

Qualitative interviews with Peer Support Workers and Supervisors: preliminary findings

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Mike Davidson, Research Assistant & Peer Support Worker, CORE study

Process

- Mixture of focus groups and interviews
 - PSWs in six trusts; supervisors in four
- Audio recordings transcribed and summarised
- Coding framework developed; transcripts coded
- Thematic analysis and write-up
- Anonymous, non-identifiable

Purpose

- New intervention – lots of unknowns
- Qualitative interviews allow depth and nuance
 - What parts were useful or less so?
 - How has it worked?
 - What are the mechanisms that effect change?
 - Implications for future implementation

Training

- Mixed reception of some aspects, but generally very positive feedback
- High quality, relevance and volume of training
- Lack of formal accreditation disappointing
- Training on additional areas desired

Booklet

- Mixed reaction from peers
- Variety of formats useful
- Structure for sessions useful for PSWs
- ‘Goals and dreams’ section polarising

Supervision

- Balanced combination of group and individual supervision
- Supervisor/PSW support useful in different ways
- Unfortunate emphasis on practical issues
- Supervisors were supportive and flexible

Impacts on peers

- Wealth of stories: big, concrete, positive changes
- Importance of companionship, support, power of shared experience
- Improved: hope, self-confidence, self-awareness, skills
- PSWs provided help in practical ways

Impacts on PSWs

- Inspirational, constructive, rewarding, validating, helpful for own recovery
- Increased self-confidence, understanding of mental health, communication skills, assertiveness
- Helpful for career development
- Value of friendships with other PSWs

Issues / Improvements 1

- Variety of practical issues
- Not enough peers
- Some confusion about intervention
- Increased integration with statutory services desirable
- More sessions preferable

Issues / Improvements 2

- Difficulty of managing boundaries
- Difficulty of endings
- Peers not engaging
- Lack of prior knowledge of peers

Supervisors' views 1

- Generally very positive feedback
- Positive attributes of PSWs
 - open-mindedness, empathy, strength, resilience, 'family' feeling, cohesion of groups
- Rewarding to see PSWs' development
- Brought a fresh perspective on clinical work

Supervisors' views 2

- High value of lived experience; PSW as experts
- No difference between supervising PSWs & other staff
- Concern about boundaries
- Matching by more than gender useful?

Quotes 1

‘Peer support is a unique service because it fulfils the gap between the mental health professional and patient... it encourages the peer to open up and speak because they don’t feel shame or they don't feel stigma about their mental health problems.’

‘I think for me professionally it's been monumental to be honest... It helped me get the job I have now. It's taught me a lot about boundaries, talking about mental health and how to express that... I've learnt so much about different types of mental health conditions. I've worked with people who've disclosed things that I've not come in touch with on a personal level, different conditions. I've learnt from them a lot.’

Quotes 2

'I think the book was just part of it, but I would say a small part of it. I think it was mostly about the connection we had as, you know, I don't even want to say client-worker, because it wasn't that kind of relationship. It was just two people having a chat about mental health.'

'So even though it's coming to an end, we did something good here, I think. I think people seem quite happy for the support; I like the befriending element as well... it felt a little bit like we may have been an alternative sometimes to other things they'd tried out that weren't working too well, so maybe the fact that it's not so clinical was a positive, you know?'

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Contact details

- Email: m.davidson@ucl.ac.uk
- Telephone: 0207 679 9662