

Recovery Devon's Team (Board) WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan)

What can we do, as a leadership team, to stay well so we can function well in supporting developments in recovery in Devon?

Background

The Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) has become the best-known tool to support self-management and taking effective action to stay well. WRAP was originally devised by Mary Ellen Copeland working with experience-based experts in Vermont nearly 30 years ago. It arose as a practical, supportive and skilfully designed answer to the question, 'what can I do to get well and stay well?'

It does not offer content or suggestions of what to do so much as a framework with which to work out for yourself what triggers a loss of health and wellbeing, how to notice that and, though reflecting on personal experience of what has proved helpful or effective, making plans for what to do to restore it. It centres on taking care and responsibility to write your own plan to guide action in the light of experience.

It has stood the test of time, travelled around the world and been adapted to different services and cultures and tuned to the needs of different groups, from military veterans to children and families. The basic idea remains the same. Anyone, everyone, if they choose can pause for thought and carefully consider their resources, the difficulties that trip them up and after reflecting on 'what works for me', plan and act to maintain health and wellbeing when difficulties arise. This is not easy. Working on your own recovery takes effort and concentration and so a WRAP is best developed when relatively well; when people are more able to use the questions and framework of headings it offers to write their own self-help manual. It can only be written by and owned by those it is about. It intended to be a living, open document that is read and reflected upon often and is continuously revised in the light of changing circumstances and further experience. It is a framework for learning.

Recovery Devon began with a major conference in 2003 at which Mary Ellen was the key speaker introduced people to WRAP and inspiring people to use it. This set off a cascade of training and learning and two years later there had been over 100 WRAP training courses across Devon and it was firmly on our Recovery landscape. It was designed as a tool for individuals but can equally be applied to groups, teams and organisations who want to ask ... 'What can we do to get well and stay well?'

Purpose

Our creativity and productivity are closely connected to our health and wellbeing. It is hard to 'do well' if we cannot 'be well' and wellbeing provides a foundation for work. There is value in creating a WRAP plan but its value is really found in using it regularly and skilfully, with commitment and developing it in the light of our further experience. Over time and with successive revisions it increasingly becomes a well-shaped and well working tool that accurately reflects our world, how we live in it and what we can do to live as well as possible within it. We have arrived at our first version – we now need to think what to do with it. Individuals are encouraged to read and reflect on their WRAP daily as a lively reminder of how to stay well and to prompt timely concern when action is needed. The challenge in constructing a team WRAP is in working out how best to take this seriously and think how we can effectively put it into action – together!

Recovery Devon: TEAM WRAP

As with any WRAP plan this covers the following headings:

1. What are we like when we are well?
2. What are our wellness tools?
The Wellness Tool box
3. What do we need to do every day (and less frequently) to stay well?
Daily Maintenance plan
4. What are our Triggers?
- And what can we do about them
5. What are early signs of something going wrong?
– And what can we do about that
6. What are signs of things getting worse / things breaking down?
– And what can we do about that
7. What can we do when we are beyond being able to resolve things ourselves? -
Crisis Planning
8. What have we learned? Post-crisis planning

The value of an action plan is in making sure it is put into action ...

How to use our WRAP to stay well

The main value of WRAP is in using it. So ... the recommendations for using a personal WRAP include the idea of reading it when well and spending 10-20 mins reflecting on it daily to reinforce awareness and commitment to staying well and being prepared to take the positive actions that we have worked out ourselves when needed in response to triggers. When things do get difficult it is suggested that attending to the actions we planned for ourselves is given more time and becomes an increasing priority. If a stage is reached when things are getting worse or breaking down then putting our plans into action then become the top and possibly sole priority, as we are heading for a crisis.

This is how we will use our Team WRAP

- 1. Each member of the board to have a personal copy** and asked to read and reflect on it regularly, perhaps alongside briefing papers prior to each monthly board meeting, to use it in support of our wellbeing.
- 2. We regard our WRAP as a tool, an open document** that will need regular 're-sharpening' in the light of continuing and changing experience and will be routinely reconsidered as part of the biannual review of our business plan
- 3. We will check in with one another** at the beginning of each board meeting, asking 'how are we doing' ... this is an opportunity to gather an impression of how and where we are in relation to our WRAP.
- 4. RD MD (James) to carry a specific responsibility for a regular 'health check'** of RD Board's organisational health and lead the Board to implement the WRAP and consider if it continues to be fit for purpose or needs changes.
- 5. It is a shared plan, so any board member will raise the need for action, change and development** of the WRAP if it does not meet a specific situation – this is a shared responsibility.
- 6. Our WRAP will be posted on the open website for RD** as a declaration of our commitment and intent to work in this way and something that others can hold us accountable to e.g. members at open or general meetings

We will therefore aim to support one another and our team by *using* our WRAP plan and through using it also be learning through doing.

1. What are we like when we are well?

This is a description of how people experience one another in the Recovery Devon Board, when we are at our best – when we are well. It is a team portrait that we all recognise and which reminds us of how we can be. It is what we should attend to and maintain and we can use it to be aware of when we've changed – 'are we like this, now?'

What we bring to the Board: we are

- Enthusiastic and fun to be with
- Generous and hospitable
- Innovative
- Reflective
- We appreciate the value of being realistic and understanding limits

How we treat each other

- We are aware of and responsive to one another
- Contributions are valued and we make space for others to contribute and join in
- We are respectful, accepting and appreciative of what one another brings ... even if we are in a 'mixed up place'
- We are honest and can be constructively critical and creatively challenging; in response, we are ready to take direction from one another

What the team is like to work in

- We want to turn up for meetings
- We create a safe place to be together. There's a freedom to 'get it wrong' and that's OK

What the team does

- We aspire to live and work as a team by the values we advocate
- We act responsibly and meet deadlines
- The team is productive and is characterised by a shared experience of:
 - Knowing we are fulfilling our core purpose – both to our satisfaction and for those who commission us
 - A lively and creative interaction with those who constitute the 'community of goodwill' around Recovery Devon, its members, supporters and other agencies
 - A clear sense of not only working in the community but with the community, and we can give practical examples of that in action.

One board member commented that, 'We are the evidence', at our best we represent and embody what we value and advocate – a visitor would 'get it'.

2. What are our wellness tools?

In our experience this is what supports and sustains our wellness as a team:

What we have inherited:

- Substantial history and foundations
- A good reputation
- Secure finance (about as secure as it can be)

Our values

- Belief and confidence in a clear vision concerning “Recovery”, which we all share and to which we are committed
- We have hope and goodwill
- We value co-production

Our skills

- We communicate well, listen and share
- We are flexible and adaptable, able to respond to changing circumstances
- We give value to a range of knowledge – personal, professional, research based
- We are realistic and aware... including of limits and gaps
- We take feedback seriously, consider it and see from different perspectives
- We take time to reflect
- We know how to support each other with our responsibilities

Organisational strengths

- We have stable, coherent structures with clear accountability
- We have good leadership and well chaired meetings
- We keep things simple, e.g. “just enough” documentation
- We have a business plan
- We are linked to many networks and partners

We have a lot of skills and resources to call on

Many are relationship skills and aspects of the culture we have developed over many years. These are clearly useful in sustaining our wellbeing and good functioning but are also vulnerable to change should we become less well. They highlight the need for and value of us taking care to ‘keep our tools sharp and well oiled’ i.e. they need to be in good condition if we are to be able to rely on them.

3. What does the Recovery Devon team need to do regularly to stay well?

By definition this is what we need to do to stay well. It's useful to keep this brief, i.e. to what is *needed* so we can see what's most important and make sure it gets done, and if whoever is responsible is not available that it passes to another director, since if we don't do what is necessary we are in trouble.

Every day / week we need to ...	Who is responsible?
Stay in touch with one another - share information, phone in, email, stay connected. Ensure good documentation to sustain communication for people not present	All
Engage with those around us: DPT, members of RD CIC, public	All
Ensure good external communications via Recovery Devon gmail and phone	MD, []
Keep up to date with website and social media	Webmaster, all
Let one another know if we are not well, and ask for help if we need it	All
Celebrate success	All
Attend to agendas and meeting dates	
Attend to action points from previous Board meetings to progress actions	All with action points
Think about new ideas / directions for Recovery Devon Be on the lookout for new opportunities for activities and projects	All

Every month we need to ...	Who is responsible?
Remind members and prepare, documentation, agenda, financial and other reports or papers	MD: those with specific responsibilities
Turn up to Board meeting – or inform one another if going to be absent	All
In the meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - greet one another, and check in and out - speak up and contribute - be prepared to make and meet a challenge constructively - prompt, invite and welcome the contribution of others - crack jokes 	All All All All Some more than others ... !
Produce and disseminate minutes within a week of the meeting	Minute-taker

Do the payroll, pay the bills	Finance
Carry out supervision	Line managers

Less frequently we need to:	Who is responsible?
Do Companies House return	MD
Review policies and business plan, using this as an opportunity to check back on ourselves that we are still respecting, living our values	All: MD to agenda
Ensure that our contingency planning is up to date and everyone knows what their responsibilities are	All

Another way of thinking about what we can routinely do to stay well is to adopt a team version of the ‘5 ways to wellbeing’

Following the acronym CLANG:

Connect – if we haven’t heard from someone for a while or we just want to say hello.

Keep Learning – if an aspect of our roles is something we don’t know much about we could commit to asking about it and seeking learning

be Active – we could make time to do something active together; a walk, a bike ride, we could take a break for a few minutes stretching in a long board meeting.

take Notice – we are in tune in with each other and notice when things aren’t quite right.

Give – we do this with our ‘bring and share’ lunch. Giving care, concern and interest to each other is important; if one of us is doing something for charity we could support them.

4. What are our Triggers?

These are the issues, events or experiences which unsettle us, trouble us, trip us up and if unchecked bring us down, make us less well and create escalating difficulties ...

Stresses and difficulties arising from ourselves:

- If one of us is struggling with our own health and wellbeing – leading others to think ‘what’s going on?’
- Excessive demands, either too big a spread of activity, too many tasks or too much responsibility, feeling pressured and not able to say ‘no’
- Needing and not getting a rest / break – getting tired or exhausted
- Unrealistic expectations

Shocks and difficulties arising from others:

- News of severe adverse events in the lives of people we know can upset, threaten and disturb us: e.g. hearing of people becoming very unwell, getting into trouble or ending their lives
- Disappointments at how people have responded to our efforts, leading to blaming self and being troubled by, ‘what have I done wrong?’
- Transitions and changes whether planned or imposed by others

We know that these painful events, handled well and responded to with skill, support and understanding are also sources of our growing maturity and resilience ... hence the value of ...

OUR TRIGGERS ACTION PLAN

1. Be honest and open

- Be honest and open about our own experience toward and with one another
- Take the time and take care to feel properly in touch with others, e.g. at the “checking in” time at meetings

2. Look after each other

- Encourage one another and be appreciative
- Be aware of one another’s’ personal ‘triggers’ and able to be considerate and caring
- Actively watch out for the wellbeing of those who carry a lot of responsibility

3. Lighten the load

- Moderate expectations so they are realistic rather than perfectionist
- Share responsibilities and ownership
- Find / ask other people to give time to reflect upon difficulties and plan useful actions

4. Forward planning

- Make sure to stick to daily maintenance plan
- Prepare and plan contingencies for how to respond to ‘shocks and difficulties’
- Use ‘adverse experiences’ as triggers to plan contingencies for similar events in future and grow experience and skills (don’t waste a good crisis)

5. What are early signs of something going wrong?

These are our signs that something is going wrong ...

What we bring to the Board

- People feel and act withdrawn and disconnected
- Loss of generosity
- We become 'allergic to good ideas' as they represent an unwanted demand
- Reduced capacity to absorb / accept stuff

How we treat each other

- Less supportive of one another / avoidant
- Loss of interest in and sensitivity to one another
- Reduced tolerance

What the team is like to work in

- Humour goes
- Atmosphere of meetings changes: feel anything from 'flat' to an 'ordeal'
- Jobs feel like an unwanted duty
- Discussions get critical or defensive
- We may be reluctant to own up to mistakes or worry we'll get found out and there will be a bad consequence
- Hostility / irritability / grumbling to each other outside of meetings
- Manner of challenging leadership decision – becomes more hostile or covert /hidden

How the team starts to fail

- Communication gets difficult or fails
- Non-attendance: we do not turn up to meetings and neither do others
- Productivity drops as action and activity drop to the minimum necessary
- Finances get out of order:
 - we overspend or fail and acquire debts or
 - underspend and fail to put our financial resources to work
- We miss opportunities because we haven't got the interest or energy to engage
- We make mistakes

OUR WARNING SIGNS ACTION PLAN

1. Be honest and realistic

- Be willing to face up to the difficulties, recognise them and be realistic
- Accept limits: recalibrate, recalculate and reset expectations so they are achievable
- Ask: what does this mean?
- Understand the problem

2. Look after ourselves and each other

- Be honest when someone's becoming unwell – be open and trusting with others, and others respond by being open and caringly responsive
- Ask for and welcome feedback
- Give permission to take time out / step back
- Enable responsibilities to be shared
- Be patient with one another but keep up standards i.e. not collusive

3. Take a step back

- Remember our values and purpose – what we are trying to do and why
- Reduce striving and stress
- Accept it will take time – don't knock yourself out

4. Prioritise

- Check maintenance plan is being effectively acted upon and reallocate responsibilities so that everything that needs to be done is being done

6. What are signs of things getting worse / breaking down?

This is a seriously worrying and painful state to be in and should alarm us and needs to be recognised as requiring urgent attention and committed action:

These are the signs that things are getting worse for us ...

- Break- down in all modes of communication – disjointed, fractured
- We are stressed and preoccupied with ourselves rather than our work as a team, and start blaming rather than thinking of shared responsibility
- Conflict within the team: we no longer trust each other and share difficulties
- Team split into factions: talking behind one another's backs – keeping secrets
- Overstretching ourselves beyond capacity and risking burn-out: we lose hope and start thinking about leaving Recovery Devon
- Things don't get done / are left as we lose our goodwill and do the minimum; the team no longer functions effectively
- A sense of fear, that we are not achieving the things we should be achieving
- A sense of disaster: if we can't pull this back what will we do?

OUR 'GETTING WORSE' ACTION PLAN

Principles:

- Decide in advance how to establish leadership in case of crisis
- Be clear that anyone in the Board can suggest a crisis meeting – shared responsibility
- Be clear what the priorities are e.g. what functions must continue and which can be left or postponed

How we should behave:

- Avoid blame
- Show compassion for one another and the situation
- Need to find, make and take time to focus on restoration: pull back, slow down and take stock
- A time for tough leadership (tough love)

What we should do:

- Cut back to basics – make time and conserve energy – to put into the task of solving our own problems
- Share any hard decisions
- Talk to one another and not through mediators; but if this fails, get help from trusted supporters or consider external facilitation for a team meeting
- If we have serious concerns, but are unable to gain willing commitment from other team members to take action – we should all be prepared to 'blow the whistle' and raise the concern, having made sure that we have got the facts straight and that we have enough personal support and resources to see it through

7. What can we do when we are beyond being able to resolve things ourselves?

By definition – at this stage we have lost it – we are not a team and we are beyond our capacity to sort out the problems we are in disarray and need to look to others for help, as individuals and collectively as a team / board. At this stage, we do not have the time, energy or agreement for complicated or elaborate action. We need to face facts, be responsible, seek appropriate support and engage with what's going on to work on resolution, repair and recovery.

OUR CRISIS PLAN

- Be honest with ourselves and one another about what is going wrong
- Ensure that core responsibilities are being taken by someone
- Seek help from and formally engage outside mediators who may see things more objectively:
 - Advisors
 - Peer supporters
 - Senior managers representing our stakeholders

- Identify where we are going wrong and address the problems
- Learn from our experiences, reflect, be humble, be willing to accept change
- Not get stuck or try to go back to a nostalgic past

Ask ourselves if the organisation is still fit for purpose or needs to dissolve

8.LEARNING FROM A CRISIS – post crisis planning

If we get to the point where, despite our best efforts, things break down and we enter a crisis, we are, by definition, beyond what we can sort out ourselves and need to call on others to help us get through the difficulties ... it seems, feels and looks like a mess and a failure but the best thing we can do is to use this experience to grow and develop. We can commit to learning from whatever has happened and draw from it useful understanding of what could be done to avert crisis or limit harm another time. We can use this information to make better, possibly more effective plans for how to stay well and take more effective action, should we get into difficulties again in the future.

If we are still together and wanting to continue with the work we need to find a way to ask, 'how can we honestly, openly, genuinely reflect upon:'

- How well did our WRAP work for us / how well were we able to use it?
- DID we use it?
- What were the positives?
- What were the elements that didn't work?
- What can we learn from this experience?
- How can we adjust our WRAP to be better suited to our needs, more robust and effective for the future?