

## **‘Peer support by Another Name’**

A workshop with Sound Minds

The workshop started with showing a short film about our BaME focused ‘Canerows’ Peer Support project, based at Sound Minds. The film included contributions from Melba Wilson OBE, former Lead for Delivering Race Equality, writer and former psychiatrist Suman Fernando, and Survivor Researcher Jayasree Kalathil. **View the [film here](#).**

Contributors to the film expressed concerns that ‘Peer Support’ is being commandeered and commodified by the NHS as just another ‘unit of healthcare delivery’. In some areas peer support is now only deemed worthy of the name when it is delivered one to one from within a health team.

The film makes a clear point that the naturally evolving social foundations of peer support are being disregarded. This is a loss felt particularly by people from BaME backgrounds where community and mutual obligation is more highly valued.

The film outlined the elements of Canerows and how the service helps to build community:

- A weekly Ward Visiting service including a bespoke accredited training, and consultation with in patients
- Mama Lows Kitchen, a one day user led drop in running from a local community centre
- A post discharge support project linked to the Ward Visiting
- Regular ‘Have Your Say’ consultation and social events

Canerows was formed 6 years ago because of local concerns about BaME over representation in hospital mental health services. We then went on to talk about the particular evolution of both Sound Minds and the conditions which helped nourish and grow Canerows. Sound Minds has been a user led charity for more than 20 years, and over that time a culture has grown where people using the studios in Battersea move on to share their skills with others, formally in a paid way, and also less formally.

Sound Minds is arts based, and many people come with a background in this. The shared mental health issues are important, but valuing creativity is probably what binds people together more. Playing music together was the starting point for Coral, Devon and James, who drove for the formation of Canerows, and they still play together in the Channel One Band.

Skills shared at Sound Minds are: Singing lessons, film camerawork, ICT, web design, art and printmaking, music and instrument tuition, songwriting, cooking

In summary the main points were:

- Building and valuing ‘community’ is an important aspect of creating the conditions for peer support
- Helping others by sharing skills is also peer support.

We then broke into 4 groups to consider:

- How do you currently ‘build community’ in your peer support?
- What more could you do to build community?
- How do you currently share skills in your peer support?
- What more could you do to share skills?