

# THE GOOD CLUB GUIDE: WORKING WITH DISABLED VOLUNTEERS

## This resource will:

- Explain why involving disabled volunteers will benefit your club.
- Provide you with information and support on working with disabled volunteers.

## Introduction

Volunteers are hugely important within sport and a great asset to any club. They will have their own aspirations, skills and experiences however they may not know which area they want to volunteer within. This resource will assist you to ensure that you can make effective use of volunteers of all abilities.

## Links to swim21



swim21 is the ASA's club development programme. The Good Club Guide is intended to complement swim21, by providing tools, templates and resources that will assist the running of a club and ultimately assist in achieving or maintaining swim21 accreditation.



## Why strive to include disabled volunteers?

Encouraging disabled people to volunteer can enhance the skills and knowledge base within your club. Disabled people's life experiences differ to that of non disabled people and as such they will have knowledge and problem-solving skills that can be applied to volunteering. Disabled volunteers will be able to share these skills with other members of your club and in doing so impart knowledge and awareness of different disabilities which will assist your club in being more accessible to disabled people.

Disabled people can be positive and proactive role models especially to young people who themselves may have had to overcome barriers to participate in sport or volunteering. Involving disabled volunteers can enhance the reputation of your club to be inclusive and promotes equality to encourage more disabled people to participate in the sport.



## Working with disabled volunteers

All volunteers are individuals, each requiring different levels of support and different expectations for the outcome of their volunteering experience. To promote equality in club volunteering it is important to ensure that when working with disabled volunteers, regardless of their impairment you remember to:

- Always address the disabled person, not the person they are with.
- Be aware of personal needs and preferred ways of communicating and respect individual requirements.
- Work together to solve an issue, rather than avoiding it.
- Do not underestimate the intelligence or ability of the disabled person
- Do not assume that all disabled people require assistance. Ask in the first instance if they require your help and how best to assist, or wait to be asked.
- Demonstrate what you mean if you are not getting the message across successfully verbally.
- Respect the individual and their needs. Do not interrupt, correct, speak for the person or be tempted to finish sentences off for them.
- A wheelchair should be viewed as part of the user's body space. Keep an appropriate

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- distance and never use the chair as something to lean on.
- It is perfectly acceptable to offer to help guide the wheelchair or negotiate obstacles such as doors. But only push someone's chair if they have said that it is OK for you to do so.
- Think about where the disabled person is positioned within a group or meeting situation and if their impairment restricts movement or sight in a particular direction.
- Other forms of communication may be needed such as documents with larger font or images to describe instructions.
- Take the time to learn about different disabilities and the characteristics most commonly associated with them.

## Case studies

**Name:** Robert Knibbs

**Age:** 17

**Volunteer Role:** Club Helper

**Disability:** Dyspraxia

**How did you get into volunteering?** I had been swimming at the Friday Evening Swimming Group in Romford for a long time and the session leader asked me to start volunteering in the club. I really enjoy helping people and find it a very rewarding experience.

**What volunteer roles have you taken on?** At my club I encourage the young people to swim as much as possible as well as helping to pack away at the end of the sessions.

**What barriers to volunteering have you faced?** I am very shy and lack confidence so I found it hard when I first started to volunteer but now it is starting to become easier.

**What advice would you give to young people wanting to start volunteering?** I have only recently started to volunteer but I have already found that it has helped me to feel more confident so I urge other people to also get involved to make a difference to their own life.





**Name:** Callum Lawson

**Age:** 24

**Volunteer Role:** Coach

**Disability:** Born without lower right arm

**How long have you been volunteering?** Ever since I was about 16 in various sports and clubs. Currently I have been coaching at Falcon ASC for 2 years, I have just begun my 3rd season in charge.

**How did you first get into volunteering with swimming?** I used to help the younger swimmers at the clubs where I trained, passing on useful tips and techniques.

**What has been your most memorable volunteering experience within swimming?** So far, I have a swimmer who qualified for National Champs this summer in 3 events. She didn't even have a Regional time when I took over. Also my team won the first round of the National Arena Swimming League. These were both proud moments for me and really made all the hours of hard work worthwhile.

**Has your disability impacted on your experience as a volunteer?** I never really think about my disability and I don't think it has impacted in any way. However, my experiences as a swimmer have impacted the way I coach and the content of my sessions. I feel that this has also enabled me to use my experiences to motivate other swimmers. I have also got a growing number of young disabled swimmers training with me.



## Sources of Information

When working with disabled volunteers the most important thing to remember is that it is not any different to working with non disabled volunteers. If you feel like you would like more information on working with disabled volunteers then please take the time to look at the following external resources:

- **Running Sports Involving Disabled People as Sports Volunteers -**  
[http://runningsports.org/club\\_support/all\\_resources/top\\_tips/involving\\_disabled\\_people](http://runningsports.org/club_support/all_resources/top_tips/involving_disabled_people)
- **Advocacy and Activity Buddy Scheme -**  
<http://aabstraining.efds.co.uk/>
- **Recruiting, Retaining and Developing Disabled Volunteers -**  
[http://www.volunteering.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C24854A7-2742-4087-9093-3B81DB7210F5/0/DRCGuidance\\_for\\_Volunteer\\_Opportunity\\_Providers\\_Apr07.pdf](http://www.volunteering.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C24854A7-2742-4087-9093-3B81DB7210F5/0/DRCGuidance_for_Volunteer_Opportunity_Providers_Apr07.pdf)





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