Managing Risk In Peer Support

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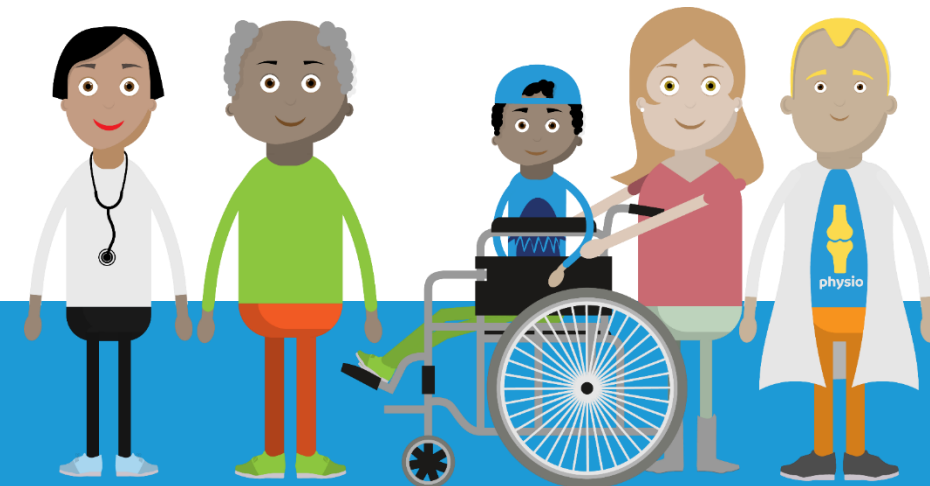
Mental Health Transformation Manager

Health and Care Portsmouth is a partnership between:

What is Peer Support?

- Recovery though lived experience – Sharing stories to provide mutual support

- Key Principles – Empathy, trauma informed, experience, Non-judgemental

- Benefits of peer support – Enhanced Recovery, Reducing Stigma

Common Risks in Peer Support

- Emotional Exhaustion

- Triggering Personal Trauma

- Role Ambiguity

- Lack of Training or Support

- Conflict Within Peer Groups

- Clinical Risks
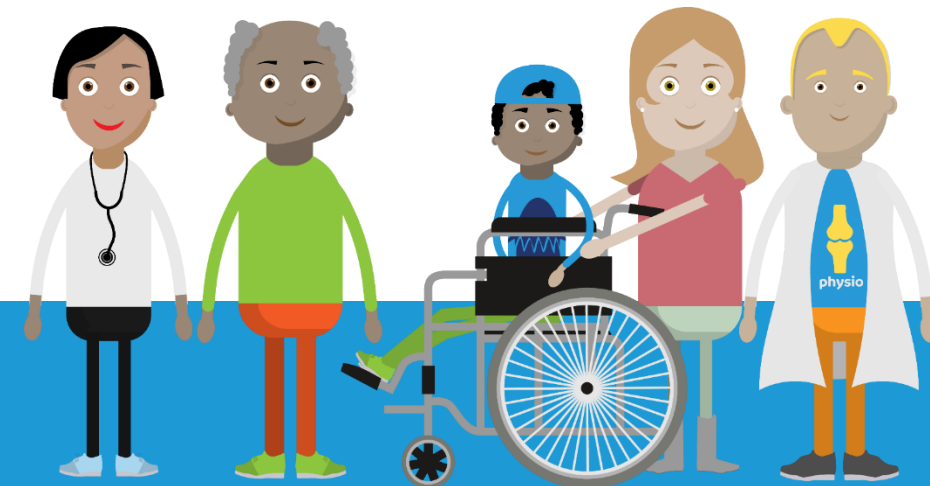
Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma refers to the emotional and psychological impact that occurs when individuals repeatedly hear about or witness the traumatic experiences of others.

- Peers may experience symptoms similar to those of individuals directly exposed to trauma, including intrusive thoughts, emotional distress, and heightened arousal. The cumulative exposure to others' trauma can lead to feelings of helplessness, cynicism, and disconnection.

- Engaging in self-care practices such as mindfulness, exercise, and seeking social support can help mitigate the effects of vicarious trauma.
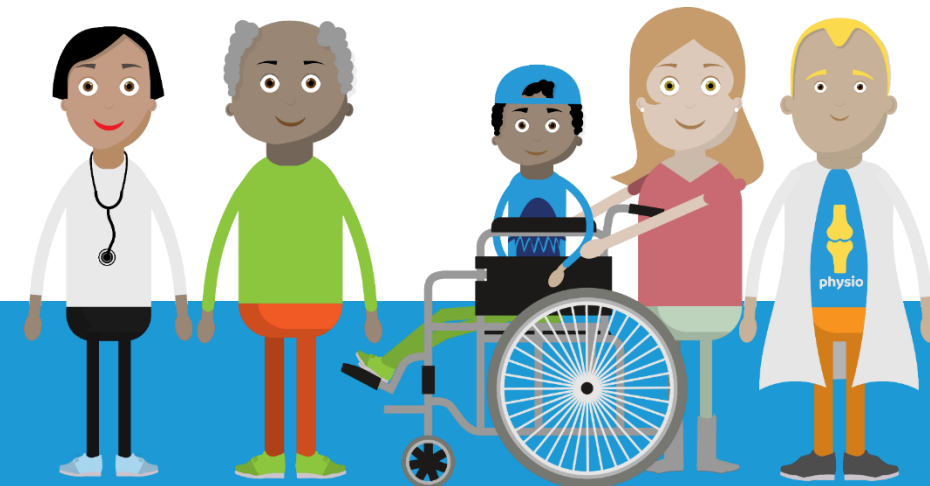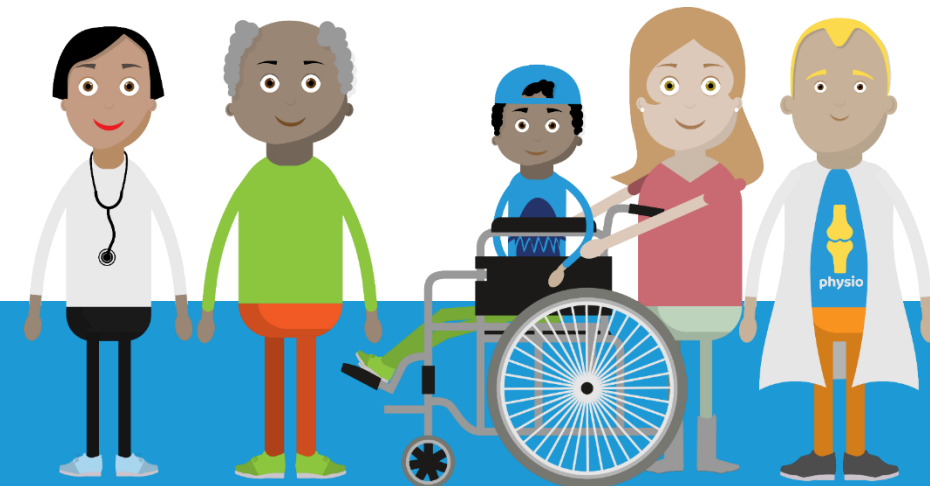
The Peer Response to Risk

- Clinical Risk vs Self Defined Risk

- Secondary Mental Health
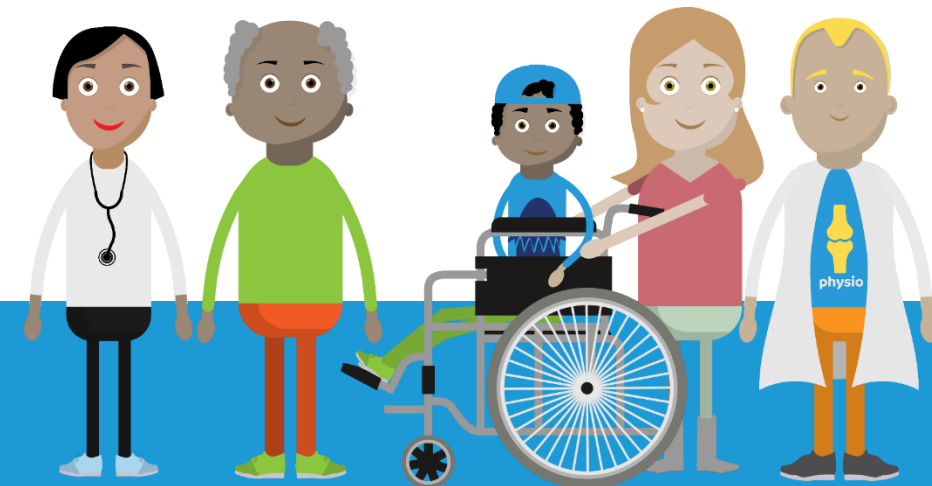
- Seeking Support and Guidance
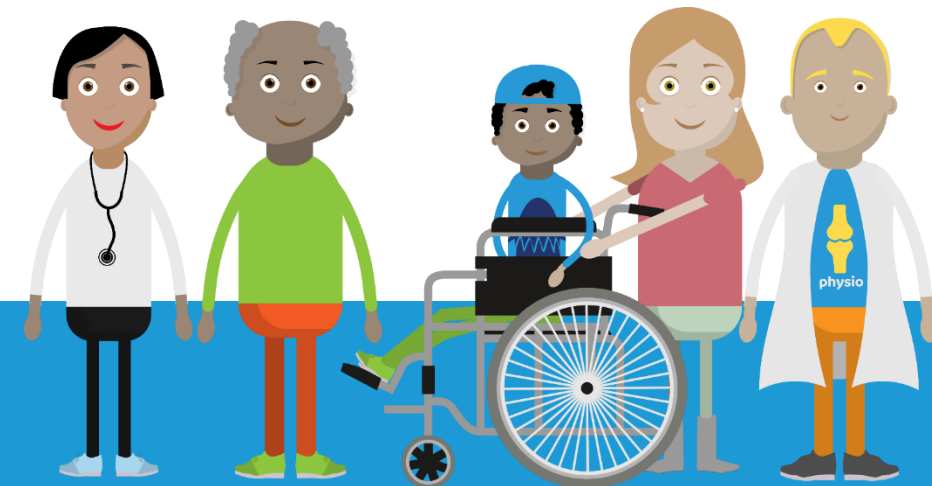
How can we Support Peers with Risk?

- Fostering a Culture of Safety

- Continuous Learning and Development

- Supervision – Clinical AND Peer supervision

- Trauma Informed Working

Self Care

- Work Place Action Plans (WAP)

- Setting Boundaries

- Seeking Support

Wap Example

What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

For example, taking an adequate lunch break away from your workspace, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, natural light at your workspace, opportunities to get to know colleagues.

Exercising before or afterwork (dependent on weather or light) helps me clear my mind.

I need to have breaks from the screen so rarely eat lunch at my desk

Booking time of in advance so I know when I have a few days off coming

Are there any situations or behaviours that can trigger poor mental health for you whilst working?

For example, conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan, difficulties in contacting colleagues whilst they are working remotely.

Not being heard - I come from a working class single parent family. I speak with a Pompey accent and have found people don't take what I have to say seriously at times. I find this frustrating and when I take a knock in my confidence anxiety usually creeps in.

What can you, your manager or colleagues put in place to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work and minimise these triggers?

For example, regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments.

I need to be reassurance, that I have earned my place in a team. That I haven't fluked my way to in the very privileged position that I am currently in.

Conclusion

In conclusion, supporting peers in managing risks within mental health services is essential for creating safe, supportive environments where individuals can thrive. Peer support workers play a vital role in identifying and addressing potential risks, while also promoting recovery, resilience, and empowerment. By prioritizing clear communication, empathy, and self-care, peer supporters can effectively navigate challenges while fostering a culture of safety and support. Together, let us continue to champion peer support as a cornerstone of mental health care, ensuring that every individual receives the understanding and assistance they deserve on their journey to wellness.
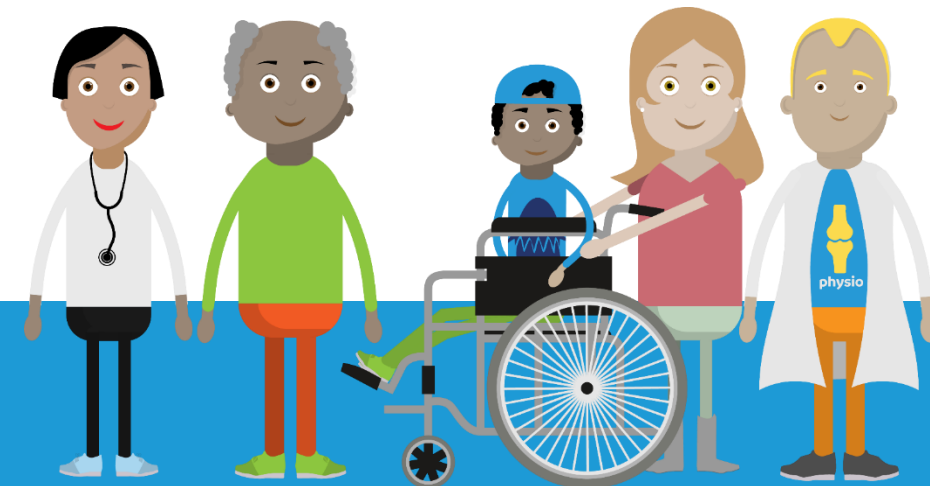
Any Questions?

Thank you for listening, I hope you enjoy the rest of the day

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