

Introduction

This social value report represents the **Support Life Art Exhibition**, and explores the significance of delivering a project relating to the importance of maintaining good mental health. A project that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all people that make up our community, explores the tragedy and impact of suicide through the mediums of **Art, Music, Film, Poetry and Performance** and acknowledges the social value of delivering a suicide prevention 'freely available to all' public service.

Throughout **November 2019** from Tuesday 5th until Saturday 30th **Real Arts Workshops**¹ (RAW) successfully delivered the **Support Life Exhibition** from the **Light House Media Centre**² in Wolverhampton. **Real Arts Workshops** (RAW) create high-quality and innovative Art, Craft and Music workshops to meet with the educational, welfare and recreational needs of people that live in the Black Country. As such, **RAW** deliver public value projects, which support in developing resilient and confident communities that are a good place to live.



The **Support Life Exhibition** was commissioned by **Dr Paul Darke**, chief executive of **Outside Centre**³. The said charitable organization works with the social model of disability. Its primary objective is to recognize and respect the nature of disability through the **Arts, Media and Culture** while promoting the importance of education, good health and well beingness.

Paul Darke created the highly successful **'Wolves in Wolves'** sculpture trail which ran from July to September 2017 as supported by Wolverhampton City Council and Wolverhampton's Business Improvement District (BID) and 'celebrate' a Big Lottery funding initiative.

The purpose of the sculpture trail was to promote public engagement with Art and Culture while providing educational, economic and public health benefits. Further to the event the Wolf sculptures generated **£35,000+** at auction. The said finance was distributed among the Mayor's selected charities. The **'Support Life Wolf'** created by **Alex Vann** (one of RAW's directors) was included in the 'Wolves in Wolves' sculpture trail, and continues to be present in the grounds of **Wolverhampton University Millennium building**. The said sculpture provided inspiration when naming the **Support Life Exhibition**, which is the subject of this social value report, and is dedicated to Alex's close friend, the late musician and social activist **Rich McMahon**.



1. RAW is an independent Arts workshops provider in Wolverhampton. Website: www.realartsworkshops.co.uk

2. Light House Media Centre <https://light-house.co.uk> Supports Arts and Culture exhibitions and educational events in the Chubb Buildings, Wolverhampton. Registered Charity Number 1146547

3. Outside Centre <https://www.digital-disability.com/> works extensively with Wolverhampton's 'Arena Theatre'. Registered Charity Number 1117578

The aim of RAW's **Support Life Exhibition** was to **raise public awareness about the importance of maintaining good mental health, what it is to be suicidal and suicide prevention services for people living in the Black Country.** The said meets with the current **National Suicide Prevention Strategy**⁴. The exhibition drew upon local experience, and people who have been affected by suicide, personally attempted or in the people they know and care about.



Brendan Hawthorne, watched by Rich McMahon

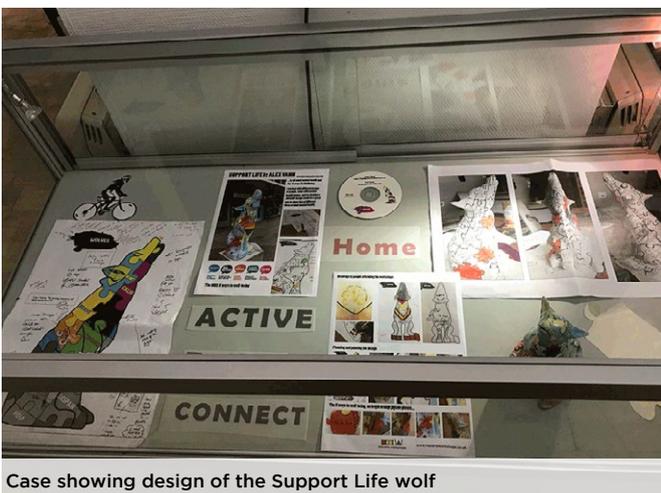
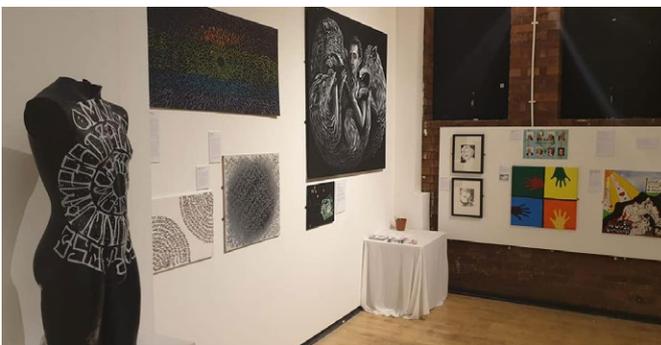
Exhibits from artists local to **Wolverhampton** and the **Black Country** took centre stage; including **paintings, drawings, photography, sculpture, graphic design, prints, illustration, poetry and film.**

University of Wolverhampton alumni were well represented in several of the exhibits and also by **Councillor Claire Darke**, currently Mayor of Wolverhampton. Her involvement and support throughout the exhibition promoted civic engagement and ensured the exhibition was recognized and established as being of significant public value.

As such, the **Support Life Exhibition** surpassed expectations in meeting with its aims. The exhibition had a high public attendance and the feedback given by participants of workshops and members of the public benefiting from the exhibition's 'free to view' presence, is positive. A feedback overview is given during the **'Context and Social Value'** section of this report.



Gary O'Dowd, Cllr Claire Darke, Paul Darke, Alex Vann



Case showing design of the Support Life wolf



Mayor Of Wolverhampton Claire Darke with Bally Barquer and her work

4. Preventing suicide in England <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk> a cross-government outcomes strategy to save lives

Alongside the displayed art and sculptures **The Support Life Art Exhibition** included live workshops and performances, which were delivered by **Real Arts Workshop** directors **Alex Vann** and **Gary O'Dowd**, alongside local Arts & Music professionals. The dates and information relating to the activities delivered are as follows:

08 November 2019

Official Launch by the Mayor of Wolverhampton Councillor Claire Darke. Local actor and social activist **Tonia Daley-Campbell** emceed the event. Poet **Brendan Hawthorne** and musician **Alex Vann** performed material specific to the cause of suicide awareness and prevention and explained the purposes of the **Support Life Exhibition** available to the public during the coming four weeks.



Tonia Campbell and Alex Vann

12 November 2019

Honesty Portraits workshop delivered by **Alex Vann** and **Gary O'Dowd**. Members of the public designed and painted **3D Emotion Masks**, designed to support their ability to express how they really feel. The young local artist **Becky Lawley** brought forward the idea for '**Honesty Portraits**' as given from her personal understanding of the significance of maintaining good mental health and how sometimes people present the appearance of good health, when their actual experience is one of unhappiness and despair. Both she and her sister, aged 12 years, had their work included in the **Support Life Exhibition**.



Artist Bridie Green



Young Artists at 'Honesty Portraits' Workshop

16 November 2019

5 ways to Wellbeing poster design workshop delivered by Alex Vann and Gary O'Dowd. Using the NHS initiative '**5 ways to wellbeing**'⁵ as a basis for creatively expressing what we each can do to improve our mental well beingness.

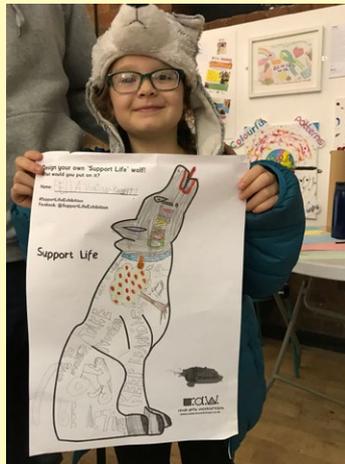


'Honesty Portraits' and '5 Ways to Well Being' Workshops

5 NHS UK - 5 steps to mental well-being web url: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/> The listed steps are; connect with other people; be physically active; learn new skills; give to and support others; pay attention to the present moment through practicing mindfulness

23 November 2019

'Wolves in Wolves' Support Life Wolf Design Inspired by the original 'Support Life Wolf' designed by RAW director **Alex Vann**. Members of the public were encouraged to create the design for a **'Wolves in Wolves'⁶** sculpture with the theme of the importance of maintaining good mental health, suicide and suicide prevention.



27 November 2019

Support Life Exhibition Round Up Hosted by RAW director, local artist and musician **Alex Vann**. Poetry and Music performance by **Brendan Hawthorne, Billy Spakemon** and **'The Dissenters'⁷**. The performances explored the impact of poor mental health, the inability to participate in society, the impact created by suicide and the importance of suicide prevention. The performances were done in memory of the late **Rich McMahon⁸**; who took his own life in 2015. Rich was a creative and admired member of our community. Additionally he organised public performances with the **SIFA Fireside's** vulnerable service users.



Performers at the Performance Evening with Claire Darke



Billy Spakemon



Deirdre Maguire



Members of The Dissenters with John Napier and Alex Vann, perform the songs of Rich McMahon



Rich McMahon
Photo ©Justyna Bansal

6 Wolves in Wolves sculpture trail web url: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolves_in_Wolves The largest public art event Wolverhampton has presented to date, ran between July-September 2017

7 The Dissenters are a group of vulnerably housed people who attend a drop in centre at SIFA Fireside in Birmingham, web url: <https://www.sifafireside.co.uk>

8 The late Rich McMahon web url: <https://www.richmcmahon.com> Irish song writer and musician, originally from Coventry. He produced socially conscious songs with themes of "identity and borders, the personal and the political" and raised public awareness about social issues.

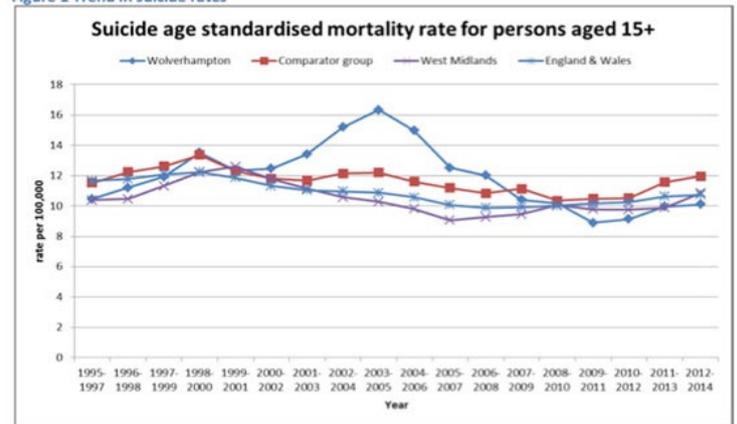
Context and Social Value

In England, one person dies every two hours as a result of suicide. National figures determine that at least ten people living in England attempt to end their own lives within every two hours.

There were 6,859 suicides in the UK and Republic of Ireland in 2018. One in four (26%) of young people in the UK experience suicidal thoughts; the majority of which seek support from their peers, health professionals and public services while trying to stay alive and be well. The highest rates of suicide in the UK, and England happens among men aged 45-49 years⁹. In the UK, suicide rates among young people have been increasing in recent years; the suicide rate for young females is now at its highest rate on record.

In terms of how this impacts upon the city of Wolverhampton the overall (persons) suicide rate is the same as the England average. This said, the rate for adult males is higher than average (e.g. 15.9 per 100,000 in Wolverhampton compared to 14.1 per 100,000 people in England). The risk of suicide increases with 'depression severity', and 'poverty and deprivation' also exacerbates the rate of suicide. As such, over half of Wolverhampton's population represent the most deprived 20% in England, and the prevalence of depression is higher than the national average. Homelessness is higher in Wolverhampton than elsewhere nationally, which research has suggested multiplies the risk of attempting suicide by nine.

Figure 1 Trend in suicide rates



Source: Wolverhampton Public Health Intelligence Team

Further, non-heterosexual sexual orientation people are high risk with the greatest risk being in homosexual men due to the discrimination that these groups may experience.¹⁰

According to current government strategy, a suicide safer community that sees people adequately supported towards those ends requires collaborative practice between organisations and stakeholders. Organisations like Outside Centre, Wolverhampton's City Mayors Office and Real Arts Workshops, coming together to support and deliver public services. Services, which actively support the prevention of suicide, promote public education and awareness, provide support to those affected by suicide, and promote the maintenance of good mental health and wellbeing of all citizens.

When suicide strikes, the effect upon people close to them and the wider community is devastating. In keeping with national suicide strategy Wolverhampton's **Support Life Exhibition** sought to involve the wider community and individuals whose lives have been affected by the suicide of family, friends, neighbours or colleagues.

⁹ Samaritans 'suicide statistics report':

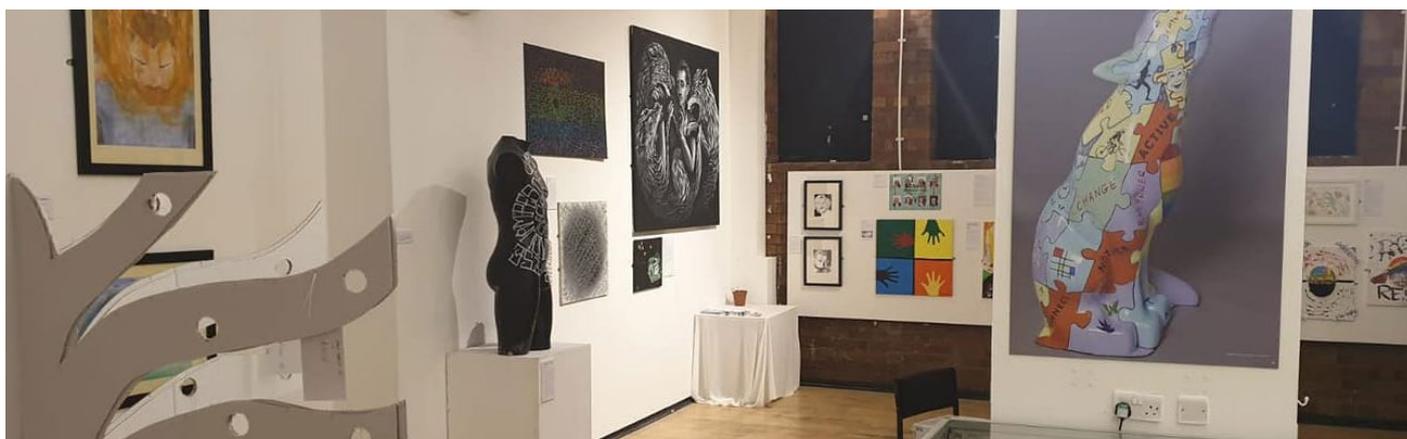
https://media.samaritans.org/documents/SamaritansSuicideStatsReport_2019_Dec19_compressed.pdf Latest statistics for the UK and Republic of Ireland (Dec 2019) pg.3, pg.5

¹⁰ Wolverhampton Suicide Prevention Strategy 2016-2020

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/wolverhampton/asch/files/making_wolverhampton_a_suicide_safer_community.pdf pg. 2, 3, 5

The Support Life Exhibition:

- Promoted awareness and understanding about the value and importance of maintaining good mental health amongst the general population.
- Exhibited creative works to explore the impact of poor mental health, as expressed by local people it affects most greatly.
- Raised awareness about the presence of public services, which actively support people affected by suicide and compromised mental health.
- Ensured civic engagement through the active participation of the Mayor's office.
- Explored the impact of suicide as directly experienced through the mediums of the Creative Arts, Media and Music.
- Was delivered inclusively to any person, in a highly accessible location developed specifically for the purposes of engagement with Art and cultural activities.
- Raised money for the **Mayor of Wolverhampton's Charitable Fund** through sales of artwork, Support Life tattoos and by money raised from Alex Vann, Olivia Vann and Gary O'Dowd's involvement in Wolverhampton Marathon sponsored events.



The Support Life Exhibition included:

- Creative works of Art by **thirty two** individual artists currently living within the Black Country. Eight of which were works created by students from HMP Oakwood. There were two pieces of 'deaf art' and the individual workshops were British Sign Language (BSL) interpreted. Additionally, RAW directors Alex Vann and Gary O'Dowd created a Support Life Exhibition information video in BSL with subtitles.
- Featured artist's age ranged from **12 years** to upwards of **50 years**. The exhibition was open to all Artists from society, it was all-inclusive and in keeping with equalities and diversity legislation. As such the exhibition had a fair representation of ethnic groups, gender, disability and LGBT.
- Members of the public were actively encouraged to participate in the exhibition impromptu by presenting their own art in a Creative Corner on readily available notice boards.



A **Tree of Hope** sculpture was available for members of the public to write 'wish-tags' regarding their thoughts about suicide, how suicide impacts upon their lives, and suicide prevention ideas. Visiting members of the public wrote wish-tags and hung them on the Tree of Hope sculpture throughout the month that the exhibition was active.



Councillor Claire Darke - Mayor of Wolverhampton 2019/20 puts the first tag on the Tree Of Hope



A **Signposting Area** presenting information leaflets and posters from local and national organisations that are involved in delivering public services to those affected by suicide and suicide prevention. Relevant information was also presented on the wall throughout the exhibition.

Featured organisations included:

- **Papyrus:** prevention of young suicide, confidential support and practical advice to young people struggling with thoughts of suicide (and others affected by it) through a helpline 'HOPELineUK'. Papyrus also provide training related to suicide prevention and actively support suicide prevention projects.

<https://papyrus-uk.org/hopelineuk/>

- **The Kaleidoscope Plus Group:** works to promote and support positive health and wellbeing. Kaleidoscope provides suicide bereavement support services to people living in the Black Country.

www.kaleidoscopeplus.org.uk



- **Samaritans:** is a volunteer led suicide prevention service that provides a free telephone helpline to offer 'listening and support' to people and communities in times of need and crisis. Samaritans seek to prevent crisis. Every six seconds in every 24 hours, Samaritans answer a call for help from someone in need of support from another person. Samaritans gives people ways to cope and, through their volunteer schemes, supports in developing the skills to be there for others. The Samaritans office in Wolverhampton is 54, Newhampton Rd West.

www.samaritans.org or email jo@samaritans.org



For Samaritans Wolverhampton, call 116 123 free from any phone, 24 hours per day 365 days of the year, or visit its office at 54 Newhampton Road West, log on to www.samaritans.org or email jo@samaritans.org.

- **Childline:** is a freely available, private and confidential service which enables young people opportunity to talk about their worries and fears. It encourages children and young people to reach out via telephone or the internet whenever they feel they need help and provides 1-2-1 counsellor online chat support.

www.childline.org.uk



Childline - 24-hour support for individuals under 19:
www.childline.org.uk
or call 0800 1111

- **The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM):** provide suicide prevention frontline and bereavement support services. It includes a free and confidential helpline and webchat support.

www.thecalmzone.net



Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM):
www.thecalmzone.net
or call 0800 58 58 58

- **The Deaf Health Charity SignHealth:** help deaf BSL people of all ages and backgrounds, which have varying health needs. SignHealth actively campaign on behalf of deaf/blind and people with usher-syndrome.

www.signhealth.org.uk



SignHealth - BSL Healthy Minds:
www.signhealth.org.uk
or call 01494 687 606
or text 07966 976 747

- **Deaf 4 Deaf Counselling and Psychotherapy:** D4D is a team of deaf mental health counsellors and therapists. It supports the mental health of deaf people that are in personal difficulty, including those who experience suicidal tendencies or are in need of bereavement counselling.

www.deaf4deaf.com



We are a counselling and psychotherapy service for deaf people, we accept private or NHS funding in some regions.
<https://www.deaf4deaf.com/>
Textphone: 07736 835445

- **Zebra Access:** provides support and services in Wolverhampton to ensure all deaf and hard-of-hearing people enjoy equal participation in society without communication barriers.

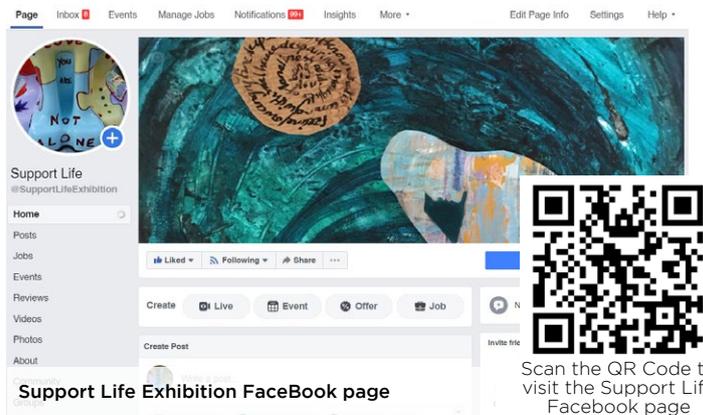
www.zebra-access.com



Members of the public attending the **Light House Media Centre** for other purposes (e.g. the cinema, café, public meetings) during the month of November found the **Support Life Exhibition** fully inclusive and accessible to them.

All members of the public were invited via word of mouth, social media and ongoing RAW workshops to exhibit their own Artistic effort on the theme of suicide and suicide prevention.

To inform and encourage public attendance, news about the **Support Life Exhibition**, Workshops and Public Performances were advertised on Eventbrite on a dedicated Facebook page¹¹; the Real Arts Workshops website (which includes a Support Life Blog¹²); an **Express and Star** newspaper article, the **'Milk Bar'** podcast and **WCR 101.8** Chris Allen's Sunday radio show. Additionally, the exhibition events were recorded on video and are available for viewing on Real Arts Workshops **YouTube** channel¹³.



Scan the QR Code to visit the Support Life Facebook page

Event organisers know of at least one person who was significantly affected due to visiting the exhibition; viewing the Art and information relating to suicide encouraged her to seek professional help to alleviate her own feelings of depression and suicidal thoughts.

The social impact the exhibition created can be gauged through the **seventy** completed tags on the **'Tree of Hope'**, and **thirty-four** Feedback Statements members of the public were invited to leave in an exhibition comments book. Public statements are included later in this report. An unrelated **'City Voices'** poetry and music event happened in the gallery space during the exhibition and **thirty-five** audience members were interested in the work.

Learners use art to help prevent suicides

CILENE TANAKA
<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/2020/11/05/learners-use-art-to-help-prevent-suicides/>

Learners from Oakwood prison are exhibiting their art to help prevent suicide.

The exhibition at the Light House Media Centre, in Wolverhampton, also includes the work of a variety of artists, poets, and photographers, books, films and performances.

Mayor Claire Darke attended the launch and the exhibition will be open until November 30 with the support of Oakdale Centre and created by Real Arts Workshops (RAW).

Alex Stone, UK owner of RAW said about curating the work of Oakwood inmates: "We have their a valid interest in suicide prevention and we know that there's a high number of suicides in Oakwood."

Project

Oakwood prison was rated second-most suicidal institution in the country last August.

Oakwood's high index of suicide made national news in the past.

The art project at Oakwood has the rehabilitation of inmates at its core, so they prefer to refer to them as "learners".

Vann said: "I've noticed that 'inmate' is a social media bad. For those corrected by prison staff, it's actually better to call them learners because they're learning skills within prison; they're learning, hopefully, a better way to live life, as opposed to 'inmate' where it's something final."

Among the artists in the first Wolverhampton Post Laureate, Emma For-

Exhibition curators, left to right, Alex Vann, and Gary O'Donnell, born of Wolverhampton, at the Light House Media Centre above. Alex said: "What I've been blown away by is the diversity. Some of the artists struggle with mental health and art is a very good way of reaching people and it's a story of hope. There's light at the end of the tunnel when you're depressed."

A few works will be available for sale, and 49 per cent of earnings will go to the mayor's charities, including the Wolverhampton Suicide Prevention Stakeholders Forum. Many events will take place over the duration of the exhibition and the full program is available here: [The Light House Media Centre is based in the Chubb Buildings, Fyfe Street.](https://www.lighthousemedia.com/)

Express and Star

When the exhibition ended, 40% of the finance accrued from the sale of any artwork went to the Mayor's charities. Additionally, Ben Vann designed some 'Support Life Tattoos', 50% of the proceeds accrued were also donated to the Mayor's charities.



Jason Forrest's interview with Alex and Gary was broadcast on the 'Milk Bar' podcast Facebook page with in-vision BSL interpretation

11 Support Life Exhibition Facebook Page, web url: www.facebook.com/SupportLifeExhibition/ the page includes pictures, videos, radio program, news article,

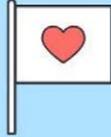
12 Support Life Blog (Jan 2020) <https://www.realartsworkshops.co.uk/blog--news/archives/01-2020>

13 Real Arts Workshops YouTube Channel, web url: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmuIArtxp_fjuz5x-Msuh_A live performances from the Support Life Exhibition include: 'Beauty All Around', 'Making Notes', 'You Shine On' (Jan 2020)

'INFO GRAPHIC'

The following Info-Graphic illustrates what the 'Support Life Exhibition' represents in terms of public value and social policy:

Support Life Exhibition Info-Graphic



Encourage Public Understanding about Suicide, and Suicide Prevention



Raising Awareness Suicide Support Services for people living in the Black Country



Inclusivity and Open Dialogue about the importance of good mental health



Encouraging all people to express their ideas about suicide via Art, Media and Music



Civic engagement with the Mayors Office, Collaborative practice between 'Outside Centre' and Real Arts Workshops

w: www.RealArtsWorkshops.co.uk
e: RealArtsWorkshops@gmail.com

Examples of Direct Feedback 1

A **'Comments Book'** was available for all people attending the Support Life Exhibition.

The following represents some of the feedback people gave relating to their experience of viewing the exhibits and attending the Art Workshops and Music Performances.

"This exhibition has been wonderfully put together.

Such thought provoking pieces, candour and creative expression. *It's* incredibly encouraging to see and read these artworks.

Thanks to everyone exhibiting. As a suicide attempt survivor *I'm* very moved and happy to see such open dialogue."

Anonymous

"Brilliant!

Work that comes from the heart!

Keep fighting, keep being creative, keep embracing your dark and bright sides and communicating with the audience... *the people.*

Thank you!"

Anonymous

"Support Life... Life Support.

We need to work together. Thank you for hosting a thoughtful and positive exhibition.

I am very grateful to visit."

Adult Male

"This is a really beautiful and thought provoking exhibition which I am sure will inspire many visitors.

I hope to see another exhibition like *this one soon"*

Adult Female

"Remembering those that took the step.

And those we supported to step away and embrace life."

Adult Male

“So expressive!

It means a lot having dealt with these problems with my late husband, it certainly brought it home to me.

It was certainly out of the darkness, into the light for me.

Thank you for your powerful *sentiments, so brilliantly done*”

P.Ball (Adult Female)

“Very moving and powerful exhibition showing work from all walks of life.

Inspirational!”

Anonymous

“*Thought provoking* exhibition, which illustrates to me that many of us (perhaps most) live life ‘*keeping the lid on*’ *anxiety and depression*, which is sometimes caused without knowing why we feel such a condition.

***Keep up the good work*”**

Adult Male

“*Inspiring exhibition*, moving subject matter. *Thank you*”

Anonymous

“*Great work on the exhibition!*

It was interesting to see how each of the artists expressed the themes of the exhibition in a very different way.

Hopefully people in need of support will find solace in knowing the artists struggle with these negative feelings *as well... they are not alone*”

Keep it up!

Adult Female

“Interesting exhibition as I attempted suicide this summer.

It makes me think about what damage I would have left behind, and what my Mum and colleagues would have had to deal with.

***Encouraging*”**

Anonymous

“*Dedicated to Chris and James, gone but not forgotten. Loved, but never lost*”

Adult Male

“What a lovely warm vibe tonight!

I loved the way it brought so many people together.

And the exhibition is moving and thought provoking.

It is important for us to learn about these stories.

Brings hope”

Anonymous

“Thank you so much for allowing me to be part of this amazing and beautiful exhibition about mental health and suicide prevention!

Thanks to Alex, everyone and the Artists involved.

The artwork is absolutely stunning. Deep and real.

Everyone has a story. It brings together the beauty of people.

It allows us to acknowledge and overcome the stigma of suicide”

Adult Female

“Fantastic exhibition!

Well done to Alex and his team for bringing together such fantastic artworks for this amazing collection.

I'm honoured to be a part of it, and hope that The Lighthouse continues exhibiting work for other great causes in the future.”

Adult Female

“What a brilliant job you've done: bringing so many different people together to share their experiences and solidarity.

Fantastic community exhibition, really worth a visit.”

Becky, Andy and Emma

“A lot of people do hide behind a smile.

It is good to communicate with one another and be open, because we all at time need one another”

Anonymous

“A great exhibition and phenomenal resources. I will be using them in school next week.

Thank you for the help you have provided. Keep up the good work.”

Anonymous

“Quite inspirational!

***People’s views on their mental health
and how they express themselves”***

Adult Female

***“Any form of performance that
highlights the issues we as a
community tend to ignore has to be a
benefit to us all.***

**Music, Word, Art are always the most
powerful to engage and educate.**

Bostin!

B.Spakemon (Adult Male)

“Fantastic exhibition!

Uplifting and inspirational.

Thanks for the information”

S.Baines

“Well done Alex and Gary!

This is fantastic.

**Thank you for inviting us to
contribute.**

I hope we have done you proud.”

HMP Oakwood

“Incredible exhibition!

**As someone who has attempted
suicide multiple times, it’s so amazing
to be in a room full of people who
understand, support and encourage
recovery, as well as sharing their
experiences.**

Beautiful artwork!”

Adult Male

***“Wonderful and thought provoking
collection of work and performances.***

Thank you for sharing.”

S.Lavender (Adult Female)

Examples of Direct Feedback

TREE OF HOPE

The following represents the statements visiting members of the public made related to 'Suicide Awareness and Prevention'; their thoughts and advice.



“Have Faith, in You”

“Always stay positive”

“Dreams always come true”

“Love everyone, not just yourself”

“Be kind to yourself. Always smile”

“There is always someone near. Never think you have to be alone. Take a brave step and say, ‘I need help’”

“My wish is for more support in mental health instead of just being forgotten about on a very long waiting list! Also for Doctors to understand that tablets do not cure mental health disorders”

“Things will be alright in the end. If they're not alright, it probably isn't the end”

“My wish is for us all to have a deserved peace of mind, with love to all”

“I (like you) am gifted with LIFE, TALENT and GOODNESS... may society change in support of our expression of the good”

“I hope everyone finds Peace and their turning point in life”

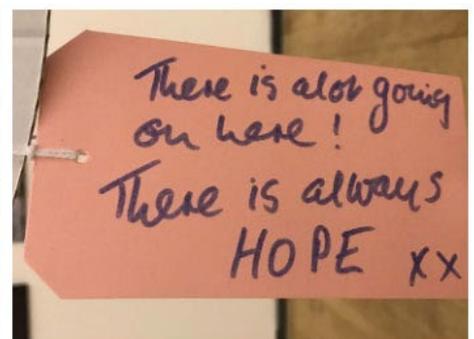
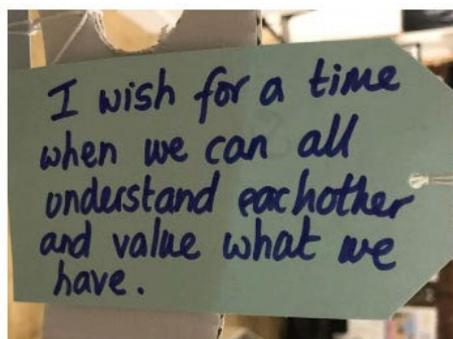
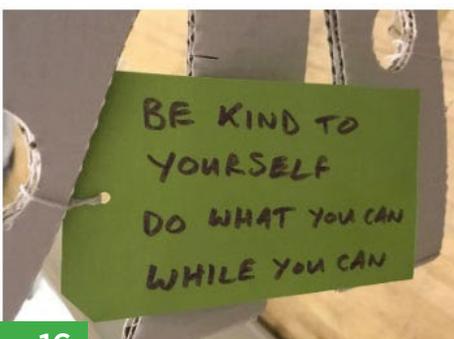
“Always remember, you are somebody else's world” “We have days when we are triggers, and others when we are everyone. That's OK... that's fine... that's me. Deal with it” xxx

“I wish for a time when we can all understand each other, and value what we have”

“My wish is for everyone to be allowed the freedom to be who they truly are...”

“Don't stop believing”

“Let's all work together to help each other through hard times. Love is all we need”



“My wish is ‘Equality for All’”

“All the world is a stage. Be yourself”

“My wish is for everyone to be listened to by someone”

“My wish, as Chair of Wolverhampton’s ‘Suicide Prevention Forum’ is that my home city is the first in the UK to see zero suicides. One life taken, is one too many. If you are struggling... YOU MATTER. We judge ourselves far more harshly than we would anyone else. BE KIND TO YOURSELF”

“This exhibition makes me think about feeling happy and being positive”

“I hope for a world where self-healing is the norm. A world where we are free to speak our truth and feel safe doing so”

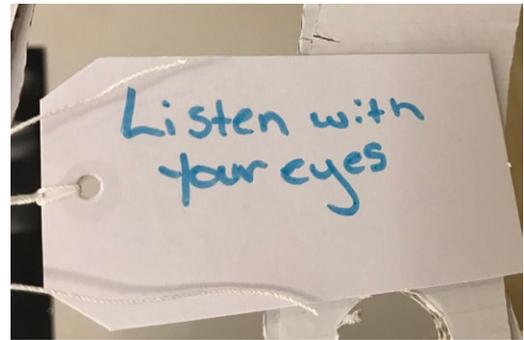
“You are Powerful, Beautiful, Brilliant and Brave! Be your beautiful self. Give Peace and Love a chance. Spread the word... Peace, Love and Harmony to all”

“I wish for a low level community response where everyone has a safety plan. Anyone can experience distressing thoughts that their life is not worth living. Survivors with stories of hope tell us that these thoughts pass! We all need a plan to keep ourselves safe until they do”

“LOVE YOU! Let Peace be in everyone’s ‘Heart’, and help one another along the way”

“Don’t be afraid. Please ask for counselling. Be positive”

“Don’t let anyone ever put you down. You are amazing no matter what!”



“Listen with your eyes”

“Tell everyone who you are”

“My wish, is for World Peace”

“END AUSTERITY, provide hope”

“Stop and think before you judge someone”

“Things will get better, it just takes time”

“I wish everyone would fine meaningful human relationships”

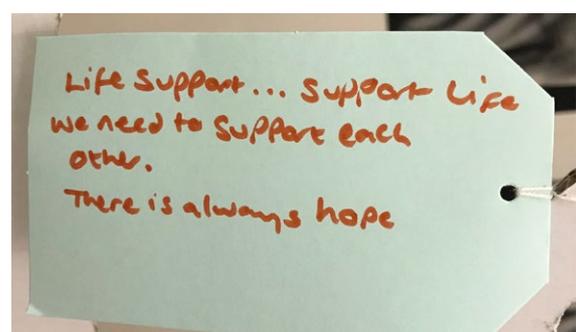
“Sometimes we all need another adult for the burden”

“LET PEACE BE... GOD IS WITH YOU”

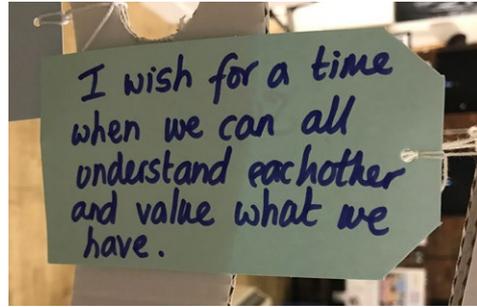
“You are never alone! Peace! Smile and nice each other forever”

“I wish for us to be remembered for what we have done. Kindness and Empathy”

“I hope that I wake up one day without feeling anxious for no reason. Love, Peace and Prosperity”



“You are never alone, and you are always worthy of love”



“There is always light at the end of the tunnel... LOOK FOR IT!”

“I pray for the bullies to STOP. They are sad jealous people, I forgive them”

“You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending”



“We are all what is... what was... what was never, and will be”

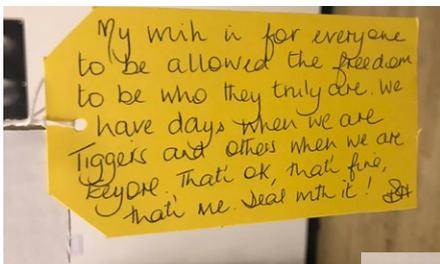
“He knows... He loves... He cares. When he gives Peace, the storm must cease. I know my Saviour cares”

“BE-YOU-TIFUL”

“YOU MATTER”

“Have Faith and Hope”

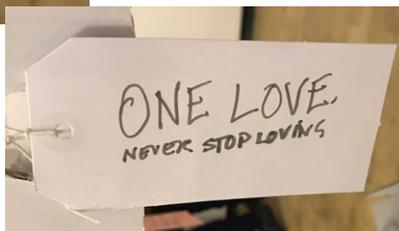
“Keep on, keeping on”



“ONE LOVE... never stop loving”

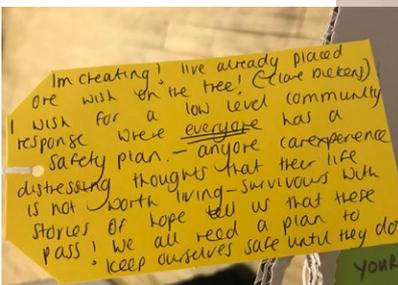
“Always remember, you are somebody else's world”

“I hope people are able to see, before it's too late”

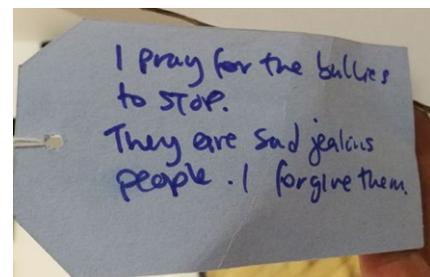
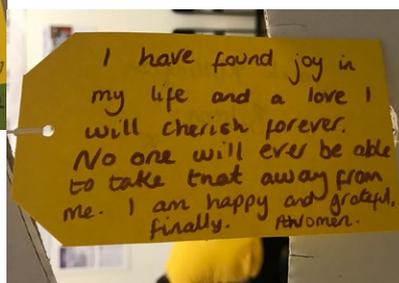


“I hope for a better future, with Deaf Support, crafts and games”

“Smile and be nice to each other... there is no place for nasty”



“You are always someone's reason for living. Believe in 'it gets better' because life is precious” xx



Conclusion

The aim of **Support Life Exhibition** was to raise public awareness about the importance of maintaining good mental health, what it is to be suicidal and suicide prevention services for people living in the Black Country.

The said aims meet with the current **National Suicide Prevention Strategy**. The exhibition drew upon local experience and people who have been affected by suicide, personally attempted or in the people they know and care about.

The Support Life Exhibition:

- Promoted awareness and understanding about the value and importance of maintaining good mental health amongst the general population
- Exhibited high quality creative works to explore the impact of poor mental health, as expressed by local people it affects most greatly
- Raised awareness about the presence of public services, which actively support people affected by suicide and compromised mental health
- Ensured civic engagement through the active participation of the Mayor's office
- Explored the impact of suicide as directly experienced through the mediums of the Creative Arts, Media and Music
- Raised funds for the Mayor Of Wolverhampton Charitable Fund
- Was delivered inclusively to any person, in a highly accessible location developed specifically for the purposes of engagement with Art and cultural activities

Thanks are extended to all individuals who attended and exhibited at **Support Life Exhibition**, workshops and public performances throughout the month of November 2019.

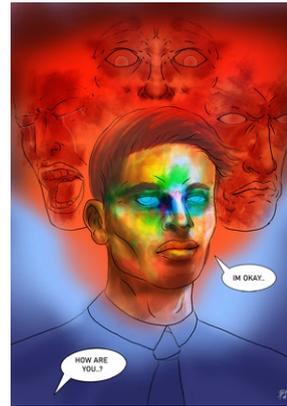
Real Arts Workshops Directors **Alex Vann** and **Gary O'Dowd** appreciate those which make up the community of Wolverhampton, it's artists, musicians, poets, film makers and mental health professionals, **Wolverhampton City Council's Mayor's office** and **Outside Centre** for all of their support and encouragement throughout the exhibition; we could not have achieved anything without you.

Going forward may the people affected by suicide receive the support and consideration they need to ensure their ability to continue living a meaningful life.

A life filled with love and light, surrounded by good people in a positive and thriving community for all.



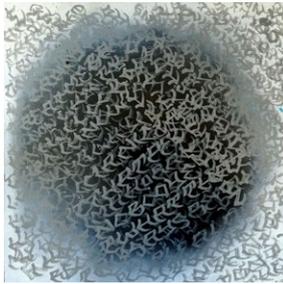
De-constructed Rainbow
Anthony Bleu



Face Me
Ben Pinnock



Despite All This
Bridie Green



El Bridge
Bridie Green



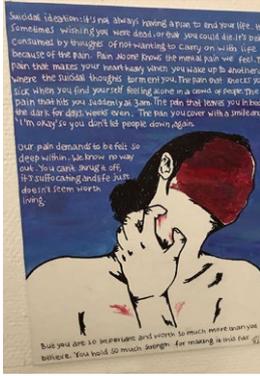
Body of Thought
Bridie Green



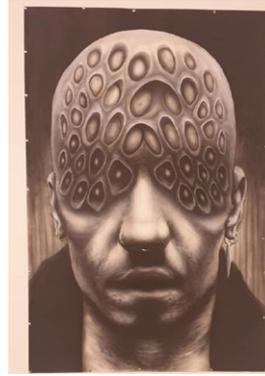
The Bad Jar
Bridie Green

HMP Oakwood
Various artists





Pain
Becky Lawley



Untitled I
Tariq Evans



Underwater
Becky Lawley



Untitled II
Tariq Evans



The Unknown
Becky Lawley



Struggle
Ewan Johnston



Letting Hope In
Mia Lawley



Sketchbook
Clare Wassermann



Behind Every Smile
Deirdre Maguire



Supporting Fathers
Clare Wassermann



Semi-colon tattoo project
Robin Firth



Marilyn and James
Alex Vann



Dark Matter
Vicky Flint



Blue Rain, Black Thoughts
Melanie Powell



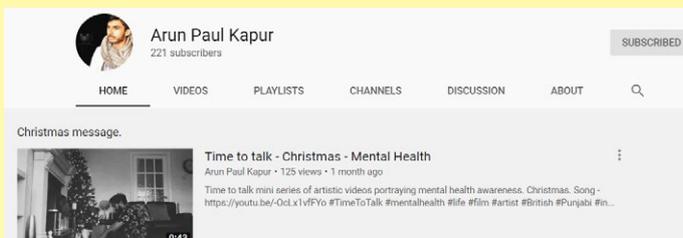
Support Life (prints)
Alex Vann



A Darker Day and Night Abyss and Flickers and Bursts of Brightness and Light
Melanie Powell



Now You See It
Bridie Green



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCed9gAtAMokyqyj1hFbVufQ/videos>

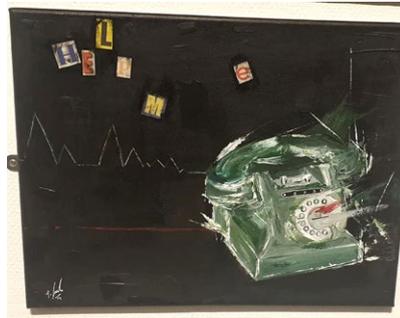
Link to Arun Kapur's YouTube Channel. Arun has made a series of short films on the theme of mental health called 'Time to Talk'



Survivor
Bally Barquer



Hello (BSL)
Gary O'Dowd



A Call for Help
Jason Fullwood



It's OK not to be OK
Kellie Powell



Tattoo offer poster
Ben Vann



Wolverhampton Hope Walk



2 Deaf Walk - fund-raiser



The work of RAW with local community groups, including Honesty Portraits with a HeadStart cohort

Brendan Hawthorne: poet and performer

Billy Spakemon: poet and performer

Deirdre Maguire: talking about the story behind her photography piece : in BSL, with interpreter voicing over

Band “The Dissenters” playing songs written by the late Rich McMahan

John Napier: musician and Teaching Assistant at a Birmingham school

Louise Kilbride: musician and SIFA FireSide Fundraising Director

Alex Vann: Musician and creative director

Billy Spakemon Black Country Poet:

‘**Without A Trace**’ Poetry based upon his daughter Gem who took her own life due feelings of worthlessness.

‘**Big Words**’ which came about after a workshop he led at Halas Homes, a centre for people with learning disabilities

Brendan Hawthorne’s pieces are also deeply personal. Brendan has suffered with his own mental Health issues. Some of which he feels were brought about as a consequence of taking medication to meet his therapeutic mental health needs.

Song Lyrics; performed by the friends of Rich McMahan

- “Inbetweenland” written by Rich McMahan
- “Beauty All Around” written by Rich McMahan
- “Beyond Borders” written by Rich McMahan
- “You Shine On” written by Alex Vann, in memory of Rich McMahan
- “Silver Linings” written by The Dissenters
- “Dissenters” written by Rich McMahan
- “Wild Rover” Traditional, adapted and performed by John Napier

Beauty All Around written by Rich McMahon

Midnight and down comes the rain
I'd walk the Earth just to see you once again
Candle burns, and the eye it is drawn
Toward the dark stain it leaves upon the wall

But the night - it will pass
And the sun it will rise up from the ground
And you'll see, there is beauty all around

Outside, there's a cold bitter breeze
And all the branches are shaking in the trees
Fire burns, flames flickering ghosts
All around me, no pity for their host

But the night, it will pass
And the sun it will rise up from the ground
And you'll see, there is beauty all around

See the sun rising - see it coming over the hill
We are together - and the Earth is peaceful and still
See the sun rising - see it towering over our heads
We are together - and everything is beautiful
It is beautiful

And the night - it will pass
And the sun it will rise up from the ground
And we'll see there is beauty - all around



Scan the QR Code to
watch



Watch the video of the performance of this song:
https://youtu.be/53e_Lf6yOFo

INBETWEENLAND Written by Rich McMahon

I was born in England
Red and White with just the merest shade of green
As a child I took the night boat
And woke up to a vivid change of scene
From 'Land of Hope and Glory' to 'Amhran na BhFiann'
I'm neither one thing or the other - But something in between

Ivan he's from Portadown
He swears his allegiance to the Queen
Each summer marches with his friends
Down the road towards Drumcree
His speech is laced with emerald - But his world is tangerine
He's neither one thing or the other - But something in between

Klara lives in Dublin
Her mother's name it is Maureen
Her daddy's name is Nikolai
He works nights at the hospital Canteen
There's a lots like her at school - She's not unusual you see
Being neither one thing nor the other - But something in between

Tommy he's from Drogheda, Says he hates every English man he sees
He's lost his faith in politics
The struggle's not yet over till we're free
While he's been working down in London
Back home things have changed in ways he'd not believe
They're neither one thing or the other - But something in between

Well I don't know where we're headed
Who can blame us, how could we have foreseen?
The world is getting smaller
The old Rod Of Iron has turned to Plasticine
And We've only got the future
We can't go back to who we've been
We're neither one thing or the other
But something in between



Scan the QR Code to
watch



Watch the video of the performance of this song:
<https://youtu.be/98EYDKkAYGo>

BEYOND BORDERS (Rich McMahon)

Intro: Dm A x2

VERSE 1

Dm E A B
Let's run away – Beyond the Borders

Dm E A B
Let's start a new life – over there

Dm E A B
F#m

Let's climb these walls that keep us
i-n --

Bm C# Dm E A B
We won't let them stop us, oh no

VERSE 2

Dm E A B
We got no money – we got no gold

Dm E A B
There's a man – well so I'm told

Dm E A B G# F#m
He'll take us over – we'll owe him the
fare

Bm C# Dm E A B
They say he's got work for us there

CHORUS

E F# F#m G#
Somewhere, Beyond the borders

(HARMONIES)

E F# F#m G#
That's where – we're gonna be

E F# F#m G# Bm C#
Somewhere beyond the bord - ers

B (maj) C# Dm E A (Dm)
lasts longer on last time only)

There's a new life for you and me

VERSE 3 (same chords as other verses)

We bring our learning – we bring
our labour

We bring our music – we ask no
favour

Just a blade of grass in a wide open
field

Is all that a man really needs

CHORUS (repeat)

VERSE 4 (is instrumental)

VERSE 5 (quieter)

Is it our nature – to walk the Earth
To leave behind, the land of our
birth

To shed our blood – to crawl in the
dirt

And defy those who question our
worth

CHORUS (repeat)



Scan the QR Code to
watch



Watch the video of the performance of this song:
<https://youtu.be/yFpi7ihQZGk>

You Shine On written by Alex Vann 2015 - for Rich McMahon

VERSE

Your vivid heart:
Shone brighter than the rest
Your great big smile:
Hid the pain the best

PRE CHORUS

I hope you find your home and I hope you find some peace
I hope you find your home and I hope you find release

CHORUS

Your light is still burning strong
Your heart it goes shining on:
Shining on, Shining on,
You Shine On,
You Shine On

VERSE

We fragile things - Life: delicate and brief
But you made your mark - And you brought out the best in me

PRE CHORUS

I hope you find your home and I hope you find some peace
I hope you find your home and I hope you find release

CHORUS

Same as above

BRIDGE

Nobody knows what goes - when the crowds have all gone
Nobody feels what you can feel
But you went Inbetweenland, Beyond the Borders of man
And now your Lost and Found is Here

PRE CHORUS rpt TWICE then

You Shine On
You Shine On
You Shine On
You Shine On



Scan the QR Code to
watch



Watch the video of the performance of this song:
<https://youtu.be/sJELbuvrqqo>

SILVER LININGS original song by The Dissenters group

Intro C x 4

C Dm
See the leaves a-falling down,
C Am
Storm clouds gathering around,
Dm Em Am
Sometimes I can't see the sun a-shining,
Dm Em G
Please don't worry there's a silver lining.
C Dm
And with troubles all around,
C Am
Keep your feet upon the ground,
Dm Em Am
Keep your faith in me and all your friends,
Dm Em G
Please don't think that has to be the end
C C7
Dm G C Am
Please don't give up, sometimes it's tough,
Dm G C C7
These days will pass, someday soon,
Dm G C Am
In time you'll find, your peace of mind,
Dm G C C7
These days will pass, someday soon.
C Dm
Life can sometimes be a fight [solo line]
C Am
And it's hard to see the light [solo line]
Dm Em Am
Just remember there's a brighter future [solo line]
Dm Em G
Inspiration comes from living nature [All]
C Dm
My lamp's a light to guide your feet, [solo line]
C Am
A way to make your life complete [solo line]
Dm Em Am
Life's like silver that requires refining [solo line]
Dm Em G
Please don't worry there's a silver lining [All]

Dissenters written by Rich McMahon, performed by 'The Dissenters' group

VERSE 1

Go call all your friends
If you got any friends
Go call all your friends
To - Day, To - Day

VERSE 2

You just got to be glad
For all that you once had
You just got to be glad
For the time has come
For the time has come

CHORUS

You say - there's dissenters among you
Keeping you d - o - w - n

1. You can hear them all say: 'The end's on its way'
2. Take all their possessions, drive them out of town (G/C/D x4 times)
3. Would u throw them in the water and watch them go down? , watch them do down? (G/C/D x4 times)

VERSE 3

It's time to collect, all that u say u deserve
It's time to collect your thoughts my friend, Your thoughts my friend

CHORUS

VERSE 4

Could you forgive - those don't see things your way?
Could you forgive - yourself my friend? Yourself my friend?

CHORUS

Could you forgive - Could you forgive - Could you forgive yourself?

WILD ROVER alternative words & performed by John Napier

When I was a young man I heard in a bar,
A man play an old song on his cheap guitar,
Though he played it quite badly he still got applause,
But it seemed like a cheap trick so to myself I swore,

I said “no nay never, no nay never at all
Will I play the Wild Rover, no never at all”

So with youthful conviction I stuck to my cause,
Never gave in to pressure, never sought cheap applause,
But because of my morals I was oft overlooked,
And the bands who had none were the ones who were booked

“Still there’s no nay never, no nay never at all,
Will I play the Wild Rover, no never at all”

As the years slowly passed by and it became clear,
That all chance of success had at last disappeared,
And promoters suggested a cover or two,
So I played the Wild Rover what else could I do?

I sang “No nay never, no never no more”
Yes I sang the Wild Rover in spite of it all

Now I’ve played thousands of gigs and nothing has changed,
I still play the Wild Rover again and again,
Though I’ve lost all perspective, oh what’s it all for?
At least in death I won’t hear that damn song anymore

I say no nay never, no nay never no more,
Will I play the Wild Rover, no never no more...

Making Notes by Brendan Hawthorne

The poem above was done as a performance piece; with the words of the main poem presented in a large gold frame – covered with strips of newspaper. The strips were removed (at the highlighted points) to reveal a second poem:

Words seem harsh
Actions often worse
Everything seems

like barbed criticisms Don't worry about me today

pushing into the skin
They feel like blows
seeking out a fragile psyche
Allowing thoughts to become
enemies of my state of mind
Random behaviour patterns
accumulate
Fuel up my sense of failure
How many times

must they keep asking? You don't need to know how I feel

Repeating lines?
Even when I say
I'm coping
why do they doubt me?
I can do that for myself

Thinking thought shards Would it change things if you did?

as cold as a glacier
Sharp as a broken mirror
reflecting multiple images
shattered with a thought bullet
sent burning through synapses
with a belligerent
blowtorch philosophy
that short circuits cold logic
into cruel paranoia

Mental illness does not discriminate I don't need you. My fears are here to embrace me

It embraces everyone held
in it's grip of self destruction
It generates tidal waves of raw emotion
Whirlpools of paranoia
Produces under the weather

clouds of depression They put me in a rain cloud

and inroads to low mood fog

It's so hard to find a way home signpost me anywhere via

But I need to find a way for myself
I don't need any help
Maybe I'm beyond it
I don't really need another drink



Scan the QR Code to watch



Watch the video of the performance of this poem:
<https://youtu.be/TlryKxGwjMO>

But it is my round and a double brandy towards

when I'm left on my own

I can pile on guilt

Magnify the small

Amplify the argument

Spiral uncontrollably

through self pity

Moralise upon the value

of self harm both

mentally and physically

I don't want tablets

I want life

I don't want alcohol padded bliss

but it is a cushion

I can over eat for extra comfort

should I need to and then

vomit to ease my guilt

Where is that positive self

I knew so long ago?

I used to feel all conquering

Have a 'help anybody' attitude

But I misplaced it all so carelessly

Did I leave myself at the bus stop I'll take the last bus home

or was I lost in your arms?

Was it beaten out of me?

Was it simply taken from me?

Did I give it all away?

Did the years turn joy to fear?

I stare at the TV

my only daytime friend

A distorted window on the world

I disengage to feel safer and where I can be lost in thought

lose myself in the wallpaper wondering if washable anaglypta is best

I talk to the voice on answering machine

Bleed out in social media tirades

They allow me to

watch the shadows dance

disappearing in deepening darkness

I know they still exist

I sense them all you see

They lurk in REM sleep corners

where my mind can wrestle them out. Wake up! Don't miss the last stop

where I'm left to shadow box

in unlimited rounds

of self-loathing and uselessness and

image conscious consciousness

to the final KO blow. ding ding ring out the reflections in the glass

I carry debt through

increased workload

Feel image worthless

Feel worn out through stress

and invent multiple identities tell me is it me me me or me?

But not one of them is me

Why can't you accept me for who I am

and not who you want me to be?

I'm always someone's someone

How did I get here?

How do I go back?

Old ways place an

ad in the local classifieds all this confusion seeks clarity

Confused mind

seeks clarity

A call for help

but it won't be taken

A call for help

but who am I to burden?

A call for help. I have to live with myself

Told a pill for the ill will calm things down

as a slick blade slips

around the edges of a dis eased mind

simply caused by a cock up

in the chemistry set crucible

of my make up

Mom was it down to you?

Dad! Was it him? You can walk away

I'm told to turn on a bulb

for increased daylight

when all I need is spring

I'm labelled through stigma I am who I say I am not who want me to be

when all I need is understanding

I can work through counselling

but only months later on the phone

I want someone to hold me

I need you to hold me

Will you reach out and hold me?

Will you still care enough

after the way I've treated you?

Do you laugh at me? Believe in me that's all

Do you smile for me?

Hold me

Hold me 'til dawn

Hold me to the point of release

from these mental shackles. Ask me next time for the real me

Let light and warmth

fill my mind with hope

And if I say I love you

maybe I could learn to love myself If you think you can handle it

Say kind words.

Give a simple kiss

and open these tired eyes

to the simple bliss of a promise. I hope so

for a brand new

cloudless day x

Excuse His State Of Mind by Brendan Hawthorne

It's a pity he isn't a smoker
He'd have been seen sooner
Given help to quell the
Dark fountains of self-loathing that
Rise up from the deep wells
Of a mind-poisoned heart
He has his off days
Says he feels useless
Tossed aside like last night's take away
Excuse his state of mind
He reckons he's a flavour from the past
Too complex
And deemed too sour to be palatable
Too volatile to digest
Too cynical to enjoy
Too unpredictable to be a safe bet at a party
He's a self-obsessed embarrassment to some
Quaintly odd to others
Excuse his state of mind
His thoughts are like razor wires
Ready to slash a blue sky grey
Into mood emerging canopies
that fragment the stilled reflections
refracted in summertime lagoons
crazing the sun's distorted face
into sharply contrasting
segments of expression
Excuse his state of mind
He is seen as erosion
Eros defiled
Broken down
Washed up and forgotten
So close to creation
So far from happy
Left sitting in a place where shadows
no longer see themselves
in the absence of light
Excuse his state of mind
Fears prowl the perimeter of his sanity
Rabid dogs of conscience are
unleashed with no bounds
They reactively bare their teeth to change
Ready to hunt down the faintest glimpse of a smile
Tear it apart and feast on it until
there is no meat left on the bone
They should have excused his state of mind

Sleepwalking by Brendan Hawthorne 2019

How many times have I kissed you
Whilst you sleep
Softly as a summer's breeze
That caresses your lips
As they silently hold the secrets
That I know you keep

How many times have I held you
Whilst you sleep
Gently as if you were finest porcelain
That would simply crumble
Under the pressure of time's fingers
As they slowly creep

How many times have I said sorry
Whilst you sleep
Whispered in case I awoke you
From the dreams that engage you
And how I wished it could be different
Can you hear me weep?

How many times have I left you
Whilst you sleep
Deserted you through the onslaught
Of my own rampaging fears
And wished that if you could hold me
We could change the harvest we both now reap

Wi-out a Trace by Billy Spakemon (this is in Black Country Dialect)

Lips do lie/ years pass by
but the achin' it do' change
This i'll do, i'll gee ter yo
'Er story lost... wiout a trace

Tiny signs , we wus blind
'er tellin' wor 'er'd do
we loffed , we scoffed , we med it wus
'er wuthlessness it grew

Wiout a trace wiout a trace
be gone wiout a trace

The voices sed inside 'er yed
They do want yo' around
Drowned in fear the bottle near
A lonely deafnin sound

The clink on glass would mek it pass
'er toasted till passed out
'er'd stepped across, the fault it wus
not 'er's . It's yo' !'erd shout

wiout a trace wiout a trace
Be gone wiout a trace

all the lies the jealousy grew layered in 'er yed
'er believed the voices not what anybody said

nobody believed 'er until reckonin' day , it's time the voices asked and 'er just
slipped away

No words spoke, er'd played 'er joker
mebby some'ow 'er'd fun peace
Wiout a trace so many feel
on this world 'ave no place

Wiout a trace, wiout a trace
gone... is it fate?

Big Words by Billy Spakemon

Shadows on your shoulders
They pull and they push
Damping, heightening emotions
Big Words

Goals become unreachable
A cocktail that explodes
Skirting round the edges of
Big Words

How do you tell them?
When they don't feel the same
How can they understand
The trapdoors
And the little things that mean so much?
Simmer in your head.

Breath becomes acidic
Legs collapse in tremors
Light leaves a darkness
Warnings
Big Words

How.....

A constant ever changing battle
Be Calm, Be slow, be confident
Are these words big enough to win?

So you live on eggshells
Tread across broken pavements
Listening for signals
Whispering
Big Words

Chinks in the armour
Piercing panic blade
Suddenly no control
Shout out
Big Words

ANXIETY! DEPRESSION!

Never Rains But...

in the mizzling bus stop it starts.
Droplets form, and run down
wide steamed up window panes,
so that if there were a bus in sight

none of us would see. Not me.
Not the woman zipped up in her coat.
Not the boy all bum fluff, frayed edges,
cheaply suited, cheaply booted,

who checks his mobile phone, tells us,
as we moan about the bloody buses,
that the hold-up is on a bridge in town
someone threatening to throw themselves down

to the ring road below. Go ahead
some might say a woman shrugs
gauging support for her opinions.
And the lad who is looking more

and more like the man he'll be
takes her on. I don't agree. Blushes,
pushes glasses up his nose. Be late any day
if someone lived. Mental health issues

prob'ly. Says it like he knows.
On that heaven goes and opens,
pours and pours and pours. And I hope
it's not the final straw for that person

on that bridge. A last humiliation
sending them over the edge, to fall
like those drops wrung out of this sky
as at last, finally, our bus arrives.

Emma Purshouse

'Never Rains But' by Wolverhampton Poet Laureate Emma Purshouse.

Thank you for reading.

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