

# IRISH FA VOLUNTEER POLICY



Foundation

*Serving the community  
through football*

# 1.0 Volunteering at the Irish FA

## Values

Our volunteering management, roles and expectations match the underlying values and principles (PITCH) of the Irish FA Strategic Plan (2013-2018). This includes:

- **Professional**

The Irish FA will undertake a professional approach to volunteering, ensuring that opportunities, uptake and the subsequent positive impacts are maximised. As a volunteer you will work alongside and on behalf of a professional governing body with extremely high standards. Volunteers will be supported, engaged and mentored to ensure they are acting in this manner.

- **Inclusive**

A key overarching principle of the Irish FA and with regard to volunteering is the notion of inclusion. Volunteers will be fully supported and involved throughout all steps of the volunteering process. The Irish FA recognises the need to nurture relationships with volunteers to promote long-term involvement. A key aspect of this is to ensure that volunteering is inclusive through the sustained provision of social, mental and physical outlet and engagement opportunities. We will endeavour to foster an attractive and enjoyable environment for volunteers to join and stay involved.

- **Team**

Volunteers will be working within an organisation that has a strong team culture and atmosphere with set common goals and objectives. Social interaction is a key component to ensuring long term volunteer involvement and we recognise that a strong volunteer team is vital. As a volunteer, you will become an important and valued member of a specific team working to achieve set targets and aims. The Irish FA is committed to supporting such teams and to providing training, mentorship and guidance where appropriate. At times volunteers will be involved in teams that consist also of paid members of staff. Management will ensure that volunteers are made to feel as important and valued as paid staff.

- **Caring**

The Irish FA commits fully to providing a caring and welcoming environment for volunteering. In line with this policy, new volunteers will be provided with a supervisor/mentor who will guide them through their induction period while providing the volunteer with encouragement, support and guidance. The welfare of our volunteers is vital and we will do everything possible to ensure an enjoyable, developmental and cathartic experience for those getting involved. Each volunteer will have the opportunity to sit with their supervisor in a one-to-one capacity, and will be provided with the appropriate support and guidance to fulfil their role. Each volunteer will also be introduced to other parts of the Irish FA where possible and gain a sense of belonging and involvement.

As an organisation we are thankful for the important work undertaken by volunteers on a regular basis and as such care greatly for them in both a personal and professional capacity. We strive to recognise and reward our volunteers through the Applause system. Details of this system can be found on the Irish FA website or within the Volunteering at the Irish FA publication.

- **Honesty**

Honesty is a key watch word within the Irish FA Strategic Plan and therefore equally important regarding volunteering at the Irish FA. We commit to and expect a two-way process of honesty between the Irish FA and volunteers. An honest environment promotes trust, understanding and positive relations between the Irish FA, volunteers and external stakeholders.

## 2.0 Recruitment of volunteers

### 2.1 Who can volunteer?

In line with its vision, the Irish FA is committed to providing opportunities for all in football and this includes volunteers. The Irish FA strives to reflect the diversity of the football community it represents, so volunteering opportunities are open to all sections of our community. We will endeavour to advertise volunteer roles as widely as possible and will monitor the diversity of the team to enable us to target specifically under-represented groups. In some cases, volunteering roles may be age-restricted due to the specific tasks involved but details of this will be promoted through the role descriptions. Those who wish to volunteer with the Irish FA can do so either by registering their general interest or by applying for any advertised opportunity.

### 2.2 Recruitment process – advertised opportunities

Each advertised volunteering opportunity will have a detailed application process attached. Each role will have a role description and specification to allow the Irish FA and the individual volunteer to assess the suitability of the applicant. There will be a clear recruitment process and this will be made evident through the advertising of the opportunity.

**In most cases the process will be as below:**



## 2.3 Registering volunteering interest

The Irish FA will also welcome general interest in volunteering from potential volunteers who can apply to join the Irish FA Volunteer Team. Subject to suitability and appropriate checks, applicants will be placed on our volunteer database with a view to matching them to future opportunities. This will be co-ordinated by the Irish FA Volunteer Development and Policy Officer (VDPO) who will in turn make the list available across departments in the Irish FA (ensuring compliance with our data protection policy).

The volunteer will be invited for an informal introductory interview with the VDPO as an initial assessment of suitability and introduction. At this stage, the VDPO will collect key information on the prospective volunteer such as interest, availability and experience. They will also clarify the next steps of the recruitment process and agree suitable communication methods. When a suitable opportunity becomes available, the successful volunteer will be contacted and made aware of the opportunity. If the individual is interested, they will be provided with the role description and asked to confirm their commitment. Selection will begin at stage three of the recruitment process (see section 2.2) and the volunteer will be appointed a supervisor prior to starting.

## 2.4 References

The Irish FA reserves the right to request references from applicants within both recruitment schemes (see section 5.2 and 5.3). The need for references may vary depending on specific volunteering role requirements.

## 2.5 Vetting

To ensure the effective safety and welfare of both the Irish FA and all stakeholders within our reach and remit, we will undertake appropriate checks and information-gathering on the prospective volunteer.

## 2.6 Unsuccessful applicants

Volunteers will be informed if their application has been unsuccessful and will have the opportunity to request feedback. Subsequently, the Irish FA will endeavour to signpost the volunteer to alternative opportunities or organisations if possible.

# 3.0 Management of volunteers

## 3.1 Volunteer Development and Policy Officer (VDPO)

The appointed VDPO has overall responsibility for volunteering within the Irish FA to cover recruitment, management, recognition and co-ordinating operational components such as data management, insurance, and information sharing. At times, these roles or parts thereof may be devolved to specific departments within the organisation. The VDPO is responsible for ensuring the training of key staff within the organisation and updating as necessary, to ensure they are confident and competent in managing volunteers in line with this policy.

## 3.2 Volunteer supervisors

Upon recruitment into a specific volunteering role, volunteers will be appointed a supervisor who will provide a number of functions to the volunteer depending on their experience and skills (training, induction, mentorship etc.). The volunteer supervisors are responsible for the individual volunteer including but not limited to their welfare, safety, inclusion, deployment, enjoyment and development.

### 3.3 Role clarity

All volunteers will be provided with a role description and personnel specification for their specific volunteering role. This will provide clarity and responsibility for both the Irish FA and the volunteer.

### 3.4 Induction

Each volunteer will be required to sign up via the Volunteer Now management system. The VDPO or Irish FA member of staff will be responsible for providing mentorship, social engagement and ongoing support to the volunteer, as well as identifying the needs of the individual and addressing these where possible and/or appropriate in line with this policy.

During the induction period the volunteer will receive an email about policies and procedures that are directly linked to their volunteering role. They will be given information as to where they can locate these and all other relevant Irish FA policies and procedures.

There will be a volunteer settling-in period which will be determined depending on the specifications of each volunteering role. This will allow both the volunteer and the Irish FA to assess the suitability of the applicant. Upon completion of this settling-in period, the volunteer will have an informal meeting with their supervisor to address any issues and concerns and plan future development.

### 3.5 Ongoing support and supervision

The Irish FA will provide ongoing support and supervision to individuals throughout their volunteering. The volunteers will be made aware of the types of support available to them and points of contact within the Irish FA. Support will be provided as appropriate, but may take the form of one-to-one and/or group support sessions.

### 3.6 Volunteer feedback and communications

The Irish FA is committed to understanding and acknowledging the skills and knowledge of our volunteer and as such will provide opportunities for volunteer feedback and opinion sharing. This feedback will be used by the Irish FA to help shape our future volunteer programmes. The Irish FA will communicate regularly with registered volunteers and will endeavour to use a variety of communication methods that are suitable to both parties, as agreed in the recruitment process. Volunteers will also be made aware of changes within the organisation that may affect their volunteering. Volunteers will be made aware that they are fully entitled to refuse demands that they consider unrealistic, beyond the scope of the role or that they do not have the skills to carry out.

### 3.7 Training and support – investing in our volunteers

The Irish FA will provide relevant training and support to volunteers to allow them to confidently and competently undertake their volunteering roles.

### 3.8 Ongoing volunteer opportunities

The Irish FA are committed to matching the skills and experiences of volunteers to the specific volunteering roles which suit both the Irish FA and the volunteer. Volunteers will be able to discuss their needs with their identified supervisor, and explore opportunities to get involved in other areas of volunteering across the organisation.

### 3.9 Training our staff

At the Irish FA we are committed to the development and inclusion of our volunteers within all areas of the organisation and its remit. Due to the large scope of work involved, we recognise that our staff must be trained appropriately in volunteer management. This training will be delivered and co-ordinated regularly and where appropriate by the Irish FA Volunteer Development and Policy Officer. We will undertake quarterly reviews to assess our organisational volunteer management training and implementation methods to address any identified needs.

### 3.10 Monitoring and review

To ensure our volunteer recruitment and management methods are efficient and effective we will monitor and review our volunteer management performance on a regular basis. This will use both quantitative (volunteer retention and deployment statistics) and qualitative (key stakeholder consultation) methods. If volunteers wish to raise a concern or issue, they should do so with their volunteer supervisor who will deal with it in line with the relevant Irish FA policy and procedure guidelines.

## 4.0 Volunteer reward/recognition

The Irish FA fully appreciates the vital work undertaken by many volunteers within the Irish FA, its operations and the wider football community in Northern Ireland. As an ongoing thankyou and recognition of the vital work that volunteers perform, the Irish FA will put in place a reward/recognition system, which will include different statuses of achievement and service of the volunteers.

Our volunteers will be recognised and rewarded accordingly for their contributions.

## 5.0 Ending the volunteering partnership

### Volunteers wishing to leave

Volunteers can leave the Irish FA and end the partnership if they wish to do so. They must notify the Irish FA, and upon leaving will be asked to undertake an exit questionnaire or interview, which will assess their reasons for leaving. The Irish FA will use this information to shape volunteering structures and processes.

### Termination of volunteering

The Irish FA has a duty to protect the well-being and interests of all of its stakeholders. In the event of serious issues or breach of our volunteering standards, the Irish FA has the right to terminate the partnership with the volunteer. Where a criminal offence is suspected the matter will be handed over to the police.

## 6.0 Commitments of the Irish FA

### 6.1 Investing in volunteers

The Irish FA aims to establish long-term relationships with its volunteers and is committed to investing time and resources into their development and management. The Irish FA has embarked on a quality accreditation scheme called Investing in Volunteers, which is co-ordinated through Volunteer Now in Northern Ireland.

The quality standard assessment involved has nine indicators that the Irish FA fully endorse and commits to:

1. There is an expressed commitment to the involvement of volunteers and recognition throughout the organisation that volunteering is a two-way process that benefits volunteers and the organisation.
2. The organisation commits appropriate resources to working with all volunteers. These include money, management, staff time and materials.
3. The organisation is open to involving volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community and actively seeks to do this in accordance with its stated aims.
4. The organisation develops appropriate roles for volunteers in line with its aims and objectives, which are of value to the volunteers.
5. The organisation is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, volunteers are protected from physical, financial and emotional harm arising from volunteering.
6. The organisation is committed to using fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedures for all potential volunteers.
7. Clear procedures are put into action for introducing new volunteers to their roles, the organisation, its work, policies, practices and relevant personnel.
8. The organisation takes account of the varying support and supervision needs of volunteers.
9. The whole organisation is aware of the need to give volunteers recognition.

### 6.2 Child protection/vulnerable adults

The Irish FA will ensure that safeguarding remains paramount within volunteering and will do everything in our power to safeguard children and vulnerable adults either as a volunteer or when in contact with our volunteers . Our Child Protection and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy will be implemented within volunteering at the Irish FA, and all volunteers will be made aware of these policies.

### 6.3 Data protection and confidentiality

The Irish FA is registered under the Data Protection Act (1998) and is committed to meeting all its obligations under this act in respect of personal data held about its employees and volunteers. Any data held on volunteers will be subject to the same protocols found within the Irish FA Data Protection Policy.

### 6.4 Volunteer expenses

The reimbursement of volunteer expenses may vary across different volunteering roles and specific details can be found within the volunteer role description. Eligible volunteer expense claims can be submitted using a standard volunteer expenses form.

## 6.5 Employment substitution

The Irish Football Association is fully committed to ensuring that volunteering is never used as a substitute for paid employment where there is a clear need and expectation for the latter. Furthermore, volunteering will not be used to cover any work during any industrial action.

## 6.6 Insurance

Volunteers will be insured through public liability and personal liability insurance. However, it is the responsibility of the volunteer to ensure that they have the correct insurance in place for driving duties (if applicable) within their role as a volunteer.

## 6.7 Volunteering while claiming benefits

It is possible for those receiving benefits to volunteer as long as the individual continues to meet the conditions of the benefit or tax credit they are receiving. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to advise the jobs and benefits office of any volunteering they have committed to.

## 6.8 Fostering a positive experience

The Irish FA is fully committed to providing, promoting and fostering a positive experience for all volunteers. This will include establishing a welcoming and inclusive environment, ensuring that volunteers are supported in their roles by Irish FA staff, and that they are provided with the necessary equipment, materials and training. The Irish FA aims to create a long term relationship with volunteers ensuring their lifelong involvement and input within football in Northern Ireland. As such, all reasonable steps will be taken to make volunteering at the Irish FA as enjoyable and valuable as possible.

## 7.0 Intellectual property rights

The Irish FA will make volunteers aware that the intellectual property rights of original work produced by volunteers while in their Irish FA volunteering role will automatically transfer to the Irish FA.

## 8.0 Internal monitoring and evaluation of Irish FA volunteering programmes

The Irish FA will monitor and review volunteering structures, processes and protocols within the organisation on a regular basis. This will be done to ensure the volunteer policy is being adhered to and implemented appropriately. If gaps are identified, the Irish FA will address these through the provision of additional volunteer management training, developing new procedures, consulting with stakeholders and potentially updating or revising the policy.



## Commitment of the Irish FA

At the Irish FA we commit to:

- Fairly offer volunteer opportunities to all who are interested in getting involved
- Provide a welcoming and positive introduction to all prospective volunteers
- Provide an appropriate induction process for all new volunteers
- Provide relevant training where appropriate
- Provide each volunteer with our specific policies and procedures
- Best match volunteers to specific roles based on their experience, skills and competency
- Provide ongoing support and engagement with our volunteers, listening to what they have to say and addressing their needs and concerns
- Provide appropriate insurance for volunteering activities
- Provide the necessary equipment, support and instruction for the specific volunteering roles
- Provide any agreed out-of-pocket expenses (as per the role specification)
- Recognise and reward the achievements of our volunteers
- Recognise and reward the loyalty and dedication of our volunteers

## Expectations of a volunteer

As a volunteer of the Irish FA you are expected to:

- Strive to achieve excellence in all areas of your volunteering
- Aim for high levels of reliability, trustworthiness and dependability in your volunteering
- Adhere to the Irish FA policies and procedures
- Always act in a professional manner which upholds and promotes the reputation of the Irish FA
- Act responsibly and within the law at all times
- Get fully involved and enjoy volunteering within the Irish FA
- Be honest with your volunteer supervisor if any issues arise
- Make the Irish FA aware of any issues arising that may influence your ability to volunteer to the highest standards
- To promote volunteering at the Irish FA



Foundation