**GRID Voices – Growing Recovery In Derbyshire and Promoting the Voice of Lived Experience**

*“Recovery is a social contagion that primarily spreads from peer to peer but it should also take the form of a cascade that permeates professionals and organisations to create the conditions to allow contagion to occur”*

Wednesday the 7th of September was the launchpad event for an initiative to help to build momentum around increasing the visibility and participation of the voice of lived experience across a range of specialist and community settings across Derbyshire.

Magnificently hosted by Chesterfield FC Community Trust at the Technique Stadium, we were delighted to welcome more than 50 participants from inside and beyond Derbyshire to an event that marks the start of nine months of building a coalition of GRID Voices.

**Purpose of the day**

To launch the initiative, the project team made contact with all eight of the commissioned recovery support services along with a number of key stakeholders to review who else should be invited and how to disseminate messages about the event and the overall initiative. Essentially, the aim was to communicate and disseminate the goals around increasing lived experience awareness and engagement and how this could be linked to future commissioning activities as well as in reviewing the processes and arrangements for residential treatment for Derbyshire residents.

It is probably easiest to describe the event chronologically and then to outline what the next steps are. Following an introduction and welcome from Andy Raynor on behalf of the project sponsors and authors, Derbyshire County Council, David Best introduced the project team and briefly summarised some of the key evidence points about recovery and the principle of CHIME (Connection; Hope; Identity; Meaning and Empowerment) for supporting and enabling recovery to grow and spread. He closed by suggesting that key principles of recovery are that it is intrinsically social, future-focused, community-based and strength-based. As a result, the initial exercise attempted to assess what the strengths were that already existed in Derbyshire. All of the exercises were done in groups across the seven tables in the room.

**Task #1: What are the recovery strengths in Derbyshire?**

Around specialist treatment provision, the groups reported that coordination and colocation were seen as strengths, alongside a single point of contact. There was also considerable optimism about the development of digital platforms borne of necessity from COVID. Out of area referrals for residential treatment were also seen as positive. Intuitive Recovery was also seen as supporting ongoing recovery and linking to treatment.

In terms of community recovery projects and activities, GRID was seen as having considerable potential as was the network of commissioned meaningful activities available across the county, linking to opportunities for support networks and to access volunteering opportunities. There was a mixed picture around peer-based mutual aid – with a Hope Springs group continuing to meet in Chesterfield, what is seen as a robust AA community, but greater limitations around NA and SMART Recovery.

**Task #2: How do we build the voice of lived experience at the service and systems levels?**

There was currently perceived to be a lack of visibility for recovery in Derbyshire, and the lack of an independent voice. The foundations for this process were seen to be around trust, and the devolution of responsibility from specialist treatment services. Beyond this, key goals were seen to be around:

* Pathways to paid roles
* Training options including pathways to peer leadership and peer mentoring
* Increased commitment to peer support and the development of a cohort of recovery navigators
* The development of an advisory group
* A key issue was seen to be around resourcing not only in terms of funding but also other forms of support around training, engagement and access
* Significant enhancement of the Growing Recovery in Derbyshire (GRID) website
* Opportunities for shared stories of success and providing the opportunity to support others
* A need to provide a recovery contribution to school-based prevention
* Create the appropriate conditions for support

In the mental health field, there is already the RETHINK map that we could potentially link to once we have a structure and a link to recovery navigators. One of the key tasks identified was the need for a recovery hub in the county designed to promote linkages, to provide aftercare and to offer peer-to-peer work.

Other opportunities suggested for consideration include the use of podcasts; the provision of multiple points for feedback

**Task #3: How do we create the conditions for lived experience informing recovery-oriented services within a recovery-oriented system in Derbyshire?**

The key ideas are grouped together below:

1. Media campaign to promote listening to recovery voices that promote the narrative of recovery, and a commitment to communication in this area
2. Part of this would be around educating professionals in each agency, and challenge any biases that may exist about recovery
3. Improve the digital offer and better funding
4. A mapping of recovery services with feedback integrated into the process
5. Meaningful investment in people at all levels of the system and adequate resourcing of the whole system
6. The creation of a recovery hub whether this is virtual or physical
7. Ensure that the system is not hindered by geographic or organisational boundaries

**Next steps**

There was an incredibly positive level of engagement with the event and clear need for this process to take place as evidenced by the fact that 33 of the participants have signed up to be a part of the next steps, which is an incredibly strong foundation for co-production. We will split this group into two parts:

* A forum for those with lived experience who will work with the project team to develop a coherent group identity, who will look for new members and partnerships and who will develop a training plan and a GRID voices vision and mission
* A wider Support and Empowerment group whose goal will be to support the emergence of GRID Voices and to enable their work to have the necessary access and impact across treatment and other specialist settings in Derbyshire

The aim of the initial phase of the work will be to attempt to integrate the work of these two groups and to create a developmental model for building the voice of lived experience across Derbyshire.

However, the range of the issues identified in the workshop and the commitment to improving both the interpersonal and structural foundations for recovery in Derbyshire also provides a further agenda that we need to address in this work. There are evidently strong foundations for us to work from and a commitment to an integrated and innovative recovery model but some distance to go for this to become a sustainable reality. What we will attempt to provide is a platform for the people and organisations with lived experiences to take active part in the design and delivery of services across the county,This will partly involve a cultural shift in systems and processes but crucially will be a key part of reviewing and building a meaningful lived experience model for Derbyshire.

**Conclusions**

It has been suggested that there are seven core domains for community recovery supports and this might prove a useful checklist for Derbyshire to test itself against through this process and to ensure that the lived experience voice informs the initiation or growth of each:

* 12 step groups
* Alternative forms of peer-based mutual aid (including for affected others)
* Recovery coaching or other forms of one-to-one or group-based support
* Fun activities and exercise
* Volunteering
* Linkages to education, training, housing, and other community resources
* Means to generating personalised growth pathways

These link to a broader base of effective specialist treatment and wraparound services, safe and reasonable housing and processes for overcoming stigma and exclusion.

This is the start of an exciting new chapter for Derbyshire and there are very good grounds to think that we can build on these strong foundations.

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