

# **Volunteer Centre Merton**

## **What skills do you need to be a good interviewer**

### **Empathising**

By empathising you are appreciating the volunteer's position

- Acknowledge the volunteer's position and how they are feeling – they could be anxious, depressed, stressed, feeling foolish, feeling that they are wasting your time, worried about being rejected, feeling inadequate, nervous aggressive.
- Listen and look at the tone of voice, facial expression, body language – how is the volunteer feeling?
- During the interview reflect back by repetition, a phrase or sentence that has seemed significant. In this way the importance and intensity of the feeling is acknowledged.

### **Rephrasing and summarising**

These skills allow you as an interviewer to check your understanding of what has been said and to demonstrate that you are listening.

- If you are not sure what the other person means, repeat it in different words and ask if this is what is meant.
- Do not repeat back exactly what has been said. This indicates that you have heard the words, but not understood the meaning.
- When you are summarising focus on the main points or ideas.
- If you are unsure what to say next summarise. It may prompt the prospective volunteer to say more or develop another line of thought.
- Do not constantly rephrase and summarise as it can be very irritating for the person being interviewed.

### **Listening**

Listening is active not passive. Active listening is about making sure that you really are listening and that you show you are listening.

- Remember to listen
- Be seen to be listening – make eye contact, nod.
- Show that you are listening by summarising what the volunteer has said but in different words
- Don't be afraid to get someone to clarify what they have said if you are unsure what they mean.

- Avoid making judgements, be aware of your own prejudices.
- Distinguish between facts, opinions and preferences.
- Concentrate on both the words and the body language of the person.

## **Questioning**

Questions allow areas to be explored more deeply and to open up a new line of thought. There are two basic types of questions – open and closed.

- Open questions are useful for eliciting facts, feelings, opinions and preferences.  
How? What? Why?
- Closed questions produce precise, normally one word answers.  
Who? Where? When? Did you?
- Prompting – help someone by encouraging them to say something they find difficult, eg “are you saying that you would rather not work in the afternoon?”

## **Making sure you put the right impression across**

The person you are interviewing will notice and respond to your behaviour.

- You need to be reassuring
- You need to be interested and sympathetic
- You need to be relaxed, calm and unhurried.
- Speak quietly and slowly and make sure you are using language that the volunteer will understand – avoid jargon and abbreviations, keep your vocabulary simple.
- Keep bureaucracy to a minimum, don't write anything down unless you must do so.