

Annual Report

2022-2023



*Everyone to
do with
Battle Scars
is amazing*

*I've never felt
so understood
and accepted
before*



*We can laugh
together and
have some fun
but also learn
and support
each other*



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Chair's message

It seems that every year I begin by saying "this has been a successful year for Battle Scars" and this year is no exception. Yet again I can honestly report that we have had a successful year, possibly our most successful to date. What a great thing to be able to say! There are two things that immediately spring to mind:

- The Battle Scars 5th birthday
- Our new premises.

In February Battle Scars was 5 years old. We celebrated with a party for members, staff, volunteers and supporters. We were generously helped to do this by MonroeK, one of our partners, who provided both the venue and a delicious lunch.

Everyone had a wonderful afternoon doing various enjoyable activities and as I chatted to people at the party, I realised just what an impact Battle Scars has made on a lot of people's lives. So many expressed such gratitude for the help and support they had received and many more explained how being able to contribute in various ways to Battle Scars has made them feel valued and how it has been a personally helpful experience for them. I think they would all agree that "Battle Scars makes life better".

Hi, I just wanted to say, it's amazing what you do.

Thank you x [service user]

So much has been achieved in such a short time. From being a tiny new charity only five years ago, it has become the "go to" charity for information and advice on self-harm. It is now a highly regarded charity all across the UK and also internationally, by both the professional community, lay people and the wider world of the general public. This has happened due to the dedication and hard work of Jenny, our CEO, our volunteers and our staff. We thank them all for

their outstanding contribution to building and developing our work and are very grateful to our supporters and funders.



Thank you for the birthday card Healthwatch Leeds!

One of our new partners has been instrumental in turning one of our hopes and aspirations into reality. To have our own premises has been one of our long-term aims and part of our strategic planning. Thanks to MunroeK we are on the verge of achieving this. They have generously offered us the use of one of their buildings at a much-reduced rent. The plan is for this building to become a mental health hub, with various other organisations occupying some of the spaces in the building. It will be called "Onward Mental Health Hub", a name suggested by one of our service users that resonated with us all and it already has a stunning logo. We are so grateful for this exciting opportunity. By having a permanent physical base we will be able to create a safe, welcoming space and we will be able to increase, develop and extend the range of services we offer. Also we will be able to more easily work in partnership with other mental health organisations. Everyone is thrilled and excited by this new prospect (and possibly a little apprehensive too!) We look forward to

moving in and starting this new chapter in the life of Battle Scars.

Alongside these exciting new developments the ongoing, daily work of Battle Scars has continued to thrive. We are consistently striving to meet our aims of supporting people who self-harm, along with educating and breaking down the stigma of

self-harm. Our thanks go to all who have helped Battle Scars achieve these aims in the past year. I am sure we can rely on everyone's support as we go forward into this new venture and endeavour to make this yet another success for Battle Scars which we will be able to report on next year!

Jean Birch

Message from founder & CEO

I'm sure every CEO thinks the same at the end of their financial year: is it time to write an annual report again?? I am definitely no exception! In a way it is an indication of how full and busy the year was: ongoing services, events, training and as always, more growth and lots of personal development for our staff and volunteers.

All the members of our staff team had dips; some dips were more dangerous and lengthier than others. We supported each other and got through them. The Battle Scars ethos of acceptance and openness may give the impression that we're often wobbly when what it really shows is that we're not masking and hiding our struggles. It's hard to put previous learned behaviour aside and be genuine so this is work in progress for all of us. We're also all different requiring an individual approach. One size definitely does not fit all!

I fortunately bounced back just in time to receive the most exciting news, the opportunity to create a new mental health hub in South Leeds and make it our base. This is all possible thanks to MunroeK, the private company that sponsored the Compassionate City Award we won at the end of last year. Our relationship has blossomed and they are offering us one of their properties to create the hub. Thanks to support from our current funders and the NHS we will re-purpose funding so we can start this project and drastically expand the range of support we can offer. Our aim is to create a hub with a strong element of lived experience of mental health difficulties, a space that is safe and uplifting

where everyone can truly drop the mask and be themselves. It's a massive project and I find myself – once again – needing to learn a lot to lead it but, as always, the support we're receiving is heart-warming and I'm confident that we'll turn this into reality (as well as excited and terrified!)



Announcing the good news about premises at the birthday party

We had the pleasure of bringing a large part of our UK-wide team together in September, finally meeting people "in the flesh" and creating stronger bonds, thanks to support from the Tudor Trust and our hosts, MunroeK. They were again our gracious hosts in February for our birthday party when their General Manager and I together announced our plans for the Onward Mental Health Hub. As anyone can easily imagine, this is such an important opportunity for us and we're hoping that we form new partnerships and continue building on what we've started.

Jenny Groves

Our vision

To make sure nobody who struggles with self-harm, in whichever form, fights alone.

To break down the stigma surrounding self-harm.

Our mission

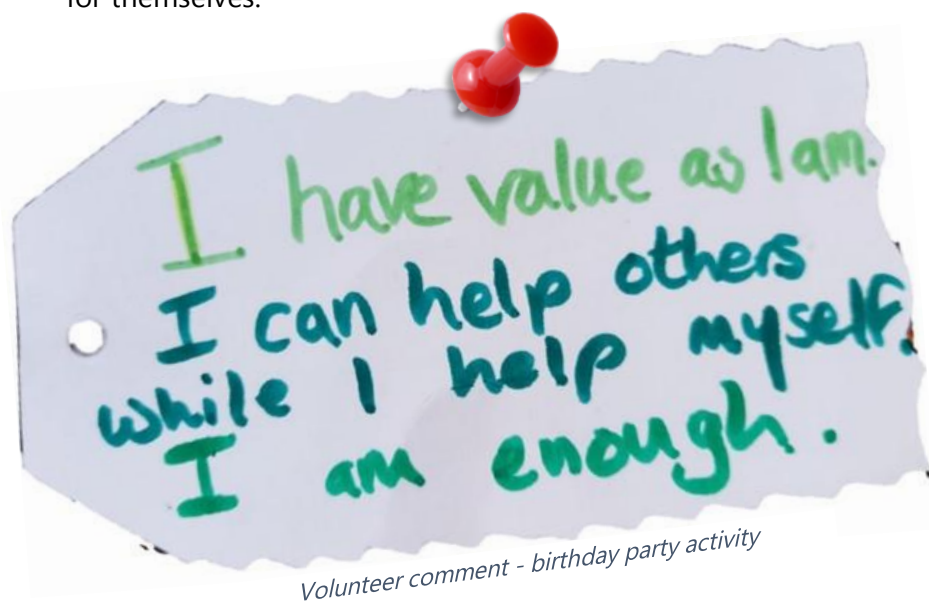
We support anybody affected by self-harm: those who self-harm and those supporting them (family, friends and professionals) to make sure they no longer feel alone.

We build better awareness of self-harm's complexity, roots and reasons resulting in anybody affected by self-harm receiving non-judgemental, genuine peer support, acceptance and understanding so they can build a healthier future for themselves.

We educate, influence change and break down the self-harm stigma.

We encourage our service users, volunteers and staff to live life despite the self-harm, to achieve whatever they can manage and continue inspiring others.

We create safe environments where people affected by self-harm can be themselves.



Thank you. You were all very friendly and welcoming. Its progress for me to even register with you guys. I've just got to take the little wins and not beat myself up when I fall down or not achieve as much as I want.

3 years ago, I joined Battle Scars, as a parent, trying to find support. To help me support my son. Battle Scars has been a massive lifeline for me. I am now honoured to be a volunteer for Battle Scars, to help support other parents who are where I was 3 years ago.

Our values

Acceptance - we accept people as they are and, by fighting the stigma surrounding self-harm, we wish for all of us to be accepted as we are by family, friends, professionals and the general public.

Trust - we build trusting relationships with the people we support, who also trust us with their stories, and the people we work with.

Transparency - we are open and transparent no matter who we work with.

Integrity - we do what we say and never make promises we can't keep.

Compassion - we treat people as we wish to be treated taking into account the hurt, pain and distress they may feel. Because we've been there.



Our objectives – what we are doing and why

A recent report in the news showed a steep rise in children and young people attending A&E for self-harm and at the same time a drop in attendance by adults. This may be interpreted as showing that young people are struggling more while adults are struggling less. Unfortunately numbers can be very misleading as in this case the drop in adults attending A&E is actually the result of many adults taking heed of the pleas to avoid going to A&E. As we always say, numbers linked to self-harm never give a true representation of the situation. Judging by the increasing demand for our support though, there is no doubt that self-harm is on the rise, not just amongst young people but people of all ages.

At the same time, children are using self-harm at an earlier age and adults are starting using self-harm at a much later age. Socioeconomic pressures are affecting everyone and COVID-19's longer-term impact is starting to show.

My support and commendation for everything that you are doing with Battle Scars and your good work.
[member]

Self-harm can be seen as the “quick fix” making it very attractive to young people, to a generation used to quick access to solutions. It ticks all the right boxes: can be very effective as a distraction, an emotional regulator, a grounding method; it’s self-contained, has fast results and provides a sense of self-sufficiency; it’s easy to pick up but hard to let go of; what appears as a good way of managing life becomes a trap and a hindrance stopping us from learning better ways.



Working with young people

Thank you so much Battle Scars. Today I received a WhatsApp from my daughter with an attachment “I need to tell You....” I thought something was wrong for a while and now due to your diligence and her courage she has found a mechanism to let me know that she self-harms. I have found your website really helpful and you have equipped me with many tools to understand what is going on and the best way to deal with situations to reassure her and support her. The leaflet was a godsend to me and provided a conduit for us to talk about things in a non-confrontational way. THANK YOU SO MUCH. I hope she is using your services as I am sure you can help.

Our definition of self-harm

Our definition of self-harm includes harm inflicted on the body and/or mind with immediate or longer-term effect.

Even though some use the term “self-injury”, we use – and will continue using – the term “self-harm” for several reasons:

- the definition of self-injury is much narrower than ours and we’ve found that more often than not, people who self-injure are also using other self-harm methods, often without being aware of them or realising that they are self-harm;
- the term self-harm carries a large stigma and sometimes the only way to break that down is by calling something exactly what it is;
- we need to openly talk about the various forms of self-harm in order to break down myths such as “self-harm means cutting” which can prevent people reaching out for help.

We are therefore trying to make the term accepted and normalise talking about it.

We also will not use the term Non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI) partly because of the above and partly because the concept of suicidal self-injury is just confusing. Even though accidents do happen, the intention behind the action is the only way to say with certainty what was self-harm and what was a suicide attempt (or what was self-harm gone wrong compared to suicide). We can draw logical conclusions but we must not make assumptions.

I like battle scars definition of self-harm which helped me identify it in individuals I would have otherwise overlooked.

Our achievements



Some moments from the past year jump out: our big team event in September; the announcement at our 5th birthday party in February that we'll soon be getting premises; getting filmed for an American documentary in March.



Team event activity: how would you describe Battle Scars to aliens?

We have most definitely increased our reach with much more demand from outside of Leeds for support and training as well as for our expertise.

Our staff team grew to a total of 3 FTE (from 2.44) made up of 7 people. This year we focused more on filling in gaps while next year we'll focus on strengthening and expanding the team.

We regularly took stock of our services, staff and volunteer teams, we responded quickly to needs and consolidated our resources to ensure everyone remained safe.

Our webinars were extremely successful reaching hundreds of people helping them understand self-harm and eating disorders as well as introducing

our organisation. Effective communication has played a massive role in spreading the word.

I've not seen a facilitator that isn't involved in a group, dedicated and well invested. All willing to show their vulnerability which really matters to me.
[virtual group service user]

We trained more people than ever before. We developed new links in England, Wales and Scotland. We managed our own mental health and kept a very high volunteer retention rate. We were, once again, awarded the Leeds Volunteer Managers' Network Quality Mark.



Impact & value

Who we have reached and what difference our work has made

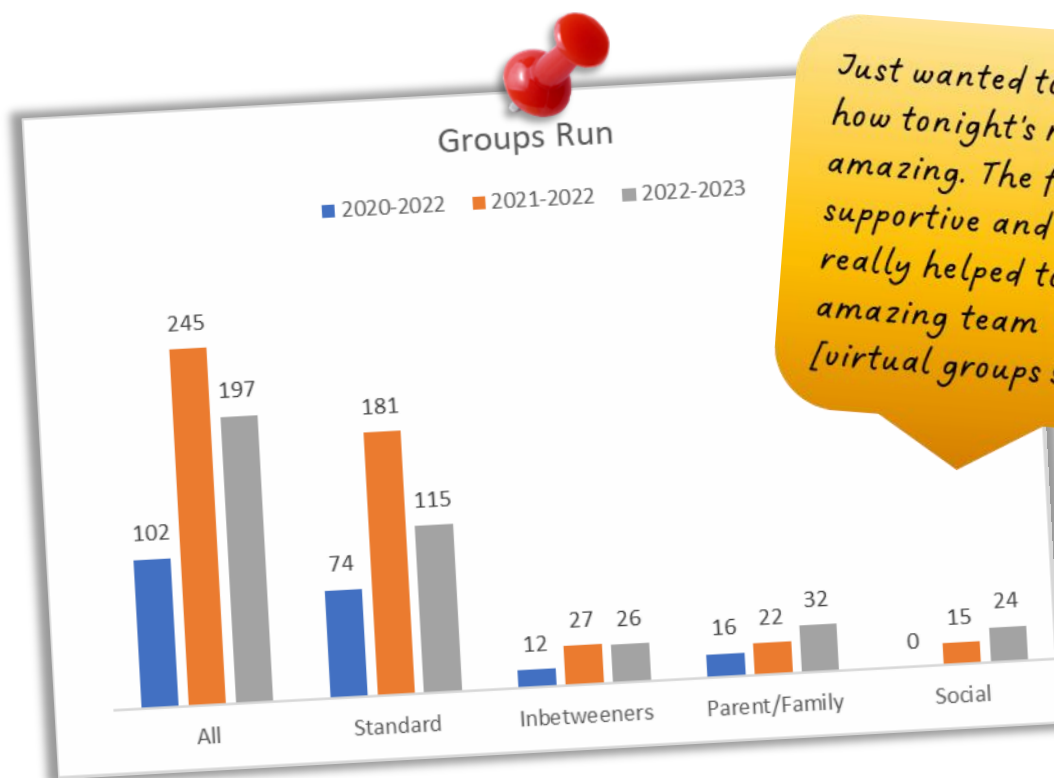
Adult services- virtual

As we started approaching the end of the lockdowns and other activities became options again, as expected, the attendance at the virtual

groups dropped. This was one of the reasons we reduced the **number of groups** we ran over the last year:

Number of groups

Group	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	% change since April 2022
Standard	74	181	115	36.5% Decrease
Inbetweeners	12	27	26	Same
Parent/Family	16	22	32	45% Increase
Social	0	15	24	60% Increase
Total groups	102	245	197	Overall change: 19.6% decrease



Just wanted to message so I could say how tonight's meeting was so amazing. The facilitators were so supportive and everyone in the group really helped tonight. You have an amazing team ❤️
[virtual groups service user]

At the same time there was an instance when multiple people attended our groups while in crisis which had quite an impact on the facilitators. Full credit to them, they handled the situation with expert sensitivity and compassion while remaining calm. Immediate support was provided to the volunteers and the decision was very quickly made

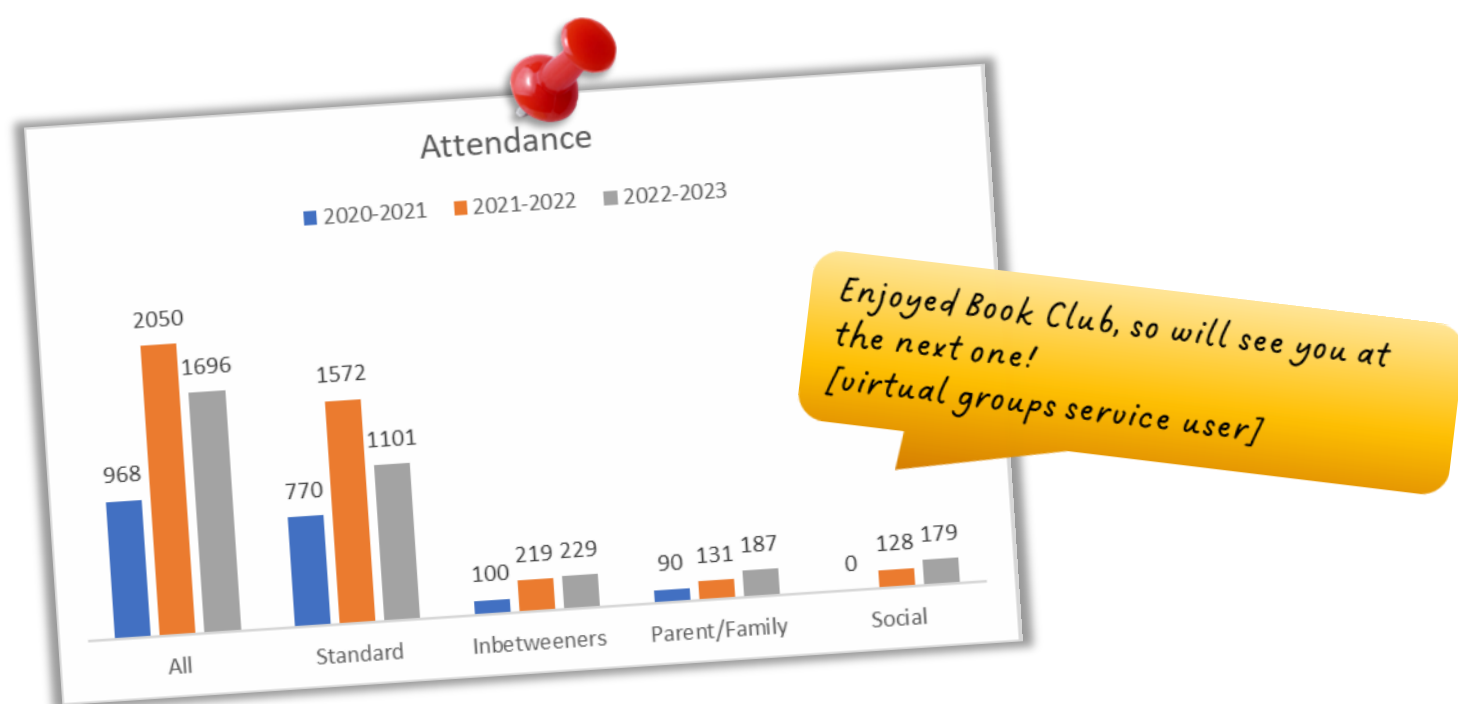
to consolidate the facilitator teams into teams of 3 instead of 2 as well as ensure senior staff were on call during every group. Lots of shuffling people about, the number of groups was again reduced, but this strengthened all teams and made difficult situations more manageable.

Due to many parents and family members expressing they were unable to attend on a Tuesday evening we added a second group on a Monday evening. Both groups have steady low to medium attendance which makes them much easier to manage. Many have benefited from them,

some gaining the courage and conviction to stand their ground in situations affecting their child's care equipped with better knowledge and understanding. Unfortunately young people are still sometimes met with outdated advice and rigid approaches.

Group attendance

Group	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	% Change since April 22
Standard	770	1572	1101	30% Decrease
Inbetweeners	100	219	229	4.6% Increase
Parent/Family	90	131	187	42.7% Increase
Social	0	128	179	39.8% Increase
Total	968	2050	1696	Overall changes: 17.3% Decrease



Our virtual groups were attended by 246 individuals with many attending multiple groups. The number of individuals using the virtual groups

has increased despite the number of standard groups decreasing which shows there is a growing demand for the groups.

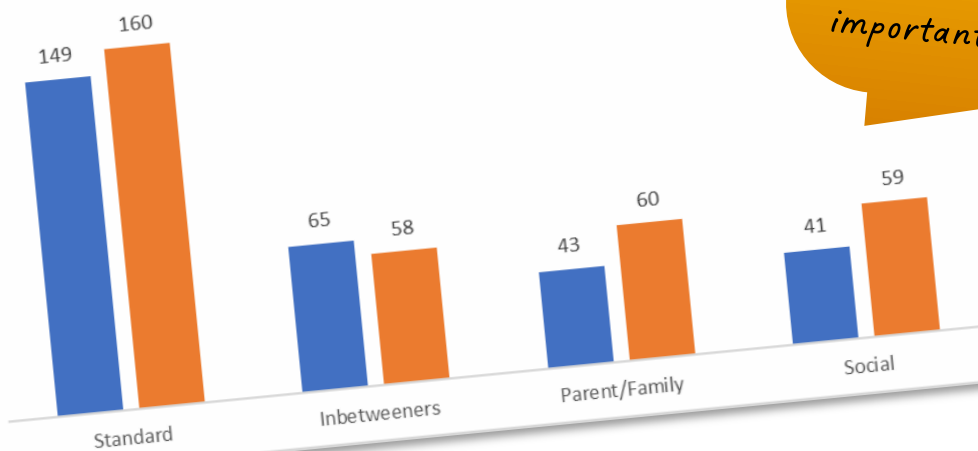
A positive inclusion from the facilitators. Time to speak without judgment. A safe place even if you didn't want to speak there's no pressure on you. And a great aftercare if you have been triggered by something which is impossible for them to stop all that. As we all have so many triggers but they do a great job trying to stop that happen. Thank you to you all.

Individuals attending groups

Group	2021-22	2022-23	% Change
Standard	149	160	7.4% Increase
Inbetweeners	65	58	10.8% Decrease
Parent/Family	43	60	39.5% Increase
Social	41	59	43.9% Increase
Overall	230	246	6.9% Increase

Attendance by individual people

■ 2021-22 ■ 2022-23



Today was so great. I've never felt so understood and accepted before. Hearing and reading what everyone was saying really made me feel less alone. Some of the thoughts and feelings I have had for pretty much my whole life have made me feel like an outsider. But hearing other people express things and to be able to relate to that was really important to me. Thank you

290 people joined the group invite list, an increase of 72.1% from last year. By the end of the year in order to manage this demand we had to limit how many groups each person can book on to ensure everyone gets the opportunity to attend. New facilitators are being trained to increase the group numbers again and also availability.

Recent topics discussed at the groups included:

- Masking
- Self-Regulation
- Measuring Mood
- Being open around self-harm
- Gratitude - 3 P's
- Achievements & Counting
- Distractions - What Works When?
- Our Inner Battery

- Talking to People about Self-Harm
- Managing Change
- Setting Boundaries
- Urges
- Overthinking, Brain Dump
- Why the words we use matter
- Alternative New Years' Resolutions
- Perfectionism

I like the topic groups, it makes me think of things I wouldn't usually in terms of how I think/feel/behave and helps to widen my self-awareness.

When I feel ...

Angry

Hate

I will ...

- Distractions
- Punchbag
- Exercise - Run, fast walk, anything!
- Music - piano, guitar, singing
- Therapy Dogs, Alfie
- Cuddles with animals - Myrtle the Hedgehog
- Loud Music
- Throwing stones in sea (water)
- Screaming - Into a pillow, in the woods, in my car
- Breathing Exercises
- Destruction Therapy
- Smash Room
- Reaching out to a helpline such as breathing space
- Mindfulness
- Distractions
- Horror Films
- 5 senses grounding - 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste or one deep big breath
- Writing letters about hate and ripping them up
- Writing self-compassion letters
- Photos that appeal to me - turn the feeling hate into something nicer. Something I love and makes me feel comforted
- Self-Care Box - Books from childhood, hand cream, comfy clothes.
- Being our own best friend - Treat ourselves. Do something I really enjoy for myself.
- Self-care, self-soothe and grounding box workshops

(What works well?) The friendliness of people doing the group. It's great having them online for anyone anywhere. I like having a constructive topic to focus on.

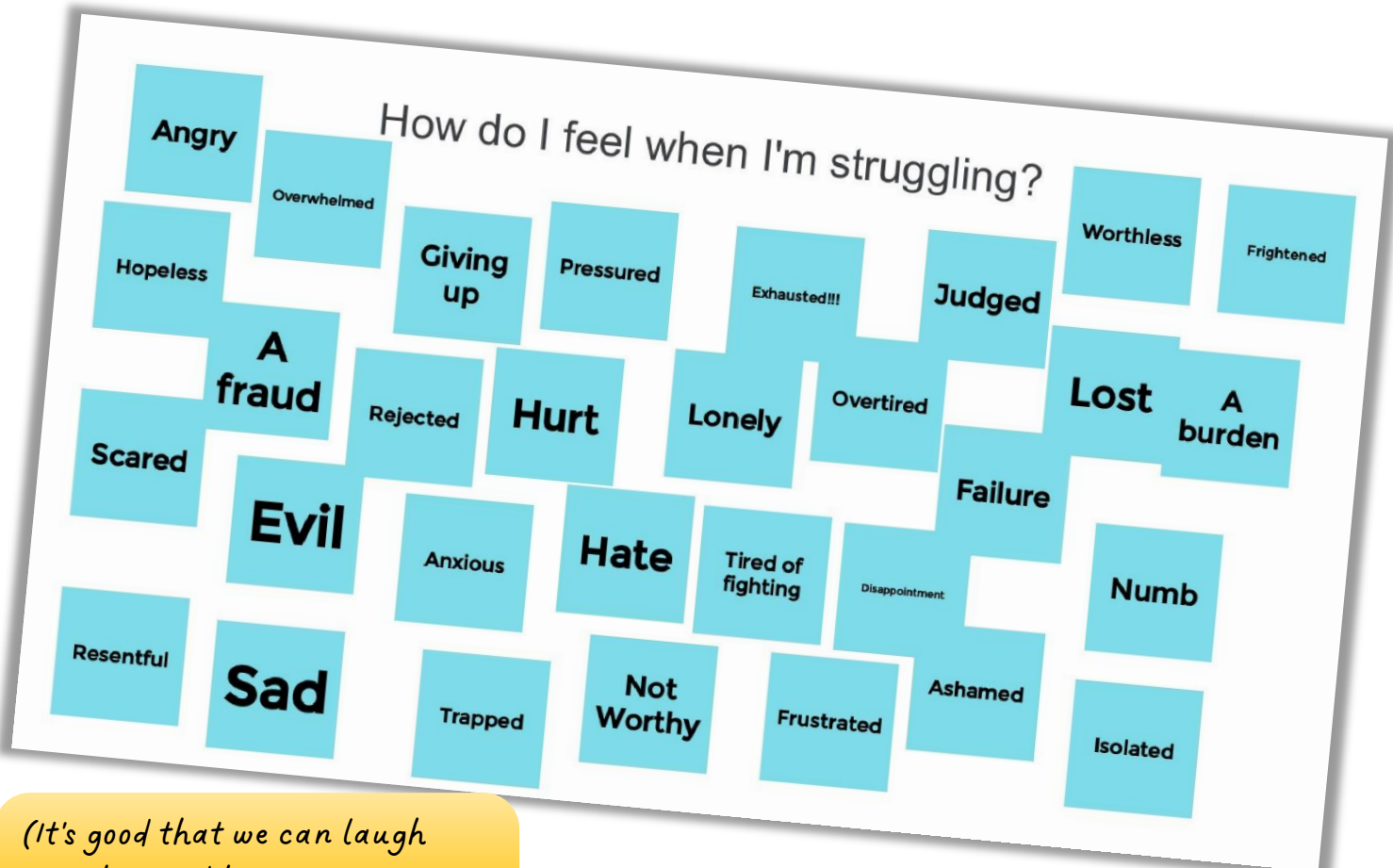
When I feel ...

Lonely

Overwhelmed

I will ...

- Listen to Music, Radio
- TikTok Lives - get personal
- Talking to animals
- Joining a Battle Scars Group
- Phoning a helping such as the Samaritans
- Cuddling Animals
- Playing the Piano
- Singing along to Great Showman
- Watching Disney Movies
- Texting my friends
- Comfort Movies and Shows
- Audiobooks
- Teddy Bear and comfort toys
- Worry Jars and Worry Worms
- Podcasts
- Draw a washing machine - fill it clothes representing your worries and triggers
- Sensory Corner - safe space
- Getting in my oodie
- Scream
- Go for a drive in my car
- See my neighbours
- Swearing
- Play piano and draw
- Cry**
- Cover myself in a weighted blanket
- Put sad music on to get my emotions out
- The fuck it bucket
- Cuddle animals - my budgie
- Headphones audio books, block things out



(It's good that we can laugh together and have some fun, but also learn and support each other when needed.)

WHY DO WE DO THIS AND WHAT MAY HELP US TO TAKE IT OFF?

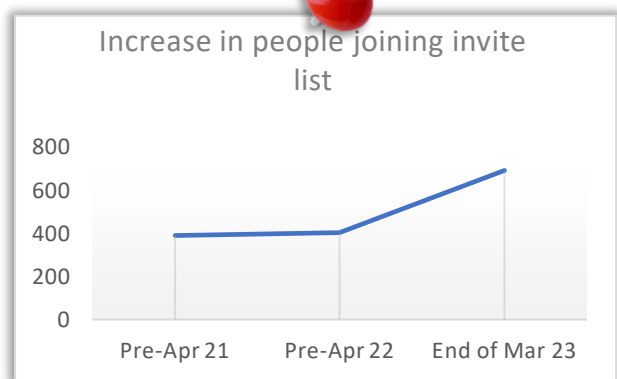
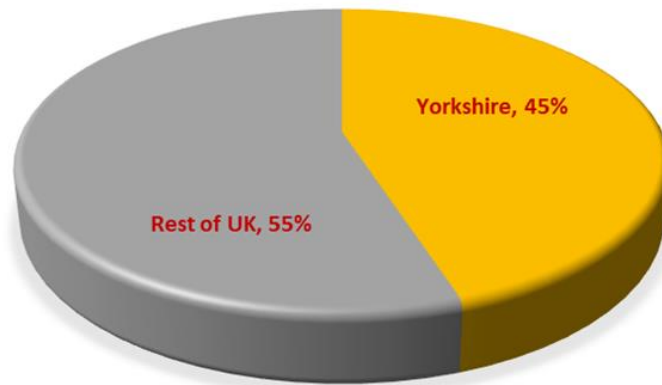
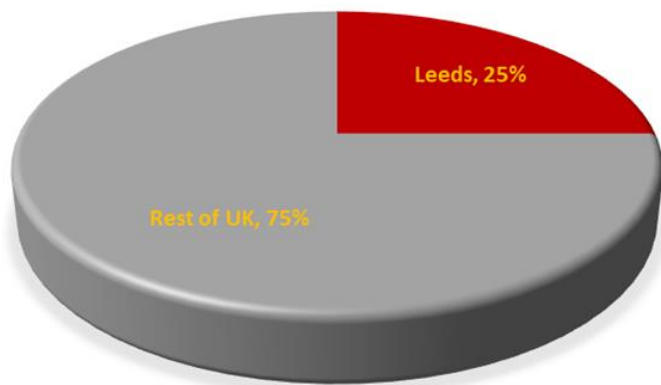
Taking the 'mask' off

WHY?

Unless its close family i feel too vulnerable to share
I dont want to be asked if I am ok as it can make it worse
Some people I dont want to see me bad
Dont want to answer 'how are you doing'
protection
Partly because I cant fully remove it
know you wont get a helpful response that is true to how you are feeling
Question is too big
try to keep going and live life. if I dont do this i might sink
I dont think people really care. It is a surface question. Dont want people to worry about me
too complicated to explain and no energy
Protecting others from having to know what im feeling
people dont understand so best not to enter a conversation

WHAT MIGHT HELP?

Talk to a counsellor
being with those we trust
test it with people
Pick your battles
Not giving a shit what people think
Work towards having acceptance of who I am
Being honest with people
do it in stages. we dont have to ditch all at once
create a safe space
be more selective
Battle scars facebook group
Battle scars
trying to have a bit more confidence in myself
will it just fall off or disappear one day?



Wanted to say thank you to the facilitators for tonight's group. Been struggling a lot but doing the group tonight was definitely a positive experience. They are amazing people, everyone to do with Battle Scars is

Plans for the future

These groups have become our bread-and-butter service allowing us to reach people in locations we never thought we'd reach. As the word spreads amongst professionals and we have a stronger media presence, the demand keeps increasing. Our

aim is to continue expanding this service to keep up with the demand alongside constant reviews of the groups' efficiency and the wellbeing of our volunteers. Anyone can leave anonymous feedback via our website at any time or contact the team.

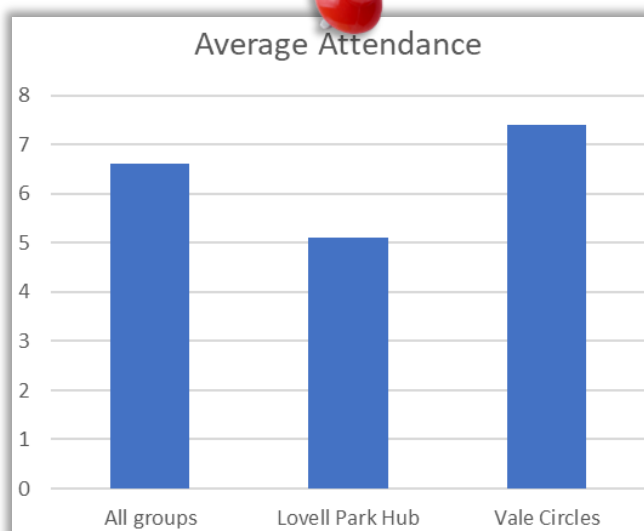
It was really helpful to hear others have been through similar experiences as it has felt quite lonely this last year. It was also good to see older women, as someone who started self-harming at 49, married with kids, it's felt like so much out there has been aimed at teenagers/younger people. Again making it a lonely place.

The facilitators are fantastic at making people feel welcome. I really like the fact that there are icebreakers, they put me at ease and that has lasted throughout each session. Also finishing a session on a positive note is great. I've found that the whole structure and approach has been beneficial to me on a personal level and I think that many if not all other people who have attended the groups I have been to would say the same.

Adult services – face-to-face



Attendance at the adult face-to-face groups has been rather disappointing. We ran a total of 18 sessions at two locations, both on evenings. The average attendance at all groups was 6.6 people (Lovell Park Hub: 5.1 people; Vale Circles: 7.4 people).



Through contact with people who were regular attendees before the pandemic we've been told that they "got used to not having this support" and

I think the groups are a good way for people to make friends and feel understood and everyone is very kind.

Thank you very much for a great meeting. Yours is always a safe place I feel able to express myself in. It felt like the whole meeting was laid back and free flowing.

that "they are not as comfortable going out in the evening as they used to be". Covid-19 changed many habits and chipped away at many people's confidence.

Topics in the face-to-face groups have included: Managing stress. Pros and cons of opening up about self-harm and looking at our achievements.

Plans for the future

We will continue running these groups and are planning on introducing daytime groups at our

Welcoming, friendly and relaxed atmosphere

new premises. We understand that having 4 weeks between groups may be a too large a gap for many people so are hoping to run all adult face-to-face groups fortnightly matching the virtual groups. This could have a positive effect on attendance.

Adult services – phone

Our FRESH service has undergone many changes this year. After testing the original model as a Follow-up Review after Emergency treatment of Self-Harm, we came to the conclusion that this model was not working as intended. We received 48 referrals, the majority of which were from the Leeds Student Medical Practice.

Really feel relieved to be able to talk about my self-harm at last.

This year this project was funded by Leeds NHS with a lot of support from the NHS director. Frequent contact between us allowed to modify the service in stages. The end result is a service that accepts both self and professional referrals and is no longer linked to emergency treatment of self-harm. This recent major modification resulted in an instant increase of referrals with near zero publicity.

FRESH has had a change of logo and its new purpose is to provide first contact, signposting and

Plans for the future

We are seeking further funding for FRESH and are strengthening the team. We're gradually spreading the word about this while constantly monitoring demand and function as well as team capacity as we're continuing to recruit.



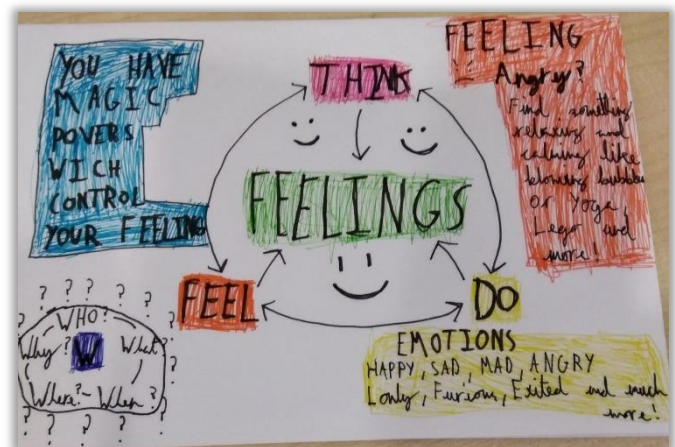
support to people who may not know us or to people who may already have accessed our services but could use some extra support. We strongly believe this can be a successful service helping people understand their self-harm behaviours, develop healthier strategies, overcome their anxieties about getting further support and, most of all, know they're not alone and that others understand.

Such a relief to know there's a service out there to help, I will be looking into the groups that are offered.

Young people and families

Work with under 16's

A lot of effort was put into building connections with clusters and key school staff in Leeds. We only delivered 3 assemblies (one in a primary school) and 2 workshops but they all had a massive impact on the children and young people we worked with.

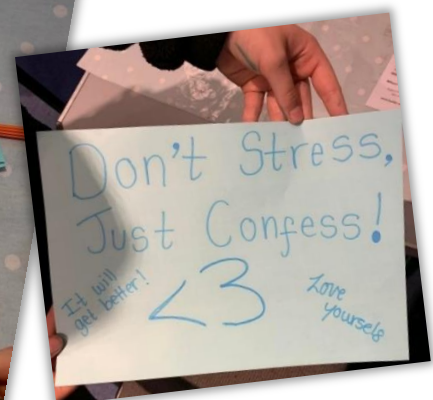
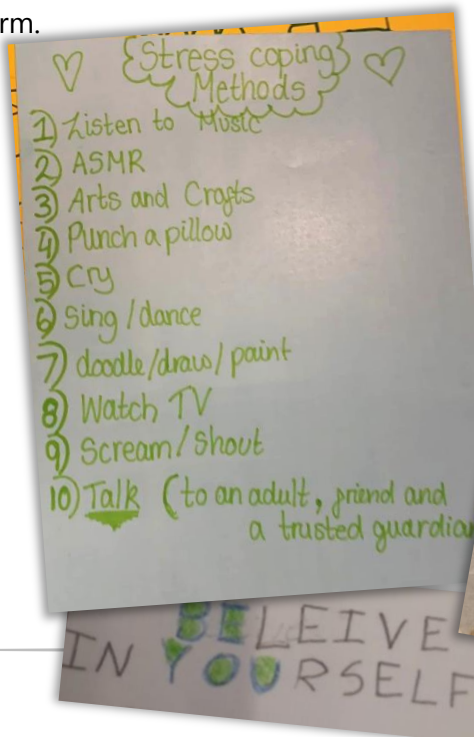


Thank you so much for your time and visiting out school. I think it's been invaluable for students to gain some understanding and learn more about self-harm and that it's something that can be spoken about.

We're expecting an increase in demand as we hold further discussions about the best way to support pupils and staff.

We also held a very well attended stall at the Alder Tree Primary School and were impressed with how open staff and parents were about self-harm.

The Discovery Journal aimed at 10–17-year-olds is almost ready to go to the printers following a testing period (funded by the Foyle Foundation, the DWF Foundation and the Arnold Clark Community Fund) and will be available free of charge to young people in the UK soon.

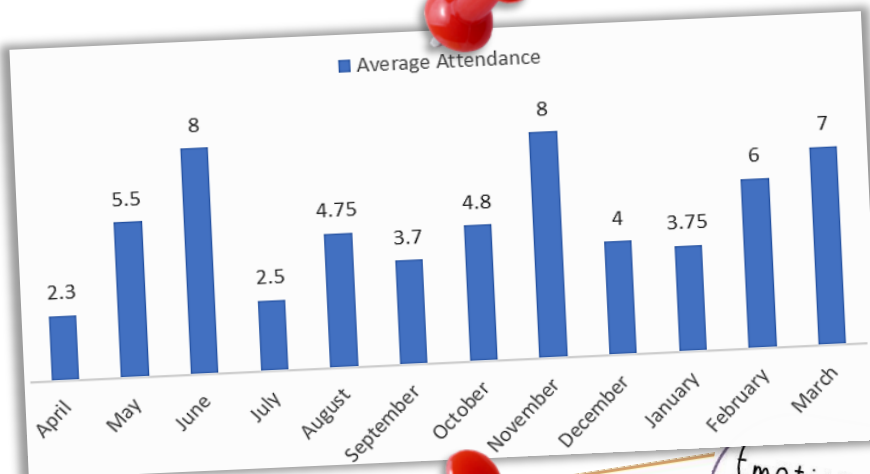


16-25s group

Our young people's group certainly grew, not necessarily in numbers but in being regularly attended and establishing itself as the warm, welcoming, accepting, safe space we wanted it to be known as.



This weekly group, funded by the Randal Foundation, ran 45 times over the last financial year at the Lovell Park Hub, near the city centre (6:30-8 pm). 36 young people used the group with the majority living in the Leeds 6 area and average attendance was 5.



Climb Every Mountain

There will always be occasions when we have to face something or do something that we do not want to do or are really anxious attending an appointment, or going to a busy shopping centre, or having to have a difficult conversation with another person something different. However, sometimes 'being brave' or 'powering through' just isn't enough and can potentially escalate. Therefore, it is helpful to consider the 'Before', 'During' and 'After' of the mountain we are going to climb so we can minimise the risk of escalation.

Add your own ideas to each section so you are best able to cope with the challenge you are facing.

Before ~ Prepare

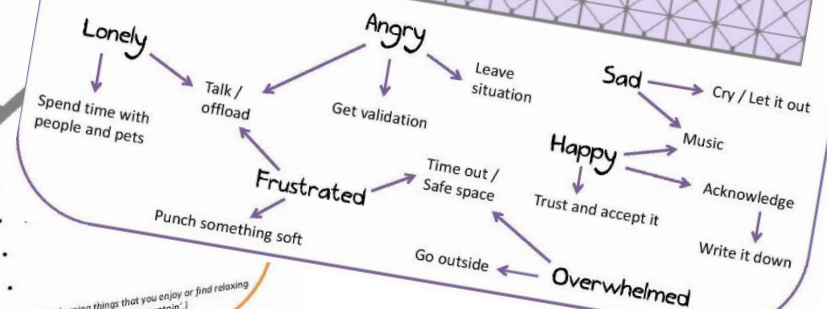
- Rest and plan ahead
- Verbalise concerns and fears
- Plan an exit strategy

During ~ Sustain

- Bring something calming
- Plan breaks or timeouts
- Remind yourself of exit strategy

Emotions Rollercoaster

What am I feeling? How do I manage?



The group is quite casual, not formal, so there's no pressure

It's a mix of colouring and talking and it feels relaxed

There's a relatability – a shared lived experience

It's the most positive environment you can go to – I used to hate Mondays but now I am excited for them

It's the focal point of my week – the anchor point that gives me stability

It's a place to be supported and to be seen.

Nobody from my personal life knows about my self-harm so it's good to be able to talk about it

Even when I was non-verbal, I wasn't judged

I don't need to pretend, I can truly be myself

It's nice to have discussions without the societal pressure of eye contact (love all the toys/activities)

You can be silent – there's no pressure to talk, you can just sit and listen

The group is accepting of everything (not just SH) – I can say who I am I looked on the website and saw the stuff about "safe self-harm" and having a self-care kit – and you give away free dressings – and this blew my mind. You accept what we do now and support us now.

I go to several other groups but I like this one best because it's more relaxed

We're equals, not talked down to or lectured

It's good that we talk about self-harm reduction rather than stopping – that's different to my previous experience when it was "all or nothing" and if you self-harmed you got into trouble [I asked what she meant and she said she'd been barred from the previous group for 2 weeks after self-harming]

It's the first time I've felt able to talk about my self-harm – I know I'm not going to be judged here

It wasn't as scary as I thought

Everything else I've seen has made it look like it's only a problem that affects teenage girls, and I'm older now and part of me feels I should have "outgrown" it, so finding you has helped me see that's just not true.

It's nice that everyone who volunteers has their own experience

I like the vibe of this group

Support for students in Leeds universities

This year we linked up with Emma's Embrace, a local charity running the It's Our Day project, providing social space, craft activities, board games and food to university students in Leeds every Saturday afternoon during term time. We now have Battle Scars volunteers supporting the project and those using the safe space, many of whom are university students themselves.



(From It's Our Day website)

Family

We are continuing to support the families of young people who self-harm through the virtual support groups, the website information and resources, and, occasionally, via email or over the phone.

We are providing education, information and support to foster carers around Leeds with support from social services.

I wanted to pass on my absolute gratitude for the support that has been extended to me via the online parent support groups. Without this connection which has had a really grounding effect on my whole family things would have been really stressful at home. I'm directly that have helped my son who self-harms he knows I am supported and it helps him to feel less pressure and guilt about me having to deal with his harming.

Great virtual group time that works well for people who work full time. No other groups provide this facility or expertise in SH.

Plans for the future

We will continue running assemblies and workshops in schools, building on the links that were forged over the last year. We aim to increase the support we offer with extra services located at our new premises.

We hope the long-awaited Discovery Journal will meet the young people's need for a self-help workbook.



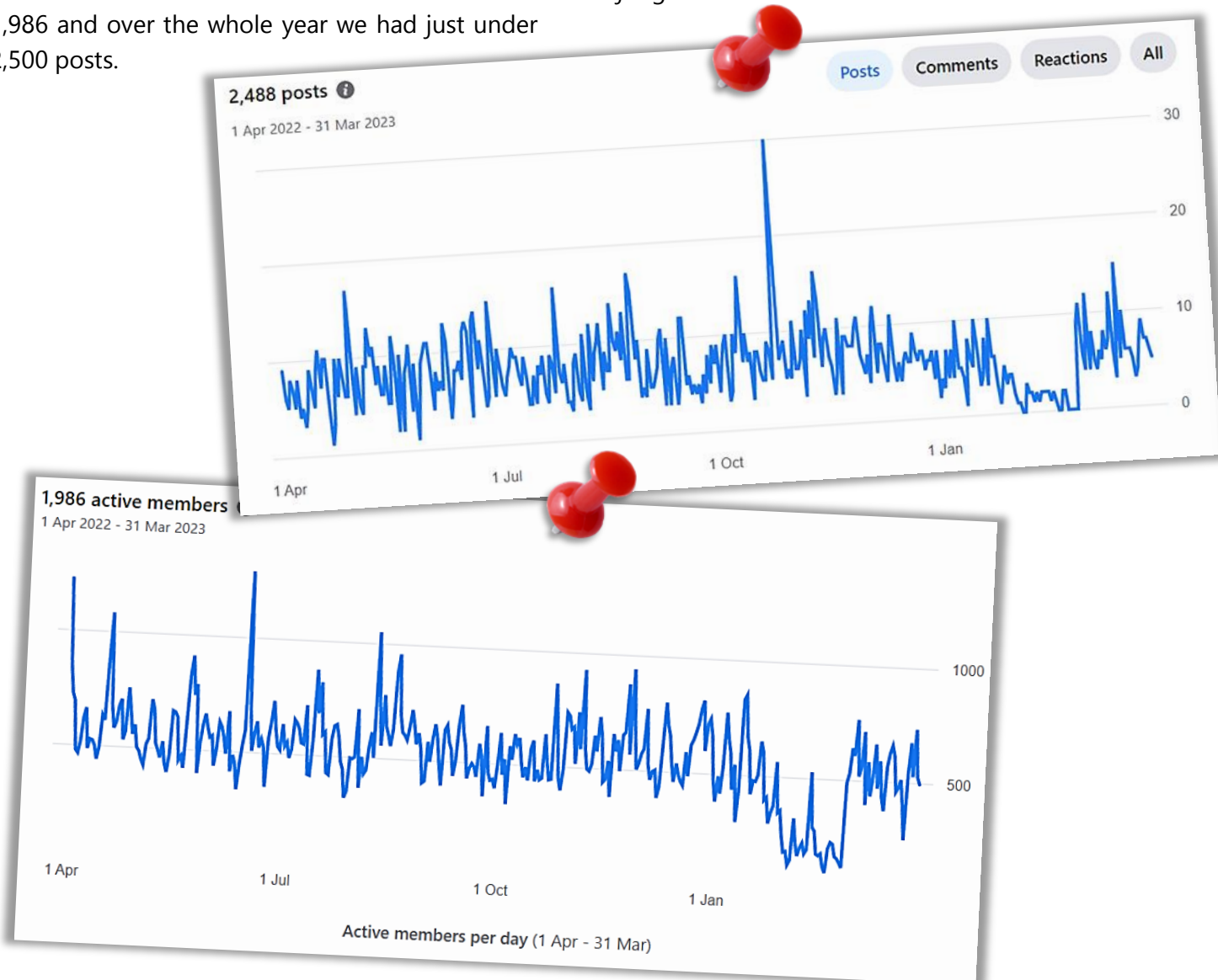
All the constructive and warm and welcoming support. This group was the only help I had available during my child's fast mental health decline and was there for me when I needed advice about what best to do.

My child has not self-harmed for 3 months and is in a better place now so I no longer need to attend the parental group. I just want all the people involved to know you make a HUGE difference – Thankyou

Private Facebook group

Membership for our Facebook self-harm peer support group rose by 17.5% to 4,450. As in every such group, not everybody is active in the group. On March 31st the number of active members was 1,986 and over the whole year we had just under 2,500 posts.

We strengthened the admin/moderator team who read every single post and comment ensuring the group remains safe, compassionate and non-judgemental.



I use Facebook. I have only ever posted twice but I have found people being very helpful and supportive. I read all the posts that go up and the ones I relate to I read the responses and find them helpful. I'm shy to post things myself and worry if I say the wrong things so finding people I can relate to is good.

Talking in groups holds me back. I prefer face to face than calls. But sadly I am in Middlesbrough. Maybe you could expand the charity? I would love to be able to attend face to face sessions with others.

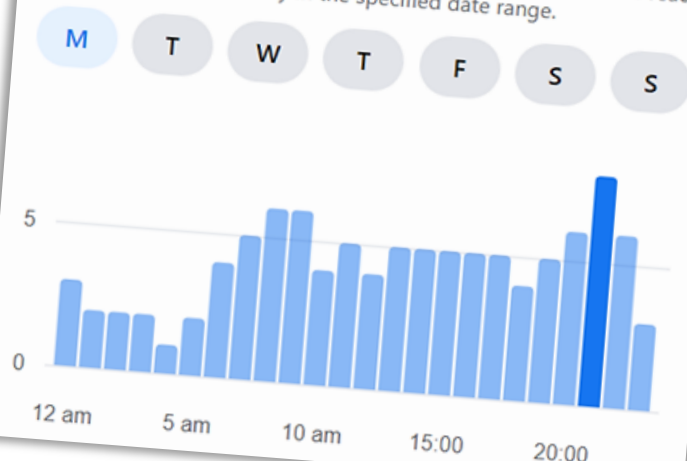
Popular days ⓘ

The average number of times that members post, comment or react on a given day in the specified date range.



Popular times ⓘ

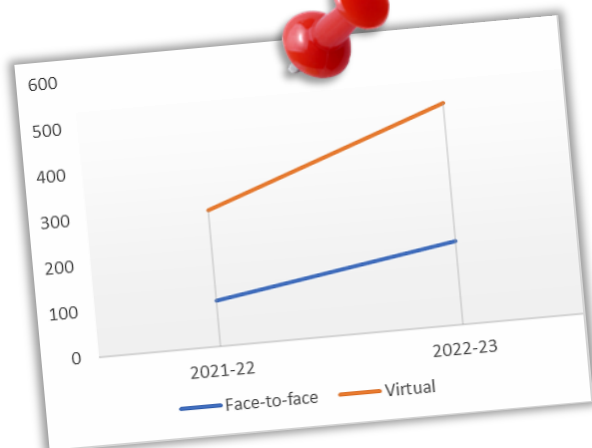
The average number of times that members post, comment or react at a given hour of the day in the specified date range.



Plans for the future

We will continue monitoring the effectiveness and capacity of the admin/moderator team, reviewing our procedures and group rules as required.

Training professionals



Thanks to our excellent reputation and the much stronger publicity of our training we had significantly higher demand than last year. We delivered a large number of self-harm and eating disorders sessions training a total of 498 professionals, 198 face-to-face and 300 virtually, an increase from last year by 86% and 52% respectively.

I have done both the self-harm training and eating disorders, both were brilliant. Informative, approachable representatives from Battle Scars. I loved how it was so open and wasn't structured a certain way, the trainers were more than happy to answer difficult questions and didn't make anyone feel daft or awkward for asking them. I feel like people can often hold back asking questions due to possibly offending or not wording things right and not once did it feel like that would be the case, both the trainings I did where small groups which I thought may make it more awkward for feedback but everyone got involved and I think that is a massive credit to the trainers. Thank you.

Face-to-face workshops took place in Leeds, Huddersfield, Macclesfield and Birmingham. A variety of professionals attended our training such as counsellors, university wellbeing staff, safeguarding leads, school staff, GP surgery staff, children's residential care staff, support workers, mental health staff from acute wards, social workers etc. from various organisations: Just Drop In, Homestart Leeds, Touchstone, CADMHAS, Conwy Mind, Coventry City Council, the Cellar Trust, Big Noise (Sistema Scotland), HARP, Oxfordshire Mind and Signpost Stockport for Carers to name but a few.

Many volunteers and staff joined these sessions, not only as part of their own training but to add their own voice and enrich the delegates' experience.

Other projects/activities

Thanks to the Focus Foundation we printed 250 copies of the Self-Harm Addiction Programme's workbook (2nd edition) following its review last year. Demand is low but steady. What has increased though is attendance at the monthly support group where we have rich and often challenging conversations.

This was fantastic training. I feel empowered, more knowledgeable and inspired. Such informative and knowledgeable trainer and love getting training from people with lived experience. The whole thing was truly excellent and well received.

Plans for the future

We will continue providing virtual training alongside expanding the face-to-face provision in Leeds and surrounding areas using the training room at our new premises, making individual bookings for face-to-face training available again.

Plans for the future

We will keep running this group which remains different to our other virtual groups and continue having in-depth discussions about the various aspects of the programme.

Spreading the word

We ran 4 self-harm awareness and one eating disorders awareness webinars with attendance numbers ranging from 75 to a full house of 100, reaching a total of just over 400 people. These free hour-long sessions are an introduction to Battle Scars, an educational opportunity as well as an advertising tool – everyone benefits. They have proven very popular and fill up within hours.

Thank you so much for your time today and your service. I am taking away lots to think about.

We have also ran similar sessions for smaller groups for Leeds Teaching Hospital mental health first aiders, Yorkshire & Humberside branch of the International Institute for Risk & Safety Management, Leeds Recovery College, Progeny, Leeds Psyched, Portakabin York, Voluntary Action Leeds, Bitesize (Leeds school staff) and Early Help Parenting Team (Westminster).

Thank you so much for that inspiring and thought-provoking session! It has been really helpful!

Over the summer our website got a full facelift. We split the sections to a more user-friendly “I self-harm”, “I’m family/friend” and “I’m a professional” tabs with a clearer section with our vision, mission and values, as well as an easier way to learn more about volunteering with us and other ways of supporting us. We also set up a new donation system with the Charities Aid Foundation who also manage GiftAid for us. This new system has

enabled us to accept regular donations as well as one-offs.

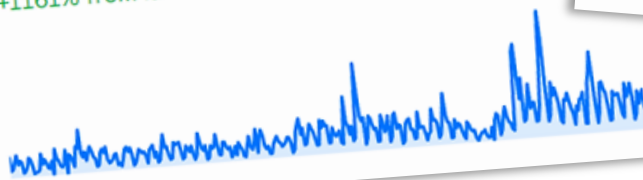
From a very desperate mum thank you for being brave enough to start a company that just does not exist anywhere, I've learnt more from your website in one hour than I have this last 2 years of doctors, hospitals and therapists. You have given me hope!

Not only have the unique visits increased, but people spend more time exploring the website and discovering what else is there. Our communications officer has been kept very busy managing an ever-growing mailing list and coordinating our social media presence.

Page Views

68,525

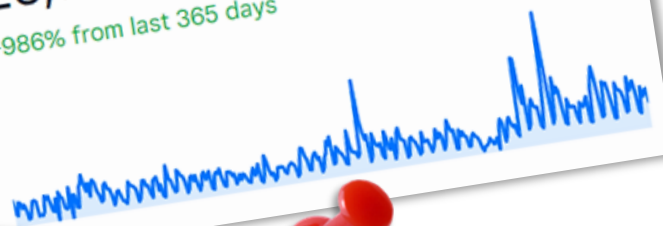
+1161% from last 365 days



Unique Visits

25,521

+986% from last 365 days



Avg. Pages Per Unique Visit

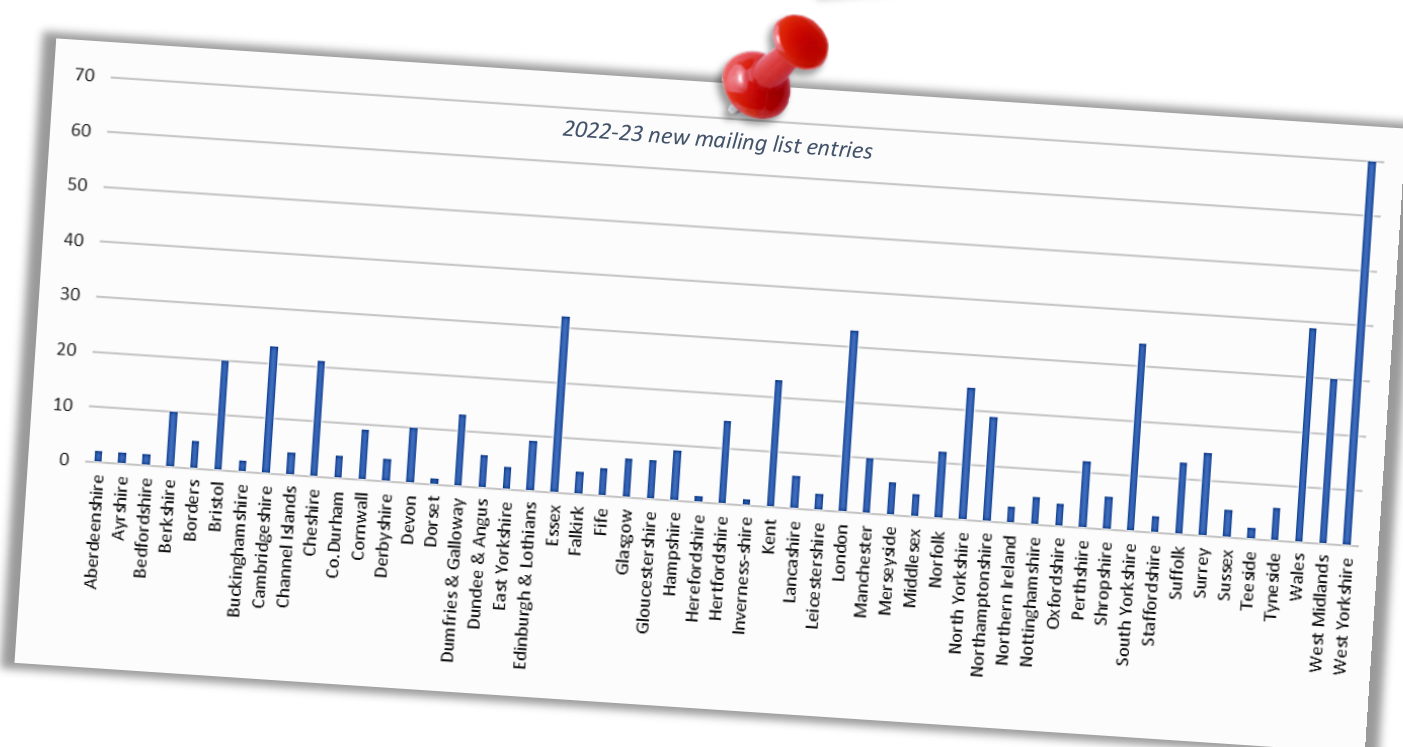
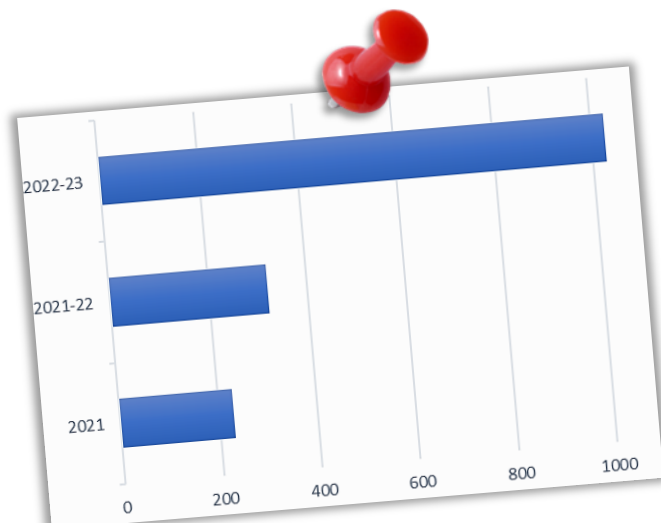
2.5679

+1178% from last 365 days



Our mailing list has grown in a spectacular fashion to having a total subscription of 1027 people:

89 people joined the mailing list in 2021-22.
707 people joined the mailing list in 2022-23 – an increase of 694%!



We didn't do as many radio interviews this year, partly because we didn't have time to pursue them. We did get a chance to go live with BCB Radio Bradford and close the year with an interview on BBC Norfolk.

The most unusual – and unexpected – opportunity came up when we were contacted by a Californian production company wanting to do a documentary about self-harm as part of the UNMUTED series. The producers and crew met Jenny, our CEO, in London on March 27th for the filming of the self-harm episode of a docuseries called UnMuted

looking at self-harm in the US and the UK. It was an experience and we're looking forward to the end result and the impact it may have for us.

Plans for the future

We will aim to promote our services and news – such as when the Discovery Journal becomes available and the opening of the new premises – using existing connections and by making new ones.

Work with partners

We are hoping our ongoing participation in the It's Our Day project for university students in Leeds will continue providing opportunities for discussions around mental health and self-harm as well as providing the students with a feeling of connectedness to the community outside campus.

In Leeds, we continue being 3rd sector reps in the Mental Health Partnership Board as well as regularly take part in the Crisis and Urgent Care group. We only had a small role to play in the mental health transformation work due to our time restrictions.

Just wanted to say congratulations for 5 years of fantastic work and hope you have a great day celebrating.

Ooh happy birthday to you [Jenny] and Battle Scars! What an amazing achievement and person you are!!

Huge congrats to you Jenny, such amazing work, making such a difference to the people of Leeds. Thank you so much

[Birthday wishes from Healthwatch Leeds staff]

We became approved members of the Somerset Big Tent, a signposting service for young people and their families in the Somerset area. We connected with the Gwent Alliance and are now the only dedicated self-harm support organisation on the Gwent Suicide Prevention and Self-Harm

Prevention Expert Advisory Group. We have just applied to get charitable status in Scotland and have connected with Penumbra and Fast Forward.

MunroeK have continued supporting us and surprised us with the offer of their building to create a mental health hub and help us with the next stage of Battle Scars' growth. They were also our amazing hosts for our AGM, September's team meeting and February's 5th birthday party. We are beyond grateful to them.

The White Rose Shopping Centre have also been very supportive, inviting us to hold a stall on Purple Tuesday aimed at improving the disabled customer experience amongst other help.

Lush, the cosmetics company, welcomed us in their store in the White Rose Shopping Centre to hold a stall for 3 days and donated their charity pot profits over those days to Battle Scars.

We continue working together with both Leeds and Kirklees Public Health and worked in an advisory role with Leeds Mind, York Mind, Hope for Harm (Cornwall), the Essex Personality Disorder service and a number of social workers.

Just looking at all the brilliant resources and information on your website, there's so much there! It's fantastic what you've set up and I'm sure invaluable to many people who self-harm [Self-Injury Support]

We linked up and introduced Battle Scars to a large number of organisations/projects: Just 'B', Lifecraft, UMHAN, Northpoint Leeds, Ten Years Time, Turning Point, Catalyst, Yorkshire Housing, Leeds Conservatoire, One Stop Networking, Leeds

Student Medical Practice, Leeds CAMHS crisis helpline, Ministry of Justice, the Trauma & Adversity Project West Yorkshire, St. Luke's, the Scottish National Rural Mental Health Forum, Scottish Recovery and various GP surgeries around the UK.

We have grown more confidence in approaching other organisations to forge partnerships.

Plans for the future

We are now looking for partners for our new building and more formal working relationships. With a charitable status in Scotland we're planning on involvement in the implementation of the Scottish self-harm strategy.

We will continue working closely together with 3rd, statutory and private sector organisations to our mutual benefit.

Volunteers

Our volunteer number has grown to 59, 5 of whom are currently on hold but hoping they'll be ready to volunteer again in the near future. 6 volunteers stepped down over the year for various work and health reasons, while one who had stepped down the previous year came back by taking a virtual role instead of a face-to-face one. Following a period of recruitment drought (an issue with most charities), we signed up a total of 16 new volunteers most of whom have taken on the virtual facilitator role, with a smaller number assigned to the FRESH and It's Our Day projects.

We provided role-relevant training as well as outsourced training about domestic abuse and autism awareness. Many of our volunteers also attended a workshop run by Chimp Management based on Prof. Steve Peters' Through the Jungle book.

Recruitment and training of volunteers is now an ongoing process. We have just started developing an extensive volunteer development programme which will be made up of a wide range of mental health and skill development courses. All mental health training will be written and delivered by staff, volunteers and service users with lived experience of the subject. The volunteer manager

and CEO are guiding the process and will assist the volunteers to upskill as necessary.

Our volunteers are growing in confidence and their compassion and commitment are exceptional. We couldn't do what we do without them.

Volunteering with Battle Scars gives me an immense sense of pride and purpose; it has meant that the darkest and most painful parts of my life are now something that lets me help others. It is truly inspiring to work with such a dedicated group of people.

Plans for the future

We will keep working on the volunteer development programme, one course at a time, which we hope will attract more volunteers as well as maintain our high retention rate.

From service user to being a member of the team, a volunteer's story written by the group coordinator:

The first time J came to the 16-25s group, he himself admitted he would not have made it there if his dad hadn't pushed him! He was so anxious a member of our team went out to speak to him, to explain how the group works, to help him take those last few steps through the door. He was extremely nervous but it helped that another person was attending for the first time too and was as nervous and quiet as he was. By half-way through the group they were both talking and were fully engaged in the discussion.

The first time I met J (his second week), he chose the seat next to me, but didn't speak beyond saying his name. However, it was apparent he was finding things hard. He used his phone to type a message to me about having become non-verbal. I thanked him for finding a way to communicate with me, and checked in with him at the end of the session if there was anything I could do to support him or if he needed signposting to other services – we talked about services which could be accessed via text.

The following week I could see he was finding it hard to come in and waited outside. We chatted for a bit, and he admitted he was embarrassed about becoming non-verbal. He accepted my reassurance that it wasn't a problem – we'd managed to communicate anyway, thanks to his use of his phone.

Over time, he started to say a little more each week – sometimes only a word or two, but it was more and with encouragement from the volunteers, he has contributed more and more to group discussions, and shared openly about his own experiences and thoughts.

When we invited people to come forward to be volunteers, he was keen to apply. He had some concerns about the application process and

documentation, but we worked together to address those, and he completed his application and then his volunteer training.

He now participates every week, sharing the volunteer tasks with the others. I know I can rely on him to be there every week. I can also rely on him to pull me up (nicely) if I am unclear, or I make a mistake or have misspoken.

He has said that having the group on a Monday anchors his week and sets him up for having a better week. He has talked about how his management of difficult situations and anniversaries has improved this year, keeping him safer. Recently, we were talking about not liking the word "recovery" for getting better after having mental health issues, as that implied going back to where we used to be, when often we are changed by and learn from our experiences.

"No," he said. "It's not recovery; it's discovery."

I couldn't agree more.



Trustees & AGM

We experienced the sad loss of our newest trustee this year, Craig Hughes. He was never officially voted in because by the time we held our AGM, Craig was terminally ill. He remained a trustee until he passed away. He'd have enjoyed being a member of the board during our upcoming growth. We thank him and miss him.

Our AGM in July was hybrid with a really good turnout. It was described as "the best AGM I've ever been to" by one of our Ambassadors who has attended way too many AGMs for his liking! We spent most of the session picking the Battle Scars values which are at the start of this report.

This year's AGM will undoubtedly focus on the premises – finally a reality and not just the dream we've all had for the last 5 years. Next year's will be held there!

Plans for the future

We will endeavour to have the right equipment to run hybrid AGMs and other events/meetings and will remain inclusive of our members, staff, volunteers and service users who are unable to attend in person.



Staff & personal development

Thanks to the Tudor Trust's wellbeing grant we were able to hold a big team event in September and invite all our staff, volunteers and trustees. 25 attended in total and came from as far afield as

Dumfries, Bournemouth and Essex staying overnight at a nearby hotel. A day of various activities, a combination of fun and work, included awarding certificates – relevant, inspiring or funny.



Our CEO's mentoring relationship is ongoing as both parties are benefiting. We are fortunate to have the friendly easy-to-get-on-with board of trustees and a great working relationship between them and the CEO. But as another chief executive said, "it can be lonely being a CEO".

We made a few modifications to our staff team's working hours: we more than doubled the volunteer manager's hours (from 10 to 23) to cope

with the increase in volunteers and allow the CEO to delegate a few tasks; there was also a small increase in hours for the communications officer and the services support changing our FTE (Full Time Equivalent) from 2.44 to 3.

Our team of 7 sometimes feel disconnected due to not often being together, something we will rectify when we have our own premises.

Battle Scars continues to be somewhere where I feel I can be the authentic me and that is not only acceptable but encouraged and wanted.

This enables me to feel safe to be vulnerable and stay engaged, rather than having to withdraw to feel safe.

Our CEO's example of letting us see her own difficulties has helped me to do the same; I've had feedback from several people that this has in turn inspired them to be honest with others (including in work situations) and ask for (and get) support. This ripple effect cannot be underestimated in the impact it has and is having. Owning our difficulties but demonstrating that we still add value helps to change people's perception of people who live with self-harm and difficult mental health.

My confidence has grown, and I have made both personal and professional progress. Without Battle Scars, I do not think I would have tried to change my career. I feel I can now do work that has direct positive impact and this in turn has helped to boost my sense of self-worth.

I know the young person's group is not run for my benefit, but I do benefit from it. The volunteers are committed, sincere, compassionate and friendly. I feel fully supported, and able to share the stuff I'm working through (when it relates to the topic). I don't feel I have to be "perfect" or know all the answers.

Thank you,

Joy McMillan - 16-25s group coordinator

I became Battle Scars' first member of staff (not including our CEO) a little over two years ago now, which is a source of great pride to me. Prior to starting work with Battle Scars, I had been unable to work for a couple of years, due to my physical health; by taking me on as an employee, Battle Scars helped me to open a door I thought was closed to me.

Working at Battle Scars has helped me find purpose, to develop my identity and to grow in confidence in dealing with the challenges I come across as part of my role. I can speak confidently about my own story and share the knowledge I have gained throughout my 4+ years with the charity, whether that it is with my peers or with professionals. For the first time in my life, I am in a role where I can honestly say "I am good at this" – and that feels amazing.

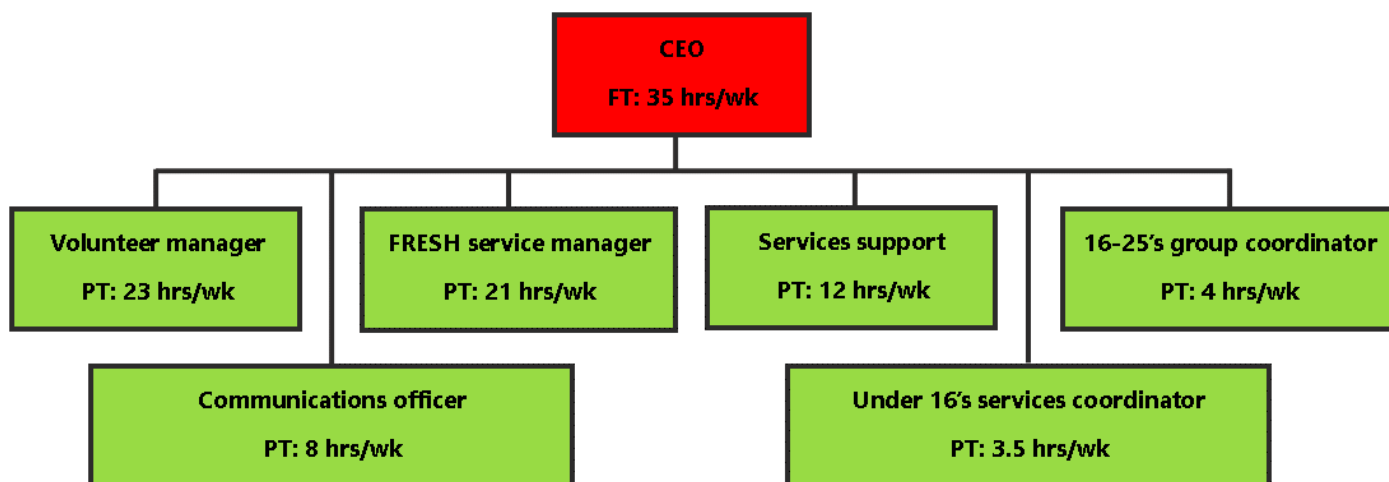
As well as increasing my levels of confidence and self-belief, my levels of self-awareness have grown exponentially through working and volunteering with Battle Scars, and this helps me every day with my own mental health challenges.

Em Gardiner – volunteer manager

Plans for the future

In order to encourage team cohesion and belonging, we've decided to hold quarterly team meetings with all staff attending in person which will allow us to bring the "head of our Scottish division" to Leeds on a regular basis.

We will need more staff as our services and responsibilities grow over the next financial year but will remain flexible and wait until we've clearly identified needs before recruiting. As always, we will look for suitable staff amongst our volunteers and assist in their further development.



Staff structure at the end of the financial year 2022-23

Funding & strategic plan

We've just written our 2023-2028 strategic plan which is a useful tool to keep a track of everything that is going on as well as our plans for the future. The building also required a business plan and will bring many challenges and plenty of opportunities to learn.

We're now into year 2 of the second 3-year funding from the Tudor Trust and, with their help, working on sustainability and future growth. Other funding

from NHS England, the Focus Foundation, the Foyle Foundation, the Randal Charitable Foundation, the Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust, the DWF Foundation, the Allen Lane Foundation, the Arnold Clark Community Trust and the George A Moore Foundation have covered most of our project and core costs. Our income from training has greatly contributed towards core costs and kept our reserves healthy.

Many thanks to our funders:

the
Tudor trust



England



Plans for the future

We have already secured funding from the NHS, have reallocated funds and will continue raising funds to keep all services running and to run and maintain the Onward Mental Health Hub. We expect some temporary changes in tasks and working hours as we set up the hub but we know

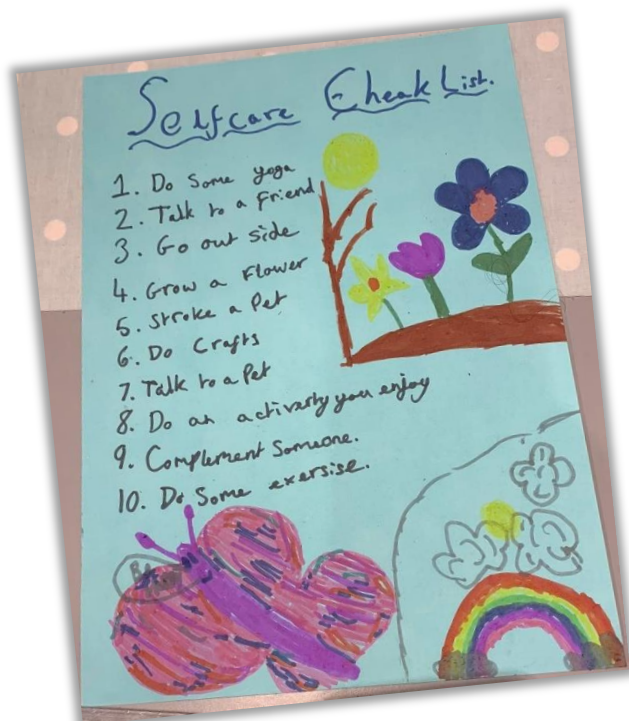
many of our volunteers are excited and can't wait to help with this project.

The Albert Hunt Trust will cover the expenses of the new peer support project in two local prisons that we will set up in partnership with Giving Time (a Voluntary Action Leeds project supporting volunteering by people with criminal convictions).

We hope you'll stay with us as we start a very exciting new chapter.

Onward

Mental Health Hub



Excellent course, trainer full of knowledge and experience. Thank you so much for sharing everything and Battle Scars is a unique service!



The training/information I received went above and beyond my expectation. Tips/hints, do's and don'ts have opened my eyes and my outlook towards the individual I am supporting has changed completely. I have found 4 days after attending the session I am more calm and less frustrated. I have been struggling for 10 months prior to this session to help/support and pretty much telling myself I am not just helpless but useless as well but the session changed all of that. 2 of the best hours of support, guidance, training I've had. Thank you so much. Keep up the brilliant work/job you all do at Battle Scars!!

Finances

Summary of financial accounts

	Unrestricted Funds*	Restricted Funds**	Total
INCOME			
Grant - Tudor Trust		£ 30,000	£ 30,000
Grant - NHS Leeds CCG		£ 29,331	£ 29,331
Grant - Focus Foundation		£ 2,225	£ 2,225
Grant - The Randal Charitable Trust		£ 4,050	£ 4,050
Grant - Arnold Clark Community Fund		£ 1,000	£ 1,000
Grant - DWF Foundation		£ 1,500	£ 1,500
Grant - Foyle Foundation		£ 4,600	£ 4,600
Grant - Allen Lane Foundation		£ 7,228	£ 7,228
Grant - Cecil Pilkington Charitable Trust	£ 3,000		£ 3,000
General donations	£ 857	£ 5,737	£ 6,594
Fees & charges (invoices)	£ 434	£ 20,309	£ 20,743
Memberships	£ 218		£ 218
Raffles	£ 58		£ 58
Mechandise, workbooks & other income	£ 373		£ 373
TOTAL INCOME	£ 4,940	£ 105,980	£ 110,920
EXPENDITURE			
Salaries		£ 71,926	£ 71,926
Training & information	£ 78	£ 2,643	£ 2,721
Travel, accommodation & refreshments	£ 527	£ 1,999	£ 2,526
Workbook, promotional & other printing	£ 399	£ 2,427	£ 2,826
Insurance	£ 17	£ 423	£ 440
IT (running costs)	£ 101	£ 619	£ 720
Equipment	£ 304	£ 254	£ 558
Professional charges	£ 640	£ 61	£ 701
Phones	£ 22	£ 589	£ 611
Postage	£ 229	£ 247	£ 476
DBS checks	£ 66	£ 6	£ 72
Raffle licence	£ 20		£ 20
Running costs			£ -
Consumables	£ 77	£ 309	£ 386
Advertising		£ 707	£ 707
Other running costs	£ 1,200		£ 1,200
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£ 3,680	£ 82,210	£ 85,890
NET (INCOME - EXPENDITURE)	£ 1,260	£ 23,770	£ 25,030
Brought Forward from 2021-22	£ 16,377	£ 23,077	£ 39,454
Carried Forward to 2023-24	£ 17,637	£ 46,847	£ 64,484

* Unrestricted Funds can be used flexibly to fulfil our aims and objectives but may be "ringfenced" (allocated) for specific purposes

** Restricted funds are grants given to us for specific reasons that must be spent for the purpose they were given

Today I want to express my thanks to this group and all who are in it. You've supported me when I struggle with my urges, when my friends tell me it's been so long and they don't think I'll give in to them. You understand the worry that I have that maybe one day I will give in to them, and that the urges will be stronger than my fear of what I'll lose.

You understand my worry for my children, the concern I have regarding their own battle with self-harm and addiction. You support me in this when I feel like I can't cope. You let me vent, knowing that while I battle with my own self-harm, that I don't fully have the answers for my own children, which my friends and colleagues expect I should.

You listen when I feel the judgment of my scars, whether actual or perceived. You understand the sideways glances, why the descriptive words 'it was the pharmacist with the scars' can be hurtful (I am more than my scars), and understand the constant concern that you will always be defined by your scars, no matter how long it has been since your last self-harm.

You listen. You provide me with information/resources as I try (and am not really succeeding) with trying to set up a support group in a country that only sees self-harm as a symptom of mental illness, and refuses to acknowledge that there can be an addictive nature to self-harm.

To each and every member here, I thank you. I am inspired by you in my own journey, your willingness to ask for help, to support each other.

To the moderators, looking at each post, making sure we are protected from ourselves, from accidental triggers, I thank you.

To **Jenny Groves**, I thank you. You are an absolute inspiration, with the time and effort you have done to set up a page, a group, where people can be heard, known, and supported, instead of being pushed from pillar to post by the mental health system.

I feel it is a safe and non-judgmental online group. It is really helping and supporting me. I feel understood and I like that there is no pressure



Body Mapping

How do emotions affect your body?

Where do you feel them?

Do they change your body's temperature?

Do they have colours or shapes?



Support groups online: lovely people, very supportive to each other.



www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk

info@battle-scars.org.uk

07410 380747

