

Reading Champion Report

2005-2010



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"The project has made us question ourselves ... raising our awareness of the importance of books and education. Reading can take people out of the conflict zone."

Martin, Residential Care Officer

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All quotes are authentic but some names have been changed to protect the identity of those involved in the project.

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Thank you

Our thanks to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for the essential funding of £49,500, recognising the potential of the project to improve access to reading for pleasure amongst children and young people. Thanks also to the Scottish Government's Changing Children's Services fund for its contribution of £20,000.

Thanks to the children, young people, care and library staff who have been involved in the project and have influenced its direction of travel.

Thanks to the advisory group members: Martin Goodwin, Barbara Wright, Nigel Beal, Caroline Budge, Sara Grady, Philippa Cochrane, Valerie Walker, Lorraine Moore and Paul McCloskey.

Thanks to Who Cares? Scotland, Edinburgh International Book Festival, Scottish Book Trust, Scottish Storytelling Centre, Barnardos Scotland, Action for Children Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council's Services for Communities and Children and Families departments for their support.

Thanks to Kelly Nicholls who got the project off to a good start and to Colm Linnane who picked up where Kelly left off. He has stamped the project with his own passion and enthusiasm for books and reading, recognising the potential in everyone to enjoy reading – if they are helped to find the right book!

Special thanks to Catherine Forde, Anthony Horowitz, Des Dillon, John Chalmers and Sandra Marrs from Metaphrog, Keith Gray, Alan Bissett, Paper Cinema, Sean Choolburra, Ruth Kirkpatrick, Marion Kenny, Teresa Flavin, Pam Wardell, Ryan Van Winkle and all the other authors, artists, illustrators and storytellers who have all contributed so much to encourage young people to read for pleasure over the course of the project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Liz McGettigan'.

Liz McGettigan

Library and Information Services Manager
Edinburgh City Libraries



Foreword

The award winning Edinburgh Reading Champion project has made a real difference for children and young people in residential care. Reading and being able to get access to books and libraries can affect people's life chances for the better. Some of the very moving case study evidence from the project shows just how life changing this can be.

For many of the children too its also about the simple fun and enjoyment of a good book, a comic, a recipe (cooking can be part of the deal!), talking about their favourite characters, sharing a story, choosing books from the local library or bookshop. Some young people have taken this a step further by scripting, staging and acting out their own drama and stories.

Reading in every sense – from cornflake packets to novels – is celebrated and enjoyed!

Take time to read this report which celebrates not only the significant successes of the project but also identifies areas for improvement as it moves on to a new chapter in the story.

The City of Edinburgh Council is delighted to continue to support the Reading Champion project for the next three years 2010-2013 as children, young people, partner organisations and Council Officers embark together on the next exciting stage of the reading journey.

Councillor Deirdre Brock

Convenor for Culture and Leisure
The City of Edinburgh Council



Executive summary

The Reading Champion project has been successful in bringing funding for reading, events and arts based activities to young people and staff in residential units. It has brought, for the first time, young people into contact with authors, theatre and storytelling. It has even inspired some of them to write their own stories and act out their own drama.

It has significantly improved the range and quality of reading resources at residential units. It has increased reading activity amongst children, young people – and in some cases – care staff. It has not had this impact everywhere however. One of the key changes identified in the evaluation is how to achieve consistency in uptake and opportunities for reading.

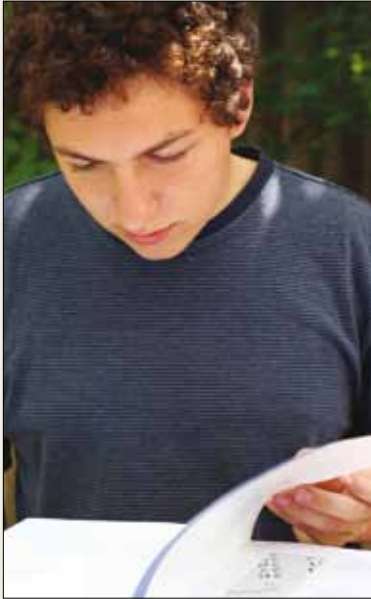
The project has given young people the opportunity to select and own books for themselves. It has acted as a source of information for staff on choosing suitable reading resources for children and young people.

The Reading Champion has coached and mentored care staff on storytelling and reading activity. This personal contact and building of positive working relationships has been a key strength of the project. In addition, the ability of the Reading Champion to gain their trust and respect has enabled good one-to-one working with individual children and young people.

The advisory group's partnership working has been highly successful. This is underpinned by its winning of the Standard Life Partnerships in Practice Award.

“The books is good, I get them all the time. I like fairy and princess books.”

Susan, Edinburgh Family Support Services



The project

The Reading Champion project aims to improve long term opportunities to access books, reading and library services for around 150 looked after and accommodated children and young people in Edinburgh.

To achieve this aim, a number of approaches and methods are employed. This includes one-to-one and group work, visits to book shops and libraries, attendance at arts activities such as the Edinburgh International Book Festival and Scottish Storytelling Centre, reading development training for staff and support for arts based activity in the young people's residential units.

The project employs a full time Reading Champion (based within the library service) who champions reading to children, staff and partners as well as promoting the work and outcomes of the project to other local authorities and care and library staff groups.

The project is approaching the end of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation phase in terms of funding support and this report reflects developments since its beginnings in June 2005.

Like many projects, some of the outcomes set out at the beginning have changed over time. This report reflects the learning by staff and partners on what worked well. It also notes what needs to change in order to become even more successful.

“The project should be owned by the young people that it is aimed at. Kids need to own it – I think that is really important. But it has not reached the young people in this unit.”

Mohammed, Residential Care Officer



History

The need for a Reading Champion project emerged from the work and outcomes of another piece of work which promoted leisure and library services to looked after and accommodated children.

The Youth Link to Libraries and Leisure Project (YLLL) promoted sports, reading and libraries. This was achieved through developing activities such as football clubs and setting up book and audiobook collections at residential units and child and family centres.

The project outcomes were evaluated by the Edinburgh Youth Social Inclusion Programme which cited the YLLL Project as an exemplar.

Over 80 looked after young people engaged with the project. One of the main issues to emerge was managing the growing demand for services – an initial group of seven residential units using the service rapidly expanded to 14.

A significant weakness of the YLLL project was whether the multimedia collections in the units were being used. While some children and staff were enthusiastically taking up the new reading resources, this was not the case overall. Discussion involving staff from the Children and Families department and libraries led to the idea of employing somebody specifically to champion the enjoyment of books and reading – not least amongst staff working in units and libraries.

“I can say that ‘I was there’ when the young people in St Katharine’s brought to life the poetry of Robert Service by staging the best production ever of *The Shooting of Dan McGrew*. If I had not seen it I would never have believed that these young people could have been helped to enjoy reading and performing in the way they did. The joy they got from doing this and the boost to their confidence was there for all to see. These young people will remember the Malamute Saloon forever!”

Frank Phelan, Team Manager – Specialist Residential Care, Children and Families

Developing support for a reading project

Library staff involved with the YLLL project met with residential unit managers to put forward the business case for a new project which would actively promote reading. Option appraisal of alternatives such as libraries staff taking on the reading champion role at a local level were considered but rejected as being less effective.

Information about the shape of the project was discussed with stakeholders and disseminated to Children and Families staff via monthly residential unit managers meetings and libraries team meetings. Research was undertaken into similar projects elsewhere in the UK and this information was fed into the project decision-making process.

Support was sought from senior management in both Services for Communities and Children and Families departments for the initial development of the idea and to secure the requisite match funding commitments required by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (the PHF Right to Read fund was identified as a possible source for funding). Support was successfully sought from Changing Children's Services, which allocates Scottish Government funds within the Council to improve the attainment of looked after children.

Start up and running costs for the project were identified with the involvement of library staff, care staff, human resources and finance personnel. The experience of similar projects elsewhere was used in deciding upon the level and allocation of funds.

An application was submitted seeking support funding for a Reading Champion project to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Right to Read fund in June 2005. After providing some additional information on key milestones, an award of £49,500 was confirmed in January 2006.



Reading Champion user communities



■ The young people

Some of Edinburgh's most challenging and vulnerable children are involved in this project. The user group is characterised by children, some of whom:

- have difficulty accessing services because of disability/communication difficulties
- have experienced multi-deprivation/neglect or abuse
- are experiencing difficulties with their education
- are excluded from school
- are marginalised or excluded from mainstream services within the community
- present very challenging behaviours and are sometimes regarded as a threat to the community.

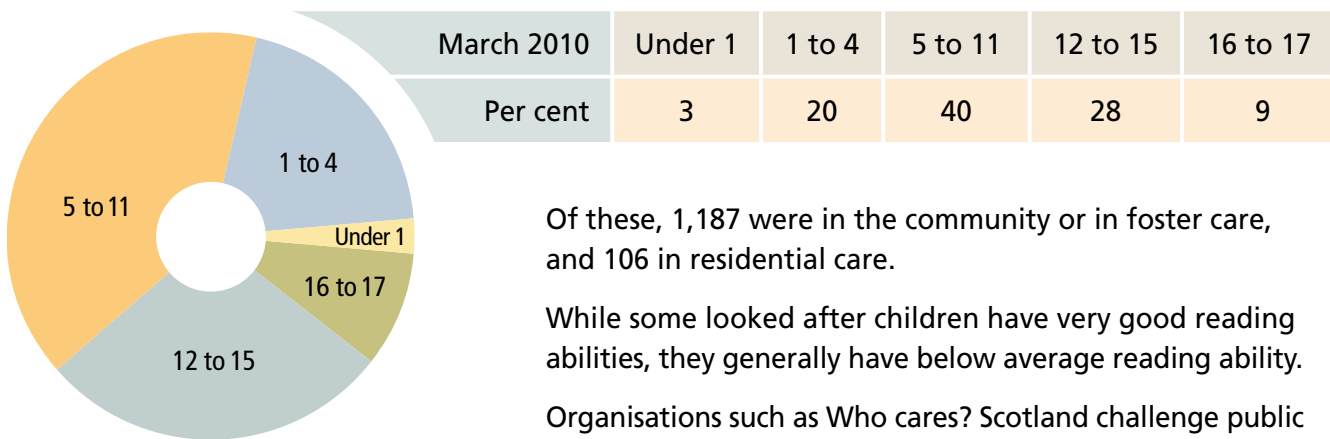


“Before Anthony Horowitz came to school I wasn't really bothered about meeting him. When I did meet him I was a wee bit interested and enjoyed listening to him, especially when he was talking about his dog Lucky. That story made me laugh!”

Kieran after Anthony Horowitz's visit to Howdenhall

■ Looked after children

The figures below relate to all looked after children (total 1,293) in the community, in family based care (foster care) and in residential care.



Of these, 1,187 were in the community or in foster care, and 106 in residential care.

While some looked after children have very good reading abilities, they generally have below average reading ability.

Organisations such as Who cares? Scotland challenge public perceptions about young people in care, notably through their 'Give me a Chance' and 'Reaching Higher' messages and campaigns.

Low expectations about young people in care can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The Reading Champion project is very much about challenging those low expectations: encouraging children, young people, library and care staff to raise the bar when it comes to reading and books.

"Reading for enjoyment was encouraged and the residential units had a good selection of books. In addition the young people made good use of the mobile library." page 5

"Almost all boys and girls enjoyed reading for pleasure in their units." page 7

The Integrated Inspection of Secure Services by the Care Commission and HMle for Edinburgh, February 2007



■ Care staff

The City of Edinburgh Council's Children and Families department employs more than 280 residential care workers across 14 different units. In addition, there are two residential units managed by Barnardos Scotland (RAFT – Residential and Families Together) and by Action for Children Scotland (Gilmerton Road Project) which employ up to 30 staff. The range of services includes secure accommodation, outreach and respite, close support units and young people's centres. Two units have children with autism and Asperger syndrome (Gilmerton Road) and physical and learning disabilities (Seaview).

Further information about the residential units can be found on the Edinburgh Reading Champion project website at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/libraries

Residential unit staff provide round the clock care for children who, for various reasons, are unable to live at home or with other family members. The range of tasks encompasses basic care tasks, counselling, relationship building and family work. Staff work at gaining trust, building relationships and raising the children's confidence and self-esteem.

All residential care services in Edinburgh have adopted a model of engagement with children that puts relationships at the centre of the work they do. Theoretical models about attachment¹ and resilience² are core areas of knowledge. Staff are expected to develop an attachment promoting style recognised as an effective way of working.

Several studies note the link between storytelling, literacy skills, good attachments and the development of resilience. 'Children learn from adults. If you don't read for fun, why would kids?' Munsch, Robert *Raising Kids Who Read*, Search Institute, 2004.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Attachment

A theoretical model that looks at the impact of the earliest relationships (usually with birth parents). It argues that these earliest relationships produce a template for the infant about themselves (as loveable or not) and others (as available or not). Children can therefore become securely or insecurely attached to their parents.

² Resilience

Personal and environmental protective factors which enable an individual to cope with adverse circumstances – the ability to bounce back in the face of adversity.

■ Library staff

Edinburgh City Libraries employs 300 library staff. The majority of staff work directly with a wide range of customers across 26 libraries and mobile library services. The service has won several national awards for its work with children and young people.

The service underwent a large scale service review 2008-2009. A key outcome of this was to develop the skills and knowledge of all staff so that they are better equipped to meet the needs of local communities, through partnership working and outreach promotional programmes.

Prior to the project there was limited contact between residential units and libraries. Although the project has improved levels of contact, there is still work to be done in this area. One of the key changes required going forward is to have sustained and strengthened working relationships between staff from libraries and residential units within local neighbourhoods.

■ The partners

Before the Paul Hamlyn Foundation application was submitted, various partners were invited to get involved in the project based upon their potential to contribute to programme activities, to involve looked after children and staff in their work streams and to help to develop the relevance of the project for the user groups.

Partners include the City of Edinburgh Council's Children and Families and Services for Communities departments, Scottish Book Trust, Edinburgh International Book Festival, Scottish Storytelling Centre, Action for Children Scotland, Who Cares? Scotland and Barnardos Scotland.

The project benefits from the fact that Edinburgh houses the national bases for the Scottish Storytelling Centre and Scottish Book Trust. However all the organisations involved have a national remit within Scotland and the UK, and similar partnership arrangements could work just as well elsewhere in the UK.

Further information on the partner organisations can be found on the Edinburgh Reading Champion project website.

“Can I swap *Fantastic Mr Fox* for the second Tracy Beaker? I really like Tracy Beaker.”

Jessie, Secure Unit

How does the project work?



■ The Reading Champion

The Reading Champion delivers the project on a day-to-day basis. There have been two Reading Champions: Kelly Nicolls and Colm Linnane. After Kelly's good start in developing positive working relationships with young people, Colm commenced as Reading Champion in August 2007. He previously worked as a library officer and brought considerable experience of successful working with young people, particularly encouraging reluctant readers.

He works with individual children and young people in residential units. He spends time with them informally such as at meal times gaining their trust and introducing reading in the broadest sense. He took some young people to book shops to choose books for their particular unit.

He collates information for staff about possible authors, performers, and storytellers and assists funding applications to put on events and activities in centres. Colm advises on appropriate multimedia resources for specific ages and interests. The role has become more that of an enabler – supporting the staff to organise and develop reading activities for children in their care.

Day-to-day decisions about the project are made by the Reading Champion in consultation with the project manager and/or partners. Referral for advice is made to the Children and Families manager as required. Major decisions on budget expenditure are taken by the advisory group.

“The joint training for librarians alongside residential staff was a good idea – it established contact, helped to break the barriers to communication and provided something to build on. We need to strengthen the link between staff as both services are busy – we could make residential staff aware of the things on offer at the library.”

Greg, Library Officer

■ Advisory group

At bimonthly partner advisory group meetings, progress is reported highlighting what is working well, identifying slippage in timescales, looking at further strategies and programmes to make the project more effective.

Partners have been involved from the beginning in recruiting the Reading Champion, defining project outcomes, establishing the evaluation framework and producing the development plan all of which can be seen on the website. They also take forward work streams for the project such as funding and stock editing.

An informal event early on in the process enabled partners to know more about each other. The project is registered on **www.seapn.org.uk**

This is a network of libraries, museums, archives, culture and heritage organisations and individuals that work together to promote social justice. They run training courses, produce newsletters and coordinate email lists around a range of topics (including working with looked after young people), and advocate the role that the cultural sector plays in this area.

■ Project manager

The project manager Paul McCloskey is based in the libraries direct services team. This team provides services for people who have difficulty accessing mainstream library services. For example hospital patients, prisoners, children and young people who have additional support needs, people in care homes and sheltered housing and disabled people.

The project manager manages the Reading Champion. He also works closely with Martin Goodwin, Behaviour Management Development Officer in the Children and Families department. Martin has responsibility for staff learning and development and previously managed Greendykes Young Peoples Centre.

“They use the public library. Kids have gone up there and used the computers online. We have had no complaints from the staff there. Sometimes the staff go up to the library with the young people. I would not want library staff visiting the unit – I want the young people to be treated as normal kids and use the library as they wish.”

Dot, Residential Unit Officer

■ Staff training

Staff training for care and libraries staff is a key element of the project. From the outset, the importance of engaging with staff has been essential to the project's success. The effective implementation of this training and outcomes is a key measure of whether the project has had any impact.

In the *Summary of Emerging Outcomes* (initial findings from 27 Right to Read projects), Viv Griffiths, the Paul Hamlyn evaluator, identified overcoming negative staff attitudes to books and reading as a major challenge faced by many of the projects.



“A key objective of the project is influencing and challenging the sometimes negative attitudes of both residential unit and library staff to the relevance of books and reading for looked after children and young people.”

Paul McCloskey, Project Manager

■ Planning and delivery

Early meetings of the partner advisory group focused on developing a plan for the project which would define what the key outcomes would be, what activities would bring these about, what evidence would be collected, how the evidence would be used.

The group defined nine key outcomes. The Development Plan visits each outcome, the evidence of impact, what activities helped, what worked well and what has not been achieved. The latter areas will be used to inform the next steps for the project.

All the outcomes reflect those in service plans and strategies for library, care services and partner agencies. Key policies and strategies considered in target setting and evaluation include:

- *A Curriculum for Excellence*, the Scottish Government, 2008
- *Getting it Right for Every Child*, the Scottish Government, 2008
- *Culture and Leisure service plan 2006-2009*, the City of Edinburgh Council
- *Library and Information Services service plan 2006-2009*, the City of Edinburgh Council
- *These are our Bairns*, the Scottish Government, 2008
- *Children and Families Service Plan 2009-2012*, the City of Edinburgh Council
- *It's Everybody's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright*, 2002
- *The Same as You*, 2002
- *1995 Children's Act (Scotland)*
- The Care Commission standards
- The Cultural Commission educational and cultural strategy.

“ This has enabled us to increase our awareness and understanding of the needs of looked after children and young people and we'll be in a much better position to deliver services to similar groups in the future.”

Caroline Budge, Scottish Storytelling Centre

Best practice and innovation

■ Recruitment and selection

A decision was taken early on to involve looked after children in the recruitment and selection process. Save the Children's *Involving Young People in Recruitment and Selection* pack provided guidance on the process and staff from Who Cares? Scotland identified and trained young people in this task. The process had to satisfy both City of Edinburgh Council staff and the partners involved in terms of equalities issues and the rigour required. The process was evaluated afterwards and found to have worked well in terms of the experience of young people, recruiters and the candidates themselves.

■ Training

Creative approaches to training were considered and research conducted into what had and hadn't worked elsewhere. Training delivery involves a variety of training methods including workshops and awareness days. Where possible care and library staff are trained together which could help to promote a better understanding of their respective service areas. Staff were asked to report back on how the training was applied in their workplace and on any consequent changes in reading development activity and working practice.

The delivery of the staff training programme started out well with joint care and library staff days but lost some ground. The reasons for this are unclear but may stem from the fact that the project began to focus more on putting on events and activities and on the individual learning of staff rather than on the training needs of all staff as a group.

The value of bringing people together for a day away from their normal workplace to share good practice in reading development and getting young people interested in books was clearly demonstrated in the positive outcomes afterwards.

The joint training approach supports the longer term sustainability of reading as a 'normal' activity in the centres.

Moving forward, the project will reignite the joint training programmes.

"The choice of books are great and I like to order my books. **Rhiannon, aged 13**

"Like the autobiographies." **Jack, aged 15**

"Love to listen to the talking books at night time." **Lizzie, aged 12**

■ Community of Practice group

A peer group Community of Practice group has been set up for care and libraries staff to meet periodically to share ideas and best practice in reading development. This has only recently started but early indications are that this is a good model for more informal learning and development.

■ Book bus

It was recognised that looked after children in Howdenhall and St Katharine's Secure Units and those attending Wellington School for boys (located in a rural setting 12 miles from Edinburgh), were at a particular disadvantage in accessing library services. To overcome this, a new mobile book bus service brings library services to these centres every three weeks. The book bus also visits all child and family centres and special schools in Edinburgh, in addition to primary schools which are further away from community libraries. Some looked after children attend these schools and can use the library services from the book bus visits to complement those provided by the Reading Champion project. As a further incentive to encourage book bus parents, a fines amnesty for parents and carers was introduced on this service.



■ Policy change

Influenced by the project, an amnesty writing off all outstanding fines and long overdue items was introduced for all young people under 19 years in Edinburgh, encouraging them to become library members once more. The project also influenced the introduction of a So Easy membership policy which allows all people to join the library and borrow books without having to prove their identity.

The idea of having a distinct library membership category for all looked after and accommodated children and young people was discussed (with no overdue fines and charges and other benefits) but this has not yet been progressed. This is due to staff not wishing young people to stand out and be identified as looked after. This is still something for future consideration, as a number of other local authorities have introduced such a policy. There are benefits in being able to measure the longer term impact on the use of library services.

In the words of the Reading Champion

Colm Linnane

■ Involving young people in buying books

"It was important that the young people bought the books for their unit. One of the things I noticed was that the books that were available did not necessarily reflect their interests. Feedback showed that none of the books really grabbed them – some felt the books were too difficult, long or not interesting enough. I decided the best way to ascertain what young people wanted was by including them in the process of selecting the stock for their own units!

"Some of the young people had little experience of bookshops. One young woman spent about 20 minutes feeling very self-conscious in one, and we were about to leave when she exclaimed "Johnny Cash" and made a bee-line for the music section. Neither I nor my colleagues could have anticipated her interests but the process of finding the right book for her really improved her confidence – minutes later she was asking whether Dolly Parton's biography could be ordered too.

"This is a key component of the work, to enable young people to find the right book for them and purchasing stock helps demolish some of the barriers. The arrival of books at the unit creates a sense of occasion and enables those who haven't been on the book buying expeditions to see what the others have selected. This is important as reading and books are something that we share with others.

"Thanks for getting us the tickets to Jacqueline Wilson, we got to meet her and she signed our books!"

Chloe, Barnardos Scotland RAFT after an Edinburgh International Book Festival event



■ Books and drama

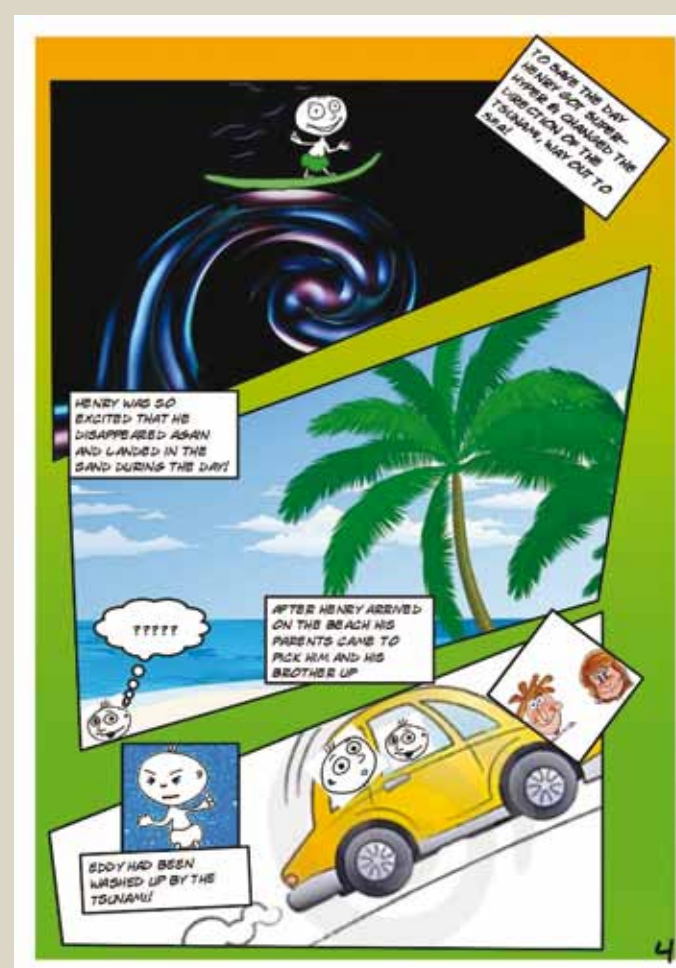
"One unanticipated outcome of the project was the enthusiasm for drama that emerged at Wellington School. Early in the project, the project hosted a dramatised version of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, commissioned by the Scottish Storytelling Centre. The entire school was invited to the performance. Care and education staff were very encouraged by how the pupils engaged with the performance and the feedback from the boys was very positive. Inspired by the performance, a group of pupils suggested writing their own play. They worked on this in class and performed the finished version, entitled *Gangs, Guns and Drugs* to their peers. The head teacher said this was the first time a lot of the boys had experienced live theatre and the experience was clearly inspirational and empowering.

"Another example of how drama created unexpected opportunities for young people to engage with the project emerged when a young man from another unit met with the playwright and author Des Dillon. Knowing the young man was a Celtic supporter, Des gave him a copy of his play *Singin' I'm no a Billy he's a Tim*. The young man enjoyed the format (which was quite easy to read) and brought it with him when he moved to Wellington School. A teacher noticed the book being shared between the pupils and suggested they read/act out parts of the play. This was a great outcome as many of the boys hadn't seen reading as being something for them. When it was announced that the play would be performed at the Lyceum in Edinburgh, 13 pupils from Wellington went along. For all of them, it was the first time they'd been in a theatre.

"The performance was well received, everyone had a great time, enjoyed the play and it complemented the work they'd done on the play at school. The journey of the script of *Singin' I'm no a Billy ...* from one unit to another and from pupil to pupil demonstrates the importance of a reading culture and the unexpected outcomes which can spring from observing what young people are reading."

Hyper Henry is a comic produced by young people in the Education Unit at St Katharine's Centre.

The story was developed through workshops with author Catherine Forde as part of the Edinburgh International Book Festival outreach programme supported by Scottish Power.



Evaluation

Key strands of the evaluation methodology:

- external evaluation report on changes in staff attitudes conducted by Helen Kay researcher from the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care. The case study is based on interviews undertaken in Spring 2007 and Spring 2009
- managers and care worker project feedback workshops, March 2010
- initial benchmark study (Summer 2007) by Colm Linnane, Edinburgh Reading Champion assessing access to reading resources within residential units
- quantitative data relating to the Project Development Plan outcomes
- several case studies narrated by unit managers and officers which focus on how the project has impacted on individual young people, on groups of young people and on the reading culture of Wellington School.

All the aforementioned evaluation papers and project development plan are available on the Edinburgh Reading Champion project website.

The main conclusion to be drawn from Helen Kay's report is that the project did not have the same level of impact at every residential unit and library; particularly so in the two units and their two local libraries which volunteered to take part in the evaluation.

The follow-up workshops for managers and residential unit officers held in March 2010 – to which staff from all 16 residential units were invited – indicated that the project had more of an impact on staff awareness in some residential centres than others. In the workshop discussion, some staff related that they had become aware that their level of engagement had been less than they would have wished in hindsight.

These findings highlight the importance of increasing staff awareness and commitment to improving literacy and reading skills of looked after children and young people. They are entitled to the very best in reading and to have knowledgeable staff to help them extend their skills. Having consistency across all units and libraries is a 'must do' for staff and partners involved in the project. The awayday in March involving care and library staff was a first step in this direction.

The John Vincent framework *Working with Children and Young People in Care – the Library Journey* is being employed to measure progress for this type of work.

To date, three embedded/engaged/community-led benchmarks have been achieved:

- regular outreach programme/including involvement by looked after children in selecting stock, supported by activities such as storytelling
- library service actively promoting work with looked after children to neighbouring authorities/region/professional groups/across the local authority/ to external organisations
- funding for work with looked after children mainstreamed, partly provided by library service, partly from children's services.



Value for money

■ Resources

Discussion took place with other agencies in education, hospital and outreach teaching teams such as Information and Learning Resources (School Library Services), to ensure that the project supported and complemented existing activities and resources were shared as far as possible. This has already resulted in the Reading Champion promoting opportunities to access school library resources of which the unit staff were previously unaware.

In addition the publishing arm of the Children and Families Department has offered free resources to the units. The Reading Champion – working across different sections of the Council – highlighted that sometimes Council staff were unaware of the vast resources which already existed.

■ Cost efficiencies

The project had a funding commitment from library services to add to the media collections already in place. A stock editing programme was undertaken to maximise the effectiveness of the collections by circulating stock around the units. Recent moves within the library service to supplier selection, with consequent economy and efficiency savings, will reduce the amount of staff time spent in choosing new stock as well as the cost of stock ordered. In addition, the stock selection process has involved the input of children, young people and care staff as the project develops.

There was a wide range of expertise among partners. The project took advantage of the resources offered including free book festival and film festival passes, books from local bookshops, spreading resources around the project.

“We had one boy who couldn’t read ... We bought him some story tapes and mixed them with some from the library – and he found that he could lay and listen to them at bedtime – it calmed him.”

Sheena, Residential Care Officer



Barriers overcome

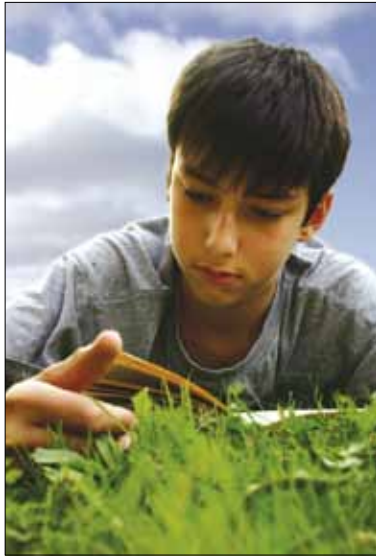
Staff advocating the project encountered some scepticism from other Council staff about the project being successful in Edinburgh. Concerns were expressed about how overstretched staff would cope with the additional work. This view was challenged by the demonstrable success of similar projects elsewhere. It was reinforced when they witnessed the positive changes brought about in the young people.

The occasional last minute cancellation of visits, events and activities in the units led to this issue being raised with senior management in Children and Families. The backing of the nominated senior manager for Edinburgh has been beneficial in efforts to address this problem.

Staff involved in the project are fortunate in being able to learn from the experience of the other Right to Read projects. In her *Summary of Emerging Outcomes*, Viv Griffiths, the Right to Read evaluator, highlighted some of the critical success factors and pitfalls for other projects. These include strength of the partnership, the length of time it can take to get projects up and running (always longer than you think), tackling barriers to library use, tackling staff attitudes early on, importance of book ownership, recognising achievement no matter how small, the challenge of training carers, support of care staff for the collections. These critical success factors and pitfalls very much reflect the experience to date of the Reading Champion project.

“For a lot of our families, I don’t imagine buying books for the children is high on their list of priorities. They cannae afford to go out and spend money on nice books and things like that. The young people are proud to take their book home and show it to Mum – and that promotes interaction in the home as well as in the unit.”

Margaret, Residential Care Officer



Changing lives

This type of work – and the impact on people’s lives – is often long term. The life changing effects may not reveal themselves until the child is an adult or well into their maturity.

Some significant changes have been observed by staff: the positive impact on behaviours, the greater sense of belonging through joining in and participating and a child discovering and nurturing interests they barely recognised – or allowed to recognise – in themselves.

The contribution of reading and stories to the child’s daily routine and the communication around sharing books is recognised by Clinical Psychologist Helen Downie who works at the Gilmerton Road Project.

“A story has now become part of the bedtime routine for the children, many of whom come to respite with a disrupted sleep pattern. Having a regular, predictable bedtime routine which involves stories and characters they enjoy can help the children settle for the night and contribute to the establishment of a better sleep pattern”.

Reading comes in useful in other areas of the children’s lives. For Ryan and Declan it’s just about having fun in the snow!

“When it was snowing, me and Declan wanted to make an igloo but we didn’t know how, but we found a book Pingu in the education room with some pictures in it. We used that.”

Where the project could improve in terms of evidence gathering is in trying to measure some of the changes in reading ability. Much of the evidence of change is based on the views of care staff rather than a formal measure of progress such as through reading tests or other measures.

“Kirsty reads to calm down – I did not realise how keen she was on reading until we got the books in. She gets very frustrated and angry sometimes and reading helps her to relax.”

Ruili, Care Officer, RAFT

■ Case study

Residential Care Manager Jacqueline McAlpine recognises the profound impact of the project on young people's lives.

"Tania was admitted to secure care when she was almost 15. Her tragic history included neglect, emotional, physical and sexual abuse. These acts were carried out by adults from within and outwith her family. Contact between Tania and her siblings was limited to the telephone and this added to her feelings of isolation.

Presenting behaviours:

- deep mistrust of and violence towards adults
- night terrors and nightmares
- self-harming
- diagnosed learning disability
- poor literacy – Tania could only read two or three letter words.

She was placed in a secure unit as she was at significant risk.

One care plan task was to aid a regular sleep pattern. Colm Linnane encouraged her and the care staff to develop a night time box and then a distraction box with soothing music and smells to create an ambience. This plan supported her emotional well being and health so that after six months Tania was sleeping six nights out of seven.

Tania's future is brighter. She resided in secure care for 14 months working through many of her issues – and was pivotal in organising a Christmas show *Twas the Night before Xmas* which children and staff performed in front of her drama group and to neighbours in the home for older people. She has recently moved to college and stays there as a residential student. Residential staff maintain contact via the Throughcare Team and Tania is better prepared to face the world."

"The project has given us the opportunity to work with a range of partners across the Council and the voluntary sector to develop innovative services and to focus on the needs of looked after children in residential units."

Valerie Walker, Librarian, Information and Learning Resources



Potential for replication

The project can be easily replicated by authorities to meet the national priority of improving young people's access to books and reading. In addition, the *Standards of Residential Child Care* would be met within care settings. Government initiatives such as *We Can and Must do Better* and the 24 hour curriculum would become more embedded within practice.

All the partner organisations have a remit in Scotland and the UK and there will be equivalent organisations in the majority of local authorities. Many arts organisations would want to target services for looked after children but sometimes the necessary network is not in place to start such a process. One of the simple benefits of this type of project is the development of good inter-agency working relationships which can often lead to unexpected spin-offs in unrelated but highly relevant directions.

In the weeks leading up to Christmas 2009, over £2,000 of books were bought by Blackwell bookshop customers for looked after children, through the Children's Book Tree initiative.

For more details on the Children's Book Tree, see the Reading Champion pages at **www.edinburgh.gov.uk/libraries**

“By enabling and enhancing a wide range of reading opportunities this innovative initiative is providing new opportunities for the young people involved.

Providing these reading experiences are valuable in themselves. They can improve literacy and build self-confidence. The young people have spoken highly of these opportunities that have engaged them with reading and the multitude of possibilities brought with it.”

Gillian Tee, Director, Children and Families Department

Future

An awayday on 23 March 2010 involved staff and partners in defining the priorities for this work over the next three years.

The five main priorities identified are:

- strengthening local links between libraries and residential units
- mainstreaming so that the promotion of reading is part of everyone's job
- developing partnerships – sharing good practice
- encouraging user involvement to shape the service
- integrating reading into a person's whole life.

The away day also came up with a list of actions to take forward the main priorities.

The partner advisory group met on 24 April to look at how these actions can be best taken forward.

As the Paul Hamlyn Funding comes to a close, the City of Edinburgh Council is committed to funding the work of the project for the next three years.



“The good partnership working and collaborative approach exemplified by the project, supports our collective responsibility as corporate parents for the well being of all looked after young people in the city of Edinburgh.”

Mark Turley, Director, Services for Communities

Recommendations

1. Involve front line care and library staff more closely in the work of the project by developing local networks of libraries and units which are self sustaining.
2. Involve children and young people themselves more directly in the work of the project.
3. Involve siblings and parents/carers in the work of the project.
4. Investigate introducing downloadable audio books to the units.
5. Investigate having attractive designed space for reading – in consultation with children and staff – in every residential unit.
6. Produce directory of contacts on the website – ‘who does what’ – so that children, young people and staff know who to contact.
7. Identify at least two Reading Champion members of staff in every unit and library – though all staff need to see this as part of their job.
8. Reignite and develop a planned training programme for care and library staff.
9. Develop a quality framework for the way the project works in residential units and libraries so that good practice and policy is shown (and evidenced) to work consistently.
10. Ensure the aims and outcomes of the project are reflected in neighbourhood, care service and library plans.
11. Embed reading for pleasure in every child’s care plan.
12. Expand the work of the project to include children and carers in fostering and kinship care.
13. Organise a biennial conference/seminar in Scotland to share and promote good practice on promoting reading for pleasure and storytelling to young people, including young people in care.

Budget

	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Employee costs	£3,715.80	£15,086.56	£16,307.25	£28,063.80
Transport	£0.00	£9.30	£0.00	£0.00
Supplies and services	£70.86	£265.70	£85.99	£0.00
Third party payments	£0.00	£2,100.00	£2,100.00	£0.00
Income	£4,098.00	£17,656.61	£18,493.49	£21,831.00
Library match funding	£311.34	£3,204.25	£3,000.25	£6,232.80

Awards received by the Reading Champion Project

Winner:

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities –
Scottish Executive Delivering Excellence (2006) Award

Winner Standard Life – Partnerships in Practice (2007) Award

Finalist:

Association of Public Service Excellence – Public/voluntary
partnership working (2007)

Libraries Change Lives (2007)

Local Government Chronicle – Children's Services (2010)

Further information

Reading Champion: www.edinburgh.gov.uk/libraries

Paul Hamlyn Foundation: www.phf.org.uk

Learning from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund



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