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Next update due	December 2024

Aim: To document how we recruit, support, and learn from volunteers. To give people the confidence to volunteer with us, to let them understand what Number Champions expects from its volunteers, and to enable volunteers to hold us to account if we do not live up to our own policies and culture.

In this policy, 'HoO' stands for 'Head of Operations'.

About us

We set up Number Champions in 2018 to transform the lives of children in state primary schools who struggle with numeracy.

Our In-School Volunteers spend a school year with each child in weekly one-to-one sessions. A volunteer uses maths games and other creative activities to engage the child and to enable them to build confidence and skills and so overcome the 'maths barrier'. Helping the children at this early stage puts them back on track to achieve their full life potential, in a world where some fluency with maths and numbers is such an essential building block.

Former teachers volunteering with us as Mentors train and support these In-School Volunteers. We also have volunteer Area Leaders coordinating with our In-School Volunteers and partner schools in a borough.

As at November 2023, we are working across 13 London boroughs in 30 partner schools, with 98 In-School Volunteers supporting nearly 300 children. We plan to increase these numbers progressively in future years.

Everyone involved in the charity is passionate about helping to improve children's educational and life chances.

The power of volunteers

We chose a volunteer-based model for two key reasons.

Firstly, because we want our programme to be accessible to as many children as possible. So, by engaging volunteers, we are able to offer the support to schools for a minimal cost.

Secondly, we wanted to provide a really valuable volunteering opportunity, given the large pool of potential volunteers who want to help improve children's educational chances. We provide training, ongoing support, and a sense of being hugely valued and of being part of a local - and wider - community.

We currently have two (part-time) staff members. As we grow, we plan to employ a small but growing staff team, but we will always engage volunteers in our front line in working with children and in mentoring. This will help keep our service affordable to schools and support an organisational culture of self-reliance and mutual responsibility.

Our vision and mission for volunteering

Volunteers are vital to our mission of helping to improve the life chances of young children.

Number Champions will train and support volunteers, will communicate with them and listen to them, and will give them opportunities to meet other volunteers and to discuss all aspects of the charity so that they can feel part of a community with a common goal.

Attracting volunteers and our volunteer agreement

As we increase the number of schools with which we work, we will have a continuing requirement for additional In-School Volunteers and for Mentors to support these. We will also need volunteers to help with organisation, and from time to time we will need new trustees for our Board. All our volunteer opportunities will be on our website <https://www.numberchampions.org.uk/>. You can apply for any role or ask questions about volunteering by writing to us at volunteer@numberchampions.org.uk.

When we receive an email from you, a member of our team will get in touch with more information on specific opportunities and we can decide together if there is an option which matches your interests, skills, and time availability, together with our needs.

We meet with prospective volunteers in person or online to assess their suitability for working with Number Champions and to give them an opportunity to satisfy themselves on the details of the role they are applying for. Before volunteers take up a role, we require references and sight of documents proving their identity. We also have policies on safeguarding, data protection, confidentiality, and health & safety which all volunteers have to read and agree to abide by. Part of volunteer training will cover these policies.

We will require volunteers to sign our Volunteer Agreement which details the reciprocal commitments of the organisation and the volunteer. There are separate versions for In-School Volunteers and other types of volunteer.

DBS check (Disclosure and Barring Service) and safeguarding

Our in-school volunteer role involves working with children in an unsupervised environment, and it therefore requires an enhanced DBS check including a check of the child barring list. This is generally administered by the school the volunteer will work in, but we occasionally administer these ourselves.

We ask our trustees to have an enhanced DBS check without a check of the barring list; this is strongly recommended by the Charity Commission for organisations working with children. Our Mentors currently do not work unsupervised with children and therefore do not need a DBS check, but we are keeping this under review as the Mentor role develops. Other volunteers typically will never work with children and therefore will not need a DBS check.

We have a safeguarding policy which is available from our website at <https://www.numberchampions.org.uk/forms-and-policies/>

All volunteers are required to read this policy and sign a note confirming that they have read and understood it. This is a part of the volunteer induction process.

Induction and training

We aim to give volunteers an initial induction and periodic training appropriate to their role.

Before an In-School Volunteer is assigned to a school, they receive induction and initial training delivered mainly by our Mentors. At the start of each school year, we have refresher training for returning volunteers on safeguarding and on working with children on maths. We will generally deliver

this refresher training remotely. Through the year, we also aim to provide optional short training sessions online, again delivered by our Mentors.

Each In-School Volunteer is paired with a Mentor (not necessarily the same Mentor as delivered the training) so that they have a personal contact for support on educational and behavioural topics. The Mentor will aim to join the In-School Volunteer for at least one session with a child to provide further support, feedback and skills sharing; however, for logistical reasons, this is not always possible.

For other types of volunteers, including Mentors, we will provide an appropriate induction based largely on peer support, and we will provide training where this is identified as necessary.

Support and resolving problems

For In-School Volunteers, our Mentors and the HoO (or Area Leaders in the boroughs where we have one) will give support on educational and administrative issues respectively. In addition, as we are currently a small organisation, all volunteers can speak directly with the Chair as necessary for further support or for resolving problems (at bernard@numberchampions.org.uk).

Mentors and Area Leaders receive support directly from the HoO.

To provide an alternative support mechanism where a volunteer feels that the Mentors, HoO, Area Leaders, or the Chair are not appropriate people to help, the Board has appointed our trustee Lisa Baglin as our volunteer ombudsman. She will discuss all matters in confidence and in particular she will not report to the Chair or Board without the volunteer's permission, other than the fact that she has been approached by a volunteer and that the matter has or has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the volunteer. Note that this duty of confidence cannot override any legal duty to report potential criminal activity. Lisa can be contacted at lisa_baglin@yahoo.co.uk.

Whistleblowing

Where there is a problem which cannot be resolved by the route above, and where a volunteer believes there is a realistic possibility of harm to an individual or serious mismanagement of Number Champions, we request that the volunteer approaches an appropriate external organisation.

We do not yet have formal structures for this, but we offer the following as potential routes.

If you believe that there has been criminal activity or that this is a risk, you should contact the police.

If the issue concerns safeguarding, as per our Safeguarding Policy you can contact the NSPCC on 0800 800 5000.

You can approach the Charity Commission. They have information at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity-as-a-worker-or-volunteer>

If the issue is not clear cut you may wish to approach the Head of the school where you work (or with which you have a connection through your role) for a confidential discussion.

Recognition and reward

We cannot do the work we do without our volunteers. To acknowledge this, we will always say "Thank you" and show appreciation for a job well done.

We will hold in-person social events for volunteers to thank them and to celebrate our joint achievements.

As the charity grows, we will look to develop further ways of recognising the contribution of individual volunteers.

Expenses

We appreciate the work that volunteers do and the time they give, and we do not expect them in addition to pay for the expenses they incur in their work for the charity.

We will therefore reimburse reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. At this stage of our development this is mainly travel expenses.

For In-School Volunteers, we will pay expenses for using public transport.

Where public transport is not practical, we are willing in principle to reimburse car or motorbike miles, but this has to be agreed in advance. Reimbursement for petrol cars will be at £0.35 per mile. For electric cars the figure will be £0.25 per mile. These figures are estimated as £0.22/£0.12 per mile for petrol/electricity plus £0.13 for wear and tear and an allowance for price variations. For other vehicles we will aim to agree a rate per mile based on a similar calculation.

Expense claims should be against receipts or, if agreed up front, against a log book. For In-School Volunteers, claims should be made at most a month after the end of the term in which the expenses were contracted.

For volunteers other than In-School Volunteers, including trustees, we will reimburse them where they incur travel and other expenses necessary for the role. Total expenses over £50 in a month must be agreed up front. Again, we ask volunteers to use public transport, selecting the cheapest practical option, and to provide receipts or agree up front the use of a log book. For these other volunteers, claims should be made at most a month after the end of the month in which the expenses were contracted.

In-School Volunteers should agree expenses in advance with the HoO, and other volunteers, including trustees but not the Chair, should agree them with the HoO or the Chair. Expense claims should be submitted similarly to the HoO or Chair. The Chair's expenses must be approved either by the HoO or by an independent trustee.

We will make every effort to reimburse legitimate expense claims by bank transfer within 21 days.

Insurance, health and safety, accidents, and risk assessment

Number Champions has insurance for Employer's Liability which covers volunteers. We also require our partner schools to have their own Public Liability insurance which covers our volunteers when they are on school premises. In addition, we require partner schools to give volunteers an induction on their health and safety arrangements.

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 defines health & safety responsibilities for employers. As well as our specific responsibilities under this Act, we use the overall standard it defines to interpret our duty of care in this area as 'to endeavour to ensure health, safety, and welfare of our volunteers and of others who may be affected by our actions, as far as is reasonably practical'

We have a separate Health & Safety Policy available at <https://www.numberchampions.org.uk/forms-and-policies/>

This details the steps we take to exercise our duty of care. As above, as part of their induction, volunteers are required to read the Health & Safety Policy and to signify acceptance by signing a copy,

If volunteers consider that they are being asked to work in an environment which is unsafe or to take any action which creates a risk to their health or safety or to the health or safety of others, they should refuse and should immediately escalate the issue as described above under 'Support and resolving problems'.

The Board of Trustees has a fixed agenda item at each meeting to review risks and to maintain a risk register.

Confidentiality

We require all volunteers to read our confidentiality agreement and our data protection policy and to sign a note confirming that they have done so and will comply with them before they start as a volunteer. This is part of the induction process for volunteers.

The data protection policy is available at <https://www.numberchampions.org.uk/forms-and-policies/>

Equality, diversity, and inclusion

Number Champions is committed to embracing diversity and promoting equality and inclusion. We serve the diverse population of London children; accordingly, we seek to have a volunteer base from all ethnicities, orientations, and backgrounds, including those with disabilities

We advertise roles through public websites and other channels intended to reach as diverse an audience as possible, and this has indeed proved successful.

For the In-School Volunteer role we emphasise that schools have a duty to be accessible, and our agreement with schools includes their agreeing to exercise their responsibilities under equality legislation.

Separately, for the Mentor and Area Leader roles we clarify that, if the volunteer has limited mobility, the role can be done totally remotely.

All our volunteers receive training and, as part of this, we share our values about the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion.

The trustees keep these processes under regular review and welcome any feedback on this from volunteers.

Bullying and harassment

We encourage a culture where everyone treats others with respect and where bullying and harassment are not ignored or accepted. The charity will regard any proven instance of bullying or harassment by a volunteer as 'misconduct' for the purposes of the section below on 'Terminating a volunteer's involvement with Number Champions'. It will treat equivalent behaviour by staff with equal seriousness within its staff management processes.

If you believe you have witnessed bullying or harassment of someone else (whether a volunteer or staff member or an outside person involved in the activities of the charity), please take appropriate action. This could involve supporting the victim and encouraging them to take action as described here, informally challenging the perpetrator, or reporting the incident as below.

If you are being harassed or bullied, either by Number Champions volunteers or staff or by other people in the course of your activities for the charity, and you feel you cannot raise this directly with the person responsible, then you should explain the situation to the HoO or the Chair.

If the HoO, Chair, or another trustee becomes aware of potential instances of bullying or harassment, either through the process above or otherwise, they must take timely action to investigate and to resolve the issue. They will maintain confidentiality, and in particular will not reveal the name of a person raising an issue without their direct permission.

If these steps are not appropriate, or have not been successful, you should raise the matter formally to our ombudsman as described under 'Support and resolving problems' above."

Terminating a volunteer's involvement with Number Champions

If a volunteer is not performing as defined in their role specification or as communicated to them by their Mentor or Area Leader (for an In-School Volunteer) or by the HoO or Chair, we will do our best to give support to help them improve. If adequate improvement does not take place in a reasonable time as evaluated by the Chair after appropriate review, then the Chair will arrange a meeting between the volunteer and a trustee on how to resolve the situation. If the situation cannot be resolved within an agreed timetable, we will ask the volunteer to leave the organisation.

If a volunteer is suspected of engaging in misconduct, the trustees will make immediate investigation to see if the suspicion is reasonable; such a determination will not be taken to imply that any actual misconduct has taken place. If the suspicion does seem reasonable, we will immediately suspend the volunteer from their role and arrange a meeting to discuss with them how to resolve the situation. A trustee will also attend these meetings. (We may also continue investigations separately as appropriate.) If the process identifies that there has been misconduct, we will ask the volunteer to leave the organisation and we will take such other action as seems appropriate or as is legally required.

If a volunteer is suspected of engaging in misconduct and, after investigation, this accusation proves unreasonable or unfounded, the trustees will give full support to the volunteer

When the organisation is larger, we may change this policy to have a designated person replace the trustee in these meetings.

The Board of Trustees will receive a report of the number (if any) of volunteers who have been asked to leave in the above circumstances as part of the Key Performance Indicators produced regularly.

Leaving your volunteer role

We very much hope you will want to stay with Number Champions for a long time. When you do decide that you wish to stop volunteering at Number Champions, we will ask you to give feedback on why you are leaving. This can be in writing or verbally at your choice. We very much wish to understand the reasons why volunteers leave. If a volunteer cites shortcomings of the organisation as reasons for leaving, we will consider this seriously, and the Board of Trustees will review these reasons at least annually.

We ask volunteers to make every attempt to give us good notice, ideally several months, if they intend to leave. This is to give us the opportunity to find a way of covering the role being vacated. This is particularly important for In-School Volunteers, where we do not want to leave children unsupported.