**Invitation to Join the Service User Experts by Experience Group**

**Supporting** **the VSCE Paid Workforce: An Action Research Study**

**A collaboration between researchers at the University of Sheffield and Leeds Beckett University**

**We invite you to join our Service User Experts by Experience group** to inform and influence a research project about improving professional and wellbeing support for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) employees whose role involves delivering health and wellbeing-related support to clients. By health and wellbeing support roles, we mean roles such as Social Prescribing Link Workers, Health and Wellbeing Coaches, Care coordinators, and other personalised care roles, as well as Community Development Workers and Youth Workers.

Experts by experience are people who have received support at any time from VCSE organisations providing health and wellbeing support who could use their experience to guide the research project.

**About the Research Project**

The project focuses on understanding how we can better support paid staff working for VCSEs to improve their wellbeing and stay in their roles. We are doing this research because people who access VCSE services find it difficult when their workers leave. Helping staff feel supported and stay in their role will improve VCSE services.

We will do the research by co-designing professional and wellbeing support (such as training, peer networks or accreditation) to suit six VCSE organisations over 21 months. Organisations will pilot the professional or wellbeing support. The research project team will evaluate whether professional or wellbeing support can be delivered and whether it helps staff.

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

Further information about the study is available at: [**https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR159286**](https://fundingawards.nihr.ac.uk/award/NIHR159286)

**Joining the Service Users Experts by Experience Group**

We are looking for people who currently use or have previously accessed health and wellbeing services delivered by VCSEs, e.g. charities and community groups. For example, you may have been supported by a Health Trainer, attended a support group or accessed social prescribing. We want to recruit a diverse group as your knowledge and experience will be invaluable in guiding the research project.

We are recruiting people based in the UK.

The group will have 6-8 members with different backgrounds.

As part of the group, you will influence the research. They will be integral in deciding what professional or wellbeing support the organisation will test and implement.

**What are the benefits of being a Service Users Expert by Experience Group member?**

* People who join the Expert by Experience Group will be able to utilise their skills and experience to help the research investigate how to improve the working environment for VCSE staff.
* It is a unique opportunity to learn about social research and could strengthen your CV.
* Participating in this project could lead to other opportunities to be involved in research or community activities.

**What would we be asking you to do?**

* Attend seven meetings, each about 90 minutes long, every six months until April 2027. These will be online.
* Attend two virtual stakeholder events to share learning between those involved in the study. Funding will be available for you to attend.
* As a service user, we will pay you £50 per meeting (either in vouchers or bank transfer) as a thank-you for your time.
* **If you currently use any VCSE service, your participation in this study will not be shared with them.**

**How do I become involved?**

Firstly, complete the Expression of Interest form below. We will then contact you to discuss the next steps.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with Sophia Arthurs-Hartnett, Research Associate, University of Sheffield: vcseworkforcestudy@sheffield.ac.uk

**Expression of Interest Form**

Please complete and return this form to vcseworkforcestudy@sheffield.ac.uk to record your expression of interest in being a member of the Experts by Experience group for the VCSE Paid Workforce Research Study

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contact e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a brief description (in bullet points) of why you are interested in being involved (No more than 200 words):

I am interested in hearing more about the project.

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please return the Expression of Interest form to vcseworkforcestudy@sheffield.ac.uk

Alternatively, if you cannot be part of our project at this time but wish to keep up to date with our work, please email us, and we will add you to our project mailing list. Your details will not be used or shared outside this research project.

***Thank you for your interest in the project.***