



## ***OCTOBER 2024 NEWSLETTER***

### **BSS-Support Annual Conference**

**Saturday 9th November 2024**

**The Friends House, Euston, London**

Less than a month to go! Registration closes on **22nd October**, so we urge you to book soon to avoid disappointment

[MORE INFORMATION HERE](#)

[BOOK HERE](#)

### **In this newsletter**

[BSS-Support Conference 2024](#)

[One Year On: Annual Report, Edinburgh Academy Survivors Group 2023-2024](#)

[Support for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse](#)

[Other Resources for Boarding School Survivors](#)

[And finally...](#)

Dear all

With our Annual Conference less than a month away, the Directors of *Boarding School Survivors - Support* are in full preparation mode - especially as we will be hosting you all in a new lighter, brighter venue, [The Friends House, opposite Euston Station](#).

## **BSS-Support Conference 2024**

### **A warm response**

We have worked hard crafting this year's conference, to make sure all participants - old or new - will feel warmly welcomed and benefit from a rich, meaningful itinerary of talks and activities.

Our efforts have certainly paid off. We have the highest rate of 'first timers' booking this year than ever before. And we've had consistently higher than average booking rates throughout the Summer. Whilst this last point is promising from our perspective, it means we have only a limited number of places left.

While it would be tempting to fill up the new, bigger venue, we have taken an executive decision to cap participant numbers at less than capacity. Thanks to a subsidy from our generous donors, we've also opted to keep the fee below £100. This means participants can benefit from a full day's programme in a bigger, brighter space, with better lunch arrangements - and overall, enjoy a more personal conference experience.

So if you are keen to join us, please [book](#) ASAP - and by 22 October at the latest.

### **Your welcome at the conference**

This year, we have organised the conference, speakers and discussion groups around the theme of the *Boarding School Survivor's Journey*. You can see the full conference programme [here](#).

It is important that the conference is accessible to everyone who wants to come (space permitting, of course!) If you need financial assistance, please select that option on the [registration form](#), and we will be in touch. Also, if you are unsure about attending, would like some emotional support with buddying on the day, or would like to ask about special dietary, mobility or other such accommodation, please do contact us [here](#).

For all those who are coming for the first time, or anyone who doesn't enjoy walking into a room full of strangers, we've set up a welcome delegation who will be on the door to greet you, and have organised

the day so that you can participate as much or as little as you wish. There's also a quiet space for anyone who wants to step out and take a breather.

It is daunting for all of us to address our boarding past. It takes courage: but we know from our own experience that it often marks the beginning of a process of self-discovery that is life-changing in the best possible way. *At a BSS-Support conference you will be held and encouraged in safety by fellow survivors who genuinely 'get it'.*

### **Poetry at the event**

Many former boarders find creative writing and art very therapeutic. One medium that seems to resonate is poetry.

We will have a display of childhood and boarding-related poems at the conference. Any former boarder - whether attending or not - is welcome to submit their poetry to [info@bss-support.org.uk](mailto:info@bss-support.org.uk) for consideration. It's best to submit before 30th October, so our team have time to select, print and collate the poetry collection for the big day.

### **Conference book stall**

We always have a very popular book and resources table on display at the conference. You can browse and buy copies of respected works from academic leaders in the field, and former conference speakers, and other literary works that reference former boarders' experiences.

Those coming to the conference are also welcome to bring topical books to sell, or flyers related to Boarding School and Boarding School Survival. (All we ask is that you attach a price to **each** book if they are for sale).

[Back to top](#)

## **One Year On: Annual Report, Edinburgh Academy Survivors Group 2023-2024**

### **Trigger warning - Child Sexual Abuse**

We feel it worth highlighting this well-written Annual Report from the Edinburgh Academy (EA) Survivors Group.

The report documents the actions and progress made by the Edinburgh Academy Survivors Group from its inception in September 2022 to September 2024, in the pursuit of justice for survivors (and victims) of known and alleged abusers at The Edinburgh Academy (EA) between 1950s and 2000s. The purpose of the report is manyfold:

- To document the history of EA Survivors in its first two years
- To assist other survivors and survivor groups with their own efforts
- To inform educationalists and schools of today
- To improve relationships between survivors, schools and the authorities
- To make ongoing recommendations on safeguarding and child protection

We have expanded on the Twelve Lessons Learned from the report in our article below. The full report - downloadable from [Seen & Heard's website](#) - will also be of interest to individuals on their own journey for justice, those involved in assisting survivors or running survivor groups, and any stakeholder concerned with justice or safeguarding within child protection.

[Back to top](#)

### **Support for Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse**

The EA Survivors Group is offering their assistance and experience to survivors of abuse in childhood care of any kind. Although the group was started for those abused in the past at The Edinburgh Academy (EA), the group now supports over 110+ men and women from a variety of schools or residential care backgrounds.

The group has set up an EA-specific WhatsApp group, as well as a multi-school one called *Justice Support*. They also have a renowned pro-bono legal adviser who has kindly offered support on a personal basis.

There is an open invitation for people from any school or residential care background setting to make [contact](#), and the group may be able to connect you with others.

The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is ongoing and still open. Anyone who would like advice on giving evidence, from those who already have, are also welcome to get in touch.

## **Lessons Learned - 12 Critical Factors from the EA Annual Report**

### **Lesson 1: Quality and quantity of evidence matters**

*No group knows more about what happened than those of us it happened to. We are the main body of evidence.*

### **Lesson 2: Forming a group is key – the Testudo strategy**

*We are each other's shields. The more connected the survivor group, the better the chances of encouraging action.*

### **Lesson 3: The effect and impact of the abuse is sadly predictable**

*We realised very quickly that we all shared common traits. The root cause become obvious once we met other survivors.*

### **Lesson 4: Coordination is not collusion**

*We were well-organised, boundaried and co-ordinated, but never colluding. If anything, the collusion that has taken place is that by the schools.*

### **Lesson 5: Use the group's transferable skills**

*EA Survivors drew on their members' mix of highly varied skills, plus valuable support from others who have walked the same path.*

### **Lesson 6: Public sector bodies are fearful of negative publicity**

*The institutional culture of inaction and fobbing off means perpetrators of vile crimes in childcare environments are rarely brought to justice.*

### **Lesson 7: Pressure gets results**

*Pressure group tactics and threats of exposure work – exactly because public sector bodies are fearful of negative publicity. The successes in the report prove that strategically applied pressure can be effective.*

### **Lesson 8: Influence has a snowball effect**

*Presenting as a credible and formidable group means you get a foot in the door and taken seriously – and one door opens another.*

## **Lesson 9: Be reasonable**

*It is better to engage than to confront. Adopting a measured, constructive, forensic and well-reasoned tone proved the most productive way to get results.*

## **Lesson 10: Why did we not speak up at the time?**

*The subject of delayed disclosure is well-documented in psychiatry and trauma studies. The reasons are manifold and well laid out in the report. But ultimately, there is a power imbalance between adults and children, and the family and institutional systems in which this abuse was allowed to proliferate. It is those systems and the perpetrators - not the children - that are wholly to blame.*

## **Lesson 11: Don't be afraid to NAME AND SHAME**

*Judicious naming and shaming can be powerful in certain circumstances. Perpetrators know they have been exposed and are powerless, because challenging you will expose the truth. You, on the other hand, will be protected by UK defamation law - so long as you stick to the facts.*

## **Lesson 12: Abuse in childhood has an exponential impact**

*The impact of that abuse is lifelong and intergenerational. Like poisoning a river at its source, the water carries this contamination downstream, damaging relationships and causing harm to families, children, parents, siblings, colleagues, friends.*

And one final, sobering fact that ends this article:

### **Many 'survivors' do not survive.**

*The abnormally high number of suicides in the EA cohort is currently being studied. Additionally, through alcohol or substance abuse, homelessness and poverty, many more of the boys commemorated in the report faced early death. "The perpetrators have blood on their hands."*

We applaud the great work of this report, and the generous sharing of lessons that will enable others to bring institutions and perpetrators to justice.

[Back to top](#)

## **Other Resources for Boarding School Survivors**

Just a reminder also, that [Seen & Heard](#) (who are hosting the above report) have gathered a wealth of resources which our members might find valuable, including a [Therapist, Counsellor, Coach & Practitioner Directory](#) and a [Self-help & Learning Resources section](#) which includes lots of books, articles, research, podcasts and a curated [You Tube channel](#). Their website also hosts [Stories of Hope & Healing](#) and details of newly formed [Online Connection Groups](#).

And of course, our own [BSS-Support website](#) remains on hand as a resource for all former boarders wishing to seek advice, answers, solace, validation or connection. We look forward to seeing many of you at the conference in November.

[Back to top](#)

## **And finally...**

This newsletter comes from the directors of BSS-Support, a not-for-profit Limited Company, who's aim is to guide and support former boarders on their healing journey.

All our Directors give their time as volunteers, without remuneration - and even pay for their individual places at the annual conference!

Any income, whether from events, sale of books or donations, is used for the sole purpose of staging our annual conference, providing individual bursaries for therapies and participation, or financial support to organisations that share our agenda and aims.

It is brought to you with very best wishes - from Allison, Caroline, Mike, Paul, Pippa, Tim and Sam.

[Back to top](#)

A Not-for-Profit Limited Company (limited by guarantee)  
Registered in England, Company no. 11973972.

**Our registered office and mailing address is:**

2 Lansdowne Road, Cambridge CB3 0EU

You received this email because you signed up on our website  
or made a purchase from us.

[Unsubscribe from this list](#)

