

PROCESS EVALUATION OF RECRUITING AND TRAINING PEER SUPPORTERS IN A DIGITAL LIFESTYLE INTERVENTION FOR MIDLIFE WOMEN WITH TYPE 2 DIABETES

Dr Bozkurt, D¹; Dr Duaso, M¹; Dr Nadal, IP¹; DNS Walker, R²; Prof Sturt, J.¹

1 Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Palliative Care, King's College London, London, UK

2 Successful Diabetes, Ipswich, UK

Background

Peer support is increasingly incorporated into diabetes self-management programmes to enhance motivation and support lifestyle behaviour change. However, few studies describe in detail how peer supporters are recruited, prepared, and supported when delivering digitally delivered lifestyle interventions. This study aimed to evaluate the process of recruiting and training peer supporters for a 12-week digital diabetes lifestyle intervention and to explore their experiences of facilitating online peer support.

Method

Peer supporters with lived experience of diabetes were recruited through a targeted social media campaign and selected based on predefined eligibility criteria. They were trained to facilitate a private online peer-support group and support participants' personalised lifestyle goals. Training was delivered online over two days and covered programme content, communication and facilitation skills, behaviour change support, role boundaries, confidentiality, distress management, motivational and listening skills, and procedures for managing participant concerns and referral pathways. Training also included guidance on facilitating group discussions and managing Facebook technical settings. Ongoing check-in sessions were provided throughout programme delivery to support peer supporters. Data sources included programme documentation and semi-structured interviews with the peer supporters, which were analysed using framework analysis to identify what worked well, challenges encountered, training resources used, and recommendations for future improvement.

Results

Online recruitment successfully identified three peer supporters with relevant lived experience, who were recruited and trained. Peer supporters valued the structured training and facilitator handbook provided before the programme. They highlighted the importance of empathy in communicating effectively with participants. In addition, teamwork and collaboration among peer supporters were identified as key elements in successfully managing the online peer group. These approaches were perceived to enhance participant engagement. Peer supporters also offered practical suggestions to improve training and support for future online peer groups.

Conclusion

This process evaluation provides insights into the recruitment and preparation of peer supporters for digital diabetes interventions. Structured training, clear

role expectations and ongoing support may strengthen peer-facilitated lifestyle programmes.