

THE STORY SO FAR

A collective summary of reflections on Scotland's
road to recovery since 2008



FOREWORD

Less than 2 years ago we dropped the 'drugs' in our name and embarked on an odyssey of asset based, positive recovery interventions in Scotland. It is thoroughly heartening to read these measured, thoughtful and asset based reflections coming back from every part of Scotland. Read them, they are your words and your collective experience.

Come to The Recovery Summit prepared to make the very most of the opportunity within the room. It's only 10 months since the SRC held the very first Recovery Summit in Perth and we have all come a long way since then. In that time, we have got our heads together nationally on residential rehab, on building recovery in the community treatment setting and even for the fun of it; to take over the Forth Road Bridge one windy day in May this year. In that time also, The Road to Recovery was confirmed in parliament as our National Drug Strategy, the Opioid Replacement Therapy review has been published and is into the action phase and by the way - over 90% of us have met our waiting times targets! To top it off nearly 30 new independent community recovery support groups have been launched and mutual aid fellowships in Scotland just keep growing. It's been a good year since we last met in Perth, so allow yourself some admiration time, let the gratitude swell!

One important lesson I have learned in this short time at the helm of the Scottish Recovery Consortium is never to underestimate the power and influence of a really good conversation. Every time I sit at a conversation cafe- whether in Perth last week or in Glasgow back in the winter of 2010, I leave knowing my next action in building recovery. I firmly believe that a conversation café is never 'just' talking.

The next five years is already calling us all. None of us can know what the future will bring, but I do know the power of dreams, willingness and connection.

Let's talk!



Kuladharini
Director, Scottish Recovery Consortium

INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Recovery Consortium has invited people across Scotland to share their thoughts on The Road to Recovery over the past 5 years. The information that we gathered has been collated in this report and distributed to everyone who has registered for The Recovery Summit. The SRC hope that the country's shared experience to date can be used to inspire future contributions to Scotland's Road to Recovery over the next 5 years.

Methodology

The information gathered in The Story So Far was collected via a web survey that was posted on the SRC website and ran from 9 July to 16 September 2013. Potential respondents were invited to complete the survey upon acceptance of our invitation to attend The Recovery Summit. Facebook and Twitter followers were directly invited to participate and visitors to the SRC website were also able to contribute. A total of 135 people completed the survey.

Respondents were asked a series of both closed and open questions to share their reflections on the past 5 years since Scotland launched its national drugs strategy, The Road to Recovery. There was no requirement for respondents to be in recovery in order to participate; results were analysed to determine the differences between those who stated that they were a person in recovery, working as an ADP/Treatment provider or neither of these categories.

We accept that while the benefit of a web-based survey is speed and accessibility across Scotland, the results are also limited by these factors. Respondents to The Story So Far were self selecting and had access to the internet therefore may not necessarily represent the population at large.

However, a significant 'slice' of those participating in building recovery in Scotland have spoken and their contributions deserve our attention.

THE STORY SO FAR: ABOUT YOU

The Story So Far began by asking respondents to select a descriptive term that best described them. Three options were provided; 'person in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction', 'ADP/Treatment Provider' and 'neither of the above'. We found out the following about our respondents from this question:

41.8% (56) identified as a person in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction

50.7% (68) identified as an ADP/Treatment Provider

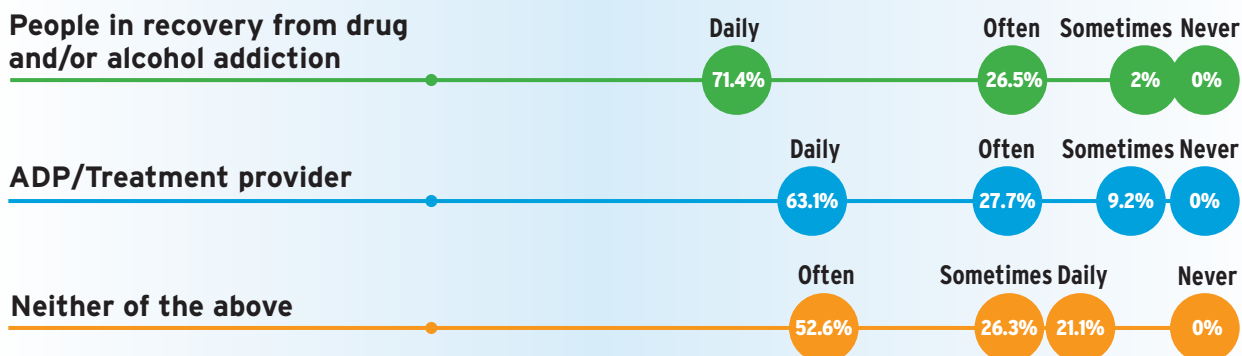
16.4% (22) identified as neither of the above.

12 people identified as both a person in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction and an ADP/Treatment Provider, and one person did not answer this question.

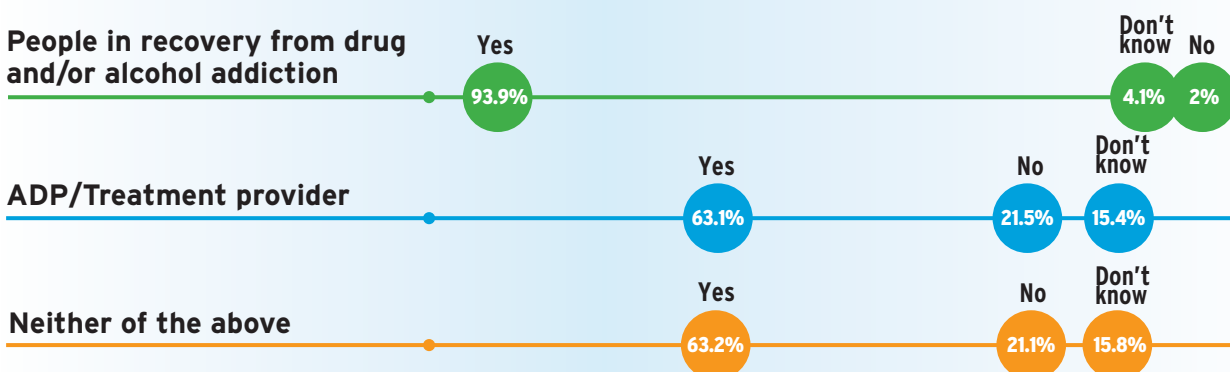
THE STORY SO FAR: VISIBILITY OF RECOVERY

The SRC has taken part in many conversations over the past 18 months and one of the most common themes to arise is the importance of recovery being clearly visible to all. We often hear of the importance of help and support being available quickly in a person's local area and how inspirational the lived experience of recovery can be. Is this a reality in Scotland today? This is what you told us.

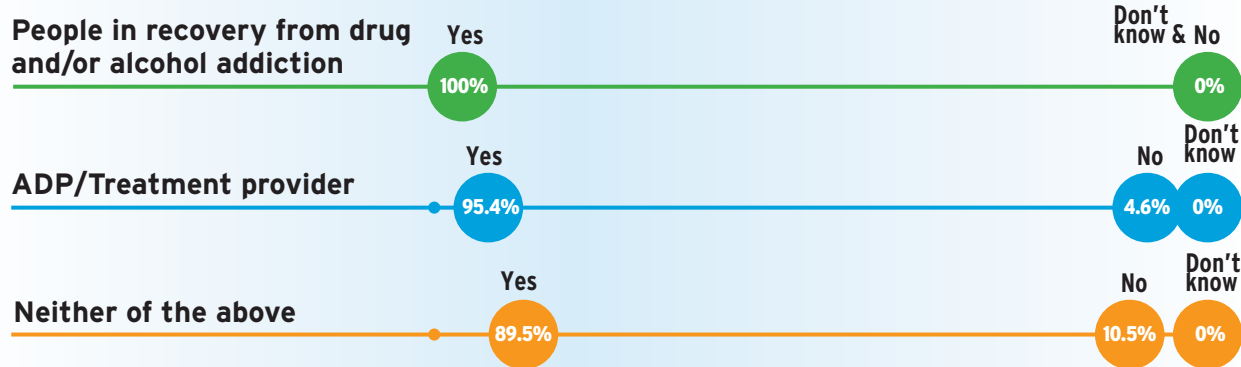
How often do you come into contact with people in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction?



Do you socialise with people in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction?



Are you aware of recovery support groups, mutual aid or recovery communities in your local area?



SRC Reflections: Visibility of recovery in Scotland

The majority of respondents across all categories are in contact with people in recovery either often or on a daily basis, socialise with people in recovery AND are aware of support offered in their local area.

The SRC is encouraged by the results that suggest that awareness of the support available in local areas is high. We believe that this shows growth and improvement in the provision of support for people who need it, which should be regarded as positive for Scotland’s recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

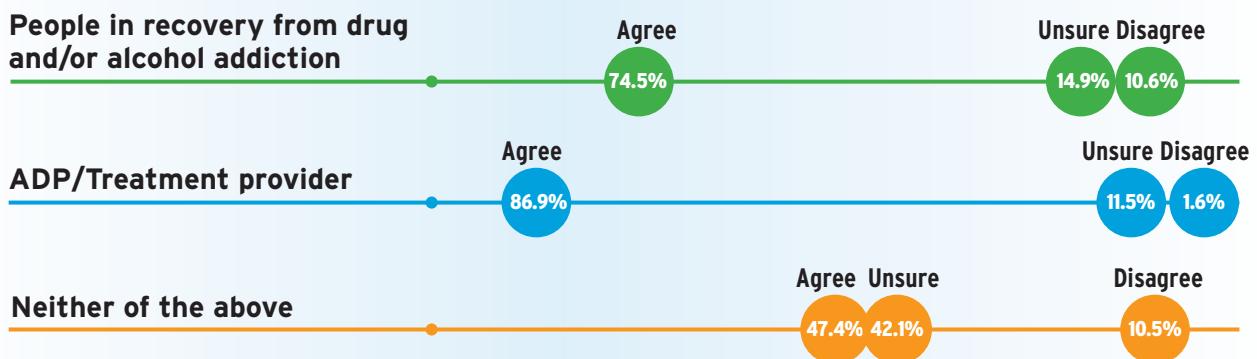
High levels of contact (either daily or often) with people in recovery are recorded by all respondents. This could be interpreted to show progression and indicate that people with lived experience of recovery are increasingly involved in the development of both their own recovery and the recovery community at large. Similarly, high levels of respondents indicated that they socialised with people in recovery which could reflect the growth in recovery cafes and a reduction in stigma.

The SRC believes that these results suggest recovery is indeed visible in Scotland.

SUPPORTING RECOVERY IN SCOTLAND

This section of The Story So Far was designed to measure respondents' reflections on the impact of The Road to Recovery. The following three questions were based upon showing agreement with a statement in relation to Scotland's progress.

"In the last 5 years there have been positive changes in Scotland to support people in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction." Please show the extent to which you agree with this statement.



We asked respondents to expand upon their selection above and we received a total of 77 comments. The five most regularly used phrases are shared here with a selection of the reflections shared within them.

People in recovery

- "There is greater acknowledgement that people in recovery are best placed to inform how services are provided, and there has been a growth in support groups organised and run by people in recovery."
- "Increasingly people in recovery and the recovery community are shaping the agenda for change. There is still a way to go though and we must continue working together to keep the momentum going."
- "There is now a service for people in recovery in my area which didn't exist 5 years ago."

Recovery communities

- "The changes I have seen are massive since 2008, recovery was not a word I could say I had heard or spoke of...First change I experienced was at conversation café in the Mitchell Library (Glasgow) then RAFT, Wired In and then I knew I could recover...Absolute 360 degree turnaround."

Support

- “From my own experience over many years my impression is that the profile of recovery is much higher now. Slowly, services seem to be changing to being better joined up and more accessible (although a lot further to go); there is hope that recovery is a real option for those who wish it; those with the addiction, their families/carers are getting a voice and at last professionals seem to be starting to listen with many championing recovery.”
- “The growth of online support meetings and forums has advanced rapidly since I started in recovery 5 years ago. There are more opportunities to help with addiction, it’s not limited to one recovery model. I believe that the recovery opportunities have always been there but now the government have realised recovery is a big issue...GP’s and health officials have been forced to offer a range of recovery models.”

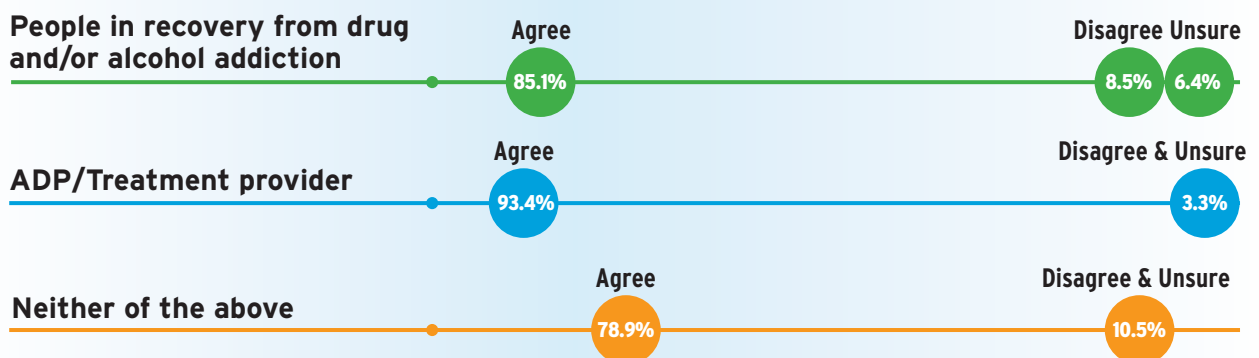
Addiction

- “Statutory addiction services have been forced to examine their role in the recovery process and, consequently, methadone and a pair of slippers is no longer acceptable.”
- “I think it was way back in 2003 that a health strategy first put down in ink the importance of involving service users in the delivery of services. No cultures or systems can be changed overnight but it gave a clue as how thinking was changing in society around addictions.”

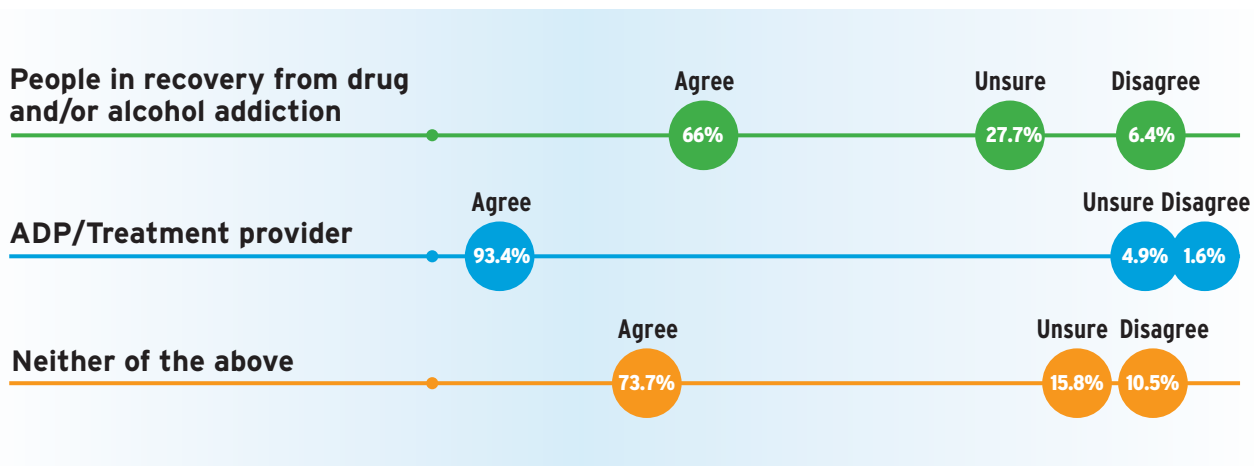
Treatment

- “I’ve noticed a cultural shift from treatment being done to people to treatment being done with people. But with more choice and control comes more responsibility for the patient and more perceived risk for the worker.”
- “Greater emphasis on recovery in the assessment and treatment of people with alcohol and or drug problems. Care plans have been replaced by recovery plans. Difficulties remain in relation to setting up recovery communities and mutual aid in remote and rural areas.”

“There is support available in my local area for people in recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction.” Please show the extent to which you agree with this statement.



“I am aware of Scotland’s National Drug Strategy The Road to Recovery 2008.” Please show the extent to which you agree with this statement.



SRC Reflections: Supporting recovery in Scotland:

The SRC believes that the results indicate an awareness that recovery is supported in Scotland. The majority of both people in recovery and ADP/Treatment Providers agree that there have been positive changes in Scotland to support people in recovery from drug/alcohol addiction in the past 5 years and additional comments provided support this conclusion in the main. The majority of all respondents agree that there is support available in their local area with ADP/Treatment Providers showing the strongest level of agreement with this statement. A greater number of respondents across each category agreed that they were aware of Scotland’s National Drug Strategy with the ADP/Treatment Provider group indicating the strongest level of agreement.

We believe these results should be interpreted as a positive benchmark in Scotland’s recovery journey from drug and/or alcohol addiction.

THE FUTURE

In the final section of The Story So Far we focus upon the future and ask respondents to reflect on this in a series of 4 open ended questions. We want to know what Scotland's dreams are for the next 5 years of recovery from addiction. This is what you told us.

What recovery achievements do you want to see us celebrate in Scotland in 5 years time?

A selection of the 83 responses received to this question is listed below.

"Peer worker models across alcohol and drug services. Recovery communities in all areas. Social enterprise projects ran by people in recovery. Real community integration for people in recovery. Increased prevention activity in relation to alcohol and drugs. More people in recovery entering training and employability. Reduced stigma from employers and increased opportunities for people in recovery."

"More people off methadone scripts. More Recovery focussed services for people aiming for and already in recovery from drugs."

"Continue making it more positive and mainstream to showcase the talents people have and to destigmatise recovery by raising awareness."

"I would like to see a change to the way people on methadone are treated. I believe that they should have much more of a say to whether not they want to discontinue their methadone, or have a say in whether or not they want to reduce."

"I would love to see Recovery Communities which have grown from the Recovery Activists, in a visual display of connectedness take Scotland by storm, especially the public who are not yet involved in the 'Recovery Revolution'."

"A collective celebration of people and communities who have recovered and a recognition of the role of supportive and flexible services in that. I hope we will be seeing a big reduction in the number of people dying from overdoses or alcohol related illness."

"Drug related deaths down in numbers greatly. Increase in awareness of drug related issues within the community. Reduced stigma for drug using community. Widespread community resources for those in recovery and their families."

"Increase awareness of all forms of addiction so there is no hierarchy between socially acceptable addictions and those where substance users are stigmatised."

What challenges might we need to overcome to achieve this?

A selection of the 83 responses received to this question is listed below.

“Challenges in relation to funding streams for community based services including the more remote areas of Scotland.”

“From a provider perspective the prolonged economic downturn could increase need for services but at the same time public spending and voluntary grant funders are becoming more constrained. I think that’s a huge challenge.”

“Challenges relating to geography and challenges in preserving confidentiality in small communities where everyone knows everyone else and where there is considerable stigma directed to those with drug problems and those who need Opioid Replacement Therapy (ORT). Overcoming the hostility of some GPs to ORT and getting these GPs to prescribe ORT.”

“I feel that stigma will be a significant challenge, along with the challenge of encouraging everyone to adopt a recovery based approach and move away from a medical only model.”

“The media can tend to portray addicts/ alcoholics as worthless. Often the things we do when we are in our addiction are a product of our overwhelming desire to use. We need to change people’s perceptions of addicts, though this won’t happen overnight.”

“Resistance from the established services.”

“Lack of joined up approaches to ensure support connects with local community developments and strategies.”

“We need more government involvement and raised awareness and education for future generations.”

“I think there is a challenge to services to change the way they interact with people in recovery. The big systems like health need to continue to move to more person centred care.”

“Challenge practice and practice change. Change thinking. The biggest challenge of all are the people wanting to recover and the services providing the support to have that all important ‘paradigm shift’.”

“The polarisation of views that characterises all treatment services as homogenous and fails to recognise the range of skills, care and support which helps people to recover their way.”

How might we overcome these challenges?

A selection of the 83 responses received to this question is listed below.

“This is a mighty task, but everyone has to pull together do their bit and spread the message that recovery is better. It’s better for the individual, the NHS and in turn Holyrood.”

“Continue to ensure that recovery and recovery journeys are seen as part of community development approach that extends beyond recovery and enabling individuals. Support groups to be recognised as key contributors to local community change.”

“By promoting the positive changes that are occurring throughout the country created by people in recovery.”

“One part of the solution is promoting visible recovery and increasing capacity within communities to support individuals affected by substance misuse.”

“By encouraging and supporting people in recovery to become active participants in the recovery movement, celebrate success and find ways to promote these successes in the media and political arenas. Consequently minimise stigma and discrimination.”

“By encouraging people in Recovery to stand up and show an example to those in a position to fund change and stop making blanket assumptions about those in recovery or addiction.”

“Education.”

“Gulp!! Well... Patience, compassion, walking the plank when necessary and helping local groups in recovery projects to continue with community building and most important having the local MSP along for a cuppa.”

“Need to discuss these barriers at the top level of health and government. Voluntary organisations can provide good support for people but they need to be able to guarantee their funding to ensure a trusting relationship with service users. ADPs need to provide more funding to the voluntary sector and be more transparent with funding given to statutory services.”

“We have to challenge the service users that are stuck in treatment to move them forward. It should not only be about the prescription that service users are on, they have to move through the system.”

Finally, please share any further comments, thoughts or experiences on recovery from drug and/or alcohol addiction in Scotland.

A selection of the 83 responses received to this question is listed below.

“When addiction made its unwanted presence felt in my family there was no way forward, no guidance that I could find. It thrills me all these years later to witness so many people reclaiming their lives and joining the world, inspired by their peers who have journeyed before them. They in turn will inspire those ready to take the steps into recovery.”

“Scotland is a small country well known for addiction issues, it’s the perfect place to recover. We have so many established recovery activists we are big enough to be diverse but small enough to connect, its magic, just watch it grow.”

“As a guy who was on methadone for 17 years, I never once was offered to get clean, I never even knew what it was to be clean. Now nearly 18 months abstinent my life has changed 100%, I am free to go on and have a life and have a say once more. I have also become employable and becoming a productive member of society.”

“There has been a significant change in the last five years, with more optimism and positive hope visible in Scotland. We need to use this momentum to turn the hope into more positive and long-term outcomes for individuals, communities and Scotland.”

“I think we’ve talked and theorised this to death. Can we please see some practical actions/support to recovery groups in

Scotland, and work to grow more in the future. These groups will be more visible and stronger if they stand together and everyone knows what they do, when and where.”

“Momentum is building and I hope that in 5 years time we will have reached a tipping point that washes all the unhelpful stigma and moral rhetoric away. I appreciate that sometimes we can be seen as naive optimists and know that living can be tough whoever you are, whatever demographic, social, economic situation you’re in... But it is right to pursue recovery in this way, at this time, in an inclusive and hopeful way... and it is working.”

“I do know for sure that the Scottish Government and agencies have been able to take brave recovery steps themselves which I have witnessed affecting many people.”

“Support is tantamount to achieve recovery. Talk to someone who has walked the walk. Be open minded. Keep believing you will recover in spite of your doubts and you will come to really believe you can recover. Be honest with someone you can trust. Be careful who you divulge your feelings to. Always believe that recovery is possible, get involved.”

SRC REFLECTIONS: THE FUTURE

This final section of The Story So Far holds the SRC's reflections on the future of recovery from addiction in Scotland.

The SRC firmly believes that Scotland has all the wisdom it needs to utterly transform the face, range and depth of treatment for addictions in Scotland. We are making progress. The change in direction of large and complicated treatment systems has involved equal parts inspiration and perspiration, but you have told us that it's working. The SRC will continue to invite treatment systems and people within them, both organisationally and individually, to join the recovery movement. We will maintain the opportunities for commissioners, providers and recovery communities to meet, share learning and connect through our work.

We know that patterns of addiction differ across the country and that what works in one local area may not necessarily work in another. An indication of recovery transformation over the next five years will be the extent to which each local area has a visible, tangible and coherent recovery pathway that directly relates to the local assets, addiction trends and culture of its community.

We believe that Scotland will support abstinence as a real and supported choice for people in treatment, without further stigmatising those who choose maintenance as a recovery path. People will have clear exits from the world of treatment and those who achieve this will have their success celebrated and counted. We will be able to say how many people are recovering through treatment.

New types of relationship and trust will be increasingly built between treatment and recovery communities. An indicator of ROSC transformations will be the extent to which money is moving along the recovery journey to support sustainable recovery after treatment in communities. These independent recovery support groups and communities, wholly led and organised by people in recovery, will be the visible backbone of the whole population's growing acceptance of and reliance on the reality of recovery from addictions.

Scotland will continue to support new ways to connect and build recovery in each local area of our country. The recovery community will offer the daily hand of recovery to those who remain in active addiction; this has always been the case.

This collective summary of experience from across Scotland has shown progress made over the past 5 years; recorded perceived challenges and given space for dreams of the future. We hope that The Story So Far has been useful to reflect upon before taking part in The Recovery Summit on Friday 18 October 2013.



The future depends on
what you do today.

Mahatma Gandhi





Scottish Recovery Consortium, 234 West George Street, Glasgow G2 4QY
Telephone: 0141 226 1662 Fax: 0141 226 1663 www.scottishrecoveryconsortium.org
Registered Office: 7 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 1BA, Charity No SC041181 (Scotland)

