



Recovery Café East Dunbartonshire

Executive Summary

Running since May 2013, the Recovery Café offers an alcohol-free alternative to the local night-time economy in East Dunbartonshire. It allows people with substance misuse issues to spend time with their family in a supportive and alcohol-free environment; with the option to engage with recovery services at the same time.

The initiative began in response to service user consultation in December 2012 which identified that people struggled with their substance misuse out with traditional service hours such as evenings and weekends. Initially the café was facilitated by the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP) and it remains a key supporter; but individuals in recovery now largely manage the café.

The evenings offer healthy and nutritious homemade food, fellowship and entertainment, information on local services and a chance for informal discussion. They provide a 'safe' venue for individuals in recovery to go out with their family and friends and wider support network(s).

The café offers individuals in recovery from substance and/or negative life events the opportunity to enjoy an evening out with their families in a supportive environment. It also gives people the chance to talk about their issues and work through the stigma under which they have previously lived. Many of these individuals would not normally have contacted any kind of support service, and the café offers opportunities for early intervention. This asset-based project has developed skills including budgeting, menu planning and management in café users. Individual's capacity has been increased through natural development of relationships resulting in increased self-esteem and improved family dynamics.

Building on the project's success, the management committee is planning to run the café more frequently and to develop a community enterprise. They are also seeking funding to expand the project to different areas so many more communities can benefit.

This project won the Strengthening Community Engagement and Resilience Category at the 2015 Safer Communities Awards.

Background and Aims

In December 2012 there was a service user consultation undertaken at a Recovery Café Conference in Kirkintilloch organised as part of the National Recovery Programme and supported by the Scottish recovery consortium. From this, users identified that they particularly struggle with relapse out with traditional service hours ie evenings and weekends. The Recovery Café developed in response to this and offers a welcoming environment where individuals with substance misuse issues, mental health issues or negative life experiences can come alone or with their family to enjoy food and entertainment.

The café differs from the traditional night-time economy as it is alcohol free; and utilises a co-production model to support them on their recovery journey through mentoring or informal conversation and also offers signposting to services. It also gives people the opportunity to become involved and the café is now largely managed and operated by this community giving training and networking opportunities too.

Activities

The Recovery Café is a monthly event run on the first Saturday of every month at Kirkintilloch Baptist Church. There is food, entertainment and alcohol-free drink; and the informal atmosphere allows individuals to spend quality time with their family, but also speak with other individuals on their recovery 'journey' to learn from those in similar situations.

In kind support is leant by a number of partners who regularly attend the café, and are on hand to provide support to patrons if required. However it is the recovery community who primarily plan the meals; shop, prepare and cook the food and serve the patrons.

There is a wide network of PR undertaken with the local community to help reduce stigma and develop relationships; and many locally business advertise and advocate on behalf of the café.

Impact

Feedback is gathered from participants about the café itself for example: cleanliness, the welcome they received, the quality and variety of food, overall experience and whether they would attend again. Overall feedback in all of these areas is either rated as 'excellent' or 'above average'. They also gather information on how people found out about the café, what they like best/least and any suggestions for the future. People can also volunteer through the feedback sheets and note whether they attend other groups locally and what they are e.g. mental health or substance misuse support groups. The café was developed in response to this community's requirements, and the community-led management committee regularly review evaluations and make changes in response to ensure they always meet user's requirements.

The outputs are as follows:

- Empowerment of individuals in recovery and local capacity building to develop an effective recovery model.
- Improvements in health, self-esteem and recovery; and mental health and well-being
- Peer support and support to families and carers
- Signposting/information provision and greater connectivity between individuals in recovery and services
- Attracts people who would not normally engage with services

Monitoring and Evaluation

The café is not formally evaluated, but feedback is gathered from participants about the café itself for example: cleanliness, the welcome they received, the quality and variety of food, overall experience and whether they would attend again.

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The community-led management committee meets monthly to reflect upon feedback and make changes to the café on the basis of these to make the café better for users.

Lessons Learnt and Sustainability

There are large numbers of willing volunteers to support the Recovery Café and help it develop into other geographical areas in East Dunbartonshire. Funding to help the café run more frequently are also being sought.

The café catered for a Recovery Conference within East Dunbartonshire in December 2014, and to continue this sustainability there are longer-term plans to develop the café into a social enterprise.

Resources

Funding: The project costs a total of £3,960 per annum. The primary funder is the East Dunbartonshire ADP. Self-directed support implementation funding for preventative spend were also utilised.

Partners: The ADP provided a lot of in-kind support too, but much of the café's operation is managed by service users. In-kind support is also provided by: Addaction Families, Carr Gomm Allotment Project, Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs, Addiction Recovery Centre, Group Recovery Aftercare Community Enterprise, East Dunbarton Alcohol and Drugs Service and Scottish Association for Mental Health Community Rehabilitation Service and support from Kitkintilloch Baptist Church to name a few.

Outcomes

National	We live longer healthier lives Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
Justice Strategy	Reducing offending Enhancing efficiency Reducing the damaging impact of drugs and alcohol problems Reducing the harm from fires and other emergencies Increasing public confidence and reducing fear of crime Strengthening community engagement and resilience

Practice Note Information

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