



**Fulfilling
Lives in
Islington &
Camden**



LOTTERY FUNDED



Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC)

Peer Mentoring Evaluation January 2018

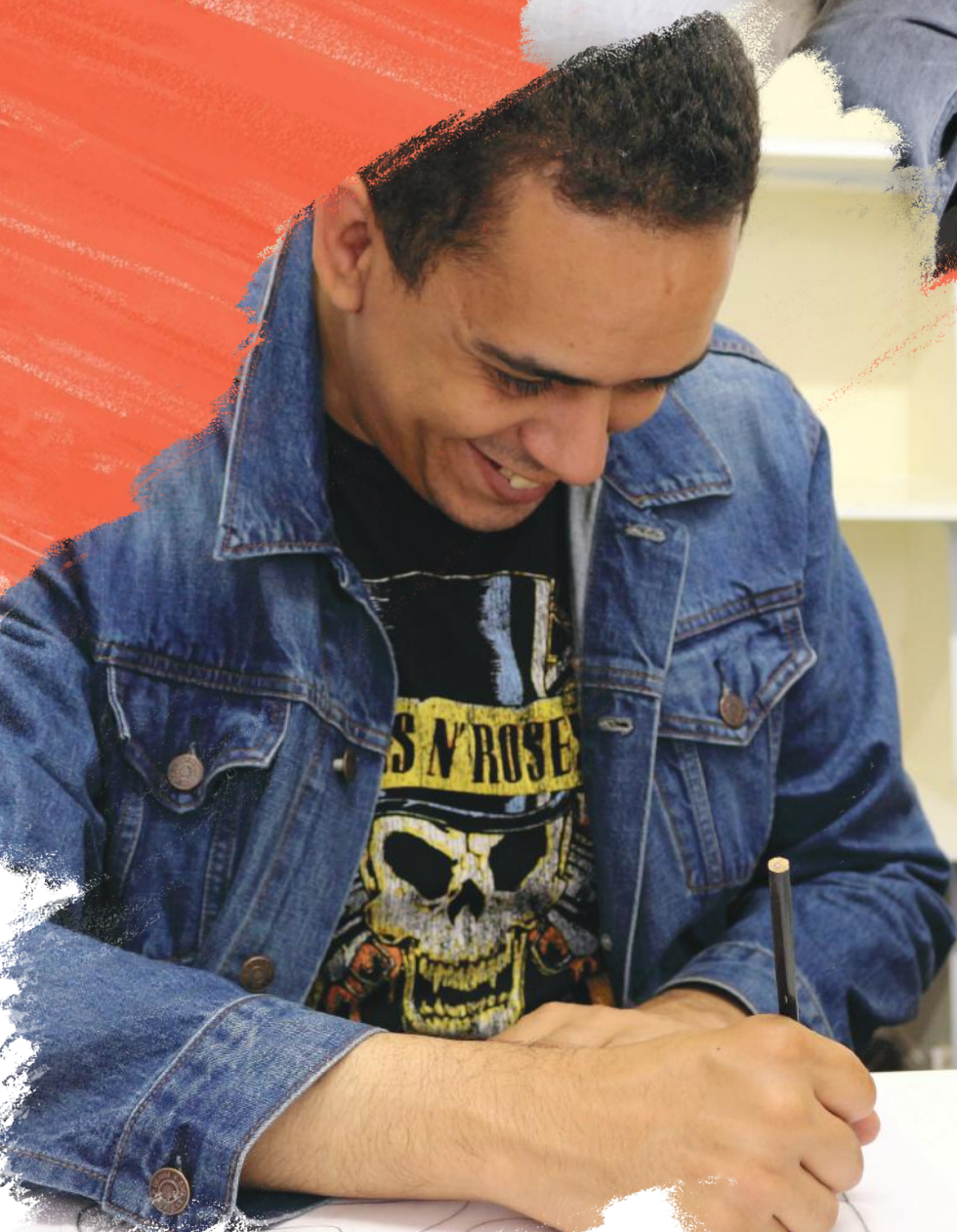


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Executive Summary

The main findings of this research shows that peer mentors play a valuable role in the delivery of the Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC) programme. This report outlines a number of benefits to using peer mentors.

Peer mentors also benefit personally and often considerably, through a routine and structure that supports recovery and enhanced employability.

- The evaluation consists of thirteen interviews with peer mentors, the co-ordinator and clients. This process was designed to measure how far the programme to date has met the objectives of providing a system of support to clients and developing and supporting peer mentors to use their skills in a positive manner and enhance employability.
- The peer mentors were most likely to be male, White British and aged 46-55.

Key findings:

- Motivations for becoming a peer mentor comprise a mix of altruism ('giving back') and a desire to sustain recovery and improve employment prospects.
- Peer mentors are positive about their experience of the recruitment and induction process.
- Peer mentors are positive about their experience of training.
- Peer mentors felt extremely well supported.
- Peer mentors have mainly been deployed in roles providing general and social support to clients. It has been a deliberate strategy for the peer mentors to be in roles that are distinct to the Link workers.

- A couple of matches have not worked due to a lack of client engagement.
- Peers have enjoyed doing something worthwhile.
- Relationships between peers and link workers have all been positive.
- Peer mentors have reported seeing clients increasing engagement, confidence and enjoyment.
- Although still in the early stage of the programme, clients clearly felt they were benefiting from positive relationships. They were able to be open and talk, their social interaction improved, felt their horizons broadened and they had a helpful resource.
- In deploying peer mentors, FLIC is putting lived experience at the heart of the programme. The evidence to date shows that clients using peers have very high satisfaction levels and the formal matching process managed by the programme has been a success. The relationships that have developed could lead to clients talking more openly.
- Being a peer mentor has had a positive impact on the well-being of peers. Benefits have included improved confidence, direction, hope, personal growth and career development.
- In the future it is hoped the benefits to both parties can be demonstrated and the programme can be replicated elsewhere.

In conclusion, the peer mentoring programme is meeting its objectives and has proved successful in implementing a programme that is positive and enriching for both parties.

Introduction

In July 2012, the Big Lottery announced an eight-year investment of up to £112 million to improve the lives of people with complex and multiple needs through the provision of intensive, personalised, coordinated and service users driven support services (CFE, 2016). Islington and Camden were chosen as one of twelve areas across England to receive funding to deliver a Fulfilling Lives project.

In February 2014, SHP was appointed the lead partner for the Islington and Camden project and was subsequently awarded a grant of £7.4m by the Big Lottery to deliver the Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC) project over an 8-year period. FLIC works intensively to support people facing severe and multiple disadvantages relating to homelessness, reoffending, problematic substance use and mental ill-health. The project is committed to bringing about system change in the way services meet the needs of people with complex and multiple needs. It is envisaged that this will take the form of ‘showcasing’ or ‘demonstrating’ more effective and efficient ways of designing, commissioning and delivering service models for people who have ‘fallen through the cracks’ between services.

The project is designed to achieve the following primary outcomes:

- People with multiple and complex needs are able to manage their lives better through access to more person-centred and coordinated services
- Services are tailored to the individual and better connected. This will empower users to fully take part in effective service design and delivery.
- Shared learning and improved measurement of outcomes for people with multiple and complex needs, will demonstrate the impact

of revised service models to key stakeholders and commissioners.

Methodology

This report presents a six monthly evaluation of the FLIC Peer Mentoring Programme, and reflects progress so far.

Peer mentoring is defined as:

“A voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life.”

Aims

Broadly speaking, the FLIC Peer Mentoring scheme has three core aims:

1. To provide a system of additional support to FLIC clients. We involve volunteers in the support of Service Users, with the aim to model visible recovery, reduce self-damaging behaviour, build on clients’ social capital to improve relationship building skills, make links in the community and reduce isolation.
2. To develop and support peer mentors to use their skills in a positive manner and enhance employability. To support the Peers in a path of professional development towards gaining the skills and knowledge necessary to access employment in the field of health and social care.
3. To contribute to system change by developing a model of best practice in peer mentoring that can be shown to benefit both parties and can be replicated elsewhere.

The evaluation aimed to measure the impact of the progress to date on clients and the peer mentors and how far these aims have been achieved.

One of the key aspects of the FLIC programme is flexibility - we can learn from the successes and challenges that arise and innovate and adapt the programme accordingly. The evaluation additionally aims to help with the learning process enabling us to identify what works and does not work from a number of perspectives.

The research comprised the following elements:

- Interviews: 13 interviews took place (five client interviews, seven Peer Mentor and one Co-ordinator). The aim of the interviews was to gather perceptions on how well the model and all its components were working and the impact on clients and peers.
- Document review: we reviewed operational documentation and quarterly reports on the scheme.
- Database: we drew on a specific database set up to profile the population and collate information about recruitment and outcomes.

Sampling and interviewing

Topic guides were developed and pilot tested.

All service user interviews were carried out face-to-face in a private room at SHP's office on Gray's Inn Road in Camden.

Interviews were semi-structured, face-to-face and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. These interviews were guided by a number of topics, including discussion around expectations, benefits and impact.

Consent was given by participants using consent forms, which explained what would happen to the data and how their confidentiality would be protected. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participant. Clients were paid in high street vouchers (equivalent to £20)

for sharing their expertise and giving up their time. All tape recordings were kept in a locked cupboard and deleted after transcription to protect confidentiality.

Pseudonyms are used throughout the report.

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were analysed using standard thematic content analysis.

Background

FLIC believe that having Peer Mentors improves the quality of service provision and increases positive opportunities for clients, partly because the Peer Mentor is less representative of 'the system' and can relate in a unique way to the service user. The evaluation sought to test this hypothesis.

Involvement in Peer Mentoring programmes has been proven to increase the chances of people moving on to paid employment, providing transferable skills, experience of a work environment and references, an outcome that FLIC actively supports through the co-production of a Personal Development Plan with each Peer Mentor.

The FLIC model

FLIC adopts a one-to-one model of Peer Mentoring, whereby a Peer Mentor will be matched to one, two or three clients and will meet them individually, as opposed, for example, to a group setting. It is expected that Peer Mentors will employ the following methods in their relationship with clients:

- Face to face
- Telephone (strictly by using the SHP phone that will be provided to the Peer), via calls or texts, depending on both parties' needs and preferences

FLIC have developed a programme of Intentional Peer Support (IPS) based on the idea of mentoring, which puts a particular emphasis on positive role modelling. (IPS is a recognised regulated model of support as opposed to a non-regulated form of support, such as friends).

The Peer Mentoring Programme in FLIC

The employment of Peers (either formally employed or as volunteers) is a relatively new approach in the field of mental health and substance misuse. Currently there are various definitions of 'peer support' and, with the lack of a universal definition and model, organisations have developed their own understandings and peer support programmes. The FLIC Co-ordinator defines it in the following manner;

'Peer support involves a relationship where the person providing support is not afraid of being with someone in distress. But it is also about seeing within that distress the seeds of possibility and creating a fertile ground for those seeds to grow. It explores what a person has gained from their experience, seeks out their qualities and assets, identifies hidden achievements and celebrates what may seem like the smallest steps forward.'

What do FLIC Peer Mentors aim to do?

Peer Mentors can work on personal recovery planning by using their own experience to support the person with identifying and prioritising goals. They can share and discuss control and self-management strategies, increasing self-efficacy, a sense of agency, belief in personal control, and the motivation to take personal responsibility for working towards recovery. They are not there to tell clients what to do, but to offer them another perspective and alternative form of support.

Peers can facilitate access to opportunities in the local community, supporting people to participate in new relationships. They can offer some practical information, signposting, advice and guidance, but they are not replacing support workers (rather, they are enhancing their work) and should not be tasked with, for example, filling in forms for clients without the supervision of staff. While they can be involved in the work of taking clients to professional appointments, this is not the main purpose of their role as they are not there to replace support workers. They are expected to engage with clients in meaningful conversations and activities that they will negotiate with the client.

The Co-ordinator has designed and produced a number of relevant forms in order to provide organisational clarity. These have included a programme guide, role description, person specification, volunteer agreement, problem solving procedure, personal development plan, personal well-being plan and a training handbook.

Recruitment

After contacting the pool of Peers who previously engaged with the Programme, the role of Volunteer Peer Mentors for FLIC was advertised from mid-March 2017 through:

- SHP Communication team: Facebook, Twitter, Intranet
- SHP Managers: an email was sent advertising the role to Managers across SHP
- Volunteer Action Islington
- Volunteer Centre Camden
- Foundation for Change: trainers were advised to advertise the Programme to students who were completing the course in the Spring, as well as previous students who did not get a placement via Foundation for Change

12 Peers were recruited and started the nine day FLIC training; three people dropped out at the initial stage, and a group of nine Peers completed the whole training. Eight Peers remain on the programme. Two people stated there were going to be major changes in their time commitments and consequent availability. One person realised they would be best placed to work in a mental health setting rather than a complex needs setting. The demographic breakdown of Peer Mentors is included in Appendix 2. The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator recruited more males than females but additionally some of the women recruited had problems with time commitment. In the next stage of recruitment the aim is to recruit more women.

Training

The training took place over nine days, from Monday 20 April to Friday 10 May 2017. The training was injected with external expertise on specific modules and external trainers were either paid or worked in partnership with FLIC. The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator designed the training specifically for work with complex needs clients. (Please see Appendix 1 for a breakdown of training content.)

Through liaison work with SHP AQA Project Support Worker, a module on Peer Mentoring in Complex Needs was approved by AQA and was awarded a Level 2 Accreditation. The students were offered the option of completing a workbook after the training to get the accreditation.

Support for Peer Mentors

Personal Development Plans and Personal Wellbeing Plans were completed for all Peer Mentors, and will continue to be reviewed on a quarterly basis. Monthly individual supervision has taken place with all Peer Mentors and Group Supervision has now started.

Three Peer Mentors identified needing support with their IT skills. This was offered on a 1-2-1 basis by the Coordinator, and one Peer Mentor also attended an external 10 days training in basic IT. While the 1-2-1 support has proven effective and these Peer Mentors report feeling that their confidence and skills have rapidly increased, this has proven very time consuming and a different approach is being planned.

Several Peer Mentors initially identified 'self-confidence' as an area where they needed to develop themselves. While most of the Peer Mentors report feeling more confident in themselves and in working with clients, the majority of them still express a strong desire to continue shadowing staff – also to learn more about the services that clients use.

A focus group has taken place with the Employment Liaison Coordinator and the Peer Mentors to analyse career aspirations and possible barriers and will be followed by individual sessions between each Peer Mentor and the Employment Liaison Coordinator.

Matching

Potential matches were identified for each Peer Mentor before the end of the training. These were based on Link Workers informally referring clients to the Peer Development Coordinator and individual Personal Profile Forms completed by the Peer Mentors. After matching, the peers shadow the Link Worker with the client for at least three or four sessions before they can work alone.

Progress so far

The progress so far at six months shows that seven peer mentors are working with ten clients (two non-Flic). Those working with clients also did periods of shadowing. In addition, Peer Mentors are currently shadowing six clients. (Please see Appendix 3 for a breakdown of progress to date.)

Findings

Section 1: The Programme

i. Motivations for becoming a peer mentor

Motivations for becoming a Peer Mentor include both altruism and more personal benefits; the desire to give back to society is a key motivation for all interviewees. Many observed their experiences meant they were well placed to support others.

A further motivation was to improve employment prospects. Participants felt that being a Peer Mentor would help them move closer to the labour market and some Peer Mentors were already volunteering before they became involved.

Five Peer Mentors said the key reason for being a Peer Mentor was helping others and giving back. Three said career development, so it appears to be a mixture of both.

In interviews, Peer Mentors were asked to further explore their motivations for becoming a Peer Mentor. For the majority of participants their personal experience in this area and recovery had led them to believe they had skills that they wanted to share with others as one Peer Mentor commented; 'I brought my own experience. I was a cocaine addict and a heroin addict but I quit eleven years ago so all my life I had substance issues'.

Additionally Peer Mentors felt they had general skills that were ideal for the role.

“Well, I am a confident communicator and I have been doing some pretty crappy jobs over the years, so I really wanted to do something where I could communicate with people I have a lot of empathy, a lot of compassion and a big desire to want to help people out and coming through the recovery service. I had been told I would be really good at it, so I just wanted to home in on those skills that come to me naturally.” Peer Mentor

Many Peer Mentors said that they wanted to develop a career in the field and it was perceived that this role could help gain valuable career development.

“I hoped to gain a much more developed sense of what it means to have complex needs and the system they have to deal with and learn more about the various hostels and processes and the dynamics between staff and residence. Obviously training helps for all that sort of thing but it doesn't substitute for getting out there.”

Peer Mentor

ii. Experiences of the recruitment and training process

Recruitment

In recruiting for peers FLIC has some basic requirements:

“Officially, the person should be over eighteen, have lived experience of one or more of the four areas but also be in recovery so not using illicit substance for six months, legal substances well managed and they shouldn't be using any tier two mental health services and they should be in independent accommodation.” Peer Mentor Co-ordinator

The peer mentor co-ordinator also described looking for people who were empathetic, flexible and dynamic.

“What else do we look for in terms of personal skills? Someone who has an understanding of empathy, that is ready to deal with set backs, that is willing to develop, someone who is also quite dynamic and relatively flexible with their time. That kind of dynamism is something I look for in the mentors.”

Peer Mentor Co-ordinator

In terms of where peers were recruited from, the data showed:

Three Peer Mentors were recruited through a SHP member of staff



One through the previous scheme



One through a FLIC worker



One through the SHP twitter channel (@SHPcharity)



One through Icope Foundation trust



One through Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust



The most successful method of recruitment was through SHP.

The co-ordinator described the methods of recruitment and the fact that this second time round recruitment is proving to be more of a struggle.

“There are two separate rounds of recruitment. The first time I made an assumption that a lot of people previously involved in the programme might want to get back which wasn’t the case, three people said “yes I would like to”, and then changed their mind. Together with that I advertised with SHP and a volunteering network and then I had a few contacts in the trust in Camden that I used and I seemed to get a lot of applications. I had to turn down a few people, because for different reasons they were not suitable. In this round right now I am recruiting this is not going well at all and I don’t know why because I have actually advertised in many more places than before SHP, Mind, charity jobs so I feel I have put it everywhere and I am just not getting the applications that I was the first time round to the point that we have to consider next week whether we might have to postpone the training.” Peer Mentor Co-ordinator

“I was already volunteering and they send you different opportunities that are happening so then they sent out about Fulfilling Lives and I heard about it through the trust.” Peer Mentor

“Through my local NHS in Camden and Islington. I was doing a peer coaching project and they informed me by email.” Peer Mentor

Participants were asked to describe what they thought of the recruitment process. The feedback was all positive.

“I think it was really good we did the application then the Co-ordinator met with us and we went for coffee and a chat and I think it was quite informal but it gave me the opportunity to hear all about the project I thought that side of it was very good.” Peer Mentor

As described previously the majority heard about it through existing programmes they were involved with.

“Yeah, it was very smooth as I recall because I had already had this meeting with Sarah then a similar meeting with the co-ordinator but it was very informal and non-pressurised which I kind of appreciated. She was very open and I think that made me open. So yeah we had that initial meeting and she ran through things like the DBS and then she emailed me.”

Peer Mentor

iii. Training

Following an induction, the Peer Mentors took part in a nine day accredited training programme.

Peer Mentors were overwhelmingly positive about their experience of training which was described as; ‘excellent’, ‘amazing’, ‘really good’ and ‘thoroughly enjoyable’. They praised the skills of trainers highly.

“As a group we were all very impressed with the training. It was very well structured, it was very participatory so we were all involved and they brought in really interesting people as speakers as I recall we were all looking forward to it every day.” Peer Mentor

The co-ordinator was asked how training went from their perspective, and they were satisfied with the process. Next time round, we will be making a few minor changes to the programme. More fundamentally, a plan has been put in place for all Peer Mentoring training and the programme within SHP to be delivered centrally and homogenously. This has an impact on the current programme and is discussed further in challenges.

iv. Support for peers

The co-ordinator has implemented a tailored package of support around the peers. This comprises a personal development plan and well-being plan. The well-being plan is a way

for the Mentor to identify triggers and coping mechanisms. It is a way to be transparent about what FLIC would do if there was a relapse, and what they would want us to do if we noticed any of those signs. This is based on concerns around possible re-traumatisation, or resorting to old mechanisms if they felt under pressure.

Both plans are reviewed every three months in supervision.

In addition, the peers have monthly individual supervision during which client work, well-being and anything else they would like to bring to the agenda is discussed. Bi-monthly, there is group supervision, whereby the whole team come together to share what they are doing and discuss any difficulties around lone working.

There are on-going training sessions that are organised every seven weeks or so, on relevant topics (e.g. Criminal Justice System, Domestic Abuse, Universal Credit, Support Planning and Risk Assessment)

Participants were very positive about the support offered by the co-ordinator describing it as; ‘brilliant’, ‘positive’, ‘really good’, ‘generous’ and ‘first class’.

“I just want to say the Co-ordinator is absolutely brilliant, she is so supportive and she is absolutely great, just really good. I had a period when I had a family member going through homelessness and she was really good. It was a family member and it would be a bit of a contradiction if I had not helped. I think us having a well-being plan is a very good thing as well.” Peer Mentor

“I think it’s been a really positive thing. The support given to us has been first class.” Peer Mentor

Section 2: The role of Peer Mentor's in service delivery

i. The nature and remit of the role

Participants were asked whether the role of the Peer Mentor was made clear to them during training and recruitment and all agreed that it was.

The number of hours each mentor works varies, but it is common for Peer Mentors to volunteer one day a week and build up at their own pace. Peer Mentors work alongside Link Workers to build relationships of trust, to respond to on-going needs and to sustain engagement and retention.

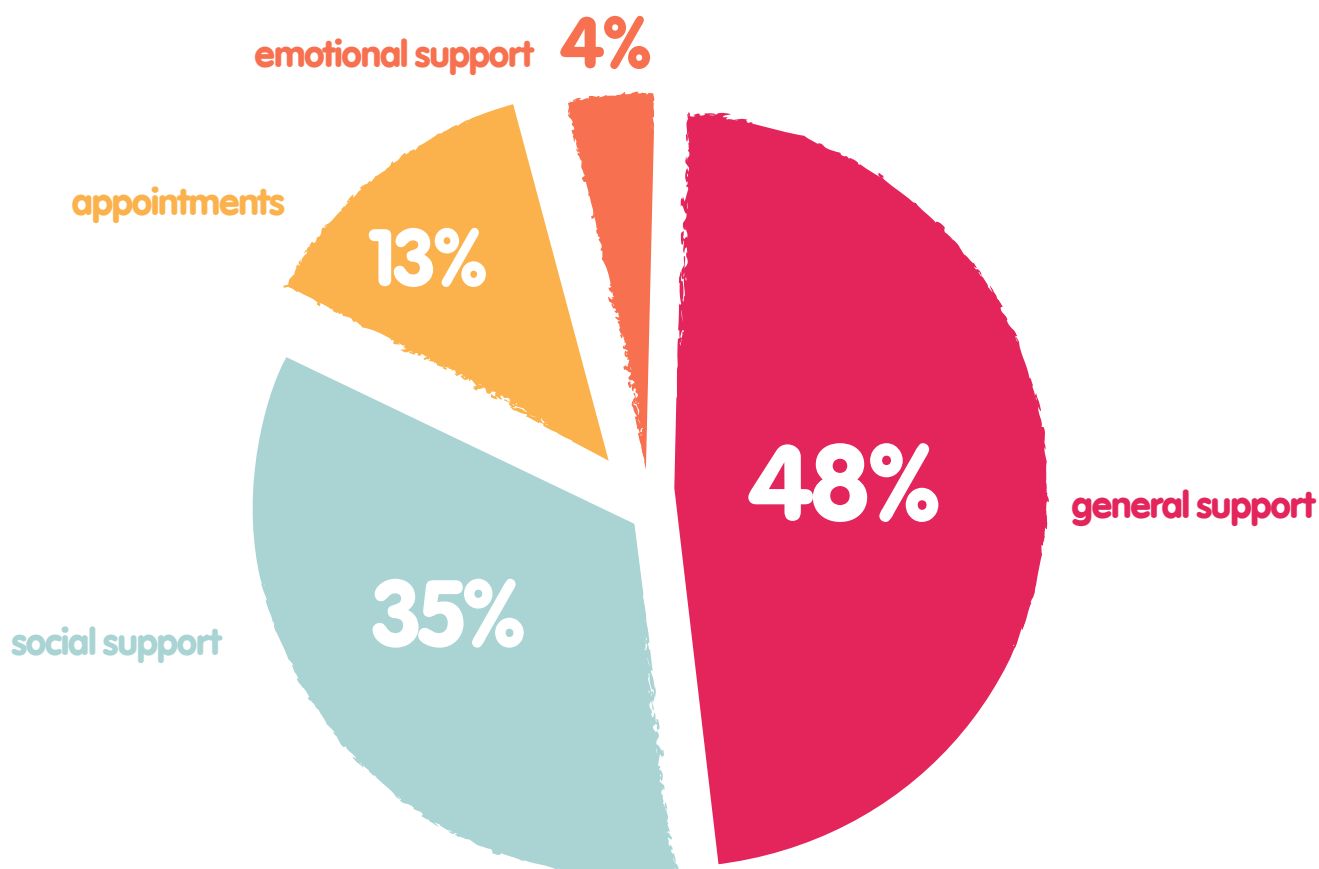
The Peer Mentor role closely reflects that of the Link Worker, in that mentors initially visit a client with a Link worker and once they have acquired the necessary experience they are given more responsibility. The remit of the Peer Mentor is not static, but evolves as mentors gain experience.

ii. Deployment of peers

Seven peers have been working with ten clients. Peer Mentors are asked to keep a log of all meetings that take place. From May to end of November (evaluation period) 48 meetings with clients were logged. (A detailed summary sheet of these logs are contained in Appendix 4.)

Analysis of the 48 meetings recorded in the log shows that the key reason for meetings were general support (48 per cent), social support (35 per cent), appointments (13 per cent) and emotional support (4 per cent). Though in reality, some of these functions overlap.

Notably, only six meetings were to accompany a client to appointments, which is largely the link worker role, and the majority of peers were deployed in a supporting or social function. The co-ordinator was asked if this was deliberate and responded that it was part of the strategy to deploy peers in roles distinct from the Link Workers.



“I think I give guidelines but perhaps it’s part of the ethos I was very wary of creating roles that would sort of fill in for the things that Link workers do i.e. to just to get extra help to go to appointments and that I didn’t want to do that. That is a paid role to go to appointments so I was very clear when I started to meet with the team and met managers and started to draw guidelines that the role of the Peer Mentors was kind of socialising. After the first few meeting where there is chit chat and then deeper things will emerge and that seems to be the pattern. Also a lot of the clients we are working with for different reasons may be a bit fed up with professionals so I didn’t want the figure of the peer mentor to be someone again like that I wanted the figure to be fun so whenever the client is ready they can start sharing information.” Peer Mentor Co-ordinator

The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator noted that a number of social activities had taken place.

Clients interviewed were asked to describe typical activities they undertake with peers or what they saw the purpose of meeting with the peer was. The majority described social activities when asked why they had met up with a mentor.

“To visit the museum and go for a walk.”
Client

“We have been to the cinema, we have met for coffee, we go for walks and that is really nice because the things he likes are the same as what I like we have been to Bournemouth as well.” Client

iii. Client work

Peer Mentors were asked to describe more about the type of work they have been doing with clients, so FLIC can understand more about the role in practice and identify any factors that have hindered progress and highlight factors that have helped foster good relationships.

For two peers the first match did not work out as the clients were very difficult to engage as highlighted by the comments from one Peer Mentor below.

“I had one particular client - Roger which has not quite worked out, well it was getting quite frustrating he is quite a heavy drinker with a history of violence and he self-harms now and again. I went to meet him a few times and you know I usually get on with most people I meet and I did get on with him but he doesn’t seem to want to engage. You know he is quite happy with the Link worker going up and doing what she does the generous stuff. The trouble is he wont answer his phone and he will only reply a one word answer to a text a day later and it kind of slowed everything down. I went out with him once we went to a pet shop and we went for McDonalds and we got on really well but this trying to get him, you know? I planned a day out in the park with animals but he always came up with an excuse which you know is part of his condition but it just didn’t seem to be happening.” Peer Mentor

Similarly, one peer was just starting the process of trying to engage with two new clients.

One peer had experienced some difficulties with a client in the beginning because the client was unable to distinguish between the role of peer and friend as highlighted below. This issue was dealt with by management.

“The first client that was difficult I was introduced to him in the coffee shop, then I met him one more time with his Link worker, his Link worker then resigned then he had another Link worker and she was off sick so there was this really long period where I was the only person he was connecting with so that was really difficult. I was kind of thrown in the deep end and I had an apology – the Co-ordinator took me for a coffee. I hadn’t found it very difficult but some issues came up with his anger and me not being able to explain where this guy had gone and so I was just trying to keep him busy but we got on really well. The role of Peer Mentor had not been explained to Peter very well so that the difference between a friend and a peer he was confused by it so the chap that resigned had given him a

very different Idea of what a peer was you know he wanted me to go on holiday with him and that’s just not going to happen. Having come through services myself you know these kinds of relationships they are just between 9-5 when the service is open. Peter wanted to call me in the evenings, he wanted to hang out, he wanted to go to Northern Ireland with me and it was difficult because I didn’t want to hurt they guy, you know? and he was in quite a vulnerable state but anyway that has all been resolved. They spoke to him and they had a chat with me and it was stressing me out because he was getting really angry and stuff, not angry at me just angry he wasn’t really connecting with any one here so management took him out. You know there are rules I am bound by and it was very difficult for him to understand those rules but he is alright now! Peer Mentor



However, when the client was interviewed he still expressed some ambivalent feelings.

“It was just the way my former Link worker put it to me maybe he didn’t understand himself. I took it the wrong way. I thought we could go here, go there. I thought he could come to Northern Ireland. I thought we could go out on our bikes. I asked him to go on holiday. I was so frustrated. Then management explained to me and it made sense. I am ok with it because you know what half a loaf of bread is better than none. I am good but the rules hurt me, they fucking hurt me. I want to fix his bike my brain can’t understand it all. I think that’s silly. I see it but I got really angry I said to him it’s cruel. I find it unfathomable. Do you understand where I am coming from? It’s amazing how we get on. It got so frustrating I didn’t want to talk to him for the fear of wanting to do something for him.” Client

One Peer Mentor has been working outside of FLIC in a hostel setting in line with her development plan. This peer has skills and training in counselling and talking therapies and so the nature of her work has been distinct from the others and is based more on one to one talking.

“The client in the hostel has alcohol problems and mental health issues as well. I have been helping him go through daily challenges. The issue is he is not able to communicate. The hostel had assumed he didn’t understand English as he did not want to reveal much about his inner self but he does understand English. I am hoping to support him to express himself”

Peer Mentor

Case study:

When Tim (peer) and Simon (client) met, Simon expressed the desire to go out with Tim, but was also wary of yet another professional involved. Tim used their common passion for specific film genres and the first few meetings were simply cinema outings. As Tim was starting to worry that this would be the only thing he would do with Simon, Simon opened up about difficulties in his past and current anxieties, and cinema outings became longer, also including eating together or having a coffee and talking more. Tim also noticed Simon’s taste in food (also dictated by his difficulty in chewing) and has done some food shopping for Simon on occasions when Simons did not want to leave the hostel. Simon has taken notice that Tim is choosing some of his favourite foods and has been grateful for this. Simon has also finally made contact with the dentist.

One peer meets a client for the same function every week. Another peer is working with a client with dementia which makes his role more distinct. He has undertaken training in this area. More typically peers had been engaging clients socially. Although, this has also provided an opportunity for clients to 'open' up about other issues. One Peer Mentor describes typical social activities below;

"We have been to the cinema, museums we went to a community event we have been to Bournemouth for the day we both have motorbikes I think that was the initial match but bikers right they meet up and they go for a ride on their bikes but I can't do that I can meet him on my bike but we can't go burning round the streets together and that's very difficult for him to understand you know and that would be for me too but it's very difficult for him he is getting his head round it. I have done all sorts with him." Peer Mentor

In addition, peers were asked to describe what they have enjoyed about the work described with clients. Peers listed a range of things from doing something worthwhile, to seeing increased confidence, communication and witnessing client's enjoyment.

"I have just enjoyed the fact that I think it's a really worthwhile thing to do and the two main clients I have worked with if it's something that helps them or breaks the routine then I know it's worthwhile. I think I have enjoyed building a rapport with them. I like both my clients you know."

Peer Mentor

"I enjoy working out how clients communicate." Peer Mentor

"I enjoy building the relationships it's been good for me. We understand each other and are really at ease they are opening up about problems." Peer Mentor

Case Study:

When Lee (peer) and Luke (client) met, Lee reported finding it difficult to speak to Luke, as Luke was more inclined towards talking than listening. Lee explained to Luke that he was finding it difficult at times, and that 'in order to be listened to, one also has to listen'. Luke progressively took this on board and their conversations now appear to be much more balanced. Lee understood that at times – particularly when he is angry – Luke needs to vent at first, without being interrupted, and that after these initial moments, a two-way conversation can take place. Honesty on both parts in this respect has allowed for a relationship of trust and mutual respect to develop over the months, which is proving beneficial both for Lee and Luke. This will hopefully also help Luke to develop new relationships outside of the circle of support services, which is the next area Lee and Luke want to work on.

iv. Relationship with Link workers

Peers are required to work closely with Link workers so they were asked how their relationships with Link workers had been. The feedback was all positive.

“I am encouraged because both Link workers think I have good relationships and they feedback to me.” Peer Mentor

v. Matching mentors and beneficiaries

After the first training peers were matched with clients based on their mutual personal interests. This strategy has been reviewed and in the future clients will shadow more clients before matches are made, as there were some concerns this strategy could lead to a somewhat superficial match.

Section 3: The strengths of the approach

i. The benefits for clients

Peer Mentors and the co-ordinator were asked to describe any benefits they have since starting mentoring the clients. A wide range of benefits were described such as being more engaged, increased confidence, increased engagement with other services and increased pleasure and enjoyment as highlighted below:

“The feedback on Tom is he is more engaging and has finally gone to the dentist” Peer Mentor

“The client the peer has been working with at the hostel, there has been really amazing feedback that he has decided to connect with CGL and address his alcohol and he is looking after himself more.”

Peer Mentor co-ordinator



“The confidence thing Claire is a lot more confident and talkative. I get to find things about her but I never say but now my client is feeling more confident she is telling me things for herself. She is starting to trust me and she was looking at doing something at college and she went along and inquired on her own and I think that was just great to happen.” Peer Mentor

Clients were also asked to describe the benefits of working with a peer from their perspective. It should be noted that this evaluation represents an early indicative look at the programme (six months in) and many of the clients had not been working with their mentors for very long. Relationships need time to develop before more tangible benefits can be recognised such as shared experience, raised aspirations, improved self-esteem, role-modelling and recovery. However, the early signs are that successful partnerships have been established in the initiation stage and clients are likely to see more benefits in the future emerge through these relationships.

Clients felt that the relationships being established were positive.

“Very good relationship he likes me I like him.” Client

“I really enjoy meeting him.” Client

Evidence to date shows that clients were enjoying and benefiting from alternative ways to socialize that may differ from more negative patterns.

“I like going for a walk with him I really do.” Client

Research shows recovery is more likely with enhanced social support and clients felt they had been broadening their experience and horizons.

“We are planning on going go-karting. We are going to go at 40-50mph. It is great.” Client

“I suppose it has I have started taking more interest in things and I wasn’t doing that before.” Client

“I would say yeah do it its really helpful like.” Client

Research also suggests that clients benefit greatly from receiving support from an individual who can share their experience. The evaluation shows that clients were already benefiting from having someone to talk to.

“Nice actually. She is really so friendly and nice. I do get on with her I can talk to her” Client

“Its great do it without a doubt. I like to run a point by him. It gave me peace of mind any decision I made was not just me.” Client

“It’s the same really I can talk to her about him and vice versa. It’s good. I think it’s a lovely relationship. I can’t believe how far I have come.” Client

One client had been learning new skills like how to shop and budget.

“Definitely helpful without him I couldn’t have gone shopping. He helps me with the shopping. If I spend all my money I will be stuck.” Client

Although still in the cultivation stage, the evidence shows that clients are already benefiting from positive relationships and whilst providing this support the peers may also be providing or may later provide

inspiration and proof that change is possible. Future evaluations further down the line will look to measure change in behaviour, health status and outcomes.

ii. The benefits for the service:

By deploying peers, the FLIC programme is truly putting lived experience at the heart of the programme. The evidence to date shows that clients using peers have very high satisfaction levels. If after further evaluation this proves to be the case peers will be a useful tool in retaining interest in the programme. The evidence shows that the formal matching managed by the programme has been a success. The open relationships that have developed highlighted by clients could lead to more personal disclosure by clients.

iii. The benefits for Peer Mentors

Many Peer Mentors emphasised the extremely positive impact being a Peer Mentor had on their wellbeing. Benefits included improved confidence, direction, hope, personal growth and career development.

“I think it has given me confidence around working with clients I think initially you know the more you do the more your confidence grows. Initially elsewhere when I did a home visit I was very nervous but then that goes. It has made me think about what I want to do in the future. I have been talking to the employment advisor. I have just applied for a one day a week job as a peer support worker and I showed the application to her.”

Peer Mentor

“Yeah loads. It’s been a really positive experience. It’s given me a new sense of purpose having been in quite a big rut. In the week I look forward to doing it. It’s just nice to look forward to doing something that is worth doing and

hopefully doing it well.” Peer Mentor

Responses showed the Peer Mentoring programme has played a unique role in improving employability and was seen as a supportive path into the labour market

“Certainly it’s getting me more job ready just the discipline, structure my physical fitness has improved I came from a low base but I have really pushed myself and it’s been worthwhile.” Peer Mentor

iv. Benefits for the system

Benefits for the system are not yet apparent but the Peer Mentor Co-ordinator was asked how she saw the programme contributing to system change and described modelling good practice with benefits for both parties as the key.

“The way I see it there is a hesitance from employers to employ people who might have a history in these areas. I think if we manage to show that actually training people with these experiences is actually a positive thing for both, that we would be able to make the case on a larger scale that yes it’s good for all parties so that people may be more flexible with people and possibly find guidelines on how to do that. I think that one of the things I have implemented that has been praised is the personal well-being plan and the fact that it feels liberating to be able to say to the line manager if you see this behaviour this is what I want you to do without having to be ashamed and that sort of thing could go into guidelines.”

Peer Mentor Co-ordinator

Challenges and changes made or being made

The feedback from the evaluation has been very positive overall. The Peer Mentor Co-ordinator and peers were asked to highlight any challenges. Some of the challenges highlighted by the co-ordinator are already being addressed, most are not significant and can be easily fixed.

Administration:

- The lack of necessary documents to apply for a DBS for one of the Peer Mentors has meant that they have not been able to fully participate in the Programme. While they are being supported with obtaining relevant documents, an extra question has been introduced in the Application Form, so that this situation will be avoided in the future. DBS applications will also be started as soon as an offer of placement is made to a new Peer Mentor, rather than during the training. This will mean that Peer Mentors will be able to shadow / lone work at an earlier stage.
- The office space has been reduced.

Recruitment:

- The ratio of females to male Peer Mentors was lower and the women recruited had greater difficulties with flexibility. In this second round of recruitment women are being particularly targeted.
- The pool of individuals possessing the necessary motivation, aptitude and skills may be small. The recruitment process the second time round has had limited success but SHP communications are being utilized and it may improve.

Training:

- Several Peer Mentors identified the need to be supported in developing their IT skills, and providing it on a 1-2-1 basis has been time consuming. A further question has been introduced in the Application Form around levels of IT skills, so that group support might be planned in advance.

Engagement and boundaries:

- While the current Peer Mentors have consistently expressed a desire to shadow members of staff, the level of involvement and availability of Link Workers in this respect has been mixed. Shadowing members of staff with several clients, before a match is identified, is therefore being structurally embedded into the Programme. On-going and continuous shadowing – for which there is great appetite among the Peer Mentors – will continue to be requested of Link Workers.
- The experience of one client and peer demonstrated there can be difficulties in maintaining appropriate boundaries. These can be re-enforced by management.
- Some peers had struggled to engage clients but this is due to the nature of their complexity. Similarly, a couple of clients highlighted they were a bit frustrated with the time it was taking to get them a second match.

Move on:

- Finally, one peer only was concerned by the lack of move on.

'I have been a bit surprised that people just don't move on. I was working in recovery before where you have people who actively want to detox its very different to that this environment. And that leads me to think sometimes that you are enabling some of them so I have had a little bit of personal conflict around all that if you don't mind me saying. It will be interesting to see how it all pans out'. Peer Mentor

Programme streamlining:

- A bigger and more significant challenge is that SHP are planning to streamline Peer Mentoring training and programming and it is expected FLIC will be part of this. A benefit to this could be a wider pool of recruits and structured career paths. However, there are concerns about losing the detailed training. Details of the change are not yet known and it is bound to have pros and cons. However, this evaluation clearly demonstrates the programme has been a huge success to date with participants overwhelmingly positive about training, recruitment and support and it would be a shame to lose any of that.

Conclusion

The evaluation sought to investigate how far the programme to date was meeting its aims and objectives. The programme aimed to provide a system of additional support to clients and to develop and support Peer Mentors to use their skills in a positive manner and enhance employability. The findings have clearly shown that these objectives are being achieved. Ten clients are being successfully supported and all peers have been developing personally and strive to develop a career path in the field.

Additionally the recruitment, training and support were all highly praised by Peer Mentors. Peer Mentors have mainly been deployed in roles providing general and social support to clients. It has been deliberate strategy to have the Peer Mentors in roles that are distinct to the Link workers. Peers have enjoyed doing something worthwhile, positive communication and witnessing increased confidence and pleasure and enjoyment in clients. Peer Mentors have seen a wide range of benefits in clients including increased engagement, increased confidence and enjoyment. Clients have seen the benefits of positive friendly relationships. Being a Peer Mentor has had positive impact on the well-being of peers. Benefits include; improved confidence, direction, hope, personal growth and career development.

The conclusion of this research is that that Peer Mentors play a valuable role in the delivery of the FLIC programme.



**“As a Peer Mentor, I can relate to the clients I meet. If I see someone struggling with something, I will open up a little bit and say “I do know what you’re going through.”
- Lisa**

Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden

Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC) supports people who have multiple and complex needs relating to drug and alcohol use, homelessness, offending and mental ill health, to build more positive and fulfilling futures.

We work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies across both boroughs to improve services for people with multiple needs and drive systemic change, influencing how services are designed and delivered.

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