



Run by Oblong
197 Woodhouse Street, Leeds LS6 2NY
Tel: 0113 2459610

Volunteer Handbook



WELCOME!



Hello and welcome to Oblong at Woodhouse Community Centre.

Volunteers are an essential part of Oblong. The groups and activities we deliver are only made possible because of people like you, who willingly give up their time to help others.

This handy guide will help familiarise you with our background and structure. It will also explain your induction process and provide a potted introduction to the groups and activities you could get involved with.

The guide is yours to keep and refer to whenever necessary – you can even add important information yourself as you go along.

We hope you will enjoy volunteering with us!

How to use this guide

Section 1 of this guide contains information about Oblong and your induction process.

Section 2 contains tools and advice on how to identify issues or areas for change and for setting goals and making changes. You might find the tools in Section 2 useful to complete and take along to your supervision sessions.

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Section 1

Who we are

About the organisation

Established in 1996, Oblong is a community resource centre that provides advice, support and facilities for local people who want to make a difference through volunteering and community projects. Oblong is a user-led organisation which is strongly embedded in the local community. The centre has space and facilities for hire to individuals and groups.

Fundamental principles and values

Our aim is to support people over the age of 18, and projects to help create active and flourishing communities. To achieve this we provide volunteer opportunities, learning and training courses and facilities at Woodhouse Community Centre where people can come to make a difference through volunteering, participating or running their own projects.

We have a flat management structure, which we believe is vital in ensuring our organisation does not reflect the inequalities that can exist in wider society.

Bobalong helps us to achieve this. It is a monthly meeting for volunteers, staff, trustees and service users. It is an open space where people can raise issues and take responsibility for matters relating to Oblong.

Our values guide the way we work. We hope these points will help you get an idea of what Oblong is about!

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Empowerment | - people feeling able to change their community for the better. |
| Collectivism | - making decisions together as equals. |
| Sustainability | - caring for the future of the community and the environment. |
| Community led | - directed by people, focusing on people's ideas and needs. |
| Equality | - ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. |
| Respect and care | - how we relate to each other and the people we work with. |

Oblong staff



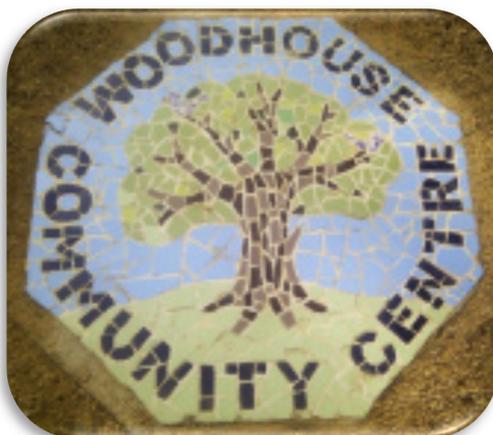
Mark W



Helen



Duncan



Chris

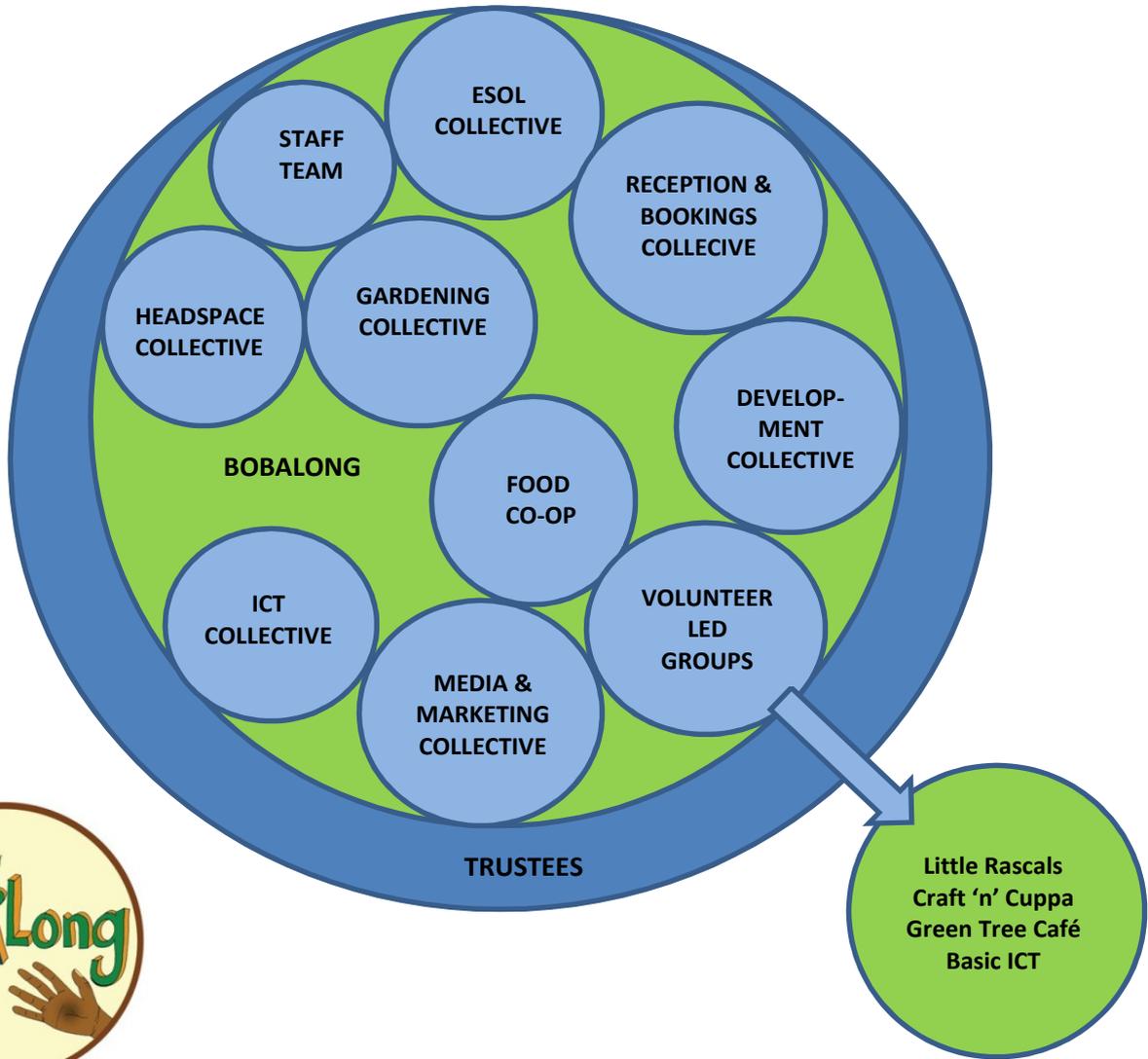


Emma



Mark S

Oblong's structure



How to get involved

The Collectives

We call our groups Collectives because all paid staff and volunteers work collectively in them - we make decisions as equals and do the work together. All volunteers are invited to take an active role in the Collective meetings – it's a great way to get to know people, get involved, and learn new skills!

Ask about days and times of individual Collectives during your induction.

The Reception and Bookings Collective

The volunteers who work on Reception and Bookings are essential – they keep our community centre going! These volunteers are the 'face' of the community centre, and offering a warm welcome to visitors, volunteers and centre users is a valuable and rewarding responsibility. Reception and Bookings volunteers have the opportunity to contribute to the smooth running of the building, and make it an enjoyable space for people to use. This important role can help volunteers build skills in:

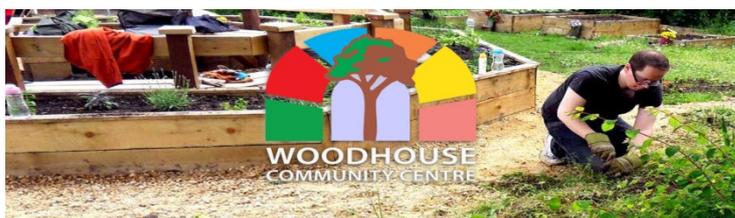
- Welcoming people to the centre.
- Administration and room bookings.
- Using telephone and email systems.
- Meeting new people.
- Learning about health and safety procedures.
- Preparing rooms for group activities.
- Improving practical English language skills.
- Experience to put on your CV.



Gardening Collective

The gardening group transforms derelict land into community gardens. They plan, consult, plant and dig! Everyone is welcome - no experience is needed, just enjoyment of gardening! Tools and gloves are provided, and support is given. From time to time, extra sessions are held on subjects such as path laying, furniture making, garden design, and fence making. This is an ideal opportunity for any volunteer to:

- Work outside.
- Meet new people.
- Learn a range of gardening skills.
- Create a brand new garden from start (talking to residents), to finish – the opening party!



Media and Marketing Collective

A team who use creative skills for projects including:

- Publicity for Oblong and other organisations from flyers to posters, logo design, articles, newsletters, social media, websites and videos. This may involve a fee for external organisations.
- The Newsroom: producing stories for the Woodhouse Stories blog, Oblong website and social media using writing, photography and film making.
- Oblong Cinema: films by Yorkshire film makers shown at a monthly event at Oblong.
- Personal and other projects: From short films to art installations.
- Use creative skills including: writing, photography, graphic design, illustration, art, film making, editing, journalism.
- A range of skill levels from beginner to professional. Training is available. People who are looking to develop existing skills are particularly welcome.



ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Collective

This Collective develops and maintains the Woodhouse Community Centre network, and back-ends systems used by Oblong staff and volunteers e.g. phone system, ICT suite, booking system, website maintenance.

This would be suitable for people with existing knowledge in:

- Intermediate computer skills.
- Computer security.
- Systems administration.
- Networking.
- Troubleshooting problems.
- drupal, php, mysql, civiCRM
- Webhosting.



English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Collective

Weekly informal English conversation classes aimed at anyone including asylum seekers and refugees. There are 3 ways to be involved in the ESOL Collective:

1. Student - This is a great opportunity to:

- Meet other people.
- Practise English in a supportive environment.
- Develop English skills for work, and other practical day-to-day activities.

2. Teacher - Lesson plans are available, and you do not need teaching experience. Speakers of English as a second language are welcome to volunteer as ESOL teachers. An ideal opportunity for anyone wanting to learn new skills, or improve existing ones in:

- Planning and delivering a lesson.
- Building confidence through working with a group.
- Getting experience of running a group.
- Improving English grammar skills.

3. Classroom assistant helping to prepare and run ESOL lessons.

Volunteering as a teacher or classroom assistant would be an ideal opportunity for anyone wanting to learn new skills, or improve existing ones in:

- Building confidence through working with a group.
- Getting experience of running a group.
- Improving English grammar skills.



Head Space Collective

A free seven-week course designed to help people deal with stress, build confidence, and improve self-esteem. The course is run in the community centre and other venues. There are 2 ways to be involved with Head Space:

1. Take the seven week course, and learn helpful ways to look after your mental wellbeing.

2. Help with organising the Head Space Collective or sometimes co-run sessions with staff.

This is an ideal opportunity for any volunteer wanting to:

- Learn how to help run a group.
- Learn more about adult education.
- Learn more about mental wellbeing.
- Help with research and design of the course content.



Food Co-op

Anyone can join. The Food Co-op provides weekly orders of fresh fruit and vegetables to its members at a competitive price. Members order their weekly shop on-line then come to pick it up from the community centre. Volunteers manage the membership of the Co-op, the ordering and sorting of the fruit and veg, maintenance of the web site, and the marketing. This is a great opportunity for anyone wanting to:

- Meet new people and get involved in a local community scheme.
- Learn how a small local cooperative runs.
- Improve local access to fresh vegetables.
- Get experience to put on your CV.



Development Collective

This Collective helps find funding to support Oblong's projects, expenses and staff, and the strategic development of Oblong. Anyone with relevant skills and knowledge can get involved.

This is an ideal opportunity for any volunteer wanting to:

- Learn about grants and funding for community projects.
- Learn about group decision-making processes.
- Get an insight into local community activities.
- Get experience to put on your CV.

The Community First Panel

Oblong supports a panel of local people who give out small grants from the government's Community First programme for community projects that have made successful applications. The groups can get between £250 and £2500 to run diverse projects in the local area. Volunteers are wanted to sit on the panel and help with administration. This is an ideal opportunity for anyone wanting to:

- Learn how funding decisions are made.
- Learn about the process of group decision making.
- Get an insight into local community activities.
- Get experience to put on your CV.

Other ways to be involved: Volunteer-led groups

Craft 'n' cuppa

Free drop-in group run by Oblong volunteers. Held every Monday from 1 - 3pm.

If you would like to assist, this is a great opportunity to:

- Help others improve skills and confidence.
- Deliver training.
- Evaluate people's progress.
- Supporting individuals to create their own art.
- Working in a supportive, informal environment.

Green Tree Café

A pop-up café catering for events within the centre. Provides an opportunity for volunteers to develop an understanding of:

- Working in a kitchen.
- Customer service.
- Food preparation.
- Handling money.
- Social interaction with other centre users.

Basic ICT classes

Held every Monday 11am – 2pm. A free drop-in service that provides basic IT instruction for novice computer users. If you would like to assist, this is a great opportunity to:

- Help others improve skills and confidence.
- Deliver training.
- Evaluate people's progress.
- Plan activities e.g. exercises for participants to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence in using computers.
- Work in a supportive, informal environment.

Little Rascals street dance for kids aged 5-11

A street dance class held every Saturday from 2 - 3pm. If you would like to assist, this is a great opportunity to help with organisation and running of the group which includes:

- Coordinating activities.
- Opening and closing the building.
- Publicity.
- Handling money.

How we show we make a difference

Making a difference to the community

Results of an independent impact survey from 2013 found that Oblong was making a noticeable difference locally in the following areas:

- Education and lifelong learning.
- Culture and leisure.
- Community unity and involvement.
- Health and social wellbeing.
- Environment.

Making a difference to individuals

Oblong is strongly committed to improving the lives of the people who use Woodhouse Community Centre. All volunteers are given an induction to help them get to know their role and how Oblong works.

The Forward Plan

Looking to the future, Oblong also aims to:

- Include work with youth and young people.
- Strengthen communications with local community.
- Work on improving Oblong's marketing.
- Continue to measure Oblong's impact on individuals and the community.
- Place stronger emphasis on health and wellbeing.
- Strengthen emphasis on community development and small groups.
- Work on getting more people involved through user groups and community forums. to encourage people's feelings of ownership of Woodhouse Community Centre.



Your role - what to expect

As a volunteer, you can expect to...

- Be given a training plan to help develop the skills you need for your role at Oblong.
- Be given training to make you feel confident and safe in your work and develop your own skills.
- Be valued and respected by everyone involved in Oblong and treated equally.
- Have your complaints taken seriously and listened to.
- Use the Acceptable Behaviour and Problem Solving Policy for issues that cannot be resolved informally.
- Not be given more responsibility than you can cope with.
- Get meal expenses every day you work with Oblong.
- Get travel expenses for your volunteer days.
- Be invited to Collective Meetings, where you will have the same decision making powers as paid staff or other Collective members.
- Be asked about any important changes that may affect how Oblong runs.
- Have feedback sessions with your supervisor where you can plan work and training, and discuss your progress.

As a volunteer, you are expected to...

- Be punctual and reliable.
- Let Oblong know if you can't attend when you'd agreed to.
- Be respectful of the needs of everyone who uses Oblong.
- Treat everyone equally.
- Report all accidents.
- Clean up any mess you make.
- Ensure the centre is a safe environment for everyone to use.
- Work as a team with other volunteers and staff.
- Recycle as much as possible.
- Come to the Collective meetings, Bobalong, or the Development Collective.
- Agree to a role description.
- Help out around the centre.



Your induction

All volunteers at Oblong have an induction. The aim of the induction is to explain:

- Your role in detail.
- How Oblong does what it does.
- How Oblong is organised.
- The policies and procedures which may affect your work as a volunteer.
- How to use the equipment you will be using.
- What you can expect from us.
- Travel, meal and childcare expenses.

The volunteer co-ordinators are:

- **Mark Southwell** - **ESOL and Development Collectives**
- **Emma Arnold** - **Reception & Bookings and Media & Marketing Collectives**
- **Mark Waddington** - **Media and Marketing Collective**
- **Duncan Millard** - **Gardening Collective**

On a day-to-day basis a member of staff is allocated the role of centre support; if you need assistance please do not hesitate to ask.

Developing your role

Volunteers contribute significantly to the work of Oblong. Success in reaching our aims and objectives is best achieved through working with you. We are committed to creating meaningful and productive volunteer roles which we hope will help you to gain valuable skills, knowledge and experience.

As a volunteer you have the right to be given:

- Meaningful roles.
- Effective supervision.
- Recognition for the work you have done.

As a volunteer you will be part of the Collective, and have an equal say and contribution to the direction of Oblong. The work you do will be agreed with you beforehand and you will get guidance at the Collective meetings.

As a volunteer you are expected to do your role to the best of your abilities and to work within Oblong's values, goals and procedures.

Useful information

Key policies and guidance

We want to create a safe and welcoming space for everyone who uses Oblong.

We will not tolerate

- Intimidation and harassment.
- Racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination and prejudice.
- Violence.
- The theft of other people's belongings.

If you have a problem with someone else's behaviour, we suggest that this should first be addressed informally. Please read the **Acceptable Behaviour and Problem Solving Policy** for advice and guidance.

If this does not solve the problem then you should speak to a volunteer coordinator personally or put it in writing. You can download the full policy from:

<http://www.Oblongleeds.org.uk/node/1884> or ask any member of staff for a copy.

Other important Oblong policies include:

- **Confidentiality**
- **Health & safety**
- **Equal opportunities**
- **Oblong volunteer agreement**

You can download the full policies from:

<http://www.Oblongleeds.org.uk/node/1884> or ask any member of staff for a copy.



Equal opportunities

At Oblong we will not tolerate discrimination. Be aware that some comments or jokes may be offensive to other people, even if you don't mean them seriously. Talk to people! Get to know them and understand where they're coming from. Oblong is a place where everyone is valued and everyone is of equal worth.

Confidentiality

Oblong will maintain confidentiality concerning the personal details of volunteers. Volunteers are expected to respect the confidential nature of general information which may become known to them. However, we have a moral and legal obligation to protect others from risk or harm. If we think someone is in danger we may be forced to share information appropriately.

Acceptable Behaviour and Problem Solving Policy

We want to create a safe space for everyone.

In order to promote equality of opportunity Oblong expects all volunteers to adhere to the following:

- Respect for others and to treat others equally.
- Be sensitive to the needs of others.
- Be friendly and helpful.
- Not to engage in offensive behaviour within Oblong or at Oblong events, including racism, homophobia, sexism, and aggressive or unpleasant behaviour.

Safeguarding – your safety at the centre

As Oblong has a collective way of working, most of our work is done in small groups. If you need to have a conversation with just one person at any time there are plenty of communal spaces for you to do this. One-to-one private meetings are unusual and it is important that you let other people know where you will be and what your meeting is about.

At Oblong we work in an open, transparent and accountable way. If you do not feel safe or happy with the people you are with feel free to let someone know and alert a member of staff. If anyone asks you to do anything you do not want to do just say no, and let someone know.

Although we welcome friendships forming and activities carrying on outside the centre, you do not have to meet up with anyone you do not want to, do not know, or do not feel safe and comfortable with.

All volunteers and staff work together to ensure everyone in the centre is able to enjoy the facilities on their own terms and free from harassment and hassle. If you see anything you are

not comfortable with, please ask what is going on and alert staff to anything that does not feel safe.

The IT area is a public area and we ask that you take care of your belongings, and look out for each other while you are there.

Fire Safety

- If you notice a fire sound the alarm.
- Leave by the nearest exit.
- Proceed to the assembly point – on Woodhouse Street.

First Aid

- The first aid boxes are at reception, under the sink upstairs, and in the kitchen.
- There is another first aid box for the gardening group which will be on site.



Practicalities and expenses

- Sign in and out of the building.
- Tea, coffee, etc. is free of charge to volunteers - please clean your mugs!
- Lunch – we can reimburse up to £3 per day per volunteer.
- Travel expenses – we can pay your expenses to get to Oblong and get home. This is up to the price of a Yorkshire Rider. We will give you a bus token in advance or reimburse mileage expenses if you have a car.

Volunteer and Staff Support Services

As a volunteer you will have a supervisor who is responsible for providing support on a regular basis throughout your time at Oblong. Volunteers should have all the information they need to be successful in their role. We will therefore provide regular support and guidance through feedback sessions with your supervisor.

The regularity of the feedback sessions will depend on your level of need; ideally we would like these to be around 6 times a year. Feedback sessions will include a review of your progress, help in identify training and development needs, and agreement about how these may be met. Sessions will be recorded, using the Feedback Session form, and kept in your confidential file.

You can request an additional feedback session with your supervisor (outside those scheduled) by contacting your supervisor personally. If you are unable to contact your supervisor then please talk to a volunteer co-ordinator – see page 12 for details.

Feedback

We value your feedback and will use it to contribute directly to Oblong's volunteer programme and, where appropriate, service provision. We hope that as a volunteer you will provide and receive support from other volunteers.

As a part of our support programme for volunteers, we provide access to training which will be useful and effective to our volunteers and the work they undertake for us. This may be on a one-to-one basis, through another organisation that has come to give in-house training at Oblong, or at an external location.

You can request training at any time and opportunities can be identified through discussion between you, your supervisor and the volunteer coordinator. For any information on training provided by Oblong, you can ask a member of staff.

Key resources

Contact Details

Oblong reception: 0113 245 9610

Oblong email address: info@Oblongleeds.org.uk

Staff Contact Details

Duncan Millard duncan@Oblong.org.uk

Mark Waddington markw@Oblong.org.uk

Emma Arnold emma@Oblong.org.uk

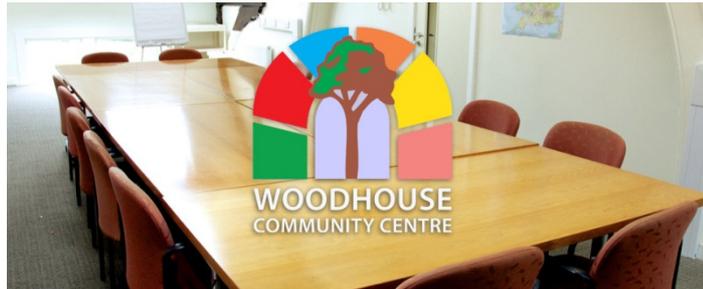
Helen Collins helen@Oblong.org.uk

Chris Lightfoot chris@Oblong.org.uk

Mark Southwell mark@Oblong.org.uk

OBLONG Ltd
Woodhouse Community Centre
197 Woodhouse Street
Leeds
LS6 2NY

Charity number: 1120379
Company number: 3147855



Yammer

Yammer is an online forum that you are invited to join after your induction. Yammer is a great way to keep in touch with staff and volunteers at Oblong, and keep up to date with the latest news and information. Feel free to introduce yourself!



Section 2

Tools for self-development

How to use this section

Section 2 contains a variety of tools and techniques to help identify areas of your life you wish to change or develop, and ways to help you achieve this. Each tool or technique comes with a clear explanation to help you complete it. If you have any questions, the staff will be able to help.

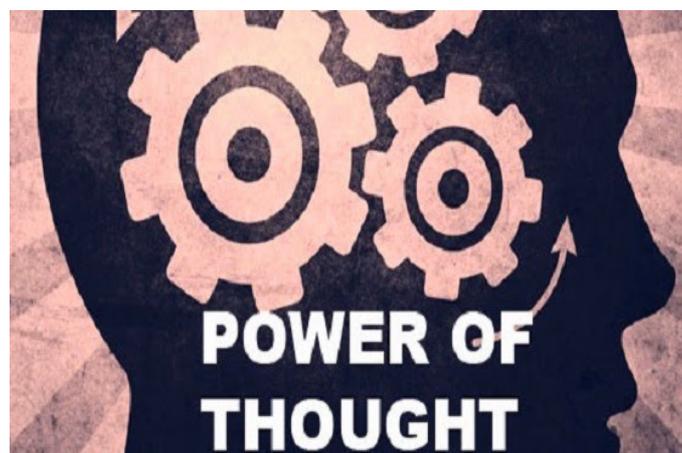
These tools can be used more than once to allow you to track changes or progress you have made in your journey at Oblong.

Tools for identifying issues or areas for change:

- Time use diary
- The river model
- The energy jug

Tools for setting goals and making changes:

- SMART goals
- Vision boards
- Challenging unhelpful thought patterns



Time use diary

A time use diary is a simple tool to help you look in detail at how you spend your time over a week. It gives you a visual idea of what you spend your time doing, and can show if you have a balanced mixture of activities, which has been linked to a healthy lifestyle. Try to be as honest and as accurate as possible!

Fill in the diary on the next page with your activities for the week e.g. sleeping, eating, watching TV. Entries do not need to be detailed but should clearly show what you were doing at that time. Once you have finished completing the diary, please colour in the activities you did into the themes:

- **Blue - sleeping**
- **Red - productive activities such as work or volunteering**
- **Green - self-care activities such as showering**
- **Yellow - leisure activities such as watching TV or visiting friends**

It's up to you what you think counts as productivity, leisure, and self-care. For instance, some people love housework and might call it leisure! For others, housework would be a productive pastime. Others might consider it self-care.

Example of part of a completed table:

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
7am to 8am	sleep	sleep	sleep	sleep
8am to 9am	sleep	sleep	sleep	breakfast
9am to 10am	sleep	breakfast	breakfast	part-time job
10am to 11am	sleep	watch TV	coffee with friend	part-time job
11am to 12pm	watch TV	phone mum	coffee with friend	part-time job
12pm to 1pm	breakfast	food shopping	housework	part time job
1pm to 2pm	watch TV	lunch	lunch	lunch

Questions

- Which days look well balanced between sleep, productive, self-care and leisure activities?
- Which days do not look well balanced?
- How do you think you would feel if you had a day like Monday?
- How do you think you would feel if you had a day like Friday?
- Are there ways your week could be more balanced?

Time use diary							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7am to 8m							
8am to 9am							
9am to 10am							
10am to 11am							
11am to 12pm							
12pm to 1pm							
1pm to 2pm							
2pm to 3pm							
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6pm to 7pm							
7pm to 8pm							
8pm to 9pm							
9pm to 10pm							
10pm to 11pm							
11pm to 12 am							

The river model

What would you like your future to look like?

Imagine that your life journey is a river. Upstream is your past and downstream is your future. The river model is a way of stepping back from everyday life and looking at your current situation. It can help you identify issues, strengths and weaknesses. This can help to clarify things you can change or do differently to improve your wellbeing.

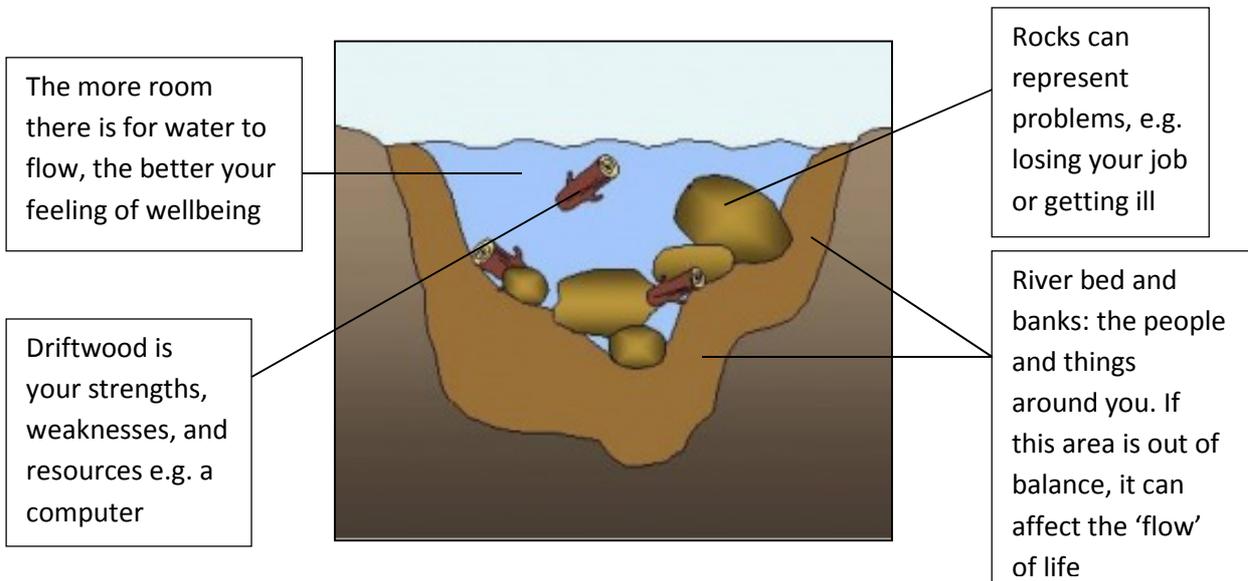
A river is not empty, in the river there are:

Rocks: these are your current life difficulties or fears which block the water.

The river bank and bed is your environment, e.g. where you live and who with, the important people in your life, your family, healthcare professionals, schools, your work or workplace, and our culture. These all make a difference to our life.

Driftwood represents your character and resources. Sometimes these can help you and sometimes they can hold you back. For example, you may be so independent that you don't want to ask for help, even if you really need it.

The water represents your overall satisfaction with life and the things that make you happy, such as your day-to-day pastimes. The more water there is, the better your feeling of wellbeing.



Draw your own river on a piece of paper

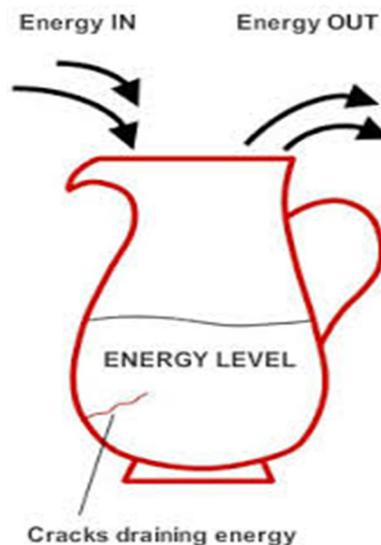
- What does your river look like at the moment – how is the 'flow'?
- What steps can you take to help overcome any problems you have identified?
- What character strengths, resources and support can you use to help you?
- What do you want your future river to look like?

The energy jug

The energy jug is a visual tool to explain where your energy is coming from, what you are using your energy for, and if something in your life is draining more energy than it should.

How to create your own energy jug:

1. Draw the outline of a jug.
2. Draw a line on the jug where your current average energy is.
3. If you have a particular thing in your life that is draining your energy then put a crack in the jug and label what this is, for example a demanding job, caring for another, a diagnosed disorder etc.
4. Energy coming into the jug is represented by arrows coming in; energy going out of the jug is represented by arrows going out.



If your jug shows more energy going out than coming in, you may find you often feel tired or short of energy. There are ways to change this. The examples below are just a few suggestions of ways to balance your energy. Even small changes could help to make a difference.

Examples that can give you energy:

- taking time out for your own interests and hobbies
- getting enough sleep at night
- having fun
- socialising
- doing things you enjoy

Goal setting

Goals are a useful way to help you get the results you want. By doing things that you find meaningful and interesting, you can build up skills and knowledge that can improve your quality of life, and give you access to new opportunities. Clear goals are the easiest to reach.

SMART goals

One way to write clear goals is by using S.M.A.R.T.:



SPECIFIC – say exactly what you want to happen.

MEASURABLE – how will you know when you have met your goal?

ATTAINABLE / ACHIEVABLE – the goal is not too big or too small.

RELEVANT – the goal is important to you.

TIMED – when do you want to meet your goal?

Example S.M.A.R.T. goals:

To make a 5-minute film for Woodhouse Stories about my volunteer role at Oblong, using equipment and help from the media and marketing collective, for 1 or 2 hours every week, to be finished in 2 months.

To get a reception job in six months by applying for at least one job every week, and volunteering at Oblong reception once a week to improve my skills, and build experience to add to my CV.

What kind of goals would you like to reach?

You might like to discuss your ideas with a volunteer coordinator.

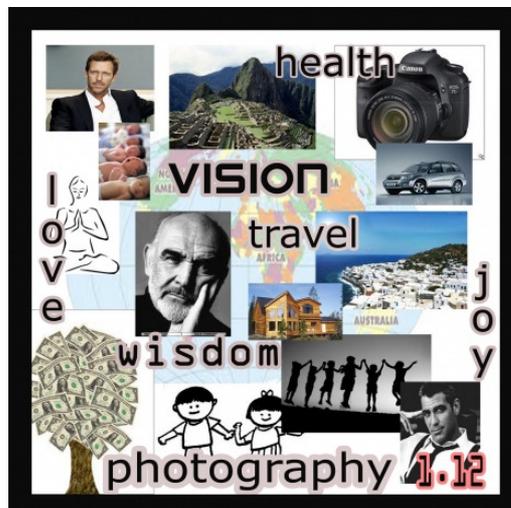
Vision boards

When you can clearly see a goal, you can start working towards it. A vision board is a great way to turn your goal into a picture that acts as an everyday reminder of what you want to do. This might include improving your health and fitness, learning a new skill for your CV, or saving up money for a special treat. Working towards something important and meaningful can help you feel motivated, and give you a sense of purpose and wellbeing even before you reach your goal!



How to make a vision board

1. Decide what your goal is and picture it in your mind.
2. Collect pictures from magazines or newspapers that represent your goal, and arrange them on a large piece of paper. Use a variety of magazines to get a good selection of images, e.g. photography or nature or travel magazines.
3. Glue the pictures onto the paper to make a collage. Put your collage somewhere you will see it every day, to give you motivation and inspiration!



Challenging unhelpful thinking

Our thoughts and how we think about things has a direct impact on our mood, anxiety and stress levels. We have an internal dialogue continually throughout our lives. Most of the time this dialogue is normal and useful such as: "I need to do the washing up" or "I'm tired, I should probably sleep".

The problem comes when these thoughts start to become negative towards ourselves and what we can achieve. This is called negative or unhelpful thinking.

Examples of unhelpful thinking patterns:

All or nothing thinking: *When I'm not perfect I've failed. Either I do it right or not at all.*

Overgeneralising: *Everything's always rubbish. Nothing good ever happens.*

Mental filter: *Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes.*

Disqualifying the positive: *discounting the good things that happen, or that you have done.*

Jumping to conclusions: *Imagining we know what others are thinking, or predicting the future.*

Magnification (catastrophizing) & minimisation: *blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important (minimising).*

Emotional reasoning: *I feel embarrassed so I must be an idiot.*

Using critical words: *like 'must' 'should' or 'ought to' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed. If we apply 'should' to other people, the result is often frustration.*

Labelling: *I'm a loser. I'm completely useless. They're such an idiot.*

Personalisation: *"This is all my fault".*
The flip side of this is blaming other people for something that was your fault.



Tips for challenging unhelpful thinking

The trick is to notice when these thoughts are occurring and to challenge them by using questions like 'is this just a thought?', 'does it have any real basis?' Even though we may believe a lot of our unhelpful thoughts when we are feeling low, anxious or stressed, it is good to remember that they should be questioned as they are often based on wrong assumptions.

Do you have any unhelpful thoughts that follow some of the patterns described? Use the box below to write down any examples you can think of.

Unhelpful Thought	Category
<i>e.g. "I'm such a loser"</i>	<i>Labelling</i>



Here are some questions to challenge negative or unhelpful thinking:

- What is the evidence?
- Am I jumping to conclusions?
- What alternatives are there?
- What is the effect of thinking the way I do?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of thinking this way?
- Am I condemning myself as a person on the basis of a single event?
- Am I concentrating on my weakness and forgetting my strengths?
- Am I using ultimatum or extreme words in my thinking?
- Am I blaming myself for something that is not really my fault?
- Am I taking things personally which have little or nothing to do with me?
- Am I expecting myself to be perfect?
- Am I using a double standard?
- Am I only paying attention to the negative side of things?
- Am I worrying about the way things ought to be, instead of accepting and dealing with them as they are?



Thank you for using this guide – we hope you find it helpful!

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A full list of references is available on request from the staff at Oblong.

