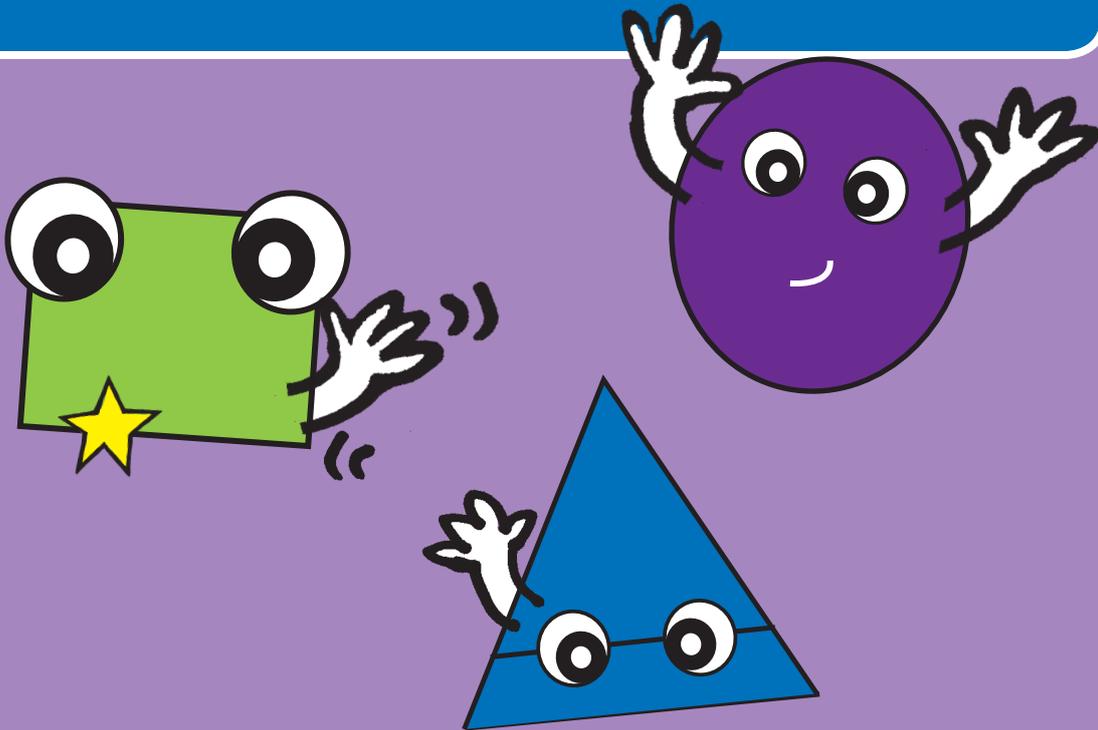


FAST's Wee Day In

How we are making a difference
for people affected by alcohol
and drug addictions



“It’s good to know that you’ve helped make services better, that you’ve made a difference. I’ve used my experience of needing help to benefit other people.”

Patrick McCallion, FAST

“It is our community. We are all part of this.”

Provost Dennis Agnew, West Dunbartonshire Council

About this report

This report describes what the FAST group do and what happened at an event we ran in May 2011.

We hope that it gives people in West Dunbartonshire and in other areas ideas about what you can do to develop opportunities for people who have lived with a drug or alcohol addiction to contribute to making life better for themselves and for other people.

What FAST does

FAST is the Future of Addiction Services Team. It brings together people in West Dunbartonshire who have experience of using addiction services or of living with an alcohol or drug problem.

FAST has been going for over 5 years, although the group of members who planned and ran the Wee Day In have been working together for just over a year. FAST looks to work with services to include service users' views and experiences of addiction services to have a positive influence on the planning and delivery of services in West Dunbartonshire. Our aim is to help provide a voice for service users and improve the way people who use addiction services are perceived.

FAST does 3 things.

- We signpost people into services, by giving them information about what is available and encouraging people to use the support that is there.
- We provide a voice for clients and former clients of addiction services to West Dunbartonshire Community Health and Care Partnership and it's partners.
- We look to create practical opportunities for people in recovery.

We meet each week - this is a business meeting that happens in a friendly and fairly informal way. New members are always welcome to come along, but we know that this isn't right for everyone.

From May 2011 we will also have a drop in. It will meet once a week in a Community Centre. People can come along for tea and a chat, or a game of pool or whatever they want to do. This will be another way for us to hear about what matters to people - on addiction services and on all the other things that make life easier or more difficult for people.

People who use services contribute their views in lots of ways, including giving feedback direct to the services they use. We have been building our contact with the addiction services in West Dunbartonshire, so we can work together to get more ways for people to have an influence and be heard.

There is a strong peer support element to everything we do. Our involvement in FAST is part of our own recovery and we want to support other people in their recovery.

Over the past 3 years FAST has had support from Outside the Box when we needed it. Outside the Box is an independent voluntary organisation that works alongside user-led groups and community groups all over Scotland. In this past year they helped us get going again after most of the previous members moved on to do other things. They also helped us produce our booklets and plan events. This support helped us get established as an independent group which influences services.

Now, we have support through Alternatives, which is a voluntary organisation that provides some of the addiction services in the community. Knowing that we have the support from Sharon helps us plan further ahead.

We have always had good support from West Dunbartonshire Council. We have had a lot of encouragement from the Provost and Councillors since the very beginning. The Council staff give practical help and the Council covers the costs of most of the things we do. They listen to what we say and give suggestions, but respect our independence.

“There is a real purpose to the group. I feel good after each meeting and event.”

“We notice the changes in each other. How people are getting more confident. Then you realise you are getting more confident too and you’re feeling better about yourself.”

What FAST has achieved

These are some of the things we have done over the past year and developments we have helped make happen.

We have taken part in local and national conferences and events relating to recovery, to find out about what is happening in other places. We feed this back to people in West Dunbartonshire and get ideas on ways we can improve services here. We also help raise the profile of service users as people who make a contribution to services.

We are members of the Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, sitting alongside staff from the local authority, Police, NHS and other partner organisations who plan and deliver services. We raise the issues that are important to people who use services and then feed back to people who use services on the progress that is getting made.

Examples

An example is access to residential rehabilitation facilities. People told us about how they were worried that they no longer had access to the services outside the local area they had used before. We raised this with the ADP.

The Council was able to secure the current funding for residential rehab. So people still have the option of going to a residential service out of the area.

But the outcome is even better than that. There is now going to be a new residential service based in West Dunbartonshire, which has the good elements of the old arrangements plus good ideas from other services. Overall, people should have a better service with more choices than we had before.

We have also raised other matters that affect members and other people affected by alcohol and/or drug addictions. One example is around employment. There is good support for people wanting to look at getting into employment - and we would like to see more of that and more people feeling confident enough to use that support. But we saw a gap in the support for people who are already in employment. We raised this with the ADP and asked West Dunbartonshire Council to make sure that all of their managers and staff knew about the policies and arrangements they already had for staff who are trying to cope with an addiction problem.

We produced 2 booklets in 2010, to show people living in West Dunbartonshire how they could use the ordinary services that are there for everyone to help their recovery. They also showed how people can take control of their own recovery and get peer support and the right sort of support from family and friends. These have been circulated through local addiction services, so they have reached a lot of people. The booklets have also been used by many groups in other parts of the UK and the feedback from them has been very positive.

We held a few small events to publicise our leaflets and ask people their views on priorities. We arranged sessions with the Welfare Rights Team and Community Learning Team, to let people in touch with addiction services and staff meet people in other services who could also help with another aspect of people's recovery.

We have learned that it can take time for new developments to get established. We have also learned how to make the case for new developments.

Examples

In 2008 FAST helped make the case for a new out of hours telephone support service. This started as a pilot over Christmas and New Year in 2008-09 and was then there for a few hours each weekend. FAST members helped plan the publicity. Now in May 2011 the HEAR service is available 5 nights each week.

When we planned our new drop in, we showed how people were asking for this type of activity. Anne from Outside the Box showed us how to think through all the practical aspects, to make sure it will be easy for people to use, easy for us to run it and safe for everyone. We checked out the financial side – how much we needed to run it for 6 months as a pilot. Then the Council gave the funding for it.

More information

You can get the booklets we produced on the Outside the Box website: www.otbds.org

You can contact the HEAR out of hours service on 0141 952 8815. HEAR is available Wednesday to Sunday, 5.00 pm until 11.30 pm.

"You look back and realise what has happened, how we helped people have a voice and make things better for everyone."

"Coming to FAST doesn't just give a purpose to your day. It gives a purpose to your life."

How we organised the Wee Day In

- We began planning this event at the start of 2011. There were several good events that focussed on recovery. We wanted to show people in West Dunbartonshire what was happening here to help people in their recovery. We also wanted to show what FAST are doing and how people who have had an addiction can be part of making things better and doing positive things for themselves and for other people.
- Other people were having their big day out, so we had a wee day in.
- We planned the event together and then shared out the various tasks for organising it.
- We thought about what we would like to find out about and what would make the day comfortable for us - both now and when we were at an earlier stage in our recovery and contact with services. We also thought about what we are hearing from the people who use services across West Dunbartonshire.
- We shared out the tasks on the day too - setting up the halls, welcoming people and signing them in, doing the teas, speaking and being on the Panel, just being around to talk to people, and then all the clearing up at the end. People who have been part of the group but are now doing other things on Mondays came along and helped on the day. It was good to know that they still feel they are members and part of FAST.
- We decided to use an ordinary community venue rather than a building that was connected with addiction services. We booked a local church which we knew other groups had used for their events. It didn't cost too much and the people there were friendly and helpful. It was also convenient for people living in both of the 2 main towns in West Dunbartonshire.
- We invited lots of other organisations to take part. They included the services that give treatment for people's addictions, the services giving follow-on support, and other community services that can help people in their recovery.
- We publicised the event very widely. Information went to all the services and we asked them to pass it on to the people they support. We produced a leaflet and sent it out very widely. There were articles in the local papers. Two of us recorded a slot for the local radio station and that went out with all their news bulletins a few days before the event.

What happened on the day

We planned a day which had a conference and which had opportunities for people to relax and find out more about what is happening in West Dunbartonshire.

- The programme had a balance of talks and opportunities for people to ask questions. We broke the day into short sessions, which made it easy for everyone to concentrate and take part.
- The sessions included personal stories from FAST members and other people in recovery, and updates on developments in services in West Dunbartonshire such as befriending and help to get back into learning and employment.
- Speakers took questions from people at the event and there was a Panel session, where a FAST member and staff from services answered questions that we knew are important issues for people who use services.
- We built in lots of time for people to get to talk to each other over the tea and coffee breaks and a nice long lunch session.
- There were stalls where people could get more information. These included some of the local addictions services, the NHS Health Improvement Team, the Community Learning Team and the Community Safety Team from the Council, and a community arts project.
- The Welfare Rights Team came along and gave individual advice to people.
- There were complementary therapies, so people could have a Reiki or Shiatsu session or head massage.
- We served tea, coffee and fruit juice all through the day.
- People could just chat and catch up with us or friends, or have time to themselves.

Over 120 people came on the day. Some stayed for a while and others were there all day.

- The Provost and Councillors from West Dunbartonshire Council came, to show their support.
- There were people in recovery.
- People came from addiction services, other services provided by West Dunbartonshire Council and the NHS, housing organisations, community projects and the Police.
- Some people came from other areas, to hear what we are doing and tell us about what is happening around service user involvement in their area.

About recovery

Recovery is about an improving sense of self, when someone recognises or remembers that you have a purpose beyond dependence on drugs or alcohol. This event is a good definition of recovery.

There are 4 components which support someone's recovery. Social capital at a personal level - friends, family and the groups we belong to can all contribute.

There is cultural capital - our communities and how we view addiction; what stigmas exist or are challenged; the opportunities for jobs, education; political commitment; opportunities for people to meet other people.

Physical and economic capital - having the money to keep ourselves safe and well; being able to use the opportunities that are there.

Personal or individual capital - having hope and aspirations, our skills and our health. These help us make best use of the other 3 components of recovery.

Treatment and support services are often part of someone's recovery journey. But they are only one part.

The Wee Day In has built in all of these elements of recovery.

Notes from the presentation by Tom Jackson, Addiction Services Manager, West Dunbartonshire Community Health and Care Partnership.

Questions people asked the panel

- 1 Stigma affects everyone on recovery. How do you think we could improve awareness and start to break down these barriers?
- 2 What can we do to encourage community support and involvement for recovery?
- 3 What opportunities are there for services to improve and what helps them improve?

What people said about the Wee Day In itself

"The best bit was hearing the recovery stories from the FAST group and other people who use services."

"Great seeing people who have lived with addictions taking the initiative and running such a good event. The day has made me think differently."

"It was easy to ask questions. I appreciated the FAST members getting up and speaking. The other speakers were all good too. They all listened to me and to everyone here."

"Great day, lots of work and effort by the FAST group."

"It was nice to meet old friends and make new ones."

"It was good to make contacts with other organisations that can benefit the people we work with."

"Glad to have the chance to be here."

"I've never had the nerve to try a massage before. I'm glad I did it today and I'm going to do it again. It made me feel great, nice and relaxed. It could help me cope better when things get difficult."

"It was even better than I expected. I loved it."

What people said about the role of FAST and other ways for service users to contribute

"FAST can help those of us who provide services by being a critical friend and voicing the direct experience of people who use services. I appreciate the role they have had over the years."

"Services have been improving because we've been listening to the people who use the services."

"We rely on service user groups, FAST in particular, to help us develop our services."

"Being part of FAST has been a big part of my recovery. I'm glad I came along and I'm glad I've stayed."

“We work well as a team.”

“FAST is a place to give and a place where you are appreciated.”

“What is happening here is a real inspiration.”

What people said about the issues that face people with addictions

“So far, public education in relation to addictions has meant educating people to drink less. Now it needs to be educating people to look beyond the person who is drunk or using drugs and see someone who is asking for help and who has something to contribute.”

“I was very interested in the talks about the help for people to get into work. That could make such a big difference for so many people.”

“The lady from Welfare Rights was great. Really helpful. Getting my money sorted out would make things much better for me.”

What happens next?

We have plans to develop FAST, to let us get even better at representing the voice of people affected by addictions.

- We will keep working with the West Dunbartonshire ADP and other bodies, to contribute at local and national strategic planning.
- We will be gathering the views of people who use services on particular issues, to give the CHCP independent feedback as part of planning for better services.
- We want to have more formal and informal training for members, so they have the skills and knowledge to influence change.
- We want to develop our drop-in and continue to give people more opportunities.
- Eventually we want to become a constituted group, so we are officially recognised as an independent voluntary organisation with our own governance.

FAST has been in touch with services in West Dunbartonshire to give the people there a way to feed in their views and questions through FAST. As part of the follow up to the event, FAST will be working with more local services in this way.

People who work in other areas got ideas from the day. They have said they will tell the people who use services their area about what FAST have been doing. They hope this will encourage other service users to develop their own involvement groups.

Outside the Box continues to support groups and people who want to develop service user involvement in their organisation or area. FAST and Outside the Box will keep in touch and we hope we can work together to promote service user involvement across Scotland.

Support from Outside the Box

- Outside the Box has worked with FAST and other groups to develop resources that support groups led by people who use services or by families, and other community groups.
- The report from the big service user involvement event that was held in Clydebank in 2008 has material on involvement of people who use addiction services and ideas on running local events based on the FAST group's experiences: *Been There, Seen It, Done It*.
- There is a set of posters to show how groups like FAST complement the ways in which people get involved in their own care and in improving the services they use.
- *Influencing change* shows how people can make changes in the policies or services that affect them.
- *Making changes in our own lives* is a resource that helps people get support from the people they know and from services, and plan how to move on in their lives.
- There are other resources to support Participation and for Groups who want to develop what they do.
- We give support to local groups and to organisations that want to develop the ways they involve the people who use their services.
- We bring people from different places and organisations together to share what they are doing and learn from each other.

The reports and resources are on the Outside the Box website: www.otbds.org

Thanks

FAST want to thank

- All the people who came to our Wee Day In.
- All the people who helped on the day.
- The people and organisations that have supported us.



Contacts

FAST

T. 0750 236 9418

E. fastnews@hotmail.co.uk

Outside the Box

Unit 23, Festival Business Centre

150 Brand St

Glasgow G51 1DH

T. 0141 419 0451

E. admin@otbds.org

www.otbds.org