

Volunteers

The Backbone of Sports Clubs in Scotland

"It is estimated that there are 1.5 million volunteers supporting sport throughout the UK. The vast majority, approaching 80%, operate within sports clubs and it has been calculated that the value of the voluntary contribution in the UK equates to staff costs of £1.5 billion."

(Sport 21, Nothing Left to Chance; 1998; Scottish Sports Council)

This insert of 'clubwise' aims to assist clubs by providing information on the recruitment, support and development of the 'valuable' volunteer.

Recruitment

Volunteers are essential to ensuring clubs are run effectively, efficiently and successfully. However, there are few clubs who could complain of having too many volunteers. A common expression within clubs is 'it's the same minority group of individuals who do everything'. Therefore the recruitment of volunteers is of considerable importance.

What does the club need to consider?

Before recruiting volunteers, the club has a clear idea of exactly what jobs need to be done and how much commitment is required to undertake it. Clubs should be honest in doing this, as a volunteer will quickly become de-motivated if they do not what is expected of them.

Job Descriptions are a useful tool to communicate what jobs need doing, what commitment is required, what skills are needed and will also help show the volunteer that they are valued. Your local Sports Development Officer will have examples of job descriptions for clubs, which can be easily adapted by clubs. However job descriptions can be seen as inhibiting so keep them flexible!

For larger jobs, it may be worth dividing them into more realistic sizes. It is also worth noting, however, that giving a volunteer too little to do can be more harmful than giving them too much.

The club could also consider offering incentives for volunteering, e.g a reduction in annual subs, free merchandise, assistance towards training costs etc.

What motivates a volunteer to become and remain involved?

Volunteers become involved for a variety of reasons, and clubs should be aware of what these are. It is also important to identify what skills each volunteer has and allocate tasks appropriately. If a volunteer does not have the interest or skills to undertake the task, they will become de-motivated.

Where do we find Volunteers?

The most obvious place to find volunteers for a sports club is within the membership, past and present. In addition, parents also make ideal volunteers and you should never be afraid to ask them. Very often they will be fully supportive. Remember clubs do not just need volunteers for coaches. Administration, financial and organising roles are equally important.

- **Colleges / Universities**

There are now an array of sports related courses whereby students have a number of voluntary hours and placements to undertake in order to complete their courses. These students make ideal volunteers for your club.

Hot Tip:

Know and recognise each individual volunteer, what motivates them, what skills they have or wish to have and match these appropriately to the jobs which are required to be undertaken.

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In addition non-sports related students are often looking for placements, which the club could offer. E.g, a marketing student could assist with promotional tasks in the club. Most Universities and Colleges within the area have up-to-date web-sites that list the courses they offer and contact details of course leaders. 'Freshers Fayes' are also a good means of recruiting volunteers, as well as new members!

- **Volunteer Agencies**

Volunteer agencies are extremely useful and helpful when it comes to recruiting volunteers. Although each work slightly differently, it is a good idea to get in touch to discuss your clubs needs. They are experts in the field and use a variety of methods to assist both volunteers who are looking for work and groups who are looking for volunteers.

- **Angus Volunteers**

Tel: 01241 878833

e-mail: anvol@sol.co.uk

- **Volunteer Information Point Dundee**

Tel: 01382 305705

www.volunteerdundee.org.uk

- **Volunteering in Action Perth**

Tel: 01738 631331

e-mail:

via.pkavs@scvo.org.uk

Support

Finding people to volunteer is not easy. Therefore making sure you retain them is very important. Once you have volunteers involved in your club, you need to think about keeping them. You need to consider how to meet their motivations.

Supporting volunteers can take many forms;

- A welcome pack;
- A contact person within the club;
- Time and help to settle in and adjust;
- Contact with others in the club;
- A chance to speak on major decisions which affect what they do;
- Any necessary training;
- Recognition for their efforts / achievements;
- Help with expenses;
- Social Activity.

It is important that you offer support to your volunteers to ensure they enjoy a rewarding experience working within your club.

Support can be given formally or informally and how it is given will depend on what best suits the volunteer and the club.

There is a need to be flexible with your approach

to supporting volunteers, and it is important that volunteers feel confident, ideas are shared and any concerns are recorded confidentially.

What are examples of formal support the club can offer;

- Designated meetings between volunteers and Supervisor / Club Chairperson / Head Coach;
- An Induction Programme;
- Setting goals / targets;
- Receiving feedback;
- Identifying Training Needs;

What are examples of informal support?

- The volunteer can approach their 'supervisor' when they feel it is necessary;
- The volunteer is able to give input when they feel it is necessary;
- The volunteer receives feedback regularly.

What about expenses?

A volunteer should never be financially out of pocket. Volunteers should receive expenses for travel, costs etc, which are occurred through the process of completing tasks for the club. It is important that they are given expenses rather than them having to ask.

Hot Tip:

Your Local Sports Council runs awards that recognise the contributions local volunteers make to sport. Keep your eyes open for nomination forms and put someone from your club forward for recognition.

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Development

One of the benefits of volunteering is that volunteers have the opportunity to develop new and existing skills.

Volunteers need to feel valued and their personal skills are being developed. If a volunteer does not have the skills that are required to do particular tasks, or the opportunity to develop they will quickly become demotivated. In addition, volunteers will soon become disenchanted if continuing to do the same job without the opportunity to gain a qualification or grow into a more challenging role.

Informal Skill Development

Most clubs are fortunate to have a broad cross section of membership representing a wide range of skills and expertise. If a volunteer takes on a job and then finds they need some additional knowledge or skills, there may well be someone within the club who can help. Learning by doing is the way most people overcome any lack of specific skills.

One way the club can facilitate this happening is by setting up a buddy

system. This is when two people work together, to develop the skills of the less experienced person. The buddy system allows that person to learn by doing, under the guidance of a more experienced individual.

The clubs role will be to identify the particular skills an individual needs to develop and who would be a suitable 'buddy' for that person. Once this has been identified the club should continually support both the volunteer and the 'buddy' to ensure no problems have arisen and that the system continues to be effective.

Formal Training

Informal Skill Development is very well, providing the support is there and people have the time to learn by doing. Sometimes, however, a short time in a more structured learning environment might help volunteers make better use of their valuable time.

There are various ways in which volunteers can access training. As well as National Governing Body awards, there are national agencies that offer more generic courses to help volunteers in a club environment. These include **sportscotland's**

Running Sport and Volunteer Investment programmes and Sports Coach UK (formally the National Coaching Foundation) development programme for coaches and volunteers. Contact your local sports development officer for further information.

Clubs should encourage training for volunteers and it should be provided on a regular basis. The club should strive to ensure that local or national training opportunities are shared. Volunteers should hear of training opportunities either from a notice board, an announcement at meetings or through newsletters. Also, by providing at least some financial support, where possible, towards to cost of training, clubs will help to show that they value the volunteer.

There are many ways of adding to the skills which volunteers bring to your club. Providing some personal development will benefit both the individual and the club. Time is the volunteers most precious commodity and therefore any additional time they give to developing their skills must be well spent and in the long-term time saving.

Hot Tip:

Remember, your Local Sports Council can provide financial assistance towards a variety of sports related courses. Contact your Local Sports Council Representative for more information.