

# **Recruiting, Retaining and Developing Disabled Volunteers**

## **Guidance for Volunteer Opportunity Providers**

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## **1. The guidance**

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) believes that disabled people should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as non-disabled people. This applies as much in the field of volunteering as elsewhere. This document seeks to improve access to volunteering opportunities for disabled people by providing advice and guidance to organisations providing, or who are planning to provide, such opportunities.

The DRC hopes that organisations of all kinds will use this document to help them create barrier free volunteering opportunities for disabled people in many different types of volunteering environment.

When referring to disabled people throughout this document we include all people who have rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), including people with long-term health conditions. The guidance provides a generic view on barriers, but includes some impairment specific examples.

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## 2. Background

### 2.1 Current position

At present disabled people face a range of barriers that limit their equal participation in volunteering opportunities. Approximately, 20 per cent of the working age population have a disability or long-term health condition, yet only 51 per cent of working age disabled people are in employment,<sup>1</sup> and approximately 6 per cent of volunteers are disabled people or have a long-term health condition.<sup>2</sup>

There are about 10 million people in the UK who have rights under the DDA. Of this number statistics indicate there are approximately 6.8 million of working age with approximately 2.7 million who currently claim incapacity benefit.<sup>3</sup> Of this group it is estimated that 1.2 million are capable of working and wish to work, as long as they are helped to do so. This indicates there is likely to be a vast pool of disabled people who might be interested in, and capable of, undertaking volunteering activities.

At the same time, research indicates that disabled people predominantly volunteer in disability related organisations.<sup>4</sup> Such organisations are well placed to provide a range of opportunities and roles at various levels. Also disability organisations tend to understand the issues and barriers experienced by disabled people. The DRC believes that disabled people have a contribution to make across all sectors; public, private, charity and voluntary.

Addressing barriers to volunteering for disabled people may not be as complicated as some organisations may assume. A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development report identified that over 80 per cent of managers found that employing disabled people had been 'easy'.<sup>5</sup> This experience is likely to be reflected when providing volunteering opportunities to disabled people. This is the case irrespective of the sector and positive examples can be found across

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<sup>1</sup> Disability Rights Commission (2006) 'Disability Briefing'

<sup>2</sup> CSV (2001) 'Disability Need Be No Handicap'

<sup>3</sup> (2005) 'Labour Force Survey'

<sup>4</sup> Scope (2005) "Time to Get Equal in Volunteering: tackling disablism"

<sup>5</sup> CIPD (2001) "Adapting to disability - It wasn't so difficult after all"

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all fields including the public, education and private sectors.

## **2.2 National initiatives**

The recent Government report 'Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People' (available at [www.strategy.gov.uk](http://www.strategy.gov.uk)) sets out a number of objectives to increase inclusion and social justice for disabled people across society. In order to realise these objectives, the full participation of disabled people in volunteering across all sectors is vital. Although the report aims for full inclusion by 2025, it is our belief that this can be achieved well before that target date – at least for volunteering opportunities. This guidance is designed to support organisations to achieve such inclusion.

There are already a number of initiatives underway to improve disabled people's inclusion in volunteering opportunities, and this guidance will compliment these. A summary of these initiatives is given below:

### **The Russell Commission**

The Russell Commission was set up by the Government in 2004 and published its Report in 2005.<sup>6</sup> The Report details the Commission's recommendations for delivering a step change in youth volunteering in the UK. The report responds to the clearly expressed desire of young people to find meaningful ways of contributing to their communities. It addresses current inconsistencies and weaknesses in provision, which prevent the full potential of youth volunteering opportunities from being realised, as well as identifying ways to engage more young people from disadvantaged and under-represented communities; this includes recommendations about ensuring increased and full participation of young disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. The Commission's recommendations were accepted and work is now in hand at implementing them and the associated charity 'V' has now been launched.

For more information visit the Russell Communication website at [www.russellcommission.org](http://www.russellcommission.org) and the 'V' website [www.wearev.com](http://www.wearev.com)

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<sup>6</sup> The Russell Commission (2005) 'A national framework for youth action and engagement'

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## **The Compact**

This is a Government initiative to facilitate the key stakeholders (Government, voluntary and community sectors) to work more effectively together. The national Compact is an agreement between the voluntary and community sector and government to improve their relationship for mutual advantage. The national Compact is supported by local Compacts which aim to do this at a local level between the voluntary sector, councils and other local public bodies. This approach facilitates meeting the needs of local people and in particular those who experience poverty or discrimination which inevitably include disabled people. There are five codes of good practice, which support the work and help turn the theory into practice.

For more information on the Compact visit [www.thecompact.org.uk](http://www.thecompact.org.uk)

## **Investing in Volunteers**

This is the UK quality standard for all organisations which involve volunteers in their work. The Standard enables organisations to comprehensively review their volunteer management, and also publicly demonstrate their commitment to volunteering. It is managed locally by the lead volunteer development agency of each individual country of the UK. The Standard is based on four key areas of volunteer management:

- planning for volunteer involvement
- recruiting volunteers
- selecting and matching volunteers
- supporting and retaining volunteers.

For more information on Investing in Volunteers visit [www.iiv.org.uk](http://www.iiv.org.uk)

In Scotland, Investing in Volunteers is managed by Volunteer Development Scotland. For more information please visit [www.vds.org.uk](http://www.vds.org.uk)

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## **Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN)**

This is a curriculum development organisation and a recognised awarding body. It offers a wide range of curriculum programmes and qualifications for all abilities, mainly in the 11 to 25 age group. Amongst their awards are a Certificate in Community Volunteering at Levels 1 and 2.

For more information on the ASDAN visit [www.asdan.org.uk](http://www.asdan.org.uk)

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### **3. Barriers to volunteering**

To become an effective provider of volunteering opportunities to disabled volunteers it is necessary to understand the nature of the barriers that disabled people face, and how to overcome them.

We recognise that at present disabled people do not have the same opportunities or choices as non-disabled people in many areas of their lives. Nor do they enjoy equal respect or full inclusion in society on an equal basis. The poverty, social exclusion and disadvantage experienced by many disabled people is not the result of their impairments or medical conditions, but rather stems from attitudinal and environmental barriers. This is known as the 'social model of disability'. You will need to focus on your organisational policies, procedures and practices to find out if they present and can overcome issues such as:

- attitudinal barriers – general lack of understanding and awareness of what disabled people can contribute to volunteering
- fear and misunderstanding – concerns that disabled people's health could adversely impact on their reliability
- lack of reasonable adjustments – a lack of physical access in the work environment and training venues as well as inflexibility in working arrangements and provision of equipment and so on
- financial – for example, failure to meet additional travel costs for disabled people who cannot use inaccessible public transport
- communication – some disabled people will be dissuaded from applying if they cannot access the recruitment process due to lack of alternative formats eg Braille, large print, easy read, or British Sign Language (BSL).

Analysing barriers and identifying a way of removing them must involve the disabled person as well as the volunteer manager. Other specialists might also need to be involved depending on the specific circumstances, for example IT specialists or an adviser from disability organisations. If this is necessary the disabled volunteer

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should always be involved in any discussions with these other specialists, to ensure that the solutions found are workable for the disabled person and the Volunteer Opportunity Provider (VOPs).

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## **4. The benefits of providing volunteering opportunities to disabled people**

Many of the business case arguments which apply to employing disabled people also apply to volunteering. Some of the tangible benefits include:

- access to a pool of useful and skilled talent – many disabled people have acquired strategic skills and knowledge about problem solving and overcoming barriers that can be applied to a variety of circumstances
- improved awareness of disability related issues helps to provide more effective service delivery and customer care – having expertise in the organisation helps to identify and overcome potential barriers to disabled customers and consequently makes it easier for people to use your services and buy your goods
- development of employment policies and procedures – thinking through what might be needed for a disabled person to act as a volunteer helps develop understanding about the barriers disabled people face in paid employment. Getting it right for disabled volunteers helps VOPs get it right for everyone
- improved staff morale – experience in organisations who have positive and proactive policies in terms of employing disabled people have found other employees find this reassuring and it helps to develop a belief that an organisation cares about its staff
- enhanced business reputation – organisations who are seen to be putting equality for disabled people into practice can benefit from an enhanced reputation generally, which can mean that they become employers or service providers of choice for many more people disabled and non-disabled alike.

### The rewards of having disabled volunteers – Case Study

Community Concern Erewash (CCE) offers a host of services to support the local community, which has number of social exclusion problems. Bren Davies, their Chief Executive says,

“We work by listening to what the community needs. Volunteers at CCE reflect the community in all its diversity. We have no dividing lines and boundaries that put people into boxes because of their disability.”

“CCE does not specifically target disabled people as volunteers – it targets people who want to volunteer. CCE has the experience, skills and knowledge to recruit volunteers from all parts of the community and that includes disabled people. Sometimes people come to CCE directly and say they want to do something. Others are referred by their families, by doctors and health visitors, and by other voluntary organisations including Older People’s Forum and MENCAP”.

CCE takes disability very seriously and has always recognised that people in the community have physical and mental disabilities that need catering for. The building is accessible; services are accessible; staff members, including the Chief Executive, can use British Sign Language; there is a loop system; training materials are available in large print. All these things are important but Bren believes that supporting volunteers with disabilities is about more than complying with the Disability Discrimination Act.

“At CCE we are open-minded and creative in how to recruit, support and train volunteers. When we interview people who are thinking of becoming volunteers we want them to be confident that we are interested in their strengths and the skills they wish to develop. Some volunteers have disabilities but we always look at the person first and the disability second”.

Bren explains that supporting volunteers – including those with disabilities – is about listening to them and understanding their particular needs. There are people who originally came to CCE as clients needing services who have become volunteers. For example one volunteer was referred by Social Services to CCE because she was agoraphobic, claustrophobic and suffered from anxiety. CCE

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arranged for a volunteer to keep her company while her husband was out. But through conversations with her CCE found ways to reduce the one to one support she needs. More than that, by adapting projects to her needs they have enabled her to make a contribution to the community through volunteering herself. She progressed to run a shop with a group of other volunteers”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Draws on research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) ‘Doing one’s duty: a case study of volunteering in a deprived community’ (R 0002200592) Professor Irene Hardill, Nottingham Trent University and Dr Sue Baines, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

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## **5. The role of volunteers**

### **5.1 What do volunteers do?**

There is a traditional stereotype of a volunteers role, for example, befriending, provision of Meals on Wheels, service in charity shops, work on a neighbourhood project, supporting adults to learn to read and run activity groups such as football teams and Scout groups. However, when disabled people are considered in the volunteering context, their roles have sometimes been perceived as more limited to unskilled closely supervised activities such as gardening or other light manual labour, basic office duties or 'behind the scenes' work.

New opportunities for volunteering are emerging all the time, and the range of activities are vast.

Activities in 'public life' have long been a field where volunteering is critical but where opportunities are not always perceived as volunteering. Being a member of an NHS Board, a School Governor or a member of a tenants association are all examples of volunteering. There are many examples where disabled people successfully undertake such roles. This type of leadership role can have a positive impact on attitudes whilst at the same time help the organisation become disability confident. It is also important to note that the new Disability Equality Duty (DED) includes specific requirements about encouraging disabled people to participate in public life – many of these wider public roles can fall into the volunteering field – see Section 6.3 for more information about the DED.

The widespread availability of technology has moved volunteering into broader areas where personal mobility issues, lack of transport or even lack of time have traditionally been a barrier to participation for some people. Technology can facilitate involvement for previously excluded groups in a range of opportunities such as administration and policy development. Also it is possible to broaden roles further by using video links to allow people to participate in meetings from their own homes or alternative venues. This new development is at an early stage but it highlights the need to consider volunteering in the widest sense and in a creative way in order to overcome potential barriers.

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Jamie, a management consultant and BSL user, participates in a national scheme and mentors two university students taking business related degrees. He does this via a video link with an interpreter which has been established between the university and his home office and which is supplemented by email communication.

It is important to remember that many disabled people are highly skilled and have worked in a wide variety of fields and sectors, or may have been responsible for organising activities for others in their family or local community. This means that organisations could be missing out on a largely untapped resource of skill and knowledge, because they hold misconceptions about the capabilities of disabled people. The first barrier that organisations need to address is to avoid being constrained by traditional views of volunteering and equally important, of disabled people.

A police force decides to use volunteers to supplement its own victim support scheme and mounts a publicity campaign to attract applicants. It is particularly concerned to recruit disabled people to work as volunteers. Recognising that traditional attitudes might be a potential barrier, the campaign's case studies include disabled people who currently work with the police service - both in a voluntary and paid capacity including civilian staff, people working in victim support, full-time and special constables.

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## 5.2 Why do people volunteer?

People's reasons for volunteering are varied and include:

- personal development - perhaps to acquire new skills and knowledge
- a desire to support a specific organisation or cause
- a wish to play an active role in society
- developing opportunities to socialise
- being part of a returning to work strategy
- experience for career development
- changing life style.

Kirtley who is hearing impaired has been volunteering for many years. "I was unemployed for a long time and never thought about volunteering. It seemed a bit middle class and white and certainly not disabled friendly. Things have changed a lot over the years and where I volunteer now (a local environmental group) is the best yet. But even though it was hard in the old days it really helped my self-confidence and gave me something to put on my CV. I could show on my CV that I was reliable and trustworthy and this all helped me get back to work and I have never looked back".

Linda is in her 40s and lives with her husband and two sons in Cotmanhay. She is a long standing and very reliable member of Community Concern Erewash's (CCE) befriending team. Linda is a multiple volunteer and also volunteers for two other organisations in the community, as well as helping CCE with occasional extra volunteer work, such as helping at the luncheon club. Linda is registered blind, she has tunnel vision. She befriends a lady who lives three streets away. Some days she is able to volunteer without assistance, but on other days she needs assistance to enable her to volunteer. Linda has an arrangement with CCE, she telephones them

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on her befriending day to let them know she needs some help, and she can either have a helper or opt for a taxi for the journey, and is subsequently reimbursed by CCE for her expenses. Linda feels supported being a volunteer, as when she needs it support is there for her to fulfil her volunteer work.

She was introduced to CCE by a friend, who asked her to come and help, as they were short of volunteers and in the past five years she hasn't looked back. Linda loves talking to people, and she hopes she makes a difference to housebound people. Volunteering has given Linda a lot of confidence, but it is not just the volunteer work that Linda enjoys, she has loved the training opportunities that CCE has given her. 'These last five years have been tremendous for me, I have got loads more confidence, I have gained certificates, really achieved things I didn't think I would ever do, if it wasn't for CCE putting me on courses. Also if it wasn't for the volunteer work I would be stuck in the house 24/7'. For Linda volunteering gives a structure to her week, a role outside the home, she 'wants to give something to the community, where there are people worse off than I am. The day will come when I have to give in and I just hope that someone will be there to support me'

Appendix 2 contains details of some of the organisations who can provide routes into volunteering as well as additional advice in this field.

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## **6. An overview of the Disability Discrimination Act**

### **6.1 Who has rights under the DDA?**

The DDA only provides protection to people who fall within the definition of disability which is contained in the Act. A person is defined as being disabled under the DDA if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. To be covered by the definition, conditions should have lasted, or are expected to last, for at least 12 months; MS, HIV and cancer are automatically covered effectively from the point of diagnosis.

This definition means that a wide range of conditions are potentially covered such as diabetes, epilepsy, arthritis, learning disabilities, depression and so on. However, it is not necessary to be overly concerned about a person's condition or whether it is covered by the DDA; what is important, is to consider the impact of any condition on an individual basis. This means not making assumptions about conditions and how they might affect people's ability to work, for example, assuming a deaf person can't use a phone or a blind person can't use a computer.

### **6.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 1995**

This guidance is written on the basis that the DDA does not apply – as will be the case for many volunteers. Where “volunteers” are covered by the DDA, then VOPs should refer for clarification to the DRC's ‘Statutory Code of Practice on Employment and Occupation’ which is available from the DRC's website [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

For example, an organisation may have agreements with its volunteers to set out the arrangements under which they might operate. In some circumstances a volunteering agreement might be construed as a contract of employment. Whether this is the case is likely to depend on the precise wording used and the intentions behind the agreement. For example, if such an agreement sets out what an organisation requires a volunteer to do, eg work a minimum of 6 hours a week or give 4 weeks notice, then such an agreement might be interpreted as a contract of employment depending on the other circumstances of the case.

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Where there is a contract of employment, then the DDA employment provisions (Part 2 of the Act), and other employment law, will apply to that relationship. This can be a very complex area and this information is not intended as substitute for taking detailed legal advice if you are not sure whether a position amounts to employment or not. There are other situations where what may appear to be a volunteering arrangement is actually covered by Part 2 of the Act.

For example;

- If organisations use volunteering as a way of assessing an individual's suitability for particular work with that organisation, then the DDA is likely to apply in relation to the "volunteering", as it would amount effectively to an arrangement for determining to whom employment is offered, which is covered by the DDA. This would mean that organisations would need to consider their recruitment and assessment procedures and determine what reasonable adjustments might be needed.
- Volunteers undertaking practical work experience for a limited period for the purposes of vocational training are covered by the "work placement" provisions of the Act. Detailed guidance on these aspects of the Act and how they might apply are set out in the Statutory Code of Practice on Employment and Occupation which can be found on the DRC's website [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

In addition, there are public posts to which people may be appointed or elected – such as members of NHS Trust Boards or school governors – which will be covered by the DED. More details about the duty can be found at [www.dotheduty.org](http://www.dotheduty.org)

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### **6.3 The Disability Equality Duty**

The DDA 2005 amended the DDA 1995 to introduce the new public sector duty to promote disability equality, which came into force on 4 December 2006. What is known as the general duty requires public sector authorities such as local and national Government, educational institutions, NHS Trusts, the emergency services and so on to actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

The aim of the DED is to get public authorities to think and act proactively on disability equality issues. They should identify what barriers to full inclusion exist for disabled people and by involving disabled people they should provide action plans for tackling these. The duty should for the first time enable public authorities to tackle institutional disability-related discrimination.

The duty is likely to have an impact on volunteering and disability in a number of ways. Part of the general duty is to have due regard to the need to encourage participation by disabled people in public life – which will clearly involve encouragement and support of volunteering. In addition, where authorities are subject to the specific duties, there is an obligation on them to involve disabled people in the development of their Disability Equality Schemes. In many cases this involvement is being facilitated by organisations of disabled people which in turn are run or represented by disabled volunteers. In such cases, in order to ensure effective involvement, the authority will need to fund those adjustments required to facilitate the involvement process, for example, ensuring that information is available in alternative formats, transport costs are met when attending meetings and so on.

A local authority run museum establishes a group in order to involve disabled people in the drawing up of its Disability Equality Scheme. This group includes representatives from a range of local disability organisations who are represented by disabled volunteers. The museum meets the costs of getting people to the meetings and provides additional adjustments such as a palantypist and providing information in alternative formats.

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The DRC has produced a wide range of guidance on the duty which can be found on the DRC website [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org)

Also available here is 'The Duty to Promote Disability Equality: Statutory Code of Practice England and Wales' as well as the Code for Scotland which set out the duty in detail.

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## 7. Reasonable adjustments

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 introduced the concept of 'reasonable adjustments'. Essentially, this means that adjustments are made to the way people work or access goods, facilities and services or education in order to make them accessible. Such adjustments might be made by providing specialist equipment, eg an induction loop, or by changing the way things are produced, eg providing information in alternative formats.

An advice service offers its customers information in a range of ways; these include Braille and large print format information or having staff read the information over the phone. It also offers a service which texts individual responses to enquiries to a customer's mobile phone. It does not charge for these services but provides them to overcome recognised access barriers.

Given the nature of the organisation-volunteer relationship, the law requiring such reasonable adjustments does not ordinarily apply to volunteers. However, when considering the nature and costs of most adjustments it is good practice to adopt a similar approach for everyone irrespective of whether the DDA might apply. This is especially true when considering the contribution which will be made by disabled volunteers.

A lot of advice and guidance is available about making adjustments in order to overcome the barriers faced by disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. A good starting point for such information is the DRC's website [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org) and most disability or health condition organisations provide specific information and guidance on their own websites.

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## 7.1 What are reasonable adjustments?

There are many types of reasonable adjustments that can assist disabled people to participate fully in volunteering opportunities. Below are some suggestions of reasonable adjustments:

- the provision of specialist equipment, eg screen reading software for a visually impaired person who needs to use a computer
- changing processes, eg allowing a person with Dyslexia to provide details using dictation software instead of applications forms
- swapping duties around so that a person with a mental health problem can start their duties later on (this may help them overcome the side effects of medication)
- allocating additional rest breaks for someone with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. VOPs should consult the DRC's website [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org) for more information.

It is important to remember that adjustments don't necessarily mean changes to the physical environment, although this may be the case, they are often simply changes to the way things are done.

A wheelchair user volunteers for the Samaritans. There is no wheelchair access at his local branch as it is on the first floor of a house. He drives to the next nearest Samaritans location which is accessible and the Samaritans pay his extra expenses. Whilst the office is generally accessible the manager discusses what other adaptations might be useful with the volunteer; these are put in place.

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When considering adjustments there is a need to be creative, for example, there are a number of instances where disabled volunteers have an adjustment which is the provision of support from another volunteer. You should always consult with the individual when considering making adjustments as they will know their own condition and what adjustments might be best. There may also be a need in certain circumstances though for expert advice from an external source (eg a disability specific organisation), especially if the person has recently developed their disability and may not know about what type of help and support they might find most helpful, or if the organisation wants to offer volunteering opportunities in a new area of activity.

## **7.2 How much do adjustments cost?**

Not all adjustments cost money and where there are costs, these can be met through a range of options. In the case of adjustments for paid employment 80 per cent of employers found it easy or very easy to make the adjustments to facilitate disabled people either to join or stay with their business, with 65 per cent claiming there were no direct costs to the business. Where costs were incurred the average was less than £200.<sup>8</sup> This is almost certainly the case for disabled volunteers. For example, re-arranging duties amongst a team of volunteers so that a disabled person does not have to undertake a specific activity would be an effective adjustment yet would cost nothing.

Many organisations have found it is the attitudes of colleagues that are the biggest barriers to address as opposed to spending money on equipment. It is important to remember that training and briefing staff may be an appropriate adjustment to make; again such adjustments may cost very little or nothing. There is a lot of useful material about disability, communication and etiquette on the Internet, for example, the DRC's website [www.drc-gb.org](http://www.drc-gb.org) as well as sites for those organisations for specific disabilities or health conditions such as the Royal National Institute of the Blind and Scope. Often local charities are able to provide both general disability awareness and disability specific training for free or at a low cost.

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<sup>8</sup> The Papworth Trust (2006) 'Engaging Employers'

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### 7.3 Funding adjustments

It is inevitable that some adjustments might cost money and there is no one approach to finding the resources to pay for them. Some organisations are able to fund the adjustments and they plan for this and allocate budgets to support the volunteer programmes. This is ideal if it is possible and given the average costs of adjustments such provision need not be high.

Where resources cannot be identified internally the main option open to organisations is to seek funding from other bodies that may be prepared to make grants. For example, the Olympic games volunteer programme will allocate budgets for providing uniforms, computer equipment, travel costs, office space, equipment etc. Alongside this, VOPs can budget for 'reasonable adjustments' and have a central fund available for potential costs of interpreters and other human support, assistive technology, extra travel costs and so on. Appendix 3 lists some organisations which may be prepared to consider making access related grants.

There are likely to be other local organisations that might be able to provide assistance. There is no ready way to identify such organisations although a good starting point would be local directories or a web search. Identifying and establishing a relationship with such organisations early on in the recruitment process is likely to prove useful and help save time later.

A health authority has contacted a local organisation of disabled people about access to their services. The organisation of disabled people explain that they would like to help with more in-depth involvement and engagement of the services and employment issues that disabled people face in the health service, as they have valuable expertise within the group to help with this. However, they are all volunteers and do not have the funds available to continue sustained consultation and involvement.

The health authority decide to fund the organisation for 3 years in exchange for agreed commitment to helping them develop their Disability Equality Scheme, with potential for renewed contract at the end of that term. This helps the organisation develop and grow and offer other public bodies similar arrangements.

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This approach will allow VOPs to build a database of potential help and support which can be used in the future. Also such organisations can be helpful in providing help and advice on specific issues and adjustments. It is likely to be useful if you help your organisation develop its expertise in this field and nominating individuals who take the lead is likely to minimise the need to 'reinvent the wheel' in this area.

Many organisations which provide volunteering opportunities rely on funding from the public sector, for example, grants for running refuge centres. The DED, that has applied to public sector bodies since December 2006, may offer new opportunities to increase public / voluntary sector partnership agreements on the inclusion of disabled people, which may include tackling funding issues for access and inclusion purposes.

When seeking funding from the public sector, therefore, it is worth highlighting any additional costs for making adjustments which may be needed for disabled volunteers and linking this to the requirements of the new duty. This might be particularly useful in respect of encouraging disabled people to greater participation in public life. Building in costs for larger adjustments as a planned programme of overcoming barriers to using disabled volunteers is a good way of demonstrating a cohesive and planned approach to ensuring a barrier free environment. This is likely to fit well with public sector bodies' obligations under the duty. Such applications for funding need not be restricted to the usual grant application process and it is always worth seeing whether additional funding might be available for specific adjustments.

Some organisations who work with disabled volunteers are likely to be involved in helping public authorities meet their 'involvement' obligations under the duty, eg developing the Disability Equality Scheme, undertaking research and collating information. It might be appropriate for organisations to negotiate a fee for such work especially where this is to fund the costs of continued involvement of the organisation and its disabled volunteers. In such circumstances it is important that these issues are discussed and agreed in advance to avoid misunderstandings at a later stage.

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A library service is concerned about the apparent lack of use of its services by disabled residents. In particular it is concerned that disabled residents from Black Minority Ethnic (BME) communities are not using the service. The library management committee contracts with the local coalition of disabled people to undertake research into the barriers which are apparently limiting the take-up of library services by disabled residents with particular reference to BME communities. The coalition ensures that it includes in its tender a sum to meet the cost of any adjustments required to facilitate the research.

The general duty specifically includes the requirement to have due regard to the need to encourage the participation of disabled people in public life; a significant number of these roles are voluntary, for example, tenants association, patients' advisory bodies and so on. Encouraging disabled people to participate in such voluntary roles will mean the public authority should consider how to make and fund appropriate adjustments.

A local authority is considering how to involve disabled people in the development of its Disability Equality Scheme. It contacts the local health and education providers and agrees to fund a forum for disabled people that will be readily able to involve and engage disabled people in developing ideas and actions which will make the authority's services more accessible. They fund the administration, provide the venue and fund the costs of making the meetings fully accessible. This offers disabled people an opportunity to collectively decide on their priorities and feedback scrutiny into the local services and employment opportunities.

Another potential source of funding might be from Local Strategic Partnerships which set up equality across sectors based by local authorities. The role of these Partnerships is to co-ordinate responses to local issues of community development and they have their own funding streams.

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## **8. Engaging with disabled volunteers**

There are many ways that VOPs can engage with disabled volunteers. The approach is likely to vary depending on the nature and size of the organisation along with its function and culture. Such approaches include:

- a casual approach where all volunteers are welcomed and included in the organisation where possible
- actively recruiting disabled volunteers to perform specific tasks
- incorporating disabled volunteers as they come forward within an organisation
- a structured programme incorporating disabled volunteers for a period of time
- offering disabled volunteers specific training in a job role with the expectation that, once qualified, disabled individuals could then continue to undertake that role.

Experience shows that VOPs are likely to find it useful if they determine in advance their basic approach to using volunteers. This will help:

- clarify the overall role and purpose of volunteers in the organisation
- determine the approaches used in management issues such as recruitment, development and assessment
- ensure a good match between the nature of the opportunities and the volunteers
- determine a structured approach to making adjustments to ensure the inclusion of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions as volunteers
- assess the level of any additional expertise, resources and assistance which might be needed when using disabled people or people with long-term health conditions
- determine whether the organisation is achieving its own

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objectives with volunteers.

In most circumstances having a policy on the use of volunteers will be valuable. This will help to ensure consistency of approach, provide a source of advice and guidance and clarify important issues such as how to manage identified health and safety risks through reasonable adjustments. Such policies should also include the specific issues which apply to disabled people, eg approach to making adjustments, provision of accessible format information and so on. A policy can also usefully establish a number of 'ground rules' about disabled people, for example, stereotyping and assumptions should be avoided in terms of judgements about people's abilities or attributes.

A UK-wide heritage organisation relies on volunteers to help run its hundreds of properties. As a major user of volunteers it develops over time a wide-ranging policy on the recruitment, development and use of volunteers. One key aspect of the policy sets out the managers' role in determining volunteers' development needs. All volunteers have a development plan which identifies their organisational based training needs, eg customer care, health and safety and so on. Additionally volunteers are encouraged to set personal development objectives which allow them to develop such attributes as their competencies, interpersonal skills and confidence; these vary widely and depend on the individual and their reason for volunteering. The personal development plan ensures both the organisation and the volunteer achieve what they want from each other. This approach minimises volunteer turnover and facilitates a high level of positive visitor feedback. Feedback from volunteers indicates they achieve personal objectives including a number moving into paid employment.

Organisations are responsible for carrying out Criminal Record Bureau checks where appropriate for disabled volunteers in the same way that they are for non-disabled volunteers. However, it may be a reasonable adjustment to assist a disabled person in completing a CRB form if required. Information about this procedure can be found at [www.disclosure.gov.uk](http://www.disclosure.gov.uk)

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## **9. Making it happen**

The most successful volunteering experiences for disabled people result from a clarity of role and function and where the volunteer is seen as a valuable team member who is enabled to contribute fully to the team's activities. Conversely the most unsatisfactory experiences have been where volunteers do not have specific areas of work and responsibilities, are simply given ad hoc roles and tasks, and are made to feel they are there as an act of charity.

When recruiting, developing and retaining disabled volunteers, barriers may arise at various stages. With a little preparation and thought many of these can be eliminated before they arise. Disability and long-term health condition related barriers are not only addressed by applying some adjustment. Thinking through and adjusting the processes and systems used when recruiting and managing disabled people often prevents barriers arising in the first place. The areas which should be reviewed in order to assess and remove barriers include:

- organisational and individual attitudes
- defining the role
- defining the person specification
- management
- recruitment
- training and development
- assessment and feedback
- on-going support
- involvement procedures.

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## **9.1 Organisational and individual attitudes**

We have already discussed some of the issues around how organisations and people might view using disabled people as volunteers. In order to ensure a positive experience for both the organisation and the disabled volunteer, therefore, it is useful to consider whether any work needs to be undertaken in identifying specific barriers in this field and develop a strategy to address them.

Negative or misinformed attitudes about disabled people can lead organisations to create barriers to disabled people's integration and involvement. There may be a number of reasons why people may hold such views:

- a perceived lack of contact with the organisation from disabled people in the past, organisations may assume disabled people are not interested in volunteering there
- negative media images and stereotyping of disabled people which influence the way people think about disabled people generally
- people's fear of doing and saying the wrong thing
- people may not have had contact with a disabled person before and so may know little about disability and what it means for individual's lives.

Tackling these attitudinal barriers will require different solutions in each organisation. There are a number of activities that can be undertaken to start the process of building positive attitudes towards disabled people. These include:

- disability equality training, for example, briefing sessions, videos, information booklets
- planning workshops, for example, getting people involved in determining how disabled people might successfully work in their organisation
- using case studies, for example, highlighting positive examples
- facilitating contact, for example, visiting other organisations

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who work with disabled people to develop awareness and understanding of barriers

- using positive images, for example, photos and articles in newsletters
- developing clear policies about the organisation's position, for example, how adjustments should be made, managers' role, position on bullying and harassment.

Being proactive in this area sends out positive messages and helps others understand what the organisation expects and wishes to achieve.

## **9.2 Defining the volunteer's role**

It is important to have clear roles for disabled volunteers. A clearly defined role should:

- outline the specific requirements of the individual and the organisation
- enabled disabled volunteers and VOPs to be clear about what is expected from each other
- enable the VOP to be clear about issues such as line management responsibilities, training needs, health and safety management.

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### **9.3 The person and role specifications**

A good person and job specification can help volunteers to be clearer about what is expected of them. However, many organisations can tend to fall into the trap of trying to define the person too rigidly, rather than concentrating upon the role and tasks that need to be performed, and looking at how these can be undertaken, involving different types of reasonable adjustments.

When drawing up a job specification care must be taken to ensure this is not discriminatory, for example, by asking for unnecessary levels of formal qualifications when the requirement should be to do the role, or requiring a person to hold a driving license when other arrangements could be made.

Good person and role specifications should:

- be clear about what is required in terms of outputs
- indicate what is involved and how flexible the opportunity can be to accommodate particular circumstances, for example, time needed for hospital visits or the requirements to comply with Jobseeker's Allowance rules.

A hospital trust decides to use volunteer 'meeters' in its main hospital to ensure visitors are welcomed and helped to get to where they want to go. The person specification identifies the key functions of the role, eg meet visitors, determine where they want to go and either tell or show them the way.

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## **9.4 Management and supervision**

Although volunteers are not paid employees it is good practice to ensure they are effectively managed. A volunteer should know, for example, who manages them and who is responsible for dealing with any queries and problems. It is also important that someone has responsibility for wider issues such as health and safety.

### **Supervision**

In undertaking this role the manager and supervisor and related systems need to take into account the volunteer's specific disability or long-term health condition and how it might affect their individual requirements.

There should be an individual who is responsible for ensuring all barriers are identified and adjustments made. This might be the volunteer team manager or it might be another person who has developed expertise in the role. Who is nominated to do this will depend on the organisation and its size but the important issue is for everyone to be clear who is to take the lead and who should be involved in the process.

The individual is an excellent source of knowledge and expertise about barriers and solutions that work and they should always be involved when considering such issues. At the same time it is useful to have someone responsible for overseeing the identification of organisation-wide barriers such as recruitment procedures, as individual managers may experience difficulties in addressing these.

A key principle to bear in mind is that although volunteers are 'giving up their time' it does not mean they should not be effectively supervised. Supervisors should adopt good practice approaches to supervising all staff irrespective of whether they are paid employees or not. In many respects the approach to supervising volunteers will be similar to that when supervising employed staff. The approach may be different and the systems used vary but essentially the supervisor will be responsible for making sure the volunteer undertakes their role effectively, achieves both the organisation's and personal objectives, complies with organisational practices and procedures, eg health and safety, and so on.

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Supervisors should be involved in determining the role of the volunteers as they will be expected to help the volunteer discharge that role effectively. Generally speaking, supervisors are closer to the work than centralised departments and have a considerable amount of knowledge about the day-to-day issues which might arise; this knowledge should be drawn upon.

In carrying out their day-to-day role as supervisors the organisation establishes they have the knowledge, awareness and confidence to deal with any specific issues which might arise as a result of supervising a disabled person. Where appropriate, additional training and briefings should be provided along with additional support from their manager.

### **Disclosure of disability**

VOPs generally should not disclose information about a person's disability without their consent. However, it may be difficult to make adjustments if you don't know that a person is disabled. So the DRC would generally encourage disabled people to disclose their disability or health condition, but the onus is very much upon organisations to develop a culture in which disabled people feel safe to do so.

It may also be the case that those working alongside the disabled person may need to know some information about their disability to make sure that they make any adjustments needed. Organisations should discuss with the disabled person about how they want others to be informed of their requirements.

### **Bullying and harassment**

One particular issue for managers and supervisors to consider is bullying and harassment on grounds of disability by colleagues or service users. For example, research found that nine out of ten people with a learning disability reported having experienced harassment.<sup>9</sup> This means the issues must be given due consideration and actions taken to prevent it occurring, or where it does, ensure it is dealt with effectively.

Bullying and harassment can take different forms and may be

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<sup>9</sup> Mencap (1999) 'Living in Fear'

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unintentional. Irrespective of whether it was inadvertent or malicious its impact is likely to have a marked impact on the work of the volunteer. Name calling, verbal abuse or the use of inappropriate language thought to be 'harmless' may be part of your workplace culture and appear not to offend anyone. However, you have a responsibility to create an environment conducive to full inclusion of disabled people and to create a culture of valuing diversity. All staff need to have an understanding of what the issues are, what they are required to do and what will happen if such unacceptable behaviour takes place.

Where organisations have policies about dealing with bullying and harassment, they should make specific mention of disability-related bullying or harassment. Managers need to understand what sort of things might constitute disability related harassment or bullying and be prepared to be proactive in dealing with it.

Often disabled people do not want to report bullying and harassment. Managers and supervisors should monitor proactively for such behaviour and not wait for it to be reported. At the same time the organisation, managers and supervisors should encourage people's trust and develop a culture where such incidents can be raised and know they will be dealt with effectively.

It is likely that managers and supervisors will need some specialised training and disability awareness training, in particular in relation to communication, etiquette and language, especially if some attitudinal barriers might exist. Such training for colleagues will also play a useful role in helping them to understand the issues relating to bullying and harassment.

Bullying and harassment can arise where disabled volunteers deal with members of the public. The organisation's policy should be clear about what should happen when a member of the public may have bullied or harassed a disabled volunteer.

VOPs should have a clear policy on how to deal with such situations. Such policies could usefully include the organisational procedure, eg refusing to serve the customer, reporting it to a supervisor, logging the incident and supporting the individual. Both employees and volunteers should be clear about the point at which it is appropriate to contact the police or other external agencies.

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Organisations covered by the DED have a specific duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate disability related harassment. This means they will need to take proactive steps to deal with these issues, the scope of this obligation does cover volunteers. For detailed information and guidance about the duty see [www.dotheduty.org](http://www.dotheduty.org)

## 9.5 Recruitment

Best practice in recruiting disabled people applies equally to paid and voluntary work. The procedures for recruiting volunteers are likely to be less rigorous or detailed than the procedures used for paid employees. However, any procedures used will need to take into account the requirements of potential applicants and ensure that they are barrier-free from the outset, for example, offering alternatives to completing an application form.

Similarly, there is also likely to be a need to be pro-active to ensure the widest pool of possible talent is able to consider the opportunities on offer. This will mean using different approaches to reach potential volunteers, including those who may not yet have considered volunteering as something they want to try. Relying on one method of advertising volunteering opportunities is unlikely to be effective in reaching the widest pool of potential recruits.

Being proactive is the cornerstone of any effective recruitment strategy. This should be underpinned by a range of approaches and methods aimed at ensuring having an impairment or long-term health condition does not prevent someone from finding out about or applying for a volunteering opportunity. For example, only using print medium may exclude people with dyslexia or a visual impairment; radio advertising may exclude hearing-impaired people. In developing a broad based approach to advertising opportunities you could consider:

- asking existing staff and volunteers to spread the word and nominate people
- notifying local organisations of and for disabled people who can be made aware of your volunteer opportunities
- asking third-party stakeholders like social services to let their client groups know about the opportunities

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- notifying local religious organisations
- using road shows or stands at exhibitions
- advertising in local magazines and free newspapers
- posting fliers in GP surgeries, libraries, benefit offices, hospitals and so on
- using specialist agencies and websites
- seeking media publicity via local radio or newspapers
- advertising in your local Volunteer Centre. Contact details for Volunteer Centres can be found on the websites listed in Appendix 2.

There are organisations which act as agencies to supply organisations with volunteers. If your organisation uses these, it would be good practice to ensure that the agency is aware of your willingness and desire to recruit disabled volunteers.

Specific initiatives may also be needed to reach potential volunteers from traditionally hard to reach groups, for example, black and minority ethnic communities, lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people. The impact, for example, of poor employment opportunities for BME disabled people may be doubly adverse, and opportunity to address these dual barriers should be implicit in good practice. Direct contact with representatives of organisations should be considered as a matter of course along with using the specialist press and radio with such target audiences.

Some other points to bear in mind when trying to make your volunteer recruitment processes more accessible are:

- be prepared to discuss opportunities informally to provide additional information and answer any questions
- make clear what training and guidance will be available
- be prepared to provide additional support to address concerns and ensure continuing development, eg liaising with staff at Jobcentre Plus in relation to benefit rules and compliance
- consider offering a 'buddy' or mentor during the induction

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period and beyond

- make sure information about the opportunity identifies the competences that a volunteer might be expected to have and develop
- make sure you discuss potential barriers which might exist and jointly develop adjustments to address them.

In Scotland an NHS hospital is concerned its patient consultative panel lacks representation by patients with a learning disability and decides to actively seek representation from this group. As well as using the usual methods of press advertising it also develops an information pack which is available in a range of accessible formats including Easy Read. The hospital circulates the pack to appropriate organisations in its region.

The pack includes information about how the hospital will consider and make adjustments to both the recruitment and working arrangements and gives contact details for those who want further information or need adjustments to the recruitment procedures. It also circulates the information pack to the social services and asks for their help in ensuring that the details are made widely available to the target group. Finally the hospital also asks a number of the local organisations of and for people with learning disabilities whether there are any other actions they could take to maximise the chances of getting applicants to come forward.

When interviewing and assessing the potential of disabled applicants there are a number of specific points to bear in mind:

- Is the process flexible and does it reflect the type of opportunity on offer? For example, an intern role in a think tank or participating in a befriending service do not require the same procedures or approach. In the former example the recruitment process is likely to be similar to a formal recruitment process whereas the latter can be more relaxed and informal. Which approach to be used should be established in advance and be part of the process of determining the role, the aims of the job and so on which then leads to determining the arrangements for filling the post. based on that.

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- The purpose of the role should be clear; for example, if the opportunity is a developmental one you will want to select a volunteer who will find the role challenging. Similarly if you need a disabled volunteer to undertake a specific role immediately then the assessment and selection process will need to identify candidates who can immediately step into the role. This means that when setting up the opportunity you establish not only the duties but also the wider purpose of the role which will allow you to set out the core competencies needed. This then leads to determining the selection arrangements and the assessment criteria used.
- Many disabled people may have had negative experiences of volunteering. The approach used needs to take this into account. For example, reassuring applicants and ensuring that you demonstrate a positive and understanding approach. This can be enhanced by asking if there are any requirements before the interview and subsequently providing them, during the discussions ask for the disabled person's view on the potential barriers and likely adjustments which may overcome them, eg transport arrangements or specialist equipment, and flexible working arrangements. Approach the selection in a positive way and help the individual identify positive things they can bring to the role and provide neutral feedback if they are unsuccessful which will help them develop.
- Some young disabled people may have experienced relatively sheltered lives and consequently may have less developed social skills than for non-disabled people of the same age. Take this into account when interviewing and assessing suitability as it may mask the full potential of that individual. It may be appropriate to help develop their social skills as part of the placement and this might be done by using a mentor and ensuring effective feedback on performance as well as support encouragement to take part in any social activities with other volunteers.
- It is inappropriate to ask generalised personal questions about an individual's disability or health condition, however, it is good practice to determine the effect of any impairment or health condition on the person's ability to undertake the tasks involved eg would you need any adjustments to enable you to attend our regular board meetings?

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- Appearance or behaviour may be misleading about the candidate's actual potential and ability to fulfil the volunteering role effectively. For example, some impairments may affect a person's body language, eg a partially sighted person not making eye contact or a person with a mental health problem appearing apprehensive. Those who are involved in the selection process should be aware that such issues can unconsciously adversely affect their assessments of people. These issues should be addressed in the training people are given in relation to the selection of volunteers and care taken that such issues do not affect assessments; the criteria should be about the person's ability to carry out the role.

Tony has a history of mental health issues. "I didn't want them to know in the organisation I'd had problems but if something happened they might think there was something really wrong. I decided to tell the Volunteer coordinator about my anxiety problems. He couldn't have been more understanding. They set up a short notice stand-in arrangement for me which is just what I needed. It gave me great peace of mind and I have never needed it – result!"

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## **9.6 Training and development**

The individual's training and development needs should be assessed both in terms of effective performance in the role and in their retention and development. As with employees, training helps volunteers feel valued, and gives them confidence that they can undertake the role. It might equally be critical in helping to achieve a desired outcome of becoming a volunteer, eg as a stepping-stone to work.

Training for disabled volunteers may be needed in a number of areas:

- in the tasks to be undertaken
- in using any adjustments applied such as screen reader software for a visually impaired person
- in health and safety (especially how the organisation will use reasonable adjustments to ensure the safety of the disabled volunteers and others they work with)
- in first aid (do not assume that disabled people are unable to administer first aid to other people)
- for managers, supervisors and those who will be working alongside the disabled volunteer.

Any training must be accessible to the disabled volunteer irrespective of their impairment and barriers should be identified and overcome in advance, eg training materials in alternative formats, using appropriate language, providing facilities for assistance dogs and support workers. You should discuss the training format and delivery with the disabled person in advance, so that reasonable adjustments can be made if required. Such considerations should apply to internal and external opportunities.

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A women's refuge recruits a visually impaired support worker. The refuge provides induction to all new volunteers and prior to the event the trainer contacts the volunteer and discusses what adjustments might be needed to overcome any potential barriers. Consequently, all training materials are provided in advance by e-mail so the volunteer can familiarise herself with them. The volunteer also discusses with her manager whether there are any training needs for her colleagues. It is decided that no specific training is likely to be needed but the volunteer asks for the opportunity to brief her colleagues about her visual impairment and its implications at the first team meeting she attends.

## **9.7 Assessment and feedback**

Disabled volunteers may not be subject to your usual appraisal procedures that apply to paid staff. Nevertheless, there needs to be some process that helps determine performance. This is particularly important where the volunteering opportunity is a way to develop skills and competences with a view to taking up paid employment in the future. The system needs to be flexible to allow its use either informally or formally and take into account the requirements of the volunteer, the organisation and what the opportunity is intended to achieve. Bearing this in mind any system used should be capable of:

- agreeing what performance standards, outputs or development milestones are to be achieved and by when
- identifying how achievement will be measured and by whom
- identifying when the next performance review will be held
- identifying any training needs that are needed to achieve the agreed outputs
- providing a record of achievement which can be used for future reference.

Issues around poor performance should also be discussed in a constructive way. It should be remembered that disabled volunteers may appear to be performing badly, but this can often be due to a lack of adjustments being made, or are made at the start of the

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activity but not maintained when work or other situations change.

Regular one-to-one sessions with the supervisor or manager will provide an opportunity to monitor performance effectively and to discuss additional development needs, problems that may have arisen, etc.

Any arrangements for providing feedback need to be barrier free and adjustments might be needed, for example, the language and approach used for a person with a learning difficulty.

In the case of the women's refuge the manager adapts the standard volunteer appraisal procedure to ensure it is accessible to the visually impaired volunteer. The volunteer's appraisal reports are typed up by the manager who e-mails them to the volunteer two days before the meeting scheduled to discuss her performance.

On a less formal basis the manager and volunteer decide to meet fortnightly and discuss any issues which arise; in particular to check about the effectiveness of any adjustments and whether any unforeseen issues have arisen which need addressing. The manager also makes it clear that the volunteer should come straight to her should any issues arise between meetings.

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## **9.8 On-going support**

Disabled volunteers may find it useful to have on-going support available whilst they undertake their role. It is important that such support is made readily available should it be required. What might be available should be made known to the volunteer and how it can be accessed. This role might be undertaken by the person responsible for the volunteer although this type of support might be best provided by someone who is not directly involved with the day-to-day work of the individual perhaps as an informal mentor. This would allow issues such as harassment or difficulties with colleagues to be discussed along with any other issues in a neutral and non-threatening way.

Any person providing such support might need to be trained in the task including knowledge of disability awareness, reasonable adjustments and wider potential barriers and how they can be addressed.

## **9.9 Involvement procedures**

Involvement of disabled volunteers is at the heart of ensuring effective participation in volunteering by disabled people. How you do this will depend on the organisation and the role of the volunteer and any procedures can be flexible to suit the organisation. For example, a large organisation which uses hundreds of volunteers, might usefully establish a consultation group which can advise and become a centre of expertise. In smaller organisations it might be appropriate to appoint a champion or similar role who can perform the same function albeit on a smaller scale.

It should be remembered that disabled people are not necessarily experts on anyone else's barriers and adjustments; whilst they may have an insight into them such things are specific to the individual and need to be discussed with them.

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Lesley, a young woman with a learning disability, is offered a volunteering opportunity at a day centre for visually impaired people. Before she takes up this role she meets the head of the centre together with a friend and they talk through what the role involves and what she will be doing. As part of the discussion they talk about what duties might need adjusting and what could be done to overcome any barriers. The manager ensures Lesley identifies the issues and solutions. The manager asks the health and safety representative for their view on those duties. After her first day the manager and Lesley review the day and check how things went and consider whether any other issues have arisen. The manager repeats this process until they are both content the placement is working well for both of them.

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## **10. Health and safety**

One of the significant barriers that volunteers who are disabled face is the perception of others that their disability or health condition increases the risk of accidents, injuries or reliability. Internal research carried out by Dupont in 1981 and 1990 shows that disability and long-term health conditions are not a significant issue when considering sickness absence or determining the causes of accidents or dangerous occurrences; there is no reason why this would be different for volunteers as long as the issues are assessed and managed effectively.

### **10.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**

Volunteers are not specifically referred to in health and safety legislation; nevertheless, it is considered common sense as well as good practice to treat volunteers in the same way that employees are treated.

There are legal obligations under Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which imposes a duty on organisations to ensure the health and safety of people not employed by them but who may be affected by that organisation's activities, this includes volunteers. These obligations require organisations to 'as far as reasonably practicable' not expose non-employees to risks to their health or safety and to provide appropriate information.

Health and safety should not be used as a false excuse to justify treating people less favourably simply because of their disability or long-term health condition. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and DRC research, found this happens and often because others make judgements about risks based on preconceptions and lack of knowledge or understanding of disability. This finding is also likely to apply in the case of volunteer opportunities.

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## **10.2 Risk management**

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require organisations to make an assessment of risk not only in relation to employees but also on the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking - this would clearly cover volunteers. When any risks are identified, organisations need to put in place measures to remove or manage these risks effectively. Training, provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and altering ways of working are all ways of managing risks.

When considering managing risks with regard to disabled volunteers, do not assume that a disabled person poses more risks than a non-disabled person, simply because of their disability. VOPs should be risk assessing the operating / working environment, not the disabled person.

A good practice approach to risk management, and one that can help identify issues and solutions in advance, is for the organisation to plan for disabled volunteers with a range of impairments or long term health conditions to be involved in all volunteering roles, and then to consider, with experts if necessary, some general approaches to managing these risks. If this is done, then such general approaches can be adapted for an individual, but will be located within an overall framework of risk management, this is likely to make the whole process more inclusive and more effective for everyone.

The DRC recommends that organisations should review their health and safety policies to ensure that disabled volunteers are included in them. Such policies should also address training, lines of responsibility, provision of information and set out specific procedures such as emergency evacuation. In doing this it might be appropriate for organisations to consult with specialists as well as the individuals involved.

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## **Risk assessment**

Risk assessments should always use the social model approach. This means that the emphasis should be placed on identifying risks removing or managing them by making reasonable adjustments, rather than excluding disabled volunteers from certain activities or work sites. Any risk assessment should:

- involve the disabled person at all stages
- provide clear recommendations about how reasonable adjustments will be used to manage any risks
- identify how these adjustments will be made
- identify who will implement the adjustments
- how the organisation will ensure that the adjustments are implemented in a timely manner
- identify how other volunteers or staff will be made aware of any adjustments that are in place to manage risks, so that they can be fully supportive of the disabled volunteer
- a process for monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of any risk management actions.

For example, an organisation may be concerned about how a disabled person can be made aware of fire evacuation alarms, and how they can leave the building safely. VOPs should remember that under the new Fire Regulation Orders, it is their responsibility to plan for the safe evacuation of all users of their buildings, including disabled people.

There are a number of methods that can be used to help disabled people be aware of alarms (for example using flashing alarms or vibrating pagers for Deaf or hearing impaired people).

A personal evacuation plan should be developed for every disabled volunteer who feels that they may need assistance to leave a building safely.

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### **10.3 Duty of care**

There is a general duty of care placed upon all organisations which applies to all workers - paid and voluntary. The duty of care is an obligation to take such care as is reasonable in all the circumstances towards an individual, to avoid injury to that individual or his property. This duty of care extends to all activities. VOPs should be careful to ensure that they strike a balance between taking a protective attitude towards disabled volunteers and putting them in situations where they may be placed at unnecessary risk because adjustments have not been implemented properly. The key is to involve disabled people in any decisions about risk management, and to take advice from experts as appropriate who can provide advice on helping the organisation to work with disabled volunteers to ensure a safe, but inclusive, volunteering environment.

The above is not intended to be a definitive statement of the law on health and safety, and the DRC would recommend that VOPs consult the HSE's website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) for further information.

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## **11. Insurance**

All organisations that use volunteers should ensure they have an insurance policy which covers them. Volunteers can be covered under Employer's Liability Insurance or Public Liability Insurance and, depending on the type of work involved; the organisation may need professional indemnity insurance.

### **11.1 Employer's Liability Insurance**

This covers paid employees in the event of accident, disease or injury caused or made worse as a result of work or of employer's negligence. However, it does not automatically cover volunteers. It is recommended that the policy should explicitly mention volunteers if they are to be covered by it.

### **11.2 Public Liability Insurance**

This type of policy is also known as third party insurance and is designed to protect the organisation from claims by members of the public for death, illness, loss, injury, or accident caused by the negligence of the organisation. It generally covers anybody other than employees who come into contact with the organisation. This should include volunteers, covering them against loss or injury caused by negligence of the organisation if they are not covered under the Employer's Liability Insurance.

It also protects for loss or damage to property caused through the negligence of someone acting with the authority of the organisation which could include the actions of volunteers. Again it is important to ensure the policy mentions volunteers.

### **11.3 Professional indemnity insurance**

This type of insurance is to protect the organisation from claims where someone acting on their behalf has provided misleading or inaccurate advice and guidance that has led to a loss. It might be appropriate for some volunteers to be covered by such insurance depending on their roles. Again policies should explicitly cover volunteers to ensure they are effectively covered.

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## 12. Benefit issues

In general terms volunteering should not affect disabled people's benefits, however, there are some rules which need to be observed and which may affect benefit payments in some circumstances. Research by the Citizens Advice Bureau found that some potential volunteers who are disabled fear a perceived 'benefit trap' which restricts their opportunities to volunteer.<sup>10</sup> Concerns were expressed that Jobcentre Plus staff will assume that if they were 'capable' of volunteering that they were 'capable' of working which also stops some people from taking up the option of volunteering. The Government are now supportive of volunteering by disabled people and support this type of activity.

Whilst welfare benefits are not the responsibility of the organisation, it is useful to have an understanding about the rules and the issues which may impact on their volunteers. It might well be appropriate for an organisation to take a proactive role in helping volunteers address any issues which may arise as this will help to reassure disabled volunteers and increase the potential pool from which they recruit them. It might also be necessary on occasions for the organisation to liaise with Jobcentre Plus where misunderstandings and difficulties arise. Some larger organisations have nominated individuals to be responsible for helping volunteers where such issues might occur and have trained them to undertake this specialist function. This, of course, may not always be possible but identifying sources of expertise in other agencies may be useful and which can be accessed should it become necessary.

The sections below discuss the two key benefits which were identified as those about which volunteers were most concerned. However, there are a range of benefits which have associated rules regarding volunteering – these are set out in Appendix 4. Where concerns or doubts exist Jobcentre Plus staff should be consulted; similarly, for Housing Benefit and Council Tax issues claimants should contact their local authority; for tax credit issues people should contact HM Customs and Revenue.

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<sup>10</sup> Citizens Advice Bureau (2005) 'The Benefits Barrier: What impact do welfare benefits have on volunteering'

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## **12.1 Jobseeker's Allowance**

If the work that volunteers carry out is unpaid, other than out of pocket expenses, then a volunteer's Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) should not be affected. However, under JSA rules, a beneficiary:

- should be available for a job interview within 48 hours of being asked
- be able to start work within one week
- should continue with job seeking activities.

Therefore it is important for volunteering arrangements to allow the volunteer to be released from any commitments to comply with these rules.

## **12.2 Incapacity Benefit and Income Support**

There are no limits on the amount of time that people may undertake voluntary work whilst claiming Incapacity Benefit and income support. However, this has not always been the case and many people still believe there is an upper limit of 16 hours. Some volunteers may need reassuring about this change. Generally speaking, if the work that volunteers carry out is unpaid other than out of pocket expenses then a volunteer's Incapacity Benefit (or Employment and Support Allowance which will replace it) will not be affected for that reason.

However, the rules governing these benefits are complex and open to interpretation especially in respect of notional earnings. This is where Jobcentre Plus may decide that it would be appropriate for a volunteer to be paid for the work they are undertaking, for example, if the volunteer is doing the same job as someone else who is getting paid for it. In such circumstances Jobcentre Plus may decide that notional earnings exist even though the volunteer is not being paid and consequently there may be a reduction in benefits. Another issue of concern is where an individual's personal assessment for receiving Incapacity Benefit might change as a result of undertaking voluntary work which results in an improvement in their capabilities and consequently changes their personal assessment which might affect their payments.

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It can be seen these are complex and sensitive issues for disabled volunteers. Organisations may need to help clarify the position on a case-by-case basis. It is recommended that where any doubts or concerns exist about potential impact on any benefits advice and guidance should be sought from not only the appropriate agency but also specialist advice bodies such as Citizens' Advice and welfare rights advisers. This may be particularly important for organisations and volunteers as Government continues to review the benefit system and where rules are likely to change.

Jobcentre Plus, local authorities or HM Customs and Revenue should be notified of any voluntary activities being undertaken when someone is claiming a benefit from them. It might well be appropriate for organisations to remind volunteers of this and support them if necessary.

**Disclaimer:**

'Every effort has been made to make sure that the information in this section on benefits is correct at the time of publishing. However, the DRC advises that VOPs should consult Jobcentre Plus or other appropriate advisers and agencies for the most current information'.

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## **Appendix 1 - Potential barriers to volunteering for disabled people**

This is an illustrative checklist of those areas in which disabled people can experience barriers and which can be removed or avoided, often in advance. The degree of the severity of the barrier will depend on the individual and the specific circumstances. However, this list will give a starting point to consider what the barriers might be and, based on this, the organisation should seek to eliminate them by developing solutions as part of their usual working methods.

### **Institutional**

It is likely that your policies, procedures and practices unwittingly or otherwise restrict, hinder or discriminate against disabled people. Some examples are:

- strict and unmoveable working times which may impact adversely on someone whose medication may require a later starting time in the morning
- lack of available storage space for equipment or medication
- restrictive working arrangements that do not provide for the use of support workers
- time limited tasks that unfairly discriminate on users of alternative technology
- restricted allocation of workspace that hinders the use of equipment, support workers or good communication.

### **Physical**

- Is the external signage clear and readily visible?
- Are there accessible car parking bays at a suitable location?
- Is the dedicated parking clearly marked and policed to stop abuse?
- Is there easy access into buildings?

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- Are all parts of the work and training environment accessible, eg toilets, tearoom, social areas?
- Do the physical features cause difficulties, eg revolving doors, height of handles and vision panels, height of notice boards, etc?
- Are the toilet facilities accessible, eg adapted properly, readily usable taps, etc?
- Are there effective lighting levels?
- Is there effective colour contrast on décor and signage?
- Are there rest areas and / or seats near steps or in long transit areas?

### **Transport**

- Can the person drive and, if so, park close to the venue they will be volunteering in?
- Are there accessible public transport systems to the venue?
- Is there accessible information on public transport provision?
- Will transport costs be refunded where public transport is inaccessible or unavailable?

### **Communication**

- Do you provide text phone / typetalk facilities?
- Are there hearing induction loops available?
- Are information or work materials readily available in alternative formats?
- Are other staff aware of appropriate communication techniques and etiquette?

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### **Practical**

- Are the recruitment procedures easy to use and appropriate to the circumstances?
- Is advertising going to reach the widest range of potential applicants and take into account specific issues such as nature of disability and health condition, hard to reach groups, etc?
- Are facilities usable without assistance, eg staff restaurants, tea points, etc?
- Are all parts of where the activity takes place accessible?
- Are all tasks able to be undertaken?
- How will adjustments be made and who needs to be involved?

### **Attitudes**

- Is stereotyping likely to be an issue?
- Will colleagues and managers need any training?
- Do managers understand the issues and any adjustments which are going to be put in place?
- Are colleagues and managers confident or apprehensive about working with a disabled person?
- Do colleagues and managers see a disabled person as a health and safety risk?

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## **Appendix 2 – Useful organisations**

This appendix gives an illustrative list of possible routes into volunteering opportunities.

**Community Service Volunteers (CSV)** - [www.csv.org.uk](http://www.csv.org.uk)

**Do-it.org** - [www.do-it.org.uk](http://www.do-it.org.uk)

**Gap year opportunities**

[www.gapyear.com/volunteering](http://www.gapyear.com/volunteering)

or

[www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk/?gclid=CMY8rera5oUCFS1LEgod6x51UW](http://www.gapyeardirectory.co.uk/?gclid=CMY8rera5oUCFS1LEgod6x51UW)

**National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA (formerly NACVS))** -

[www.navca.org.uk/about/nacvsredirect.htm](http://www.navca.org.uk/about/nacvsredirect.htm)

**National Union of Students** -

[www.nusonline.co.uk/info/freshers/271338.aspx](http://www.nusonline.co.uk/info/freshers/271338.aspx)

**VolResource** - [www.volresource.org.uk/jobs/volopps.htm](http://www.volresource.org.uk/jobs/volopps.htm)

**Volunteering England** - [www.volunteering.org.uk/finder](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/finder)

**Volunteer Centres Northern Ireland** - [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

**Volunteer Scotland** -

[www.volunteerscotland.info/coming2scotland/links.htm](http://www.volunteerscotland.info/coming2scotland/links.htm)

**Volunteering Wales** - [www.volunteering-wales.net](http://www.volunteering-wales.net)

**VSO** - [www.vso.org.uk](http://www.vso.org.uk)

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## **Appendix 3 - Potential sources of funding and other support**

### **Association of Charitable Foundations –**

[www.acf.org.uk/default.htm](http://www.acf.org.uk/default.htm)

A support organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations of all types.

### **Awards for All - [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)**

A Lottery grants scheme for local communities. There are different schemes for each of the four countries of the UK.

### **Baring Foundation - [www.baringfoundation.org.uk](http://www.baringfoundation.org.uk)**

Gives money to charities and voluntary organisations pursuing charitable purposes.

### **Big Boost - [www.thebigboost.org.uk](http://www.thebigboost.org.uk)**

Gives awards of between £250 and £5,000 to young people, to help them get their ideas off the ground.

### **Big Lottery – [www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/)**

Gives out half the good causes money from the National Lottery.

### **Bridge House Estates Trust Fund -**

[www.bridgehousegrants.org.uk](http://www.bridgehousegrants.org.uk)

Makes grants in excess of £17 million a year to charitable projects benefiting the inhabitants of Greater London.

### **Cadbury Schweppes Foundation - [www.wa-cadbury.org.uk](http://www.wa-cadbury.org.uk)**

Makes donations to registered charities mainly, but not exclusively, in the West Midlands.

### **City Parochial Foundation (CPF) and Trust for London (TfL) –**

[www.cityparochial.org.uk](http://www.cityparochial.org.uk)

These are charitable foundations which work closely together. CPF aims to enable and empower the poor of London to tackle poverty and its root causes, and to ensure that its funds reach those most in

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need. TfL aims to support small, new and emerging voluntary organisations to significantly improve the lives of people and communities in London.

**Comic Relief** – [www.comicrelief.org.uk](http://www.comicrelief.org.uk)

Are committed to ending poverty and social injustice

**Diana Foundation** - [www.theworkcontinues.org](http://www.theworkcontinues.org)

Helps people to change their lives for the better, by giving grants to charities in the UK and around the world, and championing causes.

**Esme Fairbairn Foundation** - [www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)

One of the largest independent grant making foundations in the UK in four programme areas: Arts and Heritage, Education, Environment, Social change

**Funders Online** - [www.fundersonline](http://www.fundersonline)

An initiative of the [European Foundation Centre Orpheus Programme](#). The mission of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) is to promote and underpin the work of foundations and corporate funders in the New Europe.

**Pro funding** - [www.fundinginformation.org](http://www.fundinginformation.org)

Offers services that provide up-to-date news and information to all those involved in raising funds for not for profit organisations.

**Help the Aged** – [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)

Fights for disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas from poverty, isolation and neglect.

**The Goldsmiths Company Charities** – [www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk](http://www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk)

Makes grants in three main areas: General Charitable Support, Support of the Goldsmiths' Craft and Education.

**The Kings Fund** - [www.kingsfund.org.uk](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk)

An independent charitable foundation working for better health, especially in London.

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**Lankelly Foundation** - [www.lankelly-foundation.org.uk](http://www.lankelly-foundation.org.uk)

Supports work that has a recognisable charitable purpose concentrating upon smaller charities, many of whom will have only a local or regional remit.

**The Lloyds Foundation** - [www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk](http://www.lloydstsbfoundations.org.uk)

Supports and works in partnership with charitable organisations which help people, especially those who are disadvantaged or disabled, to play a fuller role in communities throughout England and Wales.

**Local Rotary International** - [www.ribi.org](http://www.ribi.org)

Rotary International is a global network of service volunteers. It is the world's largest service organisation for business and professional people.

**The National Council for Voluntary Organisations** - [www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

A useful general source for locating suitable funding. See for example the 'Umbrella Directory' at:

**Nationwide** - [www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk](http://www.nationwidefoundation.org.uk)

Works towards a just and caring society by encouraging people to take part in building better futures in their communities.

**Northern Rock Foundation** - [www.nr-foundation.org.uk](http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk)

Tackles disadvantage and improves quality of life in Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and the Tees Valley.

**The Round Table** - [www.roundtable.org.uk](http://www.roundtable.org.uk)

The Round Table supports local needs and large national charities alike. Each Table gets to choose its own methods, projects and causes.

**Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations** - [www.scvo.org.uk](http://www.scvo.org.uk)

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations is the national body representing the voluntary sector.

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**The Tudor Trust** - [www.tudortrust.org.uk](http://www.tudortrust.org.uk)

Aims to support work which addresses the social, emotional and financial needs of people at the margins of our society across the UK.

## **Further Information on Policy and Good Practice**

There are a number of organisations who have published their own guidance in this field and who may be able to offer additional help and information.

**Health and Safety Executive** - [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

For advice on the application of the law on health and safety

**SCOPE** - [www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)

The disability organisation in England and Wales whose focus is people with [cerebral palsy](#). Our aim is that disabled people achieve equality: a society in which they are as valued and have the same human and civil rights as everyone else.

**SKILL** - [www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)

The national bureau for students with disabilities have produced guidance for organisations who might want to use disabled people and those with long-term health conditions as volunteers along with guidance for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions who might be interested in volunteering

**Volunteering England** - [www.volunteeringengland.org.uk](http://www.volunteeringengland.org.uk)

This website offers a range of resources for anyone who works with or manages volunteers, as well as to people who want to volunteer. Resources include a Good Practice Bank on managing volunteers and a free information service.

**Wales Council for Voluntary Action** - [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)

This is the main Voluntary Action site for Wales where they run a dedicated site for Volunteers.

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**Volunteering-Wales** - [www.volunteering-wales.net](http://www.volunteering-wales.net)

**Volunteer Scotland** - [www.volunteerscotland.info/index.php](http://www.volunteerscotland.info/index.php)

This is the main Voluntary Action site for Scotland.

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## **Appendix 4 - List of benefits**

Below are benefits which disabled volunteers might be claiming but which should not be affected by undertaking volunteering activities. Any specific queries should be addressed to the local JobCentre Plus office. Further information can also be found at [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

- Carers Allowance
- Child Tax Credit
- Council Tax benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Income support
- Pensions Credit

(Source: Department of Work and Pensions – Volunteer Rulebook 2005)