

INTRODUCTION

The SRC has worked with Substance Misuse Policy Unit in the Scottish Government to hold a recovery awareness event in the Scottish Parliament. The goal of the event was to make friends with MSP's, and begin a conversation about recovery from addiction.

The Campaign had several components

- A four-week email campaign in the lead up to our appearing in parliament
- From 13-15th Sept we held an exhibition/meet and greet in the lobby of parliament. Some of the key recovery assets were there to personally dialogue with MSPs about recovery from addiction. We aimed to gather business cards for follow up on a local level between individual MSP's and their respective recovery communities.
- We also had the 'soft launch' of the Methadone Memoirs exhibition and the newly minted publication and the updated Recovery groups directory to give away.
- October onwards – the SRC will follow up connections and begin developing relationships around key issues for recovery

RECOVERY CAMPAIGNING IN PARLIAMENT

We attempted an asset based campaigning approach – stories are our strength and listening is as key as telling.

People attending were asked to share what they know and have experienced of the recovery movement, recovery transformations in Scotland and their own personal recovery (when and if they felt it pertinent). Our goal was to be human and helpful.

We asked that our recovery assets attending be curious about the MSP as a human, to find out what is important to him/her in their MSP role. How do they currently experience addiction and recovery in her/ his constituency?

We invited people to offer anything – be they facts, perspectives, stories - from their own knowledge and experience that might help the MSP in the conduct of her/his duties when engaged in work around addiction and recovery.

We asked ourselves to remember that we were making friends not taking hostages or complaining. We wanted to leave there with live relational connections with MSP's that will encourage them to learn more, connect more, take part in and listen when we do come to them with a change we want to see in the world that they can help with.

LEARNING: we go into places with curiosity and as humans – not pushy and agenda-driven.

EMAIL CAMPAIGN

Thought provoking “cheeky” questions were sent directly by email to all 129 MSP's, one a week.

The image shows four email campaign cards for Recovery Month Scotland. Each card features a question and multiple choice options. Below each card is a blue banner with a call to action.

- Card 1:**

RECOVERY MONTH SCOTLAND

WHAT % OF PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL PROBLEMS GO ON TO RECOVER?

A) 7%
B) 20%
C) 50%
D) 70%

Have you ever wondered if it's the way we are looking at the problem that has become a problem in itself? It's not the media's opinion we want to change – it's yours. Be part of the solution: talk more recovery than addiction.
- Card 2:**

RECOVERY MONTH SCOTLAND

HOW MUCH PUBLIC EXPENDITURE DO YOU ESTIMATE WE ARE PAYING FOR ONE KIND OF HELP GIVEN TO PEOPLE WITH ADDICTIONS TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL - 7 DAYS AND EVENINGS A WEEK - THROUGH OVER 1200 BRANCHES ACROSS SCOTLAND?

A) 1.4 BILLION
B) 30.4 MILLION
C) 40 MILLION
D) ZERO

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- Card 3:**

RECOVERY MONTH SCOTLAND

WHAT OUTCOME DO PEOPLE WITH ADDICTIONS SAY THEY MOST WANT TO ACHIEVE FROM THEIR TIME IN TREATMENT?

A) GET THEIR FAMILY BACK
B) GET ABSTINENT
C) GET A JOB
D) REDUCE THE HARM CAUSED BY THEIR ADDICTION

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- Card 4:**

RECOVERY MONTH SCOTLAND

WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF LONG-TERM RECOVERY ON PEOPLE WITH ADDICTIONS?

A) LIFE-LONG ANXIETY/MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS
B) ONGOING PHYSICAL HEALTH PROBLEMS
C) BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE THAT WHEN THEY WERE ADDICTED TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
D) BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE THAN PEOPLE WHO WERE NEVER ADDICTED TO DRUGS OR ALCOHOL AT ALL

Have you ever wondered if it's the way we are looking at the problem that has become a problem in itself? It's not the media's opinion we want to change – it's yours. Be part of the solution: talk more recovery than addiction.

Despite the to-be-expected general silence from the vast majority of MSP's (these email campaigns are rarely effective on their own), our small scale attempt at some thought disruption provoked an interesting response.

Entitled “**It’s not the media’s opinion we want to change, it’s yours**” our email garnered a reaction from a good number of MSP’s prior to our event at Parliament. We had even more of their assistants and researchers take notice of our campaign – which played on the stereotypes often associated with addiction but was very much framed in an asset based way. We simply emphasised the very good news that recovery brings to individuals and communities – good news that seldom gets heard.

LEARNING: we have some work to do on producing an alternative narrative around the reality of recovery – and people are open to hearing this. We have work to do in the ‘internal’ recovery world to disseminate these messages on a local level.

SRC has learnt that people are welcoming of this type of campaign. We are now looking at reinvigorating of “Recovery Gave Me...” posters and are developing a discreet sticker to let people know that places are ‘recovery-friendly’.

EXHIBITION



Over three days, the SRC ‘occupied’ Parliament. We were in the Garden lobby space at Holyrood, where our visually attractive stall enticed many MSP’s to stop by and have a conversation. At each conversation, we tried to link the MSP with their local recovery community. We asked for business cards. In total, 44 person-to-person connections were made. We also had numerous conversations with researchers and assistants. Topics ranged

from fascination about the recovery 'movement', how recovery has the potential to have so much impact on communities and an often repeated expression of "how is it I have not heard about this?".

An answer to that question may lie in some of the MSP's being unable to understand that we are not situated in the 'problem'. We had a number of discussions around drug deaths and the inadequacies of the treatment system.

LEARNING: local representatives have a real willingness to support local recovery, and where it doesn't exist, to nurture it. SRC will focus on making those connections and helping recovery communities to link into power.

As an aside to the above, we saw a real example play out in front of us at Holyrood. A recovery community in Leith happened to be experiencing some issues at the time of the exhibition. The local MSP put his team into action straight away to try to resolve the issue and offer support to them.

FIRST MINISTER PROCLAMATION

Underpinning the activities at Holyrood, we were presented with a proclamation from the First Minister in support of recovery. We were visited by Aileen Campbell MSP, the Minister for Health & Sport, who handed this over.



Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister of Scotland

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Proclamation of Support for International Recovery Month

As we embark upon the 27th International Recovery Month, it is important that we reflect on the impact that the flourishing recovery movement is having, not only on individuals, but on families, the wider community, and on our society as a whole.

The loss of far too many of our fellow citizens to drugs and alcohol misuse highlights how vital it is for us to continue the work we started with our 2008 Road to Recovery drugs strategy, and to find effective routes out of addiction for more people in this country.

Recovery from addiction does exist in Scotland. At an individual level, research suggests that most people do go on to recover, and after 5 years in recovery, individuals talk of attaining a 'better than well' effect, where they report themselves to be happier, better adjusted people who achieve more of their potential.

The challenges brought by addiction to substances affects every community in Scotland. However, recovery support groups, new recovery communities, individuals in recovery from addiction, their families and supporters, are combining to tackle addiction all across the country, to empower and support people.

By making recovery visible and more accessible, individuals who were once troubled and excluded by the stigma associated with addiction are turning their lives around and becoming positive and contributing members of our society. These benefits can also be felt at an intimate family level, for example parents re-connecting with their children. However, the benefits go much wider, allowing individuals to re-discover skills lost to them, to re-enter the workplace and allow them to provide for and to support their families.

I am proud that our country is now home to over 1,200 mutual aid meetings taking place every week, as well as over 120 new recovery support groups and communities led by people and family members in recovery. All of them working together as recovery activists to ensure that no one suffering with addiction who wants help is left without support nearby.

International Recovery Month provides these activists with an opportunity to celebrate and highlight the work they are doing with activities taking place all over the country, including the 5th Recovery Walk Scotland, organised by the Scottish Recovery Consortium and taking place in Falkirk on 17 September.

I applaud the efforts of everyone involved in the collective efforts to turn the tragedy of addiction into a story of recovery for the whole country. I encourage everyone to break the stigma attached to addiction by finding out more about recovery from addiction in your community so that together we can build a country where it's the recovery not the addiction that flourishes.

LEARNING: the wider world is very open to the concept of recovery and wants to learn about it. We must be bolder in telling our story!