

Out of the Box

Sharing our stories with
poems & photographs



Introduction

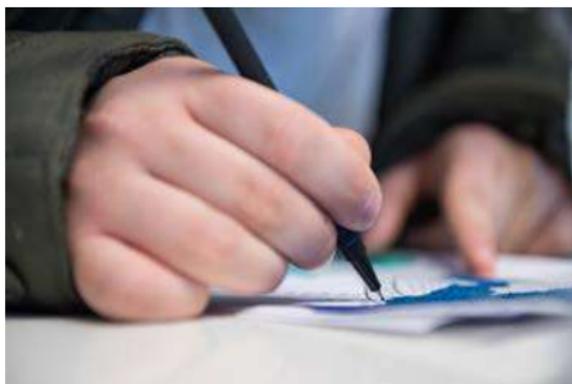
Out of the Box is part of a three year arts programme, working with people at Growing Lives in Ilkeston.

From generously shared personal stories, I condensed our gentle conversations into haiku-style poems, using only people's own words. The poems were printed on translucent paper and tucked away inside small, individual boxes.

The boxes are also illustrated by photographs and found images that are meaningful to each person. Jon took photographs and supported people to take their own images, which will feature, along with some boxes, in exhibitions across Derby and Derbyshire.

This small book gives a glimpse into the real lives of the people we worked with, and may help illuminate the complexities many of us live with.

Jan Flamank



Anon

I love gardening
Runner beans grown up wigwams
Ten to twelve feet high.

Rubbish summer though
Went to seed, very stringy
Just not enough rain.

Cherry tomatoes
Redden up in the larder
Kept in a brown bag.

Grandad grew them too
Yellow tomatoes for him
Money Maker, mine.

The peas were ok
Couple of batches off them
I cook them, not raw.





Put slug pellets down
Little Gem and Mixed Leaf ones
The lettuce were good.

I tried spring onions
Never any good with them
Radishes grew well.

Well, Mum feeds the birds
They chuck it o'er the garden
So I don't feed 'em.

Beetroot, purple ones
Slice 'em up for sandwiches
Mum's pressure cooker.

Not many 'tatoes
As the garden's not so big
I have grown them though.

Ian

Just to get drug free
Good father to my children
Off the methadone.

That's why I moved here
Walk away from my drug friends
Get away from it.

It's been six months now
Able to say no to them
That has helped me loads.

Want to see my kids
Build trust back with my family
Getting there, slowly.

It's helped me a lot
The staff are good listeners here
I can't talk to blokes.

If not for this place
I'd be in the gutter now
They have stood by me.





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Macheala

I am good at that
Just looking after people
I don't know what else.

Got 'A star' in school
For my photography work
I am good at that.

When I was a kid
I lived with my grandparents
So, different rules.

I'm looking forward
To just being a family
We're having a girl.



Went to the GP
Wanting to be pregnant now
Two days later – yes!

It's all new really
Not had a baby before
Been with Brad three years.

We've been through a lot
Still going through some with Brad
But we will get there.



K.D.

Whole reason for me
I've four kids, two lots of twins
Most important thing.

Try to get sober
Don't want them to see me drunk
Or have to hide it.

Brad

Keeps me busy here
Not at home, just drinking more
And up to mischief.

I like the woodwork
I'm normally quite on it
Unless it's fiddly.

I found an old chair
Stripped it down and sanded it
Filled it, back to new.

Got to get some foam
And then I'll fabricate it
I've picked what I want.



People judging you
Not here, but out and about
This is a good place.

I had nowt to do
And so I just turned to drink
Got into trouble.

Had an allotment
Lost it from moving a lot
Here, I keep busy.

Dawn

Rehab for six months
I chose to go there myself
Booze out of control.

With Mum, Mother's Day
Thought I'd have a crafty drink
The demons got me.

Eighteen months sober
Everybody liked me then
A different person.

Clearing Mum's garden
The rubbish wasn't burning
Put petrol on it.

Lit a match, threw it –
Mum was getting fish and chips
But the fire got me.

In Notts Burns Unit
Never got my fish and chips
They were brilliant.





Luke

I'm good at painting
It's something for my sister
A new baby soon.

I need to make two
One for my brother as well
Both younger than me.

We all get on now
When we all lived together
We didn't used to.

Two more on the way
An Uncle 7 times soon
I do want kids too



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John

What I came up for
To look after the chickens
From Derby to here

I've got me own place
Thing is, it's getting so hard
Bad, how they do it.

They take money out
Of Universal Credit
When they shouldn't do.

I'm not in arrears
They still take the money out
I have things to pay.

Kieran

I'm good at cooking
Normally pasta for me
I tend to cheat though

Get a tin of beans
Meatballs in tomato sauce
To go with pasta



Tomato puree
Red onion, with my Aunt
Some in the freezer

My second day here
It's not too bad at the mo
Haven't done much yet

It's better here now
I was with YMCA
Accused of all sorts

I can leave things out
It will still be where it was
I can trust us three

Don't see them often
We keep ourselves to ourselves
I can leave things safe

Gaz

My woodworking skills
That 'feel' for a piece of wood
That ability

Didn't think I could.
Carved out the name for 'baby'
That Les asked me to

Before, at college
Did painting, decorating
Part-time joinery

What I most enjoy
Is coming up with ideas
To put to the wood

Did the name Camden
No template, just drew it on
And jig-sawed it out.

Unicorn for Debs
She asked me to make her one
With the name Effie



The best bits of kit -
Jigsaw, orbital sander
I use them the most

A scrap bit of wood
Make sure I have the right wood
And then try it out

Oil, wax, linseed oil
They bring up all of the grain
Get it smooth to touch

My dolphin design
Draw round it ready to carve
So it's a sculpture



Anon

Do decorating
All the jobs people don't like
I like doing them.

All the painting too
Done to a decent standard
Keeps it all ok.

Trellis, Red Cedar
I do it Forest Green now
Goes green with the mould.

Got petunias
Still growing now, pink and white
I grow them from seed.

The local Wilko
Nip there to buy all my seed
They have all sorts now





Ian

My Dad, my real Dad
Bought me up a bit rubbish
My Stepdad was good.

He'd a tattoo shop
I was chucked in the deep end
Doing big tattoos.

Very detailed work
I was alright, carried on –
Until depression.

Depression and drugs
I kept letting my kids down
Then couldn't see them.

Woke up one morning
I don't want this any more
For my kids' sake too.

I just felt so ill
Best do something about it
I just couldn't cope.

When I first came here
I felt really lost at first
But it was friendly.

Staff kept asking me
Asking what I wanted now
And so I kept on.

Macheala

Struggles with money
My family don't want to know
But I've made friends here.

Come here, be yourself
Forget about what's happened
I've learnt how to sew.

A nightmare just now
Accepted a property –
Went to someone else.



K.D.

When I was 18
Worked in an Asian restaurant
And I learnt to cook.

Had to wear a suit
Head waiter and bar tender
With a dicky bow.

I learnt to tie it
My manager showed me how
Proper red bow tie.

Best thing working there
Free curry at end of night
My favourite – phor.

The spiciest one
Learnt to cook it from watching
I still like it now.





Indian lager
Kobra, Carlsberg and Fosters
There were lots on pump.

I liked the top shelf
The Jack Daniels. It's bourbon.
Soft spot for J.D.

Dynamic Cleaning
Bog Scrubber to Brown Noser
Head of Cleaning there

Dawn

My dad was poorly
When I was in the rehab
Then he passed away.

Hit the booze again
After 18 months sober
Don't blame anyone

A pain in the arse
And treated mum like a dog
To be honest, now.

Mum had had enough
I was going to be homeless
Derwentio came.

Good at the hostel
I was doing good there now.
Then I met a man.

Mum said to me then
You've been with right bastards, you.
We named the last three.

He's beat me up lots
This last time was the worst though.
Didn't prosecute.



Luke

Always loved footy
I support Man United
No favourite player.

I like to play it
Football, I play on Tuesdays
Rutland. Scored goals too.

And when I come here
I like cooking and woodwork
And a nice bike ride.

Quite good at cooking
I'm neat at chopping the veg
Pizza, sausage, cake.

And I like the pub
I need to stop drinking beer
Did cut down a bit.

Drink Red Bull and Coke
To stop me drinking the beer
It helps me a bit.

Good where I live now
Can do what I want, sorted
Better now I've moved.

Getting paid next Sat
That will be a special day
27 soon.

John

Seen a lot of change
I really got on with Pip
Have a Monday moan

Stick with the chickens
I enjoy sitting with them
I have learnt a lot.

Used to let them out
They kept attacking lettuce
So they stay in now.

Gave them beef curry
When I was in the house, here,
Not had them before

So I picked stuff up
Learning from the Internet
What not to feed them.

They like ham and cheese
Can live in minus 40
And they are bright too.







Gaz

Me coming up here
Takes me mind off mental health
A struggle sometimes

I've PTSD
And social phobia too
Coming here helps me

But in the workshop
I can block everyone out
And I just focus

The workshop's my thing
Not Cheryl's craft room really
Been here just 3 months

Anon

I do gardens, but
Main thing I do is fishing
Kirk Hallam Canal.

Carp, tench, bream and roach
I use sweetcorn as the bait
Expander pellets.

Sit on a grey box
Plastic, adjustable legs
For uneven ground.

Mostly go just me
Sometimes meet up with some lads
Like to fish alone

Take the radio
And cheese salad sandwiches
It is all good stuff.



Find a quiet spot
Irritating fishermen
Coming up to chat.



Have to pick days now
Don't go when there's a cold wind
But it's been quite mild.

I chuck the fish back
There for the relaxation
And for the wildlife.

I've seen kingfishers
And rats, but no water voles
Seen weasels and stoats.

Grass snakes, cormorants –
Not stuck on them, they eat fish
The herons do too.

Stanton fishing club
I go out where people aren't
They can't bother you.



Ian

Been suicidal
In and out of hospital
With overdoses.

How do people cope?
Depression is so, so grim
Staff here stuck by me.

If it weren't for them
I just wouldn't be here now.
Help, changes your mind.





Macheala

Used to work with wires
Fitting connectors on them
For Virgin and Sky.

And in Derby town
Air Ambulance shop, on till
Plus, sort the shop too.

Tough though, on your own
It gave me something to do
Volunteering there.



Go back to college
To do my beauty again
I've done Level One.

They do night college
I'll work it that way with Brad
Do my Level Two.

I enjoyed it all
Mani's, pedi's, make up, nails.
We will work it out.





K.D.

Three pics of Harry
One, when he was a kitten
And a recent one.

On a mad mission
Drove to London to get him
21st birthday.

Just a furry ball
He is my favourite child.
Claws like razor blades.

He's nearly 10 now
He's always pleased to see me
With Mum and Dad now.

Dawn

My mum, coming here
And seeing my dog, Ollie
All these, they help me.

He's a scruffy mutt
And he follows me around.
My mum keeps him now.

I'm good at cooking
I am a qualified chef
No help with the booze.





John

When I was a kid
The neighbours had a cockerel
Would come through the hedge

Attacked anyone
Line prop to keep it away
Even with the dog.

Three were here before
Marilyn, Maud and Mabel
But the fox got them.

Now we have Audrey,
Babs, Brenda, Doris, Doreen,
Marguerite, Lily.

Went to Ravenshead
To get the feed for them all
Was a nice day out

We don't go there now
They had huge chickens and ducks
Ordered on line now.



Gaz

After Hartington
Someone from Healthy Futures
Told me about it

There's not enough help
For people with mental health
Living with worry

Struggle with KF
Born with extra chromosome
Klein Felters syndrome

I didn't find out
Until I was twenty one
I had blood tests then

I need injections
The nurse does them 3 monthly
They make a difference



A hole in my heart
That's to do with KF too
Awaiting results

So, with all this now
Might go back to the unit
To get more support

And I want to put
All of my little carvings
In the box you bought

Ian

I love my fishing
And I love being outdoors.
Started back fishing.

The River Derwent
I was a fishing bailiff
Checking the rivers.

Shardlow Marina
I've been in the fishing mags.
17lb Barbel.

Delicate Barbels
Need a lot of oxygen
Take time to revive.

You have to be quick
Put them back in the water
'Specially in summer.

Got free bait for it
Biggest fish off the Derwent
Three cheques for it too.





When I've got sorted
I can go back to work there
As fishing bailiff.

Down in Derby town
Litter picking with school kids
In their bailiff vests.

Put weeds round the pond
Two and a half grand of plants
To stop it flooding.

The River Trent pike,
They are my favourite fish
A winter fish, pike.

36lb pike!
I would never harm the fish
I put them all back.

My friend has a boat
I buy him coal, go fishing
Been going for years.



Macheala

Had one real sister
She died before I was born
The others are steps.

I'd Aunty Glory
Would visit her every day
She died of cancer.

I've stuff she gave me
For birthdays, and Easter cards
And I kept it all.

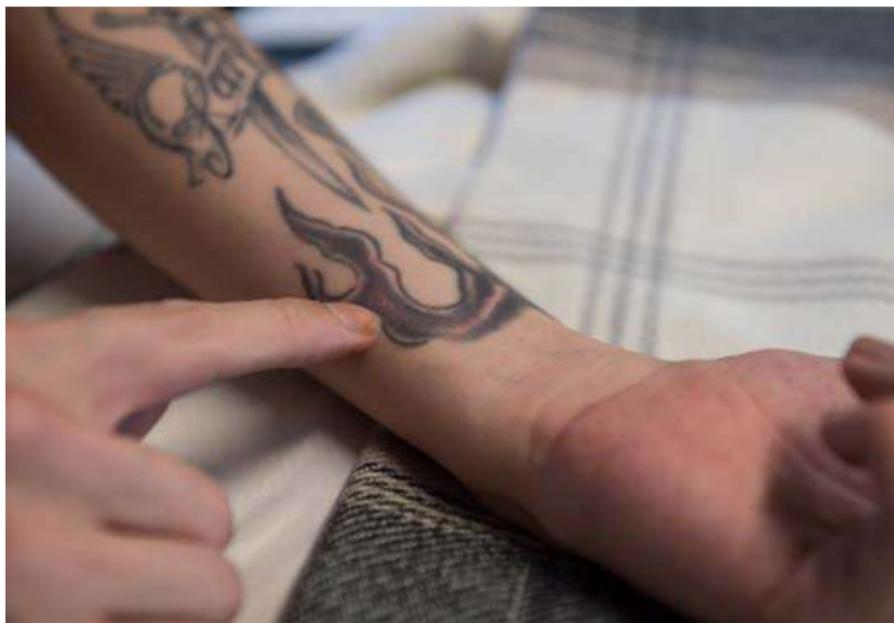
Only me saw her
Fought cancer, twenty years
Everyone working.

I'm feeling stressed now
It's all due to the housing
January birth.

Seems to me as though
Council waits 'till last minute
To sort it all out.

Now, since coming here
I've a lot more confidence
Leant lots of new stuff.





K.D.

Designing tattoos
It's the meaning behind them
Personal to me.

So I sketch it out
Then after the tattoo's done
I destroy the sketch.

So it's just for me
It can't be copied atal
It's personal, mine.

I've two main tattoos
My battle with mental health
And alcohol too.

Unsure how to cope
Struggles with dependency
Overcome demons.

A good guy at heart
Going into a dark place
Come back to the light.

Dawn

Before the rehab
Bed - drink ready for morning
The demon vodka.

Can't understand it
My family aren't big drinkers
Brilliant childhood.

I just rang me mum
She's proud of me coming here
She's proud of me now.



John

I garden here too
I'm thinking horticulture
Could be a career

I've City and Guilds
In track work for HS2
Change the rail sleepers

Worked in factories
I didn't enjoy the work
Got on with people.



And then my Mum died
It had a profound effect
All I did was work.

We had a dog then
And she kept me ticking on
Looking after her.

She's a staffy cross
She was company as well.
Had to let her go.



Ian

Couldn't spell my name
Dyslexic, picked on at school
Chose to be naughty.

In prison three years
They offered me the classes
Learnt to read and write.

I used to breed birds
I had eighty canaries
Yella and green ones.

My Dad had birds too
Aviaries everywhere
And he had barn owls.



Worked with my neighbour
Just got into showing them
And then they got nicked.

It just broke my heart
When the canaries were nicked
Then sold at auction.

Moved house after that
And bred German Shepherd dogs
They were protection.

Cassie first, then Drake
He was transported from Czech
Cost lots of money.

Took him to training
Thursdays, for obedience
We both enjoyed it.



Derventio Housing Trust

Derventio Housing Trust is a registered social landlord providing accommodation and support to people experiencing homelessness. As well as providing safe and secure accommodation and support to sustain a home, we provide specialist support services to help people overcome any barriers they are facing.

Out of the Box is part of Growing Lives, an easy-access project in an urban community setting. It provides people with opportunities to develop their self-confidence, gain new skills, reduce social isolation and improve their health and wellbeing.

We would like to say a big thank you to all of the Growing Lives participants, Growing Lives staff and artists Jan Flamank and Jon Legge for their work on this project.

derventiohousing.com

With Thanks To

Jan Flamank

Jan has extensive experience of designing and leading participatory arts projects as a freelance writer and artist. She has worked with diverse organisations including Shelter, Drink Wise Age Well, Age UK, hospices and NHS inpatient units. She leads creative writing groups and teaches a variety of fine art workshops and courses.

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Jon Legge

Jon is the senior photography instructor at Coventry University and does regular freelance work including at local centre QUAD where he tutors digital photography courses, including talks, hands-on workshops, demonstrations and group activities. He has worked with Derventio Housing Trust before to deliver two photography projects at Growing Lives.

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