

**PRG FAMILY READING INITIATIVE 2019:
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

'Look around at all this energy. It's like coming up for air with our kids'



Our experience with Family Days has highlighted the difficulties many prisoners have in sharing books with their children. In early 2019 we piloted a project in Wandsworth prison to help the men feel more confident and engaged. Participants attended a workshop and this was followed soon after by a family reading event.

The workshop explored the importance of reading with children, how to choose books your children are likely to enjoy, and how to discover the pleasures of reading together. At the end of the workshop the men chose a book for their child(ren) and inscribed a bookplate to make it a gift which they presented at a special Family Reading Day.

At the workshop the men were also invited to take a copy of their chosen book back to their cells so they could read and 'prepare' it. At the event there were reading activities for the families and time for them to explore their chosen book together.



There was very good feedback from all participants. Prison staff reported that the men were excited and energised by the workshop and the men's comments were extremely positive:

'an eye-opener on how important it is to read with your kids'

'working together in the group was brilliant'

'I haven't stopped thinking about it and all the stories I'm going to read with my kids'

Evaluations of the family reading event emphasised strengthened bonds and the pleasures of reading together.

'What was good about the event?'

'building up our family relationships, great that everyone got involved'



Prison Reading Groups

Two months after the project we held a focus group that confirmed longer-term positive outcomes. One participant reported that he now regularly reads a story to his son over the phone, *'something I've never done before'*. Another commented on his daughter's increased interest in books: *'Now when she comes on a visit, she runs straight to the book corner to choose a book to look at with me'*.

Another man said phone conversations are now much easier with his 10-year old son: *'He doesn't so much want to talk about books but he wants to tell me about his day'*.