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**First UK Recovery College: Minister Highlights Role of Recovery Approach in Mental Health and Wellbeing**

Health Minister, Paul Burstow, met students, mental health practitioners and peer trainers at the formal opening of the UK’s first Recovery College.

The South West London Recovery College, based at Springfield University Hospital in Tooting, is a pioneering educational facility, providing recovery education for people with mental health conditions, their families, carers and friends, and Trust staff. The college offers courses and resources at sites across the five boroughs of South West London and has welcomed more than 1000 students in its first year.

Care Services Minister, Paul Burstow, said: “The South West London Recovery is the first of its kind in this country, providing educational courses to help people even with the most severe mental health conditions recover.

“The Government is determined to promote good mental health – to help people manage their illness and to get on with life. The aim of our mental health strategy,

“No Health without Mental Health”, is to prevent mental ill-health in the first place and to get people the help they need as early as possible.

“We have also invested an additional £400 million for talking therapies to help people build better lives for themselves: not just to manage their illness or its symptoms, but also to be able to get on with life with or without mental illness.”

Recovery is the term given to the personal approach which people take to regain control of their lives. In line with the Government’s mental health strategy “No Health without Mental Health”, the South London Recovery College uses this approach to enable people with lived experience of mental health conditions to become experts in the management of their own care.

Making recovery a reality requires fundamental changes to the relationship between service users and mental health professionals. All courses at the South West London Recovery College are produced and delivered by both mental health practitioner and peer trainers, in recognition of the value of both kinds of experience: one gained by professional training; the other by lived experience of mental illness.

Judy Wilson, Chief Executive of South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust, said: “Our Recovery College is at the forefront of developing mental health services which shift the focus away from purely therapeutic support towards an educational approach which aims to build people’s skills and confidence in managing their illness.

“While it is still early days, we are finding that the majority of those students who complete their courses have needed less contact with community mental health services on leaving the college.”

Professor Geoff Shepherd, Recovery Programme Lead at the Centre for Mental Health, said: “The College is important because it embodies a fundamental shift in thinking in mental health service provision to incorporate a jointly planned and jointly delivered educational approach to supporting people in their recovery.”

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**Notes to Editor:**

* South West London and St George’s Mental (SWLSTG) is one of six demonstration sites for the national Implementing Recovery Organisational Change (ImROC) project developed by the Centre for Mental Health and the NHS Confederation to support mental health services to become more recovery focused.
* Peer trainers are people with personal experience of using mental health services who are trained to deliver courses at the college.
* For further information on “No Health Without Mental Health” (February 2011), see: http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Mentalhealth/MentalHealthStrategy/index.htm
* Educating people about their conditions and how to manage them are important components of National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines and a core NICE standard of service user experience of adult mental health services.
* SWLSTG provides community and hospital psychiatric services, serving the London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Kingston, Richmond, Sutton and Merton.

The Trust also provides a range of specialist services – including for eating disorders and personality disorder – on a national basis.

* SWLSTG is applying to become a Foundation Trust. Information on becoming a member is available at: [www.swlstg-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.swlstg-tr.nhs.uk) and on the Trust Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/makinglifebettertogether](http://www.facebook.com/makinglifebettertogether)