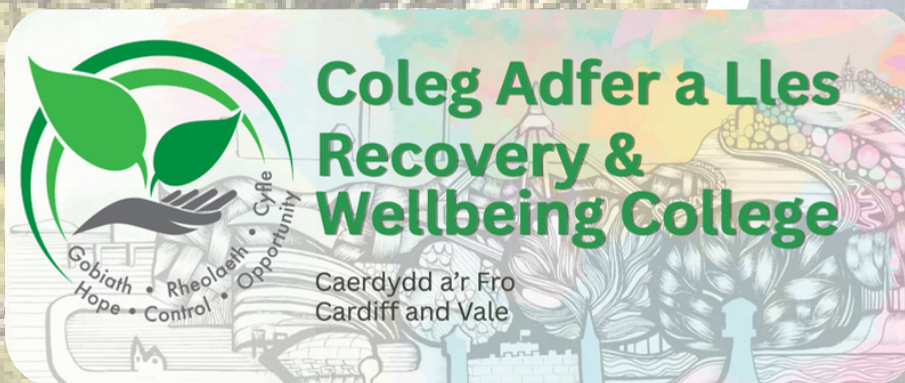




PROSPECTUS

Autumn Term 2026

14th September - 18th December



**GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES**

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Caerdydd a'r Fro
Cardiff and Vale
University Health Board

Welcome

Hello and welcome to the Autumn Term at the Cardiff and Vale Recovery & Wellbeing College as we celebrate our sixth year.

We are pleased to share our newly designed prospectus, shaped by feedback from our students and reflecting our ongoing commitment to making information as accessible, engaging, and easy to use as possible.

This prospectus is also the result of a huge amount of work from our team, whose dedication and attention to detail have made it possible. We would like to acknowledge the significant effort that has gone into bringing this together.

At the Recovery and Wellbeing College, learning is about exploring new ideas, building knowledge, connecting with others, and discovering what works for you. Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning, we hope you find something here that sparks your interest and supports you on your journey.

As always, our courses are developed through co-production, bringing together professional knowledge and personal experience to create learning opportunities that are relevant, practical, and meaningful.

Thank you to everyone who continues to contribute their ideas, experiences, and enthusiasm to the College. It is through working together that we continue to learn and grow. We look forward to welcoming you this term.

Rachel Wheeler

Cardiff and Vale Recovery & Wellbeing College Manager

Let's start with who we are.

The Cardiff and Vale Recovery & Wellbeing College is a completely **free open-access** NHS service that runs psycho-educational courses on a range of mental and physical health topics. We are a **peer-led service** meaning that lived experience is at the heart of what we do.

All our courses are **co-produced** by bringing lived experience together with the learned experience of clinicians and other health professionals to give a more complete view of the topics we cover.

Our courses are run in a workshop style with discussion and conversation central to how we can **all learn from each other**.



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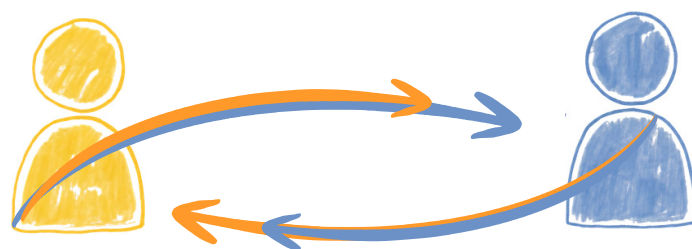
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Here is how to enrol:



Scan the QR code, which will take you straight to the enrolment form OR follow the instructions below

1. Go to www.cavuhb.nhs.wales/recovery-college
2. Look for the green ribbon that says, "To sign up with the Recovery and Wellbeing College, please click here", and click "here"
3. Fill in your details on the Student Registration Form that appears
4. Make sure you scroll all the way to the bottom and hit the orange "Submit" box
5. You will receive an email inside the next few working days with a link to your student portal where you can create your password
6. You are now ready to enrol on courses

If you need any assistance with your enrolment, contact our admin staff by ringing 02921 832619

Introduction to the Recovery and Wellbeing College

Date: Tuesday 15th September

Time: 11:00 - 12:00

Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

First time coming to the college? Or maybe it's just been a while since you did a course? Then this short introductory course is just for you.

It's designed to alleviate any worries you might have about attending courses as well as give some background to the Recovery & Wellbeing College and what you can expect as a student. There is space given all the way through for you to ask any questions, make comments, or get clarification on anything that might be on your mind.

We hope that by attending this short online course students become more confident about attending any of our other courses.

We highly recommend you do this course first to familiarise yourself with the Recovery & Wellbeing College

Understanding Anxiety

Date: Wednesday 28th October

Time: 13:30 - 15:30

Wednesday 4th November

Sessions: 2 **Location:** In-Person

Anxiety can come from anywhere, for any reason. It might be a journey somewhere new, or a doctor's appointment, or a job interview. For some it might be sitting exams or public speaking; for others, a trip down the shops might feel near impossible. It can be different for everyone.

This course examines the different types of anxiety and where they might come from. It looks at how anxiety may be viewed in a positive light when it comes to when we might be in danger, but also how these feelings might persist when we are in safety. It also looks at how we can manage our feelings around anxiety and how we might be able to prepare for when anxiety arises.

As well as increased knowledge, students should leave with a better understanding of how they might better navigate the world when anxiety becomes challenging for them.

Voices, Visions & Unshared Beliefs (Sometimes called Psychosis)

Date: Tuesday 10th November

Time: 13:00 - 15:30

Tuesday 17th November

Sessions: 2 **Location:** In-Person

The course considers experiences of voices, visions and unshared beliefs. It begins by looking at the definitions and diagnostic criteria used and the limitations these might pose. We discuss the frequency of the experiences in the general population and explore some explanations and theories about where such experiences might come from. We look at delusions and distress and consider the stigma and impact they can have on people, with a focus on the language that is often used.

We aim to provide a non-judgemental, inclusive space for people to discuss what these experiences are like for themselves or those in their lives.

We hope the course will provide useful information and deepen students' understanding of psychosis and importantly, provide an inclusive, safe space where students have an opportunity to be open and honest without fear of judgement.

Understanding Depression

Date: Wednesday 23rd September
Wednesday 30th September

Time: 13:30 - 15:30

Sessions: 2 **Location:** In-Person

Date: Wednesday 21st October
Wednesday 28th October

Time: 18:30 - 20:30

Sessions: 2 **Location:** Online

This course looks at what depression is; how it is defined and what that might look like for any of us, be it personally, or someone that we are close to. We consider some potential causes of depression and some of the medical theories used to explain it.

The course will provide a space for people to explore what depression might look like and discusses potential hurdles to recovery. The different forms of support available, professional and otherwise, will also be looked at. We also take time to explore some tools that might be used in recovery.

We hope the course will provide students with useful information on depression and provide a non-judgemental, inclusive forum for attendees to discuss the subject with other people with experience of depression in their lives.

Understanding Bipolar

Date: Friday 6th November

Time: 10:00 - 13:00

Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

Living with bipolar at any time of life can be a very complex and disorienting experience. The many myths and prejudices that are often associated with bipolar can make coming to terms with a diagnosis even more difficult.

Through facilitator-led discussion, this introductory session aims to help people with their understanding of these issues. We will discuss the history, the different types of bipolar, and the associated feelings, thoughts and behaviours that might accompany bipolar. We will examine the impact of receiving a diagnosis, as well as treatment options and support available.

Students should leave this course with a greater awareness of what bipolar is as well as some practical positive information of how others live with bipolar in their own lives.



Did you know ...? Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)

An ILP can be a great way to start your educational journey with the college as it is exactly what it says it is: a way to look at your own personalised learning plan. Some benefits of attending an ILP are:

- See which courses might interest or suit you best
- A chance to identify any learning or support that you may require accessing and participating in our courses and come up with solutions
- A fantastic opportunity to reflect upon one's strengths and skills
- One-to-one session which will be led by a member of college staff

Though ILPs are usually one-to-one, if you feel you need support it is more than okay to bring someone with you. This can, of course, also extend to attending courses.

ILP sessions are co-produced in a non-judgemental, informal, flexible, discussion-based way, and are facilitated by peers with lived experience and knowledge.

Being a Parent with a Mental Health Challenge

Date: Friday 25th September
 Friday 2nd October
 Friday 9th October
 Friday 16th October

Time: 10:00 - 12:30
Sessions: 4 **Location:** In-Person

This course considers the impact that raising a child may have on the mental health of parents and caregivers with both pre-existing and new mental health challenges. We explore possible reasons for these challenges, and how we might support our own well-being and the needs of our child(ren). This course also holds space for people who may be disconnected from their children in some way.

Students can expect sessions with relaxed discussions around these key themes. The sessions are facilitated by two people who are parents, bringing together psychological theory and lived experience to provide a holistic approach to navigating the challenges to parenting.

Some of the themes we will be exploring during the course include definitions of parenting, what changes when you become a parent, challenges that we might be experiencing, communicating our needs, self-compassion, acknowledging the challenges we face and identifying our strengths and what we have achieved.

Connecting with Relationships

Date: Tuesday 13th October
 Tuesday 20nd October
 Tuesday 27th October

Time: 13:00 - 15:30
Sessions: 3 **Location:** In-Person

Relationships are a fundamental part of being human. These might include our relationships with others, our environment, or even our pets!

We cover a number of topics including how to build healthy and supportive relationships, attachment theory, the biopsychosocial model, patterns of disconnection and reconnection, personal values and social networks. This course is also an opportunity to explore how past adverse experiences can lead to challenges building healthy relationships.

Students can expect discussion with some interactive activities as we explore these topics. Together we will explore our own world-views and values and discuss how they influence the relationships we build. Students will gain an understanding of how to build healthy and supportive relationships, insight into their own patterns within relationships and the importance of setting healthy boundaries.

Discovering Self-Compassion

Date: Wednesday 7th October
 Wednesday 14nd October

Time: 12:30 - 15:00
Sessions: 2 **Location:** Online

Do you find it hard to make time to look after yourself? Do you criticise yourself and treat yourself more harshly than you would other people? Maybe it is time give yourself a break and practice a bit of self-compassion.

The first week of this course begins by taking a look at what compassion and self-compassion are and how they might differ. It then opens up a conversation on the barriers that might limit our ability to practice self-compassion, and how we can overcome them. Week two goes into more depth by looking at how past experiences can form our opinions on self-compassion and how we might be able to change these opinions. This course focuses on how we can learn more about ourselves and how we can improve our habits around self-compassion.

Connecting with Relationships

Date: Friday 13th November
Friday 20th November
Friday 4th December

Time: 10:00 - 12:30
Sessions: 3 **Location:** Online

One certainty in life is that we will all have to face uncertainty at some point. But what if those uncertainties start to impact our lives: discouraging us from making decisions; freezing us out of completing things we want to accomplish; or causing us to withdraw from friends and family?

This three-week course is designed to look at where uncertainty comes from and why it has become so prevalent in modern life. It explores how we can identify when uncertainties begin to spiral and the coping strategies that may help alleviate the anxiety that often accompanies uncertainty.

The course will also encourage participants to voice their own concerns in a safe environment and form strong plans to move towards a time when uncertainty does not hold any of us back from the things we want to achieve in life.

Men & Mental Health

Date: Friday 4th December

Time: 13:00 - 16:00
Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

This course explores men's mental wellbeing by looking at emotional health, masculinity, and the social pressures that shape how men experience and communicate their mental health and distress. Through lived experience, group discussion, and reflection, we examine common signs of poor mental health, male-specific expressions of struggle, and societal expectations such as stoicism, competitiveness, and "being strong," which can create barriers to seeking help. The course also highlights the high suicide rates among men and the social factors that increase this risk.

Students can expect a peer-led, co-produced learning space that values both lived and learned experience. Sessions include practical tools, videos, and conversations focused on the crucial topic of men and mental health.

By the end, students will gain increased awareness of how masculinity and social norms influence mental health, along with greater understanding of support options, confidence to talk openly, and practical strategies for supporting themselves and others.

Recovery & Identity

Date: Wednesday 25th December

Time: 13:30 - 16:30
Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

This one-session course looks at how we define both recovery and identity, how and why they are intertwined, and why this is important. In the course, we consider our beliefs, our views of the world and the values most important to us. We consider how these inform how we relate to our current identity and how they can help us navigate towards a future based on the identity we want for ourselves.

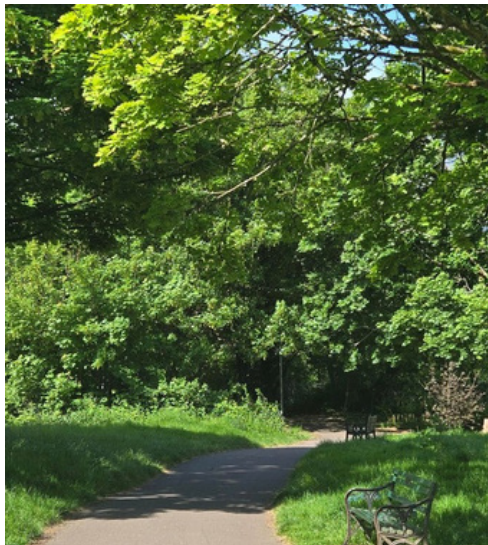
The course is an opportunity for discussion and exploration of recovery and identity in an accepting and inclusive environment. It will include some short, optional, art-based exercises to help reflect on how we view ourselves and our place in the world. Students should gain an understanding of recovery and identity and the interconnectedness of these two concepts along with some preparation of how to move forward toward the identity and recovery they would like for themselves.

Nature

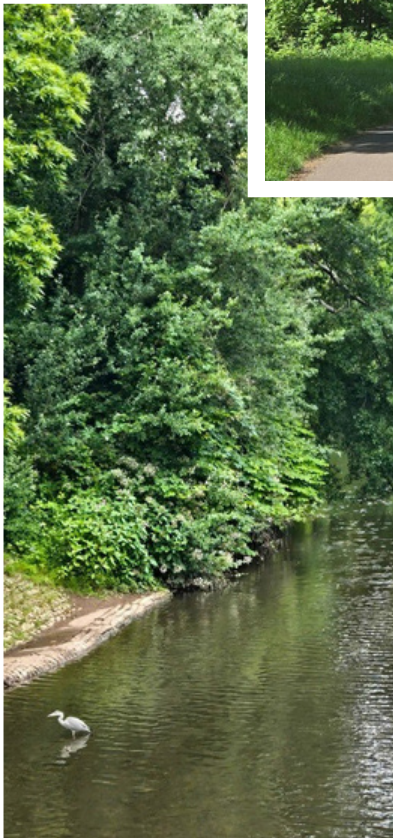
By Pete Miles (Peer Trainer)

Now spending time outside in nature, in whatever form that takes, remains an important part of my life and something I can anchor the rest of my life around when things start to feel chaotic.

In the early stages of my own recovery, I was unable to leave the house. Even being in the garden felt too much, too exposed, too vulnerable. At this stage my mental health challenges were viewed as treatment resistant by clinical staff and traditional medical interventions had made little impact on the severity of symptoms.



Over a period of years and with support from staff I began to challenge myself and confront some of my fears around being outside. This was a very slow process, but what I was able to notice immediately when returning from a walk, bike ride or game of football was an immediate benefit to my wellbeing which I wasn't getting after other interventions. **These periods of time outside, although incredibly difficult at the start, became the chink of light that provided me with hope for the future.**



Looking back, they were the catalyst that enabled more meaningful interaction with other services and facilitated a positive trajectory for my recovery which wasn't possible previously. Now spending time outside in nature, in whatever form that takes, remains an important part of my life and something I can anchor the rest of my life around when things start to feel chaotic.



What are we doing at the Recovery & Wellbeing College?



After receiving funding from Keep Wales Tidy and the RSPB, we have, alongside our students and staff, reclaimed and developed the garden space around our offices at Park Lodge. We have fruit and vegetables growing in raised beds we built ourselves and are in the process of creating several reflective spaces within the garden.

Our intention is that the garden will be a community space for students to catch up, maintain and develop relationships they have made in our courses, or simply spend time in nature alone. Everyone is welcome to interact in the space in a way that works for them and that can look different for us all.

Thursday mornings are our gardening sessions. In recent months we have been planting vegetables and wildflowers, and these will need nurturing over the coming months. But there are always lots of new projects to participate with in the garden. We plan to build a pond, create a sculpted woodland area, as well as design seating amongst our wildflowers.

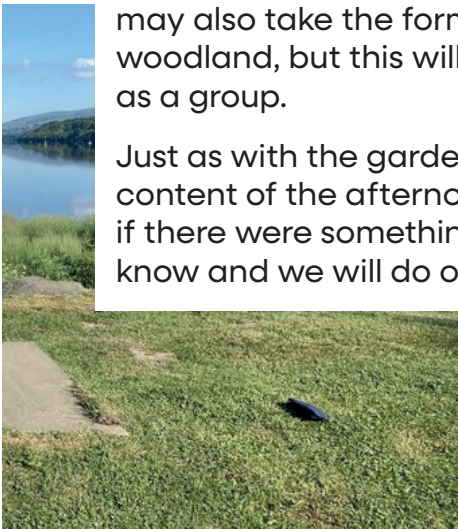
However, we need more ideas and that's where you come in. All ideas are welcome!

Thursday afternoons we facilitate a wellbeing session. These will look different over the course of the year and might involve mindfulness, bushcraft and creative activities but, once you are on our mailing list, we can let you know beforehand what is happening on each day. The session may also take the form of a walk through the nearby woodland, but this will be something we decide together as a group.

Just as with the gardening sessions, we are very open to the content of the afternoon sessions being decided by you, so if there were something you would like to do please let us know and we will do our best to facilitate it.

All-in-all, we would love to see you there in nature whatever way suits you best.

To find out more information, please don't hesitate to contact the college!



Experience of Addiction

Date: Thursday 26th November
Thursday 3rd December

Time: 10:00 - 13:00
Sessions: 2 **Location:** In-Person

The Experience of Addiction course explores what addiction is, how it differs from dependence, and how substance and behavioural addictions can affect the brain, body, and daily life. The course examines tolerance, withdrawal, the brain's reward system, and the cycle of change. It also looks at reasons why people might use substances, common self-deceptions, and the impact addiction can have on self-esteem, relationships, work, and mental health.

Sessions are discussion-based and reflective; a space where students can share experiences and challenge assumptions; all whilst in a compassionate and supportive environment where lived experience and scientific viewpoints are explored.

By the end of the course, students will hopefully gain a clearer understanding of addiction, increased self-awareness, practical knowledge of support options, and greater confidence in making or supporting positive change.

Food & Mood

Date: Thursday 22nd October

Time: 10:00 - 12:00
Sessions: 1 **Location:** In-Person

We all know we should eat five portions of fruit and vegetables daily, reduce caffeine, and boost protein and fibre intake. Yet longer working hours and shorter mealtimes can often mean people feel the need to opt for convenience foods. But should we beat ourselves up about it?

This course offers practical guidance on when and how to make mindful and sustainable changes to our eating habits. We will delve into the significant influence diet can have on our mood and emotions, which in turn may directly affect physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Students should hopefully have a greater understanding of how food can affect their mood and therefore feel more confident about the foods they choose. The focus of the course is on how different foods can lift our mood as well as how they can help us stay healthy.

I Just Can't Sleep

Date: Wednesday 9th December

Time: 13:00 - 15:30
Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

Sleep difficulties are incredibly common, affecting millions of people and influencing mood, energy, concentration, and overall wellbeing. In this gentle workshop, we explore how sleep works, why it matters, and the many factors that can disturb it - from stress and low mood to circadian rhythms, lifestyle habits, and unhelpful thought patterns. We also look at common experiences of insomnia, the "vicious cycle" that keeps sleeplessness going, and how disrupted sleep can shape daily life.

Join us in a supportive space to learn practical, evidence-informed strategies such as paced breathing, sleep-supporting habits, mindfulness for calming the mind, and ways to break unhelpful cycles, that may lead to more reliable and restorative sleep.

It's More than Just 'Tired' - Making Sense of Fatigue

Date: Wednesday 11th November

Time: 13:00 - 15:30

Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

Fatigue is a widespread and often invisible symptom, which can arise from long-term physical or mental health conditions, stress, medications, or treatment. It affects how we think, feel, and participate in everyday life, and can be difficult to understand or explain - even to ourselves. Although for many there is no cure, learning how to manage fatigue can significantly improve our wellbeing.

In this single-session course, we explore what fatigue really is, why it occurs, and how it impacts daily living. Through compassionate discussion, we draw on lived experience and clinical understanding to explore practical tools for managing energy, improving rest, and communicating confidently about fatigue. You'll have space to reflect, connect with others, and build confidence in managing your condition with hope and kindness.



Living with an Eating Disorder

Date: Tuesday 8th December
Tuesday 15th December

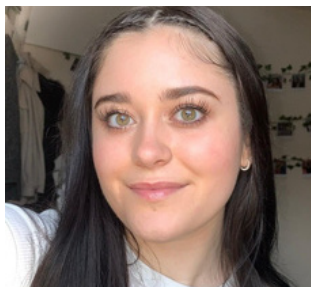
Time: 13:00 - 15:30

Sessions: 2 **Location:** Online

Living with an eating disorder can be incredibly challenging, not only for the individual but also for family and friends. It may be the case that it is difficult to even begin thinking or talking about it. So how do we openly discuss these thoughts, feelings, and experiences honestly? This course explores what eating disorders are and how they may develop. It also looks at how to support someone with an eating disorder, as well as how to be supported. The space we create will also be a chance to explore other challenges that can accompany eating disorders.

It is our hope that we can have open and honest discussions around disordered eating and eating disorders by removing the stigma that is so often attached.

Student Story: Mia Davies



The Recovery College felt very different from anything I had experienced before. I felt accepted and didn't need to hide who I was, which gave me a real sense of belonging and community.

In 2024, I was introduced to the Recovery College at a time when I was struggling to see a future for myself. I had previously spent a lot of time in hospital, felt I had no hope or direction, and struggled to find a sense of purpose in my life.



At first, I felt very hesitant. I had lost all confidence and found being around others extremely challenging, but I decided to start with an ILP session with a peer trainer. This gave me space to talk openly about my needs and helped me begin to feel understood and supported from the very beginning.

I began by attending some online courses, using only the chat function, as speaking or being on camera felt too overwhelming. Because I was able to engage in ways that felt comfortable for me, I gradually began to build my confidence. The following term, I was supported to attend an in-person course. Being alongside others with similar experiences helped me feel less alone, and the peer trainers and practitioners were so welcoming and understanding that I felt safe enough to keep showing up.

The Recovery College felt very different from anything I had experienced before. I felt accepted and didn't need to hide who I was, which gave me a real sense of belonging and community. For the first time, my recovery had real meaning, and I began to feel more in control of my life. This helped me begin to see a future that felt possible, and a path where my experiences could have meaning and purpose, which inspired me to learn more about peer support.

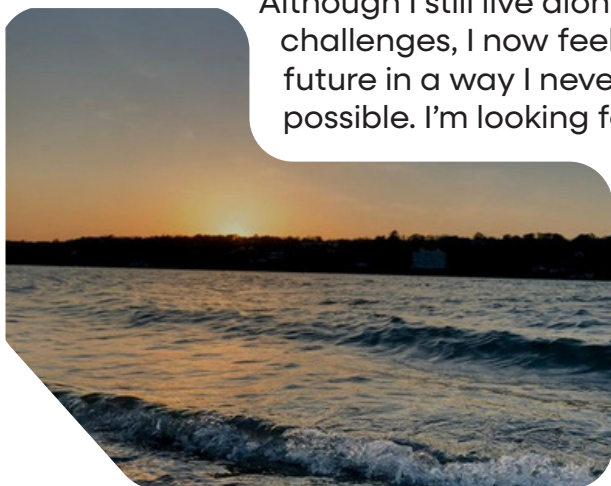
Because I had attended a lot of courses already, I felt the next step was to go on the Peer Support Skills course, which introduced me to peer support. I then went on to complete IPS training. All these experiences have led me to where I am now – training to become a peer trainer with the College.

Although I still live alongside mental health challenges, I now feel hopeful about my future in a way I never believed was possible. I'm looking forward to continuing

to develop and use my lived experience to offer others the same sense of hope, connection, and empowerment that I experienced myself through the Recovery College.



All photos by Mia



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
			1	2 BPwMHC
5	6	7 DSC	8	9 BPwMHC WWWW
Comm 12	13 CwR	14 DSC	IfW 15	16 BPwMHC WWWW
Comm CTP 19	20 CtA CwR	21 UD	IfW FM 22	23 VT WWWW
Comm 26	27 CtA CwR	28 UA UD	IfW 29	30 VT WWWW

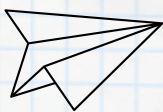
DSC	Discovering Self-Compassion Wednesday 7 th and 14 th Oct 12:30 - 15:00 x2 sessions Online
Comm	Communication Monday 12 th , 19 th , 26 th Oct, 2 nd & 9 th Nov 10:00 - 14:00 x5 sessions In-person
CwR	Connecting with Relationships Tuesday 13 th , 20 th & 27 th Oct 13:00 - 15:30 x3 sessions In-person
WWWW	While We Were Walking Friday 9 th , 16 th , 23 rd & 30 th Oct 13:00 - 15:30 x4 sessions In-person
IfW	Improv for Wellnes3 Thursday 15 th , 22 nd & 29 th Oct, 5 th , 12 th & 19 th Nov 10:00 - 12:00 x6 sessions In-person

CTP	Care & Treatment Planning Monday 19 th Oct 10:00 - 13:00 Online
UD	Understanding Depression Wednesday 21 st & 28 th Oct 18:30 - 20:30 x2 sessions Online
FM	Food for Mood Thursday 22 nd Oct 13:00 - 15:30 In-person
UA	Understanding Anxiety Wednesday 28 th Oct & 4 th Nov 13:30 - 15:30 x2 sessions In-person
VT	Vicarious Trauma Friday 23 rd , 30 th Oct & 6 th Nov 13:30 - 15:30 x3 sessions In-person
CtA	Connecting through Activities Tuesday 20 th , 27 th Oct, 3 rd , 10 th , 17 th & 24 th Nov 12:00 - 15:00 x6 sessions In-person

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Comm 2 PS	3 CtA	4 UA	IfW 5	UB VT 6
Comm 9 PS	10 VUVB CtA	UND 11 MT	IfW 12	LwUC 13
16 PS	17 VUVB CtA	UND 18	IfW 19	LwUC 20
23 PS	24 CtA	UND 25 R&ID	EoA 26	27
TA&MH 30				

PS	Peer Skills Monday 2nd, 9th, 16th & 23rd Nov 13:30 - 16:30 x4 sessions In-Person	LwUC	Living with Uncertainty Friday 13th, 20th Nov & 4th Dec 10:00 - 12:00 x3 sessions Online
UB	Understanding Bipolar Tuesday 8th Nov & 15th Dec 10:00 - 13:00 Online	R&ID	Recovery & Identity Wednesday 25th Nov 13:30 - 16:30 Online
VVUB	Voices, Visions & Unshared Beliefs (Sometimes Called Psychosis) Tuesday 10th & 17th Nov 13:00 - 15:30 x2 sessions In-person	EoA	Experience of Addiction Thursday 26th Nov & 3rd Dec 10:00 - 13:00 x2 sessions In-person
MT	I'm Moe than Just Tired Monday 11th Nov 13:00 - 15:30 Online	TA&MH	Trauma, Adversity & Mental Health Monday 30th Nov & 7th Dec 10:00 - 12:30 x2 sessions In-person
UND	Understanding Neurodivergence Wednesday 11th, 18th, 25th Nov & 2nd Dec, 10:00 - 12:00 x4 sessions Online		

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	1	UND2	EoA3	LwUC4 M&MH
TA&MH7	8 LED	9 CS	10	11
14	15 LED	16 What's Next? Online	17 What's Next? In-Person	18



M&MH	Men & Mental Health Friday 4 th Dec 13:00 - 16:00 Online	Notes
LED	Living with an Eating Disorder Tuesday 8 th & 15 th Dec 13:00 - 15:30 x2 sessions Online	
CS	I Just Can't Sleep Wednesday 9 th Dec 13:00 - 15:30 Online	
What's Next Online	What's Next? Signposting & Further Resources Monday 11 th Nov 11:00 - 13:00 Online	
What's Next In-Person	What's Next? Signposting & Further Resources Thursday 17 th Dec 12:00 - 15:00 In-Person	



Connection & Compassion

Brian Nelis - Peer Trainer
(Poet & Creative)

Connection is one of those words we hear a lot at the Recovery and Wellbeing College.

As humans it's something that we seek, maybe even hunger for. As children it can be something that a lot of us felt was a natural part of life, playing in the same sandboxes and playing on the same teams. Even for the more introverted of us, just sharing the same spaces as others could give a sense of connection.

But then we grow up.

As we get older, making connections can become more difficult and even reconnecting with those we haven't seen in a while can become a chore. It seems almost counter intuitive, but as we become more mature, we can find ourselves more adrift and separated from those we want to spend time with. If we take this one step further and add in a period of time where we face some sort of challenge, we may feel even further from others and completely disconnected.

So what can we do about it?

It may seem like a strange place to start, but compassion, and in particular self-compassion, might give some answers.

The clinical psychologist and practising Buddhist Jack Kornfield famously said, "If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete." This beautiful sentiment suggests that compassion is a two-way street, where we need to have compassion for ourselves so that we can have compassion for others, and vice-versa. If this is true, it offers us an avenue of connection simply by being kinder to ourselves and other people. Maybe we could think of this as step one.

But what about the next step and the step after that?

Perhaps that's where we need to go back to how we thought when we were younger. Curiosity of who we are and who others are and what we have in common and what we can learn from each other are all ways in which we can reach out towards connection. Trying new things and returning to those that gave us joy in the past and finding people who can share this joy is another. Of course it can seem scary taking these steps, but it's worth remembering that a lot of other people are out there tentatively taking them too.

If you are interested in showing yourself and others some compassion and maybe have a bit of curiosity, we'd love to see you on some of our courses and hear what you think.

Take care and hopefully see you soon.



Trauma, Adversity & Mental Health

Date: Monday 30th November
Monday 7th December

Time: 10:00 - 12:30

Sessions: 2 **Location:** In-Person

Trauma and adverse life events can have a significant impact on our mental health. This two part course examines definitions of trauma alongside an exploration of adverse childhood experiences. We also explore the brain and trauma, and consider research, strategies and techniques to manage difficult emotions and associations with trauma.

Students can expect a combination of videos, discussions, and information regarding different models around trauma. We do not encourage students to share individual traumatic experiences but rather share the common physical and psychological reactions to experiencing those events. Students can expect to learn about how the brain can develop new pathways to manage the complex reactions to trauma through developing healthy coping strategies.

Students should gain a greater understanding of how trauma, adversity and mental health are linked, how we can try to rewire some of the thoughts we have, as well as skills that can be employed when challenges arise.



Vicarious Trauma: What happens when we take it home?

Date: Friday 23rd October
Friday 30th October
Friday 6th November

Time: 10:00 - 12:30

Sessions: 3 **Location:** In-Person

Vicarious trauma is something you might not have heard of, but something we can all experience. Taking on the trauma of others can happen to anyone and can have serious impact in our lives, both at work and home.

Across three weeks, this course will examine what vicarious trauma looks like and how it can negatively affect our lives. Such topics as social isolation, the breakdown of our closest relationships, and how our physical health can be affected will be explored and discussed. This will be followed by some coping strategies that may be used when we see these difficulties in ourselves or those that we are close to.

Through use of the creative arts, our facilitators hope to provide an interactive experience where our participants move towards a personal insight into their own experiences of vicarious trauma whilst keeping an empathetic heart.

Communication

Date: Monday 12th October
 Monday 19th October
 Monday 26th November
 Monday 2nd November
 Monday 9th November

Time: 10:00 - 12:30
Sessions: 5 **Location:** In-Person

Communication is a massive part of all our lives. Whether we want to tell those close to us what they mean to us, or the information we need to give our local GP, or even simply letting people know how we feel, there are always going to be times we need to communicate. But what if this is something that we find difficult to do?

Heavily based in the arts, this course will examine what communication is and some of the barriers that might limit it. We will specifically look at verbal and non-verbal communication, how we can communicate through the written word, and how we can communicate through the medium of art.

The aim of this course is to take a step back and find ways that we find easier and more effective to better communicate with ourselves, those around us, and the world as a whole.

Connection through Activity

Date: Tuesday 20th October
 Tuesday 27th October
 Tuesday 3rd November
 Tuesday 10th November
 Tuesday 17th November
 Tuesday 24th November

Time: 13:00 - 15:30
Sessions: 6 **Location:** In-Person

There are times in life when we connect with others, the world around us, and ourselves. And then there are times when we disconnect. And, naturally, there are also times when we want to reconnect.

This course focuses on how we can connect or reconnect with the world around us and those that live in it. Over six weeks, we have a look at the concept of joy and the different activities that might bring us closer together through allowing ourselves enjoyment of them. We have a go at simple arts-based activities that should be accessible to all.

Students should leave the course with a better sense of what they enjoy, how to find commonality with others, and the tools and skills of how to find those activities they want to engage in within their own communities.

Improv for Wellness

Date: Thursday 15th October
 Thursday 22nd October
 Thursday 29th October
 Thursday 5th November
 Thursday 12th November
 Thursday 19th November

Time: 10:00 - 12:00
Sessions: 6 **Location:** In-Person

So... A little while ago some students asked if there was anything at the college that was a bit more out there? A bit more out-of-the-box? Some way they could try something a bit different... Our answer is the **Improv for Wellness course**.

This course invites students to come along and have a go at some improvisation theatre in a safe and fun environment where you can't get anything wrong. The games and discussions we take part in will be an opportunity to explore the way each of us views the world and how we can come together to learn from each other whilst finding commonality and hope.

It is our hope that students find this a place where they can express themselves in a free environment where new skills might be learned, all under the umbrella of being able to have a laugh.

While We Were Walking

Date: Friday 9th October
 Friday 16th October
 Friday 23rd October
 Friday 30th October

Time: 13:30 - 15:30
Sessions: 4 **Location:** In-Person

In a world that seems to be increasing in speed, sometimes what we need is right on our doorstep.

While We Were Walking examines our relationship with nature by focusing on how we are part of the natural world and not an opposing force working against it.

Centred on the Five Ways to Wellbeing and the extensive work already completed on nature connectedness, this course combines discussion, arts-based activities, and the great outdoors to provide a space where we can all learn from ourselves, each other, and, of course, nature.

Our exploration into the outdoors is for everyone and we welcome people of all abilities. The time we spend in nature is intentional, as in we intend to be fully present.

Meet a Trainer

Georgia Howard
 Deputy RWC Manager & Peer Trainer



‘Take a chance on risk’

Georgia has been working with the college since 2021 and works across a range of areas. She facilitates courses, looks after the quality assurance, and is also heavily involved in expanding our Neurodivergent offerings, to name but a few.



Her lived experience includes many life interrupting mental health challenges where she often felt a constant sense of chaos both around her and within her, meaning employment itself became challenging.

However, after experiencing a consistent time of ‘wellness’, she began volunteering for many different charity organisations. This ranged from cleaning spaces where people needed assistance, to advocacy, through to Peer Support projects centred around people experiencing mental health challenges becoming more active and using the arts within nature.

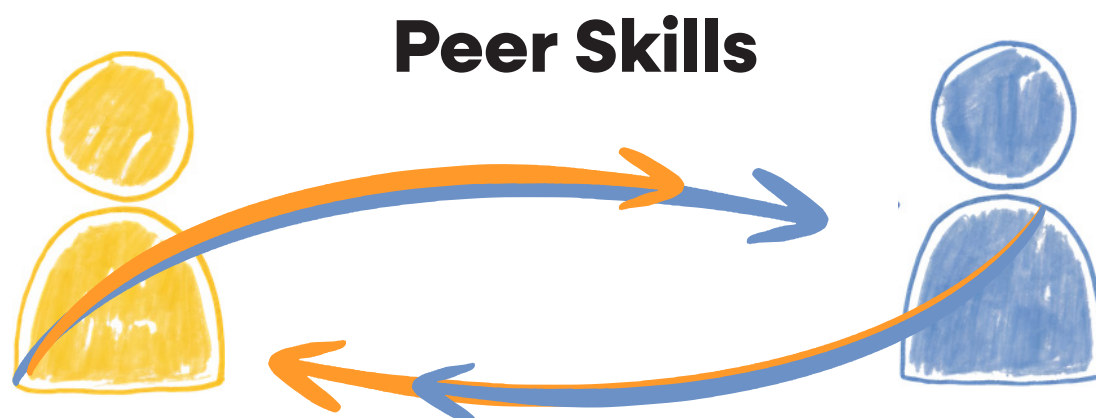
This creativity has always been a big part of Georgia’s life. As a neurodivergent person, she often finds it

challenging to understand, let alone describe what she is experiencing or feeling. Therefore, being able to explore life through other means is integral to her own wellbeing – something she likes to bring to a college she is so proud to be part of.



All photos by Georgia

Recommended Pathway



Many students ask how to get into peer work, and we do have a suggested pathway. After attending a few of our courses, students can look into some of our peer-specific courses.

Peer Skills

An introduction to Peer Support work. This 4-part course focuses on preparing students as they consider working in this field. We focus on understanding the peer role, preparation and readiness, wellbeing, communication skills, boundaries, confidentiality and next steps.

This course is advertised on the prospectus every term and all are welcome to sign up.

ImROC Peer Support Worker Training

An introduction to working as a Peer Support Worker. This course supports students to understand the peer role, develop core peer support skills, and build confidence in using lived experience safely and effectively. We explore the core values of peer support – mutuality, reciprocity, non-prescriptive, progressive, recovery focused, strengths based, trauma informed, relational, person centred and safe.

This course is advertised via our mailing list. You are asked to complete a detailed expression of interest and attend an informal interview. Places aren't guaranteed. Students already volunteering or working in Peer roles are given priority.

International Peer Support

An introduction to the IPS approach. This course explores the core principles of IPS and supports students to understand how to build mutual, purposeful relationships rooted in shared learning. We focus on the IPS tasks and principles, communication, worldview, connection, and how to use IPS to create change in everyday peer support practice.

This course is advertised via our mailing list. You are asked to complete a detailed expression of interest and attend an informal interview. Places aren't guaranteed. Students already volunteering or working in Peer roles are given priority.

Understanding Neurodivergence

Date: Wednesday 11th November
 Wednesday 18th November
 Wednesday 25th November
 Wednesday 2nd December

Time: 10:00 - 12:30
Sessions: 4 **Location:** Online

This four-session course offers an opportunity to explore neurodiversity and the emotional and social experiences associated with living as a neurodivergent individual. We will examine topics such as identity, communication, and mental health in relation to neurodivergent populations, and discuss effective approaches to supporting emotional well-being and self-acceptance.

As one might imagine with such a wide covering subject, this course covers a lot of information but also offers students the opportunity to voice their own opinions, questions or reflections. The course is perfect for those individuals seeking a deeper understanding of neurodivergent conditions, including practical strategies to foster inclusion and appreciation of diverse needs.

We welcome everyone to this course as we feel learning about neurodivergence is more important than diagnosis.

Care & Treatment Planning

Date: Monday 19th October

Time: 10:00 - 13:00
Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

Care and treatment plans are a legal right to anyone accessing secondary mental health services and this course explores how to develop them in a meaningful, co-produced, and, often, creative way. We consider people's rights under the mental health act and the inclusion of carers/family members. The importance of positive language, and how to set meaningful, recovery-focused goals is also examined.

Students can expect to hear from service-users and clinicians regarding CTPs and will have the opportunity to discuss how CTPs have affected them. There will also be discussion around what each of the domains in the CTP form might mean.

Students will gain the skills to meaningfully co-produce care plans from a clinician and service-user perspective. This course provides an opportunity for students to feel more empowered to share the decision making and goal setting in relation to their own or loved one's care and treatment plans.

Peer Skills

Date: Monday 2nd November
 Monday 9th November
 Monday 16th November
 Monday 23rd November

Time: 13:30 - 16:30
Sessions: 4 **Location:** In-Person

A peer is someone with lived experience of mental health and/or physical health challenges who draws on their experience to support others. Peer support involves intentional and safe sharing to build connection, trust and inspire hope in recovery.

This introductory course offers a foundation in peer support practice. It explores what it means to feel ready for a peer support role and how lived experience can be shared in ways that are meaningful and appropriate in different situations. The course also covers key communication skills, approaches for sharing our story safely, maintaining personal wellbeing, signposting and engaging in community resources.

Learning these skills in an open, supportive environment provides an ideal starting point for anyone beginning their peer support worker journey, whether you plan to continue into further training, volunteering, or future employment in peer support roles.

What's Next? Signposting & Further Resources Event

Date: Wednesday 16th December

Time: 11:00 - 13:00

Sessions: 1 **Location:** Online

Date: Thursday 17th December

Time: 12:00 - 15:00

Sessions: 1 **Location:** In-Person

Join us for our 'What's Next?' Signposting and further resources events.

The events offer an excellent opportunity to learn about the various initiatives at the Recovery and Wellbeing College, including new courses, additional training opportunities, and sessions focused on lived experience co-production.

Time and space will be given for students to tell us how their term has gone and give us feedback on what else they would like to see at the Recovery & Wellbeing College. Something that has helped us shape the college into what it is today.

Students will have the opportunity to engage with our Peer Trainers and Practitioners, gaining a deeper insight into the courses and content they offer. Furthermore, you will have the opportunity to connect with other organisations in Cardiff and Vale, exploring additional opportunities that may match your interests.

Meet a Trainer

Katya Brown

Peer Support Lead & Peer Trainer



"Making meaning of our experiences and growing together as people motivates me every day and makes me genuinely excited to get to work"



Kat started working in the Recovery and Wellbeing College in 2023. She facilitates Peer Support courses, including Peer Skills, ImROC and IPS, and also supports the implementation of Peer Support workers across mental health teams.

Living with mental health challenges for as long as she can remember, Kat first went into Peer support as a volunteer but then went on to work in various mental health and substance-use roles. Every role since has involved Peer Support and training, and she remains passionate about walking alongside people as they find their way forward.



Kat has worked in many third-sector organisations over the years but being part of the college has given her more mental stability than ever. Being in a service that lives and breathes recovery, and puts wellbeing at the centre of everything, gives her a strong sense of purpose. She finds it uplifting to share experiences with students and hear theirs in return.

All photos by Katya

Getting to know ...



Dr Sarah Cavill
Occupational Therapist

*“The world would be very boring if it was perfect,
so find the perfect in the imperfect.”*

Brian Nelis (Peer Trainer) had a sit down with Dr Sarah Cavill, who is the CAV Rehabilitation Team Lead for Occupational Therapy and who also facilitates a course with the Recovery and Wellbeing College, to find out a bit more about her and here is what she said.

Q. Hello, Sarah, Great to see you. An easy one to start: how long have you been an OT (Occupational Therapist)?

Sarah: Hi, that should be an easy one. I qualified in 2011, so that would be... 15 years. Wow.

Q. Sounds like that's the first time you said that out loud.

Sarah: I think it is. 15 years. Where has the time gone?

Q. So, what is the best thing about being an OT?

Sarah: I say this all the time, but it is the job itself. It's the difference you can make, especially in mental health where it's focused on increasing independence, purpose and meaning in people's lives. Yeah, I'd say the most exciting thing about being an OT is doing those things while being able to think outside the medical model.

Q. That's great to hear. On the flip side, what is the worst part of being an OT?

Sarah: As OTs we like to think outside the box and support people with different things, but we don't always have the funds to do that. We do apply for a lot of funding and when we get it, it's fantastic. We've had really successful funding bids. Things like working alongside Cardiff Pottery workshops and working in an allotment garden as well. Those things are fantastic, but it does take a lot of time and resource to apply for them and get the money.

Q. I get it, a bigger budget means being able to do more things for more people; something that we have often talked about at the college. Which leads us onto the next question: what brought you to the Recovery and Wellbeing College?

Sarah: A lot of recovery college courses were taking place on the wards of Hafan y Coed hospital for the patients. With my team members engaging in these, I wanted to learn more. It was mostly from a management point of view at that point, looking at freeing up OT's time and how that fitted into the college. And from this I learned about the community courses where anyone could attend and benefit. I thought this was brilliant and wanted to get involved.

Q. And the course you now facilitate is...

Sarah: Vicarious Trauma. With yourself, of course, Brian!

Q. And you bring a wealth of experience to it, Sarah. We're really glad to have you. But I suppose what I'd like to know is how facilitating the courses differ from your day-to-day.

Sarah: In OT, we run our own groups, but they are very tailored to the group we are working with. We know who they are and what their specific needs are. With the college, the courses are a lot more structured, which is great because in the community, you can never be sure exactly who is coming. And I suppose another big difference is the role I am in.



When working with my inpatients, I try to communicate as informally as possible, have conversations, but there are barriers already in place with the patient-professional relationship already established. It's much easier to break those barriers down when working in the Recovery College because the students can be anybody coming from any community. And for me, it's quite nice to be in that slightly different role where we have that fresh start where you can be on a par with someone.

Q. It sounds like you try to break down that strict clinical role within your role, but maybe find it a bit easier at the College?

Sarah: Yeah. OT is often thought of as the “really fun profession”, and in some ways it really is. But everything is goal-directed. For example, when we do a walking group, it isn't just a walk. We have a specific purpose behind it; we need to know who is going, why, and their goals for going. And this makes it difficult to be completely informal. Whereas at the Recovery College, everyone is more on a level, and from that you get great conversation and great interaction.

Q. Is there any other crossover?

Sarah: I love going back to the patients and encouraging them to sign up to the college. I think it is nice to be a student as opposed to always being seen as a patient. It is a great step for anyone regaining autonomy.

Q. Well said. Speaking of autonomy, if you weren't an OT, what would you be?

Sarah: I was really lucky in the sense that my mum made me go and see the careers advisor in high school who told me to be an OT. I got into it early and it suited me, especially the way my brain thinks. OT is all about problem solving and finding ways to use peoples' strengths to solve problems. I guess I'd have to go into a profession that did the same sort of thing

Q. It sounds to me that if you weren't an OT, you would want to be an OT.

Sarah: Yeah, that's it. If I wasn't an OT, I'd train to be an OT.

Q. Stepping away from roles and jobs, can you tell us one thing people may not know about you?

Sarah: (laughing) I guess I'm trying to think what people may not know about me. People know I love travelling and have worked abroad. Maybe Music. I do have eclectic tastes, but people are usually surprised that I am a lover of Drum 'n' Bass.

Q. As someone who has heard you sing opera; this has opened my eyes to a whole new fusion.

Sarah: (again laughing) Opera drum 'n' bass; It's already out there.

Q. One last question, then. We're asking everyone for a quote, do you have one for us?

Sarah: I do. I just said this to someone yesterday, if I can remember it. That's it: “The world would be very boring if it was perfect, so find the perfect in the imperfect.”

If you are a practitioner and would like to get involved with the college, please don't hesitate to contact us: Cardiffandvale.Recoverycollege@wales.nhs.uk

The Rest of Our Ecosystem



Hafan y Coed

The Recovery & Wellbeing College also has a presence in Hafan y Coed where we offer courses that may be of significant interest to anyone who is either an in-patient or staff member. The courses fall into two broad categories: Ward-based and Prepare for Discharge (P4D).

Ward-based courses

In-patients and staff can become students on their own ward and take part in a range of stand-alone sessions designed to support wellbeing and recovery.

These sessions offer a safe, welcoming, and positive space to explore different topics, learn new skills, and connect with others. Students are encouraged to take part in a way that feels right for them, sharing their voices and learning together as equals.

Each session is an opportunity to build confidence, reflect on experiences, and discover what best supports recovery.

Preparing for Discharge

Preparing for Discharge (P4D) is a 5-day course for students who are beginning to think about life beyond hospital. Like all Recovery & Wellbeing College courses, P4D is co-designed and co-facilitated by people with lived experience and practitioners, recognising that everyone can bring valuable knowledge and insight.

Students are offered the opportunity to reflect on their strengths, build practical skills, and think about the next steps on the journey of their own recovery.

Through shared learning, open discussion, and gentle reflection, the course hopes to support students feel more prepared, confident, and hopeful about life outside hospital.

Cardiff Prison & Universities

As well as the community courses and the hospital-based courses the college is always interested in exploring where else courses might offer something new. Two such places the college is currently involved with are Cardiff Prison and Cardiff's student population.

Cardiff Prison

The partnership between the Recovery & Wellbeing College and the Prison Service has been in place since early 2025 with the first courses running in September of that year. Since then, the sessions have been running every 2 months with some fantastic feedback from the participants.

Facilitated by a senior Occupational Therapist from the Prison Mental Health team and a peer, the course is based on the 5 ways to wellbeing with a focus on challenging the stigma of men in prison talking about mental health.

Breaking down these walls has been instrumental in how the participants view themselves and each other. This has led to some truly heartwarming sessions where recovery and wellbeing can be focused on in a non-judgemental space.



The Rest of Our Ecosystem

University Engagement

The Recovery and Wellbeing College 5-part University Wellbeing series ran in February - March 2026 and was really well received by attendees.

The purpose of this series was to engage with students who might be finding things tough but didn't know where to turn. Content of the courses was co-produced by the college, university students and university support staff resulting in sessions on the following topics:

- Self-compassion
- Relationships
- Uncertainty
- Social media
- Stress, studying and fatigue

The College has plans to run the sessions again in Autumn 2026 and looks forward to meeting new students then!

Nature



The college has renewed its commitment to sustainable growth and nurturing through the enhanced nature programme that sits alongside our community curriculum.

Gardening and Wellbeing in Nature courses have both been running since April 2026 with students able to drop in and out of what they want to get involved in.

If you want more information on the nature programme or to be added to the nature mailing list, please do not hesitate to contact us the usual ways.



Did you know ...? Drop-In Sessions

Another way to engage with the college is through our drop-in sessions, which run both online and in-person. Unlike our other courses, there is no need to register or sign-up; you can just come along on the day and get a taste of what the college is all about.

The sessions are designed to let students, and potential students, get a feel of how our courses run by attending a less in-depth version regarding some of the topics we cover.

As always, these courses are completely free and there is no pressure for anyone to stay for the whole session (though we do prefer if everyone can get there for the starting time.) So, if it sounds like something for you look out for when they are on or contact the college directly.

Student Charter

Students can expect us to:

- Efficiently manage their enquiries and support their enrolment in a friendly, professional manner
- Ask if there are any issues which might make attending courses difficult and make reasonable adjustments to support them, providing they inform us at time of enrolment
- Send them reminders of their upcoming courses
- Provide a warm, safe and professional learning environment
- Deliver high quality courses which promote recovery and social inclusion
- Respect their personal beliefs, life choices, faith and cultural practices and traditions
- Give time and space to give feedback about the Recovery & Wellbeing College without fear of recrimination
- Address any complaints or concerns confidentially and professionally

We expect student to:

- Complete their registration form including relevant information such as their contact details and an emergency contact
- Tell us of any mental or physical health difficulties which could make their learning journey difficult. This will enable us to support them
- Agree and adhere to this Charter and the Recovery & Wellbeing College Code of Conduct
- Ask college staff about anything they are unsure of
- Attend courses on time, or inform the college if they are running late
- Inform the college if they are no longer able to attend
- Inform the college of any challenges to attending courses
- Ensure that they enrol separately, so that groups are not attending online together on one device, to avoid disruption to other students' learning experience
- Be respectful of the rights of all other students and course facilitators

Code of Conduct

We want to ensure that every student at the college has a positive and enriching experience.

Students do not have to disclose anything about their personal or professional life, their history, or their physical/mental health unless they want to. If they do, it is important that all students know to treat anything said with complete confidentiality.

We ask all students to:

- Be punctual
- Behave in a responsible manner
- Respect the rights, life choices, beliefs and opinions of others
- Not behave in any way that might be considered threatening or disruptive
- Refrain from the use of alcohol, un-prescribed restricted medication or illegal substances
- Not behave in a way that disrupts learning or activities
- Not use violent, disorderly, or offensive behaviour or language
- Not record workshops by phone or other means

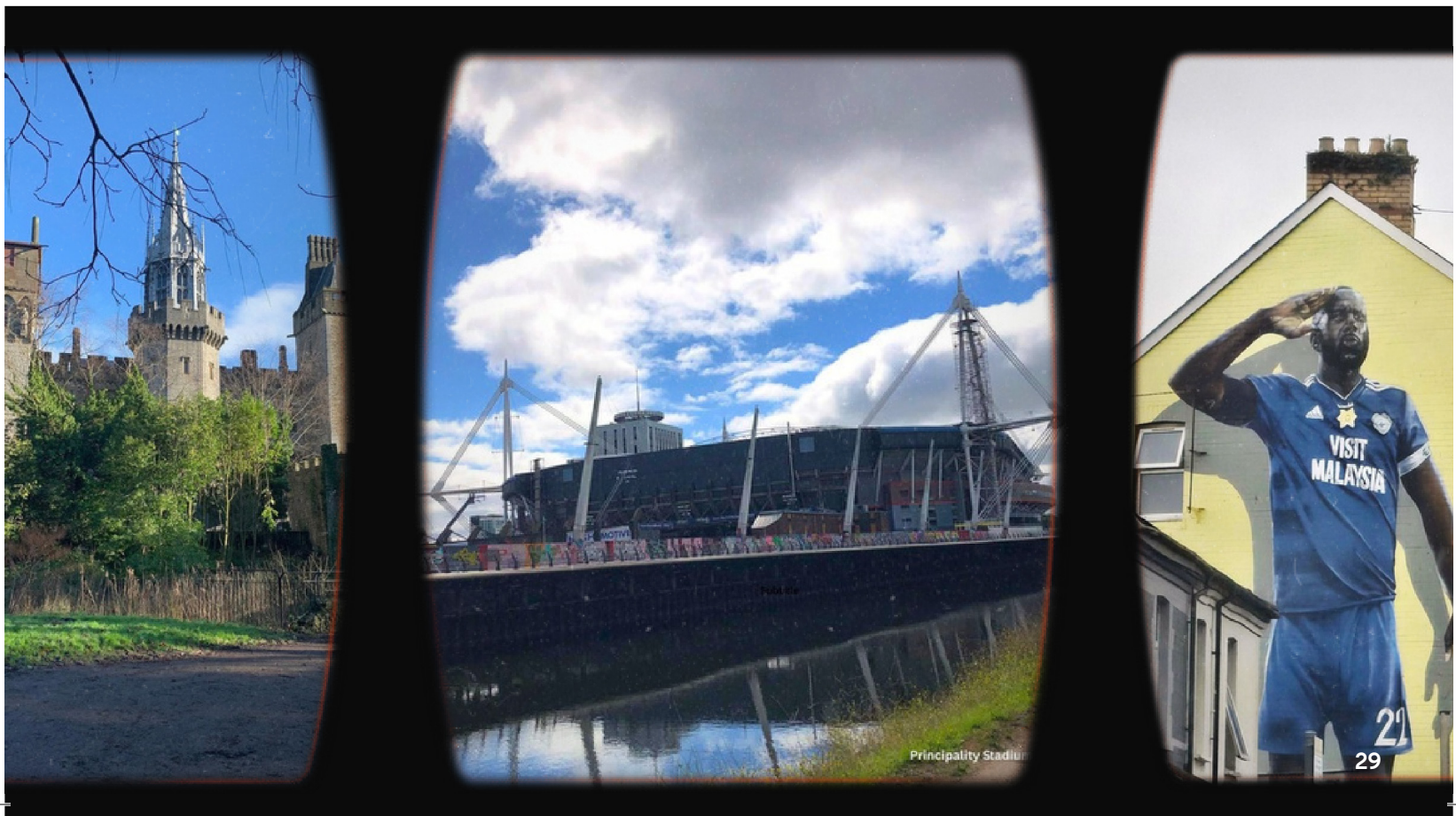
All of us, students and staff, have a responsibility to ensure that this code is respected and observed. Please approach a member of the College staff if you have any concerns.

If we feel that you have breached this Code of Conduct, we will discuss this with you and try to find a way forward.

Acknowledgments

A special thank you to all of our associate trainers and practitioners, without your dedication, commitment, expertise and time, none of this would be possible. A warm thank you to all those supporting from behind the scenes, as well. Your work is vital in providing information, scheduling and supporting students every step of the way.

Alice Marie - Artist Facilitator
Annette McLean - Dietetic Lead
Ash Selby - Mental Health Nurse Neuropsychiatry
Bethan Henderson - Clinical Senior Nurse
Charlotte Ede - Deputy Ward Manager
Dan Miles - Ward Manager
Karen Griffiths - Recovery & Wellbeing College Administrator
Kay Challoner - Specialist Mental Health Practitioner
Kevin Jones - Specialist Dietitian
Madelaine Watkins - Clinical Nurse Specialist
Matthew Lloyd - Senior Programme Manager ABUHB
Dr Megan Davis - Lead Forensic Psychologist
Mia Davies - Associate Peer Trainer
Nick Chown - Peer Support Worker
Rachel Martinez-Suarez - Learning and Development Lead CAVDAS
Rachel McAleer - Speech and Language Therapist
Rachel Wallbank - AHP Clinical Lead
Rob Fisher - Associate Peer Trainer
Samantha Porter - Peer Support Worker
Sarah Cavill - Occupational Therapist Team Lead
Sean McDonnell - Skyline Artist
Shell Griffin - Associate Peer
Stephen Boulcott - Associate Peer
Stephen Garrett - Associate Peer Trainer
Tara Robinson - Director of Nursing Mental Health Clinical Board
Taryn Talbot - Senior Academic and Therapies Tutor



Skyline Winner: Sean McDonell

The Cardiff and Vale Recovery & Wellbeing College would like to offer a massive congratulations to the winner of our Skyline Competition, local artist and college student, Sean McDonnell.

You may have spotted his fantastic representation of Cardiff and the Vale throughout our prospectus. Look out for it elsewhere!

Sean is the winner of the Recovery & Wellbeing College's 'Skyline Competition' after submitting a fantastic piece of art that depicts his personal recovery journey through the many sights and feelings he has around Cardiff. His submission was at first only going to be used as a header for some of the college's literature but, incredibly, has now become so much more (see below)!

Having lived experience of both his own mental health challenges and supporting others with their own experiences, Sean was no stranger to the Recovery & Wellbeing College. He often states how engaging with the college benefited him in a multitude of ways. From connecting to others through to having his voice heard, through to sharing experiences with others and having them share in return, the college has been a place where Sean felt he could be himself.



One very special way that the college has helped Sean has been through developing his peer support skills. He attended the Peer Support Skills course and then went on to complete the more extensive ImROC training with the college. This has led on to a peer support volunteer role where Sean is able to use his artistic talents in a meaningful way to help others.

Sean is Cardiff born and bred and his drawings often feature or reference the geography and landscapes of the city he is proud to call home. Drawing, and art itself, has also been intrinsic to Sean's personal recovery from a serious mental health crisis. This demonstrates how a connection to place, time, and oneself can be communicated in a way that can benefit health, recovery, and general wellbeing. Sean is very proud that his skyline was chosen to be used by the college.

“My artwork often contains layers of meaning and my skyline drawing is no different. It literally layers familiar features of Cardiff that are woven together with features personal to me.”





Coleg Adfer a Lles Recovery & Wellbeing College

Caerdydd a'r Fro
Cardiff and Vale

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