MARG REPORT

Kevin and I attended MARG on Tuesday 10th Dec 2019.

Kate Morrisey began by telling the group that she was the lead on a new initiative - RECONNECT - which is a new service designed to connect all clients who are in contact with government agencies to local services (which will include mutual aid organisations). This will be a well-funded programme – rising to £20 million a year. She invited input from all groups within MARG.

Kieran Lynch (Chair) stressed the need for regular contact between the groups within MARG and also within PHE.

Ed May – Recovery Champion – reported that he had been very busy. He stated that his definition of recovery was centred in life in the community after treatment.

He is hopeful of securing funding for a Recovery Institute and is particularly keen to address the lack of academic interest in what it takes to sustain recovery. Initially he is collaborating with David Best who is at the University of Derby.

He is keen to establish a working group.

He is also working to address the fact there are wide discrepancies of quality of provision within the country. In addition any centres of excellence were poorly equipped to provide rigorous statistical evidence of how and why they were successful.

He is driving a very rapidly developing programme of recovery friendly university campuses. Teeside has already adopted this programme. Birmingham university is close.

Ed is planning a conference where this programme is disseminated to university authorities.

He raised the continuing issue of stigma. Canada has pushed the UN to address stigma around addiction. There is going to be a 3 day conference in Vienna and Ed spoke about how important this was because it forced the Government to pay attention to a subject for which they showed no interest.

This point lead to Ed stating how ultimately it was his ambition for addiction to be treated in the same way as Mental Health – for example employers currently react to addiction by dismissing the employee and not engaging with the problem. This would require structural changes within the law.

He mentioned a group called Faces and Voices - which is comprised of recovery proponents.

Ed reported that Jeremy Hunt was making very positive indications about the National Centre for Drug Treatment and placing recovery at its centre. However Ed was cautious about attaching too much credence to these pronouncements.

Ed said that despite his doubts around these pronouncements he believed there was a push within the Civil Service for Visible Recovery.

AA reps reinforced the point that it was incredibly difficult to access any colleges/universities for input into the training of prison officers, doctors, social workers etc.

Michael Ventris and Rob Stanbury are producing a module on Substance Misuse within Offender Management and requested input. Thomasina Chapman is leading on this module.

They mentioned that HMP Home House is prison leading on treatment and learning.

There is a conference on Recovery in Prisons in Leeds on the 28th January.

Kevin efficiently and modestly handed over the Survey.

Tony Mercer spoke about the NA pilot in Coventry – a site chosen because of Mutual Aid friendly probation workers and suitable density of meetings.

I will follow up with Tony about the chits - he said that it had been a difficult process – even down to what the chits looked like and who owned them.

AA rep shared that the he ran a meeting where an employee had a chit from the company that employed him.

AA reps raised the issue of safeguarding policy. AA is currently in the process of drawing up a safeguarding policy and generously offered to share the document with us.

The Mutual Aid Toolkit was discussed. Ed May suggested that it needed to be supported by a programme of education. He also expressed the reaction that it was verbose and too much for professional staff who were already overstretched.

He reiterated the point that it was essential for staff to attend meetings.

The Chair Kieran Lynch asked for help in editing the Toolbox. Tony Mercer is drawing up a document addressing the myths around 12 Step Recovery.