



PEER TO PEER: A ROUTE TO RECOVERY OF PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS THROUGH PEER SUPPORT TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Project N° 2013-1-ES1-LEO05-66277-AN

Peer2Peer: Supervisory visits brief

Introduction

The course developed as a result of the adaptation and integration of the PDA Mental Health Peer Support with psychodrama and video therapy will be piloted twice by each of six partners in the Peer2Peer project. These pilots will take place between September and November 2012 and January to March 2015. During these pilots there will be a series of supervisory visits undertaken by SRN and INTRAS. In total there will be six supervisory visits with each organisation involved in the pilot being visited once. This short brief sets out the purpose of and process for these supervisory visits and the topic guide to be used during the visits.

Purpose

The purpose of the visits is to:

- Ensure the appropriate implementation of the curriculum and video therapy methodology;
- To learn from the experience of those involved in the piloting of the course – what is working well and why, revisions that may be helpful and guidance to inform future delivery of the course.

Outline of visits

Each supervisory visit will take place over 1 day. The approach will be informal and based on a two way exchange with those undertaking the visits being focused on learning from the experience of those involved in the pilots.

Each visit will include the following:

- Introductory meeting with those organising the local pilot of the course;
- Observation of delivery of part of a session;



- Informal interviews and discussion with trainees;
- Informal interviews and discussion with the trainer(s);
- Final meeting with those organising the pilot to discuss initial impressions and clarify any questions.

It will be the responsibility of the partner piloting the course to ensure that those undertaking the supervisory visits can meet with the required people and also observe part of a session.

Timing

There will be a total of six supervisory visits during the course of the two pilot phases. When considering when to visit each of the partners piloting the course we took into account the need to minimise travel and make best use of the time and budget available. Therefore it is proposed that the visits take place as follows:

October 2014	EASP, Andalusia and INTRAS, Valladolid
November 2014	MHC, Sofia and RLMH, Bucharest
February 2015	GOW, Rotterdam and Pmooe, Linz



Draft topic guides

Separate topic guides have been drafted for staff supervising the pilots in each test site; trainees and trainers.

Pilot supervisor (partner organisation)

Tell us how you planned and organised the delivery of this pilot?

- Any issues or challenges?
- Were the instructions clear?
- How did you identify and select trainers?
- How did you identify and select trainees?

How well do you feel the course delivery is going?

- Are you happy with the course and its delivery?
- Are the trainers finding the curriculum useful?
- What is the feedback from the trainees?
- Has there been any drop outs and if so what has caused this?

What is working well?

- Materials?
- Benefits to trainees?
- Benefits to your organisation?

What do you think needs to be changed or revised?

- Why is this?

How important is accreditation to your organisation?

- If it is what would be your preferred route for this?

What are your plans for the second pilot? (first pilot visits only)

Would you run the course in its current format again?



Trainees

How would you describe your experience of the course so far?

- What do you think of the structure of the course?
- Have you found the sessions informative?
- Have you enjoyed the course?
- What have you enjoyed most?
- What has been the most challenging aspect?

What difference is the course making to you?

- Do you have more knowledge and understanding of recovery and peer working?
- Do you feel more confident about being a peer worker or personal assistant?

Do you have any suggestions for improving the course?

- rationale

Trainers

What is your experience of delivering the course so far?

- What are your impressions of the course overall?
- How useful have the sessions and exercises been?
- To what extent have you used the sessions and exercises in your delivery?
- Have you developed and used any other sessions or exercises?
- If so, why did you do this?

To what extent is the course suitable for the student group?

- Is the content of the sessions appropriate to the student group?
- Have you faced any challenges delivering the sessions? Detail
- How are the trainees reacting to the content of the course?
- How are the trainees reacting to the demands of the course?

To what extent is the course having a positive impact on knowledge and understanding of recovery and peer working among the student group?

- Do you have any examples?
- What is having the most impact?
- Are there any aspects that do not appear to have been beneficial to the students?

How are you assessing student performance on the course?

- How well is this approach working?



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Peer2Peer

Report of Supervisory Visit to delivery of pilot course by EASP, Granada

1. Introduction

Sara Marcos Ispuerto of INTRAS and Louise Christie of SRN visited the delivery of the pilot Peer2Peer course in Granada on Tuesday 14th October 2014. The visit lasted from 9.30am to 4pm. During this visit we:

- Interviewed the course organiser;
- Interviewed the course tutors;
- Observed the delivery of part of a session;
- Interviewed the course trainees.

A brief containing semi-structured questionnaires for the each of the groups interviewed was agreed in advance.

2. Delivery arrangements

The course is being delivered by EASP in partnership with En Primera Persona. The course is being delivered in the offices of SAPAME, the service user led organisation in Granada which is a member of En Primera Persona. EASP and En Primera Persona have been working together for a number of years and the delivery of the course builds on this existing relationship.

Tutors

The course was being delivered by two tutors; one from EASP and the other from SAPAME. The tutor from EASP has a clinical/service delivery background and has experience of developing and delivering peer volunteer training. This tutor was also heavily involved in drafting the course to be piloted. The tutor from SAPAME is a peer volunteer and currently involved in leading a peer support group at a day hospital in the area. She had been on a previous peer volunteer course and also a more advanced course focused on facilitation skills run by the other tutor.

Delivery approach

The 13 sessions of the course are being delivered over 3 weeks with each session lasting around four hours with a short break in the middle. The course is being delivered in SAPAME's shop

front premises which make it accessible and also familiar to many of the trainees. The delivery takes place in the main training area which is open and as a result is affected by interruptions and noise from other SAPAME members such as those using the IT equipment behind screens at the back of the room. However the tutor and trainees appeared to manage this well and remained focused on their discussions.

The approach to course delivery is facilitative and highly participative. A range of methods were used in the session observed including whole group and small group discussions; individual feedback and reading from the course hand outs. The training was delivered around a large table with small group discussions being informal and using the space available. Encouraging small group discussions to be standing also maintained energy. It was clear that the students were interested, engaged and motivated with a high level of discussion and participation. The student group also appeared to be very supportive.

The students are keeping a portfolio where they are relating what they are learning to their role in SAPAME and other peer experience. There is time set aside for the portfolio in each session. Each of the students made an oral presentation of their portfolio to date in session 7 and will provide their completed portfolio at the end. They are handwriting it as most do not have access to IT and there are varying levels of confidence and skill in using IT.

The course organisers have some concern that the course may raise expectations among students regarding future employment opportunities. However they did acknowledge that the students would be able to fulfil valuable peer support roles in a voluntary capacity in the short term and that future consideration of how this work is developed by EASP and En Primera Persona will include looking at how this course will be built on.

3. Trainee selection and retention

All but one of the trainees were largely drawn from SAPAME membership, with the other being from a sister organisation in Cadiz who found out about the course through En Primera Persona.

Originally 18 individuals had signed up to complete the course but three dropped out prior to the course starting resulting in 15 starting the course. There are currently 11 on the course and the tutors were confident that these 11 would complete. The 11 students comprise six women and five men.

The four who dropped out of the course after it started tended to drop out relatively early. In one case the person left the course as a leg injury made it impossible for them to continue to

attend. The view of the tutors was that the reasons for the other three dropping out were partly due to the academic level of course but possibly more to do with the nature of the course and the emotional impact of dealing with the subject matter.

Some of the students knew each other previously but not all. However they have gelled very well as a group and have expressed a preference for whole and small group work rather than individual work.

The students had an understanding of peer support before the course through their roles in the association. However this tended to be unrecognised and not discussed and as a result the course has helped to bring out this knowledge.

4. Feedback from course organisers and tutors

Course and course materials

- The course is well structured and works well with the sessions building on the previous ones.
- The style and content of the course materials was praised and the clear contribution from people with lived experience of mental health problems in creating the original material was warmly welcomed.
- The careful and intentional use of language in the original materials helped to encourage reflection and to challenge some pre-existing attitudes. However it is not always easy to immediately translate the materials in a way that preserves this and as a result the Spanish translation is seen as a 'work in progress' and needed further consideration and discussion.

Delivery approach

- The delivery of the course by two tutors with different skill sets and backgrounds has been important. They have been able to complement each other and bring different skills and perspectives.
- The tutors have adopted a facilitative rather than traditional training approach and this has modelled the values underpinning the course and helped to highlight the importance of lived experience, personal responsibility, mutuality and empowerment in learning.

- The participative nature of the course has also meant that it has been a positive experience for trainees as it has enabled them not only to acquire new knowledge and skills but also to recognise, develop and build their confidence in existing knowledge and skills. During the observation of the session the confidence, motivation and knowledge of the trainees was very evident.

Trainee group

- The trainees all had some understanding of peer support as a result of their experience in SAPAME and other similar organisations. They were all supportive of the concept of peer support and this not only helped to gel the group but also to sustain their motivation and participation. The tutors were very much enjoying delivering the course and working with the group.

Adaptations suggested

The tutors were very positive about the course overall but felt that a number of adaptations were required for future delivery:

- Some of the sessions require more time to be properly covered; session 3 which covers societal influences, the effect of force and trauma and trauma-informed practice needed more time and possibly could be split into two sessions. It was suggested that an additional two or three sessions to deliver the course would be beneficial.
- There is also a need to develop a wider range of exercises for the course so that the tutors can choose those which play to the strengths and preferences of the group. In the case of the course in Granada this would be more group exercises to complement the individual study and exercises.
- The course materials are focused on one-to-one peer support and it would be helpful to have more about peer support group work including additional exercises.

5. Feedback from trainees

Experience of the course

- For some candidates the course is a new opportunity, a chance to help others and to learn things that they did not previously study.

- Another candidate pointed out that it is good for getting into the labour market and also for their social life, *“it is like a stimulus to continue fighting for your place”*.
- For another candidate the course is a good chance to meet people with the same interests and motivations that they have.
- Some candidates commented that the course is a support resource itself, because they get support from their peers and there is always someone to talk.

The sessions

- For candidates the sessions are very informative, emotional and comprehensive, but some sessions are more challenging than others due not only to the amount covered but also the nature of the topics.
- Some candidates commented that they found the portfolio challenging as it can be difficult to understand the questions. However it was recognised that this may be partly due to the difficulties in translating the materials.
- Some participants commented that they liked the review section at the end of the sessions, and considered them as a time for reflect upon what they understood. They were also an opportunity to discuss understanding with fellow trainees and were happy that most of the time they all understood the same and reached the same conclusions.

Most enjoyable

- The trainees enjoyed the exercises most and they liked to reflect and comment them.
- Role playing exercises were enjoyable and useful for participants as they help them to understand better concepts and gave them an opportunity to put this into practice.

Most challenging

- The portfolio, in part because the translations which made difficult to understand some questions, and because it takes time to reflect upon the things you learnt. Even though some candidates found the portfolio the most challenging aspect of the course, they commented that it was good for reviewing the things they already know by experience, but they do not knew they know.

Benefits

- The trainees felt that they had not only learnt a lot about recovery and peer working but had also been able to articulate things they felt before but had not discussed through the exercises and role plays and the reflection on them.
- The trainees commented that this course helped them to understand the point of view of the peer worker and emphasised the mutuality of peer support. Most of the candidates have been involved in peer support groups, but had not considered the needs of the peer worker in the relationship.
- All trainees agreed that they felt more confident about being a peer worker and were keen to have more opportunities to practice and develop their skills. They were very interested in exploring opportunities for peer support and peer working in services locally but were aware of the challenges in creating such opportunities.

Improvements suggested

- Some candidates commented that the translation of the course materials could be better and more reflective of the subtleties of recovery language.
- A trainee manual would be helpful as it would enable participants to focus on the tutor and fellow trainees rather than taking notes. It would also allow them to review the theory exercises at home to aid understanding. It was suggested that as well as summarising the theory and concepts, this manual for trainees could include exercises and also further reading in Spanish for them to explore.
- It will be very useful to have more focus on the approach of peer support groups in the course and the materials.

Peer2Peer

Report of Supervisory Visit to delivery of pilot course by EASP, Granada

1. Introduction

Sara Marcos Ispierto of INTRAS and Louise Christie of SRN visited the delivery of the pilot Peer2Peer course in Valladolid on Thursday 16th October 2014. The visit lasted from 9.30am to 4pm. During this visit we:

- Interviewed the course organiser;
- Interviewed the course tutors;
- Observed the delivery of part of a session;
- Interviewed the course trainees.

A brief containing semi-structured questionnaires for the each of the groups interviewed was agreed in advance.

2. Delivery arrangements

The course is being delivered by INTRAS. They have hired a room with good space and facilities in the public library in Valladolid for the course.

Tutors

There are three tutors, all INTRAS employees involved in delivering the course. Each is delivering a number of sessions. Two of the tutors are directors of INTRAS facilities in Valladolid and Toro and the third is the Technical Director of the organisation. The tutors have experience of working with people and also of delivering training. They see the course as an important element in the development of INTRAS and the move away from more traditional approaches to one which embraces recovery and values lived e experience.

Delivery approach

The course is being delivered in sessions of around four hours with a short break in the middle. The first six sessions were delivered daily Monday to Friday and then there was a break of about a week where each trainee had an individual session to discuss and plan their assessment portfolio. This was followed by the remainder of the sessions daily and a final individual session with each trainee focused on their portfolio.

The tutors commented that the students have found the course intensive; especially being there for 10am every morning. On the day of the visit eight of the nine students attended and three were a little late but all arrived within 30 minutes and apologised for being late.

The students all have a manual in a folder which contains course information and to which they add any course hand-outs including suggestions for further reading.

The session observed was highly participative and the tutor used a variety of techniques to involve the group and encourage them to take responsibility for their own and the group's learning. The trainees worked well as a group and were respectful and supportive of each other.

3. Trainee Selection and retention

The students were recruited from INTRAS services and also through those of other local mental health organisations. A poster and leaflet were developed to raise awareness of the course and all of those who indicated that they would like to attend were interviewed individually to assess their suitability. During the interviews the candidates were also asked to complete a short written exercise to ensure they could manage the demands of the course.

Nine trainees (eight men and one woman) were recruited and all have been retained on the course. The support available from the group has been an important factor in this. Indeed one of the trainees had considered leaving the course in the early stages but was persuaded and supported by the group to stay. Another trainee missed a couple of sessions due to a family bereavement but returned and was supported by the group.

4. Feedback from course organisers and tutors

The course organisers and tutors are very positive about the course and the materials provided and emphasised that while this built on work they are doing the subject matter of and approach taken in this course was different from previous training experiences. They identified a number of factors which contributed to the success of the pilot course:

Group size

- A group of eight to ten people has worked very well as it is enough people to get a range of views and discussion but small enough to allow space for all and to support the group to gel.

- The small size of the group has also possibly discouraged people from dropping out as it emphasises the need for responsibility for self and to others.

Tutor role

- The role of the tutor as a guide, mentor and facilitator rather than a traditional trainer has helped to model the values underpinning the course and to emphasise the mutuality of the learning experience.

Delivery approach

- The individual sessions half way through the course focused on the portfolio worked well and assisted the trainees to reflect on their learning.

Course materials

- The materials were generally well received and the tutors felt able to use them in a flexible way to meet the needs and preferences of the group.
- The session focused on reflective practice was helpful.

They also had a number of suggestions to improve the course:

Course materials

- The course materials were described as dense with the tutor commenting that most of the sessions have too much in them for the time available for delivery. They suggested a slightly different approach for the course materials with each session having key learning points with some background material and references for further study.
- This could help to get a better balance between knowledge, skills and team building in the course. The feeling was that there was a little too much focus on knowledge and that there needed to be more on skills and team building.
- It was also suggested that there be a wider range of exercises including role plays for the tutor and the group to choose from depending on their preferences and learning styles. These would help to develop skills and practice and support reflection.
- The session dealing with trauma was very emotional and challenging for the group as this was a subject matter which they would not have discussed openly before, including in services.

Course structure

- It was suggested that there be a session on elements of sessions focused on building the group and developing team working and learning. These sessions or parts of sessions would be primarily focused on team building and could take place outside the classroom. It was suggested that this could help to prepare the trainees for the more emotionally challenging aspects of the course.

5. Feedback from trainees

Experience of the course

- All commented that the experience was positive so far; they were enjoying the course and had learnt a lot.
- The course is a new experience particularly the focus on the role of the peer as the expert. The trainees liked the idea of changing the established power relationships and beginning to see themselves as people who give as well as receive support.
- There was strong support for the peer worker role with the group feeling that this would have benefited them in their recovery.
- The supportive nature of the group and taking part in a social activity with people who share their interests and worries has been important to the trainees.

The sessions

- The theoretical part of the course feels easier than the practice elements but this is due to the novelty of the role to them and that they do not have an opportunity to practice out with the course as yet.
- Although the course has been intensive the time in each session goes quickly as there is so much involved.
“The dynamism, energy of the sessions and the role play activities made each session different and enjoyable, although some sessions were more difficult than others”
- The trainees liked the flexibility of the course and the activities used to help them understand the different concepts and particularly valued the group discussions.
“There is always the chance to interrupt, to talk, ask or comment on something”
“Tutors are always open to talk and discuss anything”

- The review sections of the sessions provided an opportunity for discussion and reflection and built confidence as trainees found that they agreed with each other and reached similar conclusions.
- The trainee manual was very useful as it provided key concepts and explanations. It meant that the trainees were able to follow the sessions without taking lots of notes.

Most enjoyable

- The trainees like the use of role plays and also video therapy where they were recorded and then played back to aid discussion and reflection.
- The small group of nine people gave them a chance to talk and participate and get to know their colleagues.

Most challenging

- There was some uncertainty and lack of confidence in their skills to support other people. This is largely due to lack of opportunities for practice.

Benefits

- The intensity of the course has been good as it has been useful to learn how to communicate and share experiences to support other people.
- Better understanding of recovery and peer worker roles and also to articulate, organise and develop the ideas and knowledge they already had.
“We were familiar with some of the concepts but we did not know what to call them”
- Helped trainees to form new viewpoints and also to better understand their own recovery process.
- While there was still some uncertainty the trainees were interested in being peer workers and felt more confident in this than before.

Improvements suggested

- More time for role plays and other practice in the sessions would be good as the trainees don't have an opportunity to practice out with the course.
- More peer support roles in the health system.

Peer2Peer

Report of Supervisory Visit to delivery of pilot course by RLMH, Bucharest

1. Introduction

Sara Marcos Ispuerto of INTRAS and Louise Christie of SRN visited the delivery of the pilot Peer2Peer course in Bucharest on Tuesday 25th November 2014. The visit lasted from 9.30am to 1.30pm. During this visit we:

- Interviewed the course organiser;
- Interviewed the course tutors;
- Observed the delivery of part of a session;
- Interviewed the course trainees.

A brief containing semi-structured questionnaires for the each of the groups interviewed was agreed in advance. The supervisory visit took place on the first day of the course which meant that while we were able to discuss the planning and preparation for the course and student expectations as well as observe the delivery of a session we were not able to discuss experience of the course with the tutors and students.

2. Delivery arrangements

RLMH are working with a partner organisation, Estuar, to deliver the course. Estuar are an NGO who run two centres in Bucharest and deliver a range of services including counselling; legal and financial advice and employability support. The training course is being run in a newly opened clubhouse in the city. RLMH provides capacity building support and practice development support to other organisations and established Estuar in 1993. The course organiser is closely involved with the delivery of the course including as one of the two tutors.

Tutors

Two tutors are delivering the course. Both are clinical psychologists who work with RLMH and are involved in the project as organisers as well as tutors. Their motivation to get involved with the course came from a commitment to developing new ways of working; including strengths or asset based approaches.

Delivery approach

The course will be delivered in weekly sessions from the end of November 2014. Taking into account a break for Christmas and New Year it is anticipated that the course will be completed in March 2014. The delivery of the course will follow the structure of the

Peer2Peer manual. However the tutors have made some amendments to the content to take account of the fact that the concepts of recovery and peer support in mental health are very new to both people with lived experience and professionals.

The first session was focused on introducing the students to the course with introductions; development of a group agreement and discussions on the peer support role and reflective practice. In the section on reflective practice the tutors used role play to introduce this learning approach to the student group. The delivery was led by the tutors but used strengths based exercises and focused on encouraging participation in small group and whole group discussions. At the end of the session the tutors asked the group for their preferences as to how the course should be delivered.

3. Trainee Selection and retention

The students have been recruited through services supported by RLMH and most were people involved with Estuar as users of their services. A number of students described themselves as volunteers and one of the students already works for the Estuar foundation on a part time basis. They were introduced to the course at first through participation in the Peer2Peer needs analysis questionnaire. The co-ordinators of services also advertised the course to their members/clients.

15 people attended the first session and it looks likely that most will continue with the course. There is a range of people on the course and varying levels of understanding of concepts such as recovery and peer support in mental health.

4. Feedback from course organisers and tutors

The course tutor/organisers found the Peer2Peer course structure and manual helpful but felt that there was too much material to be delivered in the time available.

5. Feedback from trainees

During the group discussions it was clear that many of the students were interested in the course both as a way to learn or improve their skills in helping others but also to better understand how to maintain their wellbeing.

Three trainees discussed why they wanted to participate in the course in more detail. They stated that they were interested in the course as a way to:

- develop their skills and knowledge to use their own experience to help others whether in a paid or volunteer role;

- to help themselves in their own recovery and then use this experience to help others;
- meet new people.

What they hoped to get out of participating in the course was:

- Information
- Qualification
- Get a job in a peer worker role ('if it works elsewhere it can work in Romania')
- Make progress in own recovery by doing something with a purpose and structure.

None of the students expressed any worries about the course and its content or demands.

Peer2Peer

Report of Supervisory Visit to delivery of pilot course by MHC, Sofia

1. Introduction

Louise Christie of SRN visited the delivery of the pilot Peer2Peer course in Sofia on Thursday 27th November 2014. The visit lasted from 9.30am to 4pm. During this visit:

- Interviewed the course organiser;
- Interviewed the course tutors;
- Observed the delivery of part of a session;
- Interviewed the course trainees.

A brief containing semi-structured questionnaires for the each of the groups interviewed was agreed in advance.

2. Delivery arrangements

The course is being delivered by MHC, Sofia. The course organiser is less involved in the delivery of the course than those in other pilot sites. MHC is planning to work with a patient organisation on the next course.

Tutors

The course is being delivered by 2 tutors, both of whom work in the MHC. One is a psychologist by profession and works as a works as a Cultural Therapist. He is also a trained psychodrama therapist. He manages the day hospital which delivering a range of group therapy and rehabilitation activities for patients of the centre. The other is a social worker and lawyer by profession and is the manager of the day centre which provides a range of rehabilitation activities for individuals who are no longer medical patients of the centre. Both trainers have roles in both the medical and social functions of the centre.

They were selected to deliver the course as both have extensive experience of working with groups and with potential students. They were also willing to deliver the course in addition to their work duties and clearly have a strong commitment to promoting strengths based approaches.

Delivery approach

The course is taking place within the MHC in an area that is used for group work and other activities. The MHC occupies a 6 storey building and has a range of services including in-patient and out-patient facilities and a crisis centre as well as the day hospital and day centre.

The group currently meets weekly for a session which runs from 12.30-2.30pm. This is seen as a 3 hour session as a teaching hour is interpreted as around 45 minutes. So far there have been 7 sessions including an introductory session. The decision to run weekly 2 (or 3) hour sessions is based on knowledge of the students and their feedback with regard to the course. At the introductory session the tutors discussed the delivery of the course with the students and they were strongly of the view that 4 hour sessions were too long and expressed a preference for 2 hour sessions. To enable 2 hour sessions the tutors are splitting the suggested sessions and delivering them in two parts. They plan to increase the length of the sessions after the first couple of months and will complete the pilot by the end of February 2015.

The sessions delivered so far have not followed the structure used in the manual and have covered:

- Group cohesion/group building
- Introduction to recovery and peer support
- Partnership and trust
- Expectations
- Introduction to psychodrama

Each session starts with a reflection on the previous session. The arrangements for assessment and the creation of a portfolio are not yet clear. The session observed started with reflections on the last session and the course to date and then an exercise looking at risk. The approach was very informal and used psychodrama with two of the students taking part in an exercise and then a general discussion. The group were visibly tired by the end of the session.

3. Trainee Selection and retention

Initial engagement with potential students was through the pre-course questionnaire which 22 individuals completed. Those targeted for this questionnaire were individuals in rehabilitation who were relatively well. Of these 22, 12 indicated an interest and from this group 8 started the course. So far one has left the course but another student joined the course at session 3 so there are currently 8 students on the course. Of the 8 students on the course 4 are male and 4 are female. With regard to previous educational attainment 4 have high school qualifications and 4 are educated to university degree level.

The reasons for those expressing an interest in the course but not staying in the group were varied, but what was common was low self-esteem and a concern among individuals that they would not be able to help others if they still needed support themselves. Indeed some of those participating in the course still have concerns around this.

The tutors felt that the group had developed a good level of cohesion and that there was a readiness to share.

4. Feedback from course organisers and tutors

Tutor role

While the tutors have considerable expertise in mental health they are not experts in peer support.

Delivery approach

The tutors were strongly of the view that 4 hour sessions are too long for the student group; who tend not to be used to formal, organised activities.

Course materials

The tutors felt that the Peer2Peer manual needs considerable editing and more focus on key learning points. They felt that one way to do this was to differentiate between teaching and background materials and for a clearer structure for the sessions. They felt that the materials were too dense and that it was not possible to deliver all the material and exercise in the sessions. They also suggested revisiting the exercises and role plays and ensuring that the instructions on how they can be used were as clear as possible. A more concise, clearer manual would also help in translation.

While the materials contained a lot of information and exercises they would have preferred a set of lessons ready to deliver. Not all tutors have time to prepare as well as deliver courses.

They also stated that a student manual was required. This would contain information on the concepts as well as homework exercises.

Course structure

There is a tension in delivering the course between the text which is more about traditional teaching and the exercises which are about participative learning.

5. Feedback from trainees

The tutors have been recording feedback from the trainees after each session and there was also a section in the session observed where all students fed back on their experience of the course so far.

Experience of the course

Initially students had concerns about participating in the group and about their readiness to speak out in a group but this got easier after the first session and the group has bonded well. Students reported that they were finding the course interesting and a positive learning experience.

The sessions

Students have found the 2 hour sessions enjoyable and manageable. Some of the concepts have been difficult for some to understand but all were agreed that the sessions were interesting. A number commented that this was a new subject that not only required new knowledge but also new attitudes.

Most enjoyable

Students really liked the participative nature of the course and feel that this is helping them to learn more about communicating with others and managing boundaries. They have also enjoyed the role play exercises as they were both fun and a good way to learn from different perspectives. Indeed a couple felt that there should be more focus on these and less on learning from the text which was seen as overly long and repetitive.

Most challenging

It can be difficult for students to talk about themselves. There were some concerns expressed about confidentiality and the students were aware of the stigma associated with mental health problems.

The students also felt that a course manual to assist them to learn at home between sessions would be good.

Benefits

As well as the knowledge and skills learnt through both the content of the course and the delivery approach, students expected the course to help them to develop the skills to support others. While there had been concerns about ability to help others when still needing support yourself, students were starting to see their potential to help others and also how this would help them in their recovery.

Improvements suggested

- Shorter sessions with an increased focus on key learning points with clearer instructions on how to use the exercises and role plays.
- A student manual.

Peer2Peer

Report of Supervisory Visit to delivery of pilot course by Pro mente, Linz

1. Introduction

Sara Marcos Ispuerto of INTRAS and Louise Christie of SRN visited the delivery of the 2nd pilot Peer2Peer course in Linz on Monday 18th May 2015. The visit lasted from 10.00am to 5.30pm. During this visit we:

- Interviewed the course organiser;
- Interviewed the course tutor;
- Observed the delivery of part of a session;
- Interviewed the course students.

A brief containing semi-structured questionnaires for each type of interviewee was agreed in advance.

2. Delivery arrangements

The course was organised and run by Pro mente. They worked with STRADA, an established user led organisation which is part of Pro mente to recruit students for both pilot courses. The trainer is a Pro mente staff member with considerable experience of training.

If funding permits they would like to continue to run the course to provide opportunities for those involved through STRADA to develop their skills and work towards Government funded training in Peer Counselling that enables them to work as peers. They anticipate that there will be increased job opportunities for peers in the future.

Training for social professions is established in law in Upper Austria and this provides for Government funding of training in a variety of professions. This includes an 18 month course in Peer Counselling which prepares people to work as peers in mental health services.

The supervisory visit took place on the final day of the course.

Delivery approach

The trainer did not deliver the course as set out in the manual but used the content to develop a series of sessions covering all topics and delivered over six full days. This comprised of a two day residential event to start the course followed by four weekly full day sessions. The two day residential event comprised two full day sessions and an evening session where the students watched the Norwegian film 'Elling' about two men moving into their own accommodation from an institution and finding a way to live a fulfilling life and

then discussed the themes from the film. The organiser, tutor and students felt strongly that starting the course with a two day residential event was positive and helped create a good group dynamic and maintain student motivation. There were no breaks in the course as the experience of the first pilot was that a break of two or three weeks resulted in the loss of momentum.

The first five day sessions covered the course content using the following topic headings:

- Recovery
- Force, trauma and societal influences
- Peer support
- Peer relationships
- Self-care and self-management

The sixth session focused on reviewing and reflecting on learning and planning for the future.

A key aspect of the delivery was the use of active dialogue approaches. This involved small groups of three where two discussed the topic and one listened and reflected back and then change in role so all in the group had an opportunity to speak. This approach was taken as the skills being practiced are central to the skills required by peer workers.

The trainer was clearly very experienced and creative in his approach. The session observed focused on reviewing and reflecting on learning. In the first session each student was asked to consider what they wanted from the course and share this with the group. This was captured on video and played at the final session where students were asked in small groups to reflect on what they had done to ensure they got what they wanted from the course.

The session observed was attended by 12 people (5 male and 7 female) and was very participative. Each student participated at some point in the 90 minutes observed. There was a very good group atmosphere and dynamic with the students clearly feeling free to talk and comment on the topics.

The trainer also used images, cartoons and film to introduce topics such as personal responsibility, hope and labelling rather than traditional presentation. This resulted in a very participative environment and also helped when dealing with difficult or challenging topics.

Each student had a folder to keep any handouts and written reflections. All students at the session observed had their folder with them.

There was no written assessment during or after the course. There was reflective assessment but this was discursive and not written. The tutor felt that there was not enough time allocated in the course for written assessment. During the first pilot they used the portfolio for assessment but questioned how helpful this was.

3. Student selection and retention

The students were recruited through SRADA, a well established user led organisation which is part of Pro mente. Within Pro mente each service selects representatives to participate in STRADA which meets 10 times a year. This meant that Pro mente had an established group of user representatives available when recruiting for the pilot courses. In addition to this they also contacted the managers of their services and asked them to suggest suitable candidates for the course. There has been a high level of demand for places on the two pilot courses.

For the first pilot of the Peer2Peer course student interviews were held but this approach was not taken for the second pilot. While the trainer felt that interviews were a good way for candidates to decide if the course was for them it was apparent that those seeking a place on the course were suitable as most were already user representatives and involved in some form of peer activity. Therefore it was felt that interviews were not necessary,

18 students started the course with 14 completing it. Two students did not attend the first two day part of the course so were not able to continue and a further two dropped out after the third session. One became ill and the reasons for the other are not clear as the student did not communicate with the trainer. Other students have missed some of the course due to ill health (physical and mental) but have maintained contact with the trainer.

The trainer and organiser felt that there were a number of reasons why a high number of students had completed the course. The positive, enjoyable and lively approach to the delivery of the course and holding the first two days as a residential helped to build a good group and retain students. They also felt that the motivation of the students to learn and to change their lives was a key factor. The tutor also stayed in contact with the students between sessions; sending content by email and responding to questions and other correspondence from students.

4. Feedback from course organiser and tutor

Course and materials

The manual contains a lot of good information but some of it could be ordered better so that topics are dealt with in one section not a few. However there was a lot of information

to deliver and the tutor's knowledge and understanding of the subject area was needed to help him decide what was a priority and how to use the material to develop a course.

Delivery approach

- It is important that the course and manual are flexible so the tutors can adapt the course to student needs and preferences and also to fit with their teaching/facilitation style.
- The use of active dialogue approaches enhanced the course and helped to develop the skills needed to be a peer worker during the course.

5. Feedback from students

Experience of the course

- There was a consensus that the course had been very good, very well delivered and of benefit to all students. One or two of the students were concerned at first that the course would be too stressful but this had not been the case. The course was clearly a positive experience for those attending.
- The students liked the active nature of the course; the exercises, role play and discussions and the fact that there was not too much theory presented on its own.
- The students also reported that they had appreciated having an opportunity to consider and discuss recovery and the support of their peers in the group.
- The full day sessions were fine for the students but they all commented that the approach of a 5 minute comfort break each hour worked well.

Benefits

There was evidence that the course had benefited the students in a number of ways.

- A number of the students were applying for the Peer Counselling training so that they can secure employment as Peers. They were aware that there was likely to be more employment for Peers in the future in Pro Mente and other organisations.
- In addition to this students described how the course enhanced their self-belief and all reported that it had increased their knowledge, skills and confidence. Those who felt they benefited most had not been involved in a lot of previous training.

- However, even where students had been involved in training, they reported positive impacts of the course on their knowledge, skills and confidence. One student said that the use of active dialogue was very important as it had helped to open up their understanding of others and resulted in them being more empathetic. There was a general consensus that the course showed the importance of looking beyond the immediate and of having an open mind.
- Students reported feeling that they were more open minded as a result of the course and felt more able to talk with other people and express their views and feelings. One student felt that the course had helped them to explain their history to others and gave them the language and confidence to help others understand recovery.
- One student who currently works as a peer stated that the course was a good refresher for her and also increased her understanding of the importance of self-care and self-management for peers. Indeed she would like to bring these elements of the course into the established Peer Counselling curriculum.

Most enjoyable

- The students reported that the group experience and the delivery style meant that they enjoyed the course. Actual words included 'It warmed my heart' and 'It was very lively' and 'It gave me so much.'
- The students also reported that, whilst challenging at first, most enjoyed the role plays and the use of video to aid reflection as it helped them to understand how to put the concepts and values they were learning into practice. Indeed the group felt that more role play and use of video would have been beneficial.

Most challenging

- The students felt that the translation of the manual from English into German had resulted in the use of unfamiliar language.
- While the role play and use of video was good for learning it was felt to be challenging at first. However the positive environment on the course encouraged students to 'give it a go' and they found that it was a good experience.

Improvements suggested

- All students were agreed that the course should be longer and felt that a lot of material was covered in the six sessions. Some felt that one solution would be to have a more advanced follow-on course for people to move onto after an initial or entry-level course.

- There needs to be more thought given to the difficulty of translating courses such as this into different languages in a way that goes beyond basic translation and produces a manual that is understandable culturally as well as literally. There was also a feeling that the language in the manual was not easy to read and that this may not only be a result of translation. The manual text needs to be simple and more attention needs to be given to structure and the repetition of topics.
- The students felt that there could be more role playing exercises.
- They also would like some form of follow up to the course to maintain contact with other students and to continue to reflect on their learning and experience.