



**BREAKING FREE™**

*Pillars of Recovery*  
**Health and Justice**

**Group and keyworking programme  
for recovery from substance misuse  
and mental health difficulties**

Developed by Clinical Psychologists



The  
British  
Psychological  
Society

*Chartered Psychologist*



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## *Pillars of Recovery*

### Health and Justice

## Overview

The Pillars of Recovery programme is a **fully manualised treatment and recovery programme** for practitioners working with prisoners experiencing substance misuse and mental health difficulties. It allows a wide range of **evidence-based psychosocial interventions that comply with NICE guidance (CG51, CG90, CG113 and CG115)** to be delivered in a systematic way. It is also recognised as a structured psychosocial intervention for the purposes of **NDTMS Data Set J**.

The programme comprises **12 group work sessions and a parallel series of 12 one-to-one key working sessions**. The individual key working sessions complement and reinforce the group programme, but also allow prisoners who disengage from it to continue in and complete treatment.

As the Pillars of Recovery programme is commissioned on a licence basis, there are **no restrictions on the number of groups that can be run or prisoners that can be treated**. And for maximum flexibility, the series of 12 key working sessions can be implemented as a stand-alone intervention without the group sessions.

The programme has been **shown by longitudinal research to be highly effective** in helping people both achieve and maintain recovery from alcohol and drug dependence.

The comprehensive practitioner manual for each of the 12 sessions contains:

- **Checklist of pre-session tasks** to help practitioners organise the group work session
- **Checklist of equipment and materials** that are needed to deliver the session
- **Goals** to define the therapeutic focus of the session
- **Attendance record** to monitor prisoners' engagement with the programme
- **Preparation guide** to help practitioners reflect on the personal, environmental and participant factors that could influence the session
- **Materials and resources** to be distributed during the session
- **Slides** with suggested timings and step-by-step guidance on how to deliver each one
- **Assignment** for prisoners to complete before the one-to-one key working session
- **Key working session** to reinforce the knowledge and skills acquired by prisoners during the group work session

The Pillars of Recovery programme is supported by a **3-day training course that is DANOS-mapped and delivered by a Clinical Psychologist**. This training actively promotes workforce development by equipping practitioners to apply a toolkit of evidence-based interventions safely and effectively.

This document provides an overview of the content of the programme and highlights the **recovery capital acquired by the prisoners** in each of the 12 sessions.



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## **Structure**

*Session 1:*

**Starting the recovery journey**

*Session 2:*

**Understanding substance dependence**

*Session 3:*

**Staying safe**

*Session 4:*

**Managing cravings and urges**

*Session 5:*

**Sampling sobriety**

*Session 6:*

**Building relationships and social networks**

*Session 7:*

**Achieving lifestyle balance**

*Session 8:*

**Understanding emotional wellbeing**

*Session 9:*

**Overcoming negative thoughts**

*Session 10:*

**Breaking unhelpful behaviour patterns**

*Session 11:*

**Building recovery capital**

*Session 12:*

**Creating a roadmap for success**



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### 1 Starting the recovery journey

- Participants will meet and start getting to know other members of the group, and
- Reflect on their motivation to attend the group programme
- Recognise the benefits of group treatment and feel motivated to continue to attend
- Experience working together, supporting each other and sharing ideas in the context of group exercises
- Understand the role of the Lifestyle Balance Model in explaining what is driving their substance use
- Create a formula for success to establish appropriate boundaries for future sessions
- Identify and set personal recovery goals

### 2 Understanding substance dependence

- Participants will explore the consequences of their substance dependence and what drives it, and
- Identify the effects of their substance dependence on every aspect of their lives
- Recognise the extent to which the consequences of their substance dependence represent negative reasons to continue to use
- Learn the difference between negative reinforcement for continuing to use and positive reinforcement for not using, in order to facilitate a shift in focus from one to the other
- Reflect on the importance of motivation and its role in creating positive change
- Identify meaningful incentives to stop using (including internal rewards) in order to increase motivation
- Begin the process of disrupting, and ultimately overcoming, their substance dependence by taking personal responsibility and developing strategies that target identified areas of difficulty



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## 3 Staying safe

- Participants will explore the nature of risk, and
- Appreciate the impact of risk-taking behaviour both on themselves and on other people
- Begin the process of generating strategies to minimise risk
- Understand that the decisions they make about managing risk will determine the consequences of their risk-taking behaviour and, ultimately, their progression through the recovery journey
- Consider the suitability for them of the two key approaches: maintenance and abstinence
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of tolerance and the vital importance of harm reduction (including overdose awareness)
- Create an action plan that will help them to stay safe in emergency situations

## 4 Managing cravings and urges

- Participants will understand the true nature of their cravings and urges to use substances, and
- Recognise the triggers for cravings and urges, including both internal cues and external cues
- Learn to use the strategy of 'urge surfing' to help them overcome the physical sensations associated with cravings and urges
- Learn to use the strategy of 'letting unhelpful thoughts go' to help them cope with the negative thoughts associated with cravings and urges
- Use a cravings diary to highlight the fluctuations in the intensity and frequency of their cravings, and help them to identify the most important triggers
- Learn to 'recognise–avoid–cope' in difficult situations that are likely to trigger cravings and urges to use substances



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## 5 Sampling sobriety

- Participants will understand the process of sobriety sampling, and
- Appreciate the range of very significant benefits they can derive from sobriety sampling
- Explore their current perceptions of adopting a substance-free lifestyle
- Begin the process of considering their personal values and the extent to which their current lifestyle is consistent with those values
- Consider their existing support networks, focusing on those people who can genuinely help them
- Anticipate the initial effects of withdrawal from substances
- Identify the rewards and incentives that will motivate them to stay abstinent and reinforce their progress in their recovery journey
- Plan sobriety sampling in detail to maximise the chances of it being successful

## 6 Building relationships and social networks

- Participants will appreciate that relationships are fluid and likely to change over time, and
- Consider the nature of their relationships with significant people in their social networks, and the negative impact of their substance use on those relationships
- Understand the role of communication difficulties in maintaining conflict, and the detrimental effects of their substance use on their ability to communicate appropriately
- Learn how to communicate more effectively with other people and adopt a constructive approach to resolving conflict
- Acknowledge the importance to their recovery journey of building a positive and supportive social network
- Recognise the significant potential benefits of joining a mutual aid group such as AA, NA, CA or SMART Recovery
- Actively consider joining a mutual aid group to gain long-term support with their recovery
- Create a social network action plan to help them start the process of rebuilding bridges and reconnecting with key members of their social networks



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### 7 Achieving lifestyle balance

- Participants will appreciate that everyone's lifestyle comprises many different aspects, and
- Identify the most important areas of their own lifestyle (using a lifestyle map), and the most significant challenges to those areas
- Learn to build motivation by recognising and rewarding, through positive experiences, all their successes on their recovery journey
- Understand the importance of being awake to and fully aware of the positive experiences they have
- Learn to apply the approach of being mindful of all positive experiences, including those that arise in everyday settings
- Take personal responsibility for addressing their lifestyle challenges by taking positive action and using incentives to maintain their motivation
- Create an action plan to facilitate the attainment of a productive and balanced lifestyle that does not revolve around using substances

### 8 Understanding emotional wellbeing

- Participants will appreciate the importance of emotional wellbeing, and
- Understand the impact of substance use on emotional wellbeing
- Explore how the recovery journey affects emotional wellbeing and how everyone can move up and down a line (or continuum) from 'good' to 'poor'
- Recognise the early warning signs of emotional difficulties such as anxiety, anger or low mood
- Identify their own unique signs and symptoms, and consider what other people might recognise
- Use an A-B-C framework to explore what can cause them to feel anxious, angry or depressed
- Create an emotional wellbeing action plan to enable them to recognise the early warning signs and develop positive coping strategies



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## 9 Overcoming negative thoughts

- Participants will explore the links between their negative thoughts and emotions such as anger, anxiety and low mood, and
- Understand the impact of this process on their emotional wellbeing
- Appreciate that their negative thoughts are not always accurate
- Learn to challenge their inaccurate thoughts and replace them with new, more helpful ways of thinking about situations that are based on facts rather than feelings
- Recognise that they also have other techniques for reducing the impact of negative thoughts, acquired in previous sessions, available to them
- Practice challenging their negative thoughts, both after the event and in situation, to accelerate the process whereby this starts to occur automatically (and ultimately subconsciously)

## 10 Breaking unhelpful behaviour patterns

- Participants will understand that when they feel angry, anxious or low, they may stop doing activities that they enjoy or that give them a sense of achievement and purpose, and
- Recognise that previously beneficial activities can be replaced by unhelpful behaviours, which can then become habitual
- Start the process of breaking their unhelpful behaviour patterns by creating a blueprint for action that identifies meaningful and realistic activities
- Compare the desired activities on the blueprint to the activities they are currently doing, in order to highlight the discrepancies between the two
- Use activity scheduling to establish positive routines and replace unhelpful behaviours with more helpful ones
- Feel supported in implementing activity scheduling





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### 11 Building recovery capital

- Participants will understand the concept of recovery capital as being the assets and resources they can draw on to support their recovery, and
- Learn what makes up their social capital, physical capital, human capital, cultural capital and community capital
- Acknowledge their personal qualities and strengths
- Recognise all the recovery capital that is currently available to them
- Consider what additional recovery capital they would ideally like to have
- Take active steps to develop their own recovery capital in order to strengthen their resilience
- If possible, try out at least one mutual group to see if they find it helpful

### 12 Creating a roadmap for success

- Participants will recognise and actively avoid situations in which they could potentially set themselves up to relapse, and
- Identify life goals that are genuinely meaningful to them
- Appreciate the scope and relevance of all the skills, knowledge and resources they have acquired throughout the Pillars of Recovery programme
- Support each other in generating ways to achieve the life goals that are identified
- Reflect on and celebrate the progress they have made, both individually and collectively, since starting the programme
- Acknowledge the importance of taking personal responsibility for shaping their own future
- Develop a roadmap to success to consolidate everything they have learnt and guide the next stage of their recovery journey



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The Pillars of Recovery programme integrates a wide range of effective approaches to substance misuse treatment that are recommended by the Ministry of Justice/NOMS, Public Health England, NICE, the Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Government, or that have a strong emerging evidence base.

These approaches include:

- **Motivational enhancement therapy**
- **Community reinforcement approaches**
- **Node-link mapping**
- **Cognitive-behavioural therapy**
- **Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy**
- **Acceptance and commitment therapy**
- **Mutual-aid facilitation**
- **Relapse prevention**

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