

Lifewise Peer Support and Lived Experience Strategy 2019 - 2021

LIFEWISE

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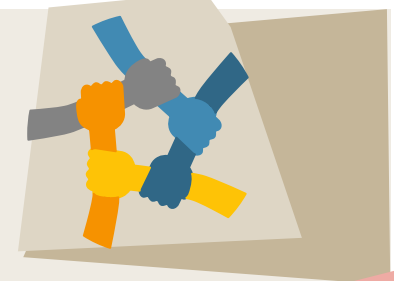
Introduction

Lifewise has a longstanding commitment to empowering people use our services and who have has lived experience of the issues with which we are involved. These include homelessness, mental distress, addictions.

We have employed people as peer support workers since 2016 in our homelessness work, and intentionally employed people who have their own lived experience of mental distress or addictions in both our homelessness work and our residence in Rotorua.

In 2018 Lifewise included the intentional building of this approach in our strategic plan under our Building Strong Communities priority. This is *Expand the role of peer support and lived experience activity in Lifewise*.

We engaged an external peer support consultant, Mary O'Hagan from PeerZone to produce a report with recommendations about develop this work across Lifewise. The report "Developing lived experience and peer roles" was produced in July 2018 after Mary interviewed a number of staff and volunteers throughout Lifewise.



The report concluded with some recommended ways forward:

Lifewise wants to move forward with integrating lived experience and peer support into its work. The following suggests a way Lifewise could approach this.

1. Develop a Lifewise peer support and lived experience strategy

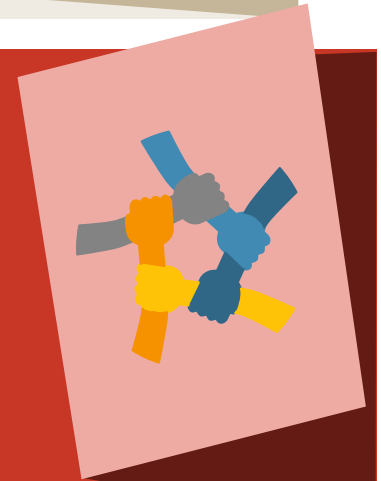
- Make lived experience and peer support a strategic priority and create a brief three to five-year plan for its development that includes:
- Agreed definitions of lived experience and peer work.
- A statement on why lived experience and peer work fit with the values and direction of Lifewise.
- A scan of the opportunities and barriers within Lifewise and the external environment

2. A mapping of where lived experience and peer work will add most value across Lifewise and descriptions of the roles that need to be developed, such as:

- Direct delivery: Peer support and peer advocacy
- Operations: Learning and development; Service and community-led development; Research and evaluation; Human resources and line management.
- Governance: Board members.

3. An implementation framework that covers:

- Staged development of new roles, HR infrastructure and career pathways.
- Funding streams for peer work (e.g. through including them in new contracts, re-negotiating existing contracts or filling vacancies).
- Growth targets.



This paper articulates the agreed organisation strategy to progress our work on lived experience and peer support.

A working group to develop the strategy and recommendations made in the report was established in October 2018. The purpose of the working group is to carry out the strategy, champion this work across the organisation and advise the CE and Senior Leadership team on the way forward.

The core working group meets regularly and is made up with staff from across Lifewise and includes representatives from:

- Practice and Development Manager – convenor
- Human Resources
- Service managers
- Staff in Peer Support roles
- Others can be invited as required

"It is the right thing to do because it aligns to our vision and values.

It is an appropriate thing to do because it will make us more effective.

And it is the way of the future for the sustainability for the non government sector. We have to get better at working in communities so people are addressing their own stuff in a way that works for them."

Moiria Lawler – CEO Lifewise. Speaking about Lifewise's commitment to developing our peer support and lived experience work.



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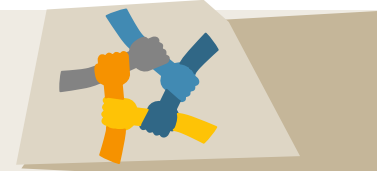
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Strategic priority

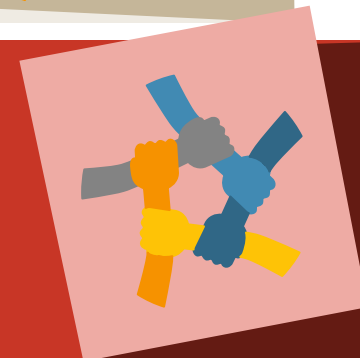
Expand the role of peer support and lived experience activity in Lifewise.



Definitions

Lived experience is a term that refers to the knowledge, wisdom and expertise that comes from living with or beyond a major life challenge. In health and social service settings lived experience means that the worker faces or has faced similar challenges to the client group.

Peer workers include all paid and unpaid workers in health or social services who are trained, employed and supervised to openly use their lived experience they share with the client group, in a role that requires this. Not all people with lived experience occupy peer roles. Peer work has a robust evidence base and is most developed in mental health and addiction services. Peer workers have a unique contribution because they are positive role models who have walked in the person's shoes



Priorities

Current Staff and volunteers:

1. Further develop training for paid and volunteer workers, so it is tailored to the client group, is culturally relevant, and fills common knowledge or skills gaps, such as expectations in the workplace for people who have little work history.
2. Ensure all paid and volunteer peer workers have access to regular group supervision and to individual supervision on an as needed basis.
3. Consider pay scales for paid peer workers beyond traditional job sizing criteria and ensure they reflect the educative value of lived experience, the complex interpersonal skills required in a more mutual relationships and the unique stresses of the role.
4. Provide volunteers with job descriptions, clearer accountabilities, more generous expense payments, and ongoing training and support.
5. Provide training and support for people with lived experience in non-peer roles who wish to use their lived experience in their work.
6. Train peer workers and volunteers in Intentional Peer Support or other formal qualifications to assist them develop negotiation-based boundaries.
7. Continue to work with volunteers and paid peer workers to attain qualifications and map out career paths.

Further development across Lifewise

1. Clarify the definitions of lived experience and peer work with all staff.
2. A scan of the opportunities and barriers within Lifewise and the external environment
3. A mapping of where lived experience and peer work will add most value across Lifewise such as:
 - Direct delivery: Peer support and peer advocacy
 - Operations: Learning and development; Service and community-led development; Research and
 - evaluation; Human resources and line management.
 - Governance: Board members.

