

## INSIDETIME: PRISONER LETTERS

### **PAST SUICIDE**

“..two officers knocked on my door at home, one was the duty governor, the other the suicide prevention officer. I had been asleep about forty minutes so I was sleepy but as soon as they introduced themselves I knew what was going to be said. The governor looked me in the eyes and said ‘I’m sorry your son Kirk ....’ I fell to pieces; I have never felt such pain in my life. Nine months on I’m sat in a cell exactly like the one my son died in. Was Kirk a lifer? No; previously in trouble? No. He was a first time offender, never even been arrested before. He was remanded, put in a double cell on his own and two hours after being placed in that cell found dead by ‘his own hands’.

I have asked for the last nine months how could this happen. I hit some walls and barriers, all I hear, loud and clear, is ‘we are investigating’, ‘we are investigating’, ‘WE ARE INVESTIGATING’ and in a whisper I hear them say ‘we are covering our backs’. My son, on entry to HMP Durham, said to staff he was going to kill himself, this is legally documented. Was he placed on an ACT? No. Was it on his police and medical reports that he had suicidal problems? Yes. Did he have recent cuts on his arms from self harming? Yes. Was he placed on an ACT? No. Did I, his father, phone the prison before he even arrived and told Durham that he was suicidal? Yes. I was told he would be safe and taken care of. Was he placed on an ACT? NO.

I see all around me innocent and guilty men, their crimes include not protecting people in their charge. The people given the responsibility to protect my son not just from others but from himself; they did not do so in any shape or form. How many have been punished? ZERO. But I have been punished, not just losing my son and seeing my world fall apart, but also placed – five months to the day – in Durham prison 200 metres from where my son died for 19 long days. The hell I faced mentally endured was a killer, all Kirk was to the prison service was a number, now he is a mistake they need to cover up. Since that night I have never had one prison officer say sorry. Since being in prison, first in Durham and then here in Holme House, I have never been offered any help by the prison service to help deal with my loss or the pain it causes and the nightmares. The only counselling I get is via the prison chaplaincy service which I have sought and arranged myself.”

- *Matthew Spurgeon - HMP Durham, December 2013*

“...a man whose inquest I gave evidence at recently. He ended his own life because he was finding prison difficult. Although I agree in part with the suggestion Sam makes about prisons becoming micro economies, I also think that anyone who has never experienced prison and who may have read his letter will get the wrong idea about just how difficult prison can be for most people.”

- *Andy Morris – HMP Ford, August 2013*

“How many of those suicides involved ex-prisoners who were already suffering emotional/psychological trauma/damage caused by imprisonment? Mentally damaged individuals who had barely survived imprisonment only to find themselves in so-called "Approved Premises". In which, they were subjected to pressure to undertake coursework or face the likelihood of being returned to prison - possibly for even more years of emotional suffering. For some of us, that prospect is far too frightening to contemplate - hence suicide.

How many more of us must die before someone in "authority" notices that the practice of blackmailing (already emotionally traumatised) ex-prisoners with such a menacing prospect is pushing people to suicide. I know this to be true because I am in "Approved Premises", and the same blackmail is being used against me. Consequently, suicide is emerging as the only course of action open to me.”

- *John Raymond, March 2013*

## **PAST SUICIDE ATTEMPTS**

“I have been here over 8 months and have suffered acute clinical depression which resulted in a serious suicide attempt by overdose in June of this year. Following a long stay in the Intensive Treatment Unit at the hospital I returned to Oakwood frail and very depressed. I have had NO access to mental health services since my overdose despite 7 referrals by myself and some staff.”

“Unfortunately there is little or no support for prisoners in severe crisis, prisoners at risk of harm and prisoners with mental health issues. Complaints are dealt with very badly and ineffectively.”

- *From A Very Concerned Prisoner - HMP Oakwood, October 2014*

“I was placed in a cell with no bedding, no change of clothing, no washing kit; the electric was off therefore no running water. I was denied food for two and a half days as staff were reluctant to open my door. My treatment was inhumane and degrading. My mental state deteriorated when I wrapped ten toilet rolls around my body and set myself on fire! Staff who witnessed this act of attempted suicide ran for the fire hose, placed it in the door and blasted me with water to put the fire around my body out.”

“I submitted complaint forms - they went unanswered. I wrote to the Ombudsman, he returned my complaint saying Oakwood have no record of my complaint. “

“On adjudication I was given 21 days cc and placed on basic for setting myself on fire.”

- *Jonathan McDonell - HMP Oakwood, September 2014*

“Only a few weeks ago we lost one of our young guitarists here to suicide, this only a matter of weeks after the Prisons Ombudsman stated - 'Having a guitar in possession is not considered essential to maintaining stable mental health' in a case I took to him. Taking those who have demonstrated consistently good behaviour and hitting them with a stick whilst dangling a shrivelled carrot to many who do not eat carrots is never going to work.”

- *Tom Clark - HMP Wakefield, July 2014*

“Prison is not about rehabilitation. Prison is not an environment which embellishes one's character, nor a place which discourages a person from committing crime. Prison is an environment which cultivates any elements of criminality within you and causes detrimental effects to your personality. It defiles your dignity and ruins you. I am 19 years old and spent my childhood in private education and was training to be an accountant when I was wrongly convicted and sentenced to 4 years in a Young Offenders Institution. Though, as of 17-3-13 I am still being held at HMP Exeter, an adult prison, having served 102 days of my sentence. I had a privileged upbringing and never had any trouble with the law. I came to prison as a self-confident, honest and well-mannered person. I now spend 21 hours a day locked up with a neo-Nazi fantasist who thrives on pain, violence and hatred, which is slowly turning me into a lesser person than the one I came in as. This week it got too much for me and I made an unsuccessful attempt to take my own life. I have the full support of my family and friends but prison is a place which ruins a person”

- *Name Withheld – HMP Exeter, June 2013*

## **SELF— HARM**

“I have suffered from autism, ADHD, anxiety and depression since childhood. When I started my sentence I thought that it would be straightforward for me to see a psychiatrist in prison if I needed to, but I have been asking, unsuccessfully, for 7 months with no result. The in-reach psychiatrist is a ghost; you never see him but only hear about him. Apparently I'm not entitled to see him because I don't 'fit his criteria', but I am not allowed to know what his 'criteria' is. As time passes I self-harm more and more and I am afraid that I will be found dead in my cell. Mental health in-reach in this prison is a disgrace.”

- *From Arthur Skarbnieks - HMP Huntercombe, November 2014*

“On the 5th of July 2014 the Daily Mail reported that a prisoner had gouged his eyes out at HMP Nottingham. It was said that it was in protest at the unbearable temperature level in his cell.”

- *From Andrew Roberts - HMP Wymott, September 2014*

“I work as a wing cleaner here at HMP Nottingham and that means I am about on the wing every day and over the months I have seen a lot of lads put on Basic and the only thing that really hurts them is losing their television. I believe that if televisions are denied new prisoners then the prisons will find incidents of self-harm rising and they will be opening a lot of ACCTs on people.

If you try to make prisoners ‘earn’ their TV when they first come into prison this is the period when their heads will be all over the place, trying to come to terms with being in jail. This is when the TV is most useful, helping to take your mind off your troubles. So I hope that by taking TVs away they are not going to increase the suicide and attempted suicide rates in prison.”

- *Lee Shelley- HMP Nottingham, July 2013*

“I have just read a letter by Benjamin Burns (‘Mental illness in prison’ - November issue) and believe I have myself been placed in cells with those suffering mental problems. After spending some time in a cell with someone who is not very well you start to become concerned for your own sanity. This is not a good experience and should not be happening to anyone. A mentally ill person should not be treated (or not) in prison. I have been through the most traumatic experience of being banged up with an alcoholic self-harmer with mental health problems. This prisoner tried to kill himself when we were banged up for the night, his attempt failed but I have been left depressed by witnessing it. The prison system should not be a place for the mentally ill.”

- *B Elston – HMP Exeter, March 2013*

## **ACCESS TO FAMILY**

“Category C prisons are supposed to be for rehabilitation and to help strengthen family ties, but there is no chance of this at Oakwood! If anything, they have helped sever my family ties, ruined my relationship with my partner - in effect they have lied blatantly to my face.”

- *Tom Newton - HMP Oakwood, November 2014*

“One of the effects of the new IEP policy is that if a prisoner is maintaining their innocence they are put onto Basic regime. So now the prisoner's family can only visit twice a month for one hour per visit. There are prisoners on my wing affected by this harsh ruling whose families travel an 8 hour round trip to get to the prison for a visit. It is no longer viable for them to put their families through this ordeal for such a short visit, not to mention all of the indignity that goes with entering a top security prison.”

- *David Corrick – HMP Long Lartin, May 2014*

“I have spent over 6 years in this prison and have watched the visiting process become more and more restricted.”

- *Sarah Baker – HMP Elmley, April 2014*

## **HEALTHCARE-RELATED CONCERNS**

“healthcare is actually the root of much distress and discomfort.”

“the prisoner who was diagnosed with dementia at his previous prison but has been refused treatment here because they say they have 'no knowledge of it'.”

- *From Name Supplied - HMP Swaleside, August 2014*

“It took me 4 medical applications to get to healthcare and it was only because I pressed the emergency bell and waited for 20 minutes that I managed to make it over there. The 2 times I couldn't handle the pain I was in after lock-up and asked the night patrol officer if I could see a doctor or have a couple of painkillers, I was completely ignored.”

“The majority of staff are rude, lazy and uninterested in prisoners concerns. I have never been so angry and frustrated and so close to kicking off in my entire life.”

- *From Alex Carr - HMP Wandsworth, October 2014*

“Complaints go unanswered, applications are 'lost' and any time you ask for something the reply is - 'Sorry, can't help you as we are short of staff'. Medication issues are being missed and people on meds to help their mental health are being left for days without them.”

- *Paul Beardsley - HMP Nottingham, August 2014*

“...my brother, who is at HMP Belmarsh, has severe mental health problems. He has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and has had this illness since the age of 17. He was taken into a psychiatric hospital and sectioned for 6 months whilst they tried many different ways to medicate him. It was found that a combination of anti-psychotic medication was needed to stabilise him, so he could then behave in the most normal way possible. My brother was transferred to HMP Belmarsh from HMP Highdown but when he arrived at Belmarsh he was informed that he was only allowed one form of his anti-psychotic medication and it was given at a much smaller dose than he needs, and without the combination of the other two medications it will never work. This has led to unmanageable behaviour which is out of my brother's control.

At the last count he has received over 65 adjudications in 15 months of residing at Belmarsh. My uncle was transferred to Belmarsh and moved in next door to my brother as it was hoped that he could be a calming influence. My uncle became extremely concerned with how ill my brother is and how he is not getting the care he needs. My uncle voiced this on a COMP 1 and as soon as the complaint was received my uncle was moved to another wing. So my uncle wrote to his MP and voiced his concerns about the poor treatment my brother was getting. The MP contacted the governor and soon after this my brother was put in stripes (escapee uniform) and is now due to move to a Severe Personality Disorder Unit. WHY? Personality disorders are not the same as schizophrenia. My brother could be managed by giving him the right medication. Mental health is an illness just like any other and should be treated as such.”

- *Kieran Thomas – HMP Woodhill, April 2014*

“staff here at HMP Birmingham do not seem to be taking seriously the mental health problems of myself and other inmates. I suffer from schizophrenia, psychosis and I have a split personality disorder. Before I came into custody I was homeless as a result of my mental health. I had to leave my family home as I was always blacking out and smashing the house up. I was assessed by the mental health team before coming into custody and was deemed ‘high risk of serious harm to the public and myself’. I couldn’t even go into a hostel because I am so high risk. When I came into custody I was seen by a nurse who told staff that I cannot share a cell with anybody. I was then asked if I had been convicted of murder, manslaughter or a sexual offence to which I answered no, so they ticked the ‘low risk’ box and I am now in a double cell. The staff here keep telling me that there are no single cells and that you have to be convicted of murder, manslaughter or sexual offences to get a single. I’m going to end up killing someone or seriously harming them and my cell mate is at risk. At night I hear voices and I am on medication for my schizophrenia. I don’t want to hurt anybody and that’s why I have spoken to staff but it’s like they are not bothered.”

- *Jamie Bryan – HMP Birmingham, December 2012*

“For 3 weeks he has been waiting to see the mental health team, he has called me stating he is hearing voices in his head and they are getting worse and the only way he can help himself is to bang his head against the wall. I cry myself to sleep at nights as I am so worried he is going to harm himself, which he has done many times before.”

- *Mrs. J S – A prisoner’s mother, November 2012*

“...like many prisoners I suffered from depression. I was prescribed Prozac, which I took daily. However, I was told I could not access psychology because as I was a remand prisoner they said I could be shipped to another prison or go to court and be released at any time and it would not be worth me seeing any mental health professionals. At court I received a hospital order and was committed to a mental health hospital. However, I feel the need to speak out about how prisons treat mentally ill and disordered offenders. The whole system is in urgent need of reform so that prisoners have FULL

access to mental health professionals regardless of whether they are on remand or convicted prisoners.”

- *Benjamin Burns – Rampton Hospital, November 2012*

“I personally witnessed one prisoner being issued the wrong medication, which, if taken, would have resulted in death. When this prisoner complained internally he was transferred to HMP Whitemoor. The same prisoner had previously been left in a coma for around 12 hours before anyone noticed, even though he was on 10 minute observations as part of an ACCT for a suicide attempt.”

- *Kevan Thakrar – CSC HMP Woodhill*

## **BULLYING**

“I was then bullied by other inmates. Eventually they decided to deal with me by three of them coming to my cell armed with weapons in order to assault me, or maybe worse.”

- *PJ- HMP Lowdham Grange, May 2014*

“to go on these classes you have to mix with prisoners from the main locations of the prison and in doing so are subjected to abuse such as embarrassing and degrading name calling, being spat on and missiles being thrown towards faces and heads, meaning there is only a very small percentage of VP’s prepared to attend the education department, forcing the rest to work in the workshops where know training is given and know qualifications can be earned. Also whilst on route to the workshops the VP’s have to pass one of the main location wings quite close in fact, and again we are subjected to lots of verbal abuse and most of the time physical abuse, for example being spat on and having missiles thrown at our heads and in some of the incidents which I have witnessed the main location prisoners were throwing faeces out the window. The yard we have to cross to pass this wing has 2 or sometimes 3 officers manning the route, and when this abuse is happening the officers stand there laughing and do nothing to stop what is happening.”

- *CM – Manchester, August 2013*

“Aylesbury really is like that. Londoners run the show, bullying is rife and everybody is digging everyone else out.

kids are killing themselves all over the prison system and they are not doing that because they are living the dream in ‘holiday camp’ prisons.”

- *George Collins – HMP Dartmoor, April 2013*

“it would seem the size 9s and batons have been replaced by verbal bullying and intimidation by some so-called professionals. Here at HMP Guys Marsh there is a

systematic abuse of our rights when it comes to making official complaints. Whether it be a DIRF or a Comp 1, the replies are always the same, one-sided, consistently fobbed off and, in recent experience, punished for standing up for oneself. I've actually had a discrimination allegation investigated by one of the 2 staff involved in the actual incident!!! Worse still, and the reason I write, is the consistent verbal bullying I have been subjected to. I put in a complaint about it and truth be told I was probably better off being psychologically tortured and having my right to be spoken to by staff in a respectful and dignified manner trampled all over. Because I chose to stand up for myself I now find myself out of work, locked behind my door all day, apps going unanswered, missed gym sessions and not a single explanation as to why.”

- Gary Nash – HMP Guys Marsh. January 2013

“Prison is hard enough without having to worry that you might be blamed for something that you would never do. Things then sometimes get out of hand leaving people scared and very paranoid. No prisoner should accuse another prisoner unless they have proof – not just ‘so-and-so said...’ or ‘I saw him talking to a screw...’ Grow up and stop trying to make your own time pass quicker by digging people out for your own amusement.”

- Steve Hope – HMP Everthorpe, December 2012

## **CONDITIONS OF PRISON—TIME SPENT IN CELL**

“It is not in the prison rules and managers simply tell you that you are going behind your door for a couple of weeks, whereas Rule 95 only allows this for up to 72 hours before they need to ask SPS HQ for approval. You are not given any information other than the uttering of the word 'intelligence' and there is no opportunity to make representations on your own behalf.”

- Gordan Williamson—HMP Edinburgh, November 2014

“I have been here at HMP Swaleside for five months and since I arrived have literally been left locked in my cell for 22 hours a day. But all I want is a job. I get less than £1 per week on my canteen so I can't afford phone units to keep in touch with my son; they have stripped my last chance at keeping in touch with my 7 year-old. On all the job apps I put in I get the same answer 'You have not been security cleared for work yet' - I spend so much time behind my door that when it is now opened I feel slightly anxious. HMP claims it strives to maintain family ties, but they have stripped me of mine.”

- Daniel Smith - HMP Swaleside, July 2014



“There is no work and we are banged up for 24 hours a day, sometimes with no water or electricity in the cells. For 2 consecutive days we were not allowed out on exercise and the explanation is that there are not enough staff.”

- *Charlie Chapman - HMYOI Glen Parva, October 2014*

“I would like to refer to the cutbacks here in HMP Nottingham. There are no jobs for at least half the prisoners in this prison, due to staff shortages, and we are locked in cells for 23½ hours a day doing nothing.”

- *Paul Beardsley - HMP Nottingham, August 2014*

“I feel that the government has become responsible for keeping inmates locked up when their cells should be open. I am over retirement age, blind, have a heart condition and I am disabled. During the core working day here at HMP Risley, the retired, disabled and medically unfit inmates are kept locked up in their cells for 23 hours per day. This decision has led directly to the deterioration in health of many old and disabled prisoners such as myself. Since the national changes to routine brought in last September we have suffered a great deal of lock-up and we are presently on a minimum of 5 scheduled lock-ups a week out of 14 unlock sessions. During these lock-ups the elderly and disabled do not have access to their nominated carers. With all my problems, I am supposed to be provided with 'Grade One Care', but during lock-up I am denied any help and this has led to me suffering several falls, knocking myself out once, and causing myself many injuries. I applied to the Wing Manager to get access to my carer and was denied on the grounds that the POA (Prison Officers Association) has to give permission and they don't consider my case serious enough! With no care or compassion from the POA and Justice Secretary then deaths are inevitable as the old and sick are left to rot in their cells. It's a national disgrace.”

- *From Tom Garside - HMP Risley, June 2014*

## **CONDITIONS OF PRISON—DISCRIMINATION**

“I am not allowed to visit the prison library, the gym or the multi-faith room. The reason given for this is because of a recent incident where 6 prisoners climbed onto a workshop roof in order to protest. But what has that got to do with me? I am already restricted by being on Basic and this is just adding to the misery. I have had no response (surprise, surprise!) to my written complaint form.”

- *P Wilkinson - HMP Oakwood, June 2014*

“I have had a number of poorly made decisions taken against me in connection with my sexual orientation at HMP Glenochil, all of them illegal. But, like many other things, the law does not seem to matter within these walls and arbitrary punishment seems to be the norm”

- *Name Withheld – HMP Glenochil, August 2013*

“I am a homosexual prisoner in a Scottish prison and I am really disheartened and angry at the way homophobic abuse gets dealt with by the Scottish Prison Service. Over the past 4 years of my sentence I have been in 3 establishments which all differ when dealing with homophobic incidents. I have been the victim of several homophobic incidents which have included verbal, physical and mental abuse. Each Scottish prison should have an Equality & Diversity Team who can deal with this. In my current establishment they have one but I have recently experienced abuse here and when I approached the Equality & Diversity Team manager, I have to be honest and say he wasn't very forthcoming or interested and just assured me that it would be dealt with. But all that happened was that the perpetrator of this abuse was 'spoken to'. The abuse continued. The fact is that there are loads of prisoners like me who will be experiencing the same thing and unless it is seriously challenged it will go on. Homophobic abuse is not taken seriously or challenged appropriately, unlike racist abuse, it is ignored and people will suffer. The SPS needs to review their equality and diversity policies. It would be interesting to get other people's views on homophobic abuse or being gay in prison and how they deal with it. I have tried complaining to the SPS HQ but to no avail.”

- *Name Withheld, HMP Glenochil, June 2013*

“I came to HMP Haverigg in September 2012 and got a job in the kitchens, where I came across one of the worst cases of racial abuse by a so-called professional member of staff I have ever witnessed. This man repeatedly throws out racial abuse like he has some form of racial tourettes. I've witnessed him refer to Asians as 'curry munchers', and I've also witnessed (along with 6 other witnesses) kick a black lad in the shin and call him a 'black bastard'. I put in a RIRF (Racial Incident Report Form) against this man in October and I was spoken to by the Race Relations Manager, but since then I have heard nothing and the man in question still works in the kitchen and is still racially abusing black and Asian prisoners with no consequences.”

- *Colin Mangan – HMP Haverigg, March 2013*

“I am registered disabled with Secondary Progressive Multiple Sclerosis. The doctor says I should be located on the ground floor and that my mobility should be actively encouraged. HMP Wandsworth's answer to this is to keep me locked up for 23 hours a day on the second floor and to have my food brought to my cell. I get no activity; they just lock me up and may as well throw away the key. The Governors and staff here make no effort at all to find disabled prisoners a job and they cannot get a cell on the ground floor as these are reserved for workers. Surely this is discrimination? Why are we just locked up and forgotten about, it is as though this prison does not want to address the problem. I cannot use the exercise yard as there is no lift, I cannot use the library as nobody can be bothered to get me there. All I can do is sit in my cell and write as I slowly feel my muscles and joints seize up.”

- Jason Place- HMP Wandsworth, March 2013

### **CONDITIONS IN PRISON—ABUSE**

“I was seriously assaulted by staff in the seg unit at HMP Lowdham Grange. I had my hands handcuffed behind my back and I was punched, kicked and stamped on. I also witnessed the staff stamping on another prisoner's head. Using the complaints system is no good because they investigate themselves and never find themselves guilty of anything.”

- D Gee- HMP Woodhill, May 2014

“...hidden behaviour of our Prison Service which the majority of us incarcerated have had to endure. A lot of us have suffered broken bones and other injuries whilst under ‘control & restraint’...”

- Tony Joyce – HMP Parkhurst, August 2013

### **MENTAL HEALTH GENERAL**

“Recently I submitted an article on depression to the in-house magazine here ‘Maidstone Voice’. The editorial team were keen to publish it and Healthcare looked it over and had no objections to it. Just before publication my article was pulled. After investigation I found that it had been stopped by 2 governors and they gave the following reason ‘Given our Safer Custody responsibilities we have no wish to promote negative feelings to prisoners which may lead to an increase in self-harm across the establishment’. That is an illogical and ludicrous reason! My article explained what depression is, what the symptoms are and the help that is available from healthcare. I was encouraging any depressed prisoner to seek help from healthcare. I took my facts from information provided by mental health organisations – Sane, Mind, Depression Alliance and HMP Maidstone’s healthcare department. I kept my personal opinions out of it. The governors are saying that providing information about depression and encouraging prisoners to seek treatment is ‘promoting negative feelings’ and self-harm. This ignorant approach will only lead to an increase in self-harm. I thought that mental health awareness had come out of the dark ages in prison, but apparently not. I urge any prisoner in any prison who thinks they may have depression to speak to healthcare for help and show that talking about depression is a healthy thing to do.”

- Patrick Regan – HMP Maidstone, December 2012

### **CONDITIONS OF PRISON – GENERAL**

“A lot of the staff treat us like animals and some are openly racist. There is a significant use of force and 'control and restraint', and substantially high adjudications.”

- *Letter from Charlie Chapman - HMYOI Glen Parva, October 2014*

“After recently watching Newsnight on BBC2 and seeing Nick Hardwick, Chief Inspector of Prisons admitting he was worried that budget cuts and restrictive regimes were leading to an increase in overcrowding, self harm, suicide and rising assaults on staff, I can say he is right to worry.”

“Here at HMP Gartree we've had an increase in prisoner/ staff assaults and self-harm, we've also had a man on the healthcare roof in protest against the regimes we are forced to live in.”

- *R Lewis - HMP Gartree, August 2014*

“Then, out of the blue the landscape changes from blue to gray(ling) and an ill-conceived and arbitrary policy and a random Facilities List that can see the rehabilitative worth of a PlayStation 2 but not in learning a skill. Not only does this damage hope, motivation and rehabilitation/psychological well-being here and now, but it also steals away those accumulated rewards made over the years of good behaviour and hard work.”

- *Tom Clark - HMP Wakefield, July 2014*

“Te 'New Basic' removes all possessions from te prisoner and tere is no gym, no association, visits, television, te lot. A review is rare and applications and COMP1 forms mean noting.”

“After its inception, in February, stress levels rose, tere was an increase in violence and a spate of deats.”

- *Tony Joyce - HMP Parkhurst, July 2014*

\*Note: H key is faulty on this computer. Several letters lacked the letter H

“On many occasions I have witnessed basic procedures being ignored and a total disregard for the well-being of inmates. On almost a daily basis inmates fail to access healthcare and prescribed medication due to the failure of staff to reorder repeat prescriptions or the huge delay in processing applications of people wishing to access healthcare.”

- *Andrew Brown - HMP Moorland, July 2014*

“we are then treated badly, spoken to with bad attitude, moved around like cattle and forced to work for big profit private companies for £7 a week at the same time as being ripped off by the privatised canteens and prison phone companies, how does anyone think we are going to react? Our written complaints are disregarded and our requests are ignored...”

“...atmosphere is in severe decline because we spend most of our time in our cells and this place has become just another warehouse. We are now made to eat in our cells, even though we have a designated dining area. There are a lot fewer jobs because workshops and education classes have been closed down and staff have lost their jobs. We used to be treated as responsible adults and had access to resettlement, now everything is limited to a time-consuming application process.”

- *Ash Meadows - HMP Wolds, June 2014*

“The thing is, since legal aid has been cut for prisoners we have no recourse to law and have to suffer the fact that the prison system knows this and know they can get away with practically anything.”

- *From John Palmer - HMP Channings Wood, October 2014*

“...causing the prisoner anxiety, which is exactly what happens when two or more total strangers are forced to live, eat and defecate in each other's presence in a tiny cell designed for one person.”

- *John Palmer – HMP Channings Wood, March 2014*

“We all know the tough challenges we face in prison, the misery, the ever-increasing lock-up, and the fight to get anything done no matter how small. The long hours where we can only sit and reflect and, for me, being a VP and all the prejudice that entails ... So if you are sitting in a cell with an illness or disability, try to find the strength to medically rehabilitate yourself otherwise you'll be stuck in your own personal prison.”

- *John Hanson – HMP Woodhill, February 2014*

“at HMP Stoke Heath exercise is only given on weekdays during the core day. There is NO exercise at weekends or on Bank Holidays, etc. If you work full time, which many people do, then you get NO exercise. The PSI concerning exercise states – Prisoners are entitled to 30 minutes (minimum) every day in the open air with sufficient sunlight. But for the last couple of years here going to and from work has been classed as exercise”

- *Gary Kay – HMP Stoke Heath, July 2013*

