PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEER ROLES INCLUDING USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

*Your club will usually produce leaflets, posters or adverts to recruit volunteers, and using these in a wide range of local settings will help your club to reach a broader audience. You might already have advertised in lots of public and community clubs and centres in your area, but have you tried social media. There’s a good reason everyone’s talking about Social Media. The “Social” aspect means this is an easy way to keep in touch with members from your club.*

**What are the Options for Social Media?**

One of the best ways to tap Social Media is to create a free **Facebook group** for your club, then invite all your members to join it and use it to make announcements, called ‘posts’, and receive ‘comments’ back.

Facebook is one of the easier, more popular mediums to cover all age ranges in your club.

In addition to Facebook, some keen clubs might have a Twitter account run by volunteers to send reminders and help their teenage and younger members feel connected.

Pinterest and Instagram are popular if your club has photos of club activity to share. Instagram is particularly popular among younger people.

“Google Plus” is a new variation of Facebook. In 2013 more of your club members are likely to be found on Facebook, however this may change in years to come. Google Plus is an option to add if you want the strongest club presence in all social media platforms.

**How Much Time is Required?**

Social Media can be very time consuming. Ideally you might have trusted volunteers appointed to manage your social media, but with one key person as an ‘admin’ so the club have control if and when they need it.

Social Media is a busy, instant, public forum. Everything happens ***now***!

Whoever is managing your social media will need to keep your posts fresh and relevant and constantly monitor to support positive comments and take action to nip any negative problems in the bud - potentially at odd times during the week. Like a good Public Relations (PR) person, they will also need to respond carefully and positively to questions and direct messages. You might consider having one volunteer to manage most of the posts and another mature, experienced volunteer to respond to challenging queries as they arise.

The more social platforms you open up, the more time will be needed to manage them all.

If limited time is available across your volunteer team, then **Facebook alone** might be your best strategy.

When you have resources to go beyond this, your volunteers might consider the other options above such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest and Google Plus.

**Open versus Closed Facebook ‘Groups’**

Before you create a group on Facebook for your club, it is helpful to understand the difference between ‘Open’ and ‘Closed’ groups.

When you or any group member ‘Posts’ an announcement, ‘Likes’ something or makes a ‘Comment’ on your group page, that activity will be seen by everyone else in the group. With a ‘Closed’ group, that is all that happens - only the group members can see the activity.

With an ‘Open’ group, **all of the friends** connected to each group member can also see the group’s activity, announcements etc. Open groups are your best choice if you will use Facebook to Find and Induct Volunteers and to make general announcements. The Open nature means many more people are likely to see your announcements and take interest in the club.

Closed groups are best if you want to share partially sensitive information only with club staff or members, or if you want to provide a safer ‘members only’ forum for club members to discuss topics without prying eyes. A good strategy might be to create an Open group to advertise your club and then use direct email to keep in touch with volunteers and members for private information.

**Social Media is Not Always Safe with Sensitive Information**

Whether you create an Open or Closed group, be aware Facebook reserves the right to change rules without warning. In addition you or club members might accidently share private information wider than you intend to, if unfamiliar with the various privacy settings throughout Facebook. In addition, sometimes unauthorised people can access an account that is not theirs if someone uses a password that is too easy to guess or they forget to logout on a computer shared by others.

For these reasons it is good practice to use Social Media mostly to promote your open, public information and use more secure means for private information. When information is particularly sensitive, a phone call or private face-to-face chat can be the safest and most thoughtful way to discuss it.

**Age Restrictions**

Each Social Media platform has their own age restrictions. For example Facebook requires a minimum age of 13 as at 1/11/2013. Be sure to check and advise your members.

**How to Create a Facebook Group**

Facebook has instructions on creating a group at [**https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/**](https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/%20)

**Find Volunteers Through Facebook**

Under ‘Open versus Closed Facebook Groups’ above we have highlighted that the posts in an *Open* Facebook group can be seen not just by your existing club members, but also by all the Facebook *friends* of your club members. If you have 100 members in your Facebook group and they each have 100 Facebook friends, this means your announcements might be seen by up to 10,000 people. The friends of existing club members can be ideal candidates to become volunteers.

The following actions will help you draw them in;

* + 1. Create your open Facebook group for your club
		2. Invite all your club members to join it so you have lots of ‘connections’ in Facebook (see [**https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/**](https://www.facebook.com/help/162866443847527/) to Invite club members)
		3. At regular intervals post vibrant comments and photos of club activity so that onlookers will be interested in your club. Short posts once or twice per week can be a good balance so people don’t forget you but also don’t feel you have too many posts to annoy them (spam).
		4. Every so often post an announcement that your club is looking for certain volunteers and how rewarding it can be.
		5. Encourage your club members to 'Like', 'Comment' on and 'Share' your volunteer announcements because this makes those announcements much more visible to others.
* The more popular your posts or photos are, the more likely Facebook will put them at the top of the ‘news feed’ of the friends that are directly or indirectly connected to your group.
* When posting, if you don’t have a public phone number for your club, you can direct people to ‘message’ your group with their own contact details if interested. In this way you keep your personal email address or phone number private. When receiving enquiries you can look at their Facebook wall and their Facebook friends to get a sense of who they are, and who they might know prior to contacting them.

**Keeping Them**

Social Media is a great way for people to share the positive, interesting things that are going on in their lives. Posting vibrant photos and announcements of fun club activities, including photos that include many of your club members and volunteers over time, can be an effective way to keep members feeling good about their involvement in the club and help them share what's going on with their friends and peers. If your clubs looks like a healthy and fun group, this can make current volunteers feel proud and encourage others to join in.

Tagging photos and thanking people publicly on social media can be an easy, ongoing way to show your thanks and help your volunteers feel appreciated and wanting to come back for more.

‘Tagging’ a photo is where you click a person’s face in a photo and enter their name. If that person is connected to your Facebook group, Facebook will highlight their name and link to that person’s Facebook account so they know they have been ‘tagged’. That person’s friends will then see the photo they were tagged in. If you include a Thank You message in the photo description, the person’s friends will see the contribution they’ve made and how much their efforts were appreciated.

For more on uploading and tagging photos, see [**https://www.facebook.com/help/118731871603814/**](https://www.facebook.com/help/118731871603814/) for uploading and [**https://www.facebook.com/help/463455293673370/**](https://www.facebook.com/help/463455293673370/) for tagging.

Make sure you obtain permission from club members before posting any photo or personal details about them. Getting everyone to sign a social media permission form as they join your club is an easy way to manage this.

**Supporting Your Volunteers**

Many of the tips above in “Keep” apply equally well to Backing your volunteers.

Using Social Media to broadcast a steady stream of positive, interesting photos of club members and volunteers having fun and being appreciated will make your volunteers feel valued and wanting to keep up their club involvement.

In addition, if people make negative comments on social media about one of your volunteers, be very quick to step in and smooth the situation. In particular look to defend and paint your volunteers in a good light wherever appropriate. Praising their efforts regularly is a proactive way to Support them and social media is one of the easiest, most appropriate forums in which to do so.

In addition, be sure to pass on positive comments and feedback to your volunteers that you receive on social media. Also if you receive comments, ideas and suggestions from your members or volunteers, be quick to acknowledge their thoughts and let them know how soon their ideas will be discussed and considered by your club committee.

**4 C’s of Social Media’s Role in Volunteer Recruitment**

* Communicate
* Coordinate
* Celebrate
* Connect