

Volunteering at Shannon Trust

Prison Volunteer Recruitment pack



About us

Shannon Trust is a charity that transforms lives by supporting people to learn to read and improve other basic skills. We believe nobody should be left out of learning. We operate in most prisons across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We also work with a number of partner organisations in the community, supporting their service users to learn to read.

Over 70% of people in prison, and 15% in the community, have a literacy level below that of an 11 year old. Many cannot read at all. This means they have reduced access to education, training and rehabilitation programmes which could transform their lives, and give them hope for a better future outside of the criminal justice system.

Many of our team work remotely, with colleagues currently based in all parts of the country, from the North East to the South West and all points in between. We also have prison based colleagues who do a fantastic job of growing our programmes in their prisons.

Our volunteer friendly benefits include support and supervision, all volunteering out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed and ongoing training to support your role.

"I didn't think that at the age of 72 it was going to be worthwhile. I have now been reading for 2 years and enjoying it."
Shannon Trust learner



Our vision, mission and values

Vision

A future where confidence with words and numbers unlocks access to connection, dignity, and opportunity

Mission

We build reading, numeracy and life skills through mentor-led learning to help people fully participate in society

Values

Our values define the beliefs and principles that guide how we operate, make decisions, and work together. They articulate the standards we hold ourselves to, shaping our culture, influencing our choices, and grounding our strategy in a shared sense of purpose.

- **Respect:** We treat everyone with fairness, kindness and understanding. We see people's potential, not just their circumstances.
- **Connection:** Strong relationships make learning possible. We build trust, communicate openly, and work together with honesty and care.
- **Progress:** We learn, adapt and improve; for the people we support, for ourselves, and for each other.
- **Belonging:** Everyone has a place here. We include people, welcome difference, and remove barriers so everyone can contribute and succeed.

We work with many people across the criminal justice system and beyond, supporting them to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills. Developing those skills is critical in reducing re-offending and improving life chances. We want to take every step possible to encourage those with lived experience into employment.

We are an accredited 'Ban the Box' employer, meaning we do not ask applicants to declare convictions at the application or interview stage. We only ask for this information where necessary for the role, and not until after an offer of employment or volunteering has been made.

As part of the recruitment process, prison-based volunteers are required to complete security vetting. This vetting is arranged by the prison and is free of charge for volunteers. If

you have lived outside the UK, the prison may require you to complete additional international security checks. In some cases, these checks may incur a fee. Unfortunately, Shannon Trust is unable to cover the cost of any international security checks, and any associated expenses would need to be met by the applicant.

It's important to acknowledge that the vetting process can involve lengthy wait times, particularly for candidates with lived experience. At Shannon Trust, we're here to stand by our candidates, offering support every step of the way.

Beliefs

We believe that...

- nobody should be left out of learning
- self-belief is essential to personal growth
- learning can increase confidence, transform lives and reduce reoffending

Looking after our people

At Shannon Trust, we value great people that work hard and have the skills and abilities to make a difference.

Volunteer benefits



Expenses

Reasonable, out of pocket, volunteering expenses are reimbursed. We'll also cover any administrative costs such as printing or telephone calls



Training

You will receive induction training and ongoing training to support and develop you in your role



Support

All volunteers receive ongoing support and quarterly reviews to enable you to gain the most from your volunteering experience



Recognition

We recognise and are grateful for the added value that volunteers bring to our organisation



Flexible

We provide flexible volunteering opportunities, subject to the requirements of your role

Being a Shannon Trust prison volunteer provides you with a number of benefits which can help you to develop both your personal and professional skills:

- Ongoing training to support your role
- Developing IT skills and support using up to date packages
- Developing and growing your understanding of the HMPPS structure and prison system
- Training, facilitation and phonics/ numeracy skills
- Relationship building
- Chairing meetings
- Presentation skills

Key information: Prison Volunteer

Location: Prison and remote/homebased – *In most circumstances we would require volunteers to live within 1 hour of the prison they are applying to volunteer at.*

Reporting to: Shannon Trust Facilitator, Programme Manager or Regional Manager

Hours: Approx. 7-14 hours, over 2-4 days per month, Monday to Friday 8am-4pm

Role summary

Shannon Trust's vision is of a future where everyone can experience the positive impact of learning. As a prison volunteer your role will be at the heart of our organisation as you support our mentors in prisons. This will include delivering training to new mentors and supporting existing mentors to develop and deliver our Turning Pages and Count Me In programmes. You will be volunteering alongside Shannon Trust facilitators and / or frontline prison staff to empower mentors and ensure no one is left out of learning.

Volunteer role description

Key tasks and activities

- Delivering initial, and ongoing, training to mentors in prisons
- Supporting and encouraging the Shannon Trust facilitator and mentors to attract new learners and expand the reach of the Shannon Trust programme
- Arranging and leading mentor meetings to develop mentors' skills, share good practice and to provide support to mentors to find solutions to concerns
- Supporting facilitators to engage prison staff and people in prison to set-up, maintain and develop the Shannon Trust reading and numeracy programmes across the whole prison, and contributing to progress planning for how to progress and achieve this
- Using your skills to build positive relationships with frontline prison staff, people in prison and other organisations
- Training and supporting mentors to collect and submit data and learner feedback
- Supporting with the planning of, and attendance at, celebration events
- Collecting and sharing good news stories and feedback
- Attending area meetings and sharing good practice with other volunteers
- Engaging with quarterly reviews to receive support and discuss progress

- Acting as an ambassador for Shannon Trust in all that you do, sharing the vision and values of the charity throughout your volunteering

Every prison does work differently and so volunteer roles do also vary prison to prison! We will provide full role information to volunteers as part of your training and induction.

Additional tasks and activities may include:

- Raising awareness of Shannon Trust across the prison through staff briefings and building relationships with other agencies in partnership with the Shannon Trust, or prison based, facilitator
- Co-facilitating volunteer training and peer support
- Attending additional Shannon Trust training and or information events
- Other administrative tasks as required

Location and volunteering hours

The prison volunteer role is available Monday to Friday during working hours and in line with the prison regime. You will be linked to a specific prison or prisons to support as a representative of Shannon Trust. Typically you will visit your prison 2-4 times a month and you will also attend quarterly area meetings.

We ask volunteers to commit approximately 7 to 14 hours a month to the prison volunteer role, spread over 2 to 4 days to fit in with staff availability and the prison regime. This isn't a role where your activities can take place on a set day or time each week and prison visits can't take place at weekends. You'll need to be flexible and be able to visit your prison at an agreed time with staff, during the daytime Monday to Friday. Prisons often ask you to start your visit at 08.00 or 13.30.

Who we are looking for

Key skills/ attributes

We don't need you to have any formal qualifications to become a Shannon Trust volunteer.

We're looking for people who

- Have a commitment to providing non-judgemental support to people in prison

- Are able to give a regular, reliable commitment for ideally two years and have flexibility to visit the prison at times required
- Have strong communication skills and are able to use these to inspire others
- Are able to deliver engaging training and identify training and support needs for mentors
- Are able to manage own time and prioritise
- Are able to keep up to date with Shannon Trust news and communications and share relevant information with the wider prison team
- Are able to use and regularly monitor Shannon Trust outlook emails, use Microsoft Teams and other computer packages as required

Training, Induction and Support

Assemble is our volunteer management system here at Shannon Trust. Our Assemble Volunteer Hub will provide a single point of access for your volunteering needs and opportunities at Shannon Trust, including training, volunteer events and expenses.

Shannon Trust provides a wide range of training for volunteers. You will be expected to attend all mandatory training for new volunteers, some will be group training and some will be online. The training dates will be listed in the Assemble role advert and you must be available to attend all of the sessions. The training will provide you with the knowledge and understanding of the values and visions of the charity and practical support for your prison role.

You will receive a thorough induction into your prison and quarterly review meetings to review and discuss your volunteering experience.

We want to ensure that volunteers' out of pocket expenses are not a barrier to their involvement with Shannon Trust. As such, reasonable expenses, including expenses for travel and meals, will be reimbursed.

How to apply

- Complete our application form on our website, via our volunteering platform, Assemble.
- In some circumstances, volunteer vacancies may close early. Successful applicants will be sent interview questions in advance with notice to prepare.