

# VOLUNTEERS

## Training

### **Have clear expectations**

Volunteers need to know what they are agreeing to: What you expect from them and what they can expect from you. This could be a job description or volunteer covenant, or similar form of outlining and agreeing to responsibilities and expectations.

### **Match gifts and passion with role**

Not all volunteers will want to do whatever you need. It is important to match their gifting and passion with a role where they can thrive. Relationship and communication are important—talk to them and get to know where they will best fit in the team.

### **Pair old with new**

Put a new volunteer with an old hand to help them get to know routines and to give them confidence. An apprenticeship model is very helpful—you watch me, you help me, I'll help you, I'll watch you.

### **Continue to cast vision**

It is important to unite the team under one vision; to remind them what is important and why they are all there. Use team meetings, newsletters, emails, social media, and other training events. Whenever and however you communicate—cast vision.

## **Offer training in a number of ways**

Not everyone takes on information in the same way—so just as we vary our techniques when teaching children—we also need to offer a variety when training our volunteers. Use short videos, meet one-on-one, do short training at regular team meetings, or have a day or afternoon session for more in-depth training. Be aware of the time commitment you are requiring of people. Keep a balance. We are all busy people and you don't want to overload everyone.

## **Retaining**

### **Team Culture**

Continually and intentionally work on maintaining a positive team culture

### **Relationships**

Stay connected to your volunteers: listen, follow up, connect in, offer support where needed, and show you care.

### **Communicate**

Respond to questions, concerns, communicate expectations and information they need to do their job well.

### **Allow Breaks**

It can be tempting to overload good volunteers—those who you know will always step up if needed, but resist. We want people to be involved for the long haul—we need to give them opportunity to rest and recharge. It's a marathon not a sprint.

## Trust

We need to allow our volunteers space to do what they do well. Our job is to make sure they are well-equipped and resourced, and to allow them a sense of ownership of what they do. This can be hard for those of us who like to be in control of everything—but by giving that autonomy to our volunteers we are contributing to the positive team culture and more importantly allowing our volunteers to grow and serve and thrive.

## Celebrate and value

This is an important part of leading a team. Celebrating together unites us. Don't wait until the end of the year to celebrate. Look for things to celebrate during the year—big and small, tell stories about what you are seeing in the lives of children and their families, and in the lives of the team. Do not underestimate the importance of stories. Encourage each other and value each one in your team.

## The difference between valuing and appreciating volunteers

We often confuse what it means to appreciate someone with what it means to value someone. They may seem like the same thing but there's an important difference.

When we appreciate someone, we are recognising what they have done—an action. We often do this with gifts and words of appreciation—which is great, and we need to do this. People need to know that their hard work matters and that we notice what they've done.

But when we value someone, we are to go one step further—we let them know they are important members of the team—not because of what they *do* but because of *who they are* as individuals and what they uniquely bring to the team.

The difference between valuing and appreciating our volunteers is an emphasis on their identity versus their actions. It's the difference between a generic thank you card and a hand-written specific note.

## Ways to show you value someone:



Ask their opinion.



Listen to them.



Praise them in front of someone (not for what they do but for who they are) e.g. Karen is such a valuable part of our team, she is really committed and passionate about communicating the story of Jesus with the kids, and does it so creatively, we're blessed to have her.



Spend time with them—take them for a coffee or ice cream or whatever, and chat.



Hand-written note of encouragement.