ENGAGING YOUNG VOLUNTEERS

*There are a huge number of young people available on our communities and it is essential that we tap into these young people as future volunteers in our clubs. This information sheet will provide you with some tips on engaging with young people in your area.*

**Who are they?**

Young people are generally defined as being between 12 and 25 years of age.

**Why Involve Young People in Your Club?**

Young people can bring enthusiasm, energy, creativity, a fresh set of eyes and flexibility to a club. These young volunteers can add value to your club by bringing a youth perspective through new ideas, theories and knowledge. They will also help bridge the gap between generations.

Engaging with young people also allows your club to plan for the future and help to prevent your volunteer base from sinking over time, as the aging of your population begins to affect the ways in which people volunteer.

Having young people in your club contributes to the future of volunteering and the community – people who start volunteering early tend to continue to volunteer for the rest of their lives. If your club is planning for the future and developing a succession plan, clubs need to seriously consider engaging young volunteers in the management and day-to-day operations of your club.

**Why do Young People Get Involved?**

Young people want to volunteer. Research shows the main reasons include:

* To reach out and really make a difference to others
* To obtain new skills, particularly ones that can be included on a CV or demonstrate experience in a particular field
* To have fun and meet new people

**Why Changes Can Your Club Make?**

It is important for your club to accept young volunteers on an equal basis. The following changes will make your organisation more appealing to young people:

* Be more flexible. Can your working practices be updated to accommodate young people? Can they get involved at times that suit them?
* Ensure that policies and practices are not discriminatory. Can you ensure there are no age limits for activities and roles in the club?
* Reassess where you require volunteers with young people in mind. How would roles change if young people were involved? How could they be done differently? Do you have any specific projects/roles that target young people?
* Don’t assume that young people can or can’t do – think of what they could achieve if they had adequate support and mentoring. Do you have young people in decision-making roles? How could you include them effectively? Think about how you can use their knowledge and life experience
* Listen to what young people have to say and help them build upon their ideas. Get them involved behind the scenes first so that they can begin absorbing the information necessary to take up the reigns in the future

**Tips for Finding and Keeping Young Volunteers**

* Be strategic with your advertising:
  + Identify the benefits associated with your volunteering opportunity – it may be a reference, something to add to their CV or learning new skills
  + Use youth friendly language – ‘marketing experience’ rather than fund raising’
  + Think about where you look for young volunteers
  + Could you find new places to advertise? – colleges, youth clubs etc.
  + Talk to local schools and colleges – they often look for volunteering opportunities for students
* Make it easy for young people to get involved and be flexible about the timing of their involvement – remember many young people have jobs or study so may need to adjust their volunteering hours
* Look for a shorter commitment from young people such as a fund raising project – easier to commit to project based tasks
* Get your young people to help evaluate your programs to allow you to improve and develop
* Acknowledge your volunteers – people do not know they are doing a good job unless you tell them!