



Recovery Walk Scotland 2013: Our reflections

Introduction

Recovery Walk Scotland 2013 took place on Forth Road Bridge on Saturday 11 May 2013. Over 800 people in recovery, their friends, supporters and families took to the bridge to express their personal gratitude for recovery from addictions.

Our aim

The Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC) wanted to celebrate recovery from addictions in Scotland by hosting its first national recovery walk at a national monument – the Forth Road Bridge. We also wanted to show gratitude for recovery and encouraged those who attended to think about who they were grateful to for their recovery.

Event planning

The SRC gathered a walk working group together in January 2013. Representatives from Fife and Edinburgh ADP, Restoration and Serenity Cafes (Fife and Edinburgh independent recovery groups), treatment providers and individuals in recovery from Fife and Edinburgh formed a basic design and reference group for the organisation of Recovery Walk Scotland 2013. They were joined at the first two meetings by key personnel from the Forth Bridge Authority and the SRC's contracted event manager James Dean to ensure that our shared vision for the walk was workable and safe.

Communications for the walk included weekly email newsletters to registered participants, posters, flyers and business cards for passing out person to person. We kept all national committees of mutual aid organisations informed and all national commissioned organisations updated on a weekly basis as the walk approached.

The event

Approximately 800 people walked the bridge. Each person received a walk goody bag with souvenir badge and recovery gratitude cards. In the event tent, two speakers; each in long term recovery shared their inspiration. Comedian Janey Godley gave a short routine and two bands; Boots McCoy and Sunshine Boy and the Vendors each played a 15 minute set. Kuladharini closed the event.

Were we successful in achieving our aim?

Yes.

Practical matters

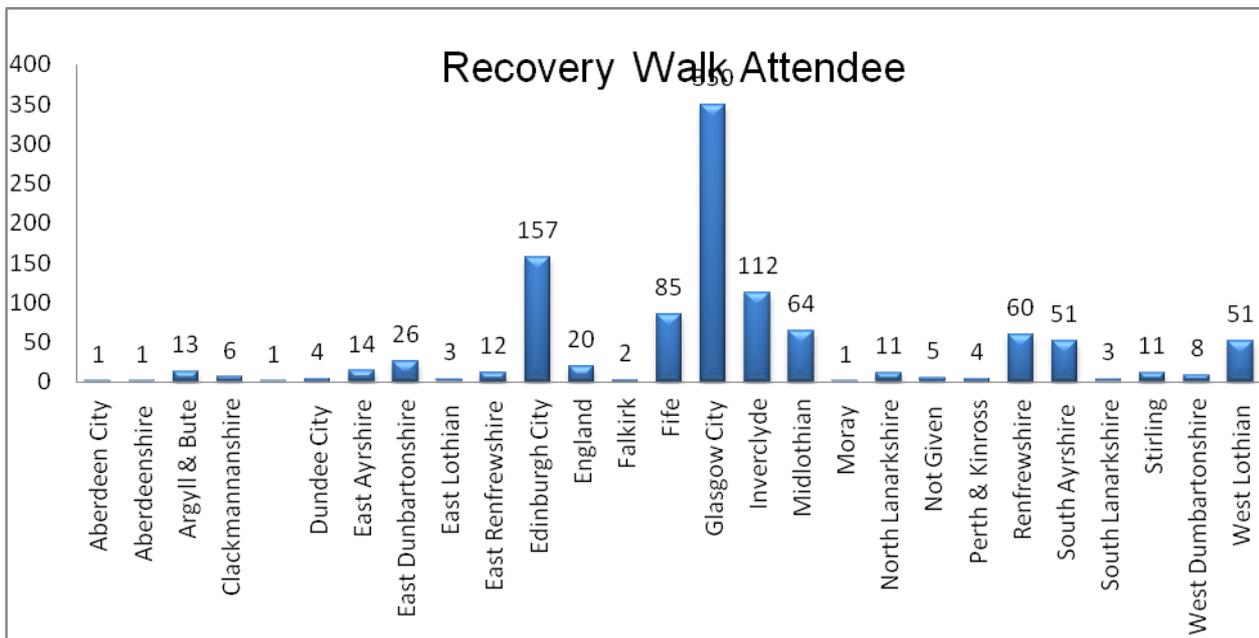
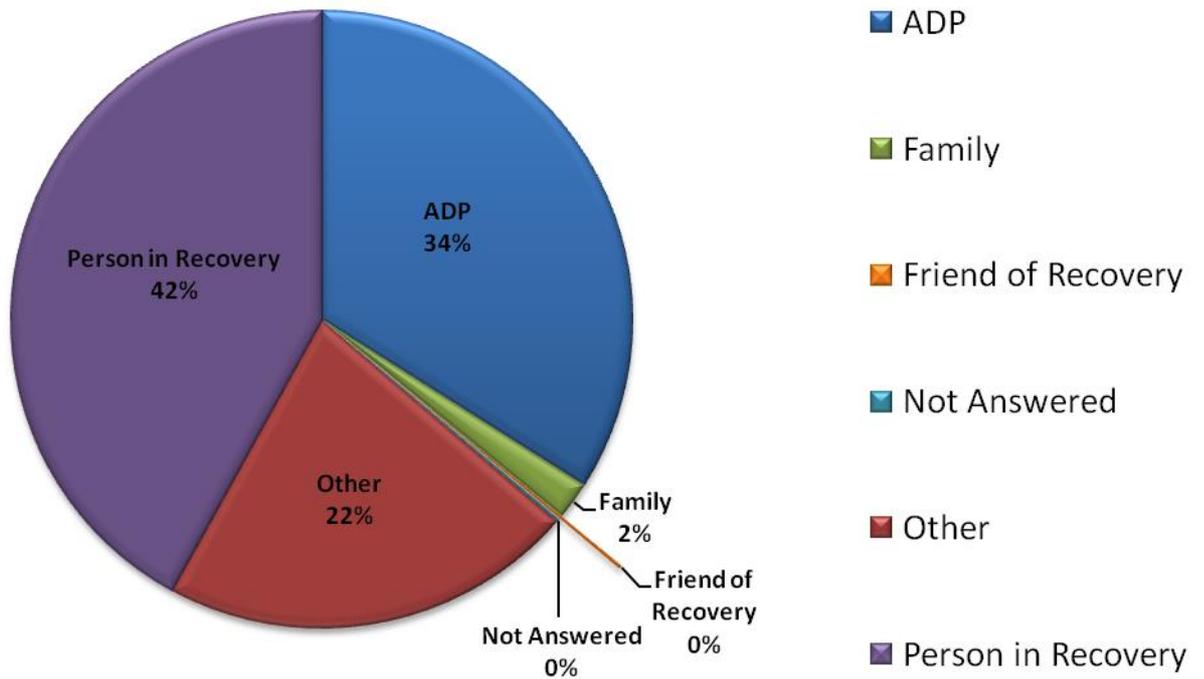
We know that that following practical matters could be improved upon;

- Scottish weather can prove unpredictable and impact upon a planned outdoor event
- Slow service and long queue at the catering stand
- More seating provided within the celebration marquee
- Proactive and skilled stewards for events with a large amount of people present.

Attendance

The following attendance figures are taken from the Recovery Walk Scotland 2013 registration forms.

Recovery Walk Categories



Feedback

Feedback was gathered from a surveymonkey questionnaire, Facebook, emails to the SRC, reflections from the working group and anecdotal conversations. Some examples of feedback are:

- *“Fantastic. All our client that came have gave really good feedback and would do it again if given the chance”*
- *“Thrilled to have been a part of such a fantastic event. So many amazing folk to share the day celebrating recovery”*

- *“Amazed at the number of people participating! As far as the eye could see, there were people walking for Recovery. I was really proud to see people I've worked with recognising their achievements and meeting new people with shared experiences. I was also touched to see family members walking proudly beside their loved ones.”*

Extract from surveymonkey questionnaire

How well did we communicate information about Recovery Walk Scotland 2013?

- *Not very well* 7.7%
- *It was OK* 15.4%
- *Very well* 76.9%

What did you think about organisation on the day of Recovery Walk Scotland 2013?

- *The organisation was poor* 3.8%
- *The organisation was OK* 15.4%
- *It was very well organised* 80.8%

Visibility of Recovery: Initial impact

Facebook posts on the SRC page reached over 4000 people on 11 May 2013 and our 'likes' grew to 300. Our website received 761 page views and 286 visits over the weekend of Recovery Walk Scotland 2013. Visual impact was huge as over 800 people walked together across the Forth Road Bridge. We know that there was a profound impact on the individuals in recovery. Many people in early recovery were participating in a recovery event for the first time. Treatment agencies also engaged fully with the day. We did achieve the spiritual uplift effect and the 'recovery buzz' was generated which is essential for people's recovery.

“I wanted to shout (loud and proud might I add) about my own success in recovery, to give recognition to the people who have helped me on my journey and to celebrate with you all.”

More people from the local area participated in this recovery walk than those who travelled to attend. This is unusual because recovery walks tend to be attended, in the majority, by people from out with the local area.

Visibility of recovery: Developing impact (the recovery bounce)

We were told by one person that the Recovery Walk Scotland badge helped to begin a conversation about recovery with their children that they had been waiting to have for a long time. One of the children involved now wears the badge on their jacket.

Retrospective feedback from contacts within mutual aid fellowships is that several people have said 'I wish I had attended'. We also know that the event has acted as a catalyst between local areas where people across treatment, mutual aid and people in recovery are now in contact with each other.

International impact

Scotland is now visible on the international recovery walk stage.

What did we learn?

The SRC has learned that planning outdoor events in Scotland can present challenges out with our control. In future we will arrange any outdoor activities for later in the year. We have also learned that the concept of a recovery walk is one that means a great deal to the recovery community and that there is real appetite for an annual Scottish recovery walk.

June 2013