

# Battle Scars

Newsletter – October 2022

Dear members

I know I've been rather quiet with the newsletters but the Annual Report replaced what would have been the summer newsletter.

We held our AGM in July and received really good feedback for it. We kept it simple, hybrid (lessons learned about how to behave in the room to make the experience better for those joining virtually) and, apart from a brief summary of what we did last year and an update about what our plans are for this financial year (we're already half-way through!), we then had a group conversation focusing on what the Battle Scars values are. After a lot of input from everybody attending, extra voting and deliberation by the trustees, the following 5 were selected – they even spell a word which makes it so much easier for me to remember



**A – Acceptance:** we accept people where 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.

**T – Trust:** we build trusting relationships with the people we support, who also trust us with their stories, and the people we work with.

**T – Transparency:** we are open and transparent no matter who we work with.

**I – Integrity:** we do what we say and never make promises we can't keep.

**C – 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 (also on the Our vision, mission & aims section of the website).

We spent the first half of this financial year focusing on strengthening existing services and the organisation's infrastructure. We recruited a new member of staff as Services Support which has

freed some of my time to look at our strategic plan and make sure what we do aligns with it.

Over the summer we gave our online presence a full shake-up rebuilding the entire website to ensure it's more user friendly, easy to navigate and fully updated, as well as creating a whole new look for social media. Also, thanks to the bulletins going out on a regular basis, we're constantly connecting with various organisations across the UK, paving the way for the expansion everyone is asking for.

Financially, we remain in a reasonably strong position ensuring all expenses are covered and our reserves are healthy. We are now looking into longer term funding for the next financial year (it is a never-ending process...!) Despite the fact we now have the equivalent of 2.5 full-time employees, we are almost working up to full capacity and keeping up with the growth can be quite a challenge. At the same time, we wish to expand our team and services in a way that allows us to adjust. It is also my task to ensure every member of staff gets the support they need. We are a unique organisation and extra effort needs to be put into looking after our people (including our volunteers). But our ethos of acceptance is extraordinary and our peer support model is already becoming the envy of many other services and organisations.

I'll give you a quick update on services to give you an all-round view of how things are at the moment:

Our virtual groups are back to thriving. We are in the middle of training 5 more volunteers to strengthen the existing teams as well as set up one more group for family and friends on a different night, therefore providing support to them on a weekly basis.

Our face-to-face groups are slowly getting more attendance while our 16-25s group went from strength to strength during the summer, a

very pleasant surprise! More volunteers are required for these groups and as soon as the above have completed their training, we will start another recruitment round.

Talking about volunteers, we are recruiting more for our FRESH project (the follow-up for people who needed emergency medical treatment of self-harm). With the commissioner's permission we have broadened the criteria for certain selected GP surgeries (in areas where self-harm is a bigger problem) so they can refer without the emergency element. Due to so many people who self-harm not attending A&E – it's what we're all told to avoid! – referrals have dropped to very low levels, something we're trying to address by widening the criteria. We do not like wasting resources and all our volunteers would prefer to regularly make calls. Why are we recruiting more volunteers? It keeps happening that the referrals come in when we have a gap. Our aim is to fill these gaps in and be ready for when ('when' not 'if!') the referrals pick up.

The Discovery Journal for 10-16 year-olds is approaching the final stage before testing. We've already secured funds to print a large number of copies which will be available totally free of cost to the children.

We will also be supporting the 'It's Our Day' project run by Emma's Embrace, a breakfast/ lunch club for university students in Leeds, running every Saturday during term time. A number of existing volunteers have come forward to help with this and we're trying to recruit more people to specifically help out for a few hours every 4-6 Saturdays. The

website has all the information potential applicants would need in order to apply.

Once again, I need to thank our volunteers for the time and effort they put in alongside our staff whose commitment to the charity is exceptional.

We held our first F2F team event just a few weeks ago. Months of planning went into it, bringing volunteers and staff from all over the country together, meeting people we've only seen on Zoom and discovering we all have bodies below the chest! MunroeK once again supported us by gifting us the use of their conference room at the White Rose Office Park as well as providing the catering. Massive thank you for their hospitality and care on the day. We had a day of getting to know each other, an hour of Equality, Diversion and Inclusion training, an activity describing Battle Scars to aliens (scans of the work will go on the website) and an entertaining round of awarding certificates ranging from 'cake baker extraordinaire' to the award for 'most pens' (see below).

On a sad note, our trustee Craig Hughes, passed away on September 28<sup>th</sup>, only a few months after his wife, Carol. They were both firm supporters of our work. Craig's funeral is this week and I know I can speak on behalf of the other trustees, we will miss him.

Thank you for reading this newsletter and thank you so much for your support.

Please look after yourselves.

Jenny – CEO

