

Peer Support Survey

A report by **healthwatch**
York for the
Northern Quarter Partnership

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Introduction

The Northern Quarter (NQ) Project in York is working to change how we approach mental health in our city. This project is influenced by the community-based approach set up in Trieste, Italy. This approach connects people with already existing opportunities that can improve mental health and wellbeing.

The work in York is based in eight council wards in the north of the city which already have a wealth of community assets.

Peer support has come up in previous consultations around mental health in the city. The NQ Project has received funding to set up peer support and peer carer support. Information about these opportunities was shared with the voluntary and community sectors across York in late March.

In early March we put together two short surveys so people could give feedback to help shape initial proposals. This report summarises the results of the Peer Support survey.

What is Peer Support?

Peer support is when people use their own experiences to help each other. There are different types of peer support, but they all aim to:

- bring together people with shared experiences to support each other;
- provide a space where you feel accepted and understood;
- treat everyone's experiences as being equally important;
- involve both giving and receiving support.

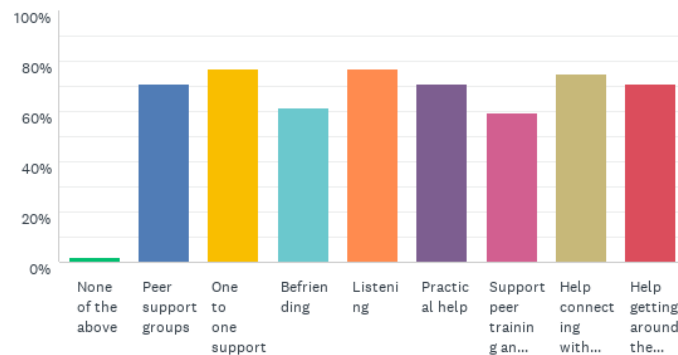
This might include groups, one to one support, befriending, listening, practical help, support challenge, help to navigate the mental health system, and peer education.

Peer Support Survey Results

52 people responded to the survey

1 The kinds of support people wanted

Q1 What kinds of support would you like a peer supporter to offer? Tick all that apply



(Full labels for final 3 columns: Support peer training and education; help connecting with other services and support; help getting around the mental health system.)

2 What difference would having a peer supporter make to someone leaving Foss Park Hospital to go home? Is there anything that you hope this project would achieve?

51 people answered this question.

The main themes from the responses to this question are:

Reducing isolation

This was a theme mentioned by many of the respondents.

“Less fear of being on your own. Connection is vital to reduce feeling isolated.”

“Provide the additional support needed, having someone who understands so you don’t feel as lonely.”

Confidence building

“Help to build confidence which I believe is knocked down with even a short admission.”

“Helping the person to feel safer, more confident.”

One to one support from someone who understands because they have been through the same experience

“That person has someone to support them to actually go home and aid in recovery and share life experiences.”

“Wouldn’t feel isolated and would feel that someone is there to understand, care for and about and also to understand the needs of the person.”

“A potentially very helpful connection with someone who has 'travelled the same road' and is likely to have at least some shared sense of how the individual may be feeling.”

Support with practical needs

“.....on leaving hospital the needs are probably more practical; e.g. help with shopping, cooking, ensuring that the patient has adequate meals, funds, warmth, and shelter to recuperate.”

“...practical support with informal information on benefits and statutory services available as well as the impact of medication such as side effects.....”

Social engagement and building connections

“Reduce isolation and fear on discharge from hospital. Opportunities to build a supportive network.”

“.....increased confidence and an opportunity to start to think collaboratively about a recovery pathway.”

Help to smooth the transition from home to hospital and avoid readmissions

“The person would not feel alone dealing with their feelings when they leave the hospital, sometimes the patients go from all to nothing when discharged or also they can slip back into same habits which will make them be admitted again so may need support to break the cycle.”

“A more seamless transfer in to the community and end to end support”

3 What support and training do you think a peer supporter would need?

A wide range of training and support needs were outlined by 50 people in the survey. Other issues raised included the need to be clear about the peer supporter role.

The role of a peer supporter

Some comments raised issues about the role of a Peer Supporter and the need for clarity about this. There were also comments about the kinds of personal qualities required.

“Is it more an attitude of mind than acquiring a bunch of skills? Yes..”

“how to be patient, emphatic without becoming condescending or patronizing.”

“I'm hoping the peer supporter is an expert by experience - so a real peer.”

“A clear understanding of what is and is not the role of a peer support worker.”

“Understanding that they are there to support the person make decisions & navigate their world not tell them what's best..”

“A peer supporter must be made aware of the limits of their work.”

Support needs

There were a lot of comments about the need for supervision or one to one support for peer support workers, as well as group support. There were differing views about how this could be provided.

“Regular line management plus emotional supervision preferably from external supervisor”

“A forum for individual supporters, plus a further forum for organisations”

“clinical supervision can over formalise the role especially if the supervisor is from a statutory provider. You could think about establishing a more democratic approach where supporters come together to support each other and talk through issues as they arise”

“Support needs to be available through regular supervision and accessible in an emergency situation.”

“I think they need clinical supervision and access to mental health support for themselves...”

Some of the comments raised the real importance of training and the need for peer supporters to ensure their own mental health is supported and for that support to be available:

“a very great deal, if not this service could do more harm than good”

“The peer supporter must feel comfortable enough to seek help if they feel that their health is affected and know that help will be available at short notice.”

“support in who to talk to for support themselves”

Training needs

A wide range of training needs were identified, including:

- Mental health first aid
- Crisis management
- Trauma training
- Safeguarding
- Communication skills
- Counselling
- Confidentiality and boundaries
- Data protection
- Mental health conditions
- Insight into service models and roles
- Risk management
- Information about local networks and sources of support

4 Do you have any thoughts on which groups or organisations should employ peer support workers?

A total of 50 people responded of whom 14% answered 'no' and 6% were not sure.

A further 24% thought all relevant organisations or any organisation could employ peer support workers.

“Any established group which offers an appropriate service and has the key elements in place”

“I think peer support workers can fit in any organisation which is prepared to put the effort into including them in their workforce.”

“Different people will want to access different groups/organisations”

Another 28% thought that it should be the voluntary sector in general or a specific named organisation who should employ peer support workers.

“I think it would be great if they are independent of statutory services”

“I think it should be a voluntary sector organisation that already works around peer support”

However, 12% felt that the statutory sector should be the employers with some of these saying it should be the local mental health trust or NHS who took on the role. It was stated that the mental health trust already employs peer support workers.

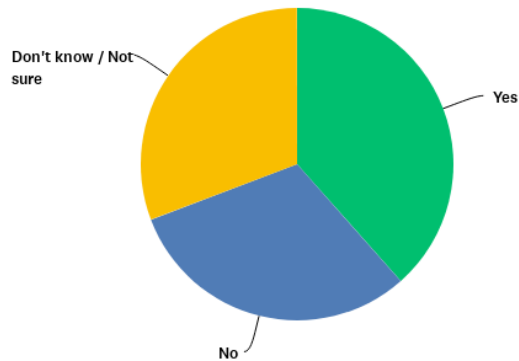
The remaining 16% offered a range of responses. Some named a specific list of local statutory and voluntary organisations who should take on the role whilst other mentioned the kind of approach was the important thing.

“Those that have experience of person-centred approaches and work in a collaborative manner”

“People setting up projects who have lived experience of mental illness.”

5 Is who employs them important to you?

Q5 Is who employs them important to you?



Of the 52 responses to this question:

- 38% said yes
- 31% said no
- 31% said don't know/not sure.

6 Would you be interested in knowing more or continuing to be involved? If yes, please leave your preferred contact details.

32 people responded to this question and the majority answered 'yes' and left contact details.

Partners in the Northern Quarter

