



QUALITATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT 2010

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY CONDUCTED BY BDRC CONTINENTAL LTD, FEBRUARY – JULY 2010



PRESENTATION AGENDA

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

MAIN FINDINGS

SESSION 1

- Parents' opinions
- Children's opinions

FACE TO FACE RESEARCH

- Children
- Adults
- Librarians
- Selection Process

LONG TERM VIEW

OVERALL SUMMARY



BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

BACKGROUND

PLRS is in its eighth year; to complement a pre-post quantitative survey, an impact evidence base was required to inform consideration of continued funding into 2011 and beyond.

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Session 1:

Tele-depth interviews with parents/ carers and young people after the first session

Opinions on first session, expectations and aspirations

Face to face:

Interviewing with parents/carers (usually) after fifth sessions
Opinions about scheme, views on process, likes and dislikes, assessment of impact on reading behaviour, preferences, achievement, and so on

Interviewing took place in Crosby (Liverpool FC), Epsom (Fulham FC), Bolton [2 libraries] (Bolton Wanderers FC), Stretford [2 sessions] (Manchester United FC), Hornsey (Tottenham Hotspur FC) and Islington (Arsenal FC)

Long term view:

Tele-depth interviews with previous scheme attendees

THE LIBRARIES WE VISITED



Bolton Heaton



Adenike Johnson



Bolton Breightment



Hornsey (Spurs)



Liverpool Crosby



Epsom (Fulham)



Islington (Arsenal)



Stretford (Manchester United)

LOW RES IMAGES

MAIN FINDINGS – 1

OVERVIEW

To a very large extent, parent/carers and youngsters were pleased to have been selected, excited at the prospect of attending and all enjoyed attending the sessions.

Selection for the scheme was seen as a privilege and never as an indication of 'failing' educationally. Most felt really lucky to have been chosen.

In most cases the input from schools was adequate or good; in a minority of cases, the selected partnering schools could have been more helpful (e.g. a more prompt response, selection of children whose reading was already good; inadequate information given to parents).

The librarians were all extremely enthusiastic about the scheme and all saw the benefits that ensue for both adults and children. Some librarians were giving up their own free time/ maternity leave to the scheme such is their conviction.

The connection between football and the reading scheme is very powerful; even those who had little or no interest in football – or those that supported a club other than that providing the 'reading star' for that group – engaged very positively with the football theme.

The scheme certainly inspired participants to feel they would visit more often; some were surprised at how welcoming, friendly and happy the library was (adults in particular).

MAIN FINDINGS – 2

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S ASPIRATIONS FOR THE SCHEME WERE CONSISTENT WITH THOSE OF PLRS :

Increase access to local libraries, to books and to professional football clubs.

Many did not 'belong' to a library and, for many, going to a library was a rare occurrence. The scheme certainly encouraged the children (and some adults) to reconsider their views about libraries and see them positively as friendly and helpful treasure stores. Professional football is a very powerful 'hook'

Improve attitudes towards all aspects of literacy.

Many of the children selected were reluctant to read (even if they could do so reasonably well). Parents were particularly keen that their children should read more (and, say, use their Playstations less!).

Raise confidence to read well, to enjoy reading, and to mix with others socially.

Adults and children felt the need to read because they want to, not because they have to. The scheme was especially celebrated for being different from 'school reading' which is, generally, imposed. PLRS is 'fun' reading. Mixing with other children outside the school situation was a positive experience.

Provide motivation towards reading more and to improve one's reading ability.

This is a strong motivation for all parents, as being able to read well is seen as a gateway to success in other areas of life – most obviously, 'doing better at school'.

Change perceptions towards reading and the stereotypically negative view of readers.

The scheme not only encouraged the youngsters to read more and enjoy reading more; it encouraged many of the parents to pick up the books their children were reading and to engage in discussions about the books as a family. In some cases, parents reported that they were now being read to by their children. This creates a cycle of positivity about reading.

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

OVERALL OPINION OF COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT THE SCHEME – PARENTS

Summary

Variable according to school.

Mainly good or acceptable but it would be a good idea to ensure that:

- Sufficient details are clearly communicated
 - what the schemes objectives are
 - the practicalities (dates, start times, duration)
- Parents are told what's expected of them
 - e.g. participation in reading
- Communication with parents is seen as a priority
 - ...even when a school steps in late

Good Ones:

"The communications was very good. We got booklets and leaflets telling us about the scheme from the school. I do think that we got the right amount of information." [Crosby]

"The school sent me a timetable with information about when to be at the library for the next six weeks. It was good information because I was able to see and plan if we were able to take part or not." [Crosby]

"We received the invitation from the library with the dates and we were given a few days to mull it over and we were intrigued. They gave us good notice. The information was clear." [Islington]

"The communication that we have had from the library has been very clear and very good, I think there were a couple of editing errors in the second letter that they sent out but they used colour in the letter which was very good and good for the children." [Islington]

"We did get enough information. We got a letter and Nike [the Librarian] was very helpful. We also get updates through the post which gives a low down of what's going to be happening in the next sessions. [Islington]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

Not So Good Ones:

"I did receive a letter from the school and some leaflets from the library. I would have liked more information from the school, more in-depth information about what the scheme entailed. I was sent a letter inviting Jason to come along but I didn't really get any more information. I would have liked more information about the ins and outs of it all and how long the sessions were going to be." [Epsom]

"Well in the beginning there was a communication problem. I didn't receive the letter that was sent by the library. It was sent to my home but we didn't get it so when the lady called and left a message on the answering machine I didn't know what they was talking about. It wasn't until Harry went back to school after the holidays, he was asked by his teacher if he would be participating and she later approached me about it. Because I don't live in the Borough I didn't really know about it so I was kind of oblivious until the teacher asked us about it. I did have to do a bit of research about it on the internet because as I didn't get the letter, the school only gave a brief description of what it's all about so once I realised what the phone message was all about I called the lady back and she was very helpful and apologetic and gave a full explanation about the scheme." [Hornsey]

"The Information from the school was terrible. We only knew that Shauna was offered a place to go but I didn't have a clue and most of the parents were in the same boat. Only three parents had a letter so they could have done with a bit more information so that we didn't go in blind." [Bolton Breightment]

"The school didn't give much information. Josh had been picked out to attend and told when we needed to attend the library but I had no idea what it was about. I think that's because our school wasn't supposed to be part of the scheme but another school let them down so Josh's school was a last minute choice." [Bolton Breightment]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

HOW DID THE FIRST SESSION GO? – PARENTS

Without exception, adults and children all found the sessions enjoyable, fun, engaging and worthwhile. Some particularly liked meeting new people.

"I did enjoy it and the lady was friendly, polite and funny. She was very good with the children they were all listening because of the way she managed the activities. I did join in. I think that it was very well done and the success of the day was that two [uninvited] children came along and enjoyed it so much that they made the decision to stay. We really enjoyed it. [Epsom]

"I thought it was very good overall. It was a lot more interactive and fun than I thought for the parents and the child. They got the parents involved which I wasn't expecting. I did join in and enjoy it because football is not really my thing so for them to be able to keep me engaged is a good thing. My daughter won a prize for having the most unusual favourite food so that went well. The only thing that didn't go so well is the fact that when we arrived I was asked to fill in a questionnaire which they didn't tell me about so I didn't bring my glasses and I couldn't read it which was a bit embarrassing. Luckily my eldest daughter was with me so she was able to help me but I could've come prepared if I was pre warned." [Epsom]

"I don't mind taking her and this week was pretty much induction so it was good getting to know each other." [Crosby]"

"Both me and my son enjoyed it. It was nice to be able to communicate with different people. I think that the interaction between the children and adults went well and also the reading because it encourages us all to read; I don't have a lot of time to read usually." [Epsom]

"I think it was really good...they made it really fun for the children. I thought what went really well is the way that they kept the children interested in choosing and reading. It also was good for parents to interact with their child." [Crosby]

"It was really good and enjoyable. I really enjoyed the participation of the adults joining in the games because they were activities that we could all do together. The only thing that could have been improved was that a lot of the books that were chosen [by the Reading Star] were books for adults. I think that there should have been a few more books for kids." [Hornsey]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

HOW DID THE FIRST SESSION GO? – PARENTS

Summary

- Consistently good
 - what the schemes objectives are
 - encouragement to read in a fun way (e.g. Prizes)- children kept interested and engaged
 - children kept interested and engaged
 - excellence of leaders
 - variety of activity
- Room for improvement in some locations
 - stuffy room (Crosby is an older library)
 - parents need to be catered for and involved (they are giving up their time, too!)

"I think that the room was very hot and quite cramped. I'm not a football fan but I think it was OK. The lady taking the session was very good and had very good people skills. We didn't do much as parents and the parents didn't really seem bothered. The children made badges and introduced themselves and played games about their favourite colour. I think it could be improved by having less people and less children in a session. I didn't really see why the parents were there because they didn't do very much." [Crosby]

"I really enjoyed it and I did join in. I went round with Stefan and joined in with the activities which I enjoyed. It was good fun. I liked how they got the children involved in everything and made it interesting with different challenges. We were given things to take home and do which Stefan took very seriously. They made things fun and not hard work. The leaders were brilliant. They got all the children to join in. There's nothing that could have gone better." [Bolton Brightment]

"I did enjoy it, it was good. I went with my husband and it was nice to see a lot of dads out with their children because you usually see the mums. I did join in and every one was at ease, there was no atmosphere and they had refreshments available which is always a good thing to keep everyone going. I don't think that there was anything that could have gone better." [Islington]

"Yes I did really enjoy it and I did join in. Parents were asked questions and included. The whole organisation of it was excellent. We got refreshments. There was nothing that could've been done better." [Bolton]

"Yes the sessions were brilliant. I enjoyed how they got all the children involved. I did join in with some things. I thought that in general they made it fun and there were lots of different things to do." [Bolton Brightment]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF THE LIBRARY – PARENTS

Parents were very impressed with the libraries which were, in some cases, new and bright but in all cases, friendly, welcoming and helpful places (which surprised some).

"I was very impressed because there was a huge choice of activities offered. English is my second language but I could still find something there for myself. There is something for everyone and a lot of activities offered. They were friendly, helpful and welcoming. If I asked them something, they always gave me a clear answer." [Epsom]

"I have visited the library before and I'm a member so it's familiar to me. The staff have always been friendly and helpful in the past." [Epsom]

"I thought that the staff were very friendly and helpful and the library was very nice and spacious and very welcoming. You were able to see what was available because the area was open and spacious; it was quite simple and not elaborately laid out." [Epsom]

"I felt comfortable. Everyone is welcome there. The staff were helpful and explained everything to us." [Epsom]

"I did feel at home because libraries are not as daunting as when I was a child. We couldn't even speak. Nowadays they're friendly. The staff are approachable they can help to recommendations so we can choose the best books for Harry's interests and needs." [Hornsey]

"It was all well organised and the room upstairs was all set out for the children. The librarian was very friendly and made you feel at ease and was friendly with the children." [Hornsey]

"We go to the library regularly anyway and everyone was welcoming. It did look as though they had made an effort because there was a football theme and there were books for adults and for children on the table." [Crosby]

"My kids go to the library anyway. There were books on the shelves and a big area to play games in and the staff were brilliant." [Hornsey]

"They made it fun and interesting and inviting. There was friendly staff, friendly people who encouraged as much as possible; everyone was included, no one was just left there on the sidelines." [Fieldway]

"The Library really did look like a fun place. It's recently been opened. They closed down our old library and opened the new one and it's very well kitted out in a fun way for example the books were not on regular bookshelves it was like a round thing that you sit in and the books are all on it. The staff are very friendly and welcoming." [Brightment]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

EVER VISITED THE LIBRARY BEFORE? – PARENTS

Most visited the library quite regularly; only a small minority visited rarely or never:

"We have visited the library before. The last time was a couple weeks before the scheme to take out books for the children." [Bolton]

"We have been to the library before. We're already members so we've been with them for a very long time. We probably went about a month before the scheme because we wanted to look around at the new library. We didn't take out any books or anything." [Bolton]

"I was there with my son today." [Fieldway]

"We go every week and we went on Saturday to pick our son up from the after-club." [Fieldway]

"Yes, a month ago to get books for the children." [Hornsey]

"Yes we have been to the library before. The last time we went was about a week ago. We took out books and DVDs for the family and my other daughter also used the internet." [Crosby]

"Yes We have been there before. The last time we went was about 3 weeks ago. I usually help the teachers when they are visiting the library. We go there to choose books and for the children once a month." [Hornsey]

EXPECTATIONS OF UPCOMING SESSIONS – PARENTS

The expectation was commonly that there would be more reading, it could get harder but there would still be lots of fun activities and the children would enjoy it.

"I hope that there will be more reading because that is my priority for my daughter. The first session was really good, motivating and very good fun." [Epsom]

"I think that it will be a challenge for the children because its something new and I do think that it will be more fun because the lady who was taking the session seemed like she was on top of things and knew what she was doing. She seemed very experienced and capable." [Epsom]

"I'd like to think that it will be like a book club where they recommend books to read and then discussions about it the following week. It should also be fun though so that it doesn't become an extension of school." [Hornsey]

"I think that it will probably be similar but maybe a bit more about the books, encouraging the children to read more books. I think that it might be a bit more challenging though but more fun in order to encourage the children." [Hornsey]

"I think that the children will enjoy it because they enjoyed the first one. If it is just talking or playing games, then I think that that will be more for the children. I don't think that the sessions will get harder but I think that they will get more fun in order to encourage the children to read." [Crosby]

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ANY CONCERNS ABOUT REST OF SCHEME? – PARENTS

None of the parents had any concerns about the remaining sessions as they all felt they were well planned, well led and fun for the children. Just a couple of comments about the choice of some of the books:

"No because the letter gave a brief description of what to expect and the lady, Rebecca I think gave a good

explanation as well. There was no pressure to the children. They gave each child a picture on their chair and they had to match their picture with the footballer's poster on the wall and then choose the players favourite book. The book that Harry's footballer liked was The Godfather and although I didn't mind the fact that it was an adult book he didn't read it." [Hornsey]

"It's good that they ask all of these famous footballers about their favourite books, but our favourite footballer was Fabianski and his favourite book was The Godfather which wasn't very appropriate. They should ask the footballers what their favourite children's books are. They should be child-appropriate. Also, the school runs a booster class on the same day and they could have done a better job in co-ordinating that a bit better so that clash could have been avoided." [Fieldway]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

HOPES FOR OUTCOMES AT THE END OF THE SCHEME – PARENTS

The hopes of parents are almost entirely based on developing a love of reading (not a school chore)

"To make my daughter interested in reading books and interested in visiting the library so that she is able to find information that will help her with lots of things and to make her interested in reading because that is the priority for me." [Epsom]

"I'd like Harry to realise that there's all different ways to read and it can be enjoyable. I get to choose books as well which is good because I love reading." [Hornsey]

"Charlotte already enjoys reading so I hope this will help her interest to continue to develop and grow so that she becomes more confident reading out loud as she's not so confident at reading out in class at the moment. What I want to get out of it is just for my daughter and what she can achieve." [Epsom]

"I hope that it will give Jessica more confidence in reading so she can enjoy reading instead of seeing it as some boring school thing. I hope it also helps improve her school work. I just do it to support her and it gives us time together to bond which is always a good thing." [Crosby]

"I'd like my son to do more reading and enjoy it. I've noticed that he will sit down and do more reading since joining the scheme. Also reading together with others is good because then you get different opinions." [Epsom]

"My hope is that my child will spend more time doing his own reading in his own time and not because of having been forced to read. I hope that he will become more confident in his reading and to be more aware of what he needs to do; that will also improve his self esteem." [Epsom]

"I hope that it will help Hannah with her confidence and general reading and for me I hope I'll get to enjoy reading again, something apart from the bills." [Crosby]

"To encourage Rory to read different types of books. He tends to read books for boys like books by Jeremy Strong and the Horrible History and Horrible Science books. I hope that the scheme will encourage him to read a variety of different types of books. It will also hopefully make him more confident to speak out in front of the class and not to always leave it to the other children in the class." [Hornsey]

"I think that she will get to meet an author and have pictures taken. I think that it will help with her confidence although she is already good at reading. She may also read a wider variety of books. I hate books because I'm a bit lazy and have no time to read." [Hornsey]

"I'm hoping for more of an interest in books than he already has and more independent reading. We've always read as a family, that's why the scheme was attractive to us, we just want our children to be more involved. My confidence hasn't changed, I just hope that my son's confidence will improve." [Fieldway]

SESSION 1 PARENTS

(16 interviews completed after first session)

PERSONAL READING BEHAVIOUR – PARENTS

All but one of the parents said they enjoyed reading a bit or a lot. A wide range of reading matter is liked with books and various magazines being particularly popular.

I LIKE READING A LOT	10
I LIKE READING A BIT	5
I DON'T LIKE READING MUCH	1
I DON'T LIKE READING AT ALL	0
MAGAZINES	6
BIOGRAPHY	2
COMEDY	1
FICTION	5
GOSSIP MAGAZINES	2
HORROR	1
NEWSPAPERS	4
DRAMA/ACTION	1
CHILDREN'S	1
MURDER MYSTERY	4
GIRLY BOOKS	1
NON-FICTION	4
ACADEMIC	1

SESSION 1 CHILDREN

(16 interviews completed after first session)

IMPRESSIONS OF FIRST SESSION – CHILDREN

The children really liked the session because it was fun; the ice-breaker games were popular and the importance of the football framework is very apparent.

"Yes, it was really a lot of fun because there were lots of games and the lady was really nice. I especially enjoyed when we were filling in answers to questions like what is my name and what is my favourite football team." [Epsom]

"I thought that it was fun because of the games that we played at the end. I think that I will become better at reading because of the fun games at the end." [Epsom]

"I enjoyed playing lots of games like when they said header you had to catch and when they said catch we had to header. We also made badges but the games went really well" [Crosby]

"I enjoyed it when we talked about football because I really like football. I liked seeing the famous footballers' posters. We played a game where we had to find out what team the players played for. I liked finding out about lots of different teams." [Epsom]

"It was really good. We got to play loads of games and did activities. We played pass the ball and another game where we had a picture and had to find the footballers favourite book. My one was the Godfather so I didn't read it as it's an adult book but I really enjoyed it otherwise." [Hornsey]

"I think it was really good because we made badges and we got juice and biscuits. We played football games as well. I joined in and really liked looking at the books." [Hornsey]

"I did enjoy it because it helps you to get to know about other teams that people support. You also had to read books and I enjoyed the games that we played. What I particularly enjoyed was getting to know what teams other people support and the games." [Hornsey]

"Yes it was fun because of all the activities. The only thing is that sometimes we had to wait around while other people were doing things. I also really enjoyed the head and catch it game because it is all about opposites and because it's challenging." [Crosby]

"I thought it was really fun. Me and my mum spent time together and we played games. I also enjoyed finding out what the footballer's favourite books were because I am an Arsenal fan. I really enjoyed playing the games and most people joined in." [Hornsey]

"Yes, it was quite fun; it was a bit nerve-racking at first because I didn't know what was going to happen, but then it turned out fun in the end. There was everybody trying to get to know each other and everybody having fun with things that have got to do with football." [Fieldway – Arsenal]

SESSION 1 CHILDREN

(16 interviews completed after first session)

IMPRESSIONS OF FIRST SESSION – CHILDREN

"I am enjoying it because of the activities. I felt confident joining in. We had to find the envelopes and look for the author's book. I really enjoyed that. I think it was all set out really well. There isn't anything that I thought could've gone better." [BRIGHTMENT]

"Yes I did enjoy it but I can't remember what I especially enjoyed. I did join in. We did a quiz. I'm not sure what went well and there is nothing else that could have gone better." [ISLINGTON]

"The scheme was really good. I enjoyed everything. I did join in with all the activities. I thought that the game we played where we had to find the grey envelopes which had questions in them, went particularly well because we got stickers and a sticker book as well. There's not really anything that I think could have gone better." [BRIGHTMENT]

"I did enjoy the sessions especially the different activities which I did join in with. I really enjoyed that we all got to take part because we were all involved." [BOLTON]

ASPIRATIONS BY THE END OF THE SCHEME – CHILDREN

Whilst the main aspirations involve reading, self-confidence, improvements in school work and footballers, the hoped-for outcomes often involve more engagement with parents.

"I hope that the scheme will help me to read more and do better at school. Also tour the grounds and meet the players." [BRIGHTMENT]

"I hope that it will help me to do better at school because we do a lot of reading at school. I also hope that it will help mum to like reading more because she doesn't do a lot of reading at the moment. I hope we can also read more as a family and go to the library more." [BOLTON]

"To enjoy reading more and to do better at school." [EPSOM]

"I hope that it will make my confidence in reading go up. I'm not really confident in reading now. I think that we will read more as a family and maybe my dad will join in too." [EPSOM]

"I hope it will help me to be better at school because I have a lot of writing to do at school and I hope this will help me to do better. I also hope to meet players and tour the grounds and I'll be able to play games with mum." [CROSBY]

"I hope that it will help me to like reading more than I did before. I didn't like reading much but from the books chosen at the scheme, I've found reading quite exciting. I hope that my parents will be proud that I like reading more and that will give me confidence." [EPSOM]

"Hopefully I would have read a lot of children's books and it will help me to be more confident and help me with school work. I hope it will help mum to help me with spelling and reading and I'd enjoy reading with mum." [HORNSEY]

"I hope this will help me to do better at school and spend more time with mum and dad as a family." [CROSBY]

SESSION 1 CHILDREN

(16 interviews completed after first session)

IMPRESSIONS OF THE LIBRARY – CHILDREN

Libraries are generally seen as interesting, fun, informative and safe places.

"I think that it is an interesting place because there are books there and you can do your homework." [EPSOM]

"I think that there are different types of libraries, some are just for adults and some are not very interesting. There are also libraries for kids, so I think that they can be fun." [CROSBY]

"I think the library is interesting because people won't make fun of me there if I can't read." [EPSOM]

"It's fun but you have to be quiet and I like to make a bit of noise." [HORNSEY]

"I think that it is fun and interesting because sometimes when you go in, there might be an activity on and you can also find out more about people in olden times." [HORNSEY]

"To do more reading and football, to do better at school and to help with my reading and speaking out loud. I think that I will be more self-confident and enjoy reading more." [HORNSEY]

"I hope that I will have learnt a few more things that I didn't know before like maybe games that I didn't know and to read more and different books." [CROSBY]

"I think that it will help me with my reading. I do enjoy reading and I am around the library a lot. I think that the scheme will help me to do better at school and make me more confident because I'm not confident reading in front of the class." [HORNSEY]

"It's just something that helps you read better. My dad used to not like reading that much but now that he's gone to Reading Stars he's reading books with me now. I'm already a member of the library and I have my hopes up that a player will come." [FIELDWAY – ARSENAL]

"I think that it is quite an interesting place because you can discover cool books." [CROSBY]

"I think that it is an interesting place because you can read a lot of books and find out a lot of new things." [HORNSEY]

"Just a place where you go to sit down, relax and everything's quiet and you get to read or rent a book that maybe you don't have." [FIELDWAY – ARSENAL]

"The Library is a fun place. The staff is very friendly and nice." [BRIGHTMENT]

"The Library is quite welcoming. They have computers for the children which was good and the staff are friendly and helpful." [BOLTON]

There's always one exception!
I usually get bored at libraries." [FIELDWAY – ARSENAL]

SESSION 1 CHILDREN

(16 interviews completed after first session)

ATTITUDES TO READING AND PREFERENCES – CHILDREN

All the children interviewed said they enjoyed reading – some a bit, some a lot*. A wide range of reading matter is liked with the majority reading books that interest them.

I LIKE READING A LOT

I LIKE READING A BIT

I DON'T LIKE READING MUCH

I DON'T LIKE READING AT ALL

NO REPLY

ACTION/ADVENTURE

FOOTBALL

SPACE

COMICS/MAGAZINES

FANTASY

FAIRY TALES

ANIMALS

DINOSAURS

DICK SMITH

COMEDY

NOT TOO LONG OR SHORT

JACQUELINE WILSON

SPIES/WAR

LONG BOOKS

INTERNET

7 CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

8 Summary

• Children are enthused and inspired by PLRS

- they feel that the sessions are fun, interesting and sociable

- the library is recognised as a friendly, safe and interesting environment

- the children are clear about what they want to get out of the scheme: whilst this is mainly about improving reading skills and the enjoyment of reading (which will, in turn, make them more self-confident and more successful at school), it's also, for many, about achieving closer engagement with parents

- although children realised that, they would benefit by improving their reading skills, most claimed that they already enjoy reading. This could either be interpreted as a need to question the selection process* or as a positive indicator that participants, while poor at reading, are capable of enjoying it.

* Notes on the selection process to follow

* However, this was not reflected in the face to face interviews with parents and children and 'a bit' might be a polite way of saying 'not much'!

45% OF CHILDREN IN THEIR PRE-PROJECT QUESTIONNAIRES SAID THEY DIDN'T LIKE READING AT ALL.

THE FACE TO FACE SESSIONS

THE NEED FOR A FLEXIBLE APPROACH

The original plan was to conduct focus groups. For several reasons this was not always appropriate (e.g. The scheduled activities did not easily incorporate dedicated focus group time; the children were often very excited, failed to concentrate and quickly became silly – and tried to out-silly one another!).

In the event, a combination of focus groups (with adults) where practicable, and interviews with individual/pairs of adults and children were conducted. The investigation covered:

Adults

- overall view of the scheme
- views on impact on child
- impact on own reading habits
- anything they'd change
- extent to which PLRS has delivered against objective

Children

- what they most/least enjoyed doing
- level of difficulty
- what they got out of attending
- what will happen after the scheme finishes
- use of library before scheme and anticipated use after scheme
- changes in reading behaviour



LOW RES IMAGES



THE FACE TO FACE SESSIONS

CHILDREN

The substantial majority of the children were well behaved and all were excited by being part of the scheme. They all seemed comfortable in the library situation and the structure of the scheme (light hearted, fun, not school, author visit, bookshop visit, trip to ground) was viewed very positively.

What they most/least enjoyed doing

- they enjoyed just about all of it: the main thing is that it's fun and not school. The main difference between PLRS and school is that books are not 'imposed' and there's no pressure to finish a book. One girl didn't realise you could leave a book unfinished and start another.
- specifically, they enjoyed having social time with their friends and meeting new people.
- meeting a real author was superb, the bookshop trip (a first for some) and choosing books to buy for themselves were really appreciated and enjoyed.

- going to the ground and meeting a player was, for many, the real high point even for those who didn't support the sponsoring team.
- the children all seemed to like the competitive edge to the games and activities which meant they could win prizes for themselves; most were also motivated by reading and summarising books to win stickers for the team.

level of difficulty

- many (if not most) could already read with no great difficulty so the level of difficulty in reading (decoding) or enjoying the reading matter was rarely an issue. Those who did struggle with reading found participation no problem and, importantly, most had found something they had enjoyed reading.

what they got out of attending

- in every case, the scheme presented a fun way to concentrate on reading – discovering more about books, authors and getting expert help with the kinds of thing that will be found enjoyable to read in future.
- all enjoyed the relaxed and sociable environment and liked the unpressured approach to reading.
- many said they had discovered that reading was more enjoyable than they had anticipated or experienced (it's not necessarily 'boring!').
- a substantial proportion mentioned that the scheme provided an opportunity for more engagement with parents through reading with them (or, sometimes, to them). One girl who had no interest in football took her Dad (who no longer lives with her) to a game with the ticket she'd won and now goes to football with him regularly and she talks and reads about football with him.

THE FACE TO FACE SESSIONS

what will happen after the scheme finishes

- most were enjoying the scheme so much that they would like to see it continue for longer. Parents agreed that it would be a good idea to carry on (most adults enjoyed it, too!) but recognised that it would need funding, housing, running, etc. The library would be the best place to continue running reading 'clubs' like this – anywhere but school.

use of library before scheme and anticipated use after scheme

- a minority hadn't been in the library before although rather more said they didn't use it. All claimed that they would be likely to use the library much more after the scheme finishes because they realise how many great books there are to choose from and how friendly and helpful the library staff are.

88% OF CHILDREN AND 87% OF PARENTS SAID THEY WILL GO TO THEIR LOCAL LIBRARY MORE

changes in reading behaviour

- there is little doubt that the reading habits of almost all participants had changed as a result of the scheme. Those who could already read well seemed to want to demonstrate how good they are, showed their enthusiasm and clocked up lots of stickers with their reviews. Those who were less confident and competent had also tried hard to find material they liked and most had managed to achieve something they probably would not have done without the scheme.

81% OF PARENTS FEEL THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOLWORK HAS ALSO IMPROVED SINCE THEY PARTICIPATED IN PLRS

THE FACE TO FACE SESSIONS

ADULTS

Predictably, there was a varying degree of intellect and enthusiasm for reading in general and the scheme in particular. There was a clear connection between the views and behaviour of the parents and the children. For most, the scheme was something they agreed to support for the good of their children; in a couple of cases, it seemed like an inconvenience and 'something else' to have to fit in.

overall view of the scheme

- universally positive – the youngsters want to come (one even counts down the days!) and they willingly do the assignments (unlike school homework in some cases).

views on impact on child; impact on own reading habits

- all said they felt that there had been a positive impact on their child's reading and, in many cases, their own. This was seen as quality time with the kids and a time to concentrate on reading for fun (as with the children, a positive contrast was drawn with school's 'planned reading'). As one father said: "It gets us out of the house together and him away from his gamestation for a couple of hours".

85% OF PARENTS SAID THAT PLRS GAVE THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO BOND WITH THEIR CHILD

- In several cases, the scheme had helped parents whose first language is not English. By reading together, the child is helping the parent to improve language skills and an appreciation for written English. The child also feels good about helping the parent to integrate.

anything they'd change

- In some locations, the parents felt that they needed more involvement – they sat in the room and watched their children engage in some activities. This was by no means the majority view but a substantial minority felt they could have joined in more with what was happening.
- On a similar note, in some locations adults were not offered 'half time' refreshments.
- Parents should not, of course, be ignored; they have given up their time each week to make the scheme a success and the children want them involved, too.

extent to which PLRS has delivered against objective

- The substantial majority of adults thought the scheme had delivered very well against what they hoped it would achieve – i.e. A scheme that would help their child to improve their reading skills (in some cases) and gain a greater love of reading (all cases).

THE FACE TO FACE SESSIONS

LIBRARIANS

- Exceptionally committed
 - giving up spare time
 - friendly, helpful, well prepared
 - making it fun
 - go beyond the call: e.g. finding Roald Dahl books in Polish
- Mostly happy with the materials provided and all seem to appreciate the support and materials provided by Football Foundation
 - however, some would appreciate a bit more guidance on what works well with other groups as the activities vary from library to library according to how librarians interpret the guidelines

THE ATTENDEE SELECTION PROCESS

In a number of cases, the children selected were not 'core target' youngsters; for example, they already enjoyed reading and read extensively. In other cases, participants' friends had been invited to make the numbers up or had joined in because they were using the library. Consideration might

be given to consulting with school contacts regarding their motivations about the scheme and re-stating the selection criteria to schools and librarians.

- some schools tardy in supplying names and needed much chasing
- some schools didn't provide enough names leaving the Librarian to have to top up numbers: "Ben didn't get invited to the scheme by the school. He goes to art club within the library so he was invited through them."
- some schools seemed to select good readers for the scheme as a reward for doing well (e.g. a reading prize of a visit to Anfield)
- one school asked who'd like to attend and put all the names in a hat for a lucky dip
- Substantial numbers did not support the sponsoring club – most kids at the 'Tottenham' group supported Arsenal; not one 'Fulham' participant supported Fulham

However, none of the 'non-core' children caused any problems for other participants. Several of the librarians indicated that it was 'not a bad idea' to have a good reader in the group that all the others can aspire to. There may also be a distinction between 'someone who's a good reader' and 'someone who enjoys reading' that PLRS can help overcome.

Summary

- Children are enthused and inspired by PLRS
 - excited by being part of the scheme.
 - comfortable in the library situation
 - overwhelming majority like everything about the scheme
- Adults universally positive
 - approve of concept and its aims
 - enjoy seeing their children succeed and enthuse about reading
 - some would like more involvement
- Librarians exceptionally committed
 - highly professional
- Selection process would merit further review

THE LONG TERM VIEW

PREVIOUS ATTENDERS

We were able to contact four families who had participated in PLRS schemes in 2008 and 2009. Data Protection considerations made contact with a larger sample very difficult.

OVERALL OPINION – VERY POSITIVE RECOLLECTIONS FROM ADULTS

"I thought that the sessions were really good and they got Ross into reading which it was aimed at. It was very well run and the staff members did a very good job."

"We did enjoy the scheme and all the different events. It was interesting because the author, Dan Freedman, talked about his books. There was also a lot of different schools that participated which means that the children got to interact with different children. I don't think that there was anything that could have gone better. It was all planned well."

"I did enjoy the sessions. Bradley had just started a new school so this was good for him to be able to interact with the children and get to know them. It was also a good opportunity to get to know some of the parents. I thought that when they had an author come in that went really well. My son has since got all the books that Dan Freedman's written and he's really enjoyed reading them."

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE END OF SCHEME – ADULTS

The hopes that parents had for their children to be more interested in reading appear to have been satisfied and there is evidence that the interest gained during the scheme has been sustained in the longer term:

"I didn't know what would happen once the scheme finished. I didn't want it to finish. We were really enjoying it and it was quite nice for me and Ross to do something together so we quite enjoyed our Saturday sessions. It did what it was supposed to do, it did get Ross more interested in reading and going to the library, looking at the books and taking books out. It also helped us to read more as a family. I found it really good and I think it's a good thing and other children could benefit from it."

"I hoped that it would improve Anthony's reading. I didn't want to personally gain anything from it just for Anthony. We do read more together as a family since the scheme. There's no new activities that Anthony has got involved with since."

"Well Bradley is quite a good reader anyway but sometimes I have to nag a bit to get him to read so I think that this probably got him a bit more interested because he was able to choose more books rather than just picking up the school books that they're given to read. He was more willing to choose books that were interesting to him. He was told that Dan Freedman had a new book and he wanted to get it so he's more interested in going out to buy books. I do a fair bit of reading myself anyway so it was definitely good for Bradley."

"I did enjoy the sessions. Bradley had just started a new school so this was good for him to be able to interact with the children and get to know them. It was also a good opportunity to get to know some of the parents. I thought that when they had an author come in that went really well. My son has since got all the books that Dan Freedman's written and he's really enjoyed reading them."

THE LONG TERM VIEW

WHAT'S HAPPENED AFTER ONE OR TWO YEARS – ADULTS

There had clearly been a longer term positive impact with both participants and families having changed their reading behaviour since attending

"Ross has dyslexia and finds it hard to read so it's not an enjoyable thing for him. Sometimes he'll get a book and he'll love it and read it and other times he won't find a book that he likes for a while and then he won't read for a bit. I'm sure that once his reading improves to a standard where it's not difficult for him to read and it just comes naturally he'll enjoy reading more. I think [the scheme] did help him at school. I think he was reading more, playing games and being more interactive. He's doing really well at school."

"The scheme has helped with both his reading and self confidence. It has increased his reading which in turn has boosted his self confidence and self esteem. I do think that it has also helped him with school because the special needs teacher at his school said that she thought it had helped him. I think the fact that he had other children from his school, that he was familiar with, also

helped. I do think that it helped me and we do read together more as a family."

"Yes I do think that the reading stars scheme has helped with his reading and his self confidence. He did change school because there was some children that wasn't very nice to him so he had practically just started the school about a week when he was picked so he was getting to know new friends and build his self confidence."

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO OTHERS? – ADULTS

Adults would have no hesitation in recommending PLRS to other parents on the basis of the positive long term impact they have seen on their own children

"Yes I would recommend other children to take part in this because it's a good thing to do and it does get the kids' interest – especially those who don't like to read. It was also enjoyable, it wasn't just about pick a book, read that, tell us what you think about it next week, it was fun which I think is important. You don't want it to be like school. It has to be different and that's what it was. They played games. It gets the mind going,

gets you thinking because you get other children talking about their books and what they've read and it's very good. It wasn't what I was expecting. I just thought it was going to be about reading and writing essays but it wasn't, it was very enjoyable."

"I would recommend [it to] other people for all the benefits that Anthony has gained from it."

"Yes I would recommend others to do the scheme because it was good fun based around football. I'm not sure how interesting it would be if you didn't enjoy football but it was very good."

THE LONG TERM VIEW

OVERALL OPINION – VERY POSITIVE RECOLLECTIONS FROM CHILDREN

“I did enjoy the football reading stars scheme. I enjoyed going to see the people in Tottenham Green. There was an author who came there and told us how to get started when writing a book then he read some of his books. I joined in with all the activities. My favourite activity was getting books signed from the author. I think it went really well when we went to the stadium and went through the tunnels. There is nothing that I thought could have gone better.”

“I did enjoy going to the scheme. I enjoyed meeting the author because he was talking about his life and showed us some videos of what he’s done which was interesting. I did join in with the activities, answering questions in the quiz and getting books from the library. I really enjoyed going to Fulham grounds where we met one of the players and we had to do a presentation then they called out our names and gave us a certificate. I can’t think of anything that could have gone better.”

“Yes I did really enjoy it. What I enjoyed about it is that it wasn’t just reading, it was fun as well. I joined in with the fun and games. I can’t really remember what went particularly well but I think that the scheme could have lasted longer because since everything’s stopped I haven’t been reading as much.”

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE END OF SCHEME – CHILDREN

The children had a clear vision of what they hoped would happen when they went to the PLRS:

“I hoped that it would help me to read a bit better and more confident at reading and maybe help me to see reading as more fun at school. I hoped that it would help mum to help me to make sure I’m doing well in reading and to help me be more self confident. It helped us to read more as a family. We used to go to the library more when we was going to the reading stars scheme.”

“I hoped it would help me to read more and be more confident because before I wasn’t that good of a reader. I hoped that it would help mum to help me read and we’d read more as a family and go to the library. I did hope that we would

have gone to the Arsenal ground instead of Tottenham’s because I’m an Arsenal supporter.”

“I hoped that it would help me to do better at reading and at school and that me and mum would be able to go to the library more.”

WHAT’S HAPPENED AFTER ONE OR TWO YEARS – CHILDREN

“Yes some things did come true. I think I’m more self confident in school and with reading but we don’t read as much as a family any more or go as much to the library. It’s helped me with my reading and being more self confident because in class I never use to read out loud but now sometimes I do.”

“I do think that the things I had hoped for did come true apart from going to Arsenal grounds. I do think that I do read more books and have become more self confident because at the reading scheme you had people who could help you to read the books that we can’t read.”

“I do read more and I’m more self confident. We do kind of go to the library more as a family. The reading scheme has helped me read more and do better at school. I think it’s because it’s mostly about football so it made learning more interesting.”

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO OTHERS? – CHILDREN

The children were very happy to be ambassadors for PLRS – they had clearly enjoyed it, recalled lots about it and had found it helpful to them for self-confidence and improving their general school performance.

“Yes I would tell my friends to go to the scheme because it’s fun and you learn a lot more about reading and it’s about football.”

“Yes I would tell my friends to go because it will help them more as well.”

“I would tell my friends to go because it’s fun, it’s helpful and it gives you something to do on the weekends.”

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS – 1

PLRS is very highly regarded among child participants, parents and librarians. The structure of the scheme, its basis on football and the energy and enthusiasm of the librarians all provide an incentive for children and their parents to enhance their enjoyment of reading.

Meeting authors, visiting bookshops and enjoying the professional skills of librarians to help choose appropriate materials is great fun, enjoyable and certainly productive.

It is very apparent that there are positive ‘unintended’ consequences of PLRS, most notably the social and familial aspect of children spending quality time with parents and using reading as a means of bonding.

The only substantive element of concern is the policy (or lack of it?) applied by schools at the participant recruitment stage. It was common to find children who were not ‘poor readers’ and, possibly less of an issue, did not support the sponsoring club.

One of the ways the scheme works is the power of the ‘I want to be like [footballer]’. Some librarians reported that some better readers in a group are likely to make a similar ‘I want to be like him/her’ positive impact on the whole group as they encourage the less engaged readers to enjoy reading, too.

OVERALL SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS – 2

On the basis of this qualitative assessment, we recommend that PLRS should continue its valuable and highly regarded work

We would also recommend that the recruitment policy be reviewed and, if necessary, clarified and re-stated to schools.

It may be worthwhile consulting with participating schools in order to improve understanding of the motivation and support for the scheme; issues such as which point of contact would be most appropriate (e.g. Literacy co-ordinator, Head teacher or special needs coordinator - SENCO) could be clarified.



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Reading The Game

