

Battle Scars

Newsletter – January 2021

Dear members

Traditionally I'd be starting by saying Happy New Year to you all.



Many are glad to see 2020 go. Realistically though, 2021 will be another tough year. I guess the difference is that at least this time we (mostly) know what we'll be dealing with and at least progress is being made to stop this pandemic's progress. Personally, I don't think of years as "good" or "bad", I focus on what was achieved, learned and how I've grown (not physically, even though the lockdowns have not helped in that respect lol!) But we've been some of the lucky ones who haven't suffered losses. But I did develop the ability about 15 years ago to spot the positives in pretty much every situation. That really helped me get through the past year.

And since Battle Scars and I are still so closely linked, it's helped Battle Scars get through the year and arrive in 2021 much stronger and versatile than it was a year ago. Yes, plans have changed, we've had to almost completely change our strategic plan and, following advice, only plan for the next 18-24 months. Things are still very changeable, no point trying to come up with a 5-year plan which, like the last one, might be obsolete within months.

So, what happened over the last 3 months? Plenty of meetings. Actually, too many meetings!

Now that everybody is using virtual conferencing there's no escaping them! What we have all noticed though is that we're allowing too many back-to-back meetings with barely a trip to the toilet in between! And our brains are having to instantly switch from one topic to another. I know that without the location references we used to have, a lot have rolled into one. I was able to find a CEO/senior management peer support group and it was no wonder so many of us were so near burnout a couple of weeks ago!

Our trustees have been amazing support to me as always and our volunteers kept stepping up to help. It was actually a volunteer that made us a finalist at the Mind/Marsh peer support awards last month in the Doing It Ourselves category. This is what the judges had to say:

- *Great activities and interventions and support, growth and expansion, training, mentoring, the fact the majority are volunteers is a credit to the group focussing on empathy and compassion, for men and women*
- *Complex and far-reaching organisation*
- *Very strong application. Loved their website included self-harm and not self-harm. Great increase of peers on Facebook. Survivor led and run. Great peer model.*

Even though we didn't win, it was an experience. I haven't seen the replay and we haven't been sent the highlights yet, but my laptop decided to do updates 3 minutes before I was supposed to do my presentation! Apparently, I don't look totally freaked out and flustered when I did our slides!

To be honest, I was a bit resentful about the time I had to put into these awards – and I didn't even do the application! But they wanted slides

or a video (ha!), had to do a rehearsal that lasted over an hour (!!) and a tech rehearsal on the day which lasted 45 minutes (!!!) I must remember next time we see something like this: they might be useful exposure but they are time consuming, especially when they happen a couple of weeks before Christmas when we're all trying to squeeze in as much work as possible before the break (before you all look at the word "break" with a raised eye-brow, I have taken 2 whole days off work and a few half-ones – mostly DIYing but still!)

In other news, the virtual peer support groups are going from strength to strength. So much so that 2 more are planned for launch in a few weeks with 6 volunteers (including one trustee) completing the, now, virtual volunteer facilitator course. All volunteers who haven't yet attended plus those running virtual groups will be attending safeguarding training (virtual again) this month. I do miss seeing people in the flesh, but I have to admit, this virtual malarkey has made some things so much easier to organise and run! It has certainly made me become more inventive about how we do stuff.

The virtual Q&A-style training for professionals is becoming more popular as word is spreading. Training professionals is one of our big objectives as it can make such a huge difference to so many who struggle with self-harm. There is also demand for a longer (virtual) training session so my plan is to create a hybrid of the 1-day workshop and the Q&A sessions by picking some of the workshop interactive activities that can be delivered well virtually but with more time for questions. We keep all these sessions small (max. 10). I've attended virtual training with 30 people present and never felt comfortable participating. I don't consider those "interactive". Which is why I'm hoping that ours will be different.

The other big event in December was making the self-harm addiction workbook available (worldwide). 160 copies were printed and a number of them have already gone out.

Even though they are free to those who need them, we had to charge a £1 admin fee to cover PayPal costs as well as our time to process the orders. This applies to the PDF version as well. P&P is charged at cost. In order to do all that, we had to upgrade our website to allow us to sell and take PayPal and credit cards. One of our funders, the Brelms Trust, agreed for us to re-allocate some of the unused funds to cover this expense. It was a brilliant move as we can now take donations, membership fees, sell raffle tickets, wristbands and cover costs for sending out individual crisis cards. I also just did the website's bi-annual review to make sure everything is up to date and to freshen up some areas.

I'll finish with some plans for the near future: funding applications are currently being submitted to recruit a few part-time staff to help with the virtual groups, the marketing/social media and admin. We're also needing to attract more men to our services which is a project on its own. Not to mention our young people services, all of which are suspended at the moment. So the aim is to have one person exclusively work on developing such services over the period of a year, making connections, coming up with new ideas etc. We are painfully aware we don't have much for young people and this way, hopefully this time next year we can be planning setting some new services up.

I also wanted to reassure all of you that we are coming out of 2020 in some ways stronger than before. We've added many new strings to our bow. We're also one of the few charities that didn't have to dip into their reserves to cover expenses during the pandemic. How things will pan out this year, nobody knows. But I think we will keep growing. Besides, like one of our funders said, we're achieving a lot with very little!

As always, thank you for reading this and thank you so much for your support. Please look after yourselves and stay safe.

Jenny - CEO