



Club Development Manual

***A Guide to Help
Club Officers
Organise for
Success***

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Club Structure

Club Administration and Management:

A suitable structure is essential for any club to achieve success and continually develop.

The introduction and implementation of a good committee is imperative as it ensures that not all work is left to one person but is managed and shared, ensuring more efficient running of the club. The best way to start this is to involve as many people as possible in the administration of the club. This will spread the workload out and avoid overburdening any individuals.

The role of the club administration and management is to:

1. Manage the operation and affairs of the club
2. Enhance the club's activities by adopting proper policies and practices
3. Oversee correct usage of club resources
4. Implement a child safeguarding policy
5. Develop a health and safety statement and policy

To achieve success a club must have:

- Proper structures
- Good coaching
- A positive opening and welcoming attitude by all
- Effective leadership
- Proper delegation
- Good teamwork
- Child centred and athlete focussed environment
- Correct financial management

Committee and Structure:

It is essential to create a full committee in the club. An appropriate structure is paramount and should be chosen based on the size of the club, amount of members and volunteers, etc. For example, a club with vast amounts of members will of course require more coaches.

Essential Personnel within your club

1. Club Chairperson
2. Club Secretary
3. Club Treasurer
4. Club Registrar
5. Children's Officer
6. Designated Person
7. Public Relations Officer

Key Roles within the Club

Role of the Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson is to manage the club in an efficient and effective manner, while at all times keeping in mind the club constitution. They have overall control, giving direction, keeping focus and providing guidance. The chairperson should be elected at the AGM. At meetings the chairperson takes charge of the meetings and ensures that those present are heard in a fair and equal manner

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chair committee meetings and Annual General Meeting• Ensure appropriate documents, including minutes are available for committee members• Ensure that committee members are aware of their roles and responsibilities• Act as the ambassador and/or spokesperson for the Club• May be called upon to act as mediator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confident and Effective communicator• Great organisation skills• Ability to delegate duties• Ability and knowledge to act as spokesperson for the Club• Unbiased and impartial• Strong and fair leadership skills• Be able to facilitate discussion and keep the debate focused• Be able to take decisive action• Be well informed about all aspects of the club• Be able to involve all Committee members in the decision-making process• Be able to maintain harmony within the group even when there is a disagreement

Role of the Club Secretary

The efficiency of the club will greatly depend on the efficiency of the secretary to carry out his/her duties. The Secretary is the mediator between Club Committee and everybody else. All of the written communication that the club receives will go to the Club Secretary. To ensure optimal efficiency, appropriate measures should be put in place to deal with this communication.

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First point of contact for all enquiries• Organising meetings• Taking and distributing minutes• Dealing with correspondence:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Record date of incoming mail○ Deal with correspondence promptly○ To make life easier, create some standard letters that can be re-used with just changes of dates, names,○ Keep notes of important telephone conversations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excellent organisational skills• Reliability• Excellent communication skills, both written and spoken• Be able to delegate tasks• Be able to work to timescales• Be able to maintain confidentiality

Role of the Treasurer

It is absolutely paramount that reliable and accurate financial records on all transactions are kept. This responsibility falls directly onto the Club Treasurer. The Treasurer is responsible for the safe keeping of the club funds and also the collection of subscriptions, depositing monies, paying the bills, issuing receipts, preparing year end accounts and keeping up-to-date records of all financial transactions. The treasurer must not commit the club to any expenditure for which prior approval has not been given. Some banks may offer free banking to sports clubs, so with this in mind consider opening an account with a bank that is close and will offer 24-hour phone or internet banking. Statements should be obtained every month to check all transactions. All deposits should be made as soon as possible.

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Managing all income and expenditure, including banking arrangementsManaging legal requirements where requiredReports regularly to the committee/chairperson on the club's financial statusPrepares /presents financial year end report to AGMFinancial planning, budgeting and monitoring throughout the year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Be well organisedConfidence dealing with figuresBe very honest and trustworthyTake great care when handling money and chequesKeep up-to-date information and be able to answer any questions on the accountsBe able to keep very accurate records

Role of the Registrar

All club members must be registered with Athletics Ireland. This requirement is listed in our bye-laws and should be immediately actioned once a membership fee is accepted by a club. The Registrar must verify proof of age for all juvenile members and ensure that all entries on the on-line system are accurate to avoid problems at a later stage. All members must sign a membership form each year. It is good practise to include important club and NGB rules including affiliation rules on the membership form.

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Entering all members on the online Athletics Ireland registration systemKeeping up to date records of membersAmending member details online as requiredStoring membership forms securelyReporting membership numbers to the Committee as requiredLiaising with the Treasurer to ensure registration fees are dealt with appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Be well organisedBe able to keep very accurate recordsGood attention to detailA working knowledge of Athletics Ireland online system

Role of the Childrens Officer

The appointment of Children's Officers in clubs is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere. They act as a resource with regard to issues and policies that affect children and young people in the club. Children's Officers should be aware of the code of ethics and child safeguarding in relation to young people. Check that all activities are safe, fun and conducted in a spirit of fair play for all. Children's officers should also be informed on how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of children and young people.

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote awareness of the code of ethics • To influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise children's needs • Establish contact with Athletics Ireland Child Welfare Manager • To ensure that children know how to make concerns known to leaders in the club • To act as an advisory resource to club leaders on best practice in children's sport • To report regularly to the Club Management Committee • To monitor changes in membership • To ensure that the children have a voice in the running of their club • Ensure all children/athletes, volunteers and parents agree to abide by and sign up to the Code of Conduct • Ensure that the club maintain effective rules and regulations including complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures • Ensure that the club has an anti-bullying policy • Ensure Safe Recruitment Guidelines are followed including Garda Vetting and acceptable references • Monitor and promote the correct use of Social Media as a communication tool within the club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Centred • A good knowledge of current guidelines in the safety and welfare of children • Childrens Officer training • Ability to maintain confidentiality • Organised record keeper • Knowledge of child safeguarding reporting procedures • Excellent communication skills

Role of the Designated Person

Every club should designate a person to be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. The designated person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to Health Services Executive or Social Services (NI) and/or An Garda Síochána/PSNI. Normally this role is automatically assigned to the club chairperson unless it has been transferred to another individual at a club committee meeting.

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics and statutory guidelines • Have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse • Undertake training in relation to child protection • Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures • Communicate with parents and/or agencies as appropriate • Assist with the on-going development and implementation of the clubs child protection training needs • Be aware of local contacts and services in relation to child protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Centred • A good knowledge of current guidelines in the safety and welfare of children • Childrens Officer training • Ability to maintain confidentiality • Organised record keeper • Knowledge of reporting procedures • Excellent communication skills

- Advise club administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection

Role of the Public Relations Officer

This person deals with the publicity side of the club. The PRO should attempt to open and maintain lines of contact and relationships with local newspapers and radio stations. A good idea for a PRO to have is a club promotional plan and a social media strategy.

Main Duties	Skills Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular updates as to club activity in local media • Advertising for members • Ensuring results of competitions are given to the local papers and radio • Establish your own website and social media • Keep the County Board informed of club activity • Positive appropriate promotion regularly in every possible way • Establish social media channels and monitor content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good communication skills • Familiar with social media platforms • Knowledge of marketing tools • Good writing skills • A general knowledge of the sport and club policies

Club Constitution

All clubs must have a constitution. The constitution clearly states how the club should operate and the rules that govern it. It needs to be adopted at an AGM by the membership and can only be amended at an AGM or EGM.

This is a sample club constitution, a more detailed one can be downloaded from: www.athleticsireland.ie/childwelfare

1. Name

The club will be called (CLUB NAME HERE) and will be affiliated to the Athletic Association of Ireland (AAI).

All club members including committee members, coaches and volunteers shall register annually with the Athletic Association of Ireland and will be subject to the rules and regulations of the AAI.

The club shall register club colours with the AAI, which shall confirm with IAAF/AAI rules.

The club shall be in affiliation with its appropriate County Board and Provincial Council of the Athletic Association of Ireland.

2. Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of the club will be:

- To participate and compete in the sport of Athletics including track and field, cross country, road running and race walking.
- To offer coaching and competitive opportunities in Athletics.
- To promote Athletics within the local community
- To ensure a duty of care to all members of the club.
- To provide all its services in a way that is fair and ethical to everyone.
- To ensure that all present and future members receive fair and equal treatment.

3. Membership

Membership should consist of officers and members of the club.

All members will be subject to the regulations of the constitution and by joining the club will be deemed to accept these regulations and codes of conduct that the club has adopted.

All members will be registered with Athletics Ireland

4. Membership fees

Membership fees will be set annually and agreed by the management committee or determined at the Annual General Meeting. Fees will be paid: annually *and* /by weekly subscription.

5. Officers of the club

The officers of the club will be:

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Registrar
- Child Welfare Officer
- Public Relations Officer

Officers will be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting. All officers will retire at the AGM each year but will be eligible to stand for re-election.

6. Committee

The club will be managed by the Management Committee consisting of elected members. Only these posts will have the right to vote at meetings of the Management Committee. The club committee shall meet at least eight times a year, where all decisions and records will be minuted and circulated to all committee members.

The quorum required for business will be agreed by the management committee. The management committee will be responsible for adopting new policy, codes of conduct and rules that affect the organisation of the club.

The management committee will have powers to appoint sub-committees as necessary and appoint advisers to the management committee as necessary to fulfil its business. The Management Committee will be responsible for disciplinary hearings of members who infringe the club rules/regulations/constitution in line with the AAI Disciplinary Process. The Management Committee will be responsible for taking any action of suspension or discipline following such hearings.

7. Finance

All club monies will be banked in an account held in the name of the club.

The Club Treasurer will be responsible for the finances of the club.

The financial year of the club will end on the 31st of December.

An audited statement of annual accounts will be presented by the Treasurer at the Annual General Meeting.

Any cheques drawn against club funds should hold the signatures of the Treasurer plus one other officer.

8. Annual General Meetings

Notice of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be given by the Club Secretary. Not less than 14 days' notice to be given to all members. The AGM will receive a report from officers of the Management Committee and a statement of the audited accounts.

Nominations for officers of the Management Committee will be sent to the Secretary prior to the AGM.

Elections of officers are to take place at the AGM.

All members have the right to one vote at the AGM.

Parents can represent their children and vote on their behalf by proxy in addition to their own vote if they are a paid up member also. The chairperson has the casting vote in the event of a tie.

The Management Committee has the right to call Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) outside the AGM. Procedures for EGMs will be the same as for the AGM.

9. Disciplinary procedure and appeals

9.1 Complaint is received by the secretary or children's officer.

9.2 Member against whom the complaint is made should be informed of the nature of the complaint being made against them within 1 working day of the complaint being received by the club.

9.3 A disciplinary committee should be formed consisting of a club committee member, the children's officer and an ordinary member of the club. This committee should meet and review the complaint and discuss separately with the complainant and the accused member. This should be done within 10 working days.

9.4 The disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed or not. The notification should be made in writing setting out the reasons.

9.5 The member has a right to appeal any decisions to an appeals committee independent of a disciplinary committee. Any appeal should be made in writing within 10 working days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the club management committee along with two other ordinary members, neither of whom has participated on the disciplinary committee leading to the appeal. The club appeals committee has the power to confirm set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.

10. Dissolution

A resolution to dissolve the club can only be passed at an AGM or EGM through a majority vote of the membership.

11. Amendments to the constitution

The constitution will only be changed through agreement by majority vote at an AGM or EGM.

12. Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport

No member of the club shall be discriminated against on the basis of age, gender, class or creed.

The Athletic Association of Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of all of its registered members. Every individual in the association should at all times show respect and understanding for registered Members' rights, consider the safety and welfare of each athlete and conduct himself or herself in a manner that reflects the principles of the association and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and the Child Protection Guidelines in Ireland.

13. Declaration

The club hereby adopts and accepts this constitution as a current operating guide regulating the actions of members.

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____

NAME: _____

POSITION: *Club Chairperson* _____

SIGNED: _____ DATE: _____

NAME: _____

POSITION: *Club Secretary* _____

Annual General Meetings (AGM)

Every club must hold an AGM. It is the most important meeting of the year and clubs should do their utmost to ensure that the AGM is organised in strict accordance with the rules as laid out in the club constitution. The AGM's purpose is to:

- Review the work of the previous year.
- Review financial statements and auditor reports.
- Elect officers and executive committee members.
- Get member views on club and association policy.
- Consider club constitution, policy and revise or endorse.

1. *Setting the Date:*

The Executive Committee set the date and location for each AGM.

2. *Notice of AGM to members:*

The secretary shall give at least 14 day's notice in writing.

The secretary must then circulate the following documentation:

- Copy of the agenda
- Details of nominations for election to the Executive Committee
- Copies of previous AGM minutes

3. *The AGM Agenda:*

It is a key part of the planning process for a meeting. It helps to inform those to attend the scope of the topics to be covered. The business of the Club AGM and the Agenda is set out as follows:

- The Chairman's address.
- Adoption of Standing Orders.
- Minutes of Previous AGM.
- Consideration of the Financial Statements.
- Management committee officer's reports.
- Motions.
- Election of officers and members of the executive committee.
- Any Other Business.

Disciplinary Procedures

The committee shall have the power to make rules governing the conduct of the club. Such rules shall be binding on membership. All complaints will be investigated and dealt with by the management committee. Anyone representing the club in competition must be a registered member of the association. The club and all its members will follow the rules and guidelines outlined by the Athletic Association of Ireland. The club is agreed to all the principles set out in code of conduct as detailed in the code of ethics.

There should be an adequate disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures (policy) in each club as set out by the Athletics Association disciplinary process detailed below.

The Athletic Association of Ireland is governed by the following principles;

Memorandum & Articles of Association.

1. Article 24, Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.
2. Article 25, Disciplinary matters.
3. Article 26, Dispute resolution.
4. Article 21, Anti-doping.

Athletic Association of Ireland Bye Laws 2012

- All child welfare concerns are governed by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's sports as detailed in article 24 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Athletic Association of Ireland.
- All anti-doping concerns are governed by article 21 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Athletic Association of Ireland.

The Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Athletic Association of Ireland (article 24) requires all members to accept and abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's sports. Recommended processes outlined on page 13 of the Code of Ethics detail complaints/appeals procedures that shall be adopted by the club.

The principal steps outlined in the Code of Ethics are as follows:

1. Complaint is received by the secretary or children's officer.
2. Member against whom the complaint is made should be informed of the nature of the complaint being made against them within 1 working day of the complaint being received by the club.
3. A disciplinary committee should be formed consisting of a club committee member, the children's officer and an ordinary member of the club. This committee should meet and review the complaint and discuss separately with the complainant and the accused member. This should be done within 10 working days.
4. The disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed or not. The notification should be made in writing setting out the reasons.
5. The member has a right to appeal any decisions to an appeals committee independent of a disciplinary committee. Any appeal should be made in writing within 10 working days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the club management committee along with two other ordinary members, neither of whom has participated on the disciplinary committee leading to the appeal.

The club appeals committee has the power to confirm set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.

Dispute escalation procedure

1. Refer to the County Board

If any party is not satisfied with the outcome at club level the matter shall be referred to the county board for consideration. “(The County Board) Shall decide any dispute that may arise between registered members, if called upon to do so” (Athletic Association of Ireland, Bye laws, April 2012, Objectives of a County Board, item 8).

2. Refer to the Provincial Council

If at the County Board level the party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter shall be referred to the Provincial Council for consideration. “(The Provincial Council) shall decide any dispute that may arise between registered members, if called upon to do so” (Athletic Association of Ireland, Bye laws, April 2012, Objectives of a Provincial Council, item 6).

3. Refer to the National Governing Body

If at the Provincial Council level the party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter shall be referred to Athletics Ireland for consideration under Article 25(f) of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Athletic Association of Ireland. All decisions issued under the appeals procedure set out in Article 25(f) and Article 25(g) may be appealed exclusively by referral to Just Sport Ireland within 14 days after the decision has been communicated to the person or body in respect of whom or which the decision was made, for final and binding arbitration in accordance with the Just Sport Arbitration Rules. All costs associated with Just Sport Ireland will be the responsibility of the person or persons disputing the decision(s) issued under the appeals procedure by Athletics Ireland.

Running a Meeting

The chairperson should always start meetings on time and indicate a finish time. If there are items on the agenda that are not discussed within the set time, it is important that they are placed as the first topics to discuss at the following meeting. The running of any meeting is usually as follows:

- The agenda is a list of topics to be discussed which should be sent out in advance along with any information that is needed.
- This agenda is followed in the order of which topics are placed on the list and each issue must be resolved before moving on to the next.
- A motion is a recommendation that is presented to the meeting for debate and approval.
- The proposer is the person who presents the motion and the seconder is another person who expresses support for the motion. Some club constitutions require that motions must be seconded to be open for discussion.
- Voting rights differ from club to club and there are a number of ways of carrying out the voting procedure:
 1. A show of hands for majority.
 2. A secret ballot is sometimes required on sensitive issues where members vote anonymously on paper.
 3. If a vote is tied, some clubs allow the Chairperson second vote to make the final decision
- A quorum is the minimum number of members needed to make a decision – this is normally stated in a club constitution.

The following is a sample agenda:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Apologies for absences
3. Minutes of last meeting (these need to be approved as correct)
4. Matters arising
5. Financial Report
6. Consideration of reports from officers and sub-committees if any
7. Administration Business
8. Date of next meeting
9. Any Other Business

The secretary is responsible for taking and typing up minutes of each meeting with appropriate wording important (agreed, noted, approved, recommended, received, etc

Minutes:

- List those people present and record the apologies for absences.
- Follow the order of the agenda and try to keep each section short.
- State the main issues and decisions made.
- Do not take sides in your recording – simply state what was discussed in an unbiased way.
- Write up the minutes to all committee members soon after the meeting while it is still fresh in your mind.
- Circulate the minutes to all committee members soon after the meeting so that all are aware of their action items for the next meeting.
- When minuting General Meetings, keep a formal record with the names of proposers and seconders, quoting any resolutions and the results of any voting.
- Committee meetings need not be minuted so formally

If possible, set out a calendar of meetings for the year at the first meeting of the year.

Safety Statement

A Safety Statement is the club's document and programme for safeguarding the health and safety of people involved with the club. It represents the club's commitment to health and safety, and specifies the manner, the organisation and the resources necessary for maintaining and reviewing health and safety standards.

Every club operates differently and has different hazards associated with its activities. The club must look at itself to ascertain what those risks are, and the best methods to minimise the number of accidents that may arise from them.

Having a Safety Statement will not in itself prevent accidents. However, by making a commitment to promoting health and safety in your club and by specifying the arrangements and resources to be made available, the Safety Statement plays a vital role in the implementation of the policies it contains. Every club has a duty of care towards the safety of everyone who may be affected by its activities. A Safety Statement can help to show that a club has taken every reasonable precaution to prevent accidents.

Categories of persons covered by Safety Statements

1. Employees (permanent and part-time/casual)
2. Contractors working on the premises.
3. Persons involved in club activity

The following should be included in your Safety Statement:

- Statement on general policy
- Policy statement on safety, health and welfare
- Duties of members
- Consultation and information
- Hazards
- Specific hazards
- Constant hazards
- Trained First Aid personnel
- Other items for inclusion in a statement

Your safety statement will have to be understood and applied by your members. You should, therefore, aim to keep it as short and concise as possible.

Accident Report Form

Accident Report Forms should be used in the case of injury to anyone. It is often hard to recall information at a later stage and so it should be filled out at the time of the occurrence.

The following are some guidelines to keep in mind when dealing with an accident:

- Stay calm but act swiftly and observe the situation. Is there danger of further injuries?
- Listen to what the injured person is saying.
- Alert the first aider who should take appropriate action for minor injuries.
- In the event of an injury requiring specialist treatment, call the emergency services.
- Deal with the rest of the group and ensure that they are adequately supervised.
- Do not move someone with major injuries. Wait for the emergency medics.
- Contact the injured person's parent/carer.
- Complete an incident/accident report form.

Following is an accident report form sample:

Accident Report Form

Name of Athletics Club: _____

Name of person in charge of session/competition: _____

Where did the accident take place?

Date of Incident/Accident:

Name of Injured Person:

Address of Injured Person

Nature of Incident/Injury and Extent of Injury:

Give details of how and precisely where the incident took place. Describe what activity was taking place, for example training/game/getting changed:

Give full details of action taken during any first aid treatment and the name(s) of first aider(s).

Were any of the following contacted?

Parents/Carer/Spouse: YES/NO

Police: YES/NO

Ambulance: YES/NO

What happened to the injured person following the incident/accident? Eg carried on with session, went home, went to hospital, etc.

All the above information reflect the true nature of the incident/accident

Signed:

Date:

Name:

Disabilities

At present there are over 340,000 people with disabilities in Ireland (CSO-2005). Of this number there are 16% involved in sport compared with 53% of the non-disabled population. This shows that there are a significant number of people with disabilities involved in sport, but there are a lot more that could be involved. The question is - Is your club accessible? The answer to this question should be 'yes'.

The Building Regulations 1997 (Part M - Access for People with Disabilities) states that:

- M1: Access and Use: Adequate provision shall be made to enable people with disabilities to safely and independently access and use a building.
- M2: Sanitary Conveniences: If sanitary conveniences are provided in a building, adequate provision shall be made for people with disabilities.
- M3: Audience or Spectator facilities: If a building contains fixed seating for audience or spectators, adequate provision shall be made for people with disabilities.

Once the access to the facility is there then it is about inclusion of the person. It is possible to adapt most games and skills with a bit of creativity; this way the game can be developed to suit individual needs. All you need to do is ask the question - What are we adapting?

Is it the:

- Environment
- Form of Movement
- Rules/Instruction
- Equipment

It is NEVER the INDIVIDUAL

Remember:

- People first - People with disabilities (PWD) second
- Disability is sometimes sensationalised
- Avoid generalising and labelling
- Focus on someone's abilities - what they can do.
- They have the right to try, fail and be angry
- They know what they want to say, so listen
- They have a need to be independent - give space
- They have great potential

Drug and Alcohol Policies:

As drugs and alcohol are very prevalent in today's society, all clubs are encouraged to have a written Drug and Alcohol Policy. This should include details on what is and is not acceptable and the consequences. It should also centre on the following:

- The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco should be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.
- Coaches should not smoke when taking a session or drink alcohol before taking a session.
- Clubs should be encouraged to organise events in a non-alcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned. Adults should act as role models for appropriate behaviour and refrain from drinking alcohol at such functions.
- Coaches should promote fair competition through the development of sound training practice and should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performances or to by-pass the commitment and hard work required to achieve success.
- Coaches in children's sport should refrain from seeking sponsorship from the alcohol and tobacco industries.

Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to sport. Sport simply would not function without sufficient numbers of volunteers. However, volunteers are often hard to retain resulting in a constant and frequent cycle of volunteers coming in and out of the organisation. Organisations are very aware of the importance of volunteers and their value within sport. However, volunteers often feel over-burdened and their efforts often going unrecognized and/or unrewarded leaving organisation struggling to attract and retain their volunteers.

- **1. Recruit**
- **2. Retain**
- **3. Reward**

Challenges in volunteering:

- There is a perception that most people are paid to run sport clubs. This often leads parents to think that there is no need for them to play a more integral role in the club as someone is already getting paid to do that.
- A seemingly increased bureaucracy surrounding the running of voluntary organisations.
- Participation in master's sport is increasing. Many former players who would usually enjoy volunteering after their career is over are deferring their retirement date due to better and broader opportunities in their sport today.
- Often, volunteers are stretched across more than one sport. Sometimes summer and winter sports have an overlap. This often results in a less extensive volunteer base to choose from.
- Aging volunteer workforce. The aging volunteers base appears to create certain difficulties in both replacing and attracting volunteers from younger age groups. Some may feel threatened as they feel that these volunteers 'own' their job and can't be challenged. They may feel like what's the point in getting involved in an organisation if I will have no say or power whatsoever, but that may not be the case at all.
- Generally, volunteer roles are too demanding. There is an increased load placed on volunteers which eventually leads to them becoming overwhelmed and leaving their volunteer post (Job sharing could help).
- Pressure of paid work only adds to the problem. Sometimes volunteering is the last thing you would want to do after a day of work.
- Out of pocket expenses. Some organisations/districts pay for volunteer expenses or at least contribute. Eg training courses, petrol cost for weekend trips, accommodation for overnight stays. Often, volunteers cannot afford to or just don't want to pay the costs associated with volunteering.
- Some people feel because they are somewhat lacking in knowledge about the job tasks, e.g. governance, financial planning, management they do not get involved as they feel they cannot perform the job.
- Some people do not get involved for the fear of being sued. They are afraid of the liability they could be exposed to. For example, many males are put off taking over underage girls' teams as they worried about their interaction with young girls and what parents may think.
- Fear of being abused. Major reasons why some volunteers do not come back. Eg: referees get a great amount of abuse in certain sports.
- Some volunteers find their jobs very rewarding. These are jobs which are generally easily noticeable, with other peripheral-type jobs which are important going unnoticed. This lack of recognition can deter volunteers.
- Lack of resources, facilities and infrastructure for volunteers to perform their roles adequately.
- Ambiguity or conflict between volunteers and paid staff roles in the club

Recommendations to Sports clubs:

1. Introduce volunteer recruitment seminars aimed at increasing the amount of volunteers from ranging population groups
2. Provision of more positive volunteers experiences through:
 - a) Appointment of volunteer coordinators to reorganize volunteer workloads and reduce

- perceived pressures on volunteers through more effective scheduling and planning
 - b) Better management of the interactions between the club stakeholders (parents, athletes, spectators) and volunteers (Eg practical workshops in conflict resolution and coping measures for dealing with abuse and/or harassment)
 - c) Reinforcement of the social and community experience
 - d) Implementation of mentoring programs
 - e) Recognition and appreciation initiatives
3. Appropriate volunteer training and education to overcome increasing concerns amongst volunteers along with potential volunteers that they lack the skills/experiences/knowledge to play an integral role

Funding

In all clubs, the issue of finance and funding is a critical question in that it must be answered. Most clubs will ask their members to pay an annual subscription; the amount of which will depend on the activities of the club and will be decided at the AGM.

However, often clubs require alternative sources of funding for large expenditures such as equipment, clothing, special events, etc and this can be done in a number of ways such as:

Event Planning

When clubs want to promote an event they should contact their County Board, local RDO and consult the AAI calendar of events. By doing this, the event avoids any major clashes that might take from the event and also serves to publicise the event. If a permit is required the club needs to arrange this sooner rather than later. To plan your event, start with setting the date. Look at planned events and see what else is on that might affect numbers participating. Elect a committee that will help with the organising of the event. Remember when organising an event plan plenty of time in advance. Have a social media launch before the event to arouse interest. Try to source some sort of sponsorship if possible. Try to get as much publicity as possible for your event.

General Fundraising

Raising money locally should be an important part of any club's fundraising strategy. Apart from raising money it also acts as publicity for your club and it also raises awareness of your club's activities in the locality. There are many ways in which to carry out general fund raising such as:

- Road Race or similar event
- Table quiz
- Bag packing in local supermarket
- Lottery or raffle
- Barbeque
- Events doing another activity, e.g. golf

Encourage members involved to bring friends and family along to increase the numbers. Supporters can be asked to contribute through donations, subscriptions, and advertising of an event, promotion of any kind or sponsorship.

Donations

This is where money or goods are donated with no expectation in return. Money is often donated to help run certain events, for goods such as sports equipment and local companies often give prizes for social occasions. The key to receiving donations is to build a good relationship with potential donors and not to ask too often.

Sponsorship

Corporate sponsorship is an arrangement between a company and a voluntary or community organisation. The company funds either an event or project in return for the good publicity that it will receive. Sponsorship is not the same as a donation where a gift of money or goods is received without any expectation of return. Sponsorship is a form of marketing for many companies and they will therefore expect a return such as, the guarantee of publicity especially for the company name. Most companies allocate sponsorship once a year so contact them before you send in a proposal to see if they have used their annual budget or not. If it is already allocated enquire as to when is the optimal time to make a future application. Also, ask if they have any set procedures or sponsorship policy so that you are aware of how the company likes to deal with potential sponsorship partners.

If any club members work for or have links with any companies, these should be approached first as the connection gives a good introduction to any proposal. If you are looking for a large amount of sponsorship, it can help to break these down into smaller sections and apply to various organisations. Research the companies that you are applying to. You are more likely to find a sponsor on your own doorstep so always include the local perspective. This works especially well with companies that are new in an area given that they are trying to build a local profile. Always ring before sending in a proposal to establish the appropriate person to send the application to.

Always state that you will contact the company on a certain date to see if the application has been successful - give a reasonable amount of time 3 or 4 weeks - this means that a decision will usually be taken one way or the other so that you are not left sitting waiting for the company to contact you. Make sure that you always follow up on the date that you state.

Where you are applying for an event/project involving young people, there are some ethical principles to be aware of:

- Particular care should be taken that the association with a sponsor should not put them under pressure to purchase the sponsor's products
- Where programmes or events are directed at children, ideally they should not promote products or services aimed at a children's market
- Sponsorship by alcoholic drinks or tobacco companies should be avoided
- If you are unsuccessful in your application, don't be afraid to contact the company to ask why - this can give you valuable information for your next application

Lotteries

A permit is needed for lotteries not held privately or in conjunction with an event. Application is made through the local Gardaí. A permit is also needed from the Gardaí to collect money in a public place. These applications must be made to the Gardaí in the area where the collection or lottery is to take place and they will be confined to the area applied for. Collecting without a permit is an offence and entitles the Gardaí to seize what money has been collected.

Writing fundraising proposals

Before you begin, research all the potential organisations/people you intend to approach about funding. This could include:

- What kind of organisations and projects do they fund?
- What are they interested in?
- What are their requirements in terms of supporting documentation, accountability and evaluation?

Some organisations/people will have their own funding applications that list the details required.

If this is the case you should still include a covering letter and supporting documentation.

For those who are told to structure their own submissions, make sure to include the following details:

- Profile of the club
- The general needs that the club meets
- The specific needs that the funds will meet
- Exactly what the club plans
- How the proposal will be carried out
- How much money is required
- How its other funding requirements will be met
- The expected outcomes of the project
- Why they should be interested

Start your application with a covering letter outlining who you are and why you are writing. As a lot of organisations get quite a number of requests/applications for sponsorship/funding, your covering letter has to be well written, well-structured and to the point (especially the first paragraph, as this is what will grab their attention).

Always be positive, put down all the good qualities of your project without being modest. Tie this in with what you know about the funding agency/sponsor and show that you have done your research. Draw in all of the benefits to the sponsor, the club and the potential participants in the events/projects. Always show that the funding that you are applying for is part of an overall sustainable scheme.

Keep the proposal clear and concise and easy to read. Get someone unconnected with the application to read it over before sending it in to ensure the clarity of the proposal. Use tables and graphs where possible and don't crowd the text onto the page. Make sure that the proposal is well presented - don't just hand something

in for the sake of it. Use colours for different sections and use a folder to keep all of the information together.

Personalise it - don't send off the same letter and information to all funding agencies and potential sponsors. Use the information that you have on each company to direct each proposal personally towards the recipient.

Be clear about the amount that you are asking for - you should also indicate a willingness to fundraise at least part of the total cost. Asking for partial funding is far preferable to simply asking for the whole amount. In budgeting for the proposal, the club must show that it has its finances under control. It is important that accounts are kept up-to-date and that they are easy to understand.

Guidelines when Applying for Funding:

- Research your proposal before you begin.
- Address the proposal to someone specific.
- Always follow up on written proposals with a phone call.
- Include any information that you feel may be relevant in supporting your application -press cuttings, statistics of club, etc.
- Adapt your application to the specifics of the company/funding agency that you are applying to.
- Be business-like - be positive not defensive.
- Show that you are planning for the long term. Funding agencies especially want to see that the funding will be used on something sustainable or for an event that is part of a bigger plan - drawing up a *Club Development Plan* will help you in this.
- If successful, keep the company/funding agency informed of progress with regular updates - this creates a contact that could lead to further funding at a later stage.
- Even if the contact doesn't respond positively this time, ask for feedback on your application for future reference. Also keep them informed of other opportunities - they may not have had the budget at the time and may be interested at a later stage.
- Keep records of all funding applications, successful or not as these can help in future applications.
- Don't come to rely solely on one sponsor as they may decide at some stage to withdraw the funding - keep trying to make other contacts at all times
- Invite them to the event being staged or other event such as prize giving's or club socials.

Some reasons why requests for funding are rejected :

- The applicants may not have made a distinctive case for themselves
- The aims of the club and project/event are not clear
- There seems to be no financial control in the club
- The application does not contain all of the required information

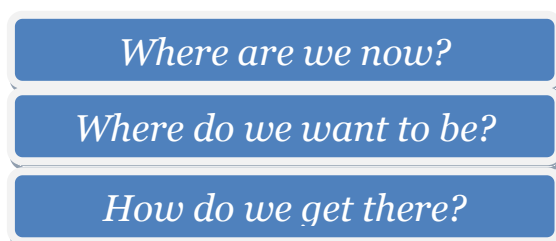
Club Development Plan

A club development plan is a very important tool if a club wishes to make real progress.

- A club development plan will provide a template to build, strengthen and improve the structure of the club and ensure that it can cater for the needs of its members. The membership of the association has grown steadily in recent times and this has manifested itself in greater demands upon the clubs, their officers and coaches. Clubs need to adapt to their new circumstances and a development plan will facilitate this.
- The process of preparing a plan will involve an analysis of the clubs current situation. This is an inherently useful exercise. It should promote healthy discussion among members and identify areas for improvement that may not have been apparent previously.
- A development plan provides a focus for club activities and ensures that the members are working to a common purpose. It can serve to re-energise the members.
- Athletics is a multi-disciplinary sport and very few clubs cater for all elements. A club may wish to expand its events provided, improve facilities or offer new activities.
- Club membership is continually rising but there still exists a high turnover among members, particularly among teenagers. Clubs need to consider this and implement strategies to retain members.
- When applying for funding, a club development plan will greatly enhance any application, as it will demonstrate that a club is organised and that any funding received is part of a long term and sustainable scheme.

Drawing up this plan need not be a long or complicated process. Involve as many people as possible so as to include the views of all involved in the club. The following is a suggested template for a Club Development Plan

The three main steps are as follows:



This process will involve creating an overall strategy to take the club forward. The first step will be to analyse the current situation. A SWOT analysis is a useful tool to assist in this process. SWOT represents Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. This will assist in arriving at a comprehensive picture of the situation facing the club and will be discussed further below.

In order to develop your club it is a good idea to carry out an analysis of the clubs current situation. This will give an idea of areas that are progressing well and also issues that need improvement. These areas can be listed and rated in order of priority. This will form the basis of a plan to develop the club.

STRENGTHS

e.g. the club may have a large number of volunteers.

WEAKNESSES

e.g. the coaches may only be able to deliver a small number of events.

OPPORTUNITIES

e.g. potential to establish Fit4Life group to boost club.

THREATS

e.g. club may close for a period during the year and some athletes may not return when it reopens.

Common Questions Could Include:

- Do we have enough coaches?
- Do we offer all athletic events to our members or just a few events?
- Do we have sufficient volunteers?
- Do we have sufficient facilities/equipment?
- Are we adequately catering for all sections of our membership e.g. young children, competition age teens, juniors, seniors, recreational runners, etc.?
- Are we retaining our membership?
- Are we efficient enough in fundraising, etc.?
- Do we have appropriate links with local schools?
- Do we have a proper PR strategy?
- Is there sufficient procedures in place to develop highly talented and young prospects
- Are coaches continually updating their qualifications?
- Can we get more parents into coaching? How?

CLUB OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the club need to be discussed. Are there short, medium and long term goals in place? Is there a vision of where the club wants to get to or is it drifting along? The issues that were raised during the SWOT analysis may lead to the development of further goals.

In all cases your objectives need to be S.M.A.R.T.E.R.

Specific

Measurable

Agreed

Realistic

Timescale

Exciting

Recorded

SHORT TERM GOAL(S)

These may relate to the current competition season or similar timescale

MEDIUM TERM GOAL(S)

These may relate to the next year or two

LONG TERM GOAL(S)

These may relate to goals that can extend as far as five years

In addition to clearly outlining the goals there needs to be a plan of action to make these happen. The end goal should be broken down into smaller steps with timeframes and responsibility allocated. These roles should be clearly defined to avoid ambiguity and ensure the tasks can be carried out. A potential plan may be structured along the following lines.

Goal Defined:

Timescale:

Steps involved / Tasks to be completed:

Person(s) responsible:

Review process:

Athletics Ireland Club Mark

Athletics Ireland Club Mark stands for development and recognition of excellence in safety, fairness, coaching and management. Club Mark is a step by step process to help member clubs keep up to date with the key administration requirements involved in running an athletics club. This way our clubs network will be safer, stronger and more successful.

Athletics Ireland Club Mark accreditation is easy to achieve by completing an online workbook.

Once the workbook is completed and submitted it will be assessed by your Club Mark coordinator. When your submission is approved your club will be awarded the Athletics Ireland Club Mark accreditation. Achieving accreditation will include benefits such as discounted coaching courses and sports equipment for your little athletics groups. Certification will last for two years from the date it is awarded.

Clubs accredited to Athletics Ireland Club Mark can be proud of what they have achieved. They will have demonstrated a commitment to developing our sport. Parents can be assured that their children belong to a safer club. Members can be reassured their club is well-managed, striving to offer the best in coaching and sports development. By striving to achieve higher standards clubs will attract more members and build a sustainable future for our sport.

How does Club Mark work?

Getting involved is easy! Simply get your committee to appoint a Club Mark coordinator. Then register online at www.athleticsireland.clubmark Once registered you can log in and amend your Club Mark workbook as often as you wish until you sign off and submit on the last page.

The workbook is made up of a number of questions to be answered on behalf of your club. There is a facility to upload any documents required as part of the accreditation process. You will need to revisit your workbook, just use the same login that you submitted at the start and each time you log in all the data you entered previously will be retrieved. You can also email your documents to supplement your submission.

Why should we become accredited?

Very often clubs are unsure as to what is required of them to operate effectively within the association. Club Mark maps out the key requirements for a club. This will help volunteers to better understand the club management process and facilitate club development.

What will we learn from Club Mark?

Participation in Club Mark will provide clubs with an action plan for any areas that require further attention or development. In turn Athletics Ireland will provide the support for clubs to achieve the goals set out in the action plan.

How often do we need to be accredited?

Accreditation will last for two years before clubs will be invited to update their submission for review.

Who do I contact about Athletics Ireland Club Mark?

The Athletics Ireland Club Mark coordinator can be contacted by email at clubmark@athleticsireland.ie



Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Athletics

The Irish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland published a joint Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in 2000. This major joint publication recognised the commitment of both Councils to ensure that young people are safeguarded in their participation in sport in the island of Ireland. The Code has been adopted and implemented by governing bodies of sports, clubs, local sports partnerships and community/voluntary groups on an on-going basis since 2000.

If young people are to stay involved in sport throughout their adult life, they need to be equipped with the fundamentals to remain involved with sport and physical activity. Equally we need to ensure that their early experiences are positive and enjoyable, irrespective of their ability, gender, social class, race, etc. It is encouraging to see adults, both volunteers and professionals, contribute to these positive experiences by acting as role models in all dealings with young people. In particular the work of Children's Officers at club and national level is instrumental in implementing the Code. We need to build on this valuable work to ensure that all young people see sport and physical activity as an important and valuable aspect of their lives that they will sustain throughout their adulthood.

The review of the Code in 2005 ensures that the policies and procedures that we implement at all levels in sport are up-to-date and in line with relevant documents, current best practice and legislation throughout the island of Ireland.

Athletics Ireland is committed to the protection and well being of all children and young people in athletics. It is compulsory that all club leaders be vetted by the National Vetting Bureau and participate in the Code of Ethics and Child Protection training as provided by Athletics Ireland. For more information please contact the Athletics Ireland Child Welfare Manager.



Garda Vetting Policy & Procedures

Athletics Ireland is committed to the highest standards of professional practice in its recruitment processes. The Association is committed to ensuring that all people who are employed or are volunteers within the Association act according to the highest standards in all aspects of their roles and responsibilities. Garda Vetting is an important component of a good practice recruitment policy. Other components are verification of identity, interview and gathering of references. It is the responsibility of each club to decide which members should be vetted. Athletics Ireland is responsible for providing vetting services to clubs.

Garda Vetting is provided to Athletics Ireland members by the Garda Central Vetting Unit, through the Association, in respect of voluntary and paid staff working for the Association. All volunteers/staff who have direct access to children or vulnerable adults or those that are in a position that they can influence policies that affect children should be vetted.

The Vetting Process

1. The applicant is asked by the relevant body (Club, County, Region or Association) to complete a Garda Vetting form.
2. The form is forwarded to AAI, where it is checked and signed by the Authorised Signatory (appointed by AAI and trained by Garda Vetting Unit for the role).
3. Incomplete or illegible forms are returned to the applicant with a cover letter requesting the forms correction and resubmission.
4. When the Authorised Signatory is satisfied with the form, the applicant's details are entered onto the AAI Vetting Database and the form is forwarded to the Garda Vetting Unit.
5. Forms are returned to the Association usually within 6 – 8 weeks for the attention of the Authorised Signatory.
6. When the returned forms contain information relevant to the engagement of the applicant, the Authorised Signatory will call a meeting of the review committee.

Support and advice is available from the Child Welfare Manager at AAI head office, telephone: 01-8869933.

Garda Vetting will be sought in respect of all volunteers/staff every three to five years thereafter, or at any time within the said five year period as deemed necessary by the Association.

What is the purpose of Garda Vetting?

The purpose of Garda Vetting is to provide details regarding all prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed and/or convictions in respect of an individual applicant to an organisation which is registered for Garda Vetting.

Who is subject to Garda Vetting?

All members of Athletics Ireland, both voluntary and paid staff, who work with children and vulnerable adults in an athletics setting.

Why should an organisation avail of the Garda Vetting Service?

Garda Vetting is one strand of the "Safe Recruitment" policy adopted by Athletics Ireland and endorsed by the Irish Sports Council.

For the most part, people who become involved in service in any organisation are properly motivated. However, occasionally people with malicious intent will try to gain access to children and vulnerable adults through sporting organisations. Garda Vetting may deter these people from becoming involved, or may provide useful information to the Association regarding their suitability.

Is the Association obliged to use the Vetting Service?

Athletics Ireland has a duty of care to ensure that no person is appointed who is not suitable to work with children or vulnerable adults. Failure to use the service to identify those people could be seen as a failure in the duty of care. It is the clubs responsibility to comply with the law on vetting (National Vetting Bill 2012).

What are the benefits of Garda Vetting?

- Protection of children and vulnerable adults
- Protection of the Association and Club
- Protection of coaches and volunteers
- Management of risk

Garda Vetting is one of the key elements of a robust child protection system

Who provides Garda Vetting?

Vetting is carried out by the Garda Central Vetting Unit, Thurles, Co. Tipperary. Garda Vetting can only be accessed through Athletics Ireland, the Gvu does not deal with individual applicants. Garda Vetting cannot be accessed through local Garda Stations.

Can I engage/employ an applicant who has not yet completed the Garda Vetting Process?

Under the National Vetting Bill 2012 applicants should not be employed/engaged before the Garda Vetting process has been completed.

Who is the Authorised Signatory?

The Authorised Signatory (AS) is appointed by the Association to administer the vetting process. The Authorised Signatory is trained by the Garda Vetting Unit and reports to the C.E.O. The AS maintains strict confidentiality regarding applicant details.

Who has access to information on a Garda Vetting Form?

The Authorised Signatory and the Garda Vetting Unit. If a disclosure needs to be discussed by the Review Committee, the applicant will be advised in advance, and will be invited to attend in order to discuss the information received from the Gardaí. The process is EXTREMELY confidential.

What are the implications if I have previous convictions?

All applicants must declare previous convictions on the Garda Vetting Form. Details of any previous convictions will be listed on the form by the Central Vetting Unit and returned to the AS. The Association will decide whether the information is relevant to the role and to the suitability of the applicant to fulfil that role.

What if I have a case pending against me?

An applicant should provide relevant information, which will be taken into account when considering the application.

What if I do not disclose a previous conviction?

Applicants are required to disclose all relevant information on the Garda Vetting Application Form. If this is not done, and if the conviction is such that would give cause for concern regarding the appointment of the applicant, he/she will be given an opportunity in a review meeting to explain the omission and the Association will make a decision based on all the information.

What happens if I do not have all my address details?

The applicant should write a short explanation to the Gardaí in the margin of the form. If the Gardaí need further clarification, they will return the form to the applicant through the Association AS.

Guide to effective Public Relations

What is PR?

Definition of PR: Strategic communications processes, that helps manage, protects, and enhance the reputation of an organization, its members, and its services

PR is...

- Simple: One call can earn media coverage
- Cost-effective: You can reach hundreds and thousands without any costs incurred
- Powerful: The right story with the right message can have a huge impact

How PR can benefit your club?

- Build an image and raise awareness for your club
- Reinforce and further your club's reputation.
- Encourage new membership
- Educate and increase understanding of athletes

How to go about using PR to get Media Coverage?

The media should be invited/informed of all relevant events in which the club involved and of key achievements by the club events (such as county, provincial national championships, club awards, hosting road race etc). Keeping the media informed of your activities will help raise public awareness of the events in which your club is involved

Pre-event

- Appoint a publicity coordinator/ club PRO
- Compile a list of local journalists you would like to cover the event
- Send them individual notices with the details of the event by email
- Notify news desks and photo desks of local newspapers
- Follow up with a phone call to confirm attendance and receipt of invitation
- Ring relevant radio shows to inform them of the upcoming event
- If you can afford one, book a professional photographer or perhaps use a photographer who is willing to provide this service at cost price. If you organise the photographs yourself, send them to the local papers with a press release and caption attached to each photo as soon as possible in order to meet deadlines
- Invite the photographers from the local newspaper; if they attend they will submit the photographs to their publications automatically. You can submit their shots to other papers and magazines, which don't attend the event

On the day:

- Issue a press release to the local radio station and newspapers in an effort to get media coverage to promote the event
- Telephone the news editors to ensure they have received the release and offer extra information or an interview with a guest speaker

After the event:

- Make follow up calls to see if any of the journalists require further information
- Issue photographs, which were taken at the event, accompanied by captions
- Send letters of thanks to all those who facilitated the event, especially guest speakers
- Keep a file of the positive and negative coverage, which was achieved, and lessons learned from the event

Writing and Issuing a Press Release

Journalists are sent a huge number of press releases, and many of them end up going straight in the bin. This may be because the press release is irrelevant or badly put together

Content

- Date - the date you issue the release
- Embargo - if you do not want the story covered until a certain date/time, you can put an embargo on it, in which case you must make this clear on the releases - e.g. Embargo: 5pm DD/MM/YY. Be aware however that embargoes can be broken by accident not just by intention
- Heading - a short headline summarising the story
- First paragraph - the most important facts should be included in the first paragraph. Newspapers often cut the information to make it fit the space available, and this is likely to be from the bottom up, so vital information could be left out if it's not at the beginning of the release. Answer as many of the "W" questions - what, when, where, who, why and how - as you can in the first paragraph
- Quote - a quote can explain the importance of the story in clear language, or it can add a new dimension such as the personal side of the story.
- Additional paragraphs - if you have more information, add further paragraphs but don't write more just to make the release look more important
- Contact details - the contact name, title, day, time and out of hours telephone number should be included in clear, bold print at the end of the release. Email and website addresses should also be included where possible

Guide to the Website

Generally an athletics club website will have 2 purposes:

- 1) Provide information on the Club to new members
- 2) Communicate amongst existing members

Setting up a Website

- In terms of providing information on the club to new members the best way of doing this is to have a website with it's own domain name e.g. www.dingleac.com or www.dingleac.ie
- The advantage of this is that it allows the Club communicate an address people will remember easily, and having a proper domain name will allow the website to be found more easily by search engines
- Note: .com domains are quick and easy to register while .ie domains require documentation proving your right to register that domain and are more expensive.
- The best option in setting up a website is to delegate the task to a professional but not every club can have this option.
- If your club doesn't have the budget or in-house skills to set up its own website then a good halfway option is to use online blogging software to set up your website.
- The most common choices are wordpress.com or blogspot.com. Both are easy to use, quick to set up and will give you an address such as dingleac.wordpress.com
- These sites allow for frequent updates and they will give you template options to style the site according to your taste.
- Another option is Google sites (sites.google.com) - This option is a little more difficult to use than the options above but the advantage is that they make it pretty easy to register a .com or .net domain for the site.
- In terms of communicating amongst existing members, an updated website is the best option. Another good option is Facebook, but the limitation is of course that your members/prospective

members have to be on Facebook. The stats say that if your club has many young juvenile athletes or masters athletes this approach may not be the best.

- The ideal approach is to have both a website and a Facebook page but if you have to choose one your own website is best.

Management of Club Website

- There are a number of key elements that make a good website including; visual appeal, good clear navigation and knowing your audience. The website homepage needs to offer the users a compelling experience that will drive them deeper into the site. If you can keep it fresh and attractive, this will encourage the user to re-use the site. The following are tips to help you manage your website:
- Be accurate-make sure to check all images, links and texts before and after posting. Involve a colleague to double check everything for you, so as to be 100% sure.
- Understand your audience-think what users might want to find out, not what you want to tell them. For athletes the results, club news or picture gallery may be of the most interest to them. Make sure that these sections are visible and easy to find on your homepage.
- Use short sentences- make sure that news items and links on your homepage are displayed using short sentences and are to the point. By doing this it will quicken up the journey for the user.
- Keep your website up-to-date- during the busy competition period make sure to keep your website up-to-date with all the results/news reports that involve the various athletes.
- Focus on images-Images will encourage the users to click through to a story, make sure that the pictures are relevant to the news piece.
- Schedule content updates-users expect the website to be updated frequently. Have a monthly meeting scheduling the time needed to update the website.
- Make it easy-Ensure that if a user clicks on a link it brings them to the desired area. For example "Click to see Video", ensure that when they click on the link it brings them to the video rather than to another page.
- Commit the Proper Resource-Delegate to someone in your club to have responsibility for up-dating the website. It is important to up-date the website as much as possible in order to attract repeat users.
- Getting Your Site Noticed-When your site is ready; you will need to submit it to search engines like Google and Bing. The following are the links to do this:
- <http://www.google.com/submityourcontent/#>
- <http://www.bing.com/webmaster/SubmitSitePage.aspx>
- *In general, if your site is already linked to by other websites, you may not even need to submit it to these search engines. They will probably find it themselves by following the links on those websites.
- When you are happy with your website, ensure that club site is listed to our "Find a club section" of the website, see link: http://www.athleticsireland.ie/content/?page_id=5996

Guide to Social Media

What is Social Media?

- Social media includes web based and mobile based technologies
- They are used to turn basic communication into a two-way street form of communication that enables users to interact directly with organizations, companies and each other.
- Social media websites enable Social Networking where users can interact by adding friends, commenting on profiles, joining groups and having discussions.



How Can Social Media Benefit Your Club?

- The use of social media sites can benefit your club by enabling users to interact with the club easily and directly in a less formal matter than a club website. It is an excellent, low-cost way to engage the community and build publicity for your club.
- Social media sites enable the club to post photos, training and race reminders, social events and engage in general conversation with a group of target people who are directly interested with the group and what it has to say.
- With the introduction of wireless internet (Wifi, 3G) it is possible to receive social media updates through the web and on your smart phone which makes it very useful for people on the move.
- Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter provide a user friendly template for users to fill in their information and get their profiles started in minutes.



Facebook is a social network founded in 2004 and now has over 750 million users.

A few keys to Facebook's success are its ability to appeal to both people organizations and businesses.

Key Features

Facebook allows you to maintain a friends list and choose privacy settings to tailor who can see what on your profile. It allows you to post content such as comments, links and videos along with giving you the ability to upload photos and maintain photo albums that can be shared with group members and friends. Facebook supports groups and fan pages, allowing organizations to effectively use Facebook as a vehicle for social media marketing. On setting up a fan page, users then have the option to 'Like' your page. Facebook then provides insights on those who like and view your page content, allowing you to make more concise decisions and tailor your posts to suit your target audience.

Setting Up Your Page

- If you already have a Facebook profile, you can go to www.facebook.com/page to set up your page.
- If you do not already have a Facebook profile, go to www.facebook.com click "Create a page", follow the on screen instructions and register your details.
- Be sure to set up a "sports club" page type. This is very important from a privacy perspective, a club page allows members to share and view information without access to personal profile pages. No personal pages should ever be used to promote clubs.
- Once set up, upload a page photo such as your club crest or logo.
- In the "About" section of your page, fill in your club's basic information along with contact details and a link to your club website.
- Your page can be found by typing it's name into the search bar at the top of the Facebook screen.
- Grow your Facebook fan page by creating events, writing messages, posting videos, links or photos on your wall for people to 'like' and comment on.

Safeguarding guideline: Sports leaders should not engage in communications with underage athletes via personal social network sites.



What is it?

Twitter is a social networking service that allows its users to send and read other users' updates (known as tweets), which are text-based posts of up to 140 characters in length. You can receive updates via Twitter through the web on a computer or on your smart phone or tablet which makes it very useful for people on the move.

Key Features

The public can "Follow" your tweets to receive updates on what you post. Twitter allows users to pick and customize how they receive your messages. They can get alerts via the web, text messages, instant messages, e-mail and RSS feeds. Users have the option to "retweet" your messages to their own followers which in turn can help promote your message and club brand.

Setting Up Your Account

- Go to www.twitter.com and fill in your details in the fields provided and come up with your Twitter username. This username will be used by your followers to message or mention you in 'tweets'.
- Upload a profile photo such as your club crest or logo and fill in your 160 character biography.
- Consider "Following" people and companies of specific interest to your club i.e club members, local businesses, sponsors etc. Use the search box on your club's homepage to search for people and even mentions of key terms regarding your club. Also have a look at the "Find People" section.
- On your club's homepage you can start to post your first "tweets". These messages can be a maximum of 140 characters in length and can include links, videos and photos which can be seen by your "Followers"



What is it?

YouTube is a [video-sharing](#) website on which users can upload, view and share videos. Most of the content on YouTube has been uploaded by individuals, although organizations and businesses can offer some of their material via the site as a form of publicity.

Key Features

After signing up for an account, you have access to your own Youtube 'channel'. Your channel is your home page where you can see all the videos you have uploaded, your comments, your friends, your subscriptions etc. Here you can easily upload videos of races and events which can be shared with friends via your other social networks such as Facebook or Twitter. Videos from your Youtube channel can also easily be embedded on your club website and can help in improving your overall website content, visits and search rankings.

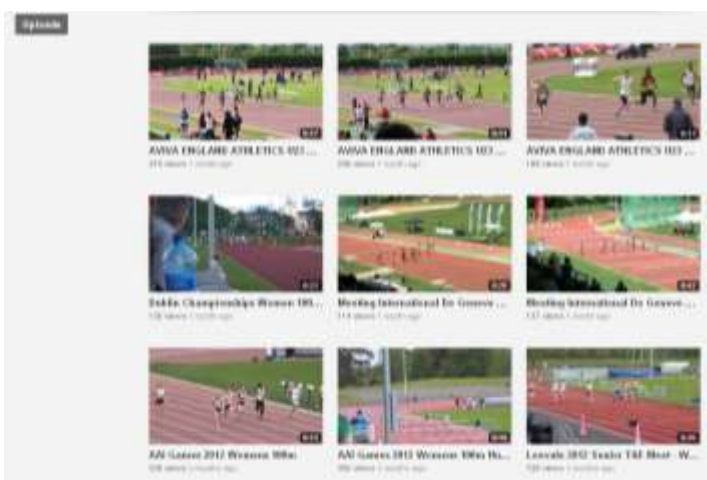


Fig: A Youtube Channel Video Display

Do's & Don'ts

Do

- Consider having private separate accounts for work or project related purposes.
- Think before you post, there is no such thing as a "private" social media site.
- Be accurate, make sure that you have all the facts before you post.
- Correct mistakes - If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and be quick with your correction
- Respect others - users are free to discuss topics and disagree with you or one another
- Create a club policy outlining what is tolerated, not tolerated on the site
- Use direct messages when appropriate, not everything is meant to be said in public
- Post pictures, videos and content you feel is of interest to the community, interact with users & be polite.

Don't

- Post confidential information
- Forget you are responsible for what you post on your page – make sure to get permission, cite and link your sources when posting others information
- Ignore comments and feedback
- Give away your password – make use of privacy settings and a strong password
- Upload anything you wouldn't want everyone to see.
- Post the same content over and over
- Forget to update posts.
- Post anything that could be misleading, fraudulent or deceptive
- Tolerate obscene, racist, bullying or threatening language on your page, use the 'Report' or 'Block' features.

Communicating with Juvenile Athletes

(mobile phone, text, e-mail, social media)

Coaches and leaders should never place themselves in a compromising position by texting or communicating via social media sites with juvenile athletes. All such communications regarding athletics should be sent via the parents or guardians of the athlete.

The following should apply when communicating with juvenile athletes:

- Do use a club group text or email system for communicating with parents/guardians of athletes.
- Do not communicate individually by text or email with juvenile athletes.
- Do not engage in communications with underage athletes via personal social network sites.
- Always use official club group text or social media sites to communicate with juvenile athletes.

Athletics Ireland Programmes

The following are Athletics Ireland led programmes and initiatives that can assist with developing your club. The local Regional Development Officer will be keen to assist you in any of these areas.

Fit4Life & Fit4Youth

Fit4Life is a recreational running programme which is based on a meet and train model. Fit4Youth is a similar programme targeting teenagers. It is aimed at people who would previously not have been involved in a club. The programme allows these people to get fit and enjoy running in a relaxed environment. The individual benefits from the club environment, structure and expertise. Fit4Life offers an opportunity to open the club to a whole new section of the community. The recreational running phenomenon often takes place outside of the club structure. This programme unites both parties.

The club benefits from...

- Increased profile in the community.
- Increased membership. This Fit4Life member often brings their children and friends
- Skills and competencies. An influx of adult members may increase the potential for promotion and recruitment, fundraising, extra coaches and officials along with an increased number of helpers.
- Increased club income.

Regional Squads

The regional squads take place during the winter / spring period and usually have a minimum of five events. These events provide coaching for young athletes across the range of events in advance of the summer competition season. These provide excellent opportunities for club development...

- Specialised coaching for club athletes across the event groups.
- Opportunity for young athletes to sample events that may not be available in the club.
- Club coaches are encouraged to attend to observe experienced coaches in action. This can be a very useful learning environment.

Little Athletics

The Little Athletics programme is based on the Long Term Player Athlete Development model. It provides opportunities for children to gain physical literacy in a club environment. The programme is focussed on activities which promote speed, agility, balance and co-ordination for club members who are under the age of ten. The Athletic Leader course equips the coach to run the session and the Little Athletics pack provides the tools required. The main benefits of the programme include....

- Young athletes receiving age-appropriate training.
- Coaches properly prepared to work with athletes at pre-competition age.
- Structure allowing younger athletes join the club without removing resources from elsewhere.
- Point of entry for new coaches.

Club / School Links

The clubs that achieve regular success in competitions all have well established links with local schools. This provides the club with a regular flow of athletes as a minimum benefit and can extend as far as clubs utilising school facilities for mutual advantage. Any club that wishes to grow and develop needs to make the local schools one of the top priorities. Some areas to consider include.....

- All schools in the club's catchment area should be aware of the club and direct any interested pupils towards the club.
- Schools should be encouraged to enter club athletes in the relevant schools competitions.
- Clubs should build links with the PE teachers in order to promote athletics.
- Athletics is on the primary school curriculum. This presents an opportunity for clubs to liaise with local schools.
- Many clubs have members going into schools to coach. If this is possible it yields very strong results.
- Any teachers that are interested in athletics should be assisted and encouraged to work alongside or join the club.
- Developmental leagues among primary schools emphasising Sportshall or cross country have proved very beneficial to clubs organising them.

Coach Education Courses

The coach education courses offered by Athletics Ireland are a very strong part of club development.

Courses offer the following benefit to the club...

- Improve the knowledge of existing coaches. This results in an increased level of preparation among athletes for competition and subsequently better results achieved.
- Increase the number of events that the club can offer. Coaches will be up-skilled in events that previously were not available in the club.
- Allows the club recruit new coaches as entry level courses are pitched at beginners. Parents or volunteers with little experience are quickly equipped to start coaching.
- Increased capacity. Additional coaches allow the club recruit extra members as they can be accommodated.

The courses available include the following....

Athletics Leader

Aim

Athletics Leader focuses on introducing the fundamentals of athletic movement to children. The aim of the Athletics Leader course is to provide teachers, parents and club members with the skills and tools to manage and lead an Athletics Programme in their club or school. The content focuses on organising athletics games and activities for young children. It is aimed at those who want to coach or assist in their local club or school. The course focuses primarily on developing athleticism through games designed to improve agility, balance and co-ordination and is very practical in nature.

Content

The content for this course includes;

- group coaching skills and identifying ways to make the coaching sessions fun
- The use of small hurdles and obstacles, running, jumping, throwing and running
- games to provide fun in developing fitness

- developing an awareness of the growing child and the implications on fitness activities
- games to develop speed and reaction, using acceleration and change of direction
- The ethics of coaching including topics such as winning vs. involvement and recognising the importance of individual improvement
- Practical sessions on running and agility, balance, jumping, co-ordination and throwing and catching
- Planning a session and a programme

Duration

This is a course over 1 day (8 hours)

Entry Requirements

Athletics Leader is open to all those who are 16 years or over

Cost €60- Included in the price for this course is the Athletics Leader manual full of fun games and activities for use with young athletes

Assistant Coach

Aim

The aim of the assistant coach course is to give some basic skills to the beginner coach to help assist a more senior coach in the delivery of coaching sessions to young athletes. It is an introduction to coaching in three key event areas, Running (Sprints and Endurance), Jumping (Long Jump) and Throwing (Shot Putt).

Content

The content for this course includes;

- group coaching skills and identifying ways to make coaching sessions fun
- Fun and functional warm ups and cool downs
- Safety in Athletics, including Child Welfare
- Rules of key events
- Communicating with young athletes and giving effective feedback.
- Basic Running skills
- Basic Long Jump Skills
- Basic Shot Putt skills

Duration

This is a course over 1 day (8 hours)

Entry Requirements

The Assistant Coach Course is open to all those 16 years or over.

Cost €60- Included in the price for this course is an AAI Assistant Coach Manual.

Level 1

Aim

The Level 1 course is focused on the learning to train stage on the LTAD pathway. Coaches working at this

stage will continue to develop the fundamental skills of the athlete. Fun and participation are still the main aims of the course. The course focuses on the development of sports specific skills, learning the correct posture and movements of all running, jumping and throwing events.

Content

The content for this course includes;

- Developing the techniques of running, jumping and throwing.
- Understanding the effects of puberty in developing the young athlete
- Planning and conducting a training session incorporating Running, Jumping and Throwing
- Developing the mental capacities of the athlete towards fair play, discipline, confidence, concentration etc.
- Developing the fundamental skills of Running, Jumping and throwing and making them more sport specific
- Continuing the development of athletics in a fun environment
- Child Welfare and Safety in events

Duration

This is a course over 2 weekends (25 hours)

Entry Requirements

Level 1 is open to all those 18 years or older who have completed an Athletics Leader course or an Assistant Coach course.

Assessment/ Qualification

Practical assessment and continuous assessment throughout the course.

Sample training session

Observed Practice

Oral assessment

Cost €100 - Included in the price for this course is the AAI Level 1 Coach Manual.

Athletics Ireland Development Contacts

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