

I moved back to Newcastle from London 2 years ago. I have been suffering severe depression for many years and hardly left my home for nearly four years. I used to be part of the Star and Shadow around 10 years ago. It was somewhere that had a massive impact on my life and the way I viewed the world. The star and Shadow is a place you can meet people and find things to do that fit the type of person you are so I thought coming back here could be a solution to my mental quagmire. After my first year back in Newcastle and diving in to being involved in the Star and Shadow I took stock of the decision I have made and am happy to say it was the right decision for me.

I am very involved in new volunteer inductions. I find this one of the most rewarding things I do at the Star and Shadow. I was once asked when doing a tour of the Star and Shadow what my role was. After a moment's thought I said, "Passing on enthusiasm". Through inductions I introduce the Star and Shadow to around 20 plus people a month who are interested in participating in our collective. I do part of the presentation and my intent, in addition to the practical knowledge is to try and help people understand that when they join the Star and Shadow it belongs to them. They are not volunteering for the Star and Shadow; they are the Star and Shadow. Their contribution impacts what and how things are programmed, when the space is open, what is sold behind the bar, even how the toilets look. Someone I inducted said they would like to create a bit of art in one of the toilets and that is what they did, and it is admired to this day.

I am also part of organising the Star and Shadow Market. We have 5 markets a year where people come to sell bric-a-brac, collectibles and arts and crafts. Priority for spaces is given to Star and Shadow volunteers. I think our market is unique. We do not charge anyone for a space at the market. At the end of the day, we ask for donations off people if they have made a fair profit. Our priority at the market is not to make money but that everyone has a good time, volunteers who do the café and support the market, sellers and the visitors on the day. The market goes from strength to strength, and we often have additional activities on the day and with this market spaces have become highly sort after.

I see the Star and Shadow as having three pillars to an individual's wellbeing and self-actualisation.

- **Being part of something** – You get to meet people, make friends and form groups that can even extend beyond the walls of the Star and Shadow.
- **Feeling useful** – You get to do things whether it's volunteering in the bar, the café, or cleaning club. You are part of the content, most of it being programmed and organised by Star and Shadow volunteers. You get to share your skills with others and learn new skills. Skills which are transferable outside the Star and Shadow.
- **Being empowered** – The Star and Shadow (Which is us) strives for a non-hierarchical structure. It does this through regular meetings to which all are welcome to come to and is based on the consensus of absolute agreement of all those in attendance. We also have working groups which anyone can join either immediately or after an induction in to a specialist area. This means you can have input and ownership of stocking the bar, what's served in the café, what's in the program for regular film slots, to updating/using Star and Shadow tech.