

Case Study

London Borough of Bromley

September 2012

LOVE
LIBRARIES

LOVE
VOLUNTEERING

Starting the process of introducing Volunteers to Bromley Libraries

Abstract

The aim of the project was to increase the volunteer roles available in Bromley Libraries and promote the positive contribution they could make.

The issue / Background:

Prior to the project, Bromley libraries had used volunteers in their Local Studies library and with the Home Library Service. A few young Summer Reading Challenge volunteers had been used in 2011, but only in selected libraries. It was, therefore, essential that both the support of the staff and unions was gained before any further roles were introduced.

The Shared Services between Bexley and Bromley had just started, so it was a perfect opportunity to use Bexley's experience with volunteers to help develop the project in Bromley..

Partners and funding

The Team London project enabled the Library service to work closely with other boroughs and the Volunteer Centre Bromley. It provided partial funds to the Volunteer Centre Bromley to enable it to spend staff time on attending meetings and giving advice. The project funding allowed library staff to spend the necessary time on the project.

What we did:

- Bexley and Bromley senior staff attended training courses provided by the Team London project enabling them to explore the advantages of using volunteers and any issues that might arise.
- Staff from Shared Services and Volunteer Centre Bromley attended a library supervisors meeting to introduce the concept of using volunteers.
- A meeting was held with interested Library supervisors and Volunteer Centre Bromley to follow up on the idea of using volunteers and to discuss potential roles.
- Role descriptions were developed from this meeting for 4 roles: Walker for school visits, Leaflet distribution volunteer, Group Helper and Computer buddy
- Branch library staff attended training session run by Reading Agency on using Summer Reading Challenge volunteers.
- Role descriptions were sent to unions and a meeting was held to discuss them.
- The Unions consulted with staff
- A meeting was held with unions to obtain feedback – they approved 2 roles(walker and leaflet distributor), one was asked to be amended(group volunteer), one was not accepted in the current format.(Computer buddy)

Data:

In 2012 the number of libraries willing to have Summer Reading Challenge volunteers increased from 10 to 12

Evidence:

The Steering group has continued to oversee the role of volunteers in Bromley Libraries

The partnership with Volunteer Centre Bromley has continued.

The profile of using volunteers in libraries has been raised with members and leaders.

The impact:

- More staff can see the positive aspect of using volunteers,
- Discussions with the unions about the use of volunteers have taken a step forward
- Much greater acceptance of Summer Reading Challenge volunteers.

Key Learning Points

- Time- introducing volunteers is a long business, and should not be rushed if you want to take the staff along with you.
- Work on the positive- build on aspects already accepted e.g. SRC and ensure effective and efficient systems are already in place to ensure positive feedback.
- Allow staff to devise roles they feel would be useful.

Future Plans

- Meeting to be held to progress the 3 roles accepted by the unions.
- Work on computer buddy role..
- Ensure all policy, procedures and paperwork is in place.
- Highlight the importance of the volunteers already used.
- Continually evaluate and monitor the use of volunteers
- Continue to work with staff to get feedback on present use and encourage them to suggest ways to develop the use of volunteers in the future

Further information:

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<http://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/policylobbying/culturetourismand2012/lovelibraries/>

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