

NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER 2023

# THE 'KEEP THE HEID' NEWSLETTER!

From North Ayrshire Justice Services Service User Involvement Project



## WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING?

The festive period can be a wonderful time for some, but it can be challenging for many people too - financially taxing, lonely, extra pressure at work...

We spent a little time this month talking to our project members and asking what they find difficult about this time of year but also the ways they have found to cope... or the little joys they have found at times too.

Whilst we don't want to focus entirely on negatives, we also wanted to share the realities for some of those we work with and what they face because sometimes it's easy to forget that when we're in the midst of all the Christmas chaos.



# TIS THE SEASON...



## The challenges:

*"I've always felt that I cannae afford to do Christmas the way the telly says you have to... I don't get enough to treat ma family that way. That makes me feel rotten, like I don't care for them."*

*"I'm mostly alone these days. Or sitting wi pals using drugs. It's no very festive. But then again... would I rather sit maself?"*

*"I thought this Christmas would be better because I'm no in the jail but I can't afford a turkey and ma family don't speak to me anymore... so maybe I'd be better inside with ma pals."*

*"I lost my mum this year so this is our first Christmas without her and I don't know how I'm going to cope. Seeing an empty chair and just knowing she'll never be there to enjoy it with us anymore. I need to be upbeat for my kids but my heart is breaking inside."*

## The ways we cope:

*"I find when I feel really lonely, I like to bundle up and get outside for a walk and seeing all the Christmas lights sparkling in all the living rooms makes me smile and feel a wee bit hopeful. I know that sounds weird but it works for me."*

*"My friends in recovery have been everything to me. We're meeting up to go a walk on the beach this Christmas morning so we can remember all the reasons we're staying in recovery for!"*

## The joys:

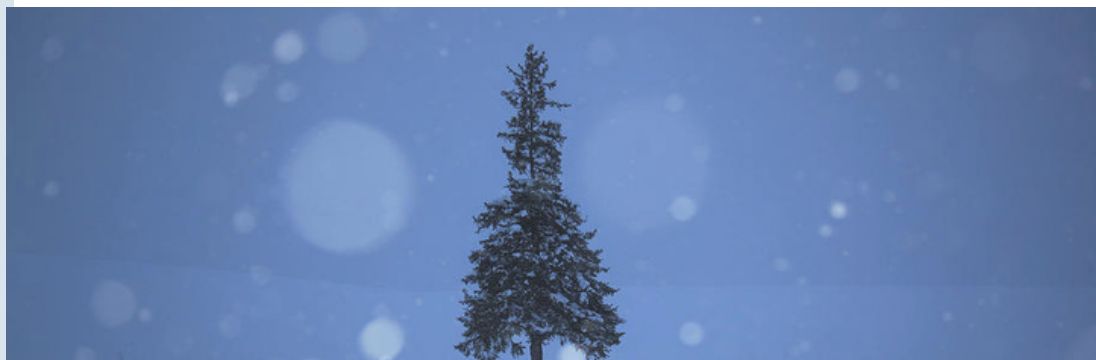
*"Honestly, this is the first Christmas of many where my mum is talking to me again. She's actually invited me for Christmas dinner because she can see how well I'm doing. I'm buzzing about spending the day with her."*

*"This year I feel really good about Christmas, It's the first for a long time where I'm stable and in a place where I can spend some time with my lad... so yeah I'm looking forward to it this year."*

*"I wasn't sure what I was going to do about Christmas dinner and my recovery worker got me some vouchers to help out with some food shopping and maybe a couple of wee presents. Thing is I hadn't asked for anything, I just keep my head down as best I can and get on with my Order. So it was pretty cool when they rocked up with my vouchers. It'll really help, I was a bit down over the lack of money so these will make a difference."*

**"HOPEFULLY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR I WILL BE IN A BETTER PLACE. I'M DEAD LUCKY TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN MY ORDER AND NOT BE IN PRISON OVER CHRISTMAS, SO WHO KNOWS MAYBE THIS TIME I WILL TAKE THE SUPPORT ON OFFER TO ME AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS, I'M JUST GLAD NOT TO BE IN THE JAIL."**

**(MAD PROJECT MEMBER)**



# LAST BUT NOT LEAST...



For this month we made chocolate Christmas cookies and gave our project members a wee gift box in case they wanted to give them to friends or family. Here's our recipe:

## Ingredients

(makes several cookies)

270g plain flour  
50g cocoa powder  
120g icing sugar  
150g butter  
2 eggs

For decoration

melted chocolate or piping icing,  
sugar pearls, sprinkles.

## Method

Mix the flour, cocoa, icing sugar and a pinch of salt in a bowl. Rub in the butter and then mix in eggs.

Knead quickly with your hands to a smooth dough. Wrap in foil, press into a flat disc and chill for 30 minutes.

Heat the oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4. Line a couple of baking sheets with baking parchment. Roll out the pastry on a lightly floured worksurface to about 3mm thin. Cut out shapes from the dough. Put the biscuits on the baking sheets – it's best to put similarly sized cookies together. Bake for 7-10 minutes, depending on the size of the biscuits.

Knead the off-cuts of the dough together and chill again for 15 minutes. Roll, cut and bake as before. Cool completely.

When cooled, the cookies can be decorated with chocolate or icing and sugar pearls and sprinkles.



*"SEE HAVING SOMETHING TO MAKE WITH MY KIDS... IT WAS BRILLIANT. PLUS DECORATING THEM WAS A LOT OF FUN!"*

(MAD PROJECT MEMBER)