

Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Leading Questions

Learning from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund

Right to Read: Looked-after children and young people in care

Free with Words: Prisoners and young offenders

Libraries Connect: Refugees, asylum seekers and other marginalised groups

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By Helen Carpenter MBE



Foreword

Paul Hamlyn Foundation has as its mission to help people to realise their potential and increase their quality of life. In the Social Justice programme, we are also focused on trying to integrate young people who are marginalised in society.

Increasing access to reading fits very well with each of these aims. Few other skills are so central to participating in society and realising potential. Accessible literature was also a great passion of my father, and one of the bases on which he built his success.

So I am delighted to be able to share this report on what we have learned from the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund.

There is much here that will be of use to organisations concerned with promoting reading as a means to tackling some of the social injustices faced by marginalised people. We have gained valuable insights into how libraries, local authorities and prisons can work to help remove barriers to young people's participation in society. We have not found that there is a single formula for success that all organisations can follow, but we have identified some key principles that we think can play an important part in making projects work effectively.

The Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund was one of the Foundation's earliest Special Initiatives. We made 60 grants over several years through three different streams, and the process has provided us with valuable lessons on planning, developing and implementing other initiatives – in particular emphasising to us that more in-depth work with fewer funding recipients could be a more effective approach to future Special Initiatives.

We are grateful to Helen Carpenter for her work pulling together the various strands of the Fund and placing them in context in a useful and informative way.

Michael Hamlyn
Chair, Social Justice Programme Committee

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Introduction: The big picture

“I never thought I’d ever read a book through, but I did and it’s fantastic. I can’t imagine reading a better book.”

Prisoner talking about *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, Free with Words project, Leicester

The Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund, launched in 2003, was one of Paul Hamlyn Foundation’s earliest Special Initiatives. Administered through the Foundation’s Social Justice programme, the Fund sought to encourage work by libraries and other institutions to improve access to books and reading among young people and others experiencing disadvantage, including refugees, asylum seekers and care leavers. Perhaps more ambitious was the aspiration that the work supported by the Fund would lead to lasting change – not only in terms of access to books and reading, but in the culture and ways of working of public libraries and other institutions, such as prisons and care services.

The Fund recognised the potential of public libraries to help improve people’s lives, and challenged them to go about this in more effective and creative ways.

Unsurprisingly, given its founder’s interests, the Foundation was sympathetic to the view that books and reading could have transformative power, with public libraries being well placed to open up new routes into reading and learning for the disadvantaged.

At the same time, the Fund was also a challenge to institutions that were widely perceived as not having moved with the times. Where there had been innovative practice, library services often suffered from a lack of connection with and influence on policy and development at a wider organisational or institutional level. Although there had been investments in technology in public libraries – such as the People’s Network – there had not been the same investment in workforce development and in meeting the new challenges posed by rapid and complex social and economic change. Change, where it did happen, was too often a product of chance rather than design.

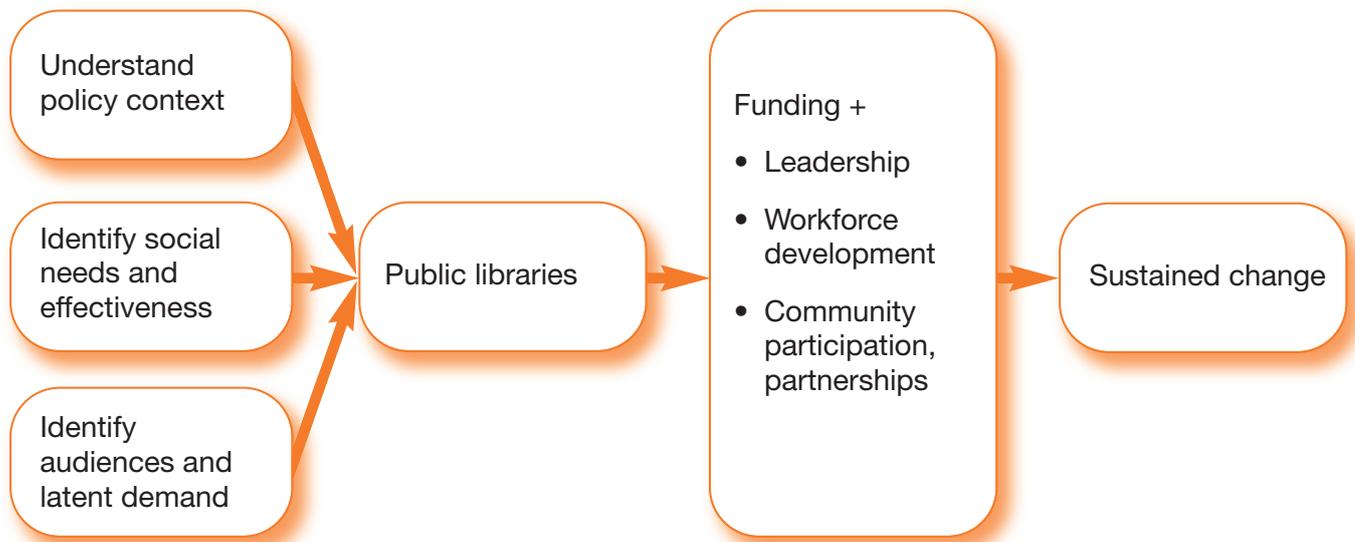
Over the timeframe of the Fund, major policy changes have altered the climate in which public libraries operate. Perhaps most notable has been the re-shaping of the social care profession and statutory children’s services. The publication of the Every Child Matters framework (2004), in particular, has been significant, with its focus on achieving key outcomes for children and young people. As a consequence of policy changes such as these, the requirement for a wide range of organisations to work together to play a role in improving and transforming lives has grown. This shift in approach has provided new and still emerging opportunities for public libraries to develop their role and demonstrate their impact and contribution in wider policy arenas, with a focus on well-being and civic participation.

Public libraries have tended to be slow to react to this changing environment. This may be in part because their operating culture is not used to expressing their role in terms of policy objectives emerging in other sectors, such as children’s and youth services. It may also be that libraries have not sufficiently

entered the consciousness or collective imaginations of policy makers in other domains, as a resource that can help them to achieve their objectives. What is certain is that libraries now find themselves, along with other public services, facing increasing challenges to improve their performance. With the last year marked by political debate and discussion about the future of libraries,¹ there are also growing pressures for public libraries to work with each other, with other local authority departments and with other organisations and local communities in a much more collaborative way at every level.

The timing of the Fund has therefore been critical. In retrospect, what seemed ambitious and innovative in 2003, encouraging much more cross-sector work involving public libraries to transform lives, is now a more widely accepted part of the landscape – through, for example, Local Area Agreements and Comprehensive Area Assessments. There remain significant challenges in putting the rhetoric into reality, and public libraries have some distance to go towards clearly demonstrating their value and impact, and articulating how they fit into a bigger picture of policy and practice.

In order to contribute to sustained local and national change, projects must identify social needs, audiences and latent demand, and place what they plan to achieve within policy context. Projects also need to follow funding with strong leadership, workforce development and community participation and partnerships.



This review looks critically at the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund and poses some questions about the process of achieving systemic change.

¹ Empower, Inform, Enrich – the modernisation review of public libraries: a consultation document. Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Dec 2009
www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/libraries/5583.aspx

Inquiry into the governance and leadership of the public library service in England. All-Party Parliamentary Group on Libraries, Literacy and Information Management, Sep 2009
www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/public-libraries/pages/appg.aspx

A local inquiry into the public library service provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council. Led by Sue Charteris. DCMS, Sep 2009
http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/libraries/5583.aspx

What makes a good library service? Guidelines on public library provision in England for portfolio holders in local councils. Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), Oct 2009
www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/public-libraries/Pages/goodlibraries.aspx

However, in doing so, it is important not to lose sight of the impact that projects have had on individual lives. All the projects produced anecdotal evidence from participants to show how the work has encouraged creativity, changed perceptions and built confidence, teamwork, a sense of belonging, and enjoyment from reading.

Projects

The Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund, launched in 2003, comprised three funding streams:

- **Right to Read** for looked-after children and young people in public care
- **Free with Words** for prisoners and young offenders
- **Libraries Connect** for neglected communities such as refugees and asylum seekers

The Fund supported 60 projects across England, Wales and Scotland, over 40 of which were part of Right to Read. A list of Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects can be found in Appendix 1.

- Projects ranged from one to three years, and several received second grants to extend their work.
- Over two-thirds of grants were for £50,000 or less.
- Grantees were required to provide evidence of senior management commitment and matched contributions of at least 25 per cent (usually comprising time and resources in-kind).
- The work of most projects was limited to their local authority area, but several operated regionally or nationally, most notably:
 - **Big Book Share**²
A national partnership between the prison service, prison libraries and public libraries to support inmates' and their families' reading and learning, inside and outside prison.
 - **Partners for Change**³
The involvement of socially disadvantaged young people aged 11–19 across the South West of England in shaping public library services and supporting a national library improvement programme for young people.
 - **Welcome To Your Library**⁴
A national project, established after a pilot project involving five London boroughs, aiming to connect public libraries with refugees and asylum seekers and increase opportunities for their participation.

² www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/big-book-share/

³ www.readingagency.org.uk/private/south-west-smch-0609/
www.readingagency.org.uk/young/fulfilling-their-potential/

The Partners for Change project: involving socially excluded young people in shaping library services. Ciara Eastell, *New Review of Children's Literature and Librarianship*, vol 14, issue 1, Apr 2008, pp.31–44

⁴ www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk

A distinctive approach to change

The Fund is probably best seen as an example of proactive grant-making. Applicants made initial applications to one of the three streams, and then Paul Hamlyn Foundation provided support and feedback as they developed their application further. Once funding was agreed, grantees could access a range of resources to support and enhance their work. These resources included one-to-one contact with Paul Hamlyn Foundation staff, workshops, conferences, web-based resources and networking between projects.

More 'active' grant management represented a steep learning curve for the Foundation. Providing for all grantees' needs was not always possible, but the lessons learned have informed subsequent initiatives, such as 'Right Here', which uses expert consultancy on organisational change and partnership management to support grantees.⁵

More details of the approach used in the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund can be found in Diana Leat's study of how philanthropy can contribute to longer-term systemic change. In *Just Change*, Leat reviews in detail the ways in which Right to Read operated as an attempt by a charitable foundation going "beyond funding in achieving the change it sought".⁶

Unusually for a charitable foundation, the majority of which tend to support individuals or voluntary organisations only, direct funding was also given to local public library and prison services. The decision to fund in this way reflected the Foundation's recognition that systemic change would not be possible without the leadership of statutory services, and partnerships with the voluntary sector were actively encouraged.

This approach meant that the £3.7million invested by Paul Hamlyn Foundation through the Fund was one of the single largest investments in public libraries in the UK by a charitable foundation since the time of Andrew Carnegie.

Feedback suggests that this investment has been influential in the sector, both in terms of the work it has resourced and lessons learnt, and the effect of having a high-profile partner taking seriously what libraries can do.

⁵ www.right-here.org.uk

⁶ *Just Change*. Strategies for increasing philanthropic impact. Diana Leat, Woburn Place Collaborative, 2007. Available from the Association of Charitable Foundations acf@acf.org.uk

What did the projects do?

Projects supported under the Fund varied in scale and in the nature of their operating conditions and environment. However, all the activities broadly sought to identify and remove barriers to services and participation.

Central to achieving this objective was the development of a more sophisticated approach to understanding need and moving away from offering services on a 'one-size-fits-all' basis. Building trust and understanding with partner organisations and local communities was vital.

In pursuit of this, projects embarked on a wide range of activities – often in partnership with other organisations, providing specialist support and skills. Activities included:

- Understanding and mapping local needs – identifying the size, location and changing make-up of local communities to map specific and emerging needs and planning accordingly.
- Simplifying procedures – waiving charges and making it easier to join the library.
- Working with community organisations.
- Developing a multi-agency approach to service planning and delivery.
- Outreach work, such as visiting residential and foster homes and traveller sites.
- Awareness training and tailored support – both for library staff and others, including local authority staff in different departments, foster carers, residential home staff, social workers and prison service staff.
- User involvement in both service design and delivery – for example, enabling users to select stock and working with volunteers from different backgrounds.
- Providing ESOL, community language, reading and citizenship support.
- Collecting and publishing creative work – for example, working with writers and readers in residence in prisons.
- Book gifting schemes, celebrations of achievement, reading groups, taster visits, homework, study and ICT support.
- Developing resources to share lessons and good practice and highlighting relevant policy and opportunities – in particular using websites, e-digests, evaluation reports and events.

Achievements, challenges and lessons

Changing lives

“We only want to feel equal and in the library we feel equal.”

Refugee volunteer in Leicester library service

“I borrowed loads, they were brilliant. Oh, there were those ones about being pregnant and it was like reading my own life back. It was so good ... I couldn't put it down.”

Young mother, Derby Read Away project

“The first time the Chinese prisoners saw the books available in their own language they started giggling and slapping hands with one another with joy.”

Prison librarian, HMP Bedford

Project and individual achievements in the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund have been recognised through the Libraries Change Lives award and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities Delivering Excellence award. Two people working on Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects were nominated successfully as ‘Reading Heroes’ as part of the National Year of Reading in 2008, one of them by a foster carer.

Several projects have been able to document progression and development of individual project participants in settings beyond the library.

“I have spoken to the class teacher ... who has monitored progress, and he feels that this particular group have made significant progress in their reading confidence. They are much more willing to contribute ideas in class when discussing different texts and are engaging more with books, reading a wider range of books and showing more enthusiasm for reading in general.”

Head teacher to library project worker

“The kids were made-up with seeing something come in the post with their own name on it (Christmas present from the library). When they first arrived, they told us their parents had told them bedtime was for bed, not for reading. We read to them every night for about two weeks, and it took time, but they just love it now. The older one reads to the younger one.”

Foster carer, Knowsley

However, in general there is clearly a need for a more longitudinal approach that tracks impact over time. This has been a challenge for short-term projects and would be an important part of a wider strategic approach to change.

Understanding needs

“You have to ask their opinions and be prepared to be told that, what you thought was a ‘great idea’ might not be viewed the same by them.”

Librarian, Dorset

“An important lesson we have learnt is that you have to work with young people where they are and this may not be in your library. We have to look at how our colleagues in the Youth Service operate which is by progressing from where the young people are ... this is very hard work and very time consuming, but wonderful when you see the results.”

Project lead, Gloucestershire, Partners for Change project

The work of library staff was much enhanced where they were able to develop a more sophisticated understanding of users’ needs, and when they were prepared to have their assumptions challenged and change their approach to their work in response. The benefits were evident in better engagement and relationship-building at all levels, new skills, more structured project planning and a more reflective approach.

“The main misconception was that the traveller community is a discreet group and the young people on each site visited would have similar literacy levels and attitudes towards education and reading ... We found that instead the traveller community is made up of very many groupings, all of which are different, with many feeling culturally separate from others also called ‘travellers’.”

Schools Library Service manager, Dorset, Partners for Change

“Being able to identify the various communities resident or active within the local authority boundary (Southwark) enabled the project manager to establish a plan for working with each different community and to make decisions about priorities and appropriate service developments and delivery methods for individual communities.”

Evaluation report, Welcome To Your Library

All the findings from project work suggest that in order to understand the barriers to service use, it was critical that staff be willing and able to invest time continuously in listening effectively to users’ needs, and how they varied and changed. It is no surprise that the amount of time required was often underestimated. The value of going through this process was strengthened further when those working on projects were effective in sharing the knowledge and insight gained.

“The impact of the project has increased over the three years it has been operating. The managers have worked with community organisations and specific communities, building up trust, confidence and encouraging people to access further services.”

Excerpt from Libraries Connect project final report, Hull City Libraries

A key component of the work to understand users' needs was the training of library staff. The purpose of this was to raise staff awareness of the life situations faced by particular groups and to enable staff to explore social inclusion more widely in order to gain a deeper understanding of the broader context of their work. Such training helped library workers both to identify potential barriers to service use by particular groups and to reflect on their own perceptions, role and behaviour. This was particularly effective when the training was designed and delivered with active participation by those who had personal experience of the issues being discussed. In addition, training was offered in some projects to raise awareness and introduce the library service – for example as a component of courses for foster carers.

Training and other activities, such as reading groups, were also valuable ways of ensuring that staff other than those leading on particular projects had an opportunity to participate and learn. Improving awareness, when successful, led to non-project staff being much more willing to get involved in activities to support project work.

“I feel that I have gained more of an insight into the lives of children in care and it has given me a wider perspective and tolerance for all social groups ... I have never knowingly met a child who was in care before, so that has been a real plus. I hope it has increased my understanding of what they have to deal with.”

Member of library staff, Nottingham

“The introduction of a social inclusion session to the training had a very positive effect, and staff ... were then able to put their refugee and asylum seeker training into context. If at all possible, future training should include this element ... Another important area is testimony from refugees themselves, whether in person or on DVD, as staff responded well to personal histories and were enabled to see the human dimension of statistics and regulations.”

Feedback from library manager, Welcome To Your Library training, delivered by The Network and North East Refugee Service

“One prison officer kept referring to the reading group as being on Jackanory duty but, at the end of the first session, became involved and asked to be included in future events.”

Project worker, Free with Words Project, HMP Bedford

A fundamental factor in the success of projects was clarity about what active participation by users in service planning and delivery really meant and following this through in practice. This ensured consultation was meaningful and motivating for participants and led to real opportunities for engagement.

“The WTYL national phase aimed to adopt a person-centred approach, in order to make sure that services were relevant and appropriate to refugees, in contrast to a service-led approach ... one based on what libraries ‘could do for’ refugees, which had primarily been adopted in the pilot.”

“A person-centred approach to service delivery generally views the service user as the best authority on their own needs, fully capable of identifying the services they need to support them. In adopting a person-centred approach, service providers carry out consultation with individuals and groups to identify the most appropriate services to deliver.”

External evaluation, Welcome To Your Library

Where this happened, it required time, ongoing project staff support from senior managers and colleagues, input from partners with relevant knowledge and experience and strategic commitment to a wider cultural and organisational shift in thinking. Examples of activities that emerged from this approach include the refugee work experience and volunteering programmes in the London Borough of Camden and in Leicester.⁷

While there has been significant progress in developing participation and making a real impact on individual lives, the pattern of delivery in many libraries is still largely rooted in a model of service ‘to’ rather than ‘with’ particular groups. This challenge to think differently was acknowledged by one of the consultees in the Welcome To Your Library project, who felt that:

“... although WTYL had been valuable it had been a ‘starting block’ ... Experience of working with a community empowerment organisation during an application to the Big Lottery Fund had further challenged the library service’s thinking regarding how to work ‘with’ local people, namely, it had raised the possibility of local community representatives having a place on planning groups.”

Where projects and staff got this right and there was a clear commitment across the whole library service, the work had a much greater likelihood of achieving longer-term objectives. Evidence shows that where this happened, it has led to change.

“The defining feature of the national phase was the degree to which participating library services incorporated learning from the project into core services ... where there has been effective ownership and willingness to change, services are making a real difference in their understanding and practice in relation to community engagement.”

External evaluation, Welcome To Your Library

This has major implications for workforce development and there are still challenges in developing participatory approaches and the capacities of existing staff.

Improving access and welcome

Learning about and acting on different users’ needs and developing participative approaches through projects have all contributed to improving access and welcome.

Evidence from the evaluation of the Fund shows that by working with community partners, committed library staff found ways of raising awareness

⁷ www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/listChildren.asp?page_id=38 and <http://research.mla.gov.uk/case-studies/display-case-study.php?prnt=1&prjid=261>

and clarity about what a library is and can offer new users, particularly where language is a barrier. For example, it is often not clear how to distinguish between free and fee-charging services in the library. Ways to overcome this included the use of less text and more icons in signposting, and other visual ways to highlight services.

Approaches to market segmentation and publicity are often under-developed, but projects have been successful in involving and giving a voice to people who can champion the library and influence others in their networks through word-of-mouth.

“We put [A] in touch with the library service and she took up the opportunity of volunteering. She has since got a job as a cleaner at a local primary school, where her children are pupils, but in addition, she has become a parent-governor. She is also running an advice group for refugee women in the library ... she is introducing the library to them, perhaps for the very first time, and making them feel welcome.”

Community Development Officer at Refugee Action, Leicester

Success in bringing increasing numbers of vulnerable people into the library has, in turn, given staff confidence in learning how to balance and manage competing expectations in relation to use of library space.

Many library services, irrespective of whether they have received funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation, have reviewed their joining procedures, revised or abolished requirements for proof of identity and waived fines and charges for specific groups. Despite this, some still have cumbersome procedures and charging policies.

New users need to feel comfortable and represented in the library. This can be through welcoming staff who reflect a spectrum of the population, through the choice of stock and displays and through the organisation and design of library space.

Some project participants from different backgrounds who have worked as volunteers have gone on to take up paid roles in public libraries.

In practice, long-term success in enhancing access is contingent on a proactive approach and welcome by all staff, which in turn requires a clearly articulated and shared vision and strategy for the library service as a whole.

Project design and management

“The work links to the council’s corporate objectives, and when we can show people that, they start to take notice of what libraries are doing.”

“We needed this and it has changed the way we are thinking.”

Comments by heads of service, Welcome To Your Library external evaluation

“Developing the project plan was really useful in terms of getting the project together. As a result of doing the plan we are able to relate our practical work to how it fits in with policies and strategies. It has been really useful to give the project focus. It shows how it all fits together ... not only locally, but regionally and nationally as well.”

Project worker, Leicester, Welcome To Your Library

Project work highlighted how important it was to ensure library staff's understanding of how to situate and promote their work in a wider policy context, something that turned out to be a bigger task than had been anticipated. Perhaps in retrospect, all projects could have benefitted from being offered more structured support in this area. Paul Hamlyn Foundation, through its current 'Right Here' programme on young people's mental health, is now providing grantees with consultancy support around partnership working and organisational change. Although things are changing and progress has been made over the lifespan of the Fund, this remains an area where skills development work is required.

“Project planning that put the overall desired outcomes from the project into a work plan was a relatively new concept for some of the project workers and one that required considerable support in the attainment of a clear, succinct format.”

External evaluation, Welcome To Your Library

Investing in and supporting the project planning process with partners to enable development of a clear, shared vision and goals made a difference to securing support and influence and enhancing the impact of the work. However, there was some evidence from project evaluation that staff sometimes only fully recognised the value and importance of the planning process once projects were at delivery stage and achievements were already apparent.

The work of projects was enhanced when senior library managers understood how it could enable them to demonstrate delivery against a wide range of policy agendas – a feature that was important in engaging partners.

“From a management perspective, it is crucial to engage partners and encourage them to act as advocates. Perhaps a bit more focus was needed at the beginning on getting colleagues, e.g. social workers, aware of reasons for the project. They don't acknowledge their key role in being a positive reading model. We found we needed to persist with selling the key messages ... that reading is an essential life skill and without it, children and young people are more likely to experience multiple disadvantages.”

Document with key lessons from Knowsley libraries

Where managers took an active and supportive role and linked project learning into wider strategic planning and policy, there was a much greater likelihood of the work continuing beyond the project's life.

However, there were many challenges to achieving this. Due to their transient and unpredictable nature, prison settings in particular often made planning

difficult and participants in projects frequently moved on before work was completed.

In some Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects, workers relied on the support and active cooperation of colleagues, but struggled to generate sufficient engagement and commitment. Sometimes project workers found colleagues unwilling or unable to work in new ways and did not understand what the value of doing so might be, flagging up the need for more strategic leadership and staff support. In these circumstances, it was important that these resistance factors be recognised and addressed – through clarifying purpose, ‘fit’ with corporate objectives, or through finding ways to convey the value that the work would bring. In each of these cases, the involvement of leaders and support for staff was important.

Partnership development

“The partnerships we’ve put in place have been key to getting things done. It can sometimes be difficult to engage with each other, as we often have different ways of working, but some of our best ideas have come from discussions we’ve had with partners. I’m not sure we’d have got this far if we hadn’t been able to establish these relationships.”

Welcome To Your Library project worker

“Right to Read ... has become embedded into the consciousness of other services, agencies, projects and groups. It has addressed the need to update the knowledge and understanding of carers and other professionals regarding the development of a culture that promotes the positive life chances of young people in public care, and sets it in a context of family learning ... The time invested developing relationships ... has been invaluable and the value will continue ... The project itself has built up a reputation of supporting both parents and carers in helping young people to enjoy and achieve ...”

Final report, Right to Read, Knowsley

Partnerships developed by library services with community organisations, groups of users, other council departments and numerous external agencies have been a fundamental element of all the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund work.

The effectiveness of partnerships working in different settings has varied. Success has been contingent on the strength of leadership and commitment to develop and embed learning in a structured way, using project work as a stimulus, and adopting a phased approach. Where this happened, library services have been able to build their reputation and demonstrate their worth over time.

Evidence from project work shows consistent factors which underpinned successful partnership development and genuine participation and involvement, including:

- Providing support to community organisations to help them meet their own objectives and giving them a better understanding of what libraries do.

- Mutual understanding of different organisational cultures alongside flexibility and willingness to adapt to changing circumstances.
- Clear objectives and clarity about roles and responsibilities of different partners in formal and informal project steering groups and any joint project work.
- A strategic approach, with strong multi-agency commitment to tackling specific priorities and developing a recognised role for the library service and specific projects.
- Exchanging and sharing skill-sets with partners in other sectors such as health, in order to co-develop strategy and project work and adopt a more reflective approach.
- Addressing with partners the options for sustaining work in the long-term at the earliest opportunity.

Project work highlighted the benefits of working with external agencies where there had been no connection made with libraries before. For example, North East Refugee Service, which worked with North Tyneside libraries, reported that they had not previously considered the library as a potential partner but were pleased the library service had approached them. They felt they had gained tangible benefits and working together had changed their perception of the value of library services.

Project work showed that taking time to get to know groups by visiting them on their own premises, attending community events and learning about needs was critical to building partnerships with community organisations. This first stage was an essential building block to develop joint participation in practical work. Successful experience of small-scale project work established good personal contacts, trust and understanding, providing the groundwork to go on to develop more ambitious proposals.

Findings from project work, particularly projects with a shorter timeframe, indicate that many library services underestimated the complexity, time, effort, patience and skills involved in effective partnership-building and the strategic commitment required to develop a clearly structured approach.

Setbacks and challenges included, for example, re-organisation and funding changes that prevented both partner organisations and library services from sustaining commitments made, which led to a lack of continuity.

Sustainability

“The Reading Friends project came to an end when the grant funding was used up. However, the legacy ... has been links between South Gloucestershire Library Service and the Education for Children in Care Service which promotes library use by children in care and foster families. Today, an Inclusion Support Worker based in the Family Placement Team has a responsibility to work with foster carers and with children in care in their foster placements to address literacy issues and promote reading for pleasure.”

South Gloucestershire Beacon Co-ordinator at a national learning exchange event on improving outcomes for children in care, organised by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), September 2008

“I know that this work should be developed and delivered as part of the core service anyway, but sometimes we need a ‘push’ to get something going and to show how the library service can support wider aims and objectives. Libraries Connect supplied that ‘push’.”

Strategic Library Manager, Access and Inclusion, Hull

The Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund was designed to enable innovation, but at times original project targets and objectives were overly ambitious and too dependent on the passion, commitment and initiative of individuals. Without proper support or connection made to strategic planning, there was a tendency for work to stop when project funding ceased.

Projects needed both to innovate and incorporate, transferring learning into the planning and delivery of core services in order for work to continue long-term. Marrying innovation with achieving long-term systemic change is not easy. With hindsight, there has been recognition by the Foundation that investment of the same overall budget into fewer projects with a greater emphasis on sustaining transformation might have had a bigger impact.

Further skills development is required to map need and link evidence and impact of project work into policy and performance indicators and wider strategy. This would enable public libraries to position themselves effectively as part of strategic partnerships and to build awareness of their wider role and value.

An examination of Children’s and Young People’s Plans, for example, in areas which have received funding from Paul Hamlyn Foundation, indicates that by no means all of them refer to the role of libraries. Where they do it is often in rather general terms rather than setting out their contribution to specific priorities.

Nonetheless, project work continues to have consequences a long while after projects themselves have ended. Those library services that have taken a more strategic approach and achieved recognition of how they contribute to wider policies around, for example, social inclusion, community cohesion or citizenship, are also the services that have been most successful in sustaining work.

There are some signs of library services using the opportunity of other funding, such as from Big Lottery Fund, to embed learning from Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects in relation to community engagement, but it is too soon to say what the longer-term effect will be.

What conclusions can we draw?

Rather than a systemic change programme, the aims of the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund emphasised innovation in ways of thinking and working, and as such, it has been a very timely and valuable investment, with important lessons.

Individual projects have broken new ground, demonstrated good practice and shown that where there is appetite for change, along with the capacity to deliver, real progress can be made.

There is evidence to show that learning from projects is being transferred into core practice and services, particularly around reading and learning. This includes incorporating social inclusion measures into appropriate strategies and plans.

There are also some signs of greater emphasis being placed on a participative approach and enabling new users to influence library service planning and delivery, but it is too soon to say whether this will lead to more profound change. The degree to which this has happened varies considerably from one local authority to another, as does the extent to which community engagement has been understood and practiced.

However, relevant changes still have a largely internal focus. External partners have been very positive about the relationships they have formed with library services as a result of some Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects. Nonetheless, additional development work is still needed to enable public libraries to influence policy and be seen automatically as a natural partner in external environments, such as in Local Strategic Partnerships, or implementing Local Area Agreements.

Project work must be keyed into achieving a lasting transformation of public library services and the next step is to achieve that change.

Paul Hamlyn Foundation has also learnt lessons about this approach to social change. In particular, the active grants management approach developed in the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund is now common across its other initiatives. The Foundation recognises that in achieving wider and systemic change, projects face considerable challenges, and developing realistic and measurable approaches early on is particularly valuable.

In retrospect, if investing a similar amount of resource, the Foundation may have had more impact in the longer term if it had funded fewer projects, but invested more time and support in developing models of change with them and partnerships to deliver that change. This approach is being taken in the Social Justice programme's latest initiative on mental health, 'Right Here'.

Key issues

Learning from delivery of projects

- Evidence from project work shows that most new ideas have come from staff working at or near the front line, as well as from working across sectors and boundaries, with communities and partners with different backgrounds and skills.
- Long-term success is contingent on vision, effective ownership and planning, and real motivation and proactive commitment at all levels to: work creatively and collaboratively; be open to learning; exchange good practice; and move away from a service-led model.
- Flexibility is required. What is relevant and appropriate in one location may not be right in another, and public libraries need to be in a position to make decisions based on evidence about their local population.
- Local authorities have tended overall to be hierarchical and risk-averse, with structures that militate against innovation and create departmental silos. Public libraries are not immune from this and it poses a challenge for the sector.
- Bold change may be viewed as too risky by local authorities. They may be content to see a library service coasting when that service is perceived as a small part of council business, if it is not currently failing in relation to national indicators and satisfaction levels, and if the perception of what would be gained from the changes is seen as limited.
- The lack of space and incentive for developing foresight, reflection and creative thinking, combined with pressure to meet delivery targets, has led to timid, incremental improvements, rather than stepping back and asking more radical questions.
- A more profound systemic transformation is needed than what a project can achieve alone, but that transformation needs to draw on learning from innovative project and partnership work. Catalysts and leaders are needed to nurture new ways of working.
- Heads of library services have a critical role in making change happen, but they need appropriate supporting infrastructure, tools and programmes to help them engage with local communities and ensure that communities really are at the heart of delivering services.
- Libraries do not have to play a lead role in partnerships, but do need to be able to articulate and define much more clearly what their contribution is, with evidence to back this up.
- Libraries need to have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, and to plan and deliver to new audiences in a way that demonstrates their public value.
- Lack of clarity of purpose has tended to leave public libraries at the periphery of local government concerns, with too much emphasis on processes and not enough on demonstrating how they are able to transform lives.

Wider impact

- The lack of articulation of a clear, shared vision and purpose within the sector is reflected in a lack of understanding and recognition in the external policy environment of the wider role and value of public libraries.
- Strong leadership and direction is needed within government to generate a renewed sense of impetus and purpose, and to drive improvement. There are already national strategies and policy frameworks in place that can help place public library work into context.
- Opportunities should be taken to draw together good practice and have a clearer model of what libraries should offer at a national level.
- Advocating for and positioning public libraries across central and local government is essential to opening up opportunities and resources for strategic long-term partnership working – for example in relation to citizenship and integration.
- Champions at every level in and outside the sector are vital, as are constructive critical friends in positions of authority with no direct connection to library service delivery. They can challenge and support, refresh debate about the future, provide different perspectives and stimulate new ideas and ways of thinking.
- Partnerships need to be part of a long-term phased approach to change management, for example to enable cross-sector learning and skills-sharing and opportunities for funding to test and develop new ways of working.
- There needs to be a clear analysis of the skills and diversity needed in the library service of the future. This needs to be coupled with far more opportunities for staff that are eager to acquire the necessary leadership, management, communication and people skills needed for a dynamic and outward-facing service.

Appendix 1

Right to Read projects

Lead body	Project duration	Grant
Barnardo's	3 years	£15,000
Birmingham City Council	27 months	£45,000
Blackburn with Darwen MBC	12 months	£13,370
Bolton Literacy Trust	2 years	£46,700
Cambridgeshire County Council	2 years	£11,000
Cheshire County Council	2 years	£37,170
Cornwall County Council	2 years	£50,000
Croydon, London Borough (Phase 1 and 2)	3 years	£17,640
Derby City Council	2 years	£30,000
Dorset County Council (Phase 1 and 2)	4 years	£49,050
Edinburgh	3 years	£49,855
Enfield, London Borough	12 months	£20,402
Gloucestershire County Council	30 months	£30,000
Hampshire County Council	2 years	£40,000
Hertfordshire County Council	12 months	£15,000
Kingston-upon-Hull City Council	2 years	£44,835
Knowsley MBC	2 years	£36,000
Liverpool City Council	12 months	£51,220
Manchester City Council	2 years	£50,000
Newcastle City Council	2 years	£50,000
Norfolk County Council	12 months	£25,000
North Tyneside MBC	3 years	£7,290
Northamptonshire County Council	2 years	£40,000
Northorpe Hall Trust (Kirklees)	12 months	£12,875
Nottingham City Council	2 years	£25,000
Nottinghamshire County Council	2 years	£25,000
Portsmouth City Council	3 years	£35,000
The Reach Up Team (Oxfordshire)	2 years	£58,000
Read on – Write Away! (Derbyshire)	2 years	£29,636
St Helen's MBC	2 years	£48,000
SE London Performance Improvement Group	12 months	£35,000

Lead body	Project duration	Grant
South Gloucestershire Council	6 months	£8,300
South Tyneside MBC	2 years	£16,130
Southampton City Council	2 years	£34,600
Staffordshire County Council	3 years	£22,963
Swindon Council	12 months	£23,452
Tameside MBC	2 years	£20,000
University of Sussex/East Sussex County Council	12 months	£16,000
Walsall MBC	2 years	£50,000
Warwickshire County Council	2 years	£59,000
West Sussex County Council	2 years	£58,940
Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust	2 years	£50,000
York City Council (Phase 1 and 2)	3 years	£40,725

Free with Words projects

Lead body	Project duration	Grant
HMP Bedford	2 years	£39,780
Big Book Share (The Reading Agency)	3 years	£120,000
Bridgend Council	2 years	£82,475
Doncaster Borough Council	2 years	£7,600
HMP and YOI Feltham	2 years	£72,000
John Moores University (Free to Write)	5 years	£49,750
Leeds City Council	3 years	£89,250
*Leicestershire County Council	4 years	£83,500
*Lincolnshire County Council	4 years	£99,751
London Borough of Islington	3 years	£42,668
Medway Council	2 years	£23,000
NW Area Prison Service	4 years	£100,000
Staffordshire County Council	3 years	£60,512
Stirling Council	3 years	£179,950
HMP Wealstun	3 years	£50,300
York City Council	2 years	£22,500

*Extended project

Libraries Connect projects

Lead body	Project duration	Grant
Blackburn with Darwen MBC	2 years	£40,000
*Kingston-Upon-Hull City Council	4 years	£97,184
*Leeds City Council	3 years	£75,000
*London Libraries Development Agency (Welcome To Your Library)	3 years	£250,000**
Manchester City Council	2 years	£90,000
Nottingham City Council	30 months	£55,000
Brighton City Council	2 years	£37,867
Sheffield City Council	30 months	£22,379
The Reader (Get into Reading and Merseyside Reading Communities)	3 years	£179,688
The Reading Agency (Partners for Change)	2 years	£99,775
Volunteer Reading Help	30 months	£95,310

*Extended project

**First stage not funded via Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund

These tables do not include over 40 Right to Read and other projects supporting books, reading and libraries funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation. This is either because funding was granted before the Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund launch in 2003 or because the projects have been supported from other funding streams.

Appendix 2

Selection of web-based information about or referring to Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund work

Big Book Share

www.readingagency.org.uk/adults/big-book-share/

Capturing the Impact of Libraries

www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Capturing_the_impact_of_libraries.pdf
Final report by BOP Consulting (9 Jan 2009) for Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Exploring the story: Jean Reed describes an innovative project in Staffordshire prisons

Public Library Journal, vol 23 no 4, Winter 2008, pp.6–11
www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/special-interest-groups/public/journal/23/23-4/Pages/plj23-4-reed.aspx

Foster a Book scheme in Cornwall and Children in Care Development Team

www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=17628 (page updated 29/9/09)
See also
Reading Champions and Foster a Book
www.yearofreading.org.uk/wikireadia/index.php?title=Reading_Champions_and_Foster_a_Book

Get Into Reading

<http://reachingout.thereader.org.uk/get-into-reading.html>
Get Into Reading aims to engage people through literature to improve wellbeing, build community and extend reading pleasure. See also www.thereader.org.uk

Learning to Love Literacy for Life

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3432
Final report (July 2008) from Gloucestershire Virtual School for Children in Care (formerly the Looked After Children Education Service) and Libraries project

The Network

www.seapn.org.uk/editorial.asp?page_id=39
Information resources on looked-after children and young people, including a report and survey related to librarians' training kit, supported by Paul Hamlyn Foundation

Our Shared Future

http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080726153624/http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/Our_final_report.aspx
Report by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (June 2007)
Case studies produced alongside the report include Libraries Connect project, Hull City Libraries (pp.34–5; p.60) and Refugees into Libraries, Leicester (pp.24–5)

Partners for Change

www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk/bestPractice/fulfilPotential/aboutFtp.html
Overview of achievements and impact of the project

Reader in Residence: HMP and YOI Cornton Vale: Reader in Residence

www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/lsergpsp.html#43

Full account of project and impact. Part of:
Learning, Skills and Employability: a review of good practice in Scottish prisons

HM Inspectorate of Education in Scotland

www.hmie.gov.uk/documents/publication/lsergpsp.html

Reading Champion project, Edinburgh

www.edinburgh.gov.uk/internet/leisure/libraries/explore_your_library/accessibility/cec_the_reading_project

See also

Edinburgh champion recognised (posted 15 Apr 2009)

www.cityofliterature.com/news.aspx?sec=5&pid=22&item=797

Reading Together work of Lincolnshire Library Service

Family reading and libraries: reading together

<http://archive.niace.org.uk/projects/connect-five/Section3-Chapter3.pdf>

Case study by Wendy Bond in Section Three of Connect-Five, highlighting the critical role of family learning in the Every Child Matters agenda. For more information and to purchase:

<http://shop.niace.org.uk/connect-five.html>

Switched on to Reading

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/6842B68A7844EB9F802574B3004C7656

Warwickshire Library and Information Service web pages on services for looked after children and families include a professionals' zone, with links to project reports and evaluations.

Welcome To Your Library

www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk

Legacy website for project connecting public libraries and refugees. Includes practical advice, case studies, and information resources.

External evaluation

www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/content_files/files/WTYLEvaluationReportrevisedversion.pdf

WTYLEvaluationReportrevisedversion.pdf

Good Practice Guide

http://www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/content_files/files/WTYLGoodPracticeGuideNov07.pdf

WTYLGoodPracticeGuideNov07.pdf

Wikireadia

www.yearofreading.org.uk/wikireadia/index.php?title=Main_Page

Online good practice guide developed as part of the National Year of Reading 2008. Case studies and examples of practice for anyone supporting readers, including Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund projects.

Appendix 3

Selected resources

Arts Council England

www.artscouncil.org.uk

CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals)

www.cilip.org.uk

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/libraries/default.aspx

London Library Change Programme

www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/networks/lcip/londonlibrarychangeprogramme.htm

MLA (The Museums Libraries and Archives Council)

www.mla.gov.uk

National Literacy Trust

www.literacytrust.org.uk

The Network

www.seapn.org.uk

The Reading Agency

www.readingagency.org.uk

Society of Chief Librarians

www.goscl.com

Unison

Taking Stock: the future of our public library service (Sep 2008)

www.unison.org.uk/positivelypublic/libraryservice.asp

