

STILL I RISE

Creating Community

Connections:

A new project

providing specialist

support for women

Setting up your

own business:

Olivia shares her

experience and advice

Guided self-soothing

exercises with

One Small Thing

Colouring

exercise,

Word search

and more!



**Women
in Prison**

What does healing mean to you?

Healing means different things to different people. It can even mean different things to the same person. When we think about healing, we could be referring to the healing of a physical injury. Then there is the healing that this edition of the magazine is all about: mental and emotional wellbeing and healing, be it of a person, community or society.

The journey we take to overcome trauma and pain to move beyond suffering can often be a struggle. It can take time. It can take courage. It can be hard work. But we can all benefit from healing.

We would love to hear about what healing means to you and how you heal. We've created a competition on the theme of healing for this edition so you can share your thoughts on healing with others – we hope you will take part.

Rules for entering the competition:

- Feel free to give your own interpretation of what healing means.
- If it's a story, essay, interview or article (fiction or non-fiction) please write 500 words or less. When handwritten, this is between 1½ and 2 pages of A4.
- An entry can also be a poem, drawing, painting or a collage.
- Please include a completed consent form (**see p.65**) with your entry and send it to Freepost – WOMEN IN PRISON (in capitals). Without the consent form we are unable to include your submission in the magazine.

One entry will be selected as a "Star Letter" with the writer receiving £10 (only entries that include the consent form on p.65 can be considered for "Star Letter").

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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 in the community through hubs and women's centres (the Beth Centre in London, the Women's Support Centre in Woking, Surrey and WomenMATTA in Manchester).

WIP campaigns to reduce the number of women in prison and for 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 hubs for services and women's centres in London, Surrey and Manchester**
- **Still I Rise A magazine written by and for women affected by the criminal justice system with magazine editorial groups in some women's prisons**



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 65 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

Women in Prison
2ND FLOOR,
ELMFIELD HOUSE
5 STOCKWELL MEWS
LONDON
SW9 9GX

WIP's freephone is not an emergency or advice line, but a means to get in touch with us. 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.

We are happy



to announce the new name you have chosen for WIP's magazine:

Still I Rise.

Still I Rise is the title of a beautiful poem by Maya

Angelou about hope, healing, and the ability to emerge from trauma and hardship, as the poem says, 'Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear'. Of all the challenges across the world in the last 18 months, we know that few would have had it harder than people in prison; that's why the theme of this edition is healing.

In this edition, we have some great tips for practising self-care and mindfulness, including guided self-soothing exercises from the organisation One Small Thing and a piece from their Women's Involvement Advisor, Lilly, on her own self-care journey in prison. We have information on how to make a complaint to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, and we hear directly from the Governor of HMP Foston Hall about her hopes for the future of prison services. We also have contributions from Sophie at The Traveller Movement, highlighting the issues Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women face in prison, and insights into the National Women's Prisons

Health and Social Care Review from Aly, who explains how the review is hoping to improve health and social care services for women in prison, and needs your help!

You can also find out how to get involved in our campaigns to ensure every woman has access to specialist community-based services like those in women's centres, rather than building new prison places for women.

As always, the best parts of our magazine are those written by you! To get involved, you can enter our competition on page 2 on the theme of 'healing' with a chance to win ten pounds.

Thank you for all the ways you are supporting each other to heal and sharing your strengths and talents across women's prisons and women's centres. It gives us hope and strength. Returning to the words of Maya Angelou:

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

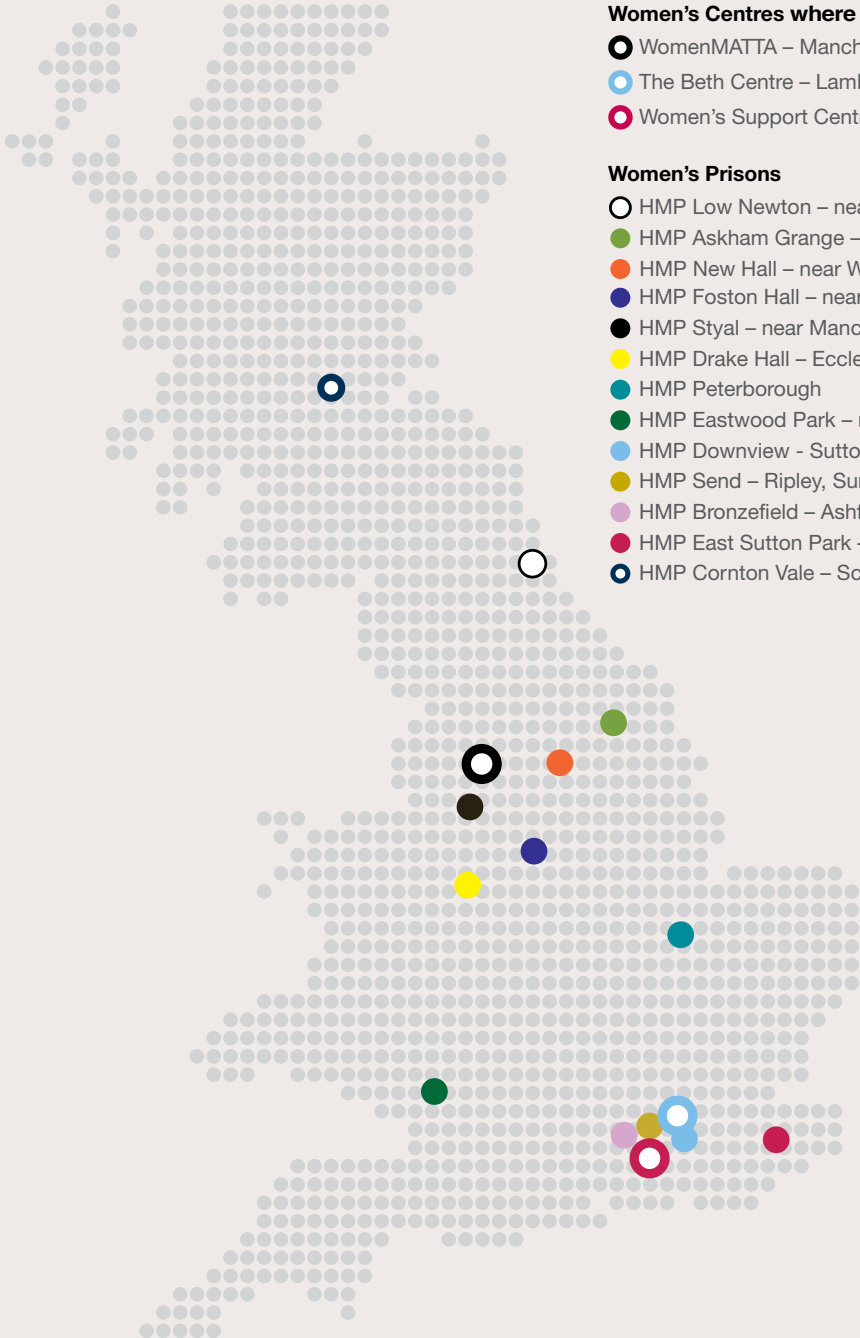
Kate
Chief Executive of Women in Prison

Project Manager: Sorana Vieru
Art direction & production:
Henry Obasi & Russell
Moorcroft @PPaint
Production Editor: Jo Halford
Chief Sub-Editor: Raeesah Akhtar

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

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Registered charity number 1118727



Women's Centres where WIP works

- WomenMATTa – 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



‘Railing against the past will not heal us. History has happened. It’s over and done with. All we can do is to change its course by encouraging what we love instead of destroying what we don’t.’

— Arundhati Roy

The I and the We: Koestler Arts' latest exhibition

Each year, Koestler Arts holds an exhibition to showcase artwork from people in prison. From portraits and paintings to graphic novels and sculptures, this year's exhibition, titled *The I and the We*, features a range of works that were all created during the pandemic. Sarah Matheve, Director of Outreach at Koestler Arts, tells us a bit more about their awards and exhibitions, and gives us a sneak preview of some of your successful entries.

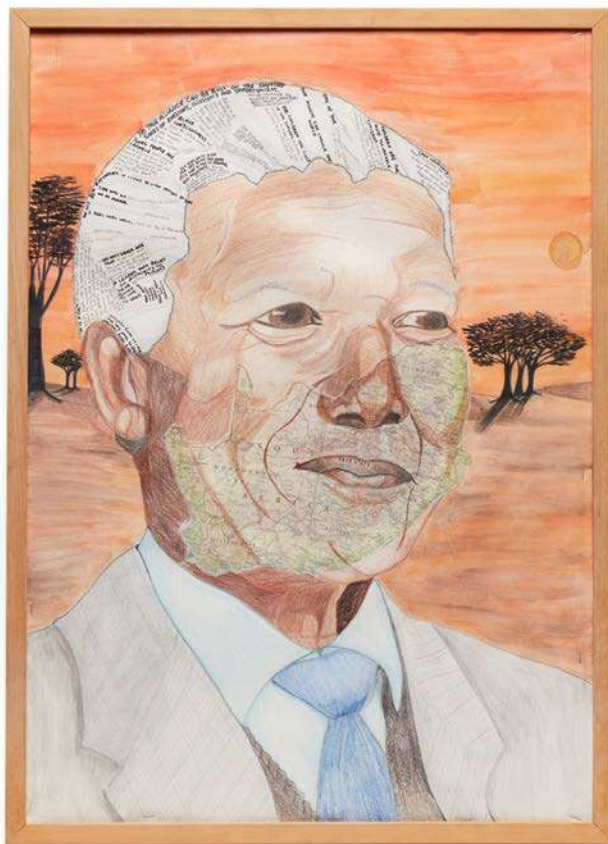
At Koestler Arts we have the rewarding role of encouraging people in prison to share their art with us, and as a result we get to see your amazing talents.

From crocheted toy bears, origami minions, and photo-realistic drawings of beloved family members, to soap carvings, song lyrics, and poetry written on toilet roll paper, the 52 different entry categories allow anything creative to find a home at Koestler Arts. Each entrant gets a certificate, and many will receive a cash prize if their work is selected as an award-winner. We also aim to give feedback to as many of our entrants as possible.

The process of being creative can be incredibly therapeutic. The work that we

receive from the women's prison estate often shows that the process of creating has been just as important as the end result. Whether it's because the work was made as part of a group, which allowed for conversations and camaraderie, or the subject matter helped the creator say something to the world or to themselves.

Art itself doesn't heal, but the process of making it can be healing, as can the process of looking at it. When you read a poem and recognise the writer shares the same feelings as you, it can help you heal. When you paint a picture and people tell you it made them smile, it can help you both heal. And when you are proud of a handmade greeting card that you made for a family member, that can also be healing.



◀ **I Will Not
be Beaten**

HMP Downview

▼ **It's Only
a Matter of Time**

HMP Send



▲ **St. Tropez Beach**

HMP Bronzefield

► **Black Life Matters**

HMP Downview





► **Keep the Faith**

HMP Bronzefield

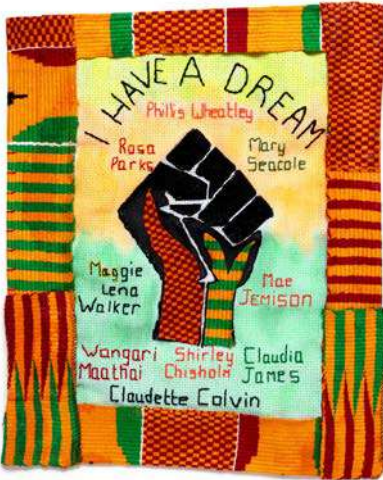
◀ **Together We**

Picture Perfect

HMP Send

▼ **Let Us Pray**

HMP & Young
Offender Institution
Askham Grange



▲ **Become The Fire**

HMP Eastwood Park

◀ **Phenomenal Women Collection**

HMP Send



▲ **Through My Window**

HMP & Young Offender
Institution Styal

◀ **Together**

HMP Bronzefield

Friendships through the post

Illustration: Lucy

Ever wanted to have a pen pal? Someone you can write to about your day, or practice your writing with? Prisoners' Penfriends tells you what you can expect from a pen friend and how you can join the scheme.

At Prisoners' Penfriends, we provide people in prison with pen pals from outside of prison. Our penfriend scheme launched in 2003 and now operates in most prisons in England and Wales*. Our volunteers come from many different backgrounds; they are all caring individuals who are interested in the world around them and in getting to know others. Here are some frequently asked questions about the scheme.

How does it work?

Once you are signed up to our scheme, your penfriend will write you letters or emails. You can reply to these by post or by using a free email reply service. Many of our penfriends write to each other for years – you can even keep writing once you leave prison if you like.

What do penfriends talk about?

Penfriends write to each other about all kinds of things, like giving each other book or TV recommendations, discussing

'The letters have helped me through some dark days. Knowing there are forgiving and understanding people out there... gives me hope and faith for the future.'



plans for the future, or difficulties they are facing. Having a penfriend is a great way to share ideas and get inspiration and feedback from someone not directly involved in your life. It's basically a friendship through emails or letters, but it can also help to improve your reading and writing skills.

People in prison who have used our penfriend scheme have said that it has helped reduce their feelings of isolation, connected them to what's going on in the outside world, and offered emotional support. Here's what some of them had to say:

'The letters have helped me through some dark days. Knowing there are forgiving and understanding people out there... gives me hope and faith for the future. I can't tell you how much any tiny bit of hope is worth.'

'It's huge to have someone else apart from family to write to and to talk about other things instead of the mess one finds

themselves in.'


'It's been good to write to someone to say how you feel, knowing that they will write back. It's nice to have another person to write to.'

How can I join?

If you would like to make a friend through the post or want more information about the penfriend scheme, please send your full name, prison number and the name of the prison you are in to the Penfriends PO Box:

Penfriends
PO Box 33460
London
SW18 5YB

*We operate in HMP Foston Hall, HMP Peterborough, HMP Bronzefield, HMP Low Newton, HMP Send and HMP Downview. If you are in another location, please ask a member of staff to contact us about setting up our scheme at your location.



Collect images to **collage** from printed materials for colours, textures and content.

Start with the background and layer up to the foreground

Cut your image from polystyrene or cardboard in reverse. Paint surface with acrylic paint and then print in place

Paint your dreams

Wash away your troubles with Watercolour

Everyone can Create ART!

LOVE ART

GET LOST IN ART

Use tracing to copy and reproduce

SEND
SOME
LOVE

3. Turn over and
re-draw
in place

2. Shade
the reverse

1. Trace your image



Use pen
to sketch,
shade and detail.
Watercolour can
brighten things up!

Use acrylic for a solid colour,
overpainting texture and water down for a wash

Making plans for life after prison

Words: Olivia

Illustration: JB

**After leaving prison, Olivia*
launched her own business.
She reflects on her time in prison
and how she went about setting
up her business, giving advice
on how to make the most
of life after release.**

NAME?



BRAIN STORM

REGISTER



When I reflect on my time in prison, I remember so clearly the little piece of paper I'd scribble a monthly countdown on. Each night before I turned my cell light out, I would mark a huge 'X' across that day as my release date edged closer and my freedom became nearer. It was all I could think about from the moment I entered prison. I kept a diary throughout the days – not about anybody, but about everything I thought, felt, and wanted to do once those gates were open, and I would be free.

A group of us would sit on the wing sofas, with *The Simpsons* playing on the communal TV. I recall one early evening, after our portion of bolognese, when we all had a conversation about what we would do when we got out. One girl wanted to set up her own bakery, another wanted to become a fitness trainer. Sitting there in that moment, I thought about what I wanted to do. I knew I loved the fashion of the past and something lit up inside of me whenever I'd bought a dress from the 1950s. It was the same feeling I saw on the face of the girl who loved baking cakes and licking the icing off the spoon. I knew this was what I wanted to try and do, although I wasn't sure how. So, I asked my family to send me a blank notepad to write down all my ideas so I could start making a plan: I was going to start my own business.

I'll never forget the moment I was free.



It was not what I had imagined it would be. I felt scared. I cried. We popped into Tesco and it felt like the world was staring at me, knowing where I had just come from. I was overwhelmed with anxiety. If I could give one piece of advice to myself, or to any woman preparing to leave

prison, it would be this: be gentle with yourself. Don't

force yourself to be anywhere you don't feel ready to be.

Hide away if you need to for a little while. You're overcoming a traumatic experience. You and I are only

human. Have hot baths. Read

gorgeous, uplifting books. Eat the food you love the most in the world.

Talk to your friends or explain that you're not ready yet. Give your mind and body the recovery it needs to settle into society once more. Institutionalisation affects us without our really noticing. Transition into the world in your own time.

I did set up a vintage clothing business, slowly but surely, and made my own money working for myself. My countdown to leaving prison was taken up with cell time planning, brainstorming, and dreaming. This was mostly how I stayed positive and believed that I could do this and that exciting things would happen. You can do this too, and I'd love to help by giving you a few tips and a little advice. Don't think you can't – I know business owners who make candles, cakes, sell their drawings, and some who teach others with their knowledge but no

‘If I could give one piece of advice to myself, or to any woman preparing to leave prison, it would be this: be gentle with yourself. Don’t force yourself to be anywhere you don’t feel ready to be. Hide away if you need to for a little while.’

physical product. It’s completely possible, and here are a few ways you can make the most of those final days before you finish your sentence, help yourself create a positive mindset, and make your dreams a reality:

- Brainstorm everything that comes into your head. Ideas are the foundations of your business. Grab a piece of paper and write down everything you love, enjoy, and want to do. Even if it seems out of reach, write it down. Trust me. This is your blueprint.

- Think of a name for your business. This takes time and it can be frustrating. (Make a note to get on social media and check nobody else is using it when you are released. If it’s free, set

up accounts on every platform. This stops other people using it and confusing your future customers.)

- Register your business with HMRC. Give them a call if you’re unsure how to register. This is free and the most important step.

- Think about what you want your brand to look like. What colours would you use to describe it? What kind of typography would your messages be in? This creates the aesthetic that people see first and sets the tone.

When you walk out through those gates, don’t look back. Keep looking forward. ●

*Name changed to protect identity.



My self-care journey in prison

(Trigger warning: mention of harmful substance use)

Words: Lilly

Drawing on her own experience in prison, Women's Involvement Advisor at One Small Thing charity, Lilly, reflects on her self-care journey and shares the activities that helped her take care of herself.

My name is Lilly. I am a Women's Involvement Advisor for One Small Thing, an organisation that aims to redesign the justice system for women and their children. I am also a domestic abuse campaigner and a Women's Justice Ambassador for APPEAL. I started campaigning when I was in prison; I was sentenced to eight years in 2016.

My life before prison can only be described as chaotic. My story started the day I was born, when I was abandoned by my mother for the colour of my skin. For the following 30 plus years, I was in one abusive relationship after another, and I was abusing my body with alcohol and drugs.

In 2013, the unthinkable happened: my children were removed from my care. Then, in 2016, I found myself facing a Crown Court judge for my part in a conspiracy to defraud.

After six months in prison, I wrote to my sentencing judge and thanked him for what I call 'my gift of time'. Once you have been sentenced, the time you are in prison is out of your control, however what you do with that time is up to you!

Everyone is different, but here are some things that helped me:

- **Reading.** I went to the prison library and borrowed every self-help book I could find. I looked for authors such as Dr Sam Collins and Louise Hay. These books taught me how to love myself by knowing my own value and allowing my self-worth to grow.

- **Meditating.** I was able to cut out the negative chatter in my head through meditation. I saved my prison wages to buy a DVD player to play meditation CDs from the library on how to practice mindfulness.



● **Writing.** I wrote a journal for my children to read when they are older. On each page I would write ten things I was grateful for – simple things like the sun shining. This helped me to start my day positively.

● **Yoga.** I joined yoga classes and made a promise to myself that any activity I was involved in had to have a positive outcome.

My piece of advice would be to use your time in prison to take care of yourself. That way, you can walk out of those gates

with your head held high, knowing you took what could have been the worst experience of your life and made it work for you. ●

You may also be interested in the guided self-soothing exercises found on pages 52-53 of this magazine and articles on yoga and boosting your mood in the recent edition of our Healthy Foundations magazine – this can be found in your prison library.

Getting to know a Governor

Words: Helen Clayton–Hoar

We asked Helen Clayton–Hoar, Governor of HMP Foston Hall, to tell us all about her work, including the challenges she faced during the pandemic and her hopes for the future of the prison service.

*The words in this article are the interviewee's own and do not necessarily represent those of Women in Prison.



HMP
HMP Prison &
Production Service

HMP
Foston Hall

H. Clayton-Hoar
Governor

Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

My name is Helen Clayton-Hoar and I have been Governor at Foston Hall for a year. I have worked in prisons for over 30 years, but this is the first time I have worked in a women's prison – I am delighted to be here!

Could you tell us about your journey to becoming Governor at Foston Hall?

I joined the Prison Service in 1991, just after the *Wolf Report* into the riot at Strangeways, Manchester, and other prisons, was published. The report focused on improving the culture of prisons through a better balance of custody, care and justice, ensuring processes feel fair and transparent for people in prison. The direction the report gave to the Prison Service is still what motivates me today.

My first job was project managing the rollout of in-cell television. From there, I worked in the Director General's office. But I realised I wanted to have a more direct impact on improving the lives of people in prison, so I joined a fast-track scheme to become a Governor. Much of my work has been with adult men, but I am pleased to have the opportunity to work in a women's prison; I have real hope we can improve women's chances of a successful release into the community.

What are some of your priorities as Governor?

My vision for Foston Hall can be summarised as "Together Empowering Change". Keeping people safe through the pandemic has had to be a key priority in my time here but others include: putting offender management at the heart of what we do (focusing on the individual needs of each of our prisoners); developing activities to offer our prisoners valuable opportunities; improving our support for a proportion of prisoners dealing with

complex issues; reducing the day-to-day frustrations of those in prison; and delivering better care for women who are pregnant or new mums.

What are some of the highlights of your role?

One of the highlights has been seeing members of staff going the extra mile for the prisoners in their care. As well as our residents, our staff have found living through a pandemic difficult. There are some amazing people working at Foston Hall and it has been a pleasure to get to know them. I aim to listen, and if there is anything I can do to make it easier for them to deliver effective control and care, I will see how I can support that.

What are the challenges of this role?

One challenge is that things are always changing. For example, we had to shut two wings at Foston Hall towards the end of last year due to concerns about fire safety. We also have some temporary accommodation in place as part of our COVID-19 response. As we review our activities coming out of the pandemic, we are developing more short-term activities than we had before to support those who are not going to be with us very long. Foston Hall has a wonderful culture of peer support and we have been able to start to reintroduce more opportunities for this as wings are gradually able to mix again. But we need to ensure this is balanced with allowing some of our longer sentenced women to move on and spend more time in training prisons. There is always more to be done!

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

That is a hard question! Foston Hall is the second prison I have governed – and I was also Deputy Governor at two prisons before that – so I have been operating at a senior

‘It is fair to say I have learned loads along the way. If I was to pick one thing, it would be that the real heroes of any prison are the staff and people in prison who make it their community each day.’

level for nearly 20 years. I think it is fair to say I have learned loads along the way. If I was to pick one thing, it would be that the real heroes of any prison are the staff and people in prison who make it their community each day. Most of the best ideas come from those who have to make them happen – a Governor has to be clear on the ‘what’, but it is everyone else that is involved in the ‘how’.

What are you doing to improve prison conditions at Foston Hall?

Immediately before arriving at Foston Hall, I led the national ‘Clean and Decent Project’, which focused on improving the ten or so prisons in the country with the worst physical conditions. While Foston Hall is in a better place, I have brought some aspects of the project’s work here, including the Clean, Rehabilitative, Enabling and Decent (CRED) programme, where people in prison, supervised by the Estates Team, take on jobs such as painting cells. We have also refurbished our reception area to make it more welcoming and have started discussions with local charities to expand our current F & H

recycled clothing facility to give women more opportunities to purchase affordable clothing in a shop environment. We hope to have this open by early next year.

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

I spend some time each week walking around the prison listening to prisoners’ stories and trying to understand their concerns. If there is an immediate issue, I normally ask a member of staff in the vicinity to pick it up. However, when something points to a wider issue, I will look at how we can improve for the future. Being able to deal with the day-to-day frustrations is hugely important. We have also recently restarted our Prisoner Council and I am looking forward to communicating with wing representatives more through that forum.

Finally, have you got any parting words for our readers?

Sometimes it might seem easier to stay in your room, out of the way of others, but I would urge readers to get involved in the activities and, if possible, to spend some time outdoors in the external grounds. ●



Timpson is helping women like Sarah, who works as a Locksmith Support Advisor and is pictured here in their office in Manchester, to unlock their potential in life after prison.



Timpson's key to employment

Words: Darren Burns

The Timpson Group is supporting women in prison through training academies and employment opportunities. We hear from Darren Burns, National Recruitment Ambassador for the company, who explains why Timpson believes in second chances.

Timpson was founded in 1865 by William Timpson, the great-grandfather of our current Chairman, Sir John Timpson. All those years ago, we had one single store in Manchester, manufacturing and repairing shoes.

Over the years, our business has evolved and grown and we have added several services, including key cutting, watch repairs, engraving, and phone repairs, to name a few. Along the way, we have also acquired a number of other businesses that now form part of the Timpson Group. Notable additions include photo service companies, Max Spielmann and Snappy Snaps, as well as the UK's largest dry cleaners, Johnsons. Because of this diversification, we have been able to maintain our place on the high street: we are presently the largest service-retailer in the UK, employing more than 6,500 colleagues in over 2,600 stores nationwide.

In 2002, our CEO James Timpson was invited to visit HMP Thorn Cross in Warrington. It was James' first time visiting a prison and he didn't really know what to expect. James was shown around by a young man named Matt who was in prison

at the time. Matt had a great personality and James liked him immediately and thought that he would make a great addition to the Timpson business. James gave Matt his business card and asked him to get in touch when he was released, so that he could offer him a job.

A few months later, Matt was released from custody and James, true to his word, offered him a job at a local Timpson store. From this moment on, James realised that if there was one great guy in the prison he had visited in the North-West, then, surely, there must be hundreds, if not thousands, of potentially great candidates who just needed a second chance.

We then began to proactively recruit people with a criminal record into the business. At present, approximately 10% of our workforce is made up of people who have either been directly recruited from prison or have previously been affected by the criminal justice system. This equates to approximately 650 people, a statistic we are very proud of.

We quickly realised that, with over 11 million people in the UK with a criminal conviction, it made no sense to throw them



‘At present, approximately 10% of our workforce is made up of people who have either been directly recruited from prison or have previously been affected by the criminal justice system.’

on the employment scrapheap and assume that they have nothing to offer. We believe in second chances at Timpson, and have found that the people we employ from prison are hard-working, loyal, and honest employees. Employing people with a criminal record is now embedded into the Timpson culture; it's become a completely normal part of our business and our workforce are extremely accepting and embracing of colleagues who come to us from prison.

One of the most successful ways of recruiting people with a criminal record is through our training academies in prisons. These are essentially high-street store settings that we have created within prisons to provide training to those affected by the criminal justice system, in preparation for employment upon release. Over the years, we began to realise that there simply were not as many opportunities for women in prison as there are for men, so we decided to do something about it.

We currently have six academies across the UK, two of which are based in women's prisons, namely Downview and New Hall. When you step into one of these training academies, it's easy to forget that you are in a prison. We have been careful to recreate a branch environment as best we can, not

only to prepare for employment, but also to provide a welcome break from prison surroundings.

Over the years, we have had great success with our training academies, with these women going straight into employment upon release. Most of these women have gone on to thrive in our business and some have been promoted into various roles, including area managers who are responsible for numerous branches and colleagues.

However, we understand that not all women in prison are able to access our training academies, which is why we offer ROTL. Over the years, hundreds of women have joined Timpson by starting their careers with us on ROTL. ●

If you would like to be considered for employment upon release, you can either call one of our branches when you are released, or simply apply online at: www.timpson.co.uk/about/careers-at-timpson

Alternatively, if you would like to be considered for a ROTL position, please speak with somebody from the prison's resettlement department. Our business is growing fast and we always have a vacancy for a superstar!





Creating Community Connections for women in prison

Words: Jo Halford

Illustration: PPaint

We chatted with **Katie, Narinder,** and **Tracey** who are all working on the Creating Community Connections project to better support women in prison through specialist services.

They told us more about their work and the importance of the project for the future.

Creating Community Connections (CCC) is an exciting new nationwide project led by a partnership* of women's centre providers. The project aims to connect women in prison with specialist community support services, especially women's centres, before they leave prison and as they prepare for release. CCC involves a national network of Link Workers who are directly connected to women's centres and located in prisons; they are employed to work with women to assess their individual needs and are supported by Women's Champions – women peers in prison trained to provide information about CCC and put women in contact with their Link Worker.

Katie, CCC Project Manager

Our vision is that every woman in prison, whatever the length of her sentence, is connected to her local women's centre and specialist support services.

We know that for women in prison there are trigger points when they are most at risk; one of these being on their day of release when they may need to go to as many as six different appointments. This could include things like registering at the doctors to get medication prescribed while in prison; going to drug services to collect a prescription; making a benefits claim; and going to their local probation office – all at a time when most women just want to go home and be with their family.

Women's centres offer support on the day of release. Instead of having to attend multiple appointments at different agencies, often with only a discharge grant in your pocket, you can go to a local women's centre and access all these services in one place with the support of an advocate. As women-only safe spaces, these centres provide trauma-responsive support to help you tackle the harm that contact with the criminal justice system can do. They help with self-esteem, self-confidence, and really assist women to rebuild their lives again.

Narinder, CCC Coordinator

I coordinate Link Workers, checking in with them on a day-to-day basis to see how things are going and to share best practice. We are currently in the early stages of the project and although we

have recruited all our Link Workers, some are still awaiting vetting, although several Link Workers have been on the wings since July.

Link Workers provide intensive one-to-one support for women in prison, identifying your needs and then linking you to women's centres and community organisations who can help and support you while in prison and on release. Link Workers are there to support you

both in prison and once back into the community.

As well as going through all the individual probation pathways a woman will need to engage with on release, the Link Worker will highlight any issues a



‘Instead of having to attend multiple appointments at different agencies, often with only a discharge grant in your pocket, you can go to a local women’s centre and access all these services in one place with the support of an advocate.’

woman was facing prior to prison – for example, domestic abuse or harmful substance use – so they can link them with the specialist women’s services to best support them.

Link Workers also recruit Women’s Champions, longer-term women in prison trained to support Link Workers in disseminating information about local women’s centres and specialist services.

CCC is an impactful project because it works with women in prison so they can have the best start in life when they are back in the community.

Tracey, CCC Link Worker

I’ve been working on CCC as a prison-based Link Worker since July, and believe the project will make a big difference to the women I work with. I provide one-to-one support to identify a woman’s individual needs, so I can link them to the services that can most help them. These specialist services will then be there for them while they are in prison and importantly when they go back into the community.

I work with women across prison, from the first night centre to the Mother and Baby unit, liaising with different agencies on their behalf, such as the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC),

sex worker support agencies, social care and solicitors – this includes providing access to women’s centres. If a woman is transferred to another prison during her sentence, I can also help to maintain this support by liaising with the Link Worker in the prison where she is being transferred.

In the future, we hope our Women’s Champions – working alongside Link Workers – will become a branch of supportive peers that all women feel comfortable accessing. ●

How to get in touch with a Link Worker:

You can submit an APP in (an application to see someone in prison); contact your probation officer, who can do a referral; contact Women’s Champions, who will eventually be on most wings; and look out for posters on the wings with the project contact details.

CCC currently has Link Workers in:

HMP Eastwood Park, HMP Downview, HMP Send, HMP Bronzefield, HMP East Sutton Park, HMP Foston Hall, HMP Drake Hall, HMP Styal and HMP New Hall.

* **CCC partners:** Women in Prison, Brighton Women’s Centre, Anawim, Together Women and the Nelson Trust



ALLY

We received your inspiring and creative entries, drawing on your own experiences and reflections; here are some of the best poems you sent in.

Illustrations: SDK, Ulla, PPaint

Never Give Up

By Maggie

Life was tough for me growing up

I washed every floor and cup after cup

I loved my family, every one

They loved me, but not my mum

My name is Maggie and I'm from Ireland

Life for me is still tiring

I've not told you my story yet

But when you read it you'll never forget

How one girl's struggle carried on 'n' on

Right up until her whole family was gone

Lived like this for so long

Has made me tough, has made me strong

No matter what I've been through

I still love her and I still love you

People like me wherever I go

Even people I don't even know

You think, oh how could this be?

Because God is in me,

and the people can see

You people think I'm stone mad

No I'm not, I'm not that sad

I'm a human being with a great big heart

I want to see my family and never depart

It's all so much easier said than done

They all turned their backs on me everyone

That's why I'm asking to write my story

I've still got guts, I still got glory

Never give up

OURS



I am a warrior

Trigger warning: mention of suicide

By Zahrah

I am a warrior
 I did not know it till today
 I have made myself small
 I have made myself light...
 No more
 I am a warrior
 I hold the wounds and the scars
 I hear the untruths people say
 I now know me
 I am a warrior
 I have hidden my body
 I have carried the shame and the blame
 I have contemplated suicide...
 No more
 I am a warrior
 I will create my own path
 I will stand tall and proud
 I will embrace my motherhood and



my sisters
 I will commit to loving all parts of me
 I am a warrior
 In my beautiful body, I house
 my inner strength, my fighting
 spirit and my amazing soul.
 I am a warrior!



The Future in the Shape of Love

by *Maria*

We want to see ourselves
 in our children's eyes
 but a lot of the time it has come and gone
 now we wear a disguise.
 We see what we want to see
 and not what we are,
 but what we are is all we have
 but what we want, it isn't far.
 We are shaped to love
 but some of us linger;
 we want more than just today.
 So if we shape our futures for love

we will certainly be on our way.
 Be brave and go forth brave souls
 as no one will do it for us
 if we carry on loving just for fun,
 there'll be no future for no one.
 The future is the shape of love
 we can be there if we want to,
 there's hope for all
 and sorry for few.
 Re-make what we broke
 and re-build this poor earth,
 be honest with ourselves and each other
 so we can all see a new birth.

Autumn — the time of change

From the series of seasonal poems by NH

Autumn — the time of change,
 Birth, death and rebirth —
 Golden light and fallen leaves
 concrete colour carpets
 ready for the whites and greys —
 Glow of winter charm.

As one year begins —
 To end —
 The next year ending,
 it's beginning —
 Begins its readiness for the cycle of life
 again.
 Autumn.

With the death of summer
 Comes the beginning of the new year
 And the possibility of good cheer.
 We let go of fear
 Each leaf a testament.

Transformation —
 as the renewal of spring to
 Summer leaves — moves —
 Falling from the trees.
 And so the cycle of life and birth and rebirth
 Ends and we are
 Ready to begin again.

Budded flowers — petals.
 Dropping and one year seems
 to die —
 the natural cycle of life gets ready
 through the end of summer's sunshine
 to be

Born again — following the snowy winter
 soon to come after autumn.

Its golden bronze and bright
 beautiful colours,
 leaves colours, blinding.

Autumn orange —
 the decaying leaves —
 Like the sun — yellow shimmer shine
 with morning dew on
 Blades of grass.

A carpet of falling flowers
 A summer cherry tree
 Branches, Branches, Branches out
 to begin to move to the snow of winter.
 Time before renewal — we ready ourselves;
 For with the ending of days of summer sun
 We get ready for the next seasons run.



Family isn't always blood

By Elaine

Family isn't always blood.
It's the people in your life
who want you in theirs.

The ones who accept you
for who you are
The ones who would do anything
to see you smile
Who love you no matter what.



Alcohol & Me!

**Trigger warning: mention of harmful
substance use**

By Saffron

What can I tell you about alcohol & me
He helped me forget and made me feel free
Lost custody of kids, he helped
throw away the key
How could I have let this be.

No matter how he came, lager, spirits or wine
He really made me feel quite sublime
Stealing my soul to a life full of crime
Now I'm inside doing my time.

Now I'm in prison and I need him the most
I bet he's out there just having a toast
I've hurt my own mother; hit my own brother
The thought alone it makes me shudder.

He's poison, he's evil, he should be banned
Too many people have suffered at his hand
Like the Greek goddess Aphrodite
His strength is your weakness you will never
appease.

The government's corrupt
I don't mean to be abrupt
It makes too much money
So they'll never get shut.

Now I've learnt my lesson
Gonna treat this as a blessing
Gain an education, take my kids on a vacation
Life is what you make
Gonna grab it with both hands and take it.

Prisoner

By Angela

I've done my crime,
I'm doing my time.
I've come a long way from home.
If only you had seen me
the very first day inside...
I was scared, lonely, anxious
and a little confused as to
why I was here.

After all, I thought I wasn't gonna
make new friends, nor fit in
with anyone, only enemies instead.
I thought this is it...this is the end
for me, I was thinking all sorts!!!

But after time, I did take a
lot of time, I started thinking positive
I looked up and met some nice,
lovely people inside and officers too,
even some miserable ones too, ha!!!

But either way, I've come
a LONG way from home
and a VERY LONG way from
the start to the finish
all the way towards the end
to the bright lucky star.

I've come this far and all
the way towards the end
so I believe if I can do it
so can you!!

There's always light
at the end of the tunnel
If you go looking you will
get there eventually
in the end!!!

My Knickers

By Marcia

I dare not hang my knickers
On the washing line to dry
On a very windy day
Like a kite to fly

Some folk mistook them for a parachute
Yes, I don't deny they're big
My knickers are made by the RAF
So go on, have a dig

I dare not hang my knickers
On my washing line to dry
The local airfield mistook them
for a windsock
Oh, I could almost cry
So your suggestions please
On how to get mine dry

Once I took them to the laundrette
The dryer almost broke
My knickers are rather large
And have become a local joke

I dare not hang my knickers

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller women in prison

Words: Sophie

The Traveller Movement (TM) is an organisation working with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) people to challenge discrimination and promote inclusion. Criminal Justice Policy & Campaigns Officer, Sophie, tells us more about GRT women's experience in the criminal justice system.

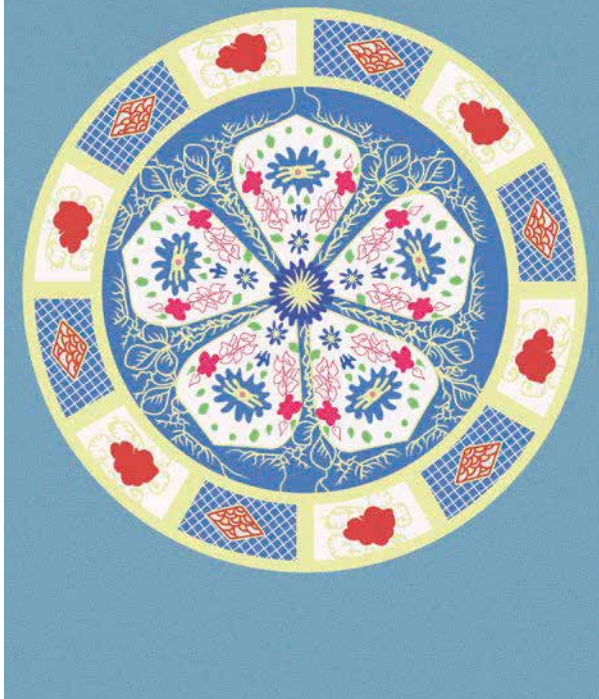
Traditional travelling groups have lived in Great Britain and Ireland for centuries. They include diverse groups such as Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, and Scottish Gypsies and Travellers. Like other minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities have their own languages, traditions, and customs that guide their way of life, and which are passed on through generations.

However, Gypsy/Traveller women have some of the poorest outcomes in health, employment and education of any ethnic group, according to the 2011 census. And although Roma ethnicity was not recorded

in this census, it seems outcomes are no different, if not worse in the case of migrant Roma women in particular.

The discrimination and marginalisation GRT women face in wider society becomes more apparent when they enter the criminal justice system, where they are disproportionately overrepresented. While Gypsy and Traveller women make up 0.1% of the general population, they represent 6% of the entire prison population. The number of Roma women is also disproportionately high.

The distinct needs of GRT women are often poorly understood and overlooked. Many experience the severe pain of family



cleanliness, it is important to recognise that there can be significant cultural and practical differences between the different groups. For example, Roma communities have historically faced intense persecution and experience different barriers as they may not speak English or be familiar with local regulations and processes.

The Traveller Movement is working to increase awareness of GRT communities' experiences throughout all stages of the justice system. Recently,

separation and experience homelessness after release due to poor exit planning and a lack of appropriate housing assessment.

Over 50% of women in prison are survivors of domestic abuse; this includes GRT women who will have different needs when accessing support for domestic abuse. To support survivors in prison, there needs to be targeted support, specialist intervention, and emphasis placed on release planning to help with rehabilitation.

While GRT communities share the history and culture of nomadism, it is important to note that around 76% of the GRT population in the UK live in bricks and mortar accommodation. Similarly, whilst GRT communities also share values such as the importance of family, community, oral traditions and

through campaigns and research, we have been highlighting the barriers GRT women in prison face, making recommendations on how sentencing, custody and rehabilitation can improve to support these communities. For more on our work, visit www.travellermovement.org.uk ●

Other organisations that offer information, support and advice for GRT people:

One Voice 4 Travellers work with and support GRT people in distress caused by or associated with violence; they can be contacted for advice or support by email at onevoice4travellers@hotmail.com;

Friends, Families & Travellers work to end racism and discrimination against GRT people, they provide advice and information on work, health and wellbeing and can be contacted at fft@gypsy-traveller.org or 01273 234 777.

Women who kill: the criminalisation of survivors of domestic abuse

(Trigger warning: this article includes mentions of violence and domestic abuse)

The Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) recently published groundbreaking research on the experiences of women who kill men who have abused them.

Sophie Howes, the author of the report, explains its key findings and what it tells us about women's experiences of the criminal justice system.

Women kill very rarely, and when they do, it is often in circumstances where they are experiencing abuse. Our research found that of all the men killed by women partners/ex-partners over a ten-year period, in 77% of cases there was evidence of domestic abuse. We set out to understand the extent to which the criminal justice system recognises women's experiences of abuse and treats them fairly.

Unlike other studies on this issue, we spoke directly to women affected. We

interviewed 18 women in prison who told us about their experiences as victims of abuse before the killing took place, right through to their conviction. There was a common theme of women finding it hard to disclose the abuse they had experienced, and when they did, they were often either disbelieved or not taken seriously. As Nancy* told us:

'I didn't want to kill my boyfriend, but there was a lot more behind it. As much as I tried to tell them, but they were not really listening... it was hard as I loved him and didn't want to bad-mouth him, but they [the

‘Instead of abuse being presented as a main issue, or the reason for their [women’s] actions, we found it is often sidelined, if mentioned at all.’



court] needed to know [about the abuse]. Nobody cared.’

If women’s experiences of abuse aren’t taken seriously, it has serious consequences for them. Instead of abuse being presented as a main issue, or the reason for their actions, we found it is often sidelined, if mentioned at all. This means women are convicted of murder or manslaughter, with longer sentences, when arguably self-defence or a partial-defence, such as diminished responsibility, should have been available to them.

Similarly, domestic abuse is often a factor in why women commit other crimes – for example being coerced into holding drugs or weapons – yet, too often this is also not considered when women face charges.

CWJ is working hard to ensure its findings are used to make positive changes in the criminal justice system so that women are treated justly. ●

To find out more

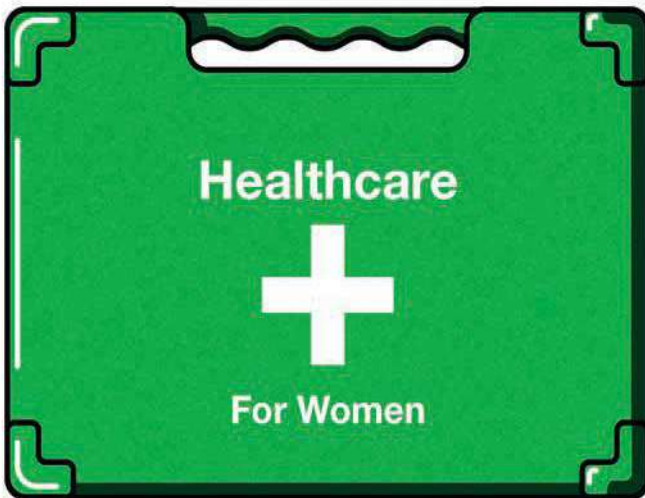
visit www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/. There should also be a copy of our report in the prison library.

*Name changed to protect identity.

Have your say on women's healthcare in prison

Illustration: PPaint

NHS England, NHS Improvement and HMPPS are leading the National Women's Prison Health & Social Care Review. Aly, who is working on the review and was formerly in prison herself, explains the aim of the review and how you can get involved.



‘I realised it wasn’t all about me and my suffering, so I vowed to do something to help other women in prison.’



Like so many women in the criminal justice system, I come from a background of chaos – battling issues like domestic violence, alcohol and drug misuse, and poor mental health.

One day I found myself in prison, sober for the first time in a decade, and I realised I wasn’t alone with my experiences. Although we all had our own story, we all had something in common: we were all women! Women in a prison system designed for men, facing different physical and mental health needs than men.

I realised it wasn’t all about me and my suffering, so I vowed to do something to help other women in prison. Upon my release, I began volunteering and opportunities started to come my way. One of these was working with the NHS on the National Women’s Prisons Health & Social Care Review.

The review aims to understand:

- The unique challenges women in prison face
- What health and social care services are doing well
- How health and social care services can improve both in prison and on release.

It will make recommendations on the actions needed to improve health and social care services for women in prison. What makes this review special is that it incorporates lived experiences. And it doesn’t stop there: we want to include all of you!

We want to hear from as many women as we can. This is your chance to have a say about how to help develop health and social care services for women in prison. We want to hear about what health issues matter to you and how you think these services could be improved.

You can get involved by contacting EP: IC, the lived experience consultants who have been engaged to ensure as many women in prison as possible are involved in the review, or by taking part in activities within your own prison. ●

Leave a message on the EP: IC
FREEPHONE number: 0800 112 5555.
 Leave your name, prison number and prison so we can get back to you.

Email: womenshealth@epicconsultants.co.uk

Write to: EP: IC, FREEPOST,
 PO Box 1159, CT1 9QL

Complete a survey. Look out for surveys coming to your prison throughout the review!

Attend a focus group. Look out for group opportunities in your prison.

Making a complaint to the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman

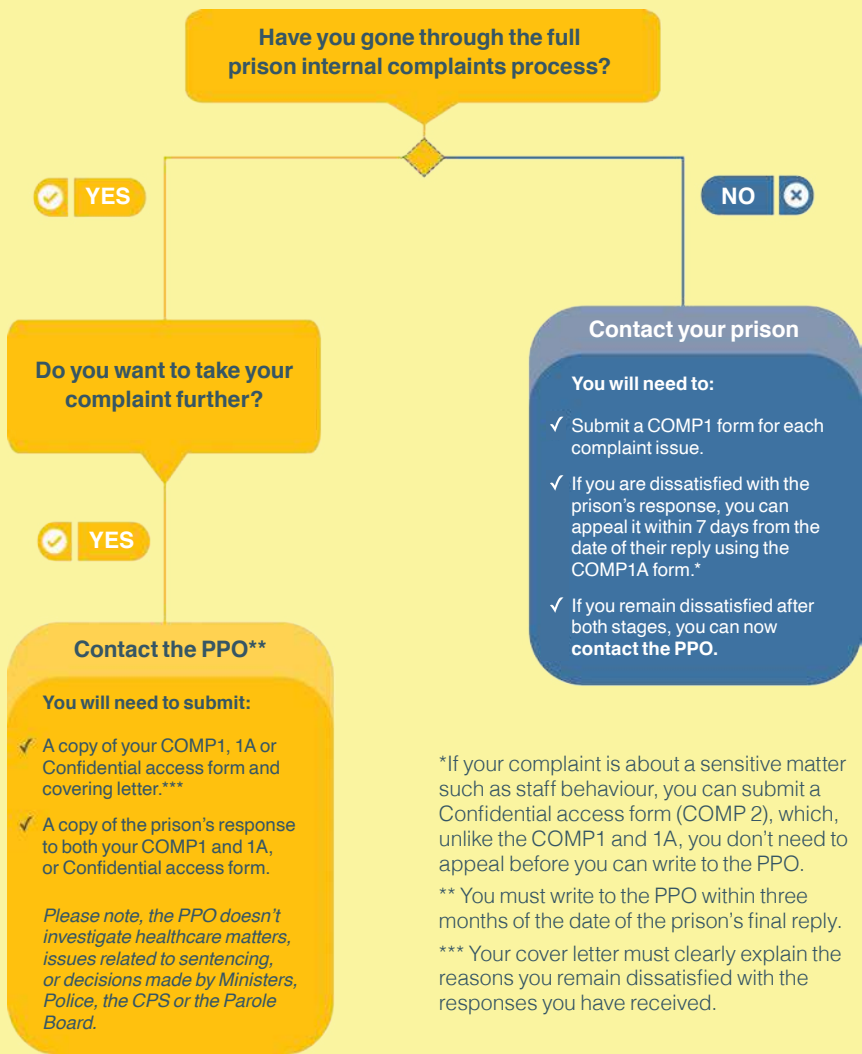
The Prisons and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) carries out independent investigations into complaints from people in prison and on probation. **Frankie**, a member of the PPO's assessment team, tells us more about making a complaint.

As an Assessment Officer at the PPO, I'm part of the team that receives complaints from people in prison and assesses whether the PPO can investigate them or not. I'm also the first woman who has been in prison to be employed by the PPO. If you are reading this as a woman in prison, I have been where you are; I served two and a half years, so I understand what it feels like to be in your shoes.

Now that I work for the PPO, I can see first-hand how they help people in prison with problems that the prison hasn't been able to solve. I know that life in prison can be very difficult for women, and this is

where the PPO can really make a difference; it is their job to investigate complaints concerning your care, treatment, and supervision. I have seen cases, for example, where the PPO have arranged compensation for lost or damaged property and made sure decisions about temporary release are fair and in line with policy.

It is important to mention that the PPO cannot help with a complaint if you haven't first completed the internal complaints process. You must have submitted a complaints form (e.g. COMP1 and COMP1A) to the prison and the prison staff must have replied before you can approach



the PPO. Without having completed these steps, the PPO will not be able to help. But if you have gone through this process and your complaint has not been resolved, or you are not happy with how it was handled, this is where we can help.

People in prison are often worried that complaining to the PPO will get them in trouble with their prison, or that they will be treated less fairly by prison staff. At the PPO, we have processes in place to make

sure this doesn't happen. While we do not work for the prisons, they are used to co-operating with us and welcome an objective and independent investigation. ●

If you have recently complained to your prison and are not happy with their response, write to us and we will do all we can to help:

Prisons and Probation Ombudsman
Third Floor, 10 South Colonnade,
London, E14 EPU

Reviewing your categorisation

As Women Prisoners' Caseworker at Prisoners' Advice Service (PAS), Kate Lill provides legal advice and representation to women in prison. Here she explains how the policy on categorising women has recently changed and how women can help themselves to progress to open conditions.

All convicted and sentenced women across the prison estate are categorised; the vast majority of whom are held in either closed or open conditions, depending on how much of a risk the criminal justice system deems them to be. Being in open conditions has considerable benefits, such as visiting one's children and access to working or studying away from prison.

A woman in prison was usually only able to be categorised as 'open' once they were within two years of their earliest release date (normally your conditional release date), although governors did in fact have the discretion to categorise a woman sooner. This changed on 29 October 2021.

Generally, the maximum time a woman in prison should spend in open conditions is now three years, and governors retain the ability to recategorise a woman to open status earlier, when an assessment of their individual risks and needs supports it. All women in prison are entitled to submit their own representations for consideration at their recategorisation review. A recategorisation review is a balancing exercise of risk and benefit. Women should provide reasons why:

- 1) They can be managed in open conditions.
- 2) How they would benefit from open status.

If a woman is assessed as trustworthy and sufficiently low risk and can demonstrate they have made positive and successful efforts to reduce their risk, they are good candidates for open conditions. In limited cases, it may be possible to access open conditions even earlier than three years before release.

Women might feel that they'll be unable to access open conditions due to a limited number of spaces, or that they might be moved to an open prison far away from their home and family. Neither of these concerns, or any others, should discourage a woman from the prospect of open conditions.

Women can access open conditions from any of the 12 women's prisons in England and Wales; as resettlement prisons, they are all able to offer the opportunities open conditions provide. ●

PAS can advise you on your categorisation, and many other prison related issues. You can speak to our specialist Women Prisoners' Caseworker on our freephone advice line, which operates on Tuesday mornings, 10am to 12.30pm.

PRISONERS'

ADVICE

SERVICE

JUSTICE BEHIND BARS

Need Advice?

Call PAS free on 0800 0246 205
Tuesdays 10am to 12.30pm

Are you confused about your legal and human rights in prison?

Free-of-charge, our dedicated Women Prisoners' Caseworker will explain what the Prison Rules mean, how they affect you and whether they are being applied fairly.

She can help you with issues including:

Adjudications; Categorisation; Contact with Children; Discrimination; Foreign National Prisoners; Home Detention Curfew; Healthcare; Human Rights; Indeterminate Sentences; LGBT+ Prisoners; Licence and Recall; Resettlement; Parole; Temporary Release; Transfers

Please note that PAS is unable to assist with criminal appeals.

You can also write to PAS at:
Prisoners' Advice Service, PO Box 46199, London EC1M 4XA

Prisoners' Advice Service is a registered charity (No: 1054495) and is a company limited by guarantee (No: 3180659).

The Change

We go through many changes in life, both good and bad. The menopause, which is often referred to as ‘The Change’, has mixed reviews. Our Healthy Foundations team have put together some information to help you prepare for whatever kind of change the menopause might bring.

First, to understand the menopause it helps to know the internal reproductive organs of women, girls, and people assigned female at birth. If you’re not sure what we’re talking about, see the diagram (below).

So, what do these organs do? The ovaries produce a hormone called oestrogen, which controls the regular monthly cycle of changes within the reproductive organs.

As we get older, our ovaries gradually stop producing as much oestrogen; this change in the balance of hormones causes the menopause. Once you’ve experienced the menopause, you’ll stop having periods and your ovaries won’t release an egg each month, so you won’t be able to get pregnant naturally.

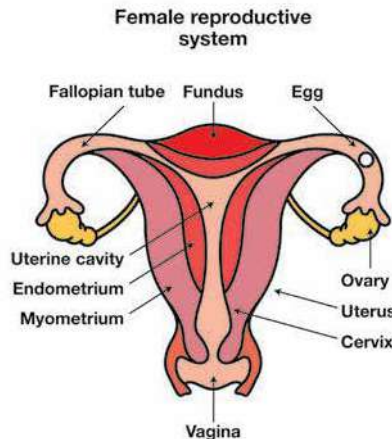
Most people start going through the

menopause between 45 and 55 years of age – the average age in the UK is 51 years old. However, around 1 in every 100 women experience the menopause before they reach 40; this is called premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency and can be caused

by surgery, cancer treatments, or an underlying health condition, but in some cases the cause is unknown.

Most people going through the menopause will experience symptoms. These symptoms usually begin months or even years before your periods stop, which is called the ‘perimenopause’

phase. On average, symptoms last for around four years after your last period, but some people can experience them for much longer – everyone’s experience of the menopause is different.



Here are some examples of the most common menopausal symptoms:

- Changes to your mood or mental health (including depression and/or anxiety)
- Problems with memory and concentration
- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping and/or fatigue

- Hot flashes – short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck, and chest
- Night sweats – hot flashes that happen at night

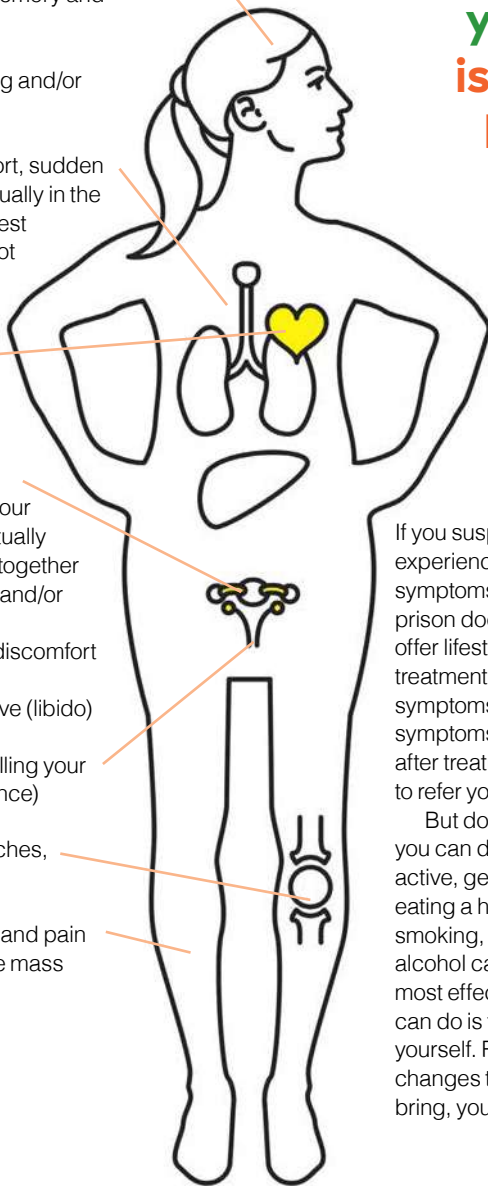
- Racing heartbeat – palpitations

- A change in the normal pattern of your periods, until eventually the periods stop altogether
- Vaginal dryness and/or discomfort
- Pain, itching, or discomfort during sex
- Reduced sex drive (libido)

- Problems controlling your bladder (incontinence)

- Joint stiffness, aches, and pains

- Muscle stiffness and pain
- Reduced muscle mass



‘The most effective thing that you can do is to simply be kind to yourself.’

If you suspect you are experiencing menopausal symptoms, see your GP or prison doctor. They’ll be able to offer lifestyle advice or potential treatments for any troubling symptoms. And if your symptoms aren’t improving after treatment, they’ll be able to refer you to a specialist.

But don’t forget, there’s lots you can do to help! Keeping active, getting plenty of sleep, eating a healthy diet, quitting smoking, and cutting down on alcohol can all help. But the most effective thing that you can do is to simply be kind to yourself. Remember, whatever changes the menopause may bring, you are still you. ●

Guided self-soothing exercises

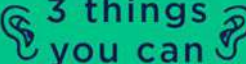
Exercise 1: The Five Senses

Take a few deep breaths
with your eyes closed.

Relax for a few moments.

Open your eyes when you're ready.

Silently, identify:

 3 things
you can
hear...


5
things
you can
see...

2 things
you can
smell...



4 things
you can
feel...

1 thing
you can taste...


Exercise 2:

Palms Up, Palms Down

Sit comfortably with your back straight.

Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, then open your eyes.

Do this until your breathing is slow and relaxed.

- Hold your hands gently in front of you with your palms up.
- Imagine them holding all the negative or upsetting thoughts and feelings you have had today. Visualise each of them as a small stormy rain cloud gathered in the palm of your hands.



- Take a deep breath in, and as you exhale turn your palms down.



- Imagine the clouds that were in your hand turning to rain, pouring and emptying all of the negative or upsetting things you've been carrying around today.



- Let go of them. Keep breathing slowly. All the darkness and storms have passed from your hands and dissolved away. Now turn your palms up.



- Your palms are open to receive support and help if you need it.
- Your palms are open to receive positive energy, positive thoughts and feelings.

These mindfulness exercises are extracts adapted from One Small Thing's *Guided Self-Soothing Exercises*, currently broadcast on Wayout TV at 12 noon on weekdays. Produced by The London Podcast Company, with text adapted from Dr Stephanie Covington. One Small Thing's mission is to redesign the justice system for women and their children. For more information, visit www.onesmallthing.org.uk

What does community mean to you?

Words: Neda Tehrani

In recent times, we have experienced the power of community like never before. In this new writing exercise, Pluto Press want to hear about your own experience of community and what being a part of a community means to you.

The repercussions of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic are still being felt as we reach the end of 2021. The crisis has had a significant impact on the mental and physical health of all of us.

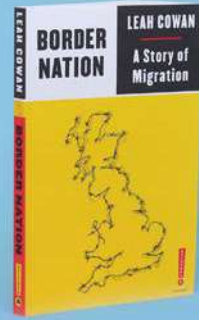
However, when faced with difficult times, our sense of community, generosity and support is what helps us all pull through. Since the pandemic began, we have seen communities support one another in a variety of ways, such as delivering food parcels, shopping for neighbours, and showing appreciation for NHS workers. Through your submissions in the last edition of this magazine, we heard about your experiences of lockdown and how a sense of community and hope prevailed during such a devastating and isolating year in prison.

On the theme of **community**, we would like to invite you to take part in a new writing exercise to tell us what community

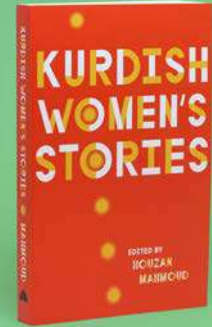
means to you. It could be about a community of like-minded people or the wider prison community; it could be about what makes for a positive community in the world; or it could be about your experience of being a part of a great community.

Being part of a community can give us a sense of belonging and improve our wellbeing. It can help us to heal, which this edition has been all about, by coming together and experiencing our shared humanity. We might also realise that we don't have to bear everything on our shoulders alone, and that many others are going through similar challenges to us. We want to hear your thoughts on these ideas about community, and more!

You can tell us about your experiences and ideas in a variety of formats: it could be an essay, a diary entry, a poem, or a short story. We want you to be as imaginative and experimental as possible! We will be picking four winning entries that



Recent Pluto Press titles, clockwise from top left: *Feminism, Interrupted: Disrupting Power* by Lola Olufemi; *Border Nation: A Story of Migration* by Leah Cowan; *Split: Class Divides Uncovered* by Ben Tippet; *Kurdish Women's Stories* edited by Houzan Mahmoud.



will receive one of the four books shown above, each of which deal with the theme of community in their own way.

Writing tips:

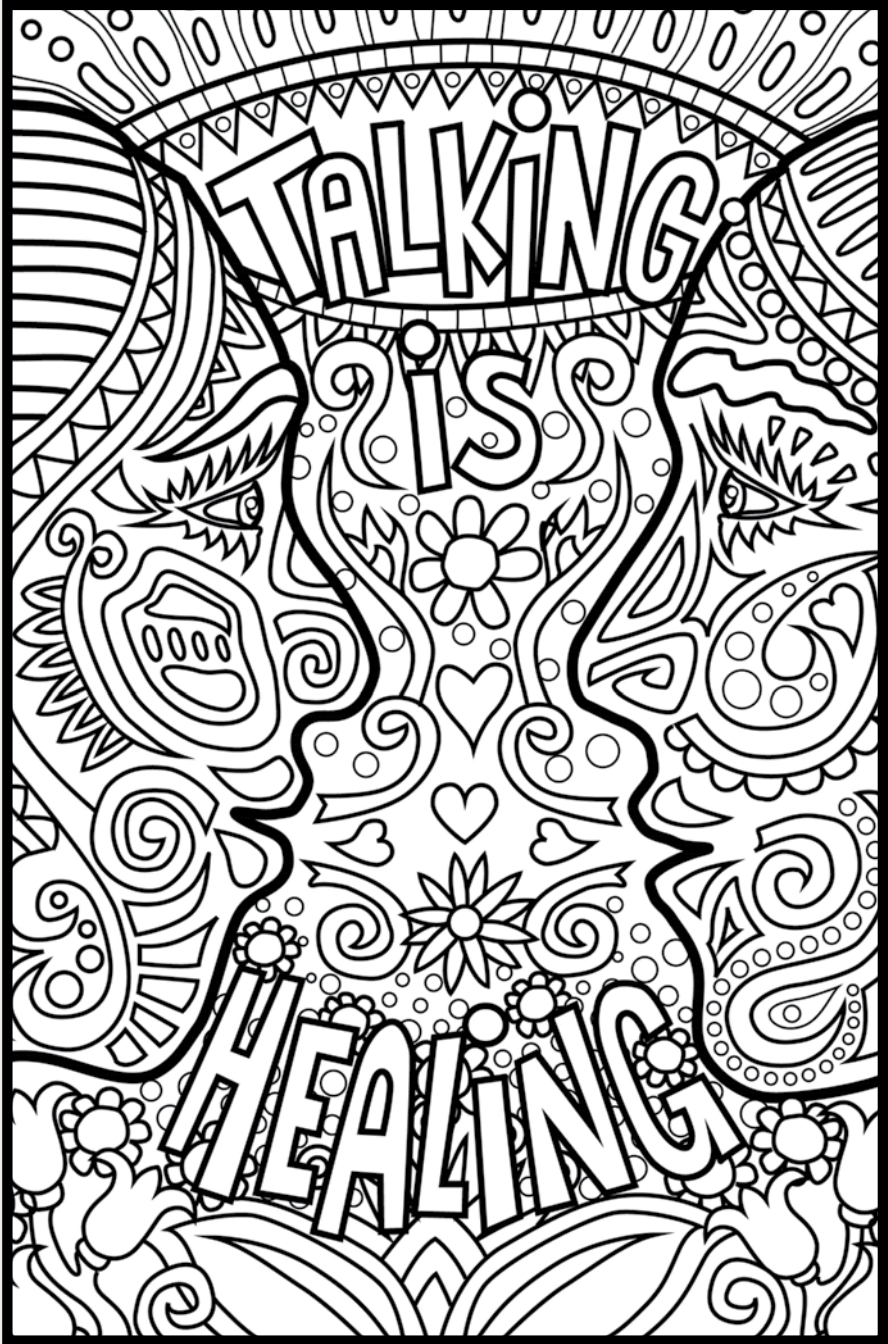
- **Plan your written piece.** Jotting thoughts down as they come to mind can help you to figure out a structure for your writing and which areas you would like to focus on.
- **Read through your writing more than once.** Even if you don't make any edits, your writing will improve after a second or third 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 65) 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 WIP's magazine, *Still I Rise*. ●

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

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.

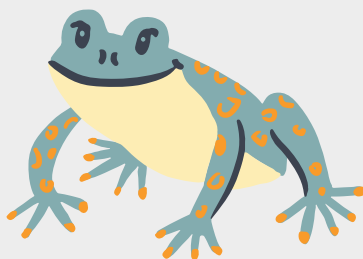


**PRISONERS' PENFRIENDS
HAIKU COMPETITION**

Deadline: 25 January 2022

**'AN OLD SILENT POND.
A FROG JUMPS INTO THE POND—
SPLASH! SILENCE AGAIN.'**

- MATSUO BASHO



A haiku is a type of poem with 5 syllables in the first line, 7 syllables in the second line, and another 5 syllables in the third line.

Your poem can be about anything at all – and it can be funny or serious – it won't affect your chances of winning! If you would like to submit a haiku for our consideration, please send it along with your name, date of birth, prison number, and current prison to:

Penfriends
PO Box 33460
London
SW18 5YB



Did you know you can also write to someone outside prison using our penfriend service? It's a great way to improve literacy and self-expression. Just write to us at the address above with your name, prison number, and current prison, and we'll send you the info.

WORD SEARCH

Find the words – time yourself!



Courage

Uplifting

Mend

Strength

Recover

Rejuvenate

Loving

Soothe

Care

Ease

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.

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

Answers

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

Arkbound Foundation: Empowering people in prison through writing

Founded in 2017 by someone who was previously in prison, Arkbound Foundation are providing opportunities for people in prison to have their writing published. Here, they explain why it's important your voice is heard and how you can get involved.

Writing is a powerful tool that allows us to communicate and develop ideas. Creative writing, in particular, allows people to think in new ways and to find new solutions. However, many people have few opportunities to practice writing and be a part of the publishing and media industries. For disadvantaged groups, these opportunities are even fewer and further between, with factors such as poor education and poverty contributing to a lack of access. Among some of the groups most affected by this inequality are people in prison or who have previously been in prison.

Generally, getting published can be difficult without contacts in the publishing world. This means that not only are people from disadvantaged backgrounds less likely to access the opportunities writing can bring, but that their voices remain unheard. This results in a severe lack of diversity, which makes room for stereotypes and misconceptions.

This is why we at Arkbound Foundation are working to improve accessibility and diversity in the publishing and media

industries. Founded by someone who spent time in prison, at Arkbound we believe that everyone should be given a fair chance to have their voice heard, which is why we are helping empower people in prison through writing.

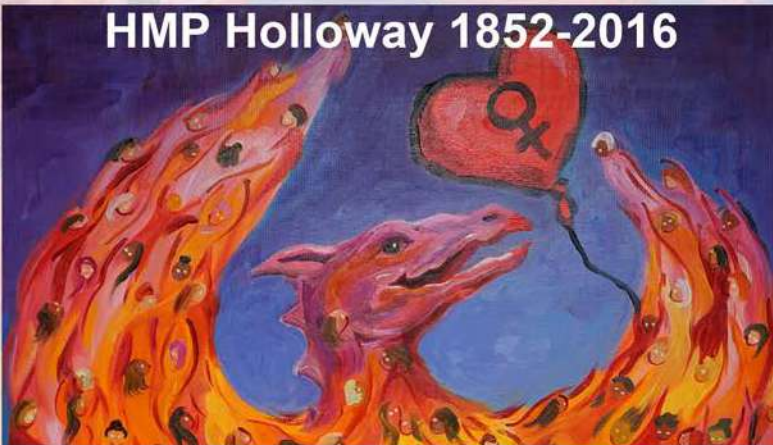
'Writing is not life, but I think that sometimes it can be a way back to life.'

Stephen King,

On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft

We are open to receiving book proposals by current and former people in prison. We also run a dedicated creative writing mentoring programme that pairs up experienced authors and literary agents with disadvantaged writers.

To find out more, write to us at Arkbound Foundation, 4 Rogart Street, Glasgow G40 2AA, or email us at info@arkbound.org. Arkbound Foundation's book *Writing Within Walls* features entries from their 2020 national writing competition for people in prison and on probation in the UK. The book includes the 20 winning entries and can be found in prison libraries across the country.



'What a weird setup we have in the UK – so often the only way you can solve your housing problem, your domestic-abuse problem, your drug problem, your being-sexually-abused-as-a-child problem is to be sent to prison... Many women got help in Holloway that they should have been offered in the community. There was someone there to listen, not correct their grammar, not to give them a diagnosis, not to give them a pill, not to tell them what to do. Tell me your story. I care. We can care. Society can care. You could see the women heal and grow.'

Pamela Windham Stewart, psychotherapist and co-editor of a book about HMP Holloway, *The End of the Sentence*.



Community Plan for Holloway, alongside a coalition of local people and groups such as Reclaim Holloway, is campaigning for a truly iconic, transformative and independent women's building of national importance to be built on the site of the former Holloway Prison, bringing together women's services under one roof to provide support, training and care to empower women for generations to come.

If you have a story to tell that we can publish anonymously, or would like some more information please write to:
CP4H c/o St George's Tufnell Park Crayford Road London N7 0ND

COMING SOON

Over the next two years, a team of University of Surrey researchers will be exploring women's experiences of food in prison with focus groups, interviews, observations and art workshops. Keep an eye out for more information to follow.

DOING 
PORRIDGE

By Sorana Vieru,
WIP's Head of Campaigns
and Public Affairs

#StopThe500

Women in Prison (WIP) have been busy calling on the Government to reverse their plans to build 500 new prison places for women, which were announced in January 2021. We believe building more prisons will only shatter more lives and unnecessarily tear more families and communities apart.

We know 9 in 10 children have to leave their home when their mother goes to prison, as women are often primary carers.

The plans fly in the face of the Government's own strategy, which commits to reducing the number of women in prison.

There is another way.

Local specialist services such as Women's Centres, which you can read more about on pages 30-33, are already embedded in many communities across

the country, providing an anchor to stop women being swept up into crime. The Government can choose to invest in these and fulfil their commitment to reduce the number of women in prison, rather than go against it by building more prison places.

In July 2021, we co-ordinated a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Justice signed by over 70 organisations spanning the housing, domestic abuse, criminal justice, midwifery, mental health, and children's sectors to make the case for community solutions instead.

We are continuing to campaign to make sure our voices are heard by the Government and fighting for investment in community-based services that support women to tackle the root causes of being drawn into the criminal justice system in the first place, like domestic abuse and poverty.

Pregnancy in prison campaign

[TRIGGER WARNING: baby loss]

Together with Birth Companions, Level Up and a group of mothers who have been pregnant in prison, we've launched a campaign demanding a change in the law to end prison sentences for pregnant women and new mothers. The call follows the publication of a report from the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman on the investigation into the death of a newborn baby whose mother gave birth alone in her cell at Bronzefield prison in 2019, one of two baby deaths in the women's prison estate in the past two years.

But every year, pregnant women are detained and give birth in UK prisons, with 1 in 10 giving birth in their cell or on the way to hospital.

We're calling on the Government to strengthen the law so that judges legally have to consider the health of pregnant women and their babies, and avoid sending them to prison wherever possible.

We've launched a petition for the Justice Secretary which has been signed by over 7,700 people so far.



You can find Birth Companions' books, *Inside Guide to Pregnancy and Birth* and *Motherhood in Prison*, in many prison libraries. They can also be provided on request to prison libraries.

Birth Companions provide support in a number of women's prisons: HMP Bronzefield, HMP Foston Hall and HMP Peterborough.

Birth Companions' contact details

Email: info@birthcompanions.org.uk
Messages only: 0207 117 2824

If you've been affected by this article and would like to share your experience with us, you can write to us at:

Freepost WOMEN IN PRISON

LEGAL & GENERAL ADVICE

Prison Reform Trust Advice and Information Service:
0808 802 0060

Monday 3pm–5pm

Wednesday and 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:**

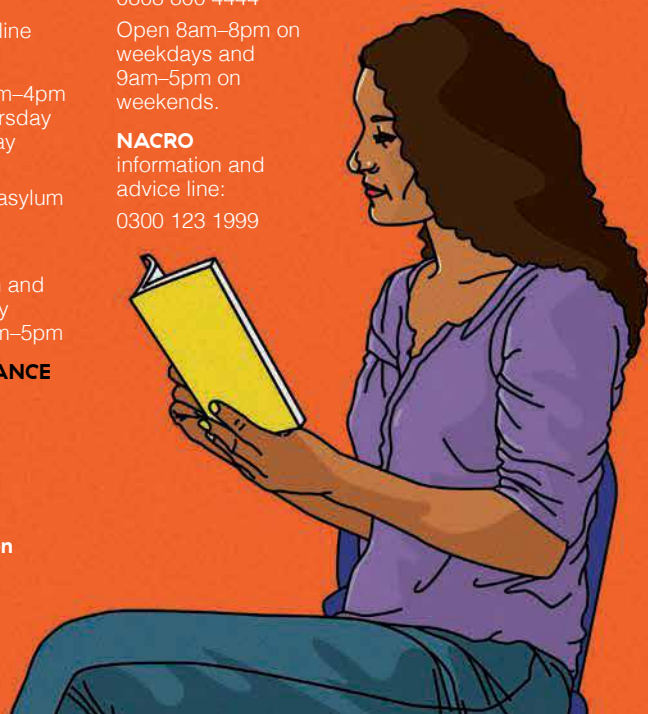
0808 808 2003
Open Monday–Friday
9am–8pm and on Saturday
and Sunday 10am–3pm
(excluding Bank Holidays).

OTHER**Cruise 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 pandemic.



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	<input type="text"/>	Surname	<input type="text"/>
Prison or Women Centre (if applicable)	<input type="text"/>	Prison No. (if applicable)	<input type="text"/>
Any Contact Details (email, address, phone)	<input type="text"/>		
Title of your piece (if relevant)	<input type="text"/>		

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 (<i>Still I Rise</i>)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
WIP's online platforms (<i>our website, www.womeninprison.org.uk, and social media, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn</i>)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
WIP's Publications & Promotional Materials (<i>i.e. reports, leaflets, briefings</i>)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

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.

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.



Sitting Together. A piece of artwork from the *The I and the We* Koestler Arts 2021 exhibition, which showcases artwork from people in prison. See our feature about Koestler Arts on page 8.

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

➤ **Koestler Arts Friendships**
through the post Making plans
for life after prison Wash away
your troubles with watercolours
My self-care journey in prison
Getting to know a Governor
Timpson's key to employment
Women's Centres Art & poetry
The Traveller Movement The
menopause Women who kill
Women's healthcare Making
a complaint Reviewing your
categorisation Self-soothing
exercises Writing exercise
Colouring exercise Arkbound
#StopThe500 Pregnancy in
Prison Haiku Holloway Word
search and Sudoku puzzles.