



# **Stick At It**

**Interim Evaluation  
June 2009**

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## Stick At It! - Background and Programme

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

This project was planned and co-ordinated by **Read On - Write Away!**, an independent literacy initiative, at the request of **Derbyshire County Council's Children in Care team**. The idea came from earlier work called Cool Readers, where Children in Care, in Year 6, used Accelread Accelwrite at home with their carers to increase their reading ability. The use of this programme improved the children's reading ages but it did not alter their attitudes to reading, or their reading habits. The **carers** learned that they wanted to help their children read but lacked the confidence and experience to do this so they asked for more help. The project was extended to cover the whole of Derbyshire when the **Derby City Council Children in Care Team** joined the project as partners. It was also supported by the **Library Services** of **both** the **Councils**. The budget available to the project was £2000; the remainder of the costs were met by contributions in kind from each of the partners.

ROWA! was asked to devise a training programme for carers so they could support their children's reading to increase both reading age and reading enthusiasm. The activity needed to be structured in a way which would be fun for both child and carer whilst, at the same time, having enough challenge to help the child develop and progress. The activity had to be supported by a range of literacy resources and we had to find a way to ensure that every family had access to the right amount of appropriate resources to enable them to complete the programme. These resources and support for the families had to be available across the whole of Derbyshire and throughout the City.

ROWA! created the 'Stick At It', programme, using well known approaches to improving reading, which gave the carers a way of working with their children for 15 minutes three times a week. The 15 minutes were spent reading two different texts

selected by their child and playing word games. The child was given a sticker album in which to collect stickers that were especially designed to encourage positive and specific praise as well as questions to encourage discussions about the books each time they read; over the programme each child needed to select at least 30 books. We asked the Library Services of both the County and City Councils to be involved, and the families were asked to visit their libraries every two weeks to stock up on reading materials. **Library staff** from across the county and city attended an awareness raising session to make sure they were informed about the project and able to assist families. **Children in Care teams** identified children who they thought would benefit from this project and the carers were invited to consider being a part of it. Seventeen families/**residential staff** agreed to take part.

In early 2009 two training sessions were held for the carers and **foster support workers** and, despite this coinciding with a significant snow fall, 16 carers/residential workers took part. Three groups of carers were trained in their own homes because they were unable to attend the training sessions. At the sessions families were given the guide, sticker album and games they needed to complete the programme. The training sessions were held in the libraries and, as part of the sessions, many of the families took the opportunity to become familiar with, and join, their local library. The children's reading ages were tested before and after the 30 sessions with their carers.

From January until June the families worked on the project. Key workers kept in touch with the families to ensure that they were happy with what they were doing. The families were given everything they needed to complete the project but additional information was available on the ROWA! website.

Of the 23 children who began the project 19 completed it and we were able to compare the pre/post reading age scores for 16 of those children. These 16 all showed an increase in their reading ages, the greatest being an improvement of 16 months. We also asked **teachers** to comment on the children's progress. All of the children enjoyed the project and said that it had made them more enthusiastic about reading.

The approaches to reading used by this project are well tried and familiar. What makes the project innovative is that the work was aimed at increasing enjoyment as well as achievement. It was supported across the two councils and was only possible because of the support of all the partners including the network of libraries.

## Key Points from the Evaluation Responses

### Statistics:

- Although the Salford Reading Test was adequate for most children it was not suitable for all - an alternative should be found.
- All children made a gain in reading age.
- More significant gains were made by children in Y5 and Y6.
- More significant gains were made by boys than girls.
- The most significant gains were made where there were two children in the same family following the programme.

### Children's Responses:

- Children's evaluations of the project were overall extremely positive.
- All the children who answered the questions said that they felt they could read better, and identified a number of different ways that they had improved.
- All the children said that they were more interested in reading as a result of the project.
- All the children had enjoyed doing most aspects of the programme, and only 3 identified elements that they did not enjoy.
- Age and gender did not emerge as significant factors in children's evaluation of the programme.

### Carer's Responses:

- The carers felt that the children had really enjoyed the programme. Reading together, choosing books, the activities, getting individual attention and having fun together were all highlighted. There was little identified that the children had not enjoyed.
- The carers all felt that the children's reading had improved and identified a range of different ways that their child read better.
- The carers all felt that their child was more motivated and interested in reading.
- The activities and games were particularly successful with most children.
- The stickers may need some adaptations, particularly for older children, who were less enthusiastic about the stickers.
- The carers did not use the website. Reasons for this may need to be explored.
- Carers found the libraries easy to use and the staff helpful. They all intended to continue using the library.
- The carers identified children's ages as a factor in their enjoyment of the stickers, but otherwise neither age nor gender were identified by carers as significant factors in the success of the project for the children.

**Support Workers:**

- The programme did not have a negative effect within the family.

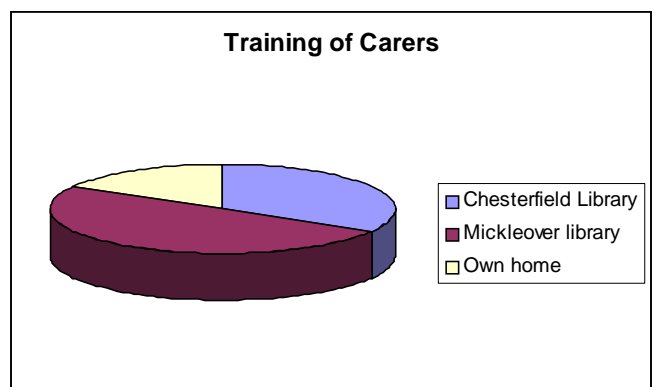
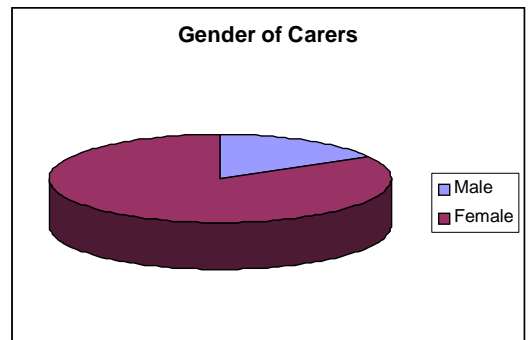
**Teachers:**

- Other literacy support was often being undertaken.
- There are often "gaps" in information between home and school - the one school used the evaluation forms to "moan" about carers and the carers had not told the school what they were doing.
- Some change was perceived within school for all children whose teachers responded.

# Stick At It Evaluation Statistics

## Training of carers:

- 18 carers trained:
  - 3 male
  - 15 female
  - 2 members of staff from a children's home
  
- 15 attended group session for training:
  - 6 at Chesterfield library
  - 9 at Mickleover library - Derby
  - 3 trained in own homes
  - 5 carers planned to work with two children on the programme

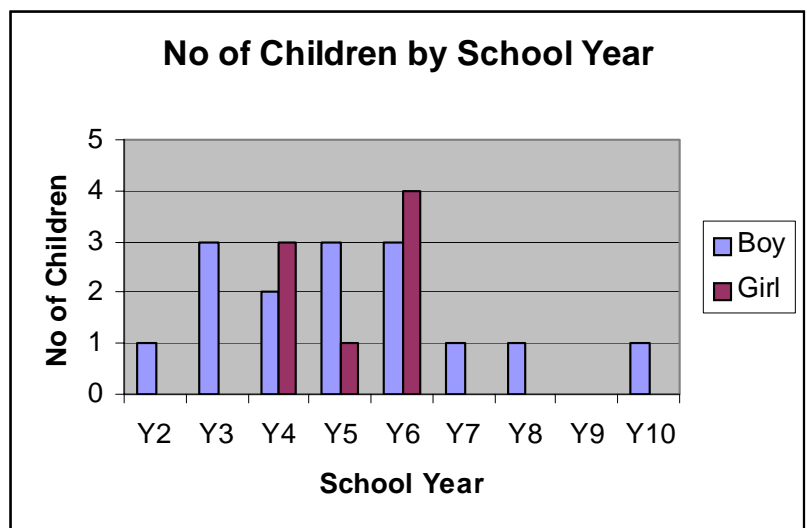


## Children - Start of Programme:

- 23 children began programme:
  - 15 boys
  - 8 girls

## Numbers by School Year:

	Boy	Girl	Total
Y2	1	0	1
Y3	3	0	3
Y4	2	3	5
Y5	3	1	4
Y6	3	4	7
Y7	1	0	1
Y8	1	0	1
Y9	0	0	0
Y10	1	0	1



## Reading Ages:

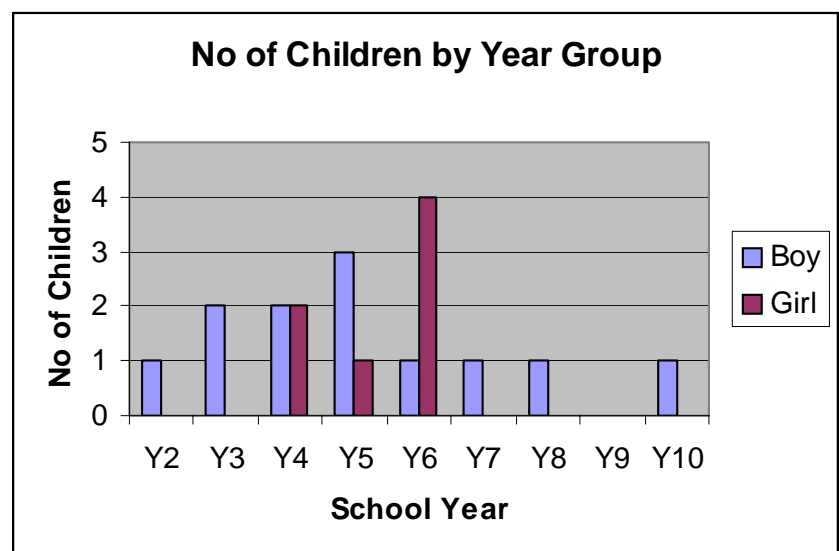
Most of the children were tested pre and post programme using the Salford reading test. The exceptions to this were 1 boy who could only identify 1 word of the test, the Y10 boy who was not tested at all and 1 boy whose reading age exceeded 10:6. A Macmillan test was used with the latter; this provided scores for accuracy and comprehension - the average of these was used to include his reading age scores with those of the other children.

## Children End of the programme:

1 family with 2 boys (Y3 and Y6) did not get beyond week 1 of the programme. The two children at the children's home did not get beyond week 1 of the programme.

## Numbers by School Year:

	Boy	Girl	Total
Y2	1	0	1
Y3	2	0	2
Y4	2	2	4
Y5	3	1	4
Y6	1	4	5
Y7	1	0	1
Y8	1	0	1
Y9	0	0	0
Y10	1	0	1



Overall Average Reading Age at the start of the programme: 8.9 years

- Girls Average Reading Age: 9.0 years
- Boys Average Reading Age: 8.9 years

Average Increase in Reading Age:

- All - 7.6 months
- Boys - 8.0 months
- Girls - 7.1 months

Overall Average Reading Age at end of programme: 9.6 years

- Girls Average Reading Age: 9.5 years
- Boys Average Reading Age: 9.6 years

Smallest Increase: 1 month\*\*

Largest increase 16 months.

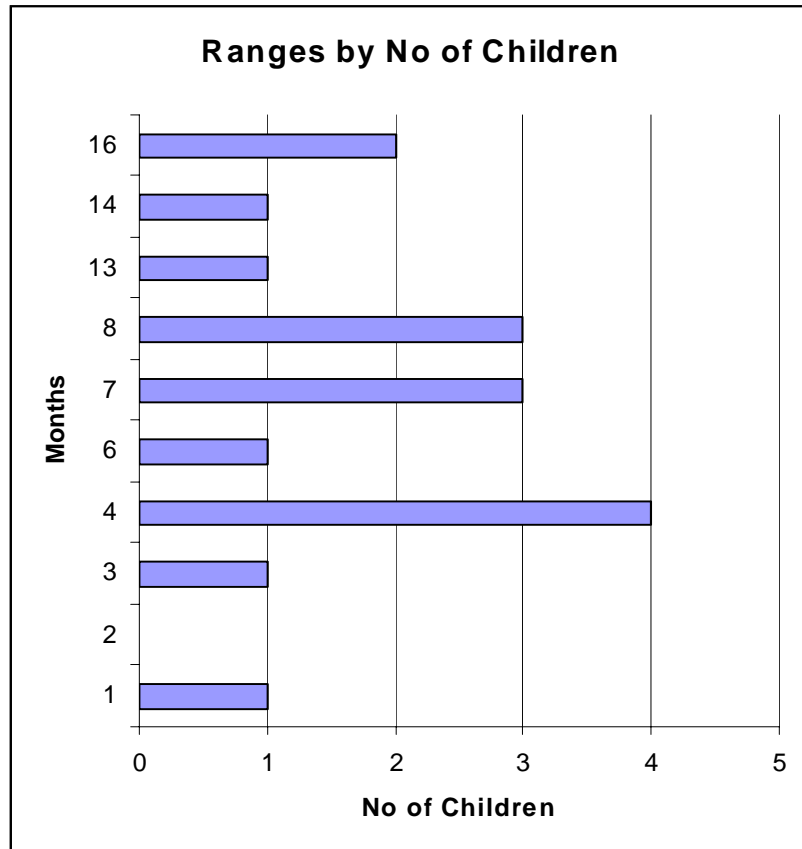
Ranges: Girls 3-14 months

Boys 1-16 months

\*\*The Salford test provided a maximum reading age of 10.5. The child who had improved by 1 month had an initial reading age of 10.4. It is possible therefore that he had made more progress than the 1 month that was reported.

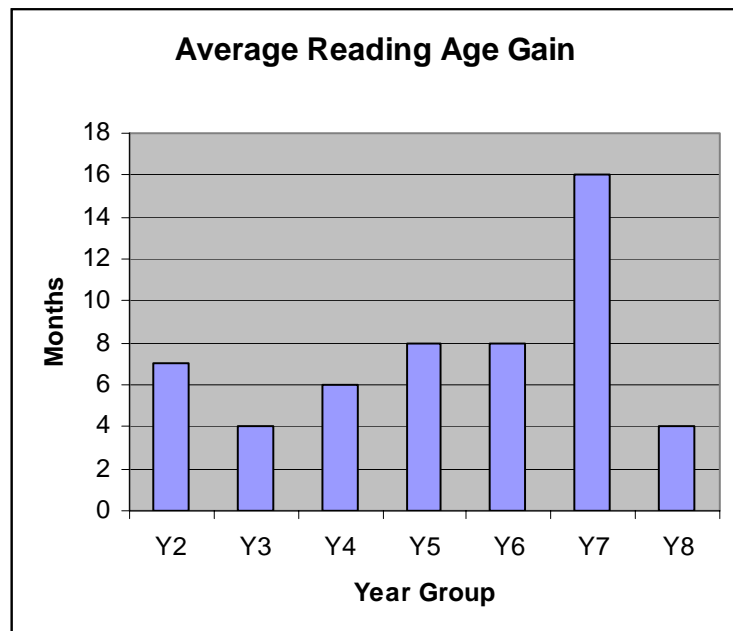
**Ranges by numbers of children:**

Months	No of Children
1	1
2	0
3	1
4	4
6	1
7	3
8	3
13	1
14	1
16	2



**Average Increase by School Year:**

Yr Gp	Months	No of Children
Y2	7	1
Y3	4	1
Y4	6	4
Y5	8	4
Y6	8	5
Y7	16	1
Y8	4	1



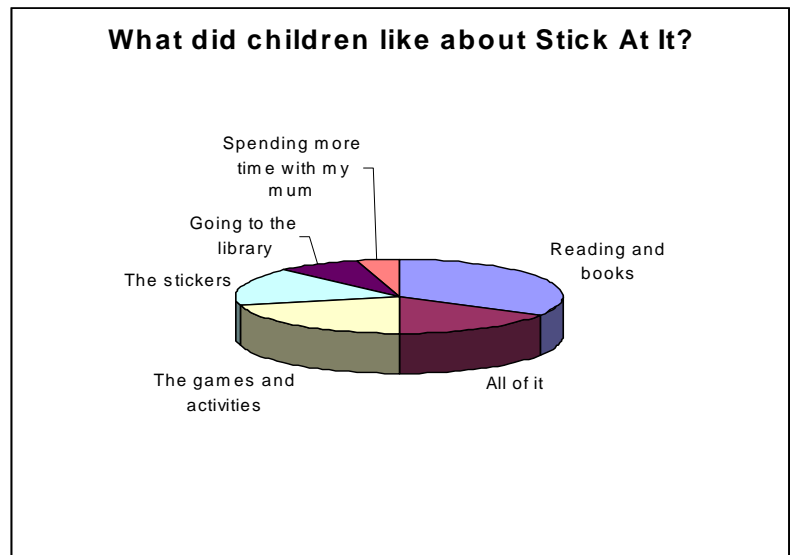
4 families completed the programme with more than 1 child:

	Family A		Family B		Family C		Family D	
	Boy Y3	Girl Y4	Boy Y7	Girl Y6	Boy Y5	Boy Y6	Boy Y5	Boy Y2
Months	4	7	16	14	13	8	16	7
Average	5.5		15		10.1		11.5	

## Children's responses to the questionnaire

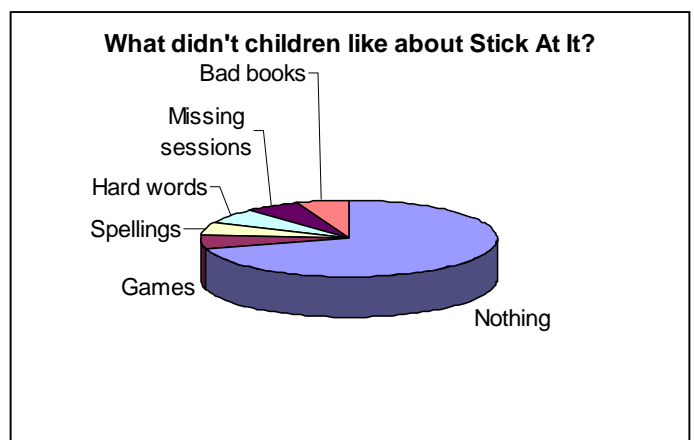
### 1. Is there anything you especially liked about doing Stick At It? (17 responses)

- 8 children said the reading and books.
- 4 said they enjoyed all of it.
- 5 said they especially liked the games and activities.
- 4 said the stickers.
- 2 said going to the library.
- 1 said spending more time with my mum.



### 2. Is there anything you especially didn't like about doing it? (17 responses)

- 12 said there was nothing they didn't like about it.
- The 4 who identified elements that they did not enjoy, mentioned the games, getting the spellings right, hard words, and missing a week of the sessions.
- 1 said "the bad books - not interesting".



### 3. Evaluation of the different elements of Stick At It. (13 responses)

- Sticker Album - 11 children thought it was good, 2 thought it was OK
- Bag - 10 children thought it was good, 3 thought it was OK
- Activities - 12 children thought it was good, 1 thought it was OK
- None of the children thought any of the elements were not good.

### 4. Do you think Stick At It has helped you read better? (17 responses)

All 17 children said yes to this question. They identified a range of ways that they felt they could read better:

- Read more with a greater variety - 4 children
- Understood words better - 4 children

- More confident - 3 children
- Could read more difficult words and break down new words into separate parts - 5 children
- Could spell better - 2 children
- Had gone up a level on the school reading scheme - 2 children
- Could read faster - 2 child
- Found it more fun - 1 child
- More relaxed in the SATs tests - 1 child
- Better at writing - 1 child
- Read more slowly - 1 child
- Read with more expression - 1 child
- Found reading easier - 1 child
- My teacher says I'm getting more confident - 1 child

**5. Do you enjoy reading more now? (13 responses)**

- 12 children said yes they enjoyed reading more now.
- Things that they mentioned enjoying were reading funny things, Roald Dahl, books, everything.
- One child said she never used to read before the project, and another said that he didn't read at school, only what he had to.

**6. Is there anything you would change about Stick At It to make it better? (17 responses)**

- 11 said they wouldn't improve anything.
- 1 said you should do more weeks - maybe 12.
- 4 thought improvements could be made including the following ideas:
  - Stickers for children aged 3 - 8 are OK, but would prefer cards to hold rather than stickers
  - Be able to make your own stickers - there could be some blank stickers.
  - Have more interesting sticker questions - the questions were boring.
  - Make it longer.
  - Make the bag more colourful.
  - Put books and other things in the bag.
  - Give a prize for doing it - like a key ring.
  - 1 suggested a book writing competition.

**7. Do you want to say anything else about the Stick At It project? (17 responses)**

- 12 children did not want to add anything to their answers.
- Other responses included:
  - It's been good.
  - Loved the library. Will carry on with the project.
  - It was fun because of the games, especially the word games.

- It's more fun when you get to do it with your family.
- It was very fun.
- Excellent. I'd like to do it for my life until I've grown up.

## Carers' responses to the questionnaire

### 1. Have you been able to do the programme in the way that you planned? (15 responses)

- 11 carers answered yes although with some provisos such as:
  - Some days were more awkward than others.
  - Took longer than expected
  - It took longer than 10 weeks because of holidays.
  - Unable to do it as frequently as they would have liked.
  - A week was missed due to bereavement in the family.
  - Another child was brought into the family for short stay fostering.
  - We kept a book a bit longer to give more continuity and recognise the words.
- 3 said they had not been able to carry it out as planned. Answers included:
  - Did not visit library as often as planned, time was a factor.
  - The child had some problems which took priority.
  - First they did the games with no reading and then they switched to reading without the games - in response to the child's reactions to the programme.

### 2. What do you think your child has enjoyed most about doing the Stick At It project? (16 responses)

- Reading - 6 carers
- Choosing books/finding interesting books - 4 carers
- Going to the library - 3 carers
- Doing it together, individual attention, relaxing together - 6 carers
- Activities and games - 7 carers
- All of it - 2 carers
- Having fun - 2 carers
- Brevity of the sessions - 1 carer
- Being in control - 1 carer
- Being praised with the stickers and matching them to the story - 1 carer

### 3. What didn't your child enjoy about doing the project? (13 responses)

- 12 carers said their child enjoyed everything, with some provisos which included:
  - Needed to choose the time to do it carefully
  - The child appreciated it when it proved not to be painful
  - Didn't want to do it if he'd had a bad day at school
  - Got a bit fed up at times - rather had been out playing than indoors

- Some aspects that the children did not enjoy that the carers identified included:
  - Didn't like the library.
  - Getting started.
  - Sometimes the formality and structure were difficult. Giving the child some control helped e.g. letting her choose the game and sticker.
  - Doesn't like reading but can manage 15 minutes.
  - Didn't like reading to start with, but later on didn't enjoy the games.

**4. Do you think the Stick At It project has affected your child's reading ability? If yes, in what way? (16 responses)**

- 15 carers said that reading had improved and one said they were unsure. Improvements carers identified included:
  - More confident - 5 carers
  - Reads more
  - Reads faster
  - Corrects self
  - Understands more
  - Knows more words
  - Asks for help when struggling
  - Not so painful to read a block of text
  - Looks at the whole sentence
  - Doesn't guess words
  - Breaks down words
  - More confidence when reading in front of others
  - In solitude puts voices on
  - Reads with expression
  - Attempts longer words

**5. Do you think doing Stick At It has affected your child's interest in reading? If yes, in what way? (16 responses)**

- All 16 carers said that their children were more interested in reading since starting the programme. Ways that interest had increased included:
  - He likes to read now
  - Chooses a wider range of books now, more difficult books, non-fiction books, more age appropriate books - 5 carers
  - Improved readiness to read
  - Enjoys content
  - Sees reading as a fun activity
  - She spent most of her holiday money on books
  - Will now read to herself
  - Already a keen reader but this has reinforced her interest

- Reads comics and checks TV listings but doesn't read books on his own, only if I'm there
- Understands difference between fiction and non-fiction

## **6. Comments on the different elements of Stick At It:**

### **The manual (12 responses)**

- All thought it was good, helpful and easy to follow, good reference point and gave re-assurance.
- One said it was useful for training but they didn't refer to it again.
- One thought it was too long and wordy and had too many choices of activities.

### **The Sticker Album (12 responses)**

- 4 carers said the children loved it.
- 2 said the children liked them initially and then lost interest in them, and stopped using them.
- 2 thought that the stickers needed to be more flexible with words and questions, that it could be hard to find a relevant sticker, that some were too specific and there were not enough general encouragement stickers.
- One thought the stickers were inappropriate for older children (year 8 child) and that older children would respond better to having a record book to record progress.

### **The activities (12 responses)**

- All the carers said that the children had enjoyed them. Comments included:
  - Loved them
  - Mainly used word games
  - She loved them all
  - Used them and made up our own
  - Loved hangman
  - Loved countdown
  - Word games a welcome relief when she didn't want to read
  - We play word games in the car
  - I spy was a big activity that happened even outside the allotted time
  - We used games with words he didn't know
  - Enjoyed them at first and then only wanted to read
  - She liked them all

### **Website (12 responses)**

- None of the carers had used the website.
- One said they would have used it if they had needed to but everything was there.

**7. How often have you used the library? (12 responses)**

- The number of library visits averaged just under 4 ranging from 2 to 6 visits.

**8. How easy was it to use the library, and were the staff helpful? (11 responses)**

- 8 carers said that the staff were very or extremely helpful - even though at one of the libraries the staff said they did not know about it.
- 3 said that they didn't ask the staff for help.
- One said the library was well laid out and they didn't need help.
- Another commented on the good selection of books.
- One carer had used a mobile library.
- One carer said that initially the staff did not know about the Stick At It project, but when they returned the staff did know about it and asked the child what books he liked and helped him find books. The child enjoyed going to the library.

**9. Do you think you will carry on using the library now that the Stick At It project is finished? (12 responses)**

- All the carers said that they intended to continue using the library.
- One said that time was a factor, but would definitely get a stack of books for the school holidays.
- 2 said that they had been going already, although not necessarily regularly.
- One said that they also chose books now and it was a family trip out.

**10. Have there been any difficulties in doing the programme at home? (16 responses)**

- 8 carers said that there had been no difficulties.
- 5 carers commented on the need for good time management - their comments were:
  - Allocation of time with extra curricular projects, contact, Dr Who and other issues
  - Making sure I put time aside
  - Only finding time
  - Other family demands
- 2 carers commented on children being initially reluctant but then taking part happily
- 1 carer experienced difficulties when a child joined the family who was not doing the project and this caused difficulties for both children.

**11. What have been some of the benefits for your child in doing the project? (16 responses)**

- Comments were:
  - Likes to achieve; reading and spelling favourite subject - having time to read together

- Finds it difficult to (show) affection towards me but when we sit down to read he gets in a position where I have to put my arm around him and he has cuddled up and been comfortable
- Recognizing the use of punctuation
- Enjoys one to one time
- X discovering books in the library
- Enjoys reading out loud
- Feeling like she was doing something worth while for herself and others
- She's more confident
- She has become a better reader
- Learning to read regularly and finding it fun
- Knowing how a story should be read ...he will do it himself
- Discovered a wide variety of books
- Finding the library
- Their reading has improved greatly
- X has discovered a love of reading
- Sometimes he didn't want to do it if he had a bad day at school, worked through it and built his self confidence up and enabled him to go to sleep a lot better and send to school with a positive attitude.

**12. Do you think you will carry on doing anything like Stick At It to help with reading? (11 responses)**

- All of the carers who responded said that they would want to carry on with something like this. The specific activities mentioned were:
  - Read a book together a couple of times a week - may do some scrabble
  - Games
  - Carry on with the library
  - Looking at his books together, school books on a nightly basis
  - Using the techniques but not as structured

**13. Have you got any suggestions for how Stick At It could be improved? (10 responses)**

- 4 carers made suggestions with regard to improvements. Some of these reflected comments they had made earlier about the elements of the programme:
  - Something a bit different for older children - the stickers probably aren't needed but a record book to record progress and record books they've read.
  - Hard to choose a sticker that was relevant - there weren't enough of some of them. More of the general encouragement. Questions were too specific. Praise stickers were fine.
  - Looked at book and talked about it but then read another book.
  - Awkward having 7 books over 2 weeks - perhaps 1-2 would be better.

14. Have you got any other comments about the Stick At It project? (14 responses)

- All of the additional comments were positive:
  - Made X more confident - given a discipline on me to assist him in a self guided manner - overall good programme.
  - Come on in leaps and bounds - well worth doing will continue after end.
  - We enjoyed doing it.
  - It seems to work - it's done what we wanted it to.
  - Yes - "Stick At It".
  - I enjoyed it.
  - Lovely idea, really helpful.
  - People should give it a go.
  - Overall a good idea only 1 or 2 minor tweaks.
  - I'd like to volunteer and take it into schools.
  - It's increased my level of reading too!
  - I would recommend you continuing this for other children.
  - We enjoyed doing it and will hopefully carry on with other children.

## Additional Feedback

At the Celebration event we asked both the carers and the children an additional question which is listed here with their responses:

**Carers: What have you learnt from this project that would be of value in working with another child?**

- *Best progress is definitely "little and often". Good games are hangman and making words from lots of letters. Let the child choose the games and the stickers.*
- *The enjoyment of seeing a child's face when he's learning and understanding. This project was simple and yet achieved great things for my child and his capacity to learn. I would love to take it further.*
- *Helping another child to read with confidence and giving them more confidence in themselves.*
- *Shows the child different forms of the written word and gives them confidence in their abilities.*
- *I have learnt there are loads of different things I can do to make reading fun.*
- *The word games were very useful. The stickers made it more exciting. The whole project was of value and it works.*

**Children: What would you tell your friends about Stick At It?**

- *I'd tell them it is really fun and good to do and it really helps you to read.*
- *Stick at It is helpful for those that can't read. Reading is fun with Stick At It.*
- *I read lots of books and played games with words. I liked doing it.*
- *That it's really good to read books.*
- *It is so good and it should go on. It has helped me.*
- *It was fun.*
- *I would tell them that the games are really good.*
- *How fun it was.*
- *Well, I would say I did this programme and it is to do with reading and writing and I achieved it.*

## Support Workers' responses to the questionnaire

Five support workers provided comments; one of these was supporting 2 children in the same family. They all were positive about the idea of Stick At It and none of them perceived it as causing any difficulties or wanted to suggest changes to it. They all mentioned benefits which they felt the children had gained; these included:

- Enjoyed and would continue with library visits
- Reading and confidence improved
- Reading age significantly improved
- Learnt to use the library
- Thrived on 1:1 time with carer (this was child who is 1 of 2)
- Confidence developed in class - speaking up and answering questions

One support worker said that the child had at first seen the activities as homework but this was overcome by the carer.

The support workers from a children's homes attended the training with the intention of supporting two children to follow the programme. This was not possible but their responses were also collected.

They were very positive about the training and thought that the manual was useful. The reasons for the children not following the programme were:

- One child has frequent contact outside of school hours with their parent and therefore was regularly not at the home.
- Time could not be found for the other because of the demanding nature of other children in the home coupled with low staffing levels.

The suggested way of addressing this difficulty is for someone to come in specifically to read with the children on the programme.

## Teachers' responses to the questionnaire

Ten teachers responded to the questionnaire. Five said that they were aware of the programme and that the family had talked about it. In all but two cases the children were receiving additional support for literacy in school. The strategies for this included:

- Peer reading
- 1:1 support (2 children)
- Lexia
- Intervention literacy
- Learning to spell programme (2 children)
- KS2 SAT booster programme
- Working in a group with 1:4 ratio adults to children

Nine of the teachers reported a change in ability over the last 3 months. The comments on this were:

- Marked difference - X could not read when he entered the school in Y4 (now in Y5)
- Improved comprehension (3 responses)
- March/May Salford test done by school showed 15 months gain
- More confident has moved up one sub level. Now keen to read and reading to others
- X has been more confident generally; she volunteered for a narrator role in the school play. Her fluency in reading aloud needs work but is much improved
- A little more accuracy and confidence

Five teachers said that there had been a change in motivation and interest in reading, two said there had not, one said the child had always been keen to learn and one did not comment. Comments about the changes were:

- Keener to read
- Wants to work independently
- Wants to read more challenging books
- Keen to read out in class and read to other pupils
- Listening better and more responsive

One other comment was that one boy had improved his keyboard skills while doing the programme.

## Library Staff responses to the questionnaire

Three of the Derby City libraries, Blagreaves Lane, Alvaston and Mickleover, provided feedback on families' use of the library. The Blagreaves Lane staff were able to build a strong relationship with the child and had talked a lot about what was happening. At Alvaston a family with two children had used the library and the older child had continued to visit alone to use the computers; they also had feedback from one of the carers who remarked on how the ethos and atmosphere in the library had changed and she now felt comfortable there and was keen to continue to use the library after the project had finished.

## Partner Reflections on the Project

### **Sue Owen: Commissioning Improvement Manager for Children in Care, Derbyshire County Council**

Sue initiated this project as a follow on to "Cool Readers". She worked with the team from Read On - Write Away! (ROWA!) who developed the programme, identified children and families who could be involved, shared in the training of the carers, testing the reading ages of the children, provided a link to families undertaking the project, helped collect evaluation responses and contacted the schools attended by the children.

Sue regretted that there were not more Derbyshire children and families involved in the pilot; this was due to the complex issues which govern the lives of children in care and the foster carers. For those children who have been involved Sue felt that it had increased their interest, enjoyment and skills in reading which would in turn raise their attainment and life chances; she also felt that it had enabled the foster carers to develop skills in developing children's literacy which the carers would be able to apply with other children.

In terms of what should happen next Sue said, "I think that we need to mainstream the work so that all children in care at Key Stage 2 and even at Key Stage 3, who are not motivated and confident readers, are enabled to take part. I would like foster carers to feel more confident to support children with their literacy using the ideas included with Stick At It, even if they are not using the Stick At It pack. The work with carers is the most important element in many ways as their skills can be used with other children, but for those carers and children's homes that are unable to take part, it may be a good idea to develop a team of volunteers who could work with the children on Stick At It.

Sue felt that the training for foster carers should be delivered in two parts, with the second session taking place after a few weeks so that carers can share ideas and address uncertainties or difficulties.

### **Pauline Inwood: Commissioning Officer -Children in Care - Derby City Council**

Pauline joined the project on behalf of Derby City Council. She informed and liaised with other colleagues and teams about the initiative. With their support she identified children and families who could be involved, tested the reading ages of the children, provided a link to families undertaking the project, helped collect evaluation responses and contacted the schools attended by the children.

Pauline regretted that the time she had to give to the project was limited. She would have liked to have been able to make more contact with class teachers before, during and after the project. She also suggests that a different reading test should be used to measure impact so that children who have a reading age below 6.2 or above 10.5 can be measured.

Pauline felt that the project had enhanced the corporate parenting role of the council with the children who took part and may have an impact on the children's performance in the Key Stage 2 SAT's and therefore the authority's performance indicators.

In terms of what should happen next Pauline said "This project, or similar, should be expanded to include a larger number of carers and children. Carers who have now been trained should be able to continue this way of supporting reading with these and other children with only 'light' continuing support and some further physical resources. Other carers, with children of appropriate ages, should be trained to deliver this too, so that all of our Key Stage 2 children can experience this reading enjoyment with their carers. I would like to be involved in organising this further roll-out in Derby, given access to the necessary funding and resources."

She was also concerned that, despite being involved in the training and receiving additional support, the children's home was only able to be involved in a limited way. She concluded that, "Thought needs to be given to addressing this difficulty for our Key Stage 2 children in residential care. Should IFA's contribute to the cost of training for their carers?"

**Carol Brooks: Operations Manager (South) Libraries & Heritage Division  
Derbyshire County Council**

Carol co-ordinated the involvement of the Derbyshire Library Service in this project. The only difficulty she felt the libraries faced was that it was impossible to predict which libraries the families would use so that all staff in those libraries were fully briefed about the project. She regretted that pressure of time meant she was unable to be part of the carer training sessions.

Carol felt that the benefits to the Library Service were evident in the enthusiasm for library use which the families expressed in the evaluation questionnaires. These would add to the Service's quality responses. She would like to see the project continued either across the County or in specific areas. She said that the project has "helped a number of families to find out that libraries are not 'scary or silent' places and has helped foster the enthusiasm for reading in young children".

## **Hilary Marshall: Children's Library Services Manager Derby City Libraries**

Hilary co-ordinated support for the project from the city library service by identifying appropriate libraries for participating families to use and liaising with library staff to raise awareness of the project and its objectives and providing them with appropriate training and support. She liaised with ROWA! to organise the training and celebration event in Derby.

Hilary was concerned that quite a few of the families did not make themselves known to staff, possibly because they were already regular users and felt confident about making choices and finding what they wanted, which is fine. She felt that it was an advantage if staff did know who the families were since, "because of the intricacies of our filing systems and the range of sequences for different types of stock, it is easy to miss things and assume we don't have something. Staff can often locate items which customers have missed or get them from another library, so I'd like all families in any future project to be encouraged to at least introduce themselves on the first visit so that staff can ensure that they are using the service in most effective way for them."

Hilary felt that the project had been of benefit to libraries in Derby City by helping to raise awareness of the range of services on offer for everyone and their potential benefits. This is particularly important in helping to achieve the target in the Local Area Agreement to increase library use by 3% to people 16 years and over. By getting the families to visit the libraries it has enabled them to appreciate that libraries have changed a lot over the last few years and now offer far more than just books. She felt that the project helped to address the fact that people often "have outdated perceptions or bad memories from their youth and projects like this give us an opportunity to extend engagement".

In terms of future work of this sort Hilary said, "I would like to see the scheme made available to all who might benefit whether through specific groups or generally through schools. Much more needs to be done out of the formal school environment to provide most appropriate means of support for children who are struggling as well as for those who might just achieve that bit more with a little extra time and attention. Whether that attention comes from parents and carers or committed volunteers, libraries are well placed to offer support by providing neutral, local and accessible spaces with trained and welcoming staff to help both children and their families make the most of their life chances. We are keen to continue our contribution as a key partner."

## **Annette Lowe: Assistant Director Read On Write Away!**

Annette produced the training guide and shared in the delivery of training to carers and partners. She advised on resources and co-ordinated the work across the City and County. She also supported two families undertaking the reading age tests, keeping in regular contact with them and collecting their views at the end of the project. She shared in collating evaluation results and organising the celebration.

Annette felt that it would have been good to have one co-ordinator who worked with the families and stayed closer to what was happening so that help could be given with some basic difficulties in delivering the programme. She felt that it would have benefited from asking the carers to attend two training sessions rather than one to allow time for reflection and sharing successes and solutions to difficulties.

In terms of benefits to ROWA! Annette felt that it had helped to develop knowledge about the difficulties facing children in care and their carers, had developed our relationships with the libraries and had helped in analysing the different elements of the other reading programmes that ROWA! delivers. Annette would also like to find a way to involve children in children's homes in this initiative and also to use this with families in other contexts.

Because she saw the evaluation responses from both carers and children she reflected that "The evaluations from the carers at times said more about them than about what their children thought! They also revealed that things we thought we had covered at the training needed re-inforcing."