



Culture of Care Peer Support Implementation Space: Meeting Chat Overview

Friday 5 September 2025, 14:00 – 16:00| MS Teams

Key Themes from the Peer Support Conversation

1. Preparing teams for Peer Support roles

- Importance of team readiness before introducing Peer Support Workers (PSWs).
- Strategies included spending time on wards ahead of PSWs starting, attending ward manager meetings, and offering informal Q&A opportunities to address concerns.
- Toolkits, handbooks, or online resources were suggested as useful supplements to face-to-face preparation.

2. Recruitment and selection

- Recruitment days after application shortlisting were seen as helpful in identifying suitable candidates.
- Having experienced peers apply for higher band roles helped highlight the value of peer expertise.
- Webinars before closing adverts were trialled to reduce unsuitable applications.

3. Training considerations

- Mandatory training requirements, such as restraint training, can be triggering for PSWs with lived experience.
- Alternative or bespoke training (e.g., shorter conflict resolution or de-escalation training) has been developed by some trusts to align better with the PSW role.
- Role fidelity was emphasised to ensure PSWs are not expected to participate in restrictive practices.

4. Boundaries and role clarity

- Challenges arose when ward teams were unclear about what PSWs could or could not do.
- Boundaries were seen as essential for protecting both PSWs and those they support.
- Carer Peer Support roles were highlighted as distinct, with different needs (e.g., private spaces for calls with carers).

5. Transition from patient to staff

- Returning to work on wards where someone was once a patient was discussed as both powerful and potentially challenging.
- Some trusts have policies or informal practices about avoiding this, including use of out-of-area placements if a PSW needs inpatient care.
- Others noted it can be uniquely valuable for patients to see recovery in someone who has shared their exact environment, though careful planning and support are needed.

6. Wellbeing and sustainability of PSWs

- Induction should include tools like Wellness Recovery Action Plans and disability passports.
- Flexibility and ongoing support are vital to help PSWs manage the pressure of "staying well."
- A staged pathway from service user → involvement work → expert by experience → paid PSW role was seen as supportive in easing transitions.

7. Communication and culture change

- Language used in inpatient settings was highlighted as a concern; culture of care programmes aim to promote recovery-focused language.
- Sharing PSW experiences through digital resources (e.g., "day in the life" videos, newsletters, intranet pages) was suggested as a way to build understanding and acceptance.

8. Research and external learning

- References were made to existing studies and webinars exploring the evolving role of peer support in mental health services.
- National resources (e.g., NIHR research, "Mental Elf" talks) were mentioned as useful for wider learning.