**Paper title:** The exploration of an ‘ex-service user’ led project for recovery from alcohol addiction

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**Abstract**

**Aim:** The aim of the research was to explore whether attendance and participation at an ‘ex-service user’ led project impacted on recovery from alcohol addiction. **Design:** A qualitative, ethnographic methodology was used to collect the data. The research adopted a single case study (embedded) research design, with participant observation and semi-structured interviews comprising the tools of data collection. **Setting:** The ‘Learning to Live Again’ (LTLA) project located at the Leeds Addiction Unit. **Participants:** The professional staff, ‘ex-service users’ and service users involved with the LTLA project. **Findings:** The LTLA project seemed to impact on recovery in two different capacities: an individual and a collective impact. From an individual perspective, feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence were enhanced through participation in the projects activities, which in turn, facilitated their recovery outside of the project. From a collective perspective, the firsthand knowledge of addiction and peer support from others in the group, created a non-stigmatising culture of recovery where individuals could practice their recovery. The regularity of the activities facilitated a sense of social stability, which contributed to their recovery by minimising feelings of boredom. The use of ‘mentors’ to run the project proved significant to the projects continuing success, as it provided a structure that was sustainable, yet welcoming for new service users. There was however, a sense that some service users could become ‘over-committed’ to the project, which in turn could keep them continually connected with their recovery identity. **Conclusion:** The LTLA project impacted on recovery in many positive ways, and demonstrates that having a project run by ex-service users is an inexpensive, effective form of aftercare.