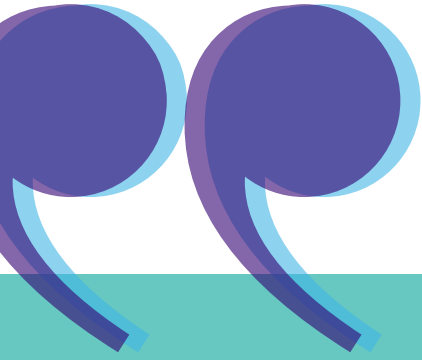


# UNSPOKEN WORD



## Poetry



by  
Black Country folk



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# A note from our editor

David Stocks

Poetry has long been a passion of mine. I find I can put in poetry what I can't express in normal conversation. When I write poetry, I distil a little part of me, leaving behind something more authentic than I would normally reveal.

In a short collection of words, I let my inhibitions go and allow other people a glimpse of my world.

Having a bipolar mental health condition, I have often struggled to share my deepest thoughts with those who are there to help me. In these times I have reverted to poetry as a form of communication, acting both cathartically and to help others understand me, so that they can better help me.

With poetry playing such a big part in my recovery, I have long wanted to put on a poetry event, to highlight the therapeutic power of poetry. Encouraged by one of our Non-Executive Directors Alison Geeson and Kate Pritchard from Communications (both poetry lovers), this dream eventually became a reality, I just didn't know how far it would go.

Contained within are a selection of poems from this and other events, covering a multitude of topics, but with such power and sincerity, I am often moved to tears by the strength of words contained within.

I hope you enjoy these poems as much as me, I feel honoured to have played a small part in exposing them to a wider audience, but I particularly thank Kate Pritchard for all her hard work compiling it and Erica Pearce for the amazing work she has done in making the events happen.

Please note, all of these poems are written from personal experience.

# An introductory note from our Non-Executive Director, Trust Wellbeing Guardian and Poetry Friend Alison Geeson

It is with heartfelt joy that I share some words by form of introduction. Poetry has been a lifelong friend of mine, and to connect with David Stocks and Kate Pritchard over the past two years has bought an added dimension to poetical connection and friendship. Thank you both.

When David shared with me his dream of putting on poetry events to highlight the therapeutic power of poetry I remember reminding him that dreams can become reality! To have encouraged, supported and contributed to this poetry collection has been a dream come true for me too.

I began my quiet friendship with poetry as a child and I could go for years without rekindling this friendship, but my poetry book scribbles were revisited from time to time and I found writing words to express myself, therapeutic. As confidence grew a little with life's journey I would sometimes read a poem to a friend, family member or colleague, and the conversations and connections that followed were most definitely good for health and wellbeing.

When working in higher education I would often encourage students to express themselves in poetry and they would find this opportunity good for the soul. The connections that came out of this are remembered fondly years on.

For me poetry is all about connection and sharing. Within the poetry events, David created and crafted a safe space for attendees whether they be accomplished poets, poetry newbies, those who simply wanted to share something of themselves through unspoken words, those who were tinkering on the edge of writing a poem, or those who simply wanted to listen and connect.

continued over...

# An introductory note

Alison Geeson

The space generated this wonderful poetry collection which is shared for your enjoyment and reflection.

We would really like to grow our wellbeing culture of encouraging poetry and unspoken word, and the launch of this collection is the beginning of a new chapter which everyone is welcome to be a part of.

Begin with finding a little space and time to read and reflect on this collection. This you may find can be a welcome distraction from the stress life can bring. If you feel it, write it or speak it, whatever shape or form it comes to you in. Dip your toe in the poetry water.

Poetry from your heart is a great start.

Poetry for all is my call!



# Our story

Kate Pritchard

In October 2021 we held our first spoken word event, focusing on stories of suicide prevention and hope. The small group event felt very special; a space where everyone connected on a human level.

Some people had never shared their poetry with others. Some had never written or read poetry before. All connected around open, honest and supportive conversation.

At the end of the event there was a real desire to continue the conversation through further spoken word events and so (Un)spoken word continued. We chose the name '(Un)spoken word' because talking about mental health, wellbeing and life can often be difficult and remain unspoken.

It has been a real privilege to spend time with the Black Country folk who came along. We have shared personal experiences, laughed and cried together. To all those who have contributed to the events and this book; thank you for trusting us with your stories.

I have always loved poetry, inspired by the brilliance of our local Black Country and Birmingham poets, but while I've been fond of writing a silly rhyme now and again, I've never been brave enough to write a 'proper' poem.

Until, lost in the sadness of losing a much loved friend, I thought about the courage of everyone who shared their stories with us and put pen to paper. Thank you for guiding me. It has helped.

To all those who read on, we hope you enjoy the poems. We have also included mental health support contacts at the end of the book. Please reach out if you need help. It is there for you.

# Unspoken words

by David Stocks

Words that remain unspoken,  
In fragile minds all broken  
Echo in the silent  
Corridors of the mind  
Lined with doors  
That won't open  
Their keys,  
Gone to rust  
Betrayed,  
By trust  
How do you unlock,  
Those whom time forgot?  
Alone in their thoughts,  
Into darkness falling  
I can hear them calling

Calling...

Calling...

Teardrops falling,

Falling...

Falling...

Trapped in a void,  
Of friends devoid  
Invisible  
Shadows drifting  
Lifeless eyes  
Shifting  
It only takes a word,  
One simple word



continued over...

Said with sincerity,  
Compassion  
And integrity  
To light that spark,  
In the cloak of dark  
That lays inside  
Barely visible,  
Behind the eyes

The word comprises,  
A thousand stories  
In different voices,  
Spoken across the world...

Told...

And

Retold...

Not by master storytellers,  
In works of fiction,  
But words of wisdom  
By those,  
Who've lived them

Of times of sadness,  
Heartache  
And Sorrow  
Of trials  
And hardship  
And the road to recovery  
And self discovery

Real words...

By

Real people...

Offering a key,  
To unlock those doors

# Unspoken words

by David Stocks



continued over...



Broken and rusted,  
From a world untrusted  
Now with sincerity open  
Releasing  
Words unspoken  
That come  
Of times of sadness,  
Heartache  
And Sorrow  
Of trials  
And hardship  
And the road to recovery  
And self discovery

Real words...

By

Real people...

Offering a key,  
To unlock those doors  
Broken and rusted,  
From a world untrusted  
Now with sincerity open  
Releasing  
Words unspoken  
That come

Tumbling...

Tumbling...

Out  
In a cleansing torrent,  
That follows a drought

A time for healing,  
With darkness receding  
A new life,  
Away from strife

# Unspoken words

by David Stocks



continued over...

Because somebody listened,  
Understood  
And offered a word called  
Hope!


# Unspoken words

by David Stocks



# Hope is the answer

by Pauline Jackson



What's going on? Where are you gone?  
I came home and feel I no longer belong  
You were the one I was anchored to,  
But you couldn't stick around, it wasn't down to you  
Your mind was a blur  
Your head was a haze  
I wish I could've helped, I was in my own daze  
I had nothing to forgive, you loved me and wished you could live  
I'm ok now – it will get better – we can work on this grief  
together  
We're part of a club that wasn't our choice  
Now we are here – we can use our voice  
I want to give hope – to those in this fresh hell  
I want to bring the news and be the one to tell  
It will, it will, it will – again and again your heart will fill and  
fill and fill  
We must deal in hope, we cannot fall down that slippery slope  
Suicides not painless – it's not the answer  
Let's help make this a curable cancer

# Nobody's nobody

by KH



"I'm Nobody", "Someone" once said,  
"I'm Nobody", in my own head.  
But "Someone" once said to me, something that helped,  
inadvertently.

"Someone" said what I needed to hear,  
Made me realise others do hold me dear.  
Maybe that "Someone" was you?  
'Didn't realise that you felt that way too!'  
"Someone" helped me see that I'm not alone,  
"Someone" saved my life and they don't even know!

"Someone" did what no one else could do....  
That "Someone" turned out to be you.  
"Someone" was there feeling blue,  
"Someone" was there struggling through.  
"Nobody" walked in "Someone" else's shoes.

But always know "Someone" does feel,  
"Someone"'s there for you..that's a deal.  
"Nobody" knows the cards you were dealt...but..  
"Someone" may feel the way that you felt.  
So....  
Just know "Someone" is ALWAYS there,  
Just know "Someone" really cares!

Because one day...  
"Nobody" was made to see...  
To "Someone" they are the world,  
they are in fact  
"Somebody"



# Depression is my secret

by KH

Everyone around me  
I'm jealous of you all  
You're all seem white,  
Imperfectly white  
But me, I'm stained  
Crimson and black,  
I live....just....  
But never seem to learn  
Lessons wasted  
Experience thwarted  
Time wasted.

One day, I hope to be like you  
Humbly proud,  
proudly humble.  
But for now, I'm here  
I don't know what I'll do  
Fear the outcome whatever I choose  
Knowing I can't live without you.  
But the reality is  
I feel it again  
The dreaded feeling  
The nights go dark early  
Somehow symbolic  
Dark suits my soul  
It fits me well  
Like a tailored suit  
Perfectly dark

Slow yet fast  
In pain yet numb  
Still whilst drifting  
Hidden not seen  
It always simmers underneath.



continued over...

Alone and yet in company  
In company and yet alone  
Invisible to you  
Felt by me  
Hidden with a smile  
Smiling falsely,  
Cloudy not clear  
Unable to see  
Hard to think positive  
thinking negatively,  
Sleepy whilst others are awake  
Awake whilst others sleep  
This depression of mine is...  
the easiest secret I ever did keep!

# Depression is my secret

by KH



# Regrets don't work

by KH

"No regrets they don't work  
No regrets they only hurt"...  
(so sang Robbie..)



When you look back... What would you change?  
What words would you use to rewrite that page?  
If you could ride in a time machine, if you could go back to  
relive your dream..  
Would you go back...would you undo the pain? If you could go  
back ...would you now switch lanes?

Would you change your actions or what you chose not to say,  
if you did, would you be who you are today??

If you had one more minute with that person you lost, only now  
with hindsight you count the true cost.  
Can you look yourself straight in the eye, and say "no regrets"  
and it not be a lie?

Because

"Regrets, I've had a few"..(so sang Frank)..

And if you're honest so have you.

But hindsight is a wonderful thing, perspective is everything.

So from this day forward make it a goal, for regrets not to  
immerse your very soul.

Time is precious..waste it wisely, life is short don't take it  
lightly.

Forget what's been... you can't change it now, but be true to  
yourself and always vow....

To do your best from this second forth,  
try your best and with all your force.

continued over...

One day look back and consider how from NOW, regrets are more unlikely somehow...

...because

With friends and family from now on just let's...

...live to have the fewest regrets.

If the past causes guilt, shame, sadness...or sorrow,  
you can't change yesterday, but you can influence tomorrow.

So negative emotions may well lurk,

Just avoid more regrets because they truly "don't work".

Regrets don't  
work  
by KH





# Pain

by David Stocks

Trapped where demons dwell,  
Living in my personal hell  
In a court I repeat my story,  
Where I am both Judge and Jury  
Tried by my own hand,  
Sentenced before I take the stand

I have failed...

Failed in life  
Failed my wife  
Failed my family  
Failed my friends  
Failed at school  
Failed in work  
Failed in everything I do

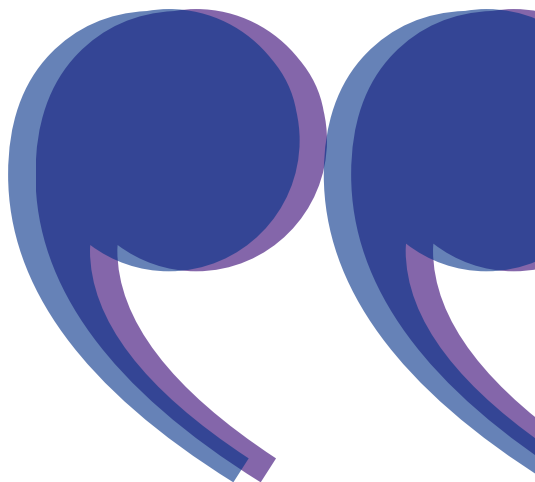
Racing thoughts,  
In senseless courts  
It's not about justice,  
The pain just won't desist

The end of the pain...

That's what I seek,  
It's not that I am weak  
Life is a torture,  
Without a cure  
I must escape,  
This mental state

I don't want to die...

I JUST WANT THE PAIN TO END!



continued over...

That's the secret I share,  
The pain that's always there  
Night and day,  
It never goes away  
Caught in a maelstrom,  
I can't escape from

# Pain

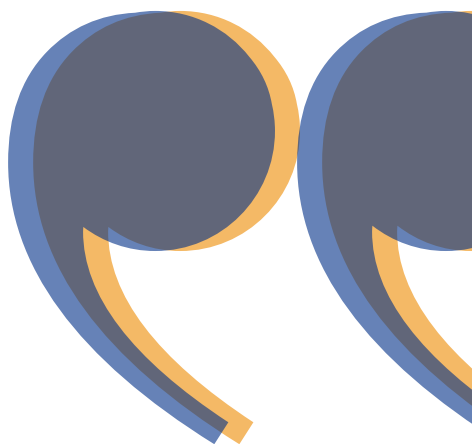
by David Stocks

...But as I took the final step,  
In order to forget  
Someone heard me calling,  
And stopped me from falling  
A friendly voice from nowhere,  
Who just listened and was there  
To help me with my burden,  
And grant me a pardon  
From crimes against myself,  
And consign them to a shelf

I could finally see,  
That it wasn't me...

I wasn't bad,  
Just sad  
And not a disgrace,  
To the human race  
My heart was pure,  
But my wounds where raw  
My scars where real  
And needed time to heal

...It was that listening voice,  
That gave me choice  
And helped me cope,  
By giving me hope!



# Dear survivors

by Kirti P

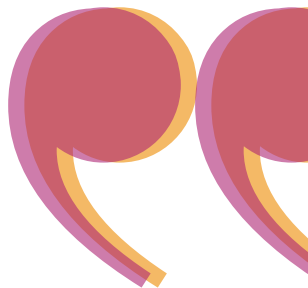


I'm writing this letter to you because I want you to know that you are not alone. I am here for you, we are here for you. And we are all same as you. We are too surviving from our mental illness.

I know you are giving your best,  
But at few moments you will feel like 'Naa, now I done, I want rest'.  
You will feel like you have nothing in life,  
You will feel like you are on the edge of knife.  
You will have everything,  
Yet you will feel like there is no living being, to support, to help, to encourage, in this your darkest phase.  
When you feel like there are no reason in existing,  
Remember still there are few people who are praying for you and your well being.

I am too suffering from this which feels like  
Messed mind, fucking tired everytime,  
Nightmare, dark fear,  
Depressive episodes, anxious road,  
Panic attacks, over or skip snacks,  
Racing thought, chocked throat,  
Fluttering heartbeat, unstable feet,  
Empty soul, dealing with black hole.

I am requesting you not to suicide,  
Dear please, please fight.  
It will be hard,  
Soon, from this you will go too far.  
And when the suffering is over,  
When you will recover.  
On yourself, you will feel proud,  
Your value will be shining differently in crowd.



# Shadows

by Lina M



Storm

I have a shadow  
Grey and unrelenting  
All the traumas of my past  
All the guilt of my present  
All the failures of my future

Every man I've feared  
Every promise I've broken  
The perfection I strive for that eludes and exhausts me

My shadow is always there  
On good days, it lurks in the background  
That gnawing feeling that I should be worrying about something  
On bad days, it suffocates and overwhelms me  
Bucks me into corners, further into my own mind

But then I found another  
Grey and unrelenting  
Warm, soft and furry

He watches over me as I sleep  
He is with me when I wake  
He is waiting for me when I come home  
He is always there, protecting me from the darkness within

If he could talk, he'd tell me about his  
own shadow  
All the times he was ignored  
All the wounds left untreated  
All the humans that let him down



continued over...

When I see myself though his golden, slow blinking eyes  
I don't see someone who is broken or worthless  
I see someone who is loved and trusted and needed  
I am his companion, his safe place, his everything

When he settles on my lap and purrs  
We find peace and warmth in each other  
We know we are finally safe to rest  
We have found our place in this world, together in our home

I have a shadow  
Grey and unrelenting  
He is my world  
And I'll always be his.

## Shadows

by Lina M

Dedicated to Storm  
Storm sadly left us on 8 July 2022 due to heart failure  
He will never be forgotten

# Seeking peace

by Sophie

I've run away to Worcester,  
a situation I can no longer bear,  
where I go next – I'm not sure I care.

I've done the retail therapy,  
I've dined alone and seen a movie,  
and after,  
after ....

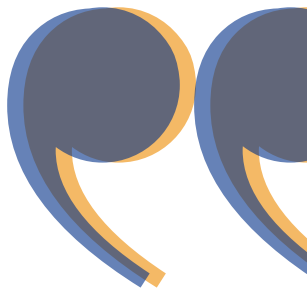
I  
walked the walls of Worcester  
I  
trailed my hand along crumbling sandstone  
and felt such solidity below.

I stood  
in awe and still, a leaf at the whim of the breeze,  
under Edgar Tower.

Then, in the midnight hour,  
while the city partied all around,  
backlit by the moon

I stood  
on Cathedral Green, among the stone  
utterly alone ....

Peace at last.

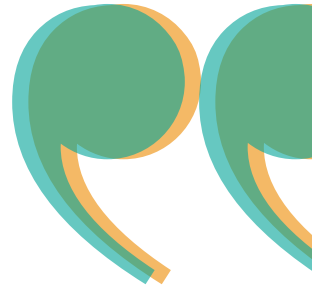


# Hope

by Maxine Stanford

Hope is a bridge built from strong belief,  
That carries you from where you are,  
Across the darkness, above the pain.  
Pushed along by a warm wind of expectation,  
To a place of want and need.

A journey of thought and possibilities,  
Every step a positive move to a better whatever.  
Taking you towards that bright glow in the distance.  
That feeling of emotion and excitement,  
For a desire to be fulfilled.



# A cry from within

by Maxine Stanford

My soul is crying, my spirit  
Is bleeding and weak.  
My mind is tired and  
My heart is broken,  
And begs to be made whole again.  
Who will rescue me and put me back together?  
Am I not worth restoring?  
Am I truly of no value?  
Do I really have to beg and scream  
For you to hear me,  
And see me for what I am?  
A living breathing human being!  
If I were a character in a story, in a film,  
You would have compassion for me.  
Then I would be worth saving,  
A first thought never mind a second.



# Today I sit and weep

by Maxine Stanford

Today I sit and weep,  
My body is tired and I cannot sleep.  
My mind wants to give up,  
But my heart says "NO STOP".  
We've been here before,  
Now is not the time to fall  
But to fight and give your all.  
We have come so far you and I.  
Now is not the time to DIE.  
Now is the time to rise high.



# This one's for you mum

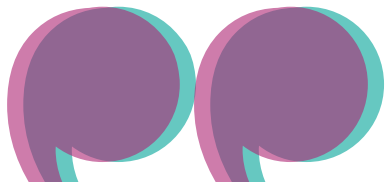
by Amanda Hemmings

I'm resting in the rhythms of your giggles  
when I'm envisioning sitting on the blue settee drinking coffee  
and you're sitting in your leather arm chair  
drinking tea from your 'Mum' mug with one sugar.  
Sometimes you called me Manda  
and sometimes I called you Mama.  
We relayed off each other's drum beats  
as the volumes of our laughter became louder.  
You would ask me, 'what do you want for dinner?'  
You're the best chef I know,  
I rest in kitchen breakfast aromas of you serving up saltfish  
fritters  
for me and my brother,  
I remember your servings of Saturday soup we slurped  
as we sat around the round dining table.

You are home for me.

You are my travel partner to charity shops and market stalls,  
You are my prayer partner,  
You are the one that would say, 'I pray for you every day.'  
You are my encourager to stay close to each dream until they  
take off  
and you're always with me in the air balloon celebrating each  
achievement.

Every few months you'd say, 'what day can you put some rollers  
in my hair?'  
You'd sit in the chair and I'd prep your curly perm,  
I'd part your beautiful black strands  
and you'd pass me the rods with the hands that you past onto  
me.



continued over...

We'd reminisce on times gone by –  
like the time we went to Stratford Upon Avon  
and the sun smothered us,  
we tried to find shade whilst we watched random acts  
and we took a photograph of our happiness in front of a pink  
Cadillac.

You used to message me  
when you saw something you knew I'd want to see on TV –  
like two months ago you told me there was something about  
Billie on the BBC.

I loved listening to you proudly sharing with me recently how  
you love to pray  
and that you believe God has given you this as a gift.  
You recently told me –  
You've been praying for me that God will give me peace.  
You keep teaching me to rise above the storms.

You make me want to be a better woman, Dorretta Marcia –  
sweet little girl with the tied white ribbons who came over from  
Jamaica,  
who became a loving Mother to a son and a daughter  
and a loving Grandmother to two granddaughters.

Thanks for being my best friend,  
Your perseverance and faith are giving me strength.

## This one's for you mum

by Amanda Hemmings

Dedicated to Dorretta Hemmings



# 1954

by Amanda Hemmings

My Grandad, My friend,  
when I play your records  
I'll think of you,  
I'll think about  
how we used to sit on your sofa  
and talk about Jamaica.  
I'll think about  
the first time you showed me  
your first passport picture.  
I'll think about the stories you told me –

You stepped off the boat and breathed in the British mist,  
holding in hands heavy dreams  
uprooted and upheaved onto three weeks of turbulent waters,  
waving farewell to your mother and sisters  
and infant too innocent to fathom his father's intentions.

You paraded along new streets that you were told were paved  
with gold  
in your black leather laced shoes that shone beyond cold fog.  
You tipped your brim hat to other West Indians you passed,  
they too wearing suits,  
carrying suitcases  
and ties tied tightly.

You shared rented rooms in houses built with bricks of brass,  
with windows that wouldn't glisten,  
framed within window pane cracks  
and a torn front door,  
with a path surrounded by overgrown grass.



continued over...

You pushed your shoulders back and held your head high  
to walk through the intolerant tide,  
to imprint new bricks for rebuilding British businesses.  
Based at a Birmingham depot  
you attended to broken down double decker buses.

You carried Jamaican rhythms in your suitcases,  
unpacking ska music in your memories,  
reminiscing on the routines that defined the dances.  
You held your accent close to your chest,  
turning down its intonations when you were loudly oppressed.

In your jacket pocket you carried a black and white picture of  
your mother,  
she's standing in a floral gown against the garden gate in  
Jamaica.  
You pondered on your fathers status as a tailor,  
you've taken the baton passed on from his legacy,  
continuing the story with your journey.

1954

by Amanda Hemmings



# Covid revisited. The days are long

by Alison Geeson



A year on, my relationship with Covid-19 became an intense one.

Day one, positive PCR, soul searching, head shaking, fate awaiting.

Day two, yes, it's true, it's not happening to someone else, it's attacking you.

Day three, bed it has to be.

Day four, symptoms galore, cough so severe, ringing ear, taste gone, sleep intense, doesn't make sense, I did everything right, morning noon and night.

Day five, for me a deep dive, double jabbed, masks, PPE, safe as could be, why me?

Day six, exhaustion into the mix, endless hours of lying down with frown.

Day seven, remedies from heaven, green tea, vitamin C, vitamin D, black seed oil, ginger, lemon, honey, until I feel strangely funny.

Day eight, the Covid wait, will this horrible visitor ever leave? I need a new date.

Day nine, a little sunshine. The kindness of others, dropping essentials at the door, texts, WhatsApp, more...care and compassion galore.

Day ten, Freedom Day but too tired to play. Lingering Covid, please go away.

Days eleven, twelve, thirteen and fourteen, fog, fatigue, Covid still gripping me intensely, now the mental strain embraces me, crazy dreams, not to be shared themes.

Day fifteen, my first venture from the safety of my home, a little seasick, surreal, nature comforting me with hope. The days no longer need counting. Came across an old friend...poetry.

Days and months ahead, I'm ready to part ways with Covid-19 but is it ready to part ways with me?

And so, battling through this virus, I know that having two jabs has saved me, as has poetry.

# Family

by KH

'You can choose your friends but not your family,  
If you had a choice, would you still choose me?  
Because I know for sure that I'd still pick you,  
Love so deep, pure and true.

We compliment each other perfectly,  
and the 'apple didn't fall far from the tree'.

Because 'blood is thicker than water',  
A father once said to his daughter,  
Yes, 'blood is truly thicker than water'...  
So said a son to his mother,  
So said a sister to her brother  
So said the child to his grandmother.

Make sure there's no 'bad blood',  
Let go of the bad, make memories that are happy and good.

Because you literally are 'my flesh and blood'

'There's no place like home' and  
'Home is where the heart is',  
And my heart resides with you,  
Love is the bond holding us together,  
Strong and adhesive like superglue.

'Children are a poor man's riches',  
I feel like the richest man,  
The day you were born my life changed forever,  
A bond unique, always together,  
Even when distance keeps us apart,  
You're always there within my heart.



continued over...

'Like mother like daughter,  
Like father like son,  
Some sad times along the way,  
But oh so much fun

# Family

by KH

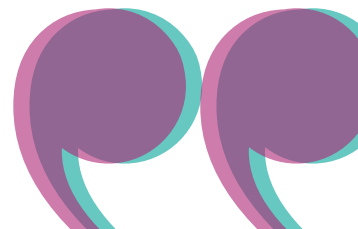
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree,  
Your the mirror image of me,  
But without my flaws, a better reflection,  
You're the apple of my eye,  
Forgive me my mistakes, I can only try..  
To do better for you than I did for me  
This love reigns in me .. unselfishly

'A family that talks together stays together',  
I miss our chats

The chatterbox of old, but now you are developing into your own  
person, who you wish to be, watching you grow is satisfying yet  
challenging, would go back to the past in an instant, to when you  
needed me,  
Now as you get older I just pray and  
hope you always remember me.

Cos you're a 'Chip off the old block'  
We are so alike it's scary,  
Sometimes we clash and I wonder if that mirror image is how I  
present, but any frustration is short lived as all I want is to see  
your smile.

So remember I didn't chose any of you ...  
My family  
But I wouldn't change a single thing  
Because family makes us who we are,  
I hope we never have to part.





# OUR child

by KH



OUR child was made in love,  
but now ...

OUR child lives amid hate.

OUR child is half of you,  
but you forget too easily ...

OUR child is also half of me.

OUR child needs you,  
And tell yourself what you like but...  
OUR child also needs me.

OUR child is what I live for  
but...

OUR child has become your weapon of choice to destroy me  
OUR child has needs and wants,  
yet  
OUR child has been stripped of all their rights.

OUR child needs two parents  
but for reasons unbeknown...  
OUR child doesn't know me  
OUR child is supported by me financially  
however  
OUR child only sees you spend that money, never me.

OUR child hears how terrible I am...  
but how you're so great ...  
OUR child should not have to choose.  
OUR child is the reason I fight  
because  
OUR child may be far away from me...  
but...and it's a big BUT....  
OUR child is always in my heart...night and day and ...  
OUR child will know one day I fought with all I had

continued over...

OUR child needs BOTH parents... but I have no rights...  
OUR child depends on you to promote positivity and advocate for them...  
but...  
OUR child will ultimately suffer and somehow you can't see...  
OUR child is upset because they long for both parents in their lives...  
OUR child should come first  
but  
OUR child always loses out.

OUR child will suffer and that's because of YOU ... spin it how you want but ...  
YOU are the adult  
YOU should put them first  
YOU tell the lies  
YOU hold the cards  
But no matter how I beg ...  
YOU refuse  
YOU have this on your conscience.  
And hopefully...one day YOU will have to explain your choices to OUR child.)

OUR child

by KH



# Love denied

by Maxine Stanford

I love him, immeasurably.  
My soul cries for a love denied,  
A love kept away by my mind,  
Hidden, locked, deep inside.  
Betrayed by a tear occasionally,  
Witnessed only by my reflection  
Looking back at me.  
To dance openly with that love,  
And not just in my head.  
To experience the emotion  
Of two hearts entwined.  
To feel alive,  
Instead of dead.  
Fear of hurt denies you heaven,  
Fear of pain denies you what could be,  
An Immeasurable love,  
Reciprocated.



# Pondering the question of love

by Alison Geeson

Who is love?

What is love?

When is love?

Where is love?

Why is love?

The answers may lie deep within the hearts of those that have found love, loved, felt loved, lost love or tasted by those looking to find love.

A pondering poem from one who has dipped in and out of all these worlds of love.



# 1

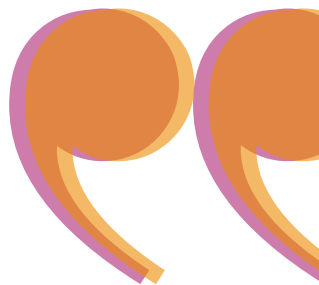
by Arun Paul Kapur

We face a state of inhabitation  
More than ever we face isolation  
The world rages in panic and they knock down  
Upon a virus spread in hysteria we drown  
Time of testing, a time to reveal true colour  
What is love without being true to the other.  
A power brought to shine light on who is real  
Those ready to fight, those ready to steal.

No room or space for the mean  
The greatest of life can not be seen  
Not through sight, flight or fight  
Inner within is a foundation of might  
States of mine lay under the sun in shelter  
Things will not now be as they once were.  
The locust swarm and clear poison crop.  
A time of unparalleled beauty  
A smile is now seen for it's worth  
We are now returning back to the earth  
We begin a time for us to connect  
Not a time for us to emotionally dissect  
We shall rejoice upon our precious land  
Time will stay with us as you begin to offer a spiritual hand  
Blown away like the wind we forgot about  
A saviour from the distance is closer than ever  
The isolation is merely to protect but also is our freedom.  
Free spirit will soar again one day.  
But you found your home here and you are welcome to stay.

# 2

by Arun Paul Kapur



Like a bullet to my brain  
Love shot fast and left us in pain  
The reason you left I shall never blame  
You showed me love in self to reign  
I hope one day you will see you have everything to gain  
Apart for the first time  
Left in bits and broken grime  
The clock has struck it's light chime  
You may never truly see what you did to me  
All I know is I want you to finally feel free  
I now discompose like a withered rose  
I shall never forget the battles you stood against all enemies and  
foes  
Broken you may be but all I see was a beautiful smile  
Please hear me and don't let love turn into bile.  
You are the only one and ever been  
You are the only one who made me feel seen  
You are the only one who made me feel heard  
You are the only one who never followed the herd  
You are the only one who I felt true  
You are the only one who I saw my future with and through  
They said man up.  
They said toughen.  
They said don't cry.  
Quietly inside I asked but why?  
Why should I hide tears for a lie?  
Am I being fair them , if I ignore their feelings and many a voice  
I deny They are living.  
They are breathing.  
They cry too.  
They struggle and suffer as like me or you.  
They want to be free to fly.  
May they be welcome to speak and live to rise high. No more  
shall we call for them to be manly.  
For the damage done can be uncanny.  
To let them speak, to let them talk.  
Together side by side, this life we shall hand in hand walk.

# 3

by Arun Paul Kapur

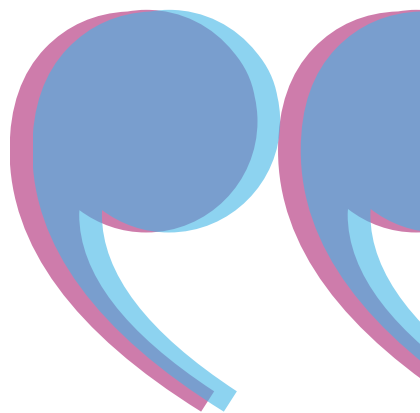


The sounds of the city – Wolverhampton  
We.  
We the working class.  
Never assume by our colourful characters we are simply crass.  
Stories a plenty.  
Many a lives we've lived and the higher have seen.  
Just because we are not privileged, means not we are less a  
human being.  
An opportunity to believe and that includes us too.  
Hear our voices unsilenced  
We are working class through and through  
The roaring wolfpack amongst the golden glory  
The everyday folk that each tell an enchanting story  
An array of beautiful languages from for wide and far  
Each person makes this house a home no matter deemed how  
quirky or bizzare  
A city of unity amongst all walks of the community  
From orange chips to a mixed grill  
If you look close enough, you will find true beauty in stand still  
From the market to the scenes  
This city will have you wondering by all means  
A saying going in cometh the darkness cometh the light  
Praise be our city of wolves , forever we unite  
A city that has born many an artist  
Though in stature we may not be the largest or seemed the  
smartest  
One thing for sure is we crack a smile even amongst times of the  
hardest  
From shops around the world to hidden gems to see  
Here you find will find a place to belong in this city x

# Acceptance walks with me

by Maxine Stanford

I am not who I want to be.  
I am not who I used to be.  
My path has changed,  
I have been blown off course.  
There is no map that I can use,  
No signpost to follow,  
Or lights to guide my way.  
But resilience and strength walk with me,  
Encouraging me on my journey.  
Acceptance holds my hand,  
And whispers in my ear.  
Reminding me of how far I've come,  
The achievements I have made.  
The milestones I have gained,  
On this road I have found myself upon.  
Accept she says, and just be,  
say proudly;  
I am me!





# Butterfly

by Maxine Stanford

The Butterfly has but a few days to make its' mark,  
A fleeting moment in time.  
It flits from plant to plant,  
Caressing each flowers' heart as it goes,  
A pollinator, a creator of life.  
An image of beauty short lived.

A symbol of spring,  
Of warm Summer days.  
In the blink of an eye, it passes by.  
A visual gift to store in our minds,  
To remember in the dark and cold times.



# My aunt from the Black Country

by Maxine Stanford

She speaks with a dialect that sings.  
Her voice has a musical lilt,  
It rises and falls with every word as she talks,  
Mesmerising; the most beautiful sound I have heard.  
I can't really say I understand all that is said,  
Like musical notes the words dance around in my head.  
On leaving her home, a phrase that she says,  
“Keep aht ‘oss rowad ma wench,”  
Finds me looking at Dad for some help.  
“That’s Black Country for bye,” he says with a laugh and a wink.



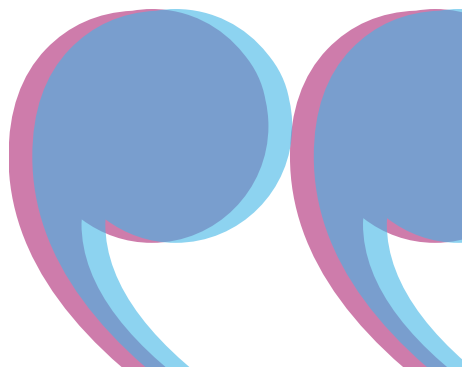
# Another place – 'recovery'

by Insa Shane

Soon, all this will be behind you  
At first, you'll look back briefly  
And then you'll realise you're in another place  
A safe space filled with love and grace  
And in case you yet still await  
Just remember you are so great

Soon, all this will be behind you  
A new chapter in your life with laughter, happiness, joy...  
So don't give up  
Keep your chin up  
You are on the road to recovery

Be a beacon of hope to others  
Inspire them with your words  
You never know, you may save someone from their painful  
troubles  
So be the one who inspires and lifts up others...  
You are on the road to recovery



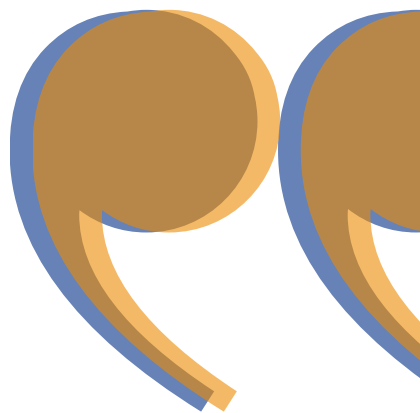
# Inspiration

by Chris

Inspired by two different sides  
I must devote my life to this rhythm and flow  
One side repetitive darkness, one a glorious sunshine and glow

Interpretation of each other's mind  
Can make the best of us, all mankind  
Like plant life we all change, amplify and grow  
Unfortunately we all believe in what we show

To an extent we would lay our lives  
It's up to you now how it goes and who survives  
Please make the right decision as nature is cruel  
Needed as some men will shovel and be happy on a stool



# Rowan

by Chris

Rowan was a person we did not get to know  
But we can all imagine watching him blossom and grow  
This news hit us all, as its evident to show  
We all expressed our emotions and tried to come to terms with  
the fact  
To try to understand in their shoes the impact  
As we hope they later can be at peace and try to reflect  
The moments will always be raw in fact  
The moments short in his first act  
We hope they later come to treasure them and come to see  
He was beautiful, perfect, Rowan he will always be

Our thoughts and our prayers which we all lend  
We wish we could help or possibly mend

I hope that empathy comes from comfort of love  
In times I hope they later can see him reincarnated flying as a  
free searing dove to look down at his family from above



# Another place

by Alison Geeson



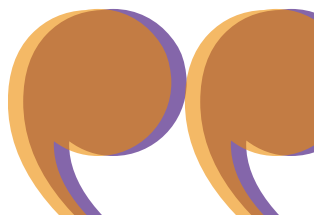
Another place, where might this be?  
Found it in the warm embrace of mountains and sea.  
In years gone by, I have driven straight through,  
Much greater things than this sleepy town to pursue,

Only this time my inner desire to slow down the pace.  
Made me take a look at another place  
Sun, sea, sands, stunning sun sets,  
This is as good as it gets.

The 'burning' orange reflection of sun on sea.  
Has intensely impacted on the appreciative me,  
Life is not a race,  
Take a slower pace.


Be embraced by the peace and tranquility of places you have missed,  
When you find one, put it on your list,  
To return, reflect, restore.  
To breathe in nature galore.

My another place is now 'my place',  
Off I will be to find another place, a hidden gem to embrace.




# Celebration – It's all about the cake

by Alison Geeson



Amidst a backdrop of stress and crazy nation,  
How can we navigate celebration?  
Well, it's all about the cake  
Readymade or scrumptious home bake!  
Reflecting on life's stages of cake  
Brings the theme of celebration awake  
The christening cake, white icing and baby joy,  
First year birthday cake, bursting with colour and toy  
The childhood years of hope for a cake with flickering candle  
So much fun with friends to handle  
The teenage years of cake time cringe and show  
When parents insist that candles you must blow  
The significant years of our cake history  
16,21,the decades,20,30,40,50,60,70,80,90, 100, mystery  
What flavour might it be?  
Chocolate, vanilla, lemon, raspberry, strawberry?  
Will there be sprinkles, jam and butter cream?  
If so, smiling faces will beam  
Remember those you hold so dear  
Enjoying cake on an anniversary year  
Pearl, ruby, golden, diamond, losing count  
The cakes of celebration through a lifetime mount  
It's all about the cake or may be not  
Perhaps more about the memories surrounding cakes we may  
have forgot  
Celebration theme, a different take  
It's all about the cake memories we can make  
So take a quiet cake memory five  
Revisit your cake and bring celebration alive!



# Carrie, my favourite flower

by Kate Pritchard

When I think of you, which is often, I see lavender  
Your arms full of fragrant, purple flowers  
A gift from your garden, your church

You shared your flowers and your wisdom  
You shared yourself, generously

Your friendship, like the warmth of the sun  
Dancing over us all; energy and life

For a moment I forget you are no longer here  
When I remember, the sadness overwhelms

Slowly, I remember the warmth of your sun  
Your energy, your beauty, your smile

I hear you 'Cut back your lavender'  
So I do

My gift from my garden, my church  
Is gratitude

For your kindness, your friendship, your love

You are no longer here, you are everywhere  
In every seed, every bud, every flower

Sadness fades, joy remains

Carrie, you will always be my favourite flower

Dedicated to my beautiful friend Carrie, September 1973–  
December 2022. A keen gardener and poetry lover, Carrie wrote  
her own poem about her garden 'This is my church' which was  
read at her funeral.





# It worked

by JezPoetic



Intimate, informative but not intrusive  
Thought-provoking but still conclusive  
Wellbeing focused yet open-ended  
Organised at short notice, but well attended  
Rekindled and revealed passion for the art  
Killed the myth that staff have no heart  
Evidenced the courage to vulnerably share  
Dared us to continue this form of care

It worked is an acrostic poem; a poem where the first letter of each line spells out a word, message or the alphabet. It worked was written about our poetry group.



# Help in a crisis

It's always OK to ask for help

A mental health crisis is when you feel your mental health is at breaking point, and you need urgent help and support. However you experience a crisis, it's always OK to ask for help.

There is more information on our website:

[blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/contact-us/help-crisis](https://blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/contact-us/help-crisis)

Our mental health support phone line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is available to Black Country residents of all ages.

Call 0800 008 6516 or text message 07860 025 281.

# Safety plan

A tool to help keep you well

A safety plan includes what and who might support you in a crisis; particularly when you are thinking about suicide. It may include techniques to distract you, what to do in an emergency and reminders of positive parts of your life you want to hold onto.

Safety plans are brief and easy to read. You write them in your own words, and they can help you feel more in control.

Learn more on our website:

[blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/help-advice/safety-planning](https://blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/help-advice/safety-planning)

# Brighter Lives

## Support our charity

Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust provides specialist mental health, learning disability, and community healthcare services for the population of the Black Country.

Black Country Brighter Lives is the registered charity for the Trust. It exists to add extra value to the services that we are funded to provide to our patients, their families and our amazing staff that care for them.

This might be through enhancing treatment and recovery of our patients and making their stay more comfortable, supporting the health and wellbeing of the people that use our services, enhancing the buildings and grounds of the facilities where we deliver care, supporting vital research and training or providing activities for patients and their families on the wards or in the community.

Learn more about our charity on our website:  
[blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/support-our-charity](https://blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/support-our-charity)

If you have enjoyed reading this poetry book please consider a donation to our (Un)spoken word charity campaign. Your contribution will go towards funding more creative activities with service users, patients, carers, families, staff and the communities we serve.

Donate at: [justgiving.com/campaign/unspokenword](https://justgiving.com/campaign/unspokenword)

bchft.communications@nhs.net

# Feeling inspired

Write your own poems here

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# UNSPOKEN WORD

