



To support  
educate  
& bring  
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Front cover photo by San Yates ©

## Message from the Chair of the Board

Hello

This has been another successful year for Battle Scars. We are emerging from the Covid pandemic in a much stronger position than where we were two years ago.

We are here to provide a service giving help and support to as many people as possible and in the last year the numbers of people we are reaching has substantially increased. The pandemic forced us into virtual communication via the internet but this has had the very positive result of expanding the geographical range of Battle Scars. Proximity to Leeds is now no longer necessary in order to take advantage of belonging to the Battle Scars community. People from all over the country are able to take part in our support meetings, hence the huge growth in numbers. We are gradually reopening the face-to-face groups in the locality for people who prefer this type of group. We have widened our work with various ages groups including school students, young people, adults and older people. Our influence extends worldwide with users of our Facebook page and the Addiction Programme Workbook. Thanks to Jenny Groves, our tireless CEO, and all our volunteers and new ambassadors who have made this expansion in our work possible. The staff team have also worked extremely well in their first year of appointment. We are grateful for their dedication to the job and appreciate their efforts. When Jenny had to focus on her own mental health, they rallied round to support her and take on extra duties in order to keep the Battle Scars services functioning. As a result, we were able to come through with the

minimum of disruption. Many thanks to Jenny also for the way she coped with her mental health crisis, showing fortitude, perseverance and patience. Since her return she has been full of determination and diligence and we thank her for her non-stop work constantly promoting Battle Scars and managing the many services and projects we offer.

Battle Scars has made great progress in widening its sphere of influence in the medical and mental health community. Bookings for training sessions for professionals about self-harm or eating disorders have increased enormously and post course evaluations are always extremely positive, indicating the high standard of the training we provide.

I am so grateful Battle Scars even exists, so thank you to everyone involved.

*Service user*

The work of Battle Scars is so highly rated that the Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group has offered to fund the "FRESH" project for the next year and they are also providing the funding for an extra member of staff. This shows how much Battle Scars' work is valued and appreciated.

Battle Scars has expanded its influence in the media both in Leeds and in other UK areas. Acclaim for Battle Scars' achievements and impact has also come in the form of awards. We were the winners of the Leeds Compassionate City Award for Health and Wellbeing and Jenny was nominated as an "Unsung Hero of the Year".

Mental health issues continue to increase in our society, not least because of the pandemic and surrounding anxieties, uncertainties and unease about the future, which has impacted on people of all ages and situations. Battle Scars will endeavour to meet the needs of this growing number of people. The future for Battle Scars looks very positive. We have plans to expand all aspects of our work, mapping it out in our 5-year strategic plan, having done

the necessary research in what is needed and what we can realistically offer.

Our funders have been consistently very generous and we thank them for the support they have given and continue to give, so the organisation can thrive and develop.

**Jean Birch**

**(Chair of the Board of Trustees)**



*Happiness Jar (virtual group topic/activity)*

## Message from the CEO

And hello from me

As we're slowly returning to some kind of normality, it's time to once again take stock, look at the previous year, see where we thrived and where we struggled, and decide our next steps.

Last year we tested our adaptability. This year we tested our resilience and robustness. By our nature, being 100% survivor led and run, dips, troughs and major difficulties are part of everyday life in Battle Scars. Even though we greatly increased our employee numbers, when those dips hit, things got tricky. None of us does enough hours or has capacity to cover for another member of staff but despite the pressure, we got through it. I would not say we got through it unscathed, stress always leaves damage behind, but there was no impact on our service users, we cancelled no groups; if anything, we added two new services while I was in a state of mental health crisis.

We have learned from it; we know what is needed to avoid finding ourselves in such a difficult situation again but it will require resources we do not yet have. This is where our strategic plan comes in, our ethos, our dedicated team of trustees, staff and

volunteers, as well as my clinical supervisor and my mentor.

Thanks for all you and your team have done this year for me.

*Service user*

One thing shone above all though: our peer support model works across all levels. My dip was what we had all feared. It slowed us down, it is still causing problems with having to submit funding applications months later than intended, it put pressure on all of us. Still, we're finishing this financial year in a good position having gained numerous allies and support by being open and genuine. Instead of hiding this "weakness" we allowed others to fully see our vulnerabilities alongside our fighting spirit, witnessing the incredible ways in which we support each other.

We learned so much and as always, we realised how little we know and how much there is still to learn. But we're learning to cope with demand coming from every direction while Battle Scars is growing – 4 years old in February.



We have become more confident, even saying “no” to overextending ourselves, better at avoiding taking more on than we can handle; we’re becoming more aware of our capabilities, learning how to identify our weak points and how to build on our strengths, valuable lessons that will serve us well into the future.

I nearly burst with pride receiving the Leeds Compassionate City Award for Health & Wellbeing (front cover) – so happy to share that moment with two volunteers – and was reduced to tears when I received the certificate

about my nomination as an Unsung Hero of the Year. At the award ceremony I made up my speech on the spot in true Battle Scars “winging-it” style: Battle Scars is made up of amazing people who haven’t given up, who keep on fighting to survive.

We may not be the most robust bunch of individuals but we are all warriors and our collective fire burns bright.

**Jenny Groves**

**(Chief Executive)**

I live in the South West and don't think we have anything like this here. I went round in circles with the Mental Health Team who discharged me again even though I was deemed to be at risk. Your groups have made me feel so welcome and accepted without any judgment and I've gradually started participating more each time I've come as I know it's a safe space and we're all dealing with the same issues. If it weren't for this group I'm not sure what would have happened as I was in a really awful place and had tried to end my life several times. Now I'm making the time to come to 1 group a week as it's important for my wellbeing regardless of whether I've hurt myself or not. I just wish I'd found your group before my self-harm escalated to the point it did.

*Service user*



*On self-harm awareness day we ran a very well attended virtual event and did two radio interviews*

## Our aims

Battle Scars was created to support anybody affected by self-harm. Based on our broad definition covering physical (external and internal) self-harm as well as psychological self-harm (see *Our definition of self-harm* on the next page), we aim to help those who struggle with self-harm as well as those who support them.

We aim to educate and break down the stigma surrounding self-harm. We are truthful, open and honest, explaining that self-harm can affect anybody of any age, gender and background.

To meet our aims, we provide various survivor-led services as well as publications and resources on our website.

## Our objectives – what we are doing and why

The pandemic with all the changes and problems it's brought to the world, has played a large part in instances of self-harm increasing amongst people of all ages and genders. There has been a lot of loss and unavoidable adjustments. The world has not gone back to "normal", a new normal is forming. We cannot change what's happened, we can only find ways to move forward.

That's a big part of what we're here to do: provide safe spaces for people to build themselves back up, provide acceptance so that no more energy is wasted on guilt, provide a better example by people who haven't given up. We raise awareness at every opportunity, educating anyone who's willing to listen,

helping everybody understand how complex self-harm is and how to listen without prejudices and without making assumptions. We continue talking openly and honestly about self-harm, refusing to "sugar-coat" it, we challenge narrow-minded views and outdated advice, we will break down the myths surrounding it. Because the sooner someone reaches out, the easier it is to support them in finding better ways to manage their distress. Many people just need someone to listen and accept them as they are, self-harm and all. We have contact with many people who feel so relieved because they can speak about self-harm without shame and embarrassment. Nobody should be embarrassed for surviving!

*Volunteers are encouraged to attend training sessions for their own benefit as well as to add another view alongside the trainer's:* The self-harm training for professionals was excellent. It helped me see aspects of self-harm from a perspective that was much different from the 'professional' lens, which was very useful. The team at Battle Scars is kind, compassionate and flexible with regards to volunteers' circumstances.

*Volunteer*

## Our definition of self-harm

Self-harm inflicted on the body with immediate and longer-term effect. Examples: cutting, burning, scratching, hitting, pulling hair, biting, picking skin, overdosing, self-poisoning, restricting intake of food, calorie counting, restricting intake of liquids (such as water and juice), bingeing, purging, laxative usage, over-exercising, putting self in dangerous situations, risk taking that may result in injury or harm etc.

Psychological harm to the self. Examples: neglect, obsessive negative thinking, sabotaging relationships, continually forming similar damaging relationships etc.

Even though some people (especially young people) prefer the use of 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.

## Our Achievements

We have much to be proud of this year, from achieving recognition, increasing our staff team, building new links all over the UK, increasing our services and managing internal disruption.

On March 10th we were awarded the Leeds Compassionate City Award for Health & Wellbeing. Our CEO and two of our volunteers attended the ceremony at the Leeds Civic Hall and were presented with a gold owl and a certificate. We had the pleasure of meeting the sponsors for the award, Munroe K, and have already followed through on promises made on the night to build strong links with them.



*Oswald the Owl (named by our service users) and our award certificate on award night.*



*Awards night at the Leeds Civic Hall*

Two weeks later our CEO received an extra certificate in the post to confirm she had been nominated for the Unsung Hero of the Year award. Another heart-warming recognition.



We started the year with appointing two new staff members coordinating the virtual groups and providing administrative support. We soon added two more in charge of new projects, a dedicated member of staff developing services for young people and, last but not least, our out-of-Leeds team member working on marketing and social media. Altogether, our contracted hours added up to a 2.44 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE). All new staff were recruited from volunteers, upskilled as necessary to provide the professional development we've always hoped to offer.

Thanks to having someone working specifically on marketing, we were able to compile a large list of relevant organisations from all over the UK and spread the word. This has resulted in many new connections as well as a significant increase of bookings for training.

Face to face awareness events slowly restarted and our Ambassadors did a great job spreading

the word. On Self-harm Awareness Day, March 1st, we ran a free virtual introduction to Battle Scars with a myth busting session and a Q&A. It was quickly fully booked and 70 people from all over the UK attended on the day.

We were also interviewed on the radio 4 times on both Leeds and out-of-Leeds stations as well as appearing on Somerset's Talking Café for a live Facebook chat.

A promotional graphic for a radio broadcast. It features a red background with white text. At the top, it says 'TUNE IN and DON'T MISS...' followed by 'Jenny Groves, CEO and Founder of Battle Scars'. Below this is an illustration of a radio broadcast setup, including a microphone, a radio tower, and speakers. The text 'Radio' and 'ON AIR' are also visible. At the bottom, it says '...on BBC Radio Leeds at 8.15pm today and can also be heard online via [www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/schedules/bbc\\_radio\\_leeds/2022-03-01](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/schedules/bbc_radio_leeds/2022-03-01)'.

Every up and down became an opportunity to find better ways to ensure our services would remain unaffected. It does sound easier than it was but we are convinced that our service users were not impacted upon, and that we provided the stability and continuity they required.

# Impact & Value

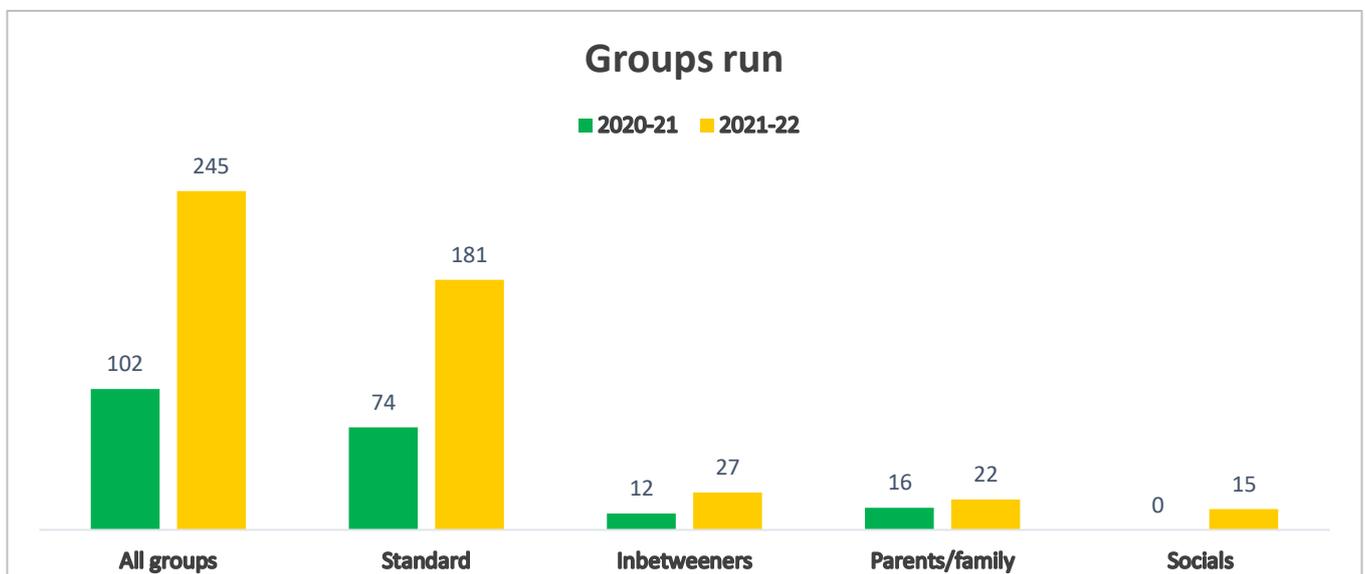
## Who we have reached and what difference our work has made

### Adult services - virtual

Our Zoom groups have proven very successful. We got to the point where too many people were trying to book and were often unable to get a place. We increased the number of groups, experimented a bit with formats and times, and we finished the year with enough capacity so that almost nobody gets left out.

Group	Group numbers		
	2020-21	2021-22	increase
All groups	102	245	140%
Standard	74	181	145%
Inbetweeners	12	27	125%
Parents/family	16	22	38%
Socials	0	15	-

We continued running our “standard” and “Inbetweeners” groups providing choices and options, a key element in the well-being of people who self-harm. The parents/family support group runs alongside our other virtual groups supporting those whose loved ones self-harm (more on this group in the *Young People and Families* section). We also introduced a Friday evening social/activities group. After a bit of trial and error, we have found formats that work, giving our service users a platform to share interests, relax and have a laugh. We also added social groups at difficult times, e.g. Christmas.



I'd like to say thank you so much for running these groups and everything you do. To say I really valued the sessions I attended is an understatement and I think they helped me greatly.

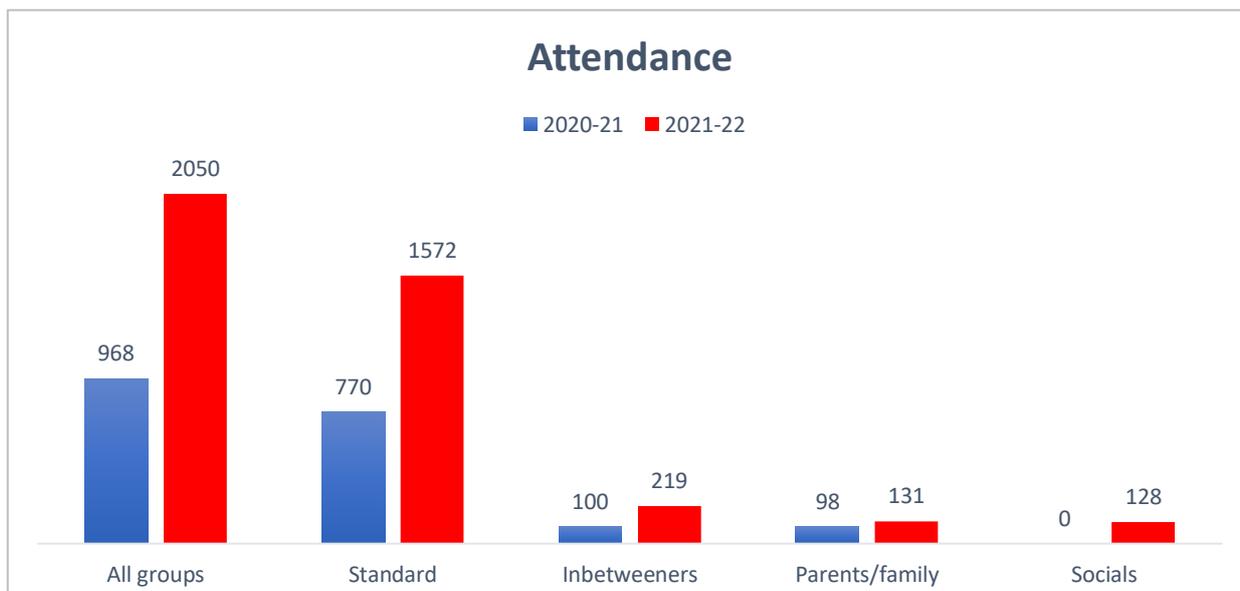
*Service user*

Due to the increase in capacity, overall attendance dramatically increased compared to last year:

Group attendance	Group numbers		
	2020-21	2021-22	increase
All groups	968	2050	112%
Standard	770	1572	104%
Inbetweeners	100	219	119%
Parents/family	98	131	34%
Socials	0	128	-

Our virtual groups were used by 230 individuals (many attending multiple groups):

Group	Individuals
Overall	230
Standard	149
Inbetweeners	65
Socials	43
Parents/family	41



We've had a variety of topics discussed, such as dealing with stress, building a support network, exploring ways to avoid and/or delay self-harm, trust, vulnerability, wellbeing, self-esteem, compliments and many others. Two of the standard groups are, what we call, "what bothers me" groups. Members can bring their own issues, concerns, frustrations, problems to

the group. The aim is to find ways to move forward with the help of their peers.

We finished the financial year with 7 standard groups, 1 Inbetweeners, 1 social and 1 parents/family group every fortnight. As always, people can attend multiple groups depending on their needs and availability. Nobody needs to wait longer than a couple of days from filling in the short online self-referral form before support is offered to them.

All our groups require a minimum of 2 facilitators to run. Some of them have a team of 3 to ensure the facilitators are not placed under unnecessary pressure. New volunteers were recruited and trained to both fill in gaps as well as help existing teams be stronger while our

Just wanted to share that this was such an amazing group. No more words. Just AMAZING, and so helpful. Thank you so much to all of you for everything you do.

*Service user*

CEO now only provides emergency cover for the parents/family group. Our virtual groups coordinator has been overseeing the running of the groups, facilitating some (for a while, too many) and supporting the facilitators.

We still have a number of people on the invite list who have not yet attended. We keep looking for ways to make the groups more accessible and often ask how we can make that so. We have been able to cater to certain people's specific needs already and all that was required was to be told what they need. On our website one can find blogs written by existing volunteers providing a better picture of what to expect at a group and we will continue working

on ways to help alleviate anxiety about attending.

On the other hand, many on the list have attended in the past but not recently. Even though coming off the list is quick and easy, very few request that. One person stated that receiving the invites was very reassuring knowing that the support remained available to them whenever they might need it. We are happy for all to remain on the list and will continue including them in the invite emails. In some cases people come off the list with full knowledge that re-joining is a few easy clicks away.



### Plans for the future

There is no doubt the virtual groups will remain and continue running alongside face-to-face services. Not only are we reaching people anywhere in the UK, but we are also providing

an alternative to face-to-face support for anybody unable to get to the venues for whatever reason. We wish to ensure we provide easy and quick-to-access support to any adult who needs it.

I just wanted to let you know how fantastic it was to experience my first 'Battle Scars' group. I am so glad that I was able to attend. There is nothing for me in my area of the country. The only things on offer are groups for teenagers who self-harm and I am 48, so that's no good! Your groups are the only specific help for self-harm that is available to me apart from very generalised counselling which I also attend.

It was really moving today, for the first time to be with people who suffer the same problems as me. When we were going through the 'negative thoughts' that we get in our heads, I felt like every single one of them was taken straight out of my brain and put on the screen. I didn't know that there were other people who felt like that too. I suddenly feel less like a freak. I was sobbing so much through the first half that I had to turn off my camera. I anticipated that the group might trigger me to self-harm, but actually, I felt quite euphoric afterwards - liberated.

Please do pass on my comments to the facilitators. You are all doing a very amazing thing! Thank you.

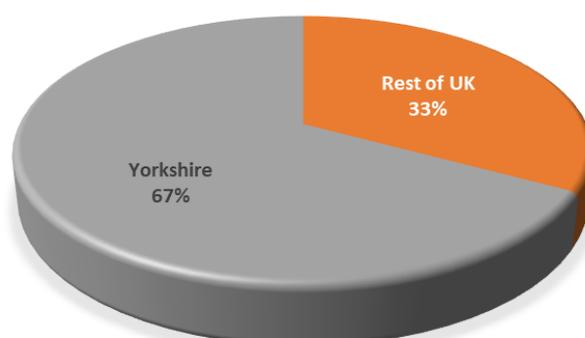
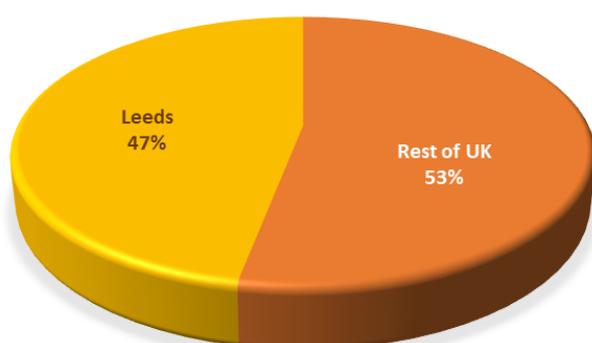
Even if I don't attend groups for a while, I still know that the support is always available. I'm always welcomed back by friendly faces.

*Service users*

## Demographics about our virtual groups

Even though we are seeing a growing number of service users from all over the UK, 47% of attendees were from Leeds postcodes while 67% of attendance was from Yorkshire.

As we don't collect demographic information linked to gender, we are unable to accurately say what the gender mix of group attendees is.



## Adult services – face-to-face

After carefully weighing their pros and cons, we held back restarting face-to-face groups until March. We did not have capacity to take bookings in order to control attendance if restrictions were still in place and we wanted to offer this service as a drop-in. A lot of thinking also went into the structure of the facilitator team. These groups needed to be self-sufficient without requiring additional facilitators on stand-by to cover if the need arose. All the members of this team are able to take turns leading the group making sure the load is shared and everybody develops their skills

further. More autonomy has also been given in choosing which topic they wish to work on each time.

At the moment, we have two groups running, one near the city centre and one in South Leeds. They're both evening groups and both teams are currently made up of two male and two female facilitators.

All our face-to-face services are currently based at Leeds City Council premises offered to us free of cost.

Battle scars is hugely important to me: a small organisation with a big heart. It's been amazing being back to f2f groups to see people and mix and share stories. Being a part of Battle Scars helps my mental health, helps my self-harm, also helps me understand and accept my self-harm. We have a great facilitator team, a great blend of ages experience. It's great to see people arrive so nervous, sometimes scared and feeling lost, but you see them lift, and relax over the 2-hour session. Put simply, myself and many others would be in a much darker, more lonely place without Battle Scars

*Volunteer*

### Plans for the future

Following a few months trialling this new model, adjusting it as necessary, we are hoping to restart our Wakefield group and add a daytime group in Leeds. Providing we can strengthen our infrastructure, we are hoping to then start setting these groups in other areas.

We have already received numerous proposals to work together with other organisations in various parts of the country, offering us a venue to set up a group in their area.

We aim to secure funding from local funders in these areas to cover group costs as well as managerial and admin support.

**Examine what happened.** **PUT THE ASSUMPTION ON THE SCALES** *They haven't seen your message*

*Most of the time you are NOT responsible* *They're busy*

*→ NOT your problem* *They've run away with the circus*

*→ forget it!* *They're poorly*

*If it was your fault* *They need more time to reply*

*→ act* *They're riding a unicorn*

*→ apologise* *They had to catch a bus*

**my fault**

**What else is going on?** **Think of all logical AND silly reasons** **Tip the scales!**



*Inside view of our handout 'card' for our Assumptions topic*

## Adult services – phone

After applying and receiving an Addressing Self-Harming in Leeds grant managed by the Leeds Community Foundation, one of the projects we set up was FRESH: Follow-up Review after Emergency treatment of Self-Harm. This is our first phone service and due to its funding, it's restricted to Leeds residents.

**FRESH** Follow-up  
Review after  
Emergency treatment of  
Self-Harm

This is our only service which requires professional referral. It provides the opportunity to have a follow-up conversation to people who have needed medical treatment of self-harm. With this service we are creating a safe space to explore the latest self-harm incident, look at better ways to manage situations, receive help to build better strategies, cover safe self-harm, offload to someone who understands, not feel alone and get appropriate signposting to both our various groups and resources as well as support offered by other organisations and services. We let the service users decide what they'd like to talk about and it doesn't even have to be linked to self-harm if on that occasion a general chat and human contact is more important and helpful to them.

Thank you for caring enough to call me.

Thank you for letting me just talk.

Thank you for suggestions to help in the future.

Thank you for 'getting it'.

*Service users*

I am so glad a desperate Google search found you so THANK you for being there when I felt as if there was nothing and no-one. In a short space of time, Battle Scars has already given me so much. The opportunity to post on the page and to respond to others. Zoom groups have also been a welcoming space, the volunteers included me and acknowledged even though I was not OK, it was OK to still be included and join in. And then FRESH! The training gave me a run of weeks on my calendar where I had a purpose and was able to meet other volunteers. I felt valued and part of something which has been missing to me for so long. And lastly, to end the year, Battle Scars gave me a reason to get on a train to meet Jenny *[delivering training to professionals together]*! That was a fantastic day! I got so much from it.

*Volunteer*

This is a one-off phone call as our other services are available to them for ongoing support and the call can last for up to 50 minutes. The service is operated by one member of staff and 7 volunteers (based in and out of Leeds). The manager has a vital role in supporting the volunteers ensuring they have frequent debriefs and using feedback to improve the service. Our volunteers, never knowing what they will get, have been able to handle every phone call with compassion.

The volunteers helped us design the operation manual, covering everything from having someone other than the intended service user answering the phone to dealing with someone in crisis.

We currently have 5 referrers: Emergency Departments/Accident & Emergency (Leeds General Infirmary and St. James's Hospital), Minor Injuries Units/Urgent Care Centres (St. George's in Middleton and Wharfedale Hospital in Otley), Acute Liaison Psychiatric

Service (operating at both A&E departments), the Leeds Student Medical Practice and The Light surgery. The GP surgeries operate as a second net ensuring the offer is made and, in some cases, making it when the potential service user is in a better mental state to consider it.

Uptake has been slow and there are still many creases to iron out but we are optimistic this will pick up.

I am so thankful that the young person I called was so easy to talk to. I hope the call for her was as good as it was for me. We talked about distractions and delay techniques. Also expressing herself through music. Talked about comfort blankets and pets. Talked about talking to her family as this is something she wants to do. Talked about safe self-harm and reflected on what made this recent self-harm different to need A&E. Talked depression and SAD and about meds and seeing her GP as she was wondering about changing dose/medication as current one not holding her as well anymore. Did lots of signposting to Battle Scars group page and the website. Also to other organisations and places listed in the handbook. Talked about plans for rest of her day after the call. And the best thing was we did lots of laughing even though it was a serious conversation. She said the call had really helped. I hope it did.

*Volunteer*

### Plans for the future

We have already secured funding (provided by the Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group/CCG) to extend this project's pilot for another year (until June 2023) while we're working hard to resolve the issues with the referrer's systems, and we have already started working on adding more GP surgeries to our referrers list. Our aim is that everybody who receives emergency treatment for their self-harm is offered phone

contact with us by the hospital/Minor Injuries Unit as well as by their GP surgery. We believe it's vital they are provided with the opportunity to discuss this with a peer and to be given a wider range of options to move forward.

Further down the line, we are hoping that this project will be expanded out of Leeds into West Yorkshire, maybe reducing the service user age to 16+ instead of its current 18+.

### **Young people and families**

We were very glad to have the opportunity to work with a small number of schools by running

workshops and doing assemblies on self-harm and eating disorders. Following one such

assembly we were informed by staff that a young man they had been encouraging to talk with them for quite some time, approached them immediately after the assembly asking for such a meeting. Well done that young man, taking things on board and taking this massive step forward!

We have been surprised by the levels of self-awareness young people have shown in workshops who appreciate being treated with respect, as individuals who know their own mind, and the frank, open approach of our representatives.

We also ran a workshop for a young LGBT+ group and worked together with Team Daniel, a charity running groups for young people focusing on improving wellbeing and mental health.

Our Young People's Services Developer spent a lot of time this year talking to as many young people as possible. Our definition for the term "young person" is anybody aged between 11 and 25. Early indicators show that young people are not keen on virtual services or even telephone support. They would prefer face-to-face one-to-one/group or possibly text support and they were all very open to the idea of having a workbook/journal they can work on in their own time.

Another project the Addressing Self-Harming in Leeds funded was our weekly face-to-face 16-25s group. Even though we started this group in the middle of the pandemic and insisted on people booking, we soon turned it into a drop-in group aligning it with our belief that less pressure results in less anxiety and higher likelihood of attendance. It's run by a facilitator team of 4: a member of staff and 3 volunteers who have created a comfortable, relaxed and safe space where everyone can be

themselves. Attendance has been lower than we had hoped for but feedback has been exceptional.

Apart from this group's running costs, the budget also included the production of a video. This was produced by Captured by Cass, a videographer we've worked with before, and released on Self-Harm Awareness Day, March 1st. It can be found on our website as well as YouTube.

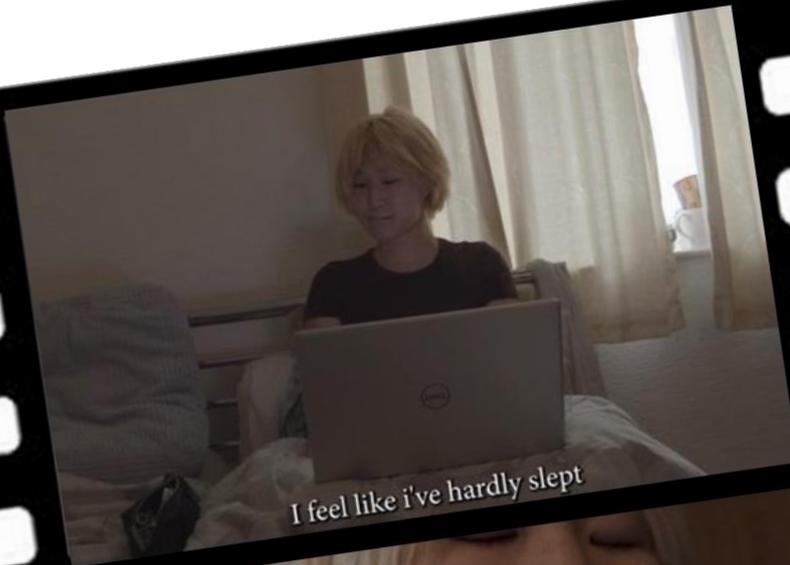
I was afraid it would be like an AA meeting but was **nothing** like it! Much more relaxed

*Service user*

We are continuing supporting the parents and families of young people who self-harm through our virtual peer support group. This is our "heaviest" group supporting many frightened, desperate parents/family members providing them with insights, suggestions and tools to support their self-harming loved one, as well as the opportunity to express themselves in a non-judgemental space full of people who understand what they're going through. The current facilitator team differs from the original of one family member and one with lived experience of self-harm, now being made up of two family members. We felt that it was vital to have the lived experience element though so now facilitators from the standard and Inbetweeners groups take turns to attend and offer vital insights.

I gain so much insight and support from the group. It is so helpful

*Parent service user*



I feel like i've hardly slept



Lot of calories in a banana



I think I am gonna go to that Battle Scars thing tonight



I wasn't expecting to have such a good time

*Stills from the  
16-25s group  
promotional/  
awareness  
video*

### Plans for the future

We will continue working with schools at every opportunity supporting small groups of young people who self-harm through workshops and educating larger groups by doing assemblies.

We aim to continue running the 16-25s group and give it a chance in the post-pandemic world. With the majority of teaching in Leeds Universities taking place virtually, many students weren't physically in the area. We have also been unable to promote it on campus, something we're hoping to do more over the coming months, especially at the start of the

new academic year. We are continuing working on developing better working relationships with over 16's and higher education providers.

We have already started developing a workbook for children/young people. This will be based on our 12-step Self-Harm Addiction Programme workbook, obviously making it appropriate for the target age for this, 11-16's. This workbook will be provided completely free of charge to any young person requesting it. We are very optimistic we will secure funding to cover printing as well as postage and packing costs.

### **Private Facebook group**

Membership for our Facebook self-harm peer support group rose by 22% to 3,785. As in every such group, not everybody is active in the group. On March 31st the number of active members was 2,194 and over the whole year we had just under 4,000 posts.

As always, the admin/moderator team read every single post and comment ensuring the

group remains safe, compassionate and non-judgemental.

### 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

<b>Age range</b>	<b>% women</b>	<b>% men</b>	<b>% custom gender</b>
13-17	1.9%	0.3%	0.2%
18-24	17.8%	4.6%	1.2%
25-34	28.9%	4.2%	1.3%
35-44	19.8%	2.6%	0.3%
45-54	10.4%	1.5%	0%
55-64	3.3%	0.8%	0%
65+	0.8%	0.2%	0%

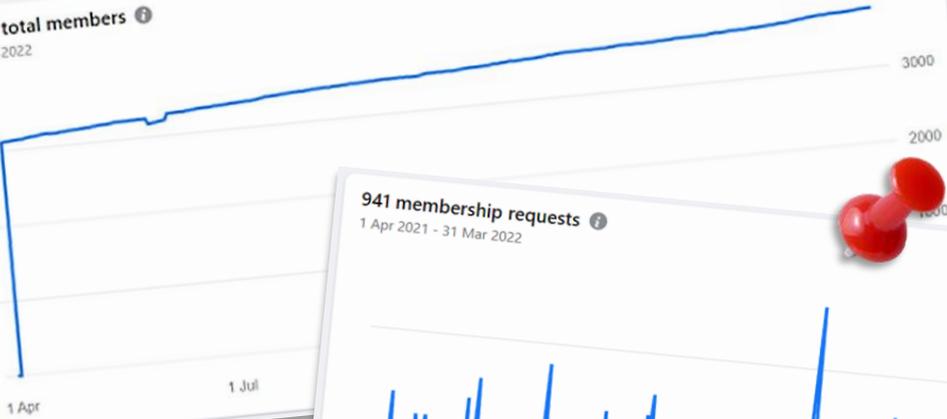
I searched online for any self-harm support groups or family support groups. I found your group. We are far away, New Hampshire, USA, but I have received great advice and support from you all. Thank you

*Service user*

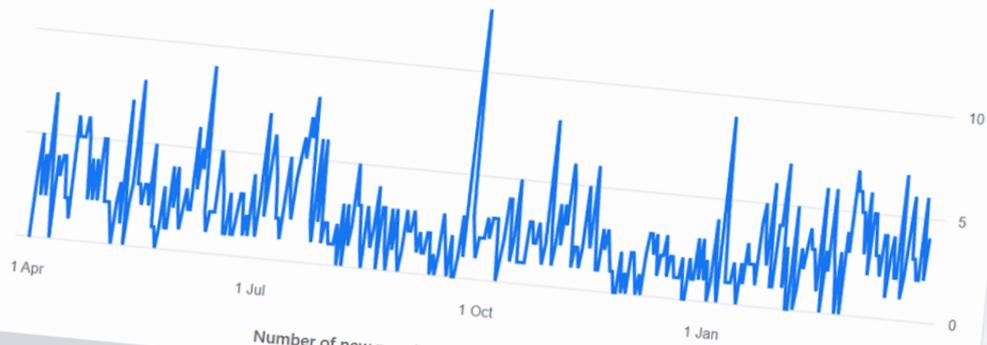
Download Details

1 Apr 2021 - 31 Mar 2022

3,785 total members  
31 Mar 2022



941 membership requests  
1 Apr 2021 - 31 Mar 2022



Number of new member requests per day (1 Apr - 31 Mar)

[See All Membership Requests](#)

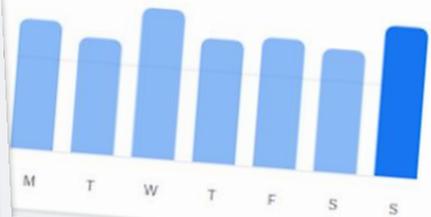
3,989 posts  
1 Apr 2021 - 31 Mar 2022

Posts Comments Reactions All

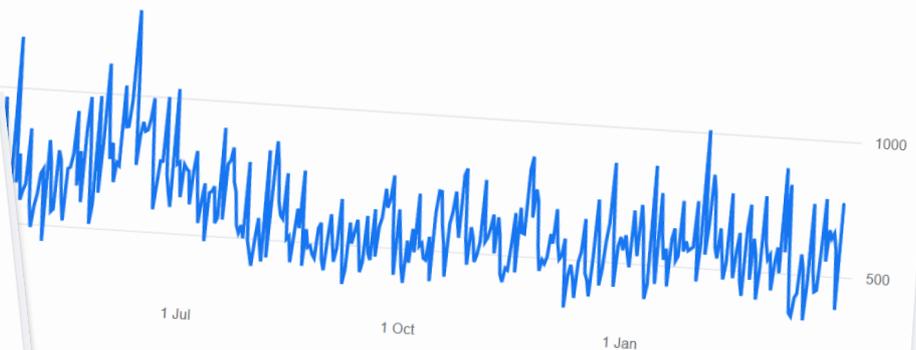


Popular days

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



2,194 active members  
1 Apr 2021 - 31 Mar 2022

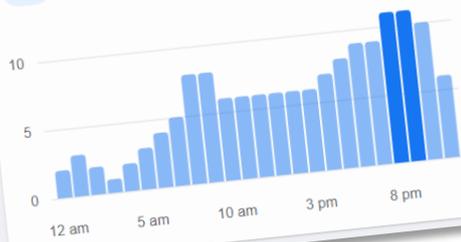


Active members per day (1 Apr - 31 Mar)

Popular times

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

M T W T F S S



	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Members</b>
1	United Kingdom	1,842
2	United States	1,196
3	Australia	123
4	Canada	89
5	South Africa	57
6	Philippines	49
7	India	37
8	Ireland	34
9	Pakistan	27
10	New Zealand	16
11	Nigeria	15
12	Netherlands	14
13	Poland	14
14	Malaysia	13
15	Vietnam	13
16	France	13
17	Indonesia	11
18	Bangladesh	10
19	Morocco	10
20	Egypt	10
21	Czech Republic	9
22	Brazil	8
23	Germany	8
24	Mexico	7
25	Italy	7
26	Israel	7
27	Spain	5
28	Belgium	5
29	Kenya	5
30	Greece	5
31	Tunisia	5
32	Sweden	5
33	Malta	4
34	Ethiopia	4
35	Uganda	4
36	Denmark	4
37	Ghana	4
38	Bulgaria	3
39	Romania	3
40	Thailand	3
41	Papua New Guinea	3
42	Trinidad and Tobago	3
43	Norway	3
44	Algeria	3
45	Cyprus	2
46	Sierra Leone	2
47	Colombia	2
48	China	2
49	Jamaica	2
50	Puerto Rico	2

<b>Top towns and cities</b>	<b>Members</b>
Leeds	269
London	50
Bradford	34
Birmingham	27
Melbourne, VIC, Australia	19
York	17
New York, NY, US	17
Manchester	17
Wakefield	17
Liverpool	16
Glasgow	15
Sheffield	15
Barnsley	14
Kingston upon Hull	13
Nottingham	13
Stoke-on-Trent	13
Dublin, Ireland	12
Blackpool	12
Sydney, NSW, Australia	12
Edinburgh	11
Castleford	11
Baltimore, MD, US	10
Bournemouth	10
Paisley	9
Perth, WA, Australia	9
Robin Hood	9
Newcastle upon Tyne	9
Chicago, IL, US	9
Brisbane, QLD, Australia	9
Wrexham	9
Harrogate	9
Basildon	9
Plymouth	9
Bolton	9
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan	9
Stockport	8
Nuneaton	8
Pontefract	8
Bedford	8
Bristol	8
Warrington	8
Halifax	8
Durban, South Africa	7
Brighton and Hove	7
Sunderland	7
Ossett	7
Southampton	7
Oldham	7
Crewe	7
Chesterfield	7

I like this group because we can be open with each other, we all struggle with self-harm and it's a safe place to open up without fear of judgement.

This is a great group which has helped me a lot.

I am grateful for this group, I really appreciate it.

I'm so grateful for the group's and having a safe space without any judgement because I have nobody in my life I can talk to and trust not to react in a hurtful way. I would truly be lost without these groups.

I was searching for a group where I could talk about my experiences in a safe space with others that would understand, I'm very grateful for finding this group

Very supportive group, and without judgement. I found this group at the perfect time. Not quite at the stage to join the groups but I know I would be welcome. Fantastic job by all involved.

Comments are not judgmental and I can relate to many situations that the group members are going through. Don't feel alone with my stuff.

*Service users*

## **Training for professionals**

We saw a huge increase in demand for our training, especially in the period between January and March. We trained a total of 280 professionals, 98 with face-to-face sessions and 182 virtually. Face-to-face workshops took place in Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham while with our virtual training we reached organisations as far as the Shetlands. Amongst them were the wellbeing teams of Birmingham University, Leeds Children's Services, Leeds Recovery College staff and volunteers, the DJP Foundation, IDAS Barnsley, Linking Leeds, Shetland Women's Aid, Ethos College and many others.

### Plans for the future

We are happy to be able to provide both face-to-face and virtual training. There is a real thirst for knowledge provided by people with lived experience. We remain open, honest and, even blunt, providing uncensored views into the complexity of self-harm. At the end of one session a delegate approached the trainer: "I thought I knew a little bit about self-harm when we started today. I now realise I know nothing". To which the trainer replied: "Good. Now you will listen to each person who self-harms without making assumptions". It's not about knowing the answers or even asking the right questions, it's about being willing to listen with an open mind.

Fantastic trainer, very engaging and informative. I really like the fact that the trainers have lived experience. Being able to listen to their experiences and then asking questions is a great way to learn. I definitely want to do more training with Battle scars, they are an amazing service.

I learnt a great deal from this session. Previously I thought of self-harm mainly as cutting. It was a revelation to realise that there are so many behaviours which count as self-harm, the most surprising being negative self-talk - I have never thought about it in those terms before.

I learnt so much and feel more able to support an individual with an eating disorder.

I found it so helpful to be given guidelines on how to approach and how to talk to someone who you suspect is self-harming, in the past I've been so nervous about saying the wrong thing and upsetting them that I've not said anything. Just being reminded that self-harm is about control and that it is imperative that you don't take control away from that person is valuable advice. Supporting someone who is self-harming needs to be about empowerment and choice! Thank you for a very informative and helpful session 🙏

*Virtual training delegates*

This has been a fantastic and insightful session with one of the most knowledgeable trainers I've met.

It was massively refreshing to hear open and honest information about self-harm after years of hearing the same old rubbish.

So authentic, honest and knowledgeable. I have learnt so much and feel way more confident to support others. The trainer has such a personal way of delivering information that it really helps to process the info and remain engaged. The training was so valuable. I wish all healthcare professionals were able to have this!

A very insightful, eye-opening and refreshing look at self-harm. Your honest, open approach made it understandable and real.

Lots of opportunities for discussions as a group which was really helpful.

*Face-to-face training delegates*

## Website & Social Media

We always try to keep our website up to date and easy to use. We had a massive increase in website traffic. Having a dedicated member of staff working on marketing and coordinating social media has made a huge difference to getting our name out. As with everything else, our volunteers play a key role promoting us over different social media platforms.

### Plans for the future

We are constantly learning and improving our use of social media and will continue using our website as the main source of information.



## Website traffic

### Page Views

48,726

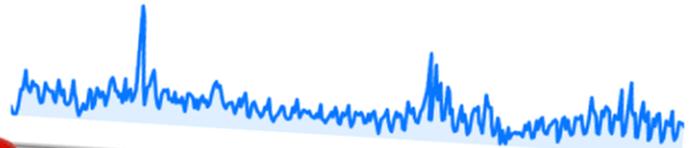
+1845% from last 365 days



### Unique Visits

21,483

+1823% from last 365 days



### Avg. Pages Per Unique Visit

2.2033

+1011% from last 365 days

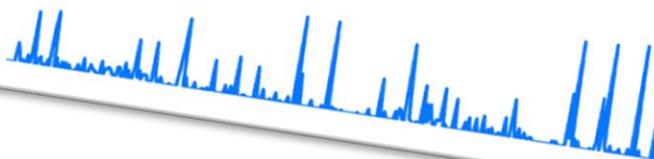


## Sales

*Sales are donations, addiction workbooks (P&P and admin), crisis cards (P&P) and sale of wristbands*

£1,267.25

+32% from last 365 days



## Other projects/activities

The demand for our 12-step Self-Harm Addiction Programme workbook remains steady. 177 hard copy and PDF workbooks have so far been ordered by people who struggle with self-harm and 62 by professionals (PDF versions) who often recommend it to their clients/service users.

Personal use	
Country	Total
Australia	2
Canada	2
Ireland	2
UK	163
USA	8
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>177</b>

Professional use	
Country	Total
Australia	2
Canada	1
Ireland	2
UK	55
USA	2
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>62</b>

Info on professionals who ordered	
counsellor	30
mental health nurse	7
Psychologist	5
Other *	19
Info not provided	7

\* as stated on the form: Professional working with people who self-harm, charity staff supporting people who have been sexually abused, intensive

care nurse, staff in primary mental health team, social workers, High Intensity User Practitioner, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Young Carers Support Worker, Health Care Assistant, teachers, Mental Health Practitioners, support worker, trainer (psycho education), CBT therapist, Mental Health Nursing Student, Psychology Wellbeing Practitioner, housing support staff, mental health and wellbeing coach, peer support worker, Advocate/coach/mentor for mental health and illness, Intensive Family Support Worker, Children's Worker, Parent and Safeguarding Professional.

In order to support those who have the workbook, we now also run a 4-weekly group run by our CEO, one of the programme authors.

### Plans for the future

Our feedback form has proved rather complicated and response has been lower than hoped. We will simplify this and encourage people to give us their views on the programme. We have been made aware that one section is proving too difficult resulting in a few people not progressing past it. This section will be reviewed.

We have almost run out of hard copies now but have secured funding from the DWF Foundation to print a further 300 – after it's been reviewed of course!

We intend to focus on existing services this year, strengthening and expanding them without overextending ourselves.

## Work with partners

After a long pause, the Leeds Mental Health Collaborative's work restarted. It picked up momentum but pressures on the NHS services halted progress once again.

We partnered with the Leeds Older People's Forum in a bid to raise awareness about self-harm amongst older people, a bid that was successful.

We are a member of the Mental Health Partnership Board, the West Yorkshire Suicide Prevention Network, the Crisis & Urgent Care group and we assisted in the review of the NICE guidelines about self-harm.

We are sowing seeds, making connections and forging links with various organisations both in and out of Leeds. We are in a good position to make well-informed choices based on understanding which relationships would work for us and which could pull us away from our aims and ethos.

### Plans for the future

We are looking forward to more partnerships and collaboration with other organisations voluntary and statutory sector, as well as with similar-thinking private sector organisations.

## Volunteers

Some of our volunteers remain on hold but we've been able to reactivate the majority by getting them involved in new projects, like FRESH and the 16-25s group. We have 45 active volunteers, some with multiple roles. Some of our virtual group facilitators have topped up their training to also deliver face-to-face services and new volunteers have been trained to deliver both face-to-face and virtual. We are overjoyed to be able to recruit from all over the UK. All our volunteer training is now virtual making this possible.

We continue recruiting facilitators from service users but we've also looked further afield for the FRESH project which needed volunteers able to deal with difficult situations on a 1-2-1

basis over the phone. But they have all risen to the challenges placed before them, acting with compassion backed up with such willingness to help and support others in need.

Our volunteers have shown incredible commitment, ability to learn and adapt as well as faith in the organisation. We are always extremely grateful to them for their continued efforts and support.

### Plans for the future

We will continue to constantly monitor volunteer numbers, skills as well as wellbeing. We try to provide them with a stable environment and we enjoy witnessing their growth and development.

2 years ago through desperation I looked for some support for myself after learning that my son self-harms. I found Battle Scars . Through the fantastic support I received and the knowledge I have gained through the peer support group, I am now a volunteer for Battle Scars. My volunteering role is allowing me to give back, to help share the knowledge I have learnt and help give support back to others who are in the place I was 2 years ago. The care and support we receive and continued training from Battle scars is invaluable . Volunteering for Battle scars is so rewarding, so meaningful. I am honoured to be a volunteer for Battle Scars.

Volunteering with Battle Scars has given me a purpose and it's very rewarding

*Volunteers*

## Trustees and AGM

Last year we knew it was pointless wishing to run a face-to-face Annual General Meeting so we did it virtually. We added a new trustee to

I started coming to Battle Scars groups as a service user and then became a volunteer, a group facilitator and then a trustee. I'm grateful for the ongoing support and have really benefited from having a sense of purpose. I'd like to thank Battle Scars for everything it does and for helping me be the best version of myself.

*Trustee*

the ranks a few months ago who will hopefully be voted in at this year's AGM, which will be a hybrid. What a new world we're living in!

We give our members, staff and volunteers regular opportunities to virtually meet with a couple of trustees representing the board for informal discussions. We feel this is important for a meaningful two-way communication and stronger links within the organisation. Our CEO is purposefully absent from such meetings.

### Plans for the future

Our AGMs will have to remain hybrid so that our members, staff, volunteers and service users out of Leeds can join us.

## Staff and personal development

Over the last year we went from 1 member of staff to 7. Sounds much more impressive than it was in hours (2.44 FTE) but it made such a big difference to how we've been doing things.

Our CEO has been working with a mentor (linked up through ACEVO, a charity supporting third sector CEOs) which has been incredibly helpful. Between them they have decided to continue working together past the initial official 12-month agreement.

Working somewhere that I don't have to hide my SH or my mental health is so empowering. It's been an underlying part of building my confidence and part of my journey towards becoming more well. A lot of employers pay lip service to 'it's ok to not be ok' but the reality is that it isn't safe to admit your vulnerability. In Battle Scars I feel safe. I don't feel the need to mask (for the first time in my life) and I feel valued for ALL that I am.

*Member of staff*

### Plans for the future

We've already had some changes to our team. Unfortunately, due to funding, we had to let

When I offered to be a volunteer, I was welcomed warmly by the team. I have received relevant training for the role I do. I have never felt that I am out of my depth in what I'm asked to do, and I know that I have the back-up and support of the team if and when needed. I also know that I am valued, and I was delighted when there was an opportunity to become a member of the Battle Scars staff. This is one of the friendliest organisations I have ever been involved with in my working life, and I feel proud to be part of Battle Scars.

*Member of staff*

our administrative officer go. We have secured funding for the FRESH project manager and we've raised enough funds for the continuation of the other contracts. We have also been – unexpectedly – awarded funds for a 10-hour/week volunteer manager post by the Leeds CCG so there will be some more changes. We are hoping to raise enough funds to recruit to a services support post, a quite varied and flexible role.

## Funding and strategic plan

After only putting together a 2-year strategic plan the year before, this year we felt we were

in a position to make longer plans, or at least to consider them! We put a lot of time and

effort into turning our new 5-year strategic plan (2022-2027) into a useful tool, a working document with a purpose. It'll be reviewed every 6 months but consulted often.

We have been able to strengthen links with existing funders and we've started building some exiting new ones.

The majority of our funding came from the Tudor Trust as part of the 3-year grant they awarded us when we were a very young charity. The Brelms Trust have continued covering our running costs as part of their 3-year grant which is coming to an end this year.

A grant from Awards For All (National Lottery Community Fund) covered wages for two posts while grants from the Charles & Elsie Sykes Trust and the Albert Hunt Trust helped us fund two more members of staff. The Addressing Self-Harming In Leeds funding managed by the Leeds Community Foundation covered the FRESH project and the 16-25s group expenses.

### Plans for the future

We have already secured another 3-year grant from the Tudor Trust covering the majority of the CEO wages, as well as more funding towards wages from the George A Moore Foundation and the Leathersellers' Company Charitable Fund. The Focus Foundation will cover the printing costs of 300 12-Step Self-Harm Addiction Programme workbooks. The Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group will cover the FRESH project costs as well as provide us with a year's funding for the volunteer manager post. Our training income is going to provide the funds needed for other paid posts while we continue applying for more funding.

Thanks to the generosity of the Tudor Trust, as well as their desire to see us grow and thrive beyond the end of their latest grant, they're covering the cost of working with a financial advisor to help us plan a financially viable future.



# Finances

## Summary of financial accounts

	Unrestricted Funds*	Restricted Funds**	Total
<b>INCOME</b>			
Grant - Tudor Trust		£ 30,700	£ 30,700
Grant - Leeds Community Foundation		£ 23,400	£ 23,400
Grant - The Brelms Trust		£ 3,440	£ 3,440
Grant - The Leathersellers Company	£ 2,500		£ 2,500
Grant - Albert Hunt		£ 1,000	£ 1,000
Grant - George A Moore	£ 1,000		£ 1,000
General donations	£ 2,929		£ 2,929
Fees & charges	£ 12,798		£ 12,798
Memberships	£ 237		£ 237
Other income	£ 545		£ 545
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£ 20,009</b>	<b>£ 58,540</b>	<b>£ 78,549</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Salaries	£ 1,770	£ 58,067	£ 59,837
Payroll charges	£ 826	£ 20	£ 846
Travel	£ 607	£ 441	£ 1,048
Training & information	£ 40	£ 195	£ 235
Membership costs		£ 582	£ 582
Leaflets	£ 214	£ 19	£ 233
Website & email		£ 715	£ 715
Consumables	£ 21	£ 326	£ 347
Equipment	£ 51	£ 1,869	£ 1,920
Insurance		£ 134	£ 134
Advertising	£ 160	£ 834	£ 994
Phone		£ 304	£ 304
Printing & postage	£ 100	£ 331	£ 431
Other payments	£ 18	£ 249	£ 267
Consultancy		£ 236	£ 236
Accountancy & independent examination		£ 240	£ 240
12-step Addiction Programme	£ 204		£ 204
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£ 4,011</b>	<b>£ 64,562</b>	<b>£ 68,573</b>
<b>Brought forward from 2020-2021</b>	<b>£ 10,260</b>	<b>£ 19,220</b>	<b>£ 29,480</b>
<b>Carried forward to 2022-23</b>	<b>£ 26,493</b>	<b>£ 12,963</b>	<b>£ 39,456</b>
Reserves	£ 10,000		

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

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

## Virtual group activities

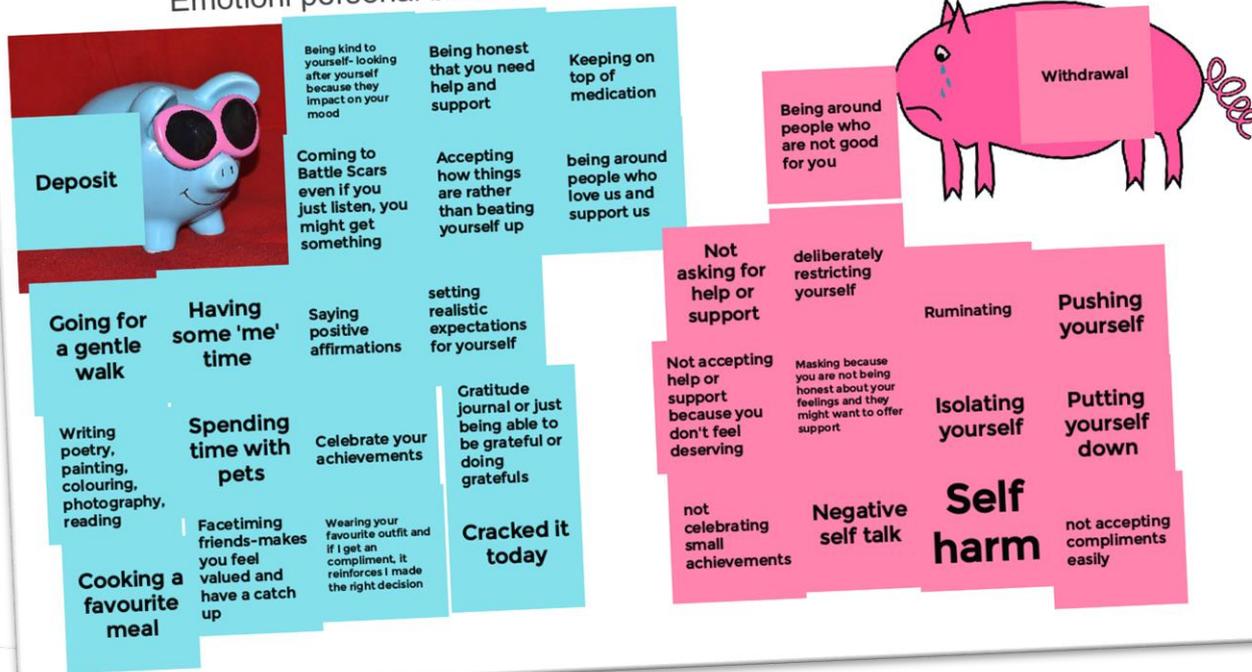
**Toot your horn**

**CELEBRATE EVERYTHING**



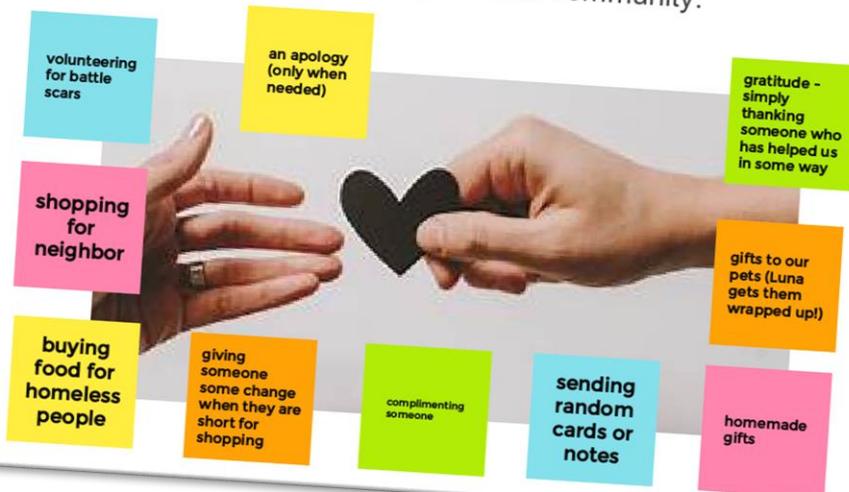
"Celebrate everything" activity

## Emotion personal bank account-Your relationship with yourself



## Give

It could be small acts of kindness towards other people, or larger ones like volunteering in your local community.



# Well

# Masking

Not bad thanks	notice more	more attentive	using a fidget toy that others can see
Stimming more publicly	show my arms/scars	more eye contact	chatty
more engaged with self care	more motivation		

I'm fine	rocking, stimming behaviours	cover my hands with my sleeves	less eye contact
bite inside my lip	leg tapping	go very quiet	sound sensitivity
light sensitivity	skin picking	rub my elbow	hide away more ie in bed
chatty	irritable	self centred	more focus on masking the more unwell I am



## Turning negatives to positives



I'm not like other bears

unique  
he's got a cool outfit on

he is who he is  
he's aging well (48!!)

I chose him  
I've kept him

every bear is different

I might be autistic

a diagnosis might help me to understand me

it might help relationships

it might get me the right type of therapy

stop giving myself a hard time

I'm a failure

I'm too needy

I know myself and what I need

my goals are unachievable

I've not given up

childish

I'm overly sensitive

I'm in touch with my emotions and can access them

more receptive to other people's situations, able to tune in, offer support

more compassionate

can be freeing



## What works well: ....

We recently asked for feedback about the groups, what works well and what needs improving. Here are some of the comments about what works well. All feedback about what is not working well and needs improving are being taken on board, systems are being

reviewed, volunteers and staff are getting extra training, and we will keep striving to improve. Feedback can be provided at any time through a simple survey on our website. We want our service users to feel they always have a say and are being heard.

The fact that there are 2 facilitators who are always helpful and inclusive and always have good ideas/suggestions. The parents who join are always thoughtful and considerate of others and there is never anyone who dominates the group. It is a safe place where judgement is never passed - only understanding and acceptance.

Having fun with like-minded people. Seeing other people who self-harm are ordinary people, but with extraordinary backgrounds that they are safe to talk about with people who won't look at them blankly! Having the different groups that can be attended as needed. Making friends that understand. Being able to laugh and cry together.

Although I have not attended for many months, it is incredibly supportive receiving your regular email offers of support since I know you are always there if I need you.

The online groups are well organised and feel a safe place, I describe it as a family of people who just know how you feel, no judgement, always able to feel part of the group. Thank you to everyone who gives up their time to facilitate the groups.

I think the virtual groups are fantastic as you meet others from all over the UK. So don't feel so alone.



[www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk](http://www.battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk)

[info@battle-scars.org.uk](mailto:info@battle-scars.org.uk)

07410 380747

