



Extract from Project Proposal to Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland

Section 4: Project Plan

1. What does your organisation do?

Comas is a community development charity working with individuals and communities to promote resilience and recovery. Community Development is action that helps people to recognise and develop their ability and potential and organise themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share. Good community development promotes inclusion and recognizes that a community is a social system of enabling all individuals to live satisfying, hopeful, and contributing lives.

Recovery refers to both internal factors and external conditions experienced by people. Internally: hope, healing, empowerment, and connection; and externally: implementation of the principle of human rights, a positive culture of inclusion and trust, and services which believe in recovery as a realistic journey for people who are experiencing setbacks or who are faced with making major changes in their lives.

Resilience means an ability to cope with problems and setbacks. Resilient people are able to utilize their skills and strengths to cope and recover from problems and challenges. Characteristics of resilience involve emotional awareness, problem solving skills, identifying as a survivor rather than victim, and having social connections.

2. What have been your main developments and successes?

Comas has two main development projects, the Serenity Cafe project and the Resilient Parents project. Both projects use a community development process of working with and walking alongside people experiencing challenges, reflecting on and learning from the experience of working together to find solutions to their needs.

3. What is your track record in supporting people with long term conditions?

The Serenity cafe project is led by people in recovery in a process which places them as experts in supporting people in recovery. The project is a model of community development in which the Serenity Cafe is developing as a hub for recovery, in which people can learn from each other about self management of their recovery, rebuild social networks to support their recovery, and learn and practice the skills they need to sustain their abstinence. At the same time, the cafe/social space / workshop provides a safe, drug and alcohol free environment where people can relax and focus on their health and wellbeing. In today's society, drug and alcohol-free socialising is rare, and many of the younger people in recovery we work with need an attractive environment in which they feel recovery is celebrated rather than stigmatised.

Since developing the Serenity Cafe project in April 2009 we have worked with around 150 people in recovery from addiction. 20 of these people are long term volunteers in recovery who help to develop and manage events for others in recovery, their families and friends. We work with a further 15 casual volunteers and around 120 people who actually attend the events. We are a trusted partner of Edinburgh treatment services and receive referrals from social workers, homelessness projects and drug/alcohol services. Our project is led by people in recovery and places them as experts in supporting people in recovery.

4. What you want to do with this funding?

Work with people in recovery is challenging and requires a consistent level of high quality support to individuals who are experiencing a range of physical, mental and emotional challenges, who are making major changes in their social connections (severing connections to addiction). In our work we have researched people's experiences, and people have told us of their early experience of recovery:

"Your mind has become so warped after so many years of avoiding the pain, your brain is so fogged, you can only see recovery stages in retrospect. I didn't know the depth of my mental ill-health".

"I didn't even know what I liked doing, no idea who or what I was"

"I was emotionally raw. I was nuts! The scariest part of my life was the first few months of recovery".

At present our volunteering opportunities provide a small group of people with some structure, learning and opportunities to build their 'recovery capital' (the resources needed to self manage



recovery from addiction). We have achieved this without funding and without the opportunity to develop a structured volunteering and peer mentoring programme. We know from experience that people coming out of treatment and detox are extremely vulnerable to relapse. We have recognised the need for a Recovery Coaching Development Worker to develop a programme of recovery coaching, in which people in recovery can train as coaches and peer mentors, in order to involve more volunteers in early recovery (people leaving treatment centres and detox) in the Serenity Cafe and maximise what people can gain from the volunteering opportunities, helping to prevent relapse and promote positive self management.

5. Who will be involved (staff and volunteers)?

The Chief Officer of Comas will manage the Recovery Coaching Development Worker and provide support to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the work.

The Serenity Cafe steering group (all people in recovery) will guide the overall development of the Serenity Cafe. Existing volunteers will initially train as recovery coaches and peer mentors, and new volunteers recruited to the Serenity Cafe will be matched to them.

6. Where will it take place?

The Recovery Coaching Development Worker (RCDW) will work from Comas' office in Edinburgh. At present, the Serenity Cafe is using a temporary let on premises in the city centre while we secure permanent, full time premises. The work with volunteers will take place in Comas' office (training and support), the temporary premises and in the permanent premises when these are secured.

7. When will it happen? How many people will benefit? How will they benefit?

The timescale will be as follows:

Timescale	Action	Outcomes
July 2010	-Work with steering group to recruit RCDW	-Worker appointed and inducted
Sept 2010	-RCDW designs coach/peer mentor training and pilots with 6 volunteers -Treatment services made aware of the coaching programme -monthly cafe-club night	-3 volunteers become coaches -3 volunteers become peer mentors -Training programmes are developed and revised -Referrals and self referrals of people in early recovery - volunteers involved together in planning/running cafe-club night for +/- 100 people in recovery
Oct 2010	-Systems of matching and coach/mentor supervision in place -Volunteer personal portfolios designed to record goals and progress -New volunteers matched with coaches / peer mentors -monthly cafe-club night	-Sustainable systems in place - 6 new volunteers in early recovery matched with coaches/peer mentors - volunteers involved together in planning/running cafe-club night for +/- 100 people in recovery
Nov 2010	Coach/peer mentor training cohort 1 Referrals matched with coaches/mentors -monthly cafe-club night	-6 coaches / peer mentors trained -6 new volunteers in early recovery matched with coaches/peer mentors - volunteers involved together in planning/running cafe-club night for +/- 100 people in recovery
Dec 2010	Volunteer/steering group review – group review of process and achievements -monthly cafe-club night*	- Evidence and revision of process - volunteers involved together in planning/running cafe-club night for +/- 100 people in recovery
Jan 2011- Jun 2011	-Use evidence to plan exit strategy -3 Cycles of coach/peer mentor training and matching with referrals -Final volunteer/steering group review	-Further funding plan in place -18 new coaches/peer mentors -18 people in early recovery matched with coaches/peer mentors -Final report and dissemination
Outcomes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30 volunteer coaches / peer mentors in recovery trained and using coaching and support skills to support self management with people in early recovery 		



- 30 people leaving treatment matched with coaches/mentors; learning skills for self management
- Increased peer support amongst people in recovery
- Reduced relapse rates amongst people in early recovery
- A sustainable model of coach/mentor training, supervision, referrals and matching, to enable the Serenity Cafe to continue to build a recovery community
- Beyond 2010-11: evidence of what works and outcomes for participants will be used to support further proposals and to promote peer support in recovery amongst other services. As the programme progresses, 'coachees' and 'mentees' will be encouraged to use their experience to train as coaches and peer mentors themselves.

*Hogmanay is an important night for Serenity Cafe as many people fear relapse and feel unsafe in normal social environments where drinking/drug use is even more chaotic than usual.

8. How will you ensure this project is open to everyone who could benefit?

The Serenity Cafe works hard to be as open and accessible to everyone in recovery, their families and friends. We have initiated a women's group to ensure women can meet together, with childcare for women who are mothers. We continue to work with people in recovery, listen and develop solutions with them to ensure we are accessible. We work hard on communications, using a website and facebook for people in recovery, and regular email alerts to professionals in agencies working with people in drug and alcohol treatment/support services

9. How you have identified the need for this work?

Comas began the Serenity Cafe after initial market research in which 98 people in recovery in Edinburgh said they wanted a safe place to make social contact with others in recovery and share experience, knowledge and skills to support their self management from others who share their experience of recovery from addiction. They told us:

"All the places I used to go are off limits now, I need somewhere to relax with other people in recovery"

"Places to meet supportive people are very limited"

"If you were asking me these questions in early recovery then I would find it difficult to be around anyone drinking and even to be around any family members if I am honest. I think it is a great idea for to have somewhere to go where you can just pop in and feel safe"

"It's good to stay busy in recovery and being home alone is a relapse trigger".

"I really believe it this takes off it would give addicts and alcoholics in recovery something to look forward to and also give the newcomers of today a safe place to go"

"I would love somewhere for addicts or alcoholics to go where they can pop in and get support. I also would love the fact if there were groups for personal development of some kind"

- 99% of survey respondents want to use the Serenity Cafe.
- 89% want to use the cafe to meet other people in recovery.
- 70% want to use the cafe to find information on recovery and recovery-oriented events
- 74% want to get involved in activities with others in recovery
- 88% want it so they know where they can find support.
- 65% of respondents want to help as volunteers
- 85% think the cafe should provide employment and volunteering opportunities for people in

After forming the steering group of people in recovery, we trialled the Serenity Cafe with three cafe-club nights run by volunteers in recovery in June 2009, with each event attended by 100 – 130 people. We gained 'customer feedback' from over a hundred people and conducted a volunteer review, to continue to gather evidence of what people thought about the recovery cafe concept, and what people gained from being involved. Customers told us:

"Fantastically awesome experience"

"Brilliant. Nice to be alive"

"I think it is just what the recovery community in Edinburgh has been lacking. Bring it on!!"

"Should be one in all cities"

"It's a brilliant place for people who are in recovery to meet each other and have a very, very great time"



"Lifesaver, proves there is an excellent night out without alcohol"

"First time-was made to feel very welcome"

"Serenity Cafe/Club had an extremely warm atmosphere"

"Excellent, lively atmosphere, welcoming, folks all friendly"

We have continued to conduct research with volunteers to understand more about their experience of recovery and how volunteering with the Serenity Cafe helps them to develop skills and experience to support their recovery. Evidence to date shows:

- All research participants to date have described experiences over many years of repeat cycles of detox and relapse. One participant told us he estimated he had cost the health service over £25,000 in one six month period due to detoxes and ambulance call outs.
- Most of the research participants to date have attempted suicide because their experience of addiction became so wretched and cycles of detox and relapse convinced them death was the only way out.
- Participants describe recovery as an ongoing struggle, which can be more or less difficult each day but is ever-present: *"there isn't a day goes by when I don't think about drink"*.
- All of the research participants describe peer support, social connections and making a contribution back to society as a vital part of their own recovery, and of the Serenity Cafe. They are clear that skills can be learned to help them self manage *"There's no possibility I'm using tomorrow. I've learned what I have to do, I've been through pain, anger, I've learned I can get through what life throws at me as long as I do what I need to do"*.
- The sense of connection to a wider recovery community is an important strand of recovery and of the Serenity Cafe. *"I was a solitary angry drinker. I drank and I had a relationship with the TV. There is a lot of conditioning people don't realise. If I am at home on my own, I still catch myself looking at the clock at ten to ten. Because that's the time I would have to get to the off-license before it closes. And I still do it, still have that check"*.
- The experience of volunteering and participation in the Serenity Cafe provides people with a positive outlook on their experience of addiction and their recovery: *"I need community involvement and a sense of purpose. The Serenity Cafe feels like inclusion and a feeling of giving something back". "I think I need social, volunteering and educational networks. Sharing at meetings, helping people, doing voluntary work". "One big word for Serenity Cafe is opportunity. I don't want to sound like captain cliché but it is opportunity for growth in lots of ways"*.

10. How have you involved people with long term conditions?

The whole model of development in the Serenity Cafe is of a user-led initiative.

11. Does your project meet the criteria of the Self Management Fund?

The Serenity Cafe project wants to improve its person-centred approach with this development of a coaching and mentoring model to support new volunteers, ensuring their experience is tailored to meet their goals and individual needs.

We know the Serenity Cafe project has wider application because we continually receive requests from groups in other parts of Scotland and the UK to visit the project and learn from our experience. Our action-reflection approach, and ongoing evidence gathering, ensures we can share the evidence of what works.

12. What outcomes you have planned for this project? See question 7

13. How will you monitor, evaluate and report on the project? See question 7

14. How will the project be managed?

The Chief Officer of Comas will line manage the Recovery Coaching Development Worker. The Serenity Cafe project steering group will guide the work, review progress and evidence, and develop plans for the future of the work.

The steering group links to the Comas Board by cross-representation (one trustee is a Director on the Board and a steering group member). The Comas Board remains accountable for the financial management of the project and is the employer, and will remain so until the steering group becomes



formally constituted as a Board – this is part of the development process over the next few years and Comas is providing training and support to steering group members.

15. Who are your partners on this project?

The Serenity Cafe project has three main partners which meet as a partnership regularly and share information in order to maintain the added value for the people in recovery we work with that we achieve by working together. These partners are:

- NHS Lothian and Edinburgh Abstinence Project (LEAP), a non-residential 12-week treatment programme
- Transitions Project, a flexible learning centre for people with addiction problems
- City of Edinburgh Housing Department, which provides safe housing for people in non-residential treatment, and people leaving treatment.

We also receive referrals from social workers in the DTO team, and a range of organisations bring clients to the Serenity Cafe cafe-club nights, including Bethany and Cyrenians.

16. How will your partnerships be developed and supported?

The Chief Officer currently participates in a strategic group led by Lothian Health focusing on the Recovery Action Plan for the Lothian Health area. The CO will continue to ensure that partners concerned with recovery are aware of the Serenity Cafe.