

SRC Reflections: HMP Perth Recovery College



Introduction

This first recovery college to be held inside a prison in Scotland was held over a three-week intensive period in December 2014. The college was sponsored by both the SPS who funded the college and the NHS addiction team within the prison who supported it. The prison community (SPS, NHS and prisoners) has been steadily building its recovery work for the last 2 years and has already hosted a world style recovery conversation café and developed a weekly recovery café.

The goal of this college was the same as other recovery colleges; to build recovery communities in Scotland. In the prison the focus was to develop recovery assets inside the prison community who would contribute to building a recovery community within the prison walls.

The prison college programme however was modified from the usual format because of the specific characteristics of the community members. Prisoners are not at liberty to communicate with the media or associate freely and easily with other recovery communities. Also we found that prison recovery was at an earlier stage than would normally have been anticipated in a recovery college.

In this college we also experimented with having staff recovery assets as students- we took one staff student from SPS and one from NHS addiction team.

The HMP Perth Syllabus

Monday 1 December:	The Recovery Journey
Tuesday 2 December:	The Recovery Workbook
Wednesday 3 December:	Steps to Excellence
Thursday 4 December:	Steps to Excellence
Tuesday 9 December:	Steps to Excellence
Wednesday 10 December:	Steps to Excellence
Thursday 11 December:	Steps to Excellence
Friday 12 December:	Student led session (staff students)
Monday 15 December:	Mutual Aid presentations
Tuesday 16 December:	Building mindful recovery
Wednesday 17 December:	Building ORT recovery in prison
Thursday 18 December:	Student led session (prisoner students)
Friday 19 December:	Recovery college review and graduation.

The College experience

The College ran smoothly with 11 students beginning and completing the course. The facilitators were delighted with the way the material worked with the students to extend their range of personal recovery and link them into a more structured sense of what recovery is and what the work of recovery journeys are.

One of the students felt the college “defragged his brain” – he said its like the filing in his head got sorted out from a jumble to orderly. Another hadn’t realized how much he had in common with other people in recovery and that he was not alone, as he had feared before the college. A few students noted that they were not as far along the recovery journey as they had thought but that felt sobering and alright because they now know where they are heading.

The STEPS programme was highly praised by the students for bringing a brand new way of looking at the world and getting their thinking behind their recovery from addiction.

All felt the experience had developed their recovery and their determination to help others. They expressed deep gratitude for what had been given by fellow students and faculty tutors.

“My eyes have been really opened, I’ve learned so much about myself through the college. I’m so excited for the future” G

What could we have done differently?

The students did not have one negative thing to say about the course- one would have like to have more time on the STEPS and this has been noted. We are also very pleased with the staff as college student experiment and may add that in future colleges.

Recovery College- initial impact

Students completing this recovery college made the following commitments:

- Keep on taking recovery into Perth prison- making it real
- To reduce and come off my methadone script/ Help others with their recovery when possible/ remain drug free.
- To continue to build a recovery community in prison/ to start ORT treatment sessions and support an ORT peer support group within the prison.
- Start my detox from methadone – 1st week in January 2015
- To help start an NA meeting in B-hall
- To help others where needed
- To stay clean of substances, to become a better person, to help others in their recovery.
- Continue to work actively on my recovery by going to groups and café's. Stay clean and get off by ORT.
- Become completely abstinent and help others
- Stay clean and positive. Actively seek to help others in their recovery, continue to attend café's and push forward with starting our own in the halls within Perth prison.
- To get my own café up and running so I can give back to the people of Brechin. Most of all stay in recovery so that I can continue my life in happiness.
- Stay clean from heroin
- To become a better person and to have a better future and to be totally drug free.

After graduation- the recovery bounce

8 Students met up again in January to review the college experience and see what is happening. The group had had some adjustments and post college challenges; as in any group of 12 people in recovery initiation and early recovery maintenance stages there had been one major and a couple of minor recovery draw backs during the month since the college.

However the whole group were overwhelming delighted to find out that the first recovery mutual aid meeting run entirely by prisoners for prisoners had already begun on the residential halls. About 12% (24) of the residents of one hall put their name down for the first recovery café meeting that could only hold 11.

College student H was really pleased with the café event that he aims to have every week on Tuesdays 7-8pm.

Other students now are working on opening a Narcotics Anonymous meeting on the halls using the tools left by the public information team of NA who presented at the college. They also committed to opening an ORT recovery mutual aid meeting as part of the National ORT recovery-meeting pilot.

On the staff side the college students have been no less busy since graduation. They have a mindfulness based recovery group getting established, an acupuncture clinic being explored, an ORT detox information session in the works. They are also exploring getting an inspiring recovery room together to hold support groups in.

Workforce Development for other prison staff was also to be organised and the SRC committed to supporting that.

Final SRC reflections

A deep level of gratitude being expressed by the students marked this college. It was noticeable that they have also taken the recovery bull by the horns quickly. They are using what they have been given teaching and tools wise. This confirms that the community was really ready for the experience and all the other recovery work done in the prison by staff and prisoners alike had allowed it to be such a success.

For us at the SRC it was a deeply satisfying experience of contributing to the growth of a new recovery community.

Recovery Colleges are, in general, very interesting to the wider recovery community, however recovery assets all over the UK watched this college, the first inside a prison, very closely. The overwhelming response to this has been heart warming and moving, with people well wishing and delighted that recovery grows inside prison.

The SRC remains committed to Perth Prison's recovery journey. Our view is to help one pro-active prison build effective recovery pathways, within their existing constraints and with their existing resources. If it can be done in one prison, then others can learn from them.

Kuladharini
Chief Executive, Scottish Recovery Consortium
January 2015

The HMP Perth Recovery College

Legacy ideas

Current contributions

- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Café
- SMART
- Brian Quinn as recovery asset

College contributions

Building capacity in 10 individuals to contribute mutual aid support group/
prisoner community led recovery support group.

Building capacity in SPS programmes and NHS substance misuse to increase
staff capacity to create treatment recovery programme.

Legacy

Treatment

- Volunteer mentor programme
- Rolling recovery programme- including SMART inside out/ recovery workbook.
- ORT detox support group
- Café

Programmes

- ORT detox support group
- Café

Prisoner

HMP Perth as organization

- Create front line and prisoner shared recovery sub group
- Staff recovery awareness and values training