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Introduction

Volunteers play a vital role in strengthening communities, whether that community is a neighbourhood, a peer support group, a recovery service, a youth project, or any setting where people come together to support one another. This workbook is designed to help you build confidence and develop the practical skills needed to contribute effectively in whichever community you serve.

Throughout the workbook, you will explore the personal qualities and communication skills that support positive engagement, including how to encourage participation, build rapport, work collaboratively, resolve conflict and promote equity and inclusion. These skills are valuable in all volunteer settings and help create environments where people feel safe, respected and motivated to get involved.

By working alongside local groups, services or community projects, volunteers can have a meaningful impact. You may help people access opportunities, support wellbeing, strengthen connections or contribute to positive change. When volunteers feel confident, informed and supported, they become powerful role models for engagement and can help shape services and activities that truly meet people's needs.

How the Sessions Fit Together

The sessions in this workbook build on one another to create a complete learning journey. Each session introduces new ideas, skills and reflective activities that deepen your understanding of community work. As you move through the workbook, you will explore your personal qualities, learn how communities function, practise effective communication, understand how teams develop, strengthen your awareness of equity and inclusion, and consider the structures that support volunteers. Together, these sessions help you grow into a confident, informed and compassionate Community Champion.

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is practical, reflective and designed to be used actively. You will find:

- clear explanations and guidance
- reflective questions to help you explore your experiences
- activities that support learning and self-awareness
- tools to strengthen inclusive community engagement

- space to record your ideas, insights and development

Use this workbook at your own pace. You may choose to work through it individually, with a partner, or as part of a group. Discuss ideas with others, try out new approaches, and reflect on what you learn. The more you engage with the activities and questions, the more meaningful your learning will become.

Everything you do here contributes to your growth as an effective, confident and compassionate volunteer. This workbook is designed to support you wherever you choose to make a difference - in your neighbourhood, a wellbeing or recovery service, a youth project, a community hub, or any setting where people come together to support one another.

Keeping a Reflective Journal

As you work through this workbook, you are encouraged to keep a Reflective Journal. This is your personal record of learning, a space to explore what you tried, what you noticed, what went well, and what you want to develop further. There is no right or wrong way to keep a journal; it simply needs to reflect your own experiences and thoughts.

A reflective journal is more than a diary of what you did. It helps you record your learning, think about your experiences, notice your emotional and thought processes, reflect on what worked well and what didn't, and identify what you might try next time. In this way, your journal becomes a space where you can explore your development in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

When you write about an activity or experience, try asking yourself:

- Did it go well? Why? What did I learn?
- Did it go badly? Why? What did I learn?
- How could I improve or approach it differently next time?

Your journal might include:

- challenges you faced and how you responded
- new skills you tried out
- conversations or discussions that made you think
- courses, books, videos or websites that helped you learn
- moments where you felt confident, or moments where you didn't
- ideas you want to explore further

Learning new skills takes time, practice and perseverance. A reflective journal helps you become more aware of how you learn, what motivates you, and what

support you might need. At first, reflective writing may feel unfamiliar, but it becomes easier with practice. Over time, your journal becomes a valuable tool for personal growth, confidence building and understanding your role as a volunteer.

Remember: your journal is for *you*. It is a safe space to explore your learning honestly and openly, and it will grow into something meaningful and directly relevant to your development.

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Session One: The Role of a Community Champion Volunteer

Understanding your Strengths, Values and Contribution as a Volunteer

Purpose of the Session

This session introduces the role of a Community Champion and explores the qualities, experiences and motivations that support effective volunteering. Whether you volunteer in a neighbourhood project, a peer support group, a recovery service or any other community setting, this session helps you understand what you bring to the role and how you can support participation, inclusion and positive change. You will reflect on your personal qualities, explore your experiences, and consider how volunteers help strengthen communities and build trust.

What Is a Community Champion?

Volunteers play a vital role in encouraging participation, building trust and supporting people to access opportunities. As a Community Champion, you may be working in your local neighbourhood, a wellbeing or recovery service, a community hub, a peer group or any setting where people come together to support one another.

Community Champions are often best placed to understand the needs, interests and challenges within their community. You may share similar experiences, backgrounds or circumstances with the people you support, which helps build rapport and trust. In contrast, organisations or service providers may struggle to create the same level of connection.

Your role helps bridge this gap by:

- widening participation and access to services
- promoting events, projects and opportunities
- encouraging involvement in activities that support personal and community development
- acting as an ambassador for engagement
- inspiring, supporting and encouraging others
- signposting people to appropriate services
- networking with groups, schools, organisations and support providers
- voicing the needs of the community
- developing new skills and understanding what motivates people
- supporting people who may not usually access opportunities
- helping strengthen community cohesion

- working as part of a team and keeping others informed

These responsibilities apply across all volunteer settings, from neighbourhood projects to recovery groups, wellbeing hubs, youth services and community organisations.

Personal Qualities Useful in Community Work

Exploring Your Personal Qualities

Every volunteer brings a unique mix of qualities, strengths and experiences to their role. Understanding your personal qualities can help you recognise what you already offer, where you feel confident, and what you may want to develop further. Some qualities are essential in community work, some are helpful in certain situations, and others may need to be used carefully depending on the context.

The qualities have been grouped into themed clusters to help you explore them in a clear and meaningful way. This structure encourages you to think about how different qualities relate to one another and how they may be useful in different situations.

Instructions

1. Read through each cluster of qualities.
2. Highlight or circle the qualities that feel most like you.
3. Choose five to eight qualities that you believe are especially important in community work.
4. Choose any qualities you feel may be less helpful or that you would like to develop further.
5. Reflect on how these qualities show up in your volunteering or everyday life.

People-Focused Qualities

Helpful, Good listener, Friendly, Sympathetic, Accepting, Empathetic, Caring, Attentive, Concerned

Communication Qualities

Assertive, Persuasive, Opinionated, Blunt, Quiet, Loud, Confident, Good-tempered, Honest, Outgoing

Emotional Qualities

Anxious, Worried, Withdrawn, Frantic, Emotional, Insecure, Proud, Mature, Calm

Work-Style Qualities

Organised, Reliable, Flexible, Persistent, Tenacious, Committed, Capable, Knowledgeable, Careful, Confidential, Patient

Energy and Engagement Qualities

Energetic, Excitable, Full of ideas, Will try anything, Strong, Amusing, Sense of humour, Interested,

Reflection Prompt: How Do These Qualities Show Up in Your Volunteering? Think about:

Which qualities help you build trust and rapport?

Which qualities help you stay calm or organised?

Which qualities help you motivate or encourage others?

Are there qualities you use too much — or not enough?

Are there qualities you would like to strengthen or develop?

You may find that some qualities are helpful in one situation but less helpful in another. For example, being ‘opinionated’ may help you advocate for someone but may need to be used gently when supporting someone who feels unsure. ‘Excitable’ may energise a group but may overwhelm someone who is anxious. This activity helps you explore these nuances.

My tree: Exploring My Experiences

Using the page overleaf to draw a picture of a tree that represents your experiences to date.

This creative activity helps you explore your experiences, strengths and challenges. Your tree might include:

- branches representing different life experiences
- blossoms representing achievements
- cut-off branches representing challenges or endings
- leaning or straight trunks representing stability or change