

Giving Hope, Supporting Recovery and Building Futures:

Young Consumers share their experiences:
By Angel Richter

Objectives

- **Share my experiences and the experiences of others**
- **Give insight into what young consumers want to:**
 - Aid them in their recovery
 - Provide them with hope
 - Build happy and successful futures

Contributors:

- **Consumer experiences:**
 - Two fellow consumer contributors
 - Direct quotes used where possible
 - Paraphrasing where necessary
 - Full written transcripts available upon request
 - Contact at wrangle99@gmail.com

Personal Service History:

- **Initial involvement**
 - Domestic violence and physical abuse
 - Drifted between services
- **Suicide of my best friend**
 - Introduction into psychiatric services
- **Bounced from service to service again**
 - Settled in an (awesome) residential rehabilitation program



- **Services used:**

- D.H.S. (Department of Human Services)
- General counselling
- Day programs
- Outreach
- A.M.H.S. (Area Mental Health Service)
- C.A.M.H.S. (Child And Adolescent Mental Health Service)
- C.A.T.T. (Crisis and Assessment Treatment Team)
- P.A.R.C. (Prevention And Recovery Care)
- Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Program
(Current program which I have been with for roughly 12 months now)



Overall Positives

- **Staff members who:**

- Love their job
- Are quite inspirational
- Motivating
- Determined to help consumers achieve their goals

Positives cont.....

- **Running optional group activities:**
 - Giving consumers opportunities to experience new things
 - Build on teamwork and trust
 - Socialization
 - Forming healthy relationships
 - Consumer input into activities

Positives with contributor assistance:

- **My contributors thoughts:**
 - Both spoke passionately about the positive aspects of optional group activities
 - Assisted with recovery
 - Negative aspect due to lack of funding
 - Benefits of activities limited due to lack of funding
 - Service providers and funding
 - Contributors and I believe this should be made a bigger priority




- **Consumers work hard:**

- Sometimes consumers need to have down time
- Kick back and have fun, or just relax
- Unwind
- Learning to balance out our lives is very important
- Socializing and having fun is essential to recovery



Positive Experiences

- **My current Residential Rehabilitation Program has taught me:**
 - Community living skills
 - Being aware and understanding the needs of others
 - New life skills
 - Flexibility
 - Working effectively within a community

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- **This service has provided me with:**
 - Readily available, ongoing support
 - Opportunities in regards to personal development
 - Educational, fun off program activities
 - Assistance in achieving independence
 - Opportunities in regards to study and work
 - A safe and secure environment to help with recovery
 - Hope, in life and for my future



Contributors Add To This:

- **To emphasise this I would like to quote both of my fellow contributors:**
 - One contributor said:

“For a long time I didn’t really believe there was much hope for me and I thought that I’d never get better and I’d never have that hope to go back to my family or live a normal life. But quite recently after I’ve done a lot of talking with the house that I’m in at the moment and the staff there they’ve really helped me and I’m really beginning to see some hope and that’s a really good and positive thing.”



- **Contributor quotes continued:**

- The other added:

“[The services I have used have helped] me see a lot clearer about things and what I used to be like compared to what I’m like now, a whole different person and I really thank them for that.....I feel so much better about myself and my confidence and my day to day.....seems so much better.”



Psychiatric Service Experiences:

- **Psychiatric wards:**
 - Voluntary/Involuntary system
 - Feeling of rights being violated
 - Assumption of being incapable of making decisions regarding treatment and recovery
 - Needs to be more of a focus on supporting consumers with coping and understanding their conditions.

Contributor Input:

- **When speaking about her experiences with clinical services one of my contributors said:**

“I think that in some of the services that I went to they could have been a bit more understanding or a bit more straightforward instead of beating around the bush and not telling you exactly what was going on. Because I did find that quite annoying because you’d be sitting somewhere or talking to a psychologist and then you’d find out the next day that you’re going somewhere and you’re like “well I wasn’t told this” so I think that just be more straightforward with the client and to tell exactly what is going on would have been really good.”

Psych Services Cont....

- **C.A.T.T. follow ups:**
 - Need to be better and more consistent
 - Need to have greater awareness of individuals’ requirements
 - My experience regarding C.A.T.T. case management
- **This experience left me with:**
 - Little faith in services
 - Little hope in attaining “normality”
 - A feeling of having nothing

Bounce Back From Psych:

- **My current service had to work hard to:**
 - Build back up my ability to trust
 - My faith
 - Belief in services
 - Willingness to seek out assistance

Consumer Focused Approach:

- **I would like to see:**
 - Consumers given more power and control over their own recovery and future
 - Having your opinion count for something, especially when it is regarding your life
- **Changing Psychiatric services/responses:**
 - There needs to be a value on what consumers want to achieve and how to go about their recovery

Long and Short Term Care:

- **Short term working with long term:**
 - There needs to be more of a focus on long term care
 - Short term service providers should assist in organising follow ups with consumers and creating links with long term services
 - The two need to work together to provide consumers with the best chance of making a full recovery

The Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Program:

- **Service provision:**
 - Provided me with a safe and secure place to live, that I have come to call my home
 - Constant ongoing support and motivation to do well
- **Helped me with:**
 - Getting into a course based on future employment goals
 - Personal growth, development and self discovery
 - Learn more about myself, my capabilities and ambitions

- Build desired future
- Build confidence within myself
- Work towards my desired future
- Use better coping strategies
- Better outlook on life
- **Experiences have:**
 - Given me great hope for the future
 - Helped me in taking great strides in my recovery

Contributor Input:

- **One of my contributors, who is also a client of this program, added:**

“They’ve helped me achieve my goals by really being there for me and trying to get me as much help and as much direction as possible so if I said I wanted to go back to school, which I did, they were more than happy to help out with that and they helped me with all the school interviews and check out each school and just really helped me in that aspect. And then when I said, you know, I have problems with mental health in this area they said “alright, well these are the services you can go to and we’ll get you hooked up to these.” So they really helped me in a lot of ways to get the help that I needed.”

Emphasis on Diagnoses:

- **Too much emphasis on diagnoses:**
 - A diagnosis doesn't define a person
- **When talking about her first experiences with mental health system one of my fellow contributors made the following complaint:**

“Instead of just trying to get me help they spent all this time trying to diagnose me with different things and it was a bit [confusing] because I spent all this time thinking I've got this mental illness and that mental illness and then they'd just go “oh no you don't have this and you have this.”

Emphasis On Diagnoses cont.....

- Right support can make the journey easier
- Support helps with confidence of getting through
- **Negatives associated with diagnoses:**
 - Causes a negative response with the consumer
 - Diminish consumers self confidence
 - Can greatly hinder their recovery

What I would like to see:

- **Approach I would like to see used:**
 - Humane, personal and individualised
 - Take the focus away from medication
- **Medications:**
 - Short term medication, should be just that
 - Experience regarding short term medication
 - Medication can be a useful tool
 - There needs to be continuous follow ups and reviews with short term medications
 - Situation needs to be openly discussed with the consumer
 - Many consumers want to get off their medication as part of their recovery

Summary:

- **What's been discussed:**
 - There are some services that help and support youth effectively
 - There are a lot of other services that need to improve on helping consumers recover
 - Services should provide consumers with hope for a better future
 - Consumers need to be given options and control over their lives and futures

Most Memorable Experience

- **Finally I am going to leave you all with my best experience with services:**
 - This event has assisted me greatly in my recovery and hope achieving my future goals
 - Story about Wade and the program and workers that made this all possible

Thank You

- **I would like to thank ALL of you for listening and:**
 - MIND Australia for supporting me in being here today
 - Richmond Fellowship for helping me make this possible
 - Gregor Henderson for his time and support
 - Mollie Campbell Smith for all her time and support
 - All the Workers from my current program

I hope you have found this helpful and have gained some knowledge about what youth think and want from services. Feel free to ask me any questions now, or if you see me walking around the conference at a later time. Thank you all once again for your time.