

Setting up a group of young planners

Involving young people in planning

One of the most effective ways of engaging with young people is to set up a young person's planning group. This gives them the chance to take on planning roles to guide creative programming and get others involved. The group will quickly tell you what they like and don't like. They'll soon have more young people engaged in your organisation and help them become advocates for reading; just follow their advice and involve them fully in decisions.



A planning group can be a sounding board for all decisions concerning young people. They can plan Reading Hack events and activities, adding a youth-friendly angle to events that have failed to attract a teen audience in the past.

We expect that organisations starting Reading Hack will be at different stages in terms of working with young people in this way. You may be new to youth-led approaches or have several consultation or planning groups established. If you're starting out or are looking to refresh an old opportunity, here's advice to help you get going.

Setting up a steering group of planners

Time taken

Meetings should last at least an hour to an hour and a half. Depending on whether young people are part of a consultation panel or are running regular activities, groups should meet regularly to enable work to progress quickly and for the young people to get into a regular routine.

Things you'll need

- Somewhere to meet regularly.
- Young people! Think about the age of your members. 12 year-olds will have very different ideas and interests to 16 year-olds.
- Posters to advertise your new group, or other promotion methods suggested by young people. Get Reading Hack branded materials from the resources section of The Reading Agency website to help promote your group.

Recruitment

- Think about your audience. Posters advertising a "library planning group" probably aren't going to attract much interest. Posters recruiting for a "marketing work experience group" that just happens to take place in a library are far more likely to have young people popping along to see what you have to offer.

- Send your posters to local senior schools. A lot of schools expect their young people to organise their own work experience, so when a poster appears offering a unique work experience opportunity they will make sure that their students are aware of it.
- Hold an information evening with refreshments. Do a presentation that shows why your organisation needs the help of young people. Make the young people feel important and valued from the beginning.

First meeting

- Explain why your organisation needs a young person's planning group and what you hope the group will achieve. Focus on what young people will get out of it.
- Ask everyone to introduce themselves and play some ice-breaking games for communication skills.
- Discuss how the group will run and agree some rules.
- Allow the young people to set an agenda for their meetings.
- Show them the introduction to Reading Hack powerpoint and website (www.readinghack.org.uk) which you can find in the resources section of The Reading Agency website. This includes the Reading Hack trailer film which you can show on YouTube.
- Start to discuss what could be done to attract more young people to your organisation. What could you be doing better?

Agree the date of the next meeting before everyone leaves and discuss if the current proposed date and time works for everyone.

Make sure that you have everyone's contact details before they leave the first meeting so that you can remind them about the next meeting.

Future meetings

- Run a planning session to plan your Reading Hack programme. Get tips for running a session from the resources section of The Reading Agency website.
- Take your lead from the young people, be flexible, and have fun
- Celebrate your group's successes

Useful information

- Feed and water everyone. Crisps and drinks will be appreciated!
- Take your lead from your group. Allow them to determine as much as possible
- Let them talk about whatever they want, including last night's TV. As long as some important matters are discussed then that's fine.
- Be prepared for young people to dip in and out of the group depending on their commitments.
- Keep in touch with group members via text and email. Be persistent but don't nag
- Have regular recruitment campaigns to keep your numbers topped up.
- Young people have busy lives and there will be a steady drop-off as they take up other commitments - this isn't a failure. Keep recruiting to keep things fresh. You may find that some young people drift in and out at various times depending on what you're doing and what else is going on in their lives. Accept that attendance patterns vary - some will loyally come every time, others won't...
- Keep meetings informal and fun.
- Facilitate to a certain point - no one likes having someone talk over them.
- Advertise your group on the Reading Hack website (www.readinghack.org.uk) and local channels. Ideally young people will eventually take over promotion.

Raising awareness among staff

Make sure your colleagues are aware of the fantastic work being done by your young people. Share updates at staff meetings, by email, over lunch in the staff room. It's important that staff and library volunteers value young people's contribution to your organisation and that the young people are never made to feel unwelcome or unimportant in your building.

As your group grows in success the message will filter out across your whole organisation that young people are very much needed and valued. Share your news with partners, elected members, stakeholders and the voluntary sector.

You can download resources to raise awareness of Reading Hack among staff, including a poster, flyer and PowerPoint presentation from the resources section of The Reading Agency website.

Planning events and activities

Visit the resources section to find out about running a planning session to design your library's local programme.

www.readingagency.org.uk/resources

www.readinghack.org.uk