



**Recovery  
Academy  
Ireland**

Promoting and Facilitating  
Addiction Recovery

# **An Evaluation of "Boxing Clever Cork": an integrated fitness, educational and substance use recovery programme**

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**Andrew Maher : Boxing Clever Cork programme participant**

# Mark Wright

## Introduction & Background

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- The Recovery Academy promotes and facilitates people who are in addiction and recovery.
- My role within Cork and Kerry region is to design, enhance and implement different programmes, groups and support structures for people who are in addiction and or recovery.
- I come from a recovery background myself, so I am well informed on the needs of people in addiction and early recovery.
- I would value myself on operating off a client centred perspective and due to my own personal experiences as a youth I value the professional relationships that I build with participants on the different programmes that I implement within the Cork community.



# Why “Boxing Clever”

- Boxing Clever came to Cork because I was implementing different fitness programmes and supporting people to get into different educational programmes.
- I loved how they brought together two elements that in my professional opinion are required for anyone in early stages of recovery or who are even contemplating getting into recovery (education and fitness)
- I decided that it would be better for the programme to bring in a partner and I approached Ria Breen from the CEBT who I have engaged with previously to see would they consider supporting the educational element for the programme.



Boxing Clever promotes recovery through fitness

# Strengths of Boxing Clever Cork

- Participants gain structure and routine for nine months.
- Upon completion the participants receive two educational QQIs.
- They become fitter, more confident, believe they are worth something and are integrated back into society where they would have previously been or felt excluded.
- They build their recovery capital, gain a community, self-esteem, self-worth and make friends who support, guide and encourage them each step of the way.
- The participants who would be using substances look at the people who are drug and alcohol free and say “if they can do it I can do it”.

# Strengths of Boxing Clever Cork

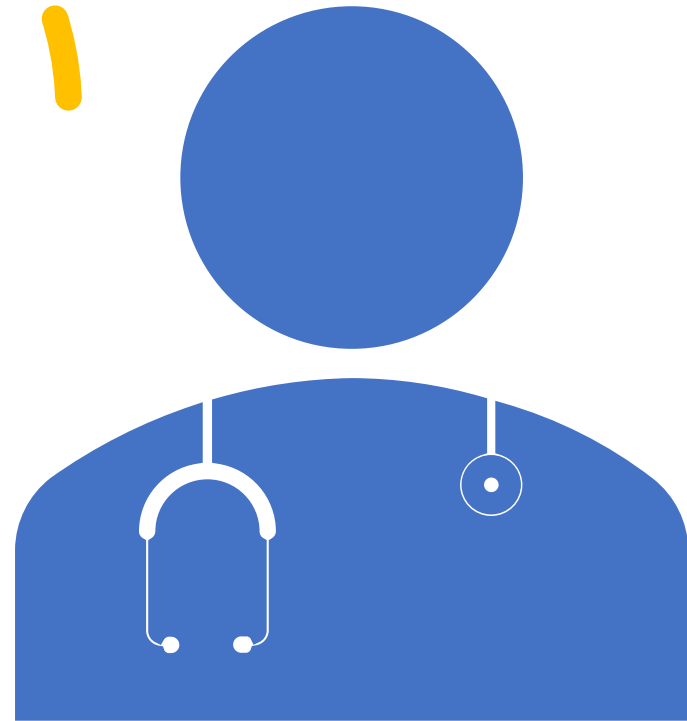
- It can be therapeutic taking part in different team building exercises, pro-socials, meditation, yoga while also getting out of your comfort zone!
- There is no better feeling coming into a programme and being around people that know exactly where you are coming from, support you with no judgement and can actually empathise with you and the struggle.
- The programme was changed from a 20 to 30 weeks operating off an academic calendar but I fill the mid-terms etc which makes it a 9-month programme.
- It is a pleasure to see participants come onto the programme with their head held down, no confidence or self-esteem and within a matter of weeks they are warming up the class and encouraging their peers.

# Challenges

- Some participants did arrive significantly under the influence which then meant they had to be removed from the programme for that day.
- Services not being used to this cohort of participants accessing their service and people within the service judging the participants.
- Bringing this cohort of people together, certain people were triggered, different situations were hard to manage due to housing issues, trauma and the stigma that people who are in addiction face each day.
- Organisations being territorial and not allowing participants engage on the programme.
- Literacy challenges.
- Financial difficulties with regards to transportation in getting to the programme.

# Professional quote: challenges

Because it was the first programme, it can be difficult to know what works and what fits. If the screening was bit more (comprehensive)..because you are trying to get the buy in. It's not for everybody. It's hard and its physical. Lateness as well.





# Achievements

- Out of the 24 participants last year, 11 graduated and 5 have now moved onto the Educational Development Partnership Programme (5-year plan) which is now an option for people graduating from the Boxing Clever Cork programme.
- It is about giving people a chance to succeed by supporting them to get an education while getting fit. Maybe then they do not have to continue to access residential treatment services!



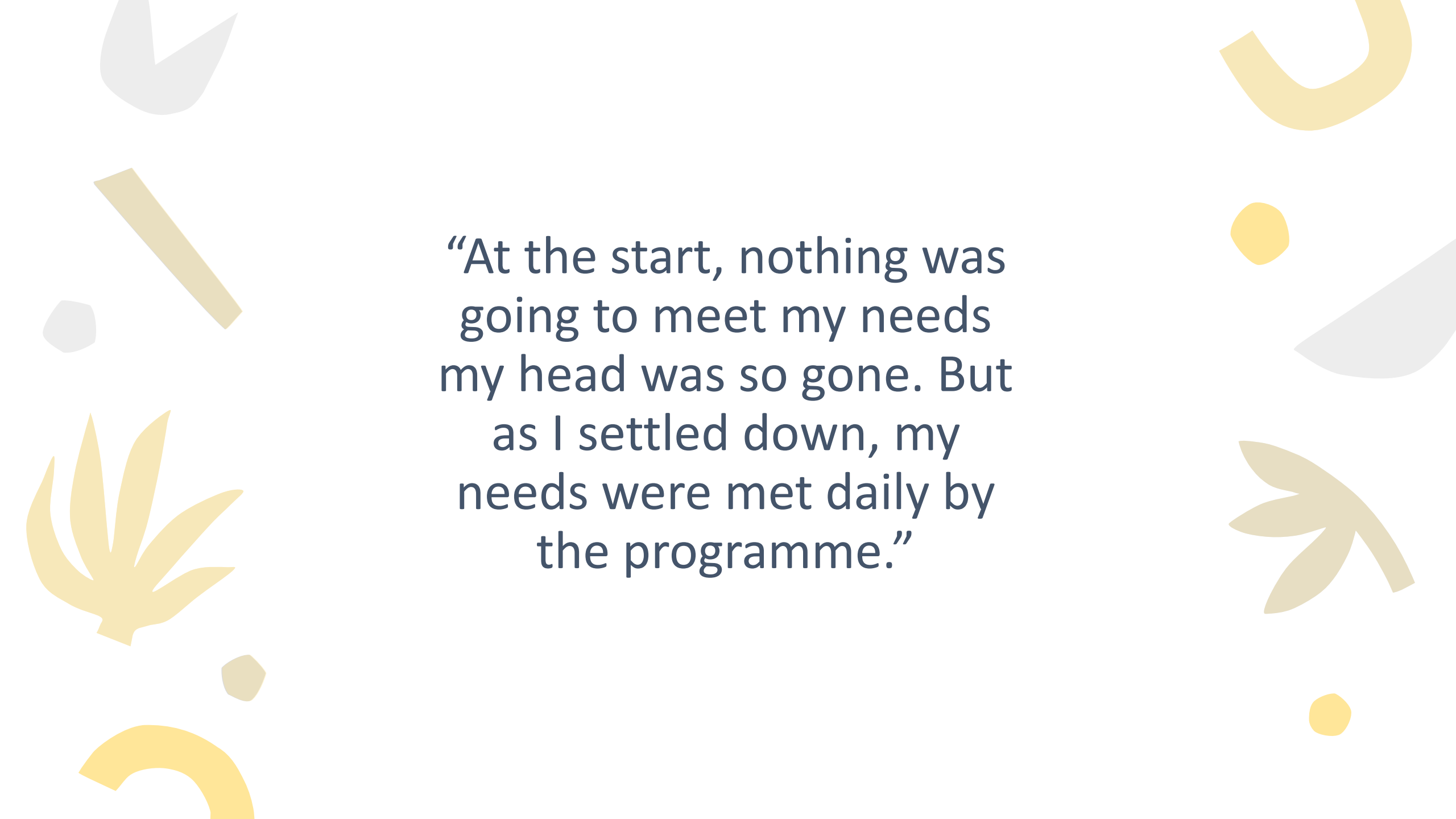
# Dr Rebekah Brennan

## Evaluation process

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- Signifies the commitment of CLDATF to this programme.
- Provides an evidence base for future iterations of the programme.
- Methodology: World Café (n=12) and qualitative interviews with professionals and service users (n=10).
- Presently at data analysis stage.
- Preliminary findings are overwhelmingly positive from programme participants.
- Professional participants were able to identify some opportunities for development which were taken on board for the second iteration.



The background features several abstract, organic shapes in shades of grey and yellow. On the left side, there is a grey leaf-like shape at the top, a yellow diagonal bar, a grey irregular shape, a yellow fan-like shape, and a yellow curved shape at the bottom. On the right side, there is a yellow curved shape at the top, a yellow circle, a grey curved shape, a yellow fan-like shape, and a yellow circle at the bottom.

“At the start, nothing was going to meet my needs my head was so gone. But as I settled down, my needs were met daily by the programme.”

Boxing Clever Cork saved my life... the physical aspect of it. When I got sober, I hated being sober. Anyone that knows me knows I never wanted to stop taking drugs at all. I only gave them up because I was backed into a corner. Don't get me wrong – I don't miss them today. I started doing things that I had to do.





Getting the results from my QQI course.. I got two distinctions. I was happy...I am going into the Youth and Community Work course in UCC. I'm so grateful for it. This is a chance to redeem myself.



# Professional observations

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Unbelievable watching them come in develop, grow, their fitness levels go up, battling their way through education when they are detoxing is outstanding.

I would like to see this run in every town. Do I think it needs to be expensive? No, I don't. We can use the boxing clubs. Boxing is a working class sport. I would like to see community based (iterations).

Their feedback about the positive effects on themselves and their connections with likeminded people (was huge).



Andrew  
Maher :  
Boxing Clever  
Cork  
participant

Personal testimonial





# Thank you for your time and attention

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Final evaluation report due at year end.

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The second iteration of Boxing Clever Cork is now successfully running.

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Any queries or comments please contact the below

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