



# Retaining Volunteers

**Volunteers** are more likely to stay at your club if they have fun, enjoyable, rewarding experiences and are confident in their role.

Research shows that sports volunteers give more time per week and volunteer more frequently than the average volunteer. Unfortunately, this isn't always what happens. In fact, sports volunteers are far more likely than volunteers in other sectors to quit – largely because they feel undervalued, unrecognised or because they've had poor experiences in an unorganised environment.

## How can you retain and manage volunteers?

**Induction** - Welcoming your new volunteers is vital to making a good first impression. A well-planned welcome process, or induction, can help a new volunteer feel supported, informed, valued and can enable them to contribute straight away.

**Codes of Conduct** - every member of your club should sign the annual declaration relevant to their code of conduct. This sets the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within your club and ensures volunteers understand the rules and boundaries.

**Role description** - what is expected of the volunteer in their role? It is important for any volunteer to understand what they are required to do within the position they are elected/ appointed to. This includes highlighting the skills needed, time commitment, roles and responsibilities, training requirements and benefits of volunteering for the club. Role descriptions templates are available for clubs.

**Communication** - agree the best method of communication within your club and keep all volunteers up to date with relevant information. Email is a useful form of communication but should not be used as a discussion forum for issues within the club. A phone call or face to face meeting is recommended when a management committee need to discuss sensitive matters within the club.

**Working as a team** - share the workload amongst volunteers to ensure nobody is over-burdened with responsibility. Encourage knowledge sharing within the club to develop skills of all volunteers. Set deadlines for completion of tasks and report back to the management committee on a regular basis.

**Meetings** - should have an agenda, stick to it and ensure meetings start and finish on time. Refer to effective meeting resource for more information.

**Dealing with disagreements or issues** - disagreements and issues may arise within your club from time to time. Try to deal with informally and immediately by meeting with parties concerned and agreeing a resolution where possible. Complaints and disciplinary matters should be dealt with in line with the Swim Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures. Support is available for the club from regional support officers.



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## Who is responsible for managing volunteers?

**Club Chairperson** - is responsible for managing the committee and their duties.

The Chairperson should also ensure that responsibilities are delegated fairly amongst committee members and should follow up to ensure jobs are completed. The Chairperson should aim to resolve any conflict or issues within the committee immediately and informally where possible.

**Club Management Committee** – is responsible for managing coaches and teachers, officials, team managers and sub-committees.

**Lead Team Manager** – is responsible for managing chaperones assisting on away trips and competitions and should give clear direction to volunteers on the role they should fulfil.

**Meet Director** – at a competition the meet director is responsible to ensure the smooth running of event and is responsible for managing officials and volunteers for the duration of the competition.

## How can you retain your volunteers?

As simple as it may sound, thanking volunteers for their time and effort is often forgotten about or overlooked in sports clubs. You could do this in a formal or informal way. Some ideas include:

- Appreciate and reward them
- Work as a team
- Don't ask them to do too much
- Ensure there are clear roles and responsibilities
- Discount fees
- Communicate with them
- Socialise away from club environment
- Feed them – if working all day at a competition ensure there is food and drink available for volunteers
- Nominate for volunteer awards