

LEARNING HANDBOOK

Guidance and tools to support systematic learning before, during and after project activity in health and care

Peer assist

A peer assist brings together a group that are embarking on a new project, programme or initiative with others that are more experienced or knowledgeable in that field.

Tool	Time	Resources	Physicality	Interactivity
Peer assist	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★

When?

A peer assist should be carried out before a project or programme begins.

Being able to learn from those who have carried out similar projects can help to avoid problems in the future, and in turn, can help save money and resources.

It may also be beneficial for those returning from a career break for example, as processes or tools may have developed since their previous involvement in this area, and finding this out prior to a project beginning can help inform the approach.

Who?

Members of the project/programme team that are looking to learn act as hosts for the peer assist. They ask the questions and guide the discussion, with one member acting as a facilitator.

The visiting team that have the 'sought-after' experience and knowledge participate in answering questions and sharing what they know with the hosts. They might be from other teams within the same organisation, from other organisations or even other sectors.

How?

The overall time for the session required can be between half a day to a full day.

A facilitator will open up the activity and introduce the aims and objectives of a peer assist.

The host team will then present the outline and context of the project or programme and what they would like to get out of the session – this may be informed by gaps in their knowledge they have identified through use of a ['before action review'](#).

The visiting team then has an open discussion with the hosts to share their learning. The discussion does not need to be strictly structured as this will allow for valuable knowledge and experience to be shared that might not have been anticipated.

It is recommended that the learning shared by the visiting team is collated on sticky notes, or taken down by a note taker from the host team.

To close the peer assist, the host team then takes time to analyse the notes taken and identify

actions that have arisen from the discussion. The visiting team take a back seat at this stage and allow the hosts to make sense of what they have learned.

Things you need:

- A facilitator
- An open space for discussion and movement (if collating learning on sticky notes it's best to be able to move around freely)
- Sticky notes, flipcharts and pens to record

Further reading:

- University of Ottawa and KM4Dev - [Peer assist animation](#)
- NHS eLearning - [Peer assist e-learning](#)
- Health and Social Care Information Centre - [Peer assist postcard](#)