



Being a Peer Mentor with Birmingham Mind

Birmingham Mind, strives to place lived mental health experience at the heart of what we do. One of the most impactful ways we've done this is through the employment of Peer Mentors. With the appointment of a dedicated Peer Mentor Manager, we've been able to expand this initiative, investing in more Peer Mentors across more of our services.

Ben's Story

We recently sat down with Ben, a music graduate, who joined Birmingham Mind as a Peer Mentor in June 2024.

For those unfamiliar with the term, Peer Mentor, Ben explains:

"A Peer Mentor has their own lived experience of mental health, and shares that experience with others to inform, provide hope, and walk alongside individuals in their recovery journey."



After graduating from university in 2021, I faced a significant decline in my mental health.

"I was in a dark place, experiencing extreme feelings of anxiety, hopelessness and being lost. I hadn't worked for a while, but after three years of navigating my own mental health, I felt ready to look for work again."

I didn't have a clear career direction but knew that I needed an employer where my mental health would be understood and supported. It was my mum who came across a social media post about the Peer Mentor role at Birmingham Mind. Though unsure of what the role might involve, I decided to attend an informal information session at the Bullring Wellbeing Hub.

After months of staying home, attending that session was a huge accomplishment for me. Meeting Danielle (Peer Mentor Manager) and learning more about the role, I felt it might be the perfect fit. Danielle offered both full-time and part-time positions. I applied for a part-time role, a stepping stone back into the world of work.



"I had never put so much effort into any job application before."

I was invited to an interview. I tried not to get my hopes up, but when Danielle called to offer me the role, I was so grateful for the opportunity.

The onboarding and induction process were managed brilliantly. I was able to be open about both my historic and current mental health conditions. Danielle supported me every step of the way, particularly in learning how to set boundaries for myself and deciding how much of my own experience I was comfortable sharing with others.

I was placed within the newly established Intensive Community Rehabilitation Team (ICRT), supporting individuals as they transitioned from hospital back into the community. From day one, I was made to feel incredibly welcome and valued. My caseload built up quickly, and I found that I was often supporting service users who were less engaged socially, often younger males, who I felt able to connect with.

Peer Mentors work in harmony with Recovery Navigators, offering unique value by drawing from their own lived experiences as part of the care plan. We can see service users as frequently as two or three times a week. This frequency gives us the space to be active listeners and validate a person's feelings through shared experiences, without the barrier of clinical formalities. Many of the people I support struggle with social isolation and disconnection.

"People often hope to feel better before taking action, but sometimes, I try to reframe that, as it can be taking the action that helps them begin to feel better."

Over weeks and months, and sometimes even longer, I am able to build trusted relationships with the adults I support. A typical support session may begin with a board game and lead to a walk in the park, a kick about with a football or a trip to the local shops.

"I can relate to the difficulty of not wanting to leave the house, that shared understanding helps build trust."

Over weeks and months, and sometimes even longer, I am able to build trusted relationships with the adults I support. A typical support session may begin with a board game and lead to a walk in the park, a kick about with a football or a trip to the local shops.

Service users can express worries about medication or treatment. Speaking to someone who has firsthand experience, who has taken and continues to take medication, can break down the stigma and anxiety around mental health medication.

After six months, I felt ready to increase my working hours. By nine months I moved into a full-time Peer Mentor role.



"Becoming a Peer Mentor with Birmingham Mind is the best decision I've ever made. All the pain I went through and now being able to use my experience to help others is incredibly rewarding and supports my own recovery too. I've come so far in the last 12 months. When I look back at those difficult years, it feels like a bad dream from a lifetime ago."

In June 2025, after 12 months as a Peer Mentor, Ben was successfully appointed as Deputy Service Manager for the ICRT.

Ben's story is a powerful testament to the value of lived experience and the profound impact Peer Mentors can have, not only on the people we support, but on their own journey of growth and recovery. His path reflects the transformative potential of inclusive employment and the power of hope in action.

The Intensive Community Rehabilitation Service (ICRT) is delivered in partnership with the [Birmingham & Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust](#). Our team of Recovery Navigators work alongside Peer Mentors to support individuals transitioning out of hospital, providing support at home and in their local community.