

Year-round volunteering in libraries

This year, **7,761** young people volunteered in libraries during the Summer Reading Challenge, across **163** local authorities.

Extending your summer volunteering offer year-round is a great way to support staff during busy times and encourage young people to spend time in the library. Year-round volunteering doesn't need to be as structured or as regular as summer volunteering – it can be as simple as young people coming into the library one day each month to act as digital buddies to other library users, or supporting library staff during school holidays or local events.



“Staff feel they have support they can rely on, but like that there is less pressure on them to run groups and organise activities.” – Library staff in Lancashire

Benefits of year-round volunteering

- Young volunteers can provide library staff with year-round support if needed.
- Staff don't need to spend as much time recruiting and training, as young people who volunteered during the summer are likely to stay involved.
- Young people who volunteered over the summer holidays remain engaged with the library throughout the year, without the commitment of regular group meetings.
- Training/induction only needs to happen once for the whole year, saving staff time.
- Young people get the opportunity to develop their skills and confidence and add to their CV.

“It's nice to have the added value to events - people really love seeing young people take the lead.” – Library staff in Leeds

Tips for working with young people year-round

- Think about the year-round support your library needs and how young people can help with this.
- Talk to young people about how they are able and willing to volunteer throughout the year.
- Advertise specific roles on websites such as www.vinspired.com to reach more young people.
- Get in touch with young people who volunteered during the summer, who are already engaged with the library and likely to look for more opportunities to get involved.
- Remember that volunteering roles don't need to be permanent – young people might prefer to help out at one big library event every three months than come in each week.
- Adapt roles for different age groups – a 16 or 17 year-old can take on a lot more responsibility than a 13 year-old.
- Remember that young people are busy! They won't necessarily be able to come into the library every week, so be flexible where possible.

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Year-round volunteering roles

Year-round volunteering can work for staff as well as young people - it doesn't need to create extra work or infringe upon staff roles. These volunteer roles are suggestions based on what some library authorities are already doing, and can be adapted to suit the needs of the library and young people.

Digital Buddy – Young volunteers spend a few hours a week helping other members of the community to use library technology, either one-to-one or as part of a group session.

Reading Buddy – Young volunteers partner with other library users (such as users of the Reading Friends scheme) to read together regularly.

Young Advisors – Young people provide feedback or advice on aspects of the library that involve them, such as book selection, events and library layout.

Activity Support – Young volunteers support staff at pre-arranged times when the library will be busy, such as activity sessions, school holidays or local events.

Mentors – Older, more experienced volunteers can support library staff in recruiting, training and advising new or younger volunteers if needed.

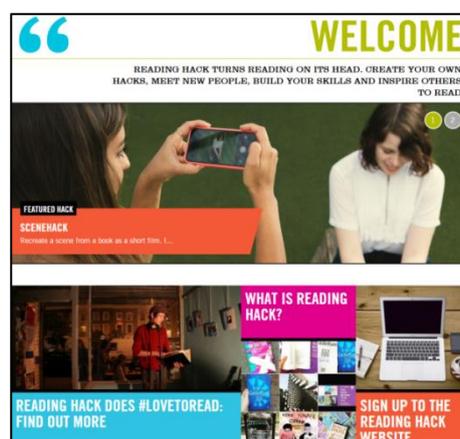
Reading Hack Ambassadors – Young people act as library representatives on a local level, for example attending events, speaking to local press or visiting schools to encourage more young people to get involved.

Supporting young volunteers

The Reading Hack website is designed to give young people a platform to record their volunteering hours, get new ideas and share what they've done with other young people.

Young people can record their volunteering hours on www.readinghack.org.uk in four simple steps:

1. Visit readinghack.org.uk to find a volunteering hack (e.g. Chatterbooks volunteering) and click Join.
2. Set up a profile on the website (it only takes a minute!).
3. Log volunteering hours and activity for the hack to get online badges.
4. Download a skills letter for their CV when needed.



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