



# Tennis Ireland Volunteer Policy

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## Tennis Ireland - Volunteer Policy Statement

Tennis Ireland is the National Governing Body (NGB) for [tennis](#) on the island of [Ireland](#). The organisation is charged with responsibility for growing participation, encouraging player development, supporting member clubs, the delivery of competitions at Junior, Adult and Seniors level, the management of ranking systems and training a professional and volunteer tennis workforce (Coaches, Officials and administrators)

Volunteers are an integral part of Tennis without whom the sport could not function. We encourage volunteers to become involved at all levels of the sport and within all appropriate activities, whether that is in administration at club, branch or national levels, supporting the delivery of competitions or supporting coaching activities.

Tennis Ireland is committed to providing a professional and efficient service in supporting volunteerism in Tennis.

Through our range of programmes, we provide training, support and advice to volunteers who wish to coach, engage in administrative duties or the delivery and management of competitions. We endeavour to act quickly and fairly when difficulties arise.

We acknowledge the unique characteristic of a professional executive who are dependent on the support, advice and direction of voluntary members of the board, committees, provincial branches, coaches and clubs and we aim to promote this working relationship as a mutually beneficial and supportive one.

Tennis Ireland retains a strong volunteer ethos and the thousands of administrators, officials, coaches and parents who give freely of their time play a vital role in our organisation.

Volunteering is vital to the growth and improved structure of clubs. There are opportunities for everyone to be involved.

- **Club Administration and Management:** Key roles in the club include Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Public Relations Officer and Children's Officer. These functions ensure the smooth running of a club
- **Coaching:** There are great opportunities to become involved in [coaching](#) whether you provide a support to qualified coaches or become a qualified coach yourself through the coach education pathway.
- **Officials:** [Officials](#) play an important role in making hundreds of competitions and events run smoothly throughout the length and breadth of Ireland on a weekly basis. There is a clear pathway for involvement and development on officials in Tennis Ireland.

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

## **Volunteer Policy Guidelines**

### **1. General principles**

#### **1.1 Purpose of document**

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on all aspects of volunteering in Tennis.

It supplements the Tennis Ireland Strategic Plan 2018-22 and our Code of Ethics & Good Practice for working with Children policies and procedures.

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

#### **1.2 Responsibility**

Tennis Ireland is responsible for ensuring that the policy and the procedures in this document are implemented efficiently and effectively. All other staff and volunteers (including voluntary committee members) are expected to facilitate this process.

#### **1.3 Eligibility**

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

#### **1.4 Working conditions**

Volunteers will be treated as equally and fairly as paid staff and are included in the organisations, functions and decision-making processes wherever appropriate and practical. Where practicable and necessary for their work, volunteers should be provided with appropriate, safe work sites and have access to the space, equipment and facilities necessary to volunteer effectively and comfortably.

#### **1.5 Working times**

Working times should be negotiated with volunteers. Voluntary time commitment is never expected to match that of full-time paid staff, but unscheduled absences can create organisational problems. When expecting to be absent, volunteers should inform the organisation they are engaged with as soon as possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made.

#### **1.6 Appropriate behaviour**

Volunteers are expected to work within the policies and procedures of the Tennis Ireland Code of Ethic and Good Practice in Children's sports and uphold its ethos. As representatives of the organisation, they are responsible for presenting a positive image of the sport.

#### **1.7 Representing Tennis Ireland and affiliated clubs**

Volunteers must seek prior approval from Tennis Ireland and affiliated clubs before undertaking anything that might affect the organisation. This includes, but is not limited to, statements to the press, joint initiatives with other bodies, and agreements involving contractual or financial obligations.

### 1.8 Confidentiality

Tennis Ireland and affiliated clubs respect the volunteer's right to privacy and confidentiality. In turn, volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering with the sport.

### 1.9 Records

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

### 1.10 Termination of service

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

## 2. Recruitment

### 2.1 Volunteering Role Descriptions

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

### 2.2 Applications

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

### 2.3 Interviews

If necessary, applications may be short listed and suitable candidates invited to attend an informal chat to ascertain their interest in and suitability for a role. Written records of all interviews should be kept. All unsuccessful candidates are thanked for applying and encouraged to reapply for other volunteering opportunities, either current or in the future.

### 2.4 Checks for suitability

Garda / PSNI Vetting and references (safe recruitment) are always completed if the role requires it; other checks may also be completed (for example, ascertaining professional qualifications). Volunteers are always advised in advance of the intention to make these checks. If they refuse permission and cannot provide an acceptable reason, they will not be considered for placement.

### 2.5 Appointment

Formal appointments are made only after the role description has been agreed and all necessary safe recruitment checks have proved acceptable. No placements are made unless the requirements of the volunteer and the volunteer's supervisor can be met.

## 2.6 Probation

Placements may be subject to an initial trial period. At the end of this period, the engaging organisation should meet with the volunteer to discuss the volunteer's suitability for their role. At this point, volunteers may continue in their current role, be reassigned to a more suitable role, or be asked to leave.

## 3. Training

### 3.1 Garda / PSNI Vetting & Safeguarding Training

A Garda / PSNI Vetting disclosure must be obtained by an applicant through Tennis Ireland before a volunteer can begin relevant or regular work with children or vulnerable persons. Basic awareness in child safeguarding training must also be completed within six months of taking up a post.

### 3.2 Induction

All volunteers should receive induction from their club when they begin voluntary work. This consists of a general introduction to the organisation, as well as a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of their volunteering role.

### 3.3 On-the-job training

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

### 3.4 Additional training

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

### 3.5 Training in Tennis Ireland

Tennis Ireland offer a comprehensive range of training in Child Safeguarding, Technical Officials and Coach Education. You can speak to your Regional Development Officer or contact the Tennis Ireland office for more information about training courses in your area to help with your development in the sport.

## **4. Supervision**

### **4.1 Lines of communication**

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

### **4.2 Supervisors**

Each volunteer must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day management of that volunteer. The club Chairperson or an Event Director normally takes on the supervisor's role and should receive training and guidance on how to involve volunteers effectively in the work of the organisation.

### **4.3 Supervision sessions**

Volunteers receive regular appraisals of their work, based on their role descriptions. These review the performance of the volunteer, suggest any changes in work style, seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the association, convey appreciation to the volunteer and ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in his or her role. The sessions also serve as an opportunity to plan future tasks.

### **4.4 Corrective action**

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

### **4.5 Dismissal**

Volunteers who do not adhere to the organisation's rules or who fail to perform their volunteer assignments satisfactorily may be subject to dismissal. No volunteers' involvement will be terminated in writing until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with their supervisor. Grounds for dismissal include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct, being under the influence of drugs (including alcohol), theft, misuse of equipment and materials, abuse of clients and co-workers, breaches of confidentiality, failure to abide by the Code of Ethics & Good Practice for working with Children policies and procedures and failure to complete duties to a satisfactory standard.

### **4.6 Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure**

If volunteers are not satisfied that issues relating to their volunteering are being handled appropriately or if they have a complaint, they are entitled to have their concerns reviewed by the club management committee. The club management committee will discuss the issue as soon as practical after receiving a written complaint and take appropriate action. The Tennis Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Process as set out in the policy and the Tennis Ireland Constitution will apply in all complaints and disputes.

### **4.7 Exit interviews**

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

## **5. Support and recognition**

### **5.1 Support**

Tennis Ireland endeavours to provide the support necessary to encourage and empower volunteers to make a meaningful contribution and gain significant benefits from their voluntary work.

### **5.2 Recognition**

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

### **5.3 Expenses**

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

### **5.4 Insurance**

Appropriate insurance is provided by Tennis Ireland to cover all volunteers volunteering on behalf and at the direction of the organisation as part of our annual membership.

### **5.5 Personal and vocational development**

Volunteers are encouraged to develop their skills while involved with the organisation and are assisted into assuming additional and greater responsibilities over time if they desire this.