



5 SMART PEOPLE

Having attracted both users and other individuals to volunteer in your toy library, the following information offers guidance on offering volunteers continued support, including tips on how to prepare welcome packs, methods of on-going training and ways in which you can demonstrate your gratitude for all the work volunteers undertake.

Supporting Volunteers

Having found volunteers who have committed to your toy library project, you will want to show them that you appreciate the time, energy, and effort they bring. Ensuring that you are considerate to their needs, recognise their abilities and encourage their efforts along the way will make volunteering a rewarding experience for everyone involved.

Preparing for New Volunteers

One way to ensure that volunteers settle in quickly and feel confident in their new role is to prepare carefully for their arrival. An effective way to do this is to think about what will be the best way for your new volunteers to learn about how your project works - maybe you could arrange for a more experienced volunteer or member of staff to guide them through their first few days. Additionally, you will need to organise a formal plan to ensure that proper introductions can be made, which, in turn, will allow the volunteer to learn how the organisation operates, as well as about its associative policies and procedures. Remember, on a practical note, you will need to make sure that there is sufficient space for your volunteer and that they will have access to any relevant resources and equipment they might need.

Welcome Packs

It is a good practice to provide all new volunteers with a welcome / information pack on their arrival. However, try to remember that there may be those who could find reading and completing forms difficult, and furthermore, be aware of any translation needs.

Offering your volunteers a welcome pack will ensure that they have all the necessary information about your toy library, and therefore, they will be able to offer the best possible service to your users.

The following list offers some suggestions for relevant items to be included in an introductory pack:

- An information leaflet about your toy library.
- Details about the structure of the organisation.
- Your aims and objectives.
- An agreement form (if appropriate).
- Information on policies and procedures - complaints, data protection, diversity, etc.
- A training and support guide.
- Expenses claim forms.
- Volunteering feedback form

The First Day

The first thing to remember when any new volunteers start is to make sure you greet them - this will make all individuals feel welcome and at ease in their new working environment. The way in which you meet and greet your volunteers when they first start is incredibly important, and will have a lasting impression! It can often make the difference as to whether they will continue to want to be involved in your project. Understandably, on the first day (or first few days) volunteers may be nervous, anxious, excited or apprehensive. Try to take this into consideration, and make sure the first day is not too daunting. Remember, when meeting a new volunteer, always:

- Be friendly - volunteers should feel at ease.
- Offer a guided tour - point out fire exits and notices, kitchen facilities, parking, etc.
- Introduce volunteers to existing staff and users.
- Check that they have had their welcome pack and offer to address any possible queries.
- Provide an identity badge, uniform, etc. (if applicable)
- Explain the procedure for claiming expenses
- Provide clear guidance on the tasks the volunteer will be expected to undertake
- Ask for the PVG check form (if applicable).



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Running a toy library in Scotland

On-Going Support

Ideally, your volunteer will need someone to act as their manager, someone who will take responsibility for overseeing their work and make sure they receive any necessary support. You will also need to provide new volunteers with an introduction to the tasks they will be expected to undertake. It is important to assess the current level of skills and identify what further training might be needed. In addition to a general introduction, it is good practice to provide all new members of staff with basic training that emphasises the ethos of your organisation. This will likely include such topics as equal opportunities and diversity, health and safety and child protection awareness. You will need to regularly review and assess the training needs of your volunteers, and a good way to achieve this is to set up a regular support meeting this will provide an opportunity for both you and your volunteers to receive feedback.

Thanking Volunteers

Implementing the suggestions detailed previously will help to demonstrate your appreciation of the work your volunteers have undertaken. Here are some other suggestions of ways in which you can do this:

- A simple thank you on the day.
- Formal thanks and recognition in the library's newsletter.
- Provide certificates for special achievement or long service.
- Make sure to send birthday cards to volunteers.
- Organise a special meal or night out to show your appreciation



Checklist

- Thought about how you will support your volunteers?
- Prepared for the arrival of new volunteers?
- Provided a welcome pack containing key information?
- Considered how you will show your appreciation for volunteers?
- Researched the potential for student placements?

Student Placements

Many colleges and universities offer their students the opportunity to work in practice giving students vital skills to support their learning as well as experience in the workplace. Find out which institutions locally offer courses on childcare, child development and social work as these are most likely to have a placement option.

Demonstrate to them how your project can support a student and how they can benefit from the experience of working in a child focused and play environment. Some universities offer long term places (up to 90 days) and others may offer shorter blocks or day release. There may be some paperwork involved as well as an end of placement report.

Smart Play Network Members Support

Member you have access to telephone and email support. For more information about the topics covered in this guidance sheet, or any other queries you may have about your group, please contact us using: 0131 554 2620 or admin@smartplaynetwork.org

It is free to be a member of Smart Play Network, for more information on how to become a member please refer to our website: www.smartplaynetwork.org.