

WHAT ARE PAID MENTAL HEALTH PEER SUPPORT WORKERS?

Peer Support Workers are employed to draw on their personal (lived) experience of mental health challenges, recovery and other shared experiences, like being a military veteran, to support mental health service users or carers. They work in a range of places including the NHS and voluntary sector. There is a lot of diversity in what they do for example group or individual support, online or in-person.

WHAT DO PEER SUPPORT WORKERS DO?

Every team is different, these are some examples

USE THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE

To support service users and find strategies together to help with recovery

CHANGE THE APPROACH

Challenge stigmatising attitudes about service users in teams and offer recovery focused ways of working

INCREASE CHOICE AND CONTROL

Advocate for service users to help them get the support they want and need

BUILDING TRUST

By using lived experience, listening and prioritising service user needs

EMPOWERING

Service users to find what works for them

SUPPORT THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCES

Such as being a parent or sharing a diagnosis

BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH COMMUNITY

For example, going to leisure centres, community venues & voluntary work

CULTURALLY INFORMED SUPPORT

Run support groups for service users from similar backgrounds to themselves

WORK WITH NON-PEER COLLEAGUES

Co-run groups or visit service users together

PEER SUPPORT WAYS OF WORKING

INSPIRING HOPE

By showing that recovery is possible

PERSON-CENTRED & FLEXIBLE

Adapting support to what service users find helpful

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

THE ROLE

KEEP PEER SUPPORT UNIQUE

Through clearly defined, structured but flexible roles. Taking on too many tasks outside of the role risks losing mutuality in relationships and its grass roots origins.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER PEER SUPPORT WORKERS

Group supervision and spaces to reflect can help improve practice and prevent isolation.

BE PRO-PEER

Whole team and organisational peer support training and awareness can help with understanding, valuing and working collaboratively with peer support workers.

VALUING PEER SUPPORT

Throughout organisations enables effective policies, guidelines and funding. Supportive colleagues, who understand what peer support workers do, helps them integrate into teams.

COMMISSIONERS

CAREER PROGRESSION & DEVELOPMENT

Sufficient and progressive pay with clear routes for career development ensures peer support workers can remain in their roles and that peer support is a genuine career

ACCESSIBLE ROLES

Support with flexible working arrangements and reasonable adjustments.

TRAINING

Should include practical skills for the role, managing boundaries when sharing lived experience and be relevant to the specific service they work in.

GOOD SUPPORT AND SUPERVISION

Regular supervision, with input into what is discussed, and mentorship or line-management ideally from staff in senior peer roles.

ORGANISATIONS

CO-PRODUCTION

Ensure peer support workers have a voice at all levels of organisations, for example, through high level roles and co-producing relevant policies and strategies.

PEER SUPPORT POLICIES & FUNDING

Roles should be in workforce planning and policies to develop and retain secure jobs, ensuring the future of peer support in services.

RECOVERY-FOCUSED SERVICES

Develop services that are recovery-orientated and value holistic support, personal choice and lived experience knowledge

This infographic is based on our research papers, please use the QR codes to read them in full.



Understanding the barriers and facilitators to delivering peer support effectively in England: a qualitative interview study



The effectiveness, implementation, and experiences of peer support approaches for mental health: a systematic umbrella review



Understanding the roles and experiences of mental health peer support workers in England: a qualitative study