

Inside Outside: The Big Book Share Phase 3

Summary of BBS 1 & 2 *Proposals for BBS 3*

1. Background to The Big Book Share (BBS)

The Big Book Share aims

- To enable parents in prison to contribute to their children's reading development
- To enable parents to play an important part in family life outside prison
- To build closer links between families of prisoners and the public library service

The Big Book Share's long-term aims are:

- to build on the public library and prison partnership so that programmes focusing on children's and family reading become an opportunity for all prisoners and a regular and important part of prisoners' family life.
- to make all prisoners and their families aware of public libraries and the services they offer, and confident about accessing and enjoying libraries and their services, from information and IT, to the widest possible choice of reading to support each individual's needs.

BBS is coordinated by The Reading Agency, a library development agency which works to inspire and support libraries in creating the best access to reading for everyone.

Phase 3 aims to take the work on to a new level towards the long-term aims by focusing on work with the whole family, and on developing patterns of library use and support when offenders leave prison.

2. The Big Book Share phases 1 and 2 (2000- 2004)

The original pilot phase was funded by Marks and Spencer and East Midlands Arts in 2000 – 2002 and ran in HMP Nottingham with the added support of 20 publishers. The focus was to develop partnership working between libraries and prisons and to trial how to help prisoners to connect with their families through sharing stories. In June 2002 this Big Book Share project won the Libraries Change Lives Award.

Phase 2 continued and developed this work by extending the work to seven prisons.

- HMYOI Aylesbury & Buckinghamshire Libraries
- HMP Blundeston & Suffolk Libraries
- HMYOI Bullwood Hall & Essex Libraries
- HMYOI Feltham & Hounslow Libraries
- HMP Foston Hall & Derbyshire Libraries
- HMP Hull & Kingston-upon-Hull Libraries
- HMP Magilligan & Western Education & Libraries Board, Northern Ireland
- & HMP Nottingham & Nottingham City Libraries (continuing)

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Trust, this developed different models of practice in different prison contexts, and spread the message about the value of helping prisoners to connect to their families through the Big Book Share. At the same time,

the project generated a number of other local projects and there are now at least 14 prisons nationally involved in Big Book Share activity.

The outcomes emerging from the Phase 2 projects include:

- Improved opportunities for prisoners to connect with their families and improved communications between them
- Prisoners' increased awareness about children's books sharing them with their children and increased awareness of public libraries among some prisoners
- Prisoners' increased confidence in choosing stories, reading aloud, talking about books, making up their own stories
- Prisoners developing a pleasure of reading and developing their own literacy skills
- Prisoners' increased social, communication and interpersonal skills, as well as improved attitudes and behaviour
- Healthy and developing partnerships between library service and prisons, and between the public and prison libraries, and prison departments, including education.
- Increased understanding and appreciation by all of how each service works and what it offers
- Increased and transferable staff skills, confidence and understanding, for library service and prison service staff;
- Enjoyment on all sides

The evidence from Phases 1 and 2 is that the Big Book Share promotes family contact and a shared interest in reading.

"It made me feel like a parent again" (Prisoner, HMP Magilligan)

"I've read the feedback. Brilliant! Keep up the good work." (Governor, HMP Magilligan)

"The Big Book Share has already become an enjoyable and hugely rewarding project for mothers and their children in Foston Hall." (Governor, HMP Foston Hall)

"When I think of the first visit I was jelly.....(now) I think it is one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. I think it is a brilliant project and I learned a lot from it..." (Senior Children's Librarian, Buckinghamshire)

Phase 2 concluded with a report and a national conference held at HMP Nottingham in November 2006, to showcase the good practice and achievements. (See www.readingagency.org.uk for this report and conference programme)

The aim of these is to raise awareness of the value and potential of this approach with prison governors, HOLS, heads of library services, and key organisations working with offenders. Already the work has won support within the participating prisons, all of whom expect to sustain the programme within the prisons to some degree.

Using the good practice and learning points of the 2003-4 BBS work, The Reading Agency has also produced a new **BBS Handbook**.

(For details see:

http://www.readingagency.org.uk/resources/toolkits_checklists_activity/bigbooksharehandbook.html)

3. Beyond Phase 2

Emerging from Phase 2, projects have begun to trial a number of strategies for making the 'inside outside' link from within the prison to the develop use of public libraries by prisoners' families, and by prisoners on their release. The aim here is to sustain the use of books and reading, as a foundation for the family's future.

The OECD report 'Reading for change' published in 2002 identified that *'15 year olds whose parents have high or medium occupational status but who are highly engaged in reading obtain higher average reading scores ... than students whose parents have high or medium occupational status but who report to be poorly engaged in reading. This suggests that finding ways to engage families in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change'*.

Helping prisoners and their families to access and enjoy reading support from their local library thus becomes a key way of supporting the family in the community in the longer term. The aim is to establish patterns of family life which will help to build self esteem and confidence, and thus help to prevent re-offending and other anti-social behaviour patterns by the children of prisoners.

The strategies that have begun to emerge for promoting inside-outside library use have so far included:

- Public library staff taking part in BBS sessions in the prison
- BBS sessions for prisoners which include information and discussion about libraries and their services
- Opportunities to for prisoners and their families to take part in mainstream library activities – eg. the Summer Reading Challenge for children
- Special collections in the prison library, clearly badged as from the local library – eg. parenting books and picture books; leaflets on teenage issues to encourage discussion within families
- Including in prisoners' individual learning plans BBS 'sharing books with children' activity – eg. building into parenting courses 'reading with babies', 'teenage reading'.
- Prisoners using the local authority internet access to learn about library and information services
- Providing prisoners and their families with publicity leaflets from their home/ local library services

Outcomes from Phase 2 will be invaluable in spreading the word and promoting its value. More work is needed however, to move towards two longer-term aims:

- **To build on prison service/public library service BBS partnerships so that:**
 - * **every prison offers The Big Book Share or a similar project**
 - * **programmes about children's and family reading are an opportunity for all prisoners, and an important part of prisoners' family life**
- **For all prisoners and their families to be aware of public libraries and the services they offer – and to be confident about the easy and welcoming access to those services.**

Achieving these is the driver for BBS Phase 3

4. BBS Phase 3

Phase 3 aims to take the next practical step towards the long term aims by broadening the influence of BBS on the whole family, and on patterns of behaviour when offenders leave prison – with the public library as a bridge between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’.

Phase 3 will focus work in **two** prisons, to take the work further and build on the lessons and experience of Phase 2:

HMP Blundeston (male, long term)

HMP Nottingham (male, local)

These prisons have been chosen because they show promise for developing sustainable strategies and they represent different sets of challenges in engaging and maintaining contact with prisoners and their families:

Blundeston provides opportunities to work with long term prisoners, whose families may live at a great distance from the prison

Nottingham provides the opportunity to build on significant partnership work between prison and library service, in making a difference for prisoners who may only be at the prison for a brief period, and whose families mostly live locally.

There will be two main objectives for Phase 3:

BBS Phase 3 Objective One:

To develop and promote a range of tried and tested strategies for Inside Outside working which link prisoners with their families and with local library services, and other community support for shared reading

To achieve this objective we will:

- develop further work on the strategies that are emerging from Phase 2 and
- trial new ways of supporting prisoners and their families to use the library in the community before and after release. These new approaches will include:
 - Partnership with Sure Start/Children’s Centres (this was an aim of Phase 2 but no prisoners’ families lived in the designated Sure Start areas). Also possible links into library work with Parentline Plus.
 - Partnership with probation and resettlement services (National Offender Management Service)
 - ‘Inside Outside’ reading groups, including linking into the national Chatterbooks children’s reading group network
 - Developing the family reading content and activity of BBS, using library resources and reader development activities, in partnership with prison Education departments
 - Networking through ASCEL (Association of Senior Children’s and Education Librarians) to involve all library services in England and Wales, and find joined up ways of communicating with families – eg.the use of a common leaflet about libraries, which could be customised with local details and given to prisoners and their families
 - In depth long term contact with BBS families, via local library services – this may only be possible with a small number of families but the case study work here would be very valuable in assessing long term impact of BBS type activity.

BBS Phase 3 Objective Two:

To develop a new Inside Outside training programme for library staff, prison staff, and other partners eg. Sure Start staff which could then be offered beyond the project prisons, on a national scale

This training would be modelled on the sessions run in all the Phase 2 BBS projects, and particularly on that established in Hull prison, where professional storyteller Clive Hopwood has worked with in partnership with children's librarians, running workshops

- With prison and library staff delivering the project
- With prisoners
- With public library staff and Sure Start staff who work with families in libraries and in the community

The workshops cover

- discussion of children's books and reading
- library services for families and life-long learning
- storytelling and story writing skills.

Prisoners have developed confidence and skills in reading and telling stories on tape and CD for their children, together with a feeling of real involvement in their family and their children's development.

Library staff have increased their storytelling skills and their skills and confidence both in their work in the prison, and in their front line work in public libraries, particularly in developing family friendly services.

The new training package that will be developed for Phase 3 will be designed to build the social inclusion work skills and confidence which are vital for

- Delivering BBS effectively in the prison
- Enhancing the work in prisons to develop a family friendly environment for families making visits
- Making the bridge between the prison and the community
- Ensuring access and welcome to public libraries for prisoners' families, and for prisoners on release

The training will be developed and delivered by: Clive Hopwood (of the Writers in Prison Network) working with The Reading Agency and with Big Book Share champions from existing projects – BBS Blundeston; BBS Nottingham; BBS Hull

5. What will BBS Phase 3 achieve?

The benefits:

- Prisoners connecting with their families and sharing in the development of their children
- This activity becoming part of mainstream practice within the focus prisons
- Prisoners and their families developing increased awareness about children's books and how to share books and stories with their children
- Prisoner and their families developing increased awareness of public libraries and what they offer
- Prisoners and their families demonstrating increased confidence by choosing stories, reading aloud, talking about books, making up their own stories

- Prisoners and their families developing pleasure in reading
- Clear strategies identified for embedding this work within mainstream prison provision, promoted widely via a report with case studies
- The promotion of a range of tried and tested strategies for Inside Outside, including working with prisoners' families, local library services, and partners to support links between the two, working with Sure Start & Children's Centres; Local Education Authorities; DfES Offenders Learning and Skills Unit (OLSU) nationally; Learning and Skills Councils (LSC); National Offenders Management Service (NOMS); NACRO (formerly the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), the probation service; ASCEL; Prison Libraries Group. This promotion would be via a) national seminars b) the BBS training courses c) material on the TRA and 'Their Reading Futures' websites
- Staff from the partner organisations and services more aware of the value of developing prisoners' links with families and society through reading and the use of libraries, and better able to support this through practical strategies and support
- Library services, prison services and other partners developing agreement on the value of this work for effective inside/outside support for prisoners nationally
- More take-up of library services by prisoners and their families on release
- **Library and prison staff** benefiting from BBS training courses and resources when made available nationally in Year 3

Specific outputs

- Targeted numbers of prisoners, family members, library staff, prison staff, and others, taking part in and benefiting from BBS
- 2 interim reports on progress for publication and promotion within prisons and libraries
- Seminar (midway in project) to spread awareness and good practice ideas within prisons and libraries
- Publication of strategies which show how family link working can be mainstreamed in prisons and library services and how inside/outside links can be fostered and developed
- A final report and conference at the end of the third year to agree the key strategies and models, building towards the long term aims
- More prisons offering shared reading for prisoners' families within prisons and on release as part of mainstream work eg as regular part of Education or Inmate activities programme, involving regular staff : By 2008 a further 15 prisons running BBS programmes, in addition to the current 15 in the BBS network.
- More library staff and services mainstreaming support for prisoners' families in the community eg. prison library a key service point in library branch

network and lifelong learning activity ; public library staff working in prison, delivering BBS, as a regular part of their community and social inclusion work; prisoners' families an identified client group By 2008 at least 25 library authorities mainstreaming support work for prisoners' families.

- Training packages for further prison/public library partnerships available as face-to-face training. Self-directed training packages available on line on the national libraries' workforce development website: Their Reading Futures.
- A programme of national training for prison, library and other partner staff on offer for 2007-8, specifically related to inside/outside strategies
- Agreement of key organisations in prison (the Prison Service, the Offenders' Learning and Skills Unit, the National Offender Management Service) and library management (Society of Chief Librarians, Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians, CILIP Prison Libraries Group) on how to build on the project to deliver inside/outside support as part of mainstream activity on a national scale