

## **Essex Health and Wellbeing Board Briefing note: Mental Health Recovery Colleges Approach**

**Date:** February 2024

### **Enquiries to:**

Moira McGrath, Director of Commissioning, ASC

Emily Oliver, Head of Strategic Commissioning: Mental Health,

## **Summary**

In response to a discussion at the January 2024 Health and Wellbeing Board, a briefing paper was requested regarding the approach to Recovery Colleges in Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET). This briefing paper sets out the current Recovery College offer across SET and details examples of how they could be further embedded into Community Mental Health Support to promote social determinants as a response to poor mental health.

The approach to Recovery Colleges differs across the Southend, Essex and Thurrock. The main difference is the funding and physical building based which is more financially viable in a smaller geography.

## **Background**

- Recovery colleges have been in existence since 2010 in Britain and have been available in Essex since a pilot was launched in Mid Essex in 2015.
  - The purpose of a Recovery College is to support people's recovery from mental health issues through learning and education that is co-produced and co-delivered by people with lived experience and people with professional expertise.
  - The courses are developed in line with what individuals identify as supporting their recovery and focus on Wellbeing and Resilience. They do this, through helping people to manage their diagnosis, developing coping skills, rebuilding confidence and also learning new skills including qualifications and skills to get back in to work.
  - Recovery colleges support the delivery of social determinants such as how to live healthy lives, how to build networks of support and how to build daily living skills.
- 
- In Southend, the charity TrustLinks provides the REACH Recovery College offering a wide range of courses, workshops and activities.
  - In Thurrock, NHS Inclusion, Thurrock and Brentwood Mind and EPUT work in partnership to deliver Thurrock Recovery College.
  - In Essex, Adult Community Learning (ACL) are offering courses across the ECC footprint. The offer includes a mix of face to face and online courses.

## Essex Current Offer and Performance

- Courses run all year round (offer is reduced over the summer as uptake is lower)
- The range of courses on offer are as follows:

2-week courses	6-week courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to Mental Health</li> <li>• Introduction To Building Resilience</li> <li>• Goal Setting For Wellbeing</li> <li>• Managing Anxiety</li> <li>• Mental Wellbeing During Change</li> <li>• Stress Awareness</li> <li>• Mental Health In A Man's World</li> <li>• Managing Sleep for Wellbeing</li> <li>• Managing Change In Life And Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Care For Resilience</li> <li>• Reducing Anxiety And Staying Healthy</li> <li>• Health And Wellbeing</li> <li>• Positive Thinking for Stress Reduction</li> <li>• Building Self Confidence</li> </ul>

- The colleges also trial different courses for different groups such as courses for men, Menopause, and carers but uptake for these has been varied.
- Access to courses dropped dramatically during Covid, but attendance is increasing. Access to courses in West has remained low, but the library in Harlow is now hosting courses and numbers are increasing.

Quadrant Numbers cumulative	Jul-21	Aug-22	Yr to date (1 term) Dec-23
Mid	205	237	69
South West	93	161	43
South East	15	28	7
North East	202	265	105
West	76	54	60
	591	745	284

- ACL have been linked with local networks including Alliances, Neighbourhood teams and with the MH Employment Service to help ensure their offer is embedded into changes in localities and that there are clear referral routes into their services. This is taking time to build, but opportunities are becoming available such as ACL being linked to the Waiting Well project in North East.
- Mid and South ICB launched a Recovery College in 2023 (within the Mid Essex geography), with an initial focus on taking referrals from EPUT. They intend to offer a wider range of courses focusing on situations such as

Domestic Abuse.

- ECC are in regular contact with Mid Essex to learn from their more targeted approach.

## Opportunities

- Many of the issues impacting an individual's mental health are about wider social determinants such as housing, work, physical health or isolation. There is an opportunity to be more holistic in designing support to meet these needs.
- As the Community Mental Health Model expands there is an opportunity to work with the ICBs to explore whether the Recovery Colleges could be commissioned with a much wider brief to provide a more personalised offer.
- Work is being undertaken by ECC with ICBs and localities to understand what community provision is available at Place and where the gaps are. There are some strong community networks already in place which we wouldn't want to disrupt, but there may be an opportunity to expand Recovery Colleges to be an umbrella structure to:
  - help with the coordination of community support and a community offer that brings together for example, 1:1 practical support with offers such as community mental health walks.
  - offer a navigation role helping people find the support they need.
  - Connect mental health support with health-based support, for example, linking someone with musculoskeletal issues and poor mental health because of it, directly with health provision such as physiotherapist and sports offers.
  - Direct referral route for Community Teams ensuring the most vulnerable and unwell are supported at the earliest possibility.
  - Offer training support to community groups to build consistency and sustainability in the system.
  - Potentially bring some efficiencies as the coordination could reduce duplication.
  - Support delivery of:
    - Everyone's Essex
    - SET Mental Health Strategy
    - ASC Business Plan
    - NHSE Long Term Plan for Mental Health
  - Expansion of the Recovery Colleges would be coproduced ensuring the values of the original concept are maintained.
  - To support some of the most vulnerable in our communities, the Essex County Council Mental Health Commissioning team are in the process of linking ACL with Mental Health Supported Accommodation settings to support individuals with daily living skills such as budget management, cooking skills etc, but this could be expanded to other Mental Health provision in communities.