Multiple Matching

Learning through voluntary work

Full exam-style task: ten questions referring to four accounts. Original independent practice, not an official exam paper.

Read the four accounts A-D. For questions 1-10, choose the person who expresses each idea. You may choose each person more than once.

Four volunteers describe what they learned from their work.

A

I joined a community repair workshop after retiring from professional engineering work. I imagined that my main contribution would be diagnosing complicated faults, but much of my time is spent helping people describe what happened before a device stopped working. At first I would take the object from them and get on with the repair. Our coordinator pointed out that this left visitors no more confident than when they arrived. Now I ask them to hold the tools and explain each decision while they work. It is slower, and there are safety limits, but seeing someone return to fix a different object independently is worth the extra time. I have also become less embarrassed about saying that I do not know the answer. Another volunteer, who has never had technical training, often notices a simple practical issue that I have overlooked. Expertise remains useful, but it can become a barrier if it makes you stop listening. I joined to put my skills to use; I had not expected to revise how I understood them.

B

The wildlife survey appealed to me because I wanted a reason to spend more time outdoors. Recording the same small area every Sunday sounded repetitive, and during my first month I wondered whether we were achieving anything. Then the project leader showed us how apparently uneventful observations fitted into a longer record. A list showing no butterflies was not a failed morning; combined with weather notes and later visits, it could help reveal a change. I started paying closer attention to the conditions rather than hunting only for impressive sightings. What surprised me was how much preparation the simple survey required. We had to practise identifying common species from photographs and learn when to record an uncertain observation as uncertain. I briefly considered giving up when a weekend training course was announced, but I am glad I attended. The work has made familiar places more interesting, although I would not recommend it to someone who needs visible results after every session.

C

I started answering calls for a housing advice charity while considering a career change. I wanted to find out whether I could remain patient when conversations were difficult, before committing to professional training. Our induction made clear that good intentions were not enough: volunteers had strict limits on the advice they could give. Those limits initially frustrated me. When a caller described an urgent problem, referring them to someone else felt like abandoning them. A supervisor explained that an uncertain answer could make their situation worse, and we practised making referrals that included a clear next step. That changed my view of what useful help looks like. I now keep a brief private learning log after each shift, without recording callers' personal details. Looking back at it shows me which situations I still need support with. The role has confirmed my interest in the field, but also persuaded me not to rush into it without the necessary qualifications and supervision.

D

My first weeks helping at the local food cooperative were unexpectedly uncomfortable. I was new to the area and hoped the work would help me meet people, but everyone seemed to know both the routines and one another. Nobody was unkind; they simply forgot how many small procedures a newcomer had to guess. Eventually I mentioned this at a meeting, expecting to be told that I would soon get used to things. Instead, the group asked me to help create a short welcome sheet and pair new volunteers with someone on their first shift. Having my experience taken seriously made me feel part of the organisation much faster. I still prefer the stockroom to serving customers, and the coordinator respects that. There is a temptation to treat being sociable as the only useful skill in community work. Quietly checking deliveries is equally necessary, and finding a role that suits me has made regular volunteering sustainable.

Your answers

1. Who changed their approach so that the people they helped could become more independent?

Answer: _____

2. Who learned that an apparent absence of results could still provide useful evidence?

Answer: _____

3. Who began volunteering partly to test their suitability for a different occupation?

Answer: _____

4. Who found that being invited to improve a procedure strengthened their sense of belonging?

Answer: _____

5. Who admits that a person with fewer formal credentials sometimes identifies what they have missed?

Answer: _____

6. Who was initially reluctant to undertake training they later valued?

Answer: _____

7. Who came to accept that passing a problem to someone else could be the most responsible response?

Answer: _____

8. Who argues that work involving little direct social contact deserves recognition?

Answer: _____

9. Who uses written reflection to identify areas where they still need assistance?

Answer: _____

10. Who warns that the role may disappoint people who expect an immediate sense of achievement?

Answer: _____

Answers & explanations

Question 1 | A - Person A

A moved from taking objects away to repair them towards asking visitors to hold tools and make decisions. The return visit "to fix a different object independently" confirms the aim. D helps newcomers settle in, but does not describe this transfer of a practical skill to service users.

Question 2 | B - Person B

B explains that "a list showing no butterflies was not a failed morning". An absence becomes informative when combined with conditions and later records. A values visible independent repairs; none of the other accounts discusses negative observations as data.

Question 3 | C - Person C

C wanted to assess patience during difficult conversations "before committing to professional training" while considering a career change. A had already retired and wanted to contribute existing skills. B sought outdoor time and D social contact, not a test of career suitability.

Question 4 | D - Person D

D was asked to create a welcome sheet after reporting confusion. "Having my experience taken seriously made me feel part of the organisation much faster" explicitly connects participation in a change with belonging. A changes personal teaching practice, but does not describe becoming accepted through an invitation to improve procedures.

Question 5 | A - Person A

A's colleague "has never had technical training" yet notices practical issues A overlooks. The contrast is about formal credentials, not relative helpfulness in general. C relies on a supervisor, whose qualifications are not described as fewer than the writer's.

Question 6 | B - Person B

B "briefly considered giving up when a weekend training course was announced" but was glad to attend. C is also involved in training, yet concludes that further qualifications are necessary rather than recounting reluctance followed by appreciation of a completed course.

Question 7 | C - Person C

C first felt referral meant "abandoning" a caller, then recognised the danger of uncertain advice and practised referrals with a next step. A also acknowledges limits, but does not describe changing an opinion about transferring responsibility to another adviser.

Question 8 | D - Person D

D says quiet delivery checks are "equally necessary" and rejects sociability as the only useful skill. A's listening, B's observations and C's referrals are valuable, but none explicitly contrasts social and less public roles in this way.

Question 9 | C - Person C

C keeps a learning log and uses it to see "which situations I still need support with". B records survey observations, but those records concern wildlife and conditions, not a reflection on personal support needs. D's welcome sheet guides others rather than tracking the writer's development.

Question 10 | B - Person B

B would not recommend surveying to someone who "needs visible results after every session". This is a caution about delayed or unobvious outcomes. A acknowledges slower repairs but ultimately describes a visible result; D discusses a suitable role, not the timing of achievement.