

Kemple View: Embedding physical activity into mental health recovery

An intro from Jamie, Programme Manager of Together an Active Future

Together an Active Future visited Kemple View in November 2021 to hear what we thought was a story about how one of our projects, Creative Football, had made a massive impact on their service users and staff. Kemple View is a low secure, high dependency unit for male service users with a mental illness.

We did hear that story. But perhaps what we weren't expecting to hear was the story about the journey of Kemple View themselves and how, over many years, they have fundamentally changed their approach to rehabilitation and recovery, embedding physical activity at the heart of it.

As we sat there listening and asking questions, we knew we were hearing something really quite special; a story of how inspirational leadership can create the foundations and belief in a better way of doing things; a story of bringing together people with passion and determination to bring about the change needed; a story of challenging engrained thinking and approaches and creating a culture where service users are genuinely and actively involved in their own recovery; a story which we thought needed to be told. We believe it's a story that all of us, whether a mental health service provider or anyone else, can learn a lot from.

Be well-led

“We knew there had to be a better way” stated Mags Gallagher the Hospital Director, as she welcomed Together an Active Future and Creative Football to Kemple View.

Kemple View is a 90-bedded site offering 56 low secure beds and 34 rehabilitation beds catering to the treatment needs of male service users with a mental illness and/or personality disorder, maximising their opportunity for recovery, rehabilitation and independent living.

Mags explained how over the past couple of decades there has been a slow and steady evolution in the views, practices and policies regarding rehabilitation; however there was still a long way to go to demonstrate the importance of the rehabilitation stage in the transition to independent living. Too often independent living was failing and service users were re-admitted, making it increasingly difficult for them to get well and resulting in the revolving door of service users coming in and out.

Mags recognise that change was needed to work out 'a better way' and so set about introducing the changes needed to set Kemple View on their way.

Finding the right team

Mags and some of her colleagues knew that to bring about change there needed to be fresh ideas, approaches and energy that could help start to move the culture of Kemple View; a culture which, by the nature of what they do, tended to be risk averse and resistant to introducing anything new and different to service users.

So, 5 years ago, Kemple View made the bold move to create a Recovery Team, a team of people with a passion and enthusiasm for recovery to be initially led by Lianne and later Janella, a Mental Health Nurse who specialises in substance recovery.

The team were not given a set plan but rather given the challenge of “opening up this other world” to service users and working how to manage risk with recovery.

Importance of physical activity in recovery

Life in a secure unit can be very mundane and service users at Kemple View used to time their day around meal times, as there wasn't much else happening. One of the first aims for the Recovery Team was to test out a way of introducing something new that could not only bring more interest in a service users day but also get people moving more, knowing that being more active can make a positive difference to peoples mental health.

Recognising that football was something that connected with a lot of the men, Kemple View started attending the Social Inclusion Football League offered by Creative Football.

There was a lot of learning for the staff particularly in the early days of these football sessions, but it wasn't long before the football became (and continues to be) the highlight of the week for many of the service users.

Seeing the positive impact the football sessions had on service users and staffs attitudes, confidence and wellbeing, the Recovery Team thought about other opportunities for service users to be active, that would expose them to different environments, teach them different skills and keep them engaged in their own recovery.

Now, in addition to football sessions, staff and service users have taken part in a range of different activities including boxing, ski-ing, canoeing, Couch to 5K and the 3 Peaks Challenge. The unit also has a gym that service users are now using more. Adrian, Recovery Worker, says that whilst the gym is great for people being more active, a major benefit is that it is a place where he develops rapport with the service users, often leading to informal counselling sessions, as they tend to talk and share more during a workout.



Kemple View now believe that “recovery is physical activity based”. The physical activity sessions they seek out play a vital role in the transition to independent living. The Recovery Team now engage with physical activity providers in the communities where service users will be going, to ensure that the service users as part of their transition have a place to go to where they can form friendships and have a support network. This introduction helps a lot, as service users often do not have the confidence to go to new places on their own and many are anxious as they haven't taken part in physical or social activities for years.

Listening to those at the heart of what you do

The change in Kemple View's approach to physical activity as a key part of recovery and the associated risks that it brings has not been easy and has taken time.

Some of the key ingredients that made it work have already been covered; being well-led and having a passionate team who are encouraged and enabled to find a way to improve things for service users and then to work out how. This in itself is great, but not enough to bring about the changes that the team wanted. And so they had to do more.

Firstly, they recognised that they needed to listen more to the service users about what they were getting right and what they weren't. This led to some difficult truths about the relationships between service users and staff but it helped the team to see how they needed to change and also developed a better bond between everyone.

“We learn a lot from service users if we listen; we learnt a lot from Wayne” said Janella.

One example of this was in the football sessions mentioned earlier. The Recovery Team had made a great change by introducing football into the week for service users and managing some of the associated risks of that. However there were some key things that weren't quite right.

Initially, there wasn't consistency in the staff members who were involved. The staff were also distant in the sessions, preferring to stay on the sidelines or on the bus not getting involved. Wayne, a service user himself who was also part of the Social Inclusion Football Team, was willing to speak up and explain how that made him feel. Vitally, the Recovery Team were willing to listen and make a change.



[Click here to read Wayne's story](#)

This led to a change in staff rota's, as Kemple View began to understand more about the importance of consistency and trusted relationships for their service users. It also led to staff joining the service users team and playing football together as one united Kemple View team. The value of this was huge as it started to break down the 'us and them' feeling, relationships and trust grew and the increase in the wellbeing for the staff as well as the service users was evident.

Getting key people on board

Whilst the Recovery Team and service users were keen to try new things and have a go, this created a challenge for a number of the clinicians at Kemple View, who understandably saw their job first and foremost, as treating patients and mitigating risk where possible. The team knew that to get the changes happening they needed, they had to move the culture from one that is risk averse to one that accepts and manages risk as a part of active recovery. And so they started small, by spending time with one senior level Doctor and showing her how they could, by being willing to take a risk but one that is well managed, open up a whole new aspect of the recovery journey for service users, one that had already shown signs of making a real difference.

This meant the team had an advocate who understood the reality for clinicians, could relate to any concerns they may have and spent time with them to talk through how the risk could be managed; and of course help them see past the risk to the value that this new approach would provide for service users recovery.

Leaping forward in time from this starting point, clinicians have seen first-hand the benefits for service users in being able to access more opportunities, sometimes in areas that would never have been considered before. One great example of this is boxing! As you can imagine, this idea took a little convincing, as to some it was perhaps seen as encouragement for service users in a low secure and rehab units to swing punches at each other. One clinician who was an advocate for the Rehab team knew a bit about boxing and so knew that boxing workouts could help alleviate anxiety, stress, fatigue and depression. It could help service users learn to control their emotions as it requires both mental and physical strength. After much discussion and convincing, an onsite trial was agreed. It was a success! There were no untoward incidents, service users enjoyed the sessions and nurses noticed that they slept much better following the sessions.

There is a different feel and vibe from the Medical Team at Kemple View compared to before. In the words of Mags, “the Medical Team now use the language of recovery”. This all started from recognising that to convince people who have a different perspective to you, it helps to have an advocate that they can relate to who can talk their language.

Never stop improving and evolving

As an independent provider Kemple View has more autonomy than the NHS and they are taking full advantage of this, so that they can build upon their journey and learning so far. Rather than getting to a level that is better than before and being happy with that, they are continuing to evolve their thinking and practice, striving for better outcomes for service users and staff.

They have made strong decisions about the team they have in place to ensure the people who work there believe in what they're trying to achieve and are committed to making it happen.

They are currently in the process of employing more staff into the Rehabilitation Team with a specific focus for these roles to enable more physical activity as a key part of recovery.

Another change has been around the approach to diet and nutrition. As many of the service users battle with their weight, (which ultimately impacts on their self-esteem and confidence), service users have always been encouraged to access diet and nutritional advice. However, building upon the learning so far and striving to improve all aspects of care, Kemple View has recently recruited an in-house Dietician who will work alongside the clinical team and individually with service users.

There is also a Mission Fit programme which provides an element of coaching to support service users regarding both being more active and improving diet and nutrition.

Willingness to collaborate

The team at Kemple View are keen to collaborate, rather than compete, with other mental health providers. So they have hosted an event, inviting providers to come and share their learning to help improve the sector as a whole and ultimately improve the lives of service users living with a mental health condition. This is an area they hope to do more of in the future so that they can learn from others as well as share what they've learnt.

The wrap up

Based on our experience, there is a lot can be learned from Kemple View. I'm sure they would say they are still learning and improving every day, but we wanted to share the story that we heard, as we felt there was a lot that could be taken from it. Whether you're working in the metal health sector or anywhere else; have the right team who believe in what you're trying to do, listen to the people who are at the heart of it all, be willing to take a risk and get people on board who can help you manage that message, try some stuff, learn from it and never stop improving.

And of course, of special interest to Together an Active Future, physical activity can deliver benefits in so many ways. In this story alone it's helped motivate service users to play an active role in their recovery, it's created deeper and stronger relationships between service users and staff, it's grown the skills and confidence of people in a number of ways and its helped shift a culture of an organisation.

We're looking forward to seeing where it takes Kemple View's service users and staff next.