

Hints and tips for recruiting and retaining volunteers

Community sports clubs and groups often entirely rely on a team of committed volunteers. With seven out of 10 clubs and groups reporting a shortage of volunteers, it's important to encourage and support new people to give their time (SIRC Clubs Survey 2018). Ensuring new people feel welcome and successfully integrating them into your team of existing volunteers can sometimes feel like a challenge. This document provides some key hints and tips for organisations looking to expand and retain their volunteer team.

1



Create a strong volunteering culture and promote the benefits

Build volunteering into your culture by; linking it into your values, creating an inclusive approach to recruitment, keeping your volunteering offer central to your club's development, making people feel like they have something to offer as a volunteer, celebrating and showcasing your volunteers, and developing a sense of family or team. Make it something people want to get involved with! Promote the benefits of volunteering and get your volunteers involved in developing tag lines to inspire people, for example *'One club, one team'* or *'Working together to achieve more'*.

2

Know what skills you need and how people can help

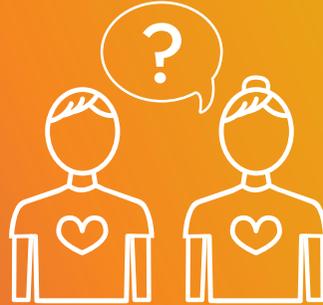
The amount of time people can give, and the roles or tasks they're interested in, will vary. Before you engage new volunteers, be clear what you need help with. However, it is good to make sure people know they can get involved no matter their skills, experience or background. Try to break roles down into interesting, engaging and flexible tasks to offer bite sized volunteering opportunities that don't take up too much time and can be completed when it is convenient for the volunteer. The smaller the ask, the better!



3

Speak to people in advance to understand their needs

Each volunteer is unique and has their own needs and motivations. Some will be confident and keen to get started. Others may have concerns that could hold them back. Speaking to them in advance helps build their confidence and enables you to find out more about them, their motivations and skills, how much time they can give, what they want to be involved in, any training they might need, and if they would prefer interactive, people-facing tasks/roles or something behind the scenes. Find a way to capture this information for new and existing volunteers, as well as members and parents, so you can look back on this when you need extra help.



4

Match people to tasks and roles

Knowing what you need help with and understanding people’s interests and skills will enable you to match them with the tasks and roles that best suit them. If you’re unsure about the best fit, suggest a few different things for them to try and see what works for them. Remember, the more times people do things, the more they develop their skills and understanding. Avoid asking people to do something they’re not comfortable with. Giving people a good experience encourages them to keep coming back.



5

Nominate a volunteer coordinator

Having an individual, or possibly more than one person, take responsibility for the recruitment and retention of volunteers can enhance the volunteer experience, develop a strong volunteering culture and ensure everyone feels confident, supported, recognised and valued. An individual who is personable, approachable and patient, with experience of the club or group, who can explain what volunteering means to them, can help win new recruits over and keep existing people coming back.



6 Give people a good induction

Avoid throwing new people in at the deep end, as it can put them off. Providing information ahead of time about what they’ll be doing, how, where and with who, can help. Written induction packs, open days, FAQs, video or online briefings and pre-meets are just some of the ways you can do this. When they arrive, introducing them to key people, showing them around and explaining who to go to for support is really helpful. Taking time to explain what they’ll be doing, any rules, regulations and procedures they need to follow, and why you do things a certain way can help people settle in well and quickly.



7

Give people a warm and enthusiastic welcome

Meeting and greeting new volunteers for their first few sessions and giving them a big, friendly welcome will go a long way to making them feel part of the team. If you can, consider assigning new volunteers to a mentor or buddy to shadow, or show them the ropes and help them get to know people quickly.



8

Keep communicating

Keep in contact with your volunteers as much as possible. Find out how their first few sessions went and check back in regularly to see how they are getting on. Don't forget to give and ask for feedback. Make sure they don't have too much or too little to do and work together to ensure they have the best possible volunteer experience. Developing things like Whatsapp groups, newsletters and social events can create a sense of community and loyalty, and help people stay connected.



9 Involve volunteers in decision making

Getting people involved in decision making at your club or group gives them a voice, helps develop their sense of ownership and enables them to show leadership and take initiative. You could consider having a volunteering sub-committee to help achieve this.



10

Treat people well

Acknowledging what volunteers do, saying thank you and rewarding them for their efforts go a long way to showing that you recognise and value their contribution. Be approachable and patient with people, and don't expect too much of them. Be understanding if plans change and they can't attend and show appreciation whenever you can. Consider rewarding people and providing incentives. Things like certificates, events, awards, training and development opportunities and enabling people to volunteer in friendship or family groups can really help to keep them motivated.

