

Poster

Title: The Power of Volunteers

Presenter: Anya Rakoczi, Sense, United Kingdom
Co-presenters: Sian Stamper

Main focus: Mainly practice/Congenital deafblindness

Abstract: As an organisation Sense is committed to delivering high quality services, and exploring creative and new ways to meet individual's needs. Volunteers – without their professional knowledge - provide a powerful way to achieve outcomes for individuals. Their fresh perspectives and creativity offers opportunities for disabled people to form relationships as equals – and outcomes of independence, increased social circles and reduction in isolation, increased confidence, and wellbeing are achieved.

This session will outline a new Sense befriending service for children & young people in east London. Volunteers are supported to develop positive and strong relationships with a child or young person, and together, through weekly sessions, pursue interests and participate in the local community. Underpinned by a culture of positive risk taking, this service is about creating a safe environment where young people and volunteers both build new relationships, explore new situations and interests, and step outside of their comfort zone. Using case studies and evaluation techniques we will demonstrate the added value volunteers can bring.

Discussions will take place on the merits and pitfalls of a volunteer led service model, the challenges and solutions of starting new services, and, once successful, how these projects can be scaled to other areas and or countries.