



Bookmark

Volunteer Policy

Volunteer Policy

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

Our core principles for involving volunteers

Bookmark:

- recognises that volunteers are vital in leading and delivering our work – without their time and effort, we simply could not deliver our mission
- is committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing and welfare of children and young people, and expects all volunteers to share this commitment
- recognises that those who donate time want to know it is well spent and structured, and that their contribution is valued
- recognises that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to Bookmark employees, to schools and to children supported
- will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to our work
- expects that employees at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work
- recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing effective training for them to support children
- will reimburse volunteers for out-of-pocket travel expenses, when requested and in line with our Expenses Policy
- recognises that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific employee roles
- will endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure our volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible, and want volunteers to feel – and be – supported and to have a positive and rewarding experience at Bookmark.

Defining our volunteers

Bookmark defines a volunteer as someone who is willing to give their time and service of their own free will for no financial gain. This Volunteer Policy sets out the principles and practice by which Bookmark involves volunteers.

Volunteering is a two-way partnership, from which both parties can benefit. By volunteering with Bookmark, volunteers can:

- positively affect the trajectory of a child's education and love of reading, with a potentially huge impact on the rest of their life
- get the opportunity to make a positive contribution
- develop valuable new skills, training and experience to enhance professional and personal development
- be truly valued and receive ongoing support from the Bookmark team
- experience a positive impact on confidence and wellbeing



Bookmark

Volunteer Policy

- get a chance to do something new, separate from day-to-day commitments
- meet new, like-minded people in the Bookmark community, and
- experience the wonderful feeling you get from giving.

Volunteer roles

Volunteer roles are clearly defined. Bookmark's volunteer role descriptions are available on the Bookmark website and reviewed regularly by our trustees. All other roles are made available through our community and details will be provided at the time.

Bookmark has a Volunteer Advisory Board (VAB) that volunteers can apply to join. The VAB acts as a critical friend and provides independent advice, feedback, inspiration and scrutiny to the Charity on a wide variety of topics. The VAB also supports with a range of other activities, including but not limited to supporting with volunteer community building events, reviewing and testing new processes and technical systems, and acting as ambassadors for the Charity.

We have the occasional need for skilled volunteer support for our team, which also offers the opportunity for volunteers to gain experience working with the Bookmark team. These are managed on an individual basis.

The volunteer journey

The volunteer relationship is binding only in trust and mutual understanding. It is not intended to be legally binding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to give their time. Likewise, Bookmark does not provide payment or other such benefit in return for any volunteering activity.

You can read more about the regularity and commitment of our volunteering opportunities in our [Volunteer Handbook](#) and in your [Role Description](#).

Equality and diversity

As a matter of respect and dignity, we believe volunteers should be treated fairly and inclusively wherever reasonable. Our policies and procedures are designed to ensure that no volunteer receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race (ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, national origin), gender, pregnancy and maternity, marital or civil partnership status, gender reassignment, disability (including past disabilities), religion or beliefs (including philosophical beliefs), age or sexual orientation. Everyone at Bookmark has a responsibility not to discriminate on these grounds, or encourage others to do so, and to report discrimination so that appropriate action may be taken.

We recognise that people often have different needs and requirements. Volunteers are encouraged to tell us anything they need to know to ensure we can make the best of their volunteering contribution.

Further details may be found in Bookmark's [Equality & Diversity Policy](#).



Bookmark

Volunteer Policy

Safer recruitment

Further information on each of the below sections can be found in Bookmark's [Safer Recruitment Policy](#).

Advertising

Bookmark runs targeted recruitment campaigns to ensure we match the supply of volunteers with demand in schools. Examples of channels that may be used are:

- Social media: Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok
- Word of mouth referrals
- Partner schools, universities, libraries and other clubs or organisations
- Corporate partners
- Leaflets and other printed media
- Online – on our own website, through volunteer recruitment websites, such as Google advertising.

Application

People who are interested in becoming volunteers with Bookmark are required to submit an online application form. We may require separate application forms for other volunteering roles within the charity.

Following a successful review of the application, the applicant is asked to declare, as appropriate for the position, that they have no convictions, cautions or bind-overs, or if they have, to provide details (which are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and in line with our [Safer Recruitment Policy](#)).

Applicants can speak with a member of the Bookmark team for an informal discussion about the role and to ask any questions they may have.

For further information, our [Safer Recruitment Policy](#) outlines all steps and checks required to become a Bookmark volunteer.

Safeguarding checks

Volunteers must complete safeguarding checks, as appropriate, which are set out within the [Safer Recruitment Policy](#).

The Designated Safeguarding Leads will risk assess any information that has been provided to Bookmark regarding past disciplinary sanctions; or allegations, or concerns which 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.

Once volunteers are issued with a DBS check, it will be sent directly to the applicant. Volunteers are required to keep this safe and have it available to show schools, for both face-to-face and online reading sessions.



Bookmark

Volunteer Policy

Where an overseas check is required, applicants are asked to cover the costs of these checks to keep down our administrative costs and focus our resources on helping children to read. Should this be a barrier, we review individual cases and may be able to fund up to £50 towards overseas checks.

Training

All applicants are given access to our online training system, the Bookmark Library. They are required to complete the mandatory training modules that cover a wide range of topics, from how to run a reading session and engage with a child, through to safeguarding training. This includes 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.

The core, mandatory training takes approximately 1-2 hours to complete online. Our volunteers are required to complete the safeguarding training every three years, but we encourage them to revisit it regularly to refresh their knowledge. Bookmark will also send an annual safeguarding update to volunteers, with key information and changes. In the event of considerable changes being made to Bookmark's Safeguarding Policy, or new legislation being passed, we may require all volunteers to complete their training again or to complete updates. We reserve the right to temporarily stop volunteering activity for individuals who do not complete this training when requested.

Support

Volunteers are actively encouraged to engage with Bookmark and each other, through our volunteer community. To find an answer to a question or obtain support, volunteers can:

- Review FAQs in the Bookmark Library
- Attend a drop-in session facilitated by the Volunteers Team
- Get advice and support from other volunteers on our community messaging platform (Guild)
- Direct message Volunteer Services on Guild, for general queries
- Email us on info@bookmarkreading.org with any general queries
- Email us on safeguarding@bookmarkreading.org with any safeguarding concerns
- Call us on 0203 995 7960

During a reading programme, if a volunteer has a specific query about the school they are volunteering at, it is best to direct your question to the Volunteers Team.

Further information is provided through 'Support and Community' section of the Library and the [Volunteer Handbook](#) also provides a useful overview of volunteering at Bookmark and the support available.

If volunteers would like to share a compliment or complaint, please get in touch with one of the team directly.



Bookmark

Volunteer Policy

Recognition

Bookmark recognises the valuable contribution made by its volunteers in tackling the UK's literacy problems. Bookmark recognises that although volunteers do not seek financial reward, they do appreciate and value recognition in other ways. This could range from a simple 'thank you' to a social event. All individuals responsible for managing volunteers will be encouraged to ensure appropriate acknowledgement is given.

Our recognition programme may involve the use of the postal system to provide volunteers with small tokens of appreciation.

Health and safety

Bookmark will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and wellbeing while carrying out their volunteering role, in accordance with the Charity's [Health and Safety Policy](#). All volunteers will receive health and safety information as part of their training.

Expenses

It is Bookmark's policy that volunteers will be reimbursed for out-of-pocket travel expenses up to a limit of £8 per visit to a partner school per day for face-to-face reading sessions. Bookmark ensures that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out-of-pocket travel expenses. Further information is provided within the [Volunteer Expenses Policy](#).

Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by Bookmark's insurance while carrying out agreed duties. Bookmark's insurance does not cover volunteers' personal belongings.

Problem solving and complaints

Volunteers may raise concerns or make a complaint about an employee, another volunteer, or the Charity. Details of this process are covered in the [Volunteer Problem-Solving Procedure](#). Likewise, it is important that Bookmark can maintain its agreed standards of service and volunteers should enjoy making their contribution. This policy also covers action taken if the participation of a volunteer does not meet with the Charity's standards.

Moving on

Volunteers are requested to inform us if they no longer wish to volunteer at Bookmark. They will also be asked, but not required, to provide us with feedback on their volunteering experience and reason for leaving. This allows us to understand how we may improve the volunteering experience at Bookmark. Volunteers may request a reference from us after completing a suitable length of service, which we deem to be a year with a minimum of three programmes..



Bookmark

Volunteer Policy

Volunteer information

All volunteers are required to share their relevant personal details with Bookmark in relation to their volunteering role. All data is processed and retained in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Further information on how we collect, process, retain, and remove data may be found in Bookmark's [Volunteer Privacy Policy](#), and [Data Protection Policy](#).

Further information

This document has provided various links to individual supporting documents and policies. For ease of access, it is possible to view all of these in the following link: [Bookmark Policies & Procedures](#).

THANK YOU

As a Bookmark volunteer you are playing an essential role in tackling the UK's literacy problem.