

"I have had to overcome my own mental health challenges so helping others understand their own health has always been passion of mine which is reflected in my career."

Jason was a previous service user of the Early Intervention Service. He was thrilled to be offered a job as their first peer support worker because he saw it as a chance to give back.

Jason Grant-Rowles

Peer Coach and Trauma Informed Collaborative Lived Experience Practitioner

Employer or university

Islington

Salary range

Band 5 (£25,000 - £30,000)



How I got into the role

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I have had to overcome my own mental health challenges so helping others understand their own health has always been passion of mine which is reflected in my career.

I worked as a mental health community partner for the Department of Work and Pensions, which involved training job centre staff on supporting people with their mental health. I also worked as a research associate at the University of Manchester looking at the inequalities within severe mental illness.

When I heard about the opportunity to work in the Early Intervention Service as their first-ever peer support worker, I was technically out of work due to the pandemic. I applied and I was successful. It was fantastic moment in my life especially as I had previously been a user of the service and it offered me the opportunity to give something back.

What I do

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I work closely with people with mental health problems to co-create goals related to their health and then use active listening, empathy, and effective communication to help them. Their goals vary as no two people are the same. Some people just want to be able to get out of bed or visit their local park or library. Others want to manage their symptoms or practice self-care. Some want to get into volunteering, education, or employment.

Broadly, I help people access information and making referrals to services that can help them. I work as part of a multidisciplinary team including psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and many others.

A major part of my role is triage, where I look at the referrals, gather information and decide on the best course of action for the individual I am just trying to help.

I also work with the team at the Trauma Informed Collective to ensure that NHS staff understand the impact of trauma on someone's life. We also develop policy and strategy, deliver training, talk to teams and services, and facilitate meetings.

I very rarely have a typical day. As well as offering people support in person, online or over the phone, there's also the administrative side of the role such as updating records booking in appointments and meetings to discuss. Not forgetting to have some lunch at some point!

The best bits and challenges

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I love working with people out in the community. I spend my days in coffee shops, parks, libraries, museums, galleries, and community centres to encourage, empower and support people using our services.

The range of training opportunities is also a real bonus. As well as all the mandatory training offered by the NHS, I have completed the Peer Support Worker training which I was able to do on the job. I have also done training in Personal Medicine Coaching and Motivational Interviewing.

I am also lucky to have got involved with Mental Health Research for All (MH-ALL) ^[1], a three-year research programme led by the National Institute of Health and Care Research's Applied Research Collaboration North Thames ^[2] (NIHR ARC North Thames). The MH-ALL scheme has been a very positive learning experience. I have access to fantastic resources, courses, and seminars to enhance my research knowledge and skills. I can also connect with other researchers who are passionate about what they do and always willing to share their expertise with me.

People face real challenges in their everyday life. Many are outside of my control such as issues with criminal justice, addictions, employment, benefits, and housing. Some are unique to the individual such as domestic violence and loneliness. This can have a real impact on their mental health, and it can be challenging when trying to help find solutions to people's problems.

Life outside work

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I have a variety of interests and passions. I like dancing and lifting weights. I enjoy cooking, reading, playing Sudoku, and spending time with family and friends. This is all really important for my own health and to strike the necessary work/life balance.

Career plans and top tips for others

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I want to further develop knowledge, skills, and experience so I can get the confidence to apply for PhD programmes and ultimately work towards a career in research practice.

As for tips, if you like working with people, want to make a real difference, and have lived experience of mental health, I would say that you should become a peer support worker. You can really see how you can improve people's lives in what you do.

Source URL:<https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/psychological-therapies/roles-psychological-therapies/peer-support-worker/real-life-story-jason-grant-rowles>

Links

[1] <https://www.arc-nt.nihr.ac.uk/research/projects/mental-health-research-for-all/> [2] <https://www.arc-nt.nihr.ac.uk/>