

September is usually the quietest of our Living Proof weekends; however, this was not the case this year. For the third time in succession we had a full house. Applications indicated a large proportion would be new members, some with a range of additional physical and mental health issues. Would we be able to cope? A foolish question: the group thrives on challenges, and this weekend was no exception turning out to be a great success. With fine sunny weather, members took the opportunity to enjoy the gardens, fish pond, meadow and each other's company.



As usual, people came from all over the United Kingdom, including an increasing number from across the border in Scotland. Our facilitators were Pat and Neil with therapists Joy, Josie, Simone and James. We are very grateful to Pat for stepping in at short notice when Emma had to cancel because of ill health: we hope that Emma's gets well soon.

Raffle & Auction

Karl and Josh did a fine job with the raffle: we raised £213, which was increased by a further £36 from the auction of an electric pizza maker and frying pan kindly donated

by a member. Thank you everyone for contributing prizes and buying raffle tickets.

After a short break, members had the opportunity to watch a DVD of the highly acclaimed documentary film 'How to Survive a Plague'. It is the story of two coalitions—ACT UP and TAG (Treatment Action Group)—whose activism and innovation turned AIDS from a death sentence into a manageable condition. Despite having no scientific training, these self-made activists infiltrated the pharmaceutical industry and helped identify promising new drugs, moving them from experimental trials to patients in record time. With unfettered access to a treasure trove of never-before-seen archival footage from the 1980s and '90s, filmmaker David France puts the viewer smack in the middle of the controversial actions, the heated meetings, the heart-breaking failures, and the exultant breakthroughs of heroes in the making. More details at: (<http://surviveaplague.com/>)

Weekend costs

One of the key functions of the Board of Trustees is to ensure that the charity is properly financed both for today and the future. At the recent board meeting we very reluctantly made the decision that we cannot, at the moment, afford to continue the 50% discount offered to all members to attend weekends. The true cost per person for each weekend is over £170 and we have been offering all places at £85. From the December 2014 weekend we will introduce a modest increase up to £95 available to all members and this will be reviewed regularly depending on what money we have available.

At the moment we can still offer additional funding from the 1992 fund for those who cannot afford £95. This additional financial help is means tested. We can also, for the time being, reimburse reasonable travel expenses for those that needed to claim them to enable them to get to the weekend.

We are working hard to secure grant funding so that we can continue to provide discounted places and would like to ask all members to consider how they could help to raise money for the charity. At each weekend the feedback is overwhelmingly positive and people describe how important the weekends are to them and yet only a very small minority of our members actually make a monthly donation, take away a collecting tin or raise funds in some other way. In order to keep offering discounted places we need YOUR help.

Conversion to CIO

At the AGM in July the membership approved the Board's proposal to change the legal structure of NLTSG from an unincorporated charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. After taking legal advice we have put together a new constitution. This needs to be formally accepted by the Board at the next board meeting and we will then commence the formal application process to the Charity Commission. The intention is to have completed the change over before the next AGM in July 2015. The membership will see little or no effect in the way that we operate.

Recently Diagnosed Reunion

In August we held our first reunion weekend for those who had attended a recently diagnosed weekend, which came as a response for the overwhelming wish of people attending these weekends to meet up. Our response was a residential weekend

that tried to bridge the experience of a Recently Diagnosed residential with that of a Living Proof weekend.



Our attempt to provide an event which was little more relaxed and closer to a Living Proof weekend (without therapies) seemed to hit the mark. In total, 26 people attended including Jenny who acted as a counsellor when needed. Gary and Andy led the main group sessions, whilst Nams, Tom and Maurice facilitated the open discussion groups. There was a raffle to raise funds for NLTSG followed by a screening of 'How to Survive a Plague'.

Feedback was extremely positive together with a strong desire for a similar event in the not too distant future.

This weekend was made possible by a grant from the National Lottery Awards for All.

Weekend Dates

2014

Dec 12 - 14

2015

March 27-29

July 10-12

Sept 25-27

Dec 11-13