



Information about Peer Support
at Future Pathways



Contents

Welcome	3
About Peer Support	3
The different parts of Peer Support	4
The values of Peer Support	6
Peer Support at Future Pathways	9
What the sessions will be like	10
Taking Part	11
Contact	11

Welcome

We are introducing Peer Support at Future Pathways. This booklet tells you more about:

- what Peer Support is
- what Peer Support will be like at Future Pathways
- how to take part in Peer Support sessions

About Peer Support

Peer Support is a way of connecting with people who have gone through similar things in life. People can come together to socialise, learn and support each other. The special thing about Peer Support is that everyone is equal.

Peer Support can happen in a lot of different ways like:

- social groups
- learning sessions
- one-to-one catch ups

Peer Support is not about fixing problems. It is about being with other people who might understand, and feeling heard and accepted.

Peer Support can help people feel less alone and more hopeful about the future. It can be good to spend time with people who have been through similar experiences. And it can help people feel part of a community.

The different parts of Peer Support

There are 4 important parts that all fit together to make up Peer Support:

- Relationship of equals
- Shared lived experience
- Supportive relationship
- Intentional space

You can find out more about each of these below.

Relationship of equals

This means people in the group treat each other how they would like to be treated. No one is better, more powerful or more important than anyone else. It is about listening, sharing ideas and helping each other out.

Shared lived experience

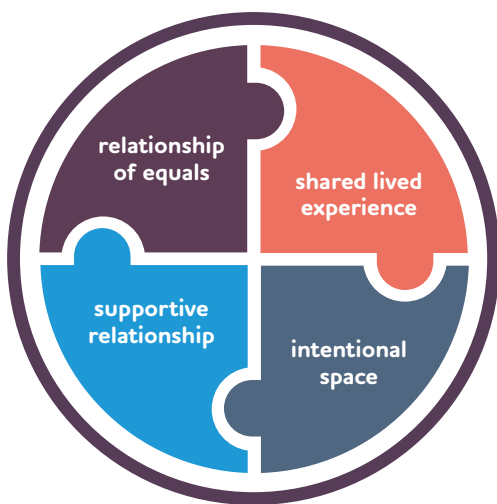
This means that you have been through similar things in life as someone else. You might understand what another person is feeling or has experienced because you have been there too. This can create a bond because you can relate to each other. And you can share your stories of what helped get you through the tough times.

Supportive relationship

A supportive relationship is about having people who will share and listen without judgement. This can help people to feel safer and more understood. It also means giving back when someone else comes to you for support. It is about being a kind and respectful group member.

Intentional space

This means creating a place that helps you feel comfortable, included and safe. 'Intentional' means that the organiser of the group plans carefully to try to meet your needs. For example, making sure the room is comfortable and accessible by public transport. It also means that when we are in the group, we focus on Peer Support and our own growth. We try not to get distracted.



The values of Peer Support

In Peer Support, we will follow a set of values called HEAR ME. Each letter stands for a different value:

- H** - Hope
- E** - Experience
- A** - Authenticity
- R** - Responsibility
- M** - Mutuality
- E** - Empowerment

In the next few pages, we will describe the values a bit more.

Hope

We believe that positive change is possible and that:

- We are all different and have our own hopes, dreams and passions
- We have the potential to be all that we can be
- The peer relationship offers a pathway to feel hope and learn new ways to manage hard times
- It is possible to learn and grow from challenges and setbacks

Experience

We believe that everyone's journey is different and that:

- We are all experts in our own experience
- There are many roads to recovery and different ways of understanding experiences
- Sharing experiences can motivate us to change and grow
- Peers use their lived experience to encourage and support other people's journeys

Authenticity

We believe being authentic is about being true to ourselves and that:

- Empathy and kindness are at the heart of the peer relationship
- Peer Support relationships are ones that are open, honest and mutual
- Peer Support is about building connections
- Connections can help people to trust and share their wisdom

Responsibility

We believe wellness and positive change involves taking responsibility and that:

- We can support people to make changes by being with people, rather than doing things for people
- Peers should nurture and develop the values of Peer Support
- Peers are responsible for their own learning and development
- Peers will challenge stigma and discrimination



Mutuality

Mutuality means that everyone benefits from the relationship. When we have mutuality, we can:

- Share learning
- Grow respect and trust
- Value each other's experience and contribution
- All gain from making the relationship work

We believe that mutuality is core to Peer Support and that:

- We are connected to each other and all have something to contribute
- We can develop connection by sharing ideas, learning and experiences
- We can have respectful conversations about what helps us
- Everyone has a responsibility for making it work

Empowerment

We believe that empowerment means being in the driving seat and that:

- Each person is in charge of their own journey
- We learn together
- We can use our own strengths and skills
- We can also use the strengths and skills of the group
- Trying new things and challenging ourselves are essential—they help us to grow and change
- Having power and control comes from being aware our own needs, making choices and taking responsibility for finding solutions

Peer Support at Future Pathways

Future Pathways offers a range of Peer Support activities both online and in person across the UK. Sometimes it will be a social event and a chat. Other times, we will get guest speakers in to teach us something we are interested in.

In the future, we will invite people who are registered with Future Pathways to help run sessions or teach the group about something they are passionate about. We will let you know when these opportunities are available, and you can always speak to the Peer Support Lead about your ideas.

There is never any pressure to share your lived experience when you come to a Peer Support group. It is just about spending time with each other, connecting, meeting new people and building supportive relationships.

Peer Support does not replace your Support Coordination or your access to other services. Peer Support is an extra opportunity to add to your existing network of support.

What the sessions will be like

Peer Support is not group therapy or a place to focus on the past. Sometimes, we might talk about what has happened to us or share a difficult experience with the group. But it is important that this is done in a way where everyone feels safe and comfortable. For example, by warning people about certain topics before you mention them, or by not going into lots of detail.

Peer Support sessions will be led by a facilitator. A Peer Support facilitator is someone who uses their lived experience to support others. The Peer Support facilitator will run the groups to make sure everyone feels included. The wellbeing of the group will always be at the heart of what we do. If you feel that you need extra support after a session, or if it has brought up difficult feelings for you, you can always chat to the facilitator afterwards. They can point you in the right direction for support such as helplines or local services.

If the facilitator feels like some topics might be hard for others to listen to, they might guide the conversation towards being about focusing on the future.

The facilitator will also help to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard. During sessions, we will balance sharing and talking with listening to others. The facilitator's role is to make sure this balance feels good for everyone.

Taking part

We will share details of new events with everyone registered with Future Pathways (including those on the waitlist). We will do this by post and by email. We will also share information on our website, in our newsletter and on social media.

Contact

If you have any questions about Peer Support, contact Mary. Mary is our Peer Support Lead.

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