

Linda Gibbs

CAPITAL Trustee

What is your name and what is your role at CAPITAL?

I'm Linda Gibbs. I am now one of the trustees of Capital, but I've been a member for 15 years plus.

What does CAPITAL Peer Support mean to you?

I used to be a peer support worker, simply because they did so much for me.

I've got a lot to thank Capital for, regarding the peer support work. When everybody and everything else threw me to one side, so to speak, Capital was there, the Capital peer support workers, sorry, were there to pick me up. Why they're not getting the pat on the back, as they should be, I don't know.

How has Peer Support helped your mental health?

They should not be being pushed to one side, that's definite. I've had mental health issues on and off, near enough all my life. And after my family pushed me to one side, of course, I ended up in hospital, and it was there that I met the peers.

Helped me more than any other tablets had, because of the peers I met Capital. And the way peers help are, they've been there, they understand. They'll let you talk and not talk at you, which most doctors do nowadays.

This is how, this is what we're going to do, and this is what's going to help. With peers, they'll talk to the person, listen to the person. And as I say, they were always there.

When I last came out of hospital, I was still talking to the peers that were helping me at the time, and that was how I got into Capital. With the Capital peer support workers, I knew I had to go out of my area, which for me was out of my comfort zone at the time. But I was willing to do that, because there'd be a peer in the office that I could just walk in that door and say, help.

Didn't have to say anything else. There'd be somebody there with a cuddle. There'd be somebody there to let me scream and shout about what the world was, what was and wasn't happening.

They, peers will give you what you need at that time. Doctors don't understand that side of things. I really don't think they do.

Capital have got the best knowledge, because everybody there has been there. In one way or another, they understand what you're going through. And they're honest.

They don't give you the jargon that doctors do, that the other companies do. With Capital, you know you're safe.

How does the uncertainty around Peer Support make you feel?

Honestly, disgusted.

Everybody is saying, peer support workers do a brilliant job. Peer support workers are needed here and there. Co-production, let's all work together.

And then all of a sudden, everything gets taken away from Capital. The peer support workers. I mean, you can't say, well done, you're doing a brilliant job.

By the way, you haven't got a job anymore. That doesn't make sense. As I said, everybody in Capital has got lived in experience.

So everybody there has been through something. A lot of them, like I did, became a peer support worker to be able to give back. We take and take and take, and it's just so nice to give back every now and then.

With, what a lot of people don't, a lot of people that aren't peer support workers don't understand is that being a peer support worker is actually helping both sides. You ask any peer support worker out there, did you get anything from that talk you just had with that person for an hour? And they, 99 times out of 100, they'll say yes. So how can people say, well done, peers are doing a brilliant job, keeping people out of hospitals, helping with this, helping with that.

And then all the funding, but 1%, taken away. I just don't understand. It's pushing the peer support workers to one side.

What would you like to say to Commissioners?

I know they're there to help us with the funding and things like that. Maybe if they were actually to come to some of our groups, talk to some of our peers, talk to some of our members, and find out what that money actually does, maybe then they'd actually be willing to give it again. I mean, yes, it's great that we've got commissioners.

Yes, it's great that we've got funding, but to turn around and say, here it is for X amount of time, but now we're taking it back. You can't say, well, we're giving it because you're doing a good job, but you can't have it to do with the peers. That is the good job we're doing.

Commissioners, if you're willing to give funding and help with other people, come in and actually see what they do. You can't sit in your office and say, oh, you can do this, you can do that. You've got to come and see the people that you're actually helping.

I don't know if all the commissioners have got mental health issues or not. Let's be honest, we've only ever seen one or two of them anyway, but if you, the commissioner, have had a mental health issue or you know somebody that has, maybe if you was to come and see what capital does, maybe then you'd be more willing to put a bit more into peer support work.

Why is lived experience important?

Lived experience is important simply because, well, for me, when I speak to a doctor or somebody like that, they only know what it says in the book.

If I say I've had this, this has been happening, that's been happening, I think it's this, he'll have to look in a book. If I talk to a peer support worker that has been through it, one, they understand the feelings I'm going through and two, if I ask them for support and help, they can actually tell me what is going to be next. You know, we all know mental health is different for every single person out there.

You might all have the same illness, but for every single person it's going to be different. For my experience, that is one thing I think doctors don't see. It's a case of you've got that, so it must be that.

Talk to somebody that's actually been through it and one, one, they can understand your feelings more and two, like I say, they give you the truth. They don't give you what's just in the book. I've said the same to doctors and I'd say it again.

Just because the book you read, the certificates you've got say it's going to be this, this and this, it doesn't work that way with mental health. It affects every single person differently and I'd go for something that I know is a trigger, I'd go to another peer support worker before I went to doctors any day.