

Peer Supporter Handbook – what to include

A Peer Supporter handbook serves as a reference point for Peer Supporters, and supports information disseminated during induction. A handbook should be concise and easy to read. There will be particular information that we recommend should be included in your handbook. To help you with structure and content we have created a sample outline which can be referenced whilst developing a handbook for your service. The headings and information we provide here are not exhaustive – they are meant to give you a starting point.

1 Introduction:

Outline the purpose of the handbook, who it is for, some words of encouragement/thanks to your Peer Mentors.

2 Frequently Asked Questions:

This is a good way to highlight key information about the Peer Supporter, role and processes to facilitate the role delivery. We have provided some sample questions, and answers. Whilst many of the FAQs will be standard, the answers in local handbooks will be dependent on the shape and structure of your project, and your organisations' policies and procedures.

Example FAQs (with a couple of sample answers) will include (in no particular order):

How much time do I have to commit to being a Peer Mentor?

The amount of time a Peer Mentor commits will vary, depending on who they are supporting. In general Peer Mentors will meet with mentees every few weeks. If you are matched to more than one mentee you may be seeing someone once a week or once a fortnight. We would suggest that you need to feel able to take time to support one or two mentees at a time, and able to attend meetings and on-going training sessions three or four times a year.

How long do you expect Peer Mentors to be in role?

How long will I have to wait to be matched to a mentee?

What if you can't match me to someone easily?

What happens if I don't get on with my mentee?

What happens if I become friends with my mentee?

How do I debrief after a one to one session?

What do I do if I have any concerns?

How often/what type of supervision do we get?

What happens if I have to cancel a session at short notice?

What happens if my mentee does not show up for a session?

What kind of ongoing training and support is there?

What do I do if I am feeling wobbly about being a Peer Mentor and need to take a break?

What training and development opportunities are there for Peer Mentors?

Do we get our expenses paid?

We do not want you to be out of pocket. We will therefore reimburse expenses up to xx. We do not generally reimburse taxi fares or unusual costs that have not been agreed in advance. Please see section xx Expenses – page xx

3 Policy and Procedure – *the most important thing to bear in mind with Peer Mentors who are volunteers is that they are not bound by employment law. Therefore your volunteer policy should cover all aspects of volunteer service and any other policies you include should be organisational – e.g. Health and Safety rather than Employment/HR policies.*

There are certain policies and procedures that you need to be aware of, and follow as part of your role as a Peer Mentor with us. The policies are designed to protect you, and keep you safe while you volunteer with us. You will have been introduced to these policies at induction and can access them at any time by contacting xxx.

3.i Volunteer Policy (include reference number and link to policy if available)

This is our general policy regarding volunteers and covers all aspects of our responsibility to you, what we expect from you and what you can expect from us.

3.ii Lone Working Policy and Procedure

Your safety when supporting mentees is our upmost priority and we have shared responsibility for keeping you safe.

3.iii Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Safeguarding is about prevention as well as reacting to issues that may arise. As Peer Mentors you may come up against issues or concerns and you need to be aware of our organisation's policy and procedures in relation to this. We have covered safeguarding with you at training and will use further meetings and training to constantly check in with you. However, being familiar with our policy and procedure ensures that you are up to date with our approach.

3.iv Expenses Policy and Procedure

Our Expenses Policy and Procedure explains what we will reimburse, and the process for payment of expenses.

3.v Health and Safety and Fire Policy and Procedure

Your health and safety is our priority and we will have covered procedures in relation to this during your induction.

3.vi Complaints Policy and Procedure

If you, or someone you are supporting has a complaint, you need to be aware of our policy in relation to this and who to contact.

4 General information for Peer Mentors

The Volunteer Policy will give you a detailed overview of our approach to working with volunteers. Below is information we feel you need to have to hand for your role as a Peer Mentor:

4.i Dealing with concerns

If you have *any* concerns regarding your role, or the people you are supporting, you must contact us straight away. Often talking through worries can be enough to solve a problem,



but the longer you sit on a worry – the bigger it can become and the harder it can be to resolve. In particular, if you feel there may be a safeguarding concern you must contact us straight away. Below are the contact details of everyone involved in the project, and details of how to contact us during and outside office hours.

4.ii Supervision and support

Part of being a Peer Mentor is having access to supervision and support to ensure that you are able to reflect on your practice and develop your skills and competencies. You will be asked to attend one to one and/or group supervision and will also have one to one meetings with the person supporting you. *(either expand on your structure for supervision here, or direct the mentor to the relevant information regarding your policy in relation to this).*

4.iii Dealing with issues

If you or someone you are supporting has an issue or complaint, we take this very seriously. In your case, if you are able to discuss this with the person supporting you then as with concerns, hopefully this can be resolved quickly. If your issue is *about* the person supporting you then you need to contact the correct person in the organisation to deal with your complaint and resolve it as quickly as possible. In the case of someone you are supporting having an issue, you must never try to deal with the complaint yourself. You may take a note of the nature of the complaint and then refer it on to the relevant staff member to deal with.

There may be times when we have a concern that we wish to discuss with you. We will contact you and arrange to meet with you to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. If a concern cannot be resolved one or both parties may decide that the role is no longer suitable for you.

4.iv Ending your service with us

We are hoping that we will have a long relationship with you. We value the support and time that you commit to us and the difference that you make to the people you work with. However, we also acknowledge that being a Peer Mentor may be the start of a journey for you, back in employment or a change of career focus. We would much rather that you let us know if you are thinking of leaving the service so that we can get feedback from you to help us continually improve our project – and so that we can thank you properly. We do have people that leave and then come back!

5 Keeping in contact

It is important that you know who to contact and how to keep in contact with us. Our contact details are as follows:

Include telephone and email addresses of key contacts and what they are responsible for – who and how to contact the organisation in an emergency.