

Newsletter

Edition MAY 2021

£12 p.a. subscription for non-members
or organisations

free for SURVIVORs
who are Members
of CIS'ters

Charity registration:
1184857
(previously 1123125)



www.cisters.org.uk

CIS'ters IS NOT a therapy group: it is a small registered charity, run by survivors
“we might be victim/survivors, but this is not all that we are, or can be”

2021 = moving forward

Email: helpme@cisters.org.uk

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Together – we can !

It continues to be a difficult time for many of our members with uncertainty in many areas. But the slow lifting of restrictions and the increased availability of vaccination and testing is definitely helping.

We are inspired by the many members who have respected the request for patience and to protect the more vulnerable members of our community.

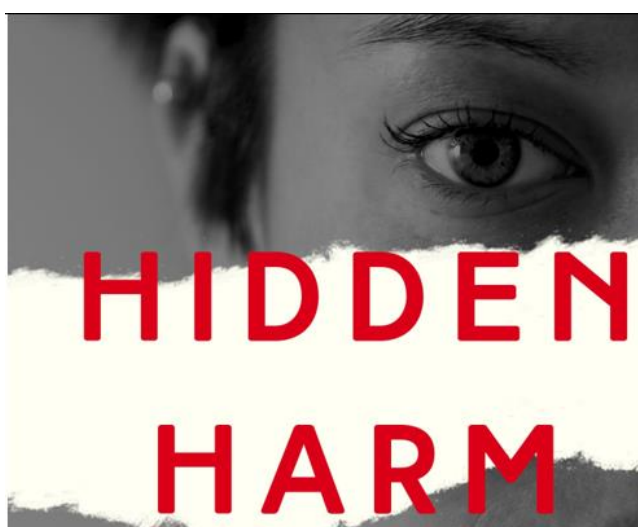
Within CIS'ters we are slowly rebuilding our resilience and to recover the ground we lost. The unique feature of CIS'ters is that we are peer led, but with that comes fragility as many of our team members have underlying health conditions, which makes them more likely to not only catch covid, but be very ill if they did. As explained previously we have been operating with a much smaller team and focused on responding to phone calls and emails. Delays have been unavoidable, but kept to the minimum.

Responding to the roadmap

Whilst some have jumped with joy as they have been allowed to meet up with friends and family that they haven't seen for a long time; others continue to feel frustrated at the ongoing delays to open up services fully. We know and do appreciate that some members find the absence of physical meetings in Southampton to be an ongoing loss.



At their recent board meeting, trustees made a decision to pilot holding physical meetings in the Autumn. More information will follow in the next newsletter or will be sent out in a special update. **The format of meetings is to be changed and also how and when they are accessed.**



HIDDEN HARM.- this is a new initiative and so far we have created 12 episodes – which can be accessed via <https://cisters.org.uk/pocastsnewslettersurvivors-voices/pocasts/>

or

<https://directory.libsyn.com/episode/index/id/19190654>

Hi Gillian, Belated happy 70th birthday!

As I grow older, I enjoy birthdays more. Like it's an achievement to get through another year. I joined C.I.S.'ters in January 1998 - something for me to celebrate.

Although I still struggle with certain aspects of life, because of C.I.S.'ters, I have learned how to manage the darker times without medication (legal or otherwise) or self-destructive behaviours. I can honestly say that I am a survivor and thriver in my own way.

I don't lead a conventional life, but it is a life. And it's my life. C.I.S.'ters gave me the strength and courage to embrace, accept and be myself- warts and all. Even the darker times, my dungeon days. It's just a time to recoup and regroup, an opportunity for my brain to catch up- I sometimes have trouble processing information and so end up overwhelmed. But it's nothing to be afraid of. I sit in my dungeon, until it passes. Forever grateful to you and Liz. Mucho love, **Sally (151)**

For those of you who don't know, Gillian met Liz prior to setting up CIS'ters in 1995. They often talked about 'the need for a peer led group'. Liz (7) joined CIS'ters not long after it was set up and inspired all who had the privilege of meeting her. Sadly no longer with us, her death was a sad time for us and her children – and we still miss her.

Hi everyone, me again!! What a year for CIS'ters and everyone!

All are aware that country, including CIS'ters, have been in Lockdown. We have been offering a reduced service (phone calls and emails). Restrictions are now being slowly lifted across the country. Face masks, social distancing & the onset of Vaccines.

When I started in November 2020 the other team members (an exhausted Gillian and Kate), welcomed Nicola and myself and set us to work. Me in the role of Membership Secretary (taking over the role from Helen who had left the previous month), and Nicola focused on a mountain of statistics (she is brill at spreadsheets).

As you might already know, not long after we both started, Nicola, went down with COVID 19. She was quite severely ill with it and for a time in a coma. She has come through it and is recovering slowly and but not well enough to come back to work.

Whilst I had been on CIS'ters Board of Trustees for a number of years, I didn't know the day to day running of the office. I had previously worked elsewhere in a call centre and not long been made redundant when the temporary contract came up as an opportunity (following Helen decision to leave). I stepped down from the role as a trustee and, with others, applied for the role of Membership Secretary – and my enduring commitment to the work we do has taken me on a new chapter in my life.

From my time so far in the role (very different to anything I have done before) and considering the restrictions we are working with, and living in – it appears that many of our members are now coping much better than they were in April 2020. Others less so.

As we slowly come out of restrictions, remember to take care and remain safe! I know that sometimes you can only focus on the next 10mins, hour or day and if so, take that time to be kind to yourself and respond to what your body and mind are telling you. Key message is to keep safe (physically and emotionally).

When I started it was a temporary contract until end of April 2021. The good news (for me) is that my part-time contract has now been extended to April 2022. I am really pleased to be continuing in this role as am still very passionate about the work we do within CIS'ters.

As you can see from my membership number I have been around for a long time and benefited from being part of CIS'ters. Thank you for the cards and emails wishing me well in this role. I have been inspired from knowing that people care for someone (me!) they have never met, but who has experienced sexual abuse/trauma, like themselves.

Sending best wishes,

Cathie (143), in the role of Membership Secretary

I MISS written by Gillian (00)

I miss the warmth of others around me
Who know me, do not judge me, comfort me, accept me
I miss the warmth of others around me
Who see me as I am, without my mask, without my defences
I miss the warm of others around me
But draw on the inspiration of others
Who multiply in number
To the drum beat of survivors, reaching out



“I wanted to give some feedback. You have continued to support me and offered help if and when I felt able to accept it. Because of CIS'ters I was able to screw up the courage to receive counselling from my local specialist rape and sexual abuse centre. Because of CIS'ters I was able to acknowledge the past, and recognise its role in my present. Because of the newsletters, seemingly arriving by some telepathic witchery, I was able to manage these last five years worth of acceptance and growth with at least some of my faculties intact. Your constant support has meant more than I can say and I hope to one day be brave enough to play a more active part. Jo (1242)”

MOUNTAIN VIEW by Carolyn (945)

These mighty mountains
Slumbering peacefully
Solid, immovability,
Representing the stability of aeons.
Tranquil, trickling streams
Tumbling down the mountain sides
To spill into the lush green valley below
Idyllic, unhurried, dependable.

And yet this surface peace
Serves to disguise the passions of a former age.
Violent upheaval as the rocks thrust upwards
Piercing the earth's green crust.
New, old things emerging from the deeps
Striking out to meet the light of day.

The pent up passions of gases and molten rocks
Spouts forth shooting its spume into the air.
Vibrant, rushing unstoppable
Then tumbling back to earth
Still fiery, angry.
Searing heat, burning all before it
as it ploughs its way downwards.
Then, passion spent it slows and cools
Leaving rocky scars down the mountain side
And changing the face of the earth for ever.

Such eloquent grandeur
Such majestic towering heights.
The mountains seem yet again to be
Steadfast and immovable.
But who knows what
Boiling passions wait beneath the surface
Biding their time till hell breaks loose once more.
And grand upheaval, fire and storm
Break forth again bringing new birth
And shattering all our expectations of solid
dependability.



Dear Gillian and the Team.

I wanted to come back to you now with a little update.

Work has been really busy. My job is ok but last year was awful - no life balance at all.

I am continuing with the free 1:2:1 therapy at my local specialist rape & sexual abuse counselling centre and I can't put into words how great the therapist there has been and how supported I have felt. Thank you CIS'ters for referring me to them.

Even though work has been horrendous and very triggering I've made great progress in the last 6 months. I recently joined a dating site which was a huge 'no' from me previously and have just started seeing a really kind and generous man. Not my previous type at all. Thank goodness. Not sure where it will lead but I feel more confident and in control thanks to CIS'ters and the therapist I am seeing locally.

So thank you so much for continuing to care about us all. You literally have allowed me to start living...in my 50s. I hope we can all meet up again very soon but in the meantime love and best wishes to you.

Member (1438)

Hello Gillian and rest of the team.

As to how I am - I think "going quietly bonkers" covers it.

My therapeutic work as a dog-sitter has dried up completely, because of course people aren't traveling. My last booking was 6 months ago, in October, and my next, IF it still goes ahead, isn't until 27th May. I SO miss my canine friends. In the interim, I am doing another online course - "Dealing with Fear, Anxiety and Aggression in Canines" so will have yet another certificate to add to my collection shortly.

I am also dealing with a severe flare up of my rheumatoid arthritis and lupus symptoms, so am in constant severe pain and extremely weak, which is a wretched nuisance - to the point that I can't currently dress without my husband's assistance. This has been going since before Yule, so I'm really fed up with it now. But it'll sort itself in its own sweet time, I hope. I just have to be patient, which unfortunately isn't my strong suit.

I have had my first dose of vaccine, four weeks ago tomorrow, and I haven't left the house since then. My husband would have to come with me anyway to do grocery shopping, as he has to push my wheelchair, so it's simpler and quicker to give him the list and let him go on his own. And it gets me out of dealing with Other People.

I have Scary Stuff to deal with this afternoon - the annual boiler service. I have told my husband he's to deal with the engineer, and I will hole up in the lounge with the door closed. I so dislike having men on the premises! It's a firm we've used for the past decade, and they often pop their heads round the door and say "hello" to me if they're doing work here; but I don't think I can cope with that today.

We are the "support bubble" for a pal of my husband's; the chap has lived alone since his divorce, about a decade ago, and he comes over to us every Wednesday evening for a couple of hours. I find it extremely stressful, even though he's a good chap, and I've known him for 19 years; but I'm good at bluffing, and my husband assures me no-one would guess that I'm totally frazzled inside.

Janie (400)

➤ > > > see next page for something else from Janie

More from Janie (400)

On a lighter note, I don't know how many people will remember "Summer in the City" by the Lovin' Spoonful, a one-hit wonder back in August 1966. It can be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rts7Qdew3HE>

Well, I re-wrote the lyrics during the period when the Tier System was going.

Lockdown, Summer in the UK
Stuck in my house going slowly crazy.
So bored, all the pubs are shut now.
Could go for a walk but I'm just too lazy.

If I had a dog I could teach it new tricks.
Switch on You Tube, all I get is Joe Wicks.

Supermarket, here I come;
No loo rolls so I'm feeling glum;
And the pasta shelf is bare;
But you know what? - I just don't care.

I'm fed up - we're stuck here in Tier Four
Like jail; I can't take any more.

And as Winter
Follows Summer
Covid-19
Is a bummer.

Anyways, that's how it is in our household just now; sorry my reply is a bit of an essay.
Stay safe, and thank you for being there for us Survivors. Janie (400)

As Life goes past by **Rosemary (1484)**

AS I look half asleep across to my window seal,
Thinking the pain of Memories in my head
Will never completely heal.
I stare with sleepy eyes at the time,
Hoping that today will be fine.

I still feel as if my head is going round in Circles inside,
Secrets and Nightmares hidden in me I try to hide.

Just another day goes past,
My heart is beating fast,
I wonder in Life what lays ahead,
At least now I know I'm safe when I go to bed.

Memories of your childhood can affect you in so many ways,
When you're asleep at night it's not so bad as the days.

Knowing you try to cope with Life the best you can,
Sometimes I need a hug and hold on to my husbands' hand,
I still mentally feel trapped inside even today,
I wish my childhood wouldn't haunt me now and just go away.

But life still goes on no matter what happened to you,
You can try to be yourself and you know you have to carry on, which is true,

There's so many of us that will always deep inside feel this pain,
But we need to move on and never blame ourselves again and again.
So when you're feeling trapped inside
Put the memories in a box in your head and you can mentally hide.

You may feel it's a long road ahead,
And you rather be anyone else but you instead.
Just keep strong and hold on tight,
Because one day you learn to live with the pain and things will be alright.



21-22 May 2022
Weekend Wksp

Member Weekend Workshop

One of the biggest impacts to us has been on the weekend workshop that we hold annually. It provides an opportunity for members, from far and wide, to meet within a safe and confidential space.

Application forms will be cascaded out with the next newsletter but contact us if you would like an early booking form

Shifting Sands by Carolyn (945)

She stands,
Wobbling slightly on uncertain legs
Like a new born foal
Testing her balance in this new environment.

Old certainties, family myth,
Hanging now in tatters,
The remnants of a once glorious banner
Revealed for what it was;
Cheap imitation
Outward show
Painted on gossamer threads
With no substance or reality to stand the test of time.

Gradually she finds her balance
As the film is cleared from her eyes
And she sees reality for the first time.
Yet still denial clings stubbornly
Like a caul - cloying, suffocating
Threatening this new, independent mode of life.

But there is something there
Deep inside, which fights for life;
Refuses to remain cocooned but stifled,
Ready to face this brave new world.
Ready to step out despite the shifting sands
And find its own way;
Head held high, breathing deeply
And greeting the new day
With fresh vigour
Unaccustomed hopefulness
And a sense that all at last, in the end - will be well.

Editorial Statement: We welcome letters from Survivors and from those who support them such as friends/allies/counsellors/social workers etc. While every effort will be made to keep contributions complete and unedited we reserve the right to make amendments when necessary, and will note it as 'edited'. Decisions about the inclusion & amendment of contributions are the responsibility of the Editorial Team, and are final. Contributions do not necessarily reflect the views & opinions of **CIS'ters**, members of the Trust Board, or the Editorial Team. Inclusion of any reference to an individual, book list, or organisation resource is not a recommendation.

The contents of this newsletter are for information and support purposes only.

This newsletter is not a substitute for individual therapy or professional supervision.

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CIS'ters: an experience in learning, sharing, growing – individually and together
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