

Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering



Report 2011: Evidence and learning from 50 partner local authorities

Headline Achievements

3891 volunteers were recruited in 117 library services (62% of the UK network) to work alongside staff during the Summer Reading Challenge. Of these, The Reading Agency worked with a sample of 50 local authorities, as focal points for learning and evidence. This report looks at the successes of the programme in these 50 authorities.

The programme has been embedded as an important model that adds capacity for libraries, alongside tangible benefits for young people and participating children. The model is being extended to other areas of The Reading Agency's National Reading Offer work.

Achievements of 50 partner local authorities

- 1361 young volunteers aged 12-24 years recruited (against a target of 1000)
- 114.7% increase in the number of volunteers recruited compared with 2010
- 96.4% of volunteers said they learnt new things and gained skills and experience through volunteering for the Summer Reading Challenge
- 81.0% of volunteers said they would like to keep volunteering in a library after the Summer Reading Challenge has finished.
- 81.6% of library authorities have offered volunteers opportunities to continue volunteering in the library or the community after the summer, with offers made to at least 755 volunteers.
- 780,000 children involved in the Summer Reading Challenge

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1. Background to the programme

1.1 Summer Reading Challenge

The national Summer Reading Challenge, coordinated by The Reading Agency, is run in 97% of UK public libraries. With 780,000 children aged 4-11 taking part in 2011, the Summer Reading Challenge continues to be the biggest national reading initiative in the UK. It runs in libraries throughout the summer holidays, with incentives, activities and events designed to create a real buzz around children's reading, as children complete the challenge of reading six or more library books over the summer.

“The summer reading challenge has inspired my daughter to read more in this 6 weeks than she ever has before!”

Parent of 9 year old, Essex

1.2 Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering Pilot 2010

In 2010, The Reading Agency developed a pilot volunteering programme with library services to respond to their need for support during the Summer Reading Challenge. We worked with 20 library services, as focal points for learning and evidence.

The pilot was based on The Reading Agency's extensive experience gathered through pioneering programmes such as HeadSpace and Participate¹. These programmes have shown that libraries and reading can offer valuable opportunities for young people to get involved in their local communities, and lead on library services for other young people.

In its first year, 634 volunteers were recruited by 20 library services. The pilot was funded by v Match Fund Programme and the John Laing Charitable Trust.

The pilot successfully exceeded its volunteer target of 250. It also saw an increase of 280% in the number of volunteers working in pilot library services, and an increase of 304% in the number of libraries using volunteers, compared with the previous year. 99.2% of volunteers said they gained new skills, and 75% said they would like to keep volunteering in a library.

¹ HeadSpaces are library spaces where young people can read, meet and volunteer. They are developed and run in equal partnership between young volunteers and their local libraries. Participate is The Reading Agency's consultation programme supporting authorities in developing a reading offer to young people across the library service.

1.3 Development of the three year programme

Based on this success, John Laing Charitable Trust extended funding to run a three year programme from 2011-2013. This support has enabled us to build on the successes of the 2010 pilot, and extend the numbers of authorities with whom we are working. In 2011, The Reading Agency worked with a sample of 50 local authorities, as focal points for learning and evidence.

The development of the programme comes at a crucial time. In August 2011, the media reported on figures from the Department for Education showing the number of NEETS was 979,000 – an all-time high since 2006.² The Guardian reported in November that youth unemployment was at record high, with 1.02 million unemployed and a youth unemployment rate of 21.9%³. Meanwhile, youth services and youth opportunity funds are being cut, and university fees are rising, along with increased pressure on university places.

This report summarises the success of the three year programme in 2011, against the background of these difficulties for young people. Library services reported that, in challenging times for libraries, their work has been sustained by the involvement of young volunteers. Volunteers, working alongside library staff, have added capacity and sustainability. In return they have gained confidence and new skills to support their future lives. Many young volunteers have gained accreditation for the work they have done with libraries.

We are very grateful for the support of the John Laing Charitable Trust which has enabled this engagement with young people to continue and develop.

1.4 Aims for the 2011 Challenge

- To create 1000 new volunteer opportunities for 12-24 year olds. This is an increase in 750 volunteers against the 2010 Challenge.
- To improve volunteer skills and confidence
- To increase young people's awareness and usage of libraries
- To increase accreditation opportunities for young people
- To encourage more children and young people to read more
- To increase the number of children taking part in the Challenge
- To increase the number of children completing the Challenge

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-14644613>

³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/nov/16/youth-unemployment-hits-1m-uk>

Additional outcomes

For Staff

- To provide support with the more time consuming SRC tasks e.g. events, school visits and promotion
- To enable staff to have more opportunities to talk to young people and become more aware of their perspective on libraries
- To become more confident in talking to young people about reading
- To develop partnerships with local secondary schools and make contact with local Youth and Voluntary organisations

For Volunteers

- To provide an opportunity for young people to participate in library work, to talk to young children and help with events and library promotion
- To provide a quality volunteering experience
- To increase their confidence in talking to children and adults
- To give them the opportunity to work on their own and develop their independence
- To give volunteers an opportunity to make new friends
- To develop skills which can help them gain work experience/ move into paid employment
- To introduce volunteers to the opportunity of year-round volunteering in libraries

For Children

- To provide a better service with greater individual attention and more help and encouragement
- To give children the opportunity to talk to young people and to see them as good role models

1.5 Role of John Laing Charitable Trust

The John Laing Charitable Trust funded the pilot and sponsored the Summer Reading Challenge Launch at the House of Commons, where Louis Howell, a volunteer from Lewisham, spoke powerfully about the Challenge.

“My advice for anyone thinking about volunteering for the Summer Reading Challenge is to go for it, because all people should be given the opportunity to become something great.”

Louis Howell, 17, Volunteer, Lewisham

2. The Programme

The 2011 programme was based on the design of the previous year's pilot. 50 library services, as focal points of learning and evidence, were recruited and offered training and resources by The Reading Agency. Library services in turn recruited and trained volunteers in each of their libraries to support the Challenge.

2.1 Recruiting library authorities

Library authorities were invited to express an interest in the volunteering programme, and 73 authorities applied. Fifty were chosen on the following basis:

- If they had applied in 2010 and were unsuccessful
- If they were engaged in another programme run by The Reading Agency, such as MyVoice, Yorkshire & Humberside Participate

The 50 final library authorities were a mixture of: authorities new to the scheme; authorities working with volunteers through our other Reading Agency projects and who would benefit from integrating the programmes; authorities with previous experience which could be shared across the programme.

Table of Authorities

Regions	Authorities	Total number of Authorities
East	Bedford Borough, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire, Milton Keynes Council, Norfolk	5
East Midlands	Derbyshire, Nottingham City	2
London	Hackney, Havering, Hounslow, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lewisham, Merton, Sutton, Westminster	9
North East	Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, South Tyneside Council, Sunderland	4
North West	Blackpool, Bolton, Halton, Lancashire, Rochdale MBC, St Helens, Warrington	7

South East	Isle of Wight, Kent, Portsmouth, Slough, Southampton, Surrey	6
South West	Bristol, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Plymouth	4
West Midlands	Birmingham, Dudley MBC, Staffordshire, Telford & Wrekin, Worcestershire	5
Yorkshire & Humberside	Doncaster, Hull, Kirklees, North East Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire, North Yorkshire, Wakefield, Sheffield	8
TOTAL		50

2.2 Training and resources for library staff

The Reading Agency ran four free training days for the 50 authorities. These took place in London, where two training days were run, and York and Birmingham. There was additional training in Scotland with Tesco Bank funding.

The training aimed to provide libraries with advice and guidance on establishing a volunteering strategy and working with young people.

The Reading Agency provided authorities with the following resources and materials: Volunteering Handbook; Volunteering Templates (e.g. Creating a Volunteering Policy Template, Risk Assessment Template, Identifying Volunteering Roles Template); Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering certificates.

2.3 Recruitment, training and resources for volunteers

Volunteers were recruited through the vinspired website, advertising in the library, word of mouth and through links with local schools and organisations. Recruitment processes varied, but libraries usually asked potential volunteers to fill out application forms, followed by short informal interviews, before completing CRB forms.

Once volunteers had been recruited, libraries were encouraged to support volunteers in the following ways:

- Run **training sessions** for the volunteers before the Challenge started. The sessions outlined the summer ahead and introduced the roles for the volunteers.
- Provide **roles for volunteers** who wanted to develop particular skills. Suggested roles were: SRC Team Leaders, SRC Media Promoters, and SRC Champions.
- Provide **accreditation opportunities** where possible and support links to accreditation schemes such as ASDAN or Duke of Edinburgh. The Reading Agency provided guidance and resources on the v50 accreditation scheme, and libraries encouraged and supported volunteers in signing up.
- Encourage **year-round volunteering**, and offer volunteers opportunities in the library after the Challenge finished.

In addition, The Reading Agency created a Facebook page for Circus Stars volunteers. This served as a place for volunteers to share their experiences, tips and resources during the Challenge, and to remain in touch after the Challenge had finished. Over the summer, a competition was run, inviting volunteers to recommend activities for encouraging children to read, with the chance to win free books. The five winning entries demonstrate the role and value of volunteers in supporting children's reading during the Challenge, and also the creativity, resourcefulness and commitment they brought to the task. (See Appendix)

3. Results and Evaluation

3.1 Evaluation methods

The programme was evaluated by a range of methods. Chiefly, volunteers and libraries were asked to complete surveys.

- 442 young people completed the pre-volunteering survey and registration form
- 303 young people filled in the post-volunteering survey
- 38 library authorities completed the post-volunteering survey for libraries, and 47 completed the Circus Stars Evaluation form for the entire Challenge. All 50 library authorities supplied their volunteer numbers.

In addition ad-hoc feedback and qualitative evaluation was collected through interviews with volunteers and librarians. Regular contact was maintained with libraries authorities over the Challenge period, and feedback collated from visits, emails and phone conversations. Libraries submitted case studies, and The Reading Agency explored the impact and involvement of volunteers through 12 case studies

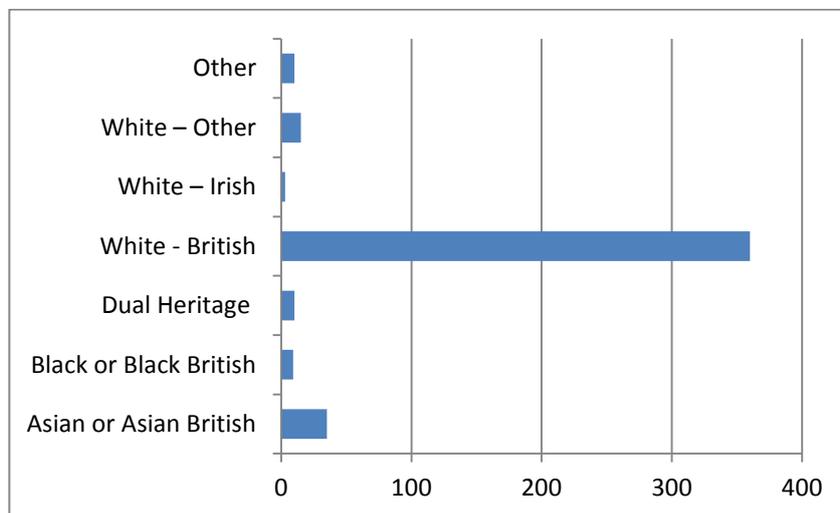
3.2 Evaluation against project aims

To create 1000 new volunteer opportunities for 12-24 year olds

- 1361 volunteers aged 21-24 years were recruited in the 50 library authorities over the summer, exceeding the target of 1000.
- This was an increase of 114.7% over the number of volunteers recruited in 2010 (in the programme's authorities)
- 1066 of volunteers recruited (across all ages) had not volunteered in a library before

Key demographics of volunteers

	Percentage of volunteers
Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds (BME)	9.9
In care	3.8
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)	4.5



3.2.1 To improve volunteer skills and confidence

Volunteers reported both a gain in skills and confidence. 96.4% of volunteers said they learnt new things and gained skills and experience. In addition, 99.3% felt confident after volunteering about working with children and talking to members of the public, and 54.5% of volunteers reported that they felt 'very confident'. This was an increase of 17.7% who felt 'very confident', compared to the number who felt the same before volunteering. The percentage of those who didn't feel confident declined to 0.7%.

Main skill breakdown by area

Skill gained	Percentage of volunteers gaining skill
Experience of working with children	87.1
Communication	77.6
People skills	68.0
Organisation	46.2

In addition, authorities reported an increase in volunteers' skills and confidence in the following areas: confidence working with children (in 94.7% of authorities); confidence working with other volunteers and library users (in 92.1% of authorities); and increased communication skills (in 92.1% of authorities).

3.2.2 To increase young people's awareness and usage of libraries

We asked volunteers if they intended to increase their use of the library after volunteering. 62.7% responded that they would. They cited an increased awareness and appreciation of the following areas:

- the range of services and resources
- the friendliness and helpfulness of staff
- the library's atmosphere and as a community space
- the library as a place for study and assisting with college work

Some volunteers were new to the library and what it could offer them, while others had used the libraries when they were younger, and had been thrilled to rediscover the wide range of resources available to them as a teenager.

"I have realised what resources they do offer, and I think by volunteering I've come to appreciate the central role a library can play in its community."

Alexander Leonard, 22, Sherwood Nottingham City

“I used to use the library a lot as a child, and as I have got older I have stopped using it so much. However, volunteering in a library has made me want to use them more often again.”

Chloe Eyre, 18, Putnoe Library Bedford Borough

“I already relied heavily on libraries for information and reading, but now I realise how important they are to a community as well as an individual.”

Katie Earl, 19, Shenfield, Essex County Council

3.2.3 To encourage more children and young people to read more

42.9% of volunteers felt that volunteering had encouraged them to read more. They attributed this increase to the exposure to books and new genres, but also to the impact of speaking with people and children about books, and sharing their own views. Many of those who hadn't noticed an increase in their reading stated that they read a great deal already.

“Seeing the children working so hard to complete their challenge made me want to challenge myself to read more.”

Georgina Brettell , 23, Dudley MBC

“I love hearing what the children have to say. When you are studying English at school it can be really easy to get stressed and bogged down by not understanding a text, but when you talk to the kids in the library and they say they love a story, and they tell you why, it makes you love English and reading again. And I never expected children to teach me that.”

Katie O'Dowdall, 18, Hutton, Essex.

3.2.4 To increase accreditation opportunities for young people

At least 207 volunteers received accreditation with others still working towards accreditation, such as Duke of Edinburgh and the v50 awards. Examples include:

- In Telford and Wrekin, 19 volunteers are working towards their ASDAN short course certificate
- In Sheffield 30 accreditation placements were offered to volunteers, with the results coming out in January.
- Wakefield libraries awarded their volunteers with a Wakefield Young People's Award in conjunction with Youth Development. In addition, 3 volunteers over 16's got the v50 award
- In Essex, 25 have been nominated for the Essex Youth Awards
- In Slough, Dudley MBC and Portsmouth, 4 volunteers were taking part in Duke of Edinburgh
- Generally, libraries reported that volunteers were given information about v50 awards, and encouraged to sign up.

In addition to accreditation, volunteers' achievements were recognised across the programme:

- Volunteers received certificates from The Reading Agency, and in some authorities they received certificates from the local council. For example volunteers in Bedford were presented with the Bedford Libraries Volunteer Certificate, while volunteers in Bristol libraries received a certificate from Bristol City Council
- Libraries also showed their appreciation at celebration events: for example, in Southampton volunteers were given book tokens and were thanked personally by the Mayor

3.2.5 To increase the number of children taking part in the Challenge

Authorities using volunteers for the first time

To measure volunteer impact on any increase in number of children taking part, we looked at whether there was an increase of children's engagement in authorities using volunteers in libraries for the first time, and whether librarians felt volunteers played a part in this increase.

Overall, authorities new to volunteering reported an increase in starting rates for participants. For example, Bedford Boroughs saw a 34.1% increase. Sue Shead, Youth Services Manager for Bedford Borough, commented: "They added value to the Summer Reading Challenge. Volunteers chatted to children about books, welcomed them, encouraged them to join and to continue to achieve the incentives. They were really enthusiastic about the Challenge, and helped with staffing the Summer Reading Challenge desk and providing good support to library staff."

Library Authority	Number of volunteers 2011	starters 2010	starters 2011	% increase or decrease
Bedford Borough	12	2402	3220	34.1
London Borough of Islington	11	2179	1969	-9.6
London Borough of Sutton	12	1910	1956	2.4
North East Lincolnshire	9	1164	1177	1.1
Portsmouth	12	2053	1762	-14.2
Sunderland	17	1846	2167	17.4

3.2.6 To increase the number of children completing the Challenge

Authorities using volunteers for the first time

We also looked at these authorities' completion rates, and whether having volunteers for the first time in 2011 had contributed to an increase. Authorities using volunteers for the first time reported both increases and decreases in completion rate for participants. Nonetheless, the majority of libraries indicated that volunteers were 'Important' to some degree to increasing completion rates.

Library Authority	Number of volunteers 2011	completers 2010	completers 2011	% increase or decrease	Importance of volunteers on increasing completion rate
Bedford Borough	12	1,603.0	2,183	36.2	Very Important
London Borough of Islington	11	767.0	772	0.7	No response
London Borough of Sutton	12	729.0	914	25.4	Quite Important
NE Lincolnshire	9	878.0	734	-16.4	Very Important
Portsmouth	12	1,192.0	926	-22.3	Very Important
Sunderland	17	1,072.0	1,059	-1.2	Quite Important

For example, Sue Wink, Development Officer for Children's Libraries, North East Lincolnshire, noted that while the completion rate did not increase across the authority, the impact of volunteers on the completion rate was 'Very important' since "In the libraries where the volunteers were, the completion and satisfaction rate increased."

David Percival, Learning and Engagement Manager from Portsmouth, where completion was down by 22.3% nonetheless felt volunteers were 'Very Important' as they minimised the impact on the completion rate of other difficulties facing libraries during the Challenge, such as restructuring:

"The number of children completing the Challenge was slightly down on last year. In common with other library authorities, we were undergoing a restructuring process during the run up to Summer. I am convinced that without the contribution of volunteers, the numbers would have been lower - for example, they were able to spend much more time on chasing up those children who had read 4 or 5 books, encouraging them to finish. We would not otherwise have been able to do this with present staff capacity."

All authorities using volunteers

In addition to looking at authorities where volunteers were piloted, we asked all authorities how important they thought volunteers were in increasing the completion rate of participants.

- Only 8.6% said they were not at all important
- 65.7% thought they were important. Of these, 28.6% said they were 'Very Important.'
- 34.3% of authorities weren't sure, as other factors, such as changes in library opening hours, may have impacted the number of starters and completers.

Authorities who saw increases in their completion rate commented as below:

"Having volunteers means we can see more children on a one to one basis, cuts down waiting time to be seen and encourages them to come back. They also rang up parents whose children had nearly finished to encourage them to finish."

Vivienne Hill, Reader Development Librarian, Havering

"I think [volunteers] were more important in increasing the number of children participating in some of our libraries. Here is a quote from a report on young volunteers from one of our library managers : *'There were two girls and a boy who were all very proactive and enthusiastic. I have to admit that their presence was the reason that we were able to sign up so many children.'*"

Alison Frost, Service Support Librarian-Children, Norfolk

Further outcomes for children

While librarians found huge value in having volunteers for increasing capacity and enabling more children to both partake in and complete the Challenge, there were also outcomes for children in terms of increased confidence talking about their books, and being provided with positive role models.

For example, Anne Ansboro, Young People's Services Librarian, said that Hertfordshire library service found volunteering a very beneficial experience from the children's point of view, as "one of the things we get at the end of the summer is evaluation from the parents, and they always stress the fact that someone has taken time to listen to the children, someone who isn't a parent or teacher. The children themselves really enjoy talking to someone who is closer to age than them."

Alison Frost, Service Support Librarian – Children, shared feedback from a librarian in Norfolk about how volunteers provided role models and related to children in a positive, inspiring way: "They related their own experiences of the challenge when they were young. Liam was brilliant at talking to the boys and managed to persuade one lad who had not read a book for pleasure for two years to join and borrow a book."

Likewise, the impact of having male volunteers providing role models for boys was noted in Surrey:

“One library reported that, unusually this year, they have roughly equal numbers of male and female completers and wonder whether this was due to them having a male volunteer, as boys seemed to relate particularly well to him.”

Carol Hales, Senior Team Officer - Children and Young People, Surrey

Feedback from parents collected by Essex library services also stressed the value of having someone available to discuss books:

“Circus Stars made a real difference to my children's reading ability. They really enjoyed the whole concept and the requirement to have to return to the library discuss their books.”

Parent, Essex

“This is a very good scheme. It has made visiting the Library more fun and incentivized faster reading. The best part is having someone available at all times to talk to the children about their reading.”

Parent, Essex

3.3 Continuation and Employment

81.0% of volunteers said they would like to keep volunteering in a library after the Summer Reading Challenge has finished.

81.6% of library authorities have offered volunteers opportunities to continue volunteering in the library or the community after the summer, with offers made to at least 755 volunteers.

Opportunities include:

- Supporting the development of the 2012 Challenge
- MyVoice, The Reading Agency's creative reading and writing programme for young people
- Homework Centres
- In Telford and Wrekin they have the opportunity to join Library lab, a year round pool of young volunteers
- Duke of Edinburgh
- Reading Buddies - supporting children reading
- In Essex Libraries, 154 of under 16 volunteers have been offered the opportunity to take part in a new project called My Library – consulting young people aged 12 - 16 about library services by email
- Helping to run a Parent and Toddler Group
- Helping with Children's Events during school holidays
- Facilitating 'Young People's Library Committees'
- Rolling out a new Study Support initiative

- Computer buddying
- Rolling out a new Study Support initiative
- Helping with a city Book Festival

In addition, 6 library authorities offered job opportunities to volunteers.

4. Lessons learnt

“Resources from The Reading Agency were very helpful, as was the training session in April. I know that we will continue to utilise volunteers next summer and that we will be even better organised! Given that this was the first time we have used volunteers for the Reading Challenge, the feedback from both staff, children, their parents/carers and the volunteers themselves has been extremely positive. It has also been valuable in changing the demographics of our volunteering base.”

David Percival, Portsmouth, Learning and Engagement Manager

Feedback on the volunteering experience was very positive from both libraries and volunteers. Nonetheless some volunteers and librarians identified areas that they found challenging, and areas where they would like to see some improvement. These are summarised below.

Main Challenges

- Recruiting volunteers, especially as some early recruits dropped out before the holidays started, since they found summer jobs.
- Occupying volunteers in quiet periods
- Difficulties using Vinspired website to recruit and lack of young people’s awareness of the website
- Cascading training to other staff, as opportunities are more limited with restrictions on training and travel budgets
- Providing a quick and easy way to reward volunteers via accreditation.
- Supervising of volunteers especially in the case of younger volunteers

Suggestions from library authorities

- Run the training earlier to bring the timescales forward
- Find a partnership body who will provide national accreditation for 14 - 16 year olds
- News update, email alerts, and a count down the Challenge
- More national publicity for the Challenge
- Provide libraries with an outlook on facts and figures they will need to provide at the end of the programme
- Circulate/promote examples of good practice
- Have the Facebook page/blog for SRC volunteers available right from the start i.e. June/July.

- A prize for outstanding commitment/service from a volunteer
- Supply a Powerpoint presentation which staff can use to roll out training across libraries
- More ideas and guidance for things to do in quiet times
- Recruitment materials designed centrally and then e-mailed to participating authorities who could adapt it to suit their needs.
- Less paperwork and form filling / surveys.
- Badges for the volunteers
- More training resources on benefits of using volunteers for advocacy purposes

Suggestions from volunteers

Volunteers largely reported well on their time volunteering and comments below should be taken in the context of a broadly very positive experience.

‘I enjoyed my experience and I don't think there's anything else I would like to have been different’

‘I can't think of how to improve, I thought the experience was brilliant.’

‘You can't improve it because it is already an amazing experience.’

Suggestions:

- More structured activities and jobs for volunteers in quiet times
- Allow volunteers to do more and take on more responsibility
- Having set times in which volunteers can come in and a proper timetable to work with or else clearer communication about whether or not volunteers are needed at specific times

Learning and recommendations

- It is important that libraries provide a clear structure and communication about when volunteers are needed in libraries and what their roles are
- The incentivisation of volunteers needs further developing – eg libraries can put volunteers forward for awards
- Planning should include opportunities to keep volunteers engaged through other roles

5. Next steps for The Reading Agency

- The Reading Agency will extend the programme to work with more library authorities in 2012/13 and integrate volunteering opportunities into all the charity's programmes with young people and children to support year-round volunteering
- The learning and models will be integrated into the Universal Reading Offer strategy being developed by the Society of Chief Librarians and The Reading Agency. This includes 2012/13 development work with ASCEL to involve more young people in helping shape library services, funded by the Arts Council.
- Further accreditation and volunteer opportunities will be developed all year round in libraries, including the Arts Award. In 2012 The Reading Agency will design and deliver a writing programme to train volunteers in running creative writing workshops, or 'story labs', in keeping with the 2012 Summer Reading Challenge theme, StoryLab.
- Resources, training and Facebook page will be developed earlier

6. Appendix

Tips and Activities prize: Winners

"I did this activity during my time in a nursery doing my work experience. What I did was got the children to pick a book they liked and we created little finger puppets. I then read the book to the rest of the class while the children with the finger puppets also acted out the book. It was a big hit with the children. I think this will be a great activity to suggest to children as they can do this with other relatives and friends to show how fun reading can be."

Katie Hamnett, Volunteer, Halton.

"I always find (from my teacher training at uni) that using drama is a great way to get children reading. This is because many children who may not be as confident are able to take on the role of someone else and believe that they are acting as that person. Therefore if they make a mistake with a word they don't feel embarrassed and stop reading because they think that character has made the mistake and actually will be more inclined to find out what words mean and how they are pronounced etc. because they don't feel that they are the ones asking the questions if they are a little more shy. This is sort of like hot-seating and I know it has been very successful during the school placements I have been in. And of course ask children questions constantly i.e. "How do you think that character feels?" "What would you do if you were that character?" This creates a response from the child and makes them more interested in the book as they feel that their opinion is actually valid.'

Zoë Hale, Volunteer, Dudley MBC

"We've done lots of craft sessions at Lye Library all based around the circus including Cirque de Soleil masks, Mr Happy and Mr Sad clown masks and also things like glitter tattoos which the

children have really enjoyed having. We also had a Harry Potter treasure hunt where the children had to follow clues to find letters hidden around the library and win a prize at the end. This was especially good because it helped the children find their way around the library and also how the non-fiction books were sorted and I found it actually led to the children finding books that they liked the look of that they then could read for the Challenge. Also when I was helping out at Stourbridge Library we had a Dalek which brought a lot of people to the library and it encouraged many children to sign up for the Challenge and it led to most of the Doctor Who books being taken out by the children!”

Beth Johnson, Volunteer, Dudley MBC

“At Huddersfield we set up a summer book review competition. The children can either write a book review or draw a picture of a book they have read. They place their entries into a shiny red box. At the end of the holiday, three from different age categories will be picked out and will win a prize. All entries will be kept in a book review book that will be kept in the library”

Rob Thewlis, Volunteer, Kirklees

“At Christchurch library we are putting up reviews the children have written about their books. I also came up with the idea of doing a writing challenge once the children have finished the reading challenge so they have more to do. The challenge was to write a story based on the circus they created upon collecting stickers. I also thought that some kind of tiered system of reading challenge may be more appropriate since many of the more prolific readers do not find the current reading challenge at all hard. Perhaps have a bronze, silver and gold? In order to encourage the younger children to talk about the books they have read, I have found getting them to pick their favourite part of the book and read it aloud very useful. Christchurch library has also run a lucky dip this year for the first fifty children who read four books. This proved very popular and encouraged the children to get to four books.”

Hannah Wheldon-Holmes, Volunteer, Dorset.