



Bookmark

Safer Recruitment Policy

Safer Recruitment Policy

We exist to change children's life stories through the joy of reading. We partner with schools to develop whole school reading cultures, and to provide one-to-one reading support.

Policy statement

Bookmark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people, and all others who come into contact with the Charity. Bookmark requires all individuals who are involved or associated with the Charity - including trustees, employees, contractors and volunteers - to share this commitment. This is a key governance priority for the trustees of Bookmark.

By having an open culture which is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people, and all others who come into contact with the charity, Bookmark aims to support all individuals who are associated with the Charity, to fully understand their roles and responsibilities.

Bookmark wishes to attract the best possible applicants to paid and voluntary vacancies. The Charity is committed to safe recruitment, selection, and pre-appointment vetting, as outlined in this Safer Recruitment Policy. Importance is placed by Bookmark on rigorous selection processes for both staff and volunteer roles. The adoption of safer recruitment practices and procedures is vital to help ensure a safe workforce by identifying, deterring and rejecting applicants who are unsuitable to work with children and young people.

Introduction

Safer recruitment is the first step to safeguarding at Bookmark and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people. Bookmark wishes to recruit and retain the highest calibre individuals who are involved or associated with the Charity - including trustees, employees, contractors and volunteers - who will support its commitment to safeguarding.

The Charity is also committed to being a supportive employer.

The Charity and its trustees are committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant equality legislation. Bookmark is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive community. The Charity aims to create a working environment in which all individuals are able to make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit.

This Policy applies to those in both paid and unpaid roles – whether on a full or part-time basis, as well as to individuals who are associated with the Charity who do not have direct responsibility for children or young people, but who will have contact with them within the Charity and will be seen as safe and trustworthy, and/or have access to confidential and sensitive information.



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The Safer Recruitment Policy forms part of the Charity's wider commitment to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people in its care. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Charity's [Safeguarding Statement](#) and [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#).

Aims and objectives

The overarching aim of this Safer Recruitment Policy is to help identify, deter and reject applicants who might abuse children and young people, or who are otherwise unsuitable to work with them.

Other aims of the Charity's Safer Recruitment Policy are as follows:

- to ensure that the best possible applicants are recruited on the basis of their skills, abilities and suitability for the position
- to ensure that all applicants are treated equally and consistently
- to ensure that no applicant is treated unfairly on any grounds including race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or religious belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, disability or age, and
- to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, statutory requirements, Government and Charity Commission guidance, and best practice - including guidance and the Code of Practice issued by the Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS).

Individuals involved in the selection and recruitment of employees and volunteers must familiarise themselves and comply with this Policy.

The Charity has a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment. The recruitment and selection process should ensure the identification of the person best suited to the role at the Charity based on the applicant's skills, abilities, qualifications, and experience, as measured against the role description and person specification, and information on an applicant's application form.

The recruitment of employees and volunteers will be conducted in a professional, timely and responsive manner, and in compliance with current employment legislation (as appropriate), relevant safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, and best practice.

If an individual involved in the recruitment process has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant, they must declare it as soon as they are aware of their application and avoid any involvement in the recruitment and selection decision-making process.

The Charity aims to adopt a consistent and thorough process of safer recruitment - while obtaining, collating, analysing and evaluating information from and about applicants who apply for roles at Bookmark – in order to ensure that those who are recruited are suitable to work with children and young people.



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Roles and responsibilities

It is the role of the Board of Trustees to:

- ensure the Charity has adequate safeguarding policies and procedures in place – including for safer recruitment – that are appropriate for the Charity's particular circumstances, and which reflect both the law and best practice, and
- make sure that these policies and procedures are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer, the Senior Leadership Team, and anyone directly involved in the recruitment of volunteers or employees:
- to ensure the Charity operates safer recruitment procedures – including the satisfactory completion of all pre-appointment checks
- to monitor contractors' and agencies' compliance with this Policy, and
- to safeguard and promote the well-being and welfare of children and young people at every stage of the recruitment process.

Approval is required by a member of SLT (junior hire) or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (line manager of above) or Chair of Trustees (Chair) (SLT) for all new appointments of paid employees. Chair and/or trustee should be included in the appointment of a member of SLT. Other trustees and members of the Senior Leadership Team may be involved in recruitment, but accountability for the final decision rests with the CEO and Chair.

Definition of regulated activity and frequency

The full legal definition of "regulated activity" is set out in Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. HM Government has produced a factual note on [Regulated activity in relation to children](#) (2012), which provides guidance on the scope of regulated activity.

"Regulated activity" includes:

- 1.1 Teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children if the person is unsupervised, or providing advice or guidance on well-being, or driving a vehicle only for children.
- 1.2 Work for a limited range of establishments (known as "specified places") that include schools and colleges, children's homes and childcare premises, with the opportunity for contact with children - but not including work done by supervised volunteers.

In relation to (1.1) an individual will be carrying out regulated activity if they work unsupervised **frequently** – once a week or more, **intensively** – on 4 or more occasions in a 30-day period, or **overnight** – between 2am and 6am. In relation to (2), an individual will be carrying out regulated activity if they work **frequently**, **intensively**, or **overnight** (i.e., on the same basis as immediately above) **in the same "specified place"**.



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Recruitment and selection procedure

Staff Involved in Recruitment and Selection

All staff involved in selection and recruitment of volunteers will be required to familiarise themselves with the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education, with a particular focus on safer recruitment. Where relevant, the volunteer recruitment and selection procedure may vary. Please read this full policy and then refer to the appropriate Appendix for variations to the recruitment and selection process.

If you are volunteering as part of a corporate partnership, see Appendix A. If you are volunteering as a Reading Mentor, see Appendix B.

Role descriptions and person specifications

A role description is a key document in the recruitment process and must be finalised prior to taking any other steps in the recruitment process. It will clearly and accurately set out the duties and responsibilities of the role. The role description should clearly set out the extent of the relationship with, and the degree of responsibility for, children and young people with whom the person will have contact. It must also refer to the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people.

The person specification is of equal importance and informs the selection decision. It details the skills, qualifications and experience needed for the role; the competencies and qualities that the applicant should be able to demonstrate. The person specification must include a specific reference to an applicant's requisite suitability to work with children and young people, where relevant.

All applicants will be assessed equally against the criteria contained in the role description and person specification, without exception or variation.

Advertisements and information for applicants

To ensure equality of opportunity, the Charity will advertise all vacant posts to encourage as wide a field of applicants as possible. Normally this entails an external advertisement. It may be the case that a vacant post is filled as a result of an initial internal advertisement. In these circumstances the vacant post will not be advertised externally.

The Charity will demonstrate its commitment to equality and diversity, and to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people, by ensuring that all recruitment advertising material contains a policy statement to that effect. All recruitment advertising material will include the following policy statements:

Bookmark is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive community. We aim to create a working environment in which all individuals can make best use of their skills, free from discrimination or



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harassment, and in which all decisions are based on merit. We offer a range of family friendly, inclusive employment policies and opportunity for flexible working arrangements to support team members from different backgrounds.

Bookmark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people and requires everyone associated with the charity, including all trustees, employees, and volunteers to share this commitment. Successful applicants will need to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the role. All information given to an interested applicant will highlight the importance placed by Bookmark on rigorous selection processes.

The information should stress that the identity of the candidate, if successful, will need to be checked thoroughly, and that where a DBS check is appropriate, the person will be required to complete an application for a DBS disclosure straightaway.

All documentation relating to applicants will be treated confidentially in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The advertisement will specify if the role is exempt from Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA) 1974.

Applications and shortlisting

Bookmark uses its own application form, which all applicants for employment or volunteering will be required to fully complete. The application form will require:

- full personal information, including any former names by which the person has been known in the past
- a full history of employment (if applicable), in the instance of paid employment with Bookmark, since leaving school, including any periods of further education or training (if applicable). This may include information uploaded from external sources
- employment, education and volunteering history for the last 5 years (if applicable), in the instance of volunteering roles
- details of all relevant educational and training achievements, including any professional membership/ qualifications, in the instance of paid employment with Bookmark
- two independent references. (See appendices for variations for alternative volunteering routes)
- a statement of the personal qualities and experience that the applicant believes are relevant to their suitability for the post advertised and how they meet the person specification.

Incomplete application forms will not be considered. A CV will not be accepted instead of an application form.

It is a criminal offence for anyone to seek or accept work in a regulated position knowing that they are barred from working with children or young people; and for an employer to offer work to or employ a person in a regulated position knowing that the person is barred from working with children and young people. All applicants will be made aware that providing false information is an offence, and could result in



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the application being rejected, or summary dismissal or the requirement for a volunteer to cease to carry out their role, if the applicant has been selected or recruited, and referral to the police and/or the DBS.

Applicants for both paid and volunteering vacancies will be offered an opportunity to speak with a member of the Bookmark team for an informal discussion about the role, and to ask any questions they may have.

All applications will be checked to ensure that they are fully and properly completed; scrutinised for any discrepancies or anomalies in the information provided – which will be followed up; and considered with regard to any history of gaps, or repeated changes, in employment or deployment, without clear or justifiable reasons.

If the applicant claims to have specific qualifications or experience relevant to their role which may not be verified by a reference, the facts should be verified by the provision of original qualification certificate(s) by the applicant or by contacting the relevant body or previous employer/deployer, and any discrepancy explored during the interview.

Shortlisting will be carried out on the basis of a close match between the role description, person specification and information on an applicant's application form. Internal candidates will be treated no more or less favourably than external candidates.

No questions will be asked about health or medical fitness prior to any offer being made, for paid roles. For volunteering roles, candidates will be given the opportunity to inform the Charity of any reasonable adjustments required for interviews or volunteering.

References

Wherever possible, references will be obtained immediately after short listing and prior to the interview stage, so that any discrepancies or issues of concern can be explored further with the referee and discussed with the applicant during interview. If references are not received prior to the interview, any discrepancies or issues of concern will be discussed with the referee and/or applicant, prior to completing their onboarding.

All offers of employment or volunteering will be subject to the receipt of a minimum of two independent references which are considered satisfactory by the Charity. One reference must be from the applicant's current or most recent employer or deployer (in respect of volunteering), if applicable. If the applicant's current or most recent role does/did not involve work with children and young people, but the applicant has worked with children and young people in the past 5 years, then the second reference should be from the employer or deployer of that role who can comment on their previous work with children and young people, and their suitability to work with them. The Charity can accept references from any senior colleague or, where senior colleagues are not available, other appropriate colleagues. References are unlikely to be accepted if they are both from the same organisation. The Charity is also able to accept references from professionals such as lawyers, doctors or police officers. Educational references can be provided, for example by university tutors or lecturers. Character references cannot be accepted from a relative or spouse.



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References must always be supplied directly by referees. References should provide objective verifiable and factual information to support appointment decisions. In order to achieve this, a reference pro-forma with questions relating to the applicant's suitability to work with children and young people will be provided. Where a volunteer does not / did not work with children and young people, an HR reference confirming dates of employment is satisfactory if a completed proforma cannot be obtained. Where a volunteer has experience working with children and young people, a HR reference confirming the dates of employment and that there were no safeguarding concerns, is satisfactory if a completed proforma cannot be obtained.

All referees will be asked whether they believe the applicant is suitable for the role for which they have applied, and whether they have any reason to believe that the applicant is unsuitable to work with children and young people.

Direct references will be received electronically, and where considered relevant or necessary, referees will be contacted by telephone for further information about the applicant's suitability to the role, suitability to work with children and young people, or to investigate discrepancies in their application. The Charity does not accept testimonials provided by an applicant.

(See appendices for variations for alternative volunteering routes)

Interviews

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview. In instances of paid employment, Interviews will be with at least two members of the Bookmark team. Interviews can take place both face-to-face and online. Questions will be set to test the applicant's specific skills during the interview, their abilities and appropriateness to carry out the role applied for, and whether they share the same values as the Charity.

For roles working with or supporting children and young people, the applicant's attitude towards children and young people in general will also be tested together with their commitment to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people. For example, the applicant should be asked why they think it is important for adults to protect children and young people.

During the interview, the interview panel will fully explore any discrepancies or anomalies, or gaps and changes in employment history, that have been identified from the information provided to the Charity by the applicant or a referee. A subsequent conversation may be required if this information differs to that provided by a referee after the interview.

In the instance of volunteering roles, interviews will be conducted with one member of staff who has undertaken safer recruitment training, or refresher training as applicable, and will have undertaken safeguarding training. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Notes from the interview are retained for safeguarding purposes and the recording is deleted following this write up. Where required, the recording may be moderated by a member of the Bookmark team before deletion.

Applicants are asked to provide declaration, as appropriate for the position, that they have no convictions, cautions, or bind-overs. This is completed as part of the application form. If they do have convictions, cautions, or bind-overs, applicants are asked to provide details to the Charity's Designated Safeguarding



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Lead (or a deputy) in a short interview. During this call, the applicant will present their DBS certificate. Information will be collected in a form by the Charity's Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) and will be held in a secure online environment on the applicant's record. All information will be retained in accordance with Bookmark's Data Retention and Data Protection Policies.

DBS

All applicants for volunteering roles who are invited to an interview will be provided with details of the identity check that will be performed, in line with DBS requirements. In all instances, the original document must be presented.

Prior to any face-to-face reading sessions - which is unsupervised, regulated activity – the Charity will verify original ID documents. This may be through a third-party agent as part of the DBS process, or in person at Bookmark's registered address.

Volunteers may be required to provide DBS and ID documentation to Bookmark's partner schools.

Offer of appointment to successful applicant

Any offer of appointment made to a successful applicant will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of the necessary = pre-appointment checks, including:

- verification of the applicant's identity
- the receipt of two satisfactory independent references – if references were not obtained before the interview, it is vital that they are obtained and scrutinised before a person's appointment is confirmed.
- for volunteers or those with access to sensitive data, a DBS Disclosure appropriate to the role. An enhanced DBS certificate - including a check of the DBS's Children's Barred List, for those who will be engaging in regulated activity - must be obtained (via the applicant)
- a separate barred list check will need to be obtained if an individual will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available.
- verification of the applicant's right to work in the UK (for employees only)
- where appropriate, confirmation that the applicant is not subject to an Order under section 79 of the Charities Act 2016 for their removal/disqualification from a charity.
- criminal record checks and/or overseas police checks, as appropriate, for an applicant who has lived or worked overseas for 12 or more consecutive months in the past 5 years. Where this check is not possible Bookmark will seek alternative methods of checking suitability and undertake a risk assessment that supports informed decision making on whether to proceed.
- where appropriate, declare that they are not disqualified from childcare or disqualified by association under the Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations 2009, and



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- Bookmark may carry out online searches on those volunteers we wish to appoint as part of assessing their suitability to volunteer with Bookmark. This will be limited to a search of publicly available online information only.

Bookmark will use the services of an external DBS partner for the processing of DBS applications for each applicant and may use an external partner to obtain references. Further details are provided on this process during a candidate's application.

Any information which has been provided to Bookmark regarding past disciplinary sanctions, allegations or concerns that relate to the safety or welfare of children and young people (or about an applicant's behaviour towards children and young people), or cautions or convictions, will be discussed and considered in the circumstance of the individual case during the recruitment process.

Medical fitness

If considered appropriate, the Charity may choose to verify the medical fitness of anyone appointed to a paid post at the Charity after an offer has been made but before the appointment can be confirmed.

Applicants may be requested to complete a medical questionnaire and where appropriate a doctor's medical report may also be required. This information will be reviewed against the role description and the person specification for the particular role, together with details of any other physical or mental requirements for the role.

The Charity is aware of its duties under the Equality Act 2010. No offer of paid employment will be withdrawn without first consulting with the applicant, obtaining medical evidence and considering reasonable adjustments.

In the instance of volunteering (unpaid) roles, the Charity will ask if any reasonable adjustments are required for interview and/or to partake in volunteer reading sessions.

Checks on overseas applicants

- All volunteers are required to complete criminal record checks and/or overseas police checks and/or Certificates of Good Character, if they have lived or worked overseas for 12 or more consecutive months within the past 5 years. Where this check is not possible Bookmark will seek alternative methods of checking suitability and undertake a risk assessment that supports informed decision making on whether to proceed.

Onboarded volunteers who are permanent UK residents but travelling elsewhere, can deliver sessions from abroad.

The Charity is unable to accept applications from individuals who are permanent residents outside of the UK.



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Safeguarding Induction Training

All new trustees, employees and volunteers will be required to complete mandatory safeguarding induction training, regardless of whether they work directly with children and young people. This will include an introduction to the Charity's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#). It will also explain the identity and specific responsibilities of individuals with designated safeguarding responsibilities. Evidence of appropriate safeguarding training is also required for all others involved or associated with the Charity, where they work directly with children and young people.

Induction training will provide trustees, employees and volunteers with a full explanation of their roles and responsibilities – and expectations which will govern how they carry them out, and the standard of conduct and behaviour expected from them. Employees will be made aware of the Charity's personnel procedures relating to disciplinary issues (contained in the [Employee Handbook](#)), and volunteers will be made aware that any potential breach of Bookmark's Code of Conduct will be dealt with in accordance with the [Volunteer Handbook](#). Employees and volunteers will also be made aware of the [Whistleblowing Policy](#), and volunteers will be made aware of the [Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure](#).

The induction training will also include child protection training, which will be tailored at a level appropriate to the person's work with children and young people, and their roles and responsibilities within the charity.

Senior leaders, Designated and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads, will ensure that employees and volunteers are adequately and appropriately supervised, where appropriate, and that they have ready access to advice, expertise and management support in all matters relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Probationary periods of 3 months (or 6 months for the Senior Leadership Team) will typically apply for new employees, during which time performance will be monitored. The Charity reserves the right to extend this period by a further 3 months at its absolute discretion. Performance will be reviewed against the role description after this time.

Central Record of Recruitment and Vetting Checks

In addition to the various trustee, employee and volunteer records kept by the Charity on individual personnel files, a central record of recruitment and vetting checks of trustees, employees, volunteers, agency and supply staff is kept by Bookmark. This is kept up to date by the Chief Finance & Operations Officer (for trustees, employees, agency and supply staff) and the Volunteers Team (for volunteers).

Record Retention and Data Protection

All data will be processed and retained in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and Bookmark's Data Protection policy suite (including the [Data Retention and Destruction policy](#), the [Data Protection policy](#), and the [Volunteer Privacy Policy](#)).



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The Charity is legally required to undertake the above pre-appointment checks, and the law and company policy requires us to retain certain information. Where required by law, the length of time for retaining information is often set by the relevant legislation or by considering what is best practice based on what the information is needed for. In relation to information that can identify individuals ('personal data'), the general rule set by the GDPR is that such information should not be kept for longer than necessary for the purposes we use it for.

Our data retention guidelines are articulated in the [Data Retention and Destruction Policy](#), and make reference to data relating to trustees, employees, volunteers, and agency and supply staff.

Ongoing employment and volunteering

Bookmark recognises that it must have robust policies and procedures in place for recruitment and selection, which should be viewed as initial measures in an ongoing commitment to create a safe organisation. The Charity will therefore provide ongoing training and support for all trustees, employees, and volunteers. The Charity will liaise with the relevant bodies (e.g. NSPCC, SafeCiC, Local Safeguarding Children's Board) and obtain legal advice, as appropriate, to ensure that training is up to date.

Leaving Bookmark

Despite the best efforts to recruit safely, there may be occasions when safeguarding concerns or allegations are raised in connection with individuals associated with the Charity. This Policy is primarily concerned with the promotion of safer recruitment, including the satisfactory completion of necessary pre-appointment checks prior to a successful applicant being offered a role. While these are pre-appointment checks, the Charity also has a legal duty to make a referral to the DBS in circumstances where both of the following two conditions have been met:

Condition 1

The Charity withdraws permission for a person to engage in regulated activity with children and young people or moves the person to another area of work that is not regulated activity. This includes situations when the Charity would have taken the above action, but the person was re-deployed, resigned, retired, or left. For example, an employee resigns when an allegation of harm to a child is first made.

Condition 2

The Charity thinks the individual has carried out one of the following:

- engaged in relevant conduct in relation to children or young people i.e., an action or inaction that has harmed a child or young person or put them at risk of harm; or
- satisfied the harm test in relation to children and young people e.g., there has been no relevant conduct but a risk of harm to a child or young person still exists; or
- been cautioned or convicted of a relevant (automatic barring either with or without the right to make representations) offence.



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Further information on relevant conduct and the harm test can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Contractors and agency staff

The principles of safe recruitment will be included in the terms of any contract drawn up between the Charity and contractors or agencies that provide services for, or adults to work with, children and young people in association with the Charity. The Charity will monitor compliance with the contract which will also include a requirement that the provider will not sub-contract to any personnel who have not been part of a safer recruitment process.

Contractors engaged by the Charity must complete the same pre-appointment checks for their employees that the Charity completes for its employees and volunteers. The Charity requires written confirmation that these checks have been completed before employees of the Contractor can commence work at the Charity, or with children and young people in association with it.

Agencies who supply staff to the Charity must also complete the same pre-appointment checks which the Charity completes for its employees or volunteers. Again, the Charity requires written confirmation that these checks have been completed before agency staff can commence work at the Charity, or with children and young people in association with it.

The Charity will independently verify the identity of all staff supplied by contractors or an agency and will require the provision of the original DBS certificate (where appropriate for the role) before contractors or agency staff can commence work at the Charity, or with children and young people in association with it.

Monitoring and evaluation

Bookmark is committed to monitoring all recruitment procedures to ensure that the best possible procedures are in place. The Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for ensuring this Policy is monitored and evaluated with respect to its effectiveness and implementation. The Safeguarding Team will meet annually to review the effectiveness of this Policy. After review, the policy will be signed off by trustees.

Safeguarding

Bookmark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being and welfare of children and young people, and all others who come into contact with the Charity. Bookmark requires all individuals who are involved or associated with the Charity - including trustees, employees, consultants and volunteers - to share this commitment. This is a key governance priority for the trustees of Bookmark.

We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and that the well-being and welfare of children and young people is paramount in all circumstances. Every child, without exception, has the right to protection from abuse regardless of race (ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, national origin), gender, gender reassignment, disability (including past disabilities), religion or beliefs (including philosophical beliefs), age or sexual orientation.



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We believe that children and young people have the right to a supportive, caring and safe environment, which includes the right to protection from all types of abuse; where all individuals who are associated with the Charity are vigilant in relation to the safety, well-being and welfare of children and young people, so that they are able to identify cases of children and young people who may need help or protection, and are confident about the appropriate action to take should they have a concern about a child's welfare, or be informed of a safeguarding concern or allegation in relation to them.

Any safeguarding concerns and allegations must be reported in accordance with Bookmark's [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#), which will be used in conjunction with the relevant Local Safeguarding Children's Board's (LSCB) safeguarding policy and procedure. Any whistle-blowing concerns in relation to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work, by any individual involved or associated with the Charity, can be raised in line with the Charity's [Whistle-blowing Policy](#).

All individuals who are associated with the Charity will be made aware that any safeguarding concerns or allegations should be raised in accordance with Bookmark's safeguarding policies and procedures and should be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead:

[For safeguarding contact details please refer to our website](#)

However, if a child or young person is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police (on 999) immediately. Anyone can make a referral. Where referrals are not made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed as soon as possible that a referral has been made. The following link will provide the relevant local children's social care contact number: Reporting child abuse to your local council (<https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse-to-local-council>)

Where a trustee, employee or volunteer feels unable to raise an issue with the Charity, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: [Advice on Whistleblowing](#); and
- The [NSPCC whistleblowing helpline](#) is available as an alternative route for those who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled. Employees can call 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed, at least annually, by the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees.



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Appendix A – Corporate Volunteering

Corporate volunteers will be identified and onboarded as part of a formal partnership between the organisation and Bookmark.

References

Bookmark will acquire a declaration from our corporate partners that the organisation took two references as part of pre-appointment checks for the proposed volunteer when joining the organisation. Two references will be sought where this declaration cannot be obtained.

The individual should provide a referee where they have worked with children in the past 5 years.

Overseas Check

In instances where Bookmark would require an overseas check from a corporate volunteer due to employment at same company in an overseas branch, Bookmark will acquire confirmation from the organisation that they are not aware of any issues relating to the time spent overseas that may affect suitability to volunteer with children and young people.

If necessary, Bookmark will undertake an internal risk assessment to support informed decision making on whether to proceed.

Appendix B - Reading Mentor

Reading Mentors are Young People referred by their secondary school working in partnership with Bookmark to read with children at one of Bookmark's partner schools.

DBS

In line with best practise, we do not require reading mentors to obtain a DBS check as they are under the age of 18. Reading mentors over the age of 18 will require a DBS check.

Application and Shortlisting

Staff at partner Secondary Schools identify and select appropriate candidates to become Reading Mentors

Reading Mentors will submit an application form via the Bookmark website. Contact details provided should be linked to the school and not personal details. For example, school address, school email etc.

References

Reading Mentors are not required to provide references as they have been identified as appropriate for the programme by their Secondary School, in line with guidance from Bookmark provided to the school.

Interviews

Reading Mentors are interviewed by at least one Safer Recruitment trained member of the Bookmark team, in a group session either online or face to face.



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A risk assessment will be undertaken following interview to support informed decision making on whether to proceed.

Reading Mentor Agreement

All Reading Mentors will be required to sign an agreement stating they understand the role, responsibilities and commitments.