

# POEMS FROM A MOD

My Journey Through Trauma, Survival and Recovery



by Michael Byrne

My name is Michael. I'm 49, married and have been blessed with a beautiful boy who is two years old ... I also suffer from Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD).

My CPTSD is the result of an accumulation of many traumatic events in my life. Those traumatic events started when I was a young child when I was verbally, emotionally and physically abused by both my parents. This happened on a regular basis until I was sixteen. During this time I also witnessed physical abuse carried out by my parents against each other.

When I was twenty-six, my father was brutally murdered in his home when he woke up to a burglar stealing his television. My father was beaten to death by a man who turned out to be an ex army boxer. It was said my father's injuries were consistent with being hit by a bus.

In November 2013, along with my best mate, I was standing in a bar called The Clutha when unfortunately a helicopter crashed through the roof killing 10 people.

In 2014, I was diagnosed with PTSD. During that year I was extremely suicidal, had survivor guilt and I did not know how to deal with the feelings or the situation so I buried them. Later in 2014 it was discovered that I had a tumour in my throat which could potentially be cancerous and was required to be removed urgently. Surgery was scheduled for early December and a tumour the size of an orange, along with half of my thyroid, was removed from the throat. I was later given the news that the tumour was benign.

In 2015, after working a 14 hour day, I came home and went to the loo ... and blacked out. I woke up in a pool of blood with my head split open. I required to go to hospital for immediate attention to have the wound stitched.

In July 2016 my wife gave birth to our beautiful boy Blaine and, while this was clearly the highlight of my life, I had feelings of inadequacy, fear and catastrophising about the future.

In April 2017 I was involved in a car crash that resulted in me having a head injury and being admitted to hospital a few days later suffering from a suspected stroke. I begged the hospital staff to let me out as I didn't want to be in hospital. After an overnight stay and multiple tests I was released with medication.

From this date forward my breakdown began.

When I had flashbacks of the car crash, the bang of the crash reminded me of the noise of the helicopter crashing into The Clutha. The devastation and scenes in The Clutha reminded me of my father's dead body that I had to identify in the City Morgue. Coincidentally, my father was murdered when he was 48 and I turned 48 last year. All of these things just became too much to bear and I began to de-construct both my private life and professional life.

All these events came to a head in January 2018 where, through my actions as a result of my illness, I was suspended from work. This is critical to me as work had always been my avoidance mechanism for not dealing with all of my traumatic

events and now my work in itself has become a traumatic event due to the way I was treated by my employer. Since January 2018 I have had many dark days contemplating and planning suicide, but with the help of my wife, my son, my best friend and the many other people, including Audrey from Stigma Free Lanarkshire that I have made a meaningful connection with, I feel that I have reached a positive 'Turning Point' in my recovery.

The enclosed poems are a descriptor of my journey since January 2018; a journey in which I am still travelling ... sometimes backwards but more often forwards.

Michael Byrne.

*I'd like to thank Audrey, Rosie and Gerald at Stigma Free Lanarkshire for having the belief in me that my poems may help fellow survivors on their journey to recovery.*

*I'd also like to thank every single person who has helped me on my journey through recovery.*

# ACT I: A MOD LIFE CRISIS



# The Final Chime

I just want to stop this pain  
It falls on me like endless rain  
Why why why each day I cry  
So much so my tears are dry

All I want is joy and gladness  
I've lived too long in the shadows of sadness  
All I feel inside is numb  
Knowing that I will succumb

My pain just never goes away  
I realise now it's here to stay  
No matter what I say, think or do  
I'll never be normal, unlike you

I've worn this suit of armour all my life  
Hidden pain from family, friends and my wife  
I know now I can't go on  
I pray each night I don't last until dawn

No-one really understands  
My life now is in my hands  
I live each day an hour at a time  
But I know soon I'll hear the final chime.

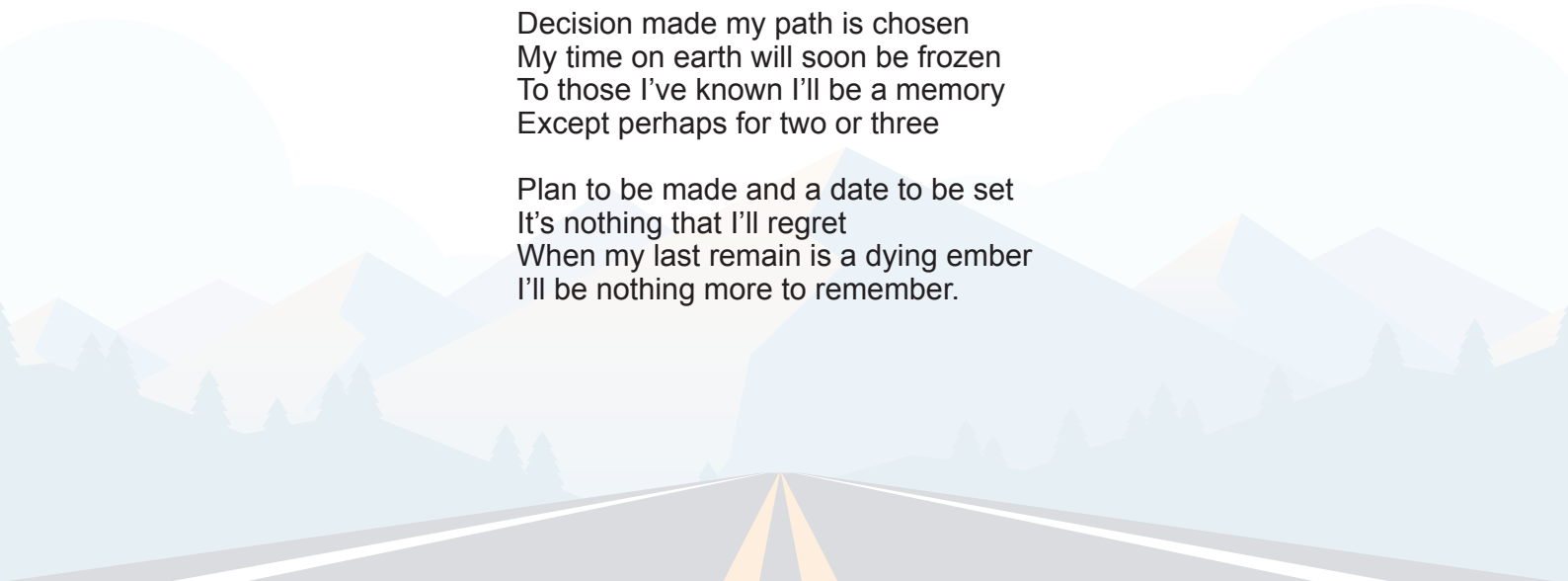
# Ember

I'm so filled with this sorrow  
Can't get through today, can't bear to think about tomorrow  
This pain, this pain, this pain  
So indescribable I can't explain

Not part of this world nothing seems real  
So numb with pain, I just can't feel  
I'm the loneliest guy on this planet  
This can't be all there is to life...can it?

Decision made my path is chosen  
My time on earth will soon be frozen  
To those I've known I'll be a memory  
Except perhaps for two or three

Plan to be made and a date to be set  
It's nothing that I'll regret  
When my last remain is a dying ember  
I'll be nothing more to remember.



# Forever Cynic

Diagnosed with Complex PTSD  
Now I know why I've been Me  
Living all the years with my torture  
Never knowing if it was nature or nurture

Hoping that I'm still a man  
But knowing you choose not to understand  
Intent to punish and not to care  
Ignoring all the years I've been there

Giving you everything for 7 years  
Blood and sweat despite my tears  
You have a real lack of understanding  
Why on myself I'm so demanding

After 7 years to be cast aside  
No regard for how I feel inside  
No care, understanding or compassion  
To play the victim is your passion

But I know what you're really like  
A forever cynic with short sight  
Who just can't see the bigger picture  
That in your job you're not a permanent fixture.

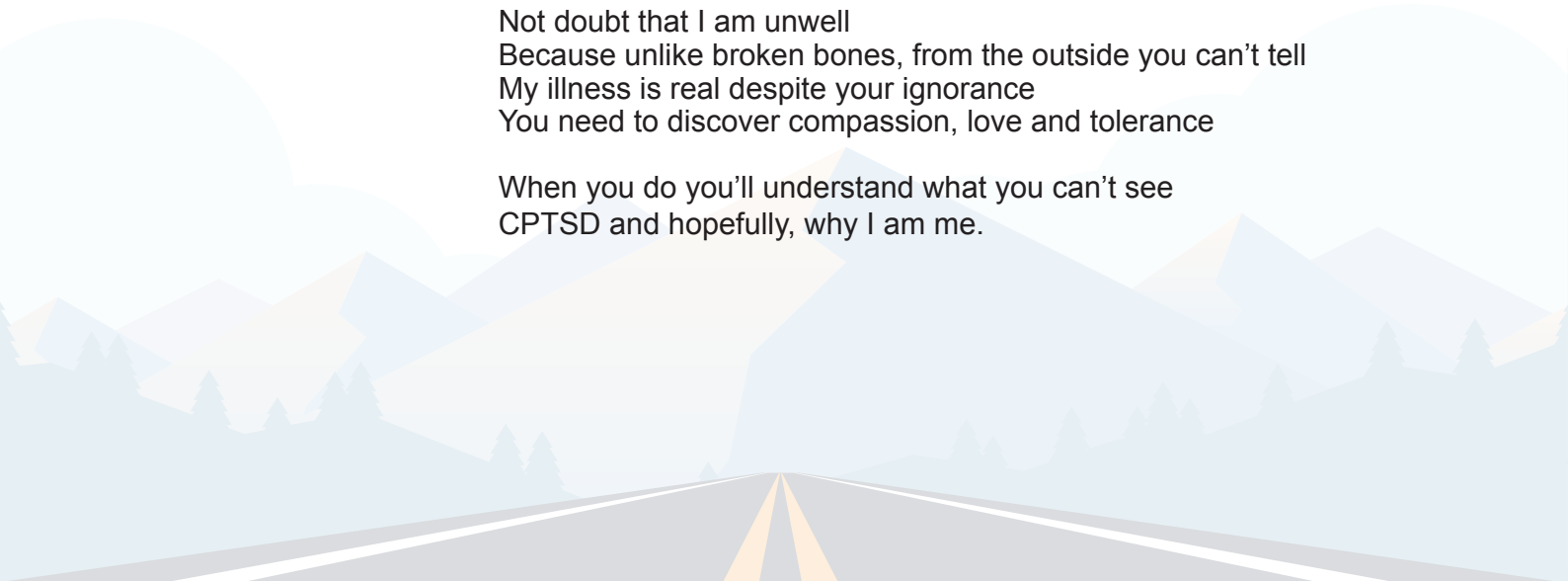
# Glass Head

I've repeatedly wished and said  
If only I had a glass head  
So when I'm unwell  
You could look inside and see for yourself my Private Hell

Not wonder what was wrong  
When I'm being 'Silent and Strong'  
Then you could see my illness is true  
And hope that in future it doesn't happen to you

Not doubt that I am unwell  
Because unlike broken bones, from the outside you can't tell  
My illness is real despite your ignorance  
You need to discover compassion, love and tolerance

When you do you'll understand what you can't see  
CPTSD and hopefully, why I am me.





# The Black Dog

The black dog is back with it's bite  
Chasing me through the day not resting at night  
Baring it's teeth before it devours  
My body, mind and soul for hours and hours

Returning to bite with a savage hunger  
Not sure if I can hold on much longer  
It feels like the pain will last forever  
Teeth so sharp they cut like a razor

He bites and snarls and I'm so scared  
Inside I scream but can't be heard  
Knowing I can never run away  
As he knows where to find me on any given day

Why does this dog seek me out?  
Back for another lengthy bout  
For a fight I might never win  
Can I really ever defeat him?

I long for the time when this dog becomes my friend  
And together we bring this pain to an end  
But until the time I become his master  
I'm terrified of the next disaster.

# Devil's Chase

Every day I run the Devil's Chase  
I stare into his dark and evil face  
He stares back with his empty eyes  
Telling me 'It's your time to die'

I run and run but can never escape  
I'm always within his sight, his reach...his gape  
He pulls me back by my shirt tail  
Into every disaster without fail

Making me feel my time has come  
Knowing the devil I cannot outrun  
This is it now he has me in his grasp  
I feel him close, I feel his breath...his rasp

I can feel the burning pain for the 7th time  
Too many for anyone's life...but not mine  
I've finally lost all my strength and power  
I know this devil will feast for my final hours

He finally has my heart and soul  
Since my birth it's been his goal  
This is now my end  
Into his deep dark grasp I finally descend.

# A Matter of Time

I'm a dead man walking  
I'm done with all of this talking  
It's just a matter of time  
Before I reach the end of my line

Bound by all the chains and shackles  
Of my daily life and it's debacles  
It's now just a matter of time  
Now the light has gone out of my shine

Are all men really created equal  
Why was I chosen for this lifetime of painful squall?  
When others lead a happy and fulfilling life  
Yet my pain is a forever stabbing knife

Why are the traumas of life so random?  
It makes it difficult to understand them  
Why has my life been so traumatic?  
When others' lives have been so fantastic

Can I shake this dead man walking feeling?  
Will I ever start believing?  
That I can beat all my pain  
And feel free to live my life again

I hope it's just a matter of time.

# ACT II: A MODS REALISATION



# A Beauty

A beauty in the sun  
A beauty that is second to none  
A beauty you can see as far as the eye  
A beauty that can't be denied

A beauty that fills your life  
A beauty in the strength of your wife  
A beauty without compare  
A beauty that can be seen everywhere

A beauty in everyone  
A beauty in fathers and sons  
A beauty as clear as the crystal waters  
A beauty in mothers and daughters

A beauty that is all around  
A beauty from the sky to the ground  
A beauty that awaits to be found  
A beauty in every sound

A beauty that you can't see but only feel  
A beauty that you must believe is real  
A beauty in the fire of desire  
A beauty in the match that started my fire

A beauty that I must sustain  
Through my dark clouds, wind and my rain  
Through my storms, troubles and my strife  
Only then will I see this beauty really is my  
life.



# Overcome

I am in the middle of my journey through depression  
Hence the reason I'm at this session  
On this journey I've met new friends  
Who knows where this journey ends

I am on a journey of discovery  
About my life and why I am me  
The good and the bad  
And the reasons why I'm so sad

Having recently met my mentor  
I now understand what he is meant for  
To perhaps be my father figure  
And teach me how to live my life better, fulfilling and bigger

I now know I have Complex PTSD  
I now know it has defined me  
But all of this is in the past  
And I want to learn how to live my life and fast

To be able to enjoy the simple things  
The beautiful clouds or hearing the birds sing  
But I now know that I can overcome  
By taking each day one by one.

# Surfing

My illness comes in waves  
It's strange how it behaves  
The waves arrive and turn things upside down  
Turning my smiles into frowns

It arrives without warning  
Noon, night or the morning  
It seems to have its own high tide  
Forcing me to run and hide

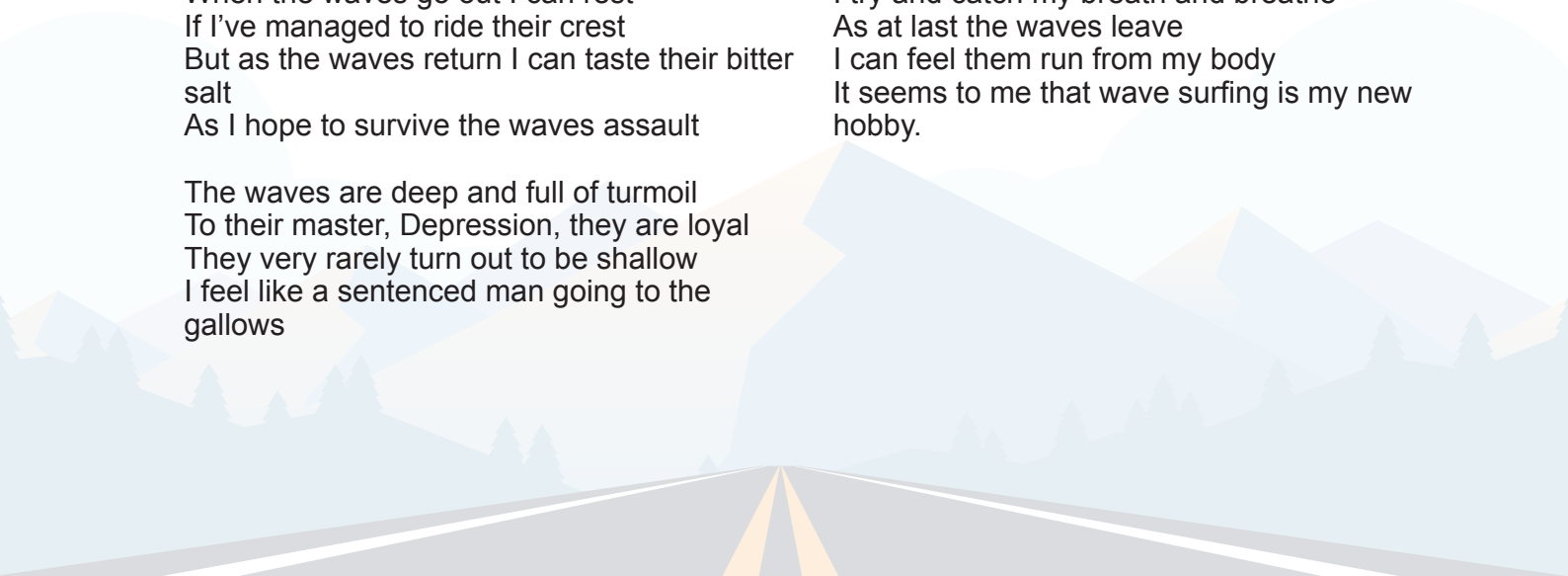
When the waves go out I can rest  
If I've managed to ride their crest  
But as the waves return I can taste their bitter  
salt  
As I hope to survive the waves assault

The waves are deep and full of turmoil  
To their master, Depression, they are loyal  
They very rarely turn out to be shallow  
I feel like a sentenced man going to the  
gallows

As each wave comes I brace myself  
Will I be able to preserve my mental health?  
Will I be able to keep myself afloat?  
I'm lost at sea without a lifeboat

When the waves finally calm  
I know that I'm a changed man  
Left for dead on a shipwrecked island  
Can I drag myself up for one more stand?

I try and catch my breath and breathe  
As at last the waves leave  
I can feel them run from my body  
It seems to me that wave surfing is my new  
hobby.



# Hope

What is life without hope?  
It's like a shower without soap  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to want something

What is life without hope?  
It's like the sea without boats  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to love something

What is life without hope?  
It's like freezing in winter without a coat  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to need something

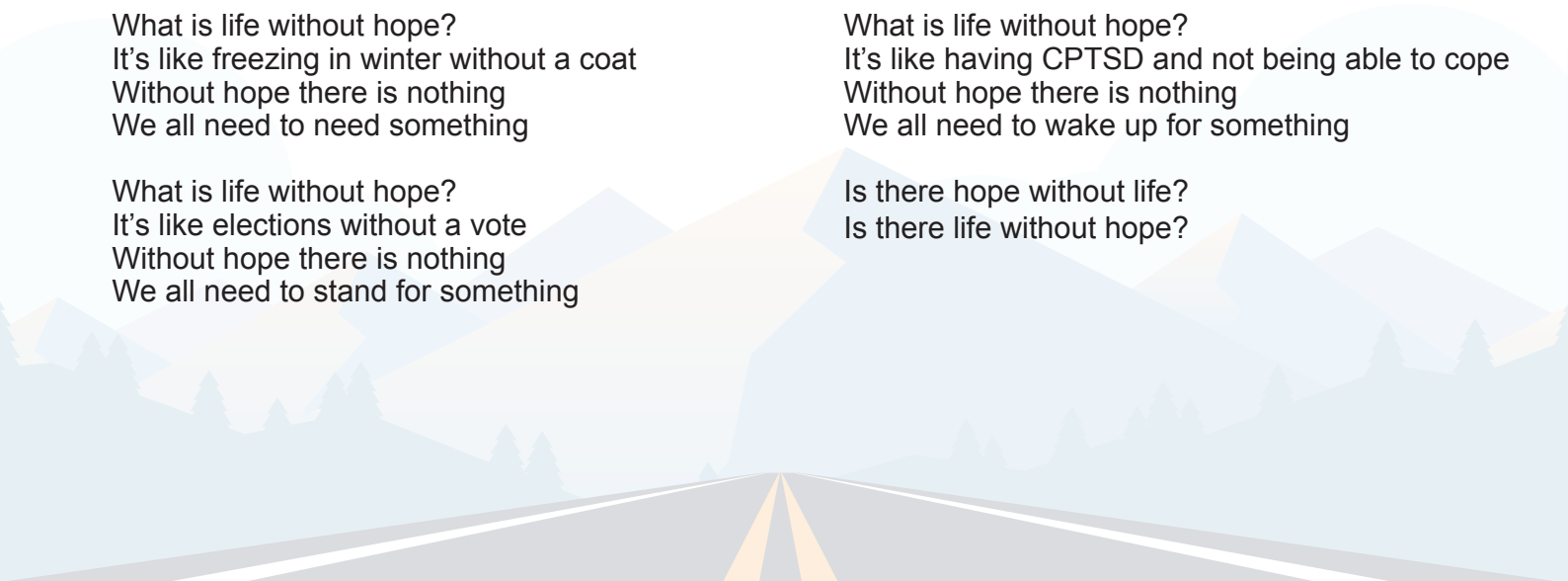
What is life without hope?  
It's like elections without a vote  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to stand for something

What is life without hope?  
It's like swimming and not staying afloat  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to believe in something

What is life without hope?  
It's like hanging without a rope  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to love something

What is life without hope?  
It's like having CPTSD and not being able to cope  
Without hope there is nothing  
We all need to wake up for something

Is there hope without life?  
Is there life without hope?





# Destiny

What is my destiny?  
What is to become of me?  
Is destiny a thing to be desired?  
Or something to watch and admire?

Will I be able to write my own story?  
Or will I be defined by my history?  
Will I be able to look positively to the future?  
Or be lost in the past...I'm just not sure?

I didn't come this far to come this far  
But it's like a rear view mirror in your car  
Do you keep looking behind you to check if you're safe?  
Or look forward believing you're going to a safe place?

How do you determine your destiny?  
Does it really set you free?  
Is it possible to have a great life and laugh?  
Or is it better to throw in the towel and take an early bath?

Is it possible to control my emotions?  
And my subsequent deadly notions?  
Is it possible to control my destiny?  
Is it really down to me?

# Veneer

Back then I thought everything was clear  
But in reflection it was a well crafted veneer  
It was a sane reaction to insane circumstances  
But I took a chance with frequent romances

Til the time it broke my heart  
And I just couldn't see a brand new start  
I'd never felt pain like that before  
And always have, since she closed that door

You try to float off into the distance  
But you know your heart is resistant  
But everyone makes a fatal mistake  
Sometimes we do it for our own sake

But I know I have a psychic civil war  
I now know what it is for  
The most angry voices come from the darkest place  
To the point in the mirror I can't look at my face

But I am a survivor  
I want to learn what my life is for  
I will listen to the voices  
But ultimately I will make my own choices.

# ACT III: A MOD ABROAD



# Sha-La-La-La-La-Jo

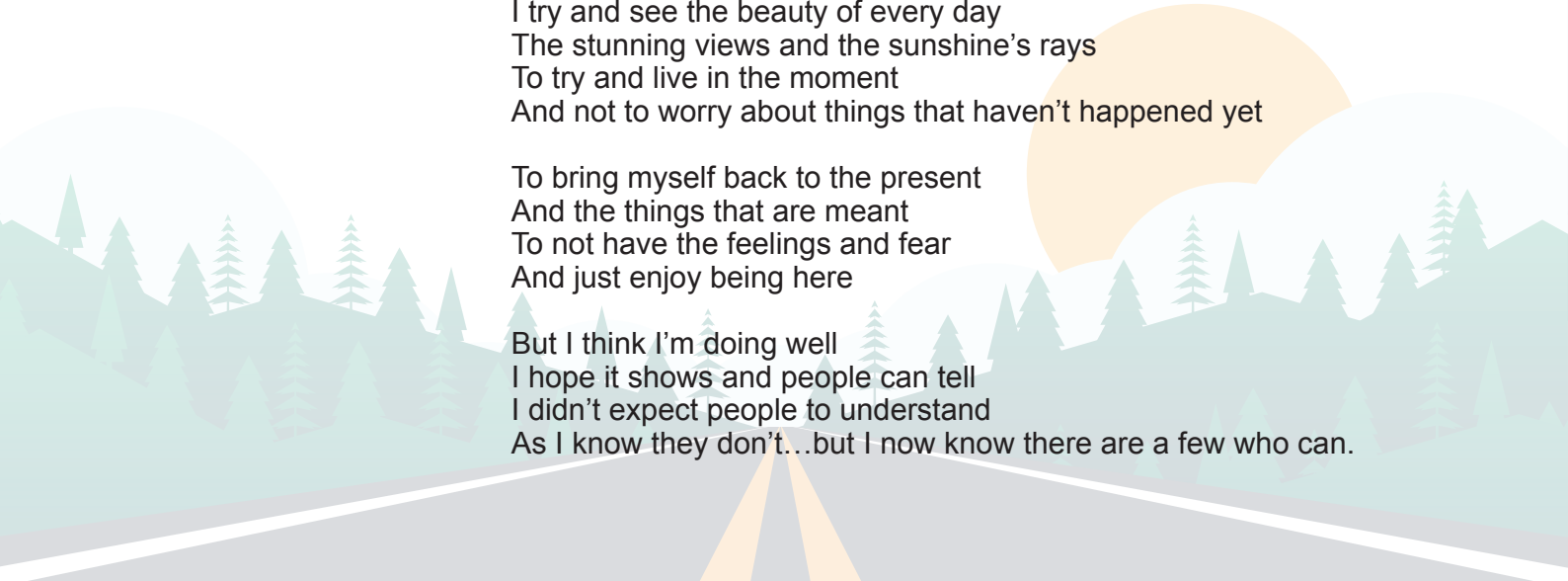
People pretend they don't know  
But for the most of them it shows  
They will ask the questions and pretend to understand  
But I know they don't, as no-one can

Iain and Jo have been great  
Told me their experiences and their fate  
And it's been good to share  
And see that there are people who care

I try and see the beauty of every day  
The stunning views and the sunshine's rays  
To try and live in the moment  
And not to worry about things that haven't happened yet

To bring myself back to the present  
And the things that are meant  
To not have the feelings and fear  
And just enjoy being here

But I think I'm doing well  
I hope it shows and people can tell  
I didn't expect people to understand  
As I know they don't...but I now know there are a few who can.



# FD18

Fathers Day  
What a way  
To spend with my son  
And his beautiful mum

To wake up in the sunshine  
And realise what is mine  
To be loved by them both  
More than Blaine loves his toast

We went for brunch at Posadonia  
And it rained like it does in Caledonia  
The streets were filled with deep puddles  
And in shop doorways we would huddle

Upto the bakery for some crepes and chocolate cake  
Some chocolate mint ice cream Blaine would take  
Teasing me with his thoughts of sharing  
But instead spilling it down the clothes he was wearing

Off to The Kool Pool and time to relax  
With Blaine enjoying the baby pool to the max  
Jumping and splashing as he jumps in and out  
Then a nice long sleep afterward was never in doubt

Next we went for the carvery at Ellie's  
The rain had cleared so no need for wellies  
We finished the meal with 3 empty plates  
This is one place the 3 of us rate

Back to the room and not far to go  
I went to watch the 2nd half of the Germany game against  
Mexico  
Afterwards up in the room I put on some Northern Soul  
And a wee dance with Blaine and mum made me whole

The weeguy and I headed to Pavlos while mum got ready  
The both of us dressed in our new Fred Perry's  
The both of us really looking the part  
As mum made sure we looked ultra smart

We stayed in Pavlos until closing time  
With Blaine shouting on Dougie until it wasn't fine  
We all walked back to the room and reflected on the day  
I had a perfect Father's Day in every way.

I would like to thank my wife  
For coming into my life  
And for making today such a special time  
And for making memories that will always be mine.

# Boat

Fishing with Peter early on Thursday  
What a beautiful sunrise to start the day  
I sat admiring the view on the pier  
Trying to contain my excitement and fear

The sunrise was such a beautiful sight  
It must give hope at the end of each night  
Everything was quiet and calm  
It's like a peaceful shot in the arm

The sea was as still as ice  
A view I simply can't describe  
Moving at speed along the surface  
Amazement written all over my face

Stopping to throw in our lines  
Both talking of harder times  
The time moved so fast  
As we spoke about our pasts

Almost immediately I caught a bite  
A small flat fish with little fight  
Peter caught another flat fish too  
We were optimistic this was the start of a few

Despite our best attempts we caught no more  
Our egos bruised, battered and sore

A few other areas were tried  
But none provided more fish to fry

So we dropped the anchor and went in for a dip  
Tops off and off the boat I slip  
My heart stops as I hit the depths  
Trying hard to get my breath

We swim onto the shore  
And we both chat some more  
About the pressure of life  
And about our troubles and strife

Discussing that less is more and more is less  
And how life judges on how people dress  
What kind of world we're living in  
And will we really ever win

Back on the boat to return to dry land  
Whilst docking the boat I give Peter a hand  
Making sure the boat is docked correctly in it's space  
With concentration on our face

The trip ends back at the harbour  
I really couldn't have asked for more  
The views, the catch, the chat and the hope  
A perfect trip on Peter's boat.

# Knockout

I'm going to be the best fighter ever  
I've fought and beaten all my challengers  
In my 49 year career  
I've nothing now left to fear

Some I've knocked out in the early rounds  
Some gave me problems and put me down  
But I've picked myself up from the canvas  
Even when I've been knocked on my ass

When I got up groggy and sore  
I dragged myself up off the floor  
Met the challenger full head on  
And showed them all I was strong

Of my opponents there were many  
Who would've knocked out lesser men than me  
My record so far is 49 and 0  
And I'm determined my 0 won't go

I've got the biggest fight on my hands right now  
It might be a long 12 rounds  
But I believe I can knock this contender out  
And give this one the full 10 count

I'll maintain my unbeaten record  
Because I believe in the words of Henry Ford  
If you believe you can or can't either way you're right  
And I believe I'm going to win all my fights.

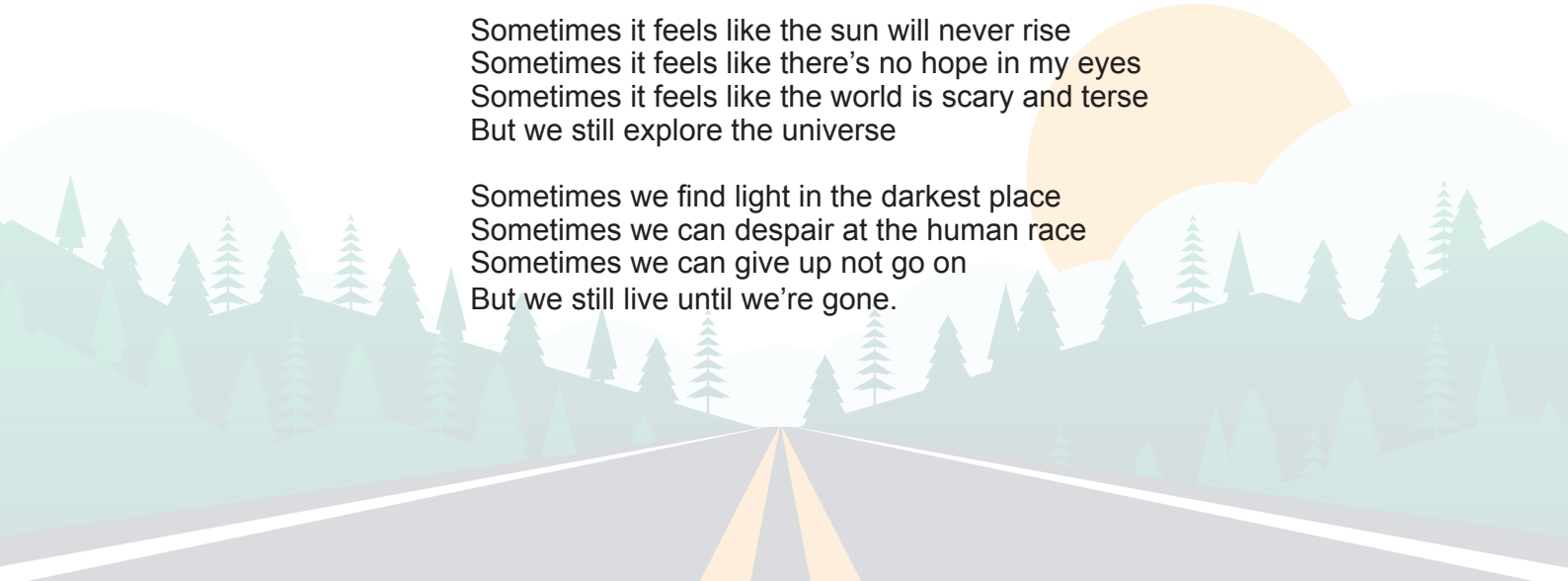
# Sometimes

Sometimes it snows in May but summer always comes  
Sometimes it feels like the world has stopped but it always turns  
Sometimes it feels like mountains can't be climbed  
But Everest gets conquered all the time

Sometimes it feels like hope and despair  
Sometimes I never want to go there  
Sometimes I think I will never overcome  
But men with no legs can still run

Sometimes it feels like the sun will never rise  
Sometimes it feels like there's no hope in my eyes  
Sometimes it feels like the world is scary and terse  
But we still explore the universe

Sometimes we find light in the darkest place  
Sometimes we can despair at the human race  
Sometimes we can give up not go on  
But we still live until we're gone.





# ACTIV: A CHANGING MOD



# Leap of Faith

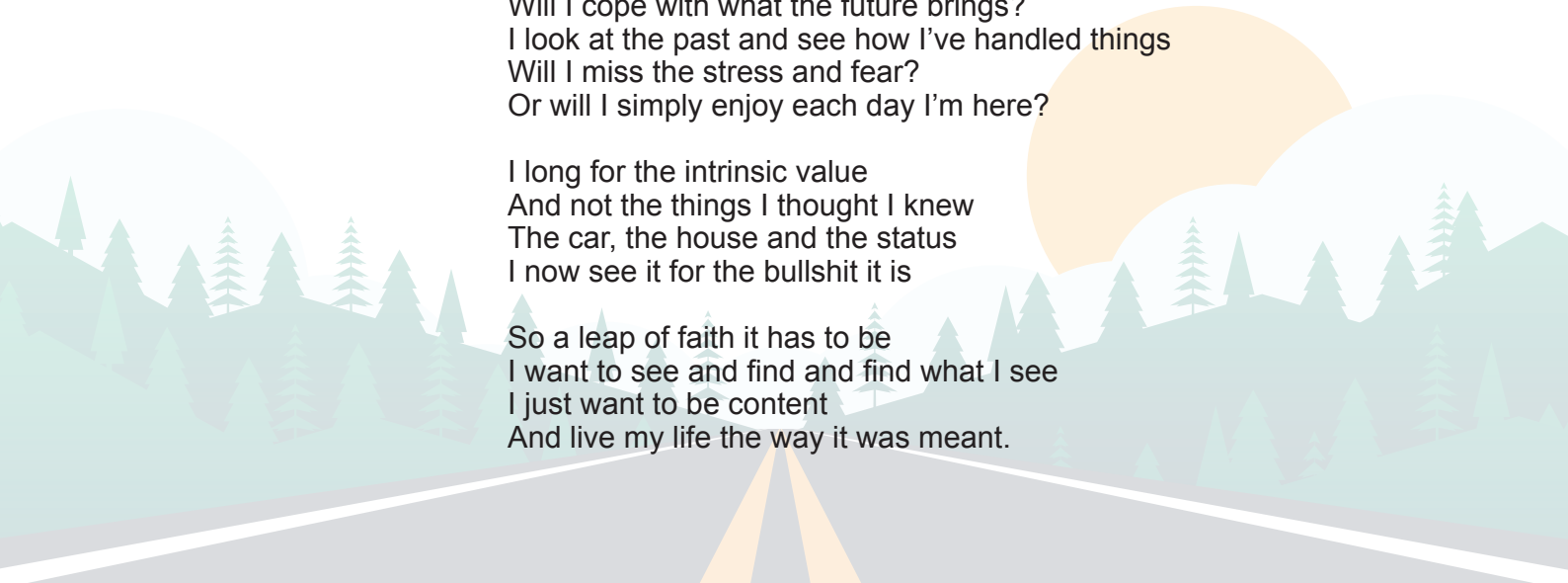
Leaving my job may be my biggest leap of faith  
Will I be able to fill the space?  
Leaving behind all the responsibility  
And believing in my future ability

Will I still have a value?  
In everything I say or do?  
I always let my job define me  
Will I be able to let it be?

Will I cope with what the future brings?  
I look at the past and see how I've handled things  
Will I miss the stress and fear?  
Or will I simply enjoy each day I'm here?

I long for the intrinsic value  
And not the things I thought I knew  
The car, the house and the status  
I now see it for the bullshit it is

So a leap of faith it has to be  
I want to see and find and find what I see  
I just want to be content  
And live my life the way it was meant.



## Moving on

On the edge of the precipice  
I suppose I always knew it would come to this  
Overtaken by the fear  
Of exactly what has brought me here

Not knowing what the future holds  
I suppose it depends on what I'm told  
Will I decide to walk away  
Or will I fight for another day

I've had almost 5 years of the unknown  
Never been able to figure out where I'm going  
I've always been engulfed by the cloud  
Wrapped around me like the Turin Shroud

I've had to deal with the visions of The Clutha  
And the horrors of my father's murder  
All my traumas have come to the fore  
These past 5 years or more

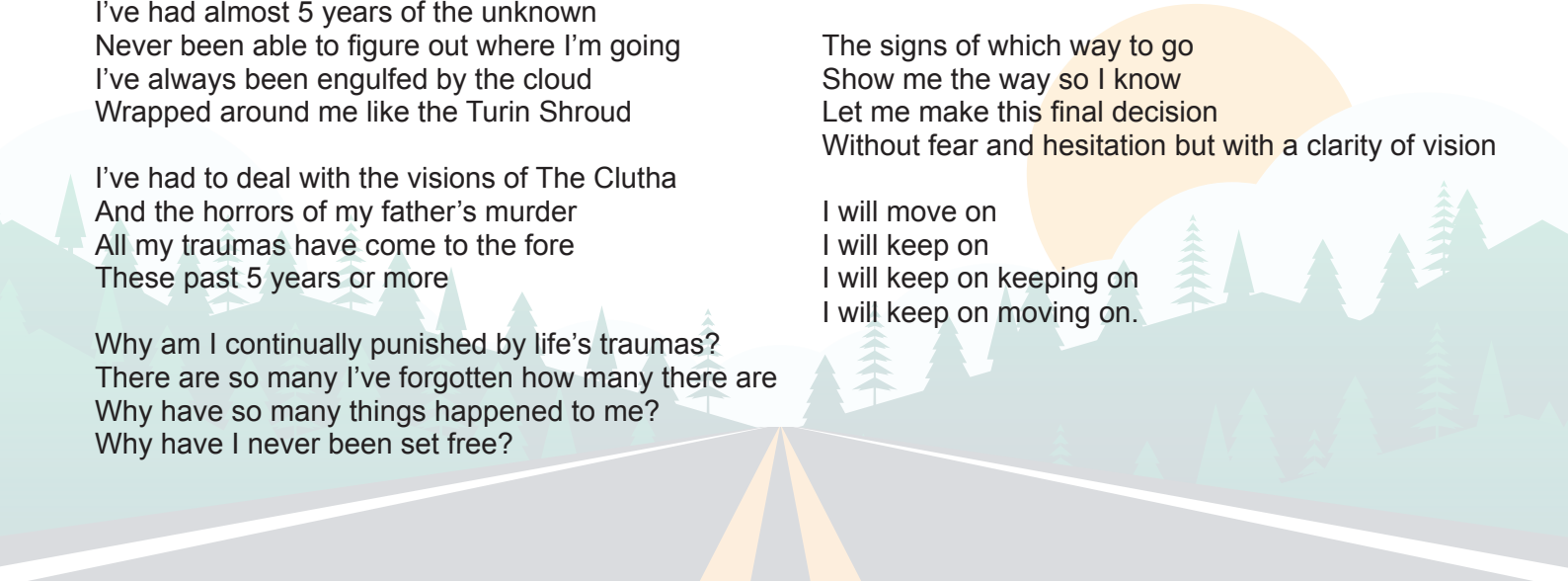
Why am I continually punished by life's traumas?  
There are so many I've forgotten how many there are  
Why have so many things happened to me?  
Why have I never been set free?

I try to see the beauty in the sky  
I try to see a different world from my eyes  
It's a constant struggle every day  
But I have to overcome...it's the only way

Is it fate that Weller releases a song called Moving  
On?  
After how my life had gone  
I'm now at the crossroads of me  
Will Weller and The Universe let me see?

The signs of which way to go  
Show me the way so I know  
Let me make this final decision  
Without fear and hesitation but with a clarity of vision

I will move on  
I will keep on  
I will keep on keeping on  
I will keep on moving on.



# Signs

'My time is now' was the sign  
A girls smile that met mine  
The guys t-shirt said 'Dream'  
All the positive things today I've seen

The difference is I've seen the signs and understood  
They really have lifted my mood  
Today I feel really positive  
This is the way I want to live

In my car I listened to 'The Power'  
I can listen to that for hours and hours  
All the positive messages from Rhonda  
They make me see life's many wonders

Things are so different when your eyes are open  
You can see and capture so many things with them  
Rather than look down you look up  
Half full not empty, my life's cup

It's the feeling within my chest  
It gives life flavour with its zest  
The flavour of life that can fulfil  
My hopes and dreams, I know it will

It's a feeling you can't buy  
It's a feeling like the highest high  
It's the feeling that makes me feel real  
It makes me believe I will heal.

# Turning Point

Today I've seen my turning point  
I've seen it before but today it was meant  
I believe today it was a metaphor  
To make me realise what life is for

Today will be a brand new start  
Of following my heart  
And not letting my mind take control  
And going to its rocks and rolls

I will stop feeling uptight and tense  
I will control and see sense  
It's not the situation that determines how you feel  
But how you feel that makes it real

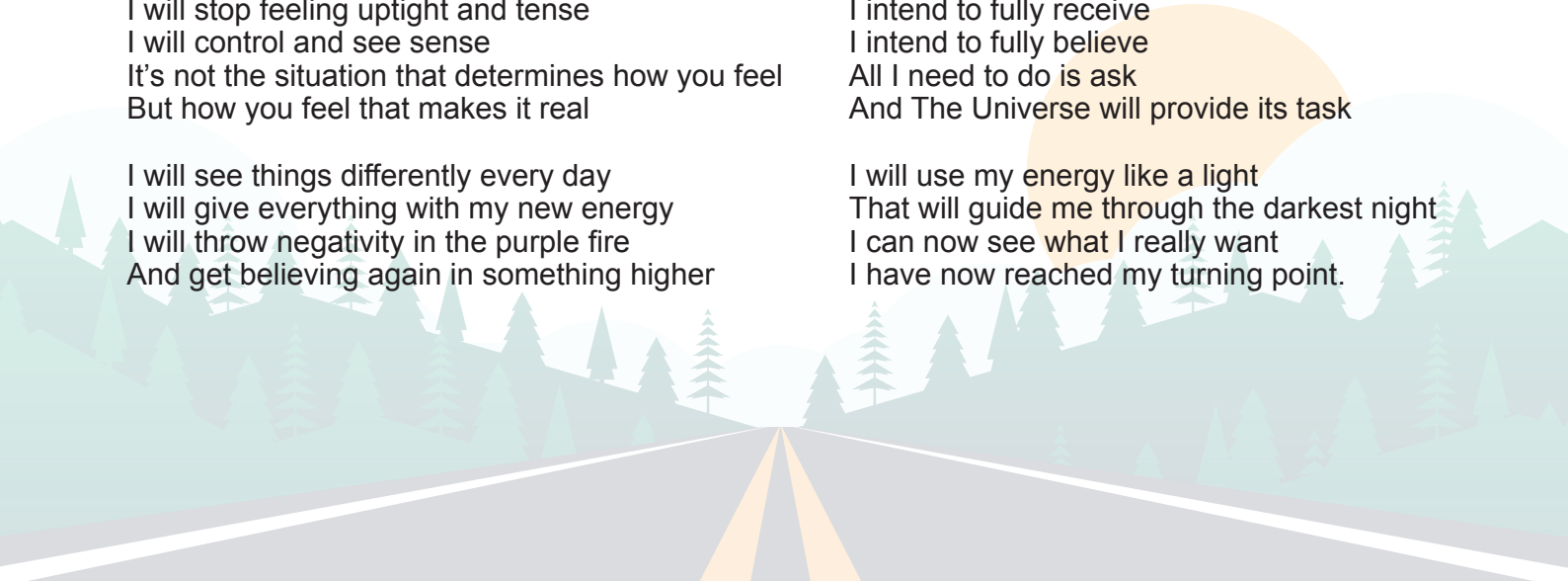
I will see things differently every day  
I will give everything with my new energy  
I will throw negativity in the purple fire  
And get believing again in something higher

I believed before and I will again  
I believed strongly before this pain  
But I intend to rise above  
And try and feel this life's love

A love that is unique to me  
A love that means I can 'Be'  
I've never felt love like this before  
But I intend to open up the door

I intend to fully receive  
I intend to fully believe  
All I need to do is ask  
And The Universe will provide its task

I will use my energy like a light  
That will guide me through the darkest night  
I can now see what I really want  
I have now reached my turning point.



# Recovery Stories Projects

This project gives people with lived experience of mental health issues and their carers the opportunity to share their story of recovery. It is understood that individual stories of recovery can not only enhance the storyteller's healing process and convey the reality of recovery but can also contribute to tackling stigma and discrimination.

Whether the storyteller wishes to use the written word, film, photography, poetry, or other, we want to offer people the chance to tell their story in a way that reflects their uniqueness.

To find out more or get involved, whether that means telling your story or supporting someone to tell their story, please get in touch:

[Audrey.Irn@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk](mailto:Audrey.Irn@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk)  
[Gerald@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk](mailto:Gerald@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk)

or Telephone: **01698 265232**

Produced by



**Stigma Free  
Lanarkshire**

Funded by



**NHS**  
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Credits: Vecteezy.com

If you need to speak to someone now you can contact:

### **Samaritans**

offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way – about whatever's getting to you. You don't have to be suicidal. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This number is FREE to call.

Phone: **116 123**

Email: **jo@samaritans.org**

### **Breathing Space**

A free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety. Call an advisor on **0800 83 85 87**. The phone line is available 24 hours at weekends (6pm Friday - 6am Monday) and 6pm to 2am on weekdays (Monday - Thursday).

### **NHS 24**

A call centre operated by the NHS to provide health advice and help over the phone when your GP services aren't available.

Call: **111**

### **eLament**

Lanarkshire's first stop for online mental health and well-being resources providing information for people seeking assistance with mental health issues. Our service directory provides listings of key organisations in North and South Lanarkshire and nationally who can offer help and support with mental health issues.

**[www.elament.org.uk](http://www.elament.org.uk)**

“Many times even the smallest words of encouragement have helped me since my breakdown, you will never know how much it has helped me and for that kindness I am eternally grateful.”

Michael Byrne

