

VOLUNTEERING & DISABILITY

Experiences and perceptions of volunteering
from disabled people and organisations

Supported by:



Clydesdale Bank

Tailored Financial Solutions

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Stirling Enterprise Park
Stirling
FK7 7RP

Tel: 01786 479593

Fax: 01786 449285

Email: information@vds.org.uk

www.vds.org.uk

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Finally, my thanks to my colleagues at Volunteer Development Scotland. Specifically thanks to: Laura Baird, Norrie Murray, Brenda Murray, Laura Connelly and those others who helped in a variety of ways.

Foreword

Clydesdale Bank is delighted to support Volunteer Development Scotland in funding this research on volunteering and disability.

We recognise that the work of volunteers in many organisations is crucial to the organisation's existence and to the wellbeing of the community it serves. Volunteering not only benefits communities but also rewards the individuals themselves who volunteer.

The Scottish Executive has committed to supporting volunteering and making it accessible to all. The Volunteering Strategy 2004 will work to "dismantle the barriers to volunteering and to closing the opportunity gap". In Clydesdale Bank

we believe that disability should not be a barrier to volunteering and one way we can help to promote this is to support organisations like Volunteer Development Scotland, the National Centre for Excellence in volunteering in Scotland.

This research will help raise awareness on the subject of disability and volunteering and we hope provide a platform to address any barriers.

David Thorburn
Chief Operating Officer
Clydesdale Bank

Volunteering is at the heart of a pro-active, healthy, fair and progressive society.

Scottish society benefits in a variety of ways from the time and enthusiasm given by its volunteers, and as the National Centre for Excellence in volunteering in Scotland, Volunteer Development Scotland believes that volunteering, in its many forms, should be inclusive and open to everyone.

By carrying out research into volunteering in Scotland, we can begin to further understand the complexity of volunteering and begin to realise its potential as a force for positive change. However, it is important that we recognise where individuals are not given the opportunity to engage, and work towards breaking any barriers to volunteering which exist.

By ensuring that the findings of this research are taken forward, we can work to ensure that Scotland is a place where everyone has the opportunity to volunteer if they wish.

Through the National Network of Volunteer Centres and through our work with our members and other stakeholders we can use the knowledge gained through this research to influence policy and practice at both the local and national level.

George Thomson
Chief Executive
Volunteer Development Scotland

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Executive Summary

Background and Aims

This research was timed to coincide with the implementation of Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), which places certain duties and obligations on service providers and employers with less than fifteen staff. Although volunteers are not directly covered by the Act, the legislation sets standards of working with disabled people on which good practice on the involvement of disabled people as volunteers can be based.

The research project is funded by Clydesdale Bank and has been carried out with support from Lead Scotland. The findings will add to Volunteer Development Scotland's knowledge of the volunteer landscape of Scotland by building up a more detailed picture of the supply of and the demand for volunteers.

The fieldwork was conducted between October 2004 and February 2005 and utilised a variety of research methods including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and a full literature review. Over 150 volunteer involving organisations and over 100 individual volunteers and lapsed volunteers from across Scotland took part.

The questionnaires were sent out to all areas of Scotland. Although the majority were returned from Glasgow and Edinburgh, every local authority area was represented in the questionnaire returns. There were also a good number of returns from organisations that are Scotland wide and have offices in a variety of urban and rural locations.

The age demographic of the disabled volunteers who took part in the study was similar to the demographic breakdown of volunteers in Scotland, with those aged 35 – 54 being more likely to volunteer than other age groups.

The definition of disability we have used follows the social model of disability. This model of disability makes a key distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Impairments are an injury, illness or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long-term effect on physical appearance and/or

limitation of function within the individual that differs from the commonplace. This includes learning difficulties, visually impaired, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing, people with epilepsy, people with mental health impairments, physically disabled people, people with HIV, arthritis, cerebral palsy. Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers. In this model, access issues arise, not due to impairments, but because society is organised in a way which does not take these impairments into account.

Key Findings

1 Volunteering Role

Disabled people who volunteer are more likely than other volunteers to undertake support and service provision roles such as befriending.

2 Becoming Involved

Disabled people who volunteer most commonly find out about volunteering through their own personal networks i.e. word of mouth. This is the most common route for all volunteers in Scotland.

3 The Internet

That the Internet is not widely utilised as a route into volunteering and that for disabled people there are a number of barriers to accessing information on the internet such as inaccessible websites.

4 The Role of Agencies

That disabled people are encouraged to volunteer by a variety of agencies such as Job Centres.

5 Alternative to Employment

Some disabled people say that volunteering has given them something to concentrate on when they are not in employment.

6 From Service User to Volunteer

That many disabled people are involved in an organisation with which they were previously service users, either as a 'safe space' or as a means of giving something back.

7 Skills

Some disabled people see volunteering as a way for them to gain a variety of skills that are useful when they are seeking employment or other opportunities.

8 Disability Equality

The barriers to volunteering encountered by disabled people range from inadequate physical access to the places where volunteering takes place (practical barriers), to a lack of understanding and awareness of disabled people and what they could contribute amongst some volunteering involving organisations (attitudinal barriers).

9 Alternatives

Some disabled people who volunteer worry about the impact their health may have on their reliability in their volunteering.

10 Benefits and Volunteering

Confusion around volunteering and social security benefits is a barrier to disabled people who volunteer. There are common misconceptions held on this.

11 Volunteer Recruitment

The majority of the volunteers and volunteer involving organisations who took part in the research feel that disabled people are under-represented in volunteering.

12 Towards Representation

Organisations with a disability focus are more likely to have higher numbers of disabled volunteers than other volunteer involving organisations.

13 Proactive not Reactive

Volunteer involving organisations tend not to take proactive action to address the needs of disabled people who volunteer but instead make adjustments in reaction to requests.

Recommendations

1 Volunteering Role

That volunteering roles, where possible are made accessible to all so that the roles undertaken are through choice and not through assumptions about the abilities of disabled people.

2 Become Involved

Prospective volunteers should be able to expect equal access to finding out about volunteering and how to take part. Making information clear and available benefits everyone.

3 The Internet

That volunteer involving organisations should ensure that their websites are accessible and that further work be undertaken to investigate the lack of use of the Internet as a route into volunteering.

4 The Role of Agencies

That organisations such as Job Centres who are in a position to volunteer are fully informed on good practice in volunteering and are aware of where further information can be found for clients.

5 Alternative to Employment

That all individuals who are not in employment are made aware of volunteering as an option for them but not pushed into it if they do not wish to

volunteer. This can be done through organisations that deal with careers such as Job Centres, Careers Offices and educational establishments.

6 From Service User to Volunteer

That those volunteering involving organisations that involve previous service users as volunteers should have practices in place to ensure that service users do not feel a sense of duty to the organisation to become a volunteer and that they encourage volunteers to move on as part of ongoing personal development.

7 Skills

That prospective volunteers be made aware of the skills that can be gained through volunteering

8 Disability Equality

That volunteer involving organisations ensure that staff dealing with volunteers or prospective volunteers have had disability equality training and are aware of means by which reasonable adjustments can be made to be inclusive.

9 Alternatives

That volunteer involving organisations ensure that they have alternative plans in place so that volunteers do not have to worry about letting people down if they are affected by their health. Volunteers should feel able to disclose ill health to an organisation and have their privacy respected. That flexibility of volunteering opportunities should be standard, as it would benefit everyone, not just disabled volunteers. Flexibility of volunteering opportunities should be standard, as it would benefit everyone.

10 Benefits and Volunteering

That volunteer involving organisations be made aware of the regulations regarding social security payments and assist volunteers with any problems in these areas. There is a role for Volunteer Centres in sharing good practice in this area.

11 Volunteer Recruitment

That volunteer involving organisations are proactive in recruiting disabled people as volunteers and that a focus is taken on abilities when developing volunteer roles.

12 Towards Representation

That volunteer involving organisations without a disability focus are proactive in recruiting disabled volunteers.

13 Proactive not Reactive

That volunteer involving organisations are inclusive and promote equal access without it being a special arrangement for individuals.

14 Partnership Working

People working in partnership to share resources and knowledge such as training and equipment.

15 Volunteer Centres

That the Volunteer Centres play a central role in the sharing of good practice and the development of accessible, flexible volunteering opportunities.

Chapter One - Introduction

This research was timed to coincide with the implementation of Part 3 of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), which places certain duties and obligations on service providers and employers with less than fifteen staff. Although volunteers are not directly covered by the Act, the legislation sets standards of working with disabled people on which good practice on the involvement of disabled people as volunteers can be based.

The research project is funded by Clydesdale Bank and has been carried out with support from Lead Scotland. The findings will add to VDS's knowledge of the volunteer landscape of Scotland by building up a more detailed picture of the supply of and demand for volunteers. VDS has undertaken various research studies, both quantitative and qualitative, into volunteering in Scotland and aims to build up a more detailed picture by studying segments of the market such as the recent study into multi ethnic volunteering (Reilly 2004).

Methodology

The fieldwork was conducted between October 2004 and February 2005 and utilised a variety of research methods including questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and a full literature review. Over 150 volunteer involving organisations and over 100 individual volunteers and lapsed volunteers from across Scotland took part.

The questionnaires were sent out to all areas of Scotland. Although the majority were returned from Glasgow and Edinburgh, every local authority area was represented in the questionnaire returns. There were also a good number of returns from organisations that are Scotland wide and have offices in a variety of urban and rural locations.

The age demographic of the disabled volunteers who took part in the study was similar to the demographic breakdown of volunteers in Scotland, with those aged 35 – 54 being more likely to volunteer than other age groups.

Background

According to Scotland's Census 2001, 19% of adults in Scotland (1 in 5) have a long-term illness and/or disability. In addition, the Scottish Household Survey 2003 states that 6% of adults in Scotland are unable to work on grounds of health or disability.

The Scottish Executive's Social Focus on Disability 2004 says that 17% of disabled people volunteer. This compares with the 24% of the wider Scottish population stated by the Scottish Household Survey in 2003.

Only 5% of disabled people are wheelchair users despite the common perception that disability refers to physical disability.

Definition

The definition of disability we have used follows the social model of disability. This model of disability makes a key distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Impairments are an injury, illness or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long-term effect on physical appearance and/or limitation of function within the individual that differs from the commonplace. This includes learning difficulties, visually impaired, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing, people with epilepsy, people with mental health impairments, physically disabled people, people with HIV, arthritis, cerebral palsy. Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers. In this model, access issues arise, not due to impairments, but because society is organised in a way which does not take these impairments into account.

Those who took part in the research defined themselves as disabled. A full list of terminology used in the report is in Appendix C.

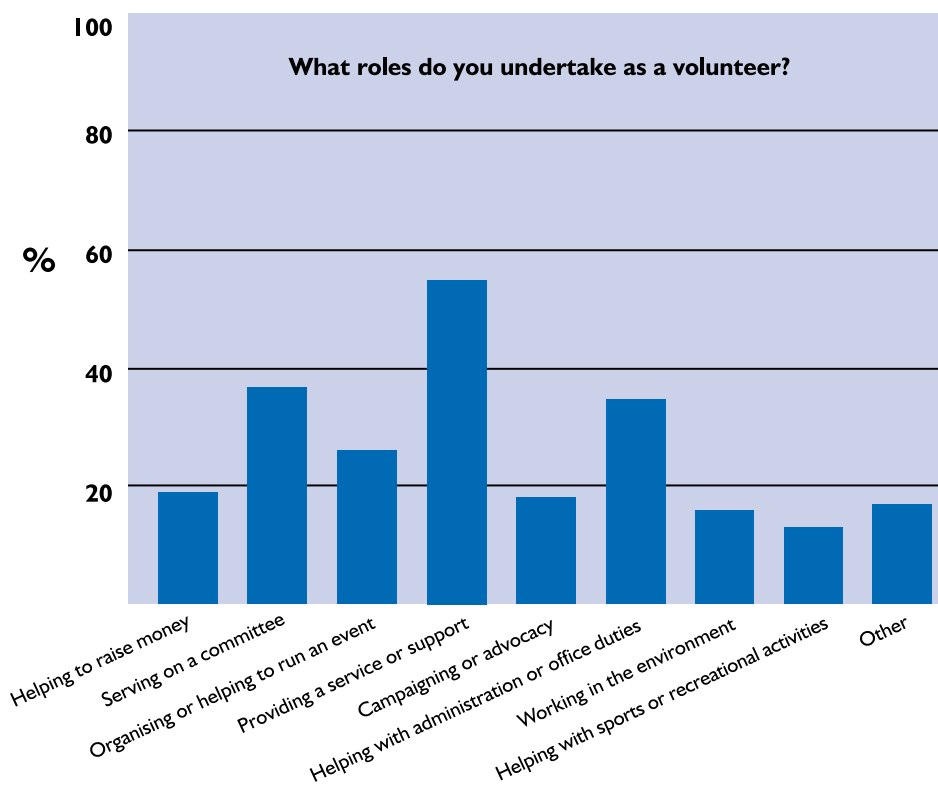
Chapter Two – Volunteer Experiences

2.1 Volunteering Role

Of those individuals who took part in the research, 89% are current volunteers with the remainder not currently undertaking voluntary work.

Of those volunteers, the most common voluntary role undertaken is providing a service or support. Additionally, befriending and gardening were mentioned as specific roles undertaken by some volunteers.

Interestingly, previous research undertaken by VDS has found quite different results for the entire population in Scotland. The roles that are most popular with disabled volunteers tend to be the less popular ones with the wider volunteering population of Scotland. For example: 35% of disabled people who volunteer serve on a committee while only 11% of the volunteer population in general undertake this activity.



2.2 How individuals got involved in volunteering

In line with other research into volunteering in Scotland, most disabled peoples route into volunteering had been through being asked to help. In addition, one fifth of disabled people who volunteer had been introduced to volunteering through their local Volunteer Centre. This is quite different to the experiences of the wider Scottish volunteering population, as Volunteer Centres

accounted for 6% of referred involvement in the most recent TNS poll commissioned by Volunteer Development Scotland (TNS 2004).

No one became involved via the Internet, which is surprising as it is assumed that the Internet is a popular resource for information. In the recent TNS poll commissioned by Volunteer Development Scotland (TNS 2004), 7% of people stated that they would use the Internet to access information about volunteering although only 1% of current volunteers polled had actually used it as their route

into volunteering. Comparatively, research into multi ethnic volunteering (Reilly 2004) found that people were more likely to use the Internet than to use a Volunteer Centre.

It could be the case that there is reliance by volunteer involvers on the Internet as a recruitment tool when in fact the information is not being accessed.

In the case of some people, the lack of use could be attributed to lack of access to technology or lack of skills needed to access the Internet. As stated in the Scottish Household Survey 2003:

“The results show that adults with a disability or long term illness are significantly less likely to access the Internet than those adults without a disability or long term illness.”

The Scottish Executive’s Social Focus on Disability 2004 indicates that 12% of disabled adults access the Internet for personal use compared with 39% of the wider Scottish population. Also, that over half of disabled people have no qualifications compared with less than one quarter of the Scottish population as a whole. According to the Disability Rights Commission (DRC 2004), a further issue with Internet use and disabled people is the lack of accessible websites:

“Eight in ten websites are impossible for some disabled people to use.”

Other means of involvement specified included being a previous client of the service, through friends/contacts, and staying on as a volunteer after having a placement or work experience at the organisation. Some had also been referred on from an educational institution, Job Centre or social worker:

“I got involved in volunteering through my social worker that came to my house one day to see what I would like to do, she said about volunteering and I agreed.”

In this situation, it is positive that the individual was encouraged to volunteer, however, it may be the case that they ‘agreed’ as it was offered to them. It is important that people do not feel forced into

volunteering by someone in a position of relative power. In this type of circumstance, it would be useful for the organisation involved to have a volunteer manager who would ensure that they understood what volunteering involved and that they actually wanted to volunteer and once that was decided, that any volunteering opportunity offered was suitable, and assistance was available for them to move on if not. In this particular case, that of a social worker, it may be useful for social workers to have a basic knowledge of the kinds of volunteering opportunities available, in order for them to make informed suggestions to prospective volunteers. One option to implement this may be voluntary placements for those studying to carry out Social Work, and training in volunteers management.

Some respondents commented on their need to do something useful with their time and volunteering seemed to fit in with their needs:

“Doing something useful had great appeal after early retirement due to ill health.”

2.3 How volunteers choose an organisation

One of the most common routes for a volunteer to be involved in a particular organisation was having previously been a service user. This seemed to go alongside a feeling of giving something back to a service that had previously helped them or passing on their knowledge in a particular field to others.

“They helped me and I wanted to give something back to someone else.”

There are a number of issues surrounding this practice, and in some organisations there is a ‘cooling off’ period that means service users have to wait a set time before applying to be a volunteering with the particular service that they have used. For some people, volunteering in a known environment provides a ‘safe space’.

There is the possibility, however, that this is not through choice, but perhaps through a feeling of indebtedness or through a fear of starting over in an unfamiliar environment. It is important for

people to know that they can walk away after using a service without having to give something back. However, it is the place of the individual to decide what is best for them. In any case, a volunteer should be able to expect equality of opportunity wherever they decide to volunteer. Many volunteers also decided on an organisation based on their interests or through a contact or friend involved.

"I am very interested in horses and they have always been a passion of mine. So to volunteer with Riding for the Disabled was and is a joy."

2.4 Experiences of volunteering

Over half of those involved stated that their experiences of volunteering had been positive. For some, their current role was their first experience of volunteering while for others it was one in a line of many. It is encouraging that volunteers had moved between roles. This indicates good volunteering management and a gain in confidence for the volunteer. It is important to note that volunteers moving between roles and/or organisations can be seen to be positive in giving them a chance to experience varied volunteer roles. In the same way that people change employment for a change and career development so too should volunteers.

"This is my first experience. Beneficial in terms of a valued job role – similar to paid work plus it is a rewarding experience and has offered me an alternative career plan. I recommend volunteering to anyone out of work."

"Through my volunteering I have met many new faces and I get the chance to socialise and go to different events. I love volunteering as it provides me with things to do with myself."

There were also mentions of negative experiences in the past, however those individuals had gone on to find a volunteering role more suitable to them.

The experiences mentioned included attitudinal barriers, for example assumptions about disabled people and what they were able and/or willing to

do as volunteer. These assumptions could be from volunteer involving organisations, volunteers and service users.

"Previous to the helpline – not very good. Since the helpline – wonderful. I feel needed, valued and respected."

We cannot assume that this change from bad to good volunteering was associated with disability, with volunteering as with employment, people enjoy or dislike different experiences and move on accordingly.

2.5 Skills gained through volunteering

Self-confidence was the most mentioned reply to this question alongside increased communication skills.

"Many skills – patience and understanding but mainly confidence in speaking within groups – not sitting quietly on the sidelines."

In addition, many volunteers felt that they had gained a variety of practical skills such as administration, IT and first aid. Soft skills included teamwork, leadership, negotiation and patience. Perhaps this is directly linked with the preference for service and support provision as a volunteering role.

"Leadership skills, development skills, listening skills and various supporting methods. These will be useful for job hunting or taking in any other volunteering situation."

2.6 Barriers to volunteering

More than half the respondents to the research said that they had not encountered any barriers to their volunteering.

"None at the helpline at all because I mainly volunteer from home and I contribute to other things when I am well enough."

For those who had encountered barriers, they ranged from physical access to the attitudes of those around them.

"[Barriers are] 100% medical. Interviewed by medics before being allowed to participate, further periodic medical interviews. I'm a driver, not a brain surgeon."

As regards legislative frameworks and government policy which affect and support volunteering, the existence of the Scottish Executive's Volunteering Strategy and the new strand of the DDA is of note although neither have been in place long enough to have a significant effect¹. These aim to effect attitudinal change but this needs to happen over a period of time. Physical change, provided resources are available, can happen quickly but changing attitudes can take longer.

"Yes, because I am unable to walk properly organisers and members of the public do not think I should be attending the events that I do even though the skills that I have learned may save someone's life; they think only fully fit people should be attending."

Some felt that their health was a barrier as some days they were too ill to volunteer.

"Have never experienced barriers in any chosen voluntary work as I have always informed people of my disability and how it may affect me e.g. seizures."

Some people worry about reliability when they have fluctuating levels of health. However, organisations can help to minimise problems by being flexible, perhaps having a 'plan B' in these situations. This would benefit everyone, as not only disabled people need flexibility in their lives. Generally, absence is at short notice and so good practice would be to have flexibility for everyone, and to have enough volunteers so that there is never 'not enough'. In a volunteering setting, absence can put pressure on those left which can cause resentment amongst peers. It would be at the discretion of the volunteer manager to ensure that these situations either did not occur, or were handled appropriately.

In this type of situation, it can be dependant on the individual volunteer disclosing any needs early on, which is a very personal thing, particularly to disclose to someone you barely know. However, if needs are not known then people may not know to be accommodating in times of ill health. It is only when someone chooses to disclose that an organisation can know to have practices in place.

This again could create resentment if some volunteers are seen to have special treatment for an unknown reason. Organisations should create an inclusive atmosphere and comfortable, confidential space. It is not about the organisation knowing about the health issues surrounding an individual's impairment but about its impact on the way that they wish to volunteer.

When asked what would make it easier for them to volunteer, most respondents mentioned that it would be easier if they were certain it would not affect social security benefits² and if it fitted in with their interests and skills.

¹See Appendices for further details and contacts

²See Appendices for further details and contacts

"Many people with a disability are scared of volunteering because they may be deemed necessarily fit for a job of work or if they receive expenses it will affect any benefits they receive."

Very few were put off by not having someone they knew volunteering with them.

"Transport required makes it necessary to turn down some possibilities i.e. I would like to buddy another newer volunteer."

Specific areas mentioned where transport was a particular barrier to volunteering were Aberdeen City and Fife.

2.7 Non-volunteers

Of those who participated in the research, 11% were not current volunteers. Of these people, 80% had volunteered in the past. The main reason for stopping volunteering was having secured a job or changed job, or through illness. Half of them intended to return to volunteering while the other half weren't sure. This was due to uncertainty to future health or situation:

"Having recently been ill it depends on my future health."

Encouragingly no one said an outright no to returning to volunteering. Opportunities should allow everyone an equal right to volunteer in a different way if circumstances have changed for individuals.

Chapter Three – Attitudes To Disabled People As Volunteers

3.1 Representation of disabled people in volunteering

It is recognised that the phrases used to gauge attitudes could be regarded to be extreme points of view, and that the first two in particular push people to the negative viewpoint. Perhaps this factor has had an influence in the opinions given.

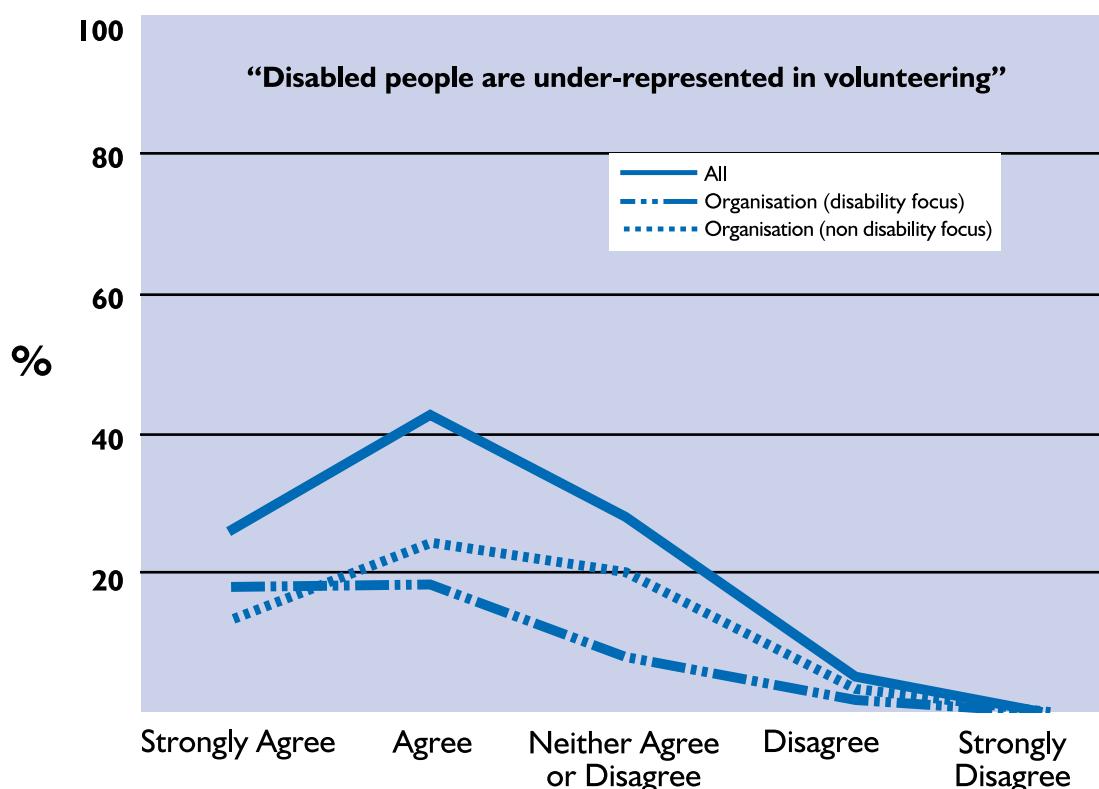
63% of individuals who took part in the research felt that disabled people were under-represented in volunteering. Of organisations that took part, 68% agreed that disabled people were under-represented in volunteering. This is similar to the 52% of organisations who believed there was under-representation in England (IVR 2004).

As can be seen from the graph, organisations with a disability focus are less likely to agree that disabled people are under-represented in volunteering.

This is a point of view that will be held depending on the organisations experiences of disabled volunteers.

As one organisation recognised, there are other benchmarks against which to measure:

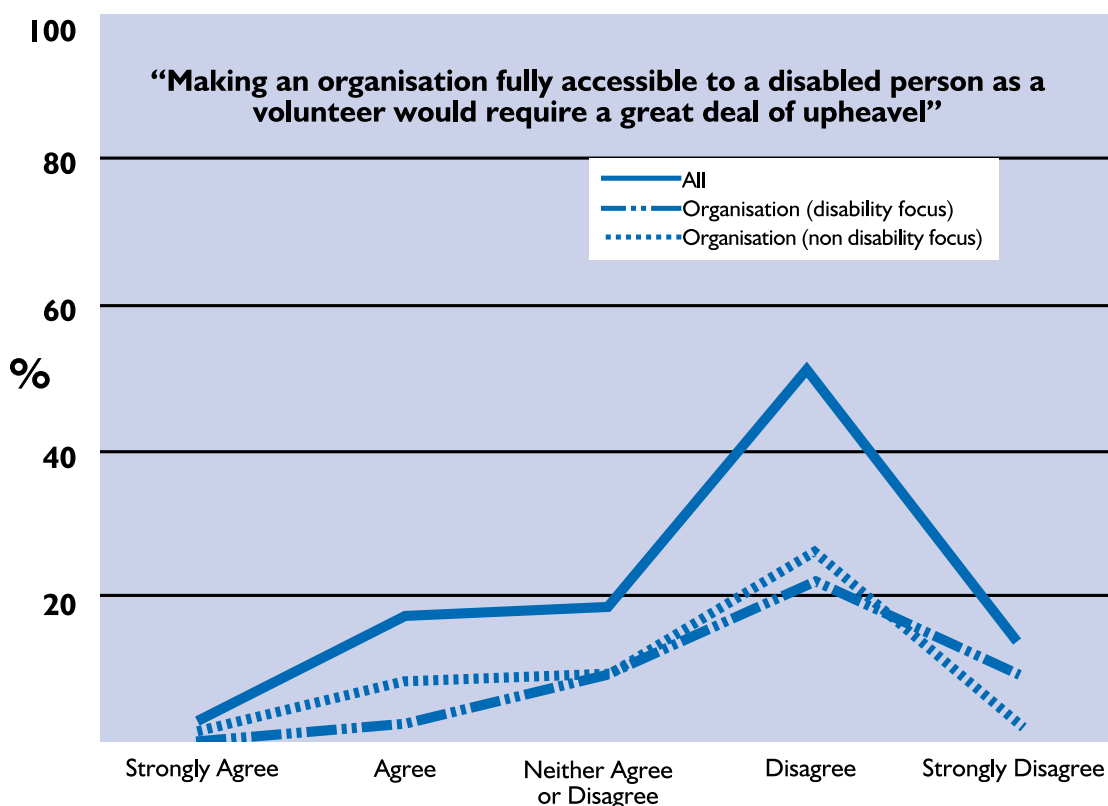
“The Scottish Household Survey 2003 identifies 3% of the population to be disabled. That 6% of bureau volunteers are disabled means that disabled people are not under-represented in our volunteering.”



3.2 Making an organisation accessible

Again, the attitudes demonstrated in the replies from this question will be based on the experiences of that organisation.

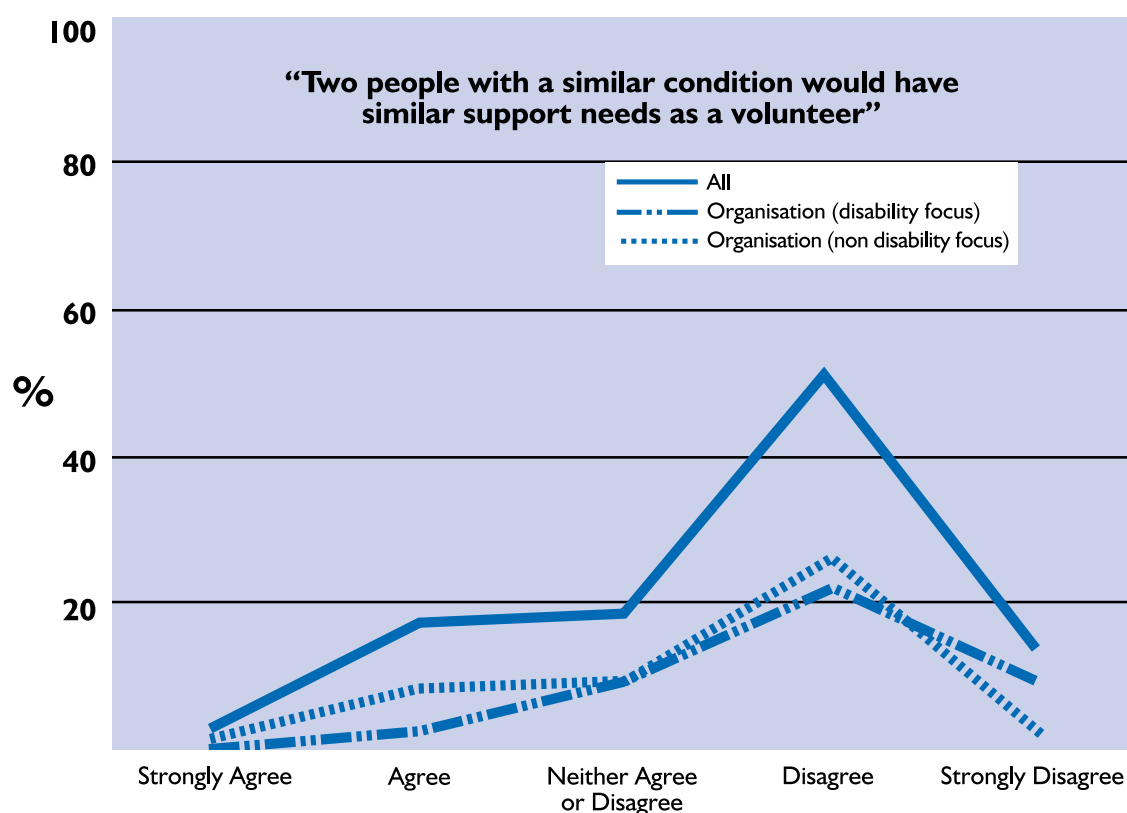
This statement had given options to capture attitudes to making organisations fully accessible to disabled people as volunteers. As can be seen from the graph, most people disagree that making an organisation accessible would require a great deal of upheaval.



3.3 Support needs

This question was asked to gauge the knowledge of, and attitudes to, disability held by volunteer involving organisations. The line of attitude between organisations with a focus on disability and those with another focus was not as clear-cut as we might expect. This suggests that it is more down to experience than focus, in that organisations will have had different experiences with volunteers.

It is important to note that all volunteers have support needs at different levels regardless of whether or not they are disabled.



Chapter Four – Organisational Experiences

4.1 Field of work

The majority of organisations did not have a specific focus on disability in their work although disability organisations were well represented. There were also a significant number of organisations involved in health, youth work and volunteering (Volunteer Centres).

4.2 Numbers of volunteers

The majority of organisations who replied had over 50 volunteers. 34% of organisations had no volunteers who defined themselves to be disabled. Organisations with a work focus on disability have a higher number of disabled volunteers than the organisations with another focus.

Organisations were asked what information they collected on their volunteers. Most collect data on age and gender but collect less on other demographics. Organisations with a disability focus are more likely to collect data on mental health status and access and information requirements than organisations with another focus. Interestingly, when asked what demographic information they collected on their volunteers; almost half collect data on physical disability while a quarter collects information on the mental health of their volunteers. Perhaps this is due to the common perception of disability meaning a physical impairment.

4.3 Volunteer recruitment

Three quarters of organisations do not specifically target groups such as disabled people with their volunteer recruitment. Of those who do, there are a variety of methods used to get them involved.

“Through presentations, talks to organisations that involve disabled people, to encourage disabled people to volunteer and break down barriers that exist. We also have material in different formats”

“Visually impaired volunteers are an important part of our organisation. We aim to have an inclusive programme where possible.”

Many of those who do not specifically target stated that they had an equal opportunities policy or that they were open to everyone and didn't discriminate. However, particularly for people less likely to become involved in volunteering, it might be easier for them to become involved if there was an easy route in, such as being invited to become involved. This might lessen the fear of rejection that people may have of nominating themselves for something. Perhaps a means of showing openness to prospective disabled volunteers would be to have publicity that states that the organisation welcomes disabled people.

Creativity in recruitment methods could find other means of doing this.

One barrier that was discovered during the research was the presets on volunteering opportunities online. The VolunteerScotland website has 'set' information that is submitted on a volunteering opportunity before it goes live to the website. However, if no answer is submitted to questions, it defaults to 'no'. This may mean that a prospective volunteer thinks that an opportunity has no wheelchair access, disabled accessible toilet or material available in Braille, when in fact it does. This oversight could be a barrier to untold numbers of people who would have considered volunteering.

4.4 Adjustments

Around a quarter of organisations had made no adjustments to involve disabled people as volunteers. Of those who had made adjustments, the emphasis was very strongly on physical access adjustments such as ramps, disabled toilets and ground floor offices. Some organisations pointed out that they had not had the opportunity to involve a disabled volunteer, and if they did would commit to making necessary changes.

These changes could involve arranging meetings outwith the office environment or altering the office environment within reason to meet needs. It is important to concentrate on abilities rather than disabilities and to make changes on the individuals

need rather than assumptions. One downside to working this way is that it is reactive rather than proactive. If a prospective volunteer was lacking in confidence, they might not want to ask for changes to be made on their account, which creates a vicious circle of non-involvement if the organisation will only make changes if asked. Adaptation of volunteer roles to meet individual needs was also mentioned.

“As one of our volunteers is blind, we have adjusted training regarding the use of visual aids. Information and policies are emailed to the volunteer; accommodation has been made for the guide dog. We are still learning about adjustments.”

“If someone needs extra support we will provide it. Our office is on the ground floor, therefore no need for practical changes.”

Chapter Five – The Next Steps: Conclusions And Recommendations

Conclusions

1 Volunteering Role

Disabled people who volunteer are more likely than other volunteers to undertake support and service provision roles such as befriending.

2 Becoming Involved

Disabled people who volunteer most commonly find out about volunteering through their own personal networks i.e. word of mouth. This is the most common route for all volunteers in Scotland.

3 The Internet

That the Internet is not widely utilised as a route into volunteering and that for disabled people there are a number of barriers to accessing information on the internet such as inaccessible websites.

4 The Role of Agencies

That disabled people are encouraged to volunteer by a variety of agencies such as Job Centres.

5 Alternative to Employment

Some disabled people say that volunteering has given them something to concentrate on when they are not in employment.

6 From Service User to Volunteer

That many disabled people are involved in an organisation with which they were previously service users, either as a 'safe space' or as a means of giving something back.

7 Skills

Some disabled people see volunteering as a way for them to gain a variety of skills that are useful when they are seeking employment or other opportunities.

8 Disability Equality

The barriers to volunteering encountered by disabled people range from inadequate physical access to the places where volunteering takes place

(practical barriers), to a lack of understanding and awareness of disabled people and what they could contribute amongst some volunteering involving organisations (attitudinal barriers).

9 Alternatives

Some disabled people who volunteer worry about the impact their health may have on their reliability in their volunteering.

10 Benefits and Volunteering

Confusion around volunteering and social security benefits is a barrier to disabled people who volunteer. There are common misconceptions held on this.

11 Volunteer Recruitment

The majority of the volunteers and volunteer involving organisations who took part in the research feel that disabled people are under-represented in volunteering.

12 Towards Representation

Organisations with a disability focus are more likely to have higher numbers of disabled volunteers than other volunteer involving organisations.

13 Proactive not Reactive

Volunteer involving organisations tend not to take proactive action to address the needs of disabled people who volunteer but instead make adjustments in reaction to requests.

Recommendations

1 Volunteering Role

That volunteering roles, where possible are made accessible to all so that the roles undertaken are through choice and not through assumptions about the abilities of disabled people.

2 Become Involved

Prospective volunteers should be able to expect equal access to finding out about volunteering and how to take part. Making information clear and available benefits everyone.

3 The Internet

That volunteer involving organisations should ensure that their websites are accessible and that further work be undertaken to investigate the lack of use of the Internet as a route into volunteering.

4 The Role of Agencies

That organisations such as Job Centres who are in a position to volunteer are fully informed on good practice in volunteering and are aware of where further information can be found for clients.

5 Alternative to Employment

That all individuals who are not in employment are made aware of volunteering as an option for them but not pushed into it if they do not wish to volunteer. This can be done through organisations that deal with careers such as Job Centres, Careers Offices and educational establishments.

6 From Service User to Volunteer

That those volunteering involving organisations that involve previous service users as volunteers should have practices in place to ensure that service users do not feel a sense of duty to the organisation to become a volunteer and that they encourage volunteers to move on as part of ongoing personal development.

7 Skills

That prospective volunteers be made aware of the skills that can be gained through volunteering.

8 Disability Equality

That volunteer involving organisations ensure that staff dealing with volunteers or prospective volunteers have had disability equality training and are aware of means by which reasonable adjustments can be made to be inclusive.

9 Alternatives

That volunteer involving organisations ensure that they have alternative plans in place so that volunteers do not have to worry about letting people down if they are affected by their health. Volunteers should feel able to disclose ill health to an organisation and have their privacy respected. That flexibility of volunteering opportunities should be standard, as it would benefit everyone, not just disabled volunteers. Flexibility of volunteering

opportunities should be standard, as it would benefit everyone.

10 Benefits and Volunteering

That volunteer involving organisations be made aware of the regulations regarding social security payments and assist volunteers with any problems in these areas. There is a role for Volunteer Centres in sharing good practice in this area.

11 Volunteer Recruitment

That volunteer involving organisations are proactive in recruiting disabled people as volunteers and that a focus is taken on abilities when developing volunteer roles.

12 Towards Representation

That volunteer involving organisations without a disability focus are proactive in recruiting disabled volunteers.

13 Proactive not Reactive

That volunteer involving organisations are inclusive and promote equal access without it being a special arrangement for individuals.

14 Partnership Working

People working in partnership to share resources and knowledge such as training and equipment.

15 Volunteer Centres

That the Volunteer Centres play a central role in the sharing of good practice and the development of accessible, flexible volunteering opportunities.

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Appendix A - Terminology

These definitions below are those that were used in the context of this research.

Disability - The definition of disability we have used follows the social model of disability. This model of disability makes a key distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Impairments are an injury, illness or congenital condition that causes or is likely to cause a long-term effect on physical appearance and/or limitation of function within the individual that differs from the commonplace. This includes learning difficulties, visually impaired, partially sighted, deaf, hard of hearing, people with epilepsy, people with mental health impairments, physically disabled people, people with HIV, arthritis, cerebral palsy. Disability is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in society on an equal level with others due to social and environmental barriers. In this model, access issues arise, not due to impairments, but because society is organised in a way which does not take these impairments into account.

Volunteering - Volunteering is done by choice, without monetary reward, and for the benefit of individuals, organisations, communities, society and the environment.

Formal volunteering - Volunteering that is managed or co-ordinated within an organisational setting.

Informal volunteering - Volunteering that is self-managed and usually outwith an organisation setting.

Volunteer Centre - A local based centre that puts prospective volunteers in touch with opportunities and helps volunteer involving organisations to recruit volunteers. There are 42 centres across Scotland based in 60 offices across Scotland.

Appendix B – Further Information

Volunteering Strategy

This government policy encourages volunteering and seeks to embed a robust culture of volunteering in Scotland. Strand two of the Volunteering Strategy focuses on breaking the barriers to volunteering and closing the opportunity gap, while strand three focuses on improving the volunteering experience. Disabled people are recognised in the strategy as encountering particular barriers to volunteering. The key outcomes of strand two:

“Volunteering must be accessible to all the people of Scotland. The Scottish Executive will work with a range of organisations with a direct and indirect interest in volunteering, including employers, and support agencies, to deliver:

- *Increased range of adults aware of the benefits of volunteering and how to get involved as a volunteer;*
- *A higher proportion of organisations operating inclusive practice; and*
- *Improved understanding of the relationship between volunteering and social security benefits amongst potential volunteers and those who advise potential volunteers”*

The key outcomes of strand three:

“Existing volunteer management expertise in Scotland needs to be shared to improve the volunteering experience across Scotland as a whole. VDS and the national network of Volunteer Centres will have a key role in delivering the key outcomes of this strand:

- *Higher standards of volunteer management in both the public and voluntary sectors;*
- *Improved opportunities for skills and personal development through volunteering; and*
- *Experiences that match the needs, aspirations and lifestyles of volunteers.”*

It is of note that the outcomes of the volunteering strategy are similar to some of the recommendations of this piece of research.

Scottish Executive (2004) Volunteering Strategy.
Scottish Executive
Available via the Scottish Executive website at www.scotland.gov.uk

DDA (1995)

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) aims to end the discrimination which many disabled people face. This Act gives disabled people rights in the areas of:

- employment
- access to goods, facilities and services
- buying or renting land or property.

The employment rights and first rights of access came into force on 2 December, 1996; further rights of access came into force on 1 October, 1999; and the final rights of access came into force in October 2004.

In addition this Act:

- allows the Government to set minimum standards so that disabled people can use public transport easily.

Disability Discrimination Act Part I - Definition of disability

The Act defines a disabled person as someone with “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

Disability Discrimination Act Part II - Employment Provisions

- The employment provisions apply to employers with 15 or more employees. The provisions, including those that require employers to consider making changes to the physical features of premises that they

occupy, have been in force since December 1996.

- There are two ways in which an employer might unlawfully discriminate against a disabled employee or job applicant:
 - by treating him or her less favourably (without justification) than other employees or job applicants because of his or her disability, or
 - by not making reasonable adjustments without justification).

Disability Discrimination Act Part II - Duties of Trade Organisations to their disabled members and applicants

Discrimination against disabled people by trade organisations is also covered by the DDA. This Code of Practice explains the provisions in the Act and gives practical guidance on how trade organisations can prevent discrimination against disabled people.

Disability Discrimination Act Part III - Access to Goods and Services

- Part III of the DDA gives disabled people important rights of access to everyday services that others take for granted.
- Duties under Part III are coming into force in three stages:
 - Treating a disabled person less favourably because they are disabled has been unlawful since December 1996.
 - Since October 1999, service providers have had to consider making reasonable adjustments to the way they deliver their services so that disabled people can use them.
 - The final stage of the duties, which means service providers may have to consider making permanent physical adjustments to their premises, came into force in 2004.

Further Resources:

Skill (2005) *Access to Volunteering: A 'how to' resource manual for volunteering organisations*. Skill

Shaping the experiences and opportunities for disabled people. A 'how to' resource manual for volunteering organisations The manual, which is a result of Skill's two-year project on access to volunteering for disabled people, will help voluntary organisations feel confident in supporting disabled volunteers.

Available via the Skill website at www.skill.org.uk
SAIF Scotland (2002) *Making websites accessible*. SAIF Scotland

Practical guidelines for making websites accessible. A supplement to the SAIF Standards for Disability Information and Advice Provision in Scotland.

Available for download from the SAIF Scotland website at www.saifscotland.org.uk

Volunteering and Benefits

Receiving welfare benefits should not prevent claimants from becoming volunteers as long as they follow the correct procedures. The most important thing that claimants still need to do, however, is to inform their Job Centre Plus office of their intention to volunteer before they actually begin voluntary work.

Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)

- No hour limit on volunteering
- Claimants must show that they are available for and actively seeking work
- Claimants should be able to attend an interview within 48 hours, and to start within a week
- They must not receive any payments in cash or in kind other than out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of their volunteering

Income support

- No hour limit
- They must not receive any payments in cash or in kind other than out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the course of their volunteering

Incapacity Benefit and Severe Disablement Allowance

- No hour limit although there is confusion as there was a 16-hour rule which was scrapped in 2000
- Payment of expenses incurred by someone who does voluntary work is disregarded in full

Disability Living Allowance

- Volunteering will not affect whether an individual receives this benefit or not

Regulations state that volunteers can be given expenses up front, but this is to cover what they spend only and the unspent proportion has to be returned.

For further information, the following are available from your local Jobcentre Plus or from **www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk**

WK1 – Financial help if you work or are looking for work

JSA17 – Voluntary work when you're unemployed and it needn't affect your benefits!

Further Resources:

VDS (2004) *Volunteering and Welfare Benefits*. VDS This Information leaflet provides guidance on the regulations governing volunteering and a range of welfare benefits.

Available for download at **www.vds.org.uk/information**

Appendix C - Useful Contacts

Volunteering

Volunteer Development Scotland (VDS)

Volunteer Development Scotland works strategically and in partnership to promote, support and develop volunteering in Scotland.

Email: vds@vds.org.uk

Tel: **01786 479 593**

Website: www.vds.org.uk

Volunteer Centre Network Scotland

The Volunteer Centre Network Scotland is made up of independent Volunteer Centres. Volunteer Centres work closely with groups and organisations that need volunteers and provide information to people who are thinking about volunteering.

Email: info@volunteerscotland.org.uk

Website: www.volunteerscotland.org.uk

Disability Organisations

Capability Scotland

Capability Scotland provides a range of flexible services which support disabled people of all ages in their everyday lives.

Email: ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk

Tel: **0131 313 5510**

Website: www.capability-scotland.org.uk

Fair Multimedia

FAIR (Family Advice and Information Resource) is an information and advice service for people with learning disabilities, parents, carers and people who work with them in Edinburgh. Fair Multimedia provides services to make reading materials accessible to disabled people.

Email: fair@fairadvice.org.uk

Tel: **0131 662 1962**

Website:

www.fairadvice.org.uk/contactfm.htm

Inclusion Scotland

Inclusion Scotland (IS) is a new innovative consortium of disability-led organisations and individual disabled people.

Email: info@inclusionscotland.org

Tel: **0141 887 7058**

Website: www.inclusionscotland.org

Lead Scotland

Lead Scotland, Linking Education and Disability, is a voluntary organisation set up to widen access to learning for all disabled adults and carers in many areas of Scotland.

Email: enquiries@lead.org.uk

Tel: **0131 317 3439**

Website: www.lead.org.uk

SAIF Scotland

The Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF) was set up to take forward the recommendations made by the Scottish Working Group on information Services for Disabled People and Carers in it's final report Enabling Information (1995).

Email: info@saifscotland.org.uk

Tel: **0141 226 5261**

Website: www.saifscotland.org.uk

SDEF

The Scottish Disability Equality Forum works for social inclusion in Scotland through the removal of barriers and the promotion of equal access for people affected by disability.

Email: sdef@btconnect.com

Tel: **01786 446 456**

Website: www.sdef.org.uk

Skill Scotland

Skill: National Bureau for Students With Disabilities. Skill Scotland operates an information and advice service, provides volunteering opportunities, informs and influences key decision makers, runs conferences and works with its members.

Email: admin@skillscotland.org.uk

Tel: **0131 475 2348**

Website: www.skill.org.uk/scotland

The Research Unit of Volunteer Development Scotland

The strategic review of Volunteer Development Scotland confirmed the need for more research into volunteering in Scotland. With the support of the Lloyds TSB Foundation, VDS appointed a Research Co-ordinator, Laura Baird in late 2002 whose role was to establish the Research Unit. The department has since expanded with the recruitment of a Research Officer; Christine Reilly, a Research and Policy Officer; Sarah Jarvis, and through collaboration with the University of Dundee Department of Geography an ESRC CASE PhD student; Helen Timbrell.

The aims of the Research Unit are to promote research into volunteering in Scotland, and to develop knowledge and understanding of volunteering which is relevant to practitioners and policy makers.

The Unit endeavours to undertake and commission research into volunteering in Scotland which:

- Is relevant to VDS members, networks and others with an interest in volunteering
- Complements existing research into volunteering in Scotland
- Explores aspects of volunteering in Scotland which are currently under-researched
- Provides qualitative research as well as meaningful statistics on volunteering in Scotland to inform the development of social policy

The Unit also undertakes research and evaluation consultancy work, and welcomes invitations to tender for research projects

The Research Findings Scotland Series

Research Findings Scotland is a series published by the Research Unit of Volunteer Development Scotland. Titles include:

No1 Counselling and Society

The contribution of volunteer counsellors to voluntary sector provision in Scotland.

No2 Formal Volunteering

This bulletin includes statistics on levels of volunteering as well as comparing and contrasting methodologies used in surveys to capture levels of volunteering.

No3 Healthy Volunteering

A study of the vision and reality of volunteering in health and the aspirations and experiences of those involved.

No4 Informal Volunteering

This bulletin looks more closely at those volunteering informally in Scotland and highlights key trends and statistics while identifying motivations specific to informal volunteering.

No5 A Way of Life: A Summary

These findings are taken from a piece of research into Black and Minority Ethnic diverse volunteering in Scotland.

No6 Young People Volunteering

These findings are taken from a variety of quantitative and qualitative research into volunteering and young people in Scotland and the UK.



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All details are provided in our web site www.vds.org.uk

We can also be contacted at:

Volunteer Development Scotland, Stirling Enterprise Park, Stirling FK7 7RP
telephone **01786 479593** fax **01786 449285**

Volunteer Development Scotland is a partner with YoungScot and provides the volunteer information for young people on the Volunteering Channel of Young Scot. We are partners in the **Workwithus.org** initiative. The new database of volunteering opportunities can be accessed from the People Channel of the Work with Us portal

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