Reader development and basic skills

An Evaluation Report

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Foreword
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This evaluation report refers to the Learning Skills Council funded period of the Quick Read project October 2002-March 2004. The project began life, however, two years earlier as part of a much wider reader development project Ask Chris (DCMS /Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund 2000-2001) and then continued as part of the national project Vital Link. (DCMS /Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund 2001-02)

Ask Chris aimed to support all readers find their next great read, and emergent readers were one specific target group within the overall project. A partnership with Adult Education brought together the reader development skills and book knowledge of library staff with the literacy expertise of basic skills tutors to begin tackling the huge barriers faced by adults who are developing the technical ability to read but have no experience of choosing books or reading for pleasure.

During the pilot project we worked with one adult community college to develop criteria for selecting accessible mainstream books and a model for how to promote reading to basic skills learners. The pilot was then expanded first to 7 and then to all 9 Adult Community Colleges across Essex and is currently being introduced to the Further Education sector. Learners have been involved and consulted at every step of the way from testing out books selected using the criteria to the development of the Quick Reads brand and publicity.

The library service, through partnership with Adult Education, has developed a service to emergent readers which is being embedded into staff training, stock selection and procedures. Quick Reads has developed from a
pilot promotion to a permanent category of stock, with a Quick Reads selection on Essex readers’ website http://askchris.essexcc.gov.uk and Quick Reads review leaflets.

This evaluation report confirms the benefits the project has brought to learners and tutors. It is because the project has had such an impact that the partnership has continued to grow from strength to strength. A number of reading initiatives have been developed, from Booktalk groups in libraries for emergent readers to library staff participating in colleges’ end of term celebrations. For two years running, library staff have promoted reading to learners at the annual Basic Skills weekend summer school with such success that it is hard to imagine going back to the days when libraries had no involvement. The success of the partnership has been because of the benefits to both organizations, and most importantly to the learner.

This report is very timely. Framework for the Future (DCMS 2003) highlighted the contribution that reader development strategies can make to improve literacy and encourage reading. The action plan for The Framework for the Future includes using reader development as a basis for partnership with the basic skills sector. The Reading Agency, the National Literacy Trust and the National Reading Campaign will be pushing forward the work of Vital Link, maximising libraries’ contribution to the Skills for Life targets and the way reader development supports and motivates the adult learner. Essex Libraries was part of the planning group for Vital Link, one of the partner authorities involved during 2001-02 and is now a member of the advisory group. This report builds on the evaluation of the Vital Link and provides further evidence of the distinctive role of libraries in supporting emergent readers.

My thanks to Learning Skills Council Essex for not only providing continuation funding for Quick Reads, but also for funding the external evaluation of Quick Reads.
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Appendices
1. Introduction

1.1 Project background

This report presents the findings of research conducted by the Centre for the Public Library in the Information Society [CePLIS], a research centre within the Information Studies department of the University of Sheffield. This work evaluated the impact of the Quick Reads project, a partnership initiative begun in 2000\(^1\) by Essex Libraries and Adult Education, continued as part of the national project The Vital Link (2001-2), and then funded by the Learning and Skills Council Essex (2002-4).

The overall objectives of the Quick Reads project were to promote ‘the pleasure of reading to emergent readers’, and to provide ‘a new resource for engaging and motivating learners’.\(^2\) It gives learners the opportunity to select, read and review books from a specifically targeted collection, entitled Quick Reads. ‘Quick Reads are mainstream books selected as being accessible for emergent readers using criteria drawn up with Mid Essex Adult Community College’ .\(^3\)

When this report was concluded, 314 students had been reached by the Quick Reads project, from 53 classes in 9 colleges of Adult Education.

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\(^1\) First phase of the partnership developed as part of Ask Chris, an Essex Libraries project funded by the DCMS/Wolison Public Libraries Challenge Fund 2000-1. Ask Chris aimed to support all readers in finding their next read, with emergent readers as one specific target group within the overall project. See [http://askchris.essexcc.gov.uk](http://askchris.essexcc.gov.uk). The pilot project was then expanded across the county as part of the national project, The Vital Link, DCMS/Wolson Public Libraries Challenge Fund 2001-2. For further information see [www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/evaluation.html](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitallink/evaluation.html).


\(^3\) Idem.
2. Methodology

2.1 Evaluation aim and objectives

The overall aim of the researcher was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Quick Reads project, and within that aim there were five objectives:

a. To investigate the impact of the Quick Reads project on the learners, looking in particular at:

   - reading habits
   - reading confidence
   - library use.

b. To investigate the perceptions of library and basic skills staff of the impact of Quick Reads on the learners.

c. To investigate the perceptions of library and basic skills staff of the effectiveness of this type of initiative on participants, for example in terms of:

   - changing attitudes
   - removing potential barriers imposed by formal education systems.

d. To consider the role of the public library service in adult basic skills education.

e. To assess the effectiveness of cross-sectoral working between the library and basic skills sectors.
2.2 Parties represented in the evaluation

The findings presented in this report are a reflection of data collected from participants in the Quick Reads project, namely:

- Learners
- Tutors
- Library staff
- Basic Skills (Skills for Life) Coordinators
- Project management group [Library-based].

It would be inappropriate to make generalisations as to the universal value and impact of the provision of resources for basic skills learners based on the data. However, the data could be regarded as an indicator that a project with a similar methodology, conducted under similar conditions, would produce comparable results.

2.3 Focus groups and interviews

The main element of the methodology was to conduct a series of focus groups and interviews with a representative sample of participants (as listed above). Holding focus groups allowed data to be obtained from a larger number of respondents and for people to develop their original responses after they heard other people’s views.

Nine focus groups were conducted, in total. The first took place in March 2003, at the end of a ten-week reading for pleasure course which took place in Brentwood Library. Six were conducted the following term in Adult Community Colleges with basic skills classes, and one with each of the project management group and the Basic Skills coordinators’ group. Details of all such sessions are given in the table below:
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>College Partner</th>
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<tr>
<td>25.03.03</td>
<td>Brentwood Library</td>
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<td>03.06.03</td>
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<td>East Essex Adult Community College</td>
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<td>Christchurch, Chelmsford</td>
<td>Adult Community College, Chelmsford</td>
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<td>The Adult Community College, Colchester</td>
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<tr>
<td>02.07.03</td>
<td>Project management gp. Essex Library Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>02.07.03</td>
<td>Basic Skills Coordinators County Hall, Essex</td>
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Additional interviews were conducted on the same dates with learners who preferred to speak alone to the evaluator. These were conducted in the Adult Community College Chelmsford, and the Adult Community College Colchester. Further individual interviews were conducted with 5 tutors and 3 members of library staff:

1. Jenny Main, Librarian, Brentwood Library (25.03.03)
2. Jackie Girling, Tutor, Mid Essex Adult Community College (25.03.03)
3. Nici Dawson, Librarian, Maldon Library (03.06.03)
4. Frances Morrell, Tutor, Adult Community College Chelmsford (03.06.03)
5. Alison Edwards, tutor, Adult Community College Chelmsford (04.06.03)
6. Shirley Page, Tutor, Castle Point and Rochford Community College (04.06.03)
7. Christine Lucas, Tutor, East Essex Adult Community College (05.06.03)
Focus groups and interviews with learners took place during the usual session, in order to obtain a higher level of participation. As the selection of focus group members was made at random, they inevitably included participants of all age groups, of a wide range of reading abilities, and both users and non-users of the public library service.

2.3.1 Subjects discussed in interviews and focus groups
The research instruments used for the focus groups and interviews were designed with reference to the overall evaluation objectives (see 2.1). Interview schedules are included as Appendix A, and a summary of the main issues discussed are given below.

Learners:

- The Quick Reads collection
- Independent use of the library
- Reading for pleasure.

Tutors and library staff:

- Role of the library in course development
- Views of resources used (learners’ perception of resources)
- Role of libraries in adult basic skills education
- Perceived impact of the project on the learners - learning, raised awareness of services, reading materials etc.
- Learners - reading more widely as a result of participation?
- Partnerships developed with the basic skills/library sector.
Project management group and Basic Skills Coordinators:

- The Quick Reads collection
- Reading for pleasure in basic skills education
- The role of libraries in adult basic skills education
- Learners’ awareness of the library service
- Partnerships developed with the basic skills/library sector.

2.3.2 Confidentiality

The confidentiality of each subject was respected by the project evaluator, so all comments are reported anonymously, using the following terminology:

- All students - Learner
- Library staff, including the project management group - Librarian
- Basic skills tutors - Tutor
- Basic Skills Coordinators - BS Coordinators.

2.4 Individual learner accounts

To increase the data available to the project evaluator, three additional sources of information were used:

1. **The Learner Record Sheet** [Appendix B] - a form completed either by the learner or the tutor/librarian, often in the presence of the learner. Gives the learner the opportunity to reflect upon his/her experience of participation in the Quick Reads project.

2. **Tracking the activity** [Appendix C] - a document completed by a member of library staff, to report on his/her perceptions of the overall impact of the Quick Reads project (and his/her class visits) on a particular class.
3. **Structured Reading Evaluation** [Appendix D] - a questionnaire designed by the evaluator to reflect the following five areas:
   a. Values, attitudes, feelings
   b. Skills
   c. Behaviour
   d. Knowledge and understanding
   e. Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment.

   Completed in the same way as the Learner Record Sheet.

   A sample of these was sent to the evaluator for inclusion in the evaluation (see Section 7).
3. Response to the Quick Reads collection

3.1 Altered reading habits

All focus group participants and individual interviewees were initially asked to give their views of the Quick Reads collection as a whole, and their response was extremely positive: there is no doubt that those learners who chose to give their views had enjoyed the experience. It is apparent that a reason for this enjoyment was not only the accessibility of the texts, but also the learners having an interest in the subject matter. Furthermore, some reported that their Quick Reads choices had been among the first books they had ever read. Examples of their introductory comments are given below:

‘I enjoyed it, I wasn’t really used to just reading books, so this was a good start.’

‘Good, very good, yes. I’ve got some books at home which I liked [but couldn't read before], and now I can read them easily.’

‘They are quite good books, actually, they can be really addictive…’

‘...the librarian] came, and explained the Quick Reads thing, it was amazing...really good. I know what I like!’

‘It was the first time I had read a book for years...’

‘I would never read those books before, they’re not my type of book, but I did read them. [Did you like them?] Yes, I thought they were quite interesting...’

Volunteer: ‘I think that quite a few of you weren’t reading at all [before], were you?’
Student A: ‘Yes, that’s right.’
Student B: ‘Well, the books are interesting, aren’t they?’

Tutors described individual cases; learners who they felt had been particularly affected by the Quick Reads experience:

‘When [Name] started to come here, she said “I’ve never read a book, and I never will.” She finds it difficult to concentrate, and can’t remember what happens in a longer book. But now, she has read quite a few…and they’re brilliant for her [the Quick Reads books]...and she has continued to read afterwards.’

‘...[one] student came, and I said to [volunteer], “Between us we’re going to get him to read a book! ” [How?] The librarian brought the books in, that’s something I wouldn’t have been able to do on my own in the class, but she’s very enthusiastic. In a way, he [the learner] was like, “Well, I’ll do it for her then! ” He was very nervous, but determined to get back into the library, to read again.’

‘[Name] wasn’t really interested in the books or in reading, but she [the librarian] found him a couple of books, and in the end he got a review on the website as well.’

‘[Is the group reading more widely as a result of the library’s intervention and Quick Reads?] [Name] certainly is...and he’s coming to the library...he brought in a newspaper cutting today for me...it’s fairly difficult language, but he was interested in it, and I think that certainly since [librarian]’s been bringing books in for me, he’s got more interested and he’s putting more into it. He can see the value of reading, whether it be for pleasure or for information...so that’s quite encouraging.’
3.2 Variety of texts available

‘They were very positive about the majority of the titles that we were using, they particularly liked the Open Door titles and some of the more modern, younger looking titles... Some of the slightly more unusual titles that we found because we were trying to fit them into the criteria aren’t as successful, but on the whole they have really enjoyed them. And there have been a few that I have been surprised how much they’ve enjoyed, like one that we thought was a dreadful book, but quite a few of them did read it and enjoy it. So I think there is a need for quite a wide range of titles, not just to focus on the more obvious Open Door titles.’ [Librarian]

In commenting on the collection, many students automatically gave their views of the variety of titles available. Some felt that the choice was sufficiently wide; others would have liked to have seen either a larger quantity of books, or more of particular genres:

‘The variety was good - I would say that [librarian] brought, say, 20 or 30 books for a group of about 5 people.’

‘...there was a big choice...’

‘There was a good choice...but I would have liked more varieties of books...maybe some true stories...true crime...’

‘I would like it if [the Quick Reads collection] had self-help books...and non-fiction.’

‘There isn’t a very wide choice of books, not too many to choose from, not much space here [i.e. a small proportion of the total library space had been allocated to the Quick Reads collection].’
‘There aren’t very many, but they’re good. They’re good for concentration, because they’re shorter.’

‘It would have been nice if there were more [books in the Quick Reads collection].

Interestingly, the last 2 respondents (above) had attended the same class and had therefore had exactly the same choice of Quick Reads books.

One learner acknowledged that the librarian visiting her class had only been able to bring in a selection of the books, that she knew that a larger collection was available to her at her local libraries:

‘…[the librarian] should have brought more in…but in the library, there’s more choice.’

3.3 Accessibility of the collection: the Quick Reads criteria

For people who have difficulty reading, it is vital that the books that they are given to try are as accessible as possible. A basic example of an accessible text would be one in which the length of the book, the size and clarity of the text, the use of illustrations and the book cover were regarded as appropriate to the adult learner.

All Quick Reads titles were selected by Essex Libraries according to the criteria they developed specifically for the selection of both fiction and non-fiction materials for the adult learner. These are included as Appendix E.

Library staff gave their views of the resulting collection:

‘They’re all short, so they look attractive; the print’s a nice size…’

‘…they’re broken up easily, so they can just read a paragraph here and there…’
‘I think it’s because we are rigorous about the value of having a criteria so that the books in our collection do match the criteria of the tutors and the learners, I think that’s really important, we have to keep that consistency. It’s hard work, because we reject more books than we accept, but that’s why we have a good collection to work with, because we are putting that time into doing it.’

The value of these criteria is more effectively measured both in the learners’ response to the Quick Reads books themselves, and in more general comments they made regarding reading materials:

‘Billy Elliott was too long for me, the normal Quick Reads books were much better.’

‘I find the Quick Reads very good…and they’re bigger print.’

‘I can read the short ones [i.e. Quick Reads] now.’

‘Big books are a bit hard, but little books are easier…the writing is slightly bigger, easier to understand…’

‘…even though they’re ‘quick reads’, you still want them to be interesting…that length of book [i.e. the length of the Quick Reads books] is right for me. I think they’re about 200 pages.’

Library staff felt that the criteria were not only a means of selecting titles for a specific collection, but that they were a useful tool in their support for each basic skills learner visiting the library:

‘And also you can use those criteria to pick books up off the shelves, that fit in with a particular student’s interest. Like I’ve got some that

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4 Billy Elliott is a standard Quick Reads title. This reflects the range in the collection, from Open Door Titles at 80 pages, to longer texts up to 200 pages.
are interested in local history...you can pick up a book and give them a quick flick and think, ‘No, the print’s too small’, pick it up and think, ‘no, that’s much too technical’, or whatever, but you can find ones that have a good layout ...’

Although the original focus of the Quick Reads collection was on fiction titles, the collection developed exponentially to include a non-fiction focus, and as was mentioned above, separate criteria were developed for each.

‘When we first set up the criteria the focus was definitely fiction, and narrative non-fiction, because we were looking for that story... And we knew that those criteria don’t work in terms of selecting information non-fiction, because it’s a different thing, it's a case of how well the photographs are signposted, there are different factors involved. So we knew that what we had didn’t work for non-fiction, and that there was obviously some interest coming from learners that they wanted a connection with non-fiction. So we took the definite decision to start trying to draw up the criteria.’ [Librarian]

Although non-fiction titles were available - and were becoming increasingly so, with new additions to the collection being made as this evaluation was conducted - it was felt that the main content of Quick Reads was still its fiction materials:

‘...fiction still seems to be the major draw...unless they’ve [the students have] got a particular interest.’

‘...we are promoting reading for pleasure, and so it’s good that that is the focus, but if people want to read through their non-fiction interests, then that’s fine.’

Library staff also acknowledged that to some students, the non-fiction books were more relevant, and that they could sometimes be used more effectively to attract their attention and interest:
‘Some tutors have used the non-fiction to stimulate discussion in class. One learner took a particular book out, but it ended up being a group, they all had discussions in class based on the book. It took them into other areas which the tutor was quite pleased about.’

‘There was that lovely local history series...there’s an elderly farmer in his sixties, he’s never read before, he’s lived on the farm and worked on the land, and there was this book ‘When I was young’, which was a collection of the memories from Essex people around the county...he was quite taken with it, he loved it. And he said ‘It’s really nice because I can identify with a lot of what they’re saying’...because it was aimed at an older age group...it was a larger print book, and it was well laid-out, and there was just short paragraphs from each person’s memories, and he read that, and he was just so pleased with himself...And he’s not read before in his life.’

3.4 Appropriateness of the reading level

In providing reading materials to emergent readers, it is essential that the books are at an appropriate reading level, and that the subject matter is suitable for an adult audience. Inevitably, some books that specifically target teenage - or younger - readers will be regarded as irrelevant, even patronising. Some focus group participants and individual interviewees volunteered comments as to whether or not they felt that the Quick Reads reading material was appropriate to their reading level:

‘They’re fine, they’re at a good level, and are the right sort of length to get you interested.’

‘I read more now because I can read them [Quick Reads books] more [easily].’
‘I would only read magazines normally, because otherwise I always felt that I would have to read children’s books, and that’s a bit embarrassing, isn’t it?’

‘I’m reading a lot more…because I can read them!’

‘I think they’re pitched at the right level, and certainly from feedback I’ve received from students both in this class and another class, they like them.’

A librarian summarised a significant reason for the positive student response to a collection of books devised specifically with the emergent reader in mind:

‘on the whole, they…were very positive about the selection that we’d got, and were just really pleased that somebody had put the time and effort into doing the work, because there’s so little published at that level that I think it’s helped them a lot.’

Basic skills classes often contain students of very mixed reading ability. As the Quick Reads collection is intended for the emergent reader, it would therefore follow that some people would find the titles too demanding, as one learner commented:

‘The books [quick Reads] weren’t really for me, they were too hard.
I’m not a very good reader.’

Library staff visiting the basic skills classes had therefore introduced the less confident readers to the Fresh Start collection⁵, a set of books aimed at a lower reading level, and this had proved to be an effective supplement:

⁵ Fresh Start is the branding given by Essex Libraries to basic skills books published specifically for the basic skills market.
'I thought it was really good that [librarian] realised that perhaps a couple of the students wouldn’t have been able to cope with Quick Reads, so she was able to bring in the Fresh Start books, or other books that she thought they might be interested in. So ok, she didn’t keep to the Quick Reads alone, if she felt that it was going to put people off...I thought that was really good.’ [Learner]

‘Each class has many levels, so when we start, we do warn tutors that we accept Entry level 3 and above, but inevitably we work with students who are below that level, because they’re in the class and we don’t want to leave them out. But with Fresh Start and spoken books, it usually works.’ [Librarian]

‘...they always ask for easier books, and so I ended up taking a lot of Fresh Start titles in, which are a very basic level, because they always want easier books.’ [Librarian]

‘...one man in one of my classes...had a stroke years ago, and didn’t read a book for years, he couldn’t cope with the Quick Reads books. So whenever I go to the class I always take him some large print, audio and some Fresh Start books, they’re that bit lower. And he took some Fresh Starts, and he read them, and the first time I came back, he said ‘this is the first time I’ve read a book in years’, and he was so pleased with himself. He has been writing reviews, and it was so lovely to see the difference in him. I have seen him in the library a few times, he started coming into the library and using it for research, he’s looking at books on tanks and things.’ [Librarian]
4. Reading for pleasure

‘...before college I was just sitting reading outside the church over there, whereas normally I’d be shopping!’

‘I’ve got a bad neck because I keep walking around with [my books] in a bag! I’ve got so many that have been recommended...So I’ve got rather a lot in there!’

Tutor: ‘She’s looking very pale these days; she doesn’t get out much now!’

Learners were asked to comment on changes they had noticed in their reading habits as a result of their experience of the Quick Reads collection, and of their contact with the local library staff. As a major emphasis of Quick Reads is on reading for pleasure as opposed to reading for purely educational means, this was included in focus group/interview questions.

Although two learners saw the Quick Reads collection as a means of supporting their studies, it was nonetheless acknowledged that acquiring a reading habit could be a pleasurable experience. When asked why they had participated in the Reading for Pleasure course at their local library, they commented:

A: ‘Because I felt that I needed to read more for my courses, to read more English books.’

B: ‘That’s the same reason I did it as well.’

When asked how she felt she had benefited from the course, the second learner said:

‘...it does make you read, whereas I used to pick the book up at bedtime and fall asleep with it. Now I actually do read it, and I read different books, I just used to go to the same section every time I
came to the library, and now I’ve got a selection of books that I wouldn’t necessarily have picked up before. And I’ve just enjoyed reading them as well, when I get time!’

A third member of the same class agreed:

‘... I’m doing the English [course] as well, but I’m now reading for pleasure as well.’

Here, reading a range of accessible fiction that they had initially been introduced to by a visit from a librarian, being sufficiently interested to make new choices, had led these people to enjoy the books they read, to acquire a reading habit. Pleasure takes precedence over education, as is illustrated in the following exchange:

[Does it put you off if you find a book that you don’t like?]
A: ‘No, you just sort of carry on.’
B: ‘No, I just find something else that I like better.’
Librarian: ‘We have given you permission to give up on a book they don’t like! That was an important first lesson: if you don’t like it, give yourself permission to give up.’

In an encouraging atmosphere, library staff had observed that learners’ confidence had gradually increased, to the point where a previously daunting experience had not only become less daunting, but had even become enjoyable. This is illustrated in the following exchange between library staff:

A: ‘At the beginning, it’s very tentative, but by the second session they [the learners] will say “oh, I hated this book”, and somebody will join in and defend the book.’
B: ‘I think that comes from having made it clear to them that their views are really welcomed and valued, and that has been the big strength of the project, because we’re not saying to them “read
these books, they’ll do you good”, we’re saying to them “reading can be really enjoyable and you might want to try these, and whatever you think about them is entirely up to you.” And I think that is really liberating...to suddenly get the idea that reading can be something that you could choose to do, that can be enjoyable, and then to get the feeling that actually what you think about the book is important to other people, it’s very important.’

A: ‘I tell them that they can say whatever they like about a book, and a negative review sometimes makes people want to read a book as much as a positive one...once they know that we really want their honest views, then they’re quite happy to come forward and talk amongst you about the books they’ve read.’

Basic Skills Coordinators agreed that giving the learners this choice had been particularly beneficial in terms of increasing both reading and social confidence:

‘...being happy to say “I don’t like it”, as well, they know that we’re valuing their opinion.’

‘Some of them wouldn’t have dreamed of reading a book before...but with this project, their opinions have been respected as readers, and I would say that’s been one of the biggest advantages.’

Basic skills tutors also acknowledged that a focus on pleasure was a welcome new addition to the content of their classes:

‘...because there’s always something else to do...perhaps we overlook the [reading for pleasure] element sometimes, in fact I’m sure we overlook it.’ [Tutor]

‘...Quick Reads has raised the profile of reading as an activity within the college...there’s a lot of fun around it, such as having Oscars for
the best books. That was really trying to cash in on the pleasure side of it, the entertainment of reading. Many people don’t see reading as entertainment.’ [BS Coordinator]

A further reason for the learners’ enjoyment of the course is demonstrated in the following comments, in which the tutor at the Reading for Pleasure course agrees that the learners themselves were as much a driving force behind its development as the curriculum:

A: ‘When anyone’s suggested anything, the next week that would be there, so it’s just great.’

Tutor: ‘We have to do what we’re told!’

[So the weekly lesson plans are based on students’ ongoing comments?]

Tutor: ‘Partly. There is a huge amount of input from the students, and we react to that, but obviously there’s a syllabus, a course that we have to follow, provided by the college, so certain aspects have to be covered. But basically the idea is for the students to get as much out of it as they want to, as is relevant to them, that’s the important thing, the relevance.’

Library staff also felt that although they were making no claim to have radically changed the reading levels or habits of every learner, that the enjoyment that the learners had felt during the courses had undoubtedly affected their attitude towards books and reading:

‘I can’t say as a sweeping statement we’ve changed the reading habits of 50 students or something, but I would say that a few of them have been surprised at their own ability to sit down and read a book from beginning to end, and have enjoyed the experience. A few of them have said “I didn’t want to put the book down”, and a couple
of them have said “I have learned to make the time to read”...often people don’t think they’ve got time to read, if they’re cooking the dinner or whatever, they don’t think it’s something they can do. So there have been a few who’ve said ‘I have made time to read these books for the course’, so they have had positive reactions to them.’

4.1 Trying new reading materials

Each of the focus group participants and interviewees who gave their views on the subject reported that their introduction to the Quick Reads collection and/or contact with the library staff had encouraged them to read types of books that they hadn’t read before. Even if they had tried new books but had chosen to return to their previous authors or genres, they still seemed to appreciate the choices they had been offered.

‘I’ve tried other things, but I came back to crime again!...also, it has given me an idea of what other authors I can get on to read, after I’ve finished with Agatha Christie...’

‘I always used to go to the autobiographies and children’s section, now I tend to - if I’ve got time - just wander around looking for different things. So it’s certainly made me do that.’

‘Before, I used to just read true crimes, really...all morbid stuff, and then I just went into Jackie Collins. But it’s only recently, since I’ve started college, that I thought “I’ll try something”...’

‘The ones I took were not something I would normally have gone for, but I made an effort to read new types of book.’

‘I would never read those books before, they’re not my type of book, but I did read them. [Did you like them?] Yes, I thought they were quite interesting.’
A tutor, speaking about the Quick Reads collection with her students, stated that it was a major interest of most learners in her classes to broaden their reading choices and interests:

‘There’s lots more to do, isn’t there? There’s lots more reading to be done, and we’ve got lots more expanding of reading to be done, I think, which is what most of you wanted to do... probably for each and every one of you, the primary thing was to expand the reading, rather than just keeping going to the same category, which we all do, don’t we? We can all get stuck in a rut very easily.’

4.2 AskChris

After trying new books, learners were encouraged to write short book reviews that could then be mounted on the AskChris book selection website, either by a librarian or by themselves, if they chose to. To help them to complete the review, they used the short A5 ‘Booktalk’ card, previously devised by Essex Libraries for all library users writing reviews for the website (see Appendix F). This card contains the following headings:

- Author
- Title
- What is the book about?
- What you thought...
- Reviewed by...

At the foot of the card the author is told ‘Thank you for your review. It will be shared with readers on the award winning AskChris website, which can be viewed world-wide on the Internet.’

6 Ask Chris: [http://askchris.essexcc.gov.uk](http://askchris.essexcc.gov.uk)
A librarian described how she had introduced the learners to the process of writing reviews, in order not to intimidate or overwhelm the less confident readers:

‘We all started off by reading the same book, and we just talked about it. We didn’t actually do one of these [review cards] from the outset, but gradually, as confidence built and everybody was reading a bit more, we started doing reviews of the same book, and then we split up and they were doing their own thing.’

Examples of learner responses to the experience of writing reviews are given below:

[Have you all read from the QR collection and done book reviews for the website?]
A: We all did.
B: We all did, yes. We have read the books, and filled the forms...then she [librarian] put it on the Internet, the form things.
C: It was good to see.

‘We talk about books, and then we read them, and then we’re given a blue card, and we put what our views are on them.’

‘We wrote reviews for the website; that was good.’

‘What you have written looks so good if it’s on the World Wide Web!’
(Tutor)

In addition to the more obvious literacy skills that writing a book review helps to develop, Basic Skills Coordinators and library staff felt that the process had significant personal benefits in terms of self-confidence and self-value:
‘Being asked for their views on the books has been crucial, there’s no comment on whether they’re reading it well or not, that’s not what it’s about. Was it a good book, was it a book that other people will enjoy, was it easy to get into to begin with? And they’re actually seeing that they’re being used almost for market research, things are going to be developed on the basis of what they’re saying. Many of the students who were very nervous readers have become much more confident, particularly in expressing their views about written matter.’ [Tutor]

‘...the basic skills students, I think their confidence has grown, because they’ve sat and they’ve read from beginning to end, and some of them have written their reviews and had them published, and actually taken the time out of their lives to sit and concentrate on something other than work, looking after their family and doing the housework. And they’ve genuinely enjoyed...just using their brain for something else.’ [Librarian]

‘Another guy, he’s never used a computer before, and he didn’t read much, so I got him a book on Animal Hospital. He did a review, and they have a laptop in the class, so he put it on himself, and said “I’m going to tell my sister, she’s on the Internet, so she can look at my review”, and he was just so proud of himself...whether he’ll continue reading, I’m not really sure, but maybe he’ll read animal books. Even so, he’s done something that he wouldn’t have done before.’ [Librarian]
5. Independent use of the library

‘The numbers at my drop-in session at [venue] had dropped, and I was sitting there looking very worried one time, because I hadn’t got many people. And the tutor said “I wouldn’t worry, because they’re all going to the library on their own back now, because they’re going to choose their own books, and a lot of them are taking their children in as well.” Some of my students have said “I used to go to the library, and while the children chose their books I would just go and read a magazine or whatever, now I choose books for myself at the same time”. [Librarian]

From the data collected during the focus groups and individual interviews, it would seem that a significant effect of the library’s involvement in the learners’ basic skills education has been that they became more aware of the library services available to them, and of their actual or potential relevance to their lives. Many learners claimed to be more familiar with the library staff, with the resources within the library, including in particular the Internet, and some said that they now felt more comfortable using their local branch library than they were before. Others had even chosen to visit larger central libraries in order to increase their reading choices.

This new familiarity and comfort seemed to stem not only from a knowledge of specific services that the learners had perhaps not read before, but also from an awareness of cultural changes that had taken place in library services since many of them had last visited their local library. The following comments were all made by library staff participating in the Quick Reads project:

‘They don’t always know about the way in which libraries have changed, and have become less silent, and more welcoming and friendly, generally, and the range of services.’
‘I think the fact that we are emphasising that things can be set out
easier, so you’re not faced with shelves and shelves and shelves of
books that are all in alphabetical order, and if you don’t know an
author then you’ll never find it…it’s emphasising that we are making
it easier for them to find what they want.’

‘I think the concept...of staff being there to help them is new! If you
come to the enquiry desk, you’re not interrupting, that’s what we’re
here for! Quite a lot of them don’t really think like that, even our
ordinary readers, so it’s worth stressing.’

With only a few exceptions, all learners interviewed for the evaluation had
visited a branch or central library to view the Quick Reads books on display
and to have a detailed library tour, given by the librarian they had come to
know through his or her previous class visits. Their responses to the question
(below) illustrate how useful and interesting many of them found these
visits to be.

All interviewees were asked ‘Have you found out anything new about the
library since being in this group?’, and selected responses are given below:

‘They [the libraries] have quite a lot...I didn’t know anything until I
went there.’

‘I know it’s made me realise that there’s a whole lot of different
subjects that they cover in the library, that you know if I wanted to
read, something, say, about birds, because I’ve got two budgies and a
cockatiel, I know now that they’ve got a section on birds that I could
go to. Or if I was going up to Scotland, or somewhere like that, you
know I could to travel and that.’

‘I was talking to one woman, and I told her what I get from my local
library, and she said to me “Oh, that’s strange, my local library
doesn’t have things like that”, and I said “yes it does, you live in Maldon, the same as me!”

Learners in Chelmsford had been particularly impressed by the large central library in the town centre:

‘It’s not my local library...I had never been in there before, I was amazed...the different things that are on offer now, look at the enormous extent of the music.

‘It was marvellous, it’s such a big place.’

‘...In Chelmsford Library, it’s good, really good...[and] if they don’t have something, they order it.’

The Quick Reads project demonstrated the need for public libraries to take a proactive approach to promoting their services to the target group. Where library staff made a particular effort to reach emergent readers, the success rate appears to have been higher. The two obvious ways in which this effort was made during the project were:

- Visits by library staff to basic skills classes
- In-library tours organized and hosted by library staff.

Examples of additional methods devised in order to encourage less confident readers to use the library were described by Basic Skills Coordinators:

‘Many of the learners wouldn’t see the library as a place to go...our local library has worked very hard to reduce barriers to access, so they’ve rearranged the displays so that when you walk in, it’s the videos and CDs, the visual stuff, rather than the text, that people see first of all.’
‘...the librarian arranged to go into the library on a Sunday in one of your places for some ESOL students...she incorporated Quick Reads into the class and she did open up on a Sunday for them, to go in.’

‘We actually asked our students about the barriers to going into the library, and our library has actually taken it on board, all the suggestions the students had to make.’

‘We’re having displays of learners’ work in libraries as well, so that any user of the library can see that anybody can use the library.’

5.1 Increased awareness of library services

A visit to the library had, for some learners, revealed specific services that they had not previously been aware of.

‘...if you find a book that you want, if it’s out of Essex, they’ll find it for you, for a small cost.’

‘I thought that it was good that if you borrow your book or books from another library, you can take it back to another library...which is great.’

‘It [the visit] was the first time we learned about free Internet - one hour free, if you want to use it.’

‘...even the people who were library members, when they had been told about library services, or had come to the library to visit, had discovered that all sorts of things existed. A lot of them [didn’t] realize that we have audio-visual materials...that there’s free Internet access, tutorials, all the IT side of it.’ [Librarian]
Although some tutors had previously taken classes to visit the local public library, they now felt that the visits hosted by the library staff had made the resources seem more relevant to the learners:

‘...we have taken people in to the library as a matter of course...but they sometimes felt that a lot of the books weren’t for them, but now they know that they are.’

All public library services should be equally accessible to all, and it should therefore follow that the information concerning such services should be similarly available. A particularly effective element of the Quick Reads project was clearly the interaction between library staff and the learners, not only in terms of introducing the learners to a wide range of fiction, but also in terms of promoting the services available to them within the library buildings themselves. If learners had not known about these services before taking their basic skills course(s), this would seem to underline a need for further marketing.

5.2 Location of materials within the library

From the beginning of the Quick Reads project, library staff have worked closely with tutors and learners in order to develop good branding and sign posting for the Quick Reads books. Learners have Quick Reads mouse mats, bookmarks, reading diaries and review leaflets to use in the colleges. In the libraries, books are displayed ‘face on’ in a Quick Reads dumpbin. The slogan on the bookmarks was developed with learners, and was addressing the key issue of finding Quick Reads in the library:

*Quick to enjoy*

*Quick to find*

*Quick Reads bin at the library.*
Effective display is dependent, however, on local staff making use of the materials supplied. At one library, books had been removed from the display and shelved with the spine facing outwards.

Students from two classes who had visited this library commented that the Quick Reads collection was very difficult to locate within the library itself. Learners in one group suggested that the presentation of the collection was not particularly prominent:

‘Well, in a small library, there’s a limitation to what they can do, isn’t there? I mean, they’re either on a shelf or they’re not, really!’

‘They’re [Quick Reads books] quite hard to find in the library.’

However, the tutor was less critical, feeling that significant progress had nonetheless been made in terms of the library service and basic skills provision:

‘Perhaps they’re putting a small amount of space to it at the beginning, so they can give it more space later on...if it works? It’s good that they’ve given it any space at all: a few years ago we wouldn’t have had anything for books like this.’

It is important for all basic skills learners that his or her reading materials are easy to locate within a library. Nonetheless, public libraries can be confusing even to the most experienced user, and it is equally important that library staff are available in order to provide the most helpful information.

Comments received from focus group participants and interviewees confirmed that location and display were important, but they also underlined the need for friendly and helpful staff to be on hand to help:
'I look at all displays. But what I want to know is, how can you select a book, to know what type of book it is? The signs aren’t clear enough - all I can see is A to Z books...I don’t know how to select...'

'They [the library staff] are very helpful. If you can’t find something, they’re straight over to us. I have never had any problems at all.'

'It’s a nice library, the books are easy to find, the staff are very helpful. [How are they helpful?] They helped to describe the different stickers.’ [genre stickers on book spines]

'I have had mixed experiences of the staff here: some are very helpful, others seem to be just doing their job.'
6. The future

6.1 Future library visits

Learners were asked to state whether or not they would continue to visit and borrow books from their local library after their course had finished and they no longer had regular contact with the visiting librarian. Nobody specifically said that they would not, although some were less confident than others:

‘I will still continue to go there in the future.’

‘[Will you visit the library again after [librarian] stops coming to the class?] I will probably go and choose two or three [books], to see if I like it...I missed out on school, so this is a good way to do it.’

‘I joined the library since doing the Quick Reads thing...I will continue to read Quick Reads books afterwards.’

6.2 Plans for continued reading activity

Particularly enthusiastic learners had discussed with their tutors and the visiting librarian ways in which they could sustain the reading habit that they had developed in their groups. The members of one group described their plans to participate in a monthly reading group, and they had specifically chosen their local library as the most suitable venue. The tutor summarised:

‘It has been good, really good [to have visits from the librarian]. To keep it going, I am thinking of getting a reading group together. It’s just an idea at the moment, but they are so keen, some of them, and
I think it would be a great debate. I’d like to be able to have a room at the library, that seems better, doesn’t it?’

Although the focus group took place at an early stage in the planning process, the group has since arranged to meet beginning in autumn 2003.

At the Basic Skills Coordinators’ focus group, tutors described additional plans to continue the learner/library interaction:

‘Our learners now have encouraged the tutors to set up reading groups in the library…the learners have taken a bit of control there, haven’t they?!’

‘We’re running a summer programme.’

A further reason for creating reading groups after courses have ended is to encourage library use. A tutor and librarian jointly organising one group had been talking to learners about their plans after the course. All of the enthusiastic participants had claimed to enjoy their visits to the library as part of the course, so it was expected that they would continue to use the library. However, as the librarian said:

‘…we suggested these meetings afterwards because they started saying that they didn’t know if they’d be coming to the library afterwards. I was quite surprised by that; I would have thought that they would have done.’
7. Individual learner accounts

The evaluation of the Quick Reads project aimed to represent the views of the learners, tutors and library staff as a whole, and not to focus unduly on individual accounts that could perhaps skew the overall findings. However, this section presents a series of individual accounts that represent the themes reflected in the overall report, and that in themselves form a useful source of data to illustrate the learners’ response to the Quick Reads project. They are a sample of comments and observations from three sources:

- The Learner Record Sheet [Appendix B]
- Tracking the activity [Appendix C]
- Structured Reading Evaluation [Appendix D]

N.B. See 2.4 for further information.

Themes from the overall evaluation findings that are also reflected in these data include:

1. Altered reading habits
2. Trying new reading materials
3. Enjoyment
4. Confidence and skills
5. Awareness of library services.
### 7.1 Learner Record Sheet and Tracking the activity

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Record Sheet - student</th>
<th>Tracking the activity - librarian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned to use PC/Internet from scratch, is now helping others. Has been nominated for a student award at the college.</td>
<td>In the ‘discussion about reading and narrative’ part of the course: Did not get very far before a full Booktalk discussion erupted. All students were keen to talk about their reading experiences and books they have enjoyed! Tutor thrilled. Wonderful!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angus, Thongs and full-frontal snogging - started reading in class and laughing, was reading sections out to the others in the group...Multiple copies requested by the students and tutor. Bridges of Madison County - couldn’t put it down. Sat at the top of the stairs to read it night so not to disturb husband.</td>
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<td><strong>Group 2</strong></td>
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<td>Surprised by how much the library has changed, more approachable. Joined herself - after years of not wanting to.</td>
<td>‘Harder group to work with - more interested in PCs/Internet. No time to read...more interest in positive parenting books from this group, more practical interest here.’ The following month, however, the librarian reported ‘successful visit to Harlow library...all borrowed books and a couple became new members’.</td>
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<td><strong>Group 3</strong></td>
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<td>You can take a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink - some students do not want to get involved [in reading], they will join in the discussions though.</td>
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<td><strong>Group 4</strong></td>
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<td>‘Look, Mum’s reading again!’ [student reported that her children had said]</td>
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<td><strong>Group 5</strong></td>
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<td>I visited the group in person. All very keen and pleased with the books I’d taken. Almost fell on them! Keen to request more for next time.</td>
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<td><strong>Group 6</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading history: Student collects</td>
<td>The tutor is very pleased [with Quick</td>
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trolleys at Tesco's [for a living], now wants to move on, wants to do CV. Goes forward then slips back, needs constant reinforcing.

Early comments on LRS: ‘started off ok but then tailed off’, ‘rejected as too long’, ‘didn’t finish, too complicated’ - after eight months at end of course, comments such as ‘interested by x book’, ‘pleased to visit library and to be able to put own long review onto website’.

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<th>Group 7</th>
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<tr>
<td>In March (mid-course), reported ‘initially reluctant to join in discussion - now no hesitation. Student comments reported: ‘It is my first book and I am really proud of myself...I allowed myself time to read. I cannot put into words how I feel.’</td>
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<td>[March] Will now be happy to use other libraries...would like to try something from each section in the library....has given up some other activities so more time to read.</td>
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<td>‘I’m sorry I’m late, I had to finish my book!’ ‘On St. Patrick’s Day, my husband went out, but I went to bed and read my book!’ ‘When I’m reading, I think about the book, not life!’ Escapism.</td>
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<td>Was nervous - now talks to me regularly on my visits.</td>
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| Librarian 2 |

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<th>Group 8</th>
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<tr>
<td>Couldn’t believe his review was on the internet and was going to tell his sister to look. Had never used a computer before he put the review on Ask Chris.</td>
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<th>Group 9</th>
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<td>I have enjoyed the course as the books are so easy to read and only short stories so you can put them down and pick them up easily.</td>
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<td>February: all six students took books. March: 5 who took books last time had read at least 1.</td>
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<th>Group 10</th>
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<td>When [name] was reading before one class, the tutor commented she</td>
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<td><strong>Group 11</strong></td>
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<td>didn’t think she’d see the day Ruth was reading off her own bat.</td>
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<td>It’s the first time I’ve been interested in books...It’s the first time in years I’ve finished a book.</td>
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<td>My visit to the library has been very good and I intend to come back.</td>
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<th><strong>Librarian 3</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Group 12</strong></th>
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<td>[Name] finds reading very difficult and has gone back to learning later in life. The Fresh Start books have really helped, and she was amazed at all the facilities that the library has to offer.</td>
<td>There was very little discussion in the class...[next visit] none of the students wrote a review - partly I feel because the tutor didn’t give them much guidance. They found the visits by the librarian information...[next visit] The tutor did not arrange a class visit.</td>
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<th><strong>Librarian 4</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Group 13</strong></th>
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<td>Produced a written review on Billy Elliot which she enjoyed. Will try to put it on herself at home (if it doesn’t appear I will do it for her). Came to this class especially because heard that QR books were coming via the tutor.</td>
<td>Proud to see her review on QR - printed it off - gave her much confidence and liked to show husband what she had done. Enjoyed tour and QR dumpbin. Put another review on while in library.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produced a review that she had written, was very pleased as didn’t think she could!</td>
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<th><strong>Group 14</strong></th>
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<td>Enthused about the QR books - was really pleased could read in chunks and remember. Found them easy to go back over if forgot something.</td>
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<th><strong>Group 15</strong></th>
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<td>She keeps saying I’m picking on her making her read and talk about books but she’s actually very good once pushed!</td>
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<th><strong>Group 16</strong></th>
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<td>She lost her diary and was so excited to get another...very pleased to receive her library ticket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 Evidence of longitudinal change

An additional methodological benefit of the ‘Learner Record Sheet’ and the ‘Tracking the activity’ sheet is that they provide evidence of longitudinal change, evidence that is only circumstantial in the interview and focus group data. Both learners and tutors used the documents to note changes over time, changes in reading habits, in interest in the library service, and in overall skills and confidence:

**Learner Account 1**

‘Learned to use the internet from scratch, is now helping others. Has been nominated for a student award at the college.’

**Learner Account 2**


8 months later: ‘Interested by x book’, ‘pleased to visit library and be able to put own long review onto website’.

**Learner Account 3**

In March (mid-course): ‘initially reluctant to join in discussion - now no hesitation’.

**Librarian Account 1**
A harder group to work with – more interested in PCs/Internet. No time to read...
The following month: ‘Successful visit to Harlow Library...all borrowed books and a couple became new members.’

Librarian Account 2
February: ‘All six students took books’.
March: ‘Five who took books last time had read at least six’.

7.3 Structured reading evaluation

Learner 1
Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment
Are you enjoying/have you enjoyed the course?
Because of what I have learned about. What I can borrow and about the different things that go on in the library. I always thought libraries were just for educational.
Have your reading habits changed in any way since beginning the course?
I understand the words/expressions better.

Learner 2
Values, attitudes, feelings
I have more confidence in my ability to read.
Needed to read more to help with other courses and for own enjoyment.
I feel more comfortable using the library service.
Came up for children before - will now come for self.

Skills
I am better at putting forward my point of view (about books).
Increased confidence in talking about books and reading.

Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment
(Why) are you enjoying this course?
Good to talk about books you've enjoyed.
Do you enjoy reading books for pleasure?
Think about book not life! Escapism
Have your reading habits changed in any way since beginning of course?
Am reading more often. Will read rather than go out!

Learner 3
Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment
Have you enjoyed the course?
Definitely. You can discuss your views with others.

Learner 4
Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment
Have you enjoyed the course?
*Given more ideas of what to read. Tried different things.*

Have your reading habits changed in any way since beginning the course?
(how?)
*Reading more and varied.*

Learner 5

Values, attitudes, feelings
I am more interested in choosing books to read for pleasure.
*I like recommendations from other members of the group.*

I feel more comfortable using the library service.
*I was anyway - but for my children rather than myself.*

Skills
I am better at using library resources and facilities (prompt: borrower services, finding books using OPAC, etc.)
*Quizzes/shelf browsing during the course has helped.*

I am better at putting my point of view (about books)
*Happy to chat about books.*

Behaviour
I have begun to read books for pleasure.
*Enjoy telling friends about books I’m reading.*

I am reading more books for pleasure than before.
*My reading speed has increased so am keen to tackle bigger books.*

Following this course...I intend to read books for pleasure.
*My bag is full of books to read. Given up some other activities so have time to read.*

Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment
Have you tried new types of book since beginning the course? - am now happy to browse and try other types of books. Not just stick to biographies.

Learner 6

Values, attitudes, feelings
I have more confidence in my ability to read. - *Read my 1st ever book.*

Skills
I am better at putting forward my point of view (about books)
*Initially reluctant to talk - then gave details of whole plot.*

Knowledge and understanding
I am more aware of resources...
Enjoyed spine label/covers exercise.

Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment
Are you enjoying this course?
Always wanted to read. Now enjoying being able to.

Have your reading habits changed...?
Given myself permission to have time to read.

Have you tried new types of book...?
Took books recommended by others in the group.

If so, what did you think of the books you tried?
Some strange, some frightening, but enjoyed them all.
8. Project management

The following sections move away from the Quick Reads collection and the response of the learners, with a focus on the wider issues that form a part of the overall management of a project that involves the public library service and basic skills sector.

8.1 Partnerships between the public library service and basic skills sector

‘...in each one of the nine adult colleges, there is this excellent work going on, and it’s got better as the partnership has progressed, so we would see it as one of our most successful partnerships.’ [County Basic Skills Manager]

Representatives from the basic skills sector and Essex libraries were asked to consider the effectiveness of the partnerships developed throughout the Quick Reads project.

One of the clear messages to emerge was that partnerships are not developed overnight; time is required in order that all parties become committed to the project in question:

‘People haven’t jumped at the opportunity, I mean I quite reluctantly said “yes”...’ [Basic Skills Coordinator]

‘I think it was a learning curve for them [the library staff], because they had preconceptions which were either confirmed or not confirmed.’ [BS Coordinator]

‘It’s very variable [the effectiveness of the partnerships]: wherever it is, it takes a long time to get to find the right people. It’s a very slow
uptake, but once you get to the right people, and get in, it’s ok.’
[Librarian]

8.1.1 The County Basic Skills (Skills for Life) Manager
A key element of the management of the Quick Reads project was the involvement of a County Basic Skills Manager, Maggie Nutt, who acted as a mediator between the colleges and the libraries, coordinating the overall project partnership. This was regarded by both parties as unequivocally beneficial:

‘...the management by Maggie has always been very effective...so it’s been quite easy.’ [BS Coordinator]

‘We have an effective partnership model, in that Maggie is the Basic Skills Manager, she is on the project management group, and she has regular communication with the coordinators of the tutors.’
[Librarian]

At the beginning of each new project period, the County Basic Skills Manager disseminates details of all participating library staff to each of the Basic Skills coordinators. In this way, each coordinator knows about the project, informs his or her team of tutors, and when the local Quick Reads team makes contact with the college, they are fully prepared to begin working together. The Basic Skills coordinator should then advise the library staff as to the appropriate classes to visit.

The difficulty with this model has been that it is impossible to ensure equal participation from each college - and each member of staff. As one librarian stated:

‘We visit nine adult education colleges across Essex, and currently we’ve had problems with just two.’
An example of such a problem has been that a coordinator has failed to forge the link between the library staff and appropriate classes. In order for a partnership to work in such a circumstance, it has been necessary for contact to be made directly with the individual tutors, which is obviously far more difficult and potentially disjointed. In other cases, an individual tutor may have been unwilling to cooperate with the local library service:

‘...it’s been really awkward, a complete struggle to get in. And because...I’ve only had the dates that she [the tutor] gave me, I’ve only seen the students twice before, which isn’t really enough to build up a bond and get them to know what it’s about, and get their confidence up.’ [Librarian]

A second problem that had arisen was that certain tutors had also been unsupportive. Members of the project management group felt that this was almost certainly because the weaker examples were the newer partnerships, and therefore that the problem could be solved with perseverance and improved methods of communication:

A: ‘The tutors that weren’t as positive were in a college that we hadn’t worked with before. So maybe next year when we go in, they will be more keen because they’ll have more of a basis and they’ll know what we’re about. So it’ll be better established, so it might just be an initial problem.’

B: ‘...because that coordinator doesn’t come to the coordinator’s meetings, it means she hasn’t had the benefit of the feedback over the last two years while it’s been going on.’

C: ‘It’s the difference between going in cold, when no one knows what it’s about, whereas if you’ve got a more supportive team behind

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7 The Essex Libraries partnerships with Adult Education began as a pilot with one college in 2000, expanded to seven Adult Community Colleges during The Vital Link (2001-2), and then
you, you go in and you’re just one of the family walking through the door.’

Another unexpected problem was the significant turn over in Basic Skills staff. This meant that in many cases the library staff were forced to develop new working relationships, which inevitably takes time. At one Adult Community College the situation changed dramatically, with the advent of a new Basic Skills coordinator who was less positive and supportive than the previous member of staff.

Further comments made by library staff who had visited basic skills classes on a regular basis underlined that any amount of senior management organisation could not guarantee an effective working partnership between the college and the library service: the cooperation of the individuals is vital.

...you can be welcomed in at one level, and you can see so many classes, and then you can’t find any more classes, and it’s because the tutors aren’t coming forward to offer themselves. That has happened at one college; I got in to see the senior tutor, and she said “right, I’ll tell all the tutors”, and just one tutor has come forward. She has been very keen, and it’s been really successful, but it’s reaching the other tutors that has been difficult.’

8.1.2 Mutual benefits of the partnerships
Despite these isolated examples of difficulties, the partnerships developed during the Quick Reads project were generally very effective. The most frequently reported benefit - from both points of view - was that they had raised awareness of each other’s operation and services:

to each of the nine Essex Adult Community Colleges during the Learning and Skills Council phase of the initiative (2002-4).
‘...I’ve seen changes in the library staff...massive changes in their approach to basic skills and coming into the classes, which has been absolutely wonderful to see...in terms of their confidence, and understanding of what basic skills learners need, what it means in terms of what libraries can offer...I think it was a learning curve for them, because they had preconceptions which were either confirmed or not confirmed.’ [County Basic Skills Manager]

‘...this course has worked, and it’s worked because we’ve got [name of tutor]’s expertise from the basic skills side, which I’m not familiar with, and we’ve got my library knowledge.’ [Librarian]

Perhaps more significantly, the partnerships had been mutually beneficial, and each party could see reasons for continuing the shared work in this area:

‘...it has grown, we have all learned something, each of us has learned something from the other partner, and we have sort of expanded in a very basic skills way, not too fast, but gently.’ [BS Coordinator]

‘It does need to go on growing, we’re always getting new students, I think it would be very sad if we all backed off a bit, if we didn’t go on doing things with the library.’ [BS Coordinator]

‘It has very much strengthened the relationship between the college and the libraries, and the idea that the library comes into the college, but now the college is increasingly going out into the library. We are making our buildings accessible to each other.’ [Librarian]
[‘Is every partnership sustainable?’] ‘Yes, and what we’re planning to do in the Autumn, we’re running a training course for the reader development and lifelong learning librarians on Quick Reads, because what we need to do is to involve more staff in supporting learners’ groups in the college...to give a better awareness of what Quick Reads is.’ [Librarian]
9. The role of Essex Libraries in adult basic skills education

‘I always felt that libraries should have an important part to play.’
[Tutor]

All tutors interviewed were asked to consider the role of Essex Libraries in adult basic education, to think about ways in which the local library service supported their work, and ways in which it could be improved. Their response was very positive, and all who gave an opinion spoke of the potential and actual value of the library’s involvement in basic skills provision.

The simple fact that library staff came out of the library and visited classes was viewed as a significant step to have taken in promoting the role of libraries in this area:

‘...she [the librarian] came in and recommended books to them, got to know what their interests were...I think that was good, because some of them haven’t really used the library service very much, if at all, so that was a good introduction for them. It’s an important role, and it’s not something I’ve been able to do with the class as a general rule.’

Prior to the Quick Reads project, work conducted in Essex between basic skills colleges and public libraries had taken place, but a service had not been as consistently provided across the county:

‘[Quick Reads has] enabled library staff to have the time to spend in this very collaborative way, and go to as many classes as they possibly can, which has been a really big support, because we’ve tended to snatch at it in the past, haven’t it?’ [BS Coordinator]
'It has been a bit fragmented, hasn’t it? It depends on who’s in which library and which area, and which college, as to how the collaboration has worked, whereas this has drawn it all together.' [BS Coordinator]

As a result of the project, the coordinators felt that the situation had changed, that the role of public libraries in basic skills education had not only become clearer to the participating staff, but more importantly to the learners themselves:

‘It’s a valuable resource which we’ve always felt that perhaps basic skills learners haven’t easily accessed. And what we’re now seeing is that they’re recognising that it is for them, that there are things in there which they can use, and that’s a vital part of our getting to be independent, and to access things, isn’t it?’

9.1 Reading for pleasure and the adult literacy curriculum

Evidently, when considering the role of reading for pleasure in basic skills education it is insufficient to be convinced of its value in theory: to what extent did both library and basic skills staff feel that reading for pleasure could realistically become part of the core delivery of basic skills education?

‘It’s a realistic ambition in that it should be there, and if it was there it might give them [basic skills tutors] the impetus to do something about it, but without it being in it, I don’t think they’ll address it, so it will get squeezed out.’ [Librarian]

‘I think it should happen. There’s enough evidence to prove that it’s valuable, and has been successful.’ [Librarian]

‘It’s all related to the curriculum we’re working with; the whole thing merges together really well.’ [Tutor]
For one tutor, the introduction of reading for pleasure as a core element of the curriculum would be the only way in which she could ensure that she would cover it in her classes, as her current teaching was necessarily so curriculum-led:

‘[Reading for pleasure is] an important role, and it’s not something I’ve been able to do with the class as a general rule...because there’s always something else to do...Perhaps we overlook the [reading for pleasure] element sometimes, in fact I’m sure we overlook it. [Is the curriculum driving what you do?] Yes, that’s right.’

Interestingly Mid Essex Adult Community College, the college involved in the original pilot project and therefore with the longest involvement in Quick Reads, has developed a Reading for Pleasure course specifically for emergent readers. Delivered in the local library and with library staff input, the first course ran from January to March 2003, and is being repeated in autumn 2003.

Library staff felt that a simple introduction of reading for pleasure in the curriculum would not be the solution, for them it was vital that basic skills tutors receive support from the library service in delivering it, as their confidence in teaching in this area varied considerably:

A: ‘Some tutors just fall on the ideas, writing a bit of a story from a different character’s angle, or following on with ‘what happened next?’ if the book was to continue after it finished...I was talking to one tutor, and she said “with all the Quick Reads books and those sorts of ideas, that’s given me enough literacy work for the whole of next term...Another one...was saying that she finds it’s a real catalyst for all sorts of other activities with the class...’

B: ‘Sometimes we have to spell it out.’
‘One tutor said that she has wanted to teach reading for pleasure in the past, but she couldn’t do it very easily, because it was about knowing what to use, what was appropriate.’

‘...if you’re going to be promoting reading for pleasure through the adult literacy curriculum, there has to be a good proportion [in that curriculum] about what are appropriate resources. And the work that we do...needs to be available to library services and adult education, so that they can access it...I do think that it is fundamentally important that...tutors are equipped to integrate reading for pleasure within the curriculum.’

‘We have demonstrated that it can be mapped to the Curriculum.’

It was felt to be important to clarify to both the basic skills and library sectors the exact remit of their role in supporting adult basic education, to recognise that each had a valuable contribution to make:

‘With the Quick Reads project, what we’re doing is really good, because we’re supporting what the colleges do; we’re not trying to take over. That’s all we can do, because we’re not teachers...Then, it works all round, the partnership.’ [Librarian]

‘...we’re not looking to deliver basic skills education. The library role is to support the tutors. We bring to it our awareness of books and resources, and particular skills such as reader development, and how to promote books and reading, which the tutors don’t have. And the tutors obviously have their skills in literacy, which we don’t have and don’t need to have, because that’s not our area.’ [Librarian]

‘...it’s an issue of who that person is, whether they should be signposting that person to where the basic skills person is.’ [BS Coordinator]
‘It’s difficult because people think they can deliver basic skills training without having been trained.’ [BS Coordinator]

The relevance of the respective roles had been recognised by a Basic Skills Inspector, who had coincidentally visited one Essex college on the same day as a librarian had attended a particular class. A Basic Skills Coordinator referred to the subsequent inspection report:

‘We had an inspection, and one of the observations the Inspector did at our college was when there was somebody from the library coming in. If I can just read you what she said about that, “The enthusiasm and value that learners will gain from this in terms of confidence, knowledge and increased reading, speaking and listening skills is evident. Learners value reading and knowing about the different books available.”’
10. Summary of research findings

A large sample of learners, tutors, library staff, project managers and Basic Skills coordinators were consulted for their views as part of the independent evaluation of the project. Every effort was made to ask only ‘open’ questions, not to influence the responses in any way. Despite this, the findings presented in this report form a large body of evidence that almost unequivocally underlines the effectiveness of the Quick Reads project.

A number of positive outcomes were identified in the report, and these fall largely into three areas:

1. Changes in reading habits and attitudes
2. Changes in perception and use of the public library service
3. Project management.

10.1. Changes in reading habits and attitudes

From the learners’ comments it is clear that a significant personal benefit of their participation in the Quick Reads project was their enjoyment of the experience; enjoyment of the new opportunity of finding accessible, interesting texts, and enjoyment of the participation and group interaction they experienced via the Quick Reads collection.

Enjoyment led to increased reading, and to making more adventurous choices that learners would perhaps have made prior to contact with texts that had been specifically selected with them in mind, according to the criteria developed and piloted by Essex Libraries. No judgement was made of the learner who preferred to read non-fiction titles, indeed it was recognised that the interest and attention of some learners was more effectively attracted by non-fiction. This area of Quick Reads was being developed at the time of the evaluation.
The combination of these factors clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of applying reader development methods to adult basic skills education.

It would have been a physical impossibility for library staff to take a collection of books that was sufficiently wide to appeal to all reading tastes. This shortcoming was overcome to a significant extent by the visits to the public library local to the college, hosted by a member of library staff that was already known to the learners.

Many people interviewed for the evaluation reported that they had read a book for the first time in their lives, or for the first time in many years, and their delight was evident. This was undoubtedly due in large part to the accessibility of the Quick Reads collection and the support of the library staff, but credit must also be given to the tutors, who fostered and maintained an encouraging and supportive atmosphere for the learners. Tutors also felt that classes had benefited from a revised focus on reading for pleasure.

Developing a new reading habit, however slowly, had been particularly beneficial in terms of increasing both reading and social confidence. Library staff emphasised that they were making no claim to have radically changed the reading levels or habits of every learner. However, they felt that the learners’ enjoyment had undoubtedly affected their attitude towards books and reading. For example, many had tried books that they would not previously have considered, broadening their reading choices and interests in line with the objectives of reader development.

The AskChris website - although not a new project for the purposes of this project - had been imaginatively used to give basic skills learners an opportunity to write their own reviews. The educational benefits of this were recognised by tutors, and all parties commented on the obvious pride learners felt in seeing their work on the Internet.
10.2 Changes in perception and use of the public library service

A significant effect of the library’s involvement in the learner’s basic skills education has been an increased awareness of the library services and resources available to them, and more importantly of their relevance to their lives. Many learners were surprised by cultural changes that they had noticed in their local public libraries since their last visit, that they were less silent and more welcoming environments. They also commented on changes they had noticed in terms of the range of resources now available, and were particularly impressed by the audio-visual and Internet resources.

Nonetheless, the learners’ evident surprise underlines the need for public libraries to market their services more to the non library user. This clearly requires more outreach work: the Quick Reads project made a significant move forward, but much work remains to be done, both in terms of direct contact with local classes, and in reaching out to the more isolated members of the community.

One difficulty that a number of learners had was in locating materials within the library. Although professional opinion is divided as to the extent to which basic skills materials should be obviously displayed, comments made by the learners themselves would seem to underline the need for prominent display, and far clearer signposting. From the beginning of the Quick Reads project, library staff have worked closely with tutors and learners in order to develop branding and sign posting for the Quick Reads books. Learners have Quick Reads mouse mats, bookmarks, reading diaries and review leaflets to use in the colleges. In the libraries, books are displayed ‘face on’ in a Quick Reads dumpbin. Effective display is dependent, however, on local staff making use of the materials supplied. In one library, books had been removed from the display and shelved with the spine facing outwards. Students from two classes who had visited this library had commented that the Quick Reads collection was very difficult to locate within the libraries itself: the more confident among them had asked the staff for help, others had felt too embarrassed.
It was, however, acknowledged that public libraries have made significant progress in this area in recent years, and that only a few years ago there would have been no allocation of space for a collection such as Quick Reads, devised with the basic skills learner specifically in mind.

Although learners varied in their confidence in using the library service on their own, none of the people interviewed for the evaluation stated that they would not go back to their local library after their course had finished.

Some classes had also made plans to continue meeting after courses had ended, for example in the form of reading groups hosted by their local library. This would hopefully sustain the reading habit and encourage library use.

10.3 Project management

10.3.1 Partnerships
The partnership between Essex Libraries and local colleges had been established during the Vital Link project (2001-2), but this developed considerably during Quick Reads. At focus groups conducted (separately) with members of the (library) project management group and Basic Skills coordinators, it became apparent that all parties regarded the partnership as a success, and were committed to its continuation, even after the end of the funded period.

Some reluctance had initially been felt by tutors, obviously concerned by their workload and by the relevance of the suggested project to the adult literacy curriculum. Where the project had been allowed to develop, however, the library staff had been able to demonstrate that all new activities could be mapped to the curriculum, and the level of commitment had increased.
All parties felt that a particularly beneficial element of the project management was the involvement of a County Basic Skills Manager, who mediated between the colleges and libraries, effectively coordinating the overall partnership.

The difficulty with the partnership model has been the impossibility of ensuring equal participation not only from each college, but from each member of staff. Channels of communication can break down easily when one person is reluctant to be involved. Fortunately, it seems that only the less established partnerships had such problems, so it was felt that with perseverance and improved methods of communication, such problems would be resolved.

10.3.2 The role of Essex Libraries in adult basic skills education

As a result of the Quick Reads project and the contact between the library staff and learners, the Basic Skills coordinators felt that the role of public libraries in basic skills education had not only become clearer to the participating staff, but more importantly to the learners themselves. It was recognised that the library service had a valuable contribution to make in this area.
11. Recommendations for improved service provision

As part of the evaluation of Quick Reads, the researcher asked representatives of all parties involved in the project to comment on the current provision of Essex Libraries for basic skills learners, and to suggest improvements, where appropriate. This section presents their comments in the form of recommendations. Although they are intended in the first instance as a ‘reminder’ for those involved in Quick Reads - learners, tutors, Basic Skills coordinators, librarians, the project management group - they could equally be applied to other library services and Adult Community Colleges.

11.1 To the project management group

11.1.1 Planning the project

1. To include a preliminary preparation and partnership development phase. The Quick Reads project benefited from continuous funding over a three and a half year period, and a model that was developed with one college and then expanded incrementally. Representatives from both the library service and basic skills sector felt that the project would have benefited from an initial period of time during which to thoroughly plan the operation of the overall partnership. For both sectors, some degree of cultural change was required, and partnerships are not established overnight. It is therefore recommended that future funded projects have a longer timescale to take these factors into account.

2. To seek flexible funding to permit sustained student contact. A major success of the Quick Reads project has been the large number of learners it has reached in a relatively short time. At the same time, a difficulty has been that its requirement by the funding body to focus on the number of students reached by the project has limited the length of time that library staff can spend with each individual student. It is therefore
recommended that future funding applications have less ambitious target numbers, in order to deliver a more in-depth service to the learners.

‘...our work with the colleges can be a problem, because as we have to have so many learners each term, we can’t really afford to visit the same classes over and over. And because the attendance in classes fluctuates wildly, we end up with people who we see just once...and I’m sure that these people could really benefit from the project.’ [Librarian]

‘I would like to see it as a lot more in-depth...because of the number of classes I saw, you couldn’t get them writing loads of reviews, you couldn’t get them really discussing the books...but it would be nice to build on it.’ [Librarian]

11.1.2 Sustaining the project

3. To disseminate the Essex Libraries stock selection criteria.

Given the obvious effectiveness of the criteria, it may prove beneficial to other library services if Essex Libraries were to support them in developing their own criteria, and in selecting appropriate resources. This is an area that other services have found difficult to build up in the past, so shared expertise would be recommended, and widespread adoption of the criteria would facilitate the development of a quality standard - but only after an appropriate preparation and pilot phase.

‘The project has built up in steps, because we worked with the tutors, we established what the key criteria were, we tested them out with the learners, we didn’t jump in at all, it’s been quite a long time going in, and checking that we were on the right track...we had the learner input, and the tutors’ involvement.’ [Librarian]
4. To continue developing both fiction and non-fiction resources as part of the Quick Reads collection.

5. To map library-centred work to the curriculum.
   To continue to demonstrate to basic skills tutors the relevance to the adult literacy curriculum of each of the activities organised by - or with the cooperation of - library staff.

6. To encourage all library staff in regular contact with basic skills learners to use the tracking document
   (‘Tracking the activity’, see 7) - as piloted in the Quick Reads project - in order to demonstrate this relevance to the curriculum, and to provide evidence of the longitudinal benefits to the learner.

   ‘...the tracking exercise...when you mark what you’re doing each week against the Curriculum, that is very useful for the tutors too, because they have to keep records of what they’re doing, and here we are going in with an activity that is fundamentally part of what they’re about, which is actually producing a very good result.’
   [Librarian]

11.2 To the project management group and Basic Skills coordinators
7. To sustain and develop the partnerships created between the library service and basic skills sector.
   Essential to future work are clear and open channels of communication, and the cooperation and involvement from all levels of the organisation.

11.3 To Basic Skills coordinators and library staff
8. To share resources and mutually promote services.
   Adult Community Colleges can support the public libraries by informing learners of the services available in the libraries, and by encouraging library use by regular visits. Public libraries can offer support in turn by
recommending potential learners to the colleges, and by lending resources to supplement limited collections.

11.4 To tutors and library staff

9. To ensure that all roles are clarified.

To deliver awareness training to both basic skills and library staff to ensure that each party realises the extent and limitations of his/her role in working with the other sector.

10. To incorporate regular library visits into lesson planning

Throughout the Quick Reads project the visits (both to the library and those made to the class by library staff) have proved to be extremely beneficial in terms of increasing confidence and interest, in the library service and more generally in reading.

“We’re going to go into the library more, to look at routes in, wherever possible.” [BS Coordinator]

11.5 To library staff

11. To encourage a flexible approach to loan periods and rules of membership. Library charges for overdue loans are a barrier to some basic skills learners, many of whom may require a longer period of time to read a book than other users. This can be addressed by offering longer loan periods and, where appropriate, by waiving fines, in short by offering a more flexible service overall. The membership rules could be similarly relaxed; if the requirement was previously to provide two forms of identification, perhaps just one would be sufficient? (Essex Libraries did in fact remove the requirement for proof of identity in 2003, as the following comment illustrates.)
‘There are a lot of changes afoot, very recently the membership rules have been changed, so that you no longer have to provide two forms of address...’ [Librarian]

12. **To offer a welcoming service to all who enter the library.**
To provide awareness training for all staff, not only those directly involved in partnerships with the basic skills sector. This would prevent potential tensions arising from poor communication.

‘...they don’t come in with a great big label on their head saying “basic skills learner”, so we are looking at training at the moment, and we’ve got to gear up our customer care to treat everybody in a friendly and welcoming way that will work across the board.’ [Librarian]

13. **To ensure that the library building is as welcoming an environment as possible.**
All displays and promotions intended for basic skills learners should be clearly signposted, and sufficiently prominently displayed to avoid potential embarrassment, while at the same time being aware of the need for sensitivity. Once effective displays are in place, routine monitoring should be implemented to ensure that the needs of the basic skills learner are not subsequently overlooked through the many conflicting pressures for library space. Awareness training for staff should also highlight the importance of effective signposting of materials aimed at basic skills learners.

The library as a whole should be arranged in the most inviting way possible, in order to encourage every visitor to feel at ease. Even a limited space can accommodate small displays, face-out books and bright, prominent signs.
‘Our local library has worked very hard to reduce barriers to access, so they’ve rearranged the displays so that when you walk in, it’s the videos and CDs, the visual stuff, rather than the text, that people see first of all.’ [BS Coordinator]

14. To circulate basic skills collections as widely as possible.
Following a successful pilot phase, the basic skills collections (as per the Quick Reads model) should be a permanent category within the overall library catalogue. As such, collections should be circulated to all libraries within a local authority, in order to disseminate the positive message more widely.

‘We’re looking now at getting the Quick Reads collections into the local branches...so that would be a step in the right direction...if someone with basic skills comes in and says “what have you got at this level?”, then the staff won’t have to say “you have to go to x library”’. [Librarian]

11.6 To learners, tutors and library staff
15. To follow the example of those groups that have created reading groups as an ‘exit strategy’, a means of continuing the shared work of the class, and thereby sustaining the learners’ reading habit.
Appendix A

Interview schedules:

- Learner focus group instrument for 3-5 June 2003
- Focus group instrument for project team/ABE coordinators, 02 July 2003
Learner focus group instrument for 03-05.06

Introduction
First of all, thank you all very much for giving your time to speak to me. My name is Briony Train, and I’m a researcher at Sheffield University. June Turner who I think you all know, a librarian here in Essex, has asked me to come and have a look at the work you’ve all been involved in for the Quick Reads project. I wanted to come here and speak to you in person, to give you the chance to tell me what you as learners think about the reading course and about the Quick Reads collection.

As you will have noticed, I’m recording our chat - this is so that I can listen more to what you’re saying. I don’t want you to feel worried by this - I know it might seem strange but please ignore it: I will! The only people that will listen to the tape are myself and maybe a small group of people I work with at the university. I have been asked to write a report about Quick Reads, and will use some of the information you give me today, but I don’t need to know who you are or have your names.

So, to let you know what will happen here in the next ½ an hour or so, I will ask you a few short questions about the course you have been doing and the Quick Reads books you helped to choose.

I want you to feel that you can say anything at all - this is not a test, I’m just interested to know what you think. And at the end you’ll have an opportunity to tell me anything else you think is important or relevant. If at any point you have a question to ask me, or you think I’ve said something that you don’t like or don’t agree with, please let me know.

Introductions
So, let’s get started. Could you say for how long you’ve been coming to this group?
1. **The Quick Reads collection.**
   - Thinking about the books that you have looked at as part of your course, could you tell me which you have found to be most useful, or most interesting?
   - And which have you found to be maybe less useful, or interesting?

2. **Independent use of the library.**
   - Have you found out anything new about the library since being in this group?
   - Do you go to other public libraries in this area (apart from this one)?
   - Would you now feel happy to go into any public library if you were passing by and find what you were looking for, or would you always use your local library?
   - Is there anything that you have found out about the library service that you didn’t know before you started the course (e.g. something to do with the computers, the books, the different ways you can find information)?
   - Do you think that the library has the sort of things [information or books or materials] that you need or want? [prompt e.g. do you think that the librarians are helpful if you can’t find something, do you know where to look for the books you want to read?]

3. **Reading for pleasure**
   - Are there any types of books that you read now that you perhaps hadn’t read before you started the course?
   - If so, what did you think of the books you tried?
   - And do you read a different amount of books than you read before?
   - When the course has finished will you continue to borrow books from your local library? Will you continue to read books for pleasure?
   - Are there any types of book you would like to try reading in the future?
Basic skills staff

What role has the library has played in the reading for pleasure course - both in terms of development and the actual running of the course?

Of the Quick Reads titles or displays, book lists, etc. - could you tell me which you think the learners have found to be most useful, or most interesting?

Is the reading level appropriate?

And which you think they have found to be less useful, or interesting?

What do you think should be the role of libraries in basic skills education?

Is there anything that you think that libraries should do differently, to support the needs of basic skills learners? [prompt e.g. staff, the books, the building, the length of the loan period...etc.]

Do you think that the learners have found out anything about the library service that they perhaps didn’t know before starting the course? [e.g. resources they didn’t know existed, details of library membership]

Do you think that they are reading more widely as a result of the sessions/course?

Partnerships

As part of Quick Reads what links have you developed with the library service, and how have these partnerships worked in practice?

In what ways, if it all, do you think these links will be sustained after the project/in the future?

Are there any aspects of your work with the library on Quick Reads that you would change?

Final question: are there any other points that you would like to make about basic skills learning and the library service that we haven’t talked about?
Library staff

What role has the college played in the reading for pleasure course - both in terms of development and the actual running of the course?

Of the Quick Reads titles or displays, book lists, etc. - could you tell me which you think the learners have found to be most useful, or most interesting?

And which you think they have found to be less useful, or interesting?

What do you think should be the role of libraries in basic skills education?

Is there anything that you think that libraries should do differently, to support the needs of basic skills learners? [prompt e.g. staff, the books, the building, the length of the loan period...etc.]

Do you think that the learners have found out anything about the library service that they perhaps didn’t know before starting the course? [e.g. resources they didn’t know existed, details of library membership]

Do you think that they are reading more widely as a result of the sessions/course?

Partnerships

As part of Quick Reads what links have you developed with the college, and how have these partnerships worked in practice?

In what ways, if it all, do you think these links will be sustained after the project/in the future?

Are there any aspects of your work with the college on Quick Reads that you would change?

Final question: are there any other points that you would like to make about basic skills learning and the library service/adult basic skills education that we haven’t talked about?
Focus group instrument for project team/ABE coordinators

Introduction for project team (am)

First of all, thank you very much for giving your time to speak to me, I know that you’re all very busy. I think you all know me by now, but if not, my name is Briony Train, and I’m a researcher at Sheffield University. Essex Libraries (via June Turner, the Reader Development Coordinator) has asked me to evaluate the Quick Reads project so that you can have a neutral observer to give an unbiased view of how effective the project has been.

Just to give you a bit of background information, my evaluation focuses in particular on 1 term, this summer term, although I have also met a group from last term at Brentwood Library. Some of my work is office-based, and involves analysing the individual learner records, and structured reading conversation documents, that I wrote using the 5 ‘learning outcomes’ that were listed in the original Quick Reads application, i.e. 1 knowledge and understanding; 2 skills; 3 values, attitudes and feelings; 4 creativity, inspiration and enjoyment; and 5 behaviour.

I have also been meeting a large sample of this term’s students, and have visited 7 groups. With some of these groups I conducted a focus group, or where I thought it was more appropriate, I met students on an individual basis. The focus of these very informal conversations was on areas such as independent use of the library, attitudes to the library and library staff, reading for pleasure and the Quick Reads collection. Some of these interviews were recorded, and where I felt that this would be inappropriate, I just took notes. At the same time as meeting the students I spoke to some of the tutors, and again, either recorded interviews or took notes. I didn’t ask anyone for their name, and I made sure that everyone knew that all notes and cassettes were just for my own use.

Today, I am meeting you, project team, and this afternoon I will meet the ABE coordinators group. My focus for our conversation now is on the Quick Reads collection, reading for pleasure in basic skills education, the role of libraries in basic skills education, students’ awareness of the library service, your partnership with the local colleges, and any general comments you may have.

If it’s ok with you, I’m recording the conversation - this is so that I can listen more to what you’re saying, and don’t have to take frantic notes all the time. The only person that will listen to the tape is myself, and the only person that will read my notes is possibly my line manager. I have been asked to write a report about Quick Reads, and will use some of the information you give me today, but it will all be used anonymously. I will refer to you as a ‘basic skills tutor’ - or use whatever term you would like me to do.

If at any point you have a question to ask me, or you would like me to explain something more clearly, please let me know.
Project team (am)

Quick Reads

How do you think that the students have responded to the Quick Reads collection?

And how would you say that the tutors have responded to it [the Quick Reads collection]?

Would you say that the reading level and presentation of Quick Reads have proved to be appropriate to the students?

Do you think that the students’ reading habits have changed in any way as a result of coming into contact with the Quick Reads collection?

And continuing this theme of perceived change, do you think that the student’s confidence has changed in any way as a direct result of Quick Reads? [prompt: this could be reading confidence, or more general social confidence]

Reading for pleasure in basic skills education

Of the tutors that you have met and the classes that you have observed, do you think that the tutors will continue to include a reading for pleasure element in their lesson planning, now that the library staff visits have ended?

On a larger scale, what are your views on including a set reading for pleasure element in the adult basic skills curriculum? In your view is this a realistic ambition?

Role of libraries in adult basic skills education

Firstly, in what way - if at all - do you feel that Essex libraries support adult basic skills education?

Do you think that public libraries in general have a role to play in adult basic skills education?

Based on your experience during the Quick Reads project, is there anything that you think that Essex libraries should do differently, to support the needs of basic skills learners? [prompt e.g. staff, the books, the building, the length of the loan period...etc.]
Students’ awareness of the library service

Do you think that the learners have found out anything about the library service that they perhaps didn’t know before starting the course? [e.g. resources they didn’t know existed, details of library membership] Give details if you can - I don’t need names.

Do you think that they are reading more widely as a result of the sessions/course? Give details if you can - again, I don’t need names.

Your partnerships with the local college

What links have you developed with the local colleges as a direct result of the Quick Reads project, and how have these partnerships worked in practice?

Have there been any particular difficulties at any stage of the partnerships, and if so, were you able to resolve them? (How?) N.B. I don’t need to know names of libraries or individuals, I’m just interested in anonymous examples.

In what ways, if it all, do you think these links will be sustained now that the Quick Reads library visits have ended?

The project overall

Are there any aspects of your Quick Reads work that you would change if you had the opportunity to begin the project again?

Final question

Are there any other points that you would like to make about adult basic skills education and the library service that we haven’t talked about?

Wrap-up...
Thank you very much for your time.
Introduction for the ABE coordinators (pm)

First of all, thank you very much for giving your time to speak to me, I know that you’re all very busy. My name is Briony Train, and I’m a researcher at Sheffield University. Essex Libraries (via June Turner, the Reader Development Coordinator) has asked me to evaluate the Quick Reads project so that they can have a neutral observer to give an unbiased view of how effective the project has been.

Just to give you a bit of background information, my evaluation focuses in particular on 1 term, this summer term, although I have also met a group from last term at Brentwood Library. Some of my work is office-based, and involves analysing the individual learner records, and structured reading conversation documents, that I wrote using the 5 ‘learning outcomes’ that were listed in the original Quick Reads application, i.e. 1 knowledge and understanding; 2 skills; 3 values, attitudes and feelings; 4 creativity, inspiration and enjoyment; and 5 behaviour.

I have also been meeting a large sample of this term’s students, and have visited 7 groups. With some of these groups I conducted a focus group, or where I thought it was more appropriate, I met students on an individual basis. The focus of these very informal conversations was on areas such as independent use of the library, attitudes to the library and library staff, reading for pleasure and the Quick Reads collection. Some of these interviews were recorded, and where I felt that this would be inappropriate, I just took notes. At the same time as meeting the students I spoke to some of the tutors, and again, either recorded interviews or took notes. I didn’t ask anyone for their name, and I made sure that everyone knew that all notes and cassettes were just for my own use.

Today, I am meeting you, the coordinators’ group, and this morning I met the library project team. My focus for our conversation now is on the Quick Reads collection, reading for pleasure in basic skills education, the role of libraries in basic skills education, students’ awareness of the library service, your partnership with the library service, and any general comments you may have.

If it’s ok with you, I’m recording the conversation - this is so that I can listen more to what you’re saying, and don’t have to take frantic notes all the time. The only person that will listen to the tape is myself, and the only person that will read my notes is possibly my line manager. I have been asked to write a report about Quick Reads, and will use some of the information you give me today, but it will all be used anonymously. I will refer to you as a ‘basic skills tutor’ - or use whatever term you would like me to do.

If at any point you have a question to ask me, or you would like me to explain something more clearly, please let me know.
ABE coordinators (pm)

N.B. The coordinators facilitate the access to the classes. If the coordinators are not keen, they could block effective partnerships. They should all have met the Quick Reads librarian. Some have had quite a direct involvement.

Quick Reads

How do you think that the students have responded to the Quick Reads collection?

Are the reading level and presentation of Quick Reads appropriate to the students?

Could you see Quick Reads as an ongoing resource for your classes? [Do you plan to use any of the collection in future?]

Do you think that the students’ reading habits have changed in any way as a result of coming into contact with the Quick Reads collection?

And continuing this theme of perceived change, do you think that the student’s confidence has changed in any way as a direct result of Quick Reads? [prompt: this could be reading confidence, or more general social confidence]

Reading for pleasure in basic skills education

What are your views on including a reading for pleasure element in your lesson planning? If you do this already, please give details.

On a larger scale, what are your views on including a set reading for pleasure element in the adult basic skills curriculum?

Role of libraries in adult basic skills education

Firstly, in what way - if at all - do Essex libraries support adult basic skills education?

Do you think that public libraries in general have a role to play in adult basic skills education?

Is there anything that you think that Essex libraries should do differently, to support the needs of basic skills learners? [prompt e.g. staff, the books, the building, the length of the loan period...etc.]
Students’ awareness of the library service

Do you think that the learners have found out anything about the library service that they perhaps didn’t know before starting the course? [e.g. resources they didn’t know existed, details of library membership]

Do you think that they are reading more widely as a result of the sessions/course?

Your partnerships with the library service

What links have you developed with the library service, and how have these partnerships worked in practice?

Have there been any particular difficulties at any stage of the partnerships, and if so, were you able to resolve them? (How?) N.B. I don’t need to know names of libraries or individuals, I’m just interested in anonymous examples.

In what ways, if it all, do you think these links will be sustained now that the Quick Reads library visits have ended?

Are there any aspects of your work with the library on Quick Reads that you would change if you had the opportunity to do this again?

Final question

Are there any other points that you would like to make about adult basic skills education and the library service that we haven’t talked about?

Wrap-up...
Thank you very much for your time.
Appendix B

Learner Record Sheet
Quick Reads Learner Record Sheet

Name  Individual Number  Centre Name

**Reading history** (include interests, specific requests)

### Books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Titles taken</th>
<th>Returned/ Spoken about/ Reviewed</th>
<th>Comments on book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
Use of Website

Visit to library/comments

Tutor comments

Student comments
Appendix C

Tracking the activity
# Quick Reads - Tracking the activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of College</th>
<th>Name of Class/Group</th>
<th>Number in class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutor</td>
<td>Library staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quick Reads activity</th>
<th>Curriculum section/elements</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Date(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Librarian explaining project</td>
<td>Listen and respond SL/lr1.1 L1.2 L1.3 L1.5 L1.6 L2.1 L2.2 L2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion about reading and narrative</td>
<td>Engage in discussion SLd/L1.4 L2.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting books from collection</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension (text level) Rt/L2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skim reading title, headings, blurb</td>
<td>Rt/E3.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the book, understanding narrative, reflecting on reading</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension (text level) Rt/L1.1 L1.4 L1.5 Rt/L2.1 L2.2 L2.3 L2.6 L2.7 L2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of experience of reading book</td>
<td>Engage in discussion SLd/L1.1 L2.2 L2.4 SLc/L1.1 L1.4 L2.1 L2.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing opinion of book</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Constructing a book review (construction, drafting and redrafting, checking spelling and sentence construction, possibly using a PC for word-processing, and possibly to submit the final review on-line). | Write to communicate (text focus)  
Wt/E3.1  E3.2  E3.4  
Write to communicate (sentence focus)  
L1.1  L1.2  L1.3  L1.4  L1.5  L1.6  
L2.1  L2.2  L2.3  L2.4  L2.5  L2.7  
Write to communicate (word focus)  
"a real context in which to emphasise the importance of planning, editing and proof-reading" Core Curric. P.79  
Ws/ L1.1  L1.2  L1.3  
Ws/ L2.1  L2.2  L2.3  L2.4  
Ww/L1.1  L1.2 |
| --- | --- |
| Possible visit to the library  
- make requests and ask for information  
- shown Ask Chris web-site and use to find information on further Quick Reads & other books and reviews  
- shown classification systems and use to find information | Speak to communicate  
Reading (text level) -Use organisational features and systems to locate text and information  
SLc/L1.2  L2.2  
Rt/L2.6 |
Appendix D

Structured reading evaluation
Structured reading evaluation

The statements below are designed to prompt your reading conversations with students at the end of their Quick Reads work, and to help you analyse them. They are not intended to be used as a structured questionnaire.

Justifying the use of ‘statements’
As an evaluation tool, people tend to find these statements straightforward to use; if used as suggested they can give structured information relatively quickly. The danger is that the statements could be seen as ‘leading’ in some way – the respondent could feel obliged to give a positive answer. However, given that there will be limited time available to complete the questionnaire, I thought that a tick box (agree/disagree) with simple statements would be a more suitable way to structure the ‘reading conversations’.

Prompts
If participants do not understand a question or need further information before answering a question, the tutor can use the words in brackets (for example) to prompt them.

Giving additional information
If students want to say more, there will be a further box with each question for further information to support the individual answers. It is recommended that tutors (etc.) try to obtain further information for each statement. For example, it would be very useful to know more about people’s reasons for enjoyment (or lack of enjoyment) in response to section 4.

Each of the statements below can be easily mapped on to the qualitative framework of 5 ‘generic learning outcomes’, as devised by Essex. All areas are included to some extent.

Each statement will have the following options: yes/no, further information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>College:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Values, attitudes, feelings</th>
<th>As a result of this course…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have more confidence in my ability to read.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more interested in choosing books to read for pleasure.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel more comfortable using the library service.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Skills</th>
<th>As a result of this course…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am better at choosing something to read that might interest me</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better at using library resources and facilities (prompt: borrower services, finding books using OPAC, etc.)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know more about working in a team (prompt: group work during course).</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better at putting my point of view (about books)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better at writing (about books)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Behaviour</th>
<th>As a result of this course…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have begun to read books for pleasure.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am reading more books for pleasure than before.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have written a review of a book I have read</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have looked up book reviews on the website</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Following this course...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Further Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I intend to continue to visit my local library.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to read books for pleasure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect to continue to borrow books from my local library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will continue to look up books on the Ask Chris website.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Knowledge and understanding

**As a result of this course...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Further Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am more aware of things I can borrow from my local library (prompt: books, CDs, videos etc.).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more aware of resources I can use in the library (prompt: computers, library catalogue, enquiry desk, photocopier etc.).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am more aware of how the library works (prompt: loans, reservations, joining, etc.).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know about other libraries in my area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know more about the Internet and web sites about reading found on the Internet.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Creativity, inspiration, enjoyment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Further Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you enjoying/have you enjoyed the course? (why?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy reading books for pleasure? (why?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have your reading habits changed in any way since beginning the course? (how?)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you tried new types of book since beginning the course (prompt: science fiction, romance fiction, new authors, poetry, etc.)? (list them)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so, what did you think of the books you tried? (open)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any types of book you would like to try reading in the future? (open)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything you would like us to have done differently? (Open)</td>
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<td></td>
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Appendix E

Quick Reads fiction criteria
Quick Reads non-fiction criteria
## QUICK READS SELECTION SHEET

**FICTION (and Narrative Non Fiction)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessor</th>
<th>Date of review</th>
</tr>
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</table>

### Title

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher/Series</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Diversity</th>
<th>Hardback or paperback</th>
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### Genre

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<th>Readability Level</th>
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<th>Level 2: smog 13-14</th>
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#### Essential Criteria (tick or cross)

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<tr>
<th>Adult content</th>
<th>No of pages 200 or less</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hook in first chapter</td>
<td>Minimum 12 point/clarity of print</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractive cover</td>
<td>No comprehension exercises</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No level on front page</td>
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#### Further Criteria (score 1=poor to 10=excellent)

<table>
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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>The ideal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Structure of storytelling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low complexity (minimal changes of voice, flashbacks, shifting time zones etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td>e.g well known author, TV tie-in, humour, other point of interest (remembering men’s interests too)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ave 15 words length; not too complex in structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paragraphs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not too long (10 lines ideal), well set out pages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapters or sections</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not too long (ideal 6-7 pages). Clear headings. Clear columns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pictures, maps, photographs or other visualisation aids as appropriate relate to the text. Well positioned, identified clearly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Accepted or rejected**
(tick or cross)

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<th>Comments and 3 line review.</th>
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**Rev 12/2002 PTO/....**

### Ask Chris Web site categories:

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<th>Contemporary</th>
<th>Quick Reads</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Science Fiction/Fantasy</th>
<th>Frightening</th>
<th>Sense of History</th>
<th>Humour</th>
<th>Travel the World</th>
<th>Love and Families</th>
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### Formats:

| Audio Book | Large Print |}
|------------|-------------|
QUICK READS SELECTION SHEET
NON FICTION

Title
Author
Ethnic Diversity

Assessor

Date of review

Publisher/Series
Hardback or paperback
Genre

Readability Level
Entry Level 3: smog 9-10 □ □ Level 1: smog 11-12 □ □ Level 2: smog 13-14 □ □

Essential Criteria (tick or cross)
Adult content
No comprehension exercises
Attractive cover
No level on front page

Appropriate layout:
Easy dip-in format
Step by step approach
Other (please specify)

Further Criteria (score 1=poor to 10=excellent)

Criteria Score The ideal

Length □ □ (No. of pages, 200 pages or less)

Interest Factors □ □ e.g well known author, TV tie-in, humour, other point of interest
(remembering men’s interests too)

Sentences □ □ Ave 15 words length; not too complex in structure

Paragraphs □ □ Not too long (10 lines ideal), well set out pages

Chapters or sections □ □ Not too long (ideal 6-7 pages). Clear headings. Clear columns.

Illustration □ □ Pictures, maps, photographs or other visualisation aids as appropriate
relate to the text. Well positioned, identified clearly.

Clarity of print □ □ Good contrast between text, paper, point size 12. Take into account
quality of paper / layout.

Clear contents page □ □ Also clear index, clear glossary if appropriate.

Average □ □
### Accepted or rejected
(tick or cross)

### Comments and 3 line review.

**Ask Chris Web site categories:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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**Formats:**

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<tbody>
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<td>Large Print</td>
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Appendix F

Booktalk review card
What is the book about?

What you thought

Thank you for your review. It will be shared with readers on the award winning AskChris website, which can be viewed world-wide on the Internet.

www.essexcc.gov.uk/askchris
Appendix G

Report on Quick Reads project

From Barbara Phippen, Tutor, to Jenny Main, Librarian, July 2003.
Report on Quick Reads Project

Since your first visit to my classes in November 2002, the Quick Reads project is proving very successful and has made a great deal of differences to two of my classes; ‘Improve your English’ and ‘Everyday Reading and Writing’.

On your first visit in November 2002, when you visited both classes, the project was greeted enthusiastically by all the students - from those with learning difficulties in ‘Everyday Reading and Writing’ learning at Entry levels 1 and 2 and for those working at Entry level 3 and Level 1 in ‘Improve your English’. The students and I were very impressed by the good quality materials - the selection of books, the bookmarks, booklets, leaflets, notebooks and mouse mats. All of these resources are being well used.

As a result of that first visit, students have learned how to find out about a book by looking at its cover, at the illustrations and at the ‘blurb’ on the back cover to find clues as to what a book might be like.

All students chose to borrow one or more books. Some have recorded their reading in the small notebooks and recorded new vocabulary. All students from both classes have submitted book reviews to be entered on the ‘askchris’ website.

By the second visit in February, 2003 most students had submitted a book review. In some cases this involved students writing their own first draft and then with help, correcting and editing it. In other cases, students told me what they thought of the book, then I wrote it down for them to copy out.

In June, 2003, students from ‘Improve your English’ thoroughly enjoyed their visit with you to Saffron Walden library, particularly the chance to learn how to use the computers to write a book review for Quickreads on the ‘askchris’ website. They could see their completed reviews on the internet and were able to have a printout of their review as a record of their achievements. I see this is a great incentive for students to read more and to comment on the books that they read. This opportunity gave a particular focus to the class in the two or three weeks preceding the visit, as students drafted and edited their book reviews.

By the end of the year, I noticed that students were becoming more discerning in their choice of books. They have a better idea of what they like and what they don’t like. Students appear more interested in reading for pleasure and some have brought in their own books that they have chosen themselves, thereby extending their interest in a topic that they first read about with Quickreads.

As a tutor, I find that Quickreads gives me plenty of good quality resources to work with. The project has added a new dimension to my classes, in providing material and incentives for students in discussion, in reading and in writing. It can be used to cover many areas of the Adult Literacy curriculum:-

Speaking and Listening Students have the opportunity to listen to a speaker, to express their opinions about the books they read, to discuss book covers and to realise that they don’t have to like a book or even read very much of it to be able to review it.
Reading  Students are able to read for information and for meaning. They are able to improve their comprehension skills and to increase their vocabulary. Most importantly, they discover that you can read for pleasure and enjoyment.

Writing  Students have been recording what books they have borrowed and when. They have recorded new vocabulary. They have drafted, corrected and edited book reviews or they have dictated what they want to say and have copied down the text.

The only drawback that I would comment on is that occasionally students choose books for themselves that turn out to be unsuitable because of the level of difficulty of the vocabulary.

I asked students from ‘Everyday Reading and Writing’ yesterday, if they had any comments to make about Quickreads.

They said that they would like you to visit the class again, about once a term. They enjoy choosing their own books and receiving the ‘freebies’. They like writing book reviews and having them posted on the website. They would like books in simple language on the following topics:- astronomy, Prince William and ‘Neighbours’.

The students have benefited greatly from having you come as a visiting speaker to the classes. Your enthusiasm for books is infectious and we look forward to working with you again in the autumn.

Barbara Phippen  - Tutor  Improve your English
Everyday Reading and Writing

Saffron Walden Centre

(Jenny Main was the member of the Quick Reads team who visited Barbara’s classes)
Get back to reading with Quick Reads

The Wedding Present
Addie Grove

The story is about Jane who is going to her niece's wedding. Her sister, whom she has not seen for ages, is going to be a bridesmaid. Jane is lonely and empty without her sister. She finds it hard to get into a book this time. I enjoyed this book. It was very much like talking to an old friend."

An Accident Waiting to Happen
Winifred Borrell

This book was about a Private Detective solving a case set in a night club. He claims it was a good book. He enjoyed it very much, and I think that this book is well worth reading."

The Blitz
W.R. Cross

The book is about the Second World War and the things that are going on around her and her family. She says, "It's a great story and easy to read. It explains what's happening so you can picture what's happening in the story."

World War II At Sea
Peter Happlus

The book is about the battles at sea and the things that are going on around the sailors and pilots. The book is good and easy to read, it explains what's happening so you can picture what's happening in the story."

Search

To add your review.

If you want to add a particular sort of Quick Reads, then make your choice here e.g. Crime and Quick Reads. You can also add the author or title to your library. For more information, please see our help section. For more information, please see our help section.

Add your review.

For more information, please see our help section.

http://askchris.essex.gov.uk

01245 284981
Enjoy the story with QUICK READS at your library

Get back to reading with QUICK READS bin at the library

www.essexcc.gov.uk/askchris