

The Model of Lived Experience Leadership



The model of lived experience leadership was developed to guide thinking on lived experience leadership and assist reflective learning and growth opportunities for emerging and established leaders. We encourage mental health and social sector leaders to engage with the model to understand the positioning and value of lived experience in their setting and broader system transformation.

Drawing on research, community of practice discussions and broad community development activities, the model describes the actions, qualities and skills characteristic of effective lived experience leadership. The model embeds the values base of the mental health consumer movement and reflects an intersectional social justice approach.

Lived experience leadership is social movement leadership. Lived experience leaders connect their personal, professional and socio-political worlds in unique ways to lead change, linking local experience with organisational and systems change endeavours. It operates both within and outside of roles, organisations and settings.

Seeing 'lived experience' as a collective movement allows leaders to recognise that leadership is shared. Individual contributions are always built on the shoulders of others, and they pave the way for who leads with us today and after us tomorrow.

Lived experience leadership is powerful; it is a key lever for transformative systems change that benefits everyone.

Centres lived experience

- Works from lived experience lens and positioning
- Stays true to recovery values and the peer movement
- Recognizes strength in vulnerability
- Supports diverse lived experience: gender, sexuality, ability, culture, and locality
- Articulates distinction between consumer and carer perspectives

Champions justice

- Seeks to rebalance power in policy and service contexts
- Interrupts and innovates for social justice
- Challenges stereotypes, discrimination, and injustice
- Advocates for authentic coproduction and opportunities for lived experience-led action

Mobilises strategically

- Builds relationships and networks with peers and allies
- Responds to dilemmas and complexity using peer values
- Works for big picture and long term change

Stands up and speaks out

- Speaks with courage and conviction
- Stands tall in 'being out'
- Shapes communication and expectations effectively
- Uses personal story and collective perspective appropriately

Nurtures connected and collective spaces

- Creates safe spaces and empowers voices and action of others
- Connected to consumer or carer lived experience movements
- Supports own and others self care
- Promotes peer culture and values

Leads change

- Doesn't settle for the status quo
- Communicates with influence
- Builds collective responses and articulates solutions
- Proactive in working with discomfort
- Thinks deeply and reflects on leadership experience

In 2019 the SA Lived Experience Leadership Advocacy Network (LELAN) and UniSA's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Research and Education Group (MHSPRE) were successful in gaining two years of funding from the Fay Fuller Foundation to establish the Activating Lived Experience Leadership (ALEL) project. The ALEL project was designed as a participatory action research (PAR) and community development project, bringing people together to improve the way that lived experience leadership is defined, recognised and utilised at the systems level. *The Model of Lived Experience Leadership* is evidence informed and has been co-designed with the lived experience community, and sector leaders. We acknowledge the contribution of people connected to the project. Their insights, thinking and words have directly shaped this model.

For more information, resources and background reports visit the project page at www.lelan.org.au/alel

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