

LIVED EXPERIENCE

At Recovery Focus we champion lived experience, and encourage our staff, volunteers and the people we support with lived experience to share and learn from each other. We encourage applications for all our roles from people with lived experience, knowing the benefit this can bring to the quality of support we offer.

We have a dedicated lived experience inclusion group who meet regularly to support and improve the experience of people with lived experience within our organisation. They have put together this overview of why lived experience matters:

Enhancing the support provided

Sharing lived experience can help someone we support to build a relationship, develop trust and make a connection with the staff supporting them. It can be a powerful means for developing empathy towards others who face difficulties and disadvantages.

Adversity and personal difficulties can enrich our understanding of human experiences, which in turn enhances the support offered to other people. Staff with lived experience can act as a role model and inspiration to others, and evidence that it isn't a barrier to achievement – creating and enabling hope in others.

People with lived experience can de-mystify the risks of sharing personal experiences. There is a misconception that sharing your own experiences can remove the focus from the person seeking help, but we know this can be done appropriately and shared for the benefit of the person being supported. Having a worker who has lived experience can be a real source of motivation for change for someone we support.

Reducing stigma and isolation

Sharing lived experience reduces the stigma felt by many in relation to mental health, domestic abuse, substance use and gambling issues, and can help to normalise experience of these issues. Knowing that many others have experienced the problem can reduce the sense of isolation in people, and the feeling there is something 'wrong' with them. Sharing also reinforces a strength and assets based approach, and reinforces the fact that the experience of a problem doesn't define a person.

Inspiring colleagues

We know staff with lived experience benefit their colleagues and services by providing inspiration for change, positive role models and facilitating a better understanding of the challenges faced by the people we support. It can also mean the people we support are more willing to engage with the service.

Valuing diversity

Having staff who are positive about lived experience can make us more understanding and open about our diversity and create a more inclusive workplace where people are comfortable being themselves.

Recruitment and retention

By being positive about lived experience in our recruitment we make it clear to the outside world that we are an organisation that is positive about lived experience and diversity. In doing so we want to attract more people to work for us and to want to stay longer in an organisation that is about creating a fairer more inclusive society.

Leadership

Staff with lived experience work at all levels of our organisation. This includes board members, senior leadership and operational management as well as frontline staff. Having people with lived experience helps improve decision making - ensuring the lived experience perspective is central to our decision making processes and governance of the organisation.

Communication

Being positive about lived experience helps our communications and our public profile by demonstrating we are an inclusive organisation that sees the strengths and benefits of lived experience.

The role of the Lived Experience Inclusion Group

Our Lived Experience Inclusion Group aims to enable Recovery Focus to draw from the talent, skills and strengths of people with lived experience to help us to create a culture where all personal experience is valued and made the most of for the benefit of everyone in the organisation.

The Lived Experience Inclusion Group assists people we support to have a voice in influencing how services and interventions are delivered, and strengthening co-production. The group also provide useful guidance and documents on how the organisation can recruit and support people with lived experience to progress within the organisation. We also provide peer support to staff with lived experience in the organisation.

