Libraries and young people

Promise to young people

English public libraries Promise\(^1\) that every young person will be:

- Inspired by an exciting environment which makes reading for pleasure irresistible;
- Find a range of books and information resources to support growing confidence in literacy and formal and informal learning;
- Be aware of opportunities to participate in, and create a range of book-based activities;
- Actively involved in making decisions about service developments that affect them;
- Welcomed and able to access the resources they need both physically and digitally.

Making reading for pleasure irresistible

77\% of young people aged 11 - 15 visit a library every year\(^2\)

There is growing research on the importance of youth reading for pleasure. OFSTED now recommends that all schools have reading for pleasure policies. Reading books is the only out-of-school activity for 16 year olds demonstrably linked to getting a managerial or professional job\(^3\). Good literacy skills is a factor in personal happiness and success - economic wellbeing, aspirations, family life, health and civic/cultural engagement.

The Big Lottery funded Reading Activists programme (2011-14), developed by The Reading Agency in partnership with 18 authorities, supported 8,677

“Libraries are…doorways. Doorways to a million other worlds” Young volunteer, ImagiNation summer arts initiative, Norwich

young people to become creative producers and social reporters in 54 local reading and writing hubs. Reading Activists organised 3,218 youth-led events for 26,148 of their peers. Over 600 achieved an accredited outcome, towards Arts Award or Duke of Edinburgh. 86\% said they had gained new skills, 85\% used the library more and 71\% enjoyed reading more. Reading Activists groups have continued to thrive following funding, actively involved in shaping a new national Reading Hack programme in which young people will share the best methods for inspiring their peers and generation to read for pleasure.

Encouraging volunteering

Over 33,000 11-24s volunteer in libraries, for the Summer Reading Challenge, as mystery shoppers for Takeover Day, IT buddies, and givers for World Book Night\(^4\).

The Summer Reading Challenge is the UK’s biggest annual reading promotion for children aged 4 to 11, organised by The Reading Agency and the UK public library network.

In 2014, 839,662 children took part, supported by 8,126 young volunteers aged 12-24, many for the first time. 85\% of young volunteers gained new skills and experience and 776 gained an accreditation; making a positive contribution to their communities and their own futures. A further 33 young people progressed to jobs in libraries. A 2014 independent research report by OPM into the 2014 Challenge found that SRCv meets all the Cabinet Office principles for great youth social action.

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\(^1\) Children and Young People’s Promise for age 0 to 18, developed by the Association of Senior Children’s and Education Librarians (ASCEL)

\(^2\) Taking Part Statistical Release, DCMS, 2013

\(^3\) Reading at 16 linked to better job prospects, University of Oxford, 2011

\(^4\) Taking Part Statistical Release, DCMS, 2013
Young people experiencing great art and culture

Libraries’ work with young people demonstrates that when they are given a stake in library services, they are more likely to engage with libraries, reading and social action; gaining new skills and confidence which can enhance their life chances. Libraries offer all sorts of opportunities for young people to experience high quality arts and cultural activity. From taking part in reading groups, storytelling sessions, author readings, arts and crafts workshops, or researching in books and online, to running their own youth-led creative projects and events.

Many libraries support children and young people who want to deepen their engagement with the arts and culture, build creative and leadership skills, and achieve a national qualification by doing an Arts Award.

In 2014, 92 libraries across England are Arts Award Centres, helping 2,351 children and young people to achieve an Arts Award. 178 libraries are Arts Award Supporters (including whole library authorities in Devon, Somerset and Northamptonshire); partnering with local museums, arts organisations, schools and colleges to support young people participating in library-run activities as part of their Arts Award.

Trinity College London runs Arts Award, in association with Arts Council England, working with 10 regional Bridge organisations. See the case studies to find out how activities in libraries fit with and contribute towards Arts Award. The Grants for the arts Libraries fund is investing £6 million of the Arts Council’s Grants for the arts National Lottery money in projects delivered by public libraries or library authorities working in partnership with cultural organisations across all art forms.

Read the case studies, watch YouTube videos and find out how the Grants for the arts Libraries fund is supporting a range of projects integrating books, reading and the arts, developed and delivered with, for and by young people. Such as Circuit Live, a spoken word project inspired by London 2012 involving children not in education, employment or training (NEET) in workshops held in libraries across London in Camden, Lambeth, Lewisham, Waltham Forest and Westminster. Or the 623 young volunteers who helped over 53,000 children complete their Summer Reading Challenge in libraries in the South West.

For many, libraries are a vital hub for arts and culture at the heart of their community. Culture Hive is an Arts Council funded free resource to help discover and share best practice in cultural marketing. It features the Magic of Libraries, commissioned by Time To Read, a partnership of 22 library authorities in North West England. The video encourages people aged 16+ to read more and to read more widely. This case study demonstrates the value in investing £2,700 in local young female film-makers to spread positive messages about reading and libraries to thousands of people across social media networks.

Libraries, arts and young people in partnership

Lewisham Library Service works in partnership with The Albany to engage more young people through arts and culture. Feature collaborations include poetry readings by young and emerging poets to whole day takeovers of Deptford Lounge by young women’s organisation Bel Eve. Through music and performance, young people share their passions and talent in an award winning community facility. The partnership with The Albany ensures high quality artists and arts organisations are engaged, especially local talent, to reach new and different audiences. As a result young people benefit from a broad cultural offer in a free, public space – their local library.