

solace

surviving exile and persecution

Solace Newsletter Spring 2020



Foreword from Solace CEO Kathryn Ashworth

Solace has faced some upheaval over the last six months having moved out of our premises, and into our temporary home across two venues, and multiple community delivery sites. Then of course we are all now facing the totally unexpected challenges of Coronavirus.

Thanks must go to the entire Solace team of staff and volunteers for taking all this in their stride and facing the unprecedented situation with good humour and an incredibly positive spirit.

Our values at Solace are to strive for professional excellence, kindness and compassion, and keeping the client at the heart of everything we do. The situation we have been in for the last 6 months has made us focus on these values and has really shaped the way we have responded to the various challenges we have faced. We can honestly say that our values are not just words written in our policies and plans, but are genuine demonstrable values that affect the way we work every day.

Well done to every single person in the Solace Team.

Kathryn Ashworth



News From Around Solace



Twitter Takeovers

Solace staff take turns to run our Twitter account, and for some this is stepping outside of their comfort zone!

This idea behind the project is to further our ambition of demonstrating out professional expertise in our clinical field.

Click the button to see what our staff have to say.

[Twitter](#)



Welcome Agnes

My name is Agnes Ndebele, I recently joined the Solace Children and Family-Wellbeing Project team in March.

I am not new to this project - it was initiated as a pilot whilst I was previously employed by Haven Project in Hull - one of the three partners (with Solace and Sheffield Refugee Council).

I have a one-year old granddaughter, I enjoy watching her grow.

[Read Agnes's full introduction here](#)



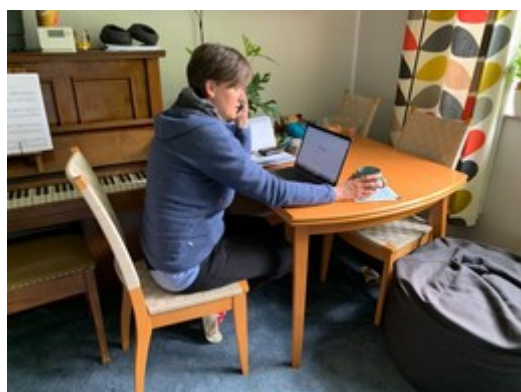
Group Sessions

We have been trialing our group sessions for stress management using Zoom video calling. We have run successful sessions in Bradford, Sheffield and Leeds.

Hosted by Nick (pictured), these sessions have gone well with participants able to hear and see the instructions and feel connected to each other.

[Relaxation Exercises](#)

Sarah Blossom, Solace Senior Therapist. Working in the Covid-19 Lockdown



Working for Solace during lockdown has presented some very interesting challenges and led to a very rapid change in our way of working that no-one expected. Initially we were faced with many dilemmas over how to continue to do our work while not meeting face to face with clients. Most perplexing was probably how to continue to support clients who benefited from the hands-on therapy that Nick and Janet provide.

My observation from my own experience, and from listening to supervisees, was that most people were energised to rise to the new challenge but then after a few weeks began to feel the impact more acutely on their energy levels.

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Communicating without face to face interaction

As a therapist, like others, I noticed very quickly that my method of conveying empathy and my ability to observe and contain the client was significantly impacted by working on the phone. I had to develop new skills and live with a certain level of 'unknown' during this time. I am sure that our listening skills have become more tuned to the differences in tone that our client's voices convey. We have developed further our curiosity and understanding of what these differences might mean.

Volunteers

Many of our volunteer counsellors have had to face big changes in their ways of working. Most managing day to day functioning across more than one organisation including their employed work and college/university courses. It is clear to me that the volunteers have faced these challenges with fortitude and real good will for the client's best interest. All of our volunteer therapists are continuing to work for Solace during this time. Nick and Janet clearly can't do hands on therapy so both of them have been supporting their clients on the phone and over zoom to ensure that they feel less isolated, and giving them advice with symptom management.

Group Sessions

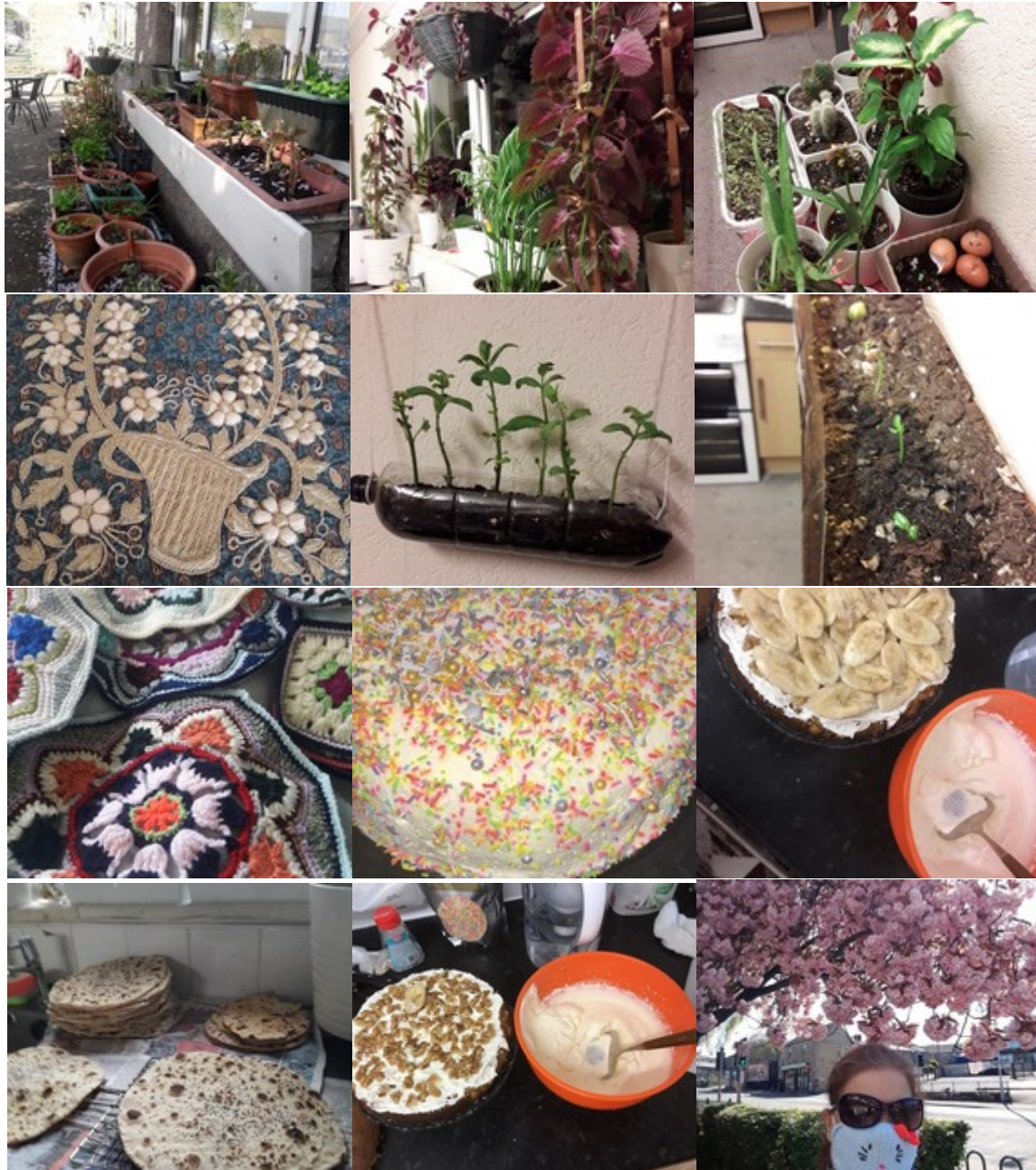
With the help of technology, we have been able to restart stress management groups in Sheffield, Bradford and Leeds. It has been a big challenge to get both staff and clients up to speed with the technology and the resources needed to make this happen. Our operations manager, Ruth, has been a real source of support in the changes that have been made, ensuring that everything needed has been available for staff and clients within our limited budget. Our admin team have also been a valuable support in helping clients adapt and making sure that information is given in a timely manner. Anne and I both have training dates in the diary coming up and so again have to adapt our way of running training to accommodate people being in their own homes.

Our clients

Our clients have presented some real inspiration and highlights during this time in lockdown. A particular favourite response to this situation that I heard about, is the client who used his £37 per week to buy ingredients and bake bread, cakes and make meals for his whole household. This is an Iranian client who has had a long battle with the Home Office and yet has the resourcefulness and generosity of spirit to respond in such a beautiful way. Other clients have shown their resourcefulness in creative ways by making beautiful crafts or growing plants, it is really inspirational to see. **(Pics below)**

As an organisation I think we can be proud that we have continued to offer the best service we possibly could during these unprecedented times. On the other side of this we will have a more diverse skill range to offer. We all long to get back together and have dreams of a suitable office of our own, but until then we can reflect on the adaptability, versatility and true grit that we have shown in very testing times.

Our clients handiwork from lockdown





Solace Clinical Director Anne Burghgraef Heads to Kenya

Anne Burghgraef

After having developed the therapeutic work at Solace since its beginning in 2006, I was delighted to finally have the opportunity to travel to Kenya to learn how refugees suffering with mental health difficulties could be supported therapeutically in neighbouring countries.

I had also long desired to see how I could use my knowledge and skill acquired through Solace to support refugees in the non-Western world where about 80% of the world's refugees live. Using up the last few weeks of my annual leave, I was able to go to Kenya and return just as the world was going into Covid 19 lockdown.

Despite the current challenges of managing Solace's therapeutic work remotely over the past two months at Solace, this experience will enable me to work more effectively with my colleagues in Kenya through a mutual exchange of knowledge and support.

[Click here to read more about my experience in Kenya](#)



Thank you for supporting Solace

Thank you to everyone who supports Solace. We are working hard to find out what people who use our service really need right now to support their wellbeing, and we couldn't do that without our supporters, volunteers, staff, funders and the amazing network of migration services in the region.

Some final notes..

Behind the scenes we are updating our website to make a more coherent resource for referrers, funders and professionals working in the field. The website is being updated live, a piece at a time, so do bear with us.

We are missing Kundy, our wonderful reception welcome volunteer who supports the Stress Management Group on Tuesdays, she is busy helping family with childcare during the lockdown.

Thanks to Kathryn's chocolate based reminder - we are carrying with us the #BeKind message from Mental Health Awareness Week that the UK celebrated in May. It's a simple message that can make a big difference to the people around us - remembering of course that being kind to yourself is equally as important.



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