

LGFA Volunteer Policy



Introduction

Founded in 1974, Ladies Gaelic Football is still recognised as one of the fastest growing female sports in Europe. With over 1,200 clubs in Ireland and membership growing by the day, Ladies Gaelic is reaching women and girls from all over the country. Not stopping there however, the Ladies Gaelic Football Association (LGFA) has many clubs based in international units around the world.

The LGFA provides a social outlet and a healthy activity for thousands of people around the world. Starting with club football for primary schools girls, an individual can keep playing Ladies Gaelic for as long as she wants, especially with our Gaelic4Mothers&Others initiative for those adults interested in recreational or non-competitive participation.

Many competitions and events are run throughout a season but undoubtedly the highlight of the Ladies Gaelic calendar is the All Ireland Finals Day in Croke Park. Croke Park plays host to all three of the Ladies Gaelic Championship Finals (Junior, Intermediate and Senior). With the Hill 16 decorated and mini games of kids and mothers alike at all the half times, the Ladies Football Finals Day is one of a kind. Attendance at this colourful event is steadily growing and can now boast as being one of the highest attended female only sports events in the world.

Coming a long way since 1974 the LGFA now has 14 full time employees, ten of whom are based in Croke Park, and the remaining 4 based in various regional locations throughout the country. There are also 8 staff employed by our Provincial Councils.

The LGFA strives to be a modern, innovative and well-run organisation that provides a quality service and support system for all members, from an 8 year old girl kicking her first ball in her local club to an elite athlete scoring her first point in Croke Park.

As a volunteer led Association the LGFA is committed to providing support to all volunteers in a professional and efficient manner. Our sport could not function without volunteers at all levels – club, school, county, provincial and national level. They are an integral part of LGFA and are encouraged to be involved at all levels and within activities matching their skillset. We could not achieve our targets without our hard working and dedicated volunteers whose input is critical to the success of our sport. It is hoped that volunteers enjoy the activity in which they are involved and look on it as a hobby.

LGFA retains a strong volunteer ethos and the thousands of administrators, officials, coaches and parents, who give freely of their time, play an essential role in our association. Volunteering is vital to the growth and improved structure of all our units and there are opportunities for everyone to be involved.

This policy document outlines the general principles that apply within volunteering in our sport.

Vision and Mission for Volunteering

The LGFA vision for volunteering to have a vibrant association where every person feels connected through active participation in voluntary activities with Ladies Gaelic Football. Our mission is to promote the value of volunteering and increase the range and quality of volunteering across all levels of our Association.

Definition

Volunteering is defined as ‘an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives.’

(Source: Compact Volunteering, a code of practice, 2005, Page 4)

Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering in LGFA. It supplements the LGFA Strategic Roadmap 2017-2022 and our Code of Behaviour policies and procedures.

These procedures apply to all volunteers who undertake tasks on behalf and at the direction of the LGFA.

Responsibility

The LGFA is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures outlined are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including voluntary management committee members) are expected to facilitate this process.

Role of Staff

The LGFA staff support volunteers across the Association and provide direction and guidance. All staff members have a specific role in LGFA to ensure the Association operates in a professional manner. The staff in LGFA provide education for all volunteer roles and strive to develop them and help to broaden their own skillset.

Eligibility

LGFA and affiliated clubs will consider involving anyone as a volunteer. Individuals must, however, be able to demonstrate a commitment to the aims of the association and may only be placed if their needs as volunteers match the needs of the association. No person who has a conflict of interest with any aspect of the association will be accepted as a volunteer.

Volunteer Roles

There are opportunities for people to get involved in volunteer roles across LGFA.

1. Administration: Key roles in the club or county include Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Registrar, PRO and Children’s Officer with additional officers optional. These functions ensure the smooth running of the club or county. At provincial and national level there are also voluntary in place of chairpersons with the other officers listed plus sub committees can be appointed at all levels.

Administration roles are filled through election at Annual General Meetings annually.

2. Coaching: There are great opportunities to become involved in coaching whether you provide a support to qualified coaches or become a qualified coach yourself through the coaching education pathway.
Coaches are appointed at club or county level by the relevant county committee.
3. Referees and Officials: Officials play an important role in making hundreds of competitions run smoothly. There is a clear pathway for involvement and development of referees in LGFA.
Referees are recruited at county level and can progress to provincial and national level.

Matching Volunteers to Roles

Prior to recruitment it is made clear why a volunteer is wanted for a role and a clear role description is provided. The unit requiring the volunteer will accurately assess the amount and type of work to be done and identify if specific skills are required plus the time commitment for the role.

A recruitment message will then be formulated by that unit and can be articulated in a variety of media however the following points should be included – the need, the challenge, the work, the fears, the benefits and finally the next steps. A recruitment process should be developed and followed, i.e., advertisement of position, application, informal interview, references and notification.

Volunteers require a clear and accurate description of the tasks and responsibilities they are expected to undertake to ensure they match the role. Prior to any volunteer assignment or recruitment effort, a role description must be developed for each voluntary opportunity. This should include (if applicable) a title for the volunteering role, starting and finishing dates, hours and place or work, name of supervisor and tasks to be undertaken. If appropriate a brief person specification may also be drawn up. The LGFA has role description for all club and county officers displayed on their website.

Volunteers can be recruited on a pro-active basis by the unit in LGFA using publicity avenues that are suitable for the roles that need to be filled. Potential volunteers may also apply speculatively or come via volunteers from LGFA.

A Garda Vetting/Access NI disclosure must be obtained by an applicant through the LGFA, GAA or Camogie Association before they can begin relevant or regular work with children or vulnerable persons if their role requires it. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be considered for a placement. Basic awareness in child safeguarding training must also be completed within six months of taking up a post. All coaches must have completed a minimum of the Introduction to Coaching Gaelic Games course.

Appropriate Behaviour

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the LGFA and uphold its ethos. As representatives of the association, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of the sport.

Representing LGFA and Affiliated Units

Volunteers must seek prior approval from the LGFA and affiliated units before undertaking anything that might affect the association as a whole. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The LGFA undertakes to ensure that no less favourable treatment is given to any group or individual on the grounds of age, colour, ethnic or national origin, race, caring responsibility, sex, marital/partnership status, religion, sexual orientation or identity, socio-economic status or background, physical/mental disability or special need or political belief (this is a non-exhaustive list) except that positive action may be taken to further include any disadvantaged section of society.

Positive Induction and Training

All volunteers should receive induction from the club, county, provincial or national unit they are representing when they begin their voluntary work. This consists of a general introduction to LGFA as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

Volunteers receive initial and then ongoing on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their tasks well. The training must be appropriate for the demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

Volunteers are actively encouraged to identify training courses, webinars, seminars, conferences and so on which would help them to perform their roles better and which would aid their personal development.

The LGFA provides a comprehensive range of training specific to each volunteer role including county and club officer, coach and match official education plus child safeguarding. The Association also published a Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Toolkit to support their units in relation to volunteer management. Please refer to the LGFA website: www.ladiesgaelic.ie

Supervision

Lines of communication should operate in both directions and should exist formally and informally. Volunteers must have access to all appropriate information, memos, materials and meetings relevant to their assignments. Volunteers must be consulted on all decisions that would substantially affect their volunteering conditions.

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer. The relevant Club, County, Provincial or National Chairperson/President or Secretary normally takes on the supervisor's role and should receive training and guidance on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the association.

Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. Evaluation sessions take place at least once a month between the volunteer and his or her supervisor. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the association, convey

appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

If appropriate, corrective action may be taken following evaluation sessions. Examples would include the organisation of training for an identified training need, the reassignment of a volunteer, or the dismissal of a volunteer.

Termination

Any voluntary service is at the discretion of the LGFA and the affiliated club the volunteer is a member of. They may, at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate volunteer's relationships with the association. Similarly, volunteers may at any time, and for whatever reason, decide to terminate their relationships. Notice of such decisions should be communicated at the earliest opportunity in writing setting out the reasons for termination. All volunteers are entitled to appeal the decision under the LGFA CODA rules.

Grievances and Complaints

Volunteers who do not adhere to the association's rules, volunteer charter or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal as per Rule 121.

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the relevant club, county, province or national management committee. The management committee will discuss the concerns as soon as practical and take appropriate action. If a volunteer wishes to make a formal complaint, they may do so as per the complaints procedure under the CODA rules.

Where possible, informal exit interviews are held with any volunteers who are leaving the association, either because they have reached the end of their project or are leaving for some other reason. Interviews are usually conducted with the volunteer's ex-supervisor and written records are kept. The session should ascertain why the volunteer is leaving, how they found the volunteering experience and what suggestions they offer to improve the way the association operates. The offer of a personal reference for future employment etc. is made to each volunteer.

Health and Safety and Insurance

The LGFA is committed to providing safe working conditions and environment for all volunteers. The Association will make every effort to ensure so far as is reasonably practical the safety, health and welfare of all volunteers. The LGFA expects volunteers to co-operate with those responsible for activities in order to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for themselves and others. Individuals are required to abide by the rules and requirements of the relevant health and safety policies to ensure that they and others do not come to harm whilst carrying out their duties.

Appropriate insurance is provided by the LGFA under the GAA Public Liability to cover all volunteers volunteering on behalf and at the direction of the association as part of our annual membership.

Expenses

Volunteers give their time and skills free of charge, so it is essential that where appropriate LGFA and affiliated units cover preapproved costs that may occur in the course of undertaking voluntary work for the association. The costs of volunteering should never be allowed to discourage those from getting involved.

Support

The LGFA endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work. Volunteers may seek support from the relevant LGFA staff member in relation to their role. Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the organisation and are assisted into assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time, if they desire this.

Recognition

Volunteers provide a unique service to our sport. The benefits of which are difficult to quantify. It is essential that their efforts are recognised and rewarded. Players, parents, staff and fellow volunteers are all responsible for thanking volunteers informally on a regular basis for the valuable contribution that they make to Ladies Football. LGFA is responsible for ensuring that more formalised recognition takes place at key times including the annual National Volunteer Awards.

Confidentiality

LGFA and affiliated units respect the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with the sport particularly so in child protection, governance matters, donations and personal information about members and their families.

Records

A system of records may be maintained on all volunteers, including contact details, vetting disclosures, dates and times of service, duties performed, courses completed etc. Volunteer records are afforded the same confidentiality as staff records and are maintained by LGFA and the affiliated clubs the volunteer is a member of.

Policy Review

The LGFA will update this document as required in line with the association's needs and sector trends to ensure it remains up to date and meets the needs of the volunteers and the Association. The policy will be reviewed at a minimum every 3 years.

Review date: November 2024