



# 4.0 Volunteers

## Involving Volunteers With Additional Support Needs

### Overview

1. Introduction
2. Support for Volunteer Co-Ordinators
3. Learning From Experience
4. Improving Your Ability to Support Volunteers
5. Further Information

### Introduction

The voluntary sector is committed to combating discrimination and offering innovative ways for people to develop skills and experiences which supports and empowers them to be active citizens.

Reaching out to different people, including those with additional support needs, creates a culture which pro actively promotes and encourages equality, diversity and inclusion and enables people to bring their lived experience, skills, knowledge to their volunteering roles and to the organisation.



Image: Two individuals volunteering on laptops

### Support for Volunteer Co-ordinators

It is not always easy to place people into volunteering, for many reasons. However, recruiting and maintaining a diverse volunteer base, which reflects the community served, is an important and a best practice approach to volunteering inclusion.

Volunteer co-ordinators will rightly see the development of a diverse volunteer base as a major success in meeting the diverse needs of the organisation's beneficiaries. Volunteer co-ordinators will benefit, therefore from accessing support, guidance and development opportunities which recognise the challenges they will face and gives them opportunities to discuss any issues and potential barriers that may exist and to identify solutions.

There are many organisations nationally and locally that will be able to offer best practice information and training regarding supporting those with specific needs. Contact your local CVC to see what services and support are available. There may be a local directory of organisations, that provide specialist support, and offer access to resources and even training.



#### External Link

You can find the contact details of your local volunteers centre on the Third Sector Support Wales website.

[Find your local Volunteer Centre](#)

Furthermore, all CVC s have Volunteering Development Officers who will be able to help you look at ways you can develop volunteer roles, volunteer support and supervision systems and consider innovative ways for involve people with additional support needs. They may also be able to signpost you to existing forums where best practice approaches can be shared and explored.

### Learning From Experience

In 2010-2012 WCVA co-ordinated a Wales wide action research project, funded by the then BIG lottery (now known as [The National Lottery Community Fund](#)), which aimed to co-ordinate learning from each CVC in working with 'harder to place' volunteers.

The project looked at different types of support which could raise the likelihood of successful volunteering for those with additional support needs and / or who are unemployed.

What follows includes some of this learning ([the full resources can be found at on the WCVA website](#)) and also includes extracts and findings from the recent Time Well Spent survey, in which key features were identified as being important in creating a culture which best supports the development of a diverse and engaged volunteer team.



#### External Link

A link to the Time Well Spent survey, a national survey into the experience of volunteering across the UK.

[Time Well Spent survey](#)

### Improving Your Ability to Support Volunteers

Making it easy for people to get involved is an important first step in creating an inclusive culture. Research identifies a number of actions and features that can be considered by volunteer-involving organisations:

- Volunteer Coordinators to visit groups, in their own environment, to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities and what measures people can take to sample and experience volunteering
- Offering taster sessions for people to try out volunteering before committing
- Organising open days for people to 'check out' the organisation and meet with other volunteers and the Volunteer Coordinator to help break down potential barriers that may be perceived
- Reaching out to people with diverse backgrounds and needs by using different and flexible recruitment methods
- Offering a tour of the volunteering location which sets a welcoming tone

- Putting in place support to assist less confident, less able individuals or those whose first language may not be English, to sample volunteering and help to apply Creating a mentoring scheme facilitated by your existing volunteers to support individuals with additional needs
- Reviewing your existing application process – is it a barrier or is it an accessible process which takes into account different abilities, motivations etc?

### Developing Flexible Roles

When creating volunteer roles, it's helpful to listen to what existing volunteers and potential volunteers are looking for and want to offer – be flexible, don't just think about what your organisation needs.

By being flexible you may open your organisation to set of skills you never realised you needed.

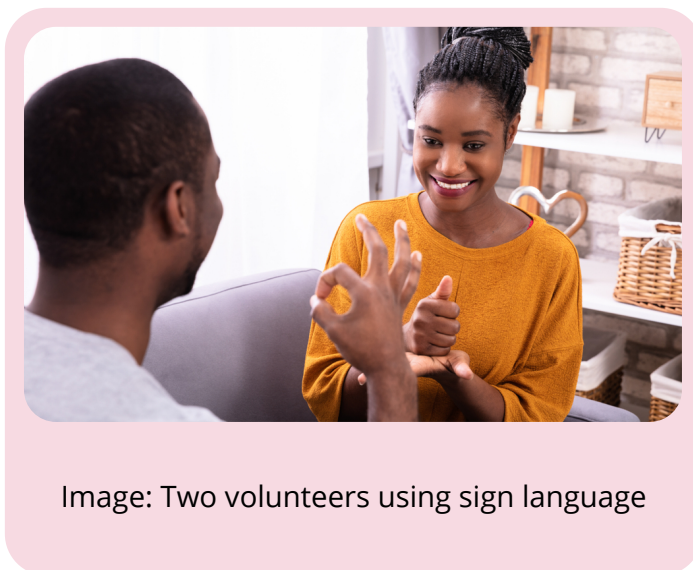


Image: Two volunteers using sign language

Whilst in role, it's important to support your volunteers to help shape and develop their roles also – this investment of time and care helps to create a culture which values diversity, through a person centred approach, and helps volunteers feel connected to an organisation. It also creates an important blueprint for future volunteering.

### What Does Additional Support Look Like?

Research evidences that volunteer-involving organisations work hard to create an environment which is enjoyable for volunteers, where they feel supported and where their contributions are recognised and appreciated.

Research also tells us that the sector still has some way to go in attracting people from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs.



Image: Volunteers planting a tree

Volunteers with additional support requirements need to feel that the organisation is trying to meet their needs and is offering different options. Below are some ideas and learning from research undertaken to consider how best the sector can effectively support volunteers with additional needs:

- Getting in touch or signposting a potential volunteer to support services in your area which may enable you and them to access additional support, information and resources which will make it possible for them to successfully volunteer
- Being aware of how accessible your facilities, building and location is, including access by public transport – talk to the volunteers about how these may impact on them and consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place
- Ensuring your information is accessible and available in different formats and fonts and complies with 'easy read' guidelines
- Consider the different learning styles of your volunteers – we all learn differently, and some may require a different approach to help them understand their roles and tasks. Induction training can be adapted, for example, to take place in shorter sessions or in a quiet area of the building. Ensure, also, that documents are available in a format that is accessible for each individual volunteer



- Be flexible about roles. Maybe you can design a role specifically for someone according to their needs, level of commitment and availability which also benefits your organisation
- Provide information to potential volunteers who are claiming benefits about volunteering whilst on benefits



For more information on benefits and volunteering,  
see information sheet:

### **4.12 Volunteers and Welfare Benefits**

- Be realistic about your capacity and the time needed to support volunteers effectively – diarise time needed to support others
- Consider the best ways to offer support to volunteers with additional needs – this may be in paired support sessions, groups or one to one sessions
- Create engagement opportunities whereby volunteers, with additional support needs, can share their opinions, offer feedback and be involved in decision making. This feedback can create important learning opportunities for organisations and can help to establish what they are doing well and areas that be improved upon.
- Continual support which gives volunteers opportunities to shape their volunteering, raise concerns or even change their roles. Regular contact and dialogue will help connect those who might otherwise feel excluded
- Demonstrate your commitment to recruiting a diverse volunteer base by using case studies, leaflets and information your website which uses images and examples of a variety of volunteers. Give good publicity to examples of volunteers in your organisation who have additional support needs. This encourages people to regard your organisation as welcoming and inclusive.
- View each individual and as individual with assets – each person has skills, perspectives, experiences which can create meaningful impact for themselves, the organisation, beneficiaries and the wider community

## Further Information

### **Video: The Benefits of Volunteering - a Look Around Swansea Community Farm** **WCVA Cymru**

Swansea Community Farm volunteer and volunteer co-ordinator discuss in a short video, their approach to supporting volunteers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcNhMN15bRo>

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### **UK Association for Accessible Formats** **UKAAF**

<https://www.ukaaf.org/>

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### **#iwill Ambassador blog: Five tips to make opportunities inclusive** **iwill.org.uk**

<https://www.iwill.org.uk/five-tips-inclusive>

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### **Investing in Volunteers - Standard** **Investing in Volunteers**

<https://iiv.investinginvolunteers.org.uk/download-the-standard>

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### **Additional Information Sheets** **Third Sector Support Wales**

- 4.6 Equality and Diversity
- 4.7 How to ensure volunteer satisfaction
- 4.12 Volunteers and welfare benefits
- 4.17 Understanding mental health and volunteering
- 4.22 Managing volunteer exits



Cefnogi Trydydd  
Sector **Cymru**

Third Sector  
Support **Wales**

Third Sector Support Wales is a network of support organisations for the whole of the third sector in Wales.

It consists of the 19 local and regional support bodies across Wales, the County Voluntary Councils (CVCs) and the national support body, Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).

For further information contact  
<https://thirdsectorsupport.wales/contact/>

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### Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.