



Pier support & recovery

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Early encounters with peer support

“For some people, finding others who had experienced something similar to themselves was in itself important, because they had previously felt alone with their experiences, and now were able to find reassurance and affirmation ... in the company of others.”

Faulkner & Layzell (2000) Strategies for Living. Mental Health Foundation.

Remembering our Origins...

“Peer support has a long and honourable history in mental health. Fellow patients and service users have always provided invaluable support to each other, both informally and through self-help and activist groups.”

Catherine Jackson (2010) *Openmind* 161 p14

What is peer support?

Informal / group based

'friends with something in common'

*It is a group of people supporting each other providing what is wanted in so far as they can.
[CAP]*



What is peer support?

Intentional peer support

It is a helping hand – from someone who has the right kind of experience, has been through something similar [WRAP]

One person who is starting out on a journey being helped by someone who has completed their journey [P2P]



The Benefits...

- Shared identity, shared experiences
- Self-confidence
- Helping others
- Developing and sharing skills
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Information and signposting
- Challenging stigma and discrimination

The Challenges...

- Support and supervision
- Role conflict
- Boundaries
- Training
- Assessment and selection
- Moving on...career development
- Funding and bureaucracy
- Professionalisation...

Questions and Dilemmas...

1. How to stay true to the origins of peer support
2. What are the essential elements that characterise 'peer support'?
3. Is it just about what we name things?
4. What happens when peer support is incorporated into mental health services?
5. Does it matter that it becomes professionalised?
6. Does intentional peer support build on the strengths or emphasise the challenges?
...or does it endanger the core equality of the relationship?

Some views...

- *... it might then lead to the service user needing someone else, e.g. a befriender to fill that more informal role. [CAP]*
- *The defining feature is the fact that you've had the personal experience. There should be no remuneration or you would become a professional. [WRAP]*
- *You shouldn't be paid to do it – it's not peer support if you are paid [BWUF]*
- *I fear that we might lose that togetherness, if we go down the route of formalising peer support. [CAP]*
- *'Formalisation validates the service that's offered. It becomes a more effective service'. [RR]*

Peer Support Pyramid –

Thanks to Rochdale WRAP group

