

The words we use – Peer Support Plus®



Some of the words we use at Peer Support Plus and words you may encounter in other mental health settings may seem unfamiliar. They may have particular meanings when we use them in context:

Roles

Us Everyone who engages in any capacity with Peer Support Plus C.I.O. to help achieve our charitable Objects is valued equally and referred to as we. There are no 'Them' at Peer Support Plus.

Peer Our name for beneficiaries of the charity Peer Support Plus.

Diversity We aim to benefit Peers and involve Volunteers from the widest possible range of backgrounds, races, abilities, beliefs, sexual orientations, etc.

Equal Opportunities To help us engage with, learn from and benefit all adults everywhere in Leeds, Peer Support Plus is committed to treat you without discrimination, especially re: Age; Sex; Sexual Orientation; Gender reassignment; Race; Disability; Religion or belief; Pregnancy and Maternity; Marriage and Civil Partnership. (Note: The Equality Act 2010 does not apply to those who volunteer.)

Open-Ended Peers usually continue their *Peer Relationship*¹ with us until they feel ready to self-manage their mental health and move on.

Group Support Group, Workshop or Course. The collective noun we use for those who work together at a Support Group, Workshop or Course.

Volunteer A Peer Support Plus Volunteer is someone who freely commits time, energy and talents to benefit others, while gaining a rewarding experience of working and personal growth, with no expectation of payment except necessary out of pocket expenses.

DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Check Is the term used for the analysis and recording of a person's past, looking specifically at any convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings they may have received.

In the nature of Peer Support Plus some Peers and Volunteers may be, or may become, vulnerable. It may not be possible to identify who is vulnerable at any given time so all of our Volunteers are required to undergo or produce a DBS Check. The range of checks required, and the Risk Assessed relevance of anything reported, depends on the Volunteer role you apply for. See *Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks*¹.

Learn more about DBS Checks on this [GOV.UK webpage](#).

Facilitator A Peer who is also a trained (or trainee) Volunteer, not an expert. Every Group Facilitator is learning to better manage and maintain their mental health. Their lived experience is valued as equal to every other Peer's.

Facilitators are responsible for steering the Group Work process in the room within boundaries described in, for examples: *Guidelines for Behaviour*¹; *Safeguarding Policy*¹; *Health and Safety Policy*¹; *Privacy Policy*¹. Our policies, processes and guidelines are designed to keep us all safe.

Mentor A Volunteer who enters a learning, development and guiding partnership with another Volunteer who has less knowledge and/or experience and wants to learn. Your Mentor may be older or younger than you but they will aspire to be an interested, accessible, informal, role model.

Team The collective noun we use for people working together to achieve a shared Peer Support Plus objective. For examples: Our Board of Trustees; Delivery Team; those writing or reviewing policy, procedures, workshop and course documents; attending Training; Fundraising together; Nurturing our charity's public persona; etc.

Delivery Team Lead Manages the recruitment and training of Volunteers and directs the charity's resources such as the Programme, Rooms, Volunteers and Mentors to ensure effective Peer Support Plus Group Work that benefits our Peers.

Delivery Team Administrator Helps to process the paperwork and communications necessary to help the charity achieve its Objects. We prefer to administer our activities and communications digitally whenever possible but will not leave out those who are digitally disadvantaged or choose not to engage with us digitally.

Peer Support Plus C.I.O. A Charitable Incorporated Organisation serving only the Leeds Metropolitan District. Registered with The Charity Commission in England, Charity Number 1190818. We exist only to benefit our Peers.

Objects Are stated in the *Constitution*¹ of Peer Support Plus CIO.

“To relieve sickness and preserve health of persons suffering from mental illness of any description or in need of rehabilitation and support as a result of such illness, in the Leeds Metropolitan District, by the provision of;

- Peer to Peer support.
- Educational workshops and courses on managing mental health illness and rehabilitation.
- Advice and guidance on living with mental health illness.

Nothing in this constitution shall authorise an application of the property of the C.I.O. for purposes which are not charitable.”

Member Anyone who supports the Objects may apply to become a voting Member of Peer Support Plus C.I.O. The Membership Fee is set at £ 0 per annum. Members democratically elect to our Board of Trustees people who are collectively responsible for directing the charity's activities and deciding matters such as *Vision, Values and Aims*¹, organisation, policy and procedures.

Trustee Directs Peer Support Plus C.I.O. and is one of the Board of Trustees who are legally responsible for the Governance and safe conduct of Peer Support Plus's activities. Trustees' roles must include Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. There are also Trustee roles we call 'People Lead' and 'Infrastructure and Brand Lead'. The Board of Trustees may co-opt others to become Trustees but anyone co-opted must stand for election at the next AGM.

Supporter Promotes Peer Support Plus; or raises funds; or donates time, money, services, skills or resources – to help achieve our Objects.

Supplier Contracts to provide Peer Support Plus with goods or services.

Commissioner or Funder An organisation that finances Peer Support Plus C.I.O. to provide specific activities designed to benefit our Peers.

Process

Peer Support Happens 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.

In peer support everyone's views and experiences are equally valued, rather than anyone being seen as more of an expert than others. How much support you give and receive can vary depending on what feels right for you at different times.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental to human rights and therefore to Peer Support Plus Volunteers' core beliefs and values.

Learn more, and watch a video of Peers describing their experience of peer support, on this [Mind webpage](#).

The Room A safe and confidential environment where the Group cannot be seen or overheard. May be physical space, or an online Zoom meeting.

Zoom Any online digital video meeting. The brand name of one supplier of digital video meeting capabilities.

Group Work Peers and Volunteers working together as equals in a safe, kind and supportive environment, learning to better manage their mental health.

Support Group A Group that usually meets once each week, at a regular time, typically for 2 hours duration, to share their lived experience with Peers who wish to take time and give voice to whatever experiences and feelings the Peer wishes to understand and learn to manage better.

Workshop A single structured Group Work session, typically 2 to 4 hours duration, exploring one aspect of better managing your mental health, for examples: Anxiety; Boundaries; Resilience; Compassion; Emotional eating.

Course A linked series of several structured Group Work sessions, typically 2 hours duration at weekly intervals, exploring in greater depth more extensive aspects of better managing your mental health, for examples: Managing my Mental Health; Assertiveness; Self-Esteem; Anger.

Round A technique to guarantee everyone a chance to speak and be heard without interruption, or to pass if they prefer.

Good News We start all Group Work sessions with a round of good news. This round reminds us that lived experiences are not always bad, even if a Peer's good news is that they managed to drag themselves to the session.

Taking Time Part of a Support Group session where a Peer chooses to voice something to the group. It is important that Peers can trust each other and risk voicing lived experiences and difficult feelings, while remembering to maintain safe personal boundaries.

It might be: something that has been on their mind recently; something that has been suppressed for a long time; something they would like to hear different perspectives on; perhaps an update about something previously shared; or something they might want to celebrate; etc.

Checking-in During a Support Group session a Peer may wish to take time to update the group about something they had voiced at a past session. After checking-in a Peer may or may not want a round of sharing.

Giving Voice to Speaking, possibly for the first time, about experiences and feelings. The act of describing your lived experiences and feelings to Peers who are not part of your everyday life can help you understand what induced those feelings and develop a balanced perspective.

Difficult Feelings Giving voice to your lived experience and feelings, or hearing other Peers describe theirs, can trigger a wide range of often unexpected, sometimes distressing and occasionally joyful, emotions. You

may find it possible to sit with a difficult feeling, especially as it is OK to leave The Room and OK to come back when you are ready to. Later, you may want to Take Time and explore why you experienced the difficult feeling.

Silence When the Facilitator offers opportunities to take time, or when a Peer is taking time or someone is sharing in a round, it isn't unusual for there to be silence in the room which can sometimes last a few minutes. For some people, silence can feel uncomfortable and a little odd, evoking an urge to 'fill the gap', but silence is positive and gives space for a Peer to gather their thoughts or just sit with the difficult feeling.

Sharing It would be surprising if two Peers had exactly the same lived experience but you will probably identify with feelings voiced by another Peer. We share on the feelings. You may be able to share about times when your own lived experience had given rise to similar feelings, enabling you to describe what you did that helped, and what didn't.

When deciding what to share, remember to respect your personal boundaries and not later regret sharing something. Nobody will push you to say more than you feel comfortable with disclosing.

Pass If you haven't experienced the feelings described by the Peer taking Time; or you have but don't want to recount or re-live them right now; or perhaps you have nothing significant to add to what has already been shared by other Peers, you may choose to say "pass".

Taking Away The purpose of Group Work is to help you discover the potential to better manage your mental health. You can take from voicing your feelings and hearing others lived experiences whatever you choose to try to apply (or try to avoid) in your own life. Nobody will give advice, or tell you what to do, or expect you to report back.

Self Evaluation We try to measure the effect Peer Support Plus has on Peers' mental health using The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) see. We ask every Peer to complete a *Self Evaluation*¹ when they first enter a Peer Relationship with us and then quarterly. Peer Support Plus will never disclose individual self-evaluations but only aggregate them to provide anonymised overall measures of effect.

Keeping in touch Opportunities to participate in Peer Support Group Work are scarce and we want to benefit as many Peers as possible. If you are unable to attend a session or intend to leave a Group please let us know immediately you know. See our *Peer Engagement Policy*¹.

Programme We publish our planned programme of Group sessions on our website and draw attention to updates in our emailed Newsletter. If you don't have digital access please contact us. We will post copies of documents, forms and Newsletters to you on request.

Donations Peer Support Plus Group Work is £ FREE to Peers. Voluntary donations and responsible fundraising activities are always welcome. We also seek small grants when available.

Learn more on the [Donate](#) page of our website.

Behaviour

Flourish To grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favourable environment.

Behaviour The way in which we act or conduct ourselves, especially towards others.

Guidelines Our *Guidelines for Behaviour*¹ describes the behaviours all those who engage with Peer Support Plus must agree they will aspire to. This is one of our Boundaries. If you do not aspire to our Guidelines and respect them, we will require you to disengage from Peer Support Plus.

Intoxication Everyone engaged with Peer Support Plus relies on you to perform your Role to the best of your capability today. To give of your best, your mind and body must be free of intoxicating substances.

Engaging in Peer Support Plus activity while under the influence of non-prescription drugs, substance abuse or alcohol consumption is prohibited. This is one of our Boundaries.

Confidentiality What is said in The Room stays in The Room – except when we are required to follow our *Safeguarding Policy*¹. Please read our *Privacy Policy*¹ and *Guidelines for Behaviour*¹.

Safeguarding *Safeguarding Policy*¹ describes our duty to disclose any concerns surrounding child safety or adults at risk. This means that if we have concerns for your safety, or the safety of others may be at risk, we reserve the right to pass these concerns and any related data to other third parties – for example, a mental health crisis team or, if necessary, the police.

Thinking and Feeling

Thinking Considering or reasoning about something.

Feeling The emotional side of your character; your emotional responses or tendencies to respond. May involve an idea or belief, including a vague or irrational one; or a sensitivity to or intuitive understanding of something.

Kindness The quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate. At Peer Support Plus we aspire to be kind to ourselves and kind to others.

Compassion The feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to help relieve it. You can feel compassion without acting on it. Compassion is not the same as sympathy, empathy or altruism, though the concepts are related:

- **Sympathy** Feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune. A common feeling or understanding between people.
- **Empathy** Your ability to take the perspective of and feel the emotions of another person. Compassion is when those feelings and thoughts include the desire to help.
- **Altruism** Kind, selfless behaviour often prompted by feelings of compassion. Altruism isn't always motivated by compassion.

Lived Experience First-hand experience of managing your own mental health.

Trust A firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something.

Judgement The ability to make considered decisions, or come to sensible conclusions.

Risk To expose someone, or something valued, to danger of harm, or loss, or the consequences of success.

Boundaries Thoughts, feelings or statements which mark your personal limits of tolerance or risk; dividing lines which, if ignored, will lead to self-protective action.

Self-Sabotage When you do something that gets in the way of your intent, or of your bigger dreams and goals. It can happen when you are consciously or subconsciously looking for a way to avoid facing your fear, or as a distraction or self-preservation to safeguard or defend yourself against stress.

Self-sabotaging behaviours that may be unhelpful and/or disproportionate include, for examples:

- Negative self-talk.
- Unwise risk taking.
- Emotional or stress-relief eating.
- Substance abuse, including alcohol.
- Unwise spending or gambling.
- Procrastination or putting things off.
- Chronic lateness, unpreparedness.
- Choosing to fail when success was possible.
- Avoiding commitment.
- Ruining relationships.
- Avoiding intimacy.

Self-Harm When you intentionally damage or injure your body. This covers a wide range of actions. Self-harm may be linked to bad experiences that are happening now, or in the past. Some of the reasons people may self-harm include:

- Expressing or coping with emotional distress.
- Trying to feel in control.
- A way of punishing themselves.
- Relieving unbearable tension.
- A cry for help.
- A response to intrusive thoughts.

Sometimes the reason is unknown.

Learn more about self-harm on this [NHS UK webpage](#).

Resilience Your ability to recover from or adjust easily to, for examples: misfortune; change; or ill health.

Stress Your body's reaction to feeling threatened or under pressure. Most people feel stressed sometimes and some people find stress helpful or even motivating. Stress might affect how you feel physically, mentally and how you behave. It's not always easy to recognise when stress is the reason you're feeling or acting differently. Signs of stress include:

- Depression or anxiety.
- Anger, irritability, or restlessness.
- Feeling overwhelmed, unmotivated, or unfocused.
- Trouble sleeping, or sleeping too much.

- Racing thoughts, overthinking or constant worry.
- Problems with your memory or concentration.
- Making bad decisions.

If stress is affecting your life, there are things you can try that may help.

Learn more about stress on this [NHS UK webpage](#).

Anxiety A feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life. For examples: feeling worried and anxious about sitting an exam; or having a medical test or job interview.

Feeling anxious can be a perfectly normal response to stress but some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives.

Learn more about anxiety on this [NHS UK webpage](#).

Low Mood Most people feel low sometimes. You may be feeling:

- Sad.
- Anxious or panicky.
- More tired than usual or unable to sleep.
- Angry or frustrated.
- Low on confidence or self-esteem.

It may be possible to improve a low mood by making small changes in your life. For examples: resolving something that's bothering you; getting more sleep. Low mood often diminishes in a few days or weeks.

Depression If you have a low mood that lasts two weeks or more, it could be a sign of depression and it is probably time to seek help. You may be:

- Feeling you are not getting any enjoyment out of life.
- Feeling hopeless.
- Unable to concentrate on everyday things.
- Experiencing suicidal thoughts; or thoughts about harming yourself.

Learn more about low mood and depression on this [NHS UK webpage](#).

Anger A strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure or hostility which if unmanaged may escalate into violent, uncontrollable rage. Anger is a normal, healthy emotion, which we might experience if we feel:

- Attacked.
- Deceived.
- Frustrated.
- Invalidated or unfairly treated.

It isn't necessarily a 'bad' emotion; in fact, it can sometimes be useful. For example, feeling angry about something can:

- Help us identify problems or things that are hurting us.
- Motivate us to create change, achieve our goals and move on.
- Help us stay safe and defend ourselves in dangerous situations by giving us a burst of energy as part of our fight or flight system.

Most people will experience episodes of anger which feel manageable and don't have a big impact on their lives. Learning healthy ways to recognise, express and deal with anger is important for our mental and physical health.

Learn more about anger on this [Mind webpage](#).

Confidence A feeling that you can believe in or rely on something or someone, including your own capabilities.

Self-Esteem Is the opinion we have of ourselves. When we have healthy self-esteem, we tend to feel positive about ourselves and about life in general. It makes us more resilient and better able to deal with life's ups and downs. When our self-esteem is low, we tend to see ourselves and our life in a more negative and critical light. We also feel less able to take on the challenges that life throws at us.

Learn more about self-esteem on this [NHS UK webpage](#).

Note ¹ available on our website peersupportplus.org

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