

Recovery College North East March – April 2014

Introduction

The Recovery College course exists to deliberately cultivate recovery assets for the good of the whole community. There have been 4 Recovery Colleges since the model's inception in May 2012 when the first recovery college took place in Glasgow. Recovery College North East was no 5- "The Chanel". It was carried out in partnership with local recovery community – Aberdeen in Recovery (AiR).

Our Aim

A recovery college cultivates recovery assets for the good of the whole community. In practical terms this means that a group of individuals in recovery from addictions undergo ten full days of learning, sharing and practicing the key skills they will need to become the future recovery community builders in the local area. AiR needed new recovery assets developed to continue the growth of their local community.

Event Planning.

When AiR agreed that they wanted to host a recovery college the SRC Chief executive and Recovery Grants Support Officer made a trip to their weekly recovery hub in the city to give a short presentation on the college idea. People signed up there and then. In addition we agreed to email and text individuals to let them know that it was on and to register via the online form on the SRC site. It was also linked on Facebook and Twitter. Once registrations had been received the SRC and Air rep met again and agreed on who would be accepted.

Event Agenda

Over 10 days The College Syllabus for North East College included:

- Steps To Excellence
- Presentation and Media Skills
- Asset Based Community Development
- Funding
- Managing recovery environments and building recovery relationships in organisations
- Graduation

Were we successful in achieving our aim?

Yes. One participant said: "I feel more empowered to help move my recovery community forward. I will be more proactive in engaging with individuals and services in order to do this. And I hope that my passion and enthusiasm for recovery will rub off on others in my community, and encourage them to become more involved and committed to developing our local recovery community."

Another noticed the following:

"As I am a much stronger person I feel that I am able to stand up for what I know as a fact."

Who Came to Recovery College North East (Aberdeen)

Of the 17 students who applied 15 were accepted and 3 of those pulled out before the beginning of college. A total of 12 students began and completed the course and 11

graduated; 5 men and 6 women. The group breakdown by location was 4/11 from Aberdeenshire and 7/11 from Aberdeen city.

Feedback

The students were overwhelmingly positive about the experience of being at college. Informal feedback was received directly from students and formal feedback was given through SurveyMonkey to which 50% of students replied.

The experience was reported as:

“Positive, encouraging and empowering. Of great value to me and thought changing with practice.”

They learned:

“Communication skills with other people. Changing my way of thinking so I can put my positive thoughts into action. Given me a clearer idea of where I want to go in life. How to become motivated and enthusiastic in my recovery. Learning to love myself”

What is different now? They are able:

“To be more optimistic about what is achievable. What I have learned about myself has given me more of an insight into the bigger picture. I can’t but we can.”

Feedback has suggested that 2 parts of the process could be updated:

1. To consider involving more family members *in recovery* in the college experience.
2. To re-think the asset-based session and include more about recovery community development as it is happening in Scotland now.

Visibility of Recovery - Initial impact

- 10 of the students had personal lived experience of recovery
- 1 of the students had lived experience of family recovery

Visibility of Recovery - recovery bounce

- Graduation showed ADP and other potential recovery activists the benefits of recovery college experience.
- Student blogging on UK website In2recovery gave high profile to recovery developments in Scotland.
- New recovery initiative ‘atmosphere’ arose immediately as a result of recovery college students taking action on idea they had been thinking about for a while.

What did we learn?

Primarily we learned that the syllabus needs refreshed, particularly in relation to the ABCD session and funding session. It is clear that recovery community developments are moving quickly and in view of this the community development side of our work will be handled by those specialised in that.

The national shared learning events and recovery communities have had an effect. We can now afford to upgrade the content to include the new recovery workbook/basics of the recovery research context as well as a little more on building recovery networks.

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