

# Valuing Volunteers

## *A Luach ar Oibríthe Deonacha*

**Getting the right people (and enough of them!) is one of the basic challenges for GAA clubs across the Province. Recruiting volunteers can be a chance to refresh and reinvigorate your club. A positive approach, combined with clear thinking and creativity, can make all the difference to your volunteer involvement.**

### **Why do some people volunteer ... yet others don't?**

Research has shown that people volunteer because:

- They were asked!
- They like it
- It keeps them busy/occupied
- They make and keep friendships
- It helps their career
- They got involved via their children
- They wanted to "give something back"
- They want to be associated with something positive and successful
- It is a family tradition

That same research tells us people don't volunteer because:

- They weren't asked!
- They think they haven't the skills needed
- They think they'll be over-burdened with work, and will never "escape" from it
- They don't have the confidence, or the time, or the interest
- They see what we call "red flag" words like "need" or "desperate" or "face closure" in our recruitment literature and are scared off by them
- They don't know about the GAA or our Club (much as we might think they do), or, worse, they have a poor image of them.

Meanwhile those already on board told us they remain there because:

- They feel valued; appreciated; and respected
- They're part of a group and feel part of "the team"
- It gives them a sense of pride. The GAA is a "badge of honour"
- Their work is productive and worthwhile.

Any GAA Club anywhere can act on these findings to help them Recruit; Retain; and Recognise volunteers.



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## Before you Recruit

Though it is tempting to jump straight into a recruitment campaign, you should first ensure that you are well prepared. It is unwise to recruit volunteers if you do not know what they will do, how you will support them, or what procedures you will have for selection.

The starting point is to decide why you want volunteers and what work you would like them to do for your club.

AREA OF CLUB BUSINESS	WE NEED HELP WITH	WHO COULD HELP US?	WHO'LL ASK THEM?
Administration			
Coaching			
Culture/Heritage			
Facilities			
Fundraising			

It can be useful to draw up a Volunteer Policy for the club, including basic principles behind your volunteer-involvement and your practice guidelines for working with volunteers.

## Support

All volunteers need support. What kind of support you provide will depend on the nature of their role and their needs.

Key elements of support can include:

- **Job description for volunteers** - People who volunteer like to know what they are getting into, hence the importance of a short and simple job description. This can simply give the job a title and a short description of what is involved and the amount of time the particular task will take.
- **Induction:** Inductions are an important opportunity to introduce volunteers to the club, communicate relevant policies and procedures and set out both what is expected of them and what they can expect in their new role.

**Example:**

IT OFFICER	
<b>Description</b>	Update website and social media sites on a daily basis with match fixtures, results, reports and general club activities.
<b>Time</b>	Will involve up to 4 hours every week liaising with Club PRO.
<b>Training</b>	Attendance at Ulster GAA Club Officer Training.
<b>Benefits</b>	Develop Key Skills in IT and Social Media.

- **Training** – The Ulster GAA Coach and Volunteer Development Programme is run annually for GAA members across all nine counties of Ulster and contains many courses, seminars, conferences and events to help develop GAA volunteers' skills and knowledge.
- **Recognition** - It's all-too-easy to take volunteers for granted. To keep everyone enthusiastic and refreshed we should check that we haven't overloaded anyone and keep providing feedback to them. It is important to give people variety and don't leave anyone in the same place/role for too long. Constantly acknowledge volunteers, formally and informally. Remember, that a simple 'thank-you' is all that is required. The club should also use its website and notes in the local newspapers to highlight the work that people are doing.
- Commitment to the GAA, so it is important to emphasise how their contribution will make a difference
- Meeting people - volunteering can be a very sociable activity!
- Gaining skills - when recruiting stress the skills and experience that volunteers can gain
- Utilising existing skills - some people want to put their skills to a good cause.
- Keeping active - more and more older people are volunteering.

## Making it Easy

Putting oneself forward as a volunteer can be quite daunting. People might not be sure what they are getting into and might be worried that, for example, they won't be up to it or that the commitment will end up being greater than they want.

## Motivation

It is useful to think about the possible motivations that people might have for becoming volunteers. This can help you to design volunteering opportunities and influence your recruitment message.

Motivations for volunteering might include:

Each recruitment drive should begin with the most basic unit of voluntary commitment which 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.

