

Competences for organisations supporting the peer support worker role

Ability to assure appropriate recruitment and support of peer support workers

(See supporting document, Section 6)

Organisations should ensure that processes related to the employment of PSWs (such as the development of criteria for recruitment, interview, selection and induction) are co-produced with people with relevant lived experience of providing or receiving peer support.

Specifying the role

An ability for the organisation to develop a job description that clearly specifies the PSW's role, remit and boundaries, and to ensure that:

the role reflects the values and principles of peer support

the lived experience of the person being appointed is relevant to the people and populations they will be working with

the role fulfils its purpose

the role is not used to fill gaps in the team or service

Recruitment

An ability to develop recruitment criteria for PSWs that:

reflect the likely pathways taken by such workers, for example recognising that:

there may be gaps in the person's employment history

there may be patterns of extended sick leave

consider qualities such as temperament, natural abilities and wellbeing, motivation and self-efficacy, as well as employment history

An ability for the organisation to plan how best to manage queries raised in the course of standard pre-employment checks, for example to ensure:

that occupational health units are aware that (by definition) PSWs will have a mental health history

that where an application or a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check flags a criminal history, arrangements are in place for HR (human resources) and clinical staff to consider its implications for employment and, where possible, take positive risks to support those who might otherwise be excluded

An ability to offer support to potential PSWs during the application process, for example:

ensuring that they understand the recruitment process

offering guidance about completing application forms

offering support regarding the interview process (for example, discussing the format of an interview, or offering interview practice)

Where PSWs are in receipt of benefits, an ability to organise for them to receive benefits advice (so that they are aware of any financial implications arising from employment)

Integrating peer support workers into the workforce

An ability for the organisation to ensure that before PSWs are employed, other staff members:

have a clear understanding of the role and remit of the PSWs being employed by the service, and of the models that underpin this role

have an opportunity to discuss any queries or concerns about the PSW role

understand that PSWs should not be pressured to share their lived experience with their colleagues (that is, that they own their story and should be able to choose when, how, and how much of their experience they wish to disclose)

An ability to monitor how teams relate to and work with PSWs, and to identify and manage any difficulties

An ability to provide training for all staff within the organisation to help share and promote the ethos, values and principles of peer support

Where the PSW has had previous contact with the service or staff to receive mental health care, an ability for organisations to ensure that the PSW's personal information and mental health history remain confidential

Where the PSW requires care from a mental health team, an ability to discuss and, if appropriate, organise this outside the service in which they are currently working

Training, support and supervision

An ability to put in place reasonable adjustments tailored to the PSW's needs and that facilitate their capability to undertake the roles expected of them

An ability for the organisation to identify and put in place:

appropriate training for the roles undertaken by PSWs (including training around equality, diversity and cultural competence)

appropriate levels of supervision (specifying the expected frequency, duration and format of supervision sessions); this includes a supervisory structure and protected time that allow PSWs to meet with at least one other more experienced senior PSW

this can be provided internally or externally to the organisation, but must be undertaken in a context that is psychologically safe as defined by the PSW

An ability for the organisation to ensure that there are systems in place to monitor and support PSWs' wellbeing

an ability to identify (and where appropriate enact) plans to support PSWs who experience difficulties in the course of their work (for example, identifying sources of support, supporting the worker in having time off)

An ability for the organisation to enable PSWs to link in with peer networks to facilitate shared learning

where a peer network does not exist, supporting PSWs to establish local peer support networks

Career planning

An ability for the organisation to support the PSW to access further training or professional development activities

An ability for the organisation to identify career planning or progression for PSWs, both in the context of peer support and in preparation for other roles

An ability for the organisation to provide opportunities or support the PSW to develop leadership and management skills, as part of their career progression

Developing the peer support worker role

An ability for the organisation to consider how the PSW role could be developed and embedded across the service, taking into account the needs of the people and populations being served

Ability to organise work-based supervision of peer support workers

(See supporting document, Section 6.3.1)

Supervisors of PSWs should understand the values and principles of peer support. Supervision should be role-specific (from an individual with active experience of the PSW role), with additional supervision from a colleague when they work within multidisciplinary teams.

Supervision structure – setting up the meeting

An ability to collaboratively develop an agenda for the supervision meeting, including (for example):

routinely 'checking in' with the PSW to help maintain focus on their self-care and any needs arising from this

helping PSWs discuss psychological stresses arising from their work and how these can best be addressed

reviewing issues related to the people being supported by the PSW

reviewing any issues related to the development and maintenance of relationships with mental health teams

identifying challenges to working in a way that is in line with the values and principles of peer support

help with administrative issues (such as meeting any relevant local standards)

helping PSWs to review and manage their caseloads and schedules

An ability to draw on knowledge that meetings should include a review of any previously identified issues (and so identify and address any challenges)

An ability to gain knowledge of the people being supported by PSWs

An ability to ensure that (over time) there is an opportunity to discuss all the people being supported by the PSW

Ending the meeting

An ability to draw on knowledge that at the end of the meeting the supervisor and PSW should agree on any steps to be taken and specify how these will be achieved

An ability to draw on knowledge that the content of discussions in supervision should be documented, identifying the next steps and any agreed goals

Maintaining a focus on strengths-based supervision

An ability to draw on knowledge that supervision should help PSWs focus on the strengths of the person who is being supported, and on them maintaining hope

Where PSWs express frustration with a person's progress, an ability to empathise and redirect discussion to problem-solving issues that have emerged while maintaining a focus on the person's strengths and resources

Where PSWs express concerns about their ability to carry out their roles, an ability to maintain a strengths-based perspective, identifying those areas in which they are succeeding

Giving feedback

Ability to create a context for giving feedback

An ability to ensure that the supervisory relationship is good enough to allow feedback to be accepted (and reflected on) by the PSW

An ability to detect whether the PSW is able to engage with feedback, and (if relevant) to identify and explore any factors that make this difficult for them

An ability to ensure that the PSW is in a position to make sense of (and use) the feedback (that is, that the feedback is congruent with their current level of understanding/learning)

An ability to detect when feedback may have a negative impact on the PSW (for example, increased anxiety), and to manage any consequences in a supportive manner

Ability to give feedback in an appropriate manner

An ability to give feedback that:

is balanced (that is, the feedback identifies what the PSW did well, as well as what could be improved)

is clear and appropriately direct

focuses on specific aspects of the PSW's work (rather than making general observations)

When commenting on perceived challenges or difficulties, an ability to suggest alternative actions the PSW could take

An ability to phrase feedback in a manner that avoids the attribution of personal failure by:

focusing on examples of behaviour (as opposed to attributing challenges or difficulties to the PSW's personal qualities)

phrasing comments in a way that directs attention to the issues rather than to personal characteristics of the PSW

After giving feedback, an ability to encourage, be receptive to, and to engage with any feedback from the PSW

Modelling and observing

An ability to collaborate with the PSW to identify areas that would be helpful to practise or review in supervision sessions

An ability to use modelling to demonstrate specific techniques and to aid learning:

clarifying with the PSW how supervision sessions that include modelling will be run (for example, whether they will also practise techniques that the supervisor has modelled)

setting up and conducting exercises that allow the PSW to practise or rehearse implementing strategies and procedures (for example, exploring ways to phrase questions, implementing specific techniques)

setting up and conducting role play of encounters that are relevant to the skills being demonstrated

An ability to structure practice sessions in a manner that ensures that the PSW is:

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| clear about the aim(s) of the practice session |
| appropriately prepared (for example, through prior discussion or modelling of the skills by the supervisor) |
| clear about the skills they are expected to practise/demonstrate |
| An ability to give feedback to the PSW that is accurate and constructive, focuses on both strengths and areas for improvement, and is task-specific (rather than global) |
| An ability to help the PSW to reflect on feedback |