

## **Innovating with Peers in the clinical space, lessons learnt from embedding peer workers throughout our organisation.**

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### **Background:**

Holyoake's Wheatbelt Team was the first in the organisation to create a Peer Support Worker (PSW) within its Integrated Support Team.

### **Description of Model of Care/Intervention:**

The development of the role within a clinical team took some time and there were several lessons learned along the way.

Recognising the individualistic nature of PSW roles is crucial, as they vary depending on factors such as skill set and experience. Involving PSWs in group counselling sessions brings a unique perspective which enriches the therapeutic process.

### **Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:**

Ultimately the insights the PSW brought to clinical discussions enhanced the support offerings and tailored them more effectively to the needs of our consumers.

Training is paramount to ensure PSWs are equipped to support both themselves and clients safely. Training for clinical staff on the value of the Lived Experience Peer Worker role is also essential. This may include identifying clearly where PSW's add value to the team, what support they may need, and a clear understanding of the emotional 'cost' in vulnerability that is needed to work in this space.

From 1 initially we now have a team of PSW's across the whole organisation and have supported PSW's to move into other more senior roles including management.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps:**

While some organisations have understood and adopted Peer Work as part of their service, unfortunately, not everyone is quite there yet. Organisations should be encouraged to leverage and work with lived experience expertise to acknowledge and stamp out any stigma and discrimination that may take place within the workplace on any level.

Managers and Leadership would also be required to understand the emotional strain and impact that delivering personal trauma can have in a professional setting. There needs to be a commitment by organisations to embed authentic peer work into their organisations. This could include commitment to peer values, financial investment, top down and bottom-up championing of Peer work.

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