



Voxblock Screen-Free Audiobook Players

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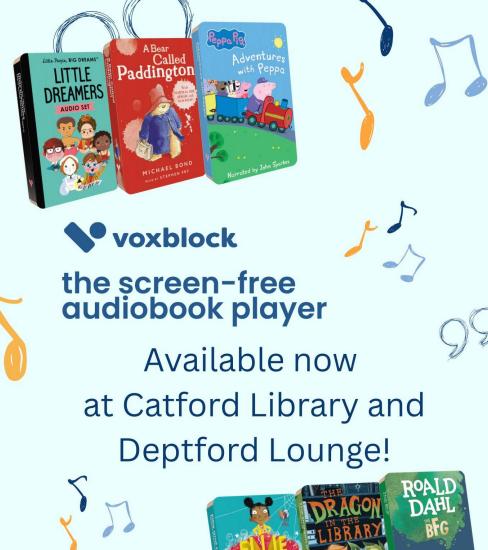


New Voxblock Collection

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.





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.



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 independently her to access literature that she otherwise wouldn't have been able to While it doesn't help her small improve her reading skills, she can still term enhance her vocabulary and "lose herself" in a good book, letting were words take her to an imaginary space. 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.







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