

# Practice to Include

Good practice to include disabled people in volunteering opportunities



Promoting good practice for volunteers from socially excluded groups

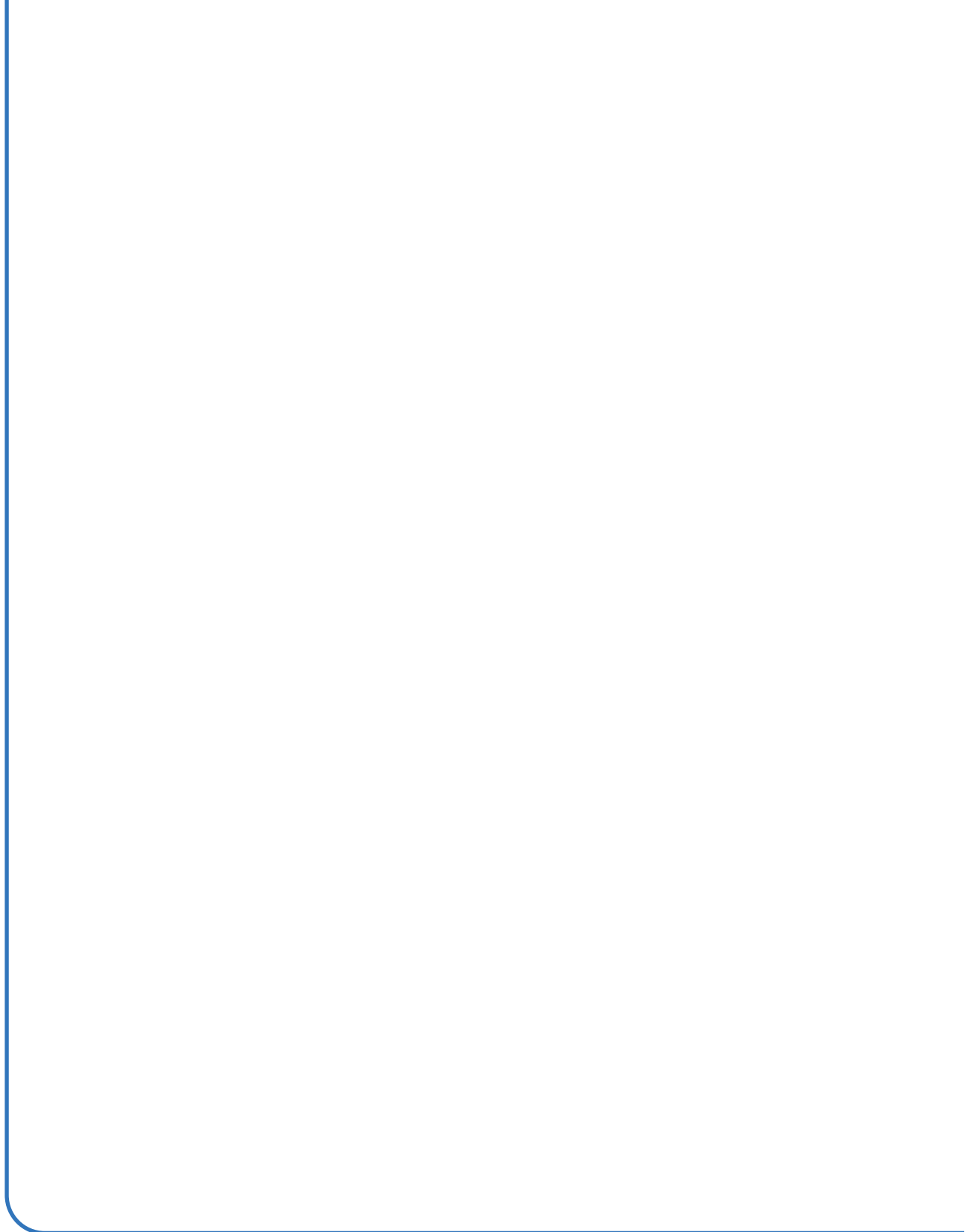


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## Introduction

**Practice To Include** is aimed at a wide range of organisations that offer volunteer opportunities. The goal of this good practice manual is to enable organisations to involve more disabled people as volunteers, by identifying and eliminating barriers to their participation, thereby promoting good practice.

There are a number of excellent guides already available, on good practice in volunteering.

**Practice to Include** does not set out to duplicate this information but highlights the particular issues that need to be addressed when disability is part of the equation.

## Our Thanks

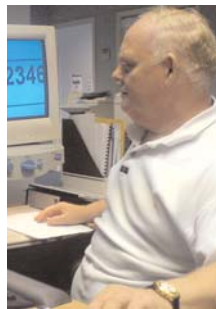


Gateshead Access Panel is grateful to GoldStar at the Cabinet Office for their financial support in the production of this manual.

This manual has been produced by Gateshead Access Panel (GAP) with input from the following disabled volunteers:



Kirsty Douglas



Frank Lewis



Anna Mace



Steven Clough

Thanks are also due to everyone who has shared their experiences of volunteering, especially those from:

- Disability Gateshead
- Liberdade
- Pathways Mental Health User Forum
- Gateshead Visually Impaired Forum
- GAP Service User Involvement Group
- Epilepsy Action North East

## **Practice To Include**

Gateshead Access Panel has produced **Practice To Include** in order to:

- promote good practice in the recruitment, management and retention of disabled volunteers
- encourage and support mainstream organisations to include disabled people as volunteers

### **Fact**

**A disproportionately high proportion of disabled people volunteer exclusively for disability related organisations**

'Time to Get Equal in Volunteering: Tackling Disablism', Scope, 2005

The manual has been designed to provide you with:

- checklists so that you can highlight the good practice you are already using and identify areas for development and/or review

- practical actions your organisation can take to develop and implement good practice
- resource lists for additional information or support. The lists cover national organisations and organisations local to Gateshead. The local resources have been included to demonstrate, where appropriate, local responses to some of the issues that have been raised. You will need to find out whether there is something similar in your area
- personal experiences of disabled volunteers to illustrate good practice

### **About Gateshead Access Panel**

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GAP's mission is to improve access to the environment, information and independent living, for all disabled people with varying impairments. It aims to increase disability awareness among service users and providers, and to reduce and remove the discrimination of disabled people. GAP is a user led organisation which works to ensure that disabled people are involved at all stages of development and delivery.



## Terminology

For the purpose of this manual the following definitions apply:

disability	the disadvantage experienced by an individual as a result of barriers (attitudinal, physical etc) to independent living, education, employment or other opportunities that impact on people with impairments
impairment	long term limiting medical condition of an individual that affects their functioning and/or appearance and may, for example, give rise to pain, fatigue, communication difficulties
mainstream	organisations that are not set up to work primarily or solely with disabled people
'reasonable' adjustment	a legal term introduced under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). The change a service provider must 'reasonably' make to enable a disabled person to access the service. What is 'reasonable' is judged against time and inconvenience

### Reasons For Involvement

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- 1 Disabled people will make new contacts, develop new skills, build self esteem and confidence, and gain work experience. They also represent a pool of untapped volunteer resources

#### **Fact**

**There are over 1 million disabled people who want to work but don't have a job**

Office of National Statistics, 2003

**Only 6% of volunteers are disabled**

'Disability need be No Handicap', CSV, 2000

- 2 Organisations will become more diverse and representative of the wider community, build networks, gain capacity, and benefit from the skills and experience of disabled volunteers

## 3 Legislation such as:

The Welfare Reform Bill (2006) which aims to get disabled people off incapacity benefit and into employment and places an emphasis on volunteering as a way into work

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) which sets the standards of good practice in service provision, which includes volunteer opportunities, for disabled people

The Disability Equality Duty 2005 (DED) which means that public bodies must, through their procurement arrangements ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted between disabled people and non-disabled people

## Basic Principles for Involving Disabled Volunteers

- 1 Adopting an approach governed by the Social Model of Disability which is based on the premise that disability is caused by the way society is organised and not by a person's impairment (Traditional Model)

**'I have arthritis. As a wheelchair user it is the lack of accessible transport that stops me volunteering not my arthritis'**

Volunteer

- 2 The practical application of the principle of 'reasonable' adjustments (DDA, 1995) in relation to volunteering activities, which means:
  - changing the way you provide a service, for example, producing forms in large print
  - providing an additional aid or service, for example, communication support
  - providing the service in an alternative way, for example, using a different venue if premises are not accessible

- removing or altering physical features (to do with design of or access to the building and its facilities), for example, improving lighting, decorating to include people with visual impairments

'Disability Rights Handbook', 32nd edition, Ian Greaves, 2007-2008

- 3 Adhering to the standards set by the DDA and DED on which good practice for the recruitment and support of disabled volunteers should be based. You would not be meeting this benchmark if you:
  - fail to make reasonable adjustments, for example, don't produce an induction manual in an alternative format
  - directly discriminate, for example, don't take on a volunteer with epilepsy because they could be a health and safety risk
  - treat a disabled volunteer less favourably, for example, assume they would need a less demanding college course than a non-disabled volunteer

## Barriers to Volunteering

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Many disabled people still face barriers to volunteering despite the huge contribution that they can make as volunteers. Barriers to volunteering are often based on:

- **attitudes and assumptions about the image and ability of disabled people** 'I'm not sure what they can realistically do'
- **a lack of organisational knowledge about the support that may be required** 'we would take on disabled people as volunteers but we don't have the staff time or the money to give them the support they would need'
- **a limited understanding of 'access' as only meaning wheelchair access** 'our premises are upstairs so they wouldn't be suitable for disabled people'

## Fact

**Only 7.7% of the disabled population are wheelchair users**

'Disability in the UK', Economic and Social Research Council Factsheet, 2007

The barriers that operate fall into three main categories, examples of which are given below:

Attitudinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● images of disabled people as beneficiaries</li><li>● negative ideas about the ability of disabled people</li><li>● general fear and embarrassment about disability</li><li>● idea that disabled people lack commitment and are unreliable</li></ul>
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Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● lack of accessible information</li><li>● inaccessible work environments</li><li>● shortage of door to door transport</li><li>● lack of resources for 'reasonable' adjustments</li></ul>
Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● 'formal' recruitment and selection procedures</li><li>● 'out of pocket' expenses not reimbursed</li><li>● inflexibility around volunteer tasks and schedules</li><li>● lack of inclusive policies and practice</li><li>● the benefit system</li></ul>



## Reducing Barriers to Promote Good Practice

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Good practice for involving disabled people as volunteers is based on the need to recognise and identify the barriers that exist in your organisation and to work towards reducing or removing them.

Once you have addressed the attitudinal, physical or organisational barriers, the management and support of disabled volunteers is no different to non-disabled volunteers.

The following chapters of **Practice to Include** will provide you with practical actions you can take to reduce the barriers and develop inclusive volunteering opportunities.

## Setting the Scene

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Two important starting points for including disabled people as volunteers in your organisation, are to:

- 1 Ensure that managers, staff and existing volunteers support the initiative. Consultation with staff will bring out any doubts, misconceptions and reservations they have about working with a disabled person which you can then address

### Practical Solutions

- Disability Equality and Etiquette Training will dispel fears, breakdown stereotypes and raise awareness of the issues faced by a disabled person. Courses which involve disabled people as trainers will give your staff a better insight into the skills, experiences and needs of disabled people as individuals
- making links with disability organisations in your area would also increase your understanding of varying impairments and ways to support the needs of potential volunteers

## 2 Increase your organisations' accessibility

There is often a lot of confusion about access and much concern about cost

Accessibility is not just about physical access for wheelchair users but also about other adjustments you can make for people with a wide range of impairments

### **Typical Adjustments Include:**

- installing ramps, rails and power assisted doors
- having height adjustable desks and chairs
- creating space for a guide dog
- voice synthesizers
- braille notetakers
- large print
- buddy or mentoring systems
- sign language interpreters
- flexible work schedules
- video magnifiers (CCTV)

### **Fact**

**Only 1 in 13 of Britain's 10 million disabled people are wheelchair users.**

'Small Employers Attitudes to Disability',  
Disability Rights Commission, 2004

It is inevitable that some 'reasonable' adjustments will be expensive for example, CCTV magnification equipment £500 - £3500, BSL signers £20 - £30 per hour, even though the average cost appears low.

### **Fact**

**The average cost of a 'reasonable' adjustment to a small to medium employer is £76**

Disability Rights Commission, 2007

However, many adjustments are often about developing a flexible and creative approach to working practice and cost little or nothing at all, for example, working flexible hours, regular breaks for people with diabetes, clearing passages of clutter.

## Practical Solutions

- ask disabled volunteers what their individual access needs are
- have an access audit carried out to assess the general level of accessibility in your organisation
- use the links you make with organisations of disabled people to inform you of potential barriers to access and volunteering

## Good Practice Checklist - Setting the Scene

Our organisation has:

- consulted with staff
- provided Disability Equality and Etiquette training
- carried out accessibility audits
- developed links with organisations of disabled people
- policies that reflect the above

## Resources

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### Training and Audits

Disability North Direct (Newcastle)



Tel: 0191 2840480



Web: [www.disabilitynorth.org.uk](http://www.disabilitynorth.org.uk)

## Gateshead Access Panel



Tel: 0191 4430058



Web: [www.access.gateshead.dsl.pipex.com](http://www.access.gateshead.dsl.pipex.com)

## MPH (Gateshead)



Tel: 0191 4698535



Web: [www.mph-uk.com](http://www.mph-uk.com)

## WearAble (Sunderland)



Tel: 0191 5229913



Web: [www.wearable.org.uk](http://www.wearable.org.uk)

## Disability Rights Commission Training Directory



Web: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

## Scope



Web: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

## Skill



Web: [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

## Advertising

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How and where you advertise your volunteer opportunities can make all the difference between success and failure in attracting disabled people as volunteers to your organisation.

**'it should be something that stands out to attract attention'**

**'it should say the place is accessible and that disabled people are welcome'**

**'people should use a certain font size for partially sighted people'**



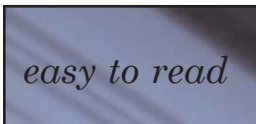




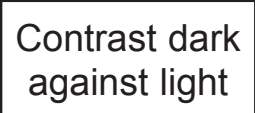


Volunteers

This involves providing accessible information and targeting your advertising.



## Accessible Advertising

Accessible adverts are:

-  easy to read  
-  in Clear Print  
-    
- 14 point font or larger
- on matt rather than high gloss paper

Accessible adverts use:

- clear and simple text (known as Plain Language) with short sentences, simple punctuation and no jargon

### **Accessible adverts are available in alternative formats:**

- audio tape
- large print
- braille
- accessible website
- email
- disc

### **Accessible adverts demonstrates that your organisation encourages disabled people to volunteer by:**

- using positive images
- stating your commitment to making 'reasonable' adjustments
- offering support to apply

#### **Reminder**

Include these points about accessible information in your policies

## Targeting Your Advertising

This involves specific outreach aimed at disabled people to make sure that potential volunteers know you welcome their participation and to let them know about any volunteering opportunities in your organisation.

### Places to target include:

- disability press
- internet
- radio
- talking newspapers
- day centres
- residential care homes
- disability organisations
- college and job centre disability officers
- doctors surgeries
- local social services departments

### Practical Solutions

Use the links you have made with disability organisations to target your advertising and check the accessibility of your adverts

## Application and Selection

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Once your advertising has attracted interest from disabled people you need to make sure that your application and selection process is easy and informal so that potential volunteers are not **put off**.

Some people find application forms daunting so, if you use them:

- make sure they are accessible (in the same way as your adverts)

- make sure the layout is simple

-  tick boxes may be useful

-  Leave bigger spaces to help people with larger handwriting

- offer help to fill them in

Being prepared to offer different ways of applying may increase your success rate for attracting disabled people as volunteers, for example:

- by phone
- on line
- in person
- by email

The idea of a formal interview may be off putting so referring to the face to face meeting as an 'informal chat' rather than an interview may encourage more disabled people to volunteer.

Other ways to ensure that 'informal chats' are inclusive to disabled people are to:

- be flexible about where you meet
- be flexible about when you meet and the length of the interview
- use accessible venues
- offer support to attend
- ask about support needs rather than make assumptions

## Reminder

Whichever approach you take, check that the information you ask for doesn't **exclude** anyone from applying for the volunteering opportunities in your organisation

## Information that Includes

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- 1 only ask for the information you need to make an unbiased decision
- 2 ask about the experiences and interests that a volunteer has rather than their qualifications (unless they are essential to the task), as many disabled people will have experienced lack of access to educational opportunities

## Fact

**Disabled people are generally less well qualified than non-disabled people. Only 18% have higher level qualifications compared with 34% of non-disabled people**

Labour Force Survey, 2001-2

- 3 accept references from sources other than previous employers as disabled people do not always have work experience

## Fact

**44% of disabled people are economically active compared with 79% of non-disabled people**

DWP Research Unit, 2002

- 4 invite people to give details of their impairments but give assurances that this will only be used to support the person to volunteer not to exclude them
- 5 don't make assumptions, **ask** potential volunteers what additional support they may require to carry out their roles
- 6 as with any volunteer, CRB checks may need to be carried out, where appropriate. Offer assistance to complete the form if required

## Good Practice Checklist - Recruitment

**Our organisation has:**

- used accessible recruitment material
- offered alternative formats
- included a welcome to disabled people
- targeted advertising
- offered alternative ways to apply
- used accessible application forms
- offered help to fill in the form
- asked questions that don't exclude people



- held 'informal interviews'
- used accessible venues
- been flexible about time and venue
- offered support to attend
- policies that reflect the above

## Resources - Accessible Information

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### Accessible Information

#### Disability Rights Commission



Web: [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

#### Easy Info



Web: [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

#### Plain English Campaign



Web: [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

#### Plain Language Commission



Web: [www.plainlanguagenetwork.org](http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org)

#### Resource (MLA) Disability Portfolio Guide 7 Using Technology



Web: [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

## RNIB



Website: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## Transcription

### AIRS - Access to Information & Reading Services (Gateshead)



Tel: 0191 433 8450



Web: [www.gateshead.gov.uk/airs](http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/airs)

### Bliss=Ability (South Shields)



Tel: 0191 456 9243

### British Council of Disabled People



Web: [www.bcodp.org.uk](http://www.bcodp.org.uk)

### MPH (Gateshead)



Tel: 0191 4698535



Web: [www.mph-uk.com](http://www.mph-uk.com)

## Adept



Tel: 01525 373974



Web: [www.adept-uk.org](http://www.adept-uk.org)

## A2i



Tel: 01179 707090



Web: [www.a2i.co.uk](http://www.a2i.co.uk)

## Deafblind UK



Tel: 01733 358100



Web: [www.deafblind.org.uk](http://www.deafblind.org.uk)

## Sense



Tel: 02476 717522



Web: [www.sense.org.uk](http://www.sense.org.uk)

## Websites

W3C Website Accessibility Initiative



Web: [www.w3.org](http://www.w3.org)

## Policy

Volunteering England



Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

## Imagebanks

Volunteering England



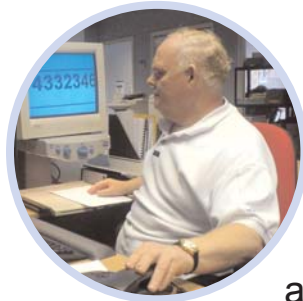
Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

## Meeting Support Needs

Managing and supporting disabled people as volunteers in your organisation means understanding individual support needs and making 'reasonable' adjustments to meet them. In this way barriers to participation will be eliminated.

Support needs or 'reasonable' adjustments fall into 4 main categories. Some disabled volunteers have complex needs so you may have to provide a range of support from each of these categories.

Category	Example
Technical Aids	assistive computer software, talking calculator, telecommunication devices
Personal Support	personal assistance, mentor, buddy, sign language interpreter
Physical Access	lift, ramp, adjustable desks, space for guide dog, signage, transport, parking
Work Practices	task shaping, flexible work schedules, progression and training, policies



## Volunteer - Frank

I am a visually impaired person. As a volunteer I have worked in office reception, computing, presentation and training facilitation. GAP provided me with Supernova magnifier/reader computer software and CCTV magnification equipment so that I could carry out my tasks. I also need information in braille, large print or on screen at the same time as everyone else, people to keep the aisles free from clutter and also a workstation with enough space for my assistance dog. I also have to ensure that my dog is kept under control because some people may be allergic to them.

## Volunteer - Sam



I volunteer as a receptionist at Gateshead Access Panel. My powerchair is high, so for me to do my work I need a height adjustable desk as a standard desk is no good. This is also useful for other people in the organisation as they can adjust it to their own height. I use a headset when I answer the telephone so both my hands are free to record messages on a pro forma on the computer.



## Volunteer - Sandra

I have arthritis and it takes me a while to get ready in the mornings. It's no good me trying to volunteer that early, so I arranged with the volunteer co-ordinator that my starting times could be flexible. They also agreed that any training or meetings I need to go to wouldn't start before 10.30 am.

**'I wanted to volunteer at my local charity shop but there was a bit of a problem. I'm diabetic and need to keep a bottle of Coke under the counter but their policy says you can't have food or drink at the counter. The manager said he would talk to the charity to get the policy changed'**

Volunteer



## Reminder

Disabled people have individual needs and should be given the opportunity to discuss any support they require

**Ask!** Don't stereotype or make assumptions about a person's support needs based on disability

In some cases if a 'reasonable' adjustment is not practicable or financially viable then creative or lateral thinking may produce an acceptable solution. In these instances it would be good practice to record the process on which you based your decisions, for example, information gathered, advice taken.

**'I wanted to be a volunteer in an advice centre. My local centre is on the first floor which is a problem for me as I am a wheelchair user. The centre has found out that there is no space to install a lift even if they had the funds. The manager has suggested that I volunteer at another branch and get my travel expenses paid**

Volunteer

## Reminder

Checking out the support needs of disabled volunteers is an on going process. It begins on initial contact, for example, offering help to fill out forms and continues at supervision sessions to make sure that existing support needs are being met and to identify any additional adjustments that need to be made.

Include the procedures you have for making 'reasonable' adjustments to meet support needs, in your organisational policies

## Resources

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### Adaptive Technology

#### AbilityNet



Tel: 0800 269545



Web: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## Adjustable Furniture

### The Human Office (Gateshead)



Tel: 0191 4930333



Web: [www.humanoffice.com](http://www.humanoffice.com)

### Phlexicare (Glasgow)



Tel: 0141 8801200



Web: [www.phlexicare.com](http://www.phlexicare.com)

### The Comfort Shop Ltd (Merseyside)



Tel: 01704 551192



Web: [www.the-comfort-shop.co.uk](http://www.the-comfort-shop.co.uk)

## Aids and Adaptations

### Altonaids (Gateshead)



Tel: 0191 4915840



Web: [www.altonaids.co.uk](http://www.altonaids.co.uk)

### Gateshead Access Panel



Tel: 0191 4430058



Web: [www.access.gateshead.dsl.pipex.com](http://www.access.gateshead.dsl.pipex.com)

### Sight Service (Gateshead)



Web: [www.phlexicare.com](http://www.phlexicare.com)

### The Independent Living Resource Centre (Newcastle Upon Tyne)



Tel: 0191 2840480



Web: [www.disabilitiynorth.org.uk](http://www.disabilitiynorth.org.uk)

## Comtec Business Equipment Ltd



Tel: 0845 4565566



Web: [www.comtecbusiness.com](http://www.comtecbusiness.com)

## RNIB



Web: [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## RNID



Web: [www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)

## Personal Support

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Personal Support is often necessary to enable some disabled volunteers to carry out their volunteer role and to reach their potential through progression and training. Personal Assistance and Buddying or Mentoring schemes are ways in which this need can be addressed. Access to reliable and 'professional' personal support will reduce barriers to volunteering that are faced by some disabled people.

Personal Assistance can be used as a tool within the workplace to assist with some of the physical aspects of the volunteer's role.

### Fact

**Personal Assistance is about the right of disabled people who require physical and / or cognitive support (whether for their personal, domestic, social, voluntary, educational or employment activities) to be able to buy, manage and control enough support so they can lead as full and spontaneous a life as a non-disabled person**

**Personal Assistance allows a disabled person to choose and employ their own personal assistant, to do what they want, when they want it done.**

'It's **My** life - An introduction to Independent Living', by Gateshead Council on Disability, 1998



## Volunteer - Anna

I have epilepsy and am a wheelchair user. I originally joined Gateshead Access Panel on a 6 week placement and went on to volunteer. It became clear that I needed more support to carry out my role on reception and in service user involvement meetings than the organisation was able to provide. GAP helped me to get more money from the Independent Living Fund to get a personal assistant to let me carry on as a volunteer for 2 days a week. My personal assistant takes notes and records messages for me. She also meets my personal care and medication needs.

Disabled people, who are eligible, can access Personal Assistance through their local authority, usually from the Direct Payments Scheme or Independent Living Fund. A disabled volunteer who employs a personal assistant is responsible for their terms of employment and insurance.

## **Buddying or Mentoring**

Buddying or mentoring is a partnership between the disabled volunteer and a partner volunteer. The role of the buddy or mentor is to provide one to one support, encouragement, training and assistance to enable the volunteer to carry out their role. Personal support from buddies or mentors can help volunteers settle into your organisation, manage their role, develop skills and maximise their potential.

Your organisation may choose to:

- train existing volunteers as buddies or mentors
- recruit volunteers for these roles and provide training
- access 'supported volunteering' schemes if available in your area



## Reminder

Personal assistants and buddies or mentors should receive induction training

Personal support for volunteering does not include personal care, for example, toileting, medication which is not the responsibility of your organisation. These needs should be met by the volunteer's personal assistant or other social care provision

You will need to provide extra workspace to accommodate personal support workers

## Resources

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### Direct Payments

Directgov



Web: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

## Gateshead Crossroads



Tel: 01207 549780



Web: [gatesheadcrossroads.org.uk](http://gatesheadcrossroads.org.uk)

## Mencap



Web: [www.askmencap.info](http://www.askmencap.info)

## Independent Living Fund

### Directgov



Web: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

### ILF (Nottingham)



Tel: 0115 9450700



Web: [www.ilf.org.uk](http://www.ilf.org.uk)

## Mencap



Web: [askmencap.info](http://askmencap.info)

## Risk Assessment

To include disabled people in your volunteering opportunities it is important to adopt an approach to risk management that aims to reduce or manage risk by making 'reasonable' adjustments rather than excluding anyone on Health and Safety grounds.

It is important to assure disabled volunteers that disclosure about their impairment during risk assessment, will not be used to exclude, but to open a dialogue for both sides to explore any limitations in order to create a safe environment for everyone.

### Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans

- are a 'reasonable adjustment' that enables disabled volunteers to take part in all volunteering opportunities
- are developed for any disabled volunteer who feels that they may need assistance to get out of a building, safely, in an emergency
- may have to be drawn up for each building if a disabled volunteer regularly carries out volunteer tasks in different venues

Inclusive risk assessment means:

- involving the disabled volunteer at all stages
- identifying adjustments and how they will be implemented
- outlining ways in which other staff and volunteers can be informed and supportive

### **Reminder**

Don't assume disabled volunteers pose a greater risk than non-disabled volunteers

Make sure your Health and Safety policies are inclusive to disabled volunteers by developing steps for risk management through adjustment and setting out procedures for emergency evacuation

## Task Shaping

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Task descriptions are a useful tool to enable organisations to clarify:

- the roles that volunteers can undertake
- the work that you need them to do
- the skills you would like them to have

However if you stick too rigidly to these and try to fit potential volunteers to the positions that are available, you may exclude some disabled people from volunteering in your organisation.

## Task Shaping

- is an approach to volunteer tasks that makes it possible for you to include disabled volunteers who may not have all the skills needed to carry out a particular role
- means making 'reasonable' adjustments so that disabled volunteers can take on tasks based on their capacities and abilities

- enables disabled volunteers to carry out any volunteer task within an organisation and not tasks only allocated to disabled people
- is good practice and should be written into your volunteer policy if you want to be inclusive

### **Practical Solutions**

- offer role sharing opportunities if a volunteer can only do part of a task
- split roles to accommodate the different skills volunteers may have
- enable a volunteer to be supported to carry out tasks, by a buddy, mentor or personal assistant



## Volunteer - Kirsty

I contacted GAP because I wanted to be a volunteer and do admin and reception work. I wanted to get a job in admin so I need more experience as well as my work placement at the council.

I told them I didn't want to answer the telephone as I was nervous and that made my stammer worse. GAP organised it so I could do some bits of the reception job, for example, recording incoming mail, doing the post and data input, but another volunteer answered the telephone.

After I'd been there for a bit I felt more confident and wanted to try answering the telephone. I got training and support from a volunteer and now I can answer the phone and transfer calls.

### Reminder

Task Shaping opens the way for progression and further training to enable volunteers to fulfill more aspects of the role and to develop the confidence to take on other tasks if they choose

## **Flexible Schedules**

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It is possible that some, but not all, disabled people may not be able to commit to regular working hours. This can be for a number of different reasons, for example, transport availability, personal care support, medical needs.

Being prepared to develop work schedules that are flexible and tailored to individual need, will mean that the opportunities your organisation offers will be workable for disabled volunteers.

### **Reminder**

The key is to remember that everyone is different and to find out from individual volunteers the best way to organise their work schedules



Volunteer	Practical Solution
'the medication I'm on means I'm not very awake first thing in the morning'	organise for the volunteer to start later or to work afternoons
'my disability means that I get tired very easily and then can't concentrate very well'	arrange that the volunteer can do shorter periods of time
'because it's difficult for me to walk some days, I feel I would let people down and they will think I'm not reliable'	assign the volunteer a task that doesn't need regular input
'I have to use taxis to get around and the school run means that it's difficult for me to get a taxi before 9am and after 3pm'	arrange for the volunteer to come in during the core times of the day
'I have to attend frequent hospital appointments so no one is going to put up with that'	coordinate volunteer schedule to take account of appointment times
'my personal assistant's shift ends at 4pm so I have to leave before then'	arrange for the volunteer to work mornings or leave early afternoon

## Reminder

Review or develop your task descriptions to make sure that the time commitment and schedules can be adjusted to include disabled volunteers

Include the practice of 'flexible scheduling' into your policy documents

## Progression and Training

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Many disabled volunteers you meet will have experienced barriers to educational, social and employment opportunities.

Progression routes and training are 'reasonable' adjustments you can introduce into your organisation that will offer disabled volunteers equal access to skills development and/or personal development.

## Progression Routes

Record and monitor the volunteers' experience of their progress in:

- skills development
- personal development
- citizen participation
- training
- employability

Enable the volunteer and coordinator to identify:

- achievement and development
- future training need
- readiness to take on other tasks or responsibilities

Give the volunteer:

- confidence in themselves and their capabilities
- ability to recognise their limitations
- information for their CV



## Volunteer - Steven

When I decided to apply for full time employment I quickly realised that I didn't have any real experience to back up my qualifications, plus I was a little unsure of my own physical abilities to work. When the possibility of a work placement at GAP came up, through the Shaw Trust, I jumped at the chance and when that ended I stayed on as a volunteer.

Through my comparatively short time at GAP I feel I have been able to dip my toe into the work environment with no pressure and risk free as far as my benefits are concerned. I have gained the experience of an actual work environment, of working as part of a team, and I have something relevant to put on my CV with the kind of reference that I previously wouldn't have had. I feel more confident in terms of myself and employment as I have been able to explore many of the difficulties and unanswered questions that I had e.g. Would work leave me too tired so I couldn't function properly in the rest of my life? Would I have to limit myself to a certain amount of hours?

With the help and support of GAP and with regular reviews I feel that I have been able to ease myself towards fulltime employment at my own pace and when I am ready.

## Volunteer - Michael



I started there as a volunteer working one day a week updating the office files. In the early days of my association with the organisation my inability to make a decision must have been exasperating for the others who worked there. Looking back I practically needed permission from one of the others before I picked up a paperclip from the floor.

Over time they have given me more responsibility for my work. Also the extent of my duties has increased. I now work on the reception desk two days per week and my duties include answering the phones and welcoming callers to the offices, as well as basic office administration and finances. My experience there built up my confidence and I felt able to do other voluntary work. I started at the Mind Book Shop and recently I began at the Discovery Museum.

Outside the office I am now finding it easier to be involved with community activities and have recently joined two book groups. I didn't have the confidence to apply to these groups before I was a volunteer.

## Training Provision

To be inclusive to disabled volunteers the training you offer, for example, in house induction, on the job training or external training courses does not need to be specifically designed for disabled people. It means that barriers to participation need to be identified beforehand so that 'reasonable' adjustments can be made if required.

### Practical Solutions

- make training materials available in accessible formats
- use accessible venues
- make reasonable adjustments to meet individual support needs, for example, technical aids, large print, BSL interpreter
- develop an appropriate pace of delivery
- determine access to training based on the disabled volunteer's need rather than on assumption of their ability
- include these points in organisational policies

## Reminder

Any training a volunteer receives must be related to the volunteer role and equip them with the skills needed to carry out the tasks. Training unrelated to the role may be viewed legally as a 'consideration' in return for work, and could affect benefits



## Volunteer - Sam

I volunteer as a receptionist. My volunteer co-ordinator organised for me to do a one to one training course in English Level 2 to help me improve my spelling and write clearer messages. Luckily the course was held in the centre of Gateshead so I could use door to door transport (bus and metro) and did not need taxis. All I really needed was a height adjustable desk.

## Volunteer - Frank



Part of my role includes giving presentations and being involved in delivering training on Disability Equality. I had already done a Presentation Skills course but wanted to increase my skills and knowledge on running training sessions. I talked about this with the co-ordinator and then enrolled on the City and Guilds 7302 Level 3 'Introduction to Delivery and Learning' course. I passed the course and have a certificate now. I met the Disability Advisor at Newcastle College before the course started to sort out a support worker and accessible training materials.

## Resources

### Progression

Impact Assessment Toolkit



Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)



## Getting There

Lack of accessible public transport and the cost of transport create physical and economic barriers to volunteering for disabled people.

**'I think transport and transport costs are the biggest barriers'**

Volunteer

You may need to offer assistance or make adjustments for some people to overcome these obstacles and enable them to volunteer.



### Volunteer - Anna

I can use my car to get to my volunteer placement if the personal assistant with me that day is a car driver. There is accessible parking at GAP so parking is not a problem. Motability sorts out my car insurance so that has nothing to do with the organisation. If I haven't got a car driver I use TaxiLink or I have to book a taxi. I get my car mileage and taxi fares back.

### Practical Solutions

- provide accessible parking spaces
- reimburse travel costs for usual mode of transport, for example, bus and metro fares, car mileage, taxi costs
- check out any accessible community transport or demand responsive schemes in your area, for example, Taxilink, Linkup
- offer support to people using public transport until they are confident about the route
- find out if there are any 'buddy schemes' that support people to travel independently, for example, Partners in Travel Buddy Scheme
- outline these practices in your policies

## Volunteer - Sam



I need door to door transport to travel anywhere and where I volunteer isn't on the route that has accessible buses. Accessible taxis are more expensive so I use TaxiLink, a door to door service run by Nexus, which uses accessible taxis and costs £1 per journey. GAP got me a regular booking and also pay my travel costs. If I can't get TaxiLink then they pay the full taxi fare.



## Volunteer - Kirsty

As I can travel on the bus I get my bus fare back each time I volunteer. Frank a volunteer at the centre told me which buses I could get. My mother came with me the first time so that I could get to know the route and then I needed to come again soon so that I would remember how to get there. The first time I came on my own Frank met me off the bus and took me back to the bus stop.

## Volunteer - Frank

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I travel independently to my voluntary work. Most times if it's available I use LinkUp, a local bus service that is booked like a taxi. It's free for me because I've got a concessionary pass - I get my travel money back from GAP. Occasionally I have to use a taxi and then GAP pays for that.

## Resources

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### LinkUp (Tyne and Wear)



Tel: 0191 2020632



Web: [www.nexus.org.uk](http://www.nexus.org.uk)

### Partners In Travel (Tyne and Wear)



Tel: 0191 2033292



Web: [www.nexus.org.uk](http://www.nexus.org.uk)

## TaxiLink (Tyne and Wear)



Tel: 0191 2020632



Web: [www.nexus.org.uk](http://www.nexus.org.uk)

## Motability



Tel: 0845 4564566



Web: [www.motability.co.uk](http://www.motability.co.uk)

## Expenses

Disabled people on benefits are often on low incomes and would not be able to volunteer if their expenses were not paid.

### Fact

**32% of disabled people receive income support compared with 12% of non-disabled people**

Labour Force, 2002

To make sure that you include disabled volunteers your expenses policy and practice will need to address this:

### **Practical Solutions**

- make payments in cash
- ensure payment is regular and prompt, for example, daily or weekly
- develop a simple and clear way to claim expenses

### **Reminder**

Volunteer expenses should be built into your funding applications

Travel costs may be higher than average

Reimbursement of 'out-of-pocket' expenses, for example, travel, subsistence, childcare does not constitute a payment and should not affect any state benefits

## Resources

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### Volunteer Expenses

Volunteering England



Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

## Welfare Benefits

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Disabled people often fear that volunteering will affect their benefits as they may be considered 'capable of work' if they are 'capable of volunteering'.

Volunteering should not affect anyone's benefit, as long as a volunteer doesn't receive any money other than 'out-of-pocket' expenses.

The main benefits likely to concern disabled volunteers are:

Disability Living Allowance	DLA is paid to people with mobility and/or personal care needs. Volunteering does not affect entitlement to DLA
Income Support	Is paid to supplement income if it is below a certain level. There are no limits on the amount of voluntary work if a volunteer claims income support
Incapacity Benefit	Is payable to people unable to work because of illness or disability. The 16 hour rule no longer applies and people can now volunteer for as long as they want
Job Seekers Allowance	Is payable to people who are unemployed. People in receipt of JSA can volunteer as much as they want to, as long as they remain available for and are actively seeking work. Volunteers are entitled to 48 hours notice of an interview and a week's notice before starting work



Disabled volunteers may be advised differently so you will need to be aware of the impact that this could have on potential volunteers and be able to offer reassurance and signposting.

**'I was told being a volunteer could change my assessment for Incapacity Benefit (how disability affects everyday tasks) and I would get less money'**

volunteer

Your organisation has no duty to inform the benefit office about who is volunteering for you but it is good practice to:

- tell volunteers that they should notify benefit advisors
- support volunteers by liaising with the benefits agency and providing relevant information and a letter about the volunteer's role, if required
- record expenses received by a volunteer to demonstrate, if necessary, that these were reimbursement of 'out - of - pocket' expenses
- ask permission to use volunteers' names or photographs in case they have chosen not to disclose the fact that they are volunteering

### **Disclaimer**

Gateshead Access Panel has made every effort to ensure that the information on benefits in this manual is correct at the time of publishing.

## Resources

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### Volunteers and Benefits

#### Citizens Advice Bureau



Web: [citizensadvice.org.uk](http://citizensadvice.org.uk)

#### Directgov



Web: [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

#### Department for Work and Pensions



Web: [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

#### Job Centre Plus



Web: [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

#### Volunteering England



Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

## Funding

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Including disabled people as volunteers in your organisation will have implications for your funding as you may need to make 'reasonable' adjustments to support them to volunteer and break down barriers to their inclusion. The cost of implementing good practice may seem prohibitive but there are some approaches you can try to minimise this.

### Practical Solutions

- build the cost of adjustments and expenses into your funding bids
- approach funders to find out if they have extra monies for additional support needs
- find out if you are eligible to access Scope's limited 'Access to Volunteer' Fund
- join the lobby for a national 'Access to Volunteering' scheme similar to the 'Access to Work' scheme which helps pay employers for support workers, aids equipment, adaptations to premises and equipment and travel costs

## Resources

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### Access to Volunteering

Leonard Cheshire



Web: [www.leonard-cheshire.org](http://www.leonard-cheshire.org)

Scope



Web: [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

Skill



Web: [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

Volunteering England



Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

### Access to Work

Job Centre Plus



Web: [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

## Policies

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You don't need to design special policies if you involve disabled people as volunteers in your organisation. However you may need to review, adapt or develop your organisational policies to make sure that they are set up to increase accessibility and support inclusive volunteering.

Inclusive policies incorporate the specific needs of disabled volunteers into guidelines that are addressed to all volunteers, irrespective of whether they have an impairment, such as:

- **Expenses**      'In some instances it will be necessary for volunteers to use taxis if the volunteer works in the evening, has a disability or public transport is inadequate'  
  
                                 'Volunteer expenses can be paid daily and in cash where preferred'
- **Health and Safety**      'Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans are included as part of our Health and Safety policy'

- **Accessibility** ‘Our organisation will hold all meetings and training events in accessible venues’
- **Funding** ‘Provision will be included in all project budgets for costs to eliminate any barriers to participation’

You may choose to outline in your policies, your organisation’s approach to specific issues that apply, for example:

- support needs and making ‘reasonable adjustments’
- accessible information

## Reminder

Each section covered in this guide indicates the areas that need to be addressed to ensure that your policies don’t exclude disabled volunteers

## Resources

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### Developing Policies

Volunteering England



Web: [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)

### Good Practice Checklist - Management and Support

**Our organisation has:**

- asked about individual support needs
- carried out adjustments to roles, environment, working arrangements
- carried out task shaping
- offered flexible working arrangements



- provided progression and training opportunities
- reimbursed expenses, particularly travel
- included Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP)
- signposted on information, for example, benefits, personal assistance
- included cost of additional requirements and expenses in funding bids
- developed policies that support and include disabled people

## Retention

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Good Practice in volunteer management is the key to retention of disabled volunteers.

The practices described in this manual will help you to maximise the retention rate of the disabled volunteers involved in your organisation.

These include:

- creating an inclusive environment by training and involving existing staff and volunteers
- giving assurance that disclosure about impairment will be used to support, not exclude
- finding out about individual support needs and making reasonable adjustments to meet these, for example, technical aids, adaptations, task shaping, personal assistants, flexible schedules
- increasing accessibility to buildings, information and people
- offering training and progression
- reimbursing expenses
- signposting on benefit information
- formally writing the practice into policy documents

Regular Reviews and Evaluation are additional factors which encourage disabled volunteers to continue volunteering.

## Reviews

Regular one-to-one reviews offer the opportunity to discuss the volunteer role and personal development but also to check out whether requirements for support and adaptations are being met.



### Volunteer - Michael

Although everyone has been so generous with me I have relied on the Volunteer Co-ordinator who has given me support and advice continuously throughout my volunteer placement. At first I needed a lot of support, mainly emotional, but now I have more confidence and doing something useful has made me feel better.

### Evaluation

Regular evaluation of volunteer opportunities by disabled volunteers means you can learn useful lessons for the future and make any necessary changes needed for recruiting, supporting and retraining other disabled people as volunteers in your organisation.

**‘There should be volunteer representatives so that people can express their opinions, monitor changes and encourage disabled volunteers to continue’**

volunteer

## Good Practice Checklist - Retention

**Our organisation has:**

- welcomed disabled people as volunteers
- created an inclusive environment
- used accessible information
- asked about individual support needs and made adjustments to meet need
- ensured that disclosure is used to support and not exclude
- provided progression and training opportunities
- reimbursed expenses in cash
- signposted on benefit information
- carried out regular reviews
- included disabled volunteers in evaluation

## Next Steps

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**Practice to Include** has set out Good Practice for the recruitment, management and retention of disabled volunteers.

### Checklist - Good Practice

The checklists in the manual will have given you an indication of

- the good practice you are already using
- any practice and procedures that you may need to develop or review

By adopting this practice your organisation will effectively reduce barriers to participation and create accessible and inclusive volunteering opportunities for disabled people.

Now that you have read this manual if there is any further information, discussion or support you would like please contact us at:



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