

## Mental health volunteering - analysis

The analysis of the literature review is based on the 3 'talent' components as follows:

### **Commitment**

1. There are a range of strategies in place for overcoming most of the various barriers identified, however some further focus on how to manage 'practicality' issues is needed.
2. There are many strategies available for overcoming the 'safety' issues, although some examples of how these are implemented in practice would be helpful.
3. There is little evidence of how to engage with the 'social/affiliation' needs, the 'status/influence' needs and the 'achievement' needs of prospective volunteers. The evidence that volunteering can provide this is strong, but there is little guidance in how these messages are communicated in the volunteer recruitment process.

### **Competence**

1. Many strategies are cited for developing skills and knowledge of both the organisation and prospective volunteers. However, it would be helpful to cite examples of how these are implemented in practice.

### **Contribution**

1. There are a number of ways people can be 'helpless victims' of the situation  
The main issues are associated with mental health being misunderstood and stigmatised. A range of proposed strategies are in place to manage this, which could be enhanced with case study examples.
2. The likelihood of moving 'bystanders' to 'beneficiaries' is undermined by the lack of guidance on how to communicate the relevant of volunteering and its associated benefits (See 'commitment', point 3 above). The role of support workers and other agencies may provide some opportunities to develop thinking and practice here.
3. There are a number of agencies that could positively influence the situation as follows:
  - a) Locally: key-workers, support staff, job-centres and 'bridge-building' organisations.  
Partnership-working at this level could influence the organisation's decision-makers to engage with volunteers with mental health needs. There are a number of strong arguments that can be developed in favour of developing mental health volunteering initiatives, but currently it appears that these are not overtly linked to practical activities that take advantage of the opportunities. Also, if mental health volunteering initiatives are in place, there appears to be scope to enhance the 'business case' for the continuing investment.
  - b) Nationally: the Government departments, employers and trade unions  
The argument for investing in mental health volunteering initiatives is strong, however it can be undermined if dialogue is limited between key national bodies. NB They each have a vested interest in positive outcomes, but the strategies to proceed can raise conflicting priorities.
4. There are limited strategies in place to move 'beneficiaries' to 'sponsors'.  
There are clearly a number of beneficiaries of mental health volunteering initiatives, and these range from individual volunteers who have influence, to local and national organisations. Example of how this can be achieved would be helpful

In addition, the ways in which 'sponsors' can be nurtured appears under-researched.

## Mental health volunteering – further areas for research

The above analysis has highlighted a number of gaps in research, strategies and initiatives to encourage volunteering for people with mental health needs.

These gaps have been framed as further research questions to be explored with relevant volunteer-involving organisations and practitioners. Further, a model of human resource management (Ulrich 1998) has been adapted to portray the trends of the current gaps in mental health volunteering research, strategies and initiatives.

	Focus on processes	Focus on people	
	<b>Strategic Partner</b>	<b>Change Agent</b>	
<b>Strategic focus</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can support workers and other agencies facilitate recruitment/placement of volunteers with mental health needs?</li> <li>2. How can an organisation engage with local MH partners in a way that satisfies the agendas of its own decision-makers?</li> <li>3. How can inter-agency dialogue at a national level promote mental health volunteering initiatives?</li> </ol>		<b>Strategic focus</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How can recruitment messages engage with 'social/affiliation', 'status/influence' and 'achievement' needs of prospective volunteers with mental health needs?</li> <li>5. What practical examples exist that show volunteer-involving organisations developing their skills/knowledge to engage with volunteers with mental health needs?</li> <li>6. What practical examples exist that show how volunteers with mental health needs can develop their skills/knowledge to better engage with volunteer-involving organisations?</li> </ol>		
<b>Operational focus</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. What do organisations specifically do to manage the barriers of 'practicality'?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. How can potential 'sponsors' of mental health volunteering initiatives be identified and nurtured?</li> <li>9. What practical examples exist where organisations overcome peoples' fear of being misunderstood or stigmatised due to their mental health needs?</li> </ol>	<b>Operational focus</b>
	<b>Administrative Expert</b>	<b>Volunteer Champion</b>	
	<b>Focus on processes</b>	<b>Focus on people</b>	