

Empowering, inspiring and rewarding our

Volunteers

Introduction

Swimming, diving, water polo, synchronised swimming, para-swimming and open water swimming rely greatly on volunteers. They play a vital part in providing governance, team administration, technical officiating and other functions that support the delivery of our sports both at grassroots and at national level.

Volunteering is integral to delivery of the Swim England strategy, 'A Nation Swimming'. As a central function, we will therefore focus on how volunteering can support all of the strategic aims of our sports.

The challenge

We aim to create the roadmap for the future of volunteering. Working together with our volunteers, we aim to retain practices that work well and improve those that can be better. We recognise that if we are not meeting the expectations of society, we will struggle to function as volunteer-based sports.

We ask everyone who is part of the volunteer structure to join in with our plan and together we can create a happier and healthier nation.



Case Studies

How does the journey begin?



Charlie Benny

Water Polo Event Volunteer
Competitive Water Polo Player
Brighton SC and Manchester University

Aspiring journalist, Charlie, has always loved water polo and jumped at the chance to play a key role at the 2018 Swim England Water Polo National Age Group Championships.

The 19-year-old was invited by Swim England to commentate on the U15 championships and write content for swimming.org following a formal application process.

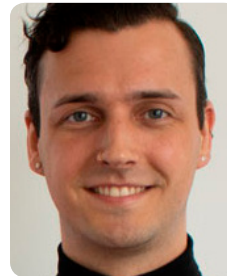
Using his experiences as a competitive water polo player for his home club, Brighton SC, and his university team, University of Manchester Water Polo, Charlie felt right at home behind the microphone.

The opportunity has allowed him to develop a range of new skills, from writing to tight deadlines to confidently addressing large numbers of people.

Charlie said: "The whole experience was encouraging, inspiring and helpful."

Charlie is now an integral member of Swim England's committed workforce and has been invited to support the organisation's events and volunteering teams at a number of events.

"I had never done any commentary work before and the experience has had a really positive impact on my development."



Alex Harrison

Swim England London Region Committee Member
Dive London Volunteer

Alex Harrison has achieved a huge amount in diving since taking up the sport at the age of four after watching his cousin dive. Since then, Alex has been a competitor, coach, official and volunteer.

It's as a volunteer, though, that Alex has been able to influence the lives of hundreds of people. He has held a variety of voluntary positions, including being the former chairperson of the Swim England National Youth Forum.

As a current member of the Swim England London Region Management Board, he is the chairperson of the Finance and Administration committee. In addition to this, he is chairperson of the London Regional Diving Committee and continues to volunteer with Dive London Aquatics Club, the club he helped to set up when the London Aquatics Centre opened to the public after the 2012 Olympic Games.

In 2018, Alex was appointed as an independent member to the Swim England Sport Operations Committee. As a member of this committee, he is central to key strategic decisions which affect the sport in England.

Alex's inspirational journey shows what can be achieved through a willingness to help others and how anyone can go from volunteering at a club level to being a member of several key national governing body groups.

"My involvement with the Swim England Youth Forum was absolutely the catalyst for increasing my involvement in different roles within the sport."

Case Studies

What's it like to be a volunteer?



Mike Annable

Club Chairman
Kettering Amateur Swimming Club

Mike had never been a swimmer, but he wanted to support his son as his love for swimming grew and to give something back to his community. Alongside his role as chairman, Mike runs his own business and has had executive roles in a number of companies over the years. From these roles, he gained valuable experience and skills to enhance the support he can provide to the club.

The role of chairman is varied and requires a fair amount of problem-solving and teamwork. This year, Mike will oversee the change in committee structure to ensure everyone has a role that adds value and shares the workload. Mike is also passionate about engaging the community within the club to inspire them to volunteer. He wants to engage with them to highlight the need for more volunteers to cover a wide range of roles. His key message is one of encouragement and a space for everyone. Mike finds his role rewarding and an incredibly impactful way to contribute not only to the development of his own children, but of all those at the club.

"Being chairman of a club does present you with a set of challenges which requires problem-solving and teamwork."



Julie Skelly

Club Secretary
City of Derby Swimming Club

When Julie first joined City of Derby Swimming Club, she didn't know the difference between a swimming club and swimming lessons. She remembers that the coach was passionate and dedicated and a volunteer.

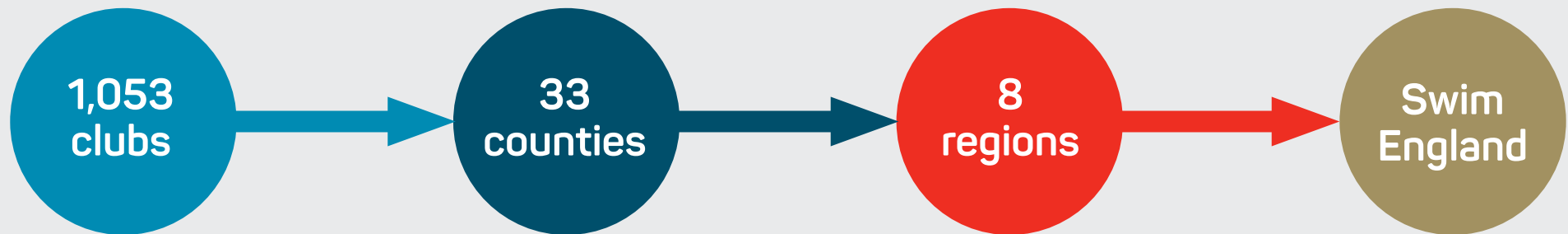
Running a club takes a lot and Julie welcomed the opportunity to help out. As her volunteering developed, the more friends and connections she made. Keen to support the club, Julie joined the committee as club secretary. This role doesn't come without challenges. Julie often finds herself out of her comfort zone but these are experiences she is able to learn from. She has been able to adapt to the requirements of the role by linking them back to her day job. She has also found herself developing new skills and confidence.

She is now in her third year and sees her role as a real honour and privilege. Julie's role expands beyond the committee. She is a qualified technical official and is about to embark on her Judge 2 training. She sees this as a great way to stay connected to the swimmers and the wider range of volunteers in the club. Supporting volunteers and engaging with parents is central to her ethos and that of the club.

"When you take a step back at a gala and watch the kids beaming because they have reached a goal they set themselves, you remember why you are doing it – because we are part of something that's really great"

Understanding our volunteers' contributions

1,000+ organisations delivering our sports



Positives*

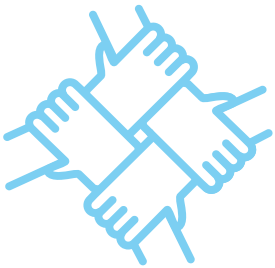
- 79% feel valued by club
- 51% feel clubs do enough to recognise their contribution
- 30% of volunteers want support to recruit new volunteers

Challenges*

- 19% feel undervalued by Swim England
- 15% feel undervalued by region
- 61% are unaware of the Swim England National Awards

The five volunteering focus areas

To support our volunteers we will focus on five key areas.



Empowerment

Doing it together.

Provide guidance and support to the individual organisations to assess, develop and sustain their volunteers. Ensure a safe environment for all members and work towards sustainability of the sport.



Recruitment

More people involved in the running of our sports.

Increase the number of people at all levels who volunteer in any capacity by promoting the benefits of volunteering.



Training

Inspiring our volunteers to meet their ambitions.

Develop effective volunteering opportunities by delivering quality training, skills development and support for potential and existing volunteers at all levels.



Retention

Make volunteering a positive experience for all.

Recognise and highlight the importance of volunteers to the operation of the sports, and reward the contribution they make.



Ownership

Meeting the needs of our volunteers.

Ensure the development of volunteers is driven from within the community to answer the actual needs of volunteers.

Measuring achievements



1 Empowerment

Key actions	Key measurements	Key delivery dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish who is active and what is their role. Upskill Swim England members to ensure that recruitment of volunteers is a continuous cycle through the development of volunteer management plans. Appoint volunteer coordinators at all levels to support recruitment, training and retention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An accurate baseline of the current landscape to identify recruitment needs and measure growth. Evidence of organisational planning and implementation of volunteer management plans. The active network of volunteer coordinators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First cohort by September 2019 and growth thereafter. January 2020 for first delivery and development based on organisational feedback. March 2020 – first analysis with annual review to measure growth or decline.



2 Recruitment

Key actions	Key measurements	Key delivery dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A suite of 'introductions' to encourage volunteering which should be available to all organisations. Ensure the volunteering pathway is well-defined, supporting development of the volunteer at all levels and progression. Provide guidance, support and resources to facilitate internal and external recruitment. Annual campaign to recruit presenters to support the delivery of volunteer training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of active volunteers. Production and publication of easy to read documents which outline opportunities and training available. Creation of accessible resources for all organisations to be able to promote volunteering. Open recruitment from the aquatics community increasing the number of presenters training to deliver on behalf of Swim England. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of easily accessible website to encourage volunteering – October 2019 with continuous updating. Volunteer coordinators pack and network by September 2019 and club marketing kit by July 2020. First release by 2020 with a two-year review cycle.



3 Training

Key actions	Key measurements	Key delivery dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local delivery to increase engagement without compromising quality. Review existing resources to ensure fit for purpose. Development of new offering to meet needs. Accredited training. Quality delivery through upskilling presenters. Support mechanisms – local gatherings, online peer networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in the number of volunteers accessing current training. A clear direction for future volunteer training. Relevant support networks in place and active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer coordinator training launched September 2019 and reviewed within 12 months. Support the launch of swimming judge 1 online by January 2020. Delivery of Swim England judge 1 in diving by February 2020. Completed review and relaunch of team manager system by March 2020. Development of water polo entry level officiating by March 2020. Accredited presenter training and licensing by March 2020. Revision and relaunch of contemporary issues for all by July 2020. Young volunteer training relaunched by December 2020. Support the introduction of officials' licensing to synchronised swimming by December 2020. Development of local delivery of volunteer coordinator training – January 2021.



4 Retention

Key actions	Key measurements	Key delivery dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme to recognise the activity of volunteers. • An awards system which recognises the breadth of the sports at all levels. • A collaborative approach to reward at all levels of the sports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to measure the level of volunteer activity and to recognise volunteers accordingly. • Reduction in volunteer turnover at club level. • Increase in volunteer development between each level of governance. • A nationwide recognition programme. • A national awards system which engages the aquatics community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised awards system active by 2019 and reviewed annually. • Increase in the awareness of the annual Swim England National Awards – January 2020. • Clear pathways developed and published – December 2020. • Evaluate the opportunities and desire for volunteers to record active volunteering in a central system – January 2021.



5 Ownership

Key actions	Key measurements	Key delivery dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the governance model for volunteering through the leadership groups. • Continued national and regional development of the Youth Advisory Panel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful establishment of Swim England volunteering steering group. • Continued impact of Youth Advisory Panel. • Establishment of regional groups to provide feedback on the impact on volunteering. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear direction on the ownership of volunteering – December 2020. • Agreement on the regional structure – December 2020. • Development of regional youth panels – January 2021.

Case Study

Recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers



Deborah Hicks

Volunteer Coordinator

Kettering Amateur Swimming Club

As a parent attending her son's first gala, Deborah was amazed by the amount of volunteers poolside. Deborah quickly began to appreciate that clubs rely heavily on volunteers. While waiting for her son at a training session, she was approached by the club secretary who asked if she'd be interested in training to become a technical official.

By taking up this offer, Deborah recognised it was a great way to develop her knowledge on what volunteers mean to the club. She could also actively support her son in his passion for swimming. Being a volunteer helped her to develop the ability to understand how her son's training sessions went and what his preparations were for his next competition and his swimming goals.

Deborah is grateful to the club secretary who encouraged her to get involved and she wants to inspire and encourage others. Recently, she took on the role of volunteer coordinator and is really excited to learn how the club can engage family members to get involved. She recognises that not all parents will want to become a fully trained official or take on senior roles, which is why it's also important to demonstrate how easy it is to pick up some of the other volunteer roles available.

"There's a lot we can do but I am confident we can offer a role to anyone who wants to be involved and engage as many people as possible in our club community."

Join us on the journey

Swim England recognises that a clear focus on volunteers is a central part of ensuring our sport is thriving. This focus is outlined in our strategy and our commitment to developing, supporting and retaining volunteers.

We want to empower volunteer-led organisations to understand their needs and work consistently towards answering them. We also want to encourage organisations to engage as many volunteers as possible and ensure that they have a positive and meaningful experience.

To achieve this outcome we want to establish a network of active volunteer coordinators who are committed to engaging and supporting volunteers. This will enable Swim England to focus its resources and deliver tailored support.

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer coordinator?

To register, please visit

swimming.org/careers/become-a-volunteer-coordinator/

 @Sw_EngVolunteer



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