

EMPLOYING PUBLIC AND EXPERT BY EXPERIENCE RESEARCHERS (PEERS) TO LEAD AND DELIVER A PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH IN SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND AGEING

M Dutton, A Kelly, M McCann, S Wadd

Substance Misuse and Ageing Research Team, University of Bedfordshire, Luton, England

Introduction / Issues: Expert by experience-led research in the field of substance misuse is rare. This presentation describes how we have developed a novel and highly successful model of recruiting, training and supporting Public and Experts by Experience Researchers or PEERs (people aged 50+ in recovery from an alcohol problem) to lead and deliver a programme of research.

Method / Approach: PEER researchers with no previous experience of social research have been recruited and trained in every aspect of the research process from research governance and study design to conducting qualitative interviews, data analysis and dissemination. PEERs co-produced this abstract submission and will give the presentation.

Key Findings: PEERs have identified research questions that may have otherwise been overlooked and these have led to externally funded studies with PEERs as Principal Investigator. The lived experienced that PEERs share with research participants creates an instant rapport, facilitating high quality research interviews and their involvement has improved the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. Challenges include the fact that model is resource intensive initially and that the PEER role does not 'fit' with existing policies and practices.

Discussions and Conclusions: Carefully selected, fully trained and supported experts by experience can greatly improve the quality and credibility of substance misuse research. We believe that expert by experience-led research should become the norm rather than an exception.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: No potential conflict of interests identified.