



## **Involving the wider community**

### Content notes

#### **The Patient as Resource and as Citizen**

##### **1 Engaging volunteers**

Participants need to have the confidence to approach patients and public and ask for their help

Involvement professionals often overlook the patient as resource. Yet, within any group you will find a rich source of examples of volunteering as well active participation in the community.

This will enable the group to explore

- motivation for participation
- how badly professionals and organisations react to participation that challenges their professional expertise and
- how it can help them deliver services.

Staff do not normally think of volunteers as involvement. Yet when we ask someone to come to a patient group we are asking him or her to volunteer.

People who are already volunteering within the department or Trust are a rich resource. They often have in-depth knowledge of how the service is running, they have picked up problems, they may know how service could be run well from their observations. They may be the people who can help staff recruit people for the groups or 'committees'. Some Trusts have developed a system whereby volunteers are represented on the Board.

#### **Exercise**

An exploration of what participants would really like help with, followed by skills patients could bring is one way of enlarging participants' views of the resource they are overlooking. OHP lists skills that may be sought and found in volunteers.

Discuss with participants if they want to add action on volunteers to their portfolio. Those who are interested could be asked to work on it in a small group or individuals could have as a project to get more information.