

The National Youth Agency
Out of the Box

Report of Phase 1
31 March 2009



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1. Background

1.1 'Out of the Box' is a joint project between The National Youth Agency (NYA) and The Reading Agency (TRA)¹, funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

1.2 NYA and TRA have a long-established relationship working together on joint projects such as the influential *YouthBOOX* programme, which brought youth workers and library professionals together to find ways of encouraging young people to read more often and more widely. The two agencies have also worked together on *Fulfilling their Potential*, the national libraries change programme, and through the national Youth Libraries Board.

1.3 Out of the Box

This project, *Out of the Box*, aims to support developmental opportunities for reading for young people aged 14-19 who are disaffected and/or disengaged from formal education.

The project has five main objectives:

- To encourage young people in youth work/non-formal settings to read more widely and more frequently
- To engage young people in the selection of reading materials
- To support young people's reading through a book box-type scheme used by youth workers and supported by local libraries
- To encourage stronger library-youth work partnerships and a range of development activities to help build active reading communities in youth work/non-formal settings
- Develop awareness of the most effective models of delivery - including an awareness of 'what works for whom in what circumstances'.

1.4 This will be achieved through the development of local partnerships of youth workers and library staff working together, and with young people, to select books and other reading materials and engage young people in the development of reading communities in youth work and other non-formal settings.

1.5 The project is being implemented in three phases over a period of two years.

- Phase 1: Action research and preparation (January – March 2009) undertaken by Dr. Kerry Young on behalf of the National Youth Agency
- Phase 2: Implementation (April 2009 – March 2010)
- Phase 3: Evaluation (April – August 2010)

1.6 Advisory group

The project is supported by an advisory group including representatives from DCSF, The National Youth Agency, the Reading Agency, the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ACSEL) and the Association of Principal Youth and Community Officers (APYCO)²

¹ See Annex A.

² See Annex B.

1.7 Phase 1: Action research and preparation

Phase 1 of *Out of the Box* involved six local partnerships of youth workers/ workers in non-formal settings and library staff across a geographical spread – Dorset, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Norfolk, Portsmouth and Stockton-on-Tees.

1.8 Each project was provided with a grant of £400 towards expenses to be determined by each project locally. In addition, each participating youth centre was offered a free one year subscription to *groupthing* – the Reading Agency’s website for young people where they can creatively engage with reading and words.³

1.9 Participating partners were selected during January 2009.

- Each partnership was visited by the project consultant in early February to discuss and agree the most appropriate delivery model (different models for different local partnerships - but all including young people’s active involvement).
- Projects were undertaken during February and March (supported by the project consultant)
- At the end of March projects were visited once again by the project consultant to gather learning from their experience about ‘what works’ and does not work. The agenda for discussion included:
 - ◇ Partnership working between library staff and youth workers
 - ◇ Developing opportunities for young people’s reading in non-formal settings
 - ◇ The practicalities of young people’s active engagement (including starting points/journey/outcomes; and involvement in *groupthing*)
 - ◇ How reading can support the informal education process
 - ◇ Changed attitudes about young people’s reading by library staff, youth workers and young people
 - ◇ Sustainability of reading activity linked to informal education processes
 - ◇ Pre-requisites of success.

1.10 The outcomes for Phase 1 were identified in the original project proposal (August 2008) as follows.

- Evidence of improved attitudes to reading amongst young people.
- Evidence that reading activity will be sustained in the future.
- Identification of an effective delivery mechanism for reaching the target groups of young people

1.11 The initial proposal also stated that Phase 1 of the overall project would be evaluated in terms of critical success factors including:

³ *Groupthing* provides young people (aged 13-18) with a safe and accessible space to log on and have conversations about books and reading materials – they can set up groups, rate and review, upload their own creative work and start chats.

- The engagement and involvement of young people in reading
- The evidence of attitudinal change
- The book selection process
- The delivery mechanism
- Partnership working
- Sustainability of local reading activity

1.12 This report is the report of Phase 1 of the *Out of the Box* project.

2. The Projects

Given the very short timescale of Phase 1 it did not seem realistic to expect that projects could be established and delivered from scratch within two months. It was therefore decided to approach areas where a relationship already existed between library staff and youth workers/workers in non-formal settings. In this way it became possible to build on existing initiatives, and learn from previous experience.

2.1 Dorset

Dorset Youth and Community Service runs a very successful young parents group in Bridport. This operates once a week for young parents and parents to be. These are informal sessions where participants are offered the chance to offload, have a cup of tea, meet new people and relax. Sometimes speakers are invited to talk about issues of interest to the group, or there are activities (e.g. art and crafts). Toys and facilities are provided and there is an onsite crèche.

The Youth Librarian makes regular 6 weekly visits to the group to discuss books, take a selection of recommendations as well as any books requested by the group. These sessions, although attracting young people from a few miles outside of Bridport are too far for people to come from Lyme Regis, which is the most westerly town in Dorset and where young people are often viewed with hostility from the other residents and where there is a perception that there is little for them to do.

Due to poor transport links to and from Lyme Regis the young people are sometimes isolated and it has proven difficult to identify young people that may benefit from designated sessions from the youth/library services. However, recent links between Lyme Regis HeadSpace and Lyme Regis Children's Centre revealed a need for provision for a small number of young parents using the children's centre through other projects.

Building on the strong relationship already established between the youth and library services, and seeking to develop partnership work with the children's centre, it was decided to try and set up a young parents' group in Lyme Regis using the model that has already proved successful in Bridport. However, this was not possible within the *Out of the Box* timescale. The project therefore focused on:

- Increased input with the youth service Bridport young parents' group specifically in terms of visits from the Youth Librarian and further work in identifying and selecting reading material. This included:
 - ◇ Discussion with young parents' group about reading – particularly young people's childhood experiences of reading and being read to
 - ◇ Book/film quiz
 - ◇ Discussion on books into films; what the group had read in the week; what they read/don't read and why; what they read to their children

- Initial work by youth workers and the Youth Librarian with the Lyme Regis Children's Centre to establish a relationship and seek to engage young parents in:
 - ◊ exploring their attitudes to reading
 - ◊ identifying current reading barriers/challenges
 - ◊ identifying possible reading interests
 - ◊ identifying reading material.

The plan was supported by the library service through the work of the Youth Librarian, visits to the library and a loan service.

Dorset now plans to build on this experience by:

1. Supporting the next 6-8 sessions at Bridport young parents group (through structured sessions prepared by the Youth Librarian based on information gathered from young people during February and March)
2. Pursuing the development of work with young parents in Lyme Regis
3. Developing a support/mentoring relationship between the Youth Librarian and local libraries across the county to grow a sense of ownership at local level and encourage local library staff to engage with their local youth centres
4. Possibly establishing 'satellite' library collections in youth clubs.

2.2 Hertfordshire

The aim of this project (based in Hemel Hempstead Library) was to recruit a group of young volunteers to select stock for young adult customers of the library. *V involved* was responsible for the advertising and recruiting of the volunteers (aged 16-20). The library service undertook the training of the volunteers on book selection procedures and the selection process. Stock selected will be in addition to that purchased through normal buying procedures.

Volunteer recruitment specified that young people needed to:

- have an interest in books and reading
- be computer literate and used to windows based applications and the internet as selection would be primarily from supplier websites
- be prepared to commit the necessary time to the project.

Each session took place at Hemel Hempstead Library running for 2–2½ hours. Each young person attended four sessions. During the sessions the young volunteers made use of the mobile services PCs and other PCs in the library office.

Sessions involved:

- Session 1:
 - ◊ Explanation of the aims of the pilot
 - ◊ Introduction to library and current stock, in particular the areas in need of book and reading selection
 - ◊ Training on library catalogue and self-service facilities
 - ◊ Outline of current buying team set up and county selection criteria

- Session 2:
 - ◊ Supplier website training
 - ◊ Stock selection
- Session 3:
 - ◊ Stock selection
- Session 4:
 - ◊ Discussion about books/reading material selected and reflections on their experience
 - ◊ Designing a logo for the book plate – providing a sense of identity and continuity for the ‘Youth Consultants’.

Informal discussions also took place with the young people exploring issues around what they read and why, how they choose books/reading material, what they want when they come to a library, their attitude towards reading.

The outcomes for the project were identified as:

- Giving young people a chance to influence the services that they use
- Giving young people a chance to learn new skills, thus increasing their confidence and capacity for employment
- Helping young people to enjoy life and to make a positive contribution
- Helping to reduce the potential for anti-social behaviour
- Ensuring that Hertfordshire libraries are responsive to the needs of the local community.

Through the project, young people selected stock from adult fiction (and some non-fiction) totalling over £1000 and £500 of stock from children’s fiction. The young people will also receive a ‘V’ *Thank You Award* for seven hours of volunteering.

Hertfordshire now plans to build on this experience by:

1. Organising a similar book selection project with ‘Youth Consultants’ in 2010 but this time with more targeted recruitment in schools and youth centres
2. Expanding the selection project to other libraries (e.g. St Albans which is in the same library district with Hemel Hempstead).

2.3 Lancashire

There were two projects in Lancashire.

- A poetry and rap masterclass in writing, speaking and recording; and
- A young people’s reading group.

Poetry and rap masterclass

In 2006 young people in residential care in Lancashire came together with performance poet Lemn Sissay to produce and record their own poetry. The results of this work were A Sense of Place CD and book that was published and widely circulated in Lancashire amongst professionals and young people in care.

This work, as well as meeting the local authority's objectives to celebrate young people's talents and achievements, recognises that poetry and rap can be a powerful tool to explore feelings and emotions in written and verbal communication and to hear the voice of the young person.

In 2009, Education for Looked after Children (ELAC) is funding a Sense of Place 2, which aims to build on best practice from previous work. Sense of Place 2 will work with young people living in foster care.

As a part of *Out of the Box* Sense of Place 2 involved a selected group of 'fostering focus' young people, aged 10-17, who have challenging backgrounds. Terry Caffrey, a performing poet who has earned the title of the 'Looked after Children's poet' for his unfailing support to deliver poetry to our vulnerable children in Lancashire, led workshops and a masterclass for the group. The result of the masterclass, which took place on 11 March 2009, was a poetry and rap CD; and an accompanying book showcasing the talents of young people placed in care to Lancashire.

The project also supplied a collection of poetry books from which young people selected a book to take away to read.

Reading group

10 young people who are part of the youth forum at Haslingden HeadSpace visited Bolton Library to select books while Haslingden Library is being refurbished. The group was supported by the two youth workers based at the library and one of the volunteers.

The young people were very pleased about the trip to Bolton and spoke excitedly about the books they had selected in the minibus in the return journey – comparing what they had seen and who had selected what. The plan is for the young people to meet again to discuss the books they selected and the possibility of starting a reading group.

Lancashire now plans to build on this experience by:

1. Developing reading activities with looked after young people (e.g. inviting young people together to discuss the books they took away from the poetry and rap masterclass. Encouraging young people to review books and select new books)
2. Expanding the provision of rap workshops for looked after young people
3. Working with the young people at Haslingden to find out how they want to develop the group and build relationships with the other four young people's reading groups across Lancashire
4. Providing youth club type activities in the library (when the library is closed) to attract more young people to use the facility.

2.4 Norfolk

The Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library is currently the busiest library in the country attracting large numbers of young people who use the library to borrow a wide range of traditional books and text based material, as well as

other non-traditional material, read magazines, use computers or as a meeting place. In addition to being a local library for some young people, the city draws in young people from all over the county.

In 2006 library staff were approached by a small group of five young people who were looking for somewhere to meet to read/talk about manga and watch/discuss Anime films. Since then, the group has been meeting regularly with a diverse membership of about 40 young women and men, young people who are dyslexic or who have other learning difficulties, as well as young people who could be described as gifted and talented.

The group is self managing but supported by the community librarian with the portfolio for young people.

In November 2008 the group organised a Manga Night similar in design to the Tokyopop Recon that are promoted in bookshops. This was attended by 80 young people and was predominantly book based. On 14th February 2009 the library held a manga drawing workshop as part of a Dragon festival in the city centre.

As a separate issue, a large number of young people started to congregate in the library during 2008. Many of these young people are not in education, employment or training, misuse substances, are young parents and/or have low levels of literacy. The presence of this large number for young people (often well over 100) started to create tension with other users and so youth workers were invited into the library on Saturday afternoons and one evening a week to help understand the needs of these young people and begin to work with them positively.

The relationship between the youth workers and library began in November 2008. Observations show that if young people do pick up books in the library it is either manga or graphic novels. For this reason it was decided that a positive development could be to take manga books out into youth centres and other youth settings and create the buzz around manga that is evident in the Millennium Library.

The Norfolk contribution to *Out of the Box* is Ready, Steady Cosplay - A manga event for young people to be held at Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library on 27th March.

- The event is being organised and run by the young people's manga group currently meeting at the library, supported by a community librarian and a youth worker
- In addition, developmental work with young people at Brundall Youth Centre (located in a small, linear community lying on the eastern edge of Norwich) has enabled discussions about what the young people like to read, and what they find challenging about reading. This was supported by the library service through (i) the loan of manga and other books and (ii) planned visiting speakers from the young people's manga group based at the library.
- Youth workers are promoting the Ready, Steady Cosplay event, encouraging and supporting young people from youth centres to participate.

Norfolk now plans to build on this experience by:

1. Following through with the visiting speakers from the manga group to Brundall Youth Centre
2. Providing opportunities for reading 'make-overs' for young people at Brundall Youth Centre offered by the community librarian with the portfolio for young people (listening to what young people like to read and making suggestions –with attention to exploring their attitudes to reading; identifying current reading barriers/challenges; identifying possible reading interests; identifying reading material; being supportive/ sympathetic about their previous reading experiences; validating their reading choices)
3. Supporting the development of a relationship between Brundall Youth Centre and Brundall Library to enable and support young people to use their local library
4. Exploring the possible participation of 'V' volunteers in taking library collections to youth centres and engaging young people in discussion about books and reading.

2.5 Portsmouth

The *Out of the Box* project in Portsmouth worked with a group of young people at Hillside Young People's Centre to encourage and support them to make use of the nearby Paulsgrove Library.

The choice of Hillside Young People's Centre was based on its location in Paulsgrove, one of the most deprived areas of Portsmouth. The population in Paulsgrove displays well above average levels of deprivation in terms of income, occupation, unemployment and other social factors. Family sizes tend to be larger and there are relatively more children and young people in this ward of Portsmouth. The centre is also located in close proximity to Paulsgrove Library.

Hillside Young People's Centre has a range of facilities including gymnasium, IT suite, Art Zone, sports/outside play area. It offers activities (e.g. pool, table tennis, IT, arts) and works with groups of young people around issues of importance to them. The centre also has a small library, which is underused.

The *Out of the Box* project involved:

- A librarian working with a group of young people at Hillside Young People's Centre to support them to review the book collection in the youth centre's library.
- This was followed by a trip to Paulsgrove Library where the group of young people and youth worker were:
 - ◊ introduced to the library and the reading materials available; and
 - ◊ given access to *groupthing*.
- A follow-up session at the library where some young people used the library resources to select magazine subscriptions to be available to them in the youth club.

Portsmouth now plans to build on this experience by:

1. Developing an initial pilot in two youth centres where:
 - ◇ book boxes can be located as 'library outposts' of the local library
 - ◇ youth workers encourage young people to choose reading and engage them in conversation about their reading
 - ◇ young people are supported to visit the local library, provide feedback on books/reading material, and participate in the selection of books/reading material (for their centre)
 - ◇ the local library grows a sense of ownership for the project and its relationship with local young people
2. Developing use of *groupthing* for young people in libraries.

2.6 Stockton-on-Tees

Stockton Central Library has a growing portfolio in its informal education work with young people, including:

- 2005: Establishment of Youth Zone as a designated meeting space in the library for young people. Book selection with young people from Youth Zone including a visit to Forbidden Planet bookshop to buy graphic novels.
- 2005-6: Stockton Libraries awarded a grant from NRF3 Education and Young People Intervention. Money spent on running networked gaming sessions provided by Cyber Chaos across a variety of venues in Stockton.
- 2006: Film Making Workshop (funded by Connexions) involving young people 13+ in acting, camera and lighting work. An anti-bullying DVD was created by the group.
- 2007: A successful Stockton Youth Bank application was made by young people from Youth Zone. This enabled them to buy Playstation 3 equipment and games.
- 2007– 8: Consultations with young people about Stockton Library Service (and Stockton Central Library in particular) included questionnaires and workshop sessions and resulted in a range of short term 'quick fix' improvements (e.g. development of a separate 'teen area' in the central library, and consent forms for under 13s to access the internet) and longer term developments (e.g. establishment of reading groups for young people in two library branches).
- 2008-9: 'Satellite' deposit collections of books delivered to a variety of community settings across the borough including the youth cafés in Billingham and Stockton – the Chill Zone.

The young people within Chill Zone youth café in central Stockton can be considered to be among the most vulnerable young people in central Stockton. The surrounding area comes under the Neighbourhood Element of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund and the majority of the young people come from disadvantaged backgrounds involving risk of neglect, risk of offending, risk of underachievement and risk of underdevelopment of social and life skills. Many are not in education, employment or training. There is also a high level of involvement anti-social behaviour, and many are very sexually active. Alcohol and drug use is also prevalent.

The age of the young people ranges from 12 to 19 with the main grouping around 16/17 years old. As Chill Zone doubles as Connexions centre during the day many of the young people have a wide range of complex issues and are referred to the youth workers by Connexions PAs, social services, preventions or youth offending.

Chill Zone does not provide the usual youth club activities such as pool, table tennis and sports. Instead it engages young people in developing activities for themselves (e.g. a residential activity to Newquay supported by funding from the Youth Opportunity Fund). Chill Zone also supports young people with a range of employment issues and has helped many young people to access training schemes or employment.

A 'book box' was deposited in the Chill Zone youth café in January 2009. As a part of *Out of the Box* the project workers:

- met with young people at the café and discussed with them their response to the reading material in the box (February)
- worked with young people to identify what kind of reading material they might be interested in and arranged with the young people (i) a trip to Borders to select/purchase reading material of their choice (ii) a visit to the library, which included discussion with the young people about their experience and how it has impacted on their attitude to reading (March)
- A further meeting is planned for June to discuss how the new reading material is being used and to explore further possible initiatives.

Stockton now plans to build on this experience by:

1. Following up on young people's response to the books selected from Borders
2. Supporting regular visits to the library for young people so that they come to view the library as a place to be and a place to join
3. Sustaining the relationship between the library and Chill Zone through library visits and continually refreshing the book collection at the café
4. Pursuing a similar relationship between the library and another youth centre which recently supported the library in undertaking its youth consultation
5. Pursuing a similar relationship between the library and Connexions.

3. Learning from the projects

Out of the Box aims to support developmental opportunities for reading for young people aged 14-19 who are disaffected and/or disengaged from formal education. Phase 1 of the project was specifically concerned with developing awareness of effective models of delivery in library-non-formal/youth work partnerships that help to build active reading communities in non-formal settings. This phase of the project therefore focused on 'what works' in relation to:

- Partnership working between library staff and youth workers/workers in non-formal settings
- Developing opportunities for young people's reading in non-formal settings
- Young people's engagement and journey
- How reading can support the informal education process
- Changed attitudes about young people's reading
- Sustainability of reading activity
- Pre-requisites to success.

3.1 Partnership working between library staff and youth workers

The key feature of effective partnership working was identified as having a common goal. This included a positive approach to work with young people (both in the library and in non-formal settings), agreed, shared outcomes and a commitment to young people's achievements and enjoyment of reading.

3.1.1 Effective communication was also seen as crucial as well as a willingness to take a different perspective, being open to new ideas and taking on ideas from the other partner. Also seen as central were:

- mutual support;
- flexibility;
- a willingness to be reflective, organic and go with the flow; and
- a shared sense of ownership.

3.1.2 In order to be effective the partnership requires that library staff are comfortable working with young people in non-formal settings; and youth workers have confidence in their own skills – in terms of interacting with young people and establishing the informal relationship. In this way, library staff are able to bring to the situation their knowledge of books and reading materials, and youth workers are able to support young people to engage in the process including conversations about books and reading – why and what young people read, why they don't read, the broader social and personal issues raised through their reading.

3.1.3 This combination of skills means that partnerships are able to get to know and understand young people and know the right book for each one regardless of whether the partnership was between library staff and youth workers specifically, or other workers in non-formal settings (e.g. Lancashire poetry and rap masterclass; Hertfordshire 'V' involved).

- 3.1.4 *Out of the Box* was seen as particularly helpful in providing an opportunity to consolidate relationships that already existed.

"The Out of the Box project made us look forward in developing the relationship so as to do something positive instead of just fire fighting. It has enabled us to be creative and innovative in going outside the library environment." (project worker)

"There was an awareness of the library being there but the Out of the Box project brokered the partnership and established the principles for it." (project worker)

3.2 Developing opportunities for young people's reading in non-formal settings

Developing the relationship with young people was seen as the single most important aspect of developing opportunities for young people's reading in non-formal settings.

- 3.2.1 This relationship involves understanding what and why young people read or don't read; their thinking style; what impact school has had on their road to reading; their learning/reading needs and interests.

"They made us read at school. I read slower than everyone else and felt stupid. Books were shoved at us, like we had to like them or else. They used to choke us up with books. I still don't like reading." (young person)

"When I'm studying I feel guilty if I read a story." (young person)

"I don't remember reading much (as a child). I wanted to go outside and play. I used to fight about it. One day a friend was in the park reading a book and I ended up reading it too. I liked it. That was a shock." (young person)

"Books? Don't have time, plus they're boring aren't they? No one reads nowadays. It's all telly. Well I do read Heat and stuff like that. Not proper books. God, no." (young person)

- 3.2.2 Opportunities also need to:

- start with what young people want and be informed by their input
- recognise that 'teenagers' are not one group (e.g. different ages, young women/young men have different interests)
- give young people responsibility, choice and ownership
- be fluid
- give young people time to trust, test the boundaries, negotiate, discuss, respect each other (and the workers), make decisions (i.e. not rush the process)
- provide access to books/reading material in the places that young people go

- capture the learning outcomes for young people
- provide tempting ‘cookies’ in terms of the reading material available as well as access to other opportunities (e.g. volunteering or accreditation – such as The Arts Award)
- bring together youth worker enthusiasm with library staff knowledge of books and reading
- provide young people with good role models of workers as readers.

3.3 Young people’s engagement and journey

The shortened timescale of Phase 1 of *Out of the Box* dictated much of what was possible in terms of young people’s engagement and journey. Three to four weeks did not provide adequate time to establish projects in a position to, at this point, reflect meaningfully about where young people started and where they got to.

3.3.1 The very nature of the exercise – working with young people in non-formal settings – also created difficulties in having Q1 and Q2 questionnaires completed by the same young people, particularly in the short timescale.

3.3.2 Nonetheless, the project did work with a broad range of young people, 59 of whom completed questionnaires. Of which:

Questionnaire 1 (before)	56	
Questionnaire 2 (after)	16	3 completed Q2 but not Q1
Q1 & Q2 completed by the same young person	13	

3.3.3 The age range of the young people involved is indicated in the table below.

11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	20+
6	7	8	6	3	7	2	6		4	9

1 age unspecified

3.3.4 Comparing responses in Q1 and Q2 (excluding respondents aged 20+)

What do you think about reading? (Q1) – 47 respondents

Enjoyable	29	Educational	16	Waste of time	7	Hard work	4
Relaxing	25	Entertaining	16	Rewarding	6	Uncomfortable	2
Interesting	24	Boring	11	For uber geeks	6	Frustrating	1
Worthwhile	18	Confidence building	9	Difficult	5	Scary	1

What do you think about reading? (Q2) – 11 respondents






Interesting	9	Enjoyable	6	Waste of time	1	Hard work	1
Relaxing	6	Rewarding	4	Boring	1	Uncomfortable	
Entertaining	6	Educational	3	Difficult	1	Scary	
Worthwhile	6	Frustrating	3	Confidence building	1	For uber geeks	

3.3.5 Comparing responses in Q1 and Q2 (excluding respondents aged 20+)

How do you feel about reading? (Q1) - 47 respondents

				
11	19	12	2	3

How do you feel about reading? (Q2) - 11 respondents

				
4	7			

3.3.6 What did you get out of the project? (Q2) - 11 respondents

Fun	7	Something to do	4	Information & support	3
Sense of achievement	6	New skills	4	Access to other services	2
Chance to get involved in other things	6	Friends	4	Support with reading	1
Being a part of something	5	More confidence	4	Feel better about myself	1

3.3.7 The questionnaire responses appear to represent a relatively 'happy' group of readers with relatively positive thoughts and feelings about reading. In some ways this is not surprising given that some young people's participation was based on an interest in reading (e.g. Hertfordshire book selection project) while others have received input from the Youth Librarian over an extensive period of time (e.g. Bridport young parents' group).

3.3.8 Some of the completed questionnaires are also difficult to interpret. For example, one respondent circled that she thought reading was enjoyable, worthwhile and interesting. When asked about other words that describe what she thinks about reading, she wrote 'Exciting'. When asked how she felt about reading she ticked



Yet, when asked about other words that describe how she feels about reading she wrote 'Boring'.

Another respondent indicated that he thought reading was boring, confidence-building, waste of time and for uber geeks. The word he wrote down to describe how he feels about reading was 'Depressed' and yet he ticked



Yet another respondent indicated that he thought reading to be a 'waste of time' and 'rubbish' but also ticked



3.3.9 Despite these discrepancies, a number of clear outcomes can be identified for some young people. Including:

- The 'V' *Thank You Award* to be received by the 'youth consultants' involved in the Hertfordshire book selection project – and the 'V' *50 Award* to be received by one young person for voluntary work previously undertaken
- Further volunteering opportunities (e.g. summer Reading Challenge, local radio)
- An increased interest in books and reading resulting from young people's involvement in choosing books/reading material themselves and getting their heads around having money to spend and making choices
- Increased commitment to their youth centre through the opportunity to choose books/reading material that further interests and activities at their centre – e.g. cooking and craft, information (e.g. pregnancy). Such was that sense of ownership, that one young man brought a bookcase from home to store the books on at the youth centre
- Cultural spin-off – e.g. young people involved with manga learning to speak Japanese and the change in their underlying attitude to reading – although this cannot be credited to *Out of the Box* specifically.

"I've found so many books I want to read. It's great." (young person)

"I found out about graphic novels for the first time." (young person)

3.4 How reading can support the informal education process

Reading was seen as supporting the informal education process in a number of ways. Particularly:

- Books can act as a conduit to wider discussions of social/personal issues. Many young adult (and adult) books offer perspectives on different situations, providing information and dealing with issues which can be followed up – e.g. through discussion on social issues or individual support
- Involvement in a book selection process enables young people to interact – discussing what books/reading material are available, what they and others like to read and why. It involves them in discussion, consultation, negotiation and decision making
- Reading activities offer young people opportunities to explore feelings and emotions and, as a result, can be life enhancing and enable young people to gain confidence and find their voice
- Reading can help trigger the reflective process through a young person exploring and understanding why they want to or do not want to read, why they are interested in fiction or non-fiction, what information they want to

access and why, why reading is a pleasure or not. The important thing is engaging in that conversation that triggers the reflective process

- Within the informal education process, reading is a source of experience in the same way as watching (e.g. a film), listening (e.g. to music) or doing (e.g. an activity). It is these sources of experience that form the basis of the youth work conversation.

3.5 Changed attitudes about young people and reading

In responding to this particular question on Q2 young people indicated as follows.

How much has your attitude to reading changed since being involved with the project?

Not at all					Lots
3	1	2	4	1	

The three young people indicating that their attitude had changed 'Not at all' were all 'youth consultants' on the Hertfordshire book selection project all of whom were already active readers with positive views about reading.

Of the young people indicating that their attitude had changed:

- three reported that a 'sense of achievement', 'more confidence', 'fun', 'friends' and 'being a part of something' were all things they got out of the project
- other respondents indicating a slight to relatively significant change in attitude cited 'picking the books' as the best thing about their involvement in the project
- respondents indicating more significant changes in their attitude – for example:



from

to



reported the 'new experience' (of selecting books) and 'new books' being the best thing about their involvement in the project.

"Young people were prepared to give it a go and ask the library staff for the books they wanted. In the past they would have just said 'they haven't got anything I want'. So this definitely reflects a change to a more positive state of mind." (project worker)

"The young people enjoyed the experience and showed appreciation for the money and trip to Borders. It brought reading more into the forefront of their minds because they were thinking about what they read and why." (project worker)

3.6 Sustainability of reading activity

Four key issues were identified in relation to the sustainability of reading activity for young people in non-formal settings.

1. The need to mainstream activities within a broader strategic vision
2. Commitment from senior management for resources and 'getting the message out there'
3. The right attitude and enthusiasm – particularly youth workers with a passion for books
4. Training and support for:
 - ◇ Library staff: to develop skills and confidence in engaging with young people in non-formal settings
 - ◇ Youth workers: to develop skills in how to support other workers in youth work/non-formal settings; and how to have confidence in their own skills as informal educators and embrace the skills of other colleagues.

3.7 Pre-requisites to success

The pre-requisites to success as identified by project workers can be seen as falling into three broad categories.

Enthusiasm	Relationships	Structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a real passion for books and reading • Being prepared to take a risk • Being open to possibilities and exploring new approaches/ideas • Wanting to achieve success • Knowing how valuable reading is and wanting to make it work for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being interesting people to young people and having vibrant, interesting material on relevant topics • Trust and commitment between library staff and youth workers/ workers in non-formal settings • Relationships that provide access to where young people are (e.g. in schools, youth centres) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linked to the broader strategic context (e.g. ECM; Hear by Right) • Young people leading initiatives • Full-time youth librarian • Understanding how reading can add to positive outcomes and what both library staff and youth workers can offer

"If you can read you can learn independently. You have more freedom to learn what you want to; explore what you want to know about at your own pace and for your own interest." (project worker)

"I am pleased I've taken part. Being involved meant a development. It helped me to build up awareness of what youth workers do and the young people who go to the youth centre. It meant more than just taking a book box. It is very positive trying to work with young people who don't normally use the library." (project worker)

4. Conclusions

Out of the Box aims to support developmental opportunities for reading for young people aged 14-19 who are disaffected and/or disengaged from formal education.

- 4.1 The project has five main objectives:
- To encourage young people in youth work/non-formal settings to read more widely and more frequently
 - To engage young people in the selection of reading materials
 - To support young people's reading through a book box-type scheme used by youth workers and supported by local libraries
 - To encourage stronger library-youth work partnerships and a range of development activities to help build active reading communities in youth work/non-formal settings
 - Develop awareness of the most effective models of delivery - including an awareness of 'what works for whom in what circumstances'.
- 4.2 This Phase of the project (Phase 1) has focused specifically on developing awareness of effective models of delivery in library-non-formal/youth work partnerships that help to build active reading communities in non-formal settings. This has involved an exploration of 'what works' in relation to:
- Partnership working between library staff and youth workers/workers in non-formal settings
 - Developing opportunities for young people's reading in non-formal settings
 - Young people's engagement and journey
 - How reading can support the informal education process
 - Changed attitudes about young people's reading
 - Sustainability of reading activity
 - Pre-requisites to success.
- 4.3 In exploring these themes, this report provides evidence of:
- Improved attitudes to reading amongst some young people
 - Plans across the six projects to sustain and develop future opportunities for young people's reading in non-formal settings
 - A range of delivery models for reaching target groups of young people.
- 4.4 Critical success factors for Phase 1 include:
- The engagement and involvement of 59 young people in a range of reading related projects
 - Evidence of attitude change about young people's reading
 - Book selection processes
 - A range of delivery models including book selection, poetry and rap workshop, manga event, youth centre/library links, work with youth centre based groups of young people
 - Partnership working between librarians and youth workers as well as others working in non-formal settings (e.g. 'V' involved; Education of Looked After Children Team)

- Sustainability of local reading activity as demonstrated through the plans that each project has made for future related work.

4.5 Groupthing

In the end, *groupthing* did not emerge as a major part of Phase 1. Currently, in relation to the free one year subscription offered to participating youth centres it is likely that:

- Portsmouth will take up the subscription offer for Hillside Youth Centre
- Dorset may possibly take up the offer for Bridport Youth Centre; and Stockton may also investigate the possibility for the Chill Zone youth café
- There are no computers in youth centres in Norfolk but Norfolk may enquire about the possibility of using the subscription for the laptops on the Connexions bus
- Lancashire and Hertfordshire will not be taking up the offer of the free subscription at this time.

4.6 Questionnaires

The limited timescale of Phase 1 did not permit for more than a quick-snap picture of young people's views of their changing attitudes to reading through the use of questionnaires that proved difficult to interpret. In learning from this, it will be important to develop different approaches to gathering young people's views in Phase 2 – e.g. through interviews and group discussions.

4.7 Phase 2

The experience and information gathered during Phase 1 will provide a solid foundation to inform work in Phase 2 in terms of its aims to:

- Consolidate the learning from Phase 1
- Develop and sustain up to 25 local authority *Out of the Box* projects based on the learning from Phase 1
- Identify models of delivery.

4.8 Again, this will include both grants to projects and *groupthing* subscriptions and support for youth centres involved.

“What’s the last thing I read?Er ...don’t know. I must’ve read something. Does it count if I say I’ll read something later?” (young person)

ANNEX A: The National Youth Agency The Reading Agency

THE NATIONAL YOUTH AGENCY

The National Youth Agency supports those involved in young people's personal and social development and works to enable all young people to fulfil their potential as individuals. We achieve this by:

- Informing, advising and helping those who work with young people.
- Influencing youth policy and improving services for young people.
- Promoting young people's participation, influence and place in society.

www.nya.org.uk

THE READING AGENCY

The Reading Agency is an independent charity, working to inspire more people to read more. We believe passionately in the power of reading in people's lives and want everyone to have an equal chance to become a reader. Much of our work is with public libraries, and we also team up with prisons, publishers, unions, businesses, broadcasters, and others.

www.readingagency.org.uk

ANNEX B: Project Advisory Group

Sue Houlton	Programme Manager: Learning and Achievement	National Youth Agency
Elizabeth Dubber	Director of Programmes	The Reading Agency
Ruth Harrison	Senior Project Manager	The Reading Agency
Claire Styles	Senior Project Manager	The Reading Agency
Jan McIntosh	Gender, Class and Books Team Narrowing the Gaps	DCSF
Liz Hassock	Head of Integrated Youth Support Service Representing the Association of Principal Youth and Community Officers (APYCO)	London Borough of Hounslow
Helen Boothroyd	Children, Young People and Schools Library Service Manager Chair of the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL)	Suffolk Library Service Representing
Kerry Young	Project Consultant	Harrington Young

ANNEX C: Key contacts and project staff

Key Contacts	Project workers
<p><u>Dorset:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharon Kirkpatrick, Senior Manager Reading & Learning, Libraries and Arts • Arthur Woodgate, Senior Youth Worker (West Dorset) • Katherine Hudson, Reading and Community Learning Manager, Library and Arts 	<p>Andrew Blake, Library and Arts Nicki Ellis, Youth & Community Service Jassamy Hotchkiss, Youth & Community Service</p>
<p><u>Hertfordshire:</u> Sue Jones, Head of Children's Library Service</p>	<p>Carol Humphreys, Library Service Annette Jackson, Library Service Nicole Connors, V involved Team</p>
<p><u>Lancashire:</u> Jean Wolstenholme, Manager Young People's Services Library and Information Service</p>	<p>Heather Pitman, Library & Information Service Alison Turner, Library & Information Service Sadaqt Amin, Young People's Service Judith Tracey, Young People's Service Elaine Roberts, Education of Looked after Children Team</p>
<p><u>Norfolk:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jill Adams, Community Librarian Manager • Dorne Fraser, Head of Children's Library Services 	<p>Elaine Simpson, Library & Information Service Anita Beckett, Integrated Youth Support Nicole Porter, Integrated Youth Support</p>
<p><u>Portsmouth:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lindy Elliott, Acting Library Services Manager • Sharon George, Head of Integrated Youth Support • Sarah Read, Positive Activities Manager, Integrated Youth Support Service 	<p>David Percival, Library Service Fiona Dexter, Library Service Kathy Haylock, Library Service Katy Howlett, Integrated Youth Support Service</p>
<p><u>Stockton-on-Tees:</u> Laurayne Featherstone, Head of Library Services</p>	<p>Helen Wilberforce, Library Services Ginny McCallum, Integrated Youth Support Service</p>