**Remote peer Mentorship In Osteoarthritis (RaMIgO) Study**

**Volunteer Peer Mentor Role Description**

**Volunteer Position:** Volunteer Peer Mentor

**Reports to:** Study Co-ordinator

**Study background**

Osteoarthritis is a common joint condition mainly affecting older people. Hip and knee osteoarthritis may cause high levels of pain, social isolation and difficulty with daily activities. Osteoarthritis is more common in people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, and its impact is more severe in this group. Health inequalities in osteoarthritis are fuelled by socioeconomic factors such as poorer general health, reduced access to/uptake of health services and digital exclusion. Alternative and better forms of support are needed to support people with osteoarthritis who are experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, a group often underserved by research.

Self-management helps people with osteoarthritis to continue to live well. For example, lifestyle changes can reduce the day-to-day impact of the condition by reducing pain and improving function and mood. Our previous research developed and evaluated a programme that involved training volunteers with osteoarthritis to become ‘peer mentors’ to provide self-management support to others with the condition. Limitations of this research were that most study participants were older, white, well-educated females and the programme was only delivered face-to-face. Wider evidence suggests that the impact of self-management programmes may vary between different groups of people. A tailored, remote peer support intervention would be valuable for people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage who are often underserved by health research, therefore increasing existing health inequalities.

**Overview of the role**

The RaMIgO study aims to develop and evaluate a remote peer support model (volunteer peer mentor) to improve self-management of individuals with OA. Volunteer peer mentors will provide peer-mentorship remotely (either by telephone or video-call) on a weekly basis for a period of around 6 weeks, for around 1 hour per week. Our working definition of a peer mentor is that he/she is usually someone who has a specific condition and has undergone training to be able to provide focused assistance and mentorship to someone with the same condition. The RaMIgO project will train a small group of volunteers to become peer mentors. As a peer mentor your skills and personality will be matched appropriately to an individual living with osteoarthritis of the hip or knee.

**Criteria**

The criteria for this role are that you:

* are living with osteoarthritis of the hip or knee (or both);
* feel that you are disadvantaged because of your finances, education or social circumstances;
* have time to carry out the role;
* agree to maintain confidentiality.

**Key requirements of the role**

* Undertake an enhanced disclosure (DBS) check;
* Attend 2-day RaMIgO training (held remotely or face-to-face);
* Be available to deliver support sessions for a minimum of 1-2 hours per week for at least 6 weeks, ideally supporting 2 or more mentees and being involved for a longer period of 2-5 months;
* Participate in the evaluation of the study (this will involve recording a brief summary about your peer-mentorship sessions);
* Participate in an interview about your experience of being a Peer Mentor (if you wish to);
* Inform the Study Co-ordinator of any concerns about the participant(s) you are providing peer-mentorship to.

**Key skills for the role**

* Be a good listener
* Be able to use your own experience to help others
* Build a sensitive, respectful and caring relationship with study participants
* Be interested in helping people to find ways to solve their problems
* Be understanding rather than judgemental about a person’s situation or circumstances
* Respect the confidentiality of participants at all times
* Establish and maintain appropriate boundaries with participants
* Feel confident in speaking to the research team about any concerns

**What will you gain from this role?**

* You will be helpful in supporting individuals to manage their osteoarthritis;
* You will gain training and support in self-management of osteoarthritis as a long-term condition;
* You will be able to meet new people and use your skills to help them;
* You will have the chance to find out more about services and activities in your local area.

**Payments and support**

You will be able to claim a £20 recognition (thank you) payment for each session you deliver. The recognition payment may affect your financial situation, such as affecting any benefits you receive. You will be free to decline the payments or ask for a smaller amount if you prefer. However, declining payment can still have benefit implications.

**Benefits**

At times, accepting a payment can affect people’s state benefits. If you are receiving benefits, and are concerned about this, then you can find more information here: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-members-of-the-public-considering-involvement-in-research/27372.

**Tax**

If you are paid via the IR35 non-exempt form, the payment will go straight into your bank account. The University of Leeds will not take tax and National Insurance off at source. It’s your responsibility to declare income to HMRC, if necessary. You can find out more information here: https://www.gov.uk/check-if-you-need-tax-return.

Unfortunately, we are not able to offer individual advice about benefits or tax, as people's circumstances differ so much. However, we are happy to provide a letter describing the nature of your involvement and why it is different to employment.

**Other expenses**

As well as offering a recognition payment, we include any out-of-pocket expenses and additional support with Wi-Fi. We can also help with expenses related to care support or communication needs.

**Extra support**

We will arrange any extra support you need to carry out this role, such as providing a training manual, resources and help with digital access. We can provide coaching on using getting digital platforms like Teams and Zoom. You will be offered regular supervision/support meetings or calls with the Study Co-ordinator. This is for support and to exchange information or discuss any concerns regarding participants. We can provide additional support with translation or interpreting.

**Data protection**

We will need to store basic personal details about you if you carry out this role. These will include your name, email address and the financial details we need to pay you. We will store all your personal details on the University of Leeds secure servers in line with the University data protection procedures.

Only people employed by the University who are directly involved in the study / payment process will have access to your personal details, and your details will only be used when essential. More details about the University of Leeds data protection procedures are available at: https://dataprotection.leeds.ac.uk/.

**Research team members**

Professor Gretl McHugh, Professor of Applied Health Research, University of Leeds

Elizabeth Lavender, Study Co-ordinator/Applied Health Researcher, University of Leeds

Dr Amrit Daffu-O'Reilly, Research Fellow, University of Leeds

Dr Anna Anderson, Research Fellow in Qualitative Research, University of Leeds

Dr Heidi Green, Director of Health Research Equity, Couch Health Agency

Professor Mark Conner, Professor of Social Psychology, University of Leeds

Susan Barry, Patient and Public Involvement Co-applicant

Linda Eckersley, Patient and Public Involvement Co-applicant

**Contact details**

If you would like to discuss this role further, please contact Liz Lavender (study co-ordinator) via mskprism@leeds.ac.uk or phone Liz on 07752 562106 or Amrit (research fellow) on 07745 210126

***Thank you for considering becoming a volunteer peer mentor for this study***

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