PDA MENTAL HEALTH PEER SUPPORT

INFORMATION FOR PLACEMENT AGENCY / EMPLOYERS

Mindspace

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Registered Charity SC002072

INTRODUCTION

Mindspace is an SQA Accredited Centre that delivers the Professional Development Award in Mental Health Peer Support.

The aim of this award is to equip the candidate with the knowledge and skills to work as a Peer Support Worker within mental health services.

This document has been designed to give you the information you require to support the candidate in their study towards their qualification. The document outlines the content of the course, the work and study commitment involved as well as what is expected from you as an employer/placement agency.

If you are happy to support the candidate in their study towards the qualification and can provide the level of involvement needed from your agency, we would ask you to complete the reference form and return it to the address provided by the deadline indicated.

If after reading this document you still have questions, please contact Mindspace.

MINDSPACE

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OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

RATIONALE AND AIMS

Peer support worker relates to a new role within Scottish mental health services. Peer Support Workers are people with personal experience of mental health challenges who are trained and employed to complement and enhance existing mental health services. They offer a high degree of empathy and mutuality, and work in a way which is strongly oriented around the recovery experience. Hope and self-direction are central components of this approach. The role requires peer workers to be confident and competent in relation to the use of certain professional skills such as boundary setting, confidentiality and disclosure.

The promotion of peer support working in Scotland not only has the potential to improve recovery outcomes in mental health services but also has the potential to promote the inclusion and empowerment of people with experience of mental health challenges. Peer support working acknowledges the experience of people who have experienced mental health and offers new opportunities for people who may be considered 'experts by experience.'

COURSE STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The award consists of two units and the candidates need to complete both to achieve the award.

Unit1: Mental Health Peer Support: Recovery Context

The unit is designed to provide the underpinning knowledge and values to understand recovery and peer support. The candidates will understand the development of the recovery approach and learn and understand the concepts of empowerment and mutuality. They will develop an understanding of peer support and its role in recovery.

Assessment for this unit consists of an essay of 1000 words to meet the evidence requirements for Outcome 1 and a portfolio of evidence of no more than 1500 to meet Outcomes 2 & 3.

Unit 2: Mental Health Peer Support: Developing Practice

The aim of this unit is to equip the candidate with the knowledge, skills and values required to provide peer support. It will also enable the candidate to understand and reflect on the peer relationship and how this can be used to support recovery. The candidate will gain knowledge from a range of theories and concepts used to inform the peer support role. The candidate will consider the work role and function as a peer support worker, relating theories and concepts to their peer working role as well as reflecting on and improving their own practice.

Assessment for this unit consists of a portfolio of evidence using real work experience in which they undertake an analysis of their use of theories and concepts to support people to identify their desired outcomes, set their own goals and recognise their own expertise. The candidates are asked to relate learning to real work practice and are expected to produce evidence relating to the role and function of peer support. The total word count of this portfolio should not exceed 2,500 words.

PLACEMENT/SPONSORING AGENCY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

ATTENDANCE & STUDY TIME

The candidate is required to attend weekly learning sessions (face to face or virtual). These sessions last for approximately 3 hours per week across both units.

Self-management is an important part of recovery and peer working. Mindspace will facilitate a Wellbeing Workshop prior to the course start date.

In addition, candidates are required to undertake self-study, which includes researching information relating to recovery and writing assignments.

PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE

It is expected that the candidates will apply their learning from the units to their work role. This is especially relevant in the Unit 'Developing Practice' where they will be relating theories and concepts to their peer working role as well as reflecting on, and improving, their own practice. Similarly, the course does not prescribe whether experience is gained through supporting individuals or working in groups. It would be up to your agency and Peer Support Worker to negotiate what would be most helpful. We encourage the candidates to get involved in different activities and the agency to provide a diverse experience. It is the agency's responsibility to explain and clarify at the start of the placement what kind of support/role they expect Peer Support Workers to provide, while keeping in mind the highly skilled and unique nature of intentional support that Peer Workers can offer.

SUPERVISION

The candidate will work with individuals within your agency, putting what they've learnt into action and reflecting on their own practice, which is particularly important in Unit 2. It is, therefore, essential that candidates have a named Supervisor, who would act as a point of contact for the Peer Support Worker, provide regular and on-going support (at least once monthly and as need arises), give constructive feedback to the Peer Support Worker and discuss the aspects of what they are learning. It is important to value and to empower the Peer Support Workers to work within the peer support values. In addition, Supervisor will need to authenticate the Candidate's portfolio and provide written feedback that they can use as evidence. It is expected that the Peer Support Worker is able to provide the same level of involvement as other support workers.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

It is your agency's responsibility to explain any relevant policies and procedures (e.g. car policy, health & safety, lone working, etc).

PAYMENTS & EXPENSES

It is up to the Agency to clarify any payments and expense reimbursement policies, including travel expenses to the course and any others that the Peer Support Worker may incur while carrying out the work for your organisation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All personal and identifiable information – relating either to individuals they work with or the agency – will have to be anonymised to preserve the confidentiality of all individuals, including staff within the agency.

EMPLOYMENT OR VOLUNTEERING

For the purpose of this course, the placement can be employment or on a volunteer basis. In either case, the candidates will need to work directly with the individuals.

If you would like to know more about employing Peer Support Worker, Scottish Recovery Network produced guidelines that can support the development of this specific role in the mental health sector. You can download the guidelines from their website:

http://www.scottishrecovery.net/Resources/experts-by-experience-implementation-guidelines.html

If you need more information or support to implement this new role in your organisation, you can contact the Scottish Recovery Network on 0141 240 7790 or email info@scottishrecovery.net. You can also find out more about the Peer Support Worker role from their website

We strongly encourage the organisations to consider employing Peer Support Workers. While the development and the implementation of the role may take some time, you may consider 'buying in' the service as needed. Please contact us if this is something you would be interested in. Mindspace is developing this service.