



PHOTOVOICE RESEARCH REPORT
Red Rose Recovery: Images of community coproduction.
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Summary

This report details the coproduction approach taken by [Red Rose Recovery \(Red Rose\)](#), a pioneering non-profit organisation which coproduces recovery systems with people affected by substance misuse and criminalisation. As a Lived Experience-led organisation, the people who work for the organisation use their own experiences to provide inspiration and hope to people who may be struggling to find a way forward. We explored people's experiences of working with *Red Rose* using an approach called 'Photovoice', where people use cameras to document their realities. We illustrate our report with these photographs, offering insight into some of the perspectives of people involved. The images and words produced by photographers indicate that in contexts of pain, shame, exclusion and disconnection, coproduction services can offer valued relationships, a sense of community and affirmation of people as vital beings in need of belonging within the built and natural environments.

Introduction

Social workers routinely provide services to people with substance use needs, making knowledge of substance use, interventions, and policies important. Yet Social Work courses often offer a minimal amount of substance use-specific content and there is virtually no mandatory substance use education (Minnick, 2019). Between 2020-2021, 275,896 adults were in contact with drug and alcohol services, over half were in treatment for opiate use and 28% for alcohol use (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2021). HM Inspectorate of Probation (2021) found a drug misuse need in 47% of cases and an alcohol misuse need in 40% of cases. Substance use interventions are vital given that drug-related deaths have increased by 80% since 2012 and the harms from drug misuse cost society £19.3 billion per year (DHSC, 2021).

'Involving' service-users and carers has been mandatory for social work courses in the UK for almost two decades and coproduction has recently been identified as one of the grand challenges facing the profession. However, creating communities of practice can be difficult, destabilising, and provocative (Reith-Hall, 2020) and sometimes it can be difficult for workers to build relationships of trust with people whose actions have been stigmatised and/or criminalised (Arnull, 2014).

Coproduction is an approach to partnership between people who rely on services and those providing them which is associated with positive trust effects (Hunter and Ritchie, 2007; Fledderus, 2016). It is based upon a philosophy that citizens and communities are best placed to resolve certain problems themselves (Russell, 2021) and often includes self-organised community provision (Weaver, 2011). Coproduction is increasingly prominent across criminal justice, and criminalised people take on a range of voluntary and paid roles including consultations, forums, councils and panels, peer led work, participatory research and leading user led organisations (Cunningham and Wakeling, 2022). In substance misuse contexts coproduction involves reciprocity and mutuality (Edwards et al., 2018). Reciprocity – or mutual benefit – has well-established value for people recovering from addiction, with a history which stretches back to 18th century Native American group-based sobriety "circles" (Edwards et al., 2018). 'Mutuality', in which two or more people support each other for the enhancement of all is also seen as vital for

the development of individuals and society (Erikson, 1964; Barak, 2005). Coproduction is central to community-based addiction support given the prevalence of people with ‘lived experience’ coproducing peer-based recovery communities and mutual aid groups (Edwards et al., 2018: 40). Such ‘communities of recovery’ form part of the government’s (2021) drug and alcohol strategy, which advocates for peer support and systems of mutual aid including, for example, [alcoholics anonymous \(AA\)](#), [narcotics anonymous \(NA\)](#), and [SMART Recovery](#). However, this strategy also notes that there is a need for more research into peer-led interventions (HM Government, 2021).

‘Recovery’ has been defined as ‘an individualised, intentional, dynamic, and relational process involving sustained efforts to improve wellness’ (The Recovery Science Research Collaborative, 2017) or more broadly as:

a social process, underpinned by transitions in social network composition, that includes the addition of new recovery-oriented groups, where such groups are perceived as attractive, beneficial, and relevant, and involves the concurrent emergence of a new recovery-based social identity (Best et al., 2016: 120).

‘Desistance’ from crime is the process of long-term abstinence from criminal behaviour, and overlaps with the notion of recovery. For example, both people in recovery and those aiming for desistance benefit from positive relationships and networks as forms of social capital (Best et al., 2017).

Elements of these individual and social philosophies can be seen in *Red Rose’s* principles, along with aspects of coproduction:

1. Recovery lies within individuals, families and communities and is self-directed and empowering.
2. Recovery lies within our ‘connectedness’ to others, is holistic and has many cultural dimensions.
3. Recovery is supported by peers, families and allies within communities.
4. Recovery involves the personal, cultural and structural recognition of the need for participative change, transformation and the building of recovery capital.
5. Recovery involves a continual process of change and self-redefinition for individuals, families, organisations and communities.
6. Recovery challenges all discrimination and transcends shame and stigma.
7. Recovery emerges from hope, gratitude, love and gifts to others.
8. There are many pathways to Recovery and no individual, community or organisation has the right to claim ownership of the ‘right pathway.’
9. Recovery exists on a continuum of improved health and well-being.
10. Recovery transcends, whilst embracing, a wide variety of approaches and does not seek to be prescriptive.
11. Honesty, self-awareness and openness lie at the heart of Recovery.
12. Recovery is a reality and contagious.

Red Rose strengthen their approach to coproduction using the ‘ABCD’ asset mapping approach (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993). ABCD mapping involves a community exploring and mapping its assets to develop solutions to issues (e.g., homelessness and poverty). The approach shares commonalities with strengths-based social work (Saleebey, 1992; Lightfoot et al., 2014), but is led by the community themselves. We hope to share

RRR's innovative approach to coproduction, using photographic methods to build upon the insights and wisdom of lived experience.

Whilst coproduction, recovery, desistance and 'lived experience' are all contested terms, there are indications that working in partnership can empower people, create new pathways to services and build community assets (Edwards et al., 2018). Meaningfully engaging people who use services in criminal justice contexts is also claimed to offer 'powerful and life-changing experiences', improving people's self-confidence and employability (HMPPS 2021). Despite promising emerging evidence of coproduced and peer led approaches, there is a need for more research (Cunningham and Wakeling, 2022; HM Government, 2021). We aim to start to bridge this gap with a participatory study of a peer led recovery organisation.

Participatory research methods

As most research about marginalised people is done by those who are not marginalised (Brown and Strega, 2015) we aimed to investigate the strategies communities use to survive marginalisation *alongside* those with most experience. Photovoice is a research method in which people use cameras to document their realities, engage in critical reflection, and advocate for change (Milne and Muir, 2019; Wang and Redwood-Jones, 2001). Photographs can offer a way for seldom heard groups to share expertise and knowledge (Wang and Burris, 1997; Milne and Muir, 2019). This arts-based method may be useful to social and community workers in other settings as a way of understanding and sharing their work. The process (adapted from Wendel et al., 2019) involved:

1. Research team (Peter, Gill and Vic) met to co-produce a photography 'up-skilling' event.
2. Research team facilitated 'up-skilling' events (assisted by a professional photographer) with participants discussing research purpose, image composition and photography ethics and safety.
3. Participant groups (total n=10) took photographs inspired by the prompts: *Why is Red Rose Recovery needed?* and *What does the work of Red Rose Recovery mean to you?*
4. Participants each selected 4-5 images (which offered the best insight into the work of *Red Rose Recovery*) to discuss in focus groups.
5. In focus groups, each participant narrated their chosen photos and discussed others' photos. Common themes were identified as a group.
6. Principle investigator wrote this report for the teaching partnership.
7. Research presented findings to the British Society of Criminology (June 2023) and a public exhibition in Lancaster is planned in 2023.

Our first training session and focus group (5 staff participants) was held via the Secure MS TEAMS platform to enable the meeting of people from different localities. However, given the barrier online work can pose to people living in poverty (Buck et al., 2022), we held a second group (5 beneficiary participants) in-person in a local recovery setting. Participants were 'hand-picked' based on their knowledge of the issue being investigated (Denscombe, 2014: 41), i.e., *Red Rose* staff members from across the service's locality areas, adults who have used the *Red Rose* service and a researcher were invited to take part in photography and focus groups.

A visual story of Red Rose Recovery

The photographs produced are each unique and beautiful. Each constitute a story and an artifact in their own right and can be viewed, along with the photographer's description in the appendix at the end of this report. As a group, we also identified common themes across photographs, including *disregard*, *visible recovery*, *nature*, and *a journey toward autonomy*. Each of these themes are now illustrated below.

Theme 1: Disregard.

People noted a theme of disregard, neglect, and abandonment. This conveys how as a society that we treat people experiencing addiction.



People communicated feeling like garbage and abandoned, in cold, dark, depressing places without love, compassion and help. These are places that are unseen, where no light shines, where people feel shame, embarrassment, and unwelcome.

These images vividly depicted the dehumanising conditions created when people are seen as 'undeserving'. Tyler and Slater (2018) argue that austerity-driven cuts to services have been legitimated through strategies of (state-sanctioned) stigma production. They argue that politicians and journalists have reanimated ideas about the undeserving poor to justify austerity, promoting the idea that an 'underclass' of people are 'trapped' in conditions of dependency. These stigma strategies encourage humiliation and shame and create deserving targets of stigmatisation and exclusion.

Theme 2: Visible recovery

In contrast *Red Rose* offers a highly visible welcome. The bright, open centre is on a main street in the middle of town. Its sign proudly announces the work. People are welcomed to rest on this couch when exhausted by street homelessness.



They are invited to play and bond with the pets of people working at the organisation, and to get involved with projects that harness their skills for the benefit of the broader community.

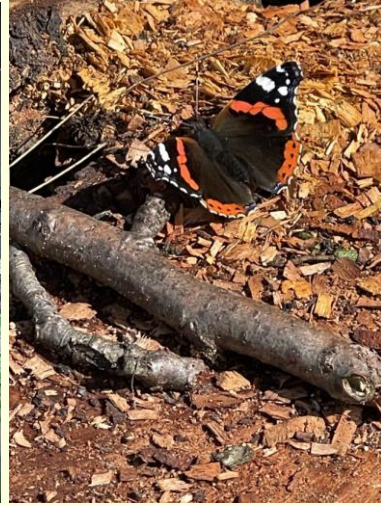


These welcomes and opportunities humanise people and communicate their value. There is recognition that everybody has assets, strengths, and skills, even if these are not always seen within a system that is focused on diagnosing deficits and rationing resources. For example, a man who presented for recovery support when homeless and in need of somewhere to rest. The team made a place him to lie down and connected him to local health services. They also recognised he had valuable knowledge of the needs of the local street homeless population and understanding of the cold weather policies. They enabled him to share his knowledge for the benefit of the organisation and the community.

At *Red Rose*, people in recovery are seen, not hidden. They receive and offer visible support services within and beyond their communities. This visibility is practically useful and symbolic, a form of what Rueben Miller (2022) might call 'radical hospitality' – creating connection, care, humanity, and non-judgement in place of retribution and exclusion.

Theme 3: Nature

There was also a strong theme of nature. People depicted animals, coastlines, waterways, and mountains. These elements represented beauty, safety, calm, belonging and healing.



Nature connected people to a sense of something bigger than themselves, it also offered peace, refuge, meditation and meaning.

There is indeed evidence that contact with the natural world—with animals, plants, landscapes, and wilderness—can offer health benefits (Frumkin, 2001). *Red Rose* purposefully uses these environments, building ecologies of support that harness the natural world. For example, they organise community walks, camps, outdoor events and encourage reflection on our symbiotic relationship with the environment.

Theme 4: A journey together to autonomy

Finally, people noted the theme of a *journey* taken alongside others that have taken a similar path. People who have experienced social exclusion have unique knowledge and survival strategies, which the social sector often fails to recognise (Sandhu, 2017), yet *Red Rose* centre and employ this potential.



For example, people are encouraged to support their peers in 1-1 and group relationships. Across *Red Rose* there are opportunities for people to volunteer as peer supporters and community connectors and prospects for people to progress into paid support and leadership roles.



There are roles for people regardless of where they are on their journey. These environments create belonging, social support, and recognition for change efforts. Role models provide a sense that change is possible and support people along the way. This shared journey ultimately provides a sense of autonomy, where people move from feeling powerless over their addiction to *powerful together* over the addiction. In recognising their power over their own lives, people are empowered to support others and shape services.

Limitations

There are limitations to our study. Firstly, we draw on a small sample of 10 people involved with one coproduced service. Those people were accessed via people who worked for the organisation, so may have felt influenced (whether intentionally or not) to present the organisation in a positive light. Finally, we did not consider the ways that coproduction is influenced by *intersecting* social identities, such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and culture. Understanding the unique challenges faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds will be important in future studies to ensure inclusive forms of coproduction.

Conclusion

Despite limitations, this small, visual study offers unique insight into coproduced recovery. Using participatory research methods, we found that in contexts of pain, shame, exclusion and disconnection, coproduced services can offer a visible example and welcome, valued relationships and opportunities, a sense of community and affirmation of people as vital beings in need of belonging within the built and natural environments. Coproduction is therefore filled with potential – providing symbolic resistance to social exclusion by co-designing and co-delivering more strengths based, community based, humanising interventions.

We would like to thank all the co-researchers and participants for taking part and the [CMSWTP](#) for supporting this project. For follow up learning and questions, contact g.buck@chester.ac.uk



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Appendix: Photographs – seeing inside the work of Red Rose.



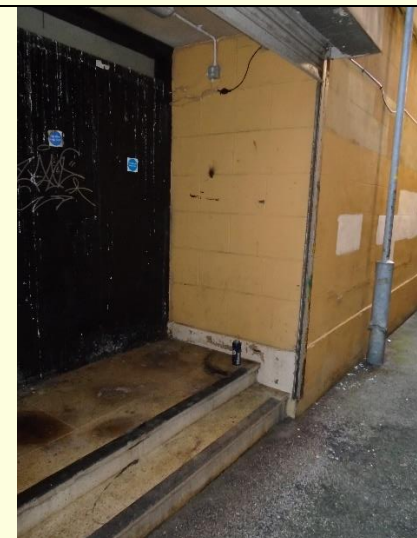
The Gate. It reminds me of addiction, the other side of reality. You're trapped, you can just see through the glass there, that's where life's going on and that's where warmth is, that's where shelter is. But you're prevented from getting through that by your addiction. You're prevented getting to that by the bars of the addiction. Prison bars you've created yourself, you can see they're rusty, they're old, neglected. Cold, alone, outside that's how it feels. Inside you see that, but you've got no authority to go in there, you're not welcome in there, no physical means to get in there and those barriers prevent you getting in there.



This is the 'in between', the places where we go and hide. This is where we hide, we hide because our addiction is so shameful. These are the dark places... The doors closed in front of you, urine-stained floor, graffiti the lights long since ceased working.

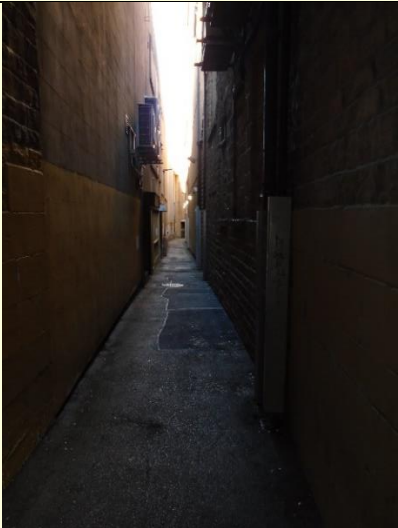
This reminds me of when I need to get my bottle, I desperately need to get that bottle and I'm not drinking in public, it's such a shame. So, I go and secrete myself in that little lane, get my fix, get the rattle away. Shameful. It reminds me of the condition that I'm in, but I have no choice. That doors closed, its metal, it's hard, I don't have the key. Who has the key?

So again, it reflected where I'm trapped, that's where I've run to escape the cravings, prevent the seizure. I'm terrified... That's the only place I find safety and it should be the other way around, I should be looking for safety at places like this [recovery service] and speaking to people but there's no one left to talk to.



If you look closely at the bottom, there's the remnants, a can of discarded alcohol. The shutters are up. Nobody walks past that, nobody sees it. But if you stop and pay attention, there was two people preparing their drugs, a worker burst open a door, give me a dirty look, no one is really interested in what happens in there.

I think in addiction terms that's where we are we. We talk about the human cost of addiction, that's the world we live in. It's dirty, its cold, it's the only place we've got left to go without love, without help, without compassion. It's dark, dank and depressing in that place, there's no light shines in that place.



The place in-between.

It reminds me of Bob Dylan's *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. You would have him stood there, but that's long gone. That's a lane forgotten. That's where we all pass through, where we stay invisible, hidden. I mean, there's life going on about the busy square but that that's a street in daylight in Lancaster. And it's just been cleaned up from the night's activities, tidied up as best it can.

Why it exists still, why it's there, I don't know, maybe it's there just to let us seep into it.

The light at the end of it – there was a time I was really poorly, and you know that feeling when you go upside down and you can see the light...



The police station, this is the point where I'd been arrested again because my drug taking had serious consequences and I got to the point where I couldn't do it anymore, I didn't have the energy for it, I didn't have the strength to go on.

It started at this very point when I first got arrested and sat in that cell, just awakening 'not again, why again?'

I realised at that point, I needed to do something different. I needed to change. And I wept in that cell. But then I got myself out of that pity pretty quickly. And I knew at this point, I was going to do something different, reach for something different, something better and have a decent legacy from that point on. Because what I've left behind which was chaos, an absolute mess. So that was just the start, that was the realisation.



The fence is representative of jail. At that time, I was on methadone, I was withdrawing from heroin, diazepam, you name it. I'd gone through rehab and recovery services many times before, but I was going to invest myself in doing something different. And so, I stopped taking methadone, stopped taking everything. This was nearly three years ago now. Usually in prison, I'd take every drug I could get hold of, anything to make it more tolerable within that environment. This time, I engaged with drug services within the prison service. And because I had a different mentality and a different way of projecting myself... before I was 'you don't really want to help me, you don't really care', but they absolutely did. It was the first time I actually tried to see this. So, I engaged with them as much as I could. And I was invited to a recovery house in the community, so I went, what have I got to lose? And I met lots of people. One I never expected to get on with but turned out to be one of my best friends. He worked for the authorities for a long time, and I didn't expect us to have a relationship, but he helped me as well, just one of my peers at that time, to view people with authority differently, accept them for the person they are.



Coming to the recovery house, where my recovery journey started. Walking in and being welcomed him into the house. We've been through that journey. This is representative of me taking that step, but its relevant to us all, it goes full circle, he offers me a hand then it goes full circle and I offer the next person a hand.

They helped me. It was a safe place to be, around like-minded people, they understood. They gave me access to a counsellor, acceptance of traumatic incidents that happened in my childhood because me my emotion was all over the place. When I first went in there, I didn't even understand my emotions, she helped me find myself as a person and she helped me see the value in myself and what I had to offer. They had a good work coach as well. She was brilliant, she helped me recognise what strengths I've got, to go back into the workplace. They do like some good groups to help understand what's going on physiologically, biologically, mentally within yourself and what keeps you entrapped, in them shackles, in that addiction. Education, yeah.



The bin, lost, alone without a home. Human, like a piece of garbage, what a waste.



'Are you OK mate?'

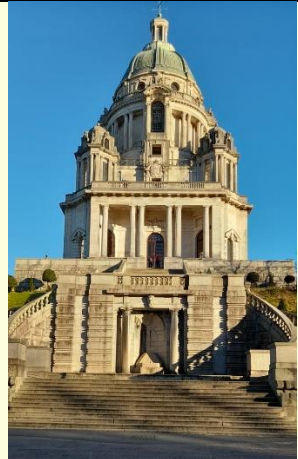
Wow, I'm not invisible!

'Do you want to take a walk with me? There's a way out'



I don't want to mention too much of the steps because I've come through a TC [Therapeutic community] and it was actually better than the 12-steps.

Zoom in at the top, us holding hands: there is hope, there is recovery...



Beacon of hope.

The power of one recovering addict helping another is without parallel. You keep what you've got by giving it away. I believe in a power greater than yourself and that's a group of people putting their heads together on a similar problem and you get pearls of wisdom. A group of people all putting their minds on the same problem of finding a solution together.

I can't, we can. Never Alone.



The abandoned place. This signifies why I ended up on drugs in the first place is through abandonment. And in the background, that's just chaos when you're in addiction, everything is just a whirlwind. So that symbolises abandonment. I didn't get it when I was younger, but now I'm older I realise why my mum did what she did, and that was because my little brother died when I was younger. But back then it pushed me onto weed, which pushed me onto other drugs. Then issues or cocaine came a bit later, and a lot of drama between me and my mother came with that as well.



On the canal. Water, my calm place, where I found myself, where I found the strength to do this. I could take myself away from all the madness, sit down and just reflect and I love just any water any water. I'd sit there and just clear my mind, like a little safe place where I could think and go over what's been going on and try and work out how I'm gonna go from this crazy life to a less crazy life, a more positive than negative life. So, water has been my go to for that. Water has such a calming effect. You can literally just sit there and open your mind, I believe, I know, I've done it. The first point of my recovery was accepting it and telling myself I wanted to move on, by the water.



Bumping into [staff member name] was the start of my journey. That was my hope. Which obviously brought me here to this office. And the support I've had from here. It's just been amazing. It's not just my key worker, everyone's helped me. Everyone has helped me in in one way or another, it's a big team effort. And I've been street homeless as well. So that's been my bed sometimes. It's missing the dog [names staff member's dog], my little cuddle puppy.



I try to help people as much as I can. I'm a different version of me, probably the normal version of me, without the drugs, I see this is as the real person. I've been so selfish so it's nice to be able to give something back, especially when you're getting help. I think it benefits us more here that all the people in your organisation have been through their own struggles and their own life experiences and we've helped each other. There are issues like street homelessness that these didn't know, I've helped them, and they've helped me. We've all got value.



This picture is on [the] beach, where I ultimately found recovery.

The roses have a double meaning: Red Rose, which is the first point of access for me when I was still using, I was welcomed and brought together, and the four roses are my children.



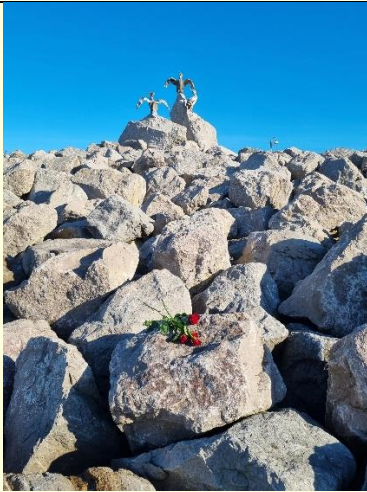
The rose is me lost, on my own and the pebbles surrounding are all the hurdles and trials and the stuff that I went through, all the bad stuff, BUT it's actually quite beautiful in this in this setting, the rose as my recovery symbol ... Lots of people around me, the pebbles, but so alone... The rose has double meaning; me and Red Rose Recovery... the rose is me, I am recovery, recovery to me is Red Rose.



Red Rose is a space where all recovery ideas come together. I actually got clean in a 12-step rehab, I followed 12-steps for two years. And it saved my life completely and a lot of the values and the ways that we're taught there, I have absolutely carried on into my life today.

BUT I also do not follow a 12-step programme to the letter now. There are other agencies, I use medication. I know it's a big like taboo, but I use medication and that really helps me to get clean and stay well. I have got bipolar disorder, so the medication is to help me with a normal life. And so are all those other agencies.

The books that I've put in, there's 12 of them set out like steps; the 12 steps for my own process and Red Rose is paramount to me. My first port of call.



Three birds in that background represent my grandchildren.

When I moved [here] and I got clean and got well, my children allowed me to be part of their life. They forgave me, and that's what that represents.

And the pebbles, the rocks are all the hurdles that we've overcome, what I've had to climb to get to where I am now. And the roses, it's how I feel I would like to represent Red Rose and my recovery symbol.



The rose theme represents Red Rose.

In the forefront where the boat is on its own, and it's docked, that's me finding recovery, anchoring myself to [this town]. And then in the distance where you can see the sea, it's just showing that the world is your oyster and you can get to where you want to be, and everything keeps moving and changing and I'm changing with it...

The sea is something bigger than me, more powerful, everlasting, ever changing, never ending, shows me how small I am in this world, so much beauty in such sadness I felt inside. The rose represents me alone, sad, lost, lost at sea, insignificant which is why the rose is placed how it is, small, not the focus.



These are my hands, that's my tattoo. On that bracelet is the Serenity Prayer. It's not an expensive bracelet, it was given to me when I achieved my first year of sobriety, and I had a friend in recovery. That friend hasn't made it through recovery. And so, it's really important to me, it represents the journey that I've been on. I do practice 12-Steps, so the Serenity Prayer is a big part of that. And that tattoo I had on my birthday, praying hands. The one thing that I had to find in recovery, we encourage everybody to find is, *meaning*, a belief in something bigger than yourself. And a belief that we can be better, and that we can do better. And there is more to life out there. Part of my recovery is I pray. Now, I'm not religious or anything, mine is spiritual, so I pray to a higher power, something bigger than me. For some people that can be Red Rose, it can be other people in recovery, it can be somebody we've lost, it can be anything. To me, it's like the power of the universe, and nature. So that tattoo, a fairy, was for me, when I'm praying, it's to remind me that there's magic in the world. For me, that's what Red Rose is, reminding people that even in the darkest moments, when they put their hands together, and pray, there's still magic out there.



My recovery is based totally in nature. I absolutely believe in the 'five ways to wellbeing'. Getting out in nature is realising that we are a small part of this world and we're all a little working part in it. And I liked his picture, because it was like a valley, and it's like, and that's what kind of Red Rose is, sometimes we're all scattered around, but if we just focus ourselves, and we'd walk through that valley together, we can see that there's a big wide world on the other side of that.

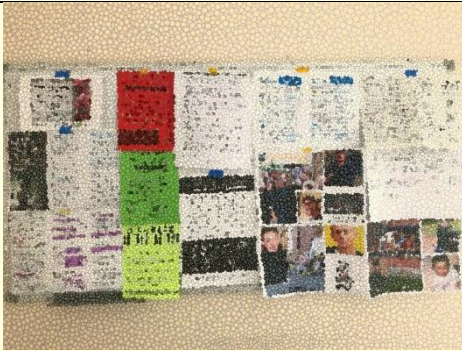


This is near where I live. I go to this spot, pretty much every day and I try and watch the sunset if I can. And it's my point of meditation. I'm not great at what most people would call meditation, but it's kind of a sit in silence. And for me, it shows that on the horizon, it doesn't matter what else is out there, there's always light at the end. So, I liked that, it was the fact that we had the light beams coming down. No matter what's going on around, there is light at the end of that tunnel. I think that's what Red Rose does. It gives people the meaning, shows them that there's a spot to focus on and there is a beautiful life on the other side of this.



One of our groups. This is what Red Rose Recovery is about. In this circle, we've got people that are still drinking and using. We've got people that are in rehab and get let out just to come to our group. We've got volunteers, we've got staff members, and other people from the community all together, all supporting each other, arms around each other. We're all in this together, everybody's here as one. It doesn't matter where we come from, it doesn't matter what point in the journey we are, Red Rose Recovery is there for everybody. It's not about hierarchy or somebody being better or further on, it doesn't matter. We're all in the same place, we're all together, we're all coming for the same reasons, the

same goals and that's to try and get better and to try and support each other to do that.



We have a board at the back of the office where we put up different information. This represents to me that nobody does this alone. We don't work as one single entity, we work alongside our partners. This doesn't work unless everybody's working together, we all have to be pulling in the same direction. Without that collaborative working, we don't get anywhere, we appreciate that and we put that at the forefront. If we can't help you straight away, or if there's an area of your life that we can't help with, we know somebody that can, not everybody knows everything, and we recognise that. We're there as a vehicle to show everybody the places that they can go and to help them facilitate that. So that's about collaborative working and working together.



My great love is music and singing, this is something I find very therapeutic and really valuable for my mental health. I got some of my sheet music together and arranged it and photographed it. The piece that you can see at the front is 'Sing gently'. This was a worldwide choir project that took place during lockdown. So, when everyone was shut away, isolated, there's this composer who wrote this piece, and he put out a global call for people to participate in this choir. We all sing our own part and then he edited it all together. Hundreds of thousands of people participated, I think it was record breaking. I think it was the biggest kind of collective singing, virtual choir that had ever been made. The song is all about singing together as one, even though we sort of separated, we kind of came together with our voices. So that's why I chose that particular piece at the front.



Nature has been a major part of my recovery, where I find peace and refuge in the natural world and the outdoors and connecting with wildlife particularly. On this walk, this family of swans came flowing down the canal and I'm pretty sure this family of swans, I've watched grow up. I think there's eight cygnets. I liked the fact that it represented togetherness, that it's a family growing up and becoming independent, but it's still bonded together, and they still hang out together. We often talk about Red Rose Recovery being a family and that's really been my experience. It's not like any other workplace that I've been in the sense of shared experience and genuine care for one another. And the fact that we are bonded over our lived experiences gives us a sense of togetherness that you don't tend to find in most workplaces. Having that all in common creates a really strong connection. Togetherness, bonding and sticking together through the changing seasons, and as time passes.



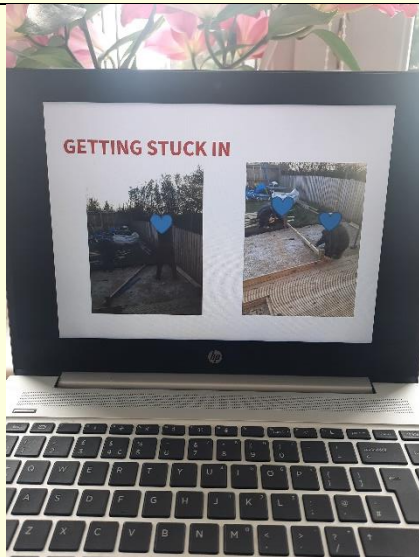
Me at the shore. The bay is obviously quite an important place for the three of us from that area. I really like getting out to the coast and watching the sunset. I took this when I'd had quite a difficult day, a really good friend had randomly fallen out with me, she's going through some stuff at the moment and I was in the firing line, it was really horrible. So, I did what I do now when I'm feeling overwhelmed, and I get out into nature. I've always lived by the coast except for a few periods in my life I really missed it. There's something really powerful I think being by the ocean. It is that sense of something much bigger than us and having this force of nature. I wanted to make it black and white because I wanted it to show I was in a dark place at that time. But I'm looking out towards the light and that's hope. There is a light out there and when things are feeling dark and claustrophobic it's not permanent, the sun will rise tomorrow.



This isn't my cat; this cat has kind of adopted me. I think this cat lives in one of the houses behind mine, and it just started coming into my garden last year. It happened to be the time where I was just starting my recovery. So, this coincided with quite a challenging, tumultuous time in my life, a really difficult time in my life and this cat started just coming and hanging out with me. It made me feel less alone. In a time that did feel quite scary and isolating, that sense of feeling alone and isolated in addiction and dependency is one of the worst feelings in the world. And we can't do it by ourselves, we have to do it with other people. Recovery is a team sport. And I think connecting, whether it's with other people, or with the natural world, the environment, something bigger, something spiritual, connecting, breaking that cage of isolation is, is important. And I like the way that the cat in this picture is framed by nature, surrounded by nature and kind of held by it. So that was a point of identification for me as well, that sense of being held by nature and this beautiful world that we live in.



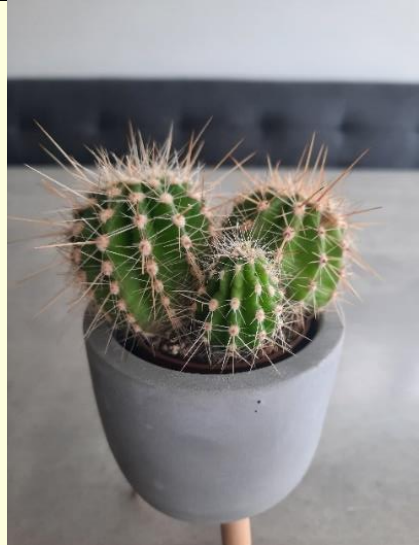
These are Lego boxes from one of my kids, I've deliberately split some into two different boxes. One box has a door and one a heart, this represents that we're all different as people and we all bring different strengths to our work. Some of us might be all heart and all relationships in our work, some of us might be all practicalities; how to remove barriers and open doors, some of us might be a mix of these things. But while we're keeping people apart in boxes, we are missing a trick. And what coproduction represents to me is the possibility of bringing all these different strengths together. What new things might we discover if we stop putting people into boxes, and stop separating people off?



I've anonymised the people in this picture, but the slide is taken from a presentation Red Rose did to students at the University. It was my introduction to Red Rose Recovery and this kind of work. The story that sticks in my head was of a barbecue held by the recovery community, which a mum came along to. She shared that one of her children, who was disabled, didn't have a safe area to play, so you as an organisation brought people together who had various skills and resources, got some materials from somewhere, asked this mother's neighbours if they had any skills. You created, free of charge, a garden for the child and their friends to play in. And it just shook me up as a social worker because we often sit in offices trying to solve complex problems, but I think sometimes we've forgotten how to bring people together to solve problems, how to connect people. So, this picture was about being struck by that as a positive piece of coproduction work.



This is plaster, I was getting some repair work done and I liked the patterns that it was making. But what it represents is the unknown mess underneath what can look quite smooth and together on the surface. So, my when I was repairing my kitchen, everything needed doing underneath – all the pipes and all the electrics, all the gas, everything needed repairing, and I didn't know until it took the plaster off the wall. If you come in today and look at that plaster, it looks smooth, it looks neat, it looks sorted, but it doesn't show you the work that's gone on underneath. This has double meaning: whatever we're recovering from, whether its illness, addiction, pain, bereavement, people don't always see what's gone on underneath. The other part represents coproduction because sometimes we see these neat studies that have happened, or these neat projects in and they look amazing, but we don't really see the difficulties that's gone on underneath, all the struggles along the way.



The cactus is prickly. I love coproduction. I've got a real interest in it. I try to co-produce work that I do. I'm interested in projects like yours that use coproduction. But I also think we don't say enough about how difficult it can be sometimes and we rub up against each other in these spaces. We're all different, we bring different things. We often speak different languages, we've had different training, we've had different life experiences. And sometimes these things jar, and we bump up against each other, and that can feel prickly. And that's okay. Because this plant is doing that and it's still beautiful, and it's still natural and wonderful. But we need to acknowledge the difficulties as well that come with it. So that's why the prickles are there.



Red Rose Recovery supports the Lancashire user forum. On the face of it, it can look like something very small, but when you go inside, it's huge, it's got so many different rooms, like a Tardis. When you just look at it, you see one thing but when you get in there, it's whatever you want it to be, it's a bit like the secret wardrobe in Narnia, a different world. That's like the community, we've got to have a stake, something that's ours, that belongs to us, a place of safety. And that's what the Lancashire user forum is. Like in the olden days, there were raiders, everyone was drawn to the castle because it was a place of safety, and it just opened the doors, and it was for everyone; friends, allies, everyone.



Transformation. That idea that you can die, but also have everlasting life. One part of me is dead but another part of me is alive. That's what recovery means to me, changing, transforming from one thing to another, but on the inside.



Red Rose recovery is a bridge to normal living. It's whatever you want it to be across that bridge but you've got to make that journey. There's a bridge to normal living, we've got training, we've got employment, we've got peer support, we've got mutual aid. We've got all the things that tend to make your life rich or it's whatever you want it to be.



The sign: no swimming, you mustn't do this! For Red Rose Recovery it's about making good choices, but you have to take responsibility for them. It's not our responsibility, it doesn't sit with us. Your recovery sits with you, you're the recipient, we're the facilitators of that, but it's your life, its over to you. And I suppose this was a bit tongue in cheek because it's telling you not to do something that you can't do anyway...



... the water has gone. One of the pillars of Red Rose Recovery is the environment, and before our eyes, the environment is changing. And we can change it, if we get our behaviours right, we can have an impact on that environment.



These two pictures speak to the environment. We can change it, if we get our behaviours right, we can have an impact on that environment.



These images were added later, without commentary for audiences to interpret.



