

History of SMART Recovery UK

Context - USA

SMART Recovery was started as a not-for-profit organisation in the USA back in 1994, with roots back to the mid-1980s and a group called 'Rational Recovery'. SMART Recovery was founded out of a partnership between people in recovery and professionals, though evolving in the direction of greater peer involvement and responsibility over time. By the late 1990s SMART Recovery was well established in the USA, with a growing number of meetings, on-line support and a thriving training programme for new facilitators. SMART Recovery also worked alongside a commercial company 'Inflexxion' to secure a government grant and develop a group-work programme for prisons, InsideOut. More recently, work on a family support programme based on both SMART Recovery and the evidence based CRAFT approach has been developed.

1998 – 2000

Fraser Ross, a prison officer in HMP Inverness in Scotland, became interested in SMART Recovery and approached the US charity. Joe and Barbara Gerstein visited the UK in 1998 and made a presentation at Inverness prison. These initial attempts to get a meeting started were not successful, though another visit by Joe in 2000 helped Fraser build momentum. This visit included presentations at two prisons and also at a prison service conference.

2001

In 2001, Fraser persuaded Nick Royle, Head of Addictions at the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) to back a proposal for the InsideOut group-work programme to become an approved activity within SPS. Inside Out is a professionally delivered psycho-educational group-work programme based on SMART Recovery.

The SPS Accreditation Services scrutinised the application and granted approved status of the programme throughout the Scottish Public Prisons. The programme manuals were slightly amended to comply with SPS requirements and to fit better within the Scottish treatment and criminal justice system. This process was handled within SPS by David McCue, who many years later became a trustee of SMART Recovery UK. Inside Out was established within Inverness prison.

In 2001, Fraser also attended a face to face training session on meeting Facilitation in Newark, New Jersey – making him the first person in the UK to do this training.

2005

Due to other pressures, it was not until 2005 that the first meeting was established in the community, at Beechwood House in Inverness.

2006

- Received £25k from the Robertson Trust to underwrite running costs and support the creation of new meetings.

Fraser registered the charity 'SMART Recovery UK' with the purpose of helping the network of meetings grow and became the first paid employee, from August 2006.

Also in 2006, Addaction (a large voluntary sector addictions treatment provider) received permission from the USA to use SMART Recovery in all their services. A member of their staff team, Tom Macintosh attended the Facilitator Training in Boston in 2006 and later attended the US annual conferences in 2007 and 2008.

2007

- Received £41k from the Scottish Executive for Prison internet project
- Received £27k from NHS Highlands for Prison internet project
- Received £75k from the Robertson Trust to support creation of new meetings
- Received £22k from NHS Highlands for Choose Life Project.

A focus of activity in 2007 was trying to strengthen the funding base of the organisation, primarily through grant applications. Two additional members of staff were taken on, in order to build administrative capacity and work on the new initiatives.

The Prison internet project aimed to develop an on-line 'Distance Therapy' platform to support prisoners and ex-prisoners and link them into peer support on release. This would also be offered to other organisations, so partner agencies such as treatment services would use this to work with prisoners over the internet.

The Choose Life or 'Internet Crisis Intervention Project' aimed to create a range of evidence based on-line interventions targeted at suicidal behaviour using the same distance therapy platform. The intention was to work in partnership with treatment services, which would use the chat rooms to support their clients remotely.

A partner organisation, 'Mackay Ross International' (MRI) was established as a Community Interest Company, with Fraser Ross, Shirley Ross, Chris Darge and Kathryn Darge as Directors. This was intended as vehicle for business initiatives, such as website design, on-line toolkits, needs assessments and consultancy that would build a sustainable source of income for SMART Recovery UK. MRI was funded to provide project management support for the Choose Life project.

The first UK Facilitator Training took place in Inverness, supported by guest speakers Jonathon von Breton and Tom Litwicki from the USA. The event was attended by 40 delegates, combining service users and treatment service professionals.

The first face to face SMART Recovery meeting in England was started in Manchester in 2007, after the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) provided funds for Fraser to travel down and deliver some training.

Also in May 2007, a conference was organised in Glasgow, with several high profile speakers from the SMART Recovery movement and supportive academics, such as Dr Linda Sobell.

Toward the end of the year there was insufficient funds to continue with the additional staffing, so for a period we returned to having a single paid position.

- Ian Smillie was appointed as a board member in October.
- Chris Durge was appointed as a board member in December.

2008

- Received £15k from the Scottish Executive and Police and Community Safety Directorate for the prison internet project.
- Received £6k for work and expenses on the DoH pilot scheme
- Received £50k from the Robertson Trust to support creation of new meetings.

In 2008, Fraser arranged for the President of SMART Recovery, Dr. Tom Horvath and also Dr. Linda Sobell to present to the Scotland Futures Forum.

Although there was a great deal of interest, at the start of 2008 SMART Recovery was still very small. The majority of meetings were professionally led, within Addaction and there were fewer than a dozen peer led meetings in the community.

The breakthrough came when Professor Nick Heather and Keith Humphreys successfully applied for Department of Health funding for a pilot scheme to work with alcohol treatment providers to spread SMART Recovery. The idea behind the project was that many people using alcohol treatment services did not, for whatever reason, engage with the existing mutual aid organisations and that SMART Recovery looked to be a viable alternative.

The scheme was hosted by Alcohol Concern, which dedicated a staff member to the project for a year, and overseen by a steering group chaired by Nick Heather and including Fraser and two other SMART Recovery Facilitators, Dan and Kevin. After sifting through 40 applications, they identified 6 sites to host pilot meetings. Training and support was provided by Fraser to interested service users at these sites to help them get meetings running.

The scheme was evaluated by Susan McGregor of Middlesex University (McGregor 2010). The report concluded that further rollout of SMART Recovery was both 'Acceptable and Feasible', though further development would depend on:

- Proactive development of activities such as provision of training and start up resources
- Presence of a supportive environment in local agencies, involving an agreed approach to mutual aid, experience with peer support and knowledge about SMART Recovery
- A national infrastructure with a clear identity and strong and stable central office, able to provide support with communications, networking and encouragement.

The pilot scheme certainly seemed to trigger a broader interest in SMART Recovery. In particular, some of the new Facilitators became very effective ambassadors and pioneers, getting even more new meetings started in a fairly short period of time. This was especially true around Manchester.

- The Directors of Mackay Ross International applied to have the company dissolved in December.
- Carol Hammond began working as Administrator and became company secretary in December.

2009

- Received £4k from Alcohol Concern for expenses of pilot scheme.
- Received £2k survival money from NHS Highland
- Received £2.6k survival money from Alcohol Concern
- Received £9k survival money from SMART Recovery USA

Toward the conclusion of the Alcohol Concern pilot however, the charity SMART Recovery UK faced an imminent threat to its survival. The organisation had two members of staff but no meaningful source of income on the horizon. The small number of funders that had supported the organisation to date were unwilling to put in further funds, applications to other funders were not successful and the commercial enterprises through MRI had not made a profit.

Faced with the risk of the charity going bankrupt within a few months, the Trustees brought in David McCue to carry out a review of the financial viability of the charity. The Board concluded that there was no alternative but to make the Development Coordinator redundant, which is what happened in November 2009. David also accepted an invitation to become a member of the Board of Trustees.

The 'survival money' described above was secured to ensure that the charity did not have to fold immediately, since committed expenditure such as redundancy costs and an office lease significantly exceeded existing funds.

- Carol Hammond became Company Secretary in February.
- David McCue became a Trustee in May

2010

- Roxbury Foundation £7k survival money
- NHS Highland 6K – survival money
- SMART Recovery USA £3k – survival money

By February 2010, the organisation had roughly 30 peer led meetings, plus another 20 or so being run within Addaction and facilitated by paid staff. Carol Hammond was still employed part time to run the central office though there was little money in the bank and no income. With the loss of Fraser, there was also no training available for new Facilitators and without further funding the future of the organisation was uncertain.

In April a conference was held as the final conclusion of the Alcohol Concern pilot scheme. This event revealed deep differences within the SMART Recovery Community. The Board was keenly aware of the precarious finances, but also felt we could not move forward without staff. They talked about the need for income and suggested we build on the partnership with providers. Fraser (now attending and contributing as a volunteer) offered an alternative vision, that SMART Recovery UK should become entirely peer and volunteer led and undertake no partnership work with treatment providers. This, it was suggested, would remove the need for income. Others opposed this idea, believing that trying to run the organisation entirely with volunteers was unlikely to work.

The trustees thought that the model proposed by Fraser did not meet the success criteria set out (and quoted above) in the Alcohol Concern pilot evaluation report and essentially ignored the key lessons of the pilot. They did however recognise that there were very strong feelings around these issues.

The board brought in Richard Phillips to help them work up an outline plan, based on a variation of the DoH Pilot, that would enable the charity to survive and secure the future growth of meetings. This would then go out to wide consultation over the summer of 2010. Richard remained involved to run the consultation.

The consultation itself was very broad, including four events, an on-line survey and the involvement of over 100 people in several months of passionate debate. Some parts of the proposals were almost universally unpopular, so changes were made to reflect these concerns. A clear majority accepted the need for the organisation to work in partnership with treatment providers in some way and also to have some paid staff.

The conclusion was that we should keep our primary focus on building a network of peer led mutual aid meetings, but also develop a partnership scheme with providers that would help our meetings grow more quickly across the country and provide a source of income. The main difference to the Alcohol Concern pilot was that we would train staff as well as peers – but ask

the provider to sign an agreement that committed them to helping service-users start their own meetings.

The Board also decided to abandon the previous funding model, based on grant funding for projects only tangentially related to the core task of running and supporting meetings.

The Board asked Richard to remain involved as 'Interim Director' and implement the new development plan. The remainder of 2010 was spent on two projects, building an on-line e-learning platform to train SMART Recovery Facilitators and also working out the detail of the partnership scheme.

The Board of Trustees was further strengthened in 2010 with the addition of:

- Dr Joe Gerstein, the co-founder and first President of SMART Recovery.
- Carl Cundal, an experienced facilitator who was involved in the Alcohol Concern pilots.
- Charles Steel, a leading figure in the Scottish recovery community.
- Terrie Semple, a leading figure in the Scottish recovery community.

2011

- Received total of £100k from the new partnership scheme

The partnership scheme was launched in February 2011 and grew to roughly 80 organisations over the following year. Most of the major treatment providers in the UK signed up, including CRI, Turning Point, Phoenix Futures, Lifeline and Compass. Addaction also signed the agreement and was asked to begin transitioning more of their meetings to become peer led.

A 'whole area' partnership was agreed with commissioners in Bristol to bring all their local services into partnership and train both staff and peers across the city. A similar partnership was set up in the Lothians region of Scotland; aiming to build a strong network of SMART meetings, with strong links to treatment services. This included a full time post for a year, to which Jardine Simpson was recruited.

NICE published clinical and commissioning guidance encouraging engagement with SMART Recovery. (NICE February 2011) (NICE August 2011)

In November 2011 we published a UK re-write of the SMART Recovery Facilitators manual, which is sent free in professionally printed hard copy to everyone who completes the facilitator training.

By the end of 2011, the organisation was no longer at risk of going bankrupt and the number of meetings was again rising.

2012

- Received total of £230k from the partnership scheme

We entered into partnership with Waypoint, a voluntary sector training agency, helping us develop a face to face training program. A plan is in place to train a team of peer trainers early in 2013.

We launched a new website and on-line community on which over 2,000 people registered in the first 8 months. This also supports weekly on-line meetings using a voice chat system.

New poster and participant leaflets were published and mailed to all Facilitators.

Support for the Lothians project continued into a second year and Jardine's post was re-configured to become the National Coordinator for Scotland. Steve Crawley was recruited as National Co-ordinator for England and Richard Phillips, previously Interim Director, was confirmed as Director.

NICE Quality Standards aimed at all NHS interventions for people with drug problems explicitly state that people in drug treatment should be offered support to access mutual aid, and specifically mentions SMART Recovery along with the Fellowships. (NICE 2012)

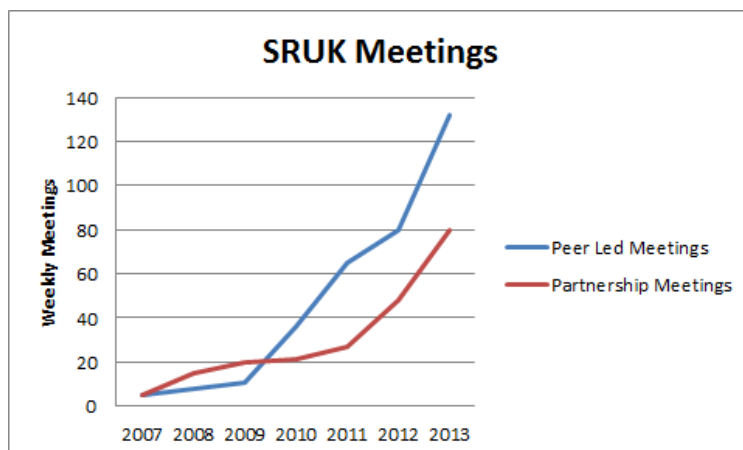
By the end of the year, this brought us up to 4 paid members of staff, with 120 peer led meetings, 60 partnership meetings and > 250 partnership sites signed up. The number of both peer led and partnership meetings continued to grow strongly, with roughly 200% growth over the previous two years. Over 1,500 people had applied for training, 750 enrolled and 200 completers. Roughly half of these were people in recovery and the rest Champions.

2013

Going into 2013, the charity is fast growing, has stable finances and is focused on an ambitious plan to make SMART Recovery even stronger and more widely available in the coming years. Highlights include a new Handbook and training up a team of peer Facilitators.

The focus of work this year is

- To broaden the base of peer involvement in how the organisation runs
- Improve how we support Facilitators and in particular new facilitators
- Publish several manuals and improve other materials.
- Consolidate the partnership scheme and in particular strengthen our work in Prisons



Finances and meeting activity by financial year

For simplicity, the main narrative of this report is provided by calendar year. The most reliable information

on the number of meetings has been recorded by financial year.

There are also a small number of additional closed partnership meetings not shown here, for example some prisons. Earlier historical records of the numbers of meetings are not entirely consistent and are probably not entirely accurate, though reflect the best available data and are included here in good faith.

The financial position of the organisation is also best judged against financial year so the following table is offered as a quick overview of how things have evolved in relation to both meetings and finances. Figures are at March 31st.

	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Peer meetings	~ 5	~ 8	11	36	65	80	132
Partnership meetings	~5	~ 15	20	21	27	48	80
Turnover £k	-	140	84	25	27	185	235
Net position £k	-	1	24	-21	4	44	79
Carried forwards £k	-	1	25	5	9	52	132

All financial figures are £ thousands, rounded for clarity. Net position and carried forwards are provided as a rough indication of the financial strength or vulnerability of the organisation. Please see accounts available from Companies House website for more detailed information. 2012/13 Finances are approximate and accounts have not been finalised.

Additional notes

There are three possible dates to describe the appointment of directors: when the decision was minutes at a board meeting, when the application was made to Companies House and the date on which this was approved. Dates shown are mostly the dates of application but this has not been checked in detail.

During the drafting of this document we sought comment and input from a number of people. We are deeply grateful for the insights, recollections and corrections of everyone who contributed though responsibility for the accuracy of final version rests with SMART Recovery UK. If you know of any inaccuracies, please contact central office and we will do what we can to verify and then update this document on our website.

References

McGregor, S. (2010). The Alcohol Concern SMART Recovery Pilot Project Evaluation Project Final Report. <http://goo.gl/TorLr>

NTA (2012) Medications in recovery Re-orientating drug dependence treatment: <http://goo.gl/ApFmJu>

NICE (August 2011) Services for the identification and treatment of hazardous drinking, harmful drinking and alcohol dependence in children, young people and adults. Commissioning guide. Implementing NICE guidance: <http://goo.gl/WuVpcg>

NICE (February 2011) Clinical Guidelines: Alcohol-use disorders: diagnosis, assessment and management of harmful drinking and alcohol dependence: <http://goo.gl/EnGsj>

NICE (November 2012) Quality standard for drug use disorders: <http://goo.gl/gc5Wu5>

Updates of this history will be available at

<http://cdn.smartrecovery.org.uk/doc/history-smart-recovery-uk.pdf>