

August 2026. Issue 1: Volunteering, Rhys Deighan and Dylan Waller.

Sports Coaching & Development



A Practitioner's Guide

About The Authors

Rhys Deighan, Founder, Writer and Researcher.

Over the previous 2 years I have gained a HND in Sports Coaching & Development, and now study at Stirling University. In addition to this, I have 5 years of experience coaching multiple age groups and teams within North Lanarkshire, including experience at an elite academy and leading a U18's women's team. In future, I plan to continue progressing through UEFA Licences while obtaining the highest degree of education possible.

Dylan Waller, Writer and Researcher.

For the past 1/2 decade I have amassed coaching experience at youth-grassroots level, led a U-18's women's team, alongside serving as an assistant to various senior women's teams competing at regional and championship levels. I also achieved a HND in Sports Coaching & Development and currently hold the UEFA C Licence. Future progression includes completing the Football Coaching Degree at Edinburgh Napier and eventually breaking into the senior men's game as a coach.

About A Practitioner's Guide

As the SFA report “Coaches and volunteers are the lifeblood of the community game in Scotland”. Often unpaid, they give up significant amounts of time and resource to helping their clubs and the wider community” (1). Further to this, a 2015 study indicated that 77% of coaches in Scotland engage in voluntary work (2).

As coaches, we often dedicate ourselves and our time for no monetary benefit, but for the development of our youth and community. However, limited training times amongst other commitments such as family and work life makes it difficult for us to become the best coach we can be (3).

The aim for this project is to bridge the gap between academic research and practical coaching by presenting evidence-based knowledge in a digestible and applicable format. This project will also include interviews with influential members of the sports industry, professional practitioners, and volunteers.

If you have any enquiries, feel free to reach out to us by email: practitionersguide@outlook.com

Issue 1: Writer's Note

“The inaugural issue of A Practitioner's Guide is dedicated to the volunteers who make grassroots football possible.

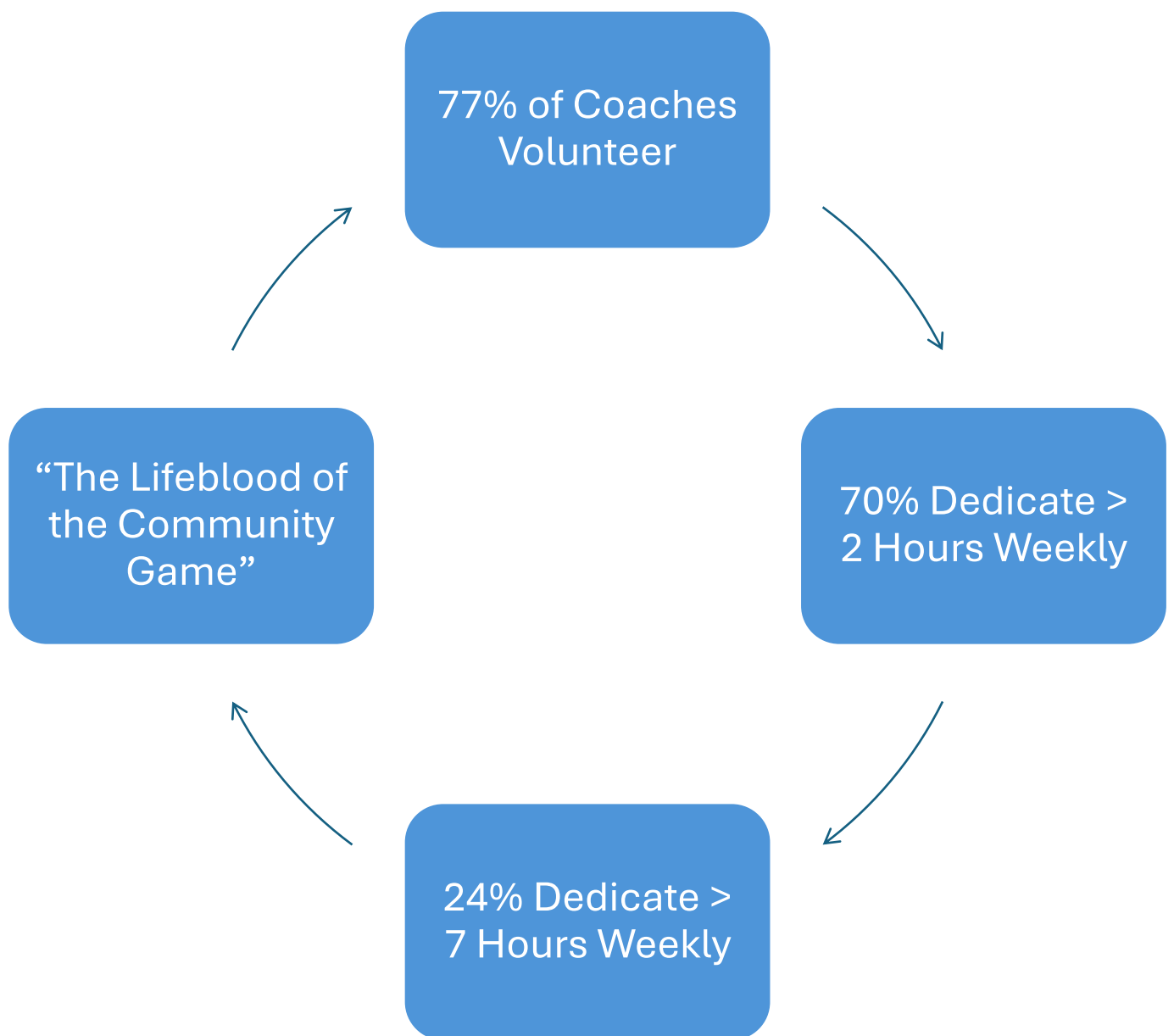
Voluntary work is difficult, time consuming and incredibly rewarding. Your commitment is selfless; never lose sight of the great work you are doing!

Your contribution to football creates fun environments where players look forward to coming and helps develop them as people.

You will affect your players lives more than you realise, so take advantage of this and be a positive role model.

Thank you to all volunteers.”

1. The Importance of Volunteers



The SFA describe volunteers as “the lifeblood of the community game”, who contribute to the grassroots game as coaches, administrators, committee members and match officials (1).

This is supported by Sport Scotland’s 2015 study, which revealed that around 77% of coaches engage in voluntary work (2).

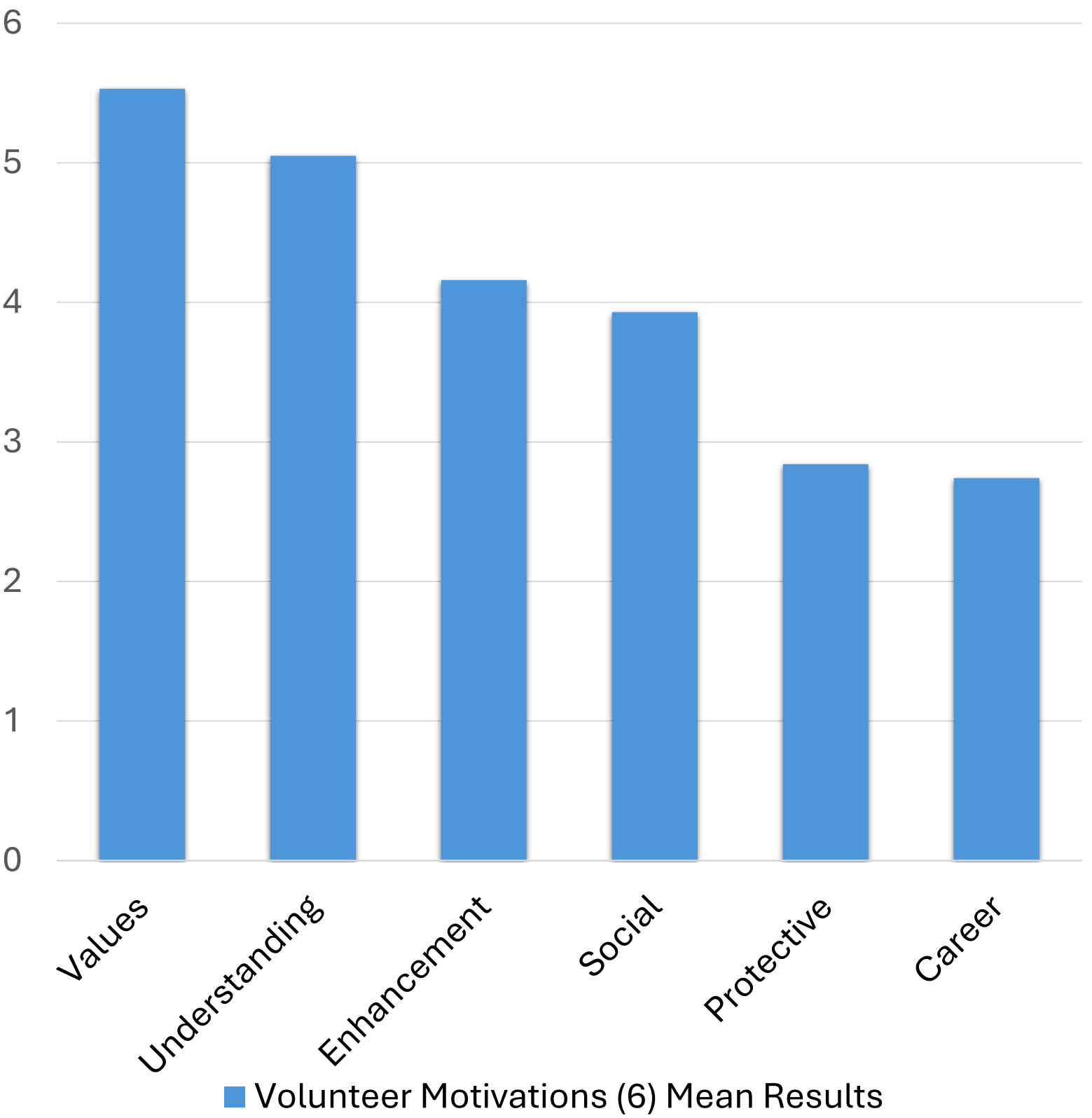
Coaches in particular are responsible for the early stages of a child’s sporting development; ensuring they build a positive relationship with sport is central to the Active Scotland Delivery Plan (4).

Over 70% of coaches spend more than 2 hours a week or more on admin, with almost a quarter (24%) spending seven or more hours a week – almost a full-time working day (5)!

“For the effective operation of youth sport organizations, programmes and events, contributions of volunteers are crucial” (6).

2. Why Volunteer?

Volunteer Motivations (6) Mean Results



A 2010 study (6) examined the motivations of youth sport volunteers, finding that the key motives were:

- (1) Values: The desire to contribute positively within the community. Especially prevalent within parents who may feel “obligated” to contribute to their child’s development.
- (2) Understanding: Many volunteers, especially young people, were motivated by training, experience and skills development.
- (3) Enhancement: Psychological growth and, in essence, the feeling of becoming a better person.

The three other motivations identified were social interaction, career aspirations, and reduction of negative emotions.

3. Challenges For Volunteers



Key barriers to volunteering (7) are reported to include:

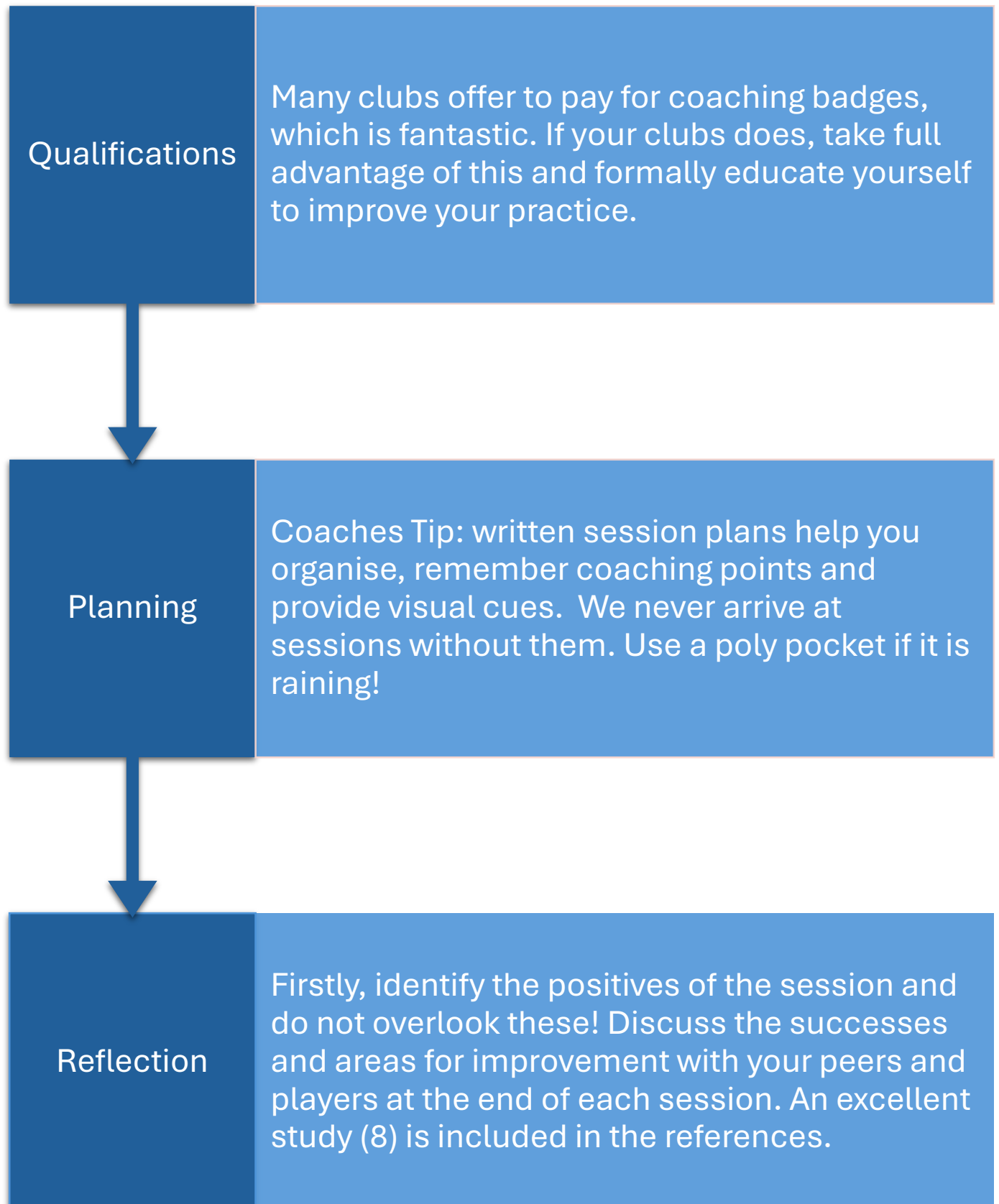
Insufficient time, and professional commitments such as work schedule. People report that they would enjoy volunteering but do not have time as much as they would like to invest.

Lack of pay is a big factor for volunteers aspiring for a career in the field, as many organisations can offer paid roles which are more appealing.

Limited confidence in new surroundings. An example of this would be that many people do not volunteer as they do not have direct experience of coaching sport.

From these findings, we must emphasise that any amount of volunteering can assist current coaches, even if you cannot fully commit to it. We must also emphasise the value of teaching new skills and actively mentoring volunteers with limited experience, which will be expanded in the next section.

4. Developing as Volunteers



5. Principles To Apply This Month



Discuss motivations, challenges and benefits with your fellow volunteers, understanding each other helps us work better as a team!



Plan, Deliver and Reflect. Write out session plans in collaboration with other coaches and take them to training. If it is wet a poly pocket is useful!



Reflection turns experience into deliberate improvement. Consider: How effective was my planning? Did the session achieve the aims? What was done well and what could be improved?



Asking your peers and players what they thought of the session is a great way to identify positives and areas for development.



Volunteer Voice

“Volunteering is the most important part of our Active Schools programme and plays a vital role in helping more children and young people become active.

Volunteers develop skills such as leadership, communication, organisation, teamwork and confidence. From an Active School’s and Sport Scotland perspective, investing in volunteers massively helps local capacity, creates programmes and encourages lifelong involvement in sport.

Volunteering can also provide valuable real-world experience and opportunities to network with local clubs, community organisations, Active Schools coordinators and teachers”

- David Kyle, Active Schools Coordinator.



Volunteer Voice

“Volunteers can be really important because a lot of clubs and community groups wouldn’t be able to run without them. They give up their own time to help others, and that can make a huge difference!”

- Sharon Dowie, Fitness Instructor and Active Schools Volunteer.

“The motivation behind volunteering was to gain and grow key skills while working within a team of people. I believe making volunteers feel part of the team is key in their development and can keep people motivated to work without making money.”

- Rhys McClymont, Council Sport Coach and Active Schools Volunteer.



Volunteer Voice

“Due to the limited number of coaches, the goalie wasn’t getting much 1-2-1 time, so I offered to help. It then led on to taking one of our 7’s teams and building towards 11’s. It was great working with the boys and helping them. I learned a lot in how different methods are needed with different boys and it was up to us as coaches to ensure we worked in ways that suited the kids learning”.

– Paul Docherty, Volunteer Coach.

“Volunteering shows you are driven and have passion for something. There are so many ways it can help improve your employability and learn new skills. Aside from job opportunities, you get to meet loads of different, new people and it can lead to new friendships and connections”.

- Bilaal Javed, Volunteer S+C Coach at Motherwell F.C. Girls Academy.

THANK YOU!

We have come to the end of the inaugural issue of Sports Coaching & Development: A Practitioner's Guide.

This project began as a eureka moment from Rhys in the early hours one July morning – after which we both failed to sleep, ecstatic about the potential of something like this.

To say this is becoming a reality fills us both with immense pride and excitement, feelings we hope are mutually shared with our readers.

All that's left to say is join us on this journey, with our next issue releasing in September, each issue will explore a separate topic which will help you on your coaching journey!

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