



Sarah, Female,
Age: 40
Lives in South
Ayrshire

Background

After years of struggling with addiction, Sarah now understands her addiction as an illness rather than a personal failure. She has care of her young children and maintains contact with her family. She has been linked into Harbour for around two years, where she first accessed 1-1 support before gradually being introduced to local groups and other women in recovery.

Barriers/ challenges

- **Stigma**, impacts confidence in help-seeking, fears losing her children.
- **Mental health/neurodivergence**, which can be hidden
- **Experiencing emotions previously blocked**, early recovery may feel unsafe.
- **Signposting**, not knowing where to start or where to turn.
- **Life and unexpected things popping up**, creating instability, and interrupting progress or routines that support recovery.
- **Ego**, difficulty accepting help or acknowledging vulnerability.
- **Shame**, impact on honest conversations.
- **Protecting my identity**, Fear of community judgement, and anxiety about negative consequences if social work find out about her addiction

Strengths

- **Willingness to engage in 1-1 conversations**
- **Ability to form bonds with others**
- **Focuses on the present**
- **Self-awareness helps her to make informed choices**
- **Open to reflecting and forgiveness**
- **Wants to help others**

Key motivations:

- **Feeling connected to people who understand her** - Sarah wants to build relationships with other women in recovery. She feels safer in female only spaces.
- **Rebuilding her identity beyond addiction** - while in a safe and non-judgemental space, Sarah can separate herself from the stigma more by understanding that addiction is an illness, not her identity.
- **Feeling like she has a voice** - when she feels like she matters to others, it reinforces her progress.
- **Opportunities to give back and help others** - helping others strengthens her own recovery, builds her confidence, and reinforces her sense of purpose.

CHIME is a recovery framework that describes the key processes that support personal recovery.
Women told us they experience CHIME as:

Connectedness:

- Relationships formed
- A place that helped her "build herself back up"
- Introducing her to trusted friendships and other women
- One-to-one support and introductions to local community groups

Hope and optimism:

- Builds belief through peer stories
- Increasing confidence in her ability to stay abstinent
- Shifts from negative to more positive thought patterns
- Has a vision for a 'peaceful life'

Identity:

- See addiction as an illness not identity
- Actively challenges stigma and misconceptions
- Rebuilding self-confidence and self-value
- Develop greater compassion for self

Meaning:

- Feels worthy, valued, and listened to
- Re-engages with people and activities
- Reclaims roles and responsibilities
- Experiences increase in happiness and purpose

Empowerment:

- Feels safe, heard, and able to be herself
- Growing confidence to reconnect socially
- Processes trauma and develops forgiveness
- Takes control of day-to-day recovery
- Open to supporting others through peer roles