

Left Out and Locked Down



**Scotland In Lockdown:
Stories from People affected by Criminal
Justice Control**



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Acknowledgments

The stories in the booklets come from people who shared their experiences as part of the Scotland in Lockdown study, without whom this work would not be possible. The work was completed by a large team of researchers at the University of Glasgow and funded by the Chief Scientist Office (Scotland). You can find out more about this study here: <https://scotlandinlockdown.co.uk/>.

The booklets were produced by Dr Caitlin Gormley, Dr Phillippa Wiseman, and Dr Nughmana Mirza who are all based within the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Glasgow. All three were co-investigators on the Scotland in Lockdown study and they wanted to bring these stories together in an accessible and creative way with the help of Research Assistants Molly Gilmour, April Shaw and Nicola Ceesay. This project was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council's Impact Acceleration Accounts.

This series was illustrated, and made possible, by Sophia Neilson, a Scottish-based ethnographic artist and illustrator. You can find more of her work online @soofillustrates or www.soofillustrates.com.

The series was translated into French by Jennifer Rieck and into Urdu and Arabic with the support of Amina: The Muslim Women's Resource Centre.



University
of Glasgow

In March 2020 Scotland went into lockdown in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were all asked to 'stay at home', 'stay safe' and 'protect the NHS', and were told that we were 'all in it together'. This was not the case for people who were already marginalised and isolated, who faced even more hardship and inequality as a result of the pandemic restrictions.



This collection focuses on four communities who spoke to us for the 'Scotland in Lockdown' study, including:

Disabled people and people with long term health conditions



People with refugee status or seeking asylum and experiencing destitution



People in the criminal justice system



Survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence



The images that follow represent the stories that they told us about life in lockdown.

People in the criminal justice system faced harsher sentence conditions during lockdown. Sources of support were removed, leaving people extremely isolated.

“We are the forgotten people of the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been no compassion shown to us human beings.”



Scottish prisons went into full lockdown from March 2020. All activities stopped: no work, no gym, no education, no library, no socialising, no support groups.



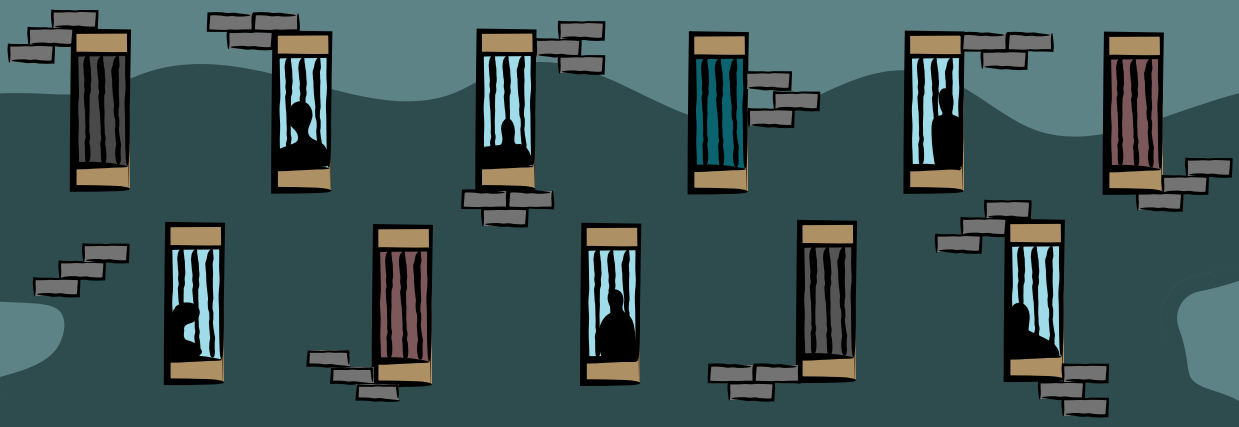
"We are locked down 23 ½ hours a day, I've put weight on, feel depressed, don't get gym enough..."



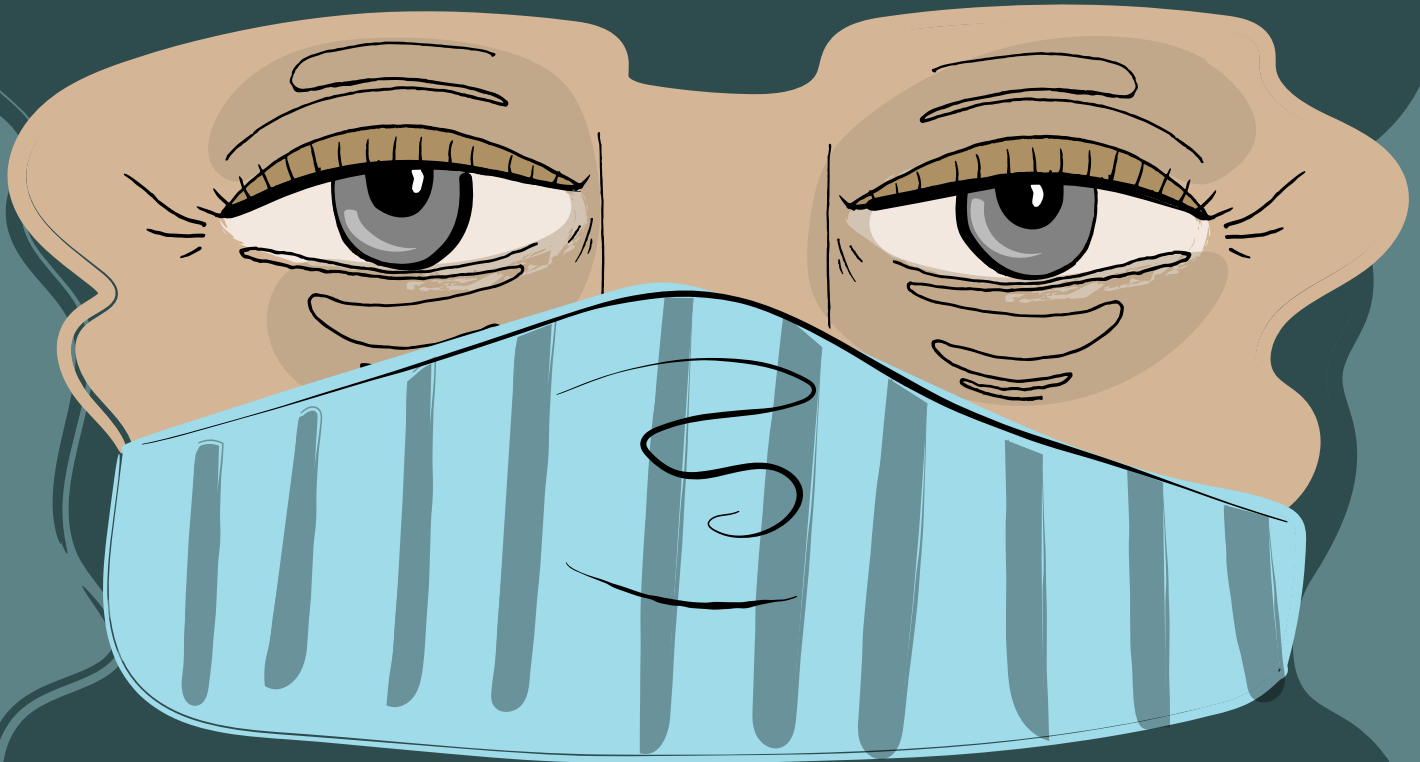
This place is unfit and should not be open. Water is contaminated, showers all mouldy, prison cells are really bad for cleanliness. This prison is not fit and lockdown has made it 100% worse."



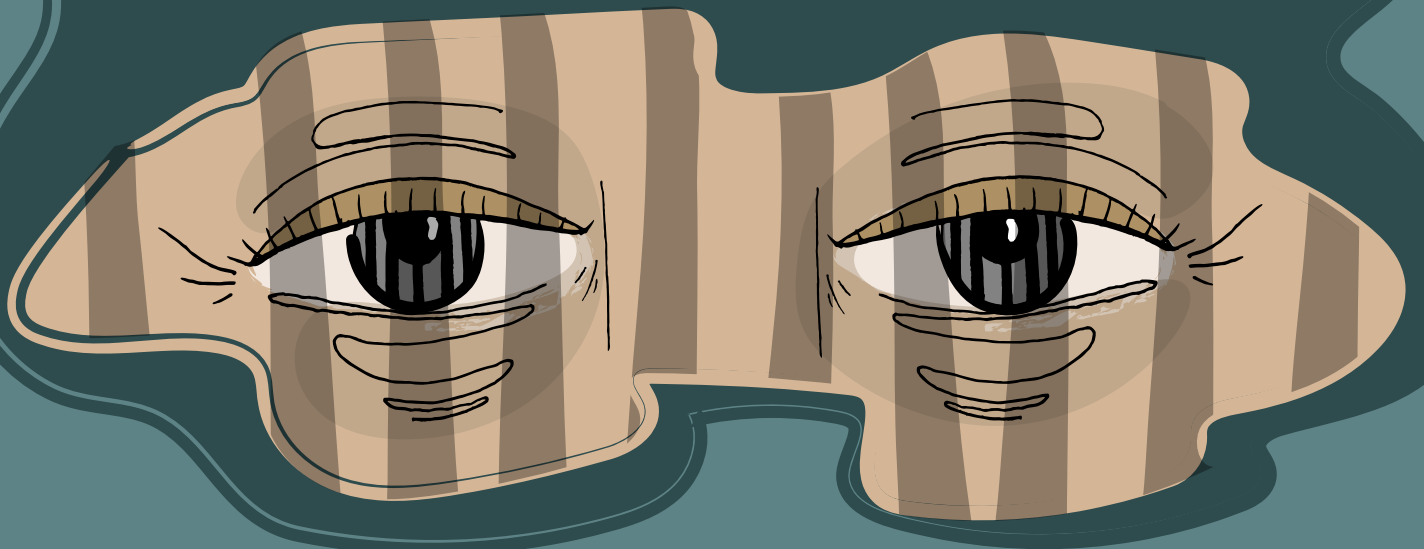
"left out and locked down."



Information from the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) about COVID-19 restrictions was unclear:

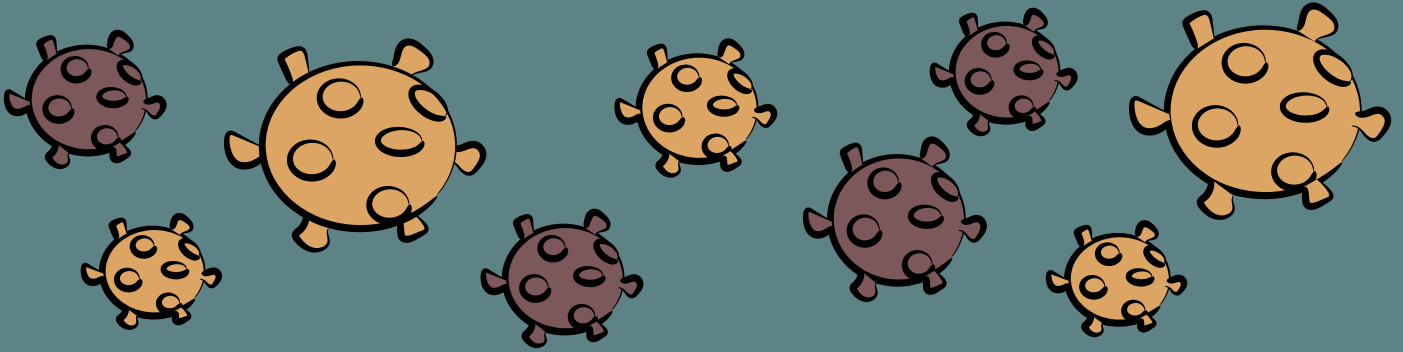


“The prison itself is being run like a zoo. The staff all are being given mixed messages, one day the hall is open the next some cells are being told you’re locked up in case you get COVID-19.”



“The SPS just don’t communicate with families. And even if you go on to the website, they don’t often have the answers you’re looking for.”

People couldn't protect themselves from the virus in prisons:



"I never saw a screw walk about with a mask on, ever, in the jail... so, it's them that's going to be bringing it in. But they're not wearing something that's going to be protecting us. So if one of them has got it, then it's just going to spread round that place like wildfire."



"Not having access to hand sanitiser, face masks etc, is worrying... Having our cells cleaned once a week isn't good, showers every 2nd day. No social distancing anywhere in the prison."



There were no mental health services in prisons during lockdown.

"If COVID-19 wasn't bad enough in here, I unfortunately lost my dad during it. Having to deal with the loss of him on my own has broken me."



"The time in your cell yourself you start to feel more anxiety. As COVID-19 hits your thoughts, depression sets in. I have to sleep early not to think much about the day."

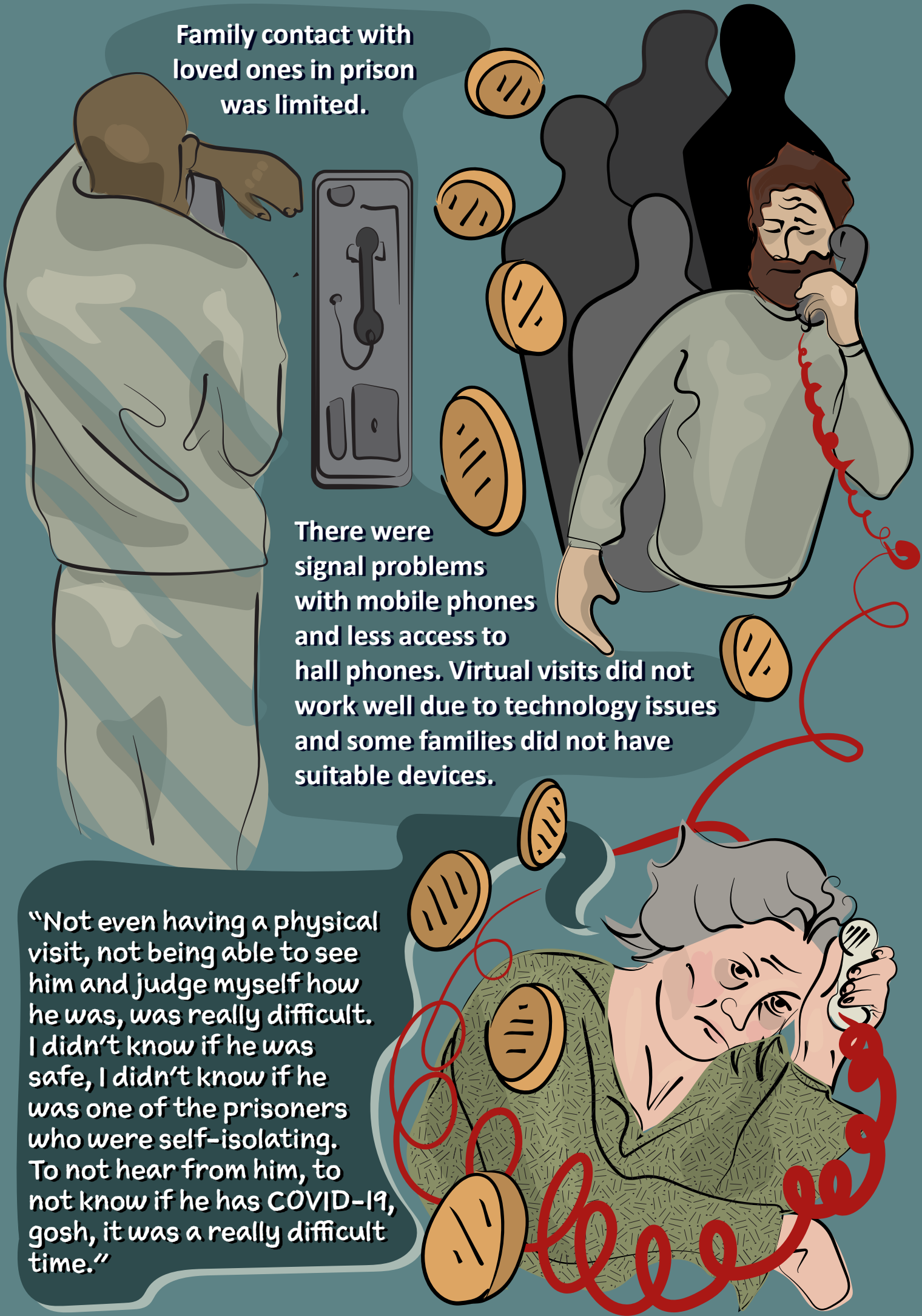
"Well, it has turned a confined existence into an even more confined one. Being locked in a cell for long periods and your regime turned upside down. I don't know any prisoners who haven't been affected mentally, some to the extent of committing suicide"



Family contact with loved ones in prison was limited.

There were signal problems with mobile phones and less access to hall phones. Virtual visits did not work well due to technology issues and some families did not have suitable devices.

“Not even having a physical visit, not being able to see him and judge myself how he was, was really difficult. I didn’t know if he was safe, I didn’t know if he was one of the prisoners who were self-isolating. To not hear from him, to not know if he has COVID-19, gosh, it was a really difficult time.”



"Now that my daughter's back in school and nursery, there aren't any weekend video visits and the video visits are only from 9am. But it's done before the wean gets out of nursery."



"It's hard because you can't maintain family contact and it's having a massive effect on my mental health and am worried about my daughter forgetting who I am."

"I miss my social contact like a wee hug after visit."





People serving community-based sentences became more isolated.



“Just before we went into lockdown, I was attending a group as part of my order and I was seeing my social worker once every couple of weeks and things were going ok. But then lockdown happened, I had to stop going to my group and I was hearing from my social worker like once a fortnight by phone. I’d be lying if I’d said my mental health wasn’t affected.”

Many people were homeless when they left prison.

This made hostels overcrowded and extremely dangerous:



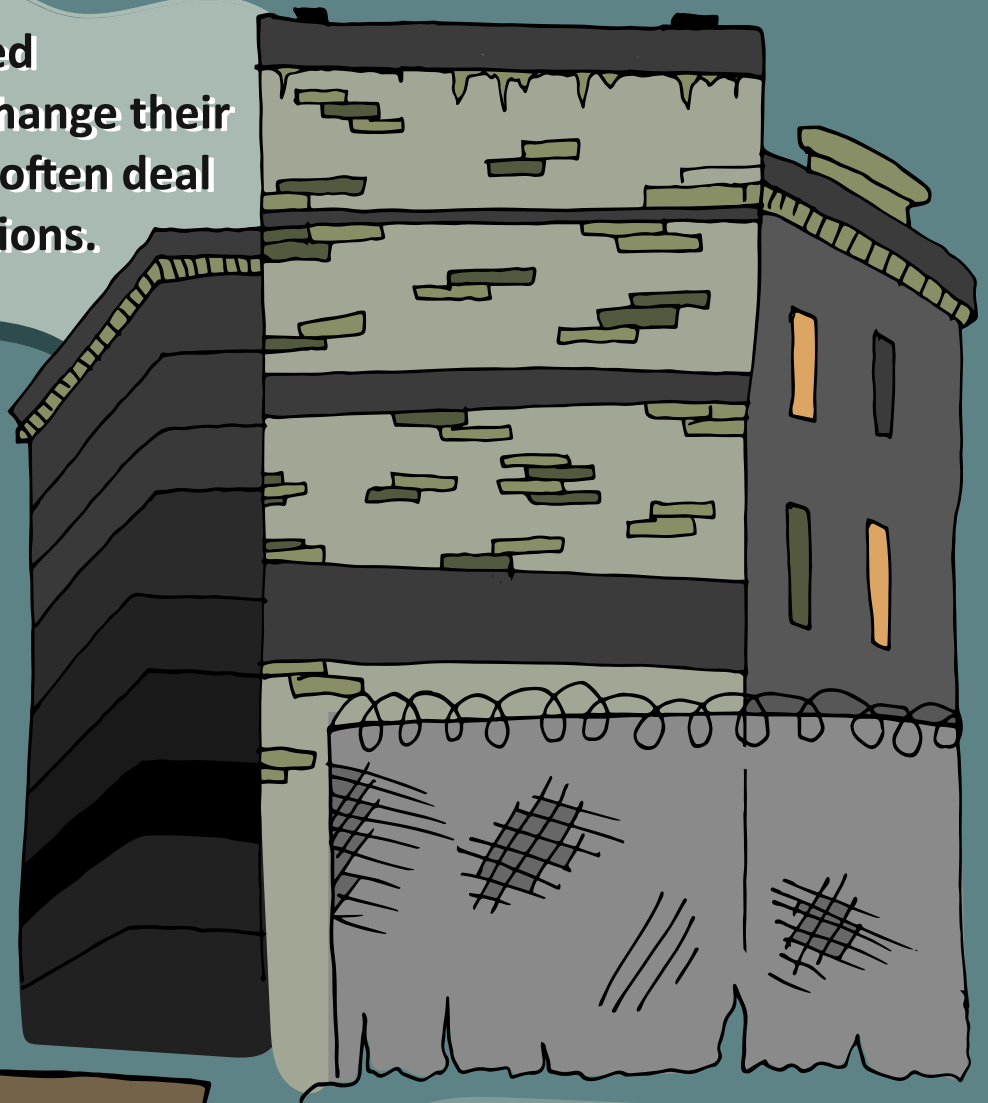
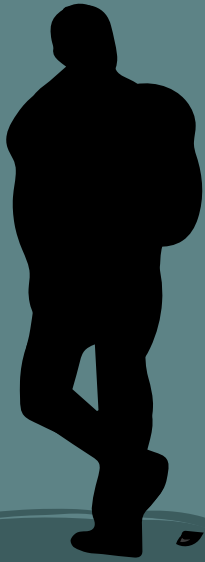
“Leaving prison, then going into a chaotic environment within a hostel, surrounded by individuals taking copious amounts of drugs every single day, just horrible environments with zero service provision...”



So if they've not used drugs during their prison sentence, they're very, very, high risk of overdose.”



Small community-based organisations had to change their service provision, and often deal with emergency situations.



“My job has changed from preventing young people going to the criminal justice system to preventing them from going to the mortuary. There are high levels of suicide attempts because people just cannot cope living in these conditions.”



“So for 12 hours, that person was in crisis and absolutely no service picked it up. That’s what we’re dealing with, honestly, it’s really, really difficult.”

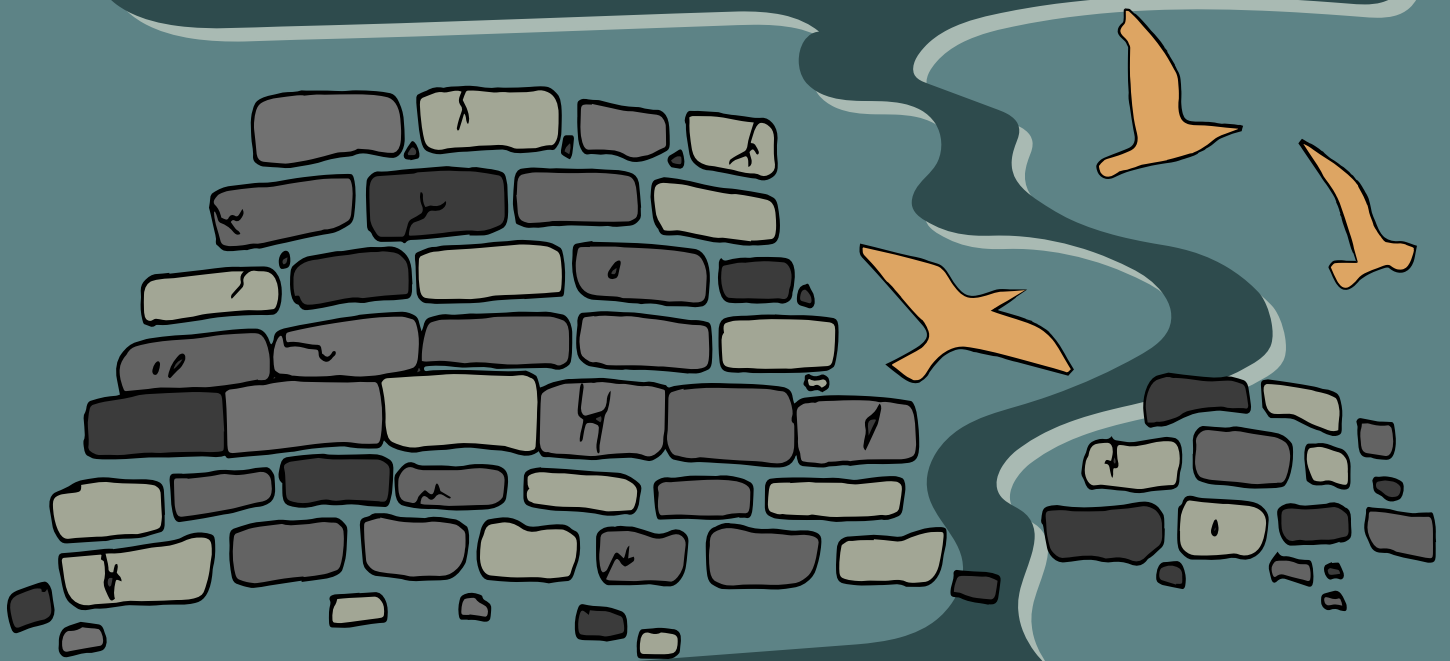
People released from prison during lockdown were coming out to a changed world:

"I don't know where there is information or advice on what to do. Like, the basics. Who do you even phone when you're really bad and really down?"

"Trying to get back on the grid and because I've just been released from prison, trying to get benefits and stuff like that, you can't do anything unless you've got a bank account."



The pandemic has made it harder for people in the criminal justice system, and their families, to have a life beyond punishment.



"I'm suffering a lot from depression and anxiety. Most days I'm just sitting in the hostel because I'm not working at the moment. I'm trying to work. I've got interviews and stuff coming up but it's hard with COVID-19, everything is shut down and it's just a really stressful time at the moment... It's pretty challenging."



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Thank You to our Partner Organisations

Aid & Abet

Amina The Muslim Women's Resource Centre

Crohn's & Colitis UK

Diabetes Scotland

Empower Women for Change

Faith in Community Scotland

Families Outside

Glasgow Disability Alliance

Govan Community Project

Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland

Maryhill Integration Network

People First (Scotland)

Safe in Scotland

Scotland Versus Arthritis

Scottish Refugee Council

Scottish Women's Rights Centre


SOLD

Scottish Prisoners' Advocacy and Research Collective

The Poverty Alliance

Women's Support Project





People in the criminal justice system and their families were hidden through pandemic, encountered greater risks of Covid-19 and increasing justice constraints. We spoke to 15 people recently released from prison, on license or on community justice orders, and heard from 86 people living in Scottish prisons. We also spoke to 6 family members with a loved one in prison and 11 staff from support organisations.