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Prepared by The Enablement Partnership

PEER WORKER CASE STUDY

MICHAEL'S EXPERIENCE OF A PEER WORKER



Trust Wide
Enablement Partnership

Meet Jennifer and Michael

Jennifer is a Peer Support Worker in Somerset Villa Ward where Michael has been receiving support for 8 months.

The Somerset Villa Ward provides rehabilitation using an enablement model. Their aim is to provide individualised care, within an environment that promotes a positive image for people with mental health problems, embracing the principles of social inclusion and recovery. Care is provided by taking a holistic approach to each individual, addressing psychological, physical, spiritual, cultural and social needs.



Introduction

I first met Jennifer when she began working on the ward here at Somerset Villa. When she joined the team, she introduced herself to everybody as a Peer Worker, and took the time to get to know everyone individually. She sat down with me and explained her role, and how she could help. She is very friendly, she will speak to you about things.

My Journey

When I arrived here, I was struggling with intense paranoia and fear, and hearing negative voices in my head. It was so difficult to even walk to the Chase Building by myself, which is only a few minutes away. Jennifer has really supported me with these things and helped me to make progress, bit by bit. We started by walking together to outside the hospital, then she suggested we meet in the park. Next she encouraged me to use public transport, which was really scary for me. I then used the bus for the first time in a very long time, over a short distance. Now I have the confidence to go to Enfield Town by myself, and Jennifer will meet me there. I would say I rate the importance of Peer Support as a 9 or 10 out of 10.





My Activities

Jennifer does a range of activities with us on the ward. She runs a cooking class with a focus on healthy eating, which people really enjoy. She is always positive and smiling, which lifts our mood in the ward. She listens to my difficulties, and helps me through them.

She also runs a peer support group, which I have found really helpful. This is a space where I can share my feelings, be myself and be open. It is an opportunity for me to share safely, without feeling judged. In my last ward, staff would take us out for activities like walking and swimming. Now that we have Peer Workers, they are slowly starting to do these things here. They take us for walks, or we have community leave to go to Costa.

My Next Steps

I am due to be discharged in the next month, and Jennifer has been helping me prepare for this. She has taken me shopping to buy bedding and other things I will need for my flat. I have felt anxious and paranoid about leaving the ward, wondering what my neighbours will be like, or if I will be lonely. I have been in hospital for a long time, so I'm used to waking up and being around people, sharing bathrooms, things like that.

Jennifer has been emotionally supporting me with this. But I am looking forward to having independence, and to not having to share a bathroom! I am excited for the summer - the flat has a little balcony so maybe I can lay out on it, get out in the sun. Jennifer has offered that I can still call her after I leave, if I want to discuss how things are going. This is really reassuring for me, and makes the change less daunting.



My Recovery

Jennifer has helped me to build my confidence and self-esteem. We have worked together in small steps, one at a time, and that's what recovery has meant for me. Jennifer has told me about how she has been ill in the past, and so we have been able to discuss recovery and coping strategies together. Jennifer has actually been an inpatient in a hospital herself. You can relate to someone more when they explain that to you. Often, you feel like people are talking down to you because you have an illness, and it makes them look at you in a certain way. To speak to someone who has been through certain things helps you open up more when you're talking to them.

I have been in hospital for the last 3 years, and when I reflect on what I'm doing with my life, it can sometimes make me feel sad and dark inside, because it feels like I am not doing anything.

*However, being around Jennifer, who was also ill once, but has come back from mental health difficulties and recovered, and is now working to help people like me, has given me **hope**. It has inspired me to believe that it is possible for me to leave here, and to have a good life.*

I feel able to tell Jennifer anything. Some things I would tell her, I wouldn't tell any of the other staff. With Jennifer, I feel like I can trust her with certain things.



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Special Thanks

Michael

Jennifer Simmons

The Somerset Villa Team