

# Our Walk Down



## Story Streets

### Encouraging Families to Read Together

Carlow County Library Service's Contribution  
to the national Right to Read Campaign 2019

2019



  
**Plain  
English**  
Approved by NALA

**Library Supports for Marginalised,  
Socially Excluded and Disadvantaged Communities**



“Thanks a mill for giving us this opportunity, we would have never thought that a programme like this would work so well for families.”

Facilitator



## Carlow County Library Service

Our Walk Down Story Streets – Encouraging Families to Read Together

1st Edition

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### Policy context of project

*Story Streets* is one of Carlow County Library Service’s 2019 contributions to the national Right to Read<sup>1</sup> campaign. Right to Read is in turn part of the National Public Library Development Plan, *Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities*<sup>2</sup> and other local plans.

We are delighted that the initiative was approved and supported by the Department of Rural & Community Development within the 2019 Right to Read programming focus, which addresses library supports for marginalised, socially excluded and disadvantaged communities.

Championed by Carlow County Council’s Elected Members and Management Team, the *Story Streets* project supports the County’s Local Economic and Community Plan, 2016 – 2021<sup>3</sup>, specifically in the areas of undermining disadvantage among new communities and Traveller families.

### Place names and thanks

Muinebheag and Bagenalstown are the Irish and English names for the same place; people use both. Muinebheag is the official name and it’s pronounced like ‘money beg’. In this report, we use the name Muinebheag, except when Bagenalstown is part of the official name of an organisation or venue, for example, Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre.

**We thank everyone who participated in *Story Streets*.**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.librariesireland.ie/services/right-to-read>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.librariesireland.ie/local-libraries/learn-about-your-local-library/libraries-ireland-2022>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/Enterprise-Development/Local-Economic-and-Community-Plan-LECP-/LE, p33 +34>



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## About the Executive Summary

This summary tells you about *Story Streets* and its exciting results, conclusions and recommendations to promote greater family literacy. We wrote this summary in plain English so anyone could learn about the project. You can read the full detail in the main report.

### What was *Story Streets* and why did it take place?

*Story Streets* was a family literacy research project set in three disadvantaged communities in Carlow.

*Story Streets* aimed to:

- encourage families to read together
- help people who don't use the library to join and start to use their local public library
- help library staff to improve the ways they involve people in their local public library
- develop a learning model to help community development.

The learning model was a structured way of organising and encouraging families to enjoy the benefits of reading and using their local public libraries. We developed this learning model for *Story Streets* and hope that other projects can use it and adapt it for their needs.

Twenty-eight families in three towns, Muinebheag, Carlow and Tullow took part in eight workshops offered during October and November 2019. *Story Streets* aimed to include families who are traditionally hard-to-reach and who had never used library services. This means families who may come from disadvantaged groups such as Irish Travellers and new Irish; that is people new to Ireland. It aimed to reach children aged 4 – 9 years old and their families.

Workshops ran in community centres and local libraries. Facilitators came from the staff in community centres. Carlow and Tullow had one facilitator each, while in Muinebheag two staff shared the work.

### Who ran the project?

Carlow County Library Service led *Story Streets* and worked with three community centres as partners. They were:

1. St. Catherine's Community Services Centre, Carlow
2. Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre, Muinebheag
3. Forward Steps Family Resource Centre, Tullow

Each partner paid for its own organisation costs, and publicised and promoted the project. The library service provided books and learning materials to the centres.

Library management used grant aid to pay for:

- three facilitators for 30 hours each
- researchers to do the research and produce the report
- the project record which included this report, a booklet, a brochure, photos and a video
- sending the project record to all interested people.

### What was the background of the families who took part?

Twenty-eight adult participants took part and came from 12 different ethnic backgrounds. Ethnic background means where the adult comes from originally. For example, if you were born in Poland and moved to Ireland and started a family here, your ethnic background is Polish and your child's is Polish-Irish.

The country of origin of parents were:

- Chinese 2
- English 1
- Irish 7
- Irish Traveller 4
- Latvian 6
- Lithuanian 2
- Pakistani 1
- Polish 1
- Romanian 1
- Russian 1
- South African 1
- Zimbabwean 1

You can read the percentage of the adult participants by ethnic background in the table opposite. Two groups made up 78% of the total number of participants with 39% each. They were:

- Irish people – settled (25%) and Traveller (14%)
- people who are non-Irish but EU citizens (39%).

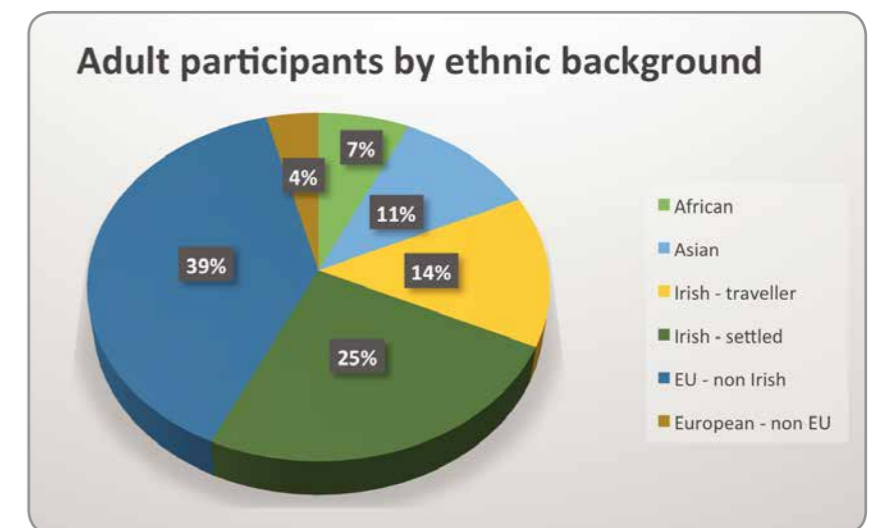


Table 1: Percentage of adult participants by ethnic or geographic background

Families were represented mainly by mothers, with 1– 3 children each ranging in ages from 0 – 11 years. Among the adults, levels of education and English language literacy skills varied, but they were low overall. Predictably, reading and writing skills were poorer than oral skills. You can see more detail about English language literacy levels in the table below. Many had high levels of education in their native language, several to 3rd level.

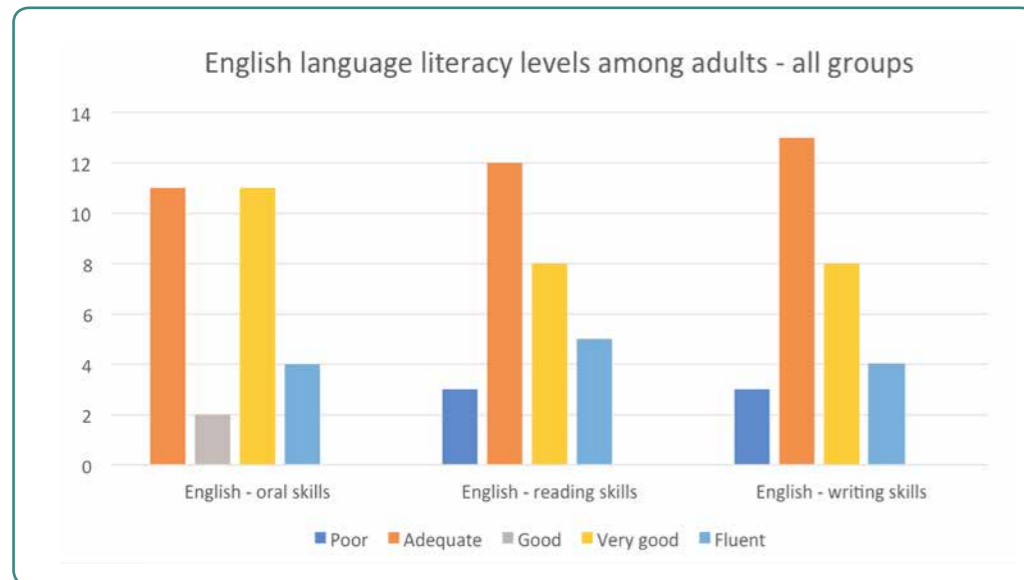


Table 2: English Language Literacy Levels among Adults – All Groups

### What was the structure of the learning model?

The project team created a workshop format as part of the learning model with six parts for families to complete together. The facilitators were free to adapt the workshop depending on their group’s needs. This format had six parts initially (see below); step 4 was discarded early in the programme as the photocopies were dull and discouraging.

- 1. Story time:** Families shared and read a core children’s book. The book was selected to be shared among the ten families.
- 2. Craft activities:** Families did a craft activity around the core book at first and other books later. Facilitators used a “Book-in-a-Box” element. Families created items associated with the core book, stored them in their story box and used them as props for storytelling.
- 3. Home reading:** Families read, discussed and shared the books chosen for the previous week with focus on reading together. There was also focus on encouraging independent use of the local library.
- 4. Home reading of core book:** Facilitators gave families photocopies from the core book for reading at home.
- 5. Snack / break time.**
- 6. Home reading of new book for next week:** Families selected a new book from a collection provided by the library service.

### How was the learning model tested and changed?

The three groups met weekly and followed the workshop format. The facilitators adapted the model to suit their group’s needs.

- Muinebheag followed the workshop model most closely. Its craft activity was themed around creating puppets that became props for storytelling.
- In Tullow, activities focused on vocabulary and literacy games.
- Carlow adopted a free-style approach with families free to create various craft items individually.

During week 5, there was a story time workshop with a professional storyteller.

We wanted children and parents to interact together with the books. The diversity of cultural backgrounds, literacy levels and age-range of children meant that groups were dynamic and full of energy.

### What were the results of Story Streets?

#### Story Streets successfully:

1. Provided a fun-based, learning experience for the 27 families that completed the project.
2. Tested the learning model for group work and learning with books and reading at its heart.

#### The results also included:

3. High participation and completion rates
4. Introduced participants to book borrowing
5. Interesting outcomes for the library and community services
6. New achievements for Carlow County Library Service.

Let’s look at each of these results in turn.

### 1. Provided a fun-based, learning experience for the 27 families that completed the project

Parents and children appreciated the project and valued:

- reading together at home and chatting about the books read
- spending time together as a family
- visiting the local library – they found it a relaxed and welcoming experience
- meeting weekly in their group to socialise and make new friends.

“I love to sit down with my kids. This is the only chance I get in the week to be so close with my child.”

Mother, Tullow.



### 2. Tested the learning model for group work

On top of the literacy and reading elements, community development workers believe the project helped to:

- encourage adults and children to socialise and communicate with each other
- increase participants’ self-esteem and confidence
- strengthen family bonds through me-time created by the workshops
- promote cultural integration and community interaction through a common interest.

While *Story Streets* demonstrated the power of books and shared reading for family and community development, its short duration meant that it did not meet its goal of helping families develop the habit of going to the library. This would need more support over a longer period.

At the end of the project, the groups did not stay together. However, library and some community services organisations committed to continuing support for project members as long as they have resources to do so.

### 3. High participation and completion rates

We wanted to see if families stayed involved for the whole project and judged it as a success if they did. As 27/28 families completed *Story Streets*, we believe the learning model works.

All the families selected books from the collections provided to the community centres, read them at home and then shared their reading experiences with the group each week. Twenty-six families attended the finale events where they shared what they learned from the project.

Families that visited the library most frequently also attended all or most of the workshops. These two activities supported each other.

You can read the levels of attendance of participants for each week in the table below. The attendance levels were similar across the three different groups. Attendance was high throughout the course with a drop in Week 5, which was a mid-term break. A red **library** means that week’s workshop took place in the library.

Town	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	mid-term Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
<b>Carlow</b> 11 Families	8	11 <sup>4</sup> library	9	10	5 library	9	8	10 library
<b>Muinebheag</b> 11 Families	8	9 library	9	7	6	8	7	9 library
<b>Tullow</b> 11 Families	8	6	5 library	7 library	6	7	5	7 library

Table 3: Number of families <sup>4</sup> Two other families attended also but were not part of the project.

### 4. Introduced participants to book borrowing

16/28 families borrowed books from the local library twice or more over the life of the project, as well as selecting books from the community centres.

However, 8/28 families did not borrow from the library. We believe low literacy levels and English as a new language for the parents were the main reasons for this.

Although 11/28 families borrowed from the library on three or more occasions, 80% of the borrowings happened when families attended workshops in the library.

Due to its short duration, the project did not achieve the aim of participants developing the habit of visiting the library on their own outside the project.



## 5. Interesting outcomes for the library and community services

- New relationships between public library and community services were developed. The project revealed the shared concerns, complementary skills, and good practices available across both sectors.
- Community services staff experienced a new way of working.
- Development workers saw how book-based activities could positively affect the experiences of vulnerable people.
- Carlow County Library Service showed it can further the objectives of countywide strategies.

## 6. New achievement for Carlow County Library Service

*Story Streets* saw Carlow County Library develop its services in new ways.

1. Already active in country-wide research, *Story Streets* is Carlow County Library Service's first self-directed, countywide research initiative.
2. *Story Streets* is also its first Carlow-wide collaboration with family-based, community services.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

We have 12 conclusions with recommendations for each which can be seen on page 40 of this report. We hope they will promote the further development of family literacy projects at county and at national level. We are very pleased with the results of this short project and hope to develop it and to inspire others.

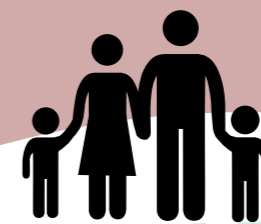
## Next steps:

- **Investigate sources of funding to continue and expand the programme.**
- **Continue to build and improve partnerships with the three centres involved.**
- **Share our learnings with Irish Public Library Services, the Local Government Management Agency and other interested bodies to support the running of similar programmes.**



**“Some parents have explained that this is giving them that special time to spend with their children that can be hard to do in their busy lives.”**

**Facilitator**



# 1 Introduction

1.1 *Story Streets* is a community based, family literacy and library access, research project led by Carlow County Library Service. Set within disadvantaged communities, the project sought to:

- support family reading in the home
- help non-library users to join and use their local public library
- from learnings, refine current practice to assist other non-users to become engaged library patrons.

1.2 Participation was open to families with no previous use of library lending services<sup>8</sup>.

1.3 Twenty-eight *hard-to-reach* families in three towns, Carlow, Muinebheag and Tullow, participated in a programme of eight weekly workshops offered during October and November 2019.

1.4 Two family resource centres and one community services centre partnered the library service in delivering the project which was run in those centres and in local libraries.

The centres were:

1. St. Catherine's Community Services Centre, Carlow
2. Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre, Muinebheag
3. Forward Steps Family Resource Centre, Tullow

## Policy context

1.5 The *Story Streets* research project is one of Carlow County Library Services' 2019 contributions to the national Right to Read<sup>9</sup> campaign. This in turn is part of the National Public Library Development Plan, *Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities*<sup>10</sup>.

1.6 The initiative was approved by the Department of Rural & Community Development and supported through the 2019 Dormant Accounts Funding Scheme which promotes library supports for marginalised, socially excluded and disadvantaged communities.

<sup>8</sup> Use of the library [1] by children as part of school visits and [2] by adults for printing and computer use only were not barriers to participation.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.librariesireland.ie/services/right-to-read>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.librariesireland.ie/local-libraries/learn-about-your-local-library/libraries-ireland-2022>

1.7 Championed by Carlow County Council's Management Team, the *Story Streets* project partially fulfils the Library Services' remit within Carlow County Council's Development Plan 2015 – 2021<sup>11</sup> and is a development out of the Council's Right to Read Literacy Action Plan, 2018<sup>12</sup>. The project also supports the county's Local Economic and Community Plan, 2016 – 2021<sup>13</sup>, specifically in the areas of reducing disadvantage among new communities and traveller families.

1.8 The Council's Culture, Libraries and Digital Development, Tourism, Enterprise and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee supported the project from its beginning. The County's Children and Young People's Services Committee was also engaged.

## Carlow Library Firsts

1.9 While Carlow County Library Service has always contributed to country-wide library development programmes, *Story Streets* was its first county wide, self-directed, research project.

Library management also used *Story Streets* to pilot a first strategic alliance with three family-focused, community services agencies in the county.

These innovations influenced management's approach and priorities.

## Project Aims and Objectives

1.10 Following project approval and first steps towards its delivery, aims and objectives were refined to the following.

**Aim:** To introduce library services to non-users within disadvantaged communities in urban settings throughout County Carlow.

<sup>11</sup> <http://carlow.ie/wp-content/documents/uploads/carlow-county-dev-plan-2015-2021.pdf> Chapter 7.2.6

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.carlow.ie/wp-content/documents/uploads/Right%20to%20Read%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Carlow/Enterprise-Development/Local-Economic-and-Community-Plan-LECP-/LE>, p33 +34



**Objectives:**

1. The main aim was divided into five objectives. Run a programme of community-based, learning activities for family groups and:
  - run workshops linked by a common theme to engage disadvantaged families with books, reading and libraries
  - record the programme elements and their composition
  - measure:
    - participants levels of engagement
    - the programme’s impact on library service usage.
2. Partner with organisations supporting inclusion, community education and family development that parallel library objectives
  - Note the roles of all partners, inputs and resource requirements overall for the project.
3. Review opportunities for future development
4. Create a project model, for application more extensively
5. Publish and disseminate research results.

**Research Methodology**

- 1.11 An independent researcher interacted with the project management structure which comprised:
  - three town teams of local library staff and the partnering community services organisation including their designated facilitators
  - a lead management team based in library headquarters in Carlow.
- 1.12 In addition to briefing and desk research (literature reviews and so on), one-to-one interviews were held with the county librarian, the project leader and the three facilitators, and with the community services’ organisation managers towards the end of the project.

To help analyse the achievements within workshops, a list of areas for interest was circulated weekly to the facilitators. The achievements of each workshop were discussed, noted and circulated to the facilitator, local library staff and project leader. Some emerging topics for use in workshops were noted and researched for use in future programmes.

- 1.13 The researcher attended and observed at three workshops in each town and visited with local library staff. Responding to the nature of the overall participant profile, plans for the researcher to liaise with them formally were not put in place. Entry and exit questionnaires were replaced by more extensive engagement with facilitators and informal chats with some participants during workshops.
- 1.14 Data analysed included individual participant profiles linked to workshop attendances and library borrowing patterns.
- 1.15 The approach has provided a diverse and rich range of valuable comment, from participants at varying stages of development. This report identifies the common themes and the stronger priorities that emerge from all the contributors.



## 2 The Story Streets Project Plan

### Structure and Management

#### Structure

**2.1 Purpose** – The model group was made up twenty-eight families, three groups of families in three Carlow towns. The model proposed to

- introduce the families to the experience the leisure and pleasure of reading – the joy of books and reading, together at home in the family and in group work at project venues,
- address any reservations among the families about using their local public library,
- help families understand and use some library services,
- grow neighbourhood and community cohesion by offering an opportunity for families to socialise, chat, support each other and learn informally.

**2.2 Approach** – Experimental, enabling, holistic, flexible, inclusive.

#### 2.3 Activity

- For the families – eight, weekly workshops for up to two hours each, during October and November 2019 within which one was a performance by a professional storyteller.
  - Six took place in the local community development centres.
  - Two took place in the local library.
- For the staff – one training/staff development workshop on storytelling practice and on engaging with family groups.

**2.4 A flexible formula for each workshop** was created. Six elements suggested were:

1. Story Time: Read and share a core children’s book, selected to be shared among the ten families.
2. Craft Activities: This related to the core book initially and extended to other books later. This was centred around a “Book-in-a-Box” element, where families created items associated with the core book, stored them in their story box and used them as props for storytelling.
3. Home Reading: Families read, discussed and shared the books chosen for the previous week with focus on reading together. Also focus on encouraging independent use of the local library.
4. Home Reading of Core Book: Distribute pages from core book for reading at home
5. Snack / Break Time.
6. Home Reading of New Book for Next Week: Select a new book from a collection provided by the library service.

### Outputs and Outcomes Anticipated

**2.5** Anticipated project **outputs** were for each group were as follows:

- For the families – library membership, the craft box, a copy of the core book, library membership, a book-token incentive for all who completed the programme.
- For the **community services centres** – another service for their clients.
- For the library service – additional members, a first self-directed research project.
- For the partnership – a project record though photographs, video and a written report.

**2.6** Anticipated **outcomes** were:

- For the families – pleasure in shared reading, learning through fun, time out together, confidence using the local library, increased self-esteem, growth in friendships and neighbourliness.
- For the libraries – staff engagement in service-wide research, a new learning experience that would improve services, a new collaboration, higher profile within community development, enhanced leadership skills and new strategic partners.
- For community services centres – a new collaboration, another way of working and an improved understanding of library roles and of capacity for working together.

### How the project was managed

**2.7** The project was created, led and overseen by the library service at executive librarian level, supported by the county librarian.

### Strategic Collaboration

**2.8** Library management initiated the partnership with Family Resource and Community Centres to ensure access to cohorts of disadvantaged families: these are a distinct client group of the partner organisations.

**2.9** Project facilitators were identified, one in each centre. Their expertise was in adult education, community development and family support. These facilitators led the project locally. Responsibility for selecting the participating families rested with the centres.

## Communications

- 2.10 Since it was a new partnership for the library service, priority was given to in-depth understanding of the remit of the centres and to building trusting relationships at management and project level. Five meetings were held with facilitators throughout the project and shared training for centre and library staff was planned.
- 2.11 Library staff received a written project outline before the project started and contact with library management as required thereafter. Local library staff and their facilitator liaised informally by phone and by frequent visits to the library.
- 2.12 A project researcher supported communications by liaising with the facilitators and library staff weekly. A photo and video snapshot record of the project and publication of project findings occurred.

## Resource Allocation

- 2.13 Each partner provided accommodation, communications and administrative support within its own service for its component.
- 2.14 The library service provided books and related reading materials.
- 2.15 Expertise and materials available at centres for other programmes there were applied to the project.
- 2.16 Grant aid, sourced by library management from the Dormant Funds Account, was applied to thirty hours work for each facilitator, project recording, report and publicity materials and independent research.

## Publicity and Promotion

- 2.17 In view of the client group prioritised, discreet publicity was targeted in the initial phase of the project. Centres liaised directly with their existing client base and in some cases prioritised families that staff knew would benefit from participation. Word of mouth, trust and the nature of one-to-one contact were important.
- 2.18 The Carlow town centre liaised with home school liaison officers
- 2.19 Two centres produced posters in-house
- 2.20 Local schools were notified by the library service at project initiation and completion
- 2.21 The final workshop was a celebration held in the local library. As well as this report, an information leaflet and a booklet were distributed widely. Follow-up activities are planned with the participants for 2020.

## 3 Participants Profile

- 3.1 Participants were first identified and accepted by the three community services partners. Interest was high among *new Irish* families; these made up 60% overall of the cohort. The Tullow Group was 100% *new Irish* and in Muinebheag, 66% of participating adults were immigrants. Carlow town had the strongest representation of Irish families at 66%.

### Representation of Ethnic Backgrounds among Adults

- 3.2 Twenty eight of the thirty places available were taken. Twelve ethnic backgrounds were represented among the adults. The country of origin of parents were Chinese [2], English [1], Irish [7], Irish – Traveller [4], Latvian [6], Lithuanian [2], Pakistani [1], Polish [1], Romanian [1], Russian [1], South African [1] & Zimbabwean [1].

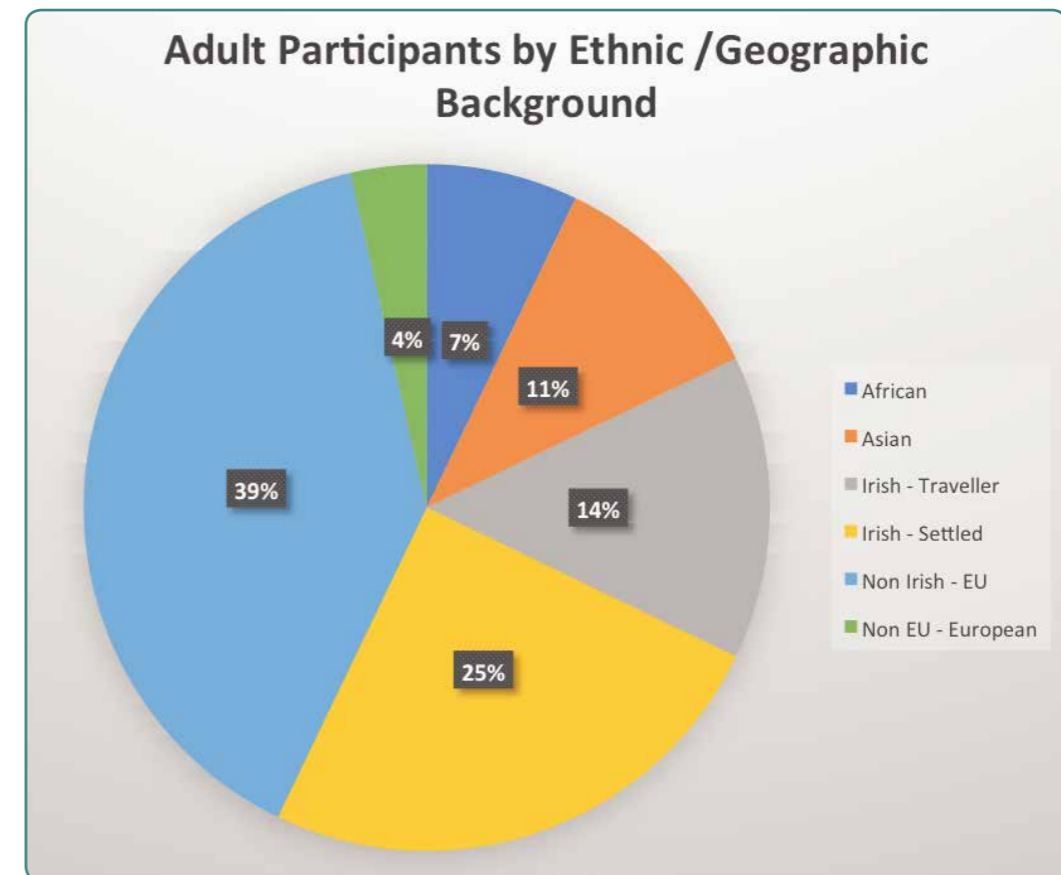


Table 4: Percentage of adult participants by ethnic or geographic background



3.3 The ethnic backgrounds of parents were distributed across the three groups as follows –

Ethnic background	Carlow	Muinebheag	Tullow	Total
Chinese		2		2
English	1			1
Irish - Settled	3	4		7
Irish Traveller	4			4
Latvian			6	6
Lithuanian	2			2
Pakistani	1			1
Polish		1		1
Romanian			1	1
Russian			1	1
South African		1		1
Zimbabwean		1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>28</b>

Table 5: Distribution of ethnic backgrounds of adults by group

Tullow served a group comprising three ethnic backgrounds among the adults, all new Irish. Both Muinebheag and Carlow involved adults from five ethnic backgrounds.

### Family make-up

3.4 Families were represented by one adult, the mother in all but one case, and up to three children. The breakdown was:

Carlow	11 adults	15 children
Muinebheag	09 adults	16 children
Tullow	08 adults	12 children – mainly boys
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 adults</b>	<b>34 children</b>

Table 6: Number of adults and children in groups

In addition, some mothers brought babies and toddlers to the workshops.

3.5 The programme was targeted at children aged 4 – 9 years old. In fact, children aged 0 – 11 years attended. 30/43 children had siblings.

### English Language Literacy Levels among Adults

3.6 Among adults, levels of comprehension in English<sup>14</sup> – spoken, read and written – varied significantly. Native Irish, English and African parents were judged most fluent, though several found reading and writing in English challenging. Other nationalities were more proficient in spoken English, but adequate at best in reading and writing.

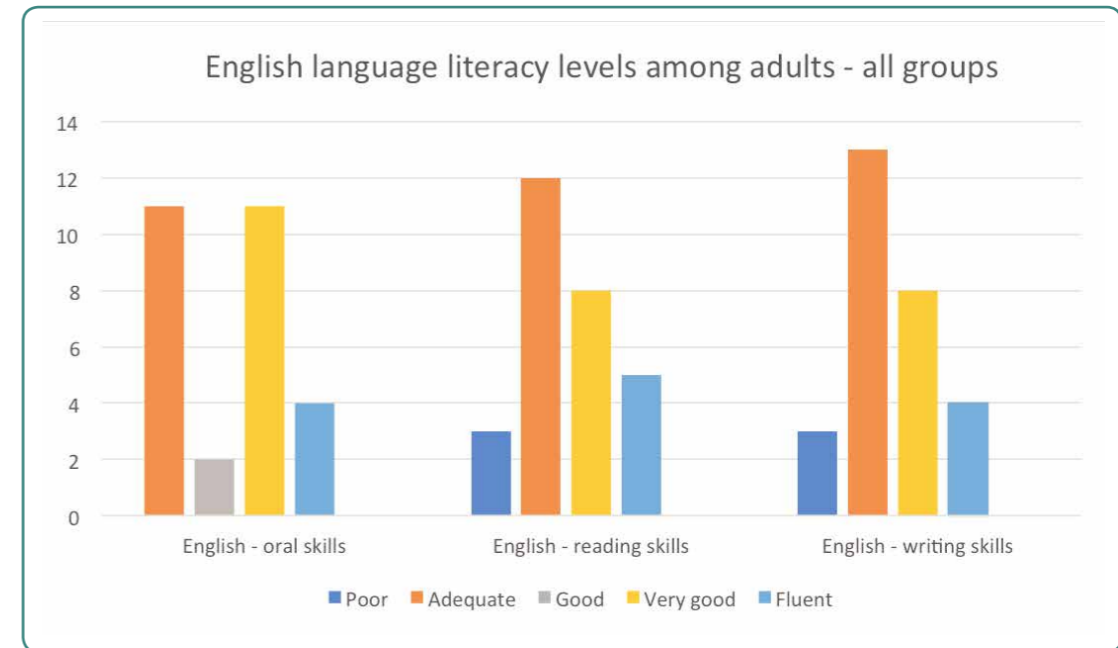


Table 7: English Language Literacy Levels among Adults – All Groups

### Community Support for Families

3.7 Across the three centres, 22/28 families were existing or previous clients. They had attended courses there previously and had used other support services.

3.8 Two centres, Muinebheag and Tullow, provided information regarding support available to families. In 9/17 cases, the main income earner in the family was in employment. In a further 7/17 cases, the family was primarily dependant on State support. No information was available in 1/17 cases.

<sup>14</sup> This was not tested formally, though Muinebheag did ask adults to fill out a simple Questionnaire – It’s your Life – midway through the process. In general, facilitators estimated levels of fluency based on their experience and observations.

The Tullow Group was the most challenged as the participants were all new Irish from Latvia, Romania and Russia with all adults there judged adequate across three aspects of English language literacy – oral, reading and writing skills.

In Muinebheag, all adults were considered to have very good oral skills. Three were poor in reading and writing English and the remaining six were very good in English reading and writing.

The Carlow group was the most diverse. Oral English skills covered four levels, with 8/11 categorised as good or above. In the other two aspects, 7/11 were judged to be very good or better at reading and writing English and 4 were judged adequate.

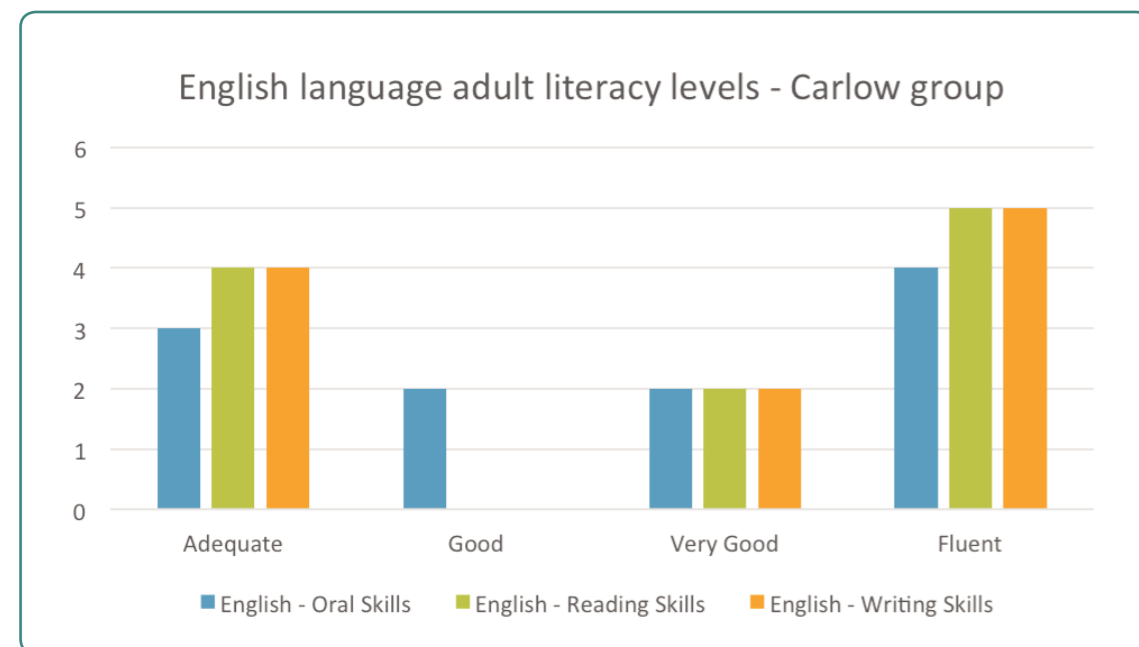


Table 8: English language adult literacy Levels – Carlow

## 4. The Story Streets Project Implementation

### Realised and Refined

**4.1** The participants profile impacted on the programme model almost immediately. The strong take-up by *new Irish* families, the ethnic diversity among adults and their range of literacy levels all required attention. The experimental approach and the high degree of autonomy that had been assigned to facilitators initially proved important.

### Initial Concerns

**4.2** In the preparation phase, concern had been expressed about the:

1. Low literacy levels of some participants
2. Nervousness about introducing family reading at home as a new activity and where children would be passed the tiny tots age (2-4 years old usually)
3. Adults’ lack of prior experience as readers or as listeners within shared reading
4. Preconceptions that the library would be perceived as irrelevant or not for them.

**4.3** Actions to address these potential barriers included:

- a) Provision, within the block loan to centres, of wordless books, non-fiction titles and richly illustrated books as well as picture books and fiction.
- b) Reading at home to be promoted as occurring at any time and place that would suit individual families.
- c) Reading at home to be done by any suitable family members. Priority was to be on the sharing, the cuddle and the chat around the story.
- d) Library membership forms and associated work to be completed before the first library visit.
- e) Borrowing to be immediate as part of the first library visit and focus on the library as a support for children. Another option advised was a very restricted reference to one or two services that may interest the adults, with the facilitator influencing the recommendation.

## Testing the Model

4.4 All three centres maintained the essential elements of the project and of the workshop structure in that:

- the core title was used
- books were shared and read aloud
- activities around the core story were organised
- families were encouraged to borrow books to read at home, from the project collection or from the local library.

4.5 Two library visits were organised within the programme as planned.

1. An introduction to services was offered by library staff. Facilitators led a linked activity. Families went home with lots of borrowings. While an introduction that was supported by the facilitators was essential, families seemed comfortable in the library. The enthusiasm of children to visit and for reading and storytelling energised the project.
2. The finale event was held in the library also.

Jean Broderick, Library Assistant, Tullow, noted after the first library tour:

“The tour went well. I felt the group was genuinely interested rather than there because they had to be! Most borrowed books before they left. Other people in the library at that time were interested also. They hung around and observed.”

4.6 The agreed workshop structure was refined when used with the three groups in Carlow, Muinebheag and Tullow. See [Table 11 on Page 30](#) for a synopsis.

4.7 Facilitators felt afterwards that more workshops could have been held in the library. The cautious approach had come from concern that the library might be seen as a daunting place, particularly for adults with poor literacy skills. Carlow and Tullow both based three workshops in the library. In any future project, centre staff suggested that more time could be spent in the library, especially where there is a separate room, and also made the following points.

1. The initial session should be in centre – a familiar place for participants. The Tullow facilitator emphasised that the “personal contact and sense of loyalty is important in encouraging less committed families to take part”.

2. Library staff should attend the first session in the centre and take ownership – due to lack of visibility of library staff, participants may have thought it was a community development initiative.
3. Library staff could engage more in programme delivery overall.

4.8 Libraries or centres hosted a story-time with professional storyteller, Simone Schuemmelfeder, in week 5. This was enjoyed by all.

4.9 A storytelling workshop for staff was provided also: centre staff found this, combined with the “demonstration” performance to families, helpful. Everyone said that they would have found it more beneficial had it been scheduled before or earlier in the project. Library staff could not be made available to attend as originally planned; this was unfortunate, a missed opportunity to liaise with colleagues in community development areas as well as the loss of the core learning for application to their own work.

Common Structure	Refinements Muinebheag <sup>15</sup>	Refinements Carlow	Refinements Tullow
<b>Project Core Book</b>	<i>Goldilocks</i>	<i>Little Red Hen</i>	<i>Red Riding Hood</i>
<b>1. Story Time</b>	Core book read weekly Story cards	Core book read weekly Story cards	Core book read weekly
<b>2. Craft Activities</b> around core book = Book in a Box	Craft element with everyone making the same item, applying a <i>puppets</i> theme. Some <a href="http://www.twinkl.ie">www.twinkl.ie</a> materials addressed aspects of core title.	Individualistic <i>free-style</i> approach. No direction or focus on a common item for creation. Box craft completed week 4. Some families doing craft element at home. One child writing stories. Children reading to group introduced in week 7.	Diverse and developed. Box completed by week 4. Some <a href="http://www.twinkl.ie">www.twinkl.ie</a> materials for core title applied. Activities had strong literacy and book focus. Bookmark: Book character treasure hunt: word searches: crosswords: masks: quizzes: Children reading to group introduced in week 7.
<b>3. Home Reading</b> Discuss books read at home	Draw picture from the book read at home. Explain picture and tell story to group. Parents and children separated for a period in several sessions	Hit and miss in chats with children and parents during workshop. Picture drawing introduced at week 6	Hit and miss in chats with children and parents during workshop. interested in increasing the number of workshops held in the library
<b>4. Home Reading of Core Book</b> Discuss books read at home	Discarded early	Discarded early	Discarded at week 2 – black and white photocopies were dull and discouraging
<b>5. Snack / Break Time</b>	Healthy	Healthy	Healthy
<b>6. Home Reading</b> New Book for Next Week	Book borrowed from public library included as option from week 3	Centre’s book selection replaced by book borrowed from public library at week 4	Book borrowed from public library used from week 2

Table 9: Learning Model and summary of its refinement for local conditions

<sup>15</sup> Introduced an “It’s my Life” profile type, data capture, Questionnaire for adults in workshop 3.



**4.10** Repeated reading of the core book at home was dropped quickly. However, the core book was important in the workshops. It helped to bond each group, energised active engagement in story-time and provided a basis for shared activities.

## Local Characteristics

**4.11** Detail within the original model was retained most closely in the case of Muinebheag. The craft element was based around a single theme: a range of different puppets types created during weeks 3-6 once the Story Box had been completed. At the celebratory finale, each family told the Goldilocks story to the group with their Story Box as a prop. The story was told also in Afrikaans and in Polish. Muinebheag developed a scrapbook to record the achievement of the project in photos, drawings and recorded quotes from the children.

**4.12** The Tullow experience aligned most closely with core library interests. As the Book-in-a-Box element moved to completion, activities with rich language and reading aspects were incorporated. Examples include: Word treasure hunts, crosswords, quizzes and so on. The finale event focused on children reading their chosen stories to the group.

**4.13** Carlow adopted the most *free-style* approach. Families developed individual outputs with the craft materials provided. Some families worked on their crafts at home. The Carlow facilitator explained how:

*“The free flow craft element, where families operate on their own initiative, was deliberate to suit age ranges of participants [rather than one common activity for all as occurred elsewhere]. Mixed skill levels of mums are not an issue since there are no skills expectations.”*

The finale event was a celebration of stories read, told and sung. One child read two stories she had written herself.

## Resources Supporting Book-based Activities

**4.14** The selected core titles had been the choice of the facilitators. Quality of some third party materials applied to support activities was mixed; this was balanced to some extent by the high quality of books available through loans to the centres. For some workshops, development of associated craft and related activities was a totally creative element for the facilitator, without support of online resources. This was time expensive. Library and community services staff reflected the following three points.

- Using several core titles books over the life of the project could be better and could address the wide age range of children involved.
- Selecting titles for which activities are already available would help – 10 /12 core titles would have been enough to serve the three sites.
- Investing in a small, centralised collection of the above and story bags or similar supports – that would be ringfenced for group work – could reduce research and preparation time for facilitators.

**4.15** The storyteller had also suggested a two-tier approach to serve the extended age range of the children. In view of the literacy levels of some adults, the wide range of engaged children was an advantage. Although it made the project more complex, it reinforced the family wide focus and created roles for older children as “helpers” to their younger siblings and to their mother.

**4.16** Facilitators were not and were not be expected to be experts in children’s literature. A body of library resources and professional practice is available to energise this element of project delivery.

**4.17** The very high levels of enthusiasm for books, storytelling and reading among children was a surprise to the facilitators. They had not expected book-based activity to be so popular. As the project progressed, facilitators and group members became more aware of the focus on reading and reading at home.

## Workloads and Roles

**4.18** Branch library staff were tentative about their role in the project. Informal contact with local facilitators was frequent and effective, particularly where relationships were already established. However, library contributions seemed to be reactive. Many staff would have had no prior experience in research management. Library staffs’ understanding grew as the project progressed. Everyone who engaged was enthusiastic and benefited from their contribution, their engagement with the families and the opportunity to liaise with local colleagues in community development.

**4.19** Facilitators were practitioners in family support and community development; as with library staff, the project provided a learning curve. Critically, Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre assigned two staff to its *Story Streets*. The facilitator there was supported by a colleague expert in early childhood learning, the only expert in this area available to the project. In Tullow and Carlow, assignment of two staff proved impossible, though, this had been attempted in the planning stages; the benefits of an increased level of support had been acknowledged.

**4.20** Lone working a programme, with family groups where children must be accompanied by an adult who of necessity must also bring other siblings, is demanding and complex. Engagement, within such a diverse range of ages and attention levels is difficult. In this project, facilitators working alone were challenged to:

1. maintain the flow and energy of workshops for such diverse groups over a two-hour period,
2. create time and space to support parents in their role while also engaging the children.

**4.21** Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre management was strong on the need for two staff to ensure the area of parental support could be covered. Greater involvement by local library staff could help create a more robust local management framework.

## 5 Levels of Engagement

**5.1** Overall, families stayed with the project to its end.

“Clients vote with their feet.  
The retention rates for this project are good.”

Manager, St Catherine’s Community Services, Carlow

### Attendance at Workshops

**5.2** Retention figures were in line with or above the norm for centre courses.

- 25/28 families attended five or more workshops.
- 23/28 attended six or more workshops
- 13 families attended all eight workshops

**5.3** By week four, groups were bonding, and the workshop formula was becoming familiar.

“The impact of the programme on persistently participating families is becoming clear. Families are now more confident and comfortable with books and libraries: families are more vocal and relaxed about reading at home and the amusing interactions it is supporting - e.g. real Mum’s real-life behaviour compared with My Mum is a Super Mum<sup>16</sup>!”

Facilitator, Tullow

<sup>16</sup> Angela McAllister, My Mum is a Super Mum. Scholastic Bks., 2015. ISBN: 978 1407147758

Attendances at the three centres dipped in week five, which was the mid-term holiday for schools. This had been expected to be a highlight week, with children free and families possibly more available for an inclusive event, hence the professional storyteller scheduled for that week. The lower attendance at the training workshop for staff was partly caused by a week of staffing pressure for all agencies. The red library below indicates that the workshop took place in the library and not the centre for that week.

Town	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5 Storyteller (mid-term)	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
<b>Carlow</b> [11 total]	8	11 <sup>17</sup> library	9	10	5 library	9	8	10 library
<b>Muinebheag</b> [9 total]	8	9 library	9	7	6	8	7	9 library
<b>Tullow</b> [8 total]	8	6	5 library	7 library	4	7	5	7 library

Table 10: Number of Families attending workshops each week

### Library Visits

5.4 Borrowing began with the library visit in week two at Carlow and Bagenalstown and in week three at Tullow.

5.5 Since a norm for regularity of library borrowing is not available, results are only indicative. Three weeks is the borrowing period applied across Carlow Public Libraries. On that basis, two borrowings over the life of the project would be a reasonable achievement.

Borrowing from the local library - Visits	0	1	2	3	4	Total
<b>Carlow Families</b>	1	0	3	4	3	11
<b>Muinebheag Families</b>	2	3	1	2	1	9
<b>Tullow Families</b>	5	1	1	0	1	8
<b>Total</b>	8	4	5	6	5	28

Table 11: Number of occasions over seven-week period when families borrowed from their local library

- 16/28 families borrowed from their local library on two or more occasions; 11/28 borrowed on three or more occasions.
- 6/28 families borrowed adult and well as children’s materials.
- 8/28 families did not borrow any books.

<sup>17</sup> Two other families attended also but were not part of the project.

Allowing that one visit was the supported “introduction” trip, 11/28 families borrowing on three or more times over seven weeks is a good result. The level of interest was high.

5.6 14/28 families borrowed on the same days as they also attended a workshop event in the library. Habit forming is slow, and it is most successful when linked into another established practice. Library visits and borrowing are both new habits. Group support and the associated activity of the workshop would have helped families engage in the borrowing practice. The end of the project removed that support.

5.7 5/8 families in Tullow did not use the public library at all. This figure is high. Mothers’ levels of literacy in English was lower in Tullow than in the other groups. Low levels of adult literacy may have impacted negatively on confidence using the library independently. In Tullow, the project prioritised vocabulary and literacy- based activities. For shared reading at home, we presume families borrowed from the collection deposited in the resource centre rather than from the library.

5.8 Carlow County Library Service has small book collections in other European and Middle Eastern languages. These collections are insufficient to meet need across the range of new communities in the county. The costs associated with extensive provision would be prohibitive. However, stock provision in native languages could be a draw for parents who struggle with reading and writing in English.

### Workshops Supporting Library Visits

5.9 It had been hoped that the supported library visits and the workshop activities relating to reading would encourage families to also visit the library independently, outside the project. This worked to a limited extent.

Regarding the fourteen families that borrowed during library-based workshops, borrowings on those occasions represented 80% [41/50] of the total number of transactions associated with the project. Most of the borrowing occurred within the structure of the project.

5.10 The families who attended the most workshops also visited the library more often.

- 13/28 families attended all the workshops: 11/13 borrowed from the library on two or more occasions.
- 4/28 attended seven: workshops; two families visited the library twice and two families visited three times.
- 6/28 families attended six workshops: four families visited the library twice or more.



Number of Library Visits						
Workshop Attendance	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	1					
2	1					
3						
4				1		
5	2					
6	2	1	1	1	1	
7		2	2			
8	2	1	5	3	1	1
<b>Total</b>	8	4	8	5	2	1

Table 12: Participation in Workshops compared with Library Visits for Borrowing

5.11 This indicates that:

1. Activities in libraries do support associated borrowing.
2. For this hard-to-reach client group, group-work and trust in the source encouraging library use is important.
3. Habit-forming and behaviour change requires long-term, on-going reinforcement.

5.12 2/28 attended five workshops: both visited the library once.

1/28 families attended four workshops and visited the library four times.  
 8/28 families did not borrow from the library. As the table below indicates, the parents' literacy skills had been listed as adequate or poor. Although all had been issued with library cards, 3/7 families missed the library services workshop.

	Total with 0 book loans	Missed library intro	Missed library visit 2	Missed library visit 3	Parent Literacy – Oral	Parent Literacy – reading	Parent Literacy – writing	Ethnic background – parent
Carlow	1	1	1	1	Very Good	Poor	Poor	English
Muinebheag	2	0	0		Adequate / Very Good	Adequate / Very Good	Adequate / Very Good	Irish, Polish
Tullow	5	1	0		Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Romanian, Russian, Latvian x3

Table 13: Partial profile of participants who did not borrow

5.13 Moving families from group-work to engaging independently with library services would be an important achievement. An eight-week programme is a brief period in which to establish new habits in families striving to live well despite many disadvantages. The analysis above suggests the groups need support over a longer period to develop [1] a library habit and [2] a habit that occurs independently.

5.14 The Carlow town Community Service's manager's comments on the sector engaged in the *Story Streets* project are important here.

"... the single biggest issue among clients is building confidence and self-worth. This is across every area of our services and is a bigger challenge than intelligence, personal circumstances, educational attainment."

And:

"Many new Irish mothers are trapped in the home when children are very young, and they may not develop good English skills there. Once the children attend school, the mothers are liberated in one way, but also can be left behind by their children whose English language fluency blossoms."

Echoing this perspective, Tullow Senior Library Assistant, Margaret Byrne, had noted in week three – "I think this project will achieve much in introducing the families to the library. However, I suspect that a more prolonged period of regular library visits will be needed to reinforce the habit."

## Feedback from the Participants

**5.15** A selection from the range of comments made by parents and children indicate some benefits families gained from participation in the project.

### Children

**"I like it when my Mummy reads to me at bedtime."**

Clodagh, 5 and a half years

**"I only brought home 1 book for myself from the library and I've used it already. It was really good and all about Beijing."**

Leo, 12 years

**"Our library is warm and cosy and colourful."**

Lucja, 7 years

**"I brought home 6 books and a DVD. I watched the movie and I've read 3 of the books. Tom Gates is my favourite."**

Tommy, 8 and a half years

### Parents

**"...lovely to come and sit down and have a cup of tea with other ladies..."**

Mother, Carlow

**"...being here with non-judgmental parents is a wonderful outlet for my son and myself..."**

Mother, Carlow

**"The children loved the library. I hadn't been before. It was relaxed and a great place in this bad weather. My two boys read all their books within a few days."**

Mother, Bagenalstown

**"I love to sit down with my kids. This is the only chance I get in the week to be so close with my child."**

Mother, Tullow

## 6 Project Outcomes

**6.1** Librarians recognise that the use of the information in books and through reading is powerful for:

1. the personal development of the reader individually
2. actions out of reading and understanding create change both at a personal level and as a community participant.

Librarians appreciate also that the community development capacity of public services can be undervalued.

### Increased Appreciation and Awareness

#### Another Driver for Community Development

**1.2** The Carlow town Community Services Centre Manager described the project as:

“a gateway ... another offer that could be made to its hard-to-reach clients and was attractive to e.g. travellers and new Irish in particular – people with concerns regarding literacy.”

In Tullow, the Resource Centre Manager highlighted how the project combined well in relation to delivery, in the local community, of prevention and early intervention programmes for the targeted sector.

### Books, Reading and Related Activity – mechanisms for Fun-based Family Support

**6.3** Community Services Managers have appreciated through this project that a quality book, used well, is a way to fuel activity and drive achievement leading to many benefits such as:

- within the home – increased self-esteem, better communication skills, creative activity, shared family time, growth in parental skills
- outside the home – more socialisation, increased neighbourliness and more integrated communities.

**6.4** The Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre Manager said that now that the Model's capacity has been demonstrated, it would seek to undertake similar projects. In the short-term there are plans to incorporate elements into what already happens. The non-judgemental, neutral, activity-based nature of Story Streets makes it applicable across ranges of environments. Some examples suggested can be read below.

- Supporting access visits for parents of children-in-care using introductory ‘ice-breakers’
- Helping people with mental health issues
- Developing children and young adults of all ages and abilities
- Supporting families across a range of interests, such as healthy eating and exercise.

**6.5** The expertise of library staff, in recommending stock and in identifying material that is accessible and engaging while also addressing relevant issues around relationships, values, conflict and its resolution was essential.

### A Model that Harnesses Shared Values and Practice

**6.6** Anne Shortall, Manager, Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre, described the *Story Streets* Model as a perfect “self-learning / learn by doing” product.

1. Self-esteem was increased for adults and children. Improved self-esteem of the mother is prioritised for its powerful impact on all family members
2. Children valued “me time” with their parent
3. Communications within families developed
4. Children grew in confidence, language skills and capacity to assert themselves. Provision of social interaction and group work opportunities for children beyond school and the family setting are valuable.

### Aspirations for Continuing Collaboration

**6.7** Within community development, the library service has demonstrated its capacity to manage and lead, and to further the objectives of several county-wide and cross-sectoral strategic structures, such as Children and Young People's Services Committee<sup>18</sup> and the principles of the Social Inclusion Activation Programme within the Carlow County Development Partnership<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.cypsc.ie/your-county-cypsc/carlow.195.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://carlowdevelopment.ie/social-inclusion-community-activation-programme-framework/>



## A New Way of Working

**6.8** Community Services Centres managers mentioned the priority assigned to prescribed activity in their sector. Both Bagenalstown and Tullow community services valued the flexibility and experimental approach adopted within both the project design and delivery mechanism.

*“Story Streets offered a rare opportunity to work outside the box and to be creative. This experimental aspect is very important for organisational development as well as for programmes and clients. The holistic approach – develop as you go – was essential to ensure the framework could be adapted to suit the emerging needs of the client group as it became more established.”*

Manager, Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre

From a related perspective, the Tullow facilitator suggested that:

*“many of the family development and support activities otherwise provided are specific in their design and purpose. The free style nature of this project, the deliberately creative and loose structure may be revealing behaviour and skills gaps among participants very quickly compared with other programmes.”*

## Shared Policy Interests

**6.9** *Story Streets* as an initiative involved many shared policy interests such as literacy, lifelong learning, integration of new and existing communities and community development. It demonstrated a capacity for “Whole-of-Government” approach to societal change. The project holds messages for Departments of Education & Skills, Health, Children and Youth Affairs as well as Community and Rural Affairs. Policy areas that associated with the project include:

- life-long, informal and community learning
- second chance education
- undermining of rural isolation
- community/neighbourliness development as well as family development
- integration.

## Future Co-operation

**6.10** Although both Tullow and Carlow mentioned resource constraints, all the organisations hope to continue to work together. Opportunities identified include:

1. Sustaining continuity for the participants in the *Story Streets* initiative
2. Shared staff learning across organisations, both arising from and leading to improved understanding of each other’s roles
3. Projects targeted at selected sectors within local communities
4. Library contributions to some existing programmes
5. Stand-alone brief interventions addressing particular issues.



## 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Below we present 12 conclusions with recommendations for each. We hope they will promote the further development of family literacy projects at county and at national level. We are very pleased with the results of this short project and hope to develop it and to inspire others.

### Conclusion 1: The learning model works

The learning model succeeded as a flexible, resilient, framework for learning in a community and as a way to introduce families to public library services. Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre described the model as a new way of working. The framework can be useful as is or it can be changed to suit the needs of particular groups or other workshops. [4.4 – 4.10 in main report]

#### Recommendations from conclusion 1:

- Continue to test the model.
- Continue to work with interested community services.
- Support and monitor their use of the model across their range of services.

Person responsible for these actions: **Project Leader.**

### Conclusion 2: The Story Streets project can be applied to different groups

Applied to the Story Streets project, the learning model worked well with three diverse, multi-cultural family groups. Twenty-seven hard-to-reach families across three towns completed an eight-week programme of workshops. They also joined their local public library [5.1 – 5.15 in main report].

#### Recommendation from conclusion 2:

- Renew the project as resources allow.

Person responsible for these actions: **Project Leader.**

### Conclusion 3: The learning model works

Families developed enthusiasm for reading, books and sharing their experiences. The project's short duration was not enough to create the habit of going often to the library. Families need ongoing support to continue using the local library [5.13 and 5.14 in main report].

#### Recommendations from conclusion 3:

- Prioritise the participants for attendance at relevant library events.
- Use community services staff to champion ongoing engagement.
- Monitor library use and borrowing for a further one-year period and record the experience.

Person responsible for these actions: **Project Leader.**

### Conclusion 4:

#### Resources are needed for the learning model to use it throughout the county

We believe the learning model will continue to thrive within the family support and childcare sector. Modest investment will make it easier apply throughout Carlow [4.14 in main report].

#### Recommendation from conclusion 4:

- Set up a collection of books and related activity materials, available specifically for group work.

Person responsible for this action: **Project Leader.**

**Conclusion 5:**  
**Library staff can be involved more in the design and delivery of projects**

Including more staff in workshops is essential. By having two facilitators, the Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre ensured they covered all aspects of the workshop, especially parental support. This was not possible in the other centres. Local library staff being more involved could help create better management of projects. [4.7, 4.18, 4.21 in the main report].

**Recommendations from conclusion 5:**

- Support the active involvement of branch library staff in projects wherever possible.
- Provide more of the workshops in libraries.

Person responsible for these actions: **Project Leader.**

**Conclusion 6:**  
**Library staff need training and development to help them participate in projects**

As its workforce levels improve and as Carlow County Library Service’s experience in research deepens, library staff can be expected to be more active in:

- recommending learning materials.
- leading some informal learning activities.
- team-working with colleagues in other agencies.

Staff participating in shared training opportunities, such as the storytelling workshop, can develop skills and improve understanding of complementary roles and networking [4.9 in main report].

**Recommendations from conclusion 6:**

- Develop and deliver a training programme for library staff in the areas of research and collaboration.
- Incorporate opportunities for shared learning with colleagues from external agencies such as family resource centres and Tusla where relevant.

Person responsible for these actions: **Senior Executive Librarian.**

**Conclusion 7:**  
**Greater links with ETBs are necessary to help with participants’ unmet literacy needs**

The low literacy levels among adults in the project suggests that working with Carlow and Kilkenny’s Education and Training Board’s (CKETB’s) Literacy Services<sup>5</sup> could help develop future projects [3.6 – 3.9, 5.7 in main report].

**Recommendation from conclusion 7:**

- Investigate the relevance of services offered by Kilkenny and Carlow Education & Training Board.

Person responsible for this action: **Project Leader.**

<sup>5</sup> <http://kilkennycarlow.etb.ie/further-education-and-training/adult-learning-service/>



### Conclusion 8:

#### Carlow County Library Service has demonstrated its ability for doing research projects

Carlow County Library Service has demonstrated its ability and interest in developing research projects within its range of services. The library service must set research priorities and grow capacity to engage staff more so they feel competent to contribute fully.

The Workforce Plan and next Library Development Plan provide the framework for this addition to services [1.9, 2.6, 4.18 in the main report].

#### Recommendations from conclusion 8:

- Provide an explicit research programme within the forthcoming Library Development Plan.
- Use the Library Development Plan to identify:
  - priority research areas
  - the research framework
  - staff learning needs.

Person responsible for these actions: **County Librarian.**

### Conclusion 9:

#### The library is an important agent of community development

Carlow County Library Service showed its ability to manage multi-agency projects and to benefit community development. While library roles in literacy and education and heritage are visible, its equal importance supporting families and community development is acknowledged less frequently. The library services can support County Council services across many areas [6.1 – 6.3, 6.8 in the main report].

#### Recommendation from conclusion 9:

- Seek more explicit focus for library services' contributions to community development within Carlow County Council's next Corporate Plan, 2021 – 2026.

Person responsible for this action: **County Librarian.**

### Conclusion 10:

#### More investment in native language resources is needed to help new Irish communities

The reach of this project shows the multicultural nature of Irish society today. Providing enough materials in native languages for all new communities is beyond the capacity of individual library services. However, improved access through shared materials could be useful for disadvantaged families. This is possible if co-ordinated at national level. As well as book-stock, digital access to e-resources could be developed centrally and shared by library services countrywide [5.8 in the main report].

#### Recommendation from conclusion 10:

- Examine if it is possible to develop a national service supporting the reading and research needs of new Irish communities in their native languages.

Person responsible for this action: **Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency.**

### Conclusion 11:

#### More promotion of the valuable work of public libraries is needed

*Story Streets* shows the capacity of public libraries to deliver positive outcomes for citizens and residents across many aspects of Irish life. Such projects clearly show the capacity of libraries to support gradual sustainable change [6.9 in the main report].

#### Recommendation from conclusion 11:

- Ensure the reach of public library services capacities, as demonstrated by the *Story Streets* project, is appreciated across all relevant Irish Government Departments.

Person responsible for this action: **Department of Rural and Community Development.**

## Conclusion 12:

### Collaborating with third-level colleges is important

As research activity increases, collaborating with academic institutions will be helpful. Locally, Carlow Institute of Technology [ITC]<sup>6</sup> and Carlow College – St. Patricks<sup>7</sup> offer expertise and capacity for collaboration. Both colleges run Social Work and Early Childhood courses which would relate to this project.

Carlow County Library Service can also:

- provide access to literacy and learning services for students
- provide a place for research to take place
- collaborate with colleges on appropriate research projects [4.16, 6. 10 in the main report].

#### Recommendation from conclusion 12:

- Investigate opportunities for co-operation with local third level colleges.

Person responsible for this action: **County Librarian.**

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.itcarlow.ie>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.carlowcollege.ie>



### Next steps:

- **Investigate sources of funding to continue and expand the programme.**
- **Continue to build and improve partnerships with the three centres involved.**
- **Share our learnings with Irish Public Library Services, the Local Government Management Agency and other interested bodies to support the running of similar programmes.**

## APPENDIX A

### Story Streets Project Management Teams

#### Project Management

#### Carlow County Council Public Library Service

- **Patricia Nolan**, Project Lead, Executive Librarian
- **John Shortall**, County Librarian

#### Three Project Sites

#### Carlow

- **St. Catherine’s Community Services Centre**
  - **Niall Morris**, Manager / Director of Services
  - **Majella Johnston**, [Facilitator] Adult and Community Educator
- **Library**
  - **Fiona O’Toole**, Staff Officer
  - **Christopher Power**, Library Assistant

#### Muinebheag / Bagenalstown

- **Bagenalstown Family Resource Centre**
  - **Anne Shortall**, Manager
  - **Josie Tierney**, Facilitator, Family Support / Community Development Worker
  - **Michelle Thomas**, Deputy Manager – After Schools Service
- **Library**
  - **Bernie Brennan**, Branch Librarian
  - **Bridget Johnson**, Branch Librarian

#### Tullow

- **Forward Steps Family Resource Centre**
  - **Molly Kirwan**, Manager
  - **Sandra Kazlauskaite**, Facilitator, Family Support / Community Development Worker
- **Library**
  - **Margaret Byrne**, Senior Library Assistant
  - **Jean Broderick**, Library Assistant



## APPENDIX B Our Walk Down Story Streets, Autumn 2019

### Client Profile Form

Please circle the appropriate word/s:

Centre: Muinebheag | Carlow | Tullow

#### The participating family:

Family surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Country of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult: mother | father | grandparent | uncle | aunt | other

Number of children participating: \_\_\_\_\_

Participating child is only child in family: yes | no

#### Educational attainment:

English language fluency of parents:

Estimated English language oral skills:

poor | adequate | good | very good | fluent | don't know

Estimated English language reading skills:

poor | adequate | good | very good | fluent | don't know

Estimated English language writing skills:

poor | adequate | good | very good | fluent | don't know

General educational attainment level:

primary | secondary | third level | don't know

#### Community support

Family member/s currently undertaking another programme in the Centre? yes | no

Family member/s previously undertook one or more programmes in the Centre? yes | no

Main family breadwinner is: working | family is primarily dependant on:

State Aid | Social Welfare etc. | don't know [please circle one]

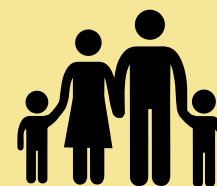






**“We really  
enjoyed every  
minute of it.”**

**Mother,  
Bagenalstown**



**Story  
Streets**



**Leabharlann  
Chontae Ceatharlach  
Carlow County Library**

**For further details  
please contact:**

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Tel: 059 912 9705

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