

UK Drug Policy Commission Consensus Group: a vision for recovery

Recovery must be **voluntarily-sustained** in order to be lasting, although it may sometimes be initiated or assisted by 'coerced' or 'mandated' interventions within the criminal justice system.

Recovery requires aspirations and hope from the individual drug user, their family and those providing services and support.

Recovery is about building a satisfying and meaningful life, as defined by the person themselves, and involves **participation in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society**. The word 'rights' is included here in recognition of the stigma that is often associated with problematic substance use and the discrimination users may experience and which may inhibit recovery. Recovery embraces inclusion, or a re-entry into society, and the improved self-identity that comes with a productive and meaningful role. For many people this is likely to include being able to participate fully in family life and undertake work in a paid or voluntary capacity.

Recovery is a **process**, not a single event, and may take time to achieve and effort to maintain. The process and the time required will vary between individuals.

The process of recovery from problematic substance use is characterised by voluntarily-sustained control over substance use which maximises health and well-being, and participation in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society

Recovery is about the accrual of positive benefits, not just reducing or removing harms caused by substance use.

Recovery requires **control over substance use** (although it is not sufficient on its own). This means a comfortable and sustained freedom from compulsion to use. For many people this may require abstinence from the problem substance or all substances, but for others it may mean abstinence supported by prescribed medication or consistently moderate use of some substances.

Recovery may be associated with a number of different types of support and interventions or may occur without any formal external help: no 'one size fits all'.

Recovery **maximises health and well-being**, encompassing both physical and mental good health as far as they may be attained for a person, as well as a satisfactory social environment.