



scottishathletics 



VOLUNTEERING

GUIDANCE

**GUIDANCE FOR RECRUITING
AND RETAINING VOLUNTEERS**

www.scottishathletics.org.uk

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INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are the life blood of every athletics club in Scotland. They contribute time and energy year after year to assist in the development of sport and leisure activities. Without these people athletics clubs fail to function effectively. Volunteers are extremely valuable, deserving considerable praise and public recognition - which is not always forthcoming.

While there is a move towards employing paid administrators, it is clear that clubs will continue to rely heavily on volunteer administrators. This resource focuses on valuing, growing and developing your volunteer team.

Two key points to consider in relation to athletics clubs:

- Business management has progressed rapidly, giving the general public higher expectations of quality and excellence in clubs.
- Employment, social and personal pressures encourage people to be selective in their leisure time and gain value and enjoyment from recreational activities.

Athletics can be regarded on three different levels:



Athletics as recreation

E.g. Run, jump and throw activities and non-competitive running.



Athletics at club level

E.g. Competition with regular training



Athletics at championship level

E.g. Representative and international.



Please note this publication is a general summary produced by Club Development Scotland. It should not replace legal advice tailored to your club's specific circumstances.

Volunteering has taken on a more sophisticated role in clubs, requiring a serious commitment from both the volunteers and the club. Competition to gain dedicated volunteers is becoming more intense.

Management systems need to be in place which will address:

1

RECRUITMENT STRATEGIES

This would include strategising about how to recruit volunteers into the club.

2

TRAINING

This considers how volunteers will be trained once recruited.

3

RECOGNISING AND VALUING CONTRIBUTIONS

This considers how volunteers' contributions are recognised and rewarded.

4

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

This includes thinking about how to measure and evaluate the success of the volunteer project and whether it met the intended outcomes.



Why do you need volunteers?

Volunteers are needed to perform many tasks and fulfil various roles and responsibilities. Take a moment to analyse WHY your club needs volunteers. It may be to:



Make up a Committee or Board



Coach



Help maintain equipment and buildings



Officiate



Organise and run events



Organise social events including fundraising



Team manage



Help market and promote club



Ensure safeguarding of athletes

What benefits can you offer volunteers?

1

FRIENDSHIPS

Volunteering fosters new friendships, expanding your social network and community connections.

5

TRAINING

Participating in volunteer activities provides valuable training and personal development opportunities.

2

SKILLS

Through volunteering, you can acquire new skills that enhance your personal and professional growth.

6

CV DEVELOPMENT

Volunteering offers the benefit of gaining valuable CV references, enhancing your resume's appeal to potential employers.

3

REWARDS

The rewards of involvement in volunteering include a sense of fulfillment and the joy of making a difference.

4

OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteering opens up exciting opportunities to explore new interests and experiences.



Why do people volunteer?

The volunteer is a community representative. People volunteer for many different reasons, such as to:



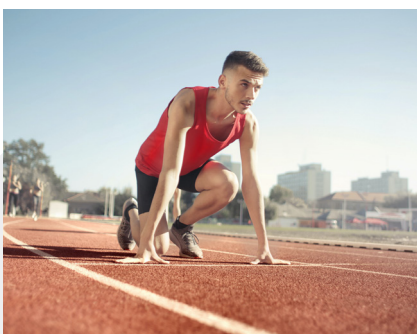
Learn new skills



Gain training



Help others and give something back to the community



Share talents, abilities and experience



Make new friends



Build self confidence and esteem



Explore career opportunities



Be a team member



Have fun and enjoy themselves

Coordinating and supporting volunteers

There are three key elements to consider when developing a strategy to developing volunteering in your club:

KEY ELEMENTS

1

RECRUITMENT

How will you go about recruiting new volunteers to the club?

2

TRAINING

How will you go about training new volunteers?

3

RETENTION

How will you keep volunteers involved in the club?

4

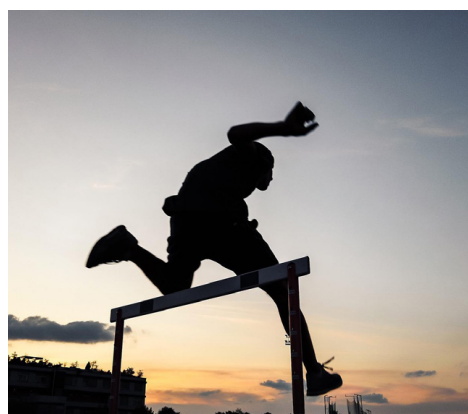
DEPLOYMENT

How will you deploy volunteers?

FOCUSING WORKSHOP

Before you start on a recruitment campaign, bring together key members of your club for a brainstorming session to examine the role of volunteers. Some areas which may be useful to include are:

- In a general overview, identify the people who have helped your volunteers to be successful.
- What have your experiences been as a volunteer within the club?
- Where have you come into contact with other volunteers? What were your impressions/experiences?
- Summarise from all members of the group which



volunteer activities you are presently involved in and why.

- What would be needed to improve the volunteer experience (e.g. having contact with other volunteers)?
- What can your club offer volunteers?
- Consider the role of a Volunteer Coordinator for your club.

Where do you find volunteers?

1

YOUR FRIENDS

Ask your friends who share an interest in sports to volunteer and support the athletics club.

5

DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Engage Duke of Edinburgh Award participants, who need to complete volunteer work as part of their program requirements.

2

YOUR FAMILY

Involve your family members, who are often eager to help and contribute to community activities.

6

PART-TIME WORKERS

Invite unemployed individuals or part-time workers to volunteer, providing them with meaningful activities and potential networking opportunities.

3

RETIRED INDIVIDUALS

Reach out to retirees and senior citizens who have more free time and a desire to stay active and engaged.

7

PEOPLE LOOKING FOR OUTSIDE INTERESTS

Attract individuals interested in exploring new hobbies and experiences by offering fulfilling volunteer roles.

4

STUDENTS

Offer volunteer opportunities to students seeking practical experience to enhance their resumes and skill sets.

8

EX-TEAM MEMBERS

Encourage former team members and athletes to give back to the club by volunteering their time and expertise.

Coordinating and supporting volunteers

Explore with your committee and/or members possible sources of volunteers. The below is a checklist of questions for the recruitment/retention of volunteer positions:



What is the purpose of the position?



What does the club want from this



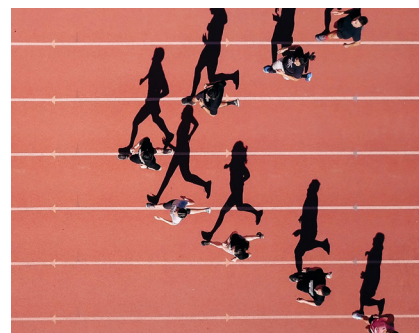
What are the key tasks and responsibilities involved?



What skills are needed to perform this role?



What qualifications are needed (if required)?



What training will be given?



What support systems are available?



How is the position reviewed/evaluated?



What is the induction process? When, where, how?

Planning the role of the Volunteer Coordinator: a two-stage process

STAGE ONE

Working with other key club members, draft a position description for a Volunteer Coordinator. Some responsibilities may be:

- Audit current volunteer roles; where are the gaps, what roles are necessary, what would be nice to have.
- Writing task, role and position descriptions.
- Planning the recruitment strategy.
- Preparing written material for posters, newsletters, social media etc.
- Safe recruitment of new volunteers, including:
 - Application forms.
 - Interviews with volunteers.
 - Reference check.
 - PVG/Self Dec.
 - Holding regular meetings with volunteers.
 - Supervising volunteers or delegating to other members.
 - Organising training of volunteers.
 - Keeping up-to-date records of volunteers.



STAGE TWO

Appoint a Volunteer Coordinator who will review the role and negotiate any adjustments.

- The Volunteer Coordinator will be responsible for reporting and action on recruitment training and retention strategies.
- The Volunteer Coordinator will need a strong commitment to the role, and the time and energy to devote to it. Excellent interpersonal and organisational skills are needed.

The objective is to examine and plan every aspect of volunteer recruitment.

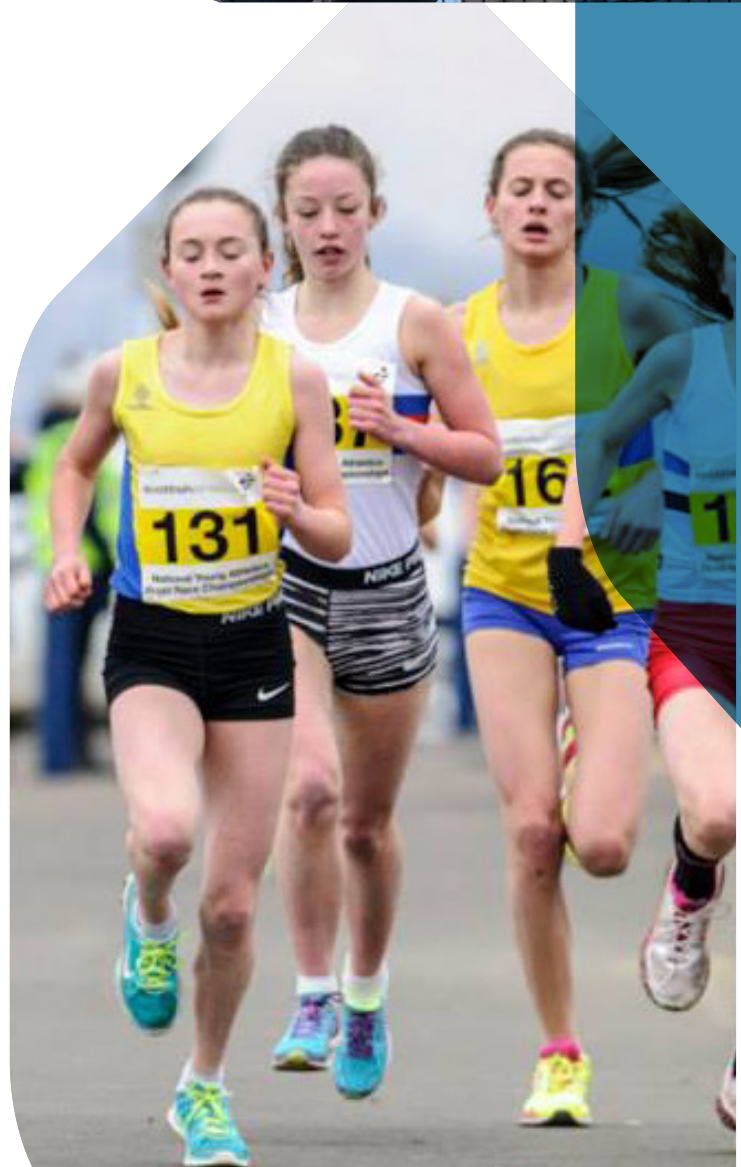
Format

Re-examine why you need volunteers:

- How many volunteers do you need? To do what? When? For how long?
- What demands will be made on the volunteer? By whom? What authority will the volunteer have?
- Who is the volunteer answerable to? What support is there for the new volunteer?
- Is there time available for trained volunteers to work with new volunteers?
- What sort of people do you want in these roles? What skills will they need?

Plan your recruitment campaign and present to club committee, looking for additional suggestions from members. Consider the following:

- Checking past and present membership lists.
- Organising a 'recruitment' drive using current volunteers to promote the club and its activities.
- Holding 'bring a friend' social events.
- Using the local and community newspaper.
- Producing volunteer information packs.
- Producing 'fliers' for distribution.
- Promote on all social media outlets.
- Holding a fun evening where trained volunteers share positive experiences.
- Making a video about the club, including the role of volunteers.
- Offering to present sessions at secondary schools/colleges/universities promoting your club.
- Putting community notices on radio.
- Talking to other organisations.



Role Descriptions

Key roles needing position descriptions will be:

Committee/Board roles:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Welfare Officer

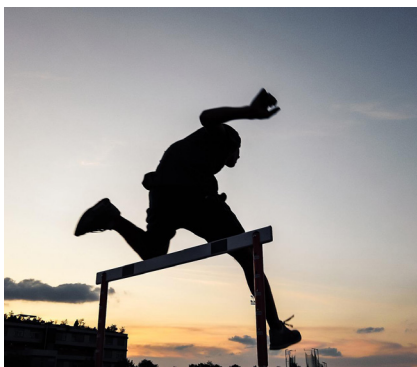
Other roles, such as:

- Coaching Coordinator
- Team Managers
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Club Captains
- Publicity/Marketing Manager/Communications Officer
- Inclusion Officer
- School to club link officer – Club Kit Officer

The position descriptions will need reviewed annually. Involve your position holders in the review.

Advertise the positions on club notice boards / website, other social media outlets or in your newsletter.

Some recruitment suggestions to explore:



Members

Your members are your best source of volunteers. Ask if there are family members who may like to be involved (encourage family involvement).



Former members

An excellent source of experience and knowledge. Often people who may be retired or semi-retired have more time and would enjoy the club involvement.



Schools, Colleges etc

Students are often looking for practical experience and could welcome this opportunity.

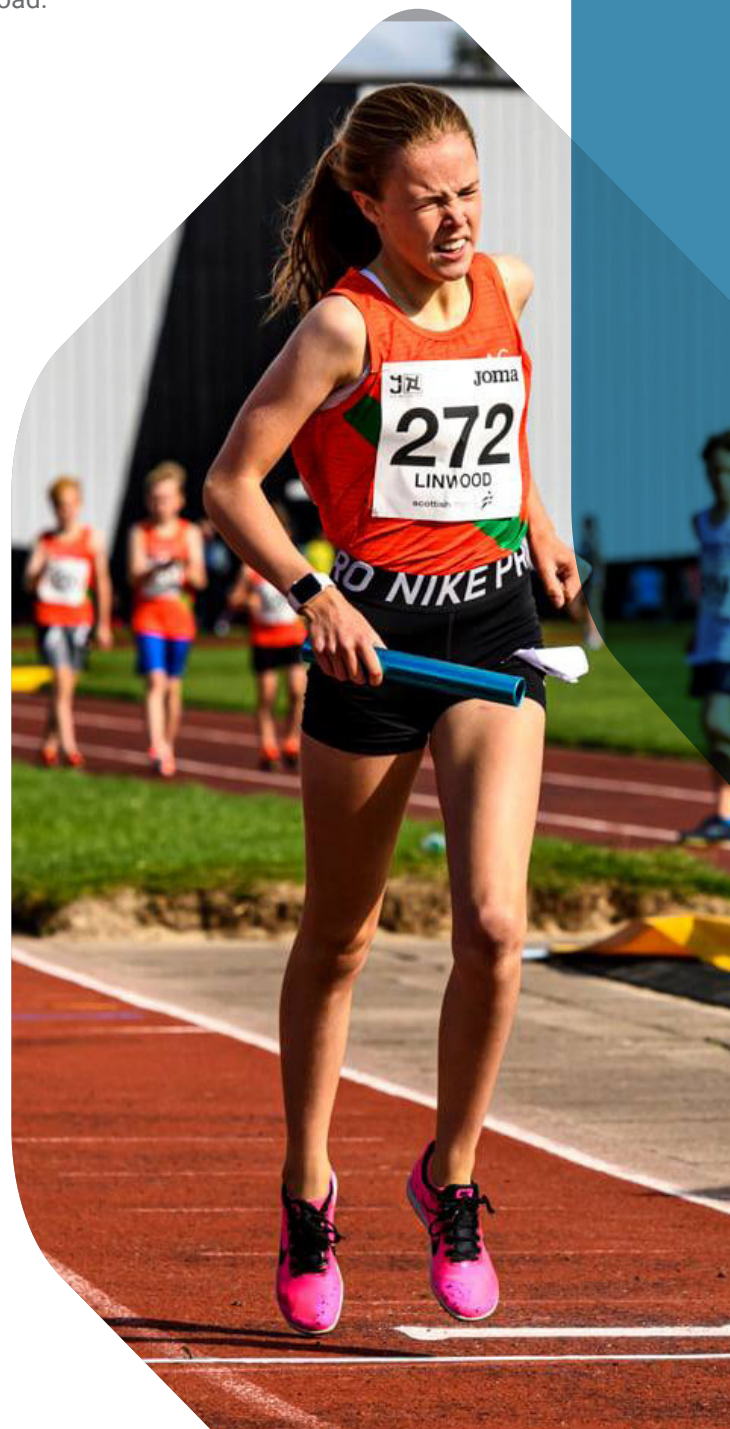
Some words of caution!

You want to make sure you are getting the right people.

- Resist the temptation to take everyone who contacts you. Have an interview selection process in place.
- Plan your recruitment strategy and ensure it is ongoing.
- Spread the tasks across more people to lighten the workload.
- Ensure roles are realistic loads for volunteers.
- Be honest in your description of the club.

SUMMARY

- Plan your recruitment strategy well and present it to the Committee.
- All relevant information should be distributed as widely as possible.
- All information should be attractively presented and be:
 - Clear
 - Concise
 - Correct
 - Courteous ('user friendly')
- Follow up any possible leads/interest shown in volunteering.
- Ensure names and contact telephone numbers are clearly visible and current.



Training Strategy

Training is a key factor in today's business environment. As training can be linked to role satisfaction it will have an influence in volunteer retention. Remember one of the reasons people volunteer is to gain new skills and experience. A training plan for your club is important if you are to function effectively.

Where to find training

- Explore your members - you may have skilled consultants/managers who can help.
- Other local organisations offer training opportunities (for example, local authorities, universities, colleges, youth organisations).
- Join with other clubs to plan a training event.
- Encourage members to grasp any occupational training offered to them.
- National/regional structures for sport and leisure usually provide training programmes and/or manuals for training coaches, officials, administrators (for example, **sportscotland**, **scottishathletics**).

Training plan

Prepare a training plan for your club. This will include:



Club training programmes

Volunteers will receive access to the club's annual training programmes, ensuring they are up-to-date with the latest coaching techniques, safety protocols, and event management practices.



Volunteer Coordinator Meetings

The Volunteer Coordinator will conduct annual one-on-one meetings with each volunteer to provide support, assess their performance in their roles, and suggest additional training opportunities as needed.

Retention Strategy

Well done. You have successfully encouraged people to volunteer for your club - that's the easy part. Now you have to retain them! Look again at the points raised:

- Why do people volunteer?
- What benefits can you offer potential volunteers?

Remember, volunteers want to feel:

- Welcome and part of the team.
- Needed and useful.

Here is the A-B-C of your retention strategy:



INDUCTION

A successful induction is crucial to volunteer retention. The process will include:

- Meet new volunteers and make them feel welcome, special and appreciated from the start.
- Arrange to spend some time exploring their interests, reasons for volunteering, and expectations from the club.
- Make time to brief them on the clubs goals, people involved, and facilities.
- Outline their specific role and responsibilities.
- Encourage questions.
- Identify any training needs.
- Provide a 'buddy system' for support. New volunteers may need help to gain experience in various roles.



SUPPORT

Maintain regular contact with new volunteers.

- Show appreciation of a job well done.
- Continually offer help and support.
- Give any training needed, or suggestions for gaining skills/ experience.
- Listen regularly.
- Strengthen links between the volunteer team members.



RECOGNITION

Volunteers are special and should be treated equally with paid employees. Regularly acknowledge their contributions with a unique recognition program and publicise it to all members. You could:

- Provide certificates of appreciation.
- Give team t-shirts.
- Acknowledge in newsletters
- Present awards at AGM/Award evenings.
- Give complimentary tickets to special events.
- Reimburse expenses.
- Hold social events for volunteers.
- Acknowledge efforts during committee meetings.
- Farewell people when they move away or retire from the club.
- Hold a 'Volunteer of the Month' award.

CHECKLIST FOR RECRUITING & RETAINING VOLUNTEERS

Use this as a checklist and follow the steps through:

Overview	YES	NO
1. Decide why your club needs volunteers and what you can offer them.		
2. Appoint a Volunteer Coordinator.		
3. Work out specific role for volunteers.		
4. Decide the qualities for any volunteers, how many you want & for how long.		
5. Write position descriptions for each role.		
6. Plan your recruitment campaign.		
7. In line with the safe recruitment policy, interview volunteers & check references		
8. Appoint to specific positions.		
9. Induct them into their new roles, providing support and feedback regularly.		
10. Involve volunteers in all matters that affect them.		
11. Provide opportunities for training.		
12. Manage, support and evaluate performance.		
13. Reward and recognise volunteers appropriately.		
14. Make necessary changes in roles and volunteers programmes.		
15. Review these steps regularly.		

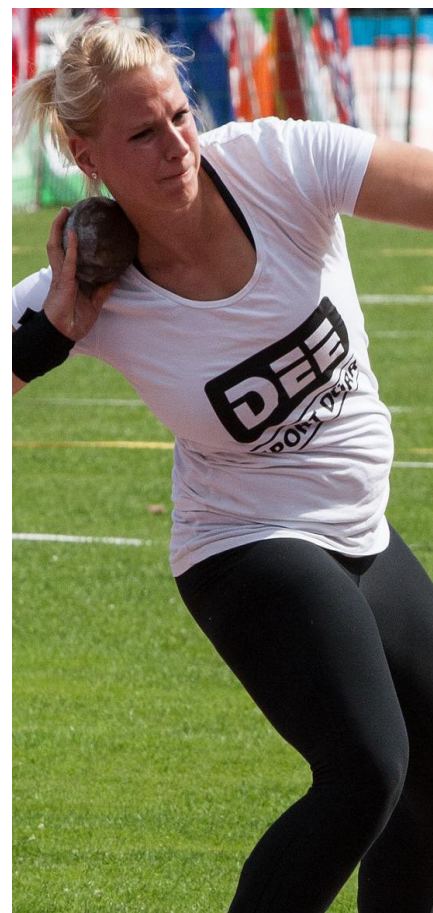
Role Description Format

- Position Title:
- Responsible to:
- Direct Relationship with:
- Purpose of Role:
- Key Task and Responsibilities:

Desirable Personal Qualities: Experience and/or Qualifications

- Timing
- Approximate hours per week
- Frequency of work
- Days

scottishathletics have a range of volunteer role descriptions including the role of a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Welfare Officer, Team Manager etc. Please contact the Development Team (development@scottishathletics.org.uk) to request any role description you require.



Appendix 1

Case Study - Springburn Harriers

Springburn Harriers are leading the way nationally in many areas of club and athletics development. The club have proven to be one of the most progressive athletics and sports clubs in the country with participation at all levels growing significantly over the last five years (even through the pandemic).

Springburn Harriers are a community focussed, registered charity who are delivering diverse athletics and physical activity opportunities to an increasingly wider audience. The club's membership has increased by an incredible 90% over the last five years. The club's membership now stands at 590 which includes activity for:



- Junior and adult competing athletes in all athletics disciplines.
- Primary aged athletics young people at the popular base camp (run, jump and throw) programme with weekly and holiday activity at Huntershill, the clubs main training base.
- Adult recreational running and jogging sessions targeting the inactive with a strong partnership developed with mental health charity SAMH.
- Athletics activity for participants facing social barriers to get involved.
- Additionally, and in partnership with the active schools' teams and schools, the club are delivering a series of curricular and extra-curricular sessions across fourteen primary schools.

These developments, described above, are primarily down to the expansive and experienced volunteer base with many thousands of volunteer hours per annum given to their members and community. This is ably assisted by one full-time paid Club Development Officer, the first athletics club in Scotland to invest in a full-time member of staff and a part time club administrator.

The club have worked diligently on setting a clear vision for the club and have developed a strong club culture of working together and of volunteering within the club.

The club have a Board of Trustees who oversee the strategic priorities of the club and a management committee who oversee the day-to-day operations of the club. Supporting this work the club have a number of supporting subgroups - Finance Team, Welfare Team, Fundraising Team, Duke of Edinburgh Team, Shine Team (disability athletics programme), and Base Camp Team (Run, Jump and Throw and holiday programmes). The different subgroups are relatively informal – the club set up a WhatsApp group and then meet online to discuss the priorities as and when required. The subgroups then report back into the main committee or Trustee group.

The strong management structure leads to the delivery of the activities by a range of officials, coaches, and helpers. The helpers assist coaches, help with registers, and welcoming the athletes and coaches each week, toilet duty, car park duty, and provide First Aid support. The club rely on over 60 regular volunteers to deliver their activities.

In terms of recruiting volunteers, the club use their membership enquiry form to let prospective junior membership enquiry parents know that the club are run completely by volunteers, and it would be great if they could give volunteer some hours for various jobs - car park duty, welfare team, event support for our xc/junior races, committee, coaching support. The club have had mixed success with lots of people saying they haven't got the time, but the club have had sufficient success that they continue to grow the volunteering team. The club also use league events to talk to parents, show them what officials are doing, encourage them to think about getting involved. For example, the club now have three additional people working for their start team official qualification. The club advertise coaching/ officiating opportunities in the club WhatsApp group too.

All of the club volunteers are important however the club have in particular developed a strong young volunteering team and programme. The club are a registered Duke of Edinburgh licence holder, the only athletics club to hold this status in the United Kingdom, with 19 currently undertaking the bronze award, 17 the silver and 16 the gold award. Additionally, 17 young leaders attended the Leading Athletics workshop, seven the coaching assistant (level one) and five the coach award (level two) qualifications. This again highlights the clear pathway for juniors in a volunteering capacity within the club and this can lead to employability. Although the club are lead deliverers the club have worked in partnership with the East Dunbartonshire active schools' team. Every year Active Schools host the Leading Athletics Training course via **scottishathletics** for juniors, aged over 14 years, at the club. Finally, the club are supporting the newly established scottishathletics Young Peoples Forum. The inaugural national forum was Chaired by a club member and two other club members are on the forum.



Contacts

For further information or if you have any questions, please email:
development@scottishathletics.org.uk or a list of all staff contact details can
be found here: [Staff - Scottish Athletics](#)

