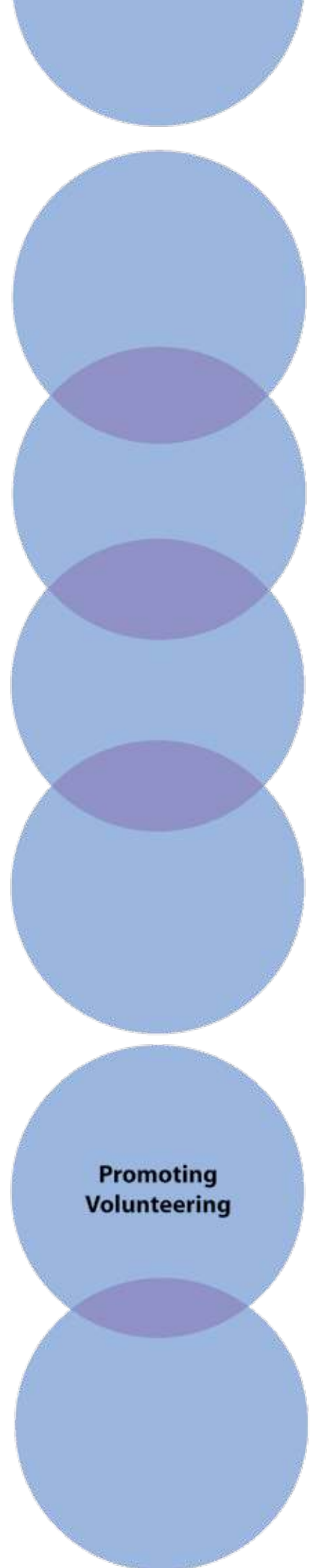


Making volunteering inclusive **toolkit**

A beginner's guide to making your **volunteering**
programme more inclusive

compact for leeds
public and third sector
working together for the people of leeds



INTRODUCTION

This toolkit has been produced by Volunteer Centre Leeds and the PSI Network at Voluntary Action Leeds. It is designed as a first step to help an organisation ensure that their volunteering programme is accessible to all.

Voluntary Action Leeds and Volunteer Centre Leeds believe volunteering should be open to everyone and are committed to helping organisations to access the abilities and potential that all volunteers can bring.

What is volunteering?

The relationship between a volunteer and the organisation they choose to volunteer with is a gift relationship, i.e. the volunteer is gifting their time to the organisation. It is not a legally binding relationship and volunteers cannot be compelled to commit their time to the organisation or carry out tasks.

Using volunteers is not an alternative to paying employees. Volunteering England and the TUC (Trades Union Congress) worked together to create a Charter for Strengthening Relations Between Paid Staff and Volunteers. The Charter sets out a series of principles for employers to follow to encourage a good working relationship between volunteers, employers and paid staff, and can be found on the TUC website www.tuc.org.uk/volunteering

Starting to develop your programme

If you do not already have a volunteering programme there is a Volunteering Toolkit designed to help your organisation.

For your free copy of the **Volunteering Toolkit** contact Volunteer Centre Leeds:

Phone **0113 395 0405**

Email volunteering@val.org.uk

or to download a pdf version visit www.val.org.uk/page/toolkit

1. Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability, developed by disabled people, sees society as disabling rather than the individual.

It draws on the idea that it is society that disables people. There is recognition within the social model that there is a great deal that society can do to reduce and ultimately remove disabling barriers.

Barriers can be prejudice and stereotypes, inflexible organisational policies and practises, inaccessible information and inaccessible transport.

These barriers have nothing to do with individual disabled people's bodies; they are created by people/society which means it is possible to remove them.

You can take the social model approach to disability by identifying and getting rid of the disabling barriers which are within your control such as management practices, the way work is organised or building design.

These ways of thinking about disability have a powerful influence on how disabled people are viewed and treated in our society.

The language we use is important because it reflects our attitudes and beliefs. This is not about 'political correctness' but using wording and language which disabled people and disabled people's organisations, working to promote the social model of disability, find acceptable.

"As a newly disabled woman, coming across the social model way of thinking was a life changing experience. It made me feel very differently about my identity as a disabled woman, giving me strength and a sense that I had a right to be treated equally and have my access needs met."

Jane Bethell - PSI Network member



2. Definition of Disability

The definition of 'disability' under the Equality Act 2010.

In the Act, a person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'substantial' means more than minor or trivial
- 'long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions)
- 'normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping

People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act.



3. The Equalities Act

The Equalities Act 2010 is written for employers and employees, there is no mention of volunteers.

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission states it is possible that, when a person is taking up a volunteering opportunity with an organisation, it counts as if the organisation is providing them with a service. This means that voluntary and community sector organisations should avoid unlawful discrimination in how they treat their volunteers.

Scope in their executive summary 'Time to get equal in volunteering: tackling disablism' found that 76% of physically impaired volunteers who had not had their needs for reasonable adjustments met felt that if the Access to Work scheme extended its criteria to include volunteers, it would be invaluable.

Volunteer Centre Leeds believes that volunteering should aim to be accessible to all and that when it comes to access, organisations should aim to have no distinction between staff, service users and volunteers.

Equalities Act is available from
www.legislation.gov.uk

4. Language

You should always try to use acceptable terms when talking about disability. However, don't be so concerned about using the wrong term that you avoid discussing how to make volunteering more inclusive.

If you want to know which language a particular person likes to use to describe either themselves or their disability it is best to ask them directly.

Language to avoid	Language to use
(the) handicapped, (the) disabled	Disabled (people)
Afflicted by, suffers from, victim of	Has (name of condition or impairment)
Confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair – bound	Wheelchair user
Mentally handicapped	Learning disability
The blind	People with a visual impairment, blind people, blind and partially sighted people
Deaf and dumb, deaf mute	Deaf, user of sign language, people with a hearing impairment
An epileptic, depressive, diabetic	Someone with..., or someone who has...
Fits, spells, attacks	Seizures

Source: Office for Disability Issues, HM Government
<http://odi.dwp.gov.uk>

5. Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010 an employer has a duty to make reasonable changes for disabled applicants and employees. These adjustments should be made to avoid disadvantaging disabled people. It can apply to working arrangements (e.g. flexible working hours) or any physical aspect of the workplace (e.g. replacing steps with a ramp).

What is a reasonable adjustment?

A reasonable adjustment is an action or arrangement that makes it easier for a disabled person in the workplace. As already mentioned, this is aimed at employees, and it is understood that volunteers are not paid staff nor under any contract of employment.

Some adjustments may be small but can make a major difference to a disabled person, e.g. an adapted keyboard/mouse, or an orthopaedic chair.

Remember to talk to the individual about what they need rather than making assumptions.

Things to think about

<i>Width of Doorways</i>	Could an electric wheelchair get through?
<i>Level access</i>	Are ramps required?
<i>Emergency evacuation procedure</i>	If the lift is out of use what are the procedures for evacuating people with mobility issues? Would your evacuation warning system effectively alert people with hearing or visual impairments?
<i>Toilets</i>	Is there an accessible toilet?
<i>Signage</i>	Signs should ideally give information using symbols and Braille, as well as print.

<i>Transport/ Travel</i>	<p>Be aware of public transport available locally and how accessible it is for people with a range of impairments. In most areas, community transport schemes exist to provide affordable transport to those who are unable to access public transport. Contact Leeds City Council to find out if there is a scheme in your area, visit: www.leeds.gov.uk</p> <p>Some volunteers may require support to learn a new transport route or to build their confidence in travelling alone. Check with the volunteer that they are confident with the route. If support is needed, the volunteer may have a parent, family member or paid support worker who could assist. You could also consider 'buddying' the volunteer with a volunteer who lives in the same area and can travel together. Some Community Transport schemes also provide a buddying service.</p> <p>Availability of parking spaces close to the place the volunteer will be based could be important.</p>
<i>Hearing Loops</i>	Do you have a hearing loop installed and are staff trained on how to use it?



6. Expenses

You are under no legal obligation to pay any expenses to volunteers. However, we would strongly encourage that you reimburse, where you are able, reasonable expenses for costs incurred. This will encourage a more diverse range of people to volunteer at your organisation (not just people who can afford it). Often this will simply be paying someone's bus fare to their place of volunteering or reimbursing their lunch costs.

This could make the difference in making volunteering accessible to someone who ordinarily would not be able to offer their time and skills to your organisation.

When budgeting volunteer expenditure, organisations should take into consideration the fact that some volunteers have extra support needs, and should ensure that their budget reflects this. For example, someone may need to use a taxi to and from their place of volunteering, instead of using the bus; equally a disabled person may have the use of a concessionary bus pass.

It is important that organisations only reimburse expenses that volunteers have incurred in connection with their volunteering. Flat rates for expenses or any money over could have legal implications for yourself and the volunteer.

If you need advice on creating an expenses policy please refer to the Volunteering Toolkit. For your free copy contact Volunteer Centre Leeds: call **0113 395 0405**, email **volunteering@val.org.uk** or to download a pdf version visit **www.val.org.uk/page/toolkit**

SUPPORT

To ensure that your volunteering programme reduces barriers to disabled people, your programme needs to be inclusive from the onset.

Things to think about include:-

- Does your application form ask if a person has support or accessibility needs?
- Can people apply in a variety of ways?
- Are you able to meet accessibility needs people may have? This could include access into the building where they would volunteer.

An initial meeting will allow you both to identify any needs or adjustments that might need to be put in place before the volunteering role could be taken up. It may not be possible for all volunteering roles to be accessible, being flexible is important.

For example, when Volunteer Centre Leeds was approached by a deaf person who was interested in volunteering, the Centre advertised successfully for an interpreter to volunteer alongside them.

Help is available

Volunteer Centre Leeds

Call **0113 395 0405** or email **volunteering@val.org.uk**

Physical and Sensory Impairment Network (PSI Network)

Call **0113 297 7920** or email **info@val.org.uk**

www.val.org.uk

Leeds City Council

Call **0113 222 4444** or email **general.enquiries@leeds.gov.uk**

Volunteering England

Call **020 7520 8900** or email **volunteering@volunteering.org.uk**

This Toolkit is a starting point for organisations looking to introduce a more inclusive volunteering programme. For more in-depth advice and support contact Volunteer Centre Leeds or the PSI Network at Voluntary Action Leeds

The internet is a valuable resource for researching and downloading information. Your **local library** can offer you **free internet access** if this is not available at your home or place of work.



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