

Peer Support in Mental Health Services



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**Just imagine that
you are**

Frightened
Alone

Unable to explain how you feel

People treat you differently

Unable to believe that you will get through this

You can't trust your self ...



And then you meet someone who has been through it and
has survived, in fact they are living a meaningful,





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So this is peer support?

People explicitly drawing on their own lived experiences to support others

People who have 'been there' and moved on in their lives – so they embody 'recovery' and convey messages of hope

People who have found ways out of similar crises and so bring experience and confidence to support others

People who know how important it is to have someone who believes in you and takes you seriously and gives you time and space to find your feet





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the words of peer support workers...

*They know I'm not the expert, they know we're
at us, both trying to beat the same demons,
and we're trying to work things through together"*

*I said to her "I've got my own experience of
mental illness, I've been on the ward myself and
on," and with that she sort of jumped up and
gave me this huge big bear hug"*

*People who are going through it will look at you
and if to say "you do actually know where I'm*





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Today ...

Bringing peer support into services

What difference does it make?

How does it make a difference?

Keeping true to core principles

Peer support around the world

Common challenges and some solutions





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Intentional Peer Support

employment of people with lived
experience of mental health conditions
mental health services

role includes explicitly *drawing on*
own experiences to support
others going through similar things

work as volunteers, interns or
employees, but job description
should include

that they have lived experience.





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What difference does peer support make?

Reviews of evidence suggest that
adding psws to teams

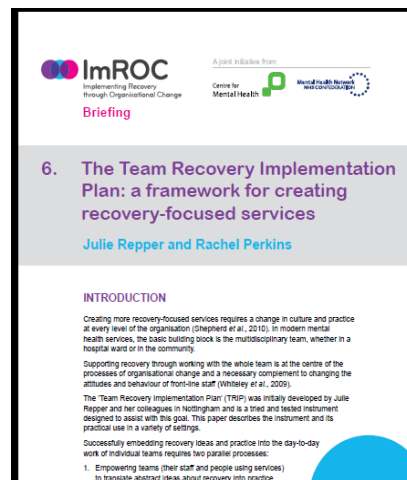
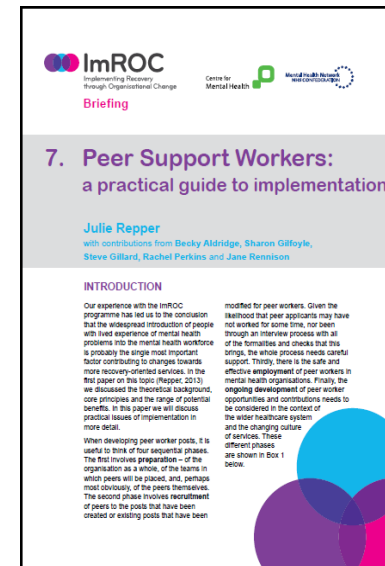
a) does no harm

b) improves lives of people
supported

c) influences culture

d) cuts costs

d) improves lives of peers





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Impact on the lives of people supported

Improved empowerment – greater belief in, and ability to, overcome difficulties, feel more understood and accepted

More hopeful - inspired by meeting people who have similar experiences and people who have overcome similar challenges

Reduction in service use, longer community tenure, fewer crises

Cost benefits (recoup cost of salary 3:1)





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How?

"I want to be able to show people that however low you go down, there is a way up, and there is a way out"

"I just want to help people kind of realise what's important for them, not what's important for me"

"The thing I try to install is, no matter where you are, if you want to get somewhere else you can, there's always a route to get to where you want to be"





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Peer Support can change the lives of peer support workers

Increased self-esteem, confidence empowerment.

Benefits of being employed (financial, social, status,
structure) combined with the supervision and safety
of a job in which they are free to disclose their
difficulties

Progress personal recovery:
Skills learnt on the job aid their
own recovery

SAFE **EMPOWERED**
RESPECTED **SUPPORTED**
LOVED **FREE**



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How ?

First and foremost I find it a really fulfilling job, I look forward to work every day. Planning my own diary and supporting people in what they do”

work hard to keep myself well now, I've got a reason to look after myself better”

When you're driving to visit somebody and you're helping them to work towards their goals and you just think, how cool is this? I can't believe I get paid for it!”



s made a real big difference to me you know, just contributing something to them. You know and hopefully changing their lives for the



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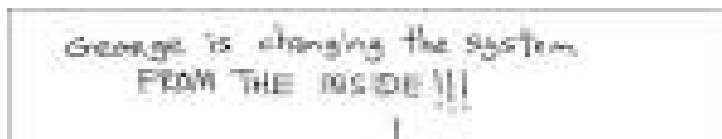
Peer Support can change the system

Communication: help providers and patients to understand each other better

Enhance provision: complement work of other team members by added skills in community inclusion and development, coaching and problem solving

Change staff attitudes: inspire belief in Recovery

Break down barriers between 'us' and 'them'; challenge assumptions.



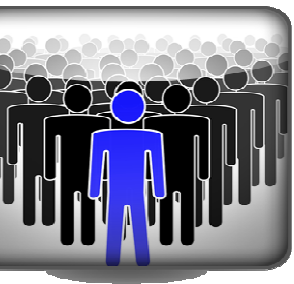


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But there are all kinds of challenges...

Different roles, definitions, codes of conduct, job descriptions,
organisations, training, supervision .

Risk of becoming socialised into the 'normal way of working'

Ambiguity about relationships, boundaries, disclosure &
management of personal information

Different factions forming and stories are developing about
various forms of peer support ...





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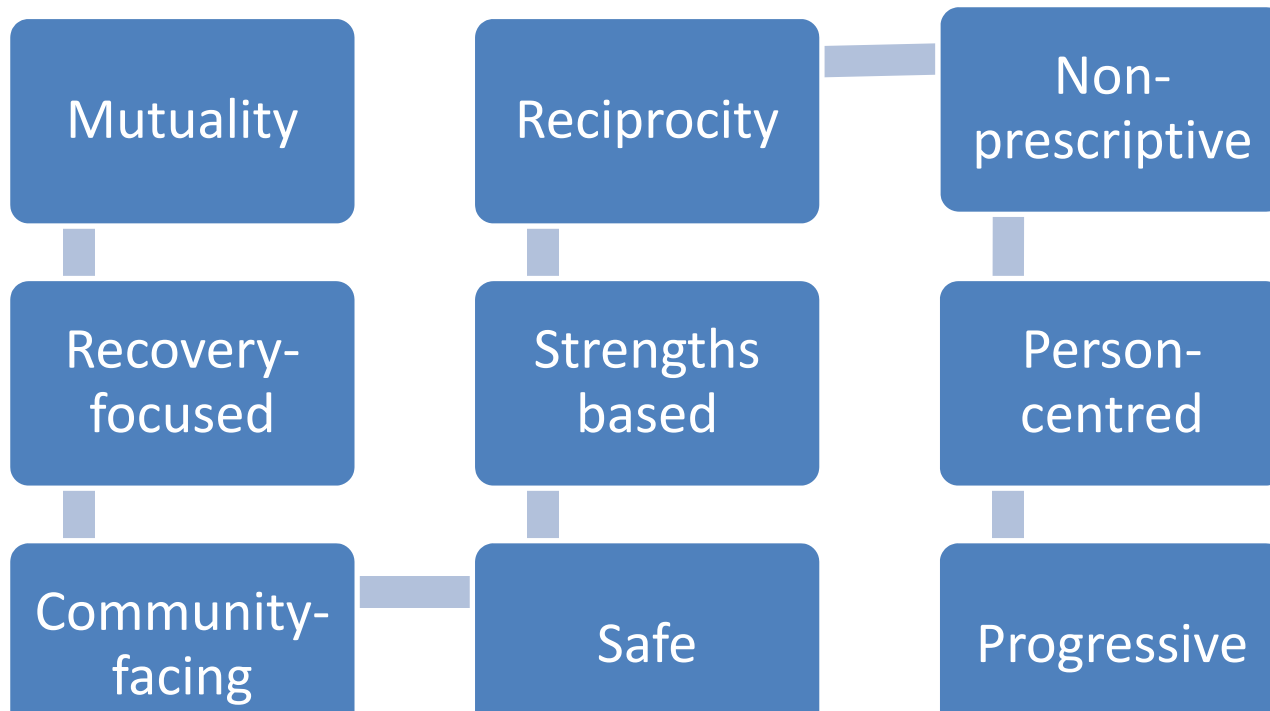
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Sticking to the defining characteristics of peer support



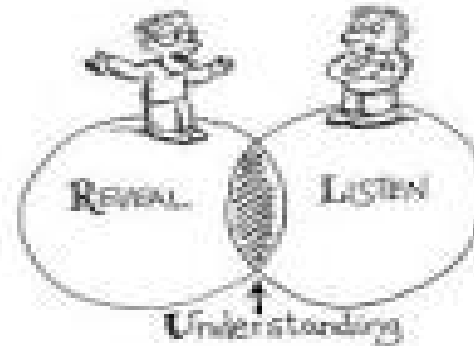
Mutuality

This refers to sharing experiences:

- Demonstrating that they share similar experiences – fear, guilt, feeling overwhelmed...
- Sharing coping strategies – things that have worked for them

All done with care – a fundamental part of training:

- For the benefit of the other person, not themselves
- Nothing said 'in secret'
- Judge what to say, how to say it, how much to say, when and to whom





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Recovery Focused

Every interaction needs to

- Inspire *hope*
- Enable person to take back *control* – develop understanding and/or self management skills
- Facilitate access to *opportunities* to do the things they want to do – identify goals, take steps to achieve them, find the community resources and supports to





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Community Facing



Peer workers often know the local community well and need to constantly develop their knowledge of resources, activities and facilities that can support people to regain roles and relationships.

Success is not judged by the quality of the relationship between peer and person so much as by the quality and contribution that the person can make to improving their roles and relationships within their communities.



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Reciprocity

is refers to learning from each
iving and taking in the supportive
ationship



though peer worker is generally further ahead in
eir recovery journey, they can

Acknowledge when they hear a good idea, coping strategy,
place to feel included...

Learn new skills by 'doing with'- sewing, music, sport...

Show that they are not frightened by 'big emotions'



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Strengths Based

natural
Strengths abilities
gifts Qualities
Core talents

Rather than focusing on deficits, disabilities, needs and dysfunctions, peer support workers build on strengths, resilience, assets and skills.

They build skills in identifying strengths which might not be acknowledged by the person, and then use these to build confidence, identify new goals and progress towards them.



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Safe



This refers to the safety of both the peer support worker and the person they are supporting.

Emotional, social and psychological safety all need to be considered.

A sound code of conduct is required, and this needs to be understood by peers.

Since peers share their own experiences they often hear more than other staff about traumatic experiences and about high risk



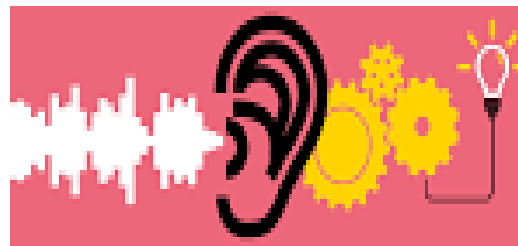
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Non-Directive



Peer workers are trained to use active listening as their primary tool.

They may use a problem solving approach and they might express their own views and experiences but they are not there to give advice or tell people what to do.

People can find their own solutions and understandings given time within a supportive and interested relationship.



Person-Centred

Every individual is different and it is important for peer workers to avoid assuming that they can understand others solely with reference to their own experience.

All support needs to be based on the individual situation and the individual's goals and supports available to them.

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Progressive

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It is tempting for peer workers to fall into a friendship rather than a professional role. However, friends are very different and need to be enabled through the support rather than provided by peer workers.

It can be helpful to set a time limit for peer support so that both parties are aware of the need to move forward and work towards goals outside the service



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around the World

Peer support is the biggest – and growing - new role in the US and the UK.

Peer support workers are developing across Europe (we have trained peers in Italy, Belgium, offered support for training in Sweden, Norway, France, Switzerland)

Also developing in less developed countries like Uganda, India, and in Japan, Hong Kong and Asia where we have offered support and training.

Peer workers have developed separately in Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

There are national accreditation systems in Australia and New Zealand and US. Local accreditation in UK and in Italy.



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Critical questions in developing peer support

Where will they be employed - what sort of services and what kind of roles?

What training will they be offered – a nationally accredited training course or locally determined?

What sort of career pathway?

What sort of support and supervision will be provided?

What will you do about other staff with lived experience – are they peers too?





Finally ...

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It is well worth investing in Peer support

They really do drive change Recovery focused change in services
and improve the experience and outcomes of people using services

They are not a cheap option



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Thank you

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