

# Peer Support Work

This page intentionally left blank

# Peer Support Work: Practice, Training & Implementation

EDITED BY

**DARYL MAHON**

*Independent Researcher, Ireland*



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL

First edition 2024

Editorial matter and selection © 2024 Daryl Mahon.  
Individual chapters © 2024 The authors.  
Published under exclusive licence by Emerald Publishing Limited.

**Reprints and permissions service**

Contact: [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without either the prior written permission of the publisher or a licence permitting restricted copying issued in the UK by The Copyright Licensing Agency and in the USA by The Copyright Clearance Center. Any opinions expressed in the chapters are those of the authors. Whilst Emerald makes every effort to ensure the quality and accuracy of its content, Emerald makes no representation implied or otherwise, as to the chapters' suitability and application and disclaims any warranties, express or implied, to their use.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83753-019-9 (Print)  
ISBN: 978-1-83753-018-2 (Online)  
ISBN: 978-1-83753-020-5 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

# Contents

About the Editor	<i>vii</i>
About the Contributors	<i>ix</i>
Preface	<i>xiii</i>
Acknowledgements	<i>xv</i>

## Part 1

<b>Chapter 1 Peer Support Work: A Brief Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Daryl Mahon</i>	
<b>Chapter 2 Peer Work in Mental Health Services</b>	<b>9</b>
<i>Michael John Norton</i>	
<b>Chapter 3 Addiction and Peer Support Work</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Mark Wright and Daryl Mahon</i>	
<b>Chapter 4 A Peer Inside</b>	<b>35</b>
<i>David Breakspear and Daryl Mahon</i>	
<b>Chapter 5 Homelessness and Peer Work</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Chris O'Donnell and Anthony Cusack</i>	

## Part 2

<b>Chapter 6 Lived Experience of Direct Provision</b>	<b>61</b>
<i>Cennis Chikezie</i>	

<b>Chapter 7 Peer Work in Ethnic Minorities Communities</b>	73
<i>Osas Iyamu Usideme</i>	

<b>Chapter 8 Peer Support Work Within the Traveller Community</b>	83
<i>Margaret Harty</i>	

### Part 3

<b>Chapter 9 Common Themes in Peer Work</b>	97
<i>Daryl Mahon</i>	

<b>Chapter 10 The Supervision of Peers</b>	105
<i>Daryl Mahon and Michael John Norton</i>	

<b>Chapter 11 The Training and Education of Peer Support Workers</b>	115
<i>Martha Griffin, Paul Duff and Liam MacGabhann</i>	

<b>Chapter 12 Implementing Peer Support in Health and Social Care Systems: Ecological Considerations</b>	129
<i>Daryl Mahon</i>	

Index	139
-------	-----

## About the Editor

**Daryl Mahon** has 15 years working experience across human services as practitioner, manager, researcher and in academia. Daryl also lectures across a variety of academic areas, and uses research informed curriculum. He is an active early stage researcher, and has a range of publications, including academic textbooks and journal articles in the area of human and social sciences, including peer support, servant leadership, trauma and psychotherapy processes and outcomes. In addition to editing the book, Daryl authored three chapters, and co-authored two other chapters.

This page intentionally left blank



## About the Contributors

**David Breakspear** spent most of his life trapped in a vicious cycle of crisis and crime, however, it was through his roles he covered in prison, such as Shannon Trust mentor, listener and education mentor that he managed to break free of that cycle. David now dedicates his time in using his lived experience to influence reform to the policies and procedures of the criminal justice system. Since 2020, David has been a member of the Lived Experience Team at the charity Revolving Doors and in April 2023 he was taken on there as a peer mentor.

**Cennis Chikezie** is currently an Academic Associate Tutor with Open Training College (OTC), Dublin. He has extensive experience in social care service, having worked in the capacity of deputy team leader and social care leader, respectively, in both Adult and Children Residential Services. Cennis also has a fulltime key role in Crosscare Homeless Service, where he is hugely contributing towards improving the health, well-being and stability of individuals and their families. He obtained BA in Professional Social Care and BA (Honours) in Contemporary Disability Studies both from OTC. He also obtained Diploma in Social Studies from ARLT International Foundation, the Hague, the Netherlands, and Diploma in Quality Management from ATU/GMIT, Galway. In addition, Cennis holds BSc (Honours) in Agricultural Science and Education, as well as MEd in Education Administration and Planning, from University of Nigeria and University of Calabar, respectively.

**Anthony Cusack** is a professionally qualified and CORU registered Social Worker having attained a First Class Honours in the Professional Master of Social Work degree from University College Dublin. Anthony attained a first class honours in Social Policy and Sociology Bachelor of Social Science degree and also completed a Level 7 in Diploma Community Drug and Alcohol Work. Upon qualifying as a social worker, Anthony worked with CLAN (Cross Links and Advice Network), and Dublin City Council where he developed a keen interest in housing policy, homelessness, addiction and trauma.

**Paul Duff** (MSc) has over 12 years' experience working across homeless, addiction and recovery services. My experience of recovery is both lived and professional, giving me insight from both perspectives. This has helped in the writing of the chapter on peer training, as a professional delivering training and having a level of personal understanding for people on the journey to being a recovery coach. From dealing with stigma and how we internalise it and how it can be a barrier

and how to overcome such barriers for people moving forward on a journey of recovery. It's worth noting the role of education and how for some, like me, it is an important component of building on a person's recovery capital.

**Martha Griffin** is employed as an Expert by Experience, Assistant Professor in Mental Health in Dublin City University and Chair of the Certificate in Peer Support Programme in Mental Health and a Peer Educator with the Dublin North, North East Recovery College. As well as having lived experience in mental health, Martha works from a human rights and community development perspective. Martha is a team member of Mad in Ireland.

**Margaret Harty** graduated from TUS Athlone with a first class honours degree in a four year Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Social Care practice course. Currently Margaret is completing a Masters in Social Work at Maynooth University. She is extremely passionate about growth and change whilst having a sense of equality and diversity especially within the Travelling community. Some aspects of her work involve advocating on behalf of the Travelling community mainly in terms of their education. This is done through the delivery of workshops for Traveller and Roma students on accessing third level education.

**Liam MacGabhann** has been working as a mental health practitioner, community activist, researcher and educator for over 30 years. Much of his collaborative work centres around people reconciling their own experiences, perceptions and practices with other people/groups associated with mental health and using different approaches to improve these at individual, group, organisational and community level. Examples of relevant areas include where people have extraordinary experiences and beliefs; when people are disenfranchised by society and community; and in the area of Trauma and responses to traumatic events. Approaches include cooperative learning, participative action, open dialogue and systemic family constellations work. Since 2002 Liam has been actively involved in pushing the agenda for active participation of people with self experience and family members in practice transformative educational programmes, for example, the Certificate, Peer Support Working in Mental Health. Although Liam has his own lived experience of trauma and mental health issues personally and as a family member, he has been privileged in education, professional training and monetary reward and has thus far, never felt disenfranchised, disempowered or beholden to statutory services on his healing journey. From his personal philosophical perspective on what constitutes 'Expert by Experience, through Lived Experience', he does not identify as 'Expert by Experience'. He identifies more with 'Radical Professional' (sometimes referred to as Ally) in service to the inclusion of all citizens in self-determination of their lives amidst health and social care systems, wherever he has that opportunity.

**Michael John Norton** is a Recovery and Engagement Programme Lead with the Health Service Executive Office of Mental Health Engagement and Recovery and a Part Time Lecturer with University College Cork. In his role, Michael John has responsibility for the implementation of recovery-oriented practice within Irish mental health services. He is involved in the development of peer support workers

in the said service. He is also module co-ordinator for a module exploring mental health policy and practice with University College Cork. He has also spent the last few years being an advocate for mental health and is involved in numerous working groups nationally and internationally looking at areas such as co-production, family recovery and trauma. He also is an early career researcher who's research interests include peer support, co-production, mental health and recovery.

**Chris O'Donnell** has a background in music and languages and majored in Slavonic studies in university. She later went on to do the peer support course in DCU and her expertise lies in lived experience of homelessness and mental health distress. She currently works in homelessness and peer support.

**Osas Iyamu Usideme** is originally from Nigeria and works as an Intercultural Health Advocate with the Intercultural Health Hub in Waterford & South Tipperary Community Youth Services. Her work is primarily with Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Direct Provision Centres and the broader community within the Southeast region. Osas came to Ireland in 2003 as an Asylum Seeker. She began life in a Direct Provision Centre herself, giving her first-hand experience of the health issues that arise for other displaced people like her. Osas became a Community Knowledge Worker working with people in Direct Provision centres focusing on mental health and well-being. On receiving her status in Ireland, Osas sought to go back into full-time education. However, because of her status in the country, she was not entitled to initial grants privilege. Her resilience and commitment have enabled her to eventually achieve a Degree in Psychology with Waterford Institute of Technology and a Master's Degree in Applied Psychology in Mental Health with Ulster University, Derry. Osas is a respected advocate and speaker of health and human rights for other displaced women and families today.

**Mark Wright** is coordinating the Recovery Academy Ireland within the Cork/Kerry region. His role as a professional practitioner is to advocate, support and guide people who are in addiction, recovery and homelessness while engaging within the peer support role. Mark is in recovery over nine years and has been through multiple services both in addiction and recovery. He coordinates multiple programmes, support groups, educational pathways and fitness groups bringing his lived experience as a peer, knowledge around different services and sectors to the participants that engage with the service.

This page intentionally left blank

# Preface

Like all books, it started with an idea. To write a book from a lived experience perspective. In setting out to do this, I first drew on my personal lived experience, of drug addiction, prison, homelessness and trauma. However, it has been many years since I have worked in a peer or lived experience role, and so it quickly became apparent that I needed to involve others. Once this decision was made, I committed to involving as many people from different backgrounds and experiences as possible. It was challenging to do this. I leaned on all my connections and networks, and in many ways I became not just an author, but took on the role of peer mentor.

Lived experience is a concept of increasing interest to those who make policy and commission services within health and social care systems. One way to incorporate this experience into service delivery is through the use of peer support workers. Peers provide support across a wide variety of services, and do so from a place of compassion and experiential knowledge. I am extremely proud that this book includes, for the very first time, a mix of peer support workers in a variety of different settings. The diversity of topics and people provides rich and interesting chapters.

In the first part of the book, I introduce the idea of peer work and some of the outcomes associated with this emerging profession. Part 1 provides chapters on peer work in mental health, homelessness, substance use and prison settings. Part 2 is based around ethnicity; we have chapters from those with lived experience of being refugees/asylum seekers, and from a member of the Irish Traveller community. The final section of the book, part 3 explores common themes in peer work, the supervision and education of peers and how systems of care can begin to think about implementing peer support workers.

This book is based on our collective experiences, and while I endeavoured to include as many voices as possible, it remains that the chapters in this book are not representative of all peers or lived experiences. With this in mind, we hope that we provide the reader with an insightful journey into the many areas where lived experience is brought to life through peer support.

This page intentionally left blank

# Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to Christine O'Donnell who sadly passed away shortly after submitting her contribution to the book. Chris co-authored a chapter on peer work in homelessness settings.

To Katy Lumsden, for your continued support and proof reading. Thank you.