



Full marks to the Recovery College

– we hear from Ian Springham, a former student of the College, who is now a peer trainer



Ian Springham

The South West London Recovery College is a bit different to other colleges. For a start, it is not just for students, but also for families, friends, carers, and staff. Also, the specialist courses are related to one subject – mental health and the issues around it.

And finally, the application process is a bit different – you don't need to take any exams to qualify and if you feel too much pressure there is no need to continue. However, it is the same as other colleges in that there is much to learn as long as students have the tools to understand the information they are looking for.

The College is the UK's first NHS mental health recovery study and training facility which helps people manage their condition and gives them the skills to help them back to work and to form new relationships. Some students themselves become trainers at the college.

Ian Springham, a former student of the Recovery College's *Telling Your Story* and *Planning Your Own Recovery* courses says, "the combination of these and other supportive, sharing environments saw me successfully apply for the post of peer trainer at the College. I now bring my lived experience to assist the students' continued recovery – it helps my own progress too!"

Ian is a person with a diagnosis of mixed personality disorder, which means symptoms of more than one personality disorder. Personality disorder can be difficult to identify and define

and has caused controversy because of the stigma surrounding this label which can lead to discrimination. In addition, according to *Emergence*, which is a service user-led organisation supporting all people affected by personality disorder including service users, carers, family and friends and professionals - some people find the diagnosis insulting and unhelpful.

Ian started at the Recovery College three years ago and the experience made him realise he had choices about his future direction. He had finally been diagnosed with mixed personality disorder after years of being given "an ever-more bewildering set of diagnoses" and encouraged by his wife he became determined to rebuild his life. He started as a student in the College in 2009 and in June 2011 became a peer trainer working with service users, their carers, families and friends, as well as with staff members.

All peer trainers either live with or have personal experience of mental health conditions.

Ian is also a Personality Disorder Knowledge and Understanding Framework (KUF) trainer. The KUF was introduced in 2007 by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Justice to support people to work more effectively with personality disorder. The key goal is to improve service user experience through developing the capabilities of the multi-agency professionals that are dealing with the challenges of personality disorder.

"The emphasis is on complementing traditional treatment approaches to mental health care and supporting self-management."

Do you support someone with a diagnosis that includes personality disorder?

Would you like to find out a bit more about personality disorder?

Would you like to meet others in a similar situation?

Contact

info@wandsworthcarers.org.uk
to find out more about
our meetings or call the
Wandsworth Carers' Centre on
020 8877 1200.

Introduction to Mindfulness is one of the courses on offer at the college



Since it opened its doors in 2010, 4000 people have been through the Recovery College's doors with the largest group of students being people with mood disorder, psychosis and personality disorder.

Ian says, "All courses are evaluated to ensure that they are meeting the requirements of service users and are co-presented with clinicians and developed by peers and practitioners, with help from external experts by practice or by experience. The emphasis is on complementing traditional treatment approaches to mental health care and supporting self-management so that people can participate in their own recovery and are not passive recipients of treatment."

The course materials include clinical and experience-based content and are focused on inspiring hope and building positive support networks. They are not in any way prescriptive or proscriptive but based on current thinking, techniques and coping strategies.

To access the service, people can either self-refer or go through the community mental health team. The Recovery College uses 15 venues across the five boroughs to deliver the courses using facilities such as libraries and community centres. Ian says, "It is important to run courses where people live, not only in wards or hospital buildings with their association with illness and containment."

Two of the most popular courses are *Introduction to Mindfulness* and *Learning to be Assertive*.

Other courses include workshops for families and friends supporting someone with mental health problems.

Ian says, "There are more and more of these kinds of colleges opening – because they work. It is an added dimension to recovery and by working together with clinicians, the courses can bring insight, understanding, hope, control and opportunity. People might not necessarily be 'cured' but the experience of attending the courses can be a real step on the road to recovery. It is about getting people to find what works for them and it is inclusive as carers, their families, friends and staff can also participate."

Correction:

The previous issue of Trustwide featured an article on personality disorder. We were aiming to create understanding of a complex issue and in the process we oversimplified the origins of personality disorder whose causes continue to be debated.

There was no intention to suggest that families are the primary cause in every case.

We would like to apologise for the misrepresentation there may have been. We are keen to work with and support carers of people with personality disorder and would recommend the Emergence website (www.emergenceplus.org.uk) and Wandsworth Carers Centre for further information and support.

CAMHS Campus update

Bringing together the three Child and Adolescent Mental Health inpatient wards has been part of the vision for developing CAMHS services in the Trust. We are happy to report that the building work is underway! The plan is for Aquarius (acute adolescent), Corner House (Deaf Children and Young People), and Wisteria (eating disorders) to be under one roof at the Springfield Hospital site.

Work has begun on Heather Ward to design it for Deaf Children and Young People from Corner House who are currently located on Ellis Ward. It is expected that Corner House service users will move in late 2013 with a grand opening planned for January 2014!

