



Frequently Asked Questions

Question: Who can take part?

Answer: Anyone over 18 years of age with lived experience of a mental health problem can take part. This could be your own personal experience or you may be close to someone who has experienced a mental health problem or work in a role that supports people's mental health. If this sounds like you, then you have what we are looking for.

Questions: Will I be asked about my experience?

Answer: We don't need details about your lived experiences and you will not be asked to provide them. We respect your right to keep your personal life separate from your work with us. We also recognise that you may want to share your stories, and that's okay too.

Question: I have additional needs, can I still take part?

Answer: When you are contacted by our team let them know what additional requirements you have and we will do our very best to meet them.

Question: I struggle with using a computer, will I still be able to take part?

Answer: The online modules we will use to support the learning as part of the Voice of Experience College are designed to be user friendly and enable self-directed learning. This means that you can move between sections with ease, you can explore in any particular order and you can go back and re-read the material at any time. There are no tests or exams and you will be able to chat about the online modules during the workshops and ask questions if you want to. The online modules will be available online for free (we call it 'open access') and you can view them as many times as you want to.

Question: Can I bring a friend?

Answer: If you are nervous to come alone or you want to bring a friend, carer or support worker with you to the workshops that is fine. Just let our team know so we can make sure we have enough biscuits!

Question: Do I need to attend all three workshops?

Answer: Each of our workshops will cover a different topic and so each one will be useful to you. However, if you feel unable to attend a workshop for any reason the team will be able to accommodate that and will make sure that you are supported if you still wish to be part of the Voice of Experience College.

Question: Can I drop out?

Answer: This is a voluntary opportunity you can drop out at any point.

Question: When will more details be available about time and dates?

Answer: We are planning to discuss availability with members as they volunteer and then will let people know the exact details at the end of July. The first workshop will be in September. No preparation is needed. Online activities will be completed in the time between the workshops.

Question: Where and when will the workshops be held?

Answer: The workshops will be held in York (city centre or at the University of York) starting in September 2019 and take place over a period of approximately 8 weeks.

It is hoped that the success of this college will lead to others being run in different locations around the UK and hopefully the world. The precise location and date will be determined through conversation with everyone who signs up to be a part of the college so that we can make it as accessible as possible.

After the first three workshops, there will be two extra optional (maximum 2.5 hour) sessions. The optional sessions will focus on more specific skills (e.g. blogging, peer review) that could be useful if you want to work with Cochrane after the College. These additional sessions will be held in November and December 2019 (in York).

Question: How much of my time will this take?

Answer: The first workshops will approx 2.5 hours in length.

You will be invited to complete 4 online modules (approx 4 hours total of learning time). But this is self-directed and when you want to do it in between workshops.

After the first three workshops, there will be two additional optional (maximum 2.5 hour) workshops to learn more specific skills to help enable you to work with Cochrane after the course if you want to these will be in November 2019 and December 2019.

All workshops will include lots of breaks and refreshments.

If you decide to work with the Group in the future you can dedicate as much or as little time to the role as you want to. We understand that you have other commitments and appreciate you volunteering your time.

Question: What's in it for me?

Answer: From the workshops you will gain an understanding of how reviews of health research are created, what we do with them after they are created and how you can use this knowledge in your own lives and the lives of those around you.

You will gain skills in critical evaluation, enabling you to make informed decisions about your own health care choices as well as help those close to you understand more about evidence based medicine.

Question: How will I contribute to the Cochrane Common Mental Disorders Community?

Answer: We aim to support you to volunteer as part of our broader team. You will be working alongside a dedicated team of people from a variety of backgrounds who want to include people from outside of our 'research bubble' into the review process.

With the skills you gain from being a part of the Voice of Experience College you will have the opportunity to contribute to the work of Cochrane, to have an impact on how research is established and communicated, and this in turn can make a difference to others with lived experience.

There will be opportunities to learn more after the workshops are finished and we welcome people to become 'Consumer Reviewers'. You already have what we are looking for, we want to empower you with the skills to use your experience to be a part of the review process. We want to create reviews that are relevant to people with everyday lived experience of common mental health problems. We want to better understand what matters to people and to improve the ways we involve people with lived experience in what we are doing. We want to ensure that people with lived experience (as well as many other experts with different perspectives) contribute to everything we publish.

Question: Will I be paid expenses?

Answer: This is a voluntary opportunity so you will not be paid for your time. However, we plan to contribute to local travel expenses (e.g. local bus or rail fares). We can't provide mileage contributions, but when workshops are held on the University of York campus we will pay for parking. Car parks can be busy on campus so when possible we will also reserve parking spaces for members of the college.

Refreshments will be provided at all the workshops.

We will keep updating the FAQs please tell us what is missing and what you need to know (also if you spot any mistakes).

Latest update 25 June 2019