

GUIDELINES FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN VETERAN SUPPORT CENTRES

Version No:

1

Prepared By:

ONE BOARD

Effective From:

Review Date:

21/03/2019

Lead Reviewer:

Veterans Support Service Committee

Dissemination Arrangements:

- Guideline Distribution through Peer Support Network
- Each Veteran Centre

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Veteran Support Centres

Overview

Peer support, is part of a range of veteran support services available for all who served, at any level. ONE recognises that in order to maintain and develop a world class Veteran Support Centres, we need to be proactive in empowering veterans to take control of their wellbeing through focussing on their abilities rather than problems.

The concept of Peer Support has been developing in the DF for a number of years and fits well with the increasing national recognition of, and emphasis on, veteran's health and wellbeing.

The evidence base demonstrating the impact and value of Peer Support is strong:

1. Our staff support structure represents an integrated 'system' of interventions, which are designed to help prevent, assess the impact of, and alleviate the potentially harmful psychological reactions that can accompany a traumatic incident (Lavan and MacManamy, 2003).
2. Catherall's (1995) first rule for institutions is to prevent and limit the harmful effects of Secondary Traumatic Stress by having preventative measures in place before incidents actually occur. This includes psycho-education, preparedness and planning; consequently, provision of Peer Support is part of our plan.
3. Our philosophy, together with a belief in the importance and value of members of staff, affords us the opportunity of bringing together all aspects of staff care provision (Catheral, 1995; McCammon et al 1995; Everly and Mitchell, 1997; Lavan & MacManamy, 2003).
4. If such support is well publicised and the perceived culture of the organisation is regarded as caring and affirming, it can reasonably be argued that the high level of rapport and trust required between staff and staff support providers should facilitate a more readily attainable therapeutic alliance (Shapiro and Forrest, 1997; Shapiro, 2001).

An integrated approach to veteran care will positively influence our culture. In addition it will develop and enhance the engagement and empathy of veterans, thereby improving their experience.

Working in a veteran support environment can be stressful, particularly when dealing with vulnerable people at some of the most emotional times of their lives. Peer support gives colleagues an opportunity to offer support and encouragement to veterans they worked with. This provides a bridge between a veteran and the peer supporter who can help them. Very often this is provided informally.

Because of the time they spend together, veterans get to know each other well and they are often the first to spot the changes in each other that might indicate a personal or professional difficulty. Veterans can be very effective in encouraging someone experiencing a difficulty/problem to seek help. They can also help each other to stay both physically and psychologically safe and well. Support may be offered by a peer, or a veteran. In order that

access to veteran support can be easily facilitated, training for volunteer peers who are willing to act in a supportive role as Veteran Peer Supporters will be provided.

Implementation of this guideline with its commitment to enable any veteran to deliver and or benefit from Veteran Peer Support is a testament to ONE's recognition of the value of veterans.

Selection and Pre requisites of a Veteran Peer Supporter

- ✓ Must be an experienced retired member of the Defence Forces.
- ✓ Each Branch will nominate a member to act as Branch Welfare Officer.
- ✓ Appointment of Branch Welfare Officer must be affirmed by the Board of Directors.
- ✓ The Board of Directors will put in place protocols for the appointment of Branch Welfare Officer.
- ✓ Nominee must agree to undergo e-vetting with An Garda Siochana
- ✓ Secure Branch endorsement to serve as a Veteran Peer Supporter including chairman's signature on Peer Supported Agreement of Understanding.
- ✓ Respect and trust of colleagues
- ✓ Ability to keep confidences
- ✓ Effective communication and IT skills
- ✓ Emotional maturity
- ✓ Non-judgemental approach
- ✓ Culturally aware/sensitive
- ✓ Appreciate that the focus of veteran peer support will be on the veteran and not on the details of the incident.
- ✓ Awareness of own strengths and limitations
- ✓ Ability to work within established guidelines
- ✓ Ability to declare where a conflict of interest is indicated

Meeting the above criteria would be followed by interview to enable the person to go forward for training and potential appointment to the Veteran Peer Support Team

Trained Veteran Peer Supporter Roles

Veteran Peer Support provides an empathetic listening ear in order to allow the telling of a personal story whilst providing a non-judgemental and supportive environment to;

1. offer an informed and confidential resource for veterans to discuss their response to stressful events.
2. respond in a non-intrusive, compassionate, confidential and helpful manner.
3. enhance both the immediate and ongoing feeling of safety and provide physical and emotional comfort.
4. promote a sense of calm and the reorientation of those who may have been emotionally overwhelmed.
5. identify immediate needs and concerns including the offer of a contact card or where required give practical assistance in accessing further support.

6. promote understanding, including stress reaction awareness, enabling the return of normal adaptive functioning.
7. provide advice on self-care and coping strategies.
8. provide a link to support services which may be needed at the time including facilitating referral to GP, or other agencies where appropriate.

Trained Peer Responsibilities are to;

Complete and sign the Veteran Peer Support Agreement of Understanding for Team Membership.

Maintain veteran's confidentiality (however, where there may be a risk of harm to self or others, advice must be sought from a mental health professional). Parameters of confidentiality must be agreed at the beginning of the contact.

Provide a response within 3 working days.

Seek personal support immediately following contact with a veteran which has been found to be sensitive or when personally affected following a contact

Ensure that veteran peer support is offered no more than 6 times without advice from the Administrator of the Veteran Peer Support Team.

Record each occasion when support is given (however, no personal notes will be maintained about the contact or services offered).

Where it becomes apparent that further support is required, to facilitate referral to GP, or other agencies

Inform the Administrator of Veteran Peer Support Team of any time when unavailable for contact for extended periods of time.

Concerns regarding Peer Support Service

Where it is identified that aspects of the roles or responsibilities are not being adhered to, this must be communicated to the Administrator Veteran Peer Support Team (or in his/her absence, the deputy) who will ensure that the facts are established and any issues resolved. Where there are serious concerns e.g. relating to professional practice, this may involve communication with the Veteran Peer Supporter's Branch.

Renewal/Suspension of Membership of Veterans Support Team

In order to protect all veterans and to maintain safe governance, should a Veteran Peer Supporter be unable to consistently demonstrate organisational values of care, respect and safety, the Administrator Veteran Peer Support Team will suspend the role.

Veteran Peer Support is managed through the Administrator Veteran Peer Support Team

Veteran Peer Support Training

Initial Training for Veteran Peer Supporters consists of a two-day course on Mental Health First Aid.

The course provides those taking part with:

- An understanding and knowledge of the fundamental principles of crisis intervention
- A recognition of common reactions after trauma
- A knowledge of, and practice of, crisis intervention techniques

Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to retain the integrity of Veteran Peer Support, there will be regular monitoring of key indicators, with data held securely and confidentially, for evaluation purposes only.

e.g.

- Number and reason for referral
- Measurable outcomes (onward referral)
- Location and source of referral.

Those utilising the service will be invited to provide feedback as to the impact and outcome of the contact.

Peer Support

Peer Supporters will be trained and administered through the ONE Veteran Peer Support Team which will provide;

- ✓ Education programmes that provides Veteran Peer Support training and skill development
- ✓ Regular updates and refinement of Veteran Peer Support Guidance based on feedback from veteran peer supporters and veterans experience
- ✓ An up to date list of Veteran Peer Supporters and contact details
- ✓ An organisational chart providing geographical locations of peer supporters
- ✓ Ongoing evaluation of systems and interventions.

Access

Opening times will be displayed in Veteran Support Centres at all times.

Veteran Peer Support

Agreement of Understanding

Name

Location

Email

Telephone/Mobile

As a trained Veteran Peer Supporter there may be occasions when this role impacts on your time requirements. This agreement clarifies the role and confirms Veteran Support Team administrator's acknowledgment of Peer Supporter commitment.

Summary of role

- ✓ an empathetic listening ear
- ✓ an informed and confidential resource
- ✓ non-intrusive, compassionate, confidential response
- ✓ provide an immediate and ongoing feeling of safety

Peer supporters will not generally see veterans on an ongoing basis (no more than 6 times) without advice from Veteran Support Team Administrator.

A list of trained Veteran Peer Supporters will be available on ONE Website.

For further information see Guidelines for those involved in Veteran Peer Support.

Branch Chairman Name and Signature

Veteran Peer Supporter Signature

Date

Please return one copy of this form to the **Veteran Support Team Administrator**

Veteran Peer Supporter Referral and Outcome

Date & duration of initial meeting:

Chances encounter Referral Date referral received:

Referred by:

Reason for referral:

Peer Supporter

Name

Email address

Veteran:

Contact details:

Best time:

Outcome

- Support/ Information/Signposting Follow up meetings
- Other..... Onward referral to.....

Date & duration of follow up meetings:

1

2

3

Total no. of hrs spent:

Comments: