

## Summary Report

# The Recovery Games

## The Alcohol & Drug Service

**Healthwatch Doncaster**

**Engage, inform, influence**

18<sup>th</sup> August 2017

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Details of activity

The fourth annual Recovery Games on 18 August saw over 650 people from all parts of the UK coming together at Hatfield Activity Centre in Doncaster in a fun packed day of celebration of people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.

Fast becoming a local tradition, the games were attended by the Civic Mayor of Doncaster Councillor George Derx; North Lincolnshire Deputy Mayor Councillor John Briggs and the Mayor of Rotherham Councillor Eve Rose Keenan, who joined the crowds of supporters to cheer on the 36 teams taking part in gladiator style games.

This year the teams competed head to head across 10 events at each event they faced a different team. This is an important part of the event as it goes a long way towards our goals of fostering and encouraging better links within our ever growing community.

The events included activities such as wake boarding, canoeing, archery and climbing as well as larger inflatables such as the ultimate wipe out, the human wrecking ball, the eliminator run and an inflatable dodge ball court.

Each team collects scores based on their performance as well as how they engage/support each other and the top 3 teams go head to head in a grand final giant obstacle course.

Prizes are also awarded on the day to those that have displayed the best sportsperson type principles and the best themed team.

Event organiser and Day Programme Lead for Aspire Drug and Alcohol Service Neil Firbank said: "This year's games were the biggest and best yet with the recovery community being stronger and more vibrant than ever. The event is about letting people know that recovery is alive and being nurtured in many towns across the region and UK. Thank you to everyone who took part and supported this amazing event."

The event was funded from donations and raised an amazing £650 on the day which will go towards other activities and next year's Recovery Games.

Stuart Green, Aspire Service Manager, said: "It's been a fantastic day with hundreds of people celebrating and applauding those in recovery from an addiction. The event has become a recognised milestone in the recovery calendar. It sees people with different addictions and health conditions come together, connect and learn new skills and most importantly have fun without the need for substances."

## 1.2 Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone that took part in competing and supporting on the day itself. The event volunteers that helped manage the day. As well as those that backed us financially including Health Watch Doncaster, The John Chapman Trust, Public Health Doncaster, Sheffield Alcohol Advisory Service, Doncaster Culture Leisure Trust and Active hire. Special thanks to all those individuals who donated and took part in sponsored events to raise money.

# 2 What was the purpose of the activity/session?

## 2.1 Purpose

People turn to drugs and alcohol for a variety of reasons including easing the pain of a trauma, escape from physical and emotional abuse or to help cope with feelings of depression, low self-esteem or confidence. Many of our service users are isolated and struggle to cope with everyday life due to the consequences of prolonged substance misuse. In many cases their families have disowned them as they are unable to cope with their behaviour. This combined with a lack of social skills and the stigma attached to substance misuse presents significant barriers to recovery for this group.

Our event aims to:

- Celebrate the achievements of individuals in recovery,
- Acknowledge that prevention works and treatment is effective,
- Show that recovery from substance abuse is a reality and people do and can get better,
- Allow for wider interaction and communication with local communities,
- Allows for those in early recovery to catch some of the recovery contagion by mixing with others in long term recovery,
- Foster hope to the family members affected by others substance misuse
- Promote physical activities.
- A format to allow individuals to feedback on how services are working for them

## 2.2 What did you do?

The format of the event has been consistent since its conception in that teams compete across 10 events and the highest scoring teams take part in a grand finale. We involved those who would likely to take part in shaping the overall day by utilising social media i.e The Recovery Games Facebook page, twitter hash tag #recoverygames. This was

a direct way of seeking information or hosting polls on what type of activities/events competitors would like to see at the next recovery games. As well as what type of advice or information stalls should be made available on the day. Survey Monkey was also utilised to gather information and feedback from previous Recovery Games events.

As well as this local service user groups were consulted as were staff that had been involved in previous events.

## 2.3 Results of the activity/session(s)

### Feedback from people who took part:

#### Quotes received from teams that attended

“What a great day everyone had. All out clients loved it. The event is getting bigger and bigger. You have done a fab job at organising such a large event” Care Plus NL

“On behalf of Our Dementia memory café, as always it was an amazing memorable day. Once again you hosted a fantastic day”.

“A seriously big thank you to all of your team for organising the recovery games. Our staff and service users had a fantastic time and the Glasgow team are already making plans to come back next year”. Phoenix Futures, Glasgow

#### Feedback from staff/volunteers who took part

“On behalf of forensics we wanted to say thank you for the recovery games. It was a fab day, well organised and it has done our lads a world of good, they are so proud of their achievement”. Amber Lodge, RDASH

“Well done, an amazing day !!” Lawson Pater

## 2.4 Conclusion

- **Engaged over 600 people at the event**

We successfully engaged 600 local people at the event. This included service users in treatment and recovery, their family and friends, staff members and members from the local community.

- **Produced a positive shift in public attitudes towards people with substance misuse problems.**

Recovery becomes contagious within communities when it's visible, when it's seen and felt. Hope, inspiration and recovery aspirations are passed on to others. Our event brought together the recovery community, re-enforce existing

networks and built new ones and provided fun for those in recovery, their friends, families and the local community.

- **Engaged over 500 people in physical activities**

There is a proven link between physical activity and mental wellbeing. The event gave everyone attending the opportunity to try out new physical activities and to encourage them to continue being active after the event.

- **The promotion of our services within the local community**

As a result of the profile achieved through this, opportunities to show service users and recovery in a positive light to the wider community, have been generated. For example we have had a request from SINE FM radio for service users presence in radio discussions and talks. We also have a 4 page spread in the local magazine Doncoplitan and received positive feedback from HMP Kirkham in there drink and drug news article.

- **Improvements to our services**

A group was created to organise the event which consists of employees, mentors and friends. The group organises meetings with service users, volunteer mentors and other local agencies to make sure as much of the community are included we are inclusive of the widest wellbeing agenda and PPE (Public and Patient Engagement). This is a vehicle for engaging the community and other community services around our hubs which are based in the community across the Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council area. In our Mexborough hub we have recently welcomed the food bank which was without a base but now operates from our hub.

People have been offered a number of ways to feedback on the event and our services including, formal feedback forms, informal verbal feedback, simple one touch machines, social media such as facebook and twitter using the hash-tag #recoverygames #engage #inform #influence #hwd. The feedback will support how we build recovery capital in communities and how we develop programmes that support the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'. A number of developments around physical activity suggested by participants have been implemented including gym membership, health walks and one off activities.

The Recovery Games has its own facebook page which is supported by the Aspire fb page and the ADS fb page. They provide forums where attendees post pictures and comments about the event. Previously we have set up an opinion poll on the page to gather feedback and this has proved very useful in shaping future events.