



THE UNIVERSITY
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Increasing reading enjoyment and engagement among children and young people

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Libraries Connected and ASCEL, June 2024



UK context

Issue

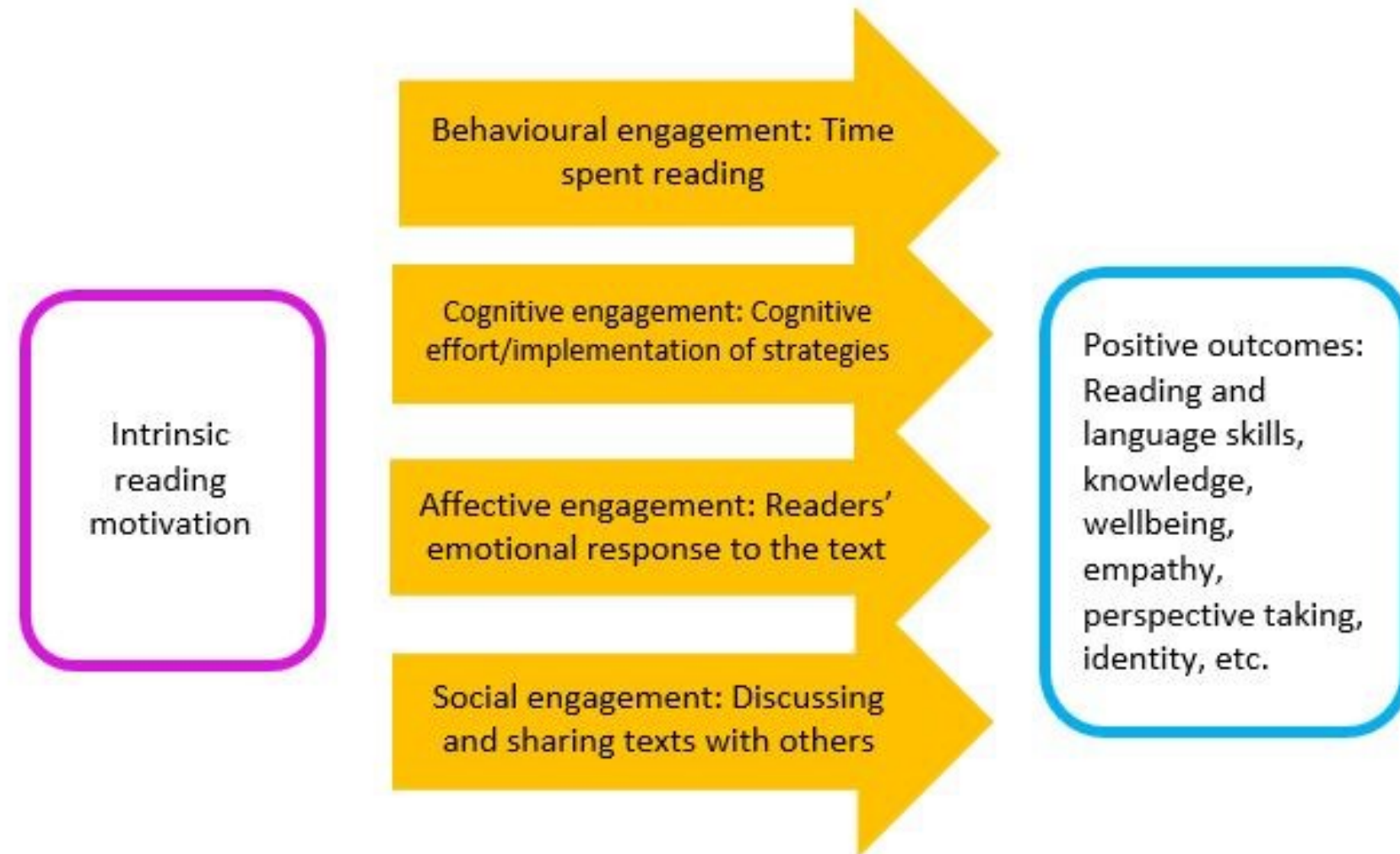
- Children's reading attitudes and engagement are at an all time low (Clark et al., 2023).
- DfE Reading Framework (2023) includes the importance of developing a reading for pleasure culture



“Just 2 in 5 (43.4%) 8- to 18-year-olds told us in early 2023 that they enjoyed reading in their free time. This is the lowest level of reading enjoyment we have recorded since 2005.”

Based on n = 64,066, aged 8-18

Reading motivation, engagement and positive outcomes



Children

Love to Read

Six research-informed principles to support children's reading motivation and engagement

Based on extensive research review and collaborative work to embed principles into school and public library contexts

- Love to Read (2021-2023)
- Love to Read Libraries (2024)



Love to Read Libraries

Support public libraries to use research insights to develop children's reading motivation and engagement.

Includes: 10-page guide, printable/editable resources, two guided activities for school visits.

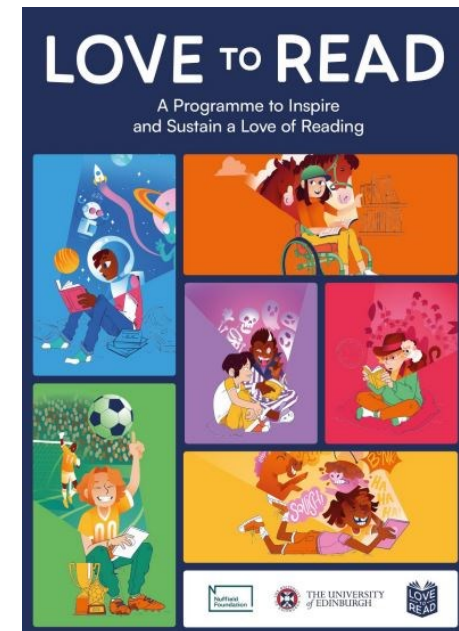
With thanks to:

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Catherine Lindow (Library Professional, Edinburgh City Council)

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Sean McNamara (Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals Scotland)



Love to Read Libraries

Libraries and library staff are essential to support a love of reading among children. Libraries provide children with access to a range of rich and diverse reading material, and those working within libraries can, and do, make a **meaningful difference** to children's reading enjoyment, reading engagement, and reading experiences.

This guide has been created to support librarians and library staff to further inspire and sustain a love of reading among primary school children, by providing recent research insights and resources to support with this. With input from library professionals, all activities and resources have been created to be **easily adopted into library settings**, either as resources, or to support school visits to the library. You can learn more about Love to Read Libraries, and access all resources for free, via our website: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/libraries/>

The development of this guide has been prompted by research evidence of a continuing decline in children's reading enjoyment and engagement (National Literacy Trust, 2023). Of most concern are declines in book reading, given the known benefits of reading books. For example, research demonstrates that books develop children's language and literacy skills, and their knowledge of the world around them (Korochkina et al., 2024; McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021; Nation et al., 2022; Torppa et al., 2019). In addition, books provide **opportunities for children** to relax, laugh, escape to new worlds, pursue their interests, learn new things, experience adventures and spend time with fictional friends (Curie & McGeown, 2024; McGeown et al., 2020).

Furthermore, when children explore personally meaningful content through books, or reflect on a story from the character's perspective, this can support their **understanding of themselves and/or others** (McGeown & Wilkinson, 2021). Indeed, research demonstrates the benefits of reading books for self-understanding, empathy, and wellbeing (Clark & Teravainen-Goff, 2018; Eklhof et al., 2022; Webber et al., 2024), in addition to their ability to leverage social change (OECD, 2021). However, for these benefits to be realised, children need to be **motivated** to read and to **deeply engage** with the texts that they read.



Love to Read principles

Reading motivation reflects children's desire to read – that is, whether they want to read or not. It is underpinned by children's beliefs about reading (i.e., their self-perceptions of themselves as readers, for example whether they think they are good

Access

Children need to have regular and easy access to books which reflect their interests, preferences, lives, experiences and abilities.

Libraries are essential sites for the provision of quality books/other text types, redressing inequalities in home provision and increasing general access for all.



Choice

Children need choice over their reading and reading activities. Libraries need to have the structure, and children need to have the skills, to ensure ‘good’ (i.e., skill and interest aligned) reading choices.

Libraries are ideal sites to support and develop children’s skills in how to choose books they will enjoy.



Time

Children need to have regular quality time to read books and take part in book reading activities.

Libraries and library staff are essential to foster children's reading motivation and engagement outside of school.



Connection

Children need to be able to access and choose books, and book reading activities, which are personally relevant, and connect with their own reading goals.

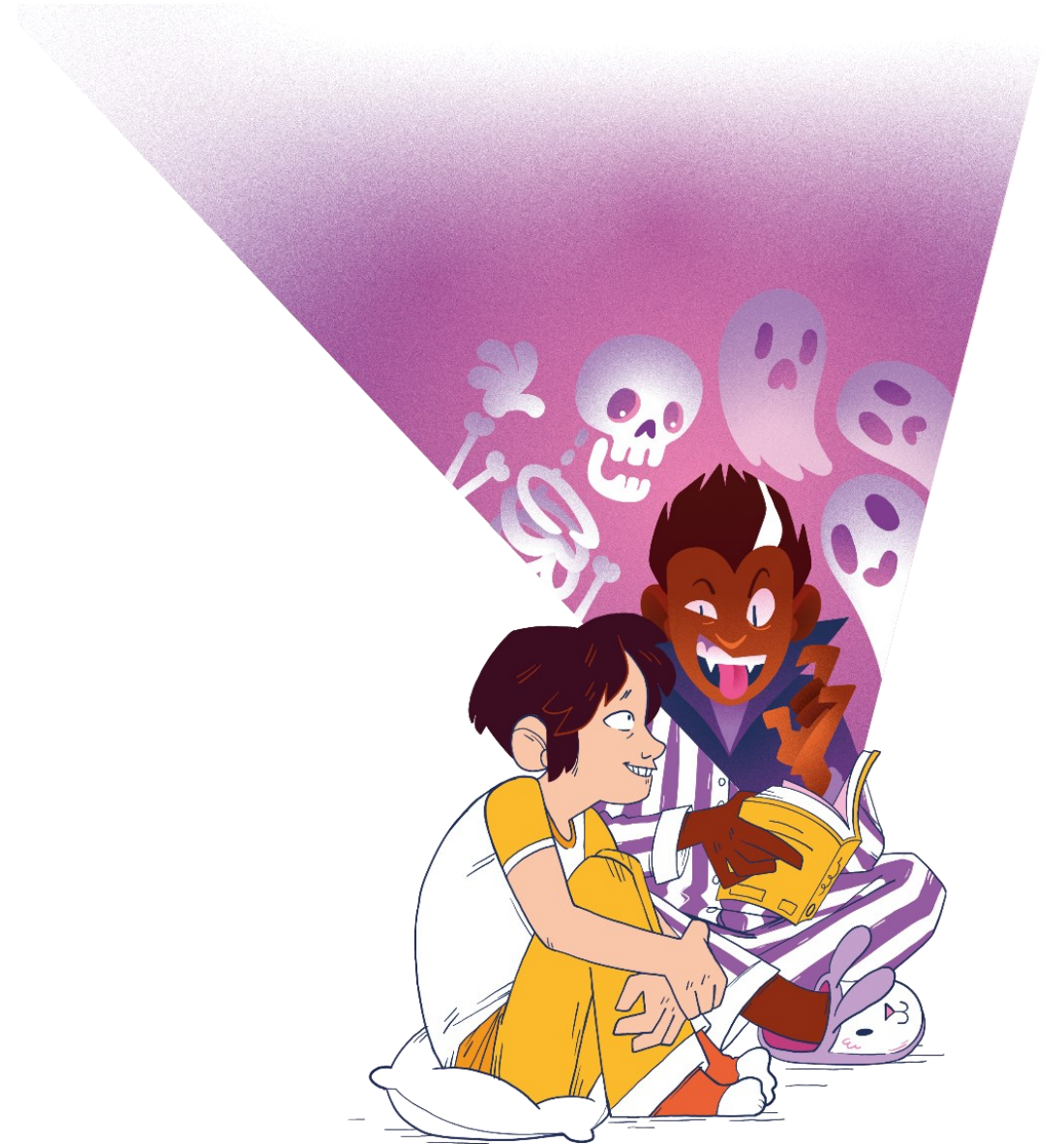
Libraries can provide access to books which reflect children's lives, experiences and interests, and reflective reading practices can deepen children's reading experiences.



Social

Children need to have the time, skills and confidence to share and discuss books with others.

Libraries provide spaces for inclusive social reading activities, and children can be guided and supported to engage in ways which are meaningful to them.



Success

Children need to have a range of rich and diverse positive reading experiences and recognise their growing success as readers.

Librarians and library staff champion reader enjoyment and development and are ideally positioned to support a lifelong love of reading, by supporting a holistic understanding of what it means to be a reader.



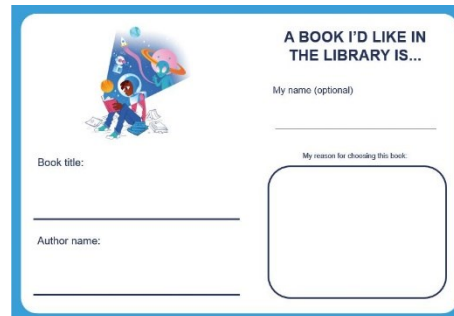
Love to Read Libraries: Guide and resources

Guide provides overview of research-informed principles and activities/resources

All activities and resources have been created to be easily adopted into library settings, either as resources, or to support with school visits to the library

Love to Read Libraries website:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/libraries/>



A BOOK I'D LIKE IN THE LIBRARY IS...

My name (optional) _____

My reason for choosing this book: _____

Book title: _____

Author name: _____



CHOOSING A BOOK

Everyone needs help to learn how to choose books they will enjoy!

Think
What type of experience do you want to get from a book?

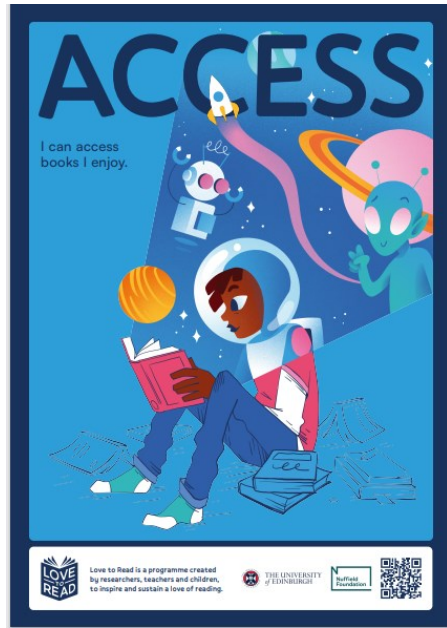
Choose
What ways could you use to choose a book?

Support – friends/classmates
Which friend/classmate would be good to talk to about books?

Ask – adults
Which adults would be good to talk to about books?



Love to Read Libraries: Resources



Young People

Young People's Reading Project

- Collaboration with Scottish Book Trust and Young People's Advisory Panel to explore the motivators and barriers to reading enjoyment and engagement during adolescence (aged 13-15).



 Literacy UKLA
The United Kingdom Literacy Association

Original Article |  Open Access |  

Adolescents' perspectives on the barriers to reading for pleasure

Charlotte Webber , Katherine Wilkinson, Dr Lynne G. Duncan, Dr Sarah McGeown

First published: 13 December 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1111/lit.12359> | Citations: 2

SECTIONS  PDF  TOOLS  SHARE

Abstract

Adolescence is often positioned as a particularly vulnerable period for reading motivation and engagement, both for academic reading and reading for pleasure. However, closer scrutiny of the literature reveals a much more nuanced pattern of changing interest,

REVIEW article

Front. Educ., 07 September 2023

Sec. Educational Psychology

Volume 8 - 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2023.1254048>

Approaches for supporting adolescents' reading motivation: existing research and future priorities

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Scottish Book Trust blog series:

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/articles/authors/charlotte-webber>

Contact: c.webber-1@sms.ed.ac.uk

Factors affecting young people's reading motivation and engagement

Access

As a barrier: Finding it hard to physically access books at home and/or at school.

As a motivator: Perceiving reading material to be readily available and having regular opportunities to access it.

Choice

As a barrier: Finding it difficult to choose books which feel relevant to their lives.

As a motivator: They can choose from a wide variety of texts and have the skills to make effective and successful decisions.

Autonomy

Particularly important during adolescence.

As a barrier: They feel that their reading experiences are controlled by others.

As a motivator: They feel a sense of control over when, where, what, why, and how they read.

Social

As a barrier: Some see time spent reading as taking time away from more social activities.

As a motivator: Focusing on and/or seeking out social aspects of reading and challenging the stereotype that reading is solitary and/or uncool.

Factors affecting young people's reading motivation and engagement

Environments

As a barrier: Distractions, lack of comfy space, loss of routines/structures they had as children.

As a motivator: Time, comfortable space, feeling relaxed, having regular opportunities for extended reading.

Relatable Messaging

As a barrier: Messaging about reading usually comes from adults and don't feel relevant to their lives.

As a motivator: Messaging comes from peers, celebrities, and social media and feels relevant to their lives and goals for reading.

Time / competing priorities

As a barrier: They have less free time and/or they prioritize other activities. They perceive reading as a cognitively demanding and/or time-consuming activity.

Supporting young people's reading motivation and engagement

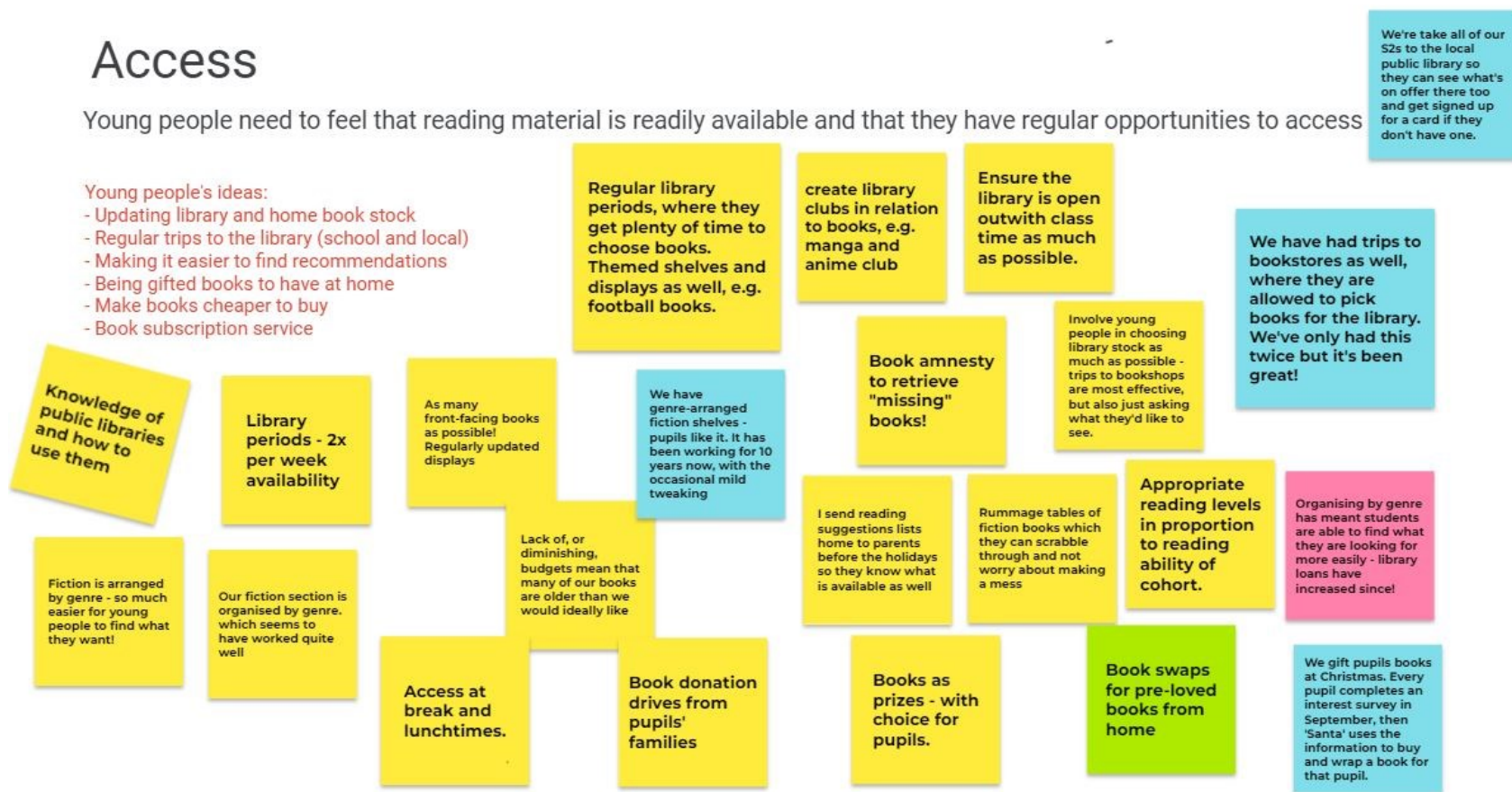
Working with teachers/other educators to embed ideas into practice.

Access

Young people need to feel that reading material is readily available and that they have regular opportunities to access

Young people's ideas:

- Updating library and home book stock
- Regular trips to the library (school and local)
- Making it easier to find recommendations
- Being gifted books to have at home
- Make books cheaper to buy
- Book subscription service



Supporting young people's reading motivation and engagement

Working with teachers/other educators to embed ideas into practice.

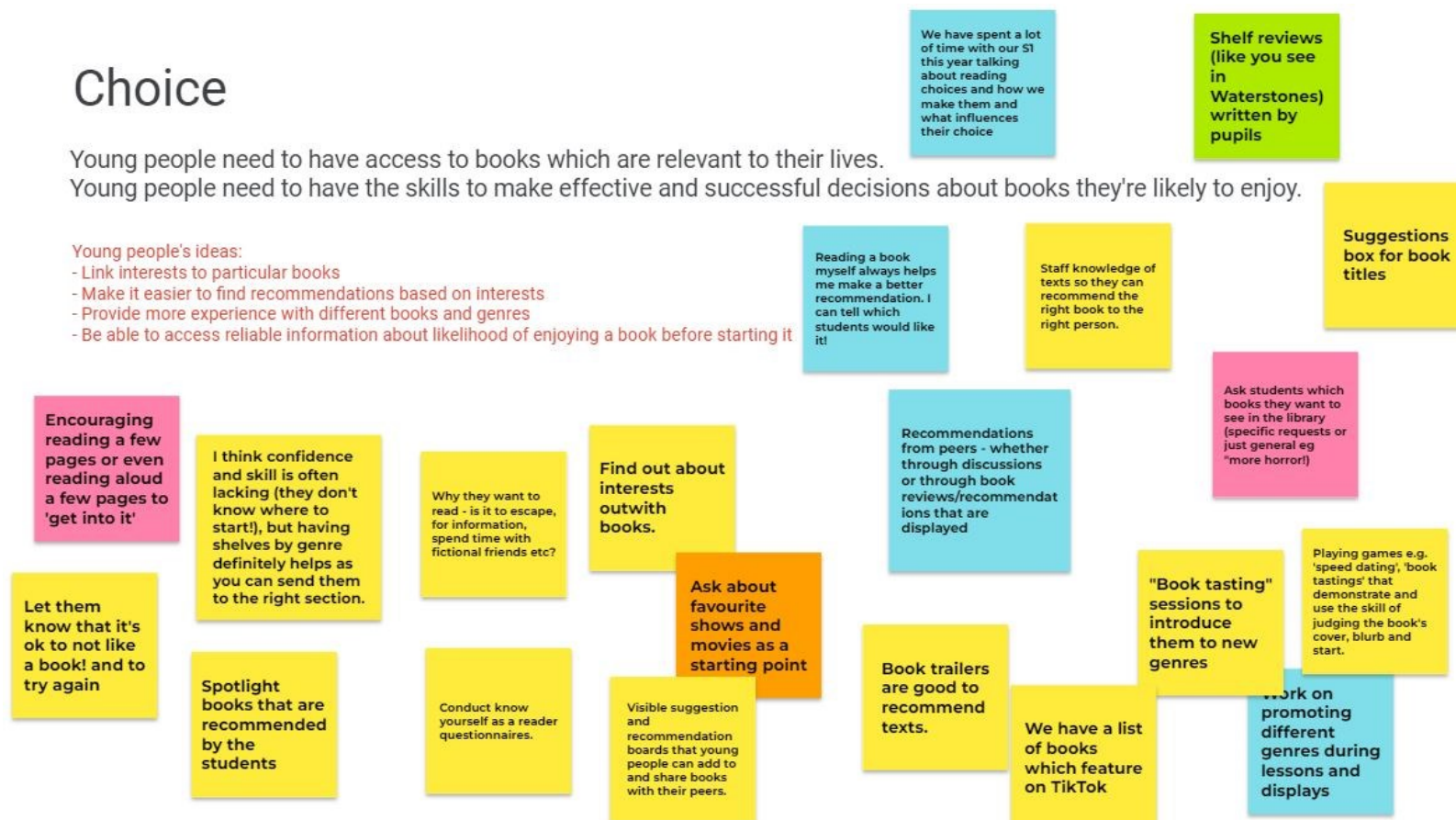
Choice

Young people need to have access to books which are relevant to their lives.

Young people need to have the skills to make effective and successful decisions about books they're likely to enjoy.

Young people's ideas:

- Link interests to particular books
- Make it easier to find recommendations based on interests
- Provide more experience with different books and genres
- Be able to access reliable information about likelihood of enjoying a book before starting it



Summary

- Children and young people's reading enjoyment and engagement is at an all-time low.
- Libraries and library staff are essential to support a love of reading among children and young people.
- We would like to contribute towards collective efforts to reverse this trajectory.
- Please get in touch if we can support your work.

Thank you for listening



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Literacy Lab website: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>

Love to Read website: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>

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