**Thinking Outside the (Tick)box Conference - Poetry**

In this document you’ll find the poems we featured in our conference in November 2022. To find our other conference resources, [please visit our website](https://shapingourlives.org.uk/report/thinking-outside-the-tickbox-outputs/).

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## ****Ju Gosling – Losing my voice****

I had my voice when I left home  
But soon as I began to roam  
My voice just seemed to fade away  
No matter where or what I say.

My voice is not the same as yours  
My voice must therefore be ignored  
My voice is not a valid one  
When everything is said and done.

It isn't heard by passers-by  
It isn't heard by those on high  
It isn't heard by those who claim  
To speak to people in my name.

It isn't heard with all the rest  
It isn't heard when I protest  
It isn't heard although I say  
You can't erase me in this way.

'Speak up, shout out' is what we're told  
'Go forth, be strong and very bold'  
And yet the only ears that hear  
Are those that venture very near.

So listen closely for the sound  
Millions of voices echo round  
Stolen from us all, not lost  
Silenced regardless of the cost.

## Ju Gosling – The ‘Non-disabled’

They can see, but don’t look  
Can hear, but don’t listen  
Can speak, but say nothing  
Can walk, but stand alone.

Ignorant of our abilities  
Isolated by their prejudice  
Segregated by suspicion  
Excluded by themselves.

While we laugh together.

**Ju Gosling** aka **ju90** is a 50-something disabled webmaster and multimedia storyteller who works mainly with digital lens-based media, but also with performance, text and sound. Ju works largely within the theories and traditions of the Disability Arts movement, and has gained an international reputation for her work. [Visit Ju’s website.](http://www.ju90.co.uk/)

## David Gilbert – The World Is Full of Toilets to Cry In

Old smelly ones of course, uninspected, with cracked floor tiles, damp inglorious seats and broken locks, where one tap gushes forever hot and the dryer doesn’t work, even if you bang it several times. And where you’re not so poorly as to fail to notice the plethora of metaphors.

I can feel more at home in posh ones, conference centres, government agencies and four-star hotels (you can sometimes sneak in if you’re desperate) where Mozart streams in from unidentifiable wall speakers and the soap and incense sticks, in your justifiable fury, are easily nicked.

There was one (after she left me) where the urinals were ringed in a hazy ultraviolet light like the one that went round and round in Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons (though maybe it was white. She said I was wrong a lot). It could be some sort of futuristic antiseptic. But it had me so captivated that I forgot. For a while.

But mostly I prefer the everyday ones, in railway stations or shopping centres, just about clean enough mostly, to let you know you’re alright in the end, not too shiny to make you feel awkward for feeling so rubbish. And at least you’re never alone. I don’t mind paying 20p for one of those.

## David Gilbert – I Won’t Cry

We come here for the warmth and patterning.

You have your cigarettes,

I have my coffee and my poetry.

I want to write of gathering.

It keeps me responsible and contained.

I want to bring in, then share the little that I know.

Things will be tidy thereafter.

I won’t cry.

As a child, I’d watch the bathroom floor

tiles repeat, oak and willow and beech leaves

every fourth square.

I knocked three times on the bedside table

as the lights went out in the hallway

and mum crept downstairs

and in the infinite curving distance of changing room mirrors

I’d gather all my selves

and say be brave be brave.

I want to gather people, ideas, fears and souls

like on a big picnic

like the day they divorced

me gathering us all

into the kitchen for the last time,

the flowery wallpaper going round and round.

David Gilbert is a born and bred Londoner. He is the youngest son of a kinder-transport refugee, and has worked for 35 years in health and healthcare. He is a mental health user and the first ‘Patient Director’ in the NHS.

Throughout his career, he has written poetry, and has published four collections. [Visit David’s website.](https://davidgilbertpoetry.com/)

## Amander Wellings – The Art of Mingling

How to express the art of mingling?

When one is more comfortable singling.

The picture with me outside the group.

I would need an excuse to join the troop.

A role I am happy to play.

Acting, masking, a jester I portray.

Small talk is big talk with anxiety array.

Easier to just walk away.

To retreat would be defeat.

So, I put on my poker face.

Hope I am dealt an ace.

The joker is kept in the pack.

This social world I must crack.

## Amander Wellings – Changing the world

Yes I want to change the world.

Shake it up skim off the scum that rise to the top.

Allowing enough space and necessities for all.

Allowing some treats too.

Life worth living not bare survival for all.

Yes for all not the few dream takers, dream breakers, fakers, money makers.

I will no matter how long it takes chip away at bureaucracy.

Move from the place it tries to keep us in.

I want to choose my own place, be valued for my efforts.

Always looking at betterment for all.

Campaigning not restraining.

Out of the box not trapped inside.

Yes so out and proud in a world where there's no need to hide.

My passion spills over and touches many.

Please spread this contagion to any ... like minded individuals.

Together good thoughts and brave ideas can change the world

Find out more about Amander Wellings on her [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/amanderspoems), or [read her guest blog](https://shapingourlives.org.uk/2022/04/28/featured-poet-amander-wellings/) for Shaping Our Lives