

Building a society where NO male survivor is left behind

BEYOND THE

SILENCE



ISSUE FOUR
Winter 2024



JAMES SUTTON MALE MIND MATTERS

POD PEOPLE

Giving a voice to male survivors

*Listen now to our
brand new podcast!*



SCAN HERE!

**[WE ARE
SURVIVORS.]**

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WE ARE SURVIVORS.

SILENCE



ISSUE FOUR Winter 2024

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WE ARE SURVIVORS.

BEYOND THE SILENCE is published quarterly by We Are Survivors, and is edited, designed and produced by our Grahame.

We'd love your feedback. What would you like to see in future editions? Let us know.

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www.wearesurvivors.org.uk



MUST LISTEN

My podcast recommendations...



DUNCAN CRAIG OBE
Chief Executive Officer



CEO UPDATE

Pressing PLAY on our special podcasts edition.

AS I SIT DOWN TO WRITE THE INTRODUCTION FOR THIS EDITION OF BEYOND THE SILENCE MAGAZINE, I'm listening to one of my favourite podcasts (*The Rest Is Politics*) and Alistair Cambell and Rory Stewart are talking about their podcast live event and one of them said, "Podcasts are the new rock 'n' roll", and I couldn't agree more!

Every week I have two key podcasts that I have to listen to: *The Rest Is Politics* and *The News Agents*. I also sprinkle that with *Help I Saxed My Boss* and *Off Menu* for some laughs. Podcasts have become such a massive part of my day-to-day life, even replacing music when I'm out and about with my earphones in. The best podcasts are those where you feel like you're literally listening in on a conversation, sort of ear-wiggling, and as a proud Northerner, isn't ear-wiggling what we do?

I've been really honoured to be asked to appear on a few podcasts, including *VENT*, Rich Wilson's *Insane in the Men Brain*, and *When We Were Out*, to name a few. In this edition of *Beyond The Silence*, you'll hear from three more podcasters whose shows I've recently been invited on - including our cover star, and original Ambassador, James Sutton. James has recently started his own podcast

Male Mind Matters, focusing on men and mental health, and I was so proud to be asked to on to the pod and his first ever episode! James and I have been friends for over a decade since I worked with him and the team at *Hollyoaks* on the John Paul rape storyline, and he has been such a massive supporter of ours since, including becoming an Ambassador. The feedback from that podcast episode has been fantastic, with everyone saying how much they enjoyed listening to us - two men chatting, two friends who love each other just gassing and having a laugh. Well reader, let me tell you, that's exactly what it was. I had so much fun doing *Male Mind Matters* and I encourage you to take a listen.

Finally, I'm so proud of our team as we launch our very own podcast *Beyond The Silence* which is hosted by George and produced by Tag and the communications team. It's such a brilliant listen and a lovely compliment to the magazine. See page six for all the info. Well done team, you're amazing!

So, grab your ear-pods, stick em' in your lug holes, and press play!


DUNCAN CRAIG OBE
Chief Executive Officer

NEWS

NEW CPS PROTOCOL



The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have announced a new protocol in which they will arrange to meet ALL adult victims/survivors in sexual abuse, rape and sexual offence cases - even if a 'not guilty' plea is entered by the alleged perpetrator.

A CPS Victim Liaison Officer will write to the victim/survivor to offer them the opportunity to meet with a member of the prosecution team ahead of a trial and will be sent to the Detective in charge of the case for it to be hand delivered. ISVAs in survivor organisations are working closely with the CPS and Police to ensure that victims/survivors understand this new process. ■

LANDMARK 'AI' IMAGES PROSECUTION



In a landmark case, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) have become the first force to charge and successfully convict a man in Bolton for the creation, possession and distribution of indecent images of children generated by AI. GMP's DC Baines required the permission from the Attorney General to proceed with this case as a 'test case' and this successful prosecution is another step forward in tackling online harms. ■



THE LAW

SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

New measures in place to protect employees from sexual harassment in the workplace.

ON SATURDAY 26TH OCTOBER 2024, NEW MEASURES CAME INTO EFFECT WHICH REQUIRE ALL EMPLOYERS TO TAKE REASONABLE STEPS TO PROTECT THEIR EMPLOYEES FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

Placing a legal duty on all employers to ensure all their staff have a safe working environment is a further positive step in tackling sexual violence.

Minister for Women and Equalities, Anneliese Dodds said, "Too many people feel uncomfortable or unsafe at work due to sexual harassment and we are putting every effort into putting a stop to it. The preventative duty is an important step on the journey, and we

will continue to improve protections for workers until everyone can thrive."

Guidance for employers on developing appropriate plans and policies has been published by the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This includes what behaviour needs to be addressed and how complaints should be handled, to help employers protect their staff and avoid tribunals.

We Are Survivors have been actively supporting NHS England, as the single largest employer in the UK, to address sexual harassment in the workplace, and we are extremely proud to have been the first sexual abuse charity in the country to sign up to the Sexual Safety Charter. ■

MEET THE TEAM

GEORGE PROCTER

**Community Development
Co-Ordinator and podcast host!**

“Our work in the Community is all about creating that first spark of hope. We’re there to check-in with our survivors regularly, listen to their needs and goals, and build up the confidence to envision and steer their own recovery journey. Once we can help provide that stability and support in living within the present, our ISVAs (Independent Sexual Violence Advisors) and Therapists can safely help our survivors process the past. Within our group spaces, it is a privilege to see those survivors can then pass on the lessons they have learned to a new generation who are just entering our service, and by sharing these stories through my role on our *Beyond the Silence* podcast (see page 6), I believe that their words will give others the strength to find their own voices.” ■



Find out more about our work at:
www.wearesurvivors.org.uk



OUR STATS

THE DIFFERENCE WE MAKE. AT A GLANCE.

THIS ISSUE WE ARE EXPLORING THE WORLD OF PODCASTS. Not only can they be a great listen, but for organisations like ours, they can be a vital platform for guiding men to our services. Here’s a look at the impact appearing on James Sutton’s podcast *Male Mind Matters* (see page 14) and a recent episode of the BBC’s *Crimewatch* had on engagement...



51%

In the week following the release of James’ podcast (7th-13th Oct), unique sessions on the We Are Survivors website increased by 51% on the previous week.

www.wearesurvivors.org.uk



58%

Page views on the We Are Survivors website were up 58% on the day of the *Crimewatch* episode (15th October), compared to the previous week.



SCAN HERE TO ORDER YOURS TODAY!
£5 DONATION



NOT YOUR AVERAGE CALENDAR

While we're on the subject of Christmas gifts, here's another suggestion for you. Curated and created by ABOVE AVG, this cheeky calendar is a celebration of body positivity and the beauty of the male form in all its shapes and sizes!

Best of all, the calendar is raising money for ON IT, the joint initiative between We Are Survivors and George House Trust, and also London Friend. It's the perfect gift for the bear-lover in your life and is available now for only £8 from:

above-avg.com



GRAB YOUR FREE FUNDRAISING PACK



To download or read our FREE Fundraising pack, just scan the QR code.

FUNDRAISING

HO HO HOLE IN ONE!

Grab one of our EXCLUSIVE We Are Survivors golf-tees for the golf fan in your life. Your £5 donation will go a long way!

THIS CHRISTMAS, why not give a gift that keeps on giving? If you're on the hunt for the perfect golf gift for your loved one and want to support male survivors at the same time, look no further! We've got you covered so you can relax, enjoy the festive season, and tee off with the spirit of giving.

For just £5, you'll be gifting one of our eco-friendly bamboo golf tees to someone you care about. But that's not all—you're also contributing to the support and safety of male survivors.

A generous 75% of your donation goes directly to supporting male survivors, while the remaining 25% helps us continue our mission here at We Are Survivors.

Over the past three Christmases, we've delivered 66 group activities to

our clients. In December 2023 alone, we saw a 53% increase in community group activities compared to previous years, meaning more men are stepping forward to receive the support they need.

With Christmas just around the corner, we want to ensure your tee is wrapped and under the tree in time for the big day. From November 19th to December 13th, you can purchase your tee by scanning the QR code above. Just fill out your details, and your gift will arrive hassle-free, and just in time for the festivities. But hurry—our supply is limited!

Thank you for your support this festive season. We promise, your donation will make all the difference!



BEYOND THE SILENCE THE PODCAST



Our very own **TAG** introduces the brand new We Are Survivors podcast, *Beyond The Silence*



WHEN THE IDEA FOR A WE ARE SURVIVORS PODCAST FIRST CAME UP, IT QUICKLY BECAME CLEAR THAT IT COULD BE MUCH MORE THAN A SIMPLE INFORMATION CHANNEL—IT COULD BE A REAL WAY TO BRING OUR CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY EVEN CLOSER, AND MAYBE EVEN OPEN NEW DOORS FOR THOSE STILL ON THE EDGE OF REACHING OUT.

A podcast would let us share our stories, talk about our work, and allow listeners to feel the genuine connections and passion we pour into supporting survivors every day. So, with excitement (and a fair bit of caffeine!), we launched into production, and *Beyond The Silence* was born.

WHY A PODCAST, AND WHY NOW?

We created *Beyond The Silence* to give a real voice to the heart of our organisation. Podcasts offer that unique ability to go deep, letting our colleagues, mental health professionals, and some survivors themselves explore and share topics that impact male survivors in their everyday lives. It's about building bridges, fostering community, and providing an accessible platform where we can openly discuss the complex issues and experiences that

our staff and service users face. Our goal? To be a resource that's informative, yes, but also engaging and welcoming—a place where listeners feel heard and understood, even if they're not quite ready to reach out to us directly.

OUR AIM

Our hope is that through open, genuine conversations, *Beyond the Silence* can serve as a gateway to our services for anyone looking to learn more, get support, or just feel connected to our community. We know that sometimes taking that first step can feel overwhelming; therefore we wanted this podcast to be a comforting first encounter with We Are Survivors—whether someone is tuning in for information, reassurance, or just to hear some real talk on issues that impact them. We hope this podcast helps more survivors and loved ones find the courage and information they need to seek support on their own terms.

INSIDE EACH EPISODE

So, what exactly can you expect? Think honest, open, and relatable discussions. We tackle topics like self-care techniques (an absolute must!), the importance of authentic survivor voices in media, and



“If there’s one recurring theme that’s emerged across the first season, it’s community.”

the all-too-common barriers that can stop survivors from accessing the support they need. Each conversation flows naturally from the experiences of our hosts and guests, who share insights and stories that reflect the wide range of challenges and triumphs within our community. This season, our host, George (*see page 4*), leads heartfelt discussions with members of our own We Are Survivors team, including our Pathfinder, Community Development Coordinator, Operations Director, Therapy Services Manager, and one of our Therapists. Future episodes will branch out even further, featuring voices from our ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) team, other therapists, and possibly a few familiar faces returning with new perspectives to share.

THEMES

If there’s one recurring theme that’s emerged across this first season, it’s community. Throughout each episode, we see that sense of shared purpose and genuine support, which is at the core of everything we do. It’s clear that community—alongside resilience and care—forms the bedrock of our work. We hope this theme resonates with listeners and reminds everyone of the strength we find in our connections with one another.

THE ROAD TO PRODUCTION

Like any new venture, recording a podcast came with its fair share of learning curves, from mastering the tech setup to figuring out the flow of conversations. But those small hurdles have been worth every minute because the end result is a platform that holds real, honest, and valuable content. Behind each episode are people who care deeply about helping survivors and supporting each other, and that passion really shines through in these discussions.

WHERE CAN YOU LISTEN?

Ready to listen? You can find *Beyond the Silence* on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube, and all other major podcast platforms. We’re releasing one episode per week for four weeks, with plans for a second series early next year. Each season will bring four fresh episodes, so you can count on regular insights and conversations twice a year.

GET INVOLVED

We want our listeners - that’s you! - to be part of this journey with us. Male survivors, their loved ones, and our community can engage by joining us on social media and leaving questions or comments on our YouTube videos. Who knows—your question might even make it onto a future episode! We’re incredibly excited to welcome you into the *Beyond the Silence* community. Here’s to open dialogue, support, and the unbreakable spirit of survivors everywhere.



You can listen to *Beyond The Silence* on all major streaming platforms, and watch on our YouTube channel. Visit the link below to listen now, or scan the QR code.

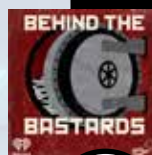
linktr.ee/ThisIsSurvivors

LISTEN NOW!



MUST LISTEN

Some of the WE ARE SURVIVORS team share their favourite pods...



TAG BEHIND THE BASTARDS

A thoroughly well-researched look at the lives of some of the worst and weirdest people in history (past and present). The host Robert is deliciously cynical and funny which helps make the subject matter more digestible.



GRAHAME ADAM BUXTON

Adam is one of the world’s most likeable chaps, and always gets the very best from the people he interviews, and they’re always the most interesting people! A genuinely warm, kind and funny podcast.



MATT BAD GAYS

It is always good to learn more about historical queer figures, especially the ones we as a community might not want to claim.



MARY ASSUME NOTHING: EIGHT STEPS TO STOP A MURDER

This podcast about femicide is brilliant. You can find it on the BBC Sounds app.



THEO PITCHSIDE

This podcast revolves around football. They share upcoming updates and *terrible* opinions when it comes to the teams and players, but it’s an enjoyable watch.

GIVING A F**K



What do you think are the key messages for people engaged in ChemSex?

I don't partake in ChemSex and am not into drugs but I have seen people struggle with addiction and it's scary. I have a very clear message - you can't consent to filming whilst intoxicated and no creator should be engaging people to film that are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. How can people consent whilst under the influence?

However, I do know that outside of work people use drugs recreationally on the club scene and I've always said that whilst it's not my bag, I don't want to preach, I just want people to be safe. Make sure that you have the right information, make sure you know what you're doing and like all things that involve consent... know your boundaries and the boundaries of others.

You're about to launch a podcast – tell us more!

The 'FKME' podcast - which is from my clothing brand - is very sex-positive and unapologetic. We're going to talk about a wide range of things that fall under the queer umbrella, including sex positivity, nights out, sexual health, different kinks and so on. We're going to do it in a light hearted, fun way, and build that community.

What do you hope people will get from your podcast?

I want people to have a laugh, and have fun! Part of the FKME brand is to create a community vibe. I want to get the listener involved! Hopefully people can learn a few things too. My message to listeners about being sex positive is there's a difference to being sex positive and a "perv". That might sound harsh, but sometimes you gotta read the room! You've got to know about respect of other people and you've got to know about consent. But embrace yourself. Be unapologetically you, and enjoy yourself! ■ [instagram.com/mrbritainx](https://www.instagram.com/mrbritainx)

Adult content creator **MRBRITAINX (ETHAN)** is launching a new sex-positive podcast. We had a chat with him about consent and plans with We Are Survivors.

Why did you decide to start working with We Are Survivors?

So it was actually a friend of mine in the industry that told me about We Are Survivors - they know Duncan and have used the services. I heard what you were trying to achieve and who you were helping and I thought it was brilliant and wanted to help, even just spreading the word in my industry.

As an adult content creator, how do you navigate conversations about consent in your work?

Personally, I actually find it very easy - I work in a very professional manner. Unfortunately, there are some people out there who see adult content creation as a "hookup", and it isn't! If you're doing this as work, it should be professional, and done in a professional way, and that includes having the conversation of do's and don'ts before you meet. I'll have that conversation before and on the day of the shoot so it's fresh in our minds. It's literally that easy, that simple. It's always been "Thank you for asking." and done.



"Make sure you have the right information, you know what you're doing and like all things that involve consent... know your boundaries and the boundaries of others."



MUST LISTEN



Ethan's podcast recommendation is 'The Padded Cell' which you can listen to on all major streaming platforms. Add it to your playlist!

Thomas Garrod-Pullar



Tom Garber



Hope for Men

SURVIVOR STORIES

THOMAS GARROD-PULLAR and **TOM GARBER** are male survivors running successful support organisations for other male survivors. They also host two fascinating podcasts...

Can you both tell us a bit about your podcasts?

THOMAS: Our podcast is called *Queer Consent*. It explores themes around consent in different subgroups within the LGBT community. So that means we'll have, for instance, one episode exploring trans and intersex experiences, another with industry professionals. I want to show that we can have a discussion within the community and bring everybody together to talk.

TOM: As a for-profit organisation our podcast (*What Happened To Me*) is a great marketing tool, and it's a space for me to be creative. I'm originally from the film industry, so doing things like this makes me happy. I also want to provide men with the space to share their stories. Recently I'm broadening that to other conversations about healing, and speaking with therapists on how to work on a healing journey.

Has podcasting helped with your own journeys as male survivors?

TOM: I feel privileged to speak with other men who trust me with their stories. It empowers

me in my work, but it can also be emotionally heavy to listen to their difficult experiences. These are deep conversations, and while I'm not a trained therapist, I'm a survivor like them. I understand the need to support them because I remember what it felt like to have no one to share my own story with. I want to be that person for them. This is my mission.

THOMAS: I have always found talking about my experience and being part of changing the narrative to be super empowering. I think also I took this very sensitive approach of trying to be as inclusive as possible and reach as many parts of the population that we're working with as possible in order to show that we want to really listen as an organisation. That's something that I've tried to do. It's always humbling, but very empowering to have conversations with people who've shared similar experiences.

Find out more about Thomas's organisation **MEN AS WELL** at www.menaswell.nl, and Tom's organisation **HOPE FOR MEN** at www.hopeformen.org

MUST LISTEN

Here's where you can listen to Tom and Thomas's podcasts. Add them to your playlist!



QUEER CONSENT
Thomas Garrod-Pullar
www.menaswell.nl

A podcast looking at where we are now with consent in the community, and what needs to be done to achieve a safe LGBTQIA+ community.



WHAT HAPPENED TO ME
Tom Garber
www.hopeformen.org

A safe space for male survivors of sexual violence. Each story, no matter how challenging, deserves to be heard. This podcast amplifies voices silenced for too long, fostering resilience and healing.

ROOM TO VENT

FREDDIE COCKER HAS RECORDED OVER 351 EPISODES OF HIS GROUND-BREAKING MENTAL HEALTH PODCAST **THE JUST CHECKING IN PODCAST**. WE CAUGHT UP WITH FREDDIE TO CHAT ABOUT HIS STORY AND THE EVOLUTION OF HIS SUPPORT PLATFORM FOR MEN, 'VENT'.



Hi Freddie, can you tell us a little about how Vent, and the podcast began?

It started in a Toby Carvery near where I live, with my best friend, Hannah. I was applying for a lot of mental health jobs and charities and wasn't really getting anywhere. I'd had experience in developing websites, and whenever someone wants to have a really deep conversation with me, they'd use the word 'vent'. So I thought, if I ever developed a platform, I'd call it 'Vent'. Hannah said, "Fred, if you just help one person, you'll have done the job. Everything after that is a bonus." So I started the website and the first article was my own coming out story about my bullying. It's just grown from there. It's gone from a website to the podcast now, 'Just Checking In'. I've done 351 episodes in five years!

You've been open about your own mental health journey. What was the turning point for you?

I think the first major point was a breakdown that I had in university. I got to a stage where I was suicidal. I had an episode of psychosis in the middle of a seminar where I started hearing voices on a wall from a painting, telling me to kill myself. The week before, I'd gone to the medical centre at my university and said, "Look, I'm not in a good space." But I still felt the stigma. I still felt too ashamed to really tell them what was really going on.

THE
JUST CHECKING IN
PODCAST



LISTEN NOW ON SPOTIFY!



CULTURALLY, I THINK WE NEED TO GIVE MEN A BETTER SPACE TO SPEAK ABOUT ISSUES THAT ARE VERY HARD FOR PEOPLE TO STARE AT... ISSUES THAT ARE STILL VERY STIGMATISED.

What do you think the specific barriers are to men and boys being able to talk about their mental health?

I think we have to look at the cultural and we have to look at the systemic, and if we can marry those two together and improve them both, then we'll create an infinitely better landscape for men's mental health. A lot of the time men are reaching out, but they're getting pushback from the system. It could be they've gone through some sort of a severe mental health issue and they've gone to the NHS, but the NHS is struggling and put them on an eight month waiting list. Culturally, I think we need to be able to give a better space for men to be able to speak about issues that are very hard for people to stare at. A lot of issues are still very stigmatised.

You've produced over 350 podcasts. Are there any particular points on that journey that really stick in your mind?

One of the first episodes was with my close friend Lloyd. He shared his coming out story, which was a massive thing, and I was so proud of him for doing that. We need to be listening to men now. A lot of the men who come on my podcast have issues like eating disorders, they've been sexually abused or been domestically abused, and I don't think society is listening to them. We NEED to be listening and taking some positive steps forward.

How do you hope that the podcast might affect some positive change?

I hope it's creating positive change. It's hard to say. I think a lot of my audience are almost a silent majority. The best feedback I tend to get is normally from the guests. They'll say, "that was the best interview I've done!" So I'm hoping it creates little ripples in each guest's social network which get larger and creates positive change. I'll say to my guests, "I hope it helps people, mate. But the first person I hope it helps is *you*. Anything after that is a bonus."

Are there any podcasts you'd recommend, either professionally or just to switch off and enjoy?

I've got loads, man. I listen to about 25! I love *Football Clichés*. It's all about the language of football, which I love. I listen to *Making Sense* with Sam Harris. That's quite a philosophical one. I listen to *Weekly Planet*, which covers comic book culture and movies and stuff. I do try not to consume too many other mental health podcasts because it can be very all-consuming and I have to try and decompress as much as I can. ■

You can listen to *The Just Checking In Podcast* on all major streaming platforms. Visit Freddie's fantastic mental health website at:

www.vent.org.uk



MUST LISTEN

We asked Freddie to recommend five episodes of THE JUST CHECKING IN PODCAST that would be of interest to male survivors. "The first four are all male survivors, whereas George (TheTinMen) advocates for male survivors through his platforms and highlights the issues they face very powerfully."

GARY HAYES: EPISODE 239

Gary is the co-founder and CEO of PTSD999.

GARY QUINN: EPISODE 255

Gary was sexually abused by his step-father from the ages of 10-12 years old.

TIM VERITY: EPISODE 106

Tim discusses his experiences of being sexually abused as a child by an extended family member.

LUKE LOUGHLIN: EPISODE 244

Luke is the co-founder of Men United.

GEORGE from THETINMEN: EPISODE 223

TheTinMen explores issues around men's mental health.

THE JUST CHECKING IN PODCAST is available to listen to on all streaming platforms including Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Soundcloud.





THE POWER OF SPEAKING OUT

CANDICE HARRIS and **GEMMA HALLIWELL** know the power of having important conversations and sharing lived experiences. Their podcast series is an honest and open conversation between two friends, both survivors of childhood sexual abuse.



CANDICE HARRIS AND GEMMA HALLIWELL first met each other at a Sexual Violence Research Network conference, and very quickly found a strong shared connection that blossomed into a beautiful friendship.

Gemma tells us, “Candice stepped onto the stage, and she just kind of lit up the whole room and I felt instantly drawn to her.” The experience for Candice was similar, she explains, “The conference was the first time that Gemma had said she was a survivor. It felt incredibly different to many other adult survivors that I’ve listened to. There was something... a lightness that I found very contagious, even when speaking about such hard subject matter. I think that that’s what Gemma and I were both so engaged with; we’ve been through and lived through really difficult things, but we both are very light, and we both wish to hold on to a lot of joy, and I think we saw that instantly.”

Do you think that lightness in your relationship and your friendship made it easier for you to discuss these topics and to discuss your shared experiences?

CANDICE: “I don’t know if anything makes it *easier*. It was just coming together, and really enjoying this human being. Liking

the other aspects of Gemma is what really pulled me in. Because of those other aspects, we were able to speak about very, very difficult things in a very safe, loving way. So I guess yes, perhaps that *did* make it easier. It’s easier to speak to someone who looks at you with a deep understanding and a love, so you can go in any direction, and you will feel uplifted at the end of it.”

That deep understanding and safety in their friendship shines brightly in their podcast series ‘Conversations We’ve Never Had’, in which Gemma and Candice talk openly and honestly about their experience of childhood sexual abuse, and how it is possible to move forward.

Has the openness you’ve had in talking about your shared experiences opened the door for listeners to the podcast? What kind of feedback have you had from listeners?

GEMMA: “One of the first things that we had back was somebody saying, ‘This was a conversation that I’ve needed to hear for my entire life and it’s helped me to have some of the biggest conversations in my life.’ It’s a conversation we wanted to hear that we’re not currently hearing elsewhere. We talk about this a lot in our last episode, ‘Fortitude’. Because we work in the sector and for both of us hope, joy and positivity is so central to the conversation

“We really believe in the power of a conversation. The silence around this topic continues to be so profound. Every second of every conversation shifts the dial. We really strongly believe in that principle.”

its about balancing things. We aren't going to shy away from the difficult parts of the conversation, but we are always going to hold onto hope because that's what we would have wanted for ourselves and its also what we want for the young people that we work with. I think perhaps that helps people to feel safer as they are listening. We've also had a lot of feedback from researchers working across sectors saying how interesting it was to listen without being lost in the pain of another human being.”

CANDICE: “Some profound feedback that we did have was from a parent whose child had recently disclosed, and not understanding her teenager's behaviour. The podcast was so helpful to her. I get very excited when I know that parents, or carers, or people who love us are listening alongside and then finding different ways of communicating with young people. Also, people who haven't gone through sexual abuse, but who *have* gone through trauma - because we all go through something - are listening too. So, hopefully we'll be able to raise difficult conversations in their life that they haven't been able to have. It's great to hear that this conversation actually stretches to a broader audience and looking at ways of coping and dealing with trauma.”

GEMMA: “We really believe in the power of a conversation. The silence around this topic continues to be so profound. Every second of every conversation shifts the dial. We really strongly believe in that principle.”

How do you want to keep the conversation going?

CANDICE: “We definitely want to do more podcasts. Gemma and I are so passionate about this work. We won't have burnout because we've lived through it and we are exhausted. But we're also energised. So that lives alongside us always. We know that we're in it for the long haul, so we're not in a rush of what's next, when's next, and how we're going to get there, because we know we are going to continue with this conversation.”

GEMMA: “We're on a mission. A foundation of our work is that our stories are no longer our own because they are so many other people's too. So for us, what's so important in the space is to be able to connect other people together. It's about creating that sense of community - collective action and collective change. I think we need to really take a look at what activism looks like, particularly for young people. That's a conversation that really fascinates both of us.” ■

You can listen to *Conversations We've Never Had* on all major streaming platforms. Visit the link below for access to all links and further information. Scan the QR to listen.

www.linktr.ee/conversationsweveneverhad



LISTEN NOW!



BEHIND THE SILENCE

To mark this podcast special edition of *Beyond The Silence*, **THEO**, our Digital Communications Co-ordinator has created a short promotional film with our amazing Ambassador **JAMES SUTTON**. Here's a behind-the-scenes glimpse at the making of the film.

A quick turn of the page of this issue of *Beyond The Silence* and you can read our interview with We Are Survivors original Ambassador James Sutton, celebrating the launch of his fantastic new podcast *Male Mind Matters*.

James is an active and passionate supporter of our work, and is always keen to help when he can. With that in mind, we decided it would be a great idea to work with James on a short film to promote this issue and his podcast - and we were thrilled when he said 'yes!' The storyboard for the video involved crafting a dynamic scene featuring a young man picking up a copy of the magazine while listening to James's podcast. At which point James magically appears!



Filming took place at the Liverpool bar, 'The Green Man' (our thanks to the team there), and to bring the storyboard to life, we enlisted the expertise of Tom Kelly, a talented young professional filmmaker whose impressive portfolio can be viewed on his Instagram profile (Search: [@tomkelly_dop](https://www.instagram.com/tomkelly_dop)).



We'd also like to thank Molly Navarro, who joined us on set, for her invaluable assistance. We hope you enjoy the film. And if you did, please share it! You can scan the QR code to give it a watch, or visit:

www.linktr.ee/ThisIsSurvivors

I'D DO THIS EVEN IF NO ONE WAS LISTENING!!

Hollyoaks actor and We Are Survivors Ambassador **JAMES SUTTON** has launched a brand new podcast series, *Male Mind Matters*. He has something to say...



LISTEN NOW!

Male Mind Matters is available to listen to now wherever you get your podcasts. Scan the QR code below to listen on Spotify...



JAMES SUTTON may be best known as John Paul on the long-running Channel 4 soap *Hollyoaks*, but he's a lot more than that. He's a proud original Ambassador here at We Are Survivors, and a passionate champion of positive mental health for men and boys.

Recently James has launched a brand new podcast series, *Male Mind Matters*. In each episode he talks in-depth to men who have their own very personal mental health journeys to share. The chats are open, honest and very much like dropping in on a conversation between two mates. The first episode featured our very own Duncan Craig OBE, a close friend of James' since they worked together on the male rape storyline in *Hollyoaks*. We grabbed some time with James to ask about the podcast and why he decided the time was right to start talking.

"I'm interested in people, fundamentally," he says. "I like storytellers. I like having interesting conversations with interesting

humans. This podcast allows me to do that. I think it's going to be quite an important podcast for a lot of men."

What kind of conversations have you had so far in *Male Mind Matters*?

It's been really varied, and they've all been quite intimate. I guess the purpose of the podcast really is to break down some of the stigma around men being open and honest. A lot of men just don't feel like they have permission, that it's not a 'masculine' thing to be vulnerable, open and honest. We've been having really interesting and often quite funny conversations that sometimes touch on difficult subjects. Loneliness has come up, and of course mental health. It's never far from our thoughts. It's been fantastic. I'm learning a lot from it, and if I'm learning from it, I think the audience will as well.

You've been very honest about your own struggles with mental health. Was there a specific moment you decided to confront those issues head on?

I didn't really have an epiphany moment. I interviewed somebody yesterday, and he had an actual moment in a police cell where he





ONE OF THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF HEALING IS HELPING OTHER PEOPLE. THESE MEN ALL WANT TO SHARE, HELP AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

What kind of feedback have you had about the podcast?

Everyone's been really kind and really positive. A few people have learned some things about me that they didn't know. I'd be a hypocrite if I wasn't sharing my story as well. I've told them "Keep listening... you'll learn more about me!"

How do you see *Male Mind Matters* developing?

I've wanted to do something like this for the longest time, and now that I'm doing it, I want to keep doing it. Nobody ever regrets having a really interesting conversation with somebody, getting a bit deep and getting things off your chest. So why would I stop? I'd do it even if no one was listening.

just thought, "what the fuck am I doing?", and drew a line in the sand. Mine was over a couple of years pre-lockdown. I knew that things weren't right and I wasn't treating myself with love, care and respect. Lockdown exasperated everyone's problems. If you were depressed, lockdown made you *really* depressed. If you were anxious, it made you *more* anxious. Lockdown was the real catalyst for me making changes and putting my mental health and physical health first.

You mentioned how difficult it can be for men and boys to talk about mental health. Do you think it's getting easier, or are those barriers still there?

I think the younger generation is more inclined to talk. The rise of things like TikTok and Instagram, for all their negatives, are actually giving voices to a lot of young people. I see it at work, with the youngsters here. They're so supportive and generous with each other and not afraid to be vulnerable. My generation and people in their thirties... there's still a lot of work to do. I think Duncan Craig always talks about permission. I think it's the perfect word for these sorts of conversations. By opening up to someone, you're giving them permission to be open and honest with you. The more that we can encourage one man to do it, he encourages someone else and before you know it, it snowballs. I have hope. I'm doing what I can.

Have there been any commonalities in the issues that the men you've spoken to have brought up?

They've all had to overcome something and find a way of being peaceful. They're all people who've been on a journey. One of the core principles of healing is helping other people. These men all want to share, help, and make a difference.

What other podcasts do you listen to either with the mental health head on, or just something that you like to sit back, chill and enjoy listening to?

I love, *The Rest Is* series. They do *The Rest Is Politics*, *The Rest Is History*, *The Rest Is Entertainment*. I love those. I listen to loads of Liverpool Football Club stuff. Sorry! I love people who are really eloquent around football. There's a lot of people who just shout rubbish about their team. But when you get someone that's really interesting and informed and can understand the nuances of the science behind football, I love all that stuff.

You've been an Ambassador for *We Are Survivors* for over ten years now. Why is it so important to you?

Firstly, it was for visibility. I just fell in love with the work that Duncan was doing. I thought it was so important. Obviously, I'll do anything I can. I'm an actor and I've got a little platform and I'm on the telly. It's the power not just of Duncan, but the charity as a whole. The ethos, the ambition, the drive, the sensitivity. It's essential. It's an essential charity. So it was a really, really easy sell to ask me to be an Ambassador. ■

The current run of *Male Mind Matters* is available on all major podcast platforms. You can also watch the conversations on YouTube. Just search '*Male Mind Matters*'.



HANG OUT WITH US!

The Hangout is a safe space at We Are Survivors for young men aged 18-35 to engage and socialise. Here's more info...

ARE YOU AGED 18-35? THE HANGOUT TAKES PLACE EVERY TUESDAY AFTERNOON AT WE ARE SURVIVORS, AND EVERY OTHER TUESDAY EVENING THERE'S A SPECIAL THEMED NIGHT TOO. CHECK OUR SOCIALS TO FIND OUT WHAT THAT WEEK'S PARTICULAR THEME IS.

The Hangout has been created for male survivors under 35 who have been impacted by sexual harms and is a safe space to come and meet fellow survivors. The group is always evolving, and is led by those who attend.

The Hangout is also a place where you don't have to be alone. It's absolutely fine to bring along your supporters, allies or friends who are also under 35 because we understand that walking through the door can be a huge step. So why not do it with a friend?

So, whether you are engaged in our service or want to engage with us, come along! The Hangout Themed Events run

"We know that walking through the door can be a huge step, so why not do it with a friend?"

every two weeks on Tuesday evenings. Themed nights are a chance to focus on a single activity. It could be a videogame night, a film night, a creative session... and again, these theme nights are suggested by and created by the guys who attend. Got an idea for a theme night? Let us know! The Hangout is a safe space that *you* define.

To find out more, drop an e-mail to community@wearesurvivors.org, give us a call on 0161 236 2182 and make sure you're following us on social media: @thisissurvivors

WE ARE SURVIVORS.



DROP IN

A safe space to connect with peers and enjoy some fun activities.

ONLINE SAFE ROOM

An online peer-to-peer support group.

MANDEM MEETUP TALKING CIRCLE

Second and fourth Monday, hosted by our brothers at Mandem Meetup.

YOGA STUDIO

Weekly session returns in January.

THE COFFEE SHOP

Let's grab a brew and have a chat.

THE HANGOUT

A brand new group for survivors, 18-35.

THE ART ROOM

Express yourself artistically - all abilities!

THE BUILDERS YARD (LEGO)

Brick by brick, come and join other survivors and get building with Lego.

THE SAFE ROOM

Confidential, peer-to-peer support groups where you can talk, listen and learn.

THE WRITING ROOM

A weekly creative writing session, open to all abilities.

THE GARDEN AT RHS

We're currently taking a break, but The Garden at RHS returns in February.

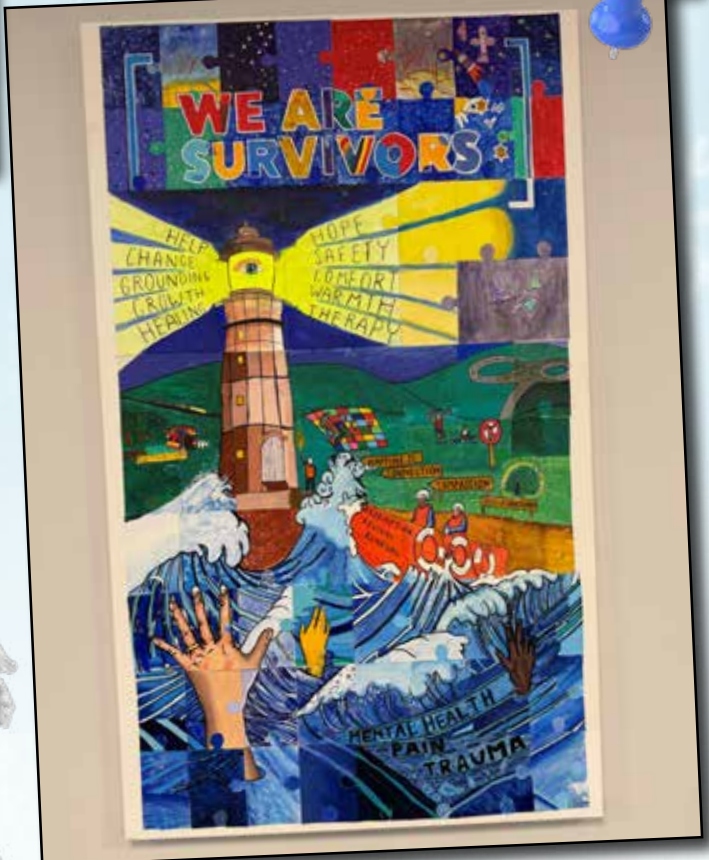
Please feel free to contact us if you'd like to know more information, or to let us know that you'd like to come along to any of the above sessions or groups.

E-mail: community@wearesurvivors.org
Call: 0161 236 2182

GALLERY

THIS IS YOUR PAGE.
Share your art, poetry and creativity with us.

Every issue we want to celebrate the creativity of male survivors. Expressing yourself through art, poetry and writing can be an important part of healing. If you'd like to share your work, send them to the e-mail on page 2.



BUT NOW I REMEMBER by Damon

The way he ate made me feel sick,
his face, his clothes, especially his dick,
I hadn't forgot, I chose not to tell,
but now I remember, even his smell,

the way he would talk, meant nothing to me,
I was 11 and him 53,
he knew it was wrong and now so do I,
you shouldn't have done it and neither should I,

but I didn't know I was only a lad,
you were the adult, you knew what you had,
your payment was poxy, there isn't a price,
on how you have truly affected my life

my behaviour got dangerous didn't care if I died,
but now I am stronger, there's one in your eye
don't know where you are, don't know if I care,
but now I remember, and now I will share,

I think I'll go back, go back to the park,
and take back my power you stole in the dark,
I'll no longer be silent, I'll no longer stay schtum,
I know what you are you know... you are scum!

the way he ate made me feel sick,
his face, his clothes, especially his dick
I hadn't forgot, I chose not to tell
but now I remember, and now I DO tell!



You can see lots more artwork and read some powerful words from male survivors on our website. Scan the QR code to visit our online Gallery.

THE LAST WORD



Darren Knight
Chief Executive
George House Trust

WORLD AIDS DAY: ENDING STIGMA



WORLD AIDS DAY IS ON THE 1ST OF DECEMBER EVERY YEAR AND IT'S A TIME TO REMEMBER THOSE LOST, REFLECT ON HOW FAR WE'VE COME AND LOOK FORWARD WITH HOPE.

It's fair to say that over the last 43 years since the first reported cases of HIV, we've seen massive transformation in the treatment and care available, especially here in the UK. We've got many people to thank, especially those activists, clinicians and carers who paved the way for what we have now. However, regardless of the progress, people's attitudes to HIV have been slow to change and unless we tackle HIV stigma, we won't make the progress needed to ensure that people living with HIV can live well, together with ending new diagnoses of the virus.

Now, my reality is that I spend most of my time in an echo chamber, surrounded by people who are working both with and for people living with HIV every day; so my view of the world is that everyone should know exactly what's going on. The reality for most people is very different from my ideal expectations and I know that; from death to the gay plague, some people's memories of HIV are from a very different time.

The fact is, more heterosexual people are now diagnosed with HIV in the UK. The other fact is that HIV is a completely manageable, long term health condition. Probably the most important fact is that it's completely and utterly preventable. Condoms, PrEP, Undetectable equals Untransmittable [U=U], we've got all the tools in the bag to end new transmissions of HIV in England by 2030...

...but do you know what you need to?

The single biggest issue in relation to HIV is HIV stigma. The fact that people avoid being tested in the first place. The fact that people are scared about what people will think if they are diagnosed with HIV. The fact that people believe



the myths relating to HIV that are peddled still to this day.

As we approach World AIDS Day 2024, there's one thing I ask of you. Know your status. Whether you're HIV positive or negative, I don't care – just be certain that you know. If you're positive, you can make sure you're on effective treatment. If you're on effective treatment, which is usually one tablet a day, you can't pass HIV on. If you're living with HIV, you can have babies, fly aeroplanes, join the army or get a job at We Are Survivors. You can do anything with HIV. If you're HIV negative, then the same applies, you can do all the same things as someone who's HIV positive. There is no difference.

I work for a charity, George House Trust, that exists to support people to live well with HIV, because we're still dealing with the societal and structural impacts of HIV stigma. Which if I'm honest, is purely shame, fear, blame and discrimination, and we really need to start naming it and calling it out for what it is. We've been working with We Are Survivors on the 'ON IT' project, to raise awareness of sex, drugs, HIV and consent. This joint project has been so important in educating and challenging deeply held views and it's been great to see the impact of the work, collaborating is crucial in furthering the impact of both organisations, truly changing minds and making life better for all.

As I write this for an audience of allies of survivors, I call for you to be a HIV ally this World AIDS Day. As without you, we can't break the barriers down that still impact the lives of people living with HIV every single day.

You can be the person that ends HIV stigma today, tomorrow and everyday. Thank you for joining us. www.gh.t.org.uk

WE ARE SURVIVORS.

NO male survivor left behind

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support@wearesurvivors.org.uk

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@thisissurvivors

We Are Survivors is a Company Ltd by Guarantee (06811096). Registered Charity in England & Wales (1144941)

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

24/7 Support Line

0808 500 2222

247sexualabusesupport.org.uk

Shout

85258

This is a 24/7 text service that supports people if they are feeling overwhelmed or anxious.

Free and confidential.

Samaritans

116 123 (available 24 hours a day)

jo@Samaritans.org.uk

Mankind

018823 334 244 (Domestic Abuse Support)

Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm

www.mankind.org.uk

Dad Matters

0161 344 0669

dadmatters.org.uk



Supporting Men's Mental Wellbeing Through Community, Activity & Purpose.



info@mandemmeetup.org

www.mandemmeetup.org

#IsThisOK



**When we see it's not OK
We can say it's not OK**

ANDY BURNHAM
MAYOR OF
GREATER
MANCHESTER



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isthisokgm.co.uk