

# Contents

|                                         |    |
|-----------------------------------------|----|
| 1.0 Introduction                        | 2  |
| 2.0 Background Research                 | 2  |
| 3.0 Methodology                         | 5  |
| 4.0 Results                             | 5  |
| 4.1 Benefits                            | 5  |
| 4.2 Barriers                            | 6  |
| 4.3 Solutions                           | 8  |
| 5.0 Discussion                          | 9  |
| 6.0 Future Research                     | 9  |
| 7.0 Key Actions from GALE               | 10 |
| 8.0 Potential Actions for Organisations | 10 |
| 9.0 Conclusion                          | 11 |
| 10.0 Bibliography                       | 12 |
| 11.0 Acknowledgments                    | 12 |

# How can we increase engagement in community activity and what are the current barriers to engagement for those with additional support needs?

---

## 1.0 Introduction

Increasing engagement in community activities is important for community empowerment and creating a community where the decisions made reflect the needs and aspirations of its residents. Citizen Participation is an important part of creating a democratic society. This idea is laid out in Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation. This frequently cited approach features eight rungs of participation. The top rung of the ladder equates to 'Citizen Control' while at the bottom of the ladder is 'Manipulation' and categorised as non-participation. The grading of participation is a simple model which signifies that for citizens to have real power over decision making processes, all parts of society must be able to be engaged and hold a view.

Community engagement can come in many forms, from membership of a community council, participation in community events or consultation, working for a local organisation or taking a formal, or informal volunteering role. It is often the case that an individual may engage with the community in several ways and that one form of community engagement may be a catalyst for engagement in other areas. Individuals with additional support needs may be less likely to participate in community activity and therefore their voice and opinions may not be as well represented.

Volunteering within a community organisation is a very direct form of community engagement. Third-sector organisations rely on a combination of paid and unpaid roles. The Community Life Survey looks at volunteering rates of over 16 year olds in England and found that in 2021/22, 27% of respondents were taking part in formal volunteering at least once in the last 12 months and 16% of respondents took part in formal volunteering at least once a month in the same period (GOV.UK, 2023). These numbers have been steadily dropping since 2013/14 with a small increase during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey found the most popular motivator for volunteering was the desire to improve things and help people (48%) as well as the cause of the organisation having an importance to someone they knew (33%). Common barriers to volunteering were focused around time and income, such as looking after children or work commitments.

The aim of this research is to explore the barriers, particularly faced by those with additional support needs (ASN) in small rural communities, in becoming actively involved in their communities as well as the solutions to overcome these barriers.

---

## 2.0 Background Research

There have been several studies on the connection between volunteering and additional support needs. These studies have explored the reasons people choose to volunteer, the demographics of various volunteers and the benefits experienced by those who volunteer. Very few studies that were found focused specifically on the barriers faced by those with additional support needs in becoming volunteers. Instead they discussed this issue as a sub topic. When looking at individuals with additional support needs, studies will often focus on one type of ASN, such as intellectual disabilities, while other studies take a broader outlook.

### **WHAT ARE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS?**

Many definitions of additional support needs are developed in the context of education. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 defines a child or young person with additional support needs as 'likely to be unable, without the provision of additional support, to benefit from school education provided or to be provided for the child or young person'. Although this definition is in the context of the education sector, they can be adapted to include adults and young people in the work or volunteering sphere.

Additional support needs are often summarised into several broad categories including physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, sensory impairments, communication disorders, emotional and behavioural needs and neurodiversity. They could also be compared to the task at hand. If an individual has a hearing impairment, but the role does not require any verbal communication, then they may not require additional support. Similarly, in a rural area, transport can be an issue for many people. Not having access to a car can present itself as an additional support need which may need to be met by the organisation or employer.

For this study, the focus is on whether an additional support need presents a potential barrier for the individual, or organisation, in a volunteering opportunity.

### **WHAT MAKES SOMEONE VOLUNTEER?**

A study entitled 'Nothing about us without us' (Yanay-Ventura, G., 2018) laid out five common motivations for volunteering which included; remaining active and busy; helping people; gaining work experience; meeting people; and paying back for support received from their community.

The same paper references Putnam (2000) in saying that the 'decision to volunteer is shaped in part by a person's social capital'. Someone who is already working is more likely to be better rooted in the community through various social networks. This was supported by Shandra, C.L. (2017) who argued that individuals with greater resources in the form of social and human capital are more likely to volunteer. Social and human capital includes higher education, children and whether they are employed. Often those people with disabilities, or additional support needs, may have less social capital (Shandra, C.L., 2017, p 3) therefore making them less likely to volunteer.

Family support can often be a key driver to someone volunteering (Yanay-Ventura, G., 2018) as is the luxury of someone with economic capital. Therefore someone who lacks either family support or an abundance of social capital is less likely to volunteer.

### **BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING**

The benefits of volunteering can be experienced by the organisations, the person volunteering and their co-workers, whether they are paid or not. Organisations receive the obvious benefit of 'free' labour although most volunteers may require additional assistance or explanation to achieve the same results that a paid worker would. Balandin et al (2006) found a range of benefits to the volunteers such as increased life satisfaction, improved physical and mental health and social engagement. 'It's their social environment so they come there and sometimes not just for the work but because that's their whole life basically.' (Balandin et al., 2006, p. 133). Volunteering can also build on the skills of the volunteer which was highlighted by Yanay-Ventura, G. (2018). 'Volunteering reinforces the volunteers' sense of self worth, empowers them, improves verbal communication and enables them to engage with social networks' (p. 2).

Benefits can also be extended to the wider team. Yanay-Ventura, G. (2018) also noted that working alongside volunteers with disabilities strengthen social ties and cohesiveness in an organisation and generate a deeper meaning of work in the minds of employees.

Volunteering can often be used as a useful stepping stone for employment. Depending on how 'formal' the volunteering is, the role may require the individual to work set shifts, turn up on time, potentially work independently and alongside other people who may be in paid roles. The concept was identified in one study by Wardell (2000). This formality, as the study points out, may put off certain volunteers who may have different motivations, but can be a useful tool for those who are struggling to get paid employment (Wardell, 2000, p. 4). As an example, two thirds of the volunteers with 'Prince's Trust' find jobs or full time training within three months of finishing the course (Wardell, p. 230). This was echoed by Yanay-Ventura, G. (2018) who also mentioned a range of studies supporting this and placing 'importance of their volunteer work to their daily routine'.

Other than the practical advantages of volunteering, such as plugging the employment gap, volunteer opportunities can simply provide a chance for members of the community to engage with each other and involve themselves in projects that local organisations are running. Projects such as beach cleans, path building and activity meets for people with additional support needs

will offer an opportunity to volunteers to meet other like minded people, engaging with community projects and a sense of well being are all often overlooked and incredibly powerful.

Working alongside volunteers with additional support needs can be highly beneficial for the volunteers as well as those working alongside whether they are volunteering, doing paid employment or managing the volunteer with additional support needs. Cruz et al, found that “continuous contact with people with disabilities is an opportunity to draw positive perception from these interactions’ (Cruz, S., Ferreira, M.R., Borges, A. and Casais, B., 2022).

### **BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING**

Despite the many benefits of volunteering that are listed in these studies, certain barriers prevent individuals from accessing volunteering opportunities. Many of these barriers can be divided into two categories; internal barriers such as internal environment, personalities of the prospective volunteer, personal skills, economic situation or family disapproval; or external barriers such as market, government and external networks, unfamiliarity of volunteering, lack of interesting activities, leadership or lack of information.

Cruz, S. et al (2022) discussed the feeling that people with intellectual disabilities need to be protected ‘since social norms dictate so’. (p. 345) This could be due to lack of awareness or knowledge of the disability or perhaps just simply feeling protective over a family member. The same article also mentioned that people may feel under qualified to work with, or manage, those with additional support needs.

The Scottish Household Survey found that in 2021, 27% of respondents had taken part in formal volunteering in the last 12 months. The survey also found that respondents with a disability were less likely to participate in formal volunteering (23% compared to 29% of non-disabled adults). This disparity between volunteers with ASN and those without seems to be common among a variety of studies in different areas. Around 10% of respondents felt that they had a disability that prevented them from getting involved in volunteer opportunities and a further 10% were not aware of volunteering opportunities (Scottish Government, 2023). Those who are asked to volunteer are more likely to volunteer than those that are not and individuals with higher levels of education and income are more likely to be asked to volunteer, both factors negatively affects those with disabilities.

Social and human capital was a defining factor in a study (Shandra, C.L., 2017) in whether an individual participated in a volunteer role. Those with greater social and human capital are more likely to volunteer. If it is assumed that those with certain disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, have lower social and human capital then it could be assumed that individuals with disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities are less likely to be able to access volunteer opportunities. In the same study, it was noted that “...a lack of awareness might lead to ‘barriers of omission’ such that coordinators don’t think about how to recruit people with disabilities into their organisations” (Shandra, C.L., 2017, p. 9).

Physical access is a barrier for individuals with physical disabilities. A participant in Balandin, S. et al’s (2006) study mentioned how a disabled volunteer went around the whole centre to make sure she had good access which in turn helped the organisation ensure they were disabled friendly. With new building regulations, any modern buildings should fulfil disability access requirements but in rural communities with older buildings this may present more of a barrier.

### 3.0 Methodology

Due to the nuanced nature of the research topic and the small, rural study area it was decided to collect qualitative data. This allowed the researchers to collect rich data and delve further into issues that were brought up. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the freedom to explore many of these themes. Purposive sampling was used in addition to snowball sampling for some candidates. All the participants were approached based on whether they fitted within three broad categories; Volunteer Coordinators; Volunteers with Additional Support Needs; Volunteers without Additional Support Needs. Some participants may have spanned across more than one category but it was decided that this wouldn't negatively affect the research outcomes.

The majority of these interviews were done in person, with either one or two of the researchers present, while the others were done via online video conferencing software. A list of questions was drafted for each of the three categories. When interviewing individuals with additional support needs, the individuals were often accompanied by either a support worker or a family member. Not only did this give them increased confidence, but they also helped them understand the questions that were being asked. Their companions were also interviewed alongside them, giving everyone the opportunity to contribute to the study. Due to some participants falling into more than one category, the interview schedules were flexible.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full and anonymised. The data was then analysed manually and separately by the two researchers to identify any themes and extract quotes which may help answer the research question. The two researchers then compared results to see if the notes and themes identified were comparable. The barriers and solutions that were explored in the background research were compared with the results of the interviews to see if they had similar outcomes.

### 4.0 Results

The outcomes from the interviews were made up of several, often positive, experiences. The experiences that were shared discussed the largely positive management of volunteers across a range of organisations and outcomes such as having 'a more relaxed, happier person at the end of it'. Volunteers discussed how they enjoyed their volunteer experience overall and the benefits were frequently noted by participants. However, to look specifically at the research question the results have been presented in three categories; Benefits; Barriers; and Solutions. The categorisation is approximate and there are several overlaps. The solutions were extracted from the results but further suggestions will be explored in the discussion page.

#### 4.1 Benefits

Although the benefits of volunteering were not directly part of the research topic, it provides an understanding of why it's so important for everyone in the community to have the opportunity to engage in volunteer opportunities. It is therefore useful to explore these benefits that participants in the study discuss. These apply both to those volunteers who have disabilities as well as those that do not. Many of these advantages reflect the findings in the background research such as having a purpose. One participant, when talking about a volunteer with additional support needs said that these regular opportunities '...makes him feel like he's doing what other people around him are doing'. This feeling of fitting in or participating in society is an important benefit as well as the feeling of having a positive impact within your community.

It can also allow people to do things they wouldn't normally do, or learn skills they wouldn't learn in their regular jobs. One participant mentioned this explicitly saying 'I get to do something I usually wouldn't do' with another two stating that the role helped them to '...improve skills, build confidence and so on' and another participant claiming '[the volunteer is] really confident now'. As well as giving volunteers unique experiences it also brings people together. For example, '...one of the things I find fascinating about volunteering in general, is there's not many situations where you get such a diverse spectrum of people working together'. This feeling of togetherness is really important in building connections between members of the community. A further example

of this was a participant stating that ‘...everyone brings their own contribution’. In the context of disabilities a participant mentioned that ‘I think it’s really good for other volunteers to work with people with any sort of disability because it broadens their perspective and makes them understand some of these things better and breaks down preconceptions’ and ‘you may be weak in some things but strong in others.’

Another participant mentioned the increase in value of a volunteer post ‘If you’re doing it not to be paid, it just feels a lot more valuable’. The general feeling from all participants was that volunteering was a positive experience, especially if it was managed correctly by the organisation. One volunteer stated that ‘I look forward to it because I feel valued’ and another stating ‘It’s a nice place to be in, and it’s a nice space to meet people who are passing through so you can tell them about the area’ which shows that it’s not just a working role but a way for people to connect and socialise with the community and visitors alike.

Too often the perception is that organisations are using volunteers as ‘free labour’, but these results show that providing these opportunities are important for communities to come together and that they hold a lot of value for the volunteers. These opportunities, and benefits, should not be reserved for a minority but be available for everyone.

---

## 4.2 Barriers

### **TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

Many organisations with volunteer opportunities are often either made up largely of volunteers themselves or are small, low-profit organisations or dependent on funding, which lack the capacity to train individuals to deal with disabilities or additional support needs. There may be some hesitancy to give casual volunteers the added responsibility, especially without training, of managing individuals with additional support needs.

‘We’ve had [volunteers] with [additional support] needs. But again because of the [till] system... they need additional supervision. Personally, I wouldn’t put one of our other volunteers in that position. It would need to be somebody who was employed and who was trained.’ Another organisation stated that ‘although I can provide the opportunity...I don’t know that I have enough capacity to give [volunteers with additional support needs] dedicated support.’ This shows there is a willingness to provide opportunities, but without dedicated support, either from within the organisation or through collaboration with other organisations, it becomes too much of a strain on already limited resources.

### **TRANSPORT**

The lack of public transport in many rural areas is a huge barrier for any individual without access to private transport and can quickly lead to isolation. There is a community car scheme in the area which helps alleviate this situation and plays a crucial and important role in the area. However as it is run as a charity and largely reliant on volunteers, it cannot always meet the demand. Individuals might also lack the confidence or ability to arrange this themselves. One participant specifically mentioned this as an issue. ‘When it’s not [a member of staff] who picks me up, I look slightly anxiously sometimes at the Car Share scheme. Are they going to have someone available to take me?’ Regardless of the capacity of a car share organisation, some individuals may still find it challenging to approach the organisation or, they may feel that someone else’s need is greater than theirs. Organisations such as the car scheme may be an effective tool to overcome a transport barrier, but individuals may also need to be assisted with utilising it.

### **PHYSICAL ACCESS**

Modern buildings, or those that have had modern refurbishments are likely to have good disabled access. However, any volunteer opportunities that are in older buildings, or are outside may have more limitations. Every organisation we spoke to mentioned how they would be happy to make arrangements to overcome this if required and examples were given of organisations making huge adaptations to get those with physical disabilities included in a task, however this was often very resource heavy.

‘The ones who have mobility problems would have a role solely at the front desk. We have volunteers who have got health issues, but mobility is the biggest barrier.’

‘But if somebody did [have certain needs] we would certainly look at what was the best. The best that we could adapt the environment to their needs.’ Due to small scale of many organisations, these adaptations may be more reactive rather than proactive which is understandable. However, it may present a barrier for someone who saw that there wasn’t the current ability to match their needs.

### **SHIELDING AND ACCESS TO SOCIAL CIRCLES**

One barrier, which is largely unintended, was the protection of individuals with additional support needs. ‘I think certainly in our community there’s a much bigger level of protection around vulnerable people and that protection is a double edged sword’.

Although the results of this project were largely anecdotal, it was supported by the background research (Barriers to volunteering, pg 345). Perhaps the lack of many large, overarching organisations in the area lead to additional reliance on an individual’s own support network.

The main drawback of this strong layer of protection is the lack of independence that is afforded to individuals. It was discussed in the interviews how gradually offering individuals more independence in their volunteer role improved their confidence and allowed them to expand their skills base. This protection may also prevent them from exploring more opportunities and ultimately disengaging them from their community and preventing their voice being heard.

If someone is shielded, or not very involved in the community, it might be hard for them to get involved without a third party organisation or family member. One participant discussed how difficult this might be for someone with ASN who might not have those social connections. Most organisations are also limited to how they can contact people due to data protection legislation. Accessing people who are isolated is incredibly difficult. At least one organisation said that they had never been asked by anyone with additional support needs to be involved and this is unlikely to be unique.

For any individual to ‘break into’ a social circle in a new community can be challenging and require a great deal of self-confidence which is both something that some individuals with ASN may lack as well as something which many in this study reported to gaining while volunteering. This same barrier can be experienced when transitioning through other life stages, such as between education and the work place or when a funded volunteer opportunity ends.

### **POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION AND INCLUSIVITY**

There was a strong and frequently emerging willingness of local organisations to accept volunteers from all walks of life and backgrounds. However many of the organisations and committees were stretched in terms of time and resources and often had quite specific needs and requirements from their volunteers. Therefore those people in the community who were seen as having skills that matched these needs were often the first to be asked to volunteer with the organisation or committee. There was no evidence from any participant that they would discriminate against someone with additional support needs but that those people with additional needs may be less likely to be approached. This is not prejudice against those with additional support needs but more positively discriminating those people who may not have certain skills as one participant described. ‘I think generally it’s been because someone has spied me as useful’.

### **FUNDING**

Funding is both a barrier as well as a solution. The drawback of funded programmes is that they are often only funded for a set length of time and people often need support indefinitely. They may also only run for a minimum number of people which is a problem that will affect small rural communities more than larger urban areas. If a programme is running on minimum numbers and someone leaves the group, for whatever reason, then this could result in the funding not being awarded. The same example was given, by two participants, of a programme which was very positive but ended due to reduction of numbers under what was stipulated by the funding.

## 4.3 Solutions

### **STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITY**

A commonly suggested solution to many of the barriers was a thorough structure. This should include matching tasks with individuals to foster the feeling of being useful rather than a hindrance. An individual matched with the right task not only makes the most sense for the organisation but can also lessen any additional support that the individual might need.

It was reported that many of the volunteers have a lot of respect for and dependence on their volunteer role. Many see it as their job and so the same respect should be showed by the organisation. Regular hours, good communication, predictable duties and they should expect the same from the volunteer. One volunteer was encouraged to call up the organisation if they were unable to attend, just as they would be expected to do in a paid opportunity. This can also help with the transition between volunteer roles to a paid role, or other similarly tricky transitions that might be challenging for some individuals. There was some discussion around individuals turning up to a role after completing the required forms and paperwork to find no-one from the organisation had turned up. Without the context it's difficult to draw conclusions, but an incident like this can be very disheartening for a volunteer who wants to be taken seriously and to the family members who work hard to pursue these opportunities.

### **FLEXIBLE ROLES**

Creating a role that can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual is crucial in attracting a broad range of volunteers and allowing everyone to benefit from these opportunities. If an individual can fulfil the majority of the requirements of the role and perhaps some of the requirement of another role then perhaps the responsibilities can be shared between different volunteers. Many organisations we spoke to attempted to match roles with the individual through having an introductory meeting with them to discuss what they might enjoy doing. This may require additional time commitments in the short term but if this was adapted by multiple organisations it may prove to be time neutral in the future.

### **SUPPORT AND AWARENESS**

For some individuals, having someone nearby who can give them support if things go wrong can be a huge comfort for themselves as well as the staff who they are working alongside and may not have the same level of training as the support worker. This can allow volunteers to be given more independence knowing that there is support 'in the background'. They should be made to feel like they are working independently, a transition which may be hard to manage.

Support could come from family members or an organisation. The advantage of family members is that it would be assumed that they already have a good rapport and understanding of the individual's needs. However they would need to have time and, essentially, financial support to be able to support that individual. Another advantage of a family member is that they might be more likely to provide a long term commitment. Organisations can fulfil this duty, but if they are reliant on funding this can often change. Staff may also change roles which can cause disruption to the support. An advantage of an organisation fulfilling this duty is that it may help to give the individuals more independence as well as giving the family member some respite.

An area of support which was seldom mentioned in the interviews was that of emotional support. This could be due to a lack of understanding or training. It could also be a general perception that additional support is visible and comes in the form of physical assistance. One participant mentioned how they would often need to temporarily leave their duties to take time to reset. They reported feeling enormous guilt from 'abandoning their duties'. Despite being told that they had the right to step away from their duties, this feeling of guilt could act as a barrier for future volunteering roles.

Awareness in disabilities, including 'invisible' disabilities is improving, however there can always be progress. Individuals with these disabilities need to know that those working alongside them understand their disability and understand that they may need small alterations to their role, or have the opportunity or space to leave their duties to take some 'time out' without feeling guilty as one participant reported. If more people with additional support needs are afforded these



opportunities awareness within the team, and the community, is likely to increase while also reducing stigma.

---

## 5.0 Discussion

The use of qualitative data can make it very difficult to provide a quantifiable outcome or conclusion. Benefits and barriers can often be nuanced, subtle and difficult to identify. A volunteer with additional support needs may not recognise the benefits of their experience, however a family member or support worker may notice a small change in their mannerisms or self confidence. This small benefit could prove to be incredibly beneficial in the long term, even if it isn't easily identifiable. Finding ways to recognise and demonstrate this is crucial to sharing and understanding the importance of these opportunities. Barriers may also be progressive or be easier to identify from an outside perspective. The removal of one barrier, may also in turn present further unforeseen barriers in other areas.

These results presented several key barriers for individuals with additional support needs in accessing volunteer opportunities, many of which were backed by previous research, such as shielding, access to resources and inclusivity. The solutions were often based around changes to how roles are organised as well as further education and training within organisations. It's worth noting that many of the solutions presented in the results may be difficult for some small organisations to achieve independently. Therefore, it is essential for smaller organisations to collaborate training and resources between themselves to reach shared goals.

Any changes, especially if resources or funding are involved should be made with a long term vision. For example, independence may be an important stage in developing an individual, but there are some who will always require some kind of support and this should always be available to them.

This research demonstrates that volunteering is often a useful first step to overcome many of the barriers that are faced to community engagement and there is a need to ensure everyone is able to access it. For example tackling social exclusion through volunteering can extend social circles. Rural communities are fairly well linked and once an individual breaks into one circle, it's likely that many more circles can be accessed. This was described by several participants and is mirrored by the researcher's own experience. Maintaining a volunteer position, learning new skills and furthering social links may then present other opportunities. This may lead to an increase in confidence in the individual, as demonstrated in the results, which may lead to further integration and engagement into other spheres within the community. The more engaged an individual is within their community, the more their voice is likely to be heard and the more representation they can give to individuals in similar situations to themselves.

---

## 6.0 Future Research

Very little link was made between volunteering and involvement in community consultations and community councils. Participants were asked about other volunteering that they participated in and some participants were asked if they were involved in community consultations. All of which said no. Future research could look at what encourages people to get involved in community meetings and consultation as this is a very direct form of community engagement but can often seem quite intimidating. Understanding what gives someone the confidence or drive to have their voice heard directly through consultations could be useful in improving local democracy.

## 7.0 Key Actions from GALE

Based on the findings of this study, GALE are keen to move forward with several key actions to reduce the barriers faced by those with additional support needs and encourage further participation within our community. Some of these actions are easily actionable, whereas others may require further consideration due to the increase in resources;

- Provide assistance with encouraging inclusivity in local community organisations through informative material laying out some simple steps.
- Ensure employees and volunteers are made aware of spaces where they can have a break if needed.
- Offer emotional support and create an environment where volunteers and employees feel supported.
- Having a 'buddy' or mentor assigned to new employees or volunteers who they can talk to about any issues or questions confidentially.
- Awareness raising of the organisations and volunteering about why people volunteer and what makes people volunteer.
- Tackling transport as a barrier to work and volunteering opportunities. This could be through collaboration with the Community Car Scheme or through organised lift sharing between other local organisations.
- Provide workshops in educating about disabilities and how organisations can be more inclusive to those with additional support needs and supporting organisations by increasing their confidence with working with volunteers with additional support needs.

## 8.0 Potential Actions for Organisations

Specific actions will depend largely on the opportunities that organisations have as well as the resources available to them. However adaptability and open mindedness are both key attributes that can be adopted by all organisations working with volunteers, especially in regard to the tasks carried out by volunteers.

Collaboration would be a key recommendation. Funders often favour collaborations between community organisations and make funding applications stronger. Collaborations between businesses can help share advice, resources, trained staff or training opportunities. For example, a group of organisations or businesses could organise a day to train managers, staff or volunteers to manage individuals with additional support needs. Volunteer opportunities could also be shared across organisations.

Finally, an increase in awareness in emotional support. This is often overlooked and is a key barrier for those individuals who may have 'invisible disabilities' or additional needs which may not have been identified. Having a workplace which puts emotional support at the forefront of its management of staff and volunteers may only require minor changes and create a far more positive workplace for all employees and volunteers, regardless of their additional needs.

---

## 9.0 Conclusion

Although all organisations were well intentioned in their inclusion, full representation of those with additional support needs cannot come purely from a welcoming attitude, although this is certainly a positive start. These individuals should be sought out wherever possible and the opportunities, roles and space in which they are volunteering should be adapted to their needs, therefore encouraging them to stay. Communities should take a role in promoting them to individuals with additional support needs and helping to tweak these spaces and opportunities in order both to retain these volunteers and expand on them. Many of the participants spoke of the positive outcomes these opportunities presented and these should be capitalised on. Organisations should be made aware of these positive outcomes and supported in increasing their confidence to work with individuals with additional support needs.

Volunteering is just one step in becoming actively involved in a community and having voices heard. As a development trust, GALE promotes and strives towards the vision of achieving a fully representative community. Voices from people of all backgrounds should be involved in all levels of decision making within the community and ensure everyone is heard and not drowned out by a loud minority, who may be more time rich, articulate or resource rich.

## 10.0 Bibliography

Balandin, S., Llewellyn, G., Dew, A. and Ballin, L. (2006). 'We couldn't function without volunteers': volunteering with a disability, the perspective of not-for-profit agencies. *International Journal of Rehabilitation Research*, 29(2), pp.131–136. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1097/01.mrr.0000191850.95692.0c>.

Cruz, S., Ferreira, M.R., Borges, A. and Casais, B. (2022). Barriers to volunteering in the field of intellectual disability: a cluster analysis. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12208-022-00343-5>.

Development Trust Association Scotland, Including People with Disabilities (Top Tips 1)

Development Trust Association Scotland, Including People with Disabilities (Top Tips 2)

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, Available at: [https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/pdfs/asp\\_20040004\\_en.pdf](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/4/pdfs/asp_20040004_en.pdf)

GOV.UK (2023). *Community Life Survey 2021/22: Volunteering and charitable giving*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/community-life-survey-202122/community-life-survey-202122-volunteering-and-charitable-giving>.

Sagone, E. and Caroli, M.E.D. (2014). Are Special Needs Teachers More Burned-out Than Volunteers with Disabled People? *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 141, pp.888–893. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.05.155>.

Scottish Government, Ipsos MORI, 2023, Scottish Household Survey: Telephone Survey, 2021, [data collection], UK Data Service, Accessed 28 March 2024. SN: 9187, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9187-1>

Shandra, C.L. (2017). Disability and social participation: The case of formal and informal volunteering. *Social Science Research*, 68, pp.195–213. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2017.02.006>.

Shandra, C.L. (2019). Disability Segregation in Volunteer Work. *Sociological Perspectives*, 63(1), pp.112–134. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121419842133>.

Wardell, F., Lishman, J. and Whalley, L.J. (1997). Volunteers: Making a difference! *Practice*, 9(2), pp.21–34. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09503159708411644>.

Yanay-Ventura, G. (2018). 'Nothing About Us Without Us' in Volunteerism Too: Volunteering Among People with Disabilities. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 30(1), pp.147–163. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-0026-7>.

## 11.0 Acknowledgments

This research was made possible with funding from Charitable Organisation Acorns to Tress. For more information about their work, [visit acorns2tress.com](https://www.acorns2tress.com)