

Obesity UK

Peer Support Group

Running a good peer support group

The structure of the group



Peer support group sessions with a specific structure can have benefits

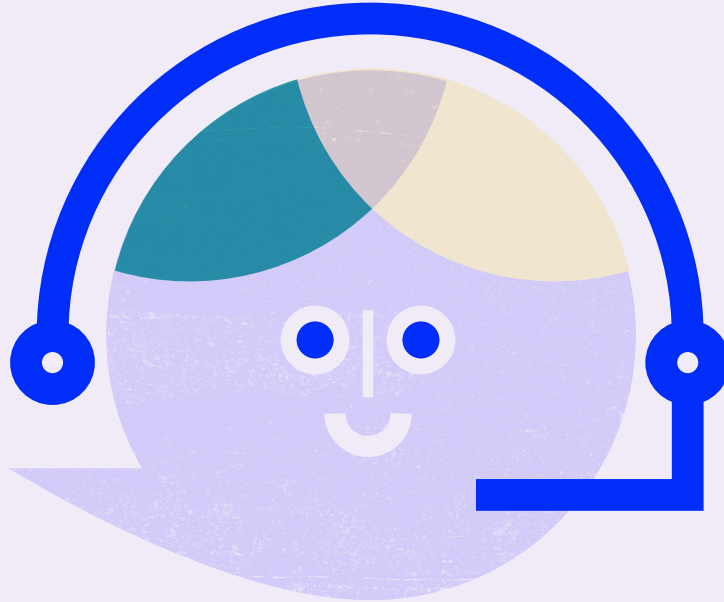
You can have a structure where people speak one by one around a circle and have specific discussion topics or activities each week. An agenda can be used to show the structure of the sessions. Putting out agendas before meetings allows group members to prepare themselves for the session. It can, however, have the opposite effect, and discourage people from attending if they do not like what is on the agenda.

A peer support group that does not have a structure allows for the group to go with the flow in an open forum, where the agenda is created during the session by the input from peers. This approach can have benefits too, as it can make group members feel empowered. It can, however, sometimes be challenging for an inexperienced facilitator to manage.

When considering structure, the following tips recommended by facilitators from Obesity UK and within the following resources: 'Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit': <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4247/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf> and 'Let's Do Peer Group Facilitation': <https://scottishrecovery.net/resources/lets-do-peer-group-facilitation/>

- Group members could be asked what structure they would prefer, including what topics they want to discuss or activities they would like to take part in. This could be carried out by using an online form or via a suggestion box (which can be done anonymously).
- You could split up the session into two segments, with half structured and the other half an open forum, where people can chat and mingle, with a comfort break in between (for face-to-face sessions).
- It may be useful to bring in guest speakers to discuss different topics with the groups. Organisations may even contact you offering to speak at your group. It is important to consider guest speakers' agendas, as they may be trying to market a product.

TIP - Do some research on the organisation before inviting people to come and speak to the group.



How to get in touch

At Obesity UK we are happy to chat with you and answer any questions you may have.

We would be happy to hear your feedback and ideas for this resource.

We can also connect you with other people facilitating peer support groups for people living with obesity.

Please get in touch

Contact us: <https://obesityuk.org.uk/contact/>

Contact us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Obesityuk>