

Public Sector Poetry Journal

Telling Stories about Education, Health and Social Care



Issue 3

Public Sector Poetry Journal



Edited by Hannah Lowe and
Korrin Smith-Whitehouse

Public Sector Poetry Journal Issue 3
(Published March, 2023)

Website: www.publicsectorpoetry.co.uk
Email: admin@publicsectorpoetry.co.uk
Insta: @publicsectorpoetry

Managing Editor : Korrin Smith-Whitehouse
Guest Editor: Hannah Lowe
Design: Louis Parkinson-Sykes
Cover Photography: Lenny McFadyen

All rights reserved. This collection © Public Sector Poetry
Journal. Do not copy or redistribute without permission.
All content © respective authors (2023)

Public Sector Poetry Journal (Online) ISSN 2755-0591

*Political poetry is the act of turning walls into windows,
of making cinema from our silences. The political poem
is both the restless sea and the hand pulling us from it.
It is civil disobedience, quiet uprising, the small things
that make the big changes.*

-Joelle Taylor
Dazed Magazine, 2019

About Us

Public Sector Poetry Journal is a literary journal based in Northamptonshire, UK. The journal is supported by the *University of Northampton* where Korrin Smith-Whitehouse, the managing editor, works as a senior lecturer in education.

The journal's aim are:

To give voice to public sector workers in Education, Health and the Social Care sectors. Poems provide an insight into these sectors and shine a light on the frustrations, challenges, concerns and joys of those working in them.

To connect those working in Health, Education and Social Care who are also poets, introducing poets to each others' work to create a new community of practice, and a new platform for new audiences.

To research the lived experiences of public sector workers; every poem submitted will contribute to a growing body of ethnographic data about the sector.

To advocate for change by highlighting issues facing public sector workers, using poetry as a form of activism.

We are privileged, humbled and extremely grateful for every single poem submitted to us.

The project is unfunded and runs solely on sales and donations, so we are also incredibly grateful to everyone who supports us by buying an issue and/or making a donation , via the website: www.publicsectorpoetry.co.uk/shop

Foreword

I write this at a time of mass strikes around Britain, at a time when teachers, lecturers, NHS workers, firemen, postal workers, train drivers and border staff have all enacted the right to withhold their labour, after years of wage suppression and an unprecedented rise in the cost of living. We are in a winter of discontent, ruled by a government whose response is to try to legislate against this crucial and historical workers' right. There are more food banks in Britain than ever before. Some poorly paid employees regularly face the choice of whether to eat or heat their homes. This is at best nonsensical and at worst, morally despicable. Britain is a wealthy country, but the majority of wealth is grasped in the hands of the wealthy.

Striking is never an easy choice. In my own experience as a sixth form teacher and now university lecturer, striking inevitably increases your workload while docking your pay, and draws you away from the people and communities to whom you are committed. Public sector workers do not go into their professions because of salaries, but because of their devotion to the work they do and to those they serve.

The poems collected in this third anthology of Public Sector Poetry remind me of the deep and attentive care of educators and health and social workers. They testify to the micro moments of a day on the job, the moments that collectively

make a working life. In systems now rigid with target setting and quality monitoring, Elizabeth Osmond's 'Neonatal Metrics' reminds us of the importance of collegiality – 'the decibels of coffee room laughter' that help alleviate stress and pressure. Meanwhile, Neil Douglas's 'Morning Clinic', draws attention to the stakes involved in medical care – 'the patient trusting you to catch them'.

I was struck by the many articulations of struggle, as systems stretched beyond their capacity by budget cuts and staff shortages take their toll on workers. In Sheryl Guterl's 'After Class', the speaker will 'read and mark -student prose, till / earnest words blur', while in 'Dear Colleague', Simon Middleton's opening line, 'None of your emails are finding me well' is a wonderful frank rejoinder to the generic communications of management. There is a sense that without remedy, 'looking for an exit strategy' becomes the lamentable focus, or a bucketload of painkillers as illustrated in Dave Robertson's 'Medicate to Educate.'

There are poems of protest here, such as Catherine Bell's 'Dear Professor', which speaks back to power in its articulation of women's lives, work and responsibilities. Without self-care and self-preservation, 'all those years of listening', as mentioned in Gail Webb's 'The Employer', might well take their toll on the mental health of the mental health professional. In Alison Binney's 'Big Top' the metaphor of the circus critiques these cultures of overwork in which rabbits must be pulled 'from impossibly small hats.'

And yet there is hope and warmth among these poems too, often located in the lives of the young – babies, 'creased, as washing / bundled fresh from the machine' and children not yet inculcated into the system. The profound care of teachers comes through strongly in 'Listening to Noah', where the speaker seems

adept at reading between the lines of a school boy's silence, declaring 'I know he knows'. Small moments in the classroom ricochet long after they are over, an idea beautifully articulated in Laura Fyfe's 'The Relativity of Learning' which closes with the couplet 'This moment / and all of their life.'

It was my pleasure and privilege to read the poems submitted for this issue of the journal. Collectively they remind me of Shelley's conjecture that poets are the 'unacknowledged legislators of the world.' In reading them, I felt the importance of testimony, to working lives that are often difficult but still full of reward. And each poem feels to be in conversation with the others, an overlap which expresses a strong and crucial camaraderie between workers and poets.

Thank you to all the poets who submitted, and thank you to all public sector workers across the country. Solidarity.

Hannah Lowe

Contributors

Elizabeth Osmond is a consultant neonatologist working in a busy regional intensive care unit in Bristol. She cares for critically unwell infants and their families. In recent years, she has started writing poetry as a creative outlet for processing and understanding her work as a clinician. Elizabeth won third prize in the *Hippocrates Prize for Poetry 2021* and her work featured in *Public Sector Poetry Journal* in 2022.

Sarah Raybould is a GP in the Derbyshire Peak District. Some of her pandemic writing was published in the creative compilation *Life in Lockdown (Derbyshire Voluntary Action 2021)* and more recently she has exhibited poems at the *Green Man Gallery in Buxton (Green Gathering Exhibition 2022)* and performed spoken word poetry with *Buxton Spoken Word (Buxton Festival Fringe 2022)*.

Neil Douglas worked as an NHS GP and Community Paediatrician in London's East End. He has appeared in journals and anthologies in the UK, North America and Hong Kong. He is currently a student of Life and Creative Writing at *Goldsmiths College, University of London*.

Catherine Bell is an NHS GP in Derbyshire who writes about practising motherhood and Medicine. After rediscovering poetry during the Covid-19 pandemic, her poems have been published in *The Mum Poet Club* zine, *Public Sector Poetry Journal* and several anthologies, including the *Hot Poets Sparks* book, a collaboration between scientists, engineers and artists on the topic of climate change

Charlotte Ansell lives in Rochester and works for the NHS as a Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist in a CAMHS Children Looked After Team. Her third poetry collection, *Deluge* was published by *Flipped Eye* in 2019 and her poems have appeared in various publications, including *Poetry Review*, *Mslexia*, *Butcher's Dog* and *Public Sector Poetry Journal*. She was a recipient of a *Royal Society of Literature - Literature Matters Award* in 2020 and is a member of *Malika's Poetry Kitchen Collective*.

Gail Webb worked for over thirty years with looked after children as a social worker and reviewing officer before her retirement. Her poem *Sky Mirror* won the *Nottingham Playhouse Reflections Poetry Award*, in 2021. Gail's pamphlet *The Thrill Of Jumping In* was published by *Big White Shed* in 2021 and explores loss, remembrance, ageing and the joys in life. Gail was commissioned to write poems for *Derby's New Theatre* and was Poet In Residence at *Lady Bay Arts Trail 2022*.

Simon Middleton worked in state education sector for ten years as both a teaching assistant and a secondary English teacher. He now works for the NHS within IAPT mental health services. Simon's work has appeared in various anthologies including *The Best New and Irish Poets 2017*, and has been shortlisted for *The White Review's Poets Prize 2022*, the *Magma Open Pamphlet Competition 2020*, and was awarded the *Dorset Award* as part of the *Bridport Prize 2018*.

Ger Duffy is a Primary School teacher and lives in County Waterford, Rep of Ireland. Her poems have been published in *Slow Dancer Press*, *The Womens' Press*, *Dedalus Press* and in *The Waxed Lemon* and *Southword*.

Sheryl Guterl claims these titles: mother, grandmother, former English teacher, former elementary school counsellor, Albuquerque Museum Docent, alto, bookworm. Sheryl's recent poems are in *Capsule Stories*, *The Bluebird Word*, *Clerestory*, *SLAB*, *Zephyr Review*, and several local anthologies.

Dave Robertson has been a secondary school teacher for over 20 years and lives in Northamptonshire. He has held various roles in school, but has returned to the front line as a full time English and Media teacher. Dave uses poetry as a release valve and processing tool. His work was published in the very first issue of *Public Sector Poetry Journal*. When not writing poetry about teaching, nature is a major inspiration, gleaned from walking around Northamptonshire.

Alison Binney has been teaching English in state secondary schools for 25 years, and also teaches trainee teachers on the PGCE English course at the *University of Cambridge*. Her debut poetry pamphlet, 'Other Women's Kitchens', won the *2020 Mslexia Pamphlet Competition* and was published by *Seren Books* in 2021. Alison is founder and leader of the Cambridge branch of the *National Writing Project*, which brings together teachers as writers.

Laura Lewis-Waters is an English teacher from the Midlands. Her debut collection *Bathroom Prisoners* was published in May 2022 by *Bent Key Publishing* and is a vulnerable account of her experience with OCD while pregnant. Her second collection *Beneath the Light* will be published by *Querencia Press*. Laura's poems have recently been featured on the *BBC Upload Festival* as well as in *Public Sector Poetry Journal*, *Free Verse Revolution*, *Lit Magazine* and *Streetcake Magazine*.

Loo Toni is an emerging writer, teacher and nursery practitioner who lives and works in West Sussex. Loo is a poet and screenwriter who was a runner up in 2022 in the Short Script Award section in the *Women Over 50 Film Festival*. Loo believes passionately in the Reggio Emilia approach to education, summed up by the *100 Languages* poem by Loris Malaguzzi. Her work featured in Issue 2 of *Public Sector Poetry Journal*.

Nicola Godlieb teaches creative writing and film in Further Education. These poems document the creativity of young people on a journey of reinvention and the often impossible situations they face. All characters in the poems are fictional. Her poetry collection was shortlisted for *The Poetry Business International Pamphlet Prize*, 2018. Her flash stories are published at *Bath Flash Fiction* and *Reflex Fiction*.

Jo Nally has been a teacher for 20 years and lives in South-West England with her partner, daughter and chickens, escaping to ballet dance, read and write whenever possible.

Rob Walton is a primary school teacher and writer from Scunthorpe, who now lives in Whitley Bay. He has taught in the same inner-city school in Newcastle for twenty years. Rob writes poems, flash fictions and short stories for adults and children and his work has appeared in various anthologies and magazines, including Issue 2 of *Public Sector Poetry Journal*. *Arachne Press* published his debut poetry collection, *This Poem Here*, in March 2021.

Laura Fyfe writes poetry out of necessity, teaches out of compulsion, and writes stories for fun. She is currently enjoying her 20th year as an English and Support for Learning teacher in Scottish Secondary schools. Her work has been published in *Butcher's Dog*, *Postbox* and *Northwords Now* and she was recently shortlisted for the *2022 Bridport Poetry Prize*. Her collection, *The Truth Lies*, was published by *Red Squirrel Press*. Laura lives in river deep, mountain high Stirlingshire and is the Stirling Makar.

Contents

Health and Social Care

Neonatal Metrics	19
Newborn Checks	20
The colour of it	22
Topsoil	24
Morning Clinic [55].....	25
Dear Professor	26
The view from the back window of Children's Services.....	28
The Employer	30
Dear Colleague	31

Education

The Cherry Tree	33
After Class	34
Medicate to educate	35
Big Top	37
Listening to Noah.....	39
The Pregnancy Table	40
Lockdown leaver	42
A Heirarchy of Needs	44
Everyone's talking about levelling up	46
Ms McCarthy takes her class to the seaside in a time of cutbacks	49
The Relativity of Learning.....	51



Photo by: Ian Irwin, poet and primary school teacher, Bristol

Neonatal Metrics

Alternative measurements of service quality

Elizabeth Osmond

Number of kilo cakes eaten
Volume of coffee drunk
Step count of delivery room team
Width of smiles at follow up
Height of thank you card stack
Depth of passion
Weight of burn out
Salinity of tears
Strength of team bonds
Miles of ambulance retrievals
Breadth of staffing gaps
Span of home countries

Decibels of coffee room laughter
Decibels of thoughtful silence

Newborn Checks

The Newborn Infant Physical Examination is performed between 6 and 72 hours of age

Elizabeth Osmond

Creased, as washing
bundled fresh from the machine.
Flexed elbows
gently straightened
eased out of new vest

Palate intact, suck strong
screwed up face after
the disappointing taste
of my gloved-finger
confirming intact facial nerve

A musical heart beat
adjusting to the loss
of placental circulation
femoral pulses knocking
a pulse oximeter blinks

Nappy heavy with
meconium thick as tar
sticking to my glove
smearing onto the new vest
testicles proudly hanging in their sac

A jet of urine
confirms there is no flow obstruction
and as I wash my hands
I think about this messy marvel
that is a new life

The colour of it

Sarah Raybould

Lying prone
 tight lipped,
 pink,
 squeezed in my hand,
 anguish a blanching grip.
 The cavity of her
 measured by the colour
 of her uterus
 bl
 ee d
 in g
 on gloved hands -
 crimson and blue.
 Unbirthed portions
 fighting their way through,
 dilated against her wish.
 Cervix bulging,
 pulse slowing,
 head down,
 atropine at hand-
 Grasp it.
 Rush

of inky waters
 spilling. The ward
 silent like the w h i s p e r s
 of a graveyard.
 Wet
 like my sodden gown.
 Feels like my volume
 l o s s.
 Adrenalin makes the heart
 feel
 w e a k.

Topsoil

Sarah Raybould

A cultivated plot
 mood unchanged
 on fertile ground
 sleeps well
 soil turned,
 appetite reasonable
 dug over,
 no suicidal thoughts
 watered.
 repeat prescription issued.

Digging deep,
 the notes reviewed
 roots
 unstable past
 and rocks
 recent bereavement
 negate the gardener's
 undermine
 progress.
 progress.

Morning Clinic [55]

(After Donna Stonecipher)

Neil Douglas

It was like climbing the ladder up to the flying trapeze at the circus and standing on a platform opposite the patient who is waiting to take off on their trapeze, trembling, make-up melting in dust speckled spotlight. Hearing the crowd go quiet.

Ω

It was like climbing the ladder up to the flying trapeze and waiting for the patient to swing toward you on their trapeze, knowing they would let go, somersault, and you, hanging upside down gripping the bar with your flexed knee, would have to catch them.

Ω

It was like climbing the ladder up to the flying trapeze knowing the patient is trusting you to catch them, that you have rehearsed the catching ten thousand times, but you have not chalked your hands for a better grip and your hands are damp with sweat.

Ω

It was like letting the patient's outstretched hands slip from your grip because your hands are damp with sweat, hearing the crowd gasp as they watch the patient fall past the safety net to a tangle of limbs while you look down from the height of your flying trapeze.

Dear Professor

Catherine Bell

I was compelled to respond to your articles **because** as a woman doctor myself, I have my own insights to share on **this** topic. I read with interest your account of how the patriarchy **is** crumbling like a stale biscuit in your damp palm; how **our** previously inconceivable, insidious invasion of your beloved **vocation** feels to you, and your brethren, like an irrepressible contagion **and** by changing the face of the workforce, in structure and complexion, **we're** regretfully making you physically **sick**.

May I suggest, Sir, that you cool your burning indignation **and** retire your poison pen, so intent on our denigration? You must be **tired** from years of fearing the old guard's annihilation, weary **of** banging your drum and head against a wall of emancipation, of **being** left behind, last of your kind, teetering on the brink of extinction. Truth be **told**, you have an unhealthy obsession with women in this profession. **We** do admittedly tend to procreate, but to state that we **don't** pull our weight, that the money spent to train us is money down the drain is, **do** you not agree, ridiculous? We already shoulder an unequal load, heavy **enough** to crush any reservations as to our value to society. As for my speciality, **for** your information, working 'part-time' is self-preservation. Even the men do **this**.

Sincerely, Nice Lady Doctor, GP - on behalf of women doctors across the **nation**.

MailOnline

Why having so many women doctors is hurting the NHS: A provocative but powerful argument from a leading surgeon

The Telegraph

The rise in part-time GPs is a symptom of the system's failure

The view from the back window of Children's Services

Charlotte Ansell

In the kitchen
there are never any spoons
but a plant thrives on the windowsill.

The yards below me are stark as a chessboard,
where each child is placed
determines which are kings and queens
which are pawns;
nothing to do with skill but the dice that rolled
which parents they got,
the ordinary ones who drop their kids off for childcare,
in the lush square with the sandpit, trees and toys
or the foster carers who deliver kids
to the square of bare concrete, plastic grass, awkward hugs-
this is not a game.

Sound drifts up through the grilles.
We hear the cries. All the cries.
Who in their right mind
thought it wise to locate a nursery next to a contact centre?
On one side shade, on the other very little grows,
there is no nuance in neglect.

Nothing prepares me
for being in reception when families arrive,
even when I know why,
even when I don't.
There are no winners
when little ones are saying goodbye to Mum and Dad
who came arms weighed down with bags stuffed full
of promises made too late and food,
leave empty handed.

We can water the plant though.

The Employer

Gail Webb

You invite me to a meeting
to discuss why I cannot
return to work, how ill I am.

It is written in triplicate,
filed away in steel drawers.
There is no time left,

to consider trauma, or how to mend,
for that was the job I had.
All those years of listening.

Over. Reduced to a checklist
of risks, dates, solutions offered,
my failure to realise – you do not care.

It is not your problem.
You hide behind bureaucracy,
a blank screen with no reflection.

Dear Colleague

Simon Middleton

None of your emails are finding me well.
In fact, they have left me needing clarification.
You have informed me of our direction of travel
and I know to expect bumps in the road
because, of course, there are a lot of moving parts.

I understand the need to look out for pinch-points
and bottlenecks, or any low-hanging fruit.
But I am struggling to map the dots in joined-up thinking.
I've tried to drill-down and deep-dive in search
of any untapped potential, only to realise I'm not fit for purpose.
I've examined it as closely as I can, and I'm unconvinced
I have the additional strength necessary to give 110%.

I know I should be considerate of stakeholders,
but don't know who they are.
In fact, this whole business of streamlining
and sustainability has got me thinking: I'm holding you back.
I think I'll follow best practice and look for an exit strategy.



Photo: Jimmy Bowman, poet, teacher and host of People's Poetry Podcast, South London

The Cherry Tree

(i.m.)

Ger Duffy

A starling stands on a thin branch, all filigreed feathers
gilded iridescence, yellow beak vibrating one long song.
I think of the boy this tree is for, buds unfurling, curling
towards clear sky and shiny sun, waving to his classmates, nearby.
This year, skinny branches might fringe with green, frill
with blossom, each shy flower might petal grass pink.
Across the yard, the school reflects white March light,
school bell rings, boys line up, sentinel starling still sings.

After Class

Sheryl Guterl

Garage door rises.
Inside dogs agitate,
"Out, food, play."

I change to sweats,
lose the bra,
whistle in the dogs.

Reheat old chicken,
empty garbage pail,
tune to nightly news.

Read and mark
student prose, till
earnest words blur.

Pen away, slouch on couch,
stroke spaniel, slug green tea,
slip into sleepy.

Medicate to educate

Dave Robertson

Two paracetamol
washed down with Gaviscon,
car stash, 7:57,

Later, at break,
feeling cheeky,
pop a couple of Nurofen
from the desk drawer,
ride that mild alleviation

At lunch, if planets align,
I reach the toilet,
in the stressed grey fluorescence
eyelids flutter,
I stretch and let the Anadin Plus
do its thing, drifting to fifth period
in marginal relief

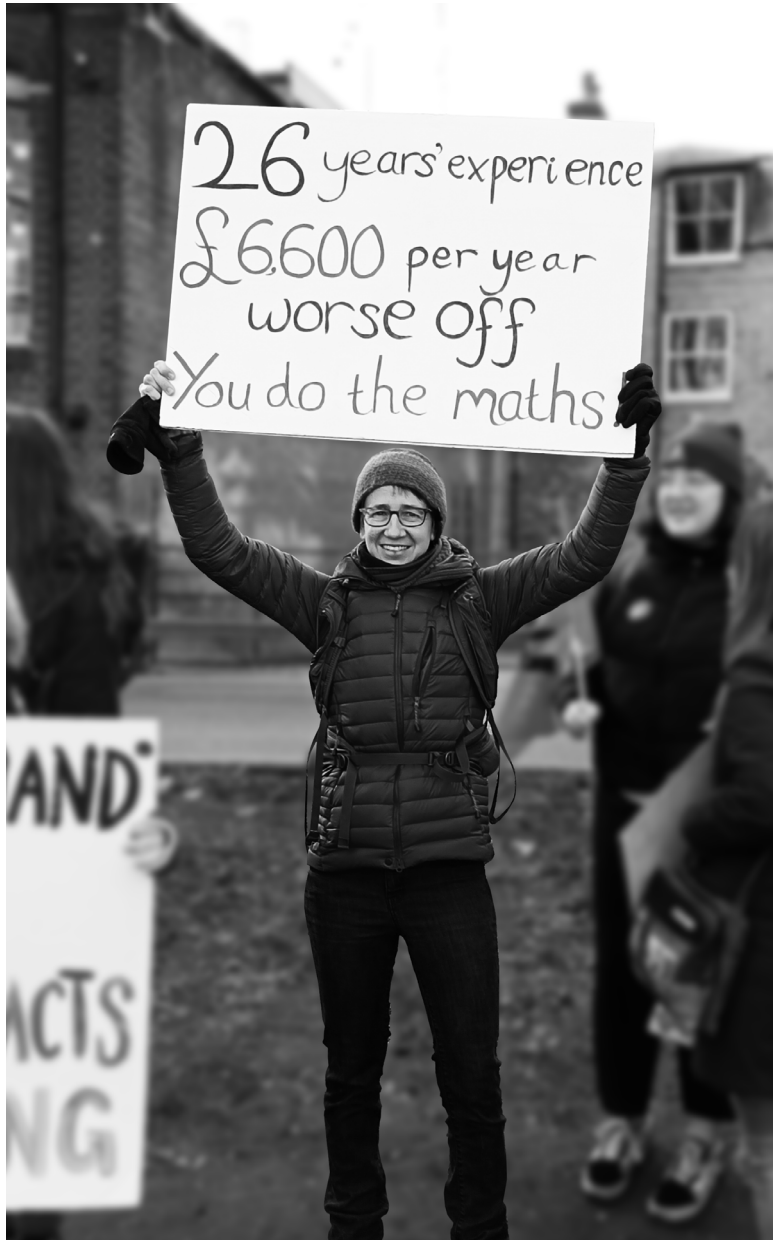


Photo by: Alison Binney, poet and English teacher, Cambridge

Big Top

Alison Binney

Everyone will talk about plate-spinning,
the juggling of knives or fire.
There will be tightropes, sure,
no safety nets,
just bare toes gripping the wire.

No need to warn you about lions.
There will be lions, yes,
hungry, not inclined to be tamed,
but you will learn over time
that your lions are just cats
with their hoods up.

You will be ringmaster, acrobat,
clown, all in an hour,
five shows a day.
You will pull rabbits
from impossibly small hats,
break free of shackles,
stilt-walk over seesaws,
backwards, blindfold.

Once you have mastered
 contortion, hypnosis, trapeze,
 you are ready to dim the lights,
 draw the blinds,
 close the classroom door.

Let silence clot.

Open to Chapter Four
 and begin your final trick:

make yourself disappear.

Listening to Noah

Laura Lewis-Waters

He doesn't really say much
 but I see him
 especially on Friday afternoons
 when the others have a lot to say
 and when the sun slants inwards
 I watch his eyes narrow
 on the blue stand-alone desk
 that was added at the back
 to cram in just one more.
 He'll say he doesn't know the answer
 but I know he knows
 more than he lets on
 if only there was time for one-to-one.
 Instead I listen
 to the inclination of his head
 when there's something he remembers
 and know there is more he knows.

The Pregnancy Table

Laura Lewis-Waters

Hush
come in closer
what I am about to tell you
is no word of a lie

there is a table
in the staffroom
fittingly named
The Pregnancy Table.

Small and discreet
its secret is kept
well hidden
behind the shelves.

Last year
four of the teachers
who sat there
got pregnant

so one afternoon
while few were around
I snuck a seat
in my one free period.

They say you won't get pregnant
if you're stressed
and these walls know stress
but not The Pregnancy Table.

The teachers who sit there
make time for lunch
and I have heard them laugh
on my way to the photocopier.

We've been trying
for years now
but the rush & worry & grades
can all be too much.

Anyway, all this was about
six weeks ago now.
Yesterday I had two lines
and maybe sometimes the stress

is manageable.

Lockdown leaver

Loo Toni

You probably won't remember any of this.
 Not me talking, gently chiding
 Not the encouragement to wash your hands
 PROPERLY
 At every possible opportunity.

You probably won't remember
 The long periods at home with Mum
 When you should have been at school.
 You won't remember
 ANY
 Of us adults
 Who will remember you.

You, our littlest boy
 One of the youngest in our class
 Barely four when you began school.

You won't remember:
 How you climbed bookcases
 Crawled into tiny spaces
 And bounced on the sofa in the book corner
 Like it was a trampoline.

You won't remember how you never spoke.
 Only hid if someone hurt you
 Clung if you were frightened
 Usually did the opposite of what I asked you.

I bet you think that teachers
 Always make a film
 For children who move schools.

You won't be surprised to see us all
 Sending you a message
 From our living rooms and gardens
 Telling you some of the reasons
 Why you are so awesome!

You won't remember us at your next school –
 You'll be too busy!
 Hiding in small spaces
 Climbing shelves and other risky structures
 Running around
 Whilst your classmates are sitting
 Nicely
 On the carpet.

But...maybe...
 When you watch our little film with Mum
 Where we adults
 Tried to weave a tapestry of memories and care,
 You'll get an inkling of
 The love,
 We tried to parcel up,
 For you to open, later.

A Hierarchy of Needs

Nicola Godlieb

Liyah has won an award for her anti-smoking film,
but she isn't here to receive it or
see herself on the silver screen
at Picturehouse.

I deliver the glass heavy award engraved with her name only
to find they have moved
overnight. That
same summer, I had taken

a mattress a colleague had chucked, a thing
of quality, from Habitat.
That bed is the best thing
anyone ever gave me, Miss.
And we had heaved our weight at one end,
jamming it through the door like a thick,
slice of bread.

I can't lie, I love smoking
she smiles, ten foot high, her youth above us

almost extinct, her paprika voice cutting
to VIP applause.

Her film is awarded a prize
for its clever use of satire, but
Liyah only ever said how she felt.
And she did.
She fucking loved smoking.

Everyone's talking about levelling up

Jo Nally

A tidal wave of stain is creeping
From the back

The Learning Zone in A15
Is where the radiator leaks and

I'm not even making it up

James' bag is soggy
The walls are predecessor purple
An unmetaphorical clock upon the floor
Doesn't have the energy to make it to midday

Lennox tells us his place in the family
Is in a room at the back
And I imagine an extension perhaps
A garden room all the rage
An outdoor cinema trellis
Beanbags fairylights But no

Later he tells me he has a sofa bed
Out there and everything And Kenji tells us
At his house the scaffolding has been taken down
And Parker tells us in his home
the oxygen tank has gone

And these are such honest offerings
I'm trusted to take from their plates

And I hold them like quivering globules of frogspawn
Scooped from a black pool on Dartmoor

And once my children played in squealing delight
With the offspring of those creatures
just out of sight
And everything they had that day was waterproofs
Wellies Easter eggs in the grass the trees the
rocks

On a clunking oak boardwalk they ran lifted up
Over the marsh

And really
there was a white horse
Grazing silently under the pines at dusk



Photo: Rob Walton and colleagues- poet and primary school teacher, Whitley Bay

Ms McCarthy takes her class to the seaside in a time of cutbacks

Rob Walton

And on this next slide you'll get to really see –
practically experience first-hand –
what it's like in the depths – or shallows, ha!
– of a rock pool.

The photos I'm now passing around
will give you a real flavour
of the precarious nature of inshore fishing.
You can almost touch the danger.

Look at the second page of the handout
to fully understand how the water moves
over the rocks,
how the waves break.

If you want to appreciate
the ripples look at this YouTube video
which thankfully has the gulls
replaced by something light
and classical that's music
to the book-keeper's ears.

The depths of the ocean can be – excuse me! –
fathomed in this painting
on the wall behind me.

And finally, please remember to return
your letters about the field trip
to the pop-up cinema in the dining hall
for the live sandcastle-building broadcast.

The Relativity of Learning

Laura Fyfe

How you relate to them,
how they relate to you,
how they relate to themselves
to each other and their parents and the world.

How they relate to
the last lesson with you
the last hour
or last week or last year.

This moment
and all their life.

Acknowledgements and thanks

Thank you to every single person who trusted us with their poems; each poem was read and valued. We can't thank you enough for sharing your experiences with us. All poems submitted will contribute to important research.

In this issue we have tried something new and incorporated photography to enable people to tell stories through photo voice, so thanks to everyone who sent a photograph, whether it was used or not; we appreciate you sharing them with us, and please keep sending them.

Thank you also to the *University of Northampton* for promoting this project and for their support and advice in terms of the research.

Thank you to Hannah Lowe for finding the time to guest edit – we appreciated all her hard work on this issue.

Thank you to our designer, Louis Parkinson Sykes, for his creativity, dedication and enthusiasm under tight deadlines, and for making the journal look great.

Thank you to the *Public Sector Poetry Collective* who champion the journal, and one another's work.

Finally, thank you to everyone who buys, reads and shares this journal, promoting the work of *Public Sector Poetry* and championing the voices of our public sector workers.

Elizabeth Osmond
Sarah Raybould
Neil Douglas
Catherine Bell
Charlotte Ansell
Gail Webb
Simon Middleton
Ger Duffy
Sheryl Guterl

Dave Robertson
Alison Binney
Laura Lewis-Waters
Loo Toni
Nicola Godlieb
Jo Nally
Rob Walton
Laura Fyfe

