



## Policy - Recruitment of Ex Offenders

Last reviewed: 18th Aug 2025

Next review: Aug 2026

Resp Person: Jude Williams, Chief Executive

### Purpose

The Literacy Pirates is committed to fair and inclusive recruitment. As an organisation using the **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, we comply fully with the **DBS Code of Practice** and the **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**.

We will not discriminate unfairly against any individual because of a conviction or other information revealed in a DBS check. Our recruitment decisions balance fairness with our overriding responsibility to safeguard children and young people.

### Strategies

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.

We use the recruitment of ex-offenders policy, which is made available to all DBS applicants, at the outset of the recruitment process. We make everyone undertaking a DBS check aware of the existence of the DBS Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.

We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a DBS check with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.

These conversations will not be discriminatory. Individual cases will be assessed on their own merit.

While we will undertake not to discriminate unfairly against any applicant, potential volunteers should be aware that if convictions involving violent or sexual offences, and offences against children in any way are disclosed, it will not be possible to work at Literacy Pirates. In the case of any query about a person's criminal history, the safety of young people will be paramount in the decision-making process. The Literacy Pirates retain the right to make this decision and will disclose the reasoning behind the decision with the candidate.

### Specific to Volunteer Recruitment and Training

All volunteer literature will contain a statement that a DBS check will be requested in the event of the individual being offered the position. All volunteers will have been made aware of the policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders at the point of application for the role, when they will have checked a box to confirm they have read it before applying.

Unless the nature of the position allows The Literacy Pirates to ask questions about your entire criminal record, we only ask about 'unspent' convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. We note that most volunteer positions at The Literacy Pirates do require us to ask about your entire criminal record, in order to safeguard the children with whom volunteers will be working.

At training, we explain to volunteers that it is their responsibility to inform us of any criminal convictions which may affect their application to become a volunteer. Following a disclosure from the prospective volunteer, in a

separate discussion after training, we ensure that an open and measured discussion takes place on the subject of any offences or other matter that might be relevant to the position. Failure to reveal information that is directly relevant to the position sought could lead to withdrawal of an offer of employment.

## Staff Training

We ensure that all those in The Literacy Pirates who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences. We also ensure that they have received appropriate guidance and training in the relevant legislation relating to the employment of ex-offenders, e.g. the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

## Complaints

Any complaints should be addressed in writing to Chief Executive in the first instance at [admin@literacypirates.org](mailto:admin@literacypirates.org) and

The Literacy Pirates  
138 Kingsland High Street  
London  
E8 2NS

If unresolved, the applicant can seek advice from the **Disclosure and Barring Service** or the **Equality and Human Rights Commission**.

## Criteria for assessing a criminal record disclosure

Each conviction is taken on a case-by-case basis. The following criteria are a non-exhaustive list of things that may indicate an ongoing risk to children.

### 1. Nature of the offence

- We will not employ individuals with record of any offence which relate to the indirect or direct harm of a child or sexual violence.
- We are unlikely to take on employees or session leaders with other serious crimes that indicate a link to activities that would put children at risk (including violent offences, offences linked to gang or drug activity, organised crime).

### 2. Time lapsed

- We will consider how long ago the offence took place (for example 5 or more years ago or a different offences committed during a different life stage).

### 3. Risk of recurrence

- We consider any evidence that the employee or session leader is not likely to repeat the offence. (For example, a change of geography, a change in social group etc)

### 4. Individual's reflections and openness

- We are unlikely to employ an individual if they did not share the offence in advance of us receiving the criminal record check.
- We are unlikely to employ an individual whose account of the offence lacks personal accountability or an understanding of wrongdoing.
- We are unlikely to employ an individual whose account of the event is inconsistent or has other credibility issues.
- While safety of children is the primary concern, we note that fear of discrimination and mistreatment from other institutions can make it hard to share and reflect on this kind of sensitive issue, so we aim to create a safe, private and non-judgemental environment for the discussions.

## 5. Risk to reputation

- We consider the risk to the reputation of the organisation. There may be cases where an offence does not show a direct risk to children but provides a risk to the organisation's reputation and therefore a risk to its ability to secure funds and deliver services.

## Recommendations following assessment of disclosure

1. The offence is of a low risk to children based on the criteria: **proceed to employment**  
*For example, a low-level offence that was a long time ago and the crewmate was open about it.*
2. The offence is likely to indicate a low risk to children, but we require additional checks: **proceed to employment pending additional actions.**  
*Our standard additional check is to take two character references. References should be from:*
  - *Someone who has known them in a professional or volunteering setting;*
  - *Someone who has known them in an education setting;*
  - *Someone from a recognised association or team such as a place of worship or club;*
  - *Someone who has supported the person e.g. a doctor, support worker or similar;*
  - *Another professional relationship at the discretion of the Designated Safeguarding lead.*
3. The offence may indicate a risk to children: **do not employ.**