

Volunteer Peer Support Group Co-facilitator

Background and Role Description

# What is peer support?

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.

Peer support is built on respect, empathy, shared responsibility and mutual benefit.

# LCiL Peer Support Groups

LCiL run peer support groups for disabled people, older people and people with long term conditions, as well as for parent carers across the four Lothian areas of West Lothian, Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian.

Groups are supported by a lead facilitator and a co-facilitator

# Purpose of the role

The purpose of a co-facilitator is to work alongside the facilitator to support the group in aspects such as:

* Setting up the room before the session
* Helping make sure all materials and resources are available
* Welcoming people and creating a safe space
* Managing time and ensuring people have time to speak if they wish
* Reminding people about group guidelines as needed
* Sharing relevant lived experience appropriately

always with the aim of helping people to become more confident, skilled, knowledgeable and resilient.

Peer support is about:

* being alongside people
* sharing your experience so that others can learn from it
* acting as a sounding board so that they can explore and make their own decisions

## About you

While we are interested to hear about your previous experience of taking part in peer support groups, or any group facilitation training you have received, this is not essential! However, we do expect all peer support group facilitators to have **personal experience of disability, long-term condition, or being a parent carer**, and a willingness to draw on this experience. We would also like to hear about your experience of supporting or enabling others – though this does not have to be in a paid role, it can be from your personal or voluntary experience.

Other things that will be expected of you (and so worth talking about when applying!):

* **A respectful and non-judgmental attitude** – you are somebody who supports others’ right to control their own lives and make their own choices and believes everyone has strengths and abilities
* Being **a good listener** and giving others time and space to express themselves, seeking to understand their points of view
* **Ability to build trust and relationships** with a variety of people – tell us if you have experience of successfully working in a team
* Awareness of your strengths and development needs, as well as commitment to keeping knowledge and skills up to date and openness to change
* Ability to deal with difficulties by keeping them in perspective, adjust strongly held opinions in response to new evidence, and be flexible and responsive to the needs of the group
* Awareness of your own needs and willingness to ask for help when required
* Commitment to LCiL values
* Ability to follow policies and procedures
* Clear understanding of, and ability to follow, confidentiality rules

# Answers to some of the questions you might have

**What sort of values and skills do I need to become a peer support group co-facilitator?**

You need to like people and be interested in them. You should be respectful and non-judgmental and have a strong belief that everyone has strengths and can grow and develop. The key skills are good listening, having empathy and having the ability to manage your own feelings whilst being comfortable with other people expressing theirs. You will need to have a reasonable level of these skills to start with, and we’ll build on them during initial training.

**What will I be doing?**

You will be working alongside one of LCiL’s group facilitators to support the group through from preparing the room, hosting the session and tidying up afterwards. Your role will include meeting people as they arrive and helping them to feel welcome, contributing the group by sharing appropriate lived experience, helping with offering lunch to participants and clearing up after the group has ended. You may be asked to take the lead on parts of the group, such as reminding people about group guidelines but only when you feel comfortable with this and any role within the group would be planned alongside the lead facilitator.

**Where will I meet people?**

The groups are held at community venues in the 4 Lothian areas. You do not need to live in the local area to come along as a co-facilitator.

**Will I get expenses reimbursed?**

Yes, we can provide transport to the venue or can reimburse travel expenses if you use public or your own transport.

**What will I get out of it?**

Hopefully a great deal of satisfaction from knowing you’re helping people to learn and grow, deal with a change, or move something in their life forward and so on. Also, your own confidence, knowledge and skills should grow too. The training and experience you’ll get will also be useful if at some point you want to try other volunteering or move into paid work.

**What support will I get?**

You’ll get training before you start meeting people and you’ll volunteer within a clear set of guidelines and procedures. Before each group you’ll have an opportunity to speak with the lead facilitator to prepare and afterwards to debrief and review how it went. There will also group support and supervision sessions where you’ll be able to continue to increase your skills and get support with anything you may be finding challenging.

**How much time will I need to commit?**

You’ll be asked to commit to attending:

* initial training sessions
* at least one group every 12 weeks as a co-facilitator
* regular support and supervision meetings as a group

People won’t be allowed to continue as group co-facilitators if they don’t engage in support and supervision.

**What will the training cover?**

There will be three one-day training sessions, and these will be a mix of information about:

* LCiL and its services
* the social model of disability
* stages of empowerment
* peer support in general
* practicalities of this role and how you’ll be supported
* practicing skills, for example:
	+ active and constructive listening
	+ how to manage boundaries
	+ managing emotions – yours and other people’s
	+ managing endings
	+ support and supervision conversations

**The dates for initial training are**:

* Thursday 10th June
* Thursday 17th June
* Thursday 24th June

All sessions will be 10.30–2.30

Venue to be confirmed

You will be reimbursed for reasonable travel costs, and if you are a disabled person, older person or a person with a long-term condition, we can also arrange transport for you.