



Quick Reads Evaluation Report 2020-21

Executive Summary

The Reading Agency is a national charity with a mission to tackle life's big challenges through the proven power of reading. One of these pressing life challenges is literacy and learning: one in three adults in the UK does not regularly read for pleasure and one in six finds reading difficult.¹ Quick Reads is a Reading Agency programme aimed at reaching those who struggle to read or do not regularly read due to a diverse range of reasons, from low literacy and low reading confidence to not perceiving themselves as 'a reader'.

Quick Reads provide a route into reading that prioritises great storytelling and adult-focused content while ensuring the books are written in an easy-to-read style. The Quick Reads programme began in 2006; since then, over 5.1 million Quick Reads have been distributed, with over 6 million loaned from public libraries.

In February 2020, The Reading Agency commissioned six new Quick Reads. The Reading Agency works with authors and publishers to commission the titles, with the aim of introducing readers to new authors and genres, as well as to the power of reading. The titles are designed to be engaging, accessibly written and affordably priced.

This report outlines the programme activity that took place during 2020 to support distribution of the new collection. Many Quick Reads published in previous years are still available to buy and to borrow from public libraries and continue to be widely accessed in these ways. As such, the distribution figures and reader views included within this report are not limited to the 2020 titles but include all Quick Reads titles published between 2006 and 2020.

In 2020-21, the Quick Reads catalogue of titles reached over 372,695 readers. This includes 208,251 library issues, 155,234 copies sold, and 9,210 books donated. As part of ongoing development of Quick Reads' emphasis on reaching reluctant readers, The Reading Agency worked to

¹ [Demos](#), 2018



amplify the donations strand of the programme in 2020-21. The following table offers a more detailed breakdown of reach within each of these categories:

Number of copies	Distribution method	Distribution breakdown
208,251	Library issues ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 206,092 library issues (Public Lending Rights data)- 2,159 e-book issues (data from one provider only)
155,234	Sales ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 90,126 copies sold through retailers to the general public (Nielsen BookScan data)- 29,328 e-books sold (data on 2020 titles only)- 23,100 copies sold to the adult literacy sector- 12,680 copies sold to public libraries
9,210	Donations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4,800 donated by publishers during lockdown to reach those most affected by the pandemic- 4,000 donated by publishers for World Book Night- 410 donated by publisher for Get Islington Reading, a programme reaching families within the London Borough of Islington
Total: 372,695		

A reader survey was also administered to capture insights into the type of people using Quick Reads and the difference reading the book may have made to them. Key survey findings included the ways Quick Reads offer non-readers and lapsed readers a jumping-off point into reading whilst also enabling readers to discover new authors and genres, thereby widening their reading habits. A strong theme that emerged from qualitative responses to the survey was the ability of the books to help readers connect with others, whether through the content of specific Quick Reads titles or through the collection's short, accessible nature.

² PLR data from July 2019-June 2020; e-lending data, only available from one e-lending supplier, from Jan-Aug 2020.

³ Nielsen BookScan data from 1 Jan 2020 – 14 April 2021; special sales, Feb 2020; Feb 2020 – April 2021. Nielsen BookScan data is currently missing several weeks across the course of 2020-21, including weeks 13-24 (22/03-13/06), 46-49 (8/11-5/12) and 53 (27/12-02/01).



Of those who responded to the survey:⁴

- 85% said that they would like to try another Quick Read
- Half (49%) said that they would like to read another book by the same author
- 1 in 3 (33%) said they would like to read more often
- One-third (32%) said they would like to talk to others more about books and reading

The following evaluation report highlights the reach and impact of the Quick Reads titles on individuals and organisations, as well as the programme's wider promotional campaign, using data collected on book sales, issues and donations; social media analytics; interviews with book users and organisational partners; and surveys distributed to book users and organisational partners.

1. Introduction

Quick Reads provide a route into reading that prioritises great storytelling and adult-focused content while ensuring the books are written in an easy-to-read style. Each year, The Reading Agency works with authors and publishers to produce six new titles, with the aim of introducing readers to new authors and genres, as well as to the power and benefits of reading. The titles are designed to be engaging, accessibly written and affordably priced.

The need for Quick Reads in the UK is clear. One in 6 adults struggles with reading and 1 in 3 does not regularly read for pleasure.⁵ Studies have shown that those who do read for pleasure have higher levels of self-esteem and a greater ability to cope with difficult situations, highlighting the potential benefits for those who read.⁶ Quick Reads aims to reach those who do not regularly read, or those who have stopped reading regularly for a number of reasons, such as low literacy, time constraints or lack of reading confidence.

⁴ A total of 246 people filled in the survey. The methodology required for 2020 meant that the survey sample was self-selecting; therefore, those who responded are likely to be more highly engaged with books and reading, skewing the findings towards more regular readers.

⁵ [Demos](#), 2018

⁶ [Demos](#), 2018

Since the programme launched in 2006, The Reading Agency has collaborated with 30 leading publishers to produce 129 titles. Quick Reads titles have been loaned out over 6 million times and over 5.1 million copies have been bought or distributed thanks to generous support from publishers and donors.

While previous evaluations of Quick Reads focused on their use within educational and learning settings, this is the first evaluation of the Quick Reads programme as a whole. This evaluation report highlights Quick Reads' wider promotional campaign and examines the reach and impact of the programme in 2020-21 despite the year's unique challenges, using data collected on book sales, issues and donations; social media analytics and press reach; interviews with readers and organisational partners; and surveys distributed to users and organisational partners.

2. Overview of the Quick Reads 2020 titles



Six Quick Reads titles were commissioned by The Reading Agency in 2019 and published in February 2020. The titles are all written by bestselling or popular authors and span a range of genres with the aim of reaching those who struggle to read, either due to low literacy or other common barriers to reading. Each title is priced at £1 to facilitate engagement with as many readers as possible.

The 2020 collection included the following titles:



- ***A Fresh Start*** (Orion): a collection of short stories showcasing ten bestselling authors including Ian Rankin, Jojo Moyes and Sophie Kinsella, edited by Fanny Blake
- ***Notting Hill Carnival: A West Side Story*** (Trapeze): a retelling of West Side Story set in Brixton by Candice Carty-Williams
- ***Darkness Rising*** (Transworld): a dark crime thriller set in Bradford and featuring the much loved character D.I. Harry Virdee written by A. A. Dhand
- ***The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*** (Simon & Schuster): a light-hearted romance by ‘the queen of feel-good fiction’, Milly Johnson
- ***The Donor*** (Little, Brown): a psychological thriller about a family meeting the organ donor who saved their daughter’s life by Clare Mackintosh
- ***This Is Going To Hurt: a specially adapted version*** (Macmillan): an abridged version of the bestselling collection of darkly funny diary entries by Adam Kay

3. Reach

In addition to the titles published as part of the 2020 collection, many Quick Reads published in previous years are still available to buy or to borrow from public libraries and continue to be widely accessed in these ways. As such, the distribution figures outlined here are not limited to the 2020 titles but to all Quick Reads titles published between 2006 and 2020, except where specified.

In 2020-21, the Quick Reads programme and its catalogue of titles reached over 372,695 readers, broken down by the following categories:

- 208,251 library issues, including:⁷
 - 206,092 library issues
 - 2,159 e-book issues

⁷ PLR data from July 2019-June 2020; e-lending data, only available from one e-lending supplier, from Jan-Aug 2020



- 155,234 books sold, including:⁸
 - 90,126 copies sold through retailers to the general public⁹
 - 29,328 e-books sold (data on 2020 titles only)
 - 23,100 copies sold to the adult literacy sector
 - This includes 12,000 copies bought by unionlearn; 6,000 by UNISON; 2,000 by Usdaw; and 3,100 bought by The Reading Agency through a grant from The Hobson Charity and distributed to prisons
 - 12,680 copies sold to public libraries
- 9,210 books donated, including:
 - 4,800 donated by publishers during lockdown to reach those most affected by the pandemic
 - 4,000 donated by publishers for [World Book Night](#)
 - 410 donated by publisher for [Get Islington Reading](#), a programme reaching families of 9-14-year-olds within the London Borough of Islington

Impact of Covid-19 on distribution and data collection

The effects of Covid-19 and lockdown have meant that public libraries have been closed to visitors and unable to operate as normal for the majority of 2020-21, affecting the lending figures for this year, which have reduced by 25% on loans for the same period in 2019-20. Individual situations varied significantly, with some libraries able to offer a 'click and collect' lending service at times whilst others were only able to provide access to e-lending.

The figures for book sales have also been affected by bookshops being closed due to Covid-19 restrictions. In addition, data collection agencies were affected by closures, meaning that a number of book sales or issues were unable to be captured and recorded. Nielsen BookScan data is currently missing several weeks across the course of 2020-21, including weeks 13-24 (22/03-13/06), 46-49 (8/11-5/12) and 53 (27/12-02/01). This indicates that book sales may be higher than can be fully represented here.

⁸ Nielsen BookScan data from 1 Jan 2020 – 14 April 2021; special sales, Feb 2020; Feb 2020 – April 2021

⁹ Nielsen BookScan data is currently missing several weeks across the course of 2020-21, including weeks 13-24 (22/03-13/06), 46-49 (8/11-5/12) and 53 (27/12-02/01).

Despite the disruption to public libraries and booksellers over 2020-21, The Reading Agency worked to amplify the donations strand of Quick Reads as part of an ongoing development of the programme's reader engagement strategy and emphasis on reaching reluctant readers. Book gifting activity and The Reading Agency's work in helping to increase access to books and reading is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.

4. Distribution: retail, libraries, special sales and donations

Libraries and retail

The main distribution channels for the 2020 Quick Reads were public libraries (supplied by Bertrams and Gardners), WHSmith, Waterstones, Hive, Amazon, independent bookshops and special sales arranged by The Reading Agency with the adult literacy sector. This distribution network is being reviewed and extended for the 2021-22 programme in line with a new engagement strategy.

Quick Reads titles were advertised to bookshops and public libraries in trade catalogues including *Bertrams Booktime* magazine (Jan & Feb 2020 edition), Bertrams Buyers Notes catalogue (December 2019), and Gardners trade catalogue (December 2019).

Seven independent bookshops requested free standing display units (FSDUs) to feature the collection, and WHSmith displayed the titles in FSDUs across 450 stores nationally.

Quick Reads displays in WHSmith Liverpool with author A. A. Dhand (left) and in WHSmith Uxbridge (right)

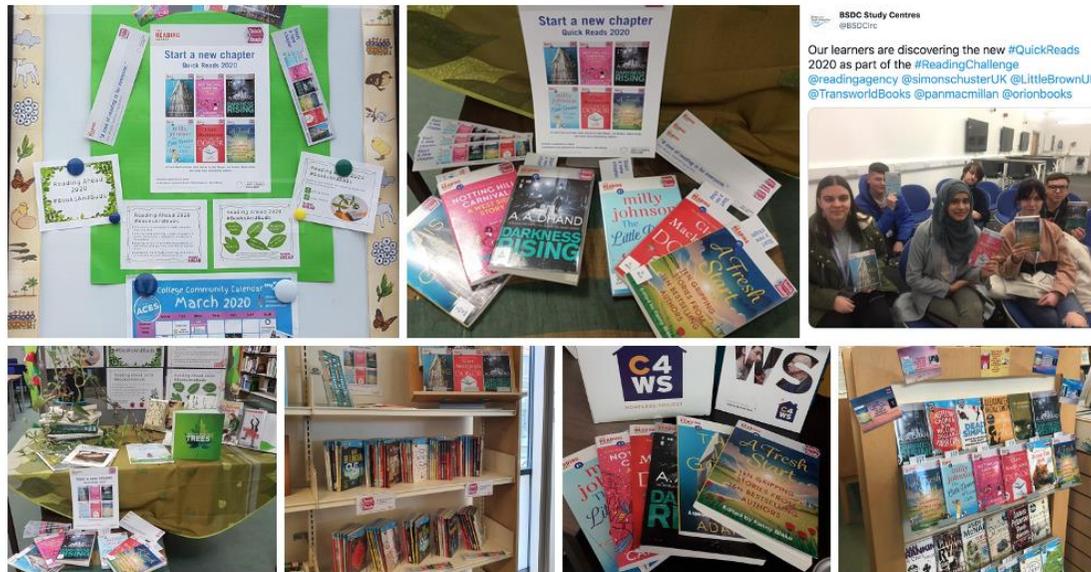




Public libraries and the adult literacy sector

Over 700 public libraries and learning providers received point of sale materials from The Reading Agency to promote the 2020 Quick Reads. This included posters, bookmarks and shelf talkers.

OverDrive and BorrowBox, two e-lending suppliers, promoted Quick Reads e-book titles to libraries by featuring the books on their Marketplace, including the titles in a 'content highlights' email and encouraging librarians to set up a 'Quick Reads shelf' to make the books more visible when browsing the library's e-lending options.



Quick Reads displays including Chichester College Group, Oldham Libraries, students at Burton & South Derbyshire College reading Quick Reads as a part of Reading Ahead, Blackburn and Darwen Libraries and C4WS homeless shelter.

Special sales and donations

The Reading Agency arranged direct sales to unionlearn; the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) and UNISON, who provided the titles free to members of their trade unions to support literacy and wellbeing in the workplace.



Unionlearn offered Quick Reads for free to members of all unions to support workplace learning. In 2020, Quick Reads were sent to union learning reps at Unite; Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS); Communication Workers Union (CWU); Aegis; National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT); National Education Union (NEU); Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF); Community; and the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU).

Donations further enabled The Reading Agency to distribute Quick Reads to readers who otherwise may not have had access to the titles:

- The Reading Agency distributed 3,100 Quick Reads to 44 prisons across the UK thanks to funding from The Hobson Charity.
- Fundraising by staff at Ted Baker was used to purchase 170 Quick Reads titles which were delivered to C4WS, a homelessness charity based in Kings Cross, by staff from The Reading Agency.
- *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe* and *Darkness Rising* were both included on the World Book Night list in 2020 to be gifted to those who do not regularly read. As part of this, Simon & Schuster and Transworld donated 2,000 copies of each title respectively.
- In response to Covid-19 and the pressures facing NHS staff and keyworkers, The Reading Agency partnered with Civic to add Quick Reads to care packages that Civic gifted to organisations including Red Cross Ambulance, Mental Health 24hr Crisis Line, Newham Ambulance Station, Newham Police, Hope for Newham Charity, Royal London Hospital and Ambulance Cleaning Team. Care packages were also donated to those most in need of support during the pandemic, such as Custom House residents who were shielding and vulnerable. Five out of the six publishers participated in this project, donating a total of 2,300 copies of the books.
- The sixth 2020 publisher, Macmillan, took part in a separate project, donating 2,500 copies of *This is Going to Hurt* (Quick Reads abridged version) to The Reading Agency to distribute.
 - 1,900 of these were sent to unionlearn, who identified five unions in the keyworker sectors, such as retail and delivery, to use the books for learning at work initiatives.
 - 200 copies were sent to HMP Brixton and 300 copies to HMP Pentonville to gift to prisoners. As the prison libraries were shut and residents were spending up to 23 hours a day in their cells due to lockdown restrictions, the books were a welcome distraction and were accompanied with activity sheets created by The Reading agency.
 - 50 copies were distributed to a community centre in Rotherham and 50 copies to Islington Adult Community Learning.



- 410 copies of *A Fresh Start* were donated to The Reading Agency by Orion to gift, alongside copies of *Crafty Science* by DK and family activity packs, to families of primary school children in Islington. This supported a new project, Get Islington Reading, aimed at engaging families with children aged 9-14 in reading for pleasure. The gifting was delivered in collaboration with schools and targeted families from disadvantaged backgrounds.

5. Promoting Quick Reads: PR, media & the adult literacy sector

The 2020-21 programme was supported with a significant, multi-platform PR campaign to reach different audiences across multiple spaces.

**6 national and regional
TV appearances by
Quick Reads authors**



**13 national and regional
radio interviews**



**Coverage in 19 national and
regional newspapers &
magazines**



The chart on the following pages highlights the type and spread of promotional coverage of the programme, as well as some key highlights:

Type of coverage	Audience	Spread of coverage	Coverage highlights
<p>Television</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories about the adult literacy crisis • Author interviews 	<p>TV coverage is important for reaching a wide audience to share the benefits of reading. These audiences include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular readers • those who don't read regularly or at all • practitioners who can help promote the books and the value of reading for pleasure 	<p>National: <i>London Live, Sky News, ITV Lunchtime News</i> and <i>BBC One: Breakfast</i>.</p> <p>Regional: <i>ITV News</i> (regional syndication).</p>	<p>Author A. A. Dhand, from Bradford, was interviewed alongside Dionne Hood from Bradford Libraries and The Reading Agency's Creative Director Debbie Hicks. The recording covered the new titles, their impact and how they can be used by public libraries with a regional focus. It was syndicated across the ITV regional news network. ITV Tees news, for example, used the syndication and included an interview with author Mari Hannah, from North Yorkshire. This type of regional coverage was used to engage adult literacy practitioners and those who could use the books with learners.</p>
<p>Radio</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author interviews • Discussion about the new titles and the proven power of reading 	<p>Radio was prioritised as an opportunity to reach non-readers and to discuss the benefits of reading in an informal setting.</p>	<p>Seven national stations including <i>BBC Radio 2, Talk Radio, Scala, BBC Asian Network</i> and <i>BBC Radio 5</i>.</p> <p>Five regional stations including <i>BBC Radio Leeds, BBC Radio Newcastle</i> and <i>BBC Radio Scotland</i>.</p>	<p>The wide spread of this coverage from breakfast radio to drive time including some of the most popular programmes, BBC Radio 2 with Graham Norton and Scala with Simon Mayo, ensured that the radio coverage reached a wide and diverse audience.</p>
<p>Newspapers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author interviews • Book reviews • Book extracts • News announcements 	<p>Newspaper coverage included a focus on gaining attention on Quick Reads and the adult literacy crisis from regular, engaged readers and on reaching less confident or lapsed readers through author interviews and book extracts.</p>	<p>Eight national papers including <i>The Sun, Daily Mail, the Guardian, the Observer, Daily Express</i> (combined monthly distribution over 18.4 million).</p> <p>Four regional papers including <i>Somerset Life, Irish Daily Mail</i> and <i>The Yorkshire Times</i>.</p>	<p><i>The Sun</i> printed one of the short stories from the Quick Reads short story collection, <i>A Fresh Start</i>, in May 2020. This provided a second push on promotion for that title and used the chapter to point readers to the full book and the other Quick Reads titles. The print edition of <i>The Sun</i> is distributed to over 6.9 million adults each month.</p>



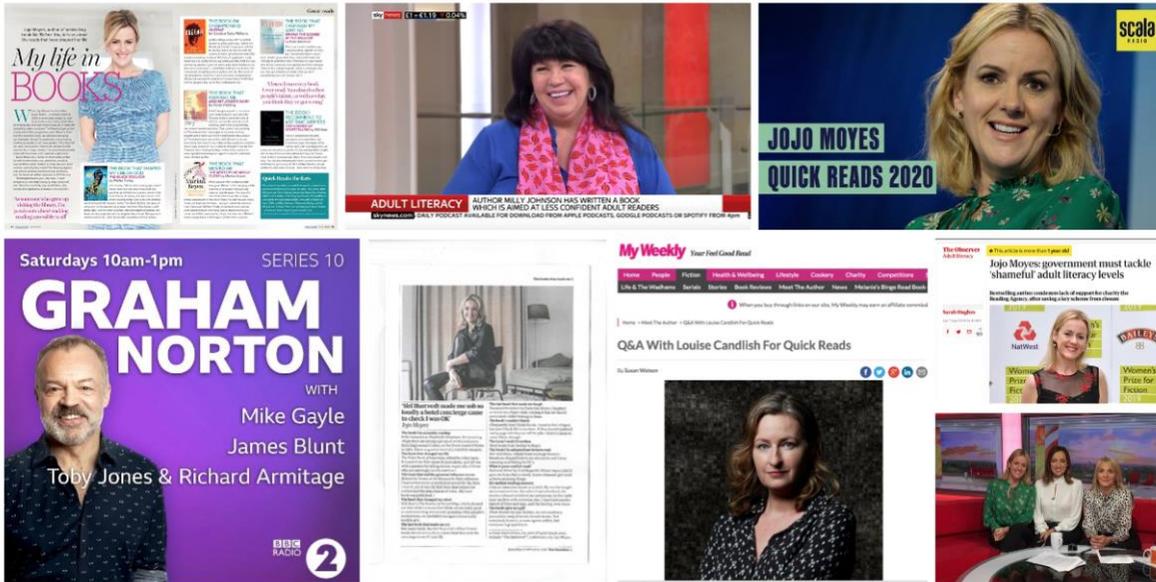
Type of coverage	Audience	Spread of coverage	Coverage highlights
<p>Magazines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author interviews • Book reviews • Reader interviews / case studies 	<p>Magazines were a key space for engaging lapsed readers, less confident readers and less engaged readers to think about picking up a book and forming a reading habit.</p> <p>The Reading Agency also worked with <i>Prima</i> magazine on a six-month partnership promoting the benefits of reading for pleasure.</p> <p><i>Prima</i> is the third biggest women's lifestyle monthly, with magazine readership of 296,000 and a total brand reach of 544,000. The median age of <i>Prima</i> readers is 60 years old and 95% of readers are female. 54% of the audience are currently in work and 19% have children living at home, making it well-placed to reach those likely to be lapsed readers.</p>	<p>National: <i>My Weekly</i>, <i>Bella</i>, <i>Heat</i>, <i>Prima</i> and <i>Pick Me Up</i>.</p> <p><i>Prima</i> received print sales of 212,089 (ABC) from July to December 2020, the period covered by the partnership.</p>	<p>Quick Reads reader Sarah Salmon was interviewed in <i>Pick Me Up</i>. She shared her experience of using Quick Reads to rebuild her reading confidence after losing the ability to read following a brain haemorrhage. An extract was also published on The Reading Agency website here.</p> <p>The partnership between The Reading Agency and <i>Prima</i> featured a different Quick Reads author and title in the publication monthly between July and December 2020. Clare Mackintosh's July interview was published on The Reading Agency website and can be read online here. Images of the coverage are shown below.</p>



Type of coverage	Audience	Spread of coverage	Coverage highlights
<p>Social media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News announcements • Information on accessing the books • Author content • Promotion of resources such as toolkits and learning resources 	<p>Social media was used to reach a range of audiences including regular readers, less confident readers and practitioners who could use the books to support learners.</p>	<p>The Reading Agency's Twitter (69.7k followers), Facebook (18.9k followers) and Instagram (7.2k followers) accounts. As an example of reach, the title launch tweet received 55,183 impressions and 7.6% engagement.</p> <p>Social media support from organisations such as NATELCA, CoLRiC, Association of Colleges, Learning & Work Institute and unionlearn.</p> <p>The Quick Reads authors (combined following of over 668.2k on Twitter) were encouraged to post on their social media channels on publication day.</p> <p>Book bloggers, with a collective following of over 120,000 on Twitter, posted on launch using #QuickReads.</p>	<p>A competition was held on <i>The Daily Mirror's</i> Facebook page (3.6 million follower), giving away five sets of the Quick Reads books.</p>
<p>Trade press</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories about the programme and the adult literacy crisis 	<p>This focused on specific spaces where adult literacy levels are low or many adults are in learning. A secondary aim was to raise the profile of the Quick Reads mission amongst the sector.</p>	<p>Seven articles including: <i>The Bookseller</i>, <i>BookBrunch</i> and <i>Cision</i>.</p>	<p>Along with adverts in trade catalogues, this coverage ensured that Quick Reads were promoted to librarians who could order the books for their libraries.</p>



Type of coverage	Audience	Spread of coverage	Coverage highlights
<p>Sector-specific radio, newspapers and magazines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book extracts • News stories about the power of reading • News stories about the adult literacy crisis • Information on accessing the books and supporting resources 	<p>This coverage focused on either the readers themselves, for example through <i>Inside Time</i> and National Prison Radio or sharing information on the books and programmes with practitioners and librarians who could use the titles with learners.</p>	<p>Quick Reads were covered across the adult literacy sector, including an article in CILIP, the library and information association here; <i>Learning Rep</i> magazine in Spring 2021 here; and in <i>Inside Time</i>, the national prison newspaper. <i>Inside Time</i> is distributed to over 200,000 prisoners.</p>	<p>Promotion of the Quick Reads to people in prison became increasingly important – and challenging – during the pandemic when prison libraries were shut. An article and book extract were printed in <i>Inside Time</i> in June & July issues, as well as online here.</p> <p>An interview on National Prison Radio in April addressed the value of reading and how to access books during lockdown. National Prison Radio is listened to by over 74% of people in prison.</p>
<p>Digital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories about the adult literacy crisis and power of reading • Information on accessing the books and supporting resources • Author interviews 	<p>Due to lockdown restrictions, digital content became increasingly important as the year progressed. It was used primarily as a way to focus on learning spaces and to provide practitioners with the information they needed to access Quick Reads and use the books with learners.</p> <p>It was also a key space for sharing impact case studies and reader reviews and blogs.</p>	<p>Information hosted on websites and included in sector-specific newsletters sent by a range of organisations: The Reading Agency, National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance, the Council for Learning Resources in Colleges (CoLRiC) and the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA).</p> <p>News items on seven sites including <i>The Oldie</i>, <i>My Weekly</i>, <i>Female First</i>, <i>ITV.com</i> and <i>Chortle</i>. In addition, the books were reviewed on multiple blogs.</p>	<p>Five blogs on the unionlearn website covering the benefits of reading and how to use Quick Reads in the workplace. A set of case studies were also produced that were published on the unionlearn and Reading Agency websites.</p> <p>The Reading Agency published case studies from readers and settings outside of workplaces on the website here.</p> <p>The charity Prison Reading Groups highlighted Quick Reads on their website here.</p>

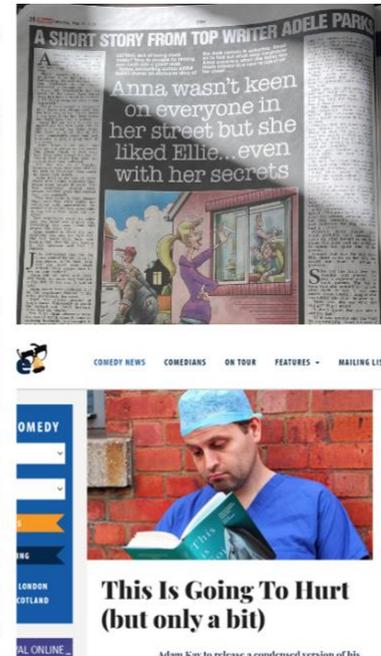


Left: Selected examples of press coverage surrounding the launch: magazine, newspaper, radio and TV coverage featuring several Quick Reads authors and author and Quick Reads funder and ambassador, Jojo Moyes.

THE READING AGENCY



Right: Selected examples of press coverage surrounding the launch: magazine, newspaper and blog coverage, including book reviews, recommendations and an extract of *A Fresh Start* printed in *The Sun*.





6. Promoting Quick Reads: events, activity and resources

Events and activities

The Reading Agency held and supported a range of events to engage new readers with Quick Reads and to share best practice in using the books with practitioners. In brief, these events included the following:

- Penned Up, a literature festival held inside prison, hosted a Quick Reads 'throwdown' book club session with 15 residents run by the Quick Reads team.
- Author Clare Mackintosh visited HMP Liverpool to speak to an education class of eight students and record a podcast on prison radio.
- The Reading Agency hosted a public panel event at Liverpool Central Library where authors Clare Mackintosh, Milly Johnson and A. A. Dhand were interviewed by commissioning editor Fanny Blake. Fifty people attended the event with two additional public libraries, Rugby and Kenilworth, live streaming the event to small groups of around six people. The event was scheduled as a part of Liverpool's 'Year of Reading' and was recorded by The British Library.
- The Reading Agency held a stakeholder event at Waterstones Piccadilly to celebrate publication day with 70 guests, including a speech from funder and author Jojo Moyes.
- Author Clare Mackintosh held a live Q&A and discussion about her Quick Reads on her Facebook Book Group which had 54 people in attendance.
- Maria Fidelis Sixth Form held a series of events for students considering a career in medicine and included a session on the Quick Read *This Is Going to Hurt*, which they gifted to attendees.
- Author Milly Johnson joined unionlearn's annual general conference as the keynote speaker to talk about Quick Reads and reading for pleasure.
- The Quick Reads programme manager delivered workshops to union learning reps at CWU in 2020 about using Quick Reads and Reading Ahead in the workplace. The workshops were attended by 74 people.



Quick Reads events (clockwise from top left): Liverpool author panel, London stakeholder event, Penned Up at HMP Downview, Jojo Moyes addressing London event, Clare Mackintosh Facebook Book Discussion, Living Knowledge Network recording author panel event.

Learning resources

The Reading Agency created several online and downloadable resources that could be accessed by engaged organisations to support the delivery of the Quick Reads programme. These resources included a promotion toolkit, branded posters, bookmarks and shelf talkers. A toolkit was also produced in partnership with unionlearn specifically for workplace learning, '[Ready to Read](#) – Promoting the use of Quick Reads in the workplace.'



In addition, a diary writing challenge was created to support the title *This Is Going To Hurt*. HMP Brixton received a donation of 300 copies of the book and distributed the diary writing activity to their residents. It encouraged them to record a diary of their day, an example of which is excerpted below:

“On this particular day I hadn’t watched the news for a little while because it became too bleak. It was early in the morning and I’d just woken up, said my morning prayers and fulfilled [sic] my morning duties. Something made me turn on the TV and I flicked through the channels with little enthusiasm, and spotted the headline. Covid vaccines to be distributed, and, I felt a glimpse of hope that this pandemic will be over shortly.” –Resident at HMP Brixton, Day 2 of the diary writing challenge

Reading group discussion guides and longer learning resources were produced for each title. The learning resources were downloaded 289 times, the discussion guides 167 times and the promotional toolkit 131 times. The *This is Going to Hurt*: Diary Writing Challenge resource was used predominantly by HMP Brixton, but it was also promoted more widely to Reading Ahead groups and accumulated 91 downloads.

Spotlight on unionlearn – reaching unions and their members

Unionlearn describes itself as ‘the learning and skills organisation of the TUC, assisting unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members.’ Engaging with unionlearn for the Quick Reads programme allows a different route to accessing these titles for thousands of union members.

Unionlearn bought 2,000 copies of each Quick Reads title in 2020-21 to ensure the books formed an element of their workplace learning offers. They also received a donation of 1,900 copies of *This Is Going To Hurt*, donated by Macmillan. They promoted the titles through several blogs and provided resources such as toolkits and guides on promoting Quick Reads in individual workplaces. Author Milly Johnson was invited to be the keynote speaker at the annual general conference and was on the front cover of the unionlearn magazine, *Learning Rep*, with the headline “Milly Johnson: Speaking Up For Reading” (pictured below).



Milly Johnson on the cover of the Spring 2021 issue of *Learning Rep*, the unionlearn magazine.

The benefits of Quick Reads in different workplaces have been highlighted in several [case studies](#) for unionlearn. These benefits include the books' role in introducing people to learning, reducing stress, improving literacy and English language skills and providing a shared activity and conversation starter. For example:

“Reading is important for everyone and being comfortable with reading and being confident helps with life in general such as completing forms in and out of work, applying for jobs, understanding contracts and generally is beneficial in all aspects.” —Angela, member of Learn with Unite Job Club Learning Centre Reading Club

“I like the level of English, it is not too difficult but not too easy at the same time. I train my mind because I always learn new verbs, new pronouns and adjectives. This helps me to broaden my vocabulary and it allows me to relate better at work, at home and with friends.” —Melissa, member of Learning Centre Reading Club

Links with The Reading Agency programmes: World Book Night and Reading Ahead

Many of the organisations that have extended contact with Quick Reads readers use the titles in conjunction with other programmes from The Reading Agency, such as World Book Night and Reading Ahead.

World Book Night is a national celebration of reading on the 23 April every year. Two Quick Reads were selected to join the World Book Night list in 2020. As a part of this, the publishers donated 2,000 copies of their title which were distributed to organisations across the country to gift to people who do not regularly read for pleasure or have access to books.



Quick Reads amongst the 2020 World Book Night collection (left), and author Milly Johnson holding her Quick Read, *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, gifted as part of World Book Night.

Reading Ahead is a reading challenge for less confident adult readers that reaches over 30,000 people each year. The organisations and learners engaged in this programme are one of the main audiences for Quick Reads and the books are promoted regularly in the Reading Ahead newsletter. The following selection of quotes highlight the various ways practitioners use Quick Reads as part of Reading Ahead:

“Quick reads are popular with those who are struggling with their reading or English” —Reading Ahead delivery partner, excerpted from the 2019-20 evaluation report for the Reading Ahead programme

“Quick Reads are always a favourite during Reading Ahead. Readers particularly appreciate the quality of the authors and the fact that the books aren't simplified in terms of content.” —James, librarian at Tameside Libraries, read more [here](#)



“Quick Reads are always a good start for someone who doesn’t like reading.” —Sadat, librarian at HMP Brixton

*“I widely promote the Quick Reads especially to our ESOL and Basic Skills participants, they’re a great tool for returning to reading too!”
—Liz, librarian at Southend Public Libraries*

In addition, in 2020 The Reading Agency team updated a booklist for ESOL learners, originally created in 2019 in partnership with NATECLA and The Bell Foundation for Reading Ahead participants, to include the 2020 titles. The booklist was downloaded 141 times over 2020-21.

In February 2021 the Reading Ahead programme was digitised and a new digital platform was launched. The platform includes a Quick Reads ‘hub’ featuring the latest titles and allowing participants to post their reviews for other readers to see, for example:

*“Really, really enjoyed this book and looking forward to reading the others in the series. It was a heart-warming story and as a cat lover I got really involved with it. I was also pleased to read at the back of the book that Bob has a Twitter feed!”
—Reading Ahead review of *Street Cat Bob* (2015 Quick Reads title)*

7. Impact

The following section offers an insight into the impact of the Quick Reads programme on individual readers. In 2020-21, a reader survey was administered to capture insights into the type of people using Quick Reads and the difference reading the book may have made to them. As with the distribution figures, readers are continuing to encounter Quick Reads titles published prior to 2020; the responses below are based on readers’ experience of reading any of the Quick Reads titles.

Key survey findings include the ways Quick Reads offer non-readers and lapsed readers a jumping-off point into reading and enable users to discover new authors and genres, thereby widening their reading habits. Of those who responded to the survey:

- 85% said that they would like to try another Quick Read



- 49% said that they would like to read another book by the same author
- 33% said they would like to read more often
- 32% said they would like to talk to others (e.g., family, friends, colleagues) more about books and reading

The survey findings and an exploration of the value of the programme to readers are outlined in more detail below.

Methodology and profile of respondents

Readers of Quick Reads books were asked to fill in a short evaluation survey, available online and promoted through The Reading Agency's social media channels and organisational partners. The survey was open from February 2020 to February 2021 and had a total of 246 respondents.

Respondents were asked a short series of demographic questions, key points from which are presented below:

- Most identified as female (91%).
- 95% said they were over the age of 25, with 53% between the ages of 35-54.
- Most readers borrowed their Quick Reads title from the library (40%), with 28% buying theirs from a bookshop and 7% obtaining the book through their workplace.
- Many respondents also noted they had purchased their book online, for example through Amazon.
- The Quick Reads titles read by survey respondents were relatively evenly spread across the 2020 booklist, ranging from 12% (*Darkness Rising*) to 26% (*The Donor*). An additional 12% reported reading a Quick Reads title published in a previous year.
- About 1 in 5 respondents (19%) said they infrequently or rarely read for pleasure, with the remaining 61% reading more frequently (once a week or more).

It must be noted, however, that the survey data does not represent Quick Reads readers as a whole for a range of reasons. The survey is self-selecting, meaning that those most likely to respond are those more highly engaged with books and reading, skewing the findings towards more regular readers. In addition, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the survey was only available to fill in online, potentially excluding readers without access to the internet. In future evaluations, The Reading Agency aims to engage a wider range of readers in the



evaluation process by, for example, including a page in the back of future titles directing readers to the evaluation survey and by engaging partner organisations, such as FE colleges, prisons and unions, to send the evaluation survey out directly to readers, in online or paper version as appropriate.

In addition to the survey, a range of interviews with readers and practitioners using Quick Reads were conducted by The Reading Agency for case studies. These were produced throughout the year and shared on The Reading Agency's website on its [Impact pages](#). Selected excerpts from these case studies have been included within this section to add further detail and context to the key findings.

Reader Motivations and Experiences

A key expected outcome for the Quick Reads programme is to motivate readers to engage with reading either for the first time, or after having fallen out of the habit. The survey explored readers' motivations for reading, with the aim of building an understanding of the most effective ways to engage Quick Reads users and what they hope to gain from reading the books.

The vast majority (90%) of survey respondents said that relaxation was a key motivating factor for them when reading, making Quick Reads' short length and accessible structure well-suited to engage these readers. This further suggests the potential for Quick Reads to impact on users' wellbeing. Given the evidence indicating that literacy is a predictor of health and wellbeing,¹⁰ we aim to measure the wellbeing impact of Quick Reads in future evaluations.

Almost 2 in 3 respondents (64%) said that learning about the world and other people's lives motivated them to read. They went on to describe how the Quick Reads titles gave them this opportunity to engage with and appreciate alternative perspectives. These observations fit with previous studies showing that reading for pleasure can enhance empathy and individuals' ability to understand their own identity and others.¹¹ Selected comments on this theme are highlighted below:¹²

¹⁰ [Institute of Health Equity](#), 2020

¹¹ [Billington](#), 2015; [Vezalli et al.](#), 2015

¹² All comments from survey respondents have been left verbatim



"I enjoyed the look at a different culture to mine and the descriptions of Notting Hill Carnival having never attended myself"
—Read *Notting Hill Carnival: A West Side Story*, 25-34 years old

"I was able to learnt more about the challenges of living in cities coming from a northern village."
—Read *Hello Mum* by Bernardine Evaristo (2010 Quick Reads title), 45-54 years old

"I liked that the characters were British Asian. I am white British and it helped me identify a little more with people of a different culture"
—Read *Darkness Rising*, 35-44 years old

As noted above, the vast majority of survey respondents (95%) said they enjoyed reading, with many identifying reading enjoyment as a motivating factor for them:

"I really enjoyed the book. The story was easy to read, kept my interest and There was a brilliant twist at the end!"
—Read *The Donor*, 65+ years old

"I thought it was funny and enjoyable. It made me feel light-hearted."
—Read *This is Going to Hurt: a specially adapted version*, 45-54 years old

"I've enjoyed all the quick reads I have read over the years"
—Did not specify title, 25-34 years old

Continuing to encourage and foster enjoyment of reading is a key desired outcome of Quick Reads, as it has been demonstrated to have a range of benefits, for example, on emotional and personal development.¹³

¹³ [BOP Consulting](#), 2015



Several other respondents highlighted the role of escapism in their motivation for reading, commenting, for example, that they read to 'escape', 'enter another world' or 'get lost in a story'. Other respondents explained in detail what Quick Reads titles offer them in terms of escapism:

"All Quick Reads offer a respite from the madness of life. They are a pocketful of treasure."

—Read *This is Going to Hurt: a specially adapted version*, 45-54 years old

"It allowed me to be able to read and escape into a different world, without having to worry about the time a full novel would take"

—Read *The Donor*, 19-24 years old

Creating Connections

Connecting with others is another powerful motivating factor for 32% of respondents. Creating connections between others has never been so important after a year dictated by Covid-19-related restrictions on movement and in-person contact with others.¹⁴ While loneliness has been shown to have a significant impact not just on mental health but also on physical health,¹⁵ a study analysing social connectedness found that reading books can significantly reduce feelings of loneliness for people aged 18-64.¹⁶

One-third of respondents (32%) said that reading their Quick Read made them want to talk to others more about books and reading, indicating a desire to bring these motivations to connect into practice. Qualitative survey responses reinforced this desire to connect. Many respondents detailed how, after reading their Quick Reads title, they discussed the books with others, helping to create and enable social connections:

"I was encouraged to read more titles by the same author and to join her online book group to discuss books and reading with like-minded people around the world."

—Read *The Donor*, 55-64 years old

¹⁴ [Red Cross](#), 2020

¹⁵ [DHS](#), 2018

¹⁶ [Demos](#), 2018 p.12



"I work in a library and [...] very often the reader is very pleasantly surprised and more likely to talk to us about books and their reading experience after taking out a quick read"

—Read *The Donor*, 35-44 years old

"[I want to] Persuade more people to give Quick Reads a try"

—Read *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, 55-64 years old

One respondent in particular highlighted how Quick Reads titles had enabled them to cultivate and maintain relationships after a tragic life event:

"I am in a supportive book club, where we all take turns in choosing the next read. following the death of my son there was a struggle to find a book that seemed right—not too difficult(I couldn't concentrate on reading), too much death, a comedy!. A couple of really bland books were suggested in the early months that nobody really enjoyed but we wanted to stay connected. The quick reads allowed that, quick, easy to read, short and gentle books which we could talk about together and keep the group going . My choice the next month-year of wonder- story of Eyam- full of death! Let's face it head on! So the quick reads allowed our group to coast, to stay connected and that enabled deeper reads and conversations in the future, about life and death. Thank you"

—Read *Looking for Captain Poldark* by Rowan Coleman (2017 Quick Reads title), 55-64 years old

Reading Quick Reads offered this respondent and their reading group a way of maintaining social connections during a particularly challenging period and enabling them to create even deeper meaningful connections in future. This experience links into research demonstrating the value of taking part in reading groups, which has been linked to enhanced relaxation, quality of life, confidence and self-esteem, as well as feelings of shared community and common purpose.¹⁷

¹⁷[Londgen et al.](#), 2015



Case study: Connecting readers at New Springs Community Centre in Wigan

The New Springs Community Centre in Wigan runs a reading club for older learners with an average age of 70. John, a volunteer says: “We use the Quick Reads as part of a reading club at New Springs Community Learning, where we run computer lessons for the community of New Springs and surrounding areas.”

The reading club at New Springs is about more than just exploring new books. It is also a way for older members of the local community to come together and chat about a shared experience.

“We like to use the Quick Reads because it also helps to get the readers reading different genres from love stories to action and adventure stories. [...] The books also add to the coffee mornings they attend, and we have a discussion on the books that they have read ... I like the number of top-class authors that write these books as the readers know who they are reading. The books are not too big to get through [this] enables others to join in who are not avid readers.”

“Reading always helps people to improve their learning, whether it is helping our ESOL learners to improve their English or around health and wellbeing for our elder statesmen and peers. I would recommend Quick Reads to others as it's a way of relaxing and getting rid of the stress that daily life brings.”

Read the full case study [here](#).

Tackling barriers to reading

A key aim for Quick Reads is to reach those who are not regular readers and may be experiencing barriers to reading, thereby providing access to the benefits of reading for pleasure, for example, by increasing literacy skills more successfully than formal literacy lessons.¹⁸ In England, however, 31% of the population do not read in their free time.¹⁹ Previous evaluation findings show that Quick Reads can act as a hook into

¹⁸ [Demos](#), 2018 p.26

¹⁹ [DCMS](#), 2018 p.2



reading for pleasure for lapsed and non-readers.²⁰ The titles are engagingly written and accessible in terms of language and structure, offering a non-stigmatising entry point for those who do not regularly read and encouraging them to develop a reading habit.

Qualitative survey responses showed that Quick Reads was achieving its aim of introducing non-readers to reading:

“They're excellent books and have really encouraged some of our group members (adults with learning disabilities) to engage with reading.”

—Read *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, *Notting Hill Carnival: A West Side Story* and *A Fresh Start*, 45-54 years old

“Very accessible, especially as I don't read very often”

—Read *A Fresh Start*, 35-44 years old

Case study: Using Quick Reads to support learners

“What I like about the books is that they are accessible to a wide range of readers yet they don't compromise on quality or diversity of text. There are many members of our group who don't find reading easy and these books are in an easy-to-read format, which helps people who may be put off by longer, more complex texts.” – Alison, adult learning tutor at Gateshead learningSkills

“I have always struggled with books due to a learning disability. I find these books a lot easier to read and I'm not sounding out as many words as I usually would. [...] I feel so much more confident about reading now. I'm starting to look forward to reading – which is something that I've never felt before.” – Julia, learner at Gateshead learningSkills

Read more from [Julia](#) here and Alison [here](#).

²⁰ [Penistone, Learning & Work Institute](#) (2016)



Tazim Ladhu, a 'Learn with Unite' Regional Learning Organiser, uses Quick Reads to help support learners at a reading club at the Learning Centre in the union's Bristol office along with functional skills classes including English and Digital Skills.

"The Quick Reads are ideal for both learners and their reading buddies. There are also titles by many authors and something to suit all."

Zahra is a member of the Learning Centre Reading Club in Bristol: *"I went to the conversation club in Unite the Union. My teacher mentioned their reading club and asked me to take part – she recommended reading to help me further with my English comprehension. [...] I like to read the book and I check any new words. This slows down my reading and helps me increase the words I know."*

Read more [here](#).

Frances Maynard, adult education English teacher in Dorset, shared their experience of using Quick Reads with adult learners:

"I work for Skills and Learning (adult education) in Dorset. This offers students a second chance to increase their confidence in reading and literacy and to gain a qualification. It's an ideal home for Quick Reads. We have a Quick Reads carousel in the English classroom."

"Quick Reads are useful for all kinds of student. You can sit down with someone and read one together. Some words come up time and time again. Sometimes I need to give more of an introduction with less able students. More confident readers can use them independently. You can use them as a class textbook - you can hand a few copies out and ask them to look up why, who and what's happening next in the book. They're very flexible tools."

Read the full case study [here](#).

Other survey respondents described experiencing disengagement with reading where they had previously considered themselves readers. For these 'lapsed readers', Quick Reads presented a path beyond this barrier, allowing them to re-engage with reading:

"I was having trouble concentrating on reading so the Quick Read enabled me to get my 'reading mojo' back."

—Read *The Donor*, 55-64 years old



"I used them to get myself back into reading as I'd hit a slow patch and was struggling to find time. The shorter books helped me get back into it."

—Read *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, 35-44 years old

"I really enjoyed reading it. It was like reading a whole novel in miniature version. It also helped me get out of my reading slump."

—Read *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, 35-44 years old

Case study: Continuing skills development at PCS at CMG Tyneview Park

Clare Hownam, Northern Regional Learning Organiser with PCS: *"Quick Reads are very popular with ULRs as it's a tool to use to strike up a conversation with a potential member. Especially as there is no charge, it can lead the conversation onto other learning opportunities available."* PCS offer Quick Reads to members for free, provided by unionlearn.

Marc, case worker and PCS member began reading Quick Reads after they were provided at his workplace: *"I read Quick Reads during lunch breaks and at home to broaden knowledge and understanding. One thing I particularly like about them is their accessibility and range of content. [...] Reading Quick Reads has helped improve my wider reading and at work this has meant that I am able to more quickly and effectively understand detailed documents relating to procedural guidance and policy changes."*

Read the full case study [here](#).

Those disengaged with reading, both non-readers and lapsed readers, commonly report a lack of time for reading as a primary barrier, a factor that was reinforced through our survey findings. Many respondents, often parents/carers, shared the ways that Quick Reads provided them with the opportunity to engage with reading in their limited free time:

"Liked having a small, easy to read book to read in the go – even in semi lockdown they are handy for the park or school run."

—Read *A Fresh Start*, 35-44 years old



"It enabled me to read whilst having small children around. The books are engaging, easy to read and quick!"
—Read *A Fresh Start*, 35-44 years old

"Really enjoyed it. Ideal read on the daily commute!"
—Read *This is Going to Hurt: a specially adapted version*, 55-64 years old

Case study: Preschool Parents book club in Sutton

Librarian, Stella, runs the book club: *"The Preschool Parents Book Club is an adult day-time book club for parents of young children. We offer a choice of two books at our monthly meetings, with one of the books being a Quick Read. The short length of Quick Reads allows everyone in the group to have read one book by our next meeting which means everyone can take part in book discussions."*

Book club member Albertina says: *"As a new mother I'd been stuck in the middle of the same book I started while pregnant, feeling daunted and exhausted. Discovering Quick Reads made finishing a book seem possible and before I knew it I had rediscovered reading again and was enjoying much needed entertainment and escapism. Now I love carrying a Quick Read in my bag for those in between moments at the park."*

Read the full case study [here](#).

Other common barriers to reading, particularly for those who may have read more frequently in the past, include key life changes such as a bereavement or poor mental or physical health. Several respondents described how their engagement with reading had been affected by factors such as ill health and the ways that the Quick Reads programme enabled them to overcome the barriers they were experiencing:

"Reading Quick Reads helped me to get back into reading following a stroke. I was really scared that I wouldn't be able to read ever again. Normal books were too big and I had to keep going over what I had read to remember. It was suggested to me that I try a Quick Read by a librarian friend of mine, who also lent me one. I kept a notebook so I could remember the characters, and being short it was easier to cope with. I am now back to reading normal books and grateful every day. It was hard work but worth it, as I read all day every



day. Thank you Quick Reads.”

—Read *The Donor*, 55-64 years old

“I absolutely loved it, I cant read currently due to mental health and not being able to concentrate, but this book had me gripped right from the start.”

—Read *The Donor*, 25-34 years old

“as disabled it helps distract me from my pain”

—Did not indicate title, 65+ years old

Respondents further described the role that Quick Reads played in helping them return to reading. The shorter format of the titles was the predominant reason for readers choosing them to get back into reading as a general activity:

“Being able to read it in just one day, it really helped me get back into reading again.”

—Read *The Donor*, 25-34 years old

“I found Quick Reads ideal to get back into reading with something that is well written, but short enough that I will definitely finish.”

—Read *This is Going to Hurt: a specially adapted version*, 45-54 years old

“I was having a slow reading week due to the lockdown so wanted something short to get back in to the reading zone. It did help to feel accomplished for finishing a book again!”

—Read *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, 25-34 years old

Quantitative data reinforced the qualitative responses above, which highlighted the influence that the Quick Reads programme has on users’ future engagement with reading for pleasure: 85% of respondents agreed that they would like to try another Quick Read after trying a Quick Reads title, and one-third (33%) said they would like to read more often. This, combined with other feedback, indicates that respondents are



motivated to continue reading. Some readers said that as a result of reading a Quick Reads title they were likely to: “Try out more short stories”; “Read another quick read”; and “Try the short story one [A Fresh Start]”.

Increased confidence

Another key outcome of reading for pleasure is improved self-esteem and confidence.²¹ One-quarter of respondents (25%) said they would like to ‘try new things’ as a result of reading their Quick Read, and qualitative survey responses further indicated that Quick Reads facilitated increased confidence:

“I think it made me feel more confident. [It gave me] a break from my reality and knowing that it can change.”

—Did not indicate title, 45-54 years old

“The books gave me back reading confidence and also the nudge to try new things”

—Read *The Donor*, 35-44 years old

Respondents also noted the ways that Quick Reads helped build not just their own confidence, but their wider family’s engagement with and confidence in reading:

“[I am motivated] to be a reading role model to my child”

—Read *A Fresh Start*, 35-44 years old

“Reading aloud with kids makes you more confident too”

—Did not indicate title, 35-44 years old

²¹ [Billington](#), 2015



These comments link into research demonstrating the value of family reading and the impact of parents/carers engaging with books and reading. Studies have found that if parents model frequent reading behaviour, children are more likely to read frequently themselves,²² and that having books in the home has been associated with improved reading enjoyment and confidence in children.²³

Reaching all types of readers

The survey responses also demonstrated the value that Quick Reads adds to engaged and disengaged readers alike. Survey respondents indicated that they planned to engage more with books and reading as a result of reading their Quick Read. Half of respondents (49%) said that they planned to read another book by the same author, 37% said they planned to borrow more books from the library, and 21% said they planned to buy more books.

Qualitative responses consistently echoed these intentions, and in some cases respondents had already put intention into action. A selection of comments along this theme are highlighted below, showing the ways Quick Reads can lead to further sales and library borrowing:

"I don't usually like to read true life stories but really enjoyed the Adam Kay and would like to try the full length book."

—Read *This is Going to Hurt: a specially adapted version*, 35-44 years old

"There must be a real art to editing a story down to create a quick read. I am looking forward to trying more of Milly's books"

—Read *The Little Dreams of Lara Cliffe*, 35-44 years old

"it was a brilliant and well written story and because of that I have just bought another book by the author!"

—Read *The Donor*, 35-44 years old

"i really loved it and after reading it, read all of Ann Cleeves other books"

—Read *Too Good to Be True* by Ann Cleeves (2016 Quick Reads title), 45-54 years old

²² [Mullan](#), 2010

²³ [McGrane et al.](#), 2017



Using Quick Reads as a break from longer titles was a prevalent theme for those who reported they were regular readers (as defined by reading once a week or more), for example, framing Quick Reads as a 'relaxing read' or an opportunity to try something new:

"I enjoyed it because it was a quick read as a relaxation from other longer books"

—Did not indicate title, 65+ years old

"When time is limited it's nice to have a short story, that is resolved quickly instead of having to commit to large book."

—Read *A Dreadful Murder: The Mysterious Death of Caroline Luard* by Minette Walters (2013 Quick Reads title), 35-44 years old

"I enjoyed both quick reads as an interim to starting a more 'meaty' book"

—Read *This is Going to Hurt: abridged* and *The Donor*, 65+ years old

Several respondents also noted the importance of Quick Reads in introducing them to new and different authors, widening their reading habits and demonstrating the value of Quick Reads as an entry point into new authors:

"I like that the books are short so I can try out different authors that I wouldn't have tried before."

—Did not indicate title, 45-54 years old

"It's also a good way to explore new authors – I hadn't read any A A Dhand before reading his quickread"

—Read *Darkness Rising*, 35-44 years old

"It has always lead me to a new author I haven't discovered."

—Did not indicate title, 35-44 years old



A similar theme emerged regarding Quick Reads' ability to offer regular readers the opportunity to branch out into alternative genres, giving them confidence to widen their engagement with reading for pleasure. Several respondents specifically mentioned trying more books from different genres after trying a Quick Reads title:

"It was a different type of book I would normally read and because it was a quick read it encouraged me"

—Read *Notting Hill Carnival: A West Side Story*, 25-34 years old

"excellent, I dont normally read crime, but the length of the book made me chance it and I am glad I did and will read more of the same"

—Read *Darkness Rising*, 55-64 years old

"I thought it was fun, it made me want to read more about this kind of genre as its not something I would usually pick up!"

—Read *This is Going to Hurt: a specially adapted version*, 25-34 years old

While regular readers are not the target group for Quick Reads, it is evident that these audiences are also being reached and affected by the programme. The survey responses highlight the varied impact of Quick Reads on its users and the ways that even those more frequent readers are widening their reading habits as a result of their engagement with the books.

8. Conclusion

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic's disruption to the delivery of Quick Reads, restricting access to libraries and bookshops, readers across the UK have continued to encounter Quick Reads and benefit from, for some, their first engagement with reading for pleasure.

Quick Reads users reported that they were already reading more frequently or planned to read more frequently and enjoying reading more because of taking part in the programme. They have also used Quick Reads to forge meaningful connections with other people in the midst of intense personal and national challenges, with many also noting that after reading their chosen title, they are now talking about books and reading more frequently with friends, family or colleagues. Quick Reads users and practitioners using the books in the classroom reported



increased self-confidence and reading confidence. Those who consider themselves regular readers as well as those who say they do not regularly read have reported widening their reading habits as a result of their engagement with Quick Reads. It is also apparent that Quick Reads continue to have lasting engagement and value beyond their publication year, with many survey respondents encountering Quick Reads titles from previous years through their local library.

To better understand the impact Quick Reads makes to both participants and organisations, we are continuing to investigate ways to increase the response from those who consider themselves non-readers. This includes data collection methods such as increased visibility of the reader survey, for example, a page in the back of Quick Reads titles directing readers to the evaluation survey, as well as by further encouraging partner organisations to send the evaluation survey directly to beneficiaries. We also aim to increase our capture of practitioner and reader case studies in 2021-22.

Through these methods, we hope to further explore the ways that Quick Reads can reach all those who struggle to read, whether due to low literacy or personal challenges, and enable them to take the first step on their reading journey.