



Peer Support Impact Report

November 2021

It's been two years...

1 in 4 people experience mental health issues each year. It affects us all in some way, especially this year, due to the pandemic. Over the past 2 years we have established ourselves within the Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service (LMWS) as a team who share lived experiences of mental health to normalise experiences of accessing and receiving support. We now have a team of 6 paid staff and 29 volunteers who support clients whilst managing their own mental health.

Our key focus for the last two years has been to improve the experience and outcomes for clients who experience inequalities and additional barriers in accessing mental health support and therapy. We are excited about becoming part of the new LMWS Inclusion Team where we can share our learning on a wider scale.

Since starting the project 2 years ago, we have received 97 referrals to provide 1-2-1 peer support for clients accessing the service.

We have also helped 20 clients test beliefs about themselves as part of their therapy.



LMWS Peer Support



We've established a new way of working that values lived experience as an asset.

1 in 3



clients are from a black or minority ethnic background



63%

clients have a disability or long-term condition

9



clients are supported with interpreters

41%

of clients identify as male and

55%

of clients identify as female



*4% have not stated, disclosed, or their gender is indeterminate

We have met and supported numerous clients who are at different stages of their wellbeing journey. This includes:

- Clients in the community who have not currently made the decision to access help
- Clients having a therapy assessment
- Clients waiting for therapy
- Clients having therapy
- Clients leaving the service.

Throughout the last two years we have listened to clients, learnt about their experiences, and helped them make suggestions of ways the wider service can improve.

We have consistently received positive feedback from our clients.



LMWS Peer Support



Our team of 29 volunteers have remained with us for the last 2 years.

Thank you to all our volunteers!

Our volunteers have been a key part of our service. They have provided high quality support to clients with a range of needs and life experiences.

In addition, they have also co-delivered part of the volunteer training, coproduced letters, written blogs, recorded videos about their own lived experiences, and supported clients with low digital literacy and digital confidence.

They have been role models within our communities and team, inspiring others and demonstrating that people can and do recover.



29
volunteers
and
2
paid, part-time peer
support workers
have supported a
total of
72
clients to date

1 in 4

of volunteers

identify as LGBTQIA+



1 in 3

of volunteers are from a
black or minority ethnic
background



100%

of volunteers have
lived experience of
mental health
difficulties



**41% of our volunteers have
obtained paid employment
through the skills they have learnt.**



These are some quotes from volunteers about the volunteer training they have received:

"Excellent delivery and looking forward to the rest."

"Really enjoyable and lively."

"Very well delivered, thank you."

"Brilliantly delivered."

"Learnt a lot"

"It has improved the relationships in my personal life."

"I will practice listening and reflection."

Since the project started, we have helped clients in a range of different ways including...

Supporting clients to remain in the service and get the help that they need

Supporting clients with their digital literacy to help them become more confident with online appointments and accessing mental health support online

Supporting clients while they are waiting to start therapy

Buddying clients to their first peer support group outside of LMWS to meet people with shared lived experiences

Helping clients reach 'recovery' as an improvement in their symptoms of anxiety and depression

Helping clients see the value in having therapy

Helping clients take control of their own recovery and access support in their wider communities

Educating clients on what support they can get from LMWS to debunk myths

Helping clients with social anxiety to challenge assumptions about themselves

Supporting clients to apply for digital devices to access online support

Supporting clients to access their first few therapy appointments

Integrating peer support and lived experience into drop-ins in the wider community

Preventing clients who face additional barriers in accessing therapy from being discharged from the service

Supporting clients to successfully leave therapy and build lives in their communities

Improving engagement by sharing our lived experiences of having therapy in LMWS

Sharing wellbeing tips and resources with clients

Helping clients to complete therapy homework and put the skills they learn with their therapists into practice

Destigmatising accessing help for mental health issues

Helping clients get the most out of therapy in LMWS

Helping clients prepare for therapy



LMWS Peer Support



Quotes from Clients

"I felt like I could talk openly without judgment as they know and have lived through it. I felt comfortable with them. I don't know where I would be now without the support, I wish it didn't end and went on for longer as I miss speaking to them. I even have told other people about how much it helped me, I have told them to refer to the service and how they can get help."

"Peer support was very helpful. It helped me feel supported and less lonely. I felt like I was relying on my grandson too much, so it was helpful to speak to someone else and have a different perspective. My time with peer support went very fast!"

"It didn't feel weird getting support from a volunteer as they had been through things with their mental health. I felt like I could talk openly without judgment as they know and have lived through it. I felt comfortable with them."

"If someone was being referred for peer support, I would tell them how much of a good service it is because the peer supporter has experienced similar things - it makes it easier to connect with them."

"The support from my peer supporter was absolutely great! It was really helpful to discuss things over that I had learnt in CBT with my peer supporter. I looked forward to the calls. It was really good. The calls with my peer supporter helped me think about how to keep going. They linked me in with other peer support groups in the city."

"My peer supporter helped me turnaround from the depths of depression. I had no interest in anything or anybody but speaking to them helped me with this...I wouldn't be where I am today without the support."

"It's nice to talk to people who've been through the same thing. It can be hard to explain to people who can't relate, and it's sometimes frustrating when they don't understand. It's just such a nice feeling to know I'm not alone"

"It has been a very good experience right from the beginning. She understands, she knows what I am talking about...I feel like she's on my side and going at my pace. It's nice to know I can get through tough days because I am speaking to someone who really has been there too and still gets through the days. It's been vital in keeping me in the service whilst I'm waiting for a replacement therapist. However, I'm happier have a peer supporter rather than therapy! She is on the same page as me and I feel like I can recover by just speaking to her."

The main thing [I learnt from peer support] is that I shouldn't be ashamed of who I am. Lots of people are like me and it is reassuring speaking to someone who knows exactly what I am going through... I feel so comfortable with [my peer supporter], and the CBT homework doesn't feel like homework.





Quotes from Our Volunteers

"I wanted to say thank you. Thank you so much for the opportunity you have given me because I have never felt a sense of joy from the work I have done until I volunteered here"

"Thank you so much for the opportunity to become a volunteer. It came just at the right time. I am a carer and being a volunteer kept my sanity through the lockdown. I don't know where I would be without this. It has kept me going. I have looked forward to my client sessions."

"I am working now - Touchstone is a good part of that. Dipping my toes into being with other people again got my confidence back up and back into the world of work. So it is a win all round! I have never regretted it for a second and hope to continue with it in the future."

"So far, I have loved everything about volunteering. The fact that I have been able to do CBT experiments, 121 peer support and now potentially be part of drop-ins makes this a golden opportunity."

"I'd always wanted to help other people to prevent them from getting as low as I had. This was invaluable to me during lockdown. It kept my mind focused, and I have relished and enjoyed every single course I've been on. I couldn't have done any of this without the training I received from Touchstone and the confidence they gave back to me. This has generated a positive ripple effect to other organisations and people. I finally felt that I had a sense of purpose again. I feel part of something very special within Touchstone and LMWS."

"Being someone of a Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background... it is not often you feel like you have mentors or opportunities to get free help with mental health, let alone help people with mental health... For me, the fact that I am a BAME psychology student, I thought there was no chance I was going to find the experience or develop the skillset I needed to help myself to get opportunities to help.....it has turned out to be so much more than something to put on my CV. Its added some much-needed meaning to my life.....I feel ,beyond my religious beliefs, volunteering with Touchstone has given me that."

"I became a volunteer because I wanted to share my experiences with clients accessing the Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service (LMWS) who have had similar experiences to me. I know how soul-destroying mental health and substance misuse can be and I'll be happy if I can help just one person not go through what I went through. I have had training by LMWS and I am now supporting clients to access therapy as a volunteer. It's fantastic!"

If you would like to hear more about the range of impacts volunteering has had on the lives of our volunteers, here are some videos from two of our volunteers:

Ken: <https://youtu.be/oL0L7xE3VwM>

Tracey: <https://youtu.be/WHEUuJqVCgg>

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Quotes from Colleagues in LMWS

"Firstly, thank you [peer supporter] for being so flexible and understanding....

Your comments about what makes you feel vulnerable in the feedback made it very genuine and meaningful. You are a very relatable person and an asset to peer support."

"You have really kept on top of this situation and gone above and beyond in supporting this client.....I have been so impressed with Peer Support – even though, in this instance you've gone way beyond the usual tasks and expectations of the role. Thank you both for keeping this case on track and for keeping me informed."

"The volunteer's insightful reflections and normalising stance has culminated in a clinically meaningful intervention for the client. They are a delightful colleague and person, and I am really looking forward to working with them again."

"I also want to say a massive thank you to the Peer Support team who have achieved such a lot in a very short space of time."

"I have found the volunteers that have assisted so far to be warm and personable, and clients have commented on their appreciation of this."

The volunteers have been very open to direction and have been able to give precise and constructive feedback when asked. Knowing that I can reliably and regularly plan for sessions that facilitate these social situations is a huge benefit."

"It was great. She was really great and responsive with her communication..... the client found the small talk experiment very helpful."

"Firstly, thank you for being so flexible and understanding..... As a result, [the client] is now open to paying attention to positive evidence after a difficult past."

"What you offer is fantastic- it's brilliant that we have access to this as therapists."



LMWS Peer Support



Do you like what you've read?

We couldn't do the vital work that we do without the support from our volunteers, colleagues, the service and the wider community.

If you would like to get involved you can receive our newsletter to stay up to date with upcoming opportunities.

You can sign up for our newsletter by contacting us by email:

LMWSpeersupport@touchstonesupport.org.uk



Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service is a partnership between:

Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Leeds GP Confederation, Northpoint Wellbeing, Community Links, Touchstone, Women's Counselling and Therapy Service, Homestart Leeds, Ieso Digital Health, SilverCloud Health, SignHealth