Renaisi

THE READING AGENCY

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

sowerby FOUNDATION

Piloting the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit: Final Report

November 2017

We are an award-winning social enterprise that helps people and places to thrive.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 2

2. Methods 6

3. Pilot evaluations: Methods and findings 9

Cumbria Library Service 9

Kirklees Home Service Library 14

Castleton Children's Centre 19

King Alfred's Academy 23

Newcastle-under-Lyme College 28

4. Reflections on the Toolkit 33

Initial reactions to the Toolkit 33

Usability 34

The outcomes 35

The questions 36

Applicability to different settings 37

Evaluation methodologies 38

Data analysis 40

Evidence section 41

Overall feedback 42

5. Conclusions and recommendations 43

Improving the Toolkit in the short term 44

Developing the Toolkit in the longer term 45

Improving evaluation practice in the sector 47

Appendix 48

Acknowledgements 48

Definition of outcomes 49

1. Introduction

This report presents the findings and recommendations from the pilot of the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit[1] and is accompanied by five case studies, one from each setting, published separately. Funded by the Arts Council England (ACE), The Reading Agency and partners[2] worked with Renaisi to deliver the pilot, demonstrating how five different settings went about using the Toolkit to measure the outcomes of reading for pleasure and empowerment programmes. It documents the steps they take from matching outcomes with programme goals to developing survey questionnaires, to data analysis and reporting findings. It looks at the challenges they overcame along the way and how they might address these in order to improve their reader development practice in the future. The report also makes recommendations, based on the learning from the pilots, for developing the framework further. It improves our understanding of the impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment programmes and, together with the case studies provides an opportunity to see the impact of reader development practice in action. The settings valued the opportunity to pilot the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit saying:

"The Framework provides a really useful and flexible Toolkit for library staff to use in evaluating reader development activity, and I would encourage anyone to try."

"I strongly recommend using the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit to evaluate the effectiveness of any activities linked to reading for pleasure."

By using the Toolkit, the projects now know more about the successes of their activities to support reading for pleasure and empowerment, as well as areas for development. More information about their evaluation methods and findings can be found in section three of this report.

This project has provided invaluable insight that will be used to further develop the Toolkit. Section four of the report reflects on the Toolkit's strengths and how it can be improved, based on Renaisi's observations of the projects' use of the Toolkit in practice and on feedback gathered from projects at every stage of the process. Our recommendations based on these findings (section five), can be summarised as:

- **In person training** at a basic, beginner and intermediate level that provides users with an introduction to the Toolkit and its practical implementation across a range of interventions, covering: an understanding of how to select outcomes; principles for

[1] www.readingoutcomesframework.org.uk

[2] Arts Council England (ACE), Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL), BookTrust, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), National Literacy Trust (NLT), Publishers Association, Scottish Book Trust, Scottish Libraries and Information Council (SLIC) and Society of Chief Librarians (SCL).

delivering high quality evaluations; detailed guidance in evaluation methodologies and methods; and an understanding of data analysis and reporting.

- **Online guidance** to accompany the Toolkit that can be accessed independently and/or can support the in-person training, including: more detail on how to select outcomes; how to design evaluation questionnaires and select questions/tools that are appropriate to the intervention; example questionnaires; step by step evaluation check lists; more information about how the Toolkit can be used to inform qualitative evaluation methods; examples of how the data findings can be analysed.
- An **online survey builder** that enables users to filter the questions that are relevant to their sector and/or beneficiaries, with easy to use functionality such as the ability to export questions into a ready-made survey.

Overall aim of the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit

Reading for pleasure and empowerment is defined in the Toolkit as a voluntary activity that people engage with as an enjoyable way to spend time or for self-development. There are a range of initiatives in the reading sector that aim to encourage this, either focussing on individual or shared reading activities. These approaches are targeted at different audiences from the early years to older people, and can take place in a variety of settings including libraries, education, voluntary sector organisations, prisons and health.

The aim of the Toolkit is to provide a practical resource to help organisations and projects to evaluate the outcomes of their activities, with flexibility to accommodate the diversity and breadth of existing interventions. The aspiration is to strengthen evaluation methods across the sector, move beyond programme level evaluation towards the increased use of shared approaches to understand the impact of activities that support reading for pleasure and empowerment and to use the learning from this to shape future development and delivery.

The Toolkit guides the user through a series of stages to plan and undertake evaluation, starting with a framework of outcomes from reading for pleasure or empowerment. These are organised under a set of seven reading engagement outcomes, and four outcome areas for individuals that might arise from increased reading engagement in the longer-term: health and wellbeing; intellectual; personal, and social. All are underpinned by existing evidence on the impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment.

The Toolkit also presents advice on evaluation methods and a bank of freely available questions that can be used to measure a programme's ability to achieve intended outcomes. These include questions that can be used with adults, parents and carers as well as children and young people.

How the Toolkit was developed

The Toolkit was developed through a collaborative process, with The Reading Agency partnering with other organisations in the sector (p.2). The project was funded by the Peter Sowerby Foundation and between 2014-16 the Reading Outcomes Framework Steering Group worked with BOP Consulting and the Office for Public Management to support the development process. This involved:

- A literature review to collate and summarise existing research on non-literacy outcomes of reading for pleasure and empowerment
- A series of consultation events involving representatives from libraries, education, schools, health and early years working at different levels within their organisations
- User-testing the Toolkit with observed and remote sessions where participants were asked to plan an evaluation

The Toolkit was designed to be straightforward and accessible for practitioners who were unlikely to have a professional background in evaluation. The Toolkit was made available online as an interactive pdf, and was presented at sector conferences in 2016 to help raise awareness of the resource.

However, there are a number of challenges that organisations can face which may have implications for their ability and capacity to engage with a sector wide Toolkit. These include:

- Users may have little or no experience of designing or conducting evaluations, or data preparation, analysis and reporting
- Users may have limited time to digest the contents of the Toolkit and understand how to apply it
- Users may find it difficult to judge how far they can tailor the Toolkit to their specific programme needs, whilst retaining the benefits of using a sector-wide tool

These issues can be compounded by users' lack of confidence in evaluation practice or skills, a perception that evaluation could be resource heavy particularly for those reliant on sessional workers, or the perception that evaluation requirements are tied to grant funding. The Reading Agency recognised that further work would be required to make it easier for practitioners to use the Toolkit, for example by providing tangible examples of how the Toolkit could be used in practice.

In addition, the consultation and user-testing phases had provided valuable feedback on the presentation and usability of the Toolkit, as well as areas for development within the content. These included:

- A concern that some of the outcomes lacked corresponding measures[3]
- A lack of clarity on how someone using the Toolkit would put together a survey, and the extent to which they could adapt the questions
- A risk that by encouraging users to choose outcomes at the start of an evaluation users will focus on what is already known or assumed about a project, and may miss opportunities to use approaches that could identify unintended outcomes and support programme learning without encouragement to do so
- A narrow focus on survey methodology, which may risk de-valuing qualitative approaches, and which includes some questions that are not specific to reading activity and could therefore lead to over-claiming impact

[3] A project to review and complete gaps in the reading engagement outcome measures (*A Review of Measures of Reading Engagement)* has recently been completed to address this issue. The new database will be published at: www.readingoutcomesFramework.org.uk.

- A lack of guidance on evaluating the quality of programmes, for example how to collect overall feedback on how a programme has been delivered

This project was commissioned in February 2017 because The Reading Agency recognised that the Toolkit was at an early stage of development and needed to be tried and tested in practice to support its wider dissemination and uptake.

Piloting the Toolkit

This project has the overarching aims of increasing knowledge about the impact of approaches to reader development, and testing the Toolkit. The specific aims of the project are to:

- Increase our understanding of the outcomes of different types of activities that encourage reading for pleasure and empowerment
- Provide case studies that will inspire others to improve their reader development practice
- Increase our understanding of how the Toolkit works in practice, assessing its strengths and weaknesses
- Provide recommendations for how to improve the Toolkit as a freely available evaluation tool
- Develop case studies to improve evaluation practice across the sector, including building a network of champions who can talk about how they have used the Toolkit

Renaisi's role was to support the five pilot sites in setting up their evaluations and to observe their engagement with the Toolkit. Whilst the evaluations were running, Renaisi were available for ongoing evaluation support depending on the different project requirements and capacity, and also assisted with analysis and reporting at the end of the evaluation period. Throughout this period, feedback was gathered on the process of using the Toolkit in order to make clear recommendations for future developments.

2. Methods

Choosing and supporting the projects

The five projects that participated in this evaluation were recommended by The Reading Agency and partner organisations involved in developing the Toolkit (p.2). A range of projects were chosen to ensure that the Toolkit could be tested in a variety of settings, working with different audiences including adults and children, and that these were likely to use a range of outcomes from the Toolkit. The participating organisations and projects were:

- Cumbria Libraries – Read Regional author events
- Kirklees Libraries – Home Service Library
- Castleton Children's Centre – bedtime reading workshop
- King Alfred's Academy – Accelerated Reader programme
- Newcastle-under-Lyme College – Reading Ahead programme

The projects were varied in their approach and context. Kirklees Home Service Library is a long-running and ongoing service, whereas Cumbria Libraries' author events were short, one-off activities. The Cumbria Libraries events and Newcastle-under-Lyme College's Reading Ahead programme involved delivering an activity that was supported by national or regional organisations, whereas other projects evaluated their own unique activity. This meant that we were able to assess how easily the Toolkit can be used to evaluate projects under several different circumstances.

All of the projects supported by Renaisi had some prior experience of evaluation, but most lacked confidence in various aspects of the evaluation process, and did not consider themselves to be experts. Few had experience of designing their own evaluation survey, and instead tended to use pre-made surveys provided by other stakeholders to evaluate their projects where these were available.

Each project was provided with a total of five days of support from Renaisi, including in-person visits, and ongoing advice and guidance provided over the telephone or via email. The projects received support in the use of the Toolkit to carry out an evaluation, but not all projects limited their approach to questions included in the Toolkit: some developed their own questions, others adapted questions from the Toolkit, and some evaluated outcomes that are not included in the Toolkit. One project asked Renaisi to use qualitative methods to evaluate an aspect of their delivery, which involved going beyond the current guidance provided in the Toolkit. Our priority was to support projects to design an evaluation that best fitted their needs, interests, and context, rather than exclusively focusing on the Toolkit itself. As a result, some projects made more extensive use of the Toolkit than others, but all engaged with it during at least one stage of the evaluation process.

Types of support provided

Renaisi provided the following types of support to projects participating in this pilot.

- **Introductory telephone call:** A 30-45 minute introductory conversation to clarify the aims of the project and the evaluation, introduce the Toolkit, and make practical arrangements for the provision of ongoing support.
- **Initial planning workshop:** A half-day workshop with each project to choose outcomes, plan their evaluation, and agree additional support that Renaisi would provide.
- **Advice on choosing questions:** We supported project leads to choose questions that were appropriate for their target audience, and supported them to adapt these questions where necessary.
- **Training workshop:** We provided an additional training workshop for Kirklees Library Service, attended by Development Librarians and the Customer Service Officers whose role it was to administer and collect the evaluation questionnaires from service users. This training workshop provided advice on how to administer the surveys well, as well as providing an opportunity for engaging the officers in the evaluation design and gaining their feedback on the methods and materials proposed.
- **Qualitative observations:** The Toolkit is currently designed to facilitate quantitative evaluation methods. Renaisi also offered support to projects in developing a qualitative aspect to their evaluation, in order to supplement quantitative survey findings. One project, Cumbria Libraries, asked us to conduct observations and short informal interviews with library users and we provided them with a written report of our findings. A summary of this report can be found below. Other projects expressed an interest in using qualitative methods, but chose to prioritise using our support for survey development and data analysis.
- **Data input:** All of the projects conducted their own data collection, via paper surveys. However, all of the projects asked us to input this data into Excel on their behalf, due to a lack of capacity, experience and skills to complete this stage of the evaluation themselves within the timescales of this pilot.
- **Data analysis:** All projects had limited experience in data analysis, and most were not confident in using Excel to analyse their data. For this reason Renaisi provided extensive support at the data analysis stage, including the creation of summary dashboards on Excel and guidance on how to interpret the findings.
- **Reporting:** Renaisi developed a reporting template for projects to use to structure their write-up of the evaluation. We also supported some projects to complete the write-up by providing guidance on what information to include.
- **Ongoing, flexible, tailored support:** Throughout the evaluation process, Renaisi provided support to project leads via email and telephone conversations. This included, but was not limited to: providing advice and guidance on data collection methods; drafting surveys; developing new questions; advice on adapting questions from the Toolkit; answering questions relating to evaluation and outcomes; support with survey design; and troubleshooting. We used a collaborative approach, and reacted to the needs and interests of the projects themselves. We aimed to proactively guide the projects to ensure that the evaluations were as high quality and useful as possible, whilst also respecting that the evaluations were 'owned' by the

projects and recognising that our role was to observe the Toolkit being used independently as far as possible.

Pilot evaluation timescales

The initial workshops with each project took place between March and May 2017. All of the pilot evaluations took place between April and August 2017, and write ups were completed in September 2017. The shortest data collection period was one day (Castleton Children's Centre's bedtime reading workshop), and the longest was three months (King Alfred Academy's Accelerated Reader programme, and Newcastle-under-Lyme's Reading Ahead programme). Kirklees Library Service collected data over a four-week period in August 2017, and Cumbria Library collected data over a six week period in June and July 2017.

Reading Outcomes Framework Steering Group

Renaisi presented at two Reading Outcomes Framework Steering Group meetings attended by The Reading Agency and partner organisations who were involved in developing the Toolkit and recommending the projects participating in this pilot. Steering Group members also provided feedback on the evaluation methods, findings, and draft recommendations for this report.

3. Pilot evaluations: Methods and findings

This section of the report discusses how each project used the Toolkit, the evaluation methods used, and key findings. It draws heavily on the projects' own write up of their findings. We are grateful to all of the project leads for providing these to us, as well as for their ongoing commitment to this project. The five projects demonstrated a strong commitment to developing their evaluation practice, which is reflected in the findings below.

All five of the project evaluations took place over a short timescale of between one day (post-survey only) and three months (pre- and post- survey). All involved relatively small sample sizes. As such, the findings below provide an indication of the outcomes of each project, but should not be interpreted as definitive evidence of the impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment. We hope that the five pilot organisations will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of their projects, and that this pilot will provide them with a strong foundation for further research and ongoing reflection on the impact of their work.

Cumbria Library Service

Summary box: Cumbria Library Service	
Programme evaluated	Read Regional author events, and library displays
Number of sites	Six libraries
Number of participants	111 adults, 66 children
Outcome areas evaluated[4]	Sharing enjoyment of reading Awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read Understanding how to find reading materials
Duration of programme	Six events over one month
Evaluation method	Post-event feedback form Interviews and observations with users of Carlisle library
Number of responses	70 adults, 46 children (63% and 70% response rates)
Headline findings	As a result of attending an event, 77% of adult respondents wanted to talk about a book to friends or family

[4] Definitions of these outcomes, and all outcomes used in the Toolkit, can be found in the Appendix.

	As a result of attending an event, 88% of child respondents who read with other people twice a month or less said that they would like to read with other people more often

About the project

Cumbria Library Service used the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit to evaluate six author events carried out as part of the 2017 Read Regional project. Read Regional is an annual campaign that connects authors with readers in library settings across the North of England. It celebrates new books by authors in the North, and is run in partnership by New Writing North and 23 library authorities.

2017 was Cumbria Library Service's second year of participation in the Read Regional project. They decided to participate because of the benefits to the Library Service of being able to buy into a collaborative project with guaranteed author events, and ready-made materials and support. The project subscription fee includes a selection of 100 books from the 12 featured titles, six author events (plus a poetry workshop if one of the events booked is a poetry event), marketing materials, online resources, website and practice support from New Writing North's Read Regional project coordinator.

Cumbria Library Service organised six Read Regional author events in June and July 2017, and evaluated these using the Toolkit. The events took place at libraries in Kendal, Penrith, Barrow, Whitehaven, Workington and Carlisle. Four of these events were aimed at adults and were attended by 111 people in total; the other two were aimed at primary age children in Key Stage 2, and were attended by classes from two schools (with a total 66 children attending). In addition to the events, libraries also mounted displays of the 12 titles featured in Read Regional 2017, using posters, reading guides, author photos, and book jacket images.

The aims of these events and displays were to:

- Offer activity to promote and encourage reading for pleasure, relaxation and enjoyment;
- Use displays to engage people as they walk into the library;
- Inspire customers to try something new and break down barriers that people may have to reading;
- Create and engender a sense of place both in the library and the local community through displays and events with local writers;
- Promote the library;
- Foster enthusiasm about, and a love of reading;
- Sharing these experiences with other people.

Evaluation needs

The team at Cumbria Library Service believes that evaluation is important to capture impact, test if desired outcomes are being met, and to collect customer feedback. Evaluation is also used by the team to inform the development of new projects and funding bids, or when deciding whether to repeat or continue an activity. The team wanted to use the Toolkit to

supplement the existing Read Regional feedback survey, which asks users to provide feedback on the event but does provide insight into the impact of these events on reading for pleasure and empowerment. The Service was also interested in evaluating the impact of their Read Regional library displays on visitors to the library, something which they had not previously attempted.

How the Toolkit was used

The Toolkit was used to identify outcomes that matched the aims of the Read Regional project, which could then be assessed as part of the evaluation. The outcome areas that best matched the project's aims were selected from the Toolkit at a workshop organised by Renaisi and attended by library staff from seven libraries across Cumbria, all of whom were involved in hosting the Read Regional events around the county. These outcome areas were:

Sharing enjoyment of reading (adult events, child events and library displays)
Awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read (adult events and library displays)
Understanding how to find reading materials (child events)

The team then reviewed the range of questions included in the Toolkit under each outcome area and selected the most appropriate question(s) for their project. Given the nature of the events, it was important to focus on the key outcomes to avoid creating a long questionnaire which attendees may be less likely to complete. The questionnaire also included questions about whether attendees had read the book before attending the event, whether they were a member of a reading group, and how they rated the quality of the event.

Evaluation methods

To evaluate the impact and collect feedback on the author events, the team developed two separate questionnaires, tailored to each audience: one for adults and one for children. Both were designed as post-event questionnaires to be completed by the event attendees themselves. The questions chosen from the Toolkit were combined with questions from New Writing North's own evaluation survey of Read Regional, to produce one combined questionnaire.

The team anticipated that it might be challenging to achieve good response rates, as attendees might want to leave the event quickly. To mitigate this risk, the team gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the questionnaires at the end of each author event and provided pens. In total, 70 adults and 46 children completed the questionnaires, giving an overall response rate of 63% and 70% respectively.

To evaluate the library displays, the team decided to use a combination of observations and short interviews with library users. Renaisi were asked to undertake this part of the evaluation, as the team had not undertaken this type of qualitative method before. The team reported that "this worked extremely well, and provided a means to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of an aspect of reader development work that previously had never been attempted".

Data analysis and findings

Renaisi were asked to input the paper questionnaires from author events into Excel for data analysis, due to a lack of capacity within the Library Service to do this. The spreadsheet was then shared with the team to complete their own analysis and write up of the findings.

Sharing enjoyment of reading *(adults)*

As a result of attending the event:

- 84% of adult respondents wanted to recommend a book to friends or family
- 77% wanted to talk with friends or family about a book
- 46% wanted to lend a book to friends or family
- 18% wanted to read with or to friends or family

Awareness of reading preferences & how to choose what to read *(adults)*

- 69.2% of respondents had not read the book prior to attending the Read Regional author events. As a result of attending, 79.2% of those who had not read it said they would now like to.
- 19% of respondents said that they found it difficult or very difficult to choose a book to read. Of these, 22% stated that the event had helped them to choose a book.
- 81% of respondents said that they already found it easy or very easy to choose a book to read.
- Overall, 45% of respondents said that the event had helped them to choose a book to read.

Additional findings *(adults)*

In addition to these findings, the questionnaire also asked for feedback on how attendees had found out about the event, and their views on the overall experience. 90% of respondents said they would recommend Read Regional events to friends and family, and 61% rated the event they attended as excellent (35% rated it as good). 24% of respondents found out about the event from library displays, and 18% from speaking to a member of library staff.

Sharing enjoyment of reading *(children)*

- 17% of child respondents indicated that they read with other people twice a month or less. Of these, 88% wanted to increase this activity as a result of the event.

Understanding how to find reading materials *(children)*

- 43% of child respondents had never borrowed a book from the library, and 28% did so less than once a month.

Additional findings *(children)*

In addition to these findings, 46% of children said that they had enjoyed coming to the Read Regional event.

Understanding the impact of library displays

Renaisi spent a day observing library users in Carlisle Library to understand what impact the library displays had on users of the library. The displays considered included the quick choice stands, children's displays, and other themed displays around the library. We used observations of users' behaviour in the library and 18 short informal interviews (vox pops) to evaluate whether the displays had any effect on users' sharing enjoyment of reading, awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read.

We found that three types of visitors used the library in different ways, and this affected the ways these groups engaged with the displays:

- '*Consumers'* knew what they needed from the library, for example to use the printers/computers, work on their personal laptop or phone, or to borrow a specific book. These users did not spend a lot of time in the library; they came in to do a specific task, and then left after that task was complete. Consumers tended to be young adults and parents. This group of people did not take much time to look around the library, and when asked tended not to have noticed any of the displays.
- '*Browsers'* came into use the library facilities in a less structured way. They were often older people who had come in to read the newspapers, read a book or browse for a new book to read. These people were much more likely to have noticed the displays and to have engaged with them than the consumers.
- '*Settlers'* had come to use the library as a space to sit in. They were not interested in the services that the library offered, they simply used it as a space to meet with friends, or use their phones. These people were often younger, and had come to the library after school or college. The settlers did not tend to notice any of the library displays as they were not there with the intention of using the library services directly.

The main impact of the displays reported by the people we spoke to was on the library environment (opening up the library, changing the layout of books on display and improving the aesthetics of the space). The secondary impact of the displays reported was as a useful curation of books for users to choose from, and a quick source of information at a glance. The displays did not appear to have an impact on users' enjoyment of reading, although they did help some users – particularly 'browsers' – to choose what to read.

Discussion

These results show that the author events did lead to a majority of both adults and children intending to share their enjoyment of reading with others as a result of attending the event. The events were also effective in supporting adult attendees to choose a book to read. However, they were less effective in supporting people who already found it difficult or very difficult to choose.

Both the adults' and children's survey results show that one area of work for further development is creating opportunities to inspire and assist those who find it less easy to choose a book for themselves. The observation findings suggest that in this case displays

primarily help to create a welcoming and inviting library environment and promote/advertise events, as well as helping some users of the library to choose what to read.

As a result of these findings, the adult reader development and young people's teams at the Library Service intend to develop new ways to engage readers and recommend books to them, as well as projects to reach out to and attract new/lapsed library users. The team also intend to continue to organise author events, as the results show that these events may have influenced attendees' reading behaviours. The evaluation results revealed that encouraging children to visit the library and borrow books remains an important area for continued focus.

The team intends to continue their evaluation activities and to use the Toolkit to evaluate other areas of work. In future, they would like to include a question about whether respondents were a member of the library, in order to track the effect of library activities on membership rates. They will also communicate the results of this evaluation to library users by creating a display in the library. The team is also interested in trialling new methods of collecting data, including online surveys or the use of tablets to make data preparation easier.

Kirklees Home Service Library

Summary box: Kirklees Libraries	
Programme evaluated	Kirklees Home Service Library
Number of sites	None – books are delivered to users' homes
Number of participants	600
Outcome areas evaluated	Mental health Reducing isolation Access to reading materials
Duration of programme	Ongoing for 20 years; evaluation took place over 4 weeks
Evaluation method	One-off questionnaire
Number of responses	200
Headline findings	77% of the respondents reported feeling happier as a result of the Home Service Library visits 41% of the respondents reported feeling less lonely due to the service 38% of respondents reported feeling less lonely due to reading

About the project

The Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit was used to evaluate the Kirklees Home Service Library. 2017 marked the 52nd year of the Home Service Library delivering books to Kirklees residents. It currently serves over 600 people from birth to 103 years old, who are unable to access a static library. On average the service supports around 75 people each day, and over 80,000 resources in total are borrowed annually.

The service is coordinated and delivered by Customer Service Officers, who are library service staff. After an initial interview with a new customer, which covers their preferred reading choices, the officers select between 2-15 items per person per visit to be delivered. Customers can be visually impaired, disabled, elderly, housebound, living in a care home, have a mobility problem or other reasons for not being able to access their local library. Some are unable to carry books home and some use the service on a seasonal basis during winter months. The aim is to empower users, particularly those with long term conditions, to live independent lives to the full, through provision of items, service and information. It is also available for carers of all ages and their families who, because of their caring responsibilities, are not able to access the library and information service.

The intended outcome of each visit goes beyond having something to read, listen to or watch. The service is also designed to facilitate social interaction, which contributes to wellbeing and helps users maintain contact with the Council, which in turn gives access to a range of partner agencies (especially those in the health sector). Over the past few years, the range of local services offering a face-to-face, on the doorstep service has reduced, so the Home Service Library might be the only professional contact some customers receive. This contact is for leisure purposes, and therefore, distinct from interactions with health and care workers. The visits allow time to discuss reading choices with the trained officers so changes can be made to future selections and users' reading needs are met.

Evaluation needs

The Kirklees library team wanted to evaluate the Home Service Library because it is currently being developed to serve a more diverse user group, and so it was a good time to explore which aspects of the service have been effective to date. The existing customer base mainly included older people who are unable to access their nearest library. However, the team is also keen to promote the Home Service Library to other groups who may find it difficult to access a library building, including young carers and new parents. As such, the evaluation was designed to create a baseline for measuring impact, and the Toolkit was used to inform the development of an ongoing evaluation system to track the impact of the service on these new groups, which had not been achieved previously.

Kirklees Library Service has experience of evaluating projects in the past, including the use of customer satisfaction surveys and service review consultation surveys. It has collected and used quantitative data for many years, but is also interested in stories about the difference that the Home Service Library makes to users' lives, to help stakeholders understand its impact. As such, the team were keen to include some space for qualitative feedback from customers as well as using scale questions. The team were also interested in using the Toolkit

to more systematically track the impact of the Home Service Library on wellbeing, as well as reading behaviour.

Initially, it was hoped that the evaluation would cover the experiences of new Home Service Library customers. However, the numbers of new customers had not built up sufficiently within our project timescales to make this viable. The evaluation has instead focused on the experiences of long-term existing Home Service Library customers.

How the Toolkit was used

The aims of the Home Service Library were mapped to the Framework at a workshop delivered by Renaisi and attended by two Development Librarians. These outcome areas were:

Mental health
Social and cultural participation
Access to reading materials[5]

The team was particularly interested in better understanding the mental health outcomes of the programme, because Reading and Health are a Universal Offer and part of Kirklees Libraries' ambitions. In addition, the team chose to include social and cultural participation as a means to measure isolation, and accessibility outcomes because these are core aims of the project, and important for the Home Service Library demographic which predominantly consists of older people at present.

Having chosen the outcomes, Renaisi then supported the team to review the range of questions included in the Toolkit for each outcome and select the most appropriate ones for the target audience. Some questions from the Toolkit were used to gauge the customer's reading habits. Other questions were added to respond to the needs of more vulnerable service users, to measure isolation (or loneliness) and access to reading materials. The questionnaire also included questions on how long the customer had been using the service, what they like about the service, and what they would like to see done differently.

Evaluation methods

The team decided that a survey was the most appropriate method to use to collect data from service users, given the scale of data collection required, the type of data needed and the time available to collect data. Customer Service Officers helped to develop the survey at a training workshop delivered by Renaisi, in order to ensure it would be suitable for older, vulnerable users. The survey had to be short enough to be completed during the Home Service Library visits, although it was also possible to leave it with the customers to complete in their own time and then collect again at a later date. Most of the surveys were completed by customers in the presence of the Customer Service Officers, and some were completed by the staff where customers were unable to do this themselves.

[5] This outcome has subsequently been added to the Toolkit under 'Reading Environment'.

Renaisi

Using this method involved a risk that customers may feel unable to be critical of the staff or the service, in the presence of the officers. However, it was difficult to find a feasible alternative given the way that the service operates, and given self-completion would not be possible in all cases. To mitigate this risk, members of staff were trained to confidently and clearly explain the rationale behind the survey and the need to capture honest feedback so that the Service could be improved. Given most customers were long-standing users of the service, a degree of trust had built up between staff and users which was viewed as being likely to encourage users to answer honestly.

The overall response rate over a 4 week data collection period from July to August 2017 was 33% of the total number of Home Service Library users (200 respondents). However, this figure represents the majority of customers who accessed the Service in this period. Given this completion rate, and informal feedback from Customer Service Officers, this data collection process seemed to work well. The response rate is likely to have been high because officers were able to incorporate the survey as part of their regular visit, they were able to clearly explain its purpose and were able to spend time talking to the customers to encourage them to complete the survey, usually with the support of the officers themselves.

Data analysis and findings

The questionnaires were collected by Customer Service Officers and then sent to Renaisi to input into an Excel spreadsheet, because the Library Service lacked the capacity to do this themselves. The spreadsheet was then sent to the Library Service team to analyse and complete the write-up themselves.

Mental health

- Reading in general has a positive effect on respondents' mood, with 75% feeling more relaxed and 66% feeling happier as a result of reading.
- The Home Service Library in particular makes a difference to the customers' wellbeing, with 77% feeling happier and 59% feeling relaxed as a result of the visits.

Reducing isolation

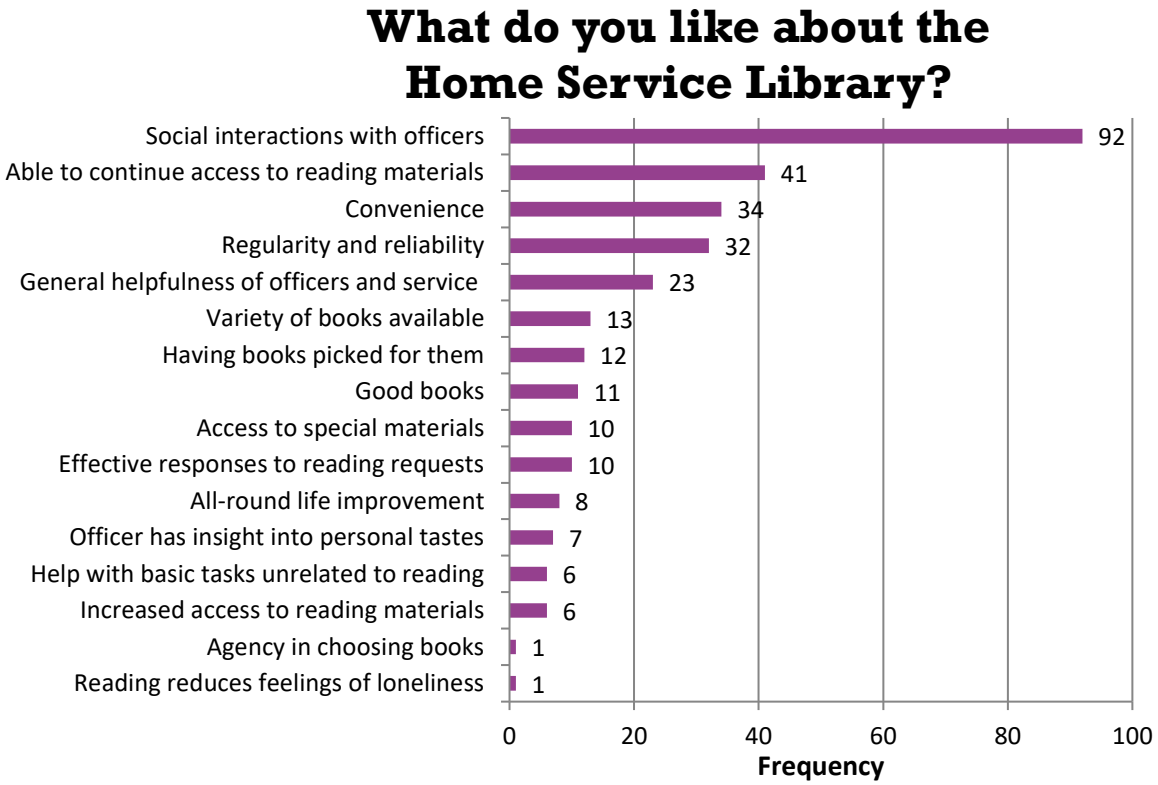
- 38% said that reading made them feel less lonely and 41% said that they felt less lonely as a direct result of the Home Service Library visits.
- 47% said that they most valued the social interactions with the officers as part of the Home Service Library.

Access to reading materials

- 24% said that they appreciated the ability to access reading materials through the Home Service Library and 94% find it easy or very easy to talk to the officers about the books they would like to read. This is important, as the officers are responsible for selecting the books available.
- 57% of the customers identified that they would like a wider range of books or more recommendations.

Additional findings

Customers were also asked an open question on the survey, 'What do you like about the Home Service Library?' Renaisi coded each response to identify the key themes that emerge. Identifying the number of times each theme was mentioned gives an indication of the element of the Home Service Library most valued by the service users, which was overwhelmingly the social interactions with drivers. The responses are summarised in the chart below:



Users also provided feedback on areas of the service that they would like to see developed, with 57% wanting a wider range of books or more recommendations.

Discussion

The results indicate that the Home Service Library does have a positive effect on users' happiness and wellbeing, and that for some users, it helps them to feel less lonely. When asked what they liked about the Home Service Library, almost half specified that they liked the opportunity to have social interactions with the officers. Reading in general also seems to have a positive effect on users' happiness, and for some users, helps them to feel less lonely.

To address feedback from customers, the Library Service intends to review their stock selection and information provided about new stock, as well as introducing new stock formats and other reader development opportunities.

The Library Service intends to use the evaluation findings to promote the service to new customers. It also intends to share the findings with key stakeholders to show how the

service could help them to meet their health and wellbeing aims. The team would like to continue to implement the survey and the evaluation process. However, to manage capacity issues they intend to use focus on a small sample of participants, rather than attempting to survey all users of the service. They also intend to experiment with electronic data capture methods as this may help to overcome the capacity issue. The team reported that the evidence section of the Toolkit is very valuable, and has already been used to inform their annual review document as a means to support investment in reading for pleasure and empowerment.

Castleton Children's Centre

Summary box: Castleton Children's Centre	
Programme evaluated	Bedtime reading workshop
Number of sites	One
Number of participants	25 families
Outcome areas evaluated	Confidence about reading Sharing enjoyment of reading Greater engagement in additional parent courses and services
Duration of programme	One evening (two hours)
Evaluation method	One-off feedback form
Number of responses	17
Headline findings	76% of parents surveyed felt more confident about reading with their child as a result of attending the workshop 76% of parents surveyed said that they intended to read more regularly with their child as a result of attending the workshop

About the project

Castleton Children's Centre initially planned to evaluate three separate activities: a week-long series of activities taking place to celebrate National Bookstart Week; a Bookstart Corner family course taking place over 6 weeks; and a bedtime reading workshop for parents of 4-5 year olds promoting reading bedtime stories.

National Bookstart Week is a national project led by BookTrust, which aims to promote and encourage families to share books, stories and rhymes. This is achieved through small to large scale events (depending on the setting) for children aged 0-5, based on a theme with an accompanying story booklet and activity resources that are gifted to the family. BookTrust

provides the resources, support and guidance, but the individual setting decides how they wish to run their celebration event(s). National Bookstart Week took place in June 2017 and was open to all families accessing the centre.

2017 was the fifth year in which Castleton Children's Centre had participated, with each child care room, nursery and Stay and Play sessions themed around 'playing outdoors', and making use of the shared text 'Every bunny dance'. Each child accessing the centre had copies of the book, a mask and colouring sheets, as well as a rhyme sheet. As part of the project the library service were involved sharing story telling sessions with children and their families. A total of 60 families accessing the Centre participated in Bookstart Week activities. However, only five responses were received to the evaluation survey, and these findings have not been included in this report.

Following National Bookstart Week, the Centre also delivered BookTrust's Bookstart Corner programme. Bookstart Corner is a targeted programme aimed at families with children aged 12-24 months. The programme supports children's centres across England to help families that need additional support to develop a love of stories, books and rhymes. Bookstart Corner is designed to offer a range of tailor-made reading related resources and activities to these families during four sessions, but delivery is sometimes adapted to suit the needs of settings and families.

In this case, Bookstart Corner was intended to be delivered over six weeks by the Centre teacher, and held for two hours per week for families of children aged 0-5 years. The group was well attended by 12 families, but unfortunately only three of the six classes were delivered due to unforeseen staffing issues, and so the evaluation of this project was not completed and has not been included in this report.

The bedtime reading workshop was a new programme, which aimed to raise attainment in literacy of Reception class children aged 4-5 years, engage families in their children's learning and promote a greater enjoyment of reading. The main objective was to raise the profile of having a bedtime story each evening as part of a child's routine, which has benefits to reading ability as well as developing bonds within the family and encouraging a more relaxed bedtime routine. The workshop was delivered in the evening, children wore their pyjamas and brought a favourite teddy, and some parents and staff also wore pyjamas. The room was decorated as a bedroom with pillows, soft toys and blankets. Two stories were shared, along with a treasure hunt to find a gift of free books for the children. 25 families in total attended the workshop.

Evaluation needs

The Centre has previously used its own questionnaires to evaluate courses and to gain feedback from staff and families on the quality of provision. In previous years the Centre has used questionnaires provided by BookTrust to evaluate National Bookstart Week and Bookstart Corner, as well as their own informal feedback sheets. The Centre has recognised that courses and special events are time intensive to organise and require input from a number of staff. Therefore, they have been keen to understand the impact and value of

these events. There was also a desire to reflect on how the events can be improved, and whether they should be repeated in the future. Finally, the Centre was keen to collect outcomes data which could demonstrate their commitment to achieving goals set out by Ofsted.

By carrying out these three projects, the Centre aimed to raise parents' awareness of the importance of reading at home, hearing their child read and finding fun ways to do this, with the long-term goal of improving children's literacy and enjoyment of reading. The evaluation provided an opportunity to discover whether those aims had been achieved.

How the Toolkit was used

Renaisi visited the Nursery Teacher and Early Years Leader at Castleton Children's Centre, to introduce the Toolkit and use it to plan the evaluation activities. We used the Toolkit to discuss which outcome areas best matched what the Centre was trying to achieve through their activities. These outcome areas were:

Confidence about reading *(parents and children)*
Sharing enjoyment of reading *(parents and children)*

These outcomes were selected because a lack of confidence and enjoyment in reading are key barriers preventing families and children reading at home. The Centre also chose to consider an additional outcome that is not included in the Toolkit – parental engagement. This is a key priority for the Centre as many families have had negative experiences of a school environment in the past. The events and workshops organised aim to engage families in their child's learning at school, and be actively involved in and support that learning. Therefore, the Centre wanted to find out which workshops families enjoy, and how best to engage parents in the future.

Once the outcomes had been selected, the Nursery Teacher created draft versions of the surveys to evaluate each of the different activities taking place. Some of these questions were adapted from surveys used in previous years or that were part of the resources offered by BookTrust, and some were taken from the Toolkit. These questions were then adapted by Renaisi to make them suitable for a post-survey only, rather than a pre- and post- survey format. Some questions also needed to be created to gain data about parents' perception of their children's confidence and enjoyment of reading, as the children were not surveyed directly due to their age. The questionnaire also included questions on the child's age, whether they attend childcare in the children's centre, and whether there are other services parents would like to access from the centre.

Evaluation methods

Three separate questionnaires were developed to monitor the outcomes of the three separate activities. Given the informal, drop-in nature of the Bookstart Week activities, a post-activity survey was developed to collect feedback after the event. Similarly, given that the bedtime reading workshop was a short, standalone project, a short post-activity survey was also used. Both a pre-activity survey and post-activity survey were developed to evaluate

Bookstart Corner, as this would enable the Centre to more easily track changes in outcomes before and after the course took place. All of the surveys were designed to use simple language, be as brief as possible and used symbols to enable families with low literacy and with English as an additional language to participate.

The response rate for families attending Bookstart Week was low. The survey was several pages long, and was given to each family to complete at home on the last day of Bookstart Week, after they had attended all the activities. Only five of the 60 surveys sent home were returned, and so it was not possible to robustly evaluate the outcomes of Bookstart Week. This experience highlights the importance of encouraging users to complete surveys on the spot and with the support of staff, where possible. It also highlights the importance of ensuring that surveys are sufficiently short and accessible for users to complete themselves. BookTrust typically receive a good response to the National Bookstart Week feedback questionnaire but are working with settings to make this even more accessible. Next year, the Centre will consider alternative methods such as asking parents to complete surveys during the session, and asking staff to provide help where required.

Whilst there was a good response rate for the Bookstart Corner course pre-survey, the final three classes were cancelled and therefore it was not possible to administer the post-survey. The materials will instead be used to evaluate the course the next time it is run.

Seventeen families who attended the bedtime reading workshop completed the post-survey, giving a response rate of 68%. Some families completed the surveys by themselves, and where necessary some were completed with the support of staff. The remainder of this report focuses on the findings from this survey of the bedtime reading workshop.

Data analysis and findings

Confidence about reading *(children)*

- 76% of parents thought that their child seemed more confident with books as a result of attending the workshop

Sharing enjoyment of reading *(children)*

- 100% of parents felt that their child enjoyed the bedtime reading workshop

Confidence about reading *(parents)*

- 76% of parents felt more confident about reading with their child as a result of attending the workshop

Sharing enjoyment of reading *(parents)*

- 100% of parents said they enjoyed the bedtime reading workshop
- 100% of parents said that they and their child enjoyed reading together at the workshop
- 76% of parents said they intended to read more regularly with their child as a result of attending the workshop

- As a result of attending the workshop, 31% of parents said they would make changes to their child's bedtime routine
- As a result of attending the workshop, 54% of parents said they planned to start sharing more books at home and 8% said they planned to start sharing songs and rhymes

Greater engagement in additional parent courses and services *(parents)*

- As a result of attending the workshop, 100% of parents felt motivated to attend more family events in future.
- Song and rhyme classes were the most popular idea for future family classes at the Centre (47% of replies), but there was a wide spread of responses.

Discussion

The results suggest that the workshop was popular with parents and children, and that it was effective in increasing the confidence of the majority of parents and children in reading. The workshop was also effective in encouraging some parents to read more regularly with their child in future. All of the parents who attended indicated that they wanted to attend more family events, which suggests that the workshop helped to encourage future engagement.

As a result of these findings, Castleton Children's Centre intend to offer the workshop again this school year, as well as other similar events throughout the year (e.g. themed on numbers and phonics). The feedback provided from families attending the bedtime reading workshop will be helpful in designing what workshops to run, when, and how often. The Centre also intends to encourage higher attendance from families who do not already read at home with their child.

The Centre intends to improve the evaluation of Bookstart Week next year by developing a shorter survey, and encouraging parents to complete it on the spot with the support of staff. If possible, they would also like to introduce follow-up surveys with parents after attending a workshop to investigate whether the intended changes to behaviour had taken place. The team will also share the results of the evaluation with class teachers, the Centre Manager, Senior Leadership Team and Ofsted inspectors, and intend to develop a display of photographs and quotes from families attending the workshop to remind parents of the importance of bedtime stories in a visual way.

King Alfred's Academy

Summary box: King Alfred's Academy	
Programme evaluated	Accelerated Reader
Number of sites	One school
Number of participants	All of Years 7 and 8; the evaluation focused on 30 pupils

Outcome areas evaluated	Attitudes to reading Awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read Confidence about reading Reading behaviour (frequency, quantity, breadth and depth) Sharing enjoyment of reading Understanding how to find reading materials
Duration of programme	Since November 2016; evaluation took place over three months
Evaluation method	Matched pre- and post- survey
Number of responses	22
Headline findings	At the start of the evaluation 41% of pupils surveyed said that they read books a couple of times a week or every day. At the end of the evaluation, this had increased to 50%. By the end of the evaluation, 67% of pupils surveyed agreed more strongly that they knew how to choose a book that they would enjoy, compared to at the start.

About the project

King Alfred's Academy chose to use the Toolkit to evaluate the impact of their recently implemented Accelerated Reader (AR) programme on Year 7 pupils.[6] Reading for pleasure is a crucial component of a successful literacy programme in Key Stage 3, however until the 2016-17 school year King Alfred's had no structured way to encourage students to read. For this reason, the school decided to buy licences for the AR programme on a trial basis for all Year 7 and 8 pupils, and committed to 15-20 minutes of silent reading at the beginning of each English lesson from November 2016.

The AR programme includes an adaptive 'Star Reading' literacy test which provides a band of books with an appropriate level of challenge based on the student's reading age. King Alfred's students took this test first in November, and then another four times throughout the year with the final test in July. This means that the school has good data about progress or regression in reading ages and literacy for this year group throughout the year.

Evaluation needs

Despite providing good data on pupils' literacy and reading age, AR does not test pupils' reading attitudes and so it was impossible to know whether pupils 'felt' differently about reading as a result of their use of the programme. The school was keen to use the evaluation

[6] More information about Accelerated Reader can be found here: http://www.renlearn.co.uk/accelerated-reader/

as an opportunity to explore whether the programme helped pupils to develop a positive attitude towards reading, which is essential for long term engagement with reading.

The school was interested in the attitudes of all students, but in particular the attitudes of the 30 students who had the lowest reading ages (as indicated by the AR Star Reading test). All of these 30 pupils rarely, if ever, read for pleasure. The evaluation was intended to explore the attitudes of these pupils, whether they changed as a result of their engagement with the AR programme, and what further support the school could provide to help encourage pupils' reading for pleasure. Furthermore, as AR was a new programme for King Alfred's, the school wanted to systematically evaluate what students thought about the programme and whether their '20 minutes silent reading' approach was working.

How the Toolkit was used

Renaisi met with the Reading Intervention Specialist and Literacy Coordinator at King Alfred's Academy to introduce the Toolkit and select the outcome areas that best matched the interests and aims of the school in supporting pupils to develop more positive attitudes towards reading. These outcome areas were:

- Attitudes to reading
- Awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read
- Confidence about reading
- Reading behaviour (frequency, quantity, breadth and depth)
- Sharing enjoyment of reading
- Understanding how to find reading materials

The school did not choose to monitor intellectual outcomes (for example literacy), because the AR programme already provides extensive data on this.

Once the outcomes were chosen, the Literacy Coordinator systematically reviewed all of the questions provided under each outcome in the Toolkit and chose the ones which were most suitable for the pupils' age and context. She also developed some additional questions about the school's approach to reading and the AR programme, to enable pupils to provide more specific feedback on aspects that they enjoy or not.

Evaluation methods

The school decided to use a pre- and post- survey to track pupils' attitudes to reading over a period of several months. Given the large numbers of students and a busy school timetable, a survey rather than observations or interviews was the most efficient way to evaluate reading attitudes. The survey was administered on paper in English lessons rather than online, due to a lack of experience in creating online surveys and because the ICT department did not have sufficient time to put links to the survey on the school website.

All 300 Year 7 pupils completed the pre-survey in April 2017, and then the 30 students with the lowest reading ages were asked to complete a post-survey in July 2017 (22 of these were completed). The post-survey was not used for all Year 7 pupils because the school did not

have the capacity to assess the results for the full year group, and chose to prioritise those pupils with the greatest need of support. The findings presented below are for the 22 pupils who provided both a pre- and post-survey response. The survey data from all 300 pupils who completed the pre-survey will be analysed by the school and used as a baseline for future evaluations.

The post-survey contained one less question than the pre-survey due to an issue with formatting the pre-survey, which led to the response to one question falling on a different page and confusing some students. Therefore, we cannot compare pre and post responses to this question, and it has been excluded from the findings below.

Data analysis and findings

The survey consisted of a series of statements that the students were asked if they agreed or disagreed with.

Attitudes to reading

- I find it hard to finish books: 60% students disagreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation than at the start.
- I feel happy if I receive a book as a present: 42% students agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- I enjoy going to a bookstore or a library: 48% students agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- After reading for a few minutes, I start to get bored: 42% students disagreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- For me, reading is a waste of time: 50% disagreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.

Awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read

- I prefer someone else picking books for me: 53% students agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- I know how to choose a book that I will enjoy: 67% students agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.

Confidence about reading

- Reading is harder for me than for many of my classmates: 47% disagreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- I have trouble reading stories or texts with difficult words: 60% disagreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- I think I would do better in school if I could read better: 52% agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.

Reading behaviour (frequency, quantity, breadth and depth)

- I would like to listen to my tutor read aloud interesting stories: 52% agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.

- I would like to go the [school] library more often if it was open more: 52% agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.
- At the start of the evaluation 41% of participants said that they read books a couple of times a week or every day. At the end of the evaluation this had increased to 50%.

Sharing enjoyment of reading

- I like talking about books with other people: 43% agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation. However, 38% students disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation.

Understanding how to find reading materials

- It's easy to find things to read: 50% agreed more strongly with this statement at the end of the evaluation.

Discussion

Overall, 18 questions indicated that pupils' attitudes improved over the course of the two-month evaluation period, 11 questions had mixed results, and five showed an average negative result. The school was also able to compare these results to the pupils' reading age, which was 8 years and 5 months on average at the start of the evaluation period, and 8 years and 7 months on average at the end – a faster rate of improvement than previously. This suggests that, overall, the AR programme and the schools' policy of silent reading in lessons may have had a positive effect on both pupils' attitudes to reading and their reading ability, though other factors may also have had an effect. The evaluation has shown that it is possible to change the attitudes to reading of children with a lower reading age than their peers.

As a result of these findings, the team intends to share the findings with the Senior Leadership Team, and possibly Ofsted, to provide evidence that the approach taken to improve pupils' engagement with reading appears to be having some positive effect, albeit slowly. The school is likely to continue its participation in the AR programme, supplemented by its own reading initiatives. The evaluation has provided some indication of areas where improvements are needed, including the provision of books for reluctant readers and the attention given to children who struggle with reading. The findings will be shared with teachers, who will be supported to use the results to provide tailored support to pupils who have demonstrated a negative attitude towards reading.

In future, King Alfred's Academy plans to continue evaluating the effectiveness of their approach to encouraging pupils' reading. Given their experience of this evaluation, they intend to make some changes: reducing the number of questions, using an electronic format to overcome the challenge of analysing high numbers of survey responses, and implementing the pre- and post-surveys over a longer time period. The team would also like to supplement these quantitative findings with a more in depth focus group, to explore pupils' attitudes in more depth and ask follow-up questions to provide more insight into their responses. The school hopes that participating in a focus group where pupils' opinions are listened to and valued will in itself help to shift some students' attitudes towards reading.

Newcastle-under-Lyme College

Summary box: Newcastle-under-Lyme College	
Programme evaluated	Reading Ahead
Number of sites	One college
Number of participants	Over 200 across three departments
Outcome areas evaluated	Reading behaviour Attitudes to reading Confidence about reading Identifying as a reader Critical thinking Self-expression Self-esteem Communication skills
Duration of programme	Reading Ahead delivered between October and May in one department, and February and May in the other two departments Evaluation took place between March and June 2017
Evaluation method	Non-matched pre- and post- survey
Number of responses	75 pre and 57 post
Headline findings	At the end of the evaluation period, an average of 14% more respondents reported that they regularly read each of the media types listed in the survey At the end of the evaluation period, on average respondents rated themselves as a better reader (by 0.12 on a scale of 1-10)

About the project

Reading Ahead is a programme developed by The Reading Agency and delivered by public libraries, adult learning organisations, workplaces, prisons and colleges across the UK. Participants are challenged to pick six reads (these can include short texts such as poems, magazine articles or online content as well as books) and record, rate and review those reads in a diary in order to get a certificate. Participating organisations purchase materials from The Reading Agency including diaries, certificates and promotional material, and participants who complete their reading diaries can enter a national competition to win a prize.

This is the fifth year that Newcastle-under-Lyme College has delivered Reading Ahead with students on some of their courses. The College is the largest supplier of students to Higher

Education in Staffordshire. In 2017, the programme was expanded to include students in three departments: Foundation Studies, Early Years and Business Studies. The college was keen to participate in the programme because the reading ability and confidence of young people joining their courses has decreased in recent years, which has had a negative impact on their studies as well as their enjoyment of reading. Anecdotal feedback and previous survey results suggest that Reading Ahead seems to have improved students' confidence in reading at the college.

Evaluation needs

Newcastle-under-Lyme college has previously used an online pre- and post-survey developed by The Reading Agency to evaluate Reading Ahead. The results of this survey are presented annually to the Senior Management Team to secure ongoing support for the programme. However, the team delivering Reading Ahead at the college does not have experience in developing their own survey or survey questions, and has not previously used a survey to evaluate Reading Ahead that has been specifically developed for their needs. Given the time pressures experienced by teachers at the college, it was important for the Toolkit to be accessible and easy to use. The team was keen to use this evaluation as an opportunity to assess the extent to which students improve their confidence and attitudes to reading over the course of the programme, if at all.

How the Toolkit was used

Renaisi met the college's coordinator of Reading Ahead, along with other members of teaching staff who were able to drop in and provide their input during lunch hour. We introduced the Toolkit and supported the team to choose outcome areas from the Toolkit which best matched the outcomes they were interested in developing as part of the Reading Ahead programme. The team felt that most of the outcome areas listed in the Toolkit were relevant, and so Renaisi supported the team to prioritise those areas that were most important to the college. These were:

Reading behaviour
Attitudes to reading
Confidence about reading
Identifying as a reader
Critical thinking
Self-expression
Self-esteem
Communication skills

Renaisi then supported the team to choose appropriate questions from the Toolkit, develop new questions for outcome areas without questions provided, and combine some questions together to avoid repetition in the final survey. The questionnaire also included questions about the students' age, gender and what course they study.

Evaluation methods

The team chose to use a pre- and post- survey administered on paper by teachers at the start of class, to maximise the response rate. An online survey would have been preferred to make

analysis easier, however the team lacked time to liaise with the IT department to create the survey online and make it available for students to complete.

To ensure that the young people gave honest answers and did not feel exposed, the surveys were kept anonymous. This meant that it was not possible to match pre- and post- responses (i.e. to identify the pre- and post- response of a single individual), and so it is not possible to assess whether individual students improved or not. However, we can compare the *average* responses across the cohort at the start and end of the evaluation period, to infer whether the cohort as a whole has improved on average.

Not all students attended class on the day the surveys were administered (particularly in the final term), and not all young people agreed to complete the survey, which is why the college collected fewer post-surveys than pre-surveys overall. This means that the results may be impacted by selection bias. In total, 75 students completed the pre-survey in March 2017 and 57 completed the post-survey in June 2017. Renaisi inputted the data in Excel and completed the data analysis, as the team lacked the capacity to do this in the time available.

Data analysis and findings

The survey consisted of a series of statements that the students were asked if they agreed or disagreed with.

Reading behaviour

- At the end of the evaluation period, an average of 14% more respondents reported that they regularly read each of media types listed (college text books; fiction books/novels; magazines, newspapers or newsletters; social media posts; and online news).

Attitudes to reading

- How much do you enjoy reading: On average, there was no change in respondents' level of enjoyment of reading at the end of the evaluation period compared to the beginning.
- I think that reading is cool: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.
- I would feel embarrassed if my friends saw me reading outside class: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.

Confidence about reading

- I do not read as well as other people in my class: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.
- The more I read, the better I become at it: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.37 on a scale of 1-5.
- How good a reader do you think you are? On average respondents rated themselves higher at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.12 on a scale of 1-10.

Identifying as a reader

- I would call myself a reader: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.

Critical thinking

- I am able to think clearly about problems or opinions: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.

Self-expression

- I feel confident in expressing my feelings through writing, speaking, art, music or dance: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.39 on a scale of 1-5.

Self-esteem

- I feel that I have a number of good qualities: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.26 on a scale of 1-5.
- All in all, I feel that I am a failure: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.38 on a scale of 1-5.
- I take a positive attitude towards myself: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.12 on a scale of 1-5.
- On the whole, I am satisfied with myself: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.16 on a scale of 1-5.

Communication skills

- I feel confident speaking to people who are older than me: On average respondents agreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.
- I enjoy working with young people as part of a team: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by 0.25 on a scale of 1-5.
- I'm good at listening to other people: On average respondents disagreed more strongly at the end of the evaluation period, by less than 0.1 on a scale of 1-5.

Additional findings

- 26 of the 55 respondents to the post-survey read more than 6 books as part of Reading Ahead.

Discussion

The results show that students appear to have increased the number of media that they read regularly, although it is difficult to tell whether this result (and the other results discussed below) has been impacted by selection bias, with those students that are more likely to read more also being more likely to complete the survey.

Nearly half of respondents to the post-survey read more than the required six books as part of Reading Ahead. However, there was no reported change in students' enjoyment of reading, and changes in attitudes were mixed: on the one hand, students agreed more strongly that reading is cool, but on the other hand, on average they also agreed more strongly that they would be embarrassed to be seen reading by their friends outside of class. Students did not seem to be more likely to identify as a reader at the end of the evaluation period.

In contrast, students' confidence in reading does seem to have increased. On average students agreed more strongly that 'the more I read, the better I become at it', and they also rated themselves as a better reader at the end of the evaluation period than at the beginning. Their ability to express themselves also seems to have increased. However, changes to their self-esteem are inconclusive: on average, students disagreed more strongly that they felt like a failure, but they also disagreed more strongly that they have a number of good qualities. The responses to questions about communication skills are similarly mixed.

Overall, it is difficult to interpret the findings of multi-statement questions where responses appear to be contradictory. However, it does seem that, on average, the cohort improved in reading confidence and increased the regularity of their reading over the duration of the evaluation period.

The evaluation survey did not ask students questions about their mental health, however anecdotal feedback from some students experiencing mental health challenges who participated in Reading Ahead suggests that reading had been helpful to them. The coordinator of Reading Ahead intends to investigate this finding further next year, and whether the College library can stock books on the Reading Well book lists. The College also intends to run Reading Ahead again and expand the programme to the Health and Social Care department, although the Business Studies department will no longer take part due to staffing changes.

In future, the Reading Ahead coordinator intends to return to using The Reading Agency's pre- and post-survey rather than continuing to use their own survey. This is partly for reasons of time, as the teachers involved in delivering the programme had limited opportunity to engage with the Toolkit and found it challenging to design a survey from scratch. The participants in the evaluation also felt that The Reading Agency's pre-made survey, combined with anecdotal feedback from teachers, adequately addressed their needs, and because it is administered online this makes analysing the data quicker.

4. Reflections on the Toolkit

The Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit is a resource in continual development. To this end and throughout the evaluation process, project leads were asked to reflect on their experience of using the Toolkit, its usability and any areas for development. Renaisi also made our own observations of how the Toolkit was used in practice and how it could be further developed. This section summarises projects' feedback and Renaisi's reflections. Overall, the reaction to the Toolkit was very positive. All of the projects engaged with the Toolkit, understood what it was intended to achieve, and were able to use the toolkit to deliver successful and insightful evaluations which they feel they can use to help them drive improvement, plan for the future and make the case for continued investment in activities designed to encourage people to read for pleasure and empowerment. The following discussion highlights what worked particularly well, as well as areas for future development.

Initial reactions to the Toolkit

Overall reaction

The project leads that we worked with were able to use the Toolkit to select outcome areas that matched the intended outcomes of their programme, and identify relevant questions. They also appreciated that the Toolkit was focused on reading for pleasure and empowerment rather than literacy outcomes.

"The Toolkit worked well for selecting questions, and the linking of questions to outcomes was particularly helpful. The range and the nature of the questions, along with the visuals aids, were excellent."

"I appreciated the pre-written questions as they were clearly written by professionals with experience in constructing surveys, something I had never done before."

Length

The Toolkit includes information for all types of user, context and beneficiary, and although it is interactive, it is currently not possible for users to isolate information that is relevant to them. All of the projects felt the Toolkit was long, and some found it slightly overwhelming to use as a result of this. Generally, project leads would have liked the Toolkit to have fewer questions that were more tailored to their specific service users or context.

"We will try to use the Toolkit in the future however it is time consuming and cumbersome because of its length..."

Time

Several of the projects found the process of developing their own questionnaires using the Toolkit time-consuming, and several struggled to find time to fully engage with the Toolkit. This was particularly the case for project leads whose role was not focused on evaluation, and also for leads working in a school environment.

"I found using the Toolkit quite time consuming, as the booklet was so detailed and sometimes hard to pick out the parts that are most relevant."

Adapting questions

The Toolkit does not provide any guidance on how, or whether, it is possible to adapt the questions provided in order to make them more tailored to a specific context. Several projects wanted to adapt questions to make them more suited to their specific context, however most of these did not feel confident in doing so without further advice.

"…[the Toolkit] does need thought and planning beforehand, and anyone using it should be prepared to carry out a degree of adaptation, rather than lift sections wholesale from it."

"… our concern is that we would be diluting the value of the questions by editing them without fully understanding why they were created in that way."

Confidence, skills and experience of evaluation

Some of the projects were already reasonably confident in evaluation, drawing on prior experiences and skills developed, and required less intensive support to complete their evaluation. Others were less confident and found the process of using and adapting the Toolkit challenging. It is difficult to tell whether these projects would have been able to complete the evaluation (certainly to the same level) without additional support.

"If we were to repeat this evaluation, we feel we are better informed than when we started this process. However, this is because we were supported by Renaisi with using the Toolkit. If we had had to start the process using the Toolkit by ourselves we are not certain that we would have completed the evaluation."

"I really appreciated [Renaisi] coming… to guide me through using it and think looking at the Toolkit in a group or pair and talking it through with someone who is used to using it would be more helpful."

Usability

Navigation

Some project leads liked the navigation buttons embedded in the interactive pdf. Others found these confusing, and found it difficult to navigate back to key pages from the pages of outcomes. This problem was probably exacerbated by some users' lack of time to fully engage in the Toolkit. Some project leads also wanted to be able to view all of the questions under one outcome in one place rather than spread over several pages, to facilitate easier comparison of questions.

Symbols

Some project leads found the symbols used in the Toolkit to demonstrate whether a question is targeted at adults, children/young people or parents/carers helpful. Others did not see them, or found them difficult to interpret.

"The visual symbols were helpful."

However, project leads did not find the symbols used to specify the question source intuitive, and most ignored this information when choosing questions.

Filtering

Several project leads would have liked a functionality that could filter the Toolkit, so that they only saw questions that were suitable for their target demographic and/or project context.

"If more than one tool kit could be devised, then one could be made depending on the target audience, e.g. one for Early Years, school aged children, teenagers or adults so it could be guided better… I am not sure one size fits all."

Exporting questions

All of the project leads felt it was time-consuming to copy questions from the Toolkit into a survey, particularly because it is difficult to copy and paste text from a pdf. Several have suggested an 'export' function, so that questions can be chosen and exported into a ready-made survey more easily.

The outcomes

Mutually exclusive outcomes

One project lead commented that the reading engagement outcomes are not mutually exclusive (for example, 'attitudes to reading' and 'identifying as a reader' are overlapping concepts). As a result, it can be challenging to choose which outcomes to focus on, and there is a risk that questions developed under each outcome may overlap. It would be helpful to create a clearer distinction between the outcomes, and/or to combine similar outcomes into one.

Reading engagement outcomes vs. longer-term outcomes

The Toolkit is currently organised into seven reading engagement outcomes, and four areas of outcomes that have been linked to reading for pleasure and are generally considered to be longer-term (mental health and wellbeing, intellectual outcomes, personal outcomes and social outcomes). Project leads did not find this distinction intuitive, and there is a risk that some users may expect to achieve longer-term outcomes over a short time period, which may be unrealistic. It would be helpful to provide clearer guidance on which outcomes are likely to be achievable in different timeframes.

Choosing appropriate outcomes

Renaisi provided a lot of guidance to some pilot projects on which outcomes to choose to monitor for their evaluations. In addition to the point above, we felt it was important that projects chose outcomes that were appropriate to the intensiveness and nature of their intervention. The Toolkit currently provides limited guidance on choosing outcomes that are appropriate to the project being evaluated. Similarly, there is no guidance on limiting the number of questions to ensure that surveys are manageable for service users to complete.

"When drafting our own surveys, I found it hard to strike a balance between having enough information and feedback gathered to be worthwhile, but keeping the surveys simple and brief so they were user friendly."

Other outcomes

Some pilot projects chose to monitor outcomes that are not included in the Toolkit, for example access to other services. It is not possible (or desirable) for the Toolkit to cover outcomes that are not specifically related to reading for pleasure and empowerment programmes, and some projects may involve outcomes that arise from elements other than reading. Project leads felt comfortable including these outcomes if necessary, alongside outcomes taken from the Toolkit.

The questions

'Missing' questions

Some outcomes included in the Toolkit do not have questions associated with them. Similarly, some outcomes do not have questions available for all demographics (*e.g.* a question may be available for adults, but not for children). Project leads understood why questions were not available, but several reported that they would prefer The Reading Agency to provide some example questions even if these were not validated (tested to assess whether the question is an accurate measure the desired outcome).[7]

Overlapping questions

Some questions contain similar, or the same, statements as other questions (for example, more than one question under 'attitudes to reading' contain the statement 'I only read if I have to'). This means that a survey may become repetitive if both questions are included, and this should be made clear to users.

Appropriate questions for different users

Some project leads felt that some question wording was inappropriate for their target audience, especially older or more vulnerable users. In particular, the questions provided under the 'mental health' outcome need to be asked with care. One project felt that some questions risked being too patronising for confident and articulate adults.

[7] A project to review and complete gaps in the reading engagement outcome measures (*A Review of Measures of Reading Engagement)* has recently been completed to address this issue. The new database will be published at: www.readingoutcomesFramework.org.uk.

"We did struggle to utilise much of the Toolkit when focusing on our elderly customers, as we found it a challenge to find [questions] which best suited these customers… Many of the questions that are relevant for our purposes are also inappropriate because they are too long, and use difficult or awkward language that would not be appropriate for our elderly customers."

Demographic or project-specific information

Questions that capture more information about beneficiaries have so far not been included in the Toolkit. Although the focus of the Toolkit is on measuring outcomes, this pilot has shown that it would be helpful to users carrying out an evaluation to see some guidance on how to collect demographic information. The methods section does remind users to collect demographic information to better understand beneficiaries' answers to questions about outcomes, however example questions are not included. Other questions about the beneficiary such as whether they are a member of a library could also be helpful. More detailed advice on this could be provided in the Toolkit.

"In terms of lessons learned, there was a definite oversight in not including a very basic question about library membership. If we had done so, this would have allowed better assessment of impact in relation to joining the library as a result of attending the event."

Questions for 'missing' demographics

There are currently no questions included in the Toolkit that are aimed at teenagers or young adults, which was highlighted as an area for development by one of the pilot project leads. Another two leads requested the inclusion of questions for teachers to complete about their students (to provide an additional perspective to students' own responses), or for parents/carers to complete about their young children (where young children were unable to provide their own response).

Applicability to different settings

Range of project types

All of the five pilot projects that we worked with found at least one question in the Toolkit that was appropriate for their setting. However, some users felt that the questions were very general and that they would benefit from more detailed advice about their specific sector.

"As a guide in early education I found it very general as it was aimed at analysing outcomes for such a wide range of projects... not enough examples for my particular needs."

Delivering existing programmes

Three of the projects supported by Renaisi involved delivering an off-the-peg programme (either national, regional, or pre-designed online software). It was possible to use the Toolkit to evaluate these projects, but the process was made more complex by the need to align

multiple partners' evaluation questions. It would be helpful for the Toolkit to be promoted to organisations that lead regional, national or online programmes so that their evaluation tools can be aligned with the Toolkit before being shared with organisations delivering the programme.

Ongoing, long-term programmes

Most of the projects we supported were short-term, with a defined start and end date. However, the Kirklees Home Service has been ongoing for decades and many users have accessed the service for years, therefore it is challenging to identify a 'start and end' point to evaluate. The Toolkit could provide more guidance for ongoing programmes on how to evaluate their impact.

Outcomes other than reading for pleasure

Some of the projects we supported were designed to achieve outcomes other than reading for pleasure, for example literacy or reading ability. Project leads found it reasonably straightforward to use the Toolkit to evaluate reading for pleasure outcomes alongside additional outcomes that related to different areas of development.

Evaluation methodologies

Quantitative and qualitative data

The Toolkit is designed to facilitate quantitative data collection, but acknowledges that qualitative methods are of equal value and can be used to address different types of evaluative questions. Most of the projects we supported value qualitative information from participants and some requested that the Toolkit provide some guidance on how to use qualitative methods to assess outcomes.

"In terms of evaluating the impact of the Read Regional displays, a number of the questions from the Framework were less appropriate in this context... if questions within the existing Framework had been used, they would not have provided the information we sought"

Types of survey

The Toolkit is currently designed to facilitate questionnaire development, however this is not the only method that can be used to collect quantitative data. The Toolkit could provide more information about different methods of administering surveys and the benefits and downsides of these (for example, online, by telephone, via third-party completion or via service users themselves).

"I think there needs to be more guidance about what generally works well in a survey and how to conduct a survey – how many questions; what are the options for collecting data (e.g. electronically, paper, in person); and especially more information about how to analyse the data."

Pre- and post-surveys

Most of the questions included in the Toolkit were originally designed to be used in a pre- and post-survey, where change over time can be measured and (all else being equal) attributed to the intervention. Questions designed for this type of survey are usually 'statement-style' and do not reference the specific intervention in order to avoid biasing the results. However, questions used in a post-survey only *do* need to reference the intervention, otherwise it is impossible to tell whether respondents felt that any change they experienced was a result of the intervention or not. Three of the projects we supported wanted to use the Toolkit to develop post-surveys only, and in most cases this required changing the question wording. However this process was not intuitive to project leads who had little prior experience of developing suitable survey questions. The Toolkit could provide more information about what type of survey the questions are suitable for, and how to change them if necessary.

Weaknesses of pre- and post- survey methodology[8]

No evaluation method is infallible. A significant weakness of pre and post methodology is that project participants often over-rate themselves at the start of a project, and then adjust their rating to be more realistic at the end once their skills and knowledge of the topic have increased. Paradoxically this can lead to the appearance that their skills and knowledge have stayed the same or decreased. The Toolkit does not discuss the weaknesses of pre and post methodology and users may be unaware of how to account for these, and other, potential challenges in interpreting the data.

Predetermined outcomes

It is important that projects are designed with a clear idea of what they intend to achieve and that evaluations measure whether these predetermined outcomes have been achieved. Unintended outcomes are equally important both to measure success and areas of weakness. The Framework Toolkit needs clearer guidance to encourage projects to use open questions and/or grounded methods to identify outcomes, whether positive or negative, as they are perceived by service users.

Involving project participants and delivery staff

Another risk is that if the Toolkit is used to develop evaluations by those in a position of power *e.g.* a project lead or other professional, it may create an unintentional barrier to the involvement of service users or delivery staff in the evaluation process. Ideally, service users should be involved in project evaluation and should be consulted on what outcomes they think should be monitored as part of the evaluation, to ensure that projects are designed to meet their needs and aspirations. The Toolkit could provide guidance or examples of how projects can achieve this.

[8] See HM Treasury's *Magenta Book* (2011) for more information about different evaluation types, their strengths and weaknesses.

"It was useful to talk through the survey and its purpose with the staff who would be administering it before it was finalised. This ensured they were able to take ownership of the survey and made it accessible to their customers…"

Programme quality

The Toolkit is currently designed to measure the extent to which a programme achieves particular outcomes, rather than monitoring the quality or process of delivery. Quality markers will vary between different settings and types of project, however the Toolkit could provide some guidance on how to use evaluations and outcomes data to assess the quality of delivery.

Data analysis

Guidance on data analysis

The Toolkit does not provide guidance on how to analyse the data generated for each question. All of the projects Renaisi supported required some advice on how to analyse their data, and/or requested assistance with inputting the data in an analysable format on Excel.

"To meet with [Renaisi] and share a number of emails was very useful to guide me through the process and find out about which findings were significant or not."

Reporting findings

The same data can be reported in different ways. For example, a pre- and post-scale question can be reported as 'average change', or 'percentage of respondents who changed'. The Toolkit does not provide advice on how to report findings in a consistent way, that would facilitate easier comparison between projects or between outcomes.

Multi-statement questions

The projects Renaisi supported struggled to interpret the findings of multi-statement questions, particularly where respondents provided contradictory answers (*e.g.* appearing to improve on some statements, and regress on others, within the same question). Given that many of these questions originate from academic research, it is likely that guidance on how to interpret and summarise the results were provided. However, project leads did not have time to investigate this and are likely to have struggled to find or access the relevant information.

Positive and negative statement wording

Some statements included in questions in the Toolkit are worded positively (*e.g.* 'I enjoy reading'). Others are worded negatively (*e.g.* 'I read only if I have to'). We observed that this made it challenging for the pilot sites to interpret the data, because in some cases a decrease in score indicates a positive outcome, but in other cases as decrease in score indicates a negative outcome. The Toolkit could provide some warning or guidance to help users recognise this potential issue.

Scale questions

In some cases, projects also struggled to interpret scale questions. This is particularly challenging where users have adjusted their self-evaluation and become more likely to rate themselves lower at the end of the project than at the beginning (see above). Scale questions can also be difficult to analyse when responses are given in words rather than numbers, and/or where the scale is not consistent.

Individuals vs. cohort

One of the projects Renaisi supported decided to survey respondents anonymously. This meant that it was impossible to link pre- and post-survey responses for the same person, and instead it was necessary to compare average responses across the cohort. Other projects using pre- and post-survey methodology chose to ask individuals to provide a name, so that the pre- and post- responses could be linked. The Toolkit does not provide information or advice about whether and how to use individual pre- and post-data, compared to cohort averages.

Data literacy

All of the projects we supported had some experience in conducting evaluations, but all felt less confident in data analysis than in survey design. In particular, some project leads were unfamiliar with Excel and/or were unsure how to organise the data for analysis. The Toolkit is not able to address this issue, but a different approach may be needed to support the improvement of evaluation practice in the sector.

"… Renaisi collated the data and after the post-survey evaluation did analysis for us; this was helpful as I had never done data analysis of this type before and my Excel skills are rudimentary."

Evidence section

Use of the evidence section

Some of the project leads found the evidence section of the Toolkit particularly useful, and one project has already used it to inform their annual review process. Several projects expressed a desire for the evidence section to be kept up to date with new evidence over time.

"The evidence section is of great value and we have already used it for our annual review document and would appreciate it being kept up to date with new findings."

Format of the evidence section

The evidence section is quite long, and some project leads felt that it could usefully be developed as a separate document to the rest of the Toolkit.

Overall feedback

In summary, the Toolkit has been well-received by the projects that Renaisi supported and has been a useful resource. It has helped project leads to plan and design their own evaluations, and the evaluation findings have been insightful and are set to continue fuelling the case for investment in reading for pleasure and empowerment programmes.

"The Framework provides a really useful and flexible Toolkit for library staff to use in evaluating reader development activity, and I would encourage anyone to try."

"I strongly recommend using the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit to evaluate the effectiveness of any activities linked to reading for pleasure."

"Our message to others wanting to use the Toolkit:

- *you can measure impact using this Toolkit however it will take time to pull out what will work best*
- *Be willing to edit the questions*
- *Use the evidence section (useful for bids, talking to partner/stakeholders as well as evaluation)*
- *Having a very specific audience works best and got strong results*
- *Don't underestimate the time required to input data gathered."*

On a practical level, the benefits of the Toolkit included having the outcome areas organised for projects to match to their programme aims, having pre-made survey questions (in most instances) to give projects a 'starting point' in thinking about their evaluation, and the fact it was flexible enough to use in a wide range of settings and programme types. However, the Toolkit alone cannot achieve the aim of improving evaluation practice in the sector, and should be seen as one approach to achieving this aim that sits alongside other approaches. Some adaptations to the Toolkit, particularly more extensive advice and guidance to sit alongside the questions, will make the Toolkit more user-friendly. We have provided some recommendations to support these aims below.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This project has highlighted the potential benefits, and added to existing knowledge of areas to develop (see page 4) to improve evaluation practice and develop shared outcomes across a diverse sector. This is an ambitious aim, and one that cannot be achieved in a short time period or without significant investment in the skills and attitudes of people at all levels of influence.

The Toolkit represents a significant first step in this process, providing a practical tool to support organisations in their generation of evaluation evidence to support local delivery and improvement of programmes. The pilot evaluations discussed in this report demonstrate that it can help provide focus, useful questions, and encourage projects to develop their own evaluation approach. It is set to continue to evolve in response to changing needs and developing understanding of the impact of reading for pleasure and empowerment, and should be used as a basis for ongoing conversations about how to improve evaluation practice in this field. However, the Toolkit alone cannot transform an entire sector and should be supplemented with additional training, support and development initiatives to facilitate more, and better, evaluation practice if it is to achieve this. The Reading Agency will need to decide what role it wants to play in this process, and how to best to build on the foundation that the Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit has provided.

The following sections summarise our recommendations, based on feedback and reflections on the Toolkit. We have organised these recommendations into three types: practical changes that can be made to the Toolkit in a short time period; more significant changes or developments to the Toolkit that can take place over a longer time period; and other activities to support improved evaluation practice in the sector that can supplement the Toolkit itself.

We recommend prioritising two types of recommendations below: those which can be implemented quickly and easily with minimal changes to the Toolkit itself (in particular recommendations 1, 3, 6, and 7), and those which have the potential to have the greatest impact on evaluation practice in the sector (recommendations 16, 17 and 19). What The Reading Agency chooses to prioritise will also depend on the available resources to deliver this work.

Improving the Toolkit in the short term

Recommendation 1: Provide more detailed guidance to accompany the Toolkit, specifically:

a) Amending questions: Provide guidance on whether users can amend the questions included in the Toolkit, and the potential benefits or downsides of doing this.

b) Different types of outcomes: Create a clearer distinction between the 'reading engagement' outcomes and the 'longer-term' outcomes. Explain that the reading engagement outcomes are likely to be achievable over a shorter time period. Explain that the longer term outcomes are only likely to be achievable if the reading engagement outcomes are achieved first.

c) Choosing appropriate outcomes: Provide guidance for users on how to choose outcomes that are appropriate for their project, given its target audience, length and intensity, as well as its intended aims.

d) Asking demographic or project-specific questions: Provide a more prominent reminder to users to include questions about their service users' demographic and other questions that are relevant to the delivery of their project, as well as outcomes questions.

e) Data analysis: Provide an explanation alongside each question of how to analyse the results, particularly for multi-statement questions. This guidance should be available from the original author/source of the question.

f) Qualitative methods: Provide more detailed guidance on how qualitative methods can be used to supplement the findings of surveys developed using the Toolkit, to identify potential unexpected outcomes of programmes and to provide richer insights or stories. Provide examples of how the Toolkit can be used to inform qualitative evaluation planning.

Recommendation 2: Provide clearer, more prominent symbols to facilitate navigation and interpretation of the Toolkit. Consider colour-coding different symbols. Provide a visual key at the start of the Toolkit to explain what the symbols mean.

Recommendation 3: Evaluation checklist. Consider including a simple, downloadable evaluation checklist to help users ensure that they have considered everything they need when using the Toolkit to plan and deliver their evaluation. The checklist could include involving other stakeholders in the evaluation design, ensuring that surveys are not too long, and making sure questions are suitable for the target audience.

Recommendation 4: Highlight questions which overlap with other questions in the Toolkit. Provide a warning that these questions should be amended if they are combined in the same survey, to avoid repetition.

Recommendation 5: Highlight questions which include both positive and negative statement wording. Provide a warning that the results to these questions should be interpreted with care.

Recommendation 6: Provide examples of how data can be analysed and reported. Provide some example responses to different types of questions in the Toolkit, and the different ways in which these data can be summarised. This can include reporting average change across a cohort, average change for each individual, percentage of users who agree or disagree with a statement, percentage of users who have changed their response, etc.

Recommendation 7: Present the evidence section in a separate document to reduce the overall length of the Toolkit. Links from the Toolkit to the evidence section (and vice versa) can be provided to ensure that users are aware of the other resource, and how the two can be used alongside each other.

Developing the Toolkit in the longer term

Recommendation 8: Clarify the reading engagement outcomes. Create a clearer distinction between the reading engagement outcomes which currently cover overlapping concepts. Consider combining the reading engagement outcomes into fewer, higher-level outcome areas to address this issue.

Recommendation 9: Develop survey builder functionality. To improve usability, enable users to choose which questions they want as they progress through the Toolkit, and export these questions into a ready-made survey at the end.

Recommendation 10: Develop question filtering functionality. Enable users to specify their project's target audience, and filter the Toolkit accordingly so that users are only shown questions that are relevant for their project.

Recommendation 11: Provide additional questions to complete the Toolkit, specifically:

> **a) Outcomes without questions:** Provide questions for outcomes that currently do not have any, either from academic sources or The Reading Agency's own suggestions.[9]
>
> **b) Different demographics:** Ensure that all outcomes have a question available that is suitable for all demographics, i.e. adults, teenagers, children, parents/carers, etc. Develop new measures where existing ones are not available.

[9] A project to review and complete gaps in the reading engagement outcome measures (*A Review of Measures of Reading Engagement)* has recently been completed to address this issue. The new database will be published at: www.readingoutcomesFramework.org.uk.

Recommendation 12: Provide more detailed guidance to accompany the Toolkit, specifically:

a) Measuring quality: Provide users with advice on the relationship between outcomes, and the quality of delivery. Develop principles for high-quality delivery of interventions designed to encourage reading for pleasure and empowerment. Explain how outcomes in the Toolkit are linked to these quality principles.

b) Different evaluation methodologies: Provide access to more detailed explanations of different types of evaluation methodologies, the benefits and downsides of each, and explain how the Toolkit can be used to support different evaluation methodologies. Outline the potential pitfalls of pre- and post-survey methodology, and how these can be mitigated.

Recommendation 13: Develop a shorter, more condensed Toolkit for use by smaller projects, short-term projects, or those less experienced in evaluation. This could be achieved by:

a) Focus on reading engagement outcomes: Encourage projects to focus on evidencing shorter-term reading engagement outcomes, on the assumption that if service users' reading engagement improves then other longer-term outcomes will follow. There is already good evidence that links reading engagement outcomes and longer-term outcomes, based on robust academic research that does not need to be re-evidenced by small-scale evaluations of individual projects.

b) Consider developing 'core questions': Alternatively, develop a small number of general 'core questions' that all projects are encouraged to use in their evaluations. These can then be used to compare outcomes across the sector, and between different delivery models. These core questions should predominantly or exclusively be drawn from the reading engagement outcomes.

Recommendation 14: Develop pre-made surveys that can be downloaded for evaluating common types of projects, for example library author events. These could incorporate 'core questions' (Recommendation 12b) and would facilitate easier comparison between projects, and encourage users who may otherwise lack the time or desire to engage with the Toolkit to make use of the Toolkit questions.

Recommendation 15: Consider developing an overarching question or questions about whether projects have encouraged reading for pleasure and empowerment. Encouraging the use of overarching question(s) to encompass the overall impact of projects on reading for pleasure and empowerment is a simple approach to promoting shared measurement in the sector. This is simpler than it sounds and would need to apply to the range of programmes, drawing on the commonality and recognising the differences also.

Improving evaluation practice in the sector

Recommendation 16: Develop training workshops to improve evaluation practice in the sector. These could be developed and delivered in collaboration with other stakeholders, including members of the Reading Outcomes Framework Steering Group and/or evaluation experts. Specifically, training workshops could cover:

a) Introduction to the Toolkit: A workshop to introduce users to the Toolkit could achieve the dual aim of increasing take-up, and ensure that the Toolkit is understood and used well.

b) Introduction to evaluation methods: Workshops to explain different evaluation methods may help to improve and diversify evaluation practice in the sector, and could also explain how the Toolkit can be used to support different types of evaluation.

c) Data literacy: Workshops to de-mystify data analysis, and increase Toolkit users' confidence in data, may help to improve the quality of data analysis and reporting in the sector.

Recommendation 17: Catalyse the development of regional peer support networks to encourage experienced and potential Toolkit users to support each other to improve evaluation practice. These support networks could be autonomous and self-directing, but may benefit from some initial guidance and support from The Reading Agency or other stakeholders in the sector. The support networks could also work together on joint evaluation projects.

Recommendation 18: Provide up-to-date case studies and examples of how the Toolkit has been used in practice. This report provides short case studies on how the five pilot evaluations have used the Toolkit, but these should be supplemented with a wider range of up-to-date examples over time. These examples could also be presented in different formats such as vlogs, blogs, or online tutorials. Peer support networks (Recommendation 16) could provide some content for case studies on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 19: Provide up-to-date evidence banks on good practice in encouraging reading for pleasure and empowerment, for use by specific sub-sectors such as early years, or libraries. Ensure that these evidence banks are updated with the latest research and good practice, and are clearly linked to steps that projects can take to improve their delivery.

Appendix

Acknowledgements

With thanks to the project leads who agreed to take part in this pilot, whose support and involvement was invaluable to its success, and for providing write-ups of their evaluations for use in this report:

Alice Visser, Reading Intervention Specialist and Literacy Coordinator at King Alfred's Academy
Caroline Tompkins, Nursery Teacher and Early Years Leader at Castleton Children's Centre
Helen Towers, Reader Development and Stock Manager at Cumbria Library Service
Kirstie Wilson and **Julie Peel,** Development Librarians at Kirklees Library Service
Lorraine Myers, Lecturer at Newcastle-under-Lyme College

Thank you also to all of the programme staff and service users who supported or participated in the evaluations for their contributions to this project.

We would also like to thank members of the Reading Outcomes Framework Steering Group for providing invaluable support and feedback:

Natasha Armstrong, Director of Evidence & Innovation at BookTrust
Christina Clark, Head of Research at National Literacy Trust
Dawn Finch, Immediate Past President at the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)
Catherine Godward, Evaluation and Impact Research Manager
Debbie Hicks, Creative Director at The Reading Agency
Eliza Kavanagh, Campaigns Executive at The Publishers Association
Marc Lambert, CEO of Scottish Book Trust
Sarah Mears, Chair of the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL), and National Member of the Society of Chief Librarians
Viv Niblett, Senior Officer, Policy & Research at Arts Council England (ACE)
Clem Pabion, Insight and Knowledge Manager at National Literacy Trust
Pamela Tulloch, CEO of Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC)
Kelly Walsh, Head of Research and Impact at BookTrust
Sue Wilkinson, CEO at The Reading Agency

Thanks also to representatives of BookTrust, National Literacy Trust and The Reading Agency who participated in a separate Working Group to progress this project.

Definition of outcomes

The following table is adapted from the Toolkit used by the pilot projects in their evaluations, and is correct at the time of reporting[10].

Reading engagement outcomes	
Attitudes to reading	What you think about reading, whether you enjoy it and whether it is important to you
Awareness of reading preferences and how to choose what to read	Understanding that different people like to read different things, knowing what you do and don't like to read and being able to select reading materials accordingly
Confidence about reading	Feeling able to read well and being confident in your own reading abilities, either for yourself or when reading to others
Identifying as a reader	Thinking of yourself as a reader, as someone who is able to read and chooses to do so
Reading behaviour (frequency, quantity, breadth and depth)	How often you read and how long you spend reading, as well as the amount and variety of things you read
Sharing enjoyment of reading	Talking about reading to other people, encouraging other people to read, reading with other people and/or reading to other people
Understanding how to find reading materials	Knowing where you can get the things you want to read, such as in libraries, bookshops or online, and feeling comfortable / confident to use these
Health and wellbeing outcomes	
Mental health	Your emotional, psychological and social wellbeing which affects how you think, feel and behave
Physical health	Being fit and healthy, free from disease or feeling able to manage a long-term

[10] The Reading Outcomes Framework Toolkit is continually being developed to suit the needs of target users. Two outcomes have since been drawn out of the Reading Outcomes Framework (as presented here), as standalone outcomes including 'reading motivation' and 'reading environment'.

	condition
Relaxation	Being free from tension and anxiety in your body and mind. This may include escapism, which means reading about things that take you away from your day-to-day life
Intellectual outcomes	
Attainment	Achieving a goal that you've worked towards, which could be an educational, workplace or personal goal
Critical thinking	Being able to think clearly and rationally to make reasoned judgements about what to do or what to believe
Focus and concentration	Performing an activity where you are fully involved and absorbed in the flow of the activity and being able to sustain engagement in an activity through to completion
Knowledge	Developing an awareness or understanding of something, including differences and new possibilities
Language and literacy	Being able to read, write, listen and communicate well, or getting better at these skills
Personal outcomes	
Being open-minded	Being willing to hear new ideas, try new things and being tolerant of different lifestyles, beliefs and cultures
Creativity	Turning original or imaginative ideas into something new, or finding different ways to solve a problem
Empathy	Experiencing another person's feelings as if you are seeing life through their eyes
Self-expression	Expressing your feelings, thoughts or ideas, for example, through speaking, writing, art, music or dance
Self-esteem	Having a positive attitude towards yourself, feeling like you are worth something and having confidence in your own abilities

Social outcomes	
Communication skills	Being able to share meaning with other people by talking, listening, writing and exchanging views
Relationships	Making and sustaining connections with other people including children, family, friends and the wider community
Social and cultural participation	Being an active part of a community. This could take the form of volunteering, recreational activities, online activities and generally interacting with other members of the community
Understanding self and others	Being aware of your own characteristics, identity, needs and desires as well as those of others, including people with different perspectives, backgrounds, cultures and ways of life
Wider impacts	
Cultural	Artistic activity and the ideas, customs and social behaviour of a society
Economic	Relating to money and costs, includes employment and spending on services like health care
Societal	Social relations, including social mobility