



**NHS**  
South London  
and Maudsley  
NHS Foundation Trust



# Peer Support Work: Building Bridges

*Truly Listening to and Including  
Lived Experience Voices*

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**PEACE**



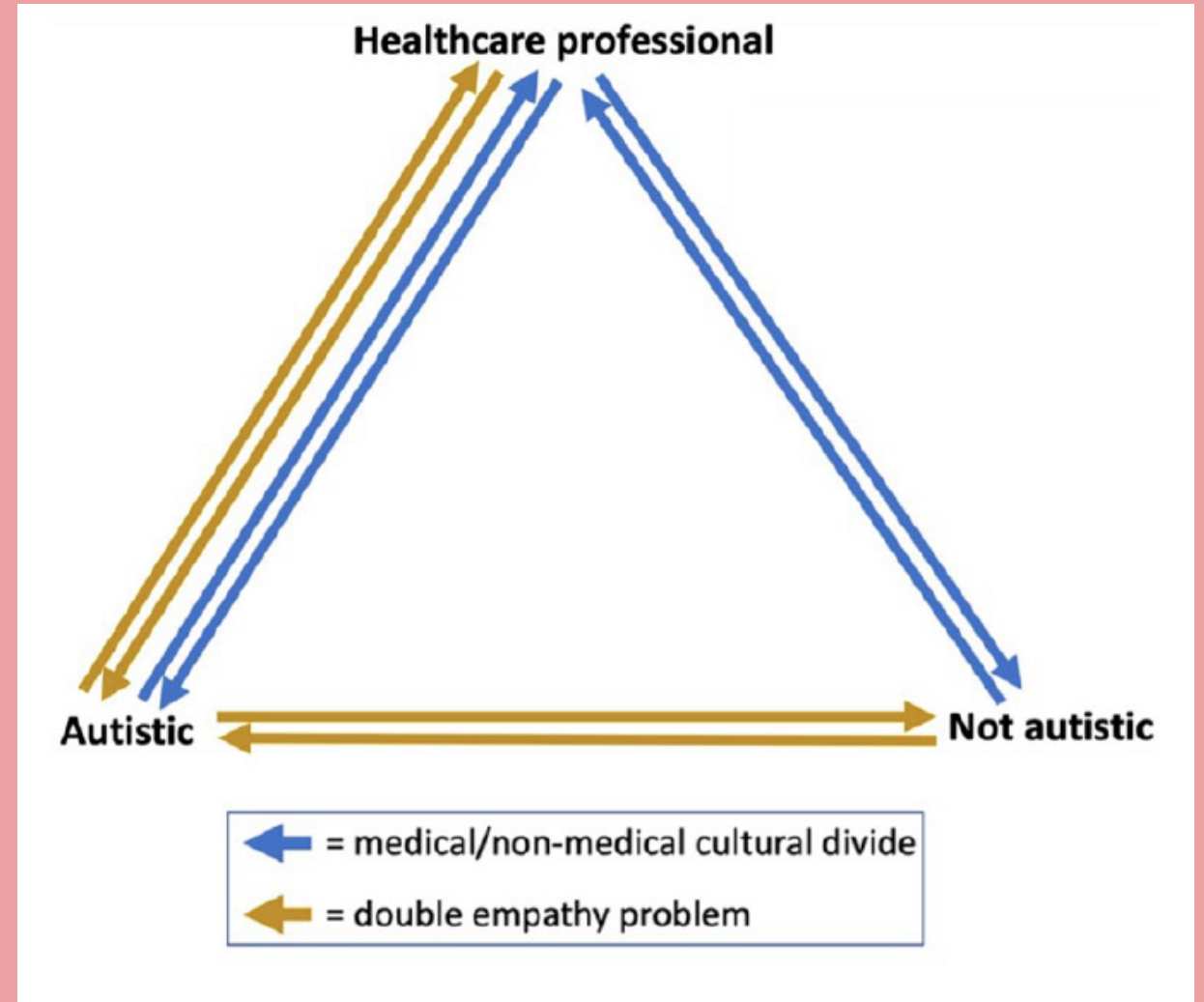
Pathway for Eating disorders and Autism  
developed from Clinical Experience

The  
monumental  
importance of  
centring *Lived  
Experience* in  
treatment  
provision...

- Existing, **non-adapted**, evidence-based treatments can be ***limited*** in their effectiveness for neurodivergent individuals
- **Moving away** from a '*one size fits all*' approach and **towards more personalised care**
- **Equity** = adapting care and providing adjustments to acknowledge differences
- The PEACE Pathway marks a ***significant step forward*** in bridging gaps and ***including lived experience*** directly

# Lost in Translation?

*"A breakdown in reciprocity and mutual understanding can happen between people with very differing ways of experiencing the world. If one has ever experienced a conversation with someone who they do not share a first language with, or even a shared interest in the topic of a conversation, one may experience something similar (albeit briefly!)" (National Autistic Society)*



[Shaw et al., 2024](#)



The Courage to  
Do Things  
Differently

***“Just because something  
is considered to be the  
way things are done does  
not mean it is right.”***

(The Autistic Survival Guide to  
Therapy - Steph Jones)



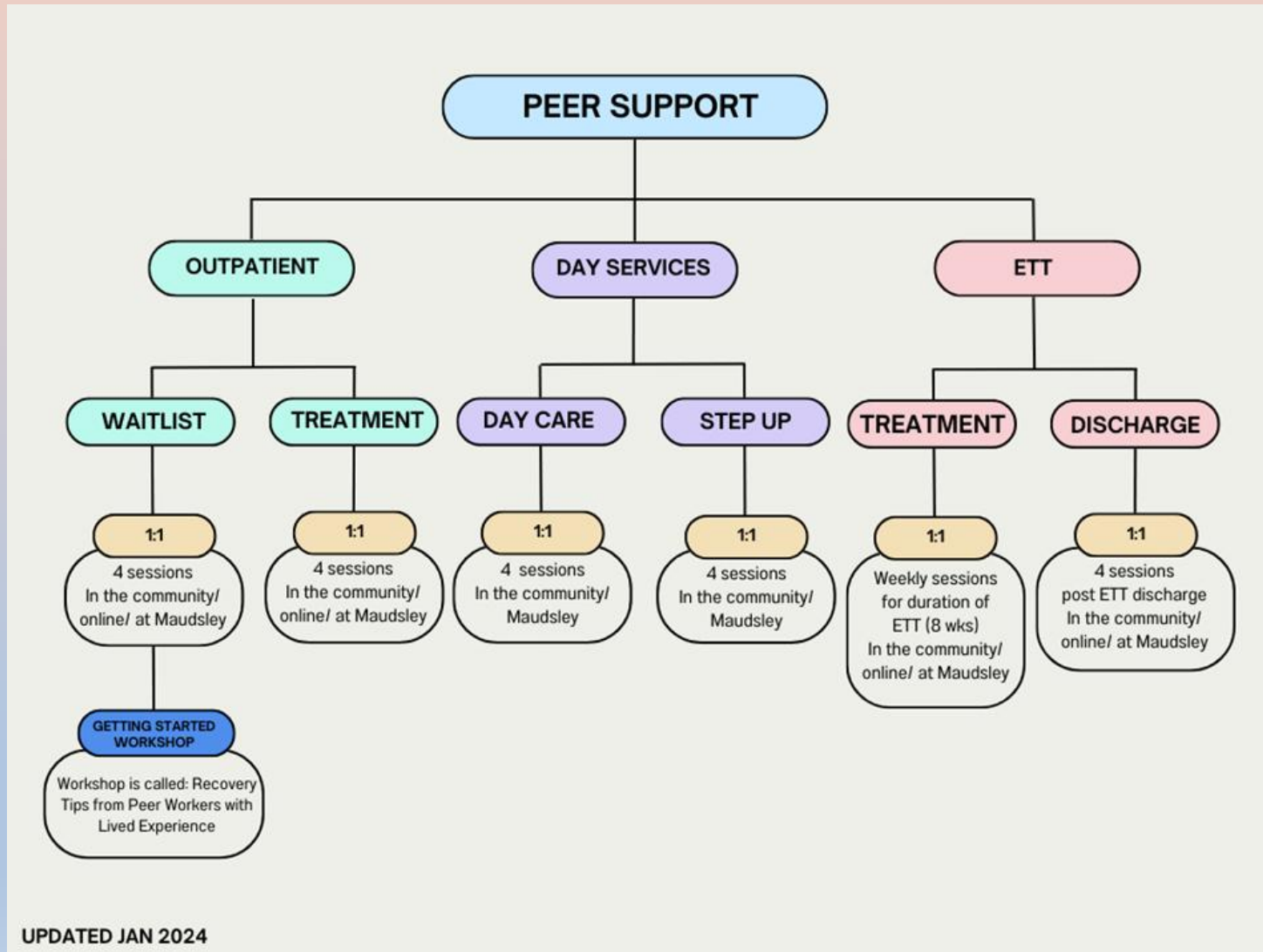
# What is **Peer Support?**

**Peer support is a range of approaches through which people with similar long-term conditions or health experiences support each other to better understand those conditions and aid recovery or self-management.**

**- NHS England**



# A New Paradigm: The Peer Support Pathway



UPDATED JAN 2024

# Peer Support Work – Service User Feedback

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“I’ve been in services for 12 years and this is the first time I feel seen and understood by anyone”

“I didn’t think recovery could be possible for me until now. I wanted leave treatment but then I had peer support sessions and **realised that recovery could be for me**”

*“I strongly believe peer support should be a mandatory element of every ED service, as it provides a unique and personal form of support that is **more relatable and motivational**”*

**“Peer support has been the most useful part of my treatment”**

*“I felt that I was **being heard**. I didn't have to explain myself, PSW just completely understood what I was talking about. It was a space where I could go in without overthinking what I was going to say and how I was going to say it. I would normally censor myself as I am aware that people who have never experienced an eating disorder would not get what I am talking about. I felt **less alienated** in this often very lonely illness. I think it is a wonderful imitative especially with the crazy long waiting lists for targeted therapy”*

# The Peer Support Approach - *Themes*

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- **Understanding, validation and normalisation**
- **Relatability**
- A more **informal** approach (different from other interventions)
- **Safe & non-judgmental space**
- **Sharing knowledge & practical techniques**
- **Inspiring recovery**
- **Positive changes in ED symptoms & wider life**







# Building Bridges

‘I’m way more open to my therapist now. I used to be a lot more closed off, not always telling the truth, being quite dishonest and secretive. I’m a lot more open now because I learned you need to be open with your fears to actually get to the root of the issues. Without (*PSW’ name*), that wouldn’t have happened.’

# Translating the Patient Voice



## Advocacy

More **flexible** weight boundaries in Day Services programmes for autistic patients



## Therapeutic Extensions

Discussed + agreed **extensions** in both therapeutic + PSW input for autistic + ND individuals



## Adapted Language

Replacing rigid phrases (eg. “Non-negotiable”) with **more sensitive** alternatives, and encouraging this within wider team



## Holistic Approach

More **space** to explore self *beyond* symptoms (eg. sessions in community, creativity)



## Improved engagement in other aspects of service

Increased group attendance and trust in wider service following engagement with PSW involvement

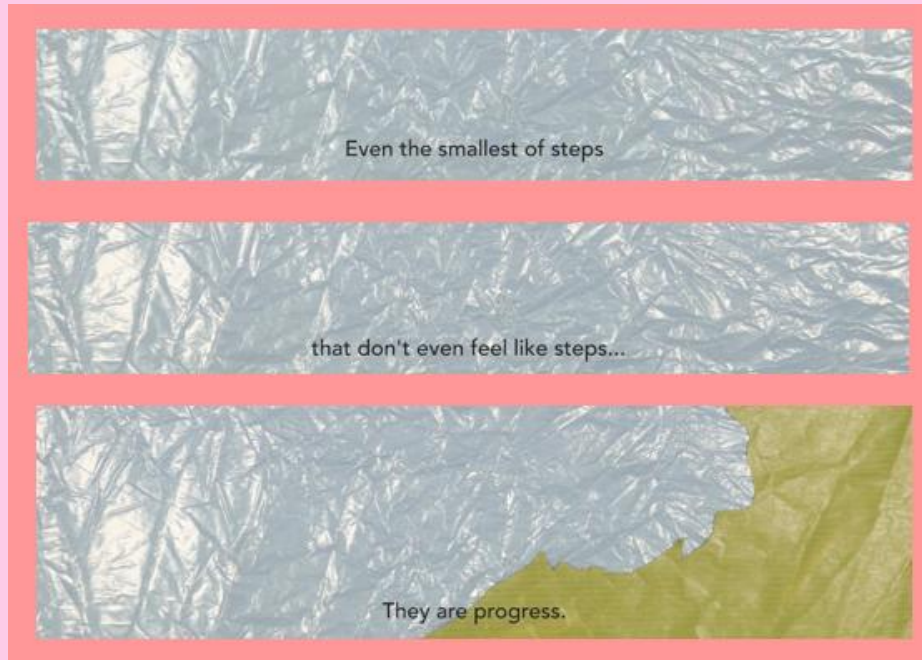
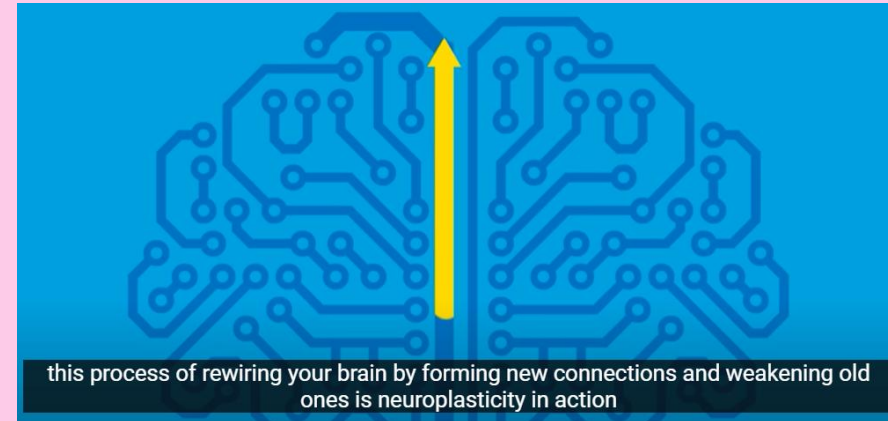


## Increased recognition + identification of ND traits

Able to provide neuro-affirming + neuro-inclusive support quickly (eg. recommending use of PEACE resources to clinicians as part of a trait focused approach following PSW intervention)

# Sharing *Fragments* of Lived Experience can be *Transformational*

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"Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."

VIKTOR FRANKL

# Carer Feedback

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“I must say X has had the most **positive sessions** with you and you've made him **feel very comfortable** having you for his clinical guidance. As I mentioned before, it's worked **very well** as you are neurodivergent and he recognises that connection which has greatly helped.”


**A Less Hierarchical,  
More Personalised,  
More Human,  
More Holistic &  
Flexible Approach.**



# Challenges of this Work

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- Culture shifts *take time*
- There is a *limited resource* pool vs a *growing need* for **personalised** and **adapted** care
- Additional *emotional toll* on clinicians with *lived experience*



**We Are All  
Learning, and  
Unlearning.**

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# *Strengths and Successes So Far*

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- The Peer Support Pathway is now **successfully** embedded in EDU!
- Internal and external *recognition* of the PS Pathway is helping to **support an ongoing culture shift**, improving care
- **Supervision** and **reflective practice** in PS Pathway (and wider service) **includes *explicit* lived experience** input

# The Peer Support Pathway's Hopes for the Future.

Reduce stigma around the therapeutic sharing of fragments of lived experience for *all* clinicians.

Center the voices of lived experience, valuing them as equally important other existing treatment modalities.

Increase neurodiversity awareness training for *all* clinicians to bridge the Double Empathy Gap

Develop better support networks for clinicians e.g. 'Community of Practice' to stay connected & support each other.

Develop specialist supervision & competency frameworks to ensure clinicians have adequate knowledge and skills to support ND clients effectively.

Further embed lived experience in treatment provision (supervision, co-production of resources, & beyond!)

Expand the Peer Support Workforce and complete further research on benefits of lived experience interventions.

Update NICE guidelines with explicit neuro-divergent lived experience input in co-produced manuals

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**Thank YOU!**

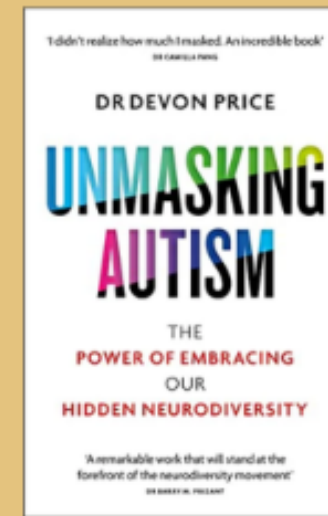
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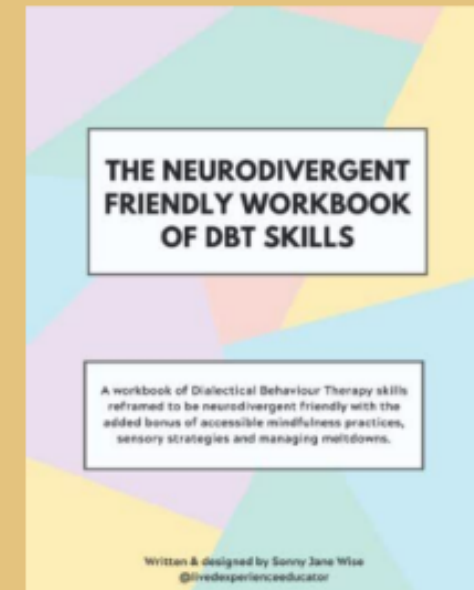
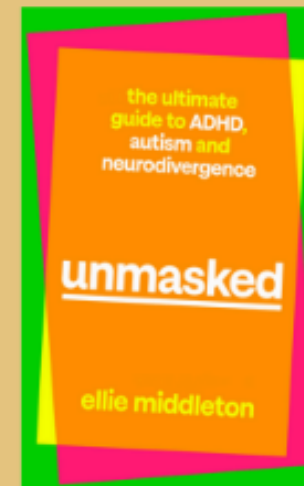
## Useful books (that also feature lived experience) ...

- The Autistic Survival Guide to Therapy - by Steph Jones
- Unmasking Autism: The Power of Embracing Our Hidden Neurodiversity - by Devon Price
- Unmasked: The Ultimate Guide to ADHD, Autism and Neurodivergence - by Ellie Middleton
- Untypical: How the world isn't built for autistic people and what we should all do about it - by Pete Wharmby
- Women and Girls on the Autism Spectrum, Second Edition - by Sarah and Jess Hendrickx
- Autism Is Not A Disease: The Politics of Neurodiversity - by Jodie Hare
- The Neurodivergence Skills Workbook for Autism and ADHD - by Monique Mitchelson and Jennifer Kemp
- The Neurodivergent Friendly Workbook of DBT Skills- Sonny Jane Wise
- Strong Female Character (memoir) - by Fern Brady
- Rediscovered, A Compassionate and Courageous Guide For Late Discovered Autistic Women (and Their Allies) - by Catherine Asta
- Different, Not Less: A Neurodivergent's Guide to Embracing Your True Self and Finding Your Happily Ever After- by Chloe Hayden
- Neuroqueer Heresies: Notes on the Neurodiversity Paradigm, Autistic Empowerment, and Postnormal Possibilities- By Dr Nick Walker
- 'It's not a bloody trend': understanding life as an ADHD adult - by Kat Brown
- Now It All Makes Sense: How An ADHD Diagnosis Brought Clarity To My Life- by Alex Partridge



## Useful websites

- The National Autistic Society - <https://www.autism.org.uk/>
- ADHD UK - <https://adhduk.co.uk/>
- British Dyslexia Association - <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/> (coverage of dyscalculia too)
- The PEACE Pathway - <https://www.peacepathway.org/> (food and eating issues and tools)
- ARFID Awareness UK - for those with food and drink avoidance - <https://www.arfidawarenessuk.org/>
- Divergent Voices YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@DivergentVoices>



Credit for resource list:  
Camilla Ferraro