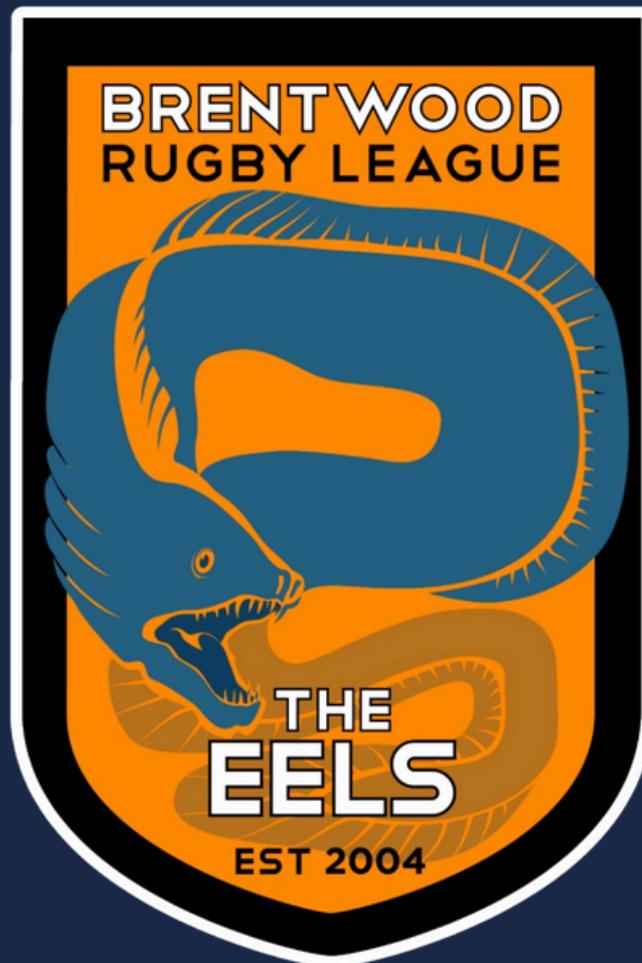




STRATEGICALLY ATTRACTING & DEVELOPING VOLUNTEERS

BRENTWOOD EELS



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Recruiting, retaining, and developing volunteers is a common challenge for Rugby League clubs.

This case study details how Brentwood Eels have found success in this area and built a welcoming environment for their volunteers. The club has adopted a strategic approach that blends traditional methods with innovative ideas to recruit and develop volunteers. This has resulted in a thriving, sustainable volunteer culture.

Brentwood Eels tell us the key to their success:

What are the clubs key focuses when it comes to recruiting and retaining volunteers?

“We recognise that volunteers are essential to the club’s success, from coaching and administration to match-day operations. From reviewing the history of volunteers at our club, we have found those starting in primary tend to be the longest serving and easiest to onboard. Our key focuses include:

- **Providing Clear Guidance** on roles and expectations, ensuring volunteers feel valued and understand their impact
- **Safeguarding and Compliance** by aligning with RFL requirements to ensure a safe and inclusive experience for all
- **Encouraging Personal Development** through coaching qualifications, leadership opportunities, or transferable skills
- **Building a Strong Social Aspect** ensuring volunteers feel part of the club’s community through events and recognition initiatives”

How does your club identify what new skill sets it needs when looking to recruit volunteers?

“A little bit of this is understanding what your biggest problem is as a club then focusing on that”

- **Reviewing Gaps in Operation** whether in coaching, media, admin, or match-day support.
- **Consulting current volunteers and committee members** to understand where extra hands are needed
- **Aligning with club growth** – for example, as we expand our junior and women’s teams, we identify roles to support these initiatives. Promoting a coach to Head of Youth and another to a pathway coach to first grade. Any young players that want to coach help our girls section as the newest and most novice section.

Recruiting Skilled Volunteers Using LinkedIn

“While grassroots Rugby League traditionally relies on local networks and word of mouth, we have started using LinkedIn and other digital platforms to attract volunteers with specific skills, such as marketing, financial planning, legal and regulatory, SEND, sponsorship management, and player welfare.

By outlining clear role descriptions and highlighting the professional development benefits of volunteering, we’ve seen success in engaging individuals who may not have previously considered a role in Rugby League.”



Developing and Recruiting Volunteers Through Community Partnerships

Brentwood’s strong relationship with a sponsor has created opportunities for youth players to learn and develop skills. These skills came full circle as the youth players began their volunteer journeys at the club.

“Our primary sponsor is a digital marketing company; we have built up a great relationship over the last few years and enough for some youth players to take on work experience.”

These youth players were able to develop their digital marketing, asset creation, and social media skills whilst on work experience and then brought these skills back to the club through volunteering.

“This had led to a few volunteers then continuing that work for us in formal volunteer roles in specific sections of the club ladies, wheelchair, and men.”

Managing and Sharing Information between Volunteers

Safely and effectively communicating with volunteers is crucial to ensure they feel connected, up to date, and can access development opportunities. Brentwood have seen success in this area by using a combination of:

- **WhatsApp group chats and emails** for regular communication and quick updates.
 - **Google Drive or shared documents** to store key resources, safeguarding guidelines, and training materials. This has been great for not having single points of failure, collaboration on the same document, and not repeating multiple forms over email.
 - **Committee meetings and volunteer check-ins** to ensure everyone is informed and aligned with the club's goals.
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Top Tips for Volunteer Recruitment

Brentwood have shared some key messages that have guided their successful volunteer recruitment strategies.

- **Make roles clear and flexible** – not everyone can commit to every week, so offering “micro-volunteering” opportunities helps.
 - **Recognise and appreciate volunteers** – a simple thank you, social event, or small incentives such as club kit can go a long way.
 - **Use local networks and social media** – engage with parents, former players, and community groups.
 - **Emphasise benefits** – Volunteering isn't just about giving time; it's about gaining experience, being part of a team, and making a difference. We have a fantastic reputation for producing players on the pathway and we would love to see the same for our volunteers, some courses already available are level 3 coaching courses, or supporting international trials or teams.
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What does Brentwood's Positive Volunteer Development Look Like in Practice?

“A notable example is a parent who initially stepped in to help with match-day logistics and gradually took on more responsibility. They completed their RFL coaching certification and are now a key part of the club's coaching setup.

Their motivation was to support their child, but over time, they found a passion for the game, built strong friendships within the club, and gained leadership skills they now use professionally.”

Thank you to Brentwood Eels, particularly **Anthony Sherwood** for your time and allowing us to share the great work the club is doing.