

# Encouraging more disabled people to volunteer in sport



There is a gap in knowledge around disabled people's level and **experience of volunteering** generally, and specifically in sport. We have designed this research to compare and contrast disabled and non-disabled people's experiences. It aims to help **understand the barriers preventing disabled people from volunteering** and how to help providers overcome these to make their opportunities more appealing, **especially in sport**.

## Prevalence and experience of volunteering

Disabled people are more likely to be currently volunteering or interested in volunteering in the future.

### Currently volunteering



### Interested in volunteering in the future



However, despite the higher levels of interest and involvement in volunteering, disabled people are more likely to have a negative experience and perceive barriers to volunteering.

### Proportion of people having a negative experience



## Perceived barriers to participation



I am not willing / able to commit to a volunteering role long term.

Disabled people **59%**

Non-Disabled people **53%**

Unaware of opportunities near me that I would be interested in.

Disabled people **48%**

Non-Disabled people **38%**

I don't have enough time to volunteer at the moment.

Disabled people **39%**

Non-Disabled people **49%**

I don't feel qualified enough to volunteer.

Disabled people **34%**

Non-Disabled people **24%**



I am not sure that I would fit in with other people.

Disabled people **34%**

Non-Disabled people **24%**

I do not think that organisations would be able to support a volunteer with my needs.

Disabled people **25%**

Non-Disabled people **9%**



I think volunteering / helping out would cost me too much money.

Disabled people **21%**

Non-Disabled people **19%**

I do not think that venues would have appropriate access for me.

Disabled people **21%**

Non-Disabled people **8%**

I think I would be treated differently to other people.

Disabled people **17%**

Non-Disabled people **8%**

Volunteering is not something I have ever considered.

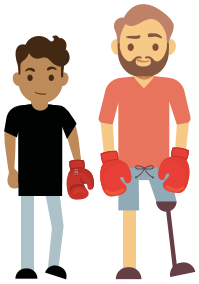
Disabled people **47%**

Non-Disabled people **41%**





# Sectors where people volunteer



Any Sport

Disabled people **21%**

Non-Disabled people **21%**

Education and school

Disabled people **19%**

Non-Disabled people **19%**

Social club / after school group

Disabled people **15%**

Non-Disabled people **15%**



Health, disability and welfare

Disabled people **28%**

Non-Disabled people **18%**

The environment / animals

Disabled people **11%**

Non-Disabled people **9%**



First aid / safety

Disabled people **11%**

Non-Disabled people **10%**

Local or community issues

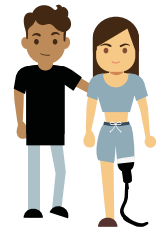
Disabled people **29%**

Non-Disabled people **19%**

Hobbies / recreation / arts

Disabled people **21%**

Non-Disabled people **18%**



Education for adults

Disabled people **14%**

Non-Disabled people **9%**



Justice and human rights

Disabled people **9%**

Non-Disabled people **5%**

Politics

Disabled people **13%**

Non-Disabled people **8%**

Other

Disabled people **14%**

Non-Disabled people **9%**



## Why are disabled people more likely to have negative experiences?

A mismatch between provider and disabled people's expectations of volunteering plays a significant role in creating a negative experience.

Providers also feel that they lack the skills and ability to ensure disabled people are fully supported in their volunteer roles. They rarely capture whether volunteers have impairments or long-term health conditions. This means that their level of awareness of disabled volunteers and their needs is low, so they do not feel very confident in supporting disabled people.

In addition, disabled people are often anxious about the impact their impairment will have on their ability to volunteer. They often feel that they are not provided with enough information prior to volunteering to fully appreciate the role and what will be required. This limits their ability to properly prepare or ask for help and support.

### And what discourages disabled people from volunteering in sport?

Disabled people are twice as likely as non-disabled people to currently volunteer in sport because they were previous participants. This possibly suggests that the sport sector is not something that appeals to disabled people who have not been part of it before.

Sports volunteering is much more likely to be frequent (at least once a week) which could also be a barrier to disabled people who are fearful of commitment due to fluctuating health problems.

### So what can be done to encourage and support more disabled people to volunteer?

- Provide clarity on the roles available, the skills needed for those roles and the recruitment process.
- Be open and honest to encourage questions and discussions with volunteers:
  - This should be encouraged before someone volunteers and ongoing throughout their volunteering experience to capture any changes in circumstance.
- Be flexible when volunteers need you to be, to maximise the benefit you can gain from them.
- Make the sporting environment more open and appealing to encourage more disabled people to think about volunteering.
- Promote opportunities to wider networks, in an accessible and inclusive way, to reach out to people previously not connected to sport.

The full report for this research can be found at [www.efds.co.uk/how-we-help/research](http://www.efds.co.uk/how-we-help/research)  
If you have any more specific questions please contact [research@efds.co.uk](mailto:research@efds.co.uk) or call **01509 227750**.





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**SPORT  
ENGLAND**

 01509 227750

 01509 227777

 federation@efds.co.uk

 @Eng\_Dis\_Sport

 EnglishDisabilitySport

[www.efds.co.uk](http://www.efds.co.uk)

