



It won't have escaped your attention that here at Aurora we talk constantly about our volunteers, if we're not talking about the great work that our existing volunteers do for us, we are trying to shout about the benefits of volunteering for the organisation, but we think it's best to hear about the volunteering experience from the volunteers themselves. With this in mind I set out to ask my volunteers a few questions about just why it is that they have given so much time and energy to the organisation. ....

"The first thing that attracted me to Aurora was that I heard it was set up by people that had been through treatment and rehabilitation themselves and they would be helping other people that were struggling, and because I had been through the system it was an opportunity to give back." Says Jonathan, one of the organisations longest serving volunteers, and others agree with him. In another interview a volunteer told me "I wanted to basically give something back, I know that's a cliché and that people always say this but it was something I was passionate about doing". Its common theme that arises when we interview new volunteers here at Aurora. The first question I ask potential volunteers when I meet them is "why do you want to be a Peer Supporter, more and more often I hear "I want to give something back to a system that has helped me so much." Aurora offers a platform for individuals to do this.

Peer Mentors have to attend a number of training sessions before they are allocated a client. This training can often seem overwhelming, it can feel daunting to walk into a classroom after years of not being in that environment. We try to create interesting, useful, fun and relevant training sessions. " I enjoyed the training, I enjoyed the fact it didn't go on for hours and hours, It didn't ever get boring which was good. The whole lot was really interesting." Says Jonathan. Another volunteer says "I think the training was really interesting because of the way it was delivered. It wasn't like we were the pupils and the trainers were the teachers. We were treated like adults, we touched serious subjects but it was also light hearted in places, which is important because the nature of the training means that it can be a bit depressing at times."

Volunteers at Aurora Project Lambeth get the chance to work with clients on a one to one basis, mentoring the clients through often very hard situations. It's not an easy job but it comes with its rewards "I enjoy the gratitude that clients show when you're helping them out with something. Yeah, the gratitude is really nice!" exclaims one of the volunteers, who has grown in confidence and self-esteem since starting at Aurora at the beginning of this year.

Volunteering also gives the chance for volunteers to stay on track and meet their own recovery goals. "Sometimes I will see my client and afterwards I will reflect on conversations we have had and

it will help me as well. I will look at it as I am offering clients certain advice and then I think “am I taking that advice myself?” It sort of helps me step up my game.”

So, how do you think our volunteers would describe the project to others? “How would I describe Aurora Project Lambeth to others? Rewarding, encouraging, and comforting.”

If you are interested in becoming an Aurora Project Lambeth Volunteer Peer Mentor please contact Jenni Parker, Service Delivery Manager, [jenni@auroraprojectlambeth.org.uk](mailto:jenni@auroraprojectlambeth.org.uk) .