**Board of Directors**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **subject** | Chair’s Report |
| **Date of meeting** | 27/04/2020 |
| **author** | Jonathan Wells |
| **purpose** | For Discussion |

1. **Summary.**

This brief report outlines achievements and challenges (both internal and external) for us at present, from my point of view.

1. **Achievements.**

Without doubt, the main event that has impacted on our functioning over the past three months has been the covid – 19 global crisis. Like so many others, in March we had to move fast to radically adjust our services once lockdown was implemented. Lois liaised closely with our commissioners who accepted that whilst actual face to face outreach to people with mental health conditions and/or substance misuse issues was no longer permitted, we would be able to build on our solid foundation of social media platforms to continue to find out about the service user experience.

Our achievements in the past quarter have included:

* Setting up systems for staff to work effectively from home, with weekly meetings online to maintain teamwork and discuss the rapidly evolving situation and its potential impact on the organisation
* At commissioners’ request, beginning to report weekly on people’s needs and ways of coping during lockdown
* Focussing more closely on Keep Your Head, its accuracy, and its use – so that it strengthens its position as the primary source of mental health information in our area – at a time when clarity about service changes is more important than ever
* Maintaining other projects such as Primary Mental Health Services feedback
1. **Challenges.**

As a Board we have been clear since mid - March that the covid -19 crisis represents an unprecedented threat to both the services required by people with mental health and substance misuse issues and to the stability of The SUN Network itself. We recognise that the exceptional nature of the current situation presents us with opportunities as well as risks.

Lois and I have concentrated on communicating confidently how we have adjusted what we do since March and on preserving an open and proactive style of communicating with our commissioners and other key partners. I am pleased about how we have done that even though there have been several recent changes in who fills which roles.

Because there are so many variables and the situation is so rapidly changing, we will definitely continue to monitor how local mental health and substance misuse services change over the coming months – both in terms of their impact on service users and also in terms of the role of The SUN Network.

A second challenge that I wish to note is the size of the Board. Following the resignation of Helen Blythe in March we are now reduced to two members only. This is legitimate according to our articles of association but is clearly less than satisfactory. Our recruitment exercise in March did not prove successful, and we need to explore other avenues in our efforts to strengthen the Board. In our first two years of being an independent organisation, we have benefitted greatly from the skills Helen brought – especially her business skills, her innovations and her commitment to strengthening the service user voice

1. **Conclusion.**

I am very grateful to all colleagues at The SUN Network for their dedication to the important work that we do, over the past three months.

It is crucial that we continue to show our effectiveness in our traditional roles and our willingness to adapt where necessary over the very uncertain months ahead.