



Lived Experience Framework 2023

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, the original custodians of the sovereign lands. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters of this beautiful place. We pay our respects to Elders past, present. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal Land.

We acknowledge the individual and collective expertise of those with a lived or living experience of mental health and substance use issues and the experience of those who may be carers, families, or supporters. We recognise their vital contribution at all levels and value the courage of those who share this unique perspective to learn and grow together to achieve better outcomes for all.

Inclusion Statement

You are welcome. And so is everybody else. No matter who you are, you can feel safe and accepted at Inspiro. We are committed to providing an equitable, inclusive, and respectful service and workplace for all. We advocate for and commit to providing accessible, affordable, exceptional, and equitable healthcare for all. We believe the community we serve should have equal access to the support they require to lead healthier lives, regardless of gender, sexuality, race, culture, or religion. We strive to meet intersecting needs of people such as age, gender, socio economic status, ability, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture. Our goal is to collaborate with our community and work in an open, honest, safe, welcoming, and transparent manner.

Contributors

This framework has been developed by Shelly Morrison, Lead Peer Practitioner Lilydale Youth Hub, Emma Grose, Lead – Lived Experience, Alissa Gielmuda & Mark Wightley - Inspiro Peer Workers, in consultation with those with lived or living experience working in dedicated lived experience roles at Inspiro, consumers using Inspiro services, and people within our community.



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Executive Summary

Welcome to Inspiro's first Lived Experience Framework. This framework celebrates what we know about the Lived and Living Workforce (LLEW) in 2023. It has been written and developed by our people who are leading and delivering peer work at Inspiro and informed by our collaborations with Victorian state wide networks and our friends and partners who are walking the same path by choice and with intention.

In the five years to 2023 Inspiro moved from having no LLEW in our Mental Health and AoD Program to having more than 20% of its growing workforce in designated LLEW positions by 2024. Increasingly people with LLE are employed in variety of roles in service delivery and leadership and are encouraged to participate in state wide and other peer based workforce capacity building initiatives.

At the time of writing, this framework represents a critical first step in articulating our commitment to growing and supporting a thriving LLEW and centering this growing workforce as key to the overdue transformation needed in Victorian Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug service delivery. This framework forms one part of Inspiro's LLEW strategy and we acknowledge and commit to future actions that will be needed to ensure future growth and sustainability.

This framework sets out our current vision, actions and commitments but in no way conceptualises the scale of its future impact. As the workforce grows in numbers and diversity we anticipate rich learning and significant shifts in our understanding of the fundamental components of safe and effective mental health and wellbeing services.

Introduction

Inspiro is a local, not-for-profit health organisation that has been caring for people in the Yarra Ranges for 30 years. Our vision is to inspire as many people as we can to identify and reach their personal health goals. In addition to our Lilydale and Belgrave locations, we run groups at various community venues. We have partnerships with local organisations including Yarra Ranges Council, SHARC, Eastern Health and more. Inspiro is also a partner in the North East Mental Health and Wellbeing Connect, and Yarra Ranges Mental Health and Wellbeing Local.

Inspiro believes good quality healthcare is everybody's right and provides accessible, exceptional, and affordable health care including mental health and drug and alcohol supports and programs in the shire of Yarra Ranges.

At Inspiro we are committed to embedding a skilled and valued Lived and Living Experience workforce (LLEW) and acknowledge this as one of the most effective ways we can support social connectedness and strengthen families and our community. The involvement of the LLEW is instrumental in achieving our organisational vision and mission, to engage our community in full partnership in healthcare. We pride ourselves in our commitment to the delivery of evidence based mental health and addiction care in our community, and the contributions of the LLEW in the design and development of supports and services throughout the organisation.

Inspiro recognises that the LLEW plays a key role in a person's journey through recovery and the service system. Providing nonclinical care within multidisciplinary teams, the LLEW are key in building community connections, modelling hope, and engaging in co-design and co-production activities. This approach ensures services and interventions are developed with the people who will be using them.

As with any framework our challenge at Inspiro is to capture both the current and future aspirations of the organisation and provide a structure where we also promote flexibility to evolve and remain at the forefront of embedding LLE in the community health sector. Inspiro aims to develop a thriving LLEW workforce promoting change, and better health outcomes for the community.

Vision

Healthy Locals, Strong Community

Inspiro is more than just the sum of our services. Every person we see, every program we run and every partnership we form strengthens the Yarra Ranges community.

By building up the physical, mental and social wellbeing of our locals, we're empowering you to bring positive, healthy habits to the environments we all shop, work, learn and play in. The result? A thriving, harmonious and resilient community

Mission

Inspiro exists to inspire healthy lives

It is our mission to be the go-to community health service in the Yarra Ranges. We do this by providing accessible, inclusive and exceptional care.

Our vision is to empower locals to identify and reach their health goals. We walk beside you, every step of the way

Values

Our Values Drive our Actions

We're Friendly

Inspiro is a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

We're Client Centred

We work with you to understand your needs and work as a team to make sure you get the care you need.

We're Local

Inspiro understands what is important to you because we're from the Yarra Ranges too and we listen to our community.

Definitions

For this framework, we have used the term Lived and Living Experience Workforce (LLEW) to describe the diverse roles and titles of people employed at Inspiro in paid or voluntary roles. LLEW staff utilise their lived and/or living experience of mental illness and recovery or harmful alcohol and/or other drug use or lived and living experience as a carer, family member or supporter of someone experiencing mental illness and/or harmful alcohol and/or other drug use.

The LLEW are employed in a wide range of positions, including but not limited to consumer consultants, carer consultants, peer workers, family/carer peer workers, peer practitioners, Board and Committee Members, Managers and Leaders.

It is important to acknowledge a unique distinction between Consumer Lived and Living Experience, and Family/Carer Lived and Living Experience.

Consumer LLEW have personal experience of mental health challenges, service use, stages of healing and personal recovery, that has had a profound impact on life as we once knew it and has changed the way in which we see ourselves in the world.

Family Carer LLEW have experience of supporting someone through mental health challenges, service use, stages of healing and recovery, that has a profound impact on life as we knew it and has changed the way in which we see ourselves in the world.

“ Only when we are brave
enough to explore the
darkness will we discover
the infinite power of our
light ”
Brene Brown

Evidence

This framework is informed by contemporary research findings, emerging evidence, the history of peer work practice and lived experience expertise.

LLEW is a growing discipline in Australian public mental health services, with a growing body of evidence supporting its use. LLEW is effective in improving a range of outcomes for people using mental health and AOD services including:

- Reduction in symptoms; helping people to reduce the severity of their symptoms of mental illness.
- Improving quality of life; supporting people to increase their social and community support networks, reduce social isolation and improve self-esteem.
- Increased engagement with services and supports; supporting people to gain increased knowledge, skills and confidence to self-manage their mental health issues.
- Reduced hospital admissions.
- Increased sense of hope and pathways to recovery, and
- Raising awareness within the mental health and wellbeing sector that the people they support can and do get better.

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Act 2022 released September 2023, places people with LLE – consumers and their families, carers and supporters – at the centre of the mental health and wellbeing system. The Act includes a lived experience principle, recognising the importance and value of the contribution of people with LLE as leaders and partners in the system. The Act supports the inclusion of people with LLE in senior leadership roles across the system.

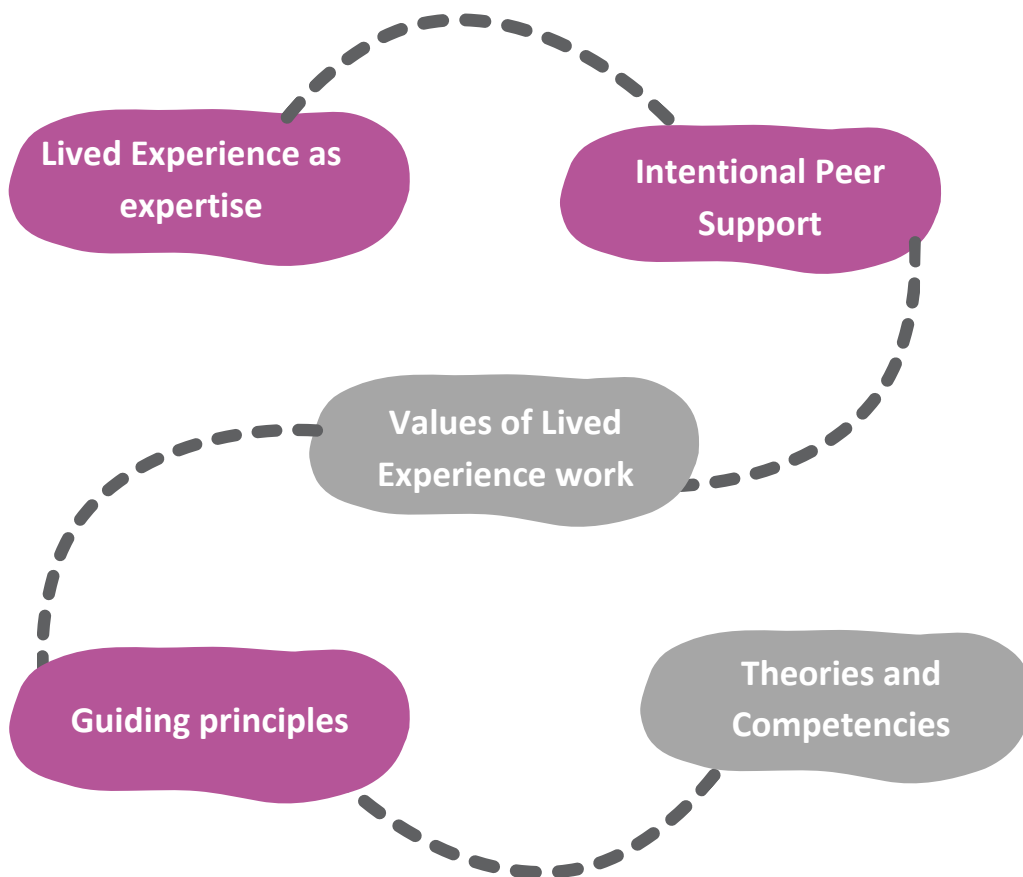
“Mental health services and systems benefit from the employment of peer workers. Peer workers can be very effective at establishing connections with ‘hard to reach’ clients, and act as a bridge between clients and other staff. Further evidence suggests that peer support workers can reduce psychiatric inpatient bed use and peer workers can also contribute to reduced use of seclusion and restraint. A further key benefit for services of utilising peer workers can be a positive change in organisational culture and an improved recovery focus. Staff may become more aware of their use of language, and more reflective regarding recovery-oriented practice”
(Health Workforce Australia, 2014).

The Framework

Our Model

Inspiro’s model of LLEW is grounded in the Intentional Peer Support Model, an evidence based, best practice model and guided by The National Mental Health Commissions’ “Lived Experience (Peer) Workforce Development Guidelines” and The Department of Health’s “The Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing Workforce Capability Framework”.

Our model of LLEW describes the practice principles, values, theories, competencies, and scope of practice that inform LLEW at Inspiro. It provides information outlining the unique differences in Lived Experience roles and role clarity for the organisation.



Lived Experience as Expertise

Lived experience as expertise is the belief that people who have LLE of mental health or addiction challenges have unique knowledge and skills that can be used to support others. Lived Experience is a unique discipline offering wisdom and insights based on a person's experience, and recovery and specialist training to use that experience intentionally to benefit others facing similar challenges.

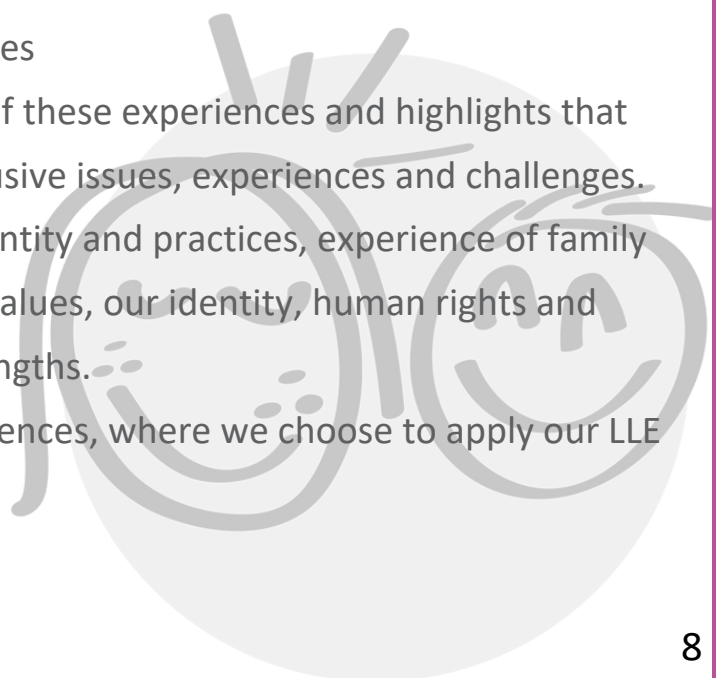
Given the prevalence of mental health issues in Australia, it is likely that many healthcare workers will have their own lived experiences of these issues. While these experiences are valid it is important to note the differences between lived and living experience and the application of Lived and Living Experience expertise; mutual support delivered intentionally by people who have similar experiences in life and grounded in the values of the consumer movement.

Some examples of people who may have lived experience include but are not limited to,

- People with mental illness, disability, chronic health conditions
- First Nations people
- People from CALD backgrounds
- People who have experienced poverty, unemployment, housing, and homelessness issues
- People who have experienced violence or trauma
- Young people and older people
- LGBTIQ+ individuals and communities
- People with substance use and addiction issues

Intersectionality includes any combination of these experiences and highlights that people do not live with singular, mutually exclusive issues, experiences and challenges. LLE perspectives are shaped by our cultural identity and practices, experience of family and peers, education, power and oppression, values, our identity, human rights and social justice, privilege, vulnerabilities and strengths.

LLE as expertise is an extension of these experiences, where we choose to apply our LLE for the purposes of mutual support.



Intentional Peer Support

Intentional Peer Support (IPS) is a way of thinking about and inviting transformative relationships. Inspiro utilises IPS as a practice framework to guide the relational work undertaken by the LLEW, and to share and use their lived experience in an intentional way that contributes to the peer relationship.

Intentional peer support can help people to see their challenges as opportunities for growth and development, rather than disabilities or diagnosis. This is done by challenging the assumptions about mental illness and addiction, negative stereotypes, and stigma that are present in our communities by normalising the human experience. It is validating the person for who they are, regardless of their challenges, and thinking creatively and non-judgmentally about the way they experience and make meaning of their lives.

Intentional Peer Support is not based on psychiatric models or diagnosis. It encourages people to rethink how they've come to know what they know. It is about creating relationships where it is ok for us to use peer relationships as a tool to look at the bigger picture, and how to operate in this world. IPS is not just a theory or framework, it is an intentional process of sharing LLE in an intentional way. Being intentional involves coming into peer relationships with a specific purpose, and specific intention, that is not focused on "helping" or "fixing".

IPS is broken down into 3 Principles that allow for learning and growing the relationship, and 4 tasks that underpin our practice.

IPS principles Moving from:

Helping, to learning together;
From 'I help you' to 'We learn together'

Individual to Relationship;
We both change; We risk openness, honesty & courage. No one is the problem, courage inspires

Fear, to Hope & Possibility
Fear based relationships are about "what's wrong" Hope based relationships are about "What's possible"

Having a lived experience of mental health challenges throughout my life has been a tough journey, but along that was has instilled a strength, resilience and a restoration of hope throughout the course of my recovery. My experiences have given me personal growth of finding pathways in discovering myself and I've learned to accept who am by finding purpose in my life I never knew I had. Now as a Peer Worker, it is a privilege to be able to walk alongside other people's journeys to empower them to find hope, build mutual connections and assist them to find their purpose. As Peer Workers, we are the face of mental health, we've lived it ,breather it and know first-hand how hard it can be to manage. As long as we keep persisting and being courageous in life, the rewards can be great.

Inspiro Peer Worker

I am so grateful to now be in a job where I can support others in their recovery. And to be able to find meaning and purpose in my life challenges.

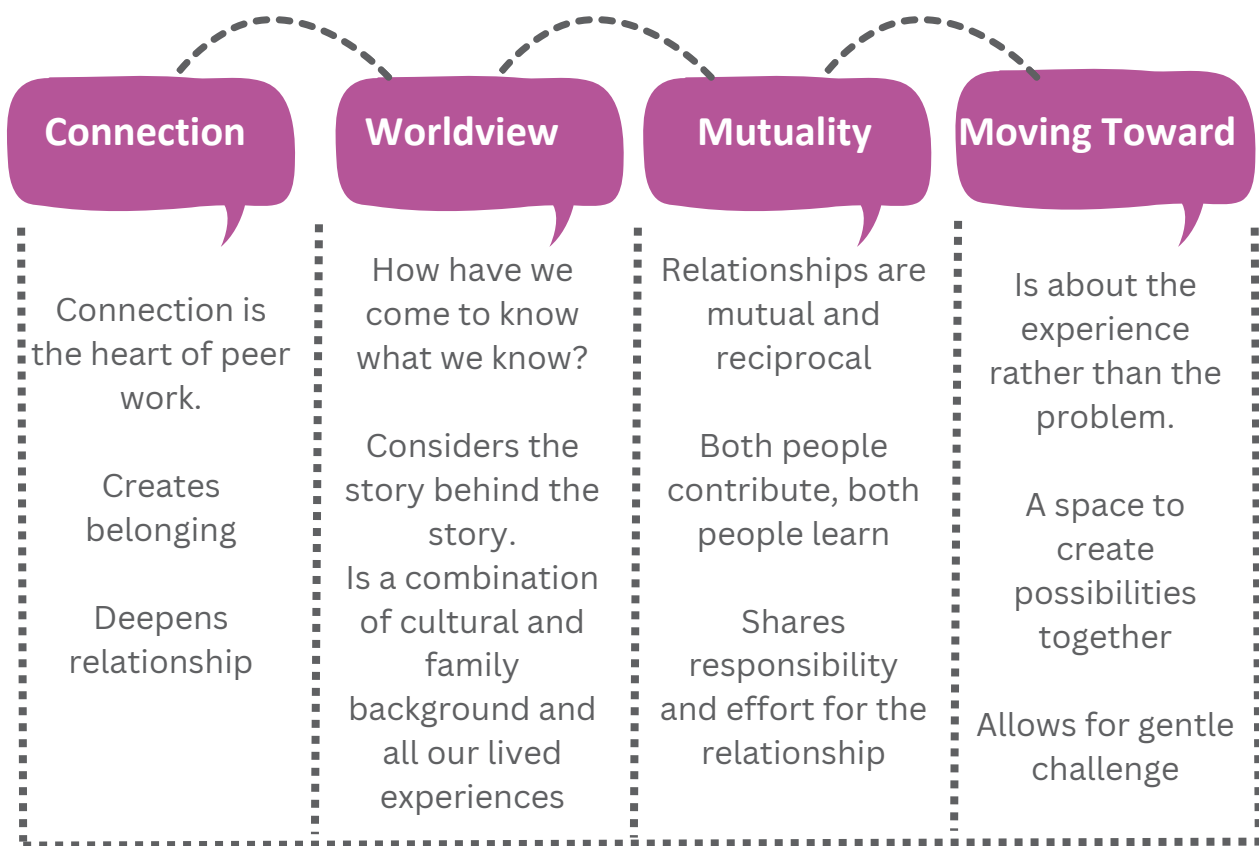
I believe my strengths lie in sharing coping strategies with consumers and walking alongside them in their difficult moments

Inspiro Peer Worker



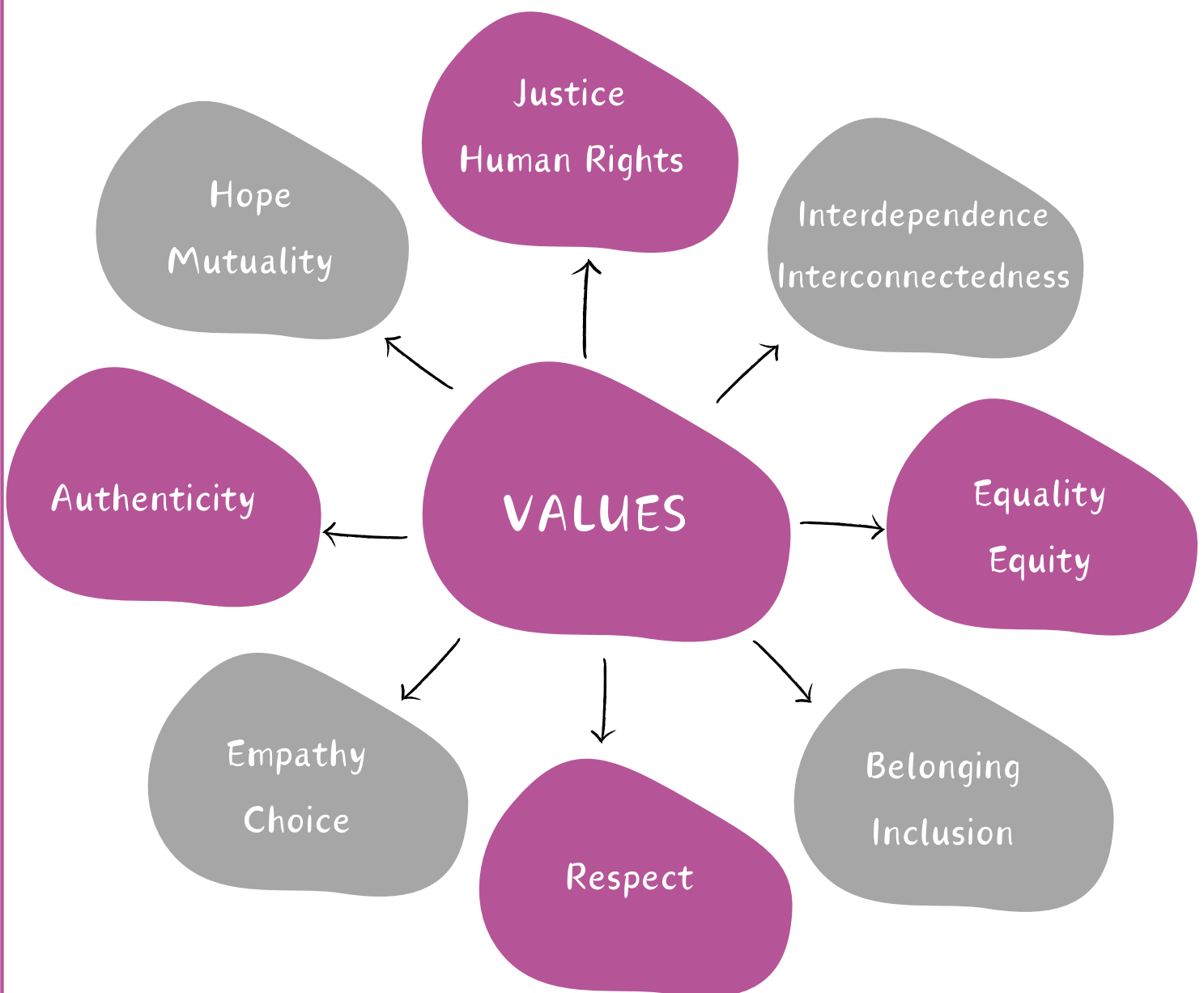
Intentional peer support is different from traditional mental health support in the following ways:

- IPS relationships are viewed as partnerships.
- IPS does not start with the assumption of a problem.
- IPS promotes a trauma-informed way of relating.
- IPS examines our lives in the context of mutually accountable relationships and communities.
- IPS encourages us to increasingly live and move toward what we want.



Values

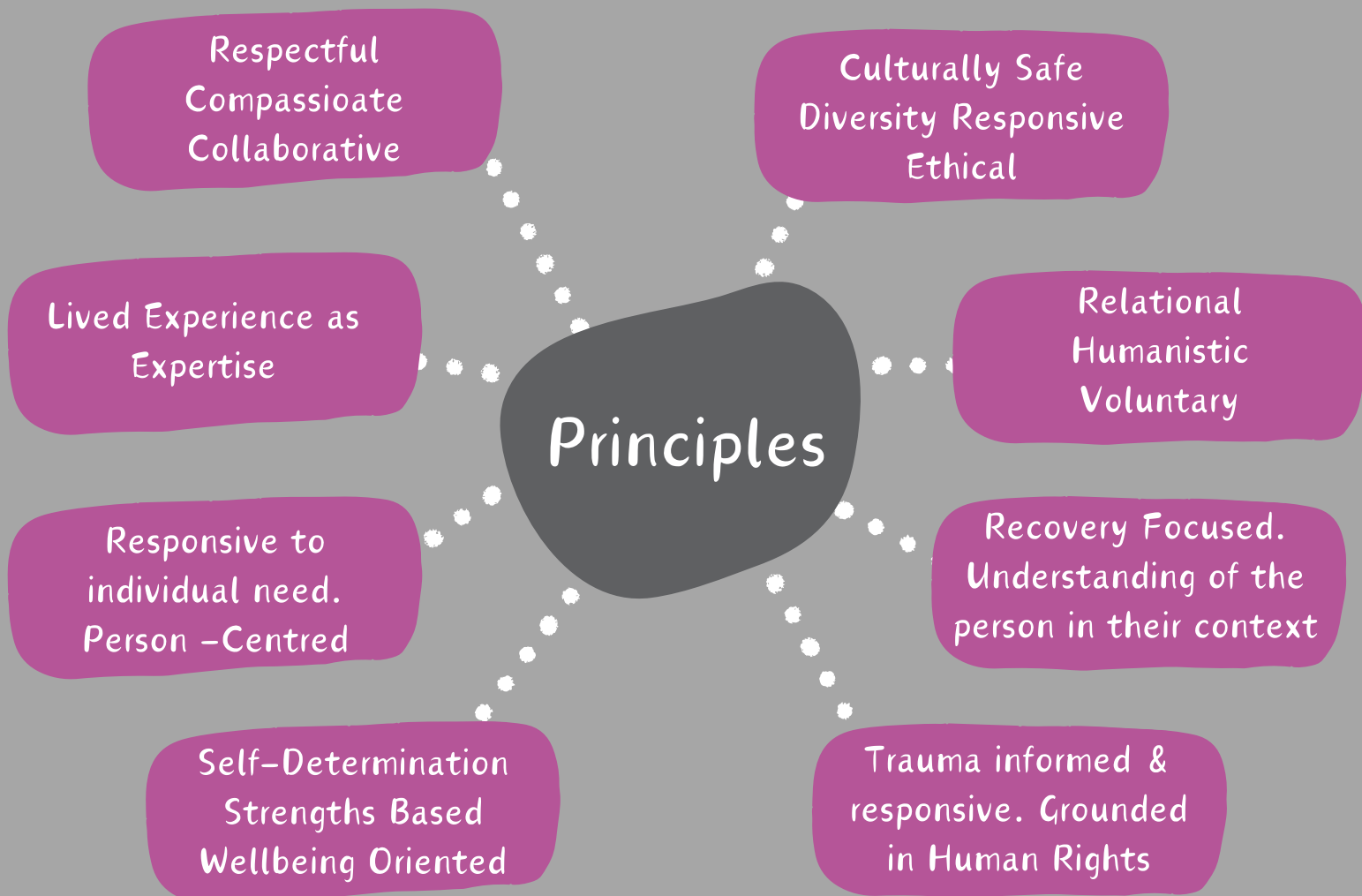
Inspiro acknowledges LLEW as its own discipline, with distinct values, principles and theories that define and guide practice that ensures ongoing contribution and value to the mental health services sector. Our Values and Principles of LLEW have been developed in line with the “National Lived Experience Workforce Guidelines” and “The Victorian Mental Health and Wellbeing workforce capability framework”



Principles

Principles are the shared values, approaches, attitudes, and ways of working that underpin our work and guide practice for all who work in or interact with the mental health system, regardless of role, setting or level of qualification/specialisation.

Maintaining the authenticity and uniqueness of LLE work is key to achieving the intended outcomes for people who use our service.



Theories

To allow for a clear and collaborative understanding of how LLE is informed at Inspiro, the below theories and approaches have been identified. They intersect and complement one another and share a commitment to supporting a person's recovery journey, emphasizing strengths and resources, and treating people with respect, dignity and compassion.

Recovery
Focused

Trauma
Informed

Humanistic

Strengths
Based

Cultural
Humility

Holistic

Person
Centred

Harm
Minimisation

Our own lived experiences
are part of the story, but
not the whole story.

Inspiro peer worker

Competencies

The core competencies of LLEW reflect the values and principles of our work and outline the specific knowledge, attributes, and skills required to successfully work with a LLE perspective. Inspiro LLE practice, regardless of the position type, is distinguished by a commitment to using LLE to benefit others, uphold human rights, and achieve system change. A comprehensive listing of competencies is available in the Peer Work practice guide. The below competencies are the basis for peer work at Inspiro

- **Ethics:** Inclusive and non-judgmental practice, treating all people equally, with dignity and respect. Values honesty and integrity, does not discriminate in the provision of services
- **Relational:** Ability to engage with others, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, work with the intention of learning rather than helping, intentional use of lived experience, and actively listen. Demonstrates mutual empathy, and values and validates others.
- **Professional:** Accountable and responsible in work practice, engages in professional and personal development activities, engages in and manages own self-care practices.
- **Recovery:** Supports recovery and self-determination, elicits and promotes hope and strength. Invites conversation that opens new perspectives without imposing own agenda.
- **Self-awareness:** Is aware of own biases, assumptions, and agendas and engages in self-reflection.
- **Trauma Informed:** Understands how a person's history and past experiences impact who a person is and how they think and relate.
- **Can sit with discomfort and, at times, the other person's pain and makes space for people to tell their own story.**
- **Lived Experience Expertise:** Upholds lived experience values of human rights, social change, and justice. Applies a lived experience perspective.
- **System Change:** Advocates for systems change, engages in co-production, supports consumer participation, and invites consumer feedback.

Scope of Practice

The scope of practice for the LLEW varies depending on the type of role. Inspiro's LLEW may work in all, or a combination of the below:

- Provide emotional support, understanding, and empathy to individuals experiencing mental health and/or addiction challenges from shared understanding.
- Help individuals to identify and set personal goals related to their recovery, mental health, and wellbeing.
- Share personal experiences and insight to instil hope and help others better understand and manage their mental health and/or addiction challenges.
- Facilitate peer-led support groups and peer-led activities that promote social connection and emotional support.
- Provide advocacy for the needs and rights of individuals experiencing mental health and/or addiction challenges within the mental health and AOD service sector and wider community.
- Provide information, resources, and referral options to individuals with mental health and/or addiction challenges and their families and supporters .



Support & Training

Safety and wellbeing are essential in creating a thriving and supported LLEW. Inspiro is committed to providing a workplace that is safe and where wellbeing of all staff is prioritised. To achieve this Inspiro will support the LLEW ensuring:

- Support for all LLE staff to access training and professional development opportunities needed to confidently perform and grow their practice
- Access to internal and external support including communities of practice, co reflection spaces, peer supervision, mentoring and Employee Assistance Program.
- Recognition of the LLEW contribution to organisational and service user outcomes
- The LLEW are remunerated appropriately to support ongoing employment in the field
- LLEW are partners in the co-creation of their roles, organisational practices, and workforce development.
- LLEW has an opportunity for career progression in advanced practice and leadership roles within mental health and AOD services.
- LLEW are involved in and contribute to action learning and evaluation to ensure the LLE perspective is present in evidence for change and ensuring our experiences today, have influence on future workforce development.
- LLE voices are heard within all levels of service delivery, organisational structure, and decision-making.
- A commitment to growing and diversifying the LLEW, ensuring service users, their families, carers, and supporters are afforded choice and support in the services they have access to. In addition to planning for growth in the LLEW both in diversity in the workforce and opportunities for employment.
- Develop a shared organisational understanding of LLEW as a foundation for workforce development.



Supervision

Line Management Supervision

Line management supervision for Inspiro LLEW is essential and provided by a team leader or manager who is responsible for the overall performance of a team or program where the LLEW is employed. Line management supervision addresses matters related to service planning, development and delivery, ensuring activities are in accordance with funding and legislative requirements, external and internal policies, and procedures. Line managers have an active role in LLEW performance appraisal, assistance with managing the workload and provide direction on a day-to-day basis.

Supervision is an important element of Inspiro's culture, accountability and quality and clinical governance frameworks. Having regular and structured supervision provides a dedicated space to build positive working relationships, maintain two-way communication channels for feedback, support wellbeing, promote professional development opportunities, reflect on best practice, and monitor progress and goals.



Discipline Specific Supervision

Discipline Specific Supervision, sometimes referred to as Consumer Perspective, Carer Perspective or Peer supervision aims to improve LLE practice and is grounded in the same unique values and principles of LLE work.

LLE roles are unique in requiring a person to draw on their most personal, sometimes painful, and distressing experiences in their work, and often sit in the discomfort of pain of the people they are supporting. Discipline Specific Supervision is vital to ensure those in LLE roles are not further isolated, retraumatised or drifting from the values that underpin the work. It is essential this discipline specific supervision does not drift into clinical supervision or perspective.

Discipline Specific Supervision is provided by a LLEW supervisor who has experience in at least two ways. They have experience working in a dedicated LLE role; and can create and maintain a reflective space for debriefing, co reflecting, discussing the challenging and unique aspects of the role and role confusion or peer drift. The relationship, like LLE relationships, is founded on mutuality, where mutual learning occurs with the exchange of life experiences, skills and knowledge that each person brings.

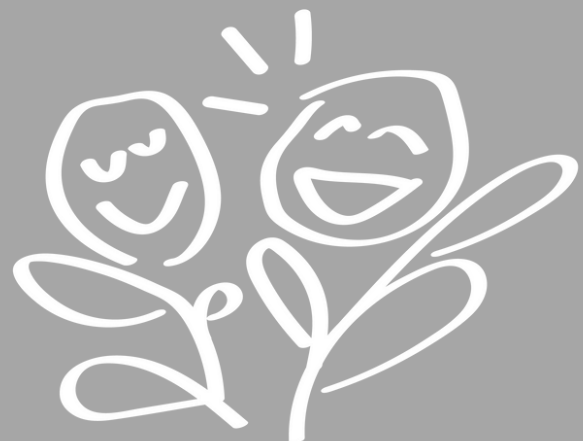
Co Reflection

The process of co- reflection is a vital component of Intentional Peer Support and is a space to come together and reflect on our practice – and how it aligns with the competencies of IPS. The goal is to build our expertise, through collective learning, doing, and reflecting, in order to put our ideas and learning into practice. Co-reflective spaces are intended to mirror a LLE connection to create relationships and grow personally and professionally. Co-reflection at Inspiro can be in a group or individual setting and is reflecting on IPS practice. The focus is kept on our interactions, rather than a specific individual. Co-reflection can be provided both internally and externally with the LLEW selecting the option that suits them best.

Organisational Commitment

Inspiro currently has a small LLEW. However, the LLEW is growing, largely in response to the 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System report and recommendations. To achieve the vision of this framework, and to authentically embed the LLE in the organisation, Inspiro has committed to the following actions:

- Co-production; developing the workforce in partnership with LLE.
- Workforce education: ensuring LLE roles are understood and supported.
- Policy and process review; removing any barriers to LLE practice.
- Robust recruitment strategies that reflect the characteristics of the profession.
- Professional support: including supervision, access to ongoing professional development, training, networking, and external support that is accessible, effective, and relevant.
- LLEW orientation program.
- LLE staff are involved in multiple levels throughout the organisation.
- A dedicated LLE lead role, to implement and monitor the framework, ensure work continues to be consistent with the values and principles of the work.
- Maintain a flexible, recovery-orientated workplace where the LLEW are supported, encouraged, and recognised in their profession.
- Line managers and supervisors demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge to support LLEW staff within multidisciplinary teams, and in performing their roles.
- The impact of lived experience work on consumer outcomes is evaluated and communicated.
- New funding opportunities are sought to expand the lived experience workforce within Inspiro.



Resources

Centre for Mental Health Learning (CMHL)

www.cmhl.org.au

Indigo Daya

www.indigodaya.com

Inside Out and Associates

www.insideoutconversations.org.au

Intentional Peer Support

www.intentionalpeersupport.org

Lived Experience Australia

www.livedexperienceaustralia.org.au

Mental Health Lived Experience Engagement Network (MHLEEN) -

www.mymentalhealth.org.au

National Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum

www.nmhccf.org.au

Peer Zone

www.peerzone.org

SHARC

www.sharc.org.au

TANDEM Carers

www.tandemcarers.org.au

VMIAC

www.vmiac.org.au

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