



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Better Together

Lived Experience (Peer) Work in WA Mental Health Services

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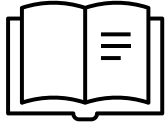
Acknowledgment of Country

Department of Health and Health Service Providers acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia.

It acknowledges the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders both past and present and pays respect to Aboriginal communities of today.



Welcome & Purpose



Define Lived Experience as a discipline



Explore the benefits of Lived Experience Workforce within WA Health



Discuss how to support and champion Lived Expertise and Lived Experience (Peer) Workers



Lived Experience (Peer) Work

Lived Experience (Peer) Work is a recognised discipline that uses the unique expertise of people with lived and living experience of mental health challenges to support others, influence service culture, and strengthen recovery-oriented practice



Roles that require a lived experience



Skilled, non-clinical workforce



Work draws on the skills, knowledge and expertise from personal experiences



Combines Lived Expertise with training, education and other role requirements



Clarifying the Landscape

Different functions, shared purpose

Consumer & Carer Engagement

- Co-design and consultation
- Advisory and governance roles
- System feedback and improvement
- External (community perspective)
- Peer workers should not substitute for Consumer and Carer participation/ perspectives within their professional role.

Lived Experience (Peer) Workers

- Professional workforce roles within the MDT
- Works within discipline frameworks
- Defined scope of practice
- Relational in practice
- Supervision and accountability
- Promotes least restrictive practice in clinical care
- Supports informed decision making

Both are essential. They are not interchangeable.



Where Peer Work Comes From...

A history of human rights, reform, and recovery

- Consumer and survivor movements
- Founded in social justice and human rights
- Recovery-oriented practice
- Trauma-informed care
- Response to coercive and purely biomedical models

Peer work emerged to humanise systems.



What is the value?

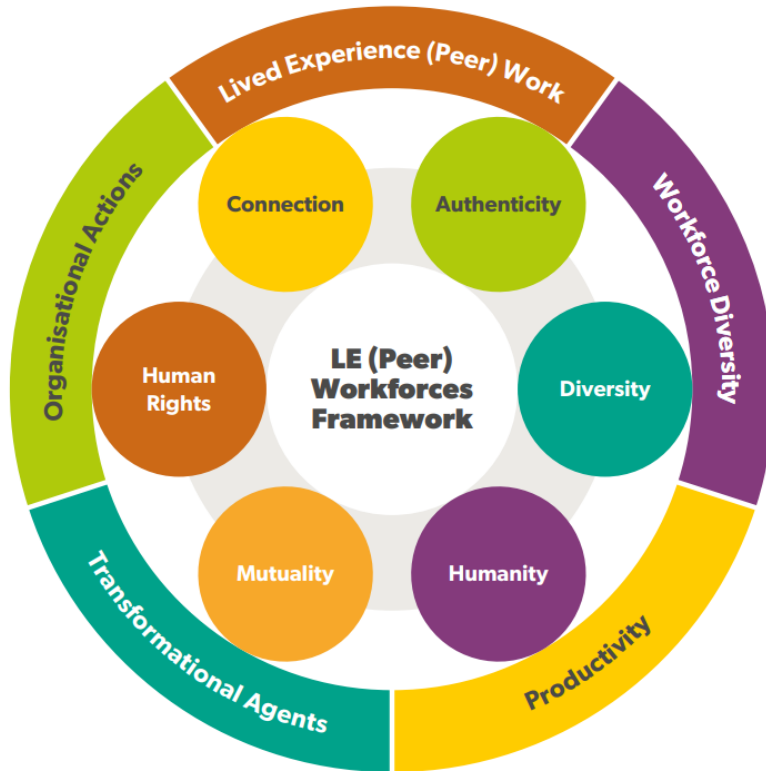
To the Consumer/Carer

- Greater feelings of being accepted and understood
- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Reduces self-stigmatisation
- Greater hopefulness about their own potential
- More positive feelings about the future
- Increased sense of empowerment
- Enhanced social inclusion

To the service

- Improve engagement and satisfaction with services
- Decrease hospitalisations
- Bridge gap between clinical supports and the young person/family
- Complement the role of clinicians
- Encourage more thorough and longer lasting recoveries

Why Lived Experience Workforces?



Peer work is recognised and supported

- [National Mental Health](#) policy direction
- [WA Lived Experience \(Peer\) Workforce Framework](#)
- [Lived Experience Inclusion Plan](#) (LEIP)

Lived Experience Workforces are embedded in WA Health strategic direction.

Lived Expertise strengthens person-centred, recovery orientated practice.

But what *‘exactly’* do Peer Workers do?

Inspire hope and optimism

Connect and support through person-led approaches aligned with Recovery principles.

Use skills to sit in discomfort, empathise and role model recovery

Contribute to service design, co-production and improvement

Create a bridge between clinical and non-clinical support.

Provide Lived Experiences to trainings and education

Promote trauma-informed, recovery-oriented practice within teams

Be part of the MDT, providing Lived Expertise

System navigation and translation

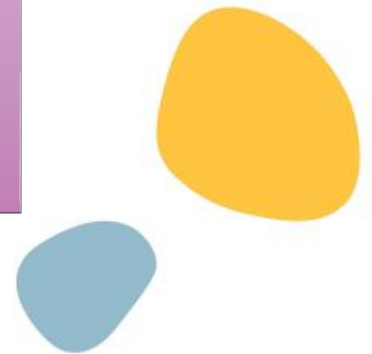
Support self determination and person-led decision making

Sharing strategies and supports for self-care and resilience

Provide peer-led groups, education and resources

Empower people to confidently navigate the journey to recovery

Rights-based care & perspectives



WA Health Lived Experience Workforces

Various roles across WA Health Services

- Frontline Peer roles have increased over the last 10 years
- Introduction of leadership roles in Health Service Providers
- 2025 saw Mental Health Commission hire an Associate Director of Lived Experience and Health Support Services Director of Consumer Engagement

Inconsistent implementation

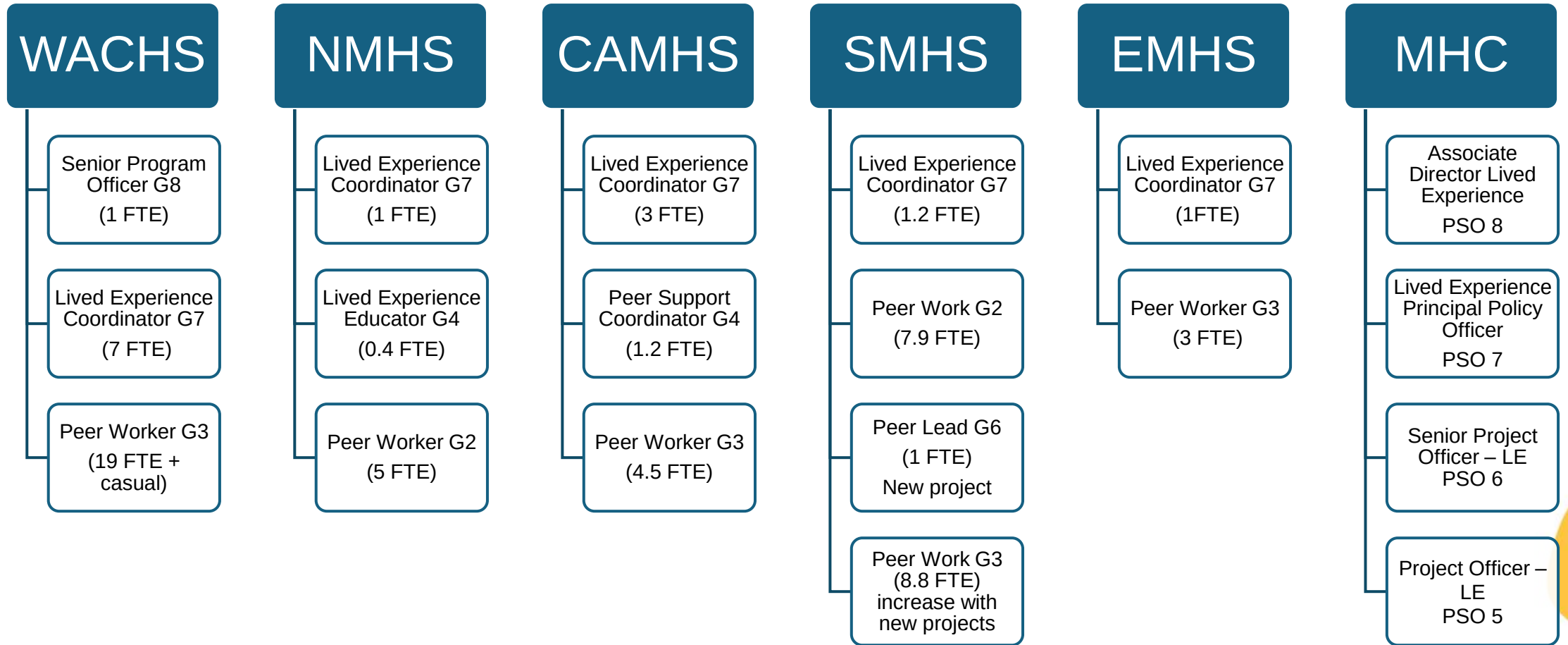
- Role scope and clarity varies between services
- Pay, job titles and access to discipline specific supervision varies

Career Pathways are limited

- Can present challenges retaining a skilled workforce
- Workforce development has advanced, awaiting funding for establishment



Where We Are in WA Right Now



Allyship in Action

What leaders can do

- Advocate for more Lived Experience roles
- Protect the integrity of peer roles
- Invest in supervision and training
- Listen to lived experience — even when uncomfortable
- Include lived experience early in reform and redesign
- Champion peer work in decision-making spaces

Allyship is active, not passive.



Key Takeaways

Better together

- Lived Experience (Peer) Work is a discipline
- Humanity in healthcare
- Peer work strengthens mental health systems & clinical care
- Implementation quality matters
- Leadership plays a critical role



References & Further Reading

- WA MHC Lived Experience (Peer) Workforces Website. Mental Health Commission of WA. <https://livedexperienceworkforces.com.au/>
- WA Mental Health Workforces Capability Framework. Mental Health Commission of WA. [WA Mental Health Workforces Capability Framework](#)
- Peer Experience Workforce Guidelines. Australian Government – National Mental Health Commission. <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/lived-experience/lived-experience-workforces/peer-experience-workforce-guidelines>
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience-led Peer Workforce Guide [Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Network Resources - Black Dog Institute | Better Mental Health](#)
- Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025–2030. [Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy 2025-2030 | Mental Health Commission](#)
- Mental Health Commission of WA. <https://www.mhc.wa.gov.au/our-initiatives/our-projects/lived-experience-inclusion-plan>
- Lived Experience Digital Library. <https://livedexperiencedigitallibrary.org.au/>
- [Cert IV Mental Health Peer Work – Consumers of Mental Health WA](#) – link to NM Tafe course
- [Certificate IV in Mental Health Peer Work \(Consumer\) - AMA Training](#)
- [Cert IV in Mental Health Peer Work\(Carer\) | AMA Training](#)

Useful Definitions

Lived Experience

A person with lived experience has personal experiences of mental ill-health, psychological distress and recovery and/or has family/significant other/s or kinship experiences of distress and recovery.

Lived Expertise

In peer work, lived experience is combined with education, supervision and training to develop **expertise** in Lived Experience. In designated roles, the peer worker draws from their lived experience expertise as a core part of their role.

Peer Worker

an occupational title for a person in a paid role, who has had personal experience of living with a disabling, traumatic, health or living situation and recovery. Through their wellbeing journey and learning from their own personal experience they are able to offer empathetic support, empowerment and validation to other people with comparable experience.

Carer Peer Worker

an occupational title for a person in a paid role, who has a lived experience of having been a primary carer for a person with enduring mental health issues. Carer Peer Workers bring a range of experiences to better assist families and carers in undertaking their role in supporting someone close to them with mental illness.

Consumer Movement

A social movement emerging in the late 1960s alongside other civil rights movements. Led by people with Lived Experience this movement seeks to decrease social stigma and transform how the mental health system operates.
