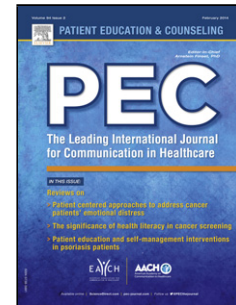


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Parent-to-parent peer support for parents of children with a disability: A mixed method study

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Highlights

- Parents of a child with a disability can experience high psychological distress
- Peer parenting support is valuable in fostering personal growth
- Befrienders act as catalysts to nurture supportive meaningful relationships
- Befriending positively influences parents' psychological and emotional wellbeing

Abstract

Objectives: This paper will report on the findings of a study which investigated the influence of a befriending (parent-to-parent peer support) scheme on parents whose children have a disability or additional need. The scheme operated from an acute children's tertiary setting in the UK.

Methods: A prospective concurrent mixed method design collected Interview (n=70) and questionnaire (n=68) data at two time-points from befrienders (n=13) and befriendees (n=26).

Results: The main qualitative findings of the study relate to the different degrees parents (befriendees and befrienders) moved from being lost, to finding and being a guide and getting to a better place. The quantitative findings demonstrate that parent-to-parent peer support has a positive influence on parents' levels of psychological distress and their ability to cope with being a parent of a child with a disability.

Conclusion: The befriending scheme acted as a catalyst for many parents to move towards a place where they could grow and begin to flourish and thrive.

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