Volunteering and the Summer Reading Challenge

Guidance Pack for Libraries

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Volunteering Templates

If you are developing a volunteering policy for the first time, please download the volunteering templates to accompany this introduction.

- Volunteer policy template
- Risk assessment
- Developing volunteer roles
- Promoting and recruiting volunteer roles
- Sample volunteer joining form
- Sample volunteer induction checklist
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1. Introduction

For over a decade, the Summer Reading Challenge has been helping children to sustain and develop their reading over the long school holidays. The Challenge has grown year on year and last year a record 839,622 children took part.

The Summer Reading Challenge is so popular that it can be a struggle to staff the various activities required to make it a success. Library services are finding that youth volunteering during the Challenge can provide a focus for work with young people and support the children taking part, whilst relieving pressure on library staff. Some young people may have experienced the Summer Reading Challenge themselves, and volunteering is a natural progression in their involvement with their local library.

Recent pioneering Reading Agency programmes such as HeadSpace and Reading Activists have shown how reading and libraries can be a powerful pivot for young people to volunteer and get involved in their local communities. Library services are well-placed to offer volunteering opportunities through Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering programmes.

Volunteering is “…an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than (or in addition to) close relatives.”

The Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering (2005)

This Guidance Pack has been created with the help of library staff already experienced in working with young volunteers on the Summer Reading Challenge.

(i) Introduction to working with volunteers
(ii) Volunteering templates
(iii) Best Practice Guide to growing your Summer Reading Challenge volunteering programme

The pack is available on the Reading Agency website, along with case studies from libraries who run volunteering programmes.

This introduction aims to offer simple guidelines which you can adapt locally to suit your own needs. If you’re already working with volunteers, it might help to fill some gaps in your policies; if you’re not, it should help to get you started. The need for this guidance has come from libraries and we’re keen not to overload you with new systems and paperwork. The Summer Reading Challenge volunteers can work like any other volunteer in your library and your current systems for monitoring and accreditation should be transferable.

This pack is not meant to be definitive, only to be a guide for library services developing volunteering. We recognise that many library services already offer excellent volunteering opportunities for a wide range of audiences, using many different approaches.

This guidance is free to all libraries because we want to support you in delivering our (and your) mission of giving everyone an equal chance in life by helping people become confident and enthusiastic readers. Employing young volunteers during the Challenge will ensure that children, young people and whole
families will have a dynamic experience of reading and libraries over the summer, helping to move libraries and the Summer Reading Challenge into a new phase. We look forward to having you along on the journey.

1.1 Why develop youth volunteering as part of the Summer Reading Challenge?

“Given that this was the first time we have used volunteers for the Summer Reading Challenge, the feedback from staff, children, parents/carers and the volunteers themselves has been extremely positive.”

Portsmouth Libraries

Volunteering is an effective way to meet the needs of libraries, young people and national agendas. Young people are current and future users of library services but often libraries find it difficult to attract and sustain their interest. Youth volunteering enables library services to tap into peer networks and get first hand feedback, ideas and advice on attracting other young people. Young people know what the library service needs in order to stay current and vibrant and are far more likely to enter a library where other young people are visibly engaged. Helping with the Summer Reading Challenge gives them the chance to work creatively on a fun project which they can see will help younger children’s reading. Those who currently don't use the library or aren’t primarily interested in reading may see numerous benefits to being involved as volunteers and, through volunteering, may become active readers themselves. For example, we are creating a selected book list for young volunteers to dip into to find reading ideas during their spell helping with the Summer Reading Challenge.

The Benefits
By involving young people as volunteers the library gains:

- support with the time-consuming work involved in the Summer Reading Challenge
- a more youthful image
- the enthusiasm and fresh perspective of young people
- a link with local communities
- help to deliver activities
- staff confidence in working positively with young people

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

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

For the children who take part in the Summer Reading Challenge, the advantages of working with young volunteers are just as great. Children love talking to older young people and young volunteers will be reading champions and mentors for the children.

Children gain:

- more one-to-one attention from volunteers and staff
- a chance to talk in more detail about their reading experiences
- reading role models to raise their aspirations
- help with web technology
- new, creative activities linked to the Challenge
- support with completing the Challenge

1.2 What will young volunteers do?

Many libraries already have a good track record of employing volunteers during the Summer Reading Challenge. Other libraries have also created roles that benefit the library throughout the year such as supporting Chatter Books or World Book Night giving.

In 2014, 8,126 young volunteers aged 12-24 years were recruited in libraries in the UK, a 43% increase in the number of volunteers recruited compared with 2013.

The roles of volunteers have varied in different authorities; however certain tasks have been consistently undertaken. These are:

- Helping staff to administer the Challenge
- Talking to children about the books they’ve been reading
- Helping children to choose new books
- Helping with summer activities
- Helping to create in-library displays
From the feedback we’ve had from libraries, we know that one of the challenges of working with young volunteers is keeping them engaged and occupied during quiet times. For this reason, it will be important to have a wide range of tasks and roles that young people can get involved in, such as organising books and displays to help create an attractive environment. And you may want to involve young volunteers in activities/roles in other parts of the library (E.g. setting up a reading group for other volunteers or helping with computer mentoring).

A big feature of 2015 will be young volunteers acting as Reading Hackers, generating content and activity ideas for other young volunteers, including reviewing their reads, sharing their experience and generating ‘hack’ activity ideas. The Reading Hack website will help volunteers to find ideas over the summer: www.readingagency.org.uk/readinghack

Here are a range of volunteering roles you could think about offering to young people over the summer:

**Assistant**
New volunteers will be able to help in any library over the summer, supporting the library staff and helping children to get the most out of the Challenge. The Assistants’ role might include:

- Signing children up to the Challenge
- Helping children to find and choose books
- Listening to them talking about their books
- Helping children to use the Summer Reading Challenge website
- Helping with events
- Using activity sheets and other ideas to help children share their reading choices with their peers
- Collecting data for evaluation

**Leader**
Leaders have probably volunteered for the Challenge before and are looking to develop their skills and widen their experience. The role might include:

- Running training sessions for other volunteers
- Timetabling volunteer schedules
- Mentoring volunteers throughout the Challenge
- Planning volunteer team building events and activities
- Planning volunteer celebration events

**Reporter**
Reporters are volunteers with an interest in gaining media and journalism skills. They help promote the Challenge online and profile their library’s work. The role might include:

- Taking photos and video footage (signed forms required for any children featured)
- Writing reviews of activities and events
- Promote the Challenge via blogging, photos and news items.
- Talking to the press
- Doing interviews for radio/TV

**Schools Role**
Some libraries have also worked with young people in schools, who promote and advocate for the Summer Reading Challenge in schools and other community settings during the school summer term. They encourage children to take part in the Challenge. The role might include:
  - Going into schools with presentations about the Challenge
  - Creating displays in schools
  - Running Creepy House activities and events during the Summer term to encourage children to take part in the Challenge
  - Volunteering for the Challenge (as above)

**Peer Researcher**
In 2014, independent impact research organisation OPM worked with The Reading Agency to evaluate the impact of the SRC volunteering. They piloted a Peer Researcher role which saw young volunteers attending a training session to write their own research evaluation questions for interviewing other young volunteers to help evaluate the impact of volunteering on 12-24s. You could incorporate this role into your local volunteering offer. The role might include:
  - Conducting surveys on other volunteers
  - Creating an online platform for peers to share their evaluation
  - Developing their research questions
  - Running research sessions with their peers

There are a range of activity sheets and ideas for engaging with children and encouraging them to think about their reading. These are available as downloads from the Summer Reading Challenge website [www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk](http://www.summerreadingchallenge.org.uk) (from the end of April).

**Other roles and ideas**
Locally, you could also organise for young volunteers to get together to become a creative planning team, deciding which activities they’d like to use with children, before the Challenge gets started. This will help with building team spirit, and a sense of ownership. They could also start a library service Steering Group which will have a life and remit beyond summer volunteering. If you are involved in the Reading Hack programme, this could be an activity for your groups.

**Volunteer hours**
There are no hard and fast rules about how much time volunteers should offer to give, though you may want to set a minimum number of hours e.g. 10. Obviously, the more hours they commit, the richer the experience and learning for volunteers. They can arrange regular sessions, maybe a couple of hours on a particular day a week, or just do one-off longer sessions. For volunteers who are happy to put in quite a few hours, you may find that it is best to arrange set shifts (minimum of half a day at a time) during the core hours of the day e.g. 10-5, as this makes it easier to integrate the volunteers with the staff team.

2. Developing Volunteering

2.1 Preparing your service

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

2.2 Volunteer policy

Your library service should have a full volunteer policy with a guide to every aspect of the volunteering process, from why and how you recruit volunteers to their rights and responsibilities once they’re actively involved. You can create a simpler, shorter policy for the young volunteers involved in the Challenge.

Your volunteer policy for the Challenge could include:

- Your aims for the Summer Reading Challenge, and the role that volunteers play, recognising the complementary roles of paid staff and volunteers
- the health and safety requirements for employing volunteers, including documents for undertaking risk assessments
- the roles that volunteers will play and the support, protection and benefits that volunteers are entitled to
- guidelines for the recruitment and selection of volunteers
• information about the induction, training, support and supervision available to young volunteers
• guidelines for how the contribution of young volunteers will be recognised and rewarded, monitored and evaluated

For a template to aid you in developing a volunteer policy, please see the Volunteer Policy Template

2.3 Communicating the message to staff

“There were two girls and a boy who were very proactive and enthusiastic. Their presence was the reason that we were able to sign-up so many children.”

Norfolk libraries

Library staff should understand the role of young volunteers, why volunteers are being involved and how they are involved in supporting them. It’s important that in the library there should be one designated person (volunteer coordinator) to manage and support the volunteers.

Involving volunteers should be included in the Summer Reading Challenge guidance notes and training for all staff, with reference to:

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

You may find that some training in how to work effectively with young people may be appropriate when beginning work with young volunteers

3. Legal Requirements

3.1 Health and safety

Every organisation has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all staff and users. That responsibility extends to volunteers, who should have the same protections and be given the same advice and training as staff.
As part of an induction to the library, all volunteers should be made aware of the library's health and safety policy, any relevant policies on issues such as confidentiality and practical safety issues relating to their particular role.

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

3.2 What is risk assessment?

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

3.3 Why assess risk within your volunteer programme?

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.5 How to assess and manage risk

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

Risk assessment involves working systematically through four key steps:

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

Measures to manage risk:

Avoid the risk. If the task is not essential and you can meet your library's objectives in other ways, it might be best not to offer that particular activity as part of the volunteering role e.g. locking up the library at night is unlikely to be an appropriate role for a young volunteer.

Control the risk. This is the most common approach. If a task is a core part of the volunteering role and the work of the library, you need to identify what policies must be adhered to, what training is needed and how this is to be recorded and monitored e.g. young people might be responsible for working with young children during the Summer Reading Challenge but shouldn't be left alone with children and should be briefed on the library's child protection policies.

Finance the risk. You may decide to allocate additional resources to overcome barriers e.g. if you risk losing volunteers because of the lack of volunteer expenses, you may decide to allocate a budget to meet this need.
For a template to help with risk assessment, please see the Volunteering Templates.

3.6 DBS checks and child protection

You need to follow your authority’s guidelines on Child Protection and DBS checking.

If your local authority does require you to undertake DBS checks, the check itself is free of charge for volunteers, but there may be an administrative fee for each check. Your local authority may have a disclosure unit or department who will arrange the checks and cover the administrative fee.

Young people aged 14-16 do not need to be checked. But you will need to obtain parental/guardian permission before engaging a young person under sixteen as a volunteer in your Service. This is covered on the joining form, available as a template.

4. Volunteering roles and recruitment

4.1 Creating volunteering roles

“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”

Kate, 18, Essex

You'll need to be clear about which roles you are going to develop for young people as part of their support for the Summer Reading Challenge.

It can be a good idea to involve young people from the beginning in developing the role descriptions. An ideal way is hold a team meeting once the young people have been recruited. It’s important that they get to know one another and feel that they’re part of a team.

They will have a good insight into the kinds of tasks young people will enjoy, and what would be a reasonable level of commitment. When devising your volunteer roles, you need to think about:

- what you want young people to do
- where they will carry out their duties
- when they will be required
- who they will be working with
The volunteer roles that you create must meet the motivational needs of the groups of young people that you want to recruit. No amount of promotion will attract young people into roles that aren’t well thought out and appealing.

Broad categories of roles you can offer young people to support the Summer Reading Challenge are outlined in section 1.2.

As well as the tasks and activities associated with running the Summer Reading Challenge, you’ll need to have a range of ideas for young people to make use of when there aren’t any children in the library. There are many things they can do which can be helpful to the library service; they can even spend the time extending their knowledge of children’s book authors and illustrators, so they have more to talk about and can share their opinions with the children.

4.2 Recruitment

“The Summer Reading Challenge has definitely given me more confidence. I am quite shy and wouldn’t normally talk to people I don’t know but now post Summer Reading Challenge I will because when I was volunteering I was meeting all sorts of new people”

Daisy 13, Sunderland

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

4.3 Ways of recruiting

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

Young volunteer, Haslingden

For more recommendations on recruiting volunteers, please see the Best Practice Guide.
You can use websites such as Do-it for recruiting young people, as well as any other recruitment methods you’ve already identified.

Work with partners. Schemes for promoting young people’s volunteering opportunities that might operate in your area are:

- The Prince’s Trust
- The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award
- Youth Offending Teams
- Universities, schools and colleges.

Consider targeted recruitment. E.g. perhaps there are young people on teacher training courses locally who would gain from the experience of working with children.

When selling the role, focus less on the library message and more on the benefits and interest for young people. For example, you may feel that an eye for design might be just what’s needed for in-library Summer Reading Challenge displays, and the attraction for a young volunteer might be the chance to use their design skills or to make an impact in their local community.

Use publicity effectively. Posters in the library are only going to attract very small numbers of people. Place marketing material in schools, youth groups, volunteer bureaus and other venues frequented by young people. Flyers tend to be more effective than posters and more effective still are websites, blogs, podcasts and social networking sites such as Facebook. Remember that web information needs to be updated regularly. The chances are that there will be a young volunteer who would love to take on that role.

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

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

4.4 Practicalities of recruitment and selection

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

- What procedures are already in place in your authority? Do you need to adhere to Council policies around recruiting staff or can you create new guidelines for young volunteers?
- Do you need to use application forms? If application forms are necessary, think about making them short and simple and make sure you offer young people support in completing them. See the Sample volunteer application form template for an example
How will you interview volunteers? Will an informal chat be sufficient or do you need a formal interview? Can young people be involved in the selection process and what measures would you need to have in place to make this fair and effective?

Will you need permissions from parents or guardians? You will need this for young volunteers under 16 years of age.

How will you deal with people you think are not right for a particular role? Can you suggest an alternative role or provide some training?

5. Induction, training and supervision

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

Louis, 17, Lewisham

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

5.1 Induction

Once you’ve recruited your volunteers, you need to think about doing an induction session as soon as possible, in advance of the Challenge. A proper induction to a role ensures that a young volunteer feels confident that they know what you expect of them and what they can expect of you.

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

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

5.2 Volunteer agreements

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

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

See the Volunteering Templates for an example of a volunteer agreement

5.3 Supporting young volunteers

“I have realised what resources the library can offer and I think by volunteering I’ve come to appreciate the central role a library can play in its community.”

Alexander, 22, Nottingham City

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

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

- a sense of ownership of their role and a real feeling of being able to contribute positively to your service and/or project
- training in how to deliver any aspects of the role that require new skills
- the opportunity to develop confidence and skills
- a feeling of being part of a team and of the wider service
- acknowledgement and celebration of the role they play
- adequate resources to carry out their role
Have high expectations of your young volunteers and they are unlikely to disappoint you. Give them as much responsibility as possible, whilst making sure that no-one is being put at unnecessary risk. A feeling of involvement and importance is what makes the volunteering experience valuable for the young person, fostering confidence and self-esteem.

You may want to consider ways to make your volunteers feel part of a team. Summer Reading Challenge t-shirts are available as part of the package of promotional materials; these can help the public to recognise volunteers and also gives them a feeling of belonging. Badges can also be used for this function. You could also get young people to design your badges or t-shirts and have them professionally printed to make sure they'll be proud to be seen wearing them.

Think carefully about how you will give support and supervision to your young volunteers before they begin their work. You may want to provide them with a personal contact for support outside of the library. This could be an experienced volunteer, or an identified member of staff from a central office. You can encourage young volunteers to keep in contact with each other through social networking sites e.g. Facebook, where they can offer support and ideas, and post up activities and photos.

5.4 If things go wrong

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

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

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

It may be worth thinking about pastoral support outside the library; a peer or member of staff not involved in day-to-day running of the library, who young volunteers can talk to about any problems they are experiencing.

6. Recognition and Progression

6.1 Recognition
“It’s important that regular volunteering gets rewarded. [Accreditation awards] are a symbol. A symbol of recognition.”

Young Volunteer, Haslingden HeadSpace

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

Formal recognition could include:

- Accreditation via a recognised body (linking in with local schemes such as Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Youth Achievement Award or Arts Award).
- Special SRC volunteers’ certificate
- Presentation and celebration events. You can give certificates out at the same celebration event as for the children taking part in the Challenge; this means the children can thank the volunteers for all their support and help, as well as staff.

Ways to give informal recognition include:

- Say 'thank you' for the work that the volunteer has done
- Make sure you greet young people as they arrive on duty
- Give young people positive feedback about their work and their personal qualities
- Praise them in front of their peers
- Allow them to represent the library service in public meetings
- Enlist them in training new volunteers and staff

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

6.2 Progression
“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 has made me want to use them more again.”

Chloe, 18, Bedford

After the summer the young people will go back to school/college/university or move on to new employment, and it would be great if they could continue being involved in the library. It’s important to make their exit positive to ensure that they leave you with a good memory of their experience and enthusiasm for their next phase of development.

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

- Celebration and recognition. Make sure each young person knows how much their time with you was appreciated. Organise some kind of celebration and present the young person with some memento of their time such as a certificate. You could also provide them with a reference for a future employer.

- Evaluation: be sure to find out what a difference the volunteering has made for the young person. First-hand accounts are powerful advocacy tools and also a way of identifying where improvements need to be made.

- Support and information. Spend time with the young person identifying progression routes. Maybe there are other roles within your library that they could play or other places they could volunteer. Working with children in Chatterbooks reading groups is one possibility.

- Training, recruitment and advocacy. Experienced volunteers are key individuals to engage in recruiting, mentoring or training new volunteers. Maybe you can create a new role for your volunteer as a mentor or advocate for the new recruits.

7. Evaluation and Review

It’s important to get feedback from the volunteers, to build on for future planning. Getting the volunteers together for a group review will be extremely useful for building on the experience and thinking about improvements for the following year.

In general terms, regular review of all of your policies and procedures will keep your volunteering programme working smoothly. Involve your volunteers in this process to get their feedback, to give them a sense of ownership, and to make sure they are up to date with any changes.

“In the libraries where the young volunteers were, the completion and satisfaction rate increased”
7.1 Reflection

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

It’s a time consuming task setting up and managing a volunteering programme, and there may be challenges along the way, but the libraries who have worked with volunteers have found it has been well worth it. In West Sussex the library service worked with 256 volunteers who between them logged nearly 4,000 hours, which could be calculated as being worth around £25,000 (using the current Library Service Evening Shelver hourly rate, a post held by many young people). Over and above this cash worth, further value can be evidenced from the many positive comments from families that met volunteers and library staff who worked alongside them.

“I think projects like Reading Activists and Summer Reading Challenge Volunteering are important because the idea that all young people are out rioting and causing trouble is unfair. They can and are doing something helpful in their communities”

Daisy, 13, Sunderland

Summer Reading Challenge volunteering is funded in England in 2015 by the Social Action Fund. The Fund will help libraries, supported by The Reading Agency, to grow the programme in 2015. The Social Action Fund is managed by The Social Investment Business on behalf of the Cabinet Office. It receives funding in Wales by the Welsh government and in Scotland by Tesco Bank.