

# VIRTUAL RIDE OUTS



At the start of Covid in March 2020 Mental Health Motorbike needed to adapt very quickly to changing circumstances due to increased social isolation of our members. Lockdown prevented any face to face work so we introduced virtual ride outs on a Sunday evening using zoom. The purpose was to have an agenda free online gathering which allowed bikers to come together and discuss their week and how they are feeling, and also get some support if they are struggling.

So how does this work in practice?

## Breaking Down Social Isolation

As the Covid situation got worse so did many of the mental health issues that were being presented to our team by our members. It was clear some members were really struggling being on their own, without any companionship. The virtual ride outs were a way of addressing this. Some early rideout members needed more support during the sessions and this was also offered on a one to one afterwards. Even though we were meeting virtually members found the interactions really meaningful. Numbers vary from 5-17 members and as time has gone on they have gathered a rhythm of their own. We have even got one of our older members to now co-host the evenings. He really engages people and it is a big highlight for him each week.

## Guest Speakers

We have had a number of guest speakers join the rideouts and these have added a great dimension to the evening. It is a fun way of spending a Sunday evening in relaxed company listening to some amazing stories. We have had two guests who have travelled the world on their motorbikes and have huge YouTube followings.

In the early days we shared some actual bike tours - but we quickly found members preferred the interaction, banter and more talking with each other.

## Plans for the Future

There are plans to repeat the same format for a virtual breakfast meet-up. This whole format lends itself to a possible online radio/TV show and as we grow our resources this could easily be setup in partnership with local media providers and sponsors. It is something we will explore in the future.

