

VOLUNTEERING AT THE CLUB – ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL!

Almost all 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 the club would simply cease to function in any meaningful way. But it is a constant challenge for most clubs to recruit and retain such volunteers.

Here are some principles to keep in mind that will be helpful in recruiting the right people, and keeping them motivated and involved.

1. It's important to provide the prospective volunteer with a clear written description of what they will be expected to do, and what skills they will need to fulfill the role. This will allow the potential volunteer to make an informed decision as to whether or not they should become involved, and will save time and effort in the long run.
2. Potential volunteers appreciate it if their role and responsibilities are well defined. They can go into the job without worrying that they will be called on to get involved in areas in which they have no expertise or interest. For similar reasons, some volunteers like to have defined time limits – e.g. they will serve for one or two years, but it's agreed they will not be pressurized to continue on after that.
3. It is vital that before a person is confirmed in their role as a club volunteer, they are subject to all recommended and necessary vetting procedures and processes.
4. One key motivational tool for volunteers is to recognize their achievements and successes, whether that simply be in the minutes of each meeting, or through a volunteer recognition programme, such as annual awards or a 'Volunteer of the Month' spot on the club's website and noticeboard.
5. 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 clubs with indoor facilities, restaurants and full-time staff. Each club will need to consider exactly what roles they need volunteers to fulfill. There follows some information on what a volunteer might be expected to do in each of the main roles that the club might have in place.

1. President/Chairperson

The President or Chairperson acts as the leader of the club, assuming primary responsibility. He or she will lead the ongoing short, medium and long term planning of the development of the club.

Responsibilities include:

Chairing meetings (including the AGM or any EGM).

Ensuring that decisions made at meetings are implemented by those responsible.

Representing the club with other bodies such as the National Governing Body or state agencies.

Keeping up to date all club activities, including the activities of each sub-committee.

Keeping abreast of all legal and compliance obligations (e.g. Child Safety).

Having a good knowledge of the club's constitution and rules, and the policies and procedures that support them.

Motivating and supporting other committee members and volunteers.

Necessary Skills:

Good communicator – confident public speaker with excellent communication skills.

Unbiased and impartial – willing to listen to all sides of an argument.

Willing and able to delegate, as in this quote from a Club Chairperson: *"We encourage ownership and we empower committee members to have responsibility to carry out day to day tasks in their area"*.

Displays enthusiasm and is 'approachable'.

2. Honorary Secretary

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

Responsibilities include:

Dealing with all club correspondence.

Maintaining 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, correspondence etc.

Prepare for the AGM in a timely and efficient manner.

Deal with entries for external events such as Leagues.

Act as a ‘point of contact’ for all those who need to engage with the club.

Necessary Skills:

Willing and able to delegate.

Good verbal and written communication skills.

Good IT/computer skills

Good office organizational skills (e.g. filing).

3. Honorary Treasurer

No organization can function and thrive without good financial controls. In a tennis club, the Treasurer is responsible for the vital role of ensuring the collection of all revenues and payment of all financial obligations. He or she must have the ability to handle finances in accordance with the constitution and policy of the club.

Responsibilities include:

Financial planning including producing an annual budget.

Keeping up-to-date records of all financial transactions.

Collecting all money due to the club and issuing receipts for all money received.

Dealing with the club’s banking procedures.

Payment of all bills and invoices.

Ensuring that club funds are spent properly.

Presenting financial accounts and reports to appropriate meetings.

Arranging for year-end accounts to be audited.

Presenting audited year-end accounts to the Annual General Meeting.

Preparation of annual statement to Tennis Ireland/Provincial Branch of fees due for affiliation and capitation.

Preparation of any other financial documents required by law.

Necessary 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.

4. Club Captains

This can be a very busy ‘hands-on’ role that requires the incumbent 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 also vice-captains in larger clubs. The role is to ensure that the members needs in terms of on court activities are met.

Responsibilities include:

Organizing and supervising the annual calendar of internal competitions.

Entering the club for external leagues.

Overseeing the selection of team members for external leagues.

Working with the club’s coaches to ensure that a comprehensive and suitable coaching programme is developed and implemented for all adult members – general group coaching, individual coaching, team preparation.

Appoint and assist team captains for external events.

To be aware of and deal with any Child Safety issues should children, or adults with special needs, be taking part in any adult tennis activities or events (e.g. a 15 year old player on the men’s league team).

Necessary Skills:

Be able to forge positive relationships with all participants in on-court activities (willing to dedicate lots of time to being on-site during events).

Be confident in 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.

Have an understanding of tennis so as to be able to work positively with the coaches in providing the necessary coaching programmes.

5. The Children's Officers/Designated Liaison Person

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

Responsibilities include:

Successfully completing the requisite Safeguarding Courses.

One of the Children’s Officers or the Designated Liaison Person will attend each main committee meeting to report on Safeguarding.

Working closely with the main committee to ensure that all activities happen in a safe environment, and that the club puts in place all safeguards as recommended by the ‘Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport’.

Putting in place and implementing a robust recruitment and vetting system for all committee members, coaches and staff members.

Keeping up with changes in the recommendations and requirements for Safeguarding, which will be communicated through Tennis Ireland and Sport Ireland.

Further information - please refer to the document ‘Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport’ on the Tennis Ireland website.

Necessary Skills:

Confident in dealing with delicate issues, should a complaint/allegation be made. Be aware that a situation you are dealing with may enter the legal system.

Be able to treat information received with the utmost confidentiality.

Approachable and trustworthy.

6. Junior Chairperson

The Junior Chairperson heads up the Junior Committee, which has overall responsibility for junior activities at the club. As the juniors are the future of the club, and given that there is an issue with teenagers leaving tennis (and sport in general) the holder of this office plays a vital role within the club's ecosystem. One of the first decisions to be made is how to delineate the various junior age groups, and the logical way to do this is to break the Junior Section into categories depending on which tennis ball they should use, in line with the ITF's Play and Stay Programme. This would give four overall groupings – red, orange, green and yellow ball. The various activities that need to be carried out for the various groups can be delegated to members of the Junior Committee, so as not to overload any individual.

Responsibilities include:

Working closely with the Clubs Children's Officers to ensure the implementation of best practice in child protection.

Overseeing the implementation of an annual calendar of on and off court, internal and external, events to meet the needs of junior members of all ages.

Working with the club's coaches to ensure that a comprehensive and suitable coaching programme is developed and implemented for all junior members – 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 all the information they need.

Report to the AGM with an overview of the junior activities in the previous year, and the outline plans for the year ahead.

Place special emphasis on the development and implementation of programmes designed to motivate and retain teenage members.

Necessary Skills:

Is approachable, caring and friendly.

Has empathy with children.

Good communication and IT skills.

Is well-organized and able to lead the junior committee in a positive manner.

Mediation skills – able to work to resolve situations that may arise if a parent is unhappy with the way the club has dealt with their child – e.g. team selection issues.

7. 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 the member's needs are satisfied by organising an annual calendar of social activities.

Responsibilities include:

Working 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.

Working with the Club Captain to tie in social events with on court events.

Booking venues, catering and entertainment as required.

Working with the PRO to promote events so as to ensure everyone knows what is on and when.

Working with the Treasurer to ensure that social activities meet the needs of the club from a financial standpoint, and do not become a drain on the club's finances.

Keeping accurate records of what events went well or not so well, so as facilitate future planning.

Necessary Skills:

Gets on well with people – sociable!

A good organizer – attention to detail as well as the broader picture.

Willing and able to delegate some responsibilities to other volunteers.

Knowledge of the membership (age, interests) so as to be able to plan events relevant to the membership demographic.

8. Club Maintenance Coordinator

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

Responsibilities include:

Regular checks on the court surface and surrounds to ensure the safety of all who play tennis in the club.

Regular checks of the clubhouse and any ancillary buildings to ensure the safety of all members and visitors.

Regular checks of the 'non-playing areas' – driveways, car park, grass area, so as to ensure safety and tidiness of these areas.

Necessary Skills:

The Coordinator may have skills in terms of electricity, plumbing, carpentry, or should have knowledge of local trades people who can be called on at short notice.

9. Communications/Public Relations Officer

This volunteer will have two main areas to consider: keeping members informed of what is happening, and communicating with the wider community of non-members in the area in which the club is situated. If the club can raise its profile in the local community, it will be easier to source new members and to gain a positive reputation which will be an advantage when applying for funding/grants.

Responsibilities include:

Working with the local media to promote the club and its activities.

Producing newsletters/eazines to keep members up to date.

Sourcing stories and news for the club's social media outlets such as Facebook or Twitter, and the club website.

An important activity on social media is to monitor the platforms for abuse or negative comments.

Necessary Skills:

Familiar with graphic design principles.

Familiar with and comfortable using social media platforms.

"A picture is worth a thousand words" – if the Communications Officer is a competent photographer it is a decided advantage.

Good writing skills.

Good IT skills- e.g. able to update the club website.

Needs to know how to submit stories to media outlets in an acceptable format.

Ability to produce or source short video clips for social media would be a big advantage.

Good networking and interpersonal skills, in order to create a situation where people are providing stories unprompted.

10. Outreach Coordinator

This member is tasked with the job of developing relationships with outside bodies with which the club wants to set up and maintain good connections. Schools, council 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 include:

Deciding which schools and Park venues to target.

Developing a plan as to how to gain members from them.

Making contact with necessary staff at the outside bodies, and developing good relationships with them.

Keeping up to date with grant opportunities.

Developing a sponsorship package than can be used to entice local sponsors to support the club financially.

Necessary Skills:

Understanding of how schools operate.

Understanding of how local government funding programmes operate.

Knowledgeable about sponsorship and how to secure funding from businesses.

Good communication skills – approachable.

11. Clubmark Officer

The Clubmark Officer is 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 when feasible.

Responsibilities include:

Understanding the criteria necessary to achieve Clubmark.

Working with various committee members and the club coach to record the relevant criteria that are in place.

Working with various 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.

Necessary Skills:

Good organizational skills.

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.

12. Enjoy Tennis Liaison Officer

Enjoy Tennis is Tennis Ireland's programme designed to involve players with an intellectual or physical disability in the game, and to help 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 include:

Becoming familiar with local service providers for people with physical or mental disabilities.
Forging relationships with key personnel from the service providers.
Coordinating the various stakeholders to ensure that an integrated programme takes place.
Monitor the programmes as they take place, and plan for further development and continuity.
Examine the possibilities of Enjoy Tennis players integrating into the life of the club.
Be a 'champion' for disability tennis.

Necessary 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 involved.

13. Coach Liaison Officer

It is 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 he or she should have a designated committee member they can talk to should they have an issue to discuss.

Responsibilities include:

Ensuring that a proper contract is in place between the club and the coach.
Ensuring that all coaches working in the club are Licensed with Tennis Ireland.
Reporting to the committee on any issues that arise.
Helping to resolve any issues that might arise between the club and the coach.

Necessary Skills:

Good at mediating between two parties in a discussion.
Interest in the field of coaching and the principles involved in how players improve.

14. General Committee Member

All committee members represent the views of members at committee meetings and help develop the direction in which the club progresses. They support other members of the committee to ensure that the club meets its goals and objectives. They help ensure that the club rules are abided to, 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 include:

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

Necessary Skills:

Good organizational skills.
Willing and able to work as part of a team.
Will need to work with discretion, taking into account issues of a confidential nature to which they will inevitably be privy.
Able to look at both sides of an argument, and keep the wellbeing of the club and its members to the forefront at all times.