

Supporting and Assessing



The Football Workforce has produced a checklist of ideas to help you support volunteers to settle into their new jobs. Investing time in the short term to help people to settle in will pay dividends in the long term, for various reasons:

- They will feel more confident and will enjoy the job;
- The quality of work will be better;
- They will be working smarter, not harder;
- People who are handing over their job will feel confident that their good work will be continued;
- A smooth hand-over minimises disruption for the club;
- Job shadowing helps a club to plan for succession – don't leave it until the AGM to start looking for a successor!
- Select ideas that suit the individual's circumstances, the complexity of the job and the time available.

For further information and help, visit TheFA.com or contact your local County FA. Alternatively, visit www.runningsports.org.

Pre-season

- Make sure each new volunteer has a 'buddy', somebody they can ask if they are in doubt about anything to do with their new job – ideally, somebody who has done that job before.
- Check that they have received a list of their roles and responsibilities and that they understand exactly what they are supposed to do.
- Introduce them to the people with whom they will be working.
- Provide a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of their key contacts, within and outside of their job.
- Provide details of meetings or events that they will need to attend in the first few months of their job.
- Provide details of key dates, for example, the closing date for league affiliations.
- Make sure they know where to find the things they need to do the job (and how to work with them!), eg, line marking equipment, first aid kit, computer, paperwork, stationery.
- Do they have all the skills needed to do the job? Could somebody within the club help by 'showing them the ropes'? Or maybe they could learn from people from other clubs?
- Provide written details of expenses that may be claimed, and how to claim them.

- If appropriate to the job, provide information on club financial procedures, confidentiality, and other operating policies such as safeguarding children practices.
- Tell them how they are getting on, and provide some feedback on progress – people generally like to know how they are doing and to learn positively from any mistakes they have been making.
- Committee chairpersons should take time to get to know new committee members, briefing them about committee procedures, terms of reference and responsibilities.

Mid-Season

Good team managers know that to get the best out of their team they need to provide:

- motivation;
- a clear focus on the goals;
- recognition of achievements and performance;
- training and support to develop skills;
- team-building activities.

Your team of volunteers and helpers are no different.

Football Workforce offers some ideas to help keep your team performing well as things settle down mid-season.

Take a few minutes to think about your team of volunteers and helpers, and ask yourself these questions (try to be objective in your answers – nobody else is listening!)

The team

- Is the team still up to full strength?
- If not, why have people opted out, overload, boredom, wrong job, or personal reasons?
- Are they working well as a team?
- Is the work being shared out or are one or two people doing more than their fair share?
- Are jobs being delegated appropriately, or are one or two people 'holding on' to jobs?
- Are there any gaps in the team, perhaps some skills that are missing?
- How would you describe the team spirit? Are they a happy team of people who enjoy what they are doing and working together?
- What do you think of the way in which you lead the team?
- Are people in the right position?
- Are you using their skills, time and enthusiasm in the best way?

Individuals

- How are they performing?
- Are they still doing the job that they are expected to do and that you want them to do – or has it grown into something else?
- Are they enjoying their involvement?
- Do they have the potential to take on more or are they already feeling overloaded?

- Would some one-to-one support or skill development help them to do better?

Yourself

- How are you doing as a volunteer manager?
- Are you enjoying your role?
- What do you think you are doing well?
- What, if anything, would you want to improve about the way in which you carry out your role?
- List one or two action points that will make the job more enjoyable, or help you to do it even better.

Hopefully, things are going well and your answers to these questions are mostly positive. You might be aware of one or two problem areas and may have some ideas about how to address those problems.

Perhaps the team has some ideas on how things could be improved. Certainly the team needs to be made aware of the things that are going well.

Mid-Season Team Talk

Everybody who is involved as a volunteer or helper, even if they only help out occasionally, should be invited to a mid-season team talk.

This could be organised after a training session, a match or at a social evening organised as a specific mid-season thank you for all of your helpers. Alternatively, informal chats with small groups of volunteers or individuals can be an effective way of finding out how people are getting on, providing some feedback and demonstrating an interest in their role.

Remember that a team talk is a two way process, and the main aims are to motivate, review performance, recognise achievement, renew the team focus and identify any skill gaps and need for support. Additionally, it may be that changes are needed within the team, so this presents a good opportunity to discuss any such moves.

Ask questions, and be prepared to listen; people may have different views about how things are going.

Encourage people to put forward their ideas, with a Football Workforce Ideas Box available for people to contribute their constructive ideas over two or three weeks before the meeting.

You could set up three Football Workforce meetings each year – one pre-season to set the team going, one mid-season to review progress and one at the end of the season to review the year, say thank you and plan for the next season.



Saying Thank You

Saying thank you doesn't take long or cost a lot, but it can mean so much, and often, a straightforward face to face thank you, or a phone call the day after a tournament to thank individuals for their hard work is all that is necessary.

However, you could even send a card; if so, make it specific, for example; 'thank you for all your help with refreshments.' This demonstrates that you really noticed and valued what the person was doing.

Overdoing the thanks may devalue your intentions or make them appear insincere, so save the cards or phone calls to recognise special effort, and keep to a simple thank you to the team at the end of an evening training session, for example.

Player's appreciation

It's easy to forget that all of the hard work that goes on is to enable people to play football. Players, most of all, should recognise the importance of valuing and recognising all the voluntary work that goes on behind the scenes.

Put together a players' appreciation pack for youth teams to make it easy for them to say thank you. This might include:

- some thank you cards;
- a Team Helper of the Month award – the team can determine which volunteer or helper they wish to receive the award each month through the season;
- a list of all the people who work behind the scenes at the club and their roles, so that they can appreciate and value the woff-the-field team;
- a reminder about the RESPECT Codes of Conduct, which promote fair play and a respect for everybody involved in the game;
- nomination forms for annual awards for volunteers and helpers.

Make each Team Captain responsible for co-ordinating the use of the pack with their team.

When things aren't going according to plan

Many volunteers and helpers give up because they feel overloaded and put upon, because they are not confident about the task they have been asked to do, or because they are fed up with doing the same thing. Some are even afraid that they will be committed for life.

Football Workforce offers various solutions that might work for you.

Job Sharing

If a job is too onerous for one person, why not split it into two or three smaller parts. It's not as difficult as it may first appear. Use the roles and responsibilities to identify the tasks that make up the job. You should find that you can group these into tasks that need to be done at the club, daily, weekly, monthly, or tasks that need specific skills. This will help to break the job down into smaller, more manageable parts and people will enjoy having a 'buddy' to share the workload.

Support Systems

Help people to develop confidence in their current role or to prepare for a new role by providing:

- a 'buddy', somebody who has done the job before, who can help them settle into the job without feeling out of their depth; a smooth hand-over from the person who did the job last year always helps people to get through the first few weeks with more confidence;
- some 'on the job' coaching;
- training opportunities which can include Running Sport workshops and booklets, job shadowing, talking to other people to see how they do the job in their club or league;
- development manual and workshops;
- magazine articles;
- e-learning and websites.

Planning for Succession

Try to find the balance between a high turnover of volunteers and helpers and stagnation. Skill and experience are invaluable qualities but 'waiting for dead men's shoes' can be off-putting to potential volunteers.

People will be motivated by new challenges and will be reassured that they are not taking on a life time commitment by volunteering their help.

Volunteers are more likely to feel comfortable about moving on to a new challenge if they know that they are handing over their role to somebody who will do a good job.

Plan ahead – encourage volunteers and helpers to look out for somebody who could take over from them. Offer them the chance to shadow the job for while, to find out what is involved and to see if it's the right role for them.

Good succession planning helps to ensure that the right people are doing the right roles at the right time.

End of Season Team Talk

Recognising and rewarding the hard work and enthusiasm of the team of volunteers and helpers is something that should go on throughout the season, however at the end of the year, something a bit more special may be in order.

Gather all your volunteers and helpers together to celebrate success, review and evaluate the year and begin to plan for next season.

This could be at a special social event exclusively for volunteers and helpers, at the club's awards evening, or even just an informal gathering.

The best time to plan the event would be at the end of the season but before everybody disperses for the summer; remember that you want to gain their commitment to being part of your team again next season.

Following your mid-season team talk, you should have an idea of whether it was more successful to talk to people in small groups, on a one-to-one basis, or in a larger meeting. You should also have learned whether the questions you asked were effective in finding out how things were going and how effective you were in resolving problems. Additionally, think about how are you going to motivate people to come back next season.

However you decide to manage the end of season team talk, aim to produce an action plan that will help you and the team to build on your successes. Revisit your season planner to help you.

“Parents of the younger players are really supportive. It's a pity we can't encourage them to get involved whilst they're so enthusiastic.”

Rewarding Achievements

Football Workforce offers some suggestions that will make all of your volunteers and helpers feel valued and that will build their recognition and reward into your season planner.

However, there will be some volunteers and helpers who deserve a special award. This may be because:

- they never let you down, they were always there, even though their role might not be seen as high profile;
- they took on a new role and made great efforts to develop the skills to do it well;
- they are an example of good practice that the club wishes to promote; for example, a young person who has taken on a voluntary role.

Try to think of a prize or gift that is appropriate to the individual; for example, a young person might not appreciate a meal for two at a local restaurant, but a mum who has manned the refreshments stand every Saturday throughout the season would welcome being waited

on! A youngster might appreciate some sports kit, or tickets to a Premier League / Football League game. Additionally, the club could have a trophy designated for the off-the-field members which can be awarded annually.

Make a special occasion of presenting the awards, perhaps at the club's main awards evening, or at the AGM.

Schools are usually pleased to hear about their pupils' out of school hours achievements, so it may be possible to present your Young Volunteer of the Year with their prize at a school assembly.

Club Certificate

Using the criteria suggested in this section, clubs may wish to use the club certificate provided by the Football Workforce programme to help recognise the efforts of volunteers and helpers. Certificates are available free of charge from your County FA volunteer advisor. All clubs / organisations, which are part of our Football Workforce database, will be invited to request free club certificates to reward their volunteers.

County Awards

Your County FA would also like to recognise the efforts which volunteers and helpers make during the year. Clubs and organisations are invited to nominate individuals who they feel have made a significant contribution to any aspect of their activities over the season. Letters and forms will be distributed to all clubs in the Football Workforce programme, and clubs can then reply to their County FA.

National Commendation

The FA will be looking to recognise the contributions of volunteers and helpers by making five national commendations from those gaining County Awards. Those receiving the commendations will be invited to a suitable occasion to mark the contribution they have made.

For further information about The FA County Awards programme and other volunteer recognition and reward programmes, contact your local County FA.

