



if Only... Charity Annual Report June 2021 to May 2022

"A RIPPLE IN THE POND ..."

Summary

If Only... Charity provides support to adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. This report reflects on the Charity's second year of operations. From last year's initial start, this has seen the reach of the Charity grow as a ripple across a pond...

Despite a second year of Covid restrictions, the work has expanded both online and face-to-face. Daily messages of hope and encouragement are reaching a growing number of survivors. Their impact is reflected in hundreds of messages we receive confirming their life-giving benefits on survivors' long healing journeys. Of particular note is the growing survivor's community, the number of survivors receiving regular direct support, and the depth and scale of messages of appreciation received from survivors affirming the impact of the work of the Charity in sustaining them on their healing journey.

The year saw the first face-to-face events with the first two Survivor Retreats. These provided a safe and peaceful context to meet other survivors for the first time and to receive encouragement and life skills input to equip them on the way forwards.

The year saw an increase in financial and in-kind donations both from direct supporters and some employer corporate social responsibility funds. These more than covered the Charity costs for the year, including the retreats, adding a small surplus to the reserve for future projects.

The Charity has sought, in the words of Henry Kissinger,

‘to help people reach from where they are,
to where they have never been
and, sometimes, can scarcely imagine going.’

The feedback that you can see below shows how this is fruitfully taking place.

With many thanks to all those who contributed in every way to this year's successes and fruitfulness.

See below for full details of all this and more ...

Background

An ambitious idea based on an overwhelming desire to help adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse (CSA). A big dream that seemed totally unrealistic but that has set us on the path that has led us to where we are now.

Through personal experience we discovered that there is very little help available for adults suffering silently the often-unbearable trauma caused by childhood sexual abuse. Very few therapists seem to have a proper understanding of the necessary skills required for working with CSA survivors.

The fear and shame that often results from CSA, means that many survivors find it difficult to speak about what happened to them. It is also extremely difficult for survivors to trust others, especially strangers. The NHS system falls short of providing the long-term trauma-informed counselling needed by survivors and the judicial system all too often does not provide the support that survivors not only badly need, but so deserve. Those who are close to a survivor of CSA are often perplexed and confused when their partner/child/friend or other relative suffers a breakdown after speaking about their experience for the first time.

Society failed these people when they were children. The vulnerable in society should always be protected. The statistics are nothing short of alarming. It is estimated that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience CSA before the age of 18. Sadly, it is likely that the true numbers are higher!

We decided to help survivors by letting them know that there is someone acknowledging their pain and believing their story. To try to provide resources that could be found in one place. To put out the message to all survivors that it is not their fault and that healing and recovery is possible!

The story continues ...

It is hard to believe that we have completed our second year of if Only... charity. Through first-hand experience of the healing journey, our work continues and lessons are learnt.

We have been overwhelmed by the responses received from some of the survivors who we have helped along the way. Feedback is quoted below. It has been so encouraging and has spurred us on to continue with this crucial work.

We are totally convinced that what survivors need is not that different from others who have mental health issues. All people need to be treated with dignity and empathy. This may sound like an obvious statement and it is. But sadly, this is not what is happening.

There is not enough of the right kind of support available.

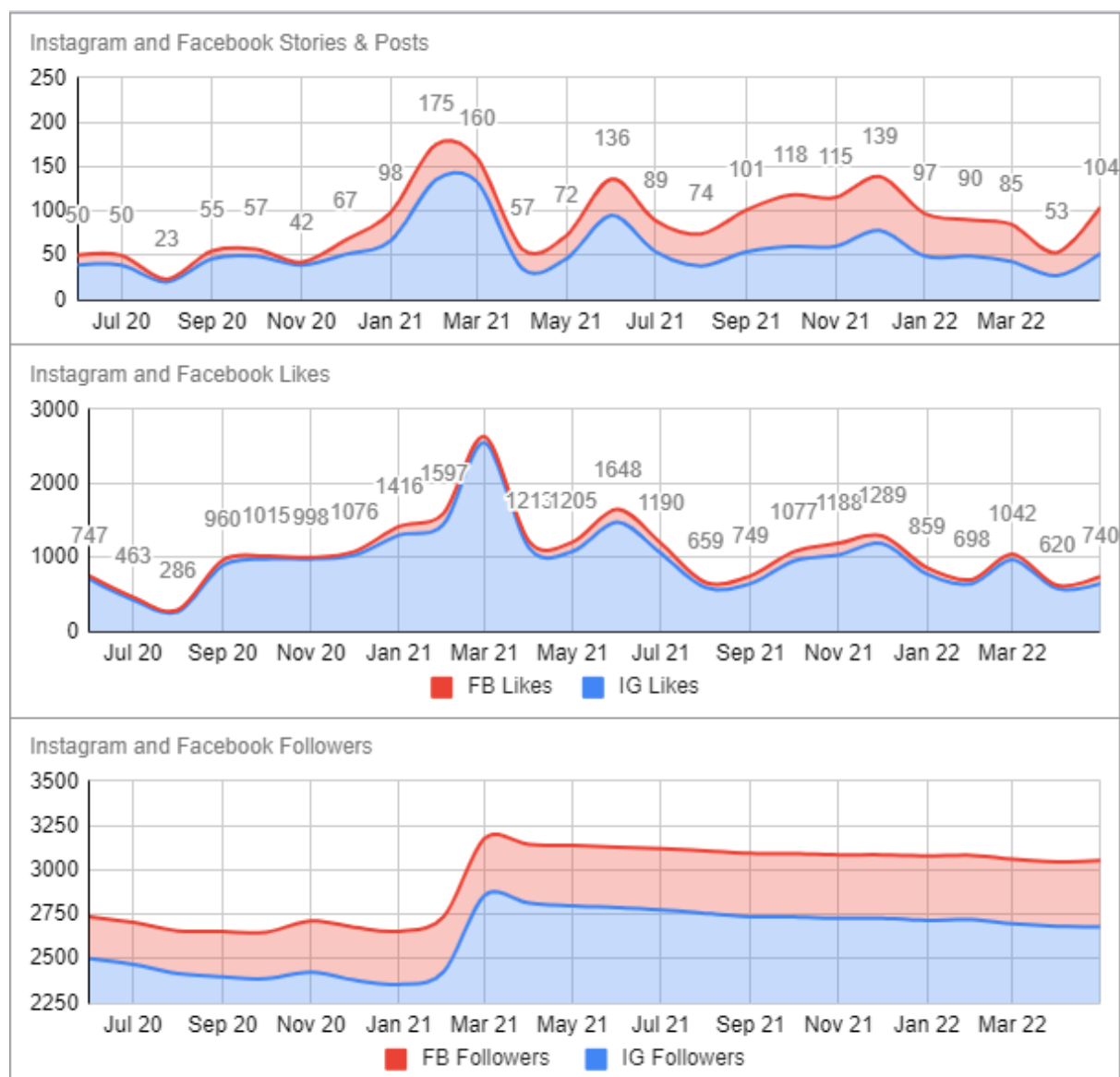
Messages of Encouragement and Hope

We have sustained our social media presence and deepened its impact. We put out regular support messages of hope and encouragement to sustain survivors on their healing journey. These are on [Instagram](#), on [Facebook](#) and on our [website](#). These messages of hope and encouragement have proved to be an overwhelming success.

Instagram followers have grown from an average of 2,518 in the 1st year to 2,728 this year.

These have generated over 10,000 'Likes' and over 600 survivor response messages. We have replied to every message we have ever received.

We have grown by 60% the number of survivors who have been brave enough to interact with us regularly. We check in with them typically on a weekly basis. We have measured the success of our posts and messages by monitoring the numbers of likes and other interactions on our monthly evidence of achievement. Please see graphs below:



Survivor Feedback

Most valuable are the depth of the message that we receive back indicating how the impact of the expressions of encouragement and hope that have been provided. Such as :

"This charity has been my lifeline and without them I don't know how I would have coped some days. I'm always checked in on. They have always made me feel safe, heard and understood. Anyone who has access to this charity, will be very lucky because they are truly amazing people."

"You have made a huge difference in my life.
Feeling heard and supported and knowing
you're here if I need you, is huge to me."

"When I first heard about If Only charity, I was really happy because during years of struggling to come to terms with what happened to me during my childhood and the trauma that followed years later, it was difficult to find any kind of support. Then Jo and Karen (angels) came into my life in the form of "If Only..." and I suddenly felt like I wasn't alone. I found people who feel the same as I do; for years I felt like I was the only person in the world to feel the way I do, and now, all of a sudden, I'm not alone. Jo and Karen are there for you day and night, nothing is too much for them.

I have been lucky enough to go on one of If Only retreats and it was so relaxing and life changing. It was held in the most beautiful location in the south east of England and having people there who understood me was wonderful. I started my journey with If Only as a survivor meeting fellow survivors and ended up making friends for life.

Anyone looking for support in their survival journey should not hesitate to reach out to If Only, they can provide you with the support you need and deserve, and lead you to further support if it is required."

"My thoughts on if Only... - would first of all like to say a massive thank you, your post chats and support have been amazing. I found "if Only..." when I was at a real bad point and suffering badly from depression due to flashbacks, and questioning myself daily on if it was my own fault and it was taking its toll on my own family that I have.

Thanks to if Only... and their constant support I know I'm not to blame and I'm not alone and if I need someone to talk to they are there. They are truly amazing, helpful, supportive and caring. I have a young family and they have

always been a message away when I am having bad days with anxiety and flashbacks.

Thanks to "if Only..." I found the strength to be honest and open and talk to my partner of 13 years about what I went through and this was majorly down to the support of "if Only..." and helping me to understand that it wasn't me wasn't my fault and I can't thank you enough for that have helped in so many ways and continue to do so.

I will forever be grateful for finding you and being able to feel safe as I have very bad trust issues and don't trust easily, but with " if only..." I feel like it's a safe open space to talk or not talk.

Just read the supportive posts and know they are always there and understand you and your feelings. Knowing I have them is a great help as I am a mother who due to my past is very overprotective of my children and always wants to keep them safe. "If Only..." is always there on hand to talk about any issues I may have or even just for a hello how are you which is truly amazing and so lovely.

I honestly, hand on heart, can say I don't know where I would be without them and I will forever be grateful for finding them for all their help and support and just being there. Thank you so much once again for everything."

Survivors Community

Through social media messaging exchanges such as those above, messages connecting with survivors, letting them know that they are not alone, that it was not their fault and that healing is possible, have built a supportive online community ...

Key community feedback messages from the Retreats:

"It was so comforting to be amongst other survivors, it made me feel easy about talking about my journey, which in itself was therapeutic. In addition, the surroundings were so beautiful, calming and relaxing, it made the whole experience rewarding"

"I really enjoyed the retreat. The setting was beautiful. I really enjoyed chatting and the relaxed environment with no pressure to do anything. On returning home I reflected on how I spoke about my feelings and felt good for doing so as it isn't often I do so."

"I was very apprehensive about coming but I am so glad that I did. Coming to the retreat has opened up a world of opportunities for me and I am now loving life and looking forward to going out again. Not all the time I am still a work in progress, but life is so much better than before."

"The retreat has really helped me feel less alone and part of something."

"Meeting other survivors was very powerful"

"It was nice to be able to speak openly and not feel judged"

We look to progressively extend face to face workshops, retreats and events whilst continuing to ensure that it is Covid-safe to do so.

Collaborations

The people who have felt inspired by if Only,,, and have given their time, have also found it helpful for their own healing and recovery to collaborate with us:

Continuing Collaborations:

Books inspired by their authors since the launch of if Only... - Two books have been published by our followers:

A children's book, to help encourage children to be brave enough to tell if an adult does something that makes them feel uncomfortable and avoid or uncover CSA.

<https://littlebeam.co.uk/product/sophie-shares-her-secret/>

The second is a compilation of personal stories of individual survivors of CSA. All profits from the first year of sales are being donated to if Only...

[The Survivor Memoirs](#)

Tee shirts, Sweatshirts and Teddy bears - A small business owner has created designs for us using our brand. (All profits are being donated to if Only...)

<https://bohokidclothing.com/collections/if-only/products/if-only-tee>

We are also very grateful for the contributions of volunteers who have helped fulfil the objectives of the Charity with assistance in all the areas of Website development & Social Media.

New Collaboration:

Lorna Kimpton ...Lorna, a very gifted artist has donated specially designed paintings, (including one that we use as part of our logo)

We sell her hand painted Christmas baubles and the profits from the sales are donated to the charity.

Resources for Survivors

Building up and sharing **Resources** to help survivors on their healing journey. Our [website](#) is being prepared for a major upgrade into a very gentle user-friendly set up where survivors, their supporters and families can find a wide range of information in one place.

All resources are reviewed and verified before sharing. This is a lengthy procedure, but important that we do our utmost to ensure that we only signpost survivors to worthwhile support.

These include other websites, charities or organisations, books, podcasts, videos and any form of helpful information that we can find.

New resources have been selected for publication in the website upgrade planned for the new Charity year.

Comfort packs ... We created our comfort packs to send to survivors as a way of showing them that someone is thinking of them and cares about them. It has been well documented by other organisations supporting survivors, that having a few very personal possessions with us, can be very comforting and help with “grounding” when needed.

We were very grateful to find someone who was willing to make the bags from the material that we supplied, meaning we could provide them at very little cost. We fill the bags with a notebook and pen, lavender pillow, lapel pin, small pack of tissues and post-it notes. We send each recipient a personal note of encouragement and support. Our suggestion is that survivors add their own personal items such as a photograph or some other item/s that bring them feelings of reassurance or comfort.

We have distributed a few comfort packs at no cost to the recipient and their feedback has been fantastic.

Events

Retreats

Our female survivor retreats take place in a quiet and secluded setting called Othona. Othona Community is a Christian community set on the Essex coast near to Southminster. It is accessible by car and there is a train station a few miles away. We are able to offer participants a lift from the station if they need it.

Othona itself is open to people of all faiths and none. It is the perfect location to step out of everyday life and enjoy peace and tranquillity in a simple lifestyle secluded and surrounded by nature.

When we hold our retreats, we stay in our own private block of rooms. The management is very kind and helpful. All meals and snacks are included and are fresh, healthy and nourishing.

The retreats are aimed at those who have reached sufficient stability on their healing journey to benefit from, and contribute to, meeting with other survivors.

Food and basic accommodation is offered for a short period of time. We also arrange a few activities such as exercises for well being and relaxation, baking and art. We go for walks together and this helps everyone to communicate naturally with each other. We discuss as a group, any personal tools that we find helpful, including keeping a personal journal.

We endeavour to ensure that anyone who wishes to join us on a retreat is able to do so. We ask that those who can afford to, pay for their accommodation (or contribute whatever they can). However we are also aware that many survivors find it difficult to work and struggle financially, so we seek to subsidise those that are unable to pay for themselves.

The retreats have been abundantly fruitful for all those who have participated. See key feedback messages above.

Wave of Light

Candles are a symbol of hope for a lot of people. Darkness can feel foreboding especially for a lot of childhood sexual abuse survivors, due to the association with bad things happening at night.

We made our own if Only...candles and invited people to light a candle simultaneously and post pictures of them on social media. It created a symbol of unity and we have adopted this as an annual event on 10th February.

In-person Contact

Informal coffee times with survivors provided initial first survivor-survivor contact points. All of these were helpful for the individuals, and without exception elicited volunteering to assist and make a contribution to help the healing journey of others.

Future Events

Further Retreats are planned for this coming year including a reunion in November for those who attended previous Retreats. Future Retreats will provide the opportunity for new people to join us and receive the significant benefits experienced by others.

Peer Support Groups - We encouraged the participants from our first retreats, to stay in touch with each other via social media. From the feedback we receive, it is clear that the mutual support is very important and encouraging.

We plan to take the peer support groups a stage further, by offering workshops in small groups, as a way of survivors meeting each other and forming supporting friendships.

We plan to raise funds for the workshops from grants as well as quizzes and raffles etc...

Items for Sale

We developed a range of items that we believe will help remind survivors that they are not alone and can at times be comforting. Items include:

- ★ Acrylic clouds - that can be hung from the car mirror or other places
- ★ Candles - to symbolise hope (light in the darkness)
- ★ Tee shirts and sweatshirts with our logo
- ★ Fridge magnets
- ★ Lapel pins
- ★ Christmas baubles
- ★ Teddy bears
- ★ Gift boxes containing some of the items listed above

In addition to immediate sales, we are well resourced with material for future sale to supporters and for gifts to survivors.

Finance

The survivors community has inspired people to run their own fund raising activities for the Charity this year.

Overall for the year the Charity raised £1,673 including: Individual Donations (£802), Individual Events (£233), Corporate Donations (£500) and Sales (£114).

The Charity spent £2,032 predominantly on Retreats (£928), products for sale and distribution to survivors.

The Charity's funds were largely sustained through the year including the commitment of a further corporate donation of £1,000 which will be received in the new financial year.

The closing balance was £5,758 together with materials inc. lapel pins for further distribution.

The funds are provisioned for further Retreats, face-to-face workshops, continuing support to survivors e.g. Comfort Packs, plus investment in increasing the appeal, reach and impact of the online messaging and survivor resources on the website.

Fundraising will continue through current channels plus grant funding and events.

Governance

The charity continued its full recognition with the Charity Commission, with timely submission and compliance with all requirements. This year saw the full transition of both financial and technology accounts to charity status.

The Charity's three Trustees continued to oversee the work of the Charity, with other volunteers assisting from time to time.

The Charity's rigorous policies, procedures and risk management continue to provide a safe and resilient context within which the Charity can exercise its gifts and calling to fulfil its purpose. This was particularly well exercised with full risk management ensuring the well-being of staff and participants in this year's new venture of face-to-face retreats.

Next Steps

We thank all those who have contributed to the successful launch and growth of the Charity in its second year.

As we move into our third year the Charity is aiming to ...

- Grow our community of survivors and supporters through a redesigned website rich in resources and through further enhancements to social media impact ...
- To seek Grant Funding in addition to current revenue sources ...
- To launch a survivor's peer-support group ...
- To continue Retreats providing stepping stones for survivors
- Continue to expand the growth of the community of survivors and their supporters
- Extensive development of website content and style to grow the survivors community and provide easier access to more resources
- Fundraising to help provide further resources for survivors
- Raising awareness of the needs of survivors to help improve services

if Only... Charity - Income & Expenditure Report - Fiscal Year 2021/22

	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Donations	£1,535.87		Personal donations, Partnerships + £500 Blakes Envelopes
Sales	£114.64		
Events		£928.96	2 x Retreats
Materials		£354.56	Comfort packs and other gifts of encouragement to survivors
Shipping		£107.86	Comfort packs, gifts and prizes shipping
Admin	£23.25	£640.86	Insurance, Web hosting + New Web design initiation
Total	£1,673.76	£2,032.24	

Opening Balance	£6,117.25
Nett Income (Expenditure)	(£358.48)
Closing Balance	£5,758.77

Notes:

Committed donation due from PIB Insurance Brokers Community Trust
£1,000.00