

rethink

Developing service-user led services (peer groups)

The Bristol Experience

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user & Peer Group developer)
and to Gaelle & Jane (CMHW's)



Working together to help everyone
affected by severe mental illness
recover a better quality of life

A Process of Modernisation

- Rethink community support services in Bristol began a process of modernisation from the end of 2005
- From Buildings based to one-to-one work in the community
- All service staff moved to the central service building (4 community teams and 2 development services).
- A maximum of 45 people are supported by each community team using Individual Recovery plans

The Evolution of Peer Groups

- What happened to groups and social spaces?
- Where was the opportunity for more informal social support?
- Some very unhappy service users
- A timely donation of £5000
- A chance meeting



The first meeting



- A city-wide service-user forum took place in September 2006
- The birth of the POD Peer Organisation Development Group as the HUB
- Identification of goals/action plan
- Resources needed

POD Goals....



The POD meet monthly to:

- Share information
- Review the POD action plan
- Discuss activities, tasks & peer groups
- Prepare posters/ 'flyers'
- Talk about changes, how to cope/support both themselves and other service-users
- Have time to socialise
- Promote a friendly atmosphere
- Liaise with staff as and when necessary

...and POD roles

- Sharing responsibility for collecting and distributing information to and from the peer groups and carrying out tasks decided on by the group to further the POD and the individual groups
- Advertising other peer groups available (rethink and beyond)
- Promote service-user independence and empowerment
- Communicating between groups and rethink services
- Ensuring the voices of service-users are heard
- Being a point of contact for information, support & advice on peer groups and their development

Support for POD and Peer Groups

- Group/staff links and support from line managers
- All parts of the Rethink Fellowship including the Regional committee
- National Groups Manager and Group Network
- Group Guide and development tools
- Learning sessions



Group/ Staff Links Have Supported...

- Identifying the need for peer groups and supporting development
- Dealing with initial start up issues, e.g., ToR, group contracts, finding venues, managing related anxieties
- Issues arising around opening bank accounts/book-keeping
- General problem solving
- Keeping all staff informed of POD issues & developments
- Funding applications
- Access to a designated computer and set up of a POD email account
- Information finding and sharing

Staff Links have not....

- Become part of the decision making processes of any of the groups
- Made decisions on behalf of any of the groups
- Given one-to-one support to any member of the group unless as part of their IRP and that does not happen within group time(s)

Reflections from a Staff Link

It is quite a challenging role as rather than being there to facilitate the group your role is to be there to support someone else to facilitate the group and help them to develop skills and techniques to be able to manage meetings. Personally this has been very difficult at times as you can see easier ways of doing things etc and not giving too many suggestions so that you end up steering the group. I think it has really given me the opportunity to support people in empowering themselves. Out of the group, there is sometimes a need to give more one to one work supporting people with administration aspects of the P.O.D., this also is a really good opportunity for service users to learn new skills and also for me to pass on some knowledge about this. There have also been POD training which were useful learning more about how peer groups are set up and how to run them. Overall I have gained a lot from supporting the POD and hope to continue to learn more.

Learning Sessions

To support specific identified concerns that had been raised in relation to attending and managing peer groups, the following sessions were facilitated:

- Developing group contracts and ToR
- Valued behaviours – rethink expects
- Funding opportunities & managing accounts
- H&S and managing difficult behaviour

The P.O.D & Peer Groups today

- The POD continues to meet monthly and supports people who have become key to the individual peer groups across the city
- There are currently 4 peer groups (including the POD), three of which are now registered rethink groups.
- Each group reflects what its participants want

The Fishponds Women's Group then...

- The 'Fishponds Women's Group' met weekly within a service based day service for some years and were very angry about the changes to service delivery.



- The group were adamant that a peer group would not be possible and fearful of the responsibility that such a group would bring

.....and now



- The group have been managing on their own for nearly 2 years and meet weekly. Attendance levels have been maintained with new members welcomed
- In addition to the start up costs from the donation, they applied successfully for sponsorship from a local business to pay the ongoing costs of room hire
- The group developed their own group contract agreement which is now a National model for other groups
- They set up a bank account and accounting procedures including a petty cash system and have submitted financial returns for audit processes
- The group developed a self-evaluation tool

The Sketchpad Group

- This group operated in North Bristol, was open to the public and met weekly in a venue during the winter and out and about during the summer months
- It had its own bank account and a designated treasurer
- The group had a rethink branded leaflet
- Additional funding was applied for successfully from a community grant awarding body
- The group ceased in 2008

The South Bristol Peer Group

- This is another mixed gender group which set up a bank account and used a mix of venues to meet.
- The group meets every fortnight.
- The group want to become open to people in and out of hospital and want to look at organising trips and activities.

The Food Group



- This peer group is open to people across the city who may or may not use rethink's community services. There is an organised schedule of where the group will meet to experience food from a variety of different types of venues and cultures and it is led by one person with support from staff.

South Bristol Staff Link reflection

“My involvement in setting up the South Bristol peer group has significantly contributed to developing my role as a CMHW. Supporting the South Bristol peer group to develop has been a new experience and has contributed towards building up both my personal and work knowledge around the different stages of setting a group.”

South Bristol Staff Link reflection continued

Being involved has also made me aware of some of the issues that service users and staff can face through this process:

- service user's fears around managing a group with no workers
- staff fears of not being able to answer people's questions
- concerns around how much commitment is needed
- Supporting people to create their own group without being too involved.

Facing the difficulties that supporting a peer group involves has particularly increased my confidence levels.

Developing a real understanding of what supporting means:



“Working with service users at developing their own project helped me to understand better that supporting is not about taking the control away from people by making decisions to achieve what we want them to achieve. Supporting service users in setting up their own group is about time, patience and keeping positive. It is about helping people develop a sense of responsibility and achievement and about encouraging those people to believe in what they do by raising awareness of what has been achieved and what will be achieved.”

Key Issues of Success



- Service-user's desire for peer groups
- Service-users commitment to making the groups happen
- Addressing of all the issues and anxieties expressed
- Involvement of the National Groups Manager
- Staff support
- Communication between staff and peer groups
- Resources to support the development

Reflections on the process

- The development of peer groups in Bristol happened in response to identified needs and the modernisation of day services. A more pro-active approach and earlier input may have seen an easier transition and should be an option for development available to all services.
- A model for staff links is essential
- Witnessing the empowerment of those involved moving from a place of fear and anger to self belief and positive achievement has been a privilege

The benefits for all

- Increased involvement of users in all aspects of service provision
- Better communication between all stakeholders
- A greater understanding of all roles and perspectives
- A more effective and representative service user voice
- Development opportunities and more diversity in staff roles
- More opportunities for service users to develop their own skills
- Developments not dependent on contract - lead to enhanced service provision

And the future

- National rollout of Group/staff links model
- National rollout of Peer Group models to enhance service provision
- Community Services modernisation guide published 2009
- More Peer support developments

Thanks for listening

- Any questions?