

A Code for Sports Governance

Guidance Note

Requirement 3.4 – People Plans



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Background

The revised Code for Sports Governance (the Code) was released by Sport England and UK Sport in December 2021. A new requirement relating to an organisation's people was introduced.

Requirement 3.4 sets out that "Each organisation shall have a People Plan and shall review and discuss it on at least an annual basis and share the findings of that discussion openly with its members and people (e.g. employees, volunteers)."

This new requirement replaces a requirement in the first release of the Code in 2016, which set out the expectation for each organisation to carry out a regular staff survey (including their volunteers), and to act on the results and share top-line data with Sport England and/or UK Sport.

The revised Code was informed by consultation with the sector. During the consultation period it became clear that successful organisations consider their people at a strategic level and that this type of approach and thinking needed to be better reflected in the revised Code.

All leaders of organisations recognised the importance of people in their ability to deliver their strategies. It also became clear that at a time of

significant change and challenge for the sector, it's more important than ever before to develop a people strategy which responds to those demands by understanding and developing the diversity, skills, behaviours and culture of an organisation's current and future workforce (both professional and voluntary).

Furthermore, whilst a staff and volunteer survey may be a tool used to inform and help shape decisions, it alone does not adequately deliver against the duty of care that organisations are expected to show to their people, which an overarching strategic approach to People Planning should do.

The commentary in the Code sets out what a People Plan may include and what a strategic approach to People Planning could involve. This guidance is an extension of the commentary. It's not prescriptive, nor a list of assessment criteria, and it does not contain any mandatory requirements or approaches.

This guidance builds on the commentary in the Code to further explore how a People Plan could be interpreted by an organisation. It's designed to support organisations with their interpretation and understanding of this requirement.

It provides some examples of how organisations may choose to evidence their compliance – the examples are provided to help organisations consider what options they have and to help them think through what may be best or most suitable for their organisation in terms of this requirement.

The examples provided are not exhaustive or referenced to set out a required approach.

Whilst the guidance is primarily focused on the requirement in the Code, we also hope it's thought provoking, and challenges you to be ambitious when you consider the way you want to plan and manage your people.

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Introduction



Who is this guidance for?

This booklet aims to provide support and ideas for organisations seeking to meet this new requirement (Req. 3.4) in Tier 3 of the Governance Code.

It's also relevant to any organisation looking to take a more strategic approach to planning for how they support and develop their people. Working through this guidance may also be helpful for those who aspire to improve the standard of their People Plan, or who may need to become compliant with Tier 3 of the Code in the future.

How to use this guidance

The booklet does not aim to be fully comprehensive, nor prescriptive, so we advise organisations and their boards to use it as a starting point for discussing ideas and deciding how to develop an approach to People Planning that best suits their needs.

The guidance does expand on the different parts of the requirement and provides some suggestions for how organisations may be able to show their work against this requirement. The guidance is not standalone, and organisations should consider how this requirement of the Code fits with their overall action plan to become compliant with the Code. Throughout the guidance are links to support tools which provide further guidance and information to help.



What is a People Plan?

A People Plan is a way in which an organisation can demonstrate its strategically planning for its people.

People Planning is essential to ensuring the work of the organisation is delivered, supported, and led by a diverse range of people who are equipped and supported to meet the demands of their role and the changing needs of the people, communities, teams and athletes they interact with.

The People Plan should be aligned to the needs and goals of the organisation for the year(s) ahead, contributing to the long-term success of the organisation by ensuring the systems, policies and processes in place to support people are attuned to people's needs and aligned with the organisation's strategic objectives.

Your People Plan may be one document, or several documents that work together to set out your approach. It will depend on where you are starting from and what feels right for your organisation. You may already have documents that cover different aspects of the workforce you engage with – for example, a Coaching Plan and a volunteering strategy which cover relevant aspects of how you plan for the recruitment, development and leadership of people in those areas.

Regardless of how you document your People Plan, what is most important is that there is a clear and aligned strategic direction set out within these documents and that together they will help support you to deliver your objectives now and into the future.

The process of developing your plan, and the conversations you have as a result, should be as valuable as the final output(s). A collaborative approach will be needed, involving different teams and areas of work within your organisation. Ideally, these conversations will continue after your plan is produced to bring people together behind your plan to help deliver it and ensure ongoing input so it can evolve and stay relevant.

Why is 'People Planning' important?

Successful organisations understand and develop the diversity, skills, behaviours and culture of their workforce, both professional and voluntary.

In essence, People Planning is about ensuring that you have the right people with the right skills, in the right places at the right time. However, it goes beyond just skills and numbers.

An approach to People Planning which is aligned to your organisational strategy can help your organisation to perform better, making your workforce more agile and resilient in response to a changing operating environment or customer needs.

The understanding about your workforce gained from developing an effective approach to People Planning can also support better decision-making about recruitment, skills gaps, succession planning and how to support, develop and retain your people. It can also help to ensure you can demonstrate a duty of care to everyone involved in your work.

To unlock these benefits, it's important to ensure there is buy-in to your plan at different levels of the organisation, and that consideration is given to how you will resource and deliver it. This may be by developing an action plan at a later stage.

Meeting the new requirement in the Code

3.4 Each organisation shall have a People Plan and shall review and discuss it on at least an annual basis and share the findings of that discussion openly with its members and people (e.g. employees, volunteers)

There are three key parts of this requirement to consider:

1. developing a People Plan for your organisation
2. reviewing your People Plan and discussing it on at least an annual basis
3. sharing the findings of that discussion openly with your members and people.

This guidance covers each one in turn and provides detail on:

- why it's important
- how you may choose to demonstrate and evidence that you have met this part of the requirement.

The three key parts of the requirement addressed in the guidance

PART 1

Developing a People Plan:

A good People Plan = Understanding your people | Getting the right people | Developing your people | Developing Leadership

PART 2

Reviewing your People Plan

PART 3

Sharing the results

PART 1

Developing a People Plan
for your organisation



Part 1: Developing a People Plan for your organisation

Why it's important

Thinking strategically about your people, and reviewing regularly your approach to developing your people, will directly impact your organisation's ability to deliver on its ambitions.

Developing your People Plan, or equivalent, should be seen as a collaborative task, involving people across your organisation, and potentially external partners you work with. As stated earlier, this is about demonstrating that you have a strategic approach to People Planning, and this may mean looking across a number of different strategies or plans which you already have in place and seeking better alignment of these to achieve your people planning goals. If you are starting from this position, it can be a great opportunity to spark conversations about People Planning across different teams.

Ways to evidence

You may need to provide evidence to demonstrate how you have met this requirement.

The easiest way to evidence compliance against this requirement may be to provide a copy of your People Plan or equivalent. For example, it may sit as a page on your website, or it may be covered through a number of documents which you may wish to share, and explain how they work together.

Ideally your document(s) or the evidence you submit will state when this was last reviewed and approved, and who by. As a key strategy/plan for your organisation it may have been approved by the Board, so you could also provide Board minutes that show when it was approved.



Key questions

When thinking about developing a People Plan you may want to consider the following:

If our organisation covers the outcomes of this requirement across a combination of documents, do I need to pull the documents apart and put the relevant parts into one single People Plan document to meet this requirement?

To meet this requirement in the Code, you need to be able to evidence that you are planning and managing your people strategically by having in place effective People Planning tools. This may be in a single People Plan document, but an effective approach to People Planning may also be evidenced through a combination of other documents which manage People Planning for different groups of people in your organisation, e.g. volunteer strategies, coaching programmes, staff handbooks, etc. You do not need to pull out everything relating to people from your other documents and create a new document called 'People Plan' for the sake of this requirement. However, if you are going to point towards a combination of different documents to evidence your approach to People Planning, then you need to be clear about how the different documents, policies, or plans interact and work together to ensure you have an effective strategic approach to People Planning. Therefore, when thinking about how to evidence against this requirement, it may be useful to have a summary document or cover sheet which sets out how your existing People Planning tools work together to give your organisation a strategic approach to People Planning.

Does our People Plan need to be approved by our Board?

The Code requirement sets out that you need to have a People Plan, review and discuss it on at least an annual basis, and share the findings of that review openly. Given that this is a key strategy/plan within your organisation, it's likely you will want it to be approved by your Board and reviewed at a senior level. The process you use to approve the Plan should align with your approach to other key strategies and documents within your organisation. Requirement 5.4 sets out that the Board is responsible for adopting appropriate and proportionate policies and procedures and for ensuring that they are communicated, reviewed, and updated appropriately. It's therefore important for your organisation to consider how your People Plan fits in with your organisation's wider approach to policy approval and review and ensure a consistent approach.



Who are the people I need to consider in my plan?

The sport and physical activity sector is built on inspirational people who play a crucial role in making a difference to the lives and experience of others.

The range of roles is diverse, from coaches, volunteers and helpers to officials, administrators, athletes, performance staff and paid employees. The sector itself is broad, covering high performance sport, commercial businesses, and those delivering grassroots and community sport.

Your plan should ideally consider not just the paid staff you employ directly, but also the wider network of volunteers and other people who help you achieve your objectives and impact. You will need to consider and decide on the scope of your plan and this may be something you develop over time.

The scope of your plan may need to include people you involve indirectly in delivering or supporting sport or physical activity, e.g.

- volunteers in clubs/community organisations
- volunteers in county associations or regional boards
- frontline workers (either voluntary or paid)
- those employed by other organisations or in sectors but who have a significant impact on your delivery or participants, e.g. if your programmes are delivered through schools by teachers.



What a good People Plan should include

Each organisation is different and will need to develop a People Plan that best suits its needs, but the essential purpose remains the same – ensuring that there is a strategic approach to People Planning that enables you to have the right people in the right places, with the right skills and support to ensure they feel valued and are able to succeed in their role.

This will then allow your workforce, as well as your athletes and participants, to have a better experience. A positive impact on organisational outcomes usually results from effective People Planning.



A good People Plan will reflect and be suitable for the scale and complexity of your organisation and what it does.

Although each organisation's Plan will look different, it's likely that a good People Plan will address four key areas:

- understanding your people and strategic workforce planning
- getting the right people – with a focus on tackling inequalities
- looking after and developing your people
- developing leadership.

This section of the guidance unpacks in more detail what you should consider under each of these areas. This list is not exhaustive, so use this as a starting point to prompt a conversation with your workforce about what your plan needs to include in order to meet your organisation's needs.

Your plan does not need to use this exact language or these headings; however, the content of the plan should ideally show that you have considered each area.

We recognise that organisations will feel they have strengths in some of these four areas and others may need further development.

The detail on each of the four areas provided below is to help you consider what to include in the content of your plan, however, organisations then need to consider how best to develop it in a way that will best align with its strategic goals.

It's fine if some of these areas need further work or development or if you feel they may not be appropriate for your organisation at this stage.

Understanding your people and strategic workforce planning

Capturing, understanding and sharing your knowledge of your workforce will allow for evidence-led planning and decision-making to meet your strategic ambitions. This is about generating or gathering information that can help to inform your Plan.

Before you start, take some time to consider what information you may need which is relevant to your plan.

Consider:

- Mapping the workforce – making sure you understand who your workforce includes, their skillsets and where they're placed or deployed currently. This includes paid and unpaid, or voluntary, members of your workforce. For organisations with a governing role, you should consider the wider network of organisations you support and govern, e.g. your club and volunteer workforce on the ground. See page 10 on 'Who are the people I need to consider in my plan?'.
- Mapping will help you identify any gaps or issues you would want to address, e.g. skills shortages, capacity challenges or a need for succession planning.
- Workforce insight – this refers to data and insight you have on your workforce. It may come from a number of sources, such as:

-  research relevant to your workforce or sport, e.g. academic research; research conducted by external organisations, e.g. UK Coaching
-  survey data, e.g. volunteer or staff survey results
-  information from Human Resources
-  external evaluations of projects or programmes
-  feedback from your workforce
-  evidence of impact or feedback from customers, participants, or athletes.

This in some cases may involve collecting personal data, so you must ensure that you seek advice and guidance to ensure you are collecting and using data appropriately, and in line with relevant legislation.

The [Information Commissioners Office](#) provides guidance for organisations to help them comply with data protection legislation.

You must also apply good judgement if dealing with limited data or low numbers of responses to surveys.



- Workforce capability and training needs – understanding the strengths of your workforce and potential areas for further training and support. This could be done by completing a training needs analysis or a skills audit of your workforce. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) gives advice on what existing data sources you could use and how you could collect data on learning needs to inform this work.
- Strategic needs and horizon scanning – considering future changes in your operating environment that will impact your workforce needs and skills. You may wish to craft your People Plan around these bigger strategic themes.
- It's also important to understand the communities your workforce is operating in and engaging with. This understanding, applied to decision-making, will help you develop locally relevant, enjoyable opportunities. This is about understanding the needs of the people and communities relevant to your workforce. A 'community' could be a place/geographic location, or a group with shared characteristics (e.g. LGBTQ+).

Support tools

- [Understanding the Sport and Activity Workforce – An evaluation guide](#) (Download PDF)
- [Club Matters – Understanding your people survey guidance](#)
- [Workforce Engagement survey guidance](#) (Download PDF)
- [Volunteer Survey Guidance](#) (Download PDF)
- [Club Matters health check tool and guides](#)
- [UK Coaching research](#)
- [CIMSPA – Workforce Insight](#)
- [CIPD Strategic Workforce Planning courses and tools online](#)
- [NCVO volunteer management guidance](#)

Getting the right people – with a focus on tackling inequalities

Getting the right people is an important consideration when building towards your strategic aims. A focus on tackling inequalities means approaching People Planning in a more inclusive way, to make your workforce more representative. In recruitment, this may mean reaching out to groups or communities who are currently under-represented in your workforce and/or adapting your existing recruitment practices.

Consider:

- How will you go about recruiting a diverse workforce (staff and volunteers), that is highly skilled and motivated, to ensure that all participants have a good experience?
- Find out whether recruitment is done at team or individual level, or locally for volunteers, and how this connects to wider organisational needs or trends. For example, could you work with regional boards or committees collectively on recruiting more women?
- Look to develop clear principles that underpin your approach to recruitment, to ensure consistency in the process and a positive candidate experience.
- Review your recruitment practices and tools to better consider accessibility requirements for candidates, to ensure you can make your processes as accessible as possible for a diverse range of people.
- Think about what targeted approaches you may need to take to diversify your staff and volunteers, and take into consideration that different approaches may be needed for each group.



- Capture data to understand how you recruit your workforce. Understand what works and doesn't work in getting a diverse and representative workforce, e.g. marketing channels, interviews. Track whether different approaches work better for different groups and try to understand the diversity of candidate pools, shortlists and talent pools you recruit from to inform your approaches to attracting diverse people.
- Employment contracts and volunteer agreements – to ensure you comply with all relevant contract and employment law, consider how you contract with employees and non-employees (e.g. consultants) in addition to how you form agreements with volunteers.
- Organisational structure - how does this align to your strategic ambitions and opportunities for your organisation?
- Board and committee members - more diverse and inclusive boards make better decisions. A good People Plan would consider how to diversify the membership of your Board, committees, and other decision-making bodies. Alongside this, it's important to consider the range of skills, experience and expertise that you need on your Board. Considering the relevance of lived experience may also be important for your organisation.
- Keeping your people – consider your strategies for retaining people and how you will approach succession planning or talent management. See more below, in 'Looking after & developing your people'.

Support tools

- [Club Matters volunteer recruitment guidance](#)
- [Sport England Volunteering Fund Evaluation – Guide to Inclusive Volunteer Engagement](#) (Download PDF)
- [Perrett Laver – Guidance and resources to help you recruit and diversify your Board](#)
- [Inclusive Employers – A paid-for inclusive recruitment service](#)
- [CIMSPA – Workforce insight](#)
- [CIMSPA – Workforce governance](#)
- [CIMSPA – Standards and endorsement](#)
- [CIPD – Contracts of Employment](#)

Looking after and developing your people

Whilst much of the day-to-day support for your people will happen at a local, team or individual level, as an organisation you will have policies and practices to ensure that you are holistically looking after and developing your people.

Consider:

- How you can develop an understanding of the needs of your participants or customers, and what they value in a positive experience. This can help identify what skills and qualities to develop in your workforce.
- Plan for how you will ensure that your people will be supported and valued. Consider how you will measure your workforce's satisfaction and understand what experience they are having, e.g. you may commit to running an annual workforce survey, or gather feedback more informally. It's important from an inclusion perspective to track whether levels of satisfaction are different for different groups.
- Developing people means planning for how you will ensure that your workforce can continue to develop the skills, knowledge and experience needed to perform well in their roles, e.g. using technology, behaviour change, or updated safeguarding and Duty of Care policies.
- Identify what knowledge or skills gaps exist and how they can be addressed through formal or informal training and development opportunities, e.g. does your workforce meet professional standards? Would they benefit from coaching, mentoring or one-to-one support? What formal training or qualifications are needed? You could draw on skills audits or learning needs analysis. CIPD gives advice on what existing data sources you could use and how you could collect data on learning needs to inform this work.
- Policies – are your HR and volunteer policies up-to-date, and do they reflect your strategic ambitions?
- A good People Plan should look ahead and take a longer-term view of learning and development for the workforce.

Support tools

- [CIPD – Identifying Learning and Development Needs factsheet](#)
- [CIMSPA – Professional Standards](#)
- [UK Coaching – training and development opportunities and resources for those performing a coaching role](#)
- [Sport England Workforce Evaluation guidance](#) (Download PDF)
- [Mind provide support to system partners to embed mental health in your organisation and create a culture where people can thrive. Access Mind's Jigsaw tool here.](#) To find out about limited free consultancy available email sport@mind.org.uk. Priority will be given to Sport England System Partners
- [Vision for Volunteering – a 10-year ambition for volunteering in the UK across all sectors](#)



Developing leadership

Leaders exist at all levels of your organisation and in your wider network, from your Board and senior staff to regional committees, to club and group leadership at the grassroots level. Consider how you will develop the right skills, behaviours and culture in existing leaders, giving them the ability to lead effectively in their role, as well as broadening the diversity of those undertaking leadership roles.

This could include:

- aligning your leadership development to your organisational values, through a distributed leadership approach
- board and committee knowledge and skills development
- your governance role, and how to support good governance throughout your network
- leadership skills development for your workforce, and leading in an inclusive way
- using inclusive recruitment practices to bring new and more diverse leaders in
- succession planning, and developing future and aspiring leaders of the organisation and the sector.

Support tools

- [UK Sport – Leadership Development Framework video](#)
- [UK Sport – Explore Career Pathways](#)
- Leading for Renewal is a support package for those in leadership roles in Sport England funded System Partners. Email workforceteam@sportengland.org for more information.
- [People and Places - Learning from Sport England Local Delivery Pilots e.g., on Distributed Leadership and system change](#) (Download PDF)
- [Sports Governance Academy](#)
- [Club Matters guidance on Succession Planning](#)
- [Vision for Volunteering has a theme focusing on sharing power. See section on ‘Power’ and volunteers as leaders](#)

Key questions

When thinking about how to develop your People Plan you may want to consider the following:

Is it acceptable for the scope and breadth of our People Plan to develop and evolve over time, or do we need to cover everything in it right now?

This guidance sets out several different areas for consideration to potentially include within your People Planning approach. It may be that you decide to develop your People Plan in stages, and prioritise focus on specific elements or groups of people in the first year. A pragmatic approach which is set out to deliver success for your organisation is more important than trying to create a Plan which covers everything but is not realistic or achievable. You are best placed to decide how your organisation should approach the task of developing a Plan; it may be that you use the annual review to develop and add to the Plan in a strategic way, so it evolves and develops as the organisation needs it to.



PART 2

Reviewing your People Plan & discussing it on at least an annual basis



Part 2: Reviewing your People Plan & discussing it on at least an annual basis

Why is it important?

The requirement states that the People Plan shall be reviewed and discussed on at least an annual basis.

The review process is important in helping to bring your plan to life and in ensuring it remains a current, live document that inspires action in your work. The review process should be designed in a way that ensures there is ongoing ownership and accountability for the plan and putting it into action. The annual review process can also be a useful opportunity to reflect on and monitor progress in delivering your plans and to reflect on learning to inform future revisions or updates to the plan.

Key questions

When thinking about how to review your People Planning approach and documents, you may want to consider the following:

Who manages the review and who is part of the discussion?

It may be appropriate for the review to be managed and led at a senior executive and Board level. It may also be appropriate to seek feedback and input from different people who are affected by your People Plan. You will need to decide what your review will look like, and who is best for your organisation to involve in the review process.

What should the review cover?

You may also want to consider the scope and focus of the review. It may be that you decide the review should focus on progress against identified actions, and that the plan will be updated according to progress. It may be that you want to review whether the plan is still fit for purpose and meeting the needs of your organisation. You may also want to focus your review on key themes of your People Planning approach, depending on changes in your organisation or environment. Ultimately the review should be a way of ensuring that your People Plan, and your approach to People Planning, continues to be relevant and effective.

Do you need to share the findings of your review with UK Sport or Sport England?

Whilst the Code requirement does not set out a need for you to share your review findings with Sport England and/or UK Sport, it may be the best way to evidence that you have completed a review. It may also be something that you choose to share as part of your ongoing discussions about your delivery and work with UK Sport and/or Sport England. It may be that they are able to support you with any challenges you have identified.

When thinking about how frequently to review your People Planning approach and documents, you may want to consider the following:

Is an annual review enough or should you review your approach to People Planning more frequently?

The Code requirement sets out that you need to review your Plan and discuss it on at least an annual basis. This suggests that an annual review will meet the requirement, but that you may also want to review the Plan and approach more frequently.

Your Plan needs to respond to the changing needs of the organisation and the changing context in which you work, and these factors may influence the frequency of your reviews.



If you focus the review on progress and implementation, is an annual review enough?

The Code requirement sets out a minimum approach to reviewing your People Plan. As you develop your thinking in this area, you will need to make decisions about what is the right approach to review for your organisation. You may want to consider a more frequent review of progress and implementation on an operational level throughout the year, and a more in-depth annual review and discussion on a strategic level, with Senior Executives and your Board, to ensure alignment and direction continue to feel relevant.

Essentially, you need to design the review approach in terms of the scope and frequency which feels right for your organisation, and this can go above and beyond the minimum review criteria set out in this Code requirement.

Ways to evidence

You may need to provide evidence to demonstrate that you meet this part of the requirement. As mentioned above, it may be that the simplest way to evidence your review process and approach is to share evidence of when your Plan was last reviewed and who by, and any related actions or updates.

If you choose to engage your Board in the review of your plan, evidence of the review could include minutes from the Board meeting where the Plan was discussed.

It may be that your People Planning approach is new, so you haven't yet had a chance to review it. In this case you may decide that the best way to evidence against this part of the requirement is to share a review plan which outlines your approach, timetable, and schedule to review, and discussion of your Plan.

To help you with evidencing this element of the requirement, it may be worth considering how you will keep records of regular reviews and versions of your Plan.

Essentially, it will be for you and your organisation to decide how you can best evidence your review process and discussions, in order to meet this requirement.



PART 3

Sharing the results of that discussion with your people



Part 3: Sharing the results of that discussion with your people

Why is this important?

Writing and publishing your Plan is just the start of the journey. Involving your people (staff, coaches, elite athletes, volunteers and others) in the development and ongoing delivery and revision of the Plan will help to ensure that a diverse range of perspectives is represented, informing continuous improvement and relevance to your strategic aims.

This is an important part of ensuring that the Plan comes to life, and has a positive impact on your organisation and people. It can also help you to get buy-in for actions that you need to take to put your Plan into practice, and to ensure that it adapts and responds to the changing operating environment.

Ways to evidence

You may need to provide evidence to demonstrate that you meet this part of the requirement.

This could include evidence of when you held meetings where the Plan was discussed, e.g. meeting minutes; or other evidence of a discussion about your People Plan.

Evidence of the outcomes of sharing and discussing your Plan. This could include feedback you have received from your workforce or members on the Plan, or an action plan that has been produced as a result of these discussions.

A link to where the updated Plan has been published on your website, or evidence of it having been shared and discussed through other channels, e.g. newsletters, blogs or use of online platforms.



Further guidance and support



Further guidance and support

Working through this booklet is a good way to start, and to help you identify specific areas where you may need more support.

We hope you have found it useful in supporting you in the development of your People Plan.

You can contact Sport England's People and Leadership Team or UK Sport's Sporting System Team to access further guidance and support.

If you would like to explore further support, you can contact us:

Sport England
workforceteam@sportengland.org

UK Sport
sportingsystem@uksport.gov.uk



