

## Dorset Wellbeing and Recovery Partnership Newsletter for Supporters and Carers

Welcome to the Wellbeing and Recovery Partnership (WaRP) newsletter specifically for supporters of people with mental health problems.

The Partnership's aim is to embed the principles of Wellbeing and Recovery across all services within Dorset. Recovery in this sense does not mean "getting better" but having the opportunity to build a meaningful life with or without the symptoms of mental illness.

This involves moving away from traditional styles of service delivery to a more person-centred, strengths based approach, engaging with people who access services as partners on their individual journeys of discovery. We believe that developing partnership working with people's supporters is an essential part of this process too. Hope is also a crucial ingredient. It is key in all aspects ... for the person experiencing the mental health problem, for their supporters and also for professionals. We want to put this at the heart of service design and delivery. This requires a culture change within existing services.

Recovery orientated communication is characterised by "clinicians having relevant expertise, but not positioning themselves as the experts; an expectation of knowledge being shared rather than exclusive and a lack of jargon." (Slade, 2009)

With this newsletter, we would like to begin a discussion about recovery in relation to carers or supporters. We think that there are three key strands to be considered. Firstly, that supporters have a key role in an individual's recovery journey. Secondly that the principles of recovery also apply to supporters of people with mental health problems, who are on their own recovery journey. Lastly, but very importantly, being able to share experiences of supporting someone with mental health problems with other peers is invaluable.

We would love to hear from you. Please let us know your views and ideas. Our contact details are printed overleaf. If you would like more information on the Wellbeing and Recovery Partnership (WaRP) and / or you may like to get involved with our work, please let us know.

*Phil Morgan, Becky Aldridge and Jackie Lawson*



### Helpful Definition of Recovery

*"Probably the most useful way of understanding recovery is linking it to our own experience because it is something that is common to all of us; it is not specific to mental health problems. Any of us, who have been through a divorce, being made unemployed, a major illness or bereavement, know that that changes us; there is no way to going back to how we were before that event. We have to incorporate that into our way of living and we learn from that and move on with that, which is exactly what we are talking about in terms of recovery from mental health problems. Very importantly, recovery is about taking back control over your own life and your own problems, about not seeing your problems as being uncontrollable, or that their control is just the province of experts. It is about understanding yourself what is possible and what you can do to help yourself."*

Dr Julie Repper, 2009

# “What does Recovery mean for us?”

## A supporter’s perspective

Murray Rose, chair of the Bridport Carers Forum, describes the opportunities the *recovery approach* creates for carers:

“Behind almost everyone with mental health problems are those that care, usually relatives, often friends: known collectively as 'carers'. The name creates a wrong impression, because the term 'carer' is generally used for a person who cares for the elderly, helping them cope with their infirmities, often living together to look after their every need. In the world of Mental Health the 'carers' role is very different. The need is for those experiencing mental health problems to be as independent as possible. The carer is there for companionship, advice, discussion and moral support. Support is the word, not care in the sense of being looked after.

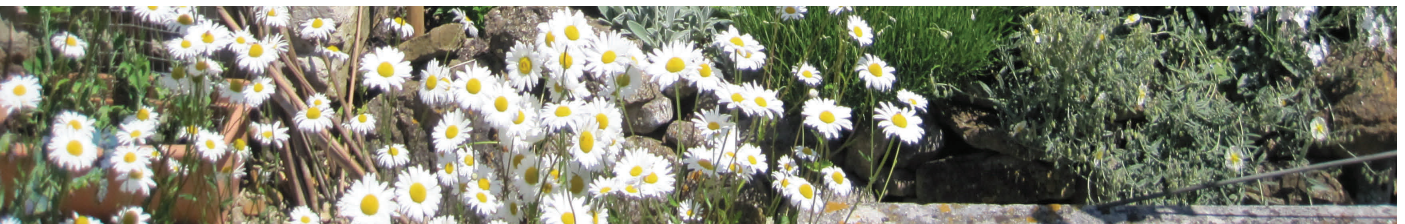
With the revolution in attitude to treatment being brought about by the Well-being and Recovery Partnership, the contribution from the support person becomes very significant. He or she often best knows the person, knows what his or her interests and aspirations were and are, and can help in guiding recovery along the lines that would fit best with the interests of the person.

Hopefully, gone are the days when the professionals regarded carers as untrained, over-protective and part of the problem. The Well-being and Recovery Approach should give carers an equal role to the professionals, because of their knowledge of the individual, their concern and their ability to recognise early deterioration in health. Through their day-to-day contact, carers are able to encourage the person to get the most out of their life. The carer should be accepted as important by the professionals.

Carers or supporters also have a responsibility to develop this role. Here are some suggestions:

- Firstly, people need to understand the objectives of the new recovery philosophy, so that they can see how the services are aiming to create opportunities for the person to build a meaningful life for themselves.
- Secondly, they can learn how to help a person on their recovery journey. For example, Carers who belong to carers groups will hear from guest speakers, and will be able to discuss and develop ideas amongst themselves. Carers not in groups could attend one-day seminars where some training and much discussion can take place.
- Thirdly through strengthening communications, a possibility is a regular newsletter, such as this. This would enable most carers to be contacted, but a newsletter alone will lose the opportunity of interacting with other carers, which can be a great help when trying to cope with mental health problems.
- Finally, there also needs to be a change in the approach from services and how they involve carers. The CPA (Care Plan Approach) where all interested parties get together to plan a future does not function well for them. The meetings are often held without the carer attending because the carer cannot make the meeting, or because the person does not feel the need for a 'carer' to be looking after him or her. The carers often feel they are left out of information sharing unnecessarily on the grounds of 'confidentiality'. Confidentiality becomes a very serious matter when the person rejects the carer, because even then, the carer does not stop being the carer.

We carers are not keepers, the name is wrong. Our role is support, concern, interest and advocacy. We should have a better name. We have a total interest in our loved ones, and want to celebrate their recovery to a meaningful life, helping in any way we can.”



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