



# Trustees' Annual Report

**For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.**

Includes our Financial Report for the same period.

## **Peer Support Plus CIO**

### **Trustees' Annual Report – 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

**Registered Address** 1 Elmete Close, Leeds LS8 2LD

#### **Trustees of Peer Support Plus CIO at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

Lisa Bamford (Chair), Elisa Tabò (Secretary), David Donaldson (Treasurer), Jamie Tyson, Jiayu Lou.

Note Two of these five Trustees were elected at our first AGM on 16th August 2021. Elisa Tabò was co-opted at the Trustees Board Meeting on 20th March 2025. Maria Bazirake (Secretary) stood down the same day. Jamie Tyson intends to stand down at the 2024/25 AGM.

#### **Financials**

Our Receipts and Payments Accounts for 2024/25 is in Appendix 3.

Peer Support Plus CIO operates a 'Clubs and Societies' Business Bank Current Account at Virgin Money (Clydesdale Bank PLC).

#### **Structure, Governance and Management**

Peer Support Plus CIO is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation governed according to its Constitution. It was first registered with the Charity Commission on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

Peer Support Plus is led and operated entirely by volunteers. Four of our Trustees have 'lived experience' of mental distress.

Trustees hold Board Meetings monthly and other working meetings as necessary. Working parties for specific tasks are formed by Trustees on a flexible basis depending on the skills needed and volunteer time available. For example, working parties develop and review policies and procedures.

Members of the charity and Peers [beneficiaries] are welcome to observe Trustee meetings and express their views but cannot vote.

Decisions about interpreting objects, and deciding policies and procedures are reserved to the Board of Trustees.

Volunteer Trustees are recruited by advertising on the Doing Good Leeds and Peer Support Plus websites, on the Peer Support Plus Facebook page and by word of mouth. The recruitment process is through informal discussions with the current Trustees. New Trustees are provided with a copy of our Governing Document (Constitution) and the most recent Trustee Meeting Minutes, Trustees' Annual Report & Financial Statements. Trustees have online access to all our policies and process documentation.

Volunteers are covered by Peer Support Plus's Volunteer Policy and induction process. Trustees undertake training appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

We have recruited new Trustees with knowledge and expertise to take on some of the tasks currently undertaken by existing Trustees and share the workload. Three Trustees also volunteer as Support Group Peer facilitators and one as an Administrator. We encourage all Trustees and Peers to put forward suggestions for improving the way Peer Support Plus CIO is governed, managed and operated.

## **Objectives and Activities**

The purpose of the charity as set out in the Constitution is "to relieve sickness and preserve health of persons suffering from mental illness of any description or in need of rehabilitation and support as a result of such illness, in the Leeds Metropolitan District, by the provision of:

- Peer to Peer support.
- Educational workshops and courses on managing mental health illness and rehabilitation.
- Advice and guidance on living with mental health illness."

The main activity undertaken by Peer Support Plus to further these charitable purposes for public benefit is the provision of Peer Support groups.

The Trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to guidance on public benefit published by The Charity Commission (PB1, PB2, PB3).

## **Executive Summary**

- Established the charity Peer Support Plus CIO on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020, by registering it with the Charity Commission. We held our first AGM on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021.
- Received a single grant of NHS funding in April 2021, enabling us to double our capacity to serve beneficiaries and reach out to people who were not previously supported. This funding enabled us to maintain two Peer Support Groups throughout 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

- In September 2022 we obtained a microgrant from the Leeds Community Foundation Leeds Fund to recruit and train additional Peer facilitators by September 2023. By March 2023 we had recruited three new Peer facilitators and two new Administrators (who helped free up additional Peer facilitators and Mentoring capacity). On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, we had six Peer facilitators.
- Continued to establish a public presence as a reputable provider of mental health support in Leeds. We do this through networking and attending community events. We also distributed notices and flyers in community settings. We publish occasional Newsletters by email, and we promote our website.
- Continued to offer two free support groups, one in-person and one by Zoom. We attracted sufficient new Peers for both support groups to remain viable.
- Financially secure until at least March 2026 and have maintained a small financial reserve equal to 12 months' operating costs.

## **Activities, Achievements & Performance**

### **Peer to Peer support.**

The Trustees established Peer Support Plus to provide ongoing open-ended Peer Support groups for adults in Leeds who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health; to promote their wellbeing and quality of life by providing the opportunity for Peers to learn from each other by sharing their 'lived experience' of living with and managing their mental health.

### **Educational workshops and courses on managing mental health illness and rehabilitation.**

Peer Support Plus's 12 Month Plan (Appendix 1) and 5-year vision (Appendix 2) include providing free support groups, workshops and courses without replicating what is available elsewhere. The aim is to increase the number of Peers able to access peer support and widen the range of strategies, tools and techniques available to help Peers with specific mental health issues.

### **Advice and guidance on living with mental health illness.**

Giving advice is actively discouraged in our Peer Support Groups. Peers who take time to talk about an issue can take inspiration from other Peers who share their 'lived experience' on ways they have dealt with similar feelings and experiences in the past. Other advice and guidance are provided through signposting to other groups, workshops, training, resources, and events that might benefit Peers.

## **Why Open-ended Peer Support?**

Our Trustees believe strongly that the ongoing nature of open-ended peer support provides continuity and stability to help Peers tackle deep-seated issues, embark on major life or behavioural changes, or maintain their present level of 'recovery'.

Following the closure by Leeds Mind of open-ended peer support groups at the end of March 2020, the first goal of Peer Support Plus was to continue meeting as an open-ended peer support group. No other organisation in Leeds is providing Peer Support Groups that are not restricted in terms of age, race, gender, sexuality, or duration. We believe that sharing the diversity of Peers' experiences is a strength.

Further information about our history, values and model of peer support is published on our website [www.peersupportplus.org](http://www.peersupportplus.org). Our 12-month plan for this year can be seen at Appendix 1 and our 5-year plan can be seen at Appendix 2.

## **Beneficiaries (Peers)**

In 2024/25 the charity provided more than 200 hours of free Support Groups with capacity for up to 10 people per two-hour session. We not only continued to offer our in-person open-ended Peer Support Group but also maintained our online Peer Support group first established during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We met weekly in-person on Wednesday afternoons at Lovell Park Hub since November 2021. Leeds City Council kindly continues to donate 'our' confidential meeting space there.

Our Tuesday evening Support Group met weekly on Zoom, reaching out to those who, for reasons such as mobility, travel, employment, conflicting caring commitments etc., would otherwise be unable to attend a Peer Support Group in-person. We have continued to offer four digital tablets with 4G internet data connections for loan to digitally disadvantaged Peers.

Potential Peers wishing to join a Peer Support Group first attend an Introduction to Peer Support (IPS) workshop to familiarise themselves with how our Peer Support Groups work and help them decide if they wish to join. IPSs are scheduled monthly and held in response to demand.

During 2024/25 thirty-seven adults made tentative enquiries about our offer. By 31 March 2025 eleven of those had formed a new Peer Relationship with us. Some of those who recently enquired are in course of engaging with us and will form a Peer Relationship with us during 2025/26.

Peers have given us the following feedback:

*"I struggle to confide in my family and friends. This group is the only place I feel comfortable talking about how I really feel."*

*"I use the group to catch issues before they become too big and to avoid worrying my friends. The support group is able to contain my feelings and not overreact, and I get validation by checking out things with the group."*

*"Have a rant in a safe Group where nobody is involved or likely to take it personally."*

*"I can check things out with the Group instead of burdening my friends."*

*"Giving voice to my feelings about things. I sometimes don't know what I am thinking and feeling until I hear myself try and express them to others."*

*"A place where I can speak freely without feeling judged."*

*"Talking with people I trust."*

*"Every meeting is new and you get something new out of it."*

*"Collaborative happiness" and "Sneaking up on happiness".*

*"A caring and loving environment to talk through difficulties in life. No matter just listening to others or sharing my own feelings, I feel safe and I belong."*

*"Zoom setting is convenient and cosy. The smiling faces have connected us almost the same way as face-to-face setting."*

*"I feel safe to be me, don't have to have any front to protect myself. Feels good to have a group where I feel safe and accepted. Every time we meet, I have some new insight, find something helpful in relation to my issues, from others in the group."*

*"Helps me so much to have this regular space in managing my mental health. It's become an important time in my week, a reliable time where I connect with myself, and especially with others, as I struggle with connecting with people in my day-to-day life."*

*"I am not alone"* [Often stated after the first Support Group meeting attended.]

## **Volunteers and supporters**

Peer Support Plus CIO has no paid staff. It is operated entirely by volunteers. Three of our Trustees are also Peer facilitators of Support groups. Collectively, our volunteers have over twenty-five years' experience as Peer facilitators.

In late 2022 we started advertising for and have successfully recruited additional Trustees and volunteer Peer facilitators. We aim to recruit further Trustees, Peer Facilitators, an HR skilled Administrator and a Fundraiser during 2025/26.

Our Five-Year Vision (Appendix 2) is to remain predominantly Peer-led and delivered. We hope to recruit and train more volunteer facilitators and Trustees from both our Peers and the wider community to help keep Peer Support Plus fresh and viable and expand the charity's capacity to support more adults in Leeds.

Private individuals and organisations have also donated funds and practical assistance. For example, during 2024/25: 34SP, our website host, gave us free hosting, email, and SSL; Leeds City Council provided a Support Group meeting room at no charge; and The Rotary Club of Roundhay donated a further £500 from its community fundraising efforts.

## **Public presence**

The Trustees continued to ensure that Peer Support Plus CIO is sustainable and viewed as a legitimate, trustworthy, and effective organisation with opportunities to raise funds and attract volunteers. This will enable the charity to expand capacity and support even more adults in Leeds.

We continued to develop our online presence through our [Website](#) and our [Facebook](#) page.

Peer Support Plus is registered on [MindWell](#), the mental health website funded by the NHS, to which adults in Leeds are signposted in order to find support for mental health.

Peer Support Plus is also registered on [Leeds Directory](#) funded by Leeds City Council 'an online source of information for services that can support you to live well in Leeds'.

Here are some more examples of our outreach activities:

We continued to attend community mental health events, for which we designed and displayed a pop-up banner. We continued to distribute posters, flyers, and business cards, to provide us with a presence in health and community settings. For example, we supported two events at Leeds City Council's Lovell Park Mental Health Hub promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing services to the general public.

## Financial Review

This report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

<b>Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period.</b>	On 31 March 2025, Peer Support Plus's only tangible asset was £5,294.07 in the bank.
<b>Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves and stating why they are held.</b>	On 31 March 2025, in case of a short-run fundraising gap, we held a Reserve sufficient to fund forecast unavoidable expenditures for twelve months.
<b>Amount of reserves held</b>	£2,000 on 31 March 2024. Increased from £1,600 to cover the rent of a weekly in-person Support Group meeting room at Little London Community Centre following Leeds City Council's decision to close all three of its Mental Health Hubs in April 2025.
<b>Reasons for holding reserves.</b>	Peer Support Plus was registered as a CIO on 12 August 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when fundraising opportunities were scarce. We rely on donations and small grants which are not predictable income streams.
<b>Details of fund materially in deficit.</b>	Not in deficit.
<b>Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern.</b>	None. Peer Support Plus made a strong beginning with a start-up Grant and deliberately low outgoings. In April 2021 it received sufficient Grant funding to operate two Support Groups until March 2022. We raised enough funds to operate them until March 2026 without relying on financial reserves.
<b>The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising).</b>	Until 31 March 2025. Peer Support Plus has relied on small Grants and Donations. The Trustees aim to begin supplementing these sources with public fundraising activity during 2025/26.
<b>Investment policy and objectives including any social investment policy adopted.</b>	None necessary. All of our funds and reserves are held in Peer Support Plus CIO's free Bank Current Account at Virgin Money (Clydesdale Bank PLC), which pays modest interest on balances.
<b>A description of the principal risks facing the charity.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Potential for failure to attract sufficient Volunteers to continue operating services.</li> <li>2. Potential for failure to raise sufficient funds to continue offering services after 31 March 2027.</li> </ol>
<b>Other</b>	Peer Support Plus CIO is currently operated entirely by unpaid Volunteers. It has no assets, no premises and is administered almost entirely online.



## Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity Peer Support Plus CIO's Trustees:

**Signature** *Lisa M Bamford*

**Full name** Lisa Michelle Bamford

**Position** Chair of Trustees

**Date** 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## See also:

### Appendix 1

12-Month Plan 2025-26 for Peer Support Plus – by 31 March 2026

### Appendix 2

5-Year Vision for Peer Support Plus as at 31 March 2030

### Appendix 3

Receipts and Payments Account 01/04/204 to 31/03/2025

## **Appendix 1**

### **12-Month Plan 2025-26 for Peer Support Plus CIO.**

By 31 March 2026 we will have:

- Continued to simplify and add lightness to everything we do.
- Continued to develop smooth day-to-day operations – meaning no requirement for urgent intervention or major systems development to continue running effectively.
- Recruited additional volunteer Trustee(s) to expand the Board's pool of available skills and experience and ensure resilience and continuity.
- Expanded our team of volunteer Facilitators by recruiting and training new and retaining existing ones.
- Recruited a volunteer Charity Administrator and a volunteer Fundraiser. Develop the skills and knowledge of our Delivery Administrator, Charity Administrator and Fundraiser.
- Continued to provide open-ended Peer Support Group meetings weekly in person at Leeds City Council's Little London Community Centre. (This venue satisfies Peers' emotional needs to feel a sense of being 'rooted' in and having a physical 'home' in Leeds).
- Attract additional Peers (beneficiaries), so that typically 10 Peers are present in the room and four rounds of sharing are achieved.
- Continue to provide open-ended Peer Support Group meetings weekly via Zoom, typically having 10 Peers present 'in the room' and four rounds of sharing achieved.
- Hold regular Delivery Team meetings between Facilitators, Mentors and Administrators including Group Supervision for all the volunteers managed by our Delivery Team Lead.
- Continued to review, simplify, and update our Policies and Administrative Processes, and develop additions as needed. Where appropriate in the interests of transparency, publish them on our website.
- Increased the voting Membership of Peer Support Plus CIO.

- Continued to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our online Peer and volunteer record keeping, and Delivery Team administration.
- Developed a performance measurement system to analyse WEMWBS and Peer engagement including automatic reporting.
- Sourced Accredited Facilitator Training externally. Developed and documented a practical in-house training and mentoring process.
- Continued to develop our established 'presence' in Leeds by:
  - Networking with other organisations supporting mental health in Leeds.
  - Observing other organisations signposting potential Peers toward us.
- Continued to promote Donations via standing order, Just Giving, Give as you Live, Easyfundraising, etc. to help fund our activities.
- Established an expected flow of Grants / Donations / Fund Raising Events by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 sufficient to fund our 12 Month Plan for 2026/27.
- Maintained our Financial Reserve at a level sufficient to fund 12 months of activity.
- Arranged our sixth AGM for May 2026.

**End**

## Appendix 2

### 5-Year Vision for Peer Support Plus as at 31 March 2030

- Nurture our Peer Support model and satisfy our Constitution.
- Establish additional in-person open-ended Peer Support Groups at other locations to achieve more accessible coverage across the Leeds Metropolitan Area.
- Additional online Peer Support Groups, to aid accessibility (overcoming timing/location/mobility constraints)..
- Extend our demographic reach by offering some free Peer-facilitated Support Groups in Partnership with other organisations.
- In addition to our Introduction to Peer Support workshop, offer some focussed mental health Workshops and Courses free to participants. (Not replicating what is available elsewhere in Leeds).
- Low cost – i.e., where possible avoiding venue costs, asset purchases, employing people and entering long-term financial commitments, so we are not ‘caught out’ by financial crises.
- Light on our feet – i.e., ready to respond to changes in levels of demand with ‘Plan B’ in place ready to change venues or funding sources if necessary.
- Continuing to have the financial and volunteer capacity to do things effectively without cutting corners e.g., responding to enquiries within 24 hours and offering ‘good tasting coffee’ at mid-session refreshments.
- Predominantly Volunteer-led and delivered, but not ruling out the possibility of obtaining funding for a paid Administrator and some paid Facilitators.
- Peer Support Groups tailored to those who, for cultural reasons, or because they share a particular Peer experience, would find it hard to discuss some issues in a general mixed Peer Support Group.
- Selling Online Peer Support Groups, Workshops and Courses to adults outside the Leeds Metropolitan Area to help us continue to offer such activities free in Leeds.
- Selling to organisations anywhere, at commercial market rates, to fund our free activities in the Leeds Metropolitan Area e.g.

- Peer Support Groups, Workshops and Courses – to other organisations on a commercial basis.
- Our 'franchise' – sharing our knowledge and expertise, and licencing for a modest fee the limited rights to use our methods, including our intellectual property such as internal policies, processes, and administrative systems.
- Copies of the copyright and public domain Course and Workshop materials we create, develop, consolidate or maintain – could be sold through a shop on our website i.e. we will offer public domain materials using the same 'well presented, convenient, accessible source' business model as those who sell public domain and out-of-copyright sheet-music or books.

**End**

## Appendix 3

### Receipts and Payments Account 01/04/2024 to 31/03/2025

	£	Notes
<b>Receipts</b>		
Donations	304.00	
Fundraising		
Grant	500.00	The Rotary Club of Roundhay
Interest	92.55	
Gift Aid		
Cashback	0.86	
	<b>897.41</b>	
<b>Payments</b>		
Remuneration		No Employees
Recruitment & DBS Checks		Re Volunteers
Training	160.00	Safeguarding
Volunteer Expenses		
Insurance	219.60	Renewal due 31 March 2026
Bank Charges		
Zoom Pro	155.88	Renewal due 7 June 2026
Venues		Donated by Leeds City Council
Meeting Refreshments	60.24	
Admin Software		Donated by Microsoft
Web Hosting and Cloud Services	20.00	Annual Domain Registration Fee <sup>1</sup>
Mobile Phones and Computers		
Data & Telephone	169.68	Mobile + 4 Tablet Data Sims
Stationery & Consumables		
Postage	6.80	
Brand & Public Relations	7.83	
Advertising & Publicity		
Membership of other organisations	25.00	Voluntary Action Leeds
Grant Application Costs		
	<b>825.03</b>	
<b>Receipts minus Payments</b>	<b>72.38</b>	
Transfer	0.00	
Balance Brought Forward	5221.69	
<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<b>5,294.07</b>	
<b>Balance Carried Forward comprises</b>		
Reserve	2,000.00	12 months operating costs
Restricted	38.26	NHS W Y Health Care Partnership
Restricted	1,011.83	Leeds Fund Micro Grant
Unrestricted	2,243.98	
	<b>5,294.07</b>	

**Notes** <sup>1</sup> Web Hosting donated by 34SP. Cloud storage donated by Google

**End**