“Volunteering has not only been a truly rewarding experience, but has taught me a lot about myself. I didn’t know I had these skills. It has ignited my passion for working with children and I have gained invaluable skills”.

Shani Grandison-Mills, 21, Grove Park library, Lewisham

“All branch staff want volunteers next year. Some volunteers are continuing to work with us and want to take on more responsibility”.

Jo Heaton, Senior librarian, Children and Young People, Telford and Wrekin

“I have realised just how much libraries can offer”.

Samia Meziane, 16, Chiswick Library, Hounslow

“The volunteers increased capacity to actively support children during the challenge”.

Abbi McInnes, Library Officer, Young People’s Service, Cornwall

“Young male volunteers are having a very positive impact on young boys who want to take part. A couple of libraries reported children and parents asking after the male volunteers when they were not working, and purposely arranging to visit the library when they knew the volunteer was working”

Wendy Clark, Audience Development Officer, Essex

“I enjoyed giving up my time to involve myself in this and it has given me more confidence within myself”

Nathalie Bedford, 15, Glossop Library, Derbyshire
This report reviews the 2010 Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering Pilot

**Headline Achievements**

- 20 partner local authorities
- Financial and in kind support from v and John Laing Integrated Services
- 634 young volunteers recruited (against target of 250)
- **280% increase** in the number of volunteers, compared with last year (in pilot authorities)
- **304% increase** in the number of libraries using volunteers, compared with last year (in pilot authorities)
- 99.2% of volunteers said they gained new skills including communication skills (84.6%), interpersonal skills (78.0%), experience of working with children (91.9%)
- 75% of volunteers would like to keep volunteering in a library
- 100% of pilot authorities want to continue working with volunteers
- 35,000 more children involved in the Summer Reading Challenge
Contents

1. Background to the programme
   1.1 Summer Reading Challenge
   1.2 Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering Pilot
   1.3 Aims and objectives
   1.4 Partnerships - Role of V and John Laing Integrated Services

2. Programme
   2.1 Recruiting the 20 partner authorities
   2.2 Training and resources
   2.3 Recruitment and training of volunteers
   2.4 Deploying the volunteers – roles offered
   2.5 Accreditation

3. Evaluation
   3.1 Evaluation Methods
   3.2 Evaluation against project aims
   3.3 Outcomes for young people
   3.4 Outcomes for library authorities and staff
   3.5 Outcomes for children

4. Lessons Learnt
   4.1 Challenges
   4.2 Solutions suggested by Libraries
   4.3 Solutions suggested by Volunteers
   4.4 Recommendations

5. Next Steps

Appendix: timeline

Acronyms
TRA: The Reading Agency
SRC: Summer Reading Challenge
1. Background to the programme

1.1 Summer Reading Challenge
765,000 children, aged 4-11, take part in the Summer Reading Challenge across the UK. It is the most successful reading promotion for children in Europe. 97% of library services work with independent charity The Reading Agency to run the Challenge every year throughout the summer holidays, with incentives, activities and events designed to create a real community buzz around children’s reading.

"[The Challenge] has really helped my children turn the corner in their reading - from it being a chore to being a pleasure. It has made a huge difference to all our lives!"

Parent of an 8 year old, Essex

1.2 Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering Pilot
Recent pioneering Reading Agency programmes such as HeadSpace (young people-led reading spaces in libraries) have shown how reading and libraries can be a powerful pivot for young people to volunteer and get involved in their communities. The Big Society potential is huge.

The charity wanted to use this experience to respond to library services’ need for support to run the Summer Reading Challenge. Libraries had reported that they were at full-capacity during the summer. At the same time, a volunteering programme linked to the Challenge could offer inspiring volunteering opportunities to young people, and encourage more children to complete it.

Several library services were already using youth volunteering during the Challenge, and we wanted to harness and showcase best practice in a focused pilot.

This work is taking place in the context of new youth volunteering opportunities as plans for the Big Society and the National Citizen Service emerge. Youth volunteering is also embedded in the Library Offer to Young People developed by the Youth Libraries Board in England. 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.

“The volunteers are providing invaluable support for library staff and are enhancing the experience of children participating in Space Hop”

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

- To create 250 new 16-25s volunteer opportunities
- To improve volunteer skills and confidence
- To increase young people’s awareness and usage of libraries
- To encourage more children and young people to read more
- To engage an extra 25,000 children in the Summer Reading Challenge
- To increase the number of children completing the Challenge

Plus...

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 increase their knowledge of what the library service has to offer them
- To give volunteers an opportunity to make new friends
- To increase library usage by this age group

For Children

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

1.4 Partnerships
The Reading Agency worked closely with v, the national youth volunteering charity, and John Laing Integrated Services. The pilot was joint-funded by the John Laing Charitable Trust and v Match Fund Programme.

1.4.1 Role of v and John Laing Integrated Services
v is an independent charity dedicated to helping young people volunteer in ways that matter to them. Its mission is to make volunteering opportunities so diverse, compelling and easy to get involved with, that giving up time to help others becomes a natural choice for 16-25 year olds in England.

v supported the pilot by marketing volunteering opportunities through its website, vinpired.com, as well as providing a dedicated Project Support Officer and technical support, resources and training from its web team. Local vInvolved teams worked with libraries to help recruit and support volunteers in recording and gaining accreditation through the v50 and vImpact awards. Staff from vInvolved attended celebration events and awarded volunteers with certificates and v50 awards.

“We’ve been working with our local v contact and she’s been really helpful.”
Elaine Dykes, Service Development Librarian, Nottingham City

The John Laing Charitable Trust funded the pilot and Hounslow libraries, run by John Laing Integrated Services, was the first library authority in the country to pioneer using Young Media Promoters in the SRC.

Staff at Hounslow Libraries and the Communications Manager, Business Resources Manager and design team at John Laing Integrated Services ran workshops and offered the volunteers training in interview technique, editing and design.

The commitment from both v and John Laing Integrated Services has been integral to the pilot’s success. Jess Haddon, v Project Support Officer, Tim Grier, the CEO of John Laing Integrated Services and Claire Griffith, Bid Director also all attended Lewisham Libraries volunteering celebration event, held at Catford Library.

2. The Programme
2.1 Recruiting Library Authority Partners

61 library services expressed an interest in being part of the project – many of them stating that volunteering is a priority for their local authority. Based on the expressions of interest we selected a broad spread of 20 authorities, aiming to get an even representation across all the regions. We wanted a mixture of authorities: some who are completely new to volunteering and some who already had experience, with an emphasis on multicultural communities and areas of deprivation.

Location 20 pilot authorities were selected from all 9 regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Authorities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>Essex, Hertfordshire</td>
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<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>Derbyshire, Nottingham City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>Boroughs of Newham, Hounslow, Lewisham, Slough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>South Tyneside, Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
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<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>Bolton, Warrington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>Milton Keynes, Surrey</td>
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<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td>Swindon, Cornwall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>Dudley MBC, Telford &amp; Wrekin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire &amp; Humberside</td>
<td>Hull, Leeds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2. Training and Resources

Library Staff training

The Reading Agency designed and ran free training in Birmingham, London and Manchester. 52 delegates attended. TRA also offered additional, subsidised training places to libraries in response to demand. The training was ran by Claire Styles and Lynne Taylor with case study guest speakers: Sue Minter, Hertfordshire Libraries, Sarah Mears, Essex Libraries, Russell Allen, West
Sussex Libraries and Ruth Lomas in Tameside. The training covered recruitment and training, volunteer roles, support and evaluation. The training was extremely well-received by attendees.

“Both Robert O’Keefe and I attended the training and thought it was great.”

Cathy Myers, Children and Young Person’s Librarian, Lewisham Libraries

### Resources and materials

The Reading Agency produced and distributed:

- Evaluation Guidance
- Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering certificates
- Consent forms for children and young people
- A free [SRC Volunteering Guide](#) to all English public libraries

“[the] Summer Reading Challenge Guidance Pack for Volunteers was extremely useful.”

Judy Zajac, Service Manager: Children & Young People, Newcastle Libraries

“Cheshire East was not selected as a pilot authority but The Reading Agency provided comprehensive guidance materials and training which enabled us to nominate Poynton library as our own pilot library.”

SRC Volunteering Report from Cheshire East

#### 2.3 Recruitment and Training of volunteers

Volunteers were recruited via the vin•spired website, through notices in individual libraries and through letters of invitation to local secondary schools. Before and during the summer, library staff ran group and 1-to-1 training for volunteers. Some libraries, such as Swindon, ran individual inductions with library managers supporting volunteers, rather than training sessions. Not all libraries completed the first survey, but from the feedback we had:

212 training sessions were run for volunteers before the summer.
2.4 Deploying the volunteers

The Reading Agency did consultation at Crawley Library in February 2010, with young people who had been volunteers in 2009. This helped us with the creation of the resources and the training courses, especially with the roles for volunteers, and ways of supporting them.

SRC Team Leaders

The Team Leaders were likely to be young people who have volunteered in the library before and knew what was involved in helping with the Summer Reading Challenge. They could, for example, be older young people, university students or trainee teachers. They’d need to be available early in the process, from March/April onwards and probably based around central or larger libraries. The role included:

- Working with the SRC planning team
- Thinking up activities and ideas for the summer programme
- Helping to develop volunteer roles and planning how to recruit volunteers
- Supporting other young people, including volunteers
- Book selection

SRC Media Promoters

The Media Promoters might have done the Challenge themselves and want to be involved in promoting it to younger children, or they may be interested in developing media skills. They’d probably be based around larger libraries and able to work fairly independently, with good ICT and design skills. The role includes:

- Going into schools with presentations about the Challenge
- Creating displays and taking photos and video footage
- Using local web opportunities to promote the Challenge via blogging, photos and news items.
- Talking to press and doing interviews

SRC Champions

The SRC Champions helped libraries over the summer, supporting the library staff and helping children to get the most out of the Challenge. The role included:

- Helping children to find and choose books
- Listening to them talking about their books
- Administering the Challenge (giving out stickers and other incentives, filling in forms)
• Helping children to use the Space Hop website (and Stories from the Web)
• Helping with events
• Using activity sheets and other ideas to help children share their reading choices with their peers
• Collecting data for evaluation

Example from Hounslow
In Hounslow, 10 young people volunteered as Media Promoters. Their work included;
• Reviews of all the events taking place within Hounslow’s libraries
• Book reviews and features
• Interviews with authors, participants in the summer reading challenge and members of the public
• The development of a Twitter site, www.twitter.com/spacehopheroes

The youth media team were involved in the organisation and promotion of a finale event (which featured high-profile author, Hardeep Singh Kohli) as well as writing, designing and producing a magazine celebrating all the events that had taken place over the summer. The magazine can be viewed online here. 1,500 copies were printed.

“I think it’s great that young people can be given these opportunities. As far as jobs go, there’s not many out there and this is something brilliant to write on your CV, so thank you Laing!”

Samia Meziane, Media Promoter, Hounslow Libraries

2.5 Accreditation

All young people were encouraged to record their experience through the vinspired website and to work towards v50 award. Young people’s contribution was recognised through volunteering diaries and a local celebration event at the end of the summer, to celebrate their achievements. A free step-by-step guide with instructions on how to gain a v50 award was produced by TRA and circulated to all libraries to pass on to and use with young people. You can view the guide here. Volunteers seeking accreditation through schemes like Duke of Edinburgh and Trident Gold were supported through that process using the
Reading Agency’s expertise developed through working with the HeadSpace volunteers and their partner organisations.

3. Results and Evaluation

3.1 Evaluation methods

• Two surveys were sent out to the 20 pilot authorities during and after the summer. The questionnaires were completed by the main authority contacts. They gathered quantitative and qualitative data about the volunteers and children and feedback on how The Reading Agency could improve volunteering in 2011.

• Two surveys and a registration form were sent out to volunteers, before and after the summer to compare their experience of volunteering in libraries.

214 Young people filled in the pre-volunteering Survey

248 filled in the registration form online

135 filled in the post-volunteering survey

• Video and audio interviews were conducted by TRA with young volunteers at pilot libraries during the summer and at celebration events. The Media Promoters at Hounslow Libraries also did video interviews with each other and children taking part in the SRC.

• Libraries also collated and produced their own evaluation, case studies and shared reports with TRA.

• Feedback was gathered from emails, visits and regular phone conversations with the 20 pilot authorities.

3.2 Evaluation against project aims

To create 250 new 16-25s volunteer opportunities

• 634 young people aged 14 – 25 were recruited in the 20 pilot authorities.
• An increase of **280%** in the number of volunteers, compared with last year (in pilot authorities)
• The target of 250 volunteers aged 16-25s was greatly exceeded.
• **407** of the volunteers were aged 16 – 25.
• An increase of **304%** in the number of libraries using volunteers, compared with last year (in pilot authorities)

**Demographic of Volunteers**

**21%** of volunteers were from BME backgrounds. In Slough, all the volunteers were from Asian backgrounds, 31 of the volunteers in Bolton and 20 from Newham were from BME backgrounds.

**6.2%** of the volunteers were in, or leaving care

**4.5%** were not in education, employment or training.

**89.7%** of the volunteers had never volunteered in a library before

**To improve volunteer skills and confidence**

**99.2%** of volunteers said they learnt new things, gained skills and experience. **84.6%** Gained new communication skills; **78.0%** interpersonal; **91.9%** experience working with children.

> “Volunteering has not only been a truly rewarding experience, but has taught me a lot about myself. I didn’t know I had these skills. It has ignited my passion for working with children and I have gained invaluable skills.”
>
> Shani Grandison-Mills, 21, Grove Park Library, Lewisham

After volunteering **50.8%** of volunteers said they felt ‘Very Confident’ compared with **40.7%** before, also not a single volunteer felt ‘unconfident’ after volunteering.

> “I enjoyed giving up my time to involve myself in this and it has given me more confidence within myself.”
>
> Nathalie Bedford, 15, Glossop library, Derbyshire

**100%** of pilot authorities we surveyed said the volunteers’ confidence increased.
To increase young people’s awareness and usage of libraries

100% of pilot authorities said volunteers’ awareness and usage of libraries increase.

In the post-volunteering survey, we asked volunteers if they intend to use libraries more now, 63.7% of volunteers said yes. When asked why they intend to use libraries more since volunteering, they said:

“I realised that a lot more goes on in libraries than I'd thought.”
Melanie Brown, 17, Gosforth Library

“I have experienced what a great part of the community the libraries are, and how good the services they offer are.”
Kate Fowler, 16, Central Library, Bolton

“Because I have developed a greater understanding of the importance of libraries as the centres of communities.”
Megan Woodward, 16, Cradley, Long Lane and Lye

“[I] got encouraged by seeing the number of people that usually use libraries.”
Himani Mody, 19, Hounslow Library

“I have realised just how much they can offer.”
Samia Meziane, 16, Chiswick Library

To engage an extra 25,000 children in the Summer Reading Challenge

The number of children taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge in 2010 was 760,000, in 2009 it was 725,000 - an increase of 35,000 over the previous year.

Feedback from libraries indicates that the number of children engaged in libraries where there were volunteers is up this year. For example:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Number of Children Started 2009</th>
<th>Number of Children Started 2010</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>136%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>7239</td>
<td>9212</td>
<td>127%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>6684</td>
<td>7058</td>
<td>106%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>2493</td>
<td>2540</td>
<td>102%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottingham City</td>
<td>2927</td>
<td>3353</td>
<td>115%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slough</td>
<td>1636</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>105%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Tyneside</td>
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<td>2244</td>
<td>109%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>12271</td>
<td>13877</td>
<td>113%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>2389</td>
<td>2715</td>
<td>114%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cheshire East also piloted volunteers in Poynton Library.

To increase the number of children completing the Challenge
2/3 of the 20 pilots said the number of children completing the challenge increased

“The volunteers allowed us to register more young people. We couldn’t have done it without them.”

Abbi McInnes, Library Officer, Young People’s Service, Cornwall
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Number of Children Completing 2009</th>
<th>Number of Children Completing 2010</th>
<th>% Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>126%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>4576</td>
<td>5866</td>
<td>128%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>2586</td>
<td>3181</td>
<td>123%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>7209</td>
<td>8148</td>
<td>113%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swindon</td>
<td>1156</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>112%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the help of staff and volunteers, more children were motivated to complete the challenge:

- in Derbyshire the starters increased by 27.3%, completers increased by 28.2% (5,866 children) and the number of children attending events increased by 65.1% (3,911 children)
- in Bolton, the 3 libraries where they used volunteers all saw an increase in both starters and finishers;
- in South Tyneside, the number of children completing went up from 1,338 to 1,453
- and in Dudley MBC 62% of starters completed, up from 57% in 2009.

“The volunteers increased capacity to actively support children during the challenge.”
Sue Minter, Young People’s Service Development librarian, Hertfordshire

To encourage more children and young people to read more
In the post-volunteering survey we asked young people if they intend to read more and this is what they said:

“The Summer Reading Challenge has given me a wider knowledge of the importance of books and reading for both children and adults. The Summer Reading Challenge has given me the confidence to speak enthusiastically about books.”
Katharine Wootton, 17, Leeds Central Library
3.3 Qualitative Evaluation

3.3.1 Outcomes for young people

Recognition: Volunteers gained accreditation
All the young people were given guidance, log books, and encouraged to log hours for the v50 award. Because the volunteering is a short-term project, many young people are still working towards their 50 hours. From the feedback we’ve had:

- 38 young people have achieved the v50 award so far, one volunteer in Essex clocked up an impressive 70 hours over the summer.
- 20 volunteers in Leeds received accreditation.
- All the volunteers in Slough got accreditation.
- In Lewisham, 2 volunteers received Jack Petchey Awards.
- The libraries have also reported that the volunteers are putting their hours towards Duke of Edinburgh, Trident Gold Awards and college certificates.
- Some volunteers have also been nominated by library staff for the Essex Youth Awards and vinspired national awards.
- Volunteers also received certificates from The Reading Agency and v to thank them for their contribution.

Celebrating Volunteers Achievements
Celebration events were held for volunteers in many authorities including: Hounslow, Slough, Telford & Wrekin, Newcastle, Lewisham, Dudley MBC and Derbyshire.

In Lewisham, the Mayor gave out certificates and speeches were made by volunteers, library staff, partners and Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency. Celebration events were attended by children, volunteers, families, partners, staff and other local organisations who offered young people further opportunities to volunteer in the library and the community.

Progression
75% of volunteers said they would like to keep volunteering in the library.
“I think the volunteering has opened a new way of thinking, I am considering a career path, and I would love to do it again.”
Kate Bentall, 24, Royston Library, Hertfordshire

100% of pilot authorities’ said they want to continue working with volunteers.

“All branch staff want volunteers next year. Some volunteers are continuing to work with us and some want to take on more responsibility.”
Jo Heaton, Senior Librarian, Children and Young People, Telford and Wrekin

**Volunteers secured employment**

1/3 of the 20 pilots have or will offer job opportunities to their volunteers in: Dudley MBC, Surrey, Milton Keynes, Telford and Wrekin, in Hounslow 7 volunteers have applied for Saturday assistant posts and in Hull 3 volunteers have secured jobs in the libraries.

3.3.2 Outcomes for library authorities and staff

A lot of time has to go in to recruiting, training and inducting volunteers, and supporting and coordinating young people once they begin volunteering. Library staff reported that although this created additional work, the volunteers support and time made up for it with all the benefits to staff, young people, children and libraries.

“The volunteers have been good advocates for their age group for our staff. They’ve been willing and enthusiastic and we couldn't have done it without them.”
Abbi McInnes, Library Officer, Young People’s Service, Cornwall

“Staff have engaged well with volunteers and seen the positive impact they can have. It has broken down some misconceptions about using young people as volunteers.”
Tracey Booth, Senior Librarian - Children and Young People, Hull

“Library staff confidence in working with young adults increased.”
Sue Minter, Young People's Services Development Librarian, Hertfordshire
“They have brought a new enthusiasm, and have really helped take pressure off frontline staff.”
Chris Everett, Development librarian – Youth, Warrington

“Feedback so far suggests that the volunteers are providing invaluable support for library staff... and are enhancing the experience of children participating in Space Hop by giving them more opportunity to talk about the books they are reading. Staff at the libraries using volunteers have been very impressed by them.”
Carol Hales, Senior Team Officer - Children and Young People, Surrey

“We couldn't do what we do without them - and are very grateful for their time and enthusiasm.”
Cathy Myers, Children and Young Person's Librarian, Lewisham

“Most of the libraries where they have worked have said they don't know how they would have managed without them.”
Chris Everett, Development librarian – Youth, Warrington

“We know that we are helping them by providing opportunities for CV content and valid experience but it is a mutual benefit.”
Elaine Dykes, Service Development Librarian, Nottingham City

3.5.4 Outcomes for children
The feedback from children taking part was collated from video interviews and feedback from staff. They said that volunteers:

Helped more children do the SRC and increased capacity

“[The volunteers] increased capacity to actively support children during the challenge. [They are] role models for young readers, helping make reading and libraries relevant.”
Sue Minter, Young People's Services Development Librarian, Hertfordshire
“Our Summer Reading Challenge figures have increased this year and feedback from our local libraries has been very positive.”
Tracey Booth, Senior Librarian - Children and Young People, Hull

Provided children with positive young role models:

“They've provided us with so much! Having young volunteers means that there is always someone for children to talk to about the books they've read - our volunteers have been involved in delivering activities and special events, making displays and assisting in the library - but the main thing that they've done is really engaged with the children on the SRC. Some have formed strong bonds with the children they see regularly and the children ask specifically for them when they come in.”
Cathy Myers, Children and Young Person’s Librarian, Lewisham

“Children enjoy talking to other young people. Young male volunteers are having a very positive impact on young boys who want to take part. A couple of libraries reported children and parents asking after the male volunteers when they were not working, and purposely arranging to visit the library when they knew the volunteer was working.”
Wendy Clark, Audience Development Officer, Essex

“The volunteers have really built positive relationships with the children taking part in Space Hop. Gives a positive image of libraries being a place where young people are welcome and valued.”
Chris Everett, Development librarian – Youth, Warrington

4 Lessons learnt

4.1 Challenges
The main challenges reported by the 20 pilot authorities are listed below but these have to be read in the context of the participation of the volunteers being seen as an overwhelmingly positive experience by libraries. Many of the pilot
authorities significantly increased the numbers involved and these operational issues reflect the amount of management time needed to process the increased number of volunteers engaged over the summer.

**Challenges were:**

- Problems in relation to getting the CRB checks done in time for the volunteers to start
- Some lack of clarity on the website around the geographical location of the volunteering opportunities
- Project management time an issue for some authorities
- Some staff reluctant to work with young people
- Some staff felt that using volunteers under-mined their jobs
- Volunteers felt under-used in quiet periods
- Volunteers did not always attend their sessions
- Low numbers of volunteers in some areas

### 4.2 Suggestions from library authorities

- Volunteers might feel more committed if they were part of a small team, rather than on their own in libraries
- Improved/more detailed training in some areas
- Discussion about other activities for volunteers to do in quiet periods
- Start the project earlier
- Arrange opportunities for sharing good practice across authority boundaries
- Earmark funding to provide incentives for volunteers and for volunteer-run activities

### 4.3 Suggestions from volunteers

In the post-volunteering survey we asked young people how we could improve the experience for volunteers next time.

- “Possibly have a little of our own creative freedom, to really get children interacting with the library and with the stories they are reading. Using display boards and crafts could get more children interested in joining in the reading challenge fun!”
- “I don't think you can - it was excellent”
- “Potentially have more drop-in sessions for volunteers to help out at, rather than just one a week.”
• “You can’t. It was a joy to participate and provided useful life experience”
• “Having a document, given to the volunteers, for the volunteering they have done.”
• “I would have liked to have done more hours and seen more aspects if library work.”
• “When there isn’t any children coming in to talk about their books, to give volunteers more opportunity to help out with things in the library.”
• “I think by offering incentives to volunteer on a regular basis would be good, e.g. by offering a Saturday assistant position by the end of the scheme as a reward would motivate the volunteers to consistently work hard.”
• “Possibly get them involved in the challenge as a whole rather than just talking to the children. i.e. helping to promote and/or organise it within the library.”

4.4 Recommendations

Incentives

• Offer volunteers more incentives and/or rewards e.g. put volunteers forward for awards
• Try to arrange high-profile authors to go to celebration events and/or local celebrities to meet with the volunteers

Timescale

• Move the timescale of the project forward to allow staff more time to recruit volunteers and arrange CRB checks

Time Management

• Allow volunteers from this year to help promote, recruit and organise new volunteers
• Encourage libraries to do v50 award - less time-consuming for staff
• Have activity list of things volunteers can do in quieter times

Survey responses
• Include more incentives for young people to fill them in and make them as part of the registration process.
• Library staff said that young people had already been asked to fill in several surveys. Need clearer agreement in advance.
• Alternatively, if the surveys were open to all volunteers it could also be promoted on social networking sites, like Facebook.

Training and resources
• More training on how to use vinspired and how young people can get the v50 award. Refresher training where needed
• More detailed guidelines on what is expected of libraries

Team leaders and Media Promoters
• Because this was the first year few libraries offered the Team Leader or Media promoter role, but intend to for next year
• Clearer branding of the roles with more details of their benefits; more guidance on these roles during the training

Volunteers
• Greater guidance on how many young people to recruit, e.g. 5 for every 1
• Suggest possible training with volunteers

Next Steps for The Reading Agency
• Extend the programme to work with more library authorities in 2011/12
• Work with the original 20 pilots to develop the scheme to include accreditation and the creation of volunteer involvement all year round in libraries
• Develop e-resources/video tutorials for library staff and volunteers
• Create and run a training programme for young volunteers in partnership with a volunteering organisation
• Seek long-term funding/sponsorship over 3 years
• Integrate volunteering opportunities into all programmes with young people
Appendix 1: Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>January</strong></td>
<td>Received 61 Expressions of Interest. Assessed expressions and selected 20 successful authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consult with adult Steering Group about resources and accreditation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Advertised training to 20 authorities &amp; wider network</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Regional training takes place (and in March) in Manchester, Birmingham and London.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>inspired</strong> website adds project sign-up link for Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering</td>
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<td>TRA created a national youth-led steering group and held a consultations session with young people in West Sussex.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>February</strong></td>
<td>Local partnerships established with youth services, schools etc</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Liaised with the SRC team for them to provide volunteering merchandise and promotions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secured extra free resources for volunteers in all 20 library authorities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wrote and distributed SRC Volunteering Guide free to all public libraries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRB checking of young people (in line with local authority policy) starts. Continued CRB checking of young people</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Training of young people in SRC Team Leader roles</td>
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<td><strong>March/April</strong></td>
<td>Young people contributing to planning library events/activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation for SRC volunteers going into schools</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young people contributing to planning SRC activities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>May</strong></td>
<td>Young people developing marketing strategy and tools</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Volunteers and staff into schools to raise awareness of SRC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training and inductions for SRC volunteers (ongoing)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>June</strong></td>
<td>Interviews for potential volunteers (ongoing)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Young volunteers and staff into schools to raise awareness of SRC with children and young people</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>August</strong></td>
<td>SRC Volunteers in libraries working with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>September</strong></td>
<td>SRC Volunteers in libraries working with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Celebration events held for volunteers to recognise their achievements and offer them further volunteering opportunities in libraries and the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We would like to acknowledge the help and support of our steering group, which included Sue Minter, Hertfordshire Libraries, Sarah Mears, Essex Libraries, Russell Allen, West Sussex Libraries – they all supplied sample materials and spoke at the training days. Also Ruth Lomas in Tameside, who was a guest speaker and provided advice on accreditation.

Thank you also to all the staff at the 20 pilot library authorities who supported the volunteers over the summer, the feedback we have had from them has been overwhelmingly positive.

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