



# Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum Bulletin June 2026

## Overview

Welcome to the third in our series of regular bulletins on Recovery in Aberdeenshire and the events affecting folk with lived and living experience and their families at a local, regional and national level.

In this bulletin

- First New Forum AGM
- Aberdeenshire Community Recovery are recruiting
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- NHS Public Health; Supporting Wellbeing in our Community
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## National & Regional News

- CORRA Funding
- Drug deaths rise nationally
- Aberdeenshire ADP continues to underspend on treatment services
- ADP Panels
- New ADP Website and Publicity Materials
- Digesting the Evidence and Mapping Recovery

We hope this bulletin informs and inspires community members to get involved, share their views and help us all make a difference.

## Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum: First AGM

Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum marked another milestone on 8<sup>th</sup> June when It held its first Annual General Meeting.

The event was part of the June Forum meeting hosted by Aberdeenshire Community Recovery at the Aberdeenshire Wellbeing Hub in Huntly.

29 community members, drawn from across the community, services and other interested groups, attended a packed and stimulating meeting.

John Bolland, as Chair, delivered the annual Chair's Report whilst our Treasurer, Jean Henretty, updated members on the Forum's current financial position.

John thanked all members, office bearers and participants for their ongoing support, commitment and contributions over the past year.

Forum members had the opportunity to elect the Forum Management Team for the year ahead; John Bolland, Kevin Campbell, Jill Dow, Jean Henretty and Diane Ord were duly elected as office bearers for the year ahead.

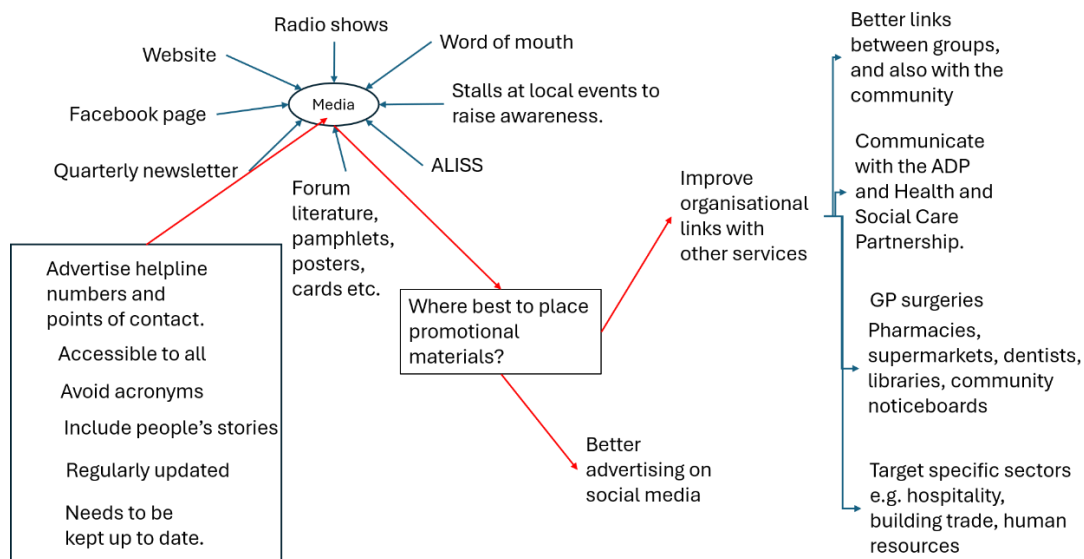
Although Kevin Galashan will continue as a trustee of the Forum, Kevin has stepped down from the management committee. The chair thanked Kevin for this support in getting our new forum off the ground and his continuing commitment.

### Forum Discussions

The conversation café topic for the Forum itself was 'How do we create and promote a better informed and better-connected recovery community in Aberdeenshire?' This generated ideas and potential initiatives to address the challenges on engagement and connection across the diverse locations and interest groups in Aberdeenshire.

Participants split into groups to discuss what's going on locally, regionally and nationally and came up with a range of ideas and existing initiatives.





The Forum Communication sub-group will work on these themes over the coming months to improve awareness and connection. If you would like to be involved, please contact [aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com](mailto:aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com).

Groups and services also had an opportunity to provide updates on their status and challenges.

**If you would like to become more involved in the Forum as a member, or if you would just like to receive information on what's happening locally through our mailing list, please email Forum Secretary Susan Weetman at [aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com](mailto:aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com).**

If you want to be involved at any level, get in touch through our email [aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com](mailto:aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com) and follow our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/aberdeenshirerecoveryforum](http://www.facebook.com/aberdeenshirerecoveryforum)

## Drug and Alcohol Services: Drop off in investment in the last quarter of 2025 - 2026

The latest Integration Joint Board (IJB) report shows Aberdeenshire ADP (via Aberdeenshire Council) were under-spent on their 2025-26 Residential Rehab budget at the year-end by £77,000.

This underspend, alongside a £30,000 underspend on works on the new Step-In Centre in Fraserburgh, meant that the Aberdeenshire ADP failed to invest £104,000 of its available funding dedicated to support recovery in 2025-26.

In parallel, Aberdeenshire Council's Adult Services Substance 'Misuse' Team was underspent by £300,000. According to the IJB report, these 'savings' were attributable to 'staff savings' achieved during the period, as the service is undergoing redesign and a new staffing model is being implemented.'

With a combined ADP/Adult Services budget of £5.5M, these figures represent an 8% underspend on Alcohol and Drugs services.

This underspend follows on the heels of previous years when almost half a million pounds of unspent reserves, held by the ADP to support the then National Drugs Mission, were clawed back by NHS Grampian to fund deficits generated in other parts of their service.

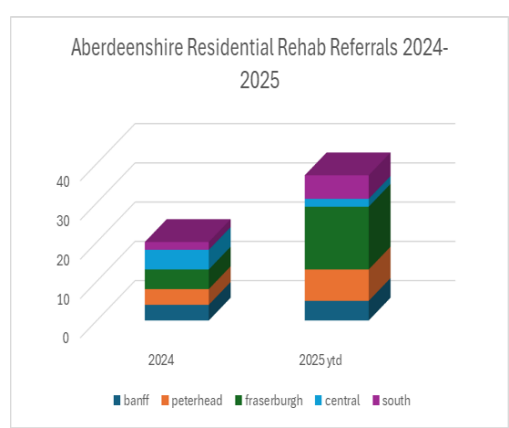
Of the ADP’s £5M budget going forward, in March the ADP Support team sought approval for the expenditure of this year’s available £21,772 Lived and Living Experience budget on the following line items:

- LLE Panels £5,165
- LLE Representative £591
- Step In Volunteer Pilot in North £7,747
- Making Recovery Visible £8,000
- Conversation Cafes etc. £219

This represents 0.4% of the ADP’s total £5M budget. A tiny sum to support Scottish Government’s priority of putting Lived and Living Experience at the centre of planning, prioritisation and decision making.

### Has Access to Rehab for Aberdeenshire Community stalled?

The reported £77,000 Residential Rehab underspend is the more worrying since figures for the first quarter (Jan-Mar) of 2026 provided by HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership) suggest that there were very few further approvals for residential rehab or detox in Aberdeenshire.



As we reported in the previous issue, the number of people accessing residential rehab facilities funded by the Scottish Government or local funds had almost doubled compared to the previous year and it was hoped, given funding was still available, that this trend would be sustained. This does not appear to have been the case.

Figures provided by the HSCP also suggest the number of onward referrals from Drug and Alcohol Services to Psychotherapeutic Support is also close to zero (consistent with the previous quarter).

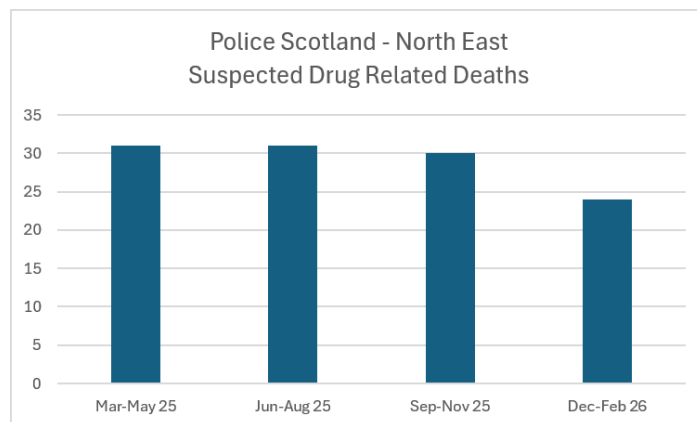
## Drug Deaths in the North East buck National trends

Police Scotland North East reported a reduction in the number of drug related deaths in their area between December and March compared to previous quarters.

These figures continue to conceal 24 individual tragedies experienced by individuals, families, friends and communities across the North East.

Scottish Government and associated services have changed the way drug related deaths, harms and other indicators are publicly reported. These statistics are now

reported via the RADAR website and associated dashboard at Police Scotland North East and NHS Grampian levels. This makes precise numbers for Aberdeenshire difficult to ascertain and Aberdeenshire HSCP have declined to provide further information.



The reduction in reported drug related deaths in the area goes against the national trend reported in the same RADAR (Rapid Action Drug Alerts and Response) update. For more information, please follow this link [RADAR](#)

In that update, services, nationally, reported the following figures compared to the previous quarter:

- Drug Related Deaths: 31% increase
- Specialist Treatment Starts: 14% decrease
- Drug Related A&E (Accident and Emergency) Admissions: 6% decrease
- Drug Related Hospital Admissions: 21% decrease
- Naloxone Administration: 10% decrease

People are dying and not making it to the right services in time.

Underlying this trend, RADAR reports continuing underlying issues

The Scottish RADAR report for the last available quarter advised that:

- The drug supply continues to be contaminated with nitazene-type opioids, new benzodiazepines and medetomidine which purchasers were unaware of.
- The majority of harms involved the use of more than one substance.
- Cocaine is the most commonly identified drug in toxicology and drug treatment testing.
- Increase in detections of ethylbromazolam.
- Continuing reports of fake medicines referred to as benzodiazepines, gabapentin and pregabalin.

Despite the gaps in regional information in some areas, RADAR does provide information on actual drug related incidents in Aberdeenshire. This intelligence should prove useful within the community and Forum in informing future direction and responses.

## Still no equivalent mechanism for Alcohol

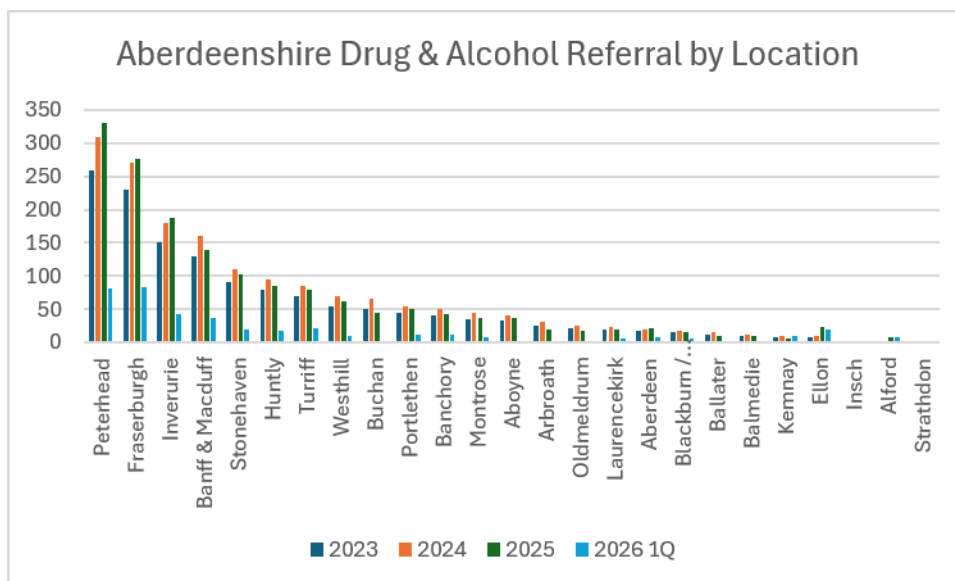
Since there is no formal reporting or review mechanism for alcohol related deaths, the HSCP (Health and Social Care Partnership) cannot provide similar information on the harms associated with alcohol use in the area. In response to Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum's Freedom of Information requests, Aberdeenshire HSCP have informed us that "Whilst there is a process to be notified of all suspected Drug Related Deaths there is not the same nationally for alcohol specific deaths so this data is not available."

## Levels of referral and first treatment by Aberdeenshire Drug and Alcohol Services remain steady

According to the figures provided by the Health and Social Care Partnership under Freedom of Information Requests, 1654 referrals were received up until the end of December 2025 (compared to 1745 and 1438 in the preceding 2 years).

During the first 3 months of 2026, services received 538 referrals, suggesting a caseload around, or perhaps higher, than previous years. The number of referrals for treatment was 10% higher in the previous quarter.

Locations with Step-In Centres continue to dominate the pattern of initial treatment across Aberdeenshire and the figures in the first quarter of this year show a slight fall-off in referrals from rural locations compared to apparent progress made in referrals from these areas in 2025.



Drug and Alcohol Services now have Step-In premises established in:

- Banff at Seaford House
- Inverurie at Lumphart Cottage
- Peterhead at 88 King Street
- Fraserburgh at the Faithlie Centre

The Step in Centre at Stonehaven, Viewmount, is still not open to the public yet, however a phone number and email address is available for arrangements to be made to see people at an appropriate venue.

We understand that publicity material for drug and alcohol services has been prepared but, at the time of writing, still awaits distribution by NHS Grampian. The Aberdeenshire ADP has also budgeted almost £8,000 to fund volunteers with lived and living experience to act as Peer Navigators in some Step-In centres in the North of Aberdeenshire.

Although the number of new treatments is an indicator included in RADAR, no data is as yet published for NHS Grampian (unlike other regional health boards) although this data is uploaded to PHS (Public Health Service) DAISY (Drug and Alcohol Information System) database.

Based on the information that is available in RADAR, drug related A&E and Hospital attendances at North East Hospitals were at low levels during the past few months – in keeping with National trends.

## LLE Panels and a new ADP Website for Aberdeenshire

The ADP Support team have now appointed panellists to the two LLE (Lived and Living Experience) Panels with which they intend to replace previous community representation mechanisms such as formal LLE Sub-groups and the Forums.

According to the ADP Support Team's Report to the March ADP Meeting:

*“The aim [of the panel] is to ensure people with lived or living experience of alcohol or drug use — including those affected by someone else's substance use — can directly influence service design and improvement. The panel will provide a safe, trauma-informed space for members to share insight, highlight barriers, and shape more compassionate and accessible support.*

*Panel members will meet bi-monthly with the Experiential Lead; each person will be recruited through the Aberdeenshire Council volunteering pathway and will be reimbursed at £13.45 per hour plus travel expenses. Training and digital support will be available. Core expectations include constructive participation, respect for diverse experiences, and the ability to work collaboratively.”*

Panellists were interviewed in April 2026 and 8 individuals were recruited to each panel. There will be one panel for South Aberdeenshire and one for the North. We understand that the new panels have met once so far, with a second meeting scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> June. The terms of reference of the panels remains to be defined and how the panels will be represented on the full ADP Committee level is not yet defined.

According to the ADP Reports provided in response to Freedom of Information Requests, the ADP Executive Group has also agreed that the Experiential Steering Group would become a Strategic Subgroup of the ADP. The reason for this was explained as that *“The Experiential Programme has developed beyond its current terms of reference.”*

*“This group under the new structure will bring strategic leadership of the programme, agree on work that comes from recommendations formed from the new ADP Panels. The group will provide oversight of the thematic analysis of the MAT Interviews and be responsible for taking*

any actions back to their service/group and reporting back on progress to form the quarterly “You Said We Did”. It will bring people with lived experience and Service Leads together.”

It is unclear who will form the Experiential Steering Group, what experience they have or how they are being appointed. Wider community consultation on this process did not take place.

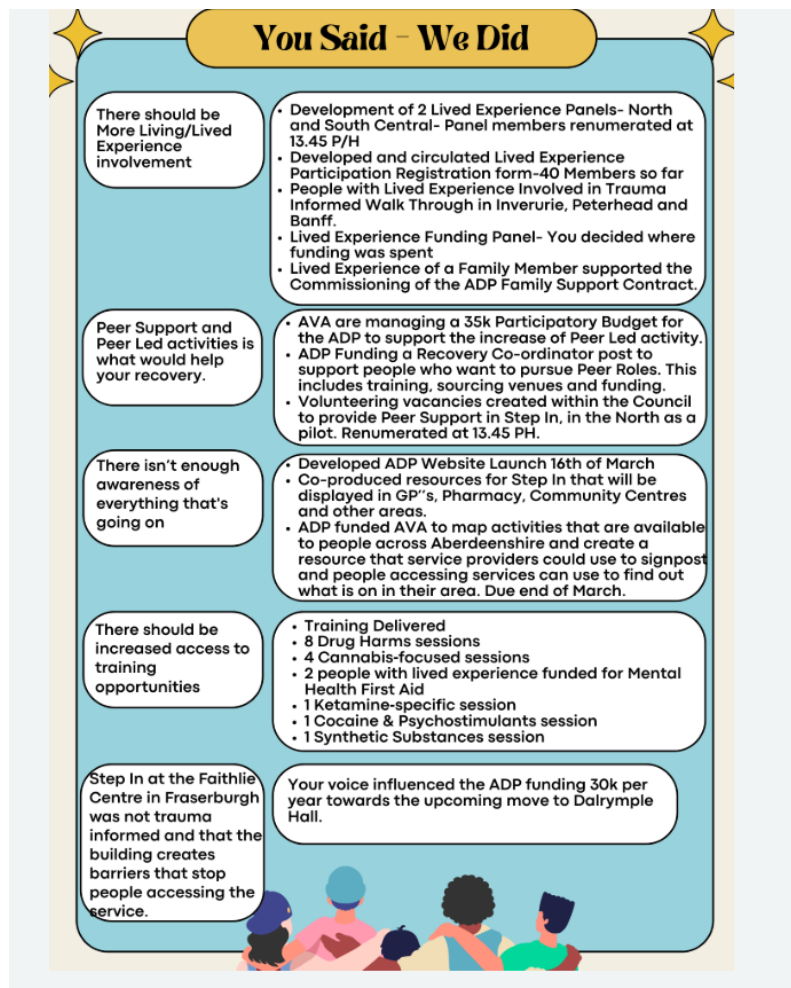
The ADP Support Team has also been spending time looking into the 10 themes identified by the SRC’s (Scottish Recovery Consortium) January *Voices of Recovery* Workshop with a view to creating a document showing *What you said, What we are doing, What Next*. The ADP Support team has, however, had no further contact with workshop participants since January.

The plan is for the ADP LLE Panels to look at the *What Next?* and give recommendations to the Experiential Steering Group.

In early April, the ADP Support Team did, finally, launch their long-promised website, primarily devoted to Aberdeenshire HSCP activities rather than the wider Partnership. Please follow this link to visit the website [Aberdeenshire Alcohol & Drugs Support](#) -

The site provides some limited signposting (though not to community groups) and access to a selection of recovery-related documentation. It also published their latest ‘You Said/We Did’ summary.

The statement fails to acknowledge that the Lived Experience Panels replace existing and well-established structures which involved far more individuals. The input of a single family member into the ADP Family Support contract commissioning process also falls far short of the levels of consultation and involvement evident in previous years.



## ADA launch a new Family Support Service in Aberdeenshire

The new contract for Family Support Services in Aberdeenshire commenced on 1st April 2026. Based on the commissioning document, the service should provide:

- One-to-one and group-based emotional and practical support for family members affected by alcohol and/or drug use.
- Information, advocacy and navigation of wider services.
- Practical support and advice on how best to support a family member's recovery whilst taking care of yourself.
- Support to reduce isolation, improve wellbeing and build resilience.

Registered Scottish Charity SC013582

Introducing  
Conversation Cafes

One Family

Aberdeenshire  
family support

ADA

Scan the QR code to let us know when and where you'd like to come to the cafes.

If you are a family member, friend or carer and you're worried about someone else's drug or alcohol use, you can now get support from ADA (Alcohol and Drugs Action) to help you cope. ADA can offer individual or group support, and can signpost you to other services who may be able to help you.

Please email [afs@alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk](mailto:afs@alcoholanddrugsaction.org.uk) with any referrals or enquiries.

ADA is also holding a series of conversation cafes across Aberdeenshire that all family members and friends are welcome to attend. This is so they can find out what people want from a family support service. Keep an eye on ADA's social media pages, or contact the email address above to find out more

## Further investment in Aberdeenshire’s very own LERO – Aberdeenshire Community Recovery

Great news! The National Lottery has just awarded Aberdeenshire Community Recovery a multi-year grant to support the development of a peer-led recovery network in Aberdeenshire.

Building on the National Lottery’s previous one year funding, money from the Fairer Lives Fund enables Aberdeenshire Community Recovery to expand its capacity, adding a further part-time Development Officer to its staff.

The new Development Officer will complement the work currently undertaken by Laura McAllister, who will still continue to be seconded to Aberdeenshire Community Recovery from its partner organisation, ADA. As well as providing sustainability for groups and individuals on their recovery journeys, this additional funding will enable Aberdeenshire Community Recovery to adopt a broader and more strategic approach to supporting the community in Aberdeenshire.

In support of this, Aberdeenshire Community Recovery will be collaborating with the Scottish Recovery Consortium in the evaluation and monitoring of Recovery Capital generated within the local Recovery Community.

Aberdeenshire Community Recovery is a committed, grass-roots Lived Experience Recovery Organisation (LERO) dedicated to Recovery in our local area but with close collaborative links with national organisations. For more information on their activities and the groups they support, visit their website at [www.acr.scot](http://www.acr.scot) or follow them on Facebook.

Aberdeenshire Community Recovery’s investment in training and capacity-building has seen a flourishing of new groups in the area over the last three months with new SMART groups established in Stonehaven, Inverurie and Banchory, DART training being delivered in Huntly and Banchory and now in Phoenix Future’s Rae House centre, a regular Job Club and a new Family Group (ERICs) based at their Wellbeing Hub in Huntly.

The growing Aberdeenshire Community Recovery team continue to make plans and pursue opportunities for Recovery. Generous grants from funders such as The National Lottery, Vattenfall’s Clashindarroch Community Fund and Cash For Kids continue to support their effort.



## Forget the newsletter! We do podcasts!

And radio shows...

Members of the Aberdeenshire Recovery Community now deliver a regular radio show on River Dee Radio and are producing podcasts touching on themes and topics of interest to the wider community.

Community Volunteer, Jill Dow, shares the experience of podcasting and broadcasting.

*"I first learned to do podcasts through SHMU [[Station House Media Unit](#)] back in the middle of last year.*

*Podcasts are digital audio or video series you can stream or download over the internet. They are like a radio show or on-demand TV. Podcasts cover virtually every topic imaginable—so why not Recovery? They are usually free to listen to on your own schedule.... ours are!*

*Although SHMU had a very professional set up, and were very good teachers, I felt I needed to be doing the editing of the podcasts too, and they only briefly touched on it.*

*It was fun and if you have a mouth the size of mine, you'll find it easy to talk about a whole heap of topics. We talked about irrelevant things in general as we were just practising, but we did do small town village V big city. That was fun and wee village won, of course.*

*We also talked about favourite drinks and biscuits, growing up in the 70's and 80's.*

*So that was my introduction to Podcasts.*

*We then were introduced to a guy called Mike Gill, who is a volunteer DJ for River Dee Radio.*

*He took Allan Brown and myself and sat down and asked if we were interested in recording radio shows for River Dee Radio. We jumped at the chance and have been recording shows since December 2025.*

*Mike lets us decide what topics we wanted to talk about and what songs we wanted to play. Mike has a wealth of music knowledge and it was easy to pick his brains for songs relevant to what we were talking about. He also has a huge music library.*

*Once we had recorded our first show, a Christmas themed one, he showed us how he edited it and gradually has been leaving me or Allan to edit the shows.*

*We use the Audacity editing suite which is a free program and is very good for what we need it for.*

*Typically, nowadays we are writing a script one week and recording and editing it the following week, so roughly once a fortnight our show airs on River Dee Radio which is a downloadable App. The show first airs on a Saturday at 2 pm and then is repeated every day. It also goes out on the Mixcloud on the Saturday and is also available on the River Dee Radio Facebook page. If you want to listen to the shows give us a like or favourite us.*



*The aim I have is to interview people associated with Alcohol and Drugs in any capacity. These open and frank conversations are not for everyone, but I'm sure the podcasts will be interesting and hopefully inspiring to some people."*

SHMU will be doing further training in Podcasting and other digital technologies over the coming months and have established links with the Huntly Job Club, in which Aberdeenshire Community Recovery is a partner. Aberdeenshire in Recovery (AiR) also have a regular radio show.

Listen in on the links below:

River Dee Radio: [River Dee Radio – Banchory and Deeside's community radio station](#)

Recovery on AIR: [Recovery ON AIR | shmu](#)

## Aberdeenshire Community Recovery Organise Bennachie Family Fun Day for the Community



Aberdeenshire Community Recovery has organised this year's Bennachie Family Fun Day. This is the second year they have organised this event on behalf of the wider community.

The Bennachie meet-up is open to everyone associated with the recovery community, their families and friends. It's an opportunity to meet, connect, chat and laugh with food and activities laid on and, of course, (for those who take the notion) the Mither Tap to climb.

The event continues the tradition of Aberdeenshire-wide Three Forums' events, bringing together folk from the North, Central and South on our very own Recovery Walk...or in this case, Climb!

The stravaig up Bennachie is not obligatory...there'll be lots more to do and folk to meet.

Aberdeenshire Community Recovery will try to coordinate transport for anyone having difficulty getting to and from Bennachie on the day. Contact them at [info@acr.scot](mailto:info@acr.scot).

Let's make it another memorable event.

## Stonehaven Folk Festival Alcohol-Free Event

Saturday 11th July 2026

Over the past several years the South Aberdeenshire ADP Community Forum has sponsored an alcohol-free event at the Stonehaven Folk Festival. The Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum is proud to carry on supporting this lively, family-friendly, free event hosted by the Stonehaven's Men Shed at the Beach Promenade. The event runs from 1 pm until 4 pm and is led by musician Sandy Mathers. Refreshments are also available. For more information about the festival and the wide range of events and workshops on offer, visit the website <https://stonehavenfolkfestival.co.uk>



## Creative Recovery in the Shire

Jill Dow reports on Creative Recovery in the Shire

*In March this year Aberdeenshire Community Recovery hosted our fellow recovery group, Creative Recovery Inverclyde, from Greenock up showing us how Inverclyde does creative recovery in their community.*

*There were 7 members of Inverclyde came up to the Wellbeing Hub in Huntly, and the first night was a video of small clips and videos of what recovery means to them and what they have been doing to get creative and at one with nature.*

*We had a chippy tea which was well received by all of the 35 people who attended the Monday night.*

*Next day it was creative writing, and I was blown away how creative I could be, with the right guidance. We all got an opportunity to share our pieces of writing and everyone enjoyed everyone else's - not a bad piece was found. We also got the opportunity to make a mini magazine [Zine] this was also really interesting and fun to do.*

*Wednesday was an introduction to film making, my personal favourite session.*

*We split into 2 tables of 8 or 10. Each of us had to draw a scene pertaining to the prompt-word we were given. My word was coffee so I drew a café scene with 2 people drinking coffee in the café. Then you had to pass your paper to the person on your left. They then had to draw*

Creative Recovery in the Shire		
<b>MON 23 MARCH</b>	<b>FILM SCREENING FISH &amp; CHIPS</b> 5-7:30PM THE WELLBEING HUB	SCREENING FILMS MADE BY CREATIVE RECOVERY INVERCLYDE
<b>TUE 24 MARCH</b>	<b>CREATIVE WRITING ZINE MAKING</b> 10AM- 4PM THE WELLBEING HUB LUNCH PROVIDED	CREATIVE WRITING AND MAKING SMALL PUBLICATIONS
<b>WED 25 MARCH</b>	<b>INTRO TO FILMMAKING</b> 10AM-12:30PM THE WELLBEING HUB LUNCH PROVIDED <b>MOVEMENT DANCE</b> 1:30- 4PM HUB	STORYBOARDING AND FILMMAKING DANCE AND MOVEMENT
<b>THU 26 MARCH</b>	<b>BREAKFAST SHOW AND TELL</b> 9:30 - 11:30AM THE WELLBEING HUB	SHOWCASING WHAT WE HAVE DONE ALL WEEK

**BOOK NOW!**      **CONTACT: DIANE@ACR.SCOT**

**FOR PEOPLE WITH LIVED OR LIVING EXPERIENCE OF RECOVERY, AND THE FAMILIES WHO SUPPORT THEM.**

**WORKSHOPS LED BY ARTISTS FROM CREATIVE RECOVERY INVERCLYDE**

**LOCATION: ABERDEENSHIRE WELLBEING HUB, HUNTLY**

*something pertaining to the last picture drawn. This could sometimes be quite hard and especially because you only had a certain amount of time to draw in.*



*Once all the pictures had been drawn you had to stand up and tell your story according to the pictures. Some were brilliant and a lot of fun to do.*

*In the afternoon we did creative movement and dance. I was dreading this but, again, a lot of fun and it's amazing what you can do if you let yourself go and get lost in movement and music. Thursday saw us say good bye to our friends, but not before they tucked into a nice healthy brunch to set them up on there long way home.*

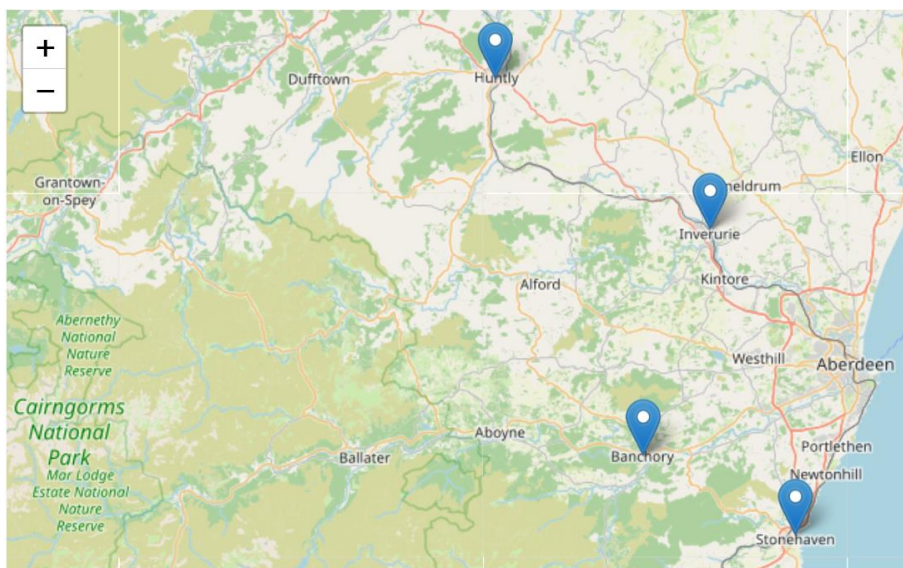
*Deveron Projects helped set up the connections with Inverclyde and were part of the events. During the week Aberdeenshire Community Recovery provided lunch and refreshments and always fresh fruit, so thank you ARC for giving us all the opportunity to see what others are doing and hopefully we can take our new found skills and practise them. We hope to continue collaborating with the Inverclyde Group over the year to come.*

## **ALISS – Where are the groups?**

Aberdeenshire Community Recovery's development officer, Laura McAllister, has been updating the ALISS website with times and locations of group meetings across Aberdeenshire. Her aim is to support a more informed and connected Recovery community in Aberdeenshire. Click on the following link to take you to the website:

[ALISS - A Local Information System for Scotland | ALISS](#)

ALISS is a national digital programme enabling people and professionals to find and share information on health and wellbeing resources, services, groups, and support in their local communities and online. Its aim is to ensure that everyone in Scotland has the right information, at the right time, about resources that are available to help them live well and stay connected to their community.



As well as listing ACR SMART Groups, Cafés, Job Club and Family Support Groups in Aberdeenshire, ALISS includes times and contact information for AA and NA meetings, Bridge Recovery Café and other health and well-being groups in Aberdeenshire.

## CORRA Funding

The publication of the new Scottish Government Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan – and the ending of the *National Mission* – has led to a shake-up in the way funding for alcohol and drug related services and projects is administered through Corra.

The Corra Foundation is the organisation selected to administer funds available through the Scottish Government’s Alcohol and Drugs Fund. This fund is intended to support the implementation of the Scottish Government’s and COSLA’s Alcohol and Drugs Strategic Plan. Select the following link to take you to the website: [Preventing Harm, Promoting Recovery: Scotland’s Alcohol & Drugs Strategic Plan 2026 – 2035](#)

Full details are still a bit unclear but we understand that 2 of the 3 funding schemes are now open for application.

1) **Local Support Micro Grants** are for grassroots and community-based groups in Scotland, which deliver frontline services to support people affected by alcohol and drugs, people in recovery and / or their families. This scheme is open to Scottish charities, social enterprises or constituted community / voluntary groups that operate on a not-for-profit basis, with an annual income of up to £75,000. Organisations can apply for between £1,000 and £15,000 per year to fund work up to April 2029. This fund will open to applications in June 2026.

2) **Local Support Grants** are for community-based Third Sector organisations in Scotland, which deliver frontline services to support people affected by alcohol and drugs, people who are in recovery and / or their families. This scheme is open to Scottish charities, social enterprises, community groups and other Third Sector organisations, with an annual income of up to £750,000. Organisations can apply for up to £60,000 per year, for work up to April 2029.

This fund is open and on a rolling basis.

The third strand is due to be announced in coming weeks:

3) **Partnership and Delivery Grants** are designed to provide funding to organisations that support people affected by alcohol and drugs. It aims to support larger third sector and public sector organisations which provide front-line, evidence-based access to support, treatment, care and recovery.

Organisations can apply for funding of up to £120,000 per year, for work to be delivered up to April 2029.

This fund will open to applications in **June 2026**.

## New Government – New Names

Following the Scottish Parliament Elections on 6<sup>th</sup> May, many of us have a new set of MSPs representing our interests in Holyrood.

The current list of elected representatives include:

### Constituencies

- Aberdeenshire East (North East Scotland) - Gillian Martin (SNP)
- Aberdeenshire West (North East Scotland) - Alexander Burnett (Con)
- Angus North and Mearns (North East Scotland) - Dawn Black (SNP)
- Banffshire and Buchan Coast (North East Scotland) - Karen Adam (SNP)

### Regional List

- Liam Kerr (Con)
- Douglas Lumsden (Con)
- Duncan Massey (Reform)
- Mark Simpson (Reform)
- Maggie Chapman (Green)
- Michael Marra (Lab)
- Yi-pei Chou Turvey (LD)

Although some parts of drug and alcohol related legislation are reserved to Westminster, Health and Social Care, some aspects of Justice and wider support for recovery are very definitely influenced by the Scottish Government and Parliament. Remember – they work for us!

Further contact details can be accessed from [All MSPs: Scottish Parliament - TheyWorkForYou](#)

## Digesting the Evidence and Mapping Recovery in Scotland

A number of community members attended the online presentation of the Scottish Recovery Forum's Digesting the Evidence and Mapping Recovery research reports on 16<sup>th</sup> June.

The online presentations were delivered by David Best, a globally recognised expert in addiction recovery and a leading scholar on recovery capital, and Andy Perkins, founder of Figure 8

Consultancy. Both presentations were based on work sponsored by the Scottish Recovery Forum.



David's presentation was a long-awaited follow up to earlier research in the same topic. Based on the growing evidence base on recovery support, David noted the critical role of peers and lived experience as carriers of the contagion of recovery and in building social and community recovery capital.

Recovery capital has emerged as an important strengths-based metric for individual change and programme effectiveness although not yet widely implemented in the evaluation of recovery systems and ecosystem models (e.g. ROSC, recovery ecosystems and inclusive recovery cities).

In the context of recovery, culture matters - shaping social and community conditions to support recovery capital growth - and there is a growing awareness of the importance of equity, inclusion, and intersectionality.

Andy presented the results of a survey of 50 recovery organisations and groups in Scotland.

Among his key messages were that the grass-roots localism and diversity of lived experience recovery groups were their strength – adapting and addressing local need in rural and urban contexts, often remote from 'service centres'. It was also interesting that only around 50% of groups have any formal referral relationship with statutory services.

Figure 8's research concluded that:

- There is no single approach that fits everyone.
- Recovery organisations extend the recovery environment into places and times that formal services often do not reach.
- What recovery organisations offer is whole-life recovery support.
- Their impacts are seen in lives, relationships and communities.

Less than half of the organisations surveyed received referrals through formal pathways, however. In response to David's observation that mutual aid and recovery groups represented a 'free lunch' for health and social care services...it is a meal that is often being missed!

Overall, the message was extremely positive and inspiring in terms of the science behind recovery and its effectiveness whilst the challenges of shifting the political culture from a 'biomedical' (treatment) to a recovery-oriented (support) model remain clear.

But there remains a danger, expressed by some participants, that it is still 'all talk, no action'. The Scottish Recovery Consortium and the groups working together in the national lived experience leadership group are determined that this is not the case and local organisations are already engaging with the Scottish Recovery Consortium and the researchers to shift the rhetoric and the science into practice across Scotland.

We'll ensure links to these reports are available in our next issue for those who want to learn more... or watch this space at: [Resources – Scottish Recovery Consortium](#)

## Drugs and Alcohol Recovery Training (DART) Programme at Rae House.

Laura McAllister, the development officer seconded to Aberdeenshire Community Recovery has been delighted to be able to deliver the 6-week self-coaching recovery programme DART to current residents at Rae House. DART, Drugs and Alcohol Recovery Training, is a Self-Coaching CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) model-based programme where we learn about ourselves and delve deeper into "how we tick".

This fantastic partnership with Phoenix Futures Rae House has enabled me to deliver this



valuable course to residents attending rehab. We are now in week 3, and the learning experience—alongside the sharing of personal recovery journeys—has been extremely positive with all involved giving their full attention to learning and encouraging and supporting peers who are all at different stages in their own journey. It provides a safe and supportive environment where individuals can openly share, reflect, and explore their own recovery. Participants are also encouraged to revisit tools they have previously used (but maybe forgotten) as well as develop new strategies to help them navigate their ongoing recovery journey.

It has been a real pleasure to deliver the programme within their own environment. Despite the busyness of daily responsibilities within the rehab setting, participants have remained focused and committed during sessions. They seamlessly balance their learning with house duties, stepping away when needed and returning fully engaged.

Rae House runs like a well-organised and supportive community, with everyone taking ownership of their roles and demonstrating strong commitment to shared responsibilities. This sense of structure and collective accountability has greatly enhanced the overall learning experience.

We are now halfway through the course, and I am excited to continue this positive journey. I look forward to ongoing joint working between Aberdeenshire Community Recovery and Rae House, with the aim of continuing to offer and develop the delivery of the DART programme for residents in the future.

This has been a great opportunity to promote Aberdeenshire Community Recovery and connect with individuals who will remain in Aberdeenshire once leaving rehab to continue to build on recovery capital, to develop and grow in their own community.

## Advocacy in Aberdeenshire

Effective advocacy is essential to ensure individuals access their full human and legal rights in our communities. Many of us are still barely aware of what our rights are and, faced with stigma, administrative and legal challenges, far fewer of us know how to argue to secure the behaviour and services we deserve in a civilised society.



Community members and service workers from Aberdeenshire were among the most recent cohort of trainee advocates graduating from REACH Advocacy's Advocacy Practice course. This SVQ Level 7 qualification provides a firm practical grounding in advocacy in support of individuals trying to secure their legal and human rights.

Lynne Hastie, one of the two community trainees, writes

“Aberdeenshire Community Recovery gave me the opportunity to complete a SCVQ Level 7 in Advocacy Practice. This was a huge challenge for me but I was so grateful of the opportunity I jumped right in! I learned about legislation, the law and human rights while working through a case study. I also learned that I am far more capable than I ever thought. I'm not going to lie, I struggled with some parts of the course, but I was supported all the way through and I completed it!!! I am 47 years old and I have my very first graduation ceremony at the end of this month!!”

Although the UK is a signatory to the European Convention of Human Rights, remarkably few of our human rights are enshrined in law. And specific rights to advocacy are restricted, in law to specific groups such as Children and Young People and those with diagnosed mental health issues.

But Scottish Government recently issued a National Charter of Rights for people affected by substance use: [Charter of Rights for People Affected by Substance Use - Lived experience](#)

This articulates seven key rights:

### National Charter of Rights

1. Right to life
2. Right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
3. Right to an adequate standard of living
4. Right to private and family life
5. Right to a healthy environment

6. Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
7. Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention

The Medically Assisted Treatment Standards (MAT) also mandate a right to advocacy for people undergoing treatment for substance use issues. That right to advocacy also demands that advocacy be listened to by services and authorities.

The Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnerships has commissioned Advocacy North East to provide advocacy services. Advocacy North East, based in Inverurie, describe themselves as *“a rights based independent advocacy service in Aberdeenshire working with people aged sixteen years and over who are affected by mental illness or disability.”* They also support *“a range of other people including those who may be involved in Adult Support and Protection processes, people with problematic substance use who need advocacy in relation to their care and treatment and people who are resident within HMP Grampian.”* [Advocacy North East – Independent Advocacy in Aberdeenshire](#)

The broadening of the advocacy skill-base to peer-volunteers and staff at Step-In centres should increase accessibility and the capacity of folk in the wider community to have their voices heard and their basic human rights and needs satisfied.

The Advocacy Practice course was a revelation, both in its scope and in revealing the mismatch between the rights we should all be entitled to receive – as human beings – enshrined in the UN Human Rights Charter, and those actually embedded in UK and Scottish legislation.

REACH Advocacy hope to continue to collaborate with the Aberdeenshire Recovery Community and discussions on further workshops and training opportunities are on-going. Watch this space.

## NHS Public Health: Supporting Wellbeing in our Community

Two community projects in South Aberdeenshire are making a positive difference to health and wellbeing.

At the Linden Centre Community Café in Huntly, volunteers have created a warm, welcoming space following the Health Issues in the Community course. Operating on a not-for-profit, donations-based model, the café pilot runs until the end of June, offering refreshments and a place for people to connect. We are now working with local partners to explore how this valued, volunteer-led initiative can be sustained beyond the pilot.

In Stonehaven, the Monday Group swim and gym sessions have supported people in recovery to become more active and build confidence. One participant shared, “It’s made a big difference to my week—getting out, moving more, and seeing familiar faces.” Following its success, there is now an opportunity to explore expanding this model across Aberdeenshire.

## Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum Grants

The Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum is now fully functioning with a management committee and administration team. The new forum was created by merging the three Aberdeenshire Community Forums to maintain continuity of support for groups and individuals. Part of the

support is funding which can help develop groups or up-skill individuals. This year there are small grants of up to £500 available.

If you have an idea for an activity, event or need to sustain an existing project contact the funding team by email: [aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com](mailto:aberdeenshirerecoveryforum@gmail.com)

Someone from the team will contact you to discuss your idea and help you with the application form.

Projects that can be funded can be varied but should achieve the following aims:

**Prevention and early intervention:** Cooperating with other community partners in helping to build resilient communities and in addressing underlying issues at the root of problematic substance use.

**Engagement and collaboration:** Working with communities and enabling those with lived experience to influence service delivery and community responses. Lived experience in the context of the work of the community forums not only includes own experience of substance use but also the experiences of family members, friends and neighbours affected by another person's substance use.

**Tackling inequalities:** Being the voice of the community in ensuring services and support are person centred and accessible to all who need them.

**Recovery:** Promoting recovery in our communities, helping to develop recovery communities, and supporting people to access local services and support.

**Inclusion and Connection:** encouraging inclusive communities and influencing change; challenging stigma and judgemental attitude.

## Get Involved

Send us your news. We welcome good news stories and updates from peer groups to share. Let's CHIME!

- 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

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

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Aberdeenshire Recovery Forum Communications Sub-Group.