to him about their no visitors policy. By contrast, a prisoner upset by not being able to see an ageing relative was simply told to pull it together. That is not to say that there weren’t many prison officers who were genuinely sympathetic and supportive, but the general feeling across the prison sometimes lacked empathy.

Coronavirus has taught us that everyone’s physical wellbeing depends on our ability to protect all equally. But maybe the

herd analogy goes deeper than this. Humans are interdependent: we don’t thrive when we are isolated, and we don’t flourish when we are unchallenged. So is the most dangerous virus among us actually a biological one, or is it the cultural ‘virus’ which allows us to disregard the needs of those we think are different from us? ●

*This piece is dedicated to Chris Gorrington who sadly passed away in the early hours of 13 January 2021. To quote Maria, ‘Prison and lockdown have robbed us of our future time together. You will be loved and missed forever.’*

Maria has enjoyed a career spanning nearly 40 years as an academic researcher specialising in suicide prevention, self-harm, aggression and drug use, as well as researching prison reform and the welfare of prisoners. Having recently spent over two years in prison, Maria has been able to see first-hand the benefits of participant observation and the need for a more ‘just’ criminal justice system.

# How to start a magazine group in prison

Illustration: PPaint

***Off the Cuff* is a magazine created by women at HMP Styal. Co-facilitator of the magazine's editorial group, WIP's Myah Jeffers, shares her top tips on how to successfully start your own magazine group in prison.**

**O**ver the last two years, a team of women have worked tirelessly to produce *Off the Cuff*, a magazine discussing the day-to-day realities of life in Styal. While the pandemic has caused delays in publishing the latest edition of the magazine, the editorial team have finally reunited to produce the fourth edition.

It's important to understand the time, effort and teamwork involved in creating a successful magazine group. Here are some tips for anyone interested in starting their own.

## Getting Started

Start by sharing the idea of a magazine with several departments in your prison to determine if people are interested. If there

is enough of an appetite for it, advertise for the editorial roles by putting up posters across the prison. Make sure you have a diverse team with various skillsets, including writing, editing, proofreading and design. For a well-balanced team, a maximum of six women are required for the editorial group.

Discuss with the prison staff where you can hold weekly magazine group meetings. Once you have found a safe space, start to think

about the magazine content and plan the first edition with the team. You might want to consider the following points:

- **Audience.** Think about your audience's reading abilities to ensure the magazine is accessible to everyone in your community.
- **Format.** Explore different ways to engage your reader



## ‘It’s important to understand the time, effort and teamwork involved in creating a successful magazine group.’

and present information about your community. This could include articles and opinion pieces, poems and illustrations or activities and exercises – don’t be afraid to experiment with different formats!

- **Teamwork.** Use the strengths of each team member; remember, some may be comfortable with written communications, others may have a flair for editing or designing.

- **Mission statement.** Work together to create a mission statement that incorporates your collective aims, ethics and values as a team – this is useful when approaching organisations or when difficult situations arise.

- **Planning ahead.** Discuss the future of the magazine: how long are you expecting to be publishing for? And how many editions will you produce in a year?

- **Support.** Think about your support network: which colleagues, staff members or volunteers can support you with the magazine?

### Gathering materials and writing for the audience

The *Off the Cuff* team has built good relationships with a range of departments and organisations within the prison community. The education department is a particularly good place to start given their



English literature, art and workshop expertise.

Expect to receive plenty of contributions from women in your community – they will be excited about the magazine and will want to have their voices heard! So don’t forget to provide a safe drop box location for women to submit their contributions, as well as a designated team member to regularly collect the submissions.

In previous editions, *Off the Cuff*’s editorial team have interviewed prison governors and Offender Management Unit (OMU) staff and written articles about their experience of the criminal justice system, along with information about prison services and facilities.

Remember, keep the articles reader-friendly and encourage women in your community to share their stories; but bear in mind that some women might need help with writing or sharing their stories. As an editorial team, it is your job to support women with writing, editing or proofreading.

### Share! Share! Share!

Share the magazine with as many people as you can, from prison visitors to prison staff. Promoting the magazine will raise its profile, which could result in external organisations and professionals volunteering to contribute or help with its production. ●

# Getting to know a Governor

Words: Hareem Ghani & Raeesah Akhtar

**We chatted with recently appointed Governor of HMP Send, Amy Frost, who reflected on her experiences working in the prison service, what this year in prison has looked like during the pandemic, and what she hopes to achieve in her new role.**

**Tell us a bit about yourself and your work.**

My name is Amy Frost and I have recently taken up the post of Governor at Send. I've been in the prison service for 11 years, working in a wide range of prisons – I particularly enjoyed my time working with women as Deputy Governor at Holloway prior to its closing.

**Could you tell us about your journey to becoming Governor at Send?**

My first job in the civil service was with the Northern Ireland prison service; it was my first real exposure to prisons, and I was so

taken by this whole world that exists that almost nobody knows about. I came into the prison service on a fast-track programme, so I was a prison officer for about six months and then I went straight into a management role. During my time at Holloway, there was a real sense of community between staff and organisations who wanted the best for the women they looked after, and I personally found working and collaborating with women in particular really rewarding, so I had always wanted to work in the women's estate again.



### **Why did you decide to work in a women's prison estate?**

I was previously involved in policy-making and legislation in the civil service, but it felt very removed from people's experiences. I wanted to do something where I was having a real-life impact. As a prison governor, there is potential to make decisions and positively change things. One thing I particularly enjoy about working with women is their feedback. Women have always been keen to share their thoughts about what's working and what isn't, and they've got lots of ideas on how to make things better. This motivates me to make those ideas happen, and it's what's made me want to work in the women's estate.

### **What are some of your priorities as Governor for the year ahead?**

This is a really bizarre time, particularly for a place like Send that has a reputation for contributing to the community and enabling women to progress with their sentences. People have had to make enormous adjustments and I think the women have done brilliantly given the huge changes, such as spending more time in rooms and not being able to undertake courses.

So, my first priority is to respond safely and compassionately to the coronavirus crisis, and to balance preventing the spread of the virus with the mental wellbeing of women in prison. My real hope is to get activities up and running as soon as possible; we're already starting some group work, which is promising, and have recently opened the hair salon. We're also working hard to get some of our women who were out on ROTL back out there.

I also want to focus on wellbeing more generally. Because of the pandemic, there have been lots of positive and innovative activities around wellbeing in the community and in prisons. Focusing on health,

exercise and the nourishing quality of human and social interaction is essential, and creating spaces where women can do that safely over the next year will be really important. Personally, I have never felt more grateful to have a job where I get the privilege of interacting with a range of different people every day.

### **What are some of the highlights of your role so far?**

It's very early days, but one of the most interesting experiences I've had at Send so far would have to be its therapeutic community. It was a real privilege to join the therapeutic community's meetings and it was fascinating to hear the women's experiences of group therapy which, while emotionally demanding, was ultimately transformative. It's a very unique service that we run here and it is available to women in prison across the country who can apply to attend.

### **What are some of the challenges you have found in this role?**

Those who have been working at Send throughout the pandemic have done a remarkable job in terms of adapting and preventing the spread of coronavirus. One of the challenges I foresee is ensuring that the current conditions don't become the new normal. It's important to remember that these lockdown arrangements have been in place for a long time now and, although there has been some easement, we're still running quite a restricted programme for the women. As uncomfortable as spending lots of time in your room is, it's easy to adapt and make it a habit. My challenge will be to make sure that we are continuing to have high aspirations for the work that we do here at Send.

### **Has your role changed your perception of prison or taught you something new?**

Coming to Send felt very much like joining

## **‘Prisons are so often associated with distress, violence and harm; and yet, the care that exists in these spaces and the way women look out for one another is really striking.’**

a small and established community that doesn't have the sort of chaos that comes with large local prisons. I guess that has challenged my assumptions about how prisons could be run. Also, kindness and generosity is so evident in this environment. Prisons are so often associated with distress, violence and harm; and yet, the care that exists in these spaces and the way women look out for one another is really striking.

### **What are you going to try and do to improve conditions at Send?**

I think the main focus for now should be on giving women more opportunities to personally develop, be it through learning or accessing support and therapy. No two women are the same, so having opportunities that reflect the diversity of needs and aspirations is critical.

### **How do you ensure that you are listening to the concerns of women in prison and acting on their feedback?**

This is the most fundamental and rewarding part of working in prisons. Community councils play a huge role in terms of hearing people's experiences and frustrations, but accountability is just as important – women should be able to follow up on promised actions. Also, personal conversations are important to me. At Send, there is a large dining hall that allows

women to sit and talk over their meals. I'm really looking forward to being able to open the dining hall up again and talk to women directly to hear about how things are going.

### **Have you got any parting words for our readers?**

Everybody has a story and the most important thing is that we don't make assumptions about other people's stories, and that we take time to get to know them for who they are. Being understanding, generous and kind goes a long way in this type of environment.

Finally, I want to highlight that as much as this has been a challenging year, it is often in the face of adversity where innovation seems to flourish. And that has certainly been the case in the women's estate during this lockdown, where technology has come to the forefront and enabled women to have video calls in place of social visits. This means that a whole raft of women who previously hadn't had any family visits, because their families lived really far away or abroad, have now been able to reconnect with their families. Because of the pandemic, these kinds of opportunities that should have been available years ago have now come into being. It's important to find the positive things from this year and hold on to them going forward. ●

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non-edible and unsu



# GREGGS



This bag has been recycled from  
If you





# A fresh start with Greggs

Words: [Roisin Currie](#) and [Beckie Rowland](#)

**The popular bakery chain is helping women in prison develop their employability skills through its Fresh Start programme. Leading the programme at Greggs, Roisin Currie and Beckie Rowland tell us more about why the high street bakery stands for more than just delicious sausage rolls.**

**B**ehind the golden puff pastry and freshly made sandwiches, Greggs has always been committed to doing the right thing. Making good, freshly prepared food accessible to everyone has been at the heart of our Social Responsibility programme from day one. In the sixties, we started with our free 'pie 'n' peas' supper for older residents in Gateshead and opened up our first bakery outlet shops on Westgate Road in Fenham. These were the small beginnings of the community work that was to become a major focus for Greggs.

Today, Greggs wants to have a positive impact on people's lives and local communities. Now in its tenth year, Greggs' Fresh Start programme aims to support those who have been affected by the criminal justice system and those from

disadvantaged backgrounds. One aspect of the programme, 'Ready to Work', has been developed with the support of Timpson, in conjunction with a number of prisons and probation trusts, to provide those involved in the criminal justice system with personal development to build confidence and self-esteem for assessments and interviews, through to work experience and paid employment.

The programme seeks to reduce unemployment rates among disadvantaged groups by improving employability skills and offering paid employment where possible. This, in turn, will help break the cycle of those caught up in the criminal justice system. The programme also allows us to identify great talent for future roles within the business.



### **Read Leah's\* Story, Team Member, Greggs, Birmingham:**

**'I never did my GCSEs. The only work I managed to get was factory work, and I hadn't even had any of that for four or five years before I went to prison. I'd given up a bit. I felt that I didn't have any training or experience and that no one would ever want to employ me. It was depressing. I had nothing to do and I needed money. I guess that's why I eventually got caught up in crime and was later sentenced to seven years. Prison wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. The prison organised some training for me, so I now have NVQ Level 2 qualifications in Information Technology and beauty therapy. And then Greggs helped me to get my current job. They did things like interview workshops and shop assistant training in the prison, and then, two weeks after my release, I started in the store, serving behind the till. I've met some nice people working here and I've got some self-respect back. I feel as if I have options now, compared to five or six years ago.'** \*Name changed to protect identity.

**‘We’re not just about delivering numbers or reaching targets; we believe that by helping one person at a time on their journey, we will be able to positively impact their families and communities.’**

Through this programme, we have recruited many committed individuals, a third of whom have now progressed into management roles. We are able to offer an inspiring development path for people – everyone who is involved in the programme feels immensely proud of the difference they can make.

Most of all, what makes our programme unique is our ‘one person at a time’ approach. We’re not just about delivering numbers or reaching targets; we believe that by helping one person at a time on their journey, we will be able to positively impact their families and communities, ensuring we offer adequate support to everyone.

**W**orking with prisons and probation trusts is a complex world; however, being able to help just one person has inspired and motivated us to develop our programmes over the last ten years and is something that we hope to continue in the future.

Greggs are proud to lead by example, encouraging other businesses to follow suit. In 2016, we took on the chair and coordination role for the Employers’ Forum

for Reducing Re-offending (EFFRR). In this role, we are committed to demonstrating that those who have been in prison or with criminal records can play a meaningful role within our business, and we have helped other employers (i.e. Halfords, Northern Rail and Boots Alliance) to set up similar programmes.

*Greggs’ Fresh Start programme has contacts with a variety of prisons across the UK via interviews, employability sessions or ROTL employment. If you would like to find out more about any of the above, please email Roisin or Beckie at [fresh.start@greggs.co.uk](mailto:fresh.start@greggs.co.uk), or visit our recruitment site for current vacancies at [greggsfamily.co.uk](http://greggsfamily.co.uk)*

The Employers’ Forum for Reducing Re-offending (EFFRR) is a reference group of employers that draws its membership from across the private, public and voluntary sectors. We meet quarterly to support and advise current or new businesses to improve the employment outcomes and skills of people with convictions. Find out more at [effrr@apm-uk.co.uk](mailto:effrr@apm-uk.co.uk) ●

# ROTL

## experiences

Illustration: JB

**Release on Temporary License (ROTL) is an important stepping-stone to help you prepare for release from prison, but you are not alone if the thought of it is also a little overwhelming. We spoke with four women who told us all about their ROTL experiences, including how to make the most of your time outside prison and how to secure a placement in the first place.**

### **Karen, Project Worker at Women in Prison**

ROTL is exactly what it says on the tin: you are released temporarily and given a piece of paper that you must guard with your life, as it contains all of your conditions and timing requirements.

I went out on ROTL regularly once I had completed my six-week risk assessment in prison. My first ROTL

was a medical one from closed prison and I was accompanied by two officers. It didn't matter that I was on my way to have two teeth extracted, I was hyped that I would be out in the real world for a few hours! As for my experience of town visits, the preparation I remember receiving was a walk through my licence, which stated the rules (e.g. no drinking alcohol, no drugs, no bringing anything back),



a list of other prohibitions and the time I had to be back.

My first town visit was from 12 to 4pm, so we couldn't do too much except go into town and have some lunch. Getting into my mum's car was liberating and it felt so good to hug my son without having to keep my hands on a table. Everything was fine until we hit the shopping centre. There were people everywhere; I clammed up, my head went light, and things around me seemed really quiet and slow. I struggled to relax, and I didn't know what to do or how to act. People in the restaurant were politely asking me what I would like to eat. It was all a huge shock just to be treated like a dignified human again.

This treatment was short lived; upon my return to prison, I was the random mandatory strip search for that day, which is probably one of the most degrading aspects of prison life. While it's painful being apart from your former life, it's important to remember that one day it'll be back, so until then, you do you, and create a better version of yourself so you are ready.

ROTL got easier. I developed a thick skin whenever I entered the prison grounds. From one world to another, deep breath in, here we go again. In the end, I was out on a town visit every two weeks, I applied for primary carer leave every six weeks, which was a Friday to Monday stay with my son, and I was at university for three and a half days each week. Without my ROTL experiences, it would have been much harder to face my release date.

My advice to those preparing for ROTL: prepare your clothes the night before, get everything organised, and take some quiet time before you leave. Most things become easier when you repeat them enough times. Talk to a friend inside and

find out what their first time out was like. And remember what you are doing it for; this is what helps you get to the end. Don't stop believing, you can get through it all.



## Jeanette, Store Manager at Greggs

I worked on ROTL for the food retailer Greggs, starting as a team member. At the beginning, my job involved cash handling, food safety, and customer care. Since leaving prison, I have been promoted over the years and I am now a store manager.

The most enjoyable part for me was knowing that once I had completed my training I would have a job. This meant that I could avoid the benefit trap. I was worried about being homeless upon release. How would I find accommodation? And how would I get to work? But having a job allowed me to save money so I was ready to find my own place.

My advice for anyone going on ROTL is to get as much help and support as you need. If you are able to work, save as much money as you can. It will help you to support yourself and sustain your living costs until your work payments come through. Knowing that you have some money to look after yourself will also prevent you from making wrong choices. Just concentrate on your employment and preparing for life on release. Sticking to this meant that I didn't have to worry when I was released and I could concen-

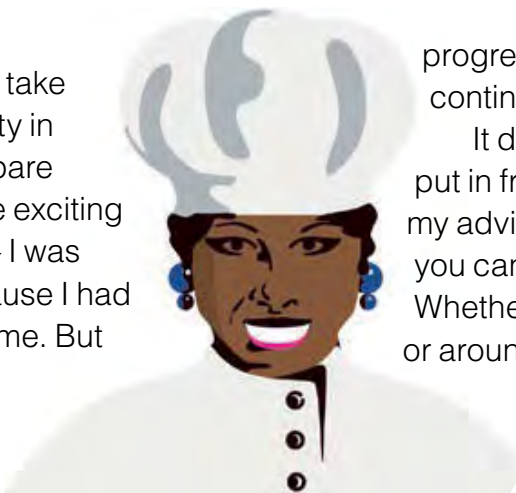
trate on working.

Before going on ROTL, take every course or opportunity in prison that you can to prepare you for a job. ROTL can be exciting and challenging at times – I was really nervous at first because I had been in prison for a long time. But you have to be practical: avoid people from your past and keep focused on your goals. You have to take care of yourself and your decisions first; just one mistake can take you off course. Also, plan everything including your journey to and from work, what you are going to do when you get to work, as well as making sure you have the phone numbers of those you can call if anything goes wrong (e.g. if a bus is running late or you couldn't leave the prison on time). Stay organised and focused on the end goal.

## Nikki, Trainee Commis Chef

Once I was 'ROTL ready' (i.e. no longer being escorted), I worked at the visitor centres at Downview prison and High Down prison on a voluntary basis. This prepared me for paid employment.

I now work at a hotel in the kitchen, training as a commis chef (a junior chef), using the qualifications I gained from prison. My responsibilities include food prep, cook-to-order and supervising the kitchen porters. I am really enjoying it and I aim to keep



progressing so that I can continue working at the hotel.

It does feel like barriers are put in front of you all the time, so my advice is to think about how you can achieve what you want. Whether this means going over or around the barriers you face, there's always a way. For my ROTL placement, I had to do the ground-work myself and then submit a proposal to the officers. Make sure you are always where you should be, as this will gain you further and future trust on ROTL – at this point, I am now only in the prison for 5 days each month. It's hard work and my advice is: don't give up and always keep your goals in sight!

## Jenny, Charity Volunteer

I currently work as a volunteer for a prison reform charity. I support the Advice and Information team, clearing the data on their database to make it easier for the team when taking calls from those in prison. I also collate data from surveys and carry out ad hoc administrative tasks.

I enjoy the experience immensely because I get to spend time with different people and experience the normal day-to-day routine of going to work, which I had really missed. This particular role allows me to have a positive impact on the prison estate too, which is very important to me.

### \*What is Smart Works?

Smart Works is a UK charity that provides high-quality interview clothes and interview training to women in need. Appointments are made on a referral basis, including through Working Chance, Solace Women's Aid and HM Prison Service. For more information about their services, visit their website on [www.smartworks.org](http://www.smartworks.org).

**‘It does feel like barriers are put in front of you all the time, so my advice is to think about how you can achieve what you want. Whether this means going over or around the barriers you face, there’s always a way.’**

The biggest challenge when working outside of prison is that you aren’t really a part of that world anymore, but you also aren’t part of the ‘real’ world yet, so you have to find a new place for yourself. My advice for anyone reading this is to be proactive: do not rely on the prison to find work for you – they won’t. Make sure you have alternative travel routes planned because commuting can be a challenge at times. And just because you are a prisoner, it doesn’t mean that you don’t have the same employment rights as everyone else; if something strikes you as wrong when in your workplace, flag it with someone.

My advice for anyone going on ROTL is:

- It’s natural for you to feel tired at first. It takes a while to get used to being out and about so much again, but don’t give up!

- Take up the prison’s offer to provide lunch – don’t spend your money if you don’t have to.
- If you are a nervous/impatient traveller, find something to entertain you on your commute, like a book or a magazine.
- No one is staring at you; they are far too busy going about their own day.
- Find out the dress code for where you are going. If you don’t have appropriate clothing, places like Smart Works\* can help out. You shouldn’t have to feel like you don’t fit in.
- Enjoy it! Work really can be fun.

*For more information on ROTL, please write to the Prisoners’ Advice Service (PAS) to request their self-help toolkit at Prisoners’*

*Advice Service, PO Box*

*46199, London,*

*EC1M 9XA. Please*

*mark your envelope*

*with ‘Legal Mail*

*Rule 39’ in all*

*correspondence*

*with PAS.*



# ALLY

In light of the coronavirus crisis that has affected millions around the world, we asked you to tell us about your own experience of lockdown. Through your creative entries, you expressed the various challenges during this difficult time, as well as your reflections on the past and hopes for the future. Here are some of the winning submissions.

Illustrations: Ulla, Chioma & JB

## Reflections from the Coronavirus Crisis

by Kim

It was Monday March 16th 2020  
Time behind the door we had plenty  
Our work clothes we had to hang up  
coz we are on 23-hour bang up

No exercise, no association  
visits please don't even mention  
We get out for half an hour  
clean your pad and have a shower

Sitting all alone in your cell  
feeling like you're going through hell  
In everybody's face you see misery  
Nobody gets to see their family

Ever since this Covid-19  
Only thing to look forward to is canteen  
Mental health is getting worse  
It's too much stress for the nurse

They came one day and said I got tag  
I couldn't wait to pack my bag  
I walked out that big metal gate  
feeling light-headed, I felt faint

Now all this stress and anxiety  
leaving prison, I don't think I was ready  
But I have done my time, and I am free  
This lockdown is not going to break me





# OURS

## Through the Lens: A Different Decade

by Chantelle

Looking back at when I was ten years old, the only hand-held technology I remember was a Tamagotchi – that was it. I had yo-yos, Cat's Cradle, Hopscotch and Bulldog; I would also spend hours jumping rope.

Ask a ten-year-old now if they know about these games and they will probably try and download the app because most ten-year-olds are glued to screens, tablets, phones and game consoles. I don't know when kids stopped wanting to be outside.

Ask a ten-year-old if they want to play conkers and they will probably have no idea what you are talking about. I have such fond memories of past times when the autumn leaves were just starting to turn brown, and I would go to the woods to find the biggest conker that I could soak in vinegar overnight. I would then cook it to harden it, drill a hole in the conker and pull a shoelace through it. The conker was ready for the next day for when I would play conkers at lunchtime.

Now to play swing conkers; trying to hit and break your opponent's conker while hoping or praying your own conker didn't break, or that your friend didn't hurt your knuckles if they missed your conker. I've since found out that yo-yos and conkers have been banned from schools, as well as Penny Up the Wall.

To a bygone era when the parks were full and not every girl dreamed of becoming a Kardashian – when children were still kids.

Corona will not affect these children because they will have more time to be inside playing Fortnite. At least Pokémon Go had children outside in the search for creatures; they would use their phone cameras to look for creatures that were invisible to the naked eye.

I miss my childhood in parks till dark, climbing trees, making go-karts.

## Still Time to Laugh

by Maria

Thank you to all who have helped everyone  
you are simply the best,  
but now it is time to thank  
You – the NHS.  
All the wondrous things  
you all can do,  
from treating cancer patients  
to helping – (whisper this) – people poo.  
You get close to people  
in their most difficult times,  
and each and every time  
higher your courage climbs.  
Please know, that you are never on your own,  
and that you can always  
pick up the phone.  
I cannot begin to imagine  
what it's like to witness death,  
it is probably enough  
to take away your breath.  
You are all so very, very brave  
we need to stop and think for a while;  
when you are all out saving lives  
you still manage a smile.  
You have tears streaming  
but you still fight through blurred eyes,  
keeping brave faces  
when hearing children's cries.  
You should all be commended  
putting smiles back on kiddies' faces,  
you still fight on  
even when days put you through your paces.  
But the one thing I love the most about all NHS staff,  
is this simple fact:  
even when your days are bad  
there's still time to laugh.  
THANK YOU!

Thank  
You  
NHS

# The Seasons

by NH

*Part 4. Winter – Snowfall\**

Snowfall, not as common during the years  
gone by  
we wait for a white Christmas.  
Frosty leaves of trees and ice on the road.  
As each new morning dawns,  
the world wakes up, starting to move  
into action.  
Another winter's day.

As we hurry through the weeks  
Before Christmas,  
The weather and the chill bringing  
us ever closer  
to the new year.

When after Christmas cheer  
we all awaken here –  
in our homes,  
ready to begin again.

As the new year welcomes along  
A new path and a new year song,  
Our carols done, we have worshipped the  
one.  
Our resolutions bring solutions,  
A day anew is dawning.

*\*This is a four-part poem written by NH.  
We hope to publish the remaining poems  
in future editions of this magazine.*



## Prisoner

by Shakara

Do not condemn me for  
all that I do, fundamentally,  
I'm the same as you.  
Try not to censor all my  
words,  
It's only the chatter you've  
often heard.  
Do not intrude upon my thoughts  
or in the trap of prejudice  
you'll be caught.  
In every life mistakes occur  
in that I'm just like him or her.  
I'm paying the price for what  
I've done,  
once I'm out, let it  
be gone.  
Don't hound me forever for one  
misdeed,  
allow me to truly hereafter  
be free.  
Burn me not with  
the prison brand,  
let me go and simply shake  
my hand.  
I am not just the things I've  
done,  
like you, I am a mother's son.  
All that I want is a  
chance to be free.

## Untitled

by Kim

If you don't give up  
you won't fail!



# Covid Reflections

by **Natasha**

Covid-19 has taught me that I should live in the moment and accept the things I can't control.

This was meant to be a good year for me! I had high hopes for the year. I worked so hard to achieve all I needed to achieve, so that I could start to go home on my visits and be transferred to another establishment nearer to my family.

I had also planned to work in the outside world and go to college – it all sounded amazing to me.

Once the lockdown took place, I realised none of this would happen and it was now a waiting game. I, of course, was disappointed. Yet my disappointment was nothing compared to how people in the outside world were feeling.

Their lives had completely changed and many had lost loved ones.

But I still had a glimmer of hope that all my plans would become a reality one day.

I am looking forward to going home on my visits and having time with my family, to just enjoy the normal things again.

I guess there is a new normal now. The outside world is completely different from the one I remember. Since Covid-19 hit us all, I have learned to be more patient and to have acceptance. I actually feel like I've mastered the art of hoping.

This year hasn't turned out how I expected it to; but while I wait for my next chapter to begin, I am focusing on self-care. I have also been enjoying the small things and I'm still making plans for my future. My plans may be on hold for now, but my dreams live on.

I think we can all say that Covid-19 has taught us something.

# Enclosed

by **Maria**

Enclosed in my little cell all day  
Wondering – 'what can I do?'  
don't want to wonder about corona  
don't want to sit and stew.

So what I do instead  
to keep me sane and well,  
is to come with words and rhymes  
and onto paper I propel.

I love to write my poems  
they are a type of medicine for me,  
and when others read them  
goodness too they feel.

I write for my mind  
as it helps me feel so calm,  
I've done it since forever  
it prevents me from so much harm.

I wrote my first poem  
at the age of ten,  
it was about my loss and grief;  
and ever since I have carried on writing  
it's helped with my beliefs.

# Leather Inside Out launches Freedom in Isolation

In March last year, prison reform charity Leather Inside Out launched *Freedom in Isolation*, an initiative encouraging people in prison to practice creative mindfulness to improve their mental health during the pandemic. Here, we showcase some of the inspiring contributions from the women in the prison community who engaged with the campaign.

► ***The Journey Leaves  
You Dreaming*** by IL

This is the opening extract from the poem; you can access the full poem via [www.leatherinsideout.org](http://www.leatherinsideout.org)

Everything changed in a blink of an eye, and I can't even cry.

Arrested, charged, bailed.

Eight months on tag, working full time, not knowing what the future holds – Lord knows this has gotten out of control.

My mistakes and lessons, I'm stressing, eating but not sleeping.

Why? Because The Journey Leaves You Dreaming.

Dreaming of a better day, somewhere else, anywhere but here. As reality hits like a ton of bricks, I have no control and cannot fix.

The verdict is in; GUILTY, GUILTY! These words leave a ring in my ear that doesn't disappear.

Now I've got seven weeks to prepare,

The day is here. Arriving at court, hugging my family and friends. There are tears and pain in everybody's eyes, these emotions are overwhelming and taking me by surprise.

As I place my hand on the glass to say goodbye, the door closes, and I let out a sigh.

As I walk downstairs to the court cells, my new journey begins, now it's time to gather strength from within.

I'm in this van, locked in.

The drive feels like a lifetime...

No one's fault, because I committed the crime.

We arrive at the prison, this is it now; my new place of residence, but I don't want to be a tenant.

First night I couldn't sleep a wink, all I could do is think, The Journey Leaves You Dreaming.

Two months on, I am being transferred to another prison – Lord knows this is messing with my vision.

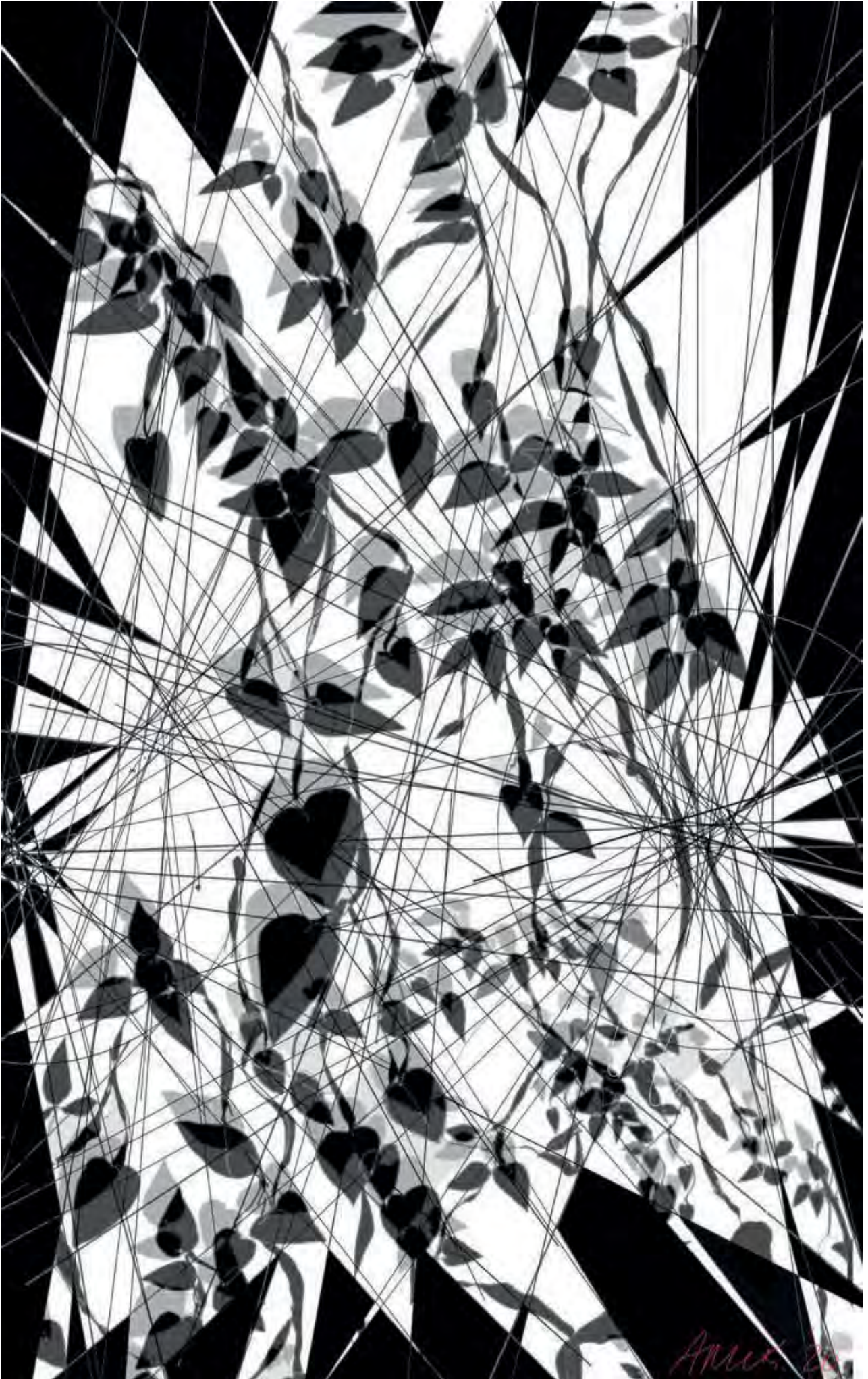
As I pack my bags to start another chapter in this long journey,

The Journey Leaves You Dreaming.

Back in this van, watching the outside world, staring at the sky as a tear finally drops down my eye.

I arrive at my new residence, let this new journey begin – Lord forgive me for my sins.

The Journey Leaves You Dreaming.



Ames 2011





◀ **Freedom in Isolation**

by Anat

An abstract graphic design print in black and white.

▲ **Take Some Time** by Fiona

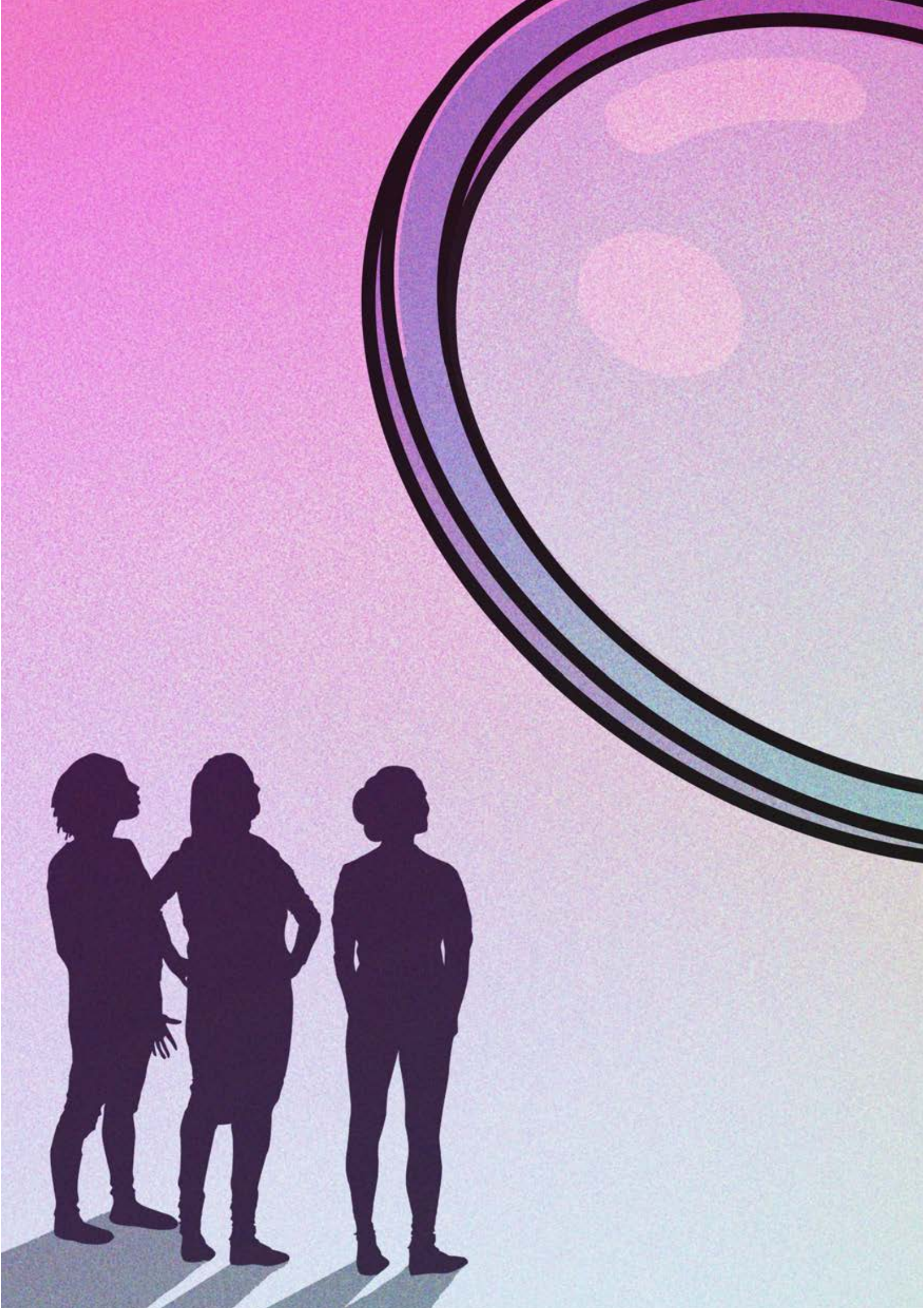
An original cross-stitch print with a clock feature and slogan that reads 'Take some time'.

Leather Inside Out is inviting members of the prison community to express their experiences of isolation through a chosen art form – be it art, writing, craft or design. If you want to contribute to the campaign, please write to **Leather Inside Out, 10 Pratt Mews, London, NW1 0AD**. Anyone who is unable to access materials for arts and crafts can request a material pack from the above address or by emailing [info@leatherinsideout.org](mailto:info@leatherinsideout.org)

All artwork will be published on Leather Inside Out's website and promoted across the charity's social media channels. Participants can choose to be named or to remain anonymous.

Founded in 2019 by Victoria Kate Johns, Leather Inside Out is a prison reform charity that offers a teaching programme in fashion and craft skills – with a focus on the leather craft and fashion accessories industries – to those who have been affected by the criminal justice system. By offering the National Minimum Wage to its participants, the training programme enables individuals to build a new life after prison.

*For more information, please visit [www.leatherinsideout.org](http://www.leatherinsideout.org) or follow their Instagram and Twitter accounts on @LeatherInsideOut*





# Independent Monitoring Boards want to know about the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in prison

Illustration: PPaint

Ever wondered what an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) is meant to do? Head of Policy at the IMB Secretariat, **Sarah Clifford**, explains this and all things IMB-related, from their roles and responsibilities to their upcoming project for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) women that they need your help with.

### What is the role of IMBs?

In every prison and immigration removal centre across England and Wales, there is an Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) that monitors life in prison to ensure people inside are being treated in a fair, humane and dignified manner.

IMBs are appointed by government ministers, but they are independent of the prison system and are unpaid. IMBs have unrestricted access to prisons and can access almost all information relating to a particular establishment.

IMB members also deal with complaints and requests. For example, if an individual in prison is experiencing an issue, they can put in a confidential request to see a member of the IMB, without involving or informing prison staff. IMB members have an obligation to respond to all requests, whether in person, over the phone or in writing.

### Why are IMBs important?

IMBs monitor prison conditions and investigate what life in prison is really like; they report their findings to ministers annually,

**'We want to find out more about the experiences of BAME and foreign national women, and those from the travelling community. This will build on the existing evidence and means we can recommend changes in policy and practice based on the current, day-to-day lived experiences of women in prison.'**

**Amal Ali, Policy Officer, Criminal Justice Alliance**

making recommendations for changes to the prison. The report is published online and made available locally via the prison library so that anyone can access it.

IMBs also relay information to the public and press about what is happening in the prison, especially if they have concerns.

### What projects have IMBs in the women's prisons been working on?

The IMBs in the 12 women's prisons in the UK have been working together to identify key problems across women's prisons and to press the prison service for action. Recently, a group of ten IMBs conducted a survey of women in their establishments

to find out where they were moving to upon release. The report, which was published in August 2020 and is available from IMBs locally, indicated that almost 60% of women did not have a home to return to and faced sofa surfing or temporary hostels to avoid being on the street. The report received national coverage and raised awareness of the issue across the wider public and the government.

**'A recent report indicated that almost 60% of women did not have a home to return to and faced sofa surfing or temporary hostels to avoid being on the street.'**

## ‘If an individual in prison is experiencing an issue, they can put in a confidential request to see a member of the IMB, without involving or informing prison staff.’

### What projects do IMBs in the women’s prisons have coming up?

IMBs in the women’s estate are now working on a collaborative project with the Criminal Justice Alliance (CJA), a coalition of more than 160 organisations committed to improving the criminal justice system. The IMBs plan to carry out a nationwide survey of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in prison, including members of the travelling community and migrant women. We want to find out about your individual experiences, and what you think needs changing to improve the treatment of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in prison.

The CJA will carry out a project at the same time surveying IMB volunteers to understand how we can better monitor the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic women and ensure there are enough Black, Asian and minority ethnic mem-

‘This is an important area of work for IMBs – boards know from what we hear every day that, whether it is poor availability of the right products on canteen lists or unfair outcomes of adjudications for women from certain backgrounds, equality issues play a key role. Women spending up to 23 hours a day in their cells has meant that these issues are coming more into focus as we monitor the impact of the lockdown and try to press for improvements in conditions.’  
**Hilary Campbell,**  
**Chair of the working group of women’s prison IMBs and IMB Foston Hall Chair**

bers on IMBs. We aim to publish the findings in a report in early summer 2021.

### We want to hear from you!

The survey is currently underway, but we need to hear from Black, Asian and minority ethnic women with lived experience of the prison system. We want to know **one thing you would change to improve conditions for Black, Asian and minority ethnic women in prison.** Please send your suggestions, along with a completed consent form (see page 63), to **FREEPOST – WOMEN IN PRISON.** Your ideas will inform the survey’s questions once it goes live.

Please look out for the survey in the next few months. We encourage you to fill it in, and would be grateful if you could encourage others to do the same. We desperately want to understand your experiences and views, and promote your ideas for change with the government and the wider public. ●

# Why are pregnant women in prison?

Illustration: Millie

In their new research study, **Rona Epstein** and **Geraldine Brown** from Coventry University are looking to find out why pregnant women are being sent to prison.

## **TRIGGER WARNING:** **miscarriage and infant mortality**

### **Why now?**

In September 2019, a woman detained in Bronzefield on remand gave birth alone in her cell; sadly, the baby died soon after. In the immediate aftermath of this tragedy, the prison, the police, the health authorities and Surrey Social Services set up inquiries to investigate the incident. However, these inquiries all failed to consider one vital question: why was a pregnant woman on remand in prison? This is what our new research project, funded by the Oakdale Trust, hopes to find out. There is now a new investigation following the stillbirth of a baby at HMP Styal in June 2020.

Approximately 600 pregnant women enter prisons in

**Antenatal:**  
the word antenatal means 'before birth' and relates to the medical care given to pregnant women before their babies are born.

England each year, and roughly 100 babies are born on the inside. Pregnant women are vulnerable and need significant antenatal care for themselves and their unborn baby – so why are so many expectant mothers sent to prison each year?

### **We need your help**

We are looking for women who spent part or all of their pregnancy in a UK prison or detention centre to participate in our online survey. All information will be kept strictly confidential – no names or identifying details will be published or shared with a third party.

To obtain a copy of the survey, please write to FREEPOST – WOMEN IN PRISON and return it to the same address. Alternatively, if you have access to the Internet, please email us directly at [lawresearchers23@gmail.com](mailto:lawresearchers23@gmail.com) for the survey link.

We will offer a £20 shopping token as a thank you to anyone who participates in the survey.

### What questions will we ask?

Our questionnaire asks women who have been pregnant in a UK prison about their experience of pregnancy behind bars and about the process of being sent to prison. This will include details about whether they were on remand, recalled while on probation licence, or sentenced; in which court and on which date they were sent to prison; and details of their pre-sentence report, if there was one. The courts have the choice of suspending a sentence or making a community order. We want to learn why they choose to send pregnant women to prison instead.

### Who are we?

We are researchers who have worked for many years to argue that we as a society imprison far too many people, especially women. Previously, we have advised against imprisonment for council tax debt – the fact that prison sentences for council tax debts have now ended in Wales is a result of the work we did with Women in Prison.

Our new research aims to understand how the courts send so many women to prison, usually for short sentences, most of whom have committed minor and non-violent offences. With our findings, we hope to be able to argue for a different approach to women in conflict with the law, especially those who need extra support and care because they are pregnant. We believe that bringing a new life into the world is important, and that pregnancy should be valued and protected.



### Our partners

Birth Companions is a charity specialising in the support of pregnant women and new mothers facing multiple disadvantages in prison and in the community. The organisation has spent many years calling for a different approach to the sentencing of pregnant women and mothers of infants, focused on maximum diversion from custody. Their Lived Experience Team have supported the research study with the development of the online questionnaire. ●

Rona Epstein is an Honorary Research Fellow at Coventry Law School; if you have any further questions about the research study, please email her at [r.epstein@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:r.epstein@coventry.ac.uk)

Geraldine Brown is an Assistant Professor at the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University; you can contact her at [g.brown@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:g.brown@coventry.ac.uk)

A copy of the survey is available directly via the link <https://coventry.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/survey-why-are-pregnant-women-in-prison-copy-copy-co-2>

# Living in prison with a disability

Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS) is an independent charity providing free legal advice, support and representation for adults in prison throughout England and Wales. PAS' Women Prisoners' Caseworker, **Kate Lill**, explains disability discrimination in women's prisons and the legal protections offered to women with disabilities under the Equality Act.

**M**any women in prison have conditions or impairments, and experience physical and mental ill health. However, women in prison with disabilities do not always realise that they are entitled to appropriate care and support, and should not experience any discrimination as a result of their impairment (loss of function or ability). The Equality Act 2010 outlines the legal responsibilities owed to people with disabilities; women with disabilities in prison can use this legislation to help access the services they need.

There is no comprehensive list of conditions, illnesses and impairments that constitute a disability. However, under the Equality Act, disability is defined as a 'physical or mental impairment' which has a 'substantial and long-term adverse [negative] effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' This is a wide-ranging definition and encompasses many conditions, including:

- Physical impairments (e.g. mobility issues and diabetes)
- Learning disabilities (e.g. dyslexia)
- Mental health conditions (e.g. bipolar disorder and depression)
- Sensory impairments (e.g. hearing or sight difficulties).

A disability does not need to be registered, nor does a certificate need to be provided, for an individual to access the rights afforded by the Equality Act. Instead, a person simply needs to be able to demonstrate that they have a physical or mental impairment, and that the effect of it is 'substantial' and 'long-term' (i.e. has lasted for more than a year).

Prisons, both public and private, have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments for people in prison with disabilities under section 20 of the Equality Act. Where a public body, such as a prison, has a practice, criteria or physical



## ‘Prisons, both public and private, have a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments for people in prison with disabilities.’



feature that puts a person with a disability at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to someone without a disability, the prison has a legal obligation to take reasonable steps to remove the obstacle.

Women can use this legal obligation to access the help they need. This can include being provided with items such as hearing aids or wheelchairs, as well as adapting prison practices, such as offending behaviour courses, for people with learning difficulties. There is not an exhaustive list of adjustments that are available in prison; but they should be based on a person's individual needs. Anyone with a disability should not be required to pay for these adjustments.

Under the Care Act 2014 and Prison Service Instruction 03/2016, women with disabilities or chronic health needs can also request a community care assessment from the local authority's adult social care department to assess their needs in prison and, if necessary, to provide relevant services and support.

Failing to provide 'reasonable adjustments' for women with disabilities can amount to indirect discrimination under the Equality Act. Women can also be subject to direct discrimination, harass-

ment or victimisation due to their disability, which is also prohibited by the law.

If a person with a disability is not receiving the care they are entitled to, they should submit a written application to the Disability Liaison Officer in prison, or another healthcare professional in prison, requesting the necessary adjustments. If this does not resolve the problem, the formal complaints procedure should be followed. Where women are not able to resolve their issues, they can contact PAS for advice, as there may be grounds to legally challenge the treatment and support, or lack thereof, that they are receiving. ●

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The Prisoners' Advice Service offers free legal advice and support to adult prisoners throughout England and Wales regarding their human, legal and healthcare rights, conditions of imprisonment and the application of Prison Law and the Prison Rules. It can also advise on matters of Family Law, and of Immigration Law to prisoners with issues relating to detention or deportation. PAS' Advice Line is open four days per week and can be reached at 020 7253 3323. You can also request help by writing to Prisoners' Advice Service at PO Box 46199, London, EC1M 4XA.

# Looking to send money to someone in prison?

## Here's how!

WIP's **Narinder Panesar** gives the low-down on the do's and don'ts of sending money to loved ones in prison.

**S**ince the coronavirus pandemic and mounting health and safety concerns, sending money to someone in prison has changed significantly. As of 2 November 2020, the main way to send money to an individual in prison is through the *gov.uk* website. You can use this service to make payments via Mastercard, Visa or Maestro debit cards. This is a free and secure service available across all prisons in England and Wales (with the exception of HMP Thameside). Here's everything you need to know.

### What do you need to send money to someone in prison?

You will need the individual's full name, date of birth and prisoner number. You will also need a valid debit card and an online banking account.

### Can you send money to someone in prison without using the Internet?

You may be allowed to send money by post

if you are unable to access a computer, a smart phone or the Internet. You may also be able to apply for an exemption if you do not have a debit card. See the *gov.uk* website for more details.

### How do you know if the individual has received the payment?

The best way to assure that someone has received the payment is to ask them directly when you speak with them. Once you have made the payment by debit card, you will receive a confirmation email. Please do not delete this email, since you may require proof of the payment if there is an issue or delay with processing the payment.

### Is it free?

This new service provided by *gov.uk* allows you to send money to someone in prison in the UK for free.

### How long does it take for money to reach someone in prison?

Using the *gov.uk* platform, it usually takes

# **‘There is no limit on how much money you can transfer to an individual in a UK prison; however, the individual is limited in how much money they are allowed to spend.’**

less than three working days for a payment to arrive in the specified account. However, sometimes a payment can take up to five days to process.

## **Why has my payment been refunded?**

If you make a mistake with the individual’s name, date of birth or their prison number, the payment will be automatically refunded.

## **How much money can you send to someone in prison?**

There is no limit on how much money you can transfer to an individual in a UK prison; however, the individual is limited in how much money they are allowed to spend. Across most prisons, individuals are entitled to spend around £20 on a weekly basis. They are also allowed to transfer a small amount from their private cash account to their spending account each week. The amount they are allowed to transfer depends on



their Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP), as well as their conviction status. In prison, you can also earn money by working or attending education and training programmes.

## **How can someone in prison spend their money?**

Individuals can order supplies on a weekly basis from the ‘canteen’ (the prison shop).

This includes phone credit, toiletries, vapes, snacks and more, all of which are available to purchase via a canteen sheet that will specify the total available funds and spends available to the individual in question. ●

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For more information on how to send money to someone in prison, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/send-prisoner-money>

# Making the most of your doctor's appointment

Words: Jade Coulon

Seeing the doctor can be stressful, overwhelming and sometimes rushed. Below are some top tips to help you get the most out of your appointment.

## Book a double appointment

An appointment with the doctor is your time to discuss any health-related concerns. If you think you may need more time with your GP because you have more than one health concern, or you want to talk about something particularly complex or sensitive, book a double appointment to make sure you have enough time to discuss everything.

## Prepare

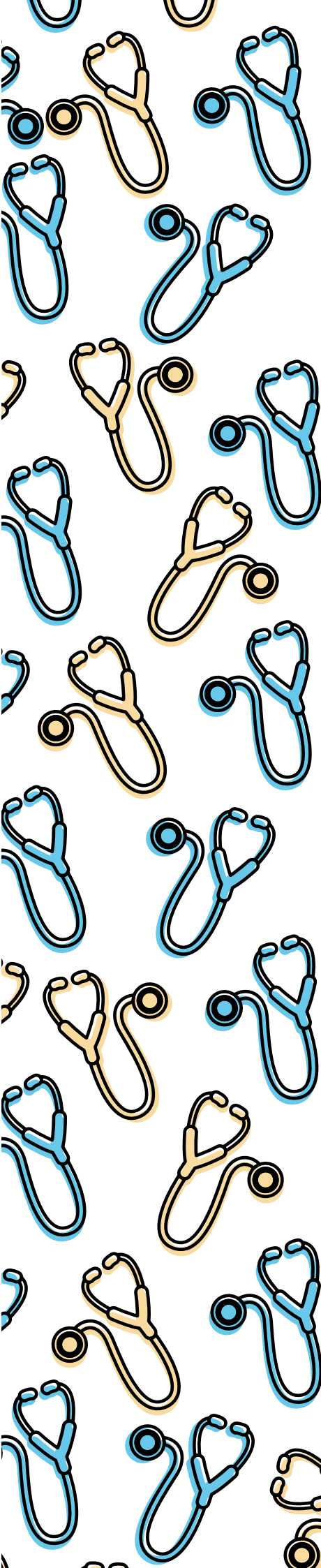
When you're sat in front of a doctor, you can easily forget to say important things. Before your appointment, think carefully about what you want to discuss and write it down in as much detail as possible. For example, if you're experiencing pain, is it dull, sharp or tender? Does it start after a certain activity or at a particular time of the day?

## Take someone with you

You don't have to attend appointments alone. If you're particularly nervous, take someone you trust with you. As well as offering support, another person in the room can ensure you don't forget anything important to say, and can listen to the doctor's advice or follow-up actions which you may find hard to remember yourself if you're nervous.

## Ask questions

Healthcare professionals can sometimes forget that we don't all understand medical talk. If you don't understand something or would like more information, you're allowed to ask them questions. They are there to give you information, advice and reassurance, so feel free to ask about anything that may be unclear with your diagnosis or medication. You



**‘If you don’t understand something, you’re allowed to ask questions. They are there to give you information, advice and reassurance, so feel free to ask about anything.’**

can even ask them to draw something if you find it easier to understand that way.

### Take your medication with you

Sometimes your medical notes are not available for all doctors to see. That’s why you might feel like you’re repeating yourself when seeing different GPs. Take your medication, hospital discharge papers and relevant letters with you to the appointment so that the doctor has a clear picture of your health needs.

### Write things down

Medical appointments can be overwhelming and contain lots of new information. Feel free to take notes of any important details concerning your diagnosis, follow-up actions, or dates and times of future appointments. ●

### Registering with a GP in your community

You have the legal right to choose a GP practice that suits your needs. Ask others for recommendations or compare practices by visiting: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp>

The GP practice **must** accept you unless:

- It is full and therefore unable to accept new patients.
- It has chosen not to accept patients who do not live within its boundary.

You’ll have to formally register as a patient. Each practice has a slightly different registration process, so it’s best to call and ask. You will most likely be asked to:

- Visit the practice to fill in a form.
- Visit the practice website to register online.

You do not need ID to register but you may need proof of your address.

# Mindfulness Exercises

**My name is Lee Marriner and I am a personal trainer from Durham. Fitness, high intensity interval training (HIIT) and mindfulness are my passion, and since being introduced into my life, they have enabled me to help myself and others.**

Mindfulness is a type of meditation or practice of being present that helps to relax the body and mind in order to reduce the risk of anxiety, depression and stress. It involves reconnecting with our bodies by engaging the five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch), and bringing our attention to the present moment.

In light of the coronavirus pandemic, it is natural for you to be experiencing heightened anxiety. This is why now, more than ever, we need to pause, take a deep breath and look after our mental health.

Being more aware of the present moment through mindfulness can help us to recognise the warning signs for when we might be on the brink of mental decline. These signs might include:

- Difficulty falling or staying asleep (insomnia)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling on edge
- Irritability
- Muscle aches
- Overthinking
- Restlessness
- Tiredness
- Trembling or shaking

Recognising these warning signs can be useful to help identify the problem and take the necessary steps to settle our nervous system. Here are some mindfulness stretching exercises you can practice throughout the week.

## Weekly exercises



### Seated forward bend (Part 1)

**A calming pose that targets your calves, hamstring muscles and back.**

Begin with your legs stretched out in front of your body. Bring your arms to your sides and up over your head, reaching towards the ceiling as you inhale. Hold this pose for 45 seconds.



### Seated forward bend (Part 2)

As you exhale, bring your arms forward, lengthening your spine. Imagine your belly on your thighs – this will help lengthen your spine. Hold this pose for 45 seconds and repeat five to six times.



### Child's pose

**A calming stretch that helps release tension in your chest, shoulders and back.**

Begin by sitting on your knees. Spread your knees about a shoulder-width apart, keeping the tops of your feet on the floor with your big toes touching. Then stretch out your arms in front of your body, with your palms facing down on the floor. Hold the position for as long as is comfortable (ideally 45 seconds), concentrating on inhaling and exhaling deeply. Repeat five to six times.

### Triangle pose

**A stretch that helps improve balance and stretches your leg muscles, hamstrings, calves, shoulders and spine.**

Start by standing and facing straight ahead. Lower your left hand down your side towards your shin or your ankle – whichever feels most comfortable for you. Stretch your right arm above your head so that your fingertips face towards the ceiling. You can choose to leave your head in a neutral position or turn to face your stretched out fingertips – again, whichever feels most comfortable for you. Make sure to keep a slight bend in your knee on the leg that has the pressure on it. Hold this position for 45 seconds, and then repeat on the other side. Repeat this five to six times.



### Downward Dog

**A popular full-body stretch that stimulates blood circulation.**

Start by standing tall with your feet apart. Bring your hands down onto the floor, palms down, fingertips spread. Keeping your legs straight, let your head hang and your quadriceps (the top of your legs) take the weight from your arms. Hold this pose for 45 seconds. Exhale, then return to the start position and repeat the stretch between five to six times.



### Cobra

**A stretch to help relieve back pain.**

Begin with your stomach against the floor and your feet hip-distance apart. Place your palms flat on the floor, pressing down lightly and keeping your elbows tucked close to your body. Hold this pose for a minute. As you inhale, lift your chest off the floor, pulling your shoulders back, keeping your elbows tucked firmly into your body and your gaze frontwards. Hold again for a minute, then repeat five to six times.

**Remember: concentrate on your inhaling and exhaling during each exercise.**

# Writing exercise: New Worlds

Words: Neda Tehrani

**Ever wanted to write about your hopes for the future or about what a new world might look like? Or perhaps you're looking to improve your writing or to simply write for fun? Pluto Press have created a writing exercise for you to take part in!**

**F**rom the COVID-19 pandemic to the Black Lives Matter protests, 2020 was marked by crisis and resistance. We are often told that there is no alternative to the unjust systems that affect our day-to-day lives; that this is just the way things have always been and will always be. However, 2020 exposed the urgent need to rethink the way we live.

The theme of this writing exercise is **New Worlds**. We want to hear from you on how you think the world could be changed for the better, so that it is fairer, more fulfilling, and more joyous for all kinds of people, including women, disabled people, LGBTQI+ people, Black people, religious minorities, the working class, young people,

**Black Lives Matter** (BLM) is a political and social movement against police brutality and all racially motivated violence against Black people. It was founded in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the fatal shooting of Black teenager Trayvon Martin. The movement was reignited in May 2020 following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

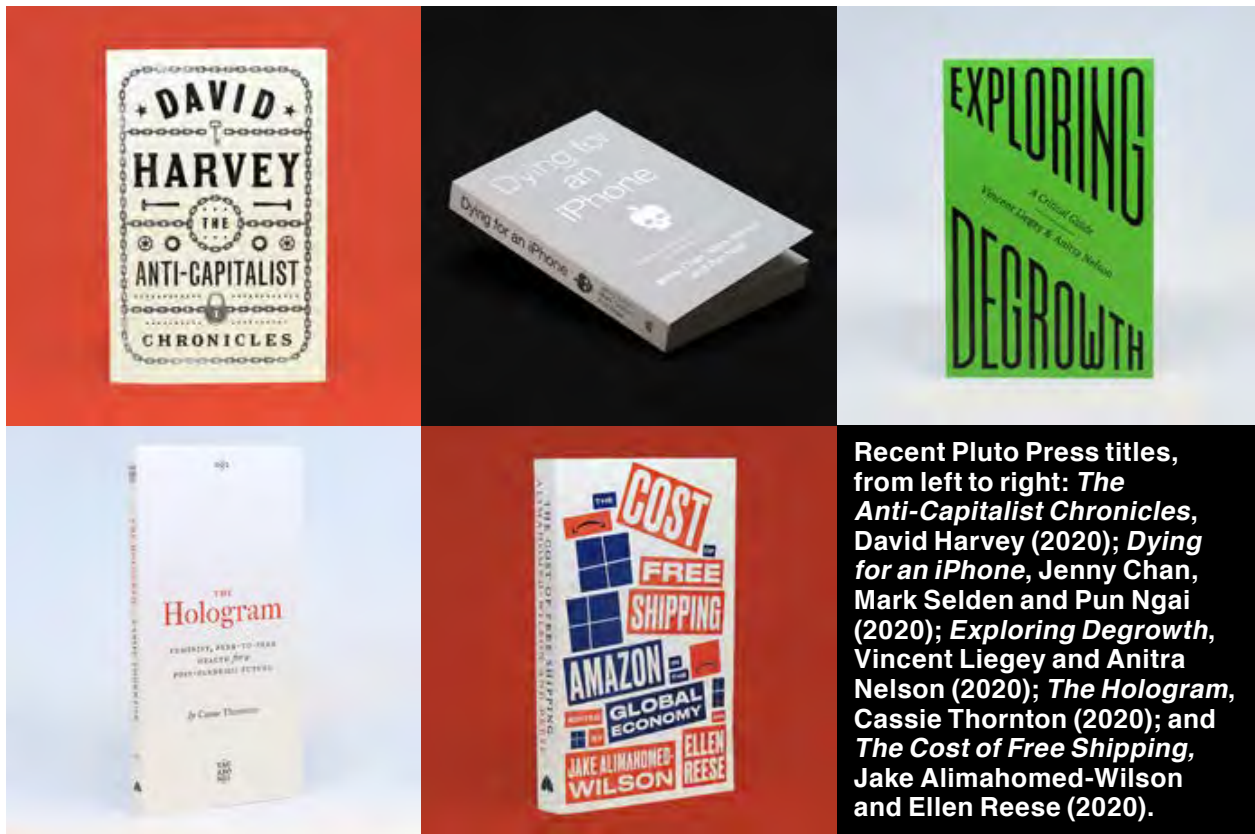
older people and more.

To explore new worlds and ways of living, you could think about what is wrong with society today and how we can overcome these problems. For example, do you think homelessness is a problem in our society? If so, how would you eradicate it?

Alternatively, you might want to reimagine the future and consider how people would live if we could start all over again. Whichever way you choose to approach the theme, we hope that this writing exercise will be an uplifting one.

Feeling hopeful can be a varied experience: it can be either intimately personal or something felt across a community – or sometimes





Recent Pluto Press titles, from left to right: *The Anti-Capitalist Chronicles*, David Harvey (2020); *Dying for an iPhone*, Jenny Chan, Mark Selden and Pun Ngai (2020); *Exploring Degrowth*, Vincent Liegey and Anitra Nelson (2020); *The Hologram*, Cassie Thornton (2020); and *The Cost of Free Shipping*, Jake Alimahomed-Wilson and Ellen Reese (2020).

even both. We want you to write in whichever style best captures your thoughts on the topic. This could be a personal essay, an imaginative essay that draws on the lives of others, a diary entry, a poem, or a short story. Please be as experimental and creative as you like!

### Writing tips:

- **Plan your written piece.** Jotting thoughts down as they come to mind can help you to figure out a structure for your writing and which areas you would like to focus on.
- **Read through your writing more than once.** Even if you don't make any edits, your writing will improve after a second or third read-through. You may find things you want to take out or points you'd like to build on in more detail.
- **Pick something you're passionate about.** It's very likely that something you've spent time thinking about before will make for a very interesting topic and will show up in your writing.
- **Trust your voice!** Everyone's writing style is different and each writer has

something unique to add, which is what makes the experience of reading so enjoyable.

Please make sure you complete and attach a consent form (see page 63) with your writing exercise and send it to FREEPOST – WOMEN IN PRISON. Pluto Press will be reading your entries, and we may publish your writing in the next edition of the WIP magazine. ●

*Neda Tehrani is an Editor at Pluto Press, an independent publisher of radical, left-wing non-fiction books. Established in 1969, Pluto Press is one of the oldest radical publishing houses in the UK, but remains focused on making timely interventions in contemporary struggles.*

If you have any questions about the exercise, or writing, books and publishing more generally, feel free to contact Neda at [nedat@plutobooks.com](mailto:nedat@plutobooks.com) or at Pluto Press, 345 Archway Road, London, N6 5AA.





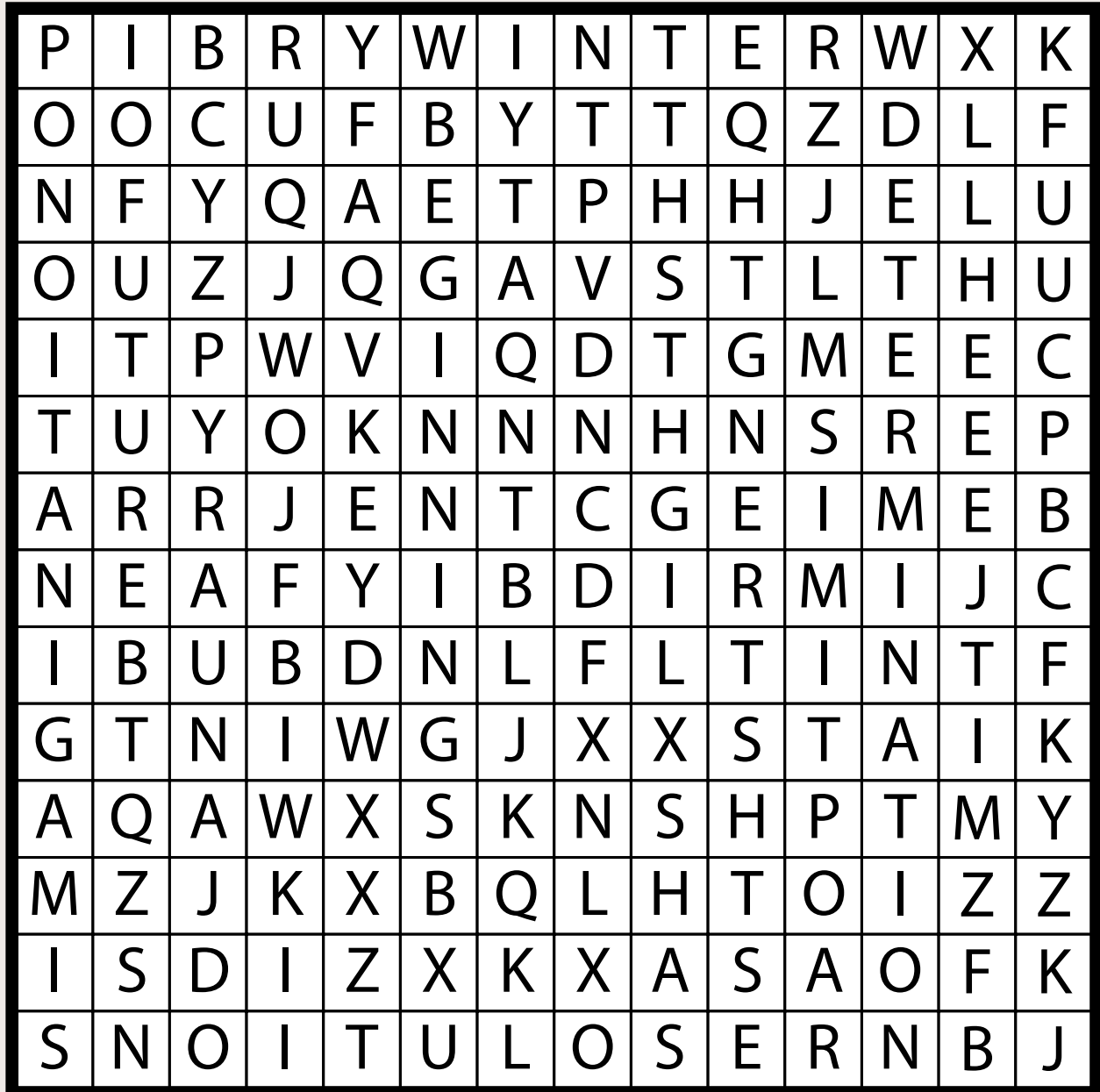
**Pangolins** are the world's only wholly scaled animals; they are mammals that use their scales to protect themselves from predators by curling up into a tight ball. They eat termites using their sticky tongue, much like an anteater. They are one of the most trafficked animals in Asia and Africa. All eight species are protected under national and international law, as their scales are used in traditional and folk medicines and remedies, and their meat is considered a delicacy.



**Common juniper** is a berry used as a condiment in food and drinks, as well as an essential oil in medicine. As its name suggests, it was once common across the UK. However, it is now on the UK's list of endangered plants. Although conservation efforts across the country have helped revive the species, it is susceptible to a nasty fungus-like disease called *Phytophthora austrocedri*.

# WORD SEARCH

Find the words – time yourself!



Winter  
Future

Determination  
Imagination

January  
Strength

Lights  
Optimism

Resolutions  
Beginnings

# SUDOKU

How to play? Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9, without repeating the number.

2		5	7					
		1			9		6	
			4	3				5
6				4				7
5	4		3		7		1	8
7				2				3
3				1	4			
	2		5			4		
					6	8		9

Answers

P	I	B	R	Y	W	I	N	T	E	R	W	X	K	
O	O	C	U	F	B	Y	T	Q	Z	D	L	F		
N	F	Y	O	A	E	T	P	H	J	L	E	L	U	
O	U	Z	J	Q	A	V	S	T	L	T	H	U		
I	T	P	W	V	I	Q	D	T	G	M	E	E	C	
T	Y	O	K	N	N	H	N	S	R	E	P			
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N	E	A	F	Y	I	B	D	I	R	M	L	J	C	
I	B	U	B	D	N	L	F	L	T	I	N	T	F	
G	T	N	I	W	G	J	X	S	T	A	I	K		
A	O	A	W	X	S	K	N	S	H	P	T	M	Y	
M	Z	J	K	B	Q	L	H	T	O	L	Z			
I	S	D	I	Z	X	K	X	X	A	S	A	O	F	K
S	N	O	I	T	U	L	O	S	E	R	N	B	J	

2	9	5	7	6	1	3	8	4
9	2	6	5	8	3	4	7	1
3	7	8	9	1	4	2	5	6
7	1	9	6	2	8	5	4	3
5	4	2	3	9	7	6	1	8
6	8	3	1	4	5	9	2	7
8	6	7	4	3	2	1	9	5
4	3	1	8	5	9	7	6	2
2	9	5	7	6	1	3	8	4

## LEGAL & GENERAL ADVICE

**Prison Reform  
Trust Advice and  
Information Service:**  
0808 802 0060

Monday 3pm–5pm

Thursday 10:30am–12:30pm

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

PO Box 46199, London,  
EC1M 4XA

0207 253 3323

Open Monday, Wednesday  
and Friday 10am–12:30pm  
and 2pm–4:30pm, Tuesday  
evenings 4:30pm–7pm

### **Rights of Women**

- Family law helpline

020 7251 6577

Open Tuesday–Thursday  
7pm–9pm and Friday  
12–2pm (excluding Bank  
Holidays).

- Criminal law helpline

020 7251 8887

Open Tuesdays 2pm–4pm  
and 7pm–9pm, Thursday  
2pm–4pm and Friday  
10am–12pm

- Immigration and asylum  
law helpline

020 7490 7689

Monday 10am–1pm and  
2pm–5pm, Thursday  
10am–1pm and 2pm–5pm

## HARMFUL SUBSTANCE USE SUPPORT

**Frank Helpline:**  
0300 123 6600

Open 24 hours,  
7 days a week.

### **Action on Addiction Helpline:**

0300 330 0659

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### **National Domestic Abuse Helpline:**

0808 2000 247

Open 24 hours.

### **LGBTQ+**

#### **Bent Bars**

A letter writing project  
for LGBTQ+ and gender  
non-conforming people in  
prison.

Bent Bars Project, PO Box  
66754, London, WC1A 9BF

#### **Books Beyond Bars**

Connecting LGBTQIA+  
people in prison with books  
and educational resources.

Books Beyond Bars,  
PO Box 5554,  
Manchester,  
M61 0SQ

## HOUSING

### **Shelter Helpline:**

0808 800 4444

Open 8am–8pm on  
weekdays and  
9am–5pm on  
weekends.

### **NACRO**

information and  
advice line:

0300 123 1999

## FAMILY SUPPORT

### **National Prisoners' Families Helpline:**

0808 808 2003

Open Monday–Friday  
9am–8pm and on Saturday  
and Sunday 10am–3pm  
(excluding Bank Holidays).

## OTHER

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

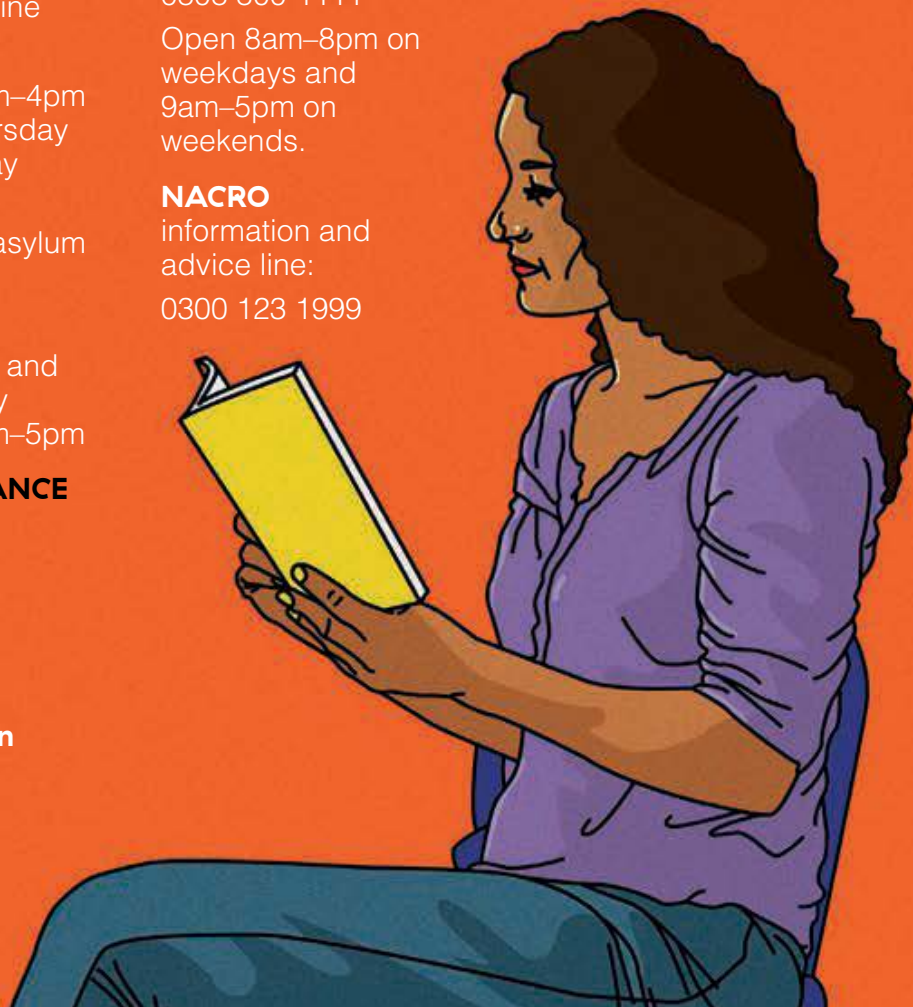
0808 808 1677

Open Monday–Friday  
9:30am–5pm, Tuesday,  
Wednesday and Thursday  
9:30am–8pm and weekends  
10am–2pm.

### **Samaritans**

116 123

Disclaimer: please be aware  
that some helplines will  
be operating under new  
opening hours due to the  
COVID-19 outbreak.



# Women in Prison (WIP) Consent Form

We love to receive artwork, poetry, stories, articles, letters, knitting patterns, recipes, craft ideas, etc., for publication in the magazine from women affected by the criminal justice system in prison or the community. Please complete and tear out this form to send along with your piece so that we know you are happy for us to publish your work and what name you would like to use.

Please note that we are unable to return any of the written pieces or artwork that you send to us for publication.

Thank you for your contribution! All the best, the Women in Prison Team.

Please use CAPITAL letters to complete

First Name  Surname

Prison or Women Centre (if applicable)  Prison No. (if applicable)

Any Contact Details (email, address, phone)

Title of your piece (If relevant)

Basic description (e.g. a letter in response to... or a poem or an article on...)

I give permission for my work to be used by Women in Prison (PLEASE TICK):

WIP's magazine (*Ready Steady Go!*) Yes  No

WIP's online platforms (*our website, www.womeninprison.org.uk, and social media, including Twitter, Instagram and Facebook*) Yes  No

WIP's Publications & Promotional Materials (*i.e. reports, leaflets*) Yes  No

Please note we only publish first names (no surnames) and the name of the prison or Women's Centre in the magazine (we don't publish prison names in other publications or online).

You can of course choose to be Anonymous (no name used) or write a nickname or made up name.

I am happy for my first name to be published Yes  No

Please write exactly what name you would like to be used:

Freepost — WOMEN IN PRISON (in capitals)

No stamp is required and nothing else is needed on the envelope.

## **TOGETHER WE CAN #OPENUP WOMEN'S FUTURES IN EVERY COMMUNITY**

Become global leaders and set an international example in how to reduce the human and financial cost of imprisonment and create healthier, safer communities

## **#OPENUP PATHWAYS AWAY FROM CRIMINAL JUSTICE INTERVENTIONS**

Prevent women affected by abuse, childhood trauma, mental ill-health, addiction, poverty, homelessness and inequality from entering the criminal justice system

## **#OPENUP THE SUPPORT SERVICES WOMEN NEED**

Invest and grow the UK's unique network of specialist women's centres that are proven to be more effective than prison at addressing the root causes of offending

## **#OPENUP OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN**

Build a system enabling those who have experienced the harm of prison to have access to housing and support to rebuild and move forward with their lives




## 10 solutions to #OPENUP

### WOMEN'S FUTURES

- 1 Use the **£80m received by HM Treasury from the sale of Holloway prison** to deliver the Ministry of Justice's women's strategy.
- 2 For every local authority area to have a **women's centre**.
- 3 A **trauma-informed diversion programme in every police force** so women can be referred into community support.
- 4 Significantly **reduce the use of remand** in prison.
- 5 An end to prison sentences relating to the punishment of debt including **non-payment of council tax and TV licence**.
- 6 A legal presumption against **short prison sentences**.
- 7 When sentencing primary carers ensure alternatives to custody are used to **minimise the harm to children**.
- 8 All those serving **indeterminate sentences of imprisonment for public protection (IPP)** (abolished in 2012) are given a release date and intensive support to rebuild their lives.
- 9 For every women's prison to have **'Women's Centre Link Workers'** so that women can build trusting relationships to prepare for life after release.
- 10 An end to **'Post Sentence Supervision'** to reduce recall to prison and shift the focus on to support.

# 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 serving a sentence in HMP Holloway. Upon her release, she campaigned 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 incarceration for all but a tiny number 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 the radical reduction of the women's prison population and for significant investment and growth in community-based support services, especially the network of Women's Centres.

- **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 men and women's experiences of the criminal justice system have 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** knows, from experience and research, that prisons do not deal with the root causes which bring women in contact with the criminal justice system.

- **Women in Prison** believes that the most effective way to reduce women's offending is to deal with its root causes – including poverty, gender and racial inequality, and other social injustices – through community alternatives like women's centres.

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

# ASK ALICE

Do you want to make a complaint, but you're uncertain about the process? Perhaps you need additional housing support and you're unsure who to contact, or the new coronavirus restrictions have got you feeling anxious? Then write to the WIP magazine and we will do our best to answer your query!

As part of the magazine rebrand this summer, we are introducing an agony aunt section where we want to hear from you about any issues you are experiencing in prison or in the community.

Please note, we are unable to give advice on a one-to-one basis and we cannot take on any casework; instead, to ensure as many of you can benefit from the advice as possible, we want to hear about problems you may be experiencing as a collective. If there is an issue that at least three women in your prison community are facing, then please write to us and we will try and answer them on this page!

For the chance to have your queries answered in the next edition of the magazine, please write to us at **FREEPOST — WOMEN IN PRISON**. Please make sure you complete and attach a consent form with your query (see page 63), otherwise we will not be able to respond to it in the magazine. All queries will be kept anonymous.  
We look forward to hearing from you!

The national magazine of Women in Prison written by and for women affected by the criminal justice system

➤ **New resources for LGBTQ+ people in prison** Starting your own podcast Interview with a governor A fresh start with Greggs Independent Monitoring Boards Release on temporary licence experiences Pregnant women in prison How to start a magazine group Art and poetry Rethinking society in the face of coronavirus Living in prison with a disability Mindfulness Making the most of your doctor's appointment How to send money to someone in prison Writing exercise Word search & Sudoku puzzles.