

Health and Community Care

Evaluation of the Scottish Recovery Network

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The Scottish Recovery Network (SRN) was established in 2004 as an initiative under the former National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing. The main purpose of the SRN is to promote the concept of recovery at a national and local level, and to support mental health services in Scotland in adopting recovery-oriented practices.

Different aspects of the work of the SRN have been evaluated over the past few years, but the Network itself has never been evaluated. Therefore, the Scottish Government commissioned an evaluation of the SRN in Autumn 2009. The aims were to assess the effectiveness and impact of the SRN (at a national policy level; at a local level; and at the level of service users), and the extent to which the SRN is providing value for money.

Main Findings

- Participants in this evaluation believed that the SRN had made an enormous contribution to raising awareness of recovery in Scotland. However, there was also evidence that further work was still needed to reach people who are not yet engaged with the Network.
- The Narrative Research project was cited as one of the SRN's biggest successes. Its findings have provided the basis for a range of awareness-raising and training materials.
- The SRN has invested considerable effort in supporting the use of the Scottish Recovery Indicator (SRI) in mental health services in Scotland. The SRI has good potential to influence service culture and service change towards more of a recovery approach.
- The SRN has had a significant influence on national mental health policy. The Network is also the main implementation body for national policy on recovery, and it is clear that the working relationship between the SRN and the Scottish Government has been successful.
- In terms of its value for money, stakeholders felt that the SRN does a good job, meeting its objectives in a high-quality way, and achieving this with little resources when compared to other national mental health initiatives.

Introduction

The SRN was established in 2004 as an initiative under the former National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing. It has three aims:

- To raise awareness of recovery from mental health problems, and in particular, long-term mental health problems
- To develop an understanding of recovery within a Scottish context, and to share that learning with others
- To share ideas and encourage and support action nationally and locally for the promotion of recovery.

These aims have been translated into four main objectives: (i) to raise awareness; (ii) to promote understanding; (iii) to build capacity in communities; and (iv) to support practice development.

The Network is funded entirely by the Scottish Government and funding has increased from £200k per year in 2004-05 to the current £475k per year in 2010-11.

Evaluation aims

In 2009, the Scottish Government commissioned an evaluation of the SRN. The aims of the evaluation were to assess:

- The effectiveness and impact of the SRN (at a national policy level; at a local level; and at the level of service users, and
- The extent to which the SRN is providing value for money.

Methods

The evaluation involved the collection of data from a range of sources. Interviews and / or focus groups were carried out with key stakeholders including SRN staff. In addition, a review was undertaken of the SRN-related evaluation literature and an analysis carried out of the SRN's data on resource distribution, events attendance and website visits. Finally, four local case studies (involving both service users and service providers) were undertaken.

Objective 1: Raise awareness

A significant focus for the SRN has been on raising awareness of recovery and making connections — with

service users and mental health professionals. Awareness-raising activities included: organising conferences, workshops and other events; attending / speaking at non-SRN events; producing and distributing publications and other resources; and developing and maintaining a website and mailing lists. To a lesser extent, the Network has also attempted to raise awareness of recovery among the general public.

Participants in this evaluation believed that the SRN had made an enormous contribution to raising awareness of recovery in Scotland. However, there was also evidence to suggest that further work is still needed to reach people who are not yet engaged with the Network.

Objective 2: Develop a Scottish evidence base

A major focus for the SRN has been on creating an evidence base to promote and support recovery-oriented practice in Scotland. It did this partly by looking to and learning from what others had done internationally, but also by developing Scotland's own evidence base — through its Narrative Research project.

The Narrative Research Project (begun in 2005) involved gathering qualitative evidence (i.e., stories of people's personal experiences) from 64 people with mental health problems across Scotland, who had experience of recovery. The aim was to find out about the factors that helped and hindered recovery from a Scottish perspective.

The Narrative Research was widely cited by evaluation participants as one of SRN's biggest successes. The SRN has used its findings for pamphlets, podcasts, awareness-raising materials and training materials.

Objective 3: Build capacity

The SRN has sought to build capacity in communities through: (i) supporting Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP); (ii) developing and supporting peer worker schemes and (iii) supporting the development of local recovery networks.

WRAP

WRAP provides a structured method for helping people with mental health problems to maintain wellness and make advance plans for the eventuality of a crisis. The process of developing a personal WRAP begins by attending WRAP training. The SRN has funded the delivery of training for WRAP facilitators (a five-day training course), so as to create

a group of individuals in Scotland who are able to deliver WRAP training to others. In addition, the SRN is developing a quality assurance scheme for WRAP facilitators, and currently provides facilitators with on-going support through “facilitator network” days.

At the time of this evaluation, WRAP was being delivered widely to service users around Scotland, although there were also reports of not enough local facilitators to meet demand. A separate evaluation found that WRAP was effective in increasing hope, expectations and self-direction for recovery.

Peer support worker schemes

The SRN has promoted the development of peer support worker schemes in mental health services in Scotland. At the same time, national policy commitments provided an impetus for a peer worker pilot scheme to be implemented in five NHS boards in 2007-08. The SRN was not substantially involved in the implementation of the pilots, but provided support to the pilot sites by convening meetings for the groups involved in implementation and training.

The SRN has been involved in taking forward many of the recommendations of the evaluation of the peer support pilots; for example, by working together with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) to create a new nationally recognised award for peer support worker training, and by developing guidance for employer organisations.

Local recovery networks

The SRN views local recovery networks (LRNs) as a way of promoting the sustainability of recovery at a local level. Local networks provide a neutral place for people with mental health problems, carers and families, and service providers to meet to discuss the concept of recovery and how to make it real in their communities.

The SRN’s initial approach to supporting LRNs was largely responsive — i.e., providing advice, information and guidance as requested, and occasionally collaborating or part-funding specific projects. However, in April 2010, a Network Officer was appointed, at least in part, to add capacity for the development of LRNs.

This evaluation found that LRNs were felt to have achieved changes in attitudes, values and practice, and in those areas, service users reported that they felt more empowered. Factors that supported the success of LRNs included: funding; having a mix of professionals and service users on steering groups; support from strategic managers in the NHS or local council; having an organisation that was prepared to host the network; good communication systems; a focus on meeting local needs; and help from the SRN.

Objective 4: Support practice development

The SRN has supported practice change through the development and roll-out of the Scottish Recovery Indicator (SRI) and training materials for mental health professionals.

Scottish Recovery Indicator

The SRI is a mental health service development tool. It involves the assessment of 19 indicators which are focused around factors known to promote recovery. The SRN has invested considerable effort in supporting the use of the SRI in mental health services in Scotland, to enable services to reflect upon, and where necessary, to make changes to their practice. An evaluation of a pilot implementation of the SRI found that it had good potential for influencing service culture and service change towards more of a recovery approach.

Developing learning materials for professionals

The SRN has worked together with NHS Education for Scotland to create a national framework for training mental health workers (particularly nurses) in recovery-based practice. This has led to the development of the *Realising Recovery* learning materials, which builds on an existing training programme called the *10 Essential Shared Capabilities (10 ESCs)*. An evaluation of the impact of the *10 ESCs* and *Realising Recovery* found that the training raised awareness of a range of issues relating to values in mental health practice, and that it helped practitioners to recognise where there was a need to develop / change aspects of their practice.

Influence on policy & practice

This evaluation found that the SRN has had a significant influence on national mental health policy. They have done this through their success in engaging with a wide range of stakeholders; through the creation of a robust evidence base for recovery in Scotland; and through the perceived value of the tools and training materials they have developed. The SRN is the main implementation body for national policy on recovery, and it is clear that the working relationship between the SRN and the Scottish Government has been successful.

The SRN has also had an influence on practice. The greatest influence was reported to be in the area of NHS mental health nursing and community mental health services in general. However, there were also some groups on whom the SRN has had less influence, namely GPs, psychiatrists and psychologists, although there is evidence that the SRN has had a measure of success in engaging with psychiatrists around the issue of recovery.

Value for money

This evaluation found that stakeholders think that the SRN does a good job, meeting its objectives in a high-quality way, and achieving this with little resources when compared to other national mental health initiatives. The SRN also has transparent governance and management arrangements, and there is evidence of the SRN making sensible decisions about the use of its resources. It is suggested, however, that the SRN and Scottish Government should agree indicators for assessing whether the Network is meeting intended outcomes.

The future for recovery and the future for the SRN

Evaluation participants at every level felt that much progress had been made in the area of recovery in Scotland. However, there was also a feeling that recovery was not yet fully embedded into practice and there was more to be done. There was also a strong view that there was an important role for SRN beyond 2011 (when the Network's current funding ends). At the same time, participants felt that the SRN should not be the *only* player. They saw an important role for government (in continuing to prioritise and support policy in this area) and for those responsible for the planning and delivery of services at a local level to ensure that recovery-related practices were embedded in services.

Recommendations (selected)

- The work of the SRN should continue beyond 2011.
- The Scottish Government and lead professional bodies should continue to promote and support recovery in Scotland. The Scottish Government should continue to give priority to recovery through commitments in key policy documents in mental health and other areas.
- The Scottish Government and the SRN should agree appropriate indicators to measure the SRN's outcomes and how data on these indicators will be collected.
- The SRN should continue to expand the Network, engaging with service users and professionals who have an interest in recovery. However, we suggest that:

New efforts be made to target awareness-raising activities to primary care professionals

New efforts be made to identify and establish direct contact with service user and carer groups to ensure that the message of recovery is being heard by as many as possible

Continued efforts be made to engage with psychiatrists and psychologists.

- The SRN should continue to support services to develop recovery-oriented practices; in particular, they should continue to support the use of the SRI.

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131-244 7560.



Social Science in Government

ISBN: 978-0-7559-9875-3

