

Development of the Group

Initiated in response to identified service need. Move towards “shared care” model of mental health support between primary care and specialist mental health services.

Target Audience

Anyone identifying as the carer, family or friend of a loved one with a mental health difficulty, living in the Dublin North area.

Typical Group Outline

Check - in from each attendee

Facilitated discussion on topic chosen by the group for that particular evening

Break

Brainstorming topics and talks for future groups generated by members

Check - in and ending

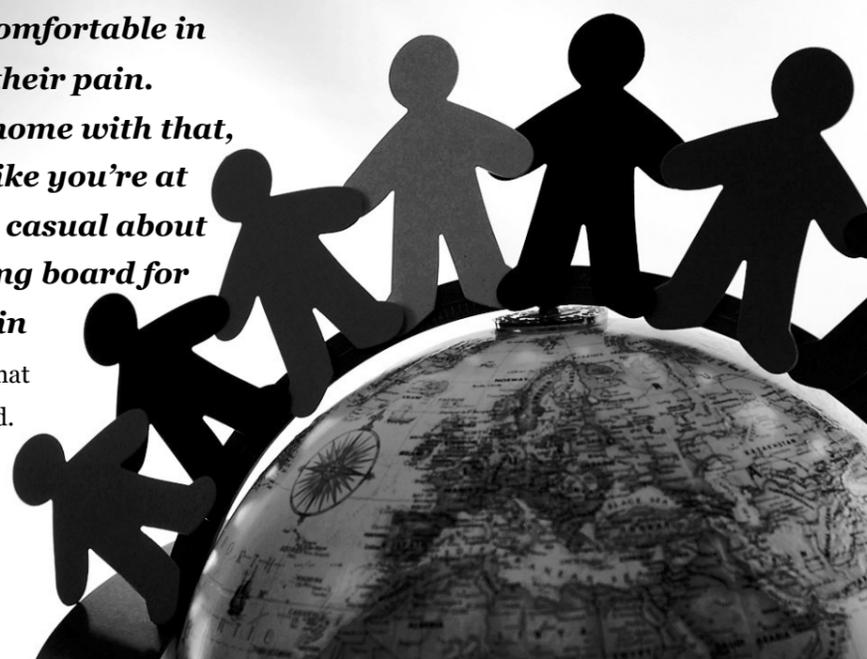
Experiences of the Attendees

- ▶ Attendees identified the group as a place for supporting them in their role as carers. They received information and support which enabled them to share experiences. Attendees found this helpful and comforting as it offered them a space to problem solve.
- ▶ Attendees gained confidence from attending the group. The group was seen as motivational in the carers own life as well as helping them to support their loved ones.
- ▶ Attendees liked having the ongoing input from professionals in relation to mental health, practical issues and general health and social issues.
- ▶ Focusing on the carers own need for self-care was identified as positive.
- ▶ Attendees voiced the wish to spread the message about carers groups to other areas. The group took ownership of wanting to support other people in their position to receive support all over the country.

"People have become more comfortable in sharing their problems and their pain.

Everyone's become more at home with that, you know? And yet, it's not like you're at home with a cup of tea being casual about it. It's more like it's a sounding board for

people. I wouldn't have that in the community" in reference to what the group is about and how it has evolved.



Caring For Carers

A peer support group for families and carers of people with mental health difficulties

"I think what you're planning now to have more talks is positive, for me personally. I mean the talking aspect, the supporting is very important, that's very good but I think that little extra structure is good" - in reference to the group structure.

Experiences of the Facilitators

- ▶ Observing the participation and willingness of attendees to share their stories with each other, and the mutual respect and trust that has developed among group members has been a privilege.
- ▶ Group must be flexible, each month people have different experiences to share and some need more time to talk than others. This develops organically throughout the session.
- ▶ Friendships and support networks have developed throughout the lifetime of this group.
- ▶ Getting the balance right of an educational group and a supportive group is key - both are important focal points, however this must be led by group demand.
- ▶ Challenge - aim to have group fully peer led and run has not yet happened.