

**An Evaluation of a Pilot Study of a Literature Based Intervention
with Women in Prison**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

This study investigated whether ‘Get Into Reading’, a literature-based intervention, which has been established in other custodial and non-custodial mental health settings, transposes to a prison context and to women prisoners specifically and whether any of the benefits to mental health and well-being identified in custodial and non-custodial contexts elsewhere were reported by women prisoners. The study was conducted through a partnership between researchers the Centre for Research into Reading, Information and Linguistic Systems (CRILS) at the University of Liverpool, HMP Low Newton, Durham, and The Reader Organisation (TRO), a nationally recognised centre for the promotion of reading and positive mental health. The project was approved by the Northern and Yorkshire Research Ethics Committee.

The Study

The project established two weekly reading groups, in which participation was voluntary: there were no exclusion criteria. As women entered and left the prison over time, the opportunity to take part in the research study was offered to all women who participated in the Get Into Reading programme at any time during the 12-month data collection period. Data was collected through: researcher observation of the reading groups; interviews and focus group discussions with women participants; interviews and focus groups with staff working at the prison; interviews with the Reader in Residence leading the reading groups; a review of records kept by the Reader in Residence of the reading group sessions. Additional data on the participants’ age, literacy levels, admission and release date were made available to the research team by HMP Low Newton.

Findings

The self-reports elicited in interviews and focus group discussion, and the evidence of the Reader in Residence records, attest to the benefits of the reading group intervention in respect of participants’ well-being. The study found that there were four significant areas of improved well-being:

1.Social Well-Being

Prison staff noted that the reading group tended to attract more solitary and less socially engaged women to attend the reading group. It also encouraged greater integration of women on the Personality Disorder wing and those who struggled to find acceptance within the larger prison culture. Within the reading groups, participating women reported experiencing a sense of support and inspiration from the experience, as well feelings of enjoyment (often visible in humour and laughter), and an increase in personal confidence. This was verified by the evidence of the Reader in Residence record which demonstrated strengthened ease and responsiveness to the literature in the course of the study. It was observed that the shared reading and discussion promoted respect of others' views and tolerance of conflict or disagreement as well as enhancing social and communication skills and encouraging a form of 'conciliatory assertiveness'. A new pattern of social activity was also seen to emerge from the reading groups, since attendance was not based on personal friendship but on preference for the activity and a sense of reading-group membership.

2.Emotional/Psychological Well-Being

The activity of shared reading-aloud – of listening and of discussing – resulted in a form of 'disciplined relaxation'. A number of the participating women spoke of the reading group as a form of 'escape', in the sense that personal worries recede. Others described the reading experience as a 'bubble' – an atmosphere of complete mutual absorption and concentration, offering protection both from the distraction of the environment or personal anxiety, and from self-consciousness. A crucial element in the creation of this atmosphere was the relative freedom from formal authority or discipline, in an activity not regulated by prison or therapeutic programmes. Participating women regarded the activity as a form of self-expression unique to the prison, and that regard was verified by the voluntariness of the women's attendance despite competing appointments and their commitment without expectation of material reward ('getting something out of it without wanting something from it' as a member of the prison staff put it). The voluntariness of the activity – including the absence of pressure to contribute, read aloud or discuss, except as chosen by the participant - was clearly key also to the motivation to participate: this is something

participants 'do for themselves'. Participants also reported that anticipation of the reading group was an important point of reference – keeping them going during long periods of lock-up, or offering a life-line when they were coping with too much time on their hands. The evidence of the Reader in Residence record shows strong mental and emotional engagement on the part of the women participants with the fiction and poetry. There were repeated instances of the literature spontaneously eliciting specific and vivid autobiographical memory or moments of recognition, as well as of the reading activity encouraging a capacity (sometimes demonstrably progressive) for understanding personal and imagined experience from a range of viewpoints. These are possible areas for future investigation of the mechanisms by which shared reading might help produce deep-level and lasting psychological well-being.

3.Educational Well-Being

The reading group activity attracted women across the range of literacy and educational achievement - high achievers (for whom there is often little provision in prison) as well as low achievers. For some participants reading proved a new form of enjoyment: for others it was a habit pleurably renewed or rediscovered. The comment 'We *read* books here' was very telling of the level of concentration and attention the reading activity demanded and received. The reading groups were observed by the Library staff to further the prison Library's mission and aims of enhancing the role of reading in participating women's lives. Specifically, the shared reading aloud model helped those who lacked the reading skills for books they were keen to read. More generally, the reading activity extended the scope of women's lives, widening their sense of possibility.

4.Organisational Well-Being

Prison staff noted how participants responses to the reading group activity – their willingness to tackle 'difficult' books, for instance - challenged some of the staff expectations of prisoners. Staff were particularly appreciative of the voluntariness and motivation of the prisoners in respect of the activity – which freed them from the obligation to 'make prisoners do things'. One important consideration in this context is that the motivation for joining the group was very varied, suggesting that the reading group attracts such commitment from a wide range and meets multiple needs. A further critical element to this motivation and its ancillary effect is the

corresponding motivation and commitment of the Reader in Residence, who inspired trust and loyalty in the participants and, in his regard for the human material at work in the participants and in the literature, offered a positive model of interpersonal relationship.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Yes GIR transfers to custodial settings and has the capacity to extend from Library's and units to the wings, association rooms and other parts of the prison: the intervention is flexible, adaptive, and fluid.
2. Yes, women engage in GIR voluntarily. Given creation of the right assurances and support, and provision of appropriate reading material and Reader, the women will engage. Group composition can be challenging, however, and the integration of older women with young offenders, and of prisoners with particular backgrounds and histories, needs to be managed to ensure people are able to engage.
3. Yes GIR helps to improve well-being for women for whom little else can. It enhances self-esteem, and encourages a sense of achievement and self-worth, and of social participation and even friendship. GIR gives participants something else to think about, that they can carry with them back to the wings, and many support their participation by starting and/or continuing to engage with the Library in order to read in their rooms, under the momentum and energy provided by the reading groups.
4. GIR could be further rolled out on the basis of this study. Women were concerned that if they were moved to another prison GIR would not be available to them. It was their view that GIR should be available to them wherever they were, and on their release into their communities
5. Further areas for research are strongly suggested by the findings of this study, in particular: how to engage staff in GIR; how to engage with younger women, particular those serving shorter sentences; identifying what books and poems 'work' with different groups of women and why; discovering the psychological mechanisms and processes which help to improve well-being.

Evaluation of a Pilot Study of a Literature Based Intervention with Women in Prison

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Criminal Justice Service (CJS) and National Health Service (NHS) Policy and Priorities

Since the publication in 1999 of ‘The Future Organisation of Prison Healthcare’ and the National Service Framework for Mental Health’, there has been clear government policy that prisoners should receive the same level of health care, including mental health care, as they would in the wider community. The most recent reviews of mental health services and prisons welcomed the increase in recent years in in-reach services which are locally commissioned and which acknowledge the needs of particular groups. The reviews have stressed, however, the need for increased investment of resources in prison (mental) healthcare as ‘prisoners remain more socially excluded than all other groups in society, with a higher risk of suicide and self-harm, plus a higher level of serious mental illness than the general population’ (Brooker et al, 2007) as well as early intervention and diversion for offenders with mental health problems (Bradley, 2009). These findings resonate with the Department of Health’s current emphasis upon increased provision, extended range and improved quality of effective psychosocial interventions in mental health care (‘No Health Without Mental Health?’, 2011). There is a need to identify and extend the range of effective mental health interventions for prisoners, including prisoners with personality disorders, and find new ways of engaging those unable or unwilling to engage in existing therapeutic interventions.

Suicide and self-harm, together with personality disorder, have been identified as key research priority areas in prison mental health with a particular need for evaluation of psycho-social and individual interventions and a review of ‘what works’ in managing Personality Disorder (PD) and preventing self-harm and suicide (Proceedings of Prison Health Research Programme Board, 2005). Personality disordered offenders are of particular concern to mental health professionals in terms of, for example, their

likeliness to re-offend (Steels et al, 1998) and their non-recovery from long-term depression (Viinamaki, H., et al, 2006). Deliberate self-harm represents a significant health problem in secure settings in its own right – it is one of the most common reasons for emergency admission to hospital resulting in considerable healthcare costs – and is of considerable concern to mental health professionals as a risk factor for completed suicide (Hawton et al, 1998).

1.2 The Get Into Reading model

The Reader Organisation (TRO) is an award-winning charitable social enterprise working to connect people with great literature, and each other. Its mission is to create environments where personal responses to books are freely shared in reading communities in every area of life. Beginning life as a small outreach unit at the University of Liverpool in 1997, it was established as a national charity in 2008 and has pioneered the weekly ‘read aloud’ model at the heart of their Get Into Reading Project (GIR), which currently delivers over 300 groups each week, in a range of health and social care settings, across the UK.

The Get Into Reading model is based on small groups (2-12 people) coming together weekly, to read short stories, novels and poetry together aloud. Regular breaks in the reading encourage participants to reflect on what is being read and how it might relate to their own lives. They interact in relation both to what is happening in the text itself (in terms of narrative, characters, place and setting, themes, description, and, above all, specific language) and to what may be happening within themselves as individuals (in terms of reflections on personal feelings, thoughts, and experiences for example), responding to the shared presence of the text within social group discussion.

GIR offers social and individual benefits in developing both a deep sense of human selfhood and a more emotionally-sharing small community. The key elements of the model, as identified in a recent pilot study investigating the benefits of the GIR in relation to depression (Billington et al 2011, Dowrick et al 2012) are:

- Literature: Rich, varied, non-prescriptive diet of serious literature, including a mix of fiction and poetry.

- Read Aloud: Making the literature ‘live’ in the room and become accessible to participants through skilful reading aloud. Ensures everybody can take part regardless of levels of literacy, educational, ethnic or cultural background. Readers can control their own involvement, contributing, as much or as little as they like according to mood and confidence levels.
- Shared: The read aloud group model of GIR, and the sharing of personal ideas and feelings in response to literature, is inclusive of everyone, knitting people together in both the reading experience and a supportive community.
- Weekly: Meet every week, offering valuable continuity and structure for people whose lives may be chaotic or empty.

TRO’s trained project workers deliver the intervention. TRO project workers attend bespoke *Read to Lead* training which grounds them in necessary skills and understanding for shared reading facilitation. Thenceforth, their practical experience is combined with an on-going programme of staff learning and development. TRO’s creative enterprise employs over 50 project workers across the UK, and has trained over 600 individuals to deliver shared reading groups. Key professionals and agencies around the country recognise the importance and expertise of TRO’s work. Dr David Fearnley, Royal College of Psychiatrists ‘Psychiatrist of The Year’ (2009), described Get Into Reading as ‘the most important development in mental health practice in his career’.

1.3 Reading and Mental Health

The Reader Organisation has been delivering Get Into Reading in a range of secure settings for the last four years. Working in partnership with the Offender Health Team Liverpool PCT, the DH/NOMS Offender PD Policy Team, Greater Manchester Probation Trust, HMP Manchester, HMP Kennet, the A B Charitable Trust, The Trusthouse Foundation, The Pilgrim Trust, Offender Healthcare - Central London Community Healthcare, Greater Manchester West NHD Mental Health Trust, it is now running 15 weekly reading groups in HMP Low Newton, HMP Hydebank Wood, HMP Styal, HMP Liverpool, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, HMP Manchester, HMP YOI Reading, HMP YOI Hindley and HMP Kennet. GIR has been delivered in mental health secure units for the past 5 years. TRO’s long term partnerships include Mersey

Care NHS Trust (the first GIR group in Ashworth Hospital started in February 2008), Greater Manchester West, West London. TRO is also running groups in secure settings in three new trusts – Calderstones (medium secure, learning disabilities), Cheshire and Wirral Partnership (medium, Learning disabilities), and Lancashire Care (medium secure). Since 2008, TRO has provided nine groups in High Secure units (five Ashworth, four Broadmoor) covering the range of provision (high medium and low dependency) and eleven groups in Medium Secure units, including men's, women's, young peoples' and Learning Disabilities wards.

Published studies have focused on the effects of shared reading in community settings (Hodge 2007; Billington, 2011), and in health care and rehabilitation centres (Robinson, 2008; Davis, 2009). Observed and reported outcomes (Robinson, 2008) for participants have included: being 'taken out of the themselves' via the stimulation of the book or poem; feeling 'good', 'better', 'more positive about things' after taking part in the group; valuing an opportunity and space to reflect on life experience, via memories or emotions evoked by the story or poem, in a convivial and supportive environment; improved powers of concentration; a sense of common purpose and of a shared 'journey'; increased confidence and self-esteem; sense of pride and achievement; valued regular social contact; improved communication skills. GIR group members have often reported a sense of the book itself as a voiced human presence in the group and its emotional centre. GIR's read-aloud model encourages 'interpersonality' both with the book, and its author and characters, and with other group members. (Davis, 2009) The pilot study on reading and depression (Billington et al 2011; Dowrick et al, 2012: see above) identified distinct, yet reciprocal mechanisms of action, the most significant of which were the roles of the **literature**, the **project worker** and the **group** process, which together helped participants to discover new, or rediscover old or forgotten modes of thought, feeling and experience. Related research suggests that the inner neural processing of language when a mind reads a complex line of poetry has the potential to galvanise existing brain pathways and to influence emotion networks and memory function. (Davis et al, 2008, 2012). A recently published study on Get into Reading's shared reading model in prisons has shown how fiction and poetry demand the kind of continuous mental agility and

moral and emotional flexibility that few activities (even including other arts-related ones) can demand with equivalent directness and immediacy (Billington 2012).

1.4 Borderline Personality Disorder and self-harm

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), as a syndrome, and the self-harming acts that are often symptomatic of it, are characterised by emotional and interpersonal disturbances, impulsivity and distress intolerance, and low self-esteem (usually associated with adverse childhood/family experiences and/or untreated depression) (Hawton & Rodham, 2006; Links et al, 1999; Minzenberg et al, 2006). Drug intervention has proved unsuccessful in preventing repetition of behaviour in women who deliberately harm themselves since such behaviours are often determined by life experiences rather than by somatic foundation or organic disease (McElroy, 2004). The few qualitative studies that have been conducted have concurred in the view that deliberate self-harm is an externalised way of representing diffuse intrinsic distress (Bennett et al, 2003; Coggan et al, 1997). Arguably, there are a significant number of self-harming patients who require psychological help rather than psychiatric treatment.

Although most studies of effective psycho-social interventions are too small-scale to be conclusive or generalisable, the evidence is strongest for the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural and dialectical behaviour (as against purely behavioural) therapies and promising results have emerged from trials of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and derived therapies adapted to the needs of parasuicidal BPD patients (Davidson et al, 2006; Low et al, 2001; NICE, 2009; Weinberg et al, 2006). These interventions target emotional and interpersonal deficits found in BPD – emotion regulation, interpersonal effectiveness and ‘mindfulness’ (focusing on present experience thus reducing tendency to dissociate).

Low self-esteem is invariably identified as central in suicidal ideation and in self-harming behaviours. The basis of low self-esteem is a perceived gap or dissonance in the self’s estimation between aspiration (ideal self) and achievement (real self) often

exacerbated by relationships which mirror rather than correct poor self-image. While the generic aim of therapeutic care in relation to self-harmers will be to ‘close the gap’ between the real and ideal self’ (Mann, 2004), aspects of the prison environment are not conducive to strengthening self-concept and positive self-regard among a population which suffers more self-stigma than other groups, reflecting intense labelling processes, repeated hospitalization, frequent interpersonal difficulties and visible scars (Rusch et al, 2006).

The CBT therapies which have reported some success in reducing self-harm rates in BPD patients have focused on developing conscious awareness of triggers, recognition of distortions (such as feeling completely useless), and the replacement of irrational thoughts by coping and survival beliefs. Self-report of women with a history of multiple self-harm attests to lack of validation of unique personal experiences, a sense of not being heard or of their stories being regarded as unimportant, as strong contributory factors in recurrence of self-harming incidents, together with feelings of isolation and despair (Sinclair and Green, 2005). Treatment of the underlying illness, often (though not invariably) depression, remains vital in prevention of suicidal behaviour and recent research on management of depressive symptoms has emphasised the importance of a sense of value, purpose or comprehensibility in respect of one’s self and life and the capacity to ‘tell a good story about oneself’ (Dowrick, 2009).

1.5 The Model of Reading Therapy

The specific and original model of reading therapy developed by The Reader is one which

- tends to elicit personal narrative as a matter of course, in response to literary stories and poems
- offers a conscious language in which individuals can recognise their own experience, helping them to ‘tell a new story’ about themselves even as they become more able to articulate implicit ones.
- enables both a sense of recognition and a degree of critical distance and perspective.

Moreover, published findings on reading and health suggest that the act of reading together a literary text not only harnesses the power of reading as a cognitive process: it acts as a powerful socially coalescing presence, allowing readers a sense of subjective and shared experience at the same time (Hodge et al, 2007). These outcomes resonate with recent research findings on the importance of mindfulness, verbalised recognition and reflective self-agency in reducing incidents of self-harm.

Shared reading groups offer a way to combine an exploration of the private self with more outward-facing, social elements of identity. Reading groups allow readers to share experiences of a book, and to test out their personal responses against those of other people. They are dynamic encounters where people negotiate and re-think meaning in the process of talking and listening to one another. In line with courses designed to help rehabilitate prisoners on parole, such as ‘Enhanced Thinking Skills’ reading groups create ‘an inquiring and critical sociability’ (Turvey and Hartley, 2008).

The benefits of the reading group have the potential to extend beyond the group to the wider prison environment as members pass books to other prisoners with whom they can also share responses. Moreover the reading group may help prisoners to recover a sense of community with, and a continuing stake in, the larger society they will re-join, thus helping to counter some of the effects of incarceration and contribute to the rehabilitation process.

2. THE STUDY

2.1 Research Questions

This research aims to inform the following research questions:

- How do women prisoners at HMP Low Newton engage voluntarily with the literature-based intervention, ‘Get Into Reading’?
- What are the reported benefits of ‘Get Into Reading’ for women prisoners at HMP Low Newton?
- How do staff working at HMP Low Newton engage with and identify any benefits of ‘Get Into Reading’ for women prisoners?

2.2 Aims

The aims of the project are to:

- (1) Assess whether ‘Get Into Reading’, a literature-based intervention, will transfer from mental health settings into a prison context.
- (2) Investigate the efficacy of a literature-based intervention with women in prisons and identify areas for further study.
- (3) Contribute to the emerging body of research relating to reading in promoting mental health and well-being in women in prisons with high levels of need.

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- (1) Assess whether the ‘Get Into Reading’ model, which has been established in other custodial and non-custodial mental health settings, transposes to women prisoners.
- (2) Explore whether any of the benefits to mental health identified in custodial contexts elsewhere transpose to this prison context and are reported by women prisoners.
- (3) Report on the degree to which Get Into Reading represents a sustainable form of intervention in HMP Low Newton, and an intervention that would be of benefit for women prisoners in other prisons.

2.4 Ethics

The project was approved by the Northern and Yorkshire Research Ethics Committee, and conducted on principles of good research governance in line with the ESRC Framework for Research Excellence and the BSA guidelines for the conduct of ethical research (ESRC, 2012; BSA 2002).

2.5 Data Collection

Two weekly reading groups were established by the Reader in Residence, who had been trained by The Reader Organisation, at HMP Low Newton. Participation was voluntary. There were no exclusion criteria; however, in practice there were a number of factors that acted to exclude some women from participating in the project, and these are detailed under Section 3.3. The reading groups took place in different

settings within the prison: firstly in Primrose Wing; moving to the Learning Shop and Library, which was where more of the data for this study was collected; with one group moving to an association room close to the Library towards the end of the study period.

The project involved, consenting women, taking part in “Get Into Reading” activities in HMP Low Newton. As women entered and left the prison over time, the opportunity to take part in the research study was offered to women who participated in the Get Into Reading programme at any time during the data collection period from 1 July 2011 to the end of June 2012.

Additional data

Age Range

Thirty-five women were recruited to the reading groups. The age range was 18 to 62, with most participants within the age range 30-50, thus: under 20 = one participant; 20-30 = six participants; 30-40 = twelve participants; 40-50 = seven participants; 50-60 = eight participants; 60-70 = three participants.

Education

Literacy levels were recorded for thirty-four of the thirty-five participants. Seven participants were classified at Adult Literacy Level 2, (National Curriculum level 6, GCSE Grades A-C); over half participants (twenty-one) were classified at Adult Literacy Level 1 (National Curriculum level 5, GCSE Grades D-G); five participants were classified at Entry level 1 (National Curriculum, levels 3-4 – expected of an eleven year-old) and one participant was classified at Entry Level 2 (National Curriculum level 2 - expected of a seven year old).

Attendance figures

Group 1: Of the fourteen participants recruited to Group 1 (Monday), five were at Low Newton for the duration of the reading group (41 sessions). Of these, two attended 100%, one attended 50%, two attended 25% of reading-group sessions. In the course of the study: six participants were released after 7 months, 5 months, 3 months, 10 weeks, 8 weeks, 7 weeks, having attended 21, 18, 11, 9, 7 and 4 sessions respectively; three participants were transferred after 5 weeks, 4 months and 7 months, having attended 5, 7 and 2 sessions respectively.

Group 2: Of the sixteen participants recruited to Group 2 (Tuesday), eight were at Low Newton for the duration of the reading group sessions (35 sessions?). Of these, one attended 70%, one attended 60%, three attended 30%, and three attended 15% of the reading sessions. In the course of the study: three participants were released after 7 weeks, 5 weeks, 4 weeks, having attended 7, 5 and 4 sessions respectively; five participants were transferred after 9 months, 4 months, 10 weeks, 6 weeks and 4 weeks, having attended 31, 13, 12, 4 and 4 sessions respectively.

Groups 1 and 2

Five participants attended both reading groups. Three of these were long-term prisoners, attending 16 sessions (1, Mon; 15, Tues), 16 sessions (2, Mon; 14, Tues) and 9 sessions (6, Mon; 3 Tues) each. In the course of the study, two prisoners were released after 6 months and 2 weeks, having attended 13 sessions (9, Mon; 4 Tues) and 3 sessions (1, Mon; 2 Tues).

The figures give some evidence for correlation between maturity, education levels and attendance. But the participants with the highest and lowest attendance levels had the same literacy classification (Level 2) and were relatively close in age (49 and 57); and a long-term prisoner in the Monday group (age 49, Literacy Level 1) attended the same number of sessions (9) as a long-term prisoner in the Tuesday group (age 20, Literacy, Entry Level 3). The correlation between residence at the prison and weekly attendance is very strong.

Observations

The researcher (JR) observed each of the two reading groups over a total of seven visits at intervals throughout the research period. These observations included not only observing the women in the research study participating in Get Into Reading groups, but also the wider environment, including the Library and Learning Shop and areas of the prison setting. She sat with the groups, but did not take part in the readings or discussions, and made some written notes both during and after the sessions (Emerson *et al.* 1995; 2007). Particular attention was paid to the ways in which the women engaged with the reading sessions, such as their attention and engagement with the text, and their levels of participation in the activities, such as joining in the discussion and volunteering to read aloud. As well as the verbal communication, note was also made of any non-verbal communication, such as body

language, gestures, their position relative to others in the group and the level of eye contact, and also evidence of enjoyment, such as laughter and smiling (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Geertz, 1993). A parallel record was made of JR's emotional response and any interpretations to what was going on in the groups and all the initial 'jottings' were later written up into more complete fieldnotes, or field records, in the days following the visit (Atkinson, 1990; Goffman, 1989).

Interviews and focus group discussions with women participants

As the women participants were required to return to their rooms after the reading group, there were limited opportunities either to talk to the women one to one, or in the group. On one occasion, the groups finished early to enable JR to talk to the participants about their experiences about the group, and what they thought they and others got out of their participation. The Reader in Residence was not present during the discussion, although it took place in the Library/ Learning Shop and so what was said was audible to others in the at the time. It was sometimes possible to talk to the women immediately after the groups, although often they were recalled to their rooms before the groups had finished, making it impossible for further discussion. It was possible to talk to some women on the Wings in association rooms, with the Reader in Residence within sight, and in Primrose, JR talked to women with a member of staff monitoring a video (only) link to the room. Other conversations took place while JR was in the Library/ Learning Shop, when some of the participants in the groups were able to take a break from their jobs to talk to JR, and JR with the Reader in Residence also visited Education to talk to some women during their art class. Therefore while some of these conversations took place in more or less private settings, others were in places where other people were studying, working or browsing for books, and so were not confidential. However the women seemed comfortable talking in these varied settings, and the researcher was careful to adapt the line of questioning to suit the context, and so did not introduce overly personal topics in places where the participants could have been overheard. These conversations and interviews took place at different time points with women taking part in the research study to enable them to describe why they chose to engage with Get Into Reading and how their participation may have influenced other aspects of their life. These issues are referred to again in more detail in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this report.

Interviews and Focus Groups with staff working at the prison

There were some opportunities to have conversations with staff about the project, but they were limited as the staff were often working and any exchanges were necessarily brief and talked about topics that could be discussed in more public settings. At the end of the project, there was an opportunity to carry out interviews and two group discussions with people working at the prison, including custodial staff, clinical staff and learning, education and Library staff, involved in Get Into Reading or with particular knowledge of some of the women who take part in GIR. In these interviews and focus group discussions JR asked participants to talk about any observed and reported outcomes for women prisoners taking part in the research study; about their own engagement and attitudes toward effectiveness of Get Into Reading as an intervention and its sustainability in HMP Low Newton.

Interviews with the Readers in Residence

To understand how the groups were working, who got involved, and their experiences of running the reading groups, JR also had longer discussions with the Reader in Residence. These conversations on each of the seven visits, each of which spanned at least two days, took place both inside and outside the prison and some conversations were audiorecorded.

Observations and Review of R in R logs

A review of the R in R's logs of the literature covered in the reading groups and the participant's (anonymised) records of their responses to the fiction and poetry was carried out by JB. A full record of the fiction and poetry which participants read in the course of the reading groups' sessions can be found in Appendix 6.

3. FINDINGS FROM THE OBSERVATIONS, INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Reflections on the research

Limited opportunities to talk to the women

JR visited the HMP Low Newton on seven separate occasions from July 2011 to June 2012, with each visit lasting at least two days. The timing of these visits was

constrained by both JR's availability, the Reader in Residence's availability, and to some extent by what was going on in the wider prison at the time. However it was possible to arrange all visits at mutually convenient times and there were no serious obstacles to the timing of visits. The duration of the visits tended to be around 2-3 days, enabling not only observations of the groups, but some time to talk to the Reader in Residence and to other staff, and crucially, the women participants, as there was often no time to do this immediately after the groups. As the Reader in Residence was the primary escort for JR, and only worked for a maximum of two days a week on the project, visits to the prison outside these days required JR to be escorted and supervised at all times by a member of the prison staff, and so this had to be negotiated with the prison some time in advance to make sure staff were available to cover this additional activity.

The available time to carry out the research was also limited by a number of other factors. Observations of the groups were necessarily limited to the times when the women were actually taking part in the reading groups namely one period each week either in the morning (approximately 9am to 11am) or for two hours in the afternoon. As one of the groups was scheduled for Mondays, some were cancelled as Bank Holidays, and could not be rescheduled for another time during the week. The women had other appointments or activities scheduled at the same times as the groups, and while some of the appointments were compulsory, others were made for the women, some of whom were reluctant to complain and ask for their appointments to be rescheduled. This meant that during the research visits, the composition of the group varied from week to week.

As the women knew in advance when JR would be visiting the prison, it may have been that some women did not want to talk to her, or take part in the groups on those dates, because they knew that she would observe them and might ask to talk to them. Even though it was made clear to women that they could refuse to let her observe the groups and did not have to talk to her either in the group interviews or individually, they may have preferred not to join the group for that week, or even during the year of the research period. Therefore, given the brief and sporadic nature of the research visits, there were some people who attended the groups during the year that JR never

met and/or never spoke to individually. It was also the case that people who said they would like to talk to JR were not able to, as either there was no time during her visit to schedule them in, or they might have an appointment, or not be well. Some of the reading group sessions were interrupted by an early 'movement', that is, women were required to leave the Library/ Learning Shop and go back into their rooms immediately, so the groups were unable to finish reading the poem, or even the book, and JR was unable to talk to them as a group or individually. On other days, the group would finish on time at 10.30am, or earlier in the afternoon, and as movement was on time, there was around half an hour when JR could talk to one or more participants.

In addition to their time spent in the Reading Group, which was recognised as work for the participants, the women's time was taken up with other activities, including health appointments, visits, getting their canteen, education and other work, mealtimes, and spending some time each day locked up in their rooms. Therefore the women's 'free time' outside their rooms was very limited and valued by the women as an opportunity to wash clothes, make phone calls, shower, socialise and wash their hair, all of which represented important and meaningful activities to the women. As part of disciplinary procedures, some women's free time was restricted or withdrawn, and as they were only able to attend approved activities they were not available to talk to the researcher outside these times and sometimes were not even able to attend the Reading Groups. On the times JR left the Library/ Learning Shop to talk to women during their association time, she needed to be escorted either by custodial staff or (more frequently) by the Reader in Residence to the wings, and so time was further limited, depending on other commitments of the staff. JR was not permitted to talk to women in their rooms, and depending on the person and setting, some encounters had to be in view of a member of the security staff, who may or may have been close enough to overhear what was said. Other interviews and conversations took place with a member of staff able to see, but not overhear the conversations.

As a result, most of the research interviews were carried out in the Library, where JR could talk to any women who either worked in the (orderlies and cleaners), were involved in the Learning Shop or related activities, or who were visiting the . As it was important to ensure that the women really did want to talk to JR, the Reader in

Residence would make the first approach and ask if women would be willing to talk to JR, either individually or in pairs, and only once they had consented, did JR then approach them and again ask them if they were happy to talk to her. While there were always member of staff present in the room (custodial and/or non-custodial) talking in the Library/ Learning Shop seemed to be acceptable to the women, who seemed largely unaffected by the noise around them and the presence of other people, and the interviews themselves were very like other interviews JR has carried out in other more private settings outside the prison, and the women seemed to be able to create for themselves some form of privacy within these environments and talk relatively unreservedly. However given the public setting and the norms of prison life which meant women learned not to disclose too much to others, the researcher was careful to not to touch on too many personal issues and the women were understandably wary about giving too many details about themselves. While some women were candid and open about some aspects of their lives than others, even these women tended to give few names, dates or specifics that might have enabled people or events to be identified.

All of the observations of the Reading Groups were recorded as contemporaneous fieldnotes, with JR talking notes during the groups and writing additional notes at the end of each group. As JR was not able take a digital recorder into the prison, most of the interview data collected for project is in the form of research notes, mostly written up after the interviews. Therefore, the only quotations included in the section below are from the recorded interviews and group discussions with staff which were carried out towards the end of the research period.

This part of the research aimed to inform the following research questions:

- How do women prisoners at HMP Low Newton engage voluntarily with the literature-based intervention, ‘Get Into Reading’?
- What are the reported benefits of ‘Get Into Reading’ for women prisoners at HMP Low Newton?
- How do staff working at HMP Low Newton engage with and identify any benefits of ‘Get Into Reading’ for women prisoners?

The findings are grouped under headings that represent the main themes from the project. The following convention have been adopted to indicate where the data are from observational notes (OBS); from conversations about the research with staff (CONV STAFF), with women (CONV WOMEN); from interviews with staff and women (INT STAFF, INT WOMEN) and from focus group discussions with staff and with women (FG STAFF, FG WOMEN).

NB. In the presentation of quotations from the focus group discussions, participants are denoted as P1, indicating the first speaker *in that section*, with P2 and P3 as the following speakers. However these designations are temporary, and so *only* refer to the specific sections of text, and so P1 in one extract from Focus Group 1, is not necessarily the same speaker as in a later extract of data from the same group discussion. The Reader in Residence will be referred to as ‘Reader’ throughout this section and the term Prison Staff will be used to refer to all staff working at the prison, including custodial staff, library and learning shop staff, to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

3. 1 The reading group

All of the women described their experience of taking part in the reading groups as ‘relaxing’, variously saying that it was the sound of the Reader’s voice when reading, or the story itself, or the fact that they were sitting down in the Library talking about books that helped them forget about any other worries or issues they had and helped their experience of prison life recede from that moment. Taking part in a Reading Group was described as representing a big step by around half the people interviewed for this study, many of whom had not read for a long time, and some of whom experienced difficulty reading. Not being able to read, or read well, is a common problem for many women in prison, and a member of the prison staff commented:

Yeah, yeah, you do, you get people who haven’t read or people who have (sighs) I don’t know if they haven’t read, but they haven’t read in a very long time, you get people who can’t read INT1

Taking part on such a group was outside the previous experience of many of the women, and the few that had taken part in conventional reading groups where a book was read prior to a group discussion contrasted this with the Get Into Reading model,

of taking it in turns to read aloud. While some participants found it hard to express what in particular they liked about hearing a book or poem read aloud, they commented on how few opportunities they had ever had to simply listen to something that they were interested in, without anything demanded or even required from them in return. The staff seemed to be aware of this, and in a focus group discussion contrasted the women's opportunities for voluntary engagement with art, poetry and reading with the opportunities they had had outside prison, and how they believed that the women saw these activities as 'totally separate' to other things they were required to do in the prison:

P1 I think it's probably very different isn't it?

P2 I think yeah because most of the work that they have to do is behaviour-led, so it's given as a task to them to complete and it's very much a carrot and stick of getting through the sentence, whereas something like that isn't, it is volunteering, it's something that they can find that they're interested in. Women especially tend to not know what they're interested in because they've been so busy outside being ten other things that when they get in here and they find that they've got time and they've got the thought process to sit down and think, what is it that I really want to do with my life and what am I interested in? And it tends to be the art work, the poetry, the writing, the sewing, those types of things that they haven't had an opportunity to do before. So it goes alongside that. But it is, yeah, it's not, it's totally separate I think from everything else that they have to do. I don't think there's anything else where they can sit in a room, very small numbers as well, so you haven't got 20 people all vying for somebody's attention, you've probably got half a dozen and they love that, they love time, there's nothing better than giving them the time. FG STAFF

Some women remembered being read to at school, although for some school generally had not been a happy time, and while some women had completed secondary education and enjoyed it, for the majority, reading aloud in secondary school had been an ordeal, and something they often had sought to avoid [CONV WOMEN, INT WOMEN]. Some women said that they still had difficulty reading, and were observed to read in a slow or hesitant manner and found many words unfamiliar. During interviews, some women recounted secondary school English language or literature lessons where they had been humiliated or silenced by unsympathetic teachers and/or sniggering class mates. Others had refused to read in these settings, and for some, shyness and self-consciousness had made them stop reading aloud, even if their teachers had encouraged them to do so. Other people had

stopped attending school from around age 11-13 years and so their opportunities to take part in classes, even those they enjoyed, were limited.

While these women still found reading aloud in the Reading Groups a challenge, many had started to read aloud, some many weeks or months after attending the groups, and described how they had found this environment both supportive and inspirational. One of the focus groups with staff reflected on how they had observed not only the lack of pressure on the women in the group, but also the participation of one woman in the group who experienced some difficulties in reading who had quickly engaged with the group and to their surprise, had started to read aloud:

P1 Yeah, and I think it's a good thing if somebody isn't a very good reader neither because like you say they can go along and they can read, like listen to the book and almost, they're being read to without having to say, I can't read, there's just no pressure is there?

P2 No.

P1 There doesn't seem to be pressure. And we've got a lady who came, and she's come to it right from the very beginning when it was on Primrose itself and she continues to go now really religiously, without being made to, so she hasn't missed any unless there's been a crossover in her timetable, and she's got a really quite a serious speech impediment, and when she first came to us, would not, there is not a hope in hell you would have got her to read out anything, even a sentence in front of anybody else. And yet now, and I think not only the reading group's helped with this, but I think it certainly has helped, she gets up and speaks in front of people, she'll get up and do kind of role play stuff in front of other people ... she will read out from books. And I just think that's an immense change in quite a short period of time that I think the reading group undoubtedly has contributed to.

JR So it's supporting other things that you're doing?

P3 Yeah.

P4 Yeah, I think the other women as well, they've been supportive of her as well thought haven't they, because you'd expect some, you know especially with the group of women that we're working with, that maybes they wouldn't be as tolerant but they have been really supportive of her ...

P5 You'd expect some kind of giggling but [talk over each other]

P6 As far as I'm aware that hasn't been a problem?

P2 No.

P4 No.

P5 There definitely wasn't when it first started when it was on the unit. FG STAFF

Hearing other people read, particularly if they sometimes were unable to read fluently, or with expression, and even hearing the Reader falter over an unfamiliar word, gave

them the space they needed to try reading for themselves. A few women had not yet started to read aloud in the groups, but were very happy to hear others read aloud, and when asked if they might consider reading aloud in the future, all thought that they might at some point, find themselves wanting to read.

In contrast to secondary school, for most of the women, primary school was a time they were happy to recall sitting on the floor of a classroom, often at the end of the day, hearing their teacher read to them. Some could recall the stories that they had been read, almost the sound of the teacher's voice, and they clearly associated this recalled early pleasure with their current enjoyment of the Reading Group. Most of the participants had been read to as children, although for some, this was more sporadic and perhaps had not lasted for as long as they would have wished. Often it was one or other of their parents who read to them, and for one participant, her father's reading to her was part of her continuing love of books, and she still wrote to her father about the books she was reading while in prison, as throughout her childhood they had continued to talk about books and pass on recommendations to one another. Two participants could not recall being read to as children, with one participant saying no more about this, with another simply saying that hers was not that kind of childhood (INT WOMEN).

For a few women, listening now was a reversion to their childhood, but for others it was a new form of that enjoyment, very much for them as adults. One member of the prison staff reflected on why she believed the Reading Group engaged the women's interest and why they enjoyed it so much:

It's almost like narrative therapy because there's just, I mean it is, to be fair, it's just huge, because when you tell somebody a story about your life or whatever, you're telling them a story, it might be a true story but you're telling them a story and I think there is a huge amount of kind of therapy in that. And then you don't, maybe the magic is because they don't realise that, I don't know... I think, I don't think people realise and I don't realise to be honest, but I do believe that when someone tells a story and there's something about that verbalisation as well, as much as I hate reading out loud, there is something about that verbalisation. Now, I'm tempted to say maybe it takes them subconsciously back to childhood when maybe your parent read a story, but I'm sure there's a lot of women in here who have never had a story read, who have never had that type of parental love. So maybe it just takes them to replace that they didn't even know existed. And that all sounds very romantic but I do believe in the power of story, so you know ... INT STAFF

These reports of the ‘relaxing’ dimension of the women’s participation in the group discussions and interviews were further evidenced by their behaviour while they were in the group, as participants did not appear to be nervous when sitting down before the start of the group, but instead took their preferred seats in an unhurried and often sociable way, sometimes talking to other people in the groups or elsewhere in the room, sometimes sitting quietly. While some groups were more lively and some participants were clearly distracted and fidgety, in other groups, there was hardly any movement during the entire session. In an interview, a member of staff who was present in the Library during the reading groups sessions commented:

‘I can see how it works, I can see them just sat there and relaxing and I think [Reader]’s voice, he’s got a very soothing, he’s got a lovely voice when he reads it aloud, and he likes doing it, he reads, sometimes he’ll say, ‘Oh can I read you a poem?’, and I love it, it’s really nice. But I think just to be in that, that sort of bubble, that gentle, the voice and the language, I can see how, I can definitely see how it works... I’m thinking of one woman who goes into like a trance when it’s one and just listens and absorbs it all. Mm, it’s really nice.’ INT STAFF

While people tended to sit forwards at the start of the group if there was any news or discussions, they mostly leaned back in their chairs for much of the reading of the novel, with some slightly sprawled. However there were limits to their relaxation, for example the Reader intervened when one woman almost sprawled off her chair by asking her to sit up, similarly on a few occasions when women leaned into one another they were asked not to do so, as there were evidently still boundaries and levels of discipline that needed to be maintained within that environment. Others sat far forward with legs apart, their arms resting on their legs, leaning over the text, apparently absorbed in their reading.

In addition, the ways in which the women responded to requests to read and questions about what they had read or heard also suggest that they were comfortable and fully engaged with the activity, as they would answer in their own time, sometimes raising point of questions themselves, and at times the discussions were punctuated with laughter. Laughter was present at every group, variously stimulated by the text, and/or the ensuing discussion. These bursts of laughter often attracted the attention of other people using the Library and Learning Shop, suggesting that laughter might not only

be loud but unexpected in that context. This point was discussed at one of the focus group discussions with staff, and JR asked the extent to which humour and laughter were present in wider prison life:

P1 It can do ... humour plays a big part, I think it's one of the things that nearly everybody, you can laugh about your one particular thing, like everybody can laugh about can't you?

P2 I think you don't see it a lot in, unless you go onto something ... Like you don't see a lot of the women on the wing just walking about and being quite humorous and laughing, I think there has to be something ...

P1 There has to be a reason

P2 ... which obviously the reading group has. I do think that there are other things that create that [opportunities for laughter] in prison but ... Yeah, I think undoubtedly that's one of them. FG STAFF

For the women, notions of relaxation through engagement with the reading group related to having 'left the prison behind' (CONV WOMEN), and this was a form of 'escape' for some women. During their interviews the women reflected on the pressures of living in the prison, and how every day there were events and people to endure or negotiate, the possibility of fresh challenges or dangers, hopes and fears about their custodial sentence, and for many women, the constant worry of what was happening to their children. Far from being safe and predictable, for some women prison was a hazardous place, and the strain of living there caused feelings of stress and tension. For many people, boredom and lack of occupation during the times when they were locked in their room was also a real problem, as while this could be a time where some people switched off and relaxed, perhaps reading, or watching television, or by drawing, for a few people it was the time when all their problems and worries were heightened and they found it very hard to make the time pass, and two women referred directly to their history of self-harm. Taking part in the Reading Group offered a real distraction for the women, enabling them to forget all of these concerns for the duration. This possibility was recognised by the staff, one of whom reflected in a focus group:

P1 I think it's got to be a brilliant distraction because whatever's going on in your mind about the story, about the characters, about the way [Reader]'s reading it, about being in the , takes you away from any of the other rubbish that you'd been thinking about for the rest of the morning. So yeah I absolutely think it's ...

P2 And I think I can relate to that actually in some respects because I don't have time to read like generally, however if I'm on holiday I love nothing better

than to ... And I can read lots and lots of books. So I suppose they've got, it's something that they've got the time and ... It's like real escapism.

P1 Yes.

P3 And another thing which I think would be a major factor is there's no white shirts in there, there's no discipline staff in there. So they're seeing [Reader] as an outside person, not an officer. FG STAFF

The speaker in the extract above mentions the absence of 'white shirts', discipline staff, present in the Library and this a point that will be returned to in a later section, as the environment of the Library was recognised by the women and staff (see extract below) as contributing to their feelings of relaxation and escape:

P1 Sort of, when I worked on the F Wing, it was held on there originally in the association room, it was fairly well attended by the lasses on there.

P2 The lasses that were going I think enjoyed it. There was about four or five regulars wasn't there? And they always went. It was always good feedback.

P1 The environment, the difference, that's what they liked, it's an escape from the mundane ordeal of prison life isn't it? It's just a bit of escapism.... FG STAFF

3.2. Reading, books and poetry

In interviews and conversations, many of the women described how taking part in the Reading Group had helped them have a new and very positive relationships with books. For some women, books were 'found' as they had never previously read for pleasure, or thought about books at all. Other women recalled how at some times in their lives they had read for pleasure, or at least enjoyed reading books at school, but had somehow lost the habit of reading. For some women, this often attributed to a change in their life circumstances, such as leaving school, or leaving home, or becoming interested in alcohol or drugs, and for many women, it also related to transforming relationships, so a relationship with a partner, marriage and/or having children. These life changes had meant that some women had only read magazines for many years, and many had preferred to watch television than read. A few of the women I spoke to still only enjoyed the books read in the groups and didn't read outside the groups, even in their rooms when they were alone, but for others, taking part in the Reading Group meant that they had a new love of reading, and described how they would now spend more time reading in prison than they had for years.

For a minority of women, books were continued as sources of pleasure and information, and as they had always read books, they continued to read in prison. One woman, who was educated to degree level, reflected why the Reading Group was so important to her, describing how the prison regime is geared towards people who have few qualification and skills, and so doesn't set up a range of activities for people who already have had an education and have social skills. Other than art classes, during her long sentence, she didn't feel that the prison had offered her many opportunities to take part in activities for pleasure or development, and prior to this group she had spent most of her time volunteering to support the needs of other prisoners. In common with another (educated) participant, she described how taking part in the book group had been a wonderful opportunity for her to take part in a stimulating activity that not only gave her pleasure, but also helped her regain a 'sense of self' that she had felt in danger of losing during her long sentence. Another woman described how she had always read, but only particular books and mostly history, and had initially been uneasy about the choice of books and short stories selected by the Reader, but had been surprised by how much she had enjoyed them. This had also been noted by the prison staff, one of whom during a focus groups discussion confirmed that this woman was now much more open in her choice of reading:

... Because I would imagine that the person we were talking about in particular would read a lot about history, just loves history and would read loads about history but not read a lot of anything else it didn't seem. Whereas now, I think she would pretty much read anything that was suggested. FG STAFF

Therefore, in common with the other women participants, and irrespective of their previous reading practices, women who had always read also found that taking part in the Reading Groups in the prison had transformed or heightened their experiences of reading. These readers also described a new appreciation of reading through hearing the books read aloud – by reading each word and discussing in the group made them read books differently when alone. As one participant said, during one of the routine group discussions about the text, with real emphasis: 'We *read* the books here'. A member of staff also reflected how important it is seemed to be to read the text aloud in the group so that others could hear and comment, but also as an aid to understanding:

I don't know why that is, but there's definitely something about verbalisation and I think the therapy, if you can call it that, comes from the verbalisation and the kind of sharing of ideas. INT STAFF

Reading was repeatedly described during conversations and interviews as an activity of pleasure and enjoyment, an important form of meaningful occupation, and the anticipation of the weekly groups was an important point of reference for some people, who described it as 'keeping them going'. Reading was described also as a form of 'release' that led to increased self esteem. It also gave the women something to think about and to talk about sometimes outside the group, and one participant described it as '*something the prison couldn't touch*' and another participant similarly reflected how the Reading Group was something that the prison didn't 'regulate' in the same way as other activities and so taking part for her was a form of freedom and self expression. The idea of personal choice and freedom associated with participation in the Reading Groups is returned to in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

During the research period, the two groups variously read together short stories, some of which were read and discussed in a single session, and longer texts and whole books. Some of the books were shorter and fast-moving, reflecting the composition of one of the groups who seemed to prefer teen fiction to other works. The books *Holes*, *Kes* and *Skellig* were read, and the Reader reflected why that might have been the case for this group, but was also alert to the possibility that some of the texts may have worked better than others:

'That worked really well, Holes. Sort of part of the problem here is that I worry about what, being patronising or condescending, so it has to be the right choice, and it has to be something that, yeah, has enough meat on it... Yeah, so I suppose that's a teenage fiction that I would read myself and feel like I'm getting somewhere... But nevertheless there is, it's using thoughts and stuff there. And I was, with that group, I was surprised, Skellig perhaps read the least well at first and I wonder if that is partly because it's ... It's a beautiful book isn't it and I wonder if ... But at that time, that group found sort of being poetic or the fantastic parts of it harder to cope with... Even though Holes is a fantasy but the comedy they could cope with...' Reader

The women were generally happy with the choice of books, and while there were some books that some people clearly didn't like and others they preferred, they were happy to leave the choice of books largely to the Reader, as most of the women wanted to read things that were new to them and they also said that they trusted him

to find them things they liked. One of the other staff working in the Library who had observed many of the groups that took place there and knew the women who took part commented on how open the women seemed to be to read books that they may never have even heard of before, and how they were positive about whatever was suggested:

Nobody seems to complain about the books, which I think is quite ... but I've never heard anybody say, oh we're reading this [makes a sad face] ... they're just, oh and we're reading this next... You know like, oh right, we'll just try everything, let's just see... And I think that's because to an extent I wonder if the story doesn't matter and it's the telling and it's the tale and you know what the actual title is doesn't matter because they're going on a journey of discovery? So in that sense it doesn't matter what they're discovering as long as they're discovering something, I think. INT STAFF

Other members of the prison staff was also amazed by what they were reading, as they knew that the first group had started by only reading short extracts of text with lots of discussion, but had moved to reading 'whole books' and more than that, works of great literature. They described in the discussion how this challenged their ideas of what could be achieved by the project, and in particular their ideas as to what the women taking part in the project would be able, and prepared, to read:

P1 ... reading for a few minutes initially, give them something to discuss and then I think what, they read full books and that now don't they...

P2 They are and that's really surprising ...

P3 Yeah.

P1 ... I think that's really surprised me that, because to sit through a long book sometimes can be a bit tedious yourself when you're reading it can't it, I suppose it's more interesting because other people are reading it, it's different characters, but they've come back and have been reading things like Charles Dickens, and I know it sounds quite stereotypical of me to say but I'm amazed that some of the women that we've got will go and sit and listen and read Charles Dickens.

ALL Mm.

P1 If they'd gone and picked up, I don't know, Jordan's biography, I wouldn't have been surprised.

P4 Not surprised, yeah.

P1 It surprises me that they're interested in that and actually come back and want to talk to you about it. And I know that does sound really like I'm making big judgements but some of the women that we've had will never, ever have read anything like Charles Dickens or shown any interest in it before, and yet now they want to talk to you about it and they're telling you about what they're reading and why they find it interesting. And it gives them a real broader view about things I think. FG STAFF

The staff reflected how important this reading could be in terms of widening the scope of the women's lives, and the possibility of enriching the women's lives by broadening their appreciation of books and reading was shared by a member of staff who worked in the Library. The Governor of the prison was described as being very supportive of the Library and recognised the potential for reading books to enhance the lives of the women there. Library hours had been extended and the range of books had broadened and a visit to the Library was included as part of the women's induction, so that everyone coming to the prison was shown round and told about what and when they could borrow and order books. However, staff working in the Library were aware that some women had never owned or borrowed books before and so had to be helped to learn how to handle and take care of the books they borrowed. Some women 'lost' books, or lent them to other women without understanding that they should be returned and reissued, and some even tore their favourite pages out of a text, or the useful lists of other books by the same author printed in the front of the books, for their personal use. However the overall endeavour was to make sure people felt they could visit and use the Library, so they had to be relaxed in certain situations:

Oh yes, and certain people you will allow [to borrow up to seven books at a time] and certain people you won't, which, because you know that the books are going to get damaged. There's one lady who's got, she's got mental health problems, and she wants to take more books but she, the books are returned to us and you know they're torn and you know ... So I will let her take her seven and when I sort of challenge her about the book that she's brought back, it's, 'It was like that already'. But she's got real problems so you know you've just got to let that happen. INT STAFF

This member of staff went on to describe how the women could be encouraged to try new authors, either recommended by other women, or the staff in the Library and she saw this as a positive means of extending their range of reading:

And also definitely seeing people who first come in and maybe read, you know, they come in, do their induction, they've got so many things on their mind, they might ask for a true crime book because that's what they know about, and you see them very soon get through the true crime and look at other books and that's great, I love that and you see that a lot. And just to see people become passionate about their reading, yeah it's ...INT STAFF

Staff working in the Library/ Learning Shop were aware of how taking part in the Reading Group had extended the range of some of the women's reading, and so saw

the work of the group very much in line with their approach. This resonated with the accounts of the women who were clear about the importance of the Library as supporting their reading experiences. Having books was very important to some women, particularly those who had always read, and one woman described them as 'her lifeline' when she entered prison, and believed that she would not have got through her sentence as well as she did without being able to access books and to keep reading.

Other women described how they stocked up with books to make sure they never 'ran out' when they were locked in their rooms. Weekends were described as the hardest time in prison, as during the week they were occupied with work and activities, whereas as the weekends they spent many more hours locked in their rooms, and this was also a time when many of them thought most about their families and how much they missed them. For some women, books and reading represented a means of coping with 'too much time' and could make all the difference to a 'good' and a 'bad' weekend, and a bad weekend could result in serious deterioration in the mental health of the women, sometimes leading to incidents of self-harm or behavioural issues. The need for some women to have books to read, to help them cope with boredom and isolation was recognised by the Library staff, and they recognised how much the women valued the books despite the numerous lost or damaged books that they had to find the money to replace each year:

But the positive side of the job is that it's, you ... people just value the so much and that's great, you know, you get books in and people who maybe only get the once a week with their slot and they come in and they want their books, and the books that you've ordered have come in and they're so excited and happy. INT STAFF

Although the visiting the and the ongoing work of the Library staff was an essential support to the women in terms of the ongoing or emerging reading, attending the Reading Group was still the only reading that some women did. One woman described how she didn't have the reading ability to read the books she really wanted to read, and although she was learning to read through the Toe-to-Toe reading scheme, she loved coming to the reading group as she could hear the books read that she wanted to read and loved to hear the expression that the readers brought to the text.

Another woman said that she could not read when she was on her own, and that while she hated the time she spent on her own, she couldn't settle to read and found herself too distracted by other thoughts. In the group, this woman read fluently and well, and brought real expression to her interpretation of the text and joined in the group discussions, but this was her only reading all week. During her interview she talked about how the thought of the next week's reading group 'kept her going' over the long periods of lock up over the weekend, a time when she was likely to self-harm. Another woman who also read fluently and well, but was generally more reticent in discussions, said during an interview that she tended only to read magazines in her room, preferring to hear and read the books while in the group. However in a later interview she said that she had started to read some other, lighter, books in her room, and that the staff in the library were helping her to find the books she liked.

It was also notable that the books that the women chose to read themselves in their rooms were not always from the same literary genre as those they were happy to read in the groups. Many of the women liked to read books that covered 'True Crime' and what was termed 'Misery Lit' by one of the librarians, so first-hand accounts of abuse and hardship. Interestingly, in conversations with JR, the women referred to these books as 'Real Life' books, which seemed to be as much about how these books related to their own lives as their authorship and credibility. Some women only read 'fact' books, for example some read books about health, and one person read books on pharmacotherapy as they wanted to understand their own health and current prescriptions and diagnosis, and another woman preferred history books. There were some books on horses for Traveller women and health and beauty and celebrity biographies (younger women) were also popular. Romances and teen (gang) fiction were also very popular, and some authors were constantly being requested. However the Library retained a wide range of books, and the women talked of the Librarians ordering in books for them if they liked a particular author and recommending them to try different books, and some women were now reading books from a different genre as a result.

Some women read avidly, taking out seven books at a time, and observed patterns of borrowing the Library during the research period confirmed that taking as many books as was allowed was common among regular Library users. When the women who were working in Education came to the Library, they all arrived together for a limited time period, which could have been cut short prematurely by an early call for movement back to their rooms. The following is a lightly edited abstract from JR's notes of one such visit:

The women streamed into the room, talking loudly and some headed straight for the stacks on the far side by the windows where the new books were arranged. Others headed straight for [Librarians 1 & 2] asking in loud voices whether the books they had ordered – not always the title of the book (or the author), just the 'new one by X' or 'the next one after X', with an unquestioning assumption that [Librarian 2] knows exactly what they mean, and can remember every detail of last weeks' request. All friendly and smiling and books are found and requests dealt with. Other women go to the desk (staffed by Orderlies), others drift towards the stands of magazines by the front desk and some take them to tables to read, others are scouring the shelves. From the moment of their arrival the noise level has risen, the loud laughter and shouted comments a real contrast to the quiet of the few people completing the courses from the Learning Shop.

I stay behind the desk with [Orderly] who is now busy answering questions and watching some of the louder women who have formed a group to the left by the new book stack. Some people in the Learning Shop logged off immediately Education came in, and joined friends, others are leaning back in their chairs and only one person is ignoring what is going on. [STAFF LS] is standing up by the desk in her area – few people with her there – and looking across the Library towards some women around the computers and [Librarian 1] stands on the far wall facing me. Some more conversation with [Orderly] but we are both looking out at the women in front of us, so distracted. I can't ask for names or explanations as could be overheard by women leaning over the desk, trying to look at the screen of computer there. Very noisy now and some calls from [STAFF] to keep it down and some direct instructions to two women. The desk is now very busy, with women lining up to take out piles of books and there is a frantic (last day of the sales??) as more women crowd round with armfuls of books. {STAFF LS} has called for them to line up by the door, and the women use it to line and queue by the desk combined, the Orderlies work to issues the books with [STAFF].

While this extract demonstrates the important of books as a resource and a source of pleasure and activity for the women, it also illustrated to JR the range of users, and they ways in which the Library was used by different people in the prison. While some women came to the Library to sit quietly and to read or draw, others also used it as a place to relax and socialise, and this included some of the women taking part in

the Learning Shop course and activities. For the short time they were there, the group from Education transformed the Library by talking loudly, moving briskly and purposefully and making loud conversation between themselves and with staff and orderlies. As they arrived in a (noisy) group, they were able to disrupt the status quo and temporarily transform the setting in a busy lending and sociable environment. There was always the possibility that this disruption could become disruptive or even violent, and the staff were always vigilant on this and other occasions to monitor the behaviours of everyone using the space.

From these and other observations and conversations with the women who took part in the Reading Group it appears that the relationship between the Library and Reading group was symbiotic, with both acting to support the work of the other in mostly complementary, but occasionally overlapping ways. For some women, the Library was an occasional source of books, but their real reason for coming was the Reading Group. However once they were inside the Library, they found themselves reading more and so using the Library lending facilities. Others were users of the Library space for reading and for respite from other parts of the prison, but found themselves drawn to the Reading Group and this enhanced their experience of the Library.

As well as reading books in the groups, the groups read poems aloud at the end of the session and both from observing the groups and talking to the women, it was clear that this was perceived to be a different activity than reading the book. The closing of the book and the move to distribute the poetry books or copied sheets was often accompanied by stretching and shifting by the women and some talk, as if physically marking the transition from one form of text and reading to another. Some women seemed to find it hard to make the transition from prose to poetry at the end of the session, and didn't offer to read the poem or to comment on it, and were less attentive than others, although it was clear that other women did look forward to this part of the session.

A very few women said that they were familiar with poetry and they even occasionally read some poems for pleasure, but most did not, and had not read any poetry from books since leaving school. Understandably, the women were not always familiar with poetic conventions and tended to read poems 'line by line, so pausing at

the end of each line regardless of the punctuation, although this was not regarded as an obstacle to appreciation or understanding by the women, or as something that needed to be corrected by the Reader. The practice of re-reading the poem in verses or a whole by other readers including the Reader, the meaning became clearer, although some readers stated at the end of the session that they didn't understand it, or didn't like it. While the poems were chosen each week by the Reader to complement the reading in some way, the women were not always able to make the connections from the poem to the text. While women often said they liked a poem, when they were asked what they liked about it, sometimes they found it hard to put into words, often just rereading a favourite fragment.

However, depending on the poem and the group, some poems were popular and enjoyed, with people wanting to read out verses or the poem aloud, or asking the Reader to read it, saying he read it 'better' or 'best'. The discussion would be lively and involved and the women would vie with one another to put their interpretation across. There was often discussions around meaning and although consensus could be reached, often people held to their own interpretations. This is something that was noted by a member of staff working in the Library, who had overheard the discussion of the poem '*The Art of Losing*':

Oh it's a brilliant poem, 'the art of losing isn't hard to master'. So many things can be lost that their loss is no disaster. And it's a woman talking about everything that she's lost and I always think, oh it's a really powerful poem, you know, she's obviously lost her, somebody that she loves she's lost, in my mind, whenever I've read it. And she said, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, but it really, really matters. And I thought, oh God, I'm going to have to listen to what they say about this poem because I love it. So I went over and one woman said, well she's become senile ... because she talks about losing her keys. She talks about quite frivolous things that she's lost and then right at the end she mentions losing you ... It really gets you. But she said, no, she said she's got Alzheimers and she's not longer being able to find things and remember ... And I thought, and I read it, and I thought no it doesn't mean that, and I read it and I thought well yes it can ... It could mean that, and I thought that was amazing that somebody had just come out with that. And I've heard that poem a few times, she just, they'd just read it and she'd come out with that, so it's great to hear. INT STAFF

The Art of Losing, Elizabeth Bishop

Lose something every day.

Accept the fluster
of lost door keys,
the hour badly spent
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
places, and names, and where it was you meant to travel.
None of these will bring disaster.
I lost my mother's watch. And look! My last, or
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.
- Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

This recollection by a staff member was not an isolated incident, and sometimes women were very clear in their own interpretation of the poem, even if others around them in the group had voiced another opinion. While at times the discussion moved to consensus, as the text was discussed and 'evidence' given to back up a point of view, it was also likely that people agreed to disagree. The fact that the women felt able to assert their own opinions and any disagreements were openly discussed and unresolved without acrimony or violence was commented on positively by all the staff. The importance of shared reading and discussion in the development of social skills is returned to in Section 3.4.

One women in the group loved valued reading the poems and even if she didn't like or particularly understand a poem, she would take it back to her room and say that she would put it on the wall. Another woman took her photocopy and sent it in a letter to her husband so he could read it too. This same women also asked her husband to read some of the books and short stories she had read in the reading groups, but this seemed to be harder to sustain, and the advantage of the poem was that it was short and immediately available for re-reading. Some women left the sheets of poetry at the end of the sessions, but most of the women folded them carefully and took them away with them, suggesting that they may be read again, or stored or even passed on within

the prison. Some of the women's reaction to the poems was partly influenced by whether they wrote their own poetry, as a muttered response to some poems was '*I could write better myself*'. However some women commented that as they wrote their own poetry, they felt this helped them to appreciate other poetry more, as they could admire the crafting of a line, as they knew how hard it was to construct that particular form of expression.

3.3 Who gets involved and why?

Originally the Reading Groups were held in the Primrose unit, and while they encouraged women to go to the group who were unable to move easily to other areas of the prison (restricted status) or found it harder to interact with women in other areas of the prison, it effectively excluded women who did not live on Primrose. While the prison staff could see that it was great for the women in Primrose, as it was easy for them to attend, and more women got involved than they had originally anticipated, it did not help those women integrate with other aspects of prison life and could increase their social isolation.

I think it holds its own problems having it on the unit itself, it was really helpful initially so that the women who were maybe less confident to kind of engage in things within the normal prison would still come because it was kind of a safe environment for them, where they were used to coming for treatment and things like that. But we've only got 12 women, so out of those, even if you said half of them were interested, and actually it wasn't even 6 at some points, it was only 3 or 4, they had even days due to their personality disorder, other mental illnesses, that they just didn't want to come or they weren't want to engage that day. So actually the fact that it goes out into a bigger group holds its problems for our women but also really encourages them to go and do things elsewhere, and it doesn't really give them the option as much to just say, I don't really want to go today, because they've almost made a commitment to the reading group now to go, which they didn't seem to have that same commitment ... FG STAFF

In addition, over time it seemed that some women's attendance became erratic because they knew they could always rejoin the group, and the staff felt that moving the groups out of Primrose into the wider prison made some women value it more:

P1 *...I think originally the reading group was held on the DSPD unit, so it was specifically for the DSPD prisoners, unit prisoners.*

P2 *Yeah, it sort of complements what we try to do to get them to go away from you know ... they sort of, they all live together and all working together, so we*

wanted to encourage them to move away from that and if the ... the ones, especially the ones who are really interested in it because they want to do something like that, will go to it, so ...

JR *So is that quite a big deal then to have them leaving Primrose ...?*

ALL *Yeah.*

P3 *I think it especially was when the reading group first started wasn't it?*

P2 *It was at the time and then, especially with the first group that attended because we had [name] and [name] and the likes of them. So moving it away I think was a very good idea, although we did, it did work well on the unit, getting the women off to mix with other women throughout the prison, because that's what they do, better, bigger and better for [Reader] as well to have a bigger group I think. FG STAFF*

The women who originally attended the group in Primrose described their different motivations for joining the group. One person had always read, and thought it would be a way of engaging in an activity that they would enjoy. Another woman, who had not read very much throughout her life, went because it was something to do, and it sounded interesting. They did not go necessarily expecting to get anything out of the groups, but the staff reflected that could be the secret of the success with some women in Primrose, as they participated in a number of therapies that had very specific targets, and this sometimes made the women less motivated to attend, and that was why some women continued to go even after it moved into the main prison:

P1 *I get the impression it's, you know like when they go to education and places like that, you'll hear them come out and say they don't, they want to be in the class but they don't want to be in that class because the other people are messing about and they cannot concentrate on what they're doing. And I get the impression when they go to the Library, to go to the reading group, the group of people that's there all want to be there, for the same reasons. So nobody's going to ridicule anybody else and everybody ... You know it's like if you go to church, oh she goes to church, this, that or the other ...*

P2 *It's a choice isn't it?*

P1 *... yeah, it's a choice that they make and they feel comfortable like with the people that are there as well. I think it's ... I'm like you, I don't know enough about the other people who go, but from our women I think it's the ones that want to go, they want to learn ...*

All *Yeah.*

P1 *... they don't want people messing about, they're quite serious about it, it's quite serious to them. And they enjoy it, they want to listen to the story and they want to have the discussions afterwards. FG STAFF*

The issue of 'choice' was clearly important to the women, as they described their decision to come to the groups as 'my choice', and something they did for themselves. The women contrasted their decision to come to the reading groups with other

activities they had to do, and said that felt different coming here, often moving into the accounts of relaxation and escape detailed in Section 3.1. The voluntary nature of their participation was appreciated by staff, who found the women ready to attend the group, instead of needed persuading, and when they returned, they were happy and willing to talk with others and with staff:

P1 But you know as they might stand talking on the landing as well, or if they're going off to something that they enjoy, they want to go and they're coming back and they're in good spirits as well. So it's good for us really that they've got things that they want to do, that they enjoy doing, that they're not forced to go to, you know, like where if they've got to go to work.

JR Yes.

P2 This is something that they have a choice. FG STAFF

While the groups were sociable and some people did attend because someone they knew someone who was attending, the prison staff commented on how friendship didn't seem to play a significant part in the women's decisions as to whether or not they attended the reading group, suggesting a different and perhaps new social pattern of activity was occurring:

P1 I think historically as well through prison, I think anything like a reading group or any other group that's formed anywhere throughout the prison, a lot of people tend to just turn up because their friends are going. Like chapel's a prime example, people go to church on a Sunday or Saturday because their friends are going, I don't get that sense with the reading group, I think the peer group go to the reading and want to go to the reading group they don't go because their friends are going....

P2 And you would almost think, especially [name] she, not at the minute but a particular friend she had, wherever she went she would go, so you would think if that friend wasn't going it would have stopped her from going, yet it didn't.

P3 No it didn't.

JR Oh that's interesting, so they have got friends who don't go?

ALL Yeah. FGI

Women's motivations for joining the reading group once it moved into the main part of the prison varied, suggesting that the model is able to attract a wide range of women and meet multiple needs. Some women attended because they had been approached by the Reader and asked if they would like to join the group. Many of these women were already visitors to the Library and knew the Reader and so they decided to try just one week to see if they liked it. Those that did, stayed, and this

encouraged other people to come forward and ask about the group, either because they had heard about it on the Wing, or seen a flyer, or even overheard a group while they were in the Library for work or to read or draw. While friendship did not dictate participation, it was evident that sometime the women did attend because a particular friend did, and equally, some women chose not to attend a group because of who was attending.

The social dynamics of the group changed throughout the research period, and represented a real challenge to the Reader in terms of keeping the group together, as while he did not want to turn anyone away, he was aware that if some people did attend, others would not. While not all staff were aware of who attending the groups, as there were no custodial staff in the Library unless they were escorting someone, they were aware that the ‘groups’ of women and more solitary women in the prison has started to attend the groups:

- P1 and I would say, certainly at the beginning, like minded individuals seemed to go, like groups of like friends used to go...*
- P2 So from initially starting with some like minded individuals who probably wanted to be with each other in their company in that environment, I think it's taken on a little bit now, I think some of the people you wouldn't normally think would go, go there ...*
- P3 ... The ones that you would never see socialise on the wing actually going to that group as a group. So no I think they are different. FG STAFF*

The Reader was also aware of the difficulties of leading reading groups where people may not know each other, but may know enough about someone for them to dislike them or find it hard to talk to them. The Library was often the place where the more vulnerable women spent time, and while they were invited and welcomed into the groups by the Reader and some of the women, other women were more hostile, and anecdotally avoided the Library and the Reading Groups as they were concerned that they might be ‘associated’ with certain women, usually sex offenders, if they spent time there. This was well known by all the Library staff, who were aware of the dynamics between these women and were watchful when other groups entered the Library.

... the women that are in the Library, that are in the learning shop are quite vulnerable women, they often come there because there's nowhere else for them to go, they feel like, they feel quite intimidated in the gaol INT STAFF

The other group of women that had more difficulty integrating were the women from Primrose, who were known to have some diagnosed mental health issues. The staff were aware that this knowledge meant that the women from Primrose didn't always feel safe or welcome when they left the unit, and had been impressed by how the attendance of some women at the Reading Group had been accepted by the wider prison community:

P1 I think other women in the jail also make quite big judgements I think about the women who are on Primrose and what kind of women they are and you know they should be isolated almost, whereas now they can see them interacting with everybody else as perfectly normal human beings, that they would maybe never have seen before. So I think that's really been helpful for them as well, to recognise that people aren't always going to make judgements about them and that they can interact socially and be comfortable...

P2 I'm not sure if surprise is the word ...

P3 I am surprised!

P2 ... because I think we're more aware than what they are that they can do things but it's nice to see them grow, it's nice to see their confidence grow I think, that they can do things like that and they can mix.

FG STAFF

It is perhaps necessary to qualify that while the women were prepared to sit down together, it was notable that a few of the women did not interact with the other women at all while in the Reading Group, except through the group discussion, never making eye contact and never using their names or answered directly a point that they would raise. But this did not necessarily cause difficulty within the group, as the discussion was mediated by the Reader, who shaped the discussion as if the women were talking to one another rather than through him. While the Reader was aware that people could sit quietly and accept someone else's presence in the group, they also stressed the positive aspects of the patterns of social interaction in the groups, as some women had formed new friendships while in the group.

... that was somebody that didn't know anybody, was from A wing, didn't know anybody on the group but had made friends through the group... an older prisoner that was relatively isolated on that wing but I had actually seen her form friendships groups through the group... which was really nice because I mean I think that has happened before but I haven't sort of been able to just see the point of contact when it started, I know that she knows those people through this. Reader

What was observed during the course of the study were women who didn't know each other, and might even have otherwise refused to get to know each other, sitting together in a group, week after week. By sitting in the Library, the participants gave a more or less public affirmation of the group membership, although it was notable that while some people came and sat down in the seats allocated for the group some minutes before the group started as the women were coming in to the Library from the different Wings, other women tended to talk or browse the shelves, only sitting down once the Reader had confirmed with the other staff who was present and who was not coming, and was ready to start. This suggests that sitting in the group was only a form of temporary alliance for some, and the women did say that they had no articulated particular contact with the other women during the rest of the week, although they may smile or nod in passing.

Over the course of the year, the composition of both groups changed, with only one woman attending the group each week for the duration of the research period. Other than some drop out, the reasons why the women stopped attending or attending less frequently included: being transferred to another prison; being released; poor health (although some women did re-attend once they recovered); legal appointments; accumulated visits; and changed work and education plans. As the groups only met once a week for a few hours, even brief appointments could mean that women missed a session:

So there was legal type of things going on..., with appointments you can't do anything about, depending on what they are but I mean even sometimes things like haircuts which sound, I think we've talked about this, it sounds trivial but if you haven't had one for two months or ... Reader

While some of the staff in the prison were aware of the timing of the Reading Groups, others were not always aware, or preferred the women to miss the Reading Group rather than another activity. Some women were very assertive about their not having appointments made to coincide with the Reading Group times, but other women were less vigilant, and appointments were made that prevented their attendance, and they did not feel willing or able to challenge the staff, who may not have been able to reschedule as some women had very busy timetables of activities during the available time. Sometimes the women themselves forgot that they were going to the group and

agreed to do other activities and appointments, as it seemed to them to be a very long time between groups. However some staff did try to ensure that the women were able to attend the groups, knowing that it was important to some of them:

P1 *I think it probably shows that if there is something that they're really, really interested in doing, then they will put that time for it, which is actually something good in itself because it makes them see, well I can, there is something, I can keep up when I want to do it, when I've got an interest. So it almost encourages them to think, you know, if you persevere you can.*

P2 *Hasn't there been some times on the timetable though, hasn't it been on the timetable where there's been something on but it's been the reader's group in the prison and they'll actually say ...*

P3 *Yeah.*

P2 *... does this have to run at the same time because we want to go to the reading group, they don't want to miss anything if there's something on the timetable that they want to do as well, but they certainly don't want to miss the reading group as well. So they must be interested in it.*

ALL *(agreement)*

P2 *Sometimes it's difficult to do but we tend to try to always do that so they can attend the reading group. FG STAFF*

One major change to the project that affected the frequency attendance at the groups was to free the time for the Reader to go to visit the women on the Wings on Monday mornings in advance of the groups on Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning. This meant that he could remind the women when the groups were taking place and recruit, new people and also identify and reschedule any clashing appointments. Despite the problems experienced by the women when trying to attend the groups, the groups did meet regularly and while membership did vary from week to week it remained buoyant throughout the project and compared favourably to the women's engagement in other activities:

I think it's surprised me how long they've continued with it because when we've done things on Primrose, people have come for like a period of weeks and then they seem to drift off in numbers, whereas people have really seemed to continue to go to this and it's been for a really long period of time now, so I think that has surprised me, how long they've attended for. And I know some women's attendance isn't every week but I still think they attend really regularly in comparison to other things that they've gone to before. FG STAFF

3.4 Developing social skills and trust

Joining the Reading Group had real significance for the women, as some said it as the first group that they had voluntarily joined. Coming to something each week was a new experience for some, and clearly felt a sense of achievement. This translated into increased participation in the group and this effected a personal transformation for some of the women, who had never before felt comfortable talking in front of other people to put their views across:

And personally, I mean there was a couple of women that wouldn't or didn't want to speak in a group, they didn't feel confident or anything, and some of them women still go to the readers' group now that's held in the main jail and they're much more confident, much more able to talk and speak in front of people, and I think the reading group's helped that, definitely. So I think moving away from Primrose wing has been good for some of our Primrose women because they integrate more. FG STAFF

The staff were also aware that the women didn't expect to receive anything from their participation. Many of the other activities that women engaged with were to get their allowance through their work, and to achieve educational qualifications and certificates or to work through activities as part of their sentence. Taking part in the Reading Group did not offer them any particular material reward, and for the staff, this indicated that the women were really motivated to go:

P1 ... they're getting something out of it without wanting something from it, if you know what I mean, because they're obviously, whatever they get is enough without having to sort of ... Because normally they'd attend things, like [name of PO] says, for their friends or different ...

P2 To get something isn't it?

P1 ... other reasons you know ...

P2 Yeah, they might get a free cup of tea or a biscuit of something like that.

P3 Yeah, whereas they're attending without wanting ... they're getting something without ...

P1 And that's not the case here.

P3 They're not getting something material from it.

P1 Yeah, they're getting something, just a self satisfaction from going and the enjoyment of it rather than ... FG STAFF

Following the Get Into Reading model, participants in the Reading Groups mostly sat and listened while the book was read aloud, and the readers paused at appropriate moments, so that points could be raised, discussed and clarified and opinions shared. How often the reader paused and was often a matter of judgement, but participants got used to the format, they began to pause automatically at the end of a complicated or confusing section or when a significant event has taken place, and the Reader would indicate whether or not they should continue to read, or stop. If people do not pause at

these points, or is involved in reading a long passage, the Reader would request that the reader paused just to make sure the balance of reading and discussion was maintained. Sometimes the reader would resume reading after the discussion, but usually wait to do so. At other times, readers preferred to defer to another reader, or even just stop and say that they didn't want to read any more. Some readers only chose to read a paragraph, and in some groups, some people didn't read until they had attended the groups for many months. Some people read infrequently, and one person preferred to read a section of the poem rather than the prose.

Other people would want to read more than was deemed appropriate by the Reader, who had to make a judgement between enabling someone to participate and let them dominate a particular activity. Some people would just 'jump in' before they were invited and there were other issues of assertiveness, which manifested themselves in the groups, including some unequivocal assertions of opinions and putting pressure on others to read. However these were dealt with not only by the Reader, but also to some extent within the group and while there were differences of opinion, the women seemed to moderate their behaviour sufficiently to ensure that there were no arguments or conflicts. This pattern of interaction had been noted by other staff working in the Library:

And that's another thing that I think is really beneficial and I've kind of heard is the different ideas and everybody allowing each other everybody else's opinion, which often they disagree but on a very kind of, yeah, we'll just disagree with, that level, which is good. INT STAFF

If someone did appear to be asserting their opinion strongly, some women were observed to literally 'keep their heads down' to ensure that they did not become involved. However other women had conciliating ways of asserting their own views without necessarily contradicting the views of others, and so by knowing or learning how to put forward an opinion assertively, but appropriately, the group members kept the discussion and the reading going. Other staff commenting on the same phenomena of reasoned discussion, with some opposing views, that characterised all of the observed sessions, contrasted this favourably with what they knew went on in other parts of the prison where people were less tolerant of opposition:

- P1 The other thing about communication I was thinking of then, not only are they maybe better able to explain themselves to us to some degree, but the more they're able to sit and listen to somebody else, because that's something that doesn't happen very often with maybe women in general! That women don't listen to what you have to say, they have something they want to say on top and trying to explain or give advice or reassurance to women, or to do treatment with them if they can't listen to you effectively is torture, quite frankly. So if they're able to listen a lot more and spend time just sitting and taking in what you've got to say or what somebody else has got to say, that can only be beneficial.*
- P2 And they're actually patient really aren't they?*
- ALL (agreement)*
- P2 They're respectful of each other ...*
- P3 It increases their tolerance doesn't it?*
- ALL (agreement)*
- P1 I think that is really impressive because you see other groups in different places and that doesn't happen. You'll see people have big disagreements and not able to take other people's views on board and not being able to communicate that, again like being really unable to sit for that period of time as well and listen to other people.*
- P4 So all of the things that are happening in the reading group sound like really beneficial and helpful ... FG STAFF*

While there was still some insecurity about reading or other issues, which may mean that some people will never read aloud in the groups, participants seemed to accept different levels of participation, including not reading or even really entering the discussion, and this was not seen as a barrier to being considered part of the group.

While the women did discuss the books, and occasionally related some passages or events to their own lives, this was usually done in a very general way, and there were few identifying details of time, place or the names of the people involved. This contrasted with groups observed elsewhere by JR, where some participants would relate parts of the text to their own life, often using names to draw people in to new relationship by sharing information about their present and past lives, and exchanging anecdotes. This lack of reflection did not appear to relate to a lack of engagement with the text, as often the women were moved by particular passages, or stimulated to recall a past event, but they appeared to have developed ways of talking about issues without disclosing too much personal information about themselves.

I think sometimes you go away and you think about things that people have said to you, not about the crimes, not, very rarely about the crimes, but how they're coping in prison, different things that happen in prison and that can stay with you a bit. INT STAFF

This observation was raised by JR in a group discussion with the staff, and they explained how the women learned to protect their personal lives in prison, and so in the Reading Group:

- P1 *I don't think initially for us when we had it on the [Primrose] unit, there wasn't a lot of talk about ... was there? It was book and then ...*
- P2 *They had the session, they talked about the book ...*
- P2 *It was very rare our women would talk about their lives in the group with other people.*
- P3 *I think in a tight knit group where they do really trust each other, then I can see a little bit more disclosure but I would doubt it in a big group in the Learning Shop I would have thought.*
- P2 *Yeah because I think they would be concerned as to where that was, information would have gone.*
- P4 *Yeah.*
- P2 *And actually although it is a good thing in itself, trying to manage that as the person who is doing the reader group, if you've got, I don't know how ... say you've got ten people in the reader group and everybody wants to start discussing a little bit of something, I think it's really difficult to manage as well. FG STAFF*

There were occasions when the women did recall a particular event in detail, but these tended to come from older participants and were stories from 'long ago' that couldn't compromise the person's present identity or security. They related to people who were now dead and to places that would have changed out of recognition, and they were also possibly stories that had been told before in another setting, so were prompted by the text, but not necessarily a raw, emotional response to it.

While trust might be limited in terms of the discussion, the act of reading did appear to create a special social and emotional space within which the reading and the discussions took place. In common with groups observed elsewhere (Hodge 2007; Billington et al, 2011; Dowrick et al, 2012) the act of reading aloud created an affect between the readers and listeners, resulting in complete mutual absorption and concentration. Here a member of staff who had been present at a number of the discussions described it as a 'bubble' that seemed to envelop the group and set them outside of whatever else was going on in the Library:

Yes, I've seen that, I've seen people really concentrating. It's like a bubble isn't it, the lad sat in a bubble? And they're really concentrating. Sometimes [Reader] will ask, and they'll say, no I'm just thinking, and you can see you know people are really working hard, listening to what's being said. Yeah it's good. I wish I could have, I

just don't get a chance to listen to the Dickens at all, to Great Expectations but ... And I know they weren't, there was a few of the women said they wouldn't watch it over Christmas, because it was on over Christmas and they didn't want to spoil it ...
INT STAFF

Another member of staff also commented on the same phenomenon, calling it an 'invisible shield' that not only appeared to protect the women from the noise of their immediate environment, but also from any feelings of self-consciousness. For this member of staff, it is notable that people do not only sit and concentrate, but also read aloud as if no-one but the other group members can hear them:

I'm amazed at the willingness of people to read out loud because I hate reading out loud, it slows me down when I read, apart from anything else, and I like to read you know. But I am quite amazed because nobody makes fun of anybody else, they all just give each other you know that space and that time and ... For me, it would be horrendous for me because I'm quite a shy person, is not only are they reading in that little group but when it's taking part, I mean obviously sometimes it's in the association so that's a bit more private, but what you've got it, what I'm trying to say is you've got ... so if it was me reading, I'd have like six, seven, eight people listening to us but I would be very aware of the people in the background. And they almost seem to create some kind of invisible shield around them and they just exist in that time and that space, and that's quite fascinating! And quite a talent to create I think.
INT STAFF

This apparent lack of awareness of the other people in the room was discussed with the women, but they perhaps found it harder to explained as they had not observed it, but were part of the phenomena. However it may relate to the findings described in Section 3.1, where the women talk about relaxing and escaping. However it is worth noting that from an observers point of view the unique atmosphere seems to be created as much by intense concentration and focus, which is not always associated with relaxation. To the observer (JR) it appeared that the women were actually working very hard to regulate their bodies, so to not fiddle, or twitch or walk around; to discipline their minds not to shout out, complain, interrupt or argue; and to concentrate so completely on the text that they could follow the prose and perhaps imagine the story, so they could discuss it. This total embodiment of the reading experience may explain why particular behaviours were observed not only by JR but by staff working at the prison.

3.5 The leadership of the Reader in Residence

One of the reasons why women joined the group, enjoyed taking part and came back week after week was because of the enthusiasm of the Reader. The women commented on the Reader's contribution to creating the atmosphere of the group and this included creating an environment of trust, encouragement, and helping a diverse group of women develop their social skills and enjoyment of reading, and still maintain discipline. That the Reader was a man in a female prison might have caused problems, and some of the women discussed during their interviews that they had not always had good relationships with the men in their lives. However some of the women had known the Reader for a number of months or years before the Reading Group in his role as Librarian and so the transition to the Reader was easier.

P1 That's probably nice for them as well, I know this is about [Reader] perhaps and not so much the reading group, is he is a sort of safe, positive male role model.

P2 Yeah he is.

P3 You know and they've had a lot of, probably a lot of our women have had negative experiences with men and that's probably been part of its success.

FG STAFF

The women who took part in the Reading Group contrasted the atmosphere in the group and the Library with elsewhere in the prison, and feeling 'safe' was an important dimension to their experience. However in this environment safety was more than shutting out the wider prison, it was about regulating behaviours within the group so that no-one felt physically or emotionally vulnerable.

I think a lot of it is environment but I think a lot of it is facilitation as well. And I think it's the way, again it's ... I see it as a group that has a lot of mutual respect. I know [Reader] very, very kind of keen and blatantly obvious, which is positive, that he wants everyone to take part, everyone to be comfortable and he'll not let anybody kind of disrespect anybody else. So I think what you may have is the wider ethos, which at the end of the day is created by women and by the staff, then kind of feeding the smaller ethos, so ... I was going to say it's like ripples in a pond but it's kind of like ripples in both ways! You know! One feeds the other, feeds the other I think!

INT STAFF

The enthusiasm of the Reader was commented on by the women, who said that it helped them engage with some texts that they would have otherwise given up on. The women felt that the fact that the Reader really believed that they *could* understand

something made them try harder to understand the meaning of a piece of text in the book or a poem, which added to their enjoyment and sense of achievement.

P1 I think he creates a relaxed atmosphere anyway, he's very motivational isn't he?

P2 He does, he's very good.

P1 We've seen him on(?) because we've all sat in the reading group in the early days of how motivational ...

P3 He's brilliant!

P1 ... he is with them, if they don't want to, they don't make them, but he has this tendency to like almost make you want to read, doesn't he?

P4 His enthusiasm ...FG STAFF

Given the participation of a range of women, the possibility of an adverse incident was always present, but the women described how they trusted the Reader, and the other staff in the Library, to intervene if necessary and this gave them the confidence to take part:

P1 There again I think that credit has to go to [Reader] for keeping that group as he does, because I think he does run it very well, and he runs it tight and he doesn't have any messing about in there.

P2 Yes.

P1 Oh without a shadow of a doubt.

P2 If he didn't have you wouldn't have the attendance he has.

P1 Exactly and I think they obviously, they feel comfortable with that and know that, again the advantage of knowing that they're going to come to the group and that is the way the group is, it's ran in a certain particular way and they enjoy that.

P3 Yeah, I think it's all credit to him as well because he must run it in a certain way so that everybody feels comfortable but he must have control of the situation as well ...

P1 ... he must do, because they must feel relaxed and comfortable to go down there. And it's quiet isn't it, it's in the Library and it's something that they must enjoy. But I think he does really well ... FG STAFF

While the composition of the Reading Group was not necessarily representative of all the women in the prison, the staff were well aware that within any such group, there was always the potential for some risky behaviours, such as aggression or bullying, to evidence themselves. The fact that these were not really apparent in the reading group marked it out as an exceptional activity:

P1 I think one of the things is, with prison life is you know whether you attend work, whether you attend the gym, whether you attend, you know, whatever it

is, there's always the underlying problems that goes with prison life, you know, bullying, threats and stuff like that and some people probably absent themselves from stuff that they would normally like to do because of these things. Where within the reading group I would imagine that those things aren't present. FG STAFF

Having someone aware of security issues was important for the long term support of the Reading Group by the prison staff, as indiscipline and incidents would have a knock-on effect for their work elsewhere in the prison. The fact that the Reader worked in the prison and knew and followed prison protocols, and knew the other prison staff and also knew the women was seen as a real strength:

- P1 Well if you're looking for one potential negative... [Reader]'s quite a unique situation in as much as he's passionate about what he does but he's also got a bit of nouse about what the prison environment is. If the programme of reading ... you know the reading groups was expanded for instance, you'd have to be very, very careful that the individuals, because the supervision is very low, and that's probably one of the reasons that they like going, you'd have to be ... you'd have to be sure that the person that was leading the group knew what they were doing, if you know what I mean.*
- P2 You couldn't just have someone who was passionate about books coming into a prison and doing, trying to replicate what [name]'s doing because that person could potentially get into trouble FG STAFF*

The women also talked about how the Reader helped them enjoy the story they were reading, and how the choice of the reading the activity of reading alone, the discussion, and their enthusiasm combined to keep them interested and engaged. Women and staff were aware that the Reader used a variety of strategies to engage the women's interest, and they were responsive to the choice of books, the varying pace between short stories and longer books and the use of poetry.

- P1 And I think it was very clever what [Reader] used to do because he would tell a story for about 15 minutes, half an hour possibly, which had a twist at the end that nobody would see coming, and then that would make them sit up and think, well I never seen that coming and it made them think a little bit more.*
- P2 Yeah, they start to think, yeah, because he would stop it halfway through and say, right, what do you think is happening, who is the main character here, what do you think is going to happen? And nine times out of ten he would say some story that was far from the truth what the end of the story ... And he was very clever at doing that ...*
- P3 I think that's a good way of ...*
- P4 ... drawing them in ...*

P5 ... *their imagination isn't it?*

P3 ... *and then what do you think will happen next? And then he would read for another five minutes and stop, and it would be again, right, so you've just said that but that, it doesn't look like that's happened now does it, no.* FG STAFF

3.6 Creating the right environment

When some people were sent to prison, they said that they had not been near a public Library for many years, and some recalled only ever having been in a Library as part of a school visit. However either for the reading group and/or part of a wider patterns of engagement with the Library (borrowing, cleaning, working as an orderly or attending a course as part of the Learning Shop programme) these women were now regular visitors and said that the Library was an important place for them, somewhere almost as a 'bridge' between the prison and the outside world. Other women had visited their public Library's and so were used to the system of borrowing books, and they described how indescribably comforting finding the Library in the prison had been for them. For them too, it was a place that linked them with the outside world, somewhere that was closer to more familiar places outside the prison.

All the women JR spoke to talked about how the Library was a very different place than anywhere else in the prison, and this was not only because of the physical space and the function, but also the environment there, which was variously described as 'quiet', 'peaceful', 'safe' and 'calm'. The staff working at the prison were aware that the Library provided a particular environment for the women compared to other places in the prison:

P1 *Again, it's down to the environment isn't it?*

P2 *Yeah.*

P1 *I mean the wings and the place of work are manic, even when they're in their rooms, locked in at night, the wing is still very loud and things going on. But the Learning Shop, you do, you go in it's, you can hear a pin drop, can't you?*
FG STAFF

This was not to say that on occasions the Library could be very busy and noisy (see Section 3.2) and sometimes the noise of the people taking part in the learning shop activities seriously disrupted the reading group for some participants, who felt they needed a quiet room to read in. However other women didn't seem to mind the noise as much, perhaps accepting it as a part of prison life, and they preferred to have the

group in the Library, rather than in one of the association rooms. The reader too was torn between wanting the reading group participants to feel they can read, hear the reading and discuss in a calm, quiet atmosphere, and wanting the group to be seen and heard by the other people in Library, who may want to join, or just listen in. From JR's observations, people taking part in the other activities or just borrowing and browsing for books, did listen to the story, and this was confirmed during an interview with a member of staff:

It is... I think that's one of the benefits of having it... It has, I've seen it in the past, kind of drawn people in, and I think if ... it's unfortunate that you know if it's not in that environment that's not going to happen but it certainly ... And you know it does, it works, I do, I've seen people nearly fall off their chairs before, trying to listen in... INT STAFF

Staff were asked to reflect on how the environment of the Library might be different from other places in the prison, and why the women enjoyed spending time there, and one member of staff responded by saying that they too felt safe there:

I don't know to be honest, there's something about ... Because we get, we do get people in who attempt to create a nasty atmosphere and we don't put up with it, but we're not officers, so I can't for example remove somebody straight away, but what I can do is if I've got somebody who is feeling very vulnerable is I'll just move them behind the desk and we'll sit and have a chat while that ... So I don't know, I'm not entirely sure why ... I certainly feel safe there and I certainly feel if anybody went to harm me, there's about 20 women that would stand in front of us. That's a big thing to say I think. So it's not just the women who feel safe I think. INT STAFF

This feeling of 'safety' was perhaps notable as custodial staff were largely absent from the Library. While the staff working there carried keys and radios and managed the security within that setting, they were responsible for aspects of education and training and the running of the Library rather than the discipline of the women, and wore their own clothes rather than a uniform. Women were escorted to the Library by custodial staff, who stayed to make sure that everyone they had brought was expected, and no-one had to be escorted elsewhere, but then they left. Only on a few occasions did a member of custodial staff stay in the Library, as they were escorting a woman who required a constant escort. Occasionally, a member of the custodial staff did come through the Library on their way to another part of the prison, and this was disruptive for some of the women, who broke off whatever they were doing to watch

their movement across the room, only resuming their activities once they had left. Others seemed less diverted, and were able to carry on what they were doing.

Prison staff were aware that their absence from the Library was probably part of the unique environment there, referring to the lack of 'whites' as a positive thing in that setting:

P1 The ... I haven't ... I can't say this first hand because I haven't spoken to anybody necessarily, but there'll be one aspect of why they like it as well is in as much as although we try and treat prisoners with humanity, respect, decency and stuff like that, at the end of the day we still control their lives in quite an impersonal way, that's just the nature of the job and the way it has to be. But I would imagine that they probably feel better about themselves within that setting, they probably feel a bit more ...

P2 More in control and stuff like that I would think and more respected, if you know what I mean, if that makes sense.

P3 It's equality isn't it, it's a leveller?

P4 And it's escape from, you know, from us isn't? Almost you're not having a uniform there controlling them?

P1 Yeah, because that environment doesn't have us FG STAFF

A constant theme of the discussions with women and staff was the strain and challenges of prison life, and how a change of physical and disciplinary environment, could act positively on the women's sense of wellbeing, and so positively impact on their engagement with the reading group:

P1 Yeah, I think anything different really. I mean long termers especially, you know, that have been in prison a while or are going to be in prison a while, you know, we know how much it does our head in coming to work every day doing the same thing, so ...!

P2 And they react differently to different people, so obviously we're discipline staff and people we might have a problem with in the regime may be totally different with somebody who is an outsider, an individual, a civilian member of the public and they won't display any of those problems or behaviours with them in the group. So I think it probably gives them a break in that sense as well. FG STAFF

However, despite the many positive comments about the Library from the women, the reader and the staff were aware that there were advantages in moving the reading groups outside the Library. The women who attended were often designated vulnerable by staff, and this was apparently recognised by the women in the wider prison, who were reluctant to go into the Library, except in a group to borrow books, in case people thought they were vulnerable themselves or friendly with any women

there who were known sex offenders. This was thought to prevent some women from joining the reading group in the Library, but who may be willing to join a group on their wing or in an association room. The staff suggested that women should be given a taster session in the Library when they first came to the prison:

P4 And hopefully it's before they've got any preconceived ideas about who is in the Learning Shop and why people go there and all that kind of thing.

ALL (agreement)

P4 Because they won't have heard or seen any of that. FG STAFF

However, even if this were successful, once those women join the wider prison, it is possible that they may not attend again. This suggests that while holding the reading groups in the Library is very positive for some women in the prison, as the Library provides a secure and calm environment, it may alienate others, who do not want to be associated with it.

3.7 Contribution of the Reading Group to wider prison life

The women were very clear that for them, the reading group was unlike anything else they did in prison, even reading to themselves or visiting the Library. Whether it was being part of a group, reading aloud, or discussing the poems and stories that particularly appealed to them, the women participants said that it had the power to take them away from being themselves and being in the prison, and few things ever did that for them (see also Section 3.1). Some of the staff were also aware that the reading group complemented some of the other activities that the women were engaged in, and could see the potential for the reading group to use literature to discuss some of the issues from a literary, philosophical and humanitarian that they can only deal with as issues of discipline, so a breach of rules rather than of morality:

It has other possibilities as well... The stuff that we, that is very difficult to tackle from a discipline point of view that potentially could be explored during a reading group, for example, I've got something that I'm going to have to look into where there was some racial abuse given by one particular prisoner. And the formal means of trying to put something in place and tackle it and stuff like that is quite draconian really and not likely to succeed, so you just... What [Reader] was saying was you could probably discuss it in a completely different environment that the person might actually engage with because the person's not going to engage with me, they're just going to see the wing manager, you know and so ... So there is possibilities I think there, [Reader] was interested in that, he could see the possibility of addressing people's

offending behaviour through discussion in the reading group ... that a perpetrator is more likely to address offending behaviour of that nature in that environment rather than with me. FG STAFF

While staff pointed out that some of the women who took part in the reading groups were undergoing multiple interventions to support their personal development, not just the reading group, they acknowledged the contribution of the reading group in supporting these initiatives. They highlighted the social and emotional development of the women through taking part in the reading group and through other interventions, and believed that by gaining these new skills, reinforced in different settings in different ways, the women were enabled to deal more effectively with emotions outside the group and to express their feelings to avoid conflict, anger, violence and self-harm.

- P1 *It runs side, like side by side really with what we're encouraging as well. I mean some of the recommendations for them, like some of the work they've done is to attend groups and ... they're the ideal situations to use the coping strategies that you know that they've picked up, we've taught you along the way. So again it's they're taking, they're also taking notice of what is being recommended for them and they're actually going to it and not just going for the sake of one or two weeks to say oh well I've been, they're actually going and staying and getting something back from it.*
- P2 *Yeah, I think we've definitely noticed a difference. And I do think you're right when you say it runs alongside other things because I wonder if the reading group on its own, for the women that we have, would be enough to help with some of those things. But I think it's helped massively with confidence, with self esteem ...*
- P3 *I agree.*
- P2 *... with reading ability, with vocabulary ability, they've been able to explain themselves and communicate with us better, being able to get up and take part in other treatments and other activities that we're putting on that they would never have done before. And I think undoubtedly that's helped and I can't see how it couldn't really.*
- P2 *No definitely. FG STAFF*

The staff were aware of the capacity for the women to learn different ways of behaving not only from taking part in the group, but by learning about human actions and behaviour from the literature. The literature had the potential to enable the women to discuss scenarios of action and reaction and to trace actions over time to look at the effects and consequences of behaviours, including the impact on others. That it was fiction made it easier to read and engage with, and one member of staff felt that this meant that they were more likely to respond and internalise the

possibilities of alternative patterns of behaviour than simply being given scenarios, or even being asked to reflect on their own actions:

I wonder when the women are starting their more in depth treatment as well, that some of the things that they can recognise from books, once they start to have a bit more insight into things, will like link over as well, so if there's like twists and things aren't always kind of as you think they're going to be or things can change and things can be done differently, do you remember, when we read about this. And actually that can be used in treatment, so like to underline once they've started to realise that things aren't always what they seem or that people deal with things in different ways because they'll see characters doing things differently in different books, so I think that can be quite helpful, especially with people who are really rigid or don't have much insight into their own behaviour. FG STAFF

The reading group therefore dovetailed with existing therapies and programmes for people within the prison, offering a unique alternative that also enabled women to consider the 'big issues' of life in a non-directive, non-goal orientated way. As discussed in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 the element of self-determination and choice of whether or not to participate in the group was very important to the women, and staff were aware that the success of the reading group in engaging the women's interest was likely to be linked to the fact that that they were not required to take part, and that it was not specifically labelled as a 'therapy':

I almost think sometimes if things are classed as kind of therapy almost, that there's that added pressure, even if you feel that you don't have to go, you do attend and then you're thinking am I here for this reason, am I supposed to be doing this, should I be doing that? And I just think it causes, creates problems whereas actually you can get a real therapeutic benefit from going without even having to even think or consider that. FG STAFF

Staff were asked how the groups were considered in the wider prison, and whether they had any suggestions, comments or criticisms of the model. Staff who had had some form of engagement with the project, or knew the women who were regular participants, were supportive of the project. In the following extract, the staff reflected that it wasn't doing any harm to the women, and this was clearly an important feature of anything introduced into that particular environment:

P1 I think it's been quite a good thing, up till now, definitely, and that's proved by the amount of people that go and still go.

ALL Mm mm.

P1 I can't think of anything negative I would say about it.

P2 I was going to say, it's not as if it could ever harm anything, it's ...

P3 It's certainly not having a detrimental effect on anything is it? And I think it probably has more of a positive effect than you initially think when you just think about somebody going and having a listen to a story. FG STAFF

Even those who said that they knew little about it, said that they had never heard anything bad about it, which they assured JR they would have done if there had been anything bad to say:

P1 I've never heard anything negative about the reading group if I'm honest.

ALL No.

P1 I'm just trying to think, I don't think I have, even in the gaol. FG STAFF

3.8 Engaging with women in the wider prison

One of the challenges for the project and for the Reader was firstly to get to join the group, and then come regularly to the group, and after the first group was set up, to form a second group. The women participants at one stage of the project tended to be those who already spent a considerable amount of their time in the Library, and this was often because they were deemed 'vulnerable' and so found working and being in other parts of the prison more challenging. The staff were also aware of this, and also the challenges of getting more women involved:

... to really say one way or the other. But I do think, there was some discussion ages ago about whether the women who tended to go quite regularly were people who already attended the Library or the Learning Shop regularly because they knew the staff, they knew Charlie, they knew the people that were in there and were quite comfortable with the atmosphere. Whereas I would imagine if it was maybe advertised more around the prison, that you maybe would get a different mix within there. Because I wonder how daunting it is for somebody to not only go to a reading group, which is something they've never done before, maybe don't really read all that often, or can't read, so they're having to go to a new place, do a new thing, from a different wing, mixing with people you don't know. And I would imagine that's really daunting for somebody to do. So I wonder how that could be improved, if any, at all. FG STAFF

The reader had invested considerable time and effort in making sure that women remembered to come to the group each week, and also to try and get women to join the group from all parts of the prison. The participants who came regularly to the groups through the research period tended to be on longer sentences, as they were perhaps more aware of the need to factor in a variety of activities to help pass the time, whereas women serving shorter sentences were reported to have very busy

programmes of activities concerned with their life outside (their legal case, probation and possibly child custody arrangements) and also preparing them for their discharge which might have prevented their attending regularly. These staff, who were talking towards the end of the project suggested that the cohesion of the groups might act to deter some women from talking part, although from JRs observations, people who joined established groups were immediately accepted by the readership, in the sense that they were given space to read and discuss, if they wanted, and there was no overt hostility observed. However, as these were the women who had come forward, it is hard to know who might not:

P1 ... I'm just thinking that there may be people who feel excluded from it at the minute because they haven't been going before and trying to join a group that's already established must be really quite a daunting thing to do. I wonder whether they could just like small kind of roadshows almost in different wings.

P2 Like taster sessions.

P1 Where people were invited along, the women who go could talk about what it was like because I would worry that when people are starting to be released and numbers do, there will be times where they're dwindling then build back up again, how they're building them back up, is it just kind of word of mouth or are they starting trying to approach people that maybe wouldn't normally go. FG STAFF

These staff seemed unaware that the Reader had already held a number of sessions at different times and in different parts of the prison and had got people involved in the project as a result. However such sessions were very time consuming to do, particularly as there were always new people coming in, hard to schedule for a time when the women were not busy, and hard to work out what to read to catch the interest of a group of unknown women. However given the time and resources, both the reader and staff were aware that this kind of outreach sessions could draw in women from across the prison. Another suggestion was for the Reader to hold groups more frequently, as staff could see how waiting a week to find out where they had got to in a story would be hard for women in prison, and that this would improve attendance at the group:

P1 Yeah.

P2 Yeah, definitely.

P3 Because I know myself from session to session from week to week , just to recap as well, it takes them a while then to remember, so even getting yourself

back to the place of where you were, it's that part of the story finished, to get yourself back into it again.

P2 Takes time ...

ALL Yeah.

P3 Not necessarily just for all the women but certainly for ours, their concentration and their motivation lapses so quickly at times that if they're kept interested more frequently, the more likely it is their attendance will stay high.

P4 It's a long time in prison.

P3 And we know from experience don't we?

ALL Yeah.

P3 It's really important ...

ALL Yeah.

P3 And I think it would work well if it maybes is on at the beginning of the week and then the end of the week, it's something for them to like look forward to at the end of the week, then also once the weekend's over to ...

P5 You'd have to leave it like a TV soap, you'd have to leave the story hanging at the end! (all laugh) FG STAFF

Some of the staff in the focus groups reflected that they were largely unaware of what actually went on in the groups, but having listened to other staff discussing the participation of women, they felt that should have been made aware of what was going on, and they believed other staff should know as well:

P1 That's the main thing, if somebody likes reading or ... They might never have been in a group like that, they might never even have read a book but there could be maybes a taster sessions they go to where something in there just grabs them and they think, I like this, I want to see a bit more, without having to go with a friend or without whoever is there, just the actual thing they're going for is the reading group itself.

P2 I think the staff could play a big part there too couldn't they, by encouraging, if they've got people locked behind the door on a particular morning, I think you should maybes try the reading group, it might be good for you or ... And try and gently persuade them to go. They might go once and like it. So I think the staff have a big part to play.

P3 I don't think the staff know enough about it.

P4 But, that was my next thing I was going to say, but I don't think a lot of staff know. FG STAFF

4. FINDINGS FROM THE RECORDS OF THE READER IN RESIDENCE

The Literature

How Did Women Engage With the Novels, Stories and Poems? Which Literature Worked? How and Why did it Work?

4.1 What did the groups read?

The range of material was very varied (see Appendix 6) crossing centuries and genres, according to the interest and choice of the participants, guided by the project worker. A wide range of literature has always been integral to the Get Into Reading model (Davis, 2009) and established as one of the most important components of the intervention (Billington et al, 2011). This study showed the project worker's commitment to the Get Into Reading custom of offering a rich rather than narrow diet – based on the seriousness and quality of the literature, past experience of 'what works' in read aloud groups, and the agreed taste and interests of the group members themselves.

4.2 Low Newton GIR and non-custodial GIR

It is noteworthy that not only was the model and choice of literature unchanged in key respects from the one used in community mental health settings. Equally, individual responses, the group dynamic and the project worker's role in relation to the literature (as illustrated specifically and in detail at 4.4 to 4.6 below) were recognisably continuous with those observed and reported in previous studies of community reading groups.

As in non-secure GIR groups, participants were observed to become more confident, more willing to talk, listen and interact with the other group participants. They appeared to welcome the reading groups as a stimulating, meaningful, challenging activity. Often, reading group members read aloud for the first time since school and experienced pleasure both in the doing and the sense of accomplishment it brought. Enjoyment of reading seemed revitalized, renewed or discovered for the first time. Increasingly, participants were able to make choices and give indications of preference that were stimulated by the intrinsic interest of the book, regardless of topic or difficulty (see below) or relative remoteness in time. One group chose to read

a Charles Dickens novel, for example. The inherent difficulty of the material was never in itself a difficulty or obstacle but more often appeared a cooperative challenge.

The role of the group facilitator in expert choice of literature, in making the literature 'live' in the room and become accessible to participants through skilful reading aloud, and in sensitively eliciting and guiding discussion of the literature, were, as always in GIR groups, critical in creating individual confidence and group trust. The facilitator's social awareness and communicative skills, as well as alert presence in relation to the literature, the individual and the dynamics of the group, was a complex and crucial element of the reading group experience.

Hearing other people's opinions and sharing details of their own experiences in discussion was also valued. The role of the group in offering support and a sense of community was fostered particularly by the shared reading model of GIR which included everyone together in the reading experience. Likewise the discussion elicited in response to the texts, where personal ideas, feelings, opinions and experiences were mutually shared, was demonstrably critical in 'knitting' the group together.

4.3 Low Newton GIR and other custodial GIR groups

There were, however, some distinct emphases within this broad continuum of responses to the literature which resonate with observed and reported outcomes in other secure settings.

Groups at Low Newton not only faced distinct pressures and distractions in the process of becoming established (see 3.3 above) and in the settling of group members. In custodial settings, GIR project workers often find that 'life inside' dominates the atmosphere – manifested either in visible agitation or anger or in disengagement from the literature and discussion. 'Serious attention difficulties', 'poor concentration' and 'fidgetiness', were reported by the Low Newton project worker in the early sessions of each group. More, there are commonly higher levels of explicit resistance, in the initial stages, both to the idea of reading, and to the invitation and encouragement to share feelings and experience in a group. 'Interest is never feigned,' a GIR project worker at Hyde Bank, Belfast says; 'the women are too honest for that. Indifference,

however, often is.’ The culture and relationship dynamics which dominate outside of the GIR group, ‘require and raise a defensive front,’ as one GIR project worker at HMP Liverpool has described it, and some of the instances of disruptive behaviour reported by the Low Newton project worker seem related to this tendency. There is often marked and verbalised distrust of relationships also. ‘The women can be very cynical about male/female relationships: for whatever reason, life has taught them that romance is a fallacy. Human relationships for them have been, at times, cruel, testing, and destructive.’ Though troubled personal histories can be at the root of an initial reluctance to engage, they can also produce an intensity of response unusual for a GIR group and a strong challenge to the project worker. At Low Newton, one group was unable to continue with John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* (long a tried and tested GIR favourite) because the subject matter proved too upsetting for the participants, ‘who could not cope with the way events spiral out of control’. Two participants began to cry, finding the writing ‘too close’, ‘reminding them too much of their own lives and in particular their offending’.

These considerable challenges are balanced by the fact that progress, and a sense of uplift, and often of expressed gratitude for the reading group, is frequently more marked in GIR groups in custodial settings. The instances which follow in sections 4.4. to 4.6 give abundant evidence of this trend, but the session referred to above, in which *The Pearl* was abandoned, is representative. The session, says the project worker, was ‘saved’ by the poem – William Henley’s ‘Invictus’ - which concludes: ‘It matters not how strait the gate,/How charged with punishments the scroll./I am the master of my fate:/I am the captain of my soul’. The project worker recorded how:

All nodded in agreement and were visibly moved by the final stanza, saying that for all the darkness they kept their 'unconquerable soul'. One reader spoke very movingly about six months she had spent in segregation, her self-harm and suicide attempts. She then looked up and smiled and said ‘you know, through it all, I remained, I'm still here - I'm alive, “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.”’ To finish the group, this reader stood up and read the whole poem again, and read it very well indeed. This led to applause

from the group. She then announced that she was going immediately to type it out so everyone could have a copy to stick on their walls.

Within the general trends outlined above, however, the researcher (JB) has isolated a number of key areas which (i) have emerged as significant aspects of the participants' responses to the literature (ii) appear to have contributed to any beneficial effect of GIR (iii) are likely to reward further investigation in a future research study.

4.4 Memory and Continuities

GIR's power to elicit articulate personal memory was strongly in evidence in the Low Newton GIR groups. This phenomenon has significance in view of research evidence for memory impairment during periods of mental ill health (depression) and low self-esteem (Williams and Scott, 1988; Lemogne et al, 2006). Current self-views and goals influence recollection of the past, such that is there not only a lower retrieval of positive memory, but also a lack of specificity in the recollection. Autobiographical memory becomes characterised by over-generality, with a tendency to recall sequences of events or time periods and/or extended or repeated events rather than specific episodes or instances, and this is more evident in positive than in negative memory. Depressed people find it all the harder to imagine present or future alternatives, since they are less able to retrieve specific episodes from the past which support them in a 'better' view of themselves. In this light, the diverse modes of remembering the past which occur in the reading group have strong potential significance for future therapeutic practice and research.

The Past

Memories of the past were divided roughly into three types:

Type 1 - Convivial sharing (often humorous or joyful) of common past experiences relating to childhood and relationships as well as to the legal and penal system. Group 2 for example, beginning the novel *Kes*, were moved to plenty of reminiscences about earlier times, mixed with some startling stories of childhood misdemeanours. 'The stealing of milk bottles and ringing doorbells was certainly familiar to the entire group. The story quickly raised discussion on a variety of topics including libraries and librarians good and bad, old money, clubs and drinking. The

moonlight climb was marvelled at by the group and this led to discussion of people's climbing pasts and some hair-raising descriptions of tower blocks and other teenage antics. There were also shared reminiscences of school experiences, pet stories, betting shops and fish and chips.'

In Group 1, *Great Expectations* elicited humorous exchanges around past experiences of lawyers (provoked by the character of Mr Jaggers) and of men who take pride in DIY and gardening (elicited character of Mr Wemmick – whose home, literally, is his home-made castle). Reading of the protagonist Pip's journey back home, sharing the ride with two convicts, provoked comment on the humour and humanity of the story at this point, especially in the descriptions of the convicts' reactions. 'One group member told a very funny story about a visit to outside hospital where she was handcuffed to a guard and the other patients reactions to her. The parallels with the Dickens's chapter were remarkable.'

A reading of Robert Browning's poem, 'One Way of Love,' 'brought to life fond reminiscences of adolescence, the unrequited love of the poem being related to teenage crushes and the lute substituted by an electric guitar'. On occasion, the 'atmosphere' of the literature was more evocative, on a first reading at least, than its content. On reading Gilda O'Neill's *East End Tales* the group expressed appreciation for this gentle stimulus of the 'olden days' and 'all contributed to a long chat about old money, clothes and the hard work of the past'. One participant remembered reciting Howard Davies's poem 'Leisure' as a girl in 1963, and stood up to read it one last time to conclude the session.

Type 2 - Individual recollection of serious watersheds or events of moment in past life.

After a reading of Doris Lessing's short story 'Flight', one participant 'spoke about her own family extensively and reminisced for a long time about when she left home'. Reading *Great Expectations* led one participant to comment on how perceptive Pip, the protagonist, could be on reflection, while unable to 'act it out' and that this 'was very much like experiences in her teens'. Another participant related the character Miss Havisham's condition to modern understandings of mental illness and trauma.

She spoke of ‘how strong the sense of embarrassment and denial can be’, and then disclosed that she ‘had not left the house herself for four years, and movingly talked about a shrinking world and how it gets harder and harder to change’.

Type 3 - Awareness of the past as a possible source of solace as well as regret (see below 4.5).

At the conclusion of a session, a participant refocused the group’s attention on the final lines of Ted Hughes’s poem, ‘The Horses’ -

In din of the crowded streets, going among the years, the faces,
May I still meet my memory in so lonely a place
Between the streams and the red clouds, hearing curlews,
Hearing the horizons endure

-and ‘eloquently spoke of how whatever you've done there are beautiful moments in your past that can't be taken from you’.

These are representative samples of memories which, as the ensuing sections demonstrate, are a constant feature of the group sessions. Given the potential significance of autobiographical memory in grounding the self - providing coherent narratives which help ‘organise’ a sense of identity across time - GIR might offer the kind of cognitive activity which can help recover the meaning and value of personal memory, and build resilience against vulnerability to further breakdown.

The past, present and continuity

Quite a lot of the ‘recollection’ was a calling to mind of a past life, outside prison, which is continuous and concurrent with a present life, inside prison.

On reading *Holes*, Stanley’s and Zero’s ‘fantasising about the food they’ll eat worked well to start a discussion about first foods on release, a popular bitter-sweet topic’. In *Great Expectations*, too, the subject of food always created a lot of interest and debate. But the novel also provoked serious thinking about class, age and – in the case of Wemmick’s ‘castle’ – the keeping of work and home or private life separate. One person spoke about ‘having to do the same thing in prison, to general agreement’. There was always a strong liking for the evocations of nature. Quite a number of poems and stories generated appreciation of the natural world, or wild animals,

flowers, landscape, or scenery. These responses resonate with previously published observations of prison reading groups which found that shared literature helped to ‘find’ or ‘recover’ a more complete and multi-dimensional experience than might readily be realized in a captive environment. ‘Participants are sometimes shocked by the sudden sense that mere print on thin paper can transmit such a primary and full sense of life. Fiction and poetry can convey the very feel of the sensory world – the sun on one’s face, rain on one’s head, sand between one’s toes.’ (Billington, 2011).

The power of literature to reconnect people to their former lives and selves, through evoking and stimulating memory, has been especially noticed in the use of GIR in dementia care homes where a sense of connected life and identity is often demonstrably restored. In prison, such rescue work is perhaps equally important, if the ideal of rehabilitation is founded upon the fostering or creation of a more responsibly integrated self, as a preliminary to the return to civic life.

One striking aspect of the prison reading groups was participants’ use of the literature as a link to that continuing and ongoing life. Writer and journalist, Erwan James, has spoken of how he sent Shakespeare’s Sonnet 29 (see 4.5 below) from prison to his estranged daughter, to try to reignite his relationship with her. Notably, participants explored this possibility of making the literature a means of renewing connection to loved ones. One participant, attending her final reading group before her release, thanked the group leader, saying that ‘it was the only thing that has kept her sane during her time in prison’ and said she was going ‘to read the book [*Great Expectations*] aloud with her husband’. Participants became increasingly eager to discuss ‘ways of sharing our reading with families’ and ‘creatively widen the group to include families’. One told how ‘her 10 year old daughter has started *Great Expectations* because she wants to be reading the same thing as her mother’ and the mother’s sister is helping her daughter to work through the book. Another participant often spoke of ‘the ways she shares the poems with her husband and writes to him a synopsis of the group and how she tries to read the same books as her daughter.’ A Carol Ann Duffy poem reminded one reader of her grandad and she took a copy to send to him. The possibility was enthusiastically discussed ‘of holding a reading group during family visit days - all agreed that this would be a great idea’.

At the same time, the books also clearly offered a strong sense of continuity within the prison and between institutions. When *Great Expectations* was well underway, one participant declared ‘she wanted to take the book back to her pad and finish it tonight’. One reader took copies of Carol Ann Duffy’s ‘Big Sue’ and ‘Now Voyager’ to stick on her wall. Another participant, who was being transferred to another secure establishment, asked about the possibility of joining an equivalent group there. It transpired later that this participant had written to another member of the group to say ‘she’d taken *Great Expectations* out of the Library as soon as she’d arrived at her new prison and had since finished it’.

4.5. Recognition

One striking feature of the project worker’s log was the prevalence of verbalised or otherwise explicit recollection of, or familiarity with, situations, thoughts, feelings, which resonated with personal experience, past or present. As these responses had a quality distinct from (if connected to) memory or sympathetic-imaginative identification, they are here designated collectively instances of ‘recognition’.

Sometimes, these moments, too, were shared. A reading of Raymond Carver’s short story ‘Cathedral’ led immediately to a ‘perceptive exchange of views on the character of the narrator and then the group related this to their own experiences of small mindedness’. Alice Walker’s ‘Everyday Use’ provoked ‘an interesting discussion about heritage and how much the narrator was like ourselves’. At the start of *Great Expectations*, the project worker was ‘impressed by how quickly and how strongly the story gripped the group. The drama of the narrative was heightened by the setting of the group, but the women really liked the penal references. The hints of domestic abuse were discussed, but in a thoughtful and sensitive way ... The prison visit [in *Great Expectations*] caused quite a few nods of recognition and quiet reflection even if people didn’t dwell on the similarities’. The same novel occasioned discussion about ‘consciences and the importance of truth telling. There were lots of non-verbalised nods and sighs when Pip wrestled with the idea of telling Joe about what he had done [stealing food to feed a convict]. One participant declared: “but we all feel better when we tell the truth”’.

Poetry was also a strong stimulus for such recognitions. A reading of Matthew Arnold's 'The Surface Steam' -

Below the surface-stream, shallow and light,
Of what we say we feel ... there flows
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,
The central stream of what we feel indeed.

-elicited thoughtful observations on the ways in which emotion is hidden in prison. A reading of Shakespeare's Sonnet 29 created strong personal resonances for the group, one group member saying of the first movement - beginning 'When, in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes, I all alone beweep my outcast state' - 'This is us, this is how we are seen, outcasts'. Thereafter, in response to the poem's affirmative second movement - which concludes 'For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings/ That then I scorn to change my state with kings' - one group member talked with unwonted honesty of the importance of having love.

On notable occasions, as in the final example above, the recognitions were more individual at one level. But the personal achievement in each instance was demonstrably enabled by the shared literary thinking. In *Great Expectations*, when the newly elevated central character, Pip, receives a visit from his humble, kindly guardian, Joe, there was 'appreciation from the group for the reintroduction of Joe and much discussion about how things can change when people have moved on. The poignant sadness of the meeting really seemed to hit home for two readers. Pip's own confusion about whether he should go home or not - and the lies that he told himself seemed to strike chords. One participant made a moving contribution about being embarrassed by family, and asked the group to consider their own families and their reaction to imprisonment. She also read, which is very unusual for her, and was clearly very pleased with herself for having done so'.

In one key session, Mary Oliver's poem, 'Wild Geese', led to a discussion, said the project worker, which 'went to the heart of what I feel Get Into Reading can be'. Here is the poem, followed by the project worker's comments:

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.

You do not have to walk on your knees

for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.

You only have to let the soft animal of your body

love what it loves.

Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.

Meanwhile the world goes on.

Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain

are moving across the landscapes,

over the prairies and the deep trees,

the mountains and the rivers.

Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,

are heading home again.

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,

the world offers itself to your imagination,

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—

over and over announcing your place

in the family of things.

‘One participant, new to the group, was happy to read the poem aloud. She then was very eloquent about how the poem spoke directly to her of the difficulties of living with remorse and the importance of always trying to be part of the world. This broadened out to a discussion about the importance of imagination to sustain people, particularly when in prison. Another group member then went on to make the link with the group - how the group helped sustain imaginative life in prison. There was a general nodding of agreement to this suggestion. She went on to say the poem really reminded her of another group member, who had been quite quiet but was looking very thoughtful. The other participant nodded emphatically and said, "This is me". She then told us how she shared everything we read with her husband and would be immediately sending him a letter with this poem, telling him how it made her feel.’

4.6. Mentalisation

‘What is striking about the conversations which take place in prison (as in all GIR groups) is that participants routinely inhabit not just one position or perspective ‘not their own’ ... Rather, even as readers predict forwards, they must enter two or sometimes more perspectives at the same time.’ (Billington, 2011)

Many of the reading group sessions at Low Newton suggested the power of the literature to encourage the capacity to make sense of oneself and others in terms of subjective states and mental processes. Understanding one’s own and other people’s likely thoughts, feelings, wishes, desires (‘mentalisation’) is a major developmental achievement, believed biologically to originate in the context of infant attachment relationships, and strongly to influence adolescent and adult social and interpersonal relationships and behaviours. In mentalisation-based theories of some psychological conditions, including Borderline Personality Disorder, unstable or reduced mentalising capacity is a core feature or symptom (Fonagy and Bateman, 2008; Harari et al, 2008).

Some of the examples of apparent mentalisation of self and situation, overlap with or begin as ‘recognitions’ which then generate a further level of reflection or thought. The opening lines of William Blake’s ‘The Schoolboy’

How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring?”

attracted much comment and the lines were immediately associated with the participants’ own situation. But in a second, related movement, one participant displayed strong imaginative sympathy with the caged bird, not merely as a metaphor for her own and the children’s situation but as an affectingly tragic phenomenon in its own right - since the bird is innocently ‘born for joy’. In response to Mark Strand’s ‘Lines for Winter’, beginning

Tell yourself
As it gets cold and gray falls from the air

That you will go on
Walking, hearing
The same tune no matter where
You find yourself

one participant talked eloquently about how it true it rang for her, that ‘everything isn't always all right, but it is possible to keep going, and to remain true to oneself even when you cannot continue as you had expected or hoped’, where ‘you’ seems to hover between first person singular (‘I’) and first person plural (‘we’) recognition. A reading of Henry Davies’s poem ‘Leisure’, elicited ‘some really quite moving talk about “prison time” and using its space to think. One reader talked about a bunch of flowers and how she looked at them with a focus and concentration here that she had never done outside prison. Another reminisced about the “time to stop and stare” her father had had, and sounded a note of regret that she has not always done this. She also looked forward to an imagined future where she could take more time.

For the project worker, one of the most compelling examples of mentalisation occurred at the conclusion of Sherman Alexie’s short story, ‘What You Pawn I Will Redeem’. The story had ‘worked incredibly well’ with the group, one participant opening up about her own homeless past, others about their alcohol and drug use, as the sympathetic protagonist and the humour in the story helped ‘opened up a space’ for discussion of serious matters. ‘The issue of trust and being trusted when you have nothing really resonated with the whole group.’ At one point the story talks about an offender spending a year trying to work out why he'd offended. ‘One participant immediately responded to this, and said, in a new departure for her, "You know, lots of us are like this - I did bad things, and now I'm here and I spend my time trying to work out why I did them and I don't know". This level of honesty from a serious offender felt like a real break through.’

The examples from the reading groups quoted above suggest that mentalisation is a common, even intrinsic phenomenon in GIR groups. Sometimes the ‘thinking from another point of view’ is inseparable from what might be called ‘sympathetic identification’ with a fictional character or situation. For instance, in one chapter of

Kes, ‘there was general revulsion at the failings of the head teacher and the unfair treatment of the messenger boy by the head teacher’. At other times, it is difficult to distinguish possible mentalisation from possible projective identification with the situation. ‘Billy attacking his brother drew laughter from some of the group but one participant who had been reading, *said she had found reading it very difficult and was moved by this boy that had been pushed to the limits.*’ But some of this literary thinking is very subtle, and very clearly summons new perspectives. ‘The visceral descriptions of feeding and meat in this story alienated some of the readers. One participant was visibly unsettled by the description of the hawk eating the sparrow. *Another, however, made some very good contributions about the way the hawk’s calmness and wildness related to Billy’s.*’

In one group GIR’s capacity to encourage mentalising tendencies in most group members was thrown into sharp relief by one member in whom such cognitive activity was unaccustomed. This participant had presented some challenges to the project worker, especially in some of her highly individual responses to the poetry. The other group participants, for example, had found George Herbert’s ‘Affliction’ a ‘powerful’ poem about inward pain and trouble, and connected William Henley’s poem ‘Invictus’ (as we have seen) with aspects of their own situation of imprisonment. This participant described these interpretations as ‘misreadings’, or dismissed the poems as unnecessarily difficult, or blamed the project worker for failing to read the poems in a way that made them accessible. These views were often steadfastly retained by the participant, who was resistant to any modification of them by the project worker’s or other group-members’ views. Conversely, when the group struggled with the meaning of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 116, this participant ‘claimed the poem was both beautiful and easy to understand and came a bit too close to saying that other’s failure to “get” the poem was because of personal defects’. A similarly absorbed concentration was often shown in relation to the prose works. ‘When she started to read aloud she wanted to keep reading, and when she reluctantly stopped and another prisoner began to read, she sometimes became belligerent, correcting them when they read.’ (This group member would also ‘unreasonably expect the group to re-start the reading for her benefit if she were delayed’.) When the group were ‘very moved by the transformation of the narrator’ in Raymond Carver’s story

‘Cathedral’ and regarded the story as ‘a plea for human relationship and openness’, this participant found the story’s conclusion ‘disappointing’ having found the darkness of the story quite funny, making a good, if unexpected, case for it being a black comedy. Again, in *Great Expectations*, while the casual domestic violence Mrs Joe inflicts on Pip was seen as shocking by most of the group, this participant confidently declared Mrs Joe, ‘strong and admirable’, and couldn’t understand others’ dislike of the character, characteristically ‘making this an “I’m right, your wrong issue”’. In response the project worker was ‘more explicit in stating the expectation that we should be able to hold within the group a multitude of potentially contradictory views, and there doesn’t have to be one right answer. This seemed a genuinely new idea to her! From this point we were able to have a fascinating discussion, particularly focussing on whether Joe was weak in letting Mrs Joe dominate the household. The participant was able to contribute fully without demanding everyone agree with her. A breakthrough!’ (By contrast with this session, this participant later ‘*thoughtfully* commented that Miss Havisham was too feeble and this led onto an important discussion of the latter’s character and the steely malice at her core’.)

From this point in the reading group, it is possible to trace a distinct, if uneven, shift in mentalising activity in this participant, and it is perhaps significant that these shifts occurred in relation to prose narrative, where a sustained imaginative attention and sympathetic engagement with other views and worlds is demanded, in contrast to poetry’s often briefer intensity. (Notably, this participant responded very positively to Helen Hunt Jackson’s poem ‘October’s Bright Blue Weather’, liking its ‘narrative nature’.)

The snapshots presented below of the group’s response to reading John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* – an achievement in itself, given the other group’s distressed inability to continue with the book – demonstrates, in general terms, the degree to which the inhabiting of alternative viewpoints is intrinsic to GIR for most participants. It also shows in specific terms, how the participant described above (designated **A** below, and demonstrably ‘part of’ the group, not resistant to it) gradually became adjusted to the expectation and/or stimulus occasioned by (i) the literature per se and (ii) the

shared reading of the novels and poetry, to mentalise her own and others' experience, where 'other' refers both to members of the group and the human presences in the literature.

Both myself and the group were a little unsettled at first but then the story took hold and the group took off. The room was noisier than usual but once we were involved in the story it mattered less. All three women had a lot to say about the story and the injustice of the doctors actions. There was an extensive discussion of music in the story. A wasn't sure about the story to begin with but then really began to engage with it. When she started to read aloud she wanted to keep reading, and would have done to the end of the book if she'd been allowed.

The start of today's group was rather ungainly as we recapped the story - it had been a while since we read it and two of the group hadn't been there, but once we started reading they really got in to it. There was an intense discussion about the dangers of money. One participant was firmly of the opinion that it corrupts all and that the pearl should be thrown away. There was some discussion about trust and how you can know who your friends are - there was a high level of distrust in the group particularly when they talked about prison life. Another group member related it to her own experience - she said prison had taught her that material goods were less important, that as long as she had family she was going to be OK.

This group was slow to start, but once it was going it was difficult to stop the extensive discussion about the morality of greed, money and the class system. A in particular was adamant that Kino should not give into the poor offer of the sellers. Other were less sure particularly because of the disempowered situation of Kino and his family. It was difficult to get people speaking today not because they were uninterested but because their attention was so rapt. This was the chapter that had caused so much consternation with the other group. This group handled it much better. There was an interesting conversation about Juana's reaction to Kino's violence, with one participant drawing parallels with her own life. Another was moved by the change in Kino, thinking he'd 'sold his soul' but that it was important for

him to keep on fighting. When the chapter was finished the discussion became very animated, particularly on the subject of literature with a social awareness.

*The quietness of this group was even more pronounced this week as we reached the end of *The Pearl*. The whole group was really wrapped up with the story. The tragic end really got to us all, but the sense of achievement in reaching the end was palpable. One participant, who doesn't read much independently, was really impressed. Normally very quiet she shook her head at the end of the book and then said "that was really, really good. Really, really sad but in a good way." All members were keen to impress how much the story has meant to them.*

The habitual practice of understanding from a range of imagined positions and points of view here, as well as the progress in mentalisation made by members of the group for whom this is an unaccustomed cognitive activity, is itself instructive of GIR's potential to galvanise new forms of mentality. The clinical implication of the mentalisation-based model of Personality Disorder and other psychological conditions is that, for treatment to be successful, it should have mentalisation as its focus and at the very least stimulate development of mentalising as a by-product. That is to say, it needs to address the patient's capacity *to think about* behaviours and relationships, rather than emphasising relational or behavioural patterns themselves; it must seek to enhance and facilitate flexibility of thought processes, tease out understanding and generate alternative perspectives (Fonagy and Bateman 2008; Harari et al 2010). Though the findings outlined above in relation to GIR's capacity to stimulate mentalisation are exploratory only, they lay the foundation for future research into GIR's efficacy as a mental health treatment or complementary aid.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. GIR transfers to custodial settings and has the capacity to extend from Library's and units to the wings, association rooms and other parts of the prison: the intervention is flexible, adaptive, and fluid.
2. Women engage in GIR voluntarily. Given creation of the right assurances and support, and provision of appropriate reading material and Reader, the women

will engage. Group composition can be challenging, however, and the integration of older women with young offenders, and of prisoners with particular backgrounds and histories, needs to be managed to ensure people are able to engage.

3. GIR helps to improve well-being for women for whom little else can. It enhances self-esteem, and encourages a sense of achievement and self-worth, and of social participation and even friendship. GIR gives participants something else to think about, that they can carry with them back to the wings, and many support their participation by starting and/or continuing to engage with the Library in order to read in their rooms, under the momentum and energy provided by the reading groups.
4. GIR could be further rolled out on the basis of this study. Women were concerned that if they were moved to another prison GIR would not be available to them. It was their view that GIR should be available to them wherever they were, and on their release into their communities
5. Further areas for research are strongly suggested by the findings of this study, in particular: how to engage staff in GIR; how to engage with younger women, particular those serving shorter sentences; identifying what books and poems ‘work’ with different groups of women and why; discovering the psychological mechanisms and processes which help to improve well-being.

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7.APPENDICES

7.1. Appendix 1.

Centre Number: HMP Low Newton
REC Reference: 11/H0903/5

Participant Information Sheet (Staff)

Reading Group at HMP Low Newton

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what this involves. Please talk to others about the study if you wish to.

Part 1 – tells you why the study is taking place and what will happen if you take part
Part 2 gives you more detailed information about the conduct of the study

Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Part 1

What is the purpose of this study?

Although the popularity of reading groups in the UK has never been higher and some reading-and-health projects have been started, there has been relatively little research in the United Kingdom on how the act of reading and discussing poems, prose and stories may influence people's health and sense of wellbeing.

The aim of this research is to involve people who volunteer for a reading group (set up by The Reader Organisation) at HMP Low Newton in a study to explore (i) whether The Reader Organisation's successful community 'Get into Reading' programme can be transferred to a prison (ii) whether there are any benefits to prisoners (in terms of well-being) of taking part in shared reading programme.

Why have I been chosen?

You have shown an interest in the reading groups at HMP Low Newton and/or you have had contact with the reading group and/or people participating in a reading group.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to take part, or withdraw, or not take part will not affect your working life.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in an interview and talk about your contact with the reading group and participants, and assess the contribution of the groups to prison life and the lives of the women participants. There are no right or wrong answers here, and we would like people to feel that they can express their views openly.

Are there any disadvantages or risks if I take part?

There are no risks or harms associated with taking part in this research. However if you have said something and you wish that you had not said it, or you do not wish it to be repeated in any way, then you can ask that it is not included as part of the research data.

What are the benefits of taking part?

We hope that the information from this study will support the continuation of this group at the HMP Low Newton and could be used to support the case for setting up reading groups in other prison settings.

What happens when the research study stops?

After we have collected the data for the research, we will spend some time analysing it, and then we will prepare a written summary of the findings that will be made available to all the participants. This summary will include details of how to access a copy of the short report of this study that will be available online, or as a hard copy on request.

What if there is a problem?

Any complaint about the study will be addressed, and more detailed information is given in Part 2.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, all the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The details are included in Part 2.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact either Jude Robinson by telephone on (0151) 794 2981, or at HaCCRU, Thompson Yates Building, Brownlow Hill, University of Liverpool. L69 3GB or Josie Billington on (0151) 794 2734 or at School of English, Cypress Building, Chatham Street, University of Liverpool. L69 7ZR.

This completes Part 1 of the Information Sheet. If the information on Part 1 has interested you and you are considering participation, please continue to read Part 2 before making any decisions.

Part 2

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide that you want to withdraw from the study, then depending on what you wish to happen, your data can be withdrawn from our analysis, or you can have your contribution so far included.

What if there is a problem?

Should you have a concern about any aspect of your involvement with this research project, you should ask to speak with the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions and address any concerns in the first instance, (Jude Robinson, (0151) 794 2981; Josie Billington (0151) 794 2734). If you remain unhappy, and wish to complain formally, you can do this through the University of Liverpool Complaints Procedure. Details can be obtained from the researcher or from the University of Liverpool (0151) 794 2000.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, your taking part in the study will be kept confidential to the project. All data will be anonymised, and stored securely at the University of Liverpool for seven years, and then destroyed. The anonymised data will be seen only by members of the research team, and will not be used for a further study. Your name will not be used in any published material resulting from the study, including reports. These procedures are compliant with the Data Protection Act (1998).

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research study will be summarised and sent in either a written form, or as a CD or tape, to all of the participants in the research. A further brief report of the findings will be made available to participants, and also to key stakeholders within HMP Low Newton and at The Reader Organisation, and to other people interested in reading and health. We also hope to publish the findings in a peer-reviewed publication, and to present at relevant conferences. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

Who is organising and funding this research?

This exploratory piece of research is being funded by the Ministry of Justice.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favourable ethical opinion by Northern & Yorkshire Research Ethics Committee.

You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project

7.2. Appendix 2.

Centre Number: HMP Low Newton
REC Reference: 11/H0903/5

Participant Information Sheet for Women Participants

Reading Group at HMP Low Newton

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what this involves. Please talk to others about the study if you wish to. Part 1 – tells you why the study is taking place and what will happen if you take part and Part 2 gives you more detailed information about the conduct of the study. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information, and take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Part 1

What is the purpose of this study?

Although the popularity of reading groups in the UK has never been higher and some reading-and-health projects have been started, there has been relatively little research in the United Kingdom on how the act of reading and discussing poems, prose and stories may influence people's health and sense of wellbeing.

The aim of this research is to involve people who volunteer for a reading group (set up by The Reader Organisation) at HMP Low Newton in a study to explore (i) whether The Reader Organisation's successful community 'Get into Reading' programme can be transferred to a prison (ii) whether there are any benefits to prisoners (in terms of well-being) of taking part in shared reading programme.

Why have I been chosen?

You have shown an interest in taking part in a reading group at HMP Low Newton.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep, and be asked to sign a consent form when you join the reading group. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to take part, or withdraw, or not take part will not affect the standard of care you receive.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Observation of reading group sessions

The researchers, Jude Robinson and Josie Billington, will be attending 12 reading group sessions (once a month over 12 months). They will be there as observers, and will be making some notes throughout the session, but they will not be taking part in the discussion. We may include verbatim quotations from the sessions in reports, the research summary and articles, but your name will not be mentioned in any part of the written material. The observed reading group sessions will take place at the usual time and in the usual way, and should last the same time (just over an hour).

Focus group discussion

You will be given a separate information sheet and asked to take part in a focus group after the twelve observed reading group sessions. You do not have to take part in both parts of the

research, and you can take part in the reading groups and not take part in the focus group discussion if you wish.

Are there any disadvantages or risks if I take part?

There are no risks or harms associated with taking part in this research. However if you have said something that has been observed and you wish that you had not said it, or you do not wish it to be repeated in any way, then you can ask that it is not included as part of the research data.

What are the benefits of taking part?

We hope that the information from this study will support the continuation of this group at the HMP Low Newton and could be used to support the case for setting up reading groups in other prison settings.

What happens when the research study stops?

After we have collected the data for the research, we will spend some time analysing it, and then we will prepare a written summary of the findings that will be made available to all the participants. Audio tape or CD versions will be made available if preferred. This summary will include details of how to access a copy of the short report of this study that will be available online, or as a hard copy on request.

What if there is a problem?

Any complaint about the study will be addressed, and more detailed information is given in Part 2.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes, all the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential. The details are included in Part 2.

Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact either Jude Robinson by telephone on (0151) 794 2981, or at Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, Eleanor Rathbone Building, Bedford Street South, Liverpool L69 7ZA or Josie Billington on (0151) 794 2734 or at School of English, Cypress Building, Chatham Street, University of Liverpool. L69 7ZR.

This completes Part 1 of the Information Sheet. If the information on Part 1 has interested you and you are considering participation, please continue to read Part 2 before making any decisions.

Part 2

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you decide that you want to withdraw from the study, then depending on what you wish to happen, your data can be withdrawn from our analysis, or you can have your contribution so far included.

What if there is a problem?

Should you have a concern about any aspect of your involvement with this research project, you should ask to speak with the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions and address any concerns in the first instance, (Jude Robinson, (0151) 794 2981; Josie Billington (0151) 794 2734). If you remain unhappy, and wish to complain formally, you can

do this through the University of Liverpool Complaints Procedure. Details can be obtained from the researcher or from the University of Liverpool (0151) 794 2000.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, your taking part in the study will be kept confidential to the project. All data will be anonymised, and stored securely at the University of Liverpool for seven years, and then destroyed. The anonymised data will be seen only by members of the research team, and will not be used for a further study. Your name will not be used in any published material resulting from the study, including reports. These procedures are compliant with the Data Protection Act (1998).

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research study will be summarised and sent in either a written form, or as a CD or tape, to all of the participants in the research. A further brief report of the findings will be made available to participants, and also to key stakeholders within HMP Low Newton and at The Reader Organisation, and to other people interested in reading and health. We also hope to publish the findings in a peer-reviewed publication, and to present at relevant conferences. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

Who is organising and funding this research?

This exploratory piece of research is being funded by the Ministry of Justice.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study was given a favourable ethical opinion by Northern & Yorkshire Research Ethics Committee.

You will be given a copy of this Information Sheet and a signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project

7.3. Appendix 3

Centre Number: HMP Low Newton
REC Reference: 11/H0903/5

**Consent Form – Reading Groups (Staff)
HMP Low Newton**

Please tick or initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 11th January 2011 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider The information and to ask questions, and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that this discussion will be audio-recorded and transcribed, but only the researcher and transcriber will hear the recording, which will be destroyed at the end of the project

4. I understand that quotes from the focus group discussion may be reproduced verbatim in a written summary, and/or a report, and/or a published journal article, but my name will not be included.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Jude Robinson

Name of person
taking consent

Date

Signature

7.4. Appendix 4

Centre Number: HMP Low Newton
REC Reference: 11/H0903/5

**Consent Form – Reading Groups (Women)
HMP Low Newton**

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 11th January 2011 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider The information and to ask questions, and I have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that the researcher (Jude Robinson or Josie Billington) will be observing the reading group session, and taking notes.

4. I understand that quotes from the discussion may be reproduced verbatim in a written summary, and/or a report, and/or a published journal article, but my name will not be included.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Jude Robinson

Name of person
taking consent

Date

Signature

7.5. Appendix 5



National Research Ethics Service Northern & Yorkshire REC

Room 002
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31 March 2011

Dr Josie Billington
Lecturer
University of Liverpool
School of English
Cypress Building
Chatham Street
Liverpool
L69 7ZR

Dear Dr Billington

Study title: An evaluation of a pilot study of a literature-based
intervention with women in prison.
REC reference: 11/H0903/5

Thank you for your letter of 14th March 2011 responding to the Committee's request for further information on the above research and submitting revised documentation.

The further information has been considered on behalf of the Committee by the Chair.

Confirmation of ethical opinion

On behalf of the Committee, I am pleased to confirm a favourable ethical opinion for the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation subject to the conditions specified below.

Ethical review of research sites

NHS sites

The favourable opinion applies to all NHS sites taking part in the study, subject to management permission being obtained from the NHS/HSC R&D office prior to the start of the study (see "Conditions of the favourable opinion" below).

Non-NHS sites

Notification(s) of no objection have been received from local assessors for the non-NHS site(s) listed in the table below, following site-specific assessment (SSA).

I am pleased to confirm that the favourable opinion applies to the following research site(s), subject to site management permission being obtained prior to the start of the study at the site (see under 'Conditions of the favourable opinion below').

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator

[Confirmation of approval for other sites listed in the application will be issued as soon as local assessors have confirmed that they have no objection.]

Conditions of the favourable opinion

The favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met prior to the start of the study.

Management permission or approval must be obtained from each host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

Management permission ("R&D approval") should be sought from all NHS organisations involved in the study in accordance with NHS research governance arrangements.

Guidance on applying for NHS permission for research is available in the Integrated Research Application System or at <http://www.rdforum.nhs.uk>.

Where a NHS organisation's role in the study is limited to identifying and referring potential participants to research sites ("participant identification centre"), guidance should be sought from the R&D office on the information it requires to give permission for this activity.

For non-NHS sites, site management permission should be obtained in accordance with the procedures of the relevant host organisation.

Sponsors are not required to notify the Committee of approvals from host organisations

It is the responsibility of the sponsor to ensure that all the conditions are complied with before the start of the study or its initiation at a particular site (as applicable).

Approved documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
Protocol	Version One	11 January 2011
Response to Request for Further Information		
Participant Information Sheet: Short Version	One	11 January 2011
REC application	Version 3.0	12 January 2011
Interview Schedule	Version 1	10 March 2011
Participant Information Sheet: Patient Information Sheet (revised)	Version 2	02 March 2011
Advertisement	One	11 January 2011
Investigator CV	Dr Josie Billington	11 January 2011
Participant Consent Form	One	11 January 2011
Covering Letter		21 January 2011
Covering Letter		14 March 2011
Letter from Sponsor	University of Liverpool	26 January 2010

Statement of compliance

The Committee is constituted in accordance with the Governance Arrangements for Research Ethics Committees (July 2001) and complies fully with the Standard Operating Procedures for Research Ethics Committees in the UK.

After ethical review

Now that you have completed the application process please visit the National Research Ethics Service website > After Review

You are invited to give your view of the service that you have received from the National Research Ethics Service and the application procedure. If you wish to make your views known please use the feedback form available on the website.

The attached document *"After ethical review – guidance for researchers"* gives detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion, including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Adding new sites and investigators
- Progress and safety reports
- Notifying the end of the study

The NRES website also provides guidance on these topics, which is updated in the light of changes in reporting requirements or procedures.

We would also like to inform you that we consult regularly with stakeholders to improve our service. If you would like to join our Reference Group please email referencegroup@nres.npsa.nhs.uk.

11/H0903/5	Please quote this number on all correspondence
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With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project

Yours sincerely



Professor Peter Heasman
Chair

Email: sharon.sevenoaks@sotw.nhs.uk

Enclosures: *"After ethical review – guidance for researchers" [SL-AR2]*

Copy to: *Mrs Lindsay Carter, University of Liverpool*
[R&D office for NHS care organisation at lead site]

7.6. Appendix 6.

Reading Record

Date	Texts used
Month One	
	<i>Tea with Birds</i> , Joanne Harris; 'The Tyger' William Blake
	<i>Gold Cadillac</i> , 'Ozymandias', Percy Bysshe Shelley
	<i>The Plate</i> , Roddy Doyle; 'Affliction' George Herbert
	<i>The Jester of Astapova</i> , Rose Tremain; 'In a Restaurant' Aleksander Bloc
Month Two	
	<i>ChiReader Nry</i> Neil Gaiman; 'They Might Not need Me', <i>Emily Dickinson</i>
	'The Story of the Eldest Princess' A.S. Byatt; 'The Road not Taken' Robert Frost
Month Three	
	'The Ugly Duckling' Frank O'Connor; 'A Noiseless Patient Spider' Walt Whitman
	'Psalms' Jeanette Winterton; 'Permanent Granite Sunrise' Frank Cotterell Boyce; 'Prayer' Carol Anne Duffy
Month Four	
	<i>The Unforgotten Coat</i> Frank Cottrell Boyce, 'Kubla Khan' Samuel Taylor Coleridge 'The Lake Isle Of Innisfree' W.B. Yeats 'Below the surface-stream' Matthew Arnold
	Simon Armitage 'King Arthur in the East Riding' & 'The Stone Beach'
	William Boyd 'Snapshots' Simon Armitage 'It ain't what you do it's what it does to you '
	James Thurber <i>The Secret Life of Walter Mitty</i> Carol Anne Duffy 'Big Sue' and 'Now Voyager'

Month Five	
	Raymond Carver 'Cathedral' Mary Oliver 'Wild Geese'
	John Steinbeck <i>The Pearl</i> William Henry Davies <i>Leisure</i> William Shakespeare 'When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes' Mckay Brown 'Beachcomber'
Month Six	
	John Steinbeck <i>The Pearl</i> Edward Lear 'The Owl and the Pussycat' Elizabeth Barrett Browning 'One Art' Invictus
Month Seven	
	John Steinbeck, <i>The Pearl</i> Gilda O'Neill <i>East End Tales</i> William Blake 'The Poison Tree'
	Alice Walker 'Everyday Use' Seamus Heaney 'Blackberry picking'
	Helen Dunmore 'Swimming into the Millennium'
Month Eight	
	Joanne Harris 'Faith and Hope Go Shopping'
	Doris Lessing 'Flight' Helen Hunt Jackson 'October's Bright Blue Weather'
	David Almond <i>Skellig</i> William Blake 'The Schoolboy'
	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> John Keats 'Ode to Autumn' Rilke 'Evening'
Month Nine	
	David Almond <i>Skellig</i> Wilfred Owen <i>Dulce et Decorum Est</i> William Blake 'The Angel' William Wordsworth 'Daffodils'
	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> Siegfried Sassoon 'To Any Dead Officer' John Keats 'Ode to a Nightingale'

Month Ten	
	Charles Dickens, <i>Great Expectations</i> and <i>A Christmas Carol</i>
	David Almond, <i>Skellig</i>
Month Eleven	
	Louis Sachar <i>Holes</i> George Bernard Shaw 'Lines for Winter' Alfred Lord Tennyson 'Break, Break, Break'
	Charles Dickens <i>Great Expectations</i> Robert Burns 'A Man's A Man' D H Lawrence 'Lizard'
Month Twelve	
	Barry Hines <i>Kes</i> Ted Hughes 'The Horses' R.S. Thomas 'The Bright Field'
	Charles Dickens <i>Great Expectations</i> William Shakespeare Sonnet 116
	Sherman Alexie 'What you pawn I will redeem' <i>Poverty of Mirrors</i>
	Duffy <i>Head of English</i>
	Vikki Feaver <i>I used to iron everything</i>
	Yeats <i>He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven</i>
	Alice Munro <i>Postcard</i> , Rossetti <i>Promises like Pie Crust</i>
	Barry Hines <i>Kes</i> (pp 1-16), Van Dyke <i>Life</i>
	Thomas Hardy <i>Darkling Thrush</i>