

Peer Workforce Information Sheet

Peer Workers are a job position category within the NNSW LHD Mental Health Services (MHS). Peer workers have been working in the mental health workforce for many years in other LHD's and MHS in Australia and overseas.



The Peer Workers Role

The essential qualification for Peer Workers is to have a lived experience of mental health issues and recovery.

Peer Workers are complementary to and work collaboratively within multi-disciplinary teams to provide support in line with the Model of Care and Person Centred Care Plans.

Peer Workers use their lived experience of mental health issues and recovery to give feedback to their teams and provide support to people who access the service.

As part of a team Peer Workers can contribute

- Their lived experience of mental health issues and recovery
- Their lived experience as a resource to support others into and with recovery
- The rapport and communication they are able to establish with consumers
- The ability to role model wellness and recovery and nurture hope
- The ability to mediate between consumers and the MHS

Peer Workers in the Workplace

- As with all team members, Peer Workers will comply with all NSW Ministry of Health and NNSW LHD and MHS policies, procedures and guidelines, are bound by the Ministry of Health's Code of Conduct and will comply with various relevant legislations
- Peer Workers are employed because they have a Lived Experience of mental health issues and recovery. It is expected that Peer Workers are able to self-manage their wellbeing and are primarily responsible for monitoring and maintaining their own wellbeing in the workplace
- As with all team members, any concerns regarding a Peer Workers wellbeing in the workplace should be confidentially discussed with the line manager
- As with all team members, personal medical files and information regarding a Peer Worker is private and confidential. Peer Workers and clinicians will maintain a boundary between their private clinical relationships and their professional roles
- Peer Work is a professional role but the nature of the sharing of lived experience, means that personal and professional boundaries may be challenging for peer workers and may be different to other team member's professional boundaries.
- Personal story sharing is an important part of Peer Work and Peer Workers are skilled in how, what and when to disclose with a view to supporting a person with their recovery journey. Peer Workers' personal stories are their own to share and this needs to be respected by other staff members

- If a Peer Worker discloses some of their personal experience in one context, it should not be discussed outside of that context
- Prior to making a referral, staff will consult with Peer Workers regarding their role and appropriateness to supporting particular people
- Peer Workers should not be forced to disclose any personal experience
- Peer Workers will work collaboratively with clinical staff with regards to ensuring that the safety of people who access the service and others is supported. Peer Workers will discuss risk issues with the treating clinician or the treating team upon referral and during the course of their work with people who access the service.

The NSW LHD MHS recognizes people who have experience of mental health issues and recovery as service partners. They have a right to:

- Self-determination and autonomy in their personal development as an individual and as part of groups
- Identify their own strengths and capacities and have this respected and supported by others. The concept of partnership means sharing "power with" rather than "power over" people so that strengths and potential are encouraged
- Safely share and exchange in a professional manner their unique perceptions and lived experiences of the MHS with other staff without fear of retribution
- Express a safe, informed alternative personal and/or cultural views complementary to conventional medical theories about mental ill health, recovery and services
- Be recognized, respected and valued to participate as equal members of teams within the MHS. Including, but not limited to
 - Participating in case reviews, planning and meetings concerning people who access the MHS
 - Participating in team and other meetings within the MHS
 - Representation and participation at all levels of the service
 - Representation and participation in quality improvement initiatives
 - Documenting relevant factual information in clinical notes
 - Involvement in own professional development and supervision
 - Being able to express clinically and professionally appropriate opinions that may or may not agree with those of carers and others without fear of retribution
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Monitor and manage their own mental health and wellbeing
- Access appropriate debriefing, supervision and the opportunity to discuss supports with their manager

The Peer Workforce will access the same workplace supports as all staff. The newness of the positions to the MHS may create some initial challenges. Other supports that Peer Workers and other team members may access include: **Team peer champions, debriefing, line manager support and the Consumer Partnership Coordinator (DMH).**

The NSW LHD *Peer Worker Orientation Information Booklet* provides further information on Peer Workers and their role.

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