

# Battle Scars

Newsletter – January 2022



Dear members

I don't know about you, but 2021 felt both extremely long and extremely short! Time certainly flew but this time last year feels like forever ago. But we have now made the leap to 2022 hopefully ready to face whatever this year throws at us. 2021 certainly had many challenges both personal and work-related for me. Battle Scars is doing the usual, growing whether we're ready or not and we saw a huge increase in interest in our services especially over the last few months very much thanks to our marketing coordinator! I guess that was probably the biggest change within the organisation: a staff team. 2021 saw an increase of our paid workforce from one to seven. And I can say hand-on-heart, we wouldn't have managed without our new employees. Everybody has put in so much effort, literally blood and tears (we are a self-harm organisation after all!) to get new projects off the ground, to keep everything running especially during the 4-month period when my mental health was exceptionally poor, to support each other as well as me. I cannot say how proud I am of all of them, not to mention how grateful! Fortunately, I started picking up quite a lot at the end of November and spent the

rest of the year catching up and dealing with the increased general demand and interest in training.

Talking about training, after 3 years we just increased our prices to match our products' high quality, still keeping it extremely affordable and competitive. We are almost fully booked until March with many organisations booking private sessions for their teams. I also did one f2f workshop in Birmingham for the University Wellbeing team doing the other half of the team in early March. One of our Midlands volunteers joined me on the day and hoping the other will join me in March. We got amazing feedback: *"Jenny and S have been so excellent. Their insights have been perceptive and helpful for our setting. They have communicated their expertise using accessible stories and examples alongside the printed info and slides. Incredibly engaging and helpful"*.

As usual, we noticed many people having a difficult time over the Christmas period. But our staff and volunteers kept all virtual groups running over the holiday season (except the family group which took a break) and even added an extra Christmas Eve social group

alongside New Year's Eve's providing a vital lifeline for many.

Our 16-25s group dropped on Bank Holidays this year so didn't run over this period. Attendance is slowly creeping up and we're hoping it will continue doing that in the new year.

FRESH, our phone follow-up service (Follow-up Review after Emergency treatment of Self-Harm) launched at the end of October and had a few referrals in the last couple of months. We have 5 referrers: ALPS (Acute Liaison Psychiatric Service), A&E (LGI & St. James's), Urgent Care Centre (St. George's, Middleton), the Leeds Student Medical Practice and the Light surgery. This is another service we hope will be utilised more and more this year.

We are currently in the process of recruiting a few more volunteers as group facilitators. We need some to help with the virtual groups as well as we are, finally, rebuilding our face-to-face facilitator teams. We have secured the Lovell Park Hub (near the city centre) on a Wednesday evening and the Vale Circles Hub (in South Leeds) on a Tuesday evening. These two venues are large enough to accommodate a reasonably sized group while following social distancing rules. We are hoping to launch these two f2f groups early spring.

The bigger concern at the moment is funding. Because of my unfortunate 4-month-

long inability to think about this we are now cutting it rather fine. But almost all my attention is turned on it now and I am hoping we will secure the funds we need.

Needless to say, we don't know what 2022 will bring. Even though a new 4-weekly virtual group is starting on January 31<sup>st</sup> to support those working on our self-harm addiction programme/workbook, we don't currently have any plans for new services and our main focus will be to strengthen our existing services. But who knows what opportunities will present themselves!

I am sure I have forgotten to mention things but if they were that important, I doubt I would have forgotten them!

I mentioned in my last newsletter that we were setting up virtual "open floor" meetings like we used to hold when our board meetings were virtual. We will have one on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January at 6.30 and two of our trustees, Tristan Batten and Laura Cox will be available to discuss what you want to discuss (I will only be there at the beginning). The link will be sent out again nearer the time and it would be lovely if you attended.

As always, thank you for reading this and thank you so much for your support.

Please look after yourselves.

Jenny – CEO

