



TOP TIPS - Including Volunteers with a Physical Disability

Recent research carried out on behalf of Voluntary Action Leeds with both volunteers who have a physical disability and the organisations they volunteer with has confirmed both the positive impact on wellbeing and self worth for the volunteer, and the benefits of increased diversity for those organisations within which they work. During this research organisations who would like to recruit volunteers with a physical disability but have encountered barriers to doing so were also consulted.

Barriers to Inclusive Volunteering

Identified barriers to recruiting physically disabled volunteers include:

- A lack of appropriate accessible space in the workplace.
- The funding, time and resources to devote to volunteers with a physical disability. For example, a volunteer may require specialist equipment to perform their work.
- Attitudes to disabled volunteers can be a barrier to a successful placement, and these volunteers can be under-valued.

Things to Consider to Improve Diversity

- Be flexible about the volunteering roles you offer where possible and be aware that not all roles will be suitable for everyone. If an existing role is not appropriate could a new one be created?
- Make clear in any publicity materials for your role it is stated that disabled volunteers are welcome. Disabled volunteers may assume they are not welcome otherwise.
- Be aware that volunteers with a disability may need an increased amount of time and support from you.
- If funding is an issue look into schemes such as the Government's Access to Volunteering scheme or any assistance available from organisations such as Scope or local charities, who may be in a position to help you secure discounted or free accessibility equipment for your volunteers.



Things to Consider to Improve Diversity (continued)

- Arrange diversity Training for you and your staff if required.
- Consider the working environment from the perspective of disabled volunteer and if this could be improved. Look at door widths, workspace layout, level access (are ramps required?), toilets, emergency evacuation procedures and signage - which should include braille and symbols in addition to print.
- Monitor accessibility on an ongoing basis. We would recommend every four months.



- Consider volunteer reward systems to increase engagement and volunteer retention.
- Build in one-to-one support with volunteers

Policies and Procedures

- Ensure the DBS checks levels you require are appropriate to each volunteering role. Be aware of creating a barrier for skills & time rich communities such as refugees and asylum seekers.
- Engage in training and development opportunities on inclusive culture
Check up your policies are up to date & set up regular reviews
- Have an external organisation audit your process
- Ask Leeds Volunteer Managers Network for information & resources to support your organisation reflect an inclusive culture from top to bottom