

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new - Socrates

We are losing our base at Pathways, Mirfield; the final course running on the 24 April. We are relocating our office to Ravensleigh Resource Unit, Oxford Road in Dewsbury. I understand that many of you will be upset, and I can't pretend this is all good news but we will be very much around and running courses throughout Kirklees and Calderdale for years to come! In fact, our team in Kirklees is expanding and doubling in size!

We are now planning to run more courses online and in venues across Kirklees but please bear with us as we find our feet. We will keep you informed as and when we know more.

When I think of the things I hold most dear it is never possessions, it is the people and the memories I have made with them. I, like many of you have an attachment to the Pathways site, but when I reminisce it's all about the people I have met there. The Recovery College is the project I am most proud of because of the hope and community it has created. We have seen so many lives changed for the better and friendships formed. The College is not closing it is adapting to a new situation with the same people and the same clear purpose - that no matter what you can create a life of value.

As we change and grow, we need your help more than ever to spread the word about the College to your friends and family, so we reach those in need across the districts. Remember to prioritise your wellbeing by talking to others, using your wellbeing tools and booking onto courses that help. Visit our website or look at our printed course information sheet for details.

The team thank you for your kind words of support and practical help. Remember all of you are what makes our College what it is, not where it is.

Matt Ellis - Principal

The title is centered on a blue rectangular background. On either side of the text, there is a black spotlight fixture with a yellow light beam. The background of the entire page features orange and green brushstroke-like shapes in the corners.

Spotlight On.... Mindful Maker CIC

Mindful Maker CIC is a newly formed creative Community Interest Company set up by Carolyn who uses her lived experience of mental health to provide something more than an arts and crafts class.

“I’m Carolyn and I came to the Recovery College as a learner in January 2017 after being signposted by S2R. Their Wellness & Recovery Action Plan course gave me the encouragement to rebuild my life following a physical and mental breakdown. It was an extremely emotional time for me but fellow learners and staff were a HUGE support in dealing with so many of the challenges I was facing. I felt seen, heard and most of all not alone. Becoming a volunteer for the College’s creative courses gave me back my confidence, learning so much from staff and my volunteer peers. The experience helped me see a new career path which has been slowly and organically growing over the last 7 years.

Like many Creatives my business is complex but I’m celebrating it’s diversity. I run weekly Crafternoon sessions at Globe Arts in Slaithwaite on Thursdays and I’m also involved in some of Hive Community Cafe’s Wellbeing Wednesday sessions in Huddersfield.

I’ve recently won my first funded project which is being supported by NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and Thirds Sector Leaders with the help of Valleys Anchor. *The Mindful & Creative Wellbeing Project* is a series of workshops exploring the mental health benefits of being present while creating. These are currently being delivered in Slaithwaite but I hope to expand the project across Kirklees.” Click the link to find out more or book on: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/the-mindful-creative-well-being-project-2940809?aff=ebeseaorganizationprofile>

If you’d like to be kept informed of future Mindful Maker projects & workshops, contact Carolyn to be added to her mailing list by emailing: mindfulmaker1@gmail.com

Someone Like Me

Big thanks to learner, Charlotte who has kindly shared with us her Recovery College journey. We're certain she will continue to build friendships, learn and grow, whether in the classroom, at home or on the water!

My journey with the Recovery & Wellbeing College began in 2019. Unfortunately, after working for the same business for many years, I had to leave due to irreconcilable differences with one of the owner's relatives. It was such a shock. I had a breakdown and struggled with anxiety and depression. This also coincided with the perimenopause; 2019 was not a good year. It took me some time to pluck up the courage to approach my GP, but once I did, I took part in online therapy sessions to help me see my way through. At the end of 2020, my therapist told me about the College and I signed up.

I initially attended online courses due to Covid which seemed less daunting. I was very nervous about joining but the classes were so welcoming and inclusive. I did a Meditation course, something I'd never tried before and it was so interesting. I also did a Textiles course. It was lovely to do something totally different and to concentrate on crafting rather than letting your brain whizz off, trying to cope with too many things.

I started working again in 2021 but this only lasted for 2 years due to insolvency; all the feelings of failure I'd experienced before resurfaced. Shortly after, the College contacted me to see if I wanted to be still enrolled. This was like a lifeline and couldn't have come at a better time. I immediately booked on a Beginners' Yoga course. This was the first time I had attended the College in person and I was so nervous but like before, the staff and teachers were so welcoming it seemed as though I had hardly been away. Feeling more confident I then joined a Beginners Knitting course which was brilliant for building your concentration. I am now doing wood block printing and planning to kayak in a few weeks!



The last 5 years have been very up and down. My confidence has hit rock bottom and I still feel as though I let people down very easily. The College has been so supportive in my mental health journey. I now understand how fragile we can all be and that we need to be kind to ourselves as well as to others. My head feels clearer and I believe that learning different crafts along with mind and body techniques really does make a difference to your health. I have made new friends through visiting the College in Mirfield and I hope to be able to continue learning with them in the future.

Let's Get Physical



Dedication's what you need!



In this feature we often talk about motivation. We need to be motivated to start to move more, to become more active, to book on that exercise class, but what about after we've taken that first step? Do we have to remain motivated forever to keep up with our plan?

The truth is, motivation only gets us so far. Perhaps you know someone who exercises regularly; a neighbour who goes for a daily run after work, a friend who heads to the gym early morning several times a week or a colleague who spends their weekends cycling up and down rainy Yorkshire hillsides. It isn't motivation that gets them putting on their trainers after a long day in the office, or out of bed at 6am or putting on their waterproofs - it's dedication! To stick to any kind of regular activity, we need to have determination, to persevere, to grit our teeth and get on with it. That may sound like an arduous task but we guarantee you won't regret it. Exercise, movement, activity - whatever you want to call it, gives us a real boost and the sentence "I wish I hadn't done that exercise" is not one often heard. We definitely feel better after some kind of activity when those endorphins have kicked in.

If you have been inspired to move more or follow a regular exercise regime then well done you and keep at it. Don't wait for motivation to strike to head out for that walk, to go swimming, to do that beginners dance workout on Youtube. Just be dedicated to give it a go. You don't have to beat your personal best, or run a marathon. As the famous sports brand slogan says "just do it".

We have lots of courses on offer to get you moving including yoga, kayaking, rock climbing, creative wellbeing walks and even paddleboarding! Visit our website for details

Find your inner SHERO



I was bought this necklace by a friend of mine. I knew exactly what it represented to me, whereas many people have asked, what does your necklace say? What does it mean?

SHERO: a noun defined as a woman admired or idealized for her courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities; a heroine. I would add that it would include anyone from any gender, race, culture that supports the notion of equality and respect for all.

With this definition in mind comes some of the greats; Emmeline Pankhurst for fighting for our voting rights, Rosa Parks, for taking a stand against racial injustice, Ada Lovelace regarded as the world's first computer programmer, the list goes on. However there are many personal stories hiding under our noses that we should honour.

Therefore, designing a course for International Women's Day must be about celebrating our own journeys as women. Whilst chatting with a friend she told me 'my mum always says its ordinary women that lead extraordinary lives'. This comment - and the necklace gave me the idea to celebrate our own personal stories and Shero moments. I was ecstatic when I was given the green light and able to work with other staff members to design this course. After all the College is about sharing our lived experience, lifting us up and reminding us that our stories do matter.

It has taken me 20 years to realise what I have achieved, that I am important, that I make a difference. I don't need to land on the moon, solve world hunger, earn more money or be the best at anything really.

I just need to stay true to my values and challenge the norm with kindness and positivity.

So here is me, Laura Merriman, Shero of 2024, doing what she does best, gathering people with compassion and making things happen!

There is still time to book on our International Women's Day workshops on 8 March in Halifax and Online. Contact us to secure your place!



Welcome to the Team

‘Hello, my names Ashish which means “blessings” in Sanskrit. I do however prefer to be called Ash and I’m one of the new Peer Project Workers. My background is working in criminal justice and social benefits, so working at the College is all very new to me.’



‘I’ve been made to feel very welcome by my colleagues and learners and I’ve already undertaken some courses as a learner myself. I’m looking forward to co-producing some new courses, enabling learners to get the very best out of their learning experience.

I have my own lived experience of chronic physical health, mental health and addiction and I feel empowered to take on this new Peer support role. In my spare time, I can usually be found watching or listening to music, it’s my escape. I particularly love music from the 80’s, 90’s & indie.
I look forward to meeting you all.’

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