



CLUB VOLUNTEERING HANDBOOK

Rugby club guide to volunteering onboarding and
retention in community rugby

2026 -2028

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Their investment has enabled the Welsh Rugby Union to develop a modern, inclusive and people centred approach to volunteering. One that recognises the vital role volunteers play in sustaining community rugby across Wales.

This resource has been designed to:

- Support volunteers to feel confident, valued and supported
- Help clubs create positive, sustainable volunteering environments
- Strengthen the long-term resilience of community rugby

The Welsh Rugby Union is grateful for the commitment shown to volunteering and community sport, and for the opportunity to work in partnership to support volunteers at every level of the game.

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CROESO!

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOUR CLUB

Volunteers are essential to the survival and success of community rugby clubs.

Every training session, match day, junior programme, social event, and safe environment depend on people giving their time freely.

Without volunteers, clubs cannot function and when volunteers are not supported properly, clubs feel the impact quickly.

Across community sport, most volunteer problems do not start with a lack of goodwill.

They start with:

- Unclear expectations
- Informal onboarding
- People being asked to do too much, too quickly
- Volunteers feeling unnoticed or unsupported

When this happens, volunteers rarely complain. They simply stop turning up.

Volunteer turnover creates real risks for clubs:

- Disrupted teams and activities
- Increased pressure on a small number of people
- Safeguarding vulnerabilities
- Reputational damage
- Long term sustainability issues

This guide exists to help clubs avoid those risks.

Good volunteer experiences do not happen by chance.

They are created deliberately through clear roles, proper onboarding, regular support, and a culture that respects people's time and boundaries.

This document is not about blame or criticism.

It is about giving clubs a clear, practical way to do volunteering well. In a way that is realistic for volunteer led organisations.

Clubs that support volunteers properly:

- Keep people involved for longer
- Reduce burnout and conflict
- Create safer environments
- Build stronger club cultures

Volunteers don't leave rugby.

They leave environments.

This guide is here to help you create one they want to stay in.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to support your club.

It recognises that:

- Most community rugby clubs are volunteer led
- Time and capacity are limited
- People are doing their best in challenging environments

You are not expected to:

- Read this cover to cover in one go
- Implement everything at once
- Have perfect systems in place

This guide works best when it is:

- Used as a reference
- Shared across the committee
- Revisited at key points during the season
- Used to support improvement, not assign blame.

Some sections set minimum standards that all clubs must meet.

Other sections describe good practice that clubs can work towards over time.

Progress matters more than starting point.

If your club recognises itself in some of the challenges described, that is not a failure! It is common across community sport.

The purpose of this guide is to provide clear, practical steps to improve the volunteer experience in ways that are achievable.

Use this guide to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities
- Improve how volunteers are welcomed
- Reduce burnout and pressure
- Create safer, more sustainable environments

This document should support conversations, not replace them.

Volunteering works best when expectations are clear, responsibility is shared, and people feel valued.

THE CLUB'S DUTY OF CARE TO VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers give their time freely.

That does not mean clubs have no responsibility for their experience.

Every club has a duty of care to the people who volunteer on its behalf. This duty is not just about safeguarding.

It is about how volunteers are treated, supported, and protected from unnecessary pressure or harm.

Volunteers are not:

- Free labour
- A limitless resource
- Responsible for fixing every problem

They are people who choose to help because they care about the club and the game.



The club's duty of care includes:

- Being clear about what is expected of volunteers
- Providing appropriate support and supervision
- Respecting personal time and boundaries
- Creating safe, welcoming environments
- Taking concerns seriously when they are raised

When duty of care is overlooked, clubs often see:

- Burnout among a small number of people
- Conflict within committees
- Volunteers leaving quietly
- Increased safeguarding and reputational risk

Looking after volunteers is not an optional extra.

It is a leadership responsibility.

This responsibility does not sit with one individual alone. It sits with the club as a whole, led by the committee.

Clubs that take their duty of care seriously are more resilient, more welcoming, and better placed to grow.

They create environments where people are willing to help and to keep helping.

The pages that follow explain what this responsibility looks like in practice.



**VOLUNTEERS DON'T
JUST HELP A CLUB
FUNCTION.**



**THEY ARE HELPING TO
CREATE THE KIND OF
RUGBY EXPERIENCE AT
YOUR CLUB THAT
PEOPLE REMEMBER FOR
THE RIGHT REASONS.**

WHAT GOOD VOLUNTEERING LOOKS LIKE

Good volunteering does not happen by accident.

It is the result of clear expectations, shared responsibility, and consistent support.

When volunteering works well, clubs typically have:

- Clear, agreed roles
- Named points of contact
- Realistic time commitments
- Open communication
- Respect for personal boundaries

In these environments, volunteers:

- Know what is expected of them
- Know who supports them
- Feel comfortable asking questions
- Feel valued for their contribution

Good volunteering is not about doing more.

It is about doing the basics well, every time.

This includes:

- Welcoming volunteers properly
- Explaining roles clearly
- Checking in regularly
- Saying thank you often
- Allowing people to step back when needed

Good volunteering environments are proactive, not reactive. Issues are spotted early, conversations happen sooner, and pressure is shared rather than concentrated on a few individuals.

Importantly, good volunteering does not require:

- Large committees
- Complex systems
- Significant extra time

It requires clarity, consistency, and care.

Clubs that get this right find that:

- Volunteers stay involved for longer
- Fewer crises arise mid season
- Safeguarding risks are reduced
- Club culture improves

This guide is built around creating this kind of volunteering experience to ensure volunteers feel like they belong, safe and for the long term.

One that is realistic for community clubs and sustainable over time.



WHY VOLUNTEERS LEAVE

Most volunteers do not leave because they dislike rugby or the club.

They leave because, over time, volunteering becomes confusing, overwhelming, or unmanageable.

Common reasons volunteers step away include:

- Unclear roles or expectations
- Being asked to do more without agreement
- Feeling taken for granted
- Not knowing who to speak to when issues arise
- A lack of support or feedback

In many cases, volunteers do not raise concerns before leaving.

They do not want to cause tension or feel awkward.

Instead, they quietly reduce their involvement or stop altogether.

When volunteers leave in this way, clubs often experience:

- Increased pressure on a small number of people
- Gaps in delivery and organisation
- Last minute crises
- Frustration and fatigue within committees

This creates a cycle where:

- Fewer people are doing more
- Pressure increases
- Burnout becomes more likely

The good news is that most of these issues are preventable.

Clear onboarding, realistic expectations, regular check ins, and a culture that respects boundaries significantly reduce volunteer dropout.

This guide focuses on preventing the conditions that cause volunteers to leave rather than reacting after they've gone.



WHAT THIS FRAMEWORK CHANGES

Many clubs already rely on goodwill, tradition, and people “stepping up” when needed.

While this has kept rugby going for years, it often comes at a cost.

Burnout, pressure on a few individuals, and volunteers leaving quietly.

This framework does not remove goodwill.

It replaces uncertainty with clarity.

What changes with this approach:

- Volunteering becomes agreed, not assumed
- Responsibility is shared, not concentrated
- Support is planned, not improvised
- Issues are addressed early, not after people leave

Instead of:

- Rushing to fill gaps
- Asking the same people repeatedly
- Reacting to problems mid season



Clubs begin to:

- Prepare before recruiting
- Onboard volunteers properly
- Check in regularly
- Normalise reviewing and adjusting roles

This framework also creates consistency.

Volunteers joining different clubs should receive a similar standard of welcome, support, and clarity. (Even though every club has its own identity and culture.)

Importantly, this approach:

- Reduces pressure on committees
- Improves safeguarding confidence
- Makes volunteering more attractive
- Supports long term sustainability

This guide is not about adding work.

It is about doing the right work at the right time.

The next section focuses on preparing properly before recruiting volunteers.

The step that prevents many problems later on.



ARE YOU READY TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS?

Before asking anyone to volunteer, it's important to pause and check whether the club is ready to support them properly.

Recruiting volunteers without preparation is one of the most common reasons people leave early.

When expectations are unclear or support isn't in place, even well intentioned volunteers can quickly feel overwhelmed.

Before recruiting, your club should be able to answer the following questions clearly:

- Who will welcome and support this volunteer?
- What exactly will the volunteer be doing?
- How much time is realistically required?
- Who does the volunteer speak to if something feels unclear?
- What safeguarding requirements apply to this role?

If the answer to any of these is “we'll work it out later”, recruitment should pause until clarity is in place.

Being ready to recruit does not require complex systems. It requires:

- A named point of contact
- A clear, simple role description
- An agreed time commitment
- Basic onboarding arrangements

Taking time to prepare before recruiting saves significantly more time later.

It reduces confusion, protects volunteers from unnecessary pressure, and helps clubs build a more stable and supported volunteer base.

The next pages explain how to define roles clearly and recruit volunteers in a way that encourages them to stay.



DEFINING VOLUNTEER ROLES CLEARLY

One of the most effective ways to support volunteers is to be clear about what a role actually involves.

Many volunteer issues start when:

- Roles are vaguely defined
- Expectations change over time without discussion
- People take on more than they originally agreed

Clear roles protect:

- Volunteers from overload
- Clubs from confusion
- Committees from avoidable conflict

Every volunteer role should be defined simply and honestly before recruitment.

At a minimum, each role should be clear about:

- What the volunteer will do
- What the volunteer will not be expected to do
- The realistic time commitment
- Who supports the role

Roles do not need to be formal job descriptions. In fact, overly complex role descriptions often put people off.



Good practice is to use a one page role snapshot that:

- Uses plain language
- Focuses on practical tasks
- Sets clear boundaries
- Can be reviewed and adjusted

Clarity at the start makes it easier to:

- Welcome volunteers confidently
- Have honest conversations later
- Adjust roles when circumstances change

If a role cannot be explained simply, it is usually a sign that expectations need to be reduced or broken into smaller parts.

Clear roles make volunteering feel manageable and manageable roles are far more likely to be sustained

SAFER RECRUITMENT



Safer recruitment is about putting the right people in the right roles and supporting them properly once they are there.

It does not mean treating volunteers with suspicion or creating unnecessary barriers.

When handled well, safer recruitment protects:

- Children and adults at risk
- Volunteers themselves
- The club and its reputation

A key principle is proportionality.

Different roles carry different levels of responsibility and contact.

Clubs should clearly distinguish between:

- Roles that require safeguarding training and checks: Coaches, Team Managers, 1st Aid/Medical staff and referees.
- Roles that do not

For example:

- Coaching, team management, and welfare roles will usually require safeguarding training and appropriate checks
- One off helpers, occasional match day support, or behind the scenes roles often will not

Over checking can:

- Put people off volunteering
- Create unnecessary delays
- Increase pressure on a small group of “approved” volunteers

Under checking can:

- Create safeguarding risks
- Expose volunteers and clubs to harm
- Lead to serious governance and reputational consequences

Good safer recruitment practice includes:

- Explaining clearly why certain checks or training are required
- Supporting volunteers through the process
- Keeping requirements proportionate to the role

Volunteers should never be left to navigate safeguarding requirements on their own or made to feel they have done something wrong by being asked to complete them.

Clarity, explanation, and support are what make safer recruitment effective and not complexity.

Further support and advice can be sought from your club safeguarding officer.



RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS WITHOUT PRESSURE

How a club asks for help directly affects who comes forward and whether they stay.

Volunteers are far more likely to commit when they feel invited, supported, and respected, rather than pressured or guilted into helping.

Language that creates pressure often includes:

- “We’re desperate for someone”
- “If no one does this, it won’t happen”
- “It won’t take much time” (when it will)

While usually well intentioned, this approach can:

- Put people off coming forward
- Create unrealistic expectations
- Lead to early burnout

More effective recruitment focuses on clarity and choice.



Good practice is to:

- Explain clearly what help is needed
- Be honest about the time commitment
- Offer flexibility where possible
- Make it clear that support will be provided

For example:

- “We’re looking for someone who could help with this one task.”
- “The role can be shared or reviewed after a few weeks.”
- “Support and guidance will be available.”

Recruitment should feel like an invitation, not a rescue mission.

Encouraging people to try a role on a trial basis can also reduce pressure and help volunteers decide what works for them.

Volunteers who feel respected at the point of recruitment are far more likely to feel valued once they are involved.

THE VOLUNTEER ONBOARDING STANDARD

Every volunteer deserves a consistent, supportive start regardless of their role or the size of the club.

This onboarding standard sets out the minimum experience that all volunteers should receive.

It is designed to reduce early drop out, improve confidence, and create safer environments.

Within 7 days of agreeing to help clubs should ensure that the volunteer:

- Is contacted personally
- Knows who their main support person is
- Has a clear explanation of their role

Knows who the Club Safeguarding Officer and Volunteer Coordinator

Within 14 days clubs should:

- Introduce the volunteer to key people
- Provide basic safeguarding signposting
- Reassure the volunteer about expectations

Within 30 days clubs should:

- Check in informally
- Confirm the role feels manageable
- Adjust expectations if needed

This standard is not about bureaucracy.

It is about preventing confusion and isolation.

Clubs that meet this standard consistently see:

- More confident volunteers
- Fewer early dropouts
- Fewer issues escalating later

The next pages explain how to deliver this standard in practice during the first weeks and months.



THE FIRST DAY/EVENING

A volunteer's first experience sets the tone for everything that follows.

If the first day feels welcoming and organised, confidence grows quickly.

If it feels rushed or unclear, doubts can set in just as fast.

On a volunteer's first day or first evening, clubs should ensure that:

- Someone is expecting them and greets them
- They are shown around relevant facilities
- They are introduced to a small number of key people
- They understand what will and will not be expected of them

The focus at this stage should be settling in, not delivery

Volunteers should not be expected to:

- Lead activities
- Take responsibility on their own
- Make decisions without support
- Know how everything works

Good practice on the first day includes:

- Encouraging observation
- Answering questions patiently
- Keeping tasks simple
- Reassuring the volunteer that learning takes time

Clubs should avoid the temptation to “make use” of a volunteer immediately.

Early overload is one of the quickest ways to damage confidence and reduce retention.

A calm, welcoming first experience tells volunteers:

- They are valued
- Support is available
- They are not expected to get everything right straight away

This sets the foundation for a positive and sustainable volunteering experience.



THE FIRST MONTH

The first month is about building confidence, clarity, and trust.

During this period, clubs should begin to gently move volunteers from observation into agreed involvement without pressure or assumption.

Good practice during the first month includes:

- Agreeing one small, manageable responsibility
- Making sure expectations remain clear
- Checking in informally to see how things are going
- Encouraging questions and feedback

This is also the point where clubs should actively listen.

Simple questions such as:

- “How are you finding things?”
- “Is the time commitment what you expected?”
- “Is anything unclear?”

Can prevent issues from developing later.

Clubs should avoid:

- Adding extra responsibilities without discussion
- Assuming availability has increased
- Relying on a volunteer to “just step in”



Early clarity makes later conversations easier.

The aim of the first month is not to increase output.

It is to increase confidence and comfort. Volunteers who feel supported at this stage are far more likely to remain engaged as the season progresses.

THE FIRST 90 DAYS

The first 90 days are a key point in a volunteer's experience.

By this stage, volunteers will usually have a clear sense of:

- How much time the role actually takes
- Whether expectations match what was agreed
- How supported they feel within the club

This is the point where clubs should pause and review, rather than assume everything is fine.

Around the three month mark, clubs should have a short, intentional conversation that covers:

- Is the role working as expected?
- Does the time commitment still feel manageable?
- Is the volunteer getting the support they need?
- Would they like to continue as they are, adjust the role, or step back?

These conversations should be open and judgement free.

Clubs should normalise:

- Adjusting roles
- Reducing commitments
- Changing responsibilities
- Pausing involvement if needed

When clubs fail to check in at this stage, volunteers often make decisions on their own usually to reduce involvement or leave quietly.



When clubs do check in:

- Issues are addressed early
- Pressure is shared
- Volunteers feel listened to
- Retention improves significantly
-

The purpose of the 90 day review is not to increase responsibility.

It is to ensure volunteering remains sustainable for both the individual and the club.

WHO SUPPORTS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are most confident when they know exactly who supports them and where responsibility sits.

Every club should clearly identify the people responsible for supporting volunteers. This should never be left unclear or assumed.

At a minimum, clubs should have:

Volunteer Coordinator

- Responsible for welcoming volunteers, coordinating onboarding, and acting as a first point of contact for support and questions.

Club Safeguarding Officer

- Responsible for safeguarding matters, such as safe recruitment, reporting safeguarding concerns, ensuring volunteers are aware of safeguarding responsibilities (including reporting), managing the club safeguarding plan and being the safeguarding advocate on the main committee

Club Committee

- Ultimately responsible for the volunteer experience, culture, and standards within the club.



These roles should be:

- Clearly communicated to volunteers
- Visible and accessible
- Supported by the committee

Responsibility for volunteers does not sit with one person alone.

While individuals may lead specific areas, the committee as a whole holds accountability.

Clubs should avoid situations where:

- Volunteers do not know who to speak to
- Issues are passed between people
- Responsibility becomes unclear

Clear ownership builds confidence for volunteers and protects clubs from issues escalating unnecessarily.

The next section focuses on safeguarding and volunteer protection and how clubs can handle this confidently and proportionately.



SAFEGUARDING IS A CLUB CULTURE



When safeguarding is embedded into everyday club life, volunteers feel safer, more confident, and better supported.

The next pages explain how clubs can support volunteers through safeguarding requirements and handle concerns properly if they arise.

Safeguarding is not the responsibility of one individual alone.

It is a culture created and maintained by the whole club.

While every club must have a named Safeguarding Officer, safeguarding works best when:

- Expectations are understood by everyone
- Volunteers feel confident speaking up
- Concerns are handled calmly and consistently

Clubs that treat safeguarding as “someone else’s job” are more likely to experience:

- Confusion about what to do
- Delays in responding to concerns
- Increased risk to individuals and the club

A strong safeguarding culture is one where:

- Volunteers know who the Safeguarding Officer is
- Volunteers understand their role in keeping people safe
- Questions and concerns are welcomed, not avoided

This does not require creating fear or suspicion. It requires openness, clarity, and leadership from the committee.

Safeguarding should be:

- Visible
- Talked about
- Normalised

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEERS THROUGH SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding requirements can feel daunting to new volunteers if they are not explained properly.

Clubs play a crucial role in making safeguarding clear, proportionate, and supportive.

Good practice includes:

- Explaining why safeguarding training or checks are required
- Making it clear which roles require them and which do not
- Supporting volunteers through the process
- Reassuring volunteers that safeguarding exists to protect them as well

Volunteers should never feel:

- That they have done something wrong by being asked to complete checks
- That safeguarding is a judgement on their character
- That they are expected to navigate the process on their own

Clubs should:

- Signpost volunteers clearly to training and checks
- Provide help if forms or systems are confusing
- Allow reasonable time for completion
- Keep volunteers informed about what happens next

It is also important to avoid unnecessary barriers.

Over checking volunteers can:

- Discourage people from helping
- Delay involvement unnecessarily
- Concentrate responsibility on too few individuals

Under checking can:

- Create safeguarding risks
- Expose volunteers and clubs to serious consequences

Proportionate, role based safeguarding protects everyone.

When clubs handle safeguarding calmly and supportively, volunteers are more likely to engage confidently and remain involved.



HANDLING CONCERNS PROPERLY

How a club responds when a concern is raised matters as much as the concern itself.

Concerns may relate to:

- Safeguarding or welfare
- Behaviour or conduct
- Something that doesn't feel right
- A situation a volunteer is unsure how to handle

Volunteers should never be expected to investigate concerns themselves or decide whether something is “serious enough” to raise.

When a concern is raised, clubs should:

- Take it seriously
- Listen calmly and without judgement
- Thank the person for raising it
- Follow the appropriate reporting process



Clubs should avoid:

- Dismissing concerns
- Delaying action unnecessarily
- Asking volunteers to handle issues alone
- Discussing concerns widely or informally

Clear processes protect:

- Individuals involved
- Volunteers who raise concerns
- The club and its reputation

It is important that:

- The Club Safeguarding Officer leads safeguarding concerns
- Committee members understand escalation routes
- Records are kept appropriately and confidentially

Volunteers should feel confident that raising a concern will lead to support, not criticism or conflict.

Handling concerns well builds trust, reinforces a positive safeguarding culture, and reduces the likelihood of issues escalating.

The next page focuses on behaviour, conduct, and online risks areas where clear expectations protect everyone involved.

BEHAVIOUR, CONDUCT AND ONLINE RISKS

The way people behave (in person and online) has a direct impact on volunteers, participants, and the reputation of the club.

Clubs have a responsibility to set clear expectations around behaviour and to act when those expectations are not met.

Good practice includes:

- Making expected standards of behaviour clear
- Addressing issues early, before they escalate
- Supporting volunteers who experience poor behaviour
- Taking online conduct seriously

Poor behaviour is not limited to the pitch or clubhouse. It can also occur:

- On touchlines
- In changing areas
- In messaging apps or group chats
- On social media

Clubs should be clear that:

- Abuse, intimidation, or discriminatory behaviour is not acceptable
- Volunteers should not be expected to tolerate poor behaviour
- Issues should be reported and addressed, not ignored

Online communication requires particular care. Clubs should:

- Use agreed communication channels
- Avoid discussing sensitive issues publicly or in group chats
- Support volunteers who are targeted online



Volunteers should never be expected to:

- Respond to abuse
- Defend the club publicly
- Manage conflict alone

Clear standards of conduct protect:

- Individuals
- Volunteers
- The wider club community

Addressing behaviour issues early and consistently helps maintain a safe, respectful environment where volunteers feel confident and supported.

Further support and guidance can be gained from your Club Safeguarding Officer and the WRU Safeguarding tool kit they can access for you.



WHY VOLUNTEERS DRIFT AWAY

Most volunteers do not leave suddenly or dramatically.

They drift away slowly.

Often, this happens without complaint or confrontation.

Volunteers reduce their involvement, stop responding to messages, or quietly step back until they are no longer involved at all.

Common signs a volunteer may be drifting away include:

- Reduced attendance or availability
- Less engagement in conversations or planning
- Hesitation about taking on agreed tasks
- Signs of frustration, fatigue, or withdrawal

These signs are rarely about a lack of commitment.

More often, they indicate:

- Unclear expectations
- Growing pressure
- Feeling unnoticed or unsupported
- A role that no longer fits their life



Clubs that rely on volunteers to “speak up if there’s a problem” often miss these signals.

Many volunteers do not want to create tension or feel uncomfortable raising concerns.

Early, informal check ins make a significant difference.

Simple questions such as:

- “How are you finding things?”
- “Is this still working for you?”
- “Is there anything we can do differently?”

Can prevent volunteers from quietly disengaging.

Recognising drift early allows clubs to:

- Adjust roles
- Share responsibility
- Reduce pressure
- Retain people who might otherwise be lost

The next pages focus on how clubs can use regular check ins, boundaries, and recognition to keep volunteers engaged for the long term.

CHECK INS, SUPPORT AND BOUNDARIES

Regular check ins are one of the most effective ways to support volunteers and prevent burnout.

These do not need to be formal meetings. Short, informal conversations are often more effective and easier to sustain.

Good practice includes:

- Checking in at agreed points (for example, after the first month and around three months)
- Asking open, non judgemental questions
- Listening carefully to what is said (and what isn't)

Helpful check in questions include:

- “How are you finding the role?”
- “Is the time commitment still manageable?”
- “Is there anything you'd like to change?”

Check ins should create space for honesty.



Clubs should make it clear that:

- Saying no is acceptable
- Boundaries are respected
- Adjusting roles is normal

Volunteers are more likely to stay involved when they feel able to set boundaries without guilt or judgement.

Clubs should also be mindful of:

- Repeatedly relying on the same individuals
- Allowing roles to grow without discussion
- Assuming availability has increased

Supporting volunteers is not about extracting more time.

It is about protecting the time they choose to give.

Clear boundaries benefit everyone from volunteers, committees, and the club as a whole.



RECOGNITION AND BELONGING

Volunteers are far more likely to stay involved when they feel noticed, appreciated, and included.

Recognition does not need to be formal, expensive, or public to be effective. In many cases, small, consistent gestures have the greatest impact.

Good practice includes:

- Saying thank you regularly and sincerely
- Acknowledging effort, not just outcomes
- Noticing when someone has gone above and beyond
- Including volunteers in the social life of the club

Belonging is closely linked to recognition.

Volunteers who feel part of the club are more likely to:

- Enjoy their involvement
- Stay involved for longer
- Encourage others to help

Clubs can strengthen belonging by:

- Learning and using people's names
- Making volunteers feel welcome in shared spaces
- Keeping people informed and included
- Avoiding “inner circles” that unintentionally exclude others

Recognition should be:

- Genuine
- Inclusive
- Consistent

It should not rely solely on annual awards or end of season events.

Day to day appreciation is just as important. When volunteers feel valued and included, they are far more likely to continue giving their time and to do so with positivity and commitment.



WHEN VOLUNTEERS STEP BACK OR LEAVE

Volunteers stepping back or leaving is a normal part of community sport.

People's lives change.

Availability changes.

Priorities shift.

How a club responds at this point has a lasting impact on its culture and future volunteer recruitment.

Good clubs understand that:

- Stepping back is not failure
- Reducing involvement is not disloyal
- Leaving does not erase the contribution someone has made

When a volunteer needs to step back or leave, clubs should:

- Thank them genuinely for their contribution
- Avoid guilt or pressure
- Keep conversations respectful and positive
- Leave the door open for future involvement

Clubs should avoid:

- Taking decisions personally
- Applying pressure to stay involved
- Allowing frustration to shape the response

How a volunteer leaves is often remembered more clearly than how they joined.

Handling departures well helps clubs to:

- Maintain positive relationships
- Protect reputation within the community
- Encourage people to return at a later stage
- Signal to others that volunteering is safe and supported

Clubs with mature volunteer cultures recognise that sustainability comes from treating people well at every stage (including when their involvement comes to an end).

The final section of this guide focuses on standards, assurance, and how clubs are supported to improve over time.



MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CLUBS

To ensure volunteers are supported consistently across community rugby, all clubs are expected to meet a set of minimum standards.

These standards are not about perfection.

They are about ensuring a safe, supportive baseline for everyone involved.

Minimum standards all clubs must meet

Every club must have:

- A named Volunteer Lead or Coordinator
- A named Club Safeguarding Officer
- Clear safeguarding reporting routes
- A basic onboarding process for new volunteers
- Clear role expectations for volunteers

Every club must ensure that:

- Volunteers know who supports them
- Volunteers know who to speak to if something feels unclear
- Safeguarding requirements are applied proportionately
- Volunteers are treated with respect and fairness

These standards are designed to:

- Protect volunteers
- Protect participants
- Protect clubs
- Protect the game

Meeting these minimum standards does not require large committees or complex systems.

It requires clarity, ownership, and a shared commitment to supporting volunteers properly.

All clubs must have a safeguarding plan.



Clubs that meet these standards consistently are better placed to:

- Retain volunteers
- Reduce burnout and conflict
- Identify and address issues early
- Build positive, sustainable club cultures

The next page explains how clubs can use the volunteer self assessment tool and a maturity model to understand where they are and what support might help them improve.

HOW THE WRU SUPPORTS CLUBS

Supporting volunteers well is a shared responsibility between clubs and the Welsh Rugby Union.

This framework is not designed to leave clubs to manage challenges on their own.

It exists to provide clarity, consistency, and support.

While recognising the realities of volunteer led community rugby.

The WRU's role is to:

- Set clear national standards for volunteer support
- Provide practical guidance and tools for clubs
- Support clubs to improve over time
- Share good practice across the game
- Monitor themes and risks to protect volunteers, clubs, and participants

The WRU will support clubs through:

- Clear guidance documents and templates
- Advice and problem solving support
- Development conversations with WRU staff
- Signposting to relevant training and resources

This support is:

- Proportionate
- Development-focused
- Designed to help, not to punish

Clubs are encouraged to:

- Be open about challenges
- Use self-assessment honestly
- Ask for support early
- Share what works well

Strong volunteer cultures are built through partnership, trust, and shared responsibility.

By engaging with this framework, clubs are taking a positive step towards:

- Retaining volunteers for longer
- Reducing burnout and pressure
- Creating safer environments
- Strengthening long-term sustainability

Supporting volunteers well is not an additional task.

It is a core part of running a healthy, resilient successful rugby club.



A FINAL WORD TO CLUBS

Community rugby exists because people choose to give their time.

Every volunteer who helps at your club is making a decision (often repeatedly) to show up, contribute, and care.

How that experience feels will shape whether they stay involved, step back, or encourage others to help.

Supporting volunteers well does not require perfection or complex systems.

It requires:

- Clear expectations
- Shared responsibility
- Honest conversations
- Respect for people's time and boundaries

This guide is not about adding pressure or paperwork.

It is about helping clubs create environments where volunteering feels positive, manageable, and valued.

Strong clubs are not defined only by results on the pitch.

They are defined by the cultures they create off it.

Clubs that look after volunteers:

- Retain people for longer
- Reduce burnout and conflict
- Create safer environments
- Build long term sustainability

Use this guide as a reference, a conversation starter, and a support tool.

Focus on progress, not perfection.

Most importantly, remember that volunteering is about people.

When people feel supported, rugby thrives.



THE WELSH RUGBY VOLUNTEER CHARTER

Volunteering is at the heart of Welsh rugby.

This charter sets out a shared understanding between volunteers, clubs, and the wider rugby community. Built on respect, care, and belonging

As a rugby volunteer, you can expect:

- To be welcomed and treated with respect
- Clear and honest expectations about your role
- Support, guidance, and someone to turn to
- A safe, inclusive, and positive environment
- Recognition and appreciation for your contribution
- Respect for your time, boundaries, and wellbeing

You should never feel pressured, overlooked, or expected to give more than you can.

Your rugby clubs commits to:

- Valuing volunteers as people, not just helpers
- Providing clear roles, support, and check-ins
- Creating environments where volunteers feel they belong
- Supporting volunteers to speak up and be heard
- Looking after volunteers' wellbeing, not just delivery

Strong clubs are built on shared responsibility and mutual respect.

As a rugby volunteer, you commit to:

- Treat others with respect and fairness
- Act in a way that reflects the values of rugby
- Work within agreed roles and boundaries
- Ask for support when something feels unclear
- Help create a safe and welcoming environment

You are not expected to know everything, only to act with care and integrity.

As Welsh rugby, we believe:

- Volunteering should be positive and sustainable
- Belonging is the starting point
- Support matters more than pressure
- People matter more than process

Rugby in Wales exists because people choose to give their time.

Our shared commitment

This charter is a reminder that volunteering works best when it is:

- Agreed, not assumed
- Supported, not stretched
- Valued, not taken for granted

This Together, we commit to making Welsh rugby a place where volunteers feel proud to belong.

FURTHER SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Use these only if they are helpful to you. Everything on this page is optional.

You are not expected to read or complete anything here unless it applies to your role or is something you choose to explore

This page is here so you know where to go if you ever need more information or support.

Safeguarding & Welfare

If your role involves working with children or adults at risk, your club will guide you through any required training or checks and explain what is needed and why.

You can find further information on:

- Safeguarding training and workshops
- How to raise a concern
- What happens after a concern is raised

If you ever have a concern about someone's safety or wellbeing, speak to your Club Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

You will be supported for doing so.

For further Safeguarding information and support please email:

safeguarding@wru.wales

dbs@wru.wales

Training & Learning

Some volunteers enjoy learning new skills or gaining qualifications. Others are happy contributing without additional training. Both are completely valid.

Optional opportunities may include:

- Coaching or refereeing courses
- First aid training
- Welfare or wellbeing workshops
- Personal or leadership development

Any training should:

- Be optional
- Be supported by your club
- Fit around your availability

There is no expectation that you take part unless you want to.

For optional training and learning opportunities please email:

ref.admin@wru.wales

coach.admin@wru.wales

clubvolunteering@wru.wales

FURTHER SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Looking After Yourself

Volunteering should feel positive and manageable.

If at any point volunteering begins to feel stressful, overwhelming, or difficult, it's okay to pause and talk to someone.

Support may include:

- Adjusting your role
- Reducing your time commitment
- Taking a break
- Stepping away if needed
-

Looking after yourself helps you enjoy volunteering and stay involved for longer.

Wellbeing and support resources:

integrity@wru.wales

clubdevelopment@wru.wales

WRU Volunteer Support

Further guidance, updates, and support for volunteers are available through the WRU.

This may include:

- Volunteer guidance
- Updates and information
- Additional support signposting

Your club can help you access the right support if you're unsure where to go.

WRU Volunteer Support can also be accessed via these emails:

clubvolunteering@wru.wales

clubdevelopment@wru.wales



DIOLCH

Thank you for choosing to volunteer.

By giving your time, energy, and care, you are helping to create positive rugby experiences for players, families, and communities across Wales.

Your contribution whether regular or occasional matters more than you may ever fully see.

Volunteering is not about perfection.

It is about presence, effort, and care.

There will be moments that feel rewarding, moments that feel challenging, and moments that feel ordinary.

All of them matter.

Every hour you give helps make rugby possible.

You are part of the game not because of a title or a role, but because you show up.

If at any point you need support, reassurance, or a conversation, it is okay to ask.

You are not expected to carry things alone.
Rugby is stronger because of people like you.

Clubs are stronger because of people like you.
And whatever your journey in volunteering looks like now or in the future your contribution is valued.

Thank you for being part of it.

