

UKRI, THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTTINGHAM & LUNG
PRESENT:



WOODHILL. A SHORT FILM

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Credits and thank you

DEDICATION

"This film is dedicated to Stephen and Nathan. With thanks to Cheryl and Matt, who have been the wind beneath my wings."

Janet Farrar.

FURTHER DEDICATION

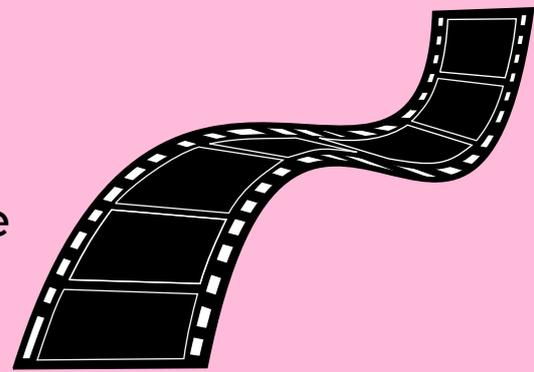
We dedicate this film to prisoners, families, friends and staff impacted by prison suicide.



ABOUT THE FILM

This short film features Janet Farrar, a bereaved mother whose son Stephen died by suicide in HMP Woodhill in 2013.

The words and experiences are Janet's. Professional writers, choreographers and musicians have added dramatic interpretations.



The film confronts us with the lived experience of bereavement by prison suicide and invites audiences to (re)consider what actions are needed next.

Formal prison death investigation processes risk subsuming the lived experience of prisoners and their families (Tomczak, 2018).



Collaborative film offers a powerful form of visual representation which can influence understanding (Sonza, 2018) and provide art with activist qualities (Murray et al., 2019).

Trauma is often embodied and difficult to reduce to words (Chesner and Lykou, 2020).



ABOUT HMP WOODHILL

BACKGROUND

01.

Between May 2013 and December 2016, 18 prisoners took their lives at HMP Woodhill. During this period, Woodhill combined multiple complex functions: being a local prison, high security unit and close supervision centre for 'disruptive' prisoners. From 2013, staff cuts and shortages reduced regimes and time out of cell for prisoners.



STAFF

02.

Staff recruitment and retention at Woodhill was especially compromised by the cost of housing and alternative jobs available in Milton Keynes and London. By 2017, Woodhill had functioned with restricted regimes for three years. Serious staff cuts and shortages led to prisoner boredom and isolation, which are major contributing factors for self-harm.

POLICIES

03.

Suicide prevention policies were designed when the number of prison staff was significantly higher and the prisoner population significantly lower following suicide prevention procedures was therefore impossible in Woodhill. To prevent deaths of young men like Stephen, bloated prisons with insufficient staff and mental health resources must be subject to sustained challenge by interest groups working together (Tomczak, 2021).

PRISON HEALTH NATIONWIDE

Mental health in prisons



45%
of adult prisoners
have a diagnosis of
depression or anxiety
(Singleton *et al.*, 1998)

8%
of adult prisoners
have a diagnosis of
psychosis
(Singleton *et al.*, 1998)

60%
of adult prisoners
have experienced a
traumatic brain injury
(Parsonage, 2016)

(Durcan, 2021)

Former Justice Secretary Chris Grayling's 2012 benchmarking policy generated historic prison staff reductions. England and Wales' prisons subsequently became less safe than ever, experiencing significantly elevated levels of suicide, homicide, self-harm and assault. Between 2012 and 2016, prison suicide rates more than doubled.



Record levels of self-harm followed in 2017, 2018 and 2019 (Tomczak, 2021). Scotland, England and Wales have the highest imprisonment rates in Western Europe. Prisons are too frequently considered a 'place of safety' for people with severe, acute mental illness (Tomczak, 2021; Tomczak and Banwell-Moore, 2021).

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Featuring: Janet Farrar
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Director of Photography: Dino Dimopoulos
Music and Sound Design: Sami El-Enany
Choreographer: Alex Sarmiento
Drone Pilot: Adam Okello Tarrant
Academic Advisor: Gill Buck
Academic Advisor: Philippa Tomczak
Counsellor: Ruth Hannant
Dramaturg: Helen Monks
Editor: Dino Dimopoulos
Director & Writer: Matt Woodhead

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