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## Reading Together: Improving Reading Outcomes for Children in Care

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council

We are pleased to be able to share the results of the Reading Together Programme with you all. We would like to thank all of you for the time and effort you invested in our study. Even during such a difficult year, we were delighted by the responses from foster carers and children.

Overall, the trial found no evidence that the Reading Together Programme had any additional effect on the reading skills and attitudes of children. However, given the trial took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not possible to determine how much of this may have been due to the impact of the national lockdown. Promisingly though, children on the Reading Programme did progress as expected for their age groups, despite the pandemic enforced lockdowns.

We were able to carry out interviews with a sample of foster carers and children who had taken part in the Reading Together Programme. The interviews found that the Reading Together programme itself – that included the book-parcels received, the handbook and the in-person training provided – were all well-received by the children and foster carers respectively. Although reading levels did not improve as a result of the handbook or training, the interviews revealed that the programme may possibly have had a positive impact on relationships between foster carers and children and may have sustained their progress during the pandemic. However, this finding would need to be confirmed through further research.

Ultimately, the findings of this study are inconclusive regarding whether a book-gifting programme, enhanced with the introduction of paired reading, can be effective in improving the reading skills of children in foster care. Whilst the programme showed no evidence that Reading Together was effective, it is not possible to determine whether this was due to the ineffectiveness of the programme itself or the profound impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown on the ability to deliver the programme as intended and also its major impact on day-to-day lives and routines of children and their foster carers.

We extend our thanks again for the huge efforts made by foster carers and children to complete the Reading Together Programme as best as they could, given the unforeseen circumstances. We are very grateful to you all.

For further details and access to the full report please refer to the project website:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/readingtogether/>