

The Reader

Magical Story time and Stories for You and Yours
A feasibility study

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Parental Engagement Fund

The Sutton Trust working in partnership with Esmée Fairbairn Foundation established the Parental Engagement Fund building on the evidence that engaging parents in their children's learning can have a positive impact on their attainment. The aim of the fund was to improve learning outcomes for disadvantaged children in the early years through the development of more effective parental engagement practice and to identify features of good practice to share with the Early Years sector. The Reader is one of five organisations that the fund worked with. An evaluation team, (Jelley, Sylva, Eisenstadt) from the Department of Education at the University of Oxford, has worked with The Reader, acting as a critical friend, expert advisor and independent evaluator supporting them to improve delivery, develop their understanding of evaluation and demonstration of impact.

The Reader

The Reader believes that reading and talking together about a book is the best way to engage children in reading for pleasure. Our unique *Shared Reading* model brings people together in small groups, a story or poem is read aloud and a trained Reader Leader facilitates discussion. Reading aloud, lively conversation and an open, interactive atmosphere are cornerstones of our work.

For over a decade The Reader has delivered *Shared Reading* with children and families of all ages, in a variety of settings across the UK. Our work with adults across community settings, care homes and within the criminal justice system improves health and well-being, reduces social isolation and builds stronger communities.

Whether delivered by volunteers, parents, teachers or Reader staff, *Shared Reading* is designed to support the development of core skills, help children to feel more confident about reading, create a sense of achievement and contribute towards improved well-being.

Dr Alice Sullivan (IOE2013) has shown that "reading for pleasure is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education", and UNESCO report that "reading for pleasure is the single most important thing that will make a child successful in life".



The Reader in Sefton

Stories for You and Yours commenced in the borough of Sefton in September 2015. Sefton was chosen as it is an area of deprivation, and was strategically important as an area with limited previous reach and profile for The Reader.

The Reader developed a partnership with Sefton Schools Readiness Team, who helped to select the schools that would benefit most from the programme. They also helped to facilitate introductions to schools and staff, promoting the benefits of the programme to the schools.

The programme consisted of:

Magical Storytime

Staff member (Reader Leader) from The Reader led a weekly, 45 minute session with parents and children reading together. This gave parents and early learning practitioners the opportunity to engage in *Shared Reading* for pleasure and to model the skills and principles of reading together with children in a safe, open environment. We worked with settings to engage and encourage parents (and younger siblings) to attend.

Stories for You and Yours

Parents attending the Magical Storytime sessions with their child were given the opportunity to take part in this course, for two hours a week over three weeks. This developed parents' and carers' confidence to share stories and poems aloud with their children.

Storytime Boxes were provided as a free resource for each participating school, comprising books, a puppet, a 'reading blanket' and a hints and tips help sheet.

Staff CPD Programme

A one-day training programme was offered to staff from each school.

We aimed to engage schools with two- form entry so that we could have a comparison group of families who could be compared to those attending the programme.

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is in three main sections. It will first describe some of the feedback collected informally by The Reader from parents attending the groups, followed by The Reader's considerations around engaging nurseries and families in the project. It will then discuss a piece of evaluative work carried out in collaboration with the evaluation team (the 'critical friend') from the University of Oxford. This focused on feasibility testing, but also touches on the idea of 'rapid-cycle' testing. Finally, The Reader will reflect on its understanding of evaluation and consider recommendations for the future.

Feedback collected by The Reader used to inform programme delivery

Feedback from families

The Reader – Magical Story time and Stories for You and Yours – aims to foster an enjoyment in shared reading for pleasure. The Reader group leader models the appropriate skills to do so and leads by example.

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Parents from the groups reflected on how they felt the groups had achieved this and shared their views with the Reader's staff:

"Me and my child enjoy reading together a lot now, at first he wasn't interested or focused but now, thanks to this course, we really enjoy reading :) This is a really worthwhile course, it helps brings parents and children closer together and enhance enjoyment of reading. The course was delivered brilliantly by Alex and me and my son have really enjoyed it"

"The workshops have been brilliant for myself and my daughter. Seeing how much she enjoys them really encourages me to take time out and sit to read with her."

"I have really enjoyed the workshops and so has my child. She has enjoyed the crafts and stories and all the variations in books. We have also got some of the books out from the library."

"We have always read at bedtime, but I have noticed her wanting to read books more throughout the day. She will pick reading over other activities that she also enjoys."

"He enjoys reading more now coz he enjoys turning the pages and loves me making different noises and facial expressions"

Additional benefits were identified including relationship building within the setting:

"The workshops have been well facilitated and have not only helped my own ability to help my child to enjoy books but have also strengthened relationships with parents and grandparents of the other children."

"I enjoyed receiving tips and different techniques about reading. I enjoyed seeing my child in his nursery setting with his peers."

"Laura was brilliant, I felt the workshops have helped my child a lot- it has calmed him down in a group situation."

A unique feature of The Reader is the equal emphasis on developing enjoyment for the parent/carer as well as the child. This was recognised by the parents in their feedback:

"This group feels more relaxed and welcoming than other groups. Also having the first hour for the parents I have really enjoyed and don't get much time to read adult stories/poems and talk about them. We now read more at bedtime and make time to do it."

"It helps parents to understand why it is important to read for children and for themselves."

"There has been more opportunity for adult discussion about reading rather than just focus on the children. I want to start reading more following these sessions."

"I never used to read the paper or anything and have now noticed myself picking up the paper to read."

"It really made me think back to how I used to read books and made me realise I was not getting the full enjoyment from books but I will be now."

"This has really opened my eye to a wider range of books and how much they can have influences on everyday life."

"Enjoyed talking about texts and impact of reading/ or even looking at books. Nice to share week to week with my child. My daughter searched in the library for particular books following the sessions at school."

Parents and carers participating in the groups (intervention group only) were also asked a series of questions at the end of the programme about how, if at all, various reading habits had changed since they started the programme. Their views are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Parent feedback to the Reader (percent of parents who "strongly agree" with each statement)

Post-intervention statement	Percent of intervention group who "strongly agree"
I have new ideas to bring books to life	40.3% (N=72)
I know more about the value for children of reading regularly	48.6% (N=72)
Reading together has improved our relationship	38.9% (N=72)
Reading has become more enjoyable for both of us	38.9% (N=72)
I spend more time reading with my child	32.4% (N=71)
I am more able to engage with my child's school and education	31.4% (N=70)
I read more and different things for myself	18.3% (N=71)

Engaging nurseries and families: using feedback for change (The Reader)

The recruitment strategy for this project was built on ensuring that the settings invited to participate would support the delivered activities whilst ensuring the programme reached the most deprived families. Nurseries attached to primary schools (where children were likely to continue attending into compulsory education) were chosen to increase the likelihood of strong investment from both parents and staff.

Nursery staff were encouraged to support parental recruitment, with FAQ sheets being provided to help them reinforce clear, simple messaging around the goals and structure of the project.

However, any strategy relying on school staff to promote the sessions left the project particularly vulnerable to poor recruitment in schools that already struggled with parental engagement. In cohort 2 greater focus was placed on engaging parents directly, with Reader Leaders meeting parents at pick-up/drop-off to generate interest in a taster session to be held the following week. Low sign-up for the comparison strand of the project identified in cohort 1 was addressed by amending the communication strategy so that parents did not find out which strand they were assigned to until they had confirmed their participation.

Families were offered incentives of books and vouchers to The Reader's Storybarn to take part in the programme. In practice, this approach to boosting participation had very little impact, with only 32 families taking up the offer of incentives at the project's end.

Timing also had an impact on recruitment rates, with fewer families recruited during the Summer Term. This was potentially a knock-on effect of working with schools which had been the least proactive in taking up the initial offer of involvement in the project.



Evaluation activities (the Oxford Team)

Although the Reader's *Shared Reading* model has been running for many years in a range of settings, the specifically defined programme for parents and young children, *Stories for You and Yours*, was still in its infancy. The evaluation work within PEF, therefore, was not intended to be a full randomised controlled trial (RCT) to assess the impact or efficacy of such a new programme; rather it was an opportunity both to investigate some feasibility aspects of conducting a trial, and also to learn about and refine features of the programme itself. This was done within the context of a randomised controlled trial (with a counterfactual group, and pre and post measurements), but the goal of the work was to prepare for future evaluations and to make refinements to the programme itself during the course of the project, e.g., trying out different things in different cohorts. This way of working is similar to 'rapid-cycle testing' or 'fast-cycle iteration' and is widely used by organisations concerned with both programme development (e.g., Impetus-PEF and 'small feedback loops') and programme evaluation (e.g., the Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University). The feedback described above that was collected by The Reader and used to inform delivery of the programme falls into this category of rapid-cycle testing.

With support from the Oxford team, The Reader also used the evaluation to establish the 'feasibility' of procedures or measures that might be used in a full trial once the programme was more developed. Feasibility testing is often conducted before a fully-fledged RCT in order to test practical elements of potential trial methodology and to ascertain the possibility of conducting a larger, more rigorous trial of the programme. The combination of rapid-cycle testing and feasibility provided an opportunity to try out different recruitment techniques, to test different outcome measures, and to find the best ways of liaising with schools to gather teacher-completed rating scales and assess children. The evaluation also allowed The Reader to assess their reach (were the families they thought would benefit most from the programme successfully targeted and recruited?). In many ways, this work could be considered an 'early-stage' evaluation most appropriate for new interventions.

The sample in the feasibility study

The project ran over 4 school terms between September 2015 and December 2016, and in each term a new cohort of schools and families were recruited. A total of 30 primary schools with attached nurseries in the Sefton area were recruited to take part in the study. Because the project spanned 2 academic years, some of the schools from earlier cohorts were revisited in the final cohort.

For practical delivery and scheduling reasons, whole classes were allocated to intervention or comparison group, and this was done within school to account for school-level differences. For this reason two-form entry schools were focused on during recruitment. Some one-form entry schools were included in the project, but because there was no comparison group within those schools they are not included in the final figures here.

A total of 271 families from 30 schools took part in the evaluation over the 4 cohorts; 168 (62%) families were in classes allocated to the intervention group and 103 (38%) were allocated to the comparison group. Because much was still being explored in Cohort 1, and substantial changes to recruitment strategies were made in subsequent cohorts, a more realistic total number would include only those in cohorts 2 to 4, and only those schools with two-form entry (i.e., those with a comparison group). The final sample for this early stage evaluation work therefore, was 204 families (120 intervention; 84 comparison) in 19 schools.

Table 2 shows the schools and number of families recruited in each cohort, and Table 3 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 2. Number of schools and families in each cohort of the feasibility study

Cohort	School	Number (% within cohort) of families recruited
2	Birkdale	9 (10.3%)
	Cambridge Nursery School	6 (6.9%)
	Christ Church	21 (24.1%)
	Forefield	19 (21.8%)
	Greenacre	11 (12.6%)
	Our Lady Star of the Sea	5 (5.7%)
	St Edmund's and St Thomas'	16 (18.4%)
	Subtotal	87
3	Hatton Hill	8 (17.4%)
	Linaker Primary	9 (19.6%)
	Our Lady of Walsingham	5 (10.9%)
	Rimrose Hope	10 (21.7%)
	St George's	7 (15.2%)
	St Luke's Halsall	7 (15.2%)
	Subtotal	46
4	All Saints	14 (19.7%)
	Forefield (Cohort 4)	14 (19.7%)
	Freshfield	8 (11.3%)
	Northway Primary	17 (23.9%)
	Our Lady of Lourdes	5 (7.0%)
	Thomas Gray	13 (18.3%)
	Subtotal	71
	Total	204

Table 3: sample characteristics by intervention and comparison group

Baseline variable	Intervention (n=120)		Comparison (n=84)	
	N	Mean (sd)/frequency (%)	N	Mean (sd)/frequency (%)
Child's age (months)	118	45.34 (4.37)	83	44.70 (4.75)
Parent/grandparent age	113	36.67 (10.76)	75	35.04 (9.77)
Child gender (girls)	114	54 (47.4%)	80	44 (55.0%)
Child ethnicity (white British)	90	88 (97.8%)	63	57 (90.5%)
Home language (English)	113	111 (98.2%)	79	73 (92.4%)
Parent gender (female)	116	106 (91.4%)	76	67 (88.2%)
Parent qualification: compulsory or below	115	62 (53.9%)	75	27 (36.0%)
Parent qualification: higher education	115	30 (26.1%)	75	21 (28.0%)
Parent in employment or education	114	56 (49.1%)	75	41 (54.7%)

This was a predominantly white British sample, which is typical of the particular area of Liverpool in which The Reader was working. Based on the questionnaire data, it seemed to be a fairly disadvantaged sample, with a substantial number of families reporting unemployment and relatively low qualification levels, on the whole.

Most demographic variables are fairly balanced across intervention and comparison groups. There are a couple that differ significantly: **home language**, with a slightly larger proportion of the intervention group speaking English at home; and **parent qualification**, with parents' highest qualification being somewhat lower in the intervention group.

Measures trialled

Following recruitment, parents and teachers were asked to complete various parent and child measures. Children were also assessed on a standardised vocabulary test. Measures were administered at pre-test, post-test, and 6- and 12-month follow-up.

British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) (Dunn, Dunn & NFER, 2009). A measure of children's receptive vocabulary, administered by The Reader team (the person administering did not know the allocation status of the classes).

Brief Early Skills and Support Index (BESSI) (Hughes & White, 2015). A 30-item, teacher-completed rating scale providing a broad measure of school readiness across four subscales:

- Behavioural Adjustment, e.g., being easily distracted
- Language and Cognition, e.g., ability to use one-to-one correspondence
- Daily Living Skills, e.g., needing help to look after belongings
- Family Support, e.g., being read to regularly at home

Parent/carer Questionnaire (developed by The Reader). As well as demographic questions about the family (as presented in the sample characteristics above), this included questions on how parents/carers and children usually spent time together, their reading habits at home, and their knowledge of children's books and authors.

Attendance

Attendance data was available for 116 participating families. Table 4 shows the mean attendance at Magical Storytime (**MST**) sessions, Stories For You And Yours (**SFYAY**) sessions, and total attendances.

Attendance at the different session types appears to be relatively similar, with parents attending on average just over half of the sessions. Almost two thirds of families (72; 62.1%) attended at least 3 MST sessions, and the same number attended at least 2 SFYAY sessions.

Table 4. Summary of attendances

	Mean no. of sessions attended (sd)
MST attendances (out of 5)	3.1 (1.3)
SFYAY attendances (out of 3)	1.7 (1.1)
Total attendances (out of 8)	4.8 (2.1)

Child measures: descriptive data

The British Picture Vocabulary Scale (BPVS) was conducted at pre-test and 6-and 12-month follow-up (since it is not recommended to re-test within 6 months). The raw mean scores at each of the 3 time points are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Unadjusted (raw) pre-test, 6- and 12-month follow-up BPVS scores

	N (at pre & 6 months)	Pre-test mean (SD)	6-month follow-up mean (SD)	N (at 12m)	12-month follow-up mean (SD)
Intervention	82	52.12 (17.82)	63.56 (16.14)	40	71.60 (14.32)
Comparison	57	50.35 (19.20)	60.93 (16.07)	25	68.44 (17.83)

The Brief Early Skills and Support Index (BESSI) was conducted at all time points. Raw scores on the four subscales of the BESSI are presented in Table 6. Note that BESSI scores range from 1-4, with a lower score indicating a more positive outcome.

Table 6: Unadjusted (raw) BESSI1 scores by subscale at pre-, post-test, 6- and 12-month follow-up

	N (pre & post)	Pre-test mean (SD)	Post-test mean (SD)	N (6m)	6-month follow-up mean (SD)	N (12m)	12-month follow-up mean (SD)
BESSI Behavioural Adjustment subscale mean							
Intervention	104	2.06 (.34)	1.97 (.40)	78	1.74 (.53)	35	1.78 (.59)
Comparison	72	2.08 (.48)	2.04 (.46)	56	1.81 (.47)	27	1.85 (.56)
BESSI Language and Cognition subscale mean							
Intervention	104	2.07 (.49)	1.88 (.57)	78	1.61 (.58)	35	1.60 (.41)
Comparison	71	2.07 (.60)	1.95 (.62)	56	1.65 (.58)	27	1.62 (.49)
BESSI Daily Living Skills subscale mean							
Intervention	104	1.99 (.41)	1.85 (.42)	78	1.55 (.49)	35	1.73 (.46)
Comparison	71	1.96 (.39)	1.87 (.45)	56	1.73 (.51)	27	1.67 (.50)
BESSI Family Support subscale mean							
Intervention	104	1.96 (.39)	1.82 (.49)	78	1.58 (.48)	35	1.70 (.41)

Comparison	72	1.88	1.86	56	1.59	27	1.69
n		(.43)	(.51)		(.46)		(.52)

¹BESSI (all subscales) score range: 1 to 4, lower score indicates better outcome

No tests of statistical significance were conducted because the study was designed as feasibility rather than impact. From a feasibility perspective, findings indicate that the measures were suitable for the families and children participating in the project, and were acceptable to the teachers in terms of administration. There was reasonable distribution of scores, although both measures showed some skew with a trend towards more positive scoring.

Parent/carer questionnaires: descriptive data from intervention and comparison groups

Questions from the parent/carer questionnaire that were particularly relevant to the intervention aims are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Responses from the parent/carer questionnaire

	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean (SD) no. of activities (from a given list of 14) parents/carers report doing with their children		
Intervention	9.69 (2.81)	9.72 (2.62)
	(N=117)	(N=72)
Comparison	10.44 (2.57)	10.35 (2.83)
	(N=77)	(N=62)
% parents/carers reading at bedtime every day		
Intervention	58.9%	63.8%
	(N=107)	(N=69)
Comparison	67.6%	60.7%
	(N=71)	(N=61)
% parents/carers reading at other times every day		
Intervention	29.1%	39.1%
	(N=103)	(N=69)
Comparison	26.1%	23.6%
	(N=69)	(N=55)
Mean (SD) no. of child 'responses' to reading (choose up to 3; total=positive-negative)		
Intervention	2.51 (1.02)	2.63 (.89)
	(N=117)	(N=72)
Comparison	2.40 (1.19)	2.59 (.81)
	(N=77)	(N=62)
Parents/carers' feelings of confidence reading aloud with their child (% "strongly agree")		
Intervention	66.4%	66.7%
	(N=116)	(N=72)

Comparison	71.4%	73.8%
	(N=77)	(N=61)
Parents/carers' feelings of confidence choosing books for their child (% "strongly agree")		
Intervention	64.0%	54.2%
	(N=114)	(N=72)
Comparison	67.5%	60.7%
	(N=77)	(N=61)

Evaluation activity summary

This evaluation provided the opportunity to explore different ways of recruiting, running the intervention, and fine-tuning the programme structure (all in a 'rapid-cycle' manner), as well as incorporating some aspects of feasibility, that is, considering the processes involved in a randomised controlled trial to assess whether it is possible to conduct a more rigorous trial of the programme.

Recruitment to a trial can present different challenges compared with recruitment to a programme. Participants are signing up to potentially (but not necessarily) attending a programme, which would typically be decided by random assignment, as well as committing to data collection, which in this case included measures completed by themselves, their children, and their children's teachers. In this project, 204 families across 3 cohorts signed up to take part, were willing to be randomised, and agreed to ongoing data collection. In terms of the demographics, it appeared to be fairly reflective of the broader, fairly disadvantaged population in Sefton. Recruiting such a sample to participate in a trial can be challenging, so a final sample of 204 families is encouraging in terms of feasibility.

The attendance figures presented above indicated good programme engagement. In terms of engagement with the research (i.e., whether families were retained between assessment time points), the teacher-completed measures were the most likely to be returned, with only 21 (out of 197 with baseline data) not completed at post-test. A total of 150 children (out of 188) had BPVS scores at the follow-up time point. This is reasonable considering it was 6 months later and that this measure requires an assessor to visit each child at nursery. The parent/carer questionnaire was completed by 132 participants at post-test (of the 193 participants who completed it at pre-test).

The Reader were able to test a relatively new but established outcome measure they had not used before (BESSI), as well as try a measure they had used previously but not with this age group or with a comparison group (BPVS). Both seemed to go well in terms of administration – assessors were able to gain access to nurseries to conduct the BPVS assessments, and children seemed to enjoy completing them. Teachers/practitioners were willing to complete the BESSI.

Scores on the two child measures did not show a good distribution, with some 'skew' towards more positive scoring. The BESSI especially did not seem to discriminate particularly well between children, with a large proportion of scores falling in the middle of the scale. It may be that the BESSI is more useful as a screening tool (and good at identifying difficulties in just a few children in a whole class), but it may not be such a suitable outcome measure for an intervention.

In sum, this feasibility evaluation demonstrated that it would be possible to conduct a larger, more robust randomised controlled trial of The Reader's programme. Many of the practical aspects of running an RCT went smoothly in this project. It would be important to consider data collection carefully, especially concerning use of bespoke questionnaires, as will be described in the following section. Overall, this project afforded the opportunity to learn a great deal about not only the programme but also about research and evaluation more generally, and this learning will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

Learning from The Reader's perspective

Understanding of evaluation

The 'critical friend' structure of the Parental Engagement Fund project provided The Reader with the opportunity to plan, deliver and review a large-scale evaluation project in-house. Whereas research projects are often conducted by external partners with data reviewed after all evaluation activities have been completed, this project enabled the evaluation and implementation teams to work together throughout the project, regularly taking stock of the successes, challenges and learning arising from the work as it unfolded.

The Reader's previous experience of evaluating early years work had highlighted the difficulty of securing reliable baseline data from parents due to the sensitivity of self-reporting parental involvement and related competencies. Questions for *Stories for You and Yours* were therefore designed to be as non-judgmental and light-touch as possible, and a more objective measure (a 'titles and authors checklist') included to counteract the biases associated with self-reported items.

In the first cohort, parents were invited to complete the baseline evaluation at home. Extremely high scores for the titles and authors checklist suggested that some parents may not have completed this task independently, calling into question the trustworthiness of their other responses. Additionally, the previous strategy of telling parents which group they were assigned to prior to sign-up meant few volunteered to take part in the comparison strand and the project risked differences in background and motivation arising between the make-up of the two groups.

By holding supervised feedback questionnaire sessions in subsequent cohorts the reliability of the data could be safeguarded to some extent, and only telling parents their assignment to delivery or comparison groups after baseline assessment helped to reduce any gap between delivery and comparison groups. Despite efforts to obtain unbiased information from parents, the usefulness of their final data was nevertheless restricted by all cohorts recording worryingly high scores at baseline.

As the evaluation was designed to test feasibility rather than impact, it was not possible to identify statistically significant change. However, The Reader reported that they have learnt much about evaluation that will help them to design more effective tools and processes moving forwards. Sensitive phrasing of items may not be enough to eliminate the social desirability bias and potential for response shift bias that can be at play when high scores are returned at baseline, raising the question of whether longitudinal self-report measures are the best way to measure changes in parental engagement. Alternative evaluation methods, such as retrospective pre-tests ('Can you remember how you felt back in September?'), may provide better means of capturing change in such circumstances. Furthermore, scheduling an evaluation tool pilot phase in future projects will give us the opportunity to assess whether baseline data is likely to be useful and make changes, if necessary, before the start of the study proper.

Operationally, The Reader have learnt how important it is to invest significant time and resources in recruiting participants, creating parity between delivery and comparison groups and taking steps to increase the reliability of the data they submit. With this bedrock of improved recruitment and practical administration of evaluation activities in place, The Reader should be well equipped to maximise their recruitment to evaluation in the future, focusing their energies instead on ensuring the questions asked are the best means of measuring impact over time, returning pre-intervention scores low enough to enable significant change to be captured at follow-up points.

Reflection and recommendations for the future: how The Reader might build on the learning

This project has highlighted the importance of engaging effectively with both settings and parents to increase participant take-up. Those schools that were most supportive of the programme tended to have higher sign-up but direct interaction between parents and Reader Leaders was also instrumental in encouraging more reluctant families to take part. Attaining sufficient sign-up in schools where staff

already struggle with family engagement remains a challenge, particularly as their need may be greatest. Considering the resources available, it may be most effective for The Reader to target schools that serve disadvantaged families and who are engaged, proactive and likely to embrace programmes such as *Stories for You and Yours*.

In projects such as this relying on delivery from experienced facilitators, the need for extended in-person involvement from highly trained staff inevitably limits the reach and scope of activities, especially when combined with the restricted number of weeks available for delivery due to school term times. This becomes especially problematic in research projects, which rely on high recruitment targets and effective dosage in order to return statistically significant results.

It may be advisable to trial mixed delivery models where the vital energy, inspiration and experience of trained Reader Leaders is supplemented by in-classroom activities delivered by school staff. Guaranteeing a high level of dosage for young people by embedding *Shared Reading* into daily teaching would increase the likelihood of achieving measurable impact on children's cognitive development, with parental engagement being used primarily as a means to extend and reinforce reading for pleasure outside of the school environment. This use of the classroom as the prime site for cognitive development would also facilitate a shift of emphasis for evaluating the impact of parental engagement – with children's socio-emotional development becoming the key focus of the parental strand. As well as making the reach and dosage of activities more substantial for future research projects (increasing the likelihood of reaching statistical significance), this approach would have the added benefit of bringing evaluation of early years work closer to The Reader's wider goals to boost wellbeing and reduce social isolation.



References

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