

Recovery Advocacy Toolkit

Faces and Voices of Recovery UK is a prominent organisation unifying and mobilising the UK Recovery Movement. We are also a public and professional education and advocacy organisation, challenging attempts to dehumanise, objectify and demonise those with alcohol and other drug problems.

We have produced this toolkit to support people across the UK in Recovery Month (and throughout the rest of the year). We hope you find the ideas, tips, and practical suggestions helpful, whether you are a

- long-established Recovery Community
- a newly constituted organisation
- Or a group who is considering becoming legal entity

Whether you are a treatment provider or recovery support service, a peer led recovery support project, a service user group or simply a handful of people in recovery getting together to organise something, this resource can help you identify how you can become an advocate of recovery.

We look forward to seeing you at our annual **Recovery Walk** every September, to celebrate the achievements of individuals in recovery and acknowledge the work of prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. Why not visit our website to find out more, download some of our free resources and even join the charity (it's free) and support our work:

Annemarie Ward Chief Exec, Faces and Voices of Recovery UK



BY OUR SILENCE WE LET OTHERS DEFINE US

Faces & Voices of Recovery UK is a charitable organisation dedicated to organising and mobilising across the UK through advocacy, campaigns, and challenging stigma. With the support of lived experience, families, friends and allies, recovery community organisations and networks are able to promote the rights and resources to make recovery possible.

As a public and professional education organisation we have produced this toolkit to support the work of those involved in local advocacy work for prevention, treatment, and recovery support services. We hope you find it useful.

If you require more support with advocacy in your local area please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at

info@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org

*“When the world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”
– Malala Yousafzai.*

The Oxford English dictionary defines advocacy as “**public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy**”. Recovery advocacy simply means publicly supporting recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. It can take different forms, for example working to improve local services so that everyone has every opportunity to recover, challenging disinvestment in services, supporting someone to get the treatment and support they need and challenging all forms of stigma that objectify and dehumanise people addicted to alcohol and other drugs.

INDIVIDUALS, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

People in any stage of recovery, along with their families and friends, are **visible, living proof** that there are solutions to addiction to alcohol and other drugs. They can be powerful advocates when they talk about their experience of recovery in public. They can help inspire people in addiction to try recovery for themselves and help educate the public and influence policy and decision makers.

GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Similarly, people working in the field such as doctors, public health professionals, local government officers, and civil servants can be powerful advocates, for example, by working to improve local services or arguing the case that investing in effective prevention, treatment, and recovery support services brings many benefits to the whole of society.

ALLIES OF RECOVERY

Anyone who supports recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs can, and should, be a recovery advocate. There are also many people across the UK on many pathways of recovery that may want to advocate for effective prevention, treatment, and recovery services by speaking out about their own recovery experiences but may feel apprehensive because of the principle of anonymity. There is, however, a long and rich tradition of people in 12-step recovery speaking out as advocates. Many other pathways to recovery also are strong advocates of recovery.

Faces and Voices of Recovery UK provide “Recovery Ally Training” to support anyone in any position to become an ally easily and readily.

[Click here for more information about the Recovery Ally Training](#)



WHERE TO START

We cannot underestimate the power of good solid relationships with those who can further our cause. These are people who have seats at decision-making tables (and indeed their staff) that have similar interests.

1. RESEARCH

Your local town councilors, politicians and community activists.

Things to think about that help you flesh out the picture in your area:

- ☐ Who are in close proximity to your service or your area?
- ☐ Can you invite them to visit your service to show them the work you do with your services users and put a face and a voice of recovery?
- ☐ What are their hot topics for discussion/interest and can your organisation help them give weight to their issues that support your needs?
- ☐ How accessible are decision makers themselves? Are you likely to see them in your local area? Do you need an introduction and who can make that introduction?
- ☐ Can you connect your aims and objectives with their personal interest?
- ☐ Do a values check. Is what they are talking about and how to get it, align with your organisations values?

2. MAKE YOUR SERVICE PROVISION ABOUT THE 'PEOPLE' WHO USE IT FIRST.

Statistical Information may be a 'cold' way to tell a story of a service user's journey to your service so bring those numbers to life with people's stories.

Local, regional and national reports are all available online from statutory bodies and from the voluntary and charity sector. Use that data to validate your request for support and connect it to their topics of interest. Translating the data into a voice of people's experience is powerful. Stories move us and connect us in ways that last for a long time.

Connect with FAVOR UK about our free [**Our Stories Have Power Training to support your storytelling.**](#)

3. RELATIONSHIPS WORK BEST WHEN THEY ARE BENEFICIAL TO BOTH PARTIES.

Are there opportunities for them to be connected to something in your service that gets good exposure?

Keep them up to date on your service developments. Invites to events that have a high attendance rate will attract attention.

Where possible attend public meetings where discussions are had in relation to your service. Be seen by them as present and interested in how they are going about their role.

Keep notes of comments they made, the language they use and see if there is an opportunity to support them in their work.

A solid relationship could be an opportunity to deepen the relationship with them, over time so they become a recovery champion, advocate or ambassador.

4. FUNDRAISING EVENTS IN YOUR AREA ARE PLACES TO MEET YOUR INFLUENTIAL OFFICIALS

Consider what is going on in your area that someone might attend that will be in your interest to meet and chat with informally.

All good networking starts with a conversation, not an 'ask' of them to support as the opening conversation.

Being in the same place at the same time creates a common ground for you and them. A good conversation starter when you do meet on a more formal level can relate back to something at the local event you both attended.

5. YOUR VISION

Get very clear on articulating your vision.

Having confidence in your own vision will go a long way to instill confidence in those influencers that they are supporting something solid. This can increase interest and enthusiasm to support you.

Nothing speaks louder than walking your talk.

Show inclusiveness, diversity, and equality in your service. Where possible have service users a part of all meetings and discussions.



6. SOCIAL MEDIA/NEWSLETTERS

Follow your representatives on their social media platforms and comment favorably when they post about your topic. Be very mindful of your type of engagement on the web.

It is there for everyone to see and comment further on it.

Remember the person posting on social media is doing so on behalf of your organisation and not from their personal opinion.

Sign up for their newsletters (if they have them) and keep yourself informed of what they are doing in your area.

[Click here for examples of how FAVORUK encourages people to post on social media supporting the Advocacy Project.](#)



DO'S

- ✓ Remind them of your name and service each time you meet. Assuming they will remember you can be awkward for both of you.
- ✓ Familiarize yourself the status of parliamentary bills that is relevant to your meeting. It shows you are keeping yourself informed of issues that impact you.
- ✓ Know the past votes of your official(s). Know what their attitude is about topics that are relevant to you. Remember we all have the capacity to change so they may have had a change of heart and mind over time.
- ✓ Get to the point, Use your time wisely when in front of them. They will appreciate brevity in their busy schedule.
- ✓ Express gratitude for their work and time.
- ✓ Bridge building is an art so even if you get a 'no' this time, the relationship built and having an open mind that things can and do change will help you connect easier the next time an opportunity comes around.

- ✓ Ensure you talk and engage with all officials and not just the ones who align with your interests.
- ✓ Remember you have the grassroots expertise about how policy impacts your service and service users and freely give this to them to inform future decision making.
- ✓ Be transparent. It is ok to name that opposite views may be held by you both but that you are both working on bigger picture and the experience of the service use is what is important.
- ✓ Do ask them for their support clearly.
- ✓ Keep to what impacts you directly. Going too broad can make your discussion too opaque.
- ✓ Have an 'at a glance' information sheet to leave with them. Sometimes less is more. The information sheet can sign post the official to a bigger more in depth report but let them see quickly and easily the pertinent information.

DON'TS

- ✗ Push so hard that it feels too pressurized.
- ✗ Ask the impossible every time and remind them of how they didn't support you before.
- ✗ Overwhelm use sectoral jargon and buzzwords.
- ✗ Be afraid to say you don't know. Offer to find out and send the information back.
- ✗ Confront, threaten, pressure or beg.
- ✗ Expect legislators to know everything about your service or indeed your sector. They are keeping track of a lot of broad topics and parliamentary bills.
- ✗ Start with a hostile attitude.
- ✗ Give financial support to their campaigns. It can be seen as trying to buy favour with those of influence.

SOCIAL CONTENT

Example posts you can use on social media.





We can end the UK's long-standing addiction crisis, one community at a time. That's why I'm taking action to #BackTheBill and joining the efforts of @FAVORUK #OorBill

Recovery is the solution to addiction. That's the message I'm sending my MP. Join me and @FAVORUK contact your MP. #RecoveryMovement Urge them to ensure everyone has access to treatment, making recovery a central focus:
<https://tinyurl.com/2py5p7yh>

LET'S GET SOCIAL



FOLLOW AND TAG US

-  @Faces & Voices of Recovery UK
-  @facesvoicesofrecovery
-  @FAVORUK
-  @Faces and Voices of Recovery UK



HASHTAGS

- #BackTheBill
- #OorBill
- #YouTalkWeDie
- #YouKeepTalkingWeKeepDying

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional information, resources, and guides for [Alcohol and drug misuse prevention and treatment guidance](#)

Additional Information on "Why Invest" in alcohol, drug prevention, treatment, and recovery- [Guidance: Alcohol and drug prevention, treatment and recovery: why invest?](#)

[Download the "Why Invest" Slides to use in your own presentations.](#)

Read more about the [Extra funding for drug and alcohol treatment: 2022 to 2023](#)

Read the press release about the ["Largest ever increase in funding for drug treatment"](#)

Read more about [The UK's FIRST Addiction Advocacy Service](#)

[Must Know: Treatment and recovery for people with drug or alcohol problems](#)

Read more about the 10-year plan to cut crime and save lives by reducing the supply and demand for drugs and delivering a high-quality treatment and recovery system- [From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives](#)

[Download the PDF "From Harm to Hope"](#)

[Download Resources](#)

[Helpful Articles](#)

