

Volunteer Policy

Updated March 2026 by Angele Tilly, Senior Volunteer Manager

Date	Changes made to policy	Reason for change	Person signing off changes
24/03/26	Update Policy of recruitment of ex-offender Update on staff	Updated policy	AT

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Introduction

The Literacy Pirates believes in the value of the work and support of our volunteers. We take responsibility for ensuring that volunteers within the Literacy Pirates are appropriately involved, valued for their contribution, and respected as colleagues.

In this policy we use the term 'Volunteer' or 'Crewmate' interchangeably, and this will always refer to anyone doing volunteer work with the Literacy Pirates.

Volunteering Contacts

The Volunteer Team:

- volunteering@literacypirates.org
- 020 3327 1777

Senior Volunteer Manager:

- Angele Tilly: angele.tilly@literacypirates.org

Volunteer Coordinators:

- Amelia Logue: amelia.logue@literacypirates.org
- Muhib Miah: muhib.miah@literacypirates.org

Equal Opportunities & Our EDI Policy

What is EDI?:

When we refer to EDI at the Literacy Pirates we are focusing on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

- Equity is making sure that we create opportunities that ensure our staff, Crewmates, Young Pirates and families are not unfairly prevented from accessing resources or opportunities. We take steps to prevent others from having an unfair advantage and proactively focus on offering more than equality of opportunity. Instead of offering everyone the same thing, we aim to give people what they need to ensure fair access. We want to proactively work toward closing the existing gaps between individuals.

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- Diversity is the presence of differences within our setting. As an organisation we want to encourage, embrace and celebrate the differing identities, backgrounds and experiences we have and to ensure all have equitable access to resources, opportunities and decision making.
- Inclusion is the practice of ensuring that people feel a sense of belonging in the volunteering space. We proactively support people of different backgrounds, identities and experiences to feel welcomed, respected and confident that they can bring their 'full selves' when joining the Literacy Pirates. We work proactively to encourage an environment of psychological safety at the Literacy Pirates.

As an organisation we believe we have a deep social responsibility to uphold EDI. We also uphold our legal duty to ensure we:

- Provide equality, fairness and respect for all volunteering with us,
- Do not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation
- Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination.
- Having a diverse group of volunteer's benefits organisations and the communities they serve:
 - It brings new ideas and perspectives into an organisation.
 - It opens the benefits of volunteering to everyone.
 - It helps people from different backgrounds to work together and understand each other.
 - It makes organisations more representative of the communities they serve.
 - It promotes role models from different backgrounds to the community the organisation serves.

Throughout the volunteer recruitment process we will ensure that no applicant receives less favourable treatment by reason of age, disability, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, or pregnancy and maternity.

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Our in-person sessions are delivered in a building that is accessible to wheelchair users.

We also acknowledge that the access to the virtual programme will be limited to volunteers who have the necessary equipment and tech-literacy skills to join the programme.

Literacy Pirates' commitment to its Crewmates:

- We encourage equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging in the Literacy Pirates volunteer programme.
- We create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all Crewmates are recognised and valued. Responsibilities include Crewmates conducting themselves to help the Literacy Pirates provide equal opportunities in volunteering, in its programme, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination. Crewmates should understand they can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, during their volunteer role, against fellow Crewmates, Young Pirates, employees and the public.
- We take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow Crewmates and any others during the charity's work activities. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- We make opportunities for training, development, and progress available to Crewmates, who will be helped and encouraged to develop to their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the charity.
- We review volunteering practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- We encourage volunteers with all skills and experience to join our programme. Where a volunteer does not have the equipment to join online training or book sessions, we will facilitate in-person support to ensure they can join the programme as well prepared as any other volunteer.
- We monitor the make-up of the volunteering workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in this policy. Monitoring will also include assessing how the equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging policy are working in practice, reviewing them bi-annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.
- We aim at continuously improving our own practices. We are aware of our own limitations and welcome feedback from Crewmates in how our programme could be more inclusive

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and this is why we constantly review the data collected from Crewmates, as well as training and marketing material, and any other volunteer related procedure and documentation, and try to accommodate volunteer needs wherever we can.

Crewmates will be expected to adhere to the Literacy Pirates Equal Opportunities Policy, a copy of which can be found on [our website](#).

Recruitment & Selection

Volunteer opportunities will be promoted in a manner that ensures there is wide accessibility to the positions we offer. Recruitment of Crewmates will be from all sections of the community, and will be in line with the Literacy Pirates Equal Opportunities Policy.

Prospective Crewmates will be required to complete an application form. If required the Literacy Pirates will provide help to complete the form.

Crewmates will be asked to sign a statement saying they understand the specific policies that affect them in their role and will be given help and assistance if needed to be able to do this.

We will ensure that procedures are in place to explain, support and monitor good practice requirements for Crewmates selected to work with Young Pirates

Criminal Background Check



Crewmates will be asked to undergo a criminal background check. For volunteers living in England, Northern Ireland, Wales: Enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS), for volunteers living in Scotland: the Protecting Vulnerable Group (PVG) scheme.

For the criminal background check process, the prospective Crewmates must show three documents for proof of identity to a member of staff at the Literacy Pirates, usually during their welcome meeting.

Crewmates are asked to renew their criminal background check every three years, in compliance with the advised sector best practice. All criminal background checks are enhanced and have an additional check for working with children in regulated activity.

All criminal background checks must:

- Be completed before starting any volunteer activity and renewed after three years from the date of issue.
- DBSs are generally non-transferable. We process a new check for each role. However, we do accept DBS's that have been uploaded to the Update Service, provided the level of check is equal to what our organisation requires.
- DBSs are performed by our partner uCheck and PVGs are performed by Volunteer Scotland

Crewmates are required to disclose any changes in their criminal background record that have occurred after their last criminal background check was done with the Literacy Pirates. The volunteer's participation to the programme will be temporarily paused until a new criminal background check is completed and reviewed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Volunteer Manager.

Volunteer recruitment of Ex-Offender

Literacy Pirates is committed to fair and inclusive volunteer recruitment. We actively promote equality of opportunity for all with the right mix of talent, skills and potential and welcome applications from a wide range of candidates, including those with criminal records. We select all candidates for interview based on their skills, qualifications and experience. To read more about our ex-offender recruitment policy, visit our [website](#).

Information & Training

Crewmates will receive a full description of their role and responsibilities to the Literacy Pirates and the Young Pirates.

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Crewmates will be given induction and training in the specific tasks to be undertaken and will be consulted in decisions which affect them.

Crewmate commitments

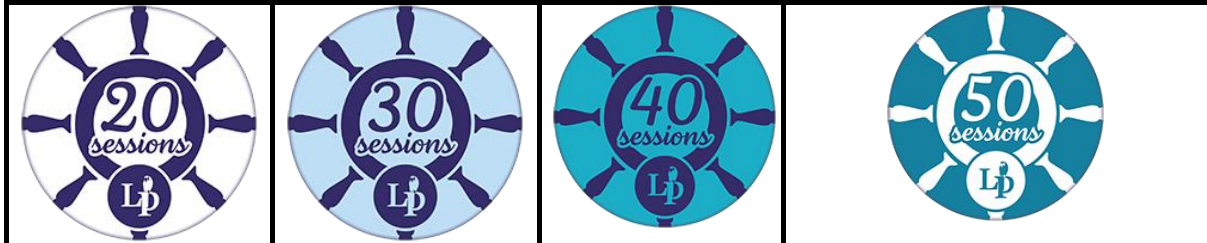
When volunteers sign up to be a Crewmate, they will have been made aware of our minimum commitment of 12 sessions with our Young Pirates within 12 months. It's up to the Crewmate as to how quickly or slowly they honour their minimum commitment. They may do one session a month or multiple sessions a week. 12 sessions is the turning point at which volunteering will start to show an impact on our Young Pirates. We invest a large amount of resources into volunteer recruitment, training and retention because our Crewmates are at the heart of everything we do at the Literacy Pirates.

We know that 12 sessions is a big commitment and we recognise this. We have Crewmate promotions that become available to Crewmates once they have completed their first session, 50% and 100% of their minimum commitment, and then 20th-30th ect... At their 100th session, Crewmates will receive a certificate signed by the Captain (CEO) of Literacy Pirates:

	1st session	I'm a Pirate	After their first session, Crewmates are awarded with their first badge .
	6th session	Seadog	After 6 sessions Crewmates will be elevated to a 'Sea Dog', which means they are half-way through their commitment.
	12th session	Buccaneer	When Crewmates have completed their full 12 session commitment, we will elevate them to the role of 'Buccaneer'.

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The majority of our Crewmates carry on beyond our 12 sessions commitment and many Crewmates feel that after 12 sessions is when they get the most out of sessions. By the time Crewmates have done 12 sessions they are familiar and comfortable with our processes and have started to really get to know the Young Pirates.

However, every year we have a few Crewmates who are not able to fulfil their 12 sessions commitment. When a Crewmate doesn't meet their commitment, this results in a large amount of wasted resources for the Literacy Pirates and can mean that we are not able to fulfil our promise of one to one (in person) or one to two (online) in all sessions. Therefore, we ask Crewmates to reflect during their registration on the barriers they may face towards meeting their 12 sessions commitment.

We like to keep in touch and check in with Crewmates if we have not seen them in a while. Often we'll send an email to find out when we may next see them. If there are any changes in the Crewmates personal circumstances that will affect their ability to meet the 12 session fulfilment, for example moving house or going abroad, we ask that the Crewmates inform us so we can make a note of this and will hold off our emails until we know they are ready to volunteer again.

Employment References and work placement

Employment references

We require all Crewmates to have completed a minimum of six sessions within the last six months before we can provide them with a reference. This is because we have a large pool of Crewmates and a limited team, we always want to ensure we provide accurate references.

Due to the high number of Crewmates that we have at the Literacy Pirates, we provide the same template reference for everyone.

The terms of our references are laid out below.

- If a Crewmate has just started, we can provide a confirmation letter that they are currently volunteering with the Literacy Pirates.
- If a Crewmate has completed between 1 and 11 sessions, we can provide a reference letter confirming the dates they have been volunteering with the Literacy Pirates.

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- If a Crewmate has completed 12 sessions or more, we can provide a full reference, detailing the responsibilities of the volunteer role.

To request a reference, contact the Volunteer Team: volunteering@literacypirates.org

Work placement

Student Crewmates might join us as part of a work placement with their university course. We ask that they let us know if they are joining us on a placement and how many hours they need to fulfil. If the target is lower than our minimum requirement, we still ask them to complete the minimum commitment of 12 sessions.

We are happy to fill in placement documentation for student Crewmates, including health and safety forms and induction checklists. This can be completed by any member of the Volunteer Team. We can also provide confirmation of their hours.

Unless specified, work placement roles are the same as our Crewmate roles. If a student wishes to complete additional tasks, this needs to be agreed in advance with the Volunteer team and or any other team involved.

Safeguarding Children & Young People

We take safeguarding very seriously, keeping our Young Pirates safe is a number one priority. You can read our most up to date [safeguarding policy on our website](#).

Designated Safeguarding Lead: David Jones, Head of Product - david.jones@literacypirates.org – 07929 672 695

Using social media to protect children and adults

Purpose

This policy covers personal use of social media when working with children and young people. It is designed to ensure the children (Young Pirates) and young volunteers (those aged under 18) we work with are kept safe.

It applies to all Literacy Pirates staff, volunteers (Crewmates) and trustees and should be read in conjunction with our Safeguarding policy.



Young Volunteers

From time-to-time we have Crewmates who are aged under 18 (Young Volunteers). Where this guidance reference Young Pirates or their families, it should be assumed that the same guidance applies when adults, whether staff or Crewmates, are working with Young Volunteers.

It is also important to note that Young Volunteers should also follow this guidance when working with Young Pirates and their families.

Key principles

- The responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries rests with the adult, not the child.
- Digital actions have real-world consequences and can significantly impact your professional life.

Staff and Crewmates must not

- Connect with Young Pirates or their families on any social media platform during or after their time with Literacy Pirates.
- Share personal contact details (phone number, email address, home address) with Young Pirates or their families.
- Post content about Literacy Pirates that includes derogatory comments about Young Pirates, families, colleagues, schools or the organisation.
- Share photographs or videos of Young Pirates on personal social media accounts. As a reminder, Crewmates should never take photos of Young Pirates and staff members should only do so using the organisation's equipment.

Note: *Breaches may result in disciplinary action including dismissal or removal from the volunteer programme.*

How to protect yourself

- Review your profiles regularly. Remove personal information or photographs that could be manipulated or used against you. Check privacy settings are set to the highest level.
- Use professional judgement. Ensure all content you share would be appropriate for someone working with children. Consider how posts might be seen by Young Pirates, families, colleagues or the public.
- Be careful with online interactions. Avoid inappropriate communication with anyone under 18. You cannot accept requests to connect with Young Pirates on social media platforms.



- Maintain respectful communication. Treat people online as you would face-to-face. Use appropriate language and demonstrate integrity that upholds trust in your professional role.

Special situations

Pre-existing relationships: If you knew a Young Pirate or their family before joining Literacy Pirates, disclose this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and your line manager or the Volunteer Manager immediately.

Contact requests: If a Young Pirate attempts to contact you through personal social media or shares personal contact details, do not respond. Report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and your line manager or the Volunteer Manager.

Accidental breaches: If you accidentally breach this guidance (e.g. accepting a friend request before realising who it was), report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and your line manager or the Volunteer Manager. Document what happened and any action you took.

When to report

Contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead and your line manager or the Volunteer Manager immediately if:

- A Young Pirate or family member attempts to contact you through personal social media
- You breach this guidance, even accidentally

Document incidents in writing including what happened, when, who was involved and any screenshots (don't delete original messages). If you accidentally accept a request to connect, please document and then unfollow/remove the connection.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will keep a log of any incidents and follow up action on Salesforce. Keeping a log of actions is designed to ensure we are transparent in the actions we take to safeguard children and to help keep staff and Crewmates safe.

Remember

This guidance protects both you and the children we work with. When in doubt, seek guidance from the Designated Safeguarding Lead, your line manager or the Volunteer Manager.



Capacity in session

The Literacy Pirates does its best to plan and prepare sessions with an accurate number of Crewmates to Young Pirates. The ideal ratio is 1 Crewmate to 1 Young Pirate for in-person sessions, and 1 to 2 for virtual sessions.

However, it might happen that number of Young Pirates varies, and we might have sessions when we have more Crewmates than Young Pirates (if Young Pirates are sick or unable to come on that specific day). While we do our best to prevent this from happening, if the situation does occur, we will offer Crewmates the chance to conduct various admin tasks needed (such as cataloguing the library system), or alternatively to go home. We recognise that volunteers have fulfilled their commitment to attend the session they booked, so Crewmates who have been sent home because of lack of capacity (not enough Young Pirates in session that day) will still be marked as having attended the session (but sent home).

Complaint procedure

The Literacy Pirates views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person, people or organisation that has made the complaint.

[The complaint procedure is available on our website.](#)

Volunteer expenses

Crewmates can claim expenses for volunteering with us. We follow best practice in the volunteer sector, and endeavour to enable Crewmates to volunteer with us, without incurring personal costs.

Our approach on expenses is that reimbursement will be made for any travel costs incurred of up to £10 per day that are additional to daily travel costs. Where appropriate, we will reimburse food of up to £5 per day if the volunteer session is longer than five hours.

Our Volunteer Manager authorises claims, they should be made within 14 days of the expense being incurred. They will be paid in cash or via BACS, usually within two weeks.

[The full procedure and expense form can be found on our website.](#)



Review

The Literacy Pirates commits to review this policy as and when changes in legislation or other factors make it necessary. The policy will be subject to a comprehensive review every year.

Next review date: August 2026

Terminology

“Crewmate” refers to volunteers with the Literacy Pirates

“Staff” refers to paid staff and those undertaking paid placements with the Literacy Pirates

“Young Pirates” refers to the young people who take part in the Literacy Pirates programme

Useful links

[Policies on our website includes](#)

- Safeguarding policy
- Complaints policy
- Recruitment of Ex-Offender policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Volunteer Expense policy & Claim form

[Crew Log](#)

[Treasure Trove](#)