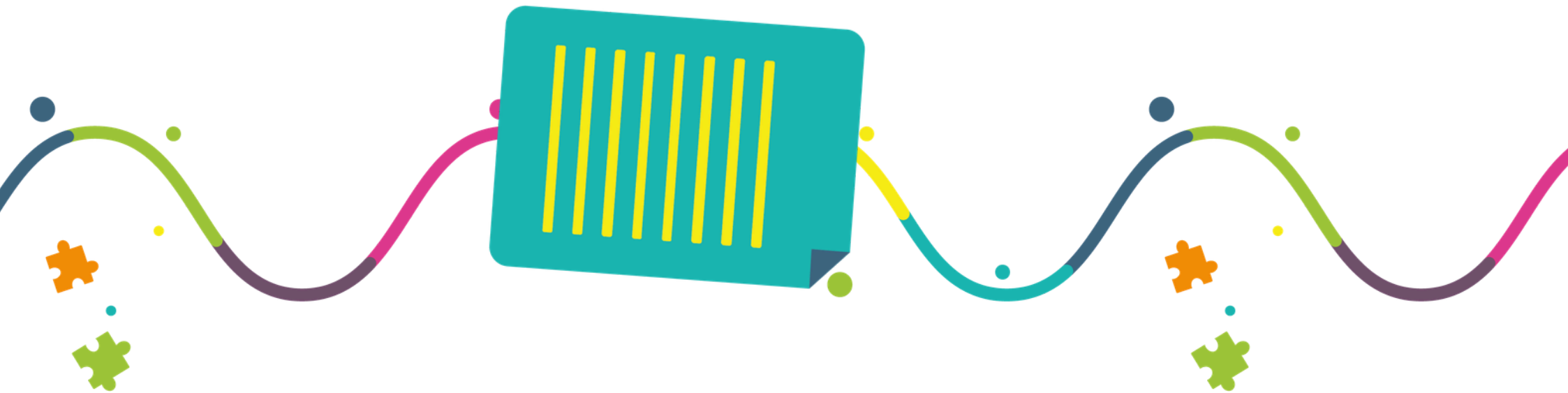


# Let's evaluate peer support

## A guide to using the Adaptable Outcome Map



# Why evaluate peer support?

It's an exciting time for peer support in Scotland. As well as lots of innovation and learning on the ground there is also, for the first time, a commitment to championing peer support in the Scottish Government and COSLA Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan.

In addition, the Creating Hope Together Suicide Prevention Strategy and Action Plan recognises the vital contribution of peer support in our communities and services. But this is just the beginning. We need to build on this to be able to sustain and grow peer support activity across the country. Peer support is powerful and it works but it is underfunded and often misrepresented as an optional add-on or inferior to clinical approaches to support.



**We need to be able to evaluate the incredible work done by peer support programmes**

- Let's Evaluate Peer Support co-design participant

By gathering and sharing evidence we can make sure that funders and decision makers know that peer support is part of the solution to an overwhelmed mental health system. We can increase understanding of what peer support actually is and the positive impact it has on people's mental health recovery.

## Who is this guide for?

The Adaptable Outcome Map was co-created through the Let's Evaluate Peer Support project to support people and organisations involved in mental health peer support to evaluate their work in ways that feel meaningful, creative and true to peer support values. It is built upon Matter of Focus'

### Outcome Map approach

Evaluation often feels like a tick-box exercise. It can be overwhelming, time-consuming or disconnected from the real impact of the peer support work. This outcome map offers an alternative: a flexible and grounded approach that reflects the reality of peer support practice.

# How will the Adaptable Outcome Map help you?

Co-designed with people in a wide range of peer support roles, the map:



Reflects what peer support looks and feels like in real life



Highlights the emotional, relational and systemic changes it creates



Helps build learning and reflection into everyday work



Can be adapted to suit different contexts while staying rooted in shared values

Whether you are just getting started or looking to deepen your approach, this adaptable outcome map supports a way of evaluating peer support that is human, creative and sustainable. Using the map will help you to:



Understand and describe the difference your work makes



Build evaluation into your practice  
without losing warmth or connection



Strengthen the way you share your impact  
with funders, partners and communities



Contribute to a collective understanding  
of the value of peer support across Scotland

# The co-design process

This tool was not created behind a desk or in a boardroom. It was built with people involved in a wide range of peer support throughout Scotland. Peer workers, managers, facilitators, evaluators and others came together to shape this from the ground up. Their insight, experience and honesty formed the heart of this process. Co-design was not just a method, it was the driving force of the outcome map process.

We collaborated with people from different organisations as well as piloting the outcome map with different stakeholders as part of the Let's Evaluate Peer Support Roadshow. People brought different perspectives, challenges and hopes to the table. Across a series of creative, reflective workshops, they shared what peer support really looks like, what changes it sparks and why it matters. Every part of this outcome map is rooted in those conversations.

This is not a top-down tool. It is a collective piece of work created by people in peer support, for people in peer support. It reflects a deep respect for peer values, lived experience, a belief in the value of collaboration and a shared commitment to making evaluation more meaningful, accessible and representative of peer support values.



Huge thanks to Bipolar Scotland, Mindspace, Neil's Hugs Foundation, Stepping Stones, Penumbra Mental Health, Living Warriors Project, Future Pathways, Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action (DVVA), Hope Point Dundee (Penumbra Mental Health), Moray Wellbeing Hub, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, RAMH and all the fantastic roadshow participants we met along the way .

We could not have created this without you and will continue to gather feedback and learning as we continue to share, develop and learn from this resource.

# Using the Adaptable Outcome Map

The six sections and statements in the outcome map are prompts designed to guide the creation of your own map. They help you think about different aspects of your peer support work but can be adapted or added to, to fit your unique service. While each group or service may use different language or focus, everyone is working with the same core values and ideas. This creates consistency and shared understanding across the peer support community in Scotland. Across the next couple of pages are some insights from people who helped us co-design the map and who have used the map, on how to get the best from it.



**Peer support makes a difference because it allows people with lived experience to make a positive impact on others and increase their own wellbeing. It offers empathetic and authentic support to those in need.**

- Let's Evaluate Peer Support co-design participant



**Gather your team**, bringing together peer support workers, volunteers, managers and others involved.






**Review each section** on the outcome map. Look at the prompts under What we do, Who we work with, What people learn and gain, What they do differently and What makes a difference.



**Adapt to Your Context.** Use the prompts as a starting point. Add, remove or change them to fit your peer support activities and goals.



**Use the outcome map to guide reflection and learning.** Regularly revisit the prompts to discuss progress, successes and areas for growth within your peer support work. It could be helpful to code things using a traffic light system. For example:

-  **Red** - Poor progress and little evidence to back it up
-  **Amber** - Ok progress and some evidence to back it up
-  **Green** - Good progress and good evidence to back it up

Colour coding is a spectrum to help visualise success and areas needing improvement for reflection. It is important to note that progress means you are where you want to be at that time, not that a piece of work or outcome is 'completed'.



**Collect stories and examples.** Gather real-life experiences and evidence that show how your peer support achieves these outcomes



**Share insights.** Use the discussions and stories inspired by the map to demonstrate your impact to funders, partners and your wider community.

# Understanding the outcome map

The outcome map tells the story of peer support through six connected columns. Each column represents a different aspect of the journey, from what you do through to the wider difference it makes.

- **Who with** - The people and organisations you work with, including people with lived experience, communities, services and decision makers.
- **What we do** - The activities and approaches that make up your peer support work, from creating safe spaces to amplifying lived experience.
- **How they feel** - The immediate emotional shifts people experience through
  - peer support, like feeling valued, connected, hopeful and less isolated.
- **What they learn and gain** - The new understanding, confidence, skills and
  - networks people develop through their involvement in peer support.

- **What difference does this make** - The lasting impact at individual, community and systems levels, showing how peer support creates meaningful change across Scotland.
- **What they do differently** - The changes in behaviour and action that follow, as people take more control, connect with others and use their voice.

Together, these columns capture both the human experience of peer support and the broader impact it creates. The map shows how small shifts in connection and confidence can grow into significant changes in people's lives and in the systems around them.

Over the next couple of pages we've shared an example map. It's laid out across two pages to fit this guide but we recommend keeping all six columns on one page when you create your own map. We recommend printing this download of the map in A3 if possible but A4 works too: [Adaptable Outcome Map](#)

What we do	Who with	How they feel
<p>Supporting personal growth, confidence and wellbeing through peer relationships</p> <p>Creating safe, inclusive spaces where peer support can flourish</p> <p>Offering emotional support through active listening, validation, and understanding needs</p> <p>Facilitating open, honest and respectful peer conversations</p> <p>Building community, belonging and mutual learning within peer support networks</p> <p>Amplifying the voice of lived experience to influence systems and enact change</p>	<p>People with lived experience</p> <p>Peer support workers</p> <p>People experiencing mental health challenges, their families, carers, and local communities</p> <p>Health services, including NHS and emergency responders</p> <p>Charities, funders, local authorities, housing and third sector organisations</p> <p>Education providers, researchers, activists and media</p> <p>Policy makers and planners connected to peer support</p>	<p>Recognised and valued for their lived experience and contributions</p> <p>Heard and understood by others who truly relate</p> <p>Safe, connected and included within peer-led spaces</p> <p>Hopeful and motivated about recovery and the future</p> <p>Less isolated and stigmatised through shared experience</p> <p>Confident in their role and the vital importance of peer support</p> <p>Empowered and connected to the wider community</p>

<p><b>What they learn and gain</b></p>	<p><b>What they do differently</b></p>	<p><b>What difference does this make</b></p>
<p>New perspectives and appreciation for peer support and lived experience</p> <p>Greater awareness of their own strengths and potential</p> <p>Confidence to build meaningful peer relationships</p> <p>Hope, purpose and a sense of belonging</p> <p>Skills to support others through peer work</p> <p>Better knowledge of peer support, community resources and systems</p> <p>Increased self-worth and compassion for themselves and others</p>	<p>Have more control and confidence over their own wellbeing and personal growth</p> <p>Try new ways to connect, support, and collaborate with others</p> <p>Use their lived experience and skills to shape decisions and services</p> <p>Speak openly about the importance and impact of peer support</p> <p>Step into leadership, advocacy, and co-production roles</p> <p>Build stronger connections across communities and organisations</p> <p>Less reliance on statutory services as people are empowered and linked in with others</p>	<p>Individuals gain confidence, wellbeing and a stronger sense of identity through peer support</p> <p>People feel valued and empowered in peer support roles and relationships</p> <p>Fewer people reach crisis point due to increased connection and support</p> <p>Peer support shapes community decisions, building trust and collaboration</p> <p>Systems become more person-centred by embedding peer support approaches</p> <p>A strong, supported peer support workforce strengthens impact across Scotland</p>

# Tips for using the Adaptable Outcome Map

We asked our co-designers for their top tips on using the Adaptable Outcome Map. Here's what they said:



**Co-create the map.** Involve peer support workers, managers and partners to create a shared picture of your outcomes.



**Use the prompts!** Use the provided statements in the map as prompts, not rules. They're there to inspire ideas and start conversations, not as boxes you must fill or check off. Take what resonates, adapt language and add your individual nuance.



**The sections are interconnected** – Ideas in one column might influence or overlap with others, but there's no fixed pathway.



**No rows!** – You don't need to create horizontal links between sections. Each column stands alone and doesn't have to match up across the page.



**One map per group or service** – This keeps it specific to your unique context.



**Use the statements as prompts**, they're there to spark ideas, not as boxes to fill.

# Using your map: From planning to impact reporting

Plan your evaluation as soon as you can, not reactively. Too often, evaluation becomes a scramble when funders ask for reports. We're left piecing together memories and hunting for evidence. The Adaptable Outcome Map helps change that by helping you embed evaluation into your work from the beginning: so reporting becomes telling a story that's already been unfolding, with evidence already gathered.

## **Define what change you want to see**

Before collecting data, using the Adaptable Outcome Map helps you be clear on your outcomes using the six columns of the map: who you're working with, what you're doing, how people feel, what they learn, what they do differently, and what lasting difference this makes.

This clarity shows you how to measure it. Once you know what change matters, measurement becomes more straightforward. If an outcome is "people feel less isolated," you know to gather evidence about connection - through feedback, stories, and observation. The outcome map keeps your data collection focused and manageable.

### **Embed data collection into your day-to-day work**

When evaluation is planned from the start, it doesn't feel like an add-on. Build in reflection sessions, simple feedback forms at natural points or shared logs of significant moments. Not all forms of data collection will work in different contexts, so try different things and see what works best. Make it feel natural: evaluation should enhance peer support, not interrupt it.

## **Use evaluation to reflect and learn, not just to prove success**

An outcome map is a reflective tool. Using it in a reflective way, such as colour coding different parts of your map, helps you see clearly what you're doing and evidencing well, and identify areas where there needs to be a bit more work.

When reporting time comes around, your data is already organised. You have clear outcomes, real-time evidence, stories organised around those outcomes. You also have team that's been reflecting and learning throughout. Reporting becomes synthesis and storytelling, not archaeology.



**It made us think differently about evaluation. Reporting to funders is just one part of the picture, it's also understanding our own impact and learning as we go and being transparent and accountable.**

-Pilot participant

# Dundee Peer Network and Bipolar Scotland

Over the space of a year, we piloted this resource with organisations from the co-design group including Dundee Peer Support Network and Bipolar Scotland. This helped us to continue to develop the map but also support the organisations to use the tool to embed evaluation. Both embedded evaluation from outcome setting through data collection and analysis, creating a seamless flow where evaluation became part of their work, not something happening to their work.

When reporting time came, evidence was already organised and meaningful. They weren't scrambling to prove impact, they were sharing what they'd been learning all along. Their reports were stronger because the foundation was solid from day one.



## Support Group Evaluation Report

Bipolar Scotland

Evaluating the impact of peer support within Bipolar Scotland support groups.



## Growing Together

Dundee Peer Network

Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Network (DVVA)  
Year One (2025-2026) Relaunch Report.

Evaluation is one of the key ways to grow and sustain peer support in Scotland. It's how we prove the work matters, and how we learn to do it better together. But there's no need to wait for the perfect moment to start to evaluate or to do it differently. Today is the moment. Pick up this resource and start where you are. It's never too late to begin.

# Get in touch

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Together we're building a recovery-focused mental health system for Scotland, powered by lived experience and strengthened by peer support.

If you need this information in a different format, please contact us.