



BUILDING RECOVERY IN MIDDLESBROUGH

One Year of Progress



WHAT IS BRIM?



Building Recovery in Middlesbrough (or BRIM) was created in 2022 and we are now into the second year of the project. There are a number of key overarching components of the project. These include:

Building and strengthening relationships across the community within Middlesbrough
Broadening opportunities for the recovery community in Middlesbrough
Increasing the visibility of recovery with Middlesbrough
Further strengthening the recovery community
Challenging stigma and creating a positive framework for recovery

In many respects, these components of BRIM build upon what we already do in Middlesbrough.

But what BRIM has done has allowed us to be intentional about the focus of the work. It has provided us with a dedicated resource and the space to develop and embed, broaden and deepen these components. BRIM, as a project, also allows us to bring these components together – under one umbrella. This makes it easier to market as a package.

Existing Key Components of BRIM

BRIM builds and brings together work that is already being undertaken and delivered in Middlesbrough. All of which contribute towards a Recovery City approach – and do, in effect, become a part of BRIM:

We have our core recovery work. This includes our coaching, our harm reduction outreach, our community recovery centre and our groupwork and recovery coaching. In terms of building partnerships and networks.

- like most organisations, we have built these over time in the localities where we work, in order to meet the needs of the recovery community. We also work alongside the recovery community to support and to encourage them to develop and find their own sense of power.
- PD Ports. We are commissioned by PD Ports – they are a major employer on Teesside, who employ 1400 people around the country. We deliver drug and alcohol and recovery training to their Board, senior management, management and Union reps. We have now started to deliver this to staff. We also provide one to one recovery coaching to staff and their families. We also engage on site with staff – we meet staff when they are starting and finishing their shift, or we will have a presence on site to have conversations with staff around recovery and addiction. An important part of our work with PD Ports is around education and awareness raising and building capacity for members of the general community, the population, and residents of Middlesbrough to be aware of recovery and that factors that support people in recovery. We are working in partnership with PD Ports to create a recovery friendly environment where workers can come forward and seek help and support in at an early stage.



- We have a Recovery Ally training package – which is accredited. It helps deepen understanding, empowers and raises awareness regarding recovery. We have delivered this, free of charge to hundreds of individuals. Again, this is about creating an awareness of recovery and building capacity across organisations and within communities in Middlesbrough.
- We have two Social Enterprises in Middlesbrough: 131 The Venue, which is space where we hold community events and also a space that we hire out to the community. We also have Fork In the Road, which is a café, again open to the public. In both of these spaces, the public engages with people in recovery and they have an awareness of our

- mission. We have a café in Hendon in Sunderland, which serves the same purpose.



- One of the recent initiatives we developed was Memories of Middlesbrough. We accessed a small pot of Ageing Better money from Middlesbrough Council. We brought in a facilitator to deliver three sessions on Memories of Middlesbrough – looking at working life, social life, family life. We made these available to 25 members of the general population. We provided lunch. It provided an opportunity to bring the residents into our venue, to meet people working there who were in recovery, and we could tell them about our work. They absolutely loved it – and appreciated this gift we were able to bring them. In fact, they have actually booked our venue for a Christmas party. This is how we build alliances, connections and friendships.
- We have always felt that people in recovery are gifted when building recovery and know the power and importance of recovery. To that end we secured National Lottery funding for a year for three of our workers, in recovery, to build community amongst the general population in Linthorpe, Middlesbrough. We are using an ABCD approach on this project. So far, we have met hundreds of citizens and heard a lot of stories – the population have also heard the story of recovery from our community builders. Our next step is to bring the people we have met together, as a community – to explore the ways in which community members as citizens can meet their own needs through the exchange of their gifts.

- In South Tees we deliver IPS – which is part of a national employment programme. Again, an important part of our work is educating and building awareness with employers regarding recovery – and we support people in recovery to work in their organisations.



- We deliver Campus Recovery at Teesside University – we host twice weekly host groups with students in recovery, we support students, we will have a stall and a presence during Freshers week. Teesside University will also be signing a Recovery Pledge we which developed and has already been signed by Chester University and Sunderland University.



- We have a number of coffee bikes around the region. We take these out and about around town – we make free coffee for members of the public and this provides an opportunity to talk about recovery – again, it's about building awareness and understanding and building bridges. It's about telling stories, building relationship and connections. As stated by a member of our staff who hosts the coffee bike, we want people to go home and talk about recovery around the dinner table with their family.



THE BRIM DEVELOPMENT ROLE AND THE WORK UNDERTAKEN

An important part of BRIM is a dedicated development resource. Middlesbrough Council have commissioned, and we employ, a BRIM Development Lead. Adam Petson delivers this work. Adam is in recovery. One of the first pieces of work that we undertook was to map the current networks that we draw on and work with, and to look at ways we can extend and build outwards. The role is very much about creating outward facing links. There have been two key elements to this work – one focussed on engagement with the wider community – and another focussed on building the recovery community.

1. Community Building – extending, deepening and deepening networks and connection

Through building relationships, we can help to create fertile ground for housing, create more opportunities for employment and support and social life and work towards a city where people are welcomed without fear of stigma.

One of the first things we did during 2020 was to hold a BRIM. We brought together key agencies, partners and the recovery community to share the vision and to invite commitments to the project. The launch event really inspired other organisations to be involved. It facilitated an openness to a shared purpose. Building on this event, we then looked to strengthen and build and extend our networks throughout the town. We did this at two levels:

1. By sector – across third sector, for example, grass roots organisations, Statutory sector, housing, private landlords, arts, health and wellbeing.
1. We also mapped through geography to ensure we had good geographical coverage across Middlesbrough.

Adam then met the organisations and they talked about BRIM. Even at this stage, Adam can tell his own recovery story and the story of the recovery community in Middlesbrough – they get to know more about recovery, and we are making recovery visible to them. We also discuss aspirations for BRIM. We also ask other agencies if there are any other people or agencies we should meet – this way we continually extend networks.

Strategic support and networks have also been important. We have had good support from leadership within the town. Jonathon Bowden and colleagues within Middlesbrough Council have been very supportive, as has our Director of Public Health, Mark Adams. We have also had great support from civic leadership – including our current mayor Chris Cooke – who signed the Recovery Cities charter – and our Previous Mayor, Andy Preston. Steve Turner, our Police and Crime Commissioner, and his team have also been very supportive.



Working alongside the recovery community to build capacity

The second key aspect of the work has been working alongside the recovery community. The community had a very active role in the first BRIM community event last year. They helped to shape and outline the way forward. In Middlesbrough we are fortunate to have a recovery centre at Bedford House. This is a community space where the recovery community comes together – it is a safe space and it is a place where the community lead on much of the work undertaken in the centre.

For well over a year the community has worked to deliver fortnightly Sober Social events at Fork in the Road - these are organised and led by the community. The community organise other social events, lead on many of the celebrations within Middlesbrough and on outings.

The recovery community have also continued to use their role as Ambassadors, supporting work across the treatment system, hosting the coffee bike and being involved in much of our work within the town. They are a vital part of making recovery visible across Middlesbrough.



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Making a Difference?

So, is BRIM making a difference? Professor David Best has been working with us for over a year with a focus on measuring impact over the period of the project - so we will need to wait for that data to emerge. More generally, it's early days, but there are a number of ways in which we feel that BRIM already having an impact:

- There is increased confidence within the recovery community about their sense of power, and their ability 'to do'. Testament to this is the newly established Rainbow Recovery groups (a group of people in recovery from the LGBTQ Plus community); and a new Cycling Group - where the community secured their own donated bikes. These are the community's own groups - they are independent of us - but have Recovery Connections as a resource to support them as alongsiders.
- The referral streams into our service are now more diverse than they were prior to BRIM - testament to the networking and to our work on building connections outwards.
- There are significant outcomes following participation on the Recovery Ally training - with participants feeling more informed about how to support someone in recovery/ feeling more able to recognise and challenge stigmatising language/ and people feeling they have learned new tools that will help them have more confident recovery conversations with others.



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- We have deepened and extended the lived experience work with some partners. We already had existing good relationships with key partners where our Ambassadors and workers with lived experience worked alongside and reached into services. This included Probation in Middlesbrough and the treatment system in Middlesbrough, to name just two. But we have deepened and extended the involvement of lived experience in the treatment system within Middlesbrough, and the Probation Approved premises. We have also established good in-reaching work with Holme House and strengthened relationships with Kirkclevington Prison. We have also met new partners who we signpost into – and have met and established good working relationships with other lived experience organisations.



- Recovery Cities as a project and a global network, of which BRIM is an important part, has helped to market Middlesbrough; the Recovery Cities launch at the Riverside Stadium, brought people from across the country and from across Europe to the town. We have also had visits from members of the Scottish government, from North America and from across England who are interested in BRIM and the Recovery Cities movement within the last year.

What's Next?



So, what's next for BRIM in our second year?

BRIM 2: We have just held our second BRIM event at 131 The Venue. More on this in our next BRIM blog.

Strengthening Community Power: We will be looking for more community led involvement and supporting the community to stretch out. Specifically in terms of BRIM, we will be looking to see if community members would like BRIM specific roles. This will also build the capacity of the project. The community will have a central role to play at the second BRIM event next week.

Strengthening Partnership Engagement and Relationships: In year one we mapped and engaged, organisations and agencies. For year two, we need to build. We will be re connecting with agencies and individuals we will work together to deepen and increase involvement.

Building Understanding: During year two we will continually explore ways in which we can increase the general population's understanding of recovery. In this vein we will continue to roll out our free Recovery Ally training throughout the town.

How do you Build a Recovery City?

So, in conclusion, how do you build a recovery city? – well, you build it the same way that you build a community – through connections and relationships. And through connections and relationships, you build trust and understanding and create opportunities for friendship, alliances, closer working, exchanges of views and ideas, and an exchange of gifts. This is how we can help to create a town where recovery is everybody's business and that the contribution of the recovery community is valued and welcomed.



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www.recoveryconnections.org.uk

