

the reading agency

Participate: Involving Young People

Volunteering Handbook

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Libraries are:

“A place to develop citizen skills and community engagement through volunteering and sharing ideas.”

Library Offer to Young People, National Youth Libraries Board, 2008

1. Introduction

Young people volunteer more than any other age group in the community, and volunteering is a key way in which libraries can contribute to wider involvement strategies for young people.

This volunteering handbook forms part of the Participate module on Involving *Young People*.

Following *Every Child Matters* and *Aiming High*, there is a new onus on local services to involve young people and to offer them positive activities and local facilities. The National Youth Agency’s framework [Hear By Right](#) – Standards for the active involvement of children and young people, has provided the tools for local authorities to examine their practice and to work with young people to improve services. Libraries are part of that work and, in recent years, many libraries have developed new and exciting ways of involving young people in shaping services.

The Reading Agency's pioneering project, HeadSpace, is one example of how young people can have a significant impact on library services through their roles as volunteers. The need for libraries to be working towards more active participation of young people is also embodied in the national [Library Offer to Young People](#) developed by the national Youth Libraries Board. The Offer sets out what young people should expect library services to offer and recognises volunteering as a key way to empower young people in their communities.

1.1 Why develop youth volunteering?

“We are going to offer volunteering opportunities at the HeadSpace, where you’ll get an award at the end. It’s an innovative way to encourage young people to use their library in a different way than before – to get more out of it and make a difference to their education.” HeadSpace Volunteer Buxton

Volunteering is an effective way to meet the needs of libraries, young people and national agendas. Young people are current and future users of library services but often libraries find it difficult to attract and sustain the interest of young people. Youth volunteering enables library services to tap into peer networks and get first hand feedback, ideas and advice on attracting young people to the service. Young people know what the library service needs in order to stay current and vibrant and young people are far more likely to enter a library where other young people are visibly engaged. Those who currently don't use the library or aren't primarily interested in reading may see numerous benefits to being involved as volunteers and, through volunteering, may become active readers themselves.

The Benefits

By involving young people as volunteers the library gains:

- **a more youthful image**
- **the enthusiasm and fresh perspective of young people**
- **a link with local communities**
- **help to deliver valuable activities**

For young people, the benefits of working in a library setting are enormous. Volunteering provides young people with a valuable opportunity for work experience which can help them to gain future education or employment opportunities. It can also help young people to develop a range of work and social skills which helps them in their transition into the adult world. This is particularly important for young people who have become disengaged from the education system; who may have few or no formal qualifications. Young people gain:

- **valuable work experience**
- **a reference for employment**
- **the opportunity to develop confidence, social skills, employment opportunities and literacy skills**
- **the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their communities**
- **a chance to make new friends**

Developing youth volunteering enables libraries to show that they are delivering the national Youth Libraries Board Library Offer, achieving:

Empowerment by:

- **Participation in shaping the future design and delivery of library services**
- **The power to influence the allocation of funds and the selection of books and other resources**
- **Volunteering opportunities with younger or older library users**
- **The chance to be involved in staff appointments, creating content for library websites and accreditation for skills acquired**
- **A place to develop citizenship skills and community engagement through volunteering and sharing ideas.**

Volunteering is one of the most crucial elements of broadening the participation of young people in your library service. This handbook is designed to help you get started on developing youth volunteering opportunities in your libraries. If you are already working with young volunteers, this handbook should help you to improve and sustain the opportunities that you offer and ensure that your volunteers and your service get the maximum benefit from their involvement.

“The volunteering opportunities it has offered have been really good for me. I’ve got involved in lots of different things and helping other younger teenagers to get involved– it’s going to be good for my CV to have had this experience.” Chloe, Young Volunteer, High Wycombe

1.2 Types of volunteering

“I’ve applied to do voluntary work at the library – I like working with younger children, doing youth work, so it would be really good work experience for me.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Haslingden

There are many different ways in which young people can be involved as volunteers. Young people can be involved in short-term projects or long-term commitments, in roles that are accredited and in roles that are more informal.

In the library, young people can be involved as volunteers in three key ways: service delivery, activism and leadership.

Service delivery

Young people can be involved alongside other staff and volunteers in delivering the core service of the library e.g. serving customers or helping out at events.

Activism

Young people can be involved in helping to shape your library service, determining what services your library should offer and how these services are delivered. For example, young people can be involved in stock selection or in discussions about opening hours.

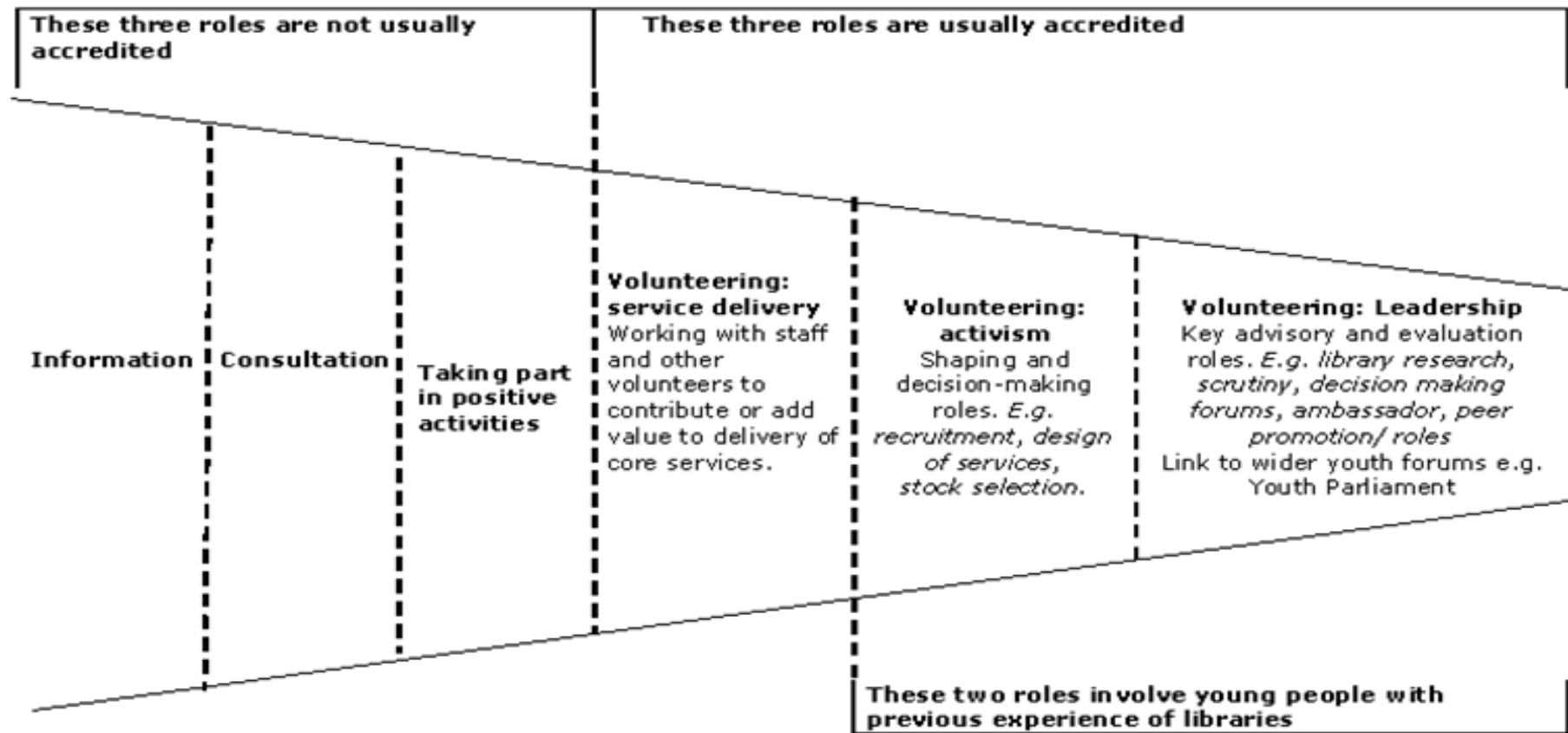
Leadership

Young people can be actively involved in leadership within the library, taking on such roles as evaluating the effectiveness of the service and promoting/advocating on behalf of the service within the local or national community.

For more detail on how volunteering fits into the Youth Involvement Model (below), see the Involving Young People document *Youth Involvement Methods*. Within each of these headings, there are a range of roles that young people can play, many of which will be outlined in more detail in section 4.

Of course, young people can be involved in your library service in numerous other ways such as participating in creative reading activities, borrowing books and taking part in consultations about library developments though these types of involvement are not usually classed as volunteering. See the Youth Involvement Model below for an illustration of how young people can be involved in library services.

1.3 Participate Youth Involvement Model – for developing young people’s participation



This model is based on the model developed by the North West Youth Libraries Board

2. Developing Volunteering

2.1 Preparing your service

“(the success has...) everything to do with our front-line staff putting their hearts and souls into it.” Durham Investors in Children

If your organisation wants to use volunteers, it is important that everyone, from senior management to frontline staff, knows why and how. If staff are well-prepared, young volunteers will feel welcome and supported and the process of volunteering will run smoothly. Good communication about volunteering will also avoid mistakes and prevent a breakdown in the relationship between volunteers and paid staff. The best way to prepare your library service for the introduction of volunteers is to develop a volunteer policy and to make sure that all staff and volunteers are aware of its contents.

2.2 Volunteer policy

A 'policy' might sound like a long-winded document that gathers dust on a shelf. However, to be effective, your volunteering policy should be brief, to the point and should be an active document that is referred to regularly. Having a volunteer policy:

- **makes a clear statement to volunteers, staff and the wider community that your service cares about volunteers**
- **ensures everyone understands how and why you use volunteers**
- **makes it easier to recruit volunteers**
- **helps you to retain volunteers**
- **ensures the delivery of a good quality service**
- **enhances the reputation of your organisation**
- **enables you to respond positively to funders' requests for evidence of good practice**
- **supports you in complying with legal requirements**
- **sets out expectations for everyone and helps to eliminate the possibility of disappointment and a failed relationship**
- **helps you to evaluate progress**

2.3 What is in a volunteering policy?

A volunteering policy should provide you with a guide to every aspect of volunteering within your library service, from why and how you recruit volunteers to their rights and responsibilities once they're actively involved.

Your volunteering policy should be unique to your particular service as your aims, objectives and needs will be different to those of other organisations. However there is some standard information that any volunteering policy should include:

- **a written statement of the aims and values of your library and of the role that volunteers play in delivering your objectives, recognising the complementary roles of paid staff and volunteers**
- **the health and safety requirements for employing volunteers, including documents for undertaking risk assessments**
- **an explanation of what your library expects of volunteers and what volunteers can expect from you**
- **the roles that volunteers will play in the service and the support, protection and benefits that volunteers are entitled to**
- **guidelines for the recruitment and selection of volunteers, including information about underlying principles of quality, diversity and equal opportunities**
- **information about the induction, training, support and supervision available to young volunteers**
- **guidelines for how the contribution of young volunteers will be recognised and rewarded, monitored and evaluated**
- **a code of practice governing the relationship of volunteers with your service**

For a template to aid you in developing a volunteer policy, please see the *Volunteer Policy Template* in *Involving Young People*.

2.4 Communicating the message to staff

“The staff down there are really nice, they come over and talk to you and ask you how you are and things like that – it’s not like an old-fashioned library where you keep getting told to be quiet and you don’t get treated like a stupid little kid.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Melksham

Any effective involvement of young people begins with the involvement of staff. The relationship that staff build with young people is a key part of successful volunteering. Library staff should understand the role of young volunteers, why volunteers are being involved and how they are involved in supporting them. Ideally staff should be involved in decisions concerning the roles that volunteers will play.

All staff should be reassured that volunteers are not a replacement for library staff and youth volunteering should enhance the service, not place burdens or challenges upon it. Young volunteers can do work which enriches the library's core functions and staff should be encouraged to see their role as one of supporting young people's participation.

Brief staff and discuss issues around:

- **Why your library service is involving volunteers**
- **What the library wants volunteers to do**
- **How staff will support young volunteers**

You may find that some training in how to work effectively with young people may be appropriate when beginning work with young volunteers, you can even involve young volunteers in delivering this training.

“It was excellent having Ellie there. She was really good. She led sessions on using Hear By Right and got us to examine our attitudes to young people. She was inspirational.” Kathryn Boothroyd on being trained by a young person in Lambeth

Training is available as part of the Participate Involving Young People module. The Reading Agency can also provide additional training for frontline staff.

3. Legal Requirements

3.1 Health and safety

“It was really important that we set the ground rules for the space. We’re the ones that have to abide by them.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Haslingden

Every organisation has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all staff and users. That responsibility extends to volunteers, who should have the same protections and be given the same advice and training as staff.

As part of an induction to the library, all volunteers should be made aware of the library's health and safety policy, any relevant policies on issues such as confidentiality and practical safety issues relating to their particular role.

Part of preparing the service for young volunteers should also include carrying out a risk assessment for the role. It is an important part of good volunteer management and will ensure that staff, volunteers and the service are protected from unnecessary risks.

3.2 What is risk assessment?

Risk is everywhere and all of us are skilled at negotiating risk in our day to day lives. Every decision we make from where to cross the road to taking part in a new activity has a risk attached. Risk assessment is about focusing on what might go wrong, however it’s not intended to put you off an activity. By focusing on what could happen at the outset, we ensure that it is very unlikely that anything bad will happen. Risk assessment is a formal process of thinking through, recording and reducing risks.

3.3 Why assess risk within your volunteer programme?

The reasons why you should carry out risk assessments before involving volunteers in the service include:

- **To protect the library and its resources**
- **To protect service users**
- **To protect volunteers**
- **To ensure maximum quality and effectiveness**
- **To reassure funders and partners**
- **because you value volunteers and the benefits that they can bring to your library service.**

3.4 What types of risks can be associated with involving young volunteers?

The risk to the public, the volunteer and the library itself, are minimal. Most of the risks that you identify during a risk assessment will never happen.

However, if you're aware of the potential hazards involved in volunteering you can take steps to improve the quality of your service. In the unlikely event that something does go wrong, good risk management should also help to minimise the impact of the event and give you clear procedures for dealing with it.

Some examples of potential risks you might want to consider are:

- **To the service e.g. a volunteer speaking or acting inappropriately or breaching confidentiality through lack of training**
- **To service users e.g. a volunteer providing inaccurate information through lack of training or understanding of procedures**
- **To the volunteer e.g. putting themselves in danger through lack of training or health and safety standards, or not being supervised and protected appropriately**

3.5 How to assess and manage risk

As risk can be associated with any activity, it is important to keep risk assessment in proportion; otherwise we can end up being fearful of involving young volunteers in any meaningful task. Risk Assessment should identify the really significant risks and seek ways of minimising their likelihood or impact. It is also important that the actions we take to minimise risk should not place unnecessary or impractical requirements on volunteers.

Risk assessment involves working systematically through four key steps:

- **Identifying the potential risks faced in each volunteer role (remembering to consider the risk to the volunteer, to the library and to other people)**
- **Categorising the seriousness of these risks according to likelihood and impact (You may find it helpful to use a scale such as High, Medium and Low) Attend to the most serious risks first.**
- **Identifying and implementing measures to manage the risk**
- **Regularly reviewing your risk assessment by setting dates to evaluate that implementation and risk reduction has been effective**

In order to be effective, your approach should be:

- **systematic**
- **regular**
- **recorded**
- **involving all appropriate people**
- **monitored**
- **reviewed**
- **effectively communicated**

Measures to manage risk:

- **Avoid the risk. If the task is not essential and you can meet your library's objectives in other ways, it might be best not to offer that particular activity as part of the volunteering role e.g. locking up the library at night is unlikely to be an appropriate role for a young volunteer.**
- **Control the risk. This is the most common approach. If a task is a core part of the volunteering role and the work of the library, you need to identify what policies must be adhered to, what training is needed and how this is to be recorded and monitored e.g. young people might be responsible for working with young children during the Summer Reading Challenge but shouldn't be left alone with children and should be briefed on the library's child protection policies.**

- **Finance the risk. You may decide to allocate additional resources to overcome barriers e.g. if you risk losing volunteers because of the lack of volunteer expenses, you may decide to allocate a budget to meet this need.**

For a template to help with risk assessment, please download the template from Participate *Involving Young People* website.

3.6 CRB checks and child protection

You should follow your authority's guidelines on Child Protection and CRB checking. Staff who will be supporting young volunteers will need to be CRB checked and understand about safeguarding young people in the library. You will also need to obtain parental/guardian permission before employing a young person under sixteen as a volunteer in your Service.

Your authority's own policy on volunteer CRB checks is the guidance you should use when it comes to involving young volunteers. However, there is no legal requirement to vet all volunteers and CRB checks can be time-consuming and off-putting for young people, particularly for those who are part of socially excluded groups such as young offenders, or those who have literacy issues.

Your decision to undertake a CRB check should be based on the following:

- **A thorough risk assessment of the role to be performed by the volunteer and the extent to which this will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable adults**
- **If the voluntary work is to be carried out on someone else's premises, for example a school or care home, to comply with the legislation that governs their business.**

In June 2008 The Cabinet Office published [guidance](#) to help organisations that use volunteers to be clear about when they do and don't need to carry out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. A [volunteer risk assessment toolkit](#) was developed to support the Cabinet Office guidance, which you may also find useful,

4. Volunteering roles and recruitment

4.1 Creating volunteering roles

“It’s really good that we’ve got the HeadSpace now – there aren’t that many places to go in Efford otherwise. I’m definitely going to stay involved. I’ve got a list of volunteering activities that I’d like to do.” Young Volunteer at Efford
HeadSpace

You may have specific tasks that you would like volunteers to undertake or you may simply be looking at volunteering as a way to attract young people to participate in the library service. Either way, you'll need to be clear about which roles you are going to develop for young people.

The best way to develop volunteering roles that are attractive to young people is to involve young people from the beginning in developing the role descriptions. They will have a good insight into the kinds of tasks young people will enjoy, and also have a better idea about availability. Young people may already have a lot of demands on their time and they might need you to be flexible in terms of the timing of their commitment. When devising your volunteer roles, you need to think about:

- **what you want young people to do**
- **where they will carry out their duties**
- **when they will be required**
- **who they will be working with**
- **what support, training and supervision they will require**
- **what the role offers young people and what benefits they will receive**

You will also need to consider whether you are creating a long-term volunteering position, or a short-term role and whether the role requires any specialist skills. Consider offering short taster sessions for young people to test out a particular role. You might also consider whether there are roles that young people could carry out as a group.

Volunteers carry out a role not a job, which requires greater flexibility and understanding of how young people can be helped to develop.

The volunteer roles that you create must meet the motivational needs of the groups of young people that you want to recruit. No amount of promotion will attract young people into roles that aren't well thought out and appealing.

Having clear, progressive and varied volunteering roles will also ensure that young people get maximum opportunity for enjoyment, skills development and work experience. One short-term, temporary role could lead onto a different long-term role and maybe even accreditation for the volunteer. The Youth Involvement Model in section 1.3 outlines how young people's involvement and progression can take place.

Some roles that HeadSpace libraries have already been developing are:

- **Library assistant – helping to shelve books and assist customers**
- **Stock selector – choosing books, especially for the young adult area**
- **Reading group co-ordinator – organising young adult or children's reading group**
- **Homework club helper – helping children and young people with research**
- **Summer Reading Challenge assistant – helping children to find appropriate books and talking to them about their responses**
- **Library promoter – advocating on behalf of the library in schools and in the community**
- **Evaluator – assessing the service that the library provides (especially the service for young people)**
- **Trainer – assisting with staff training in working with young people**
- **Marketing assistant – developing publicity for the library service**
- **Web co-ordinator – developing library's online content for young people such as building groups and pages on groupthing.org**
- **Events co-ordinator/assistant – organising events for young people**
- **Group leader – running gaming, music or film clubs etc**
- **Designer – helping to develop the design, layout and décor of the library**

See the Participate *Involving Young People* website resources for templates to help you to develop volunteering roles for your service

4.2 Recruitment

“If adults tell you what to do, young people will be less likely to sign up.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Haslingden

Recruiting young volunteers is part of marketing your service, volunteering roles need to be understandable, and designed to be attractive and fun for young people. Spending time thinking about and working with young people themselves on the benefits of each role will help you to effectively sell the roles to your target audience.

4.3 Tips for recruitment

“This isn’t mentioned in the strategy, but a really important reason for getting involved is friendship.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Haslingden

When selling the role focus less on the library message and more on the benefits and interest for young people. For example, if you want help to redesign your young people's area you don't necessarily need young people who love books. In fact a critical eye might be just what's needed and the attraction for a young volunteer might be the chance to use their design skills or to make an impact in their local community.

Consider targeted recruitment if you're looking for young people from a particular age group, area or background. Go to where they are and work with partners to contact the right groups. E.g. perhaps there are young people on childcare courses in the local college who would like to help out at Baby time.

Use publicity effectively. Posters in the library are only going to attract very small numbers of people. Place marketing material in schools, youth groups, volunteer bureaus and other venues frequented by young people. Flyers tend to be more effective than posters and more effective still are websites, blogs, podcasts and social networking sites such as groupthing.org. Remember that web information needs to be updated regularly. If you're not confident using IT, the chances are that there's a young volunteer who would love to take on that role.

Ask young people personally to volunteer. Many young people feel that they've never been asked to volunteer. Seek out opportunities to talk to young people about the roles you have available.

Use word of mouth recommendation. Provide a positive volunteering experience for one or two young people and the likelihood is that they'll bring their friends.

Act promptly to take advantage of young people's enthusiasm. Develop procedures to acknowledge the young person's interest in volunteering straight away. Young people live in a fast-paced world and will lose enthusiasm and commitment or find other things to do with their time.

Understand young people's time commitments. Older young people are likely to be busy around exam times; Muslim young people may need to go to mosque at certain times of day. Ask young people what times suit them and be flexible to fit in with their commitments.

Work with partners. There a number of agencies who promote volunteering with young people who would be keen to work with you. Some schemes that might operate in your area are:

- **V – an independent charity to promote volunteering for 16-25 year olds. They will be able to help you to develop and promote your volunteering opportunities. See their website at <http://www.vinspired.com/> for more information.**
- **The Princes Trust**
- **The Duke of Edinburgh's Award**
- **Youth Offending Teams**
- **Universities, schools and colleges also often have their own volunteering services.**

“I first heard about HeadSpace from our school newspaper when it ran a small piece about Efford library which was encouraging people to get involved with this new project. I thought that it would be fun and something that I would like to do -- help out and volunteer.” Young volunteer HeadSpace Efford

See the Participate *Involving Young People* website resources for a template which will give you further help with marketing volunteer roles

4.4 Practicalities of recruitment and selection

“I’m doing some volunteering at HeadSpace Folkestone – it’s really good because I’ve also just started doing some youth work and it’s helping me with that.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Folkestone

Different organisations will have different procedures for recruitment and selection. When drawing up this section of your volunteer policy, it's worth thinking about the following:

- **What procedures are already in place in your authority? Do you need to adhere to Council policies around recruiting staff or can you create new guidelines for young volunteers?**
- **Do you need to use application forms? If application forms are necessary, think about making them short and simple and make sure you offer young people support in completing them. See the Sample volunteer application form template in the *Involving Young People* web resources for an example**
- **How will you interview volunteers? Will an informal chat be sufficient or do you need a formal interview? Can young people be involved in the selection process and what measures would you need to have in place to make this fair and effective?**
- **Will you need permissions from parents of guardians? You will need this for young volunteers under 16 years of age.**
- **How will you deal with people you think are not right for a particular role? Can you suggest an alternative role or provide some training?**
- **If you're working with vulnerable clients, what procedures do you have in place to protect both them and your volunteers. Use the risk assessment procedure to prepare for this.**

5. Induction, training and supervision

“I'm going to volunteer to be a book waiter -- I think it's a good idea to have someone your own age helping you choose a book to read because it can be intimidating to have to ask an older person.”

Young Volunteer, HeadSpace Lyme Regis

Recruiting your volunteers is important but it's also important to retain their interest. The best way to do this is to make sure they have a positive experience. Induction and training are a very important part of this, so that they feel adequately supported. Planning for induction and training should ideally begin at the recruitment stage so that you can capitalise on the young people's enthusiasm and get them started as soon as possible.

5.1 Induction

Once you've recruited your volunteers, you need to think about doing an induction session as soon as possible, preferably on the first day. A proper induction to a role ensures that a young volunteer feels confident that they know what you expect of them and what they can expect of you. Induction can help to make a volunteer feel welcomed, and don't forget the simple things such as knowing where the toilets are and where you can have a cup of tea and what people's names are.

An induction doesn't need to be a boring checklist. Think about what young people need to know and then consider how to convey this information in a way that's welcoming and fun. You could ask other young volunteers to be responsible for the induction. They can give first-hand information about the volunteer role and library procedures in a way that's accessible to young people. You could also devise creative activities to help orientate young volunteers such as a treasure hunt to find out where things are or a quiz to get to know the staff.

If you do have key written information that young volunteers need to know, make sure the volunteer has a copy and think carefully about how to make the language simple and jargon free. Talk it through with the young person to make sure they understand; not all young people who volunteer will have good literacy skills.

See the Participate *Involving Young People* website resources for a sample induction checklist

5.2 Volunteer agreements

It's a good idea to draw up a volunteer agreement as part of the recruitment and/or induction process. This agreement clarifies the rights and roles of the volunteer and the library service. The agreement should be signed by the volunteer and a member of your team. Training needs should be identified during recruitment and induction and your commitment to the volunteer's training programme should be part of the volunteer agreement.

Ensure the young person understands everything that's included in the agreement and that they have their own copy. Talking it through makes the process more informal and ensures that there will be no confusion later.

See the Participate *Involving Young People* website resources for an example of a volunteer agreement

5.3 Supporting young volunteers

“At the opening I looked at it and it was so satisfying because we have been involved with it and it has worked! ” Young Volunteer, HeadSpace Lyme Regis

The level and type of support and supervision that a young volunteer will need will vary according to their ability and the role that they have agreed to play. For example, a volunteer working at the library counter with colleagues close by will not need the same kind of support as a young person who has agreed to organise events for other young people.

In order for the volunteering experience to be a positive, all young people will need the following:

- **a sense of ownership of their role and a real feeling of being able to contribute positively to your service and/or project**
- **training in how to deliver any aspects of the role that require new skills**
- **the opportunity to develop confidence and skills**
- **a named person that they can look to for support and guidance**
- **regular discussions about their role and how it's going**
- **a feeling of being part of a team and of the wider service**
- **a safe, friendly and relaxed place to develop**
- **acknowledgement and celebration of the role they play**
- **respect from the people they work alongside**
- **not to be out of pocket – it is good practice as a minimum to provide bus fares and refreshments to your volunteers**
- **adequate resources to carry out their role**

Have high expectations of your young volunteers and they are unlikely to disappoint you. Give them as much responsibility as possible, whilst making sure that no-one is being put at unnecessary risk. A feeling of involvement and importance is what makes the volunteering experience valuable for the young person, fostering confidence and self-esteem.

You may want to consider ways to make your volunteers feel part of a team. For instance, in HeadSpace, young volunteers wear HeadSpace t-shirts. This helps the public to recognise them and also gives them a feeling of belonging. Badges can also be used for this function. Get young people to design your badges or t-shirts and have them professionally printed to make sure they'll be proud to be seen wearing them.

Think carefully about how you will give support and supervision to your young volunteers before they begin their work. There may be no need to sit down with young people in formal supervision sessions involving mountains of paperwork, but having a formal policy for how you give support will make sure that no-one feels abandoned.

5.4 Training and development

"I've been trained to be a book waiter and we've just organised our own schedule of regular meetings for all the HeadSpace team" Young volunteer, HeadSpace Bolton

All volunteers will need some kind of training in order to fulfil their role. Training is a way of investing in your volunteers and making them feel valued

and supported. Training needs should be identified during the recruitment and induction process and opportunities for training and development should be personalised to meet each young person's individual needs. Training can take a number of forms:

- **Formal training courses either within your library service or in external settings**
- **Shadowing staff or volunteers who are already performing the role that the young volunteer is wanting to take on**
- **Mentoring by staff or more experienced volunteers**
- **Visits to other projects and support from partner organisations**
- **Research conducted by the young person**

Make sure you build in reflection time for the young person to check that they have understood their training and to make sure that the training has met their needs. New training needs will emerge as the volunteer becomes more experienced and takes on further responsibilities, so ensure that measures are in place to identify and respond to your volunteer's changing needs.

5.5 If things go wrong

In most circumstances and with good planning the library service should easily be able to resolve any difficulties involving young volunteers. However, to protect all concerned it's important to have procedures in place. These should include:

- **Complaints made by or about volunteers**
- **Inappropriate behaviour by or to volunteers**
- **Breach of agreed procedures by volunteers or staff e.g. confidentiality**

Although you may base your procedures on those already in existence within your authority, it is important to make the distinction between volunteers and paid staff and to have separate procedures for volunteers.

6. Recognition and Progression

“It’s important that regular volunteering gets rewarded. [Accreditation awards] are a symbol. A symbol of recognition.” Young Volunteer, Haslingden HeadSpace

Hopefully your volunteers will gain many benefits from being part of your volunteering scheme: new skills, new friends and work experience being just a few. It's important to remember though that your young volunteers are working for nothing so it's your responsibility to make sure they feel that their contribution is valued. If a young volunteer feels that they are appreciated and important, they will enjoy their job and will want to continue to attend. You can show appreciation for the work of your volunteers in a number of ways, both formal and informal. Formal recognition could include:

- **Accreditation via a recognised body such as Duke of Edinburgh's Award or Youth Achievement Award**
- **Hand-made certificates to acknowledge a particular piece of work**
- **Presentation and celebration events**
- **Plaques or gifts**
- **References or feedback for a record of achievement**

Accreditation should always be on offer for young people who are volunteering but taking up the offer should be a young person's choice. The Participate Accreditation Handbook will give you more information about developing and offering accreditation in your service.

Formal accreditation will suit some young people; however others may prefer a more low-key informal approach. Ways to give informal recognition include:

- **Say 'thank you' for the work that the volunteer has done**
- **Make sure you greet young people as they arrive on duty**
- **Give young people positive feedback about their work and their personal qualities**
- **Show an interest in their lives**
- **Leave them thank you notes or positive feedback**
- **Praise them in front of their peers**
- **Provide food at volunteer meetings**
- **Acknowledge their contribution by naming them in written materials and displays**
- **Allow them represent the library service in public meetings**
- **Enlist them in training new volunteers and staff**

Some kind of regular opportunity for socialising with other volunteers is likely to be one way of keeping your young people happy but there may be numerous other things that they would like. If you're not sure what would make your young volunteers feel most valued the best thing to do is to ask them.

“It was amazing! The Headspace party was a huge success! We all loved it. Well done!” Young person, HeadSpace High Wycombe

6.1 Rules for recognition

- **Give recognition or young volunteers will drop out or not give their best.**
- **Give it frequently: once a year is not enough. Little and often is better.**
- **Vary your approach: use different ways, some big, some small, to give your appreciation.**
- **Be honest: don't say things you don't mean. Seek out the thing that you can compliment about each young person.**
- **Name the people involved in successful work rather than praising whole events.**
- **Praise appropriately: small accomplishments, small praise. Major accomplishments, major praise.**
- **Be consistent: praise equal efforts equally**
- **Be timely: give praise when it's due**
- **Make it individual: praise people according to their tastes**

6.2 Progression

“Because of HeadSpace, we're also involved with the Bolton Children's Book Awards – There's been lots of exciting opportunities like that. We also made a presentation about the project to a conference of 200 people! We were very nervous but it was great and we got to go to London.” Young Volunteer, HeadSpace Bolton

However much your young people enjoy volunteering with you, the time will come when they're ready to move on. This phase of their involvement is as important as the phase when they joined you. Make their exit positive to ensure that they leave you with a good memory of their experience and enthusiasm for their next phase of development.

When a volunteer's time with you is ending, consider the following steps:

- **Celebration and recognition.** Make sure your young person knows how much their time with you was appreciated. Organise some kind of celebration and present the young person with some memento of their time with you whether it be a photo album or their best moments or a certificate from an accrediting body. You could also provide them with a reference for a future employer.
- **Evaluation:** be sure to find out what a difference the volunteering has made for the young person. First hand accounts are powerful advocacy tools and also a way of identifying where improvements need to be made
- **Support and information.** Spend time with the young person identifying progression routes. Maybe there are other roles within your library that they could play or other places they could volunteer.
- **Training, recruitment and advocacy.** Experienced volunteers are key individuals to engage in recruiting, mentoring or training new volunteers. Maybe you can create a new role for your volunteer as a mentor or advocate for the new recruits.

7 Evaluation and Review

Regular review all of your policies and procedures will keep your volunteering programme working smoothly. Involve your volunteers in this process to ensure that they feel ownership, give feedback and also that they are up to date with any changes.

“There were other young people who were involved before me, who were responsible for choosing the furniture, but I’ve got involved in the book buying and I am going to spread the word to other young people, to let them know that we have got this space, and it’s ours.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace High Wycombe

7.1 Reflection

Volunteering is making a real difference to young people all around the country in a wide variety of settings. By taking the step of deciding to involve young people in your library service you will be contributing to building communities and improving the quality of life for young people you work with. Young people will recognise the library as a vibrant community building that welcomes young people, and this can help to transform the image of young people within their community. The Reading Agency will support you to gain the skills and information to make it happen and to be rewarded by the rich, fun contribution that young people can make to your life and to the life of your library service.

“It’s a really relaxed layout – very different from any other part of the library. It’s not a space that the adults have made – it’s for us by us. We’ve had the choice in terms of books and design and other things through a series of meetings. We’ve made it, so it doesn’t look like what adults would think is kids’ stuff. It’s cool, not kiddy stuff – it looks like a whole different area and it’s our area – you walk in and it’s obvious that it’s our space. So often youth projects can end up being half-hearted and fail, but this has worked, and there’s a real sense of achievement in that.” Young volunteer, HeadSpace Lyme Regis

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