

Battle Scars

Newsletter – July 2021

Dear members

First of all, apologies that in the end there was no newsletter or annual report in April. Due to some confusion the independent examination of our accounts was scheduled for September when we were hoping it would be done by May. So the AGM we were hoping to hold this month has now been pencilled in for September. I have therefore put finishing off the “glossy” version of the annual report aside while my attention and energies are required elsewhere.

As always, we don't sit still and many things have happened. The biggest change is that I'm no longer the only member of staff, there are now 6 of us:

- Emily Gardiner: Virtual Groups Coordinator
- Ailish Brown: Administrative assistant
- Craig Horsfall: Service Manager
- Debbie Riley: Young People's Services Developer
- Joy McMillan: 16-25's Group Coordinator

Everybody is part-time and on a 12-month contract but we are very hopeful that we will extend all ongoing work contracts and offer more hours.

Some of the above roles are self-explanatory but it's worth expanding on two of them a bit: Craig's and Joy's. Funding for these two came from the same Leeds-specific pot for a service we decided to call FRESH: Follow-up Review after Emergency treatment of Self-Harm (follow-up will be by phone the next working day after referral) and for a face-to-face young people's group which will be based at the Lovell Park Hub, near the city centre. Both are very exciting projects but we are not used to doing such strict project work which doesn't yet come natural to us. Many things to consider and set up

before we can be up and running not to mention that the F2F 16-25s group will be subject to COVID restrictions and venue rules.

For now, we have tried to set up some team spirit which is extremely difficult with everybody working from home and on different projects. Having staff has also required major adjustment from my part. But I am now developing the art of delegating and it's not too bad! My clinical supervisor was very impressed with me! I also now have a mentor, another CEO. We were paired up through ACEVO, an organisation supporting 3rd sector CEOs. We only started working together a few days ago and we really get on. It's great being able to ask some questions without feeling stupid. The mentor was very impressed with how much has been achieved in such a short period of time.

Our well-established services are going from strength to strength. The standard virtual groups will be increasing to 8 from the 15th, plus the Inbetweeners and Parents/Family group. We are intending to add at least one more standard group in the near future. This is all thanks to existing and new volunteers putting in a lot of work, overcoming their own anxieties and committing to help. How some volunteers are developing has also been very noticeable. We are proud of all of them.

We have become extremely aware though that numbers of men attending our groups has dropped significantly over the last 6 months from 20% to only 9%. We are holding an open, no booking required info group for men later this month and we're hoping some guys will pop in to meet us (a male member of staff, a male volunteer and myself) and maybe start attending.

Intro zoom session for men (18+)
Pop in and meet the Battle Scars team

Thursday 22 July 2021, 6.30-8.30 pm

Do you cause yourself harm by hitting, cutting, putting yourself down, over/under eating, overdosing, pushing yourself too hard etc? Self-harm takes many forms, it's a way to regain some control, to get some relief, to avoid hurting others to stay alive.

Our virtual peer support groups are open to any adult living in the UK

Drop-in anytime during this session to find out more about our ethos, approach and services :

<https://zoom.us/j/97268594401>
Meeting ID: 972 6859 4401



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

We are also developing the role of Battle Scars Ambassador, volunteers who spread the word about our work, ethos and approach in both Leeds and other parts of the country.

We held a virtual volunteer event for volunteering week (1-6 June) which went down really well. Mostly organised by one of our trustees, it included a quiz, a couple of games, an update on our work and time for our volunteers to envisage where they'd like us to be in 2 years' time. We are still in need of premises but a much wider UK-wide reach was obviously hoped for. We've got our work cut out for us for sure! Thanks to the hard work of a particular volunteer and a bit of help from a few others, a large database is being compiled, effort already paying off linking us up with organisations up and down the UK.

At this point I think I need to mention a group of people who operate behind the scenes and do essential work, our trustees. Without them we cannot operate. I've also been reading a lot about what issues some CEOs face with breakdowns in communication between them and the chair of the board – or the whole board! Definitely not something we foresee struggling with! Peer support is the core of Battle Scars and it's there at all levels. We care for and support each other; and that's how we wish to continue operating.

To give you some finance/funding info, the paid posts I mentioned are being funded by the Awards for All Scheme of the National Lottery, the Charles & Elsie Sykes Trust and the

Addressing Self-harm in Leeds pot managed by the Leeds Community Foundation.

At the same time, our training for professionals has been quite successfully increasing our unrestricted funds and reserves (needed in case something goes wrong, there's a gap in funding, or to cover other unpredicted needs). Almost all the training has been virtual but we have started offering F2F training again, as long as there is appropriate space, distancing etc. Needless to say, our F2F workshop had to be heavily modified to comply with such regulations but when there's a will, there's a way! As with all our other services, we are hoping to run virtual and F2F side by side.

Also funded by the same Leeds-specific pot, partnering with Leeds Older People's Forum, Leeds Age UK and Shine, is a project to raise awareness of self-harm amongst older people (50+). A campaign is being organised and apart from consulting on that, we will be delivering training to a large number of staff.

We continue playing a big part in the work of the Mental Health Collaborative working very closely with Leeds Involving People as well as having many fingers in many other pies.

Overall, many exciting things happening but a great deal of adjustment is also required. I think Battle Scars just had another growth spurt!

As always, thank you for reading this and thank you so much for your support. As members we'd also like to invite you to the "open floor" 30-min session before our next board meeting on Thursday 5th August at 6.30 pm. We don't have a specific topic for this one yet but if there's something you'd like to bring up, please ask me for the link or email us.

Please look after yourselves and stay safe.

Jenny - CEO