

Recovery Matters

Spring 2020-Issue #06



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Editorial

Hello Readers

Thank you for taking some time out of your day to have a read of Recovery Matters, a magazine that is put together by those of us in recovery who make up the AiR Media Group. We are all passionate about making recovery visible and celebrating the process, as well as highlighting and raising awareness to the serious issues relevant to those who have experience of problematic substance use and addictive behaviours.

In this edition, our main feature and front cover raises awareness of Hepatitis C, the new testing and new treatment available. Included is a personal account from one of our AiR members. See more on pages 8-10.

Also included are features on two groups actively supported by AiR; Parents United In Recovery (PUiR) and the Family Support Group.

As well as featuring some encouraging personal stories, we also look back to our attendance at the Scottish Recovery Walk in Inverness which was an inspirational and fun-packed experience.

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Aberdeen in Recovery, (also known as AiR) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). Scottish Charity number SC049125

Supported by



Family Inclusion

DC

In Chapter 6 of the Scottish Governments 2019 Drug and Alcohol Strategy it states that one of the expected outcomes will be that, “children and families affected by alcohol and drug use will be safe, healthy, included and supported.” But what do they mean in this statement specifically in regard to inclusion?

You may have seen a series of articles that were published in the Evening Express in November 2019 where Caroline Butler an Aberdeen in Recovery (AiR) Board Trustee and our Family Inclusion Ambassador shared some of her own experiences.

She described how her son had been self-medicating a range of mental and emotional issues with heroin for years. Following a period of abstinence ‘Kevin’ allowed himself to be encouraged by another and had lapsed. Caroline believes because his tolerance levels had greatly reduced during

his drug free period, he suffered an overdose and had tragically died on the pavement outside the premises where he had obtained the illicit drugs.

Caroline explained how this devastating loss had had a huge impact on her, but she courageously went on to describe how difficult the previous years had also been.

She said: “My life revolved around Kevin.

“Addiction in the family is a never-ending process and we had many years of it. I blamed myself. I felt that, as a mother, I should have been able to stop this happening.

“I didn’t feel ashamed but believed people wouldn’t understand so in self-preservation, I isolated.”

I asked Caroline if there was anything that would have assisted during those tormented years to which she replied, “I should have been involved in the creation of care and support plans.

“I never felt welcomed or asked to participate with services. Family is the first port of call for most people when things go wrong.

“If we see the whole family as an asset even when the family unit is fragile or damaged, we can still identify and support all of the potential strengths, resilience factors and recovery capital around the individuals.

“We know that families support and provide a vital part of a holistic approach to treatment, they improve engagement with services and also recovery outcomes.”

So it’s pretty clear what Caroline thinks inclusion means and we hope that the Scottish Government agrees! Do you?

Do you want to be part of the movement to improve family inclusion then get in touch. We welcome and need your input.

Email info@aberdeeninrecovery.org or call 01224 638324 or 07936008808

PUIR

PUIR ANNOUNCES NEW GROUP PROGRAMME TO BE LAUNCHED IN SPRING 2020

A peer-led support group which is actively supported by Aberdeen in Recovery (AiR) is to launch a new structured programme of recovery in spring 2020.

Parents United In Recovery (PUIR) is a peer-led support group for parents who, due to issues with alcohol and drug use, no longer have full-time care of their children and have limited or no contact. PUIR was pioneered by both Zoe and Mel, who are both recovery activists in the local recovery community, after it was recognised that there is a significant gap in specific support for those parents who have either had children removed from their full-time care or taken the decision to voluntarily give up their parental role due to alcohol or drug use.

Zoe and Mel both use their lived-experience of being unable to care

for their children due to addiction in order to support other parents who find themselves in a similar position. PUIR has been running for approximately 18 months and during this time they have grown in knowledge and understanding of the needs of parents in terms of support and wish to share their learning journey with others in the most effective way possible. In order to achieve this they have developed a recovery programme specific to PUIR.

Zoe said: "One thing that Mel and I have identified is just how deeply the sense of shame impacts parents who no longer have their children with them because of addiction issues. Guilt and shame is something that many who have experience of addiction identify with but I think that for parents who no

longer are in a position to care for their children, the shame seems to be more overwhelming, crippling and more deeply rooted.

"When my daughters were taken into care, the sense of loss and pain was indescribable, but I did not feel worthy enough to grieve. I was deeply ashamed that I had failed my children despite the deep love I had for them. I held the belief that I was completely worthless and I was aware that the rest of society would readily agree with me. The stigma that parents face when they are unable to care for their children intensifies the shame and shame is one of the most powerful blocks to recovery. After losing my children from my day to day life, I slid even further into the spiral of addiction, I felt increasingly isolated from the rest of society and at that time I could

see no meaningful future for myself, I felt I deserved nothing but the hopelessness I felt.

"Thankfully I found a recovery programme that began my healing and I can now look back and see how sad it is that I felt that way, it took time for me to even identify and connect with the shame I felt, I had buried by pain so deeply. Mel and I have both been on a journey of replacing that deep shame with acceptance and self-love and the things we have learned throughout our recovery and our involvement in various recovery based programmes have been vital to this journey. It's

a continuing process of developing our self-awareness, of working on our self-beliefs, of increasing our emotional intelligence and of adopting self-caring behaviours, it's not easy and we are both still on this journey. We are keen to share the recovery building blocks that we have learned with others.

"We began PUIR with a deep empathy for parents and the desire to provide a safe place for parents to share their experiences and emotions with others who understand but we also recognise how important it is that parents are empowered to build on their own

recovery from a place of shame and pain to a place of healing and hope. This is why Mel and I have been working to develop a tailor made programme for PUIR which identifies the key areas that have been most valuable and have had the biggest impact on us in our journeys."

PUIR plan to launch their new programme in Spring 2020. If you feel you or someone you know would benefit from attending PUIR or you are interested in learning more about PUIR then please contact Zoe or Mel at parentsunitedinrecovery@gmail.com to or call AiR on 01224 638324 or 07936008808



Opiate Replacement Therapy (ORT) Recovery and Me

DC

We believe that there is a bit of misconception about ORT Recovery and Me. It would seem that a lot of people see it solely as a meeting of peers, individuals who have had past or present personal experience of problematic use of opiates, and may have been prescribed ORT and that the meetings offer an opportunity to share of their experiences with others.

Although this is certainly one aim it is not commonly known that there is also a reduction programme offered that individuals can engage in. With the support of their prescriber and support provider where people can look to firstly, evaluate their current support structures and where they are in their own recovery process.

Where and when a healthy balance of resilience factors is established, they can then look to undertake a structured reduction process in their prescribed ORT with the aim of reducing levels and dependant reliance on medication.

The regular weekly meetings then become an integral part of your support structure and recovery capital giving you a regular opportunity throughout the week to discuss any worries, concerns and fears with others who have worked through this process and are willing to share of their personal experience, strengths and example.

There are currently plans in process to provide regular, monthly ORT workshop meetings, where this

process will be described in detail. Look out on our social media and website for dates, timings and venues of these workshops.

Regular ORT Recovery and ME meetings will continue to be held at the following

Tuesdays afternoons @ 2.00-3.00 and Thursdays mornings @ 10.30-11.30

AiR Community Rooms @ Elim Church 50 Marischal Street AB11 5AL

(Thursday meetings are a temporary venue measure until the regular room at the Timmermarket Clinic is again available).

SCOTTISH RECOVERY WALK LW

The Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC) held their annual National Scottish Recovery Walk on Saturday, 21st September 2019 in Inverness.

This is the first time this event has been held in Inverness and recovery communities from across Scotland arrived in their droves. Around 2000 people took part in this annual event and Aberdeen In Recovery had the pleasure of taking over 40 of our members up to Inverness by coach to join in the celebrations. The parade took place around the city centre with the starting point being on the waterfront of the River Ness where the atmosphere was buzzing. There was also a time to reflect, remember and celebrate the lives of those loved ones lost to addiction as roses were thrown into the river. The final rally point was in the Northern Meeting Park and this is where the celebrations really took hold as we were blessed with loads of amazing stalls, food, live music and even the weather, around 21 degrees and glorious sunshine!

For me personally this was my second year in attendance and once again I was left in complete awe at the huge amount of positivity and strength that comes from all the recovery communities across the country.

Recovery truly is alive, and I cannot wait to see the power we can generate together in this coming year!



Scottish Government commits to eliminate Hepatitis C by 2024

Some of our regular readership will recall that we printed an article in our second issue in Spring of 2018 headlined “Chronic Need for improvements in Hepatitis C testing.”

So we wish to proffer the following update and to inform how things have progressed, or not, in this regard.

Scott Ferguson a fellow Recoverist with the Forth Valley Recovery Community conducted an interview with the Scottish First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon last year to highlight “Three Key Asks” that would help ensure Scotland can eliminate hepatitis C as a public health concern.

In the interview Ms Sturgeon said that Government would sign up to the three asks as they are all crucial in meeting the World Health Organisation’s 2030 target of eliminating Hepatitis C while improving the lives of those affected by the illness and those at risk.

Ms Sturgeon also stated that with new Hepatitis C medications transforming the treatment landscape, currently there is an incredible opportunity to improve the health of Scotland’s communities.

The First Minister also highlighted

that government must lead by example, and have a moral responsibility, in helping to tackle stigma. She strongly felt treating people with respect and dignity is a key issue in getting people to come forward for testing and treatment.

The “Three Asks for Elimination” are as follows

- 1. Get more people diagnosed and/or into care.**
- 2. Treat people whenever and wherever they ask.**
- 3. Prevention is better than a cure.**

The above was assembled by a group of voluntary and statutory agencies working together since 2013 under the HepCScot national awareness campaign. They ask that these three priorities are considered by national and local agencies when addressing hepatitis C priorities. Full details available at hepcscot.org/three-asks-for-elimination.

So the question is how and is this being translated and implemented on the local level. Certainly, in Aberdeen city, it gives me the greatest of pleasure to say that this now seems to be the case.

The opportunities of having simple and easy to access testing service

has been greatly increased by the recent introduction and roll out of dry blood spot testing (DBST) service being provided at local pharmacies across the town and in branches in the shire. This is in addition to DBST services which are provided within NHS sites and GP practices as well as being available within the NHSG Sexual Health Clinic and as a service available to clients of Alcohol and Drugs Action (ADA) in Aberdeen. For details contact their helpline 01224 594700 or website www.alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk)

This DBST process is non-invasive and only involves a single pin prick being administered to a finger to provide the required sample which is then sent off for testing. Results are returned normally within 48 hours and will be passed on confidentially and directly to yourself. A full list of participating local pharmacies addresses, and contact details is available on our website www.aberdeeninrecovery.org.

New and much improved Hepatitis C treatments have been available now for the last three years and record a cure rate of around 95%.

The treatments no longer involve injections and are administered in tablet form, taken daily, and are

prescribed over a number of weeks. This course of medication can now cure the virus in as little as eight weeks and involve no serious side effects, anything reported as being minimal and minor.

It’s also really encouraging to hear that liver biopsies are no longer routinely used. Blood testing or ultrasound scans are now customarily used to check the health of your liver.

So the good news is that a diagnosis of Hepatitis C is no longer the sentence that it once was and the development and improvements in the provided medications, testing and treatment process are no longer the horrendous experiences that they once historically were.

So the message we wish to strongly convey is simply this, “See It. Treat It and Beat It” and you could be cured of the virus and its symptoms within eight weeks. You will also

be doing your part in fulfilling the World Health Organisations and our Scottish Governments pledge to, eliminate Hepatitis C within the next decade!

More information available at www.hepcscot.org and www.hepatitisScotland.org.uk .



22 Years of Doubt Started in 3 Months

SB

I found out that I had Hepatitis C 22 years ago when my son was born. To be honest I wasn't concerned about it as I was in no pain and had no physical symptoms, for example jaundice. I got offered treatment before, which was the old treatment called Interferon and tablets but because I saw friends on Interferon, and they were really ill I refused it. I was also still in the midst of addiction at the time.

Then, three years ago I was getting sore pains in my stomach. I was getting really worried about the pain, so I made an appointment

with my doctor who was so helpful. She put me for a blood test and gave me medication for the pains in my stomach. The doctor phoned me and said that my sugar levels were high, and she thought I may be diabetic, so I got more blood tests. These came back negative for diabetes, but sugar levels were still high. The doctor offered to put me forward for a liver function test, and I agreed to get one. It came back that there were signs of my liver 'stiffening up'. I had to go up to the clinic to see the liver specialist who offered me a three-month course

of the new treatment. One tablet a day and there were very little side-effects from the new treatment, albeit fluey and hot flushes on the inside of the body which felt like the poisonous Hep C was leaving my body.

After finishing the medication and a further two blood tests (three months apart), I was given the all clear – great news! So, my recommendation to anyone who has any doubts or concerns about Hep C is get tested, get treated and get well!

Dry Blood Spot Testing and Naloxone Pharmacies

Currently there are seven pharmacies in Aberdeen City and Shire which offer dry blood spot testing (DBST) for Hep C and other blood borne viruses. Details are:

Bairds Pharmacy, 302-304 Clifton Road, Aberdeen, AB24 4HP, 01224 484688

Bairds Pharmacy, 519 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 3BT, 01224 483783

Summerhill Pharmacy, 16 Summerhill Court, Aberdeen, AB15 6TW, 01224 326944

Ferryhill Pharmacy, 9 Millburn Street, Aberdeen, AB11 6SS, 01224 580950

Bairds Pharmacy, 6-12 Mid Street, Fraserburgh, AB43 9AJ, 01346 511007

Buchanhaven Pharmacy, 23 Skelton Street, Peterhead, AB42 1HR, 01779 473525

Wills Chemist, 35 West High Street, Inverurie, AB51 9AJ, 01467 620475

Please note these pharmacies are also registered Naloxone suppliers if you require any kits. In addition to the above pharmacies, Naloxone kits are available at over 30 other pharmacies around Aberdeen City, Shire and Moray. If you, or someone you know, is at risk of a

drug overdose you can get a free Naloxone kit. Naloxone is an easily administered medicine that can temporarily reverse the effects of opioid drugs overdose (examples heroin, methadone, morphine, including opioid medicines) until an ambulance arrives. You can get your free kit from any of the pharmacies listed and you can find the full list of pharmacies on our website

www.aberdeeninrecovery.org

How I Found my Next Steps

MG

Foster care, drug addiction and prison is never the ideal start to life but it was my experience. This left my physical body in ruins, my mind and spirit shattered and my heart heavily bruised by incredible suffering.

Not a good start, (which I now see as a gift), but something had to change and that something turned out to be me. This started when I was 26 and just left prison. I was determined not to repeat the same mistakes and I believe it was then that my mental development began.

Years of trial and error would follow, with more mistakes than I care to admit, but I was on a journey and there was no going back!

I was reading books, adopting change and learning and putting this into application and action.

In doing so I began to realise something, known but unknown. I was tapping into something within, something that sits waiting to be released, a powerful intelligence and potential which I had been overwhelming with substance use and addictive behaviors. I was finding a way to begin to believe in myself.

I'm totally fascinated with the potential of becoming the best version of ourselves. So I was lead to find a way to share the learning I had found. I was inspired to teach and help others better understand themselves and begin the same steps I began just 8 years ago. But sometimes our next steps in life aren't so obvious.



Thus Next Steps which are mental health development mornings groups where we stretch, shape and mold our mental health in the direction of finding lasting transformation in our lives. We also run healthy eating workshops, yoga classes and strength finder workshops where we tie together healthy active lifestyle and nutrition to improved mental and physical health.

Everything that we do is facilitated through DW Fitness First Aberdeen. For more information please contact nextstepsabz@gmail.com or **DW Fitness First Aberdeen on 01224 213933**

2DH

This was a massive topic. Even explaining anything on anxiety was becoming stressful. Immediately, I felt overwhelmed, my breathing became quicker, my hands started to sweat, then my arms. Not before long, my thoughts were repetitive and negative. “Don’t even start, don’t even try. You’re useless!” Soon my body was tensing up. Subsequent frustration and

We all experience emotions with relationship issues, financial difficulties and work or unemployment. In these situations, anxiety is a normal human response. However, many people, like myself, find it difficult to control their worries, feelings or behaviours. These feelings are more constant and can often seriously affect our daily lives.

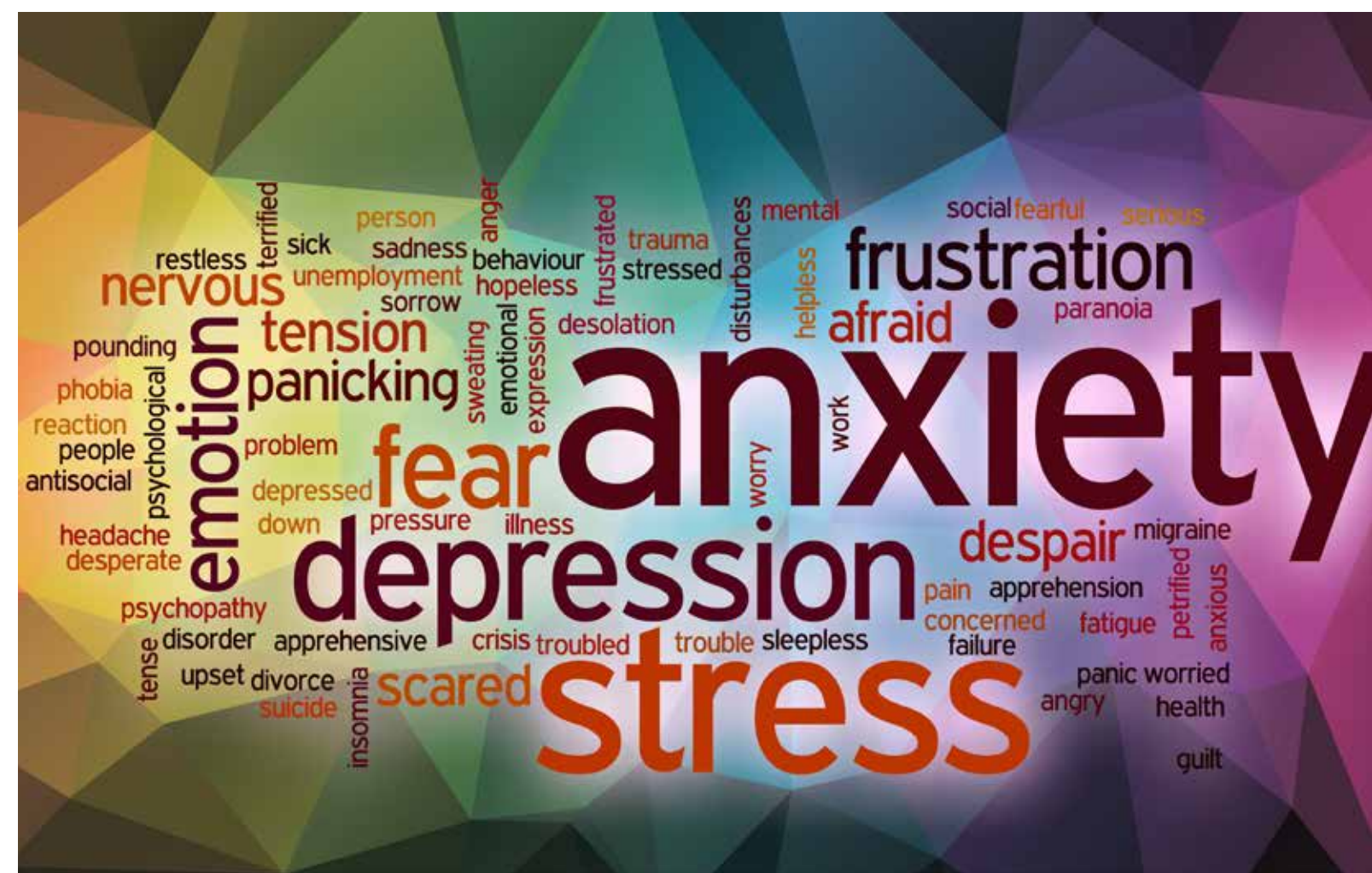
Social Anxiety Disorder is an intense fear that does not go away and affects everyday activities, self-confidence, relationships, work or unemployment. Many of us worry to some extent about social situations, but someone suffering from social anxieties feels overly worried before, during and after a social event. Meeting new people, starting conversations and speaking on the phone can be triggers. You may also avoid social activities or group conversations or are always

Social anxiety can often manifest into panic attacks. A panic attack is when feelings of anxiety become intense and overwhelming. A bout can often last several minutes, sometimes resulting in over an hour.

until calm is restored. A person can normally experience physical symptoms including shortness of breath, sweating, increased heart rate and blurred vision. Symptoms can become worse depending on the situation. If we are to get the full grasp of what is anxiety, what causes it and keeps it going we must ask questions. I will be furthering those

questions and explaining in more detail. Why does it affect us in the way that it does, both physically and mentally?

In part two, I will be uncovering and exploring ways in which to deal with anxiety, how we can face anxiety and overcome it.





The Journey Continues..

I've already spoken about how I have been affected by addiction, both mine and others, in previous editions of Recovery Matters. First, I wrote about how growing up with an alcoholic mum impacted me and how I get recovery through the fellowship of Al-Anon. I then went on to write about my own issues with addiction and how big a role food played in my life until I found freedom from binge eating and food obsession in Overeaters Anonymous. This third part of my story is, I suppose, a glimpse into what ongoing long term recovery looks like. I certainly see my recovery as an ongoing journey that I hope never ends. I say this not because I am attached to the labels of adult child, co-dependent, sugar addict or binge eater. I say this because of what I have been given as a result of finding recovery.

Before getting into recovery I drifted through life, never really having a sense of my self or my purpose in life. I had unrealistic expectations of what I should be

doing and achieving while always falling short. Always comparing myself to others and feeling inadequate and incompetent as a result. At the root of this was what I have come to realise is shame. Shame, that dark, murky, horrible feeling that eats away at the core of us and robs us of our self-esteem, our self-belief and our self-confidence. The feeling that I am never enough. That I am a bad person. And this is the perfect environment for addiction to thrive. My journey into recovery over the last eight years has begun to shine a light on my shame and my core belief that I am not enough, allowing the authentic me to emerge and shine.

Living life on life's terms without using my addictive behaviours is a roller-coaster. There are highs, there are lows and there is mediocrity. My job in recovery is to ride this roller-coaster using all the tools and inner resources that recovery has given me. First and most important, recovery has given me a community of

wonderful people who are there with me every step of the way, cheering my achievements, holding my hand through the tough days and offering unconditional love and acceptance as I discover the real me that continues to emerge. Recovery has also significantly improved my relationships with the friends and family who have known me the longest. I am much more willing to be open and honest about my feelings and needs which strengthens the bonds that were previously fraught and frayed. As I get to know myself I have found a real sense of purpose to life and have found the courage and strength to pursue my dreams. The most significant change in me is a more consistent feeling of sanity and serenity that continues to evolve. No longer do I spend months or years running around my own head feeling lost and scared. I am finally out in the world, living the life that I am creating for myself. Putting one foot in front of the other. Taking one step at a time. Becoming me.

The Recovery Collective Presents - Recovery Connects 2020



The Recovery Collective is made up of people in long term recovery from alcohol and drugs. Our goal is to give people in any form of recovery whether that be addiction, mental health, homelessness or social based issues opportunities to get involved in community-based activities that will enhance their recovery, whilst also engaging the wider community to challenge the stigma and misconceptions surrounding issues that affect us all.

At Queens Park in Glasgow last year we staged our first drug and alcohol-free music festival and if you had asked us how many people, we hoped would attend beforehand we

would have said maybe 200. We were amazed that over the course of the day over 2000 people attended.

We aspire that this event will grow to become a national celebration. Last year we had people from as far away as Dundee, Edinburgh, Forth Valley and Ayrshire in attendance. This year we expect to have people from as far afield as Inverness, Aberdeen and the Borders at the Recovery Connects Live Music Festival event.

Once we have built capacity and relationships nationally we hope that Recovery Connects will be an event that can be hosted in different

locations all across Scotland.

We cordially invite you to this year's event, which is free, and to join us on this journey and support our cause. We look forward to welcoming you to Recovery Connects 2020 at Queens Park in Glasgow on the 17th May.

For more info on The Recovery Collective and Recovery Connects follow us on

Facebook – The Recovery Collective and Twitter - @Rec_CollectCIC,

**#WeAreTheRecoveryCollective
#ComeTogetherAsOne
#RecoveristNetwork**



Recovery Matters community contacts

ADA Helpline

01224 594700

Timmer Market

01224 651130

AA

0800 9177 650

NA

0300 999 1212

Al-Anon

0800 0086 811

Anonimowi Alkoholicy Informacja

07598853253

SFAD

0141 221 0544

Gamblers Anonymous Scotland

0370 050 8881

Samaritans

116 123

Breathing Space 24hr Helpline

0800 83 85 87

Aberdeen Foyer

01224 373880

Overeaters Anonymous

07798587802

Citizen's Advice

0808 800 9060

LGBT Scotland

0300 123 2523

Rape and Abuse Support

Aberdeen 01224 591342

Grampian Women's Aid

01224 593381

St Machar Credit Union

01224 276994

Next Steps - nextstepsabz@gmail.com

com - 01224 213933

Grampian Credit Union

01224 576990

Community Food Initiatives

North East (CFINE)

01224 596156

Families Outside

0800 254 0088

Aberdeen Multicultural Centre

01224 478203

Social Work Duty Team

0800 7315520

Emergency Out of Hours

01224 693936

Instant Neighbour

01224 489955

Family Planning

0345 337 9900

NHS 24 111

G-Dens 111

What's On at AiR

Community Rooms

@ Elm Church

MONDAYS.

10.30 -12.00 Cuppa with a

Purpose drop-in.

12:30pm-1:30pm

Recovery Meeting

TUESDAY.

1.00-2.00pm Media Group.

2.00 -3.00pm ORT recovery and Me

WEDNESDAY.

11.00 -12.30pm SMART Recovery

1.00-2.30pm Cuppa with a Purpose

Drop-in.

THURSDAY.

10:30-12pm PUIR

(Parents United in Recovery)

FRIDAY.

1.00-3.00pm Family

Support Group (fortnightly)

Finally, if there are other things that you would like to see or ideas you may have for a group/meeting please get in touch.

Also....

Tune into shmuFM (99.8Fm or www.shmu.org.uk/fm/ listen) for Recovery on AiR, a weekly radio show, to find out more about what's happening.

If you are interested in attending any of the current groups please feel free to drop in to the community rooms or if you would like more information or a member to meet beforehand please either e-mail info@aberdeeninrecovery.org or call 07936 008808 or drop into the AiR community rooms at Elm Church

Likewise, if you are interested in any of the upcoming groups/training please also contact us.