



Lewisham



Voxblock Screen-Free Audiobook Players

Laura Elliott – Lewisham Libraries



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New Voxblock Collection

Voxblock players are **fun, intuitive, screen-free and internet-free audiobook devices** designed for children aged **3 to 12**.

Thanks to initial funding from a **Libraries Connected and Arts Council England Microgrant**, we now have **80 Voxblock players** and **350 audiobooks** available across two library branches — completely free for children to borrow for two weeks at a time.

Our mission? To spark a **lifelong love of reading** and support families who may find this journey more challenging.



Available now
at Catford Library and
Deptford Lounge!



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Reading for Pleasure

The latest **Annual Literacy Survey by the National Literacy Trust (2025)** revealed a worrying decline in children's reading for pleasure:

- **Only 1 in 3** (32.7%) children aged 8 to 18 say they enjoy reading in their free time—the lowest level recorded since 2005.
- **Only 1 in 5** (18.7%) read daily in their free time.

However, almost **2 in 5** (37.5%) children and young people said that listening to an audiobook or podcast has got them interested in reading books.



Why Audiobooks?

Research shows that audiobooks **enhance literacy, build confidence, and boost language skills** - especially for reluctant readers and non-native English speakers.

They also foster a love of stories, improve comprehension, and contribute to **mental well-being and emotional intelligence**.

With the Voxblock collection, we're making these benefits **accessible to all** children in our community.



voxblock
the screen-free
audiobook player



zero
connectivity



parent-free
set-up



bedtime
mode



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Why Lewisham?

Lewisham has one of the **highest rates of deprivation** in England, ranked 7th most deprived borough in London (DCLG, 2019).

Lewisham also has a large number of families for whom **English is not their first language**.

As a **Borough of Sanctuary**, we have a particular responsibility to those who are settling in the UK after having to leave other countries.

We also support families who lack basic **digital literacy** skills as well as **access to the internet** at home.



Engagement

Lewisham is the **first public library service** to offer Voxblock players or any screen-free audiobook device of this kind for children.

The **unique format** of Voxblock is a great way to entice children into reading and expand their awareness.

We promote Voxblock in interactive ways that **prompt conversation**.

We **positively advocate** for audiobooks as a legitimate form of reading for children of all ages.



Outcomes

Since launching in March 2025, the Voxblock players have over **150 issues** and the audiobooks nearly **500 issues**.

Feedback from both staff and users has been overwhelmingly positive.

Every respondent reported using the Voxblock player daily, with 93% noting it **increased their enjoyment of reading**.

Unexpected adoption by the **Home Library Service**.

My daughter is not yet an independent reader so this has been a great way for her to ^{independently} access literature that she otherwise wouldn't have been able to.

While it doesn't help her ~~even~~ improve her reading skills, she can still ~~even~~ enhance her vocabulary and "lose herself" in a good book, letting ~~her~~ words take her to an imaginary space.

It definitely also decreased her demand for screens. Thank you!

Future Plans

- **Connect** with other council services to cross-promote, e.g. Lewisham Fostering.
- Apply for further Arts Council England funding to focus on more **targeted outreach and expansion**.
- Explore more **creative, qualitative** forms of **feedback**.

These next steps will help us build on the early success and **extend the project's reach** to a wider audience.



 **voxblock**

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