

Recovery in action

Shanelle Manderson finds out how the Core Recovery Church model is expanding across the territory

AMERICAN author Robert Collier once wrote, 'Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.' Since the launch of the Core Recovery Church model in 2019 and its implementation across the UKI Territory, those behind the scenes and on the front line have been working day in and day out to ensure service users can flourish on their journey of recovery. Attendees have also been working day in and day out to stay committed to this journey.

Core Recovery Church is a Salvation Army community where everyone is welcome but it is designed specifically for those in recovery – most of whom struggle with addiction.

'The model supports members in their individual journeys of recovery, focusing on their personal journeys of faith while providing appropriate pastoral support along the way,' explains Core Recovery Development Officer Major Lynden Gibbs (THQ).

The concept has been used by the Army in New Zealand and Australia, as well as within the wider Church in the UK and USA. An exploration of how it could be developed for use in the UKI Territory began with a focus group and has since expanded. Assistant Secretary for Mission Mitch Menagh (THQ) explains the model's advantages and why it was considered necessary:

'Part of the problem we have seen over the years is that it can be quite an ordeal for many new people entering an Army building for the first time, and even ongoing. This is more so when an individual is in recovery.

'The behaviour of people in recovery can cause upset to others attending the meeting, and understanding and patience aren't always displayed in a compassionate manner.

'We are keen to offer people who are in recovery a safe space where they are accepted and can belong, but also unashamedly are under the influence of the gospel.'



CORE RECOVERY CHURCH
An open community of honesty & hope

'Although birthed from the Army's addictions work,' adds Major Lynden, 'it is hoped that there will be a wider understanding of what it means to "be in recovery" and that in our brokenness as people, we are all on a journey of recovery as we seek to connect with each other and with God.'

Core Recovery Church groups are worshipping communities rather than just programmes. There are three types: a standalone community; a daughter community grown from a corps setting; and a daughter community within a Lifehouse, Homelessness Services or community setting. A typical meeting includes creative worship, sharing, a positive Bible focus and hospitality.

There is a clear link between recovery and spirituality. Therefore, commitment to a spiritual journey is a key element of the model. There are also a number of

principles that form its foundation, including acceptance, belonging, equality, belief in transformation, the power of storytelling and creating a space where a community can grow together.

RECOVERING – AND THRIVING

As Core Recovery Church is a form of fresh expression, it is very much open to integrated mission. Core Recovery Church communities have therefore been encouraged in several settings.

A natural approach to collaborative working between a Lifehouse and a corps where an expression of Core Recovery Church is in place has also been encouraged, regardless of whether the community is based at either setting. Where Core Recovery Church is based at a Lifehouse, it has been established that the role of the chaplain is crucial to



“We are keen to offer people in recovery a safe space where they are accepted”



Booth House Lifeshouse, Swindon

its development and process, as they become the leader, providing support and pastoral care.

Interest in the model has grown rapidly. A Core Recovery Implementation and Monitoring Group chaired by Mitch has been established. A peer support group also meets monthly, with corps officers, divisional mission enablers, Homelessness Services Unit chaplains and regional chaplaincy officers all involved. The group is growing as more corps and Lifeshouses consider developing a Core Recovery Church expression in their settings.

In Neath a fresh expression is under way, to be led by Major Mary Wolfe. Core Recovery Church communities are being developed at Niddry Street Wellbeing Centre, which is a drop-in facility in Edinburgh, Springfield House Lifeshouse in Milton Keynes and William Booth Centre Lifeshouse in Birmingham.

Stroud Corps will also be adopting the model. The corps is in a challenging part of town, where addiction is a widespread issue. Many people in recovery, who have a heart for ministering to those with addictions, have linked up with the corps recently. Corps officer Captain

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►

◀ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Teresa Conway is building a team to deliver Celebrate Recovery material in discipleship groups.

In Tavistock, Churches Together has partnered the corps to develop a Core Recovery Church community. Poplar Corps and Riverside House Lifehouse have also been discussing how they can work together under the model.

At Greenock, corps leaders Territorial Envoys Alice and Paul Swain, Drug and Alcohol Service worker Lesley Anderson and floating support service chaplain Major Lynn Farmer are considering how Core Recovery Church might work alongside ongoing ministry.

Existing communities continue to thrive. In Sheffield, the Oasis community – an ecumenical partnership with Charter Row Lifehouse, the Methodist Church and the Church of England – has expanded its fellowship. The main focus is the Sunday church in Methodist Central Hall, led by a partnership including Paul Huggins, who is the chaplain at Charter Row. Paul is also running a discipleship group at the Lifehouse and has been invited to run another Core Recovery Church group at a local church.

At Booth House Lifehouse, Swindon, a regular is interested in becoming an adherent and is currently exploring the adherency material. This would bring the total number of adherents at Booth House to five.



Sharon Bates is welcomed as an adherent

“Attendees asked to become adherents but they had no dealings with the corps and declared the Lifehouse to be their church”



Jason Rall is welcomed as an adherent



Lesley Anderson and Major Lynn Farmer

NEW COMMITMENTS

New commitments in Lifehouses are not a new concept for the Army. Before Women's and Men's Social Services merged in the late 1970s, hostels had their own soldiers, adherents and friends rolls. Residents and staff could become soldiers at a hostel and were required to follow the same process as soldiers at a corps.

Sunday meetings, midweek fellowship and praise and testimony meetings were regular occurrences, and the then Social Services chaplain would have facilitated those activities across the territory. This became redundant when the UKI Territory came into being, but the concept of membership at centres was reintroduced after Core Recovery Church was presented to the Cabinet.

'Our first presentation in 2019 provoked helpful and wide-ranging

TESTIMONIES

Four people connected to Lifehouse settings share their stories:

MICHAEL

CHARTER HOUSE LIFEHOUSE, OASIS COMMUNITY

I started attending Oasis a few months back. When I came to the Lifehouse, Huggy, the chaplain, got me involved. He's a good man. I love the community. I love everything about it. We're a total recovery group. We talk and pray and admit that we have addictions. I spoke recently in a group and shared that I was an alcoholic. I began drinking heavily when my partner passed away two years ago. I hope the group will help me get through the suffering I've had since I lost my partner. I need a lot of help at the moment with things, but I'm taking it slowly. I've prayed to God a lot in the past few weeks and he has helped me. He is in my life. I believe in him.

SCOTT

CHARTER HOUSE LIFEHOUSE, OASIS COMMUNITY

I've been with Oasis for almost two years and was introduced to it by the chaplain at the Lifehouse while I was a resident. I wasn't of faith when I moved in, but through conversations with the chaplain I found my faith a little bit. The next step was to become acquainted with a church but I didn't want the typical church regime so I was invited to Oasis. It's not like a normal church, it's more of a community. You feel welcome. It's like home more than anything. At Oasis we're one big family. There are all sorts of different people that attend, from people experiencing homelessness to people who have mental health issues. You get to meet people from various walks of life. Since I started going I have definitely felt that it's had a massive positive impact on my mental health and anxiety. Within a few months of attending I became a volunteer, helping to set up for worship and in the kitchen because we also feed people experiencing homelessness. That helped with my faith as it gave me something to focus on. Now I'm an official volunteer for the Victoria Methodist Church rather than Oasis, so I'll have more responsibility. I feel like I am wanted, like I am part of a family.

JASON

BOOTH HOUSE LIFEHOUSE

I'm in recovery for alcoholism. I went into recovery last year and was introduced to the 12 Step Recovery programme. I never had a faith as such before that. If you had tried to speak to me about God, religion or the Bible I would have declined politely. In April 2019 I found myself in a room. I'd lost everything worthwhile in life: my children, my relationships, my job. I was banned for drink-driving and, as I used to work in the automotive industry, I was unemployable without a driving licence. I was caught up in the grip of addiction. On that day God revealed himself to me and said: 'Are you finished? I've got some work for you to do.' In that moment in time, it didn't seem like that but that's how I look at it today.

Eighteen months after being in recovery I found myself being asked to leave my accommodation and ended up at Booth House. I'd meet up with Brian, the chaplain, once a week and we'd talk about spiritual stuff, the Bible and faith. After moving out of the Lifehouse I returned two years ago in June to work as a support worker. I was still seeking something more so Brian helped me explore churches. Although he's now my colleague, he's still very much part of my spiritual walk with the Lord. He spoke to me about becoming an adherent and I made my commitment in November 2019 (pictured opposite). I've kind of come full circle. Today I am still walking hand in hand with the Spirit.

SHARON

BOOTH HOUSE LIFEHOUSE

I was an assistant support worker at the Lifehouse and had been involved with chaplaincy for just over a year. During this time, I was helped with my depression and my addiction to alcohol. I began speaking with Brian about God and the Bible and I came to faith. I felt such an affiliation with The Salvation Army that I became an adherent and made it my spiritual home (pictured opposite). I no longer work at the Lifehouse but attend Core Recovery Church on a Sunday as my circumstances permit. I have a better understanding about who I am, as well as what I want and need in life, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ.

discussion,' says Mitch. 'However, we encountered a challenge when Captain Brian Ward, the chaplain at Booth House who was hosting weekly Core Recovery Church sessions, reached a point where three attendees requested to become adherents but two of them didn't want the service to be at the corps, as they had no dealings with that setting and declared the Lifehouse to be their church.

'We took this back to the Cabinet and it was unanimously agreed that, where a Core Recovery Church expression is operating at a Lifehouse and all the

appropriate due process had been followed, individuals could become an adherent or a soldier at a Lifehouse as part of the established Core Recovery Church fellowship. Of course, we would want this to be done in collaboration with the nearby corps, and this has happened. The corps officers at Swindon Citadel were supportive and attended the occasion.'

For now, this approach is only taken where there is an established Core Recovery Church. The specific details regarding membership rolls at Lifehouses

are still to be fully agreed.

'Ideally, where people move on from a Lifehouse or a supported housing service, we would want to encourage them to continue to attend and enjoy the fellowship and pastoral care and to hold to a real and genuine sense of belonging,' enthuses Mitch.

**SHANELLE IS
EDITORIAL
ASSISTANT,
SALVATIONIST**

