

# Newsletter

## Edition June 2023

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

free for SURVIVORS  
who are Members  
of CIS'ters

Charity registration:  
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(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”

# 2023: Coping & Resilience

Email: [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk) Phone: 023 80 338080 (answer phone)

## Really good to see use of the words ‘coping’ and ‘resilience’

As part of the Victims Funding Strategy (VFS), the Ministry of Justice’s (MoJ) Victims and Vulnerability Unit are committed to reviewing and refreshing UK Government commissioning guidance, as the current framework has not been updated since 2013. The MoJ commissioning guidance is currently aimed only at Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). As part of this refresh, they are now seeking views from sector members (eg **CIS'ters** and other charities/organisations like ours) so that they can get an accurate picture of what the sector believe UK Government commissioning guidance needs to contain.

For decades and beyond, statutory services have insisted that services being commissioned offer ‘recovery’ and ‘healed’ pathways. We and others have long pointed out that these are targets that many victim/survivors will struggle to achieve. Whereas the ability to build ‘stepped’ resilience and coping are the cornerstones of moving forward. So, it was a joyous moment when we read – within the survey-questions that related to an outcome of ... ‘*coped and built resilience to move forward with daily life*’.

A huge gold star to MoJ for acknowledging that for many, being able to cope and being able to become more resilient – is a massive and celebratory step; something that is achievable, with the right help which is readily available and for as long as it is needed. Anything less, and we are more likely to crawl and stumble, rather than stride ahead with conviction and determination.

Commissioning is still, from our perspective, a hit and miss experience for many services in our sector and there continues to be an inequality or post code lottery for many victim/survivors. But, putting victim/survivors at the centre of the process should (we hope) make services closer to what we need, rather than what others *think* is needed.

## **The Big Half Event – London >>>> Sunday 3rd September 2023**

We have four CHARITY places at this major event.

For those taking part it is a 13.1-mile course that sets off by Tower Bridge in central London and finishes at the famous Cutty Sark in Greenwich. We are seeking participants (who do NOT need to be survivors) to raise funds for us.

For further information on how to get one of our **four places**, email [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk) or leave a (clear) message on 023 80 338080

## GOOD NEWS... Trustees have approved May 2024 Weekend Workshop....

As our members will know, our annual weekend workshop is a highlight of the year. Delegates (who are all members of **CIS'ters**) travel from across the UK to attend the event. We do have to charge a fee to attend, which is heavily subsidised – and participants are able to spread the cost over 9 months as long as completed prior to actual event. Here are some of the comments from 2023 delegates.....

An optional session on the programme was called 'I feel different to you because' (which is because although we all share a similar history, there are still many differences in our lives that continue to add to our sense of isolation). Once voiced, we more often than not find out that we are not the only one:

*My favourite session – incredibly useful to help me feel less alone/alien. So many shared thoughts/feelings/experiences which I wouldn't have otherwise felt validated in.*

Another optional session offered an opportunity to create Vision Boards:

*I don't consider myself creative but I really enjoyed this ! It felt relaxing and 'mindful'. The non pressured chat with others doing pictures was lovely too.*

And the optional bubbles were a great hit this year and gave a perspective:

*I actually found this hard. One revelation for me has been understanding how little play I had and that having fun isn't comfortable. I so want to find that inner child that never was and learn to have FUN.*

Although we don't always have control over who is in our lives in the outside world, we do within our Internal Village (see July 2022 newsletter for more detail):

*Boundaries and trust are difficult issues for me and 'My Village' is an opportunity to assess who is there for me and who we should let in and toxic people I should let go of. Being able to be my authentic self in 'My Village' is something I am just learning.*

Is this event for you ? Perhaps this will help you decide.....

*I am so grateful and glad that I came. I loved my little gift pack as well and have been carrying the glass flower around with me to feel connected to CIS'ters. I had been struggling to shift a depression which was lingering in the months prior to attending and wondered whether I should back out of the weekend, but I'm so glad I went. I experienced such pure joy in amongst some serious emotional release. It was so refreshing to go to a survivors group where fun and laughter were encouraged and facilitated without avoiding the difficult stuff. I was incredibly sad to leave as I felt so much like myself there – emotionally safe to be quite chatty, happy or sad. I worried the joy wouldn't come with me. However, I am happy to say that my depression is gone. I've been feeling more like myself than I have in a long time, particularly at work. My partner told me he wanted my home with him to make me feel as loved and accepted as with CIS'ters, so we've been able to have some good conversations. I am very conscious of who is in 'My Village', with improved emotional boundaries. Thank you so much. I have taken so much from the weekend.*

And:

*A huge thank you to all involved in making this residential possible. It is so well organised and clearly a great deal of thought and planning is involved. The fact that everyone there knows what I have experienced in life without me having to say a single word remains one of the most special and healing aspects. I once again have come away feeling contented, validated, understood and feel privileged to have shared this time with incredible women. Thank you team CIS'ters.*

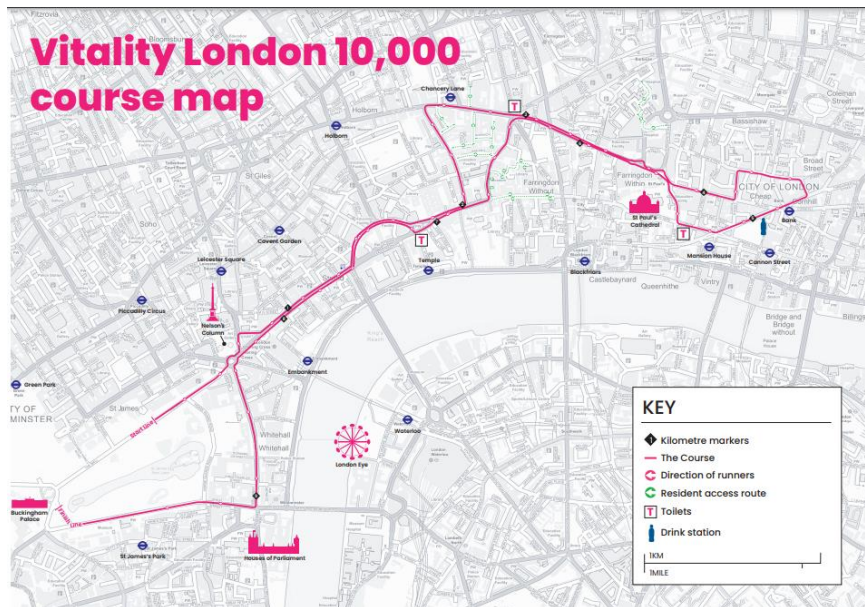
Did you know ?

That our first peer-led weekend event was held in 1999 and that we have continued to hold them annually apart from 2020 and 2021. If you are a Member and want to know more, please contact us.

# IF YOU LIKE RUNNING.....

## Vitality 10k Event – London Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2023

We have been allocated ten places at this special fun run and we are seeking individuals who are able to take part and raise money for **CIS'ters** (which will be used to help offset the cost of the 2024 Annual Weekend Workshop). For further information on how to get one of our **ten places**, email [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk) or leave a (clear) message on 023 80 338080



### Tolly's Self Help Toolkit 2023 (an update since the last newsletter)

This is a self-help toolkit which we are developing and is currently being piloted by six members. Feedback is promising and we are appreciative of the time being taken by both the development team and also the initial participants, to create something that will help many in the future.

Further information will be available in future newsletters.

### We are seeking resilient and robust Members to join our new Forum

In recognition that nearly 50% of our Members do NOT live in Hampshire, we are in the process of setting up a forum, with initially ten members, who will meet quarterly **on-line**. This forum will be tasked with providing trustees with insights/updates and reports on the kind of issues and challenges that Members are encountering in their wider worlds. This can also inform and expand the awareness work that is undertaken by **CIS'ters**.

When applying to join this forum it will be important for individuals to appreciate that this is not a therapy group. It will have a formal role to discuss and debate key issues that have either been requested by the Trust Board, via the Manager, or issues that the forum itself considers important at that time.

The forum will be Chaired by a Member designated by the Trust Board. Terms of Reference will be established for the forum, and there will be a recruitment process. We will also be seeking a balance of not less than six members (out of the ten) who live outside of Hampshire.

For further information email [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk) or leave a (clear) message on 023 80 338080

## Feedback from Caroline (who joined in 2022)

Thank you for the Peer Support Meeting. It was good to realise I am not alone ! It was helpful to talk about coping strategies. It made me realise how well I am doing.

## Feedback from Trina (who joined in 2019)

Thank you for the newsletter, which is so invaluable to those of us who live so far away from the charity base in Hampshire. And also to show my thanks for the telephone calls. I have made a donation to **CIS'ters**. Not able to gift aid it, but I wanted to show my appreciation.

If it wasn't for the information you put in a newsletter (I think it was January 2021 or thereabouts) I would not have known about the Truth Project; and that the Same-Roof Rule had been dropped by the Criminal Injury Compensation Authority; and that Victim Care Services could help with applications.

After taking part in the Truth Project (part of a National Inquiry <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/victims-and-survivors/truth-project.html> ) I contacted my local Victim Care Service and received incredible support from them, including making an application to the Criminal Compensation Scheme.

Things became a bit complex after the award was made, because I am on benefits and it looked as though I would lose my benefits. Again, I was helped by another agency, my local Citizen Advice Bureau, and eventually after many stressful months, the DWP decided that I wouldn't lose my benefits and I was given a year to use the award. The CAB wanted to challenge that decision, but to be honest Gillian, I was just relieved not to have lost my benefits and not to have to use all my award on my day to day living costs.

So one small acorn planted by you in the newsletter, grew into a tree for me and I am so very grateful to **CIS'ters** and especially to you for that. I know Margaret from my local Victim Care Service would say that I put all the hard work in, but I felt I was guided and supported every step of the way, to enable me to get to where I needed to be.

*Message from Gillian: Trina and many others are now submitting claims to CICA. We know that many are being turned down or offered small sums. It is worth appealing – please do – I myself was previously barred from submitting a claim due to the ‘Same-Roof’ ruling and have now received an offer (initial one I rejected) which I have accepted. It doesn't take away the hurt not least because the past can't be changed. But – for me – it was a way to ensure that the identity of the abuser is in an official document and his crime is part of history and no longer invisible.*

*PLEASE ALSO NOTE that the abuser being deceased is NOT a barrier to applying to CICA.*



[www.cisters.org.uk](http://www.cisters.org.uk)

Life is never simple is it ? Trauma and drama come in all shapes and sizes, and ALWAYS when we are already overwhelmed with too much of this, or that. A few months ago we were advised that we needed to move our website from one host, to another, and that the software itself needed to be upgraded. Phew..... where to start !

As at the end of June 2023, the website has migrated i.e. been shifted and considered stable (good to know something is, as often we don't 'feel' that way ourselves). We can now temporarily draw breath and gather thoughts and energies as we move into phase 2, which is to assess how much work is going to be involved in the software upgrade.

I guess, part of me has been asking myself, all this time and fuss and money on the website – does anyone actually look at it ? The answer is yes, they do.

But I guess the ongoing question is – do you ever look at the website ? Are there any topics that you think are missing, or better still, what has helped you ?



We wanted to let you know that the Restorative Justice Council has recently launched a consultation on the use of RP/RJ in respect of domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

They would very much like to hear the views of the specialist domestic and sexual abuse sectors, and especially service users, and to this end have engaged with the Office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, seeking a working partnership. They have acknowledged that the use of RJ is controversial, and are committed to hearing views both for and against.

The initial deadline is 7 July 2023, however we have been advised that **comments after that date are still welcome and will not be ignored**. Depending on the response to this initial phase, we may be organising online consultation workshops. The online consultation form gives the opportunity to register an interest in these. The link to the consultation is here: [The RJC launches its consultation on the use of restorative justice in cases of domestic and sexual violence and abuse | Restorative Justice Council](#)

*Note from Gillian >> Some of you may have recently seen the documentary on Channel 4 which followed a victim who was seeking to know 'why me' after being abused by her father. At the time he was due to be released from prison. She did contact RJS for their help to confront her abuser.*  
<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/a-paedophile-in-my-family-surviving-dad>

**TACKLING  
MALE VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN & GIRLS**

**Victim Survivors Police Experience Survey  
for rape and other sexual offences**

**THE DEADLINE FOR THIS VERY  
IMPORTANT SURVEY HAS NOW  
BEEN EXTENDED TO June 2024.**

As part of Operation Soteria Bluestone – a national scheme aimed at transforming the policing response to rape and other sexual offences – academics at City University London, have launched a police experience survey for victims of rape and other sexual offences.

It is hoped that this will improve the ways in which police forces engage with victims of rape and other sexual offences, and thereby improves the victim-survivor experience of the police investigation and criminal justice process.

If appropriate please do undertake this survey, which does not ask for contact details. **If you wish to undertake this online survey >>>>** <http://www.tinyurl.com/1experiencesurvey>

More information on Operation Soteria Bluestone and wider project:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/operation-soteria-year-one-report/operation-soteria-bluestone-year-one-report-accessible-version>



**FIRST PERSON PLURAL**  
dissociative identity disorders association

## This Is Such Sad News !

We have been advised that First Person Plural (registered charity 1156602 (previously 1109464)) has begun the process to close down the charity, following the decision by trustees to dissolve the organisation. The target for closure is 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

This is such sad news and an indictment on the sector we all work within (volunteers and paid) and for those who seek emotional support and understanding from them.

It has always been a privilege to meet and know the founders of FPP, and know the level of appreciation of the amazing work they have undertaken in the last 20+ years to raise awareness of the diagnosis and impact of dissociative disorders.

We join with others to send heartfelt feelings to those charged with the difficult and emotional tasks of closing down such a well-respected small charity that delivered so much.

FPP website will still be available as a learning pod – please take the time to visit it, if not already:

<https://www.firstpersonplural.org.uk/>



**#WomensRightsNetwork**

<https://www.womensrights.network/about-wrn>

An increasing number of our Members have highlighted this growing organisation to us. So, what or who are WRN ?

According to their website, they are a feminist group and have created an ever growing network of women from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland with one main focus: to defend the sex-based rights of women. They do not appear to be aligned to any political party – reflecting women of all political persuasions and none. Their core position is "Respect My Sex" – seeking to support candidates (in local and general elections) who understand the rights and needs of women, regardless of party.

WRN has around 60 geographical groups, with more than 1200 members. Members are of all ages, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, employment status and socio-economic backgrounds. They are all committed to free speech and to putting the sex based needs of women and girls first. Members of WRN are all women - adult (biological sex) females.

Our understanding is that WRN groups offer a safe space to talk freely and compassionately; and that they provide support to one another and campaign for evidence-based solutions to stop the erasure of female biological sex-based rights.

Message from Gillian: as we are an adult female (biological sex) peer support group for those who were sexually abused as female children it is clear that we have an investment in the ongoing protection of such spaces. Whilst we have no direct link to WRN or the research they have undertaken (they recently published a report on safety within hospitals) we are obviously interested in the work that they undertake to help maintain and retain female only spaces.

If you would like to know more about WRN and the work they undertake, look up their website and/or email > [admin@womensrights.network](mailto:admin@womensrights.network)



The Law Commission has recently published proposals to reform sexual offences prosecutions.

They are consulting with stakeholders and members of the public on a series of questions and provisional proposals about possible changes to sexual offences prosecutions and welcomes responses to its consultation from anyone affected by, or with knowledge of, the issues covered.

This includes those who have experienced sexual violence or support people who do, and those who have experience of the criminal justice system.

The Government's End to End Rape Review found that the prevalence of rape and sexual violence has remained steady in the last five years but there has been a sharp decrease in the number of prosecutions since 2016/2017.

There are many complex reasons for the decline in cases reaching court. The Law Commission focus is on how evidence is used in trials involving sexual offences. Academic research shows that some individuals hold misconceptions about sexual harm ("rape myths") in relation to the credibility, behaviour and experience of complainants in cases involving a sexual offence. It is unclear how extensive such misconceptions might be amongst the public and how much impact they can have on the juror's task of evaluating the evidence.

Some argue that jurors need more assistance with assessing evidence in relation to sensitive and challenging issues that may fall outside their own experience and understanding. The Law Commission, in listening to the feedback from the Consultation, will consider whether more needs to be done in the criminal courts to tackle misconceptions.

**PLEASE TAKE PART IF YOU CAN > The consultation *period* closes on 29 September 2023.** The consultation paper on evidence in sexual offences prosecutions and the summary consultation paper, along with further details about the Law Commission's project, are available on its project page>>>>>> use this link >>>> [Evidence in Sexual Offence Prosecutions - Law Commission](https://www.lawcommission.gov.uk/evidence-in-sexual-offence-prosecutions) or you can contact the Law Commission by phone on 020 3334 0200 or email [Enquiries@lawcommission.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries@lawcommission.gov.uk)

## **PLEASE READ UP ON MANDATORY REPORTING**

It is clear from some of the recent media articles and also items on social media, following government announcements relating to potential introduction of Mandatory Reporting (MR), that many have been previously unaware that there is currently no legislative requirement to report sexual abuse when disclosed, for example, in a school or similar **regulated** organisation.

Within the UK the one organisation that does have a comprehensive understanding of the nuances of Mandatory Reporting and the evidence to support this, is called <https://mandatenow.org.uk> – who have been recognised as the national voice of adult survivors seeking the introduction of MR. Since 2005, they have been providing past and current governments (across political divides), with the unquestionable evidence to formally introduce Mandatory Reporting. This is a topic we should all have an opinion on, as the failure to introduce MR, or the introduction of a not-fit-for-purpose framework – will affect us all, and continue to fail children in the future.

**To learn more about Mandate Now and also view the film that provides the background to 'why' MR is important, please watch this award winning film: <https://youtu.be/WoOzqebOU1k>**

“THE WORLD FEELS PARTICULARLY SCARY AT THE MOMENT” .....  
.... is what most people are saying to me, and around me. I have to admit that I agree with them. It feels unsafe with so much uncertainty. Opinions are so divided on an increasing number of issues, and it is difficult to keep track of so many topics, and worries and concerns.

No wonder I am so anxious, I tell myself – every day.

But I also have to admit that there is so much that I have no control over, and that in itself adds to the feelings I am currently experiencing. BUT a friend suggested that I flip this on its head. And say, if the larger slice is that which I have no control over, then the smaller slice is the one I do. So, really I only need to worry about the smaller slice. Focus on that – and let everyone else worry about that which I have no control over. That might not be a philosophy that you can buy into it – but for me, at this moment in time, it is definitely the road I need to travel because the alternative is that I will go bang, in real time, and that isn't going to help me in the long run. So, I just need to focus, for now, on what I can control, or am in control of. This will help me to reduce the overwhelming feelings of powerlessness I am experiencing.

At times I think my head is going to explode, due to the weight of the thoughts and stuff in it. Like a pressure cooker I have to find ways of releasing some of the steam. Carefully, so that I don't burn myself, or burn out. I have to have something to look forward to – however small or large, a treat, something that is for me and that I want. It's not selfish to think this way, it is a lesson in self-love, which I don't do much of.

I don't usually invest too much time in me, or what I need personally. My approach has always been to look after the world around me, so that I can feel safer. But, hey, that's a big bad world out there, and trying to be something to everyone – is blxxdy exhausting. So, I am committing to not doing that. It's a bad habit that has taken me to the edge too often.

Now, for the moment at least, my world is going to shrink and I am going to focus only on what I need, in the here and now and also what I have control over and can achieve, in the here and now. And it does NOT include saving the world from oblivion.

I am going to live day by day, and find ways to enjoy each day, even if it is a minute and a time.

Wow, this feels scary .....

sending best wishes to all, Anon Member, 2023



When things aren't going your way ?

If you always act/respond,  
as you have always done,  
Then the outcome/result  
will likely be  
The same.



this image by Gerd Altmann via Pixabay website

When you can't control what is  
happening to and around you.  
Challenge yourself to control the  
way you respond to what is  
happening.

Be prepared to do something  
'different'

That is where YOUR power is !

## **A message to YOU**

Members like you  
Pave the way  
For Members like me  
And for that  
I will always be grateful



## ARE YOU A SOCIAL WORKER, EDUCATOR, COUNSELLOR etc ?

Did you know that we deliver *training for workers* in other organisations, and across sectors, to help raise awareness on the topic of sexual abuse and the impact of such experiences ? Would you like to be added to our mailing list for Professional Training Events ? Please email [helpme@cisters.org.uk](mailto:helpme@cisters.org.uk) with a request to be added to our professional mailing list. We will ask for more detail, such as your professional background/work email/title – so that we can continue to tailor our professional training events to match the breadth of professionals seeking additional training.

**Our 2023 Member Only Weekend Workshop.** Held in May, this was an inspiring event (in common with prior annual events since 1999) in so many ways. Participants travelled from across the UK to spend time together reflecting (within a peer support environment) on how our experiences as children has impacted our adult lives, and the common threads that draw us together. The workshop is a mixture of sessions, offering a variety of ways to work on complex and difficult topics.

If you attended the recent event, perhaps the following picture will remind you of a sunny afternoon when we ‘let go’ of some painful aspects and then ‘played’. The latter is something that often remains an approach that feels alien to many of us, who grew up too soon.



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**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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