

Ferguson McQuarrie, Service User / Carer Governor – Blog

In a typical week I have been busy working for Wirral education for wellbeing at the Recovery College to help promote all the different courses that are available to all the Service Users who are in the Community. My role at the Recovery College is to meet and greet people who are attending for the first time, as it can be quiet nerve racking when you go anywhere for the first time. I make cups of coffee for everyone and get to know everybody's name and make everyone feel at home.

The Recovery College is a great way of meeting likeminded people who are looking for different ways to learn new coping mechanisms that help people cope with everyday life. When attending groups at the recovery college we talk about things that help one another and we learn from each other new ways of how to cope with life stresses. We can't achieve this at home on our own just hoping things will get better but if you have the courage to attend one of these courses you will be pleasantly surprised that you are not the only one who is struggling with life and things can get better.

There are a lot of courses available at the Recovery College; you can attend all the courses or just the ones that interest you. An example of some of the courses you can attend is one called achieving better sleep. This is one I co-facilitate on. Another is the introduction to mindfulness, which is a form of meditation and it can help brighten up your day when practiced. You can also learn about food and how it can affect your mind. I have learnt myself only recently that I have been drinking a lot of coffee and it has affected my mood this is because of all the caffeine so I have weaned myself off coffee and drinks that contain caffeine and I feel so much more calmer and relaxed when I am interacting with people. You can learn different things about yourself every day when you attend the recovery college just that little bit quicker than you would do on your own.

I also attended a PLACE visit at Clatterbridge Hospital. If you don't know what a PLACE visit is, they are a way to attend a hospital and carry out checks of the building, making sure everything is tidy and clean and also making sure it complies with health and safety standards inside and outside the hospital. We then interact with staff and observe how things are run for the service users. We also observe the care the patient's receive and what facilities the patients have to keep them busy throughout the day. I was pleased to see that they had a lot of the patients interested in an anxiety class. I thought this was great as I have attended anxiety classes in the recovery college and they really do make a difference. You also have a chance to try the hospital food and give scores on how the food tastes, I was surprised by the variation of food for service users and overall the food tasted great, the premises were clean and tidy and staff were great. A job well done and I learnt a lot, what a great way to end the day.

During my time as a Governor I have been able to help services users to have a voice for example the gym was closed for a short time in Clatterbridge due to lack of funding. I was told by one of the service users who attended the gym regularly that this had happened. So I addressed the Board of Directors and asked what could be done about it. I left it like that until the next Governors meeting; this gave them time to figure out how they were going to deal with the situation. Their response was

that they trained six nurses from the different wards and they employed a full time fitness instructor. The gym was closed at the weekend but from now on the nurses that were trained would be able to take service users to the gym on the weekends. I thought the response was amazing and it made me think as a Governor that I could make a difference.