



KIRKLEES PLAYING FOR SUCCESS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE READING FRIENDS SCHEME IN KIRKLEES

JULY 2010

This case study demonstrates all the key themes of the ELO and in particular focuses on the advanced themes of

- Measuring the difference- using data for more effective learning by informing our planning and provision based on data and feedback.
- Getting Results- self directed learning is part of the organizational ethos-young people's skills and aspirations are broadened through new opportunities to learn and receive accreditation for learning.
- Managing Improvement- a capacity for managing change through self – evaluation- working together and exploring our strengths as a flexible and adaptable working team with shared values and vision and take on new challenges.
- Achieving a return on investment- a clear and demonstrable return on investment- all stakeholders understand and are part of our shared purpose and vision and this generates further support and income to extend and develop provision.

Context:

Batley Bulldogs Study Centre is now one of 5 Playing for Success centres in Kirklees. Huddersfield Town Study Centre was the first centre to open in Kirklees in 1999, followed by Batley Bulldogs in 2001, Dewsbury Rams in 2003, Thongsbridge/ Topspin in 2007 and the recently opened Huddersfield Giants centre in 2008. The sports represented are football, rugby league, including super league, and tennis and the 5 centres cover the 7 localities of Kirklees. As testament to the success of the 4 more established centres in Kirklees, all have Established QiSS, with Batley at Advanced level, the DCSF funded Huddersfield Giants RLFC in 2008 as the fifth centre.

Playing for Success Kirklees now sits within the Children and Young People's Directorate under Learning alongside School Improvement. PfS in Kirklees is used as a narrowing the gap strategy; all schools are targeted and each centre has a specific catchment area with a focus on FSM and underachievement in relation to national averages amongst KS2 and KS3. Playing for Success is the main study support provider in Kirklees; we are partners with UFA colleagues in delivering study support programmes within the LA.

A number of PfS satellites operate in Kirklees and have been set up to extend provision to meet demand and to enrich and enable young people and give them opportunities to learn in new contexts and settings. Several satellites are based in partner primary schools and at a boxing club and a faith centre.

Local Authority
Kirklees MC

School /Centre
PfS Kirklees

Why the project was set up:

Reading Friends is a reading intervention/ reading improvement scheme in Kirklees that has operated in schools across Kirklees for around ten years, it started around the same time as PfS when intervention strategies to support schools were at their height in government thinking. Managed by FAST LANE, a department under Community Education and Regeneration where PfS was originally housed, the project was funded through adult learning money as the scheme recruited adult volunteers as trained reading coaches. The initiative has 500 adult volunteers and works with over a 1000 children every year and over 50 primary schools are signed up.

In the last few years, under Extended Learning, and as a partner with PfS, the profile of Reading Friends has declined as support from the Extended Learning Manager was minimal. This has led to the current situation where a designated co-ordinator of the project had left and taken early retirement and due to the current economic climate and budget cuts within the LA, the position would not be replaced. The Reading Friends project was in danger of ending completely. The PfS Manager saw this as a great opportunity to manage the project within the PfS umbrella and the advantages were as follows:

- Embedding PfS further in LA strategy- with a designated remit for reading recovery and improvement.
- Raising the profile and scope of PfS through this popular project.
- Increasing the skills of PfS staff and adding an additional string to their bows.
- Giving PfS staff training on improving reading skills to support the literacy work in their sessions.
- Improving and developing links further with our partner schools.
- A mechanism for engaging faith groups and other family/ community groups.
- Adding to our list of mentors through engaging RF volunteers in PfS support.
- Extending our scope into adult learning and training and accreditation.
- Demonstrating hard data impact by using reading tests that reveal a 6 months average gain in reading ages following the scheme.

Target group, delivery and outcomes:

All primary schools are eligible to access Reading Friends, as they do with PfS provision and this adds to our range of services; we are being proactive in the light of the current financial climate by positioning ourselves as a provider of a range of services for schools. Not only does this raise our profile within the LA, it also ensures that schools see that we can offer more than just PfS. In the changing climate it is likely that schools will have more bargaining power and this could be a service we can offer. There are many similarities between the RF scheme and PfS and this is why it fits so well and can be managed and delivered by PfS staff. Underachieving KS2 pupils are selected by the schools and the trained volunteer reads with 2 pupils for half an hour each for 10 weeks during term time; this fits our remit completely. The school has a bank of volunteers that visit the school and each school identifies a RF Co-ordinator as the link person, often an ETA, like the escorts we use in PfS sessions.

The scheme benefits the children taking part in a number of ways:

- The child's reading skills improve and interest in reading for fun increases.
- The child's confidence increases and self-esteem as they have one to one attention and mentoring support.
- The child's reading age on average improves by 6 months, bringing them

- closer to the expected reading age for their year group.
- The child receives a gift book as a reward to keep at the end of the 10 weeks and is celebrated in a school assembly for their efforts.

The scheme also benefits the adult volunteers in many aspects:

- Retired people, parents, students are all RF volunteers so there is a variety of people.
- Parents can feel engaged in their child's school.
- Retired people feel a sense of purpose and community engagement.
- Students and unemployed adults can add this volunteering to their cvs as their skills develop.
- Some RF volunteers have gone on to become classroom assistants from the skills they have developed.
- Community cohesion is achieved by the school ensuring that members of the community are engaged.
- Volunteers can seek OCN accreditation for their volunteering.

Resources and management:

There is a small amount of funding linked to the project and provided from the Adult Learning budget to ensure quality assurance of the project in terms of the learning experience for adults. This will fund the PfS administrator to act as RF administrator for 2 days. This role will require CRB checks to be completed, books to be ordered, databases of volunteers to be updated and a newsletter to be produced and contacting of schools and volunteers to arrange training events. This is a pivotal role in the project running smoothly and luckily, our administrator used to work on this project and is familiar with the various systems and strands to be dealt with.

The PfS Co-ordinators and their staff at each centre will carry out the training of the volunteers as RF trainers, having been trained themselves in reading improvement skills. The volunteers receive training and then meet up once per term for top up training and to support each other as a group and share ideas and thoughts on the project. The school co-ordinators will also attend get together at the centre closest to them to support their role and share good practice. This will increase our valuable links with schools and will raise the PfS profile. Celebrations are held for the volunteers at the end of each year and we will incorporate these into our PfS celebrations as a joined up approach and with the view that many volunteers may become PfS volunteers when they see the centres in action and their engagement with similar children.

There is also a RF committee that acts as a fund raising arm to buy gift books for the children participating as a thousand books a year are needed. In terms of raising the PfS profile, this committee is very high powered with its patron being the Huddersfield MP, Barry Sheerman and its members including the deputy mayor. Both have attended PfS celebration events and both are very supportive of the PfS remit so adding RF to the PfS portfolio can only be a bonus in terms of publicity and profile.

Successes and areas for development?

The main strengths of the project being managed by PfS are the shared vision and purposes of the schemes and how closely they link together. Both are strategies to raise attainment and narrow the gap and both are extremely effective at meeting these outcomes. The impact of both programmes is demonstrable and valued by schools in supporting raising attainment. Both programmes raise self esteem, self belief and motivation to learn. The individual attention the children receive is fundamental in both programmes to the successes made as RF volunteers almost act in a mentoring role and are seen as role models to the children involved. The other important aspect is the role of the volunteers as adult learners and how they engage in a quality learning experience that develops their skills and self belief in their own value as a mentor. In addition, community cohesion and community engagement are achieved through adults from the local community engaging with the young people and understanding their needs and issues. The recent White paper outlined the need for schools to look beyond the school confines to access learning opportunities and both PfS and Reading Friends adhere to this concept.

For PfS and its sustainability and being embedded within the LA to be seen as a strategy for school improvement and narrowing the gap and raising attainment, taking on the Reading Friends project is a key area for development. It lends itself to adult learning opportunities, possibly linked to funding, and broadens our offer. We hope to position ourselves as a provider of a range of services with a range of skills and this is another string to our bow. The PfS/ RF administrator is undergoing City and Guilds training as an adult learner provider and this can be used as a stepping stone to access a Certificate of Education to become an adult teacher/trainer.

Conclusion:

Reading Friends is a popular scheme in Kirklees and engages over 1000 primary underachievers and 500 adult volunteers. The impact the scheme has is measurable and impressive as on average reading gains are 6 months per child. The scheme has a high profile with significant members and is widely recognized as an effective strategy for improving reading skills and developing children's confidence and skills and self belief. It shares the same vision and values as PfS and therefore being managed by PfS will ensure a joined up approach with demonstrable gains for raising attainment and narrowing the gap. PfS staff will become adult trainers and will develop their skills and the PfS offer for the future. Funding opportunities could arise from the involvement with adult learners and underachieving children and the fact that the scheme promotes community cohesion. With the current climate, the PfS remit needs to develop and broaden and Reading Friends is an addition to a high quality offer of services to promote a host of strategies to raise achievement.

Future plans:

- Enlist PfS volunteers as Reading Friends to broaden their skills.
- Develop partnerships with Reading Matters, a KS3 reading scheme to share ideas and skills.
- Offer Reading Friends style sessions to children attending PfS sessions.
- Seek funding around developing reading skills.
- Engage with faith groups and community groups to offer training.
- Review the Reading Friends process and develop and enhance.
- Promote the scheme through our website and E newsletter and publications.

- Enlist more schools, particularly PfS partner schools.
- Recruit more RF through our volunteer routes and network.
- Engage in reading support training and development work.
- Train PfS staff in our region- other regions.
- Target secondary school partners to join the scheme.

Case Study Author:

Jeanette Palmer, *PfS* Kirklees Manager

Quality in Study Support
Oak Lodge
David Salomons Estate
Broomhill Road
Southborough
Tunbridge Wells
Kent TN3 0TG

Phone: 01892 507657

www.canterbury.ac.uk/qiss

