Discovery College:
Co-producing for self directed recovery and organisational change in a youth mental health setting
Andrew Foster
Discovery College Co-ordinator
Headspace Youth Early Psychosis Program (hYEPP)
Alfred Health, South East Melbourne

20 years of working in specialist education focused roles (including at a Recovery College and Discovery College)

‘Lived Experience’ with mental health challenges including a small list of ‘diagnoses’

Experience of overcoming alcohol addiction after 28 years as a problem drinker

At Discovery College I look to bring these 2 areas of expertise (education and lived experience) together, helping others to make sense of their own experiences in a way that is engaging, interesting and inspires hope

I am passionate for people to be able to find their own unique voice and to be able to understand their life experiences in a meaningful and empowering way
Before we start...

In my recovery journey, one of the many things
I have learned is that it is important to

**express gratitude**

So today... I am grateful for:

- the invitation to come to speak with you all
- The beautiful venue and the warm welcome from the Swiss people
- A wonderful place to stay, to help me feel comfortable during my stay
- My beautiful partner (Michelle), who helps me to be the best version of me (who can’t be here in body, but is in spirit)
- Each and everyone of you for daring 😊 (I still have some inner doubts!!) to come to see and listen to my presentation today
- All of those people, some of them named, many of them not, who have helped to inform my team and I of what it is that Discovery College should look like and how we can support them and others.
- I AM GRATEFUL FOR ALL OF THESE THINGS 😊
Discovery College appears to be the first **youth focused** Recovery College in the world.
What makes this stuff possible?
We have completed some research and are in the process of having the outcomes published...

Educational Outcomes of Discovery College participation: measuring change for young people

Liza Hopkins¹, Glenda Pedwell² and Stuart Lee³

¹Alfred Health, Melbourne, Australia

Background: The current focus on recovery in mental health care across both policy and practice in Australia, as elsewhere, has seen the development of Recovery Colleges as an opportunity to improve and expand the ways mental health care services are delivered. Discovery College represents a new, youth-focused Recovery College model, now being implemented and trialled.

Aim: The aim of this study was to understand why young people and adults enrolled in co-produced, co-received Discovery College courses, what their experience of participating was, and whether attitudes towards education changed as a result of course participation.

Method: The study took a mixed methods approach. The qualitative component explored the experience of participants in Discovery College courses, while the quantitative component measured change in attitudes to education and learning opportunities.

Results: The project found that participating in Discovery College had benefits both for adult participants (generally mental health service staff members) and for young people (generally mental health service clients). Benefits for adults included increased professional knowledge, improved empathy and enhanced self-knowledge. Benefits for young people included an improved attitude towards education and greater likelihood of participating in future study after completing a Discovery College course.

Conclusion: People who participated in Discovery College courses, both young people and adults were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences and experienced positive attitude change. While more work is needed to understand the effect of participation on mental health symptoms and subjective well-being, preliminary findings from this work demonstrate the importance of Discovery College as part of a holistic approach to the care of young people with mental illness.

Establishing Discovery College in Melbourne: findings of a process evaluation in a youth mental health service

Liza Hopkins, Lara Nikitin and Andrew Foster

Suggested journal: Journal of Mental Health (UK, 4000 words)

Abstract

Background: Recovery Colleges are relatively new mental health initiatives, growing rapidly in popularity across the globe, reshaping the way services are delivered and received within a recovery-focused framework. South East Melbourne’s headspace Youth Early Psychosis Program (HYEPP) Discovery College is a youth-focused Recovery College, drawing on the model of Recovery Colleges and integrating the wisdom of lived experience with professional expertise in supporting its students.

Aim: This study aimed to inform the development and implementation of Discovery College, at the same time contributing to a broader understanding of the benefits and barriers of Recovery colleges for young people and adults experiencing mental health challenges and the benefits, enablers and potential practical barriers to developing a Recovery College in a youth setting, for services.

Method: Following the implementation of Discovery College into the HYEPP service, a series of face to face, telephone and paper based interviews was conducted with various Discovery College stakeholders, to draw out qualitative information around the experiences of implementing Discovery College into a mental health service.

Results: Sixteen themes emerged from the qualitative data, which were then clustered into four main areas: Establishing Discovery College, organisational context, the nature of Discovery College and service transformation.

Conclusion: Implementation was widely reported as both feasible and effective. An initial tension between the fidelity of the model and a pragmatic approach to action was negotiated through a process of trial and error (and an ability of staff to sit with the unknown and/or uncomfortable) a service offering that brought benefits to service users, clinical staff, senior managers and the service itself was widely reported.
Some background to the initiative

2014 Established new ‘headspace Youth Early Psychosis Program’ (hYEPP) service across South Eastern Melbourne

- Operating from a hub and spoke model (4 campuses)
- Specialist clinical teams (MATT, CCT)
- Recovery Program (Vocation, Exercise Physiology, Neuropsychology, Groups*, Peer Support)

Leadership teams developed a vision for a service working in partnership with service users to create a needs driven offer

- Open Dialogue
- ORS and SRS evaluation tools
- Recovery College (later named ‘Discovery College’)
- Workshop to inform the nature of Recovery Programs

*Some ‘Groups’ funding was used to establish Discovery College
What we knew...

- First Recovery College launched in 2009 in UK (South West London).
- Today over 80 Recovery Colleges, globally
- An ever growing evidence base to support the idea of Recovery Colleges and the value they are having in Mental Health telling us...

“Recovery is a personal journey of discovery... It involves making sense of, and finding meaning in, what has happened; becoming an expert in your own self-care; building a new sense of self and purpose in life; discovering your own resourcefulness and possibilities and using these, and the resources available to you, to pursue your aspirations and goals...The challenge for mental health services is to assist people in this journey”

Perkins, Repper, Rinaldi, and Brown (2012)
What we didn’t know...

• Would a Recovery College work in a youth space?

• How do you co-produce with a consumer base who haven’t necessarily found their voice yet?
  Young People being able to have learned enough from their experiences to share with others in a meaningful way

There is a lot of ‘not knowing’ and ‘discomfort’ in approaching something no one has done before

You have to be able to ‘sit with the unknown’ or ‘be ok with being uncomfortable’
Some background to the initiative

**2015**
Discovery College focus groups created to support...

- Recruitment of staff to Discovery College (initially 1.5 FTE)
- Meetings arranged to set up co-production teams
- Initial suite of courses into co-production (4 courses)
- Joint co-production with Mind Recovery College

**August**
Discovery College working group established

- Additional recruitment of contracted lived experience workforce
- Working group develops ‘pilot’ program and key processes

**November**
Recovery educator training (2 days, 26 attendees)

*Some ‘Groups’ funding was used to establish Discovery College*
Some background to the initiative

2016
January
Co-production of three new courses, with greater understanding of requirements and challenges of effective co-production

April
Discovery College official launch!
Regular Courses run in each term for the first time ever!!

2016
June
Courses run in two different campuses for the first time
2 x 0.6 FTE added to staff
  • 2 x part time learning consultants and learning co-ordinator role created

December
Part time roles increased to full time
Milestones at May 2018

42 separate courses
run across 4 campuses in 6 locations

259 unique students
including young people, mums and dads,
mental health professionals and other members of the community

57 ‘Recovery Educators’
28 members of staff or from partnering services (Experts by Profession)
23 ‘contractors’ paid for service (Experts by Experience)
6 currently ‘inactive’
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<tr>
<th>REFRAMING</th>
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<td>• Taking the edge off: Let’s talk about drugs and alcohol</td>
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<td>• High school, relationships, and social media</td>
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<td>• In Your Write Mind: Exploring creative writing and recovery</td>
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<td>• Making sense of your senses</td>
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<td>• Mind + Body: Exercise (coming soon!)</td>
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We see that Discovery College is that ‘parallel process’, providing the model for the future vision of Mental Health Services

- Creating partnership between professionals, service users and the community
- Equal power where lived experience and professional expertise are held in equal regard
- Creating communities that can tolerate human distress

Williams et al. (2017) wrote of:

“The [great] potential of experiential learning and use of parallel processes as a means to enhancing recovery-oriented service delivery.”
Discovery College…

...is the practice ground for recovery oriented practice

...is co-produced; co-facilitated; co-received educational opportunity

...works on well-established principles of recovery

...emphasises:
• Hope
• Positive sense of the future
• Learning from the wisdom of lived experience and professional expertise
• Individual choice and control to meet participants personal needs
We have completed some research and are in the process of having the outcomes published....

Findings...

**Process evaluation (Hopkins, Nikitin, Foster)**
- Important to be able to ‘sit with the unknown’
- Recovery Champions/Discovery College Champions are key to embedding practice
- Fidelity of model is important, but not always fully possible
- Lived experience doesn’t have to be ‘youth’ so long as it connects with youth or is drawing on experiences from youth
- Creating ‘safe’ spaces is important for the effective formation of genuine partnerships

**Outcomes evaluation (Hopkins, Pedwell, Lee)**
- Benefits for adults included increased professional knowledge, improved empathy and enhanced self-knowledge.
- Benefits for young people included an improved attitude towards education and greater likelihood of participating in future study after completing a Discovery College course.
Why would we want to have a Discovery College?

“... to foster collaboration between young people, families and professionals to help improve outcomes and minimise stigma and discrimination.”

Director of Psychiatry
Why would we want to have a Discovery College?

“...it moves us out of traditional roles, relationships and power imbalances to talk about mental health in new ways...it equalises expertise between lived and learned experience and...allows a dialogue to occur whereby each experience can influence the others thinking and together new understanding and meaning can be formed between us.”

Principal Psychiatrist
Why would we want to have a Discovery College?

“Initial reaction: why wouldn’t we have a Discovery College? It gives me a place where I can share my lived experience with the intent of helping others. As the topics covered are not generally spoken about in everyday life, it’s helped me become more open minded and aware, from listening to the varying perspectives from both facilitators and the participants. I genuinely wish something like DC was available to me when I was struggling with my mental health challenges.”

Young person who has become a Recovery Educator (Expert by Experience)
Why would we want to have a Discovery College?

“To develop a greater awareness for the individual and to the community...without Discovery College there isn’t enough understanding of what some people may be experiencing...some insight may be heard directly from the doctor (but) it’s very formal. Discovery college is an informal service that allows individuals to express their own ideas and experiences in relation to the topics discussed.”

Young person who attended as a student
Why would we want to have a Discovery College?

“I find it most valuable to hear of the experiences of other participants and of the facilitators. I feel more connected through our shared experiences, knowing that I’m not alone.”

*Parent of a young person experiencing mental health challenges who attended as a student*
Why would we want to have a Discovery College?

“Discovery College offers an opportunity to rethink the way services are delivered and received for and by young people, families, staff members and interested others...it helps to shift the service in a very positive way, to a recovery and person centred focus in line with both policy imperatives and world best practice.”

Evaluation and Research Development Officer
References

Perkins, Repper, Rinaldi, & Brown, (2012). Recovery Colleges – Briefing Document 1. ImROC, Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Network NHS Confederation

Williams, Deane, Oades, Crowe, Ciarocchi, & Andresen (2016). Enhancing recovery orientation in mental health services: expanding the utility of values. The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice