

# Recovery

Promoting hope, choice and opportunity

Issue 1, Spring 2015

## Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of *Recovery*, a regular newsletter dedicated to bringing you news and information about mental health recovery work in Northern Ireland. Inside you can read the personal stories of people on their own recovery journey, as well as updates on the work of all the local Health and Social Care Trusts.

### What do we mean by recovery?

While every person facing mental health difficulties develops their own definition of recovery, it generally means the process through which people find ways to live meaningful lives, with or without the ongoing symptoms of their condition.

The recovery approach alters the traditional relationship between those who provide mental health services and those who use them. Even when resources are limited, this new partnership delivers results.

### What is ImROC?

Implementing Recovery through Organisational Change (ImROC) is an ongoing Health and Social Care (HSC) programme to help people with mental health difficulties.

The aim of the programme is to change how the HSC and its partner organisations work, so that the key focus is on helping people with their recovery.



No decision  
about me,  
without me

Peer support and recovery colleges are integral to the ImROC programme.

### What is peer support?

Peer support is the introduction of people who have lived experience of mental health difficulties into the mental health workforce. It is a hugely significant step to ensuring services across Northern Ireland become more recovery-focused.

### What is a recovery college?

A recovery college allows people using mental health services, their carers and the providers of those services to learn more about and develop recovery skills together.

These study and training facilities provide a range of courses based on the principles of further education.

### In this issue:

- Recovery colleges
- Carer stories
- User of services stories
- Service updates

# Ten key challenges for organisations wishing to support recovery

Ten key challenges have been identified as ways in which services can make changes to support and maintain practices that are geared towards promoting recovery and a better experience for those using mental health services.

1. Changing the nature of day-to-day interactions and the quality of experience.
2. Delivering comprehensive, user-led education and training programmes.
3. Establishing a local recovery education college to drive the programmes forward.
4. Ensuring organisational commitment, creating the culture and leadership at all levels.
5. Increasing personalisation and choice.
6. Changing the way we approach risk assessment and management.
7. Redefining user involvement.
8. Transforming the workforce.
9. Supporting staff in their recovery journey.
10. Increasing opportunities for building a life beyond illness.

*The NHS Confederation's Mental Health Network (MHN)*

*The role of mental health professionals is to try and create the right conditions in which service users can be supported to lead full and meaningful lives of their choice.*

**NHS Confederation**

## Brian's story

As a peer support worker, I use my experience of recovery from mental illness to help others going through a similar crisis in their life. I suffered from severe depression in the past, so I know only too well the devastating impact an enduring mental illness can have. However having managed to gain control of my condition to enjoy life again, I now use my knowledge and skills to help others embark on their own recovery journey.

The stigma surrounding mental health means that many people find it difficult to talk about what they are going through, but I have found that by being open about my illness helps to create an immediate connection with the service users I meet. As one of four peer support

*You have the wondrously terrifying task of becoming who you are called to be.... Your life and dreams may have been shattered – but from such ruins you can build a new life full of value and purpose.*

**Patricia Deegan, 1993**

## Alix's story

My wellness recovery action plan (WRAP) has enabled me to achieve recovery and a level of wellness I had not hoped to gain. My recovery journey has spanned over almost two years and has at times had its set-backs, but I have found that when I have returned to the principles of WRAP I have been able to recover and even achieve better health than I had thought possible.

WRAP provides a structure around which I have devised my own plan for recovery. While the concepts are simple, to a very unwell individual this ease of use and understanding has been vital. The identification of the signs that I am becoming less well have enabled me act quickly to prevent myself becoming more unwell which would make it a more difficult and prolonged recovery. Having a pre-determined action plan in place ensures that I do what is effective, based on careful planning and not acting on my feelings.

WRAP has highlighted for me the necessity to take responsibility for my own recovery but with help and support and to make life changes to maintain good health in the future. It has also shown me that it is the combination of changes in all areas of my life which has the greatest impact and that an understanding of how my illness affects me means I can overcome it and not be controlled by it. Applying WRAP to my life means I am now in recovery.

My belief in WRAP as a strategy for recovery is such that I took the opportunity to train as a WRAP facilitator and have subsequently co-facilitated three WRAP courses. I coordinate two WRAP support groups and both these activities have not only played a part in my own recovery but I have been privileged to be a supporter of others seeking better mental health. It has been wonderful to see so many benefit from WRAP and to achieve good health and happiness. I will continue to advocate the benefits of WRAP and provide support to those who seek it.

workers recently recruited to work with the community mental health teams in the Southern HSCT area, I feel our role really compliments the dedicated work of the health professionals.

In my role, I emphasise that recovery is a 'way of life'. Achieving and maintaining mental wellbeing requires work, but the benefits to be gained from putting in this effort are enormous and there are tools such as the wellness recovery action plan (WRAP) to help along the way.

It is a privilege to be able use my experience to help others rediscover their zest for life. From going go-karting to making short films, I have joined service users taking their first steps towards recovery. It's very fulfilling to be able to help!

# Belfast Health and Social Care Trust - transforming and



I am the lead service user on the working group looking at 'transforming the workforce' at the Belfast HSCT. I am currently managing an independent peer advocacy service to a number of teams within mental health services in the trust.

trust enabled me to have a better insight into the group dynamic of working with peers. We delivered the training over a full day for each team and gave them an overview of the vision of ImRoc, the role of a peer support worker and facilitated an open and honest discussion to address staff fears and worries.

I had concerns and anxieties about delivering this training, as I had never worked with the two trainers I was to work with. During the course of the preparation, we got to know each other and built a good working relationship while we co-produced all the material used. This process helped me feel included and a valuable part of the training team. I also felt my experience brought a lot to the training as I could see some of the problems that concerned the teams. I was able to give them the service user's perspective and examples of case studies

One of my biggest roles in this whole process was to deliver training to existing staff within the two community teams identified to help them better understand this new way of working. My own personal experience of working as a peer advocate within mental health teams in the

## Eileen's story



Hello, my name is Eileen Shevlin. I have been working with ImROC since May of this year. I have been a mental health service user for the past nine years.

My background is in management and leadership but my mental health became so bad over a prolonged period that I lost all hope of

recovery, my life became unrecognisable to me and at times unbearable. I could see no light at the end of the tunnel.

Then the most amazing thing happened, I was asked to contact ImROC (Fiona Houston) and by the end of that phone call I felt like I had been handed a lifeline. Suddenly I felt hopeful of a meaningful future.

Where else would I have been given the opportunity to dip my toe in the water in a safe environment to see if the skills that I thought I'd lost forever could be recalled? I am now involved in coproduction and co-delivering workshops for the recovery college and the mental health wards as well as helping to launch the college.

I have been given the opportunity to tell my story of recovery at large events and I have discovered skills that I didn't even know I had. I have attended many training sessions and have had opportunities to influence decisions in group meetings from a 'lived experience' point of view.

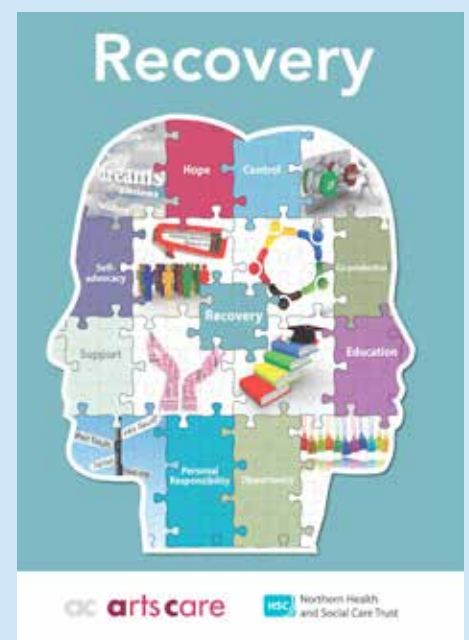
ImROC is playing a huge part in my own recovery and I'm very excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for myself and other mental health 'experts by experience'.

## Northern region recovery college

The Northern region recovery college offers a range of interesting and inspiring courses to promote recovery and wellbeing for all within your community. We are people with lived experience of mental illness or distress, carers, staff and partner agencies who are encouraging individual journeys of recovery, wellness, progress and life-long learning.

We believe everybody faces challenges, but everybody can learn from these experiences. Our courses provide the opportunities to encourage individual journeys of recovery, wellness, progress and life-long learning.

This support is in your community now so if you want to make decisions about your own wellness and how you want to move forward please pick up the phone and speak to us.





## preparing the workforce

that helped illustrate firstly, the value of peer workers and secondly, how some of their worries had been overcome in other teams who already work with peers.

Overall I found the experience of being involved in this project very worthwhile and rewarding. I hope I have helped staff better understand the role of peer support workers but more importantly helped allay their fears and concerns.

My involvement, I hope, has made the process of implementing recovery through organisational change a bit easier for all concerned.

**Paul McFall**

## Southern HSCT update

The Southern Health and Social Care Trust is committed to supporting people with mental health conditions and the people who love and care for them. Over the past two years the recovery agenda has gathered momentum through the structure and guidance of experts of the ImROC project. The trust took on key challenges to establish a recovery college, to develop opportunities for co-working in the shaping and delivery of mental health services and redesigning the workforce through employment of peer support workers.

Each service area also chose challenges, for example, the addiction service and its service users initiated a service user group (SoHope). In addition to attendance at regional service user network groups, the group have been involved in the set-up and running of harm reduction cafes in community settings.

To date substantial co-working has been achieved. An initial pilot course for the recovery college has been delivered, materials and a local newsletter printed, service users, with full voting membership, on panels for recruitment of peer support workers, service user involvement in planning of the PICU on Bluestone site and involvement with the SHSCT's Personal and Public Involvement Panel, to name but a few. It is hoped that in the next few months a recovery co-ordinator will be appointed so that this work and the drive for recovery will continue.



**Recovery College**



*Recovery is a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life even with the limitations caused by illness.*

**Anthony, 1993**



## A carer's story

I am a carer for my twenty-four year old son who was recently diagnosed with psychosis. This diagnosis has had a huge impact on firstly my son, myself and my family, particularly given that we have had no previous experience of mental health in our family.

When my son was initially given his diagnosis, it was such an overwhelming experience for me. I felt as if my world had fallen apart and we would never be able to recover from this and my son had no future worth talking about. I was embarrassed to talk to anyone about it and felt as if I was carrying a huge secret, hiding it from family. Prior to meeting the consultant, in the waiting room I had picked up a card advertising My Mind among other leaflets. I had unconsciously put the card in my coat pocket at the time when called.

A number of days afterwards I found the card which had got me intrigued. I downloaded the My Mind app and proceeded to read. For the first time I could relate to all the signs of psychosis in my son which I had previously made excuses for. It sparked some anger and guilt, but the more I read the better understanding I began to have regarding his illness and what he might be experiencing. As well as the factual information I was able to access in abundance, I got great comfort in listening to the inspirational stories and messages.

The app enabled me to talk to my family about what I had learned and helped to bring the family to a new understanding. It also gave me the courage to return to see the consultant (which I initially vowed I wouldn't) and helped me to devise a long list of questions to be answered. I realise my son has a very long journey to recovery ahead of him, but the app certainly was a turning point to me realising that while life will never be the same for my son and indeed my family, it is a journey of ups and downs and recovery is possible.



*Don't give up because you had a bad day! Life is full of twists and turns, ups and downs. Forgive yourself and do better tomorrow.*



# Update from the South Eastern HSCT

2014 was a busy year for ImROC in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. We have been working on three main areas:

- to develop a recovery college;
- to have people with lived experience of mental health working within our teams;
- to be more person centred in everything we do.

In November we were thrilled to have four peer support workers join our mental health inpatient staff teams, and at the end of December we welcomed Anna Devlin who took up the post as our recovery college co-ordinator. Anna has started just in the nick of time too!



We now have seven courses co-produced and happening regularly. Some of these include 'Hope, control and opportunity for recovery', 'Goal setting for recovery', and 'Coaching for recovery'. We have another 20 courses in co-production at the minute which are due to start in our spring term.

During the week commencing 23 March 2015 we are officially launching the recovery college, with guest speaker Rachel Perkins, along with our new prospectus as part of our first ever recovery awareness week.



Other things happening that week are: 'Soup and a WRAP'; dress down Friday; quiz night and story-telling evenings. You can find out how to get involved, about our courses and activities during Recovery Awareness Week on our Facebook page: 'Imroc in SET'.

This isn't something we've done all on our own. We have many service users and carers and staff involved in all kinds of ImROC groups. Our community and voluntary partners like NIAMH, Mindwise, AMH, Praxis and CAUSE are also working alongside us.

Now seems like a good time to say thank you to everyone involved and we're looking forward to see what 2015 will bring!

## Is 'recovery' becoming a buzz word in the Belfast HSCT?

No - recovery is more than a word. Recovery through the ImROC approach is steadily becoming embedded in practice in a much more real way.

We have recruited three of our four peer support worker posts who are based with community mental health recovery teams. The fourth post is being taken from the waiting list and human resources are currently processing this. The peer support workers work alongside the professionals involved with the service user to establish what areas they can best assist the service user. The understanding and maximum utilisation of the peer support worker role will be an emerging and strengthening process.

One peer support worker and a member of her team are co-delivering wellness recovery action plan training to the service users of the team. This will be incorporated into the recovery college prospectus. A logo has been designed to 'brand' the recovery college and this will be used on all public information and course materials.

A Band 7 coordinator along with a Band 3 part time admin support are in the process of being recruited. The coordinator post will be open to applications from anyone who meets the relevant criteria while the admin post will be recruited through the workable scheme. These posts will support the development and management of the recovery college. There are seven different coproduced courses are being delivered via the college, each course is co-delivered by a peer trainer. Venues are sought from community areas such as local libraries and community groups.

New information packs are being developed for all service users new to the community mental health service, to assist them in understanding the service to which they have been referred and to provide them with useful contact numbers and email addresses.

The pilot of How to get the most from your appointment is now being evaluated to see what benefits the service users found in using it. We hoped to spread the use across all community teams in the near future.



# Western HSCT ImROC report

The Western Health and Social Care Trust have embraced the ImROC challenge and are delighted to share our progress. We have promoted the recovery message with managers, staff and service users and carers via recovery workshops, attendance at ImROC learning sets, identifying champions across the services and developing service user reference groups in all recovery teams.

We use Facebook and Twitter accounts to disseminate information. The launch of the My Mind mental health app concurred with a Recovery Fair in June 2014. Our distinctive 'Discovery to Recovery' logo has become synonymous with change.

Our service user group, SMILE continues to grow in numbers and enthusiasm with several projects in the pipe line.

We have enjoyed a successful first term of our recovery college in Omagh with 10 courses being offered over 25 sessions. 125 people registered to attend. The courses were co-produced and co-delivered, with service users and staff in unanimous agreement that the experience was enlightening, rewarding and enjoyable. In preparation, service users and staff attended 'Train the Trainers' sessions, a pivotal change for many in the relationships between peers and professionals. This training will now be rolled out to all trust areas.

We have consolidated working relations with local community and voluntary organisations including the libraries, employment organisations, local councils and non-statutory service providers.

We have facilitated service users to write and share their stories of hope and their personal journeys to recovery.

Staff and service users have trained in WRAP together and our aim is to offer all service users the opportunity to develop their own personal wellbeing plans promoting hope, opportunity and control.



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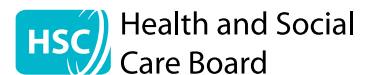
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