

Wendy Crookes, who volunteers at Greenhill community library in Sheffield, said that the library has a very positive ethos and has developed an even stronger community feeling since the volunteers took over its running.

The volunteers were trained by Sheffield City Council to run the library but soon came up with their own ideas to boost what it offers to local people.

Wendy explained, "We organise lots of events. We buy a great many children's books and bid for cash to get new stock in for a particular cause. We have lots of books donated to us and where we have duplicates we sell them in our shop."



The library is close to a housing estate with lots of children and the library is keen to sell books at pocket-money prices – as little as 10 pence – to encourage as many children as possible to read more.

"As well as providing a valuable service to the community, the volunteers get a lot out of it too," said Wendy. "We feel we're doing something really worthwhile. It's very satisfying."

She added: "We all want it to succeed because without us the nearest library is a bus ride away. If you're a mum with a few children that makes it really difficult to take them to the library."

About 100 volunteers give their time to suit them – from a couple of hours a month to several days a week.

Wendy got involved because it's her local library, she has been a library user all her life and is a big believer in the importance of libraries. Greenhill has now been managed by the community for four and a half years and is going from strength to strength.

One of Wendy's most successful ideas was to begin a coffee morning on Fridays.

"I saw it as a way to bring people together," said Wendy, "the widowed, the lost, the lonely, people whose husbands or wives have had to move into some sort of care, or people who just like a chat. And now young and old join together. Quite often some of the older people will read to children who come along with their mums. People look forward to it. I look forward to it."

The coffee morning led to a bi-monthly knit and natter group being set up, as one of the coffee morning volunteers was inspired to start another community get-together.

"It really is the hub of the community," said Wendy. "We have craft fairs, a farmers' market, storytime, chatterbooks after-school group, film shows, a lunch club, evening talks – we have lots of freedom to try anything we think local people will enjoy."