

LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKFORCE PROJECT (LEWP) WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Profile: NGO Mental Health Workforce in South Australia

Background and Evidence

In 2015, the LEWP conducted a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) within the NGO Mental Health sector. Information obtained provided a clear, comprehensive snapshot of the Lived Experience Workforce at that time: from the perspective of Lived Experience Workers, their Leaders and their colleagues in non-Lived Experience roles (Case Managers and Community Support Workers).

14 organisations were represented in the responses collected, with 181 staff participating from a total of 601 staff targeted (30%). A report was distributed throughout the sector: a summary of the key points referred to in this Profile can be found in the appendices section of this document.

	Manager or Team Leader	Case Manager or CSW	Lived Experience Worker	Totals
14 organisations	103	448	50	601
Respondents	36	118	27	181

This information has been invaluable in assisting the LEWP to develop the NGO Mental Health Lived Experience Workforce Standards and Guidelines which supports the effective recruitment, retention and ongoing development of Lived Experience Workforce within NGOs in South Australia. We gratefully acknowledge the LEWP Reference Group, LGBTIQ/GSD, Aboriginal and CALD Lived Experience Workforce Consultation Groups who worked with the LEWP in a co-design process.

What We Know: Lived Experience Workforce Overview

The Role

- 50+ designated mental health Lived Experience roles in the NGO sector
- Carer and Consumer role titles and duties performed vary, e.g. Carer Support, Peer Worker, Community Support Worker
- 95% of Lived Experience Workers report that consumer or carer support forms part of their role, yet only 56% of Leaders view their LEWs as case workers (i.e. providing direct consumer or carer support)
- 75% work part time, 3 days per week is the average
- 67% of people in Lived Experience roles identify as female
- Greatest percentage of Lived Experience Workers are aged 25-45 years (48%)
- 42% have been in the role less than 1 year (majority of LEWs have been in the NGO mental health sector between 1-2 years)
- 73% of Lived Experience Workers want to stay in the sector for longer than 5 years
- Majority operate within Adelaide metropolitan area, very few designated Lived Experience Workers in country SA

Qualifications

- 86% of Lived Experience Workers have a mental health relevant qualification. Some have more than one:
 - Degree – 24%
 - Diploma – 29%
 - Certificate – 57%
 - No qualification – 14%

Comparison with non-Lived Experience role colleagues (Case Managers and Community Support Workers):

- 88% have a mental health relevant qualification. Some have more than one:
 - Degree – 37%
 - Diploma – 22%
 - Certificate – 49%
 - No qualification – 12%

Skill Set

The top 3 skills of Lived Experience Workers as identified by Lived Experience Workers and Leaders:

Lived Experience Workers

- Building rapport
- Understanding recovery-oriented practice
- Communication and interpersonal skills

Managers and Leaders of Lived Experience Workforce

- Ability to share the recovery journey
- Empathy
- Role modelling

Leading Lived Experience Workforce

- 81% of people in leadership roles manage Lived Experience Workers
- Lived Experience Workers report they feel most supported through:
 - Effective management/supervision – 56%
 - Healthy workplace culture – 22%
- 94% of leaders said they have clear or some understanding of the Lived Experience role and skill set; 73% have not received adequate training around Lived Experience Workforce
- Leaders want:
 - Training and professional development relating to Lived Experience
 - Clarity around Lived Experience Workforce
 - Workforce case studies and information

What Lived Experience Workers, Managers/Leaders and Non-Lived Experience Colleagues Want and Need¹

Lived Experience Workers

- More effective Supervisor/ Lived Experience Worker relationship
- More opportunity for Lived Experience Workers to network with other Lived Experience Workers

Managers and Leaders of Lived Experience Workforce

- Embedding the Lived Experience role and skill set within organisational cultures
- Training, mentoring and open/difficult conversations to better understand the lived experience role, worker's unique experience, skill set and strengths
- Adequate training around recruitment and retention of Lived Experience Workforce

Non-Lived Experience Case Managers and Community Support Workers

- Increased opportunity for mentoring from Lived Experience Workers/shadowing their role
- Greater collaboration with other peer workers

All Three Groups

- Clarity of Lived Experience role (this is supported through the LEWP NGO Mental Health LEW Standards and Guidelines)
- More effective use of lived experience roles within organisations
- Affordable, accessible professional development – increase in NGO training budget
- Training opportunities around skills/strategies for working with clients (e.g. Trauma Informed Care)

Summary

We can see from the results of the TNA that the NGO Lived Experience Workforce is highly qualified, with almost all Lived Experience Workers wanting to remain within the sector for more than 5 years. We are also aware that the sector is facing a time of significant reform at present, which is triggering uncertainty and concern for many, across all levels.

As well as presenting challenges and risks, this impending change provides NGOs with incredible opportunity to plan for the growth and development of this workforce, utilising the unique skill set and strengths that Lived Experience Workers bring to promote themselves as the organisation of choice for people seeking mental health recovery support.

The LEWP Workforce Development Strategy has been developed to support mental health NGOs to seize the enthusiasm and passion of their Lived Experience Workers, strategically embed the Lived Experience Workforce and develop strategies that will ensure their trained, skilled workforce is valued and retained.

¹ Refer Toolkit Resources for report of identified Training Needs including what, by who, why, how and when