

BGA CLUB MANAGEMENT GUIDES

Clubs as Employers:

HR; Policies; and Personnel Issues

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Clubs as Employers: HR; Policies; and Personnel Issues

The subject of human resources is a potential minefield. Employment law is a constantly shifting area of legislation and any policies put in place will need to be reviewed at least annually to ensure that they have not been left behind.

Most gliding clubs in this country are run by volunteers. No two clubs are the same and people are employed for a variety of reasons and to fulfil a variety of roles.

1 Communication

Good communication is helpful. When a club decides to change staffing levels, the right amount of good quality information will need to be transmitted to the membership. It may also be entirely appropriate to consult the membership on the matter, in which case, the right amount of information needs to be transmitted from the membership to the Committee and used to help inform the decision making process.

Good communication will also prove invaluable when setting and maintaining working relationships and creating an environment where a supportive culture can be enjoyed by all; ordinary club members, volunteer management or employees alike.

2 Policies

The BGA is not a specialist in employment law and therefore does not and will not provide model policies for clubs to adopt in this area.

As each employment / staff / HR club policy is developed, written or updated, clubs should seek advice from an appropriately qualified professional.

For general information, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has a section on [‘Employing and Managing Staff’](#), with sub-sections containing guides on specific topics:

- Employing staff essentials
- Recruiting & inducting staff
- Managing & developing staff
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Flexible working
- Discipline, grievances & whistleblowing
- Managing change
- Ending employment well

The guides include details of further information and organisations that offer free advice, with [specific help for small charities and voluntary organisations](#) (with under £1m pa income).

Clubs should be able to access this information, without paying to join NCVO. There is a member only section on ‘Creating policies and procedures’. If your club needs to do this, then paying for NCVO membership could be useful.

Two areas where the principles also apply to other areas of club management:

- [Equity, diversity and inclusion](#) (also referred to as 'EDI' or 'DEI')
- [Volunteers and employment rights](#) and [not inadvertently creating an employment contract](#)

Other good sources of information include:

- [ACAS](#);
- [Gov.uk 'Employing people'](#)

3 Contracts of Employment

The critical element is the contract that the gliding club has with each employee. Most benefits, benefits-in-kind, and entitlements that you may wish to develop a policy on should be covered within any contract of employment. The contract works hand in hand with the job description that should be used as part of the recruitment process. Often it contains the meat of the job's responsibilities. Preparing this well sets and manages expectations for all in relation to the role and getting it right is almost as critical as getting the contract right.

NCVO have guides on '[Understanding Employment Law](#)' and '[Employment contracts and written statements](#)'.

It is worth having any draft contract checked by an appropriately qualified professional. The money spent should be viewed as a wise investment which could save the club thousands in the future.

4 Fundamental Personnel Issues at Gliding Clubs

Having more than one boss is not funny. Someone who works at a gliding club has a lot to contend with. This includes the turnover of people on the Committee. Each Committee has its own dynamics and style of management, and this has the potential for changing every year after the AGM, with the subsequent lag phase as people settle in to their new roles. Technically, of course, the Club members are the employer. The membership elects the Board or Management Committee to manage the affairs of the club including the appointment and management of any staff. Therefore, to form a sustainable working relationship, it is imperative that there is a clear reporting structure for any employees. This is a two-way street; it is for information to and from the Committee. Therefore, if you want to keep your staff, it is essential that club and committee members respect this and refrain from providing impromptu performance reviews for staff as they pass the office (or worse, whilst sitting in groups at the bar).

When contemplating changes within the club, it is important that the committee involves any members of staff and give them the option of becoming actively involved, either as a volunteer or as part of their role. However, if this means a change of the terms of their contract, it needs to be a joint decision, following negotiation. Training should be offered where appropriate. Unilateral variation of a contract is likely to result in heartache, paperwork, extra costs and ultimately, a speedy recruitment exercise.

These issues are often compounded by the fact that, due to the specialist nature of the work, club members may have become employees and will subsequently find themselves in

awkward situations when their friends (or even syndicate partners!) have become their employer. Such conflicts of interest should be monitored and mitigated wherever possible.

If the temperature seems to be rising with staff, consider things from their perspective. Working with a group of volunteers, however hardworking and well-intentioned, can be extremely challenging, demanding and frustrating. However, strike the right balance and there is no better and rewarding setting in which to work than a happy volunteer-run organisation.

5 Thinking of Employing Staff for the First Time?

A club that wants to employ staff for the first time, or that wants to move the staffing levels up a gear, for instance by taking on a professional instructor or club manager, needs to bear some points in mind. The most important of which is developing an understanding of the true cost of employing someone. This is not just salary, tax, national insurance, other benefits and pensions. It also includes:

- Recruitment costs
- Potential costs of covering illness or any reason they may require paid absence
- Costs of finding and paying staff to cover absence
- Redundancy costs – should the club need to scale down again in the future

There are more subtle issues to consider. In a club with no employees, club members know they have to muck in and do things, or else they don't get done. Having employees reduces the amount of volunteer activity – often because people don't like to tread on other people's toes, but more often because people get used to not having to do things themselves. Bear in mind that if the club chooses to pay a club member to get a job done, what effect might that have on the goodwill amongst other club members who would have volunteered, but perhaps weren't given the opportunity to do so.

6 Using Your Policies and Procedures

These should be practical so that both parties can consult them to work out how to react to a given situation, such as requesting a pay review. Creating a file full of papers that simply gathers dust on a shelf will not help anyone.

During a challenging episode, such as the requirement to manage a member of staff through a performance related issue, or to discipline them, following the appropriate procedure should help to keep you out of the sort of situation where you may find yourself in front of an Industrial Tribunal, having been accused of unfair or constructive dismissal.

Correctly following the appropriate procedures is vital.

If you find that you are reaching for the file in order to start using some of the emergency policies to support some advanced management activity, please also reach for the telephone to get some outside advice. You can get this from ACAS. You can also contact the BGA Development Officer. Details of sources of free advice are included in section 2. Buying appropriate professional advice should not be ruled out.