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Dedication

Recovery themed issue dedication

CPsychI REFOCUS Committee

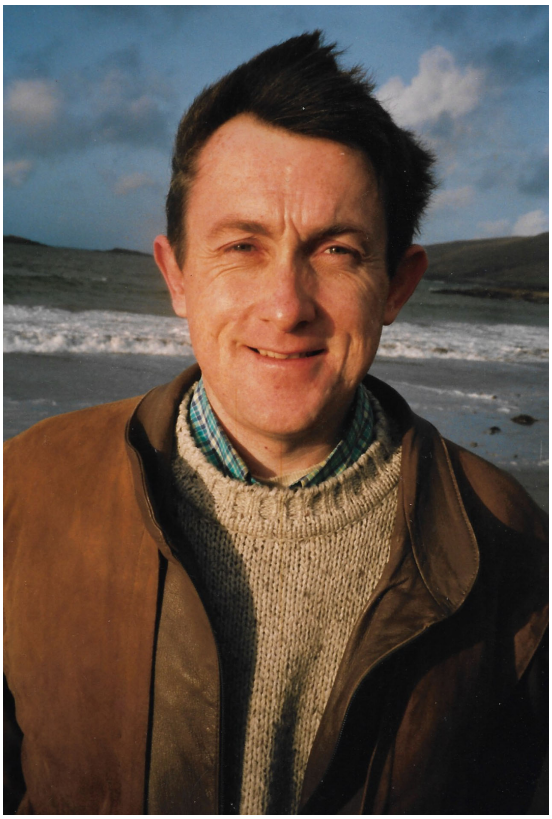


Figure 1. Diarmaid Ring.

This special themed issue on recovery is dedicated to the memory of Diarmaid Ring, who sadly died on 13 April 2021. A former joint chair of the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland REFOCUS (Recovery Forum of Carers and Users of Services) committee, Diarmaid also worked for many years for University College, Cork, with previous experience as a peer support worker. He was an invaluable source of insight and creativity to the work of REFOCUS, which continues to prioritise the voices of service users and carers in advocating for humane, recovery-focused mental health services.

The following is a written contribution by Diarmaid which was shared posthumously at a college symposium on the monetary impact of mental illness. It covers the successful tripartite relationship between an employee, their psychiatrist, and their employer/direct manager working together to ensure an enriched, sustained career, and recovery.

As a mental health service user, I have been employed for circa 25 years in University College Cork in different peer and professional paid positions.

There were certain times in my employment when my mental illness became overwhelming and so distressing that I needed to stop working and take time off to access mental health services and supports, etc. Having a very supportive consultant psychiatrist was very important to me, especially during these crisis times, in that he wrote directly to my UCC employer namely via the Department of Human Resources, explaining the exact situation and comprehensively outlining the context and nature of my condition.

Because my psychiatrist had such an in-depth understanding of my situation, this, I assumed, assured my UCC employer of any fears/concerns regarding my employment requirements and responsibilities and allowed greater understanding of my particular case going forward which I think allowed greater flexibilities in my employment contract and again perhaps was a very important reference point for my continuing employment in UCC – at least I would say a notable factor in the overall employment context. As an aside I, would also add that a key psychiatric nursing professional who worked with me for many years on one occasion wrote a glowing reference for me for some UCC employment opportunity or placement I recollect which I remember at that time was very helpful.

Having had the great privilege to work with some great service users for so many years, it's a profound sadness to me when some service users recount how difficult it is first to even access employment not to mind sustaining employment, etc. I have found, given the right supports and mediation mechanisms, it is possible to overcome difficulties . . . . the service users who I worked with were in my opinion some of the most creative, intelligent, and conscientious workers I ever had the privilege of working alongside, and so it appals me that so many of my brothers and sisters in the service user context are still living on or below the poverty line – for me a shameful tragedy that flies in the face of any substantive sense of recovery and self-determined living and meaning.

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