

# Different approaches to providing support

All kinds of people can offer support including:

- a public involvement manager working inside an organisation – they may be a researcher or an experienced member of the public
- a peer support worker
- the project principal investigator or chair of a committee
- a peer – a member of the public who is also involved in research, or a researcher with experience in involvement
- a counsellor or psychologist.

Different people may be better placed to provide some forms of support than others. For example, the principal investigator or senior manager may be best placed to offer supervision and project management, whereas a peer, counsellor or psychologist may be better placed to provide emotional / psychological support.

Different approaches to providing support include:

- mentoring (see [case study seven](#))
- coaching (see [Sharing innovative practice workshop report by INVOLVE](#))
- group meetings – annual meetings, support groups, shared learning groups (see [case study eight](#))
- a peer support worker (see [case study five](#))
- virtual support – through telephone or email conversations (see [case study seven](#)) or the use of social media.

The best approach will be highly dependent on the situation, for example whether you are an organisation seeking to support large numbers of staff or projects or an individual researcher

seeking to support a small research team.

Some of these ways of providing support may also be effective at meeting people's learning needs – they can help increase people's knowledge and skills to help them be effective in their role.

**Peer support** is a valuable way for people to support each other, gain confidence in their role and learn strategies and skills from each other about involvement in research. Many of the examples of support described in this resource include an element of peer support, from advisory groups and panels to interviewing and peer support workers.

The key feature of this approach is the exchange of support between people who share a common experience and are on a level with each other. Whether in a group setting or on a one-to-one basis, people are offering each other support on an equal or shared basis. This can be of particular value to people who share experience of a health condition or disability, who can understand each other's circumstances and needs in a way that others without this experience might not.

Peer support can often develop informally and it is possible to encourage people to support each other by creating the right environment or facilitating particular activities. Examples include:

- when holding meetings or events build in time for socialising to encourage informal conversations and sharing experiences
- encouraging members of a group to discuss their own experiences of a particular condition or their training and support needs
- setting up a [peer mentoring system](#) between more experienced members of a panel or group and new members just joining
- exchanging contact details, setting up an online forum

or [email groups](#)