

VOLUNTEERING POLICY

Read With Me

Registered company number 12594043

Read With Me CIC (from herein referred to as Read With Me) launched in Gloucestershire in 2020 after Co-Founder Linda Thomas (also known as Linda Cohen) had begun to understand through work in Somerset the terrible disadvantage that not being heard to read or read to at home can deliver to our children, but also how quickly and easily you can put it right with two one-to-one sessions of reading every week. This simple intervention with their reading ensures that the futures of our talented children aren't written or indeed written off by the age of 7. Children who are unable to read properly at 7 never really catch up. These children do less well at school, have reduced employment choices and earning opportunities and a greater chance of going to prison.

- Every year 200,000 children will leave primary school unable to read well.
- 1 in 4 five-year-olds struggle with basic vocabulary.
- 96% of primary school teachers are concerned about pupil's speech and language.

Read With Me tries to help bridge the gap. Our volunteers hear primary school children across Gloucestershire read twice a week for 10/15 minutes – we provide one-to-one time which helps to improve social and communication skills and builds confidence. We're here to give them the first building blocks of self-belief and our objective is to ensure that each child can read well by the time they leave primary school.

1. Volunteer Policy Statement

Volunteers play a vital role in the life of Read With Me and the organisation could not function without these volunteers. Volunteering at Read With Me also provides valuable workplace experience for those who wish to support others or gain experience which will be a useful route to employment.

Volunteers bring new skills and perspectives into our organisation and can undertake activities that would otherwise not be carried out. Their roles therefore complement, rather than replace the roles of paid staff.

This policy affirms the Read With Me commitment to supporting volunteers. We hope that volunteers enjoy being part of the team and we will do the best we can to make our volunteers' experience with us enjoyable and rewarding.

2. Recruiting volunteers

When recruiting volunteers, open and transparent processes will be used, with clear and accurate information provided. We will provide flexible volunteering opportunities that bring out people's strengths. Interviews, observations and/or skills assessments may be used as part of the recruitment process. References will be requested and taken up. All Read With Me volunteers will be required to have an enhanced DBS, however this will be at no cost to the volunteer.

On some occasions the recruitment process will show that those applying for a volunteer role with Read With Me may not be suited to that role. In these cases, feedback will be

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provided and, if wished, the volunteer's details will be kept so that they can be made aware of further opportunities at Read With Me or elsewhere.

3. Volunteers working with vulnerable people

Where volunteers' responsibilities and duties include working with vulnerable children, Read With Me will follow its Safeguarding Children Policy which will include assessing roles to consider whether any additional checks are required and conducting relevant checks e.g. DBS checks.

4. Supporting volunteers

Read With Me commits to demonstrating the value we place on volunteers through the way they are treated, supported and thanked.

Each volunteer will have the Volunteer Liaison Manager as the named person responsible for supporting them. Volunteers will be given clear guidance on expectations and boundaries. Induction, training and reviews will be offered to volunteers. Weekly communication will be sent to all volunteers giving details of any news and updates along with the timetable for the following week. There will also be regular opportunities to meet the Read With Me team and other Read With Me volunteers at Volunteer Meet-Up sessions held at various venues around the county.

5. Expectations of volunteers

The Read With Me team, including Directors, staff and volunteers are all ambassadors for the organisation and responsible for maintaining a safe, friendly and welcoming community. Volunteers will sign a Volunteer Agreement with Read With Me and will be expected to abide by Read With Me's policies and procedures, particularly those relating to Safeguarding Children and Equal Opportunities. Volunteer Agreements may be terminated if a volunteer fails to abide by Read With Me's policies. The Volunteer Handbook will contain further information, this and the Volunteer Agreement, will be presented in plain English.

6. Young Volunteers (aged 16 – 18)

Read With Me will occasionally provide volunteering roles for young people (aged between 16 – 18). These volunteers will need to have a responsible adult provide parental consent on their registration documents prior to commencement of any volunteering duties.