Reviewer's report

Title: Introducing Peer Worker roles into UK mental health service teams: a qualitative analysis of the organisational benefits and challenges

Version: 1 Date: 15 August 2012

Reviewer: Geoff Shepherd

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The 'Settings' for each team are not described in sufficient detail. Given that the term 'Peer Worker' is used to describe many different kinds of intervention, this makes it impossible to tell whether or not the interventions under examination are sufficiently similar to combine together and draw general conclusions. It is therefore suggested that each intervention is characterised in a Table which describes: (a) the aims of the intervention; (b) the nature of support provided by Peer Workers; (c) whether or not peer workers were recruited using a job description/person spec. and, if so, its contents; (d) what prior training was provided; (e) the nature of the supervision/management support provided; and (d) extent of preparation of staff team.

2. Although one of the Aims of the paper is to describe the 'emergence of the peer worker role from different perspectives', the results are presented in such a way that these different perspectives are lost. Suggest they continue to use the 7 themes and sub-themes, but organise the results around the 3 key stakeholder groups: (i) peer workers; (ii) service users; and (iii) staff (including managers). The results could even be tabulated in this way with a quantitative indication of the frequency of occurrence of each theme, so that the reader could get a sense of whether they were all equally important to all stakeolder groups. Failing that a text description of how the perspectives differed across the 3 groups would be useful. Obviously some issues (e.g. 'Benefits for SUs') can only be answered by specific groups; whereas others (e.g. 'Boundaries') may have responses from all groups.

3. Suggest re-ordering of the Discussion and Conclusions based on 2. above.

Minor Essential Revisions
4. I would like to see the problems listed in the Conclusions accompanied by suggestions regarding solutions. e.g. How to clarify expectations? (JDs + preparation for the teams). How to review boundaries? (Joint supervision for peer workers and staff); etc.

5. Table 2, row 3, title should be 'Identity', not 'Identify'.

Discretionary Revisions
6. I don't like the semantics of 'non-peer' staff. Although staff may not be employed as peers, they may have peer experience as part of their personal
lives. I would prefer the phrase 'mental health trained' staff (which contrasts 'experts by training' with 'experts by experience').

7. First para of Conclusions, don't like the word 'stymie'. Can we find a replacement?

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I have agreed to act as Chair of an Advisory Group which the first author is establishing in relation to a subsequent grant he has obtained to pursue another research project in this field. I am therefore quite supportive of this group and of further research in this field.