

Battle Scars

Newsletter – September 2023

Dear members

I hope you enjoyed reading the annual report, our achievements last financial year and the plans for the future. As you can imagine, the creation of the Onward Mental Health Hub is our biggest project right now and what is taking up most of my thinking (alongside funding – what else?!) We just got the keys to the building and, once again (it happens every time!) I was shocked by how big and airy it is! I've put some pictures on page 2 but you can follow Onward's story with pictures and videos on our [website](#) and/or [YouTube](#). I've been losing sleep wondering what needs doing and how the work will be done. MunroeK, our landlords, to the rescue (again!) massively helping out organising contractors to sort the work for us. Let me make it clear, all this work was supposed to be done by us and/or paid by us. We only have a very limited amount of money for this work but MunroeK keep magicking more help! And not just MunroeK! It looks like there are so many people who believe in what we're doing, who wish to help in whichever way they can. We're also being supported by CAPITA who have kitted out most of the building with surplus furniture and equipment. I am meeting their board later this month, the board that has never come out of London before, who have asked to meet me. We are also being supported by ARCADIS, mostly consulting us regarding marketing. Black's Solicitors are doing the legal work for Onward pro-bono and other companies are lining up to help. I have been overwhelmed with the support at every stage!

Like I mentioned in the annual report, the NHS is supporting us with a large grant linked to workforce training and development. This is work we're doing to both educate and upskill our staff and volunteers but also to train professionals to better understand self-harm and eating disorders. Demand for that is increasing as our reputation

grows and word of mouth spreads. Work is already underway to develop the extensive range of courses we wish to provide.

Our long-term funders, the Tudor Trust, an organisation that has believed in us since the start, have made the setting up of Onward possible by allowing us to re-purpose their grant. I just found out that the grant manager will be visiting in October and I'm very excited to finally meet her face-to-face.

Talking about funding, we have a number of bids in the pipeline and hoping that some will be successful. It has become harder and harder to get grants so our links with the private sector are becoming more essential.

I mentioned our reputation growing. We are being signposted to by organisations up and down the country while more and more are asking to connect with us and get to know us more. As you can imagine, demand for services is rising, especially our virtual ones that are available UK-wide. There is also an increasing demand for our presence in meetings, events, consultations etc. It's very positive but we're now operating at capacity and I am starting to show some cracks. So our fundraising efforts are massively focusing on strengthening our infrastructure, to build ourselves up to respond to challenges.

We recently did a workshop about the challenges and benefits of having a workforce made up of people who currently struggle with self-harm and their mental health. It was a very successful workshop that we're hoping to develop into something a bit longer (from half to a full hour) and encourage other organisations to expand their offers of employment and volunteering to people who need that purpose and distraction most. As you can imagine, we also focused on how such a workforce needs to be supported and the levels of flexibility that need to be applied.

As for service changes, we've added a new virtual group to manage demand. We're making some big changes to the face-to-face adult peer support group teams from this month freshening them up. The decision to make them fortnightly (instead of 4-weekly) to match the virtual groups has been taken and it's all arranged to start in January. The group duration will also be shortened to 1.5 hours from 2. We're hoping this will provide the more regular support the group members asked for.

Following various consultations and conversations we're currently planning the services we will set up in Onward. We have many ideas, have prioritised 3 new services and – guess what?! – I'm now looking for funding for them!

I will keep this newsletter short this time – like I mentioned, spinning too many plates!

Thank you for reading it and thank you so much for your support.

Please look after yourselves.

Jenny – Founder & CEO

