



Acknowledgements

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In 2007, 22 local authorities in England, and NCH in Wales, took part.

In 2008 we were joined by 30 additional local authorities, covering every government region in England. Our thanks go to all the children, foster carers and staff who contributed to the testing, questionnaires and interviews for this evaluation.

From 2009 the Letterbox Club was open to every local authority in the United Kingdom, on a subscription basis for each child. Over 4,200 children were enrolled for 2009.



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The Letterbox Club 2007 to 2009:

Final Evaluation Report

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How Letterbox Club works

Locally

Each local authority makes a list of their children who will be members that year, and tells Letterbox Club how many...

9 children in year 3
14 children in year 5

Centrally

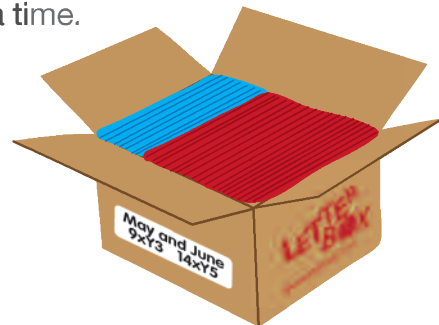
Letterbox Club chooses books for the year, and orders the books, games and stationery to go to our warehouse.



The local authority has a confidential database of children's addresses.



Each child's parcel is packed and we send the local authority the number of parcels they need, for two months at a time.



Each child gets a parcel once a month for six months.

It's great!
Come and see!



Letterbox Club staff at Booktrust in London are available to help and advise at any stage.



The national pilot, 2007 and 2008

Getting a parcel through the post is exciting for anyone, and the Letterbox Club uses this excitement to encourage looked after children to enjoy playing games and reading at home. The aim is to enable children to make as much progress as possible in literacy and numeracy in Key Stage 2 (ages 7 to 11), and to support foster carers and family members who would like to help the children do well.

The project was initiated by the University of Leicester in 2002, and developmental pilot work took place from 2003 to 2006 with two local authorities, Leicester and Suffolk. This helped to establish a successful way of working, leading to a major partnership with Booktrust, the national charity that runs Bookstart and other bookgifting schemes, and hence a successful bid for a national pilot for 2007 and 2008, funded by the DCSF.

Each child who joins the Letterbox Club receives a parcel once a month for six months. The parcel is addressed to the child at their foster home or other residence, and typically includes a letter (personalised with the child's name), two reading books, stationery items such as pencils, an exercise book or drawing book, bookmark or stickers, and a maths game at the child's own level of attainment (for National Curriculum levels 1 to 4). Sometimes there is a CD to accompany a book.

Parcels are sent from May to October, to cover the summer holiday period, where there is said to be a dip in attainment for many children. It is hoped that many carers will join in by reading or playing games with the children, but there is no assumption that this is required. Children can join Letterbox in Year 3 (and be members across the summer holiday into Year 4) or in Year 5 (to take them into Year 6).

Establishing the national project

Funding for 2007 was confirmed in February for April 2007. The initial period of establishing the national project, managed by Booktrust, was successfully completed by the end of May. This process included: the appointment of a part-time project manager and assistant; confirmation of which local authorities would take part; book selection for the year; sourcing books and materials for the parcels, and arranging warehousing and distribution. Every local authority took part in Induction Days led by the University of Leicester. These days ensured that everyone felt confident about how to administer the reading and maths tests that were given to participating children before the first parcels were sent out. Children were also tested after the six months had finished, to examine their progress across the period of the intervention.



What did children and carers think of the parcels?

Children were sent questionnaires to collect their views of the books and games in the parcels. They were asked to rate each item “Liked it”, “It was OK” or “Didn’t use it”. (We realise that the latter category could include “Didn’t like the look of it” or “Haven’t used it yet”, but we felt that it was important to keep the questionnaire as simple as possible.) There was space for a comment on each item if wished, and carers were asked their opinions, too.

Children in Year 3/4 received a different selection of books to those sent to children in Year 5/6, except that in 2007 *Where’s Wally?* was sent to both age ranges. Books had been chosen by a selection panel to include a mixture of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, with good levels of illustration.

The maths games were organised by National Curriculum level not by age range, and each child was sent a game at level 1, 2, 3 or 4, depending on their initial maths test or a teacher assessment. The games were chosen to develop the child’s understanding of number and their confidence and fluency with key skills in number.

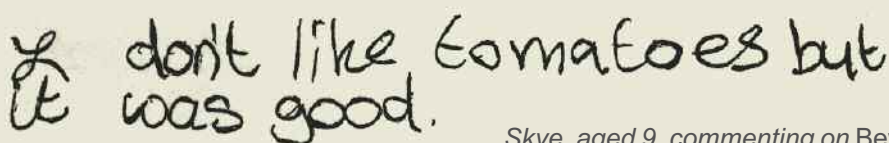
“Satisfaction rates”

It was hoped that across the 12 or 13 books for each age range, each child would find at least 8 or 9 books which they liked or thought were “OK”, and only 3 or 4 that they did not immediately want to use: the target was a “satisfaction rate” of about 67%, and “Didn’t use it” of 33% or less.

The questionnaires (from 361 children) show a high level of satisfaction with the books they were sent: 86% “liked it” or “it was OK” and 14% “didn’t use it” on average for each book in 2007 and 2008.

Maths games were also well received: 77% satisfied, and 23% “didn’t use it” for each game on average. Comments indicated that the majority of carers felt the provision of the games and activities had encouraged them to do more with their (foster) child, and there was evidence of brothers, sisters, grandparents, and social workers playing maths games with children, often because the child had asked them to play. Many children used the maths equipment provided in other ways, too – for example, using the pretend money to play shops.

The maths games were printed very cheaply, and children (sometimes helped by carers) cut them out and made them themselves. Carers commented that children usually enjoyed doing this, but some felt that a higher standard of production would help make the games more attractive. The possibility of using full-colour games is being investigated for 2010.



I don't like tomatoes but
it was good.

Skye, aged 9, commenting on Beware! Killer Tomatoes.

Feeling special

Many carers commented on how important it was that the parcels were addressed to the children and came through the post over a sustained period of time. They had noticed the satisfaction that their children felt in “being remembered” and in being able to organise things for themselves. Children were excited at receiving a parcel, and most were keen to show others what they had.

“Loved the fact it was addressed to him, opening and sorting, cutting out game, putting books away etc.”

(Carer of Year 5/6 boy, 2007)

“The colour of the envelope is brilliant. Brandon watches the post and can immediately identify ‘his’ package. It’s like a birthday present and the combination of the reading and the doing stuff is excellent.”

(Carer of Year 3/4 boy, 2007)

“Jake felt rather special as he loved the postman delivering the parcel for himself each month. He enjoyed getting everyone together and playing with his games and reading his books.”

(Carer of Year 5/6 boy, 2008)

“Danielle really enjoys her parcels – it helps her because she finds concentrating difficult but I have noticed her reading one of the books quietly to herself, which doesn’t happen often!!”

(Carer of Year 3/4 girl, 2007)

“To have his own parcel that he can open is fantastic.”

(Carer of Year 5/6 boy, 2008)

One carer of a boy aged 9 said how important it was that the child was given books of his own:

“We’ve got a cupboard absolutely full of books, but he never paid them any attention at all, so it was nice that these came just for him. He’s not big on reading but he has looked at them. The stories were all good and something he could get into.”

“It was good fun because I’ve never been in a club before.”

(Lewis, aged 8, 2008)



Enjoying books and games together

Many carers felt that receiving the Letterbox materials gave them and the children the opportunity to spend more time with others and to form better relationships.

“Never bored, with a wide choice of stories. Found it a great way to bond with my daughter. It’s definitely encouraged me to do more.”

(Carer of girl aged 10, 2008)

“Sammi gets very excited when she receives her parcels, loves the books, gets us to do the games you’ve sent.”

(Carer of girl aged 7, 2008)

“He has had fun, and we have spent a lot of time together because of Letterbox Club.”

(Carer of boy aged 8, 2008)

There were a few children who used the books but not the games, and some who used the games and stationery but not the books, but most children used all three types of items – and the variety this provided was appreciated.

“There was a good all round variety of things in the envelope that came. I wouldn’t change anything.”

(Carer of boy aged 9, 2008)

“Andy loves the stories that are funny, and he enjoys the extra things in the pack, like pens and note books. It helped us do more with him – the maths games were great.”

(Carer of boy aged 9, 2008)

“Lottie has all the books on show in her room, we both enjoy reading and playing the games. Lottie loves reading in bed, it helps her drift off to sleep. She keeps her books close to the bed.”

(Carer of girl aged 9, 2008)



Mum is reading this book with me.

Callum, aged 11, commenting on I was a Rat!



Children reading to others

It was encouraging to see how many children were keen to share their books with siblings and others in their families.

"Dylan reads every morning before he goes to school, he reads to Jack who is five."

(Carer of boy aged 9, 2008)

"I read to my sisters, about vampire bats. They said, 'George, what's in that book?' and I said 'Nothing much, unless you want me to read it to you?' and they said 'Yes'."

(Boy aged 8, 2008)

"Some of the books were too hard for Kyle on his own, but we are reading them together."

(Carer of boy aged 10, 2008)

Some carers were obviously very sensitive to the needs of children who find reading difficult:

"David gets very irritable and uncomfortable during reading. But he loves to listen to stories and enjoys us doing a chapter at a time."

(Carer of Year 3/4 boy, 2007)

"Cadey loves to look through the books. He is still a reluctant reader, but the books give us an opportunity to spend time together."

(Carer of boy aged 11, 2008)

Listening to stories on CD

At least one parcel in each age range included a CD and book. The CDs were often used at bedtime or on car journeys, and many carers commented that they had not previously thought of using audio stories with their foster child:

"Best gift ever. He was listening to one CD each night at bedtime. He never seems to have enough of it."

(Carer of Year 3/4 boy, 2007)

"Damon especially enjoyed the audio book – he finds reading quite difficult and struggles with comprehension. He's of an age where he wouldn't appreciate a bedtime story from me, but he listened to the CD at bedtime."

(Carer of Year 5/6 boy, 2007)

There were higher numbers of children who said *"Didn't use it"* for the CD version rather than the book on their questionnaires, and this often seems to be because they did not have easy access to a CD player. Some local authorities are looking for ways to provide a small personal CD player for children to use. As technology advances, it may also be appropriate to consider other ways of providing audio stories in future years.

*I love the ocean book because i
J4sh do.
ALEX*

Coping with difficult situations

A significant proportion of children in care will move placement during any year: at least 15% of the Letterbox Club members moved once or more during their six months. Each local authority worked hard to keep their Letterbox database up-to-date, so that the parcels followed the child if they moved. This was very important to many children. A boy aged 9 who was interviewed in the earlier pilot work had seemed amazed (and pleased) that this happened: *“So somebody knows where I live?”* One carer, of a girl aged 10 who had moved three times in the year, said this:

“The Letterbox Club was the continuity, something that stayed the same when she moved from A to B. She’d had so many ups and downs and I think something like that, that stays the same, is quite important to children and it was very important to Kelly.”

The same carer talked about the value of stories in helping children feel calmer: *“Getting involved in a story that’s got a nice beginning and a nice end and it’s the last thing you read before you go to sleep, you’re feeling content.”*

Children also appreciated books that reflected their own unhappy experiences or that of people they knew. *Michael Rosen’s Sad Book*, which describes how you feel when someone dies, but also offers a positive view of the future, was included with some more light-hearted books in a Year 5/6 parcel. One teacher told us of a boy who found the *Sad Book* so comforting that he carried it with him wherever he went for many days. In their questionnaire responses, children gave the book an 86% “satisfaction rating”.

Carers’ engagement with the project

A small number of foster carers (5 out of 361) expressed the opinion that the parcels were “wasted” on their children, but the great majority were very pleased. Some carers made comments that showed they were uncertain about aspects of helping children with reading and number. We would like to follow this up in the future and to look for further ways of offering support.

The book selection panel for the Letterbox Club had hoped that carers would find the books as attractive as the children did, as this could encourage carers to take a more active part in encouraging the children to use them. One carer of an 8 year old boy said the child’s favourite book was *Mammals*:

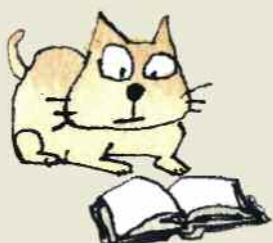
“Every time I looked at him, he had that out. But then I found that interesting as well, because there are a lot of things in it that I wouldn’t necessarily have known.” (2008)

The carer of Danny, aged 9, admitted *“Pirate Penguins – I’m afraid I snaffled that one!”* and the foster mum for Janie aged 8 said *“Everything in the parcels was excellent, but The Diary of a Killer Cat was superb and the CD is used all the time in the car – I love it too!! Hope we can have more parcels one day.”*

When children finish getting their Letterbox parcels, it is hoped that many could then become more active members of their local library, borrowing books and story CDs. Several local authorities told us about special Letterbox events which they ran with their library services for foster carers and their children, with the aim of encouraging all of the family to use the library more frequently. It is intended that some “good practice” examples of this extended work will be included in the Letterbox Handbook for local authorities in future.

Lasting impact, six months on...

Four children and their four carers were interviewed six months after the children had received their last parcel, to find out what they had thought about the Letterbox Club and to see whether they still used any of the things they had received. All four children told us about their favourite books or games, which they still used. All four were keen to be members again if possible. The visit from the interviewer had the side effect of reviving the children's interest in the other things they had (games, books and stationery), including items that they had not used when they first received them. We felt that it would be worthwhile for anyone who is due to visit a child in the months after their last parcel (for example, a social worker, tutor or mentor) to ask them about their Letterbox things, to encourage them to have another look at what they received.



Letterbox Club Parcel Contents, May to October 2008

Year 3-4 Books

Horrid Henry and The Abominable Snowman
(Francesca Simon)
Mammals (DK Eyewonder)
First Greek Myths (Usborne)
Ocean (DK Eyewonder)
The Diary of a Killer Cat (Anne Fine)
Tales of a Killer Cat (CD read by Jack Dee)
Oliver Twist Retold (Usborne)
Scooby-Doo! Fiendish Sticker Book
Oh the Things You Can Think! (Dr. Seuss)
The Story Tree-Tales to Read Aloud (Hugh Lupton)
Pirate Penguins (Frank Rodgers)
Mustard, Custard, Grumble Belly and Gravy
(Michael Rosen, illustrated by Quentin Blake)
The World According to Humphrey (Betty G Birney)
Me and My Cat? (Satoshi Kitamura)

Maths Games

Parcel One: £30 game
or £100 game
Parcel Two: One to Nine Bingo
or Tens and Teens Bingo
or Times Tables Bingo
or One Hundred Bingo
Parcel Three: Counting Cats game
or Sums which make 10
or Calculator Race
or Rough Total game
Parcel Four: Make 5 game
or Fifty Pence game
or Eighteens game
or 999 game
Parcel Five: Add or take away game
or Elevens game
or What's missing?
or Forty Nine game
Parcel Six: £20 game
or £50 game
or £500 game
or £600 game

Year 5-6 Books

Big Cats (DK Eyewonder)
Worry Website (Jacqueline Wilson)
The BFG (Roald Dahl)
Human Body (DK Eyewonder)
Stig of the Dump (Clive King)
Stig of the Dump (CD read by Tony Robinson)
The Sun in Me (Judith Nicholls)
Spy Dog (Andrew Cope)
Michael Rosen's Sad Book (Michael Rosen,
illustrated by Quentin Blake)
Where's Wally? (Martin Handford)
Beware! Killer Tomatoes (Jeremy Strong)
I Was a Rat! (Philip Pullman)
Doctor Who Official Annual 2009
Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories (Dr Seuss)

Stationery and other items

Exercise books (one in each parcel)
Pencil case
Scissors
Handwriting pen
Zip top wallet (one in each parcel)
Felt pens (set of 12)
Pencil and rubber
Pencil sharpener
Calculator
Blue and black biros
Ruler
Highlighter pen
Bags of plastic £1 and £2 coins
Token £5, £10 and £50 notes
Dice and counters
Sticky notes
Letter from Jacqueline Wilson
Letter from Michael Rosen

Favourite books

The Letterbox Book Selection Panel has used feedback from children and carers to check that the criteria the panel are using for selection are reasonable, and to help guide the choice of books for each successive year's parcels.

Many children wrote comments about why they liked particular books, and told us whether they had been able to read them independently or if a family member had read the book to them. Children liked the element of surprise, not knowing what books they might get, and carers, too, commented that this broadened the range of books their children used:

"He read a lot anyway but it gave him more choice of books to read... storybooks and fact books."

(Carer of boy aged 8, 2008)

Comments on *Where's Wally?* showed children's pleasure in owning their own copy of a book, in having to concentrate, and in sharing their enjoyment with others in their family:

"My brother had two *Where's Wally?* books and sometimes wouldn't let me look at them. Now I have my own it's great."

(Year 3/4 girl, 2007)

"I liked it but it was very hard to find Wally as there are loads of people with red and white on."

(Year 3/4 girl, 2007)

"We all had a go at *Where's Wally?* – even the teenagers wanted to have a go."

(Carer of Year 3/4 child, 2007)

Children's reasons for wanting to read a book included that it had a good title and an attractive cover. Many also mentioned positive links with their personal experience: they had seen something on television or a film, or they were working on a topic at school, or someone important to them had shown interest in the story or topic.

"He does keep getting out the *Ocean* book, and if he watches something on the TV or they're talking about something at school, he'll come straight back and look at the book."

(Carer of boy aged 8, 2008)

Favourite books in 2008 for children in Year 3/4 included *The Diary of a Killer Cat* (97% "satisfaction rating"); *The Scooby-Doo! Fiendish Sticker Book* (95%), *Pirate Penguins* (94%), *Horrid Henry and the Abominable Snowman* (94%), *Ocean* (93%), *Mammals* (92%), *Me and My Cat?* (91%), *The World According to Humphrey* (90%), *The Story Tree* (89%), *Oh, the Thinks You Can Think!* (89%), *Oliver Twist* (87%) and *Mustard, Custard, Grumble Belly and Gravy* (86%).

"I still read the *Oceans* book. I'm tied between the *Oceans* book and the *Killer Cat Diary*. And I love the *Oliver* book. I seen it on the telly, the film. I like 'Consider yourself one of us'."

(Boy aged 9 in interview, 6 months after receiving his last parcel, 2008)

Children in Year 5/6 in 2008 loved *Spy Dog* (94%), *Big Cats* (94%), *Where's Wally?* (92%), *The Worry Website* (88%), *Human Body* (87%), *Stig of the Dump* (87%), *Michael Rosen's Sad Book* (86%), *The BFG* (85%), *Dr Who Annual 2009* (84%) and *Beware! Killer Tomatoes* (82%).

Improvements in number

Children's maths and reading were tested before and after the children were members of the Letterbox Club. We had results for analysis from a total of 316 children (147 girls and 169 boys) in 2007 from 16 local authorities, and from 536 children (217 girls, 263 boys, and 56 children for whom gender was not reported) in 34 authorities in 2008.

The process of assessing the children's reading and number work in Year 3 and Year 5 at the beginning of the Letterbox Club has been valued by many participating authorities, as it has provided additional information about children's attainment. Many authorities have continued using the assessments after 2008 to plan future provision for each child.



The mathematics tests we used were devised to check children's ability to complete number problems successfully, and also to check their fluency with mental arithmetic (in other words, over a period of time the tests check not just whether a child can get the right answer to a problem, but also whether they can get it right more quickly and confidently). These detailed tests can show whether a child is making progress, even when that progress is slow. Even so, there were about 10% of children whose scores did not improve over the eight months between testing in 2008.

The Letterbox maths test results were converted into National Curriculum levels for each child, to give a score of Level 1 or below, Level 2, Level 3, or Level 4 or above. The results show that about 40% of the Letterbox children in 2007, and about 32% in 2008, had scores in number that increased by at least one National Curriculum level from late May to early January. For children progressing at an average rate, the usual expectation over that time would be that about 33% of pupils would make such an improvement. Since the period of the intervention included several weeks of school holiday, and many of the children have previously been making very slow progress in mathematics, this is encouraging.

"We've played the game from the first parcel lots, and Shaun can now do his number bonds to 10!"

(Carer of Year 5/6 boy, 2007)

"Damon enjoyed the maths bingo – wanting to play with everyone who came to the house."

(Carer of Year 5/6 boy, 2007)

Improvements in reading

Children's reading scores (using the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability) were recorded as standardised scores. For a typical child of any age, a standardised score of 100 is average; if the child makes normal progress over any period of time, their score will stay as 100, because it is adjusted for age. If a child aged 8 has a standardised score of 90, they are about a year behind expectations for their age and have a reading age of 7. If a child's standardised score goes up, it means they are making faster progress than average.

Our cohort of children had lower reading scores overall at the beginning of Letterbox than would be expected for children of their age nationally. For example, in 2008, 39% of the Year 3 Letterbox children and 44% of the Year 5s had scores of under 90; nationally, this figure would be only 23%.

6% of the Letterbox children in 2008 had not yet started to read (i.e. they scored less than 70 on the Neale test); nationally this would be only 2% of children.

Some of our children were very good readers, but there were less children in this category than the national average: in 2008, 9% of the Year 3s and 17% of the Year 5s scored over 110, compared to 23% nationally.

If all the children made average progress over the period between their two tests (i.e. 8 months' progress in 8 months), they would have a "gain score" of zero; this would have been good, as this period included the summer holiday and a change of class.

In fact, our 2007 cohort of Year 3/4 children made a mean gain score of 4.4, and the 2007 Year 5/6 children gained a mean of 2.5. Both

gains are statistically significant (i.e. unlikely to have been caused by chance). These gains were replicated in 2008, with children across the two age groups making an average gain of 3.9 points on their standardised scores (an average gain of 4.4 for Year 3 and 3.5 for Year 5).

Standardised Reading Scores are the most reliable scores to use when looking at children's progress, but many people find it helpful to think of a child's situation using "reading ages". These two case studies show you how they are linked:

Case Study One: Jamie

Jamie was 10 years 5 months old when he was first tested. His reading age was 8 years 11 months (so he was about 18 months behind the average for his age; his standardised reading score was 92).

A month after his last Letterbox parcel he was tested again. He was now 11 years 1 month old, and had a reading age of 10 years 1 month (so he was now only 12 months behind, with a standardised score of 95).

Jamie had made about 14 months progress in the 8 months between his two tests. He had gained 3 points on his standardised score.

Case Study Two: Leanne

Leanne was 8 years 6 months old, with a reading age of 7:10, and a standardised score of 94 when she was first tested.

A month after her last parcel, Leanne was 9 years 2 months old, with a reading age of 9:10 and a standardised score of 105. She had made about 16 months progress in 8 months.

It would not be reasonable to attribute all of the children's progress to the Letterbox Club, but it does seem that the project has acted as a catalyst for many children and their carers by providing additional support and encouragement to read:

"The parcels have played a big part in Hamza becoming more enthusiastic about reading. Even made him keen to bring home school books."

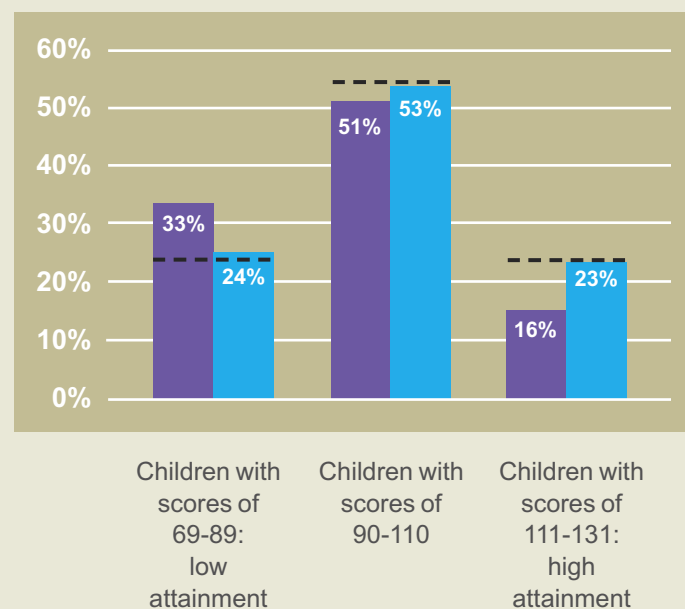
(Carer of Year 3/4 boy)

"It has got her interested in different types of books, and it helps her with her reading. Also, the younger children have started to get more interested in reading because of this."

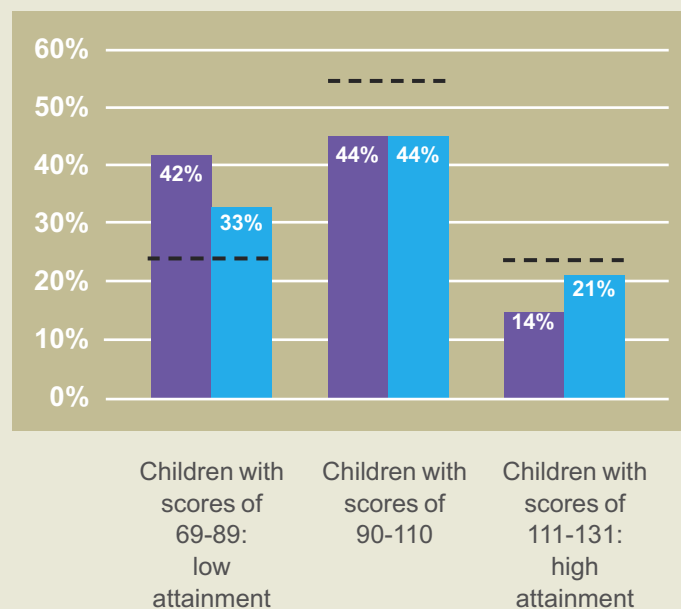
(Carer of Year 3/4 girl)

Improvements in reading using standardised reading scores

Results from 316 children, 2007



Results from 449 children, 2008



■ Before Letterbox Club ■ After Letterbox Club

- - National expected percentage for comparison

Results from both years show improvements across the board, with children moving out of the lowest attaining group, and children moving into the higher attaining group.

Which children gained the most from Letterbox Club?

We examined children's "starting points" to see which groups of children gained most in maths or reading scores over the time they took part.

The project made least difference to the reading scores of children who failed to score at all on the initial test. In 2008, there were 24 children included who had not yet started to read. 12 of these children made progress that could be measured by the Neale test, but 12 remained as non-readers. However, 21 of the 24 children did make progress in number work, and several made very enthusiastic comments about receiving parcels and having stories read to them.

The maths and reading results have been analysed according to each child's starting point, and children in all three initial categories (below average, average, and above average attainment for age) benefit just as much from being a member of the Letterbox Club.

"Shani can't wait for her Letterbox parcel to arrive. A fantastic idea to encourage children. Shani was thrilled with all her parcels and it has certainly helped her."

(Carer of girl aged 11, 2008)

"He's loved receiving the Letterbox parcels. He said it feels like Christmas. *The BFG* is a bit hard for him at the moment, but his reading has improved so much, won't be long! We've read it to him. We've also very much enjoyed the parcels."

(Carer of boy aged 10, 2007)



Changes in 2009 and plans for the future

The national pilot of the Letterbox Club was funded by the DCSF in 2007 and 2008, so during that time the parcels were provided free to participating local authorities. From 2009, the programme has become a subscription service, provided at £115 per child for the six months of parcels. Many local authorities in England have used the new Personal Education Allowance to pay for each child's membership.

Wider geographical coverage

The DCSF recommended the project to local authorities as a helpful way of supporting children's progress in Key Stage 2. 99 local authorities in England joined the scheme for 2009, involving over 3213 children across every English region.

The Welsh Assembly Government via Basic Skills Cymru and Fostering Network Northern Ireland funded subscriptions for every eligible child in their countries for 2009, and two Scottish authorities piloted the project this year. This added a further 1058 children and 29 local authorities, making a total for 2009 of 4271 children across the UK. **See our maps on the fold-out page ...**

Plans for the future

The Letterbox Club provides an effective, economical and enjoyable way of giving children and carers sustained support in reading and number over many months, and it is hoped that this can be extended in the following ways in the next two years:

- Any vulnerable children

Since the programme is now funded by subscription, some local authorities have decided to allocate money not just for children in care, but also for a small number of vulnerable children who would benefit. The parcels have also proved welcome as part of post-adoption support.

- Children with additional needs

"Letterbox Extra", a pilot project for children who are working below National Curriculum Level 1, is being run from September 2009 to February 2010, to see whether this is a useful and enjoyable way of providing suitable books and number activities for children and their families.

- Children in Years 7 and 8

We are very pleased that the Siobhan Dowd Trust is providing funding to run a pilot in 2010 for children in the early years of secondary school.

Dear Letter box

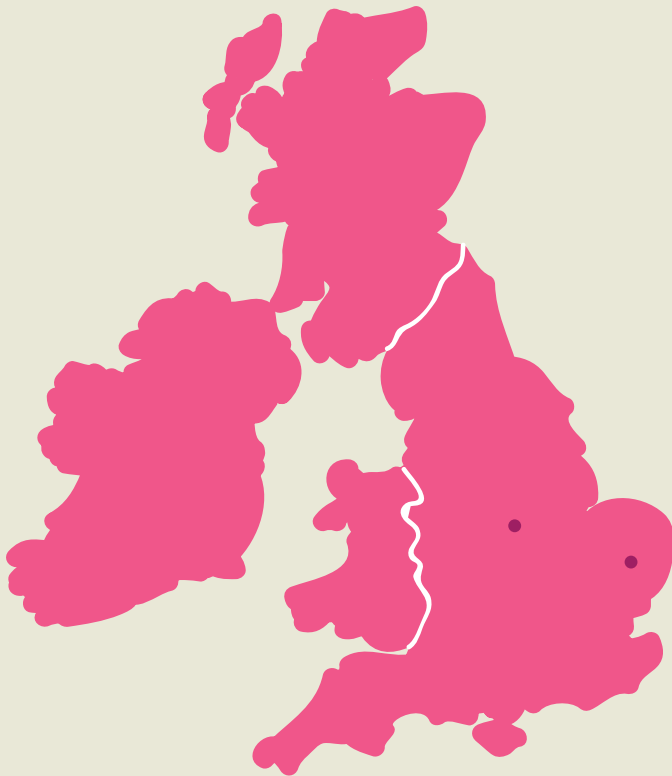
Thank you very much for my books.
I love Jacqueline Wilson I will keep it
forever. And I Love The Doctor Who
book it is lovely, I like Doctor Who books
there interesting and it is a diary so
I can write in it when I feel happy and
sad.

Thank you so much.
From Megan

How the Letterbox Club has grown

2003 - 2006

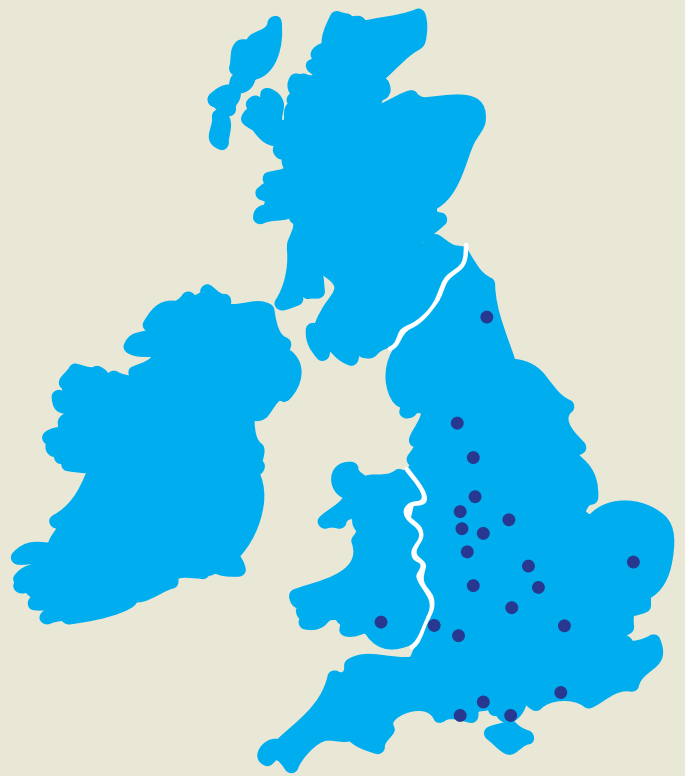
Early pilot studies



2 local authorities
191 children

2007

DCSF pilot in every
English region



22 local authorities
560 children

Local authorities taking part in 2009

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Aberdeenshire
Barnet
Bath and North East
Somerset
Blaenau Gwent
Bedfordshire
Belfast
Bexley
Birmingham
Blackpool
Bournemouth
Brent
Bridgend
Brighton and Hove

Bristol
Bromley
Bury
Caerphilly
Cambridgeshire
Cardiff
Carmarthenshire
Ceredigion
Cheshire
Conwy
Cornwall
Cumbria
Denbighshire
Derby

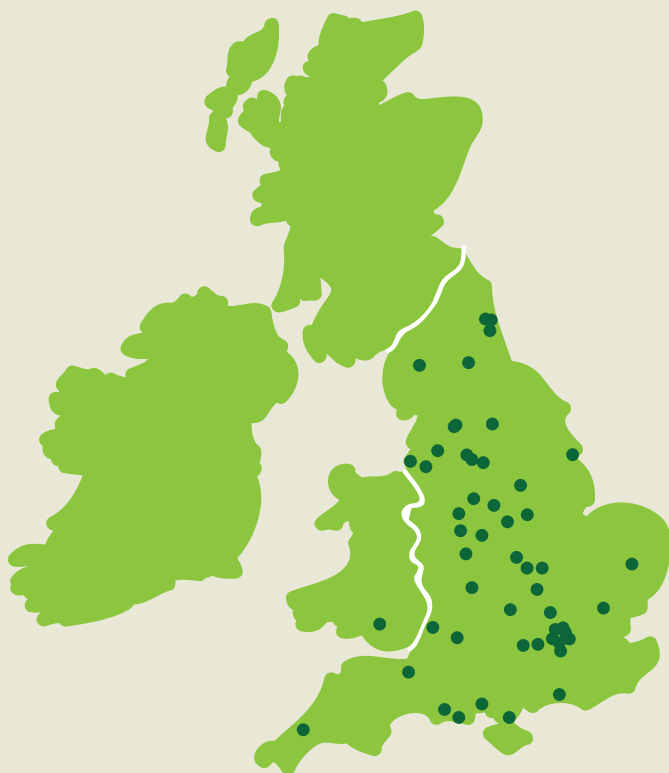
Doncaster
Dorset
Dudley
Durham
Ealing
Essex
Flintshire
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Greenwich
Gwynedd
Halton
Hammersmith
and Fulham

Hampshire
Harrow
Hartlepool
Havering
Herefordshire
Hillingdon
Hounslow
Isle of Anglesey
Isle of Wight
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Kent
Kingston-upon-Thames
Kirklees

Knowsley
Lambeth
Leeds
Leicester City
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Liverpool
Luton
Manchester
Merthyr Tydfil
Merton
Monmouthshire
Neath Port Talbot
Newcastle Upon Tyne

2008

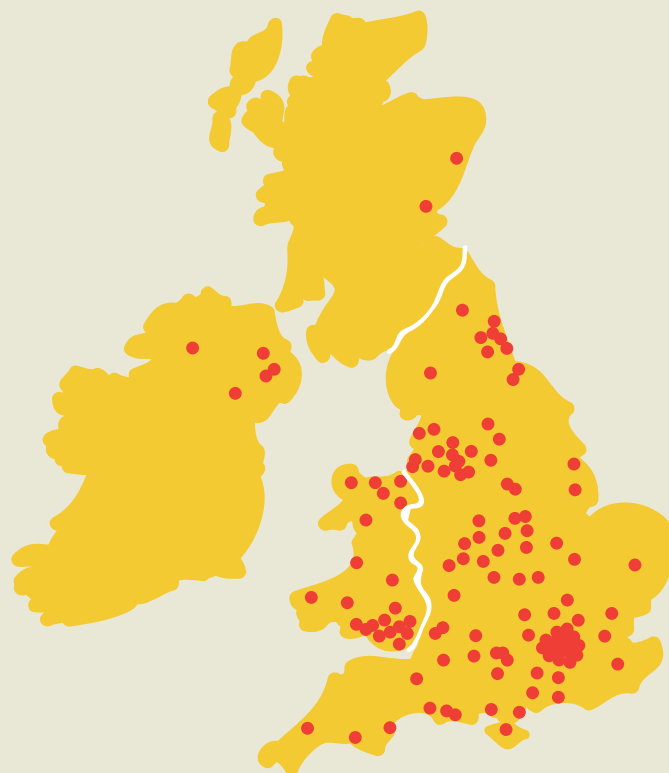
DCSF pilot in every English region



52 local authorities
1,000 children

2009

UK subscription service



128 local authorities
4,271 children

Newport
Northern Ireland
North East ELB
Northern Ireland
South ELB
Northern Ireland
South East ELB
Northern Ireland West ELB
North East Lincolnshire
North Somerset
North Tyneside
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Nottingham

Oldham
Oxfordshire
Pembrokeshire
Perth and Kinross
Peterborough
Plymouth
Poole
Portsmouth
Powys
Reading
Rhondda Cynon Taff
Rotherham
Salford
Sheffield

Shropshire
Somerset
Southampton
South Tyneside
Staffordshire
Stockport
Stockton-on-Tees
Suffolk
Sunderland
Surrey
Sutton
Swansea
Swindon
Tameside

Telford
Thurrock
Torbay
Torfaen
Tower Hamlets
Trafford
Vale of Glamorgan
Wakefield
Waltham Forest
Wandsworth
Warwickshire
West Berkshire
West Sussex
Westminster

Wigan
Wiltshire
Wirral
Wokingham
Wolverhampton
Worcestershire
Wrexham



Contact us

If you are interested in knowing more about Letterbox, please see our website: www.letterboxclub.org.uk or contact us at Book House.

Our office is open 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. Outside these hours, please leave a message and we will call you back.

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For all press enquiries, please call Katherine Solomon on 020 8875 4583 or send an email to Katherine.Solomon@booktrust.org.uk

Contact the authors of this report at the University of Leicester School of Education via Rose Griffiths, rnag1@le.ac.uk . Our web address is www.le.ac.uk/education.

“It was nice because I could read a lot of different books not just ones that I choosed, because I’d probably pick up the same book every time. I’ve still got the books. I still use them.”
(Girl aged 9, six months after receiving her last parcel, 2008)

“He really looked forward to receiving his books, and he did a lot more reading and maths. It’s a really good idea, thanks.”
(Carer of boy aged 10, 2008)



The Letterbox Club is a programme managed by Booktrust in partnership with the University of Leicester. It focuses on improving the educational outlook for children aged 7 to 11 in foster care by providing them with a parcel of books, maths games and educational materials once a month for six months, addressed to them personally through the post.

This report summarises the main findings for 2007 and 2008 from a national pilot funded by the DCSF, involving 50 local authorities and over 1,500 children and their foster families.

The Letterbox Club was established as a national programme across the UK in 2009, and is already working with over half the eligible children in the country each year.

The key benefits of taking part in the Letterbox Club were:

- ★ Increased involvement of children in their own learning
- ★ Gains in reading and number for many children
- ★ Enjoyment for the child in receiving a series of personalised parcels
- ★ Increased involvement of carers

“It is brill.”

(Boy aged 8, 2007)



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Registered charity no. 313343

www.letterboxclub.org.uk