

TheMHS Awards 2016 Submission from Mind Recovery College, Mind Australia

Submitted by Dianne Hardy, Director Mind Recovery College (Telephone 03 8698 4061) on behalf of Mind Australia

1. Additional Information about Entry

The Mind Recovery College was the first recovery college in Australia and was created following the success of recovery colleges in the UK and USA. It is based on two ideas: valuable knowledge and skills can be gained from first-hand experience of mental distress; and learning can enrich lives aiding people who experience mental distress to recover a life they value. The College's coproduction approach means people with personal experience of mental distress are involved in the design and delivery of courses, running of the College and participation in College activities.

There is a wide variety of courses offered by the College that range in length from one 2 hour session to 1 day per week over a year. The range of options is designed to help build in success for students and make it easier for those students who haven't had confidence building experiences elsewhere in their education. Examples of courses offered by the College include: Confident me, What is Recovery, Motivation and Mental Health, Understanding Medications, Mindful Self Compassion, Understanding Self Harm, Understanding Anxiety, Advanced Statements, Finding and Navigating Friendships, I Choose to be Spiritual, and many more.

It provides a complimentary alternative to existing case management approaches. At the same time it is a practical vehicle for cooperation between services and their communities. Everyone is welcome to attend courses and no one is asked to provide information about their diagnosis. Students talk about how the College is different and 'real'. They also reflect that it is a welcoming learning space where they don't even think about whether there is stigma. This was described very well on the short video about the College on our web site at www.recoverycollege.org.au

When students come to the College they not only find a safe place to be themselves but at the same time a place where they are challenged and experience the value of being outside their comfort zone. This is important for learning and often an inherent part of recovery too.

The College is role modelling a consumer choice culture where: power is shared; first-hand knowledge is valued alongside other forms of evidence based information; and consumers and carers feel, and are, an integral part of the running of the College.

Some quotes from students at the Mind Recovery College include:

"I found it ground breaking and proactive to consumer's needs"

"I've used services for ten years and this is something really different"

"I'm learning a bit more about my triggers towards how I'm thinking. And learning that so many other people are feeling the same way that I do"

"I usually struggle in groups but I'm really comfortable. I am getting a lot out of this"

"After this course I feel like a real person, not a diagnosis"

1. Evidence of a significant contribution to the field of mental health on a local, state or national level.

The Mind Recovery College makes the following contributions to the field of mental health that impact at local, state, national and international levels:

- Providing a rich educational experience to hundreds of people impacted by mental ill-health
- Demonstrating new organisational 'peer' roles that require personal lived experience and utilise this experience in their work as Learning and Development Consultants
- Providing opportunities for consumers to become sessional teachers that not only adds to the value of courses but also challenges their own and other consumers perceptions about what is possible
- Building capabilities, capacity and experience of people affected by mental ill health and health professionals in co-production of courses. This is an approach and expertise that can be applied in a range of settings within and beyond the College
- Demonstrating that value can be gained from well run co-production processes and courses even on sensitive and difficult topics such as self harming and medications
- Generating new knowledge and ways of doing things that are beginning to be used to enrich the practice of existing services and supports.

In 2015 the College was recognised with a National Disability Award for Excellence in Choice and Control in Service Delivery. This award was due in part to the ways that people with first hand experience of mental distress are integral to every aspect of the College. Many of these are listed in the description of the College earlier in this submission. However, it is worth looking in a bit more detail at how coproduction and co-delivery occur which is described under Criterion 3.

The College has built a reputation for providing an innovative and complementary support for recovery. Local organisations are connecting and sometimes partnering with the College due to their interest in the model and the ease with which partnering can occur. Other organisations from Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia have approached the College to learn more about what we are doing and how it is working. Three of these organisations have created their own recovery colleges over the past two years. The College has hosted visits from overseas professionals from places such as Myanmar, Hong Kong, China, Malaysia, United Kingdom and Canada.

The Mind Recovery College was invited to be part of an International Recovery College Community of Practice (IRC CoP) in 2014 as a result of collaboration between the College and an overseas Recovery College, St Michael's STAR Learning centre in Toronto, Canada. Members of the IRCCoP are from the Canada, UK, USA, Uganda, Ireland, Italy, France, Japan and Australia. The Mind Recovery College Director currently coordinates this group and chairs quarterly teleconferences to exchange practice, collaborate on research opportunities and engage in other joint activities to further the development and quality of recovery colleges around the globe.

The best demonstration of the contribution and value of the Mind Recovery College is from the voices of our students and teachers which as mentioned earlier are contained in a 5 minute video at www.recoverycollege.org.au where our Semester Course Guide can also be viewed.

2. Evidence of innovation and/or recognised best practice.

Creation of the Mind Recovery College has allowed Mind to lead the development of this innovative approach in Australia.

The College presented at The MHS in 2014 and had a paper included in the proceedings of the Conference. In 2014 the College leads also presented to a forum on recovery colleges at Moorabbin Headspace alongside Jane McGregor and Geoff Shepherd from Implementing Recovery Through Organisational Change (IMROC). This organisation has been associated with supporting a number of successful recovery colleges in the UK. In December 2015 the College was the subject of a case study on coproduction in a coproduction guide being developed by Cath Roper from Melbourne University for the Department of Human Services.

As described under other criteria in this submission, the College has demonstrated by its way of working that first hand experience of mental distress from carer, family and professional points of view can be used to design and deliver learning experiences that provide new knowledge and ways of looking at things. Practical skills are also gained that make sense and can be personally applied by students regardless of whether they are service users, carers or health professionals.

Co-production workshops can provide a space where people share stories and talk about their own experiences in a way that allows professionals to be outside the constraints and responsibilities associated with diagnosing and treating individuals. This allows them to be very open, hear and sit with other perspectives. Similarly this is a different experience for carers who are able to draw on their experiences separated from their day to day efforts and concerns for those they care for. Consumers are able to speak honestly outside the complex and risky relationships where there is time pressures and significant consequences can result if what they say is not fully understood. Co-production workshops offer a space where the aim is sharing and understanding for the purpose of helping others through the creation of worthwhile learning opportunities. It is about listening for meaning rather than judging which can be a very affirming experience. Many participants in co-production workshops talk about how good it has been to be involved. Consumers also say it has been healing or valuable for their recovery. New teachers are typically identified and engaged through these workshops. Experience has demonstrated that even sensitive and poorly understood topics such as self harming can be explored in this way. And there can be interesting surprises. For instance: 27 of the 34 participants at the three Medications Coproduction Workshops run by the College had personally taken psychotropic medications including people from the health professionals, carers and consumers involved. Not so surprising when you think about it but perhaps not the perception everyone came into the room with.

Coproduction processes have even been used to design the College space. A group of consumers, carers and staff shared stories, brainstormed ideas and worked with a domestic interior designer to produce warm, welcoming, creative and interesting functional spaces at the College. This styling is being reflected at each of the new Campuses as well with adaption to local circumstances.

3. Evidence of participation of mental health consumers, in the planning, implementation and evaluation as relevant.

All courses are coproduced with people with lived experience of mental distress and or carer experience. Courses are delivered by people with: expertise in learning and the content area, a lived experience of mental ill-health and commitment to recovery-oriented practice.

The co-production of college activities is at the core of the model which brings together the expertise of people with a lived experience in their own and others' recovery and the expertise of the professional mental health and education knowledge-bases. By bringing together and valuing an individual's lived experience as valid knowledge equal to professional expertise, innovative and responsive courses and programs are developed that are different to existing psycho-education courses and curricula. These courses offer new strategies for assisting people to manage their mental ill health and improve their social and economic participation. People with a lived experience of mental ill-health and recovery are encouraged and invited to participate in all aspects of the College's life.

The majority of College staff are Learning and Development Consultants who coproduce and co-deliver courses, coach new teachers, help students develop Individual Learning Plans, evaluate courses and a range of other activities. Having personal lived experience of mental distress is one of the key selection criteria for these roles.

The overwhelming majority of sessional teachers also have a lived experience and a number have stepped up to co-develop and co-deliver their first course teaming with College staff. This includes people who have been service users for many years.

Each campus has a Local Working Group to assist and advise on all aspects of the Campus' operation. These Groups typically have 3 – 4 consumers, 2 carers, 2 local staff and the Campus Manager and Learning and Development Consultant.

The Governance Committee for the Mind Recovery College comprises ten members including two members with first-hand experience of mental ill health. A Carer representative is currently being recruited.

The evaluation of the College currently being conducted by Melbourne University includes student and staff interviews, surveys and focus groups. The Evaluation Team includes a Consumer Advisor. The majority of students and staff have a lived experience.

4. Evidence of Partnerships and Linkages (collaboration for continuity between organisations).

The recovery college model is one that makes it easy for partnering with a variety of organisations. Having been developed by a community mental health organisation it has been easy to connect to consumers, family carers and Community Mental Health Practitioners. It has taken more work to find connections with clinical and other professionals.

The College is becoming more widely known and there is considerable interest in the model. Peninsular Health, Eastern Health, Monash Health and Alfred Health have all expressed interest in talking further about how they might work with the College. Discussion with Victoria Police and some education providers about opportunities to collaborate are also continuing.

Examples of Mind Recovery College Partnerships

<i>ORGANISATION</i>	<i>NATURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP</i>
Disability Discrimination Legal Service	DDLS had funding and capability to provide awareness training on disability discrimination legal rights and associated information but had found it hard to reach two of its target groups, people experiencing mental health issues and people in rural locations. They approached the College, agreed to partner with a consumer to refine and deliver their training. Two courses were offered jointly with strong enrolments and feedback.
Pangerang/Bangerang Aboriginal Elders	The local Mind Office in Wangaratta had good working relationship with the local Pangerang/Bangerang Community. The College Leads approached the Elders early in the MRC pilot and gained their support for the College. This has translated to Aboriginal students attending the College, gifting of a name for the Campus, Thargomimba. This is a Pangerang/Bangerang word meaning going in the right direction or walking together.
Bentleigh Headspace and Youth Early Psychosis Program (YEPP) including their Discovery College	In 2015 Bentleigh Headspace and YEPP launched their new facilities and Discovery College. This is the second recovery college to emerge in Victoria. MRC staff have worked in partnership with the Discovery College team resulting in help marketing our courses, partnerships that have provided access to clinical staff for the Understanding Self-Harm coproduction workshop, professional development opportunities through access to a forum and training course arranged by the Discovery College and delivery of some courses at the Discovery College by MRC staff.
Melba Services and Pathways to Care	Partnered to offer a nationally accredited Cert I course in Finding and Navigating Friendships. The College provided a consumer teacher, venue and marketing and helped tailor course materials.
NEAMI	NEAMI were commissioned by SANE to develop a Peer Health Coaching Package for use by interested organisations in the Community Mental Health Sector. They provided a teacher and tested course materials to work in partnership with an MRC teacher to deliver a Peer Health Coaching course at the College.
Partners in Recovery (Primary Health Networks)	Three PIRs have provided seed funding to help establish MRC Campuses in their areas. In Bendigo the local PIR has contributed expertise and resources and coordinated the running of a Cert IV in Peer Work at the MRC Bendigo Campus.
Eastern Health	Potential ways to partner have been explored with Eastern Health. EH were involved in the Coproduction Workshops designed to inform the Understanding Psychotropic Medications Course. They provided a psychiatric nurse and pharmacist who both contributed to the development of the course and commented positively about its value.

ORGANISATION	NATURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP
Hearing Voices Inc.	Hearing Voices Inc. had the opportunity to have respected US Psychiatrist and Loccota Indian, Dr Lewis Mehl-Madrona come and run a 1 day workshop whilst he was in Melbourne in 2014. The MRC provided the venue and marketed to MRC students and Hearing Voices organised Dr Mehl-Madrona's workshop and marketed through their network. The result was 65 people at the College for a remarkable full day workshop. Another is planned for 2016.

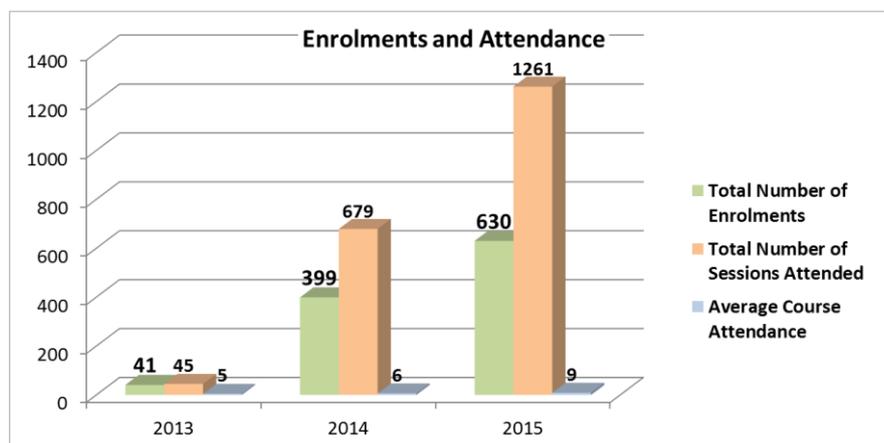
5. Verification and evaluation of the program's effectiveness

Course evaluations indicate that learning objectives are regularly being achieved and students are rating the quality and value of the courses highly.

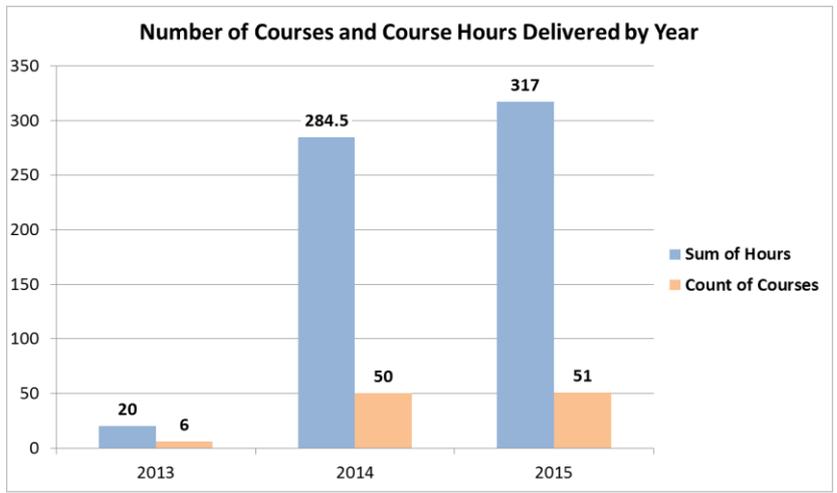
Formal evaluation of the College is currently underway and early results are confirming the very strong anecdotal feedback from students about the value of the College for their recovery. Dr Helen Jordan and Dr Lennart Reifels, Centre for Health Policy & Centre for Mental Health, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne completed the evaluation design in September 2015. Dr Lisa Brophy has engaged a Consumer Advisor and a research assistant and will oversee the implementation of the evaluation. This has commenced and is scheduled for completion by June 2016. Dr Jordan will be on the Advisory Group for the implementation. The evaluation will look at both the College processes and outcomes for students.

Student interest is also evident in the encouraging trends in the College data.

- **Average class size is steadily increasing.** This is likely to eventually level out as there are maximum class sizes that are optimum depending on the topic. Waiting lists are now needed.
- **Courses are attracting many new students.** In the first year the same students tended to come to multiple courses. Now new people are increasingly enrolling and attending courses.
- **No of courses in 2015 similar to 50 courses run in 2014** despite the impact of shifting the MRC Team to a Central Campus in Cheltenham and setting up the new College Central Campus.
- **No. of student places steadily increasing** from 399 places in 2014 to 630 places in 2015.
- **317 course hours** delivered in 2015. Using the average class size of 9 students, that is **2853 student hours.**



Graph 1: Level of student participation in Mind Recovery College courses



Graph 2: Number of Mind Recovery College courses delivered from July 2013 to December 2015.

Conclusion

The College is a welcoming and inclusive new service. Involvement in the College helps consumers, carers and professionals learn from each other. Students develop a greater sense of their own strengths. Their beliefs about what is possible are challenged in positive ways that increase hope and motivation. Knowledge, skills and perspectives learnt visibly increase students mental health and wellbeing.

One of the important benefits of the College is that it provides a new space for discourse about mental health topics and issues between people with a mental health disability, family, carers, health professionals and a variety of other community members. This space is different as it is outside the usual therapeutic settings where these matters are typically discussed. The focus is on understanding aspects of mental health that individuals can then draw on for managing their own mental health or helping others. This contrasts with a therapeutic search for what is wrong with an individual and finding ways to fix them. In this way the College is contributing to system change towards a more person-centred approach.

The Mind Recovery College adds another option to the mix of therapeutic and other approaches that students can draw on to aid their own recovery or support someone else's. All aspects of the College benefit from lived experience contributions and perspectives. It is designed to acknowledge that choices about what they take from the College experiences can only be made by students. They are voting with their feet and talking about how valuable the College learning opportunities are for them for helping them better manage their lives to be satisfying and rewarding.

The Mind Recovery College continues to learn and develop whilst actively sharing learnings and collaborating with others. The most exciting thing about the College is hearing students comments about what value it brings for them.

Referees: **Nominate two referees.**

Referee 1

Removed for privacy

Appendix of Support Material:

Please see <http://www.recoverycollege.org.au/> for the current Course Guide and a 5 minute video about the College

Also attached is:

1. A letter from the CEO of the Ian Potter Foundation
2. National Disability Award Certificate for Excellence in Choice and Control in Service delivery
3. The what, how, and why of co-production at the Mind Recovery College



The Ian Potter
Foundation

12 January 2016

Ms Dianne Hardy
Project Lead Mind Recovery College
Mind Australia
86-92 Mount Street
HEIDELBERG VIC 3084

Reference: **20130832**

Dear Ms Hardy

Re: The Recovery College Project: trialling an innovative approach to mental health recovery

Thank you for the progress report received on 14 September 2015. I was pleased to read that the College is expanding and that a co-design methodology is now underpinning all aspects of the operations. As the newly appointed Chief Executive Officer of the Ian Potter Foundation, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate and acknowledge Mind Australia on receiving the 2015 National Disability Award.

The next payment of \$50,000 representing the final payment of the grant will be made via EFT. Please provide Mind Australia's banking details via the *My Account* associated with the grant application and which can be accessed from the Foundation's website www.ianpotter.org.au. You should select the *Reporting* tab and open the EFT link. Please complete and submit the required details within 14 days.

Following payment of the grant to Mind Australia's account an email will be sent to you confirming payment and requesting that you provide an official receipt.

The grant is paid subject to the Standard Grant Conditions provided with your first payment and which detail the reporting schedule and requirements. The next report has been published in the online account associated with this grant. The report may be referred to or started at any time, but as a prompt a reminder to complete and submit the report will be sent approximately one month prior to its due date.

It would be appreciated if you could acknowledge the support of The Ian Potter Foundation in your Annual Report, display material or other publications linked to the project. To request a digital copy of the Foundation's logo (jpg or eps) please email admin@ianpotter.org.au

On behalf of the Governors, I wish Mind Australia all the best for the continuation of the project and I look forward to reading about the next twelve months' activities in the report, due on 28 February 2017.

Yours sincerely

Craig Connelly

Chief Executive Officer

The Ian Potter Foundation

Level 3, 111 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
T +61 3 9650 3188
F +61 3 9650 7986
E admin@ianpotter.org.au
W www.ianpotter.org.au

ABN 77 950 227 010
Trustee: The Ian Potter
Foundation Limited
ABN 42 004 603 972

Founder

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Life Governor

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Hon LLD Melb

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HonDUniv ACU DJuris Bologna
Hon LLD Melb

Professor Thomas W Healy, AO
PhD Columbia BSc MSc HonDSc Melb
FAA FTSE FRACI

Professor Richard Larkins, AO
MD BS Melb PhD Lon Hon LLD Melb
HonLLD Monash FTSE FRACP FRCP
FRCPI FAMM FAMSing

Mr Allan J Myers, AO, QC
BA LLB(Hons) Melb BCL Oxon
HonDUniv ACU HonLLD Melb

Professor Graeme B Ryan, AC
MD BS PhD Melb FRCPA FRACP

Professor Brian P Schmidt, AC
BS BS UofA AM PhD Harvard
HonDUniv UofA HonDUniv UChile
HonDUniv Macquarie
HonDUniv UQ FAA FRS NAS

Chief Executive Officer

Craig Connelly

2. National Disability Award Certificate and Submission



3. The what, how, and why of co-production at the Mind Recovery College

Background

1. What is Co-production?

Simply put, co-production is a form of collaborative service design and delivery. It is one of two defining features of any Recovery College, along with the use of an education approach to supporting mental health.

Boyle and Harris (2009) neatly sum up both the 'what' and the 'why' of co-production:

Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.

All courses at the Mind Recovery College are co-produced, as are many other elements of the overall student experience. Essentially, this means we make sure we have the right mix of experience and expertise involved, to ensure rich education experiences based on what people really find helpful for mental wellbeing.

Co-production actively disrupts 'business as usual' for mental health services, by inviting people to engage with the topic of mental health outside their usual prescribed roles. Consumers, carers, and workers become students. Students become teachers, and teachers become students. In this way, co-production opens up new ways of speaking, listening, and thinking about mental health.

Co-production is also a form of market research. When people have the chance to design and deliver the services they access, together we can meet the real needs of the community, rather than the perceived needs. In an education sense, this is about sound needs analysis informing all aspects of learning offered.

Crucially, co-production goes beyond consultation. Instead of asking, 'what can we do for you?', the question becomes, 'what can we do together?' Married with a strong commitment to quality assurance and ongoing development of individuals, co-production can be a powerful tool of transformation, for people and systems alike.

5. Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose of this document is to guide co-production in the Mind Recovery College. The Mind Recovery College is Australia's first recovery college, and as such our approach to co-production has some unique characteristics.

Mind is also engaged in fostering other forms of consumer participation, involvement, and influence in its broader work, and this document may also inform the development of those practices.

6. Objectives

The objectives of co-production at the Mind Recovery College are to:

- Engage people impacted by mental distress in rich educational experiences
- Ensure courses reflect the real needs of people seeking mental wellbeing, not simply their perceived needs
- Build Mind's capabilities and capacity in co-production of activities
- Enable people to turn their experiences of mental distress and other disruptive life events into valuable learning experiences for others
- Open up new ways of listening, speaking and thinking about mental health, by constructively disrupting traditional boundaries between providers and consumers of services
- Generate new knowledge and practice that could be used to enrich the practice of our existing services and supports
- Provide a demonstration of an innovative approach to recovery that may be taken up by other organisations in Australia
- Establish an ongoing and respected College that continues to model and contribute to innovation in welcoming and engaging learners in actively developing themselves.

7. Pillars of Co-production

Four pillars guide our approach to co-production. Co-production is by definition a fluid, experimental undertaking. It disrupts business as usual for mental health services, in search of better ways of doing things – and if it didn't, it wouldn't be worth the effort.

These pillars offer a useful reference point for determining whether any particular experiment in co-production is in keeping with the Mind Recovery College Co-production Model. The pillars are:

Pillar	Application to co-production
We are all people	Co-production brings together people who have used mental health services, family members, and mental health professionals; however these roles can become fixed in a way that discourages an open exchange of ideas. We must all engage in the process as people first and foremost. The relationship between those involved is collegial; it is not a service provision relationship.
Living is learning	Life experience is the most important form of knowledge at the College. Virtually everyone has some relevant experience of distress, and of supporting others through distress. As such, all those involved in the co-production process are invited to share and draw on their messy life experiences.
Many heads are better than one	When it comes to mental health, no one has all the answers. We invite as many people into the co-production process as we need to ensure any given course is as useful as it can be.
Growth happens outside our comfort zone	We ask individuals involved in the co-production process to engage with the topic of mental health in new ways, which may stretch their comfort zone. We ask first-time teachers to do something scary and new, and to work to develop their skills with our help. At a service level, co-production asks Mind and other providers to engage with different ways of thinking about mental health, some of which may challenge individuals' beliefs and assumptions.

8. Recovery Oriented Practice

At the heart of recovery is a set of values about a person's right to build a meaningful life for themselves, with or without the continuing presence of mental distress. It is based on ideas of self-determination and self-care, and the importance of hope in sustaining motivation and supporting expectations for a personally meaningful life. Personal recovery supports people to build and sustain self-defined, purposeful lives and identities, and as such it is a diverse personal and social experience.

As Slade et al have pointed out, despite a policy consensus on the power of a recovery focus; services have struggled to find ways of working that can give primacy to each individual's understanding of what mental distress and recovery mean to them.¹ In this context, co-production is an extremely useful method, since it asks people seeking mental wellbeing to shape the service in a way that best suits them. It also invites people to move beyond the often limiting roles of consumers or carers, to become teachers; and that transformation builds confidence and hope not only in those who teach, but in their students.

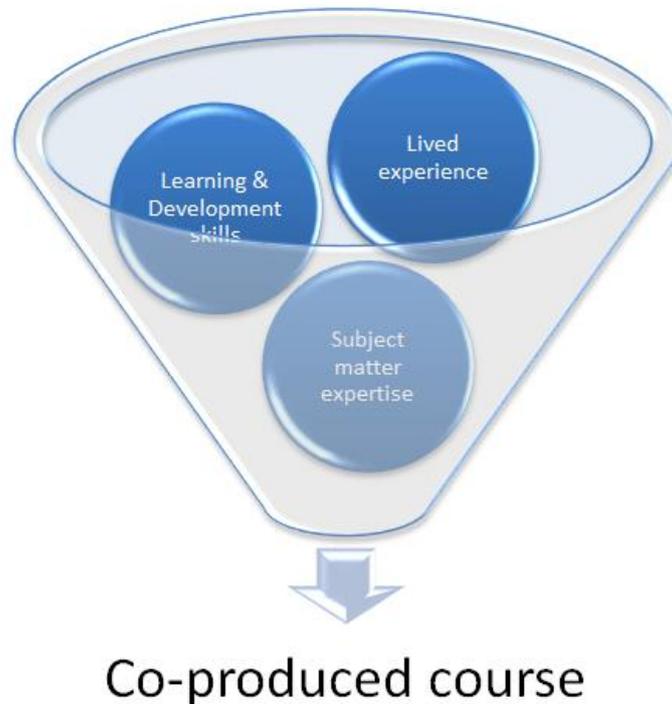
At the same time, co-production creates new types of relationships between people who use services, their family members, and people who work in services. Co-production invites people to engage as colleagues, working together on the creation of a new type of mental health and education service.

¹ Slade, M., Amering, M., Farkas, M., Hamilton, B., O'Hagan, M., Panther, G., Perkins, R., Shepherd, G., Tse, S., Whitley, R. 2014. Uses and abuses of recovery: implementing recovery-oriented practice in mental health systems. *World Psychiatry*. 2014 Feb;13(1):12-20.

9. The key ingredients

Co-production is often defined as the collaboration between a person with lived experience and a mental health professional. At the Mind Recovery College however, we emphasize three key ingredients: lived experience, subject matter expertise, and learning and development skills.

Sometimes these three components are all present in one person, who designs and delivers a course. Often, courses are designed and delivered by multiple people who each bring a mix of each key component.



Lived experience

Our definition of lived experience is relatively fluid, to reflect the way in which mental distress itself defies easy definition. Primarily, this means lived experience of mental distress. We also run some courses designed and delivered by people with experience supporting family members through mental distress. We are open to ways in which lived experience might go broader, including lived experience of being marginalised or disabled by society in other ways.

Subject Matter Expertise

Whatever the course, involving someone with subject matter expertise is key to providing a useful learning experience. This is where, on certain subjects, we might actively seek to involve people with professional experience working in mental health. Many courses though will not involve mental health professionals in design or delivery. Often subject matter expertise overlaps with lived experience. The lessons we learn from experiencing mental distress can make us extremely well placed to teach on subjects as wide-ranging as recovery, motivation, living the life you want, healthy living, helping others help you, and navigating the mental health system.

Learning and Development Skills

To bring the other two elements together in a high quality learning experience, we ensure any course development involves at least one person with strong learning and development skills. Regarding delivery, our teachers either have those skills already themselves, or are being actively mentored by someone who does.

10. Many ways to co-produce

There are many ways to bring these different ingredients together. We list here some of the main ways we approach co-production at the Mind Recovery College.

Note: this is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the possible ways to bring together lived experience, learning and development skills, and subject matter expertise. Guided by the four Pillars of Co-production (p3), you can experiment with any number of ways to co-produce.

11. Coaching teachers

Learning and Development Consultants coach students to develop and deliver courses on subjects they have particular knowledge of. Some students have learning and development experience already, but often it is their first time delivering a

structured learning experience. Through the process of developing their course, these teachers also develop their learning and development skills.

See *Mind Recovery College – Course and Teacher Development Policy*

12. Partnerships

We work with external agencies and individuals to develop and run courses. To ensure we have the mix of Learning & Development skills, Lived Experience, and Subject Matter expertise, the external person can work with:

- Our Learning and Development Consultants, or with
- Other sessional Mind Recovery College teachers, or with
- Students at the College.

13. Co-production workshops

Co-production workshops bring together a larger number of stakeholders...

This approach can be used to develop course content, and can also be used to inform any decisions where traditional consultation would typically be employed.

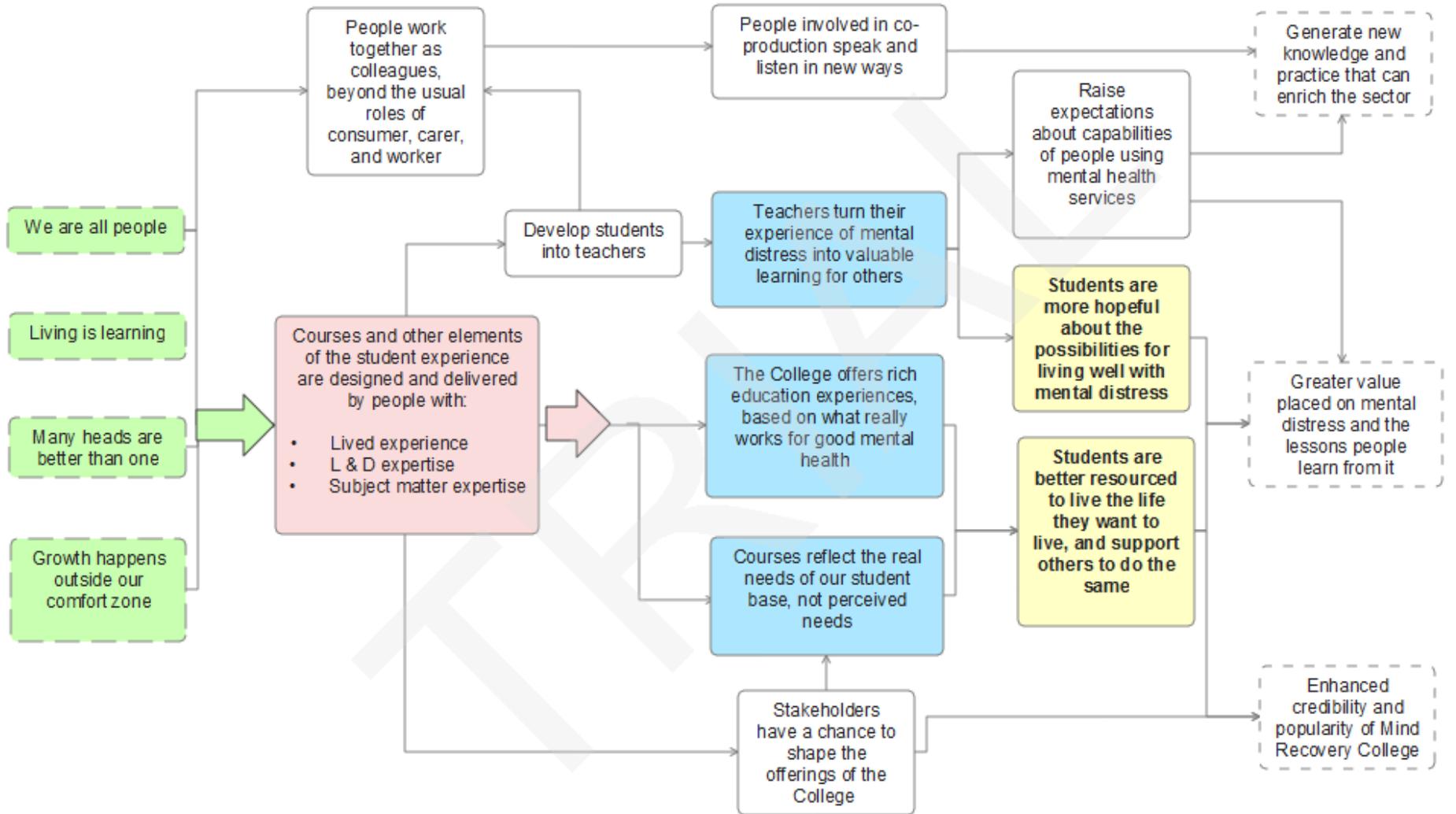
14. Working groups

Working Groups have been formed at each new campus site, to help provide local input into the development of the College in that area. These are made up of people with a mix of perspectives, including experience as students and teachers at the College, experience using other mental health services, supporting loved ones using mental health services, or working in mental health services.

See *Working Group – Terms of Reference*

15. Co-production Model

The following diagram outlines the theory of change underpinning our Co-production Model:



16. Integrity of the model

Co-production aims to encourage innovation – new approaches to mental health and recovery. Hard and fast rules about what constitutes co-production could stifle that innovation.

Instead of asking, ‘does this count as co-production?’, perhaps a more useful question is, ‘how deep are we going, and could we go deeper?’ With this in mind, we offer the idea of layers of co-production.

The layers of co-production

	Design and Delivery	Expertise involved
Layer 0	Consult with segmented stakeholder groups, ideas processed later	Professionals deliver initiatives Mental health professionals
Layer 1	Consult with segmented stakeholder groups, ideas processed later	Professionals deliver initiatives, with some input from clients, e.g. “guest speakers” Mental health professionals and people with lived experience
Layer 2	Mix of stakeholders, some processing done in the room	Professionals and clients work together, with clearly defined areas of expertise Mental health professionals and people with lived experience
Layer 3	Create new discursive spaces; not always clear who has which role	Expertise not tied to specific individuals; people wearing many hats at once Actively seek any relevant experience, including L&D; develop skills where needed

Layer 0 is traditional consultation. Consultation was once thought of as the endpoint of consumers’ input into a service. Now it is just the jumping off point for co-production.

Layer 1 can be thought of as “consultation plus” – with the addition of involving consumers in delivery of some initiatives.

Layer 2 sees the growth of partnerships between consumers and providers, in which each can play an equal role in design and delivery.

Layer 3 sees the blurring of lines between professional and consumer altogether, allowing for new ways of communicating and producing new ideas.

All of these layers may have their place, depending on who is involved and what they are up for, as well as the timeframes and resources. However, the vast majority of courses and other initiatives at the Mind Recovery College should aim for Layer 3.

It is at Layer 3 that each area of skill, expertise, or experience in the co-production mix is no longer tied to any one person. This opens the door for surprises:

- E.g. clinicians mentioning their experience taking psychiatric medications; or
- E.g. people who access our services bringing significant professional expertise on a given topic

Layer 3 encourages a holistic view of people as people, rather than as the roles they play, while nonetheless recognising the importance of drawing on each perspective in the design and delivery of courses and other offerings. People can bring whatever expertise they have to the table, and see the value of those contributions.

17. Enablers of co-production

Enablers for layer three include:

- Encouraging people to engage in the co-production process beyond the roles they most strongly identify with
 - E.g. encourage mental health professionals to draw on their personal experience
 - E.g. encourage people currently using services to draw on their professional expertise
- Mind Recovery College staffing largely made up of people with lived experience of mental distress
- Utilising effective facilitation processes and capability to make it safer and easier for people to be involved and to guide towards useful outcomes
 - In both delivery (e.g. courses) and co-produced planning and design (e.g. co-production workshops)

- Well-managed planning and communication to give people a sense of co-production being purposeful and worthwhile personally to invest in
 - Including: communicating venue, logistics, and expectations well before co-production workshops, and feeding back outputs to all participants
- Those leading any design or delivery process need to understand and agree with the four pillars of co-production (5)
 - Note: this doesn't mean everyone involved in the co-production process has to be, only those leading it. E.g. co-production workshop participants need not have agreed with the four pillars, only those leading the workshops.

18. Pillars of the Mind Recovery College

The following pillars underpin how we do things at the Mind Recovery College:

We are all people – It is sometimes useful to label the roles we play, such as 'client' and 'professional', or 'student' and 'teacher', but these labels do not change the fact that we are all people. Nor will we treat anyone as 'lesser than' or 'more than' someone else simply because of the label they sometimes wear.

Living is learning – Life experience is the most important form of knowledge at the College. The wisdom that often comes from life experience is immensely valuable. Often what you learn from tough times can guide you and others in profound ways.

All states of mind are human experiences – There is nothing 'abnormal' about extreme emotions, hearing voices, high highs, low lows, and other ways of being in the world. We will never call someone's experience an 'illness', though people can speak about their own experiences however they wish. If you have experienced it, it's a human experience.

Many heads are better than one – When it comes to mental health, no one has all the answers. It helps to share what we know. We embrace collaboration with individuals, organisations, and communities. Our students play a key role in shaping the College at every level. We explore many ways of knowing about wellbeing.

We call a spade a spade, with respect – Our communication is clear, honest, direct and respectful. We encourage people to describe their experiences in their own words. We respect that what's true for one person may not be for another.

We focus on strengths – We help people identify and build on one another's strengths. We don't get hung up on the challenges people face. A person's strengths can certainly include the things they've learned from mental distress.

It's for everyone – The College is for anyone who wants to get involved. We do our best to remove any barriers people face in learning or contributing to College activities. We seek ways for people of many cultures and many backgrounds to shape the College.

Miracles happen in safe environments – Different people have different ideas about the kind of learning and teaching environments that make them feel safe and confident to share their experiences and knowledge. We do our best to find out what works best for everyone who learns or teaches at the College.

Growth happens outside our comfort zone – Just as important as safety is the choice to step outside your comfort zone when you want to. At every level of the College, we encourage experimentation to learn and grow, recognising that this involves taking risks, and helping people learn from any mistakes.