

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

Role Profile

Job Title:	Peer Research Assistant
School/Department:	School of Health Sciences, Institute of Mental Health
Job Family and Level:	Research and Teaching Level 4a
Contract Status:	Fixed term (4 ½ years)
Hours of Work:	36.25h per week
Location:	Institute of Mental Health, Jubilee Campus
Reporting to:	NEON Senior Research Fellow and Prof Mike Slade (PI)

Purpose of the Role:

The purpose of this role will be to assist and support the Principal Investigator (Prof Mike Slade) and the NEON Senior Research Fellow with all aspects of the NEON Study.

The National Institute of Health Research (NIHR) has funded the 'Personal experience as a recovery resource in psychosis: Narrative Experiences ONline (NEON)' Study (grant RP-PG-0615-20016) (2017-2022). The NEON Study looks at whether experiencing online stories of personal recovery ('recovery narratives') told by peers improves quality of life for people with psychosis. Recovery narratives involve people describing the understanding they have developed about their mental health problems and their recovery. NEON also looks at whether these narratives can improve the way mental health workers support this client group.

The aim of the NEON study is to use recorded recovery narratives to support the recovery of people experiencing psychosis. The objectives are:

1. To collect recovery narratives from four under-researched groups (n=120), and combine this with existing repositories to create the world's largest collation of recovery narratives about different people's experiences of living with psychosis and their personal recovery.
2. To develop and validate (n=20) a conceptual framework characterising recovery narratives and their benefits to others, identifying which elements of existing and new recovery accounts may best help others
3. To develop (n=40), refine (n=30) and optimise (n=81) an intervention using recorded narratives to benefit people experiencing psychosis. The online self-management tool will match the most hope-promoting narratives to the participant's needs and experiences. We will also assess the practicalities and safety of carrying out a large-scale evaluation.
4. To conduct a definitive randomised controlled trial to assess the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the intervention on current mental health service users experiencing psychosis from across England (n=683). The hypothesis is that participants receiving the narratives intervention will have improved quality of life at one-year follow-up compared with those not receiving the intervention.
5. To develop an online intervention for mental health professionals to increase hopefulness and expectations that recovery is likely for the people with psychosis.

If found effective, NEON could offer a low cost approach that would be delivered nationally, benefitting many people who experience psychosis across the country and saving the NHS money.

The post will involve working with the other NEON researchers (Senior Research Fellow, Research Assistant, Software Engineer, Statistician) to undertake the tasks of the study. The study is supported by a Lived Experience Advisory Panel, an International Advisory Board, and a Programme Steering Committee. Excellent organisational support is available from the Institute of Mental Health and the School of Health Sciences, and the study has a full-time Administrator.

The post-holder will gain substantial experience in a wide range of research methodologies, including qualitative data collection, systematic review and narrative synthesis, manualised intervention development, online trial methodology, standardised measures, and outcome / process / economic evaluation. Data collection will give contact with a range of mental health stakeholders, including people using services, their family / informal carers, clinicians and managers. The post-holder will also obtain transferable skills, including international collaborations, working with people with lived experience of mental illness and recovery, software development, working with a Clinical Trials Unit and Good Clinical Practice. Career development support will be offered, including involvement in writing academic papers. (Each of the three researchers in equivalent roles to this position in Prof Slade's last Programme Grant – REFOCUS (see www.researchintorecovery.com/refocus) (2009-2014) – obtained a PhD and was co-author on 25 academic publications.)

An essential requirement for this research post is lived experience of mental illness and recovery, whether personal or from supporting a family member / friend. We intend to recruit someone who is looking to develop as a peer-researcher, i.e. to use their lived experience and research skills, and support for the role will be available from the NEON PPI Lead (Dr Vanessa Pinfold, McPin Foundation). Applicants for this post are encouraged to also apply for the other NEON Research Assistant post (which has a similar job content with the difference that lived experience is a Desirable not Essential characteristic), as applications to the two NEON Research Assistant posts will be considered separately.

The post will be of particular interest to people wishing to pursue a PhD related to the study, and active support for a part-time PhD will be available. Applicants who have relevant academic experience outside of mental health services and who wish to develop a career as a mental health service researcher may also be interested, as may people ultimately wishing to develop a clinical or especially a clinical academic role. The ideal candidate will have a strong commitment to recovery and be able to show evidence of interest in research and the ability to engage creatively and productively with mental health service users, workers and managers.

The post-holder will join the School of Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. The post is located in the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), which is a partnership between University of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, to promote research excellence and its implementation in health and social care. The IMH currently manages £37.6 million in external research grants, with over 100 PhD students, and publication of 400 peer-reviewed journal papers per year. The recovery research team at IMH is led by Prof Slade, with a focus on developing theoretically-defensible and empirically-tested approaches to supporting recovery in mental health, using mixed-methods research designs and developing new measures (see researchintorecovery.com). The team co-ordinates the international Recovery Research Network (established 2009, n=550 members from 20 countries) and organises the *Refocus on Recovery* conferences, the field's largest regular scientific meeting on recovery.

Main Responsibilities	
1.	To conduct and analyse semi-structured interviews with people who are under-served by mental health services (e.g. refugees, people with substance abuse or homelessness problems) (n=30) and people working in statutory or voluntary roles for which lived experience is a requirement (e.g. peer support workers, peer trainers, living library members) (n=30).
2.	To collate evidence (e.g. using systematic review methodology) and contribute to the development of a conceptual framework characterising recovery narratives and their benefits to others.

3.	To validate the conceptual framework through semi-structured interviews with mental health service users (n=20).
4.	To contribute to develop a model of causal assumptions (e.g. expressed as a logic model) and intended impact of the intervention.
5.	Working with international collaborators, to contribute to the creation and curating of the world's largest database of recovery narratives.
6.	To contribute to the development of a new online intervention comprising a person-specific matching approach, which will decide the order of narratives to choose from the narrative database for presentation to participants. The machine-learning algorithm will match recipients to narratives, with the intention of maximising positive and minimising negative impact. To contribute to the refinement of the Narratives of Recovery Scale (NORSE), for use in the matching algorithm.
7.	To contribute to the piloting and feasibility testing of the intervention, including cognitive debriefing with service users (n=40), workshops with healthcare professionals (n=30), liaising with experts (n=27), evaluation using think-aloud protocol with service users (n=30) and focus groups with GPs and other clinicians (n=24).
8.	To contribute to all aspects of the design, management and data collection for an online randomised controlled trial (n=683), including outcome, process and economic evaluation.
9.	To support the development of develop a parallel narrative-based online learning intervention for mental health professionals.
10.	To contribute to the production of research reports and publications, and to support knowledge mobilisation activities, e.g. <i>Refocus on Recovery 2017</i> [see researchintorecovery.com/ror2017] and the Recovery Research Network (see researchintorecovery.com/rnn)
11.	To continue to develop skills in and knowledge of research methods and techniques and contribute to the development of/or choice of techniques, models, methods, critiques and approaches.
12.	To build relationships with internal and external contacts to develop knowledge and understanding and form relationships for future collaborations.
13.	To work in conjunction with others in the research team in order to achieve objectives and deadlines of the research project.
14.	Any other duties appropriate to the grade, as directed by Prof Slade or the Senior Research Fellow.

Knowledge, Skills, Qualifications & Experience

	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications/ Education	Good first degree or equivalent in a relevant social science or health related discipline (2:1 or higher).	Clinical qualification Relevant postgraduate qualification, e.g. Masters.
Skills/Training	Expertise in research design and knowledge of many of the research methods to be used. Experience of conducting qualitative interviews. Experience of using standardised measures. Ability to interact sensitively and professionally with people who use, work in and manage mental health services.	Familiarity with academic environments. Expertise in using software packages for qualitative and quantitative data analysis, such as NVivo and SPSS. Demonstrable evidence of high quality writing for academic and practitioner audiences, with evidence of ability to publish at national level (to include conference and working papers).

	<p>Proficiency in IT (Word, Excel, database use).</p> <p>Excellent oral and written communication skills, including the ability to communicate with clarity on complex information and the ability to speak with credibility to both academic and non-academic audiences.</p> <p>Analytical ability to facilitate conceptual thinking, innovation and creativity.</p> <p>Ability to build relationships and collaborate with others, internally and externally.</p>	
Experience	<p>Personal experience of mental illness, its impact (on self or others) and of recovery.</p> <p>Experience of analysing qualitative and quantitative data.</p> <p>Experience and knowledge of health research and health care systems.</p>	Experience of mental health services research.
Statutory/Legal	<p>Ability to work autonomously and exhibit initiative.</p> <p>Able to manage own workload.</p> <p>Highly organised, able to work effectively on a complex project and prioritise tasks.</p> <p>Able to work well in a team.</p> <p>Strong motivating and influencing skills.</p> <p>A genuine interest in recovery, mental health and mental health services</p> <p>Career goals which demonstrate motivation for a mental health research or clinical-academic role.</p>	Motivated to undertake a PhD



The University of Nottingham strongly endorses Athena SWAN principles, with commitment from all levels of the organisation in furthering women's careers. It is our mission to ensure equal opportunity, best working practices and fair policies for all.