



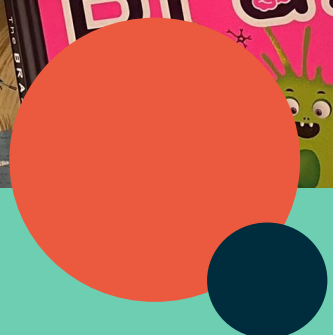
Bookmark

Change a child's story

Bookmark Reading Charity - Volunteering

A guide to being
a Bookmark volunteer!





Hello!

We are thrilled to welcome you to Bookmark Reading Charity!

Thank you so much for choosing to become a Bookmark volunteer. As a volunteer, you will play a really important role in promoting literacy and inspiring a love for reading in the children you support.

We know that igniting the joy of reading in a child can help them shape a better future. In just five years together, we have supported over 5,000 children on their way to becoming confident readers.

Across 2023-2024 we hope to complete 50,741 individual, one-to-one reading sessions with children. However, we cannot do this without our volunteers.

Our Bookmark volunteers really do mean the world to us, and we are so very grateful to you for your support. We are keen to make sure you receive the best support possible. This handbook covers everything you will need to know about volunteering with Bookmark so that you can be confident, prepared and feel ready to have a big impact on the child you are volunteering with.

Thank you again for joining our Bookmark community.



Emily Jack
Chief Executive Officer

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Why we're here

We exist to change children's life stories through the joy of reading. As a leading literacy charity for primary school children, we partner with schools to develop whole school reading cultures and provide one-to-one reading support.

1 in 4 children leave primary school unable to read well. Struggling to read can contribute to poor educational attainment and lower literacy in adulthood and has been linked to a lower life expectancy.

Because reading isn't just about books. It is about reading a road sign, a job advert, a bank statement or the prescription that could help save your life.

When a child can navigate words, they can navigate the world.

By inspiring the joy of reading we can provide the motivation to read to every child and help them succeed in life.

Our values

We have heart

- We care deeply about what we do; it is our driving force
- We believe in the potential of all children and the power of communities to support them
- We fuel our work with optimism and a positive energy, supporting each other through challenges and celebrating our achievements

We are curious

- We are interested and constantly learning so that we can adapt to improve the support we provide
- We ask questions and contribute outside of our specialties to develop great ideas
- We have the courage to challenge the norm in search of a better alternative

We are a team

- We work together with our volunteers, schools, partners and supporters
- We embrace diversity and celebrate differing perspectives and backgrounds
- We listen well and communicate clearly to seek understanding and achieve better outcomes

We act with integrity

- We are trusted to always keep safeguarding at the heart of what we do
- We are honest and open within our teams and across our communities
- We are professional and hold the highest expectations of ourselves and one another

We make it happen

- We work hard – and smart – to fulfil our promises and make an impact
- We are proud of what we have achieved and we know there is always more to do
- We each play an important role in Bookmark's story and consider how our actions impact the charity's vision





Our promise to you

We absolutely couldn't do what we do without our Bookmark volunteers. That's why we promise you that we'll actively value your contribution. We promise we'll:

Equip you with the right skills and knowledge

- We'll make sure you have a clear understanding of your role and provide you with all the policies and procedures you need to know
- We'll provide you with initial and ongoing training and guidance, so you're always fully up-to-speed

Always make sure you're supported and protected

- We'll support you throughout your volunteering journey, offering opportunities for contact and support
- We'll provide you with a comprehensive collection of frequently asked questions on all aspects of volunteering, on the Bookmark Library
- We'll provide interactive drop-in sessions and recorded sessions to help you feel more confident with volunteering
- We'll provide you with opportunities to connect with other volunteers and share ideas through messaging groups (like Guild) and events
- We'll provide you with a volunteer helpline, specifically for urgent support during online reading sessions (0203 995 7960)
- For queries about your volunteering, you can email us at info@bookmarkreading.org. You can also direct message our Volunteer Services Team on Guild
- We'll cover you with appropriate insurance while you're volunteering with us
- We'll sort any problems that you may have in your volunteer role fairly, and as quickly as we can
- We'll keep you safe with good health and safety practices
- We'll always stick to our organisational practices, policies and standards

Value you as an individual

- We'll always treat you with respect, appreciation and consideration
- We'll work with you in line with our Equality & Diversity Policy
- We'll be rooting for you and will celebrate your successes and achievements



What we expect

Our Bookmark volunteers are incredible ambassadors for our work. As you'll be representing the charity, we ask you that you always act professionally and in line with Bookmark's values.

We ask you to:

- Read and comply with your Role Description
- Commit to your reading programmes to ensure we support as many children as possible
- Make sure you treat Bookmark staff, other volunteers, the schools and their pupils with respect and consideration
- Support our values and act as a champion for Bookmark
- Make sure your skills are up-to-date by completing your training
- Log into your online reading sessions or be at the school when you've said you'll be, and if you can't be, always let the school know through the Volunteer Hub and additionally with a phone call if it is within 24 hours of your reading session
- For face-to-face sessions, always follow site security procedures at schools, such as reporting to reception on arrival, providing proof of identity and your enhanced DBS check. Please note, you can find school specific policies on their website.
- For online reading sessions, always have your proof of identity and DBS check with you as you may be asked to show this at any time
- Follow all our policies, procedures and standards, including our [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#), [Code of Conduct](#), [Complaints and Compliments Policy](#), [Social Media Guidelines for Volunteers](#), [Equality and Diversity Policy](#), and [Health and Safety Policy](#)
- Give as much notice as possible if you are no longer able to volunteer with Bookmark
- Always let us know if your contact details change. You can update these through the Volunteer Hub under My Profile. You must keep us up to date with your current key details including address, email and phone number
- Always maintain the confidentiality of information you access through your role with us
- Comply with Terms of Use for the applications, systems and platforms that we use
- Provide us with feedback through volunteer surveys and any other forums that you choose to attend, such as focus groups



How we support you

Training

Whatever your prior experience, we'll always make sure you feel prepared for your reading sessions. Our safeguarding and programme training is designed to give you the tools you need to engage with a child in a fun and meaningful way, whilst also developing their love of reading, and their literacy skills.

If you have any questions about your training or think of something else it would be handy to know for your role, please contact our Volunteers Team (via Guild or on info@bookmarkreading.org).

Support throughout your volunteering journey

Our Volunteers Team are here to provide you with dedicated support. You can find out more about how to get support through the Bookmark Library. You can also find out about our drop-in sessions, recorded sessions, volunteer events and how to connect with other volunteers on our messaging platform Guild through the Bookmark Library.

The Bookmark Library also has a suite of Frequently Asked Questions on a range of topics that you might find useful. We encourage you to familiarise yourself with this section of the Bookmark Library, particularly when preparing to start your first reading programme.

References

You can request a reference based on your volunteering work with Bookmark after completing a suitable length of service, which we deem to be a year with a minimum of three programmes. We are only able to provide factual references. This is part of our commitment to supporting our Bookmark volunteers with their own development. Please email info@bookmarkreading.org to do so.



Keeping children safe

Bookmark is committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing and welfare of children and young people, and everyone else who comes into contact with us. We require that absolutely everyone who is involved or associated with our charity - including trustees, employees, consultants and volunteers - shares this commitment.

Please remember:

- You're not alone! Within Bookmark and each individual school, there is a dedicated team of Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) who are always available, should you ever have any concerns about a child
- If you have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child, you have a duty to report these concerns, so that the right people can help
- If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact the Bookmark safeguarding line 020 3995 7960. This will be answered by one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads
- You can also email us on safeguarding@bookmarkreading.org with any concerns

Ensuring child safety and wellbeing is at the heart of what we do, so you will receive safeguarding training during your induction. We will also provide you with regular safeguarding updates. All our volunteers are required to complete safeguarding training and read and adhere to our [Code of Conduct](#) and [Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#). If you have any questions about these, we're here to answer them.



Volunteering with children

Gifts

We encourage you to have a positive relationship with the children and schools you support. However, you must not give any personal gifts to children. It may be inappropriate for reasons you're not aware of, give the impression of favouritism, or raise expectations of the level of support you can provide. Bookmark volunteers must also not accept gifts of monetary value from children or the school (gifts such as thank you letters or pictures drawn by the child are absolutely fine!). If you are unsure whether you can accept a gift, please contact the Volunteers Team (via info@bookmarkreading.org).

Mobile phone use

Remember not to use your mobile phone when you're with a child, or have your mobile phone in view at schools, whether that be online or face-to-face.



Representing Bookmark

What to wear

Whether you are volunteering online or face-to-face, it is important to dress appropriately and comfortably. This includes wearing clothes that are clean, do not carry wording or pictures that may be considered offensive or inappropriate for children to see. If you're still not sure what to wear, contact us on info@bookmarkreading.org and we'll be happy to help.

Code of Conduct

You are a representative for Bookmark while carrying out your volunteering role, so we ask you to conduct and present yourself in line with our values and [Code of Conduct](#). If you have any questions about conduct whilst in your Bookmark volunteer role, speak to the Volunteers Team (via Guild or info@bookmarkreading.org).

Social media

We would absolutely love you to share your experiences and tell others about Bookmark through social media. We expect that any information or opinions posted by our Bookmark volunteers represent our charity positively.

Any posts should not conflict with any of our commitments to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of information relating to children, schools, Bookmark and its employees and volunteers, and others associated with Bookmark. Further guidance is set out in our [Social Media Guidance for Volunteers](#).



A few things to know

We value diversity

Diversity is really important to us and we're committed to ensuring that our opportunities are accessible to all, so that children can benefit from reading volunteers from all walks of life. Find out more in our [Equality and Diversity policy](#).

We want you to be happy and healthy

We ask you to be sure to take reasonable care of your own health and safety and of others who may be affected by your actions, and to report any health and safety incidents or concerns to the Bookmark Team on info@bookmarkreading.org. Bookmark has the appropriate insurance in place to protect volunteers. You can find further information in our [Health and Safety Policy](#).

Your wellbeing, health and safety are very important to us. Health and safety information is included in your induction with the school when you first visit for face-to-face sessions. School specific health and safety policies can be found on the school website.

Please update us with any changes to your contact details

We understand that your contact details may change over time. It is important that you let us know any changes to your address, phone number and email address as soon as possible. You can do this by updating the My Profile section in the Volunteer Hub.

We understand that plans change

We try to make our reading programmes as accessible as possible. Volunteering is a commitment, and we encourage volunteers to book reading programmes when they can fulfil the full commitment. However, we also understand that sometimes things come up, such as illness or important appointments. If you are unable to make a reading session, please let your school know as soon as you can by cancelling through the Volunteer Hub. If you need to cancel within 24 hours of the session, please additionally phone the school office to let them know. This will ensure that the relevant school staff and child have been informed.

We're here if things go wrong

If you have a problem while volunteering with Bookmark, please let the Volunteers Team know as soon as possible. We take your concerns very seriously and will do our best to resolve them as quickly as we can. You can find more information in our [Volunteer Problem Solving Procedure](#).

We recognise that circumstances change

We understand that sometimes circumstances change, and you may want to end your volunteering with Bookmark. We ask that you let the Volunteers Team know by contacting info@bookmarkreading.org, and we might ask volunteers a few questions to help us improve the volunteer experience before you leave. You have no obligation to provide feedback, but if you can we do really appreciate it.



...and a few more things

Expenses

We will happily reimburse volunteers for any reasonable out-of-pocket travel expenses. We will reimburse the amount that you have spent as a result of your volunteering, up to agreed maximum levels. It's entirely up to you as to whether you want to claim expenses or not. Find further information in our [Volunteer Expenses Policy](#).

Copyright

Sometimes we take photographs and videos of volunteers, which we use to promote Bookmark's work. If you'd prefer we didn't use your image, please just let the Volunteers Team (via info@bookmarkreading.org) or Bookmark photographer know at the time. All copyrights and any other intellectual property rights in relation to your volunteering (such as photographs and the results of research) belong to us, unless agreed otherwise.

If volunteers are taking part in an arranged photoshoot, we will obtain consent ahead of time.

Confidentiality

We are committed to maintaining high standards of confidentiality in all aspects of our work. Throughout your time volunteering, you may come across confidential information such as details about children, or people that children tell you about, as well as information about other volunteers and Bookmark employees. We ask that volunteers treat all personal and sensitive information as confidential and do not share or retain any such information, including identity information such as name, address or contact details. However, you must never make promises of confidentiality or secrecy to children.

No photographs may be taken of children on mobile phones or otherwise. If you have a concern about anything you learn through volunteering, please contact the Volunteers Team (via info@bookmarkreading.org) or if the concern is about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, report it to our Designated Safeguarding Leads by phoning the Bookmark safeguarding line 020 3995 7970.

Other ways to support us

There are lots of other ways for you to get involved with Bookmark!
The ideas below can help you get started.



Spread the word

We'd love you to tell your friends and family about your volunteering and the work of Bookmark. Let them know what you've been up to via [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) by giving us a follow!



Take on a new challenge

From taking on a half marathon to holding a cake sale or book drive, there are many challenges you can take on to fundraise and help children to discover the joy of reading. You can easily pay in the money you've raised online via our [donate](#) page, or simply set up a [JustGiving](#) page [here](#) in aid of Bookmark. Don't forget to let us know so that we can cheer you on and celebrate your fantastic achievement!



Fundraise while you shop

You could be raising money for Bookmark every time you shop online, at no extra cost to you. [Give As You Live](#) and [easyfundraising](#) turn a percentage of every penny you spend into a donation for Bookmark.



Share your feedback

It is so important to us that our services reflect the needs of the children, young people and schools we support, as well as the volunteers we work with. Your insights, opinions and ideas help us ensure we are providing the best services possible, so that we can fulfil our vision. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any thoughts or feedback.



Join our Volunteer Advisory Board

Bookmark has a Volunteer Advisory Board (VAB) that volunteers can apply to join. The VAB acts as a critical friend and provides independent advice and scrutiny to the charity on a wide variety of topics, as well as supporting with a range of other activities.



Check out our other ways to volunteer

We're always looking for more ways that volunteers can help us to support more children. You could help us as a Community Ambassador or Session Coordinator - you can find more information on the Bookmark Library. Additionally, we have one-off volunteering options for corporates when it comes to team building activities - please do get in touch to find out more.



Sign up to our newsletter

Sign up [here](#) to receive our termly newsletter to keep up to date with exciting news about our achievements, campaigns and events that are coming up!



Get in touch

Email info@bookmarkreading.org

Call 020 3995 7960

Address Bookmark Reading Charity,
3rd Floor Charles House, 5-11 Regent Street,
London, SW1Y 4LR



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Thank you

(and welcome to the team!)