

**Our Reflections: West Lothian Recovery Conversation Cafe
Building Recovery in West Lothian: Howden Park Centre Livingstone
Monday 20 January 2014**



The cafe in action

Richard Foley, Recovery Service Manager for the Cyrenians at The Hub in Bathgate has long been a Recovery Champion (yes that's Richard with the pinny and big smile. After attending several SRC events Richard asked if we would facilitate very first Conversation café in West Lothian. We said yes!

Our aim

The aim of the cafe working group was to host West Lothian's first Recovery Conversation Café. There were 9 key members in the working group which consisted of interested parties keen to build recovery capacity in the local area.

Event Planning

The working group met for the first time on Monday 14 October to organise the café before Christmas. After that first meeting of like minds it was clear that we had a zero budget and would need to look at the type of café we would have and the possibilities.

Thankfully, Lisa Noble and Elizabeth Butters from the Alcohol and Drug Partnership attended the next meeting – (that's our Lisa in the Centre of the picture) and agreed that the ADP would support the café. The ADP team very generously identified and paid for the venue and catering for what turned out to be a really fabulous day. As Richard had attended our Conversation Café Host Training, I asked that he would co-facilitate the café with me – thank you Richard.

The Event Agenda

10:00 Tea and Coffee

10:15 Introduction and Etiquette

10:30 Seed One

10:45 Question One

11:15 Overview of Commitments

11:20 Tea Break

11:45 Seed Two

11:45 Question Two

12:15 Cafe News & Themes

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Seed Three

14:15 Question Three

14:45 Café News and Themes

15:00 Tea Break

15:15 Video

15:25 Whole Group Conversation

15:45 Commitment

The Café in Action



Were we successful in achieving our aim?

Yes. Our SurveyMonkey evaluation reports that 85.7% of people who attended had never attended a 'World style' conversation café before and that 81.3% of participants said they left with new ideas.

Who came to the event?

A total of 87 people came to the event. Invitations were allocated to each member of the working group who in turn invited key assets with an interest in recovery, in the community, in services, with a lived experience of recovery and from Mutual Aid treatment services in West Lothian. The invites extended to key assets with an interest in recovery in outlying areas and in up and coming café working groups.

Feedback

Feedback was received informally on the day and a SurveyMonkey was sent out. All feedback given on the day in response to the dialogue questions has been typed and will be available to interested parties in a separate document. The responses came from 38.3% Treatment Provider, 33.3% Other Staff and 28.6% Person in recovery. A selection of these below:-

We asked - What was your overall experience of the West Lothian Conversation Café?

"I thought it was a fantastic day! It was really good to hear different views and experiences. It was enlightening to speak to the service providers and other professionals. A fun, informative and very enjoyable day."

"I couldn't attend until 1pm and feel I missed out on a lot of interesting conversation. What I was involved with was informative, enjoyable and inspiring. It helped me to put my small input into recovery services into much bigger West Lothian and national perspective. I felt there were lots of conversations going on that were at a very early stage, but also so the progress that had been made. It was particularly delighted to speak to a range of people with differing professional and personal insights into recovery. I learned a lot. I also thought the café format was immensely positive and gives a really healthy picture of the recovery community in West Lothian. Not only that, there was creativity and ideas."

We asked - What themes emerged in the conversations that you took part in at the event?

"The most disturbing thing I heard from the service providers was the lack of funding available to them in providing their service. Also the lack of manpower, which goes hand in hand with the funding, which means huge caseloads for individuals therefore some people in recovery may not be getting as much support as they actually require. The need for a rehabilitation programme opportunities like LEAP in West Lothian and other areas. LEAP has a limited number of places so waiting lists are high. Promoting awareness of all the services available to people in addiction, recovery their friends and families. There are many services out there but lots of people either have no idea of their existence or not aware of all the help and avenues available to them."

We asked – Did you leave the event with any new ideas?

"That not everyone's recovery is the same."

"Recovery bus, help for people that do their recovery in the community without help from addiction workers need more support."

"Thoughts about making services change with a more whole person approach."

We asked – Any final comments for the SRC that related to your experience at the café?

"I got a real buzz from the day and was really happy I had been invited. A year ago I would have struggled to leave my house and go anywhere but now being part of the recovery community it's good to experience and feel part of such an event."

"I think something could be rolled out on a regular basis and that we could learn much more from. I feel that the best possible training for workers comes from service user involvement and that service users also gain a fantastic insight into what we do and why through these events. Service Users also get a lot from being able to tell their story and be part of establishing new things in the community and most importantly owning it."

"It was a great experience and feel like people would benefit if these were run more often. I like the fact that no one had a name badge/label and felt this came across in the discussions allowing people to speak more freely."

Visibility of recovery - initial impact;

- A decision made on the day to host another conversation café within 6 months.

Visibility of recovery; developing impact (recovery bounce);

- A Recovery Matters Workshop in West Lothian.
- 47 recovery commitments were made.

One of the café tables



Apologies

Our apologies were offered to both the Cafes running that week as we experienced some difficulties with our IT due to a change of office premises IT which impacted on our ability to continue effectively for a short period of time. We appreciated both working groups for their administrative work and tolerance. A Recovery Matters Workshop and catering has been offered as a token of our gratitude.

What did we learn?

We learned not to rush the working group and to ensure all interested parties were able to attend the first meeting. Future cafes will hold their own registrations to ensure that ownership and local feel for connectedness remains within the local area.

We will remember to take a photograph of each working group as part of the café process. Finally, the smaller tables that we chose as an experiment proved to be ideal for the facilitation of more intimate in-depth conversation.

Anne-Marie Quigg
Scottish Recovery Consortium - April 2014