Developing Principles for Working with Young People in Libraries
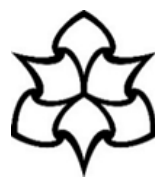
Marianne Bamkin, Birmingham City University

Sarah McNicol, Manchester Metropolitan University

2019

Acknowledgements

Contents

Executive Summary

This study set out to identify a set of principles for libraries to work with young people. Young people, library staff and other adults working with young people were consulted about their perceptions of guiding principles for working with young people; ways of encouraging their voluntary participation; and the development of leadership and teamwork skills. Reports on the Reading Hack and Arts Council England Quality Principles (ACE QP) underpinned the research.

The assessment of the Reading Hack (Peach et al. 2018) indicated that an ethos of working collaboratively with young people in the co-production of services aligned to their local needs should be retained in libraries. It recommended that this be supported by local partners, and some thought should be given to the differing requirements for young people across a wide age range. It suggested that named staff members should work with young people who work as volunteers. The ACE QPs are well-established and have been used by libraries when developing their work with young people. However, they are intended to cover a variety of arts and cultural organisations, as well as attempting to cater for a wider age range. It was decided that, whilst they formed a robust basis for the development of a set of principles for libraries, it was necessary to test, and then adapt, the ACE QPs to form a set of principles best suited to the needs of the library sector.

The first stage of the research was an online survey about library use and statements related to the ACE QPs. This received responses from over 300 young people, around half of whom were regular library users. This provided evidence of the broad relevance of the principles to young people within a library setting. In particular, it demonstrated the importance to young people of:

- Having fun
- Being treated like an equal
- Feeling welcome
- Well-organised events
- Being listened to
- Feeling their skills are valued
- Learning new skills and trying new things.

The survey also indicated that some aspects of the principles had a lower priority for young people, in particular, the idea of activities being youth-led.

A focus group was held with young people to provide more detailed feedback on the principles. This led to a collaborative rewriting of the principles, for example, the term "excellence" was expanded to include safeguarding and accessibility; "being authentic" was problematic and the words "truthful and "trust" were considered more relevant; the term "having fun" was preferred to "being engaging"; and "being listened to" was considered far more important than a project being youth-led.

In addition to data collection activities with young people, interviews were conducted with adults experienced at working with young people either in a library setting or in a youth organisation. Interviewees' prime consideration was that young people should be kept safe, with library staff understanding the correct safeguarding procedures. They also considered that mutual trust, treating young people on an equal basis, listening to their advice and creating an inclusive team were important factors that improved services and helped young people gain confidence and self-esteem.

Adults were keen to get young people "engaged" rather than suggesting that they would "have fun" and considered that volunteers should be rewarded in some way. The interviewees showed a depth of understanding about the challenges that young people are facing in their lives and advocated a flexible approach to tasks or projects delegated to a young volunteer. They stressed the importance of working together with other agencies to recruit and/or support young people.

Based on responses from the survey, focus group and interviews, together with the findings of previous research, this report recommends that the following principles for working with young people in libraries are adopted.

1. **Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience for all young people**

   This includes feeling welcome and comfortable; being treated as an equal and accepted; and being able to choose whether, when and how young people participate.

2. **Being fun, exciting and inspiring for young people**

   This principle is concerned with offering a variety of activities that promote fun and help young people to have positive attitudes towards other library-based activities in the future.

3. **Developing community belonging and ownership for young people**

   The key ideas in this principle revolve around feeling part of a community, through which young people both give and receive support; having a sense of ownership; and making a positive difference.

4. **Being trustworthy, reliable and relevant**

   The notion of the library as a safe space for young people to explore and experiment, within which they are trusted and treated with respect is central to this principle.

5. **Listening to, valuing and involving young people**

   This includes taking a youth-focussed approach that includes empowering young people as decision-makers; listening to them as equals and taking their views seriously; and valuing their skills.

6. **Working together for excellence and accessibility**

   This principle involves working in partnership with other types of organisations and with young people as collaborators; ensuring safety and welfare issues are addressed, including the need for staff training; and ensuring opportunities are accessible to as wide a group of young people as possible.

7. **Enabling young people's life chances, confidence and well-being**

   This includes helping young people to achieve career and other life goals, including less tangible outcomes such as increased confidence and improved wellbeing.

By setting out secure practices for working with young people, together with practical exemplars to help libraries to think about effective ways to implement these principles, this report is intended to

support libraries in continuing and developing the ways in which they support young people, as well as encouraging discussion about the role of libraries and the ways in which they might work together and share learning – both with each other and with other organisations that support young people. The principles are intended to help libraries to shape engagement with young people in a variety of ways, including reviewing existing programmes; planning new work; identifying workforce development needs; developing evaluation frameworks that include young people's voices; and engaging in self-reflection and learning. In time, we hope that the principles will come to provide a common framework for communication and organisational development for working with young people within the library sector.

Introduction

This work was funded by Paul Hamlyn and was commissioned by The Reading Agency to provide the sector with a long-term sustainable legacy by using the best practice and learning from Reading Hack to shape the way it engages and works with young people.

The aim of this project is to:

develop a set of guiding principles for the library sector which will set down secure practices for working with young people

This has been achieved through the following objectives:

- examining key learning from the Reading Hack programme
- identifying priorities of libraries and young people
- examining existing principles of working with young people, e.g. ACE QPs.

This report describes research carried out with young people and key stakeholders in the libraries, youth work and voluntary sectors. It then details recommendations for a set of principles that underpin the Children's Promise and libraries' work with young people, including practical exemplars to help libraries to think about effective ways to implement these principles. These principles are intended to help libraries to review existing programmes; plan new work; and engage in self-reflection and other learning.

Reading Hack

Successfully running for the past five years, the Reading Agency's Reading Hack is a programme through which young people aged 13-24 years volunteer to work in public libraries and schools to improve and increase their peers' engagement with reading. The programme supplies an adaptable model for libraries to develop their work with young people. Its strength is that young people plan, design and take the lead for the activities that they deliver, meaning that their volunteering work develops their individual skills and confidence as well as inspiring other children and young people to engage with reading. A recent evaluation of Reading Hack (Peach et al, 2018) identified a demand for autonomous volunteering opportunities for young people, therefore opening an opportunity to further develop Reading Hack.

The report (Peach et al, 2018) evaluates the impact of the Reading Hack and references many examples of the work being done in libraries with young people as part of the Reading Hack programme. Peach et al (2018) also made a set of recommendations for libraries and the Reading Agency to consider. The recommendations were based on the premise that libraries would continue working with young people as volunteers using the Reading Hack approach, making allowances for local variation of style and delivery. It is clear from the report that currently libraries have diminishing capacity and that justifying staff time to support a volunteer programme is challenging and the recommendations reflect that concern. Briefly summarised the recommendations cover:

1. Ensuring that the co-production ethos continues as a sustainable model
2. Working with young people to develop the right model for the locality
3. Ways by which a library can justify the effort that their staff put into the work: aligning it with local strategic points and national initiatives
4. Embedding the Reading Hack model into other programmes

5. Making decisions for the age range of volunteers, age groups in relation to the amount of support each age range requires
6. The benefits found from working with local partners
7. Co-ordinating the volunteer programme in a library with a named staff member with skills and knowledge of working with young people.

The recommendations also suggest that the name 'Reading Hack' is confusing and may affect perceptions of the project. However, branding was found to be popular with the volunteers as they were given T-shirts or lanyards or badges that gave them a sense of belonging. There was a consideration that the Reading Hack model could be used in other settings, but some adaption may be needed to be effective in other situations.

ACE Quality Principles (QPs)

The development of ACE's QPs for arts and culture for, by and with children and young people involved a review of 31 quality frameworks from the UK and overseas; interviews with stakeholders across a range of art forms; a 'Quality Conversation' website for sector leaders to post perspectives and stimulate discussion; and a national sector event to gather evidence (Lord et al. 2012). This activity resulted in a list of seven QPs and associated questions underpinned by both research and practice. These were subsequently tested across the arts/cultural sector (Sharp & Lee, 2015). This pilot study identified potential benefits of the principles as: providing a focus on the perspective of children and young people; encouraging greater engagement with children and young people; the development of evaluation frameworks including the voices of children and young people; and providing a common framework for communication and organisational development.

The robust progress through which the ACE QPs were developed and tested means they offer a strong basis from which to develop principles for working with young people in libraries. However, in the development of the principles presented in this report, particular attention has been given to:

- Issues or factors particularly relevant to libraries, which may not be equally important to other types of cultural organisations
- The focus on young people (aged 13-24) whose needs and aspirations may well differ from those of younger children
- Issues raised during the piloting of the ACE QPs, in particular, the fact that some organisations would like more detailed information about how to interpret the principles.

In addition, whilst the original development of the ACE QPs focused on involvement by arts and cultural practitioners, in this study we have placed greater emphasis on direct involvement by young people themselves.

Methodology

Data was gathered as follows:

Desk Research
- Examining -
  - Reading Hack evaluation documents and ACE QPs
  - Other examples of young people's volunteering
  - General principles of working with young people

Online survey
- Asking young people about their experiences and expectations
- Promoted via Reading Hack blog, Ascel membership, social media, mailing lists
- Open 19th Nov 2018-6th Jan 2019
- Resulted in 319 responses from young people

Virtual interviews
- With key individuals -
  - From library-related organisations e.g. Reading Agency, Libraries Connected, Youth Libraries Group
  - From youth-related organisations e.g. Girl Guides, Youth Employment UK, Youth Focus NW

Focus Group
- With a group of young people, from Oldham Youth Council
- Exploration of each of the seven principles in small groups and a whole group discussion of overall ideas.

Background and context

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) includes the right for children and young people to be involved with decision making that affects them (UNICEF, 1990). In the UK specifically, the government considers that young people should make a positive contribution to society through active citizenship and by being included in the decision-making process (Big Lottery Fund, 2012). This concept of developing a spirit of citizenship amongst young people has led to a number of organisations conducting research and developing recommendations, principles and guidelines for working with young people. Relevant literature from those organisations was examined in order to gather a range of perspectives and to identify the most suitable principles for working with young people in libraries.

The key document is the report which introduces the seven ACE QPs (Lord et al. 2012). The principles it sets out are:

1. Striving for excellence and innovation (originally 'Striving for excellence')
2. Being authentic
3. Being exciting, inspiring and engaging
4. Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience (originally 'Ensuring a positive, child-centred experience')
5. Actively involving children and young people
6. Enabling personal progression (originally 'Providing a sense of personal progression')
7. Developing belonging and ownership (originally 'Developing a sense of ownership and belonging').

Striving for excellence and innovation

Lord et al. (2012) explain that in order to follow this principle organisations should develop a clear vision of their work with young people and that the young people should gain a high-quality experience. The best possible outcomes for the young people should be taken into account in the development of the work and the organisation should reflect on its service. More importantly, the organisation must wholeheartedly commit to achieve what it has stated will be done. It has to prove its integrity to the young people. Advice for working with young people published by the Big Lottery Fund UK (2012) states that organisations improve their quality and efficiency when they allow young people to become involved with decision making as the organisation gains access to new ideas and staff skills are improved through working with young people. Organisations will require additional resources to work well in collaboration with young people (Big Lottery Fund, 2012), but the benefits of youth participation are argued to outweigh the challenges, by developing active citizenship (Crowley and Moxon, 2017). Sharpe and Lee (2015) reported that organisations participating in their pilot studies for the ACE QPs engaged in self-reflection to enhance their staff development and peer learning.

Being authentic

According to Lord et al. (2012), the phrase 'Being authentic' refers to organisations giving young people a real, meaningful experience. The Big Lottery Fund (2012) states that participation should not be tokenistic. Tasks given to young people should not be an exercise, but should have some importance and relevance to the organisation, its users and the young people. Sharp and Lee (2015)

found that this principle was perhaps the least understood by pilot organisations as there are a number of interpretations for the meaning of authenticity.

Lord et al (2012) also intended that this principle should develop young people's awareness, understanding and skills. Big Lottery Fund (2012) advice recommends that projects should be enabling for the young people: they should be given responsibility and their involvement should be supported. The organisation should take the attitude that they are in partnership with the young people who are voicing their opinions to shape a service that is relevant and useful to them.

Being exciting, inspiring and engaging

Lord et al (2012) interpret this principle as providing inspiring and relevant opportunities that stretch, challenge and excite young people. Arts Connect (2018) assessed young people's attitudes to arts and culture and showed that young people want to engage with activities that challenge them and provide opportunities for them to enhance their skills. Activities should enhance their self-esteem and widen the young person's aspirations of life and career choices (Lord et al, 2012). Arts Connect (2018) found that careers are important goals for young people – but their ideas for future professions are broad and not limited to one job alone. Big Lottery Fund (2012) advice states that young people should develop self-confidence and deal with life changes and challenges, as well as developing enterprising behaviour. Sharpe and Lee (2015) found that young people can gain life skills through collaborative projects that use the ACE quality principles.

Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience

In order to obtain a child- (or young person-) centred experience Lord et al (2012) stipulate that staff working with children and young people should have passion, commitment, knowledge and the correct skills. Similarly, Big Lottery Fund (2012) guidance states that staff should have a good relationship with young people; they should enjoy their role and spending time with young people. Furthermore, training is required for adults who work with young people and the organisation should be a learning organisation, developing its programmes for young people in line with their feedback and participation (Crowley and Moxon; 2017; Lord et al, 2012).

Arts Connect (2018) found that young people generally identified themselves as individuals, not as a member of a group. This sense of individuality should be encouraged in order to develop confidence (Lord, et al. 2012). Commentators agree that participating young people should be recruited from diverse backgrounds. Crowley and Moxon (2017) consider that a strategic approach to youth participation should be developed with all young people, including those from minorities and potentially disadvantaged groups. They suggest that young people themselves should be involved with working out the best method of engaging young people from other backgrounds. They also advise that there should be many ways that young people could be involved. Such flexibility of approach is echoed by Big Lottery Fund guidance (2012) which recommends that involvement methods should be varied, tested and adapted because the needs of young people change.

Lord et al. (2012) advocate that each individual should not only be treated with equal respect, but also be welcomed into a warm community by both young people and the adults working with them. Young people want to be part of activities that are enjoyable, sociable, emotional and feel-good (Arts Connect, 2018). In addition, there is an assumption that young people require rewards and

incentives to celebrate their achievements, which may be as simple as being taken to an event (Big Lottery Fund, 2012).

Actively involving children and young people

Lord et al. (2012) believe that young people should be given hands on participation and direct collaboration with organisations providing a service. Crowley and Moxon (2017) examined forms of youth participation, comparing traditional methods, such as youth councils, with other more innovative ideas, for example 'participatory spaces' and co-management. They found that both routes were equally as effective and equally as likely to encounter challenges. However, they recommended that organisations should encourage innovative approaches and be open to new ideas and experimentation in conjunction with young people. However, Arts Connect (2018) highlighted a challenge to young people's participation – their free time is dominated by school work, and their main influence on their lives are their family. This means that the time they have to spare for participation is limited.

Enabling personal progression

Personal skills development is an essential component of working with young people, and Lord et al. (2012) suggest that for this principle, organisations should consider ways that they can develop young people's leadership skills; the next steps to be taken by the young person; and other activities in which they can participate. Big Lottery (2012) guidance recommends that organisations provide opportunities for young people to learn transferable skills such as: team work, planning, organising events, and problem solving.

Developing belonging and ownership

Lord et al (2012) believe that young people must feel that their involvement is recognised and that they are part of the organisation. In order to stimulate this feeling young people should have choice and autonomy by making real decisions. Crowley and Moxon (2017) emphasise that young people are a valuable resource and their expertise should be utilised by organisations for advice and the ability to bridge the different realities between organisations and young people. In order for young people to belong, the language used with them should be clear and accessible.

Outcomes for young people

Lord et al. (2012) were clear that the use of the ACE QPs should result in positive outcomes for the young people involved. After engaging in activities, the young people should gain a set of transferable skills which include greater understanding and thinking and being able to put knowledge they have gained into a wider context. They should see personal development and progression in positive attitudes and values; improve their communication skills; acquire empathy with other people; and improve their own well-being.

Sharp and Lee (2015) hoped to report on the effect of the principles on young people but piloting organisations considered that it was too soon to comment. It was noted that organisations did involve children more than they had previously, but reliable methods for gathering feedback from young people had not been devised. However, Sharp and Lee (2015) found that the principles did change the practices of some organisations and that there have been changes to activities offered to young people.

Review of existing principles for working with young people

Seven well-established organisations that work with young people were selected and their websites and literature examined to discover their basic principles for working with young people. A table comparing the organisations to find the most common principles developed can be found in Appendix A. The following is a summary of the main points.

- All organisations train adult volunteers and provide training for young people (members) who want leadership roles within the organisation. Three organisations give the opportunity for members to achieve accredited qualifications (e.g. BTEC or OCN)
- All state that they provide a safe environment (mentally and physically) and have safeguarding procedures
- All state that they promote and encourage members to be active citizens and participate in social action
- All partner with other organisations
- All state that they work with individual members towards their personal and social development
- All state that their activities are fun
- Six organisations state that they empower young people and give them responsibility
- Six organisations state that they encourage team working skills
- Four state that they promote the concept of an equal society to their members
- Four state that children and young people are actively involved with the decision making for the organisation. The three that do not state that young people are involved with decision making emphasise that their activities are structured.

Therefore, the principles each of these organisations have in common are: the provision of a safe environment where young people can develop their personal skills and gain self-confidence; the encouragement for young people to do something for other people, in their own community or wider; training given to adults working with the young people and to young people themselves; working with other agencies to achieve the principles; and young people having fun while gaining experience that will be of benefit to them throughout their lives.

Findings

The following section sets out the findings from the three main areas of data collection for this project:

- An online survey of young people
- A focus group with young people
- Interviews with key stakeholders.

Survey of young people

An online survey was designed to ask young people about their experiences and expectations of library-based activities. The survey was open between 19th November 2018 and 6th January 2019. It was publicised through a variety of channels including: the Reading Hack blog; ASCEL membership; the School Library Association (SLA) blog; School Library Research mailing list; individual contacts of the researchers and funders; and university library social media. The survey asked young people about their library use patterns; involvement in volunteering; and the importance of various statements about participation in library-based activities. When responding, young people were free to choose which type(s) of library they wished to consider (e.g. school, public, college, university). A copy of the survey is available in Appendix E.

In total, 346 responses were received. However, 27 of these were from respondents aged 25 or over[1]. The main analysis of the survey is therefore based on the 319 responses from under 25s. The analysis includes 73 responses (22.9%) from young people under 13 years old. Although this group is outside the target age range (13-24 years), these are likely to be of secondary school age given the ways the survey was distributed and the design of the questionnaire[2]. It was therefore decided to include their responses in the analysis, although we indicate below where age-related differences were observed in responses. We explored statistically significant differences between the responses received by age and other variables using chi-square[3].

Figure 1 shows the number of responses from each age group. The modal age group was 13-15 years (42.3%). This was followed by 16-19 year olds (28.8%). Only 6.0% of respondents were aged 20-24, despite efforts to encourage more responses from this age group. It must therefore be acknowledged that responses are skewed towards the younger end of the target age range and less firm conclusions can be draw from this survey about the reactions and preferences of young people over the age of 19.

---
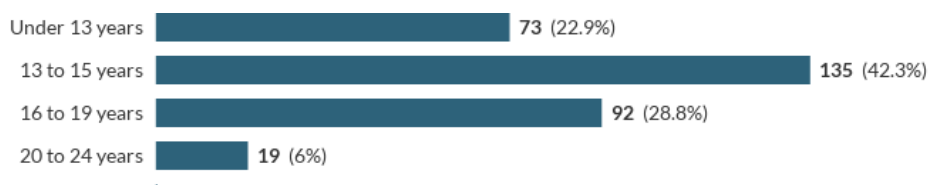
[1] At least some of these were from librarians who had filled in the questionnaire themselves rather than asking young people to do it.

[2] It is worth noting that opportunities marketed towards young people from a particular age group almost inevitably attract interest from those who are slightly younger.

[3] We also used Kruskal-Wallis as a check; this produced similar results, but with stronger evidence of a difference in some instances. We have therefore reported the chi-square results to err on the side of caution.

Figure 1: Age range of survey respondents

As shown in Figure 2, almost two-thirds of respondents (65.8%) were female. Just under one-third (32.3%) were male[4].
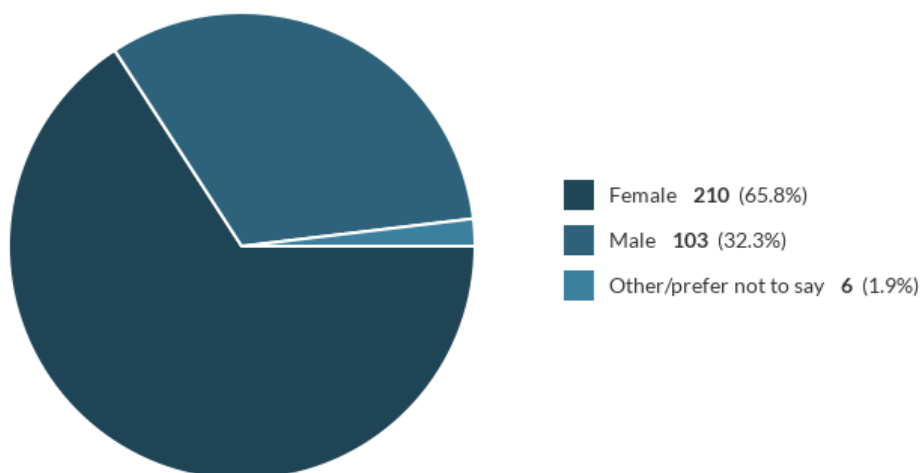
Figure 2: Gender of respondents

Library use

Almost half the respondents (49.6%) are regular library visitors, **visiting a library** often or very often. 44.5% visit less frequently. Only 6.0% of respondents said they never visit a library (Figure 3).
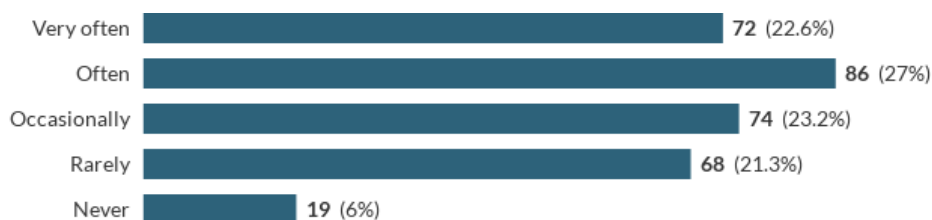
Figure 3: Frequency of visiting a library

There was a statistically significant difference in frequency of library visiting by age (p<0.01), with the proportion visiting often or very often dropping from 60.7% for under 13s, to 43.0% for 13-15 year olds and 36.3% for 16-19 year olds. Amongst 20-24 year olds surveyed, the proportion was 73.7%, but the sample size for this group is small and they are likely to have some existing connections with libraries to have found out about the survey (rather than doing so through their school for example). There was no significant difference in library visits by gender.

Just under one-third (32.9%) of the survey respondents said they **borrow books or other resources** from a library often or very often; 9.4% never borrow resources from a library (Figure 4).

---

[4] This is not unusual; surveys in this field typically receive more responses from females than males.

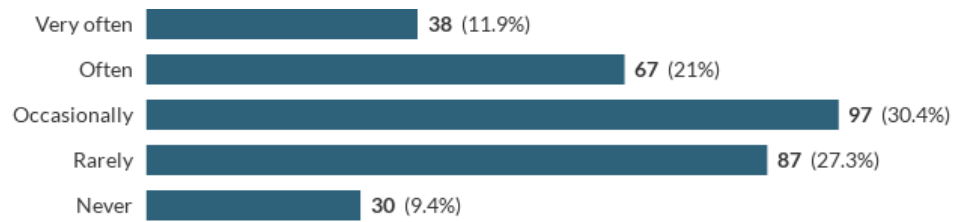|	
Very often	38 (11.9%)
Often	67 (21%)
Occasionally	97 (30.4%)
Rarely	87 (27.3%)
Never	30 (9.4%)

Figure 4: Frequency of borrowing books or other resources

There was a statistically significant difference in frequency of resource borrowing by age ($p<0.01$), and the pattern was similar to that for library visits. The proportion borrowing often or very often dropped from 46.6% for under 13s, to 28.9% for 13-15 year olds and 20.6% for 16-19 year olds. Amongst 20-24 year olds surveyed, the proportion was 68.5%. There was also some evidence of a statistically significant difference by gender ($p<0.05$), with 37.6% of female respondents borrowing often or very often, compared to 24.3% of male respondents.

Fewer respondents **attend library events**: just 17.8% do so often or very often and 39.8% never do so (Figure 5).

Very often	25 (7.8%)
Often	32 (10%)
Occasionally	54 (16.9%)
Rarely	81 (25.4%)
Never	127 (39.8%)
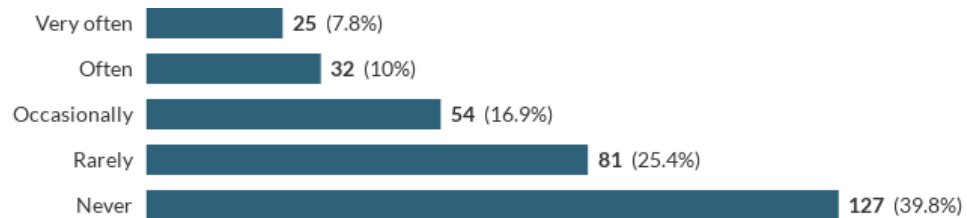
Figure 5: Frequency of attending events or activities at a library

Again, there was a statistically significant difference by age ($p<0.01$). The proportion attending events often or very often dropped from 28.7% for under 13s, to 15.5% for 13-15 year olds and 9.8% for 16-19 year olds. Amongst 20-24 year olds surveyed, the proportion was 31.6%. There was no significant difference by gender.

Perhaps surprisingly given the age range of respondents, only 21.3% **access library services online** often or very often, and 38.2% never do so (Figure 6).

Very often	23 (7.2%)
Often	45 (14.1%)
Occasionally	57 (17.9%)
Rarely	72 (22.6%)
Never	122 (38.2%)
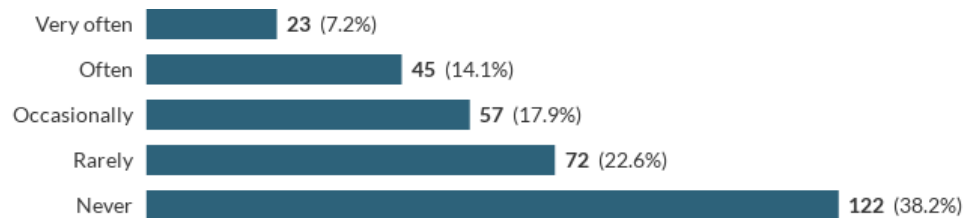
Figure 6: Frequency of accessing library services online

Once more, there was a statistically significant difference in frequency of online use by age ($p<0.01$), but the pattern was slightly different. Amongst 20-24 year olds surveyed, the proportion was 73.7%, considerably higher than for the younger age groups. The proportion of under 13s accessing library services online often or very often was 27.4%; for 13-15 year olds, 14.8%; and for 16-19 year olds, 15.3%. There was no evidence of a significant difference by gender.

Almost one-third of respondents (32.3%) said they used the library for a purpose other than those listed often or very often. Amongst those who described what else they used the library for, the most frequent response was to do homework, revise or study (86 responses). This was followed by using IT services (including printing) (22 responses), and relaxing or socialising (17 responses). Attending clubs (8 responses) and volunteering (5 responses) were other reasons given for using the library.

Thirteen respondents (4.1%) indicated that they never used a library in any way.

Participation in Reading Hacks

Only five respondents (1.6%) said they had **created a Reading Hack**. However, 31 (9.7%) had taken part in a hack led by someone else. Around one-quarter of respondents (26.3%) were unsure whether or not they had taken part in a hack. (Figure 7)
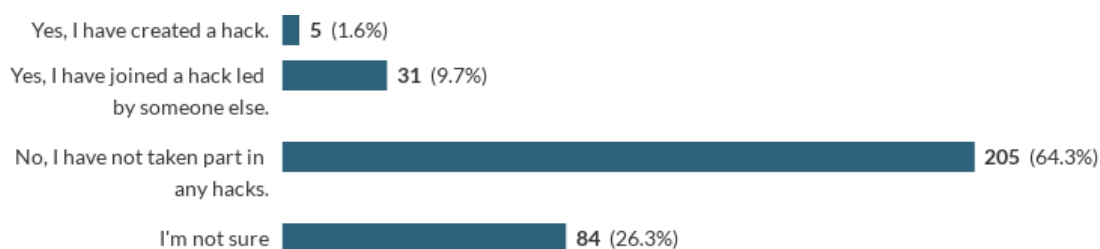
Figure 7: Have you taken part in a Reading Hack?

Volunteering

In total, 37.6% of **young people responding to the survey volunteer**: 18.5% do so regularly and 19.1% occasionally. This is around the level reported by DCMS' Community Life Survey (2017/18) which places rates of volunteering (at least once a year) amongst 16-24 year olds at 39%. In addition, 30.7% of our survey respondents said they would like to volunteer, although they did not do so at the moment. (Figure 8)

Figure 8: Do you volunteer?

There was some evidence of a statistically significant difference in volunteering by age ($p<0.05$), with young people in the older age groups being more likely to volunteer either regularly or occasionally (47.4% of 20-24 year olds; 42.4% of 16-19 year olds; 37.8% of 13-15 year olds; 28.7% of under 13s). However, there was a strong interest in volunteering from under 13s, with 49.3% saying they want to volunteer although they did not currently do so. There was also some evidence of a significant difference by gender ($p<0.05$), with 40.5% of female respondents saying they volunteer regularly or occasionally compared to 31.0% of male respondents.

Principles for working with young people

Young people completing the survey were asked to rate the importance of 28 statements related to the ACE QPs using a 5-point Likert scale. These statements were closely based on those used in previous research exploring the QPs with young people (Sharp & Lee, 2015), although altered where necessary to ensure they could be easily understood by the whole age range targeted. Of course, particular statements could be argued to apply to other principles than the ones they are associated with here; however, decisions about statements used to investigate each principle were based on a review of the literature examining how these have been applied in previous research. The statements related to each of the QPs can be found in tables 1 to 7.

Order of importance of principles

Comparing the results for statements related to each principle, the following is a list in order of the importance afforded to them by young people responding to the survey:

1. Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience
2. Being exciting, inspiring and engaging
3. Striving for excellence and innovation
4. Developing belonging and ownership
5. Enabling personal progression
6. Actively involving children and young people
7. Being authentic

However, it is important to remember that the seven principles are open to interpretation and each principle may encompass a number of different ideas or approaches to working with young people. Differences in responses to individual statements within each principle (described below) suggest that the way in which these principles are interpreted may well have an impact on the way in which they are viewed. For example, within 'Being authentic', whilst 41.1% felt it was very important that 'I am trusted by adults in the activity', only 16.9% rated 'Other young people lead the activities' as very important. Having a genuine relationship with adults involved was therefore felt to be more important in terms of authenticity than activities being peer-led.

Order of importance of individual statements

At least 80% of respondents felt the following ten statements to be important or very important[5]:

- I have fun (89.1%)
- I am treated as an equal (87.4%)
- I feel welcome (87.3%)
- I feel I can be myself (85.6%)
- The activity is well-organised (84.3%)
- My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously (84.3%).
- I feel like my ideas are listened to (82.8%)
- My skills are valued (81.8%)
- I learn new skills or develop existing skills (81.2%)
- I feel comfortable trying new things (80.6%).

---

[5] The most important 10 statements remained the same regardless of whether under 13s were included in the sample, or not.

Based on the survey conducted, it can therefore be concluded that there is a high level of support for these statements amongst young people. However, opinions were more divided on other statements. The five statements rated as important or very important by the smallest proportions of respondents were[6]:

1. Other young people lead the activities (42.0% rated as important or very important)
2. I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities (47.9%)
3. I can help to solve real-life problems (52.6%)
4. The experience is different from being in school, college or university (53.0%)
5. My skills or learning are formally recognised (64.3%).

The following section presents the responses to each of the statements in full. For principles with more than one statement, we calculated Cronbach's alpha to identify the level of internal consistency for this sub-section of the questionnaire.

Striving for excellence and innovation

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
The activity is well organised	127 (39.8%)	142 (44.5%)	39 (12.2%)	8 (2.5%)	3 (0.9%)

Table 1: Responses for 'striving for excellence and innovation'

Based on the literature, only one statement was associated with 'striving for excellence and innovation'. Had the survey been conducted after the interviews and focus group, additional statements would likely have been added, for example, around anti-bullying and accessibility (see below).

Being authentic

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I am trusted by adults involved in the activity	132 (41.4%)	114 (35.7%)	60 (18.8%)	6 (1.9%)	7 (2.2%)
I have freedom to experiment	123 (38.6%)	110 (34.5%)	67 (21.0%)	15 (4.7%)	4 (1.3%)
I can help to solve real-life problems	92 (28.8%)	76 (23.8%)	113 (35.4%)	30 (9.4%)	8 (2.5%)
The experience is different from being in school, college or university	79 (24.8%)	90 (28.2%)	111 (34.8%)	29 (9.1%)	10 (3.1%)
Other young people lead the activities	65 (16.9%)	80 (25.1%)	118 (37.0%)	49 (15.4%)	18 (5.6%)
Average percentage for statements in this category	**30.1%**	**29.5%**	**29.4%**	**8.1%**	**2.9%**

Table 2: Responses for 'being authentic'

---

[6] The five statements *least* likely to be rated as important were the same regardless of whether under 13s were included in the sample or not.

Within the 'Being authentic' principle, the statements rated as most important by survey respondents involved being trusted by adults involved in the activity and having freedom to experiment. Factors relating to having a safe space within which to explore were therefore rated as more important than whether the activities were authentic in the sense of relating to real-life problems or being notably different from formal education. Having peer-led activities was seen as the least important aspect of authenticity. There was an acceptable level of internal consistency for 'Being authentic' (Cronbach's alpha: 0.782), meaning the statements appear to be accurately measuring 'being authentic'.

There was some evidence of a significant difference by age for the statements: 'I can help to solve real-life problems' ($p < 0.05$); 'I have freedom to experiment' ($p < 0.05$) and 'Other young people lead the activities' ($p < 0.05$), with those under 13 being more likely to rate these as important than older age groups.

Being exciting, inspiring and engaging

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I have fun	182 (57.1%)	102 (32.0%)	25 (7.8%)	7 (2.2%)	3 (0.9%)
I get to know people who are different to me	97 (30.4%)	116 (36.4%)	88 (27.6%)	12 (3.8%)	6 (1.9%)
I look forward to attending the activity	126 (39.5%)	129 (40.4%)	47 (14.7%)	13 (4.1%)	4 (1.3%)
I feel motivated to do similar activities in the future	107 (33.5%)	132 (41.4%)	59 (18.5%)	16 (5.0%)	5 (1.6%)
Average percentage for statements in this category	**40.1%**	**37.6%**	**17.2%**	**3.8%**	**1.4%**

Table 3: Responses for 'being exciting, inspiring and engaging'

The factor rated as most important in relation to the principle of 'Being exciting, inspiring and engaging' was the most straightforward, and universally applicable, idea of having fun. 'Getting to know people who are different to me' was less widely regarded as important. There was an acceptable level of internal consistency for this principle (Cronbach's alpha: 0.780), meaning the statements appear to be accurately measuring 'being exciting, inspiring and engaging'.

Responses to the statements in this principle were generally consistent across the age range, although, for 'I have fun', there was some evidence of a difference by age group ($p < 0.05$), with under 13s being most likely to rate this as very important.

Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I am treated as an equal	210 (65.8%)	69 (21.6%)	28 (8.8%)	8 (2.5%)	4 (1.3%)
I am encouraged to contribute ideas	96 (30.1%)	134 (42.0%)	65 (20.4%)	19 (6.0%)	5 (1.6%)
Everyone supports each other	142 (44.5%)	112 (35.1%)	49 (15.4%)	9 (2.8%)	7 (2.2%)
I feel comfortable trying new things	132 (41.4%)	125 (39.2%)	47 (14.7%)	12 (3.8%)	3 (0.9%)
I feel I can be myself	190 (59.6%)	83 (26.0%)	27 (8.5%)	15 (4.7%)	4 (1.3%)
I feel welcome	191 (60.0%)	87 (27.3%)	31 (9.7%)	6 (1.9%)	4 (1.3%)
Average percentage for statements in this category	**50.2%**	**31.9%**	**12.9%**	**3.6%**	**1.4%**

Table 4: Responses for 'ensuring a positive and inclusive experience'

Several factors emerged as important for the principle 'Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience': being 'treated as an equal', feeling 'welcome' and feeling 'I can be myself'. These relate to the overall atmosphere of the activity and, like the most important statements for other principles, the importance of having a safe, welcoming space in which young people feel accepted. Again, the statement that suggested young people taking direct ownership of the activities, 'I am encouraged to contribute ideas', was seen as less important. There was a good level of internal consistency for this principle (Cronbach's alpha: 0.887), meaning the statements appear to be accurately measuring 'ensuring a positive and inclusive experience'.

Whilst there was support for this principle across the age range, there was some indication of a difference by age group for the statements 'I am treated as an equal' ($p<0.05$) and 'I feel I can be myself'($p<0.05$), with under 13s more likely to rate these as very important.

Actively involving children and young people

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I feel like my ideas are listened to	131 (41.1%)	131 (41.1%)	43 (13.5%)	7 (2.2%)	7 (2.2%)
I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities	62 (19.4%)	91 (28.5%)	108 (33.9%)	33 (10.3%)	25 (7.8%)
My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously	120 (37.6%)	149 (46.7%)	33 (10.3%)	13 (4.1%)	4 (1.3%)
My skills are valued	128 (40.1%)	133 (41.7%)	43 (13.5%)	11 (3.4%)	4 (1.3%)
Average percentage for statements in this category	**34.7%**	**39.5%**	**17.8%**	**5.0%**	**3.2%**

Table 5: Responses for 'actively involving children and young people'

There was little difference between the way in which 'I feel like my ideas are listened to', 'My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously' and 'My skills are valued' were rated. However, 'I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities' was rated as less important by respondents. There was an acceptable level of internal consistency for this principle (Cronbach's

alpha: 0.780), indicating the statements are accurately measuring 'actively involving children and young people'. However, the internal consistency would increase with the removal of the statement 'I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities', suggesting this is perhaps not such a useful statement to include for this measure.

Responses to this principle showed evidence of differences by age group. There was strong evidence of a significant difference by age for the statement 'My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously' ($p < 0.01$), with under 13s most likely to rate this as very important. The statements 'I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities' and 'My skills are valued' were also more likely to be rated important by under 13s, although the evidence for these was not as strong ($p < 0.05$).

Enabling personal progression

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I get helpful feedback on ways to improve	124 (38.9%)	126 (39.5%)	52 (16.3%)	9 (2.8%)	8 (2.5%)
I am challenged to do something I didn't know I was capable of	99 (31.0%)	133 (41.7%)	64 (20.1%)	17 (5.3%)	6 (1.9%)
I learn new skills or develop existing skills	138 (43.3%)	121 (37.9%)	41 (12.9%)	13 (4.1%)	6 (1.9%)
My skills or learning are formally recognised	104 (32.6%)	101 (31.7%)	64 (20.1%)	32 (10.0%)	18 (5.6%)
Average percentage for statements in this category	**36.5%**	**37.7%**	**17.4%**	**5.6%**	**3.0%**

Table 6: Responses for 'enabling personal progression'

Regarding the principle of 'Enabling personal progression', the two factors rated as most important were 'I learn new skills or developing existing skills', and 'I get helpful feedback on ways to improve'. Receiving formal recognition for learning was regarded as less important. There was a good level of internal consistency for this principle (Cronbach's alpha: 0.834), meaning the statements are accurately measuring 'enabling personal progression'. However, the internal reliability would be improved by the removal of the statement 'My skills or learning are formally recognised'.

There were a number of age-related differences noted for responses to this principle. For the statement 'I get helpful feedback on ways to improve' ($p < 0.01$) and 'I am challenged to do something I didn't know I was capable of' ($p < 0.01$), there was strong evidence of a significant difference by age group, with under 13s most likely to rate both these statements as important or very important. There was also a significant difference by age group for the statement, 'My skills or learning are formally recognised' ($p < 0.01$). Again, this was rated as very important by under 13s, but also, to some extent, 16-19 year olds. In addition, the statement 'I learn new skills or develop existing skills' produced some evidence of a significant difference by age group ($p < 0.05$) as under 13s and 16-19 year olds were the groups most likely to rate this as very important.

Developing belonging and ownership

Statement	Very important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I feel an important member of a team	119 (37.3%)	125 (39.2%)	55 (17.2%)	15 (4.7%)	5 (1.6%)
I am proud of what we achieve together	123 (38.6%)	111 (34.8%)	64 (20.1%)	15 (4.7%)	6 (1.9%)
I feel part of a community	111 (34.8%)	111 (34.8%)	72 (22.6%)	20 (6.3%)	5 (1.6%)
I feel I am making a positive difference to other people's lives	116 (36.4%)	102 (32.0%)	70 (21.9%)	21 (6.6%)	10 (3.1%)
Average percentage for statements in this category	**36.8%**	**35.2%**	**20.5%**	**5.6%**	**2.1%**

Table 7: Responses for 'developing belonging and ownership'

There was relatively little difference between the importance afforded to the four factors within this principle in the survey: feeling an important member of a team; being proud of group achievements; feeling part of a community; and making a positive difference to other people's lives were seen as of roughly equal importance by young people responding. There was a good level of internal consistency for this principle (Cronbach's alpha: 0.834), meaning the statements are accurately measuring 'developing belonging and ownership'.

There was strong evidence of a significant difference by age group for the statements 'I am proud of what we achieve together' ($p<0.01$) and 'I feel part of a community' ($p<0.01$) with under 13s most likely to rate these as very important. In addition, there was some evidence of a difference for the statement 'I feel I am making a positive difference to other people's lives', although this was less strong ($p<0.05$). Again, under 13s were most likely to rate this as very important.

Other factors identified by respondents

Finally, survey respondents were asked to give details of other factors they considered important to the way in which libraries work with young people. Most of the comments reflected the seven principles, but expressed in slight different ways. Examples are given below.

1. Striving for excellence and innovation
   - Make sure it is current and new
   - Accessibility (easy to attend)
2. Being authentic
   - I feel that I can express my creativity
3. Being exciting, inspiring and engaging
   - Being cool
   - It's not being seen as nerdy
   - Not as strict, allowed to speak
4. Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience
   - Just to feel comfortable and enjoy the activity
   - Everyone is kind and accepting
   - To feel safe and able to talk freely
   - People who don't like reading are involved and encouraged to take part
5. Actively involving children and young people

- Getting your opinions put into action
- I feel as though people are listening to me
6. Enabling personal progression
- It is recognised by people outside the library as being valuable
7. Developing belonging and ownership
- Taking part and teamwork.

As these examples illustrate, young people may express ideas associated with various principles in different ways and libraries need to take account of this in the way in which they discuss and promote opportunities with young people.

Summary of significant differences between groups

In addition to significant differences by age noted above, there were differences by gender, library usage (visits and event attendance) and volunteering experiences/attitudes in relation to a number of statements. Table 8 summaries the variables for which statistically significant differences in responses were identified. Further details about the nature of these differences observed is provided in Appendix B.

* indicates evidence of a significant difference (p<0.05) ** indicates substantial evidence of a significant difference (p<0.01)	Age	Gender	Library visits	Event attendance	Volunteering
Striving for excellence and innovation					
The activity is well-organised				*	
Being authentic					
I am trusted by adults involved in the activity				*	**
I have freedom to experiment	*				
I can help to solve real-life problems	*	**			
The experience is different from being in school, college or university		*			
Other young people lead the activities	*	**		**	
Being exciting, inspiring and engaging					
I have fun	*				*
I get to know people who are different to me		*			**
I look forward to attending the activity			**	**	
I feel motivated to do similar activities in the future				*	*
Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience					
I am treated as an equal	*	**	*		**
I am encouraged to contribute ideas		*		*	*
Everyone supports each other		*		**	**
I feel comfortable trying new things		*	*	*	**
I feel I can be myself	*	**	*		**

I feel welcome			**	*	**
Actively involving children and young people					
I feel like my ideas are listened to			**	**	**
I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities	*			**	**
My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously	**		*	*	**
My skills are valued	*	*	*		**
Enabling personal progression					
I get helpful feedback on ways to improve	**			*	*
I am challenged to do something I didn't know I was capable of	**			**	*
I learn new skills or develop existing skills	*			**	*
My skills or learning are formally recognised	**				
Developing belonging and ownership					
I feel an important member of a team			**		**
I am proud of what we achieve together	**		**	*	*
I feel part of a community	**		**		**
I feel I am making a positive difference to other people's lives	*			*	*

Table 8: Summary of significant differences

In addition, there were differences in the way older people (over 25s) who completed the survey responded to some of the statements, in particular for 'being authentic', 'ensuring a positive and inclusive experience' and 'enabling personal progression'. The number of responses from over 25s was of course small as they were not targeted for the survey. However, these differences suggest that older adults need to take care to ensure that they interpret the principles (and the relative importance of different factors) in a way that responds to the needs of young people, rather than their own expectations.

Focus group with young people

A focus group was held as part of one of the regular meetings of Oldham Youth Council, a group of democratically elected young people who represent the young people of Oldham. Members are aged 11 – 21 and live, go to school or work in Oldham. The focus group was attended by 13 young people: three male and ten female. Oldham Youth Council has a connection to the local library service as members have been involved in running events at the library. As individuals, however, the young people in the focus group varied in the extent to which they made use of libraries. Some used public libraries regularly, usually to borrow books or study, but others rarely visited. Some commented that they preferred to borrow books from friends or use a Kindle. Some members of the group also had access to school or university libraries. In the case of school libraries, provision was varied; in several cases, access to the school library was very limited because it was also used as a

classroom. The young people in this focus group felt that they were 'in the right community to know' about events in libraries through involvement in the Youth Council. Other ways of finding out about opportunities included posters in the library, websites and Twitter.

As the relevance of the seven ACE QPs had already been established through the survey of young people, focus group participants were asked to provide more detailed feedback on each of the principles and consider how these might be adapted to ensure they are relevant to work with young people in libraries. Based on a review of the literature, plus terms identified from the survey responses and interview transcripts (see below), a series of words and phrases associated with each of the principles were identified. For example, for the principle 'Enabling personal progression', the following terms were used:

- Helpful feedback
- Challenge
- Develop skills
- Certificate/award
- Reflection
- Progression
- Recognition.

These were used to create flashcards for each principle (see Appendix C for a complete list). Groups of two or three young people were allocated a principle and asked to identify the cards they felt were:

a. The most important
b. Did not fit with the principle they had been allocated.

They were also asked to add further suggestions which they felt were missing and to consider whether they would like to alter the wording of the principle. They then discussed their responses to each of the principles as a whole group.

Overall, the young people commented that many of the principles covered very broad ideas, so needed to be broken down further in order to be put into practice effectively. One commented, 'You couldn't just give this to libraries; it's not enough on its own', whilst another said, 'It's a bit vague, isn't it?' The following outlines their responses to each of the principles.

1. **Striving for excellence and innovation**

The young people felt that all the ideas presented on flashcards were relevant to this principle, but they identified the following as the three most important: 1) 'safety and welfare', 2) 'accessibility', 3) 'new or novel'. They discussed the fact that, as well as covering issues like health and safety regulations, the concept of 'safety and welfare' should also include approaches to issues such as bullying. They felt that being new and novel might be important to some library activities, but was less relevant to others. As they pointed out, a library-based activity did not necessarily need to be innovative, but it could still be excellent.

2. Being authentic

The ideas felt to be most important to this principle were: 'relevant', 'reliability' and 'truthful'. 'Trusted' and 'real life problems' were also seen as relevant. 'Creative expression' and 'freedom to experiment' produced mixed reactions: some of the group thought they were relevant, but others did not. 'Integrated' and 'different from school or college' were not considered relevant.

Some of the young people said they would like to change this principle to 'being approachable'. Others disagreed with this, but there was consensus that the idea that young people felt comfortable asking for help in a library was important. The group also discussed the differences between the library itself being approachable or accessible, and individual members of library staff being approachable.

3. Being exciting, inspiring and engaging

The most important terms identified for this principle were: 'difference/diversity', 'fun' and 'look forward to'. Terms that the young people felt did not fit were: 'cool' and 'not nerdy'; as they said, 'It's a library, come on!' There was uncertainty about 'celebration' and 'feel motivated'. The group felt celebrations could be good, but were not really necessary.

4. Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience

Many of the ideas suggested for this principle were felt to be important: 'co-operation'; being 'treated as an equal'; being 'accepted'; feeling 'relaxed', 'safe' and 'welcome'; 'respect'; able to 'contribute ideas'; and 'open to all'. An additional idea suggested was to ensure that people who did not want to participate felt comfortable, as well as those who did. 'Support each other' and 'I can be myself' were seen as good points, but the young people felt they did not fit with the other ideas presented because they were more about individuals rather than the library as a whole.

5. Actively involving children and young people

The most important ideas identified for this principle were: 'tailored to individuals', 'empowering', 'listened to' and 'taken seriously'. 'Skills valued' and 'decision makers' were also important as the group really liked the idea of young people being involved in decision-making. They did not feel the term 'youth-led' was a good fit here. However, as one participant said, 'We can involve young people, but that doesn't mean it has to be led by them…to be frank we're not employed by the library; we don't have to run things'. Similarly, 'participative' and 'responsibility' were also ideas that the group did not think were a good fit with this principle.

6. Enabling personal progression

The group did not think the phrase 'enabling personal progression' was particularly appealing, but struggled to find an alternative. The most important elements of this principle were felt to be: 'progression', 'reflection' and 'develop skills'. 'Helpful feedback' was identified as somewhat relevant, although the group felt this was more applicable to a school setting than a public library.

'Certificate/award' was also seen as relevant, but not amongst the most important elements. The elements that were not felt to fit were 'challenge' and 'recognition'.

7. Developing belonging and ownership

All the ideas presented in relation to 'belonging and ownership' were seen as important, with the exception of 'team member', which the group thought did not fit quite so well. The group described how each of the elements might relate to work with young people in a library setting. 'Achieve together' was interpreted in terms of breaking down generational barriers. 'Being part of a community' meant that the library was owned by all. 'Supportive relationships' could make the library more inclusive and user-friendly. 'Benefit to the community' could be achieved through young people feeling they had a voice and belonged to the community through helping others. 'Taking action' might help to get more young people involved. The group wanted to add the phrase 'for young people' to this principle to make the focus clearer.

The group were not familiar with term 'social justice' initially, but upon looking it up, felt that this was something that would ideally be the outcome of library-based activities. Other ideas suggested for this principle were: 'accessibility', 'connection' and 'ownership by the community'.

Rewards

The group also discussed what would be seen as an attractive 'reward' for young people who give up their time to contribute to activities on a voluntary basis. According to the young people in the focus group, one of the biggest incentives to participate in activities was knowing it could help them to get where they wanted to be in the future. This might be related to their career ambitions, for example, being able to talk about their involvement in job interviews. It might also relate to other activities, such as involvement in politics. As one young person put it, voluntary experiences could mean 'you get picked for certain things that matter to you'.

Having a lasting impact was also important to members of the group, for example, knowing that a piece of art would stay in the library for the community to see, or that outputs of the activity would be placed in an archive as 'a lasting record of what you've done'. In terms of more immediate rewards, getting a good turn out to an event and being asked questions on an equal level to adults were important. Aspects of the practical arrangements of the event could also act as a reward, such as providing food.

Summary of young people's responses

Consultation funded by ACE in the development of their QPs (Lord et al, 2012) focused on gathering feedback from professionals who work with young people. The research reported here therefore provided an opportunity to test the relevance of these principles for young people themselves through the survey and focus group. Overall, their responses indicate that there is strong support for the principles and their underlying ideas. The following are the key issues raised in relation to each of the principles by young people engaging in this research.

1. **Striving for excellence and innovation**: There was wide acceptance of this principle. Aspects such as ensuring the safety of young people were expected to be in place as a given. There

was less support for 'innovation', which was felt to apply better to some aspects of libraries than others; accessibility was felt to be a more important idea to highlight.

2. **Being authentic**: This principle saw the lowest level of support amongst survey respondents. However, ideas of being trusted and having freedom to experiment were more important than ideas around solving real life problems; being different from school or college; or activities being led by young people. In the focus group, relevance, reliability and truthfulness were highlighted as important, along with approachability.

3. **Being exciting, inspiring and engaging**: There was strong support for this principle amongst survey respondents across all demographic groups. The focus group agreed that the fun aspects of activities and looking forward to participating are important.

4. **Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience:** There was generally a good level of support for this principle amongst survey respondents, although there was a significantly higher level of support amongst female respondents and those who are already highly engaged. Focus group participants agreed that this principle was important, but emphasised it was important to ensure that the experience was positive for all.

5. **Actively involving children and young people**: Amongst survey respondents, this principle emerged as less important, although there were differences by age group and existing engagement in libraries and volunteering. It appeared that being encouraged to lead activities is notably less important to young people than feeling they are being listened to. This was reinforced in the focus group discussion.

6. **Enabling personal progression**: From the survey responses, this was found to be less important to young people overall, although there were differences by age and existing level of engagement in library events and volunteering. In particular, many respondents did not see formal recognition of progression as important. The focus group participants found it difficult to engage with the wording of this principle. However, whilst there was limited interest in formal recognition, understanding the ways in which they might make use of experiences, for example, on CVs and in job interviews, was important.

7. **Developing belonging and ownership**: There was support for this principle amongst survey respondents, but the level of support differed by age and existing engagement in libraries and volunteering. The focus group participants also thought this principle was important and they stressed the importance of inclusivity and the need to ensure that this sense of belonging and ownership applied to everyone.

Interviews with stakeholders

Ten interviews were conducted with key individuals from a range of organisations that either work directly with young people or represent a membership who work with young people. This included the Reading Agency, Libraries Connected, the School Library Association (SLA), specialist groups from the Chartered Institute of Library and information Professionals (CILIP), Girl Guiding and youth work and youth volunteering groups. Six organisations had an involvement with libraries (school or public), whereas four did not. All individuals interviewed had personal experience of working together with young people and drew on their experience and knowledge to inform their responses.

The interviews were conducted either by telephone or Skype and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. A question framework was used (Appendix D), which outlined six main questions with some sub-

questions, but each interview was adapted according to the circumstances and responses of each participant. The key points summarised as below.

Encouraging young people as volunteers

Interviewees suggested strategies to initially recruit young people to volunteer in libraries, which included: ensuring that the promotional material should be worded in the correct way to target the audience and putting forward arguments that volunteering not only benefits the individual volunteer, but also other individuals, which helps to change society.

Working with partner organisations who know and work with young people, such as youth groups and schools, gives access to a range of potential volunteers and support from other people. Similarly, volunteering in a library can be part of a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, or done in conjunction with other volunteering agencies. One interviewee considered that the personality of some young people naturally prompts them to volunteer.

In order to open opportunities to a range of individuals, a variety of volunteering tasks should be offered and it was emphasised by a number of interviewees that staff working with young person volunteers must get to know them as individuals and understand their skills, expertise, knowledge and capabilities. Interviewees advised that young volunteers should be supported with training both for specific tasks and for their personal development, and it should be easy for them to gain more information about what is expected from them.

The words 'trust' and 'responsibility' were frequently mentioned by the interviewees who believed volunteers must be trusted, given responsibilities and that each volunteer should be treated on an equal footing, with respect and as part of a team. It must be remembered that the young people have chosen to volunteer and therefore their participation should be facilitated, not dictated. There was a strong feeling that volunteering must be rewarding, and rewarded through variety of means, including simple praise and actively voiced appreciation as well as celebrations, certificates or rewards. Young people should be trusted with responsibility and given challenges that were stretching, but achievable, that would improve their personal skills and self-confidence thereby equipping them with transferable skills suitable for their future work, such as team work. Where possible, a volunteering programme that allows individuals to progress through stages of personal development is of great benefit to the individual. Such encouragement should engage young people and their enthusiasm can be harnessed to recruit new young person volunteers. However, getting the voluntary work recognised as an educational experience by other agencies can be difficult.

Encouraging a diverse range of young people to volunteer

Overall, the interviewees considered that libraries should be pro-active to attract a diverse range of young people, although the experience of two interviewees was that the diversity of their volunteers happened naturally. It was recommended that libraries develop an engagement strategy to examine the language used for promotion and consider whether it is inclusive to all young people who are eligible to be part of the volunteer group. It was also suggested that strategies may need to be developed for specific groups, for example, Girl Guiding has a policy for the inclusion of transgender individuals. Interviewees stressed that library staff should show a welcoming and supportive attitude to all people who would like to volunteer. A sense of belonging was an important issue raised though the interviews. Interviewees considered that young people should be welcomed into a community

and shown respect, suggesting ways that a sense of identity can be fostered in a library, with the resources reflecting a range and variety of ethnicities, abilities and social demographics.

Issues and challenges of working with young person volunteers

Interviewees identified two areas of challenge when working with young people: staffing and the needs of young people.

Challenges around staffing

One interviewee noted that many libraries that develop services in conjunction with young people are driven by the personality of a staff member who enjoys the work. Other interviewees commented that a natural ability to enjoy working with young people is not shared by all adults; some are apprehensive about the prospect and need to be trained and reassured. Some organisations offer training for library staff working with young people, but the representatives of those organisations understood the time pressures on library staff and budgetary constraints which limits the uptake of such training. Organisations that work with young people outside libraries reported rigorous training and guidance for adults working with young people. It was generally acknowledged that staff time must be invested and committed to support young people volunteering. Persistence may be needed by staff to grow the volunteer workforce. It was emphasised by all interviewees that you have to be honest with young people.

Challenges around the needs of young people

Interviewees demonstrated an understanding that different expectations are needed when working with young people compared to adult volunteers. Young people under the age of 18 in particular have limited control over their own lives with many pressures: time, other activities, educational work, family pressures. The interviewees therefore advised that meetings and events should be timed when the young people are available. In addition, recruitment for volunteers must be done frequently - as young people move on in their lives.

It was considered that a flexible approach is needed when collaborating with different cohorts of young people. Not just because of their individuality, but to accommodate their availability, their ideas and the current trends that appeal to young people of that age. The ideas presented by the volunteers should be received seriously - even if the library staff do not like them, or if they have been tried before. A new person or group may succeed or improve something that was not so successful on previous occasions. One interviewee highlighted that young people's relationships with other volunteers is sometimes challenging and that a watchful eye should be kept on any incidents of bullying, harassment or arguments.

Acting on young people's feedback

The interviewees were asked whether any of the services they were involved in had seen changes due to feedback from young people. The following are some of the examples given.

- Suffolk Libraries changed the timing of events and access to event content because of feedback from young people and publicity design was chosen by young people.
- School libraries are benefiting from the Pupil Library Assistant of the Year award, as ideas developed by each annual winner are being implemented in their school with the support of a small grant of money.

- Consultancy with young people changed aspects of initial ideas of Reading Agency projects, for example, the Reading Hack and referring to books on prescription for young people as Shelf Help.
- Girl Guiding have changed their programme after extensive consultation and programme testing with their membership.

Interviewees stated that feedback methods should be simple, straightforward and appropriate for the age group being consulted. Anonymous surveys allow young people to express their thoughts honestly, and informal feedback should be encouraged, for example, young people talking about what they like and dislike about a service. One interviewee advised that a paper-trail should be captured and the justification for programme changes should be documented.

Key suggestions for guidelines

Interviewees made suggestions for guidelines based on their own experience or the guidelines used by their organisation. Uppermost in their minds was the need for the legal requirements to be met for clear safeguarding and disclosure procedures, including understanding what to do if a volunteer starts acting in way that is unusual for them, and taking parental consent for under 18s into consideration. Interviewees were of the opinion that young people consider that library staff are safe adults and for that reason confide in them. Therefore, the interviewees were concerned that library staff should understand and follow the correct procedures for referring information to the relevant safeguarding official in their library or local authority. It was stated that staff should be aware of group behaviour and ensure that no individual is being harassed or bullied by any other member of the volunteer group and encourage inclusivity within the group.

In addition, interviewees were forthright in their opinion that young people's services should be driven by young people's articulation of their needs, with one interviewee stating that the first thing that any library should do before asking young people to volunteer was to ask whether there is actually a need for that service. Many considered that young people should be represented on decision-making boards and that guidelines should be discussed with young people in every library. Some interviewees reasoned that the younger age group may require different ways of implementing the guidelines, but the overall principles remained the same.

Other suggestions for potential guidelines for libraries included the following.

- All young people should feel welcome and comfortable in the library space.
- Staff attitudes to the young people volunteering are very important and need advocacy, support and training.
- The young person volunteers should be given real responsibility and lead the programming of events, being supported by the expertise of library staff rather than dominated by them.
- Volunteers should be trusted and treated with respect, demonstrating faith in their expertise.
- Staff should treat the young people as equal partners and clearly explain and justify any decisions made by the library.
- Staff should get to understand each individual and what they already know, to tailor tasks which develop their existing skills and experience, and supply relevant training.
- Staff must be very clear about the contract between the library and the volunteer and make a commitment to fulfil any promises made.

- Staff should be truly collaborative and clear about what is possible for the library to do, and what is not possible, while being open and responsive to young people's ideas without being dismissive.
- Staff should be reminded that willing volunteers must not be pressurised into actions – as it is counterproductive.
- Young people who volunteered were supported in their role and given training to have an ethical code of conduct - understanding such things as data privacy and 'non-censorship'.
- There should be flexibility of timing events/meetings, to suit the availability of the young people, and understanding that many do not have full control of their time.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to develop a set of principles for working with young people for the library sector. Whilst taking the ACE QPs as our basis, we have drawn on the findings from the survey, focus groups, interviews and literature review described in this report to recommend a set of principles for working with young people in libraries. Unsurprisingly given the detailed process used to create the original ACE principles, we have not moved significantly away from these. In the main, the changes suggested are the result of two factors.

a. Whilst the research to inform the creation of the original principles focused on feedback from practitioners and policymakers, in this project, we have gathered more feedback directly from young people.
b. The principles presented here are more tightly focused on the needs and experiences of libraries, rather than broader arts and cultural activities.

The order in which the principles are presented below attempts to locate related concepts more closely together, perhaps highlighting connections between some of the principles. The following section explains how the findings from the research have informed the revisions made to the ACE QPs to create a set of principles for libraries.

1. **Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience for all young people**

This principle includes ideas of feeling welcome, comfortable, being treated as an equal, being accepted, open to all, feeling relaxed, and being able to contribute (or not) as young people wish. It means ensuring that the library promotes diversity and endeavours to make opportunities as widely accessible as possible. It may also mean offering opportunities for specific groups who may face common issues or concerns to come together. In addition, this principle encourages libraries to offer a range of activities or options for young people who may have different interests and wish to participate in different ways.

Based on responses from the focus group, this principle has been adjusted to emphasise that it applies to all young people. It also implies that libraries offer alternatives to suit the needs, interests and preferences of a diverse range of young people, an issue raised by interviewees.

2. **Being fun, exciting and inspiring for young people**

This principle encompasses ideas of having fun and looking forward to an activity, as well as feeling positive towards similar activities in the future. It can include large-scale programmes of activities designed to promote widespread interest in, and awareness of, libraries, but it can also include small-scale activities that are fun, exciting and inspiring in their own right.

In a change from the ACE QPs, the word 'fun' is used explicitly as this was identified as being highly important to young people themselves in both the survey and focus group.

3. **Developing community belonging and ownership for young people**

This principle includes feeling part of a community; having a sense of ownership; making a positive difference; helping more young people to get involved in activities through supportive relationships;

and working together across generations. It highlights the contribution that young people make to their communities, as well as the ways in which communities can support young people.

The idea of community came through strongly in the focus group discussions and this echoed the feeling of belonging to a group which was highlighted as important in the Reading Hack report. 'Community' has therefore been added to this principle.

4. Being trustworthy, reliable and relevant

This principle is focused around the idea of young people feeling confident that the library is a safe space within which to explore and experiment and to discuss complex issues that young people can face. It is a space in which they are comfortable asking for help and are trusted and treated with respect by adults. This principle also means that library staff need to be approachable; clear about what is possible (and what is not); and make a commitment to fulfil any promises made.

This principle replaces 'being authentic' in the ACE QPs. Both young people and adults participating in this research found the idea of authenticity difficult to understand and relate to a real-life setting. In the survey of young people, 'being authentic' received the lowest levels of support overall and the focus group participants were confused as to its meaning. Amongst stakeholders interviewed, this principle was also problematic as it was considered difficult to define and highly open to interpretation. This principle has therefore been changed to use terms suggested by young people in the focus group, which also echo words used by the adult interviewees.

5. Listening to, valuing and involving young people

This principle encompasses empowering young people as decision makers; listening to them as equals; getting to know them as individuals and better understanding their motivation for participating; gathering feedback from young people in a variety of ways (formally and informally); taking their views seriously; and valuing their skills. It means that activities should be youth-focused, but do not necessarily need to be youth-led.

The phrase 'actively involving' was used in the ACE QPs, but it was felt this might imply that young people needed to take a lead role in activities. While some young people may wish to lead activities, overall there was limited support for this in both the survey and focus group. The terms 'listening to' and 'valuing' have been added as these came out as much more important ideas for young people themselves. This research has suggested that, within a library context at least, activities need to be 'youth-focussed', but need not necessarily be 'youth-led'.

6. Working together for excellence and accessibility

The term 'working together' includes working in partnership with other types of organisations (e.g. youth clubs, volunteering organisations, other arts and cultural providers). It also means actively working with young people as collaborators to shape services.

'Excellence' includes safety and welfare, encompassing concerns such as safeguarding and other legal requirements, as well as issues such as bullying. 'Excellence' also highlights the need for staff training and support necessary to provide a high quality service.

'Accessibility' refers to adjustments as appropriate to allow young people to participate, including those with additional needs. It also includes flexibility (e.g. in timing of events to fit around other demands on young people's time).

This principle has been reworded to include the idea of partnership – both with organisations such as youth groups and with young people directly. Partnership features in several of the other guidelines reviewed, and was mentioned by both interviewees and focus group participants. In the focus group, accessibility was felt to fit within this principle as it emphasises libraries' mission to provide high quality, but also be accessible to all. Innovation was seen as less important as it is not always necessary to be innovative; quality is more important.

7. **Enabling young people's life chances, confidence and well-being**

This principle includes some of the key ways in which young people are likely to feel rewarded for participating in activities, for example, through gaining and improving skills; participating in experiences that will help them to achieve career or other goals; and making contacts that may be useful in the future. The practical outcomes of involvement (e.g. being able to include an activity on their CV or talk about it in an interview) are likely to be important. This principle also includes less tangible outcomes of participation, in particular, increased confident and improved wellbeing for young people, as well as helping them to prepare for adult life.

The idea of 'personal progression' in the ACE QP was not engaging for young people in the focus group and the survey had raised questions about whether the statements forming this principle are best-suited to the target age group. Nevertheless, focus group participants were keen to identity ways in which young people might be 'rewarded' for participation in an activity. This could be related to career goals, but also to broader life experiences. Interviewees discussed how participation can make young people more confident and improve their wellbeing, so these outcomes have also been highlighted within the principle.

In addition to the changes outlined above, the phrase 'for young people' has been added to several of the principles based on suggestions from the focus group.

Table 9 sets out the seven principles for working with young people for the library sector, together with a description of the main themes covered by each principle and practical examples of how each might be applied.

Principle	Description	Practical example
1. Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience for all young people	This principle includes ideas of feeling welcome, comfortable, being treated as an equal, being accepted, open to all, feeling relaxed, and being able to contribute (or not) as young people wish. It means ensuring that the library promotes diversity and endeavours to make opportunities as widely accessible as possible. It also means offering opportunities for specific groups who may face common issues or concerns to share their experiences. In addition, this principle encourages libraries to offer a range of activities or options for young people who may have different interests and wish to participate in different ways.	**Reading Hack examples** Gateshead Youth Council host a storytime lunch session for asylum seekers in their community. A storyteller works with families and the scheme also includes groceries for families to take home. Blind Bookworms makes reading more accessible for young people who are blind or visually impaired. It records new audio versions of books that focus on other types of descriptions, not just visual ones. **Other examples** Brighton & Hove Libraries worked with Photoworks and the Mass Observation Archive on a photography project 'Into the Outside' to enable young LGBTQ people aged 13-25 to share their experiences and perceptions of being a young LGBTQ person living in Brighton & Hove. Young people learnt photography and research skills; learned about the importance of archives to document their experiences; and had the opportunity to gain Arts Award accreditation. Their work was exhibited online, at Brighton Pride and at the Brighton Photo Biennial Exhibition, and is now held in the Mass Observation Archive. Oldham Libraries endeavour to offer equal opportunity work experience placements for young people, regardless of their background and ability. Young people are offered an opportunity to work collaboratively with library staff and to have an input into their role. Oldham Libraries works with local education groups such as NewBridge and MenCap to provide equal opportunity roles to those

		with additional needs. Oldham Libraries work closely with young LGBTQ people through their Reading Friends and Zine-making group. Young people learn to develop individually and as part of a group through zine making and interaction with others. Together they explore interests and identity, documenting this in their zines. Many libraries emphasise the importance of diverse collections and book displays. For example, including books by authors from a variety of ethnic groups and genders; promotional posters or displays of world events including images of young people from a range of ethnicity, physical ability, and social demographic; and resources on cultural, social and political history beyond the Minority World. Designated library spaces for different activities, (e.g. quiet space with sound proof dividers, a group working area, a media area).
2. Being fun, exciting and inspiring for young people	This principle encompasses ideas of having fun and looking forward to the activity, as well as feeling positive towards similar activities in the future. It can include large-scale programmes of activities designed to promote widespread interest in, and awareness of, libraries, but it can also include small-scale activities that are fun, exciting and inspiring in their own right.	**Reading Hack examples** Booklings high school book club turned their interviews with authors (conducted via skype, twitter and in person) into podcasts which they promote around the school – and more widely. Cannock Library Reading Hackers ran an alternative Shakespeare Festival that included street performers, jugglers, an ice cream van, and craft and poetry sessions based on popular plays. Highfields School ran a book-themed 'Bake Off' competition in their school. **Other examples**

		Oldham Libraries has played a key role in the town's annual [Comic Con](#), which attracts large numbers of young people to the library, including those who may not normally visit, to take part in a fun and inspiring event that attracts artists and visitors from well-beyond the local area. They also host regular themed days around youth-focused topics /interests such as Dr Who Day and Sci-Fi Saturday. Oldham Libraries' live@thelibrary offer endeavours to programme activities for young people, such as Mash Up. Mash Up incorporates activities using music, singing and dance as its core. There is an evening of entertainment with an open mic slot where audience members are welcome to rap, sing, dance, recite poetry, etc. The BRIT School library runs a 'Blind Date with a Book' event on 14th February. Fiction is donated or purchased from charity shops and wrapped as a present with a tag describing the book. A short book review form is included inside. When the book has been read and reviewed there is a prize draw.
3. Developing community belonging and ownership for young people	This principle includes feeling part of a community; having a sense of ownership; making a positive difference; helping more young people to get involved in activities through supportive relationships; and working together across generations. It highlights the contribution that young people make to their communities, as well as the ways in which communities can support young people.	**Reading Hack examples** Patcham High School produces a magazine that includes student book reviews, cover design competitions and creative writing slots. There are lots of opportunities for students to get involved in the publishing process and contribute to the magazine. Reading Hack T-shirts, lanyards and badges give some volunteers a sense of belonging. **Other examples** In ['Great Minds'](#), two Lancashire libraries work with CAMHS and local schools to allow young people in isolated communities to take over libraries and curate their own festival which aims to boost mental

		wellbeing. Oldham Libraries' Reading Friends project aims to bring isolated young people together to share experiencs and to foster a sense of belonging and community. Those who are deemed as being isolated (physically or mentally) are encouraged to join in with the group and to see that there is a whole community of people wanting to interact and engage with them, to hear what they have to say. This is done by using books and reading as a core to promote conversation. "Listening Lunches" allow students to showcase their talents (such as song, music, and poetry slam) in a less formal way, while their peers, classmates, teachers, and community share lunch in the school library. Teachers come to see their students perform and the performing students have been helping to get the word out to the rest of the school community. Harris Westminster Sixth Form library has an internal canon which is a tool used for dialogue between all students and staff and has allowed the school to form a shared reading experience. In addition, students are able to request any book they require which allows them to feel ownership of the library and its collection in addition to expanding it to their needs and interests.
4. Being trustworthy, reliable and relevant	This principle is focused around the idea of young people feeling confident that the library is a safe space within which to explore and experiment, and to discuss complex issues that young people can face. In this space, they are comfortable asking for help and are trusted and treated with respect by adults. This also means the library staff need to be	**Other examples** Manchester Libraries worked with a local college to create a media art installation called 'Safe Space'. This is part of the RADEQUAL Project which is Manchester's campaign to build community resilience through empowering and enabling organisations and communities to come together to challenge hate, prejudice and extremism. The purpose of the project was to create a 'Safe Space' for extreme views. A media art installation of visual and audio stimulus was created by students, which allows people to air and consider extreme views on a range of

	approachable, but at the same time, clear about what is possible (and what is not) and make a commitment to fulfil any promises made.	controversial subjects by creating a safe space for challenging dialogues to take place. Oldham Libraries provide safe spaces for the Youth Council's Young Refugee group and their own LGBTQ Readers group, providing a safe area for confident discussion and sharing. These are no-judgement zones where young people do not feel threatened or embarrassed. Staff are trained to ensure a level of understanding and empathy. At Harris Westminster Sixth Form, the librarian provides one-on-one sessions with students if they are struggling. Staff also book students in to see the librarian as part of the pastoral system. The librarian is also building a VLE which will supplement the workshops and guides offered so students can access them and work through them without feeling the pressure of interacting with a member of staff.
5. Listening to, valuing and involving young people	This principle encompasses empowering young people as decision-makers; listening to them as equals; getting to know them as individuals and better understanding their motivation for participating; gathering feedback from young people in a variety of ways (formally and informally); taking their views seriously; and valuing their skills. It means that activities are youth-focused, but do not necessarily need to be youth-led.	**Other examples** Suffolk Libraries changed their engagement programme after talking to groups of young people. Young people designed promotional material and had the final choice for the design used. Library staff trusted the young people's expertise in what would appeal to other young people. Oldham Libraries are developing a Young Volunteers offer where young people can have a say in the development of the library service and its offers. A young people's steering group creates ideas and suggestions on what the library can programme and how it can become a safer more welcoming place for young people. In addition, "Secret shoppers" provide feedback to the library in a safe and anonymous manner. At Harris Westminster Sixth Form, the Library Committee is a key link between the student body and the library. Representatives share student views and highlight areas of concern to be addressed. The

		library also organises an annual student survey and then updates students on the resulting outcomes and actions. A school librarian who knows little about Manga books works with a student who is a regular reader of Manga to select titles for the library. The pupil's knowledge on the subject has been valued; he has been listened to; and the library collection has been improved. The BRIT School library created an online induction video in which dance students enacted a mannequin challenge with a voiceover from a theatre student outlining the different services and facilities on offer. A new induction video, which is being filmed and edited by a Year 12 media student, will feature post-16 students from different backgrounds describing their experiences and what they feel is of value to prospective students. The criteria are that it is student-centred, informative and of interest to new and prospective students to feel that the environment is inclusive.
6. Working together for excellence and accessibility	'Working together' includes working in partnership with other types of organisations (e.g. youth clubs, volunteering organisations). It also means actively working with young people as collaborators to shape services. 'Excellence' includes safety and welfare, encompassing concerns such as safeguarding and other legal requirements, as well as issues such as bullying. 'Excellence' also includes the need for staff training and support necessary to provide a high quality service.	**Other examples** Oldham Libraries works with local youth-focused partners to help better engage with young people and to train staff. Local groups such as the 0161 Community help to bridge gaps with the community and libraries as they offer varying opportunities that would not be expected in the library but are engaging with young people, e.g. Graffiti Art that promotes creativity. These local partners are part of a steering group allowing continued growth and development. Youth workers work in partnership with their local library to run homework club and a babysitting course for young people. A school library allows students to anonymously report bullying via a 'Bullying box' in the library.

	'Accessibility' includes adjustments to allow young people with additional needs to participate. It also includes flexibility (e.g. in timing of events to fit around other demands on young people's time).	School libraries might ensure they are accessible in a variety of ways (depending on the student body they support), including not charging fines for late returns; ensuring the library is open before and after school to provide young people with a space to learn and read; and running events at lunchtimes when students are free.
7. Enabling young people's life chances, confidence and well-being	This principle includes some of the key ways in which young people are likely to feel rewarded for participating in activities, for example, through gaining and improving skills; participating in experiences that will help them to achieve career or other goals; and making contacts that may be useful in the future. The practical outcomes of involvement (e.g. being able to include an activity on their cv or talk about it in an interview) are likely to be important. This principle also includes less tangible outcomes of participation, in particular, increased confident and improved wellbeing for young people, as well as helping them to prepare for adult life.	**Other examples** School librarians have described how pupil library assistants may start as vulnerable students who take refuge in the school library. However, their confidence is increased through their role and develops enough for them to spontaneously choose to mentor younger pupils in the library. The pupil library assistants will notice if younger pupils are upset and chat to them. This improves wellbeing for both. Oldham Libraries worked with Oldham Theatre Workshop on a project to engage young people in conversations about mental health – empowering them to identify the issues they see as most important and working with local decision-makers to recommend change. The project resulted in a comic, Jack & Lucy, highlighting some of the mental health issues faced by young people. Nottingham City Libraries' Storysmash included digital gaming workshops, creative writing sessions and author-led discussions. The sessions aim to inspire learning and individual expression through the medium of gaming, empowering those taking part by developing literacy, confidence, and digital skills, transforming the way libraries engage with disadvantaged communities. Oldham Libraries worked with University Campus Oldham to create the drama "Library Tales". This show took place within the library itself, using various locations as settings for scenes. The play was written from interviews with the local community, led by the young actors, focusing upon what the library means to them. The young actors then

interpreted these transcripts to create their play. This project resulted in a tour and gave young people a voice within the wider live@thelibrary programme, sharing the experience of the library, from a youth perspective, with the wider community.

To help prepare students for university study, Harris Westminster Sixth Form library offers access to higher level library services such as workshop sessions on referencing workshops, academic honesty and research methodology.

The Library Committee at Harris Westminster Sixth Form was established to meet the needs of students who would like leadership experience but not on such a visible, pressured scale such as the Student Senate or House Captaincy. All Library Committee members have to complete an application form responding to a job description and undergo a panel interview to be admitted, therefore replicating real world experience of applying for employment.

For Libraries Week, The BRIT School ran activities focused on mental wellbeing: art therapy – providing art supplies for students and staff to paint their moods; a spoken word masterclass with the performance poet and writer; a Q&A session with illustrator and writer, Jada Bruney; working with an activist and rapper to re-write bad experiences; and a tea party where cakes and board games were available for people throughout the school to feel welcome. Jada Bruney and Potent Whisper are ex-students and it was empowering for current students to be working with inspiring alumni.

The BRIT School has created a 'Books for Success' section in the library which includes Reading Well for Young People books.

The BRIT School also runs BRIT is Talking in the Library once a term, facilitated by a librarian and the wellbeing co-ordinator. Cakes and

		drinks are available to students at lunch time and they are invited to take part in a session focusing on a mental health first aid toolkit. Each session encourages them to look at their stress containers – how well they are managing their wellbeing and mental health, focusing on related themes in each session. The student participants are encouraged to discuss this in the group.

Table 9: The seven principles for working with young people for the library sector

Areas for further research

The process of conducting this research has also highlighted a number of areas where a need for further research has been identified.

Considering differences by age and gender

In the survey, female respondents were more likely to rate a number of factors as important. This leads to the question of whether there are certain aspects of the principles that are better suited to the needs of young women, in particular, statements related to 'ensuring a positive and inclusive experience' and some aspects of 'being authentic'. There is potential to explore this further and consider how this may have practical implications for the ways in which libraries might organise and promote opportunities for single/mixed gender groups.

There were also differences by age group. The youngest age group responded more positively to a number of the statements, especially those related to 'actively involving children and young people', 'enabling personal progression' and 'developing belonging and ownership'. The age range from 13 to 24 covers a very broad range of experiences and the relevance and interpretation of different aspects of the principles may differ for young people at different points within the age range covered.

Ways of engaging a wider group of young people

It is important to remember that young people who do not volunteer and do not want to accounted for around one-third of survey respondents. This group are clearly more difficult for libraries to connect with, but cannot simply be dismissed or disengaged as they took the trouble to complete the survey. However, based on the survey findings, they are unlikely to respond as readily to the principles as young people who currently volunteer or who wish to do so. Although they demonstrated weaker engagement with the statements overall, the order of statements rated as most important and least important by this group do not differ greatly from the rest of the respondents. However, 'I feel I am making a positive difference to other people's lives' was noticeably less important for this group than for the rest of the survey respondents (48.5% compared to 77.5% overall).

Toolkit and training for library staff

The interviews identified that a more detailed toolkit of methods to work collaboratively with young people and to implement the principles would be appreciated by library staff and library management. It was also suggested that training should be made available for library staff to work with young people in order to give them confidence. Interviewees indicated that online training is more accessible to staff rather than spending time travelling to a training event or course. Work has previously been done in this area, and there are training courses available to members of some organisations such as the SLA. However, this is not accessible to all library staff. Therefore, further work is needed to identify best practices, existing training and methods of working with young people that will facilitate the implementation of the principles for working with young people in libraries. This work could result in a toolkit accessible to anyone working with the principles in any library.

Next steps

This report is intended to be of use for libraries in continuing and developing the ways in which they support young people, as well as encouraging discussion about the role of libraries and the ways in which they might work together and share learning with other organisations that support young people. Whilst this report has researched and set out principles based on feedback from young people and adults who work with them, as well as the existing literature and documentation, there is further work needed to ensure libraries are able to apply these effectively in a practical context. This may include, for example, the development of training (face-to-face or online) for library staff in working with young people based around these principles; the development of guidance hints and tips for library staff; the collection and sharing of further examples of good practice in the implementation of the principles; as well as the development of methods to evaluate the impacts of using these principles for libraries and young people.

References

Arts Connect, 2018. *Young people's cultural journeys,* Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton.

Big Lottery Fund, 2012. *Good practice in… actively involving young people,* London: Big Lottery Fund.

Big Lottery Fund, 2012. *Good Practice in ... developing active citizenship,* London: Big Lottery Fund.

Crowley, A. and Moxon, D., 2017. *New and Innovative forms of youth participation in decision making processes,* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Lord, P., Sharp, C., Lee, B., Cooper, L. and Grayson, H. 2012. *Raising the Standard of Work By, With and For Children and Young People: Research and Consultation to Understand the Principles of Quality*, Slough: NFER.

Peach, B., Condell, K. and Reynolds, M. 2018. *Evaluation of the Reading Hack programme 2015-2018*, London: OPM/The Reading Agency, https://readingagency.org.uk/young-people/Reading Hack report 2015-18 full.pdf.

Sharp, C. and Lee, B. 2015. *Using Quality Principles in Work for, by, and with Children and Young People: Results of a Pilot Study (Draft Final Report)*, Slough: NFER.

UNICEF, 1990. *The United National Convention on the Rights of the Child,* London: UNICEF UK.

Appendix A: The working principles of youth organisations

Principle	Organisation						
	Girl-guiding	Boys brigade	Girls brigade	Scouts	Jewish lads and girls brigade (JLGB)	Sea Cadets	Army Cadets
Train adults	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Training for young leaders	*	*	*	*	**	**	**
Provide safe environment	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Promote social action	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Partnership working	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Personal development (social skills)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Element of Fun	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Empowerment /responsibility	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Encourage team working	*	*		*	*	*	*
Promotion for equality of society	*		*	*	*		
Involvement of YP in decision making	*	*	*	*			

Appendix B: Commentary on significant differences identified for survey statements

Striving for excellence and innovation

For this statement, there was some evidence of a significant differences depending on attendance at library events ($p < 0.05$), with those who attend often or very often being more likely to rate this as important or very important. Interestingly this statement was rated as very important by a much greater proportion of those over 25s who completed the survey: 63%.

Being authentic

Young people who did not volunteer and did not want to were less likely to rate 'I am trusted by adults involved in the activity' as important compared to those who currently volunteer or are interested in doing so ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, those who often attend library events were more likely to rate this statement as important or very important ($p < 0.05$). It is also perhaps worth noting that, of those over 25s who completed the survey, 63% rated this statement as very important (compared to 41.1% of young people).

'I have freedom to experiment' showed some evidence of a significant difference by age ($p < 0.05$). While it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about patterns of responses, this was most likely to be rated as very important by under 13s.

There was some evidence of a significant difference by age for the statement 'I can help to solve real-life problems' ($p < 0.05$), with those under 13 being most likely to rate this as important. Female respondents were also more likely to rate this statement as important than males ($p < 0.01$).

There was some evidence of a gender difference for the statement 'The experience is different from being in school, college or university' ($p < 0.05$). Amongst those over 25s who completed the survey, 41% rated this statement as very important (compared to 24.8% of young people).

There was some evidence of a significant difference by age for the statement 'Other young people lead the activities' ($p < 0.05$), with those under 13 being most likely to rate this as important. This was also more important to female respondents than male respondents ($p < 0.01$). There was also evidence of a significant difference depending on attendance at library events ($p < 0.01$), with those who attend very often being more likely to rate this as important or very important.

Being exciting, inspiring and engaging

For the statement, 'I have fun', there was some evidence of a difference by age group ($p < 0.05$), with under 13s being more likely to rate this as very important. Young people who do not volunteer and do not want to were less likely to feel this was important ($p < 0.05$).

Young people who did not volunteer and did not wish to were also less likely to rate the statement, 'I get to know people who are different to me' as important ($p < 0.01$). There was also some evidence of a difference by gender, as female respondents were more likely to rate this statement as important or very important ($p < 0.05$).

Young people who visited a library very often, and those who library events often or very often, were more likely to rate 'I look forward to attending the activity' as important (both $p < 0.01$).

51

There was some evidence of a difference between volunteering patterns and responses to the statement 'I feel motivated to do similar activities in the future' (p<0.05), with those who volunteer regularly being more likely to rate this as important, and those who do not volunteer and do not want to least likely. Furthermore, there was some evidence of a significant differences depending on attendance at library events (p<0.05), with those who attend very often being more likely to rate this as very important.

Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience

There was some evidence of a difference by age group for the statement 'I am treated as an equal' (p<0.05), with under 13s more likely to rate this as very important. There was also evidence of a difference by gender, with female respondents more likely to rate this as very important (p<0.01): 73.3% compared to 51.5% of males. In addition, there was a significant difference depending on library visiting patterns, with those who visit a library often or very often being more likely to rate this as important (p<0.05). There was also a difference found by volunteering patterns with those who do not volunteer and do not want to being least likely to rate this as important (p<0.01). It is also worth noting that, of those over 25s who completed the survey, 41% rated this statement as very important (compared to 65.8% of young people).

There was some evidence that the statement 'I am encouraged to contribute ideas' was considered more important by female respondents than male respondents (p<0.05). There was also some evidence of a significant differences depending on attendance at library events (p<0.05), with those who attend often or very often being more likely to rate this as important or very important. In addition, those who do not volunteer and do not want to were less likely to rate this as important (p<0.05).

There was some evidence of a significant difference by gender for the statement, 'Everyone supports each other' (p<0.05), with female respondents rating it as more important. There was evidence of a significant difference depending on attendance at library events (p<0.01), with those who attend very often being more likely to rate this as very important. Again, those who do not volunteer and do not want to were less likely to rate this as important (p<0.01).

For the statement, 'I feel comfortable trying new things', there was some evidence of a significant difference by gender (p<0.05), with more female respondents rating this as very important. In addition, there was also some evidence of a difference in terms of library visiting patterns (p<0.05) and attendance at library events (p<0.05), with those who visit or attend often or very often being most likely to rate this important or very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important (p<0.01).

For the statement 'I feel I can be myself', there was some evidence of a significant difference by age (p<0.05), with under 13s most likely to rate this as very important. There was also a significant difference by gender (p<0.01) as female respondents tended to rate this as more important. There was some evidence of a difference by library visiting patterns too (p<0.05) with those who visit a library very often being most likely to rate this as very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important (p<0.01). Finally, of those over 25s who completed the survey, only 37% rated this statement as very important (compared to 59.6% of young people).

The statement 'I feel welcome' produced a difference by library visiting patterns ($p<0.01$) and attendance at library events ($p<0.05$), with those who visit a library or attend events very often being most likely to rate this as very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important ($p<0.01$). Of those over 25s who completed the survey, 81% rated this statement as very important (compared to 60.0% of young people).

Actively involving children and young people

The statement 'I feel like my ideas are listened to' produced evidence of a difference by library visiting patterns with those who visit a library or attend events often or very often being most likely to rate this as important or very important (both $p<0.01$). Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were less likely to rate this as very important ($p<0.01$). It is also worth noting that, of those over 25s who completed the survey, 59% rated this statement as very important (compared to 41.1% of young people).

For 'I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities', there was some evidence of a significant difference by age ($p<0.05$), with under 13s most likely to rate this as important or very important. Volunteering patterns were another factor ($p<0.01$); those who volunteer regularly were most likely to rate this as very important. There was also evidence of a significant differences depending on attendance at library events ($p<0.01$), with those who attend often or very often being more likely to rate this as very important.

There was some evidence of a significant difference by age ($p<0.01$) for the statement 'My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously', with under 13s most likely to rate this as very important. There was also evidence of a difference by library visiting patterns ($p<0.05$) and event attendance ($p<0.05$), with those who visit a library or attend library events very often being most likely to rate this as very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important ($p<0.01$).

The statement 'My skills are valued' produced a significant difference by age group ($p<0.05$) with under 13s most likely to rate this as very important. There was also some evidence of a significant difference by gender ($p<0.05$) as female respondents were more likely to rate this very important than male respondents. In addition, a difference was observed by library visits ($p<0.05$) as those who visit a library often or very often were most likely to rate this as important or very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important ($p<0.01$).

Enabling personal progression

For the statement 'I get helpful feedback on ways to improve', there was a significant difference by age group ($p<0.01$), with under 13s most likely to rate this as important or very important. There was also some evidence of a difference by volunteering involvement ($p<0.05$), as those do not volunteer and do not want to were less likely to consider this to be very important. There was some evidence of a statistically significant difference based on library event attendance ($p<0.05$), with those who attend very often being most likely to rate this as very important. It is also worth noting that, of those over 25s who completed the survey, only 19% rated this statement as very important (compared to 38.9% of young people).

The statement, 'I am challenged to do something I didn't know I was capable of' produced was a significant difference by age group ($p<0.01$), with under 13s most likely to rate this as important or

very important. There was also evidence of a significant difference by participation in library events (p<0.01) as those who participate in library events very often were most likely to rate this as important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important (p<0.05).

The statement 'I learn new skills or develop existing skills' produced a significant difference by age group (p<0.05) as under 13s and 16-19 year olds were the groups most likely to rate this as very important. There was evidence of a significant difference by participation in library events (p<0.01) as those who participate very often were most likely to rate this as very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as very important (p<0.05). In addition, of those over 25s who completed the survey, only 26% rated this statement as very important (compared to 43.3% of young people).

'My skills or learning are formally recognised' also produced a significant difference by age group (p<0.01) being most likely to be rated as very important by under 13s and, to some extent, 16-19 year olds.

Developing belonging and ownership

There was a significant difference by library visiting patterns for the statement 'I feel an important member of a team' (p<0.01); those who visit a library very often were most likely to rate this as very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as important or very important (p<0.01).

There was evidence of a significant difference by age group for the statement 'I am proud of what we achieve together' (p<0.01) with under 13s most likely to rate this as very important. There was also a significant difference by library visiting patterns (p<0.01) and attendance at library events (p<0.05), with those who visit a library or attend events often being most likely to rate this as important or very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as important or very important (p<0.05).

'I feel part of a community' saw a significant difference by age group (p<0.01), with under 13s most likely to rate this as important or very important. There was also a significant difference by library visiting patterns (p<0.01), with those who visit a library very often or often being most likely to rate this as important or very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as important or very important (p<0.01).

The statement 'I feel I am making a positive difference to other people's lives' produced some evidence of a significant difference by age group (p<0.05), with under 13s most likely to rate this as very important. There was some evidence of a difference based on attendance at library events (p<0.05) with those who attend events more often being most likely to rate this as important or very important. Those who do not volunteer and do not want to were least likely to rate this as important or very important (p<0.05).

Appendix C: Focus group flashcards

1. **Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience**

    Treated as an equal
    Contribute ideas
    Support each other
    Relaxed
    Feel comfortable
    I can be myself
    Respect
    Feel welcome
    Co-operation
    Accepting
    Safe
    Open to all

2. **Being exciting, inspiring and engaging**

    Fun
    Difference/diversity
    Feel motivated
    Cool
    Not nerdy
    Look forward to
    Celebration
    Creativity

3. **Actively involving children and young people**

    Listened to
    Youth-led
    Taken seriously
    Skills valued
    Empowering
    Responsibility
    Participative
    Decision-makers
    Tailored to individuals

4. **Being authentic**

    Trusted / Trustworthy
    Freedom to experiment
    Real-life problems
    Relevant
    Different from school/college
    Truthful

Integrated
Reliability
Creative expression

5. **Enabling personal progression**

Helpful feedback
Challenge
Develop skills
Certificate/award
Reflection
Progression
Recognition

6. **Developing belonging and ownership**

Team member
Achieve together
Part of a community
Make a positive difference
Social justice
Supportive relationships
Benefit to community
Take action

7. **Striving for excellence and innovation**

Well-organised
Safety and welfare
Trained staff
Accessible
Ambitious
New/novel

Appendix D: Interview question framework

Interview question framework

1. Please tell me about how your organisation, (or your members) encourages young people to volunteer and work with their peers?
   a. If so, how did you do that?

2. What are the key issues/challenges of working with young people in this context?

3. How do you encourage a diverse range of young people to participate?

4. Do you follow guidelines for working with young people?
   a. If so, do you know how these guidelines have been developed?
      i. Are there different approaches/ guidelines for different age groups, or different genders?
   b. If not, do you think it is useful to have guidelines for working with young people? And what might these include?
      i. Would you differentiate between different age groups and gender?

5. Do you collect feedback from the young people involved?
   a. How has that feedback helped you to develop their experience?

6. Can you think of some practical examples?

7. Any other questions?

Appendix E: Survey for Young People

THE READING AGENCY

Working with Young People in Libraries

Page 1: About this survey

Manchester Metropolitan University and Birmingham City University are carrying out this survey on behalf of ASCEL (the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians). We are interested in finding out how libraries can improve the ways they work with young people.

This survey is for young people between 13 and 24 years old. It is up to you to decide whether you want to complete this survey. You will not be asked to provide any personal information and all the answers you give will be treated in confidence.

If you have any questions about this research, you can email Sarah McNicol: s.mcnicol@mmu.ac.uk

1 / 10

Page 2: Background information

1. What is your age?

   ○ Under 13 years
   ○ 13 to 15 years
   ○ 16 to 19 years
   ○ 20 to 24 years
   ○ 25 or over

2. Are you...

   ○ Female
   ○ Male
   ○ Other/prefer not to say

3. How frequently do you...

	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Visit a library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Borrow books or other resources from a library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Attend events or activities at a library	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Access library services online	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use a library for something else	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2 / 10

3.a. If you use a library for something else, please tell us about this.

3 / 10

Page 3: Background information

4. Have you taken part in a Reading Hack? (Please choose all the options that apply to you). Reading Hack is a programme led by young people aged 13 to 24 who do reading activities and volunteering, called hacks, to gain skills and experience. You can find out more at https://readinghack.org.uk/

- ☐ Yes, I have created a hack.
- ☐ Yes, I have joined a hack led by someone else.
- ☐ No, I have not taken part in any hacks.
- ☐ I'm not sure

5. Do you volunteer (in a library or somewhere else)? Please choose the option that best describes you.

- ○ Yes, I volunteer regularly
- ○ Yes, I volunteer occasionally
- ○ No, I don't volunteer, but I would like to
- ○ No, I don't volunteer and I don't want to

4 / 10

61

Page 4: Principles for working with young people in libraries (1)

We want to identify principles that are important to the ways in which libraries should work with young people.

6. If you were to take part in a library-based activity for young people (for example, a book club, workshop or event) how important would you consider each of the following to be:

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I feel welcome	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The activity is well-organised	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I look forward to attending the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am trusted by adults involved in the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel like my ideas are listened to	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I have freedom to experiment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can help to solve real-life problems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The experience is different from being in school, college or university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

5 / 10

62

Other young people lead the activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am encouraged to lead parts of the activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

6 / 10

Page 5: Principles for working with young people in libraries (2)

7. Again, if you were to take part in a library-based activity for young people (for example, a book club, workshop or other event) how important would you consider each of these factors to be:

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I have fun	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get to know people who are different to me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel part of a community	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Everyone involved supports each other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am encouraged to contribute ideas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel comfortable trying new things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel I can be myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel an important member of a team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am proud of what we achieve together	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Page 6: Principles for working with young people in libraries (3)

8. Finally, if you were to take part in a library-based activity for young people (for example, a book club, workshop or other event) how important would you consider each of the following to be:

	Very Important	Important	Neutral	Unimportant	Very unimportant
I feel I am making a positive difference to other people's lives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My feedback and suggestions to improve the activities are taken seriously	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My skills are valued	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am treated as an equal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I get helpful feedback on ways to improve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am challenged to do things I didn't know I was capable of	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I learn new skills or develop existing skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8 / 10

65

My skills or learning are formally recognised (e.g. certificates or other rewards)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel motivated to do similar activities in the future	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Are there any other factors that would be important to you if you were to take part in library-based activities for young people? If so, please describe these.

```

```

10. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the issues raised in this survey?

```

```

9 / 10

66