

Aberdeenshire Recovery Community Forums

Update 9th September 2025

Welcome to the first edition of the Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum's regular news update.



This note provides an update on the great work that is being done and how the Recovery landscape is changing since the Three Forums last met in Inverurie in May.

We welcome some good news stories and updates from peer groups to share. A good tool to use is **CHIME** so let's

- CONNECT with each other
- Give each other HOPE
- Find and love your IDENTITY
- be MINDFUL of yourself and others
- Be EMPOWERED, take control of your destiny

This will be the first of a regular communication with the recovery community. Please share with others and let's grow.

Headlines for this edition

3 Forums Development Meeting leads to proposed new Forum Constitution

Networking and Peers Support in the Shire

Working together to nurture peer-facilitators and leaders

Aberdeenshire's ADP Propose new models for community engagement

Recovery Walk 2025

What next after the National Mission on Drugs?

3 Forums Development Meeting - 25th May

Nineteen individuals associated with Aberdeenshire's network of 3 community forums met on 25th May to discuss the community forums' purpose and intentions for the years ahead. This discussion was held in the context of Forum committees having been informed that the Aberdeenshire ADP intended to stop funding community forums from June 2025 and remove community forum representation from the ADP Strategic Committee.

It was agreed that the Forums should carry on but transition into one constituted organisation with one bank account. A working group agreed to develop a single forum constitution.

Minutes of the meeting were issued to the Forum mailing lists in June. For additional copies please contact your forum secretary.

New Forum Constitution

The sub-group comprising Jean Henretty, John Bolland and Diane Ord have worked to develop a new constitution based on the up-to-date OSCR template for a voluntary association. The revised constitution proposes the purposes of the Aberdeenshire Recovery Community Forum as being:

- Develop and expand the network of trusting and cooperative peer-led community recovery and family support groups.
- Establish and strengthen formal pathways between services and community recovery groups.
- Collaborate with partner agencies and funding bodies to implement peer-led community initiatives supporting prevention, harm reduction and sustained recovery.
- Promote prevention and harm reduction activities within Aberdeenshire associated with problematic substance use and associated social and mental health issues.
- Advocate for equitable access to services and the human rights of persons or family members affected by problematic substance use.

The new association requires three trustees to get off the ground. Two community members have already agreed to serve. The working group propose the set up of the new association with the intent to hold an AGM during 2025 to broaden participation and membership.

For additional copies please contact your forum secretary.

Networking and Peers Support

Local peer-led recovery groups continue to meet and provide mutual support across Aberdeenshire. Groups meet regularly in Inverurie, Stonehaven, Huntly on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays as well as at special events aimed at drawing together the whole Aberdeenshire community.

Laura McAllister is a dedicated Recovery Development Officer working as part of the Aberdeenshire Community Recovery (ACR) - Alcohol & Drugs Action (ADA) Partnership. Laura is available to provide support and advice to existing groups and new groups wishing to start up across the shire. Laura can be contacted via info@acr.scot.



In August, ACR organised a whole-shire summer event for community members at the Bennachie Visitor Centre, building on last year's successful 3 Forums' Event. It was great to see Forum members, friends and families connecting and sharing hope and identity.

Capacity Building for Peer-led Recovery

In addition to the work of planning and shaping community recovery for the years ahead, community members have also been active providing and participating in training to build capacity and resilience. ACR has organised training courses open to community members in

Family Support – using Scottish Families Affected by Drugs and Alcohol (SFAD) CRAFT course.

Group Facilitation – training has taken place or is scheduled in DART (ADA), SMART (SMART UK) and My Medication and Me (SRC) courses providing community members with the skills and confidence (and accreditation) to run local peer-led groups in these formats.



The Basics – ACR has also organised training for community members in First Aid and Food Hygiene, recognising the importance of the BASICS in establishing and running local groups in a safe, welcoming (and legally compliant) way.

Further information on ACR activities and Training Opportunities can be found at www.acr.scot or on Facebook under Aberdeenshire Community Recovery.

Aberdeenshire ADP Proposed Developments

In parallel with these community-led developments, the ADP Support team has progressed plans which include

- a) Formal revision of the ADP Partnership Agreement and Terms of Reference which broadens ADP Committee membership but **eliminates** community appointed representatives from the committee, replacing them with LLE representatives appointed by the ADP Chair.
- b) Requiring community voices to interact with the ADP through a reconstituted LLE Sub-group whose chair is an ADP appointee.
- c) Setting up a new Recovery Development steering group comprising the ADP Support team, Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action (AVA), Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC) and the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) which meets every 3 weeks.
- d) Proposing a test of change exercise lasting into 2026 to identify and engage with local community recovery groups. AVA will be funded by the ADP to undertake this exercise.
- e) Proposing a community engagement exercise 'Voices of Recovery' to enable the commissioning of recovery services in subsequent years. It is proposed that this exercise will be coordinated by the Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC)

These plans and proposals will be tabled and proposed for approval at the next ADP Strategic Committee Meetings.

No members of existing forum management teams have been consulted in the development of these proposals or involved in the Recovery Development Steering Group and the elimination of forum representatives from the ADP committee was actively resisted by the forums nominated representatives at the March and June ADP Strategic Committee meetings.

Strategic Committee Meeting 11th September.

The next ADP Strategic Committee is scheduled for 1230 on Thursday 11th September in Committee Room 2 at Woodhill House, Westburn Road, Aberdeen, AB16 5GB.

The meeting Agenda is:

- Welcome, apologies and introductions
- Previous Minute
- ADP Membership
- ADP Partnership Agreement and Structure
 - New Partnership Agreement
 - New Drug & Alcohol Harms Reduction Group chaired by Police Scotland
- Spotlight on BBV
- Scottish Recovery Consortium Engagement
- ADP Strategy
- Partner Updates
- Unallocated Spending Proposals
 - ADP Development Budget
 - AVA Recovery Test of Change
 - Participatory Budget Allocation
- Resources & Governance Group/Finance Report
- Strategic Outcomes and Performance/Impact report
- Lived and Living Experience Update
- Experiential Update including LLE budget proposal
- AOB

ADP Strategic Committee meetings are public meetings and any concerned member of the community may attend either in person or via weblink through Microsoft teams.

The committee papers have been issued to the Forums and, since they are public documents, can presumably be shared with interested members of the public. Please contact your forum secretary if you wish to review the documents.

Anyone wishing to attend the meeting virtually should contact Renata Giszczak renata.giszczak@aberdeenshire.gov.uk to obtain a link to the meeting. Please contact Renata if you wish to attend.

Recovery Walk 2025

SRC has organised the Recovery Walk Scotland for 27th September in Stirling. It's good that the location is a bit farther North and more accessible than on some previous years.

Unfortunately, due to decisions by the Aberdeenshire ADP to stop funding the Community Forums, the Forums do not have the resources or capacity to organise travel for community members to Stirling this year. If you are planning to attend or keen to attend, let others know. Perhaps we can organise mutual support around car shares or accompanied travel on the day.



National News related to Recovery

Scottish Government ADP Update

In their ADP Newsletter September 2025, the Scottish Government say they are “working with a wide range of stakeholders to develop a future alcohol and drugs approach for after the National Mission ends.” Currently, they are “working on the basis that ADP funding will be maintained next financial year.”

The National Mission on Drugs is due to end in 2026. The long-awaited Alcohol Strategy has not been issued.

In the meantime, drug related deaths in Scotland remain the highest in Europe and problematic alcohol use continues to harm our community.

The Scottish Government has also published resources to support people with lived and living experience of substance use who are looking to embark on their employment journey. This also includes support for employers to attract, recruit and retain staff with lived experience.

In June, the Government also published its annual benchmarking report on Medically Assisted Treatment (MAT) for 2024/2025 which includes self-assessment status for MAT implementation in Aberdeenshire. <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/33682/final-v12-2024-25-benchmarking-report-on-mat-standard-updated-070725.pdf>

Connecting and Inspiring



Over the summer, community members attended 2 inspiring national conferences focussed on recovery and stopping drugs deaths.

In June, the Scottish Recovery Consortium (SRC) hosted *Connecting Recovery*, a coming together of recovery communities in Perth to share learning, inspire and connect. Yes: CHIME.

The 400 **free** tickets available 'sold out'. Recoverists from all over Scotland as well as Ireland and the North of England came to connect, learn and, for me, be inspired. Lots of hugs and warm reacquaintance among folk who have the experience and know RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE. They are walking the talk.

One of the key take-aways was the presentation by Dr. David Best - *Beyond Treatment – Why Recovery Deserves Its Own Conversation and Why Lived Experience Should Lead it*. Building on decades of research in the UK, Australia and Canada, David's key message was **peer-led recovery communities work!** Unlike two decades ago, there is robust scientific evidence to prove it.

We need to shift the model of conversation from practitioner-patient to partnership and nurture the 'social contagion' which motivates us all to want to recover by providing community-based relationships and resources.

- Something to eat
- Something to do
- Someone to love
- Somewhere to live

It was David who presented the C-CHIME model as a way of testing if we are heading in the right direction in communities. It's a model we have adopted a celebrate here!

More info on the conference can be found here [Connecting Recovery - Perth 2025 - Aberdeenshire Community Recovery SCIO](#) and SRC has recently uploaded a video and the presentations, outcomes and a report on the conference on their website which makes fascinating reading and a great inspiration for recoverists and recovery groups. [National Recovery Conference – Scottish Recovery Consortium](#)

In August, it was the turn of the Scottish Drugs Forum (SDF) to host their conference in Glasgow *Stopping the Deaths. Stop the Deaths* seemed to attract more 3rd and statutory services (and government) workers than community recoverists though free spaces had been made available for people with lived and living experience. Once again, there was inspiration and challenge in the course of the two-day event with lots of useful ideas and insights and great news, especially with regards to the successes and challenges of safe consumption spaces in Glasgow and Dublin. John Bolland will be blogging about the conference on www.acr.scot in the coming weeks. Watch this space.



Send us your news

As we said at the top, we welcome some good news stories and updates from peer groups to share. Let's **CHIME!**

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Please forward any suggestions for content to john@acr.scot. We also welcome citizen journalists to get involved, offering their insights into Recovery, its triumphs and challenges in the region. Check out the peer-edited *Buzz* magazine recently launched for inspiration and ideas.

John Bolland – Central Forum

Jean Henretty – South Forum