

# Safer Recruitment and Management of Volunteers in Athletics Clubs May 2024

## Introduction

Volunteers are the lifeblood of athletics and their dedication and commitment drives our sport forward and delivers success. However, every registered club has a duty of care to its members which extends to ensuring that anyone recruited to undertake regulated work is a suitable person for the role.

PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) scheme membership is important in any recruitment process for staff and volunteers, but it is only one part of it. This document offers guidance on safely recruiting volunteers and the role of PVG within that process.

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### 1. Role Specification

It is beneficial to **specify and describe the roles** within your club to provide clarity to prospective volunteers on what would be involved should they undertake the role.

scottishathletics has provided role descriptors for all of the common roles within clubs. Please contact your National club Manager for further information on how to access these.

<https://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/clubs/club-support/national-club-manager-support/>

It is a good idea to have a **volunteer information pack** ready to send to potential volunteers. This could contain; a welcome letter, information about the club, the volunteer role(s), practical information about expenses and training, and information from existing volunteers about the benefits of volunteering with the club.

You should view the volunteer information pack as part of your recruitment material. Try not to include formal policies at this stage as these are better dealt with during induction.

### 2. Application

Every prospective volunteer should complete an application form. The content and structure of the form will vary dependant on the size of the club and the role being applied for.

#### Volunteer expression of interest form

Most clubs will ask volunteers to complete a short expression of interest form and then gather more detailed information when they meet the volunteer in person. Having a lengthy formal application form to complete in the initial stages can be a barrier to potential volunteers.

An expression of interest form can be a useful way of recording basic information such as the person's name, address and other contact details.

#### Full application form

Depending on the role, a more detailed application form can be completed at the interview which will provide a more rounded picture of the potential volunteer, their motivations, skills, knowledge & experience.

### 3. References

- Always try to request and check 2 references.
- If recruiting to a regulated role with children and/ or protected adults, it is preferable that one reference be from a similar role (professional or voluntary).
- References from relatives are not acceptable.
- References can be verbal or written but always make a written record of any verbal references and keep with the individuals record.

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### 4. Interviewing

Everyone who applies to volunteer or work within a club should at the very least be interviewed informally to gauge their suitability for the role.

Ideally this should be done by two members of the committee, one of whom should have training and/or experience in safeguarding and child protection.

The volunteer interview should be a two-way process. It is as much about the volunteer deciding whether they like the club as it is the club deciding to take on the volunteer. An ideal process will reflect both.

As well as outlining the volunteer roles and responsibilities, if you have not already done so prior to interview, you should provide some background information about your club.

You may want to discuss:

- the role descriptions and types of tasks
- training and support offered to volunteers, including any compulsory training
- how the volunteer will be supported in their role
- role progression
- your club expectations of volunteers
- the days and times available
- resources available to volunteers whilst they are volunteering for you

You may want the potential volunteer to tell you:

- what attracts them to volunteering with your club or to take part in athletics
- what they hope to gain from volunteering
- relevant skills, interests and experience
- time availability
- any additional support needs
- names of potential referees
- when they would be able to begin volunteering, or start any required training

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### 5. Criminal Record Check

The vast majority of coaches, officials/volunteer helpers are committed, dedicated people who are motivated to work within athletics for commendable reasons. However, it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that unsuitable individuals or individuals with an inappropriate motivation are prevented from working in a regulated role with children and protected adults. The following procedures should be adopted and applied consistently when deploying an individual in a regulated role, in either a voluntary or paid capacity.

#### Self-Declaration

Self-declarations provide an opportunity for applicants to disclose to the club/ **scottishathletics** any previous convictions or relevant investigations they were the subject of, and which would be relevant to a *suitability decision*.

#### PVG Scheme

Membership of the PVG scheme is a requirement for any role that involves regulated work with children or protected adults. Changes in legislation make it a criminal offence to employ anyone into a regulated role without first obtaining a PVG linked to that role and a suitability decision from **scottishathletics**

As best practice, all those in regulated roles (including Volunteer Helpers) are requested to complete a PVG update every 3 years.

**scottishathletics** has produced separate guidance documents to support clubs with the PVG application processes and this is available in the Welfare section of the website.

Further information on recruitment of individuals with previous convictions can be found in our policy. This policy is available on request.

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### 6. Checking Qualifications and/ or Licence

Where necessary any relevant qualifications should be seen by the club before an appointment is made. Where the applicant is a Home Country (formerly UKA) licensed leader/ coach or Official (or UKA licensed if Level4 or 5) the club should ask to see their licence card.

Remember:

**Every Home Country licensed leader/ coach or Official (UKA if Level4/5)** is issued with a licence card which is valid for 3 years and which contains:

- a photograph,
- an expiry date
- details of the qualifications held by the individual.
- The front of the card will also include any licence restrictions\* (this applies to leader/ coach licence only).

\*Any restriction is solely based on the background check that has been completed for licence.

**If the licence has expired** (i.e. is more than 3 years old from date of issue), the individual will not be licensed or insured until it is renewed.

**If the applicant is transferring from another club**, the club Welfare Officer should do the following:

1. contact the previous club welfare officer to check the applicants safeguarding record and to verify any explanation for leaving.
2. Contact **scottishathletics** welfare team for clarification that the applicant has the correct PVG in place prior to their deployment in a regulated role in the club.

More information on qualifications and licensing (including the scope of each qualification) can be found on the **Coaches** section of the website.

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#### **Leaders (LiRF or Jog Leader)**

As Leaders (LiRF or Jog Leader) are not permitted to work in regulated roles, they are not required to join the PVG scheme. New and existing leaders should follow the specific guidance in their licence renewal emails. Further guidance can be found here: <https://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/coaches/obtaining-or-renewing-your-uka-coach-leader-licence/leader-licence-card/>

#### **Coach Qualifications**

- Where an individual is not coaching U18s or protected adults, they will complete a self-declaration in place of a PVG.
- CiRF - All those with this qualification who are coaching out with an affiliated club will complete a self-declaration in place of a PVG

Further guidance can be found here:

Coaching Assistant Licence - <https://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/coaches/obtaining-or-renewing-your-uka-coach-leader-licence/coaching-assistant-level-l1-or-equivalent-licence-card/>

Coach Level Licence - <https://www.scottishathletics.org.uk/coaches/obtaining-or-renewing-your-uka-coach-leader-licence/coach-level-l2-and-beyond-licence-card/>

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### 7. Appointment and Induction

#### Appointment

It is important to remember that an individual must **not** be appointed into a regulated role until a PVG has been obtained and where relevant, a suitability decision has been received from **scottishathletics**.

#### Induction training

When a new post holder starts at the club the head coach, in conjunction with the welfare officer, should:

- Agree what training the new volunteer requires (e.g. coaching qualifications / Safeguarding Training) and when it should be done by (some positions may require mandatory training, for further information contact the welfare team at **scottishathletics**).
- Explain and get written agreement to abide by the club's key policies such as code of conduct, child and adult safeguarding, complaints, grievances, and misconduct etc.
- Have the new volunteer read and sign up to the UKA and Home Countries codes of conduct. This is important as the purpose of any code is to clarify:
  - what behaviours are acceptable, and unacceptable.
  - the standards of practise expected.
  - the basis for challenging and improving practice.

The Codes let everyone know what they can expect from the club, coaches, and volunteers, but also what standard of behaviour is expected from club members, athletes and parents. They can be used prior to, or during training sessions, at club or team meetings, and at annual renewal of membership.

It should be made clear that the codes are an important part of monitoring and improving the behaviour and practice of volunteers.

When a club member does not meet the expectations set out in the codes, disciplinary or performance management action may be taken by the club in accordance with club policy/procedures.

#### Useful Links

[UKA Safeguarding Policies and Procedures](#)

[UKA and Home Countries Codes of Conduct](#)

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### 8. Ongoing Supervision and Management

#### Trial period

It is recommended that the club and any new members of the sports volunteers/staff agree a trial period to make sure that the role is a good fit for both – normally 6 months with a review thereafter.

#### Monitoring and Performance review

The club should monitor the performance of the individual doing regulated work. This gives an opportunity to check on progress and address any problems or concerns.

#### Misconduct

Everyone takes part in athletics for the enjoyment of the sport, whether they are an athlete, coach or a volunteer. However, there are occasions when things go wrong and it's important to have procedures in place to manage them when they come up.

- Experience tells us that even small issues can quickly get out of control if a club does not have processes in place to manage them. Having transparent and easy to access guidance on what is and is not acceptable, and which clearly explains how a club will respond is key to successful resolution. Having a clear process also shows that you'll deal with anything that comes up in a consistent and proportionate manner. It's part of making sure that all members are treated fairly with respect. All complaints about volunteers should be dealt with in accordance with the club's constitution.
- Clubs are advised to adopt the national standards and procedures in this regard, but if they chose to develop their own it should be clear, concise, easy to read and understand.

Remember by joining a club, members are bound by the constitution, policies, codes of conduct and procedures of the club, this applies equally to office bearers, coaches, adult helpers, athletes, parents and anyone registered with your club in any capacity.

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### Appendix: Recruitment Process Chart

#### 1. Role Specification

Develop role descriptions & person specifications for each regulated roles.

#### 2. Application

Request that new volunteers to complete an application form or note of interest.

#### 3. References

Obtain two references (verbal or written) include someone who can comment on the applicants previous experience in a regulated role.

#### 4. Interview

Interview applicants (formally or informally).  
Preferably done by 2 representatives of the club committee.

#### 5. Criminal Record Check

Ensure the correct background check is completed.  
*Do not appoint in a regulated role until a PVG check is complete.*

#### 6. Checking Qualifications and/ or licences

Check for confirmation of all relevant qualifications and that licence(s) are in date.

#### 7. Appointment and Induction

Ensure that all new recruits go through an induction process as soon as possible after appointment.

#### 8. Supervision

Monitor the performance of the individual doing regulated work.  
Take the opportunity to address any concerns as they arise.