

wellways

OUTTOGETHER



Who are Wellways?

- Mental health and disability organisation
- Previously Mental Illness Fellowship Vic
- Services across VIC, TAS, NSW, ACT, QLD
- NDIS provider
- Residential Services (Adult & Youth)
- PARC services
- Homelessness & housing programs
- Family & carer services
- Peer services
- Community education
- Advocacy





Vision

An inclusive community where everyone can imagine and achieve their hopes and potential.

Mission

We connect people, strengthen families and transform communities. We work with individuals of all ages experiencing disabilities or challenges to their social and emotional wellbeing.



The Out Together Project

- Funded by National Disability Services Innovation Workforce Grant
- Recruit and train NDIS support workers who identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community and have lived experience of mental health issues and/or disability
- Match Out Together workers with NDIS participants who identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ community
- Evaluate results
- Co-design & publish resources



Why Out Together?

- Addressing access and inclusion issues for LGBTIQ+ participants of the NDIS
- Increased choice and control
- Piloting peer workforce models in NDIS
- Sharing resources and learning



Establishment & co-design

- Steering Committee – GLHV (Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria), NDIA, NDS, consumers & carers, Wellways peer trainers
- Collaborations – Qlife, Senswide employment
- Focus groups – design of project and training
- LGBTIQ+ participants of NDIS as consumer representatives on interview panels
- Following co-design, experienced Wellways peer trainers delivered training
- Co-reflection with Out Together staff



Practice frameworks

Well Together – a blueprint for community inclusion

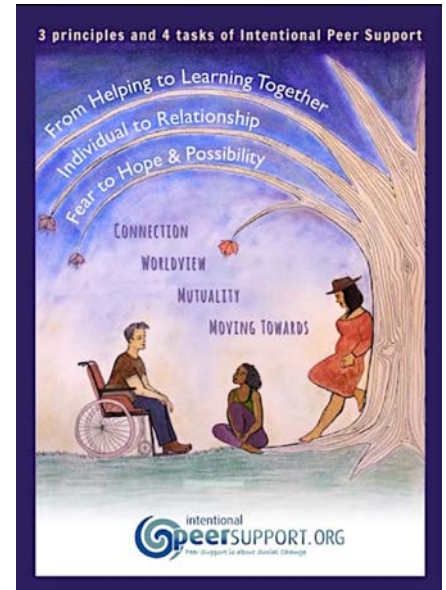
"Inclusive communities challenge age-old prejudices and the established patterns of discrimination they foster, replacing marginalisation and isolation with affirmation, eager welcoming and embracement."

(Salzer, M.S. & Baron, R.C. (2016). Well Together – A blueprint for community inclusion: fundamental concepts, theoretical frameworks and evidence. Published by Wellways Australia Limited, Melbourne, Australia.)



Practice frameworks

- Intentional Peer Support (Mead)
- Recovery – CHIME Model (Connectedness, Hope, Identity, Meaning, Empowerment)



Engaging staff & participants

- Establishing trust
- Exploring connection, shared interests
- Understanding diverse needs and goals
- 13 Out Together workers - Melbourne, Geelong & Ballarat
- 14 LGBTIQ+ NDIS participants
- 87 participants supported by Out Together workers in total



Evaluation and reporting

- Conducted focus groups with participants
- Interviews with staff and managers
- Published report
- Developed toolkit and resources for sector



Participant outcomes

- An **increased sense of empowerment** and **higher levels of self-esteem**
- A sense of **greater continuity of support** leading to better outcomes and increased satisfaction
- **A greater validation of experience** when compared with previous non-peer NDIS supports received
- **More visibility** of disability and mental health challenges specific to LGBTIQ+ people



Participant outcomes

- **Experiences of acceptance and understanding:** *“I enjoy having a LGBTIQ+ worker who isn’t going to be sour or judgmental and understands where I am coming from without having to go into a whole lot of detail.”*
- Having peers share their own recovery journey encouraged people to **explore different strategies** and “try new ways of being”
- **Development of supportive networks** and a range of natural supports in community



Staff outcomes

- Validation and celebration of lived experience and LGBTIQ+ identity
- A greater sense of self-worth
- Training which resulted in practice confidence – use of lived experience, managing risk
- Skills which led to improvements in relationships in professional and private lives



The peer experience

- Amielle Penny – Out Together worker



Peer support within NDIS

- Core supports
 - Community access
 - Assistance with self care
 - Individual skills development & training
- Limited plans funding peer support specifically
- No recognition of specialisation of peers
- Funding restraints – impacts on capacity of organisations to train & supervise



Learnings

- Positive outcomes and ongoing need
- Peer model can be applied broadly
- Requires ongoing promotion and education
- Ensure all staff have required knowledge and understanding
- Ongoing advocacy to recognise peer expertise and fund accordingly
- Ongoing co-design and co-reflection



Next steps

- Sharing resources – toolkit and online resources
- Further evaluation – Deakin Uni
- Expansion of program within Wellways in Grampians, Great South Coast, Melbourne
- Support to sector who wish to implement



Questions

- www.wellways.org/out-together
- www.intentionalpeersupport.org
- www.nds.org.au/workforce-hub
- [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)

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Thank you

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