

Qualities for the Volunteer Support and Centre Support Team Role

- Maturity – not necessarily in the sense of age, but rather the kind of maturity that comes from a variety of life experiences and learning. This implies a willingness and ability to embrace an array of situations and people in a way that enhances the quality of community and work life. Maturity also implies having a healthy self-awareness – knowing our triggers, etc.
- Leadership – having people in the role who lead by example and who have gained the respect of others in their community/circle of connections. This extends to honouring commitments with the guests, staff, volunteers and others in lived community, while also taking responsibility for one's actions. Leadership in the team is not about being out front – it is about leading from behind.
- It is important for the team to have personal values and practices that dovetail with the guiding principles of Corrymeela – inclusiveness, embracing difference and diversity, ensuring personal safety and safe spaces for people, and respectfully and sensitively having difficult conversations.
- Being present – spending time in shared space in the volunteer accommodation as well as other places on site or on outings. This is more than scheduled things such as the weekly volunteer meeting, community dinner or volunteer circle time. This also means being intentionally present in the centre as well as the volunteer accommodation for conversation, watching a movie or sports event, participating in board games, going for a walk, etc. In some situations, this may mean being fully engaged in conversation or it may mean being an observer in other situations. It is knowing when to enter a shared space and also when to depart a shared space.
- Relationships are central and people in the role must be committed to and skilled at developing and fostering positive relationships in centre with our guests as well as the lived community. While all of us tend to gravitate to certain people in a group, the team must intentionally include all members of the group. This is not about dealing with everyone in precisely the same manner; rather it is about being inclusive, fair and available to all. The team must be able to engage in conversation and dialogue at both the individual and group level. Such demands may come at any time, so flexibility is an important quality.
- Observant – experienced and skilled at observing individual and group dynamics in a work and shared living environment. This encompasses the ability to “read” spoken and unspoken communication, body language and behaviour as one way of assessing the wellbeing of the group. In essence, this means being in touch with how the volunteers are coping and participating in community.
- Life together – it is essential for the team to enjoy sharing space and spending a great deal of time with young adults through a mix of good and challenging times. Unless one has spent notable amounts of time with young adults, things like noise and energy levels may come as a bit of a surprise or even a shock.
- Community wellbeing – while the team must place a high priority on the personal wellbeing of individual volunteers, the highest priority must be on the collective wellbeing of the entire volunteer community.
- Effective communicator – listens well and has good judgment about when to speak and when to remain silent; knowing when to let silence fill the space and not feeling you have to speak. When communicating to others, the team must be able to do so clearly in writing or verbally. When receiving communication from the team, the volunteers must feel it was worthwhile.