

FINAL REPORT

EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL YEAR OF READING IN WALES 2008

APRIL 2009



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1) This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the National Year of Reading 2008, conducted by Arad Consulting.

Overview of the National Year of Reading 2008

- 2) 2008 was declared a National Year of Reading in England and Wales. The responsibility for administering events in Wales was assigned to the Welsh Books Council, which was invited by the Welsh Assembly Government to develop and coordinate a programme of activity to promote reading in Wales. Following a period of planning, and against considerable time pressures, a distinctive programme of activities for Wales was devised by the Books Council, consisting of the following:
 - **Give a Book Week** – which aimed to promote reading by encouraging people of all ages to give books as gifts.
 - **Reading Communities** – local authorities were invited to bid for funding worth £20,000 in order to become Reading Communities. Two communities were selected, Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan and Llanelli in Carmarthenshire.
 - **08 Clubs** – this programme aimed to establish 50 reading clubs across Wales for teenage boys. First meetings were held in mid-September 2008 with a programme of activities that ran through to January 2009.
- 3) In addition, library authorities were each given funding of £2000 to deliver activities at a local level.

Management and Administration of the National Year of Reading in Wales

- 4) The Welsh Books Council was in a unique position to deliver the Year of Reading in Wales: its well-established working relationships with library services ensured that it was able to mobilise key partners at short notice and secure buy-in at a local level, both essential to the successful delivery of the campaigns.
- 5) The central team's strategy in administering the Year of Reading involved delegating responsibility for coordinating and delivering activities to a wide range of partners. This was a sensible and effective approach, given the resources at their disposal.
- 6) The Welsh Books Council's management and administration of the Year of Reading in Wales delivered added value: additional staff resources were provided to support the development and management of campaigns; and the time investment on the part of partner organisations at a local level also contributed greatly to the year's success.

- 7) Campaigns planned as part of the Year of Reading demonstrated good strategic fit with broader national initiatives and strategies.

Give a Book Week

- 8) Give a Book Week was promoted as an inclusive campaign that would appeal to all. It sought to launch the Year of Reading and generate momentum as quickly as possible, raising public awareness and securing buy-in from partner organisations. Evidence suggests that it succeeded in achieving these aims.
- 9) It placed an emphasis on the fun and enjoyment of reading using images of personalities and prominent figures in public life to generate positive publicity. The pleasure and satisfaction to be gained from reading was also emphasised in newspaper articles that encouraged readers to give books as gifts during the week of celebration. Indeed, the publicity generated by Give a Book Week (and by subsequent Year of Reading activity) was notable: FBA, which conducted research on behalf of the Welsh Books Council, reported that 1,221 press articles reaching over 8.5 million readers were generated.
- 10) The campaign targeted new readers, including school leavers, basic skills groups, women's groups and many others. It promoted a sense of inclusion, encouraging all to take part in reading. The campaign was also visually strong, owing to the materials and branding used and through the use of celebrities, providing publicity and images that could be drawn on throughout the year.

Reading Communities

- 11) The successful communities, Barry and Llanelli, adopted different approaches; both however sought to tap into local networks, involving partner organisations. Both also focused from an early stage on sustainability and on using Reading Community funding to create a legacy on which to build future activities.
- 12) The main focus of celebrations in Barry – the Barry Book Bash – was a weekend-long event and consisted of a full programme of activities including readings (for adults and children), talks by well-known authors and by television and radio personalities and other activities linked to the two books selected during Barry's Big Read. An impressive variety of events was organised: creative writing classes, an art project led by local students, a reader in residence and a fashion show.
- 13) The steering group reported that coordinating a wide-ranging programme of events for the community in such a short space of time proved extremely challenging. However,

the event was a considerable success: attendance levels at the events were good and extremely high levels of satisfaction were reported.

- 14) The campaign in Llanelli sought to build on a long standing tradition of libraries as centres of education and the steering group based the campaign around books that were of a particular local interest. As a result, there was strong engagement with the local community, reflected in the fact that levels of borrowing from Llanelli library increased by 15% between July and December 2008.
- 15) As in Barry, the Llanelli Reading Community campaign enjoyed a high profile visit from the Education Minister. In addition, the press coverage secured locally and nationally helped to sustain momentum and ensure widespread awareness of events.
- 16) The Reading Communities campaign enabled local library authorities to test innovative projects. By doing so, it enabled them to reach out to and engaged with new audiences. The support of the Welsh Books Council was considered crucial, providing advice and guidance and through the provision of materials for the campaign.
- 17) Through its emphasis on forming partnerships between local libraries and organisations and groups within the community, the Reading Communities model links extremely well with the vision set out in the Libraries for Life strategy, which 'puts the citizen at the centre of the service, responding to their changing needs and ensuring that libraries remain vibrant and relevant to modern life in Wales.'
- 18) Difficulties were caused by a lack of time to plan activities. Should the Reading Communities model be rolled out in other towns across Wales, it is proposed that 6 months is the minimum lead-in time required to plan effectively.

08 Clubs

- 19) The campaign delivered its target of establishing 50 reading clubs across Wales, with over 500 children and young people involved – the vast majority boys. The system whereby national and regional coordinators worked to recruit and establish clubs was effective.
- 20) Schools showed considerable enthusiasm for the initiative, particularly those in disadvantaged areas that saw an opportunity to engage boys in reading using methods that they had not previously tested. The clubs clearly captured the imagination of young readers, with many schools noted that they were pleasantly surprised at how positively the clubs had been received by boys.
- 21) However fewer clubs were linked to youth groups than had been hoped at the outset.

- 22) Evidence reveals that the clubs succeeded in attracting new readers. In some cases this was done by targeting boys from lower ability groups and classes. The choice of titles by the Welsh Books Council contributed to the clubs being able to appeal to new audiences.
- 23) 08 Club leaders reported that good levels of attendance were achieved; boys were enthusiastic about being part of what was seen as an exclusive club. The incentives and 'freebies' supplied by the Welsh Books Council were popular and undoubtedly contributed to the levels of attendance at the clubs. Similarly, opportunities to meet with sports personalities, actors and to take part in extra-school visits also played an important part in ensuring boys continued to go along to club meetings.
- 24) Club leaders was that they appreciated having the books selected on their behalf; they certainly appreciated having the books supplied beforehand, saving time and enabling them to plan before the start of the series.
- 25) Based on the monitoring information provided by Club leaders, the majority of Clubs will continue in some form beyond the originally planned 6 sessions. Some reported that the young readers themselves were keen to carry on meeting.

Local Authority-led National Year of Reading activity

- 26) A wide variety of events took place across Wales under the banner of the National Year of Reading, supported by additional funding made available to local authorities through the Welsh Books Council and CyMAL. A number of library services reported increased numbers of people attending events and an increase in the numbers of registered borrowers, including children and young people. Local authorities also reported an upward trend in the number of children taking part in, and completing, the Summer Reading Challenge.
- 27) There is some evidence that the additional funding enabled libraries to try out activities that would not have been part of their usual programme of activity and, as such, the relatively small sums of money enabled them to think more creatively.
- 28) The extra funds made a contribution to partnership working at a local level. Around half of the local authority areas set up a Year of Reading steering group which, in some cases, drew together a diverse and impressive list of partners. New partnerships were also created and others strengthened as a result of delivering the activities.

Summary conclusions on delivery of Year of Reading core aims

- 29) Collectively, the three specific projects coupled with activity at local authority-level ensured a continuum of activity for children from early years through to Key Stage 3. Many of the activities – particularly those delivered by local authorities and some of those organised by the Reading Communities – focused on involving children with their parents. However it cannot be said that there was a consistent ‘focus on fathers’ across the Year of Reading activities – one of the core objectives. Clearer guidance should be issued to local authorities and other delivery partners if this is to remain a priority in future programmes to promote reading.
- 30) The design and delivery of the 08 Clubs programme achieved a second key aim, namely to promote reading among boys.
- 31) The third aim was to foster new partnerships locally: the emphasis on locally-focused activities, planned and delivered by those closest to the communities they serve proved to be a success, not least because of the effectiveness of local networking and the added value achieved by bringing in skills and expertise from a range of different quarters.
- 32) The National Year of Reading in Wales was an innovative and effective programme of activity that engaged and inspired tens of thousands of people of all ages and backgrounds across Wales during 2008. The programme received funding of £458,000. According to estimates by Dr Hywel Roberts¹ some 106,000 individuals took part in, or attended Year of reading events, indicating substantial cost-effectiveness. Equally importantly in terms of the legacy and longer-term impacts achieved, the Year of Reading in Wales provided an opportunity to pilot new approaches to promoting reading, presenting important lessons upon which to base future activities and programmes.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- I. That Give a Book Week, or a similar campaign, should be continued as part of World Book Day on an annual basis.
- II. That the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Welsh Books Council, should determine the scale and focus of the promotional activity within such a campaign and that funding should be made available to reflect this.
- III. The Welsh Assembly Government should provide funding to support Reading Communities in Wales on an annual basis. However, any future campaign would benefit from more clearly defined strategic objectives, guidance regarding target

¹ Hywel Roberts (January 2009) End of year report

groups and a greater emphasis on the need to measure impact (see issues raised in Section 4.10, above).

- IV. As part of this guidance, any future Reading Communities campaign should look to formalise links with schools and colleges, ensuring the involvement of young people across a range of age groups.
- V. The central support provided by the Welsh Books Council was key to the success of the Reading Communities. Similar support should be available to future Reading Communities, providing advice on approaches to running activities and good practice.
- VI. DCELLS, working with Basic Skills Cymru and the Welsh Books Council, should consider whether guidance should be drawn up to ensure that the initiative complements broader national strategies to promote reading.
- VII. The Welsh Assembly Government should re-assess the funding required per Reading Community.
- VIII. Firstly, continued support should be provided to build on the interest in boys reading clubs identified in schools not included in the 08 Clubs initiative, taking into account lessons learned;
- IX. More specialist advice and support is required to facilitate the establishment of reading clubs in informal, non-school settings, drawing in the expertise of organisations with experience of working with youth groups in non-statutory sector.
- X. Boys in the last years of primary schools and the early years of secondary school should continue to be targeted.
- XI. Clubs should be encouraged to link reading activities to sports themes, building on successful approaches introduced during the 2008 National Year of Reading.
- XII. That the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Welsh Books Council should consider the strengths and weaknesses of different possible models for supporting Reading Clubs.
- XIII. In continuing to support Reading Clubs, it is important that a linguistic balance is maintained, with clubs operating in Welsh and English.

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

1.1. Purpose of the report

Arad Consulting was commissioned in October 2008 to carry out an evaluation of the implementation in Wales of the National Year of Reading 2008 and its associated activities.

This report presents the findings of the evaluation and includes conclusions and recommendations to help inform the future direction and format of activities that have been introduced as part of the Year of Reading.

1.2. Overview of the National Year of Reading 2008

2008 was declared a National Year of Reading in England and Wales. The responsibility for administering events in Wales was assigned to the Welsh Books Council, which was invited by the Welsh Assembly Government to develop and coordinate a programme of activity to promote reading in Wales.

The programme of activity sought to bring together local authorities, libraries, schools, colleges, publishers, bookshops, workplaces, communities and families. The aim was to develop a tightly focused campaign with an emphasis on local rather than national activity. In particular it was intended to be a programme that:

- targeted, as a priority group, children and young people from early years through to Key Stage 3 (14 years of age) and parents of young children with a particular focus on fathers;
- gave specific emphasis to the promotion of reading to boys;
- concentrated on drawing together partners at the local level including early years groups, schools, libraries and youth groups to develop and run activities to promote reading.

Under the terms of the contract entered into with the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Books Council was expected to:

- provide a focal point for the development and management of a programme of activity in 2008 to promote reading to young people;
- develop an associated website, publicity and branding;

- identify and support a “reading champion” to lead work at the national level and support local campaigns;
- develop proposals and materials for 3 campaigns during the year to be delivered through local partners;
- establish links and work with key partners across Wales to develop and co-ordinate an agreed programme of work;
- establish a link with NYR England and look at the potential to apply material produced in England to Wales – to be produced bilingually.

During the National Year of Reading, three specific projects were developed by the Welsh Books Council:

Give a Book Week (7 to 12 July 2008)

This project aimed to promote reading through encouragement for people of all ages to give books as gifts. The campaign launch was held on 19th June with an associated media campaign including email messages, radio advertisements and promotional materials in shops, libraries and the National Year of Reading website.

Reading Communities

All authorities in Wales were invited, through the Society of Chief Librarians Wales, to bid for two pots of money, worth £20,000 each, in order to become NYR Reading Communities. Barry in the Vale of Glamorgan and Llanelli in Carmarthenshire were chosen as their programme of events and activities best fitted the ‘Reading City’ model implemented with great success both in the US and the UK. Over the course of the summer both communities were invited to vote for their favourite books to be followed in September and October by a rolling programme of activities based on the books selected by the community. The work is led in each community by a steering group.

08 Clubs

The 08 Clubs campaign aimed to establish 50 reading clubs across Wales for teenage boys. First meetings were held in mid-September 2008 with a programme of activities that ran through to January 2009. The original intention was that clubs would meet in informal settings and that members would have the opportunity to meet celebrities, win prizes and participate in a range of activities linked to the books they read. The 08 micro site on the NYR website was set up to provide an interactive element for the target audience, offering the opportunity to create on-line profiles for the clubs and write regular blogs. A national

and regional team of coordinators was charged with identifying potential leaders for the clubs, who in turn would engage club members and run meetings and activities.

1.3. Aim, scope and objectives of the evaluation

The aims of this evaluation, as set out by the Welsh Assembly Government, were twofold:

- i. Firstly, to assess the effectiveness of the arrangements put in place by the Welsh Books Council to develop and co-ordinate a campaign to promote reading through the National Year of Reading. *(Section 2 of this report)*
- ii. Secondly, to evaluate the impact of specific strands of the National Year of Reading and in particular the three campaigns (Give a Book Week, Reading Communities and 08 Clubs). *(Sections 3-6 of the report)*

The first aim, above, has included assessing whether the Welsh Books Council set in place the arrangements agreed as part of its contract with the Welsh Assembly Government; linked to this, the evaluation has sought to assess the effectiveness of these arrangements. A further objective linked to the first aim has involved investigating the effectiveness of partnerships that the Welsh Books Council has established in coordinating the National Year of Reading. Finally, the evaluation team was tasked with considering the extent to which the National Year of Reading made linkages with, and complemented, ongoing work to promote reading including the Library Festival Wales, the Read a Million Words and Quick Reads campaigns.

Within the second aim outlined above, the evaluation has sought to assess the outputs and outcomes of each of the three campaigns, examining the strategic and delivery partnerships forged and considering whether target audiences were reached during the activities.

Other reviews and research have focused on various aspects of the Year of Reading in Wales and are referenced in this report. These include work undertaken by Dr Hywel Roberts, who has recently completed an internal End of Year Review on behalf of the Welsh Books Council and a report by FBA examining the press and media publicity generated by the National Year of Reading in Wales. These reports – which focused on more quantitative outputs to emerge from the National Year of Reading than this evaluation – have produced interesting data and conclusions, which are cited in various sections of this evaluation report.

1.4. Overview of methodology

The purpose of this evaluation report, undertaken as the campaign was coming to an end, is to provide evidence to the Welsh Assembly Government on the implementation and impact of the National Year of Reading 2008. The evaluation also provides recommendations for future activities.

Decisions about data collection were influenced by the need, wherever possible, to complement, rather than replicate research commissioned by the Welsh Books Council for its own End of Year Report. Much of the research for that report, compiled by Dr Hywel Roberts, involved the collection of evaluation feedback forms during 2008 from organisations involved in delivering aspects of the Year of Reading. We are grateful to Dr Roberts and the Welsh Books Council for access to those findings.

Following the guidelines in the original invitation to tender and a subsequent project inception meeting the methodology for undertaking the evaluation was based on a combination of desk research and fieldwork which included the following key tasks:

- Desk-based review of contract letters, meeting notes, other project documentation to outline progress and working practices;
- Desk-based review of evaluation forms collected from local authorities and O8 Club leaders;
- Interviews with Welsh Books Council staff and Welsh Assembly Government officials;
- Interviews with strategic partners (Basic Skills Cymru, CyMAL, Estyn, Society of Chief Librarians);
- Visits to meet with the Steering Groups of reading communities in Barry and Llanelli;
- Interviews with national O8 Club coordinators and O8 Club regional coordinators (x 5)
- Interviews with O8 Club leaders and participating boys (x 5 clubs, including Welsh-medium and English-medium groups);
- Interviews with local authority representatives (x 5);
- Interviews with booksellers (x 3); and
- Visits to a sample of local libraries across Wales (x 5).

Arad were pleased that Professor Viv Edwards, Director of the National Centre for Language and Literacy at Reading University, was able to form part of the team and to bring her knowledge and experience to the evaluation.

1.5. Acknowledgements

We would like to place on record our thanks to all those who contributed their time and effort to this evaluation of the National Year of Reading in Wales. All contributions – both written submissions and contributions during interviews with the evaluation team – were greatly appreciated and provided the team with a substantial body of evidence and information upon which to base this report and its findings.

2 MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE NATIONAL YEAR OF READING IN WALES

2.1. Planning the National Year of Reading in Wales

In March 2007, Alan Johnson, the Minister for Education in England, announced that 2008 was to be a National Year of Reading. At short notice, a Steering Group was convened by the Welsh Assembly Government to consider a response in Wales. The Steering Group included representatives from the Welsh Assembly Government, Estyn, Basic Skills Cymru and the Welsh Books Council. In May 2007 it was decided that Wales should exploit the opportunity presented: the Steering Group considered that efforts to plan and coordinate activities would be aided by the fact that *'all of the links between the relevant organisations are already in place'*².

It was agreed from the outset that proposals in Wales need not necessarily mirror events in England. The Steering Group decided rather that the National Year of Reading in Wales should focus on, and seek to complement, Welsh Assembly Government priorities in relation to promoting literacy. *'The drive to raise standards of literacy in Wales had been taken forward over several years through partnerships between organisations with respective areas of expertise and [the National Year of Reading] would be an opportunity to showcase past and current work while heralding new activity.'*³ Promoting reading and literacy in a bilingual context was, it was noted, an important factor behind the decision to run a distinct campaign in Wales. (Scotland decided against administering its own Year of Reading).

If ensuring strategic fit of the National Year of Reading was one theme discussed during the planning phase, continuing the momentum that had been sustained since the National Year of Reading 1998-99 was another. One of the legacies of the first Year of Reading had been that World Book Day had become an established highlight within the school calendar and was the basis of numerous strong partnerships between schools, libraries and the wider community. The Year of Reading in Wales provided the opportunity to build further on these achievements, forge new partnerships and test new approaches to promoting reading and literacy across all ages throughout Wales.

² Note of meeting held on 21 May 2007 to consider a Wales response to the National Year of Reading in England

³ Note of meeting held on 26 July 2007 to discuss arrangements for National Year of Reading in Wales 2008

In addition, the Steering Group that planned activities in 2008 recognised the need to take into account one of the findings to emerge from the National Year of Reading 1998-99 End of Year Report:

“The Report shows clearly that there is no one clear route to success; a variety of different strategies, partnerships and methods of working can be equally successful”⁴

While every effort was made by the Steering Group to move the planning process forward as quickly as possible, the Welsh Books Council faced considerable time pressures in designing, initiating and delivering a programme of activity. (Indeed, the limitations imposed by time pressures became a recurring theme throughout the Year of Reading.) The final programme of activities was not finalised until late 2007, following an application for funding from the Welsh Books Council to the Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills of the Assembly Government. Each of the individuals involved in the planning stage interviewed as part of this evaluation has conceded that the process required substantially more preparatory time.

Before outlining the arrangements put in place to support the delivery of the Year of Reading campaigns, it must be noted that significant credit is due to those who were involved in the planning process – notably staff at the Welsh Books Council, who took on a considerable amount of risk in agreeing to plan and lead the campaigns under the time pressures we have described. Without the strong partnerships created over time between the Books Council and local authorities and the dynamism displayed in making the most of these links, it is doubtful whether the range of activities carried out during the Year of Reading could have been delivered.

2.2. Funding for the Year of Reading

The Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government allocated a grant of £341,000 over two years and accepted a further bid for additional funding worth £117,000 in the 2007-08 financial year, providing a total of £458,000. Figure 1, below, provides a detailed breakdown of costs, illustrating the many different aspects included in the Year of Reading, including administrative costs, launch and closing conference, PR work and media consultancy, the creation and maintenance of the Year of Reading website and the costs of running the three individual campaigns.

⁴ *National Year of Reading 1998-99 Wales: End of Year Report* (The National Assembly for Wales, The Welsh Books Council)

Additional funding was provided by CyMAL under its Libraries for Life programme to enable and encourage all local authorities to deliver additional activities as part of the Year of Reading, linking these activities to the ‘Happy Days’ marketing initiative. The 20 authorities who had not been successful in being selected to organise one of the two Reading Communities campaigns (i.e. all of those other than Carmarthenshire and the Vale of Glamorgan) received £2,000 to deliver activities. £500 per authority was funded from the National Year of Reading budget (part of the additional funding for 2007-08) and £1,500 per authority (£30,000 in total) was made available by CyMAL. This additional funding ensured that the all 22 local authorities experienced the benefits of the National Year of Reading in Wales. Significantly, it also ensured that activities taking place as part of the Year of Reading were aligned with other strategies and funding streams.

Figure 1: Year of Reading in Wales, breakdown of costs 2007-08 and 2008-09

BREAKDOWN OF COSTS FOR 2007-08		BREAKDOWN OF COSTS FOR 2008-09	
	£		£
Reading Communities Campaign (2 x £20,000 to the successful bids)	40,000	Administrative costs (to include salaries for National Coordinator, Administrative Officer, freelance Support and office costs)	70,000
Cost of official launch at Cardiff Bay (to include promotional material for use during the year)	5,000	<u>3 National Campaigns</u> Give a Book Week Reading Communities Reading Groups (08 Clubs)	75,000
PR campaign – FBA	10,000	PR Support	40,000
Media consultancy	15,000	Website Editor / Moderator	15,000
Administration to include salaries and office costs	10,000	End of Year Conference	20,000
Reading Gift Campaign To include design work and promotional material	25,000	-	-
Reading through Sport Campaign Set-up of campaign to include the appointment of a coordinator	10,000	-	-
Website moderator/editor	6,000	-	-
Total	121,000	-	-
ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR 2007-08			-
Presentation of books to local authorities to mark NYR launch	30,000	-	-
Participation of 20 local authorities in Reading Communities Campaign	10,000	-	-
Summer Reading Challenge	2,000	-	-
NYR website	75,000	-	-
Total	117,000	-	-
TOTAL FOR 2007-08	238,000	TOTAL FOR 2008-09	220,000

2.3. Arrangements put in place by the Welsh Books Council

As described above in section 1.2, activities were based around three separate initiatives, namely:

- **Give a Book Week** – during the second week of July;
- **The Reading Communities campaign** – working with two chosen communities;
- **08 Clubs** – reading clubs focusing on working with boys identified as reluctant readers.

The administration and management arrangements will be considered in greater detail in sections dedicated to each of these initiatives. Internally, the Welsh Books Council appointed Delyth Humphreys as Coordinator of the National Year of Reading in Wales. Rhian Evans was appointed as an Administrative Officer. Additional support was provided by senior management at the Books Council.

As well as managing the three initiatives mentioned above, the Year of Reading management team were charged with:

- Developing and maintaining the website created for the Year of Reading in Wales;
- Organising an end of Year conference in February 2009 to showcase the good practice developed during the National Year of Reading;
- Establishing links and work with key partners across Wales to develop and implement an agreed programme of activities to promote reading; and
- Producing an end of year report on outcomes from the National Year of Reading.

Arrangements were put in place to monitor and review activities delivered – both activities as part of the initiatives and activities at a local level. These arrangements proved to be extremely robust and a wealth of both quantitative and qualitative data has been submitted by partners, much of it feeding into this evaluation.

2.4. Promotion

Before the activities for the Year and the three initiatives could begin, a promotional campaign needed to be planned to ensure that the National Year of Reading in Wales was widely celebrated and publicised. The Welsh Books Council (and its appointed agencies, FBA and Golley Slater) employed a range of approaches to publicising the year such as radio adverts, newspaper editorials, promotional posters and flyers. Some early lessons were

learnt with regards to marketing, including the focus on radio (as opposed to television) advertisements as the most cost effective method.

The promotional activities were monitored and reported by the contracted agencies. FBA's report on the press and media publicity generated by the National Year of Reading in Wales found that the following had been generated:

- 121 press articles and features reaching over 8.5 million readers in Wales;
- Annual EAV of £155,768 and PR Value of £467,304
- 33 TV and radio interviews reaching over 5 million people
- 53 internet articles and features⁵.

Welsh celebrities were used for the promotional activities, in particular the Give a Book Week campaign, and their use was effective in promoting the wide appeal of reading. A more formal reading champion was also appointed, Geraint Lewis, who presented at events and launches. This approach – using celebrities supplemented by a reading champion when required – worked well, enabling the promotion of reading to be pitched at different audiences and at several levels. The more formal presentations of the reading champion complemented the more popular appeal of the celebrity champions.

At a local level the evaluation research found that word of mouth, local press and promotion by library staff were the methods by which members of the public heard about the Year of Reading and associated events. The Year of Reading in Wales also benefitted from some general UK-wide coverage of the English Year of Reading and from a number of other publically funded initiatives such as Libraries for Life and the Basic Skills Agency's Quick Reads and Read a Million Words.

The project website was a key part of the promotional push both in terms of the resources invested and in its potential reach. When it became clear during discussions with the Year of Reading in England in early 2008 that their embryonic website could not simply be translated, the Welsh books Council set about to commission a Wales specific website. Against a tight timescale a website was produced which not only provided news, events and book previews but incorporated three micro-sites for each of the main campaigns. As such the website presented comprehensive information about all aspects of the programme and conveyed through its colourful and accessible style the breadth of fun events and applicability to all readers.

⁵ *National Year of Reading in Wales 2008 Report* (FBA on behalf of the Welsh Books Council)

2.5. Engagement with partners

Effective partnerships were identified from the outset as being critical to the success of the National Year of Reading in Wales. In view of the time pressures facing the Welsh Books Council as the organisation responsible for managing and administering the programme of activity, it was essential that the right partners were engaged / involved swiftly. More importantly, perhaps, it was necessary for these partners to be utilised efficiently and that systems were in place to make the best use of the time and the skills secured.

Different types of partnership contributed to the National Year of Reading. Firstly, a strategic partnership involving key organisations (initiated by the Welsh Assembly Government and described above in 2.1) was convened to steer the planning process and to develop the underlying principles and objectives of the various campaigns during the year. The Welsh Books Council maintained good strategic links with the Welsh Assembly Government throughout the year.

A second important group of partners was essential to the administration of activities. These were key to organising activity at a local level, facilitating the involvement of schools, libraries, youth clubs, community groups and other delivery partners. While a central team was in place at the Welsh Books Council, the team was not in a position to coordinate all activity and used its networks to ensure that responsibility for administering activities was cascaded down to various individuals and organisations. The approach taken to engaging local authorities provides an example: Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, Director of the Books Council, contacted each authority, informing them of the Year of Reading, outlining the additional funding available to support activities and asking for a designated lead coordinator at a local level.

Local coordinators were tasked with arranging Year of Reading activities in their areas, collecting monitoring data and feeding this information back to the Welsh Books Council. They were encouraged to form local coordinating committees to help steer activities. A range of approaches was adopted across the 22 authorities. Some authorities invested considerable effort, establishing coordinating committees with wide membership and drawing in expertise and skills from a range of disciplines. The commitment and enthusiasm demonstrated by local authority partners resulted in considerable value being added to the Year of Reading.

Other sections of this evaluation report will expand upon the roles and contributions of other administrative partners. A key aim of the Year of Reading was to secure buy-in at a local / community level. The partners listed below were an essential link between the

central team at the Welsh Books Council and those individuals who delivered Year of Reading activities. In some cases administrative partners also delivered many activities, as is illustrated below in figure 2. Other partners in this category are those who coordinated PR and promotional work.

The third and final tier of partners comprises those who delivered the wide range of activities that took place during the National Year of Reading in Wales. At the launch of the Year of Reading in March 2008 the Education Minister, Jane Hutt AM, set the ambitious challenge to the people of Wales to arrange and participate in 2008 reading activities during the year. This was achieved, largely due to the involvement of an enormous number of organisations.

Figure 2: Welsh Books Council's partners in the management and administration of the National Year of Reading in Wales



The Welsh Books Council was able to demonstrate different qualities with different partners by:

- i. Contributing to planning processes with strategic partners and maintaining good strategic links, in particular, with the Welsh Assembly Government throughout the year;
- ii. Providing guidance to partners involved in coordinating and administering activities as part of the various campaigns;
- iii. Often being involved in a hands-on manner, providing practical support e.g. through the website and through direct involvement with the Reading Communities.

The Books Council was therefore involved at every level, ensuring that key partners were fully engaged in the Year of Reading and employed in the most suitable and effective manner.

2.6. Development of new partnerships

Delivering the Year of Reading also led to the development of new partnerships beyond the Welsh Books Council's customary links with education and libraries. Particularly useful relations were fostered with the TUC and their teams of union representatives; the Looked After Children team within the Welsh Assembly Government; and the homelessness charity Llamau.

These new links not only spread the effects of the Year of Reading widely through practical activities, such as distributing books in workplaces and homeless hostels, but also helped to break down the perceived barriers held by some groups.

2.7. Strategic links with other initiatives

The campaigns initiated as part of the Year of Reading in Wales did not, of course, take place in a vacuum. Strategies that pre-dated the Year of Reading, including the Basic Skills Strategy, share common objectives with the campaign, and will continue beyond 2008. One challenge facing the Welsh Books Council in planning the year's activities was indeed to seek to ensure that they linked with, and complemented, other key national initiatives to promote reading and literacy. The involvement of key strategic partners meant that this was achieved through purposeful planning.

Qualitative evidence collected during the course of the evaluation indicated that the Year of Reading in Wales was able to:

- Build upon the momentum generated by the Read a Million Words campaign, emphasising the fun and enjoyment of reading;
- Promote the Quick Reads / Stori Sydyn series as part of Give a Book Week;
- Contribute to efforts to market libraries to wider audiences, one of the key aims of the Libraries for Life strategy⁶;
- Provide schools with opportunities to target reluctant readers, and use reading clubs to improve boys' literacy skills, a priority set out in Estyn's latest Annual Report⁷.

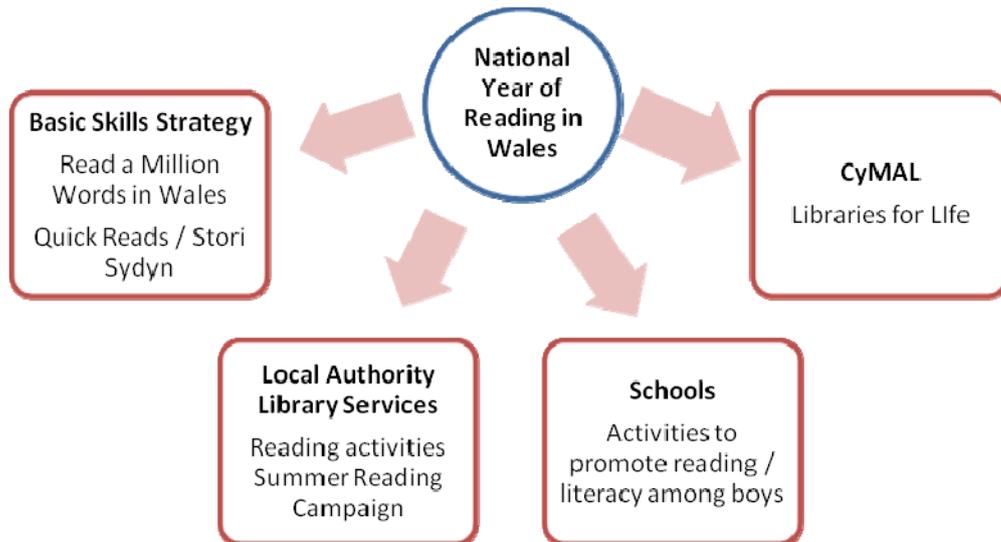
We can therefore be satisfied that the National Year of Reading did link well with other national initiatives being delivered. One commentator noted that it was important that the

⁶ *Libraries for Life: Delivering a Modern Library Service for Wales 2008-11*, Welsh Assembly Government (2008)

⁷ *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales 2007-2008*, Estyn (January 2009)

National Year of Reading in Wales was not seen to produce only fleeting and short-lived impacts. Rather, the activities delivered during the year should aspire to inform the future delivery of broader strategies. Subsequent sections of this report will reflect on the extent to which each of the campaigns could or should be sustained and what lessons have emerged that can feed into associated national strategies.

Figure 3: Strategic Links between Year of Reading in Wales and other key strategies



2.8. Summary conclusions: effectiveness of administrative arrangements

Perhaps the most appropriate approach to measuring the effectiveness of the management and administration of the Year of Reading is to simply consider whether the Welsh Books Council delivered the key targets set out in the terms of its contract with the Welsh Assembly Government and the additional target set by the Minister for Education. The Welsh Books Council performance against these targets and objectives can be summarised as follows:

Figure 4: Welsh Books Council's performance against key targets and objectives

Target	Performance	
The establishment of 50 08 Clubs, with 10 members in each club;	50 clubs established with over 500 members	√
Oversee the delivery of 2008 Year of Reading events	2509 events by the end of the calendar year	√
Establish Reading Communities in partnership with two local authorities	Reading Communities established in Llanelli, Carmarthenshire and Barry, in the Vale of Glamorgan	√
Manage and coordinate the Give a Book Week campaign	Week of July 7-12	√
Develop an associated website, publicity and	Website, publicity and branding	√

branding	successfully developed	
Establish links and work with key partners across Wales to develop and implement an agreed programme of activities to promote reading.	Links established with strategic, administrative and delivery partners (as outlined in Section 2.5, above) including all 22 local authorities	√
Identify and support a “reading champion” to lead work at the national level and support local campaigns	The application for funding submitted by the Books Council to the Welsh Assembly Government in Sept 2007 had referred to engaging a ‘Reading Champion’ for the Year (there had been a similar position in 1998). In the event, the Council opted for a number of celebrity reading champions, linked to key projects. In addition, Geraint Lewis was brought in to speak at numerous launches, carry out media appointments and help promote activities.	√
Organise an end of Year conference in February 2009 to showcase the good practice developed during the National Year of Reading;	Conference took place on 12 February, 2009	√
Produce an end of year report on outcomes from the National Year of Reading.	Report prepared by Dr Hywel Roberts	√

CONCLUSIONS

- The Welsh Books Council was in a unique position to deliver the Year of Reading in Wales: its well-established working relationships with library services ensured that it was able to mobilise key partners at short notice and secure buy-in at a local level, both essential to the successful delivery of the campaigns.
- While numerous partners contributed in different ways and at different levels – through strategic planning, coordination and delivery – the Books Council was involved at each level, drawing in the required external expertise as and when required.
- The organisation as a whole – and the National Coordinator in particular – deserve considerable credit for delivering its contractual obligations on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, particularly given that the campaigns were delivered against

significant time pressures.

- The central team's strategy in administering the Year of Reading involved delegating responsibility for coordinating and delivering activities to a wide range of partners. This was a necessary approach, given the resources at their disposal. In doing so, there was a balance to be struck: engaging numerous and diverse partners without over-burdening them with excessive monitoring responsibilities. This was achieved effectively.
- The Welsh Books Council's management and administration of the Year of Reading in Wales also delivered added value: additional staffing resources were provided to support the development and management of campaigns; and the time investment on the part of partner organisations at a local level also contributed greatly to the year's success.
- As noted in section 2.6, evidence collected during the evaluation has found that the campaigns planned as part of the Year of Reading demonstrated good strategic fit with broader national initiatives and strategies.

3 GIVE A BOOK WEEK

3.1. Description of the campaign

Give a Book Week was the first of the three Year of Reading campaigns and took place during the second week of July 2008. It focused on encouraging people of all ages to give books as gifts to each other, taking inspiration from the Catalan tradition of giving books (and roses) on April 23rd. In many ways, this first campaign could be said to have set the tone for the National Year of Reading in Wales in that it promoted reading as something for all, regardless of age or background. Everybody was encouraged to participate. It provided, according to the Give a Book Week micro-site:

'the perfect excuse for people across Wales to share the pleasure and rewards of reading with a loved one, friend or workmate.'

A high profile campaign launch was held in the centre of Cardiff in June and was followed by a media campaign. Tenders were invited to lead the press and public relations work linked to the campaign; Golley Slater were commissioned to assist with the promotion of the campaign, generating publicity and ensuring that celebrities and figures in public life helped to raise the profile of Give a Book Week. The advice provided by PR specialists helped develop a strategy to disseminate information about the campaign, consisting of a blend of approaches to ensure that this first Year of Reading initiative reached a wide audience. A radio advertising campaign was carried out – broadcast on twelve local stations and reaching a potential audience of over a million people.

Promotional materials (including 5,500 posters, 20,000 bookmarks and almost 10,000 stickers) were made available to bookshops, libraries, schools and work places and a specially commissioned large model of books was on display at festivals and events. Additionally, e-mail messages flagging up the date were distributed widely.

3.2. Objectives of Give a Book Week

This section revisits the core objectives of the Give a Book Week campaign and considers whether, based on evidence reviewed during the evaluation, these objectives have been delivered. The core objectives were:

- To ensure an inclusive campaign that was open and appealing to all;

- To target new readers;
- To generate involvement in, and support for the campaign, across the whole of Wales;
- To emphasise the ‘fun’ element.

The widespread promotional and marketing campaign ensured that substantial attention was focused on this first initiative as part of the Year of Reading. One Welsh Books Council representative noted that the intention was to try and *‘make a splash and generate momentum as quickly as possible’*, largely as a result of concerns about time. The presence of the Minister for Education, Jane Hutt AM, at the launch on Queen Street in Cardiff city centre certainly helped create a sense of occasion. Simon Weston was also in attendance, along with Jasmine Aherne, who represented the Noah’s Ark appeal and received a gift of books worth £1,000 for the Children’s Hospital for Wales. Books were presented to members of the public, generating widespread interest and attracting considerable media attention. Those present were impressed by the enthusiasm shown by parents and their children who gratefully received the gifts. Many of the books distributed were from the Quick Reads series, short and accessible fiction and non-fiction titles that are aimed at people who are not confident readers.

The wider public was also encouraged to participate in Give a Book Week by means of an emailing campaign: 164,000 emails were circulated during a three-week period. At the same time, promotional materials were distributed to a wide range of organisations including schools, libraries, bookshops and charity shops across Wales. The Welsh Books Council was proactive in attempting to spread the word: bookshops were informed of the Year of Reading and the Give a Book Week through presentations by Books Council staff at booktrade networks. Understandably, due to the short lead-in time available, booksellers did not have as much opportunity to develop their own ideas and accompanying activities as they would have liked. Nevertheless the Week was the main means for booksellers to become fully involved in the Year of Reading and many were able to arrange supplementary events and materials locally.

Interviews conducted with owners of bookshops revealed that they welcomed the promotional materials and the boost they gave to their own efforts to market books and reading in their own communities. Booksellers worked with local schools, presenting books to pupils about how to make the transition to secondary schools. Indeed, the timing of the campaign was another important consideration and the end of the academic year appears to have presented opportunities to engage with schools effectively.

The use of celebrities to help promote the campaign served a number of purposes: it provided important ‘hooks’ for media outlets, ensuring that good levels of publicity were

generated at local and national levels. Images of personalities and prominent figures in public life receiving books - including the First Minister Rhodri Morgan, Boris Johnson, Max Boyce and many others – helped promote the message that books are to be enjoyed by all people in all walks of life. Beti George, presented the book *Paradwys* (Paradise) by William Owen Roberts (published by Barddas) to Gwyn Llewelyn.

'I would like to give the book as a gift to Gwyn - rather than go travelling all over the world so often looking for his paradise, I can assure him that he'll find it in this book without once leaving his armchair!'

Tori James, the first Welsh woman to climb Mt Everest, gave *Sugar and Slate* by Charlotte Williams (Planet) to her sister, Liv.

'If ever I want to share something Welsh it's normally with my sister, Liv. Whether it's the rugby result, Welsh music, television or in this instance a good book it'll be Liv that gets a phone call or an email. We both choose to read as a way of relaxing in our busy lives, and since we've been living in culturally diverse cities we've taken a greater interest in cultural identities. This is just the kind of book my sister would pick off the shelf and that's why I've chosen it for her. Happy reading Liv!'

The pleasure and enjoyment to be gained from reading was also emphasised in local and community newspaper articles that encouraged readers to give books as gifts during the week of celebration. One contributor noted that:

'Reading has always been a pleasure for me, never a burden.'

'While we read for information or to obtain knowledge, there is another reason for reading, namely to derive pleasure. And if you are one of those people who truly read for enjoyment you will know that there is an enormous world you can step into at any hour of the day.'

3.3. Impact of the Give a Book Week campaign

As a promotional campaign, the success of Give a Book Week can in part be measured in terms of the publicity generated. As part of its press and publicity contract, FBA recorded press and media coverage and estimated the reach and value of the coverage. The FBA summarises publicity generated per month and has estimated the Equivalent Advertising Value (EAV) and PR Value of the articles and features generated. From these measures it is clear that the campaign gathered momentum in the run up to the week itself. In June there

were 14 press articles reaching a potential audience of 836,582 and five television or radio features reaching a potential average audience of just over a million people, according to FBA's report. Over the whole year FBA report that there were 1,221 press articles reaching over 8.5 million readers which they estimate to represent an annual EAV of £155,768 and a PR value of almost half a million pounds.

Arguably, the true impact of a promotional campaign however is not measured in column inches but rather in increased awareness or recognition of a particular issue. No data was collected to track changes in attitudes or levels of awareness of the Year of Reading during the course of the Year. However, evidence from contributors to this evaluation provides a clear indication that the 'reach' of the campaign was impressive, with the national campaign being supported by activity promoted at local levels through bookshops, community newspapers, libraries and local authorities and by getting out onto the streets and raising awareness directly with the public. This diversity of approach was undoubtedly aided by the specialist advice that the Welsh Books Council secured from the external agency. The high profile start to the Year of Reading that was needed was indeed realised.

The success of the campaign at a national level also produced impact at a local level. One bookshop in Caernarfon used Give a Book Week as a springboard to generate additional sales: those who bought books during the week were given discounts of 10% off their next purchase. The results for the bookshop were sustained increases in sales over a period of 4 weeks into the summer.

While the campaign was in some ways a promotional campaign that aimed to raise awareness among as wide an audience as possible, there was evidence that it targeted new readers. The local Merched y Wawr, in partnership with the Honno publishing company presented a collection of books to a women's shelter in Aberystwyth. £1,000 worth of books were presented to the Children's Hospital for Wales. Ysgol Danygraig in Swansea held a special event to present a book as a gift to each pupil that left the school that summer. Finally, Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen, Caernarfon, took a selection of books to children in Zambia during a visit to that country.

3.4. Key success factors

The Give a Book Week campaign had a clear set of objectives and a focused and professional approach ensured that these objectives were met. It also set the stage for the remainder of the year's activities and campaigns. The evaluation considers that the following factors were key to the campaigns success:

- i. It was based on a **clear and simple premise** – the idea that everybody can share in the pleasure of giving and receiving a book. One contributor to the evaluation commented that the emphasis on providing a gift, rather than the process of reading or improving literacy, helped the campaign’s appeal.
- ii. This, in turn, promoted a sense of **inclusiveness**. The campaign was light-hearted and centred around enjoyment.
- iii. **Incentives** were provided to a wide range of individuals and organisations. In addition to the donation of books to passers-by during the launch in June, the Minister for Education provided books to the value of £30,000 to community groups across Wales. Each library authority received boxes of books to be distributed to local groups. Beneficiaries included community centres, basic skills groups, children and young people in care, hospitals, shelters for women and many other organisations. This meant that the Year of Reading, from the very start, was able to reach out to disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups, further evidence that the campaign actively sought to offer something for all.
- iv. Local authority representatives and local library staff agreed that the campaign was **visually strong**, owing to the materials and branding used and through the use of celebrities, providing publicity and images that could be drawn on throughout the year.
- v. Finally, Give a Book Week **supported the promotion and delivery of a wider campaign** – i.e. the launch of the Year of Reading as a whole. In some respects, because it is not a stand-alone initiative, measuring the outcomes is difficult. It is perhaps best seen as a supplementary promotional initiative that seeks to engage the wider public in a more established campaign.

3.5. Sustainability and recommendations

Following on from point v., above, there is a strong case to build on the successes of Give a Book Week and link this to a wider event or initiative. At the time when this evaluation has been taking place, arrangements have been made to encourage people to give books to each other on World Book Day (March 5), under the heading ‘*Give a Book on World Book Day*’. This appears to be a sensible and forward-looking approach and could be continued on an annual basis.

The amount of funding dedicated to Give a Book Week during the Year of Reading (£50,000) clearly dictated the scale and reach of the campaign. Should these levels of funding not be available annually, requiring the need for the campaign to be promoted on a smaller scale in future, it may be necessary to place a comparatively lesser emphasis on the use of celebrities to draw publicity. It would seem sensible to continue to involve schools, libraries, bookshops and a wide range of community organisations in the campaign, underlining the core principle of promoting reading as something for all people, of all ages from all backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- That Give a Book Week, or a similar campaign, should be continued as part of World Book Day on an annual basis.
- That the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Welsh Books Council, should determine the scale and focus of the promotional activity within such a campaign and that funding should be made available to reflect this.

4 READING COMMUNITIES

4.1. Introduction to the Reading Communities campaign

The Reading Communities campaign was based on the 'Reading City' model that had been used successfully in the US and UK. The model was tailored to meet the needs of the Year of Reading in Wales, focusing on community-level activity based around two books, one in English and one in Welsh. All authorities in Wales were invited, through the Society of Chief Librarians Wales, to bid for one of two tranches of funding (worth £20,000 each).

4.2. Aims of the Reading Communities campaign

The letter sent by the National Coordinator for the Year of Reading in Wales set out the aims of this particular campaign. In brief, local authorities were invited to submit proposals that would deliver the following:

- Create a programme of activity based around the two selected books;
- Establish a sense of community ownership and ensure that local people were involved in the campaign from the outset;
- Ensure that local groups and organisations played a part in the proposed activities;
- Ensure cooperation from other departments within the local authority;
- Attract the attention of the local media.

4.3. The successful communities

Four proposals / expressions of interest were received from library services following the letter sent out by the Welsh Books Council. This disappointing number was largely due, once again, to the tight timescales and the short turnaround required to submit proposals. The two communities selected, however, presented some innovative and exciting ideas. The two communities selected to be Reading Communities in 2008 were Barry, in the Vale of Glamorgan and Llanelli, in Carmarthenshire.

Both Llanelli and Barry formed steering groups in order to design and plan activities and the Welsh Books Council liaised closely with both while proposals were amended and finalised. Additional guidance provided by the Books Council emphasised the need for the Steering Groups to give consideration to sustainability post-2008. As subsequent pages will demonstrate, there were differences of approach taken in the two communities – as one would expect. Both present interesting models for future activity.

4.4. Barry Reading Community

The steering group in Barry was led by Siân Jones, Chief Librarian in the Vale of Glamorgan, who recognised that the funding made available provided “*a rare opportunity to innovate*” and try out a range of new activities and projects with partners in the local community. From the outset there was a focus on sustainability and on using the Reading Community funding to create a legacy on which to base future activities.

There was, therefore, a clear vision among those leading the campaign of what they wanted to achieve. Where to centre activities was another early consideration: the key factors in deciding to focus activities in Barry were staff capacity, the excellent facilities in the town’s recently renovated library and its accessibility to the community.

The tight timescales presented the main challenge: the steering group recognised the need to be realistic in terms of what could be planned and delivered by the end of the calendar year. In order to try and address this, different managers within the library team took responsibility for different activities. The Reading Community campaign comprised a varied programme of events, as is set out below:

Barry: Our Big Read

There was a concerted effort to ensure that a wide range of groups was able to contribute to the process of drawing up a shortlist of books to be put to the public vote. Letters were sent out inviting nominations to reading groups, bookshops, adult education classes, secondary school teachers and Merched y Wawr. A panel was assembled to consider the books nominated and two shortlists were agreed.

A concerted effort was made to ensure that voting took place in a variety of settings: voting boxes were set up in libraries, bookshops, leisure centres and in different council offices across the authority. People also had the option of voting via the Year of Reading website. It was expected that the shortlists would create interest in the titles and, although the library service in the Vale of Glamorgan supplied copies to local libraries, demand out-stripped supply during the 6-week voting period. Voting took place during the summer holidays,

which the Steering Group considers to have had an adverse affect on the numbers of people who were able to take part, given other commitments during the summer months. 649 people voted in total and the two books selected were:

Martha, Jac a Sianco by Caryl Lewis

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

Book Festival – Barry Book Bash!

The Barry Book Bash took place over the weekend October 31 to November 2nd and consisted of a full programme of activities including readings (for adults and children), talks by well-known authors and by television and radio personalities and other activities linked to the two books selected during Barry's Big Read. Author of the Welsh book selected by the community, Caryl Lewis, took part in two events.

Attendance at the events was good: internal monitoring data supplied by the Steering Group showed that 423 people had attended the various events, one-third of whom had not previously been to the library. Extremely high levels of satisfaction were reported. In addition the Book Bash drew crowds to the stalls in the town square, creating an enjoyable atmosphere throughout the weekend. The steering group reported that arranging a wide-ranging programme of events for the community in such a short space of time proved extremely challenging and frustrating. However, the event proved successful and served as the central celebration of Barry's status as a Reading Community.

Creative writing classes

Phil Carradice, a local poet, short-story writer and historian was commissioned to lead creative writing classes aimed at people with special needs who attended Barry's Open Learning Centres. Three workshops took place in total and produced interesting and thought-provoking writing that was displayed in the library. Evidence from those who participated in the classes demonstrates that the activity raised aspirations and developed new writing skills.

Art Project

This element of the Reading Community initiative in Barry sought to involve young students from Barry College: they were given a brief to produce artwork that portrayed Barry as a reading town. The steering group was keen to approach the Reading Community campaign from a different angle, while building on existing relationships between the library and Barry College. The mural produced was unveiled during the Book Bash weekend.

Reader in Residence

Michael Harvey, a bilingual storyteller, was appointed as a Reader in Residence. His role involved going into various community organisations and venues, reading excerpts from the winning books and leading discussions around these extracts. The activity continued into early 2009 and has sustained the impact of the Year of Reading, succeeding in reaching wider audiences and community groups. Groups visited included nursing homes, Welsh learners, schools and reading groups.

Fashion Show during the Barry Book Bash weekend

Finally, students at the textiles department in Barry College were asked to design and produce costume-based interpretations of books / characters in books. There was an enthusiastic response, with work being displayed during the Book Bash.

4.5. Impacts achieved in Barry

The following sections set out some of the key themes to emerge from the qualitative evidence collected:

4.5.1 Awareness raising and engagement

Efforts to promote activities proved successful with good coverage generated locally (through the local newspaper, the Council's free newspaper) and through wider-reaching national channels, including *Radio Cymru*, *Wedi 7*, *Y Cymro* and *Golwg*. One innovative and colourful approach to raising awareness was employed by asking the Town Crier to announce the winning books during the Book Bash.

Library staff played an important role in distributing promotional materials to community centres, GP surgeries and sports centres. Location played an important part in ensuring that the Reading Community celebrations were extremely visible: Barry library is at the heart of Barry town centre and all those who visited the town during the weekend of the Book Bash would have necessarily become aware of the celebration.

The steering group recognised the need to set aside a significant proportion of the £20,000 to cover the costs of promoting events. Approximately £8,000 was spent on promotional activities, £8,000 on authors (also essential to being able to promote and market events), and £2,500 on books.

4.5.2 Partnerships and team building

One outcome from the Reading Community campaign in Barry that has a greater bearing on the library service internally than on the broader community is the fact that it galvanised the

team, developed new skills among staff and strengthened the library's partnerships with others. It also required high levels of organisation; this was approached by assigning responsibility for particular projects to different individuals. One steering group member commented: *'Our team in Barry is stronger and better organised as a result of the Reading Communities initiative.'*

Arrangements were also helped by the fact that one of the *Libraries for Life* Regional Development Officers for South East Wales is based in Barry. She also made an important contribution to engaging secondary schools and other organisations. As well as providing additional capacity to the team, she also provided a link to wider strategic developments.

4.6. Llanelli Reading Community

The Llanelli Community Reads campaign appointed a local coordinator, Garry Nicholas, to facilitate activities. He was supported by Carmarthenshire's Chief Librarian, Dewi Thomas, and by Mark Jewell, Regional Library Manager Llanelli, and Myrddin Morgan, Regional Library Manager Ammanford. The campaign sought to build on a long standing tradition of libraries as centres of education in Llanelli and the team deliberately sought to base the campaign around books that were of a clear local interest. As such the small team selected a shortlist of books with a local or Welsh connection which reflected the team's knowledge of local tastes for non-fiction books.

4.6.1 The launch

Llanelli Reading Community was launched in July 2008 with an event at the town's library. The purpose of the event was to announce the shortlisted books and promote the process of voting for a favourite Welsh and English book. Flyers were placed in the libraries in the Llanelli area⁸; library staff local branch libraries promoted the event and encouraged customers to vote. The library team also set up a stall in the town centre shopping streets following the launch to hand out voting flyers and raise awareness of the event.

4.6.2 Voting on shortlisted books

Polling took place in August and the start of September. As in Barry, the Steering Group felt that better timing would have probably elicited a greater response; nevertheless approximately 600 votes were cast in libraries in Llanelli and surrounding area and online.

⁸ Branch libraries included in the campaign were Llanelli, Llwynhendy, Burry Port, Llangennech, Hendy, Trimsaran, Pembrey, Tumble, Crosshands, Pontyberem, Kidwelly, Penygroes, Dafen, Felinfoel and Pontyates.

The two winning titles, *Coeliwch Neu Beidio* by Roy Davies and *Before the Last All Clear* by Ray Evans were announced at an event at the town's library attended by the Minister. Two evening events were arranged, each celebrating one of the books. The programmes for both evenings included readings, short films and musical entertainment.

4.7. Impacts achieved in Llanelli

4.7.1 Engagement with the local community

Dr Hywel Roberts' End of Year Report for the Welsh Books Council notes that 160 people attended the various events organised to celebrate the two successful titles. The initiative was met with an extremely positive response among those who were involved. Library staff through the area have reported that users were pleased to have been introduced to the books and to have been involved in the voting process. Evidence from Llanelli library, in particular, suggests that the campaign had an impact in terms of levels of borrowing, with a 15% increase between July and December 2008.

"The process of creating shortlists certainly encouraged discussion....there has been heated discussion in the libraries."

4.7.2 Promotion

Llanelli Reading Community enjoyed a high profile visit from the Education Minister. In addition, the press coverage secured (on Radio Cymru, in the Llanelli Star and others) helped to sustain momentum and ensure that there were continuous reminders of the initiative throughout.

It had been hoped that the blog would serve as a forum whereby members of the community could interact with each other and discuss the books; however, this met with a disappointing response with no comments. While the community appeared happy to vote online, web-based discussions about the books were clearly of lesser appeal.

4.8. Key success factors

This section aims to draw out some of the key factors that contributed to the success of the Reading Communities initiative. Should it be decided to fund future Reading Community initiatives, these issues should be taken into consideration / reflected upon in any guidance issued.

4.8.1 Reaching out through reading

The Reading Communities campaign enabled and encouraged library services to reach out to new audiences – the true value of the Reading Community initiative, as demonstrated in both Barry and Llanelli is the ability to engage with new audiences, including new and diverse groups in reading-related activities.

4.8.2 An opportunity to test innovative approaches

The additional funding provided presented library services with the opportunity to pilot new projects and activities. A number of chief librarians contacted during the evaluation referred to the constraints imposed by tight budgets; the Reading Community model provided two authorities with scope to experiment and test new methods with a view to reaching new audiences.

4.8.3 Support of Welsh Books Council

Both Steering Groups noted the importance of the support provided by the Books Council and the reassurance the central team provided.

“Their regular contact and their readiness to offer advice was extremely important, particularly as this was new territory for us in many ways.”

There is a strong argument that this central support, along with the provision of materials, should be maintained at a similar level should the campaign be sustained.

4.8.4 Team structure

Barry and Llanelli adopted different structures for their steering committees. The common theme is the need to assemble teams that were fit for purpose and that were best equipped to deliver the visions they had outlined. In Barry, the range of events planned meant that the delegation of responsibility for managing specific activities was necessary. This was achieved successfully, thanks to a broad and multi-skilled team.

In Llanelli a local coordinator was brought in to assist with the management of the campaign; this approach suited the aims in Llanelli, as the individual’s wide network of local contacts provided opportunities to promote the campaign quickly and efficiently.

4.8.5 Tendering process

Although the tendering process met with a disappointing response, it nevertheless obliged library services to spend time planning their campaign, giving thought to the overall tone of the campaign and the type of activities to be included.

4.9. Conclusions: sustainability and strategic fit

It is to their credit that both communities are committed to continuing activities introduced as part of the campaign. While, admittedly, events are unlikely to be on the same scale as in 2008, there is nevertheless a recognition that the benefits should be sustained through activities of a similar nature. In Barry, plans are already being made to organise a vote on new books, culminating in a 'mini-Book Bash', a clear signal that staff in the local library and the library service as a whole have a clear desire to build on the achievements in 2008. Llanelli's Steering Committee also plan on initiating a similar voting campaign. Both groups noted that, with the luxury of longer lead-in time, it would be possible to involve larger numbers of people.

The second issue linked to sustainability is whether the campaign itself should be funded on a continuous basis. Based on the evidence provided and the impacts achieved, there is a strong case for providing similar opportunities for other communities. In addition, the initiative links extremely well with the vision set out in the Libraries for Life strategy, a vision that:

"encourages partnership working between different types of libraries and non-library partners, delivers modern facilities, invests in further developing the skills of the workforce and, above all, it puts the citizen at the centre of the service, responding to their changing needs and ensuring that libraries remain vibrant and relevant to modern life in Wales."

Difficulties caused by lack of lead-in time are a consistent theme in this evaluation report. However, it is important that these issues are addressed if the Reading Communities initiative is to be continued and lessons are learned from 2008. During the Year of Reading activities were not commenced properly until May, leaving only a short period of time before the summer holidays. Many of the people and groups who needed to be consulted or involved were not available. Only six weeks was available for voting. Ideally there would also have been a longer lead in before the vote – possibly around three months to allow people to obtain and read the shortlisted books. Some planned activities did not go ahead due to time pressures. The Reading Community Steering Group in Barry had intended to have an art competition to design a book cover and to commission high profile individuals / celebrities to champion the shortlisted books. These two other activities were discarded on the basis of time and cost.

4.10. Considerations for any future roll-out of the Reading Communities campaign

Much was achieved by the two communities selected to be Reading Communities in 2008. While there is a case to continue to fund a similar campaign on an ongoing basis, several observations are worthy of consideration:

- Central support and advice of the kind provided by the Welsh Books Council during the Year of Reading is essential;
- It would appear sensible that decisions regarding the membership and composition of the Steering Group and lead team should be taken at a local level by library authorities, who are best placed to identify the most appropriate members and the key local networks with which to engage;
- More clearly defined strategic objectives should be set out to ensure that Reading Communities link to existing or planned national strategies to promote reading and literacy; if a central aim of these programmes is to target reluctant readers or raise literacy levels among disadvantaged or hard-to-reach groups, this should be articulated from the outset in order to help shape activities; prospective Reading Communities should be encouraged to outline how they will measure the impact of their activities;
- Further to this, there may be merit in drawing up clear guidance regarding audiences / target groups that communities should prioritise; campaigns could include significant deadweight if they only benefit / engage with members of the community who are already active readers;
- Links between Barry Reading Community and the local FE college proved successful; future Reading Communities should look to formalise links with schools and colleges, ensuring the involvement of young people across a range of age groups.
- A tendering process for the selection of eligible / successful communities should be continued. Linked to this, and to encourage the development of Reading Communities in all parts of Wales, tenders could be let in lots; i.e. one lot per year for South Wales and one on lot per year in Mid and North Wales;
- Longer planning and lead-in time is essential: it is proposed that a minimum of 6 months is required to plan effectively. Prior to this, two months should be set aside

for a tendering process: one model, based on a calendar year might be as follows, with the cycle beginning in the month of April (A):

Figure 5: Possible timeline for planning and delivery of Reading Community

CALENDAR YR 1 April-December 2009										CALENDAR YR 2: Full year designated as a Reading Community 2010											
A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Tender process		Planning process and liaison with central support team								Delivery of programme of activities, including assessment of impacts at end of year											

Two other considerations remain, namely how many Reading Communities should be supported on an annual basis and what level of funding is appropriate per community.

1-2 communities per year will enable good practice to be developed quickly and will produce substantial impacts over a relatively short period of time. Later in this report (Section 6) we refer to the notable impacts achieved by other library services as a result of the relatively small sums of additional funding they received. (As noted earlier, the twenty library authorities that did not have a Reading Community each received £2,000 additional funding during the Year of Reading). As such it would appear sensible to revisit the amount of funding per Reading Community, ensuring that funding enables library services to develop innovative practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Welsh Assembly Government should provide funding to support Reading Communities in Wales on an annual basis. However, any future campaign would benefit from more clearly defined strategic objectives, guidance regarding target groups and a greater emphasis on the need to measure impact (see issues raised in Section 4.10, above).
- As part of this guidance, any future Reading Communities campaign should look to formalise links with schools and colleges, ensuring the involvement of young people across a range of age groups.
- The central support provided by the Welsh Books Council was key to the success of

the Reading Communities. Similar support should be available to future Reading Communities, providing advice on approaches to running activities and good practice.

- DCELLS, working with Basic Skills Cymru and the Welsh Books Council, should consider whether guidance should be drawn up to ensure that the initiative complements broader national strategies to promote reading.
- The Welsh Assembly Government should re-assess the funding required per Reading Community.

5 08 CLUBS

5.1. Aims, objectives and description of the campaign

This campaign had as its key aim the establishment of 50 reading clubs across Wales. Within this broad aim, specific objectives were set:

- That each of the 50 clubs would include at least 10 members;
- To target boys in the last years of primary schools and the early years of secondary school;
- To hold as many of the clubs as possible outside the formal school environment;
- To develop reading activities around sports themes;
- To ensure a linguistic balance with clubs operating in Welsh and English;
- To hold at least six sessions;
- To work to ensure that the clubs would continue after the Year of Reading.

It was envisaged that members of these clubs, which became known as 08 Clubs, would have the opportunity to meet celebrities, win prizes, participate in activities and visits – all linked to the books they were reading. The National Year of Reading included an 08 micro-site that was to provide members with the opportunity to create an on-line profile for their club, contribute blogs and express their views on the books they had read.

Establishing 50 new reading clubs for boys presented obvious challenges. The Welsh Books Council approached Dafydd and Bethan Whittall to serve as national coordinators for the campaign. They, in turn, assembled a team of five regional coordinators to take responsibility for contacting schools and youth groups and encourage them to form 08 Clubs. There were incentives in place to facilitate the process of setting up clubs. A small budget of £100 was provided to each club, with members/club leaders given the choice of how this budget was spent. A series of gifts was also to be distributed during the initiative, partly aimed at making members feel special and partly to convey a message that being involved in reading activities – something that many members were usually reluctant to do – brought with it rewards

5.2. Clubs established

The system whereby national and regional coordinators worked to recruit and establish clubs worked well. Although clubs did not get started until September 2008, 50 clubs were indeed set up across Wales and the average number of members in each club exceeded the target of 10.

Interviews with the regional coordinators revealed that the target was reached with less difficulty than was originally thought. One regional coordinator commented that she could have recruited many more to the initiative, noting that *“there is still demand out there in schools for clubs to be established.”*

Schools showed considerable enthusiasm for the initiative, particularly those in disadvantaged areas that saw an opportunity to engage boys in reading using methods that they had not previously tested. One disappointment was that far fewer clubs were linked to youth groups such as the Urdd, boys clubs, scouts and guides than had been hoped at the outset. Although regional coordinators targeted many organisations working with children and young people outside formal school settings, they found that many of these groups have a specific programme of activities and were unwilling to make adjustments in order to accommodate additional reading activities.

5.3. Overview of qualitative findings

This section draws on qualitative evidence collected during discussions with 08 Club leaders and with the young people who took part in the activities. 08 Club organisers were asked to return brief evaluation forms to the Welsh Books Council on their experiences and opinions of running the clubs. This section also draws on the comments submitted in these forms.

5.3.1 Club organisers

Club organisers / leaders varied considerably across the 50 clubs. In some cases they were English or Welsh teachers, i.e. individuals who usually work with pupils to promote literacy. Other schools were quick to see the advantages of selecting leaders whom pupils were less likely to associate with reading activities. In some cases, organisers were physical education teachers, science teachers or non-academic school staff, e.g. librarians. Boys clearly appreciated the informality of arrangements:

'It wasn't like a reading class, it was relaxed and we all enjoyed it – it felt a bit like a break from school, even though we actually met up in a classroom.'

- 08 Club member

5.3.2 Recruiting 08 Members

Many of the organisers reported that they discussed who to invite to join the 08 Clubs with colleagues before approaching prospective members. Most organisers did attempt to identify reluctant readers who would be likely to benefit most from taking part. In some cases, leaders targeted certain individuals so that they could serve as role models to others in the school, for example choosing a *"mix of the popular and the shy"*.

In other schools however the 08 Club was open to anybody who wished to take part and where there was more demand than spaces. Here membership was offered on a first come first served, or a lottery basis. Around two thirds of the clubs were boys groups, having acknowledged the original guidance provided by the Welsh Books Council and regional coordinators:

"We chose 10 boys (as we understood we were meant to) who had been identified as "reluctant readers" (again as we thought was the focus of the project)".

- 08 Club leader

The fact that a sizeable minority of clubs were mixed – and some appeared not to have targeted reluctant readers – suggests that there was a misunderstanding or breakdown in communication at some point during the process of establishing clubs or recruiting members.

Almost all organisers described attendance as good or excellent. In some cases attendance was compulsory as it was linked to a school lesson, which also can be seen to go against the grain of the original objective that the Clubs should take place outside of formal schooling arrangements. On the whole, however, the high level of attendance was due to good levels of interest and motivation, which were sustained throughout the campaign. Members felt *"that they were part of something special"*. One club member observed:

"It was exciting to be part of the club – I wondered at first whether it would be like an extra lesson, but it wasn't at all. When other boys in school – from outside the Club – realised that it was fun, they wanted to join." - 08 Club member

5.3.3 Arrangements

Many organisers thanked and complemented the Welsh Books Council in their evaluation forms and commented on the excellent support offered, notably through the materials and incentives provided.

There were some difficulties in finding time for the clubs within the school timetable, with most resorting to meeting during lunch hour and working around band or sports practice. For some schools this was a particular challenge, with the organiser finding it impossible to find a lunch-time with no rugby, football or music practice. A small number of organisers commented that the Club could have proved more beneficial if it had taken place off the school premises and by someone other than a teacher. The issue of timing within the school year was frequently raised: beginning the Clubs at the start of the autumn term required that everything needed to be in place by the previous July. This created difficulties in identifying Year 7 pupils for secondary schools.

A number of the organisers reported difficulties with using the website to upload the members' comments to the blogs. Some complaints can be explained by teething problems at the start of the project or an organiser's self confessed 'technophobia'. However, any similar use of a website in future will need to resolve and overcome issues of access of this kind. Some organisers noted that pupils don't have much opportunity to access the web in school: 08 Club meetings were squeezed into a relatively short period of time in the lunch break and if the internet or the Year of Reading website was down at this time, this caused disruption for the rest of the planned activities. Other organisers raised concerns about the lack of a facility for organisers to moderate the entries on the site, and that only staff at the Welsh Books Council could access the pupils' entries should they need editing.

However, this is not to say that the website was not a welcome addition to the club activities. Club members were allowed access to a member's area where they could write a profile and add comments on their own club's page. Contributing to the website was described as "*a great incentive for club members*", with one organiser commenting that the group...

"would like to create our own website or continue to update the club's website so that the pupils feel that their opinions are important". – 08 Club leader

Young readers also saw value in the website, which provided a focus for some of the activities linked to the books. Some groups filmed synopses of books they had read and uploaded short films onto the 08 Clubs website. Others posted short reviews or comments, with many of them quite frank in their verdicts.

“This book was good to begin with and I liked the characters, but it became more boring as it went on – I would have enjoyed a few more pictures.” – 08 Club member

5.3.4 Activities and gifts

The clubs each received £100 to spend on any activities, and some noted that the money was used to hold author workshops and visits by local sports people. Particularly popular were any trips outside of school: examples included the podcasting workshop in the Urdd centre in Cardiff, and the visits to some north Wales clubs by actors from the ‘Rownd a Rownd’ television programme. Several of the organisers commented however that the most welcome activity was simply meeting and chatting about books and that they could not put on as many activities as hoped due to time pressures in the school timetable.

The gifts supplied by the Welsh Books Council, such as t-shirts and footballs were gratefully received.

‘the gifts were great – we didn’t expect them when we first started up so they were a bonus. And they made friends outside the club jealous!’ – 08 Club member

Some organisers commented however that the gifts were somewhat unusual and that *“the sports related gifts were appreciated but the boys were not sure how they related to the reading club”*.

5.3.5 Selected books

The balance of opinion among Club leaders was that they appreciated having the books selected on their behalf; they certainly appreciated having the books supplied beforehand, saving time and enabling them to plan before the start of the series. One commented:

“there are too many books to choose from and having someone else choose the titles made it a surprise and a pleasure for us as well as the club members”. – Club leader

Discussions with readers illustrated that the books were, on the whole, suitable and well received. Boys considered it useful that there was a variety, appealing to different tastes. In one club that the evaluation team visited, each appeared to have a different favourite.

“it was nice to have different sorts of books – it meant we read things that we wouldn’t normally read” – 08 Club member

A minority thought that it would have been more motivating for the readers to have chosen the books, enabling members to choose titles that best reflected their own interests. There were reports that some of the books were too ambitious for reluctant readers – particularly for primary school groups.

5.3.6 Attracting new readers

The clubs were met with a positive response among teachers and described as an “*excellent idea to attract young people to read*”. The types of books selected and the tone of the activities, website and events helped create a positive image of reading and:

“activities like podcasts and interviews in the Bay were a change from the old image that reading is laborious and boring... the selection of books helped too as they focused on sports and mystery which appeal to boys”.

Other organisers were more cautious in their responses, reporting that at best the clubs may have “*made the children think again about reading*” and that the “*less good readers just didn’t have the reading habit and it would take something more regular and controlled/organised than the 08 Clubs to change this*”.

Not all clubs were made up of reluctant readers but, in these cases, those who already read regularly had the chance to discuss, something that they wouldn’t be able to do in every Welsh / English lesson. As such these clubs were “*more about encouraging readers to try new kinds of books*”.

Organisers reported that the clubs produced benefits for both new and regular readers.

5.3.7 Sustainability

Based on the monitoring information provided by Club leaders, the majority of Clubs will continue in some form beyond the originally planned 6 sessions. Some reported that the members themselves were keen to keep meeting:

“Yes, the boys are keen to continue” and “the boys have asked if we can extend membership of the Brightspax reading clubs to the rest of the school and they are willing to give the new members the benefit of their experience”.

Other organisers’ feedback showed that they had been prompted to think creatively of how to continue with the clubs or establish new clubs:

“The pupils who were part of the club this year could give their opinions and encourage future pupils to take part in a similar club. Possibly the pupils could run their own club in future years”

“I would like to repeat the task with group of girls and also to have the Year 11 prefects to help”.

“I think more reading clubs will be set up... as many more lads have asked to join than were in the club”

In other schools the busy school day meant that the organisers thought it unlikely that they would be able to carry on with the clubs.

Evidence from discussions the boys indicates that many have seen their interest in reading sustained, even though formal club meetings have come to an end.

‘It has made me more interested in reading generally – Welsh books especially. Before I would never read Welsh books in my spare time but that’s changed and we go to get books from Mr Thomas [Welsh teacher] and swap them when we’re finished. We all hope that the club will start up again soon.’ 08 Club member

5.4. 08 Clubs: lessons learned

The intention from the outset was that the 08 Clubs should be informal, enjoyable and, where possible, should meet outside school settings. Regional coordinators were therefore encouraged to approach organisations working with children and young people – as well as schools – to persuade them to sign up to the initiative and establish reading clubs for boys. All five coordinators did make contact with such groups, including the Urdd, local scouts groups and other clubs and associations, but with very limited success. There was general disappointment with the response from such groups, in contrast to the significant levels of enthusiasm demonstrated by primary and secondary schools approached, including many schools in disadvantaged areas. Why was the response from youth groups poorer than expected? Two key reasons were cited:

1. Many groups have an established programme of planned activities and appeared reluctant to introduce a new reading-based project or initiative;

2. Linked to this, some feedback from 08 regional coordinators indicated that staff or contact points in these settings felt they were not equipped or sufficiently experienced to run such activities.

Regional coordinators found schools to be far more responsive and consequently recruited the overwhelming majority of clubs through this route. Interestingly, particularly positive feedback came from clubs where the coordinator (i.e. club leader) was not an English or Welsh teacher – as the 08 National Coordinator said, not the ‘usual suspects who promote literacy in formal school settings’. Such clubs (facilitated by sports or geography teachers, librarians or administrative staff) appear to have been particularly successful in creating an informal feel, although the clubs met in school. This, coupled with the emphasis on out-of-school visits, including high profile visits in some cases to Blackburn Rovers FC, the set of *Rownd a Rownd* television programme, succeeded in breaking down the formality.

The limited number of out-of-school 08 Clubs established makes it impossible to conduct a robust analysis of the benefits of such settings relative to school-based clubs.

Regional coordinators reported that there were many more schools that had expressed interest in establishing clubs, suggesting that there is an appetite for such clubs and the associated activities. If support for similar boys reading clubs is to be provided in the future, the experience of 08 Clubs must be taken forward. Where clubs are established through schools, brief guidance could be provided on ways of presenting clubs as informal experiences, encouraging out-of-school activities and venues and encouraging staff from outside English or Welsh departments to be club coordinators.

Other settings present specific hurdles, particularly in terms of managing to persuade such organisations to give reading clubs a try. While their work in establishing 50 reading clubs for boys is to be commended, the five regional coordinators witnessed a disappointing response in out-of-school settings. One possible approach would be to involve or seek advice from organisations with specific experience in working with youth groups in non-statutory settings (e.g. CWVYS, Youth Cymru, CYPPs).

In effect, one can conclude that two separate approaches are required:

- Firstly, continued support should be provided to build on the interest in boys reading clubs identified in schools not included in the 08 Clubs initiative, taking into account lessons learned;
- More specialist advice and support is required to facilitate the establishment of reading clubs in informal, non-school settings, drawing in the expertise of organisations with experience of working with youth groups in non-statutory sector.

5.5. Impacts and key success factors

i. Captured the imagination of young readers

Many schools noted that they were pleasantly surprised at how positively the clubs had been received by boys. There was a great deal of enthusiasm about being part of a 'different type of *non-lesson-time* event', as one coordinator put it:

'When we held the first meeting in the library the interest was enormous: I could have run three clubs!' – Club leader, Pembrokeshire secondary school

ii. Succeeded in attracting new readers

Evidence reveals that the clubs succeeded in attracting new readers. In some cases this was done by targeting boys from lower ability groups and classes. The choice of titles by the Welsh Books Council contributed to the clubs being able to appeal to new audiences or, as one coordinator noted,

'It helped us move away from the traditional image of reading being something boring and laborious.' – O8 Club leader

This view was supported by many of the boys who attended the clubs. One observed that:

'the books were mainly focused on sport or were mystery books – which we all seemed to enjoy.' – O8 Club member, Cardiff

Ensuring that the themes of the selected books appealed to the target audience was therefore a key to success in this regard. So too was the forward-looking selection of club leaders in many cases. As noted in section 5.3.1, a number of clubs decided against giving the responsibility for coordinating activities to English or Welsh teachers, which had beneficial effects:

'[The O8 Club] enabled me to be an role model to lads who normally see me as a sports teacher... as someone keen and enthusiastic about reading.' – Club leader, Wrexham

iii. Levels of attendance

O8 Club leaders reported that good levels of attendance were achieved; boys felt enthusiastic about being part of an exclusive club, that many were personally invited to join.

'We have had 100% attendance from our club members. They recognise that they are part of something special and have participated fully.' – O8 Club leader, Conwy

As noted in section 5.3.5, above, the incentives and ‘freebies’ supplied by the Welsh Books Council were well-received and undoubtedly contributed to the levels of attendance at the clubs. Similarly, opportunities to meet with sports personalities, actors and to take part in extra-school visits also played an important part in ensuring boys continued to go along to club meetings.

iv. Success in engaging teachers / club coordinators.

Without these individuals, the clubs would not have taken place. The campaign succeeded in engaging staff and practitioners, who clearly saw value in the 08 Clubs: many noted that it had been a ‘privilege’ and a ‘pleasure’ to be part of the campaign.

v. Other impacts reported

- Recruited new library members

One of the clubs arranged through Pembrokeshire library service attracted new borrowers to the library, ‘who now borrow regularly’.

- Broadened interest in reading among non-club members

Around half of the groups reported that the 08 Clubs had generated significant interest among peers who were not involved. In some cases this prompted schools to make plans to have a reading club on an annual basis, increasing the numbers.

‘We hope that this year’s 08 Group will become role models/ mentors for future groups.’ – Club leader, Cardiff

5.6. Sustaining ‘08 Clubs’ – a summary options appraisal

As noted in the previous section, the fact that the target of 50 clubs with 500 members was achieved at relative ease, along with the evidence from regional coordinators that additional unmet demand for similar reading clubs in a large number of other schools, gives weight to the argument that additional support should be provided for similar clubs.

However a number of different approaches could be taken and this section presents an overview of different possible delivery models.

Option 1: The Year of Reading model.

This involves largely continuing the model used during the Year of Reading, with a full range of support provided including central support (WBC), recruitment of clubs through a network of regional coordinators (possibly drawing in wider expertise), books selected by the central support team, who also provide copies of books and various other incentives to

help encourage involvement in the programme. The target audience would be boys who are reluctant readers with a limited number of members.

Option 2: Scaled-down model.

This would include elements of the 08 Clubs but would have reduced levels of central support, with guidelines provided by the Welsh Books Council and some good practice case studies being made available to support clubs. The network of regional coordinators may not be required. If there is sufficient demand among schools to establish clubs, then the central support could market the scheme to schools and youth organisations who would be encouraged to apply to establish an 09 Club. The benefits would be at a reduced level, though book lists and the books themselves would still be provided. The target audience would be at the discretion of the individual club, e.g. schools would decide on what basis club membership should be allowed and whether specific target groups should be prioritised.

Option 3: Link clubs to Reading Community campaigns

This option would involve supporting reading clubs in schools and youth organisations near towns selected to be Reading Communities in the future. (This is subject, of course, to that campaign being sustained). It would therefore necessarily have a more limited scope and geographical coverage from year to year. Central support would focus on ensuring that local clubs were established and seek to link the clubs’ activities and books to the wider programme of activities planned to celebrate the local area as a Reading Community.

Figure 6: 08 Clubs options table

	Support Elements						Target Audience		
	Central Support	Regional Coordinators	Gifts & limited budget for clubs	Interactive Website	Books – suggested reading list	Books – copies supplied	Boys	Reluctant Readers	Maximum 10 members
Option 1: YoR model	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Option 2: Scaled-down model	✓ but at reduced level	X	✓ at reduced level	?	✓	✓	At discretion of individual club; school / youth org to decide		
Option 3: Linked to Reading Communities	✓ linked to RC campaign	X	✓ at reduced level	✓	✓	✓	To reflect target audiences & strategy of the Reading Community campaign		

5.7. Recommendations

- Firstly, continued support should be provided to build on the interest in boys reading clubs identified in schools not included in the 08 Clubs initiative, taking into account lessons learned;
- More specialist advice and support is required to facilitate the establishment of reading clubs in informal, non-school settings, drawing in the expertise of organisations with experience of working with youth groups in non-statutory sector.
- Boys in the last years of primary schools and the early years of secondary school should continue to be targeted.
- Clubs should be encouraged to link reading activities to sports themes, building on successful approaches introduced during the 2008 National Year of Reading.
- That the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Welsh Books Council should consider the strengths and weaknesses of different possible models for supporting Reading Clubs.
- In continuing to support Reading Clubs, it is important that a linguistic balance is maintained, with clubs operating in Welsh and English.

6 LOCAL AUTHORITY-LED YEAR OF READING ACTIVITY

6.1. Description of the Local Authority-led activities

The formal link with local authorities began with correspondence from the Welsh Books Council early in the programme requesting nominations for a contact point, although at that early stage, no additional funds were available. However, following discussions between the Society of Chief Librarians and the Welsh Books Council, it was decided to offer grants to each local authority towards Year of Reading events. Local authorities were invited therefore to apply for a £2000 grant (made up of £500 contribution from the WBC and £1500 from CyMAL). The intention of this additional funding strand was to enable all local authority areas to have some commitment to the Year of Reading and to contribute to the raising of awareness of the Year across Wales.

The local activities were led by the libraries but in most areas were steered by a group of partners drawn from other departments in the local authorities, including education (e.g. early years advisers, specialist literacy teacher), sports and leisure and housing (Tenant Participation officer), and from external partners (e.g. the Academi-funded Literature officer).

6.2. Local authority events

A variety of events took place across Wales under the banner of the National Year of Reading. Most local authorities used the grant for the promotion of their Summer Reading Challenge 'Team Read', and funded materials, workshops and storytelling events. Additional events in some local authorities included craft workshops, poetry readings, games, quizzes, family days, numerous author events, and library open evenings or afternoon parties. For the most part, activities were designed to appeal to all library users, existing and new, especially children and young people. Some local authorities decided to focus on specific groups within their local communities:

- Blaenau Gwent used the funds to raise awareness of the needs of blind and partially sighted people and spent the funding both on a programme of specially designed author visits and events and on support and transport for blind people to the library.

- Merthyr Tydfil libraries used over half of the grant on promotional materials and display equipment. They invested in glossy leaflets dedicated to monthly themes and in 'book pods' book display equipment, one of which was located at a local college to provide library leaflets and stock suggestions.
- Two of the main events funded in Denbighshire focused on football and aimed to complement the Year of Reading's targeting of boys and fathers. The fun events were promoted to local schools and the junior football club.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf used the grant to develop and print a volume of short stories and poems written by local people.

Local authorities used the logo widely during the year in the following ways:

- Many local authority websites, staff payslips, internal newsletters and intranet;
- Library flyers (e.g. the logo appeared on a flyer prepared by Gwynedd which was distributed as an insert in 15,000 'papur bro' newspapers);
- Community newspapers (logo and article in 83000 community newspapers distributed in Carmarthenshire)
- Information flyers and brochures (in Pembrokeshire the logo appeared on the torch theatre autumn programme brochure with a print run of 30,000)

6.3. Numbers taking part

In their evaluation reports many of the library services reported increased numbers of people attending events and an increase in the numbers of registered borrowers, including children and young people. New membership to Newport libraries rose by almost 5 per cent in the run up to and after the Big Read event, the flagship Year of Reading celebration in the city. Elsewhere, one 10 year-old boy in Pembrokeshire was encouraged to join his local library after attending a Book Fiesta in mid October 2008:

'Fantastic, absolutely brill, very entertaining and would love to have another Book Fiesta next year.'

- new library member, aged 10 (Pembrokeshire)

An older new borrower, who joined following a Year of Reading event in Ceredigion noted:

'It has changed my perception of the library'.

Many of the evaluation reports reported an upward trend in the number of children taking part in, and completing, the Summer Reading Challenge. The extra events put on as part of summer reading challenges may have contributed to the upward trend in numbers,

"Attendance (at events) were strong and feedback extremely positive. The event may also have been a factor in the increased completion rate of the Summer Reading Challenge (57.6% in 2008, 53.4 in 2007 – this sounds small, but is an increase of 520 children competing the challenge)" Flintshire Library and Information Service Report

An impressive number of people attended the range of events across Wales. According to the End of Year report commissioned by the Welsh Books Council⁹ 106,000 people took part in Year of Reading events, an extremely impressive total.

The increase in numbers is difficult to attribute to the extra funds from Year of Reading, however, as many of the events were arranged under the banner of Year of Reading and the Libraries for Life / Happy Days campaign. Furthermore, many of the events may have taken place regardless of the extra funding and were repeats of the previous years' programme.

6.4. Feedback from those who participated

Information received from heads of library services, both in the evaluation forms and through interviews, revealed high levels of satisfaction with the activities on offer and views expressed indicate that the Year of Reading branded events have resulted in greater levels of interest in, and awareness of, the importance and pleasure of reading and the opportunities and facilities offered in libraries. Anecdotal evidence such as this provides only a snapshot and there are obvious dangers in generalising. However, it is clear that the extra funds and the opportunity to facilitate more and different events was widely appreciated and valued. The events themselves were also widely appreciated, with many positive comments received on the customer feedback forms:

"My football-mad 7 year old year old isn't keen reader but – gave us lots of ideas of different ways of reading – like magazines, We are library members but don't come

⁹ Hywel Roberts (January 2009) *National Year of Reading 2008: End of year report*

very often – we will come again now because my son wants to do the reading challenge (Parent’s feedback to Denbighshire event)

“Really fantastic to be given an opportunity to meet an author” (Conwy feedback)

“Didn’t know the library had such a lot of stuff” (Feedback from new member in Merthyr Tydfil)

In addition, there was evidence that local events had been very well received by many of the boy readers, a target audience for a number of activities.

“I’m going to read Tom’s book now – I got my mum to let me join the library so I could borrow it” – member of junior football club, following a Summer Reading Challenge event led by author Tom Palmer in Rhyl, Denbighshire

“Reading is an important skill in life ... it will help me get further.”

Young reader, providing feedback from Summer Reading Challenge event.

“My great love is football, but I’m going to come to the library now to borrow stuff to help me with school work”. Young reader, male

More tangible outcomes have also been achieved. One, which has already been alluded to, is the increase in numbers taking part in library events and the associated increase in the numbers of new members and loans of books.

- Newport hosted a programme of events, culminating in an October ‘Big Read’ series of events. New membership of Newport libraries rose by almost 5% in the run up to and after the event.
- Statistics from Monmouthshire reveal that there had been an increase in the number of items issued and the visitor count in October and November 2008 compared to the same period in 2007
- One of the author events organised in Swansea on the theme of climbing was promoted to the university mountaineering society. Among the audience at the event were 5 students who then joined the library.

6.5. Impacts and key success factors

There are also other potential impacts of the local authorities’ library-based activities funded by the Year of Reading:

- Local authorities reported that they had attracted new borrowers, especially children, following events at the library;
- There is some evidence that the extra funds enabled libraries to try out activities that would not have been part of their normal programme and, as such, the relatively small sums of money enabled them to think more creatively;
- The activities funded through the grant fitted well with the libraries' existing programmes;
- The grant and the subsequent involvement of areas across Wales meant that the logo and year of Reading branding was visible across Wales;
- The extra funds made a contribution to partnership working at a local level. Around half of the local authority areas set up a Year of Reading steering group which, in some cases, drew together a diverse and impressive list of partners. Partnerships were also created and strengthened as a result of delivering the activities: events were promoted in conjunction with sports clubs in Swansea and publishers in Neath Port Talbot; they were co-hosted with the Llangollen fringe festival in Denbighshire.
- The grant (and the existence of a wider campaign) allowed the libraries to lever in additional support, for example Swansea libraries reported that *"several sporting personalities came along [to sports themed library events] and supported us at no cost to us;* and Rhondda Cynon Taf, in the process of compiling an anthology of stories and poems by local authors, received letters of support and reported that *"People have donated monies to the RCT Mayor's charity appeal in support of the project"*.

Not all activities were a total success, as can be expected in piloting new initiatives. One local authority reported that the attendance at author evening events designed to attract new readers was extremely disappointing with audiences of two or four people turning out to the evenings at branch libraries despite much publicity in the local press. On the other hand there was considerable interest in a reader's event with local authors.

In summary, the line between impacts arising from the Year of Reading funding and from other funds is blurred and many of the events funded by the grant had been part of the libraries' programme for many years.

6.6. Contribution to 2008 Events

At the Year of Reading launch the Education Minister set a challenge: arrange 2008 reading events and activities during the year. The target was met and passed, thanks in no small part to the numerous activities organised by the local authorities across Wales.

6.7. Looked After Children

In parallel to the main Year of Reading funds awarded to the WBC to run the campaigns, the Welsh Assembly Government provided additional funds directed at Looked After Children teams to ensure that those children also benefitted from the promotion of reading. A sum of £5,000 was provided to all local authorities which, according to the Welsh Assembly's lead officer, was designed to provide "an intensity of support across Wales".

Examples of activities undertaken with Looked After Children included story telling in bookstores, helping young people to choose and purchase books (in many cases for the very first time) and workshops using art and drama and aimed at Year 6 children in foster care. Evidence was presented during the Year of Reading conference showing that a number of Looked After Children who had participated in activities had seen substantial increases in their reading ages.

6.8. Additionality and deadweight

Programme evaluations often provide an assessment of additionality, displacement and deadweight of activities. However, in the case of a programme of promotional events such as the Year of Reading, such an assessment is near impossible. Clearly some activities reported here would have taken place anyway but to what degree and to how large an audience is not known.

In order to assess the true net additionality (and thus the effectiveness) of the Year of Reading campaigns, it would be necessary to assess the total take-up of reading activities against the degree to which reading activities and general promotion would have taken place anyway (deadweight). It is also necessary to assess the extent to which activities undertaken through the Year of Reading substitute for other areas of reading activity (displacement). Only by taking these two factors into consideration could an evaluation begin to build a clear picture of the extent to which the Year of Reading has truly increased reading and involvement in reading-related activities. Isolating the effects of the Year of Reading in this way is neither possible nor desirable, as the whole programme was designed from the outset to be complementary and build on a range of other initiatives (Quick Reads, Read a Million Words, Libraries for Life, Happy Days).

7 CLOSING CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Delivery of Year of Reading core aims

Section 1.2 of this report set out the core aims of the Year of Reading. This section will draw on the evidence presented in earlier chapters of this report and consider the extent to which these aims were realised.

The first key aim related to:

- i. targeting, as a priority group, children and young people from early years through to Key Stage 3 (14 years of age) and parents of young children with a particular focus on fathers;

Collectively, the three specific projects coupled with activity at local authority-level ensured a continuum of activity for children from early years through to Key Stage 3. Some activities organised by local library services were targeted at children under-5. Other authorities planned activities that appealed to all ages. One example of an activity that sought to span all age groups and diverse interests was Ceredigion's "Geirie-ie-ie-ie! Wow! Words, Words, Words!" event in November. This included story-time sessions for small children, dance sessions, face painting, drama classes, writing sessions and story-telling for older children. The 08 Clubs project was also a deliberate attempt to target children and young people in Key Stages 2 and 3 and achieved its target of engaging 500 reluctant readers in book club activities. It should be noted that activities were also arranged for older age groups – including 6th form students, and those studying at FE and HE in some cases – indicating that those who benefitted extended beyond the original priority group.

Many of the activities – particularly those delivered by local authorities and some of those organised by the Reading Communities – focused on involving children with their parents. A number of authorities organised family reading events to promote reading as an experience to be shared between parents and children. In reporting attendance at such events, authorities did not distinguish between numbers of fathers and mothers present. Anecdotal evidence indicates that mothers represented the overwhelming majority of parents at such events. In some cases activities centred on reading through sport produced higher levels of interest among fathers.

On balance, therefore, it is difficult to conclude that there was a 'particular focus on fathers' across the various strands of the Year of Reading. The fact that none of the local authority Year of Reading evaluation reports refer to activities that specifically targeted fathers suggests that, while this was identified as a priority at a national level by the Year of Reading Steering Group, it was less of a focus for library services when delivering, and reporting on, activities. It would appear that clearer guidance should be issued to local authorities and other delivery partners if this is to remain a priority in future programmes to promote reading.

Two other key aims were identified in section 1.2, namely:

- ii. specific emphasis to the promotion of reading to boys;

The Welsh Books Council's response to the second aim, above, was the design and delivery of the 08 Clubs project. Section 5 of this report has considered the outcomes from this project. In broad terms, it must be concluded that this aim was achieved. While some clubs involved mixed groups of boys and girls, the promotion of reading among boys was very much at the heart of the campaign.

- iii. [a concentration] on drawing together partners at the local level including early years groups, schools, libraries and youth groups to develop and run activities to promote reading.

Local steering groups established to plan and deliver local Year of Reading activities provided important opportunities for local library services to involve different partners – both from other local authority departments and external partners. As noted in previous sections, there was not a uniform approach taken in each local authority area to engaging partners. Different circumstances (and different corporate structures in local authorities) meant that a range of approaches was taken bringing in key skills, expertise and contacts as required. However there was a rich and varied range of local partners involved: local authority partners included officers and advisers in basic skills and literacy departments, sports and leisure officers, housing and tenant participation officers, youth and community officers, youth service organisers, carers for older people, arts officers, health promotion officers and many others; there is also a long list of other partners involved in planning and delivery of local events included schoolteachers, theatre managers, young farmers clubs and individuals representing a raft of other local organisations.

The emphasis on locally-focused activities, planned and delivered by those closest to the communities they serve proved to be a success, not least because of the effectiveness of

local networking and the added value achieved by bringing in skills and expertise from a range of settings to support events.

7.2. Effectiveness and cost effectiveness

The Year of Reading has clearly been effective inasmuch as WBC met all of the targets set for numbers and membership of 08 Clubs and 2008 events. In judging cost-effectiveness, however, a range of other factors need to be included. The cost effectiveness of any programme depends on the impacts and outcomes generated in relation to the resources invested, taking into account the intended results (the targets met) and the wider benefits generated. In the case of Year of Reading 2008, evidence collected for the evaluation reveals that the following additional outcomes achieved also influence the value for money generated.

- Wide awareness of the Year of Reading;
- An opportunity to test and try out new ways of working;
- Developing and disseminating good practice;
- New partnerships;
- New materials available for future projects.

The programme received funding of £458,000. According to estimates by Dr Hywel Roberts¹⁰ some 106,000 individuals took part in, or attended Year of reading events. If the cost effectiveness of the programme is assessed in the very crude terms of these basic figures, then it has cost £4.32 per beneficiary.

However, any analysis of the cost effectiveness must take into account a host of other factors:

- **Wide awareness of the Year of Reading** - The cost per head should not be measured solely by numbers attending Year of Reading branded events. Many more people will have heard promotional items on radio, read articles as part of the media campaign, be involved as parents of 08 Club members or have taken notice of promotional window displays in a bookshop.
- **Test new ways of working** – The Year of Reading was building on lessons learnt from the 1998 year and the annual World Book Day events. Reading Communities had

¹⁰ Hywel Roberts (January 2009) End of year report

been successful in America and small scale versions had worked in the UK; the Year presented an opportunity to run dedicated Reading Communities in two areas of Wales. Similarly, the act of giving books originated in Spain but in 2008 there was an opportunity to develop the idea as a central part of the promotional and PR element of the Year of Reading. In the process, there were opportunities for testing and trialling. At a project level, although libraries organised activities to fit in with their existing programme of events for Happy Days, there is evidence that they also tried new activities and, in so doing, fostered new partnerships. At a central level, the staff at the Books Council learnt new ways of working, for example commissioning and updating project websites, which will inform and enrich other projects, especially the World Book Day.

- **Developing and disseminating good practice** - the programme, both on a national level and as delivered locally, developed and tested new ways of working. Cost-effectiveness therefore needs to take into account the opportunity of transferring ideas and lessons not only to other Welsh Books Council initiatives, but also to strategic partners' activities (Estyn, Basic Skills Cymru and the Welsh Assembly Government), and to the activities of delivery partners (schools, libraries) and new partners (TUC, charities, Looked After Children coordinators etc).
- **New partnerships** - At a national level, the Welsh Books Council developed new working relationships during the year, most notably with the TUC; these links will be strengthened in their work together to promote Quick Reads. At a local level, too, there was evidence from all of three campaigns of closer working relationships between partners, with schools making links with sports clubs to arrange 08 Club visits and the Reading Communities working with a range of local contacts.
- **New materials** - A significant level of investment was made to develop the project website and this is reflected in the attractive and accessible design and the emphasis on reading as fun. There was a commendable focus on interactivity although few members of the public took the opportunity to comment on the blogs. Likewise, the opportunity to blog on the site was a key feature for many members of the 08 clubs, in spite of some technical glitches and reluctance by some groups. The evidence collected as part of the evaluation indicates that the website proved most useful where it was targeted at a particular audience and designed to appeal to that audience, as was the case with the 08 Clubs micro-site. Significant parts of the website will be incorporated into the Welsh Books council's site for the future.

The nominal 'cost per beneficiary' therefore covers far more than the number of people recorded at activities, and it is clear that the scheme cannot be measured purely on this financial basis. The real value of the Year of Reading will lie in the sustainability of its outcomes, the sustainability of the new projects and the enthusiasm generated; and in the increased interest and take-up of reading among the 08 Club members, those who voted and attended Reading Community events and those who received books as gifts.

7.3. Recommendations

- I. That Give a Book Week, or a similar campaign, should be continued as part of World Book Day on an annual basis.
- II. That the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Welsh Books Council, should determine the scale and focus of the promotional activity within such a campaign and that funding should be made available to reflect this.
- III. The Welsh Assembly Government should provide funding to support Reading Communities in Wales on an annual basis. However, any future campaign would benefit from more clearly defined strategic objectives, guidance regarding target groups and a greater emphasis on the need to measure impact (see issues raised in Section 4.10, above).
- IV. As part of this guidance, any future Reading Communities campaign should look to formalise links with schools and colleges, ensuring the involvement of young people across a range of age groups.
- V. The central support provided by the Welsh Books Council was key to the success of the Reading Communities. Similar support should be available to future Reading Communities, providing advice on approaches to running activities and good practice.
- VI. DCELLS, working with Basic Skills Cymru and the Welsh Books Council, should consider whether guidance should be drawn up to ensure that the initiative complements broader national strategies to promote reading.
- VII. The Welsh Assembly Government should re-assess the funding required per Reading Community.

- VIII. Firstly, continued support should be provided to build on the interest in boys reading clubs identified in schools not included in the 08 Clubs initiative, taking into account lessons learned;
- IX. More specialist advice and support is required to facilitate the establishment of reading clubs in informal, non-school settings, drawing in the expertise of organisations with experience of working with youth groups in non-statutory sector.
- X. Boys in the last years of primary schools and the early years of secondary school should continue to be targeted.
- XI. Clubs should be encouraged to link reading activities to sports themes, building on successful approaches introduced during the 2008 National Year of Reading.
- XII. That the Welsh Assembly Government, in partnership with the Welsh Books Council should consider the strengths and weaknesses of different possible models for supporting Reading Clubs.
- XIII. In continuing to support Reading Clubs, it is important that a linguistic balance is maintained, with clubs operating in Welsh and English.