

BSG Annual Conference 2023
Hosted by University of East Anglia (UEA): Norwich

Symposium: Co-creating solutions to barriers in volunteer involvement of and for older adult volunteers

09:00-10:30 Thursday, 6 July, 2023, New Science Building 0.02



Katherine Deane



Ruth Leonard



Mike Locke



Jurgen Grotz

Abstract

Volunteering can play an important role challenging social exclusion of older people, but equally it has potential to exclude, with a wide range of possible barriers. This symposium will assess and discuss the physical, personal, organisational and structural barriers to volunteering for older volunteers. The format of this symposium is deliberately co-productive, involving academics, practitioners and people with lived experience, exploring knowledges and experiences from different perspectives. Volunteer involvement of older adults is well described, with levels of volunteering among those aged 65 and over, before the pandemic, higher than other age group (McGarvey, 2019). However, this appears to have changed during the pandemic. The pandemic is likely to have exacerbated existing social, political, cultural and economic barriers, as much as it has created new ones (Grotz et al, in peer review). Looking ahead this symposium will discuss how public policy and the attitudes towards inclusive volunteer involvement of older people in the public, voluntary and private sectors remove or contribute to barriers to volunteering for older adults.

Provocation

Older people make up a substantial proportion of volunteers. Volunteering intends to have a positive social impact and can also be beneficial for individual volunteers in terms of reducing social exclusion and increasing mental and physical wellbeing.

But it's not all positive, as volunteering can also be a source of stress, and financial and time burden. The pandemic has had substantial impact on the context in which volunteering takes place.

The pandemic exacerbated existing social, political, cultural, and economic barriers as well as creating new ones. Consideration is required of the physical, personal, organisational, and structural barriers in this "new normal" and how we can create solutions to them. When considering access to volunteering opportunities the aim should be to have access solutions built-in and provided as a default. The aim should be to remove the need for a volunteer to have to request accommodations wherever possible.

The social model of disability (Oliver 1990, Scope n.d.) places responsibility for accommodating the disability access needs on society, rather than the disabled individual. Whilst this model was originally developed in the context of disability, the requirement to accommodate diversity and difference can be expanded to other characteristics. These characteristics may have legal protection, such as gender and race (Equality Act 2010), but other characteristics should be considered, such as socioeconomic status. Taking an intersectional view, how can we accommodate the diversity of people we wish to be involved with, and impacted by, our volunteering activities?

How diverse are the voices you use to help you identify volunteering priorities, design the volunteering process, and disseminate the impact of volunteering to the community? How can you expand the diversity of your volunteers to inform these aspects of volunteering opportunities?

Consider the adverts you use to ask people to participate in your volunteering activities. Is the language simple and easy to understand? Is the text easy to read? Are the photo's of possible volunteers diverse for gender, race, and visible disabilities?

If you think about accommodating disabled volunteers do you worry that it will be too

expensive and complex to be practical? Whilst there is a significant amount of knowledge required, there are plenty of guidelines available to aid organisations in their practice (AIE 2020, Deane 2023). Most accommodations represent little to no cost, often requiring a shift in attitude or usual practice rather than the provision of expensive equipment.

I would suggest that volunteering organisations need to be more proactive in their efforts to challenge structural biases and take active steps to improve access to volunteering opportunities. This would improve the diversity of their volunteering population, and likely increase the quality of the volunteering experience and service offered.

References

AIE (2020) *Seven Inclusive Principles for Arts & Cultural Organisations: Working Safely through Covid-19. Attitude is Everything*. Available from:

<https://attitudeiseverything.org.uk/industry/welcoming-disabled-audiences/seven-inclusive-principles/>

Deane, K.H.O. and the Access All Areas in Labs Team (2023) *Access All Areas in Labs: Suite of Access Guidelines. Version 1. March 2023*, University of East Anglia, Norwich. Available from: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/web/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs>

Equality Act (2010) The National Archives. Available from:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Oliver M. 1990. *The Politics of Disablement*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Scope (n.d.) *Social Model of Disability*. Available from:

<https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/>

Bios

Katherine Deane

Dr Katherine Deane is a wheelchair user with a variety of long term conditions. She is also an Associate Professor in the School of Health Sciences at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in Norwich. She conducts research on the co-created management of long-term conditions and disabilities and has published over 80

peer-reviewed journal articles. Her work informs NHS and WHO guidelines. She is also the University's Access Ambassador and has improved the accessibility of their campus substantially in the last eight years. She has provided access information to a wide variety of organisations and events. Her publications include

Deane, K.H.O. and the Access All Areas in Labs Team (2023) *Access All Areas in Labs: Suite of Access Guidelines. Version 1. March 2023*, University of East Anglia, Norwich. Available from: <https://www.uea.ac.uk/web/groups-and-centres/projects/access-all-areas-in-labs>

Schroeder K, Bertelsen N, Scott J, Deane K, et al. (2022) Building from Patient Experiences to Deliver Patient-Focused Healthcare Systems in Collaboration with Patients: A Call to Action, *Therapeutic Innovations & Regulatory Science* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43441-022-00432-x>

Deane K, Delbecque L, Gorbenko O, et al. (2019) Co-creation of patient engagement quality guidance for medicines development: an international multistakeholder initiative, *BMJ Innovations*. 13. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjinnov-2018-000317>

Ruth Leonard

Ruth Leonard is Chair of the UK's Association of Volunteer Managers whose day job is Head of Volunteering Development and Operations at Macmillan Cancer Support. She is regularly called upon to provide her practitioner expertise and as a research consultant and has recently co-authored a book with Jurgen Grotz on *Volunteer Involvement: an Introduction to Theory and Practice*,

For Ruth, volunteer involvement is about empowering and enabling people to bring creativity and ingenuity to a solution to make a difference in their community. She is a core partner within the Vision for Volunteering steering group

Her current paid role is to consider strategically where volunteering can add value to developing solutions and to ensure a supportive infrastructure so people who want to give their time can have a quality experience. Having been involved in volunteer management for over 2 decades she has significant experience at providing leadership on involving and engaging people and is committed to ensuring others are able to develop these skills.

She has volunteered in many roles from Samaritans to Compassionate Neighbour

and has recently started volunteering with The Literacy Pirates, a charity in London using the power of positivity and fun to unlock the potential in children. Her publications include:

Grotz, J. and Leonard, R. (2022) *Volunteer Involvement: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mike Locke

Mike Locke is Chair of the Advisory Panel of the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR). In 1997 (then with the Centre for Institutional Studies, University of East London) he created IVR in association with Justin Davis Smith (then with the National Centre for Volunteering, later Volunteering England). In 2022 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of IVR he edited with Jurgen Grotz Research, *Volunteering and the Test of Experience* (IVR/ UEA)

Locke, M. and Grotz, J. eds. (2022) *Volunteering, research and the test of experience*, Norwich: UEA Publishing Project.

Jurgen Grotz

Jurgen Grotz PhD is the Director of the Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) at the University of East Anglia. He is an author, academic and practitioner with 30 years' experience of applied research, working with a strong focus on participative and inclusive approaches. His mainly interdisciplinary research covers volunteer involvement in the public, private and voluntary sectors, focusing on the role of agency for everyone being involved as volunteer or involving volunteers and the difference this makes to individuals, organisations, communities and societies. His publications include:

Grotz, J., Ledgard, M., & Poland, F. (2020) *Patient and public involvement in health and social care: An introduction to theory and practice*. Imprint Springer Nature and Palgrave Macmillan.

Grotz, J. and Leonard, R. (2022) *Volunteer Involvement: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hardill, I., Grotz, J. and Crawford, L. (2022) *Mobilising Voluntary Action in the UK: Learning from the Pandemic*, Bristol: Policy Press.

Locke, M. and Grotz, J. eds. (2022) *Volunteering, research and the test of experience*, Norwich: UEA Publishing Project.