

The role of reading, literacy, libraries, museums, archives and cultural heritage: response by “The Network – tackling social exclusion ...”

Introduction

C4EO have produced an excellent first paper¹ looking at improving educational outcomes for looked-after children and young people [LAC], but it does not include anything about this key area. The Network contacted C4EO, offering a paper on the roles of literacy etc, and this offer was accepted – this is the paper produced in consultation with Network contacts.

Libraries, museums, archives and heritage organisations [LMAHs] undertake a wide range of activities with LAC, yet their role is often unnoticed – this paper highlights some key activities.

To avoid duplication, this brief paper is arranged under the following headings – however, there are examples of work which, obviously, cut across a number of these themes but which are listed only once.

Background

Work by LMAHs with LAC is not new; for example, the writer was part of a team of librarians running storytelling and outreach visits to Lambeth children’s homes in the early 1970s. However, this area of work has received a boost in recent years because of:

- Recognition of and focus on the need to improve educational attainment of LAC
- Focus on work by LMAHs to tackle social exclusion
- Prioritising of work with LAC and to meet the five outcomes within “Every Child Matters” by local authorities
- Provision of targeted funding, for example by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation [PHF].

There is a good summary of some of this creative work in the Who Cares? Trust publication, *Create to educate*².

What are the main areas of work?

- Increasing engagement with young people and carers (eg Knowsley, Norfolk)
- Work to support foster carers and residential care workers (eg Derby, Knowsley, Stockport)
- Outreach work (eg Stockport, The Reader)
- Ensuring that all services (for example Bookstart, Summer Reading Challenge) are made available to LAC and carers (eg Blackburn)

- Organising activities, either targeted towards LAC and their carers (eg Birmingham's "Stories from the Web", Cornwall, Foundling Museum, Liverpool, Manchester Art Gallery, Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service, The Reader) or open to all young people and their parents/carers, but with care taken to ensure that LAC are specifically targeted (eg information about library events is posted to residential units and foster carers regularly, as in Birmingham)
- Building partnerships (eg with networks of foster carers in Norfolk)
- Using the experience of working with LAC and their carers to change the way services operate (eg Birmingham, Stockport, Tameside) and ensuring that, apart from any necessities (eg getting an adult's permission to use the internet), joining is as easy as possible (eg Salford)
- Involving LAC and their carers in opportunities for formal education (eg Derby, Knowsley) and informal education (eg Derbyshire's ROWA, East Sussex RO)
- Creating opportunities for LAC to own books and other resources (eg Cornwall, Letterbox Club).

"Right to Read"

"Right to Read" involved over 40 projects across England and Scotland to improve access to books and reading for children and young people in public care. Funded by PHF, it began with a one-year pilot involving the National Literacy Association and Who Cares? Trust (1999-2000). This highlighted the need for additional support for looked-after children and their carers, and PHF set up the "Right to Read" fund in 2001. As the funding programme developed, it became clear that libraries were key to access to books and other reading materials, and that they also needed additional support to fulfil this role. "Right to Read" then became one of three streams in the Foundation's three-year Reading and Libraries Challenge Fund which closed for applications in March 2006.

Analysis of the projects' evaluations³ showed that they were going some way to meet the ECM outcomes, eg:

"Activities, and support of reading and access to books raised the self-esteem and confidence of LAC who participated".

One of the last of the "Right to Read" projects to complete, "Switched on to Reading" in Warwickshire, has produced a full report⁴ illustrating the range of their work and the impacts that it had on young people and their carers, including some examples of writing by the young people. Included below are some examples that started as "Right to Read" projects, but which have since become mainstreamed (Cornwall, Edinburgh, Knowsley, Norfolk).

Brief case study examples of work undertaken

Public library activities

Birmingham Libraries

Contact: Heidi Stacey, heidi.stacey@birmingham.gov.uk

- A special library ticket category is now in place for LAC so they don't pay fines or charges
- Foster carers also have a special ticket which entitles them to extra and longer loans
- Information about library events is posted to residential units and foster carers regularly
- Some free tickets are usually available for LAC at library events such as Malorie Blackman and Michael Rosen at Young Readers Birmingham
- Three brilliant creative events took place in the last 12 months exclusively for LAC including comic book-making with Beano artist Kev F Sutherland. There were also free books for all participants (thanks to "Reading is Fundamental"⁵)
- Young people in every Children's Home have had nearly £300 to choose books and magazines for their home in the last year
- They also all had a great activity. Choices included Bollywood dancing, Manga drawing, slam poetry and a table football tournament.⁶

In addition, Birmingham Libraries' "Stories from the Web"⁷ scheme (contact: Debbie Mynott, Debbie.mynott@birmingham.gov.uk) is about to launch a small-scale project (funded via the PAYP stream):

"A 12 week programme of workshops will be run for three different groups of looked after young people. Twice with looked after children and young people from selected care homes in Birmingham and once with a group from the Looked After Children Education Service (LACES), at least one of these groups will be children in care with disabilities. The workshops will focus on developing creative reading and writing activities using the Stories from the Web website."

Blackburn with Darwen Library and Information Service

Contact: Jean Gabbatt, jean.gabbatt@blackburn.gov.uk

Blackburn-with-Darwen have developed a service that combines specific provision and ensuring that universal provision is targeted, for example:

- The under-5 "child in our care" will receive Bookstart packs via his/her foster carer, and will be encouraged to have a personal library ticket, but, if living with a family of four or more fostered children, may also use an additional ticket, issued to the house, which will allow him/her to borrow extra books.
- Education Support Officers use the School Library Service [SLS] to borrow resource loans which match her/his curricular needs. If the LAC is in a residential home, books from a special SLS collection (Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded) will be used to stock a book corner and will be regularly swapped.
- Carers will be encouraged to use libraries and promote reading.
- The Summer Reading Challenge is promoted via direct mailings, and carers receive regular up-dates regarding library-based out-of-school events, with

the library service sign-posting “what’s on” via the foster carers’ newsletter.

- In addition, LAC are invited to special promotions. In the past, the library service has supported “Professor Nabroc’s Reading Game”, an all-year round reading competition with books and linked activity sheets for participants to complete. It has hosted a weekly drama club and “Celebrations of Achievement”. And there have been bespoke, informal events for family groups: craft sessions, coffee mornings, book talks and presentations – each offering a flavour of mainstream provision.

“The library experience strives to be innovative, but pragmatic; multi-faceted, but seamless. The strategy is summarised in a partnership agreement drawn up by the Library and Information Service and the Looked-after Education team, which is reviewed and revised year on year.”

Cornwall – “Foster a Book” [FAB]

Contact: Michaela Dunge, mikaelad@hotmail.co.uk

FAB was originally a “Right to Read” project that has been mainstreamed. They organise events and activities, as well as supporting LAC and care-leavers.

For example, they invited French author, Timothée de Fombelle, to visit to talk about his book, *Toby Alone*. With the help of “Outside In”, he and his award-winning translator, Sarah Ardizzone, visited the Eden Project to run a workshop for a small group of foster families.

FAB is registered as a “school” in the collective sense with the National Literacy Trust’s “Reading Champions” initiative⁸. In Summer 2009, they had 45 bronze awards and 2 silver awards in the pipeline.⁹

When children (0-16s) come into the care system, they or their carers are automatically sent a library ticket and a £10 book token. Tokens are sent out annually while they remain in care. FAB also participates in the Letterbox Club.

Derby City Libraries

Contact: Hilary Marshall, hilary.marshall@derby.gov.uk

“Here in Derby we continue to support children in care and work very closely with corporate CIC teams especially those working to improve educational attainment. Children’s librarians visit each residential home on a 6 to 8 week basis exchanging books within their deposit loan collections and consulting and advising on book choices and library activities. I attend regular meetings both of residential care worker children’s champions from the Homes to raise awareness of our services and events and also a multi agency group within the City which focuses on education of CIC and the partnership aspect of joint initiatives. We also send out information via foster carer networks and dedicated websites.

This year we have also been involved in:

- Delivering slots around promotion of reading and library services at residential worker/ foster carers corporate training

*C4EO theme: Vulnerable Children (particularly children in care) – Scoping review:
Improving educational outcomes for looked-after children and young people*

- Partnership literacy pilot project with ROWA and Derbyshire called “Stick at it” [please see below] aimed at increasing reading levels for KS2 CIC ...
- Supporting “Letterbox Club” mail-outs to KS2 CIC with library leaflets and fliers
- “Give it a go” celebrating achievement event for CIC. At the event all children had the opportunity to choose a book to keep from a range of titles selected by my team with input from CIC young people’s Council. Children’s librarians attended the celebration to chat with young people and help them make their choices
- Writing an article about how library services support local schools and CIC for designated teachers newsletter

Derbyshire “Read On Write Away” [ROWA]

Contact: Annette Lowe, Annette.lowe@derbyshire.gov.uk

ROWA is a strategy to improve literacy in Derbyshire and Derby City¹⁰.

“Stick At It!”¹¹ is a project which helps carers of Children in Care to support their children’s reading skills and reading pleasure so that the children’s lives are enriched and their chances of achievement increased. Disruptions to family and school life often lead to reduced educational outcomes, and Children in Care often have a deficit in their reading ability; this project was designed to reach 20 children and their families and to influence their reading habits so that reading became something they did, and enjoyed, more frequently. We hoped to improve both the children’s reading ability and reading confidence, but, to achieve this, we needed to work with a wide range of people who either support foster families or could provide literacy resources ...

This project was planned and co-ordinated by ‘Read On Write Away’, an independent literacy initiative, at the request of Derbyshire County Council’s Children in Care team. The idea came from earlier work where Children in Care, in Year 6, used ‘Accelerate Accelerate’¹² at home with their carers to increase their reading ability. The use of this programme improved the children’s reading ages but it did not alter their attitudes to reading, or their reading habits. The carers realised that they wanted to help their children read but lacked the confidence and experience to do this so they asked for more help. The project was extended to cover the whole of Derbyshire when the Derby City Council Children in Care Team joined as partners. It was also supported by the Library Services of both the Councils ...“

City of Edinburgh Council – the Edinburgh Reading Champion Project

Contact: Colm Linnane, colm.linnane@edinburgh.gov.uk

“This innovative Edinburgh-wide initiative encourages reading for pleasure amongst looked after children and young people in residential care in Edinburgh. Children who do not have access to services because of disability, communication difficulties, neglect or abuse, difficulties with their education or those who present very challenging behaviours and are sometimes regarded as a threat to the community

are often marginalised or excluded from mainstream services.

The Project encourages staff to help the most vulnerable young people discover the pleasures of reading, contributing to their self esteem, sense of attachment and educational achievement.

It employs a Reading Champion to develop 'bespoke' reader development programmes in partnership with looked after children, carers, library staff and other partners. Central to the project is influencing staff on the relevance of books and reading for looked after young people. The long term aim is to effect 'cultural change' in which care and library staff promote reading as normal activity in all centres."¹³

Knowsley Library Service “Right to Read” Project

Contact: Pam Jones, pam.jones@knowsley.gov.uk

“The ‘Right to Read’ Project in Knowsley started in September 2004, with 2 year funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to engage Looked After Children and Young People in activities to encourage and promote reading for pleasure and literacy in its widest sense. A Coordinator, Tracey Collins, was appointed in January 2005 to engage children, young people, carers and agencies with the aims and objectives of the project (outlined below) and to initiate activities and events. The project has achieved many of its original aims and objectives. As a result of this, and the impact the project has on the lives of young people looked after, Knowsley Council’s Directorate of Children and Family Services has made a commitment to provide permanent funding to mainstream the work. The Project is currently managed by the Library Service in partnership with the Children Looked After Team, Family Learning, Sure Start Children’s Centres and the PCT with support from Knowsley Adoption and Fostering Service.

The project aims are to: -

- Promote reading and literacy
- Encourage family learning
- Raise expectations around educational attainment
- Support the aspirations of young people
- Provide inspirational training and support for foster carers around issues of literacy and family learning

In addition to relaxing joining procedures and actively engaging children and young people to participate in library membership and activities such as the Summer Reading Challenge and school holiday activities, specific initiatives are organised and delivered by our enthusiastic and committed Coordinator.

The work plan is currently concentrating on the following: -

- Delivering the Letterbox Programme – working with Year 5 children who are identified as “struggling” with English and Maths and engaging them with books and other learning resources. This takes place through assessments, gifting, providing activities and engaging with the children, schools and

carers. Each child receives a parcel through the post on a monthly basis with tailor made resources. This year the coordinator has worked with 11 children and their carers. This has included specific activities for them over the summer

- Producing 2 editions per year of a vibrant, highly designed magazine for and written by children and young people. They work with a designer and have developed many skills as a result of various workshops and training. They were successful in achieving a Youth Opportunities Fund (Big Deal) grant to purchase a computer and design software to enable them to produce the newsletter
- Training for foster carers
 - A specifically designed course aimed at engaging foster carers with reading and wider literacy issues
 - One day Course led by consultant Jerry Hurst aimed at motivating carers to read and use books with their children
 - Courses are linked to CWDC standards for foster carers
- Writing and delivering a quarterly newsletters for carers advising them of activities and initiatives that are taking place for children
- Developing a range of activities to support children and young people to engage with learning and build confidence and self esteem. An example of this being a Choir which has a growing number of young people attending sessions and performing on a regular basis.
- Linking in with the Bookstart Programme and providing additional book giftings to supplement the Bookstart Packs
- Gifting Books
 - to young people based on their preferences
 - to carers either for personal use or to assist with issues connected with care of young people
 - to professionals working with young people
- A Library has been established at Knowsley Adoption and Fostering Service for carers and professionals

The Coordinator does evaluate the project, reports are produced and a bank of case studies is available which demonstrate the impact of the work taking place.

Liverpool Libraries

Contact: Andy Johnson, andy.johnson2@liverpool.gov.uk

“The Little, Brown Book Group approached Liverpool Libraries to promote author Paul Barber, who was launching the paperback edition of *Foster Kid: a Liverpoolian Childhood*. This was via the Reading Agency’s *Reading Partners* programme that links publishers with libraries. Paul had specifically asked his publicity agent for a library venue in an area of the city he grew up in.

The event interested Liverpool Libraries as we knew we could target a new range of people to make up the audience. As Paul had appeared in TV’s *Only Fools & Horses* and *The F/M* this included people who may not normally attend author visits, plus young looked after people. Audience was by invitation only and no printed publicity was produced.

We chose Ruby Dixon to interview Paul. She used Toxteth Library as a young person and now works in London for IDeA ... Our request coincided with IDeA recognising local council's services to 'looked after' children. They helped promote the event.

The Education Dept's Looked After Children's Education Services (LACES) were delighted to be involved and Paul's publisher supplied them with copies of the book to read. 12 young people met Paul in Central Library for a discussion. They were able to relate directly to the events described and discuss in private some of their own experiences. For one this was the first time he had read a complete book and he described the afternoon as *the best thing to have happened to him all year*. Paul later also described the discussion as the best interview he has ever had. He has been able to support the young people since and has encouraged some of them with their own writing.

The public event later, attracted an invited audience of 60 from a range of organisations including council staff, Foster Carer's Group, young people's organisations, reader's and writers' groups. He was welcomed on stage with a moving rendition of Michael Jackson's 'I'll be there' by a local 13 year old singer.

Here he recounted some of the major incidents from the book and took a range of questions from the floor. Local bookshop, *News From Nowhere*, sold 40 copies and Paul signed them all! He also received a poem from a person who had been in foster care and had written it after reading his book. Everyone one I spoke to had a great evening.

Legacy

- Young people have been inspired to read and write more
- The publisher is looking to promote more issue-related books directly with relevant groups.
- IDeA invited Paul to answer questions relating to local authority care online
- A member of the black fostering panel described the event as *well organised, very well presented and pitched at the right level* so the service's profile is raised ..."

Norfolk Library & Information Service

Contact: Lisa D'Onofrio, lisa.d'onofrio@norfolk.gov.uk

After a successful "Right to Read" bid established their initial project, Norfolk obtained additional funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to continue and mainstream this.

For example:

"The project has established good relationships with a total of 8 residential homes (the latest coming on board recently), and each home now has a good rapport with their local community librarian, who has taken over the contact role from me. Each Break home has received a parcel of books/magazines from me, and a visit from their librarian, in order to set up taster collections and begin a

relationship with their homes. The Community Librarians working with NCC homes continue their work with these homes. This means we are now working with a total of 8 homes.

- Taster collections, which ideally are changed every term, are placed in the homes, with residents choosing what goes in the collection. I give any appropriate materials I receive (i.e. book donations) on to the homes, and promptly answer their requests. Home group memberships are in the process of being switched over to the Corporate Guarantor Scheme.
- The project has monitored the Catch Up programme (please see attached article) and we are pleased to see there has been marked improvement with the children participating in the scheme. I have supported the Specialist Support Assistant's (SSAs) with their delivery of the programme with resources, and providing a wide range of reading materials and motivational items.

Comment from the SSAs:

‘A massive thanks to you re the Opening Doors Project for the support and the resources that you have provided for the children and our team throughout the year. We really appreciate all the support.’”

In addition:

- “The commitment of the Library Service to the project has led to a member of the Libraries’ Management Team being included in the Corporate Parenting Operational Group which facilitates delivery of the Council’s plan for looked after children.
- 5 existing Carers Collection (collections of books and resource materials that are targeted to support Carers’/LAC's needs) in Earlham, King’s Lynn, Yarmouth, Attleborough and Gorleston Libraries have been added to and promoted and a new collection in Long Stratton has been created. The collections now hold over 180 titles relevant to LAC's emotional, physical, mental and educational wellbeing.”

Stockport Library & Information Service

Contact: Wendy Griffiths, wendy.griffiths@stockport.gov.uk

“In 2004 Stockport Libraries did away with the need for identification and parental signatures for under 18's. This resulted in an 18.5% increase in membership in the first year and was particularly welcomed as easing and simplifying joining for looked after young people.

All residential settings for looked after young people are regularly visited with collections and a newsletter is also sent out at least twice a year.

Library staff also attend foster carers coffee mornings to highlight library services and this information is incorporated into new foster carers induction.

For the first time this year all Year 3 and Year 5 looked after children in Stockport were funded to receive Letterbox Club parcels, to which Stockport

Libraries promotional material was added.

For the third year running, all looked after children in Stockport were invited to a library event. This year it featured author Illustrator Lynne Chapman; a temporary tattoo artist; face painter and ball pool. Attracting an age range between 10 months to 17 years, some over 18's with disabilities also attended. Each child receives a goody bag and can choose a book to keep from the bookshop (run in conjunction with Border Books). Comments included:

“Wonderful thank you” (Shannon age 12 & Stephen age 16)
“ Daniel wanted to come but Amy didn't but I couldn't leave her, just look at her now, we are nearly the last to leave and she's pulling her face because I've told her its time to go” (Foster parent)
“It's been a wonderful afternoon, I wish I had brought them all, it's a really good idea, you certainly catered for all ages” (Care worker)

After 6 months the number of attendees who have used the library has increased by 4.6% to 56.6%. The level of overdue or non return has decreased by 33%, which, in a group who can experience greater mobility than average and rapid change, is particularly pleasing.”

Tameside Libraries and LAC

Contact: Ruth Lomas, ruth.lomas@tameside.gov.uk

“We are a participant in the Looked After Children Sports and Leisure Corporate Parenting sub group. This group has an annual plan and we have four actions in the 2009/10 plan, progress is reported quarterly to the sub group and then upwards to the Corporate Parenting Group

Tameside libraries have STAR library cards for both LAC and their foster carers. Star cards for LAC – means no proof of address, no charge for lost or damaged books and no parental signature is required. Star cards for foster carers means additional library card (as well as their own) to enable them to borrow books for the children they care for. No charge for lost or damaged books on these tickets

Tameside Libraries do regular targeted promotion to LAC and foster carers, through newsletters organised by the LAC Education Resource Team. We promote information about the star cards, activities available in libraries, including the Summer Reading Challenge and Children's Book Festival.

We also work in partnership with the School Library Service and the LAC Education Resource Team on Letterbox Library ... “

This includes:

- Doing presentations to foster carers as part of training sessions for Letterbox Library
- Choosing books and other resources for a Tameside 'Letterbox' scheme for

Year 8

- Providing booklists for other LAC children including children from Reception, Year 1 and Year 6
- Providing materials to support year 8 pack contents and resources to help the foster carers involved.

Wiltshire Library Service – “Cherub Represents” Reading Group

Contact: Tracy Hager, tracy.hager@wiltshire.gov.uk

The Library Service has established a regular reading group for LAC.

“The idea was two-fold. The first was to run a county-wide book group called ‘Represent: Words change lives – the good, the bad and the ugly’, where LAC age 13+ would read books featuring characters with similar experiences to their own. They would get to vote for the author/book that best ‘represented’ their experiences of living within the care system. The second part of the pilot was to award a prize for the best piece of writing, inspired by their own experiences of being in care. We really wanted to promote a love of reading and writing as well as an opportunity to help with their emotional literacy ...

Young people come from different parts of Wiltshire, and are transported by Wendy, a designated taxi driver for LAC. She has become an additional member of the group, with an interesting ‘take’ on things as she was also brought up in the care system.

All of our meetings have been held between 5:15 and 7:30 in Chippenham Library on a Wednesday evening when the library is closed to the public. Liza [Children’s Rights Officer] provides a well balanced dinner as well as light refreshments. We generally discuss the book for a while, break for dinner and then discuss it some more.

The group consists of 5-7 young people, Liza, Wendy and me. We occasionally have another member from Liza’s office and have had Jess from Salisbury Library. The same young people attend each month. It has become a ‘closed’ group and additional members are only invited after discussion and agreement.

Funding for this group had been predominately covered by the Children’s Rights Team (CRT). Wiltshire Libraries provide the books unless we need them in special format (one reader has dyslexia) or on short notice. In both of these situations, CRT have covered the cost. They also pay for food, transport and special events and speakers.

The booklist has been researched and chosen from existing lists, websites, librarian and bookseller recommendations, as well as suggestions from John Vincent’s national LAC JISMAIL network. Our primary criteria is that the books are fiction rather than memoir ...”

As one young person said:

“I’ve been through 71 placements in 16 years. My next one, and hopefully last, will be in Plymouth, where I come from. I will miss this group so much. My teacher too. She bet me that I couldn’t read 300 books in a year and I’ve done 350. All I want to do is read and write. I’ll really miss this group.”
Corianne

Museum, gallery & heritage activities

Foundling Museum – CLAYFM09

Contact: Si Wharton, si.wharton@rbkc.gov.uk

Nine young people aged thirteen to sixteen worked with a ceramics artist at the Foundling Museum and created ceramic pieces which Lars Tharp, the Director of the Museum, decided to display in the museum itself, next to the ‘Familie Rose’ bowl which inspired them.

On the last day of the five-day project the young people collected the bowls from the East London kiln where they had been fired for the third time. Before returning to Brunswick Square for the private view they visited Dalston Market and the Geffrye Museum.

Manchester Art Gallery

Contact: Helena Lee, h.lee1@manchester.gov.uk

The Gallery started to develop work with LAC residential care units on a programme called “Image & Identity” in 2003¹⁴.

During 2004-2006, they really developed this work with 5 LAC units and 6 Action for Children (formally NCH) projects. It involved using the galleries' collection and resources to encourage young people to explore their own image and identity (and, in 2005-2006, focused on “The Year of Islamic Culture” and the abolition of the Transatlantic slave trade.

From 2007 to date, DCMS has continued to fund this partnership, however with a new focus and name: Design for Life. This is a partnership project focused on engaging young people in creative design through the use of museums and galleries. They are currently working with three groups, a school group, an Action for Children group (which includes young people in care), young unaccompanied asylum seekers who are LAC¹⁵.

In addition, the Gallery has done some work with young unaccompanied asylum-seekers from the organisation CAFRASS (Children and Families Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service, Manchester City Council). This has included a film project and a photography project, both exploring what it means to be a young asylum-seeker/refugee in Britain¹⁶.

Natural History Museum – “Following Footprints”

Contact: Si Wharton, si.wharton@rbkc.gov.uk

*C4EO theme: Vulnerable Children (particularly children in care) – Scoping review:
Improving educational outcomes for looked-after children and young people*

In 2008, six LAC and their carers and friends become Science Educators and experts about some of the Natural History Museum's millions of specimens. After three sessions with museum staff and some behind-the-scenes visits, they presented their specialist knowledge on gallery tours in Autumn 2008.

Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service – “Escape into imagination”, Summer School 2009

Contact: Katrina Siliprandi, katrina.siliprandi@norfolk.gov.uk

“The target audience were young people aged 9-13 years, some of whom are vulnerable, including 15 children in care and 3 young people with Asperger's syndrome.

We organised two summer schools for young people that used Norwich Castle itself and CAN09 exhibition to explore ideas about imprisonment and control. The young people interpreted and reacted creatively to the building and its history as an institution for imprisonment and punishment. CAN09 inspired and took forward their contemporary responses, engaging them in exciting ways. Each week the participants were supported by peer tutors and student volunteers, working alongside professional artists and museum educators. The young people were involved in activities such as animation, collage, sculpture, dance and music – all designed to enable them to develop skills in research, team building and problem solving as well as to inspire their creativity. The summer schools culminated in a presentation by the young people of their work to an invited audience ...

Attendance at the first week was 100%. There was one day of absence by one young person in the second week when Emran went to visit prospective new carers in Birmingham.

There were 2 presentations to audiences totalling approx. 90 people. All the young people and several of the peer tutors, students and volunteers completed sketchbooks.

The development of relationships built on trust, collaboration and respect was central to the weeks and it is this that helped us to achieve the learning outcomes.

The young people's knowledge about the museum and its history developed and they all became comfortable within the space and felt it is somewhere they are welcome and wanted:

‘I learned something new about the shape of the Castle’ (Jasper, in reference to the panopticon layout)

‘I learned something new about prisons and prisoners’ (Chelsea).”

In addition, NMAS has a group of LAC regularly attending its monthly club at Norwich Castle and organises bi-monthly activity Saturdays for looked-after children and foster care practitioners.

Archives activities

East Sussex Record Office

The Record Office worked with the Looked-After Children's Unit and two Children's Homes on the "Imagined Lives" project to enable looked-after children to gain an insight into the kinds of archival material and resources held at the Record Office and to explore what life was like for looked-after children in the past. Through accessing archive documents the children were encouraged to explore their findings through a series of creative writing workshops.

"The project:

- motivated an interest among the young people involved in how young people lived in the past and raised awareness of how the places in which they live have changed over time.
- promoted discussions of rights, values and responsibilities and how they are affected by the times in which we live
- helped them 'learn to listen' and developed their verbal communication skills
- improved literacy levels
- increased young people's understanding of how historical documents can be used creatively

The children's team and archive staff were also able to meet young people in a different setting and develop a greater understanding of how to engage them in informal educational activities and the sharing of information."¹⁷

Other organisations' activities

Letterbox Club

Contact: Marian Keen Downs, marian@booktrust.org.uk

"The Letterbox Club is a project managed by Booktrust in partnership with the University of Leicester. It focuses on improving the educational outlook for looked after children aged 7-11 by providing them with a parcel of books, maths activities and educational materials once every month for six months. Each child participating in the scheme will receive the parcels directly addressed to them at home. The Letterbox Club is also suitable for other vulnerable children who would benefit from receiving the parcels.

Research shows that children in care underachieve in education, but evaluation from pilots of the Letterbox Club showed a demonstrable impact. Many children began to make more significant changes in their standardised score in reading."¹⁸

The Reader – Get into Reading: Wirral Children in Care Reader in Residence Project

Contact: Sam Shipman, samanthashipman@thereader.org.uk

"The Reader-in-Residence project has been up and running in Wirral since October 2007. We started with one project worker employed on a part time basis of 2.5 days per week, but in February 2009, we received further funding from Wirral Children and Young People's Department to extend the project to a full time job share post. This has allowed us to employ another part time project worker, giving a tremendous

boost to the reader-in-residence project. As a result of this additional project worker, we have been able to reach more young people in the care of the local authority on a weekly basis, whilst the position has given us more scope to run reading and creative arts projects during school holidays ...”

The project aims are:

- “To continue to promote the enjoyment of literature, encouraging young people in the care of the local authority to see reading as a fun, beneficial, and life enhancing activity.
- To connect with young people through one-to-one reading, with the project worker acting as a friend/ mentor.
- To build young people’s confidence and self-esteem through shared reading.
- To promote mental and emotional well-being through books and reading.
- To extend literacy by making reading into an enjoyable activity that is individualised for each person.”

“... The growth of the project comes at a time when the DCSF are emphasizing the importance of additional, personalised one-to-one support for Children in Care ... The focus of their support is designed to take place in school, but we feel that offering one-to-one support in the home provides the opportunity for each child to engage with literature in a relaxed and warm environment, whilst the absence of teachers and targets allows the young person to naturally form a unique relationship with an adult who becomes not only a friend, but a mentor and a positive role model.

Reading with each young person within their foster home offers stability and continuity, and we see this particularly when a child has to change placements and move from one home to another. Our project workers continue to read with them in the new home, providing a friendly and familiar face in what is undoubtedly a difficult time for the young person. Reading sessions also continue to take place whilst they are in respite care and during school holidays as we believe that the regularity of the sessions is an important aspect of the project and is crucial in engaging young people with literature.

Reading within the foster home also allows each project worker to form a relationship with the carer and encourage them to see reading with their child as an important part of their role. Having a regular visitor bringing books encourages a reading culture within the home, and if the carer has any queries or questions about reading, they will often come to the project worker for help and advice. This ‘in house’ support is always welcomed, and is perhaps one of the best ways to reach foster carers who often struggle to attend day courses in amongst their hectic domestic life.

As the project reaches its third year, the long term effects of shared reading on a one to one basis are becoming more and more impressive; we see the children we read with engaging with literature in a way that they may never have had the opportunity to, but also huge improvements in terms of increased self esteem, confidence and reading ability. We look forward to being able to continue this valuable project in the long term and hope that we can secure to funding to

enable us to do this.”

Other resources

- **Wikireadia**: one of the key ‘legacies’ of the National Year of Reading, this is an important resource¹⁹, including a number of good practice examples drawn from public libraries (eg Brent, Leicestershire, South Gloucestershire, South Tyneside).
- **“Reading Rich”**: this programme was commissioned by the then Scottish Executive in 2004 (now Scottish Government), and the evaluation report²⁰ was published in 2008. Its main purpose was: ‘*to promote reading for children and young people who are looked after in order to promote all of the known benefits of a reading rich environment within which more privileged children are raised*’. It also aimed to improve educational attainment through reading and, in doing so, to find out what were the barriers to achievement in literacy.

Acknowledgements

With very many thanks to the following people for their input to this paper:

Lisa D’Onofrio (Norfolk Library Service), Michaela Dungate (FAB), Ruth Edson (Manchester City Galleries), Jean Gabbatt (Blackburn-with-Darwen Library Service), Wendy Griffiths (Stockport Library & Information Service), Tracy Hager (Wiltshire Library Service), Judith Hall (Tameside Library Service), Natasha Innocent (MLA), Andy Johnson (Liverpool Libraries), Pam Jones (Knowsley Libraries), Ruth Lomas (Tameside Library Service), Peter Marchant (Knowsley Libraries), Hilary Marshall (Derby City Libraries), Debbie Mynott (Birmingham Library Service “Stories from the Web”), Samantha Shipman (The Reader Organisation), Katrina Siliprandi (Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service), Heidi Stacey (Birmingham Library Service), Emma Stagg (MLA), Emily Thorne (National Literacy Trust), Marie-Amélie Viatte (Scottish Government), Si Wharton (Kensington & Chelsea LAC Support & Review Team).

John Vincent
October 2009

¹ Isabelle Brodie *et al.* *Improving educational outcomes for looked-after children and young people*. C4EO (Vulnerable Children Scoping Review 1), 2009.

http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/files/c4eo_improving_educational_outcomes.pdf.

² *Create to educate*. Who Cares? Trust, 2007. Further information at:

<http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/publications.php/6/create-to-educate>.

³ *Evaluating work with looked-after children & young people against the Every Child Matters outcomes*. The Network, 2006.

http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/r2r_mapping_against_every_child_matters.pdf.

⁴ Stella Thebridge.

[http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/6842B68A7844EB9F802574B3004C7656/\\$file/switchedontoreadingfinalreport.pdf](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/6842B68A7844EB9F802574B3004C7656/$file/switchedontoreadingfinalreport.pdf).

⁵ For further information about “Reading is Fundamental, UK”, see: <http://www.rif.org.uk/aboutrif/index.htm>.

⁶ Further information at: www.birmingham.gov.uk/younglibraries.

⁷ A national reader development website managed by Birmingham Libraries, the site provides opportunities for children and young people to engage in a range of creative reading and writing activities for example: access the work of published authors, read extracts, play educational literacy games, comment on authors’ work and produce their own responses to stories on the site. See: www.storiesfromtheweb.org.

⁸ See: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Campaign/Champions/index.html>.

⁹ Information taken from Cornwall Foster Care Network *Newsletter*, Summer 2009.

¹⁰ See: <http://www.rowa.org.uk/>.

¹¹ See: http://www.rowa.org.uk/stick_andthen.html.

¹² “AcceleRead AcceleWrite is a multisensory, talking computer programme that uses colour-coded, graded sentences to improve reading, spelling and writing skills, through structured phonic exercises. It appeals to all pupils, especially disaffected boys and is recommended for use with dyslexic learners.” Taken from: <http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/teaching/intervention/l-acceleread-accelewrite.pdf>.

¹³ See:

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/PublicSites/cScape.CILIP.GenericTemplates/Information.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID=%7b8F7F6BE0-5501-4E09-8CEA-2F7282551529%7d&NRORIGINALURL=%2faboutcilip%2fmedalsandawards%2fLibrariesChangeLives%2flclafinalist09%2ehtm&NRCACHEHINT=Guest#two>.

¹⁴ This was a national project involving museums and galleries working with schools, LAC and NCH, the children's charity, see: <http://www.manchestergalleries.org/whats-on/community-programmes/current-projects/image-and-identity/>.

¹⁵ See:

http://www.vam.ac.uk/school_stdnts/schools/projects/design_your_life/manchester_city_galleries/index.html.

¹⁶ See: <http://www.manchestergalleries.org/whats-on/community-programmes/past-projects/welcome-to-manchester/>.

¹⁷ Further information at:

<http://www.seco.org.uk/laatoolkit/content/contentcasestudies/eastsusseximaginedlivesencouragingcitizenshipandraisingattainmentamonglookedafterchildren.html>.

¹⁸ Further information at: <http://www.letterboxclub.org.uk/Home>. See also: <http://www.guardian.co.uk:80/education/2009/sep/08/looked-after-children>.

¹⁹ See:

http://www.readingforlife.org.uk/wikireadia/index.php?title=Category:Looked_after_children.

²⁰ Maureen Finn. *NCH Scotland’s Reading Rich Programme delivered by the Scottish Book Trust*. Scottish Government Social Research, 2008.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/231567/0063158.pdf>.