**Making Volunteering more Inclusive – a guide to good practice by Abbie Kendall of Equal Lives**

Volunteers come in all shapes, sizes, ages and demographics – and everyone can contribute not only their time but also their particular skills, knowledge and personal perspective on the world. So, make your volunteering family broad and inclusive, for everyone’s benefit.

Here are some aspects to consider when offering inclusive volunteering :

* Have a Welcome Statement on your website or pinned up in your venue which speaks about how your organisation welcomes people from diverse backgrounds and why, e.g. their valuable contributions and insights.
* A Summary of Expectations, that gives prospective volunteers an idea of what’s expected of them and what they can expect from the organisation, is a useful document.
* Work with your existing volunteers to benefit from their experience in co-producing new opportunities and considering access arrangements.
* Reach out to under-represented groups within your community, especially if they are relevant to your organisation or project.
* If it is practicable, offer the role as remote/from home so that it is more flexible.
* Keep the application process simple and welcoming and use different formats, such as Easy Read or recorded versions, for those with accessibility needs.
* Avoid asking for qualifications, unless really necessary, as this can exclude many people.
* Provide opportunities to shadow an existing volunteer, but use a Non-Disclosure Agreement form, signed by the potential volunteer, so that they cannot share any information about your organisation or your clients.
* Include a photo or a graphic of someone with a disability on any volunteer recruitment materials and on your website or brochure..
* If possible, produce information in alternative languages and formats and make sure the formats you do use are accessible, e.g. screen readers can’t read PDF’s, but most people who aren’t visually impaired don’t realise that, so your PDF leaflet isn’t accessible to anyone who uses a screen reader.
* Make sure all policies and procedures are accessible, and diversity is reflected.
* In an interview process, offer questions ahead of time for volunteers who suffer from anxiety issues.
* It can be a good idea to have a meeting with an applicant before they start volunteering to see if there are any reasonable adjustments that you need to make in order for them to volunteer successful. Otherwise, you’re doing it retrospectively and that could be tricky for them to be waiting for the right equipment.
* It is important to use the right language when talking about disability or it can be very alienating. If you are unsure, the best thing to do is ask.
* Looking after your volunteers’ wellbeing is important, particularly if they are carrying out stressful roles, so consider putting a wellbeing action plan in place, or offer peer support sessions, to ensure you’re taking care of them.



A user-led Disabled person's organisation (DPO) working across Norfolk and Suffolk offering a range of services and advice.

<https://www.equallives.org.uk/>

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