

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS WITH DISABILITIES

The time and skills of people with disabilities are often under utilised. They want to contribute to the community the same as any other person. For some people with disabilities this will be their first chance to do any type of productive work. The attitude of the Volunteer Co-ordinator can make all the difference. Do look at what people can do. Think about different ways the task or components of it could be done. As with any volunteer some people may not be suitable for some positions. Don't be scared to ask the person with the disability what they think is the best way for them to fulfil the role. They often have years of experience adapting situations to their needs, or they might have one small suggestion that makes all the difference. Ask the person with the disability what they can or cannot cope with – that person knows better than anyone does what s/he can do.

When interviewing a person with a disability, apply exactly the same process as you do for any volunteer that wants to be involved with your organisation.

If the first role offered doesn't work out be prepared to offer and try different roles. In some circumstances the explanation of a task may take a little longer. Some tasks may be done more slowly but this doesn't mean the quality won't be the same or better. Fit the right person to the right position.

Transport is a major issue and a major cost for people with disabilities so assistance with transport costs is appreciated.

Encourage other staff, volunteer and paid, to assist if need be, e.g. provide help if something drops on the floor, help with photocopying, etc.

Check that the workplace has adequate access, with no clutter on the floor. If the volunteer will be working elsewhere ensure they have a cellphone.

CCS is happy for an approach to be made to them for help when involving volunteers with disabilities. Always check with the prospective volunteer first.

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SOURCE: Volunteering Canterbury www.volcan.org.nz