



**NORTH AYRSHIRE**  
**ALCOHOL & DRUG**  
**PARTNERSHIP**

## Summer 2025 Newsletter

Welcome to the Summer 2025 edition of North Ayrshire Alcohol & Drug Partnership's newsletter. The ADP Support Team will produce 4 newsletters per year highlighting positive recovery stories, what is going on in our communities, and sharing information about local services. If you would like to get involved in helping to produce the newsletter or have a positive story we can highlight, get in touch by e-mailing:

[adp@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:adp@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)

### Recovery Connects Festival

North Ayrshire was proudly represented at the Recovery Connects Festival in Glasgow this July - a vibrant, alcohol-free celebration of recovery, connection, and community. The event brought together people from across Scotland to share in a day of live music, inspiring workshops, and powerful stories of recovery and resilience.

The festival was a moving reminder that recovery is not only possible, but also something to be celebrated. North Ayrshire's presence highlighted the strength, hope, and unity that thrives within our local recovery communities, reinforcing our commitment to supporting individuals and families on their journey.



### MINDS of Recovery Conversation Cafe

MINDS of Recovery were successful in their recent application to CORRA and will be starting a weekly conversation cafe within Kilwinning which will run for 6 months.

More details to follow in the coming weeks!



## Pathways to Progress Graduation

On 26th June, Pathways to Progress celebrated a successful first year with a powerful graduation event at Fullarton Hub. Thirteen students received certificates, but the real success was in the stories shared by students who highlighted positive outcomes regarding re-establishing relationships with their families and being more stable in their recovery. Graduates spoke of reduced police involvement, new friendships, and positively impacting their community through volunteering.

Local Councillor, Jean McLung, praised the programme's impact on tackling inequality and called for its continuation.

The event highlighted how Pathways to Progress is more than a course, it's a catalyst for change, recovery, and community connection.

The next course is starting on **Wednesday 13th August 2025**. Applications are available by contacting our office on **01294 447407** or emailing the contact details below:

Email: [NorthAyrshireInfo@turningpointscotland.com](mailto:NorthAyrshireInfo@turningpointscotland.com)





## Harbour Ayrshire: Community, Connection & Continued Growth

It's been a busy and impactful few months at Harbour Ayrshire, with the team and volunteers continuing to provide support to those affected by addiction and poor mental health across Ayrshire.

Two volunteers have recently progressed into employment with North Ayrshire Drug and Alcohol Recovery Service (NADARS). Ally Martin, Harbours longest-serving volunteer, has been promoted to Social Work Assistant, and Margaret-Ann has secured a Recovery Development Worker post – fantastic achievements that highlight the power of lived experience and peer-led support.

The support groups continue to have good engagement within Irvine and Kilbirnie. An 8-week workshop will be facilitated with members of the family group providing them with the support and knowledge when impacted by a family member's substance use.

The Harbour community came together to stage "Better Days", a powerful play telling the story of Harbour. The cast was made up entirely of Harbour volunteers, many of whom had never performed before, directed by Kelly and Ross from IRIS. The play was a roaring success, performed to sold-out audiences over two nights at the Harbour Arts Centre. It was a moving and inspiring celebration of resilience, recovery, and hope.

Harbour Ayrshire remains committed to walking alongside those on their recovery journey, offering hope, connection, and a genuine bridge to a better future.

Harbour added, *"we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our partners and stakeholders for their continued support. Your belief in what we do makes everything possible."*



## Education Roadshows

Following on from pilot events in Ardeer and Isle of Arran, the wider ADP's Prevention & Education roadshows were rolled out to all S1 pupils in North Ayrshire during the 2024/25 school year. Approximately 1,300 young people participated in the workshops, as well as bitesize sessions for teachers on the risks and harms of alcohol and drugs in relation to young people. A reflective session was facilitated at the end-of-year with all ADP partners to discuss the next steps for the programme. Dates are now confirmed for all North Ayrshire schools in 2025/26.

Additionally, the Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation play is coming to North Ayrshire in October 2025 for S3 pupils, titled '*I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die*', produced and performed by Tie It Up Theatre. This includes a 45-minute performance followed by a drug education workshop.

ADP and Education HQ are hosting a Prevention & Education Conference in November 2025 with aims to have an increased understanding and awareness of local drug trends, risks and harms, upskill staff, build partnerships and an understanding of support pathways. If you are interested in attending, contact [rhyshevitson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:rhyshevitson@north-ayrshire.gov.uk) for further information.

Hi everyone, my name is Shona, and I was raised in Kilmarnock. When I was younger, I always performed well at school, and I had loads of friends. At the age of 11, I started to use solvents, and I perceived this as normal as all my friends were doing it. When I reached 14, one of my friends went missing for a couple of weeks and when she returned, I found out she was in care. My understanding of care was totally different until she explained it to me, and it was after this conversation I decided to disclose to a teacher what was happening within my home environment, and I found myself within the care system shortly after. Despite this, I had a very positive experience during my time in care.

Due to being an adolescent at the time, the Salvation Army took me in, and I moved to the Garnock Valley. It was at this point that I started to increase my drug use as there were 40 teenagers all living under the same roof, and we were all doing drugs together – magic mushrooms even grew on the grounds! At that time in my life, I just wanted to take any drugs as it helped me escape from my reality and I can't lie, I enjoyed taking drugs as it made me more of an extrovert, and ultimately, more popular.

At the age of 18 I got my own tenancy in Irvine and my drug use became daily; I was using loads of party drugs. A year later I went to Portugal, and it was here that I met my husband who was an alcoholic. Due to my experiences, I was totally desensitised to this as mum and her family always drank, so it was something I never viewed as problematic, but rather just a part of life. During my time in this relationship, I swapped drugs for alcohol, and I became a functioning alcoholic.

After living in Kent for a while, my husband and I decided to move back to Scotland when I was pregnant, and we got a tenancy in Largs. Shortly after, we moved to Germany for a year then returned to the UK. Then, in 2001, I left my husband, and I moved back to Scotland to look after my mum as her health had deteriorated considerably. Sadly, she passed away, but we had some amazing times together, she was some woman.

In 2002, I got into a new relationship with a man who was very much into drugs, and this made drugs more accessible for me, I didn't even need to pay for them. Using drugs excessively severely affected my mental health and I found myself in and out mental health units for ten years and I was diagnosed with mental health disorders. During this time, my children were staying with their father and grandparents down South and I tried my best to get off drugs on my own, as I wanted to do it for my kids, but I didn't realise at the time that it would only work if I wanted it for myself.

By the time COVID hit, I was sofa surfing from one party household to another. I was doing speed and drinking excessively and everyday was just carnage. My mental health was really bad and because I was using alcohol on top of my medication, I ended up getting hospitalised.

I moved to Scotland again to try and sort my life out and I found myself homeless, but thankfully I got a wee flat in Largs and my son also came to live with me. I reached out to someone local as I was trying to get weed but this individual was a heroin user. Despite this, I hung around with this group of people as it was the only place that I felt like I actually belonged. After two years, I finally tried heroin, but I didn't like it, then two weeks later, I tried crack, and I really enjoyed it - a little too much. I continued to use it for a month before I decided to come off it as I could see the rapid decline of the people I was using alongside as they had been on it longer than me.

Then, because of my diabetes I had to go for an assessment and the nurse advised me that I had sorosis of the liver and this was a wakeup call for me. I was assessed by a mental health team who told me that they would support me if I stopped drinking, so I called my sister and asked for help as she has experience of working within the social care sector.

I had been using alcohol for so long to self-medicate as it helped take me away from the complete torture of my mind. My sister introduced me to Caley Court, and I was put on acamprosate to help with cravings, and I managed to reduce my intake despite my partner still drinking every day. I went into Woodland View for a detox and then I stayed for the 3-week programme. After this, I got a place in Abbeycare which is a residential rehab, and it was here I stayed for 3 months. I've been out for 18 months now and have continued to be abstinent despite coming off all my prescribed medication for my mental health. I'm aware that a relapse could be around the corner at any time and it terrifies me because I don't want my mental health to deteriorate again.

Today, my relationship with my family is the most important thing to me, especially with me being away from Scotland for so long. I've also recently completed the Pathways to Progress college course that was facilitated in partnership between TPS PEAR and Ayrshire College. I'm also doing a programme called Venture Voices with Venture Trust to learn the skills to speak to the media and members of parliament to raise funds and reshape Venture Trust over the next five years. I'm also part of a research programme for Stirling University where I provide my opinions on how the outdoors affects mental health and recovery. This research will be used to set up new rehabs and hopefully provide funding for people affected by substances to give them access to outdoor therapies.

I'm also continuing with my wellness practice and outdoor forest therapy, and I love to share this experience with others. The CBT that I received during my time in rehab has helped me massively and I still apply this daily to manage my mental health. Even on days where I feel as though I can't face the world, the people in my life know that I can do it, and it helps me move forwards. I have an amazing support network, and I am so appreciative for everyone in my life. Life is peaceful and I am so grateful for it. If there is one thing I have learned throughout my recovery journey, it's that you must take care of yourself and learn how to say no and put yourself first. I've reclaimed my life back as my own and I have my family back, and that is all I have ever wanted.