



THE BRIDGE TO  
A MORE FULFILLED LIFE

# Compassionate Voices

Impact Report July 2022 - July 2023

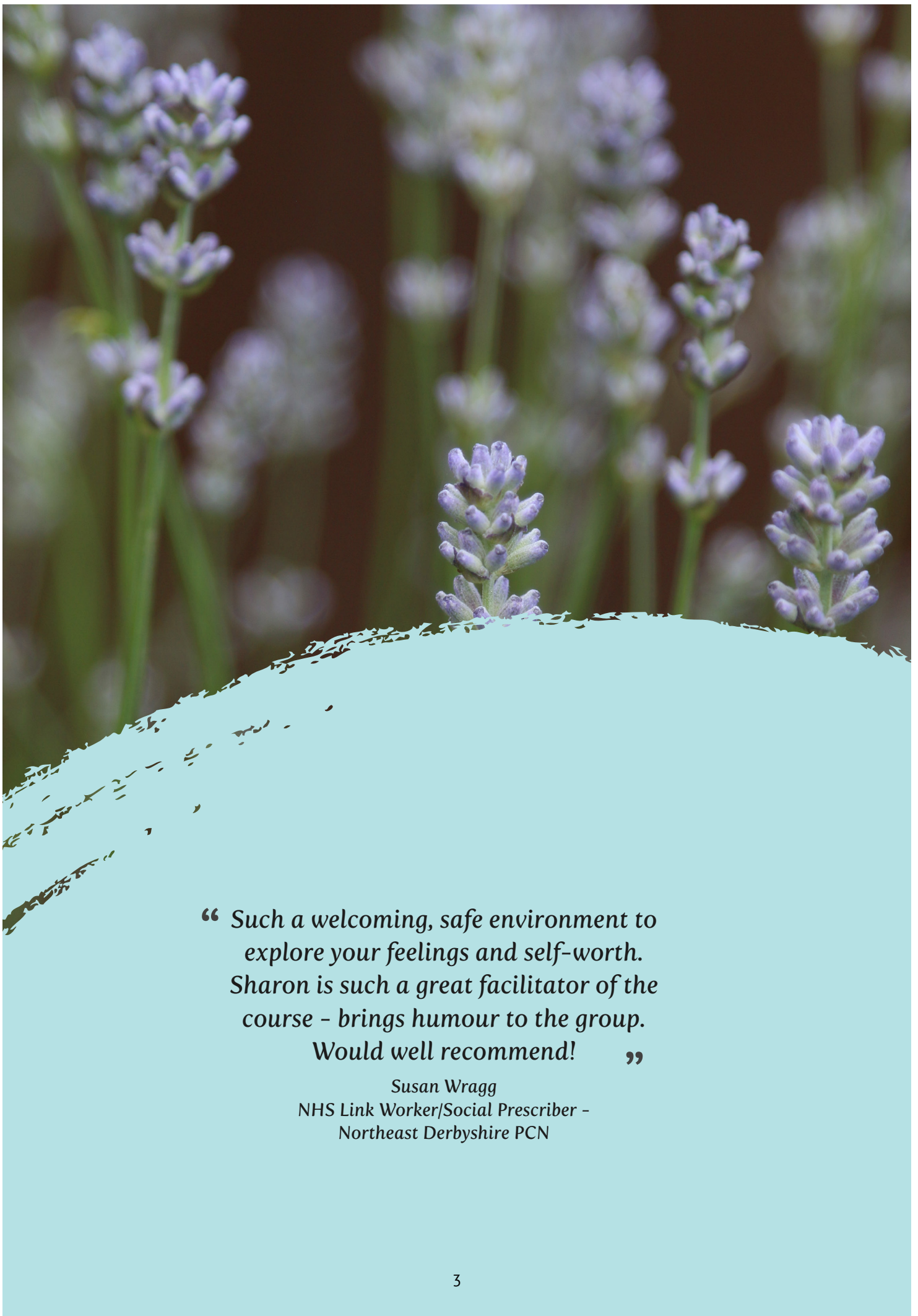
# This is US

*Empowering women and girls and  
helping to create a more compassionate  
society through encouragement of good  
mental health, openness, and a better  
understanding of each other.*

Compassionate Voices CIC.  
Registration number I2079728

# Contents

How we began	4
Going forward	6
Achieved so far	8
Our plans for the future	18
Kelley's story	20
About Sharon Bull	22
How you can help	24



*“ Such a welcoming, safe environment to explore your feelings and self-worth. Sharon is such a great facilitator of the course - brings humour to the group. Would well recommend! ”*

*Susan Wragg  
NHS Link Worker/Social Prescriber -  
Northeast Derbyshire PCN*

# How we began

Registered in July 2019, Compassionate Voices CIC is a not-for-profit community interest company. Founded by Sharon Bull, who is also an inspirational speaker and author of '30 Years in Silence', the company's focus is the wellbeing and empowerment of women and girls.

But it didn't start out that way...

In October 2019, we successfully organised and hosted our first event. A Halloween party for vulnerable children in the Chesterfield, Derbyshire community, followed by a Christmas party in December that year too. The parties, both attended by over 30 children with a parent/carer, were a raging success and plans to repeat in 2020 were soon cut short by Covid19.

We were overwhelmed by the support of the local business community including Tesco, Peak FM and Swizzels sweets. Generous donations of Halloween outfits, spooky tableware/ accessories, sweets, and toys for Santa to distribute were gratefully accepted.

We received our first funding award in October 2019 from Foundation Derbyshire's PCC Community Investment Fund. The money was used to run a free women's wellbeing and empowerment 6-week workshop in the early spring 2020. The Power of YOU's journey began, initially taking place at Derby Women's Centre, then transferred online because of the pandemic.

*“ Words cannot express how much  
this course has meant to me.  
It is so wonderful, and  
I am so happy to have found it.*

*Victoria*

*It's the best thing I ever did for me!*

*Madelaine*

*I loved every single bit of the course.  
Sharon is down to earth and has such  
good energy and vibes. I definitely feel  
more empowered. Thank you so much! ”*

*Kerri*



# Going forward

## **Our package**

Over the past three years, the Compassionate Voices package has developed and strengthened. We have achieved this by listening to workshop attendees suggestions in their feedback forms, members at our regular meetings and by continually building partnerships to deliver a wider variety of activities.

Additional to 'The Power of YOU' and 'This is ME', we have a further 2 new workshops/journals to offer members and the wider community. 'Because you CAN' (a frequently requested follow-up to 'The Power of YOU') and 'Map to Fantastique' (a tool to help map out our thoughts)



We now feel we have a unique and distinctive package to offer women and young girls, who are struggling with low self-esteem. This could be because of low to medium mental health issues, isolation, illness, financial struggles, domestic violence, bullying at work/school/online, body image, menopause, redundancy – to name a few examples.

## **The team**

Sharon has 3 directors working alongside her and between them, they each have their individual expertise; lived in experiences and have attended The Power of YOU Workshop. We are also proud to have recruited 10 volunteers and are working with Derbyshire County Council to ensure we have everything in place for a healthy work environment. All our workshop/Step Out facilitators are DBS checked and Compassionate Voices CIC has safeguarding procedures in place.

## **A diverse and growing community**

Compassionate Voices is inclusive. Our activities are aimed at women/girls of all ages and ethnicity, focusing on areas with more deprivation. We also want to target young mums, 18 -25-year-olds, and women/girls from ethnic minorities and migrant communities.

## **Generating funds/fundraising**

An overwhelming agreement from long term members to introduce a yearly subscription was put in place on 1st May 2023. For just £12 (£1 a month) subscribers are given free access and discounts to all events and activities. (We also have a concessionary level). On 10th July 2023, Compassionate Voices had almost 40 members subscribed, giving us more financial stability.

'Speak Out' events and the first Compassionate Voices 'Batty Bingo' session taking place in October 2023, also help to generate funds. This is achieved through raffles, donations, book sales and admission fees.

Every so often, we hear a heartfelt story like Kelley's (page 20) and use crowd funding platforms to help us achieve our goal. We will continue to do this.

*We have already supported  
hundreds of women and created  
the seeds of a growing and  
supportive community.*



# Achieved so far



“ This is the best thing  
I have ever seen ”

Amy Harris  
Chief Executive – Relate,  
Chesterfield and North Derbyshire



### **The Power of YOU**

The Power of YOU programme is a unique 2 session experience. It's the first step women take with us across the bridge to a more fulfilled life. During the 2 sessions, the course attendees share their journeys. They often form bonds with each other, realising they are not alone in their circumstance, or in how they feel.

Over the past three years, and with funding from The Coronavirus Community Fund, The National Lottery Awards for All, Derbyshire Voluntary Action (Feeling Connected), Nottinghamshire County Council and Derbyshire County Council we have been able to facilitate just over 40 'The Power of YOU Workshops' (online & face to face) reaching out to almost 400 women.

The Power of YOU workshops almost always reach capacity, with a waiting list for any cancellations. We have developed great partnerships through continual networking at Health & Wellbeing meetings and our services are signposted by social prescribers and third sector organisations such as Elm Foundation and Relate.

Sharing life experiences is at the core of the Compassionate Voices community. Very often, after ladies have been on The Power of YOU Workshop, they want to use their story to empower others. We encourage this through our online and Step Out activities. We also ask willing members of the community to participate in the Compassionate Voices Speak Out Exhibitions. The next one, kick-starting next year's Mental Health Awareness Week on Saturday 11th May 2024, at The Winding Wheel Theatre, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.

There are many women and girls across Derbyshire, East Midlands and the UK struggling with low self-esteem. Some may be ending counselling or therapy. This can be challenging, leading to negative emotions and anxiety. Compassionate Voices can help to bridge that gap. We can offer a supportive network, build on what they have achieved and encourage them to move forward with their lives.

**“ Truly inspirational! Really helpful!**

*Angela*

***I'll definitely take away positivity out of this workshop for life.***

*Laura*

***One of the best days I have had for ages. ”***

*Denise*

### **This is ME**

This is ME is a fun 2 session journaling programme for girls 11-16 years.

Since 2018, Sharon has engaged with 1000+ students and their tutors. She has delivered talks/workshops, either assembly, classroom or in smaller type groups and has been returning to

Spalding High School annually for five years. It's from these engagements with students 'This is ME' was created.

Compassionate Voices CIC is now making inroads with schools, child services and third sector organisations to deliver 'This is ME' across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire.



*“ Attending the Fantastique event in Chesterfield on Friday the 19th May was of great benefit to myself, and the students I arranged to take. The talk delivered by Sharon was very informative yet light and understandable, speaking well to all participants including my students. The students found this a good event and were engaged throughout. Sharon answered questions and took all questions and understanding on board well, not being fazed by some of the outspoken comments my students gave. Demonstrating great communication skills and empathy. Many of the students we have at Juniper suffer with some form of mental health issue, however many also have other needs. This can make for a more challenging situation. The talk by Sharon brought mental health to the students in an easy and understandable way with no prejudice. I would highly recommend anyone to attend a workshop/event. ”*

*Yvonne Hallam  
Tutor, Juniper Training – Chesterfield*



*“ I thought that Sharon was an amazing speaker to have. I liked her because she didn't pressure anyone to share but she shared her personal experiences to make us feel more comfortable. She also normalised talking and that it makes us feel better when we talk. My favourite thing she did was writing a love note to ourselves to read when we have bad days. Also think it was great that she included the teachers.*

*Student, Year 8*

*Sharon fully engaged with the students throughout the presentation, which this year included a fifteen-minute question and answer session. Sharon did not have enough time to answer all the many questions posed by the students, but she circulated around the Hall answering as many as she could in a frank, honest and age-appropriate way.*

*The students asked some searching and thoughtful questions and whilst many seasoned teachers would shy away from a Q & A with 150 students, Sharon handled it beautifully and it was very successful indeed. ”*

*Tanya Waldron  
Deputy Head – Spalding High School*

### **Step outs**

Compassionate Voices Step Out activities came into fruition, as the pandemic lockdowns ceased.

For 2 years we had hosted online activities to ensure no-one in our growing community ever felt isolated. Some organisations had shut their doors during the pandemic, so even on Christmas day and bank holidays, we opened our Zoom Doors.

Our face to face activities began at the Dunelm Pausa Cafes (Hastings, Chesterfield, Derby, Mansfield, Nottingham & Cramlington) Although a great success initially, averaging 10 attendees, we soon realised we had to streamline and spice things up a little.

Our Step Out activities tend to kick start where we have held The Power of YOU Workshop. Across recent months we have formed wonderful partnerships with such

places as The Hub at Gladstone – Clay Cross, Loundsley Green Community Centre, Killamarsh Active and ATTFE (Academy Transformation Trust Further Education)

Our activities are a mixture of social and learning events, and we are thrilled to have already partnered with DAAS (Derbyshire Alcohol Advise Services), Caron Kirkham Training & Coaching, Fay Hartwell Designs, Menopausal Not Mad and White Rose Beauty College - Chesterfield. Our sessions have recently included lunch at Sorbo Lounge - Chesterfield and a Pamper Evening funded by White Rose. We average 10-15 at most activities.

Our future Step Outs include Mindfulness Creativity with Fay Hartwell and a seated exercise hybrid session with Caron Kirkham.

Our online activities continue and range from coffee & chats to Face Yoga.

**“ This time last year I was barely able to breathe with Covid and depression hit me hard. I saw an advert for Power of YOU on Facebook. It helped me get back to work and recover from the depression. I’m so grateful to this community of compassion and creative ladies who got me through lockdown. ”**

Lisa (2021)



### **Compassionate Voices Speak Out Exhibitions**

The Compassionate Voices Speak Out event (funded by Loundsley Green & Holmehall Health & Wellbeing Partnership) took place on Saturday 11th March. Possibly the worst weather day of 2023, it was touch and go whether we postponed. We are thrilled we didn't. Despite the wintry conditions, we still managed to bring together just over 60 ladies under one roof. And after months of planning, all but 3 of the 18 exhibitors attended.

These included;

Derbyshire Carers,  
DAAS,  
Transition Chesterfield,  
Positive Heathy Vibes,  
P3 Charity,  
Fay Hartwell Designs,  
Coin jar Community,  
Verdant Soapery,  
LGCC and  
Filagree Jewellery.

*“ Really enjoyed the event on Saturday thank you again for organising and letting us be a part of it and I shall look forward to the next one. ”*

The feedback from the day was truly incredible.

The idea behind the Speak Out event's is to bring together services, small businesses, and charities under one roof, so that women know what is available in the area. It is also an opportunity for our members to shine and showcase their talents, and for exhibitors to connect with one another.

Bringing a mixture of services together alongside small businesses selling jewellery, soaps and beautiful stationery creates a relaxed atmosphere that allows women of all ages to wander around the stalls without pressure.

Also included on the day is speakers, taster sessions and the Compassionate Voices Café. An area decorated with bright tablecloths, flower arrangements and positivity postcards for a talking point. 'The Power of YOU' tree is also a prominent feature, where attendees are encouraged to write and hang a positive statement about themselves.

The Power of YOU tree is also included in the outstanding Chesterfield Crooked Spire's Christmas Tree Festival 18th November - 3rd December 2023.



with  
**THE POWER OF YOU**  
Never underestimate the things that you can do

“ I thought the day was laid out very well, a nice mix of organisations/charities there, everyone was very friendly and helpful. The event was very well run, I think the only thing from here is make the event bigger and perhaps invite more charities to come along. I also think somewhere perhaps a little more central would maybe encourage more ladies to come, but I do think the weather played a big part in Saturday.  
It was still a fab day’

DAAS

*It was an amazing experience to be involved!*

*A stream of conversations with other compassionate women, sharing their ideas, approaches, philosophies, asking questions. There’s something magical about a group of like-minded women.*

*Seeing the ‘aha’ moments during several of these conversations. The relaxed atmosphere which led to lots of laughter as well as thoughtful conversations. The venue was lovely. Close to shops, plenty of free parking, bit cold in the afternoon.*

*I felt the day was really well organised and I loved the bit at the end where we all got together for Sharon’s poem, the raffle and the singsong! The mood of the day was very much, ‘we’re all in it together, let’s celebrate!’* ”

Caron Kirkham  
Filagree Jewellery & Qualified Coach

# Thankyou



In partnership with  
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
COMMUNITY FUND**





*“ Loneliness can be a state of mind. If we feel separated from society because of our mental health issues, we can feel as lonely as anyone else – even with good friends and family around us. „*

*We've facilitated 40  
'The Power of YOU Workshops'  
reaching out to almost  
400 women.*

# *Our plans for the future...*

## **The next 12 months**

Our main problem now is the lack of continuity with 'The Power of YOU' and 'This is ME' Workshops. We must be able to access larger grants giving Compassionate Voices CIC funds covering a period of 2/3 years. This will enable us to recruit staff and train volunteers so that we can deliver the workshops and activities to women and young girls more frequently and in different communities.

The next 'Speak Out Exhibition' is to take place at the Winding Wheel Theatre, Chesterfield on Saturday 11th May 2024.

Over the past three years Compassionate Voices CIC has been involved with Chesterfield's Mental Health Awareness Week's Calendar. Hopefully with funding and possible sponsorship we can kick start the calendar next year with our 'Speak Out' event.

To grow awareness of 'Because you CAN' and 'Map to Fantastique.'

## **The next 2 years**

Many of our members either live alone, do not have transport, struggle with mental health issues, such as anxiety, or have mobility issues. Compassionate Voices would like to take our Step Out activities a few steps further by giving our community access to heritage and nature hot spots, such as Chatsworth House, Bakewell, Buxton, Lady Bower and Derwent Waters.

The online community also thrives on creativity with regular 'Open Mic' nights and a monthly Art group. We hope to also visit such places as 'The Beatles Museum' in Liverpool and Shakespeare's home in Stratford upon Avon.

As we grow, so do our basic business running costs. We must be able to fund a central hub that we can work from, store materials and coordinate activities.

## **The next 3 years**

To be the bridge to a more fulfilled life for women and girls across East Midlands



**“ It’s the best workshop I have been to.**

*Suzanne*

**Just take the time to work on yourself,  
you won’t regret it.**

*Rachel*

**A great workshop, very empowering.  
Lovely group of women and host  
Sharon was great. A very lovely &  
knowledgeable teacher. ”**

*Jorgie*

# Kelley's story

It was 2020, when Kelley first joined the community. It was at the height of Covid, all our events were online, and almost all our members were struggling for one painful reason or another.

It was obvious to me though; Kelley had been through more than most. Diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome and seriously struggling with Depression, Anxiety and PTSD, we could barely see the top of her head during our women's only get togethers. Initially she was extremely introverted, heavily guarded, and totally lacked any self-esteem, but over the following couple of years we have watched her blossom. She became much more visible at our sessions, attended The Power of YOU Wellbeing & Empowerment programme, interacted with others much more easily, and soon won the hearts of many of our members.

It also came to light at this time that Kelley had once been a missionary helping the most vulnerable people in such places as Africa, Honduras, and Mexico.

During Covid, Kelley never sat back. Most days she volunteered at the local food bank run by the Christian Fellowship Church. Like many, she risked her own health to ensure the homeless were still catered for. Her delight at being promoted to head of the kitchen was a joy to see. I have never witnessed anyone so proud.

More recently, Kelley asked if she could volunteer for Compassionate Voices CIC. She wanted to help other women in the way that we had helped her. But on February 27th this year,

she received a severe blow to her physical health. Diagnosed with lung cancer, the following couple of months were extremely difficult for her. She underwent treatment with a very dark cloud hanging over her head. How she remained positive, I will never know.

## **The hard truth behind Kelley's story!**

It was in 2014 when Kelley fled America and travelled to England with her new-found love, Robin. She hoped to start afresh after suffering years of abuse through childhood and then in her marriage too. Robin and Kelley married in 2015 and Kelley applied for British Citizenship. What little money they had was pooled together to pay the fees, but in 2018 the application was rejected. Letters from the home office, even suggested their marriage to be a sham. Robin and Kelley are still happily married today.

Following this outcome, she appealed, and her case was picked back up again. Once more Kelley made frequent visits to Loughborough, her officer giving her the belief that there was no reason why she shouldn't be able to apply for British Citizenship. Her monthly appointments came to an end when on 18th January 2021, her appointment was cancelled due to the pandemic. Since this time, she has barely heard from them. Just two calls to ask if she is still living at her home address.

After Kelley's cancer diagnose, I thought enough was enough, and with the possibility of a change of landlord meaning she may also lose her home. I knew we had to do something for her.

My first port of call – the home office, who have been an absolute nightmare to get hold of and totally unresponsive to my emails. Apart from an automated one, emailed to me just in time to reach their 5-day deadline to respond.

I have now found a local solicitor that will take on her case, but Kelley can't get legal aid. We needed to raise a minimum of £450 to help Kelley try and get the life that she so totally deserves.

During the 9 years she has resided in the UK she has helped so many in and around her neighbourhood. Surely, she should be allowed to call England her home, go out to work and live a better quality of life.

Through generous donations from members and the community, we have now raised enough to involve a solicitor. Kelley is in a much better position.

Sharon Bull

*Kelley (left) with Sharon and fellow volunteer/member Genevieve.*



# About Sharon Bull

Sharon Bull is the founder of Compassionate Voices CIC and is no stranger to fundraising and organising events. Between 1999 and 2010, she raised over 20k for the NSPCC with Golf days and Variety Concerts. Sharon partnered with Glenn Tilbrook (Squeeze), The Winding Wheel, Walton Golf Club and Chesterfield Football Club to make these events happen. And while on holiday, she even encouraged a cruise ship's entertainment crew to take part in a show during their leave.

Sharon, who has lived in experience with mental illness, only has one passion – to GET rid of stigma and GET everyone talking! This is at the core of the community, workshops, and events,

Sharon started out in 2012, and in 2014 had partnered with Derbyshire Mind headlining a mental health seminar at Chesterfield Football Club. She delivered her keynote talk to an audience of 80, but the impact she had on a local taxi driver that day, she will never forget. Dropping off a customer attending the event, he asked what it was all about. Intrigued by what the customer said, and with time before his next pick up, he slipped into the event.

Sharon stepped out for some fresh air during the interval and was surprised when a taxi pulling out of the car park stopped in front of her. "Brilliant, you've changed my life" he shouted through the open window. He beckoned her over and told Sharon how much he had enjoyed her talk. That was when Sharon knew she was certainly on the right path.

Since this time, Sharon has spoken at many events, wellbeing festivals, business networking meetings, women's organisations, business wellbeing events, WIs and more recently 3 keynote talks for Nottinghamshire Police.

## Media

Sharon has featured in countless publications. The most recognised being **Stella Magazine, Bella, Psychologies, Woman's Own, Scottish Woman, Daily Express, and Daily Mirror**. Interviews have included **ITV's This Morning with Eammon and Ruth, BBC's Inside Out, BBC Radio 2's Jeremy Vine** and more recently **GB News**.



“ Sharon Bull delivered a series of inspirational inputs to colleagues at Nottinghamshire Police. Sharon shared her personal story which encouraged other individuals to open up about their personal challenges. The input was interactive, well delivered and held the attendees attention throughout the session, especially the Stripped Bare poem. This was enabled by her warm and friendly personality. Colleagues found the input very thought provoking.

Sharon also volunteered to stay after her input and spoke to a number of attendees. We received lots of positive feedback from the attendees and we will consider further opportunities to engage with Sharon ”

Jasvir Ginda  
Policy and Wellbeing Partner People Services  
Nottinghamshire Police

# How you can help

## **Funding partner**

The demands for our workshops have never been higher. Word of mouth about the great work we do and the results we achieve is spreading fast.

Can you help us to meet the needs of the countless women and girls struggling with anxiety and low self-esteem?

## **Sponsor one of our events/ activities**

Could you sponsor one of our fundraising/awareness events such as Batty Bingo or Compassionate Voices Speak Out at the Winding Wheel.

Maybe you would like to sponsor one of our Step Out activities to The Beatles Museum or Lady Bower/Derwent Waters?

Please email [info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk](mailto:info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk) for a copy of our sponsorship packages

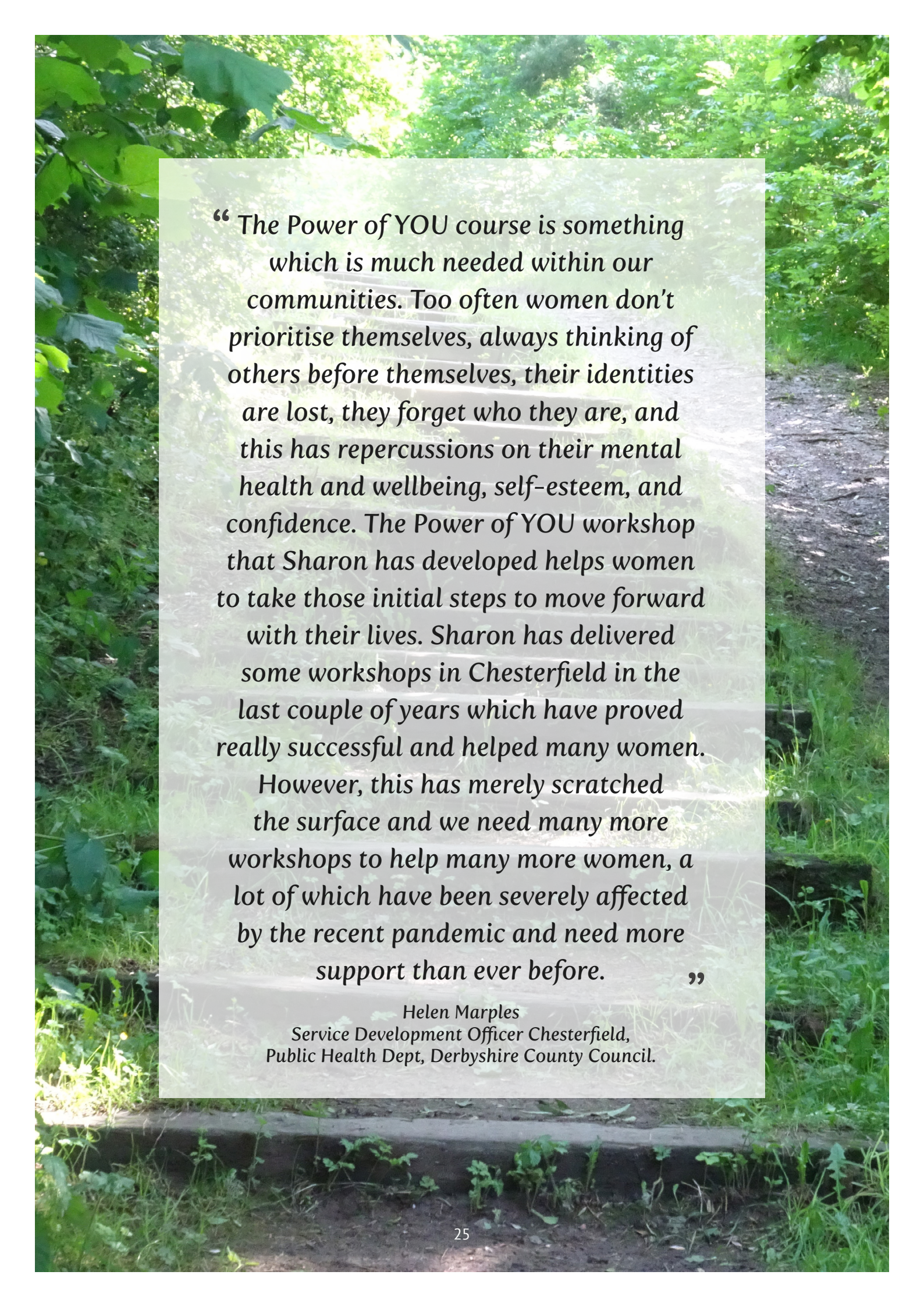
## **Fundraise/Volunteer**

Can you think of ways to fundraise? Could you organise a Compassionate Voices coffee & cake event? Please email us with your ideas [info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk](mailto:info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk) and we will send out a fundraising pack.

*“ We can never know how others feel,  
We should only hold out a hand,  
Because if we share our love,  
show compassion,  
This will help us to understand ”*

*Extract from Stripped Bare  
©Sharon Bull*





*“ The Power of YOU course is something which is much needed within our communities. Too often women don’t prioritise themselves, always thinking of others before themselves, their identities are lost, they forget who they are, and this has repercussions on their mental health and wellbeing, self-esteem, and confidence. The Power of YOU workshop that Sharon has developed helps women to take those initial steps to move forward with their lives. Sharon has delivered some workshops in Chesterfield in the last couple of years which have proved really successful and helped many women. However, this has merely scratched the surface and we need many more workshops to help many more women, a lot of which have been severely affected by the recent pandemic and need more support than ever before. ”*

*Helen Marples  
Service Development Officer Chesterfield,  
Public Health Dept, Derbyshire County Council.*

# How you can help cont'd

## **Donate/Easyfundraising**

Just a £5 donation can do so much to help us continue to deliver our extremely important services. Please email [info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk](mailto:info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk) for a breakdown of what your donation can do to support us.

Donations can be made as a bank transfer to Compassionate Voices CIC

Account no 68760078

Sort Code 55 61 17

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online – from your weekly shop to your annual holiday – you could be raising free donations for Compassionate Voices CIC with easyfundraising?

There are over 7,000 brands on board ready to donate – including eBay, Argos, John Lewis, ASOS, Booking.com and M&S – and it won't cost you a penny extra to help us raise funds.

All you need to do is:

1. Use the link below and join for free.
2. Every time you shop online, go to easyfundraising first to find the site you want and start shopping.
3. After you've checked out, the brand will donate to Compassionate Voices CIC at no extra cost to you whatsoever!

[www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/compassionatevoicescic/](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/compassionatevoicescic/)

## **Shout about us**

Keep spreading the word. Help Compassionate Voices CIC be the bridge to a more fulfilling life for many more women and girls.

For further information please email [info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk](mailto:info@acompassionatevoice.co.uk) or call **07894 101995** (Monday to Friday 9:00am – 5:00pm)

## **Follow us**



[www.facebook.com/acompassionatevoice](http://www.facebook.com/acompassionatevoice)



[www.instagram.com/compassionatevoicescic/](http://www.instagram.com/compassionatevoicescic/)

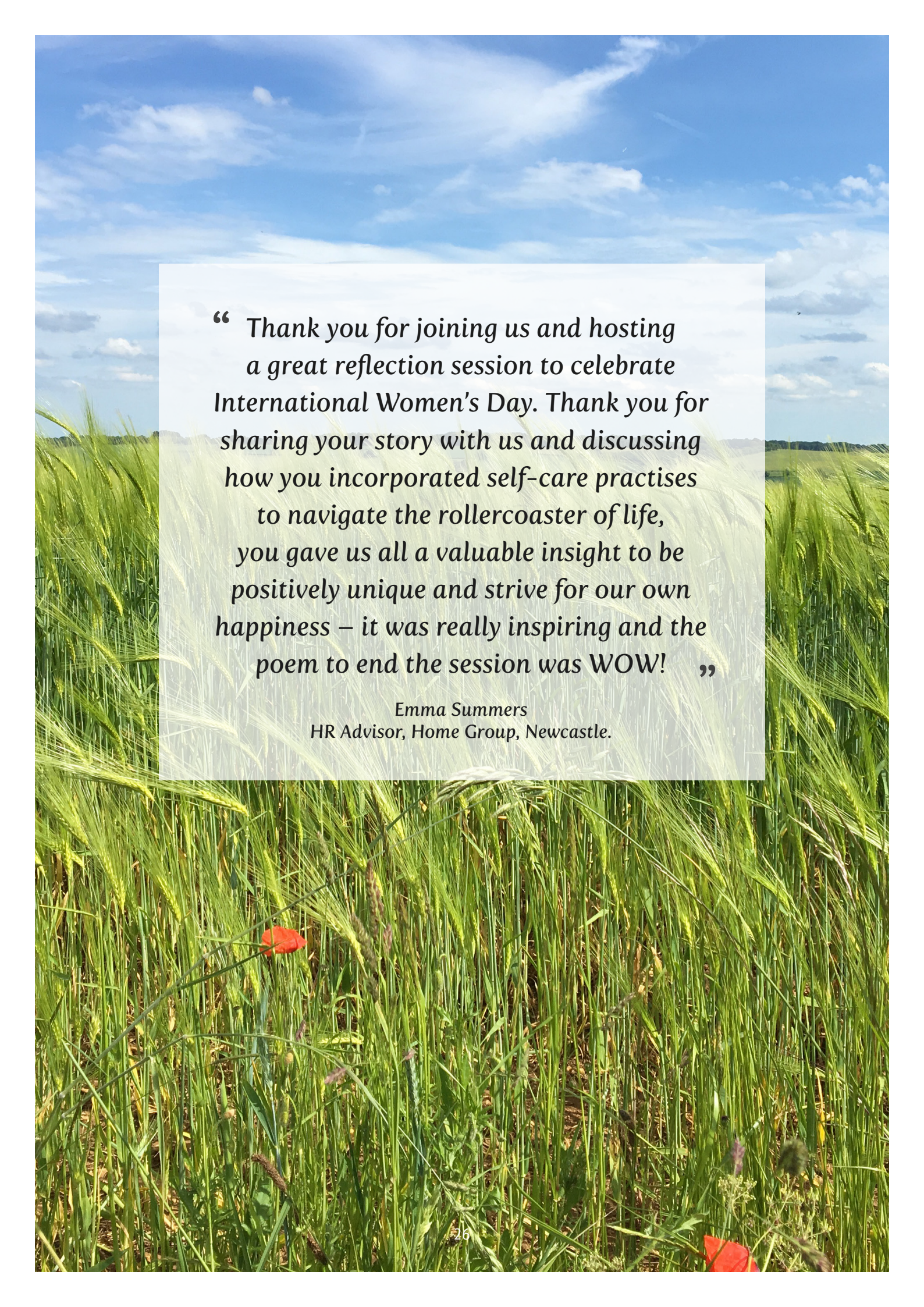


[www.linkedin.com/in/sharon-bull-b8810477/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/sharon-bull-b8810477/)

## **Book tickets**



[www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/compassionate-voices-cic-63167457513](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/compassionate-voices-cic-63167457513)



*“ Thank you for joining us and hosting a great reflection session to celebrate International Women’s Day. Thank you for sharing your story with us and discussing how you incorporated self-care practises to navigate the rollercoaster of life, you gave us all a valuable insight to be positively unique and strive for our own happiness – it was really inspiring and the poem to end the session was WOW! ”*

*Emma Summers  
HR Advisor, Home Group, Newcastle.*