

Trialing Co-Reflection for People Who Offer Peer Support to Others in Cardiff & Vale

Strengthening the Peer Workforce Through Connection, Reflection & Learning
A collaboration between RC and Cardiff & Vale Lived Experience Team

What Are the Co-Reflection Sessions?

We delivered co-reflection sessions for people offering peer support across Cardiff and the Vale—designed to support, connect, and upskill the peer workforce through honest, peer-led discussion. Sessions were held both online and face-to-face.

Who came:

- 30 participants took part across the sessions
- People came from Recovery Cymru, Recovery and Wellbeing College, CAVDAS, NHS, Cardiff Council, Cyfle Cymru, Voices Action Change, Adferiad, Hep C Trust, Voluntary Action Cardiff, and more
- Participants brought lived experience across substance use, mental health, neurodiversity, learning disability, and family support
- We had a mixture of paid staff and volunteers
- There were people who wanted to come but couldn't make these sessions.

What We've Covered So Far

These sessions created space to reflect on real-world issues in peer delivery.

Topics included:

- The principles of peer support
- Understanding and protecting peer work as a distinct approach - not a clinical or informal friendship model
- Support and boundaries for the peer workforce, especially volunteers
- The value of lived experience and how it complements, not competes with, other services
- Protecting recovery and improving practice through collaboration and reflection

These were not training sessions—they were peer-led conversations, grounded in honesty, lived experience, and shared learning, making them a great space for anyone working as a peer, especially those in isolation.

What People Said

Feedback from participants shows these sessions are doing something that's both needed and missing elsewhere:

- ***"That a space for those of us who are voluntary peers is very necessary—both for our wellbeing and professional development."***
- ***"It was good to hear others' experiences—both the different and shared."***
- ***"The supportive nature of the group, and realising that every day is a school day."***
- ***"The session looked in depth at boundaries. Just using one topic felt beneficial as more clarity was gained."***

People described the sessions as:

- Friendly, respectful, and well-facilitated
- A place to connect with others doing similar roles they hadn't previously known
- Helpful for practical guidance—such as setting boundaries and managing real-world challenges
- A non-judgemental space

There is strong appetite to continue, with comments highlighting the need for more time, more depth, and more opportunities to reflect.



Why These Sessions Matter — and Must Continue

Peer work is special - and a specialism. We are so lucky to have an amazing range of different types of peer support in Cardiff and Vale. Preparing, nurturing and supporting our peer workforce is so important. The peers who engaged in these sessions said they need them for -

- Practical peer learning and reflective skills development
- Role clarity and shared language
- Emotional support and space to reflect
- A place to look after our own recovery, being able to be honest and not worried about impacting on 'the day job'
- Cross-service networking
- A preventative approach to burnout and disengagement

These are not a "nice-to-have." This is low-cost, high-impact infrastructure for sustaining and developing the peer workforce—one that directly supports our system goals around recovery, aftercare, and lived experience.

'Please do more of these'

'Thanks to you you guys for an amazing couple of peer workshops. I found it so refreshing to hear from peers from across different services. Also it was great to hear how passionate everyone is about the work we do on a daily basis and you were right, it is specialised work.'

'I need more of this. I work alone and it's so helpful to feel connected.'

Strong Early Feedback on Co-Reflection Sessions (based on initial responses):

- Average usefulness rating: 5/5
- Average confidence boost after the session: 4.25/5

What People Want

- Monthly sessions, 2 hours
- Face to Face
- Quarterly online option
- Central, accessible venue

"It was friendly, relaxed, approachable, respectful, warm and kind."

Continuing What Works

Thanks to the Area Planning Board for supporting this trial! We are seeking your support of Recovery Cymru to lead this work with the college to:

- Provide funding (staff time, room hire and refreshments!) to continue and expand co-reflection sessions 2025–2026 and 2026-2027
- Recognise these sessions as part of core peer workforce infrastructure
- Embed this reflective model as a sustainable part of peer-led delivery across Cardiff and Vale



For more information or to explore next steps, please contact us!

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