

VOLUNTEERING AT THE CLUB – ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL!

Most tennis clubs in Ireland are run by dedicated volunteers, who donate their time, energy, and expertise to make the club a wonderful experience for all members. Without them, clubs would cease to function in any meaningful way. But it is a constant challenge for many clubs to recruit and retain volunteers.

RECRUITING

Key principles in recruiting and motivating the right people:

- 1.** Clearly define the role and responsibilities. Then provide the prospective volunteer with a clear written description of what they will be expected to do, and what skills they will need. This allows the potential volunteer to make an informed decision about becoming involved.
- 2.** Defining the role removes the volunteer's concern that they might be called on to get involved in areas where they have no expertise or interest.
- 3.** Define time limits – e.g. the person is asked to serve for one or two years, but will not be pressurized to continue after that.
- 4.** Before confirming a person in their role as a volunteer, remind them they must go through all necessary vetting and training processes.
- 5.** A key motivational tool for volunteers is to recognize achievements and successes. That might simply be in the minutes of each meeting, or through annual awards or a 'Volunteer of the Month' spot on the club's website and noticeboard.
- 6.** A new volunteer will feel more secure if they know that the person who previously carried out their role will be available to guide and assist them during the "settling-in period".

ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

Tennis clubs in Ireland cover a wide spectrum, from two-court clubs with a small clubhouse to large facilities with indoor courts, a restaurant and full-time staff. Exact roles will vary between clubs. What might a volunteer be expected to do in each of the most common roles?

PRESIDENT/CHAIRPERSON

The President or Chairperson is effectively the leader of the club, assuming primary responsibility for the ongoing short, medium, and long-term planning in terms of club development.

Responsibilities:

- Chair meetings - including the AGM and any EGM.
- Ensure that decisions made at meetings are implemented by those responsible.
- Represent the club with other bodies such as the National Governing Body or state agencies.
- Keep up to date with all club activities, including the agendas of sub-committees.
- Keep abreast of all legal and compliance obligations (e.g. Child Safety).
- Safeguard the club's constitution and rules, and the policies and procedures that support them.
- Motivate and support other committee members and volunteers.

Skills:

- Good communicator – confident public speaker with excellent communication skills – “approachable”.
- Unbiased and impartial – willing to listen to all sides of an argument.
- Willing and able to delegate.

HONORARY SECRETARY

As the principal administrative officer and manager, the Honorary Secretary is key to the effective functioning of a club.

Responsibilities:

- Deal with club correspondence.
- Maintain the membership database.
- Club meetings – schedule the meetings, draw up and circulate the Agenda, have necessary documents to hand for discussion at the meeting, take minutes and circulate them to Committee members.
- Update the committee at each meeting on current topics.
- Keep records of all key club information – rules, accounts, policies and procedures, members of sub-committees, development plans.
- Prepare for the AGM in a timely and efficient manner.
- Deal with entries for external events such as inter-club Leagues.
- Act as a ‘point of contact’ for all who engage with the club.

Skills:

- Willing and able to delegate.
- Good verbal and written communication skills.
- Good IT/computer skills
- Good office organizational skills.

HONORARY TREASURER

No organization functions without proper financial controls. The Treasurer is responsible for collecting all revenues, and payment of all financial obligations. He or she must commit to handling finances in accordance with the constitution and policy of the club.

Responsibilities:

- Financial planning including producing an annual budget.
- Keep up-to-date records of all financial transactions.
- Collect all money due to the club and issue receipts for money received.
- Deal with the club's banking procedures.
- Payment of invoices.
- Ensure that club funds are spent in a proper manner.
- Present financial accounts and reports to appropriate meetings.
- Arrange for year-end accounts to be audited.
- Present audited year-end accounts to the AGM.
- Prepare annual statement to Tennis Ireland/Provincial Branch of fees due for affiliation and capitulation.
- Prepare any other financial documents required by law.

Skills:

- Good knowledge of accountancy procedures and practices – ideally will have a financial background.
- Committed to carrying out the role with honesty and integrity. Absolute probity in completing all financial tasks in line with statutory obligations as well as those of the National Governing Body.
- Good organisation and communication skills.
- Computer and IT skills relevant to financial practices.

CLUB CAPTAIN

A very busy 'hands-on' role that requires the holder to spend quite a lot of time at the club. For this reason, many clubs choose to appoint separate captains for men's and ladies' tennis, and sometimes vice-captains in larger clubs. The role is to ensure that the members needs in terms of on court activities are met.

Responsibilities:

- Organize and supervise the annual calendar of internal competitions.
- Enter the club for external leagues.
- Oversee the selection of team members for external leagues.
- Work with the club's coaches to ensure that a comprehensive and suitable coaching programme is developed and implemented – general group coaching, individual coaching, team preparation.
- Appoint and assist team captains for external events.
- Be aware of and deal with Child Safety procedures should children, or adults with special needs, be taking part in any adult tennis activities or events (e.g. junior players on adult league teams).

Skills:

- Able to forge positive relationships with all participants in on-court activities (willing to dedicate lots of time to being on-site during events).
- Confident dealing with conflict resolution. Often the Captain is first in line to be called in to deal with an issue such as a member who is not happy with their position on a league team. A good knowledge of club policies and procedures on complaints and disciplinary procedures is invaluable.
- Understand tennis development - able to work positively with the coaches in planning the necessary coaching programmes.

THE CHILDRENS OFFICERS/ DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

The Children's Officers and the Designated Liaison Person play a crucial role in the life of the club. They are responsible, in collaboration with the main committee, for implementing the guidelines set out in 'Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport'. This document is available on the Tennis Ireland website. Child Safety within tennis encompasses legal requirements, legislated for in recent years to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults within the game.

Responsibilities:

- Successfully complete the required Safeguarding Courses.
- One of the Children's Officers or the Designated Liaison Person will attend each main committee meeting to report on Safeguarding.
- Work closely with the main committee to ensure that activities happen in a safe environment, and that the club puts in place all safeguards as recommended in 'Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport'.
- Implement a robust recruitment and vetting system for all committee members, coaches and staff members.
- Keep up with changes in the recommendations and requirements for Safeguarding, as communicated through Tennis Ireland and Sport Ireland.

Skills:

- Confident in dealing with delicate issues, should a complaint/allegation be made.
- Aware of the implications that a situation being dealt with may enter the legal system.
- Ability to treat information received with the utmost confidentiality.
- Approachable and trustworthy.

JUNIOR CHAIRPERSON

The Junior Chairperson heads up the Junior Committee, which has overall responsibility for junior activities at the club. Juniors are the future of the club, and there is an issue with teenagers leaving tennis (and sport in general). Therefore this office-holder plays a vital role within the club's ecosystem.

Responsibilities:

- Work closely with the Club's Children's Officers to ensure the implementation of best practice in child protection.
- Oversee the implementation of an annual calendar of internal and external on and off court events, to meet the needs of all junior members.
- Work with the coaches to ensure that a comprehensive and suitable coaching programme is developed and implemented – general group coaching, individual coaching, team preparation, comprehensive development programmes for promising and dedicated players.
- Ensure that the parents of junior members are kept up to date with what they need to know.
- AGM report - overview of junior activities in the previous year, outline plans for the year ahead.
- Special emphasis on developing and implementing programmes designed to motivate and retain teenage members.

Skills:

- Approachable, caring and friendly.
- Has empathy with children.
- Good communication and IT skills.
- Well-organized and able to lead the junior committee in a positive manner.
- Mediation skills – able to resolve situations that may arise if a parent is unhappy with the way the club has worked with their child.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

The social side of a tennis club is an important complement to the on-court activities. The Social Tennis Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that member's needs are satisfied, by organising an annual calendar of social activities.

Responsibilities:

- Work with other volunteers to deliver a full social diary linked to the on-court life of the club – e.g. a BBQ on the evening of a summer one-day tournament.
- Liaise with the Club Captain to tie in social events with on court events.
- Book venues, catering and entertainment as required.
- Work with the PRO in promoting events to ensure everyone knows what is on and when.
- Work with the Treasurer to ensure that social activities meet the clubs needs from a financial standpoint, and do not become a drain on the club's finances.
- Keep records of what events went well or not so well, so as facilitate future planning.

Skills:

- Gets on well with people – sociable!
- Good organizer – attention to detail as well as the broader picture.
- Willing and able to delegate some responsibilities to others.
- Knowledge of the membership (age, interests) in order to plan events relevant to the demographics.

CLUB MAINTENANCE COORDINATOR

Any facility that is regularly in use requires upkeep and maintenance to ensure that the necessary standards are upheld. Circumstances should not be allowed to develop that could cause an accident to occur – e.g. protruding fencing, electrical issues, moss on courts.

Responsibilities:

- Regularly check the court surface and surrounds to ensure the safety of players and visitors. Also the clubhouse and ancillary buildings and the 'non-playing areas' – driveways, car park, grass area, to ensure safety and tidiness.

Skills:

- The Coordinator may have skills in electrical/plumbing/carpentry.
- Knowledge of local trades people who can be called on at short notice.



COMMUNICATIONS/PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

The role involves keeping members informed of what is happening. Communicating with the wider community of non-members in the local area is also important. A high profile makes it easier to recruit new members, and will be an advantage when applying for funding/grants.

Responsibilities:

- Working with the local media to promote the club and its activities.
- Producing newsletters/eazines to keep members up to date.
- Sourcing stories for the club's social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and the club website.
- **Important:** monitor social media for abusive or negative comments.

Skills:

- Familiar with graphic design principles.
- Comfortable using social media platforms.
- "A picture is worth a thousand words" – an advantage if the Communications Officer is a competent photographer.
- Good writing skills.
- Good IT skills- e.g. can update the club website.
- Knows how to submit stories to media outlets in an acceptable format.
- Ability to produce or source short video clips for social media.
- Good networking skills will help source ongoing news and stories.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Tasked with the job of developing relationships with outside bodies with which the club wants to set up and maintain good connections. Schools, Parks Tennis venues, local government (including Local Sports Partnerships) and local businesses are prime examples of bodies that the club can gain members and funding from.

Responsibilities:

- Research which schools and Park venues to target, then develop a plan as to how to gain members from them.
- Make contact with staff at outside bodies, and develop good relationships with them.
- Keep up to date with grant opportunities.
- Develop a sponsorship package that can be used to entice local sponsors to support the club financially.

Skills:

- Understand how schools operate.
- Understand how local government funding programmes operate.
- Knowledgeable about sponsorship and how to secure funding from businesses.
- Good communicator.

CLUBMARK OFFICER

Responsible for leading the process of the club achieving the Tennis Ireland Clubmark Award at Bronze, Silver or Gold level (as decided by the Committee). Tennis Ireland strongly recommends that all clubs should apply for the Clubmark. Once achieved it will greatly assist the club in terms of member recruitment, retention and club development. Once Clubmark has been awarded, the Officer should look at maintaining and improving the standards set, with a view to retention of the Mark after its three-year validity period. If the Clubmark has been awarded at Bronze or Silver level, work should be ongoing to upgrade to the next level as soon as possible.

Responsibilities:

- Understand the criteria necessary to achieve Clubmark.
- Liaise with committee members and the club coach to record the relevant criteria that are in place.
- Work with committee members and the club coach to develop and implement necessary criteria that are not currently in place.
- Work with the Tennis Ireland Regional Development Officer throughout the process leading to the award of Clubmark.

Skills:

- Good organizer - will need to develop a complete overview of all strands of club activity.
- The ability to motivate co-workers to put in place essential criteria as necessary.

ENJOY TENNIS LIAISON OFFICER

Enjoy Tennis is Tennis Ireland's programme for players with an intellectual or physical disability, helping them become integrated into the life of their local tennis club. This role entails working with the main committee, the club coach, the Enjoy Tennis Development Officer and service providers, to ensure that there are opportunities for players with a disability to benefit from all the advantages tennis provides.



Responsibilities:

- Familiar with local service providers for people with physical or mental disabilities.
- Forge relationships with key personnel from the service providers.
- Coordinate the various stakeholders to ensure that an integrated programme develops.
- Monitor the programmes as they take place, plan for further development and continuity.
- Work to ensure that Enjoy Tennis players integrate into the life of the club.
- Be a 'champion' for disability tennis.

Skills:

- Knowledgeable with regard to the needs of people with disabilities, or willing to develop that knowledge (training programmes are available).
- A passion for making tennis available to those whom in the past were not included.

COACH LIAISON OFFICER

It's useful to have a person on the Committee who liaises with the club coach/coaching team. The coach plays a pivotal role in a tennis club, and should have a designated committee member they can talk to should an issue arise.

Responsibilities:

- Ensure that a proper contract is in place between the club and the coach.
- Ensure that all coaches are Licensed with Tennis Ireland.
- Report to the committee on any issues that arise.
- Help to resolve any issues that might arise between the club and the coach.

Skills:

- Good at mediating between two parties.
- Interested in the field of coaching and the principles involved in how players improve.

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

All committee members represent the views of members at committee meetings. They help develop the direction in which the club progresses, and support other members of the committee to ensure that the club meets its goals and objectives. They help ensure that the club rules are followed, and the club meets its requirements, both statutory and to the National Governing Body. Future office-holders (e.g. Chairperson) are usually selected from committee members who have served in a general capacity for a number of years, and along the way have developed the skills necessary to take on a leadership role within the club.

Responsibilities:

- Attending and contributing to regular committee meetings.
- Possibly serving on a sub-committee (e.g. social committee).
- Being a 'presence' at the club to gauge the efficiency and effectiveness of all programmes, by keeping in touch with and listening to the membership.
- Keep up to date with all main club activities.
- Have a good working knowledge of club rules and procedures.

Skills:

- Good organizational skills.
- Willing and able to work as part of a team.
- Discrete – will be privy to issues of a confidential nature.
- Ability to look at both sides of an argument, keeping the wellbeing of the club and its members to the forefront at all times.

NEED FURTHER GUIDANCE?

Get in touch with your Provincial Branch

Leinster: 01 269 6024

Ulster: 028 9038 3808

Munster: 087 706 1230

Connacht: 086 351 4123