TOP TIPS

START
inspiring minds

for working with Volunteers who experience mental health problems

1. Promote Mental Health
Let volunteers know that it's OK to talk about their mental health and say what support they need eg. put posters up, have statements in adverts, use appropriate language. It's always someone's choice to disclose their health but these can act as signs that the reaction will be positive.

2. Supervision and Support
All volunteers need appropriate support and supervision.
Regular reviews can be helpful for both parties. Even an informal check-in to keep in touch shows support. A buddy system can work well. Give volunteers a named contact for any issues or concerns.

3. Match volunteers with the right role
Spend time matching the volunteer to an appropriate role where they can contribute well and develop towards their goal.
One where they feel comfortable but has enough scope to grow with as their confidence increases.

4. Be flexible
Be adaptable to changes that can impact on attendance eg appointments, fluctuations in mental health.
Having a flexible approach enables volunteers to still contribute eg slightly changing a task, introducing breaks.

5. Be asset-based
Focus on a volunteer's skills and interests and what they can bring to the organisation. Take a positive approach and look at support for positive mental health for all volunteers.

TOP TIPS

START inspiring minds

for working with Volunteers who experience mental health problems

6. Training
Staff might be interestes in mental health first aid training.
Offer training to volunteers who would like to develop certain skills. Recovery Academy offers a wide range of free courses.

7. Boundaries
Ensure each party is clear about expectations.
Provide a clear role to volunteers.
Clear boundaries for safeguarding eg swapping phone numbers, sharing info.
Be clear about your role- signpost when more support is needed.
It might be appropriate to have a clear goal and endpoint to the volunteering.

8.DBS and references
Volunteers might not have recent referees- be flexible about who can provide a reference.
Chat to your DBS providers and ensure appropriate level for role.
Offer assistance for any form filling to all volunteers.

9. Informal Interviews
Volunteers may be nervous about the application process.
Keep it as light and informal as you can eg chat about relevant interests to get to know the volunteer.

10. Don't Panic
Much of volunteering best practice also supports volunteers with mental problems.
The key is flexibility- adjustments don't need to huge and expensive; it's often the small things that enable people to participate.