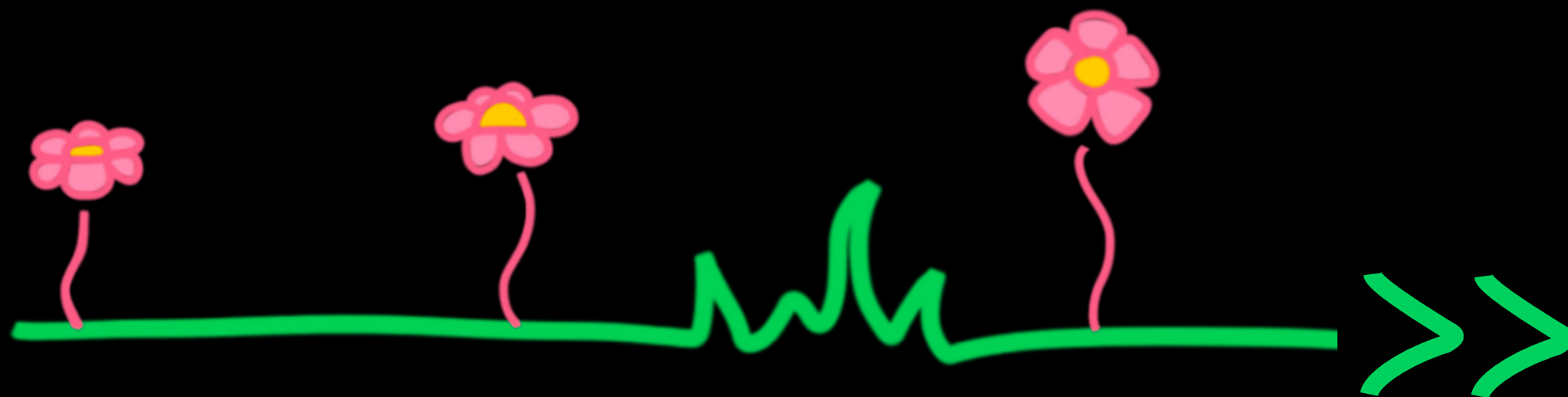


Supporting Employees with Lived Experience

Shared learning from 24 social impact organisations

Hosted by Peer Power Youth, Place Matters and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Visual resource by Lizzies Lines



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Peer Power Youth

Social justice charity supporting young people to change systems, increase their wellbeing and employment.

www.peerpower.org.uk



Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

One of the UK's largest independent funders of social justice organisations.

www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk



Place Matters

Partnership working to strengthen and empower communities to tackle the root causes of inequality and social injustice in their places.

www.placematters.org.uk



Lizzies Lines

Illustrator, designer and strategist helping impact organisations embrace creative, accessible ways to communicate.

www.lizzieslines.com

Employees with Lived Experience (LEx) can be deeply affected by their work in social impact organisations.

Particularly when they are working to change systems that have harmed them in the past.

The strengths and value of their contribution to driving systemic, structural, and institutional change is immeasurable.

Their first hand insight and connection to the cause enables us to move at a much faster rate, whilst giving us the opportunity to understand more deeply and serve more authentically.

But the weight of the work can be extremely heavy.

**As employers,
we have a duty
of care and legal
responsibilities for
the health and well-
being of all of our
employees.**

**As a values and
mission-led
organisations,
we want the employee
experience for all staff
to be ethically sound
and trauma
responsive.**

But as small organisations with limited HR resources, a greater amount of our core resource can be needed to fund the development and support needed for our teams.

We have found that standard HR processes do not always take into account the complexities around lived experience within the workplace.

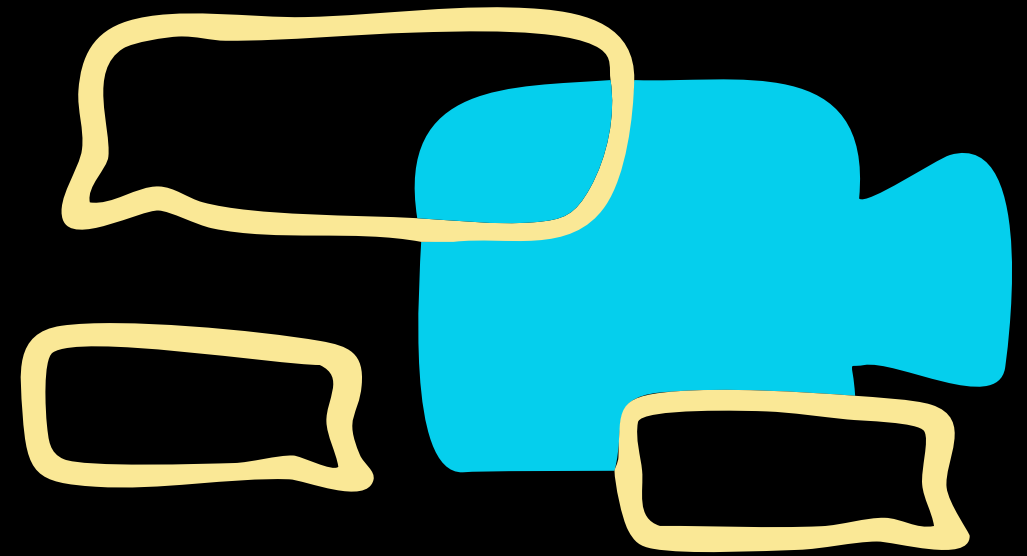
This can cause tension around our finances, ethics, and our organisational values and culture.

**Anne-Marie Douglas, Founder
and CEO of
Peer Power Youth approached
Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
about this.**

**After discussions, Esmée offered
Funding Plus support
to convene a group of
organisations with a shared
purpose.**



The shared purpose was to:



- **Exchange knowledge and resources**
- **Reimagine and challenge existing practices and**
- **Foster meaningful peer support**

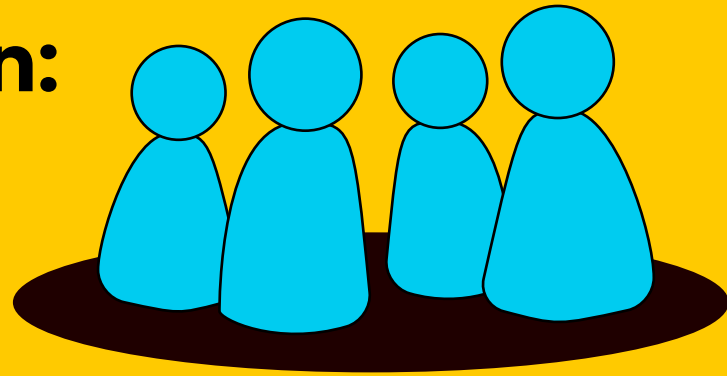
All with the ultimate goal of driving lasting improvement across the sector.



24 leaders from cross-sector social-impact organisations joined the 'Peer Learning Group'

with expertise in:

- LGBTQ+
- Disability
- Arts
- Racial justice
- Young People
- Mental Health
- Women's justice
- Refugee/Migrant justice



The group was actually over-subscribed before being **narrowed down based on:**

> **Size**

Small – medium

7 – 50 payroll employees

£200k – £2 million revenue

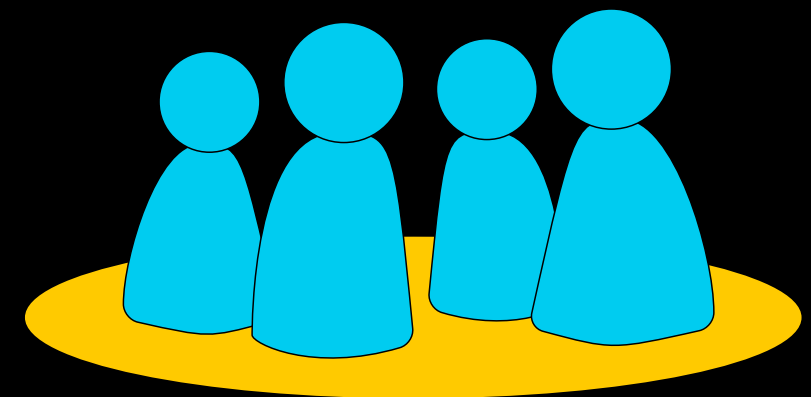
> **Amount of resource for HR/People and**

> **Current employment practice for lived experience staff**

The cross-sector social-impact organisations included:

- **Anthony Walker Foundation**
- **Attitude is Everything**
- **B Arts**
- **Back to Ours**
- **Birthrights**
- **Disability Law Service**
- **Deafinitely Theatre**
- **Drake Music Scotland**
- **IKWRO**
- **Karma Nirvana**
- **The Kite Trust**
- **Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)**

- **LGBT+ Consortium**
- **LEAP Sports Scotland**
- **Peer Power Youth**
- **Micro Rainbow**
- **National Survivor User Network**
- **National Ugly Mugs (NUM)**
- **RECLAIM**
- **Refugee Women Connect**
- **Spectra**
- **The Music Works**
- **Transport for All**



Between 2023 and 2024, we embarked on a learning journey together.

Workshops were designed and co-delivered by Anne-Marie Douglas from Peer Power Youth and Emily Sun and their team from Place Matters.

A final 'Funder Convening Event' was held in September 2024, hosted by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

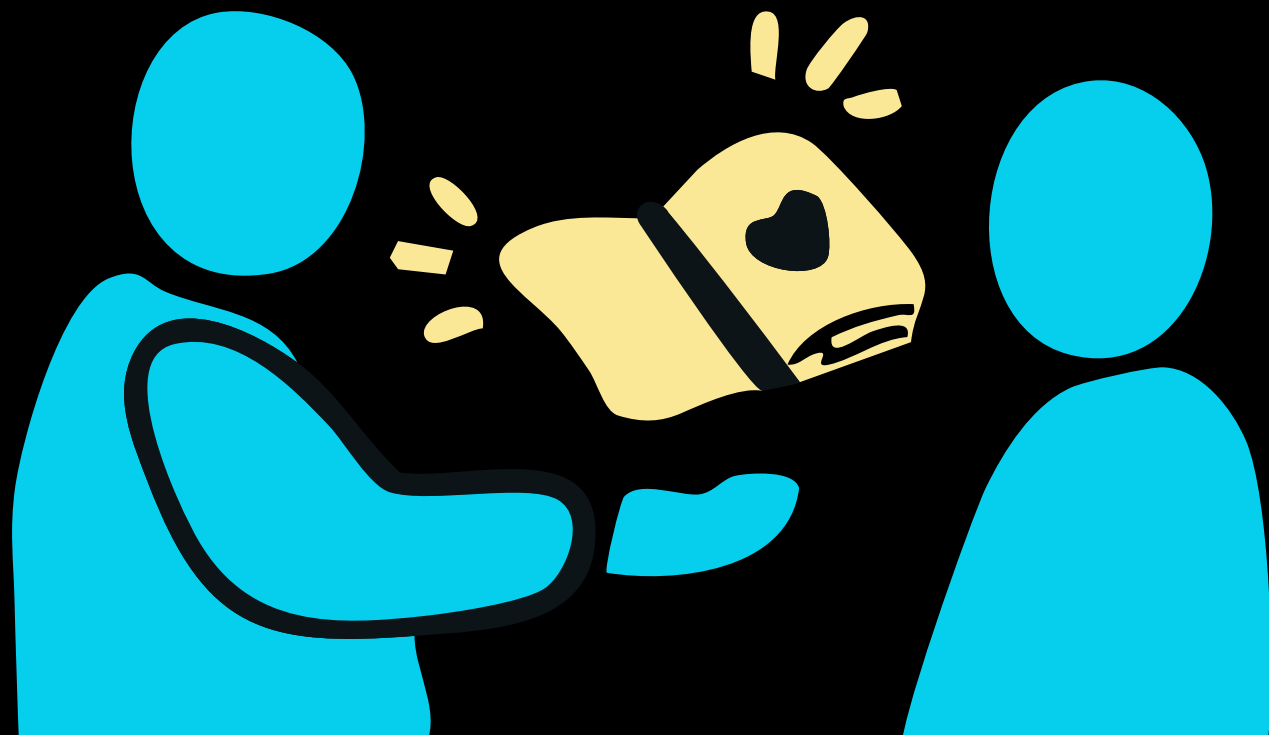
The group decided to create this resource to share their learning with funders and the sector.

It has some 'Calls to Action' which we hope will spark debate, increase knowledge and ethical practice and ultimately improve inclusive lived experience employment practice for the benefit of all.

Welcome to our journey.

CHAPTER 1

Cause and Effect



CAUSES

of insufficient support include:

HR departments

Smaller organisations don't have the resources to have full HR departments and the HR processes and policies we do have often fail to take into account the reality of people's lives and can be incompatible with our values.

Stigma

There is still a stigma against advocacy for your mental health and taking time off when needed. This avoidance and fear attached to the negative perceptions delays people's ability to fully recover.

Demand being almost always greater than capacity

The demand for support from your service beneficiaries doesn't stop when your employees take time off.

Funding

Smaller organisations compete with larger organisations for funding and can struggle in relation to their actual core costs of employing higher numbers of staff with lived experience. Larger organisations often have fewer employees with lived experience.

In order to win bids, smaller organisations are somewhat forced to claim the same % as larger organisations for core 'support and recovery costs' to avoid funding rejection or withdrawal, despite bearing a disproportionately greater cost.

Sick leave

If employees need time off, smaller organisations can't afford to pay their full-time-wage whilst they wait for their Statutory Sick Pay to kick in. Many people simply can't afford to have unpaid time-off so are somewhat forced to continue working through tiredness/triggering/re-traumatisation. Ultimately delaying their recovery.





EFFECTS

of insufficient support include:

Overworking

We are forced to continue.

There is no room to stop and pause because the demand for our services are constant, and are often greater than our capacity.

Burnout

Overworking, particularly during times of need, leads to burnout of both our employees and the senior leaders who tend to take on the overflow of extra work.

Sourcing money from other pots

To support our teams in states of burnout and need, particularly in the case of an emergency, we have to use what we have access to. If we don't have sufficient or flexible funding, we will have no choice but to sometimes use money from our (dwindling) reserves which can cause a knock on effect to our financial stability.

Talented staff leave organisations

Leaving the industry to repeat it's mistakes

**What can
we do
differently?**

CHAPTER 2

New approaches



PEER SUPPORT

Build spaces for staff to connect, build community and support each other

Foster team relationships

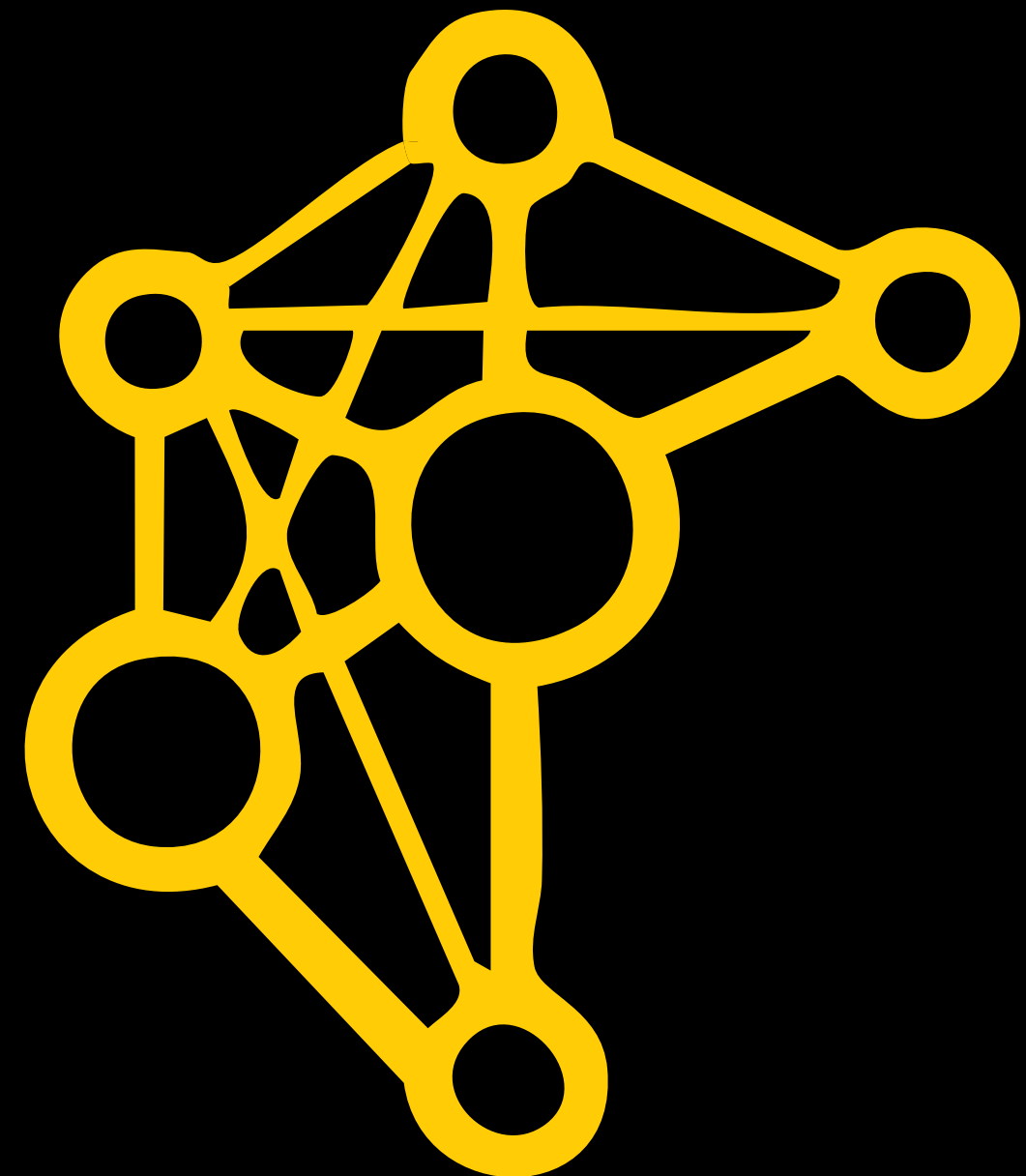
- Prioritise time for team to connect and build relationships
- Invite peers from cross-sectors

With and without senior staff

- Hold discussion groups and support spaces with and without senior staff
- Question the impact of having leaders and managers present in peer-purpose spaces
- Create dedicated support spaces for leaders and managers

Different formats

- Host online and in-person
- Tailor support and supervision to the needs of the individual



FUNDING

Provide more cost-reflective budgets and contingency funding

Budget for preventative and trauma responsive support

- Build in Wellbeing Funds in grant applications for all staff (and community collaboratives if appropriate) when applying for grants
- Incorporate a 'Lived Experience Levy' specific for LEx preventative and trauma responsive support
- Facilitate access to therapy and other external health support

Build pause and rest into everyday operations and overall strategy

- Timeout spaces
- Wellbeing weeks and time off
- Incorporate EDI assessments of mental health and chronic illness etc.



Contingency for flexible leave and sick pay

- Help staff to prioritise their recovery and return to work with increased budgets for staff absence and sickness
- Provide flexible occupational sick pay instead of statutory sick pay to support different health needs (eg. chronic illnesses and mental health)
- Establish more nuanced policies to cover different eventualities

Feedback to funders

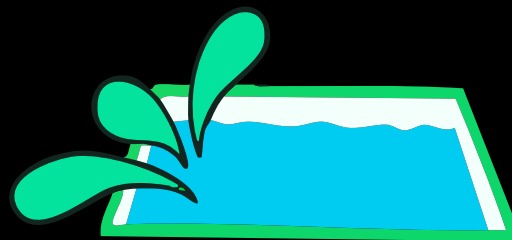
Share feedback, impact and learning regularly with funders



HR

Establish more human-centred and LEx HR practices, policies and processes:

Pool resources



- Establish a central, specialist HR support that multiple organisations with lived experience staff can access

Make policies and processes more appropriate to LEx

- Co-produce HR policies and processes with employees
- Reduce punitive HR practices and make them more appropriate to lived experience staff, for example, ensuring those that do investigations and disciplinary hearings have greater understanding of LEx and occupational health processes.

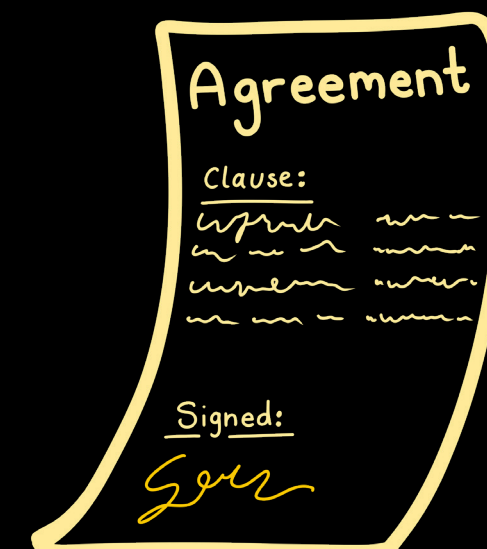


More accessible recruiting processes

- Provide support and flexibility throughout the recruitment process
- Share questions in advance
- In interview, ask specific questions about LEx requirements and allow them to bring a companion
- Consider who is on the interview panel
- Consider offering video applications, real life tasks and working interviews
- Provide health and wellness packs as part of onboarding

Add contract break clauses

- Give an alternative option to resigning and ending contracts



LEX TRAINING

For employees, employers and funders:

Cross-sector placements

- Cross-sector placements to explore new ways of working
- Fellowship programme for a year to enable staff and employer to test the role and learn from experience

Development Programme

- Sector wide development programme and training around LEx for funders and employers.
- Create a shared values and principles framework.



Training Programme

- LEx specific training for managers, that includes trauma informed approaches and is lived experience led, in addition to generic management training.



Map showing a summary of the ideal employee life cycle for staff with lived experience:

Job description and application process

- Focusing on accessibility at the start.
- Better communicate the opportunity in job descriptions.
- Encourage potential applicants to apply by providing support and flexibility throughout the process.
- Advertise role in appropriate places.
- Consider paid training opportunities to invest in future workforce.

Interviewing

- Ask specific questions about lived experience requirements.
- Make the interview as accessible as possible with questions in advance.
- Consider who is on the interview panel.

Induction to the organisation

- Investing in time to build connection.
- Clear, assessable onboarding.
- Support to deal with role transition and change.

Training and mentoring

- Providing mentoring and ongoing support for senior staff to build skills in managing staff with lived experience
- Allow 10% of time for personal development
- Allow time both insourced and outsourced training.

Career progression

- Identify transferable skills to take on other roles and jobs, offer clear career progression

Moving on

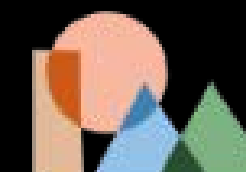
Care and support

- Well-being policy with resource / budget funded, and wellbeing action plans for all staff.
- Spaces for people to rest after emotional toil and support to help people process their experiences and traumas.
- Greater support for disabled staff and those with MH issues to have flexible work structures in policy and practice.



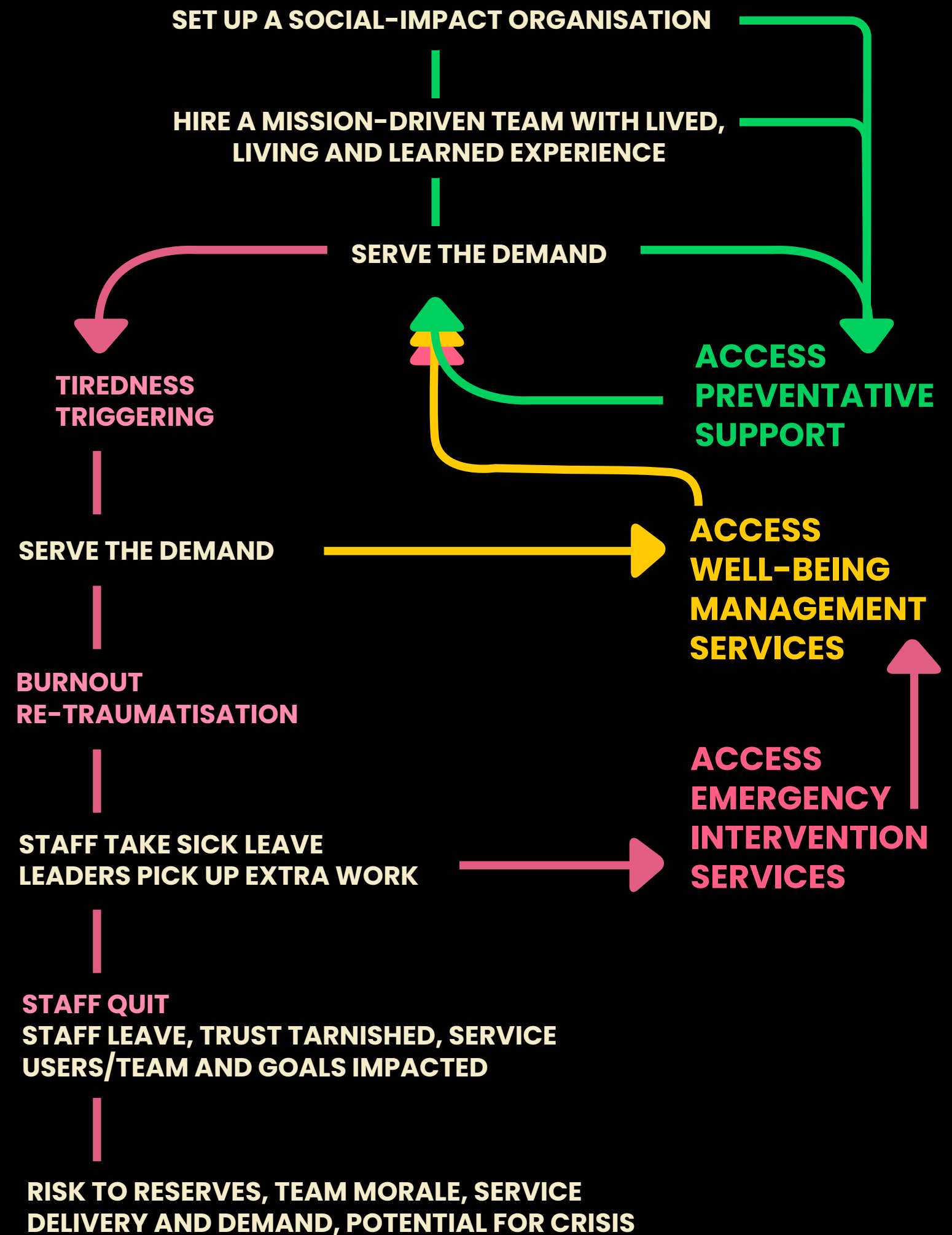
[Click to view in full](#)

place
matters



Here is a map showing the ideal placement of support:

Visualised by Lizzies Lines



To help Funders understand our contexts and the need for improved support to grantees of LEx led organisations, we held a Funders Convening Event to share our learnings.

CHAPTER 3

Funder Convening Event

26th Sept 2024



Several powerful points of reflection were raised by and for funders to rethink, including:

PREVENT
rather than **REACT**

**EMBED
BETTER PRACTICE**
It shouldn't be additional

Create
**PSYCHOLOGICAL
SAFETY**

Consider
POWER DISCRETION
Who gets to decide?

Equip people with
**THE CONFIDENCE TO
MAKE MISTAKES**

Some key internal calls to action for funders were:



Do an integrity piece...



Rethink how we measure outcomes



Upskill on lived experience language



Allow projects & research to reveal their own outcomes and impact



Expand the definition of impact



Consider unrestricted funding for lived experience

TO ACHIEVE
DEEPER, INTENTIONAL
INCLUSION

“WE (FUNDERS) NEED TO...
FUND WITH CARE AND
LOOK AT *OURSELVES*.”

Quote from a funder at the convening

VISUAL NOTES

From the Funder Convening by
Lizzies Lines:

Illustrator, designer, visual
communicator for impact-driven
projects: www.lizzieslines.com

[Click to view visual notes enlarged](#)

LIVED EXPERIENCE STAFFING

THE LEARNING JOURNEY

THE FUNDER CONVENING

Visual Notes by lizzies lines

PEER LEARNING GROUP



TO ACHIEVE DEEPER, INTENTIONAL INCLUSION

"WE (FUNDERS) NEED TO...
FUND WITH CARE AND
LOOK AT OURSELVES."

EMBED BETTER PRACTICE
It shouldn't be additional

Do an integrity piece...
Upskill on lived experience language

PREVENT
rather than REACT

Expand the definition of impact
Rethink how we measure outcomes

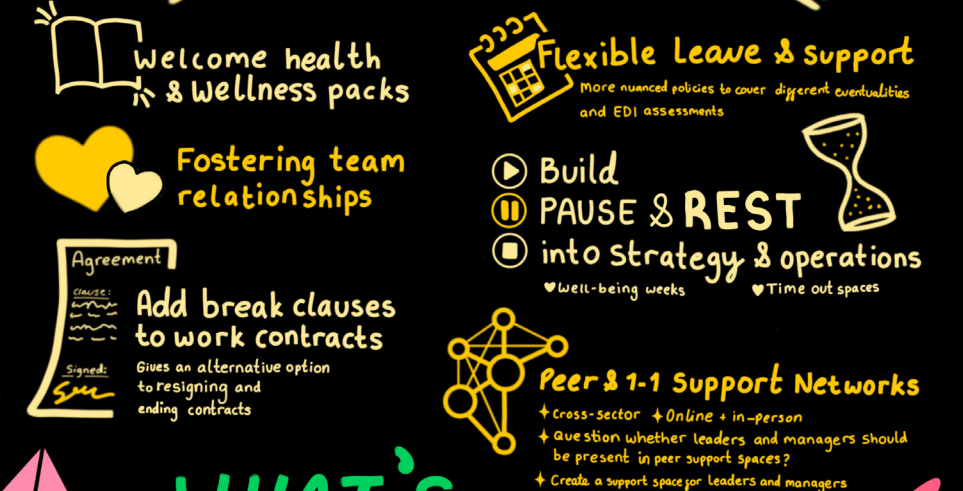
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY
Create

Allow projects & research to reveal their own outcomes and impact
Consider unrestricted funding for lived experience

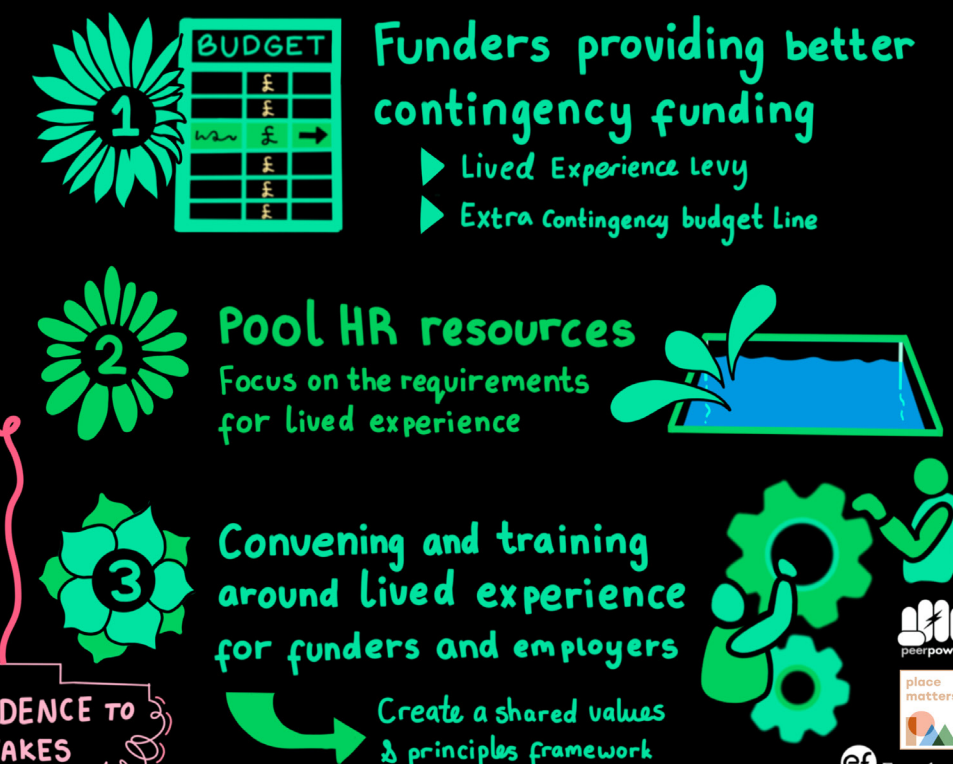
POWER DISCRETION
Consider
Who gets to decide?

Equip people with
THE CONFIDENCE TO MAKE MISTAKES

BETTER PRACTICE



WHAT'S NEXT?



The group reported the cross-sector learning and support through action learning sets were particularly valuable. So much so, **members of the Peer group continue to meet independently as a result of the project.**

Here's what some of them had to say about the Journey:

"My awareness of the issue has increased which is going to inform the way I lead"

"This has greatly reduced my feelings of isolation and sometimes hopelessness"

"[Being with people] outside of my network was invaluable as they brought a new perspective and I could be really open"

"I valued the many supportive comments about being my authentic self, and not being apologetic for my learned experience"

"I'm taking away a determination to build in more time and costs into funding budgets to support lived experience"

"I found the support, solidarity and shared understanding across sectors facing similar challenges and experiences the most valuable"

Together we can

- **Protect the health and well-being of our communities**
- **Prioritise safeguarding**
- **Dismantle workplace barriers**
- **Prevent harm and re-traumatisation**
- **Contribute to a more inclusive sector**

3 things you can do to keep this conversation going

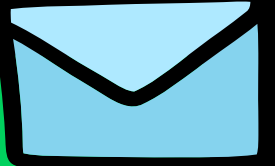
1. Share knowledge

In the comments, recommend resources and share ideas



2. Stay in touch

Email us to get involved, hear about future convenings and keep up to date with this Learning Journey



3. Gather more support

Tag funders, organisations, individuals who need to see this work



Thank you

To every organisation
who bravely and vulnerably
shared their experiences.

To every funder who showed
up, listened and took part at
our funders convening.

To every reader who's
taken the time to educate
themselves and others on
how we can improve the
social-impact sector.



Do stay in touch

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