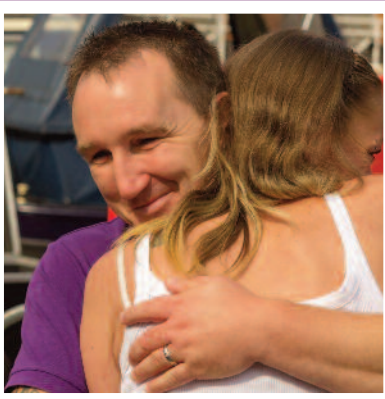




# RECOVERY WALK COMPENDIUM 2017

Sharing the memories of the previous  
UK Recovery Walks



Visible  
Vocal  
Valuable

[www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)





This year sees the ninth UK Recovery Walk which will be held in Blackpool on 9th September 2017. The walk has grown in numbers each year with around 7,000 people in recovery, their friends and families walking in Halton in 2016, making it the largest annual gathering of people in recovery in Europe.

The walk is not only a celebration for those in recovery from addiction and their families and friends, but it also offers hope to those still struggling with addiction. This compendium aims to capture some of the memories of the last eight UK Recovery Walks in words and pictures and inspire others to join us in Blackpool this year and on the UK recovery walk in future years.



# Introduction

Firstly, we want to thank our board members, our sponsors and literally thousands of amazing volunteers, without who's good will, hard cash and sheer determination, the walks would never have happened. It is their enthusiasm, purpose and dedication that enables the charity to continue to deliver its mission in an increasingly challenging environment.

The walks have been organised by local community groups and in partnership with treatment agencies, people in recovery and their families and friends, for the last nine years, to show that permanent recovery from alcohol and other drug problems is not only possible but a reality in the lives of hundreds of thousands of individuals and families. Our primary purpose is to engage those who are still living with addiction and create a world in which recovery is supported and celebrated. We walk each year to remind ourselves of this and to send a message to those still wounded, that we can and do recover. One of the key messages of each walk and the charity itself is that there are many pathways to long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug problems and that all are a cause for celebration. Those advocates who have forged the grassroots Recovery Movement across the UK represent a broad spectrum of religious, spiritual and secular pathways to recovery, with a variety of recovery practices within these different pathways. We come together at each walk, united, together to celebrate them all.

We need to go beyond telling our own stories and begin telling the stories of others who, after experiencing healing themselves, are working to bring healing to others. We need to affirm that recovery is far more than the removal of alcohol and drugs problems. For many of us the recovery experience creates a positive and profound change in our character and our personal relationships. We develop an attitude of gratitude and become involved in sustained acts of public service – living in the spirit of being of service to our friends, families and the communities in which we live.

Each year FAVOR UK members, guided by the bidding process, choose one UK city or town to host the National Recovery Walk/Event. This takes place each September and raises awareness of substance use disorders and recovery from addiction. The focus of the UK Recovery Walk is a public education and outreach campaign that communicates by offering living proof of the reality of long-term addiction recovery. We also highlight the many pathways and styles of such recovery to the public, policymakers, the media and communities. At the events, people in recovery, their families and friends are encouraged to share their stories as a demonstration that long-term recovery is a reality in their lives.

Our 2017 UK Recovery Walk will take place on the 9th of September in Blackpool where we hope to see over 8,000 people turned out for recovery. We hope you and your families will join us to take part in the coming years as we walk proudly together confirming and upholding that recovery from addiction is not only possible but a reality.

Faces & Voices of Recovery UK is the only organisation in the UK with an explicit mission to respond to the organisational and leadership development needs of grass roots addiction recovery community organisations, and to develop and unify addiction recovery advocacy in the UK. Why not visit our website at [www.ukrecoverywalk.org](http://www.ukrecoverywalk.org) and even join the charity (it's free!)

**Anne Marie Ward**

CEO - Faces and Voices of Recovery UK



## CONTACT US

W: [www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

E: [info@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](mailto:info@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

T: 0141 946 2710

M: 07727 255 808

# Tony Mercer - Public Health England



Public Health England has supported the UK Recovery Walk since the walk was held in Birmingham in 2013. No other recovery event in the UK attracts so many people and makes recovery visible in the same way. It brings together recovery communities not only from different geographical areas but also people on different recovery pathways celebrating together.

Friendships are made and maintained at the walks, building positive social networks around individuals in recovery and their families, which the evidence tells us are essential for maintaining long term recovery. This compendium is a great way of capturing some of our treasured memories of previous walks and I look forward to seeing many of you in Blackpool on 9th September.

Tony Mercer  
Public Health Specialist  
Public Health England West Midlands Centre

## International Recovery Month

Now in its 29th year, International Recovery Month raises awareness of substance use disorders and promotes the societal benefits of prevention, treatment and recovery support services.

Throughout September thousands of people across the UK have organised local events celebrating the fact that recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs is a lived reality in their lives.

## Recovery Events Growing

Recovery Month celebration events have grown beyond what anyone could have predicted here in the UK with over 100 events taking place across the country in 2017. Local recovery celebration events that once welcomed a few dozen brave participants grew into the hundreds and now into the thousands. Each one is stepping forward to challenge the degrading public stereotypes attached to addiction – and together stepping forward to put a public face on addiction recovery.

## So how much work goes into planning the UK Recovery Walk?

The highlight of Recovery Month in the UK is, of course, the annual UK Recovery Walk. This year in Blackpool, several thousand people in long term recovery, their friends, allies and families, will make visible the viable and varied recovery solutions for alcohol and other drug problems – the UK Recovery Walk is the largest gathering of people in recovery in Europe so you can imagine it takes quite a bit of planning!

We use a two tier process that involves everyone interested from people a few days in to their recovery to people who are long term recovery, strategic partnership and commissioners and managers of local services. We involve everyone because everyone's help, ideas, experience and skills are needed. Of course there are the practicalities like road closures, planning departments health and safety and a thousand other departments and individuals who need to be informed to make sure everything goes smoothly.

There also a mountain of fund raising activities that take place each year - things like cake and jam making, football tournaments, bucket shaking at local events and of course going back to our sponsors each year without who's support it just couldn't happen.

A special mention to our main sponsor CGL who have consistently supported us since the beginning and who, without reservation, continue to do so. For the charity and the planning group each year who start fundraising from scratch, having the knowledge that their sponsorship is available gives us a somewhat secure cushion to start to build on.

Usually the first bits of cash for sponsorship don't start to come in till April or May time which considering we have been planning since the September before can be a cause for concern but each year it also teaches us and reminds us to have faith but it also pushes up to inspire folks to get involved who can help us. Most people who get involved are helping us purely from a place of good will and each year the planning process itself is a lesson in how good humanity is. A genuine and authentic example of true co production, it really does bring the best out in most people.

The planning process brings together from across the treatment and recovery spectrum. Everyone is treated the same and are expected to be contributing positively which can be a bit of a culture shock for some. The relationships that are built throughout the planning process can often go on to leave a hugely positive legacy in each area where the walks are held. Sometimes going on to build projects and charities of their own, often friendships and always closer working relationships and much better between all the key stakeholders. I personally feel very blessed to be in the position to facilitate this process and often huge personal and professional growth for the people who so willingly take part. We really couldn't exist without the good will, sponsorship and boundless enthusiasm to make the walk happen each year and will be forever be grateful to everyone who has made it happen every year since 2009.

# THE FIRST UK RECOVERY WALK LIVERPOOL 2009

## *Simon's Story*

I'd joined the UKRF sometime before the walk took place, and remember attending a UKRF (now FAVOR UK) meeting in Liverpool to discuss the walk, and the UKRF Strategic plan. Jacqui J-L was a friend of some good friends of mine, and got me involved in the walk itself. I was asked to speak on the steps of the Town Hall, mainly I imagine due to my long membership of a fellowship. The walk was most memorable for me because of the people who emerged from the many pubs and clubs along the route, who applauded us as we walked. It had never occurred to me that they would do that, and it was a real surprise.

Speaking in public is always daunting, but energising at the same time, and I felt I got to say the things I'd planned to. It really seemed that we were doing something important - for the first time in the UK at least. The idea of making Recovery visible to those not in recovery was so exciting, and to be a part of it - especially as it was organised from outside the 12 Step community, alongside it, is probably a better description of how it was done.

The walk, and the whole day really cemented the idea in my mind that Visible Recovery has an important place in our communities. It reinforced the simple idea that most people had seen addiction, its' causes and its' aftermath, but not many had ever 'seen' Recovery - especially like this. I have become much more visible and overt in my Recovery since this event, and have only missed one subsequent walk. I'm also now a Trustee of FAVOR UK.

## *Jen's Story*

I'm Jen and I'm an alcoholic. I had just finished my first detox when I went to the recovery walk in Liverpool. I struggled to stay sober for the next few years but that day had planted a seed and I thought back to it often.

Several years and two more detoxes later I finally got sober and moved to Leeds and then went to the recovery walk in Durham. I was amazed how big it had got since the first one in Liverpool and the day was even more amazing.

I will definitely be in Blackpool this year to share my experience, strength and hope with other alcoholics who are still struggling.



# THE SECOND UK RECOVERY WALK GLASGOW 2010

## Paul's Story

My name is Paul and I am a person in long term recovery. I haven't used alcohol or other drugs since September 27th 2010.

I wasn't actually at the walk in Glasgow that year I was still in active addiction but it is because it took place that I'm now free from all mind and mood altering substances.

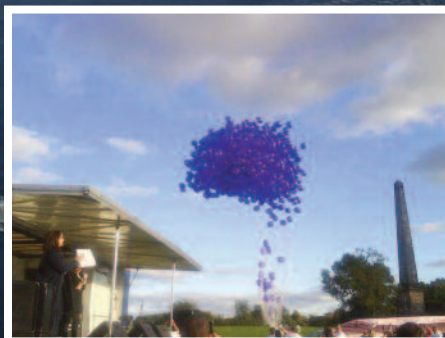
My mum and dad had been out walking in Glasgow green that day and came across James - a boy I used to go to school with. James and I had been great childhood friends, regularly hanging out in each other's homes that was until he moved to Aberdeen when we were around 15 years old. After a few minutes chatting James had let my mum and Dad know that he was now in recovery from severe alcohol and other drug use. My mum tells me that because James was so candid about his own history, she chose to share her despair about me and my situation to people - I later found out they were manning the Narcotic Anonymous public information stall.

My mum invited James and Gary, one of the other guys from the stall, to lunch on the Sunday in the hope that I would show up (probably looking for money) which I did. The rest as they say is history. I went to my first mutual aid meeting that night and I can honestly say I haven't used and mind altering chemicals since.

Finding people who can live a happy life without using drugs was a revelation to me and I haven't looked back since that day. In 2016 at the age of 44 I graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in English History. I now run a community project for young people in one of the most deprived areas of Glasgow that teaches kids to express themselves positively through music, poetry writing and other creative arts. I have a relationship with my 14-year-old daughter that wouldn't have been possible and I am no longer worrying my mum and dad into an early grave. They know where I am and they know I am free from addiction.

As long as I keep doing what I am doing I will continue to get well and nurture those relationships. Occasionally I think about what I missed that day at Glasgow green and have since been to the walk in Manchester and may get to Blackpool this year. Who knows one day the UK Recovery Walk will come back to my home town and I can testify with some of the kids I work with about its power.

I want to thank everyone involved and tell them to keep on keeping on.



# THE THIRD UK RECOVERY WALK CARDIFF 2011

## Wynford's Story

The third UK Recovery Walk was held in Cardiff on 10th September 2011 and I had the privilege of chairing the organising committee. Initially I had great difficulty in getting people to support the event, particularly statutory services. However, once I got Cardiff County Council's Events Team on board things gathered pace: Welsh Government gave us some money and some really enthusiastic members joined the committee and things augured well for a really successful walk.

Our motto was 'Its a good day to be in recovery' ('Mae'n ddiwrnod da i fod yn adfer') and this was emblazoned on the 2,000 t-shirts we had purchased and distributed free of charge to everyone.

The walk itself started outside City Hall in the civic centre and was led by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff and other dignitaries; some like Professor Keith Humphreys and John Shinholser, travelled from the U.S. to be with us. The Walk followed a route through the centre of Cardiff and there was immense goodwill shown by car drivers who were stopped by the police who, along with staff from the Event's Team, acted as marshalls. Over 1,500 people marched triumphantly through the city centre and the event was memorable mainly because of the fun we all had and the enthusiastic reaction of shoppers and supporters who lined the route. The percussion band that led the marchers made sure everyone's attention was drawn to this unique event in Cardiff's history.

The walk ended back outside City Hall and a stage and marquee had been erected so that the proud recoverees could tell their life stories and share their joy at attending this outstanding event. The press got involved and there was excellent copy and photographs in the local papers.

I felt proud at having led the organising team and at the magnificent sight, as I looked back at the procession from the head of the walk, of all the wonderful people putting such an attractive face to recovery and showing everyone that recovery is achievable and it's there for everyone who wants it. The Walk coincided with Living Room Cardiff opening its doors for the first time, enabling us to have representatives and friends from around the world there to bless us and wish us well. It was a very special time for all of us and will remain so for me for as long as I live. I'll be celebrating a quarter of a century clean and sober this July 20th through God's grace, and the Cardiff Walk most certainly is one of the big highlights of those blessed years. God bless you my friend; thank you for all that you do to spread the message of Hope to others; and bless all who 'trudge this road to happy destiny' and those who have yet to start on this the most exhilarating journey of all.

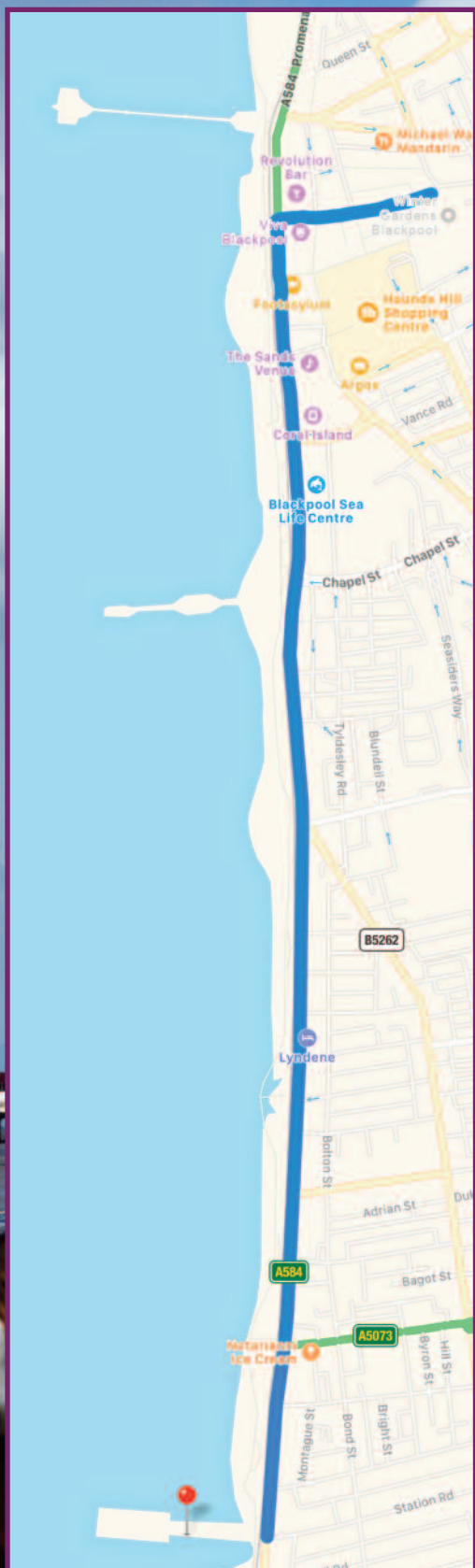
## Jennifer's Story

I became a volunteer at Recovery Cymru in Cardiff in the summer of 2011. I was not in Recovery myself but my experiences of substance misuse with close friends was a picture of misery, hopelessness and pain. The walk was my first experience of a Recovery community. It was colourful, joyful and full of hope. It celebrated that Recovery was possible and I loved to hear the stories of individuals who had turned their lives around. It gave me hope and has kept me involved as a trustee with Recovery Cymru to this day.



# THE NINTH UK RECOVERY WALK BLACKPOOL 2017

Join thousands of people in recovery, their families and friends for the biggest gathering of recovering people in Europe as we walk along Blackpool promenade from South Pier to St John's Square past the famous Blackpool Tower.



## TIMETABLE

**Friday, 08 September 2017 - 10.00am**

**Faces and Voices of Recovery UK Annual Conference**

Salvation Army, Citadel, Raikes Parade, Blackpool, FY1 4EL

For tickets visit [www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

**Friday, 08 September 2017 - 6.00pm**

**UK Recovery Walk Sleepover 2017**

North Shore Methodist Church Dickson Road Blackpool, FY1 2AP

For tickets visit [www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

**Saturday, 09 September 2017 - 11.00am**

**Ninth UK Recovery Walk 2017**

**11.00am** Assemble at Blackpool South Pier

**12.00pm** Walk Commences (see route to left)

**1.00pm** Entertainment and celebration at St John's Square and Horseshoe Bar at Winter Gardens

To register to take part in the Ninth UK Recovery walk please visit [www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)





## **CELEBRATE RECOVERY MONTH**

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Each September in the UK, thousands of people in recovery as well as projects and services celebrate their successes, and recovery itself, by organising and taking part in events throughout the country. See the website for our official UK Recovery Month Events Calendar for more.

## **GET INVOLVED, CELEBRATE & WEAR SOME PURPLE**

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Anyone can get involved. You can join the walk, attend the many events around the country, speak to us, your local recovery organisation or just wear something purple to show your affinity!

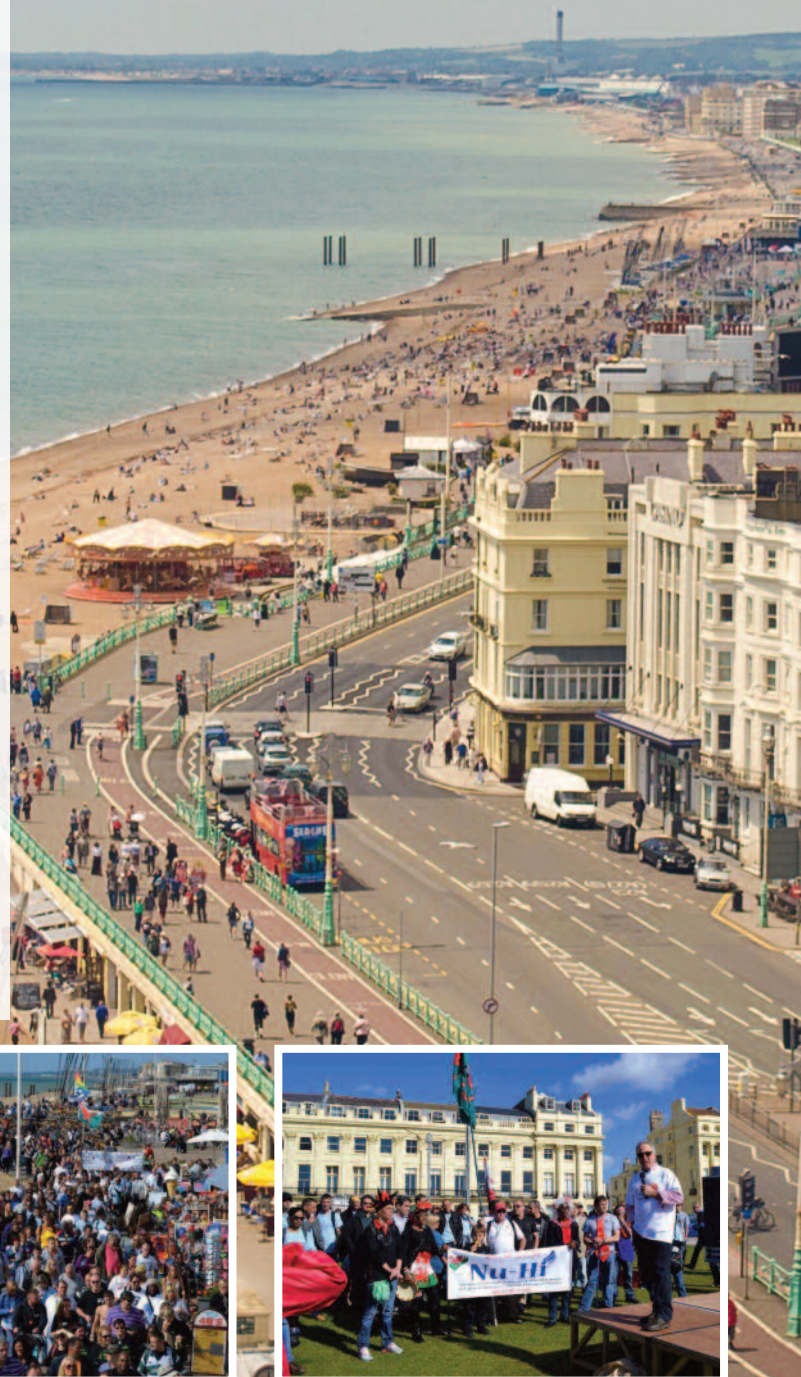
# THE FOURTH UK RECOVERY WALK BRIGHTON 2012

## Pete's Story

It all started after a day of Smart training in 2011 when 2 people who worked for local DAATs invited a few of us to a short meeting about something called the UK Recovery Walk. None of the half dozen of us had heard of the event. Myself and James Wood (volunteer in local services) went off to fact find at the 2011 Recovery Walk in Cardiff and returned inspired and uplifted, that people were prepared to walk together and proclaim the benefits of recovery from alcoholism & addiction. It became apparent that amongst our peer group that we had the skills to organise the 2012 walk, asset based community development. Finance, logistics, planning, entertainment etc...we had those assets amongst a group of people who were or had recently accessed treatment services.

With the support of the local authority and CGL (CRI) and after some emotional blackmail as there was initial suspicion from both the council and police as to addicts and alcoholics descending on a city that is infamous for decadence, the 29th of September 2012 saw 2,500-3,000 recovering people from around the country walk through a city that for a number of years had topped the drug related league table. The police Inspector on the day said it was the most peaceful day he had been involved in..... And as the sun heated the afternoon to a comfortable 22 degrees centigrade, people danced to bands including Chris Difford from Squeeze and The Should Be Deads in a local park. The sense of achievement (and relief) while we packed up the P.A. system, picked up litter etc. under a huge harvest moon, was immense and life changing.

All those involved are still in recovery and have gone on to employment and education. I myself have set up a charity called Cascade Creative Recovery, providing a coffee shop to socialise in and offer peer to peer support, we run a choir, drama collective, creative writing and mutual aid groups. In the heart of our community. Using the arts for self-expression, cohesion and connection. It gave me some belief in myself and more importantly it showed me that individually and collectively, in recovery, our dreams and ambitions can be realised.



# THE FIFTH UK RECOVERY WALK BIRMINGHAM 2013

## *Amanda's Story*

September 2013 service users, families and friends came together at Birmingham Victoria Park and walked as one to Calthorpe Park. It was one big celebration of recovery.

I walked with my twelve year old son at the time. Our relationship had been affected due to my alcoholism resulting in me being absent from his care for long periods at a time. On this day the pure unity and love for recovery brought us together.

The freedom of recovery was nothing but overwhelming. My son carries this memory and the message to this day, often describing it as "better than going to any football match any day". At the time I was a resident at Summerhill House who supported the walk. I like to say a big Thank You to all that were involved.

## *Sunny's Story*

The Recovery Walk is a movement (in more than one sense) that demonstrates the solidarity of those in recovery from addiction. In addition to the personal feeling of togetherness, it demonstrates to the wider society that those with experiences of addiction can move forwards with their lives. It brings about people from all walks of life to celebrate past achievements and future aspirations.

Visible recovery has the ability to tackle stigma and discrimination to those that can experience the harshest treatment from society.

It is not just about the day of the walk itself that ignites passion, but the whole experience of preparing for the day, the journey to the event, the return journey and the lasting memory that is taken'



# THE SIXTH UK RECOVERY WALK MANCHESTER 2014

## *Stefan's Story*

The Manchester recovery walk changed my life as I was new to the whole recovery thing and was really struggling to keep it together. I was going to score on the bus on the way up there but thought I'd better not as it was a nice trip and really wanted to go.

I really didn't know what to expect. Then we turned the corner and saw loads of people - they said around 3,000.

I was blown away by how happy everyone was and not one drug in sight. I had an amazing time singing and everyone saying how stopping has changed their life.

There were tears and laughter and it really blew me away and made new friends which have helped me find my way in recovery.

## *Peter's Story*

I came out of prison in July 2014 and had started going to an NA meeting inside and carried on after release and some of the lads told me about a recovery walk that was happening in September.

My first few months in recovery were a bit shaky after my detox in prison so I was going to everything that was going on and agreed to go with them. The whole day blew me away and I never expected so many people to be there. I even met a few lads from Salford and Stockport that I used to use with - all of who were now clean!

I remember walking through the city centre and all the music on the stage afterwards. I couldn't believe that there were so many people in recovery and made some new friends that day that I am still in touch with on Facebook.

It definitely helped me in my recovery and I am now a volunteer peer mentor in a drugs and alcohol service and help to organise a minibus to the recovery walk every year so that other people who are struggling can have the same experience I had that day.



# THE SEVENTH UK RECOVERY WALK DURHAM 2015

## *John W's Story*

My first UK Recovery Walk was in Durham. A friend who was attending this event suggested that it would be an idea if I was to come along as well. Prior to this occasion I had never heard of the Walk. I was fortunate enough to attend the conference on the Friday before the Walk and also have the opportunity to explore the centre of Durham.

On the morning of the walk we proceeded to the assembly point where the weather stepped in, or should I say the rain. Luckily this was short lived and as the start time approached it stopped. There were many groups of people from all over the country congregating on the playing field with a few stands on the perimeter. These groups comprised mainly of people from various rehabs and recovery organisations. I made it a point to mix and mingle finding all those present welcoming and in good spirits.

As the walk started, and we proceeded out on to the streets of Durham, I really started to enjoy myself and with the increase in noise I was very grateful to the organisation that had given me a whistle. This was my first experience of making a lot of noise in public and not getting arrested!

During the procession I took a number of photographs, chatted to lots of walkers and blew my whistle. As the walk came to an end we returned for the entertainment and the speeches.

## *John E's Story*

I first heard about the Recovery Walks through the great work being done in county Durham in 2014 and sadly missed the Manchester Walk. My first walk therefore was the Durham Walk. I attended some of the planning meetings and was impressed, firstly by what a colossal task it is to arrange a walk, and secondly by the ordinary folk who were doing that very thing.

Despite the rain, the sense of camaraderie and fellowship was tangible with so many hugs and handshakes going on that anyone watching would be baffled by the love and support we have for each other. The walk was enjoyable with many persons asking questions and chatting. The public and officials attending, including the police, enjoyed the fun and peaceful atmosphere.

Events like this are a tremendous help to my own and others recovery. To know that we are not alone and that people understand, to feel part of something that is much bigger than us, to make new friends and exchange contact details and to know that we are making a difference is so so vitally important in my recovery journey.



# THE EIGHTH UK RECOVERY WALK HALTON 2016

## *Ann's Story*

Somebody at a SMART meeting mentioned the Durham walk in 2015 and Durham was a city I had always wanted to visit.

It helped that they had a coach going so I knew I didn't have to worry about transport. I had relapsed at the time and saw that as a good target to reach (I set the target in April and the walk was September).

I wasn't involved with planning for Durham but really enjoyed the walk although the weather was poor. It was the first time I realised that there were so many other people in the same situation as me. It also made me realise that it was ok to be abstinent. There were so many people from all walks of life having a great time, all smiling and celebrating. That was what fuelled me to attend the Halton meetings and get involved in the 2016 walk.

The day of the Halton walk was glorious, despite the usual last minute stuff like the coaches not arriving where we had been sent to meet them. I was disappointed that more health services wouldn't let us advertise at Health Centres and GP practices (I did try).

Particular highlights were the drummers that led us on the walk – that lifted the whole group and was enjoyed by everyone on the walk as attracting public attention. There were plenty of stands, stalls and things to do including dancing. People had donated cakes, jams and stuff to sell.

The walk has helped to sustain my recovery. I see it as a chance to rejoice and celebrate rather than hide away or be embarrassed. It has helped me take steps to tell people I'm abstinent and do not have a problem.

I'm in my third year of recovery but it has taken me this long to have the courage to go out and socialise without using.



# LANGUAGE IS POWERFUL. ESPECIALLY WHEN TALKING ABOUT ADDICTIONS!

## SAY THIS

Person with a substance use disorder

Person living in recovery

Person living with an addiction

Person arrested for a drug offence

Medication is a treatment tool

Had a set back

Maintained recovery

Positive Drug Screen

## NOT THAT

Addict, Junkie, Druggie

Ex addict

Battling / suffering from addiction

Drug offender

Medication is a crutch

Relapsed

Stayed Clean

Dirty Drug Screen

**Stigmatising language perpetuates negative perceptions.**

**'Person first' language focusses on the person and not the disorder.**

**For more information visit [www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)**





#### CONTACT US

[www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](http://www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

[info@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org](mailto:info@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org)

0141 946 2710

07727 255 808