

People at the Centre Update 15



How can a recovery mindset support the future of Scotland's mental health and wellbeing?

On September 25 2020 Scottish Recovery Network released a new report "Build Back Better" exploring how a recovery mindset can assist in the navigation of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what it can offer as mental health and wellbeing services are remobilised and we plan for the future.

This report was generated through a series of twelve online conversations cafes put on by Scottish Recovery Network's to provide a space for their members to share their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ways in which they had been keeping themselves well.

One of the common themes which came out of these conversations was individuals using a recovery mindset, and the associated knowledge, approaches, skills and tools, to "influence their interpretation of the current situation and equip them to navigate their way through and out of lockdown". Four key aspects of this were identified by the report:

The value of lived experience
The power of peer support
When change is empowering
Let's build back better

Scottish Recovery Network reported that for the people they support, the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic was spoken about in a similar way to their mental health recovery; as a journey with peaks and troughs through uncharted territory. Based on this overlap of experience Scottish Recovery Network used the CHIME Framework to map out common themes from the conversation cafes regarding how a recovery mindset can support good mental health and wellbeing.

CHIME

Connections	with others through shared experiences and peer support.
Hope & optimism	for a better future where mental health support is immediate, accessible and comes in different shapes and sizes.
Identity	as people with lived experience that have many skills and strengths that can help others.
Meaning	taking time to reflect on what is important to us as individuals, communities and a society.
Empowerment	having the courage to learn from our experiences and embracing the change needed to build the better future we all want.

The value of lived experience

Participants at the conversation cafe reported that they had noticed a positive shift in wider society in the way mental health and wellbeing is discussed, and suggested this was due to more people having experienced mental health and wellbeing challenges during the pandemic.

They also suggested that as people with prior experience of mental health and wellbeing difficulties that they were in a better position to cope with the new fears and anxieties associated with COVID-19, and were themselves able to assist others.

"Those of us who've had experience of going through tough times prior to COVID have been able to use this experience to support others"

The power of peer support

Support from each other, their communities and the third sector was one of the positives that was reported from the conversation cafe participants. It was highlighted that many services and ways of connecting with each other were quickly adapted to being online and that in some cases this meant that access to services and support was significantly increased.

When change is empowering

With peoples' lives being changed so quickly and dramatically by the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals at the conversation cafes reported that they needed to find ways to adapt effectively this new way of living.

One of their commonly mentioned strategies for doing this was to focus on the aspects in their lives that they could control. People found this a very positive and empowering way to think about the pandemic and its impact. Many participants found they still had influence over the areas in their lives which were most important to them and they could utilise their existing strengths to adapt, such as their self management and wellbeing skills.

It was however, recognised that people had differing abilities to cope and adapt during this time and some people found this significantly more challenging than others.

Let's build back better

Using the insights collated through their conversation cafes, Scottish Recovery Network conclude that the mental health and wellbeing system needs to be based upon lived experience. To develop this requires involving people at the design and redesign stage and listening attentively and acting upon the knowledge and insights which they share.

They also report that these systems should be underpinned by peer support, with opportunities provided for individuals to share their experiences and learn from one another.

"People have rediscovered the importance of community and people supporting each other. I don't think we can go back to working the way we did before"

"Build Back Better" is accompanied by an animation and a BSL translation