

New Member Retention Programme – Guidance for golf clubs

Introduction

Recruiting new members is not easy. So, the last thing you want to do is lose them because they aren't having a good experience at your golf club. From research led by Manchester Metropolitan University and consultation with golf clubs, we have found that clubs with a formal programme to welcome and integrate new members have much higher retention rates.

The guidance sets out the **people and practises** required for a successful New Member Retention Programme.

People

We strongly recommend getting a team together and forming a working group to look after this area, led by a **New Member Champion (NMC)** – check out our [NMC Role Descriptor](#). Having some people on the group who are recent new members will help to provide insight into the experience of new players.

From a staff perspective it is important that the **General Manager / Secretary (GM)** and **Head Professional (HP)** have either direct or indirect involvement the group, as their insight on new members will be valuable and it will ensure there is a collaborative approach to tackling retention.

The final piece of the jigsaw is to recruit a team of Volunteer Buddies to provide *hands-on* support to help new golfers get to know the club dynamics and its members. It's an informal and flexible way to get your membership into volunteering too.

England Golf can run a free [Buddy Workshop](#) for your golf club – [click here](#) to find out more.

Practises

We've learnt a lot about what clubs are already doing to provide a great welcome for new members. Listed below are some of the practises that are having a positive impact on new member retention.

Welcome Pack	This pack should include all the relevant information about the club. Try and make sure the format is welcoming, digestible and informative.
Induction Session	Have a friendly chat over a coffee to find out why they've joined and what they want from their golf experience. Include a club tour and introductions to key volunteers and staff where possible.
Volunteer Buddies	Allocate a Buddy to each new member who wants one. They can help the new member to settle in, get to know how the clubs work and answer any questions.
New Member Event	Invite them to a New Member Event. Maybe include the option of some informal golf and plenty of chances for people to get to know each other.
Socialisation	Introduce new members to like-minded people and groups, who play at a time when they want to. Buddies can help to do this.
Coaching	Ensure there is regular group coaching opportunities, preferably with some on-course sessions. This is a great way to help new members build relationships and comfortable out on the course.
Get Competition Ready	For those wanting to play in competitions, help them to get a handicap index and enter competitions. Arrange competitions specifically for new members and get them involved in friendly matches and away days.
Regular Communications	Get in touch regularly to check how they are getting on and if they would like further support.

Tracking progress

When new members decide to leave a club, it can be for several reasons. Some you can't do anything about such as moving away or a change in life circumstances.

However, those who aren't playing enough to get value for money or people who haven't found a group to play with can often be identified by analysing rounds played through your ISV or by consulting with the Head Professional.

Task	Timeframe	Support & Staff
Speak to new members and find out how they are getting on. Take action to address any issues.	Within 1-2 months	GM, HP, NMC
Survey new members	After 3-4 months	Preferred Partner support from Players 1st & 59 Club / (GM, NMC)
Analyse rounds played by new members	Quarterly	GM, HP, NMC
Create a list of those at risk of leaving the club at renewals – consider all members who have joined within 2 years	Update list quarterly	NMC, GM
Personal communications to go out to all, asking about their experience and if they further support settling in. Follow up calls to go to all those <i>at risk</i> of leaving.	Quarterly	Template email below / NMC & Buddies

Exit Survey: use this to find out why any new members have left the club.	Annually	Contact your Club Support Officer / (GM)
Identify any common issues for new members which could be solved in the short or medium term.	Annually	NMC, GM, HP

Encouraging wider club participation

Members who get involved in more than just golf tend to be more committed to the club. Therefore, we strongly recommend encouraging newer members to:

- **Offer their opinions:** new golfers are much more likely to flag up outdated rules or practises and other issues that can affect the experience, than members who have been there years and got used to the club's idiosyncrasies. Asking their opinions will help them to feel involved.
- **Volunteer:** new members can bring a fresh perspective and additional skills to the club. Often newer members won't commit to formal roles to start – think about flexible or episodic opportunities such as helping at an event or becoming a Buddy.

Top Tip: Draw up a list of tasks and present the options to new members.

- **Attend social events:** and generally, make the most of the clubhouse facilities.
- **Represent the golf club:** whether that is playing against other sections of the club and/or playing in some (friendly) matches for the club.

Template Letter/Email – Settling in letter.

Dear

Re: Making the most of your membership

Tip: ideally start with something personal to them, to make it feel less like a generic email.

At Golf Club we are committed to ensuring every member has an enjoyable experience and makes the most out of their membership. We appreciate that it can take time settle into club life and we actively support our members to *settle in* by (list below what your club does to help people settle in. Examples include):

- **Buddy Scheme:** we pair you up with an established member to help you find your feet.
- **New member events:** a chance to get to know other new members and some of our more established ones.
- **Group and individual coaching:** our Head Professional and his team are always on hand to help you get better and integrate into the club.
- **One to one chat:** our staff and volunteers are always here to help.
- Help to **find a social group** that suits your availability.
- **Get a handicap:** we can assist you get a handicap and enter competitions (if you want to) – they aren't as daunting as you might think, and we have some great, fun team competitions.

Please get in touch if you would like to take up any of the above opportunities, or if there is anything that you would like to discuss. We're also always keen to hear feedback from new members on their experience so we can continue to improve our offer.

Best regards