

INVOLVING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AS VOLUNTEERS

*People with a disability have abilities, skills and experiences that can be valuable to your club. Many are looking for flexible and accessible volunteering opportunities in organisations that recognise their capabilities, not their disabilities. This information sheet provides ideas and tips for clubs to tap into this group of potential volunteers. Involving people with a disability in your club will benefit you and your community.*

**Who are they?**

While the number of people with a disability who volunteer and how and where they volunteer is unknown, an increasing number of people with a disability are looking for ways to engage with their communities and local clubs and become more socially active.

A disability could include:

* A visual or hearing problem
* A physical disability
* Mental health issues
* An intellectual disability
* An acquired brain injury
* An illness or disease
* A learning difficulty

**Why Involve People With a Disability in Your Club?**

People with a disability are active and prominent in many fields including arts, media and educations and can be equally prominent in sport. They bring to their work personal and professional qualities and skills, shaped by their own unique life experiences.

The benefits your club may experience from including people with a disability as volunteers include:

* Access to a larger pool of volunteers
* A more diverse group of volunteers that will offer a wider range of skills, experience and motivation
* A volunteer team that reflects the diversity of the larger community
* Improved understanding of diversity and inclusive practice among all your members

**Why do People with a Disability Get Involved?**

People with a disability volunteer for many reasons including:

* Helping others or making a contribution
* Meeting people and making friends
* Learning new skills and developing new interests
* Feeling part of the club and community
* Enjoyment

**Why Changes Can Your Club Make?**

The following changes will help your club become more volunteer-friendly and accessible to people with volunteers:

* Create an inclusive environment – think about running disability awareness training and improving physical access
* Concentrate on ability rather than disability. Don’t assume what people can or can’t do
* Think of what people could achieve if they had adequate support and mentoring
* Listen to the volunteers – they understand best how to manage their impairment
* Reassess your volunteer opportunities – how might they change if people with a disability were involved? How could they be done differently?
* Make sure volunteers feel part of the team. Address any negative attitudes towards disability
* Ensure policies and practices are not discriminatory

**Tips for Attracting People with a Disability**

Following these tips will help your club attract people with a disability:

* Build relationships and partnerships with community groups that involve people with a disability
* Promote volunteering in ways that include people with a disability. Mention that everyone is welcome as a volunteer
* Ensure recruitment processes are user-friendly – have someone willing and able to help people fill out volunteer recruitment forms etc.
* Be clear and consistent about the volunteer’s role and responsibility to the club. However be prepared to have some flexibility around role descriptions
* Match the ‘role to the volunteer’ rather than the ‘volunteer to the role’