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# Evaluation of **Booktrust Stories Tour** 2013-14

Project Team:

*Cathy Nutbrown, Peter Clough, Sabine Little*

The School of Education  
The University of Sheffield  
388 Glossop Road  
Sheffield, S10 2JA  
[c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.nutbrown@sheffield.ac.uk)  
0114 222 8086

## Executive Summary

The Booktrust Stories Tour forms part of the Arts Council's funding portfolio, specifically within the "Strategic Touring" strand. Booktrust was awarded funding for bringing

*multi-lingual (Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali) literature performances to libraries, community centres and prisons across England. These [were to] focus on deprived urban areas to reach families from black and minority ethnic groups.*<sup>1</sup>

Central to the Stories Tour was a specially commissioned play performed by four actors (two men and two women) from different backgrounds and heritages. Using a minimalist, portable set, the play included music, puppetry and audience participation. At each performance the audience was invited to choose a story from three titles given; we understand that the story options were chosen from the cultural heritages of people from the Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali communities that the play was developed to attract. The play was always performed in English with some characters using words from other languages and one part in the plot where two characters played out a 'yes'/'no' scene using the words 'yes' and 'no' in the four community languages (Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali). The play was followed by a storyteller, sharing books, and the gifting of books to children (Appendix 1). Though the language of the play was English, the Stories tour website<sup>2</sup> included downloadable support materials and the audio version of the story in five languages (also given to children on a CD at the end of each performance). The Stories Tour events were run in community centres, libraries and prisons in ten local authorities across England and Wales.

This report has been commissioned by Booktrust in order to evaluate the impact the Stories Tour had throughout its life cycle, with the principal aim specifically focusing on "the venues hosting events and the families participating in the events".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arts Council Website (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bookstart.org.uk/events/stories-tour/listen> the story could be listened to in English, Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu or Somali

<sup>3</sup> (Specification of Requirements p.2). The evaluation began with a briefing meeting in July 2013 and ends with this report (August 2014).

## Evaluation Design

Two key strands of enquiry have:

- in the venues, produced quantified and qualitative evidence of how the Booktrust Stories Tour sought to engage families in community centres, libraries and prisons.
- in relation to the families produced further qualitative evidence of their perceptions.

## Research Questions

The evaluation design was developed in collaboration with Booktrust and was based on three key questions:

1. To what extent can a community-based literature/arts event 'reach' members of the community (in particular members of Black and Minority Ethnic groups) that are 'hard-to-reach'?
2. What are the barriers to this participation?
3. How might participation be maximised?

## Data collection

Overall, the data comprised:

- Five Interviews with key staff at case study venues (in the case of prisons, a member of Pact<sup>4</sup>);
- Interviews with Booktrust's Stories Tour Project Manager at three stages of the tour;
- Twenty-two online questionnaires, conducted approximately two months post-performance;
- Twenty-six in-situ evaluations with families, featuring questions (show of hands, indication of preferences on posters), comments, and observations;
- Seven observations from evaluation team members at case study venues;
- Twenty-six observations completed by a member of venue staff/volunteer;
- Fifty-Two Stories Tour performance reports;
- Three phone interviews conducted with venues, specifically from LAs that were under-represented in the questionnaire
- Notes from a focus group conducted by Booktrust with the performers.

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<sup>4</sup> Booktrust worked in partnership with Pact on this project. Pact is a national charity which supports people affected by imprisonment, providing practical and emotional support to prisoners' children and families, and to prisoners themselves. <http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>

## Data analysis

The analysis draws first on data from all evaluation activities, before presenting the seven case studies (two community centres, two libraries and three prisons). We have adopted a simple analytical framework based directly on the following key themes:

1. Views of the event from families and centre staff
2. Staffing
3. Booktrust support and marketing
4. Organisation of event
5. Auxiliary activity (e.g. workshops for prisoners)
6. Ethnicity of participants
7. Lasting impact, 'value' and future evaluation

## Conclusions

Within these seven themes we conclude the following:

### 1. Views of the event from families and centre staff

- Overwhelmingly children enjoyed the performances.
- In the prisons there is plentiful evidence from families regarding their enjoyment of the event.

### 2. Staffing

- Levels of staffing, and commitment by staff to the project in the venues varied greatly as did the roles and use of volunteers in community centres and libraries;
- Four venues reported that the training offered to their community centre volunteers was very important whilst ten (eight libraries and two community centres) reported that it was unimportant or unused;
- Confidence of volunteers was said to have increased in six of the community centre venues;
- Booktrust's aim to empower local communities via volunteer training seems to have been at least partially successful;
- Lack of staffing was a challenge in prisons with one of the main challenges for Pact being the significant commitment of time required in liaison work within and outwith prisons to set up the tour events.

### 3. Booktrust support and marketing

- Flyers and marketing support from Booktrust were considered by 16 venues who responded (88%) to be important and 82% (14 responding

venues) found the Booktrust support good and helpful.

#### 4. Organisation of events

- The organisation of the project overall broke new ground for Booktrust
- For a small number of community centre venues and one library, the organisation was over-complicated and could have been simpler;
- All but five of the 22 responses to our questionnaire survey reported that they would engage in such events in the future if given the opportunity, and indicated strong commitment to help Booktrust achieve its aim of drawing the audience from “hard-to-reach” target populations;
- The actors would have found it helpful to know more detail about their audiences beforehand so as to adapt the play if appropriate;
- Booktrust’s collaboration with Pact, a charity experienced in working with prisons, lay at the heart of the success of the Stories Tour in prisons, so that the complex challenges to organising an event were negated or overcome;
- All venues acknowledged the support available, and for most there was a sense that difficulties and challenges would not inhibit venues from further similar engagement in the future.

#### 5. Auxiliary activity

- Personalised book bags and books were a huge success with prisoners’ children and clearly something that made the day a success for prison families.

#### 6. Ethnicity of participants

- The Stories Tour was successful to a large degree in attracting members of all the targeted BAME groups to the events located in community centres and libraries;
- In the prison venues, the criteria used to select prisoners for participation were not related to the BAME-related targets;
- Turnout for the stories tour event was higher than usual for 78% of the venues responding, In general, low participation rates at cultural events were attributed to: a history of lack of events, lack of funding, lack of interest, childcare difficulties, and language issues;
- About a half of libraries and community centres were successful in bringing children from local schools, nurseries and preschools, and in just under a third of the venues those who attended were not previously known to that venue;
- For some *venues* the £100 participation fee was likely to be a barrier in the future. For some *families* a requirement to pay in future might present difficulties in the future; some were not willing to pay at all whilst others said they might be willing to pay up to £5;

- It seems that some venues were successful in attracting new users and in breaking down some barriers to participation, attracting people considered to be 'hard-to-reach';
- Whilst not everyone agreed on the importance of offering refreshments, some venues reported more specifically that this was much appreciated by families and that it added to the special nature of the event;
- Of responding venues 78% report higher attendance than other events, and a similar proportion reported that new links were being created within the community.

## 7. Lasting impact, 'value' and future evaluation

We have identified the following indicators of and factors to support, continued activity which vary according to venue type:

- Since all **community centres** involved in the Stories Tour were new contacts, Booktrust staff felt that these new relationships would impact positively on Booktrust's future work at such venues, with several community centres having expressed interest in further involvement with Booktrust;
- The impact of the Stories Tour in **prisons** has been highlighted. Pact plans to continue collaborative work with Booktrust. Two prisons have maintained contact with the local storyteller who participated in their events and envisage further collaboration;
- For **libraries**, impact was largely measured via increased membership numbers, as well as links with the community.
- We are not able to comment on value for money because that is outside of the scope of the commissioned evaluation and we do not have the necessary information to form a view on this aspect.
- Despite immediate success in the venues, few have run follow-up activities. The planned 'Legacy Toolkit' [see below] and further volunteer training opportunities may result in more development;
- To date there have been no resulting links between prisons and local community centres or libraries, although there is hope that the 'Legacy Toolkit' will help develop this.

We have identified the following barriers to continued activity (which of course vary according to venue and venue type):

- Funding cuts have led to reduced staffing in some **community centres**, which limits capacity for additional events. In several community centres, there seemed to be an expectation that it would be Booktrust's responsibility to provide ideas or opportunities for future engagement;
- Within **prisons**, maintaining links and liaison with individual officers can be

- difficult due to re-deployment, and the prisoners themselves may also be moved between prisons;
- Staff difficulties due to funding cuts appear to have impacted on *libraries'* ability to generate further activities.

This project was ambitious; it attracted considerable funding and attempted considerable 'reach' into communities traditionally underserved in the arts. It is important to understand something of lasting effects of the Stories Tour as well as its immediate impact.

## Recommendations

We recommend that:

- clear information is given, in future, about the suitability of Booktrust events for particular age groups;
- future events should include time for consulting with families about what future stories-oriented events they would like;
- Booktrust gives careful attention to staffing the event and that venues receive the necessary funding to support future events to avoid staffing difficulties being a barrier to participation;
- guidance is given to venues on what can be funded from the marketing budget in future;
- participation would be maximized if any information specific to venues and audiences were given to actors before the event where it was known or deemed appropriate;
- a budget for refreshments at similar events is maintained in the future;
- auxiliary activities, especially personalizing the book gift bags, are included in any future events for prisons;
- venues are supported in developing community specific approaches to engaging new audiences;
- the Legacy Toolkit is available in several languages so as to maximise the likelihood of further similar activities, and includes: ways of working that might reach out to working with school groups, in terms of professional development for teachers and teaching assistants to develop ideas for work which extend beyond the day itself; information

on ways to follow up the performance; information on how the play links with Early Years Foundation Stage; support material how to consult with families about what future stories-oriented events they would like.

- careful thought should be given to the budget for evaluation of a project of this size and scope, we recommend a minimum of 10% of project funding should be allocated to evaluation.
- there should be some future evaluation of the follow-up in venues so that Booktrust can learn something of the 'legacy' of the Stories Tour.



## Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the following for their assistance in compiling this evidence review:

**The venues** for gathering observation data, participating in post-performance questionnaires, taking part in phone interviews, and welcoming us during case study visits;

**The families** who participated in data collection;

**Karen Kitchen**, Project Secretary;

**Pact** staff for facilitating data collection in prisons and taking part in interviews;

**The acting company**, Huzaiifa Hussein, Rameet Rauli, Wendy Richardson and Hemi Yeroham for facilitating data collection, for sharing their views via the Booktrust-organised focus group and for their professional competence and infectious enthusiasm.

We also thank Booktrust for the opportunity to carry out this evaluation.

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# 1. Introduction and aims of the Stories Tour evaluation

The Booktrust Stories Tour forms part of the Arts Council's funding portfolio, specifically within the "Strategic Touring" strand. Funding was awarded to Booktrust for bringing:

*multi-lingual (Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali) literature performances to libraries, community centres and prisons across England. These will focus on deprived urban areas to reach families from black and minority ethnic groups. Performance and participation will help to break down language barriers, promote community cohesion and inspire a love of books.*<sup>5</sup>

Central to the Stories Tour was a specially commissioned play performed by four actors (two men and two women) from different backgrounds and heritages. Using a minimalist, portable set, the play included music, puppetry and audience participation. At each performance the audience was invited to choose a story from three titles given; we understand that the story options were chosen from the cultural heritages of people from the Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali communities that the play was developed to attract. The play was always performed in English with some characters using words from other languages and one part in the plot where two characters played out a 'yes'/'no' scene using the words 'yes' and 'no' in the four community languages (Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali). The play was followed by a storyteller, sharing books, and the gifting of books to children (Appendix 1). Though the language of the play was English, the Stories tour website<sup>6</sup> included downloadable support materials and the audio version of the story in five languages (also given to children on a CD at the end of each performance). The Stories Tour events were run in community centres, libraries and prisons in ten local authorities across England and Wales.

In the prisons, preparatory workshops were held in the morning before prisoners' families came to the event in the afternoon (Appendix 1). While the original remit was to focus on the play - the central part of the overall Stories Tour - it is difficult to extract just this single component from such a multi-faceted intervention; the report will thus draw on salient points not directly related to the performance - including the prison workshops, the book gifting and the storyteller - as and when appropriate.

This report has been commissioned by Booktrust in order to evaluate the impact the Stories Tour has had throughout its life cycle, with the principal aim specifically focusing on "*the venues hosting events and the families participating in the*

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<sup>5</sup> Arts Council Website (<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bookstart.org.uk/events/stories-tour/listen> the story could be listened to in English, Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu or Somali

events” (Specification of Requirements p.2). In an interview with a Booktrust member of staff, the aims were further explained as follows:

*The Arts Council is particularly interested in legacy and sustainability, so the project endeavours to find venues, equip them to host an event, and then, through sharing of experiences, build capacity and confidence to host future events. The project aims to target communities that may have been missed by more traditional arts provision, to encourage the sharing and reading of books. The target communities and areas of the country were chosen as they are less likely to be engaging in the arts according to the ACE Taking Part survey. Booktrust don't expect them to have missed out on the universal Bookstart provision but potentially they are less involved in extension activities e.g. rhyme times.*

In order to conduct such an evaluation, we have pursued two key Strands of Enquiry which have:

**i. in the venues:** *produced quantified and qualitative evidence of how the Booktrust Stories Tour sought to engage families in community centres, libraries and prisons;*

**ii. in relation to the families:** *produce further qualitative evidence of their perceptions.*

Realising each of these two strands has reflexively drawn on evidence from the other, and, particularly by the presentation of seven Case Studies; this Final Report synthesises the accounts.

Throughout the evaluation we have held in mind the importance of working inclusively with individuals and groups that are traditionally described as ‘hard-to-reach’. This evaluation derives from a model of inclusion which ‘... touch[es] upon issues of equity, participation, community, entitlement, compassion, respect for diversity and sustainability (Ainscow et al. 2006). Seeing the conceptual core of the *Booktrust Stories Tour* as the promotion of structures for, and the dismantling of barriers to inclusion, then, the evaluation was driven by three key questions:

1. To what extent can a community-based literature/arts event ‘reach’ members of the community (in particular members of Black and Minority Ethnic groups) that are ‘hard-to-reach’ ?
2. What are the barriers to this participation?
3. How might participation be maximised?

In collaboration with Booktrust we defined some limits to the very considerable scope of the evaluation to focus primarily on families and their reactions to the events - particularly the play - and to a lesser extent on venues. Our focus, wherever possible, was on the first hand experiences of those involved. Any ‘legacy’ falls outside of this evaluation, which focuses on the perceptions and

immediate impact of Booktrust Stories Tour itself.

The Booktrust Stories Tour initiative was prompted by evidence that low levels of engagement in the arts in the UK are noted in deprived areas generally, and more particularly within Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. This situation is easily described through theories of social exclusion, particularly the roles which minority languages - and attitudes towards them - may play in maintaining barriers which exclude members of BAME groups from shared community cultures. Excluded individuals and communities most frequently represent complexes of mutually-reinforcing difficulties and deprivations, rather than single difficulties, and low levels of literacy are positively correlated with the phenomena and experience of exclusion (Clough, 1999, 2009).

## 2. Methodology

The design for this evaluation was developed as far as possible in collaboration with Booktrust, and depended on an assumed availability of and access to the various participants. Whereas, originally, the evaluation design relied heavily on the support from community ambassadors<sup>7</sup>, it became apparent that not all venues had such support available to them and so the research design was adapted to accommodate this.

### 2.1. Approach to the evaluation

In conducting the evaluation, issues of scope, variability and transience were key to a research design and evolving and responsive methodological approach. Briefly these issues concerned:

*Scope:* The Stories Tour was substantial: 56 performances across 31 venues, in England and Wales, over a considerable period of time;

*Variability:* By its very nature of seeking to identify new audiences, the Stories Tour explored different venues – not just by their main purpose (e.g. prisons, libraries and community centres), but also by the way these are governed, run, supported and financed. Drawing comparisons between a prison event and a library event is problematic and largely inappropriate; no less difficult is comparing a well-established, staffed and financed community centre with a small-scale community project run by one or two committed individuals on a volunteering basis<sup>8</sup>;

*Transience:* A number of members of the target groups were highly transient, either due to the venue (e.g. certain prisons), or to the individuals' status within the UK (e.g. refugees). While these made up just a small proportion of the overall target group, data collection has been a challenge, especially with regard to the data collected two months following the performance. This may lead to “false positives” or “false negatives”, i.e. the data presenting a lack of follow-up activity, whereas in fact the target group may have changed.

To address this heterogeneity with maximum focus on the ‘voices’ of the participants, the evaluation adopted a multi-method approach, seeking to capture evidence through questionnaires, interviews, and observation, and also through ‘quick questions’, show of hands, post-it notes, flips charted notes and drawings and children’s words. This was accomplished by involving participants and agents of change at each level of the project.

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<sup>7</sup> Original Booktrust project plan

<sup>8</sup> Interview with member of Booktrust staff

## 2.2 Timetable

| Date             | Actions  |
|------------------|--|
| July 2013        | Initial meeting between Booktrust and University of Sheffield team to discuss evaluation process and materials |
| Aug -Oct 2013    | Development of evaluation materials and support materials for CA volunteer training                            |
| Nov 2013         | Start of Stories Tour performances   |
| Jan 2014         | Post-performance questionnaire data collection begins  |
| Jan - Apr 2014   | Development of seven case studies, including phone interviews and visits                                       |
| Apr 2014         | End of Stories Tour performances   |
| June 2014        | Post-performance questionnaire data collection ends  |
| June - July 2014 | Follow-up phone interviews with venues   |
| June - Aug 2014  | Report drafting  |
| July 2014        | Draft report to Booktrust  |
| Aug 2014         | Final report to Booktrust  |

## 2.3 Research methods and data

Overall, the data collection methods comprised:

1. Five Interviews with key staff at case study venues (in the case of prisons, a member of Pact);
2. Interviews with Booktrust's Stories Tour Project Manager at three stages of the tour;
3. Twenty-two online questionnaires, conducted approximately two months post-performance;
4. Twenty-six in-situ evaluations with families, featuring questions (show of hands, indication of preferences on posters), comments, and observations;
5. Seven observations from evaluation team members at case study venues;
6. Twenty-six observations completed by a member of venue staff/volunteer;
7. Fifty-Two Stories Tour performance reports;
8. Three phone interviews conducted with a number of venues, specifically from LAs that are under-represented in the questionnaire
9. Notes from a focus group conducted by Booktrust with the performers.

The analysis presented in this report draws firstly on data from all evaluation activities, before presenting the seven case studies; within each study, it will be

made clear which pool of data was available to draw on. The seven in-depth case studies (two community centres, two libraries, three prisons) are mapped against evaluation activities carried out at each of the 31 venues. Since part of the Stories Tour's aim was the empowerment of local communities, training materials and guidance sheets were provided to facilitate skills development for evaluation in each venue.

## **2.4 Research ethics**

The University of Sheffield ethical research policies and procedures have been followed to ensure the evaluation was undertaken in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice in research ethics and integrity. This practice has been based on extensive experience of ethical research involving young children and their families (Nutbrown 2005), and in work in the arts (Nutbrown 2011) and work with marginalized and otherwise 'vulnerable' communities; the team drew on this previous experience in devising and carrying out the evaluation reported here.

A strong emphasis in our evaluation was placed on the design and use of research instruments which were proportionate to the task and staff available in each of the venues – with an eye to building capacity in community evaluation wherever possible. We were careful to try to avoid placing an undue burden on research participants or volunteers. Informed consent was sought from all participants, either in writing or verbally, depending on context and language needs. In keeping with ethical approval agreements from with the University of Sheffield, the names of many (but not all) venues and individuals have been changed – as appropriate and agreed.

## **2.5 Approach to analysis**

Our analysis sought to discover the various ways in which venues engaged with the Stories Tour, what they perceived as challenges or opportunities, and where impact may have taken place. In order to fulfill the aims and objectives of the evaluation, we have adopted a simple analytical framework based directly on the themes explored in evaluation activities. These themes are:

1. Views of the event from families and centre staff
2. Staffing
3. Booktrust support and marketing
4. Organisation of event
5. Auxiliary activity (e.g. workshops for prisoners)
6. Ethnicity of participants
7. Lasting impact, value and evaluation



### **3. Overview of effectiveness of the Stories Tour**

In this section we discuss findings from community centres and libraries, separately from discussion of prison venues, because the latter are very distinct and most issues are unique to them. Hence community centres and libraries are reported together, and prisons discussed separately; this provides two distinct but parallel accounts.

The organisation of the Stories Tour project was complex, involving liaison with personnel (some employed and some volunteers) at 36 venues; whilst this ambitious scale is to be commended, at the same time it gives rise to some issues. This section draws upon data available from staff interviews, regarding the initial recruitment process of community centres and libraries to the project, before focusing in more detail on the effectiveness of the Stories Tour itself.

Overall 28 organisations took part in the Stories Tour, working across 36 different venues in ten Local Authorities in England and Wales. Performance records (from 52 performers' reports) indicate that in total, 1255 children, and 1405 adults attended, representing the full range of minority ethnic groups targeted by the tour. This averages at approximately 24 children and 27 adults for each of the 52 performance.

Community centres and Library venues were identified in a "touring plan" as part of the bid for the project. Due to long turnover periods and the various draft stages of the bid, by the time it was successful there had been no contact with venues for approximately six months, and the bid had changed from originally three casts touring for three months each to the present format. The £100 "buy-in" for venues was also introduced after community centres and libraries had already expressed initial interest to participate in the project. Once funding was secured, contact was re-established with all venues; however, circumstances had changed in a number of them, including redundancies in libraries and turnover among staff in community centres. Where venues were forced to opt out, new venues were identified and appropriate links established. While some libraries had pre-existing links with Booktrust as part of Booktrust's other work, all were new to working with the member of staff leading the Stories Tour, and all community centres were new contacts. Some centres were either unwilling or unable to opt into the £100 "buy-in", despite the attached advantages of training and funding support for publicity and refreshments, so new venues had to be found.

One surprise for the Booktrust member of staff was the sheer range of community centres – some, for example, run by the council with a dedicated arts worker, budgets, and facilities, yet others some run by a handful of people from their homes. Differences in expectations from the centres themselves were also marked: some had detailed regulation (including such as DBS checks, risk

assessments, specific policies to comply with), whereas others were more *ad hoc* and consequently flexible. As one Booktrust staff member noted:

*“There are massive differences in funding and expertise, and it has been amazing to meet people who do so much for the community, but it has been challenging as well.”*

Booktrust made a point of establishing links and meeting with people from each venue, including via regional steering group meetings, thus sometimes finding them through these umbrella organisations, and acting on such local advice.

The prisons were identified in collaboration with Pact (a national charity which supports people affected by imprisonment)<sup>9</sup>, with one senior member of Pact staff taking on the role as overall liaison.

## **3.1 Views of the event from families and centre staff**

### **3.1.1 Community Centres and Libraries**

Data from the venues collected on the day of the event give a clear view of attendance, children’s enjoyment and adults’ views on attending and paying for such an event again.

#### *Overall Attendance*

Performance records show that 432 children (average 22 children) attended the library performances; 598 (average 30 children) attended the community centre performances, with the majority of children attending in the target three-six age range. There were, however, considerable numbers of under-twos and over-sevens in attendance as well, as would be expected at events marketed as ‘family events’. The majority of families said that they attended the venue rarely or never, though this was not the case where whole groups were invited from local schools and preschool groups, for example.

#### *Children’s enjoyment*

Overwhelmingly, children enjoyed the performances. Children in the target age range and their older siblings were very engaged at all the performances we visited and reports from other venues also confirmed this. Their enjoyment of live action and opportunities for interaction was clear and the ‘different’ feel to the event made the play especially engaging. Occasionally some younger children expressed some fear and uncertainty, which we attribute to the noise of the play, and the proximity of lively action to them; these very young children quickly

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<sup>9</sup> “Pact is a national charity which supports people affected by imprisonment. We provide practical and emotional support to prisoners’ children and families, and to prisoners themselves”. <http://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/>

returned to sit with their parents for reassurance. Most of the children we spoke to did not seem to fully understand the story in the play. For example: in response to the question: 'What was the play about?' the most common response was: 'About a little girl and a monkey'. The core dramatic and narrative concepts of 'time standing still', 'Old Father Time' and the need for stories to resolve a difficulty were not grasped by many of the children.

### *Adults' views*

With the exception of one venue, between 75 and 100% of those adults attending reported that they would come to another such event and would recommend the event to others. When asked if they would pay, adults in 15 venues said that they would pay between £1.50 and £5, whilst there was no indication of willingness to pay at all in 12 venues. (We note that no data for this question were provided in the case of 13 performances).

Feedback from the actors' focus group indicates that there was, understandably, some reluctance among actors to be involved in the evaluation process. The suggestion was made to have an additional person touring, with the explicit aim to evaluate the project and further inform Booktrust's future work.

A follow-up questionnaire was sent two months after the event. Of the 22 responses received to the questionnaire, half (11) reported that they held events at least monthly and only one had never held a cultural community event. They reported that the lack of events made participation low (eight) whilst six venues reported that there were many events so not all were well attended. Lack of funding (seven), lack of interest (six), childcare difficulties (five) and language issues (ten) were given as other reasons for low attendance. Some community centre venue representatives expanded further on the difficulties of getting communities involved saying:

*Confidence can be a barrier.*

*Finding out how best to promote events to diverse communities chaotic lifestyles, parents not engaged with activities of own children, not used to cultural events, unsure if they are suitable re religious reasons, many invisible barriers, some prejudice.*

Comments by library representatives included:

*The library is difficult. The Asian community sees it as white and the white community see it as Asian.*

*Difficult to engage community. The library is in the middle of 2 quite distinct areas- white/Asian- and there are tensions.*

*Difficulty in getting word out across the borough. Cultural issues and not understanding what the events are and each other's culture.*

Of the 22 responses received to our questionnaire survey, nine said that families were already known to the venue whilst nine said they brought in groups from local schools, nurseries and preschools' these responses were evenly spread across libraries and community centres. In six venues those who attended were not previously known to the venue. There was variation in responses about whether people returned to the venue again for further events and activities. In some cases individuals returned but it was not clear how many. Those returning to community centres did so for various activities including: TOTS fun sessions, ESOL classes, and 'stay-and-play' sessions. Those returning to libraries came to join the library, or visit as a school group. One library reported that:

*Some joined our events database and all were so impressed. We also are using the Booktrust Bear Club packs bought from the budget and these will encourage families to return. People lead challenging and busy lives - one lady said she always came to the library when she was a child and had just not carried this on with her children and she had no idea why. Just forgot, she supposed.*

Seven venues, four community centres and three libraries, reported that they had spoken with some families since the tour ended and reported that families loved the show and wished there were more such events.

Library representatives said:

*A few parents came back and told us that they read more to their children now. We don't have this ourselves but [the] school did say that the feedback from parents afterwards was very positive and many had never been to such an event before.*

*The feedback was that everyone really enjoyed it and it gave children and families an exciting new experience of actors that linked to books for specific backgrounds.*

Community Centre representatives reported that:

*The books that they got were really appreciated, as many Bengali families do not have money to buy books. The children just loved it too. Having the parents involved in making food, doing outreach and preparing the venue was also good.*

*Everyone thought the event was fantastic. A community group are having a Fun Day and the same storyteller has been booked for 4 hours to do*

*sessions with children. The event has given an insight to parents of how important reading and storytelling is.*

Some 83% of responding community and library venues reported that the event was different from the usual events they offered. Table 1 shows specific responses to question about the details of the events.

| <b>Response</b>                                  | <b>% of venues</b> | <b>Number of venues</b> |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Different from usual events in the venue         | 83%                | 14                      |
| More confident to run similar events in future   | 17%                | 3                       |
| Local author involvement was important           | 67%                | 12                      |
| Plan to run similar events in the future         | 65%                | 11                      |
| Most who came were unknown to the venue          | 50%                | 9                       |
| Learned new ways to engage audiences             | 39%                | 7                       |
| Community languages are important in such events | 67%                | 12                      |
| Was a success                                    | 94%                | 17                      |
| Families enjoyed it                              | 88%                | 15                      |
| Has been worthwhile                              | 94%                | 17                      |
| Built new links with venues in the area          | 50%                | 8                       |

*Table 1: specific responses to question about the details of the events.*

Venues had been asked to contribute £100 to the Stories Tour. This was intended by Booktrust as a way to ensure commitment and participation, as well as a possible gauge to understand how much centres would be willing to contribute to an event like the Stories Tour. Whereas this fee was explicitly discussed in the case study venues, it was left open in questionnaires to see whether venues would consider it a point that they needed to raise. In fact, only one community centre pointed out:

*although the £100 given was fine I don't know if in the future we would be able to give this fee as funding within the Council has been reduced significantly. Would love to do something similar again.*

Feedback from the actors outlined that they felt some audiences had a sense of entitlement rather than simply-responsive pleasure, and attended for the free books and snacks, rather than the performance itself. While this particular aspect was not explicitly measured in the evaluation, this attitude may illustrate some difference in expectations about the event.

In an interview with a Booktrust member of staff, the point was raised that reaching those who may have initially been tempted by the offer of food, was a positive point, since this may have reached members of the community who would not normally sign up for a cultural event. For two venues the offer of food as part of the event was an important element, and for one, the promotion of healthy eating was important to compliment their other priorities. For example, one librarian who also worked closely with a community centre venue said:

*The main success was the ability to promote by word of mouth, with the support of other venues. We had families who attended the event both at the children's centre and at the library. The library service now has no budget for activities, and events are solely funded by Friends Groups, and fund raising locally is limited. It was a pleasure to be able to offer a multicultural event to local families and promote the library as a multicultural venue in an area where this message is difficult to communicate. The offer of free food, and the event being after school hours certainly helped to make this a success.*

Of responses to the event itself Community Centre representatives said:

*Excellent event. The families were engrossed. .*

*Everyone loved the shows- one dad went and grabbed another relative saying "it's a real theatre show and it is really good- come and watch!"*

*One little lad had 2 hearing aids and some problems and his mother said she was amazed that he sat and concentrated through the whole event. She was so pleased.*

*The smiles and excitement from parents and children said it all. Parents wanted to come to more shows as much as the children. It was difficult to know who liked it more- children or parents! No negative comments at all from any children or parents.*

*I thought the event was fantastic. The actors were brilliant. An exciting way to engage with people.*

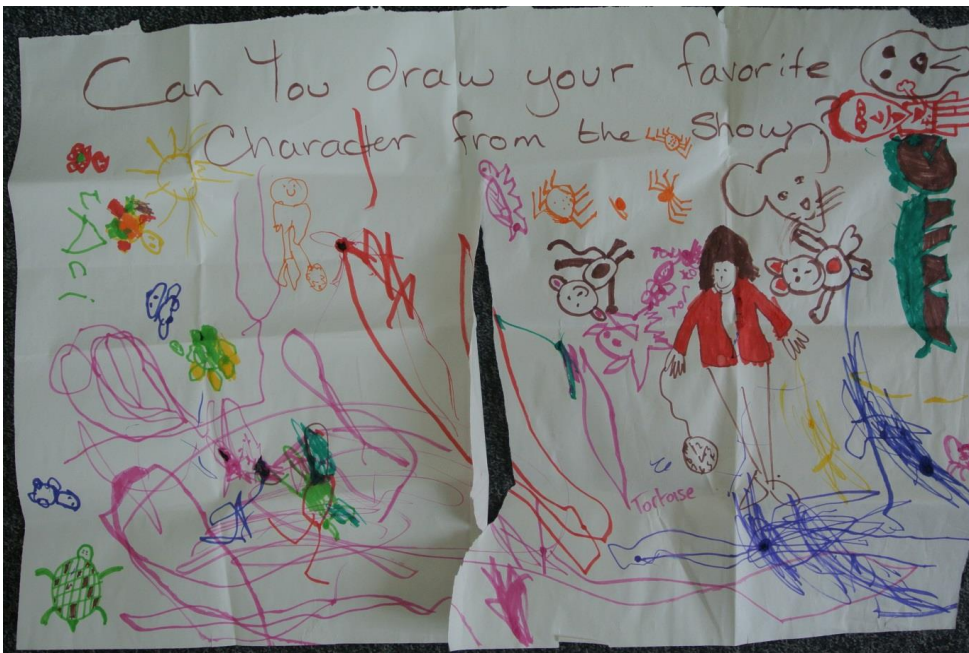
*Families reported they enjoyed the concept of having a theatre performance in the community, however feedback from some parents was that they had felt it was aimed at the wrong age range as many children aged 3 are already accessing nursery provision, therefore we had lots of 2 year olds attending, they also felt the concept of the story which incorporated time was very difficult for the children to grasp.*

*Generally children responded to the performance in awe but not sure they understood what was happening, a few children were frightened at times throughout the show.*

### **3.1.2 Prisons**

The 22 prison performances were co-ordinated by Pact whose workers also collected evaluation data, including a considerable number of photographs of “storybook” evaluation comments. Figures are available (from Performance Reports) from 16 prison performances. During these, a total of 225 children engaged with the Stories Tour, ranging from eight to 21 in any one performance. One hundred and seventy seven men and 221 women also watched the performance, bringing the total number of adults engaged to 398. The lowest number of men recorded in any venue is three. We are uncertain whether these figures include prison staff.

There is plentiful evidence from families reporting their enjoyment of the event. Feedback provided in written format on large evaluation posters frequently references enjoyment and happiness.



Overwhelmingly, the enjoyment of the event in prisons was inextricably linked to spending family time together, enjoying an event.





Some comments from mothers included:

*Excellent storytelling involving all the families fun, takes everyone out of their comfort zone to have a laugh. Enjoyed Spending time with loved one. Thank you very much.*

*All families being together and enjoying this event. coming to see Dad and watching the play for a couple of hours it felt like home. the children really enjoyed it.*

*Play was good + kids enjoyed getting to spend time with Dad*

*Was amazing, kid's found this fun + exciting great opportunity for Dad's to interact and a fun day will come away with more ideas for storytime with children. Fun fun fun!!*

Children commented:

*I think they should have more of these events for the children + Dad's as it didnt seem like they were in prison. And every2 had fun!*

*excited to come and listen to a story with daddy*



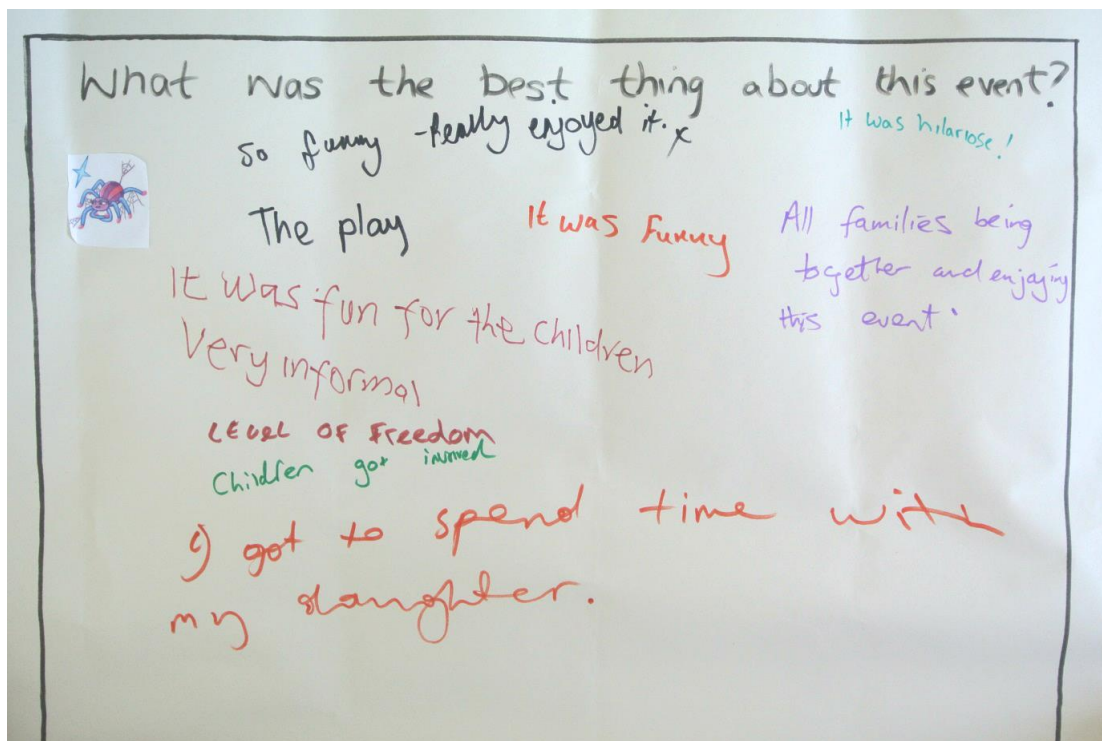
Fathers commented that highlights were:

*Watching my boys laughing at the actors*

*Spending time with my family watching the actors*

*WOW This was great really worth while spending time with family at this hard time fun & games the play was too funny I cant wait for the next one thanks to all the actors.*

Some wrote comments on the large evaluation sheets:



In several cases, “spending family time” was referenced without mention of the play. Apart from the individual mention of “storytime” above, there is no specific feedback regarding encouraging story sharing or BAME involvement. These elements were important for the Stories Tour in general, but we understand that the main focus for prisons was on providing an enjoyable event around books. Referring specifically to prisons, a Booktrust representative commented that:

*There was a lot of focus around people enjoying the arts which was a big part of what was important to us- those who traditionally miss out on arts provision getting to access it. ...The project aims to target communities that may have been missed by more*

*traditional arts provision, to encourage the sharing and reading of books. The target communities and areas of the country were chosen as they are less likely to be engaging in the arts... We weren't able to target based on ethnicity but prisons have a higher than average BME population.*

No direct family feedback is available that comments on the inclusion of community languages, although feedback from Pact includes some confusion from families with regard to the inclusion of other languages. Some comments focusing on the enjoyment of families spending time together can be seen as a positive impact, but not all comments relate directly to the Stories Tour activities. Children said:

*We got to come and see our daddy's and have lots of fun but next time can we have lots grub ples*

*Great - we always love spending time with Daddy cant wait for him to come home*

Many fathers commented that the best thing was:

*'Spending time with my kids'.*

*Seeing how captivated my lil' was. Seeing the joy on her face.*

*Woz really good for the children should do them more often!*

*We thought it was good and helped everyone interact, nice change!*

As well as many comments on how they enjoyed the time, some families also had comments about improving the event:

*Have a selection of options in the play the kids can vote for play to progress into.*

*Have children involved in the show*

*I think by getting the dad's more involved but apart from that the day was so special*

*Make it longer*

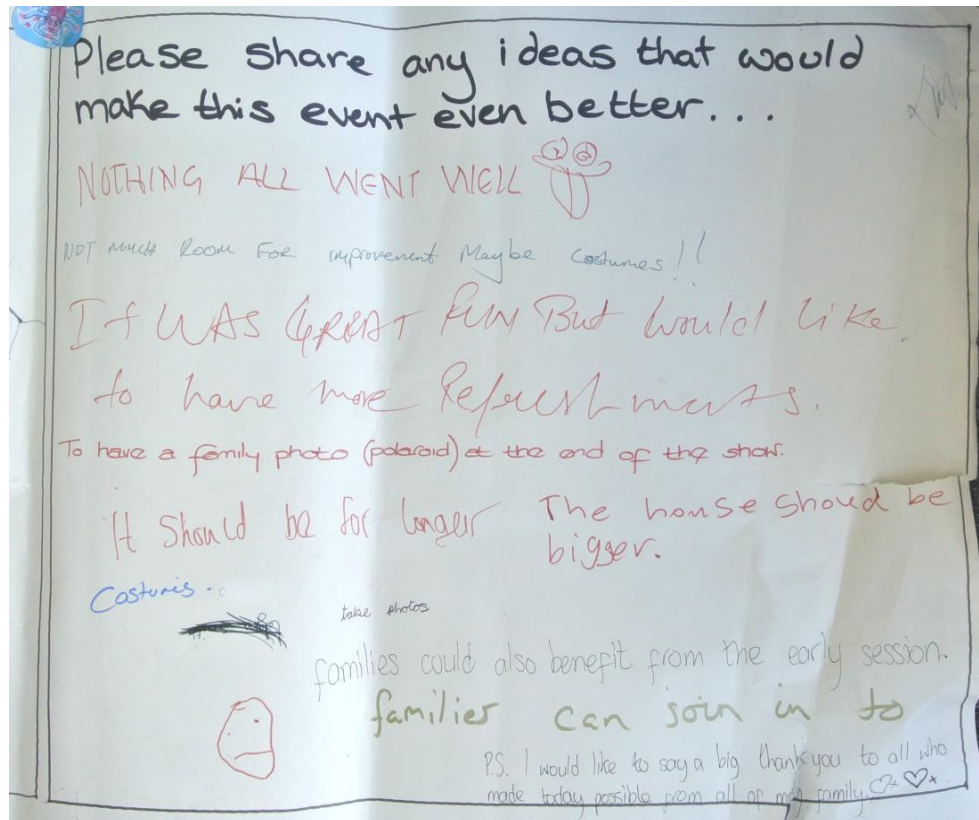
Their children commented:

shued of had more peapol

make the visit longer

If our dad would be an acter

Many family members commented in writing on large sheets of paper provided for the purpose:



It is not clear whether the success of the family events depended directly or significantly on this particular Stories Tour presentation (and so might have been achieved by some other family event). Some of the families' comments and ideas for future developments point towards their preference for a more active involvement of all family members in events, others suggest that it was greatly appreciated in the existing format, for some simply being together was a positive in itself that would have been worth paying for.

## 3.2 Staffing

### 3.2.1 Community Centres and Libraries

Staffing in the venues varied greatly as did the roles and use of volunteers. Paid staffing varied from 33 full-time to none, and volunteer hours ranged from 35 hours per week to none. Venues were asked if the use of volunteers had changed since the Stories Tour event. Five said there had been no change with one explaining that:

*we are working with the children's centre on dual promotions [of events]*

Training had been offered to volunteers and four (of the 22 responses) commented that for their community centres the training was very important whilst ten (eight libraries and two community centres) reported that it was unimportant or they didn't use it. Confidence of volunteers was said to have increased in six of the community centre venues, remaining the same in five of the community centres that responded. In the case study venues where volunteers participated, such volunteers were mainly involved in the recruitment process, with the evaluation having been completed by a paid member of staff, or, in one case, the stage manager. Booktrust's aim to empower local communities via volunteer training seems to have been partially successful, as outlined in the questionnaire responses. In a phone interview, one community centre gave further detail, outlining that one member of staff and six volunteers had attended volunteer training. While the member of staff stated that, as it is her job to organise events, she did not gain any particular new skills, the six volunteers learnt about the logistics involved in organising an event. They also learnt "a bit" about how to evaluate an event. The training was particularly useful to understand what would be happening on the day – who would arrive when, running order, and getting refreshments in.

### 3.2.2 Prisons

Lack of staffing was a challenge reported by Pact as part of the evaluation interview process. One of the main challenges for Pact was the significant commitment in time involved in liaison work with prisons to set up the tour events in prison venues. Whereas community centres and libraries had a named contact in each venue, in prisons, one member of staff managed the liaison with all prisons, for all performances.

A further organisational benefit related to staffing would have been to bring all senior contacts together to outline the project and the organisational issues, as well as the benefits. Part of Pact's workload was exacerbated due to prisons' hesitating to take on additional organisational responsibility, resulting in more work for Pact. Such work included organising and paying for refreshments,

although the prisons were locally much better placed to do so. Pact supplied posters and invitations, so that individual prisons did not need to do so themselves.

In seven out of eight prisons it was reported that prison officers interacted with prisoners and their families in a different capacity - this is not usual practice, and was seen as a great benefit.

Despite the organisational difficulties, all issues were dealt with successfully, and the Pact coordinator felt that the project was very successful and that there is a great sense of pride in having achieved a successful series of events in the prison venues.

### **3.3 Booktrust support and marketing**

#### **3.3.1 Community Centres and Libraries**

Of the 22 responses received from 19 venues, 14 reported that the event was value for money and they would be willing to pay for future events; no venue made a charge to families to participate. Booktrust flyers and promotion materials were considered useful by 16 of the venues that responded whilst other Booktrust support for promoting the event was felt to be important by nine venues and 14 venues felt that Booktrust general support was good and helpful. To enable information sharing between the venues taking part in the Stories Tour, Booktrust set up a 'Ning' - a closed message board where ideas could be shared and documents downloaded. All participants were invited to join the Ning and share their ideas and advice. The Ning was considered important by one venue whilst ten specifically reported that they did not use it.

In relation to Booktrust support and marketing, library venue representatives commented that it was useful:

*Didn't really need all the money- would rather have had free event and less support. No real need for refreshments. However the use of the money for a coach to transport the class was brilliant and enabled us to engage with a school that was far away from any of our venues. We have no money to do this normally and the event meant there were people who did not normally go to any libraries.*

At four of the community centre venues and one library, representatives commented that the organization was complicated and could have been simpler, for example:

*It was over complicated and seemed a little scary in a way*

However, these comments came alongside acknowledgment of support available, a feeling that it was well organised, and did not seem to inhibit venues from further similar engagement in the future:

*As a community, we would definitely be interested in arranging for more events like this as the parents absolutely loved it and the staff enjoyed it too.*

### **3.3.2 Prisons**

Prisons' issues regarding recruitment of participating families was very different to those in libraries and community centres. While Pact forwarded materials to prisons, getting men to volunteer and sign up was up to each individual prison, and as such prone to the issues around transience, change of circumstances, and occurrences beyond anybody's control, as highlighted elsewhere in this report.

## **3.4 Organisation of events**

The organisation of the project overall broke new ground for Booktrust. A member of staff pointed out that, although Booktrust were used to liaising with libraries, and help was received from Pact for working with prisons, working with community centres was a new experience, as was working directly with performers, developing and touring play and organizing a tour with multiple venues. As such, the organisation included many new tasks and concepts that were unusual, ranging from the variety of how centres were run, to identifying new finance procedures for provision of *per diem* rates for actors. Further organisational considerations according to venue type are described below.

### **3.4.1 Community Centres and Libraries**

The work of organising the events was described as 'difficult' by three community centres whilst eight venues (three libraries and five community centres) did not consider the organisational work to be difficult at all. For 12 of the venues (evenly split between libraries and community centres), the organisation was felt to be 'complex'. Despite complexities, 17 (of the 22 responses from 19 venues) reported that they would run such an event again and seven (three libraries and four community centres) said that they felt confident in running such an event in the future.

The variety of recruitment procedures is considerable, and one community centre shared their process in more detail during a phone interview:

*The centre worked very hard to recruit from the target audience, rather than going “the easy route” of simply trying to fill the room. Approximately twelve groups were initially involved in the recruitment process – the centre spoke to group leaders from groups using the centre, as well as several local organisations who work with the target audience. The centre manages two venues, each of which has a pre-school using the facilities.*

*The marketing budget was used, in one pre-school, to bring in families one morning, where they created story boxes together. At the other pre-school, families got recruited via a talk/presentation. A Somali housing association runs a session at one of the venues once a month and contacted its service users. Finally, a local radio station uses the venue as a base, and Bengali radio adverts went out in order to recruit from that target audience.*

*Although the centre did not charge for tickets, they were keen to have a value associated with the ticket, to ensure that community members did not only sign up, but also turn up for the event. As such, names and contact details were noted for everybody who received a ticket, in an attempt to create commitment to the Stories Tour visiting. The manager, felt that this was vital in ensuring participation.*

*As the event got closer, it became clear that recruiting through the community wasn't working. The manager described that several group leaders had not engaged with communities as they had said, with several excuses being made (“bad timing” and “inappropriate” were two that were mentioned). As a result, receptionists were paid additional hours to engage in recruitment activities, and they visited the dance school, pre-schools and others. The manager felt that this dedicated team of four (three receptionists plus himself) was most successful in terms of recruitment, and that recruitment mainly occurred, despite their best efforts, about four days before the Stories Tour visited.*

The above comments illustrate that those centres who were keen to help Booktrust achieve its aim of drawing the audience from a “hard-to-reach” target population faced considerable struggles. As one Centre Manager pointed out: “they are called “hard to reach” because they are hard to reach!” Even within community centres who already work with families who fall within the linguistic or cultural target range, the question remains whether inviting those who already engage with other activities - ESOL classes, religious classes, etc. - are in fact the appropriate target group.

However, for Booktrust, reaching new audiences was not just about the centre



reaching new people who had never attended the venue, but also about attracting an audience that would not normally access an arts event in that venue; this was a primary reason for Booktrust choosing to work with community centres. Another centre representative explained in a telephone interview that it was quickly realised that regular users would easily fill the 40 families place limit for the performance, and so at that venue there was no external advertising. The event was advertised via posters and word-of-mouth – conversations with people who already accessed the community centre. The 40 families were made up out of regular visitors to the centre and their friends and families. The variety of recruitment procedures - as well as the variety of cultural and economic contexts the centres operate in - make it difficult to offer targeted, universally appropriate advice - in future, maybe a smaller project could be used to target more specific areas of the population.

While this report has chosen to cover libraries and community centres together, feedback from the actors' focus group shows some of them to be distinct spaces. According to the actors, some libraries had more engaged audiences, and were also more likely to bring entire school groups. Community centres, on the other hand, were more likely to have a diverse audience, with parents less likely to engage.

For 14 of the venues turnout was reported to be higher than for other events. In one venue participation was said to have increased since the Stories Tour event, and 13 venues reported that there were new links created with the community. This stood in contrast with the case studies, most of which utilised existing links to draw together the audience, in one case commenting using the term "rent-a-crowd".

From the questionnaire responses, eight made use of a homogenous group – either a community group already using the venue, or a local school or nursery class – to fill the performance. One venue reported in the questionnaire:

*This location is very difficult, and as no one turned up we went and got a class from [a known local] school who enjoyed the show!*

### **3.4.2 Prisons**

Prisons are not traditionally stable environments and, as such, organising an event such as the Stories Tour had its particular challenges. There were a number of examples that threatened the success of the project - in one instance, a murder had happened inside the prison the night before, sending the prison into lock-down. Family visits were not always straightforward: for example, some families would simply not turn up; one woman was asked to dress more appropriately; some would forget their formal identification papers (necessary to access the prison); one mother withheld access to the child as part of a



partnership dispute; men would be transferred to other prisons or have privileges withdrawn for misbehaviour. Further, rules vary from prison to prison around what can and cannot be brought onto the premises. All these challenges, and variations thereof, meant that each performance was different, there was no pattern, and each visit required careful management.

Pact would have liked to see more prisoners recruited to the performances. This was part of the prisons' remit, but they were not necessarily as engaged as they could be - communications would get lost or were misinterpreted. In one location, the attitude of prison staff was particularly poor, and they sat at the back chatting throughout the performance. A complaint was filed, and the second performance at the same location was much more successful. In this location, Pact worked with another charity, which helped establish and maintain contact.

## **3.5 Auxiliary activities**

### ***3.5.1 Prison pre-performance workshops***

The prison workshops formed an activity that was added to the project between the initial bid to the Arts Council, and the ultimately approved bid. For each prison performance, the actors arrived early to spend the morning with the men, engaging them in a range of performance-based exercises, before moving on to choosing a book for their children and personalising a gift bag for them. The morning workshop was intended to break the ice, to instill some confidence in the men, so that they could explain the day to their children, and to provide prisoners with the opportunity to create a gift.

A Pact member commented that, during the morning workshop, "you could see the inhibitions of most of our men coming down"; the workshops encouraged walking around in personal space, opportunity for Yes/No games, shouting and getting their voices heard. The fact that the men enjoyed themselves had detrimental effects in one location, where the prisoners who had attended the first session effectively attempted to sabotage future events by telling other prisoners "you don't want to do that, it's just acting" - according to Pact, the thinking around preventing others from enjoying something is not uncommon in the prison world.

In seven out of the eight prisons, the workshops and performances encouraged officers to interact with prisoners and their families in a different capacity - this, according to Pact, is not common practice, and was considered to be an advantage of the Stories Tour. The morning workshops were perceived as highly successful by all involved, despite some initial scepticism about the purpose.

Feedback from Pact states:

*Overall, the actors were brilliant, especially during the workshop, which was of great benefit to the prisoners, practicing both verbal and visual communication skills. The Literacy Levels Forms were forms sent in advance by Pact were very useful, but were not always handed out and collated by prisons. On occasion, it was necessary to install professional boundaries with the younger actors - although they were initially intimidated by the setting, they would soon chat happily with the prisoners, and on occasion it was noted that they were in danger of willingly divulging personal information. Being actors, they were exuberant and excited, and sometimes had to be reminded to maintain a professional distance.*

As described above, it appears that the morning workshops served the additional, unintended, purpose to help the actors feel at ease as well as the participating prisoners. Feedback from the actors' focus group included a comment from one actor who appreciated being able to hear the men's stories over lunch, and getting to know their situation better.

### **3.6 Ethnicity of participants**

The evaluation proposed three questions re BAME groups:

1. To what extent can a community-based literature/arts event 'reach' members of the community (in particular members of Black and Minority Ethnic groups) that are 'hard-to-reach' ?
2. What are the barriers to this participation?
3. How might participation be maximised?

Table 2 indicates that the Stories Tour was successful to a large degree in attracting members of all the targeted BAME groups to the events located in community centres and libraries.<sup>10</sup> Of the attendees who gave information about their ethnicity, 10% were White British, and 75% from the target group of Somali, Pakistani and Bangladeshi families.

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<sup>10</sup> Whilst this gives some broad indication the table should be treated with caution because – data are missing from some venues; in others a tick represented either a family and/or an individual (member of that family).

| Venue                                 | White – British | White – Eastern European | White – other background | Somali-British | Black/Black British – other background | Pakistani/British Pakistani | Bangladeshi /British Bangladeshi | Asian/British Asian - other background | Mixed other background |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| <b>Community Centre and Libraries</b> | 28              | 11                       | 4                        | 12             | 16                                     | 138+                        | 65                               | 16                                     | 10                     |
| <b>Prisons</b>                        | 139             | 9                        | 3                        |                | 101                                    | 12                          |                                  | 13                                     | 15                     |
| <b>TOTAL across all venues</b>        | 167             | 20                       | 7                        | 12             | 117                                    | 150+                        | 65                               | 29                                     | 25                     |

Table 2 Summary of Ethnicities of Participants

[Note: this includes raw data only and not percentages because in some cases data are obscure with indications of family ethnicity and some not reported. Hence raw data are the most reliable in this instance.]

As to the prison venues, the criteria used to select prisoners for participation were not related to the BAME-related targets. While the project was not able to specifically target Pakistani, Somali and Bangladeshi men as such opportunities were available to all prisoners, Booktrust chose to take the tour into prisons, partly because of their high BAME rates. In 2008 BAME offenders represented 27% of our prison population but only 9% of the general population, and a high proportion of BAME members have low-levels of literacy. As the table above shows, 48% attendees at these events were from BAME populations. Prisons are venues that BAME prisoner children attend with their parent, but many do not have family learning initiatives that make the visit a valuable, attractive and non-threatening experience for the child with a structured event that promotes prisoner-child bonding and sharing. Prisons are, by their nature, under-served by the arts.

Thus findings about BAME population participation relate only to Community Centre and Library venues.

### 3.7 Lasting impact

#### 3.7.1 Community Centres and Libraries

It is not possible for this evaluation to evaluate any lasting impact and this report focuses on the data available two months after each performance, giving some indication as to whether centres had used their experience with the Stories Tour to develop their own literacy-related activities.

As with several others areas of evaluation, staff issues and funding cuts appear to have impacted on the centres' and libraries' ability to generate further

activities. In a telephone interview, one centre manager explained that the centre is in the process of changing hands, from the council into the community. As a result of this, “everybody is overworked”, and no follow-up activities took place. Because the centre could not accept all families who had asked to attend, Booktrust sent additional books to be handed out, which were well received by families after the event. Another centre representative interviewed by phone commented that there was, in the run-up to the event, a “great spirit”, the feeling of working together to make it happen. Despite the success, however, we are unaware of any follow-up activities to date. A Centre Manager pointed out “as we so often see with funded events, they happen, then there’s nothing immediately following it”. In previous years, centres were able to fund recurring events, but not any more. The manager felt that the fact that the Stories Tour came to visit them early on in the tour, meant that they would have to wait a considerable time for any follow-up support materials such as the planned ‘Legacy Toolkit’ (see Appendix 1), produced over the summer of 2014 for roll out to venues in Autumn 2014, together with further volunteer training opportunities. In several community centres, there seemed to be an expectation that it would be Booktrust’s responsibility to provide ideas or opportunities for future engagement. One community centre representative explained in the online questionnaire:

*families in Tower Hamlets really need this kind of event. Though ours is only a community group ... this kind of thing is very much valued. I would love to see more work in Children’s Centres, community centres etc for these families. The impact is enormous. They all ask when will there be another one.*

Whereas only one of the community centres responding to the questionnaire reported “storytelling” as a current activity, libraries were, by their nature, more likely to already run story-telling and literacy-related events. As the Stories Tour was in part focused on building capacity within these centres, it appears that an immediate follow-up with centre staff, potentially even on the day of the tour visit, would have helped community centres to create an action plan, or generate ideas for future community engagement with literacy.

Our main post-performance evaluation period (May/June 2014) coincided with Booktrust’s “Thank You” email to venues. This stated that

*As you know we will also be offering follow up training from the project. We will be putting together a toolkit for venues, artists and prisons on running similar events that will incorporate what we’ve learnt and also the official evaluation from the University of Sheffield. We’ll be offering training on this, as well as applying for funding, at the start of November. We’d like to offer storytelling training to venue staff and volunteers sooner than this though. We will be putting together a half-day session covering how to bring stories to life and also some workshop games to involve families in storytelling activities. Would you prefer this training earlier*

*(during the summer holidays) or would it be better in September? Please could you vote using the buttons at the top of the email or by replying to let me know if August or September would be best for you.*

This email illustrates the focus on follow-up activities once all performances had finished, and while it is clear that such a procedure will make the workload more feasible, a more dynamic and responsive approach may have helped those community centres where immediate follow-up activities would have been more useful. This aspect is of particular importance when taken in relation to Booktrust's initial difficulties in recruiting venues, where the six-month delay between venues committing to the project, and the project receiving funding, meant that there had been staff changes and transience that is inherent in working with local communities. This is further illustrated in one of the responses received to the "Thank You" email listed above:

*We tried to launch another recruitment drive for parent volunteers but due to other commitments this hasn't been as successful as first anticipated. Another launch in the new term may be just what we need! My post also ceases at the end of September, and I will return to working as the Children's Team Coordinator and Supervisor at [xyz] Library, but I will send you contact details of our new manager with time.*

However, the email also states:

*Our staff and customers still speak very fondly of the Booktrust Tour and it was certainly one of our greatest highlights of the library year! We learnt so much from the project, and it has enabled us to engage with new customers, and we have improved our customer relations and staff relationships as a consequence. Due to timings and commitments I'm afraid that we'd have to be involved with the training after the summer and in September please.*

This evaluation does not cover the follow up period post-Stories Tour, so it is not possible to include comment on involvement of community centres and libraries in any follow-up activities.

Data from the online post-performance questionnaire does give some indication of impact. When asked if the Stories Tour had led to any other book related events two community centre representatives replied 'No' whilst others said:

*Yes We are running an ESOL storytelling class every week.*

*Yes the Community fun day will have a session for story telling*

Two library representatives commented:

*We already run regular events and always try to link them all strongly to stories. We have been able to build stronger links with the local Children's Centre and are working regularly on joint promotions. We have also strengthened links with local schools and families by engaging and promoting such a large scale, quality event.*

*We now offer story sessions to our local schools - Nursery classes - this will be expanded in September to include Reception classes.*

For libraries, impact was largely measured via increased membership numbers, as well as links with the community. One library reported:

*It has been great for us, as at 2 of the events many families signed up to become library members. (30 plus) We have also organised that the schools can check records of pupils and thus provide ID for new members thus removing a barrier to membership. We were able to tell parents how important reading is and how libraries provide great experiences for their children-books, IT, summer reading challenge, bookstart packs, events-including this superb one! It was so brilliant bringing in families rather than just the children.*

Finally, feedback from a Booktrust member of staff shows additional benefits in the form of engaging with community centres, and establishing relationships. Following the collaboration on the Stories Tour, Booktrust staff were invited back to the centre as "guest of honour" to a national celebration day, and several community centres have expressed interest to remain involved with Booktrust's activities. Since all community centres involved in the Stories Tour were new contacts, Booktrust staff felt that these new relationships would impact positively on Booktrust's future work at such venues.

### **3.7.2 Prisons**

Impact within prisons was reported through an interview with a Pact member of staff. As with the libraries and community centres, follow-up activities are still taking place, therefore evaluation of post-tour follow up is not included in this report.

From the feedback received from prisons the importance of family days was recognised – in the past these happened more frequently, but funding cuts and staff shortages have meant fewer in recent times. It is uncertain whether more family days will take place as a result of the Stories Tour, but it is recognised that this has made an impact.

To date there have been no resulting links with the community or library, although there is hope that the 'toolkit' that is in preparation will help this development. Two prisons have maintained contact with the local storyteller who participated in their events and are hoping to collaborate further in future.

As with libraries and community centres, the transience and turnover among staff is a factor that inhibits continuity. Within the prison context, maintaining links and liaison with individual officers can be difficult due to re-deployment, and the prisoners themselves may also be moved between prisons. This makes it difficult to create stable long-term relationships to support interventions. Additional support is available in those prisons that work with a charity such as Pact, and Pact plans to continue collaborative work with Booktrust.

The Stories Tour has impacted largely positively on Pact workers, with some slight reservation about the unexpected added time the project required. From a positive perspective, it has helped enhance the confidence and skills development of Pact workers, particularly among younger members of staff. Through the workshops, Pact staff were also able to engage with families and receive referrals for future advice and support. Pact team members also built stronger relationships with prison officers, sometimes seeing them in a different light and it is hoped that this will lead to the prisons' commissioning further work for Pact.

From a negative perspective, the project turned out to be more time-consuming than anticipated. Small changes to arrangements often had large implications from an organisational perspective within prisons. *"Nobody appreciated how long it would take"* to get it right. Prison venues required more support for these types of events than was anticipated. However, despite the workload issues, the feedback from the team was that it was *"worth the hard work"*.

## **SUMMARY**

This section has provided an overview of the effectiveness of the tour according to our main themes for analysis: Views of the event from families and centre staff; Staffing; Booktrust support and marketing; Organisation of event; Auxiliary activity (e.g. workshops for prisoners); Ethnicity of participants, and Lasting impact. In the next section we shall elaborate on the events themselves through the presentation of seven case studies.



## 4. Seven case studies

In consultation with Booktrust, six venues were chosen for in-depth case studies. This represented approximately 10% of the 56 events and included events in two community centres, two libraries and two men's prisons. The prison context was identified as being of specific interest to the evaluation, and on Booktrust's request, a further, seventh case study - a prison venue - was added. Two of the events took place in London, others covered other areas of the Stories Tour. This is not a representative sample of the events as a whole, or of the venues; rather they were selected, drawing on guidance and suggestions from Booktrust staff, in order to give a flavour of what happened at some of the events. Information about the format and content of the day is provided in Appendix 1.

The case studies should be read in conjunction with the overview of the tour in the previous section (Section 3 *Overview of Effectiveness of the Stories Tour*). Members of the evaluation team visited the seven selected case study events either alone or in pairs; they made detailed observations and talked with families, actors, venue staff and volunteers. Each case study begins with an outline of the data drawn upon.

### 4.1 Case Study One – Central Library, Northerntown

This case study draws on the following evaluation methods:

- Pre-performance phone interview with the responsible library staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Observation sheet supplied by library staff
- Self-reported ethnicity check list
- Show report provided by stage manager
- Face-to-face interview with teacher at venue
- Post-performance online questionnaire data

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed.

#### Background

The central Library in Northerntown is situated in a multicultural, inner-city location. While the most dominant cultural group is of Punjabi/Urdu Bangladeshi origin and now in its second or third generation since arriving in the UK, there are also newer communities, made up of recent arrivals from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania. Gemma, a 'Young People and Ethnic Services librarian',



felt that the Stories Tour would be the first event that accurately captured the multicultural environment of the community.

The library has strong links with several local primary schools, and Gemma stated they could have worked with any number of them on the Stories Tour. They chose Redblue Primary School both for its geographical convenience (the school is five to ten minutes' walk away), and because the teachers felt confident that they could encourage parents to attend with their children. Gemma explained that the events they organise involving schools always had a good turnout – “it's like rent-a-crowd”. The library opted not to charge for the event: from their perspective, schools' budgets would have been committed long before they approached the school for collaboration, and they did not want to charge individuals for fear of excluding anybody.

Although the library has volunteer “literacy champions”, who work with schools and community groups, they were not involved in the Stories Tour event, because school staff would be present with the children, and had done the work of contacting families.

The main attraction of the Stories Tour for the Library was its multicultural aspect. Gemma explained that, while the library runs a large number of events, including storytellers telling stories from other countries, this was the first multicultural, multilingual in the library. In the post-performance questionnaire, lack of interest among the community and language difficulties were cited as the main barriers to use of the venue, and the library identified the need to identify successful ways to advertise events to a wide community. The future of similar events was uncertain, due to government spending cuts through which the library would lose its ethnic services librarian and its reference librarian at the end of March 2014. Gemma's post, too, was terminated at that point, so follow-up evaluation was organised via her line manager. From 1<sup>st</sup> of April the library has no specialist librarians, and, as Gemma explained, the new system would need to “run itself in” before any commitments to future cultural events could be made.

### **On the day**

Northerntown Central Library is in a prominent position on the edge of a square in the city centre adjacent to other public buildings. The performance space is a very traditional section of the library, with oak panelling, oak chairs, wooden floor, old book cabinets, and even a gargoyle. At the same time, it has high ceilings and is welcoming and bright. The families arrived together, with 30 nursery class children and their parents, plus a small number of younger siblings. Two mothers sat on the floor with their children, as did the teacher. According to self-reported ethnicity, the majority of visitors were from a Pakistani/British Pakistani background, two were White British, three African, one Chinese, and one Asian/British Asian - other background. Because they arrived together, there was

less activity in advance, the performance started quickly after a welcome from Gemma Dodd, the librarian.

The question “*what kind of stories do you read*” formed a standard part of the introduction, with each actor in turn saying what stories they liked, making up sometimes bizzare combinations “I like stories about dragons with hats”. The children agreed or disagreed whether they liked such stories. Both library and school staff were present and involved, coaxing children along, encouraging them to face the front, and so on. The children were mainly four years old, with a few three-year-olds. Between them, they spoke seven community languages. The children were very well behaved, they showed their “binocular eyes” and their “listening ears” when actors Hemi and Wendy encouraged them. When the actors said ‘Let me hear you say: *Get on with it!*, they were at first a little shy to interact, but soon found their own voices.

The actors took advantage of the several spaces available in this setting; when the play started, they all appeared from behind different bookshelves or the set. The children were attentive and listened quietly, they laughed at *Uncle Yes* and *Auntie No*, but seemed a bit confused by that. They laughed at “*No to tomatoes, no to potatoes, no to naughty toes, no to dirty toes*”, but looked a bit bewildered by the song. A couple seemed disconcerted by the noise level.

The children seemed happy as they interacted, they nodded when the character, Ameera asked them whether she should go into the basement, pointed to Monkey, and laughed when Ameera and the toy animals ran. They enjoyed the *We’re brave* song; this seemed like something they identified with (whereas it was mainly mothers laughing at Ameera’s behaviour at the beginning of the play).

When Ameera asked “*How do stories start?*”, they did not know the answer, but the actors persisted and encouraged answers, until one father said “*Once upon a time...*”. The ‘*Sky*’ story seemed very appropriate to this age group, they all sneezed together, and seemed to follow the plot well. One very small boy started crying. When the character Old Father Time appeared, all children happily shouted “*Wake Up*”, especially the second time. When asked for suggestions to get Old Father Time going again, the teacher encouraged the children to think about what they learnt recently – the answer they gave was ‘exercise’.

The children got up and did star jumps, encouraged by Hemi, to feed “energy” to Old Father Time (based on Story reports and observations, the multitude of ideas children have to get Old Father Time working again is notable, they offered some very creative solutions).

The children happily applauded themselves when Old Father Time recovered.

The Gatekeeper character evoked lots of laughter and pointing, one girl started to cry and the teacher took her to her mother who said “*I don’t think she likes the shouting*”.

The children were too young to come up with a knock-knock joke, which was fed into the play by Hemi, but one girl solved the riddle. At the end, when “Mum” asked “*Would you like me to tell you a story right now?*” the children nodded, and smiled when they recognised the story they had just seen. The children applauded the actors and themselves and happily took part in post-performance activities.

Simon Bartram was a very lively story teller, he engaged the children in detail with his pictures, there was great laughter when he couldn’t spot the alien.

Some children began to lose focus, especially those near the back, where they could not reach out to point at the aliens in the book, even though actors, Rameet and Wendy as well as Simon, both held up a copy of the book, to maximise access for more children. Some two-thirds of the children remained very engaged, despite the considerable time they had spent sitting. When the story packs were given out, some of the parents started to chat. Children proudly showed their stickers, one girl cried bitterly saying “*there is no princess in the book*”.

A spread of cakes, biscuits, buns and drinks appeared on a table behind the audience, someone said: “*there are huge amounts!*” The families stayed and chatted while the actors packed up. The library reported that 15 families joined the library following the performance.

During this time, it was possible to interview the children’s teacher who said that the play had been a great opportunity to witness what level of focus the children were capable of. She mentioned that children who are usually lost due to language issues had been “*enraptured*” by the play, and said she was amazed at how the few musical instruments used could provide such ambience. However, she considered the play very “*high concept*”, and the plot far more complex than she would consider for the year group.

She was very excited by the way in which Simon used pictures for story telling, again, she felt that the words might be too complicated for the children if the book was read alone, but seeing Simon using the pictures and interacting with the children had given her ideas to work with parents on using pictures to “read” stories with their children. She explained that “*family literacy rates aren’t very high*” with the parents at the school, and felt that using images would greatly help parent confidence. Similarly, she enjoyed the inclusion of the traditional tale in

the middle of the story, and its focus on oral story telling, which she hoped to be able to encourage parents to do in future.

### **After the event**

Two months after the event, feedback from the library was positive. Although they could not say how many of the 15 families who joined on the day had returned, they felt that the event had been very worthwhile, and they would very much like to run similar events. Although they used no volunteers for the event, they stated that they felt more confident about using volunteers as a result. The venue did not make use of the Ning or the volunteer training, but considered flyers and marketing support important. Despite the “rent-a-crowd” comment in the introduction, they felt that the Stories Tour had created new links within the community, and they valued the support received from Booktrust. Although they run cultural events on a roughly monthly basis, they felt that the Stories Tour was unlike the events already provided. The venue did not currently offer theatre events like the Stories Tour, so it gave their attendees an opportunity to access the an aspect of the arts that they would not otherwise have.

The library felt that community language events are of particular importance to their venue, and although they said that the event was more time-consuming than others to organise, they felt that their participation had been very worthwhile. Although they did not charge for the event, they would consider doing so in future.

## **4.2 Case study two – Shackleton Library**

This case study is based on the following evaluation methods:

- Post-performance phone interview with the responsible library staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Observation sheet supplied by library staff
- Self-reported ethnicity check list
- Show report provided by stage manager

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed.

### **Background Information**

Shackleton Library has a very active programme of events, with something happening every day. Events range from book groups (both for adults and

children), Story Time, homework club, poetry club, multi-language club, art club, computer club, as well as a suite of outside events on a less regular basis, such as visiting storytellers. The Stories Tour, however, was considered to be new, in that it promoted reading through a less formal engagement. Aisha, a member of staff, explained that their “other events are more theoretical, more reading-based”.

The Stories Tour was advertised via the existing clubs, but Aisha and colleagues also visited local schools and nurseries to advertise the event. There is an existing issue with many more people registering interest than actually attending, so Shackleton Library operated a ticketing system to ensure commitment, although tickets were free. Because the Stories Tour visited on a Saturday, the audience was drawn from the general wider community, rather than a specific group or class. Aisha was very happy with the turnout, and described the ticketing system as a success. In evaluation activity on the day, audience members indicated that they would have paid up to £1.50 (six responses), or even up to £3 (seven responses), with only one respondent indicating that they would not have paid anything to attend. The general feedback Aisha received from the Stories Tour was very positive, and several regular visitors to Shackleton Library have asked whether the Stories Tour will be visiting again.

Shackleton Library has a wide-ranging audience, with their main visitors being young mothers with children under five, from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, including Eastern European and Asian. Under-14s attend by themselves for homework club, and adult males also form a significant group of library users. The post-performance venue questionnaire identified language difficulties, childcare issues and lack of interest as the main issues Shackleton Library has to grapple with when it comes to attracting an audience to the venue.

Aisha saw the main role of Shackleton Library as “encouraging reading”, and the clubs and events run were geared towards this. Specifically, Aisha highlighted the importance of “reading for pleasure”, but also to instill a love of reading with the very young, and help young mothers develop both confidence and good habits of reading together. The Stories Tour fitted that remit particularly well, encouraging and enabling mothers of young children to enjoy reading together.

Overall, Shackleton Library has 22 full-time and ten part-time members of staff, and benefits from approximately 35 hours of volunteer time per week. The volunteers fulfilled daily library activities: shelving books, tidying, serving customers, and participating in the daily children’s activities, including the daily story telling sessions. Although Aisha carried out the main liaison for the project, three other colleagues helped with advertising across clubs, visiting local schools and nurseries, and ordering refreshments for the day. All four were members of staff, and although Shackleton Library has volunteers, none was involved in the Stories Tour project.

Shackleton Library chose to spend their share of the £1000 marketing budget<sup>11</sup> on refreshments for volunteer events and books –since they stated that no volunteers were used for the Stories Tour, it appears that the funding was devolved into the overall running of the venue.

## On the Day

Shackleton Library in London, is a bright colourful space with a thriving market outside, abundant with fruit and vegetables of all kinds, other stalls selling pots and pans, clothes, shoes and household items. On the Saturday afternoon of the performance, the market was busy and the many languages of the community could be heard as people bought and sold.

Inside the four-story building, the children's library is on the first floor, an open, airy and colourful space with curved bookcases housing books for all ages, and providing flexible divisions. The large photographs on the walls showed children and adults sharing books together; a large plasma screen contained quotes about reading; and the self-checkout machines made borrowing easy. There were three families using the internet facilities to play children's games online; a young woman (perhaps about 15 years of age) sat in a secluded spot reading alone; a boy about eight browsed the Japanese Manga books.

The children and their parents began to arrive and take their seats (mats and small child-sized chairs were provided); adults either drew up chairs from around the library or stood at the back of the performance space.

About 30 children were assembled and waiting when Wendy (one of the actors) introduced herself and started a warm up with the children. She asked them to show her: happy faces, scared faces, a scary spider, and brave faces. Most of the children seemed very engaged, responding to her requests and instructions and sitting up – leaning forward, some were very animated.

Wendy introduced the idea of 'Knock Knock jokes' and rehearsed a few with the children. "*Knock Knock, 'Who's there', 'Boo', 'Boo Who?', 'No need to cry – it's just a joke'*". A small group of children at the front – aged around six to eight years, were keen to get involved in telling jokes, pushing their hands in the air and shouting out different versions of the *Knock Knock* joke theme.

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<sup>11</sup> Each local authority area had access to a £1000 marketing budget to be split between the venues taking part in the Stories Tour, or for them to pool. This generally meant that each venue had approximately £250 to use for marketing, but in some cases they pooled the money for joint marketing activity.

Approximate ages of children present:

Under two – 4

2 – 4 years 7

4 – 6 years 8

6 – 10 years 14

Some 40 adults were present, approximately 15 were male.

Wendy returned to getting the children to practice different faces: brave faces, scared faces, listening faces, watching faces. She then asked them to imagine that they could get hold of their imagination in their heads, and asked them to stretch them as far as they could. Many children were involved in pulling actions, mimicking Wendy; she then invited the children to fling their stretched imaginations at the stage, where the play would begin.

There were then two games: first the children stood in a circle: hands in the middle, hands on their knees, hands on their noses. The children then stood in a circle holding hands – Wendy asked them for their ‘concentrating faces’. The second game was a chase and catch game, ‘Duck, duck goose’. The other three actors arrived and this game came to an end.

The actors introduced themselves to the children – not by character, but by their own names. Then....*“Good afternoon, we are going to do a show. Let’s start.”* The play began with a song and drumming, most children sitting up keenly. Three of the very youngest children quickly moved from the mat and returned to their mothers (perhaps because of the unexpected noise).

In the play the character Ameera is given two books to read and her two favourite toys are taken away. Most of the children seemed immediately engaged, and concentrating. Ameera asked the children *“Should I go down there?”* (into the basement). There was an immediate chorus ‘Yes’ and lots of nods. Ameera asked *‘Where did that come from?’* The children pointed and shouted ‘There!’ Monkey and Tortoise arrived and Ameera said *‘You’re my Monkey!’* *“You’re my tortoise”*. Both actors fell on the floor which elicited lots of loud laughter from the children.

*‘Without stories we don’t know who we are, we don’t know where we have been and we don’t know where we are going.’* Tortoise

Looking for Axis the spider, Ameera was being very brave; a boy at the front spotted the spider and pointed to it. Other children were looking hard – they showed ‘scared faces’. Two girls turned around and glanced at their adults



(presumably for reassurance).

Ameera: “Does anyone know how to start a story?”

Boy: “Once upon a time...”

Ameera needed to tell the spider stories: she asked the children. “*What do you want the story to be about? The sky, a king or a shopkeeper?*” The shop keeper story is decided upon.

A girl was smiling – looking up intently at Monkey. A small boy went to stand in the middle of the set – he mimicked Monkey’s actions then went back to the mat to sit – seemingly very engaged. The shopkeeper story about ash being substituted for flour and pooh being substituted for coffee beans was being acted out. It was not clear that the children were understanding the story, but they appeared to be enjoying the animated movements of the actors, some adults joined in when the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’ were introduced in different languages. Two girls began a conversation during the story – they were comparing hair clips. Two other girls turned to the bookcases they were leaning against and reached for a book each and began reading. There were four girls and one boy in the front - sitting upright – fully focussed on the play. They were eagerly answering Ameera’s questions - hands up, holding heads, craning their necks to see more as the set turned for a new scene.

*Old Father Time* was revealed: two girls stood up (as if to leave) then sat down again, holding hands (perhaps needing some reassurance at this point?). The children were invited to shout ‘*Wake up*’ so as to wake Old Father Time. The older children continued to seem engaged, the younger ones seemed a little puzzled or even worried. Ameera tried to solve the riddle and asked children for ideas - two hands went up, the three hands up - after a few incorrect answers the boy in the front who had been transfixed for the whole time said ‘*clock*’. Ameera explained the riddle and why the answer is ‘*her mother’s watch*’. Ameera asked how she could get Old Father Time going again, three children put their hands up and suggested ‘*turn the cogs*’. Eight children joined in to copy Ameera’s action – they started a rowing motion and more children got involved. Four children started to clap.

The next task was to find the “*All Powerful Gatekeeper*” so that Ameera could get out of the basement. Two girls sitting in the front were transfixed, kneeling up, leaning forward. Six children were pointing at the door handle: ‘*There!*’ more children got involved in trying to tell Ameera where the door handle was. Ameera had to tell a joke to get the handle and escape the basement. Two children put their hands up to suggest a joke. A girl told the *Knock Knock* joke that Wendy told them in the pre-play introduction, she was very pleased and smiled, there



was much applause for her.

Ameera asked her mum to tell her a story and the mum told a short version of the story that had been acted. The show ended with the song *'Be careful what you wish for'*. The boy at the front was given a drum which he played, keeping good rhythm. Seven children began clapping to time to the music. A group of six children were now chatting.

There were applause and a break for a drink.

The local author for this venue failed to attend on the day, so one of the actors told a story which clearly engaged the children, who enjoyed mimicking actions and shouting out particular words in the story.

Children and parents were keen to collect their activity pack and book before leaving, though there were so many children present that books and packs were allocated per family rather than per child.

Children very enthusiastic for free books and activity sheets...mayhem ☺  
(venue evaluation)

Parent feedback

*'That was very good'*

*'They should do this every Saturday'*

*'It was difficult for the young one but the (8 year old) enjoyed it!'*

*'Nice book to keep, Nice!'*

*'A little loud'*

*'A little bit long for the young one (age 3)'*

*'Very good, very good'*

*'Very lovely to have his book to take home'*

Children said:

*'A bit noisy'*

*'funny monkey'*

*I liked the Wendy lady'*

*'I like it'*

*'Nice'*

*'scary – a bit'*

### **Two months later**

Shackleton Library had a successful event, and the post-venue questionnaire indicated that families enjoyed the experience.

The audience for the Stories Tour was mainly Bangladeshi/British Bangladeshi with make-up of the audience (as indicated through self-reported ethnicity checklists) thus:

White British: 3

White Other Background: 2

Somali/British Somali: 1

Black/Black British – other background: 3

Bangladeshi/British Bangladeshi: 13

Mixed-other background: 2 (one of these Arabic, the other 'unknown').

The questionnaire response indicated that the event was easy to organise, but also stated that it had taken more time to organise than other events. As far as support from Booktrust, the venue rated the flyers as the most important, the marketing support as “quite important”, and volunteer training and the Ning as “not so important”. There was strong agreement from the venue stating that support from Booktrust had been useful, and that they would like to run similar events in the future. They agreed that the event had created new links with the community (though not with other libraries, community centres and/or prisons), but also stated that the event was similar to existing events they already run, and that they knew most of the attending audience (this was supported by evaluation activity from the day, where seven respondents indicated they attend every week; six attend “every now and then”, with only one person attending for the first time).

The running of the Stories Tour has had no significant impact on the venue's confidence in running similar events in future, possibly because it is already a

professionally staffed and well-supported venue. The involvement of local authors was seen as very important and, although there had been no local author on the day the case study visit took place, the repeat performance on another day featured a children's author. The running of events in community languages, was also regarded as important and the Shackleton Library representative expressed a strong desire to run similar events in future, agreeing that they had discovered new ways for engaging the audience, and stating that families enjoyed the event, although use of the venue generally had not increased as a result.

### 4.3 Case study three - Waheguru Centre

This case study draws on the following evaluation methods:

- Pre-performance phone interview with the responsible staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Observation sheet supplied by stage manager
- Show report provided by stage manager
- Brief conversations with children at venue
- Responses to poster evaluation questions

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed

#### Background

The Waheguru centre in Central England is part of a global charitable organisation, which started in India, in the 1970s. The organisation is devoted to the objective of spreading the universal message of Sikhism, and has a worldwide presence with Sikh Gurdwaras (Temples) in the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India. The centre runs Punjabi classes, Sikhism classes, music classes, and "camps" (opportunities for children to come in and take part in religious and social activities).

Haken, a member of staff, explained that his decision to take part was based on the belief that "*storytelling is basically disappearing in our culture*", and the wish to create an opportunity for parents to tell stories to their children, and for children to share books with their parents.

The centre had booked the event twice, and the interview for this case study took place between the first and second event. For both events, children were drawn

from many of the Centre's existing classes and social opportunities, with a core of approximately six or seven volunteers visiting the various congregations to advertise the event and hand out leaflets. These volunteers received training from Hakam in how to market the event, what to say, and so on. The Centre had chosen not to charge for the event - as Hakam says "*everything we do is free*". As a charity, they struggled to pay the £200 (£100 per performance), and Hakam commented on a misunderstanding - he had been under the impression that this was a refundable deposit to ensure participation. He also said he found having to pay up-front was "*off-putting*". Although the Centre chose not to charge families, out of the six responses received, four families would have paid up to £1.50, and two would have paid up to £3 for the event.

Hakam commented on the first event as being a great success, all children enjoyed it, and the parents spoke highly of the event afterwards. He had expected this, and stated "*I only do successful things*". At the time of the interview, he had not met the families again and could not comment on any longer-term comments or impact.

### **On the Day**

The building where the Stories Tour event took place houses the Gurdwara and a number of teaching rooms. The performance took place in one of these teaching rooms. While some children arrived individually, groups arrived together from other classrooms. One woman arrived, asking "*Can Mums come, too?*", and was welcomed. Approximately 27 children, mainly six to eight years old, sat on the carpet, with eight women sitting in chairs behind them, one with a younger child in her arms. From the poster evaluation, only one child was there for the first time, all the others already come to the centre on a weekly basis. While the actors waited for all children to arrive and settle, actor Wendy chatted to them: "*What stories do you like?*" One girl said "*I like scary stories!*" Two boys mentioned "*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*" and "*Captain Underpants*" respectively. At the same time, the other three actors chatted to a small group of lively boys "*Do you like acting?*"

When Hakam (the staff member) arrived, Jennifer, the stage manager, asked him which community member would do the community evaluation. He hesitated, then tried to give it back to her. After a brief exchange, Jennifer agreed to fill in the community evaluation. In communication with her afterwards, she said that this was the first time she had been asked to take on this role, and she did not feel that it was appropriate. The community evaluator should be somebody who knows the audience, preferable from the venue, and independent of the performing team. Jennifer completing the evaluation form conflicted with her role as production manager, and went against the idea of building skills in the community.

Wendy began the introduction, and all four actors shared what stories they liked, again asking the children their preferences. Answers included “*I like stories with sharks in*”, “*I like acting out stories*”, “*I like scary movies*”. Wendy said “*show me your scary face*” – all children did, some got up, mimed claws, and started running around.

When Wendy asked “*shall we have a story*”, the children happily agreed, one boy said: “*I know what this story is. You are four adventurers, and you (points at Hemi) are a witch and you (points at Huz) are a knight!*” Wendy replied: “*That’s a wonderful idea...let’s see what happens.*”

The play began, and for a moment, the children seemed unsure. However, when character Ameera threw her tantrum, then they laughed and engaged. They liked Aunt and Uncle, and laughed about the cat – lots of smiling, expectant faces in the room. Actor Hemi’s “*no to meat, no to tomatoes*” worked well when he pointed at individual children, there were lots of giggles in the room. The children continued to participate well, taking their cues from the actors “*Did you hear that*” – “*Yeah!*” “*Should I go?*” – “*Yes/No*”. The children were clearly engaged in the play. Participation caused some mayhem in places, when Monkey arrived, there was a great hullabaloo, and when the spider, Axis appeared, about six boys rushed on stage to point at her. The children chose the story about a King, although one boy suggested “*Why don’t you do a mixture of both?*” When Ameera asked “*How do stories start?*”, there was a loud chorus of “*Once Upon a Time!*” When it came to integrating ideas into the play – how to get the clock working, and finding a joke for the Gatekeeper – the actors chose girls on both times, which struck a good balance to the more boisterous shouts of the boys during other participation activities. There were more opportunities for short, interactive conversations in this performance.

Hemi asked: “*What’s a riddle?*”  
One boy said “*it’s like a story, a tale.....*”  
Hemi: “*And you have to come up with an answer, don’t you?*”  
Boy (hesitant): “*No.....*”  
Hemi: “*Well, let’s see.*”

The play seemed to have left the children energised and wanting more, and they also participated enthusiastically in the storyteller’s story, which required lots of actions. Having the actors in the audience for the storyteller gave a lovely mood to this section.

Polly says: “And the book I’m going to read is [stops] – oh, I’ve got a hair in my mouth!”

Wendy, quick as a flash: “That’s a good title for a story!”

A girl adds: “You should write that book!”

There is a lovely moment when Polly, the storyteller says:

“You know, the best ideas do come from anywhere, I might get home today and write a story about having a hair in my mouth!”

At the end, several children had questions for Polly such as: “*Why do you write books?*” The actors had to move on, and time was short, the children needed to receive their packs so Polly invited children to come see her afterwards, and one girl did so.

*The Booktrust table looked lovely, but was neglected, unused by Centre staff and volunteers. As I meandered over, two girls came up to me for a chat: “Did Polly write all these books?” I explained that they were written by a number of people, and encouraged them to take a closer look. “So, a person who writes a book is called an author?” Asked one girl, who then went on to tell me that she was an author, and she liked writing stories about “things that are real, and things that are not real”. She was six, I told her that my son also likes writing stories, and that he has a special book to write them in, and she said she writes hers in school, but she liked the idea of a special book.*

From evaluators’ journal

This performance seemed to have reached the target audience in age and community engagement. The conversations around the play (before, during and after) suggested that several children had an interest in stories, and there was perhaps a missed opportunity for somebody from venues to get involved in a discussion there and then, facilitated by actors/authors, about how “stories” could be continued in the venues, for example the Stories Tour could include a scheduled discussion where children and parents could talk about future plans, to maintain the momentum of the Stories Tour. The venue did not complete the post-performance questionnaire, and has not responded to follow-up phone calls, and so it is not possible to ascertain whether the Stories Tour has had any impact beyond the day itself.

## 4.4 Case Study four - Atifa community project

This case study was based on the following evaluation methods:

- Pre-performance phone interview with the responsible community centre staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Observation sheet supplied by community centre
- Self-reported ethnicity check list
- Show report provided by stage manager
- Face-to-face interview with teacher at venue
- Post-performance online questionnaire data

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed.

### Background

The Atifa Community Project is a well-established Centre, having operated in a large city in the Midlands for over ten years. Amna, the contact for the Stories Tour, has been in post for about five years. The project follows the Children Centre model, and originally was founded to cover provision for under-twos, for which the existing Centre had no capacity. Over time, Atifa has evolved into a thriving, active Community Centre, serving the local community by providing an introduction to British culture via events and trips, helping members of the local community to access services (understanding procedures, accessing websites, ESOL, IT skills), a substance misuse centre, and a nursery. The centre is funded from various sources for various parts of their work, including the Home Office, the City Council, and the Public Health Commission.

The local community has been transient in the past, and is now largely BAME, with specific community pockets relating to South Asia (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh), Somalia, Arab and Middle East countries, and, more recently, Eastern European. On the day, sixteen sheets were completed with visitors describing their ethnicity as “Arab” as a text entry under “Asian/Other Asian”(three), “Asian/Other Asian” (with no further information, three), and the remainder being either “Pakistani/British Pakistani” or “Bangladeshi/British Bangladeshi” (ten). Staff and volunteers were at least in part drawn from the local community, to create what Amna calls a “*home away from home centre*”.

For the Stories Tour, the centre drew on the help of seven members of staff, three volunteers, two foreign exchange students and two apprentices. The audience was drawn from the centre’s attached nursery (20 children), with a further ten expected from another centre. The intention was that volunteers would take on the role of translator for all community languages on the day of the performance (including a BSL interpreter for a child with profound hearing loss). On the day of the performance, however, no translation was provided, although



the sister of the child with profound hearing loss translated for her sibling. One parent commented about not being able to understand what was going on (as part of evaluation activities conducted by the venue). Parents were expected to attend for almost all children, although a small number were supported by nursery staff since the parents were working.

Amna considered the £100 participation fee to be good value, saying that, should the project be repeated, she would sign up every time. The centre did not charge families for the event, seeing it as a trial run and being keen to maximise community participation. If such events became more regular, then they may consider charging an entry fee of £1 or £2. Feedback from families suggested that only one family would not have paid for the event (giving financial reasons), four families would have paid up to £1.50, one specified “£2”, and four would have paid up to £3, several of these justifying or further explaining their response, e.g. “*only with refreshments*”, “*good value for money with book pack*” and “*with other activities for a nice day out*”. It seemed therefore that families saw the event in its entirety, comprising warm-up activities, the play, the storyteller, books to take home, and refreshments, making it difficult to distinguish how much they might have been willing to pay for the play alone.

Amna used the Booktrust packs to distribute additional promotional material from the centre, and hoped that the performance would raise awareness of the facility for families to borrow books from the nursery.

### On the day

On the day, the Stories Tour did not take place in the centre itself, but in a local church, a bright, modern building about 80 yards down the road. About four children arrived with nursery staff, the others came with their parents. Overall, approximately 15 children were present, one of these an older sibling, the other a younger one, numbers were therefore lower than expected with adults outnumbering the children by more than two to one. Nearly all children were two-three years old. It later became clear that several children had learning difficulties of various kinds, although the actors or the evaluation team were not aware of this in advance of the event so no particular adaptations were planned.

On the carpet, the actors start singing “*If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands*” – several children and adults join in, including some seated on the chairs around the floor space.

The performance was late starting due to late arrivals; whilst waiting, two actors sat on the carpet with children and played with foam letters, talking about words beginning with each letter: “*P – pears – do you like pears?*” asked one actor. The



child nodded. Another actor stood at the book table full of Booktrust books, talking to more children and parents. The atmosphere was friendly and relaxed.

When the play started, the children talk through the greeting. Wendy explained how to enjoy a play, using eyes and ears: “*everybody, show me your eyes. Everybody, show me your ears!*” Two or three enthusiastic children joined in, parents helped. The play started, and the children seemed stunned by the change in noise level, the actors’ voices reverberated loudly in the space. One boy was still on stage as the song started, Wendy marched him ceremoniously (with big movements) to his seat; he looked happy to be the centre of attention. [He continued to be the most engaged, so, for the remainder of this case study, will be called by the initial of his first name: R]. The children laughed at Ameera’s tantrum, so did the parents. They enjoyed *Uncle Yes* and *Auntie No*, the multilingual Yes/No signs were well-received. When Ameera went into the basement and monkey appeared, two children pointed and shouted “*he’s there!*” These two boys (R. and another) in particular engaged with the actors and the play, other children began to lose interest and started chatting or playing.

There was a lovely moment where Tortoise says “*Without stories, we don’t know where we come from, and we don’t know where we’re going!*” R. pointed randomly and shouted “*THAT WAY!*”

Apart from the same two boys, children were inattentive – when it came to choosing the story, only R. made a movement to indicate a preference (copying the actors, who both made the same movement). When it came to the question “*Who knows how stories start?*”, again, only R. offered an unintelligible answer, he was also the only child to offer a knock-knock joke that could not be entirely understood (“*Ding-Dong*”). During the story, children mainly played and/or chatted.

When Axis appeared, R. became more interested in her than the plot, he pointed repeatedly, shouting “*There’s a spider!*”

Attention returned to the story when Old Father Time appeared, and this was the next opportunity for everybody to participate. It took a few attempts, but then, five or six children shouted “*Wake Up!*” However, when Old Father Time went to sleep again – this time during the conversation, children were more interested in shouting “*Wake Up!*” than following the plot. Getting the clock started with “*oil*” collected from the audience worked well, the actors made the effort to go round all children, even those sitting on seats with parents. As a result, all children clapped and shouted “*yay*” when the clock worked again.

More children stayed engaged for the Gatekeeper, pointing at the door handle when it appeared. R. got up and joined Wendy as she played the glockenspiel, when Ameera re-emerged from the basement. When Wendy went on stage to play “Mum”, she took R. with her by the hand, he, too, sat beside Ameera, and remained on stage for the final song, during which Wendy held his hands and did the actions with him. At the end, she encouraged him to take a bow with the actors. R. was smiling widely.

The performance moved straight into the storytelling, where the storyteller (Irfan Master, author of the story on which the “Once Upon a Time” play is based) read two books, and told one story by heart, which involved transforming a towel to look like a chicken. There were several participation opportunities through repeating words, about four or five children did this regularly, others seemed to struggle to remain focussed. The session finished with the handing out of the bookbags and the final evaluation questions.

### **After the performance**

During the pre-performance interview, Amna indicated a number of ways in which she might follow up on the event, such as creating a book about the performance. Amna commented that it would be helpful to have the performance mapped against the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), to facilitate this, she said “*We’ll do it anyway, but it might help others*”. A further suggestion for improvement came from a volunteer attending the training, who pointed out that there seemed to be no Arabic support materials.

Two months after the performance, there was no mention of the initially planned book, however, the performance had an impact in other ways, not only in the way of literacy development, but also regarding the general running of the nursery. As such, Amna reported that a parents’ group had been established which enabled parents to be involved in decision processes regarding the nursery, they will work together and contribute to future events, request and plan useful workshops to support their needs or to develop awareness of issues important to the parents. This group will also look at ways of further developing themselves as parents, for employment and for social inclusion.

The nursery asked families to complete individual evaluation forms as part of the event, and talked to parents afterwards. Feedback from both the Centre staff and parents suggested a need for shorter, more targeted events, which are more interactive, and better support community languages, such as interactive story telling done entirely in community languages. There was also a suggestion of props, such as story sacks, to involve the younger children. Specific mention was made by Amna about the needs of this very young audience, particularly bearing in mind the special educational needs of several children.

Although storytelling was already part of nursery life, staff were keen to improve how stories were told, including improved planning for “Story of the Week” following the performance.

Since the nursery is part of a larger community centre, several of the children’s mothers attended ESOL classes accessible to Third Country Nationals, and Amna reported that the performance attendance helped with the mothers’ social integration in the UK. Finally, a nursery book library supported parents in borrowing book and forms for signing up to local library services were also made available.

This event was particularly interesting when it came to highlighting the need for clear pre-event communication. The company’s stage manager’s report highlighted the lack of participation from children, and identified that several children had a learning difficulty, which had not been communicated to the actors before the performance. This may not have been seen as an issues for the Centre because the children’s particular needs were not mentioned in the pre-performance interview with the venue, which included direct questions about the audience that would be attending.

It is unclear whether the lack of participation was related to the number of children with special educational needs, or the young age of the children – although it can be assumed that both affected the performance.

From discussions with the actors, the age of the audience in many venues was not always clear until they reached the venue, and while this is difficult to gauge with open venues, such as community centres, differentiation would probably have been easier if there were a form that would give an opportunity to highlight any special information, such as age range and any particular needs, where it was known or deemed appropriate.

## **4.5 Case Study five - Busby Prison**

This case study draws on the following evaluation methods:

- Pre-performance phone interview with the responsible staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Show report provided by stage manager
- Face-to-face discussions with staff at venue
- Post-performance interview with staff member

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed.

## Background

Busby Prison is a category B/C men's prison which has been operating for over 150 years. The prison has approximately 1,200 prisoners on roll at any one time. The prison has faced several challenges in recent years, including staff shortages and criticism for lack of access to education for prisoners and.

Clearly this location is distinct from the community centre and Library locations as the parents (in this case fathers) are, during their sentence, permanently separated from their children. The participating men signed up to the Stories Tour visit, which created an additional opportunity for the prisoners to see their children.

## On the day

In order to facilitate the men taking a leading role in communicating with their children about the Stories Tour, the Busby performance was preceded by a morning workshop, during which prisoners had the opportunity to interact with the performers, find out about the story and the layout of the afternoon, and feel a sense of ownership. Largely led by Wendy, but supported by the rest of the cast and director, prisoners engaged in acting activities, which included trust-building exercises (e.g. guiding a partner around), and communication exercises (e.g. saying 'Yes/No' with and without words/body language).

Nine prisoners were present; a tenth was moved at very short notice to a different prison the previous day. This movement of prisoners obviously had a knock-on effect on the rest of the family/children, who had been looking forward to the play, meeting their Dad, and receiving a gift.

The performance was an extra opportunity for the fathers to meet their children, and as such it is perhaps unsurprising that prisoners were keen to volunteer to participate, although not all prisons had a similarly positive recruitment experience (see section 4.8.3 on overall findings from prisons).

Throughout the morning's activities, the prisoners appeared engaged, happy, relaxed and co-operative. There were several laughs, quiet conversations with actors, and a real sense of group work taking place. Towards the end of the session, Wendy ran a brief evaluation to find out the usefulness of the morning.

As one prisoner pointed out:  
"We've all got our own problems, that's why we're here, of course, but it's great to be able to forget them for an hour or so."

One prisoner felt comfortable enough to make a recommendation for future events, suggesting to involve ex-offenders in the project, the running of workshops, for those, as he said, “who might want to get into acting.”

When we spoke to the Pact representative about the high level of engagement and participation, she said: “They are all keen for their families to have a good time, nobody will want to ruin it for anybody else.” This communal feeling among the men who are attending was different from prisoner behaviour outside the performance. In that situation, it was suggested that some prisoners may try to spoil the enjoyment others may take from an activity; this was explained as a part of prison culture.

After the morning workshop, the actors moved to the chapel to set up and eat lunch, while the men returned to their respective wings. The afternoon session began with families arriving at 1.45pm. Families arrived in small groups, following their security checks. The family reunions were emotional, children ran into their Dads’ arms. Because of the time security checks took, some families had time to chat before the performance began. The Chapel, where the afternoon activities took place, was light and airy. Chairs had been pushed to the side to make floor space, and 40-50 Booktrust library books had been left out for families to share. During this time, in a lull in the family conversation, one Dad asked “*do you want to read a book?*”, and took his two daughters (approximately five and seven years old) over to the display to choose a book. Other prisoners chatted with the cast, tried out the instruments, or talked to Tony, the storyteller, whom they had not met in the morning.

The overall impression is that of a family atmosphere, reminiscent of a fair in a village hall.

Prior to the play, Wendy facilitated introductions and warm-up activities, such as movements to get the Old Father Time clock moving (which was also rehearsed with the prisoners in the morning). More than once, she said “*your Dad will know what to do*”, handing some responsibility and power to the prisoners.

The play began with good interaction, one boy (about one year old) got up to dance to the introductory song. The actors interacted with him and maintained the “join in” atmosphere. When the mother in the play said she needed “just a little bit more time”, several laughs could be heard, the Mums especially recognised themselves.

When Ameera went to her aunt and uncle, the Yes/No scene and rhythmic song drew bewildered looks, audience members did not seem sure what to make of it (all the participants were white/British, so the introduction of words in other languages without warning or introduction did not hold meaning). Participation dropped during the story of *Two crooked shop owners*, when five children played with the cut-out letter foam mats on the floor, only two were still actively listening. From then, participation in the play dropped noticeably throughout the play, until the end, when the reprise of the first song drew parents and children into clapping and joining in again.

During the refreshment break, two parents returned to the books on the display, one mother reading a book to her very young (approx. one year old) child, and the same father again read several books to his children, and had a “*Where’s Wally*” finding race, Mum and one daughter on one team, Dad and the other daughter on the other.

When Tony the storyteller began, there was still generic chatter, and several parents were getting another round of tea or coffee. He was, however, very engaging, and soon had parents, children and prison staff joining in, the latter after much cajoling and gentle ribbing. Evaluating the storyteller was not part of this remit, but Tony seemed an excellent choice for this type of project. Following the storytelling, the fathers gave to their children the bags which they had made during the morning workshop, each with two gifted books from Booktrust, one bag per child. One girl exclaimed: “*Oh my God, they’ve actually got presents!*” The event ended with brief evaluation questions before leaving the prisoners and their families to enjoy some more time together.

### **After the event**

Feedback from Pact illustrated the difficulties in maintaining momentum following the Stories Tour. Busby prison has maintained contact with the storyteller, although they have not yet continued collaboration.

Pact is currently working with Booktrust on the creation of a ‘ Legacy toolkit’ aimed at supporting prison staff to run events without professional support. While the full impact on prisons is yet to be evaluated, this report offers further conclusions specifically related to the prison context as a whole in section 4.8.3.

## 4.6 Case Study six - Jephson Prison

This case study draws on the following evaluation methods:

- Pre-performance phone interview with the responsible staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Show report provided by stage manager
- Face-to-face discussions with staff at venue
- Post-performance interview with staff member

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed.

### Background

Jephson prison is situated outside the city, a sprawling building complex approximately 20 years old. It has a roll of approximately 1,200 prisoners, the capacity having been increased by turning a number of single cells into double cells.

*We arrived and were waiting for some time in the reception for security clearance, leading us to miss the beginning of the morning workshop. We joined the men in the chapel, an open space with flexible furniture, which had been moved aside to provide an open, carpeted area for workshop activities. As we entered, the men were finishing an exercise of trust, guiding and leading each other. We sat to one side so as not to interrupt, and were welcomed to join in once the activity ended. Six men attended the workshop, we joined them in a circle with the four actors, and the family liaison officer.*

Evaluator journal

A number of activities followed. One involved telling a story around the circle single word by single word, each person adding a word to the next. At the beginning, some of the men struggled, and the actors and other men made suggestions. A story of a bat being kicked over a hedge developed, the men laughed. The second story, created in the same manner, revolved around a urine-drinking man, sounds of disgust and more laughter from the men. The atmosphere was congenial.

Following on from this, the group – consisting of actors, the men, Pact staff, and us, developed “tableaus”, freezing in place for others to interpret what is taking place. Some men struggled to express themselves, others were happier to venture an opinion. All people within the space intermingle freely, there is friendly banter between all involved. A yes/no activity involved one person being friendly,



the other hateful, the men expressed themselves first through movement and facial expressions, then with only “yes” or “no”. They performed for each other and clapped.

Finally, the men were familiarised with the afternoon’s activities, Wendy explaining that there were certain moments within the play where they would need to help their children. They practiced making scary noises for when ‘time stops’, then built “*family clocks*”, before breaking for tea and coffee, which were set out in a break-out room.

One of the men explained that he will not return after lunch, as his children and partner won’t be able to attend in the afternoon. A second one tries repeatedly to contact his partner, and is disappointed to hear that they have gone away for the day and will not be able to attend either.

After a tea break, the men returned to the chapel to decorate the book gift bags for their children. They took great care, using stencils, stickers, pens, sticky jewels and pre-cut bits of wrapping paper. One man asked the Chaplain (present as another volunteer), if she might cut a piece of wrapping paper - it has a picture of two fairies - he wants just one. The chaplain apologized, that no scissors were allowed but a solution was found, folding and re-folding the paper before carefully tearing it.

In conversation, the men explain how they can and cannot obtain things in prison - the book bag is special because they do not have many opportunities to give things to their children.

*Over morning tea and lunch, we talked with the family liaison officer. She explained some of her work - arranging family visits, sorting out adoptions of babies and children, and organising “farewell” meetings between the men and these babies and children. She shared her view of the morning.*

*“It’s involving them, it’s about their kids, without them knowing it, without lecturing them, it’s teaching them to be a better parent, and they get an extra visit with the family as a reward.”*

Evaluator journal



The room was changed for the afternoon - a single semi-circle of chairs facing a line of tape on the carpet - the stage. The families arrived before the men. There were nine children aged between 18 months and 14 years, about three of them were in the three-seven years old target age range, three were younger, three older.

One boy, aged five, asked me: *“When are the toys going to be here?”*  
I said: *“Hmm...I don’t think there’ll be any toys today, I think it might be a play, and you can all watch it with your Daddy, does that sound okay?”*  
He thought and said: *“No.”*  
He continued to ask for toys.

Wendy pointed out the table full of books, several children went to get one. The men arrived, they had changed – it seemed that they had dressed up for the occasion. Four men had returned, the two whose children could not come did not return. In total, there were four men, nine children, four mothers and one grandmother. After initial greetings, it did not take long before all families were sharing a book together, talking about the pictures. *“Where’s the lion?”* a Dad asked his child.

Tony began the storytelling, all joined in the warm up exercises. Preparing for a more vigorous exercise, Tony said: *“Those of you with jackets, you might want to take them off. Those of you with keys...no, actually, don’t put them down.”* Everybody laughed. The officer needed only one invitation before he smiled and joined in, being rewarded with applause, whoops and laughter.

Tony presented the families with a choice of books; two of them, *Dirty Bertie* and *The Gruffalo*, received similar votes, and Tony checked if there was time to read them both - there was and he began to read. Following the exercises and during the storytelling, several parents and children migrated to the floor. They finished Tony’s lines, found rhymes and answered questions. When Tony finished, he received a grand round of applause.

Wendy began the play with introductions and asked children *“What scary noises can you make?”* The families huddled and quickly offered ideas.

*When the play began, each man had a child in their lap or snuggled against them, with most Mums connecting in some other way - a hand on the shoulder, leaning in, knees touching...the families are physically connected, they very clearly occupy the same space, together.*

*Ameera’s behaviour made the parents and older children laugh, Uncle Yes and Auntie No drew lots of laughter. The spooky noises when Ameera goes into the*

*basement went well, a Mum caught my eye and smiled. One boy (around six) was very engaged. He sat on his Dad's knees, frowning, smiling, laughing, mouthing words just after the actors said them. One man sat on the floor with his young daughter (about 18 months) in his lap. They had a picture book in front of them, every now and then, the girl got distracted from the show, turned to the book, and turned a page. The Dad looked down, whispered in her ear, and cuddled her. She stayed quiet and focused either on the play or the book in front of her for the entire show.*

Evaluator journal

When Monkey tried to hide from Axis, he jumped into the audience, cowered next to a girl and lifted her long, curly hair, pretending to hide behind it. First, she looked bewildered, then she laughed. When the families were asked to vote for a story, one Mum leaned to her daughter and asked "*Which one do you want*", before voting the same as her daughter. When monkey "dusted" the children and adult with his waistcoat, everybody laughed.

Towards the end of the scene with Axis, one Mum with two young children (a boy and a girl – both about two years old) got up, distracted. One of the evaluation team showed them the suitcase with the floor puzzle, and they settled at the back, playing quietly. The '*family clocks*' worked better in the play than during preparations.

The children pointed happily at the Powerful Gatekeeper. Asked for a Knock Knock joke, one boy (around nine years old) said: "*Knock Knock. "Who's there?" "Stan." "Stan who?" "Stand back I'm going to fart."*" Asked to come on stage, he was, at first reluctant, then agreed, and repeated the joke. He received a round of applause and waved before sitting back down.

At the very end, Ameera said: "*Without stories, we don't know who we are. We don't know where we come from and we don't know where we are going.*" One Dad, lifted his son onto his knees: "*Yup!*" They cuddle. During the final song, three Dads used their children's arms to wave about and move together.

Wendy said: "*Everybody say: 'Have you got a surprise for me, Daddy?'*" The men collected the book bags to give to their children. One boy (about six) asked: "*Have you made it, Daddy?*" He smiled when his Dad said "Yes". Some smaller children played with the bags, a girl looked at the activity sheets, one Dad explained to his (five-year-old) son the various decorations and why he chose them. One boy asked his Dad: "*Can we run around?*" "*Sure*", said his Dad. The boy looked around uncertainly, but did not run.

A big roll of paper appeared for the evaluation. A boy drew a monkey and a tortoise on the part that asked “*Who was your favourite character?*” He drew bananas with the monkey, then said: “*I’m not sure what a tortoise eats.*”

One Dad said to his daughter: “*Do you want to draw a smiley face to say it made you happy?*”, pointing at the section “*How did the play make you feel?*”  
One boy looks at the section: “*What did you like most about the day?*”, then turned to his Dad: “*Can I draw Daddy?*”

A couple seemed to be arguing, although they talked quietly, their movements and gestures were just as clearly visible as the couple who kept kissing and embracing. Emotions were on display for all to see, there was no privacy for the relationship.

One staff member took photos of families with the camera, having received special permission. Then the officer said:  
“*You’ve got five minutes to say your good-byes.*”  
After hugs, kisses, and cuddles, the families leave.

The family liaison worker was interested in continuing the work, but was unsure how. “*I wouldn’t know where to start organising something like this.*” [...] “*I’ve been working here for six months, and I think I’m ready now, I know the prisoners, and I think I’m ready now. The officers are very accommodating.*”

Asked what she would need, she replied “*guidelines, programmes, training materials*”. Perhaps, if training materials and/or guidelines were available immediately after the event, with activities similar to those done on the day, such as storytelling exercises, those who are enthusiastic could immediately take an extra step in trying to create a more sustainable model from the Stories Tour.

## **After the event**

Feedback from Pact indicated the difficulties in maintaining momentum following the case studies. This case study details the second visit to this particular venue. During the first visit, the attitude of prison staff had been poor. A complaint was filed, and the second performance at the same location (as outlined above) was much more successful, and significantly, attracted a visit by the Duty Governor, who was evidently pleased with the event.

## 4.7 Case study seven - Whenston Prison

This case study draws on the following evaluation methods:

- Pre-performance phone interview with the responsible staff member
- Observation by University of Sheffield evaluation team
- Show report provided by stage manager
- Face-to-face discussions with staff at venue
- Post-performance interview with staff member

Names of venue, organisers and participants have been changed.

### Background

Whenston Prison is a category B/C men's prison with a capacity of approximately 800 prisoners. The prison offers full-time education programmes to prisoners, as well as short training courses and employment in prison workshops. Pact have staff permanently attached to the prison.

### On the day

*We arrived at the prison and there was some waiting before we were able to explain our role. Details were taken and we locked our possessions in the available lockers. Eventually, we were escorted by a Pact worker, around the perimeter to the Chapel, arriving about 10.30 to the morning workshop. Similar to other prison performances, these included trust exercises, acting experiences and aspects of storytelling. We arrived just as the first part of the workshop drew to a close, with both the actors and the men finishing for a tea break. We chatted to the men over a cup of tea – several were keen to see their families in the afternoon. Two said they 'weren't sure' about the session they had just had – 'Not got much to do with our kids'.*

*The group reconvened around 11am – to look at books. We joined the small groups of men who were discussing the stories and their suitability for their own children. The men had mixed views of the books, and tied their opinions to the knowledge of, and experiences with, their children.*

Evaluator journal

Father's said:

*"Too complicated for her – she's only two."*

*"He'll like this one – likes boats – lots of detail."*

*"I watched a documentary about Titanic – fascinating – the information isn't in the book though about how it sank."*

*"A bit difficult for children to read."*

*"She loves jokes – she'll like this one."*

The group came together in a circle and Wendy led the whole group discussion of the books. The men chose a book for each of their children. Pact workers set out collage materials and gift bags and the men began decorating the bags – personalizing them as gifts for their children who would be there in the afternoon. This practice of creating and personalising a gift had been developed in conjunction with Pact, and was a great success.

The men were very enthusiastic as they did this and wrote messages on their bags for their children:

*"Princess, love from Dad."*

*"For my best buddy, love dad."*

*"I am proud of you mate, love dad."*

*"Darling, this is for you, love from DAD."*

The session concluded with the actors explaining what would happen in the afternoon and Pact workers discussed with the men how the afternoon would progress and that families would be escorted to the Chapel for the afternoon event. The men returned to their wings and the Sheffield evaluation team and the actors went to a restaurant staffed by prisoners.

*We waited for some time with the families who were arriving. Some had come for regular visiting time – others had come for the ‘family day’ event. As time went on it seemed from the women we were talking with that they were accustomed to waiting ‘There’s always waiting - you spend more time waiting than you do visiting!’ However, this wait was getting long and the women were saying that they don’t usually wait that long. [We later learned that there had been a death and so the delay was due to many staff being diverted to the wing where this had occurred and all prisoners being returned to the cells while the staff focused on what had happened.]*

*Eventually we joined the families and the men in the chapel – there was much hugging, kissing and greeting between the men and their families.*

Evaluator journal

The performance started and everyone seemed very engaged. Unfortunately there was a legal hearing in the room below the chapel and there were some difficulties due to noise. The drumming, singing and jumping elements of the play were disturbing the judge below and actors were asked to quieten or the performance would have to stop. After the play, a storyteller told one story which seemed to be appreciated by the families.

It was then time for the fathers to give their gift bags containing the books they had chosen, to their children.

The fathers seemed proud – and some near to tears - as they handed over their gifts

*“This is for you darl’.”*

*“There you go mate – I made this for you.”*

*“Here you are princess – it’s a present from me.”*

Children said:

*“Wow! Thanks Dad!”*

*“You got me a present!”*

*“Thank you Daddy!”*

*“Wow! Great! Thanks!”*

*“I like the ribbons!”*

*“Thanks – thanks!”*

They all settled into family groups – reading books, chatting, some romping on the floor. Some women and men took some moments to chat together whilst their children played and read together. There was a feeling that the event was an important family occasion. The giving of the books by fathers to their children was, we felt, the highlight of the day.

*One woman had a brief exchange with us as we were leaving*

*Mother: ‘I’d pay to do this – I really would!’*

*C: The play?*

*Mother: ‘The whole thing ... but seeing him sitting there now on the floor reading with his dad is just amazing – normal – we don’t get time like this. I’d pay just to see them sitting there cuddling together.’*

Evaluator journal

It was a dark and wet, quite miserable day – some families had travelled for four hours or more – stood in a queue in the rain to get into the prison – waited and waited and waited. But there was a general feeling that it had been worth it.

### **After the event**

The fact that the performance and visit went ahead even though a death had occurred at Whenston Prison that day showed the commitment of Pact workers and prison staff to enable the Stories Tour. While the full impact on prisons is not yet known, this report offers further conclusions specifically related to the prison context as a whole in section [4.8.3].

## **4.8 Summary of findings from case studies**

All three types of venue had their own distinct logistical and organisational challenges and opportunities. In the following, these are summarised and expanded upon.

### **4.8.1 Libraries**

Overall, libraries had the most consistent staff involvement in the Stories Tour. Library staff are commonly used to organising and supporting literacy events, and several of the libraries had dedicated community librarians working on the project. Nevertheless, the timing of the Stories Tour fell within a period of great organisational upheaval, and several staff working on the Stories Tour were either transferred or made redundant shortly after the performance, in line with governmental funding cuts and library closures.

Overall, libraries seemed to advertise mainly through existing channels, by talking to groups who used the space, or contacting local schools they were already working with, thus they were not necessarily audience of “hard-to-reach” families but they were a new audience to the kind of event offered by the Stories Tour. The libraries Case Studies – amongst many from the whole sample - reported that families attending the Stories Tour took out a library membership, but we are not able to ascertain whether these families returned or became regular users.

### **4.8.2 Community Centres**

Community centres involved in the project varied greatly, ranging from well-supported and -staffed centres to organisations that struggled for funds. Both the centres reported on in case studies drew on ready-made audiences - one in form of a nursery class, the other in form of pupils from religious and cultural classes already attending the centre. In both cases, therefore, it is unlikely that new audiences were reached but those attending may have been new to this type of experience. Staff and volunteer involvement varied, and the training provided by Booktrust appears to have been undervalued, certainly in the centres that formed part of the case studies. Other centres had varied stories to tell, but many reported on high staff turnovers, making it difficult to sustain impact.

### **4.8.3 Prisons**

The prisons were, by default, the most homogenous group of venues, each having broadly similar administration, recruitment processes, and restrictions. The collaboration with Pact on this project has been highly successful, and drawing on expertise from the well-established engagement of Pact has meant that knowledgeable support – particularly of prison staff and of the families of the



participating prisoners - has been available throughout. While this level of support might have been difficult to sustain with other venues, the model of workshops, book gifting, and the creation of presents for the children appears to have been equally (if not more) successful than the play itself, and the toolkit currently being developed by Booktrust and Pact has the potential of summarising the most useful aspects of the Stories Tour for more sustained impact. Additional, future evaluations would be needed to ascertain the suitability of the toolkit, as well as whether and how it is being used.

## **SUMMARY**

This section has drawn on the range of evaluation data to present seven distinct case studies. These cases are individual and are included to provide a sense of just seven of the fifty-six events. We will not draw specific conclusions from these events but will draw on the case study data in the final section to demonstrate and justify our conclusions and recommendations for future work.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

In this section we draw together the evidence presented in this report to identify overarching conclusions and make some recommendations for future practice. We have structured our conclusions around the themes used for section 3 of the report which are:

- Views of the event from families and centre staff
- Staffing
- Booktrust support and marketing
- Organisation of event
- Auxiliary activity (e.g. workshops for prisoners)
- Ethnicity of participants
- Lasting impact, 'value' and evaluation

Within this section we shall also return to our three research questions relating to BAME groups which were:

1. To what extent can a community-based arts event 'reach' members of the community (in particular members of Black and Minority Ethnic groups) that are 'hard-to-reach'?
2. What are the barriers to this participation?
3. How might participation be maximised?

### 5.1. Views of the event from families and centre staff

In community centres and libraries the majority of families said that they attended the venue rarely or never, though this was not the case where whole groups were invited from local schools and preschool groups for example.

**Overwhelmingly children enjoyed the performances.** Children in the target age range - three to six years - and their older siblings were very engaged at all the performances we visited and reports from other venues also confirmed this. Their enjoyment of live action and opportunities for interaction was clear and the 'different' feel to the event made the play especially engaging. Some younger children indicated some fear and uncertainty which we attribute to the noise of the play, and the proximity of lively action to them, these very young children quickly returned to sit with their parents for reassurance.

In some venues the children were older or younger than the target age range. Where the venue was successful in reaching the target audience in age and community engagement, the children seemed to enjoy the experience very much (for example Case study three Waheguru Centre). However, in some cases younger children were frightened by the loudness of the play and for some the plot was oversophisticated. **We recommend that clear information is given,**

**in future, about the suitability of Booktrust events for particular age groups.**

Though there were some opportunities for audience engagement and participation there were occasions (for example Case study three Waheguru Centre) where there were perhaps missed opportunities for somebody from venues to engage in discussion with participants about how “stories” could be continued in the venues in the future. **We recommend that future events include time for consulting with families about what future stories-oriented events they would like.**

**In the prisons there is plentiful evidence from families regarding their enjoyment of the event.** The overwhelming response was highly positive, however it is difficult to disentangle families’ pleasure at visiting men in prison and a special event, from the detail of the event itself. Overwhelmingly, the enjoyment of the event in prisons was inextricably linked to spending family time together, enjoying an event. When one mother said she would pay – it was not clear whether it was the performance that she would be willing to pay for or simply the opportunity to visit her partner with their children, in an informal and fun environment. However, what was evident was the surprise and delight of children when their father’s gave them a personalized gift bag containing a book (see Case Study five Busby Prison).

## **5.2. Staffing**

**Staffing in the venues varied greatly as did the roles and use of volunteers in community centres and libraries.** Paid staffing varied from 33 full-time to none, and volunteer hours ranged from 35 hours per week to none.

**Four venues reported that the training offered to their community centre volunteers was very important whilst ten (eight libraries and two community centres) reported that it was unimportant or unused.**

**Confidence of volunteers was said to have increased in six of the Community Centre venues.** In the case study venues where volunteers participated, such volunteers were mainly involved in the recruitment process

**Booktrust’s aim to empower local communities via volunteer training seems to have been partially successful.**

**Lack of staffing was a challenge in prisons with one of the main challenges for Pact being the significant commitment in time involved in liaison work with prisons to set up the tour events in prison venues.** Whereas community

centres and libraries had a named contact in each venue, in prisons, one member of staff managed the liaison with all prisons, for all performances.

**We recommend that Booktrust gives careful attention to staffing the event and that venues receive the necessary funding to support future events to avoid staffing difficulties being a barrier to participation.**

### **5.3. Booktrust support and marketing**

**Flyers and marketing support from Booktrust were considered by 16 venues who responded (88%) to be important and 82% (14 responding venues) found the Booktrust support good and helpful.**

There were also inconclusive views on the organisation with a small number seeing it as unnecessarily complicated.

Some venues did not feel the need for their share of £1000 for marketing and in one case (Case Study two Shackleton Library) appeared to have devolved the marketing budget into the overall running of the venue rather than the event specifically. **We recommend that more thorough guidance is given to venues on what can be funded from the marketing budget in future.**

### **5.4. Organisation of event**

**The organisation of the project overall broke new ground for Booktrust.** A member of staff pointed out that, although Booktrust were used to liaising with libraries, and help was received from Pact for liaising with prisons, working with community centres was a new experience, as was working directly with performers, developing and touring a play and organizing a tour with multiple venues. As such, the organisation included many new tasks and concepts that were unusual, ranging from the variety of how centres were run, to identifying new finance procedures for paying actors.

**For a small number of community centre venues and one library, the organisation was complicated and could have been simpler.** Three said it was 'difficult' but eight venues said it was not at all problematic. Twelve venues reported that the organizational work was 'complex' but would do it again. **Seventeen of the responding venues reported that they would engage in such events in the future if given the opportunity, and indicated strong commitment to help Booktrust achieve its aim of drawing the audience from "hard-to-reach" target populations.**

**The actors would have found it helpful to know more detail about the audience beforehand so as to adapt the play if appropriate** because the age of the children in the audience was not always clear and in one case many of the

children had learning difficulties (see Case Study four - Atifa community project). **We recommend that participation would be maximized if any information specific to venues and audiences were given to actors before the event where it was known or deemed appropriate.**

One representative said there was no need for refreshments, however, in other venues the availability of food and refreshments was greatly welcomed - creating a 'party like atmosphere' in some venues. This aspect was particularly appreciated in the prison venues. **We recommend that a budget for refreshments at similar events is maintained in the future.**

**Booktrust's collaboration with Pact around prisons lay at the heart of the success of the Stories Tour in prisons which meant that the specific challenges of organising an event such as the Stories Tour within the prison context were overcome.** Family visits were not always straightforward, rules varied from prison to prison. These challenges meant that each performance was different, there was no set pattern, and each visit required Pact's careful management.

All comments about organization of the events across all three venue types were made in the context of successful events and in the spirit of improvement rather than criticism. **All venues acknowledged the support available, and for most there was a sense that difficulties and challenges would not inhibit venues from further similar engagement in the future.**

### **5.5. Auxiliary activity**

In the prison venues, morning workshops were held before the families came for the play in the afternoon. These involved working through a range of performance-based exercises, choosing a book for their child and personalising a gift bag for them (see Case Study five Busby Prison). **Personalised book bags and books were a huge success with prisoners' children and clearly something that made the day a success for prison families.** These morning sessions appeared to be highly valued, 'broke the ice' and informed the men about their role and what to expect in the afternoon when their families joined them. As the case studies show – these were integral to the Stories Tour experience in prisons and the whole day is encapsulated in feedback from prison participants. **We recommend that such auxiliary activities, especially personalizing the book gift bags, are included in any future events for prisons.**

## 5.6. Ethnicity of participants

The three specific questions asked in relation to 'hard-to-reach' and members of Black and Minority Ethnic groups have been answered in considerable detail in this report.

We asked: 'To what extent do community-based arts events 'reach' members of the community (in particular members of Black and Minority Ethnic groups) that are 'hard-to-reach' ? ' **The Stories Tour was successful to a large degree in attracting members of all the targeted BAME groups to the events located in community centres and libraries** (see Table 2, page 34).

Findings about BAME population participation relate only to Community Centre and Library venues because it was not appropriate in the prison venues to specifically target Pakistani, Somali and Bangladeshi men.

**In the prison venues, the criteria used to select prisoners for participation were not related to the BAME-related targets.** Booktrust chose to take the tour into prisons, partly because of their high BAME rates and because they are, by their nature, underserved by the arts (see Table 2, page 34).

In relation to BAME group participation we asked 'What are the barriers to this participation?' **Low participation rates at some Stories Tour events were attributed to: the lack of events, lack of funding, lack of interest, childcare difficulties, and language issues.**

**About a half of libraries and community centres were successful bringing in children from local schools, nurseries and preschools and in just under a third of the venues those who attended were not previously known to that venue,**(see Appendix 2). There was variation in responses about whether people returned to the venue again but those who did return came for various activities including: TOTS fun sessions, ESOL classes, 'stay and play' sessions. Those returning to libraries came to join the library, or visit as a school group.

**For some venues the £100 participation fee was likely to be a barrier in the future. For some families a requirement to pay in future might present difficulties in the future, others said they might be willing to pay from nothing to £5.** Though we do not have the information to report on cost per person, it is likely that this does not bear a realistic relationship to the actual cost per person of the Stories Tour so would be a token payment in any case.

Finally, in relation to BAME group participation we asked 'How might participation be maximised?' **It seems that some venues were successful in attracting new users and in breaking down some barriers to participation, attracting people considered to be 'hard-to-reach'.**

Refreshments were clearly an attraction in some venues. **Whilst not everyone agreed on the importance of offering refreshments, some venues reported that this was much appreciated by families and that it added to the special nature of the event.**

**For 14 venues that responded (78%) the turnout was higher than for other events with a similar proportion reporting new links being created with the community.** This stood in contrast with the case studies, most of which utilised existing links to draw together the audience, in one case commenting using the term “rent-a-crowd” (see Case Study One – Central Library, Northerntown) and questionnaire responses that indicate over one third of venues made use of a homogenous group – either a community group already using the venue, or a local school or nursery class – to fill the performance.

**We recommend that venues are supported in developing community specific approaches to engaging new audiences.**

## **5.7. Lasting impact, ‘value’ and evaluation**

It is not possible in this report, to evaluate any lasting impact but we can draw on the data collected two months after each performance, to identify whether venues had used their experience with the Stories Tour further to develop arts/literacy-related activities.

**We have identified the following indicators of and factors to support, lasting impact which vary according to venue type.**

### *Community Centres*

Since all community centres involved in the Stories Tour were new contacts, Booktrust staff felt that these new relationships would impact positively on Booktrust’s future work at such venues with several community centres having expressed interest in further involvement with Booktrust.

### *Libraries*

For libraries, impact was largely measured via increased membership numbers, as well as links with the community.

### *Prisons*

The impact of the Stories Tour in prisons has been highlighted. Pact plans to continue collaborative work with Booktrust. Two prisons have maintained contact with the local storyteller who participated in their events and are hoping to collaborate further in future.

**Despite the success, few venues have run follow-up activities. The planned ‘Legacy Toolkit’ and further volunteer training opportunities may result in**



## more development.

To date there have been no resulting links between prisons and local community centres or libraries, although there is hope that the 'Legacy toolkit' will help develop this.

### **We recommend that the Legacy Toolkit is available in several languages and includes:**

- **ways of working that might reach out to working with school groups, in terms of professional development for teachers and teaching assistants to develop ideas for work which extend beyond the day itself (as was the case for the teacher in Case Study One – Central Library, Notherntown)**
- **information on ways to follow up the performance, such as creating a book about the event.**
- **Information on how the play links with Early Years Foundation Stage (see Case Study four Atifa community project)**
- **support material how to consult with families about what future stories-oriented events they would like.**

### **We have identified the following barriers to lasting impact that vary according to venue type.**

#### *Community Centres*

Funding cuts have led to reduced staffing in some community centres which limits capacity for additional events. In several community centres, there seemed to be an expectation that it would be Booktrust's responsibility to provide ideas or opportunities for future engagement. As the Stories Tour was in part focused on building capacity within venues, it appears that an immediate follow-up with centre staff, potentially even on the day of the tour visit, would have helped community centres to create an action plan, or generate ideas for future community engagement with literacy.

#### *Libraries*

Staff difficulties due to funding cuts appear to have impacted on libraries' ability to generate further activities.

#### *Prisons*

Within the prison context, maintaining links and liaison with individual officers can be difficult due to re-deployment, and the prisoners themselves may also be moved between prisons. In the prisons the importance of family days was recognised but funding cuts and staff shortages mean that they are infrequent. It is uncertain whether more family days will take place as a result of the Stories Tour.

### **Future evaluation**

This project was ambitious; it attracted substantial funding and attempted considerable 'reach' into communities traditionally underserved in the arts. It is important to understand something of lasting effects of the Stories Tour as well as its immediate impact. **We recommend that careful thought should be given to the budget for evaluation of a project of this size and scope, we recommend a minimum of 10% of project funding should be allocated to evaluation.**

**We recommend that there should be some future evaluation of the follow-up in venues so that Booktrust can learn something of the 'legacy' of the Stories Tour.**

## 6. References

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# Appendices

## APPENDIX 1 Overview of the Stories Tour provided by Booktrust

### Booktrust Stories Tour

Booktrust's Stories Tour will be an interactive, engaging and culturally-relevant show for children and their parents which celebrates and encourages storytelling. It will bring multi-lingual (Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Somali) storytelling performances to libraries, community centres and prisons, focusing on deprived urban areas and reaching families from BAME groups. Performance and participation will help to breakdown language barriers, promote community cohesion and inspire a love of books and stories.

The aims of this show are to

- bring high quality artistic content to audiences who don't normally access it and create a market for future events to tap into.
- engage Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali audiences (and a general audience), in order to prompt story sharing between parents and children, and between children (both oral storytelling and reading).
- bring these 'new' audiences to libraries, and help libraries explore new outreach strategies.
- raise awareness among prison staff of the value of such activity.

The project takes place in 10 local authorities across the country in: Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, Middlesbrough, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Bradford, Kirklees and Cardiff. Typically in each local authority there will be six events in total, with two in a community centre, two in a library and two in a prison. Alongside the tour will be a website including information on the events, videos and digital downloads of the production and lots of links to existing resources on sharing stories for families.

As well as the 60 date tour there will be a 6 month dissemination period, where we share our findings about working in this sector and touring work to these kinds of venues. The dissemination period includes creating a toolkit, a "road show" where we present the findings of a toolkit, and various other events where we share learning to leave a legacy of higher participation and more opportunities for touring to the communities and venues.

#### **Audience and Age Group**

To engage both parents and children together the show will target ages three to six. This age enables a focus on parental involvement and allows for events during the day as well as events after school and weekends. This also allows

flexibility to suit venue audience strategic priorities and ensures that some of the learning could be relevant to Bookstart and other Booktrust Programmes. However to ensure there are as few barriers as possible to attendance, the age of the audience won't be restricted. The show should also be entertaining for older and younger siblings and parents.

### **Creating the show**

We are working with award-nominated author Irfan Master who is writing an original short story for the basis of the production. Using a professional director and producer, this will then be worked into a longer performance and made interactive and more culturally relevant for all of the groups.

To ensure the show can be relevant to all of the audiences we are hoping to reach, we are looking to recruit actors who come from the communities and speak the languages mentioned. This will ensure that the show is culturally sensitive and can incorporate community languages and traditional stories accurately.

This half hour show will form the main part of the event to be hosted at the venue. The final format of the event is to be finalised but we expect it will comprise:

- Introduction to the venue and what to expect
- Show with professional actors
- Local author storytelling
- Refreshments and time to find out about local services
- Pack gifting.

Each family attending will receive a pack of a free book and storytelling handouts to encourage them to continue storytelling at home. We will also be encouraging local venues to include information on relevant events.

### **Partners**

Booktrust are working with Pact, a national charity that supports prisoners and their families and “facilitate opportunities for positive contact between prisoners and their families”. The Stories Tour will support this through providing structured and stimulating family days when the tour comes to the prison. The packs and the information around storytelling will also enhance the parent-child relationship after the tour has moved on. Pact have knowledge and expertise in working with prisons that will be vital to the success of the project. They will also facilitate training for the prison staff and the artists involved to enhance the success of the tour and the legacy potential.

In the 10 areas, prisons, libraries and community centres will work together in local steering groups. These groups will have a marketing budget and decide the best way to market the tour in their local area. By bringing together the different groups, we hope to help establish links between the different settings that can continue after the tour has finished. We will also be training Community

Ambassadors in each area, appointed by the steering group who will receive training and support to encourage families to attend the sessions.

On a national level we will be working with representatives from Booktrust and Pact as well as theatre professionals, librarians, diversity consultants and representatives from the target communities to oversee and advise on the project.

## **Stories Tour – additional information**

### **Structure of the event**

The structure of the sessions was suggested to venues as follows:

- **Introduction: 5 minutes**
  - Welcome the audience, make them feel comfortable and explain the order of the event
- **Show: 30 minutes**
  - An interactive, multi-lingual theatre show. Four professional actors telling the story of Ameera
- **Interval: 15 minutes**
  - A chance for drinks and for children to let off steam
- **Storyteller: 15 minutes**
  - A published local author reading one of his/her stories
- **Literacy Party: 25 minutes**
  - Time for food, giving out gift packs and collecting evaluation. Also an opportunity to tell families about other services and events at the venue venue.

This structure was adapted throughout the tour based on venues needs, arrival times of audiences and actors experiences. More time was often allowed for welcoming the audience to allow for late-comers. The actors welcomed the children and families, shared books with them and often played some games. In some of the final events, the storyteller started before the play as the cast felt this was a better flow to the event. The interval was sometimes replaced by time to get up and stretch (led by the actors) where it was felt a break would be too distracting.

### **Structure of the prison workshops**

- **Icebreakers**
  - Including rules, what is expected of the men, and their expectations for the day
- **Drama Games**
  - Games about personal space, power dynamics and creating stories
  - Encouraging self-expression and confidence, and giving the men ideas for sharing activities with their children
- **Linking activities to the show**
  - Creating a soundscape

- Building a family clock
- Men learn the interactive elements which they can teach to their children, encouraging interaction with their child and the play and reinforcing the role of parent as teacher
- **Shared reading**
  - Ideas and suggestions on sharing books
  - Sharing without reading
  - How to extend the life of the book
  - Ways to share the book if your own literacy is low
  - Gaining the tools and confidence to enjoy books with their child
- **Personalising the book bags**
  - Men decorate a bag for the books to give to their children.
  - Continuing the focus on the child and strengthening the experience as a way of families making memories together

### **Synopsis of the play**

Ameera's mum is always busy and they are always moving. Sometimes Ameera wishes time would stop. While she is staying with her strange relatives Auntie No and Uncle Yes she goes down into the basement and discovers a land where her dreams have come true. In Awaywhere time has stopped and there are no more stories but without time and stories the ground of Awaywhere is crumbling. Her toys Tortoise and Monkey have come to life and together they work out how to save Awaywhere so Ameera can get back home. They visit Axis the spider and tell her a new story so she can spin storywebs again and go and see Old Father Time and solve his riddle to get time ticking again. Finally they go to see the All Powerful Gatekeeper and have to tell him a joke to allow them back home. Ameera wakes up back in her auntie and uncles house with her mum comforting her. She'd fallen down the stairs and bumped her head. But was Awaywhere just a dream?

### **Legacy toolkit**

Booktrust, Pact and the Arts Council were keen that the Stories Tour had a legacy and wasn't a one-off event, so a six month legacy period following the tour was built into the original bid. Training for prison officers around the benefits of family days and child protection is being delivered by Pact and Booktrust will offer storytelling training for participating venues. There will also be a toolkit produced with advice for prisons, libraries, community centres and performers on how to arrange further events in the future. As well as being widely disseminated, there will also be training on the tool kit and funding opportunities for the 10 participating areas and 10 local authorities with a similar profile. Booktrust will also be hosting events for artists to share the experience of touring to non-traditional venues and encouraging them to do the same. The toolkit and some training around it will be available online, alongside a directory for storytellers and other artists who are keen to work in alternative venues.

## APPENDIX 2 Summary of responses to Questionnaire to venues

A questionnaire survey was sent to 27 venues (community centres and libraries), corresponding to 37 performances. 19 venues responded. 22 prisons were not included in this survey because they were evaluated through PACT which was felt to be more appropriate. Some venues chose to fill in a questionnaire for each performance, leading to 22 responses overall. N=22 – percentages are given according to the number of responses received for that question.

| How often do you run cultural events for the community N=18    |  |           |
|--|--|-----------|
| At least monthly   | 61%  | 11 venues |
| First event  | 6%   | 1 venue   |
| What prevents people in the community from participating? N=15 |  |           |
| Not many events  | 53%  | 8 venues  |
| Many events  | 40%  | 6 venues  |
| Lack of funding  | 39%  | 7 venues  |
| Lack of interest   | 40%  | 6 venues  |
| Childcare difficulties   | 31%  | 5 venues  |
| Language issues  | 63%  | 10 venues |
| Other reasons  | <p>Confidence can be a barrier</p> <p>The library s difficult. The Asian community see it as white and the white community see it as Asian.</p> <p>Difficult to engage community. The library is in the middle of 2 quite distinct areas- white/asian- and there are tensions.</p> <p>Difficulty in getting word out across the borough. Cultural issues and not understanding what the events are and each others culture.</p> <p>Finding out how best to promote events to diverse communities chaotic lifestyles, parents not engaged with activities of own children, not used to cultural events, unsure if they are suitable re religious reasons, many invisible barriers, some prejudice.</p> <p>No idea</p> |           |
| Make up of audiences N=18                                      |  |           |
| Families already known to the venue?                           | 50%  | 9 venues  |
| Ready made group – e.g. class, preschool group                 | 50%  | 9 venues  |
| People who have not used the venue before                      | 37%  | 6 venues  |



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| <p>Have people new to the venue returned?</p> | <p>Difficult to say - audience was brought to us via two community libraries. Many said they would come again but not sure unless I ask the two community libraries to find out.</p> <p>Not known</p> <p>Not returned as a group. Individuals may have returned.</p> <p>Yes new members have come along to the TOTS have fun sessions that take place within the centre.</p> <p>n/a</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Started taking ESOL classes.</p> <p>We have not formally recording, but have noticed that new faces have been using us regularly, of at least 5 new families.</p> <p>They have not returned to Greenwood - a few maybe- but many will now go to Dewsbury Library as they joined during the event. To become users of the library.</p> <p>Groups were made up by the school from families that they thought would benefit. Some of these may have been new to the library and we did encourage them to come back and gave out membership forms. We have no way of knowing how many returned as a direct consequence of the tour.</p> <p>They have come back for our stay &amp; play sessions which they found out about on the day of the performance.</p> <p>Not returned as a group. May have returned as individuals.</p> <p>Yes they have. A lot of the parents and carers and children were not library members. They joined the library and have returned.</p> <p>Some joined our events database and all were so impressed. We also are using the Booktrust bear club packs bought from the budget and these will encourage families to return. People lead challenging and busy lives- one lady said she always came to the library when she was a child and had just not carried this on with her children and she had no idea why? Just forgot she supposed.</p> |
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| <p>Feedback from families since Stories Tour ended?</p> | <p>They loved the show. I wish there should be more events like this.</p> <p>The books that they got were really appreciated as many Bengali families do not have money to buy books. The children just loved it too. Having the parents involved in making food, doing outreach and preparing the venue was also good.</p> <p>No, but a lot of parents told us how they enjoyed the event and would like us to do more.</p> <p>No.</p> <p>Everyone thought the event was fantastic. A community group are having a fun day and the same storyteller has been booked for 4 hours to do sessions with children. The event has given an insight to parents of how important reading and storytelling is.</p> <p>None</p> <p>They have all enjoyed it and wants have the similar one. It has promoted family literacy.</p> <p>No</p> <p>A few parents came back and told us that they read more to their children now. We don't have this ourselves but he school did say that the feedback from parents afterwards was very positive and many had never been to such an event before.</p> <p>The feedback was that everyone really enjoyed it and it gave children and families a an exciting new experience of actors that linked to books for specific backgrounds.<br/>No - but I can find out from the two community libraries</p> |
| <p>Staffing</p>   | <p>Paid staffing varied from 33 full time to none</p>  |
|   | <p>Volunteer hours ranged 35 hours to none</p>   |

| Volunteers N=16  |  |   |
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| Roles of volunteers  | <p>Don't have volunteers in my group</p> <p>They do daily library activities i.e. shelving books, tidying, serving customers, participating in our daily children's activities including our daily story telling sessions.</p> <p>Supporting with events and activities such as storytimes, adult IT support etc Our group Small Change does volunteer work in the community - making small changes for not much money. They also carry out community research using participatory methods - most recently looking at why people do not access cancer screening services, and currently looking at community actions to address the high incidence of Diabetes Type 2 in Tower Hamlets.</p> <p>Run the craft group and tend the herb garden.</p> <p>Support classes work with community groups help with child care.</p> <p>Admin</p> <p>Reception duties film club, promoting library services, general library duties.</p> <p>We do not have volunteers to work in the Central Library itself, however we do have a small number of volunteers who are available to help out with children's activities.</p> <p>We have volunteers that e.g. help with the garden terraces, are recruited and interviewed for specific events to assist with e.g. bookselling.</p> <p>Support Family Action with Advice Surgery, Admin/Reception support, Family Support.</p> <p>Stuff</p> <p>Various – children's, local history, specific projects. Support Stay &amp; Play &amp; outreach work to promote the centre and Early Education.</p> |   |
| Has use of volunteers changed because of the Story Tour project? | 5 no   | Not yet but we are working with the children's centre of dual promotions. |
| Volunteer training Very important                                | 25%  | 4 venues  |
| Volunteer training Not important/didn't use                      | 63%  | 10 venues   |
| Confidence around using volunteers now increased                 | 36%  | 6 venues  |
| Confidence around using volunteers not increased                 | 26%  | 5 venues  |

| Booktrust support and marketing N=18                              |   |           |
|---|---|-----------|
| Value for money and would pay for other events                    | 44%   | 14 venues |
| No charge to families   | 100%  | 18 venues |
| Booktrust flyers for promotion of the stories tour was important  | 88%   | 16 venues |
| Booktrust support for promotion of the stories tour was important | 57%   | 9 venues  |
| Booktrust general support good and helpful                        | 82%   | 14 venues |
| Ning Important/quite important                                    | 7%  | 1 venue   |
| Ning Unimportant/didn't use                                       | 67%   | 10 venues |
| Other comments on support form Booktrust                          | <p>Didn't really need all the money- would rather have had free event and less support. No real need for refreshments. However the use of the money for a coach to transport the class was brilliant and enabled us to engage with a school that was far away from any of our venues. We have no money to do this normally and the event meant there were people who did not normally go to any libraries.</p> <p>Very useful</p> <p>no</p> <p>It was great to do this with Booktrust</p> <p>It felt more complicated than it actually was.</p> <p>Could have been simpler.</p> <p>It was over complicated and seemed a little scary in a way</p> <p>Support very helpful, quick responses.</p> <p>A little too much paperwork that made some things more complicated than they need be.</p> <p>Some things like signing in sheets not really practical in our set up when classes all came at once.</p> <p>As a community, we would definitely be interested in arranging for more events like this as the parents absolutely loved it and the staff enjoyed it too.</p> <p>It was a great opportunity to be part of a well organised and supported event.</p> <p>Lizzie did a great job and supplied information and support as requested, always very obliging and positive!</p> |           |

| Organisation N=18                                |     |           |
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| Difficult  | 17% | 3 venues  |
| Not difficult                                    | 45% | 8 venues  |
| Ok/usual   | 39% | 7 venues  |
| Complex  | 70% | 12 venues |
| Would like to run more like this                 | 95% | 17 venues |
| Confident to run more in future                  | 39% | 7 venues  |
| Turnout N=18                                     |     |           |
| Higher than other events                         | 78% | 14 venues |
| Created new links with community                 | 76% | 13 venues |
| Use of the venue has increased since the event   | 6%  | 1 venues  |
| The event N=18                                   |     |           |
| Different from usual events in the venue         | 82% | 14 venues |
| More confident to run similar events in future   | 17% | 3 venues  |
| Local author involvement was important           | 67% | 12 venues |
| Plan to run similar events in the future         | 65% | 11 venues |
| Most who came were unknown to the venue          | 50% | 9 venues  |
| Learned new ways to engage audiences             | 39% | 7 venues  |
| Community languages are important in such events | 67% | 12 venues |
| Was a success                                    | 94% | 17 venues |
| Families enjoyed it                              | 88% | 15 venues |
| Has been worthwhile                              | 94% | 17 venues |
| Built new links with venues in the area          | 45% | 8 venues  |

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| <p>Has the Stories Tour led to any other book related events?</p> | <p>no No</p> <p>Yes We are running an ESOL storytelling class every week.</p> <p>We already run regular events and always try to link them all strongly to stories. We have been able to build stronger links with the local Children's Centre and are working regularly on joint promotions. We have also strengthened links with local schools and families by engaging and promoting such a large scale, quality event.</p> <p>We now offer story sessions to our local schools - Nursery classes - this will be expanded in September to include Reception classes.</p> <p>Yes the Community fun day will have a session for story telling</p> <p>families in Tower Hamlets really need this kind of event. Though ours is only a community group (we do not have a venue - Kobi Nazrul was supplied by the Brady Centre Arts) this kind of thing is very much valued. I would love to see more work in Children's Centres, community centres etc for these families. The impact is enormous. They all ask when will there be another one.</p> |
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| Other comments | <p>We are interested in creative ways that active lifestyles and healthy eating can be encouraged (especially given our current work on Diabetes Type 2). Could you promote or develop materials which involve active storytelling perhaps? Or always promote healthy snacks (e.g. fruit kebabs etc) at events rather than high sugar/junk. Of course fun stories about fruit and veg are also welcome!!</p> <p>excellent event. The families were engrossed. .</p> <p>Everyone loved the shows- one dad went and grabbed another relative saying "it's a real theatre show and it is really good- come and watch!"</p> <p>One little lad had 2 hearing aids and some problems and his mother said she was amazed that he sat and concentrated through the whole event. She was so pleased.</p> <p>The smiles and excitement from parents and children said it all. Parents wanted to come to more shows as much as the children. It was difficult to know who liked it more- children or parents! No negative comments at all from any children or parents. It has been great for us, as at 2 of the events many families signed up to become library members. (30 plus) We have also organised that the schools can check records of pupils and thus provide ID for new members thus removing a barrier to membership. We were able to tell parents how important reading is and how libraries provide great experiences for their children-books, IT, summer reading challenge, bookstart packs, events- including this superb one! It was so brilliant bringing in families rather than just the children.</p> <p>This location is very difficult and as no one turned up we went and got a class from school who enjoyed the show.</p> <p>I thought the event was fantastic. The actors were brilliant. an exciting way to engage with people. although the £100 given was fine I don't know if in the future we would be able to give this fee as funding within the Council has been reduced significantly. Would love to do some thing similar again.</p> <p>The main success was the ability to promote by word of mouth, with the support of other venues. We had families who attended the event both at the children's centre and at the library. The library service now has no budget for activities, and events are solely funded by Friends Groups, and fund raising locally is limited. It was a pleasure to be able to offer a multicultural event to local families and promote the library as a multicultural venue in an area where this message is difficult to communicate. The offer of free food, and the event being after school hours certainly helped to make this a success.</p> <p>Families reported they enjoyed the concept of having a theatre performance in the community, however feedback from some parents was that they had felt it was aimed at the wrong age range as many children aged 3 are already accessing nursery provision, therefore we had lots of 2 year olds attending, they also felt the concept of the story which incorporated time was very difficult for the children to grasp.</p> <p>Generally children responded to the performance in awe but not sure they understood what was happening, a few children were frightened at times throughout the show.</p> |
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