



Te Kaitiaki Oranga  
**Mental Health  
COMMISSION**



# Power of Peer Support Services

## in mental health and addiction

### **Personal choice**

For each person the journey of mental distress or addiction and how they achieve recovery, is unique; this means services need to be responsive to a range of needs; **peer support has the flexibility to achieve this.**

### **Wanted by consumers**

Has been driven by consumers of services and is based on the accumulated knowledge of people with lived experience. There is wide support from service users, consumer leaders and advocates to develop peer services.

### **Recovery focussed**

Peer support workers are powerful role models who inspire hope in those with whom they work.

### **Occurs within the community**

Recovery happens within the 'everyday'. Peer support workers **walk beside a person to navigate through their communities** to support the personal and social goals that give recovery its meaning and lead to greater long term wellbeing.

## What are peer support services?

A non-clinical intervention for people experiencing mental distress and/or an addiction.

Based on a formal therapeutic relationship between peers (people who have experienced similar adversity).

Provide support BEFORE a crisis.

Non judgemental and personal.

Can be delivered in a variety of ways including: groups, networks, telephone support, advocacy services, and respite.

Have grown out of **consumer**-networks and the development of the consumer workforce.

Based on the fact that people with lived experience and personal recovery are of high value.

These services facilitate access to a variety of social supports, including employment, housing, and recreational activities. By offering **support to achieve meaningful, personal or social goals greater wellbeing is sustained.**

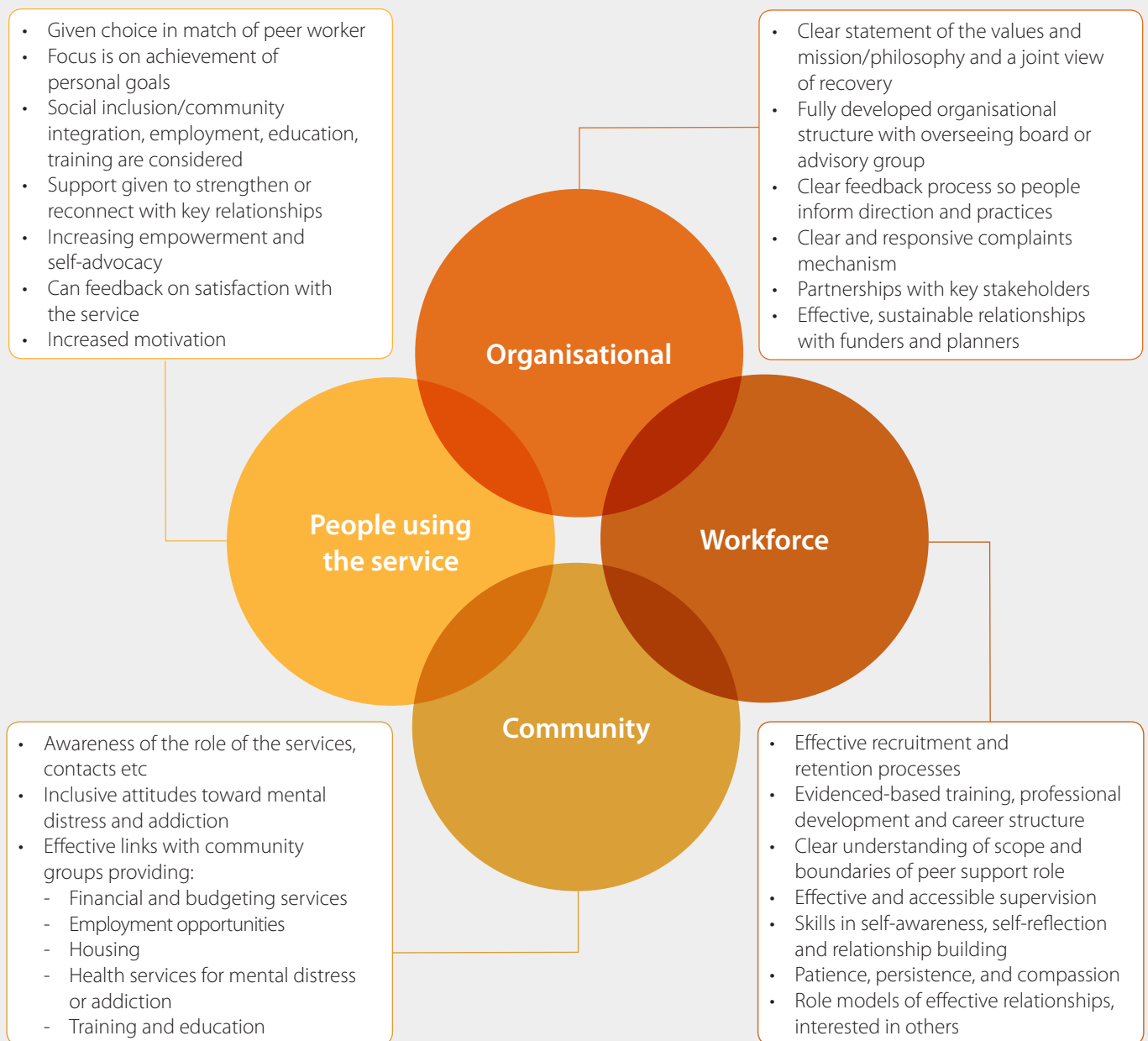
Peer support can be an **adjunct to mainstream clinical services or a stand-alone service.** They **compliment clinical services by providing additional options and treating the person as a 'citizen within a community' rather than a 'patient'.**

- Grounded in the belief that **people are their own greatest resource** and that adverse life experiences can be **sources of resilience and knowledge.**
- Draws on **a shared understanding of recovery.**
- Focuses on what will **sustain recovery** – employment, reconnection with family/whānau, achievement and purposeful activities, as well as being included in communities.
- **Instils hope** by being with someone who has been there and 'through it'.
- Not about 'fixing things' but **building on strengths.**

## Successes in peer support services – Three New Zealand examples

<p>Mind and Body Consultants</p>	<p>Mind and Body Consultants were pioneers of peer support in 2003. Their goal is to <b>'have a life worth living'</b> with each person defining this on their own terms. 'The role of the peer support worker is to help people understand the human dilemma of mental illness and to exercise their autonomy. Peer workers role model and support people <b>in using their strengths and skills to transform their situation by exploring choices and taking responsibility for those choices.</b></p>
<p>Whatever It Takes (WIT)</p>	<p>Whatever It Takes (WIT) is an exemplar of peer support with over a decade of experience in Hawke's Bay. WIT is a peer-led organisation with a kaupapa of 'Love in Action' and the belief that <b>people need to feel they belong.</b> WIT's focus is on the <b>fundamentals of life.</b> It has been successful in collaborating with Housing NZ and Needs Assessment Coordinators to develop better, long-term housing.</p>
<p>Connect Supporting Recovery</p>	<p>Connect Supporting Recovery (Alcohol and Other Drugs) began in Counties Manukau in 2010. Connect is breaking new ground as there are very few formal peer support services in addiction, this service developed from a direct request from service users. The service is about people creating relationships with peers and others <b>in a new and different way that supports and promotes growth, recovery and general wellbeing.</b> People are supported to explore their own personal strength and power to recover.</p>

# Components of effective peer support services



## Outcomes

### For people with mental distress and/or addiction

- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence
- A sense of purpose
- A greater sense of wellbeing, including less symptom distress
- Increases in the quality and number of relationships – greater social support network
- Longer periods of wellbeing
- Less utilisation of inpatient care
- Stable housing
- Increased involvement in meaningful activities
- Increased resilience and quality of life
- Increased motivation to implement life changes
- Positive outcomes where other services have failed.

### For services

- Reduced demand on mainstream services
- Costs less but is associated with increases in quality
- Free up clinician's time
- Input of peer support workers acts as catalyst to address stigma and discrimination and help mainstream services focus on recovery.

# Costs-benefits

£180 per day

Peer support services.

*Basset et al., 2010*

£259 per day

Acute hospitalisation.

*Basset et al., 2010*

## In Australia

peer support services used alongside early discharge from inpatient services saved 300 bed days in 3 months.

*Lawn, et al., 2008*

## In the US

an outpatient peer support service reduced readmission to inpatient services by 50%.

*Chinman, et al., 2006*

# Where to from here...

## Locally

- Consumer and family organisations continue to advocate for peer support services.
- DHB funders and planners, and MHA portfolio managers include the development of peer support services in regional plans, district strategic plans and district annual plans.
- Researchers evaluate effectiveness of peer support services.

## Nationally

- Ministry of Health's Service Development Plan references peer support services.
- The Mental Health Commission's **new Blueprint** includes Peer Support Services.
- Health Workforce New Zealand identifies Peer Support Workers as a valuable part of the MHA workforce.
- Balance NZ continues to develop the Peer Support Service Network.

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