

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FROM OUTSIDE RDA



Many Groups say they have difficulty recruiting volunteers. These guidance notes offer a set of options you may not have considered before. They are based on practical experience of RDA Groups and other sports clubs. Not all the options will be right for your Group – but all of them have worked for others. There are a lot of potential volunteers who may or may not already be involved in RDA or equestrianism but are willing to volunteer to develop their own skills, to 'give something back' to the community, or just to gain the rewards of being involved with RDA.

1. Why consider recruiting volunteers from outside of your Group?

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that RDA Groups recruit their volunteers mostly from within their Group, contacts or equestrianism. Whilst this is perfectly natural, it often doesn't solve the problem of a shortage of volunteers or finding volunteers with the appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise. If your Group is in need of new volunteers then why not consider recruiting them from outside of your Group?

2. Are people from outside the Group appropriate?

There may be perceptions within the Group that people from outside have no interest in RDA or the Group and will not have the specific skills to bring. Both perceptions are wrong! First, there are many more people in the general population with an interest in sport than are members of sports clubs (RDA is included as a sport). Second, many of the volunteering tasks within RDA Groups are the same as in many other types of organisation - they are not sport or RDA specific and you don't have to be sporty to do them. Examples include: chair, treasurer, secretary, child protection, health and safety, press relations, sponsorship, fundraising, website development and maintenance; this list isn't exhaustive.

The current uncertain economic environment provides a tremendous opportunity for you to offer prospective volunteers some good work experience and the opportunity to develop new and existing skills. There are lots of people who want to volunteer.

3. What volunteer support does my Group need?

Think about the roles you need volunteers to do and write short role descriptions. This will not suit all potential new volunteers, some of whom will want to help out more generally at first. But it might suit some new volunteers with specific skills to offer and it helps you to think about what you most need volunteers to do. You may need to consider the following:

- Think about whether the volunteer roles could be divided up – in many RDA Groups a small number of key volunteers, take or acquire responsibility for almost all of the key activities and consequently become demotivated due to the amount of responsibility they take on.
- Consider whether the role needs someone who has specific skills or qualifications. For example, a Group Treasurer would need 'a good head for figures' and a basic knowledge of financial procedures.
- Consider whether the volunteer can be trained by people within the Group with existing experience, whether RDA National runs a course which may be appropriate or will the Group need to pay for specific training?

- Remember the role description is largely for your benefit. Use it carefully with potential volunteers - some may be put off by the formality, whilst for others it may provide important clarification of the role.
- Most Groups have a member who takes the role of thinking about the volunteers needed and recruiting, developing and supporting volunteers. You could consider recognising the value of this role by making it an official committee position - i.e. a volunteer coordinator. If nobody is doing this role, it is important you find someone to do it. If your Group does have a Volunteer Co-ordinator, let the Volunteer Development Manager at RDA National know, who will be able to provide support.

4. What do I need to consider when recruiting from outside my Group?

Although you will have a good idea of what kind of volunteer you want - be prepared to talk to anybody who shows interest in volunteering about what they would like to offer. Remember, they are a volunteer – they want to do something they are interested in.

Present an image of your Group as well run and successful. First impressions are important and prospective volunteers will want the Group to be well organised and welcoming.

5. How can I recruit volunteers from outside my Group?

Keep an open mind about where volunteers might come from. As well as local volunteer centres, volunteers can be recruited through colleges and universities, the probation service and various volunteering websites - see details below.

Make sure that your Group's website is up to date with attractively presented opportunities for potential volunteers. Skills to develop a Group web site may be something a new volunteer could offer.

Host an open day / social function - remember most volunteers are looking for social benefits from their volunteering.

Consider the following opportunities to help you recruit volunteers from outside the Group:

Contact a local community volunteer centre

Local volunteer centres have a long history of helping local organisations to find and develop volunteers. To find your nearest volunteer centre, visit <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Local+and+Regional/VolunteerCentreFinderGoogle>.

Once you have identified the right person to talk to in the volunteer centre, arrange to meet them, so that you can explain what volunteers you need and discuss how the volunteer centre might help you. Keep this contact alive - there may not be immediate things the volunteer centre can help your Group with but there will be many opportunities for working with them to both recruit and develop your volunteers from the community.

Advertise your opportunities online

Websites are a useful means of identifying what organisations and schemes are relevant to your Group's needs as well as directly recruiting volunteers. The following websites can be used to advertise your volunteer opportunities online or via other networks:

- Do-it (<http://www.do-it.org.uk/>): A national volunteering website which advertises local volunteer centre opportunities.

- Sport Makers (<http://www.sportmakers.co.uk>): a national programme over 2011-13 to generate 40,000 new adult sports volunteers.
- Time Bank (<http://timebank.org.uk/help-you-find-volunteers>): A national volunteering charity which advertises opportunities online.
- REACH (<http://www.reachskills.org.uk/for-organisations>): A national skilled volunteering charity.
- ProHelp http://www.bitc.org.uk/community/employee_volunteering/prohelp/: A network of firms willing to provide professional support in their communities.
- Gumtree.com (<http://www.gumtree.com/>): Free classifieds website with volunteering section which allows you to advertise online.
- Sports Leaders UK <http://www.sportsleaders.org/in-your-region/whats-happening-in-your-region/yorkshire--humberside.aspx>: They deliver sport leaders qualifications but also advertise volunteer opportunities online.

Advertise locally

You can advertise directly in local newspapers and magazines, or more specific advertising in locations such as universities and colleges, the internal newsletters or e-news of local community schemes and local companies, or using posters and leaflets at local gyms. Rather than a conventional advert, consider an editorial which features one or two interesting case studies of existing volunteers, emphasising the benefits that they have got from their roles in the Group. This will enable potential volunteers to more easily relate to existing volunteers. Whatever the type of advertising, make sure that the message is designed to fit the intended audience - too general and it will be suitable for everyone but in danger of attracting no-one. The following may prove useful sites for advertising your volunteer opportunities locally:

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| • College | • Universities |
| • Local shops | • Sports centres |
| • Sports shops | • Gymnasiums |
| • Health clubs | • Sport clubs |
| • Local newspaper, e-zine, free magazines | • This list is not exhaustive |

Advertise via local sport bodies

Local sport bodies may provide opportunities to advertise your Group's volunteering opportunities, usually on each organisation's website. Engaging with such organisations will also allow you to keep up to date about potential funding in the area of volunteering and Group development. The following includes some local sport bodies you could approach:

Local Authorities usually have a sport development unit with specific expertise in volunteering, and they often receive enquiries from potential volunteers. Some advertise volunteering opportunities online or are able to provide local volunteering guidance. The following website will allow you to find the website of the local authority in your area <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DI1/Directories/Localcouncils/index.htm>

County Sport Partnerships (CSPs) are responsible for increasing physical activity and sport throughout the country. Many CSPs employ volunteering officers whose role is to develop the local sport workforce. To find your local CSP visit the following website www.cspnetwork.org.

6. How can we recruit specific target groups?

It may be worthwhile to target certain people depending upon the requirements of the volunteer role or the nature or location of your Group. The following groups of people you could target include young

people and students, employees of companies and older people. They are all looking for different benefits from volunteering, so make sure that you tailor your approach to appeal to their needs.

Recruiting young people and students

- Students and young people may often be looking for experience and qualifications. For example, sports students may often want to gain coaching qualifications or experience of coaching. Other students might want experience of journalism, IT work, physiotherapy or psychology.
- They are relatively easy to approach because they are in obvious and accessible locations - sixth forms, sixth form colleges, FE colleges and universities. Some of these will have central services which organise and promote volunteering for their students. Some will run sports courses (A levels, BTEC, degrees) which include sports leadership programmes. Some may even require a certain amount of volunteering and have CRB-checked their students.
- Find the right person, e.g. the course tutor or student union officer and discuss your volunteer needs with them. Remember it's not just sports students that are relevant - students in IT (website development, electronic and particularly social media communications); in journalism and communications (media relations) and in business studies (marketing, sponsorship) will all have the relevant skills for certain volunteering tasks at your Group.
- Often young volunteers are not available for the long term, especially if they go off to university in another region. But an increasing number of students are studying in their home towns. If, however, they are available to help for just a couple of years, that would be a significant contribution. And the school/college/university is a continuous source of similar volunteers, so 'succession' could be a lot easier than it is with normal volunteers.
- Don't be put off by perceptions that young people are unreliable or untrustworthy. Some are, but then most aren't - the same as any other part of the population! Many young people are highly motivated, hard-working and keen to impress. When targeting this potential source of volunteers, get the advice of your younger members and volunteers - consider asking them to act as ambassadors in the search for new young volunteers.

Recruiting older volunteers

- Society is ageing. In terms of sheer numbers, the greatest potential for new volunteers with time on their hands is older people who no longer have family living at home and no longer have full-time jobs. Many older people have skills that are relevant to volunteering, particularly interpersonal and organisational skills.
- Many older people have motivations that make volunteering attractive, such as wanting to give something back and wanting to enrich their social lives.
- Retired people may be looking for a new outlet for existing skills, such as a role as Volunteer Co-ordinator or Treasurer.
- Your local volunteer centre (see above) will have links to organisations which specialise in helping older people lead fulfilling lives, including finding volunteering opportunities.
- A national programme to help older volunteers find organisations is RSVP, part of the Community Service Volunteers service - see <http://www.csv-rsvp.org.uk/site/home.htm>.

Recruiting people involved in company volunteering schemes

- Many companies encourage their employees to engage in local volunteering, as part of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility. Employees are often more willing to volunteer if their company is actively encouraging them to do so, or even supporting them with, for example, flexible

time at work to release them for volunteering opportunities - see for example http://www.bitc.org.uk/employee_volunteering_check_up/2/21_volunteering.html

- If you are able to contact companies who have employee 'corporate responsibility' schemes, the company will normally want to ensure it gains some favourable publicity from its employees' participation and this source of volunteers may be best used for a 'one off' project, such as renovating a facility.
- If a local company has supported you in the past, e.g. by sponsorship, they may be more open to supporting volunteering in your Group by their employees. Employees may have skills relevant to your specific volunteering needs from their paid employment. For general guidance on finding suitable brokers for employer-supported volunteering, see Volunteering England's advice on: <http://www.volunteering.org.uk/WhatWeDo/Projects+and+initiatives/Employer+Supported+Volunteering/Brokers/How+to+find+a+broker.htm>

7. What do we do when a new volunteer contacts us?

Make sure one person in your Group has responsibility for welcoming a new volunteer and introducing them. Obviously the Group's representative needs to be someone with good people skills, who is friendly and enthusiastic about the Group. If you haven't already done so, you might like to formalise this responsibility in the role of a Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Meet a new volunteer as quickly as possible – within a couple of days if possible but certainly no more than two weeks after they have shown interest.

Explain to them the roles you need doing, or the specific one they have volunteered for. Also make sure you understand what the volunteer wants to offer and why they want to do it. Once you have agreed on a suitable role, you may have a written role description, but even if you have not, make it clear what you expect the volunteer to do – the responsibilities and the time commitment, and what you can do to support them. Make sure you are clear about any expenses or other rewards for the role.

Try to match the role to the volunteers' motivations, which can vary considerably, from wanting a better social life, to wanting to improve their CV and paid job prospects.

Introduce the new volunteer to the Group. Explain the structure and its aims and the main volunteers in the Group. Explain the Group's aspirations and how the volunteer will contribute to them.

All roles require a CRB check. Explain this to the volunteer and make an appointment to meet the Group Child Protection Officer to arrange this.

8. How do I support a new volunteer?

This is another important role for a key person within your Group - to make sure that a new volunteer doesn't feel abandoned or 'dumped on'. You might like to formalise this supporting role in the form of a Volunteer Co-ordinator, if you haven't already done so, but the important thing is to continue to support new volunteers - it is very important that they continue to feel valued.

Allocate the new volunteer with a mentor / buddy. Make it clear that experienced volunteers are always ready to give advice and support.

Show the volunteer they are valued.