

December 2015 Newsletter

Hello Fabulous Members!



Welcome to the latest edition of Imagine, the Star Wards Newsletter dedicated to our members!

In this bumper Winter (and Christmas!) edition of Imagine you will find: Word from the Wards with a feature on self-soothe boxes and bags, a congratulations to our latest Full Monty Award Winners, wintery activity ideas, recent Star Wards Events and an update about our new 'Ask Buddy' feature.

Do you have an inspirational idea you would like to share with our community of Star Wards Members? Please get in touch! We'd love to showcase your great practice on our website [Wardipedia](#) and in this newsletter so that thousands of other people can be inspired by and benefit from these.



A Few Words from Marion

Hello all you Star Wards lovelies and welcome to the Winter Newsletter! I'm getting that Christmas/Hanukah tingle in the blood and imagine that the ever creative wards are at this moment experimenting with decorations and making the wards festive. Talking to Geoff and Nic the other day I know that many wards use the excuse to tinsel the meds trolley and flood the community group with mince pies.

Christmas on a ward can be a difficult time for many, so all the effort you put in is so worth it and so appreciated – and any pics of your festive ward decorations would be welcome in our [Facebook group](#).

I have to add excitedly that we have been busy little elves at Star Wards as well! The result is that we are in the final stages of not one but three new resources which will come out in 2016. So enjoy your festivities, keep being brilliant, and know that we are always in your corner, cheering you on, with a piece of mistletoe on our hat, or in Buddy's case, a pair of felt antlers on her hairy little head.

Love Marion

Pointless National Days

Did you know there was a

Wiggle Your Toes Day?



These 'pointless national holidays' look like a lot of fun! It must be 'Compliment Day'?? Just one of the examples of pointless national days you could use; as a conversation starter, a themed ward day, or as part of your therapeutic ward activity.

Here are more examples of pointless national holidays on [Wardipeida](#)

27th December,
Make Cut Out Snowflakes Day,

24th January,
Compliment Day,

7th February,
Send a Card to a Friend Day,

23rd February,
International Dog Biscuit Appreciation Day (yes it exists!)

Have you created your own national day on the ward? Please share them with us! Get in touch with Sam - sam@starwards.org.uk

Word From The Wards!

Self Soothe Boxes and Bags

Sensory activities that help promote a sense of inner calm and control are becoming an integral part of everyday life on wards. Being on a ward is a great opportunity to learn and practice easy but extraordinarily effective techniques. Don't worry! Many of your on-ward activities will already be full of therapeutic multi sensory techniques, or with small added touches activities can be given a sensory focus.

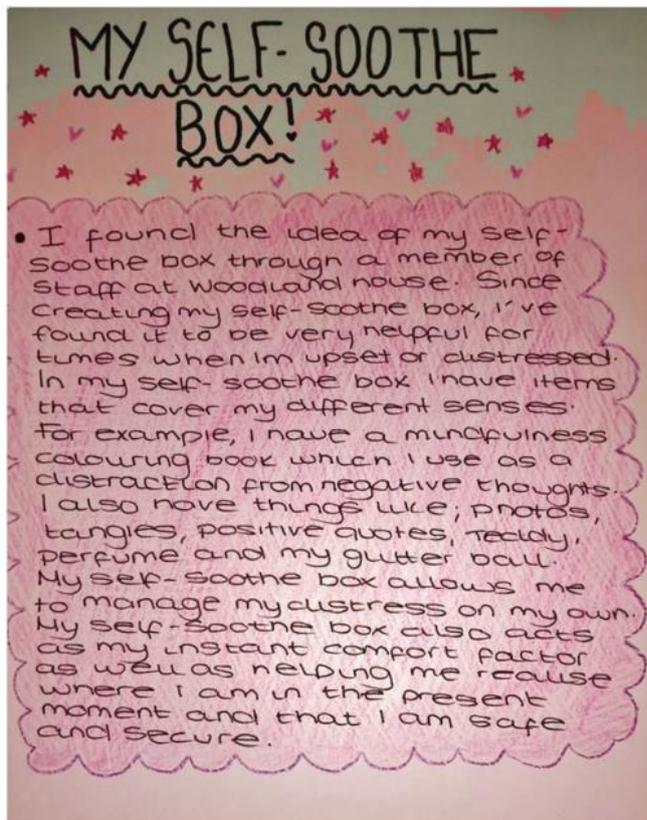
In this edition of Imagine, we would like to feature the amazing work of the young persons of Ash Ward, Woodland House. They have been getting really creative as part of their DBT skills therapy sessions, making up their own Self Soothe Boxes or Bags. The boxes or bags are full of comforting items that help them relax and relieve stress.

We are delighted to share photos of their self soothe boxes and quotes about how well these have worked!



Karen Taylor from Maple ward at Woodbourne Priory Hospital in Birmingham has also sent us this image below, along with this note...

'This is a pic of our box. The patients love it! Some of the comments from the patients include: "Love the self sooth box. Always nice things in there to make me feel better", "I use bath bombs now which I first had from the box and I sleep better after a relaxing bath."



We would love to hear from you. Please let us know what fab, funky, therapeutic things you're doing!

sam@starwards.org.uk

Winter Activities

Your ward will be a festive hive of activity. At a time when wards can be busy places to be, finding time for therapeutic activities can seem like a big task. No need to be daunted! Here are a few examples of activities that you can try that are easy to start and fun to do!



It's Good To Talk!

Often the cheapest, simplest activity that occurs on wards everyday is an informal chat with someone friendly. No equipment is needed (unless a cup of tea is involved!). With Christmas around the corner, hot topics could include; the bright new design for your wards Christmas decorations and 'who likes sprouts??' (Read more on Wardipedia: [Community Meetings](#) & [Creative Communicating](#))

'Easy on the eye, warm in the heart'

Some of the best practice often happens in the worst designed environments. Staff and service users often put vast effort into counteracting the safety, social and therapeutic impact of not-so-fit-for-purpose-environments. The effort is always worth it though!

Whilst the outside world can often be grey, cold and dull in the winter months, the inside can be a bright, warm and safe place to be. Here at Star Wards HQ we were really impressed with the pictures from your wards of Christmas and Winter art projects that were sent to us last year.

Here are a few pictures that might inspire your next creative activity.



If you would like tips on how to improve the smallest and largest of therapeutic spaces ([read more here on Wardipedia](#))

News from Star Wards HQ

New Resources For You!

'CAMHeleon' will provide practical ideas and inspiration for young people's mental health wards, and 'Marvellous Care' will do the same for wards caring for learning disabled patients. 'Animal Magic' will build on the enthusiasm expressed for mental health inpatients spending time with animals.

Please help spread the word and keep an eye out for an email announcement when they launch.

If you would like to contribute to any of these exciting new resources [please get in touch with us](#).



Paws for Progress Event



Marion & Buddy recently visited the 'The Value of Human Animal Interactions' event run by Paws for Progress where Marion was a guest speaker. After the event she tweeted; 'Huge thanks to [@PawsforProgress](#) for exceptionally fascinating, enjoyable & often moving conference'. For more information about the event [click here](#).

Mental Health Nurses Society Event During October our Geoff was a guest speaker at an event hosted by the University of Greenwich's Mental Health Nursing Society [@UoGMHN](#). The fab nurses that attended the event were able to find out about all the positive impact and experiences Star Wards can and has made on wards throughout the UK and beyond.



Meridian Ward in Blackheath (run by Cygnet Health Care) and **St Andrew's CAMHS** unit in Northampton were both recently presented with the Full Monty award. The award recognises the brilliant achievement of putting all [75 Star Wards](#) ideas in place.

You can read more all about Meridian's Full Monty celebration [here](#).

And here's what Allie Carr, Modern Matron of St Andrew's Adolescent Pathway, said about their achievement:

"It was an honour to have recognition of all of the hard work done across the Adolescent Pathway for Star Wards - all 8 wards achieved 'The Full Monty' and both staff and patients worked really hard to do this and make lots of small changes which went a long way to improve our already fab wards! Some of these improvements included introducing more volunteer sessions, more access to PAT dogs, more physical exercise and general fun sessions and more evening activities. Well done everyone!"

Read St Andrew's team brief [here](#)

A huge congratulations is in order to all the staff and patients for all your hard work and a big thank you for being exceptional hosts.

Our Latest Blog

[Being Positively Mindful - by Sam Wilson](#)

The practice of Mindfulness has become trendy in recent years and isn't just a Buddhist practice but something anyone can try, even (and especially!) inpatients and ward staff. Mindfulness is a very simple concept with profound benefits. It's all about paying attention to the present moment with focus and without judgement. It can be really rewarding to allow yourself a few minutes, however brief, to be mindful of all the amazing things staff and the patients do from moment to moment...



[Read more](#)

We're All Ears!

**As part of our Community Newsletter,
we would like to connect with you!**

Please do get in touch, you can even write to us with a Guest Blog of your experiences of mental health wards or Star Wards.

[Click here to contact us](#)

Ask Buddy!

Our brand new feature for our wonderful current (or potential!) members allows you to ask 'Buddy' a question!

Buddy's paws are ready to tap away and provide you with an answer to those questions you have about Star Wards on your ward. If we cannot find an answer for you we may be able to find you a fellow Star Wards community member (there's over 600 of you!) that may well have an answer.



Buddy really enjoys receiving your questions! She has the waggy tail to prove it. Here is one of the questions she received recently:

Question:

“Dear Buddy, My ward has done a lot of Star Wards over the years, but with other things coming in like Aims, productive wards and Safewards, Star Wards has taken a bit of a back seat. How would you suggest we get it back on track?”

Buddy's response:

We don't think you're off track at all. It sounds like you've been full on doing great things. And all that while also providing care to your patients. We've said it once and we'll keep saying it - inpatient staff are amazing – committed – hard working and just totally brilliant.

I guess the first thing I would say is remember that the ward 'belongs' to you and your patients. Star Wards (and the other initiatives you mentioned) should be about helping you to help yourself. So I suggest you first have a little pause and feel some pride in what you do and what you have achieved. Hurray for you!!

After that, if you feel that there are still things that can be improved on your ward, send us an e-mail, tweet us or post us on facebook about what they are. If we don't know how to help you, we might know someone who can.

Buddy x

We also have a FAQ section about Star Wards, so be sure to check that out as well on our website [click here](#).

Please submit your questions to sam@starwards.org.uk (being a bit of a celeb, Buddy doesn't always get a lot of time to check her email so Sam lends a hand).

We're thrilled that you're a Star Wards member and we want you to know how deeply impressed we are by all the creative, therapeutic work you do. We hope you've found ideas in this newsletter which you'll want to introduce today!

Merry Christmas!

Love,
Marion,
Nic, Geoff
& Sam

