

Volunteer Policy, Procedures & Guidance

Introduction

The aim of ABC to read ("The Charity") is to help as many young children as possible, who attend schools in Berkshire and surrounding counties, to become confident and successful readers.

The Charity was set up in 2004, as a mentoring scheme, to link community volunteers with children at primary school who are under achieving for a variety of reasons.

Role of the Volunteer

The Charity's volunteers are people from the local community who spend half an hour, usually, twice a week, with each child they mentor, sharing books and conversation, playing games and doing other literacy-based activities. Volunteers usually work with the same three children for up to a year.

Volunteers may also support the work of The Charity by becoming a trustee or assisting with fundraising, publicity or other roles deemed appropriate by the Operational Management Committee (OMC). All such roles will have a Volunteer Role Description.

Commitment to volunteering

The Charity greatly values the commitment made by the volunteers. It is acknowledged that The Charity has responsibilities towards its volunteers and similarly has expectations of them. In providing a volunteer policy and agreement it ensures that the relationship between the organisation and the volunteer is clear to both The Charity and the individual. The policy and agreement do not create a contract of employment or any other legally binding obligation.

Please be aware that it costs ABC to Read approximately £700 to recruit and train each volunteer. We are a charitable organization and have to work extremely hard to raise funds to enable us to continue with our work. We therefore ask that, barring unforeseen circumstances, our volunteers commit to a minimum of 12 months to justify the recruitment and training costs. If you feel that you cannot fully commit to a minimum period of 12 months, unfortunately it is not economically viable for us to take you on. However, should a person not be able to continue due to unforeseen health or family reasons this would of course be viewed sympathetically.

Recruitment

Advertising is usually through the Volunteer Centres but other avenues for recruitment may include web site links, media coverage and leaflets, recruitment events and personal recommendation.

Once an applicant expresses an interest in volunteering for The Charity an information pack will be posted or emailed. The pack contains the following;

- Response to enquiry (VP1)
- Volunteer Role Description (VP2)
- Volunteer Application form (VP3 and ABC4)

- Equal Opportunities Monitoring form (VP4)
- Training dates and details
- ABC to read leaflet

On receipt of an application form the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will contact the applicant either to arrange an interview or send a rejection letter (VP5) explaining why the application cannot proceed.

Interviews are conducted by the CEO and/or other suitably trained member of staff or trustees and may last up to an hour.

Each interview will follow a standard format (see VP6). A standard range of questions will be used to ascertain suitability based around the role description and person specification (VP7).

An Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) Disclosure application must be completed at the interview, including a request for information on whether the applicant is legally barred from working with children. The DBS gives strict guidance on what forms of documentation are acceptable as evidence of identity (including any previous names) and all addresses during the previous five years and The Charity will adhere to such guidance that is current at the time of the application. Where such acceptable documentation is not forthcoming, The Charity reserves the right to seek and follow further guidance from the DBS.

A decision to accept an applicant as a volunteer is always conditional upon:

- receipt of a minimum of two confidential references. Referees must be in a position to make informed comment on the applicant's suitability to work with children and to undertake this kind of voluntary work. Unless otherwise agreed, a referee must have known the applicant for at least two years. Testimonials and open references will not be accepted in the place of confidential references.
- a negative (i.e. clear) Enhanced Disclosure (with Barring Checks) by the DBS. (See Safeguarding policy).

In the case of a positive disclosure (i.e. one that reveals unspent convictions, police cautions and/or warnings, etc) The Charity has a policy for the recruitment of ex-offenders (ABC4). The CEO will take into consideration the following factors;

- whether the conviction is relevant to this position
- the seriousness of the offence; how long ago
- whether there is a pattern of offending behaviour
- the circumstances surrounding the offence and
- the explanation offered.

(However, The Charity will never knowingly accept an application from or place in a school a person legally barred from working with children.)

If the applicant is unhappy about the CEO's decision they may appeal to the Safeguarding Trustee, whose decision is final.

Successful applicants will be invited to attend the training course, (VP10) a prerequisite but not a guarantee to becoming an active volunteer. In the event of an unsuccessful application, a letter explaining this will be sent after the interview (VP9).

All aspects of recruitment will be operated in accordance with the provisions of The Charity's policies and in particular it's Equal Opportunities Policy (ABC1) and Safeguarding Policy.

Induction and Training

Prospective volunteers will attend a training course which is part of the selection process. Placement in a school is subject to successful completion of the course as well as satisfactory references and DBS disclosure (see above).

The course cover topics such as finding out why children do not learn to read easily, child protection, motivational techniques and the value of playing appropriate games as well as relevant health and safety advice. All sessions must be completed before placement in a school.

Placement in school is arranged by a Field Worker who will accompany the new volunteer on an introductory visit to meet the Headteacher or other senior member of staff (see Staff P&P Placement and Support of volunteers).

The volunteer will be shown where he/she will work and be given information about the children to be helped, as well as relevant Health and Safety information and Fire Safety information.

The volunteer is given The Charity's handbook containing practical advice and information and also relevant policies.

The volunteer will sign an agreement (Volunteer Policy Document and Agreement).

After a number of sessions in school a Field Worker will visit the volunteer to ensure that he/she is working safely and sensitively with the children and is not experiencing any problems.

On completion of a successful visit and follow up session the volunteer will receive a welcome letter from the CEO confirming their appointment. (VP15)

Supervision and Support

Each new volunteer has a named contact within The Charity. This will normally be the Field Worker who arranged the placement. The Field Worker will give a contact number for the volunteer and will telephone him/her after the first session in school.

The Field Worker will make the initial visit and thereafter be on hand to resolve any difficulties and/or give appropriate ongoing advice.

The Field Worker will visit again in the term following placement and then as often as is necessary, but at least once a year.

Volunteers will be given the opportunity to raise any concerns at every visit

The Field Worker will make contact with each volunteer, once a term, by telephone, visit or at volunteer meetings.

A Book Exchange is arranged once a term to enable volunteers to change resources. A coffee morning is arranged once a term to allow volunteers to meet others and share ideas and challenges.

A newsletter will be issued once a term to all volunteers.

Insurance

The Charity has a public liability insurance to cover any accident on school premises.

Volunteers' cars and personal possessions are not covered by The Charity even when parked or left in the school car park.

You should advise your insurer that you are undertaking voluntary work for a charity to ensure that you are fully covered when travelling to and from school.

Expenses

Volunteers may claim expenses for travelling to the training course, and other meetings, as well as their regular visits to school.

Mileage is paid at a fixed rate up to a maximum of 10 miles round trip – the distance may be increased at the CEO's discretion if, for example, the volunteer is asked to work at a school more than 5 miles from their home.

Claims for travel on public transport should be supported by the relevant receipts.

Expenses are reimbursed at the end of each term and a claim form for the following term is sent out at the same time (VP16).

Volunteers should not buy any resources for which they would like reimbursement without approval by the CEO.

POLICIES

The following are The Charity's main Policies and The Charity requires strict compliance with them. It is therefore essential that these are read, and fully understood, by the volunteer.

Safeguarding and Confidentiality

Safeguarding and confidentiality are central to The Charity's ethos and reputation. The Charity's Confidentiality Policy (ABC5) appears on the website and a copy is available upon request. The Volunteer Policy Document and Agreement, that the volunteer has signed, includes the important aspects.

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- **NB- Included above**

First Aid, Allergies and Emergencies

Volunteers are not first-aid trained by ABC to read and are not expected to diagnose, treat or administer medication to pupils. If a child becomes unwell, has an allergic reaction or there is another medical emergency, volunteers should **immediately alert an appropriate member of school staff and follow the school's emergency procedures**. Volunteers must also follow the school's requirements relating to allergies, food and drink, and complete any emergency or allergy training required by the school.

For further information, please see the **Volunteer First Aid, Allergy and Emergency Safety Policy**.

Data Protection Policy

The charity's General Data Protection Policy appears on the website and is available upon request. ABC to read is committed to protecting your privacy and complying with the Data Protection Act 1998. Our policy sets out the basis by which we collect, use and disclose personal data, as well as your rights in respect of such Personal Data. We may update our Privacy Notice from time to time and will publish an up-to-date copy of the Privacy Notice on the charity website

Equal opportunities and diversity

ABC to Read's Equal Opportunities Policy appears on the website and is available upon request. The Volunteer Policy Document and Agreement that the volunteer has signed includes the important aspects

Health and safety

ABC to read's Health and Safety Policy appears on the website and is available upon request. The Volunteer Policy Document and Agreement that the volunteer has signed includes the important aspects

Complaints by Volunteers

There may be occasions when a volunteer may wish to raise a problem or concern relating to their volunteering, whether that is about the school, a child, a member of The Charity's staff or perhaps another volunteer.

The Charity encourages communication between all parties so that, where possible, problems can be aired and resolved informally, preferably with the assistance of a Field Worker. It is therefore important to raise any concern at an early stage before it becomes a difficult issue to resolve or continually worries a volunteer. In the unlikely event that resolution is not achievable informally, and a more formal approach is required, then The Charity's procedure is as follows:

If it relates to the school

The volunteer should contact the CODO by telephone, letter or email. The CEO will arrange to meet with the volunteer in order to listen and record their concerns.

If necessary, the CEO will contact the Headteacher at the school and report back to the volunteer within 14 working days. If this is not possible the volunteer will be informed why and when the CEO will report back to the volunteer.

The CEO will inform both parties of the decision and make any arrangements for any changes in support/school as a result of the decision.

If the volunteer is unhappy with the decision an appeal may be made to the Chair of Trustees ("Chair") of The Charity.

Extra Ordinary Complaints

The volunteer should contact the Chair by telephone, letter or email. The Chair will arrange to meet with the volunteer in order to listen and record their concerns. The Chair may need to make further enquires or investigate the complaint

The Chair will report back to the volunteer within 14 working days. If this is not possible the volunteer will be informed why and when the Chair will report back and arrange to discuss the next step.

The Chair will then take any agreed action within an agreed timescale with the volunteer. If the volunteer is unhappy with the decision, an appeal may be made to the CEO within 14 working days of the Chair's decision.

Complaints about Volunteers

If a problem, concern or complaint is raised by a child, school, The Charity's staff member or other volunteer then, unless the matter is very serious, including for example relating to a child protection issue or breach of confidentiality, The Charity's policy is to deal with the matter informally through communication between all parties so that where possible the matter can be resolved informally, preferably with the assistance of a Field Worker.

In the unlikely event that this has not been possible The Charity's procedure is as follows:

1. An informal meeting will be arranged between the CEO and the volunteer and the issue explored, allowing the volunteer to voice his/her concern or explain his/her side of the story.
2. The CEO will advise the volunteer of the outcome within 14 working days of the meeting.
3. Where further investigation or enquiry is necessary this will be undertaken as soon as possible and ideally within 14 working days of the first meeting but if that is not possible, then the CEO will advise the volunteer when the investigation will be completed. The CEO will advise the volunteer of the outcome within 14 working days of completing the investigation.
4. If the issue can be resolved amicably no further action need be taken.
5. Where appropriate, further support or training will be offered.
6. If the CEO considers it necessary, based upon The Charity's policies, a mutually agreed plan of action will be set for implementation within a set time and a note of this placed on the volunteer's record file. The details of the meeting will be confirmed to the volunteer in writing.
7. If after the set period of time the plan has not been implemented either in part or whole then the CEO may terminate the volunteer placement.

8. If the CEO considers, based upon The Charity's policies, that it is not possible to resolve the situation or is too serious, the volunteer placement will be terminated immediately and this will be confirmed in writing.
9. If a decision is made to terminate the voluntary placement the volunteer has a right of appeal to the Chair within 14 working days of the decision. The trustee's decision is final.

Recognition of volunteers

The Charity recognises the individual efforts of the volunteers by giving awards for length of service and Volunteer of the Year. These are presented at the Annual General Meeting or other suitable meeting of the charity.

Leaving ABC to read

Volunteers leave organisations for a variety of reasons and, while it is sad to see them go, it is important to learn from their experience of volunteering for The Charity.

The CEO will usually telephone or meet the leaver to determine the reason and to give the volunteer an opportunity to discuss his/her time in school. All leavers will be sent an exit form (VP22) which will ask for feedback about their time with The Charity and will also give the volunteer the opportunity to join the charity's email Friends and Supporters group.

Every leaver receives a letter from the Chair expressing thanks and appreciation for his/her contribution (VP21).

ABC to read is committed to protecting your privacy and complying with the Data Protection Act 1998.

ABC to read's privacy policy sets out the basis by which we collect, use and disclose personal data, as well as your rights in respect of such Personal Data.

We may update this Privacy Notice from time to time and will publish an up-to-date copy of the Privacy Notice on the charity website