

PUNJABI SMART RECOVERY PROGRAMME

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INTRODUCTION

The Addictions Directorate in CNWL operates within the London Boroughs of Hounslow, Hillingdon, Brent, and Ealing, which are home to culturally diverse South Asian communities. It was felt that setting up a psychosocial group for Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu speakers would provide valuable support for our service users.

SMART Recovery is a science based programme to help people manage their recovery from any type of addictive behaviour. This includes addictive behaviour with substances such as alcohol, nicotine, or drugs, or compulsive behaviours such as gambling, sex, eating, shopping, self-harming, etc.

SMART stands for Self Management and Recovery Training. Founded in 1994 in the United States, SMART Recovery has grown into a global network of face-to-face and online self-help meetings supporting people in recovery. It operates as a not-for-profit organisation in many countries, including the US, UK, Canada, and Australia.

To extend this support to Punjabi-speaking and South Asian communities, Dr Sharma and Shiv established an online weekly **Punjabi SMART Recovery** meeting, which was launched in December 2024 and is delivered virtually via Zoom and is accessible worldwide. **The purpose is to address the lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate mutual aid groups for Punjabi-speaking individuals.**

AIMS

- Establish a culturally adapted SMART Recovery group for Punjabi speakers.
- Increase accessibility to mutual aid for South Asian communities.
- Promote bilingual facilitation and inclusivity.
- Track attendance, engagement, and participant feedback.
- Foster a safe, peer-led, co-produced and co-designed space for recovery and reflection.

METHODS

- A weekly Zoom meeting was set up which takes place every Sunday from 8 am (UK time). This is equivalent to 12.30pm / 1.30pm in Indian Standard Time.
- This day was chosen as Sunday tends to be a day of rest in India, the UK and across the globe.
- It was initially facilitated by trained SMART Recovery facilitators Dr Sharma and Shiv who are fluent in Punjabi and English as well as familiar with other South Asian languages such as Hindi and Urdu.
- Topics are drawn from SMART Recovery resources and culturally relevant themes.
- Reflections and feedback collected after each session.

SMART RECOVERY'S 4-POINT PROGRAMME AND TOOLS USED

SMART Recovery is based on a practical four-point programme that supports people in recovery from addictive behaviours and substance use disorders. **The programme offers culturally adaptable tools and strategies that respect family values, community connections, and personal responsibility, which are central within Punjabi and South Asian communities.**

1. Building and Maintaining Motivation

- Supports individuals to strengthen their motivation for change by exploring personal values, family responsibilities, and long-term goals, helping them move towards healthier and more meaningful lives.

2. Coping with Urges and Cravings

- Helps individuals understand cravings, triggers, and urges, including social and cultural pressures, while developing practical strategies for relapse prevention.

3. Managing Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviours

- Grounded in Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) and the work of Dr Albert Ellis, this point supports people to manage unhelpful thoughts and emotional responses in a self-empowering and stigma-free way.

4. Living a Balanced Life

- Encourages individuals to rebuild balance by focusing on wellbeing, family relationships, community involvement, and purposeful living beyond addiction.

SMART Recovery approaches and tools: Motivational interviewing, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), CBA (Cost-Benefit Analysis), ABC(DE) Model, HOV (Hierarchy of Values), Hula Hoop Tool (Locus of Control), STOPP (Urge Surfing), DISARM (Destructive Imagery and Self-Talk Awareness), Exchange Vocabulary, Mindfulness & Grounding (5-4-3-2-1, Box Breathing), Broken Record Technique, etc.

OUTCOMES

- Attendance has grown to regular engagement from 5–8 attendees.
- Participants from diverse backgrounds: UK, India, South Africa, Ghana, USA.
- First female participant joined in April 2025.
- **One participant, Harry, successfully completed the full recovery pathway: medically assisted alcohol withdrawal and the Recovery Day Programme at ARC Hounslow before joining Punjabi SMART Recovery. He has subsequently trained as a peer facilitator and is now co-hosting the weekly Punjabi SMART Recovery meeting.**
- International milestone: A participant who joins close to the Mumbai region of India completed his SMART Facilitator Training and will be setting up his own meeting strengthening global peer support.
- Participant feedback highlighted the space as “kind and welcoming,” “seva — service to our community”, and “a place to feel lighter.”
- On 14th December 2025, Punjabi SMART Recovery celebrated its one year anniversary.
- On the first Sunday of each month, this group is supported with a community of practice framework.

Addiction Recovery Support Group
ਨਸ਼ਾ ਰਿਕਵਰੀ ਮਦਦ ਸਮੂਹ

Weekly online meeting every Sunday @ 8 am London (UK) Time = 12.30pm / 1:30 p.m. India Standard Time.
ਹਫਤਾਵਾਰੀ ਔਨਲਾਈਨ ਮੀਟਿੰਗ ਹਰ ਐਤਵਾਰ @ 8:00 ਵਜੇ ਲੰਡਨ (ਯੂਕੇ) ਸਮਾਂ ਦੁਪਹਿਰ 12.30 / 1:30 ਵਜੇ ਭਾਰਤ ਦਾ ਮਿਆਰੀ ਸਮਾਂ।

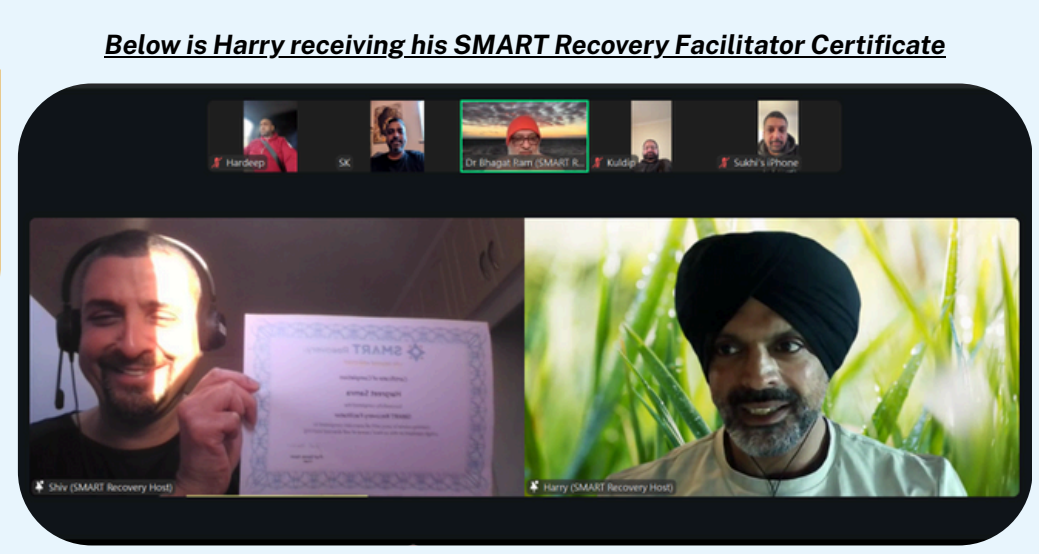
Zoom Meeting ID: 821 8799 4116
Passcode: 452367

SMART Recovery is a free mutual aid group program for those who want to abstain from any addictive behavior, whether substance or activity.
ਸਮਾਰਟ ਰਿਕਵਰੀ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਲੋਕਾਂ ਲਈ ਇੱਕ ਮੁਫਤ ਆਪਸੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਸਮੂਹ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਕਿਸੇ ਵੀ ਨਸ਼ਾ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਵਿਚਾਰ ਤੋਂ ਪਰਹੇਜ਼ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ, ਭਾਵੇਂ ਉਹ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਜਾਂ ਗਤੀਵਿਧੀ ਹੋਵੇ।

You are in control of your recovery. With SMART Recovery, people find the power within themselves to change and lead a healthy and fulfilling life.
ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀ ਰਿਕਵਰੀ ਦੇ ਨਿਰੀਤਰਤ ਵਿੱਚ ਹੋ। SMART ਰਿਕਵਰੀ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ, ਲੋਕ ਆਪਣੇ ਅੰਦਰ ਬਦਲਣ ਅਤੇ ਇੱਕ ਸਿਹਤਮੰਦ ਅਤੇ ਸੰਪੂਰਨ ਜੀਵਨ ਜੀਉਣ ਦੀ ਸ਼ਕਤੀ ਲੱਭਦੇ ਹਨ।

"The Punjabi SMART recovery meeting have helped me voice some of the specific cultural issues faced in pre and post recovery. The stigma around addiction is different in different cultures thus in this group I found a real understanding of Punjabi attitudes in relation to substances. Being able to share complex family dynamics and interactions and them being recognised by others made me feel included and understood. Sharing with a diverse audience showed me that my experiences were not unique but common amongst others."

"I have used Punjabi Smart for over a year, its great to have a place to talk about things that are generally taboo within Asian culture. Also to be able to discuss the caveats of this problem and the stigma that comes with it is invaluable and you can't get anything similar anywhere else."

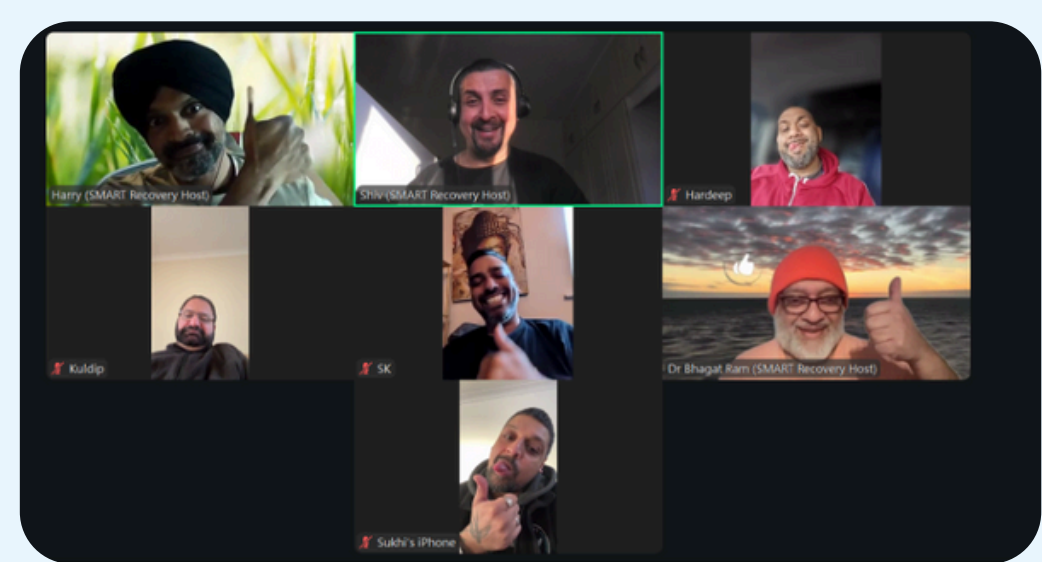


Below is Harry receiving his SMART Recovery Facilitator Certificate

"Thank you Shiv and Dr Ram for putting this together, it reinforces that change is not scary, the tools, explanations and discussions are something I look forward to every week."

"The tools within SMART recovery aren't just tips they are a way of living a balanced life!"

"Punjabi SMART meeting allow me to be alongside people who understand my cultural background without shame and guilt."



"Punjabi SMART has reached a number of south asian communities across the world all coming together to focus on their recovery."



LESSONS LEARNT

- Cultural adaptation and bilingual delivery are key to engagement.
- Peer-led, inclusive spaces foster trust and openness.
- SMART Recovery's evidence-based tools are effective across cultures when adapted for literacy and context.
- Facilitators can balance professional roles with mutual aid ethos.
- Ongoing reflection, flexibility, and community feedback are essential for growth.
- The programme has become a model for culturally sensitive, community-rooted recovery support.