



**Innovation during the Covid-19 pandemic:
Volunteers and voluntary sports
organisations in England**

Case Study 4: Using social media to attract new members

Research report for Sport England

Published January 2022

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Using social media to attract new members

Sport: Mountaineering

Size of club: 35 members

No of volunteers: everyone takes on volunteering tasks on an adhoc basis

Age range: 37-60+

Own premises/land: No, rent them

Paid staff: None

What is the innovation?

The club created a new volunteering role to attract new members using online advertising and social media. The aim was to attract a more diverse age range of members.

Why was this innovation implemented?

The club had a small membership and were concerned that the Covid-19 pandemic would lead to a loss of members, especially since the sport's NGB had flagged up this risk. They wanted to attract new members.

What impact did this innovation have on the club as a whole?

The new volunteer improved the club's online presence. Existing members were also encouraged to engage with the club's new social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram. As a result, the club has received more engagement from women and young people. This was reflected in the club's first new members meeting after the changes were made:

“About 80% of them are women, actually, which was quite a surprise because I selected a big target audience on Facebook of between 15 and 80. And so, yes, it was quite a lot of women coming and people that have just moved into the area that are wanting to join.”

What impact did this innovation have on sports volunteers?

The new volunteer has encouraged volunteers to engage with technology and promoted use of a WhatsApp group. This has improved communication among volunteers.

What were the challenges faced when implementing this innovation?

While all club members agreed that it was important to attract new members, older members often found it difficult to understand and engage with the social

media platforms. Older members were hesitant to offer help due to lack of technological knowledge. The new volunteer tried to provide some training, but that often proved difficult. As such, the new volunteer sometimes felt a bit isolated.

What prevented this innovation from happening before Covid-19 restrictions?

The club had always intended to create a volunteer role to recruit new members but never got round to it. The Covid-19 pandemic and the threat of declining membership created extra impetus:

“I think [Covid-19] instigated it, yeah..... certainly the British Mountaineering Council, they lost Members during the pandemic. That's why they introduced this 'Find Your Adventure' campaign... and hence why we wanted to gain new members.”

The new volunteer said that it was important to make changes slowly and to try to keep other members on board, even if they did not entirely understand the process.



Eight short case studies that showcase innovative practices in sports volunteering:

Case Study 1: Introducing technology to enhance participation

Case Study 2: Forming buddy groups to enhance engagement

Case Study 3: Using a survey of members to spark modernisation

Case Study 4: Using social media to attract new members

Case Study 5: Purchasing own land to offer an outdoor format of the sport

Case Study 6: Getting involved in the local community

Case Study 7: Implementing club membership management app

Case Study 8: Increasing Volunteer Inclusion and Diversity