

RECOVERY RECRUITMENT

A specialist employment support project for people in recovery from drug and alcohol problems

April 2014-April 2015, Nottingham, UK



Part of the 'Sociable Enterprises' project
Developed and delivered by

DOUBLE IMPACT

Funded by
The Big Lottery



CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	3
1	PROJECT OUTCOMES & INDICATORS	4
2	PROJECT IMPACT	5
3	CHALLENGES	7
4	LEARNING AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	8
5	SUSTAINABILITY	12
6	CASE STUDIES	12
7	CONCLUSION	15

INTRODUCTION

Recovery Recruitment is one strand of the 'Sociable Enterprises' project currently funded through the Reaching Communities programme. Overall, 'Sociable Enterprises' seeks to foster reintegration, reduce isolation and improve employment prospects for people in recovery from drug and alcohol problems in Nottingham.

The other strand of the project is an innovative and ground-breaking alcohol free café and venue - 'Café Sobar', which acts as a social hub for recovery to flourish in Nottingham (www.sobar-nottingham.co.uk/). It also provides voluntary work experience for our beneficiaries. In the long term we intend this café to be self-sustaining as a social business, ensuring that the benefits can be enjoyed by our beneficiaries and the general public for years to come.

Recovery Recruitment was initially envisaged as a social enterprise, whereby socially minded employers could source suitable candidates who were also in recovery. We also intended to engage with employers through a voluntary placement scheme, as a stepping stone to paid employment for some beneficiaries. We offered drug and alcohol awareness training to employers to help raise awareness of the issues and break down the stigma associated with substance misuse problems. Recovery Recruitment would act as a support for both our beneficiaries and employers to ensure successful outcomes for both. It was also the ambition that, as a business itself, Recovery Recruitment could offer voluntary roles to beneficiaries as administrators.

This evaluation report focuses on Recovery Recruitment and sets out our evidence that this strand of the activity will transfer well to a new project based in the county of Nottinghamshire.

1 PROJECT OUTCOMES

The project shares the following outcomes with the activity of Cafe Sobar. Outcome 1 relates primarily to activity within Café Sobar. Outcome 2 is a combination of the work of both strands and Outcome 3 relates primarily to the activity of Recovery Recruitment.

Outcome 1	MORE PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS ENGAGE IN POSITIVE SOCIAL ACTIVITY RESULTING IN REDUCED ISOLATION & RELAPSE
Outcome 2	MORE RECOVERING PEOPLE ENGAGING IN VOLUNTEERING ACTIVITY AND REDUCED STIGMA AMONGST EMPLOYERS RESULTING IN INCREASED EMPLOYABILITY
Outcome 3	MORE PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROBLEMS GAIN PAID WORK EXPERIENCE RESULTING IN INCREASED PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Project outcomes and indicators

The table below shows an update on Recovery Recruitment's progress to date towards the project indicators which correlate to its activity, since the project opened its doors to beneficiaries in April 2014. At the time of writing this report, there are 4 months of activity still to go (June 2015-end of September 2015).

Outcome 2: More recovering people engaging in volunteering activities and reduced stigma for employers resulting in increased employability		
Change indicators	By When	How much change has happened so far?
20 employers who have received drug/alcohol awareness training	End of project	17 organisations have received training through the project. Another event is planned for end of June 2015 which we are promoting at the moment

50 people gaining employment related skills/ experience/ qualifications	End of project	40 people/ 130 episodes (i.e. 40 individuals have gained these, with many of them undertaking several qualifications or training courses during the life of the project).
Outcome 3: More people recovering from drug and alcohol problems gain paid work experience resulting in increased personal and financial independence		
Change indicators	By When	How much change has happened so far?
30 people gaining paid employment experience	End of project	20 people/ 27 episodes (i.e. several beneficiaries secured more than one paid job opportunity during the life of the project)
30 people reporting increased personal and financial independence	End of project	38 people

2 PROJECT IMPACT

In practice, it soon became apparent that the social enterprise business model would not be effective for Recovery Recruitment in the short to medium term. Although the projections in our feasibility study and business plan were sound, in practice it was a challenge to engage with employers on behalf of our beneficiaries. This was especially the case with national employers with high numbers of entry level jobs, as they were often already committed to national schemes to work with disadvantaged people, or were tied in to a particular national charity as part of their CSR strategy. Getting access to the right people within the right department proved almost impossible for us as a smaller local charity.

However, as a grant-funded project or service, operating at a local level, Recovery Recruitment quickly proved itself to be very effective at supporting beneficiaries and finding paid opportunities for them, often via the usual recruitment pathways. This was achieved through project staff working closely with each individual and providing a package of tailored support including building confidence, application skills, CV writing, interview preparation, moral support and post-employment support in some cases.

Recovery Recruitment Activity/ Outcomes April 2014 - March 2015

Since the start of activity with beneficiaries in April 2014, Recovery Recruitment has achieved the following:

- ✓ It has worked with **72 different individuals**, **28% of whom have secured paid work** (comparing favourably with the Work Programme's success rate of 17 %.)
- ✓ 20 individuals have secured **27 paid work opportunities**.
- ✓ It has supported 40 **work placement** and voluntary work opportunities.
- ✓ It has supported access to **130 training & education** opportunities.
- ✓ It has supported individuals to complete **64 job applications**.
- ✓ It continues to support **18 beneficiaries** currently in employment.

Beneficiaries have been employed by a range of organisations including Primark, the Press Association, Parcel Force, Cafe Sobar, Waitrose, Action Housing Rotherham and Meridian. Beneficiaries have worked as volunteers with organisations such as Childline, Framework Housing Association, the Amy Winehouse Foundation, St Ann's Allotment Society, the Homelessness Prevention Service and Portland College.

Economic Impact

According to recent research by Addaction and the Home Office, every problem drug misuser who gets back into the labour force generates £11,900 of economic benefit per year; this equates to **£238,000 of economic benefit** generated by those who have been supported into employment by Recovery Recruitment.

3 CHALLENGES

Generating income as a social enterprise

As outlined above, the social enterprise model has not proved to be the best one for this project so far. However, its impact as a grant funded project has been significant for beneficiaries. For this reason we believe it merits future funding, to continue the fantastic work which has been carried out so far and enable more of our service users to benefit.

Staff time/ resources

The managers of the project (two staff working on a job-share basis) have repeatedly highlighted that the impact of the project is limited by the fact that they have only so much time to see and work with clients. If there were more staff resources then many more beneficiaries could be seen and helped by the service. At one point, 3 months into the project, we had to close the doors to any more new referrals as the staff were already working at capacity. It is a simple equation that more staff hours would allow us to achieve more with more of our beneficiaries.

Employer Engagement

One of the key challenges has been engaging with employers to generate the voluntary and paid work experience opportunities needed by beneficiaries. We have learnt that building relationships with employers over a period of time is necessary to achieve this - it is a mid to long term process as opposed to a short term 'win'. In an attempt to learn more about how to do this better we organised an employer focus event and learnt that some charities have one or several members of staff dedicated to just this activity. It was also confirmed that employers need to be given opportunities to gradually get to know a charity before they will go out of their way to create or open up opportunities for our particular target group.

Although we have built good relationship with some employers, we need more time to develop and nurture these to their full potential and we need the staff resources to be able to carry out this work in a consistent way. We believe it is central to the success of this project in the long-term.

“I did have some initial reservations but after speaking to Izzy and then meeting Matt a few times on a one to one basis I had no concerns about bringing Matt into the business. Izzy was very supportive and as the early meetings were between the three of us I could gauge that Matt was going to be no trouble at all and really wanted to learn about the photography industry. Izzy was bright, friendly and really positive. When you are dealing with someone with those qualities it makes it very easy to say yes to a request. Matching the right candidate to the company obviously helps and Matt was an easy sell. Keep doing what you’re doing! ”.

Tom Miller – Operations Manager, The Press Association

Joint working arrangements

We found that the joint working arrangements between our community drug and alcohol services in Nottingham city and Recovery Recruitment were largely effective, and that we received good flow (sometimes too many) of appropriate referrals to the project. We established strong links between Recovery Recruitment (RR) and Café Sobar, meaning that RR candidates were made aware of opportunities arising at Café Sobar, and also that RR was able to support any people ‘in recovery’ who were successful in obtaining paid staff roles there.

In addition, Recovery Recruitment was responsible for facilitating the volunteering programme within Café Sobar, sourcing and preparing suitable candidates for the experience, and following up with them after it had finished to help them to find the next opportunity.

4 KEY LEARNING POINTS

Our experience of setting up and delivering this activity over the past 13 months has resulted in the following learning points:

- ✓ The project’s approach of specialist, personalised support is very effective with this target group
- ✓ Moral support is as important as practical support in overcoming beneficiaries’ barriers to employment

- ✓ Positive experiences of learning and training lead into employment and vice versa – both create a progressive path for beneficiaries
- ✓ Building and instilling confidence is a key factor for success with this target group
- ✓ Competition for placements provided for 'disadvantaged' people is fierce
- ✓ Successful employer engagement requires a long-term approach for a local charity of our size and profile
- ✓ There is potential for some income generation over the longer term but other main sources of funding are required in the meantime

Taking the learning forward

As a response to the success of the approach and the resulting outcomes for beneficiaries in Nottingham, we have developed a proposal to run a similar project in the county of Nottinghamshire. As part of this proposal, we have expanded the project staff team to include a second post, with a focus on education and learning, as this proved to be a significant aspect of support requested by, and provided to, people using the original Recovery Recruitment project. This reinforced our understanding that education & learning forms an important part of the pathway towards work for many of our beneficiaries, and also, that in some cases, gaining confidence through employment encourages beneficiaries to embark on a course of more advanced learning. Having 2 posts will also allow greater resource for engaging with employers, which we have learned needs to be developed in a more consistent manner to result in more opportunities for our beneficiaries.

Developing the project

Nottinghamshire has an ethnically and culturally diverse population with areas of affluence and deprivation; some of the northern parts of the county are ex-mining communities. Nottinghamshire experiences a wide range of substance misuse related issues in much the same way as any other large county with diverse and dispersed communities, with the north of the county experiencing the greatest level of harm in terms of problematic drug and alcohol use.

In 2014, 82% of our 300 service users in Nottinghamshire County were unemployed, 34% for three years or more. This compares with an overall unemployment rate of 6% (Office for National Statistics).

Historically, due to the large geographical areas involved and the large distances between population bases, fostering a strong recovery network has been very challenging. Sustained recovery has existed in isolated pockets, mainly around Mansfield, however, the availability and accessibility of good recovery support has been limited. Double Impact has already made good headway in changing this through its services in the area over the past 10 years; the resulting increase in people achieving sustained abstinence-based recovery has created a good foundation for the activity of 'Recovery Recruitment Notts' to build on.

In Nottingham city, the success of the project in working with and adding value to commissioned community services led us to consider the benefit of a similar project in the county of Nottinghamshire – where Double Impact also delivers services under the umbrella of 'The Recovery Academy'. The Academy works with service users who are stable in their recovery to train them as mentors and volunteers to work across the drug treatment system, supporting paid staff and helping others who are not as far along the recovery journey. This cohort of service users are at an ideal place to move forward into paid or alternative voluntary employment, which Recovery Recruitment has proved very effective at helping them to achieve.

Thanks to Double Impact's recent success in securing a capital grant from Public Health England, for the purchase of a building to house The Academy, there is now an opportunity to develop Recovery Recruitment into a very effective project for recovering people in Nottinghamshire. The Academy's objectives are to deliver learning, volunteering, mentoring and service user involvement opportunities across the substance misuse treatment system for people who are in recovery and unemployed. The new centre will represent the heart of the recovery community and provide a visible community base for learning, training, volunteering and social enterprise to take place, with a clear focus on getting people into work. The centre will engender connectivity by providing excellent facilities for people in recovery, including a state-of-the-art IT suite, dedicated learning spaces and an 'Open Access' area enabling positive social networks to flourish. It will act as a community hub and centre of excellence for recovery-oriented activity and learning

- the design of the model will ensure that current providers and community assets are engaged and utilised to the benefit of all parties.

Recovery Recruitment (Notts) will be physically located within the new building and form an integral part of The Academy's activities. It will benefit hugely from the new facilities and the other activities and staff located there. The project will be ideally situated to serve beneficiaries from across the county of Nottinghamshire and to develop relationships with local employers and education providers.

Throughout the current project in Nottingham city we have also seen how Recovery Recruitment has helped beneficiaries to engage with training and education which will increase their employment prospects, and, vice versa, also how the experience of

employment has given candidates the confidence to apply for higher level educational opportunities.

It has also demonstrated that many of our beneficiaries find that they need help accessing information about learning and job opportunities, and benefit from coaching throughout the process. The present day reliance on online technology to find and apply for both jobs and educational courses puts some of our beneficiaries at a disadvantage and they can find it overwhelming. Having the benefit of the right support at this time empowers them to do this for themselves the next time and creates a more level playing field with candidates with more experience.

For these reasons we have developed the project concept so that it combines specialised employment and education support, as we believe that this will give our beneficiaries the best chances of moving close to and into the world of paid employment. Our knowledge of the geographical area of Nottinghamshire leads us to feel that these roles will be important in helping beneficiaries living across a wide rural area to link with local learning and employment opportunities.

5 SUSTAINABILITY

We plan to secure longer-term funding for this activity in both Nottingham city and Nottinghamshire county in the following ways:

- Public sector contracts – working closely with Local Authority commissioners to explore incorporating the model into future commissioning arrangements
- Exploring ways to work as ‘funding partners’ with Local Authority commissioners
- Developing competitively priced training packages for employers
- Exploring fit with other funding options e.g. Building Better Opportunities and European Structural Investment Funding
- Using Double Impact’s Business development function to attract other grant funding
- Developing high quality, low cost drug and alcohol training to create an income stream

6 CASE STUDIES

MATT

Matt first came to Double Impact in late 2012. Unsure of what he wanted to do, he took full advantage of the variety of courses on offer as well as getting involved with fundraising events such as the Recovery Ball and Charity Golf Day. Matt developed an interest in photography and Double Impact helped set up a placement at local media company, Crocodile House, which ignited a passion for photography in him. Whilst there, Matt was encouraged to apply for a diploma in Photography and Design; after completing this course he has progressed onto a degree course in Photography.

Matt has helped put together a promotional video for Double Impact and is currently coordinating a second one. He started working with Recovery Recruitment, which is how his work experience placement at the Press Association, (the national news agency for the UK and Ireland and a leading multimedia content provider across web, mobile, broadcast and print), came about. Matt describes this placement as ‘brilliant’, and the experience he is gaining, ‘priceless’; he feels he has learned as much there in a few weeks as in a year at college. During this placement he has photographed several events, including Armed Forces Day, and has also

had the opportunity to edit some of his previous photography work with the help of the staff there. Matt has really been made to feel part of the team and those he works with speak highly of him. This experience at the Press Association has not only helped Matt in employment terms but also on a personal level.

In turn, Matt feels the positive benefits are felt by all of those who form a part of his life – in his family, his employment and his community.

DAWN

When Dawn's father passed away 10 years ago, her problems with alcohol escalated in a bid to cope with the pain of losing her dad. For two years Dawn was extremely ill; in and out of hospital, given just months to live and eventually social services became involved with her children. Dawn sought help from a local organisation to deal with her alcohol issues and after a detox started to rebuild her life over the next 18 months.

When Dawn first accessed Recovery Recruitment she had been working for over 2 years and had lots of employment skills but was struggling with her work life. She had been working for various different recruitment agencies; the work was erratic at best, with periods of unemployment for several weeks at a time. Dawn was leaving the house at 4.30 am and getting 3 buses to be at work in a factory for 7.00 am, such was her determination to be earning a wage; unsurprisingly, she was desperate to find part time, regular work that would fit around her family life.

Recovery Recruitment helped Dawn to apply for a job with local employer Primark, coaching her through the assessment and application processes and advocating directly with HR on her behalf. Dawn was invited for interview where her abilities shone through and she was offered a job. She was given regular hours and was delighted to be able to start planning for the future. Unfortunately, during the course of her probationary period Dawn suffered a serious health problem and had to be off work for several weeks. Recovery Recruitment liaised with

Primark to keep them updated on her progress and they were very supportive. Not long after she returned to work, they offered Dawn a permanent contract and she is overjoyed.

Dawn has been with Primark over 6 months now and they speak highly of their valued employee. Two months ago Dawn got married with both her children proudly by her side as bridesmaids.

DAVID

David was initially referred to Recovery Recruitment in April 2014. At this time he was still alcohol dependent, drinking heavily and waiting to go to in-patient detox. The day after being discharged, David came in to see us – he was brimming with positivity and plans for keeping his recovery as the main focus of his life.

During our next meeting, we discussed volunteering opportunities and courses he felt motivated to do. He was keen to get back to work but wanted to improve his confidence and skills by volunteering and gaining qualifications first.

Now David's week is filled with a variety of volunteering positions, including one as allotted volunteer gardener at St Ann's Allotment.

A staff member there says she is "very impressed by David – he has a great attitude, got really stuck in, and is a tremendous help, very positive".

He is also now a regular volunteer for Framework HA's Eve Trades Social Enterprise, particularly involved in the Bike Repair Shop and has recently made an application to volunteer at Portland College. David recently started a part-time paid role at a local care home as a maintenance and gardening man, which he is really happy about.

Over the last year David has made incredible progress in completely changing his life – he says that he is thoroughly enjoying all of his volunteering and also says that it "feels great" to be socialising with other volunteers, even just going for a coffee which he said is something he

would never have done before. He now even makes use of the diary that Recovery Recruitment provided him with, to remind him of all he has going on in his life, which before he laughed at and said he would never use!

6 CONCLUSION

To sum up, although our original vision of creating a self-sustaining social enterprise along a recruitment agency model was not achievable, the positive impact of the activity on our beneficiaries is clear.

To date, 28% of our beneficiaries engaging with the project gained paid employment as a direct result of the support provided.

We are confident that this project model can be successfully transferred to Nottinghamshire county, and will deliver a similar impact on our beneficiaries in this geographical area.

We are confident that the location of the proposed project within our Nottinghamshire Academy will both enhance its own delivery and outcomes and also increase the overall impact of The Academy.

Eleanor Youdell 2nd June 2015