

<b>Institution:</b> University of Sheffield		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C-23 Education		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Changing family literacy practices in prisons, schools and community settings		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000–2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Cathy Nutbrown	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Education	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 1997–2020
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2015–2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Nutbrown's Raising Achievement in Early Literacy (REAL) approaches to family literacy has improved parental engagement in young children's literacy, reaching many disadvantaged families. Since 2000, Nutbrown's research has provided new insights in family literacy across the UK, uniquely underpinned by the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Sharing knowledge of literacy theory and practice with parents.</li> <li>2) Focussing on families supporting children's literacy through providing <i>opportunities</i>, showing <i>recognition</i>, <i>interaction</i>, and being <i>models</i> of literacy users.</li> </ol> <p>REAL Approaches have been adopted by educational settings and charities, with reach extending to imprisoned parents in a programme described as the most significant new contribution to family learning in custodial settings in recent years.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The underpinning research of this impact case study builds on the 1997 theoretical foundation established by Hannon (Emeritus Professor, University of Sheffield) and Nutbrown. Hannon and Nutbrown explicitly advocated for parents to be included in children's literacy programmes and taught the concepts of early literacy development so they would be empowered to support their child's development at home. The theoretical concepts were used to underpin the Raising Achievement in Early Literacy (REAL) programme and develop a set of early literacy intervention programmes: <i>REAL Family Literacy Approaches</i>, fundamental to which is a focus on joint working with families.</p> <p>REAL was evaluated in several phases from 1995 to 2005. Since 2000 the research has investigated the effectiveness of REAL approaches in practice across a range of settings.</p> <p><b>Finding 1: Effectiveness of REAL in practice</b></p> <p>Since 2000, Nutbrown and Hannon have gained new insights into the use of REAL Approaches in different educational settings and organisations.</p>		

Nutbrown's commitment to collaboration stimulates ongoing refinement of REAL Approach-based programmes through empirical research conducted in partnership with the key user, the National Children's Bureau (NCB), which, between 2009 and 2012, developed and evaluated a REAL Approach-based programme, with Nutbrown as consultant. Research into REAL Approaches in early years settings found that:

- A programme using REAL Approaches was central to supporting practitioners in explaining the 'Making it REAL' programme to parents and planning activities [R6].
- REAL approaches were collaborative, leading to improved learning outcomes by enhancing parental knowledge of early literacy development [R6].
- When REAL Approaches are co-produced with practitioners it allows them to flexibly plan, develop, and evaluate innovative community and family-specific literacy practices. Young children's literacy development is enhanced through work with families [R1, S10], particularly in disadvantaged communities [R2].

### **Finding 2: Effectiveness of REAL with communities from a diverse range of backgrounds**

Research into REAL Approaches has explored their impact with different 'groups' including bilingual families, fathers, and disadvantaged young children.

- Further analysis of randomised control trial (RCT) data found REAL Approaches produced gains in children's emergent literacy, particularly for children of mothers without formal educational qualifications [R2].
- Building on REAL, the programme was adapted and delivered bilingually, providing new insights into bilingual family literacy programme development and effects on British Pakistani children. Parents valued the programme and children's literacy achievements improved [R3].
- Nutbrown and Hannon (2009) analysed the REAL RCT data, gaining new insights into fathers' roles in their children's literacy [R4]. Nutbrown found that, contrary to other contemporary studies, most fathers *were* active in their children's literacy playing a key role often unseen by professionals and researchers [R4].

### **Finding 3: The feasibility of developing a literacy-based programme with imprisoned parents**

Since 2014, Nutbrown has worked collaboratively with the Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT) to research whether REAL Approaches could be adapted to develop a family literacy programme for imprisoned fathers. Imprisoned fathers have limited involvement in their children's literacy development. In the UK 95% of prisoners are men and over half are fathers.

Nutbrown's study was the first to establish the feasibility of teaching imprisoned parents the fundamentals of children's early literacy development; establishing for the first time that theories of literacy development could be shared with imprisoned fathers and that literacy-focussed family visits were successful in prisons [R5].

This body of research made a distinct and material impact by providing new insights into how REAL Approaches can facilitate improvements to children's literacy by engaging with families and support practitioners. It moves beyond the theoretical assumptions to practical applications.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** Nutbrown, C., Bishop, J., & Wheeler, H. (2015). Co-production of family literacy projects to enhance early literacy development. *Journal of Children's Services*, 10(3), 265–279. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jcs-02-2015-0011>
- R2.** Hannon, P., Nutbrown, C., & Morgan, A. (2019). Effects of extending disadvantaged families' teaching of emergent literacy. *Research Papers in Education*, 35(3), 310–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1568531>
- R3.** Hirst, K., Hannon, P., & Nutbrown, C. (2010). Effects of a preschool bilingual family literacy programme. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 10(2), 183–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798410363838>
- R4.** Morgan, A., Nutbrown, C., & Hannon, P. (2009). Fathers' involvement in young children's literacy development: implications for family literacy programmes. *British Educational Research Journal*, 35(2), 167–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920802041996>
- R5.** Nutbrown, C., Clough, P., Stammers, L., Emblin, N., & Alston-Smith, S. (2017). Family literacy in prisons: fathers' engagement with their young children. *Research Papers in Education*, 34(2), 169–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2017.1402085>
- R6.** Sylva, K., Jelley, F. Goodhall, J. (2018). *Making it REAL: An Evaluation of the Oldham Making it REAL project*. <https://researchportal.bath.ac.uk/en/publications/making-it-real-an-evaluation-of-the-oldham-making-it-real-project>. (Nutbrown was a consultant on the development of Making it REAL)

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)**Enhancing family learning in prisons**

Since 2015 Nutbrown's research achieved success in teaching prisoners about children's literacy through the Family Literacy in Prisons (FLiP) programme, now central to PACT's education programme. Nutbrown developed FLiP in collaboration with PACT in 2015 which runs FLiP in 21% of prisons in England and Wales (25 prisons), with reach extending to HM Prison La Moye, Jersey in 2019.

In 2017 FLiP was accredited by Ordinary National Certificate (ONC) and received Ministry of Justice recognition for inclusion on individual Prisoner Education Plans, extending FLiP's reach. In 2019 all London prison governors commissioned PACT for ongoing delivery of FLiP. The CEO of PACT credits FLiP's visible and sustainable nature for this collaboration:

*"FLiP has been the most significant new contribution to family learning in custodial settings in recent years and delivery is growing across the prison estate in spite of prisons facing the most severe funding cuts in living memory – which is a testament to the popularity of this evidence-based and theoretically sound programme. It has had a marked impact on our capacity to secure funding for all our relationship education programmes and family-learning course" [S1].*

Since 2015, 621 prisoners have engaged with FLiP, (reaching 506 partners and 753 children). The Farmer Review of Prison Education highlighted FLiP as an example of good practice:

*“More profoundly, the research showed a resolve among the men who participated to think of their role as a father differently in the future” (2017: 69) [S2].*

### **Influencing the work and funding of charities**

Using REAL-Approaches has enabled two other national charities to access significant funding.

The successful NCB-lead research project [R6] influenced **NCB**'s £1 million award from the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) to develop further REAL Approach-based interventions: *“We rely on external funding and income as an organisation and for the Early Childhood Unit this is the programme that generates the most revenue either by selling training courses and consultancy packages or by drawing in funding”* (Assistant Director and Principal Officer, NCB) [S3]. Since 2013 NCB have trained 6,118 practitioners reaching 10,448 children and 8,292 parents and carers [S3].

National charity **PEEPL**E based its Learning Together Programme on REAL Approaches, which was vital to attracting funding to train 800 practitioners annually who work with approximately 8,000 parents per year: *“In 2019 PEEPLE successfully tendered to the Scottish Government to deliver the Peep Learning Together Programme to practitioners in the most deprived areas of all 32 Local Authorities (LA) in Scotland (2020/21). The programme was recognised as the best offer to support the quality of early learning and childcare through family learning”* (CEO, PEEPLE) [S4]. An EEF-funded study found PEEPLE's Learning Together Programme improved children's literacy development by an average of two months [S5]. The 2019 EEF report cites REAL as an exemplar for improving children's learning outcomes through parental engagement [S6], and the Early Intervention Foundation identified REAL as one of two programmes, out of 10% of programmes reviewed, as having good evidence of improving learning [S7].

### **Transforming family literacy in local authorities**

REAL approaches underpin many LA literacy programmes in areas of disadvantage (F3). Practitioners using REAL Approaches have written about their practice in professional literature and blogs [S8]. Some 67 LAs in the UK [S9] use REAL approaches, a figure likely to be significantly more in reality due to national organisations delivering REAL-based work across the country. Examples include the following:

- 1) Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has embedded REAL Approaches across several teams (Library Service, Speech and Language therapists, Troubled Families and Children's Centres), with £65,000 to deliver REAL in 2016, appointing a dedicated staff member working across WCC [S10].
- 2) Oldham Council Music Service (OCMS), received £65,000 of DfE funding in 2014 to devise and run REAL-based *Tune in to Talking*, targeting parents from deprived areas to support their children's language through music. OCMS offers *Tune in to Talking* as part of their service level agreement *“with continued success”* (Curriculum and Voice Subject Leader, OCMS) [S10].
- 3) Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council developed *Chat, Play, Read* family literacy training: *“This is a bespoke programme for foster carers caring for children aged two to eight years old. [...] This has been so successful that it is now part of mandatory training for foster carers”* (PPEL Manager, Sandwell Quality Early Years and Childcare Services) [S10].

## Impact case study (REF3)

- 4) Success with *Making it REAL* led Blackpool teachers to develop a mathematics-based programme. Blackpool LA have commissioned them to deliver programme training across its early years settings [S10].
- 5) In Hackney, the achievement of boys was greatly improved through a REAL-based programme [S10].

Several LAs (including Warwickshire, Sandwell, and Sheffield) used REAL Approaches to support home learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- S1.** Letter from CEO of Pact Prison Advice and Case Trust.
- S2.** Farmer Review of Prisoner Education, 2017, page 69.
- S3.** Joint testimonial: Assistant Director and Principal Officer, NCB, plus reached figures.
- S4.** Testimonial: CEO, PEEPLE.
- S5.** EEF Learning Together Evaluation Report, February 2020.
- S6.** EEF Working with Parents to Support Children's Learning: Guidance Report, 2019.
- S7.** The Early Intervention Foundation Report: Foundations for Life: What Works to Support Parent Child interaction in the Early Years, July 2016.
- S8.** Examples of links to professional magazine articles.
- S9.** Spreadsheet of reach of REAL Approaches by local authority.
- S10.** Testimonial evidence showing impact on at a local authority level including Warwickshire, Sandwell, Oldham, Blackpool, and Hackney.