

# a guide to involving young disabled people as volunteers

# CAN Do!

## volunteering

Creating opportunities with disabled people  
**LEONARD CHESHIRE** 

**RUSSELL**  
COMMISSION

**scepe**

About cerebral palsy.  
For disabled people achieving equality.

## **Leonard Cheshire and Scope: Working together to tackle disablism**

**Disablism** *n.* discriminatory, oppressive or abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others.

Danielle Moore  
Youth Volunteering Officer, Scope

Stephanie Fishlock  
Volunteering Projects Officer  
Leonard Cheshire

2006

# introduction

'Can do volunteering' is aimed at organisations that involve volunteers and is useful for:

- Volunteer managers
- Fundraisers
- Funding organisations

This guide focuses on how to involve young disabled people (aged 16–25) in volunteering programmes. It is recognised that involving young disabled people as volunteers is part of a wider issue of inclusive volunteering and where possible, links have been highlighted.

The guide has been produced by the UK's two largest disability charities, Leonard Cheshire and Scope, in co-production with young disabled people, with funding from the Russell Commission.

# our thanks



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young disabled people who  
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# our thanks

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RNID

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Advice Bureau

Winchester District  
Advocacy Project

Woodcraft Folk

WRVS

Youthnet

Volunteer Centres:  
Canterbury Volunteer  
Centre

Bexley Volunteer Centre

Volunteer Centre Bolton

Gosport Voluntary Action

Volunteer Centre  
Greenwich

Volunteer Centre

Kensington & Chelsea

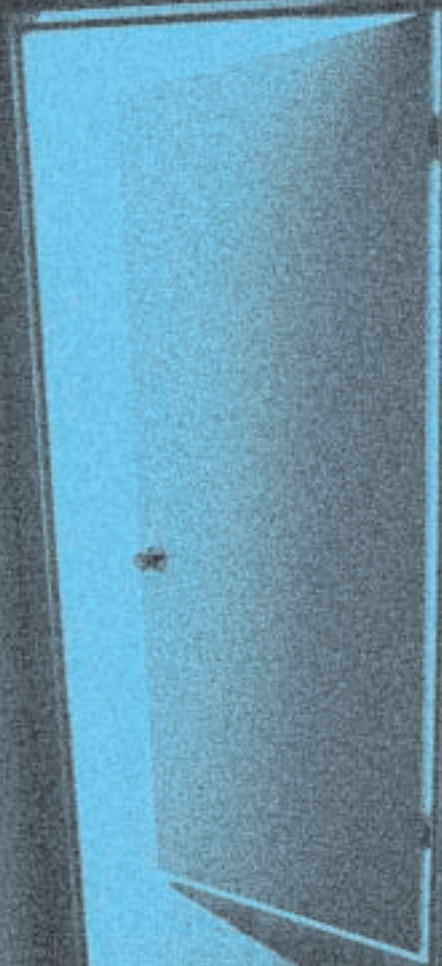
Norwich Volunteer Centre

Voluntary Services Surrey  
Heath

Volunteer Centre Watford

***“As a volunteer I have a lot to offer.***

***I could build a website for your charity, I could train your clients in how to use a computer or I could install vital anti-virus software.”***



*“Yet many organisations would turn me down as a volunteer, just because I am disabled.”*

## VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Name Robert Andrews

Address 23 Sencroft street

Kenington

London

Telephone 020 7582 4454

Postcode SE11 5UG

Disabled

**REJECTED!**

**“Would yours?”**

Does your organisation:

Offer volunteer roles that would appeal to young people? Yes  No

Offer information about volunteer opportunities in a range of formats? Yes  No

Have premises that are accessible? Yes  No

Provide disability equality training for staff? Yes  No

Offer to reimburse volunteer travel expenses? Yes  No

Offer support to complete forms? Yes  No

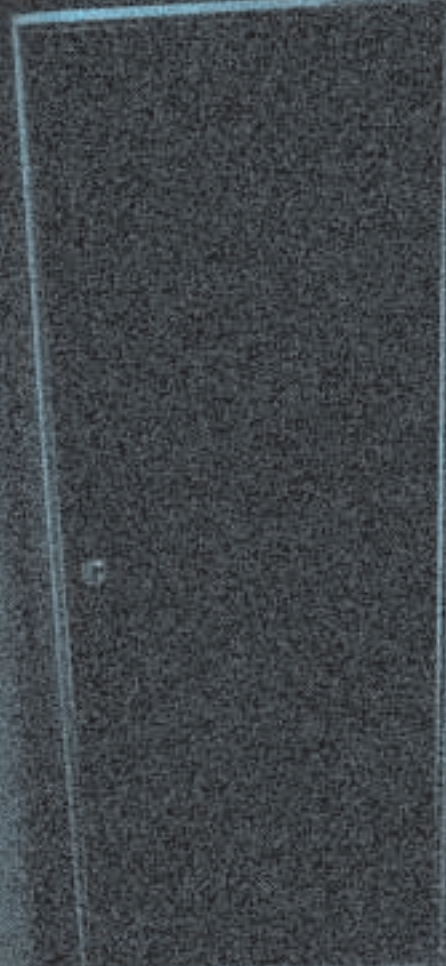


***“If you answered no to some of these questions, you might end up excluding me from volunteering.***

***Your organisation would miss out on my skills and expertise.***

***I would miss out on gaining valuable work experience and on giving something back.***

***Shouldn't I have a right to volunteer, like everyone else?”***



# this guide can help you make your organisation more inclusive

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# this guide can help you make your organisation more inclusive

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# what is disability?

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## Definition

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act defines a disabled person as anyone with 'a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect upon his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'

Disability covers a wide spectrum of impairments, including:

- Physical impairments  
(difficulties in moving parts of the body)
- Sensory impairments  
(hearing or sight)
- Communication difficulties  
(speech impairments)
- Learning difficulties (for example Autism, Down's Syndrome)
- Mental health issues  
(eg. depression, schizophrenia)

\*see contacts page 69

Although a wheelchair is often used to symbolise disability, only 5% of the disabled population are permanent wheelchair users.

## Facts

- There are about 9.8 million disabled adults in the United Kingdom (22% of the adult population) and 700,000 disabled children (5% of all children).
- Disabled people are under-represented within volunteering. According to CSV\* only 6% of volunteers in the UK are disabled ('Disability Need Be No Handicap', 2000).

## Attitudes to disability

Disabled people experience exclusion from mainstream opportunities due to environmental, attitudinal and organisational barriers rather than due to the effects of their impairments.

# what is inclusive volunteering?

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Inclusive volunteering is about making volunteering accessible for everyone. The Government's Compact Code of Good Practice recognises the need 'to effectively tackle discrimination to ensure that volunteering is open to all.'

A major barrier to more young disabled people becoming involved in volunteering is the basic problem of disablism in society.



# why become more inclusive?

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## Because it's fair

Inclusive volunteering is essential to avoid discriminating against individuals.

***“Discrimination against young disabled people is unfair and a huge waste of potential for the individuals and organisations involved. Young disabled people need their rights recognised, and that includes their right to access volunteering.”***

*Nick Palfreyman, young deaf person*

## Because it's beneficial for your organisation

Your pool of potential volunteers increases so you can benefit from more volunteers.

You will attract a more diverse group of volunteers that will:

- offer a wider range of skills, experiences and perspectives
- be more flexible
- be more sustainable
- better reflect the community as a whole
- offer increased opportunities to develop community relations and partnerships
- help to broaden your client group's understanding of diversity.

By involving a diversity of volunteers, the stereotypes of volunteer work are broken down and the profile of volunteering is improved.

Involving previously untapped groups of volunteers can bring new ideas and 'a breath of fresh air'.

# why become more inclusive?

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Specific benefits of involving young disabled volunteers can include:

- Additional enthusiasm.
- Commitment from young people who need work experience prior to paid employment.
- Young volunteers can relate to their peer group and can work well with young clients and provide positive role models.

***“Diversity brings many advantages to organisations. They are more likely to find the right person for a role if they do not exclude talented young disabled people.”***

*Jo Carter, Head of Development,  
NSPCC*

# what does it mean to volunteer?

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For young disabled people, volunteering is an important opportunity to:

- Do something worthwhile
- Demonstrate their capabilities
- Develop self awareness and confidence
- Gain work experience
- Get involved and meet new people
- Challenge attitudes to disability
- Get their voice heard
- Try something new and have fun

For young people, leaving education and starting out on their adult lives can be a stressful time. For disabled people, such transitions can be even more challenging. They may find themselves leaving a residential school and moving into independent living where they will need to make informed choices about services they receive.

Volunteering can be helpful during transition: in building confidence; in making friends and contacts; in providing opportunities for new experiences; and in giving structure and continuity during times of change and upheaval. Further information is available from the Transition Information Network\*.

\*see contacts page 69



# what does it mean to volunteer?

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***“Volunteering is a way of making a difference but also of showing people that there are people who care and who want to improve things. Volunteering has also helped me to think about what I would like to do as a career.”***

*Chris Styles, canal restoration volunteer*

***“Having benefited as a disabled person from others, this has motivated me to reciprocate. I have come to believe that life is a matter of give and take. I have experienced a real sense of team spirit.”***

*Jessica Wild, primary school volunteer*



# organisational buy-in

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Inclusive volunteering is easiest to achieve if everyone in your organisation has bought into the idea.

Inclusive volunteering is part of the wider issue of equal opportunities and diversity within an organisation. Ideally organisations should approach inclusive volunteering as part of an organisation-wide diversity strategy.

For an individual member of staff or volunteer trying to develop inclusive volunteering within an organisation, getting buy-in from colleagues is key to success.

## **Top down approach**

A top-down approach to promoting inclusion and diversity can be most effective. Try to get your organisation's senior figures involved. If possible,

arrange diversity training or a discussion session facilitated by a diversity consultant for senior staff and Trustees.

## **Inclusion in aims and values**

Getting 'valuing diversity' or 'seeking to be inclusive' written into your organisation's aims or core values can be a powerful tool for changing attitudes within an organisation.

## **TOP TIP**

**Get young disabled people involved in planning and decision making.**

**Involvement can include consultation on new policies, participation in planning groups and Trusteeship.**

# organisational buy-in

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***“Organisations vary widely in the priority they place on giving youth a voice and developing leaders for the future.***

***Leadership opportunities give young people the chance to create policies, programs, activities and procedures that they support and believe in.”***

*‘Connecting Youth Leadership to Your Organisation’s Mission’,  
An Asset Builder’s Guide to Youth Leadership, 1999*

## **Target setting**

Approximately 20% of the working-age population are disabled. If less than 20% of your volunteers are disabled, your organisation should look at setting targets for increasing the numbers of disabled volunteers.

# inclusive policies

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Check that your organisation's policies are set up to support inclusive volunteering.

## **Volunteering policy**

If your organisation has a volunteering policy, make sure that this includes a section on equal opportunities and promoting diversity.

A good practice guide on writing volunteering policies is available from Volunteering England\*. Guidance is available from other national volunteering development agencies\*. Local Volunteer Centres\* may also offer help.

## **Insurance cover**

Check that your employer's liability and public liability insurance policies explicitly include volunteers and their activities and cover young volunteers.

\*see contacts page 69

# inclusive policies

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## **Expenses policy and procedure**

If volunteers are left out of pocket by volunteering, you will exclude people from taking part. Travel to and from the volunteer placement and travel, food and drinks whilst volunteering should be covered.

Transport costs may be higher than average for disabled volunteers eg. the cost of taxis if public transport is not accessible. This should be taken into account when developing the expenses policy.

Prompt, or ideally upfront, reimbursement of expenses is essential. It is important that only actual expenses are reimbursed. There can be legal implications for the volunteer and the organisation if expenses are approximated. Further guidance is available from Volunteering England\* and other national volunteering development agencies\*.

Not all volunteers will want to claim expenses. It is important to ensure that there is no stigma attached to claiming expenses for those that do.

\*see contacts page 69

## **Health and safety**

Make sure that volunteers are included in your health and safety policies and that the needs of young disabled volunteers are considered when developing procedures for:

- Risk assessment
- Emergency evacuation
- First aid
- Health and safety training

The volunteer's age and impairment should be taken into consideration in risk assessments. However it is important that health and safety considerations are not used to exclude young disabled people from volunteering. The emphasis should be on identifying and minimising risks. For further guidance, contact the Disability Rights Commission\*.

\*see contacts page 69

# is your volunteering programme attractive?

Key to involving young disabled people is giving them a reason to want to get involved.

Things to consider:

- Do you offer roles that would appeal to young people?
- Do you offer training and development opportunities?
- Do you support volunteers to get accreditation or to build evidence for award schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award\* or the Millennium Volunteers Award\*?
- Do you offer a range of placement lengths, including shorter, fixed term opportunities?

- Do you offer volunteers the opportunity to complete project work or to take ownership for a piece of work?
- Do you recognise volunteer's achievements and thank them for their contribution?
- Would your volunteer social events appeal to young people?

## TOP TIP

**Rather than thinking “Why don’t young disabled people volunteer with us?” think “Why should young disabled people volunteer with us?”**

\*see contacts page 69

# physical accessibility

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Are disabled volunteers likely to apply if they can't get into your building?

Bear in mind that physical accessibility is not only about wheelchair access, but about improving accessibility for people with a wide range of impairments.

Making your premises accessible for disabled volunteers will make it accessible for everyone – disabled clients and staff, people with mobility difficulties, parents with pushchairs.

## **Accessibility and the Disability Discrimination Act**

The 1995 Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled job applicant or staff member. It also makes it unlawful for a business or

organisation providing a service to treat disabled people less favourably. Schools, colleges, universities and providers of adult education and youth services are required to make sure that they do not discriminate against disabled people.

The employment provisions in the Act do not specifically cover volunteer opportunities, however as much voluntary work takes place at a premises where people work and/or that provides a service to the public, these venues should already be covered by the Act. For example, offices, charity shops and schools are all covered and should have already made reasonable adjustments to make their premises accessible.



# physical accessibility

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Think about

## **Width of doorways**

Could an electric wheelchair get through?

## **Level access**

Are there steps into or around your building?  
If so, are there ramps or lifts to allow access?

## **Emergency evacuation procedures**

Would your evacuation warning system effectively alert people with hearing or visual impairments? If wheelchair access to an upper floor is via a lift, do you have emergency evacuation chairs?

## **Toilets**

Is there an accessible toilet?

## **Use of signage**

Clear signage is important for everyone. Signs should ideally give information in symbols and Braille, as well as print.

# physical accessibility

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## Lighting

Good lighting is important for people with a range of impairments.

## Decoration

Distracting backgrounds can make communication more difficult for people who lip read. Plain walls and backgrounds are ideal. Colours can be used to draw attention to features such as exit routes and steps.

This is not a complete guide. Further guidance is available from the Disability Rights Commission\*.

## TOP TIP

**Ask a group of disabled volunteers to conduct an access audit of your building. A local disability charity, Disability Action group or Access Group may be able to help. Scope\* also offers accessibility auditing through it's Access Equality team.**

\*see contacts page 69



Lack of available transport can present a real obstacle for young disabled volunteers.

## **Driving**

Availability of parking spaces close to the venue is important.

## **Public transport**

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 your local or county council for details of schemes in your area.

If no accessible public transport options are available, organisations

should consider meeting the costs of taxis to enable people to get involved. See funding section (page 53).

## **Route learning and travel confidence**

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.

# attitudes to disability

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When it comes to inclusive volunteering, attitudes can be just as important as practical considerations.

Negative attitudes to disabled people usually stem from a lack of knowledge. People are afraid of things they do not understand.

## **Disability awareness and equality training**

Disability awareness and equality training for volunteer managers and staff that work with volunteers is key to successfully involving young disabled people. This training should be delivered by disabled trainers.

The Disability Rights Commission\* publishes the 'Good Practice Training Directory' with details of disability awareness training providers.

In addition, the Disability Resources Centre at the University of Cambridge\* maintains a database of disability equality trainers. Scope\* can also provide Disability Equality training.

Training on working with people with specific impairments can also be beneficial. Visual awareness training is offered by the RNIB\*. For guidance on accessing deaf awareness training, contact RNID\*.

\*see contacts page 69

# communication

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Good communication is key. It is essential that you understand the communication requirements of your volunteers.

While it is useful for volunteer managers to be knowledgeable about different types of impairment, it is important to avoid making assumptions about someone's communication needs based on their impairment.

It is good practice to ask all new volunteers about their communication needs and how they would like to keep in touch. Some people may find phone calls intrusive, while others may find them more accessible than a written communication. Always communicate directly with the volunteer.

***“If I’m with a non disabled person, people always talk to them first. They talk about me as if I’m not there. Then if they’re forced to address me they speak as if I were a child. Their tone of voice changes, they speak slowly and often shout. Just because I use a wheelchair doesn’t mean I’m stupid.”***

*Juliette Hayworth, fundraising volunteer for an animal rights charity*

## **Hearing impairment**

There are different degrees of hearing impairment and different ways to communicate with people who are deaf or have hearing impairments. Before meeting, find out how the person prefers to communicate. Many deaf people choose not to speak. In the UK many deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. Others use Sign Supported English (SSE), which is based on the sentence construction of spoken English. Some deaf people lip read. Some use a hearing aid.

If a person uses an interpreter, speak directly to the person you are trying to communicate with, and not to their interpreter. Note that interpreters usually have to be booked well in advance.

If a person lip-reads, ensure they have clear sight of your face; speak clearly; keep objects away from your mouth including hands and fingers. People that use a hearing aid can benefit from an induction loop, especially in meetings involving a number of people.

For guidance, contact RNID\*.

\*see contacts page 69

# communication tips

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## **Visual impairment**

Many visually impaired people have some useful sight. You will not be able to predict what sight people have or what aid is needed. As with any disabled person it is always best to ask. A wide range of aids and equipment includes: Braille, large print, magnifiers, CCTV, audiotape. For further guidance, contact the RNIB\*.

## **Wheelchair users**

Wheelchairs are a mobility aid. Some wheelchair users use their wheelchair on a permanent basis, others use them just to get around. Do not assume that because an individual is a wheelchair user they can't do certain things.

It's important to remember that a wheelchair is part of the users' personal space and respect that space by avoiding leaning on the wheelchair or grabbing the handles without asking if assistance is required. Don't be offended if it isn't.

Bear in mind that it is best to communicate at the same height. Pull up a seat for a long conversation. If you are standing, stand back so that the person using the wheelchair does not get a crick in their neck.

\*see contacts page 69



## **Learning difficulties**

People with a learning disability find it harder to learn and understand, but with support can lead full and independent lives. The degree of an individual's learning difficulty can vary because of their early experiences, support, upbringing, schooling and the condition itself. You may therefore meet someone who cannot read or write and yet can understand loan agreements and contracts.

It may be necessary to confirm that the person understands what you mean but always assume that the person will understand and if necessary explain more than once. Avoid complex sentence structures and speak simply and clearly. Use different ways of explaining and use different media.

Some people with learning difficulties use the Maketon sign language to communicate. Some people prefer pictorial alternatives to writing, which can aid with communication, others don't.

Contact Mencap\* for further guidance.

\*see contacts page 69

## **Speech impairment**

People with speech impairments can be among the most excluded people in our society. A very common misconception is that having a speech impairment is an indication of being unable to think or act independently.

Don't feel embarrassed if you have difficulty understanding someone. Take time to understand and do not pretend to understand if you don't. Ask the person to repeat what they've said or to say it a different way. It may be preferable to use pen and paper or another suitable medium or to use a companion to interpret for you.

Some people with speech impairments use communication tools. These can include electronic devices, such as voice synthesisers, and more simple tools such as communication mats. For more information on communication mats, refer to the Talking Mats website\*.

\*see contacts page 69



# designing printed materials and forms

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## **Make sure that your materials are easy to read**

Use font sizes between 12–14 point (size 14 is ideal) and clear font types such as Arial, Univers and New Century Schoolbook. Make sure there is good colour contrast between the text and background. Black on white is ideal. Choose uncluttered layouts with lots of space.

The RNIB\* offers further guidance.

## **Use accessible language**

- Use plain English
- Keep your sentences short
- Speak directly to your readers
- Use 'you' and 'we'
- Choose words appropriate for the reader, using the simplest words that get the message across
- Use active verbs
- Don't be afraid to give direct instructions
- Use positive language
- Use lists where appropriate

Refer to the Plain English Campaign website\* or contact Mencap\* for further guidance.

\*see contacts page 69



I would like to  
what you would like to do. I am also happy  
and carers or other people who you are involved  
with.

I will telephone you within the next couple of weeks  
to arrange an appointment to come and see you.

If you have any questions about this please phone  
me on 020 7506 2354

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sarah Wells'.

Sarah Wells  
Volunteer Coordinator

**It can be helpful to mix  
written information with  
pictures or symbols.**

# designing printed materials and forms

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## **Make information available in alternative formats**

Not everyone can read printed material. Core information should be made available in a variety of formats. This could include: audio tape, large print, Braille. State on your printed materials that the information is available in other formats. It can be helpful to mix written information with pictures or symbols. Suitable symbols are available from Boardmaker\* or CHANGE\*. The RNIB\* offers a transcription service for audio tape and Braille.

## **Ensure forms are easy to complete**

Keep questions simple and make it clear what is being asked for. Leave plenty of space for answers. Bear in mind that people with visual impairments or impairments affecting hand movement may have larger handwriting. State on your form that support is available to complete it.

## **Look at the accessibility of your website**

The internet is an important communication tool for young disabled people. The World Wide Web Consortium\* offers guidelines, techniques, and tools for website accessibility. Guidance is also available from the RNIB\*.

\*see contacts page 69

# advertising for volunteers

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## **Provide detailed role descriptions (but keep some flexibility)**

Be clear about what the role involves and what would be expected from the volunteer, but state that adaptations to the role can be made.

Include benefits of volunteering and skills that can be developed.

## **Volunteering by another name**

As it may not have occurred to young disabled people to think about volunteering, it might be better to advertise the activity itself, rather than focusing on the volunteering aspect.

For example:

'Volunteers needed to teach children to swim' could equally be advertised as:

'Do you enjoy swimming? Could you spare a few hours a week to teach children to swim?'

## **Think about where you place your adverts**

Who is likely to see your adverts? To attract a diverse group of volunteers you will need to advertise through a range of media and venues.

Places to advertise to target young disabled volunteers:

### **Places and organisations**

- Pubs and clubs
- Youth centres
- Accessible sports centres
- Schools, colleges and universities
- Employment services eg. Job centres\*, Connexions\*
- Churches and faith centres
- Hospitals
- Disability organisations
- Volunteer Centres\*
- Residential homes
- Community centres
- Disability clubs and groups
- Shopping centres and supermarkets
- Transport (eg. bus stops, tube stations)

\*see contacts page 69



# advertising for volunteers

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## **Think about where you place your adverts (continued)**

### **Media**

- Local newspapers and radio
- Young people's and disability magazines
- Volunteering websites such as Do-it\*
- Music and sporting websites and publications
- Teletext

## **Welcome applications from disabled people**

People who have been discriminated against in the past because of their impairment may not apply without encouragement. State your commitment to equal opportunities and to making reasonable adaptations.

## **Respond to enquiries positively**

Positive initial contact is important. For some, enquiring about volunteering can be a big step. Get back to the volunteer promptly and be welcoming without giving false expectations.

Explain the application and selection process. If you do not have a suitable placement, signpost the volunteer to a suitable organisation such as your local volunteer centre\*.

\*see contacts page 69

# advertising for volunteers

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## **Give useful information**

Explain the support available for volunteers, such as training and re-imbusement of expenses, and give them the opportunity to ask questions.

## **Offer help to complete forms**

Check whether people would like practical help to complete application and other forms.

Remember that people may be embarrassed to ask for support if you don't offer it.

## **TOP TIP**

**Develop relationships with organisations that work with young disabled people eg. schools, colleges. Form links with key people who work well with young disabled people and can help you to recruit volunteers.**



# your initial meeting with the volunteer

The initial meeting is an important opportunity for two-way discussion. An informal and open approach is usually best.

- Find out what the volunteer wants to get from volunteering and what type of activity they would like to do.
- Be clear about what is required from the volunteer.

***“When I apply for volunteer work, organisations often seem to assume that disabled people are unsuitable for roles that involve creativity or responsibility. They offer me a mundane or not particularly meaningful role. It drives me mad!”***

*George Howe, university graduate*

## TOP TIP

**Avoid making assumptions about the types of role that people would be suited to, based on their impairment. (Focus on their abilities and interests and not on their impairments.)**

# discussing requirements

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Don't be afraid to ask the volunteer about their support needs. Once you understand someone's needs, you are half-way towards meeting them.

Include in your discussions:

- Communication requirements
- Any support required
- Any adaptations to the role or volunteering arrangements that may be required, such as:
  - flexibility about where and when the voluntary role is carried out
  - adapted equipment
  - changes to the physical working environment
  - communication support

- The role of the young person's support worker, parent or carer:
  - will they be involved?
  - if so how?
  - will any provisions need to be made to facilitate this person's involvement?

Be creative and flexible in looking for solutions. If the required adaptations cannot be made immediately, look for an interim solution.

A volunteer information form can be helpful. See appendix B.

Good practice in volunteer management is key. Guidance on supporting volunteers is available from Volunteering England\* and from other national volunteering development agencies\*.

Make sure that the following are in place and are accessible for young disabled people:

## **1. Induction procedure**

An induction procedure should make sure that volunteers are welcomed into the organisation, introduced to staff, other volunteers and clients and given the information they need to start volunteering. Consider offering a buddying system to support new volunteers.

## **2. A designated person to support volunteers**

This person should have a good understanding of disability equality and preferably experience of working with young people.

## **3. Review meetings**

Offer regular one-to-one meetings to review how the placement is going, whether the volunteer is enjoying the role and whether requirements for support and adaptations are being met and to discuss opportunities for personal development.

\*see contacts page 69

## **4. Recognition and thanks**

Think about how your organisation recognises volunteer's contributions and thanks volunteers for their input. Ideas can include long service awards, volunteer thank you or social events and sending Birthday and Christmas cards. Volunteers' Week (1st – 7th June), organised by national volunteering development agencies\* and Make a Difference Day (October), organised by CSV\*, are great opportunities to celebrate volunteering.

## **5. Training and accreditation**

Offer a full program of training to enable the volunteer to carry out their role safely and confidently. Training can help a young person to build up their CV. If possible provide

opportunities for accreditation and make sure you provide certificates for any training undertaken. Guidance is available from Volunteering England\* and from other national volunteering development agencies\*.

## **6. Procedures for dealing with concerns**

Check that you have a clear procedure for dealing with any concerns, feedback or complaints from the volunteer or any concerns from the organisation's view point about the volunteer's behaviour.

\*see contacts page 69

# boundaries

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- Make sure that the organisation and the volunteer are clear about the volunteer's role within the organisation. Volunteer agreements, policies and training can help to provide clarity.
- Work with the young disabled person to establish a code of conduct.
- People with learning difficulties may take longer to understand what behaviour is accepted. Once you have set the boundaries, be consistent and re-emphasise them if necessary.





# protection

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Young disabled people are amongst society's most vulnerable people. Volunteer managers should consider attending training on child and vulnerable adult protection. Contact your local authority to speak with a protection officer for children or vulnerable adults for more information or if you have to raise a concern.

Note that for volunteers under 16 you should obtain written consent from a parent or guardian for the person to volunteer.

As with all volunteers, a young disabled volunteer working with children or vulnerable adults will need to be CRB checked, vetted and provided with appropriate induction, training and supervision. For further information refer to 'Beyond Police Checks' by Linda Graff.

Maggie Williams  
Volunteer Coordinator

40 Ashley Road  
Newcastle NE4 5GP  
25th July 2006

Dear Maggie,

Just a quick note to confirm that I give my consent  
for my son Peter volunteering at the Orchard Centre  
after school on Wednesdays.

Best wishes,



Susan Rowe

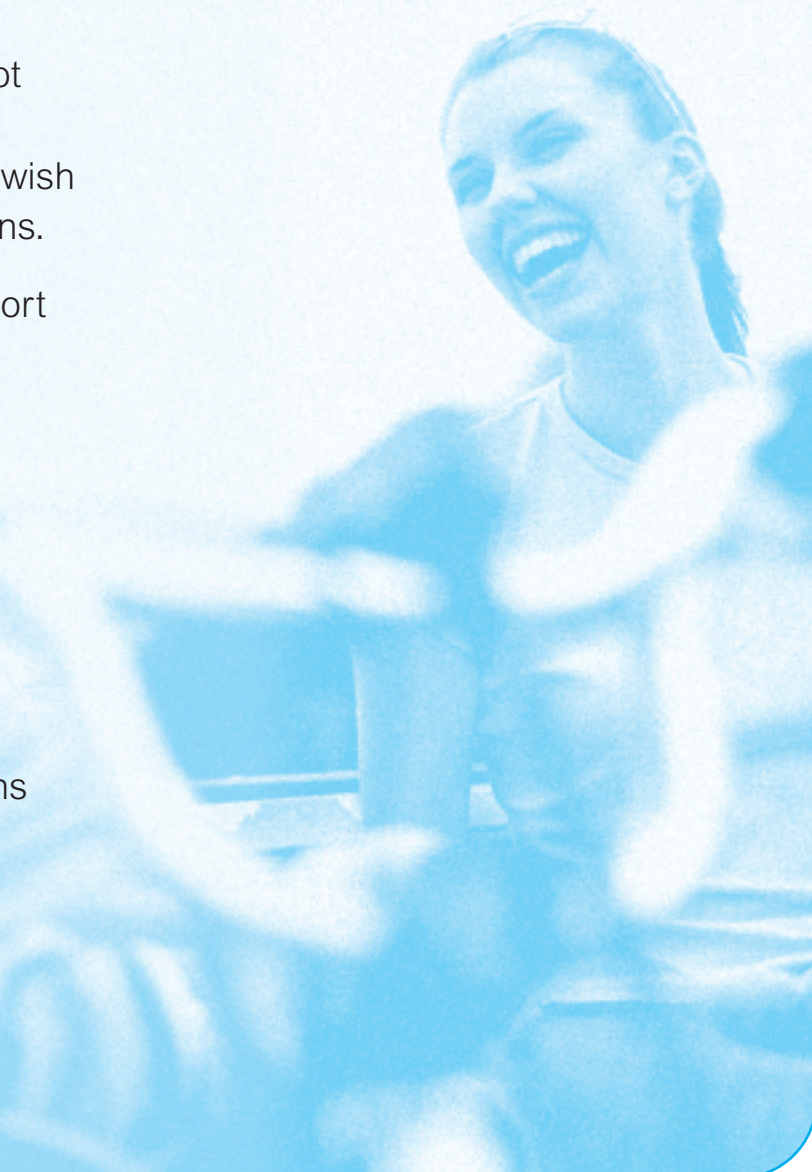
# the role of parents, carers and support workers

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Communication should always be with the person volunteering and not with their parent, carer or support worker. However the volunteer may wish for them to be involved in discussions.

Work with the parent, carer or support worker to make sure that there is common understanding of the boundaries of their involvement.

Parents might be protective of the young disabled person and feel anxious about them volunteering. An informal meeting with both the young person and the parent can help to establish what their concerns are and to address them.



# benefits

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Volunteering should not affect an individual's state benefits. Individuals in receipt of benefits are asked to inform their advisers if they take up voluntary work but often choose not to for fear of any misunderstandings. As an organisation you have no duty to inform the benefits office of who is volunteering for you and should leave this decision to the volunteer.

Volunteers who receive benefits may be required to show their advisors information about their voluntary work and about any expense payments received. You can support the volunteer by providing relevant documentation and a letter to explain the nature of the voluntary work, if required.

Further guidance is available from Volunteering England\* and other national volunteering development agencies\*.

\*see contacts page 69

Disabled people may need adjustments or assistance to enable them to volunteer.

## **Self funding**

Organisations that can afford to should set aside a budget to pay for adjustments for disabled volunteers. For organisations with multiple branches, a central fund can be set up to meet costs that individual branches may struggle to fund.

## **Using underspends**

If you have an underspend, try asking the funders if you can use this to improve accessibility.

***“I volunteer twice a week at a Scope charity shop, and have done for the last 12 years. I am partially sighted and found it difficult to read the till screen. Scope has a specific budget to cover adaptations for disabled volunteers, which enabled the shop to make changes to the counter and till.”***

*Bhavna Jogia, Scope charity shop volunteer, Wigan*

## **Inclusion in funding bids**

The government's Compact code of good practice in volunteering now recognises that it is legitimate for voluntary and community organisations to include the cost of reasonable adjustments for volunteers in relevant funding applications.

You should include a budget for volunteer travel expenses and adaptations for disabled volunteers in all funding bids for projects that involve volunteers.

## **Travel expenses**

The Millennium Volunteers\* scheme can help to meet the travel expenses of volunteers aged 16-24 who are signed up to their programme.

\*see contacts page 69

## **Grants**

Organisations offering funding for involving young people as volunteers at the time of print include:

- v charity  
[www.wearev.com](http://www.wearev.com)
- Big Lottery – Young Peoples Fund  
[www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/ypf](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/programmes/ypf)
- Opportunities for Volunteering (OFV)  
Grants available for local health and social care organisations in England.  
[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## **Resource Sharing**

Look at options for sharing resources, such as specialist equipment or training, with other local organisations.

# could the government be doing more to help?

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Young disabled people have the right to volunteer and this may require organisations to make reasonable adjustments to support them to do so.

In some circumstances the cost of making best practice solutions can be prohibitive for organisations meaning that discrimination against disabled people in volunteering can continue.

Leonard Cheshire and Scope are calling on the government to create an 'Access to Volunteering' fund to meet the costs of reasonable adjustments. This would involve the government making funding available to organisations to help meet the extra costs of involving disabled people as volunteers.

You can help to achieve equality in volunteering by writing to Anne McGuire MP, Minister for Disabled People, explaining how an 'Access to Volunteering' fund would make a difference to your organisation's ability to involve disabled people as volunteers.

Anne McGuire MP  
Minister for Disability  
22 Viewfield Street  
Stirling FK8 1UA

# quick summary

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Young disabled people have the right to access volunteering opportunities on an equal basis with other people. Volunteering is an important opportunity for young disabled people to give something back, get involved in their communities and to gain skills and experience for a CV.

Disabled people are often being discriminated against as volunteers. Scope's research, 'Time to get Equal – Tackling Disablism in Volunteering' has shown that once a disabled person has been turned down for a voluntary work because of their impairment, they are unlikely to apply again.

Discrimination can stem from:

- Lack of understanding of disability
- Lack of resources

To ensure that young disabled people are able to take part in volunteering, organisations should:

- Think about how to make volunteering attractive to a wide range of people, including young disabled people
- Look at their organisational policies to make sure that they support inclusive volunteering
- Look at the physical accessibility of their premises
- Provide Disability Equality Training for staff
- Include costs of making adaptations in funding bids
- Call on the government to tackle disablism in volunteering and set up an 'Access to Volunteering' fund



# 10 top tips from young disabled volunteers

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- 1.** Concentrate on **ability** rather than **disability**
- 2.** Listen to the volunteer (they understand their impairment best)
- 3.** Remember what the volunteer can do for you, not what you can do for them
- 4.** Be clear and consistent about the role and the volunteers responsibility to the organisation
- 5.** Be prepared to have some flexibility around role descriptions
- 6.** Think outside the box
- 7.** Check communication requirements
- 8.** Address negative attitudes towards disability (eg. of staff, other volunteers, clients)
- 9.** Prepare to challenge and to be challenged
- 10.** Make sure that young disabled volunteers feel part of the team

CAN DO!

# case study: The National Trust

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**Here, we look at how two organisations have tried to make their volunteering opportunities more accessible.**

Interview with Georgiana Hockin, Youth Volunteering Development Officer, The National Trust.

## **How much of a priority is accessible volunteering?**

Accessibility has always been part of the considerations for making sure that volunteers can work with the Trust in a way that is rewarding both for the volunteer and the organisation. Our aspiration is 'for ever, for everyone' so being accessible is part of our core purpose.



## **Who is responsible for taking accessible volunteering forward?**

The Trust has had a member of staff in place for many years who is responsible for taking a lead on accessibility issues.

# case study: The National Trust

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This post is supported by central, regional and property-based staff and volunteers, our Senior Management Team (where it is championed by our Director of Customer Services) and our Council and Trustees.

## **What has been achieved so far to improve accessibility?**

So far, the Trust has introduced:

- An Equality and Diversity Policy
- A comprehensive training programme for all staff and volunteers
- Accountability on regional staff for leading on issues of access, working with the Head of Access for All
- Accessibility audits of historic houses, offices and an assessment process for countryside sites.

Currently 11% of our volunteers identify themselves as having a disability.

## **Have you encountered any difficulties? How did you overcome them?**

The development and implementation of a training programme to increase staff and volunteer disability awareness and confidence in working with disabled people was a challenge, considering that the National Trust has around 43,000 volunteers and 5,000 staff.

The training, which was developed with input from staff and volunteers, was delivered to groups of people in each region who then delivered the programme to their colleagues and volunteers. This made the training sustainable and built up local knowledge and contacts in all our 11 regions.

# case study: The National Trust

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A booklet was developed, along with video and internet based resources. This training is now included as part of our induction for new staff and volunteers. This makes sure accessibility is viewed as integral to the work we do.

## **How worthwhile do you feel that the work has been?**

Testimonies we receive from volunteers suggest very worthwhile! Working with partners from disability and volunteering organisations for the disability month of the 2005 Year of the Volunteer resulted in more involvement of disabled people. It is very important to the Trust to be seen as being an organisation that welcomes anyone who wants to volunteer and provides a huge variety of roles.

## **What work still needs to be done?**

We need to continue to work with external partners to develop our volunteering approaches appropriately. Providing more information for volunteer managers about sources of advice about accessibility and working with disabled people is a key aim to move forward. This is coupled with making sure we describe our volunteer opportunities accurately so that people can make their own decisions as to whether they feel an opportunity is appropriate for them. A programme of further disability training covering specific impairments is also being developed. This will make our properties even more welcoming for disabled volunteers and continue to increase the diversity of our volunteers.

# case study: The Maze Project

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Interview with Carol Watson,  
The Maze Project.

## **What is The Maze project?**

The Maze Project is a mentoring service specifically designed to recruit, train and match volunteer mentors to disabled mentees aged 14 and over. Volunteers support mentees to achieve goals which can range from learning to swim, to acquiring social and practical skills or learning to be more independent.

## **What type of training do you offer volunteers?**

Training is on-going for all volunteers and we provide a structured training programme for new volunteers which includes Disability Equality Training and the option to take National Vocational Qualifications.



*Volunteers at The Maze Project*

We also invite other organisations in to give presentations to the volunteers to widen their knowledge of local and national facilities and services available. Many volunteers use the training and qualifications provided to further their career development.

# case study: The Maze Project

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## **How diverse is your volunteer group?**

Our volunteers come from a range of backgrounds. They can be disabled or non-disabled and have different reasons for wanting to volunteer. Some want to participate in our training packages to enhance their education or employment prospects, others find they have the time to help other people at this time in their lives.

We find that disabled volunteers have a lot to teach non-disabled volunteers, and vice-versa. This is also true of volunteers from different cultures and community backgrounds.

## **How have you tried to make your opportunities accessible?**

We have a fully accessible office and ensure that all our staff and volunteers are disability equality trained.

We advertise our opportunities through a diverse range of organisations, including local employers, Social Services, Day Centres and organisations involved with Black and Minority Ethnic groups. We also hold Development days to introduce people to our work. All adverts state that applications from disabled volunteers are welcomed.

# case study: The Maze Project

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## **What reasonable adjustments have you had to make?**

We have a volunteer working with us who is registered blind.

To accommodate this volunteer, all printed material was made available in 16 point text, and information was available in Braille. The volunteer is now able to offer advice, support and information to both staff and volunteers, thus raising awareness of the issues and barriers that face others with sight impairments, and how those barriers can be overcome.

The necessary adjustments were funded by the project itself.

Information and letters are translated into Braille at a cost of £1.70 per sheet, and a Dictaphone was purchased

costing £40 so that the volunteer can record information at the mentoring meetings.

## **What makes a good volunteer?**

We welcome anyone who feels they can benefit from volunteering at the project. The benefit to the project is always positive when enthusiastic, supportive people are involved.

# appendix A: timeline for volunteer managers

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Developed by young disabled people.

## 1. Before advertising for volunteers

Make sure that your organisation has the basic requirements for accessibility so that it is welcoming and meets the Disability Discrimination Act.

Make sure that staff have received disability equality training.

Think about how you can make volunteers feel welcome when they arrive.

Get 'in the know' about the support available for young disabled volunteers – funding, communication support, support workers etc.

## 2. When advertising

Include a statement along the lines of 'we welcome disabled volunteers' to encourage people.

Use accessible formats.



# appendix A: timeline for volunteer managers

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## 3. On receiving applications

Positive initial contact is important. Get back to the volunteer quickly and using the best communication method for the volunteer.

Consider getting some awareness training about the specific barriers the person is likely to face.

Consult disability organisations for advice, but remember that the needs of every disabled person are unique and avoid making assumptions about what people might need.

## 4. Initial meeting with volunteer

Give the volunteer a chance to explore in detail what the role will involve. This discussion should not be dominated or 'owned' by the volunteer manager.

Don't be afraid to ask the volunteer what their needs are.

Look at options for flexible working arrangements eg. hours and locations.

Ask them all the questions you would normally ask a volunteer! Find out what they want to get out of volunteering.

# appendix A: timeline for volunteer managers

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## 5. Next steps

Communication should always be with the person asking to volunteer and not their parent, guardian or carer. However, the volunteer may wish this person to be involved in discussions.

Think about any specific training needed by other people who will be working with the volunteer. Involve the volunteer in discussions about this.

If the required adaptations cannot be made immediately, look for an interim solution.

Ensure that an induction and welcoming process is in practice.

## 6. Ongoing

Don't forget about the volunteer! Make sure there are frequent meetings and that all support is in place.

Remember that the volunteer has a disability – they are not only a disabled person. Don't focus on the disability alone.

Discuss needs on ongoing basis.

Learn any useful lessons for the future – make any necessary changes for the next young disabled volunteer.

# appendix B: form for checking requirements – example

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This form is available in alternative formats on request. If you have any questions or would like support with completing this form, please contact us.

Name and address of venue

---

---

My name

---

Please mark the boxes that apply

## 1. Travel

I will be travelling by:

Bus  Car  Train  Taxi

Other

---

I would like my travel and enabling (if applicable) expenses to be reimbursed at the meeting – please bring all receipts

I am happy for my expenses to be reimbursed at a later date

## 2. Access and enabling

I use a wheelchair

Manual  Electric

I use sticks/walking frame

I will be bringing my own enabler/personal assistant

Name

---

I will not be bringing an enabler but will need occasional assistance (eg. carrying drinks) please specify

---

# appendix B: form for checking requirements – example

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## 3. Dietary requirements

I have special dietary requirements (please give details)

---

## 4. Communication

I will be bringing someone to help me communicate

I will be using a communication aid at the meeting

I have a hearing impairment and need:

An induction loop     To lip read

A sign language interpreter

(specify which signing system)

---

Other requirements

---

## 5. Preferred formats

Normal print     Large print

Braille     Easy read

Audio cassette

Signed and subtitled video

CD-Rom/floppy disk

Picture supported language

Other (please specify)

---

## 6. Any additional information

---

---

Please return form to:

(insert name and contact details)

---

# contacts

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## **Boardmaker**

Produced by Mayer-Johnson

[www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)

## **Change**

[www.changepeople.co.uk](http://www.changepeople.co.uk)

## **Connexions**

[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

Tel: 080 800 13 2 19

## **CSV (Community Service Volunteers)**

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

Tel: 020 7278 6601

## **Disability Resources Centre University of Cambridge**

(database of Disability  
Equality Trainers)

[www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/disability/  
university/trainingdb](http://www.cam.ac.uk/cambuniv/disability/university/trainingdb)

## **Disability Rights Commission**

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

Tel: 08457 622 633

## **Do-it**

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

## **Duke of Edinburgh's Award**

[www.theaward.org](http://www.theaward.org)

Tel: 01753 727400

## **Job Centre Plus**

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

## **Leonard Cheshire**

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

Tel: 020 7802 8200

## **Mencap**

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

Tel: 020 7454 0454

## **Millennium Volunteers**

[www.millenniumvolunteers.gov.uk](http://www.millenniumvolunteers.gov.uk)

# contacts

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## **National Volunteering Development Agencies:**

Volunteering England  
[www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)  
Tel: 0845 305 6979

Volunteer Development Scotland  
[www.vds.org.uk](http://www.vds.org.uk)  
Tel: 01786 479593

Wales Council for Voluntary Action  
[www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk)  
Tel: 0870 607 1666

Volunteer Development Agency  
(Northern Ireland)  
[www.volunteering-ni.org](http://www.volunteering-ni.org)  
Tel: 028 90236100

**Plain English Campaign**  
[www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

## **Rethink**

[www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)  
Tel: 0845 456 0455

## **Russell Commission**

[www.russellcommission.org](http://www.russellcommission.org)

## **RNIB**

[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7388 1266

## **RNID**

[www.rnid.org.uk](http://www.rnid.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7296 8000  
(Textphone: 020 7296 8001)

## **Scope**

[www.scope.org.uk](http://www.scope.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7619 7100

## **SKILL**

[www.skill.org.uk](http://www.skill.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7450 0620

# contacts

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## **Talking Mats**

[www.talkingmats.com](http://www.talkingmats.com)

Tel: 01786 467645

## **Youthnet**

[www.youthnet.org](http://www.youthnet.org)

Tel: 020 7226 8008

## **Transition Information Network**

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

Tel: 020 7843 6006

## **v charity**

[www.wearev.com](http://www.wearev.com)

## **Volunteer Centres**

Contact details of local centres available from national volunteering development agencies (see previous page)

## **Volunteering England**

See national volunteering development agencies

## **World Wide Web Consortium**

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



# CAN Do! volunteering

## **Leonard Cheshire**

30 Millbank, London SW1P 4QD

**Tel: 020 7802 8200**

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

Registered Charity no. 218186

## **Scope**

6 Market Road, London N7 9PW

**Tel: 020 7619 7100**

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

Registered Charity no. 208231