Motivating Socially Excluded People to Improve Their Literacy
Methods of engagement and skills development for support providers

A LiteracyActionNet event presented by Lemos&Crane
with support from the JJ Charitable Trust

7 December 2010

Delegate Resource Pack
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Programme

9.15    Registration

10.00   Introduction
● Gerard Lemos, Partner at Lemos&Crane, Project Director for LiteracyActionNet.

10.15   Theme 1: Dyslexia, socially excluded adults and homeless people
● Steve O’Brien, Chief Executive Officer, Adult Dyslexia Access, on key achievements in reaching and motivating dyslexic adults to improve their opportunities in life
● Julia Olisa, Thames Reach, on the organisation’s research into homelessness and literacy, and the development of a practical toolkit for key workers in the homeless sector to help support service users

11.30   Refreshments

11.45   Theme 2: Social housing tenants and the wider community
● Andrew Church, Community Investment Manager at Cambridge Housing Society, on the New Horizons project which offers learning and skills courses for tenants to improve their life chances, overcome barriers and seize opportunities.
● Libby Coleman, Founder of Yes we can read, a fun new phonics-based programme to develop reading for meaning, where anyone who can read fluently can teach a non reader to read in six months or less.
● Louise Richards, The Welsh Academy’s South Wales Valleys Literature Development Project, on engaging with hard-to-reach learners to promote literacy and offer new experiences and life opportunities.

1.15    Lunch

2.00    Theme 3: Young people at risk
● Martin Stephenson, Executive Director of Unitas, on the TextNow project, an innovative reader engagement programme that motivates young people at risk to become more confident and able readers, improving average reading ages by 18 months in just 12 weeks.
● Gerry Thompson, Positive Comedy Training, leading an interactive session on the use of comedy and improvisation to improve the communication skills of young people at risk.

3.00    Theme 4: Prisoners and ex-offenders
● Joe Baden, Open Book Co-ordinator at Goldsmiths University, on helping ex-offenders to fulfil their academic potential and encourage them to enter into higher education. An ex-offender will be present to discuss their experience of the project.
● Jon Potter, Creative Director of Company Paradiso, on the award-winning New Ballads of Reading Jail project, working with prisoners and ex-offenders through the use of rap and poetry
  o Shaun, a participant in the New Ballads of Reading Jail project will perform some of his poems
  o John Hegley, the internationally acclaimed poet and Edinburgh Fringe Festival regular will be performing some of his material from the New Ballads of Reading Jail Project.

4.10    LiteracyActionNet Awards

4.20    Departures
Biographies of Speakers

Gerard Lemos is a Partner at Lemos&Crane and the author of numerous reports and books including *Steadying the Ladder: social and emotional aspirations of homeless and vulnerable people*. Gerard is chairman of the Consumer Financial Education Body and also Vice-president of the British Board of Film Classification. In 2001 he received a CMG for services to the British Council in the Queen’s Birthday Honours.

Steve O’Brien is a leading expert in the field of advocacy for adults with dyslexia. He has lectured both national and internationally on the subject. Steve is the chief executive of Dyslexia Foundation, which many believe is the most innovative adult dyslexia charity in the UK. Steve has acted as a consultant to the government, sits on the International Dyslexia Association global partners board and various other national organisations in both commercial and voluntary sectors in the field of dyslexia and disabilities. Besides having a specific interest in disadvantaged and marginalised dyslexic adults and undertaking a PHD in dyslexia and Welfare, Steve is also involved in the development of technologies that aid the identification of dyslexia in children and adults. Steve has also devised various professionally accredited Edexcel qualifications to train educators and for adults with various learning disabilities.

Julia Olisa is a teacher with extensive experience in the fields of literacy and literacy difficulties. She has taught dyslexic individuals of all ages in schools, at university and in the workplace. With London University’s Institute of Education, Julia has taken part in several literacy research projects, and she continues to regularly train teachers and other professionals interested in dyslexia. For the last five years Julia has been a literacy tutor for Thames Reach, working with adults who have experienced homelessness.

Andrew Church is Head of Community Investment at CHS Group. He has worked at CHS Group for 13 years on a variety of issues including financial inclusion, digital inclusion, employment and training, lifelong learning and customer involvement. He also worked for a brief time in the public sector, resettling people with learning disabilities from a hospital into the community. Many years ago he worked with the New Economics Foundation on social auditing a fair trade organisation called Traidcraft; and evaluating the impact of VSO volunteers. He has also worked for the London Region of the United Nations Association, and volunteered for Health Projects Abroad in Tanzania and nearer home for a support service for people with disabilities in Haringey.

Libby Coleman (BA hons, Adv. Dip. Ed.) is the co-author of *Yes We Can Read*, published by Gatehouse Books. She is a retired comprehensive school head teacher of three schools; and has been involved with teaching reading since she was six and taught her sister to read. She has worked with people with severe learning disabilities, who have learned to read; and has lectured in special needs and school management at Roehampton and Nene Universities. She works as a volunteer teaching reading in prisons and in areas of social deprivation.

Louise Richards has a degree in Graphic Design and Illustration from Exeter Art College and a PGCE in Post Compulsory Education from University of Wales Institute Cardiff. Her fulfilling career has included Artist Residencies, Bookselling and Events Management, Library Development Projects, and Reader in Residence in the five prisons in Wales. She has been working as South Wales Valleys Literature Development Officer, Academi since 2007.

Martin Stephenson is the Executive Director of Unitas. With extensive experience in education, youth justice and social care, and having been involved in policy, management and practice, Martin has spent his career working with socially excluded groups. A founder member of the Youth Justice Board from 1998 to 2002, he was formerly Chief Executive of the charity, Include. He was also the
Senior Policy Adviser involved with the design of the Connexions Strategy for the Department for Education and Skills and was previously a trustee at Nacro and a non-executive director of Norfolk Primary Care Trust. As Director of Social Inclusion Strategy at Nottingham Trent University, he was responsible for a series of influential reports on youth justice and education for the Youth Justice Board and Arts Council. Publications include ‘Young People and Offending’ (the first generic text examining all the evidence on the relationship between education and offending) and ‘Effective Practice in Youth Justice’, which is the main textbook for all Open University courses on youth justice.

Gerry Thompson is the founder and director of Positive Comedy Training, a programme for personal development and learning through comedy and improvisation. He has been facilitating courses and workshops for twenty years in the USA, Europe and UK. Gerry works a great deal with young people, school pupils and students - including disengaged school pupils and youth at risk or in custody - working towards such outcomes as enhanced self-esteem, expression and co-operative teamwork, as well as literacy, numeracy and school curriculum subjects - and also with young people with emotional, behavioural, or learning ability issues. He also trains teachers and others who work with youth. Gerry creates and performs live stand-up comedy and writes sketches. His book, Presentation Training with Comedy, a manual for trainers, facilitators, teachers and others who run groups, has just been published.

Joe Baden is the Open Book Co-ordinator at Goldsmiths University, a project that works with those from offending and addiction backgrounds to encourage them to take up education, offering them ongoing emotional and practical support throughout their course. Joe has previously worked as a Basic Skills Tutor; Education, Training and Employment Advisor for the London Action Trust; and a Focus Group Co-ordinator to the Home Office Inquiry into the Death of Zahid Mubarek. His professional areas of interest include looking at ways to address the imbalance between academic perception and hegemony and the experiential reality of educational and social exclusion.

Jon Potter is Director of Company Paradiso Productions, which works creatively with people to enable them to tell their stories. The work of Company Paradiso Productions has won several awards including Sony Awards 2009, BBC Gillards Awards 2008, PrisonerActionNet Awards 2009, and the Koestler Awards 2009.

John Hegley’s first public performance monies came from busking his songs, initially outside a shoe shop in Hull, in the late Seventies. He performed on the streets of London in the early Eighties, fronting the Popticians, with whom he also recorded two sessions for John Peel, and has since been a frequent performer of his words, sung and spoken, on both local and national radio. He has produced ten books of verse and prose pieces, two CDs and one mug, but his largest source of income is from stages on his native island. An Edinburgh Festival regular, he is noted for his exploration of such diverse topics as dog hair, potatoes, handkerchiefs and the misery of human existence.
Motivating Socially Excluded People To Improve Their Literacy: Methods of engagement and skills development for support providers

7 December 2010

Introduction

Gerard Lemos
LiteracyActionNet Project Director
Dyslexia, socially excluded adults and homeless people

Steve O’Brien
Chief Executive Officer, Adult Dyslexia Access

Dyslexia, socially excluded adults and homeless people

Julia Olisa
Thames Reach

TURNING THE KEY
Portraits of low literacy amongst people with experience of homelessness.
A Thames Reach action research report and toolkit.
www.thamesreach.org.uk
The story of RD

Dyslexia
Resilience
Motivation
Support
Homeless
School
Home
Work

Low literacy and homelessness: Relationships

The last straw?
Causal chain?
Amplification?

Low literacy
A trajectory of disadvantage

Low literacy
Childhood experiences

More likely to
• come from low income homes
• have parents with little interest in education
• to leave school with no qualifications

Low literacy
Adulthood

More likely to be disadvantaged in their
• training and employment opportunities
• housing conditions
• personal relationships

Low literacy and homelessness: An exploration of prevalence, attitudes and experiences
A Thames Reach Study
Method

A questionnaire was given during interviews to:

• 101 people in supported housing
• 91 males, 10 females
• Age range 22-84 years

Reading Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>serious reading difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38%</td>
<td>trouble understanding text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>cannot always remember what they have just read</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading habits

• 20% never or rarely read books, newspapers, magazines
• 51% never read books
BUT
• 74% frequently read newspapers/magazines

The weakest readers avoid all reading matter, but even the more capable readers often choose not to pick up books.
Writing Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>general writing problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>difficulties with written expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>weak or no spelling ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>trouble writing legibly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dyslexia can **magnify** difficulties

- Learning the written code
- Working memory
- Fluency of processing
- Language
- Organisation

The impact of dyslexia: Emotional

- Lack of control
- Anxiety and stress
- Low self-esteem
Dyslexia

Dyslexia screening items in the questionnaire proved unreliable:

- substance abuse
- mental health issues
- restricted education

Difficulties in context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>form-filling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46%</td>
<td>letter-writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>contact with family/friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11%</td>
<td>public transport</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment

Low literacy as a key factor in their:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>inability to find jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>reduced access to training for employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>reluctance to go to college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Future Learning

60% still wished to improve their literacy skills

22-40 year olds the most interested in improving their literacy

TURNING THE KEY

A Toolkit for Support

www.thamesreach.org.uk

Readiness to learn

Emotional barriers
“I picked up the urgency in his voice, and this made me freeze. He told me where to find the information, but I couldn’t process what I had to do that quickly and I panicked.”

Ex-homeless man training for paid employment

Vulnerable adults must not be set up for further failure.

**Toolkit**
3 steps for key working

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Identification of literacy strengths and needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Accessible key working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Signposting and support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 1: Identifying literacy skills

**Discussion tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Background • English first language? • Glasses? • Dyslexia?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Confidence in everyday literacy skills • Forms • Letters • Transport • Shopping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Support • Previous experiences • Current needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 1: Identifying literacy skills**

**Discussion with service user**

**Skill spots**  
Things I can do independently

**Skill gaps**  
Things I need help to do

Support tip  Support tip  Support tip

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**Step 2: Accessible key working**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Listening and understanding</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Easy things first  
• A safe space to practise  
• Reinforce success |
| • Clear language  
• Fonts  
• Bullet points | • Be explicit  
• Info in short chunks  
• Time to reflect  
• Visual reminders  
• Repeat main points | • Diary use  
• Prioritising  
• Filing |
Step 3: Signposting and support

### Overcoming barriers

1. Why does the service user want to improve literacy?
2. Build confidence to get started.
3. Help to maintain motivation.
4. Support from other services might be needed.
5. Ensure access to information on resources and services.

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### Readiness to learn

**Practical hurdles and solutions**

- Attendance
- Travel
- Homework
- Distractibility
- Learning at the pace of the group
- Expression of difficulties

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### Step 3: Discussion tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to improve my skills because …</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I would like to learn … | Preference:  
  • Group/on my own/online  
  • Day/evening |
| To succeed, changes I will need to make in my life … | e.g. cutting down on drinking; make time for homework; etc. |
| If I need support, I can get it from … | |
John and Paul
(click on the YouTube logo)

Social housing tenants and the wider community

Andrew Church
Community Investment Manager, Cambridge Housing Society
Social housing tenants and the wider community

Libby Coleman
Founder, Yes we can read

—

Yes we can read

one-to-one is the key
From UNICEF:

A billion people in the 21st century are unable to read a book or write their names, and two thirds of them are women.

From the Basic Skills Agency’s Report by Anthony Moser:

In the UK 20% of the population is functionally illiterate.
From The British Dyslexia Society:

One in nine people is dyslexic.

From The Shannon Trust:

Over half the people leaving prison are unable to read.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families:

2009
In 885 primary schools, over half the eleven-year-olds failed to reach the standard of English required to cope with the secondary curriculum.

2008
The number of schools was 798.
Success Stories

- An 11 year old boy is teaching his dad
- Our oldest learner is 74 years old
- Prisoners are teaching fellow inmates
- Library users are teaching friends
- A 64 year old traveller is reading now

Social housing tenants and the wider community

Louise Richards
South Wales Valleys Literature Development Initiative
The Academi is the Welsh Literature Promotion Agency and Society for Authors. The Academi works with the support of the Arts Council of Wales and the Welsh Assembly Government.

The Arts Council of Wales’ 2010 Investment Review has designated Academi as one of six national companies, each representing different artform genres. The Academi is the Arts Council’s agent to develop and implement literature activity.

In addition, the Academi runs events, competitions (including the Cardiff International Poetry Competition), conferences, international exchanges, events for schools, lectures and festivals. Academi is also responsible for the National Poet of Wales project and the Encyclopaedia of Wales. Academi was a recipient of an Arts Council of Wales Beacon Company Award 2008-2010.

Three years in seven Authorities: Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen.

Neath Port Talbot joined the second phase of the project in August 2010.
The Geographical area covers 2586 square miles with a population of approximately 979,000

It is an area with an extremely high deprivation index falling within the top 10% of Lower Super Output Areas

One fifth of the adults living in the areas have no formal qualifications and 27% claim jobseekers or disability allowance

Low literacy rates (50-60%) are a key factor in these areas and there are high levels of disaffection from Education and learning

In total over 13,000 people have attended over 300 events

Sport

Scott Quinnell

Welsh Rugby Legend and Captain

Quick Reads Title

The Hardest Test
Cardiff City
Football Club

All Skilled Up

Peter Read
Mike Jenkins

Boxing Beats
Welsh National Opera

Louise Walsh

Ramblers
Venture Out

Poetry and Walking
Robert Minhinnick
Heddfan Carers Support Project

Heddfan

Mike Church

Day Conferences

Space Time Machine & Monster
Sci Fi, Fantasy & Horror

Writing Aloud
Publishers

Merthyr Literary Day
Celebrated Authors

Criminal Intent
Crime Writing

Women Writers Day
Women Writers
Community Poems
Greenmeadow Farm
Adult Learners Day
Abergavenny Food Festival Poem
WNO MAX partnership

Specific
Housebound writers
Six Book Challenge
Local celebrities

Gypsy Traveller History Month
Home Educated Support Group
Young Carers
Young people at risk

Martin Stephenson
Executive Director, Unitas

Young people at risk

Gerry Thompson
Positive Comedy Training
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<td>Jon Potter</td>
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<td>Creative Director, Company Paradiso</td>
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<td>John Hegley</td>
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<td>New Ballads of Reading Jail</td>
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LiteracyActionNet Awards 2010 Shortlist

The LiteracyActionNet Awards are for projects that have proved successful in helping children or socially-excluded adults to improve their speaking, reading and writing.

The following 13 entries were selected for the shortlist:

- **Cambridgeshire County Council**: You Are Words
- **Council of the Isles of Scilly**: Lifelong Learning in Partnership with Mental Health Isles of Scilly
- **Dudley Libraries**: Library Reading Groups for People with Learning Disabilities
- **HMP & YOI Low Newton**: Learning Shop for Female Prisoners
- **Learning Partnerships**: Volunteer Literacy Programme
- **Oldham Lifelong Learning Service and Oldham Library Service**: Family Learning Book Review Project
- **Reading Youth Offending Team**: Rapid English
- **Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council**: Literacy Champions
- **Rotherham Borough Council**: Cooking Up Communication
- **The Reader Organisation**: Mersey Care Reads
- **Unitas**: Text Now
- **Workers’ Educational Association North West**: Just the Ticket
- **Write Path**: International Collaborative Writing Project

The shortlisted organisations’ original entries are on the following pages:
Organisation:
**Cambridgeshire County Council**

Project Name:
**You Are Words**

Contact:
[Lynda.martin@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lynda.martin@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

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**Project summary**

This is a joint project between Cambridgeshire Libraries and poet John Killick from Dementia Positive. It was funded by NHS East as part of the Dignity in Care campaign. Its aims are to provide people with dementia with a creative experience both individually and socially, and to have public events, publications, media coverage which attempt to educate the public and counter stigma. It links to the criteria for this award by working creatively with speaking, and writing poetry, with people at the key life stage of a diagnosis of dementia, it links very personally with each individual’s interests and hobbies, and promotes wellbeing and positive identity.

**What are the project’s objectives?**

**Key aims and objectives:**

- To be celebratory – to begin and end with special events
- Involving as many institutions and persons with dementia in the county as possible
- It would have mentoring and training components
- A strong public relations slant with talks, readings and broadcasts – the aim being to counter stigma and showcase the achievements and creativity of people with memory loss
- There would be tangible end products such as publications
- An advisory group (to include people with dementia) would steer and monitor the project

**What are we seeking to achieve:**

People with dementia are doubly disadvantaged: their communication difficulties isolate them, and they are marginalised by society largely through ignorance and fear. They are therefore sorely in need of targeting with services and publicity to help to improve their situation. This is also, largely for demographic reasons, an expanding section of society, and initiatives mounted now to address these issues will hopefully pay off in the future. The development of non-pharmacological strategies could well be cheaper and more effective in the long-run than drug regimes. Giving people creative opportunities, as this project aims to do, is one way to enhance the lives of individuals and create a more beneficent social climate.

This is also a group which the library service has traditionally tended to ignore, and apart from the advantages outlined above, this project also brings a focus on the kind of disadvantaged minority which, if it is to survive and prosper, the service needs to be catering for.

We are also hoping to achieve:
• Greater awareness of the needs of people with dementia
• Links to key partners in the medical, care and voluntary sectors
• To provide an inspirational model to other libraries in the country
• To build longer term and embedded speaking, reading and writing opportunities to this excluded group
• To show a wider public the value of this work and the insight that it affords

*What are the project’s activities?*

John Killick, our Poet in residence explains the process as follows:

“In a collaboration between poet and each person with the condition the words are written down or tape recorded and subsequently shaped by me into a poem. They are then approved by the person and permission is given for publication; in some instances that authorisation comes from a relative. The most unbreakable rule is that I add nothing to a person’s words, only select from the material given me. Sometimes no editing is necessary. The liveliness, honesty, courage and humour displayed in our book “The Elephant in the room” (copy enclosed) surely establishes beyond doubt that there is life and creativity after diagnosis”

As well as the work with individuals John and Cambridgeshire Library staff hosted and supported poetry readings in libraries, workshops (flier enclosed) for library and care staff across the eastern region, and of course the publication (in partnership with the Alzheimer’s Association Art Groups in Cambridge) of the splendid 2010 calendar of art and poems (copy enclosed).

*Summary of activities to date:*

• Work with individuals in 6 Day Centres, 9 Nursing Homes and 1 Hospital Ward with 77 people producing 67 poems and 10 pieces of prose.
• Readings and workshops to 127 people with dementia in groups
• 294 carers and staff supported in training or mentoring
• Members of the public attended poetry readings
• “The Elephant in the room” book of poems and the 2010 calendar
• Reports in various journals and forthcoming chapter in “Mental Health and Care Homes” book

The above is a summary of what the project in statistical terms has done so far. In terms of individual satisfaction of those members of the public served it is impossible to quantify, but many tributes have been paid from people in all sections, including, most significantly, people with dementia themselves, to the quality of the service provided.

We have plans to build on the current achievement, and are looking into the possibilities of providing a mobile service of readings, workshops and book lending to institutions throughout the county

*How successful has the project been?*

The prime impact has to be the legacy of the poems themselves. The words of our local people with dementia are precious for their insight and honesty, and for the fact that without this project they...
would have been lost. Sadly, some of the participants are no longer with us, but their poems have been read at their funerals, and have been a great source of amazement and comfort to their relatives.

Impact of the project:
I feel this can best be summarised by the comments about working with the poet from some of the participants as follows:

From people with dementia:
- “You’ve made me try and use my brain in a way no-one else here has, and I thank you”.
- “This is heaven, because for a lot of people it helps them. You do it as a one to one and that’s right. I feel I’m lucky because I’ve got something like poetry”.
- “Writing is important, we want to be recording what has gone on, and what is still going on”.
- “I find it absolutely overwhelming that I’ve got all this bubbling up inside and then someone comes along who actually wants me to give him all the specific details of what Alzheimer’s like, rather than having their eyes glazed over when I rabbit on about myself all the time.”

From a home carer:
- “As for John, we both felt that we had met someone that we now think of as a friend, who can turn listening to a person with dementia and translate their words into a poem or prose --- a great skill,”

From someone whom the poet mentored and now works full time with the client group:
- “The celebration event was the ultimate for me. Some of the people attending were those who had contributed to the poems. John holds the hand of a lady who bravely shares her story of her family’s response to her illness. Another sits in the audience mouthing the words as John reads out a poem confirming her existence. It is true that the project was a success: not only does it touch those who come across the work but it has made a lasting difference to the lives of people with whom John has worked.”

Further impact has been on the staff taking part:
- “Learning and inspiration from John has helped me understand more about the users of libraries who have dementia, the importance that the library plays in their lives, that they still come and visit, try to take a book or two, even though they can’t remember where they live or even their own name at times. Some have come on their own, others with their carer, and it means a lot to that carer to be able to choose their own reading at the same time as having their loved one in a safe place. It has helped me to be more patient with my own mother-in-law who at 85 may or may not have dementia. She can’t speak or communicate very much since she had a stroke 24 years ago, it is difficult to know. John’s help on communication is very much appreciated. I found it hard to convince her care home staff of the importance of spending quality time with their residents, just listening to them, and wish that John, or others that he has trained, could work in Surrey.”

And from a Social Care and NHS manager
- “This project was truly wonderful in so many ways. What really impressed me was how it managed to transcend the usual service boundaries, and genuinely put the service user at the
centre. In so doing, it achieved outcomes which for many were just a distant dream. Reaching the often forgotten residents and recognising their creative potential was a fantastic achievement. As for the celebration event, it was so moving it brought a seasoned manager to tears.”

Evaluation summary:

- Numbers taking part
- Poems and prose produced
- Links made to partner organisations
- Numbers attending workshops
- Numbers attending open poetry events
- Book and calendar sales
- Comments from those taking part, carers, the Steering Group and those attending events
- Publicity and promotion achieved
- Further requests for information, presentations and copies of the project report
- Lessons learned for the future

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

The major challenges were:

1) How to reach out to people with dementia in the county? This was a communication challenge.
2) How to build bridges with organizations in the county? Another communications challenge.
3) How to ensure maximum use of resources and achieve follow-through? This was an organization challenge.
4) How to ensure high standards throughout? This was a quality control challenge.

My reflections on how we met these challenges are as follows:

1) We got in touch with the target group through County Council links and information networks, via local radio, leaflets, phone-calls and a launch event, and soon had enough contacts to be able to plan a programme
2) We made partnership links with various organizations, and ensured their continued participation through advisory group meetings and events.
3) We achieved a high level of activity through meticulous programming and the dedication and enthusiasm of the library staff who participated. The training events and mentoring contributed to follow-through.
4) The quality was ensured by the positive response of the participants and the high level of creativity and commitment shown. It was also due in no small part to the high standards, sheer hard work and experience of the writer whom we employed.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

The plans for the future have two key strands:
Role of libraries in serving and working with people with dementia to develop their speaking, reading and writing:

- Building and maintaining the links to Residential Homes and Voluntary Agencies – progress has been made on plans for an enhanced service via the Mobile Library
- The role of the library service in supporting the Dignity in Care challenges
- New work is in progress on developing reminiscence boxes for loan to Groups and Homes to stimulate conversation and engagement
- Encouraging Support Groups and Homes to use the library venues and resources and work with us to develop them further.
- Raising the profile of this work within the wider library service and within the County Council
- Recognition by partners for future joint work with people with dementia, those with long term conditions and those who are socially isolated.
- Involving and listening to key people who may be excluded from fully accessing resources, services and opportunities in libraries
- Importance for library staff of the training and experience of working with experts (such as the poet for this project)
- Joint training opportunities for staff across organisational boundaries.
- To build on the wonderful work achieved so far and use remaining income (and look for other funding strands) to continue developing the “You are words” project for Cambridgeshire.

Role of libraries in promoting positive wellbeing and other benefits

- Work to develop volunteering opportunities within libraries
- The powerful potential role of the library service in supporting older people to live active and fulfilling lives and retain independence
- The role of libraries in working with care and health agencies to develop library based activities such as reading for health, accessible IT opportunities, activities around hobbies and interests such as Family and Local History
- The expansion and promotion of health information points and Books on Prescription
- The value of creative writing, Reading Groups and social interaction and the important role that libraries can have in this.
Project summary

LL&MHIOS delivers training to socially excluded adults on the Isles of Scilly. We work together on a variety of projects to address the learning, social and emotional wellbeing of residents of our unique remote island community. The team delivers a bespoke program of events that replicate the services offered on the mainland. The benefits of working in a small team is that we can deliver a more individualised service that responds to the personal needs of our community.

What are the project’s objectives?

The team are endeavouring to provide an inclusive learning environment working with local organisations to achieve the following:

- To provide inclusive learning which aims to address key life skills in a fun and imaginative way.
- To promote Mental Health awareness and tackle stigma and discrimination amongst the community.
- To promote varying and creative approaches to learning.
- To in reach into existing community groups to promote meaningful activity in order to encourage mental and physical wellbeing.
- To respond to the learning needs of our ageing community (we have a higher than average UK population of over 50’s). We use the model of the U3A - “The U3A approach to learning is – learning for pleasure. There is no accreditation or validation and there are no assessments or qualifications to be gained.”

What are the project’s activities?

- Silver Surfer IT Courses – we aim to get all the islanders over the age of 65 using computers the internet, emailing and using Skype to contact friends and family. We promote these courses widely through Mental Health Isles of Scilly not only as a way to get online, but as a way to meet others.
- Older Persons Newsletter – initially set up by Adult Social Care this project has been handed over to Lifelong Learning’s Silver Surfers.
- Buddy System – we now have 3 enthusiastic buddies’ that assist in the new Silver Surfers courses currently running at Lifelong Learning. The buddy’s also do home visits as required for those who are unable to attend the sessions.
- Walking for Wellbeing – we held a series of successful pilot walks which promoted the organisation ‘Time to Change’ (tackling the stigma and discrimination of Mental Health). Following this we are now holding monthly walking events which aim to continue providing
learning experiences such as, Flora and Fauna of Scilly, Local History and the opportunity to talk about Mental Health in a non-threatening environment.

- Memory Café – LL&MHIOS work jointly to provide a stimulating, social learning experience to the guests that promotes discussion, stimulates memories and encourages new skills.

Activities to date include:
- Nintendo Wii Games
- Reminiscence therapy using memory boxes and other aid memoirs
- Creative writing activities
- Poetry readings and story telling
- Presentations about local wildlife and how to protect and enhance the local environment
- Craft sessions including making, bird feeders, (National Feed the Birds Day) Painting, felt making and card making.

The above activities are also provided in the local residential home, mental health support group and at events such as ‘UK Older Persons Day’.

In addition Lifelong Learning provide a plethora of courses ranging from Celtic Dancing, Languages, Crafts, IT, Make Do and Mend sewing, Cookery and Singing

**How successful has the project been?**

Each learning experience has had positive feedback and events have been reported on radio Scilly, local newsletters and local magazines. The events have been evaluated and reviewed through Lifelong Learning’s in house evaluation process, evaluations have been very positive.

Many of these learners have returned to us for further courses again and again. One learner’s feedback was “I have really, really enjoyed the creative writing course we all felt pleased with our achievements, more please!”

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

We are pleased at how the project has been received and feel that the joint partnership working is an excellent example of how to work with socially excluded adults.

A major but rewarding challenge has been getting the community onboard with the project, but through persistence and robust promotion we now have many examples of how these learning initiatives have changed people’s lives.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

We plan to continue and develop our joint working strategy.
Project summary

Library Reading Groups are part of increasing the services available to People with Learning Disabilities (PWLD). The groups help PWLD to socialise, be more active in local communities, support communication skills and promote learning. The PWLD Reading Groups encourage library use by people who felt that books and libraries were not for them and include a mixed gender group with varying levels of learning disabilities and groups for Asian men and women. Basic skills for life and picture books encourage the group to read and interact. Throughout sessions participants are encouraged to discuss different parts of the story or subject, relating it to their own experience.

What are the project’s objectives?

It is a common perception that Reading Groups are aimed at a particular type of library user. Libraries and Learning Disabilities Services in Dudley felt that the benefits people gained from joining reading groups could work particularly well for PWLD. Those with learning disabilities are all too often overlooked when reading groups are set up.

Through setting up PWLD Readers Groups we wanted to increase library usage from PWLD and ensure that the quality of life for PWLD is increased. Having a learning disability should not lead to exclusion from any service especially library services which should be seen as providing services for all client groups

Aims:

- To develop library reading groups for those with learning disabilities
- To increase confidence in and use of library services by people with learning disabilities
- To improve the quality of life and well-being outcomes for PWLD
- To encourage reading for pleasure
- To raise awareness of the benefits of reading as an activity

Objectives:

- To discuss the reading - story or subject - and how it relates to personal experiences.
- To increase the group’s confidence and help them to interact with library members in other library activities
- Stimulate conversation and add to the social and learning experience
• Positive contribution to the sessions and increased concentration from the group members
• To find out what books the group would like to read and reflect this in library stocks
• To give the members of the group a sense of inclusion

**What are the project’s activities?**

The Reading Group participants are transported to their nearest community library where they are introduced to the library and encouraged to look at books, participate in group listening and a related craft activity.

Using a mixture of very basic skills for life books and picture books and working to a theme each week the participants soon began to look forward to the meetings. Throughout each reading session they are encouraged to talk about different parts of the story or subject and how it relates to their own lives and experiences. The reaction is very positive and creates some very interactive discussions amongst the group. They are always given a craft session to complete at the community centre linked to what they have been reading, which they usually bring with them the next week’s Reading Group. To vary the experience they have also had a session on fire safety provided by the fire service. This has given them all increased confidence and knowledge.

Another example of ensuring the Reading Groups are kept vibrant and interesting is when the library hosted a visit by staff from Dudley Zoo who brought along with them a number of small animals and reptiles. It was planned to coincide with the Reading Group and the members were happy to join in with other library users to touch and talk about the animals. Through such activity we are increasing understanding of LD issues for other library goers as well as improving interaction and discussion between the members themselves.

**How successful has the project been?**

Improved quality of life and well-being for Reading Group participants; increased use of libraries and reading by a client group that would previously have been less likely to use the service. The clients have benefited from increased communication skills, learning new skills, confidence and anticipation.

Throughout each reading session they are encouraged to talk about different parts of the story or subject and how it relates to their own experiences. The reaction is very positive and creates some very interactive discussions amongst the group. They have all gained increased confidence in the library setting. An example of this was seen when the library hosted a visit by staff from Dudley Zoo.

The Lye Women’s group applied for a learning revolution grant to run a craft session in the library. The bid was successful and they learned how to make jewellery. This session was attended by other groups of people with learning disabilities and their families and it encouraged the women to interact with a broader mix of people.

Initial visits to the library ensure that both the staff and the clients are comfortable. It is a good idea to introduce groups to staff members so that they can relate to each other and form a good familiar relationship. This helps to break down any initial barriers that may be in place. Many members of this client group are wary of official places and this includes libraries, which helps in breaking down barriers.
Quotes from clients include:

- "I want to come again next week"  Asian women’s group
- "Can we look at football books, the newspapers"   Asian men’s group
- "I liked what we did last week"

General reading groups are usually member led. This one is led by the facilitator who encourages and leads by way of reading and discussing as the session progresses. Our partnership with Social Care is fundamental to the success of the reading groups.

Special collections have been sourced and purchased which include a range of simple life skills books covering a variety of subjects from specialist suppliers. The people in the groups help to lead the choice of reading material or subject The collections have been used in their centre by linking to topical subjects they are learning about, for example healthy eating.

What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?

Finding appropriate material is the hardest part, as the clients have varying degrees of learning disabilities, therefore using resources that are suitable for the whole group is difficult, but not impossible. Library staff built their confidence in selecting material for the group to read through and working with them to source further relevant material

Lye Library Asian Women’s reading group: the women concerned had little knowledge of reading and writing in their own community languages as well as in English. The four women came to the library and at first were quite reticent and nervous. Library staff sat with them and looked at a range of picture books and incorporated a craft activity. One of the library staff speaks Urdu and after the first few sessions took over running the group. As the women’s confidence grew they looked forward to the next session and interacting with the staff. Each weekly session was themed to subjects that they related to - one week we read picture books about Ramadan, followed up next time with the celebration of Eid and making Eid cards.

Asian Men’s group: selecting reading material for them was more difficult, as they did not want to do craft sessions. Therefore they choose books, usually about topics they relate to, read and discuss them. The library has simple life skills books covering a range of subjects with lots of pictures. These have produced rewarding results as they stimulate conversation and add to the men’s learning experience. Since starting the group the young men now look forward to the session, are always enthusiastic and make a positive contribution

What are the plans for the project in the future?

As a service involved with emergent readers the success of these initial groups has prompted staff and client groups to consider holding similar sessions at other libraries around the borough and we have been approached to help form further reading groups with these targeted clients

Dudley Libraries are running the groups as part of their mainstream work and the Social Care staff are enabling the attendance. The Library Service has expanded the number of groups to other libraries and this is part of the service provision. In this way, the reading groups are a part of the mainstream service. The books and other stock items are purchased from the libraries’ stock budget. These groups are not an addition to the library service but an integral part of it.
Organisation:
HMP & YOI Low Newton

Project Name:
Learning Shop for Female Prisoners

Contact:
Frederick.auty@hmps.gov.uk

Project summary
The learning shop inside HMP Low Newton is a library-based interactive environment which used innovative approaches to involve those who would normally be excluded from traditional learning places. HMP Low Newton is a female prison holding both adult and young offenders. Most of the women coming into the prison are assessed at “Entry Level” for literacy and numeracy. A significant number are below entry level. To encourage a holistic approach to learning, we have invited, amongst others, established authors, Durham City Arts, The New Bridge Foundation and Durham County Council.

What are the project’s objectives?
We have a concentrated population of those who are socially excluded and who avoid a formal learning environment. The Learning shop has adopted innovative approaches to encourage reluctant learners to engage with the written and spoken word. We feel that the only way to achieve this is to adopt a holistic approach whereby self-esteem and confidence building are at the fore.

Some of the main objectives are: Provide purposeful activities to encourage women’s own personal and social development, allow them to become accustomed to a learning environment so they are able to remove the barriers to literacy.
Given that 80% of the female prison population are known to have mental health problems the Learning shop environment plays a fundamental part in addressing some of these issues by providing a calm, safe, informal community environment.

What are the project’s activities?
Every day the Learning shop receives a diverse group of women from the prison, all different ages, interests and abilities and all with individual needs providing a Therapeutic Community for the women of Low Newton. Staff work with the women on a one to one basis to ensure a tailored approach to literacy needs. The Learning shop also has a number of formal events which others areas of the prison engage in such as:

- Book Festival – Established authors visit the prison to facilitate readings and writing workshops.
- Durham Mysteries – Women working together with an author and animator to produce a short film for a prestigious public performance.
- Chapbook – Women working with book artists and writers to make hand-made books which they can use for their own writing.
• Six book challenge – encouraging and introducing a reading culture to the women of Low Newton.
• Orange book club – women reading along with the prestigious prize for women’s fiction.
• Reading for life – Women engage in a reading aloud group. This is facilitated by a reader in residence and the prison library development worker.
• Prisons week – encouraging those who have contributed to the listed activities to display their work in a public forum.
• Book and Film Group – participants read a novel, watch the film and discuss
• Storybook Mums – mothers in custody read stories onto CD to send to their children.
• Family Visit Day – The prison library development worker reads to children and Mums in custody on child parent visit days, thus encouraging reading for life in future generations.

How successful has the project been?
It is difficult to evaluate the impact the Learning shop. However Low Newton is at the forefront of researching new procedures to reduce self harm in the prison population. The learning shop has been asked to produce handmade diaries (Chap Books) in which prisoners at risk of self harm can record their feelings. Above all else the learning shop introduces those most at risk, and their families, to the literary world.

What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?
Staff in the Learning Shop have transformed the Prison’s library into an interactive, multimedia learning environment. Their enthusiastic and innovative approach has encouraged those, whose background and social history acts as a barrier to learning, to embrace learning. They have actively taken new projects out to the prison population and encouraged women to “try it and see”. Often the most disruptive prisoners find an interest

What are the plans for the project in the future?
The learning shop have already planned the following for the year 2011:

• Participation in Prison’s Week
• Film festival
• Book Festival
Project summary

The Volunteer Literacy Programme supports our partner inner-city primary schools in Leeds in raising achievement in literacy. This is achieved by a rolling programme of recruiting, training and supporting volunteers from local businesses and communities to work with children on an individual basis.

As well as regular reading practice, the volunteers provide the children with individual support and attention; interested & able reading partners; an opportunity to discuss on a 1:1 basis and develop communication skills; positive role models from working life and adult interest from outside the family unit in their progress & development.

What are the project’s objectives?

Its objective is to support the raising of achievement in literacy across our partner primary schools by:

- Providing individual support and attention to children
- Supporting the children in enjoying and achieving in literacy at school
- Reducing the risk of children falling behind national literacy standards and being denied real life chances and choices when they move to high school and in later life.

What are the project’s activities?

The volunteers make weekly visits to the schools for an hour a time, working on an individual basis with the children, encouraging a love of reading so that it enriches their lives, enables them to achieve their full potential and helps them avoid facing a life of social exclusion.

We currently have over 170 volunteers across 20 inner-city primary schools who support an average of 3-4 children on an individual basis each week. This means over 600 children currently receive invaluable support that they wouldn’t have without our volunteer input. We work with 15 local business businesses and employee volunteers make up 85% of our total volunteer workforce. We endeavour to maintain up to 180 volunteers which requires a constant recruitment and training programme throughout the year to achieve.

This individual support not only helps to increase the children’s reading levels and achievement in literacy but supports the development of their self-esteem, confidence and social skills. The sessions lend the opportunity for one-to-one discussions between the volunteer and the child thus helping to develop their language and communication skills. The volunteers provide the children with positive role models and an insight into the world of work. This regular interaction encourages the children
to raise their aspirations as it crucial for them to feel that professional people are approachable and jobs achievable.

The volunteers themselves benefit through their involvement in the programme – not only do they gain the ‘feel good’ factor of supporting the children and giving back to the community but their self-esteem and confidence rises as they develop their own skills and knowledge at the same time. Volunteering in the inner-city schools helps raise their awareness of local areas and communities and can, change for the better, negative preconceived ideas of the areas.

**How successful has the project been?**

The programme is continually evaluated which involves feedback from the schools, teaching staff and volunteers.

The Children – Impact listed in Q2 above.

‘For the children to have the provision of extra support from the volunteers really helps to give them the key that unlocks their future progress. Through no fault of their own, many children have to deal with ‘barriers to learning’ and the volunteers really help to develop their self-esteem, confidence and self-image. That’s a great plus!’ - Helen Cockerham, Deputy Headteacher, Wykebeck Primary School, Leeds

The Volunteers – evaluation has shown that the skills they gain from volunteering (e.g. communication, leadership, organizational, time-management, social and patience) which are often difficult to learn in a more formal learning situation, are transferable back to the work place and benefits the individual in their paid employment.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

I believe our volunteer input plays an integral part in supporting the acquisition and development of the literacy and communication skills in the children we work with. The skills are vital for the children to access a full education, participate fully in society and achieve economic well-being. My major challenge over the last couple of years and now, is seeking funding to continue the delivery of the programme. This involves constantly being on the lookout for funding bids to which we fit the criteria, writing bids and applying for grants. Fitting this in amongst recruiting, training and placing volunteers is a challenge itself but is essential to ensure the programme’s continuation. I have taught myself to bid write bid and happily had some success.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

There will always be children who struggle with fundamental literacy and communication skills and need additional support to reach the set national standards. We will therefore continue to raise funds to deliver the programme and sustain our partnership work with the community, voluntary, public and private sectors to give the children the best opportunities possible in life to achieve their potential.
Project summary
The project is a partnership between Oldham Lifelong Learning Service’s family learning team and Oldham Library Service

The project was aimed at adults and children who’ve taken part in Family Literacy classes in the summer term. Its aim was to encourage children and their families to read books together, foster a love of reading and share their feelings and opinions about books by completing book reviews and sharing them with others.

We organised training sessions which culminated in a book review competition to encouraging families to become involved and have a chance of a reward for their efforts.

What are the project’s objectives?
By creating an enthusiasm for reading and sharing books we wished to encourage more families from the deprived areas of Oldham to join the library and borrow books to improve the literacy and language skills of adults and children within families.

Building on the successful partnership working during the National Year of Reading and the involvement in Partners in Literacy the teams in Oldham wanted to raise the profile of the importance of reading. Many of our families have English as a second language and we wished to involve them more in reading and talking about books in the family. We also wanted to encourage the families to join the library and progress to further learning.

With our partners we identified a group of parents who have poor literacy skills and many of them had English as a second language. All have children and most have very young children or babies. This has meant that they don’t have as much time for the older child (8 year olds in this case) and the book review competition has allowed them to spend time together, focusing on selecting and reading books. As they had quality time in the family literacy class, to spend with this child they developed reading and book review skills individually and together which they used with the rest of their family at home.

They made time to focus on reading because of the competition. The high profile of the celebration was the 'icing on the cake' and verified the confidence they gained whilst reviewing books in written form or verbally in class groups. As such the 'literacy intervention' of the competition allowed these parents and children to spend time together. Also for the adults to have time to improve their own literacy skills whilst developing self esteem and positive identity!
**What are the project’s activities?**

Over the summer, the family learning staff member Janet McDowell and the library service member of staff, Punam Ramchurn have worked in partnership to deliver the project. The families have attended Oldham Lifelong Learning Service’s family literacy classes in schools, community centres and children’s centres throughout Oldham and have explored books by reading together, discussing stories and improving their literacy and language skills.

We convened sessions with adults only and with groups of their children about books. As a result the children were recommending book titles to each other, to their teacher and to other parents whilst adults were exchanging books and recommending book titles to each other. They all found common ground on the exchange and expression of opinions on books – whether this is ‘chick lit’, magazines, newspapers or more intensive criminal or historical novels.

The competition enabled parents and children to focus on selecting and reading a book to review, take part in discussions together and in the class groups and then express their opinions in written form. They reviewed them with their children, friends and families and then entered it in a Book Review Competition.

All the families involved attended a prize giving ceremony at the Oldham Lifelong Learning Centre. Prize winners were presented with book tokens by The Mayor of Oldham.

**How successful has the project been?**

There has been a massive impact on the families who took part in the book review competition. All participants are now members of the library and have said that they visit libraries regularly and choose books to read together. Children and adults were awarded prizes and this has raised their self-esteem and confidence to read.

For example, one adult participant has a mental illness and her child has behaviour problems. She found it difficult to hold his attention. Since they were awarded a prize together, the parent shows more confidence in reading with her son, they share books together and she is able to hold his concentration for longer than before the project started. They now have a shared interest in books. She has also stated that they spend a lot more time together on homework and craft activities.

**Approximately 70 people attended the celebration event and over 50 families were involved in the project.**

Evaluations, including learner’s statements have been recorded in Family Literacy course evaluations and some are being followed up in SFA Family Learning Impact Fund monitoring over the next three years.

Most learners have continued with their literacy/language studies by enrolling on family learning or other lifelong learning courses. Some have now passed a City and Guilds literacy exams at Entry and/or level 1.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

The project was an outstanding success,

- Punam’s visits enabled groups of parents, children, teachers and the literacy officer to read, review and discuss books together.
• The families enjoyed the Book Review presentation, as the event was held in the Lifelong Learning/library performance space, awards were presented by The Mayor and The Mayoress and Youth Mayor were in attendance.
• Families took part in craft making activities e.g. making bookmarks and enjoyed the buffet together.
• Thoughtful and thorough planning ensured that the project was well organised, it covered the breadth of Oldham, involving families of all ages, ethnicity and cultures. This was an excellent example of Community Cohesion as families came together for the celebration event.
• There were challenges in that the literacy and language level of the adults varied greatly. For example, one adult spoke fluent English but could read or write in English. As such, she completed the book review with her 13 year old niece.

It was challenging to organise the co-ordination of class visits by Punam, with Janet liaising with family learning teachers in order to fit in with schemes of work and exam timetables.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

There are plans for the project to be rolled out next year. Family literacy courses will once again be focussing on storytelling, reading and writing and the partnership between Family Learning and the Library service is now embedded. This will involve drama sessions with Oldham Coliseum Theatre and will develop storytelling skills through art, puppet making, story maps and drama.

The partners are working together to develop further projects, these include Family Learning Week, Bookstart, family activities celebrating cultures and festivals, sharing and writing stories from different countries and cultures and newsletter production.

In addition, adults have been invited to attend the ‘Oldham Literature Festival’, listening to and meeting visiting writers in local libraries.

These families will be community champions; encouraging other families to get involved!!

**The participants expressed the following opinions about the celebration event:**

• ‘I feel so proud; I can’t believe that I’ve won this competition!’
• ‘All my family have come to watch me and my son get a prize, we are so proud together.’
• ‘I’ve met the Mayor, the Mayoress and the Youth Mayor today and I told them about the book I’ve read. They were really impressed.’
• ‘Taking part in this competition has made me feel confident in myself and I want to do lots more things now, I’m going to join a reading group.’
• ‘The book reviews were interesting and opened my eyes to how advanced my daughter’s language skills have become.’

**(ADDITIONAL INFORMATION)**

**MOTIVATING AND ENGAGING LEARNERS**

**GETTING BACK TO WORK**— in one group, some parents had part-time jobs, were on maternity leave or long term unemployed, all had young children.
Working mother of 8 year old son and baby: ‘My son has enjoyed that we have shared something together – just me and him, not me, him and his brother; we don’t get much chance to do much just me and him since his brother came along so it was nice to do.’

Mother of an 8 year old son and a baby who doesn’t sleep:- I’ve been able to learn with my son, see how he learns at school and he shows me how it’s done.-

Working mother of three year old twins and an 8 year old son: ‘I make a point of reading with my son every night and I always read with my younger children as well to ‘calm them’ during the day! He has enjoyed spending time with me on his own and showing me his world within school.’

KEY LIFE STAGES:
A new baby in the family, two children under 8 already – (Pakistani mother)
‘My child was not that much close with me but now he shares everything with me and started listening more carefully’.
‘He thought that I didn’t love him; just for me he’s coming here. I can give him time. I have two other children. I’m busy in the kitchen.’
‘I notice that we can now share things with me without any hesitation.’
‘We read together more first, I read books for him and now he reads books for me.’

PROMOTION OF WELLBEING
‘I’ve improved my confidence in reading aloud. I’ve enjoyed the book review competition very much and my personal confidence has increased.’

POSTIVE IDENTITY
Unemployed single parent: ‘My personal confidence has increased by sharing my personal opinions about books with other parents and I admire myself for this increased confidence. It has given me more confidence to realise that I can do things that I want to. Hopefully, my improved confidence will help in finding work and I have been looking at enrolling on another class. I have been inspired to go on to other learning or training and I’m now a volunteer in the school.”

LINKING LITERACY WITH INTERESTS AND HOBBIES
‘We have always read stories together but now my daughter reads a wider range of text.’

OTHER BENEFITS
- ‘My attitudes have changed as I now feel that I should make more effort and find time to read.’
- ‘We already read together but I feel that we have more confidence in reading with funny voices and with more animation.’
- ‘We completed a book review together and I came 3rd in the book review competition and now we go to the library and choose books to read together.’
- ‘I came 1st in the Book review competition!’
- ‘We read books from the library – lots of Horrid Henry.’
- ‘We use expression and change ideas during reading.’

Mother of 6: ‘I really liked this course because I learnt to spend time with my children. My children are so much happier now. We learned to do lots of new activities and we do them together at home.’
Project summary
Rapid English is an ICT teaching platform which helps young people become operational in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Many of these young people find it hard to integrate into mainstream education, or into wider society because they lack the fundamental communicative ability. We have developed a highly streamlined teaching platform, which gets students to communicate simply, clearly and confidently, no matter what their underlying conditions and backgrounds may be. The project works with the Reading Youth Offending Team clients. We have worked with over 400 students with the aim of getting them back into education or employment.

What are the project’s objectives?
The project is designed to get young people who have fallen out of society back into education and employment by tackling the problem at its source. A significant proportion of Youth Offenders are illiterate, and they have extremely poor all-round communication skills. Indeed, some of our students fail to recognise even two letter words. The link between poor literacy and bad behaviour is well documented, and our success-rates have further highlighted the need to focus on literacy levels on a massive scale.

With Rapid English, we give students the ability to interact with other people. We focus on all forms of communications, reading, writing, speaking, listening. And we target the most frequent areas of each. This has had an enormous effect on these peoples’ self esteem.
Before undertaking Rapid English, these young people simply did not have the communicative skill to gain access to education or employment. Rapid English makes it possible to re-integrate these people back into society, using a highly pedagogical teaching process.

The key to our success lies in the teaching method:
The English language can be broken down in terms of frequency. 80% of everyday communication is derived from a very small, and identifiable, 20% of the language. This is true for vocabulary, tense structure, punctuation, sentence construction, etc. Failing to understand this core language is where 90% of poorer students fall behind. Without it, even basic communication is impossible. Rapid English has identified the 20%, and applied it to a logical order of learning. Activities always control the addition of new ideas, to ensure that students never become confused. No knowledge is assumed, and students take control of the pace of progress.
Because the course is IT based, it allows helpers, and support workers to deliver an extremely high level of teaching, without much further training. As such, the purpose of the project is to empower support staff, and to ensure that they are not doing more harm than good to the learning process.

When students gain control of this twenty percent, the effect is extraordinary. It acts like a decongestant. Students begin to understand the logic of English, and all the information which had confused them during lessons starts to make sense.
Overall, 70% of last year’s students were re-integrated into education or employment, and they are much more likely to stay in these positions, because they have the necessary skills to do so.

**What are the project’s activities?**
The Course starts off with a detailed diagnostic test, which identifies any areas of concern, and gives. Students then proceed through the appropriate solutions, also contained within the software.
We have 14 modules which are tailored for specific needs. They cover handwriting, reading with power, and developing oral delivery. There is a whole course for non-native speakers. One module teaches students the 200 most frequent words in English. Proportionately, these words alone make up 33% of all communication. The Course then proceeds to basic descriptions, and basic stories.
Programs allow students to develop their own stories and descriptions. This is crucial to the learning process. The Course finally advances to intermediate levels. These allow students to gain control of tenses and to manipulate information more effectively.

**How successful has the project been?**
The project has received two outstanding Ofsted reports. One in Reading YOS and another in Wokingham YOS. It stated that Rapid English was “effective in making a significant difference to the skills, motivation and self esteem of participants.”

The success-rate for getting young people back into education and employment has also been a strong marker. 70% of students who pass through Rapid English even for a short period of time re-integrate into society.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**
The main challenge was the development of the software. It has been the labour of many years. The real challenge was to create software that avoided all the pitfalls of education. The Course deliberately avoids many of the pitfalls of teaching, but it has taken a long time to polish the teaching paths, and to make it possible for any teacher to use without supervision.
The next challenge was to spread the word. It took a long time for anyone to notice Rapid English. Recently, interest has snowballed, as it became obvious that the program was so effective.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**
Rapid English is now rolled out around a great deal of the South East. Kent County Council are looking to roll Rapid English out on a regional level in the near future.
Project summary
Rochdale has developed a partnership approach to literacy which seeks to provide relevant and accessible opportunities to those residents of the borough who are most at risk of social exclusion due to poor or underdeveloped literacy skills. The partnership identified a need for a programme of support which was provided at source by a trusted contact and as a result, in 2009 the Literacy Champions programme was developed. Currently there are around 95 literacy champions operating with the hardest to reach members of the community across the borough, providing support which for many is life-changing.

What are the project’s objectives?
There are many good services providing opportunities for residents of the borough to develop their literacy skills in both formal and informal settings. Those opportunities, however, are not always accessed by those residents most likely to benefit from the services offered. An analysis of pathways into literacy within the borough revealed that there was indeed a gap in access for the hardest to reach groups, evidencing the need for support from a trusted source.

The Literacy Champions Programme aims to enhance and accelerate literacy outcomes and extend the reach of services, with a focus on inclusion, by engaging, training and supporting community champions to deliver literacy interventions.

An initial pilot identifying the remit and scope of literacy champions revealed that there was potential for the champions to deliver far more than was originally anticipated. The first version of the programme supported champions to be able to signpost and support people who experienced difficulties with literacy into provision. What was discovered during this pilot was that champions can do much more than that. With time and resources champions were actually able to deliver low level interventions that led to actual literacy outcomes. Some of the people they were working with were not in a position to access mainstream services, yet, through the assistance of a champion, were able to develop their literacy skills.

The current programme takes that pilot forward and its objectives are as follows:

Engage with champions. The programme includes both targeted and general engagement with champions. The primary focus targets volunteer residents from priority neighbourhoods who understand best the issues and barriers facing people with low levels of literacy in their area. We also target front line workers who provide services in the priority areas; including housing, health, advice, support, employment, libraries, and children’s centres. In addition to the targeted
champions a number of other volunteer champions come forward and are usually matched in 1-1 settings.

**Provide induction training.** The programme starts with a two day induction programme during which participants go through the following:

Awareness – the case for good or improved literacy; the importance of literacy as an entitlement, how poor or underdeveloped literacy skills impact negatively on life chances, how improved literacy skills positively contribute to all aspects of social capital (economic, social and health and wellbeing) for the individual, their family and the wider community, local data – how literacy affects people’s lives in relevant neighbourhoods, the important role of parents and adults in supporting literacy development and achievement in children and young people.

Practical skills – easy to use tools to support others; identification of common barriers to literacy, picking up when someone has low literacy skills – how to ask the question and reduce the stigma, guidance / help / provision available locally, basic support which can help people begin to improve their literacy skills, support for non-readers / writers, unconfident readers / writers and how to develop plans.

**Provide resources and support.** Following from the induction programme, champions are issued with a range of resources to assist them in their role. All champions are provided with 3 key items. A literacy champions handbook with top tips, rules and tools for supporting literacy; along with links to online resources and support. A USB memory stick which is regularly updated with a wide range of specialist electronic resources, materials and information. A Literacy Champions badge, which, aside from promoting the literacy champions brand, provides access to literacy resources and support in local libraries along with free IT and printing facilities. Champions are also provided with specialist materials which are relevant to the area they are working in, for example, specialist materials for working with families, young people, adults, people with dyslexia etc.

**Opportunity for ongoing networking and reflection.** Champions are invited to attend network events to share experiences and ideas, update their resources and to attend additional specific training.

**Influencing policy developments.** An important element of the network meetings has been the rich anecdotal information that champions are able to provide which can be used to direct policy. An example of this has been the allocation of priority investment funded skills provision which has responded to the gaps in provision for families and people in priority neighbourhoods. The project design took into account the experiences and ideas of literacy champions and has enabled the development of some new routes into literacy.

**What are the project’s activities?**

The activity comprises a structured programme of targeting, engaging with and capacity building champions as described above. Champions, once they accept their role, carry out the activity working with people who have literacy barriers. Some champions work with groups, for example, small groups of adult learners, with schools, youth groups etc. Most champions provide their support on a one to one or family basis. Their activity ranges from short term task-focused
assistance, followed by signposting to a service right through to a specific literacy intervention. This involves working with the individual to identify their difficulty and determine the outcome they seek. The goal is led by the individual, and takes no account of national targets or outcomes unless that is an element of the individual’s goal. So, for example, the champion might work with a parent who wants to be able to read bedtime stories with their children – the activity will therefore focus on bedtime stories.

The main objective is to support the individual or family to achieve positive outcomes quickly and to change any belief system which may have developed over time that they would be unable to achieve literacy goals. There are many different examples of the type of activity which have ranged from specific and small goals, such as the ability to advocate in a health setting, being able to read independently small sections of news text or children’s stories, to progressing through the adult literacy framework up to level 2, or through a specific dyslexia support programme using a peer framework.

What is so successful about this approach is that the intervention is absolutely relevant to the participant – it directly addresses their priorities, where their life is up to and what their interests are. For this reason, their motivation to participate in this work, once they start, is tangible. The activities have been, in many cases, life changing.

How successful has the project been?

95 champions are currently operating across the borough, providing vital support in creative and imaginative ways with people who have experienced barriers or who risk barriers because of their poor or underdeveloped literacy skills. The work of the champions really does change lives and they have a great many very “common – sense” ideas and solutions which work so effectively for the target group. The work of the champions does not replicate, replace or displace any formal literacy provision; it adds value and promotes a pathway into the provision for people who would not have otherwise participated.

The project has been evaluated in a number of ways: The training itself has been evaluated through the usual processes (evaluation forms and suggestions). In addition, the initial pilot was evaluated, resulting in the programme being changed to reduce any limits on what a champion can offer. The first cohort of the programme participated in an action research project to understand better how it has been successful. Again, the findings from this have expanded the potential of the programme and a new version linking with a wider set of competencies is now under development.

A few examples:
“John”, who has had a long history of mental health issues and many life complications, is now working in a career he never dreamed possible, living in permanent and stable conditions and he feels his life has turned around. He puts the success of this turnaround in his circumstances down to the support of his champion, (who naturally cites John’s hard work and determination as the real reason). When John describes how his life changed developing and having the confidence to use literacy skills are a massive feature.

“Sally”, who for many years believed that she couldn’t read or write, found that with the gentle support and encouragement of her champion her literacy skills were in fact much more advanced
than she had thought. She could read bedtime stories to her child, she could start to read and enjoy popular magazine articles and she could apply for, gain and keep a new job. Sally and her family are thrilled with the new confidence she has and now they all enjoy literacy in the home for the first time.

“Rebecca”, who has learning disabilities enjoys the new reading skills she has developed. Having met with her champion for an hour a week in a local library she started to enjoy the “quick reads” series and is now an active library user.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

The project has proved that, in our borough, Literacy Champions are an important part of the solution to many of the difficulties that people with low skills levels experience. The work that they do has made a real difference both to the people they work with and to the champions themselves. Many of the champions have discovered skills they never knew they had; some of those who are in work already are considering developing their career further; some who have participated as volunteers have moved on into employment, or are getting ready to do so. Most simply enjoy the privilege of supporting a positive change for someone.

The challenges have been largely linked to getting the content of the programme right. In the early stages, it was difficult to plan a programme which didn’t limit what champions could do but didn’t seem unrealistic or difficult to conceptualise. Now there are plenty of champions from all walks of life proving that practically anyone who wants to can make a real difference as a literacy champion, this challenge is less of an issue. It has been important to carefully balance how this project fits in with local services and to ensure that it complements partners’ provision. Further challenges include the need to set up a more sophisticated system of referral, matching and communication now we have a much larger group of champions. Finally, the challenge to ensure that champions recognise the power of their role in terms of policy influence has yet to be overcome. Our research shows that champions don’t believe that, beyond the small piece of work they are doing with an individual or group, they can influence change on a borough wide level. It is felt that this belief will follow action; when the champions see the change based on their ideas and experiences, they will understand the potential of their role.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

The project has the potential to impact further within target communities. The model of community champions has the potential to impact on issues other than literacy.

Currently, scoping is underway to understand how that potential might be realised but this work has been agreed as a local priority. In the meantime, plans are in place to continue the development programme, to continue to engage with and train champions and to provide ongoing support to our fantastic team of champions. This award would recognise and validate their amazing work further.
**Project summary**

An Inspire Rotherham project, developed by Parent Support Advisors (PSAs), working with referred families of children, experiencing barriers in their readiness to learn. The project engages parents/carers, 1-2-1 or small groups, over 4 weeks, developing parenting approaches to communication in the home, promoting family cooking activities as a vehicle, enabling a safe environment for PSAs to model positive interactions and praise. An excellent Inspire Rotherham literacy resource, ‘My Favourite School Meals’ recipe book and DVD, is given to families to take home and try. Positive outcomes for parents/carers include progression onto further learning opportunities, training with qualifications and employment.

**What are the project’s objectives?**

The project objectives are to work with families experiencing disenchantment, disengagement, barriers to learning at school, leading to low levels of communication skills to:

- Raise awareness of healthy eating at home
- Elevate cooking standards in parents and families
- Improve communication skills and confidence (written, verbal and reading)
- Boost self esteem and confidence in parents’ ability to support their children’s literacy development at home and at school.
- Inflate parental aspirations

**What are the project’s activities?**

- Parents attend for 4 weeks (more depending on need) and cook recipes from the Inspire cookbook.
- This is completed with support from PSA and Jen (PSA support).
- Completed in small groups or one to one depending on the parents needs and the assessment carried out.
- Progression routes into employment, training and qualifications
- Children and parents attend for one of the sessions to cook together (normally in the school holidays)
- Allows PSA to model positive interactions and praise

Parents often disclose information due to the ‘laid back’ and homely nature of the kitchen.
**How successful has the project been?**

A measurable outcome from the Cookery Project is demonstrated on high levels of parents progressing onto the 10 week Ministry of Food (set up by Jamie Oliver on his trip to Rotherham – highly publicised) and some have moved onto further training and employment. Key indicators demonstrated from evaluations show increased confidence in communication practices in the home and with children, a greater awareness of the parent role in the child’s development of communication skills and a greater self belief.

Further work within the progression project has been evaluated by the University of Sheffield. This has further demonstrated a total shift in practice within the department working with families, to incorporate literacy practices, amongst many other outcomes for the families and ultimately the children and their literacy levels.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

The following are not in order of priority but of process:

The first significant challenge of this work is to engage families to undertake the activities, developing relationships with the families, who are often disinclined, and even resistant to engage in educational/learning activities due to a range of reasons but often due to a lack of confidence in their own skills and abilities. This was overcome through a supportive process, built on needs assessment, providing appealing methods of engagement which felt relevant and useful to the parents involved. The staff engaged on this project have built outstanding relationships with the parents, developing their trust to enable them to ‘have a go’.

The second significant challenge is to retain the families and this has been achieved through the delivery of patient, non-judgemental, non-patronising, accessible approaches, providing activities around a kitchen and cookery which was perceived as useful, relevant, beneficial and non-intimidating by the parents/carers taking part.

The third considerable challenge is to support the families to:

- Recognise the importance of communication skills;
- Understand how levels of literacy ability impacts on their children’s learning and on access to opportunities in later years;
- Learn how they can develop ways of supporting their children to develop literacy skills, through a variety of media (including cookery);
- To equip the family to sustain behaviours/approaches learned in their own homes. All of these challenges have been tackled through the use of a resource, which was valued and accessible to all families.

Also, through the promotion of reading, writing, listening and speaking, building awareness of the importance of the parent/carer role. The PSAs have ensured further achievement through the enabling of a safe, accessible environment to allow modelling of positive communication interactions and praise.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

This model has proved extremely successful and has demonstrated impact on all participants and within their families. This model will be continued as a key element of the work and new literacy
practices will be developed and introduced through other media/vehicles, creating innovative and practical ways to promote literacy practices in the home.

**Organisation:**
The Reader Organisation

**Project Name:**
Mersey Care Reads

**Contact:**
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**Project summary**
Two Readers in Residence work in Mersey Care Mental Health Trust, setting up reading groups in wards and day centres across the Liverpool and Sefton areas. These weekly reading groups provide a space for service users and staff members to enjoy and discuss poems, short stories and novels, read aloud during the session. We provide training in reading group facilitation for staff and service user volunteers, and put on other reading related events, such as author visits and poetry workshops.

**What are the project’s objectives?**
The project was originally commissioned with the aim of improving service users’ experience. Inpatients often cite the lack of meaningful activity as one of the negatives associated with being in hospital, and reading groups are a clear way of responding to that: enjoyable, relaxing, but also offering space to reflect on serious issues, and share one’s thoughts with others.

Other benefits include an increased interest in reading. People who don’t normally read are inspired to take it up; others widen their interest (“This isn’t the kind of thing I’d normally read, but it’s good!”), and often people who have been keen readers in the past, but who have dropped it because of concentration problems or other issues to do with their illness, have regained the confidence to return to literature. In several cases, patients with literacy problems, who have been coaxed into the group (“You don’t have to read aloud, you can just listen!”) have been motivated to get help in learning to read. Related outcomes are increased confidence in reading aloud, and speaking in groups.

Because staff and service users come together in an equal and human way, these groups have had an impact on ward culture, promoting a more person-centred and respectful ethos.

**What are the project’s activities?**
The Readers in Residence work in partnership with occupational therapists, psychiatrists, nurses, activity workers, or managers to set up a reading group in a particular service. The reading groups meet weekly, and stories and poems are read aloud and discussed in the session – members do not have to go away and read outside the groups. Staff attend training in the Get Into Reading model of
group facilitation, and as they become confident in finding texts and reading aloud, they take full responsibility for the group, thus embedding the project in the organisation, and freeing the Readers up to start other groups.

We run a programme of events as part of the ‘Chapter and Verse’ festival, in partnership with The Bluecoat, Liverpool’s creative hub. This year we put on three events with guest poets giving readings and leading workshops.

**How successful has the project been?**

- “*Get Into Reading is one of the most significant developments to have taken place in Mersey Care NHS Trust and mental health practice in the last ten years.*”
  - David Fearnley, Medical Director

- “I can identify people within these groups who otherwise would have needed in-patient care had it not been for the support and benefit of the groups. Groups cost about £6 per person per session; by comparison, an in-patient stay costs £9,000 on average.”
  - Alan Yates, CEO

The project was evaluated during its pilot year, 2007-8, by the Service Users and Carers Research and Evaluation team. From their summary: “*The report concludes that there has been unquestionable benefit to the service users who have participated in Reader groups across a range of service settings. Improvements in confidence, memory, concentration, creativity, listening skills are just a few of the many positive outcomes reported. There is also emerging evidence that the groups are creating spin off benefits on the ward or unit. Service users are expanding their range of conversation outside the groups, one service area has reported an ‘elevated’ mood and some people are engaging more with staff and their families thus breaking down barriers.*”

There are currently 35 reading groups running across the Trust, and an average of 157 service users attend per week, in inpatient wards, High Secure Hospital, and community settings.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

The first challenge we faced was to interest staff, already very busy, in assisting us to set up groups, and to commit to training and facilitating groups themselves. A series of induction sessions at the beginning of the project gave some 100 Trust employees a taste of how the groups might work.

Senior management have been leading from the front (the CEO and Medical Director run weekly groups themselves), and key staff in the library and creativity teams promoted the project actively. As staff experience the groups and see their effects on service users, they come on board, and spread the word. We have been amazed by the enthusiasm this project has generated among service users, professionals and senior management. Their support has enabled it to expand as rapidly as it has.

We were anxious about whether the groups would be suitable for some service users with serious mental illness. But another surprise has been the way that the relatively simple model has beneficial effects across a wide range of services. In High Secure, psychiatrists are impressed by the way patients with low social awareness and empathy learn to interact respectfully. Dementia sufferers benefit from remembering poems they learnt at school, triggering reminiscence and increased
alertness in the present. In the addiction services, literature promotes reflection and personal change, and community groups address isolation.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

- To establish a network of community groups so that people who enjoyed the groups in hospital can continue to benefit.
- To promote more informal reading on wards, e.g. ad hoc one-to-one reading sessions, weekend and evening activities.
- Collaboration with other creative interventions in the Trust – music, art and dance.

To increase service user volunteering.

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**Organisation:**

**Unitas**

**Project name:**

**Text Now**

**Contact:**

jane.dixon@unitas.uk.net

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**Project summary**

TextNow is an innovative reader motivation programme that enables young people to become more confident and able readers. Through participation, young people aged 13-19 who lack interest in reading or have poor reading skills, develop confidence in reading and become better able to access their education or training curriculum. The model is a structured programme of daily 20-minute reading sessions for a period of 10 weeks, delivered through one to one sessions with trained volunteer coaches. This regular and focused one-to-one support encourages a young person’s interest in and enjoyment of reading, and reduces the risk of long-term social exclusion.

**What are the project’s objectives?**

TextNow has been designed to meet the needs of young people aged 13-19 who do not enjoy reading and who may have a reading age below their chronological age. We know that young people who don’t enjoy reading don’t read. This results in poor literacy skills and impacts on their ability to engage with all areas of the curriculum. It also means that these young people miss out on the opportunities offered by reading: exploring new ideas, other people’s lives and different worlds. We aim to foster enjoyment of reading, leading to improved literacy skills and re-engagement with education and training.

TextNow provides a proven programme model that works for young people in a wide range of settings. It is structured to motivate and engage older teenagers who are reluctant readers as well as young people at the beginning of their secondary school experience. It helps them to enjoy and become practised in reading. Through engaging with a variety of texts in an enjoyable, relaxed but structured way young people improve their reading skills. Not only does it increase a young person’s
ability to access the curriculum and enhance chances of academic success it also works to reduce the risk of social exclusion and the behavioural issues that can result from poor reading and communication skills. TextNow has been used at key points in young people’s education - year 9s facing transition to Key stage 4, at Key Stage 4 to encourage engagement with the GCSE curriculum, and post school leaving age for young people starting in FE College. Independent evaluation of the pilot programme demonstrated a significant increase in reading scores and an improvement in attitude towards reading across participants of all ages.

TextNow has a unique approach to reading engagement which:

- Helps young people to choose reading materials which they are interested in and which they want to read. Through work with their coaches young people are helped to make sense of their reading through discussion and other activities;
- Gives young people the opportunity to discuss their reading, consider the benefits reading can bring and how enjoyable reading can be;
- Encourages young people to use library services, giving them the confidence to explore all that is available, how to navigate the services and how to ask for help in finding what they need.

The objectives of TextNow are:

- To engage young people in reading and learning.
- To increase young people’s enjoyment of reading.
- To improve the reading skills of participating young people, including their understanding of what they read.
- To improve the young people’s self-confidence and motivation as learners.

**What are the project’s activities?**

The project provides young people with an opportunity to read texts of their choice, working one to one with a trained volunteer coach for 20 minutes a day every weekday for ten weeks. Each site appoints a co-ordinator whose role includes recruiting coaches, identifying young people, carrying out reading interviews and reviewing progress. A reading assessment and questions about attitudes to reading answered by each young person at the beginning and end of the programme, provide important data on reading scores and attitudes to reading.

Sites are provided with:

- Online training for reading assessments and reading questionnaires
- Starter library of age-appropriate books
- Awards scheme through which young people can gain awards through good attendance and participation
- Coach diaries
- Young people’s diaries
- Online workflow managements system used by site coordinators and the Programme Manager to record information such as reading scores and attendance.

The role of reading coach is fundamental to the success of TextNow. Regular and focused one-to-one support allows the coaches to build up a rapport with the young person and stimulate their
enjoyment of reading. Coaches do not necessarily have to have a teaching background – successful coaches have included peer coaches who coach younger pupils at their own or neighbouring schools, volunteers and non-teaching staff in schools as well as teachers, support staff and administrative staff. Using technology to deliver online training ensures accessible training is available to all whatever their location and role. Online training modules ensure that coaches are familiar with the principles of the programme, including roles and responsibilities of coaches and the three strands of choosing, enjoying and understanding texts, and that they feel well-equipped for the coaching role.

Young people are encouraged to read a wide range of texts which could include books, magazines, instruction manuals, graphic novels and web-based texts and to write their own online book reviews. The programme also establishes links with parents/carers to ensure that all involved are working towards the same goals.

The main activities include:

- Choosing texts, learning about choosing books and visiting libraries
- Completion of a diary
- Completing reading assessments and Questions About Reading before and after the programme to monitor and evaluate progress
- Gaining awards for attendance and participation to spend on texts at W.H. Smith
- Extensive online training for coaches and coordinators

How successful has the project been?
The TextNow programme has been independently evaluated. In 2009, referring to the TextNow 2008-09 pilot, Professor Greg Brooks, a leading literacy expert at Sheffield University, concluded:

‘The evaluation demonstrates that the initiative has had an impressive impact on all aspects of reading for the young people. All the quantitative findings were statistically significant.’

Over 700 young people have taken part in TextNow, through two pilot programmes which have run across England and Wales between 2008-2010.

The first pilot during 2008-2009, ran in 36 sites including schools, colleges, pupil referral units, youth offending teams, and other organisations which work with young people. Independent evaluation demonstrated that the programme had impressive, statistically significant impacts on all aspects of reading engagement and achievement. Most significantly, the evaluation found average reading ages improved by 18 months in just 12 weeks. (At the request of schools and colleges, the programme later reduced to ten weeks better to align with academic terms). There were also significant outcomes demonstrating that young people on the project enjoyed reading more, were reading more frequently and had branched out in terms of what they read.

An evaluation of the TextNow Programme delivered over 2009-2010 is currently being undertaken by Professor Roger Tarling and Professor Greg Brooks. Initial findings are that there were significant gains in reading age for young people on the programme and the more positive attitudes to reading reported by participants on the 2008-09 programme were repeated. For example there was a significant increase in young people reporting that they felt positive about reading to themselves.
Also, there was a significant increase in young people reporting feeling positive about reading out loud, suggesting that the TextNow programme not only improves reading skills but encourages speaking skills. Coaches play an active role – talking with the young people about what they are reading, not just listening to them read.

Wrexham provided a good example of a community working together. Volunteers with the Youth Justice Service became reading coaches for a special school (St Christopher’s School) in Wrexham. The programme was successful not only because of the increases in reading scores and attitude but also because of the quality of the relationship that was forged between volunteers, pupils, parents and teachers. There was a strong sense of everyone working together and people’s perceptions about the school changing.

The Head of the Youth Justice Service said: “TextNow is an innovative project that helps raise confidence and self-esteem by encouraging young people to explore different reading materials and by helping them read alone. Improving literacy skills and engagement in reading are important factors in keeping young people in education and employment, which in turn can stop them from offending.”

Teachers have been enthusiastic about the benefits of TextNow. One teacher said of a young person who was a very reluctant reader, ‘He has since started to read ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ and won’t put it down.’

With support from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Equitable Charitable Trust, The Dulverton Trust, Welsh Assembly Government and Coutts Charitable Trust we are continuing to deliver TextNow to young people across England and Wales, working with a range of organisations.

*What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?*

The evaluation of TextNow has demonstrated the gains made in reading and improvement in attitudes to reading. It has also demonstrated the flexibility of the TextNow model in a range of settings from mainstream schools to a Young Offenders’ Institution and its appropriateness for a wide age range of young people.

There have been a number of challenges which have been addressed during the pilot.

1. During the 08-09 pilot, some sites struggled to identify coaches who were able to be available for coaching five days a week for ten weeks. Innovative solutions were developed during the 09-10 pilot, including encouraging shared coaching. The principal innovation though was the use of ‘peer coaches’ - three schools used peer coaches from year 11 or the sixth form. Coordinators reported that young people came to regard their coaches as role models and this resulted in an improvement in behaviour as well as gains in reading. Coaches in Wales also used the TextNow coaching role to contribute towards achievement of the Community Participation activity of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. The use of peer coaches is now a positive feature of TextNow which is promoted to participating sites.

2. One of the challenges of running TextNow was to ensure that programme delivery fits with demands of timetables. Organisations addressed this challenge by adopting a flexible approach to the delivery of daily coaching sessions - for example schools arranged coaching sessions...
during registration periods or lunch breaks or before and after school, as well as young people coming out of classes.

3. A third challenge was how to effectively reach and train the increasing number of coaches required each year, as face to face training created significant management and resources difficulties. We designed, piloted, and refined comprehensive online training, to support the delivery of TextNow. The use of online systems has enabled us to increase the access of practitioners to the training notwithstanding time and location and at marginal cost.

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

We have great aspirations for this programme given its demonstrable success in engaging young people. While continuing to extend its availability to young people in youth justice, the care system and alternative education we intend to make it much more widely available within secondary schools. We aim to be working with over 100 schools within three years with more than 5000 participants each year.

We have three key developments to be introduced during the coming year:

- A major extension of our network of peer coaches
- A much greater involvement of young people in TextNow through for example online reviewing of new books for other readers
- Introducing an online system allowing young people to use the awards they earn through the programme to buy books online

We have secured the necessary funding to start to realise our aims but if we were to be successful in this application we believe this award would make a big difference in promoting this programme and encouraging others to join in.

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**Organisation:**

**Workers’ Educational Association North West**

**Project Name:**

**Just The Ticket**

**Contact:**

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**Project summary**

The Just the Ticket project aimed to take 200 adult learners on unforgettable, informal learning journeys that would widen their horizons, both culturally and personally. Participation in Just the Ticket took learners away from their usual classroom environment and out into the exciting world of museums, art galleries, libraries, theatres and country estates, in and around Manchester and Liverpool.
The bespoke learning adventures were designed around an operational theme of travel with various lines radiating out from either a Manchester or Liverpool hub. Each course had a distinct educational focus and incorporated between one and five cultural ‘stops’ en route.

**What are the project’s objectives?**

In setting up Just the Ticket, WEA determined to target a range of disadvantaged people that included women from BAME communities, people with disabilities, men, the elderly, people recovering from substance abuse and homelessness and younger people of 18-25 years of age. The project was successful not only in reaching these groups but also in fostering good integration between the target learners and those for whom this kind of cultural activity is the norm.

Just the Ticket was very successful in attracting non-traditional, hard to reach learners. In particular, over 71% of participants were unemployed, 37% were men, 31% were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, 34% were over 50, 12% were aged between 19-24 and 22% classified themselves as disabled.

**What are the project’s activities?**

In total, 212 learners attended 21 Just the Ticket courses within a period of four months.

Courses included:

- **A Critical Eye**: how to write a theatrical or film review (The Royal Exchange, Liverpool Playhouse, Cornerhouse)
- **Reel Surreal**: women and surrealism – poetry and creative writing (Manchester Art Gallery, The Royal Exchange, Cornerhouse)
- **Memory Lane**: reminiscences and creative writing (BBC Radio Merseyside, The Conservation Centre, Maritime Museum, Liverpool)
- **On Track**: music and video (Urbis, Museum of Science and Industry)
- **Re:Generate**: urban photography (Urbis, Chips, The Lowry, Imperial War Museum North)
- **A Stitch in Time**: printed and woven textiles (Whitworth Art Gallery, Quarry Bank Mill)

**How successful has the project been?**

The impact of the project has had far-reaching effects for the lives of those who attended the courses. For example, one participant, who attended A Critical Eye, wrote such good theatre reviews that he was asked to contribute to the influential review website www.thepublicreviews.com.

I nominated Liam Norcott, for the North West Adult Learner Transformation Fund Award, and he won! Liam and I travelled to London in May 2010 where he received £200 and a commemorative certificate. Liam took part in the Reel Surreal course and A Critical Eye. You can view examples of Liam’s poems, reviews and videos here: http://www.weacreative.org.uk/justtheticket/contributions/congratulations-liam-norcott/
David Dennehey became our Just the Ticket Learner Traveller of the Year and attended a five day residential poetry writing course with the Arvon Foundation as his prize. You can view David’s poem video here: http://www.youtube.com/weacreative#p/a/A8785B18C428CFBB/1/V7q7PAv0iP8

In addition to this, three core members of the Just the Ticket Project team at WEA (Elaine Hutchings, Project Manager; Alex Whittle, Project Organizer in Liverpool; and Amanda Smith, Project Administrator) have recently undertaken Prince2 Project Management training and are now fully certified Prince2 Practitioners. This will have positive benefits for any further projects we may deliver in the future.

To read a copy of the project narrative: http://www.nw.wea.org.uk/projects/just-the-ticket/jtt-project-plan.php

A hard copy of the official evaluation report with DVD is also available.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

When I look back on Just the Ticket, it is with huge affection, pride and satisfaction. Overall, the project was a resounding success. However, there certainly were some major challenges:

Trying to use public transport was at times extremely frustrating and on occasion, impossible. We often had to resort to using private coach companies in order to get learners out to some of the more remote venues, such as Lime Park and Little Moreton Hall. This was a shame, as one of the main tenets of the Just the Ticket project was that learners should get to the cultural venues using public transport.

Designing courses around theatre performances and cinema screenings meant we had to estimate how many learners would participate in a course and then buy advance tickets based on this estimation. It was disappointing when learners didn’t show up for the course, resulting in wasted tickets (and money). This was an oversight on my part, as I had failed to take into account that for some of our learners, arriving at the theatre or cinema alone in the evening was daunting, to say the least. In future, I would design courses such as these based on matinee performances and afternoon cinema screenings, rather than expect learners to turn up again in the evening.

The way in which the courses were designed and delivered differed in Manchester and Liverpool. Whereas in Manchester the tutors had lots of input into the course design, content and delivery and each course had a classroom base, in Liverpool the courses tended to be more ad hoc and relied on the venues to provide the classrooms. In retrospect, the Manchester model worked far better and is the method we are currently using to set up WEA Creative courses.

*What are the plans for the project in the future?*

At WEA North West, we want to continue providing courses in the ethos of the Just the Ticket project and expand the offer to learners in Lancashire, Cumbria and Cheshire. These courses will be delivered under the banner of WEA Creative. To this end we are now in the process of designing courses that will utilize the wonderful facilities at Gawthorpe Hall, Helmsmore Textile Museum, the People's History Museum, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester Art Gallery, Touchstones and Bolton Museum.
In August 2011 there will be a festival of quilts at the NEC in Birmingham and I am hoping that we will be able to submit some WEA Creative quilts for inclusion in the display. The www.weacreative.org.uk website is currently undergoing a revamp with the designers at Axis Graphic Design. Once finished the site will enable us to capture learners’ experiences and Showcase examples of their work, much as we did for Just the Ticket.

Organisation:
Write Path

Project Name:
International Collaborative Writing Project

Contact:
libwithattitude@bevhumphrey.com

Project summary
The Write Path encourages young people all over the world from very diverse cultural backgrounds and with differing abilities to write in an exciting, engaging way with their peers and published children’s authors. The project is run completely online using new technologies and fills all of the students, even those that are reluctant writers, with enthusiasm. The most common question after taking part is ‘when can we do it again?’ and many participants go on to write for pleasure far more than they have ever done before.

What are the project’s objectives?
Young people in this modern world are seen as reluctant to write and use their imaginations – in recent years there has not been much space in the curriculum for creative writing and this has had an effect on their attitudes towards writing. This project was set up to create excitement around writing and encourage as many boys and girls to take part and enjoy the experience as possible, to stimulate them into seeing writing as a ‘cool’ thing to do and not as something they ‘have’ to do for exams.

What are the project’s activities?
Published authors/poets are asked to write the first paragraph of a story, or the first stanza of a poem, in any style or genre of their choosing. Six story starters a day are published on a ning (or collaborative website) in the form of a blog post. The poetry stanzas are similarly posted as blog posts on one particular day focussed on National Poetry Day. Six or seven international schools each day work to complete a following paragraph to each story/poem with schools working with roughly at least 12 students. One story each week is posted in the form of a video, and schools are invited to submit video continuations (this helps those pupils that have fantastic imaginations but struggle to put their ideas down on paper). After their hour (or hour and a half for Primary schools) participants are asked to write a blog post about their experience. Some schools also have Skype video calls at
handover of the stories and many more have a video or telephone call with myself as organiser. At the end of the project all of the schools are asked to vote for their favourite contributions and a trophy and prizes are awarded to the winners. All of the stories and poems are printed in proper books making the young people published poets/authors. This year the project has run over two weeks with schools in Louisiana, Vietnam, Kenya, New York, Pakistan, Qatar and many in the United Kingdom taking part, some 63 schools in all. I work closely with the Carmel Hill Fund in America and they think so highly of the project that this year they flew an experienced member of their staff from Louisiana to New York so that she could coordinate the NY schools after having already done this in Louisiana.

**How successful has the project been?**

It is hard to quantify the impact of a project like this as there are no tests of enjoyment we can run. Anecdotal evidence shows that it does indeed have real impact in all of the schools, with young people realising that yes they can write and indeed have fun doing so. The schools that it has most impact in are naturally those that have pupils with low levels of literacy, and the confidence it gives boys and girls in this category is heartening to see. All of the pupils that take part are eager to write more and are so impressed by the fact that their work is in a ‘proper’ book that this must without a doubt have an impact on their attitude to learning as well as on their self esteem.

There is also an impact on the librarians/teachers that organise the project in their school – this technology is very new to most of them and they have quite a steep learning curve to travel as well, and I have been told by many of them that they feel they have learnt new skills and so the project has added to their professional development.

**What are the major challenges for the project and how are these overcome?**

The most major challenge in a project of this kind is dealing with the different time zone changes and the differing technological abilities of the staff involved. The technology used is fairly simple to use but many adults that take part are not familiar with it and are rather apprehensive about doing things wrong. I deal with this by being online throughout the project and available for questions and training as much as possible in the months beforehand. The time zone problem is overcome by scheduling some continuations in the middle of the night here in the UK, and as far as possible I am online for those schools also.

Another challenge is the fact that local authorities block so many new technologies, including ning and it is always hard to get them to unblock the Write Path site. I don’t feel we have overcome this one completely because some authorities still do not see the use of social networking type sites for education, they only see possible problems. This is a fight I am happy to continue!

**What are the plans for the project in the future?**

The project will continue to grow and take on more schools in the future, the authors that take part are usually happy to do so each year. We have already run several smaller events via the ning and in the next year I intend to do more of these, for example one of our authors has suggested having a regular Writers Corner with authors ‘dropping in’ to leave writing prompts for young writers and this is something I think would be wonderful to develop.