

Involving and Celebrating Disabled Volunteers

The **Volunteering Together 4 Health** service is delivered by a partnership team of volunteering experts across the five boroughs of North Central London. Whether looking for volunteering advice and guidance at a system wider or local level, you will find dedicated and expert support.

Involving disabled volunteers isn't just about meeting a requirement; it's about making our health settings richer and more effective. Disabled people have an equal right to participate, and they often bring **invaluable lived experience** that helps them connect with patients and service users in a way others might not. By focusing on what someone *can* do and the unique skills they bring we ensure that no talent goes to waste.

EDI and the Core20PLUS5 Population

We are committed to reducing healthcare inequalities through the **Core20PLUS5** approach. Disabled people often fall into the **'PLUS'** population – groups that experience poorer access to opportunities and health outcomes. By proactively recruiting and supporting disabled volunteers, we are directly tackling these inequalities. We are ensuring that the people helping to run our health services reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. This inclusive approach to **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)** ensures that volunteering is a level playing field for everyone, regardless of their background or health condition.

Simple Steps to Create an Inclusive Environment

Creating a welcoming environment is easier than you might think. Here are the steps to get started:

1. **Embrace the Social Model of Disability:** Shift your focus from a person's medical condition to the barriers in your organisation that might be holding them back. When advertising a role, **be specific** about accessibility (e.g. mention there is an '8cm step') rather than just saying a building is 'inaccessible' and let the potential volunteer decide if that works for them. Learn more about the Social Model [here](#).
2. **Value Lived Experience:** Recognise that disabled volunteers bring unique, first-hand perspectives that are vital to health-related work. Take time to reflect on how disability **intersects with your mission** to ensure you aren't missing out on talented, enthusiastic people.

3. **Flexibility is Key:** Think about how you can adapt your recruitment process. Offering **remote volunteering** or **'buddying up'** in pairs can make a huge difference. Can you utilise technology to make volunteering more accessible for people with different needs?
4. **Open Conversations:** Always be ready to have **honest chats about access needs**. Remember that some volunteers might not want to disclose a disability immediately, or their needs might change over time, so keep the door open for these ongoing discussions.
5. **Clear and Accessible Information:** Provide role descriptions in various formats **like large print, Easy Read, or audio**. Once a volunteer starts, clear written instructions and a range of communication methods (like email instead of just phone calls) help everyone feel confident in their role.
6. **Use Modern Language:** Take care to use **modern, up-to-date language** in all your communications. This helps build confidence and addresses the attitudinal barriers, stereotypes, or unconscious biases that can make people feel unwelcome. See this [guide](#) for some suggestions.
7. **Set a Clear Code of Conduct:** Establish a culture of respect from the start. Your organisation should have a clear policy that does **not tolerate and actively challenges abuse, discrimination, microaggressions and exclusionary behaviour**, ensuring every volunteer feels safe and valued.
8. **Provide Practical Support:** Consider having a budget to support your volunteers. This could include providing **travel expenses for taxis** to ensure everyone can volunteer safely and easily.

Top Equality, Diversity and Inclusion TIPS

- **Focus on the individual's skills and the specific adjustments they need to succeed rather than their diagnosis or condition.**
- **By offering flexible, remote, or shared roles and using descriptive accessibility information, you empower volunteers from all backgrounds to contribute their vital lived experience.**

For further support contact your local volunteering experts:

Bridge Renewal Trust (Haringey)

CBPlus (Barnet)

Enfield Voluntary Action

Haringey Community Collaborative (Public Voice)

London Plus (Lead Partner)

Voluntary Action Islington

Volunteer Centre Camden (Operational Lead)

Volunteering Barnet (Groundwork London)

