

Alcohol and Drug care pathways: Understanding the role of recovery communities in men's recovery



Mark, Male,
Age: 35
Lives in North
Ayrshire

Background

Mark has lived with addiction for much of his adult life. He feels his life has been defined by separation from others and his own sense of purpose. His addiction made him believe he wasn't good enough. He carries long-term stigma and negative self-beliefs.

Barriers/ challenges

- **Sense of separation from society**, feeling disconnected from communities, services, and social networks.
- **Ego masking / false identity**, where presenting a confident exterior prevents him from acknowledging needs or accepting help.
- **Given up hope / lack of hope**, making it difficult to engage with support, to believe change is possible, or sustain motivation.
- **"Glass half empty" mindset**, past experiences shape expectations of failure or disappointment.

Strengths

- **Lived experience that can help others**
- **Courage to be vulnerable and honest**
- **Strong empathy for peers**
- **Determination to grow and rebuild life**
- **Willingness to reflect on identity, behavior and patterns**

Key motivations

- **To feel connected and part of something** - being welcomed and understood by peers with shared experiences helps Mark to build trust and social confidence in a safe and non-judgemental space.
- **To grow and change his life** - seeing others recover gives him belief that recovery is possible.
- **To rebuild his identity and self-worth** - Mark wants to be the dad, partner, and man he always felt he could be.
- **To contribute and give back** - helping others through volunteering or offering his lived experience gives him purpose.
- **To stay accountable and responsible** - Mark wants stability, routine, and confidence in his own choices.

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

Connectedness:

- A safe base with men 'who get it'
- A sense of belonging and friendship
- Relief from isolation
- Opportunities for meaningful activities and days out and group bonding
- Positive role models and a reliable peer network

Hope and optimism:

- Seeing others recovery demonstrates that recovery is possible
- Lived experience is reframed as valuable not wasted
- Develop future ambitions
- Change in thinking patterns

Identity:

- Rediscover 'true self' beyond addiction
- Begins to see self in social role
- Reclaims self-worth through peer recognition

Meaning:

- Finds purpose in showing up, contributing, and volunteering
- Gained a renewed life direction he didn't expect
- Develops trustworthiness and responsibility
- Gains meaning through community engagement and helping others

Empowerment:

- Regains control of decisions and daily life
- Begins to trust himself
- Takes responsibility and shows accountability
- Builds confidence and consistency
- Becomes an example for others who are just starting their recovery