



Empowering Your Club through Volunteerism

A Complete Guide to Volunteer Recruitment, Retention & Evaluation

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Volunteering in the GAA.

The greatest asset the GAA has is its people, its members, the people who make things happen in Clubs throughout Ireland and beyond. We need to sustain our people, we need to recruit more people, we need to Retain more people and then we need to empower and enhance the development of our people. Our people are Volunteers; they give of their Skills and their time all in the service of this great Amateur Sporting Body, helping to make it the most famous sporting body in this Island. They have helped to spread the ethos of our organisation around the globe, today everywhere where there is an Irish person, the GAA is present. The people who make this happen are our volunteers and the aim of this document is to help you Recruit, Retain and Enhance Volunteers to make your Club the best that it can be.

In this document we will help you see how you can recruit more people, how more Volunteers to your Club will enhance the standing of your Club within your Community. How new skill sets can be developed and how the recruiting of new Volunteers will actually retain the existing Volunteer base that you have. No one should fear recruiting new people, this will not mean that we then cast existing people aside , No, recruiting new people means that we get the best out of everyone, as they get the chance to perform roles and duties best suited to their skills. New Volunteers should mean that life within the Club is more enjoyable for those existing volunteers. There is nothing to be feared from recruiting new people.

We then want to show you how you can retain all of your volunteers, new and existing, for we can never have enough people. New All Ireland Club Champions Cuala, hire facilities they don't have any physical assets but what they do have is People. Their success shows what can be done when you are able to retain people, able to recruit Volunteers on an ongoing basis but also able to retain them. People loved to be asked in this document we will offer you guidance on asking, then recruiting and then retaining, three simple steps that can make a difference to your Club.

Finally we want to show you how you can enhance your volunteers, new and existing, how volunteering in your Club can make a difference to the life of the volunteer. Their self-esteem can and will rise if they are valued and feel valued, if they are given the opportunity to develop personally and to develop the skill sets that they bring to the role. Volunteering is not a one size fits all but the benefits of volunteering are many, for the volunteer in the first instance, for the Club and ultimately for the great Association that we all belong to.

We hope that this document will be a guide for you, in recruiting, retaining and enhancing the people that we depend on to make our Clubs function, the GAA without its people is just another sporting body, it is the people, the volunteers that make the GAA special, the volunteers who set us apart and who make a real difference. Let the work commence let us Recruit, Retain and Enhance our Volunteers.

Executive Summary

This purpose of this guide is to assist clubs with one of its most critical functions - the recruitment, retention and development of their volunteer base.

In developing this guidance we have attempted to bring together examples of best practice from across our association and provide some practical tools and advice to help clubs recruit, retain and develop their personnel.

The document highlights the importance of proper planning in setting out clear goals at the outset of a recruitment drive in terms of what the club wants to achieve and how it plans to get there. Action Plan templates focused on increased participation are provided to assist with the planning phase and some useful evidence is also included on why people volunteer (and perhaps more importantly why they don't in some cases) to help understand what motivates and de-motivates people.

The section on volunteer recruitment explores in more detail the issues of attracting volunteers, where to look, motivational tips and what practical steps can be taken to encourage more members to become actively involved in club affairs at all levels.

An important element of volunteering is the provision of suitable training not only for team coaches but also the increasing need for administrative and management skills at committee level and this aspect is covered in some depth also.

A key part of the guide examines the often overlooked area of volunteer retention and what steps clubs can take to ensure they can hold on to their volunteers, continue to make them feel valued and avoid the common pitfall of taking people for granted which is one of the main reasons why many people tend to drift away from volunteering in our clubs.

In this regard the guide aims to provide some useful information on important features such as roles, responsibilities, relationships, reward and recognition. Leadership and communication, as well as the importance of promoting the club in the wider community also features prominently.

Finally, the guide strongly recommends that having undertaken a planning and recruitment exercise, the success or otherwise of the initiative should be formally evaluated to examine what worked well and also what did not work so well in order to learn lessons that will help make future recruitment drives more effective.

A number of appendices also offer practical templates and case studies which demonstrate what can be achieved with a structured and planned approach to volunteer recruitment to make our association stronger in the challenging environment we live in today and ensure we maintain our position as the leading sporting organisation in the country.

WHY PEOPLE DO OR DO NOT VOLUNTEER

Why people volunteer

Firstly, let's look into the volunteer ethos and the thinking of those who volunteer and those who do not.

People often join a club because they want to give something back or because it meets their personal needs, but it's always for a purpose. At a GAA volunteer workshop members were asked the question of 'Why do you Volunteer?' The reasons given are varied and different for each person.

Some of the reasons are as follows:

- Because I was asked!
- I grew up with GAA in my family.
- I moved into a new area and wanted to get to know the community.
- It keeps me busy/occupied.
- I make and keep friendships.
- It helps my career.
- I got involved via my children.
- I wanted to "give something back" after my playing career ended.
- I want to be associated with something positive and successful.
- I became unemployed for a while and felt my occupation had a lot to offer.
- I retired early, and had an interest in GAA and some "time on my hands".

Even more revealing are the reasons why people do not volunteer.

Any attempt to recruit new members' needs to take cognisance of these factors.

The reasons, taken from various sources, are as follows;

- I was not asked (quoted in research as the main reason).
- I don't have the skills required.
- I'll be over-burdened with work ... and will never "escape" from it.
- I don't have the confidence ...or the time ... or the interest.
- I don't know how to get involved.
- Lack of interest/enthusiasm.
- Clubs don't sell themselves/lack of communication.

- I don't know about the GAA or the local Club (much as we might think they do) ... or, worse, they have a poor image of the club.
- I have a poor image of the Club.

The above lists contain many lessons for those who want to recruit volunteers into their club. Most of us can see ourselves reflected in many of the reasons given and awareness and good management can ensure valuable volunteers are kept, affirmed and refreshed.

It is a fact that people do sometimes leave and we need to be aware of why they do so. Apart from the obvious reasons like burnout, personality clashes and frustration at the staleness of the club, those who leave because they feel their involvement has ended organically send out a particular message to club management committees. Later on, some ideas will be presented with a view to holding on to ex-players and parents whose children have moved past the underage scene and now see no role for themselves within the club.

DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR INCREASED PARTICIPATION

Developing a club plan is a good way of promoting a positive image for the club and will give people a sense that the club is going in the right direction.

To attract volunteers you need to have a clear understanding of why you want them and what you need them to do.

A Volunteer Action plan tells you who, where, when, and what you need to do in order to meet club goals. More specifically, it gives a focus and direction for the club.

Volunteer Action Plan

<p>The template below offers six areas to consider in the management of volunteers and offers example strategies you might like to consider implementing. While it's recommended you give consideration to each area, you may not find it necessary to provide as many actions as suggested.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Blank form included in the appendices</p>	
Key areas	<p>The following are key areas which your club may wish to consider in the development of a volunteer management plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment ▪ Selection ▪ Induction ▪ Retention & Recognition ▪ Training & Development ▪ Succession Management

<p>Checklist</p>	<p>When developing a comprehensive checklist it is important to ensure all members of the club are consulted. This should be your club’s checklist for enhancing and improving volunteer management within your club. – Sample checklist in appendices</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>This section provides you with example objectives or actions to address each item in the checklist. You should ensure that all objectives developed are achievable and within the club’s operating budget. The status of each can be updated at regular meetings and the volunteer management plan can be amended as required.</p> <p>It is important to make sure your objectives are SMART. This commonly-used acronym reminds us that objectives should be:</p> <p>Specific – Your objective is tightly focused and concrete.</p> <p>Measurable – You have defined a means to quantify your efforts.</p> <p>Attainable – Your objective may be a stretch to achieve; however, at the same time, the bar has not been set unrealistically high.</p> <p>Relevant – Your volunteer programmes objectives mesh with the overall goals of your organization.</p> <p>Time-oriented – Set a deadline for which to accomplish your objective (e.g., six or twelve months).</p>
<p>Timeline</p>	<p>Allocate an achievable timeline against each of the strategies.</p>
<p>Action Officer</p>	<p>Best practice to achieve outcomes is to delegate a person or team to lead and track the progress of each strategy. Allocate an accountable person who will manage and lead the ongoing development of the strategy.</p>

Volunteer Recruitment

Developing a plan for recruiting volunteers will prompt you to ask some very important questions.

- Why do you want or need new volunteers?
- How many Volunteers do you need?
 - ❖ What is the purpose of the activity?
 - ❖ What are the key tasks and responsibilities involved?
 - ❖ What skills are needed to perform this activity?
- Who is going to find and get the new volunteers?
- Where are the new volunteers?
- How should you approach potential volunteers?
- How should you respond if you get a yes, a maybe, or a no?

WHY DO YOU NEED NEW VOLUNTEERS?

Club committees know at all times that more help is needed, but sometimes they find it difficult to assign a willing volunteer to a particular task within the club.

This is where a recruitment plan can help. Setting up a 'recruitment sub-committee', whose role is to oversee recruitment of new volunteers, is a good start.

HOW MANY VOLUNTEERS DO YOU NEED?

The first task of the sub-committee is to identify all the tasks within the club, to group them into sub-categories and then develop a method of approach which will be effective.

The table below is usually a good starting point since it gives structure to the clubs needs and lists the people who may be able to help the club.

Area of Club Activity	We need help with...	Any Necessary Skills Required?	Who could help us?	Who will ask them?
Administration	Website Registration Grant Forms P.R.			
Coaching	Go Games Underage teams Link with local school			

Culture & Heritage	Organising Scór Compiling Club History Promoting the Irish Language			
Facilities	Cleaning Club Rooms Cutting the Grass Lining the Pitch General Maintenance			
Fund Raising	Day to day running costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lotto Tickets • Sponsorship Development costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gala Dinner/Events • Cairde Schemes 			
Teams	Transport Wash Jerseys Referee Liaison			
Others				

WHO IS GOING TO FIND THESE VOLUNTEERS?

Once this information is acquired, each area of club business is given to a team leader within the club who will then divide out the tasks according to the volunteer commitment which individuals can give.

WHERE ARE THE NEW VOLUNTEERS?

There is no set place, volunteers are everywhere. However, it is useful to target certain groups and areas when looking for volunteers.

Parents & Families

The Club should see its primary target as ‘the whole family’ and should strive for family involvement in all activities. Providing games and facilities for boys and girls, and for men and women.

The demographic of the people involved with the GAA and indeed the demographic of the people attending our games has changed greatly over the past years, it is important that we embrace all sections of our community.

We need to ensure that our Clubs are welcoming, that we engage with our members and potential new members and we ask them if they would like to become involved. It is important that all members are included in the decision making process and they feel like they are an integral part of the Club

The registration of underage players now occurs on a specified night in many clubs in late winter/early spring. These nights present a great opportunity for recruiting new volunteers, since they are attended by parents who might be new to the area and might be keen to 'stay and play' with their children.

The challenge for the committee is to recognise this new talent and use it to its maximum. Once again, parents who arrive to register their children may suffer from the illusion that they have nothing to offer because they have never played the game, so tasks have to be offered which are non-games related, but still vital to the smooth running of the club.

The first task is often to put all the information forms onto a spreadsheet or database and it is surprising how many hands go up when asked if there is anyone willing to take on with this task. The Registration Form is another resource for enlisting new recruits. Below is an example of how one club recruited 25 new volunteers. This paragraph came at the end of the registration form.

Club Example: Volunteer Details:

Name:	
Contact Number:	
Email:	
Are you available to help out with some club activities:	YES / NO (please delete as appropriate)
If YES circle what you are interested in:	Coaching / Admin / Food / Hospitality / First Aid /IT /Public Relations/Photography/ Entertainment/ Transport / Fundraising/ Match Days / Other?

After the Registration Night, the information gathered is placed on the Database of Members and you have a list of people and their skills. It is best to work on the basis of a small commitment at first which can grow if the person wants to increase their involvement.

Case Study 1 discusses how the Glencar Manorhamilton GAA Club in Leitrim has successfully encouraged parents to become involved in the Club.

Retired or retiring Players

Each year, a number of players retire, or coaches whose children have moved through the club, come to the end of their involvement. Without a focused effort to keep these people involved, they can drift away. While it is appropriate to allow these people a space to get a rest from front line involvement within the club, the committee needs to be on task if they are to maintain these people. Retired players in particular have a critical role to play in the underage structures since they have benefited already from modern coaching methods and will be role models for younger players.

One member of the Executive Committee could be assigned to approach these people, get them a coaching qualification and bring them into the underage coaching team. Most ex-players will usually return when their children become involved, but few clubs can afford to lose such talent even for a few years and there is no guarantee that their children will be keen on playing the games.

Retired members of the Community

Often people who may be retired or semi-retired have more time and would enjoy the club involvement. These volunteers have long played an important role in serving the club, and that role is growing.

It is important to support and encourage ways in which retired or semi-retired members of the community can remain actively engaged and connected to the community around them.

Retirees have a vast amount of experience to offer and can pass along knowledge, skills and experience to future club leaders, as well as contribute to areas that require specialised expertise.

Face-to-face communication is an essential skill and one where younger club volunteers could benefit from having a mentor. Many individuals remember a time when communication wasn't conducted over e-mail, instant messaging, texting or social media. As a result, they have great communication and people skills and know the value of language and formal communication.

Young People

Involving young people in volunteering is great for the community, it builds young people's skills and confidence, and brings new ideas into the club.

Involving young people in the club will help you to stay in touch with the issues and challenges you face, ensure the future of volunteering within the club and help you connect with relevant future generations

At a Youth Forum, held in Croke Park, Youth Delegates from each county were asked to participate in a survey in order to assist us to evaluate the factors that influence our young people to volunteer.

Key Findings from the survey

Motivations and Benefits

Youth volunteers want to have fun and make friends but it is not a primary motivation. Young people are particularly motivated by work experience, skills, and a chance to make new contacts.

They value the career-related benefits from volunteering but also the satisfaction and enjoyment from making a contribution to the community. They want to make a difference and change things for the better.

Deterrents or Barriers

The youth delegates identified a number of deterrents or barriers to volunteering. The most significant being they are not asked. A lack of awareness of what is available, access to information and opportunities we referenced across all age groups.

The view persists that volunteering is the domain of older people, with no room for new blood.

Negative peer pressure can also be a barrier to volunteering, a small number of delegates listed this as a reason why young people are not volunteering.

Youth Volunteering Experience

Youth volunteers have generally positive views of volunteering. The majority of delegates reported the experience is rewarding and good fun. However, some delegates reported that they found the experience to be stressful. Volunteering should be enjoyable, satisfying and fun and we need to be careful that we do not over burden our young volunteers.

2 STEP APPROACH TO RECRUITING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

Our clubs rely on volunteers in many capacities, but we must keep volunteers' duties at a level where they are still enjoyable and achievable. Volunteers may feel tempted to quit if they are overwhelmed with their duties, which can negatively affect the club.

It is the aim of the GAA to foster an inclusive and respectful culture and environment that promotes health throughout the lifelong participation of our members. The welfare of our young people is paramount and ensuring that their rights and needs are recognised and respected.

Different people and different age-groups are able to handle different amounts and types of work. With this in mind, we must recognise the different abilities and tolerance levels of our young volunteers when assigning tasks.

17 – 21 Years

The age group of 17-21 yrs. should be use as an introductory phase.

During this time our young people should be introduced to the benefits of volunteering and participating within the club.

Identify the areas available for them to contribute on certain occasions, in what capacity and highlight any further development of skills enhancement needed. E.g. introduction to coaching at summer camps, which could assist with their academic studies or future career.

Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative, self-directed learning and workshops designed to develop the leadership skills that Dermot epitomised on and off the field. Participants put their enhanced leadership skills into action through a club or community-based action project.

22 – 28 Years

Within this age group we should focus on the recruitment within a specific volunteer capacity.

There is a large erosion of participating members in this age-group, the majority of whom are highly skilled individuals.

There are many reasons why this age-group decide to leave the club e.g. studying or working away from home, lose interest or some haven't achieved the same level of success on the playing field as others.

The appointment of young people on our sub-committees is a valuable way of involving and interesting these Club members in management and policy making by giving them a definite part to play in the life of the Club. It is important that roles are assigned that allow members to concentrate on their particular area of interest.

Encouraging young people to volunteer

- **Information:** Young people who are not currently volunteering lack information the requirements and benefits of getting involved, understanding the benefits of volunteering and knowing what is expected might motivate them to volunteer.
- **Experience:** One of the motivations for young people is relevant and interesting experiences where they can learn new skills, take on challenges and get work experience.
- **Training & Support:** it's important to our young people that they have the support and training for the role for which they are being prepared.
- **Incentives:** Identifying the rewards which respond to the interests of the young volunteer is essential. Find out what they want and what will motivate them from their involvement. Recognise the effort and service by awarding small gifts that honour their contribution.
- **Social Experience:** Volunteering should be enjoyable, satisfying and fun. While young people may not volunteer solely for the social side, they are more likely to continue if they are enjoying themselves.

La na gClubanna

A club open day is a great way to bring people from the community to the club, particularly those who are new to the area. An open day full of activity will let people see that the club is well organised and well managed.

It can also be of great way to encourage people to volunteer in the club. Again, ask people to volunteer in specific areas in the club and in an area that suits their particular skill-sets. Use the activity sheet as discussed to align people to tasks. Many clubs have been successful in attracting volunteers through Lá na gClubanna for example. The Lá na gClub model is one that club should consider holding each year.

Case Study 2 discusses how the club hold a family day each year and outlines how a club can recruit new volunteers through Lá na gClubanna

Scór

Here is an excellent opportunity to bring in a whole new team of people with a specific focus and skill base, which is separate and distinct to games requirements but can have the same effect on a club. It is also the perfect opportunity to try out the 'Ask and you shall receive' tactic, since very rarely is there a parish without an Irish dancing family, a singing group and an interest in Irish instrumental music.

Scór is a perfect landscape for involving other agencies in the club area;

- Rince Foirne: ceili or figure dancing
- Amhránaíocht Aonair: solo singing
- Aithriseoireacht/scéalaíocht: recitation/story-telling
- Ceol Uirlise: instrumental music
- Léiriú Stáitse: Stage Presentation
- Bailéad Ghrupa: ballad group
- Rince Seit: set dancing
- Tráth na gCeisteanna: question time

For smaller clubs who do not taste success on the field too often it is often a chance for them to grab the limelight and win county or provincial titles with a whole new group of volunteers.

Case Study 3 discusses how the Cornafean GAA Club in Cavan has embraced Scór and how this has resulted in new people becoming involved in the club who would otherwise have had little connection with the GAA

ENCOURAGING PEOPLE TO VOLUNTEER

The personal touch

Nothing can replace the value of face-to-face communication. We communicate over email and phone, but often the message is misinterpreted, also a sense of personal connection is never really created.

Body language plays a major part in our communication. It is not just how you said something, but also your facial expressions and body posture, this is lost over phone conversations, email and text messages.

Face-to-face communication leads to engagement, It ensures that the person is involved in the conversation. When you are face to face, you can see and respond to people's reactions. It sets the foundation for trust, and in the long term, creates a better working relationship.

The unit of voluntary commitment – the 'one-hour commitment'

The most basic unit of voluntary commitment is 'One Hour'. This is the shortest time per week during which one person can make a difference. While it might appear a small amount, lots of one hour voluntary commitments can add up to a highly effective, focused group of volunteers who can take much of the hard work away from others in the Club.

Below are examples of how much work can be done in one hour per week;

- Sell some lotto tickets.
- Sunday morning under eight coaching.
- Clean the social club once a week.
- Put out chairs for a club function.
- Wash jerseys for one team.
- Put out the flags before a match.
- Keep the water bottles filled for an underage team.
- Update website.
- Assist with club shop/club merchandise.

Each of these tasks are straightforward and easy to do, but when taken off the workload of a hard pressed volunteer, can make a great difference to the running of a club. More importantly, it is the minimum commitment which is required to make a difference.

If the volunteer then decided to double their commitment, once again the workload of the regular volunteers is reduced. All requests for volunteer help should begin on the understanding that the entry level commitment will be one hour. This means that the volunteer is aware of their job and is in control of their duties.

Approaching new Volunteers

The first thing to do when recruiting new volunteers is to ask them to get involved! It is advantageous that the person who is asking is known and respected by the potential volunteer.

Be specific about what they are being asked to do and the amount of time involved. Remember, one of the main reasons given for not volunteering is that people feel that they do not have the time and the necessary skills. Therefore, it is best to match people to roles within the club based on their own personal and work related skills. If the club needs someone to update the club website, ask someone with IT knowledge and explain to them the amount of time involved. Ensure that this is all they will be asked to do.

What Are the Next Steps If the Response Is a Yes, Maybe or No

A “yes”.

- As outlined, explain what it is you want them to do and make sure it’s a specific, clear-cut piece of work. (Note: See the sample role descriptions in appendices).
- Bring them along and formally introduce them to the Club.
- Avoid, at all costs, over-loading them: don’t throw anyone in at the deep end...and be clear about the time commitment involved.
- Provide them with support, maybe get an existing volunteer to mentor them

A **"maybe"** tells you that this person is not completely uninterested. Keep in touch and maybe they will be interested in joining at a later date, or becoming involved in a different capacity.

A **"no"**. Don’t take this to heart, not everyone will agree to volunteer. People choose not to volunteer for many reasons i.e. personal and/or professional commitments. If possible, try to determine if it’s a "no" or "not right now." You may have asked at a bad time. You might want to try again later, you never know when someone may have a change of heart. Remember to thank them for taking the time to consider the opportunity.

Source: Adapted from Community tool box - <http://ctb.ku.edu/en>

Best Practice for Recruiting Volunteers

The club has a duty of care to all individuals who agree to undertake work on their behalf.

The following guidelines will assist in placing volunteers in positions to which they are best suited and also help in the protection of the volunteer, young people, Coaches/Mentors, the club and the Association.

- ❖ All Volunteers should be a club member or encouraged to become a member of the club.
However, it should be noted that volunteers are under no obligation to apply for membership.
- ❖ All such appointments should be agreed by the Clubs' Management Committee
- ❖ All Coaches working with Underage players or teams must attend relevant child welfare and protection training as provided or instructed by their Governing body and must also complete a basic coach education qualification.
- ❖ All persons working or volunteering for such roles are required to co-operate with agreed vetting and background Garda/ PSNI checks within the jurisdiction in which they work and to attend coaching and training courses relevant to their roles.
- ❖ All volunteers appointed must be suitable for their chosen role(s), and should be appropriately trained, qualified and supported to fulfil such roles.
- ❖ Every volunteer should be provided with clearly defined role and responsibilities
- ❖ All Volunteers are to be briefed on Health & Safety procedures and provided with a copy of the club's Health & Safety Statement including procedures for reporting incidents.

Vetting

In the GAA any person who carries out a role of responsibility such as coaching, managing or training underage teams or indeed adult teams that contain any player under 18 yrs. of age must be vetted. It also applies to organising underage activities or refereeing underage games. Thereafter, each club shall decide if other roles merit a person being vetted.

Any person who was working with children in the GAA prior to the commencement of the Act (Children & Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 - 2016 and was not previously vetted for that role may continue in that capacity but must apply as a matter of priority to be vetted by the GAA under what is termed 'retrospective vetting'. This term and these conditions are allowed for in the Act.

For more information visit <http://www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/child-welfare-and-protection/vetting>

RETAINING OUR VOLUNTEERS

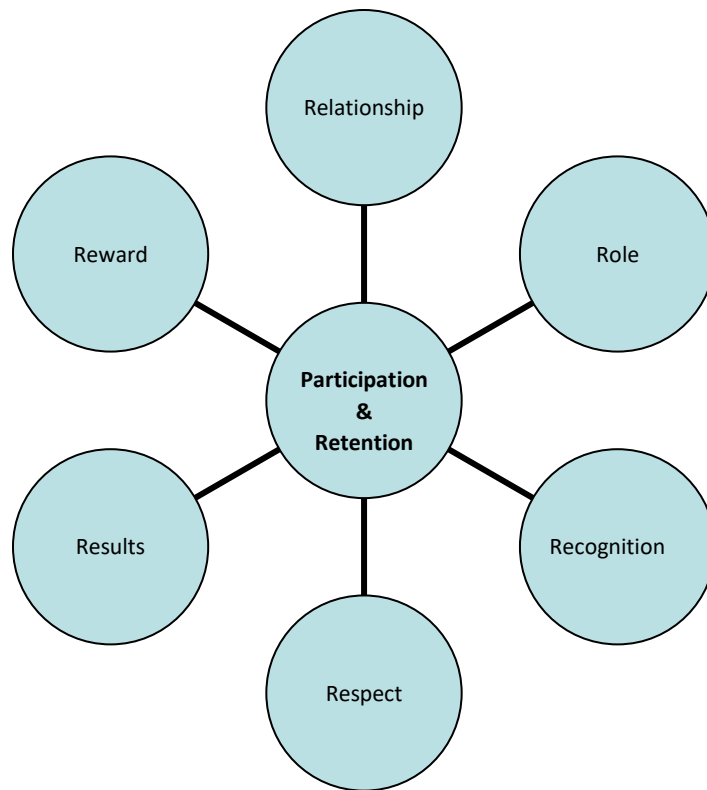
People volunteer for a variety of reasons, they want to make a difference, make friends, and give back to their club and community but they also need a balance between their volunteer efforts and their day to day lives. If they do not get this balance, they will get burned out and eventually leave.

Volunteers who continue to contribute while “burned out” may begin to become aggrieved, not because they no longer want to contribute, but because their role was not what they expected when they signed on, and because of the impositions, and impact it is making on their personal time.

What factors contribute to volunteer burnout?

- The Club is lacking in clear goals and direction.
- There is too much work to be done. People are afraid to say “no,” thinking that it won’t get done otherwise.
- There are often few rewards or recognition for a job well done.
- Too few people are involved.
- Over criticism
- Large fundraising responsibilities

It’s all-too-easy to take volunteers for granted. To keep everyone enthusiastic and refreshed we should remember the **6 R’s of participation**:



- **RELATIONSHIP**

It is often a personal invitation which convinces us to join a club. People join clubs for a multitude of reasons, to give something back; because they have some free time on their hands; to make new friends.

It is important to make sure new volunteers are welcomed warmly.

- **ROLE**

Provide a clear role description for every volunteer – **Sample roles in appendices**

Check that we haven't overloaded anyone and keep providing feedback to them.

Give people variety and don't leave anyone in the same place/role for too long.

Provide additional training or personal development to build on their knowledge and develop their skills.

- **RECOGNITION**

Constantly acknowledge volunteers, formally and informally. Tell them they have done a good job

Remember, a simple 'thank-you' is all that is required.

Let volunteers put their names to something they have helped to produce or to make happen
The club should also use its website and notes in the local newspapers to highlight the work that people are doing.

- **RESPECT**

People want their values, ideas, and time to be respected and considered in the clubs activities. It is important that we respect each other on and off the playing field and operate with integrity at all levels.

It is important to recognise official positions held by people who went before and that these people and their expertise are retained and utilised in other roles within the club.

- **RESULTS**

A club which cannot deliver on items that are promised or expected will not continue to attract volunteers. Visible projects and activities that directly impact on conditions and issues in the community are the results they are looking for in return for their participation.

- **REWARD**

Not everyone is looking for the same type of reward. Identify the rewards which respond to the interests of the volunteer. Find out what they want and what will motivate them from their involvement. Set aside a day to appreciate and recognise the effort of your volunteers.

Source: Adapted from Kaye & Wolfe 1995

In general, people stay involved in clubs because:

- They feel valued
- They feel their contribution is respected
- They feel part of the group and do not feel excluded from decision making
- They feel a sense of pride that they have contributed to the club

PROVISION OF TRAINING & RESOURCES

As already discussed, one of the reasons stated for not volunteering is that people feel they don't have the necessary skills for a particular role. Clubs can help by asking a volunteer with experience in a particular area to 'mentor' a new volunteer. This will give the new volunteer confidence in their role. The GAA provides a number of specialised training programmes and other resources that are of great benefit in helping volunteers to understand and carry out their role.

Club Officer Development:

The GAA Club Leadership Development Programme provides club officer training programmes (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and PRO) at the beginning of each year. These courses are designed to give officers an opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their roles in a confident and competent manner. Each programme will contain a series of 2-hour modules where officers will improve leadership, management and communication skills in a relaxed learning environment. For more information, visit learning.gaa.ie/administrator

Training courses are also available online at <http://learning.gaa.ie>

Club Administration Resources:

The GAA Club Manual is located on learning.gaa.ie. This manual contains information on all aspects of club administration including Club officer roles, insurance, membership, club property, communication, I.T. in the Club, Club planning etc. This manual will help new officers in particular to understand their role in the club and other aspects of club administration.

A range of other support manuals have been developed and are available to download at <http://learning.gaa.ie>:

- GAA Code of Best Practice
- GAA Code of Behaviour
- Dealing with Allegations of Abuse
- GAA Tackling Bullying
- Garda Vetting Services
- GAA Injury Benefit Fund
- Inclusion & Integration
- Transfers and Sanctions

Coaching Courses

The coach has a central role in the development of the GAA player and all club coaches should have access to coach education training. There are three GAA coaching awards available that are of particular interest to club coaches.

The Foundation Award is the introductory award for coaches. The course is aimed at beginner coaches and will enable participants to assist a coach in the organisation of activities to develop hurling or football.

The Award 1 Course is the second award on the coaching pathway of Gaelic Games and is aimed at those who have progressed through the Foundation Award and have experience as a coach. The Award 1 course has been designed to take account of the different playing capacities that exist between children (up to 12 years), youths (age 13 – 18) and Adults (age 19+) and the competencies that a coach is required to display when working with each of the playing populations. Therefore, coaches can specialise in coaching the particular players that they are involved with.

The Award 2 course is the third programme on the coaching pathway of Gaelic Games. The course is aimed at experienced coaches that have progressed through the Foundation and Award 1 programmes. The Award 2 course has been developed to take account of the different playing capacities that exist between children (up to 12 years), youths (age 13 – 18) and adults (age 19+) and the competencies that a coach is required to display when working with each of the playing populations. This allows coaches to further their knowledge, experience and capabilities when working with the various playing populations.

To find out about these courses, contact your county Coaching Officer or visit <http://learning.gaa.ie>

Coaching Resources:

The Fun Do Learning Resource Pack is a superb resource for those coaching Kids. It contains a series of manuals, DVD's and DVD-ROMs that outline how to organise fun-filled coaching sessions for primary school aged children. This pack is available through the Games Development office in Croke Park. All those coaching children should have this pack.

All coaches should consult the GAA Learning and Development website for specific information on coaching child, youth and adult players, including information on coaching specific skills in Hurling and Gaelic Football.

The Games Development Department have developed a GAA Activity Planner to support coaches in planning coaching sessions. The planner is available online (<http://learning.gaa.ie/planner/>) and features video, animation and text-based resources of in-excess of 300 games and activities that can be used to develop Gaelic games

GAA Coach Education Manuals

To support the Coach Education programme, a range of manuals have been developed and are available to download.

- Award 1 Child Coaches manual
- Award 1 Youth Coaches manual
- Award 1 Adult Coaches manual
- Coach Education Game and Skill Cards

The Coach Education materials are available to download free of charge from the Resources and Publications section.

Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative

Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative opens to GAA members in 8 counties (*Roscommon, Galway, Donegal, Monaghan, Dublin, Kildare, Tipperary, and Cork.*)

This unique programme evokes and honours the values Dermot Earley epitomised and tries to foster them in a new generation of young Irish leaders. Applicants to the Dermot Earley Youth Leadership Initiative must be aged between 15 - 18 years old

The initiative runs over three modules between September and May and involves 30 hours of workshops designed to develop the leadership skills that Dermot epitomised on and off the field. 30 hours of self-directed learning is also required before the participants put their enhanced leadership skills into action through a club or community-based action project.

Those who complete all three modules will have an option to graduate from NUIG with a Foundation Certificate in Youth Leadership and Community Action. The workshops will take place in participants own county (see application form for more details). The lucky participants will also be gathered for at least one special event in Croke Park.

Helping to facilitate their journey are a troupe of facilitators who volunteered from within the GAA and Foróige and have received four days training in NUIG, achieving a Foundation Diploma in Training and Education for their time and efforts. For a more detailed outline of what is involved please visit <http://community.gaa.ie/>

Other Club Programmes

There are a number of programmes run across the Association with a particular emphasis on providing guidance and information to club members in a variety of areas.

These programmes are as follows:

- Pre-AGM Course
- Club Planning Programme
- The GAA Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programme (ASAP)
- Critical Incident Response Plan

Club Leadership & Succession Management

What happens when a person who currently holds a key position or important skill set is moving on or is no longer available? Too often we see club officers remain in executive positions for a number of years because there is no one willing or suitable to take on the role.

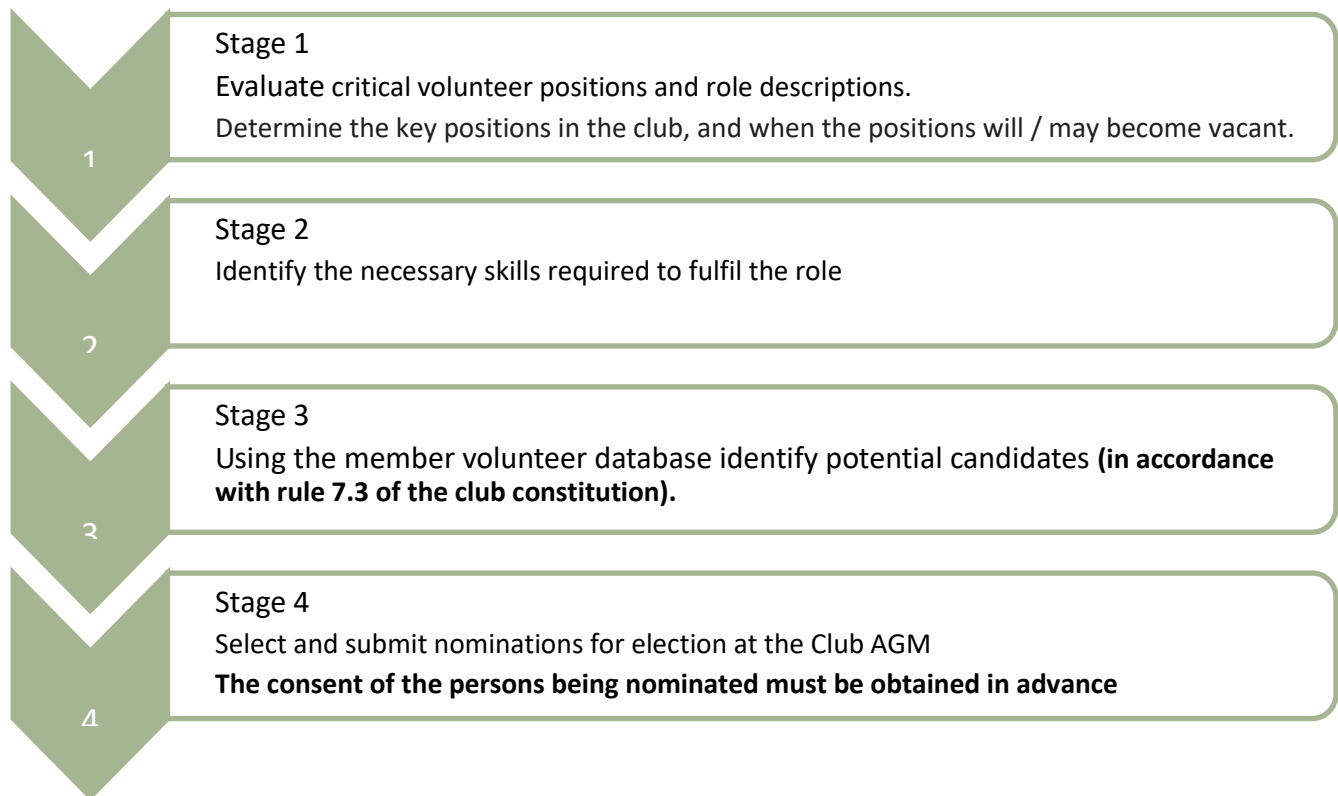
Succession plan

A succession plan is the process of identifying and developing new leaders to continue in a position when the current officer, for whatever reason, is no longer able to remain.

Succession planning ensures the continuity of the management and leadership of the Club and safeguards against the loss of critical information or knowledge.

A successful succession plan will;

- Identify future leaders and plan for the replacement of officers arising from AGMs or unforeseen circumstances
- Motivate members to put themselves forward for positions within the club
- Create a more desirable environment for volunteers, as they can commit to serve for a specific time frame
- Avoid volunteer burnout as the workload is shared among volunteers
- Enable seamless changeover of key positions with minimal disruption to the club
- Assist the club in effectively delivering on its strategic plan, despite a changeover of officers



***Rule 7.25 Club Constitution**

Should any member of the executive committee resign, be deemed to have resigned, or his position is otherwise lapse, the remaining members of the executive committee shall, at their discretion, have the power to fill the vacancy, by co-opting a replacement from the body of the full membership.

Implementing a succession planning policy

- Discuss the processes and benefit of succession planning with the club executive committee. It is important that all members would buy in to the process. Propose and action the introduction of a succession plan.
- Consider a range of people, don't over burden the old reliables.
- Enlist the help of the recruitment sub-committee to identify and suggest potential successors.
- Create positions for youth on the club committee, this helps young people to gain committee experience.
- Have clear role descriptions for volunteer positions
- Commit to good record keeping, ensure that your volunteer database is up to date.
- Provide training for volunteers where appropriate, encourage a range of members to attend. This will ensure that at least one other person in the club has a good working knowledge of each role in case they need to step in.
- Introduce a volunteer handover procedure or operations manual so that when a volunteer departs they don't take all their valuable knowledge with them.
- Review the succession plan regularly and make any necessary changes

*A succession plan should be developed in conjunction with the overall Club Plan and the Volunteer Recruitment plan.

The Club AGM

It is advisable that a three or five year rule be implemented in clubs which limits the number of years a senior officer can serve.

Clubs which do not operate a defined term of office can enter a comfort zone of complacency with regard to the office bearers positions. This leads to an attitude where members do not think it worth their while going to the AGM because all the same officers will be returned and no change will occur.

Members who might have ambitions for themselves or the club are often reluctant to oppose sitting officers because of the fear of losing, upsetting their colleague or causing a fallout within the club. Therefore the AGM becomes a stale affair with no change and all officers returned. The poor attendance can also be lamented by hard working officers who might like to see a new person in their position, but don't want to hand over to the wrong person.

This creates a more focused committee who know they have only a certain time to deliver their vision and can make way for other members who might want to graduate to a more senior position in the club later on. It also avoids the 'clique' mentality which keeps good people away or gives the impression of a closed shop.

The Club Constitution states that at least 9 officers and five other members be elected to the Club Executive Committee at the AGM. This gives greater ownership of events and facilities to the committee members and divides out the tasks evenly.

The following tips are useful in considering a recruitment drive through the AGM

- Have a five year or a three year rule to keep the club fresh.
- When an officer has reached the end of their term, identify ways in which they can stay involved.
- Have robust structures which divide the work out clearly through dynamic sub-committees.
- Ensure the committee has an agreed plan to improve the club through a development plan.
- Give everyone present a chance to have their say

The Club Leadership Development Programme is designed to provide GAA Club Officers with the basic knowledge and core leadership skills required to fulfil their roles effectively.

Officers who complete the programme will:

- Gain a better understanding of what their role involves
- Develop basic leadership, management and communication skills
- Experience increased role satisfaction
- Have an awareness of where to access resources and supports
- Be able to share ideas and solve problems with fellow officers
- Be better prepared for future roles in the Association
- Get a Certificate of Achievement

Communicating with your membership

Many clubs collect membership at the AGM and do not communicate with their members again until it is time to renew their membership. At some point, people are entitled to ask if they are getting value for money or if their membership means anything to them.

For this reason, it is critical that a relationship exists between the Club Executive and its members. Paying membership to the club is the first sign that people want to be associated with the club and this should be used to its fullest advantage.

If a club is communicating with its membership on a regular basis, then people are more in tune with what is happening and the concept of a 'closed shop' or 'clique' does not exist. This will help in encouraging more volunteering and enhance the positive image of the club, as already discussed.

It is now necessary for all clubs to hold a database of all its members. This can be a toolkit in itself and serve as a highly effective way of communicating with all Members, Officers and Players. Anyone with basic office skills will know how to mail-merge from the database and send out a letter, newsletter or notice of the AGM or Registration Night.

For more on the topic of communication, consult the communication section of the club manual, on <http://learning.gaa.ie/administrator>

PROMOTING YOUR CLUB

A positive image of the club and the image it has in the community is of critical importance.

The GAA as an organisation has a powerful image and is seen as progressive, well organised and modern in its outlook. Therefore, people will want to be associated with a GAA club that is positive in its outlook, is well managed and well respected in the local community.

The club must be seen as

1. Open and welcoming.
2. An energetic place, full of enthusiastic people and full of activity.
3. Making a major contribution to the community.
4. Well organised where people's time is productive.
5. Safe (especially for children) and well managed.
6. A vibrant and successful organisation.

Communicating with your local community is vital to successful recruitment.

- Think about promoting your club in your wider community.
- Use the provided recruitment promotion material in your community – available from www.gaa.ie

- Use less onerous sounding words like ‘get involved ‘or ‘helping out‘.
- Develop a slide show that puts a personal “face” to your club, this can be played at registration day or Lá na gClubanna
- Use your local community centre, newsletters, supermarkets, church, local groups etc. to promote volunteering opportunities.
- Ensure your volunteer recruitment message is promoted using things like;
 - A letter
 - Club website
 - Social media
 - A poster
 - Club banner
 - Club newsletter

*Remember that you’re not only promoting to existing members but also externally to non-club members.

EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF YOUR PROGRAMME

It is important to make sure that we are looking after the needs of our volunteers. Are we providing the right volunteer with the right job? Are we communicating properly with our volunteers? Are they getting enough support? Where do they see themselves getting involved?

The club committee, in conjunction with the sub-committee, should evaluate the progress of your programme, this should take place in 3 months/100 days following its implementation.

Evaluation is essential for the development of your programme and is a way to answer the following:

1. 'How are we doing?'
2. 'Are we doing what we said we would do?'
3. 'Is it working?'
4. 'What else have we learned?'

How do we evaluate the Programme?

- The first question to ask yourself is, "What areas of my volunteer programme am I currently measuring?" The success of your programme should not just focus on the quantitative outcomes but also on the quality of the volunteering experience for the Volunteer.
- Outcomes require some comparison, so you may need to get a baseline (or initial set of data) and then allow time to pass before you can conduct the second measurement

Commonly used KPIs (key performance indicators) for volunteer programmes include (but are not limited to):

- Number of volunteers recruited
- Hours worked per volunteer
- Are volunteers receiving adequate training to perform their roles?
- Did the programme achieve its goals and within the timeline agreed?
- What is the outcome for the volunteer – has their attitude changed? Are they more positive about the club?
- Are you retaining more volunteers?
- Is the community more aware of the activities of the club?

A Survey or Questionnaire is most efficient way to gather information and provides structure to the evaluation of your volunteer programme.

Interpreting and Reporting your Findings

Once you have collected the information you will need to analyse and interpret your findings.

This might include:

1. Did you meet the targets you set for volunteer recruitment, any lessons learned?
2. Are your volunteers from a wide and diverse range of backgrounds?
3. Is there any area which needs further development?

You will need to write up your conclusions based on the evidence you have found. When interpreting information, consider if there are any other possible explanations for your findings. Once you have identified gaps, you need to focus on how to make improvements.

These need to be realistic, specific and achievable. This may be a good opportunity to review targets for outputs and outcomes.

Additional support tools

- Volunteer Questionnaire and analysis toolkit
- Measure the effectiveness of volunteer hours spent against the amount of work performed - [Link to spreadsheet](#).

Appendices

SAMPLE VOLUNTEER ACTION PLAN

_____ Club

Checklist	Objective	Baseline (Current Level)	Action Officer	Timeline	Target
RECRUITMENT					
Source ideas to conduct volunteer recruitment within the local community.	Develop a set of actions around recruitment, over a specific time frame, and identify useful ways to integrate within the community and promote the club's volunteer roles.				
Have clearly defined opportunities for volunteer involvement in the club	Assess the club capacity and identify where volunteer roles are required both for long term and short term volunteers. Tailor recruitment needs on the basis of the assessment.				
Identify creative ways to attract volunteers	Research ways in which other clubs attract volunteers. Use promotional tools which attract volunteers with the necessary skills to fulfil the identified roles.				
SELECTION					
Ensure an appropriate screening process is conducted	Develop a process whereby a club official is present to meet the new volunteers to ensure the volunteer is appropriate for the role.				
Match volunteer skills, abilities and interests with roles	Collect volunteer skills, abilities and interests so these can be match with available volunteer positions.				
INDUCTION					
Job Descriptions	Ensure the volunteer roles have a position description outlining the role and responsibilities, and skills and time commitment required.				
Induction Information	Develop a document which volunteers can access, listing all the required information necessary to the volunteer.				
Collate contact details of club members	Develop a process to collate and update volunteer membership details. This can include a brief profile of the volunteer.				

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT					
List training opportunities for volunteers	Identify and list appropriate and relevant training and development opportunities for volunteers of your club.				
Identify volunteer career progression opportunities for each volunteer	Identify ways in which the club can offer internal opportunities for rotation/progression in different positions.				
Conduct regular review of volunteer skills and abilities	Identify gaps in skills and abilities and plan to fill the gaps over a targeted period. Where necessary provide up-skilling or further training.				
RETENTION AND RECOGNITION					
Understand the motivations around volunteer participation in the club	Survey volunteers to find their motivations behind becoming a volunteers and use this information in marketing and promotion campaigns				
Volunteer Appreciation	Implement a Volunteer Appreciation event as part of end of year celebrations where volunteers can be thanked and awarded for their support and dedication to the club.				
Have a relevant reward and recognition system in place	Assess the current approaches to reward and recognition and research ways to implement an ongoing system				
Maintain and sustain community partnerships	Identify and maintain strong links with community organisations to help source additional resources when required.				
Communicate effectively with volunteers	Provide pathways to communicate information to volunteers. Develop useful tools such as website, newsletter and flyers – Twitter and Facebook				
SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT					
Create positions for youths on club committees	Identify areas available for them to contribute or where youth members have a particular interest.				
Conduct exit surveys when a volunteer leaves	Develop a basic exit survey which can be done via email, phone or face to face with volunteers who resign. Monitor and track reasons for volunteer's resignations and develop ways to overcome reoccurring issues.				

Checklist for recruiting volunteers

Use this as a checklist and follow the steps through:

- Appoint a Volunteer Recruitment sub-committee.
- Decide why your club needs volunteers, how many, and what you can offer them.
- Work out specific role for volunteers.
- Write position descriptions for each role.
- Plan your recruitment campaign.
- Appoint to specific positions.
- Induct them into their new roles, providing support and feedback regularly.
- Support opportunities for training.
- Reward and recognise volunteers appropriately. Remember, that a simple 'thank you' is all that is required.
- Make necessary changes in roles and volunteers duties.
- Review these steps regularly.

Club Exercise

How would you view your Club?

Picture yourself as a person/ parent with no interest in the local club or in the GAA. Your child tells you that they want to play Hurling and Gaelic Football with the local club. How would you view the club?

- Is the club well managed?
- Do we have a good image/reputation in the locality?
- Are we welcoming?
- Are we active?
- Are we interesting?
- Are we positive in our outlook?
- Are we forward thinking?
- Are we fair to everybody?
- Is there positive and enjoyable involvement for children/youth players?
- Having answered the above questions, would you allow your child to get involved in the club and would you get involved as a volunteer? The answers to all these questions needs to be “yes”.

How would you view volunteering in your Club?

- When you think of the terms volunteering & volunteers what comes to mind?
- How is volunteering perceived in our club and community?
- What encouraged you when you first started to volunteer? (Activities, interaction with other volunteers, skills development)
- What were your expectations at the time? Did it meet your expectations?
- Was your involvement as a volunteer rewarding?
- Starting out as a volunteer, how could things have been made easier for you?
- How would you encourage another person to volunteer? What advice would you give?

Sample Role Descriptions

Role: Club Registrar

- Description:** Register players and members on the online registration system.
- Time:** This will involve about 6 hours work in total on the online system, in January, February and March. It will also involve attending the club juvenile registration day in early February.
- Training:** Online training will be available
- Benefits:** You will be a part of the biggest sporting and community based organisation in Ireland and play a vital role in our club.

Role: Under 10's coach

- Description:** To provide coaching to our under 10 footballers in a fun and safe environment.
- Time:** Coaching will take place each Saturday morning from 11a.m. until 12 p.m. from April to September. There will be 4 under 10 coaches in the club as well as number of parents helping out. Therefore, if you can't make it each Saturday, there will be plenty of cover.
- Training:** You will be provided with a GAA Foundation Coaching Course and further training, if required.
- Benefits:** You will be a part of the biggest sporting and community based organisation in Ireland and play a vital role in our club.

Sample letter to club members

Once potential volunteers have been identified, they should be asked in person. However, a club can also write to all its members and ask them to volunteer themselves for particular tasks on the activity sheet.

Below is an example of a letter which could be sent to Club Members

Tomás, a chara,

I am writing to all our members with a view to sharing out the tasks which are carried out around the club every week.

As you know, our club is always on the lookout for new volunteers. As a valued member, we would appreciate a volunteer commitment from you if you would be prepared to share an hour each week to help us out. I have attached a list of tasks which need to be done every week. None of these jobs last any more than one hour and will be reviewed every three months, so the minimum commitment you can give is one hour per week and for three months. If after this time you wish to end your involvement, that is fine, but we would hope you would continue to help us out.

Please take a look at the attached sheet on which we have listed all tasks which take about an hour per week to accomplish. I would be grateful if you could simply tick the task that you can do and sign it. You can post it back, or leave it into the club.

I appreciate your help.

Le meas,

(NAME)

Cathaoirleach an Chlub

CASE STUDY 1 - A family that plays together, stays together

Glencar Manorhamilton GAA Club in Leitrim – Creating a good image of the club in the community by promoting the family unit.

The Glencar Manorhamilton GAA Club in County Leitrim is very proud of the rapport it has with all of our members and the community at large. This did not happen by accident as in former years and indeed at present we have found that the Scór competitions were an avenue into club involvement to people who may not have been otherwise interested. We learned very quickly that parents do appreciate when their children are invited to partake in activities suitable to their age and their talents. Not all children are sports minded nor indeed are all adults but the scope of the membership of the club was greatly widened when a great number of talented musicians, singers, dancers, actors and quiz enthusiasts represented the club at county, provincial and national level. Thankfully the club has had major successes in Scór and those who became involved for that reason we now find have remained as very active club members and volunteers. Needless to say the proper Garda vetting guidelines are employed prior to any appointments being made.

One of our club members and a former County player works as a Games Promotion Officer and Tutor with Leitrim County Board. He volunteered his services to the club and we were glad to tap into his expertise in relation to getting very young children involved as this is an even greater spur to parents to lend a hand. In 2010, he and three others were the founding members of the Glencar Manorhamilton Football Academy for boys and girls aged 4-10 years. It was agreed to cater for boys and girls in this age bracket as this was seen as a more family centred approach and it was decided to call it an Academy as opposed to a Nursery as it was felt the name was unique and more attractive to the older children. An Academy Sponsor was also secured and their name is displayed on Academy related news items and merchandise given to the children. Perhaps the success of the Academy is due to the fact that it runs for the whole year. In summer the Academy runs outdoors on our local GAA pitch and if weather is inclement on one of the two astro-turfs in the area (Manor Astro & St Clare's NS Astro). This is important in itself for it means that the children are always trained in appropriate underfoot conditions. From late autumn until late spring we hold the Academy indoors in St Clare's Comprehensive School Sports Hall. The availability of these various facilities is always open to us and we appreciate the continual support from those in charge. A payment of €2 or €5 per family per week does not form part of club funds but is set aside for the provision of Academy gear, training equipment and other requirements for the participating children.

A coaching programme has been devised by the GPO and all our coaches are trained to deliver it. He attends sessions on a quarterly basis to observe progress, to give feedback and support to the coaches and introduce the next level where appropriate. The coaching given to the youngsters is always age appropriate and fun with absolutely everyone being given equal attention. Parents are regularly invited at the end of a coaching session to come into the circle with their children. The youngsters are given feedback and maybe a specific skill to practice for the next session while demonstrations are given to the parents on how to coach the skill at home. This resulted in a number of parents volunteering to do coaching courses which were run in-house by the GPO. In the intervening five year period more coaches have been brought on board, Garda Vetted and undergone and received their certificates and we are very glad that a number of those were parents who heretofore were not involved in any aspect of the club or indeed the GAA. Although he does not work for Leitrim GAA, we are extremely fortunate that the GPO volunteered his spare time to work alongside the three other men to develop and sustain the Club Academy. The willing involvement of the parents is crucial too and they themselves realise that a drop off system for their children to be left in the care of others is far from ideal. The involvement of members of our senior men and ladies teams in the Academy has been paramount to its success. They are role models within the club and they heighten the profile of the Academy and have certainly assisted in increasing playing numbers.

We make a particular point of having as many family events as possible in every calendar year. One of the highlights of the year for the children is the Annual Academy Tournament to allow them to showcase to the club and in particular to their parents the skills and teamwork they have developed. On this day, parents are invited to be managers of teams, umpires, referees and mentors. In the annual St Patrick's Day Parade in the town the members of our Academy including parents march in our club colours and this also serves as a promotional exercise for families who may have very young children who have yet to become involved. We also run a Family Table Quiz at Easter which serves as a great social event for families in the club area. In recent years, a number of families from Irish and other backgrounds have moved to the area and we immediately inform them of the facilities available in our club through posters, school talks and leaflet drops. All of these are made extremely welcome by our membership. In addition to the Academy our club hosts blitzes, the GAA Cúl Camp on an annual basis and as well as this runs its own very successful Club Camps during the school holiday periods. Between twenty and thirty coaches' work on a voluntary basis at our camps and the coaches are made up of juvenile and senior players as well as parents, many of whom take annual leave from work to be in attendance.

In our parent group there are obviously people of varying talents and we encourage these people to use their expertise for the good of the Academy and the club. Examples include photography, videoing, IT, record keeping, hospitality, entertainment, public relations, health and safety, stewarding, fundraising, kit management, transport, laundry and on our many social occasions the organisation and provision of refreshments and goodies for all those involved. Many club events would not have possible had it not been for the willing help of Academy parents.

It will take time to fully realise the effects of the Academy but we feel we are doing everything in our power to encourage every family unit in the area to be part of and very proud of Glencar Manorhamilton GAA. We look on all of this as a very solid foundation for the further advancement of our playing and supporter base, our volunteers and our family membership.

Together we can make it work!

CASE STUDY 2 - Identifying new volunteers through open days

Leading club officers seldom get an opportunity to pause and reflect, to take stock and plan, to celebrate and communicate because running a club from day to day demands a lot of time and effort and there is often little time for much else. Now with Lá na gClub there is a designated date in the GAA calendar which is the ideal opportunity for club officers to do something different. Lá na gClub is like no other club day. It is an ideal opportunity to showcase the great things that are happening in our clubs and to highlight the important role they play in our communities.

Ideally the day should consist of participation, celebration, commemoration and integration. Advertise the day's events imaginatively in the local schools, among your membership and through social media. Part of the day should consist of playing our games at all levels and across all codes with special emphasis on underage. Make sure ladies football and camogie teams are involved because participation by everybody is key. Invite back former players and officials and make them very welcome. They may have blazed the trail, forged the tradition and perhaps developed the facilities which today's youth enjoy. Organise a game between a past and present/selection with the emphasis on fun. Invite newcomers to the area to come along. Make sure they too are made very welcome. They will soon see that getting involved in the club is an opportunity for them to integrate into the community. Don't neglect the cultural side of the club so it is important that participants at Scór are involved not just winners but all who took part. Provide a cup of tea for the adults and have refreshments for the children.

Putting a programme of events together for Lá na gClub is like choosing from a long menu. Anything is possible but don't try to squeeze everything into one day. There is always next year. Make sure that whatever events your club undertakes are meticulously planned. Don't leave the work to one or two but make sure the club's executive is involved at all stages with perhaps a small sub-committee leading the organising. Remember all activities must be supervised in line with the Gaelic Games Code of Behaviour. Check that whatever events you organise are covered under the GAA's Insurance scheme because there may be restrictions with some activities.

Make your Lá na gClub a great community day to remember. Let the voluntary ethos shine forth. Try and make sure that everybody goes home happy and when the day is over sit down with your fellow officers and evaluate what events went well, what didn't and how things could be improved for next year. And start planning for the next Lá na gClub straight away.

CASE STUDY 3 - How participating in Scór has been of benefit to the Club

Cornagean GAA Club, Cavan

The recent history of Cornagean GAA club in Cavan presents a good example of how Scór participation can greatly benefit a club. Back in the late 1970s the club faced an uncertain future. It had fallen within a few decades from one of the dominant clubs in the county to one of the weakest through depopulation and a shrinkage of its catchment area. An air of defeatism and apathy threatened the club's very existence.

In the late 1970s, the club adopted a twin-track approach to halting this decline. The key elements of this strategy were the development of underage football in the club and a concentrated club effort in Scór.

A crucial decision was made to field acts in all the various disciplines in both Scór na nÓg and Scór Sinsir. In fact at the time they were one of the first clubs in Cavan to do so. This required a huge effort to involve as many local people as possible to take part in Scór, both as participators and in coaching and training the various acts.

While the club's resurgence on the pitch took many years to bear fruition, it enjoyed almost immediate success in Scór, winning multiple county titles within a few years and going on to taste further success at provincial and national finals by the mid-1980s and subsequently. These successes generated fresh interest in the club among the local community, in particular attracting many families who had not previously had any involvement in the GAA.

Over the years, many of the people who originally joined the club through Scór have gone on to play pivotal roles within the club and over the years their children and grandchildren have represented the club both on the field of play and in Scór.

Today, Cornagean is one of the county's leading Scór clubs and is also enjoying a resurgence in both juvenile and adult football. The despair and demoralisation of a generation ago is gone forever and the club can thank Scór for playing a huge role in kickstarting its renaissance.

CASE STUDY 4 - Health & Wellbeing Initiative – A catalyst for Developing a Community Based GAA Club

Cumann PheadairNaofa, Warrenpoint, Co. Down

Cumann PheadairNaofa, Warrenpoint Health & Wellbeing Initiative has played a pivotal role in the club being recognised as The Irish News Ulster GAA Large Club of the Year three times in the last five years. The creation of a Health & Wellbeing Project linked to a Community Outreach Programme was a central pillar of the club's initial 5 Year Club Development Plan launched on 30 March 2010.

Katrina Kernan was appointed Health & Wellbeing Officer and the late Ann McGeeney was appointed Community Outreach Officer and together, working with the club Senior Management Committee, created a combined Community Outreach / Health & Wellbeing Programme of Activities which enabled the club to achieve the core focus of its 5 Year Development Plan which was to operate as a GAA club at the heart of its local community for whole of family for whole of life.

The guiding principle of this Health & Wellbeing Programme was to take a wholehearted approach to Health & Wellbeing – not just symptoms but underlying issues and to develop a range of simple actions across the age ranges, young and older children – adults and older people in our community, to create a stronger GAA club and a strong local community in Warrenpoint.

Central to this programme was close integration with the newly appointed Club / School Liaison Officer at the time, Anne McCormack, and to develop healthy club activities as part of the Club / School Liaison Programme in the local primary school, St. Dallan's Primary School, in Warrenpoint.

So in those early days, the club learnt that it was important to think about what needs there are and build a plan around these in terms of healthy living and community outreach and what were the opportunities and to seize these. Having Community Health & Wellbeing as part of the club's plan enabled everyone to buy into it, and the idea was to keep it simple, and to identify opportunities for creating partnerships with other health and community organisations so as to ensure that the club did not reinvent the wheel, but rather compliment it, and build upon, what was already existing in the local community area and ultimately to work collaboratively with people actively involved in the club and outside the club to share the burden and the glory.

In those early years, the benefits, could be separated into, on the field and off the field. In terms of on the field, the benefits were, a greater awareness of the importance of good diet; greater sense of connection – among young leaders in their teams and a greater respect among the different game codes and cultural activities within the club. Off the field the benefits were greater numbers of people participating in club activities; an enhanced sense of belonging; greater interest in the club and what it is trying to do; greater respect for the GAA within and outside the community, particularly from institutions e.g. the local District Council, the PSNI, Education Board, Health & Social Services Board.

In March 2013, the club were invited along with St. Finbarr's, Cork to act as the two pilot clubs for GAA Healthy Club Pilot Programme. As part of this programme an online survey of members was carried out, and this identified 3 areas of being of key importance going forward and these were as follows:

1. Physical activity;
2. Resilience and Mental Wellbeing;
3. Social Inclusion and Community Outreach.

In terms of the Club / School Liaison Programme with St. Dallan's Primary School for example in 2014 the focus was on mental health, with particular emphasis on cyber bullying and appropriate use of social media. This theme was introduced to compliment the Beat the Cyber Bullying project which was delivered in Cumann PheadairNaofa for parents of underage members as part of the Healthy Club project. In preparation for the annual GAA Health & Wellbeing Day, pupils completed a 6 weeks curricular based project on GAA Health & Wellbeing through the medium of English, Maths, Science and Art. The theme of the art competition was "GAA healthy Lifestyle" and the pupils work was exhibited in the window of a local shop. During the day, a Healthy Lifestyle Seminar was delivered by representatives of Ulster GAA Council and a healthy eating theme was adopted in the school in collaboration with Southern Education & Library Board project for "P2 Healthy Breaks Initiative". This was launched by Down GAA footballers and coaches Benny Coulter and Mark Poland. All pupils in the school also participated in GAA Coaching sessions and Nutritional Advice sessions on Health & Wellbeing.

The GAA Health & Wellbeing Club Liaison Programme in the school has evolved over the years and one of the very interesting projects was as part of the physical activity and a desire to encourage greater numbers of young girls to participate in physical recreation sports, three teachers from St. Dallan's Primary School were encouraged to become new Ladies Gaelic Football coaches within the Cumann PheadairNaofa club.

As part of the Club / School Liaison Healthy Club Project a ground breaking specialist 8 week GAA coaching programme for children with development needs received Occupational Therapy as part of their statutory education (P1 – P7), and this was delivered by Cumann PheadairNaofa's Senior Football volunteers, Paul Trainor and Ryan McAleenan (both trainee student teachers at the time). This was acknowledged as a pioneer programme.

Cumann PheadairNaofa continues to be very active in the GAA Healthy Club Project at both County, Provincial and National level and for the current year the club has focused on a number of exciting initiatives including 25 young people in the 15 – 16 age group (boys and girls) completing an ONC Level 1 Leadership 10 week programme incorporating Health & Safety Awareness facilitated by the Education Authority and currently utilising their skills to assist with volunteering in the GAA club.

Bespoke projects were targeted at specific needs, notably a course of Water Safety Training for our club teenagers living in a coastal town, provision of table tennis tables in the club to encourage greater whole family use of the club during the winter months. The launch of the Healthy Club Phase 2 was integral to the recent GAA Health & Wellbeing Day at St. Dallan's Primary School. Community Health & Wellbeing had a presence in all club activities in promoting healthy food including: Family Fun Day, organising nutritional seminars for Senior Footballers, the promotion of healthy minds through involvement of PSNI in Club / School activities, promoting greater internet safety and in order for young people to be responsible citizens, the proactive development of an Alcohol Substance and Abuse Programme within the club and local community. In addition a Social Initiative Programme for the over 50 age group is organised by the club.

A new Phase 2 Healthy Club calendar of events for 2016 and 2017 has now been finalised and is being implemented with a number of new initiatives.

To summarise, the Healthy Club Project has created many benefits for St. Peter's GAA Club and has greatly enhanced the ability of the club to continue to operate as a progressive GAA club at the heart of its local community for the whole of family for the whole of life.