

# Peer support for discharge from inpatient to community mental health care: the ENRICH research programme

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## Plain language summary

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## Plain language summary

**W**hen people share similar experiences of mental health problems and provide each other with emotional or practical support this can be called peer support. In recent years peer support has been introduced into mental health services.

The months after discharge from psychiatric hospital can be difficult for some people. There is research that suggests that peer support might be helpful for people at discharge. There is a lack of good quality trials of peer support in mental health services. There are no studies that tell us if peer support provides value for money.

We developed new training for peer workers and a handbook guiding peer support for discharge. We tried this out in two mental health National Health Service trusts to check that we could deliver the peer support and collect the information we needed for our trial.

We recruited 590 people from seven mental health National Health Service trusts while they were staying on psychiatric wards. Half of those people were randomly selected to receive peer support for discharge, and half to receive community mental health care only. We found that people offered peer support were just as likely to be readmitted to hospital in the year after they were discharged as people offered usual care only.

We found that people who met their peer worker at least twice were less likely to be readmitted in the next year. Black people offered peer support were much less likely to be readmitted compared to people offered usual care than other people in the study (although numbers were small). Our results also suggested that cost of care could be slightly less for people receiving peer support.

We interviewed some people who had been offered peer support who told us what they valued about peer support. We interviewed peer workers who told us the work was rewarding but could be challenging.



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