WIRRAL COUNCIL

CULTURE, TOURISM AND LEISURE OVERVIEW SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
10 SEPTEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

GET INTO READING

1.0   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   This report provides members with information about the "*Get Into Reading*" project
        and its partnership with Wirral Library service.

2.0   BACKGROUND

2.1   Get Into Reading (GIR) began in 2003 as a reading group project led by Dr Jane
        Davis from the University of Liverpool whilst working in partnership with Wirral
        Library service and Wirral PCT.

        Initial work carried out by the University of Liverpool in the St. James area had lead
        to a recognition of the need for a supportive reading project to introduce people to
        the pleasure and importance of reading, exploring classic literature and developing
        reading confidence to help address literacy issues in areas of disadvantage.

2.2   The project would address social inclusion issues by re-igniting an interest in
        literature and culture, improve literacy skills by breaking down barriers to learning
        and library use and as a by product provide a sense of community and involvement
        to people who are becoming increasingly isolated.

2.3   From one group based in St James Library the project now run 27 groups
        throughout Wirral. Funding has been largely from external sources such as the Paul
        Hamlyn Fund and the Esme Fairburn Foundation. The Library Service offered
        support from existing resources which included access to book stock, library venues
        and joint staffing support to enable the groups to operate. The PCT and
        Community Mental Health also provided resources.

2.4   The 3 year funding period of the Hamlyn grant has now ended and although a
        number of other avenues are being explored, there is requirement to identify further
        support.

3.0   GIR PROJECT

3.1   GIR is a reading project which engages non-traditional library users and readers in
        a number of weekly reading group sessions, to improve literacy, encourage library
        use and to promote wellbeing through the use of books. The groups are led by a
        GIR tutor, a member of library staff and/or volunteers, participants are encouraged
        to listen without any pressure to read themselves.

3.2   27 GIR reading groups now exist (see Appendix 1), 7 of these groups are held in libraries and a further 4 are run by library staff extending the library remit into the community.

3.3   Groups can be targeted to specific groups such as homeless people, elderly groups or people with depression and mental health issues but no one is turned away. Groups such as *The Book at Breakfast* have been featured on national radio and *The Ridgeway Group* have appeared on Richard & Judy's Book Club feature and will be appearing on a Book Quiz show in the Autumn.

       In June 2007 the GIR project was shortlisted for a National Award, the DHSS Health & Social Care Awards and was highly commended.

3.4   The success of the project has attracted a lot of interest nationally. A research project is being carried out to ascertain proof of hard outcomes but anecdotal evidence and community support is overwhelming. (See Appendix 2). Other authorities such as Liverpool and Cheshire are interested in supporting the project too.

4.0   OUTCOMES

4.1   This project has extended the reach of libraries into local communities and the joint working highlighted previously has added both to the success of the project but also to library performance measures too.   It has allowed the library service to access hard to reach groups, working with groups, and remove barriers to library use.

4.2   Wirral has 24 libraries and 51 reading groups, (seven of which are the GIR related groups plus 4 run by library staff in other venues). As a result of a training programme supported by GIR staff all libraries are offering reading groups of some kind plus access to book recommendation, discussion and development as outlined in "The Framework for the Future" a document, outlining the strategic vision for the Public library service from the Department of Culture Media and Sport, published in 2003. The publication of this document coincided with the beginnings of the GIR project and 2 of the 3 main criteria are fulfilled by the project.

4.3   Being unable to read cuts people off from their own potential and from society around them. More than 7 million adults in the UK are estimated to have literacy problems many more do not read or only have functional literacy. The GIR project increases confidence in reading and enable people to take their place in local communities.

6.0   FUTURE PROGRAMME

6.1   In 2006/07 Wirral Library Service was asked to second a member of staff to look at the longterm sustainability of the project. This post was funded through the Esme Fairburn Foundation and ends in September 2007 although further funding is being sought to extend this.

6.2   A volunteer network has been developed and training and support is provided by this member of staff to the volunteers to ensure the groups continue.   Book resources are obtained through the library network and via donations and this resource will not be at risk. New projects are still being developed as the success

of this project spreads more libraries are either hosting new reading groups or visiting other establishments to ensure distribution of stock to a wider audience and bringing people in to supportive environments.

6.3 GIR has been successful in engaging a wide number of vulnerable people and using the reading groups as a way of supporting them and providing them with opportunities for further development. Further discussions are taking place with the PCT and Adult Social Services as to how the project can continue.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no funding implications arsing directly from this report bur further funding will be required to allow the project to continue.

8.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Library staff are expected to support reading initiatives as part of their existing role although changes to professional staffing roles could enable the project to extend further.

9.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The project has had direct benefits for a number of excluded groups, improving literacy and increasing use of library facilities.

10.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

11.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Capacity use of existing venues. Books used more than once. Huge recycling implications.

12.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are none arising from this report.

13.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The project has improved life skills and literacy standards for a significant proportion of the participants.

14.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The following groups were supported by the project: supported elderly people, dementia sufferers, adults with learning difficulties, parents with basic reading skills. YMCA homeless groups etc.

15.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Applies to all wards.

16.0   BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1   There are no background papers.

17.0   RECOMMENDATIONS

17.1   Members are asked to note the achievements of the Get Into Reading project.

Alan Stennard
Director

This report was produced by Sue Powell who can be contacted on 666 4717.

Get Into Reading Groups – February '07

Group	Day/time	Membership	Facilitator
Woodchurch Library: The Book At Breakfast	Monday 9.15-11.00 Crèche available	Mixed open group	Gwen/Gaynor (Librarians)
Woodchurch Library 2	Monday 2.30.3.30	Mixed open group	Gwen/Gaynor (Librarians)
Pensby Hall Care Home	Monday 2pm-3pm	Elderly people	Berni (Volunteer)
Redholme Care Home	Monday evening	Elderly people suffering from dementia	Chris (Volunteer)
Ridgeway Library, Noctorum	Tuesday 9.30-11.30	Mixed open group	Julie (GIRstaff/librarian)
Riverside Day Centre, Birkenhead	Tuesday 1.30-2.45	Adults with learning disabilities	Julie (GIRstaff/librarian)
Tranmere Community Project	Tuesday 1.30-2.30	Excluded teenagers	Mary (GIR staff)
Saughall Massie Parish Centre	Tuesday 10.30-12.00	Mixed open group	Pam (Librarian)
The Ark, Birkenhead	Tuesday 10.30-12.00	Homeless people	Sue (GIR staff)
Feel Better With A Book 2, Wallasey Central Library	Tuesday 2.00-3.30	Open, but particularly for people with mental or physical health problems	Diane (librarian)
Redholme Care Home	Tuesday 1.30-2.15	Elderly people suffering from dementia	Katie (GIR staff) and Claire (volunteer)
Active Age Centre, Pensall House	Tuesday 11.00-12.30	Elderly people	Julie (GIR staff) and Pauline · (librarian)
Time For Me, The Lauries Centre, Birkenhead	Wednesday 1.00-2.30	Mixed open group	Sue (GIR staff)
St Joseph's Primary	Wednesday 2.00-3.30	Parents and guardians	Chris (Volunteer)

| Redholme Care Home	Wednesday 1.30-2.15	Elderly people suffering from dementia	Katie (GIR staff) and Helen (volunteer)
Granville Day Centre, Wallasey	Thursday AM	Elderly people	Angie (Volunteer)
St James Library, Birkenhead	Thursday 10.00-12.00	Mixed open group	Kerry (GIR staff)
The Book Break, The Lauries	Thursday 1.00-3.00	Carers	Sue (GIR staff)
Feel Better With A Book, Hoylake Library	Thursday 11.00-1.00	Open, but particularly for people with mental or physical health problems	Teresa (Librarian)
Hoylake Cottage Hospital	Thursday PM	Elderly long-term patients	Angie (Volunteer)
Feel Better With A Book, The Lauries, Birkenhead	Friday 11.00-12.30	Open, but particularly for people with mental or physical health problems	Kate (GIR staff)
Lonsdale Day Centre, Wallasey	Friday 11.00-12.00	Elderly people	Berni and Brenda (Volunteers)
Feel Better With A Book, Wallasey Central Library	Friday 1.30-3.30	Open, but particularly for people with mental or physical health problems	Kate (GIR staff)
Phoenix House, Bidston	Friday 11.00-12.00	Recovering drug addicts	Mary (GIR staff)
Parkview Project, Liverpool	Friday 1.30-2.30	Recovering drug addicts	Mary (GIR staff)
Weatherhead College	Reader-in-residence	Pupils at school and feeder schools, parents	Kerry (GIR staff)
Rocket Training	Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday	16-19 yr olds	Mary (GIR staff)

LEARNING DISABILITY PRACTICE

The journal for professionals working with people with learning disabilities
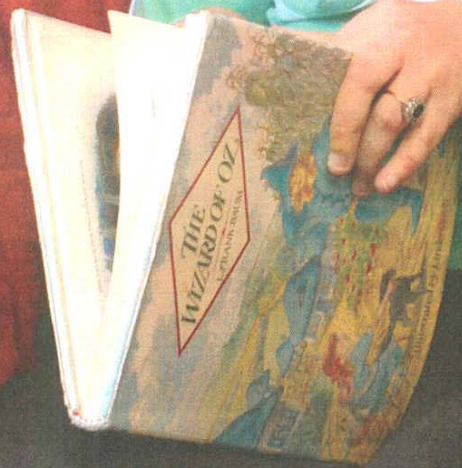
Reading matters

WITH WIRRAL LIBRARIES

music therapy   epilepsy   parents' views

Get Into Reading (GIR) is a partnership project, combining the skills and resources of the reader at the University of Liverpool, Birkenhead and Wallasey Primary Care Trust and Wirral Libraries. It is funded primarily by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and is now in its third year and going from strength to strength.

The aim of the project is to remove barriers to library use, extend individual literacy, improve mental well-being, and build community through shared weekly reading groups, targeting hard-to-reach people across Wirral. There are 24 reading groups at the moment and they are run by GIR project workers, librarians and volunteers. Locations vary from community libraries to day centres for adults with learning disabilities, hostels for the homeless, drug rehabilitation centres and homes for older people.

Chapter and verse

In each GIR session people listen to short stories, poems or novels read aloud by a group facilitator, and join in a friendly discussion, usually revolving around the subjects that come up as part of the reading. There can often be a therapeutic aspect to discussions that emerge, and the sessions certainly build confidence. The fact that material is read aloud in an informal setting over a cup of tea makes the activity accessible to everyone, whatever his or her educational background.

The Birkenhead Riverside and Heswall Day Centre Reading Group provides models that can be rolled out all over the country to care homes and day centres for older people, those with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities.

Both reading groups consist of a number of adults with learning disabilities who have an interest in books and enjoy being read to. Due to various degrees of physical and mental impairment most are unable to read themselves, but occasionally like to have a go anyway, if the conditions are right. They enjoy the sessions and attendance is regular and voluntary.

Each week, the group facilitators read either an instalment of a book or a short story aloud to the group and lead an informal discussion at key points in the text, encouraging each member to make a contribution. During the reading, everyone participates by discussing various themes that have come out of the book in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. The discussion has often been based around the personal experiences of group members and conversation prompted by the books has been very wide-ranging. Recent topics have included loneliness, being blind, happy childhood memories, and the experience of having a disability.

One of the main outcomes of the sessions is that all members of the group have access to books that they would not otherwise have been able to experience ■

Julie Barkway
GIR Project worker/Wirral Libraries

For further information, contact Jane Davies, project manager, Get into Reading.
Tel: 07970 247248. Email: jane.davies@liv.ac.uk