

# Creative Project

Mental Health Thematic

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation  
Penal Reform Solutions

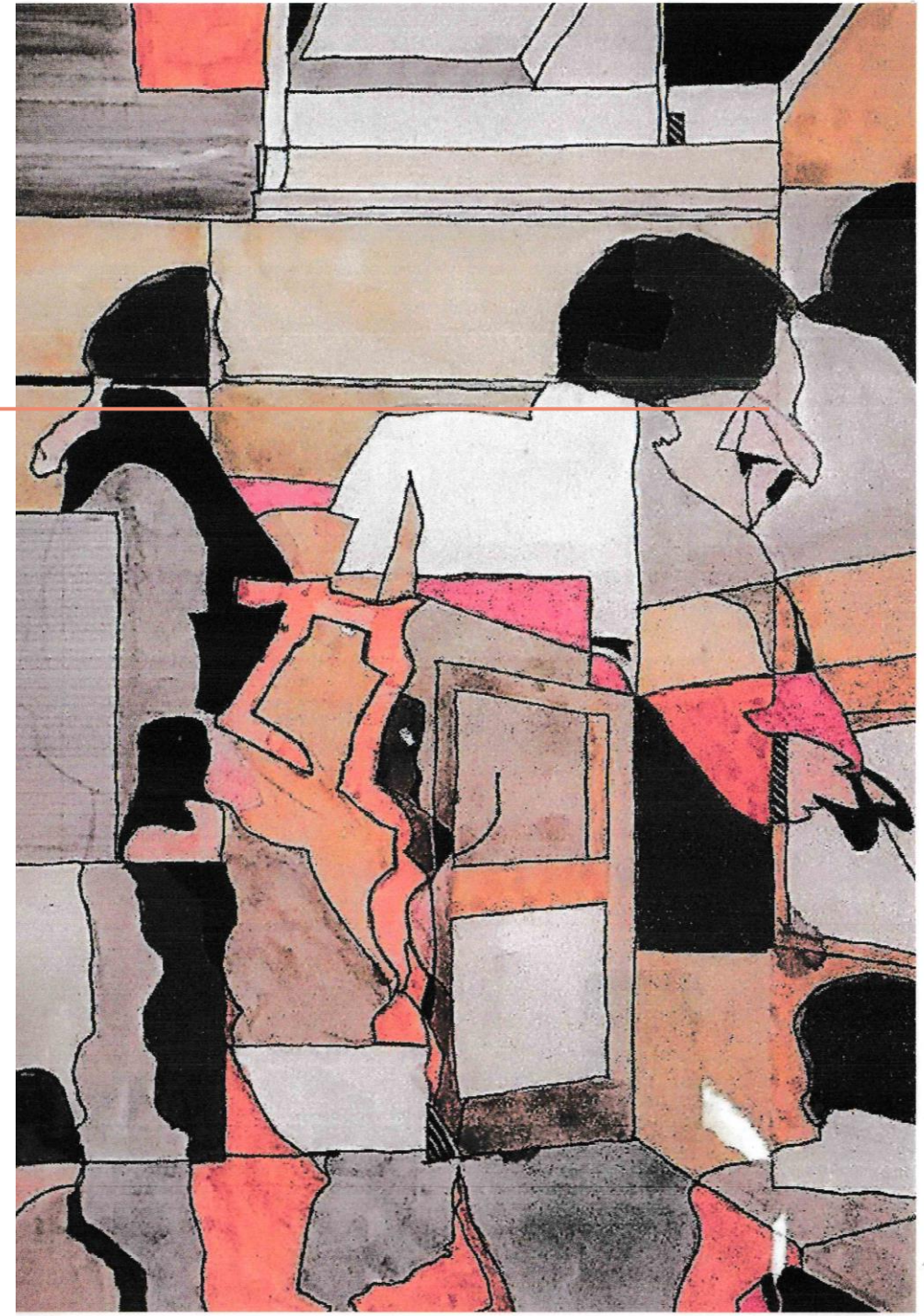
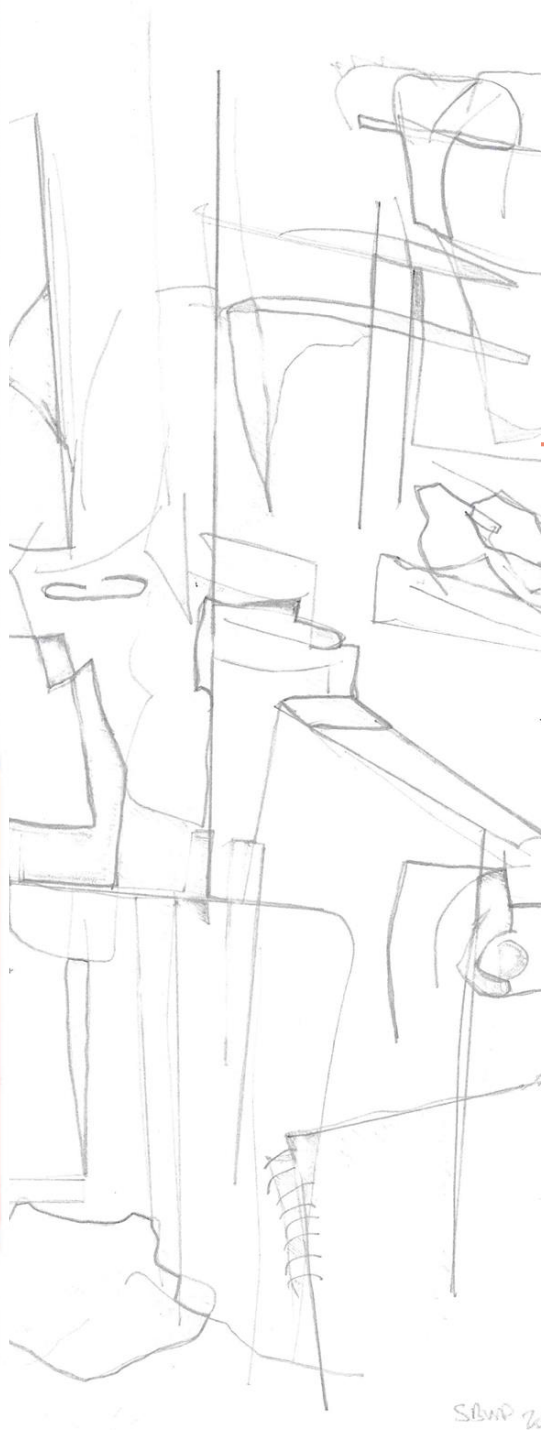


# Introduction

- *What is the creative project?*
  - As part of a thematic research project with the Inspectorates of Probation we asked participants to send us some creative work, voicing their mental health journey through the criminal justice system.
- *What did we do?*
  - We asked individuals to express their journey through means of poetry, letters, drawings or short five worded answers.
- *What was the aim?*
  - Our aim was to give these people a voice, to support them and let them know that they are being listened to

The key themes that emerged when talking to individuals about their journey through the criminal justice system are as follows:-

- Relationships
- Creating a safe space
- Trauma
- Humanity
- The need for certainty
- Faith in the criminal justice system
- Hope and hopelessness
- In search of meaning
- Diversity and inclusion



**“A bag of mixed feelings”**

***“I’m a number  
for life”***

***“Accountability, inhumane,  
lack of support”***





Don't Cry Out

You must not cry out  
Not even when you die

I will beat you

I will hurt you

If you cry

Keep your feelings to yourself

We don't care if you're upset

No matter what you go through

I will beat you

You will not cry

Even when you tell others of your peril

I will wait for you

Even when you sleep

I will get to you

I will make you weep

So hush its our secret

Don't tell anyone

No matter how much you hurt

Ensure you do as your told

Each is what I'm offered for your innocence to be  
taken

You must not cry

You must not deny us

Adults of our pleasure

An abuse of our nature

We will persist

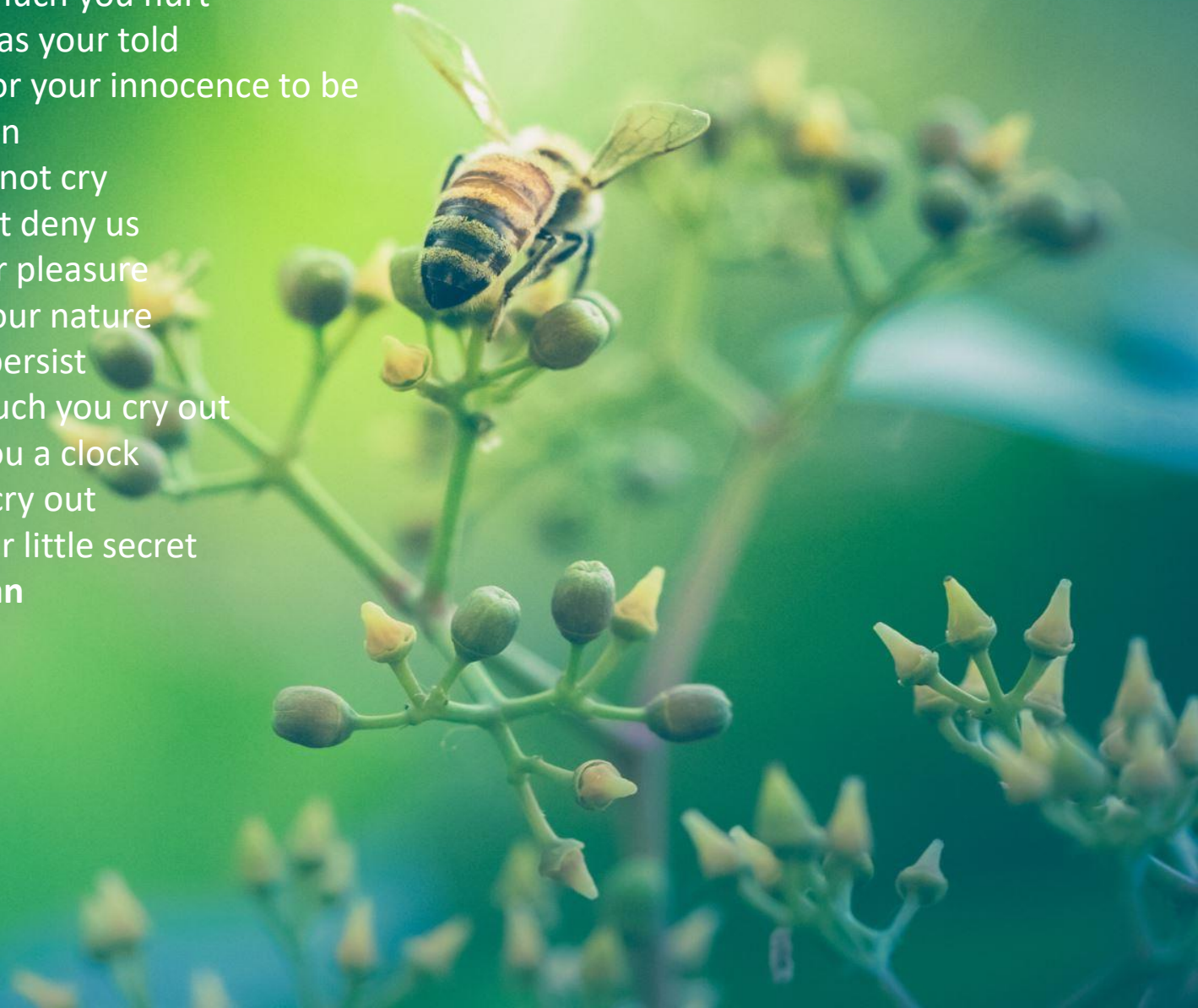
No matter how much you cry out

I will give you a clock

So don't cry out

Shhhhhh Its our little secret

- Alan



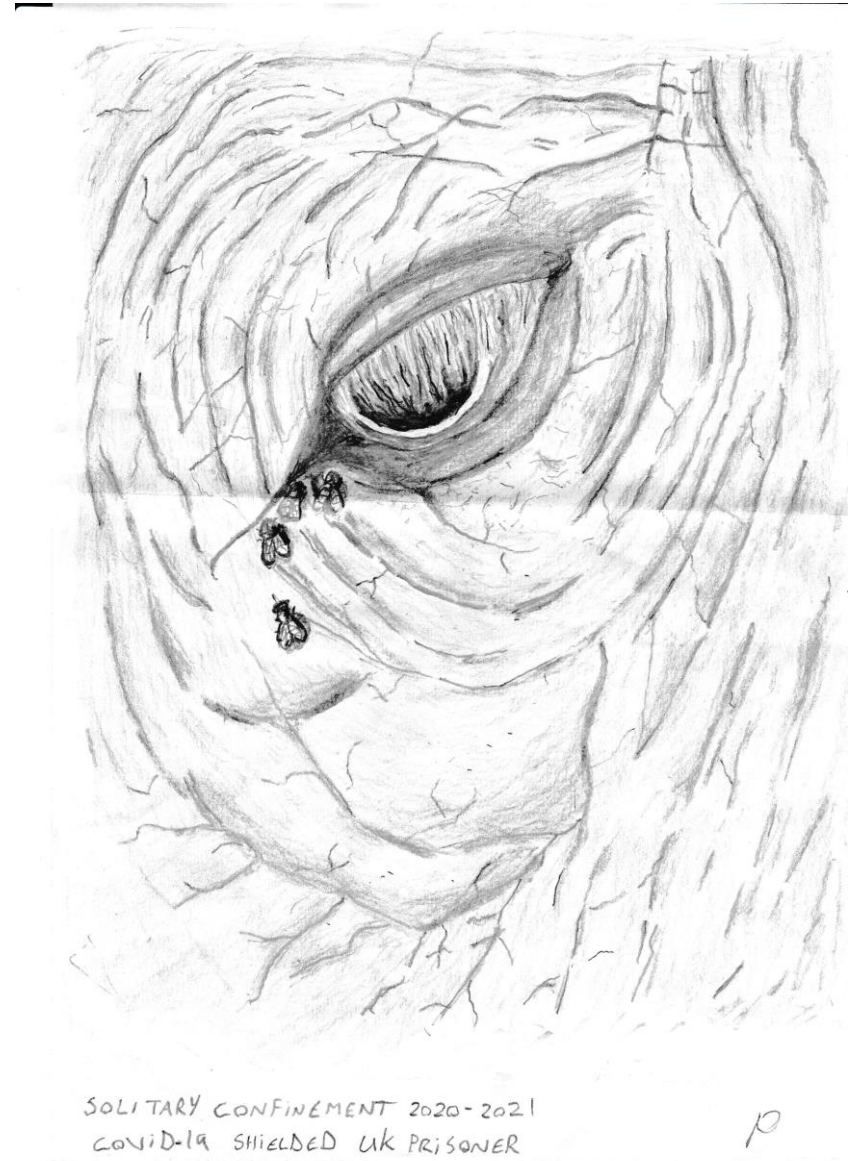
## Black Cloud

Every morning I wake,  
And slap on a smile that is oh so fake,  
Beneath that is the black cloud of grief,  
It only lays dormant and rears its head,  
Sometimes its for long, sometimes brief,  
A sense of guilt and loss,  
It eats you up and inside  
Don't ask me if I'm okay for I will cry  
And sometimes I don't even know why,  
I've never been quite this bad before  
Where I'm unmotivated and just want to close the door  
Everywhere I go the black cloud follows and won't leave me be,  
Like Charlie Brown in Snoopy and me,  
It's a psychic parasite that thrives on the bad,  
Its triggered more when I see or hear something sad,  
This too shall pass, but when I don't know,  
The voice in my head is a noisy crow,  
It feeds off negative emotion,  
It's yet to find the right potion,  
I really hope that it will end soon,  
Where the sun shines through,  
And I stop feeling oh so blue!

- Sian



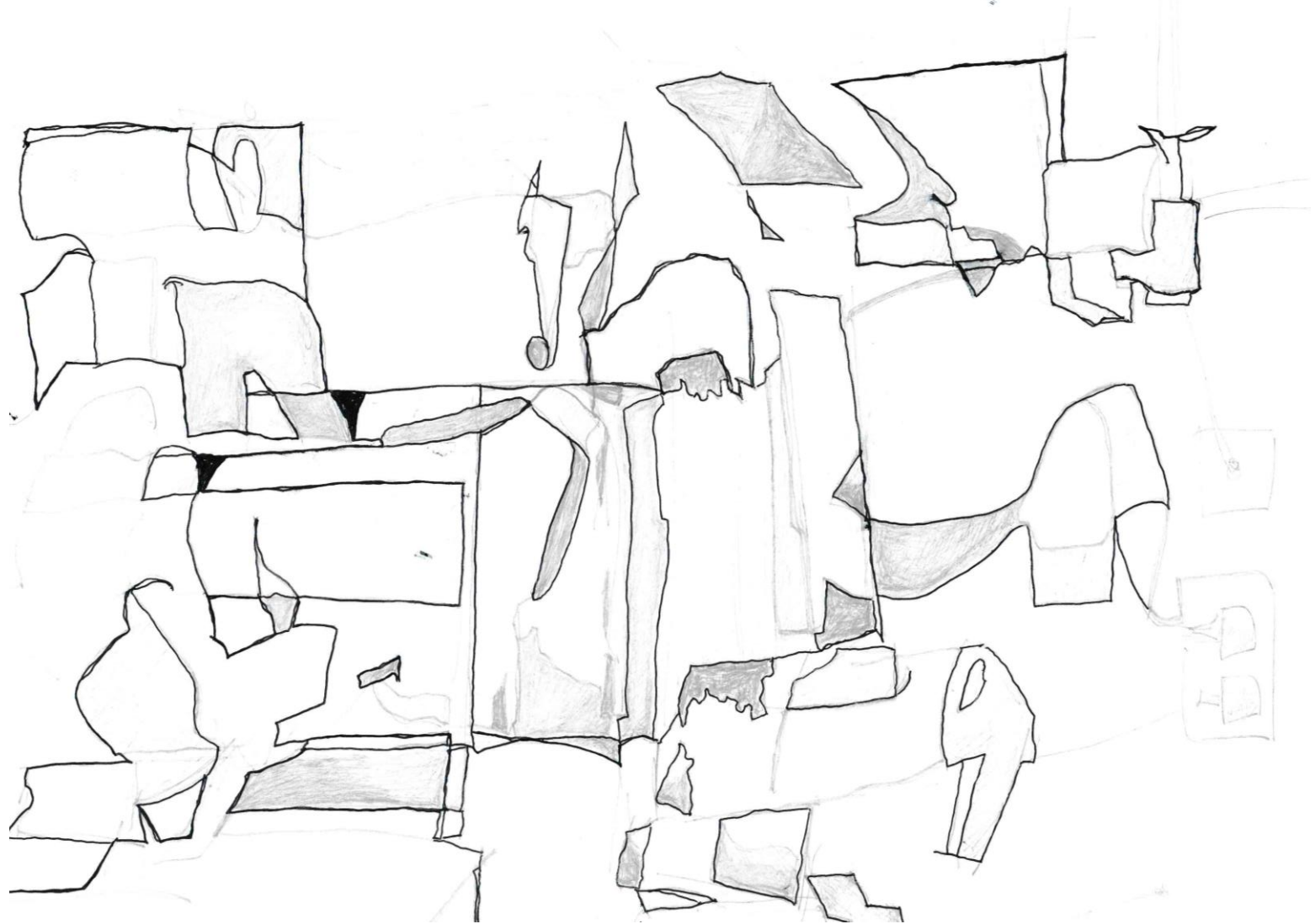
# “Solitary Confinement”

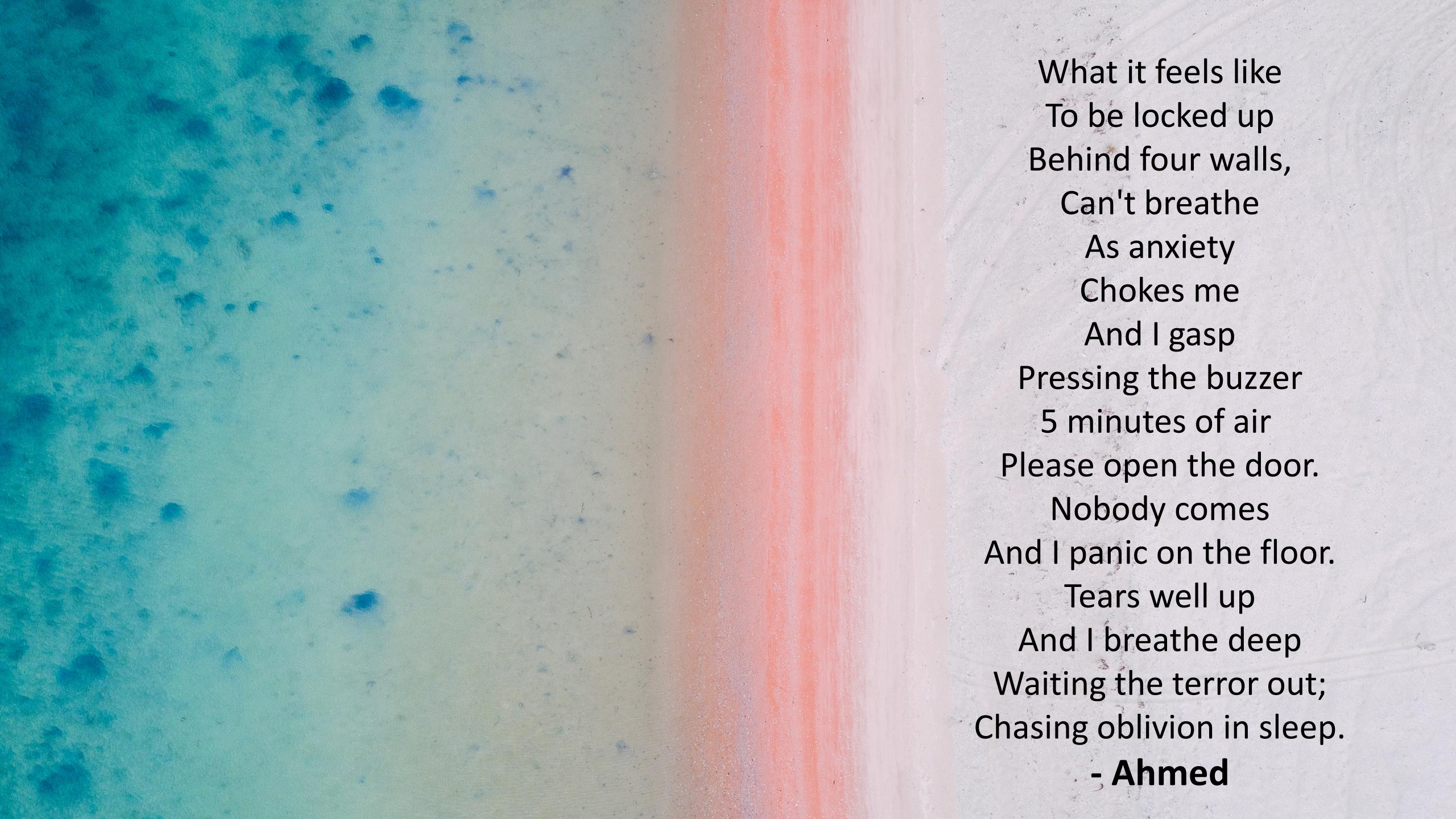


***“disappointment, no  
justice,  
discriminatory, no  
regard for the person  
and people are just  
numbers”***

***“to be heard, space,  
acknowledgement of mental  
health, Time out of cell and  
talking”***

***“More understanding & consideration as a human”***





What it feels like  
To be locked up  
Behind four walls,  
Can't breathe  
As anxiety  
Chokes me  
And I gasp  
Pressing the buzzer  
5 minutes of air  
Please open the door.  
Nobody comes  
And I panic on the floor.  
Tears well up  
And I breathe deep  
Waiting the terror out;  
Chasing oblivion in sleep.

- **Ahmed**

WE CHANGE LIVES Pigeons go to jail

CORONA ST  
QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY  
I DO  
HAVE THE  
AUTHORITY  
ICE  
SNEAK PREVIEW

Choose life **Drink & Drugs** **NEWS**  
medical negligence

**1000 GY SCREWS**

**Me llace**

notorious **Gangsternism**  
**INSIDE**  
changed my life

probation  
shakie-up  
**WHAT**  
of the **WHOLE**  
APPROVED

**WEAPONS DOWN**  
NO FEE  
NO WIN  
GLOVES UP

**EVERY THING IS GOING TO BE A WORK**

Violent life turned good

THE PRISONERS

Some walk to the  
mental Health

LOCKDOWN PRISON

Choose life **Drink & Drugs** **NEWS**  
medical negligence

**THE PRISONERS CRAPHOLE**  
The Berwyn Council  
Time to see what's going on

**RADICALISED IN PRISON**  
Do you want more bang-up?

**CORONA ST.**

Lockdown

The grim stories of prisoners  
**INSIDE JUSTICE**  
unable to stop drug supply

**A sense of escapism**  
tough New Security Measures

**INMATE**

Personal Reform, Self-Reflection

Behind the Gate - HMP Berwyn  
Troubled new prison  
domestics

Lockdown

**INSIDE**  
Come to me, all you who  
DEMAND LESS REMAND

**Porridge**

**1207**

**Welsh Prison** victims  
rehab  
2021

**THE DISCHARGE**  
An emotional experience

**HMP**  
Probation

Open 7 days  
**OMU**

**HMP BERWYN**

**1207**  
**Break down**

**BIG DRUG PROBLEMS**  
PSYCHOACTIVE  
SUBSTANCE

**MDTS**

**HMP BERWYN**

**LOCKDOWN**

**INSIDE JUSTICE**  
Probation Service

**LOCKDOWN**

**SWALLOW**

**CORRUPT**  
MERSEYSIDE  
POLICE  
OFFICERS JAILED

**HATE**  
WILL  
NEVER  
WIN

Berwyn  
**justice**  
Degrading regime  
**stinks**  
want more bang-up!  
It's just obscene!

**WHO GIVES A**

**PSYCHOACTIVE SUBSTANCE**

**ANSWER!**

**LOCKDOWN**

**LOCKDOWN**

OTHER SIDE OF THE DISCHARGE GRANT

**HMP BERWYN**

**LOCKDOWN**

**LOCKDOWN**



## *It Could Be You*

I never expected to end up in prison  
More than Fifty years of good behavior  
Never a police fine, not as much as a caution  
People would call me a good man, a hardworking and honest man  
They put bad people in prison. Not me, not you.

Branded as guilty from first day on remand  
You are punished and dehumanized with immediate effect  
Shamed. Guilty until proven otherwise  
They will brutalise you  
They will break you

Two years on and four prisons later  
Sentence plan? Never met an offender manager  
Its not what it says on the box  
It is work. I lost my mind. I was a good man  
Now I'm a broken man

I wouldn't treat a dog this way, never  
Locked up forever. No care.  
Trembling. Starting at nothing. In a cage.  
Solitary confinement for a year. No phone.  
Locked up alone for up to sixty hours at a time.  
Shaking. Face aching. Screaming.  
PTSD they call it.

Russia tortured a prisoner. Iran did the same.  
They don't tell you that the UK tortures thousands  
But they did last year – **David**

The prison system is failing  
We all know about Chris Grayling's (MP)  
Failing in abundance  
An abundance of mental health issues  
This is old news. Where's the good news?

Prison time is like staring at an hourglass  
Grain after grain of sand, no helping hand  
A comforting voice, 'how are you today?'  
You wait and wait... and wait, time doesn't  
abate  
'This is doing my head in, what now?'

22hours locked in my cell  
Daytime tv. This must be hell  
What time is meds? Who knows?  
'Is this what my life has amounted to?'  
There is a wealth of mental health

In prison, this ain't living  
- Peter

A close-up photograph of a hand reaching out from the top left corner towards the center. The hand is positioned just above a calm body of water, which reflects the hand and the surrounding environment. The background is a soft, hazy landscape with trees and a bright, low sun, creating a warm, golden glow. The overall mood is contemplative and hopeful.

***“More support for mental health”***

***“Step up, support the silent”***

***“total lack of  
understanding & empathy”***



## The Bodybuilder

Nothing is free  
Except oxygen and a mother love  
Pulsars and on the numbers  
Working men in hats and gloves

Decimated by a loving state  
Decorated at Christmas  
And every other Sunday  
Fossils buried beneath fingerprints  
Rehabilitated by the TV's ray

'Desistance is futile!  
Waits the bodybuilder  
Dangling upside down  
Networking for his family  
Whom he'd do anything for

Railing against the state of play  
Abandoned by the populists  
And electric musk tool  
Through fluid stages of the day

Damned if you do, and  
Damned if you don't  
Through the fingers and off the shoulder  
Broken, silence voices - **Dexter**



## *Indeterminate Psychological Persecution*

Trapped in the belly of the beast,  
Sometimes if rather be deceased  
Serving a sentence with no end in sight,  
Regardless of your repentance  
You may never get to see the light of day  
All you can do is hope and pray  
Don't let your mind stray  
Into a world of psychological depression  
Thoughts of regression, little hope of progression!  
Pent up aggression comes out in ways that says  
"you're still a risk"  
To yourself & others  
Your only wealth your emotional health, protect it like never before,  
Especially when behind your door  
As being trapped within a call of a depressive mind  
Hope of freedom is hard to find  
But, we mind, my inner strength is protected like meat!  
Because this sentence I will beat  
On my knees or on my feet  
The outside world I will greet!

- TJ



### *Suicidal Thoughts!*

Suicidal thoughts have forever plagued me  
"It dries me Crazy"  
Ridiculous its not, services they are!  
Emotional scare not visible to see  
But felt by me daily  
Not everyday but every week  
'This shits peak'  
Hide & can't seek me they do!  
Like glue a natural substance  
Adhesive thoughts!  
Sticky at typical times regardless of your place  
Like clusters of small blue flowers planted in the  
mind,  
Obscuring my view  
'My belief' that's laced with grief  
Not everyday or every minute  
But, any minute, there's no limit!  
Living on the edge of a knife  
Struggle and stripe a daily occurrence  
Thoughts of resurgence  
Motivated by rigor

A mental energy but physically draining!  
Like the impact of the IPP (indeterminate  
public protection)  
Physically protected they are,  
Emotionally protected I'm not  
Indeterminate that is,  
Public that's not  
Invisible to see like the suicidal thoughts  
of me  
But I wont be defied  
By the barriers of pride!  
Pleasure I feel as I reveal,  
The pain, through creative spell  
And like the power of magic  
Fascinating it is  
But this ain't no card game,  
This makes people go insane.  
Held inhumane on a barbaric sentence.  
But, there no full stop;  
Forever on going, never knowing  
Whether you'll be released  
Before being found deceased!

- **Stefan**

## *Incarcerated Period Prolonged*

As I sit behind the steel,  
With so much pain  
That no words could reveal.  
‘I try to self heal,  
From what seems a raw deal!’  
These emotions I feel, the more I try to hide.  
Less times I’ve cried, deep inside.

But I won’t be defined  
By the barriers of pride!  
Pleasure I feel as I reveal  
The pain, through creative spell  
And like the power of magic  
Fascinating it is.  
But this ain’t no card game  
This makes people go insane.

Held inhumane on a barbaric sentence  
But there no fully stop!,  
Forever on going, never knowing  
Whether you’ll be released  
Before being found deceased!

**- Harry**

## Oasys!

As I travel from court in a sweat box like 'Britbox' I watch the world go by  
from my side view, thinking, 'why can I just be like you.?'

An abiding citizen studying law

From an outside view

Rather than that of an inside view!

I contemplate why I do the things I do!

I ask myself;

'why do you put yourself through the madness you do; its like an addiction  
with every conviction, that probations use as a prediction, with their oasys  
tool.'

But, this ain't no drink or band!

It makes me wonder as I sit behind the wall while they use it as their upper  
hand, to slap on you what you can or can't do!

Its' no predictor but a future restrictor, when on license conform to the  
dynamics of the future,

Or well make the past static factors current!

I like electricity, shocking it is!

An illegal firearm, like that of a taser

But legal in the hands of the lar!

Is there a flaw in the tool they use and abuse as they choose what they add &  
subtract!

'Like Maths!'

An algorithm they use to determine risk at the heart of the problem to  
procedural 'Re-call!'

That needs resolving with ethical moral reasoning got just valid principles,

With the enforcement of a legal (tool) firearm in the trigger happy hands of  
probation. — **Spencer**

*National Probation Service!*

The national probation service are a deprivation  
on your human rights, they blight the hierarchy  
of your needs!

‘on every level possible’

As the good lives model of the victim/s  
Proceeds the rehabilitation of offenders,  
Which is at the heart of reducing re-offending.

Condescending they can be,  
Patronising to say the least!

A conscious behavior to trigger a pre ‘knee-jerk’  
re-action to your emotional action,  
Like a loaded gun without a safety catch!

Explosive like dynamite.

‘Bang’.

Is the sound of the cell door  
As the actualisation of the lack of esteem by  
authorizing figures impacts on the physiological  
self of the good lives model!

Especially when in prison!

**- Jerry**

## Paranoia?

The anger, anxiety and stress built in,  
Fear of crashing keys is long lasting.  
I twist my neck like a violent vine,  
For safety in the snaking food line.

Never knowing if I will exist once more,  
With a handle on the inside of a door.  
My mother keeps saying that she loves me,  
But is each visit another duty?

I try each day to find a positive thought,  
One negative action makes my body taut.  
Is the truth I once knew now undone,  
Has my prince of paranoia won?

Wishing my life away each season that falls,  
Just like a bored kid on their six week hols.  
Those days are long gone but feel they are back not free like  
they are back,  
If I leave prison will I know fiction from fact?

I left my dignity in,  
Reception upon my welcome,  
Do I trade in my sanity  
In return for my freedom?

- **Mohammed**



## Some Days

Some days I feel like I don't say enough  
Some days I feel like I don't wanna get up  
Some days I feel like the whole world hates me  
Some days I forget I've got friends and family.  
Those days, they come and they go  
These days, I just wanna know....  
What is the secret to staying happy?  
It comes and goes too fast for me  
I need a remedy  
Is it in my head, a chemical imbalance?  
Do I need a pill? Or a talk to a therapist?  
When it goes dark, I'll be your spark.

Some days I feel like I'm doing alright  
Some days I feel like that's no end in sight  
Some days I need to be alone for a while  
Some days I need to burn the fire till its out  
Those days, they come and go  
These days, oh I just wanna know...  
What is the secret to staying happy?  
It comes and goes too fast for me  
I need a remedy  
It is in my head, a chemical imbalance?  
Do I need a pill? Or a talk to a therapist?  
When it goes dark, I'll be your spark.

How can I be so off with you?  
When you've done nothing to  
Make me like this, oh, get a grip.  
You're far too old to be acting like this!  
Those days, they come and they go  
These days, I just wanna know...  
What is the secret to staying happy?  
It comes and goes too fast for me  
I need a remedy  
Is it in my head a chemical imbalance?  
Do I need a pill? Or a talk to a therapist?  
When it goes dark, I'll be your spark  
When it goes dark, I'll be your spark  
When it goes dark, I'll be your spark  
**- Chris**



The background of the image is a close-up, high-resolution photograph of a wood surface. The wood grain is prominent, showing concentric, wavy rings of varying shades of light brown and tan. The texture is smooth but shows natural wood grain irregularities. The lighting is even, highlighting the fine details of the wood's cellular structure.

**“Best things that’s ever happened”**

***“the prison system isn’t worth it”***

**“crap to start but better now”**

***“I’ve done wrong, they’ve tried to help and so far it’s all good”***

*My message to the youth of today.*

I grew up in the homes, secure units and care. I felt sorry for myself and thought my life unfair. I started carrying a blade, thinking I was cool, until at the age of 18 I got sentenced to 5 years and felt like a fool.

Out of the 5 for being a div I served 4 kicking and screaming and banging the seg down. But age 22 at last it was time to be released, I got out and had a ball, I went back to my old ways carrying a knife and by 24 I was back behind the wall. This time I hit the big one and got sentenced for LIFE!

I served 18 years straight I was aged 42 and I swore I'd cause no more strife. You'd really have thought I'd learnt my lesson, But on my release I went wild and had a crazy 9 week long session. So now I'm 42 and I wake up in a cold bare prison cell.

'what the fuck have I done now' I screamed as I pressed the emergency bell. Once again I'd gone too far and stabbed up my mate whilst on the train. I don't remember much, but there must be a missing link in my brain.

Once again I'm back in jail, I'm now 44 and doing a 2<sup>nd</sup> sentence of life. I'd learnt nothing during those lost years as once again I'd picked up a knife, now it's worse than ever as I sit here as a Cat A, all alone, my feelings painfully raw. All I have left are my memories as I state down at the floor.

The years have passed though sad they've been.  
There's loads of things I should've seen. All the ones I've loved I've now lost.  
That has been the ultimate cost.

The worst have been when my mam died, now there's no one left to dry the tears I've cried.  
So to all you young'uns who think carrying a knife is cool, read my story and don't be a fool. All my old pals and family have now passed on and I'll still be sitting here in jail in my latter years as an old con

**- Jose**

We would like to thank everyone who participated in this project and gave us their valuable time.

This work provided a valuable insight into how the criminal justice system has impacted on those with mental health issues. Through the words of those who participated, this report aimed to illuminate areas of practice that created hope, faith and growth, as well as to understand which aspects of practice were counter-productive.

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