



# FLIC Peer Mentoring Programme Evaluation: January 2019

**Fulfilling  
Lives in  
Islington &  
Camden**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



# Executive Summary

This evaluation was undertaken to review the impact of Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC's) Peer Mentoring Programme. In particular, it aims to evaluate whether the scheme is meeting its objectives and therefore, making a real difference to the service.

The outcomes were reviewed for both clients and Peer Mentors at the end of the first cohort (eighteen months after the programme first began).

## Key findings:

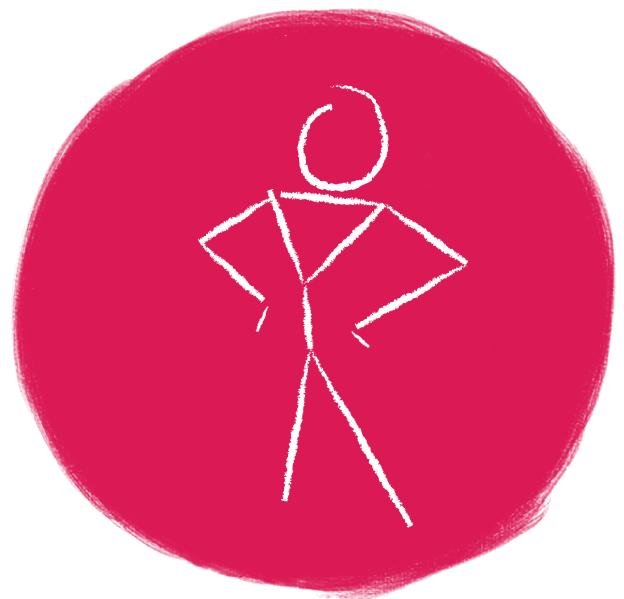
This report found that Peer Mentors play a valuable role in the delivery of the Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC) programme.

**This report outlines a number of benefits to using peer mentors for FLIC clients or 'Mentees'.**

- Clients were very satisfied with the scheme as a whole - and, consequently, felt more satisfied with FLIC as a service.
- Half the clients engaged more with FLIC after their Peer Mentor relationship began - including a third of clients engaging in more activities. As a result, two-third of clients felt less isolated.
- Clients became increasingly motivated and confident. This led to the majority finding it easier to open up, share experiences and build positive relationships.
- There was a general improvement in mentee's physical health, mental health and well-being.
- There was a minimal impact on certain areas of the clients' needs including offending. There was no clear progress in clients' reducing their alcohol or substance use.

**Peer mentors also benefited personally from the programme, particularly due to the routine, structure and support the programme provided. Many felt that it supported their recovery and enhanced their employability.**

- Peer Mentors' satisfaction with the scheme was high with all gaining valuable skills and knowledge in the field.
- All Peer Mentors felt that the volunteering improved their self-esteem, confidence and motivation.
- There was a general improvement in Mentors' mental health and well-being - including a positive impact on their ongoing recovery.
- All Peer Mentors were supported with their career development with the majority now working in the field.





# Introduction

In July 2012, the National Lottery Community Fund announced an eight-year investment of up to £112 million to improve the lives of people with complex and multiple needs through the provision of intensive, personalised, co-ordinated and service-user driven support services (CFE, 2016). Islington and Camden were chosen as one of twelve areas across England to receive funding to deliver a Fulfilling Lives project.

In February 2014, Single Homeless Project (SHP) was appointed the lead partner for the Islington and Camden project. The charity was subsequently awarded a grant of £7.4m to deliver the Fulfilling Lives in Islington and Camden (FLIC) project over the eight-year period.

FLIC works intensively to support people facing severe and multiple disadvantages, relating to homelessness, re-offending, problematic substance use and mental ill-health.

The project is committed to bringing about systemic change in the way that commissioned services aim to meet the needs of people with complex and multiple needs. This has taken the form of 'showcasing' or 'demonstrating' more effective and efficient ways of designing, commissioning and delivering service models for people who have 'fallen through the cracks'. This has been through pilot projects, demonstration events and reports such as this.

This report aims, alongside other activities, to demonstrate the effectiveness of FLIC's Peer Mentoring model.

## Aims

This research aims to measure whether the Peer Mentoring programme is meeting its stated objectives.

These are:

- To support clients to achieve and sustain independent living - or maintain their existing tenancy.
- Where appropriate, to support clients to reduce offending behaviour and to reduce their use of problematic substances.
- To support clients to engage with mental health services.
- To support clients to build links in their community. This includes finding activities to engage with in order to rebuild clients' sense of purpose and reduce their social isolation
- To support clients to increase their self-esteem and develop their career aspirations.

- To support Peer Mentors to gain skills and knowledge in the health and social care sector via their mentoring relationship; regular training sessions; shadowing staff members; and regular supervision.
- To support Peer Mentors with identifying employment positions that they aspire to - and supporting them to complete job applications and attend interviews for these.

## Methodology

The research comprised the following elements:

- **Interviews:** interviews took place with six Peer Mentors. The aim of the interviews was to explore the impact of the scheme and the Peer Mentors' reflections on exit. *(NB: Clients were not interviewed as part of this research - but the first piece of research identified client satisfaction as high.)*
- **Client survey:** A survey was designed for clients to measure their feedback against

the stated objectives above. Eight clients completed this survey.

- **Peer Mentor Survey:** A survey was designed for Peer Mentors to measure the objectives above. Six Peer Mentors completed the survey.

*The numbers completing the surveys were small, so a cautionary note should be used when interpreting these findings.*

*Some Peer Mentors and clients were not surveyed for this report. This includes one Peer Mentor who worked with a client from Solace; and another who worked with a client with dementia who could not complete a survey.*

## The Peer Mentoring Programme in FLIC

FLIC has been running a Peer Mentoring scheme for eighteen months. Peer Mentoring is defined as:

*“A voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life.”*

FLIC adopts a one-to-one be-friending model of Peer Mentoring, whereby a Peer Mentor will be matched to one, two or three clients and will meet them individually (rather than a group setting).

## Research to date

An evaluation of FLIC's Peer Mentoring scheme was carried out after the initial six months to review its progress. This evaluation was qualitative in nature, aiming to map out the process of becoming a Mentor in order to better understand their journey and experience. It also aimed to explore the Mentor's experience of training, recruitment and support.

Using that learning as a basis, this research

paper aims to further demonstrate the impact of the programme. The previous study found:

- Motivations for becoming a Peer Mentor comprise a mix of altruism ('giving back') and a desire to sustain recovery and improve employment prospects.



- Peer Mentors were overwhelmingly positive about their experience of the recruitment, training, and induction process - and felt extremely well supported in the role.
- Mentors enjoyed doing something worthwhile. They particularly noted that improvement with engagement; and witnessing their clients' increased confidence and enjoyment were key outcomes for them.
- Relationships between Peer Mentors and Link Workers were all positive.
- Peer Mentors saw a wide range of benefits in their clients including increased engagement, confidence and enjoyment.
- Although still in the cultivation stage, clients felt they were benefiting from the positive relationships. All felt that they were able to talk more openly; their general social interaction had improved; their horizons broadened and they had a helpful resource to depend upon.

# Findings - Outcomes for Peer Mentors

## Peer Mentors: Outcomes

Peer Mentors were asked to rate their skills and knowledge in the sector as well as their confidence, self-esteem and motivation. They were asked to rate these prior to starting the role, and after, to assess the impact of the programme.

All Mentors used a five-point rating score (with zero being poor and five being excellent) to rate each of the below aspects of programme.

Overall Satisfaction was very high.

- **100 per cent (six) Peer Mentors were very satisfied with the scheme.**
- **They all confirmed that they would recommend the scheme to others.**

The other results are below:

### Skills & Knowledge

#### Peer Mentors improved their skills in the sector considerably.

Prior to being a Peer Mentor, clients did not feel confident with their own skills with 83 per cent rating their skills as poor (two) and 17 per cent rating themselves as average (three). All Peer Mentors felt that they had improved their skills, with all giving a rating of four after the scheme.

What our Peer Mentors said:

*“It was a good experience for me to work with this client group, as I was not familiar with some of the issues they were experiencing.*

*I felt very supported when in the role, with*

*the SHP support and training contributing not only to my professional skills, but to my personal development as a human.”*

*“The Programme was great - I felt lucky to grab the opportunity that was offered. It helped me to become informed and grow professionally. Working alongside SHP staff felt empowering, and really helped me to improve my skills.*

#### Peer Mentors gained considerable knowledge in the sector.

Before the programme, the majority of the Peer Mentors rated their knowledge as very poor/poor, with 17 per cent rating their knowledge as average. There was a 100 per cent improvement, with all Mentors rating their skills as high after the programme (four).

What our Peer Mentors said:

*“I gained an incredible amount out of it - I learnt about what people go through, and the barriers to access services. It was clear that many of them have been bouncing around services through years.”*

*“I felt I already had a good base to work with people, but the process helped me learn a lot about myself, other people and their struggle to recovery.”*

### Personal Development

Peer Mentors felt that mentoring helped them with their own personal growth.

#### Peer Mentors gained confidence.

All Peer Mentors felt their confidence grew, improving from poor to average (33 per cent and 66 per cent respectively) to 83 per cent



rating it as very good and 17 per cent as excellent after their Peer Mentoring experience.

What our Peer Mentors said:

*“My confidence levels improved, my self-esteem was boosted, my organisational skills improved, my IT skills grew...to be honest the list just goes on and on, I can’t really sum it up. I have only gained more skills and didn’t lose anything I had.”*

*“The programme certainly gave me confidence. It made me realise that I could use my lived experience of mental health issues, and previous experience volunteering with homeless families, to help others.”*

### Peer Mentors’ self-esteem increased.

Half of Peers Mentors rated their self-esteem as very poor to poor before the programme began, with the other 50 per cent rating it as average. The programme help all peers to improve this with 83 per cent rating their self-esteem as high (four).

What our Peer Mentors said:

*“I grew so much. I was isolated for a long time looking after my dad and then suddenly, I was found fit for work. I didn’t know what was going to happen. I just really thought I was going to tick over until retirement, then this programme absolutely changed everything for me, for the better.”*

*“My self-confidence and self-esteem really grew through having a structure and learning again, particularly IT skills. It changed my whole motivation and attitude. It is a fantastic environment where you can be open and honest, helping you to grow.”*



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### Peer Mentors’ motivation increased.

After Peer Mentoring, 83 per cent rated their motivation as high (four). This compares to 34 per cent rating their motivation as very poor/poor (one to two) and 50 per cent as average (three).

There were other indicators that Peer Mentors had seen their motivation increase, with 100 per cent seeing an improvement in their well-being, confidence, hope, empathy and personal growth.

All Peer Mentors also felt they had a clearer direction and better focus towards their own career development.

This was supported by 83 per cent (five Peer Mentors) feeling like they had enhanced their communication skills, self-esteem and people skills.

### Peer Mentors’ mental health, well-being and recovery:

100 per cent of Peer Mentors said they felt their general mental health or well-being had improved.

They all also agreed that the mentoring had

helped maintain their own recovery.

What our Peer Mentors said:

*“Aside from the support I was giving, it felt like it supported me with my own recovery. I have a couple of years sober behind me, meaning my lived experience of alcoholism played a key part in my role.”*

*“You have to use it, be vocal and noisy about it. If you can talk about it and be proud of how far you have come, you can really help others.”*

*“Every day I am alive I keep my recovery at the forefront and I was really able to do that with the FLIC team. People were always interested in how I was doing. If I did volunteering where my recovery was put on the back burner that would not have suited me at all. I don’t need a pat on the back, but I need to be able to talk about it - and never feeling judged by the team was just what I needed”*

*“I am in recovery, but it is an ongoing thing and you have to work on it continually. The programme helped me improve my skills and feel more confident about my own recovery. It pushed me forward really.”*

## Employment

66 per cent (four) Peer Mentors said they became a Peer Mentor to give back to society - including 83 per cent to share their knowledge and skills with others. However, the main motivation from all was to improve their employment prospects.

The programme supported this motivation with all Peer Mentors feeling that the programme had helped them to develop career pathways or pursue further educational activities.

The mentoring experience also helped influence employment choices and opportunities. In terms of moving on; 66 per cent have gained employment in the sector, 17 per cent are in college studying relevant areas and 17 per cent are currently staying with the scheme, with new responsibilities: overseeing recruitment and project implementation. They are hoping to find employment within the sector at a later date.

What our Peer Mentors said:

*“It was a huge stepping stone for me in my career. I wanted to give something back. I wanted to do something where I could draw on experiences I had and be with people I had something in common with. It was incredible in that sense. I learnt a lot about myself. I learnt a lot about the*

### Peer Mentor Outcomes

Three Peer Mentors working as support workers.

Two in an SHP accommodation service with another for a Mental Health Rehabilitation Unit



Working on Peer Coaching Pilot Project in the Borough (and on SHP Locum Bank)



Doing NVQ Level two in Social Care at College, alongside SHP work placement



Supporting SHP’s Peer Mentor Co-ordinator with recruitment of new peers and implementation of the programme



people I was working with and it was really life changing for me.”

*“I had come out of a corporate job that ended bitterly and really needed a change. I was doing other volunteering three or four days a week, but I wanted to do more, so applied to be a Peer Mentor.”*

*“One of the reasons I did it was to see if it was the sort of sector I felt I could work in. Obviously it was a huge tick all around. I worked out it was for me and here I am - and I am happy.”*

## Peer Mentors' other reflections

Peer Mentors were asked about their most memorable part of the scheme. Peer Mentors said one of the most valued aspects of the scheme was the ability to connect with other like-minded peers and the Co-ordinator. In general, the programme created a greater sense of social connectedness from all participants:

*“I loved the training and meeting the other Peer Mentors; most of us had different lived experience and we learnt with each other and got to know each other. I also really enjoyed seeing my clients develop and grow - it was a definite positive.”*

*“Everything we did felt memorable. Each day you end up doing something unique and special. I have volunteered for different organisations but there was a unique way of doing things and the Co-ordinator definitely supported this. It was very relaxed, friendly, and informal; but also so well planned, and supportive. I could say*

*a long list of positives. We had reflective practice and amazing supervision. I flourished because all the conditions in which I worked were really positive so it has been a very, very good experience. I didn't want it to end.”*

*“The relationships I built - not only with clients but with staff like the Co-ordinator - have been amazing and I really feel like I have made a fantastic connection there. Now I am at college, I have to do a work placement and I am doing that with SHP. I feel like I have got a great contact and extra support if I need it.”*

Peer Mentors were asked if anything had surprised them about the experience. Two Peer Mentors said they were surprised by the level of support provided by the Co-ordinator.

*“I have surprised myself. I don't normally respond well to compliments but, with the Co-ordinator's guidance, she has taught me to maybe love myself a little bit more. Also, she has taught me to write, to punctuate, to write letters and CVs. In the end, I did my application for the job with no corrections. I am still working on it, but it's a lot further along than it was. I mean you the Co-ordinator has superstar status in my book for all the support she's given me.”*

*“The thing that surprised me was the relaxed way of doing things throughout the organisation. A lot of charities are driven by targets so they are anxious to tick boxes. I am sure SHP have to be funded as well, but you don't feel that anxiety here.*

*“It is relaxed, things are done nicely. You deliver work in a friendly way. Another*



*thing that surprised me was the Co-ordinator's way of doing things. She was available no matter what, she was always understanding and she could remember every detail of everything. She was friendly, but professional. I have never had a manager like her. If she was my manager that would be the happiest thing happening to me. The team as a whole was great."*

One Peer Mentor said they were surprised by the humour found with clients:

*"Clients had humour where you would not have thought and that brought a real sense of joy for me really. I remember walking down the street and we shared a moment and we both doubled over laughing with tears - it was really cathartic."*

*"I am a huge believer that you have to find humour in bad places so maybe finding humour where you would have thought there was none was a surprise. The resilience of clients surprised me too, their fighting spirit."*

All six Peer Mentors said the most challenging thing was working with clients who would not always engage - but many of them said they gained new skills through learning how to deal with the disappointment of cancelled appointments.

*"Some of the client work was challenging. The lack of engagement was hard, you know I was really trying to give it my all, but there was only one client that really worked. We had a connection. I tried to work with a few other people but they wouldn't answer any texts, calls etc. It was pretty frustrating because you know you want to get stuck in. In the*

*beginning it was quite disappointing, but I learnt to deal with it."*

*"Working with unpredictable clients and planning things, but not being able to deliver because they would cancel at the last minute. I found this hard - I learnt to accept it and it made me appreciate life more as there are things we take for granted. I reflected on it a lot and it was another area of growth. I learnt to be more flexible and to understand and to help them. I am more compassionate actually than I was before."*



# Findings - Outcomes for Clients

Clients were asked to rate the impact that working with a Peer Mentor had given them - looking at measures prior to starting the relationship and after.

They were given a five-point rating score (with 0 being poor and 5 being excellent) to rate each of the below before and after the programme.

The results are below:

## Satisfaction and engagement:

- All clients were very satisfied with peer mentoring with one client stating they were very satisfied (five).
- As a consequence, all clients said they felt more satisfied with the FLIC service as whole.
- Half of the clients said they engaged more with FLIC after having a Peer Mentor. However, this meant it made no difference to the other 50 per cent.
- 37 per cent (three) clients said they engaged more in activities after having a Peer Mentor. All other clients noted no difference.
- 62 per cent (five) clients felt less isolated after having a Peer Mentor, 13 per cent (one) did not and 25 per cent (two) said it had made no difference.

## Personal Development

### Motivation

Prior to having Peer Mentoring, 50 per cent rated their motivation as poor (two) and 37 per cent as average.

After Peer Mentoring, 74 per cent rated their motivation four to five, showing a majority improvement.

Other areas that clients noted were:

- 75 per cent (six) feeling happier to open up more.
- 75 per cent (six) enjoying the additional support/company.
- 62 per cent (five) building positive relationships and connections, with 37 per cent enjoying sharing their experiences.
- 50 per cent (four) feel more engaged as well as more confident in themselves.

Clients in the first evaluation described having a friendly relationship with their Mentor. The depth of this ranged from simply sharing jokes with one another, to feeling close or developing friendship.

What our clients said:

*"I can talk to her about anything and vice-versa. It's good. I think it's a lovely relationship. I can't believe how far I have come."*

*"He's been a great support to me. I like to run decisions by him - it gives me peace of mind that any decision I make is the right one"*

Peer Mentors were asked to describe their perception of the impact on clients. They felt clients benefitted from being given an opportunity to be heard.

*"She was quite quiet at first, but I got to see her voice. I think because her family were quite domineering, she wasn't used to making decisions. I would say 'where do you want to go?' and she would just respond 'where do you want to go?'. I had to tell her it was about her, she needed to take control. I think now that has*



*happened, she is assertive and more confident, which is a good thing.”*

*“There was a lot of progress, but I enjoyed supporting clients to express themselves. I noticed they were comfortable sharing stuff with me about their lives and struggles more than others. Some of the other support workers said they were learning more about the clients through my work.”*

## Impact on client's four areas of needs:

### Housing

Half of clients were able to sustain their tenancy over the whole duration of their relationship with a Peer Mentor. All others were housed, but were moved or unable to sustain this one singular tenancy.

### Health - Physical

Clients reported general improvements with their health. 62 per cent of clients rated their health as very poor/poor prior to working with a Peer Mentor - only one client reported this after working with a Peer Mentor.

This meant there was an improvement in 'good' health, with 75 per cent of clients stating their physical health as good to excellent.

### Mental Health & Wellbeing

There was a decline in reports of 'very bad' or 'bad' mental health. 63 per cent identified with these prior to working with a Peer Mentor, but this reduced to 26 per cent.

As a result, clients felt better about their mental health, with 62 per cent scoring this as good to excellent. This was a 49 per cent improvement.

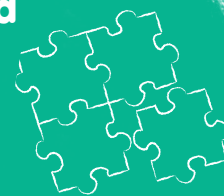
However, conversely, only 37 per cent (three) clients felt their general well-being had improved.

### Substance Use

There was no improvement in drug or alcohol use from clients after having a Peer Mentor. All results remain static within this:

- 50 per cent (four) have been drunk or using on the street.
- 13 per cent (one) have drunk until feeling intoxicated.
- 37 per cent (three) have taken illegal drugs.

**Clients improved both their physical and mental health, with 75 per cent and 62 per cent rating these as good to excellent after their Peer Mentoring relationship**



### Offending

Generally, there was a small indicative decline in offending behaviour.

- 37 per cent (three) clients had arrests prior to having a Peer Mentor and none after, showing some progress was made.
- 25 per cent (two) clients said they had been involved in anti-social behaviour before having a Peer Mentor. Only one reported this after the relationship began.
- However, there was no change in begging - the same three clients partook in this regardless of their Peer Mentoring relationship.



# Discussion

The initial FLIC evaluation of Peer Mentoring focused on the first six months of the programme. As a result, this focused more on the processes in place and general Peer Mentor and client experience, as outcomes were tentative.

This paper focused primarily on the hard outcomes and aimed to assess whether the programme meets its objectives. There is a lot of evidence on the experience of Peer Mentoring, but there is still work to be done to demonstrate these programmes' key outcomes. This is one of the first papers to report on statistical data on the impact of mentoring for those with complex needs and - whilst the sample is very small - the results are extremely encouraging.

The Peer Mentoring Programme aims to help clients sustain their tenancy, reduce re-offending and problematic substance misuse and access mental health support. It also aims to reduce isolation, increase community integration and raise self-esteem.

Most Mentees and Mentors highlighted positive outcomes, which they attributed to their mentoring relationship.

In particular, the results show that half the clients maintained their tenancy; there was a decline in the number of arrests and mental health and physical health improved. There was no improvement in substance misuse. In addition, clients felt less isolated; engaged more with FLIC and activities; and benefitted from increased motivation and confidence, opening up more, building positive relationships and sharing their experiences.

The Programme also aims to support Peer Mentors to gain skills and knowledge and improve confidence and self-esteem to help them access employment opportunities. It also aims to improve personal development. All Peer Mentors gained skills and knowledge having a strong impact on their career development, with most now working in the sector. It also supported them with their own mental health, well-being and recovery.

## Conclusion

The evaluation shows that the programme is having a mutually-beneficial impact on both Peer Mentors and clients. The Programme is also achieving all its objectives with high levels of satisfaction. It is hoped the results can be used to demonstrate the benefits to other services, showcasing it as a model of good practice which can be replicated elsewhere to help bring about lasting system change.

## Get in touch

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