

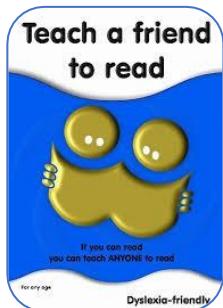
Case Study 2020 Training and Awareness Raising

Since Let's Talk Reading (LTR) started, we have worked to raise the awareness of the importance and benefits of families reading for pleasure with their children, and services available for adults to want to improve their own reading within organisations working with families. We have offered sessions to Suffolk County Council Family Support Workers, Children's Centres, Ipswich Borough Council Housing Officers, Charities working with vulnerable families and Teaching Assistants.

While it is not always possible to assess separately what Let's Talk Reading have contributed to professionals and the families they work with; the feedback received from people working with families about the LTR training sessions they have attended shows the influence of our work.

A parent who was unable to read

A family support worker approached us after an awareness raising session, to ask for a copy of our '**Teach a Friend to Read**' book (TaFTR)¹. She had been working on Child Protection Plans for a family with three under 5's and if things didn't improve in the family, the children were likely to come into care. The mother of the family had mental health problems and she couldn't manage the children during the day because she kept falling asleep. In conversation, the family support worker found that the mother's medication had been changed. When she looked at the pack, it was clear that the mother needed to take the medication at night, not in the morning as she had been doing. The mother told the family support worker that she couldn't read and had always asked the doctor or the pharmacist to tell her about the children's medication but hadn't thought to do it for herself. She was so embarrassed and had never admitted that she could not read. Changing the time she took her prescription made a big difference to her parenting. The family support worker took one of our free TaFTR books away so that she could help the mother to **begin to learn to read**.



Teaching Assistant Training

The University of Suffolk put on a professional development event for Teaching Assistants. Let's Talk Reading ran two workshops to raise awareness of the **importance of reading for pleasure** with children and the impact for families where parents struggle to read. We gave a presentation about reading, modelled reading a story sack, discussed scenario activities followed by an opportunity for the Teaching Assistants to explore a wide range of books and talk about their reading experiences with one another.

In the session, the discussion demonstrated that the presentation had been thought provoking and introduced them to new information and ideas, and their feedback to the University was that it had been a very useful opportunity.

I found the reading workshop... inspiring to encourage reading and love of books.

Two years later, one of the Let's Talk Reading trainers met one of the course attendees. She remembered the trainer and the session and talked about **the difference it had made to her practice**: how she had talked to many colleagues in her primary school about the impact of front facing buggies on children's language development; the use of mobile phones and social media on children's communication; and the importance and benefits of reading for pleasure rather than just the focus on literacy in school.

¹ Teach A Friend to Read books are available free in the community to Ipswich residents or by contacting LTR. We are grateful to the support of the author Libby Coleman in discounting the book price so that we can distribute copies widely throughout Ipswich to support struggling readers.

Family Support Worker Training and Children's Centre staff meeting

The LTR Coordinator and the Lead Early Years Advisor (volunteer) have delivered family support worker training to raise awareness of the **importance of parents reading with their children** and the impact for families where **parents struggle to read**. Immediate feedback has been that the input has been useful in introducing new ideas and broadening understanding.



The Early Years Advisor encountered a member of staff from a Children's Centre who had been at Family Support worker awareness raising in 2018 and at a Children's Centre training meeting in 2020. She talked about the passion and enthusiasm which she experienced from the Let's Talk Reading presentations and the opportunity to talk and explore books during the session. How that had influenced her understanding of the way in which books could be used in **helping parents to bond with their children** and as a tool in her work, rather than being an 'extra' in a child's life.

Inspiring Reading and Learning with Picture Books and Family Literacy Training

In June 2018 Let's Talk Reading responded to discussions with local early years settings and schools about the need for Reading Training. Early years settings told of staff who lacked confidence to read a book aloud and schools spoke of teachers who did not know how to read children's books or choose books to inspire children to read. LTR turned to Anne Harding to create some bespoke training for our wide variety of settings, age groups and professionals. Anne put together two training sessions: Inspiring Reading and Learning with Picture Books in Early Years, KS1 and KS2; and Family Literacy to look at parental engagement. **LTR funded 30 places per course** so that local professionals could access the training for FREE.

The picture book training session was attended by librarians, early years staff and leaders, and teachers. Anne brought a fabulous selection of picture books for early years, KS1 and KS2 readers. We talked about **why picture books are special**: the combination of pictures and words; the pictures are a window deeper into the book; they help younger children with their feelings and empathy; rhyme, repetition and rhythm; parents who struggle to read can share a book with their child and they remove the fear factor of not being able to read.

We explored what happens when you read aloud to children through exploring the books and lots of discussion. It is vital for the Reader – the Storyteller – to know the book before they share it and read the book aloud to children. **When we read aloud to children, we are...**

- sparking imagination and curiosity
- giving them our attention, our quality time
- creating communication between the ages – child, parent, grandparent, sibling
- giving words including wider vocabulary, unusual vocabulary, feeding vocabulary to equip children to read themselves
- aiding comprehension through context: prediction, helps with an understanding of the world, inference and deduction
- developing attention spans through sitting and listening
- developing thinking skills on complex issues, understanding layers meaning which are made accessible because children love picture books

A really inspiring session, reminding why it is important to share picture books with children of all ages.

Fantastic session which has inspired a new injection of life with books which I cannot wait to take back to the setting. It has certainly inspired my next staff meeting with a focus on picture books and discussions which I cannot wait to lead.

The sessions gave the professionals working with children confidence to read more picture books aloud, ideas for picture books to target different age groups, inspiration for using picture books more productively and ideas to support families reading.