Peer Research

Young physically disabled people’s views on Volunteering
Acknowledgements

Peer research in the youth team of Volunteer Now. Volunteer Now is a regional to local organisation which supports the development of volunteering across Northern Ireland. [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

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Introduction

For this project I have decided to base my research on young people who have a physical disability between the ages of 14-30. This survey will be used to better understand disabled people’s experience of volunteering, what benefits and barriers are to getting involved. The findings will help stakeholders within the voluntary and community sector better understand the experiences and issues this group of young people face. It will help shape the future of assisting young physically disabled people who want to volunteer.

In NI 21% of the population has a disability, a further 69% did not have a long-term condition (Census 2011). The most common long-term conditions were a mobility or dexterity problem (11%) and long-term pain or discomfort (10%) (Census 2011). Historically there has always been an underrepresentation of disabled young people volunteering. There has been much research that has shown the benefits of volunteering for young people generally, this includes meeting people and making friends, broadening experience, improving confidence and improving cv (Irvine & Schubotz 2010). Government has also shown a commitment to encourage diversity in volunteering and in particular developing an action plan to support and encourage people with a disability to get involved in volunteering (objective 2.1) (Department for Social Development, 2011).

Methodology

I approached various organisations that worked with disabled people and sent out surveys for their young volunteers to fill in. This survey was directed towards young people whether they volunteered or not. The research was also promoted through the Youth Volunteering Face Book page and Volunteer Now Members Newsletter.

Various questions were asked e.g. if they volunteered or not?, For those that volunteered questions were asked about-how did you find out about volunteering? What type of volunteering they do?, satisfaction with volunteering?, benefits of volunteering?, what are the barriers that prevent young physically disabled people from volunteering? For those that didn’t volunteer questions were asked about the barriers to volunteering.
All the young people received a letter with their survey. This was to make them aware of what the project entailed.

Results were collected via survey monkey which is an online survey and postal surveys were also offered as a way of responding. Once the results were through they were analyzed.

This report will be accessible via the internet in an electronic report e.g. abode reader (PDF) format. Also this information will be made available to the public through the Youth Section of the Volunteer Now website and the Youth Volunteering FaceBook page.

This project was funded through the Youth Council for Northern Ireland and was implemented by Volunteer Now Shaftesbury Square office Belfast.
The majority of people 73.9% (n=17) who answered the questionnaire volunteered with only a small number not. 26.1% (n=6) have never volunteered.
Six people said they did not volunteer. Of those 6, 4 said they would consider volunteering.

Two said they are not interested in volunteering.

On the survey people were given an opportunity to express their feelings to why they don’t want to volunteer. 2 people answered this question. One said they wanted more opportunities open to them. The other said they wanted to volunteer to help younger people.
Those young people who were volunteers were asked how they found about volunteering.

The most common way people found out about volunteering was through their friends. Seven people found out that way. Nine people found out about volunteering came through ‘other’ sources. This included projects or courses that they are involved in i.e. cadets, a training organisation. No one said they found out about volunteering through the internet, volunteer support organisations or Job centres.
### Findings

#### How often do you volunteer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-4 hours per week</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One day a week or more</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One or two days a month</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A couple of times a year</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very occasionally</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once only</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered Question**: 17  
**Skipped Question**: 6

Six people said they volunteered for 2-4 hours per week. This accounted for 35.3% of the results. The second highest at 29.4% (n=5) said they volunteer one day a week or more.

17.6% (n=3) volunteer a couple of times a year. 11.8% (n=2) have only volunteered the once. One person (5.9%) volunteered one or two days a month.
### Do you enjoy your volunteering?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Answered Question:** 16

**Skipped Question:** 7

Almost all of the respondents at 87.5% (n=14) enjoyed their volunteering. 12.5% (n=2) don’t enjoy their volunteering.
Findings

Have you made any long term friends through volunteering?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion 17
SkippedQuestion 6

Thirteen of the seventeen volunteers (3/4) said that had made long term friends through their volunteering roles.
Would you recommend volunteering to your friends/family members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered Question: 16
Skipped Question: 7

Fourteen of the sixteen volunteers (87.5%) that answered this question said they would recommend volunteering to their family and friends. Two people said they would not recommend volunteering.
Findings

What type of volunteering do you do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping in a church</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking after your neighbour’s property or looking after their pet</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charity Shop</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Befriending</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organising fundraising events for charity</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to clean up the environment</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering help to others e.g. going shopping and gardening</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered Question: 17

Skipped Question: 6

Young people who answered this survey had been doing a range of volunteering. The most common way of volunteering was by helping in church (n=5) and befriending (n=3) and Sports activities (n=3)
Some of the other ways young people were volunteering was in administration, working in a charity shop and offering help to others e.g. going shopping and gardening.
The majority of respondents (n=5) said their motivation to volunteer was to get out of the house for a few hours. Four said they wanted to make new friends. Four said they want to gain experience. Four said they wanted to develop their C.V.
Most of the young people (13 out of the 16) who have responded to this question never heard of Millennium Volunteers.

Millennium Volunteers (MV) is a Northern Ireland-wide programme that has been developed to support young people aged between 14-25 to volunteer. The programme is backed by the Department of Education and allows young volunteers to get a certificate recognising their contribution to volunteering after their first 50, 100 and 200 hours of volunteering.
The most common benefit of volunteering reported was developing skills (n=8). These skills can be used in their volunteering and outside of this in their life. Also some organisations offer recognised qualifications that relate to the role. Six people said they meet people from different backgrounds.

Five people said they make new friends and felt that they could achieve. Three young people said it made them feel included and part of the community.

Young people were asked what key words came to mind when they thought about volunteering. Some examples of words used include: Help, care, teamwork, helping people out, getting involved.

From this it shows that the young people are gaining from their volunteering. They are helping others and giving something back to the community. Also they are having fun, learning and making friends. Also their volunteering is very rewarding.
## Findings

### What support do you require for your role?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility e.g. with regards to building access and transport</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enough room for equipment</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheelchair toilet</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted equipment e.g. talking computer and hearing loop</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional training for your role</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional support from staff or other volunteers</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered Question: 14

Skipped Question: 9

Existing volunteers were asked about the support they get for their role. Seven said they get additional support from staff or other volunteers. Four require additional training for their role. Three need a wheelchair toilet. Three require accessibility support with regards to building access and transport. Two need extra room for their equipment.
From the young people volunteering, there is a very high level of agreement that the organisation helps them to continue volunteering and be flexible if they are not well. Fourteen of the fifteen volunteers agreed.
Findings

Do you feel your skills are well utilised in your role?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion: 14
SkippedQuestion: 9

All apart from one person agreed that their skills are used within their role.
Ten of the seventeen young people that answered this question said that they have volunteered in something that they didn’t initially like but ended up enjoying it.
Findings

Do you meet other people with disabilities volunteering in the same organisation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion 17
SkippedQuestion 6

Ten of the seventeen young people that answered this question said they had met other people with disabilities in the organisation they volunteer with. Seven had not met other young people with a disability.
### Findings

**Do you meet other non-disabled young people volunteering in the organisation?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Answered Question: 17  Skipped Question: 6*

Most of the respondents (n=15) have met non disabled people within the organisation they volunteer with. Two people had not met any non-disabled people while volunteering.
Eleven of the seventeen young people said they have their expenses paid for as a volunteer. Six people of the seventeen said they did not get out of pocket expenses.
Do you feel staff have had disability awareness training and accommodate your needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion: 17
SkippedQuestion: 6

Fourteen volunteers (82.4%) said that the felt staff members have gone through training on disability awareness. Three volunteers (17.6%) felt that staff had not been trained.
Do you feel the other volunteers treat you as a valued member of the team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion: 16
SkippedQuestion: 7

Thirteen (81.3%) of the volunteers felt that they were treated as a valued member of the team. When you are working within a team you want to know feel important and appreciated by the organisation.

Three (18.8%) did not feel that they were treated as a valued member of the team.
Do you think that you are treated with respect by the other non-disabled volunteers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion: 16
SkippedQuestion: 7

Fourteen (87.5%) said they were treated with respect by other non-disabled volunteers. Two (12.5%) said they were not treated with respect.
Do you know of any person that has been helped into the workplace due to their volunteering efforts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AnsweredQuestion: 15  
SkippedQuestion: 8

Nine (60%) volunteers said they know of someone who had been helped into the workplace because of their volunteering experience. Six (40%) didn’t know of anybody.
The findings show that public transport (n=9, 45%) is the most common barrier that prevents young people who want to volunteer. My friends aren’t volunteering in my local area was the next most common reason (n=6, 30%).

Five young people (25%) didn’t know how to access volunteering opportunities, never knew volunteering existed and I’d worry organisations wouldn’t accommodate /understand my support needs. Four people (20%) said that accessibility was an issue.

This group may have commitments and are very busy with college. Maybe they could do one off opportunities so they are not committed to carry on with the role. Less common reasons were- I don’t have the time to give- (n=2, 10%). I don’t have the right skills or experience to volunteer and I don’t think it is very cool (n=1, 5%).
### Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AnswerOptions</th>
<th>ResponsePercent</th>
<th>ResponseCount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-16</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31+</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AnsweredQuestion**: 20  
**SkippedQuestion**: 3

- Seven (35%) of the respondents were 31+.  
- Six (30%) of the respondents were 21-25.  
- Three (15%) of the respondents were 26-30.  
- Three (15%) of the respondents were 17-20.  
- One (5%) of the respondents were 14-16.
From this question the majority of people who took part were female at (n=11, 55%). N=9(45%) of the respondents were male.
Discussion

Recognising Volunteers

The majority of young people with a physical disability are underrepresented in volunteering. Those young people that do volunteer deserve recognition for their commitment. Some of them give a lot of hours to charitable organisations.

Benefits Of Volunteering

Young people in this survey are involved in a variety of different roles. Respondents in this survey highlighted a wide range of ways that they benefited from volunteering. The most common benefit was developing skills they can use in their life (47%), followed by meeting people from different backgrounds (35%) and improving my confidence (35%) and making new friends (29%). There has been other research that has also looked at the benefits of volunteering for young people generally, this has shown positive outcomes and demonstrates the value that can come from young people with a physical disability volunteering (Irvine & Schubotz 2010). Young people also mention that these potential benefits are key motivations for starting their voluntary roles.

Young people agreed (14 out of 15) that the organisations were flexible which allowed young people to continue on with their volunteering role. This demonstrates how important taking a person centred approach to individuals is and ensuring their skills are utilised. Furthermore, 10 of the 17 young people said that they ended up enjoying volunteering after a period of not enjoying it. Again this change may have been due to support being given for young people.

Preventing Social Exclusion

Young people with a disability are more at risk of social isolation therefore the benefits that can come from volunteering are particularly important. Furthermore, 76% of the young people in this survey said that they had made long term friends through their volunteering and a further 88% said that they met non-disabled young people through volunteering. It is good idea for the young people to meet others from different backgrounds. Also some young disabled people may not have any contact with others the same age. Also they might live on their own so it is good for their confidence to make new friendships with other people. This helps the young people because they would feel included in society.
Removing barriers to volunteering

Training of staff/ volunteers - Managing volunteers with disabilities

A number of areas of support were identified by respondents in this survey, in particular respondents felt having additional support from staff and other volunteers as being important. Getting additional training for the role was also identified as an extra layer of support that they value as was having easy access within the building and transport to the place of volunteering.

It is important that staff and volunteers are trained in equal opportunities and disability awareness, so that myths and stereotyping do not lead to negative attitudes or assumptions about what people can and cannot do. The staff should be informed that the volunteer is a person- the disability that they have is secondary. Also good practice must be followed with regards to the management of the volunteers in all circumstances. Also organisations should be encouraged to take part in keeping adult's safe training.

Practical Issues

There has already been work done to consider practical issues that volunteer involving organisations should consider to ensure they are accessible and attractive to people with a disability. For example, Volunteer Now has written an information sheet outlining good practice when it comes to this (Volunteer Now, 2009).

Good practice guidance states that addressing physical barriers to involving volunteers, e.g. buildings, transport, information, equipment, develop volunteering opportunities which can be carried out by people with disabilities is important as is being open to adapting existing volunteer opportunities to meet the individual needs of volunteers (Volunteer Now, 2009).

Organisations should be encouraged to do their best in facilitating involvement of young people with physical disabilities.

This includes some of the following things:

- Where possible make sure that the building is wheelchair accessible and that additional support is given to the young person.
- Follow good practice in the management of volunteers in all instances.
- Engage volunteers in discussions on how their experience / work could be improved or made easier.
- Have a fully operational equal opportunities and / or diversity policy which encourage people with disabilities to volunteer and to be involved effectively.
- Highlight the social and business rewards of having a volunteer base with a diverse range of skills, experience and attitudes i.e. it can improve how an organisation works and creates more satisfied volunteers.
Public Transport

One of the biggest barriers for volunteering is the public transport due to the cost and accessibility. An alternative is the Door 2 Door *(name of service subject to change)* depending if the person is eligible for this scheme. Organisations should make their disabled volunteers aware of the hours they will be required in advance if possible. The reason for this is because some community transport providers, like Disability Action Transport Services want you to book one week in advance.

Volunteer Now runs a scheme called the Transport Buddy service funded by DRD. This service is for people aged 14yrs and up with a disability. The volunteer buddy assists people to use public transport e.g. helping them read the timetable and to access public transport. This is called travel training. The objective is to give the person confidence to use buses, trains and community transport. Also Volunteer Now support organisations to deliver their own volunteer led Transport Buddy Services throughout Northern Ireland.

Paying out of pocket travel expenses

Volunteers should not be out of pocket from volunteering, where possible the cost of travel to and from a place of volunteering should be covered by the organisation. Some organisations don’t have the budget to pay large out of pocket expense claims to the volunteers so it is advisable that organisations encourage those who are eligible to use concessionary fare transport e.g. Door 2 Door, Community Transport and public transport.

Also with the termination of the Door 2 Door service, Disability Action will take over as an interim service. Furthermore when a new organisation takes over the criteria may change. So people who were able to use the Door 2 Door may not be allowed in the future.

It is important to provide clear information about the benefits system. Some people may not want to volunteer in fear of losing their benefits and that is an unnecessary barrier. You will find out more information through a leaflet that was produced by the Department of Social Development called ‘Volunteer and keep your benefits’. This helps voluntary organisations who want to take people on who are in receipt of benefits. The young person should inform the Social Security Agency if they want to volunteer. Also see the ‘Volunteering and the Law’ checklist for specific guidance, available from the Volunteer Now website.
Promotion of Volunteering Opportunities

Engaging Disabled volunteers

This survey has shown that young people with a disability are most likely to find out about volunteering through their friends (41%) or through projects they are already involved in. Finding out about volunteering these ways are useful, however, if a young person does not have friends that volunteer or young people who are not part of a project then finding out about volunteering will be less likely to happen. This indicates that broadening out the way that young people find out is important for example, using targeted promotion, and the use of appealing recruitment campaigns. This has been highlighted in other good practice publications (Volunteer Now, 2009).

Linking to what motivates young people to volunteer, we know from this survey that young people have a wide range of motivations for getting involved, including to get out of the house, wanting to make friends, gaining experience, developing cv and supporting a cause that was important to them. These are motivations which are common across all young people. Also some young people find out about volunteering through their local colleges via fresher's week and student volunteering week.

There is a wide range of different mediums to promote volunteering to young people. More young people use the internet so maybe face book or other social media should be used to gain awareness of volunteering. Also newspapers should give free advertising to voluntary organisations or sponsored adverts. Use appealing images, language and colours to attract the young people.

Another way of promoting volunteering opportunities is through the Volunteer Now website. Organisations can inform staff in the local job centre and benefits office so this is another area that can be looked at. Young people who attend different projects can be informed of local opportunities within their area. Volunteer centres should promote their services in places where young people meet and again the internet should be used for that. In addition to offering regular opportunities, organisations should consider more ways of getting young people involved. An example of this is ‘one off’ opportunities including taster sessions.

Also if the young person is in a wheelchair or has any physical disability the marketing material should be adapted. This could address issues about adaptations and support with regards to the volunteering roles within the organisation.

Direct mail from organisations can be expensive because of the cost of the post. Organisations should also e-mail young people who have an email address with their newsletter with current volunteering opportunities. This would be a lot cheaper and save on printing costs.

Also organisations should have volunteer ambassadors who attend fresher fairs and events in the local area. These would be young people who have a physical disability and will go out into the community to promote the organisation. Also they would advise the young people on what opportunities exist. The ambassador would also share their experiences.
Programmes

Millennium Volunteers

Few young people in the survey knew about the Millennium Volunteers Programme, which is a NI wide initiative to encourage young people aged 14-25 to volunteer. There should be more awareness of the Millennium Volunteers programme through voluntary organisations and community groups.

There should be other programmes developed for young people with physical disabilities. There is the Duke of Edinburgh award for 14-24 years old. It involves Volunteering, Physical, Skills and expedition. Some of this wouldn’t be suitable for young people with physical disabilities. Maybe they could devise 2 sections that are specifically for young people with physical disabilities.

The volunteering strategy for Northern Ireland has a priority 2.1 to ensure more young people have an opportunity to volunteer. 2. C develops an action plan and encourages people with disabilities to volunteer and also to provide support for them (DSD, 2011). This shows the Government’s commitment to encouraging more young disabled people to volunteer.

Supporting volunteers while with you

Members of staff should have discussions with their disabled volunteers to see if there are any problems that have arisen or improvements that need to be made to their volunteering role. If so then the member of staff should be able to find a solution. Remember to meet with the volunteer regularly to see if they are happy with the improvements made.

Young people in this survey reported that they had needed a range of support to help them to carry out their volunteering role e.g. additional support from other staff or other volunteers at 50% (7 out of 15) and additional training for their role 28.6% (4 out of 15). Now that they have the extra support they can volunteer and there are no obstacles in their way.

The organisation should have an equal opportunities and a diversity policy to encourage more people with a physical disability to volunteer and to be involved.
Benefits to organisations from involving young people

Organisations should be encouraged to recognise that a lot of rewards can come from having people with a physical disability. It can range from social rewards and from a business angle e.g. developing employability skills of the volunteers. Also recognising that volunteers offer their skills and talents to the organisation. Hopefully this changes the way an organisation runs and will create more committed volunteers.

I have listed viewpoints from an organisation that was interviewed for this report. They were an organisation that works with young physically disabled people as service users and volunteers, so they have a lot of experience.

“Some people come up through the service and then want to give something back so they help to volunteer with the younger ones which is actually very common with our children’s services”.

“All the buildings are accessible, we have all the push buttons to open doors, this is purpose built and designed for people with disabilities”.

“I think it gives them a good basis in life whether they have a disability or not. I think if they haven’t got a disability then you’re getting them to know about a disability from an early age and getting to accept it and see it is normal and this is what’s happening in our organisation”.

“They didn’t notice about the disabilities and they all bonded as a group”.

Conclusion

The research shows the benefits that young people with a disability gain from volunteering. It also shows how important additional support and encouragement is to get people to volunteer and to stick with it and have a good experience.

This research highlights the need for government to provide more funding for people with physical disabilities to enable them to access volunteering. If money was found more funding could become available for adaptations that are needed because some buildings may not be accessible. Volunteer Now might consider working together with different organisations to gain more of an insight into people with any disability who volunteer.

It would be useful to do some further research with organisations that involve disabled young people as volunteers. Organisations could be approached for their input and have more findings to analyze. With the results we could inform more people.
Reference

Census 2011 Key Statistics- News flash- 11 December, NISRA

Department for Social Development (2011) *Join In, Get Involved, Build a Better Future*, Belfast, Department for Social Development.


Just go for it volunteering for people with disabilities Volunteer Now, Leonard Cheshire Disability

Other Resources

Scope provides an Inclusive Volunteering Companion which is a toolkit for engaging and supporting disabled volunteers in your organisation.

Scope Toolkit


IVP also campaigns and champions the need for a more inclusive approach to volunteering from organisations.

VIPER project


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