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Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

HOUSING FIRST

Ending Homelessness

Peer Support Workers

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Organized by



TURNING POINT SCOTLAND

Peer Support Workers

What is Peer Support?

- Peer Support is a relationship of mutual support where people with similar life experiences offer each other support especially as they move through difficult or challenging experiences.

(Smith and Bradstreet, Scottish Recovery Network)

Types of Peer Support:

- Peer worker roles – formal but least common
- Mutual support and self help
- Naturally occurring peer support – least formal but most common

What is a Peer Support Worker?

- 'Peer Support Workers' are people who have personal experience of mental health problems/ addictions and or homelessness who are employed and trained to offer support to others.

Why is Peer Support Different?

- Peer Support Workers are able to draw from:
 - Experiential knowledge – of own recovery, experience of services and receiving support, knowledge of differing services and support providers (formal, self help etc)
 - Experiential expertise – are able to transform this knowledge into a skill for supporting others to consider, achieve and sustain recovery.

Benefits of having a peer supporter

- Reduces feelings of fear and self-stigma
- Enables development of life skills
- Gives control and helps develop new strategies for recovery
- Someone really understands the 'bad days'
- Increased self-awareness leads to greater likelihood of change
- Helps people accept what's happening in their life
- Puts difficulties into context & encourages new ways of looking at things

Benefits of being a peer supporter

- Grow in confidence & experience enhanced recovery
- Participate in formal training & learn new skills
- Increased awareness of own beliefs, values & attitudes
- Opportunity to share experiences and knowledge with others who might benefit from them
- Builds self-esteem
- Provides a true sense of worth
- Satisfaction in giving back to the community

Peer support and recovery

- Hope and belief underpin recovery
- Choice and control are given to the individual
- Building recovery capital, encouraging participation
- Strengths based approach to validating experience
- Living a satisfying and fulfilling life in the presence or absence of symptoms
- The recovery process has ups and downs

Introduction of Peer Support Worker to Turning Point Scotland

Scoping Exercise



Project Renewal 'In Homes Now' – Peer Counsellors



Turning Point Scotland 'Housing First' – Peer Support Workers



Tailored induction/
training



TPS – 'Best Practice
Guide'



Recovery
Activists

Advantages of peer support:

Service User	Service	Peer Support Worker
Inspirational	Increase in skill pool of staff	Increased confidence, competence & efficacy
Positive examples of recovery	Break down 'them & us' culture	Contributes to enhanced recovery & stability
Barriers to engaging with support reduced	Improved involvement & meaningful engagement	Using past experiences for positive outcomes
	Reduces stigma	
	Teams more mindful of recovery principles	

What being a Peer Support Worker means to me:

'I chose to become a peer support worker as I wanted to give something back to the community and to work with individuals with a similar background to mine, as I felt that by showing people that no matter how long you have lived a chaotic lifestyle, people do recover'

TPS Peer Support Worker

Challenges regarding implementation of Peer Support Worker role:

- Lack of understanding regarding boundaries and confidentiality
- Risk of dual relationships and role conflict with service users they know and/ or can relate to
- Limited or no previous work experience
- Becoming unwell and/ or relapse
- No experience of handling work related stress

Supporting the Peer Support Worker:

- Minimum of 2 years abstinence
- Induction, fortnightly supervision, bite-sized training, team building, team development days
- Clear management boundaries, support from colleagues, other workers, external sources encouraged/ maintained
- Open door policy – approachable line management
- Supportive culture in work place for all staff – time out if needed.
- Time to unload and reflect at end of day if possible.
- Service user feedback

For more information:

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