

SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2024

# THE 'KEEP THE HEID' NEWSLETTER!

From North Ayrshire Justice Services Service User Involvement Project



## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

It's been a busy few months for the team at Justice Services. New opportunities for activities and training are being explored for our service users and we'll share them with you as soon as we've got things booked.

We continue to do our cooking challenge and our weekly football and are looking into options to replace our boxing class on a Thursday. Our walking group is still going every Monday too and the option for coffee and a chat is there if the Scottish weather isn't playing ball! Which will be more frequent now that winter has arrived! We've also ordered more copies of our cookbooks and will be getting them out to some of the agencies that have given us recipes for this years book.

After this we're just patiently waiting to be allowed to put up the Christmas decorations in the office!



# RELEARNING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU CAN DO...



In this edition we are hearing part one of Tony's story:

*My childhood was good until I was around ten years old and things started to go badly. I was seeing a lot of domestic violence between my parents – physical and verbal abuse. Sometimes it would inflict on us as kids and sometimes my mum would have to try and stop my dad from hurting us. My dad always struggled with alcohol issues and was often demanding of money from my mum to get alcohol. If he didn't get what he wanted he got angry. My gran became a safe space for me when I was young. At this time, I also fell away from high school, and I became less interested in education and work placements. My alcohol addiction started around age 13 and at that point I was jumped by a gang in the community. I wanted to get revenge on the gang who targeted me, so I joined a rival gang. I became heavily involved and over time I became the leader of that gang. Being in a gang, there's a lot of alcohol and some people use drugs too.*

*What I discovered was that the gang was safe to some extent as they would have your back, and it was almost a safe space to express your anger. You got that buzz feeling when you were going to fight with other people. You also got a sense of belonging. Which looking back I recognise was satisfying something I was missing from my childhood.*

*At age 15, I had my first relationship which became toxic and because of my behaviour the Police became involved. I was also involved in sectarian beliefs and had a strong hatred for the opposing religion. I recognise that this was also something I witnessed growing up in my family – it was drummed into me. In 2008, my gran passed away at Christmas time so the last positive safe space I had, I had now lost. This drove me into using alcohol even more often. At this point, my life was chaos. I can see now that I normalised the abusive behaviour within my relationship because that's what I saw growing up.*



# RELEARNING WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU CAN DO...



*I became homeless at 16 years old because I was so angry towards my parents, I couldn't live with either of them. My dad then left and moved to England. I slept rough for a while and I only really cared about having alcohol as it was a way to keep warm. After a while, I was introduced to the homeless system and began living in hostels. At that point, I was still in the same relationship on and off. I was breaching Bail conditions not to have contact with my girlfriend but I was also involved in breaches of the peace and antisocial behaviour. At age 17 I ended up in Polmont Young Offenders Institute. At the time, I didn't really care where I was or what was happening to me. Several more periods of time being in Polmont followed this and I still kept on going back to the same relationship and the same behaviours. The lifestyle I knew and thought was acceptable was gang life and showing my frustration in hurting others.*

*Moving on a bit, in 2014 I lost two good friends to suicide which greatly impacted my mental health. Then I got a prison sentence in 2015 and because I was older now, I went to Barlinnie.*

*That was only a short-term sentence, so I didn't get any access to help or support.*

*I wasn't there long enough for my first time in an adult prison to have much of an effect. I was in a new relationship but because of my behaviours this was also toxic. This continued up to 2018 where I got a long-term sentence.*

*During the time I was on remand prior to this sentence, I didn't really know what was happening. I struggled with poor mental health, and I made attempts on my life – which I had done previously in the community as well. When I was finally convicted in 2018 around two-three months into my sentence, I was introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous. I started attending groups once a week and then started to go to education too. Initially this was to get out of my cell, however later on I started to realise that this is the road I need to go down to get better. I started going to church on a regular basis and prison fellowship meetings. This became a positive safe space for me.*

Part two of Tony's story will be in the next edition.



# LAST BUT NOT LEAST...



In October we made Halloween brownies.

## Ingredients

(makes one big tray of brownies)

275g butter, softened  
375g caster sugar  
4 large eggs  
75g cocoa powder  
100g self-raising flour  
100g plain chocolate chips

You will need a 30 x 23 x 4cm (12 x 9 x 1½ in) traybake or roasting tin.

## Method

Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/gas 4.

Cut a rectangle of non-stick baking parchment to fit the base and sides of a 30cm x 23cm x 4cm traybake or roasting tin. Grease the tin and then line it with the paper, pushing it neatly into the corners.

Measure all the ingredients into a large bowl and mix until evenly blended.

Spoon the mixture into the prepared tin, scraping the sides of the bowl to remove all of it. Spread the mixture gently to the corners of the tin and level the surface with the back of the spoon.

Bake for 40–45 minutes, until the brownies have a crusty top and a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Cover loosely with foil for the last 10 minutes if the mixture is browning too much.

Allow the brownies to cool in the tin and then cut into 24 squares. Store in an airtight tin.

*“THESE WERE AMAZING. I’M STILL EATING THEM DAYS LATER!”*

(MAD PROJECT MEMBER)

