

“The Methadone Question”

An ORT, Recovery and Me campaign event

25th August 2015, The Curl, Aberdeen

Introduction

The Scottish Government published the findings of the Opiate Replacement Therapy Review in November 2013. The report encouraged local areas to build more ORT recovery opportunities.

One strand of the Scottish Recovery Consortium’s response to that report was to develop ORT, Recovery and Me shared learning events in partnership with local ADP’s, treatment providers and recovery communities.

Aberdeen ADP and local treatment agencies sponsored “The methadone question” event. They worked alongside the SRC and local recovery community activists to co-create and host the half-day event.

Our shared aim

- To gather city treatment providers directly involved in the provision of ORT treatments together with people who have a lived experience of recovery that includes a period on ORT.
- To explore “the methadone question” in dialogue with each other so that together the recovery stakeholders can build more successful exits from the ORT programmes.

Event Planning Process

The event was planned and hosted by a working group comprised of ADP, Social Work, Mental Health, Pharmacy staff, local recovery activists and the SRC. The group met several times from March 2015 until the event in August. As their discussions concerns, experience and practice of the methadone programmes in the city was explored so their event programme evolved. The final programme sprang from local questions and used local staff and people in recovery to steer the shared learning experience. The working group met again after the event to consider the feedback and evaluate it. The final agenda is one that each working group participant was actively enthusiastic about.

“The Methadone Question”

Agenda

9am Registration, Coffee and Wall Poster activity answering ‘a mothers questions’ from the original Opiate Replacement Review report.

9.30 “Relapse as a Tool in Recovery”

Seed Carol Ann (Activist) “ Relapse in my Recovery”

Café question 1 “ What is your experience of relapse in recovery?”

Café question 2 “ What feelings come up for you when dealing with your own or another’s relapse? “

Seed 2 Alan (CPN) “ Using Tools to shift us from relapse to recovery”

10.45 “Creating and making the most of Tipping Points”

Seed 3: Rhona (Social Work) “what is inspiring current service users to come off”

Café question 3 “ What are the better questions to ask people who are thinking of coming off ORT?”

Café question 4 “ Table Top exercise- create ideal recovery plan for a person coming off ORT.

Seed 4; Stuart (Activist) “ What worked well in my ORT recovery journey”

11.50 “Life After Methadone”

Seed 5 Patricia (ORT recovery network) “ My life after methadone”

Group Dialogue “ Facts about recovery”

Whole group exercise rate what we have now that’s working well, what we need to do more of and what we need to create.

12.40 Event Closing and lunch

Who came to the event?

60 people attended the half-day event. 75% (45) of participants were NHS, Social Work and Third Sector treatment providers directly involved in the delivery of ORT and the support of people on ORT. There was a good spread of experience among the attending staff from student to senior practitioners with years of practice. 25% (15) of participants were people in recovery from addiction most of whom had experience of ORT programmes. There was a good range of lived experience of recovery among the participants from 2 who were still on ORT to those with decades of recovery behind them.

Event Feedback

20 people returned the survey monkey sent out by the addiction treatment agency, many people provided informal feedback on the day and subsequently to colleagues. The working group gathered this for their debrief in October 2015.

Overall the event was rated as excellent by 5% and very good by 65% and fairly good by 20%, mildly good by 10%. No one thought it was not good at all.

The most enjoyed feature for participants was hearing peoples recovery journey, that there is “hope after methadone”. Many people enjoyed the interactive nature of the event and the discussions.

The least enjoyed feature was that the event was too short, people wanted more time to discuss and finish exercises. 3 people expressed separate concerns one about the emphasis of the event being a bit ‘anti services”, another that we were perhaps simplifying complex issues and a third that we were not focusing enough on the patients responsibilities; e.g. to turn up for appointments.

Immediate Impact Were we successful in achieving our aim?

Yes.

50 % of participants felt more confident, now after the event, in ORT and recovery planning with their patients.

56% of participants felt more motivated, now after the event, in terms of reviewing ORT and recovery planning with their clients.

Some actions they plan to do differently in relation to ORT

“ Discuss it more” “ ask the question” “ ask more often”

“I may initiate the conversation rather than wait for them to mention it”

“Giving people hope there is life after methadone”

“ Change the structure and pace of my sessions”

The working group was delighted with the feedback and with the event, which they delivered exactly as planned on the day. Judging by the recovery plan templates and wall charts people were clearer about the different strands of support needed for successful ORT recovery and the role of mutual aid in that.

The wall chart contributions - answering ‘a mothers questions from ORT review report published by Scottish Government in 2013.

What effect does methadone have on you mentally?

- It can slow your thinking down
- Same thing same day
- Stuck in a system
- Thoughts are sluggish feel disorientation

Does the time you are on methadone affect your ability to come off?

- Yes- a new study shows that the longer you are on the less likely it is that you will come off
- Depends on the individual- how motivated they are to change

What effect does the medication have on you physically?

- Sex drive reduces
- Sweats
- Weight gain
- Hard to exit meth
- Green loop
- Lost teeth

Is there a timescale to stop taking the medication?

- No individuals shouldn't be time scaled
- No Just when the person feels ready
- No its different for everyone
- Yes & No It has to be the right time for the person but sometimes people feel parked on medication and it is harder to assess

The working group was able to discern a theme among some treatment providers at the event that recovery could be a big risk. The working group felt this might well be a good subject for a further ORT recovery event.

Recovery Bounce – unintended happy consequences of the event

- A new Cocaine Anonymous meeting in Aberdeen received help getting a room to meet in from the ADP. (CA- public information attended the event)
- A new mutual aid "ORT recovery meeting" will launch in Aberdeen city at the beginning of November. Recovery activists met with service providers with spare space at the event.
- The Senior Management Team has looked at creating a recovery stakeholders event in the city to bring everyone with an interest in recovery together.

What did we learn?

We want to reflect a bit more on the very small but persistent theme of "we already know this or there is nothing new here" Of course that is true, but it's not the point of this kind of event to give much new information. The point of shared learning is to shift perspective on what you already know. Perhaps we can consider that, in these cases an expectation has not been met by shared learning and we could further explore these participants views on what learning looks and feels like when its working well for them

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