



**Role:** 2 x Peer Development Facilitators

**Hours:** Each role will be 1 day per week (7.5 hours), including evenings and occasional weekends where necessary.

**Salary:** £24,000 - £28,000 Pro-Rata

**Contract Term:** 12 months fixed contract (with possibility of extension & increase of hours dependent upon funding)

**Annual Leave:** 25 days pro-rata plus public holidays.

**Based at:** Ow Bist (FVAF offices & Community Hub) in Cinderford or Main Place (Mental Health Resource Hub) in Coleford.

**Responsible to:** Mycelium Project Manager

## About Us

Forest Voluntary Action Forum is a support and development agency for voluntary activity and community action in the Forest of Dean. We provide assistance to many of the hundreds of voluntary and community groups in the district who in turn are better able to deliver their work in the local community. Much of our support is in the form of advice, guidance and information as well as advocacy and support for volunteering. As well as this 'core work', we run a number of projects with and for the benefit of local communities.

We strongly believe that through community-led approaches we enable citizens to develop the skills, resiliency and social capital



to live more cohesively with one another, the result of which leads to greater empowerment both individually and collectively in meeting health, well-being and social needs.

In 2022 FVAF were awarded funding from Barnwood Trust to facilitate the My Networks (Mycelium) mental health project. This landmark funding has been designed to develop better mental health provision in the Forest of Dean over a three year period. The project has so far facilitated an acclaimed Community Based Participatory Action Research Project. This led to the publication of a survey, an extensive report on the state of mental health support in the FoD and a guidance paper on co-production and our methods. The Mycelium project has since sought to respond to the findings in this scoping project by responding with interventions that seem to address the specific issues identified. As a result we have in the past two years pioneered the development of peer mentoring, locality based mental health support, we have led on VCS and lived experience involvement in the Community Mental Health Transformation and have successfully trialled a locality based Community of Practise (for professionals and volunteers) weekly recovery education sessions (in a locale) and a resource hub based above the library in Coleford. This has all been part of identifying and delivering infrastructure support that enables the voluntary sector and NHS staff to form links, collaborate and become more confident responding to the increased complexity and acutely experienced mental health conditions that people are recently presenting to their systems, services and groups.

## **The Role**

FVAF has developed significantly over recent years and our Mycelium Project has grown considerably as a result. The demand for high quality community provision continues to grow and we aspire to build the capacity within communities to rise to the challenge. Mycelium's focus for the coming year will be to develop systems and structures for peer advocacy, peer support and peer mentoring that can be relevant, responsive and can position us to access ongoing funding beyond the life cycle of the Barnwood funded My Networks project.

## **What will you be doing?**

You will facilitate Peer Advocacy, Peer Mentoring & Peer Development opportunities for individuals over the age of 16 who are currently experiencing, or at risk of developing, mental health challenges. You will work with individuals, groups and organisations living or working in the Forest of Dean.

### **Offering 1 to 1 support. Working with individuals**

You will be supporting people to understand and respond to social care needs or health conditions and help them to cope with situations that are causing emotional distress.

You will use peer advocacy and peer mentoring principals to help people to develop a 'recovery practise' that enables them to get back up after a crisis or travel safely through a difficult period.

You will be supporting people to find information and build confidence as they begin to identify, navigate and try out the wellbeing and self help resources that are available in the local community.

You will be supporting people to navigate the complexities of recovery from a health condition, from mental illness, trauma or addiction and will help them to understand their rights. You will help people to raise their voice about what is important to them.

Peer advocacy will work on up to three specific community advocacy issues at a time. Peer mentoring will offer a flexible, 'light touch' yet responsive open access support. You will build partnerships with individuals with mental health challenges and remain 'in the background' as a wrap around support that attempts to respond to peoples unique circumstances and complex needs whilst linking them in with the best advice and expertise available to them.

You will be proficient at negotiating appropriate boundaries with partners and will 'walk alongside' them safely as they explore the options and advice made available to them.

You will help people to access specialist support and gain advice from the best expertise available to them, you will then support them to understand, choose between and explore the options opened up to them by that advice.

## **Project Support. Working with individuals to develop groups and organisations**

You will help individuals who are further along in their recovery to develop an idea, a workshop, a group or a project that has arisen from out of their situation or lived experience of disability.

You will link partners into wider FVAF support, training, information, supervision and help to create a support structure around them that enables them to turn their awareness into a skill that can benefit others in the local community.

You will help projects, groups and organisations develop their co-production strategies and will be a point of contact with transformed mental health services and the wider mental health, VCS and social care supports.

You will help lived experience practitioners, peer workers and staff who are working in the VCS (and in local health and social care settings) to use their lived experience of illness or mental distress in a way that is safe, effective and compassionate for both themselves and the people they are supporting.

You will help volunteers & other professionals to stay well and practise self-care whilst working and using their lived experience to help others who are going through the complexities of a life lived with health conditions.

## **Main Tasks**

- Peer development & peer advocacy casework that supports individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges to develop a personal 'recovery and wellbeing practise' or build the confidence and skills to set up a group or project that supports others who in turn are struggling with their own mental health challenges.

- Support the good governance, sustainability, and strategic direction of Mycelium's peer development provision.
- Effectively support a team of advocates, activists and lived experience practitioners to develop a countywide advice and advocacy system and/or Forest community based peer support projects, peer advocacy groups & lived experience practises.
- Grow local leadership and community capacity with individuals who have experience of health & disability advocacy, activism or who have grown their own unique lived experience of managing mental health difficulties.
- Support those who you are working with through 1 to 1 sessions, recovery planning supported volunteering, training, accessing information & advice and choosing between the options available to them. Helping people to develop their own support and peer networks.
- Develop, model and demonstrate best practice alongside other staff, volunteers, and community members.
- Assist the Mycelium project manager where appropriate in the development of the service.
- Resolutely oversee operational compliance with the fundamentals of risk management, data analysis and frontline delivery planning.
- Support voluntary and community groups with their own development, including with relevant governance, policies, and best practice.
- Be a strong advocate and ally to individuals experiencing mental health challenges, their carers and professionals working in both the NHS and the voluntary sector across a number of influential strategic platforms.
- Develop and maintain networking, training, mentoring and development opportunities.
- Carry out and oversee the supervision, monitoring, reporting and evaluation for a variety of mental health and wellbeing related projects.
- Work with other agencies to encourage their appropriate action and intervention in building stronger communities for the benefit of individuals experiencing mental health challenges and their communities.
- Continue to identify, support, and utilise community assets where possible.
- Work with local professionals, emerging systems and organisations including public health leads, Locality Community Partnerships, Police, Community hubs & cafes, Social Prescribers, Psychologists and Care Navigators etc. to raise awareness of services and support and signpost into them, where necessary.
- Be able to commit to following local safeguarding procedures and reporting any concerns to the Mycelium project lead and/or the lead for safeguarding concerns within FVAF.
- Contribute to the overall aims of the charity, including any necessary data capturing, good news stories and funding applications.
- Promote the profile and ethos of Mycelium & FVAF across the Forest of Dean and beyond.

## Job / Person Specification

Forest Voluntary Action Forum considers it to be essential that the post holder has the following skills, knowledge and experience:

### Skills

The ability to build positive and productive relationships with community organisations, professionals, colleagues, individuals with complex emotional needs and families.

Excellent communication skills (both verbal and written) and the ability to communicate and present to a variety of audiences.

Strong organisational skills.

A positive proactive approach and ability to generate creative and innovative solutions.

The ability to inspire and motivate others and earn trust.

A proven ability to build strong partnerships and foster collaborative ways of working.

A flexible approach to work and commitment to going the extra mile.

Confidence in dealing with safeguarding concerns in a proactive manner.

A can-do proactive attitude with the ability to respond positively to new situations.

Confident user of a wide array of IT software, including databases, and MS Office applications.

The ability to lead by example and model best practise in peer development, peer advocacy and community coproduction.

### Knowledge

An existing knowledge of mental health provision in the Forest of Dean & some knowledge of specialist support available in wider Gloucestershire.

An understanding of the barriers that might prevent people from engaging with their local community and vice versa.

Recognition of the flexibility required in such a role and a commitment to sometimes working weekends and evenings if required.

An understanding of best practice in and the principals underpinning peer development & co-production in mental health and recovery services.

Experience of working with individuals with mental health challenges from either a person centred or a narrative positionality and confidence in reflecting upon these ways of working.

## **Experience & Qualifications**

A combination of both professional **and** personal experience of disability, mental distress and/or experience as a carer for someone who has had to navigate social and health care systems.

3 or more years working or volunteering with individuals who experience mental health challenges

Proven success building effective and positive relationships within organisations and with partners and stakeholders in the public, private and voluntary sector.

Experience of articulating learning and applying this to drive change and improvement.

A track record of applying the principles of peer development and/or community coproduction.

A full driver's license with access to a vehicle if required.

FVAF are committed to ensuring that significant levels of support and training will be provided to the successful candidate.

All duties must be carried out in compliance with the Forest Voluntary Action Forum Equality and Diversity Policy.

FVAF is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults with care and support needs. FVAF expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. For this reason the successful candidate will be subject to robust recruitment and selection processes including an enhanced DBS check and satisfactory references.

## **How to apply**

FVAF will only accept applications for this post using the application form at the following link [www.fvaf.org.uk/jobs](http://www.fvaf.org.uk/jobs)

A CV may be submitted alongside it, however a CV on its own will not be accepted.

Please send completed application forms and a covering letter detailing why you are the right person for the role to: Mycelium Mental Health Manager Simon Price at [simon@fvaf.org.uk](mailto:simon@fvaf.org.uk)

For more information about the role contact Simon Price at [simon@fvaf.org.uk](mailto:simon@fvaf.org.uk)

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: Midnight 31 August 2024**