

Role Description

Volunteer Peer Supporter

Together's values

Collaboration: achieving together

Choice: through involvement
and evolving

Integrity: doing what we say

Resilience: never giving up on people

Continuous improvements: learning

Introduction

Willow Tree House is a supported housing project for adults (aged 18 to 65 yrs) who have a primary diagnosis of mental health problems.

Set within a block of flats in the quiet Angel Ridge development, the project has seven staff and can support up to 16 individuals, each of whom have their own self-contained one-bedroom flat. The project's aim is to motivate, enable and support tenants towards recovery, social inclusion and to achieve greater levels of independence,

The service is based on a combination of key elements, delivered by recovery workers. There is a 24-hour staff presence, 365 days a week to cover any emergencies. On a day-to-day basis, staff are available to support tenants with: living skills (shopping, cooking, etc...); work/volunteering; managing their tenancy, appointments, medication and/or finances; and liaising with other health/social care providers. Each tenant has regular meetings with their own keyworker.

Another one of those key elements is **sharing recovery experiences through genuine and meaningful Peer Support**. All individuals supported by Willow Tree House have the choice of working with Peer Supporters: volunteers trained to draw on their own lived experiences of mental distress to help others towards better mental wellbeing. Peer Support can help people make huge strides forward in their recovery.

About this role

As a Peer Supporter, your lived experience of mental distress will be at the heart of your role. You will use your own experiences to empathise with and support people who are experiencing mental distress. This role is open to anybody with experience of using mental health services who feels they have the skills to support others. You will work alongside people who use Together's supported housing service at Willow Tree House.

With guidance from your Peer Support Coordinator, you will support someone in a way that is led by them and suits your strengths and skills. This could include:

- Sharing your lived experience in an appropriate way to express empathy and hopefulness. This will involve sharing skills and techniques to help people identify their own self-management tools and ways of moving forward with life;
- Supporting service users through one to one planned sessions, providing emotional and/or practical support, using your lived experience as described above. This can include helping people to focus on their strengths, set goals and develop action plans, drawing on your own experiences where relevant;
- Providing one to one and/or group peer support sessions, drawing on your lived experience as described above;
- Identifying local services and activities in Swindon and its surrounding area, that someone might want to access; signposting and supporting them to access these as appropriate;
- Providing support as someone prepares to move on from using the service;
- Where appropriate, supporting someone to appointments, meetings and activities, providing emotional and/or practical support using your own lived experiences;
- Facilitating peer support groups
- Supporting less experienced Peer Supporters in their role;
- Working alongside service users, other peers and staff to develop peer support in the services.

You are welcome to add to this list and suggest other ways of providing peer support. The important thing is that you are drawing on your own experiences of mental distress and/ or using mental health services to support others. Training will be provided to help you in your role as a Peer Supporter.

**Currently we are only offering phone/online peer support and not face-to-face peer support due to Covid-19, however we will be reviewing this regularly and keep you updated and would encourage applications from people who would like to offer face to face peer support and/or phone based peer support.*

Who are we looking for? Your skills, knowledge and experience

We are looking for people who

- Have personal experience of mental distress and/or using mental health services, past or present;

- Have the ability to share personal experiences of mental distress and recovery as/when appropriate to demonstrate empathy and share self-management strategies;
- Are passionate about service user leadership, peer support and empowering people experiencing mental distress;
- Have a good ability to communicate and engage in a respectful and non-judgemental way with a range of people who use mental health services;
- Have excellent active listening and interpersonal skills: empathy, kindness and patience;
- Have the ability to problem-solve, be proactive and resourceful when supporting people;
- Have the ability to deal with all enquiries tactfully, sensitively and on a confidential basis;
- Are able to maintain high standards of customer care, and adhere to Together's policies and procedures

Desirable skills, knowledge and experience:

- . Comfortable having conversations and supporting someone over the phone
 - . Comfortable communicating by text on a mobile phone.
 - . Able to use online communication tools such as Zoom and Skype on a computer, tablet or mobile phone.
- (if you feel you lack experience or confidence with any of the above, please feel free to let the PSC know, as they can support you to develop your skills or find alternatives)

What you can expect to get out of the role

Whilst volunteering as a Peer Supporter, you will have regular support and guidance from your Peer Support Coordinator. You can go to them with any issues or questions about peer support, and you will work with them to develop and use your skills as a Peer Supporter in a way that benefits you and the people you are supporting.

You will be added to Together's iTrent database, alongside all of our employees and volunteers; and you will have access to a dedicated website and helpline to support you with issues such as health, finance, legal issues, etc...

You will have access to learning and development opportunities specific to peer support and mental health; as well as wider transferable skills such as communication, coaching, group facilitation, etc...You will have access to our E-Learning modules which cover a range of subjects relating to Health and Social Care. You will also be able to join the in-house training available to Together staff. Your Peer Support Coordinator will also provide you with materials and resources for your own personal learning and self-development; and signpost you to

participation opportunities and events organised both by Together and other organisations (eg Mind, NSUN, etc...)

Your Peer Support Coordinator can provide you with references on request, for work volunteering or education opportunities.

How to apply and what next

You can apply by contacting your Peer Support Coordinator (or the PSC will get in touch if you are applying via the Do-It website and/or the Swindon Volunteer Centre).

The PSC will then email or call you for an initial conversation to discuss the role further; you will also be sent an application pack and be invited to complete an application form (the PSC can support you with this)

This will be followed by an informal interview, to ensure that you meet the key skills set out in the role description and have a clear understanding of the role. This will also be an opportunity for you to ask any further questions you may have

If the interview is successful, you will attend a Peer Support Training which takes place over several days and is currently being delivered online due to Covid-19. The PSC will provide you with all the information you need to take part. On completing the course, you will receive a certificate of attendance.

Finally, you will be given an Induction and Guidance for Peer Supporters handbook, and your PSC will go through this with you. The PSC will also do a DBS check and contact the two referees named on your application form, before you are able to start in your new role.

Expenses

All reasonable expenses such as out of pocket travel tickets or mileage for sessions and meetings with service users, the PSC and other Peer Supporters will be reimbursed on production of a receipt.

Access needs:

you can discuss any access needs with the Peer Support Coordinator at interview stage, and/or later on throughout your role. This could include special needs/disability or obstacles to access such as digital exclusion.

Closing date for applications: Fri 19th February 2021

Interviews will be arranged individually between the PSC and applicant,

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this role description further, feel free to contact the Peer Support Coordinator:

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