

Obesity UK

Peer Support Group

Accessing support for facilitators



As a peer support group facilitator, it is important to think about your own self-care, support and development for your role.

Here are a number of strategies to help you feel supported in your role, taken from the following resource from Mind, Developing peer support in the community: a toolkit: <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4247/peer-support-toolkit-final.pdf>:

1. Create a support network for you

A support network for you can benefit both you and your group. It can help protect your own wellbeing and can offer you opportunities to do the following:

- ‘Check in’ and consider how you are feeling.
- Offload when something is, or has been, difficult.
- Exchange ideas if you are unsure how to proceed.
- Receive guidance, encouragement, or advice from others.
- Find support if you are leading peer support on your own.
- Get a helping hand.
- Borrow resources rather than spend time and energy recreating them.

To create your own support network, you could try the following:

- Reach out to local groups, organisations or individuals who are also providing peer support and reach out to other peer facilitators, using social media or email for example.
- Reach out to others who are not fellow peer facilitators but may have something in common with an aspect of peer support delivery.
- Give yourself a range of different support options. Seek support from your family, friends, or colleagues, or Obesity UK for example.
- Think about how you will maintain your relationships with the people supporting you, e.g. how often you meet or how you might reach out to people. Remember to check in with them before assuming they will be able to support you.

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- Create a wellness action plan to help you understand what support you need for your own wellbeing and how you can make sure that those needs are met. Mind provides some guidance on this, which you can access here: <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/wellness-action-plan-sign-up/>
- Ask members of your peer support group for help in arranging or organising things.
- Consider how you will communicate your own needs to members of the group. For example, can you tell them if you are going through a rough patch and ask for help?



2. Share learning

It may be useful to connect and build relationships with others in a similar situation, to help you share and learn from each other's experiences. This can help develop your skills and expertise to ensure that your group keeps running in the longer term. This can have the following benefits:

- Increases knowledge about what works well and what might work better in facilitating your peer support group.
- Learning from other people who have gone through similar experiences or challenges makes you feel less alone.
- Problem-solving: listening to how others have overcome similar difficulties can give you the confidence to make positive changes.
- New ideas or resources which you can use or adapt to benefit your group members.
- Opportunities to reflect on your own learning journey, your successes and the challenges you have overcome and to plan for the future.
- Gaining new skills and expertise without the financial costs of formal training.
- Opportunities to share your own knowledge and help others.

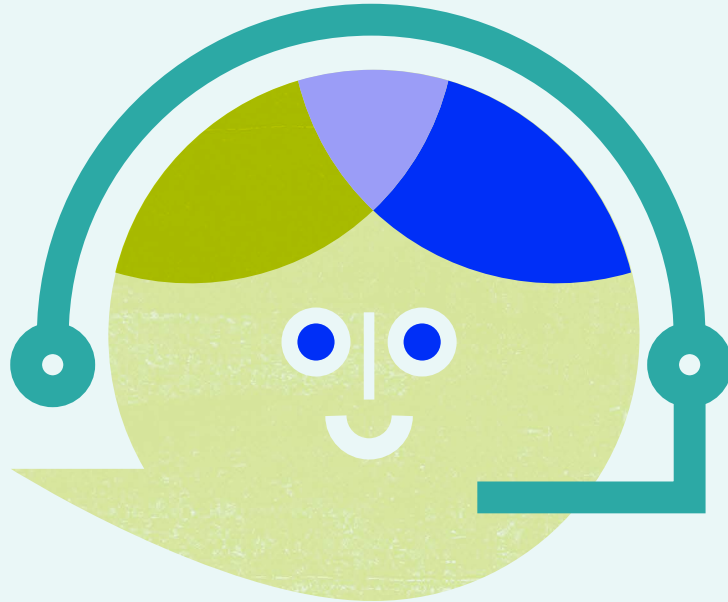
It may be helpful to create a network for shared learning, where possible. This will depend on how keen other groups are to join and how much time you can spare. The following strategies might help with this:

- Start small by contacting one other group or project at first and focus on building a relationship with them. You could then contact other groups together and share responsibility for hosting sessions between you.
- You could organise 'exchange visits' where you take a few members of your group along to a meeting of another group and compare similarities and differences in how the group is run. Be sure to check beforehand if there are any issues around confidentiality and safety.
- Identify your group's strengths: what do you have to share with others?
- If you have received funding, you could check who else has received the same or similar grants and contact them.
- You could create a group online for shared learning, using a platform like WhatsApp, Slack, or Facebook.
- You could organise video calls using the online meeting platform of your choice (e.g. Skype or Zoom) for an informal 'check in' with other groups or group leaders.

3. Think about asking a mentor to support you

It might be useful to think about what your goals are for progression and personal development and to think about the resources you will need in terms of time, resources and finance.

To help with this, it may be useful to find a mentor from within your own support network, for example another facilitator of a peer support group, or even someone in a completely separate role. When considering who you think will work well in this role, think about how often and by what method you will receive mentoring support from them.



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>