

The Value of Volunteering:

by the FED

Volunteers are the life force of The Fed Centre for Independent Living (The Fed), a user led charity that supports people to live independently in Brighton, Hove and Sussex, currently numbering about 80. In fact, volunteers across the city carry out hours and hours of valuable work, enabling organisations to deliver a vast range of community activity.

As an organisation specialising in supporting disabled people, The Fed jumped at the chance to support the DAA's Volunteer Charter. "We know from our members and service users that just because they have an impairment or health condition, they don't necessarily want to volunteer for a disability charity" said Katharine Russell, Volunteer Officer.

The Fed launched the Disability Action Alliance Volunteer Charter in Brighton & Hove in June 2015 and has been working to promote it across the City, with great success.

In the first six months, The Fed has signed up 47 organisations including Brighton & Hove City Council. Leader of the council, Warren Morgan said: "We, as a City Council, are committed to signing up to the Disability Action Alliance Volunteer Charter, and we urge everyone else in the city to sign up to."

Inspired by the Charter's success, The Fed were asked to document the project on film.

The film features Fed volunteers and other local organisations who have worked with the Fed. One volunteer said "It's important that employers understand there isn't that much of an adjustment to be made... employers think when they hear 'blind' or 'person in a wheelchair' it's going to be a really big complicated thing but actually if

they meet you and get to know what you can do its quite negotiable and not such a big job after all”.

The Fed launched the film on 3 December 2015 at their International Day of Disabled People. Over 50 people attended, watching special screenings, and meeting some of the volunteers who took part in it. The day was supported by a social media campaign, which has been summarised on The Fed’s Storify account <https://storify.com/TheFedOnline/international-day-of-disabled-people-3-december-20>

The Fed is working with the Disability Action Alliance Steering Group to continue the success of the Charter and further develop it in 2016. Katharine continued: “We all benefit from Brighton and Hove being an accessible place to volunteer.”

If you would like to contact Katharine and find out how your organisation can support accessible volunteering, you can email her at katharine.russell@thefedonline.org.uk or call 01273 89 40 40.

The film is available on The Fed’s Vimeo channel; <https://vimeo.com/147690720>