Peer Support Changes Lives Event Summary Report
27th March 2018, Edinburgh

The event was arranged as an opportunity **for peer support practitioners** to come together to:

- Increase our understanding of peer support and its value.
- Share learning and techniques.
- Have increased understanding of how to use peer support.
- Make links with each other that may lead to more joint work and in-depth learning.

Peer support is a way of giving and receiving help (knowledge, emotional assistance or practical help) by understanding others' situations through **shared personal experience**. It's different from other types of support because the source of support is a person with **similar relevant experience**.
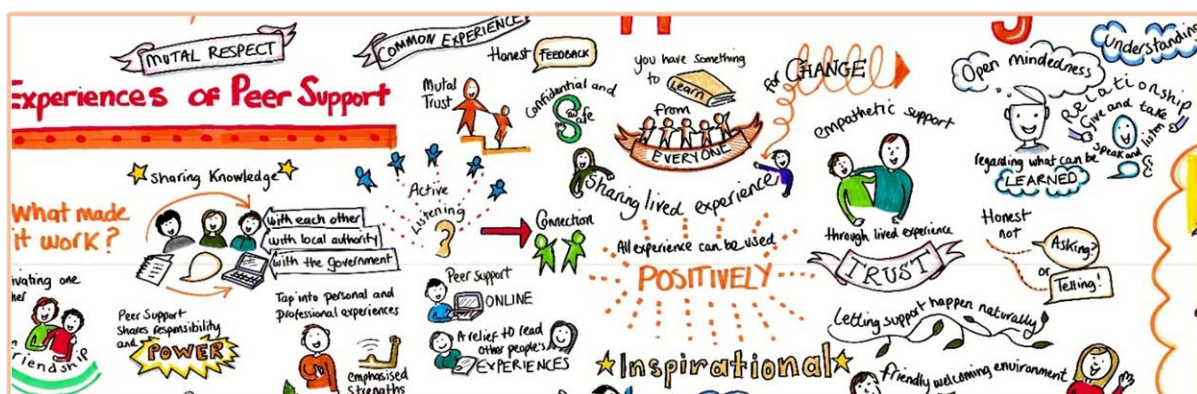
Who attended..........We were pleased to see practitioners attending from across Scotland and representing a diverse range of people and user groups. The event modelled peer support techniques at every opportunity, acknowledging we are all peers, working in this field. Participants shared knowledge, experience, contacts, questions, ideas and insights

What we understand peer support is, its value

Participants discussed what had worked for them when they had used peer support. Key aspects were identified like trust, mutual respect, a confidential-safe space, honest feedback, being 'asked and not told' and a connection with others who understood, were open minded and were non-judgmental.

Peer support is real collaborative working in which all experience can be used positively. Some discussions revealed how it has the potential to change power in traditional support relationships.

What were the outcomes? The impact and value of peer support?

People's passion for the process, value and impact of peer support came across in the conversations. Important outcomes about having a voice, being listened to and being understood were discussed. Participants revealed how peer support leads to **all kinds of outcomes** for people as they are more confident and skilled, less isolated, and have more capacity to achieve their personal goals.

Sharing learning and techniques

Participants brought lots of 'how do you' questions in terms of building capacity in their peer support practice. Such as:

- 'How to' raise awareness, engage with peers, improve referral pathways and break down barriers for people to get over the threshold to access peer support.
- 'How to' improve processes such as recruitment, training, support, facilitation and group work to sustain peer support/ers.
- 'How to' ensure self-care and sharing stories and lived experience in the most empowering way.

The event provided lots of opportunity for these kind of questions to be answered from the activities, conversations and within the workshops:

East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership presented information about how their peer mentor model works within a Health and Social Care Partnership, the effectiveness of this and the benefits of collaborative working.

Participants said what they are taking away from this workshop….

- *Fresh perspective on how Health & Social Care Partnership can work more creatively in delivering SDS & services in the community, as a more person centred way, cost effective, more responsive while also addressing care and well-being of H & SCP staff. Win-win outcomes.*
- *That councils can produce different models.*
- *Inspiring and so positive in their approach.*
- *Evidence of a successful peer support case. Going to investigate peer support for staff.*
- *How peer monitoring can aid cross departmental relationships and communication. Breaks down silos.*

Penumbra shared their experience of Plan2Change peer support service in Edinburgh, hearing from a paid peer workers' personal experience of her development and evolution in her role.

Participants said what they are taking away from this workshop….

- *The importance of peer support workers taking care of their own well-being so that they are able to do their job well. Also the importance of using personal experience that can form my work but not oversharing.*
- *Their experience of peer support. Good work.*

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL) provided an opportunity for participants to explore how we set up and facilitate peer support groups, hear how the groups have developed and changed over time and hear first-hand experience from peer support group participants.

Participants said what they are taking away from this workshop….

- *Informative how peer support groups operate.*
- *The group must set their own priorities, what matters to you. Ownership is with the group. Set ground rules.*
- *Experiences of peer support group representatives of how their life has changed.*
- *Ideas, knowledge, heart rendering experienced peer support. Have to give to group, sharing is so important, networking.*
- *The LCiL peer support group sounds excellent from the testimony of 2 members – will see about joining it.*
- *Inspiration!*

Neighbourhood Networks presented motivating case studies of the difference peer support makes. They provided participants the opportunity to hear directly from people in different roles about working in an organisation that promotes and embeds a peer support culture and to learn about resources and practice to help develop a culture of peer support in an organisation.

Participants said what they are taking away from this workshop….

- *The power of helping people connect.*
- *Keep support simple.*
- *Think what's the least I can do to facilitate this so things develop naturally.*
- *The idea of self-facilitated groups, challenges and benefits.*
- *Took me back to circle of support training many years ago. Peer support is about community connections and self-management. Developing self-management at all levels of organisations. Peer support at all levels and supervision. Team supervision/ Coaching.*
- *The importance and value of encouraging active citizenship. It's a journey, it takes time. Got to invest in it.*
- *Tips on how to make groups sustainable in the absence of staff.*

Scottish Recovery Network (SRN) provided an opportunity for participants to explore the values underpinning peer support, self-care in the peer relationship and a free to access peer support training resources they have developed.

Participants said what they are taking away from this workshop….

- *Appropriate conversations, roles and expectations. Peer 2 peer.*
- *The importance of really thinking about whether sharing aspects of your lived experience will truly help the person you are working with as a peer support.*
- *Sharing skills and knowledge regarding peer support groups.*
- *How to develop Peer Support.*
- *Very useful and informative. Self-care, values, resources.*
- *Contacts. The importance of having someone who has had the same experience as you.*
- *Lots of useful resources, Training Manual for peer support training. Booklets. Good advice. Information on qualifications.*

Wider issues & potential of peer support

As well as 'how to', some questions relating to the context of peer support were highlighted. This enabled participants to raise awareness of these issues rather than giving any definitive answers on the day.

Should there be a Scottish government campaign on the value of peer support – link to other agendas like isolation prevention consultation?

Is peer support a social movement within communities?

To pay or not to pay peer support?

Being taken seriously as a support / workforce by NHS and local authority?

Progression for peer workers? How can it help disabled people in to employment?

Balancing targets and set outcomes with being user led?

Is it only provided by those with peer support in their job title / role?

Making links with each other, networking to share and develop excellent peer support practice

During the event we heard how peer support is making a difference, it is empowering, it changes lives and its value and impact is growing in recognition. It can support individual change and we heard how it is supporting community and organisational change too.

We hoped for conversations, ideas and insights from the event that will lead to more joint working and in-depth learning together. We would like to hear back from you if you do have any follow ups or new initiatives that started from the event.

What people said about the event:

- It's vital that peer support is offered to more individuals and that we have more events like today.
- Absolutely fantastic. It has made me even more excited to start my job as a peer support worker.
- Useful and thought-provoking.
- Insightful, inspiring.

- Left feeling better informed.
- Made me happy, gave me hope.
- Reminded me of my roots, how I naturally progressed into peer work.
- Informative and positive networking day.
- Wonderful. One of the best training days I have ever attended.
- Workshops which gave opportunities to share ideas with others.
- Stirring ideas and questions. Talking to others. Hearing their experiences. Listening to 'peers' experiences and knowledge. Meeting inspirational people.
- Opportunities to share experiences and good practice.

Workshop Contacts/Resources:

East Ayrshire Health & Social Care Partnership (Gillian Keeley),

East Ayrshire Council, London Road, Kilmarnock, KA3 7BU

Phone: 01563 576000 **Email:** Gillian.Keeley@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Lothian Centre for Inclusive Living (LCiL) (Rebecca Allen),

Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5QY

Phone: 0131 475 2350 **Email:** rebecca.allen@lothiancil.org.uk

Neighbourhood Networks (Heather Calvo)

25 Dava Street, Glasgow, G51 2JA   **Phone:** 0141 440 1005

Reference to 'Reinventing organizations' book by Frederic Laloux

Plan2Change, Penumbra (Elaine Kenneway)

5 Leamington Terrace, Edinburgh, EH10 4JW, **Phone:** 0131 228 1335

Scottish Recovery Network (SRN) (Louise Christie)
Floor 6 Standard Buildings, 94 Hope St, Glasgow G2 6QB
Email: louise.christie@scottishrecovery.net

Peer2peer training resource: https://www.scottishrecovery.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/P2P_vocational_Training_Course.pdf

Peer Values Framework developed by peers to explain peer support and maintain the fidelity of the role:
https://www.scottishrecovery.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SRN_Values_Framework_Peer_Working_reprint_2013.pdf

Experts by Experience a guide to developing peer roles in services
https://www.scottishrecovery.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/srn_exe_form.pdf

Talking Mat Stories, National Involvement Network Film
https://arcscotland.org.uk/resources/films/talking-mats-stories/

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