

#PeerTalk

This issue

- Peerfest15
- Peer support guide
- Peer brokerage
- Marsh Award
- Training and workshops
- CNWL update
- Spotlight online
- Peer support stories
- Peer Support news
- Dates for the diary

Peerfest 16

Peerfest is a celebration of peer support, which started following research by national Mind in 2012 which culminated in the publication of 'Mental health peer support in England: Piecing together the jigsaw' in 2013.

This will be Peerfest's 4th year, having started in Birmingham and moved to Preston, this year it will take place in London, led by [Sound Minds](#) and partners.

More details to come as they are revealed... meanwhile, you can find out about this and previous Peerfests [here](#).



Peer Support Guide

National Mind has just released a new resource, 'Making Sense of Peer Support.'

This is an information resource, aimed at anyone who wants to find out more. It explains what peer support is, how it can help people, the different options available and suggestions on where to start.

The guide is currently online only, but with plans to turn it into a printed booklet in time.

You can find the Making Sense of Peer Support guide on the national Mind website [here](#).

'The support was mutual. When I was going through a low patch, I often received reassurance and kind words.'

'Things I was ashamed of and felt guilt for were common in the group. It was a profound and powerful experience.'

Making Sense of Peer Support



Peer Brokerage

June 2014 saw Kensington and Chelsea Mind partner up with CNWL's North Kensington Recovery Team to deliver an NHS England pilot for Personal Health Budgets.

The delivery of the pilot began in December 2014 with 15 participants trying a new different way of meeting their mental health needs.

An important element of PHBs is brokerage – support to help someone decide how they might want to spend their budget in a way that would help their mental health.

A key element of the Kensington and Chelsea PHB pilot was for the participants to receive peer brokerage ~ from someone with personal experience of mental health difficulties. Peer support was also available in the form of a Positive Steps Group for participants to share their experience of being on the pilot.

'Peer support helped me with planning, prioritising and putting a routine back in my life and has been a great benefit to my mental health'

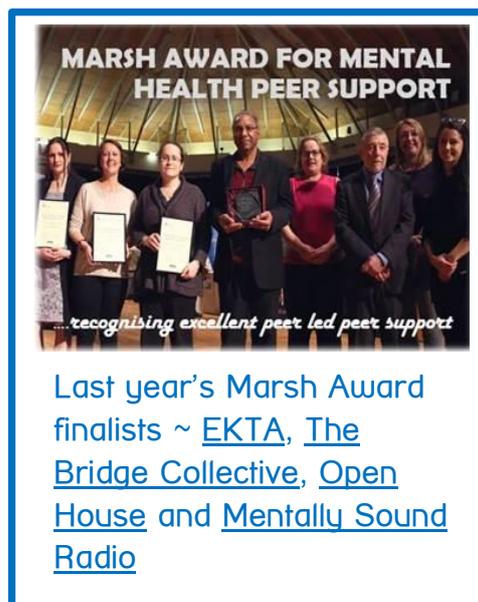
PHB pilot participant

From the evaluation, it was identified that having access to peer support was important for 84% of the participants, and 100% found it important to have access to an independent peer broker with their own experience of mental health difficulties.

Marsh Award

The Marsh Award recognises excellence in mental health peer support.

The Marsh Award started last year and was presented at Peerfest in November.



This year the Marsh Christian Trust are teaming up again with Mind and Peerfest for the 2016 Marsh Award for Mental Health Peer Support

Four peer led peer support projects will be commended, with one receiving a cash award of £1000.

Nominations for peer support projects are open now!

If you know a peer led peer support project which deserves to be recognised as an excellent example of peer support, you can nominate them via the application form [here](#).

The closing date for nominations is 18th July at 12 noon. The projects will be selected by a judging panel and an award presentation will feature at Peerfest later this year.

Training and workshops

BME Peer Support Meeting ~ The end of May saw our first meeting specifically for those providing BME support to discuss and explore specific issues and challenges relating to providing peer support for these communities.

Attendees discussed the different forms their peer support services take, training needs and local signposting. We provisionally agreed another BME Peer Support Meeting for September.

Peer Support Training ~ Our 3rd cohort of Peer Support trainees completed their training and received their certificates in mid-June.

This brings the total number of trainees who have completed our Peer Support Training to 16.

The training covers the important aspects of peer support roles, using an interactive, discursive and mixed media approach.

'Really good training materials. Very comprehensive, thorough and engaging.'

Peer Support Trainee

The next Peer Support Training course will start after the summer and currently has a waiting list.

To join the waiting list for this or future training, email zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk

CNWL Update

Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) are our local NHS Trust. CNWL has been incorporating peer support into its services since 2012, which now includes:

- Inpatient wards
- Community teams
- Eating disorders
- Homelessness Prevention
- Addictions

Locally, Karen Nelson is the Senior Peer Support Worker for Kensington and Chelsea and Francesca Lepori started in the parallel post in Westminster in June.

Local services featuring peer support include:

- St Charles Hospital
- Living Well Service
- South Community Team

Any job vacancies arising at CNWL will be advertised on the NHS jobs website. You can create an account and save a search for 'peer support' in 'London' which will send you alerts when vacancies come up. For more details on local peer support in CNWL contact [Karen](#) or [Francesca](#).

'New Senior Peer Support Worker posts have been created in order to further the progression of Peer Support within the Trust. It fills me with hope to see and I am optimistic for the future of Peer Support within CNWL!'

Francesca Lepori, CNWL

Spotlight Online

Online peer support has been around for a long time in various forms, but essentially involves people coming together to talk about shared experiences of difficulties and/or distress.

More recently, online peer support has become more formalised and is increasingly being provided and moderated by prominent organisations.

'It's completely anonymous and it's always available. When I felt suicidal, I received so much support and acknowledgement that it helped the feelings to subside.'

Elefriends member

There are many benefits of online peer support...

Geographical obstacles ~ some people face barriers to getting out and attending appointments and meetings outside the home. This could be due to health reasons; for example a physical disability, agoraphobia or anxiety.

It could also be down to practicalities, for example childcare, caring responsibilities, or transport difficulties. These could be due to lack of money or resources, or living in a rural area where attending the appointment or meeting would involve negotiating expensive and infrequent public transport, or

lengthy drives which prove even more difficult in harsh weathers.

Anonymity ~ Many people are drawn to online peer support because no-one else knows who you are. With this anxiety taken away, people can feel more comfortable talking about new things and/or difficult topics.

'Sometimes it's easier to talk to someone who you don't know but has similar experiences rather than talking to friends or family who you might feel judged or stigmatised by.'

Elefriends member

Global ~ The very nature of online peer support means that it's accessible to people from all over the world. This means different perspectives from people in different places, who use different systems of support. It also reduces the barriers to people meeting each other based on their shared experiences, outlooks and interests rather than narrowing these possibilities by geographical area.

24/7 ~ As the internet is always there, so is online peer support. As mentioned above, some members may be on different time zones. People keeping different hours will be able to respond at different times, meaning support is potentially available no matter the time. Many people who experience mental health difficulties have trouble

sleeping and mental health crises are common at night so this can be particularly beneficial.

'Online support groups helped me when no one else was there for me.'

Craig's [blog](#) for Mind

Convenience ~ Online peer support is always there; there is no requirement to keep Tuesday evenings free, or to go out into the cold. For many people this is convenient – you can choose when to log in, whether or not to log in at all, and in many cases, do so from the phone in your pocket.

This can be particularly useful for those who are working during office hours, which can make it difficult to attend set groups and services, and for those who are up on their technology and use this as the most convenient means of communication.

However, online peer support is not for everyone, and not without its drawbacks. Not everyone has access to the internet or is computer savvy, and some people are wary of the internet or choose not to use technology at all.

Some of the disadvantages of online peer support can be:

Physically removed ~ you don't really know who you are talking to, and once you make connections with someone, it might be difficult or impossible to take these connections forward into real life. Also, if you

become concerned about someone, it can be hard not being able to do anything about this and to sit with the uncertainty; some people need to take a break from being online, and disappear for a while. Some sources of online peer support are set up with moderators who you can talk to about these things should they arise.

Triggers ~ you can never have control over what other people type/post, and this means you don't know what you will be reading. It may be that others write about things you might find difficult to read, or even triggering. Some sources of online peer support have specific ways of dealing with this, for example trigger warnings, special areas for triggering material, or moderators who make sure content is appropriate for others to read.

In your pocket 24/7 ~ whilst this can be a positive factor of online peer support, it can also be negative, as it means you are constantly accessible by others. If you have an alert that goes off every time someone writes something, this could be distracting and interrupt your day. It can be rewarding to help others, but also easy to feel demands on one's time and pressure to meet others' expectations.

Infrequent / inconsistent responses ~ a big positive of online peer support is that it's available and accessible at any time, and whilst it's likely that people will be around to respond during different times, this is not necessarily always the case. It can

be disappointing not to receive a reply when really hoping for or relying on one at that moment.

Finding the right fit ~ as with any group, it is important to find one that suits you and this can take a bit of trial and error.

'I'll be honest, I had to go through a number of groups before I found one that I felt ok with and fitted in.'

Craig's [blog for Mind](#)

Online peer support can take many forms:

- Website forum
- App
- Facebook group
- Real time / live groups

Whichever online peer support you try out, it's important to take steps to stay safe. Some things to look out for include:

Audience ~ who is this peer support intended for? Some groups are based on diagnoses or other specific experiences such as abuse. There are specific online peer support groups for young people. Consider the subject matter of the group you are considering.

Moderation ~ is the group you are

considering moderated? This means that staff or volunteers regularly check in on the content posted by members of the group, and can be contacted in case of concern for an individual or a post/message.

Triggers ~ is there a way of avoiding triggers that are posted in the group? This could be that there is a specific section for triggering posts, that the group use codes, for example ****Trigger Warning**** so you can decide whether or not to click.

Reporting system ~ is there a system for reporting posts that concern you, or which you find disturbing?

Password protected ~ is your account, or app password protected so that if someone goes into your phone your messages remain private? If not, think about who might have access to the information you have shared.

Personal details ~ be careful about how much personal and identifiable information you give; people on the internet are not always who they appear to be. Also, if you join a Facebook group, people are likely to be able to see your photo and your real name. Once you and your information is out there, you can't take it back...

'As an 18 year old it has really helped to give me hope that things do get better. It's one thing being told by a therapist 'it won't always be like this,' but to hear it from someone who has lived it means so much more.' ~ *Elefriends member*

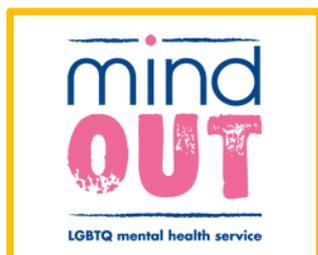
Sources of online peer support...



[Elefriends](#) ~ Elefriends is Mind's online community. This is a moderated site and also available as an app on Apple Store and Google Play store. Find out more information and register [here](#).



[B-eat](#) ~ this eating disorder charity has a variety of online peer support groups; [Adult Recoverers' Online Group](#) this is a live group that takes place on Wednesday evenings; [Recovery Club](#) live chat for young people on Monday evenings; [Emotional Overeating](#) is a live group for adults who binge eat or compulsively overeat, taking place once a month; [Adult Carers](#) is a monthly live group for adults who are caring for, or friends, family or partners of someone affected by an eating disorder.



[MindOut](#) ~ Mind Out is an LGBTQ mental health service based in Brighton and run by and for LGBTQ people. They run a daily, out of hours online chat. Find out [more](#).

**Friends
in need**

[Friends in Need](#) ~ Friends In Need is part of Depression Alliance and in addition to social groups meeting in the local area, there is an online community for peer support where people can support each other via the website, which is moderated. Find more details and register [here](#).



[Sane](#) ~ Sane provides an online community where it welcomes everyone to come together to talk about mental health difficulties. Find out more and sign up [here](#).



[Action on Post-Partum Psychosis](#) ~ This moderated peer support forum is for mothers who have experienced postpartum psychosis. Find more information and sign up [here](#).

blurt

[The Blurt Foundation](#) ~ Blurt's closed facebook group offers peer support for depression. Find out more [here](#).

Peer Support Stories



We are still looking for real-life stories of people who have experience of peer support, whether that's receiving peer support or providing peer support to others.

Stories are what connect people. By sharing people's stories, we can make a case for peer support and how it has helped different people in different ways, as well as emphasising how peer support can take different shapes and forms.

If you'd like to share your story to strengthen the case for peer support and raise the profile of it, get in touch!

We can help you to think about which parts of your story you want to share and how.

Contact Zoe for guidance and further information:
zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you...



Peer Support News

Vacancy at Together ~ The post of Peer Support Co-ordinator has arisen for Together's Criminal Justice Directorate. For more information and to apply, see [here](#).

New peer support booklet ~ The Scottish Recovery Network has launched a new booklet entitled 'Peer support roles in mental health services.'

The document draws on evidence to support the development of peer support roles across health and social care services.

It focuses on the numerous benefits of peer support to all parties; service users, peer workers and services themselves. Read the report [here](#).

'A modern recovery focused mental health system needs to use all available assets including lived experience to ensure that people get the support they need when they need it and have better experiences and outcomes. The development of peer support roles in mental health services can assist services to become more recovery focused, strengths based and person centred.'

Louise Christie, Scottish Recovery Network

Dates for the diary...

| What is it? | Who is it for? | When is it? | Where is it? | How do I register? |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Peer Worker Network Meeting (July) | Peer Workers (paid or voluntary) in K&C and/or QPP | Thursday 7 th July 11am – 12.30pm | K&C Mind Meeting Room | Zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk |
| Peer Support Training | Individuals with personal experience of mental health difficulties / emotional distress | TBC | Kensington and Chelsea Mind | Email zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk to reserve a space on the waiting list for the next cohort |
| Peer Support Network Meeting | Local organisations offering / wanting to offer peer support (K&C / QPP) | Wednesday 13 th July 10.30am – 12 noon | Pain Quotidien 15 – 17 Exhibition Road SW7 2HE | Email zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk to reserve your space |
| Peer Worker Network Meeting (August) | Peer Workers (paid or voluntary) in K&C and/or QPP | Wednesday 17 th August 11am – 12.30pm | K&C Mind Meeting Room | Zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk |
| Peerfest16 | Those who want to celebrate peer support | October - TBC | London | Being led by Sound Minds. Current information here |
| Peer Fusion | All local people / workers interested in Peer Support | January 2017 | TBC | Expressions of interest to Zoe.copeland@kcmind.org.uk |



Kensington and Chelsea



Improving mental health through peer support

