

# Recovery

Promoting hope, choice and opportunity

Issue 5, Spring 2018

## Regional Peer Support Workers Forum – embedding and developing the peer support worker role across the region

The formation of the Regional Peer Support Workers Forum began in early 2016, alongside the introduction of peer support workers into the statutory mental health services. The implementation of this exciting new role formed part of the cultural shift within services to utilise the abilities, skills and perspectives of those of us with lived experience of recovery from mental ill health.

As the forum is region wide, each HSCT takes a turn to host the quarterly meeting on one of their sites. An agenda is set beforehand and the peer support worker from the host Trust then chairs the meeting. Due to the unique nature of this role it is vitally important all peer support workers are given the time and opportunity to attend these quarterly meetings. Within the forum, peers are able to celebrate their successes, think through challenges and solve problems together in a supported environment. It is also a space to continue to define the role, which in turn strengthens the quality and consistency of our work. I myself find the forum a great support and leave feeling more energised and motivated to continue in this exciting and dynamic role.

Within the forum, we are also in the early stages of producing qualitative research into the benefits and outcomes of those who have access to a peer support worker in their recovery

journey. Early feedback from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has been extremely positive, with one individual describing it as 'a life saver'. Another person said they 'no longer felt

that they were the only one who has gone through this illness'. We can see what a difference this unique work can have on a persons' recovery and their experience of mental health services.

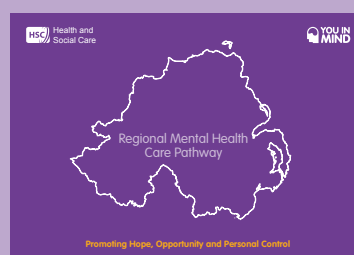
However, there is still more work to be done. Peer support workers need the time, support and the autonomy to do this vital recovery work. This can only happen when there is a solid understanding of the essence and ethos of this role. Peer support workers have often felt this understanding needs to be strengthened. It is my hope for the future that peer support will continue to infuse mental health services with its intrinsic sense of hope: not only for our services users and their loved ones but also for all the staff who support them on their journey.



*Tory Cunningham, peer support worker (BHSCT and Regional Peer Support Workers Forum)*

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**HSC** Health and Social Care

**YOU IN MIND**

You can view the Regional Mental Health Care Pathway at [www.hsboard.hscni.net/mentalhealth/Regional\\_Care\\_Pathway\\_Mental\\_Health.pdf](http://www.hsboard.hscni.net/mentalhealth/Regional_Care_Pathway_Mental_Health.pdf)

## WHSCT coaching for mental health course

When I was first approached about studying for the Advanced Diploma in Coaching for mental health, I was delighted to get the opportunity but apprehensive at the same time. Like a lot of people, I imagined that a life coach was someone who was supposed to have all the answers for their clients and 'know what to do' about whatever had brought a client to coaching. However, I was relieved to find that instead, coaching is about empowering people to find their own answers, and providing them with the tools to make the positive



Regional mental health and wellbeing coaching graduation, December 2017

changes they desire, or to make their dreams and aspirations closer to becoming a reality.

The course has benefitted both my personal life and also my work within the Recovery College. I now find myself regularly asking myself if whatever I'm about to do will bring me closer to, or further away from, what I'm hoping to achieve? At the Recovery College we have just introduced a Coaching skills for health and wellbeing workshop, which gives our students the opportunity to practise some simple coaching skills such as 'the wheel of life', goal setting and action planning. Coaching complements the concepts of hope, opportunity and control very well, with its focus on enabling people to create a positive future, something that can seem very far out of reach when you are in the midst of mental ill-health. For me, to be able to use coaching to help myself stay well is great, but to be able to use it to benefit other people as well through the Recovery College is even better.

*Bernadette Donaghy, WHSCT Recovery College*

## Student placement and work experience programme



Belfast Recovery College, in partnership with New Horizons, Action Mental Health and BHSCT Human Resources have developed a new student placement and work experience scheme. Students with lived experience are placed for six months in the BHSCT Recovery

College for personal development, vocational and employment experience. Students come from the college and through community and voluntary organisations.

This is my experience.

I began my placement in the Belfast Recovery College on 11 January 2018. I was very happy about doing the placement there, as this was part of my learning plan as a student. I was training to become a Peer Educator. I was looking forward so much to this opportunity as I have been out of work for a long while. I am mentored and coached by an employed Peer Educator, John (a trained coach), who has lived experience of mental health and I shadow him on placement. I have been involved in a range of

work experience activities from public relations, admin, learning computer skills, attending courses, working with practitioners in co-production and co-delivery. I also will provide learning support for any students who request this in their courses. I also have a mentor from Action Mental Health to support me, together with the college.

I am proud to say that I have just finished my co-facilitators course and have achieved a Level 3 in Education and Training from the BHSCT Recovery College. All these opportunities have allowed me to develop friendships, give back, grow and learn. I have received a lot of encouragement and support and the nicest thing is to be made to feel welcome and part of the college team. It's a really positive and very busy environment.

My aspiration is to become an employed peer educator, peer support worker or work in a helping role. So I am really benefiting from my time here and look forward to continuing work placement with the Belfast Recovery College.

*Carolyn Duke, BHSCT Recovery College*

# SHSCT welcomes new mental health peer support workers



**Ann Butler, Recovery Coordinator; Mary Harvey; Nathan Weir; and Emmagh McCullough SHSCT peer support workers**

For the first time in the SHSCT, a team of mental health peer support workers will be based on an acute inpatient ward. 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 focused on recovery.

Ann Butler, Recovery College Coordinator, says: "A recent survey showed that peer support in a mental health setting can help people make huge progress in their recovery. People who have lived experience of mental health can offer insight, empathy and understanding while using their own experiences to help others."

## My experience of peer support at the Southern HSCT

I have lived experience of mental health challenges which resulted in feelings of worthlessness, no direction in life and forgetting who I really was. I often wondered if I would ever be able to get my life back on track.

I spent many months in a psychiatric ward, I remember it like it was yesterday – the smells, the sounds, the doctors, nurses and the people I was there with. I remember walking around feeling lost, feeling like I couldn't talk to anyone because the nurses 'just wouldn't understand how I was feeling'.

I learned that recovery is not about 'getting rid' of problems but about being able to see beyond my mental health issue, recognising my strengths and abilities and pursuing my interests and dreams. Recovery is different for everyone, for some it is often living well with your condition; it does not mean being cured, for others it can mean something totally different. Recovery is a voyage of self-discovery and personal growth, which does not impose limits on people. Experience of

"While every person facing mental health difficulties develops their own definition of recovery, it generally means the process by which people find ways to live meaningful lives, with or without the ongoing symptoms of their condition. Many people find it difficult to talk about what they are going through, but when peer support workers are open about their own experience, this helps create an immediate connection with service users."

Bryce McMurray, Director of Mental Health says "The Southern HSCT is committed to supporting people with mental health conditions and the people who care for them. People with a lived experience of mental health and recovery play a lead role in developing our approach to peer support in mental health, focusing on an individual's strengths not weaknesses, while working towards recovery."

"I would like to welcome the new team to the SHSCT and wish them every success on their new adventure."

For more information on Recovery College and upcoming events please visit [www.southerntrust.hscni.net/livewell/3494.htm](http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/livewell/3494.htm)

mental health challenges can provide opportunities for change, reflection and discovery of new values, skills and interests.

My experience of mental health care, treatment and support was good. I have always wanted to share my lived experience and journey of recovery with others who have mental health issues. I wanted to show others that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I have come to recognise that we can support people on the journey of recovery, help them to pursue their dreams and goals and find meaning and purpose in their lives.

As a peer support worker, I can offer a listening ear and model that recovery is possible to those that feel hopeless, sharing the parts of my story that will help others recognise that they too can achieve their goals and aspirations. Peer support workers offer empathy through their own experience and this is a privilege for me.

*Nathan, mental health peer support worker, SHSCT*



# My experience of working in a Recovery College with a mental health nurse



I was diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder in February 2010 by my consultant psychiatrist after three years of crippling mental health. A few weeks before I was diagnosed as having bipolar disorder, my doctor referred me for cognitive behaviour therapy

(CBT) with a mental health nurse who was specialising in bipolar disorder. I attended his one-to-one sessions on a weekly basis for ten months. That was hard work but I listened, I learned, I talked and eventually, long after the CBT had finished, I accepted. I always thought that between the medication and the therapy I would be 'fixed'. I have learned somewhere along the way that I can't be fixed but that I can live very well alongside my diagnosis. In fact I can honestly say that my life is better than ever. I no longer take life for granted and I think I have found my life purpose: helping others to understand mental health recovery and giving people hope that recovery is possible for everyone when we put some effort in.

The reason that all this is possible for me is because of our Recovery College. I have been able to rediscover

my strengths over the past two and a half years through co-production with an amazing team of people who embrace true partnership working between professionals and people with lived experience. Because of this I have my life back and am involved in so much exciting work within mental health services and beyond.

One of my proudest moments was when I was asked if I would like to co-produce and co-deliver a course for the college with my former mental health nurse and Cognitive Behavioural Therapist called 'Living well with bipolar disorder'. Imagine how it felt to be emailing him to set up dates to co-produce that course and meeting him in his office as a co-tutor and not a client. Absolutely empowering and amazing! The fact that he was my therapist really offers hope to others attending the course and we work very well together. I am very proud of my achievements and I hope that writing this will offer hope to others and encourage staff at every level to embrace coproduction and help many more people to rediscover their skills.

*Eileen Shevlin, Peer Consultant, SEHSCT Recovery College*

## *This moment*

As I look into the eyes of this new day,  
I see the colour of peace and the light of love.

As I rest in the arms of this new day,  
Hours embrace and minutes offer up the sweetest kiss.

As I walk hand in hand with this new day,  
My breath echoes the music of creation.

All that exists, exists here.

All that is possible, is possible here.

Eternity pours into this moment.

*Written by B (Anonymous by request)*

# SEHSCT: Recovery Stories Project

My name is Angela O'Hara, I am a tutor in the SEHSCT Recovery College, and I have also been working on the Recovery Stories Project. The Recovery Stories Project is a compilation of different experiences of mental health and recovery right across mental health services in the SEHSCT. The project evolved out of feedback from people accessing mental health services and their carers. The foundation of the project is to reduce the stigma around mental health by giving people the opportunity to tell their story and open the conversation about mental health and recovery. Immediately I wanted to get involved as it was something I had already been thinking about for my own recovery but also because it was something I felt I could lend my skills and experience to in helping others tell their story.

I am Fiona Dagg (Service Improvement Manager for Mental Health) and I started to co-produce an outline for the project and decided to produce the stories in booklet and video form. This allowed people to get as creative as they wanted when choosing a format to tell their story. I have lived experience of managing my mental health and recovery but I also have learned experience with a background in film and media. The combination of the two allowed me to assist people in achieving the vision they had for telling their story in an empowering and creative way by lending my technical skills to facilitate their story telling.

For the first issue we produced seven stories in the booklet. Each person uses a unique and creative approach to telling their story using various methods: poems; fictional stories; photography; biography; art; analogies; letters and music. Although no story is the same there are common themes throughout the booklet of 'hope' and 'recovery'.

We also produced four short recovery films which we shared on our Recovery College Facebook page.

We launched the Recovery Stories Project at the 2017

Recovery College Graduation ceremony in Downpatrick. The feedback from students who attended the ceremony, staff, family and friends suggested that the videos were a powerful reflection of the shift in mental health by focusing on the person's strengths and not the illness. We had an incredible response on the Facebook page as well over 8,000 views of the films.

The Recovery Stories Project is ongoing with this being the first publication of the booklet and with more short films in production. It has been an amazing experience

for me to be able to do something I am passionate about, by combining my creative skills with my other passion of working with people to educate and promote mental health and recovery. It has been so inspiring to work with all the individuals who have co-produced the project and I really look forward to the next stages of the Recovery Stories.

For further information on how to access the Recovery Stories booklet or films please, visit SEHSCT Recovery College (ImROC in SEHSCT) Facebook page or email [angela.ohara@setrust.hscni.net](mailto:angela.ohara@setrust.hscni.net)



Launch of the Recovery Stories Project at SEHSCT Recovery College



# NHSCT Recovery College Chairman's Award congratulations

I was delighted at the success of Mental Health and Learning Disability Service at the Trust's Chairman's Awards. These prestigious annual awards are held to mark the very best in service quality and innovation within the NHSCT.

When I heard that the Recovery College had made an application to these awards under the Partnership Award category I knew that they must be strong contenders.

The Partnership Award category is open to any partnership initiative, including collaboration between Trust teams and external stakeholders such as service users and carers. In my opinion the Recovery College is a shining example of partnership working. It has significantly improved mental health services through the involvement of service users as equal partners in their own health and wellbeing.

The panel judging the Chairman's Award obviously agreed as the Recovery College won the Partnership Award. As you can see from the photograph, there was a tremendous turn out from the college at the event, showing the commitment and buy-in from service users and staff.

I have absolutely no doubt about the huge contribution for the better made by the Recovery College to our services. I must of course particularly mention the inspiring leadership of Rosemary Hawthorne who, along with Eileen Bell, Jillian Lennox, Audrey Montgomery and Stephanie Minford, drives the recovery college concept forward. I am determined to see it build upon its successes to date and to continue to grow and develop. That it will do so is due to the commitment of service users who give their time so generously and to our staff who have embraced the concept so enthusiastically.

I would like to give my fullest thanks to all involved and say well done to the Recovery College with my very best wishes for another successful year in 2018.

*Oscar Donnelly, Divisional Director of Mental Health, Learning Disability and Community Wellbeing, NHSCT*



The NHSCT Recovery College receiving the Chairman's Award

# EU invests €7.6 million in mental health recovery

Three cross border recovery college networks are to be set up to support people with mental health difficulties over the next four years in response to the increase in numbers of people with mental health issues. This large-scale, cross border Innovation Recovery project offers an unprecedented opportunity to empower and enable people and communities to take greater control over their own mental and emotional wellbeing.

The funding allocation has been secured by the Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) Health and Social Care Partnership. The CAWT project partners are the Health Service Executive, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust, the Western Health and Social Care Trust, the Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust is also a project partner.

The recovery colleges will provide education as a route to recovery, with courses devised and delivered collaboratively by people with their own experience of mental illness along with mental health professionals. By adopting this educational approach, alongside or as an alternative to more traditional therapeutic options, it is planned that those participating will be enabled to better understand their mental health. Ultimately, people will be supported to recover and to be able to create a satisfying and meaningful life for themselves.

Jim Daly TD, Minister for Mental Health and Older People at the Department of Health in Ireland and Dr Michael

McBride, Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health in Northern Ireland, jointly announced the launch of this cross border initiative.

Speaking at the launch, Dr McBride added: "The Department is delighted to be launching this cross border mental health project... It is about giving people the tools and support to identify their needs in recovering from and managing their own mental health. It encourages participants to draw upon both their own personal resources and the support of the wider community."

There will be a total of three recovery college locations across Ireland/Northern Ireland, each with a broad catchment area to ensure access by those geographically or socially isolated. Furthermore, the recovery college services and courses will also be available online, extending the project more widely. The three areas which will have new recovery college services are:

- **West: Derry, Coleraine, Letterkenny, Strabane and West Donegal**
- **South: Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim and Fermanagh**
- **East: Dundalk, Belfast City, Armagh, Newry and Louth**



Standing (back row, l-r): Barney McNeany, Co-Director of Mental Health, BHSCT; Adrian Corrigan, Assistant Director of Mental Health, SHSCT; Briege McClean, Peer Trainer, WHSCT; Martin Daly, Service User lead, BHSCT; and Trevor Millar, Director of Mental Health, WHSCT. Seated (front row, l-r): Briege Quinn, Mental Health Nurse Consultant, PHA; Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health Northern Ireland; and Soo Hun, Programme Manager, PHA.



## A doctor and an educator



I joined the Recovery College as a Psychiatrist in my junior years. I had heard about the general ethos of the college – hope, control and opportunity. I wanted to get involved so I enrolled as a student to experience a course.

I am now a co-facilitator; I co-produce and co-deliver courses. I am a student again and am participating in the co-facilitators' course.

Immediately, I noticed how many different people, from various backgrounds were working for the Recovery College – doctors, nurses, therapists, patients and carers. It also became clear that each person is an expert in their own area – either through lived experience or formal qualifications. I gained a lot of knowledge of people's lived experience of their diagnosis and of their experience of accessing mental health services. Knowledge that I could not get anywhere else.

I co-produced the course Living with psychosis, working as a team to provide the maximum possible benefit to the attendees. For me, the best part of the course came when the peer educator spoke eloquently of his experience of living with schizoaffective disorder. An important principle of the Recovery College is

that we are all students. Upon introducing ourselves, we omit any titles or qualifications, such as 'Dr', and we don't ask students on the course to disclose their background. This enables relationships to be formed without any pre-conceived barriers. Ultimately, we want it to be a learning experience for all involved.

My experience of the Recovery College gave me a fresh perspective on mental health services and shaped how we can make people involved in their care. I have learned that 'recovery' is deeply personal and unique; it does not necessarily mean 'cure'. Recovery is a way of living a satisfying, hope-filled life of contribution, even with the limitations caused by illness. What may seem like a small intervention, such as organising a trip to the daycentre, may make an enormous difference to a person's quality of life.

I look forward to continue working with the Recovery College, as a student and an educator, and bringing forward the concept of recovery to more people, to improve people's lives.

I have been discussing my Recovery College work with the consultant who is now also keen to have the Belfast Recovery College involved at ward level. Together with the Recovery College Coordinator and peer educators we are going to look at taster sessions in the Mater.

*Stuart Brown, Psychiatrist, BHSC.*

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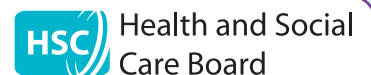
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