

Low Mood Improvement for Thalidomide Survivors (LIfTS) Study Information Sheet for Peer Supporters

What is the aim of the study?

Thalidomide survivors are more likely to experience common mental health problems, such as low mood, depression and/or anxiety, than people in the general population. The Thalidomide Trust is interested in finding ways to support beneficiaries experiencing these difficulties. Recent research with older people and people with long term health conditions has shown that a simple psychological approach called Behavioural Activation (BA), accompanied by telephone support, can reduce peoples' symptoms of low mood. The purpose of this study is to test whether a similar six session BA programme, accompanied by peer support from specially trained beneficiaries, can help Thalidomide survivors with low mood.

How will the study work?

We will work with 50 volunteers experiencing low mood. Half the volunteers will take part in a programme of BA with telephone peer support which will last around six weeks, and the other half will continue with the support they normally have. We call this support 'usual care' and it can come from family/friends, a GP or just looking after yourself.

What will I have to do if I become a Peer Supporter?

After your training, you will support up to four beneficiaries who are experiencing low mood. The project is being run over several months, so you will only have to support one or two beneficiaries at a time. All the beneficiaries taking part will be given a booklet (designed to help them find ways to maintain a positive mood) and they will have regular telephone peer support. As a Peer Supporter you will be expected to hold a 'start-up' discussion with each beneficiary you support, followed by six (normally weekly) support sessions, which could last up to 30 minutes. During the sessions you might talk about things like the difficulties the person is experiencing or how they have been feeling since you last spoke to them, and at the end of the session you might help them plan what they will do before you next speak.

What training and support will I get?

You will have a three day training course which will take place in York from lunchtime on Tuesday 6th November to lunchtime on Thursday 8th November. All your travel and accommodation costs will be met by the Trust. A week or two after the training you will have an opportunity to test your skills in a brief telephone assessment. Whilst you are supporting other beneficiaries, you will have regular support sessions over the telephone with Della Bailey, a researcher at the University of York experienced in delivering brief psychological interventions. Della will also lead the training course.

I'm interested – what happens next?

If you like to talk to someone before applying, please contact Liz Newbronner at the University of York - email liz.newbronner@york.ac.uk or telephone 01904 321630. Or you can fill in the application form. The closing date will be Wednesday 3 October. We will be holding informal telephone interviews for the role in early/mid October.