
Recovery and treatment: developing an overarching vision

The UKDPC-convened consensus panel

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The why, who & what of the consensus process

Nicola Singleton
Director of Policy & Research, UKDPC

www.ukdpc.org.uk



Why?

Negative background

- Polarised debate – artificial, political & potentially damaging treatment system & users
- Dissatisfaction & uncertainty over goals
- Opportunity for positive change
- “Recovery” ripe for consideration (possible lessons from mental health field) impressed by Betty Ford Foundation Consensus Group
- Opportunity of new drug strategies

UKDPC consensus group

March 6/7 2008

The Consensus Group process

- Invited group of 16 people from different backgrounds & perspectives across UK.
- Deliberate cross-section of:
 - perspectives (users, families, practitioners, commissioners, researchers)
 - characteristics (eg age, sex, ethnic background)
 - types & philosophy of provision (rehab, substitute prescribing, GP care, support groups)
 - disciplines (GP, psychiatry, psychology, nursing, management, layman)
- “Locked away” for 2 days
- Considered other relevant work:
 - Betty Ford Foundation Consensus, Scottish Essential Care, TOPS
- “Validation” phase

Key features of the process

A focus on ...

- **the overarching goal** not the means of achieving it;
- identifying **areas of agreement**, while accepting some areas of disagreement may remain;
- the **experience/perspective of the individuals** in recovery and the diversity of these experiences.

Key features of the definition

It is:

- a working definition of recovery ...
- ... from the harm, distress and life problems directly-related to a person's substance use

Which we hope can:

- Reflect the lived experience of users and families
- Provide an organising vision for individual services and the treatment system as a whole
- Provide a focus for developing outcome measurement for developing research & accountability

Definition

Recovery is a process characterized by voluntarily maintained control over substance use, leading towards health and wellbeing and participating in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society.

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The process of *recovery* is characterised by voluntarily sustained control over problematic substance use which maximises health and well-being and participation in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society.

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- *Recovery is a process, characterised by voluntarily maintained control over substance use, leading towards health and well-being and participation in the rights and responsibilities of society.*
 - ***Recovery as a positive benefit rather than simply the reduction or removal of harm***

Recovery means recovery from the harm, distress and life problems directly related to a person's substance use, as well as freedom from the compulsion to use substances. The definition applies to but is not restricted to recovery from diagnosable substance dependence.

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- *Process* implies that a period of time is required and that recovery is not entailed in a single event (for example the attainment of complete abstinence).

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- *Voluntarily maintained* is intended to contrast with 'coerced' or 'mandated', but is not intended to exclude the voluntary attainment of recovery by a person in prison.

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- *Control* is intended to mean a comfortable and sustained freedom from compulsion, a mastery of the problematic substance use, which may (perhaps most advisedly in some cases) be achieved through maintained abstinence. It does not mean the effortful struggle to restrict use sometimes described as 'white-knuckle' abstinence.

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- *Health and well-being* means physical and mental health as far as those may be attained for a person, as well as a satisfactory social environment. It implies optimal access to health and social care. (see the WHO definition of health as: 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease', cited in the Betty Ford paper p.224)

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- *Participation in the rights and responsibilities of society.* This element of the description is considered by many to be important, and indeed the group had a general agreement about this. It embraces inclusion, or a re-entry into society, the improved self-identity that comes with a productive and meaningful role, and also the idea of 'giving back' to society that many people in recovery value highly.

Feedback.....

- Ownership of the term “Recovery”
- Cognitive definition
- “Problematic”.....?
 - Limits of what is consistent with recovery
 - Nicotine ? Occasional cannabis ? Occasional cocaine?
 - Says who...?
- Measurement
 - Will TOPS be relevant?
 - Too individualised for targets?