

Support for peer interviewers

There are different kinds of support that could be useful to peer interviewers, many of which are relevant for anyone carrying out research interviews. These include:

Project management / supervision – to review progress in the project and address issues arising from the research, for example changing the interview schedule in response to findings from initial interviews.

Personal development – reviewing people's progress and performance to provide positive feedback and encouragement and / or to see if they need any additional pointers to further develop their interviewing skills.

Practical support – for example arranging travel to interview sites and claiming back expenses.

Financial advice – paying peer interviewers for their time may, for example, have an impact on their benefits or may mean they have to register as self-employed and people may need advice on how to manage this. See INVOLVE publications about payment – [Payment for Involvement](#) and [What you need to know about payment](#).

Please note that benefits guidance and tax legislation have been subject to considerable change/reinterpretation since 2019. Any INVOLVE documents referring to the payment of involvement fees may now be out of date and are pending a review during 2020. INVOLVE's guidance should not be substituted for professional advice, and INVOLVE accepts no liability for decisions or actions taken as a result of its guidance. You are always recommended to take your own tax, finance or legal advice.

Emotional / psychological support – to help peer interviewers cope with any distress that arises as a direct consequence of

being involved in research, for example if they become upset after discussing a sensitive or emotional topic, or from hearing about other people's bad experiences, or from returning to an environment that has been traumatic in the past, for example it can be difficult for an ex-drug user to return to old settings when interviewing current users. Mental health service users may need additional psychological support to ensure that their work does not adversely affect their mental health.

Managing health and safety – during fieldwork it's important that peer interviewers aren't put at risk, for example by travelling alone to sites where they may feel vulnerable. It is also standard practice to ensure that someone always knows the whereabouts of the interviewers and checks they are back home safely after each interview.

On-the-job support – to allow interviewers to let off steam or raise any concerns after a difficult interview or frustrating experience.

Not all of these types of support are necessary or appropriate for every individual and for every kind of project. You will need to adapt the support you provide to the needs of the people you are working with and the demands of the research.

Useful practical approaches include:

- Asking peer interviewers about their support needs at the beginning of the project and throughout, and finding ways to meet these needs. It's important not to make any assumptions about people's support needs and to be honest about what you can deliver.
- Including a 'reflection sheet' at the end of the interview schedule. This is completed by the interviewer at the end of each interview to record any thoughts on the issues raised, but also any personal reflections on the experience and about how they feel they performed as

an interviewer. This can help with tracking how their skills and confidence are improving. The information does not have to be shared, but issues raised can form the basis of team discussions.

- Encouraging peer support. Peer interviewers may set up their own informal mechanisms of peer support, exchanging contact details after training or debriefing after working together on interviews. Peer support can be established more formally by holding regular team meetings to provide support
- Providing a mentor. This could be someone outside of the research team, for example an experienced service-user researcher.