



BRITISH ROWING

People Development Guide

Managing your human
resources effectively.





Dear Rowing Club Members

Welcome to the British Rowing People Development Guide

Following consultation in 2019, this guide is one of several developed in response to clubs' requests for more guidance and support on a wide range of club related topics. We hope it will help to build good practice in how clubs manage and develop their most important resource, their **people**, so that everyone continues to enjoy their involvement with rowing at all levels for many years to come.

If rowing is to prosper as a sport, we need a network of strong and sustainable clubs that give members the best club experiences. In this guide, we cover a range of topics to help you manage and develop your club's volunteers and coaches.

This guide:

- **Highlights the key issues and challenges of managing volunteers and coaches.**
- **Flags key questions to ask yourself and your club committee about people management.**
- **Provides top tips and practical advice to help you attract, retain and manage your club volunteers and coaches effectively.**
- **Signposts you to additional guidance and resources, either on the British Rowing website or through third parties.**

The guide will be a working resource, to be updated on a regular basis, so please provide feedback and share examples of good management practices or experiences from your club.

We look forward to hearing from you.

The British Rowing Community Support Team

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British Rowing would like to thank everyone involved in the development of this Club Guide for their input. We would also like to acknowledge Sport England and the Sport England Club Matters website that provides a range of useful resources and information to support effective people management.





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Section 1 - Introducing people development

1.1 The importance of people development

Many community sports clubs rely heavily on volunteers and coaches. Without them, these clubs would not exist. In this guide, we provide more information on how best to plan, manage and develop your club's most important resource – its people.

Understanding the motivations, interests and experiences of your volunteers and coaches and providing them with the best and most positive experiences is key. Positive experiences help to create a club culture which is beneficial to both your club, its members and all those who help to run it, whether they're paid or unpaid.

The term 'volunteer' is a word that some people find off-putting as they may see themselves as 'just a club member who helps out'. Whilst some unpaid roles have titles e.g. Chair, Treasurer, Coach, etc., many do not. You may find it helpful to avoid using the word 'volunteer' too much. If you know of, or use, an alternative to describe all of the hard work that everyone in a club does, we would love to hear from you – contact us at clubsupport@britishrowing.org.

With the increasing pressures of work, or just life in general, compounded by the Coronavirus pandemic, many clubs have seen a decline in volunteer numbers, with a potentially devastating effect on future activities. To address this, it is our collective responsibility to develop a sustainable network of happy, committed, supported and recognised volunteers to support our clubs for many years to come.

This guide has two sections:

Section 2 – Volunteers. This section sets out how to plan for, attract, manage and retain volunteers, including ideas on how to enthuse and support your current (and future) helpers. There are links to further information and support to help you develop your volunteer base. This information includes references to paid staff where appropriate.

Section 3 – Coaching (volunteer and paid). This section explores how to develop your coaching resources and covers everything from setting up a coaching structure to developing coaches, including recruitment, employment and recognition. We provide some links to further information and coach resources which you (and your coaches) may find useful.

Please note that most of the guidance provided within this document is relevant to both volunteers and coaches as there is much crossover when it comes to managing them effectively.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Section 2 - Volunteering

2.1 Introduction

Volunteering is 'the act of giving up time freely to help others' and many members or friends of your club will already provide support in a variety of roles and ways.

Volunteering is about freely offering to do something, to give back or to help provide for others, working together for a common goal.

[Government research](#) shows that one in five people volunteer regularly, whilst the 2019 British Rowing Volunteer Survey highlighted that approximately 35,000 people volunteer in rowing clubs or at rowing events annually. It also highlighted a range of volunteer related issues and challenges to address (see Table 1).

Volunteers provide the support that keeps clubs running effectively, from serving on club committees or helping with coaching to serving behind the bar, in the regatta tea tent or cooking the weekend breakfasts. Without a volunteer workforce, many clubs would find it hard to survive.

Table 1: British Rowing Volunteer Survey 2019 – key findings

Rowing volunteer profile:	Key issues/challenges for clubs:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rowing volunteers provide an average of six hours of support per week.• 75% are over 45 years' old.• 30% are retired.• Most are ex-rowers.• Many have been in position for 10+ years.• Many have multiple roles with large workloads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to attract new and retain existing volunteers.• Appreciating/recognising volunteers.• Age related issues including an ageing workforce.• The importance of training and support.• The need for succession planning including advice, handovers or mentoring for new volunteers.• How to manage volunteers and ensure commitments are manageable.• How to manage expectations.

Volunteering in rowing isn't always limited to one club, it can also involve helping others. For example, your umpires or safety boat drivers may help out at events run by other clubs. Other volunteering roles involve representing clubs at [Regional Rowing Council](#) (RRC) meetings or representing the RRC at national meetings such as those for safety representatives, umpires, masters, recreational or junior rowers.



Club volunteers are also key to the effective delivery of events, one of the largest areas of income generation that many clubs rely on to keep afloat. The number of volunteers needed to host a great event (for both club and competitors) is significant. For example, a club regatta may need 20+ umpires a day to run successfully, as well as over 30 volunteers per day.

Read on to find out more about how to attract, support and acknowledge both new and existing volunteers at your club.

2.2 Volunteer planning

How long is it since you reviewed, revisited or changed your approach to managing your volunteers?

When considering your volunteer pool, it can be helpful to go back to basics. One of the first jobs for any new club is to set up and elect a committee. Although it sounds official, it is straightforward. See [Club Governance Guide](#).

At initial set up, every club should have a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary as a minimum and to be a British Rowing affiliated club you will also need to have a Club Rowing Safety Adviser (CRSA) (see [Rowsafe](#), section 3.4) and [Club Welfare Officer](#).

Once you're officially set up, or even if you've been operating for some time, it's useful to list all your club activities and the human resources needed to run them. Although this can be a long list, there are many 'micro' roles that can be merged with others.

Think about the skills needed to fulfil these roles, remembering that the list may change over time and that many roles don't require specialist skills.

Remember that many members, parents or even non-members may be willing to offer their help but don't put themselves forward – sometimes all you have to do is ask!

What roles are needed?

Some of the key club roles needed to run a club effectively are shown in Figure 1. These roles are by no means exhaustive but demonstrate why you need a large pool of willing volunteers. You may need more or less people, depending on the size of your club and its activities.

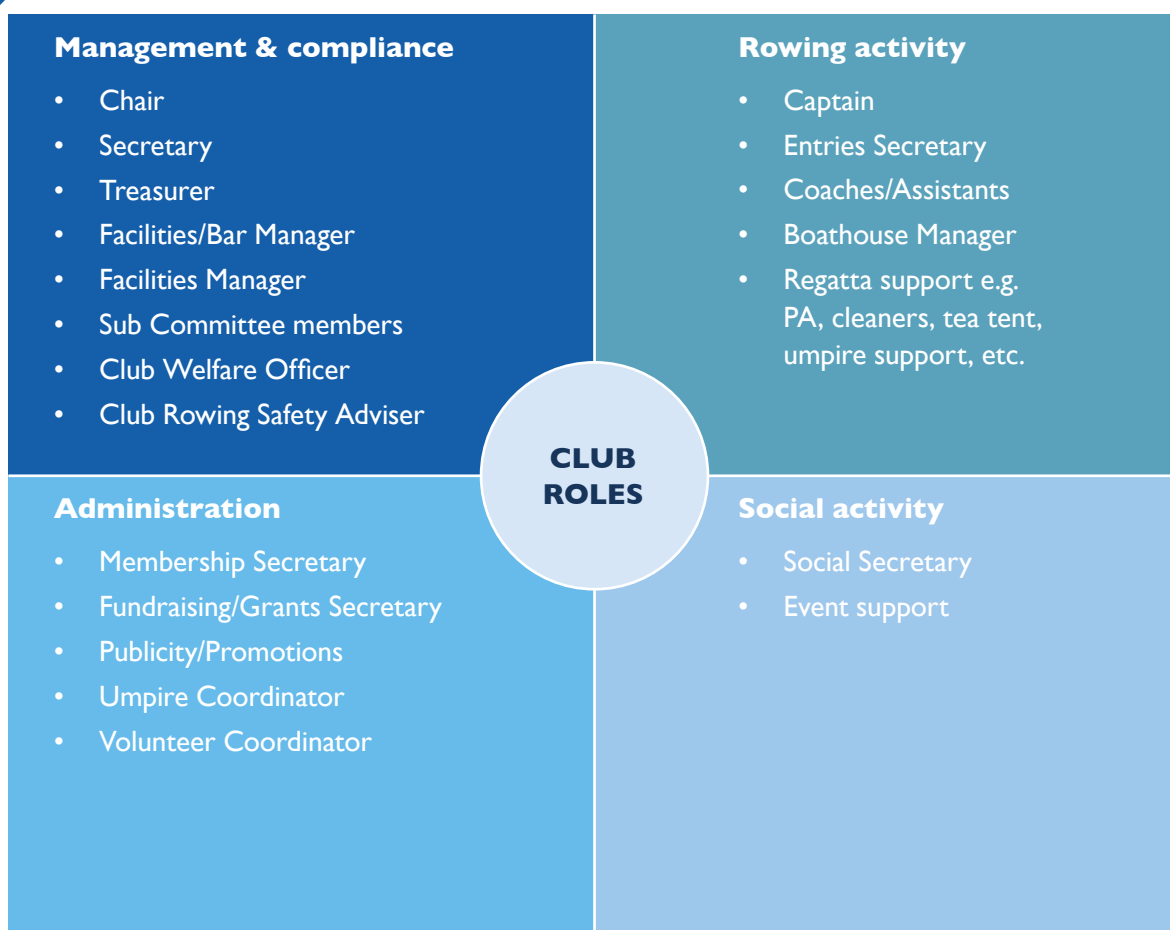
By grouping roles together in categories, you can help to spread the workload and prevent burnout, especially if there are not enough people to cover every role individually. Dividing roles and jobs into micro-volunteering opportunities can also help encourage more people to get involved, particularly those with limited time.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Figure 1: Typical club roles



Role descriptions

When potential volunteers are deciding whether to help or not, a role description can help to make that decision easier. Role descriptions typically include details such as:

- Role title and main purpose – a few lines or bullet points about what the roles entails.
- Role description – make the role sound interesting, for example:
 - A chance to develop your coaching and organisational skills (Coaching Coordinator).
 - A chance to meet new people (Social Secretary).
 - A chance to change things at your club (Captain, Web Manager).
- Key skills needed – include practical skills as well as personal ones, but don't include too many to avoid putting people off.
- Other general information such as:
 - Time commitments (based on current activities).
 - Any legal obligations.
 - Any support, mentoring or training that will be given to the post holder.



A typical role description for a Volunteer Coordinator is included at [Appendix A](#). You can use this as a template or tailor it for other positions. All volunteers or helpers should know how their role fits with both your club's overall activity and their relationship with other roles.

Role 'adverts'

It can be useful to develop role 'adverts' to promote specific roles. An example poster from Sport England's [ClubMatters](#) can also be used to help promote the need for volunteers and can be adapted for your own club.

When producing role 'adverts':

- Make your adverts more appealing by understanding **why** people volunteer – for example, to meet new friends, give back to the club or help juniors. There's some interesting information from NCVO on the reasons why people volunteer [here](#).
- Make club roles easy to understand. Note that if a role description is overly complicated or too long, it may be seen as a second (unpaid) job!
- Try to ensure that roles are time-limited and refer to the support available and/or the existence of a succession plan – many people will be put off if they think roles are never ending and/or unsupported.
- Make sure that anyone taking on a role is supported, for example, with appropriate training or a 'buddy' system for new starters, so that they feel valued.

See [section 2.3](#) for more information on attracting volunteers.

Membership skills audit

Once you have your list of roles and role descriptions, review your current situation including the skills, knowledge and availability of your existing volunteers. It can also be useful to complete a membership skills audit to find out if there are any hidden skills within your club that you don't know about. This can be completed through face-to-face meetings or by including a simple question on your membership form.





The following table provides a useful format to note down your members' skills or experience.

Name	How many hours or days a week can you volunteer?	What is your profession?	Do you have skills or experience in any of the following?						Comments
			Coaching	IT	Finance	Marketing	Events	Other	
Jan C	4 hours	Sales rep		X	X	X			After 10a.m. at weekends.
Dave B	2 hours	Accountant			X	X	X		Available Saturday 9-11am.
Paul A	To discuss	Retired	X				X	Bar work	Happy to help anytime.
Sue J	Sun morning or Thurs evening only	–							I have 3 children, so very organised and I used to be a netball player/team manager.
Jane S	To discuss	–							I don't think I have any relevant skills but am happy to help.
Sam B		Carpenter		X	X	X		Lots	I have lots of experience in all types of work from painting to building walls. I have limited time to offer but willing to help when possible.

When complete, try to match the skills and availability to the volunteer roles and skills that you need or will need in the future. If specific skills are needed, you can also explore if there are opportunities to train any of your current members who are keen to learn a new skill.

Remember to:

Make sure you highlight how volunteering is vital to the future of your club.

- Follow up on any offers of help – if people offer to get involved but are never asked to help, they can be put off for good.
- Think 'outside the box' to match roles and people – some members may not think that they have any relevant skills to offer.
- Appreciate that many volunteers may want a complete change from their working life – not every accountant wants to be Treasurer!
- Approach other people connected to your club, such as parents – they can provide a ready-made pool of potential volunteers.
- For more information, see [section 2.3](#) Attracting volunteers.



Questions to ask – volunteer planning

- Do you have a list of all the volunteer roles needed to keep your club running effectively? Are these all covered or are there any vacancies?
- Do you have role descriptions for key posts?
- Have you tried using role ‘adverts’ when seeking to fill specific positions?
- Do you know the reasons why people volunteer? This can help you when selling your volunteer opportunities to new people. Do you highlight what makes your volunteering opportunity appealing?
- What support do you provide to your volunteers? Is training available for specific posts?
- How do you meet the needs of both your club and your volunteers? Does everyone understand how your volunteers ‘fit’ into the bigger club picture?

2.3 Attracting volunteers

How do you attract volunteers at your club? Do you have a tried and tested system, or do you wait for people to step forward?

When seeking new volunteers, your existing club membership should be the first and easiest place to look. Have you tried approaching those members who don't currently volunteer or parents of your junior rowers? Many people don't get involved because they're not asked.

Don't be misled into thinking your volunteers **have** to be rowers. Consider your club's regatta – if the experience is fun and rewarding (even if the reward is just a free beer), people will be more likely to come back year after year.

Your club's ability to attract volunteers can depend on several things:

- Your understanding of volunteers' motivations and the barriers to volunteering.
- How you look after your current volunteers.
- How others view the recognition and treatment of your current volunteers.
- How easy you make volunteering at your club.
- How you advertise any volunteer opportunities, for example:
 - Do you make it clear what you're after?
 - Do you use as many different advertising routes as possible, such as fliers, posters, email, social media, website and word of mouth?

Make sure you explore different ways to recruit volunteers, from both inside and outside of your club.



When talking to potential new volunteers, highlight the positives such as meeting new people, making new friends and/or gaining new skills or a qualification – it can make all the difference.

Volunteering is usually a spare time activity so making sure that it's appealing, enjoyable, well supported and recognised, is key to filling your roles. You may not have the time (or inclination) to read any research on volunteering but **understanding the reasons why people volunteer** can help you to attract and retain more people.

Many people volunteer because they feel strongly about something, such as coaching, helping others or supporting the club that has helped them or their offspring. These reasons can be much stronger motivations than 'job satisfaction'.

Some people volunteer because they want to make new friends or find a 'place' to belong, or perhaps it's to avoid isolation or recover from illness or lifestyle changes. These volunteers need the support of others to help them adapt to their new situations. Don't overload them with high stress positions and make sure there is a good support network so they feel part of a 'team' where possible.

You may experience situations where a volunteer is poor match for the role that they want to fill. Make sure you have a clear plan on how to address such an issue. Depending on the role and/or the person, it can require sensitive discussions to prevent them feeling abandoned or unwanted.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Top Tips: Attracting new volunteers

- Word of mouth is one of the most successful recruitment routes. Your existing volunteers can help to attract new ones, but make sure they are portraying your club in the best light.
- Be specific – everyone needs to know what the ‘job’ entails. Make sure you have the answers to key questions such as:
 - Why should I volunteer for you?
 - What will I be doing?
 - How often will I be needed?
 - What support or training will I get?
- Anticipate questions (and prepare answers) before meeting any new or potential volunteers – it will help to reassure them that your club is well organised, supportive and forward-looking.
- Make sure you address common concerns such as insurance, health and safety and working alone. For example, you may be able to address concerns about locking up poorly lit premises alone or long walks to the nearest bus stop in the dark by the careful use of rotas, buddy systems and/or facility improvements.
- Titles matter – just because someone does a task for free does not make it any less important.
- Highlight the benefits – such as sharing or learning new skills, making new friends or giving back to the club.
- Target your recruitment drive at the type of volunteer you would like. For example, you may need a newsletter writer.
- Consider providing potential Learn to Row (L2R) coaches with training or mentoring in exchange for their help – some people might be concerned that they don’t know enough.
- Explore how a potential volunteer can ‘try it out’ before committing themselves.
- Be open to new ways of volunteering e.g. volunteer groups, role shares and flexible roles, or micro-volunteering. Don’t rule anyone out because of their age.
- Show that you value your volunteers. Have you looked at your website through the eyes of a potential volunteer? Are volunteers mentioned? Are there positive pictures of volunteers having a great time?



Have you thought about seeking external help to attract or train your volunteers?



Photo credit: Drew Smith

External organisations

You may also consider seeking external support with your volunteer recruitment or training. There are organisations that specifically recruit people who want to volunteer.

When approaching external organisations for advice or to help find volunteers, think about what makes your club unique. Why would someone want to volunteer for a role at your club rather than the one down the river?

Here are some more places to look for volunteers:

- **Your local community** – fresh ideas, experience and skills can often be found in many local groups.
- **Individuals or large businesses with philanthropic ideals** – an internet search can help you identify these.
- **Your local schools, college or university** may be looking for student opportunities as part of their personal development programmes.
- [National Centre for Volunteer Organisations \(NCVO\)](#) – find a volunteer centre near you.
- [Reach](#) – how to find skilled volunteers.
- [Vinspired](#) – a volunteering charity for 14-25s.
- [University of the 3rd Age \(U3A\)](#) – for retired, early retired or those wishing to volunteer.
- [Volunteering Matters](#) – for all things volunteering.
- [Sports Volunteering Research Network](#) – for sports volunteering research.
- [Do-it](#) – find out more about volunteering opportunities.
- [Active Sports Networks](#) – contact your local network for advice.
- [Royal Voluntary Service](#) – find volunteers and information on volunteering practice.

Further information

For more information about volunteer recruitment, development and support as well as some interesting case studies, visit:

- [Club Matters](#).
- [Tower Hamlets Volunteer Centre](#).



Case Study: Stratford upon Avon Boat Club (SuABC)

Attracting volunteers

In the past, SuABC struggled to attract volunteers, with the same few people doing everything, which often caused resentment. This was attributed to poor communication, for example:

- Requests for help were via a generic email, often at short notice.
- Those who did turn up were provided with limited support or advice and were often criticised if jobs weren't completed to the anticipated standard.
- There was a lack of thanks given for the help provided.

The outcome of this approach, unsurprisingly, was fewer people volunteering and many of those that did, never did it again!

The new Captain made it a priority to increase the number of volunteers and their skills by using a very different approach that involved:

- Asking specific people to do specific jobs suited to their skills. This meant that they knew the scope of their commitment and weren't overloaded.
- Making expectations clear from the outset, with support (or supervision), especially for first time volunteers, meaning problems could be foreseen, or prevented.
- Thanking volunteers publicly and effusively for their contributions and making it clear that they were valued, appreciated and rewarded, thereby encouraging others to help.
- Encouraging new volunteers in roles such as Boatman or Land & Buildings, to act as team leaders and set up their own team. Although it's taken time to achieve, it now works very well. For example, the Boatman uses Duke of Edinburgh Award juniors to help one night a week, which promotes club integration and raises awareness of how delicate the fleet is.

"I think that the pandemic has shown unequivocally that people are naturally helpful and want to get involved and I think we should build on this spirit of togetherness. Also, technical and social changes (with more online calls) mean that it's easier to get people together now and you can use their time more effectively. If we can stop the old habit of treating people appallingly and just use a few basic techniques, then I think clubs will find they improve their volunteer situation dramatically."

Jen Cary, SuABC



Case Study: Stratford upon Avon Boat Club (SuABC) (continued)

Other top tips:

- Always give plenty of notice about projects or tasks that need volunteers.
- Give start and end times for specific tasks, as people are more likely to turn up.
- For regattas, use a separate group of people to take everything down and put it away at the end (reducing the burden on those volunteering all day).
- For technical roles, use pre-briefings with good instructions. For example, regatta marshals attend online calls in advance to go through their roles, how the regatta works, the safety plan, etc. This has worked very well and ensures a more efficient use of time, with people more comfortable with their roles.
- Make it as fun as possible.
- A newsletter can help to keep everyone informed and promote inclusion.

Further ideas to consider:

- Hold an annual event for all club volunteers (funded by the club).
- Formalise inductions for parents and L2R groups, setting expectations from the outset.
- Build up your own Volunteer of the Year award – make it prestigious!
- Have a club photo board (and on the website) with pictures of all volunteers. If everyone can see who does what, they're more likely to approach them and get chatting.
- Make squads responsible for different tasks.
- Ask about skills on new joining forms – and remember to follow them up.



Photo credit: C.Best



2.4 Supporting volunteers

Volunteer policy

A volunteer policy is a good way to communicate the information that all new, existing or potential volunteers need. It can also form part of your club handbook or separate volunteer handbook (see below).

As your club grows, with more people, groups and activities and often longer opening hours, you need more volunteers and they, in turn, need (and expect) more structure and support.

Your volunteer policy can include:

- Introduction to the club.
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Expectations.
- Recruitment.
- Training.
- Support.
- Insurance, expenses and safety.

Having a 'go to' document with all this volunteer related information (including relevant club policies, procedures and considerations) can make club life easier – it provides everyone with consistent information (rather than well-meaning members' versions of the information). Make it easy to access online, for example, through [ClubHub](#) or your own club website.

Your handbook doesn't have to be complicated – a simple version is easier to update, produce and print.

Club handbook or volunteer handbook

You may already have a **club handbook** with general rowing information including key club positions/roles, as well as club rules and codes of conduct. This handbook can also include relevant volunteer information, although make sure it doesn't become an encyclopaedia!

Your handbook should appeal to all ages and be available both online or in print, for those who need or prefer it. Remember to include lots of pictures showing what a fun place your club is, with images of what volunteering looks like.



A web search will highlight several examples of club handbooks, typically with the following headings:

- Our club.
- Health & safety.
- Fundamentals of rowing.
- Rowing competitively.
- Volunteering (if included).
- Useful links.



Photo credit: Drew Smith

Alternatively, you may prefer to have a separate **volunteer handbook** incorporating more details on volunteering opportunities, expectations, education, mentoring and/or training, together with your volunteer agreements if you're using them (see below), as well as some of the core club information listed above. You may wish to include information about working with specific groups, or if a certain role requires specific skills or vetting.

By providing appropriate documented information in a volunteer policy, club handbook or volunteer handbook, you can help to make life simpler for all volunteers and for anyone managing them – for the benefit of everyone.

Volunteer Coordinator

Many clubs find that having a Volunteer Coordinator – a single point of contact for all things volunteering – is a good way to support volunteers. This person is responsible for leading your club's efforts to attract and retain its volunteer workforce, as well as developing relationships and providing support.

Volunteer coordinators can also help to develop your club's volunteer policies and procedures. They need good communication and inter-personal skills, along with the ability to inspire and motivate others. See [Appendix A](#) – Role description: Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer agreements

Volunteer agreements can also be useful, particularly if you have large numbers of volunteers or want to formalise your volunteering arrangements. An internet search will show some examples. These agreements, between your club and each volunteer, can help to secure commitment and ensure that both sides understand expectations. However, they may also be seen as a 'contract' and therefore have legal implications, or they may duplicate the information that you already have, or prefer to have, in your club or volunteer handbook and/or volunteer policy.



Top Tips: Volunteer agreements

- Make sure that your agreements are succinct, easy to understand and explain any training, inductions or support provided. Be careful not to form an 'employment' relationship. If you are concerned about this, take appropriate legal advice.
- Include a named point of contact.
- Explain your expenses policies (taking appropriate legal advice).
- Outline your Diversity and Inclusion statements and policies.
- Outline the codes of conduct that apply such as safeguarding etc.
- Outline Health & Safety and insurance procedures.
- Explain your club's grievance procedure.

As with all the data you collect, don't forget to adhere to current [GDPR regulations](#) including the requirements for retention and storage of your agreements if it contains personal information.

Volunteer expenses

For some people, offering to reimburse them for out-of-pocket expenses can make the difference between retaining them or not, but it's important to follow the current guidelines and legislation. There are specific regulations for [volunteer expenses](#) which everyone should understand, including the implications of being classed as a volunteer or an employee. Remember to make it clear to your volunteers that they don't have to accept reimbursements.

Don't forget

It's your club, your business, your money and your reputation – always follow up on any references for key positions and follow appropriate procedures such as DBS, before appointing anyone into a key volunteer, or paid, position.

You have a duty of care to your volunteers – make sure you have appropriate insurance, vetting procedures and safety [policies and procedures](#) in place to cover them.

Volunteer Action Plan

A Volunteer Action Plan can provide your main committee with a useful structure to set out how you attract, support and retain both current and potential volunteers, including key responsibilities. It doesn't have to be an in-depth document, but it can help to formalise your volunteer management plans, including the key areas of recruitment and retention. See [Appendix B](#) – Example Volunteer Action Plan.

Alternatively, you may decide to incorporate your volunteer plans into your overall Club Development Plan, see [Club Development Guide](#).



Top Tips: Supporting volunteers

- Consider developing a volunteer policy – it can help to get more people involved by setting out and demonstrating:
 - The expectations for all volunteers.
 - The roles and value that volunteers contribute to club life.
 - Your club's commitment to its volunteers.
 - What the volunteer gets out of it (friendship, social interaction, benefits, etc.).
- Appoint a Volunteer Coordinator/Manager to act as a link between your volunteers and your club's management committee, responsible for:
 - Meeting and greeting all potential volunteers.
 - Explaining the vision of the club to volunteers.
 - Explaining the key role of volunteers in your club.
 - Getting to know your current volunteers.
 - Identifying training opportunities and helping to develop and support your volunteers.
 - Acting as a first point of contact for any issues.
- Offer flexible volunteering opportunities that reflect changing work patterns and/or volunteering habits, such as:
 - For shift workers or those available on weekdays.
 - One-off opportunities, even just once a year, such as regattas.
 - Volunteer rotas with groups doing the same role – sharing can make things easier.
 - Virtual volunteering (e.g. secretariat, coaching, mentoring, etc.) The Covid pandemic has shown some excellent examples of clubs that have embraced this – look at other club websites or ask your Regional Rowing Council for ideas.
- Try 'micro-volunteering' for small 'posts' or to attract those unable to commit regularly, for example, encourage parents, partners, siblings or friends to volunteer at a regatta or head race.
- Remember:
 - Communicate more widely to find 'micro-volunteers', for example, through social media open groups and pages.
 - Make your appeals interesting and visual – a short video can bring your opportunities to life.
 - Don't overload a 'micro' volunteer – you may never see them again!



Case Study: Bewdley Rowing Club

My journey as a volunteer

"I discovered rowing when I was a last minute 'sub' at the local 'Pub N Club' regatta and ended up having to compete after only one practice! I hated it! Well, to be honest, I hated the river, but loved the competitiveness and now 13 years later, nothing's changed in that respect.

My desire to improve is still the same and I've managed to win lots of coxing and rowing events, locally and nationally as well as an International Masters medal. I learnt quite soon that clubs exist on the goodwill of everyone. My coach works full time, still trains and competes, and also volunteers at the club in non-coaching roles, so my crew and I got drawn into her 'world' of helping the club and others.

I now help to organise L2R courses, as well as coaching on them. I'm a UKCC Level 2 coach and encourage others to do this, as it's helped not just the club, but my own rowing too. I'm the club's Subscription Secretary and over the years I've been Captain for two years and Vice-Captain for three years. I am also the Regattas Secretary, as well as helping with lots of club administration. We're a small club and so a few of us take on lots of roles. It's an important part of club life. I'm now taking an umpire's course, as we need umpires to enable events like ours to run!

My advice to everyone – get involved, help your club and have some fun!"

Kat Carlyle, Bewdley Rowing Club



Photo credit: Jo Atkinson



Understanding what motivates your volunteers is key to retaining them.

Have you thought about 'micro-volunteering' to help retain your volunteer workforce and prevent overload?

Never turn down the offer of volunteer support – you risk them never offering again!

2.5 Acknowledging and retaining volunteers

Once you've managed to recruit your volunteers, your next big task is to hang onto them! This includes keeping them motivated by acknowledging and rewarding their efforts, for example, through further training and development.

Keeping your volunteers motivated

Volunteers give up their valuable spare time, and many (or most) want to get something out of the experience. How they feel about their experience can make all the difference to their approach and whether they keep coming back.

Your volunteers may leave your club for a number of reasons, such as moving away, family commitments, ill health or mobility issues, time constraints or employment changes. These reasons can be difficult to overcome, but reasons such as lack of support, overload, boredom or an unhappy overall experience should be explored and addressed. Good communication is the key to happy relationships and can often help to nip problems in the bud before it's too late. Negative feedback can be uncomfortable to hear, but in the long-term provides useful learning points for everyone.

If your volunteers feel isolated or overloaded, they will often be vocal in their complaints to anyone that listens. Unfortunately, this can include the people who you hope will step forward to replace them. It's therefore important to support your volunteers and address any niggles or issues as soon as they arise.

Many volunteers want to carry out roles that they feel comfortable with but keeping them motivated can be a challenge if they do the same role year after year. For roles that require no training, where anyone can help, consider 'micro-volunteering' where jobs are shared between crews and groups of people.

By talking to volunteers about their motivations and experiences, you can identify what is important to them and the ways in which they might be able to support your club. Remember that the circumstances of every volunteer are different so be flexible to meet differing needs where possible. It's also useful to talk to volunteers and members when they leave (exit reviews) to explore any issues and how best to deal with them.



Top Tips: Retaining volunteers

- Communicate regularly to ensure that everyone knows what's going on and where they 'fit' within the club structure.
- Take the time to talk to your volunteers to see how they're getting on, explore any concerns or worries or to just find out how life is treating them. Some key questions to ask include:
 - How were they 'recruited' and would they react differently if asked again?
 - What are their volunteering experiences, either at your club or elsewhere?
 - Any suggestions of how to improve current (or future) roles?
 - Are there any barriers to volunteering, either actual or perceived, at your club?
 - Are there benefits to volunteering and if not, what benefits would they like to see?
- Communicate regularly – keep volunteers up to date through newsletters, zoom calls, face to face meetings, emails, etc.
- Set out codes of conduct for everyone in your club and encourage all members to be courteous and thank volunteers for their time whether they are coaches, launch drivers, bar servers, tea makers, cleaners or step sweepers.
- Never underestimate the value of face-to-face contact. You'll often find out more than you ever could through social media groups, email or newsletters.
- Tell your volunteers what a difference they make to club life on a **regular basis** and encourage your committee and club officers to lead by example, even though they are volunteers themselves.
- Be flexible – try to adapt to changing work or life circumstances and their impact on the number of hours available, for example, more people may be available in the daytime due to flexible working.
- Consider volunteer training and development opportunities. Whilst some roles require specific training (such as safeguarding) many don't.
- Show appreciation, give recognition and reward, if possible.

For more information on how to motivate your volunteers, visit:

[Club Matters](#).

[Volunteer Hub](#).

[Sports Volunteer Research Network](#).



Recognising and rewarding your volunteers can make all the difference to retaining your volunteers, as well as attracting new ones.

Recognition and reward

As with any enterprise, the key to retaining staff or volunteers is to keep them happy, so find out what makes them tick and make sure that their hard work is appreciated.

Your club probably has a 'Top Rower' or 'Top Crew' award, but do you have 'volunteer' awards? What about an 'Unsung Hero' award or a 'Hidden Helper' award. There are so many jobs that get done behind the scenes – how about a 'Someone' award to acknowledge the someone who does them! If you don't have volunteer awards, what message does this send out?

An inventory of your club roles and volunteer support can be an 'eye opener' for everyone – it shows how important your volunteers are to your club's existence. Make sure you tell all your members (both existing and new) about the work that goes on behind the scenes – they'll appreciate your volunteers far more.

How much money are your volunteers saving your club? Could you survive without them?

For example, five volunteers providing five hours of their time a week for 40 weeks of the year equates to 1,000 hours of free time every year – the cost of a new boat if you paid them the minimum wage!

Acknowledging your volunteers

Recognition is the acknowledgement of someone or something that is known about – and it should never be underestimated or overlooked. A lack of recognition leads to demotivation, dissatisfaction and in many cases, dropout.

When was the last time your club said 'thank you' to the person who mows the grass and has done so, unseen by most, for the past 20 years?

As with any role, being recognised for your hard work, particularly when the going gets tough (or the weather gets wet and cold) can make all the difference between staying or leaving. This principle applies just as much to volunteers as to those in paid roles.

Recognition can come in many forms, from a simple, private 'thank you', to publicly acknowledging a volunteer(s) for their work. It can also be used as a tool to help encourage more volunteers to step forward.

Most club members forget to show their appreciation to club volunteers so it's up to your club committee to lead from the top and make volunteer recognition an integral part of club life.



Top Tips: Recognising your volunteers

- Put up pictures of your volunteers so everyone knows who they are and what they do.
- Consider giving key volunteers a position on a committee. For example, if they have great 'people skills', could they be your next volunteer coordinator?
- Encourage members to thank not just their coach but the trailer driver, the cleaner and the gardener on a regular basis.
- Complete volunteer inductions – even if volunteers have done the role before, it helps to show that you value them and all clubs have their own idiosyncrasies.
- Consider having a separate Facebook page, WhatsApp group or section of your website for your volunteers – and make sure someone's responsible for maintaining it.
- Give out certificates for volunteering hours or 'volunteer of the month/year'.
- Nominate your volunteers for local Volunteer Awards or even start your own awards programme.
- Acknowledge your volunteers in your club newsletter or on your website. Why not also send information to British Rowing ([#YourStories](#)).
- Encourage your Regional Rowing Council to run good practice days where your volunteers can meet others doing similar roles.
- Nominate your volunteers for British Rowing Awards, or there may also be [Regional Awards](#).
- **And most importantly, say 'Thank You'.**

You can never say 'thank you' too much!



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Retaining your current volunteers and attracting new ones is becoming an increasingly important part of club life. Make the extra effort to recognise and reward your volunteers for the important role that they play.

Rewarding your volunteers

Many clubs show their appreciation for coaches, helpers or committee members by either fully funding or subsidising courses or workshops to improve their knowledge. Giving people the opportunity to improve their skills not only helps them to function more effectively but also increases the likelihood that they'll continue in their role.

Some other ideas on how to reward volunteers include:

- Providing kit or T-shirts.
- Giving out tickets to rowing events as recognition for a volunteers' work.
- Paying expenses – although look at this very carefully to check the tax implications first with HMRC.
- Providing a BBQ or other refreshments for helpers, for example, on 'work' weekends at the end of the regatta or winter season.
- Awarding badges or certificates, for example, for the number of hours volunteered.
- Issuing 'long service' awards for those volunteering for many years.
- Ensuring that all your volunteers have the tools to do their job effectively, for example, megaphone, rigging tools, an iPad or online access to accounting, etc.
- Providing reduced club membership rates for key volunteers.
- Sharing club subscriptions to useful websites, such as coaching related ones.
- Asking your [Regional Rowing Council](#) to support workshops and courses for all volunteer positions (not just coaches).

If you are not sure if your proposed reward for a volunteer is liable to tax or VAT, always check the [HMRC Advice for Volunteers](#) advice or ask your club solicitor.

Volunteer training and development

Training and development opportunities for volunteers range from in-house mentoring to paying for or subsidising workshops and courses. In practice, these opportunities will depend on your club's size, resources, as well as the number of volunteers and their needs.

Whilst some roles require no, or limited, training or upskilling, others (such as coaching) can require compulsory training, such as training in safeguarding for your junior rowing coaches. Deciding who needs training and for what role can be complicated, especially if the training is expensive or there is confusion about who funds it.



Here are examples of different types of training and development opportunities:

- **Mentoring** – can be great for retaining and developing volunteers, both as mentors and mentees:
 - Mentees get a ‘sense of belonging’ and a ‘feel good’ factor when paired with the right mentor.
 - Mentors often feel a sense of pride when asked to mentor someone and from seeing them progress in their roles.
 - Mentoring can add a new dimension to the role of existing volunteers who may be feeling bored or stale.
 - Many coaches start out by helping a more senior coach before attending a workshop or coaching course and progressing to coach on their own. Likewise, many club chairs are deputies before taking on the lead role themselves.
 - Beware overloading your mentors, especially if they have several new volunteers to mentor as well as their own role to complete.
- **Training courses and workshops** – can be useful to reinforce the importance of a role and keep the post holder updated and motivated to continue their involvement:
 - Home study or online workshops or webinars can often be found online for free or at low cost.
 - Independently delivered workshops can be located at a separate location or can be delivered in the club.
 - Training courses can be expensive, so try to prioritise those who need them the most.
 - Training and support for those with club/committee roles can enhance their experience and contribution.
- **Further training and support**
 - British Rowing has many online training courses, workshops and webinars.
 - Some roles may require more specific training such as the Club Welfare Officer or Club Rowing Safety Adviser. education@britishrowing.org or clubsupport@britishrowing.org can advise on appropriate workshops and their availability.
 - For further information and advice on volunteer training, visit: [Sport England Club Matters](#) or your [Active Sports Partnership](#).



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Case Study: Vesta Rowing Club

Supporting and developing volunteers

“Over the years, a number of people have given me advice, and coached or supported me with various aspects of rowing. This support was invaluable, but over the past few years I felt it had dried up and I wanted to change that.

The downtime during the Covid pandemic in 2020 provided an opportunity for me to help pass on my experience of running events and to do something positive for other volunteers. Everyone missed the enjoyment and social benefits of volunteering, so an online meeting with a drink was a good place to start.

Our online group started with 5-6 people, ran every two weeks and provided the opportunity to not only chat and enjoy each other's company again, but to explore what we thought future event organisers might need and how we could help.

Our discussion included:

- *Reviewing what we do at events and why, what worked, what didn't and what we could do better in the future.*
- *Reflecting on and challenging some of our accepted practices such as:*
 - *Technical issues (the policies and processes required to run an event).*
 - *Human issues (including cognitive and behavioural skills).*

This fascinating process revealed lots of ideas on how to do things better. We also shared information about our personal and professional lives and how we got involved in rowing. This has strengthened our relationship and helped to develop trust within the group.

The process has been hugely beneficial for all of us and we hope this will be evident in the events that we run in the future. We are now exploring how to start involving a wider group.”

Jim Harlow, Vesta Boat Club



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Section 3 - Coaching

Coaches can have a transformative and lasting impact on those around them.

3.1 Introduction

This section of the People Development Guide provides information for clubs on the topic of coaching. The term 'coach' refers to *someone who helps others to learn new skills and be active*. It covers both qualified and unqualified coaches, coaching assistants and all helpers, including parents. The term 'rowing' is used to cover both sweep oar and sculling.

This guide aims to be relevant to clubs of all sizes and provides a range of coach and coaching related information and advice that includes:

- Developing a coaching structure that reflects your club culture. (3.2)
- Developing your club's coaches and having a clear coaching pathway. (3.3)
- Attracting new coaches, including how to involve parents. (3.4)
- Employment considerations for coaches. (3.5)
- How to acknowledge, recognise and reward your coaches. (3.6)
- Some top tips on what new coaches need to know. (3.7)

3.2 Establishing a coaching structure

In new or existing clubs with only a few members, there are often a range of volunteer roles or jobs that are covered by one person. But as clubs expand and the pool of helpers increases, it's possible to allocate individuals to specific roles. This premise also applies to coaching – as your pool of coaches grows, your club's coaching structure will evolve and coaches may have just one crew or squad to look after.

Because clubs have a variety of coaching needs, it is impossible to provide a 'one size fits all' coaching structure, but here are some initial considerations:

- For smaller clubs:
 - You may allocate the most senior coach or rower to coach all activities, OR
 - There may be a rower or crew rota allowing crews and individuals to support each other.
- Larger clubs have more options such as:
 - A team of coaches for each rowing section, operating under the 'umbrella' of a lead coach, OR
 - Several individual coaches whose focus is on individual crews or groups.
- In coastal clubs, the coxswain may be the only source of coaching on the water due to the challenge of coming alongside in a launch on the waves.



Coaches create the right conditions for learning to happen.

The role of coaches can vary widely from club to club. For example, in some clubs the coach may only be responsible for rigging, towing the trailer or delivering indoor rowing sessions.

Before you develop your club's coaching structure, it's useful to discuss and agree a common outlook on the roles, duties and challenges of coaching at your club. This includes setting out your overall coaching goals, such as how to attract, develop and retain high quality coaches to cover all of your club activities. Your coaching structure can be managed by your main committee, a single nominated person or a group of people.

By understanding more about your existing coaches, you'll gain a better understanding of the support needed to retain them, irrespective of how the roles are divided up or what level your coaches are working at.

Top tips for an effective coaching structure

- Consider having a coaching lead or coach coordinator as a single point of contact for coaches.
- Ensure clear communication between your club management team and your coaches.
- Explore a range of coach development opportunities. For ideas contact: education@britishrowing.org, clubsupport@britishrowing.org or your [local Active Partnership](#).
- Maintain continuity of funding to support coach development. For ideas contact: education@britishrowing.org or clubsupport@britishrowing.org.
- Make sure you value and acknowledge the hard work of your coaches. See [section 3.6](#).
- Be ready to embrace change or new ideas and opportunities.
- Be proactive in managing your coaching group – is it representative of your whole club or are all your coaches from one age group or section?
- Identify mentors for your coaches. These could be from within or outside of your club, or even from a different sport. An internet search will show many examples of how and why this is a great idea.
- Have a clear succession plan.



Case Study: Vesta Rowing Club

Developing a club coaching structure

Vesta Rowing Club has three squads, split by gender – senior, development and novice. There are two part-time paid coaches, one for each gender, responsible for writing training programmes.

Each squad has a lead coach. The paid coach covers the senior group and the other squads have volunteer leads. Each squad also has 2-3 volunteer coaches. The paid coaches spend some time with the novice squads to review the emerging talent for the next season.

Other points to note:

- New coaches (unless they already have a track record in coaching) work with the novice squad for two years before moving onto the next squad. This helps them to develop their own coaching style. If they are a recent senior or development squad member, it also means that they don't have to coach people who they have just rowed with.
- A mentor system is used to help new coaches, with each coach allocated someone to go to for advice.
- Rowers who are considering giving up are encouraged to try coaching and many of them help with the L2R courses during the summer. This is where they find out if they like coaching and the club finds out if they have coaching qualities like good communication skills etc.
- Coaches might start out coaching one group but can change between groups and genders, although normally at the end of a season.



Photo credit: British Rowing



Fit with club culture

When developing a coaching structure, it's important to understand and embrace your overall club culture. By agreeing and publicising your club culture, including the values and behaviours that underpin it, you set out standards, not only for members, but for coaches as well. Make sure you have a clear procedure outlined for what to do if these standards are breached.

Defining your club culture

What is club culture? Club culture can be defined by:

- The values and expectations that club members come to share.
- The 'social glue' that holds clubs together.
- The ways of thinking, speaking and interacting that characterise a group.
- The shared meanings, often taken for granted, that people assign to their social surroundings.
- A collection of ideas, traditions, values, beliefs and policies.

British Rowing has clear [Codes of Conducts](#) for clubs and their members and there is also a [Code of Conduct](#) for coaches.

These documents, along with your club vision, underpin how everyone involved in your club environment should behave. These behaviours of your club members together with your club environment, rules and communications, form your **club culture**.

Club culture – Questions to ask

- How do you describe the culture of your club?
- Do you have set behaviours that your club expects to be role modelled by everyone, from your Chair to your club's coaches and all participants?
- How do you present your club culture? What messages do new members receive about your club culture when they join? Are there images celebrating success, with trophies on display or does your club also celebrate the enjoyment and fun of rowing, with relevant images?
- When recruiting new coaches, do you explore their values to see if they will be a good 'fit' with your club's culture?



Coaches can be great role models for your club, encouraging similar behaviours in others.

Goals and challenges for club and coaches

When setting out your coaching structure, it's important to explore your coaching goals and the challenges to achieving them, for both your club and your coaches. By adopting an appropriate structure that helps to address these challenges, you will help to maximise the impact that your coaches have in your club.

Make sure you have clear plans on how to:

- Find and/or identify new coaches. [See section 3.4](#)
- Allocate coaches to squads/rowers to keep everyone happy.
- Implement training and/or mentoring.
- Tackle a lack of coach commitment.
- Create a diverse coaching group that is representative of your club and local community.
- Source funding to employ coach(es) and for coach development.
- Deal with coach retirement or resignation, including succession planning.

Remember to also consider your coaching structure from your coaches' point of view:

- How do they interact with other coaches, or work as part of a coaching team? Is there a plan to cover holidays or extended absences?
- How do they interact with your club committees and/or management teams?
- Are they supported and encouraged to develop in their roles?
- How do they manage their rowers' expectations?
- How can they identify and work with a mentor?
- How do they balance their coaching with other commitments? Is everyone realistic about what can be achieved?

By addressing the above points, your club will experience a range of positive outcomes, including:

- Coaches who are more motivated, fulfilled and enjoy what they do – who act as ambassadors for your club and its club culture.
- Happy and enthusiastic rowers – who continue to renew their membership year on year.
- Improved rowing outcomes and club performances.
- Coaches who feel part of a team or club approach and are more likely to continue in their roles.
- Enhanced self-improvement for both rowers and coaches alike.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Club coaching plan

Do you have a plan that sets out the number of coaches that your club requires and their development needs?

Most clubs have a Club Development Plan outlining its proposed future activities, although this may not always include coach development.

Aligning your club's coaching structure/plan to your overall club development plan is a good starting point. If you don't have a Club Development Plan, further details are set out in the [Club Development Guide](#), section 1.2 Getting started.

A useful approach is to structure your plan based on the following key stages:



Your plan doesn't have to be complicated but should include an overview of your current and future goals, as well as any coaching ambitions. It should include a review of the current coaching expertise together with any gaps or areas to focus on.

As with any plan, information gathering is the first action, as it helps you to understand who does what at present and what coaching related activities they help to provide or facilitate. A useful starting point is to analyse your current membership levels and how they are served by your coaches. This should include:

- **No. of active coaches, by gender.**
- **No. of qualified coaches and level, by gender.**
- **No. of unqualified coaches and helpers, by gender, including any considering a qualification.**
- **Coach/rower ratios for groups or sections, by gender.**

Remember to also look at past membership and coaching levels, particularly if there have been changes.

Based on this information, you can plan the number and type of coaches that you need, both now and going forward. Once this is done you can identify where your current gaps lie and where future gaps may lie. You might find that a SWOT analysis (**S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats) is helpful. See [Club Development Guide](#) section 1.2 Getting started.



An example of some coaching objectives set out in a typical club development plan template are as follows:

Where do we want to be? What's our goal?	How will we achieve this?	What resources will we require?	What is the cost and how will this be funded?	What are the timelines/ key dates?	How will we measure and monitor progress?
To increase the no. of active coaches: + 2 L2 coaches + 3 Coaching assistants	Identify interested parties. Host Coaching workshops.	Workshop planning.	[£xxx] funded from club reserves. [£xxx] grant funding.	[insert date]	Review of progress at next committee meeting.
To ensure all coaches and helpers have basic skills and qualifications required.	Hold regular training sessions in first aid, CPR, defibrillator use, safeguarding and water safety.	In house resources.	[£xxx] club funds.	Biannual sessions to cover all coaches and helpers (e.g. January and July).	Coach/helper numbers and training records.



Photo credit: John Anderson



Your coaching plan – Questions to ask

- Do you include coaching-related goals in your club development plan? Do you know:
 - How many rowers you currently have in each membership category?
 - How many coaches/assistants you have? How many are active? How are they allocated to your club activities? What is your coach to participant ratio?
 - What is the existing knowledge base? Are there any knowledge gaps? How can you fill these gaps?
 - What are the needs and aspirations of your current coaches?
- Do you have minimum standards or a Code of Conduct for coaches? If not, consider standards such as Safeguarding, Safety, Clean Sport and First Aid training.
- How many coaches will be needed (and at what level) to serve any projected future increases in your membership?
- What is your timeline for increasing numbers and seeking training opportunities?
- What funding is needed to cover coach training? Can this be covered by club funds or how are you planning to source this funding?
- What is your succession plan for coaches?
- When will you review progress? What are your key review dates?

3.3 Developing coaches

The aim of your coaching structure is to ensure the development of robust coaches. Robust coaches need to be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to help them unlock the rowers' potential, as well as the skills to overcome the daily challenges of their working environment e.g. people, equipment or facilities. To achieve this, most coaches follow a coaching pathway to build up their knowledge and skills over time.

Coaches have a lot to learn – not just about training and the technical aspects of the role but also about 'softer' skills such as interaction, relationships and self-reflection. Developing coaches' knowledge and skills gradually allows time to put learnings into practice.

As well as 'on the job' learning, development can occur in many ways: by talking and interacting with others; by learning from success or failure; by attending workshops or training courses; by reading up on a range of subjects; or by having a mentor. Whichever route is chosen, it should suit each coach's individual circumstances and learning style.

A coach inspires and delivers success at every level.



The skills and knowledge required by coaches are dependent on the coaching level, but can include the following:



By identifying any 'must haves' and the 'nice to haves', you can cross-reference these aspects with each coach's knowledge and skills to identify any strengths or gaps. This analysis can then be used to shape a personal development plan for each coach, for example, in the form of a matrix or a one-page summary.



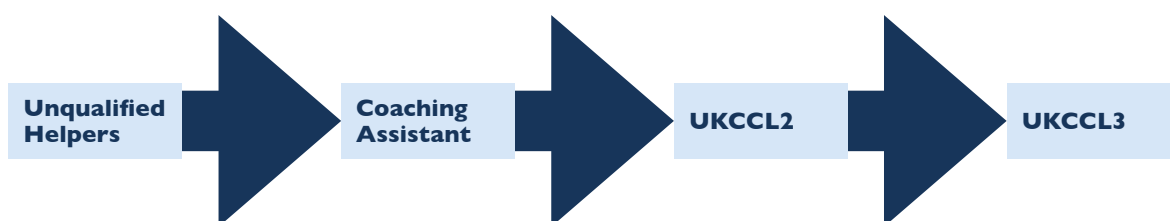
Good coaches create the right conditions for learning to happen and find ways of motivating the participants.

It's also important to consider the needs and expectations of your club members, both now and in the future. For example, are there opportunities for coaches to develop through sessions at different times of the day, with new or different groups such as adaptive rowing, or for different rowing skills such as beach sprints or indoor rowing? By broadening their scope, you may be able to identify other people to provide support and/or mentoring, and to share the workload so that no single person becomes overloaded.

Further information on what a new coach needs to know is set out in [section 3.7](#). Additional support is also highlighted in the British Rowing [Lockdown webinar for coaches](#).

Some key points to note when developing your coaching pathway are:

- Hold a review session with your current coaches – what do they do, what would they like to do and what areas of coaching practice would they like to develop?
- Build a matrix to see how these answers fit with your future coaching strategy.
- Set out individual plans for your coaches based on their answers.
- Identify potential new coaches and a support network for them.
- Explore how you can build on experiences from outside the rowing environment.
- Agree how qualifications and training are delivered to your coaches. This can be formally, through external courses, or informally, through peer-to-peer support, mentoring or groups.
- Show the progression of coaches visually – it can be linear or fluid. An example from UK Sport performance is [here](#) or it could be simple, such as:



- Explore the broader pathway. For example, your L2R coach may have no desire to gain formal coaching qualifications (as they work under the guidance of a L2 coach) but may want to broaden their skills to offer L2R courses to those with long term health conditions and impairments. They may instead benefit from workshops or specific courses, such as adaptive rowing training, mental health and first aid training or adult safeguarding.

By following this process, you will also be able to identify the key areas to address in a succession plan, bearing in mind that some workshops or courses run less frequently or on specific dates.



3.4 Attracting and recruiting coaches

Without the great contribution that volunteer coaches provide many clubs would cease to exist, so it's increasingly important to attract and retain people in these important coaching roles. Your existing club membership provides an obvious starting point. Some of your current rowers (both seniors and juniors), as well as parents or other helpers, may be encouraged to help out with rowing sessions e.g. L2R initially. From here, they may wish to further develop their skills by achieving more formal coaching qualifications.

Where to find a coach?

When seeking a new coach(es), consider the following sources:

- Your own club, for example, existing rowers, L2R participants, juniors, parents, etc.
- Universities, local colleges or other local clubs.
- Social media.
- Your [Regional Rowing Council](#).
- Your [Active Partnership](#).
- [UK Coaching Jobs in Sport](#).
- [British Rowing job search](#).

With more people choosing coaching as a career path, some clubs are also using paid coaches to support their coaching teams. See [section 3.5](#).

Recruiting coaches – Questions to ask

- Do you have a clear job and person description for your coaching roles?
- What type of coach do you want? An all-rounder, lead coach, junior coach or masters coach?
- Who is going to interview them – is there a practical as well as a formal part?
- Have you considered safeguarding and made appropriate checks?
- Have you checked out their qualifications?
- Have you followed up on recommendations and references? Try an internet search.
- Will the appointed person need a mentor?



Case Study: Durham School

Finding the right coach

When trying to find coaches, Durham School works with Durham University to take on post-graduates who have time within their studies, for example, Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) students. The school can offer accommodation which provides a financial incentive, and these students are also more mature than gap-year students.

"Sixth-form students do Strength and Conditioning training with the University students so there is a good relationship. We need qualified coaches, but the qualification alone is not enough and does not tell us what we need to know. We are happy to put the right person through their coaching qualifications. It's also an advantage if they have taken a minibus test and have a trailering qualification but we can teach that too."

Eddie Bryant, Director of Performance Sport

Key lessons

- When recruiting, include an observed coaching session as well as an interview and provide the opportunity for participants to talk to the prospective coach afterwards, for example, over lunch.
- Make sure you advertise for the kind of coach that you need, bearing in mind that performance rowers don't always make the best coaches. It's important to appoint the right person, particularly for younger students having their first experience of rowing.
- Use participation coaches to engage with and inspire beginners.
- Appoint high quality coaches to instil good habits early on and avoid the need to undo poor technique at a later stage.
- Make sure that all coaches understand the ethos (culture) of your programme i.e., someone who wants to learn and can fit in.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Involving parents

Parents can be a big asset to your volunteer team, including coaching roles. If club juniors start at 13-14 years of age and you involve the parents from the outset, you may have 5+ years of their help. There's no need to make involving parents complicated – it's all about making them feel an important part of wider club life so they want to stay involved. Here are some top tips on how to attract and retain parents as new helpers and potentially, as future coaches. The list also applies to general club members who may be thinking about coaching or those willing to help with coaching sessions.

Top Tips: Attracting parents as new helpers and coaches

Getting started

- Encourage parents of junior rowers to join your club for a free or nominal amount when their child joins. As a club member, they'll receive club related information and feel part of your club.
- Ensure a friendly introduction to club life by introducing key people such as your Welfare Officer, Captain and junior coaches.
- Provide access to the same information as their child, such as safety information and Codes of Conduct.
- Hold a parents' evening to make introductions and explain how coaching is conducted and organised.
- Develop a Parents' Code of Conduct to set out expected standards of behaviour and prevent any minor problems from escalating.

Encouraging parents to help

- Encourage parents to experience rowing, for example, through a L2R course. Many parents feel more comfortable with their child's involvement if they have experienced rowing themselves.
- Show them the coaching framework so they understand how everybody fits together in terms of club activity.
- Start small with low level help such as carrying boats, walking up the bank with a coach, practicing with throw lines or accompanying the launch driver.
- Gradually encourage more involvement – not necessarily with juniors and ideally not at a session involving their own child.



Top Tips: Attracting parents as new helpers and coaches (continued)

What can they do?

- Learn to cox/row themselves.
- Set up/carry equipment and help people onto the water.
- Launch driving – perhaps they would like to gain a formal qualification.
- Provide refreshments for participants and other parents.
- Paperwork, such as arranging sessions, communicating with other parents about sessions, events, travel, etc.
- Boat maintenance – there are free/cheap maintenance days available at some boat repairers.
- Take part in 'buddy' systems.
- Attend Safety, Safeguarding, Clean Sport or First Aid workshops.

First steps into coaching

- Try to provide the right balance of information, without overload – the first steps onto the coaching pathway can be challenging.
- Remember the formal requirements for coaches such as DBS, safeguarding and safety awareness. Many of these requirements can be achieved either online or at the club.



Photo credit: Drew Smith



Case Study: Stratford upon Avon Boat Club (SuABC)

Involving parents as helpers and coaches

"The parents group associated with the juniors at SuABC is integral to the successful operation of the club. Their support includes everything from driving safety launches to supporting events, as well as assisting coaches with session delivery."

It's often easy to forget that most parents will not have had any exposure to rowing, the terminology or how a rowing club operates. Demystifying the sport is vital and is key to engaging parents.

At SuABC, we try to dissuade parents from dropping their child at the gates and collecting them at the end of the session. We invite parents to join their child's session and help provide some basic safety cover such as holding a throw line near key hazards, as the new juniors learn to navigate the river.

Whilst the new juniors are learning about water safety, the parents learn how to use a throw line, how to handle boats, as well as having a tour of the club. Each parent is given a Parents Handbook which explains everything someone starting out at the club needs to know. Through this engagement, enthusiasm grows and coupled with our constant advertising for junior coaches, we find parents coming forward and expressing an interest in developing as coaches. From there, our new (parent) coaches will shadow one of our qualified coaches to gain experience prior to commencing more formal Club Coach training with British Rowing.

As a result, 70% of SuABC active junior coaches were (or are) parents of junior rowers."

Steve Wellstead, SuABC



Photo credit: Drew Smith



3.5 Employing coaches

Employed versus self-employed coaches

The question of 'employed versus self-employed' status for coaches can be challenging so it's important to get it right to avoid any pitfalls. The level of control over the way coaches work is particularly relevant. The relevant government information about this is available [here](#).

Whether an individual is considered to be employed by your club or is self-employed will depend upon the nature of the relationship between your club and the individual. It's your club's responsibility to make this assessment and there may be penalties for getting it wrong so if you are unsure, always take appropriate legal advice. Both tax and employment law may be relevant.

There is a free tax and legal telephone helpline service for all British Rowing affiliated clubs and competitions, provided by Official Legal Partner, Irwin Mitchell. The service also provides access to an online portal of documents including standard agreements and template legal documents. For more information, see [here](#).

Regardless of employment status, your club should use written contracts containing the minimum information required by law. The [HMRC Employment Status Indicator](#) can help you to confirm the position. Make sure you retain evidence of the results of this test.

Paying expenses

If your club pays anyone for coaching or pays expenses, check out the rules on employment status as there may be instances where coaches are considered to be employees of the club with all the associated PAYE, holiday and pension rights that employees would receive. Clubs are also advised to be aware of the off-payroll rules, known as [IR35](#).

Employee rights

Every club employing staff has a responsibility to comply with employment law. Having a clear understanding of the rights and obligations of employees will help to reduce the legal and commercial risks of your club breaching its obligations to its employees.

Given the complexity of employment legislation, there are many areas that need to be considered when using paid staff. Here are some links to government information that expands upon employee rights. Please note that this is a non-exhaustive list of employee rights and appropriate expert advice should always be sought in cases of employment.

- [National Minimum Wage & National Living Wage](#).
- [Hours of Work](#).
- [Pensions](#).
- [Holiday Pay](#).
- [Sickness and Sick Pay](#).
- [Flexible Working](#).

When recruiting and employing coaches, make sure your club seeks appropriate advice, based on its own circumstances, to ensure you are suitably protected.



In addition to the government links above, if you have any other questions, further information and telephone support can be found on the [ACAS website](#). ACAS provides free and impartial information and advice to employers and employees on all aspects of workplace relations and employment law.

Further information on employing coaches can be found in the following sources:

- UK Government advice on the [recruitment & employment of coaches](#).
- UK Government advice on [CASC clubs](#), including guidance on paying coaches.
- [Kent Sport](#) website has a good section on hiring, supporting and employing coaches
- British Rowing [Club Welfare Handbook](#), section 4.
- Specific guidance on the recruitment of [overseas coaches](#).



Photo credit: Richard Poole



Case Study: Bristol Ariel Rowing Club

On employing a coach

"For recruitment, we were keen to write a formal job specification and post the advert publicly to ensure we attracted the best candidates. Posting the advert publicly also sent a message to our own club members that this was a serious endeavour.

We employed our coach on a self-employed hourly basis (max 6 hours a week). She didn't get involved in any strategic or club managerial activities which helped to reinforce the self-employed status – something we, as a club, were very keen to maintain to simplify the compliance aspect of engaging a paid coach. She did, however, undertake squad management as it was a requirement of the role that we set out.

All in all, we were very satisfied."

On recruiting volunteer coaches

"I've found that sending a dramatic 'hard-sell' email to club members asking/pleading for volunteers to come forward to start coaching doesn't work. The best way to get people interested/started on coaching is to approach them 1-1 very casually, targeting for example those who might have shown an interest in coaching or who might have relevant experience.

Coming out in the launch for a coaching session with an existing coach is a great way to get a feel for what it's like, for discussion and to kindle an interest in taking it further. Ultimately the most important qualities are a passion for helping others and a passion for learning.

Shadowing an existing coach is a great way to get new coaches up to the point of feeling confident and competent in taking crews out on their own."

Billy Sardar, Bristol Ariel Rowing Club



Photo credit: Drew Smith



3.6 Appreciating and recognising coaches

As with any enterprise, the key to retaining staff is to keep them happy. If your coaches and other helpers feel that their contribution to club life is both valued and recognised by both participants and your club management, they'll be encouraged to keep going. Find out what makes them tick and make sure that their hard work is appreciated.

Here are some top tips on how to ensure that your coaches are recognised and appreciated. See also [section 2.5](#) for more general tips on recognising and appreciating your other helpers.

Top Tips: Coach recognition and appreciation

- Ensure that all coaches are viewed as equal – from the lead coach to whoever runs your L2R. By only recognising the coaches of successful crews, you risk demoralising the others who often dedicate hours of time.
- Make sure that your club management says 'thank you' and leads from the top.
- Recognition can come in many forms, from a simple 'thank you' to spreading the word about the fantastic work that someone is doing. Encourage your members to say 'thank you' and promote good work through your newsletter, website or club noticeboard. Examples can also be sent to British Rowing (#YourStories).
- Understand the reasons why your coaches give up their time, for example 'to support the club', 'learn new skills' or purely for 'fun'. Knowing what motivates them will help you to meet their needs and retain them for longer.
- Make sure that all members (both existing and new) know and appreciate the work of your coaches – many often think that there is magical 'someone' who rigs the boats, repairs them, writes the programmes, cleans the steps or visits the skip with the empty water bottles!
- Encourage club members, including juniors to join or progress along the coaching pathway.
- Be aware of coaches' personal circumstances and offer them support or allow them to take a break if they need it.
- Conduct an audit of all the activities undertaken by your coaches – it can be an eye-opener to see range of additional non-coaching tasks that they often help with. If you add up the cost of this time commitment (even based on the minimum wage), you'll be surprised how high the figure is.
- Remember that tangible rewards are useful for attracting both coaches and volunteers – but always be mindful of taxation and employment status rules. Note that rewards such as expenses, coffee cards/vouchers or reduced club membership can attract tax. See HMRC [Volunteer expense rules](#) or contact your club solicitor, treasurer/accountant or appropriate expert to check.



Top Tips: Coach recognition and appreciation (continued)

- Offer coaches a position on your club committee or support them by appointing a coordinator to manage the helpers.
- Introduce a mentoring or individual support/'buddy' system to provide 1:1 support.
- Consider a separate Facebook page, WhatsApp group or section of your website for your coaches to promote a sense of 'team' approach.
- Ask your [Regional Rowing Council](#) to provide good practice days.
- Assist your coaches with upskilling, for example, through in house training or club funded workshops for all (not just for coaches).
- Consider more tangible means of appreciation, such as:
 - All-weather gear.
 - Coaching bikes (club maintained).
 - Video equipment for club coach use.
 - Rigging tools to save coaches having to pay for their own.
 - An office area/filing cabinet for the use of club coaches.
 - Shared club subscriptions for useful websites, e.g. coaching, legal advice, etc.

British Rowing support for coaches

The [British Rowing website](#) contains a wealth of information and support for both existing and new coaches including:

- [British Rowing Plus](#).
- [Webinars](#).
- [RowSafe](#).
- General coach [knowledge](#) including sections on safety, coxing, touring, technique and training advice.
- [Club Support](#) including L2R Guides, Volunteer Hub, Club Hub, Club Guides.
- [Courses & Qualifications](#).
- [Online Learning](#).
- [Rower Development](#).
- [Indoor Rowing](#).
- [Safety](#).
- [GB Rowing Team](#).



Regional support for coaches

Many regions also provide support and recognition for coaches including:

- Regional 'get-togethers' or 'Sharing Good Practice' days for coaches.
- A regional website with a Coaches Forum.
- Articles about coaching on regional websites.
- Advertising for coaching positions.
- Regional mentoring systems.
- Regional annual coaching awards and nominations for national awards, such as UK Coaching Awards.
- Recognition at regional events, such as names in the programme and/or awarding medals for coaches as well as crews.
- Coaching courses/workshops/CPD.
- Regional training workshop days such as First Aid and Safeguarding.
- Regional links with [Active Partnerships](#).

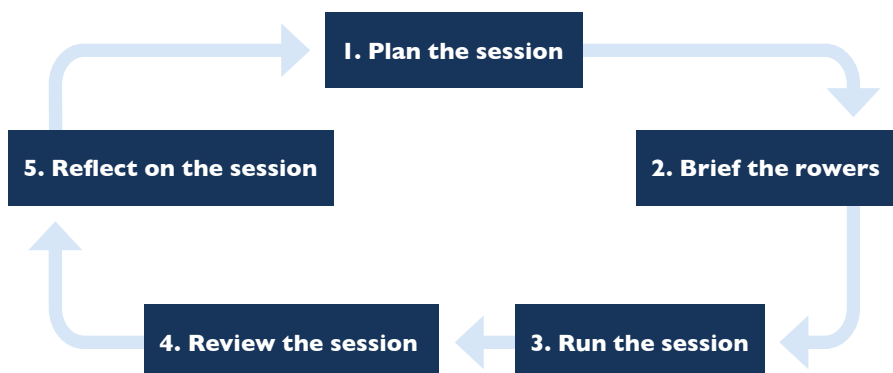
3.7 Practical tips for new coaches

Obtaining a coaching qualification is like passing a driving test – the coach has been judged to be competent but still has to develop their own style, gain experience and build confidence. If your club's coaches have been coaching for a while, it's also useful for them to reflect on areas to improve.

A key concept in British Rowing Coach Education is 'Participant Focused Coaching' with a mutually beneficial process for both coaches and rowers – the coach helps the rowers to become better rowers and the rowers help the coach to become a better coach. For more information on Participant Focused Coaching, contact education@britishrowing.org

There's more information [here](#) on how to become a better, more reflective coach. As well as being well prepared, it's important to review performance, including feedback from participants, to reflect on what went well and use this information to improve future sessions.

The key principles are as follows:





Here are some more practical top tips for new coaches to help them set a good example to participants and maintain high standards.

Top tips for new coaches

- **Plan your session** – carry a copy of your session plan (with notebook and pen), including an updated risk assessment. Get into the habit of writing a risk assessment for each outing and always have a Plan B ready.
- **Get to know your participants** – what can you learn about them from the warm-up/pre-session briefing?
- Use a **coaching bag** to carry all the items that you may need, including a basic toolkit, and make sure you replace any used items before your next outing.
- Carry a **mobile phone/charger and/or radio** in a waterproof pouch, including emergency contact details for crew, Club Rowing Safety Adviser and Club Welfare Officer.
- **Clothing** – Dress appropriately for the weather (it sets an example to your participants):
 - In cold weather, carry thermal hat, scarf and gloves.
 - In hot, sunny weather, think about your skin and eyes (as reflected sunlight can be hazardous). Wear sunglasses and carry sunscreen, spare hat and water bottle.
- **Safety** – Remember that rowers will often underestimate the risks and overestimate their ability to cope with them. Never allow anyone to persuade you to proceed with an activity if you think it's unsafe. It is your decision and your responsibility. For more information, see [RowSafe](#).
- If **coaching from a bike**, wear a hi-vis hat or top and always wear helmet and check your bike regularly.
- If **using a launch**, always wear an appropriate life jacket and check the safety of the launch as described in [RowSafe](#).



Appendices

Appendix A –

Role description: Volunteer Coordinator

Introduction

Clubs exist on the goodwill of their members and rely on members to give up their time to help with a wide range of roles. To support this important group, the Club Volunteer Coordinator acts as the single point of (independent) contact for volunteers in recognition of the important role that volunteers play and provides a consistent point of support and information.

Title, main role and purpose

The main role of the Volunteer Coordinator is to support the Club Committee in the development of a volunteering ethos and to make sure that anyone volunteering feels valued and supported. It's a chance to meet new people and help them to develop in their volunteering roles.

Ideally, the Volunteer Coordinator will not hold any other position so they have the time to get to know everyone, match skills to positions and identify any current or potential future gaps, so that the club can plan ahead.

Role responsibilities

The Volunteer Coordinator should:

- Get to know all current volunteers and be the main point of contact.
- Recruit volunteers from within the club membership (or outside of the club).
- Supervise the volunteer roles and their outcomes.
- Coordinate any volunteering recruitment, training or support.
- Be the point of contact for national or regional volunteer organisations.
- Suggest nominations for Volunteer Awards (to the Committee).
- Attend Committee meetings if necessary.
- Arrange mentoring for any volunteer taking on a new role.
- Help write or update role descriptions for volunteers.
- Promote all volunteering roles within the club.
- Be up to date with any suggested current British Rowing training or procedures.



Key skills and personal qualities

The Volunteer Coordinator is someone who is able to converse with a wide range of people on many levels and will often be the first point of contact for anyone offering their help.

Key skills/personal qualities:

- Enthusiastic and motivational.
- Approachable and can relate to a variety of age groups.
- A good communicator.
- Able to keep records.
- Able to delegate.

Ideally, the Volunteer Coordinator would have experience in arranging training/mentoring, but this can be gained through training, either from within the club or externally via British Rowing or external organisations. The Volunteer Coordinator does not need to be an expert in employment.

Other general information

- Time commitment – c 3-4 hours/week (based on current activities).
- Legal obligations – the post holder will require knowledge of GDPR and Club Health and Safety requirements. A detailed briefing/further information will be provided.
- Support or training given where necessary.



Appendix B – Example Volunteer Action Plan

To support volunteer recruitment and retention efforts	Action	Who	Timeline	Budget
Recruitment				
Local community recruitment	Meet with [xx] group. Contact Active Partnership & Volunteer hub.			
Publicise opportunities	Talk to all new members, have role descriptions. List volunteer requirements on membership form.			
Ways to attract volunteers	Talk to other clubs, RRC, community groups, etc.			
Selection and screening				
DBS and screening	Follow up all legal, British Rowing and club requirements.			
Roles				
Role descriptions	Publicised and updated regularly.			
Handover notes	What and where is handover information kept for certain roles? e.g. if your Regatta Secretary leaves, will you have to start from scratch?			
Training				
Training opportunities	Identify and list training and development opportunities. Contact your Regional Education and Training member			



To support volunteer recruitment and retention efforts	Action	Who	Timeline	Budget
Recognition				
Volunteer appreciation	How will you show appreciation/say 'thank you'? What can you do? Is there a cost?			
Regular 'catch ups'	Find out what is happening, show an interest, gather insight.			
Retention and replacement				
Communication	How do you communicate with your volunteers? Emails, website, social media, etc.			
Exit interviews for leavers	Develop a basic exit interview template (email, phone or face to face). Monitor and track reasons for leaving.			



Thank you.

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