



Changing life stories

Literacy Champions Handbook



Letter from our CEO

Thank you very much for becoming a Literacy Champion! We're so excited to have you on board.

At the **National Literacy Trust** we believe that literacy changes everything: building knowledge, confidence, inspiration and opportunity.

But we know all too well the impact of having low literacy skills. It can hold a child back at school, lock people out of the job market, and affect mental and physical health and even life expectancy.

That's why we work to increase literacy levels in communities across the UK and transform people's life chances. There's never been a more important time to act and we all have a role to play.

Your commitment to volunteering as a Literacy Champion has the potential to make a real and lasting difference, and we are very excited that you want to help make this happen.

We hope that you enjoy your experience and we can't wait to hear about what you achieve.

Jonathan Douglas



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About the National Literacy Trust

At the National Literacy Trust we are dedicated to changing lives through literacy. We use our expertise to support people's reading, writing, and communication skills, so that they can fulfil their potential and shape their own stories.

To tackle the link between poverty, social mobility and literacy, we work directly with communities in 20 areas across the UK where low levels of literacy and high levels of poverty are seriously impacting people's lives. From foodbanks to hospitals, play centres to football clubs, we are there to support a child's literacy at every step.

We also support teachers across the nation with the skills and resources they need to give pupils the literacy skills they need to succeed, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for businesses, families, and the government.

The importance of literacy

Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world. It is a vital element of action against poverty as being able to read, write, and communicate effectively can help you succeed at school, at work, and open up new and exciting opportunities throughout life.

Whether it's picking up a newspaper or a book, making sense of a train timetable, or searching the internet, literacy skills can lead to new experiences and meeting people from all walks of life. It can inspire you or provide an escape into another world. Literacy gives you the skills to navigate the world and empowers you to make your own choices about where you want to go in life.



Being a Literacy Champion

Literacy Champions are self-led volunteers who believe in the mission of the National Literacy Trust and want to increase literacy skills in their community, creating a more equal society. With guidance from the charity, Literacy Champions engage their communities in bespoke activities that promote reading, writing, and communication to give people the literacy skills they need to succeed.

If you live or work in the heart of your community and understand the unique challenges and opportunities of your area, you could be best placed to bring people together to make change.

Please note, to be a Literacy Champion you must be aged 18 or over.



How we'll support you

After registering as a Literacy Champion, you will be sent a link to our **welcome video** and receive our **Activity Guide** – providing you with information on how you can get involved. You can also access these, and this handbook, [here](#).

These will give you the confidence and knowledge to get started, but more support is available if needed.



If you have any questions, doubts or concerns, please get in touch at:

literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk



You will receive our monthly newsletter with updates, top tips and spotlights on other Literacy Champion activity to help inspire you.



No one is better placed to help improve the experience of volunteering than you. Each year we will be circulating our annual survey to volunteers so please take part to share your feedback.

How can you get involved?

There are a range of self-led activities you can take part in to support literacy in your community or workplace. More details are in the Activity Guide but here is a snapshot below.

Volunteer in your community

- Organise a local book swap event at a community venue like a sports club or cafe
- Share resources such as leaflets and posters in your local area
- Collect book donations and share them locally to improve access to books
- Set up a reading group in your local area

Volunteer from home

- Signpost people to resources on Words for Life, the National Literacy Trust's family-facing [website](#)
- Share relevant social media posts, which you'll receive via the monthly newsletter



Take part in national moments

- Share social media posts relating to our big campaigns (these will be shared in our Literacy Champions Newsletter)
- Organise an event, such as a group reading session for our **Take 10 moment** in October, to get people involved
- Share our campaign resources with your community

Volunteer from your workplace

- Display posters in your workplace and signpost our resources to colleagues and their families
- Collect book donations and share them locally
- Set up a book swap or community bookshelf (where appropriate)



Talking about literacy: conversation starters

Sometimes people have a limited or pre-conceived understanding of literacy, particularly when it comes to reading. There are a number of reasons why children and adults don't read – and sometimes it's as simple as not being able to find something they enjoy reading!

We've drafted some helpful conversation starters and 'top tips' that you can use when speaking about literacy and encouraging people to read for pleasure.

There is a book for everyone

Reading doesn't need to be a chore – you just need to know how to find something you'll enjoy in a format that suits you. There's no such thing as "good" and "bad" reading – it's about what you're interested in. Things to encourage:

- Graphic novels and comic books – illustrations can add so much to a story and shouldn't just be restricted to young children
- Ask family, friends and colleagues to recommend books they've enjoyed
- Don't forget magazines, comics and online blogs are all part of the reading experience
- Use a hobby as a hook – whether that's non-fiction books, magazines, or online blogs about your favourite sports team, musician, or video game
- Listening to an audiobook – you can get them for free from your library via a mobile app

Be a reading role model

Adult role models play a crucial role in helping children develop literacy skills. Top tips, if you are speaking to a parent, carer or grandparent:

- Let children see you reading at home and in public; whether that's a book, a newspaper, a football match programme or magazine
- Children respond to your enthusiasm, so read them something you're interested in
- Encourage children to read the words around them: on food packets in the supermarket, on buses, in newspapers or in recipes

Bilingualism has lots of benefits

Did you know? If somebody speaks their home language well, they are more likely to develop good English. Bilingualism is an amazing skill that should be celebrated – and encouraged!

Many public libraries have dual language children's books available – and if they don't you can always request some via the librarian.

Technology can be a great tool for communication

Technology is a part of our lives and can be used as a tool to support reading, writing and communication. All forms of reading and communication should be encouraged – whether that's reading an e-book or an online news article, listening to an audiobook or podcast, writing a blog post, or reading dialogue in a video game.

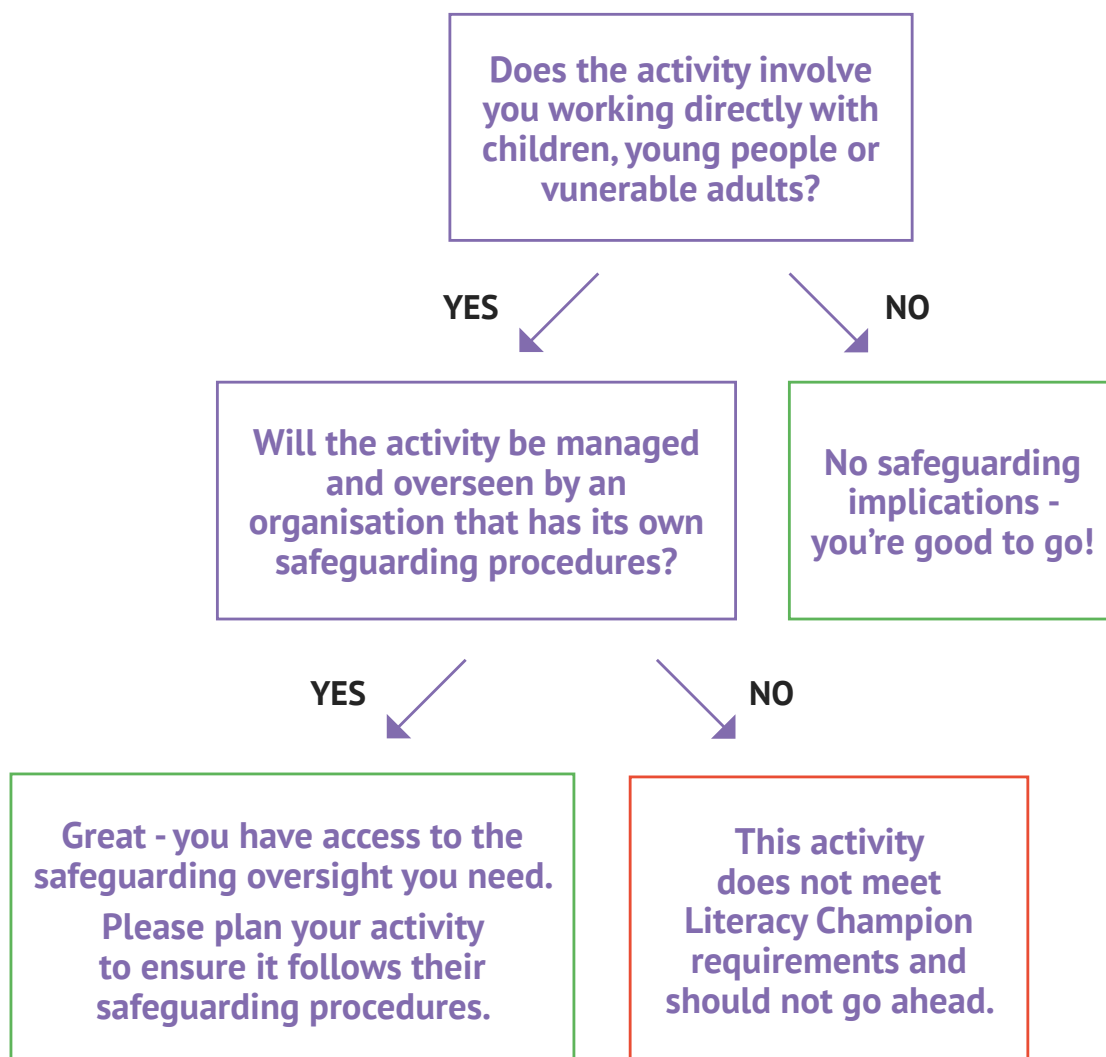
The most important thing we can do is help people improve their literacy skills in ways that they find engaging and interesting.

The essentials

Safeguarding

For safeguarding reasons, the activities we suggest do not involve working directly with – in person or online – children, young people or vulnerable adults who you don't already work with or care for. As a Literacy Champion, you should not plan activities that would involve such contact. In line with safeguarding rules, for any work involving children or young people, you must:

1. Ensure that they have permission to take part and have someone to look after them.
2. Ensure there is a safeguarding policy in place and you know who to contact with any concerns.
3. Ensure any adults looking after children have received appropriate checks – see the Government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) information for more guidance.



Health and safety

You are responsible for ensuring the activities you organise are safe. Follow the policy of the organisation you're working with, if applicable, or the professional advice of staff supervising any facilities or buildings you're using.

Where necessary, carry out a risk assessment to identify, reduce and control the risk to all those taking part or members of the public. For larger events, you may want to complete a risk assessment form to show that you have considered and mitigated any potential risks, but it is not a legal requirement unless the organiser is an employer.

We cannot accept liability for any loss, damage or injury suffered by yourself or anyone else as a result of taking part in any event organised by Literacy Champions.

Guidance on how to complete a risk assessment is available on the [Health and Safety Executive website](#).

Insurance

In organising your own activities as a Literacy Champion, you are responsible for ensuring there is adequate insurance cover, if required.

Check that any buildings or equipment that you are using are covered for the activities you're planning. For public events, you may need to consider public liability cover to protect you against claims made by third parties for injury or property damage as a result of negligence. For private events this should not be necessary. **Please seek advice if you are unsure.**

Equality and diversity

At the National Literacy Trust we promote equality, diversity and inclusion in the design and delivery of all of our work. You must act at all times in accordance with equal opportunities legislation and our principles of respect and inclusion.

Reputation

As well as health and safety issues, please consider possible risks to the National Literacy Trust's reputation. For example, check that any partners you're working with are reputable organisations. If you have any concerns, please contact us for advice.

Please note, you should not imply that the National Literacy Trust endorses or approves of any activities you plan as a Literacy Champion in your own community.

Social media

We have general dos and don'ts for conduct on social media:

- **Be respectful** – don't use offensive terms, personal insults, obscenity or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable face-to-face
- **Don't get into arguments** – even if someone says something you don't agree with, it's best to not respond at all
- **Don't engage with journalists** – on or off social media, as your words may be taken as an official comment from the National Literacy Trust, which can only come from our head office.

Keep in touch

Please contact the team at literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk if you want to ask any questions about planning some of the activities suggested, or if you are no longer able to volunteer as a Literacy Champion. The **FAQ section** on the website may also be of help.

Celebrating you

We believe it's really important to remind you how much we appreciate you! We all have a role to play in improving the literacy skills of those around us and you can make a real difference.

We want to celebrate your achievements in our monthly newsletter and national social media channels! Send a photo of your accomplishments to literacy.champions@literacytrust.org.uk with your written consent to post them on social media.



Remember if there are others in the photograph you must have their consent for it to be shared.



Spread the word

You've signed up... now **spread the word!**

We'd love you to tell your friends, family and colleagues about your volunteering and the work of National Literacy Trust.

You can also follow and tag the National Literacy Trust using **#LiteracyChampion** on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [TikTok](#).

If you know someone who would like to join us, please direct them towards our [website](#).

Useful links

- literacytrust.org.uk - The National Literacy Trust's website has lots of free resources and activities available to download
- wordsforlife.org.uk - The Words for Life website is full of free tips, guidance, book suggestions, activities, games and more for parents of children aged 0-12
- wordsforlife.org.uk/zone-in - The National Literacy Trust's website for young people 13+ is full of tips on boosting reading, writing, speaking and listening skills
- readingagency.org.uk/adults - The Reading Agency has lots of tips and resources for adult learners on their website
- booktrust.org.uk/books/booklist - Book Trust's website features a host of themed book lists, covering all sorts of different topics and themes
- lovemybooks.co.uk - Lovemybooks is for parents, carers, teachers, schools, and early years staff, created by literacy experts; it has over 250 activity pages full of creative book-based ideas





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W: literacytrust.org.uk

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 Sign up for our free email newsletter: literacytrust.org.uk/newsletter