

Turning Point Scotland

Managing Peers in Housing First
Service

Peer Support Worker posts were developed in Turning Point Scotland's HF services in 2010 as a key element of the staff team.

Peer workers within HF services are employed on the same grade as a Support Practitioner.

Peers are recruited in the same way and go through the same Induction process..

Awareness that Peers, particularly if this is their first employment, could face additional stresses and pressures in the job.

This is discussed at the interview stage when the potential Peer Support Practitioner is asked about their lived experience and recovery journey

We highlight that many HF service users are actively using substances.

As an outreach service, staff meet service users' in their own environment.

This can expose staff to viewing drug paraphernalia/alcohol and it's important to explore how the potential Peer feels about this due to the possible risk of triggers.

Peers with lived experience are generally strongly motivated to encourage clients to engage in addiction services and recovery groups. They use their own experiences as a motivator for service users

Many service users see their Peer worker as a source of inspiration

Managers need to have an understanding of how the support needs of Peers may diverge from the usual support needs of other staff.

Managers should be able to provide differing supports within the team, without creating inequality in the way staff are treated.

Stress and substance related cues can be a significant factors in relapse

Occasionally Peers can exhibit unrealistic expectations by measuring their own recovery to those they are supporting.

Maintaining boundaries – This is an important part of managing all staff. However additional issues may only impact on those with lived experience:

Peers may come across past associates which can be a negative or a positive experience for peers and service users. This should be disclosed and managed.

Experience shows that peer support workers, teams, Managers and service users can all benefit from the enhanced perspective offered by peer support.

Peers develop positive working relationships with the people they support, based on empathy and empowerment and are particularly good at meeting softer outcomes

Homeless Network England's Fidelity Guidance for Services states that,

'Hard & soft outcomes are viewed with equal importance i.e. attending appointments, buying small household items - can be significant markers of importance'.

I would have to say that there is little more satisfying in my work than to observe an individual flourish into their role, gain increased confidence, knowledge and skills.

If and when the time is right then to see the person move onward to something ever more challenging, and continuing to succeed is truly amazing.

lizlittler@turningpointscotland.com

Service Manager: Housing First Legacy
Service

lizlittler@housingfirstconsortiumglasgow.com

Service Manager: Housing First
Consortium Glasgow