

Who is being nominated?

Kate McCormack

Organisation

North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership

Award Details

Category

Category 10: Excellence in Mental Health Services 2019

Q1: Overview

The Involved! Group came into being as a result of North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership's (NAHSCP) commitment to recovery, co-production and service user involvement in the design and delivery of mental health services. The aim is to put real power, choice and control in the hands of people affected by mental health problems.

The group includes people who use mental health services alongside workers from a range of organisations together taking a rights based and trauma informed approach to participation. One outcome is the "Safe to Be Involved" event showcasing the talents of people who use mental health services through dramatic and musical performances and the exhibition of their artwork. The event is open to the public and promotes mental health through creativity while also challenging stigma. People from the group report having gained confidence and a new identity through the process of creating and presenting their artwork to an audience.

Members of the group also participate in a range of forums and decision making meetings around mental health service provision and have contributed to significant change within services, ensuring service users are at the centre of the service design, delivery and evaluation.

Q2: What did you do?

Over the past two years the role of the Involved! Group has grown and it now takes responsibility for organising and delivering a community based event known as "Safe to Be Involved". People affected by mental health problems put on performances based on drama, poetry, singing and personal narrative as well as workshops around painting, writing, jewellery making, relaxation, music and discussion groups.

The events are open to the public with audiences of over 70 people. The group has utilised feedback gathered from people at the events to inform mental health service delivery so that people can see the difference their contribution has made. For example, at one event participants expressed an interest in taking part in a singing group and by the following year a North Ayrshire Singing for Wellbeing Group was established and performed alongside the RAMH (Recovery Across Mental Health) Singing Group.

Members of the Involved! Group attend and participate in the North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership Mental Health Change Programme Steering Group which oversees the health and social work integration process within mental health services. This ensures that people with lived experience are at the heart of decision making and are influential in shaping service delivery. For example, members of the group have highlighted the importance of peer support within mental health resulting in the Peers 4 Hope service being commissioned. In 2017 members of the group supported a consultation process which

produced a new vision for the service.

A significant outcome is that members of the group have been central to the establishment of a Wellbeing and Recovery College within North Ayrshire, shaping its ethos and making decisions about the content of courses and the utilisation of funding for the resource. In this way people affected by mental health problems are deciding what courses they want to attend, what issues they wish to tackle, and what courses to drop for the next term.

For example, the trauma informed course is popular and people have noted how helpful the notion of “it’s not what’s wrong with me, it’s what’s happened to me” is and how liberating it is to recognise the impact of poverty, abuse and other life events as implicated in their distress rather than attributing this to internal deficits.

Within the recovery college people with lived experience are supported (if they so wish) to become course facilitators. The aim is to ensure that knowledge and skills that support recovery are in the hands of the service users and don’t rest only with practitioners and clinicians; peer support and self management being key outcomes for recovery.

The group is serious about rights based approaches and recognise that one of the key issues within this is power. As knowledge is one form of power, through the Wellbeing and Recovery College, service users gain greater knowledge of their rights and of choices and possibilities available to them. This results in rights becoming a reality.

Q3: What did you achieve?

The group has engaged people creatively through the annual arts event which showcases the skills and abilities of our service users and has challenged stigma regarding mental health problems as part of this. Members of the group have supported the establishment and development of the Wellbeing and Recovery College which has also been highly successful. The choice of topics for courses came from people affected by mental health problems and carers dealing with issues of genuine concern, these include:

- Wellness Recovery and Action Planning
- Living Life to the Full
- Domestic Abuse Recovery (They Love Me They Love Me Not)
- Sleeping Well
- Peer to Peer
- Write to Recovery
- Trauma and Recovery

The attendance at these courses has been impressive and the feedback outstanding. In 2018 we held a service user led public event where students of the recovery college spoke to an audience about what difference the recovery education had made to them and they also made a short film to show how it had supported them to fulfil their potential and meet the challenges they face.

Some of the comments included:

“doing this course has given me new knowledge and skills that have helped me take charge of my own recovery journey”

“I now do not let my illness define me”

“I used to feel like a victim but the recovery college has helped me see that I am a survivor!”

Q4: Why should you receive an award?

We would love to win an award to recognise the hard work and commitment of the Involved! Group and other service users, carers and recovery college students. They have shown us what championing the

rights of people with mental health problems and securing positive change looks like in practice and how powerful this is. Working together with a shared purpose of achieving the aspirations, hopes and dreams of the people who use our services has, and continues to be, inspirational.