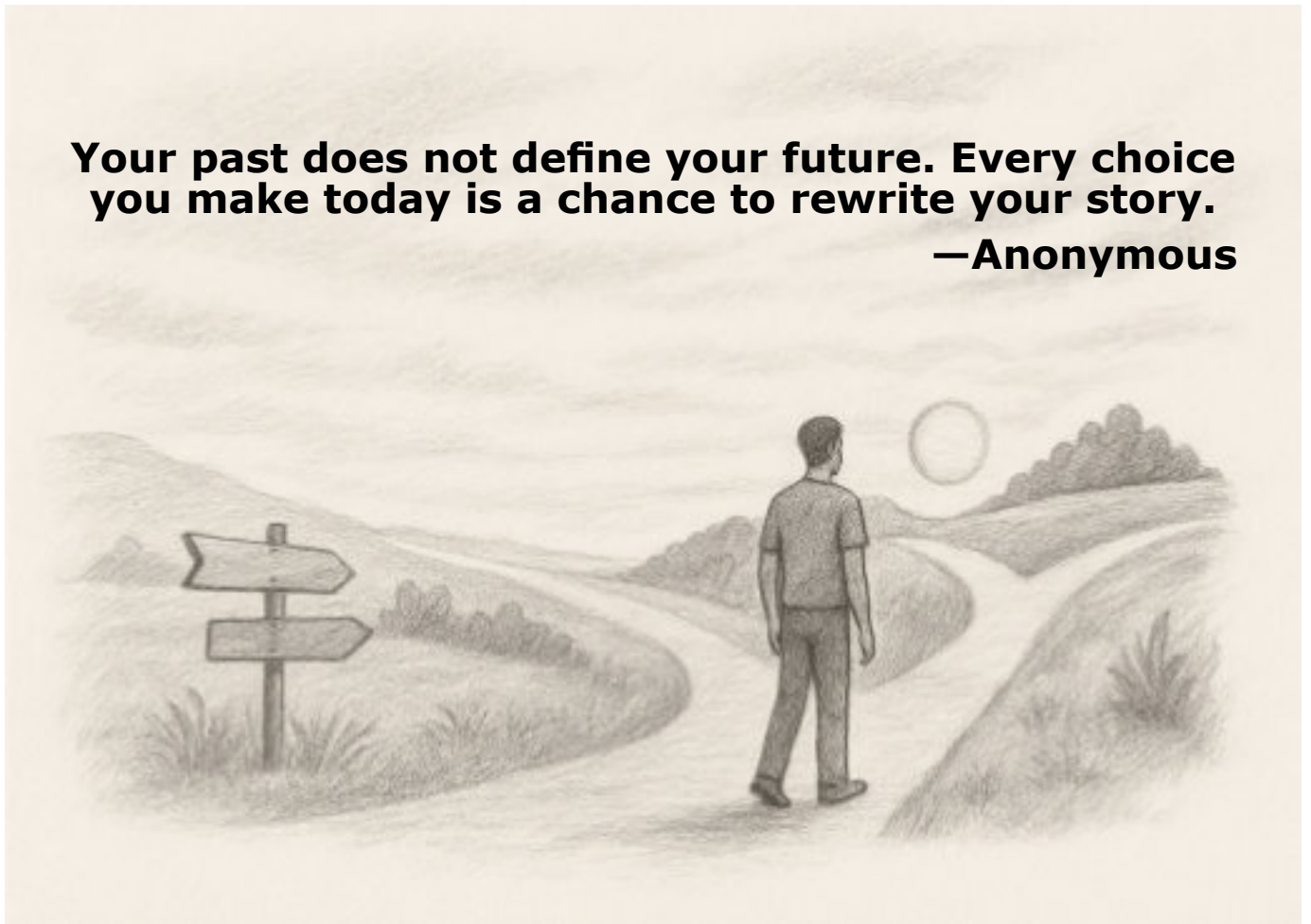


CONNECT

**Your past does not define your future. Every choice
you make today is a chance to rewrite your story.**

—Anonymous



Life doesn't always give us easy choices, but every day offers an opportunity to take a step in a better direction. Every crossroads we face is not about where we have been but where we choose to go next, whether it's reconnecting with family, finding a new hobby or building a new routine, every step on your journey matters.

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Welcome to Edition 4 of CONNECT, PBNI's Service User Newsletter

We're proud to bring you this year's edition of the Service User

Newsletter, a space where voices are heard, stories are shared, and creativity shines. Every piece in this newsletter has been written, drawn, or created by people with lived experience of probation.

Whether it's a poem, a painting, a personal reflection, or a recipe, each contribution is a powerful reminder of the value of expression and connection.

For those of you who are new to 'Connect', this newsletter was created in direct response to requests from a service user group in 2021 and the first edition was published in 2022. Our service users continue to have a central role in creating and editing the contents of the newsletter; that's what makes it so important. From your lived experience, you know what will help other service users, and you know the advice you wish you had been given at critical points in your past. The newsletter, now in its fourth year, is going from strength to strength and it is a place where you can find information and advice which will assist you to integrate into local



communities, the list of resources in the Belfast area which you can find on page 17 will hopefully be particularly useful for you.

This newsletter exists because your voice matters. Too often, the experiences of service users are spoken about, but not spoken with. This publication flips that script. It's a place where your insights, your humour, your struggles, and your triumphs are front and centre. By sharing your thoughts and talents, you help others feel less alone, challenge stereotypes, and show the richness and diversity of life beyond any labels that are given to you.

Every piece in this newsletter represents a step forward, whether it's a moment of reflection, a burst of creativity, or a voice that's been waiting to be heard. Sharing takes courage, and we really appreciate your contributions. This shows strength, bravery, and the power of being seen and heard.

We believe that listening to service users isn't just important, it's essential. It helps probation grow and develop. It reminds us all that change is possible, and that everyone has something valuable to contribute.

If you're reading this and thinking, "Maybe I could share something next time", you absolutely can. Your voice matters, and we'd love to hear it. Whether it's a few lines, a sketch, a recipe, or a reflection, your contribution could inspire someone else or help them feel understood, please just let your PO, PSO or CSO know.

To those who submitted work, thank you! Your courage, creativity, and honesty make this newsletter what it is. And to those reading, we hope you find something here that speaks to you, makes you think, or simply brings a smile.

This is your space. Your stories. Your voices. And we're delighted to share them.

As always, a special thanks goes to Fred Caulfield, Chief Executive of Prison Arts Foundation and Pamela Brown, Prison Arts Foundation who year after year have helped with the design and editing.

"No one can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending".

Gillian Montgomery
Director of Operations



The Journey

The drama was produced by the Belfast Service User Group and performed at the Quaker Temple in Belfast. Our goal was to convey the message about the transition a person experiences when being released from custody and attending their first appointment with Probation in the community. Each member contributed their unique skills and qualities to the production, including screenwriting, direction, musical talents, production, and set design.

Not everyone had been in custody, so it was educational for both group members and the audience to see the range of emotions, hopes, and fears involved in this journey. The main message was about the transformation from feeling lost, anxious, and fearful of the unknown upon leaving



custody, to the moment of that first meeting with a probation officer, where it's okay to show your true self and vulnerabilities, and where the mask you have worn begins to lift.

Participation was voluntary, and everyone was fully involved, sometimes pushing us out of our comfort zones. It was during these moments that we witnessed growth, and our hope and confidence for the future increased. Rehearsals took place over many weeks, providing us with routine and a sense of belonging.

We are grateful to Pamela from Prison Arts for attending one of our rehearsals and giving us a master class in performance, as well as to the Quakers for their ongoing support.

Group member quotes

"Gave me the opportunity to sing again something I hadn't envisaged happening"

"I gained confidence, and it gave me my sparkle back"

"Helped me express myself, at the start I was nervous but working as part of a team gave me the confidence to share my message"

"I was able to express what was in my head. Felt good to educate people, massive increase in confidence"

"Helped me be amongst crowds, work in a group, and elevate any fears I had of working as a team. Great to be in a team that worked equally"

"I cant believe we actually did it, feels good to watch an idea grow then for it to actually happen!"



Breaking the Cycle: How ResoluteM;nds is Empowering Change Through Lived Experience

At a time when youth crime, addiction, and mental health issues are on the rise, ResoluteM;nds offers a powerful, relatable alternative to traditional interventions. Founded by Rory Sloan, a mentor and personal coach with lived experience of addiction, trauma, and the criminal justice system, ResoluteM;nds is dedicated to breaking negative cycles and supporting individuals on their journey to lasting change.

WHO WE ARE

ResoluteM;nds is more than a service it's a movement. We work directly with young people and adults at risk, particularly those involved in the justice system, to help them rewrite their stories. Our work is rooted in authenticity, understanding, and connection. Because we've walked the path, we know how to light the way forward.

OUR SERVICES FOR PROBATION CLIENTS

We offer tailored interventions that complement existing probation work, including:

- 1-1 Mentoring & Coaching: Focused on mindset, emotional regulation, goal setting, and relapse prevention.
- Lived Experience Talks: Impactful presentations that challenge thinking, build hope, and inspire change.
- Group Workshops: Covering topics such as addiction, identity, self-worth, and personal development.
- Fitness & Wellbeing Coaching: Rebuilding discipline and routine through physical health.

WHY IT WORKS

Traditional approaches can struggle to reach individuals who feel misunderstood or judged. At ResoluteM;nds, we bridge that gap through shared experience. Our clients see themselves in us and that connection becomes the foundation for transformation.

PROVEN IMPACT

We've seen first-hand how powerful lived experience can be when paired with professional training and purpose. Whether



ResoluteM;nds
Dare to be different

it's preventing re-offending, supporting recovery, or helping someone find meaning in the chaos, ResoluteM;nds delivers real, lasting change.

PARTNER WITH US

We're actively seeking collaboration with organisations across region to support high-risk and high-need individuals. Together, we can offer a different kind of intervention one that speaks from the heart and walks alongside people, not ahead of them.

To learn more, contact Rory Sloan at rory@resoluteminds.co.uk or visit www.resoluteminds.co.uk

Thanks

Rory



PBNI as a Trauma Informed Organisation

Hello from PBNI's Trauma & Resilience Implementation Group (TRIG)

We're a group of 20 passionate volunteers from across all areas and staff grades within the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI). Together, we form the Trauma & Resilience Implementation Group, otherwise known as TRIG. Our purpose is to support PBNI's journey toward becoming a trauma-informed organisation. This means we are committed to:

- Realising that many people, both service users and staff have experienced trauma in their lives.
- Recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma and understanding how it can affect individuals.
- Responding in ways that promote safety, empowerment, inclusion, trust, choice, and working together, while actively working to avoid causing further harm.

Your voice matters. One of our key aims is to ensure that the voices of service users are heard and valued. We want to learn from your experiences to help shape how PBNI can become a trauma informed service. Your insights will help us create a safer and more supportive environment for everyone who engages with PBNI, whether as a service user or as a member of staff.

We'll be sharing more details soon about how you can get involved, and we're genuinely looking forward to working with you.



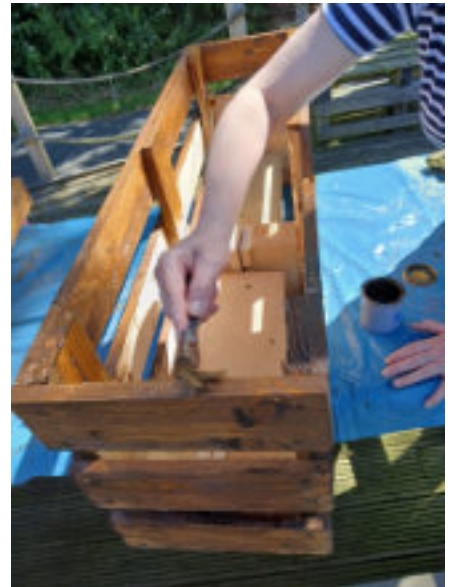


Ladies group – Coleraine Office

A new ladies service users group completed a voluntary DIY course at Ashes to Gold, Grow Project, in Coleraine. The ladies made planter boxes from wooden pallets, under the guidance of Lesa Nesbitt of Ashes to Gold. They attended one morning a week for 4 weeks during which time they learnt to use various tools to prepare, cut, and assemble the boxes from wooden pallets. The boxes were then

varnished and the boxes planted up with various hardy, colourful plants. The finished boxes were then presented to local community groups – 2 went to Mountfern Adult Centre, 1 to Rathain Fold for Independent Living, and 1 to Brookmount Nursing Home. The ladies did a great job and their work was well received.

Liz McCormick, PSO
Coleraine PBNI





Radius
HOUSING

Welcome to
Chain Fold
1-35

radiushousing.org

Feedback from Enhanced Combination Orders

Three service users from the North West contacted us asking us to share their experiences of completing an Enhanced Combination Order, which is a direct alternative to a short custodial sentence. Here is what they said:

ELAINE

Elaine was given three years probation and 80 hours community service. Whilst she was glad that she wasn't going to prison, she was worried about how she would manage with the three year probation element of the order.

At the start of the order she says she was in a really bad place, she didn't want to get out of bed, she didn't have the motivation to get out of bed and get washed and dressed, she didn't have contact with her children and she had real issues with drugs and alcohol.

Elaine didn't want to engage with Probation but she knew she had to, she says she reluctantly attended her appointments, told her probation officer as little as possible in the early stages of the order but she says she soon realized that her Probation Officer and Probation Services Officer saw potential in her that she didn't know she had. She was offered support with all issues that she had.

It wasn't easy but Elaine is now sober for the first time in her adult life, she has more confidence in herself and she now has contact with her children.

When she finished her community service hours, she remained with the placement as a volunteer and now regularly fundraises for local charities including Search and Rescue which holds a special place in Elaine's life.

The turning point for Elaine was seeing that people in probation cared about her; "I didn't care about me, but they did, I love my life now".

When Elaine was asked what advice she would give others, she said "stick it out, they will help you, I know it takes time and it's really hard at times but look at me now, I wouldn't be where I am now without them"

JAMES

James was also given an Enhanced Combination Order. James has been on probation a few times before and says he didn't really want to be on Probation again.

James is father of five children, three who have moderate to severe disabilities. He was grateful not to go to prison as his wife was also really unwell at the time he was being sentenced, but he says a short prison sentence would have been easier. James now has a good relationship with his Probation Officer and Probation Services Officer but says this wasn't always the case – he says his probation officer really challenged him about his thinking and the choices he was making, highlighting the impact his behaviour was having on his family, and he really didn't like that.

On reflection, James now accepts that they were right to challenge him and now actually appreciates this as he started to question his own behaviour because of this and has made some really positive changes in his life. James also speaks really highly of his community service supervisor and would like to have been given the opportunity to continue with his supervisor after his hours were complete; "it was good for my head being out with the rest of the lads doing something that you could see was making a difference".

When asked what advice he would give others in the situation as he found himself in, he said; "embrace the chance because good things will come from it, come in with an open mind and don't waste time messing around, they are there to help you, as hard as it is".

James also raised a really important point about the support people need after an order ends, "I'm worried about not having probation in my life when I'm finished my order, that's not something I ever thought I'd say, I know I've come a good way, but I'm not there yet"

LAURA

Laura has been on her Enhanced Combination Order since 2023. Laura has been on Probation before and on this occasion had been told by her legal team to expect a custodial sentence so she viewed her sentence as a second chance.

The mix of probation supervision and community service worked well for Laura and she feels that it gave her structure and routine that was missing from her life at that time. Laura struggles with addiction issues and also with personal relationships that aren't healthy for her. She feels probation was very different this time around and says that her probation officer, probation service officer and community service helped her so much and describes it as the "best support ever". She also feels that the service user group that she was involved in is something that should be available to everyone and that the group gave her confidence and allowed her to see her own potential for the first time.

Laura has moved accommodation, has a much more positive relationship with Social Services, is managing her addictions and states that her best is yet to come.





Your feedback is really important to us—here is a summary of some of the changes we have made, some of the things we have undertaken, based on your feedback.

You Said...	We Did...
Interview room layouts don't allow you to get to know your Probation Officer or build a relationship with them as they are sitting behind a screen	We removed screens (that were introduced during COVID) from the majority of our interview rooms. A limited number of screens remain in some offices
Victims' voices need to be heard	We involved victims' in a storytelling project, we have involved registered victims' in staff training and we set up a meeting between our registered victim group, PCNI, the Victims Commissioner and the DoJ
The Health and Safety Posters are difficult to read	We listened to your feedback and have updated the wording, the layout and the content of the posters
The relationship with your Probation Officer is critical – if that relationship doesn't work, nothing will	We listened to what you told us about the skills and values that you think Probation staff need to have and we included this into our recruitment process
You didn't know what resources were available for you to access in the Belfast area	We worked with you and developed a resource pack for the Belfast area—it is available in the Belfast offices and it's included in this newsletter
We need to be better at sharing the experiences of service users—we need to share the good news stories	We published Edition 3 of Connect in 2024 which was based on your experiences, your contribution and your feedback. We will continue to publish the Service User Newsletter
You needed to know more about housing options, more about housing availability on release from custody and the current housing crisis	We set up a meeting between the Housing Executive and the Service User group in Portadown to discuss the issue

Dig It 2

The Dig It 2 project was specifically created in collaboration with PBNI, the Quakers, Belfast Works Connect and NIACRO to support one of the most isolated groups in our community, providing them with a sense of purpose and valuable skills. This initiative aligns with PBNI's commitment to working with various organisations to reach marginalised people through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award/ Endeavour program.

The Quakers kindly gave us the use of their allotment in which to design, plant and learn about the eco system from Eco warrior Phil!

Six service users completed the programme, five achieved three sections of the Endeavour award with one achieving their DofE certificate of achievement for completing three sections of the award. The Dig It 2 programme was part of this. Each service user obtained an OCN in horticulture delivered by Belfast works. We made hanging baskets with them which were donated to the Quaker shop and animal sanctuary. Matters of disclosure and employability were delivered by Andrea Morehead (NIACRO)

The final presentation designed and delivered by us was attended by prison governors, staff from Belfast Works, mentors, Shane Whelehan Quaker CEO, Kate Russell Quakers volunteer manager, and volunteers, probation officers and staff from Belfast Works.

Belfast works will continue to work with those who are ready for work following on from the success of members of the last group.





Healthy Budget Recipes

BUDGET PORRIDGE (SERVES 2)

85g porridge oats

½tsp ground cinnamon plus extra to serve (optional)

250ml milk (any variety) plus 4 tbsp to serve

2 small apples preferably red

15g raisins

7-8 walnut halves about 15g, broken

STEP 1

Tip the oats and cinnamon into a non-stick pan with 150ml water and the 250ml milk. Put the pan over a gentle heat. Once simmering, leave for 5 mins, stirring frequently (as milk has a tendency to stick) until the porridge has thickened.

STEP 2

Meanwhile, coarsely grate the apples, including the skin, into a bowl, until you're just left with the cores.

STEP 3

Serve the porridge with the apple, raisins and nuts on top, and sprinkle over some extra cinnamon, if you like. Stir through the extra milk to loosen if you think it is too thick.

TURKEY BURGERS (MAKES 8)

2 tbsp olive oil

1 large onion finely chopped

2 garlic cloves crushed

85g porridge oats

450g/1lb minced turkey

100g dried apricot finely chopped

1 large carrot grated

1 egg beaten

Cucumber slices, to serve

STEP 1

Heat 1 tbsp oil in a pan and gently fry the onion for 5 mins until soft. Add the garlic and cook for 1 min. Add the oats and fry for 2 mins more. Tip into a bowl and set aside to cool.

STEP 2

Add the rest of the ingredients to the cooled mixture and mix well with your hands. Season to taste and shape into 8 patties.

STEP 3

Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Heat the remaining olive oil in a large, non-stick frying pan and sear the burgers on each side until well coloured (3-4 mins). Transfer to a baking sheet and cook in the oven for 10-15 mins. Serve in rolls with Tangy tomato chutney (see 'goes well with') and cucumber slices.

STEP 4

For the chutney heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a pan and add 1 finely chopped onion. Cook for 5 mins until softened. Stir in 1 crushed garlic clove and cook for a further min. Add 1 tbsp sundried tomato paste, a 400g can good-quality chopped tomatoes and a pinch of sugar. Gently cook for 20-25 mins until rich and thick. Season to taste, then leave to cool before serving.

SMOKY BACON AND TOMATO PASTA (SERVES 4)

400g spaghetti

1 tbsp olive oil

120g smoked streaky bacon sliced into matchsticks

1 onion finely chopped

1 garlic clove finely chopped

2 tsp sweet smoked paprika

2 x 400g cans chopped tomatoes

grated parmesan to serve (optional)

STEP 1

Bring a large pan of water to the boil and cook the spaghetti following pack instructions. Meanwhile, heat the oil in a large non-stick frying pan and cook the bacon for 3-4 mins until just starting to crisp. Stir in the onion and cook for another 3-4 mins, then add the garlic and smoked paprika, and cook for 1 min more.

STEP 2

Pour in the chopped tomatoes, bring to the boil and bubble for about 5 mins until thickened, stirring every so often to stop it catching on the bottom. Drain the pasta and toss with the sauce. Serve with Parmesan, if you like.

LENTIL SOUP (SERVES 2)

1 white onion finely sliced

2 tsp olive oil

3 garlic cloves sliced

2 carrots scrubbed and diced

85g red lentils

1 vegetable stock cube, crumbled

generous sprigs parsley chopped (about 2 tbsp) plus a few extra leaves

STEP 1

Put the kettle on to boil while you finely slice the onion. Heat the oil in a medium pan, add the onion and fry for 2 mins while you slice the garlic and dice the carrots. Add them to the pan, and cook briefly over the heat.

STEP 2

Pour in 1 litre of the boiling water from the kettle, stir in the lentils and stock cube, then cover the pan and cook over a medium heat for 15 mins until the lentils are tender. Take off the heat and stir in the parsley. Ladle into bowls, and scatter with extra parsley leaves, if you like.





Poetry & Art

THE MASK

There's a mask we all wear
 Try and remove it if you dare
 Behind it you will see we all have problems
 that impact you and me
 This is something only the brave will do
 To open their heart
 Only to be done by a few
 You will know when the time is right
 To lift that mask and take the fight
 Be brave and you will know
 When the time comes it's for you to grow
 Show yourself as the true you
 We all have the strength to see it through

Anon

EMOTIONAL & PHYSICAL SCARS

These walls keep you here
 The outside so near
 Fear of missing out
 Temptation keeps you here.

Walking through life twisted and blind
 Nothing but drugs destroying your mind
 Nothing but trouble making you stumble
 And all in your life begins to crumble.

You lose control, and slowly but surely
 It consumes your soul
 And what unfolds can be so bold
 It takes hold and won't let go.

These physical and emotional scars I show
 Just how low you can really go.

T. McEntee

"IT WAS THE ONLY TIME... THAT TIME STOOD STILL"

I was forever drowning on dry land
 Until one winter's night
 A search for sobriety
 Through frozen fields of snow
 All roadways abandoned behind me
 And my shadow ominous
 Moving to the singular sound
 Of my footsteps breaking new ground
 As snowflakes thawed on cold skin
 A walk beyond consequence
 The soft moon light and survival
 Absorbed in the silence
 Until another sound
 Shattered the dream—

Crouching, I scanned for clarity
 An animal? Cattle?
 A slow trudging
 My imagination scrutinised the icy-light
 Then, less than two feet away
 A beautiful black horse
 His nostrils flaring
 Smoke from his breath—

I placed a hand on his forehead
 Rubbed his neck
 He spluttered approvingly
 With acceptance and peace
 My heart beat audible
 Eyes scared and sober
 Until I too surrender
 The trauma, the hurt, the grief
 For this moment in time—timeless

Anon



Road to Freedom

KEOSTLER ARTS COMMENDED AWARD FOR POETRY

HOSTEL LIFE

Hostel life is an adventure,
 You might want to experience it,
 You might not,
 But it's an adventure everyone should
 experience.

Somewhere to lay your head,
 On an uncomfortable bed.
 At least you've your own room
 Where you couldn't swing a broom.

Staff are full of banter and laughs,
 But they are there for you when
 Your day is blue.

You might have to mingle with
 The odd stumble bum,
 But sure laugh and throw them the
 thumb.

Some people have no respect,
 They just want to act suspect,
 But you'll be okay if you keep the
 street gremlins away.

You'll have all day to reflect,
 So make sure help you don't reject,
 Or you might regret.

Hostel life is an adventure....
 One you might want to venture!
 Anon



Passion



KOESTLER ARTS PLATINUM AWARD (PRISON ARTS FOUNDATION)

FEATHER LIGHT WINGS BEFORE THE STARS

(EXTRACT)

Love always.

Last night when we talked, you cried.
Knowing.
I'll never forget about the red breast.
At dawn I stand by a window. Grieving.

As vigil I search the garden. Wishing.
Through tears, to find some peace in a birds
nest.

Last night when we talked you cried.
Knowing.

After words are spoken. The hymns all sing.
Time comes to lie a body down in rest.
At dawn I stand by a window. Grieving.

Let me feel again your soul. Remaining.
On a fence I spot a little proud chest.
Last night when we talked, you cried.
Knowing.

There is a hope of reincarnating.
Return as a robin can be true, lest.
At dawn I stand by a window. Grieving.

Embrace the gift of joy birds are giving.
My mother lives on. Still the loveliest.
Last night when we talked, you cried.
Knowing.
At dawn I stand by a window. Grieving.

FROM YOUR WORLD...

From your world, looking from outside
There you will find the grey man inside
For an earlier crime he now resides
The grey man you see blends and hides

His days are filled with locks and unlocks
Remember, separate bag for your boxers
and socks

Weetabix, two to a person is all that's
allowed

Three or four, this number is frowned

Twenty three hour lock-up destroys the soul
Reminds me of days lost on the dole
With nowhere to go, nothing to do

Corrodes your soul, makes you feel blue

Some you'll meet, full of Mad dog shite
They need something to get through the
night

Ignore them now and they will fade away
They don't matter now with no more to
say

RD

One thing for sure, the pain won't last
Someday soon, today will be past
Get through your time as best you can
Again you'll get out and be a man.

Pól Mór

KOESTLER ARTS COMMENDED AWARD (PRISON ARTS FOUNDATION)

THE REST OF THE DAY

Horsebox journey.

Metal box.

Plastic cutlery.

Glass unbreakable.

Faith unshakeable.

Good Pastor indeed,



A Lost Love



Clothes rescued,
 From previous existence.
 The shining Kingdom,
 Someone listens.
 The bird in the cage.
 Far away is your gaze,
 For the rest of the day.

DMcC

**KOESTLER ARTS
 COMMENDED AWARD
 (PRISON ARTS
 FOUNDATION)**

JUXTAPOSING

Too cold to be warm
 Too dull to be bright
 Too young to be old
 Too wrong to be right.
 Too perplexed to be surefooted
 Too concentrated to be diluted
 Too full of meaning to be symbolic
 Too benign to ever be chronic.
 Too without to be flabby
 Too careful to be shabby
 Too cautious to be rash
 Too predisposed to be fast.
 Too without it to be with it
 Too above to be in it

Too hot to be cooling
 Too straight to be fooling.
 Too altered to be aimed
 Too brash to be shamed
 Too on to be off
 Too expensive to be bought.
 Too far to be near
 To shut-up to cheer
 Too rough to be polished
 Too astonished to be admonished.
 Too prickly to be smothered
 Too constrained to be moved
 Too loud to be silent
 Too passive to be violent.
 Too opposite to attract
 Too dark to reflect
 Too forward to go back.

DMcC

**POEM FROM PRISM
 POETRY COLLECTION
 KOESTLER ARTS
 OUTSTANDING DEBUT
 AWARD**

**TUBULAR CELL
 (EXTRACT)**

I miss the crashing waves, the gentle swell,

Licking lips to taste the salty spray.
 You can't catch a break in a prison cell.
 Time and tide waits for no man, so they tell,
 I'll keep treading water, is what I say.
 I miss the crashing waves, the gentle swell.

No need to press an ear to a sea shell,
 Surf's up over the wall, a mile away.
 You can't catch a break in a prison cell.

When the wind blows my way, that distinct
 smell,
 Rolls in through barred windows for a stay.
 I miss the crashing waves, the gentle swell.

To oust dry thoughts in this water free hell,
 I'll dip into memories with dismay.
 You can't catch a break in a prison cell.

I'll not be bored when I end this spell,
 My life will be, a shoreline holiday.
 I miss the crashing waves, the gentle swell.
 You can't catch a break in a prison cell.

RD



Equine Assisted Learning

When Claire asked me to do equine assisted therapy as part of the Endeavour award, I had no idea what to expect! I was unsure and wondered what benefit if any I would get from participating. A lot of people had put a lot of effort into setting this up and I thought that I couldn't be any worse off than I am now so I went with it. Due to past trauma I qualified to receive funding from the Victims and Survivor Service which allowed me to engage in this therapy.



Therapy ponies does exactly what it says on the tin, ponies and horses used for therapy. If you are a little daunted with the thought of being around large animals with a rep for kicking and biting don't be worried. These gentle giants are in an environment they are used to and comfortable in. They are used to having people of all ages around them. They behave themselves most of the time! and there is always someone with you who knows the ponies and how to manage them.

A little about me. I'm used to being around horses, I know that horses just like people have their own personalities and some take a while to come round to you, I suffer from among other things anxiety, depression and PTSD. (a result of my experiences while serving in the armed forces) I find it difficult to ask for anything, especially help because I feel rejected and worthless if I get no response. I also feel like I am being a burden that there are other people worse off than me who need help more than me. If I ask for help, I'm taking away the help

someone else needs. I think of myself as a swan on the surface I'm gliding effortlessly along telling everyone I'm fine while underneath I'm paddling like crazy trying to stop from going under. At first, I didn't understand why I was being asked to lead Spike (horse) around an agility course. To get him to stop and get him to take 2 steps forward over an obstacle without touching it then 2 steps back without touching the obstacle. To walk him down a road and release him into a paddock. Then do it all again with Ginger, an adorable feisty little pony with lots of attitude. Both horse and pony would start by trying to assert their dominance eventually when I adapted my behaviour they understood they weren't going to get their own way and started following my instruction. From this interaction I understand that I need to give clear instructions for what I want and if I don't get the response expected there is a reason behind it. Maybe I need to be clearer about what I'm asking for or understand what I'm asking of someone is not possible at that time and try again later without carrying a feeling of rejection. Kate who runs the therapy said for someone who has trouble asking for things you've just spent hours asking Spike and Ginger to do things, you took control of the situation all you need to do now is transfer those skills you used with the ponies into your everyday life. I realise now that it is up to me to take responsibility, to make things happen, and there is nothing wrong with asking for help. Having to adapt the way I managed myself to get what I wanted from the pony are



skills I now use in the community. I feel more confident and motivated to deal with a problem and see it through to a solution whereas, in the past, I would have given up and let others deal with it.

I know that we all have different problems and circumstances. That there is no such thing as a quick fix, and we need to take things one step at a time. I know that it will take time and effort to get to where I want to be but I've taken that first step and I'm a little more confident than before.

If you want to be around some amazing animals who I'm sure you will bond with and some amazing people, then go ahead and take that step.

Thank you Spike and Ginger, you've given me some fond memories that I'll never forget and helped me take a step.

Stephen





Who are Prison Arts Foundation?

The Prison Arts Foundation (PAF) is an arts-based organization with a key aim to use the arts as a means of promoting positive change in the lives of prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families, as well as contributing to the wider community. Their programmes offer further support in terms of rehabilitation and reintegration for individuals involved with the criminal justice system.

PAF was founded in the early 1990s as a response to challenging conditions and a demand for meaningful activities within prisons. They believe that engagement in the arts fosters personal development, builds confidence, and provides valuable life skills that can reduce re-offending rates.

The artistic outputs include creative writing, graphic design, visual arts, music, sculpture and ceramics, which are facilitated by professional artists and artists in residence programmes. These are designed to support

the participants to express themselves, develop self-esteem, and learn new skills.

Each year, Prison Arts Foundation holds an annual public visual art exhibition in Belfast, which includes spoken word, music performances, and publications, showcasing the talent and achievements of participants. The exhibition often challenges stereotypes and raises awareness of the potential for positive transformation through the arts.

PAF works in partnership with the Northern Ireland Prison Service, the Probation Service, community groups, and professional arts organizations. They also have a community-based Support Hub, thanks to funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, that provides a wraparound support service to people returning to the community following release from prison, those on probation and those serving non-custodial sentences. It is a collaborative service working alongside Start360 and Community Sports Network.

The Support Hub places a significant focus on braille and learning braille as well as producing braille products: textiles, pamphlets, books, and 3D print items. Other Support Hub activities include creative writing, art and (art therapy).



PAF's Chief Executive Officer, Fred Caulfield, believes that "Art in prison is not an inconsequential pastime; it is a critical intervention that transforms lives. It serves as a platform for self-expression, healing, and rehabilitation, offering prisoners a way to self-reflect, share experiences and reconnect. Our community based Support Hub extends this transformative capacity beyond the prison walls. This holistic approach to rehabilitation not only benefits the individuals involved but the community they return to."

Through its work, PAF are an essential aspect of daily prison life and community re-engagement, offering a unique pathway for personal growth, rehabilitation and societal reintegration.

Pamela Brown,

PAF Writer-in-residence



Some of the Artwork on display at PAF's Imprisoned Imagination Exhibition at 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast.

POEM FROM PRISM POETRY COLLECTION KOESTLER ARTS OUTSTANDING DEBUT AWARD

IN AND OUT

Is there room in your heart, for my
love to call home?

Somewhere to rest my mind, a place
of peace, sanctuary.

With possibilities, of briefly sharing
pieces,

Of your life. Every moment would
then be priceless.

Together, free from my longings and
uncertainties.

Do you harbour feelings, which will
help to comfort you?

As time is my burden, I have to
convey each day,

Always getting lighter. 'Til my stint
in here is through.

RD



Ask HIM Peer Mentor Project - Healthcare in Prison



WHY DO WE HAVE A HEALTHCARE PEER MENTORS?

We began the peer mentor project in 2019 as a result of a survey of new committals we conducted in 2017 to find out what were the main issues for patients accessing the healthcare service. We interviewed over 100 people and the result of the survey showed that there were two main issues that most people experienced, difficulty regarding their prescription meds and that they didn't remember receiving good communication from healthcare at committal as they were trying to come to terms with being in prison and were also bombarded with a lot of information. The aim of the Healthcare Peer Mentor is to improve communication regarding healthcare services and help people get the support they need to keep them living well in Prison. They do this by meeting with people in throughout their prison stay and providing information and facilitating access to services and support. The mentors facilitate this in the

form of a supportive and friendly conversation.

The project has developed since then and also co-facilitates a number of health promoting initiatives. This includes mental health support, sexual health and Blood borne virus information and signposting, social engagement groups, foreign national wellbeing forums, rehabilitative programmes and the list goes on. Every encounter that an mentor has is recorded and all referrals to all services and outcomes are collated so as we can develop the project further to support people in prison. The mentors themselves have been pivotal in the development and quality of the project as they use their knowledge and lived experience for continual improvement of what we all do. We have developed weekly training and information sessions, regular supervision and psychological support sessions for all mentors.

The project is a great example of what can be achieved through collaborative working, involving everyone. Healthcare, NIPs, people in custody and other agencies worked together on the project to make prison safer and healthier for people. This work has been presented at many conferences and has received national and international recognition for excellence.

IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

70 Mentors trained since the beginning – 39 have been released only 3 returned (7%) (recidivism rate NIPS 49.1%)

ONE MENTOR'S WORK

Work Period – Apr 2024 to Mar 2025

Engaged with people from 65 different nationalities

318 people needed translation help from Mentor

228 Healthcare referrals (Telephone Booking)

300 Hep B vaccination referrals

78 older men having weekly support sessions

24% of all Adept referrals come from Ask HIM Mentors

WHAT THE MENTORS SAY ABOUT THE PROJECT

“Being a mentor has stopped me from sliding back to how I used to live as I know I can't help someone unless I help myself also.”

“I have learnt skills to approach people in different ways, being sensitive about their personalities and situations.”

“I find myself being more compassionate and my people skills have really improved.”

“Makes me feel good to help others and see how much they appreciate something that seems very small like telling them how the prison and healthcare works.”

“When you see someone who has anxious who comes in worrying about prison and you are able to help them with a referral or get them some support or information and they then leave relieved, that makes my day.”

“I didn't think my experience in prison was a positive thing but I realise I can use my experience to help other peoples experience.”

“I feel more confident and I have learnt so much. I never realised so many people coming in had difficulties reading and writing and need help to access support, coz this is not something people really talk about coz they are embarrassed.”

WHAT THE PEOPLE WHO ENGAGED WITH THE MENTORS SAY ABOUT THE PROJECT

“Much better speaking to someone who has lived it.”

“It was the most time I got to chat to someone since I have been in prison. I felt I was being listened to and he knows his stuff and you can relate to him. He is a prisoner as well and he gives me hope of how I can be in the future.”

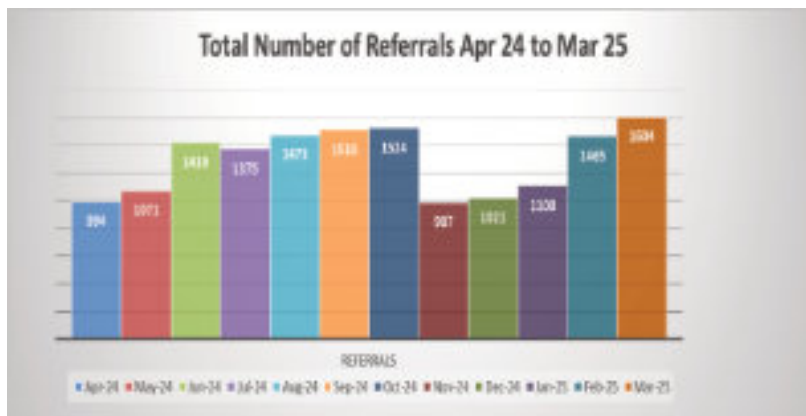
“I was lost, Bann wasn't great and I knew nothing about prison. It was my first time in. He made me feel like I was worth something and what I was saying was important, he cared about me. I learnt more in 5 mins with him than a week in Bann.”

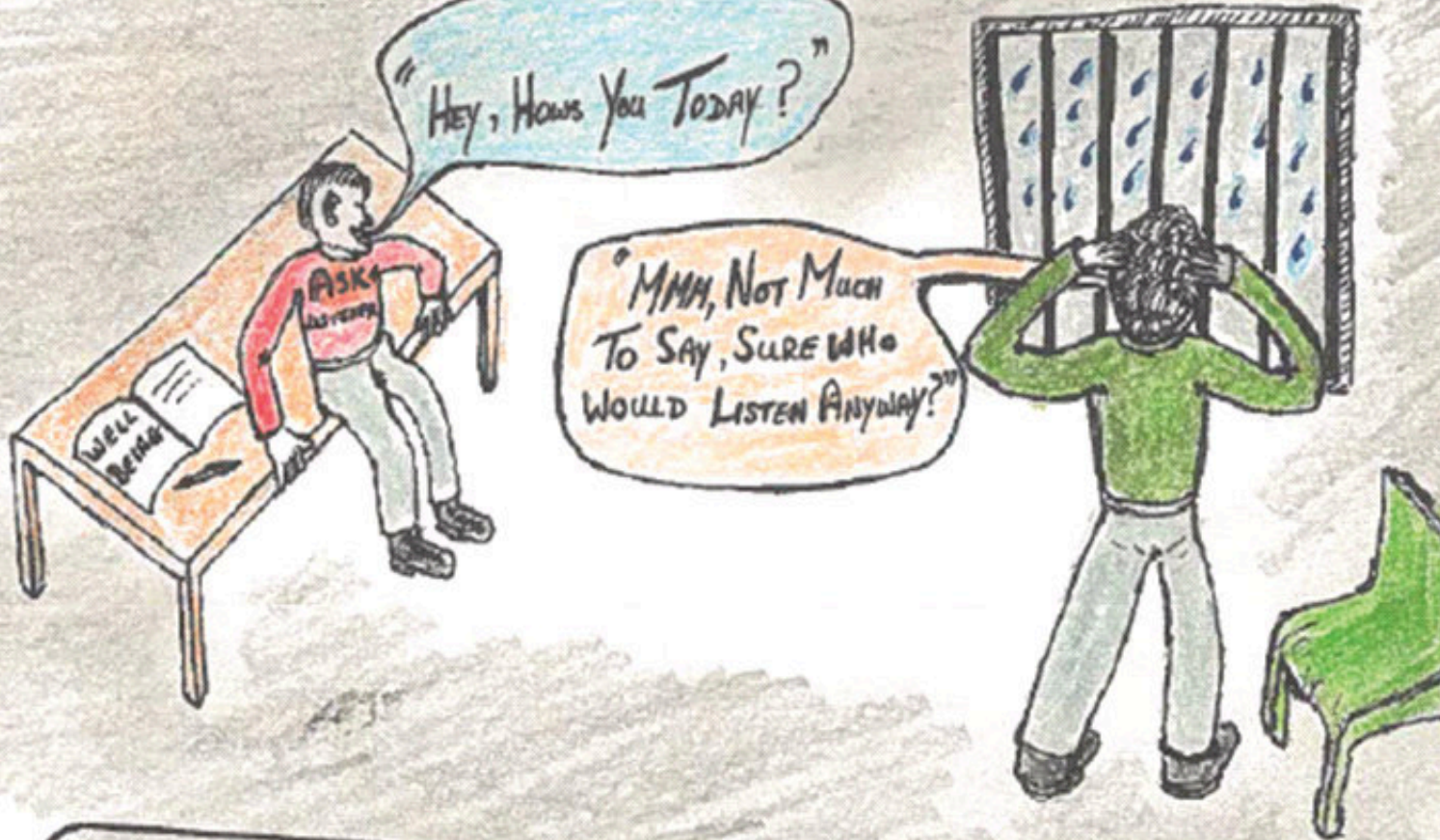
“The Mentor has been amazing. I just wouldn't have survived without him. He has been my rock when I needed one.”

“He is absolutely brilliant, very informative, knows his stuff.”

“The Mentor tells you about what's available and is very informative. He tells you how prison works and what support you can get to help. When I was with him he really helped me and now I would love to be a mentor.”

“At the time I arrived in Davis, I really needed to speak to someone. I needed help and he was really friendly and easy to understand. English is not my first language and he really helped me understand the services and support available and helped with appointments.”





THANK YOU **ASK ME** LISTENERS



List of Services available in the Belfast Area

THIS LIST WAS DESIGNED BY SERVICE USERS FOR SERVICE USERS

SERVICE PROVIDER	ADDRESS	SERVICE	TELEPHONE NUMBER
	Storehouse Centre 39 North Street Belfast BT1 1NA	Provides food, clothes, toiletry packs, and furniture to those in extreme financial difficulty	Tel: 028 90 236 333
	SVP Northern Ireland Society of St. Vincent de Paul 196-200 Antrim Road Belfast BT15 2AJ	The Society of St Vincent de Paul provide a wide range of services for vulnerable people through local offices, shops, resource centres, housing, day care and holiday schemes amongst other things.	Tel: 028 90 351 561
	People's Kitchen 1 Antrim Road Belfast	Provides hot food, drinks, food parcels and outreach support to people experiencing homelessness and addiction problems.	Mon-Thurs 9.30-11.30am Fri & Sat 7.30-9.30pm Paul McCusker, Tel: 078 40 853 089
	The Welcome Organisation 28 Townsend Street Belfast BT13 2ES	Delivers a range of support services to people who are homeless or vulnerable and at risk of homelessness.	Tel: 028 90 240 424
	Team HAVEN	Voluntary Community group based in Belfast, helping the homeless & vulnerable.	Mon - Sun 7.00pm Static Feeding Station Bridge Street (outside Cash Converters) Tel: 028 95 142 029
	Hope Harbour	Voluntary-based group who work every day in Belfast to provide food, clothing, toiletries and support to homeless people in Belfast.	Static Feeding Station, corner of Tomb Street facing Custom House Square Thurs 7.30pm
	Salvation Army Centenary House 2 Victoria Street Belfast BT1 3GE	Offer a safe, supportive environment for individuals, helping them make positive choices about their current circumstances.	Thursday 7.30pm
	Homeplus NI 113 University Street Belfast BT7 1HP	A voluntary organisation set up to meet the immediate accommodation and support needs of vulnerable homeless people and people who are sleeping rough.	Ryan Doherty Tel: 028 90 311 836
	Belfast Homeless Services 2 Amelia Street Belfast BT2 7GS (Moving to King Street)	Drop in facility three evenings per week for people who may be at risk or are experiencing a level of homelessness.	Tues-Thurs - 7.30-10.00pm

List of Services available in the Belfast Area

THIS LIST WAS DESIGNED BY SERVICE USERS FOR SERVICE USERS

SERVICE PROVIDER	ADDRESS	SERVICE	TELEPHONE NUMBER
	BURC Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre 4-6 Donegall Street Place Belfast BT1 2FN	Supports the unemployed and communities by providing advice, support and skills to improve lives and experiences.	Help with Benefit Forms Joanne Farrelly Tel: 028 90 961 111
	Extern - Street Injectors Support Services (Needle Exchange) 9 Rosemary Street Belfast BT1 1QA	Engagement with those injecting substances within Belfast City Centre to ensure each individual has access to harm reduction advice and information to reduce risks.	Tel: 028 90 330 433 Tel: 0800 085 8426
	Habitat for Humanity Habitat ReStore Belfast Unit 4 Hillview Retail Park Crumlin Road Belfast BT14 7DU	Low-cost, do-it-yourself store that sells donated new and used building supplies and home improvement materials at 50 percent to 75 percent of the normal retail price.	Tel: 028 90 243 686
	Quaker Service/Connections 541 Lisburn Road Belfast BT9 7GQ	Provides a range of community services in North and West Belfast.	Tel: 028 90 201 444
	Prison Fellowship Northern Ireland 39 University Street Belfast BT7 1FY	A Christian ministry responding to the practical, emotional and spiritual needs of prisoners, released prisoners and their families. Offering hope and a new beginning.	Tel: 028 90 243 691
	Simon Community Drug & Alcohol Low Threshold Service Ards and North Down – BT18 - BT23 Downpatrick - BT24 - BT33 Lisburn - BT17 - BT29	Free Support for people who use drugs and alcohol. Self-Referral.	Homeless Support Line: 0800 171 2222
	NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) Amelia House 4 Amelia Street Belfast BT2 7GS	Charity that provides resettlement, prevention, crisis intervention and empowerment services for adults in Northern Ireland.	Tel: 028 90 320 157
	Start 360 6-10 William Street Belfast BT1 1PR	Offers a range of programmes and services to support young people, adult offenders and families in Northern Ireland.	Tel: 028 90 435 810

List of Services available in the Belfast Area

THIS LIST WAS DESIGNED BY SERVICE USERS FOR SERVICE USERS

SERVICE PROVIDER	ADDRESS	SERVICE	TELEPHONE NUMBER
	<p>Alternatives (Restorative Justice) Greater Shankill - 137 Agnes Street, Belfast, BT13 1GG South Belfast - 33 Donegall Pass, Belfast, BT7 1DQ North Belfast - 254-256 Ballysillan Road, BT14 6RA East Belfast - Isthmus House, Isthmus Street, Belfast, BT6 9DL</p>	<p>A government accredited restorative justice programme that aims to promote and develop non-violent community responses to the issues of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour in areas across Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>Greater Shankill - Tel: 028 90 311 420 South Belfast - Tel: 028 90 315 763 North Belfast - Tel: 028 90 717 077 East Belfast - Tel: 028 90 456 766</p>
	<p>Inspire Addiction Services 40 Elmwood Avenue Belfast BT9 6AZ</p>	<p>Supports people across Northern Ireland who are affected by the use of alcohol and other drugs with a range of services and treatment programmes.</p>	<p>Tel: 02890 328474</p>
	<p>SSAFA (Soldiers', Sailors', and Airmen's Families Association) 21 Talbot Street Belfast BT1 2LD</p>	<p>Provides support to serving personnel, veterans and military families in various areas, such as welfare, disability, mental health and overseas.</p>	<p>Tel: 0800 260 6780 Tel: 028 90 327 740</p>
	<p>Belfast Works Connect 689 Springfield Road Belfast BT12 7FP</p>	<p>Offers health, education, volunteering and employment support to those who are not working or seeking work.</p>	<p>Tel : 028 90 322 003</p>
	<p>MAP (Mens Advisory Project) 5th Floor Glendinning House 6 Murray Street Belfast BT1 6DN</p>	<p>Counselling and support for male victims of domestic abuse, men going through relationships breakdown and anger management.</p>	<p>Tel: 028 90 241 929</p>



INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES FOR YOUR JOURNEY

**MISTAKES ARE PROOF THAT YOU'RE TRYING.
GROWTH COMES FROM LEARNING NOT PERFECTION.**

**HOPE IS NOT A FEELING
IT'S A DECISION TO BELIEVE IN BETTER DAYS**

**YOUR PAST IS A CHAPTER,
NOT THE WHOLE STORY.**

**YOU HAVE THE POWER TO
CHANGE YOUR STORY.
EVERY DAY IS A NEW PAGE.**

**YOU ARE NOT THE WORST THING
YOU'VE EVER DONE.
YOU ARE THE PERSON WHO CHOOSES
WHAT COMES NEXT.**

**EVEN THE LONGEST JOURNEY
BEGINS WITH A SINGLE STEP
KEEP WALKING**

**CHANGE DOESN'T HAPPEN ALL AT ONCE.
IT'S BUILT ONE CHOICE AT A TIME.**

Poster on other side!

Cut me out

And hang me up



Contact Us

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Aspire
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email: admin.aspire@probation-ni.gov.uk

Public Protection Team
PSNI Seapark
151 Belfast Road
Carrickfergus BT38 8PL Tel: (028) 9025 9576
email: admin.PPT@probation-ni.gov.uk

Victim Information
Unit 80-90 North
Street Belfast BT1 1LD
Tel: (028) 9052 2522
email: victiminfo@probation-ni.gov.uk

(For more information see Victim Information Scheme page)

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email: admin.andersonstown@probation-ni.gov.uk

Unit 4, Wallace Studios
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email: admin.lisburn@probation-ni.gov.uk

171 – 179 Duncairn Gardens Belfast
BT15 2GE
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email: admin.antrimroad@probation-ni.gov.uk

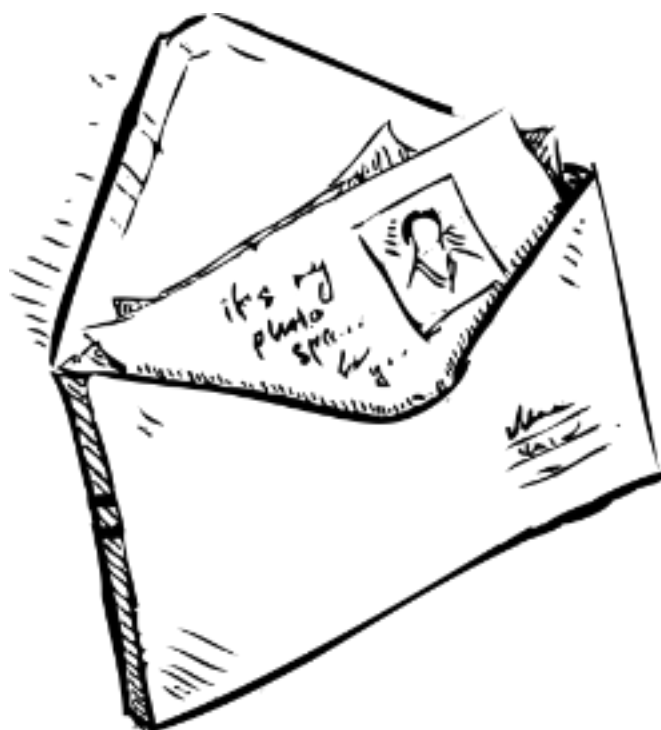
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330 Ormeau Road Belfast
BT7 2GE
Tel: (028) 9054 1444
email: admin.ormeau@probation-ni.gov.uk

15 Castle Street Newtownards County Down
BT23 3PA Tel: (028) 9185 8282
email: admin.newtownards@probation-ni.gov.uk

Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6RA
Tel: (028) 44618281

3 Wellington Court Ballymena
BT43 6EQ
Tel: (028) 2566 2345
email: admin.ballymena@probation-ni.gov.uk



Below are a number of the links that can be used to 'Connect' with us:

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X/Twitter link: x.com/PBNINews or [@PBNINews](https://twitter.com/PBNINews)
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