
Recovery-focused treatment: the challenges for research and outcome measurement

Nicola Singleton
Director of Policy & Research, UKDPC

www.ukdpc.org.uk



Coverage of this presentation

The consensus process

- Why and how we did it
- Our “vision of recovery”

The measurement challenges for

- research
- practice
- accountability / performance management

Why did we do it?

Negative background

- Polarised debate – artificial, political & potentially damaging treatment system & users
- Dissatisfaction & uncertainty over goals

Opportunity for positive change

- “Recovery” ripe for consideration (possible lessons from mental health field) impressed by Betty Ford Foundation Consensus Group
- Opportunity of new drug strategies

The Consensus Group process

- Invited group of 16 people from different backgrounds & perspectives across UK (+Dr Tom McLellan).
- Deliberate cross-section of:
 - perspectives (users, families, practitioners, commissioners, researchers)
 - characteristics (eg age, sex, ethnic background)
 - types & philosophy of provision (rehab, substitute prescribing, GP care, support groups)
 - disciplines (GP, psychiatry, psychology, nursing, management, layman)
- “Locked away” for 2 days
- Considered other relevant work:
 - Betty Ford Foundation Consensus, SACDM Integrated Care project, TOP
- “Validation” phase

Key features of the process

A focus on ...

- **the overarching goal** not the means of achieving it;
- identifying **areas of agreement**, while accepting some areas of disagreement may remain;
- the **experience/perspective of the individuals** in recovery and the diversity of these experiences.

Key features of the statement

It is intended to be:

- a working definition of recovery ...
- ... from the harm, distress and life problems directly-related to a person's substance use

Which we hope can:

- Reflect the lived experience of users and families
- Provide an organising vision for individual services and the treatment system as a whole
- Provide a focus for developing outcome measurement for research & accountability

Key features

- Individual in nature
- About the accrual of positive benefit not just reducing or removing harms caused by drugs
- Requires the building of aspirations and hope in individual, families and services
- May be associated with a number of different types of support and intervention or none

Consensus statement

The process of recovery from problematic substance use is characterised by voluntarily sustained control over substance use which maximises health and wellbeing and participation in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society.

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Challenges

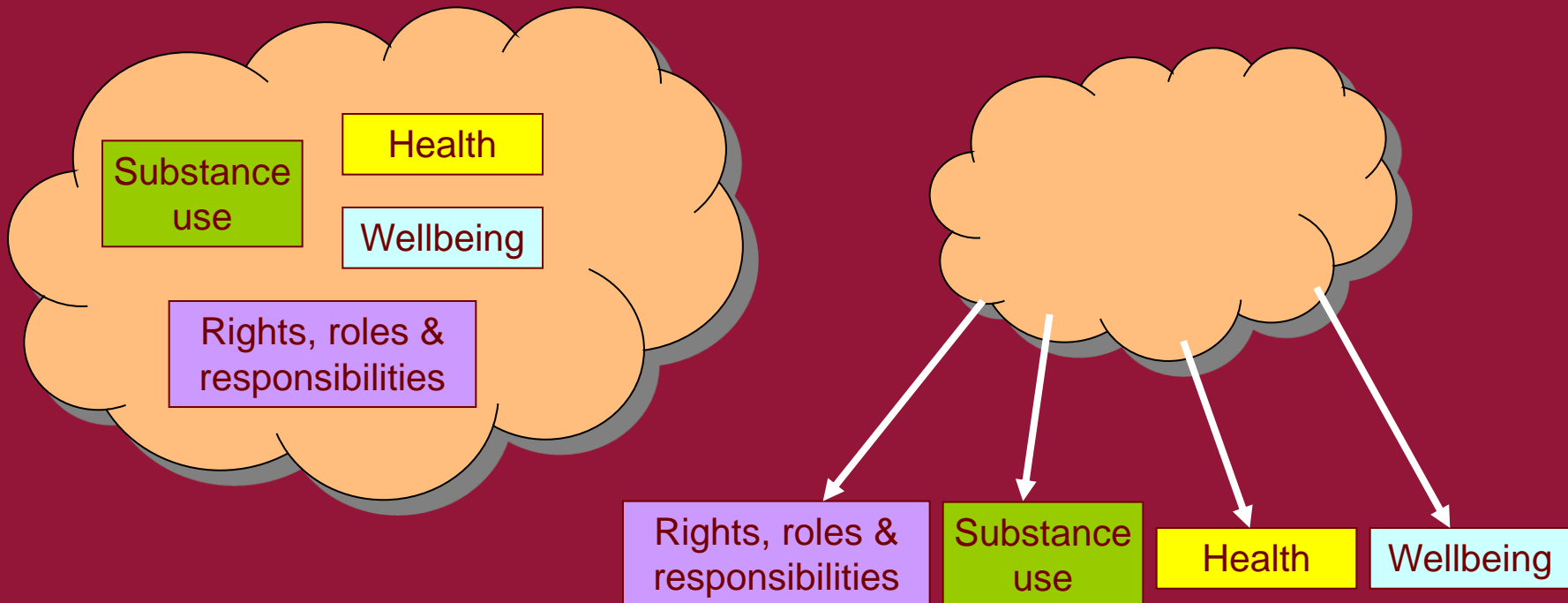
1. Communicating the complexity and clarifying the goal of treatment
2. Developing measures:
 - for a range of uses
research – practice – accountability
 - that encourage a recovery-focus in treatment services, systems and research
 - that improve outcomes

Measurement issues

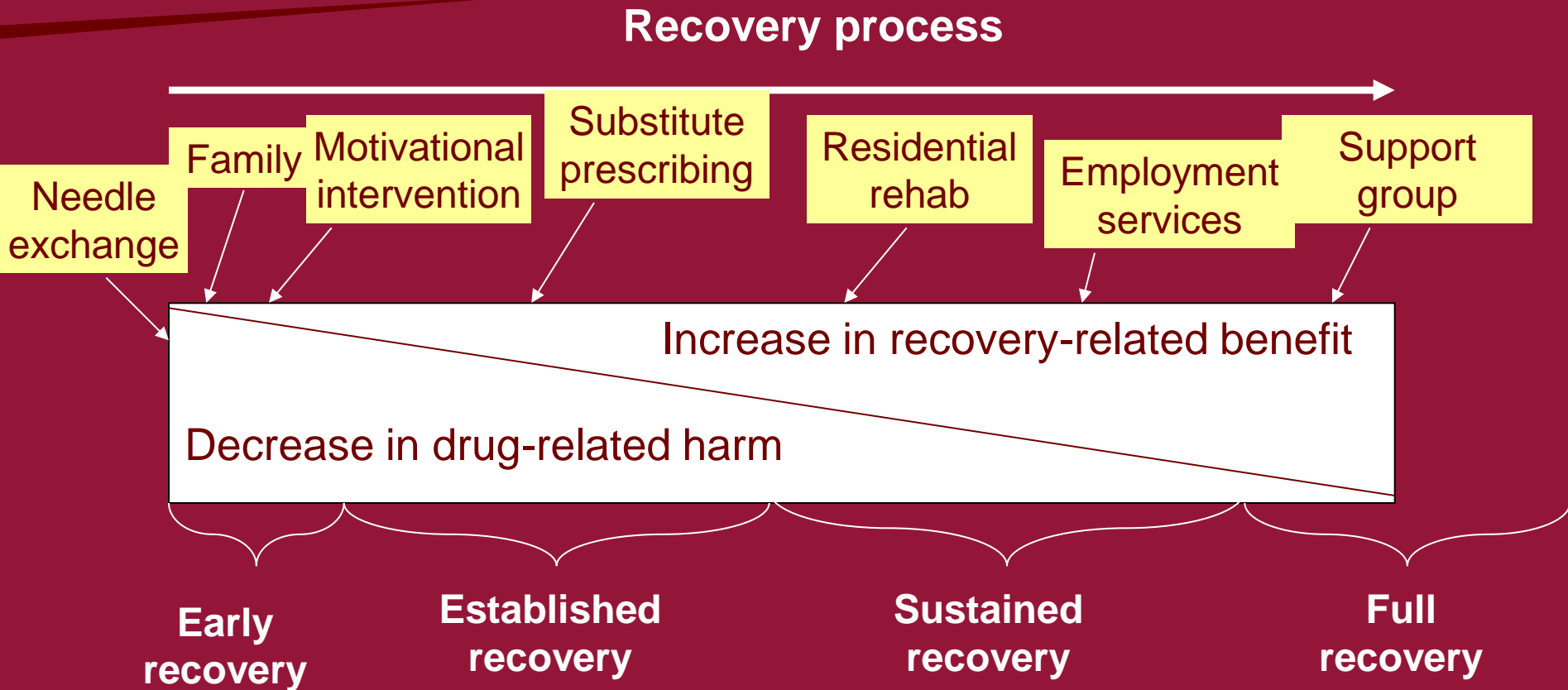
- Different perspectives
 - Individual – family – services – society
- Variability in:
 - Start and end points
 - Priorities
 - Process
 - Time periods

Measurement challenges

- The whole versus the parts



Measuring contributions across the whole recovery process



Conclusion

- Measuring a complex phenomenon like recovery will be difficult
- There is a tension between the need to represent this complexity and the need for simplicity in use & communication
- But failure to do it will leave the field open to simplistic attacks

Thanks to all the panel members:

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John Strang

Ian Wardle

and our facilitator: Tom McLellan

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