

Issues to think about before you start – support

Who is best placed to provide support to peer interviewers? It could be someone inside or outside of the research team. That person needs to be clearly identified and their telephone number made available to all the peer interviewers. They also need to be properly resourced so they have sufficient time to provide support, and able to refer people to other services if necessary. It may not be appropriate for support to be offered by line managers or anyone perceived as 'the boss', as people may not feel comfortable talking to them about their concerns.

Be clear about the boundaries to the support. You could provide this in a written statement so peer interviewers know what to expect. Research team members cannot provide the kind of professional support needed to help with people's personal problems – they are not counsellors or professional advisers. It is important to refer people to specialist or expert services when appropriate.

Be proactive in offering support. It's not enough to say: "Call me if you have a problem." It's important to for peer interviewers to routinely receive support after each interview. For example, follow up each interview with a debrief call shortly after the interview and again 24 hours later – often there won't be any problem, but people may feel the emotional effects of an interview some time after the actual experience.

Tailor the support to the peer interviewers. Different people will have different support needs and these may change over time. You might need to provide high levels of support at the beginning, but this may tail off as people gain confidence in their skills. It's also important not to be overly protective and to demonstrate trust in people by allowing them to do

things on their own.