

MEMBERS ADVISORY GROUP

Final Report – MAG3 Volunteer Strategy

1. Introduction

This project has been led by Steve Pratt, David Maddison and Neil Hurford from MAG with input from other MAG members and Jim Skinner National Council member. Further guidance has been given by Susie Hughes TTE Board member and by Greg Yarnall TTE Head of Development and Volunteering.

2. Aims

There were 3 main aims noted in the project brief. These were:

- a. Best practice for the creation of a volunteer network
- b. Examples of ways to enhance the volunteers' experience
- c. Examples of ways to encourage and retain local volunteers

3. Overview

Volunteers are vital to the success of every sport in this country and table tennis is no different. Every county, league and club rely heavily on such people, along with events, tournaments and many other facets of the sport. This was highlighted in the original Mission 2025 strategy paper "At every level, table tennis would not even exist, let alone thrive or grow, without the army of volunteers working countless hours every week. But we need more of every age group and geographical spread." There is also the ongoing challenge to increase the level of female, BAME and young volunteers within our sport.

We already have thousands of volunteers across table tennis. What we do not know is who they all are and currently there is no efficient way to manage and work with them.

The 2017 update to Mission 2025 indicated the appointment of a dedicated volunteering officer (was appointed but no longer in position) whilst the 2019 update advised of a database of volunteers created on the back of hosting the ITTF team world cup in London. The current impact report covering the 2017-19 period following the recent review of Mission 2025 would ideally support and consolidate the requirement for the key role of volunteering officer to be reintroduced.

Within TTE the general dealings with volunteers come under the realm of the Head of Development and Volunteering whilst his direct reports also have implied volunteering input. A review of a sample of job descriptions e.g. South Lead, Development and Volunteering Officer revealed what could be described as passive language e.g. "Influence key clubs, leagues and volunteers" "Support and encourage local volunteers" whilst more actively "to take a proactive approach in volunteer recruitment and deployment within a specified geographical area."

The People Strategy paper issued by the Development and Volunteering Department covered both event volunteers and separately volunteers in other roles, mainly those involved at a local level ensuring the day to day running of

clubs, leagues and counties across the country. The challenge now is to produce results from the well written Mission 2025 and People Strategy papers. This can only be achieved by a joint top down and bottom up approach. When you consider that every county, every league, every club, every tournament, every TTE event relies on volunteers, there are insufficient paid staff at TTE to engage, keep, motivate and reward every volunteer committed to the sport of table tennis.

It was interesting to note that no evidence could be found of attracting those volunteers e.g. games makers who volunteer across sports at major events. This is a potential area to engage non TT players to our sport.

4. List of recommendations

There are a number of partially strategic/ partially operational recommendations listed in the appendix for further consideration. Under the three agreed headings a smaller number of strategic recommendations are set out as follows:

a. Best practice for the creation of a volunteer network

1. To facilitate a bottom up approach to augment the existing TTE work with volunteers, consideration should be given for each county and league to be instructed/strongly advised to appoint a Volunteer Officer to their individual committees. Ideally this should also be extended to the Premier clubs in conjunction with the existing aim of these clubs having their own welfare officer by March 2021. This would have the added benefit of building core volunteer numbers who could additionally help at specific county/ tournament/national events.
2. TTE to identify what they specifically need volunteers for (e.g. pressure on existing TTE staff, geographical shortages, working with development staff etc.), numbers and geographical spread. Whilst it is acknowledged that volunteers are mentioned in TTE job descriptions these are often woolly e.g. "Support and encourage local volunteers". These should be more dynamic and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timescaled) in order to measure achievement and progress.
3. A centrally managed database should be kept as outlined in Mission 2025, 2019 update, strategic priority 3 "Database of volunteers created on the back of hosting ITTF team world event in London". This should be established for all TTE volunteers not just event volunteers, with the added benefit of having a ready-made pool of volunteer resource to support events and competitions.
4. There are a number of volunteers who work across sports at various events. There are also many potential volunteers who don't know where to look for opportunities. TTE Development and Volunteering team should explore volunteer websites such as Sport England/Club matters/Club people/Volunteers, BBC Sport Get Inspired, Sport and Recreation Alliance Volunteer opportunity finder to ensure that TT is fully represented and that any links are kept up to date.
5. TTE Development and Volunteering team to create a clear volunteer pathway of opportunities from TT Young Ambassadors, broader school schemes e.g. Duke of Edinburgh, through to club/league/event/umpiring/ officiating and beyond to volunteering at national level. This consolidates and expands on the original Mission 2025 priority to recruit and reward young volunteers at club level via the Young Ambassador scheme. Once attracted we may have volunteers for life!

b. Examples of ways to enhance the volunteers' experience

1. Clear lines of communication between all volunteers and TTE to ensure that future progress is understood and able to be implemented by all. Initially much could be achieved by the introduction of a Volunteer Handbook, Volunteer Supervisor Handbook, Volunteer role descriptions and specific

Volunteer application forms. This would also include the volunteer journey/ pathway mentioned above. This work would sit within the remit of the dedicated volunteering officer as outlined in Mission 2025.

2. "Inclusion with the opportunity to be excellent". With young people don't just offer everyone a go at volunteering but provide those who show an interest and/ or aptitude the chance to progress to a proficient or high level. This , with the potential addition of entry level youth qualifications in areas such as coaching and officiating could be perfect for attracting secondary pupils from at least 13+. Additionally these young people, working alongside older, experienced coaches/officials help other young people, especially in our growing primary schools and under 11 work, whilst providing role models and enhancing their own personal development. This is an area where groups such as the TTE Schools Committee have a significant role. This again links back to the volunteer journey/ pathway
3. The TTE Organisation needs to appoint a "driver" of the whole volunteer experience. It is recommended that they look again at the appointment of a dedicated Volunteer Officer.
4. The first edition of Mission 2025 states "We will provide training, recognition and support to volunteers and officials of all ages and levels." This was and still is a vital attribute for enhancing and retaining volunteers. The reappointment of a dedicated Volunteer Officer would help facilitate this high level objective.
5. Volunteers want to feel valued and respected, whether this is by gifts or discounts on membership etc. or even a simple certificate and thank you. Certain volunteers would also like to enhance their business/ life skills by mentoring/helping to develop others.

c. Examples of ways to encourage and retain local volunteers

1. To retain volunteers there is a need to create strong links in the volunteers' pool. This may be achieved locally, regionally or nationally. Regular interaction with TTE is a start e.g. Pride of Table Tennis awards, regional conferences etc. Consideration could also be given to the introduction of new awards e.g. "Pride of Young Table Tennis". This should be enhanced by introducing "volunteering teams" across the country (even simply N, S, E, and W) where an identity is built up and volunteers feel able to contribute to the development of the role of volunteering within the table tennis community. This should be managed by the development personnel within the development and volunteering team. This should be seen as a longer term strategy once the volume of volunteers has increased substantially. Regional conferences should not be just another meeting giving out information but more of a bridge building/development opportunity.
2. Invest in volunteers by providing training e.g. in first aid, safeguarding. Training should be as set out in the volunteer handbook/ record and should include a requirement for safeguarding and equalities training at whatever level is deemed appropriate. Valued added opportunities that volunteers can take back to their TT environment and use outside of their volunteering role as well. This may also provide volunteers with career enhancing opportunities in the market place.
3. Create volunteer participation identification (e.g. badge, clothing). Create public thanks e.g. TTE website, Twitter etc. for a job well done. Offer rewards e.g. cut price admission for volunteers only. Reward volunteers who move along the "Volunteer Pathway" as outlined in a5.

5. Next steps

Whilst there are a whole range of opportunities to engage, keep, motivate and reward volunteers TTE has made a great start with notably Mission 2025, the Pride of Table Tennis awards, and regional conferences. The challenge now is to increase the drive and determination to have many more volunteers, geographically spread around the country to support the work of TTE in every facet of our sport. This paper details a whole variety of opportunities

that could be taken. This is not a short journey. **I would recommend that within the Development and Volunteering team the following three topics are developed over the next twelve months:**

- 1. The setting up of a volunteer pathway for the full age range of potential TTE volunteers to include initial recruitment, range of volunteering opportunities, progression and reward as outlined in a5.**
- 2. Implement the mass recruitment programme and database of volunteers as outlined in a1 and a3 with particular emphasis on youth, female and BAME applications.**
- 3. Develop clear lines of communication and expectation between TTE and volunteers as outlined in b1.**

It is important that volunteers are not seen as an add on to job descriptions, conferences etc. but are a dynamic addition in their own right. Every volunteer, whatever their level of participation, needs to feel that their contribution is significant and that they are known and valued within the wider organisation and community. Volunteering is a big deal.

In order to support this strategy MAG would be willing to

- 1. Expand on any of the issues raised in this report.**
- 2. Would be willing to undertake a progress review in 12 months' time if this is requested by the TTE Board.**
- 3. Would be willing to support the review of SMART milestones, outline and detailed implementation plans as set out by TTE staff.**

6. Update November 2020

The report has been considered by the Board and accepted its recommendations in principle. It has asked the Executive to appraise the recommendations in detail and prepare indicative costs and resources for implementing the recommendations. The Board will consider how to take forward the recommendations when details of costs and resources are available.

Report completed by:

**Steve Pratt
MAG Member
July 4th 2020**

Appendix

The MAG sub group involved in this project have researched extensively from their own table tennis and other business/ social experiences across a wide variety of volunteer rich organisations and have noted the following:

Best practice for the creation of a volunteer network (in no particular order)

- Each league to appoint a volunteers co-ordinator to their league committee
- Each county to have a volunteers co-ordinator
- Need to recruit more young people (25 and under) to be volunteers
- Identify what we need volunteers for (e.g. pressure on existing TTE staff, geographical shortages, working with development staff etc.)
- Current stated aim by TTE is for all premier clubs to have a welfare officer by March 2021. Merge this effort with appointing a volunteer coordinating at same time
- Create a volunteers policy- attributes/ flexibility/ skills etc.
- Identify promotional materials/ advertising on national level outside of TTE e.g. Local volunteering bureaux/ national volunteers on line.
- Create a link to university sports clubs
- There are health benefits to volunteering , why not seek volunteers from Bat and Chat sessions
- Young people 16-19 are keen to use their skills to help 10-15 years children. Give these people as much opportunity as possible e.g. volunteers from TTE Young Ambassador programme.
- (Some) people like to be asked. They won't put themselves forward but will respond to requests to volunteer.
- Work on attracting and including parents.
- Target volunteer opportunities towards young people through digital advertising on mobiles/ accessible websites or devices.
- Work on attracting more secondary schools to offer table tennis and take it seriously (could link to area development TTE staff). TTKidz/TTE Youth officials/ TTE Youth organiser/ TTE Young ambassador/ TTE Young leaders academy. Teachers as volunteers.
- Establish partnerships with companies where employees are encouraged to give time to support charities/ social initiatives
- Review what has worked for others e.g. Cricket World Cup 2019 (London 2012 and Glasgow 2014 may be out of date), what is being done for Commonwealth Games 2022. There is a large number of VOLUNTEERS WHO VOLUNTEER ACROSS SPORTS.
- Build core volunteer numbers not just for specific events.
- Use existing conferences on clubs and volunteers to increase communication/ data collection and identify the best way to make use of such events so that volunteers benefit

Examples of ways to enhance the volunteers' experience

- Existing volunteers to mentor others
- Make reference to Facebook/ LinkedIn groups etc. to share experiences/ seek help
- List benefits of volunteering e.g. meet people, make a difference, gain experience, health, well-being
- Promote and sponsor suitable qualifications e.g. umpire, coach, TT Organisation, TT Development
- Needs to be 2 way, volunteers do give but everyone needs something back whatever that is e.g. just a simple thank you.
- Feel sense of community
- Volunteers like to feel part of something e.g. uniform, TT vol tops, discounts, tickets
- Communities have reward schemes for volunteering/ reward cards for discounts
- Public thanks by club/league TTE on website/ Twitter
- Give volunteers access to something e.g. "meet and greet top TTE players"
- Make volunteering part of broader school schemes like Duke of Edinburgh

- ASK volunteers how their volunteering experiences could be enhanced
- Clear lines of communication between volunteers and senior TTE management to ensure future progress is understood and able to be implemented by all
- Celebrate success, long service awards

Examples of ways to encourage and retain local volunteers

- Look at ways to make volunteers feel valued, supported and proud to volunteer across all aspects of the sport
- People moving to a new area may feel isolated. Have they volunteered before/ played TT. How can we be aware of and “transfer” this interest to the new TT area.
- Encourage social friendship across existing volunteers.
- Do potential volunteers know what other TT volunteering is available.
- Hold local events to celebrate
- Respond to volunteers ideas, making sure we ask for them in the first place
- Create participation identification e.g. badges/ clothing
- Make sure volunteers are welcomed and treated well and not taken advantage of. One bad experience and they could well be lost to the sport overall.
- Invest in volunteers. Provide training e.g. in first aid and /or child protection.