

Peer Mentor Volunteer Description

'Peer': Noun; a person of the same age, status, or ability as another specified person

'Mentor': a person who gives a less experienced person help and advice over a period of time

About Waverley Care

Scotland is on track to be one of the first countries in the world to achieve zero HIV transmissions, and Waverley Care will play an essential role in getting us there.

A positive HIV diagnosis still has the power to knock people off their feet and impact every part of their lives. People living with HIV still carry the burden of decades of discrimination and misinformation about HIV. HIV is treatable, but the stigma and shame surrounding HIV holds people back and makes it different to other life-long conditions. Stigma and the fear of an HIV diagnosis still prevents many people at risk getting a test and knowing their status.

Our vision is for a Scotland where no one faces HIV alone, we will achieve this by fighting stigma and empowering people living with HIV to live full and healthy lives.

Waverley Care is Scotland's leading HIV and hepatitis C charity, and everything we do is guided by the experiences of the people we work with – this ranges from shaping the services we deliver through to how we influence national policy around sexual health and blood borne viruses (BBVs).

We are at an exciting point in our history as we strive to reach the goal of zero transmissions by 2030. There is much work to be done, but as an organisation we are driven to create lasting change for everyone in Scotland living with, or at risk of HIV or hepatitis C.

You can find out more about the work we do at our website www.waverleycare.org.

About the role

Peer Mentors are volunteers living with HIV or hepatitis who can offer emotional or social support to their peers through lived experience. The main responsibilities include providing support to individuals who share a similar experience, addressing specific aspects and challenges of living with a BBV. Unlike befriending, peer mentoring involves a set number of sessions and focuses on setting goals or addressing specific challenges related to living with a BBV.

Your life experiences and friendly support can make a world of difference to someone working through similar paths. It's all about lending an understanding ear, sharing insights, and boosting each other up.

About the person

Peer Mentors are characterized by their thoughtfulness, understanding and empathy. They are able to use their personal life experiences to influence positive change by offering support and guidance to others who might be dealing with similar challenges. They have a good understanding of the challenges associated with seeking support and dealing with stigma. Peer Mentors are self-aware, respectful and are at ease when sharing their own personal experiences of living with a BBV. Yet, they remain sensitive to the issues of confidentiality and discrimination that many people living with HIV and/or hepatitis face.

Key strengths

- **Down to earth/easy to connect to:** Peer Mentors can offer support based on their lived experience, which helps them connect, build trust and empower emotional growth in others going through similar challenges.
- **Problem-Solvers:** Because of their lived-experience, they have great problem-solving skills. They are able to guide people and help them overcome challenges by suggesting coping mechanisms. They are knowledgeable enough to understand the complexities of clinical, emotional and social aspects of living with HIV and/or hepatitis and to offer appropriate guidance.
- **Positive Impact:** Peer Mentors get involved because they want to make positive change. They are the ultimate movers and shakers in supporting peers and identifying issues around living with a BBV. They want to ensure that people have positive experiences with our support services. They want to ensure that people live their best lives despite living with a BBV.

Responsibilities and duties

- Meeting with service users on a one to one basis in an informal, neutral, social setting, or in a private neutral setting.
- Engaging in general conversation with service users.
- Building trust and making others comfortable to open up about particular concerns.
- Have a detailed knowledge of the relevant BBV and be able to discuss various issues surrounding it, such as diagnosis, disclosure, treatment options etc.
- Engaging in discussions from the perspective of mutual experiences of living with a BBV.
- Explore and examine specific issues relating to the specific BBV and offer support and guidance to address particular concerns.
- Have a knowledge of other support services available to our service users and identifying when someone may be at risk or require referral to additional support services.
- Listen to service users and highlight any concerns to Waverley Care support staff.
- Carry out pre- and post-mentoring assessments and demonstrate positive changes made through the course of the mentoring sessions.

Support and training

- Volunteers will have a designated member of staff as their back up support..
- Peer Mentors will receive regular one to one support to minimise the risk of secondary trauma and to discuss any concerns. This can be tailored to suit your individual needs (over coffee, phone call, in person etc.).
- Support is available via an “open door policy”; scheduled catchups will also be provided.
- Peer Mentors can access group support at monthly arranged meetings with the Peer Coordinator and other befrienders and peer supporters to discuss and share experiences and learnings.
- Comprehensive volunteer training will be provided and updated appropriately.