

Newsletter

Edition **October 2023**

£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”

2023: Mountains to Climb ?

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

From 'there' to 'here'

Within **CIS'ters** we have the privilege of speaking with new contacts, victim/survivors who have reached out to us either for direct emotional support or as part of a signposting journey to other services, which might be located closer to them – such as specialist counselling services. Each time we have contact with someone, it is a reminder of how much of a challenge it was, for each of us personally, to reach out and ask for help – and how scarce the services were in the early years and hence the eventual outcome that Gillian made that decision (as a survivor) to set up **CIS'ters** which opened on 1st September 1995.

The current landscape of services available for victim/survivors has truly changed since 1995, including availability to meet the needs of male survivors which was almost unheard of all those years ago. We acknowledge the needs of others, though we remain a small charity for biological females, who still identify as adult females. As a specialist survivor community we can readily see the progress that has been made, though also mourn for the services that have had to close (like First Person Plural) or reduce what they offer (like Oxford Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Crisis Service) during the intervening years, due to lack of finances.

Meantime, **CIS'ters** has grown in terms of the influence it has gained, not only locally but also nationally as well. Since the year 2000 we have been part of the wider consultative voice, providing input to various government departments on how to improve the needs of victim/survivors – and whilst, admittedly, we have not achieved all that is required, **CIS'ters** has had a visible presence and **the voices of our members have** continued to be heard locally, regionally and nationally.

But, what of our future ? This is an issue that **CIS'ters** trustees are considering at this time. Not only the need for sustainable funding but also a resilient and robust trust board and workforce. Our next board meeting is in January 2024 and options for the future are very much on the agenda.

GOOD NEWS... Trustees have approved 18/19 May 2024 Weekend Workshop...

As our members will know, our annual weekend workshop is a highlight event each year. Delegates (who are all members of **CIS'ters**) travel from across the UK to attend the event. We are taking bookings at the moment and managed to keep the fee at the same rate as it was for 2023 event (which continues to be heavily subsidised by us). Participants are able to spread the cost over Nov 2023 – April 2024 as long as fully paid prior to actual event.

If you are a member and are interested in attending, please contact our office.

Raising Funds – a huge thank you to Jude and Rosie !

In the main, members of the public prefer to raise funds for charities that are providing support for children or the homeless, or similar. Charities like ours are less successful in drawing such interest from (a) those willing to raise funds for us and (b) those wishing to make such donations. It feels unfair to be so overlooked and, again, invisible – but there are moments of hope when individuals do step forward to say ‘we can help’.

This included two incredible workers from one of the NHS Ambulance Trusts, who decided to take part in the 10k race in London on 24th September 2023, and chose us as the beneficiary of their fund raising efforts.



Rosie and Jude raised nearly £800 for our charity.

CAN YOU HELP US IN 2024 ?

We have a total of eight places at the Vitality 10k event to be held, again, in London on 22nd September 2024. Contact us via helpme@cisters.org.uk if you would like to know how to apply for one of our eight places.

Its offensive that offenders can so easily change their names !

<https://www.thesafeguardingalliance.org.uk/research-sex-offender-name-change/> explains that there is a serious safeguarding loophole whereby registered sex offenders are able to change their name by deed poll and go under the radar of all authorities, putting children and other vulnerable individuals at considerable and immediate risk of harm. This renders both the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme (otherwise known as ‘Sarahs Law’) and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (otherwise known as ‘Claire’s Law’) redundant, and makes a further mockery of our legal system. For more info on these >

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-sex-offender-disclosure-scheme-guidance>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/domestic-abuse-bill-2020-factsheets/domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme-factsheet>

Fears off Fears

When things are bad and I can't sleep at night,
I try hard to tell myself that things will be alright,
It's very exhausting when you're up early in the dark morning,
No one to see you cry when you can't stop yawning,
Sometimes it's flashbacks but mostly it's the voices that wake me up with a start,
It's like ground hog day – same shit different day,
Because of my background I have many fears,
Of which I cry many tears,
I'm scared of life itself,
Not health or wealth,
There's times I feel as if I'm all alone,
Just me the voices and dead people are home,
But I keep telling myself the dead people are not real,
And when I see them I don't make such a big deal,
Having the voices all the time is part of me,
It's been 28 years so I could have them always,
I have to come to terms with you see,
Don't patronize or talk down to me like I don't matter,
I'm a real person not in wonderland with the mad hatter,
Sometimes it feels like I'm being punished and committed a crime,
And I suffer as I do on earth and doing my time,
Don't look at the illness but the person in front of you,
No matter what disabilities that person has they're still human like everyone else this is
true,

The living scar me a lot not the dead,
But I still have demons to fight in my head,
So never judge someone from the way they act or look,
If you keep reading you won't find any bull shit in this book.

Sent in by Rosie (who became a Member in November 2018)

CRAFTWORK – can help with our resilience building

(and for us to remain within our Window of Tolerance)

<https://feltmagnet.com/crafts/PAINTING-AND-DRAWING-ON-STONES> - for more information



Thank you to Louise (who became a Member in 2003) for signposting us to the following website which explains 'how to' and then 'what to' afterwards.

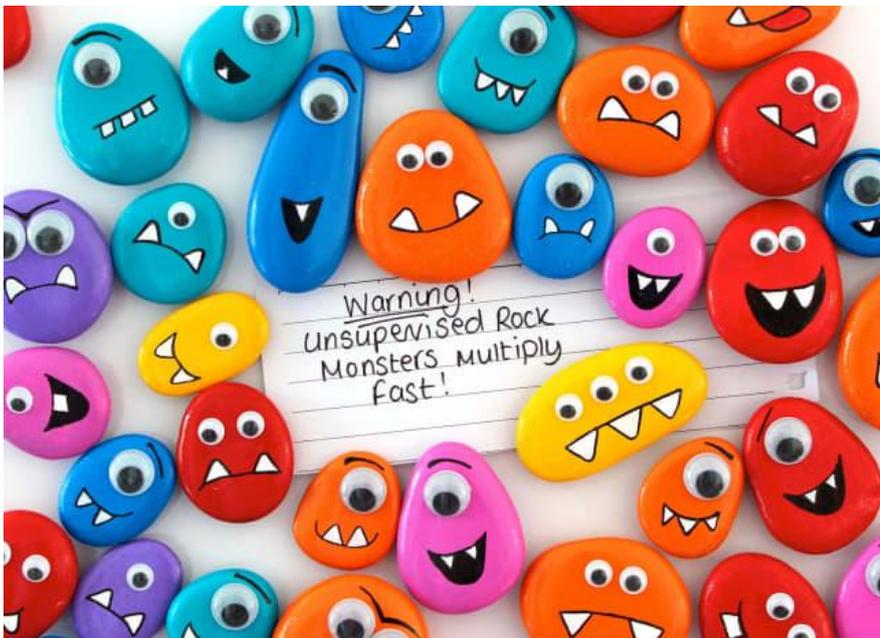
How to Paint Rocks Step-by-Step

1. First, of course, you need to find the perfect stone. Look for smooth rounded stones. River stones are best, or stones found on the beach. If you have a certain design in mind, like a cat, an owl, or a caterpillar, be on the lookout for the right shape stone to be your canvas. Searching for just the perfect stone is part of the fun!
2. If you don't have time to wander around looking for just the perfect stone, you can often buy them in online or by visiting local craft stores.
3. If you're picking up your stones from mother nature, be certain you're allowed to take the stones as some places prohibit this.
4. If you picked up your stone from the outdoors, you'll want to make sure it's nice and clean. Wash it off with some warm water and soap and pat it dry. You could even scrub it with an old toothbrush.
5. Some stones have rough patches on them that will make painting a little more difficult. You might want to sand it down with sandpaper, starting with 100 grit and moving to 150 and 220 grit until the patch is gone.
6. At this stage, you're ready to draw your design onto the rock. It might be good to try practicing your design on a piece of paper beforehand to perfect it. When you actually draw your picture onto the rock, you can use a pencil, chalk, or soapstone—or even an ultra-fine Sharpie marker which offers a lot of control and the ability to draw small details.
7. Now you're ready to start painting! Be patient and move from the biggest parts of the design to the smallest, letting each coat dry before moving on. You can use a hairdryer to dry the paint faster.
8. Once you've finished painting your design, it's time to seal it! Use a sealer and add a coat or two to make sure your art lasts for a long time.

What can you do with your stones, once painted ?



1. *Make them into magnets.*
2. *Decorate your garden.*
3. *Create seasonal decorations.*
4. *Unleash your inner artist and create a mini-masterpiece. (And if you make a mistake? It's okay. Just get another stone!)*
5. *Have craft time with the kids (indoors or outside.)*
6. *Make paperweights or gifts.*
7. *Make your very own pet rock (with google eyes, bows, or hair attached)*
8. *Write inspirational messages on them.*
9. *Sell your creations! – especially if you get lots of compliments when others see them.*
10. *..... you get to decide.....*





HOW TO GET INVOLVED

TST are currently working on a campaign called #ActOnIICSA which aims to raise awareness of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse to ensure the critical recommendations for better child protection and the voices of thousands of survivors do not go forgotten.

<https://www.thesurvivorstrust.org/blog/act-on-iicsa>

Visit and take a photo of your local IICSA legacy bench.

You can find the benches' locations here - <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/our-legacy.html#find-a-bench> and we, and TST would love to get the message #ActOnIICSA shared across social media to remind people that the findings of the inquiry cannot be ignored, and whichever future government is in post (acknowledging that there has been many many many decades of failings by successive political parties) needs to take action to better protect children from sexual abuse.

TST would like you to upload your images to social media using the hashtag #ActOnIICSA. Whether you choose to be in the photo or not, you could simply capture an image of the bench and plaque. These images will serve as a reminder and expression of support for everyone who has experienced child sexual abuse.



Sexual safety in healthcare – organisational charter

Increasingly there have been articles in the media, underpinned by research, which has highlighted that there needs to be an improvement in securing sexual safety within healthcare settings.

On 4 September 2023, NHS England launched its first ever sexual safety charter in collaboration with key partners across the healthcare system. Signatories to the charter commit to taking and enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any unwanted, inappropriate and/or harmful sexual behaviours within the workplace, and to ten core principles and actions to help achieve this. It is expected that signatories will implement all ten commitments by July 2024.

To view the initiative > <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/sexual-safety-in-healthcare-organisational-charter/>



We are coming up to the 'holiday season' and we know that some Members dread this time of year or find it difficult – whilst others adore it and create welcome and joyous moments.

We just want you to know, we care – and that some of us, too, struggle at times for the same reasons.....



Hidden Harm

Growing up invisible

In plain sight

*One of the Shadow
Children*

This picture reflects (for me) that millions of children sexually abused within a family environment/elsewhere – remain seemingly invisible to the rest of the world.

There was a key point during my childhood/teens when my behaviour changed from being a quiet child to one who was increasingly noisy and disruptive. My school work suffered as I was too tired to focus (*as an adult I was able to apply myself to learning again, and gain professional qualifications*). As a teen I self-injured, initially hidden but then visibly. There were many other clues that something wasn't ok but also I was becoming ever more skilled at remaining hidden. My abuser was someone with authority and very manipulative and extremely violent. After leaving the army, where he had been someone with authority and status, he joined the police and when he died in 1981 had risen to the rank of Inspector. I believed him, totally, when he told me that no-one would believe me – and still didn't disclose.

As adult survivors we often say 'no-one asked', and I do openly applaud the courage of those children who did say something – though that doesn't always mean that they received ALL of the help they needed at that time, or thereafter. Or even today in their adulthood. It is a sad indictment that in 2023 children who have been identified as victims of sexual abuse will still not have access to all of the services they need thereafter (for recovery and build resilience). Nor will their non-abusing family members.

My personal pathway as a child/teen was to remain hidden, in plain sight. Until (in my mid 40s) the pain and anguish could no longer be held back and I finally disclosed to my GP in 1994 (many years after the abuser had died (though my mother was still alive)). Since then my life has changed and I can honestly say that I do **not** regret disclosing to this health professional, or within my wider family. Life is still complicated and difficult at times – but overall, for the better. From Gillian, founder of **CIS'ters**

BENEATH THE SURFACE, a BBC Storyville programme (*available on BBCi Catch Up*)

In 2014, following a tip-off, a group of journalists exposed sexual abuse within the Indigenous Sami people in Norway. The programme revealed generations of ignoring the abuse that children were reporting over decades. The programme follows the case, against the statutory authorities, and highlights how a community of victim/survivors remain defiant against a judicial system that treated child victims within the Sami people, as *less* important than child victims elsewhere within Norway.

If you have access to BBCi, the programme can be viewed > <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001d059>

The Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel – offences ‘reported’ prior to 5/6/2013

What is the Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel (CSARP)?

If a victim or survivor reported (to the police) allegations of child sexual offences before 5 June 2013 and the police or the CPS decided that no further action should be taken at the time, they can request that the Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel reconsider the decision, if they are not satisfied that the original allegations were dealt with appropriately. CSARP is a joint enterprise between the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

What does the CSARP do?

The panel will consider whether the approach taken by the police or CPS was wrong and advises whether the allegations should be reinvestigated by the police or the prosecution decision reviewed by the CPS. To do this, they will look at the information requested from and provided by the relevant police force or CPS area, to decide whether to advise that the original decision was correct or if further action should be taken.

If the decision is made to reinvestigate or review the case, it will be referred back to the police force or CPS area from where the case originated for them to decide on the action to be taken.

If the panel agrees with the original decision to take no further action, the victim or survivor will be informed by letter with specialist help and support provided or signposted. There is no appeal point beyond the panel.

Sole responsibility for taking these decisions in the panel rests with the police and CPS members. The independent representative in the panel will play an advisory role i.e. they will receive and consider the relevant information and provide views to the police and CPS members of the panel as to the decision they consider should be taken.

Why was the CSARP set up?

CSARP was set up in June 2013 to look again at cases that were not covered by the Victims’ Right to Review (VRR) Scheme.

VRR was introduced to make it easier for victims to seek a review of a CPS decision not to bring charges or to terminate all proceedings; however, the scheme only applies to decisions made on or after 5 June 2013.

Cases will be considered if:

- The report is about an alleged sexual offence against the victim/survivor.
- The victim/survivor is referring to a report previously made to the police about the sexual offence.
- A decision to take no further action was taken by the police or by the CPS.
- The alleged sexual offences were committed when the victim/survivor was under 18 years of age.
- The alleged offender may still pose a risk.
- The alleged offence was committed in England and Wales.
- The case was investigated and marked no further action by police or CPS before 5 June 2013.

It is important to note that even if the victim or survivor has previously asked the police or the CPS to look at the decision they made previously, their case will still be considered.

Cases will not be considered if:

- The victim or survivor hasn’t previously reported the matter to the police, as this will therefore be a new complaint that the police will need to investigate.
- New evidence has come to light prompting a fresh investigation by the police.

Continued on next page >

- The case was investigated and marked no further action by police or CPS *after 5 June 2013*.

Who is on the panel?

The panel consists of a Chief Crown Prosecutor, a chief police officer, a specialist prosecutor, an experienced child abuse police investigator, and an appropriate independent representative.

How do victims/survivors refer a case to the panel?

Cases can be referred to the panel directly through a dedicated email address: nationalpanel@npcc.police.uk.

Alternatively, the victim or survivor can also bring their previous complaint back to the police force or Crown Prosecution Service.



‘The so-called Black Sheep of the family’ An alternative view ?

If you look online, the meaning of the so-called Black Sheep of the family is deemed to be the person who has done something that brings embarrassment or shame to his or her family and are often ‘cast aside’ by others.

Hence “He’s/She’s the black sheep of the family”.

So, a question. Who has been labelled the black sheep in your family ?

Is it the person who disclosed or supported someone who disclosed ? The whistle-blower ? Has the outcome been that this person has now been cast in the role of someone who has brought shame to the family ?

Or is it the alleged offender ?

When there is a disclosure within a family, individuals will take sides and each will have a perspective on ‘who has brought shame’ – and rarely will they choose the same person.

One of our Members suggested that we highlight the concept of ‘black sheep’. It is an interesting issue in that it can be open to so many different interpretations.

If it is the victim/survivor who has been ‘cast out’ from the family when we speak of our truth – or for a behavioral response to trauma as a child, then yes, we should always be applauded for our bravery.



CIS'ters was set up in 1995 by Gillian, a victim/survivor of familial sexual abuse as a child.

As a designated self-help group we officially opened in September 1995 and individuals soon found their way to the small charity.

It was in either 1996 or 1997 that Gillian discovered that there was to be a national march and rally in London (marching from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square).

The annual event was (at that time) arranged by a small number of activists using the name CROSS. **CIS'ters** soon became part of the organising team (and on occasions we took on the role of organiser).

This is a picture of Gillian on the plinth at Trafalgar, where we joined voice with 100s of other victim / survivors from other groups, each with their own colourful banner. Many of the participating groups have folded during recent years, though some are still going strong (as we are).

The event ceased 20+ years ago when it became too expensive to organise (insurance etc.).

TOXIC FRIENDS ?

- Jealous of your success and happiness
- Try to make you feel uncomfortable around others
- Find ways to put you down
- Lack of empathy for other people's experiences

HEALTHY FRIENDS ?

- Support, encourage and celebrate your successes
- Treat you and others fairly regardless of who is in the room
- Make you feel safe and accepted even when you disagree
- Self-aware and respect the emotional, physical boundaries of others

Former Independent on Sunday and New Statesman editor Peter Wilby sentenced for viewing child abuse online (21/8/2023)

<https://pressgazette.co.uk/news/peter-wilby-sentenced/> By PA Media and Press Gazette

Former Independent on Sunday and New Statesman editor Peter Wilby has been given a suspended sentence for viewing child abuse online. The 78-year-old had 167 indecent images of children on his computer, according to the National Crime Agency (NCA).

When interviewed by police, Wilby admitted having viewed abuse material since the 90s and said he had a sexual interest in children.

Having worked as an education correspondent for various newspapers, Wilby joined The Independent on Sunday in 1990 and went on to become editor. He was also the editor of the New Statesman from 1998 to 2005 and has written various columns for publications including The Guardian, with work published as recently as November 2022.

Wilby was charged with three counts of making indecent images of children to which he later pleaded guilty, the NCA said. Investigators said he had been accessing the material online from his home in Essex.

At Chelmsford Crown Court, Essex, on 18/8/23, he was sentenced to ten months in prison, suspended for two years. He is also required to undertake 40 hours rehabilitation, is subject to a ten-year sexual harm prevention order and was placed on the sex offenders' register for five years.

Adam Sprague, operations manager at the National Crime Agency, said: "The material accessed by Wilby and recovered from his computer showed real children being cruelly and sexually abused.

"He was viewing this content while working as the editor of prominent national news outlets, a role in which he was entrusted to form the news agenda for the British public. A trust which he has greatly betrayed.

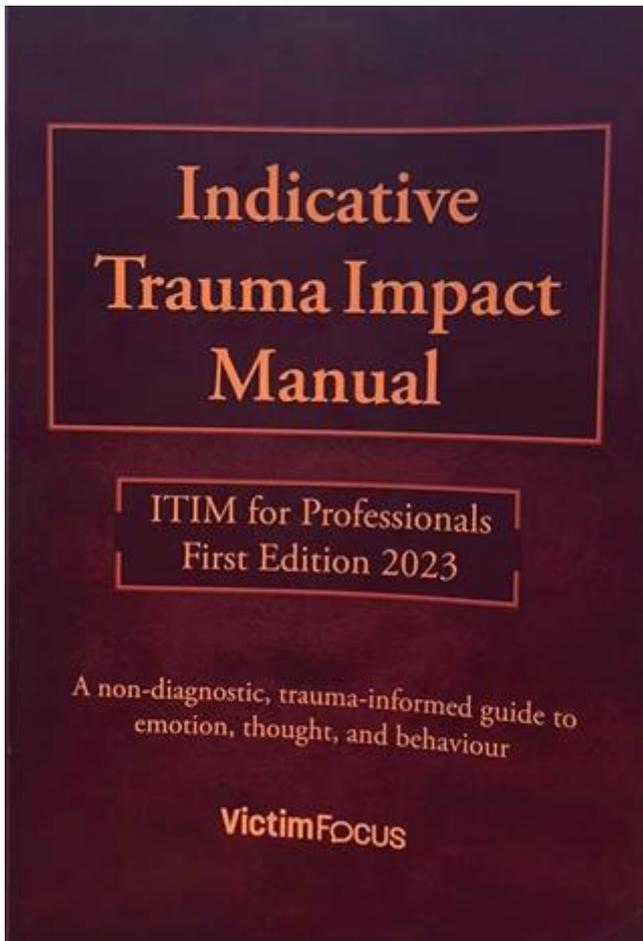
"While there is a global demand for this material, children will continue to be abused. The NCA is committed to tackling child sexual abuse in all its forms, to disrupt offenders and protect children."

The New Statesman said in a statement following the sentencing: "On 18 August it was reported that Peter Wilby, a former editor of the New Statesman, was convicted after he admitted viewing images of child sexual abuse. He was given a ten-month prison sentence, suspended for two years, at Chelmsford Crown Court.

"The New Statesman staff and management had no knowledge of Wilby's arrest or charges before they were reported yesterday, and are shocked and appalled to learn of these horrifying crimes.

"Wilby, 78, was New Statesman editor from 1998 to 2005, and remained a contributor."

Comment from Gillian, **CIS'ters**: Another example of low sentences not reflecting the full impact that someone has had in not only the role of actively creating and viewing images – but also in a position of power where they were able to dissuade others from introducing robust prevention measures to protect children from abuse. There needs to be a full review of Sentencing Guidelines to ensure that they truly match the gravity of the crimes committed. Until then, our current judicial system continues to be broken and despite what we might be told, is no longer the envy of the world. What do YOU think ??



Produced by Dr Jessica Taylor and Jaimi Shrive, from a training organisation called VictimFocus.

For any individual who has a work related role, helping and supporting victims of trauma – this is proving to be a useful and popular manual.

The Manual explains and lists over 500 traumas, trauma responses and coping mechanisms in alphabetical order, in essence a trauma dictionary.

The authors explain that it is like a dictionary of trauma and that it does not seek to diagnose, label, pathologies or categorise – just to explain why those responses and coping mechanisms may happen, and why people respond to trauma and distress in those ways.

They also reflect that the Manual is an easy to understand and simple in that there are no clusters, categorisations, symptoms or disorders – just information about natural, and normal behaviours and thoughts during and after distress and trauma.

For more information > <https://www.victimfocus.com/>

I often look at this picture and wonder 'WHO AM I' ?



At various times in my life, especially over the last 30 years, I have unpeeled the outer layers and sought to re-anchor myself. Some layers re-attached and others cast aside, perhaps with regret but often with a big sigh of relief.

Who am I ? How to survive the hurt and hidden pain and then exposed for the raw-ness and breadth of the betrayal I endured as a child. Still within a society that (seemingly) continues to judge and create additional barriers, where previously there might not have been some.

A fight to access services, a fight to maintain financially resilient services, a (new) challenge to safeguard biological female only services. Have I the energy, the will, the commitment, the determination ? Why is it a fight when before it was a right.....is it still a right, or has that been eroded, and if so by who..... which of us gave it away.....?. Is it that I stood still and the world changed around me, or is it that our voices became drowned out, as they did when we were children.....are we the invisible children once again ? In addition to 'who am I ?..... we now have 'what am I?'... questions multiply.

When my bones are unearthed by anthropologists in the centuries ahead they will have no uncertainty about 'what I am' though possibly know less about 'who' I was. So why is there this uncertainty today, and why does it feel as if the voice of a community (i.e. what happened when women said they had been victims of incest decades ago) is once again (as it was when we were children) silenced with the wave of a hand, the flick of a wrist.

No victim is more important than another – but progress ought not to be at the cost of that which is already there, and vital, and necessary..... it needs to be 'as well as' and not 'instead of'.....

Am I alone in this question ?? Gillian (Founder of **CIS**ters in September 1995)

EMDR

Increasingly EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) is being raised as the 'go to' topic, particularly for those who have experienced 'trauma'

One of our members, who has a trauma diagnosis and also is on the autistic spectrum is seeking feedback from other Members, as she has recently been offered EMDR but also has a long history of accessing local mental health services and feeling failed over decades by various therapeutic approaches (each introduced to her as 'the answer') and a mixture of helpful and unhelpful clinicians.

Below is her plea to other Members.

"Can I ask if anyone has experienced EMDR ? I am quite frightened by the thought of it. Any help would be greatly appreciated. I feel alone in my quest for a service that fits me and my needs, rather than me fitting what is on offer.

In addition, I can't understand why the community (of survivors) is so hidden. Not all of us want or can hide. Others I know do like to retain their anonymity, which is their right. I disclosed as a teenager to protect others and the abuser was convicted. But it feels as if I am in the minority in 'being open'. In my specific case, police, social services and the NHS made many mistakes in responding to my family, and myself

Not all of us have the ability to remain 'anonymous'. I have spent most of my life as someone who wants others to know and acknowledge that I am a survivor. I broke silence to protect other family members but the sacrifice is now destroying me. My ongoing challenge, my battle, and need to be so open is that I want, and need, redress and reparation for the harm that statutory services have caused.

Surely survivors shouldn't end up regretting the brave and courageous act of disclosure ? Those of us who can speak openly about the abuse we experienced – are (in my own experience and opinion) treated very poorly by society, and in some cases by other survivors.

I do respect other survivors, it is just that I find the 'not saying it out loud (in public)' very confusing.

Plus, survivors are so invisible, so hidden – it means that I feel that trans are seen as more important, because their voice is being heard. Whereas mine feels 'alone' because it lacks the volume of those who prefer not to openly disclose that they were abused as children.

I do hope you will all respect my honesty." Sent in by Carrie-Ann (who joined in 2002)

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

The toolkit continues to grow with new sections being added – plus earlier ones being enriched by the feedback from Members who are participants in the pilot stage. It continues to feel a very much worthwhile project and there are ten individuals with 'lived-experience' who are contributing to the content, making it very much 'for and by' survivors within **CIS**ters.

On 12th October 2023 we held a one day conference, as part of our 'professional training' for workers in other organisations/sectors – and we included the toolkit project as part of the programme. Feedback from professionals who attended were all very complimentary on the progress, and also many stated an interest in knowing more about the product. That in itself is a complement and credit to the team.

Mandy & Gillian gave a presentation on the toolkit at our professionals conference on 12th October 2023.



<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress/managing-stress-and-building-resilience/>

Being prepared for periods of stress can make it easier to get through them. And knowing how to manage our wellbeing can help us recover after a stressful event. Some of us may refer to our ability to manage stress as our resilience.

There are things we can try to build our resilience against stress. But there are also factors that might make it harder to be resilient, such as experiencing discrimination or lacking support.

The terms 'resilience' and 'managing stress' can mean different things to different people. We might understand them differently because our experiences shape how we feel stress, and how we respond to it.

Some people may think that our response to stress is something that we can all easily control. But this is not true. There are some causes of stress that are beyond our control. And some ways of managing stress and building resilience are not always available to us.

This makes dealing with stress very personal – it may be harder for some of us than for others.

Taking care of your wellbeing can help you feel more able to manage stress. Different things will work for different people, but these are some ideas you could try:

- Be kind to yourself. Learning to be kinder to yourself can help with how you feel in different situations. Try to take breaks in your day for things you enjoy. And reward yourself for your achievements, even if they seem small.
- Try to find time to relax. This might feel hard if you can't do anything to stop a situation that is making you stressed. But if you can allow yourself a short break, this can help with how you feel. See our pages on [relaxation](#) for some tips and exercises.
- Develop your interests and hobbies. Spending time on things you enjoy could help distract you from a stressful situation. If stress is making you feel [lonely](#) or isolated, shared hobbies can also be a good way to meet new people.
- Spend time in nature. This can help to reduce stress and improve wellbeing. You could try going for a walk in a green space, taking care of indoor plants, or spending time with animals. Our [nature and mental health](#) pages have more information.
- Look after your physical health. Getting enough [sleep](#), staying [physically active](#) and eating a balanced diet can make stress easier to manage. Stress can sometimes make these things difficult to look after. But even small changes can make a big difference.



Criminal Injuries Compensation
Authority

<https://www.gov.uk/claim-compensation-criminal-injury>

The online application system changed on 15th September 2023. Prior to this it was not possible to 'save progress' whilst completing the form. If the applicant had to stop part-way through, the system would timeout and then all of the data would need to be re-entered. Many of those wishing to apply would find it too frustrating and give up. BUT THE NEW ONLINE SYSTEM will now allow applicants to save progress after the initial questions have been answered. **CICA says:**

We have also integrated a 'save and return later' function for incomplete applications. The application form removes as many potential triggers for re-traumatisation as possible while ensuring that we have enough information to process applications. The (revised) service is the result of extensive user research and usability testing involving victims of violent crime, frontline victim support services and other stakeholders.

Between 1970 and 2015, the Roman Catholic Church received more than 900 complaints involving over 3,000 instances of child sexual abuse against more than 900 individuals connected to the Church, including priests, monks and volunteers. In the same period, there were 177 prosecutions resulting in 133 convictions.

This report was published in **November 2020**. You can access a copy via <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/roman-catholic-church.html>

Addendum as at 31st October 2023 - CIS'ters recently heard via The Survivors Trust that the Catholic Church in England and Wales are currently seeking to establish a network of Counselling and Psychotherapy Services for victim survivors of abuse. At this stage we don't know the timetable but given that the IICSA report was published THREE years ago, progress has been remarkably slow.



Transforming children's crime statistics for England and Wales: March 2023

Transforming the Children's Crime Survey for England and Wales (CCSEW) is important for improving the quality and availability of statistics relating to children's risk of being a victim of crime and other harmful experiences. Response rates for children sampled from households taking part in the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) have notably fallen in recent years, making it difficult to collect sufficient data to produce timely outputs to meet users' needs.

To overcome these challenges, ONS are undertaking ambitious plans to move data collection for children online and separate it from the adult survey collection. Their vision for a transformed survey is to sample children directly from administrative sources, rather than through households responding to the CSEW. This approach provides potential long-term benefits, including:

- a larger and more representative sample, with potential for including children aged 16 and 17 years
- improved quality and granularity of estimates
- a shorter data collection period and more timely estimates
- opportunities for longitudinal data collection

To learn more about how ONS are progressing their initiative, and how you can take part (some of our Members have already been part of the process) – you can access more information via

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/transformingchildrenscrimestatisticsforenglandandwales/march2023>



The Online Safety Bill passed its final Parliamentary debate on Tuesday 19th September 2023 and is now ready to become law.

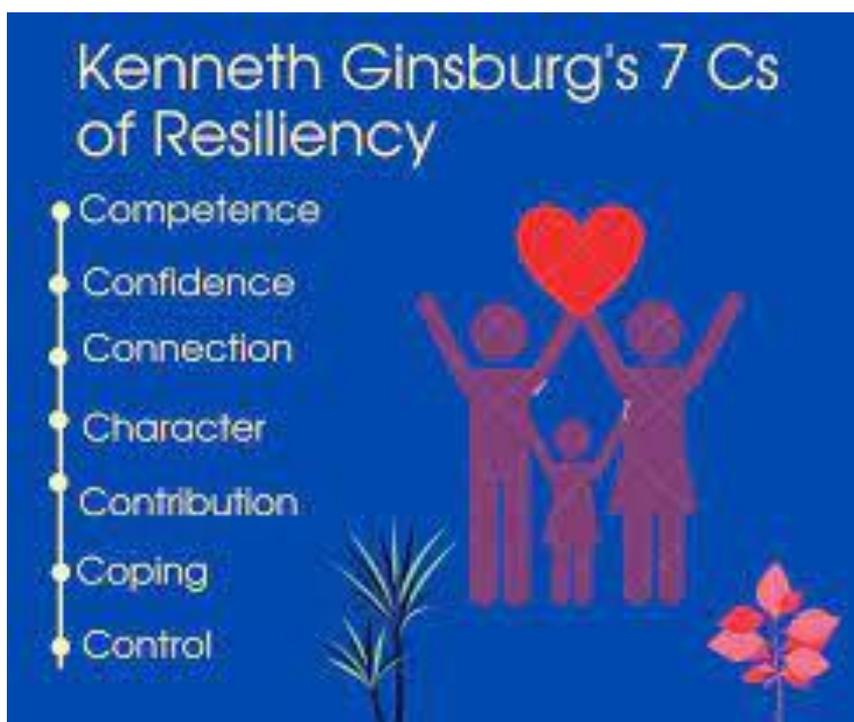
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britain-makes-internet-safer-as-online-safety-bill-finished-and-ready-to-become-law> states that:

The bill takes a zero-tolerance approach in order to protect children and makes sure social media platforms are held responsible for the content they host. If they do not act rapidly to prevent and remove illegal content and stop children seeing material that is harmful to them, such as bullying, they will face significant fines that could reach billions of pounds. In some cases, their bosses may even face prison.

This has been a controversial legislative introduction with views differing on whether this is still too little, or too much. Whichever side of the debate you sit, what is clear is that children and others have been subjected to adverse imagery and behaviours, with lifelong consequences. So, better something – than nothing – and laws can always be reviewed and adapted if the need is evidenced.

The Online Safety Act makes companies that operate a wide range of popular online services legally responsible for keeping people, especially children, safe online. Services must do this by assessing and managing safety risks arising from content and conduct on their sites and apps.

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2023/safer-life-online-for-people-in-uk>





Feedback from the conference (for professionals) that we hosted on 12th October 2023

We were very appreciative of a specific grant that we received from Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation to help cover the cost of a major conference we held in Eastleigh, Hampshire.

Delegates were from a range of professional backgrounds, including ambulance service, police, social services, and 3rd sector. In addition to presentations from Survivors we were fortunate to also receive presentations from: Kate Davies OBE (NHSEngland), Anna Gliniski (CSACentre), Prof Laura O'Doherty (Coventry Univ) plus Julie Lloyd (Clinical Psychologist).

As an event which was organised by those with 'lived-experience' it was also really good to share the physical space with so many delegates, rather than the online events which appear still to be the norm.

We are also appreciative of Jacqui Scott, the CEO of HIWCF who opened the event for us, plus our two Patrons who took part in extending our welcome (Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery who Chaired and kept us all to time, plus Virginia Lovell who closed the event on our behalf).

Feedback from delegates clearly evidences that the event was well received and that they left pondering on new insights and questions. The two that stood out the most:

“Childhood lasts a lifetime”

“when one of them is one of us; and one of us is one of them (the title of one of the presentations) – and left me reflecting on why it is so difficult for statutory/other professionals to disclose being a childhood victim and why it is so difficult for colleagues to hear such disclosures without making adverse judgements”

“The openness of those with lived-experience sharing with us, made me appreciate how easy it is to misunderstand and what more needs to happen to improve service.”



Op Bluestone Soteria

Survey is still open – deadline end of June 2024

In our previous newsletter we advised Members that academics at City University (London) had been commissioned (by the government) to undertake a major police experience survey for victims of rape and other sexual offences.

If not already, and if appropriate, please do consider completing the survey which is anonymous. You can access it via <http://www.tinyurl.com/1experiencesurvey>

It is a collaborative initiative, bringing together police forces with academics and policy leads to use evidence and new insight, enabling forces to transform their response to rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO).

The authors of the research interim reports, arising from survey results thus far have said:

“We would like to thank the survivors for their time and courage in completing this survey. We cannot put into words the gratitude and humility we felt when reading every survey entry, knowing that someone somewhere had gifted us with their knowledge from lived experience, and trusted us with their story. Many expressed that they are contributing to this research in the hope that doing so could improve things for others.”

The latest report also states that:

“The way police interact with survivors and approach their cases can be life changing. Survey respondents detailed how officers have protected them from further sexual violence or abuse, and some provided moving accounts of officers treating them with tremendous kindness, empathy, and care, and of officers going above and beyond to ensure a thorough investigation and to secure a conviction. Some survivors said this saved their lives. These respondents expressed deep gratitude to the officers. Sadly, they were a minority.”

The latest report documents the findings of the ongoing online survey of survivors of rape and sexual assault and their experiences of the police in England and Wales, as part of Operation Soteria Bluestone. It contains the voices of the 1,968 survivors with police experience who completed the survey between 16 January – 30 June 2023. A further 190 survivors whose cases are not known to the police shared insights into why they chose not to report.

The ultimate product from the initiative is the development of a national operating model to be used by all 43 Home Office police forces. In July 2023 new insights and ways of working and responding to victims arising from [Operation Soteria was rolled out](#) across all 43 police forces in England and Wales.

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>

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 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.



I wish the world felt safer

The world feels unsafe, not just my little bit of it – but the whole.
I wish it would feel safer, my little bit, and the whole.
But my resilience is depleted, on this I know for sure
So my ability to change the world, and my bit, is compromised – I know.
Perhaps I will take my time, to recharge my batteries and perspective
To reflect on what I can achieve, rather than what not.
I wish the world felt safer
Or just my little bit
My focus now needs to be on the
here and now
and leave the ‘what will be’ until then. *From an Anon Member*



Rain lashing, puddles of rain

The skies have opened, once again. Rain, torrential rain.
Upwards there is greyness.
Wet, Desolate. Darkness. Despair.
Some of us prefer the summer, the heat, the light.
Others prefer the winter, snuggles up with books and TV
But rain is seldom welcome, unless it is needed
To make the garden flourish or to refill empty reservoirs
But for me, there is only greyness
Until the sun peeps out to shine on me.
From an Anon Member



Has your case been refused because of this scenario ?

When the 2003 Sexual Offences Act was passed it included some new offences (including a recognition of grooming), and it also meant that prior legislation (from earlier Sexual Offences Act 1956) was also updated. However, one small (but hugely important) area was not updated.

According to our contact with Dino Nocivelli, a specialist solicitor who works for the firm of Leigh Day, there is a segment of current legislation that is still discriminating against many female victims within the following specific scenario.

The reality is that many underage girls are victims of sophisticated grooming techniques and might be in denial about their own exploitation. However, if they subsequently realise that they were groomed (and that experience (of underage sexual intercourse) took place between 1956-2004 and at the time they were aged between the age of 13-16) this is where the legislation fails them. As, for these individuals – the law states that they only had one year (after the event) to report being a victim, to the police.

If this was your experience, and the police have told you that it is too late to report then please contact Dino Nocivelli (via Leigh Day firm of solicitors) as this inequality needs to be challenged and there needs to be continued challenge and a call out for a Judicial Review of the legislation. Currently this situation feels discriminatory on grounds of both sex and also age.

According to Dino Nocivelli a number of women he has spoken to have been unable to proceed with rape charges because of “consent” and this is despite him asking for reviews on this legislative point. The individuals affected have also faced this issue with CICA and the ability for under 16 year olds to be able to “consent in fact”, even if they cannot consent “in law” -

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/aug/24/catholic-church-victim-blaming-children-consent-sex-abuse>

There is another article in the Guardian from the same academic -

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/aug/09/case-highlights-need-for-legal-reform>

Dino Nocivelli would like to hear from any victim who has tried to report to the police and been denied this right, based on the criteria above.

An Act of Parliament creates a new law or changes an existing law. An Act is a Bill that has been approved by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords and been given Royal Assent by the Monarch. Taken together, Acts of Parliament make up what is known as Statute Law in the UK.



Please contact us to find out what actions members of the public can take to lobby Members of Parliament etc. <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/acts/>

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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