

# Battle Scars

Newsletter – July 2020

Dear members

Believe it or not, it's time for a newsletter! Personally, it feels like I wrote the last one a lifetime ago. One of the lockdown effects for me has been a distortion of time. I've not been counting weeks, but I think we've reached 12 now? Who would have thought?!

At the start of the lockdown things quietened down quite a bit. With all services but one (our Facebook group) on hold, no meetings, no work with volunteers or professionals, my diary was full of crossed off activities. But after a while and after having to take part in a couple of Zoom meetings, we reached a point where we couldn't ignore technology and its possibilities, even opportunities. So, we bit the bullet and set up virtual adult peer support groups. A small number of volunteers braved it with me and we now have 6 groups every 4 weeks: Tuesday morning, Friday afternoon and Monday evening, each running every 2 weeks. We couldn't run them the same way as our physical groups though, it just wouldn't work. So, we opened them up to existing service users first, taking bookings and capping the participants number to 12 (including the two facilitators). We put the word out that we considered opening them up gradually and slowly people from all over the UK started joining the mailing list. They are the only ones who get invites to join the group so we can keep numbers manageable and we don't have people getting left out all the time (booking is on first-come, first-served basis). They only last one hour and, even though we do have a topic for each session, it's a more free-flowing discussion than planned activities. Since we started the Zoom groups in mid-May, we've had an "attendance" over 90 and they're now offered to

people anywhere in the UK. And as of tomorrow, volunteers are taking over 2 of the groups freeing some of my time.

On the volunteer front, things have been very quiet. For various reasons, many volunteers do not wish to or cannot get involved with the virtual work. Our volunteer week event last month had to be cancelled. A small gift with a thank you card was sent to all volunteers and trustees to at least show my appreciation for all their efforts and support.

Back to services, once we got those first groups tested and our confidence grew, we started looking for further ways to take advantage of the technology. We upgraded the Zoom package so we don't get cut off after 40 minutes, and then the possibilities were endless!

Our next step is the parents/family group. We're launching that on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> at 6.30 in the evening. We've offered this group UK-wide from the start so, once again, only those on the mailing list will be invited.

Also, following feedback received, we're in the process of setting up a group for people who still struggle with urges but rarely self-harm who still need some support while the other groups could be too "heavy" for them. I'm struggling to come up with a name of some kind for this group with some suggestions so far being "another step" and "different stage". We must make sure that people feel comfortable shifting between this and our other groups depending on how things are going for them without guilt or shame. Therefore, any names with suggestions of going "up" or "further" need to be avoided as any need to use the other groups could imply going down or backwards.

And since we're paying for Zoom and income has almost dried out, we will soon be launching virtual Q&A style training sessions for professionals on self-harm and eating disorders.

Talking about income, the Lottery funding application I mentioned last time has been put on hold for 6 months while all funding was redirected to alleviate problems caused by COVID-19. When this application will move forward, we do not know. We do know that things are changing all over and so have our plans. When this application is live again, I think it'll need a lot of updating! For now, we've had to cross off all plans of premises and more staff hoping it'll come to fruition in 2021. The council assets people are also helping us but the first search for suitable premises didn't result in anything. Not giving up hope.

On a positive funding note, our current funders, the Tudor Trust, have once again supported us with an extra £1,500 to cover whatever needs we have. We've decided to use this money to cover the small Zoom fees to start with, but put the rest towards producing our almost-ready 12-step self-harm addiction programme. 16 copies of the workbook were just posted to service users, volunteers and trustees willing to review it for us. We will take all feedback into account in order to produce an easy to understand, user-friendly workbook. Such a programme is the first of its kind (we used the AA's as a starting point but we weren't very keen on that one) and, even though it'll be a hard programme to complete, we're hoping it will change many lives for the better.

Our other news includes two live broadcasts. The first was organised by a New Jersey organisation called Remnants of Red where I and a parent running a Facebook group for other parents of (mostly) children who self-harm took part. It was an interesting discussion and some new links have resulted from it. The other was with John Temble who set up the Facebook group Uniting Wakefield mental

health and wellbeing and guests. Another interesting session.

While we're talking about networking, thanks to the University of Leeds' FReSHSTART research (looking into new therapies for people who self-harm) – I'm the Patient and Public Involvement consultant on the steering group – we're forging stronger links with other self-harm and mental health organisations in the country, such as Self Injury Support UK (providing telephone, text and email support to girls and women) and Harmless (working with young people in the Nottingham area).

Our AGM was going to take place in June. We were hoping to have it in September but it now looks more likely it'll be done virtually. I'll keep you updated on that. Hoping to be able to send you the annual report before the end of the summer.

Finally, we're running a raffle (with more to follow) of things I carve (I enjoy making them but don't want to keep them all!) This small bear cub in lime wood is the current prize (*£1 per ticket. Draw date: 10 July 2020. Apart from postage, ALL proceeds go to Battle Scars. To buy tickets: PayPal info@battle-scars-self-harm.org.uk or BACS: s/c 60-60-05, a/c 55132227. Make sure you include a contact number or email*)



So much for a quiet period! As always, thank you so much for your support. Please look after yourselves and stay safe.

Jenny - CEO