Six tips on delivering training and induction

1. Start with the basics

As peer researchers will have diverse skills and experiences, group training sessions need to be designed to meet the needs of everyone and be pitched at the right level for all participants. When the researchers started with us, each person had a one to one conversation with their line manager about their individual training needs, to help identify any areas where they felt personal development was needed, or any areas of particular interest that they wanted to learn more about. However, we have found there is value in delivering sessions that provide an overview of topics such as what we mean by social research, and qualitative research methodologies, to ensure a common baseline understanding.

In one peer research project, we asked our research partners to deliver training. They designed a two-day training course covering some basics of qualitative research, and in particular how to do qualitative interviews, our main research method in this project. Later in the project they also provided a workshop on positionality and reflexivity.

In a more recent project we have been fortunate to work with several research partners, some of whom delivered bespoke training for our peer and community research team. One off training sessions were delivered on the following topics:

- introduction to social research
- semi-structured interviews
- focus groups and deliberative workshops
- research ethics.

These sessions were very interactive, with plenty of opportunity for questions and discussion. One of the researchers described the training sessions as ‘co-exchange workshops’. In some ways the discussion parts of the sessions were the most valuable, giving the researchers chance to consider and debate important issues. During the session on research ethics, for example, the participants concluded that there are not necessarily always clear-cut answers to some of the ethical questions, but that it’s crucial to ensure there is a detailed and thoughtful consideration of these, always keeping in mind the principle of avoiding harm to participants.

2. Shadowing is a valuable learning tool

In terms of the process for developing researchers’ interviewing skills, one of the community researchers has described this as a ‘coaching model’. The first interview was led by one of the research managers, with a peer or community researcher shadowing. The second was led by the researcher who

shadowed the first interview, with the research manager supporting. After that, if both the manager and the peer or community researcher felt confident, they undertook solo interviews, with the opportunity to de-brief with a research manager afterwards. You can read some reflections on co-interviewing in parts 1 and 2 of Tesfalem and Vanja's blog 'Initial reflections in peer research'.

3. Offer informal training sessions as the need arises

We've found it helpful to offer informal sessions, delivered internally by research managers, on particular topics as the need has arisen. For example, to support researchers to participate in research dissemination, we ran sessions on writing and delivering presentations. These sessions included the opportunity to practise presenting in front of a friendly and supportive audience and receive constructive feedback. Creative research methods was the topic of a similar informal, internally delivered training session.

4. Allow enough time for induction and corporate personal development

Migration Yorkshire has an induction programme for all new staff. For those unfamiliar with the UK employment context, or perhaps more importantly not used to working for a large office-based organisation, we've found it important to spend time

providing support with unfamiliar systems such as the electronic calendar, annual leave booking system etc. We also provide plenty of opportunities for any new starters to meet colleagues across the rest of the organisation to learn about the work of other teams and make connections. This seemed all the more important because for most of a two year project we have been working remotely for the majority of the time. Like all staff, the researchers have been required to complete mandatory corporate training on themes such as safeguarding and information governance. We have also encouraged them to access other opportunities within the corporate training offer – this is a chance for researchers to pursue non-research topics that may be of interest in terms of future career development, or which help broaden general knowledge and skills.

5. Be flexible about working arrangements

Recognising that people with a migrant background (and possibly more so for those with a forced migration background) face multiple, simultaneous barriers to work and progression, we are as flexible as possible about working arrangements. As a result, all our researchers work part-time, so finding a day of the week that was convenient for everyone to meet collectively was challenging. The ability to meet as a team was important, both for training and development purposes, and for working collaboratively on research projects. Most of the team had chosen Friday as one of their working days, and another team member was flexible enough to move one of their working days

to Friday. In future, if recruiting a team of part-time researchers, we might consider specifying a particular day of the week as one of the required working days, which would have advantages in terms of communication and collaboration, as well as making it easier to arrange training and other meetings and events.

6. Provide a variety of opportunities for developing skills and experience

As well as offering training, we try to ensure that there is a range of opportunities for the Peer and Community Researchers to develop skills. Some of these relate to research, and others are more general. Some examples are given in a separate tool.

Source URL: *https://www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk/six-tips-delivering-training-and-induction*