

They speak my language

Findings from the 2026 outcome harvest

Internal Report

May 2026



About this report

This is an internal insights report prepared by Habitus Collective for Scottish Recovery Network.

It draws on an outcome harvest conducted in early 2026, involving in-depth interviews with 17 people and survey responses from 3 people who are connected to Scottish Recovery Network's work across Scotland, including practitioners, strategic leaders, and organisational partners from across the third sector and statutory settings.

The findings will be used to inform Scottish Recovery Network's strategic and operational planning and programme development.

A separate summary report has been created that can be shared more widely with those interviewed and with external audiences.

The Headlines

What are you good at and what are your assets

Scottish Recovery Network has built a network of people who trust the organisation, who find something in it that keeps them going, and who are carrying the values and evidence into spaces it cannot reach directly. That is the mechanism through which most of the impact in this report happens.

The strongest assets are the people, the training offer, the evidence base, and the quality of the spaces Scottish Recovery Network creates. Peer2Peer is embedded across Scotland in ways that are producing change. Whilst the national peer support framework is still being built, the process of building it together is already starting to shift things. People are using it in local conversations, feeling ownership of its direction, and pointing to it in strategic settings even before it is complete. Organisations are building on what Scottish Recovery Network has helped them develop and running with it in ways that go well beyond the initial relationship. Among those with longer connections to Scottish Recovery Network, there is a noticeable shift in how people are showing up, with more confidence and more willingness to push for change.

There is also evidence of something shifting in how Scottish Recovery Network uses its relationships, moving from connecting people with an offer toward genuinely shaping the work together. That shift comes through clearly in these conversations.

What you are being challenged on: some strategic leaders will see you as a threat

Several organisations are keeping a deliberate distance from Scottish Recovery Network. For some, the association with a large delivery organisation creates a competitive tension that shapes how they engage. For others, particularly people working for change inside statutory services, Scottish Recovery Network's framing can sometimes feel like it does not include them. A small number of people who have been part of the Scottish Recovery Network community for a long time describe a shift from curiosity and collaboration toward something that feels more like pressure. This could be Scottish Recovery Network having now built enough trust for people to share things they might not have said before, and handling it carefully from here will be important.

Most people we spoke to expressed appreciation and confidence in the organisation. But the people raising concerns are often exactly the people whose influence Scottish Recovery Network needs in the rooms it cannot enter directly.

What you should be listening to in this report

The organisations and individuals most invested in peer support are asking for the next layer of help: line management support, career pathways, governance frameworks for statutory settings, and practical tools that go beyond principles. As more organisations move through the journey, what Scottish Recovery Network is being asked for will grow.

Being intentional about who else needs to be in the room, and what it would take to bring them in, sits underneath several of the findings here and is one of the strategic questions.

The relational model that makes everything else work is not yet fully protected or evenly distributed across the team. It lives in specific people, and not all of those team members are using the relationships they hold as catalysts for change rather than simply connecting people to what is on offer. This is a developmental observation rather than a criticism, and it points to a significant area of growth available to Scottish Recovery Network in the next phase of its work.

What is less significant

Geography has become less of a barrier, (both real and perceived) over time, and the move toward more online provision has made a real difference for many people. PeerConnects was named as specifically improving rural and remote accessibility. In-person events are still concentrated in central Scotland, and that is worth keeping an eye on, though it did not come through as a significant concern, and this reflects interview perceptions rather than a whole programme-level review.

Several people newer to Scottish Recovery Network described finding it hard to locate what they needed on the website, particularly when searching by topic rather than by exact name. For people who already know the team well, this rarely gets in the way as they reach out directly and that conversation often leads somewhere more useful anyway. Taking a practical look at making it easier to navigate what is on offer would lower the threshold for people still finding their way in.

A small number of people raised observations about facilitation quality and language in some Scottish Recovery Network spaces. Two specific things came through. One was around consistency in how clearly the purpose of an event or session is communicated to participants beforehand and during, with some spaces feeling less clearly framed than others. The other was around language: in a small number of spaces, wellness and resilience framing was used in ways that felt at odds with Scottish Recovery Network's recovery focus, which some people found jarring given how central language and framing are to Scottish Recovery Network's identity. Both of these came up more in relation to newer staff than the team as a whole. These did not represent a wider pattern across the conversations, and they sit alongside a much larger body of evidence that Scottish Recovery Network's events and spaces are experienced as warm, purposeful, and genuinely valuable.

Themes from the 2026 outcome harvest

This grid maps the full range of topics that came through across the interviews and surveys. The eight themes explored in this report draw on and consolidate these areas of focus.

A confidence-builder and voice-amplifier	A space of belonging, solidarity, and shared language	The shift from programmatic/ transactional to relational engagement	Role in enabling systems and practice change	Scottish Recovery Network's positioning on the third sector / statutory divide
The Peer2Peer training and national framework as flagship assets	Brand clarity, identity, and the Penumbra association	Geography and inclusion	Appetite for Scottish Recovery Network to play a more activist and systemic role	The international dimension valued consistently
Confusion about purpose, projects, and how to get more involved	Role in legitimising peer support as a credible field	A counterweight to institutional pressure, a "hopeful space" and sustaining the workforce	Peer workforce development and line management as an emerging and unmet need	The specific value of Scottish Recovery Network's evaluation and research capacity
A convening asset for partnerships and commissioning	Modelling as a form of learning	Legitimacy and credibility (organisationally and individually)	Role in systems change (influencing)	Subtle tensions and challenges in facilitation and group working

Theme 1: Scottish Recovery Network is helping people grow in confidence and be taken more seriously by others.

Theme 2: Scottish Recovery Network creates a hopeful space and is one of the few spaces where people doing this work feel genuinely understood and sustained through difficult work.

Theme 3: Scottish Recovery Network is evolving its approach from relational to influential. People's ideas and needs are visibly shaping the work.

Theme 4: Scottish Recovery Network is enabling change at individual, organisational, and systems levels.

Theme 5: Peer support is growing but the infrastructure is not keeping pace.

Theme 6: Scottish Recovery Network's approach to systems change is working, but Scotland's structural conditions mean the hardest shifts are still ahead.

Theme 7: Scottish Recovery Network's relationships are its most powerful mechanism for change, and it is still learning how to use them to their full potential.

Theme 8: Scottish Recovery Network is reaching the right people. Whether it is reaching enough of the right people to drive the change the peer support agenda needs is less certain.

Theme 1: Scottish Recovery Network is helping people grow in confidence and be taken more seriously by others

"To be able to say, when I'm putting forward an idea, that there is evidence and guidance to back this up, that is what Scottish Recovery Network gives you."

What we found

Scottish Recovery Network engagement produces meaningful shifts in how people carry themselves and how they are received by others. People across all contexts connected to Scottish Recovery Network's work, including peer practitioners, organisational leaders, and those working to influence statutory and commissioning systems, describe growing more certain that their knowledge and experience are valid, more willing to take up space, more ready to speak. They are being taken more seriously by colleagues, commissioners, and institutions because of their association with Scottish Recovery Network. Several people describe these two things reinforcing each other over time.

One person described attending a safeguarding committee and preparing in advance to answer a challenge about peer-to-peer support before it was even raised, reframing the argument from a risk to be mitigated into an asset for safety. They described Scottish Recovery Network's evidence base as giving them the confidence and the language to do that. Another person described challenging their post banding in the NHS and getting it upgraded, and described being consistently vocal in meetings with senior clinical staff about the value of peer support in ways that would not have felt possible earlier in their career.

Evidence Quality

- Strong and consistent across
- many interviews with many examples.

What has changed

The 2024 evaluation named confidence as an emerging outcome but had limited evidence of it translating into changed behaviour. These interviews provide longitudinal evidence of that change across multiple people. Several describe changes they can date, attribute, and illustrate with concrete examples. This is one of the clearest areas of measurable change.

Where progress is slower

Confidence and credibility feel similar but they are not the same thing. One is about how you feel inside, the other is about how you are received. Both are happening here, and both appear in the existing framework under validation, but they require different supporting conditions and produce different kinds of change across different timescales. Keeping them distinct in the refreshed outcomes framework would help Scottish Recovery Network be more intentional about what it is trying to build and for whom.

Theme 2: Scottish Recovery Network creates a hopeful space and is one of the few spaces where people doing this work feel genuinely understood and sustained through difficult work

“Scottish Recovery Network spaces are the only ones where I feel I can bring my full experience as both a professional and someone with lived experience, without having to separate the two.”

What we found

People across very different roles and contexts describe Scottish Recovery Network events and spaces as one of the only places where their work is understood, where the language they use is shared, and where their motivation is built and maintained. This is distinct from learning or networking, though it happens alongside both.

For some people, particularly those working alone in statutory settings with little peer support around them, it is what makes the job feel possible. Several people describe choosing to go to Scottish Recovery Network spaces over higher-profile events specifically because of this quality of being genuinely understood and the events having a clear purpose.

One person described a Scottish Recovery Network event as the moment a young person in her project committed fully to the work. Listening to others who were further along the same journey, he said he was there because he wanted to build something that had not existed when he needed it. The event did not teach him to do this. It gave him the space to say it for the first time.

Evidence Quality

- Strong. Unprompted across people at
- different career
- stages and in different
- organisational
- contexts.

What has changed

Scottish Recovery Network is developing a workforce sustainability function alongside its convening role, nurturing and sustaining people who are working within their own organisations and creating change locally. This was not a named function in the 2024 evaluation and it is one of the more significant new findings. It emerged consistently and unprompted across the conversations, and it represents a meaningful addition to how Scottish Recovery Network understands its own impact.

Where progress is slower

Staff throughout Scottish Recovery Network recognising and practising their nurturing and orchestration role consistently across the whole team. The hopeful space that people describe is real and valued, and it is currently held more strongly by some staff than others. As the network grows and the demand on that function increases, being intentional about how it is distributed and protected will be important.

Theme 3: Scottish Recovery Network is evolving its approach from relational to influential. People's ideas and needs are visibly shaping the work

"Had Scottish Recovery Network not been a thing that existed in my country, I would have been all the poorer for it. It was the start of a reframing that felt really invaluable and shaped where I went with my career."

What we found

Scottish Recovery Network has always been described as a relational organisation. What has changed is the nature and depth. Several people genuinely feel like they are shaping the direction of the work. More than one person describes a previous period in which Scottish Recovery Network was warm and generous but the engagement felt largely one-directional, where Scottish Recovery Network brought or delivered events, resources, frameworks and then moved on. The shift over the last 18 months to 2 years has been noticeable; people now describe a two-way exchange that feels much more mutual. For example feedback in framework meetings leads to format changes, and people can clearly see their ideas reflected back in what Scottish Recovery Network does next. One person shared *"In the past there wasn't the idea that I had any influence... now they come to me and say, 'help us with X' and you feel like you're helping to shape that"*.

Beyond this, people are learning from how Scottish Recovery Network does things, not only from what it produces. Facilitation style, the quality of welcome at events, the way the staff model openness about their own lived experience, the way space is held for difficult conversations, all of these are being carried back into peoples' own practice and organisations.

One person described attending an event and hearing from practitioners further along the same journey she was on. She described that event as the moment her students committed fully to the project, because of what they saw was possible.

Evidence Quality

● Present in several interviews but not universal.

What has changed

The 2024 report recommended deepening co-production and relational engagement. The interviews suggest this has happened in a meaningful way. More staff at Scottish Recovery Network are modelling practice they want to see within their network.

Where progress is slower

The modelling function appeared as a theme in the 2024 evaluation but was not developed as a named lever and the evidence for it this time is considerably stronger. It comes through most clearly from people with direct experience of Scottish Recovery Network events and staff contact, and less so from those whose connection is primarily online or resource-based.

Also, as Scottish Recovery Network deepens its relationships with some people, how newer participants still find a warm welcome and feel nurtured will be important.

Theme 4: Scottish Recovery Network is enabling change at individual, organisational, and systems levels

“I wanted to bring Creating Hope with Peer Support to my area, to give people an understanding that they are doing suicide prevention work. And if you understand that you're doing it, you can be more intentional about it.”

What we found

Running across all three levels is an ability to convene and legitimise. Scottish Recovery Network's involvement makes things possible that individual people could not achieve alone. It lends weight to local arguments, provides a credible external voice in institutional and local settings, enables partnerships and events that require a convening organisation to hold them together, and appears in tendering and funding documents cited by partner organisations making the case for peer support in their own settings, and citing Scottish Recovery Network's credibility as the reason for the approach they were taking.

At the individual level, people describe taking specific learning from Scottish Recovery Network and applying it directly into their settings. They are going into settings with a clearer sense of how to present peer support in ways that land, using language and framing that reduces pushback rather than provoking it. They are also using Scottish Recovery Network research outputs in commissioning conversations and funding bids, and replicating Scottish Recovery Network's approaches in their own networks and events. In one NHS setting, a senior clinical decision-maker will not approve work without lived experience input, described by the person who shared it as previously unimaginable.

One person described building a formal peer governance group within their NHS board entirely from scratch because existing peer support infrastructure was not meeting the needs of statutory peer workers. They named Scottish Recovery Network as the source of knowledge and confidence that made them feel they could do that, and the group is now official.

Evidence Quality

- Strong at individual level. Present at
- organisational level. Emerging at systems and commissioning level.

What has changed

There is now more tangible evidence of structural change, meaning actual changes in practices, policies, and ways of working, and this moves the evidence considerably further forward than the 2024 evaluation was able to show.

Where progress is slower

Transformative change, meaning genuine shifts in the mental models and cultural assumptions that underpin how institutions think about peer support and lived experience, remains limited.

Theme 5: Peer support is growing but the infrastructure is not keeping pace

“My personal and professional development is coming from Scottish Recovery Network... the support around evaluation doesn't exist anywhere else, that has been really crucial. But there's no peer leadership training... something around line managing and leading peers. That's what's missing.”

What we found

Peer2Peer training is the most consistently valued single offer. It has been the foundation for building peer teams, developing pathways, and establishing the credibility of peer support in organisations that had not previously engaged with it. The harder challenge now is managing peer workers well in ways that protect their practice and their wellbeing, helping build career pathways, and embedding peer workers in structures without the organisational culture eroding what makes them unique, whilst developing leadership capacity.

Several people describe working with the Scottish Recovery Network to develop evaluation approaches that are recovery-oriented and peer-appropriate, rather than relying on generic organisational surveys or clinical tools. One person described being asked to prove the value of their role using tools that were never designed to measure it and described Scottish Recovery Network's evaluation support as filling a gap their own organisation had not been able to address.

One person described setting up her organisation's first peer support group in 2024 and relying directly on Scottish Recovery Network's peer facilitation guides throughout, because nothing else existed that was designed specifically for peer-led group work. These guides were the infrastructure that made the group possible. Another described in detail what Scottish Recovery Network meant to their own development as a leader and questioned where this exists for the next generation. Leadership development and who carries the peer support movement forward came up in different ways across several conversations.

Evidence Quality

- Strong for the Peer2Peer finding and the management and leadership gap. More varied for other findings.

What has changed

The 2024 report described Scottish Recovery Network as primarily supporting organisations in the planning stages of change. The interviews surfaced a cohort now in action and maintenance, and beginning to reach the sustainability stage.

Where progress is slower

The modularisation of Peer2Peer has been delayed, and people are waiting for it rather than adapting what exists, partly out of respect for Scottish Recovery Network's quality. This broader pattern of waiting rather than taking initiative and acting independently is worth understanding and responding to.

Theme 6: Scottish Recovery Network's approach to systems change is working, but Scotland's structural conditions mean the hardest shifts are still ahead

“What I feel has happened is that peer support has been seen as somebody else's job... And what the danger has been is it has absolved statutory organisations of taking responsibility and really incorporating it.”

What we found

In England, NHS trusts could make decisions, set priorities, and invest in peer workforces with a degree of autonomy. The authority of clinical voices in policy and commissioning settings in Scotland is concentrated in ways that make sharing power a significant ask, and the peer support agenda asks those voices to do exactly that. Several people describe the experience of working for change inside these structures as requiring a kind of patience and strategic awareness that direct advocacy or confrontation could quickly undermine.

The international dimension of Scottish Recovery Network's work is a direct strength here. Evidence of peer support workers in senior roles in other countries, of peer-led practice in entirely different national contexts, of what is possible when the infrastructure is in place, shifts what people feel able to argue for in Scotland.

Some people want Scottish Recovery Network to go further: to provide a collective activist voice, particularly where employment conditions prevent individual advocacy. Others argue that Scottish Recovery Network's current approach works precisely because it does not take on a confrontational advocacy role. These views represent different visions of what the organisation should be and what the movement needs.

What has changed

The evidence for transformative change, meaning genuine shifts in mental models and cultural assumptions at the institutional level, remains limited whereas individual mental models are shifting. Institutional cultures seem to be moving more slowly and in fewer places.

Where progress is slower

Whether Scottish Recovery Network's model can find reliable mechanisms for reaching into institutional and government settings, and through what tools, is a question these interviews surface but do not resolve. Habitus will be exploring this in the next phase of work with Scottish Recovery Network.

Evidence Quality

- Highly varied opinions and observations of what Scottish Recovery Network is and should be.

Theme 7: Scottish Recovery Network's relationships are its most powerful mechanism for change, and it is still learning how to use them to their full potential.

"He said to me, 'I'm committed to this because I want to set up something which I needed and wasn't there twelve years ago.' He told me that at a Scottish Recovery Network event. That was the moment things changed."

What we found

Not all staff are using their relationships as catalysts for change. Every single interview specifically names staff members. Specific people, conversations, moments where someone was recognised or reached out to at the right time. Being remembered, receiving a message that felt written for you rather than sent to everyone, comes through consistently as something shaping people's confidence and commitment.

Several people also describe a professional culture within Scottish Recovery Network that models what peer values look like in practice. One person tells their team to watch how Scottish Recovery Network staff go about their work as a professional development model.

Some interactions are still experienced as transactional or programmatic, where someone is connected to a resource or event, rather than a deeper conversation into what is needed and what might shift as a result. The most powerful accounts describe exactly that kind of interaction, but they are not yet universal. Many describe the importance of experienced peers nurturing the next generation of peer support leaders, as they themselves were nurtured by people who came before them.

Several people described the relational approach as strategically necessary. One person shared that without institutional authority, trying to challenge entrenched power structures directly would be self-defeating. Another described the Scottish system as one where the moment you push for change, you find yourself surrounded by people who suddenly have a mandate to maintain the status quo. In this context, the relational model works. Building trust, developing people, and creating conditions for others to carry change into spaces the organisation cannot reach is the strategy, and the relationships are what make it work.

Evidence Quality



Strong throughout. Among the most consistently evidenced themes

What has changed

The shift to more intentional and responsive relationship-building is felt and named by people who have been connected over the longer term; a clear example of the organisation getting better at this.

Where progress is slower

The shift toward using relationships as catalysts, where Scottish Recovery Network is not just connecting people with what it offers but actively working alongside them to figure out what needs to change and how, is underway but uneven across the team. It represents one of the most significant areas of potential growth for Scottish Recovery Network in the next phase of its work.

Theme 8: Scottish Recovery Network is reaching the right people. Whether it is reaching enough of the right people to drive the change the peer support agenda needs is less certain.

"Everything was focused on the third sector, and I felt that if you worked for a clinical service, it almost gave you a black mark. But when I made contact again a couple of years ago, there was a much different outlook."

What we found

Systems change will require Scottish Recovery Network to be deliberate about who is not yet in the network, why they are not, and what it would take to change that. Several people describe stepping back because of competitive positioning rather than values misalignment. The people who have raised this are working at strategic and organisational leadership level within the third sector, and the concern relates specifically to the competitive dynamics created by Scottish Recovery Network's association with a large delivery organisation rather than any disagreement with Scottish Recovery Network's values or approach. The perception, whether or not it reflects the reality, extends to overlapping interests in funding and positioning. Scottish Recovery Network staying ahead of the needs of the sector, continuing to create the conditions for peer support to thrive rather than becoming associated with any particular delivery model, can keep that perception from becoming a barrier.

The people and organisations not yet in the network include those kept at a distance by competitive dynamics, those in statutory and clinical settings who have not yet found a clear point of entry, and those in community and grassroots contexts where Scottish Recovery Network's presence is lighter. Who is missing from the network is as significant a question as who is present.

The historical perception that Scottish Recovery Network was unwelcoming to those in clinical services has shifted. One person described a period a few years ago when working in a clinical service felt like it gave them a black mark in Scottish Recovery Network spaces, and how much has changed since then. The third sector and statutory divide also operates as a dynamic within the peer support community itself, with a sense from some that one sector is doing this work better or more authentically than the other. Scottish Recovery Network is well placed to be a neutral convening space where that dynamic can be set aside.

Concerns and critical observations come from a small minority but they include people with significant influence in existing systems. Their perceptions of Scottish Recovery Network, and whether they see it as an ally or a source of pressure, will have a bearing on how change does or does not happen in the settings that are hardest to shift.

If the people most capable of driving peer support into resistant settings feel unwelcome, the impact may be lost. The people who shared critical observations were consistent in what they described wanting. Curiosity and collaboration were the qualities named most directly; the sense that Scottish Recovery Network works at its best when it comes to the work with openness about what is and what could be, and builds change through relationships rather than pressure. Others described wanting Scottish Recovery Network to be a genuinely neutral convening space where the third sector and statutory divide could be set aside, and where people from both worlds can simply show up as practitioners rather than as representatives of their organisational context.

Geography and accessibility have improved particularly for people living and working in rural and remote areas. Reimbursement of travel costs, food and catering are named specifically as enabling factors for under-resourced organisations and individuals.

One person observed that the team is currently all women, within a similar age and class range, and without visible or explicit representation of some of the communities Scottish Recovery Network serves. This was not a pattern across the interviews but may be worth attention, particularly as the peer leadership development agenda develops, and as the question of who is in the room when Scottish Recovery Network plans and makes decisions becomes more significant.

Several people described struggling to find what they needed on the website, particularly when searching by topic rather than by exact name. The search function works literally rather than conceptually, which means someone looking for resources about a theme or practice area rather than a named programme will often come up empty. More broadly, the way the website is structured reflects a programme-based logic, which works well for people who already know what Scottish Recovery Network does and what it calls things. For people who are newer, or who do not think in those ways, finding a way in is more challenging.

Evidence Quality

- Strong for the organisational association barrier, website navigation, and geography.
- Moderate for the statutory reach gap. Emerging for the critical minority view on leadership tone.
- Single-person observation for team diversity.

What has changed

Change and action is being taken in the most receptive settings. The organisational association barrier was present in 2024 and has grown in significance since, but this may be because trust and openness has grown, so people now feel more comfortable being honest.

Where progress is slower

Whether Scottish Recovery Network is intentional enough about who is not yet in the network, and what it would take to bring them in, remains an open question across the findings in this report.

Questions worth taking forward

On the peer workforce

The organisations and individuals most committed to peer support have moved further than anticipated and are now asking for the next layer of help. Line management support, career pathways, governance frameworks, and leadership development are the things being asked for. Is Scottish Recovery Network ready to respond to that, and if so, what does that response look like in the next programme?

On reach and who is in the room

Some of the people and organisations not yet in Scottish Recovery Network's network are absent for reasons Scottish Recovery Network can influence. What would a deliberate strategy for extending reach look like, who would it prioritise, and how would Scottish Recovery Network know it was working?

On the relational model

The relational model is Scottish Recovery Network's most powerful mechanism for change and it is unevenly distributed across the team. What would it look like to develop that capacity more intentionally, and how does Scottish Recovery Network protect it as the network grows and staff change?

On the modelling function

People are replicating Scottish Recovery Network's ways of working in their own organisations and settings without being asked to. This is one of the most significant impact mechanisms across the conversations and it is currently invisible in the outcomes framework. How should it be named, tracked, and built on?

On the outcomes framework

The interviews have surfaced two distinctions the current framework does not capture: confidence as an internal shift and credibility as an external one, and the workforce sustainability function as a named outcome in its own right. What else needs to change in the refreshed framework to reflect what is actually happening?



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