

Luke Elsmore, Peer Support Worker
Chichester Centre (LSU) and
Assertive Transitions Team, Forensic Healthcare Service

Deborah Owen, Service User Lead
Forensic Healthcare Services and Peer Support Lead,
People Participation Team

Peer support in low secure services



Why did you go back to the low secure ward as a peer support worker and how did it feel?

- Terrifying, surreal, proud moment
- Test of character of 'who you are'
- Gradually found myself, to be a source of support and to make a difference or even something little
- Felt accepted, part of a team, part of an evolving service, a bigger thing

What difference does peer support make?

- Bridges the gap - patients and professionals
- Freedom to talk, to be open
- Camaraderie (esp. if anti authority before)
- You can see possibilities in a role model
- Reduces stigma
- You are not limited by being a patient you have other identities
- *'There is some hope for me'*



What's unique about peer support in secure and inpatient settings?

- Wards are restrictive environments
- Harder to build relationships
- Lots of blocks to progress
- Lots of things to take on board - security, risks, restrictions – emotional resilience needed
- Hierarchy can be threatening
- Need to be creative, assertive and positive
- Strain on your boundaries - service users can lean or exploit you as an ally



Support structures at Sussex Partnership

- Peer support training (wellbeing, resilience)
- Peer supervision groups
- Away days
- Peer Advisory Group (policy, strategy, initiatives)
- Progression, networks, apprenticeships
- Occupational Health / HR

To come:

- Team readiness workshops
- Returning to work training
- Lived experience policy

