

Volunteer Policy

This Volunteer Policy sets out Read Easy UK's vision for involving volunteers in our work and that of our Affiliated Groups, not only when coaching Readers but at all levels and in all stages of the Organisation's development. Read Easy UK recognises the contribution of volunteers in enabling the charity to achieve its vision, which is for all adults in the UK to have the literacy skills they need to realise their potential and live life to the full. We achieve this by harnessing the initiative, energy, skills and experience of volunteers and by equipping them to provide confidential, one-to-one reading coaching for adults in their communities who want to improve their reading.

Introduction

The Volunteer Policy and accompanying guidelines are intended to provide guidance for everyone involved in Read Easy, including prospective volunteers. The policy outlines the principles on which the relationship between volunteers, our Affiliated Groups and the Charity are based and provides basic information about volunteering with us and our Affiliated Groups.

In issuing this Volunteer Policy Read Easy UK wishes to:

- formally acknowledge and support the role of Volunteers in its work and that of its Affiliated Groups;
- set out the principles governing the involvement of Volunteers and provide a set of guidelines to ensure good practice in working with Volunteers;
- encourage and enable, rather than restrict, the involvement of Volunteers.

The term "Volunteer" refers to those volunteering for Read Easy UK (REUK) or our Affiliates.

Recruitment and selection of Volunteers

We are committed to providing inclusive and accessible volunteer opportunities that will attract people with a wide range of skills and experiences and from all backgrounds.

The role that someone is coming into will determine how we engage with them on their journey to become a volunteer. Through the application process data will be collected on our volunteers that is appropriate for the role being applied for.

We are committed to providing a safe environment for everyone, including staff, Volunteers and the people we support. To support this, the recruitment process includes the requesting of two references in order to carry out background checks. A Disclosure and Barring Check (DBS) may also be carried out, either during the recruitment process or at a later date if the volunteer is to work with an adult "at risk".

Further guidance about our procedures for recruiting Volunteers is contained in the appendices to this policy.



When Volunteers join the Organisation, we will discuss our expectations of our Volunteers and what they can expect from their volunteering experience. We will also share Read Easy's ethos and values. These are to practise:

respect, sensitivity, kindness, generosity, patience, tolerance, honesty and openness to all.

We also ask everyone in Read Easy to:

- recognise the dignity, present abilities and potential of those who can't yet read and seek to release that potential;
- put the Reader first in everything we do;
- make involvement in Read Easy enjoyable and rewarding for all;
- create a mutually-supportive sense of community – nationally and locally – which appreciates and promotes diversity and where everyone is known and everyone matters;
- provide, expect and maintain high standards of professionalism at all levels as a volunteer organisation;
- listen openly to constructive feedback and try to respond constructively;
- ensure that no one feels obliged to volunteer or to do more than they want to do, and
- recognise and appreciate everyone's contributions and celebrate achievement.

Induction and training

All Volunteers receive an induction when they join the Organisation or take on a new role. This may include a discussion regarding the role and meeting with either the Coordinator/Team Leader or Regional Adviser as appropriate for their role.

Volunteers fulfil many specific and specialist roles and it is essential that all Volunteers are appropriately skilled to carry out their chosen role. Training is to be undertaken when required for specific roles as described in the handbook relevant to the volunteer role. At the same time, we remain committed to recognising the existing skills, knowledge and experience of all our Volunteers.

Volunteers' responsibilities

All staff and Volunteers are responsible for adhering to the requirements of the policy and related procedures. We ask that all Volunteers:

- work to the values that Read Easy has at its core,
- follow the policies and procedures relating to their role, and
- participate as part of their Read Easy group or as part of Read Easy UK.

Moving on

Volunteers may choose to leave their volunteer role at any time and we will give Volunteers the opportunity to feed back on their volunteering experience.

We ask that volunteers, where possible, give a month's notice should they wish to leave Read Easy UK or one of our groups, in order to plan how to cover their role. This is



particularly important for volunteer Coaches as, where possible, it allows time for the Coach to be replaced so that the Reader does not lose the support they require.

References

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference

Support and oversight

Read Easy UK is committed to ensuring that all volunteers receive an appropriate level of support and oversight. How and by whom this is provided will vary according to role. All Volunteers will be informed as to who will be their first port of call for support during their volunteering. For Pioneers and Team Leaders this will be the Regional Adviser, for Management Team members and Coordinators it will generally be the Team Leader, and for Coaches the Coordinator. The intention is to offer an opportunity to discuss the volunteer's achievements, to resolve any problems that may arise, to act as a point of contact and direction, and to ensure the smooth running of the activity in a way that is rewarding for those involved.

Local groups will also aim to hold regular meetings at least three times a year for their Coaches. This gives the Coaches an opportunity to discuss their experiences and receive further guidance and on-going training.

An Annual Review will be held between the Team Leader and the Regional Adviser, to create an opportunity for the Management Team to reflect on the work of the Group and plan the Team's actions for the following year.

Resolving problems

The Organisation cannot overstate the importance of Volunteers and we are grateful for their invaluable support. Most Volunteers find the time they spend with us to be enjoyable and rewarding.

It is important that any differences of opinion or areas of concern are settled as quickly as possible. A Volunteer can withdraw their offer of support at any time. Read Easy UK and Affiliates are also not obliged to offer or continue offering any opportunity to any Volunteer. Further details on how any complaint, issue or concern will be managed are detailed in the guidance section of this document.

Data protection and confidentiality

All Volunteer data is kept securely in accordance with our Data Protection Policy and data protection laws

Volunteers may see or hear personal information relating to people who Read Easy supports, as well as fellow Volunteers and employees. Volunteers must do their utmost to keep all data accurate and secure in line with the Data Protection Policy.

Expenses

The overall principle is that ideally Volunteers would not be out of pocket as a result of their volunteering and that all Volunteers must seek to get good value for the Organisation. Local Group volunteers would need to see their own Affiliated Group's expenses policy and make claims in accordance with this. Pioneers should refer to the Pioneer Handbook for information on Read Easy UK's policy on Pioneer expenses.



Health and Safety

The health and safety of Volunteers is very important to us. Responsibility for health and safety is held jointly between the Organisation, its affiliates, through its policies and procedures, as well as all individuals who work or volunteer for the Organisation. Groups should ensure that Volunteers are aware of and adhere to the Venue and Lone Worker policy, in particular, in relation to health and safety.

Insurance

All Volunteers will be covered by our Public and Employers' Liability Insurance. In order to maintain your cover, we ask that you both check the criteria for cover when planning a fundraising event, and pay close attention to the Venue and Lone Worker Policy, especially with regard to the venues in which Readers and Coaches meet. Failure to abide by our policies and procedures may result in you not being covered by our insurance.

Safeguarding

We strive to ensure that all adults at risk, which includes our Volunteers when they fall under these definitions, are able to engage with the Organisation safely. Our Adult Safeguarding Policy ensures that all Volunteers, staff and other representatives understand their responsibility to respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

Anti-Harassment

The Anti-Harassment Policy is in place to ensure that all those working or volunteering for Read Easy UK or its Affiliated Groups, are treated and treat others with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying. All Volunteers and Employees should take the time to ensure they understand the types of behaviour that are unacceptable under this Policy.

Social media

Social media is a valuable tool for us to use to connect with those within Read Easy and the general public. The Social Media Guidelines are provided to empower our volunteers to use social media and ensure that local groups remain within the Read Easy brand. They also provide guidance on social media etiquette. Groups should also see our Adult Safeguarding Policy, Data Protection Policy and Photograph and Publicity Permission Form to ensure social media is used safely and appropriately.

This policy was reviewed and revised by Read Easy UK in December 2019.

Appendix A

Guidance and procedures for the recruitment and selection of Volunteers

Please read Read Easy's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy in conjunction with this guidance.

Recruitment of Volunteers by Affiliated Groups

Recruitment of Volunteers is usually an ongoing process and Affiliated Groups may use a number of different methods for attracting Volunteers. Enquirers will be provided with a role description and the opportunity if they wish to discuss the role in more detail before applying.

Potential volunteers should then complete an application form. Applicants will be asked to provide two referees and should be aware that if they fail to provide adequate references then the Affiliated Group reserves the right to reject their application at any point.

If on the basis of the application form the applicant appears to meet the criteria, then he or she will be invited for an interview to discuss the opportunities within the Affiliated Group and the skills and abilities they can offer as a volunteer.

After the interview, if successful, the Volunteer Recruiter or Coordinator will inform him/her of the time, date and location of the training session and/or their induction into their volunteering role. The recruitment process will not be considered complete until after the Applicant has attended any necessary training, undertaken the first few weeks of volunteering and, where appropriate, has been observed during a Reading Coach Monitoring Session.

DBS checks

The Affiliated Group may at any stage, whether during or after the recruitment process, ask the applicant to undergo an Enhanced DBS check if they are to work with an adult "at risk", in accordance with the DBS Check Policy. Applicants should be reminded that having a criminal record will not necessarily bar them from volunteering within the Affiliated Group. Please see the DBS Check Policy for more information.

The Volunteer Recruiter will keep the name and details of the Volunteer on file until an appropriate volunteering opportunity arises, taking into account the geographical area in which the Volunteer is willing and able to work, as well as any other preferences expressed.

Records

Minimum details should be kept on Volunteers. This will include the application form, references and any other relevant information such as emergency contact details. Record keeping must be secure adhering to Data Protection Policy. The Data Protection Act enables people to access information held about them.



Volunteer Commitment

The Volunteer Recruiter or Coordinator will ask the volunteer Coach or Coordinator to sign a Volunteer Commitment which signals the Volunteer's willingness to abide by the Affiliated Group's policies and procedures. Once this agreement has been signed, the Volunteer will be covered by the Affiliated Group's Public Liability and Employers' Liability insurance.

Management Team Commitment

The Team Leader will ask new members of the Management Team to sign a Management Team Commitment to indicate that they have read the group's Constitution, the Affiliation Agreement with Read Easy UK and other relevant handbooks and policies for their role, and that they are willing to abide by the agreements and guidance they contain.

Pioneer Recruitment

Volunteers who are interested in pioneering a new group are recruited by a Read Easy UK Regional Adviser. Before proceeding with the application process to become a Pioneer, Volunteers are asked to research and investigate the feasibility of setting up a Read Easy group in their area.

The viability of setting up the new group is then discussed by the Volunteer with the Regional Adviser and agreed by the Regional Adviser's line manager. If it is agreed, the Volunteer will complete an application form and provide two referees, and an informal interview will be held with the Regional Adviser before the applicant is taken on as a Pioneer. Further details are available in the 'Introduction for potential Pioneers' document.

Before proceeding to pioneer, the Volunteer will be asked to sign a Pioneer Agreement which outlines the responsibilities of both the Pioneer and Read Easy UK.

On-going support and supervision is then provided by the Regional Adviser.

Appendix B Resolving problems

If you have a complaint, issue or a concern in relation to your volunteering, there is a choice of either a formal or informal route to raise awareness of the situation.

Informal

Try not to let irritations build up too much when they may be easily resolved. First of all, go and talk to the person responsible for managing your volunteering. This may be a member of the group's Management Team, Coordinator or in the case of Pioneers your Regional Adviser.

If you feel unable to approach the person who supports you because the problem is caused by them, then contact the group's Team Leader, or in the case of Pioneers contact the Head of Operations.

The person you have contacted should respond within 20 days and may provide one of the following responses:

- If they think you are mistaken, they should explain why.
- If they agree and can remedy the situation, they should thank you for raising the matter and tell you how and when the situation will be remedied.
- If they consider that it is not an individual matter, but rather a policy or procedure beyond their scope and affecting others, they should refer the issue to their Regional Adviser or the Regional Adviser's line manager. If the line manager thinks your complaint is justified but cannot remedy the situation themselves (or at that stage), they should take up the matter with their manager who will escalate the matter as necessary on your behalf and keep you informed of progress.

Formal

In most cases the approach described above will resolve the problem. However, if you genuinely feel this isn't the case then a more formal approach may be needed. The person responsible for your volunteering will be able to provide more support and will be responsible for leading this process. If the Coordinator or a Management Team member is the subject of the complaint, please contact your group's Team Leader, if the Team Leader is the subject of the complaint, contact their Regional Adviser and if the Regional Adviser is the subject of the complaint, contact the Head of Operations

A Complaints Panel of two appropriate people, not involved with the complaint will need to be set up. You will be asked to provide a detailed account of the complaint, issue or concern. You may be asked to attend a meeting with the Complaints Panel and you may wish to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer to provide moral support.

Once the Complaints Panel has gathered all the relevant information, you will be appropriately advised of the outcome by letter or email, which should also provide the name



of someone who would be responsible for managing an appeal.

Appeal

In exceptional cases, if you feel that your problem has not been dealt with fairly, or relevant details have not been considered, you can appeal the decision in writing to the Appeal Manager named in the email or letter.

- If you intend to appeal you will need to do so within 20 days.
- The Appeal Manager will consider the matter to determine whether there is a just reason to progress with the appeal.
- If they agree there are grounds for an appeal, you may be invited to a meeting to discuss your appeal and you can ask a fellow volunteer to accompany you.
- The Appeal Manager will aim to inform you of the outcome of the appeal within 20 days of receiving the request. However, this will be dependent on the complexity of the situation.
- The Appeal Manager's decision is final. There will be no further opportunities to pursue the issue.

Appendix C

What if Read Easy UK or an Affiliated Group has a complaint, issue or a concern involving you?

As general principles:

- every effort will be made to deal with issues as informally and as quickly as circumstances allow;
- consideration will be given to whether you have been briefed on what is expected of you and, if appropriate, any training and development needs have been met;
- alternative volunteering opportunities will be sought where appropriate;
- the complaint, issue or concern should be dealt with by the person managing your volunteering.

Informal

Usually, you will be advised by the person who manages your volunteering or activity that a complaint, issue or concern involving you has occurred. They will contact you within 20 days of the information becoming available to them or having decided themselves that an issue needs to be addressed. In most cases this can be resolved through discussion and mutual agreement about any required changes.

Formal

If a serious complaint is made concerning your actions or behaviour, you may find that a more formal investigation needs to be carried out and, in some cases, your opportunity to volunteer may need to be suspended whilst the matter is resolved. The temporary withdrawal of the volunteering opportunity will be based on the seriousness of the issue and the potential risks associated with it. It is important that you understand that this is a safety precaution to protect you as well as Read Easy. You will be offered support and advice if this happens.

You will be given the opportunity to discuss the issue and to put forward your views on the complaint, issue or concern. You can ask a fellow volunteer to accompany you for moral support to the meeting. (Please note that a meeting may not take place and a decision made in your absence.)

Once all the information considered relevant has been gathered, you will be advised of the outcome, which could be:

- recognition that the complaint is unfounded and support will be offered to help you resume your volunteering, or
- you will need to agree an action plan for the changes needed before you can continue volunteering, or
- volunteering in certain activities may not be appropriate, but transfer to another role may be possible, or
- your opportunity to volunteer with Read Easy will be withdrawn.



Appeal

This stage only applies when the outcome is the latter two of those listed above. In such cases, you will be asked to write down the details of what you felt was not considered in the original decision or why you felt the process was unfair. Advice will be available to you during this stage. This written communication should be sent to the Appeal Manager, the person named in the email or letter sent to you confirming the outcome. If you want to appeal, you should do this within 20 days of the date of the outcome.

The Appeal Manager will consider the matter to determine whether there is a just reason to progress with the appeal. If appropriate you may be invited to a meeting and you can ask a fellow volunteer to accompany you.

The Appeal Manager will aim to inform you of the outcome of the appeal within 20 days of receipt of the appeal request. However, this will be dependent on the complexity of the situation.

The Appeal Manager's decision is final. There will be no further opportunities to pursue the issue.



Complaints, Issues or Concerns Process - Flowchart

