

The Kidney Peer Supporter Handbook

(Adapted from the Peer group support handbook
from the Royal Free Hospital London)



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Introduction

The aim of this handbook is to provide a short practical guide on kidney Peer Support.

The guide is intended to give those kidney patients and carers who've been through the Peer Support training programme, together with staff working in kidney services an understanding of:

- What Peer Support is
- What Peer Support sets out to achieve
- The benefits of Peer Support
- The role of the Peer Supporter
- Where you can get support

It also provides some useful sources of information and contact numbers when providing Peer Support.

The handbook has been produced by a range of people involved in kidney care, including kidney patients, carers, doctors and nurses.



Peer Support

Nobody understands what people with chronic kidney disease are going through as well as people who have gone through the experience themselves.

The Kidney Peer Support service involves kidney patients helping other kidney patients who are facing similar situations. It aims to give short term practical, emotional and social support to people with chronic kidney disease, their families or carers based on common experiences. Peer Support offers an opportunity to have a one-to-one chat and share personal experiences and stories either face to face or over the telephone with an experienced kidney patient or carer.

Peer Supporters are ideally individuals who share similar life experiences, lifestyles and are approximately the same age. However, it is not always possible to match people in this way, depending on who has been trained to be a Peer Supporter, so you may find that sometimes you are asked to talk to someone who has had slightly different experiences to you. Often these people need just a friendly chat, but if you feel they need specific information that you cannot offer, please contact your Peer Support organiser.

Peer Support is intended to complement the care and education patients and carers receive from their kidney healthcare team. It is therefore an additional service which is available if wanted. It is not a substitute for the professional team and you should not be answering queries better suited to others e.g. about medication.



Benefits of Peer Support for chronic kidney disease

It is important for people with a long term condition such as chronic kidney disease to be given high quality support and information when making decisions about their treatment. Peer Support offers benefits both for the people using the Peer Support service and for the Peer Supporters themselves.

People using Peer Support Services

Reassurance of knowing they are not on their own

Increased confidence to make decisions and have better control over your life

Sharing experiences of what works well and is helpful

Good source of encouragement

Can talk to someone who understands the challenges they're facing

Peer Supporters

Able to use your own personal experience to give others encouragement

Positive experience by having the opportunity to contribute and give something back

Draw satisfaction from supporting others to help themselves

Helps you gain confidence



The role of the Peer Supporter

The role of the Peer Supporter aims to build upon an individual's experience and strengths. The following 'job description' gives summarises what is expected from you as a peer supporter, and on the following page are some useful prompts to remind you of how to be a good listener.

A Peer Supporter:

- Provides a voluntary service to renal patients and their relatives, which compliments the roles of the professional members of the kidney team.
- Shares their personal life experience of kidney disease and its treatments in a friendly way.
- Provides a realistic but positive example, to give reassurance and confidence.
- Supports others to care for themselves and get the best from their health care team; avoids giving medical advice.
- Listens openly, follows the other's lead, asks questions and avoids making assumptions.
- Responds respectfully to each individual in a non-judgemental and empathic manner.
- Is honest and confidential.
- Knows their limitations, including when to sign-post or refer on.
- Receives support from their link nurse and other peer supporters.





Listening Dos

- Make eye contact
- Look interested
- Smile, nod and encourage
- Relax and open your body language
- Ask questions, particularly open ones
- Follow the other persons lead
- Check out your understanding, clarify things
- Keep quiet sometimes – give the other person time and space

Listening Don'ts

- Don't interrupt
- Don't bring the topic back to yourself
- Don't set the agenda or go off on a tangent
- Don't give too much advice or try too hard to solve problems

What if you need support?

If you have any worries about what to do or how to deal with a situation please contact your local Peer Support organiser (see contact details at the end of the handbook). You may find it helpful to contact them when you feel:

- More help or specialist support may be needed
- You are unable to be honest and impartial
- Worried that the person might come to harm
- Concerned about your own circumstances
- You are not 'hitting it off' with the person you have been asked to support
- You feel that the patient being supported is not behaving in an appropriate way e.g. frequent phone calls.

Please remember that if you have any anxieties about whether a person needs help from another member of the kidney team, it is important for you to refer it onto one of the kidney doctors or nurses. We as professionals can always approach the issue of concern with the patient without implicating you in anyway.

Remember that you are doing this role as a volunteer. Your unit will not be at all upset if you feel that you are unable to support or contact a particular patient. Please let them know if you feel uncomfortable or are unable to offer support at a particular period of time – you have your own needs and health to consider and if you need a break from being a peer supporter then this is absolutely fine, just tell us.

The unit will never give out your contact details without your permission: you can obviously do so if you wish to, but do not feel under any pressure to do so. If the supported patient wishes to contact you again they can always do so via the hospital Peer Support organiser. You may also find that you are asked to take part in research about Peer Support. You obviously do not have to do this if you do not wish to.

Helpful contacts

 Find us on
Facebook www.facebook.com/DPKPG

Each dialysis unit and speciality will have a Peer Support Link Nurse who you can contact for any assistance you may require, the first few for these early stages of the project are:

Haemodialysis: Gemma McCullough, CAPD Sister,
gemma.mccullough@nhs.net
Tel: 01752 431692

Mayflower Ward: Nadine Ash, Ward Sister,
nadine.ash@nhs.net
Tel: 01752 431485

Transplant: Linda Boorer, Transplant Sister & Lead Nurse
for Peer Group,
lindaboorer@nhs.net
Tel: 01752 437145

You might also find useful:

Derriford Hospital Switchboard
Tel: 01752 202082 or 0845 1558155

Chaplaincy Service -Phone Derriford Switchboard (see above) and ask them to bleep the Duty Chaplain

Patient Advice & Liaison Services
Tel: 01752 439884 or 01752 432564