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Shared reading for veterans in prison

<title> What Were the Processes and Outcomes of Offering Shared Reading as an Intervention for Veterans in Prison?

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<abstract> The charity Reading Force encourages Forces families to read together in order to build social, emotional, and mental well-being and offset the impact of the changes and separations routine in military life. They distribute reading scrapbooks and free books and encourage families to work on them together. It was suggested that a version of the project might usefully be developed for veterans in prison, whose families experience many of the same issues. Scrapbook Dads was developed for veterans housed in the Endeavour Wing at Parc Prison, South Wales. The materials were adapted for use by prisoners and their families. They had just been distributed when the pandemic struck, visiting and social/educational activities were cancelled, and the prison went into lockdown. With the materials readily available, the project was heavily used by prison staff to seek to maintain prisoner morale and support family connectivity. This paper charts the process, comments on what was learned, and makes recommendations for how shared reading can be used in prisons in future.

<keywords> *Keywords:* veteran, shared reading, prisons, family connectivity, well-being, Reading Force

<article text>

This paper examines the delivery and effectiveness of a prison intervention to encourage shared reading among male inmates and their families, in the hope of providing common ground for conversation and fostering stronger communication. Based on Reading Force, a project developed for the British Armed Forces and their families, a special version of the project—Scrapbook Dads—was funded by a local grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund and created for veterans in prison at HMP (Her Majesty’s Prison) & YOI (Youth Offender Institution) Parc, their families, and the wider community, including prison staff.

Although the project began in December 2019, it was largely delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic (March to August 2020) and associated institutional lockdowns, when all

communal activities within prisons stopped and inmates' time out of cell was severely restricted. The project was paused in September 2020 when schools returned and prisoners returned to work. It involved the supply of the same books to inmates and their families, the distribution of reading scrapbooks to the families, and the noting and analysis of the responses reported from associated activity and discussion.

Implementing and monitoring the project proved difficult. The strictures of the pandemic meant that most of the activities took place in the prisoners' cells, and thus little associated activity was observable. Although the military origins of the project proved popular with inmate recipients, and was an encouragement for veteran inmates to participate, it emerged that not all veterans in prison self-identify as veterans, and so there were problems in tracking outcomes against ex-military status.

The project did, however, provide a valuable additional resource to involve prisoners in meaningful activity during a difficult time. Recommendations are made on lessons learnt and how the project can best be developed and shared with other institutions in future.

[B] Background

Begun in 2011, Reading Force is a simple, practical, cost-effective and fun family shared reading initiative; the only such project of its kind for all British Armed Forces families. It is made available to all those connected with the military, wherever they are serving, including reservists and veterans, and their wider and former families (e.g. grandparents and those separated by divorce or relationship breakdown). The project encourages military families to read together in order to offset the impact of change; to keep communication going with the wider family and provide common ground for conversation during periods of separation or significant change. Registered in 2015 as a charity and a member of Cobseo (Confederation of Service Charities), the project has been demonstrated to benefit the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of Forces personnel and their families. Reading Force is free to beneficiaries and receives funding from a variety of charities, trust funds, and sponsors.²

The purpose of this prison project was to adapt and deliver a version of Reading Force for the benefit of offenders, staff, and the wider community supporting the Endeavour Families Interventions Unit in HM Prison Parc. The project team would work with the staff, who

would then deliver the project to inmates and their families over an agreed period (initially 12 months but this changed because of the unanticipated arrival of a pandemic).

It was anticipated that the project would engage everyone involved (offenders, their families, staff, the wider community, and civic partners) and would enable offenders to feel more connected to their children and wider family and would thereby boost their self-esteem. All involved would have the opportunity for a positive and enjoyable experience. A physical keepsake (a reading scrapbook) would provide important evidence of the prisoners' relationship with their families even though they were unable to be together. It was anticipated the project would include:

[Bullet list begins]

- researching, contacting, and liaising with the Endeavour Unit at HM Prison Parc;
- establishing the demographics of the group to be worked with and the approximate number of participants;
- mailing sample materials, information, and registration packs and considering how they might be adapted to suit the inmates and their families;
- securing relevant books for distribution to inmates and their families;
- designing new scrapbooks and materials (leaflets and posters, information about how scrapbooks can be filled, certificates and medals for both children and fathers);
- organizing print and production of all the materials;
- familiarizing Parc Prison staff with the initiative so that activity would be supported from within the prison, and then ongoing liaison with prison staff on delivery and analysis;
- providing appropriate materials—multiple copies if needed—to relevant locations as requested;
- sending free books to children as requested, and meeting extra scrapbook requests;
- meeting travel and miscellaneous expenses relating to these projects;
- measuring and evaluating the project.

[Bullet list ends]

It was anticipated that the project would support the work of the Endeavour Families Intervention Unit at Parc Prison, which houses veterans and first-time offenders, in building connections between veteran offenders, their families, staff, and the wider community.

[B] Literature review

It has been long established (e.g. Farrington et al., 1996) that **the connections a prisoner maintains with their family during their period of incarceration correlate with a reduced likelihood of reoffending**. For example, the Ministry of Justice's own research shows that, for a prisoner who receives visits from a partner or family member, the odds of reoffending are 39 per cent lower than for prisoners who has not received such visits:

Consistently good family work, which brings men face-to-face with their enduring responsibilities to the family left in the community, is indispensable to the rehabilitation culture we urgently need to develop in our penal system and has to be integral to the changes sought. It helps them forge a new identity for themselves, an important precursor to distance themselves from crime, based on being a good role model to their children, a caring husband, partner and friend and a reliable provider through legal employment. However, responsibilities are not discharged in a vacuum. Families need to be willing and able to engage with the rehabilitation process, so harnessing the resource of good family relationships must be a golden thread running through the processes of all prisons, as well as in the implementation of all themes of the white paper. (May et al., 2008)

Keeping the prisoner busy, with meaningful activity, is equally important to their eventual successful release. The longer the sentence, the more important this is. On 22 January 2020, the House of Lords debated 'The Release of Prisoners (Alteration of Relevant Proportion of Sentences) Order 2019'.³ Lord Hailsham said,

the longer a person stays in prison, the more difficult it is for them to be reabsorbed into the community and, more particular, the more difficult it is for them to get a job. When I was on the monitoring board, I was very concerned by the lack of meaningful out-of-cell activity, particularly in the field of education and the acquisition of work skills. Therefore, I very much hope that my noble friend is able to tell the House that the Government will increase the provision available to prisons for meaningful out-of-cell activity, particularly in the field of education and the acquisition of relevant work skills, which will enable prisoners, when released,

to be absorbed back into employment, thus impacting on the income of their families.

Lord Garnier commented similarly:

More important is what we do with the prisoners while they are in prison. If a prisoner is given a 15-year sentence and serves 10 years, as opposed to six and a half or seven, and you do nothing with him while he is in a prison...you release him illiterate, still a drug addict and still suffering from mental health problems, and he is wholly unfit for employment and incapable of looking after himself or his dependents, we have achieved nothing.

He stressed to inmates that ‘work for reward was a better alternative than reoffending’.

Lord Judd talked about the need for meaningful activities in prisons:

a priority in the penal system must be for the whole culture and purpose of prison staff to be ultimately and directly the challenge of rehabilitation. It is not a warehouse function, it is about enabling people to become better people, positive people.

Lord Thomas of Gresford commented that ‘Research into victims’ views on sentencing and time spent in custody is limited’ and that this should be sought before further funding decisions were made’.

Although suspicions may exist about whether veterans tend to get lower sentences because of their stressful experiences being given undue consideration (Kieckhaefer and Luna, 2020), they can similarly remain unconsulted. Murray (2016) concluded that the ‘voices of veteran offenders remain marginal to the ever-evolving debate about veterans, crime and veteran offender policies’. She suggested bringing to the fore a different analytical agenda which she refers to as ‘veteranality’. In this light, the newly formed Office for Veterans’ Affairs, part of the Cabinet Office, displays some cross-boundaried thinking about how veterans are affected by multiple trends.⁴

On the basis of a significant quantity of data from prisoners, Auty and Liebling (2020) found that within prisons ‘higher moral quality of life, or higher interior legitimacy, supports better outcomes for prisoners on release. This is consistent with theoretical expectations about the links between legitimacy, engagement in prison programs, well-being, and compliance with the law.’ It would follow that a shared reading activity, which promotes family connectivity, would count as a meaningful activity and correlate with effective preparation for release.

Considering the literature relating to the benefits of being involved in reading, cross-disciplinary research has shown that a reading habit correlates with a wide range of longer-term positive outcomes, from greater empathy and safety to stronger articulacy and professional success (Reading Agency and BOP Consulting, 2015). Shared reading offers a straightforward way for families to connect, building significant links between those involved. The experience tends to be memorable and deep.

Reading Force encourages shared reading within the context of a family relationship. It was thought that the prototype built for families separated through military postings, and given the specific nature of their role (e.g. submariners, those deployed to war zones), had the potential to work very well with veteran offenders, who were similarly separated from their families. It provides a long-term and proven method of developing the individual within their family and community, of particular relevance to contemporary society, in which decreasing interpersonal and communication skills have been ascribed to an excess of screen-time. Shared reading provides common ground and promotes good conversation, which has given significant benefit to various populations the project has worked with. Similar processes of monitoring, evaluation, and scrutiny were proposed, along with the publication of findings in peer-reviewed and professional journals.

[B] The benefits of involvement in shared reading

Consistent feedback from participants and evidence from scrapbooks completed by Forces families since 2011 (Baverstock and Gordon, 2013; Baverstock, 2013; 2016; 2018) have demonstrated the breadth and depth of positive impact that sharing books and talking about them have had on their social, emotional, and psychological well-being, whether the family

is at home together, have recently moved home and school, or are separated by deployments, training, postings, or injury, or are ex-service. Cited benefits (from comments in previous scrapbooks) include:

[Bullet list starts, including displayed quotations]

- *Practical support*—The project encourages the family to spend quality time together and to share a fun activity that the whole family enjoys. It promotes chatting with loved ones serving or training away from home.

I enjoyed being able to share a book with my family even though I wasn't at home. It really made me feel included. (Dad)

- *Social support*—The project encourages sharing and discussion of books among a group of family and friends, including those who are geographically distant, such as grandparents.

We read together every night and we like to talk about what we read. It was nice to be able to involve Nan and Auntie Mary too—they don't normally read the same books as us. It gave us extra things to talk about with them on the phone. (Brook, aged 12)

- *Emotional support*—The project provides a positive communication tool during times of stress (such as absence of a parent, readjustment of family life after absence, illness/injury) and is soothing for children during unpredictable times (e.g. as charted by Healthy Schools North Yorkshire, 2018). Divorced or separated parents have found taking part to be an effective way of developing a joint focus with the children despite relationship difficulties.

The memories of doing this scrapbook together will always be with us and when we were having a bad day or not a lot of time we would have five minutes doing this scrapbook and we all felt better. (Warren)

- *Educational support*—The project encourages reading and leads to improved literacy. Research consistently shows that improved literacy enhances an

individual's well-being, resilience, and long-term educational and employment prospects (Reading Agency and BOP Consulting, 2015). The project also helps to strengthen children's self-confidence and sense of belonging, affirming the positives of military family life. **Fathers who lack reading confidence can gain confidence in this area by reading children's books with their children.** Most less confident readers tend to cover up this limitation. Reading Force provides a non-judgemental way of approaching reading

- *Gendered support*—The project encourages and supports fathers to be reading role models to their children. This is particularly important for boys, who are less likely to go on to be regular readers if they lack a male reading role model.

I was able to relate to what Conor was doing and therefore expand on what had been written. We could sit down and discuss on equal terms how we had read the book and its meaning. We will continue to read books together but next time I will have a say! (Conor's dad)

- *Physical support*—The project provides physical evidence (a scrapbook) as a memento of shared experience, something particularly valuable during difficult times.

[Bullet list ends]

[B] Collaborative partners

In early 2019, Elaine Boorman made a presentation at the SSCE Cymru (Supporting Services Children in Education, Wales) conference about the work of Reading Force. At the same meeting, contact was made with Ross Hall, a Forces veteran and an HCPC (Health and Care Professionals Council) registered practitioner psychologist at the University of South Wales. He suggested that a similar shared reading initiative would be beneficial to veteran offenders, with whom he was working one day a week at Parc Prison. He envisaged Reading Force being of benefit to the fathers there and therefore organized a meeting to discuss a possible project. Hall introduced the Reading Force team to Corin Morgan-Armstrong (Head of Family Services, HMP & YOI Parc and CaR⁸), author of the 'Veterans in Custody Strategy'.⁹ Morgan-Armstrong agreed that this would be a beneficial initiative and innovative collaborative project and in May 2019 Alison Baverstock

(founder and director of Reading Force) and Boorman visited Parc to make a presentation and discuss options for working together.

This initial meeting and an agreement on the format and feasibility of the shared reading project formed the basis for applying for funding from the AFC (Armed Forces Covenant) Local Grant programme. An application with project plan and budget was duly submitted by Reading Force and a grant was awarded in the first quarter of 2019. In May 2019, a meeting was held at Parc between prison staff and Reading Force to discuss project parameters and timescales.

[B] Parc Prison

Parc Prison¹⁰ is a Category B men's private prison and YOI in Bridgend, Wales. It is operated by G4S. It is the only privately operated prison in Wales. G4S operate a number of other prisons and are also actively involved in developing resources for prisoner and staff support more widely. They therefore noted this initiative with interest for possible future sharing across their organization.

A Category B prison is for those serving a sentence for an offence involving threat to life or violence, threat of arson, robbery, drugs, sexual offences, or firearms offences.¹¹ In general, those serving in a Category B prison will have offended previously, been awarded a sentence of 10 years or more (or of indeterminate length), or previously escaped from a closed prison or from the police or an escort.¹²

The project reported on in this paper draws on the innovative work led by Morgan-Armstrong at Parc. This included the establishment of the Family Interventions Unit (FIU) in 2010, the first of its kind in a prison.

The FIU at Parc has also been the base camp for the Invisible Walls Wales (IWW) service, which started in 2012 following a Big Lottery start-up grant. IWW worked on a 'whole family' approach during and after custody, which was deemed to be highly successful following the publication of research by the University of South Wales in 2017 (Clancy and Maguire, 2017). It won in the same year the 'Family' category in the Centre for Social Justice

Awards. A five-year reconviction study is pending publication from the Ministry of Justice Data Lab, and Invisible Walls is currently being expanded to other G4S sites.

IWW led to the following trends (Clancy and Maguire, 2017; National Information Centre on Children of Offenders, 2018):

[Bullet list begins]

- Unemployment for released prisoners dropped from 80 per cent to 25 per cent, and for partners from 69 per cent to 46 per cent.
- Misuse of alcohol and/or drugs by released prisoners fell from 89 per cent to 20 per cent, and for partners from 15 per cent to 5 per cent.
- Children experiencing school attainment or attendance problems fell from 43 per cent to 12 per cent.
- Children considered by social services to be ‘at risk’ fell from 16 per cent to 7 per cent.
- Children requiring ‘no additional support’ from social services or other agencies rose from 40 per cent to 69 per cent.

[Bullet list ends]

Using the same template, Morgan-Armstrong then adapted and established the Endeavour Unit for veterans in custody in 2015, also the first of its kind. Since then, he has expanded the FIU to the other G4S prisons in the UK. It has also been extended to a number of collaborating ‘critical friend’ prisons outside the UK. The Endeavour Unit was extended to HMP Berwyn in 2018, and Berwyn opened a similar unit for veterans in custody. In Parc Prison the Endeavour Unit houses a mixture of veterans in custody and other prisoners serving long-term sentences.

The premise of the FIU is to house men in a specifically designed smaller unit (60 beds) where there is a culture and clear agenda for building, repairing, and maintaining positive family relationships during and after custody. There was a clear evidence base for this approach, concerning the positive impact that family engagement during a sentence has on effective resettlement, and that this helps to reduce reoffending and indeed the intergenerational transmission of offending behaviour.

For example, prisoners unable to maintain family ties are between two and six times more likely to reoffend within the first year of release than those who do (Ditchfield, 1994).

Healthy family contact, while one is in custody, can reduce the likelihood of offending by up

to six times (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). Prisoners who receive visits have a significantly lower reoffending rate (52 per cent) than prisoners who receive no visits at all (70 per cent), (May et al., 2008). Offenders who receive at least one visit during their time in custody are 39 per cent less likely to reoffend than those who receive no visits (May et al., 2008). Finally, positive family engagement, while one is in custody, produces an average financial saving on a scale that starts at £16 000 per individual per cycle (New Philanthropic Capital, 2011–14).

These important trends were confirmed in the publication of the landmark Lord Farmer Review (Farmer, 2017), which placed family ties at the heart of prison reforms and recommended work to ‘strengthen family ties to help offenders turn their lives around and protect public safety’ (Ministry of Justice, 2017). This report has now become enshrined in HM Inspection of Prisons criteria, as well as forming the basis for pending measures from Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) for all prisons in England and Wales. A five-year reconviction study pending release from the Ministry of Justice Data Lab is currently COVID delayed, but is expected to show similar trends.

Applying some of the learning, approach, and outcomes of Parc’s FIU specifically to veterans, the Endeavour Unit sought to provide veterans with an opportunity to voluntarily opt into a residential environment where they could become part of a community with less exposure to the wider prison and therefore less contact with a recidivist culture, veterans often being first-timers. This enabled them to experience some companionship with other veterans and, importantly, to access bespoke support for themselves and their families through the various veterans’ charities and agents with which Parc has established partnerships. A designed combination of a specific veteran-focused living community, limited exposure to the general prison culture, and bespoke support for themselves and their families is intended to increase the likelihood of successful resettlement. Anecdotal evidence so far shows promising results during and after custody. An intended longer-term study is pending.

This unit has attracted interest from senior military personnel. In 2016, the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, visited (Figure 1) and commented, ‘I had an inspiring visit where I found people who were trying hard to point in the right direction veterans who have fallen into difficulties’ (Advance, 2016).

[B]Shared Reading in Parc: Project concept

[C] *Proposed outcomes*

The grant application confirmed that the most important outcome of this project was to be improved family connectivity: to benefit the mental and emotional well-being of both inmate father and their family, connecting them and giving all of them a boost to their self-esteem. Additional anticipated outcomes were improved literacy confidence, a desire to read more, and a calmer mind. It was agreed to call the project ‘Scrapbook Dads’. The application form stated,

Parc Reading Families shared-reading and scrapbooking project will engage offenders, their families, staff, and civic-partners, connecting offenders to their children/families, and a corollary boost in self-esteem. All involved have the opportunity for a positive experience and physical keepsake; important evidence of their relationship even though Dad isn’t with them.

It was anticipated that this project would sit well within existing family initiatives such as the Learning Together Club, an informal event held on the first Monday of each month, open to the whole prison. Children come into the visitors’ hall and bring in pieces of schoolwork to share with their incarcerated father. Shared activities are also on offer. The maximum number of inmates involved is 16. Usually around 12 come along.

However, not all inmates at the Learning Together Club are veterans. This raised the question of how Scrapbook Dads would be presented—for veterans only or open to all? After discussion, it was agreed to position the project as developed for veterans but with relevance to everybody who is separated; thus the activity doesn’t preclude acknowledgement of military connections or exclude non-veterans . It was also to be offered to prison staff, both temporary and full time, in all roles, to promote wider awareness and appreciation of the project’s benefits. A few additional prisoner categories were added, including prisoners inside X block of the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (VPU) and those recently released to open settings with whom contact was being maintained. The number of inmates and their families taking part would vary across the year and there would be no restriction on the number of times they could participate.

[C] *Proposed method of delivery*

Reading Force usually relies on the (preferably coordinated) involvement of a number of different agencies, both military and civilian. In general, the more institutions and individuals are involved, particularly in providing information on project availability, the more potential beneficiaries are likely to join. It follows that hearing about the scheme from multiple sources—for example, school, unit, and welfare support—will tend to promote participation. Once a family has taken part, they often remain involved. This relates to the way in which subscription publications allocate most of their marketing spend to finding would-be subscribers, who can then be expected to stay for a sector-average ‘lifetime’ of usually 5–6 years (Baverstock and Bowen, 2019, p. 39). Similarly, ‘Whether it is clothing, meals or an exercise regiment, consumers purchase a wide range of goods on a recurring basis using a subscription model’, and ‘past research indicates that people continue to subscribe to these services even when they rarely use them’ (Savery and Dhar, 2020), perhaps continuing to be influenced by the choices and processes presented.

It was expected that Scrapbook Dads would primarily be delivered by prison staff (through the Endeavour Unit with one-to-one sessions with fathers), as well as by other staff, e.g. the Reader-in-Residence, the Writer-in-Residence, the Librarian, other family support staff, and offender custody managers. All could be trained and encouraged to offer the project. The project could also potentially be integrated within Parc’s Scouts, perhaps with the awarding of a ‘Reader’ badge.

It was suggested that two copies of the same book would be offered to prisoners’ families, one for the child to have at home and one for the father to keep. The reading scrapbook included staples and needed glue for the addition of items; neither is permitted in prison. To get around these difficulties, it was suggested that the prison hold the scrapbook and both parties be issued with special notepads they could write or draw on and bring to the visiting sessions to add to the scrapbook. In order to encourage prisoners to take part more than once, a ‘passport’ was suggested that could be stamped each time a scrapbook was finished and submitted. This could then be scanned or photographed for Reading Force records (needed for reporting to project funders). It was suggested that families use a team name instead of their surname if they wished to ensure anonymity.

[C] *Prison staff training*

Reading Force is normally delivered through staff visits to specific locations (e.g. military units; schools with a high density of services pupils), liaison with organizations that can offer the project (e.g. welfare services and charities; pre-schools), and personal recommendation (Baverstock, 2016). Reading Force colleagues regularly offer presentations on the scheme directly to those likely to be involved. In the case of working with prisoners, Reading Force colleagues would be reliant on prison staff for both project administrative and social support. A training session for prison staff was therefore organized (Figure 2).

Seven prison staff members took part, and six responded to a subsequent survey on its value and effectiveness. Responders commented on the project's usefulness to the prisoners in general, their own ability to deliver it as a result of the training, and project outcomes they considered likely. The survey offered a seven-point scale for grading individual responses as well as opportunities for personal comments. Before the training, everyone was given a free copy of a book to share, to offer a first-hand experience of shared reading and with the suggestion that it be discussed during the training day. The theme of the book (Howe, 2018) was relevant to families separated by a prison sentence.

Key findings from the survey included:

[Bullet list begins, including displayed quotations]

- Although four of the six respondents were pleased to get a copy of the book, two were lukewarm at the time of receipt—scoring 3 out of 7, slightly less than ‘moderately pleased’ (the definition of a response of ‘4’).
- However, all respondents were extremely enthusiastic about the training session, scoring all aspects of it very highly. Their opinion of (i) the session overall, (ii) the information on why reading is useful, (iii) the information about Reading Force, and (iv) the time spent discussing how Reading Force might work in the prison—all scored an average of 6.8 to 7 out of 7. This is really strong. One participant commented,

The session was very informative and allowed us the opportunity to discuss the practical and logistical elements of the implementation of the scheme within the prison.

- All respondents discussed the experience of receiving the book with both their colleagues and their families. They also all discussed the book itself with someone. Two discussed it just with colleagues, two just with family, one with colleagues and family, and one with colleagues, family, and friends. This mirrors findings from other shared reading initiatives (notably the Kingston University Big Read and ReadUp! Kingston) (Baverstock et al., 2017; 2019). Comments included:

I had heard about this book previously, due to the relevance it has to our family work within HMP Parc. I had not previously found the opportunity to read it but being provided with it for the purpose of the session provided me with the impetus to do so.

Myself and my colleague both read the book and discussed it together afterwards. I had also spoken about the experience with colleagues and friends.

Enjoyed the book and it's always good to receive a gift.

- Most of the respondents were keen on reading in general (scoring 6 or 7 out of 7). Just one rated his enjoyment as a 4. This same respondent, though lukewarm about receiving the book, was very enthusiastic about the session as a whole, scoring 7 out of 7 for all aspects except the information about why reading is important, on which he scored a 6.

[Bullet list ends]

Three of the six respondents had connections with the Armed Forces and three did not. Such a connection or lack thereof did not appear to impact on the results. It should be noted that a career in the prison service is a common option for a veteran who has time to devote to a second employer.

To the question of whether respondents thought inmates would benefit from participation there were detailed answers (the most from any question). These included:

The men get the chance to do something productive with their children. It also opens conversation between them.

For families to have something to discuss in common with each other, especially the children.

Encourage prisoners to engage with their children in educational activities.

It will allow for a conversation to flow between dads and their children.

I believe that it will provide huge bonding opportunities for fathers and their children, contributing to the men in our care making the best use of their time with us.

Help build relationships between the men in our care and their children.

Respondents were also asked what would likely be the main barriers to participation? All responses showed first-hand awareness of the difficulty of delivery within prisons, where visiting time is precious and where, although activities and session purposes can be offered, it is up to families how they use the time. Barriers were anticipated in:

[Bullet list begins]

- keeping the men and children focused on the activity;
- reluctance to spend the allocated visiting time on reading;
- the parents' reading ability, given the long-acknowledged correlation between low literacy levels and being in prison (it would be interesting to look at whether this is the case among convicted veterans);
- security considerations, in the format and alteration of materials, although others felt that

There may be some security barriers with the materials, although we have been running family interventions for such a long time at this establishment now. I don't believe that these barriers will be insurmountable.

- the men's ability to have scrapbooks in their cells, given some practical difficulties relating to their format (e.g. the scrapbooks included staples).

[Bullet list ends]

In the context of prisons, shared reading was proposed as an ‘intervention’, like fitness classes or parenting advice, and was positively received: ‘I can see no reason why there would be barriers to this intervention.’ The staff also took liked the idea of rolling out this project and expected that everyone involved would benefit:

I just love to be able to escape in a good book.

I have always thoroughly enjoyed reading for pleasure, since I was a very young child. In recent years, I have found that I do not do so anywhere near as often, as family life and work pressures take over. This experience has reminded me how much pleasure I take from it and I plan to make more time for reading in the future. I read to my three-year-old son every day and I hope that he learns to take as much pleasure from books as I have.

[C] *Changes required to make the Reading Force scrapbook suitable for Scrapbook Dads*

Participants in Reading Force are invited to return their scrapbooks for feedback from the project managers (using recorded delivery so they do not get lost). This brings an affirmation of effort and an encouragement of further engagement in the project. Seeing the completed scrapbooks also enables the project team to report to funders on how they have been used and to assess project outcomes. This process, and other information included in the standard Reading Force scrapbook, needed adaptation to make it suitable for the prison environment. Besides changing the name of the project to ‘Scrapbook Dads’, other changes included:

[Bullet list begins, including displayed quote]

- Deleting references to deployments, while retaining references to parents being separated from their children.
- Substituting Parc’s Family Welfare Unit as the return address for completed scrapbooks, in place of a return envelope to the Reading Force team. Feedback and return of the scrapbook was offered within a month in order to manage families’ expectations (normally the time this will take is unspecified).
- Removing sections that asked for contact information, since it was important to ensure that prisoner and family data were managed appropriately. Prison families had the option to choose a new identifying name.

- Adapting the text to make it sufficiently inclusive to enable wider participation, e.g. by prison staff and support staff.
- Creating notepads to match Scrapbook Dads design. The text on the pads read,

Here is space for your thoughts, drawings, sketches and ideas about your chosen book or shared reading, so you are ready to talk about them or stick them into your scrapbook when you next meet.

[Bullet list ends]

The possibility of printing of the materials at Parc, using programmes of prisoner work on the prison's printing press, was investigated, but the complexity of the format was incompatible with the machinery available. All the leaflets and posters for the project were, however, printed at Parc. The books and scrapbooks were sent to the prisoners' families by Parc rather than by Reading Force, owing to considerations of confidentiality.

[C] *Measuring engagement and impact*

As a requirement of the grant, it was very important to collect evidence of delivery and outcomes within a planned time frame, which would also facilitate writing up for publication in professional and academic journals. It was anticipated that the project's success could be assessed in terms of:

[Bullet list begins]

- the engagement of those involved (staff, wider community, civic partners, offenders and their families);
- the offenders feeling more connected and engaged with their children and wider family and a concomitant boost in self-esteem;
- the offenders appreciating the benefits of reading in general and encouraging their children to read;
- the offenders and their children having a positive and enjoyable experience and a tangible memento—a scrapbook that children can turn to as a positive reference point when thinking of their fathers and that provides physical evidence of the relationship even though their dad isn't physically with them.

[Bullet list ends]

Various qualitative measures were suggested (all with appropriate permission):

[Bullet list begins]

- discussion with participants and written feedback from them;
- oral/written feedback from those managing the project on engagement and participation levels among prisoners;
- extent of engagement in a shared experience as evident from the scrapbooks;
- looking out for comments within the scrapbooks about the process of being involved in Scrapbook Dads;
- photographs of families taking part during their visits, and of the activities (but with no identifiable faces);
- some recording, and transcribing, of relevant conversations about the project with prisoners and their families;
- scans or photographs of completed scrapbooks;
- participation in a post-project author event, which was seen as a powerful opportunity for dads and their families to get further inspired about reading and writing.

[Bullet list ends]

Quantitative measures were also suggested:

[Bullet list begins]

- prison staff logs of engagement levels: numbers of books and scrapbooks handed out;
- number of scrapbooks completed;
- number of scrapbooks submitted for feedback;
- number of participants per family;
- age range of participants.

[Bullet list ends]

There was interest in exploring how the project was adopted among prison staff, many of whom are veterans, and whether it could create links across the veteran community, including both staff and inmates. There was also interest in how the project might be shared with staff in other prisons.

[C] *Project development and outcomes*

After the staff training session, a change was decided in the way the project was to be delivered. Instead of including it within the monthly Learning Together sessions, as initially suggested, a specific time could be allocated for Scrapbook Dads sessions by the Endeavour Unit. They were to run on the last Wednesday of each month, starting in January 2020. For two hours, prisoners would spend time with their children and partners talking about the

books and filling in the scrapbooks together. Sometimes grandparents would bring children if the relationship between the parents had broken down, or they came in addition to the parents. If the prisoner had children by more than one partner, a neutral member of the family might bring them all in together. There are no restrictions (within reason) on the number of visitors allowed during an intervention.

[C] *Launch*

Scrapbooks and books were first given out at a ‘Family Day’ before Christmas 2019, attended by a member of the Reading Force team. There was an introductory presentation about the initiative, and a selection of books were offered, intended to appeal to all age groups. Each child was given a book of their choice, a scrapbook, and a notepad, and the father had one copy of the same book and a notepad. There were a few dads with more than one child and they seemed happy to have more than one book to read. One 13-year-old was studying at school *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon, and her dad was keen to read it too. Forty-five books were given out in total. Staff kept additional copies to hand out to other offenders who were unable to attend.

Staff then ran two Scrapbook Dads sessions in January and February. The anticipated March meeting was cancelled owing to the rising number of COVID-19 cases in the prison and the likelihood of an imminent lockdown. Project management was also handed over from one Parc colleague to another because of maternity leave.

[C] *Change to delivery*

With all visits and events cancelled in the prison, and prisoners locked in their cells for 23.5 hours out of 24 on many days, the project had to be delivered in new ways.

The prison staff prepared a leaflet offering prisoners access to the project and slipped it under cell doors. Those who confirmed they wanted to take part could choose a free book at their next ‘on activity’ time and have a copy of the same book, along with a project scrapbook, sent to their family, as coming from them. A warder commented, ‘The children were really chuffed to get a book from their dad—they like receiving anything from their dad.’

During the lockdown period, 37 prisoners asked for books and 52 books were handed out and sent to their children with scrapbooks and these were used as the basis of talking about books

over the telephone and via video calls (so-called ‘purple visits’) and of conversations inside the prison, both among prisoners and between prisoners and prison staff. Without face-to-face sessions, it was left to the children to complete their scrapbooks at home. Feedback was consistently that the project provided common ground for conversations when people could not be together, and was particularly valuable to families who were living far from the prison, since they were able to visit less often than others (before the pandemic). The project was paused when schools went back in September 2020 and lockdown was eased for the prisoners, with a planned restart in March 2021, albeit with some changes. Overall, the books played a key part in keeping families connected over a period when many children did not see their parent in prison for 9–10 months.

[B] Detailed feedback on project interactions

[C] *Comments from the Reading Force colleague attending the Christmas event*

On Wednesday I attended a families’ day at Parc Prison to introduce the Scrapbook Dads project. It ran from 2 to 4 p.m. in the hall/canteen on Endeavour Wing and there were about 12 prisoners and their children (ranging in age from a few months up to 14). Some partners/spouses brought children in; others were accompanied by grandparents or foster parents.

There was the usual complicated personal process going through security (materials had been sent ahead so were pre-cleared for the event), but, then once in the hall, the atmosphere was surprisingly informal. The hall is nicely laid out with a large area with tables and chairs (screwed to the floor), a breakout area with sofas, a soft play area, and an area with some toys. There are vending machines, but a buffet and drinks were also available for all.

There were two craft tables, a face painter, and the Librarian who was making badges (no pins), plus two ladies with four ‘therapy dogs’ (the children can pet them). There was also a visit from Father Christmas and an area where families could have their picture taken by a member of staff.

I laid out a selection of books and spoke to nine families, giving the child a scrapbook, one copy of the book and a notepad, and the dad had one copy of the same

book and a notepad. There were a few dads with more than one child and they seemed happy to have more than one book to read. One 13-year-old was studying *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* at school and her dad was keen to read it too, so this was a particularly good match!

The Family Interventions Lead took a note of the dads taking part. She's hoping to run the first monthly Scrapbook Dads session on a Wednesday afternoon towards the end of January. Whilst everyone I spoke to was keen and thought it was a great idea, how many actually do it might be another thing. The project manager thinks there may be four or five more dads who weren't at the families' day but might be interested, so they too can have a scrapbook. Forty-five books were given out, a mixture of picture books (e.g. Julia Donaldson), longer stories (e.g. Cressida Cowell and Roald Dahl) and books for older readers (e.g. Markus Zusak and Mark Haddon).

[C] *January 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc*

This afternoon went really well, thank you. We sadly had quite a few last minute dropouts, so only seven families attended in the end but with a total of 19 children. Still a good turnout and a number of the men who dropped out of this afternoon still seemed keen to start attending in Feb so we'll soon build numbers up. We are in need of a top-up of books after today and I will send you a list shortly. One family in particular were hoping for a further copy of *The Book Thief*, as there was only one copy remaining.

[C] *February 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc*

The last session went well with most families choosing a new book. Even though the books didn't arrive in time it posed no issues; we had plenty for them to choose from. Nine families attended, with a total of 20 children. Both the men and the children were fully engaged and the afternoon went well. I do have a finished scrapbook here that I have been asked to send off, so I will get that done next week. The only thing we were looking to alter is to change it to an hour and a half instead of two hours, as some of the younger children were very restless towards the end. Hope all of this information helps. We now at least have the new books that were sent for the one taking place in April.

[C] 1 April 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

Thank you, and of course I will keep notes as to how the men respond to this. Phone contact is their only means at present to have a conversation with their families, so I anticipate that this will go down well with the men.

I wonder if the books that you sent us for the next Reading Force could be given to men on the unit so that they can read to their children? As the prison is now on complete lockdown and no visits are currently taking place, we thought that this would be a good idea for the men to have meaningful contact. Unfortunately, it is unlikely the child will have the book the same time as Dad but I know some men are doing this currently on the unit and it appears to be keeping morale up.

[C] 13 April 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

I just wanted to give you an update with regards to giving men books to read to their children over the phone. We are also posting the children the same copy of the book and a scrapbook where we are able to. So far we have had eight men take us up on the offer and the feedback so far has been fantastic!

One of the men whose daughter is just two years old has started to say ‘Daddy book!’ when he calls home. He has so far read the underpants sequels and today has asked for *The Snail and the Whale* and *Revolting Rhymes*. His partner has been able to find adaptations of the stories he is reading to her via YouTube and this has gone down well.

Another one of the men has just finished reading *How to Train Your Dragon* with his daughter and he said they have both thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He has now chosen another book *Toto the Ninja Cat*, and couldn’t wait to call her to advise her there would be a new book on the way.

It’s lovely to see such a positive response, and I guess at present this has been a lifesaver to the men who have taken this opportunity. The two men who have given me feedback have said this has been a positive experience and made them rethink the importance of time with their children. As I hear more I shall keep you informed.

[C] 29 April 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

Thank you so much for the books and scrapbooks; it is much appreciated. I wonder if you would be able to send me some more younger child's books and a different selection as to what we already have ... The uptake has been very positive but what we have found now is that the men who have younger children have now read and reread the books and could now do with a new selection.

[C] 29 May 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

Apologies for the delay in responding to this email; it has been very busy as of late. All is going fairly well at the moment, and the men as ever are grateful for materials that help them to keep communication with their children strong. I have received the children's books (thank you so much) but nothing for the adults. Do you know when they were sent? I shall try and hunt these down.

I can't thank you enough for all your support in these strange times. More than ever the relevance of Reading Force has proven to be a powerful intervention.

[C] 12 June 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

The men are coming up to the office to exchange and choose new books to send out to their children. It is still going well and we have received some lovely feedback. There was one in particular who told me that his daughter (aged four) now likes to read to her daddy. Even though I'm guessing she isn't able to read as such, she knows the story so well (it's one of her favourites) that she is able to recite it to him.

I received the books for staff this week. Thank you so much for these.¹⁶ I am going to put an email out advising that there are books here for people to come and get should they want to.

I don't have a lot of books now where I have two of the same so that I can send out one to a child and one for dad to keep. The most popular age groups are 4–8 years. It would be great if you are able to send some more out of these age groups if possible. Perhaps I could ask some of the men if they could ask their partner to send a clip in of

their child reading their books or filling in their scrapbooks? What do you think? We could ask permission to send them on to yourselves.

[C] 2 October 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

Apologies for only now responding to this email; it has been hectic the last few weeks. At present we have decided to hold back on Reading Force until we can unite the families. We feel part of the magic is to choose a book together, which at present we can't offer.

The last few months as you know have been turbulent and whilst at first the men were still keen to have stories sent to their child and them read the same book over the phone, time has changed again with the children going back to school, and the men going back to work and back to some sort of normal regime. This also makes it more difficult for them to come and see us to select books.

[C] December 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc

In addition to the Scrapbook Dads materials, Christmas activity packs were given to them. Each pack had a plain card and envelope, a wooden bauble, a bookmark, felt shapes (to make something Christmas themed), glue, paint, glitter, and a paintbrush. The idea behind this was for the men to be able to make and personalize these items to send home for their children.

In the early stages of lockdown and prior to the introduction of purple visits we took photographs of the men to send home to their children. This was to offer a visual aid to the children that Dad was ok.

[B] Numbers of books and scrapbooks handed out

[C] January 2020

Books and scrapbooks were handed out to:

7 prisoners

9 adult visitors

19 children

[C] February 2020

Books and scrapbooks were handed out to:

10 prisoners

12 adult visitors

24 children

The steady demand for materials throughout January and February replicated the interest throughout the project's duration. Books and scrapbooks were always made available, working around the difficult circumstances created by the pandemic.

Table 1 shows which books were given to children at Parc (chosen and supplied by Reading Force, based on their wide experience of providing books to children and families) and the likely age group of the recipients. It should be noted that, although these were the titles formally handed out during Scrapbook Dads sessions, many more were made available at the meetings, and as lockdown continued more were sent (e.g. in February and June 2020).

[B] Evaluation and analysis

The circumstances of a particularly difficult period have imparted to the project three clear stages:

[Numbered list begins]

1. Pre-coronavirus: Family Day launch and two face-to-face Scrapbook Dads family sessions.
2. Coronavirus lockdown (March to August): family contact limited to phone calls.
3. Project paused between September 2020 and February 2021. It was proposed that the project would recommence in March 2021.

[Numbered list ends]

Whereas feedback from families involved was really positive, it was not possible to track the individual progress of the 37 scrapbooks handed out, owing to a variety of circumstances. The project overlapped with the pandemic, the prison's status as a COVID-19 'outbreak centre', and prisoners being locked in their cell for 23.5 hours a day (and for 17 days for 24

hours a day when the outbreak was at its height). This meant that library loans were stopped and books in the inmates' possession could not circulate.

As personal visits were not possible, prison staff organized a range of activities to keep inmates connected with their families. These included quizzes (with the father as quizmaster), a continuation of the unit's Scouts Group—operating online (including enabling the children to work on the acquisition of badges)—and other family activities. Scrapbook Dads books and scrapbooks were sent out as part of these activities. As they were perceived as coming from the inmates, they were very positively received by the families. Some families took part in the project twice. A warder commented,

The men were given extra credit for their phones so they could stay in touch with their families. The long-term aim was to support relationships. Scrapbook Dads gave them something to talk about other than COVID or how difficult it all is. We were also funded by G4S to make trips to schools to give out non-perishable foodstuffs to families who we knew would be in difficulties, and this was really appreciated.

Within Parc, Scrapbook Dads was sequentially¹⁷ project managed by two (female) members of staff who had a particular and self-confessed enthusiasm for reading and books. There was immense pressure on staff, and staff illnesses and shortages certainly impacted on project delivery, sustainability, and assessment.

[C] *Unexpected findings from Scrapbook Dads*

[Numbered list begins, including displayed quote]

1. *It proved difficult to establish who was a veteran and who was not.* The books and materials were made available to all within the Endeavour Unit (first-offenders and veterans) but it proved difficult to establish who were the veterans. It emerged that veterans are often unwilling to admit to past involvement in the services. Given the strong ethos of not letting the side down that prevails in the military, this is perhaps not surprising; others may just prefer to keep personal information to themselves. Within the Endeavour Unit, whether or not they had declared a military past, all were able to take part. One staff member reckoned that the number of inmates who have a military history could be as much as twice as many as those who have self-declared

this status. This seems apparently similar to the situation of care leavers in prison, who too are often reluctant to make known this information about themselves.

2. *The military connection conferred prestige.* It was reported that the project's military origins were well received by all and seen as a source of prestige.
3. *Books make good presents.* Through Scrapbook Dads, books were offered as presents—and were received with delight. Although books were not a usual present for many of the families receiving them, and (for some) were less expensive than more common gifts, they were the basis of ongoing quality time between parent and child. **Perhaps this will offer the families some food for thought about the value of books as presents.**
4. *Prisoners may have complex lives.* Prisoners may have children with more than one partner, or experience a relationship breakdown that makes it harder for children to remain in touch with their father in prison. It can follow that the structures that facilitate formal family visits will not allow prisoners to see all their children at once. Rivalries and jealousies may result, which may lead to decisions by family members not to visit at all. In such situations, Scrapbook Dads can work very well, since it can carpet a discrete and personal link between the prisoner and a specific group of family connections, without competition for time or attention.
5. *Some veteran prisoners have no family members with whom they can comfortably share books and reading.* Through the strictures of a military career, and in particular all the moving, it's not uncommon for personnel to lose the habit of regular contact with their families. Regiments and units are often experienced as 'family'. It may be difficult to rebuild lapsed links, owing to a prison sentence, and so the inmates and their families remain out of touch. A lack of a supportive family outside prison correlates with a tendency to reoffend.
6. *Materials were irrelevant to some veterans.* Some veterans were unable to use the Scrapbook Dads materials because they were in the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit (most of them convicted of sexual offences relating to children) and so were not able to see their children (this too can lead to no family contact at all).
7. *Relocating of prisoners.* During the pandemic, and the restrictions that followed, some prisoners on the Endeavour Unit (veterans and first-offenders) were rehoused to different locations. This was partly to provide more consistency for veterans who found it disruptive to be located with short-term prisoners (as first-offenders tend to be). Transfer to units housing 'lifers' tended to promote longer-term relationships

within a more ordered environment, which is particularly important for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

[Designer: This is a regular paragraph break. The paragraph below is not a displayed quote]

Outside the prison world, the extent to which prisons are fluid communities is not generally realized. The status of inmates is reviewed every six months and can result in despatch to a different category of unit (e.g. to ‘open conditions’)¹⁸ or to release. Departure can come very suddenly. This can be difficult both for those who are left behind (who will henceforth have little or no further contact with someone with whom they may have built a strong personal relationship) and for those who are released (who suddenly have to contend with a very changed world).

8. *Delivery to prisons.* This is complicated. Materials sent to prisons have, for obvious reasons, to be security checked. Scrapbook Dads relied on stocks of books for the prisoners and their children to choose between. Books were despatched to the prison for the attention of the project manager located in the Endeavour Unit, who was then responsible for handing or sending them out. The situation was complicated by the pandemic, since paper had been identified as a carrier of the virus, and so the circulation of books was stopped.
9. *A more connected body of staff.* Overall, the effort to keep prisoners busy and connected with their families during lockdown, and particularly the enforced isolation when they were in their cells for long periods, resulted in a period of greater connectivity and collaboration among the prison staff. The project lead commented,

We have really had to think out of the box for the past few months. Anything that we formerly did face to face, we had to think of doing in another way. Nothing was off-limits and we all mucked in. We worked as one big team; the divide between operational (management) and non-operational roles started to wear away and we got to help each other out. Working together so closely to support the prisoners led to a really strong sense of community—and a really positive atmosphere.

Prison staff also shared the project, and their feedback on involvement, with other G4S prisons, which is their standard model for establishing best practice.

[Numbered list ends]

[C] *How Scrapbook Dads will be used in future*

During project training, one possible barrier identified by staff was that staff cannot direct how families and inmates spend prison-organized family time. They were able to offer the scheme but could not insist that people take part.

However, when the benefits were seen for those who did participate in the scheme, it was proposed at the conclusion of the project that Scrapbook Dads become one of the structured activities available during the prison's Homework Club, which is run on a monthly basis. With two hours available, and access to a buffet, it was thought that a structured offering of Scrapbook Dads could work well as a finishing activity: that is, first 40 minutes on homework; then access to the buffet; then 30 minutes on Scrapbook Dads.

[C] *October 2020, comments from the project manager at Parc*

We have ideas as to how we wish Reading Force to move forward as an intervention next year, and sat down this week to discuss further. We feel we would like to incorporate Reading Force into our new School Zone Club. This intervention will be where we link in with the children's schools and ask them to provide us with homework or a theme they are doing for that term. We will then ensure that when the child comes in on this intervention they can do a piece of work relevant to their schoolwork with Dad. Part of this will be also asking what books are on the curriculum for them to read and link your books that you send us in with this so that the children can show their school what they are doing with Dad. We feel it will give the intervention more structure and if the child's teacher is also taking an interest in what is being done with Dad then it will incentivize both child and Dad to be more proactive in reading and completing their scrapbooks.

Staff at Parc plan to use the newly appointed Schools Coordinator to liaise between schools and prisons, to establish which topics or set books are being covered and hence the topics that can be supported by double access to relevant books. This would align with the anticipated benefits of shared family learning, which is often the most valued effect of home schooling (Hines and Baverstock, 2018). The age range during these sessions would cover any child of school age, from 4–5 to 16–18, and the prison's Veterans Coordinator would be similarly involved. It is thought that Parc's involvement in shared reading could be showcased as a learning project that supports the prison's ethos.¹⁹ Reading Force would also be keen to

establish a link with the Reader-in-Residence, who runs the Storybook Dad recording of stories by fathers in prison for their children. Reading Force could provide a copy of the book being recorded and a scrapbook that they can send out with the recording, in the same way that Reading Force collaborates with other organizations offering to record parents reading to their children, such as Storybook Waves.

[B] Conclusions

[Numbered list begins]

1. Scrapbook Dads worked in prisons in a similar way to the way it works in the military community—by providing common ground for conversations within families and promoting reflection and mental well-being.
2. The project is suitable for delivery in a variety of contexts and works particularly well to link those who are temporarily physically or long-term geographically isolated from each other.
3. The context in which Scrapbook Dads was delivered (a pandemic) was unexpected, but the materials were flexible, able to link prisoners with their families in the most trying of circumstances.
4. The project is exportable to other prisons²⁰ and to non-military contexts.
5. Scrapbook Dads highlighted the value of books in both welfare and present-giving contexts.

[Numbered list ends]

[B] Learning points

[Numbered list begins]

1. With sufficient determination and goodwill, organizations with very different structures, processes, and staffing can establish an effective working relationship.
2. Plan for the unexpected. On reflection, the ability to deliver this project during a pandemic, and all the associated limitations, was remarkable.
3. Shared reading has additional value when people cannot see each other.

[Numbered list ends]

[B] Notes

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² [DESIGNER: Please ensure notes form continuous numerical sequence beginning with 1] Past and present funders include the Royal British Legion, ABF the Soldiers’ Charity, the RAF Benevolent Fund, the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) LIBOR Fund and further AFC grants, Annington Ltd, The Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity, and the Army Central Fund.

³ Published in Hansard.

⁴ The Office for Veterans Affairs is part of the Cabinet Office, since their concerns overlap on various issues, notably education, defence, health, and welfare support.

⁸ Custodial and Rehabilitation Services (run by G4S).

⁹ Corin Morgan-Armstrong (2017): ‘The Veterans Strategy is not something we publish, as this is a local “commercial in confidence” document, that we only share with other G4S business sites. It only becomes available to HM Inspection team upon site audits etc.’

¹⁰ <https://www.hmpparc.co.uk/>

¹¹ [Ibid.](#)

¹² <https://www.prisonphone.co.uk/blog/category-b-prisons-spotlight-on-some-of-the-uks-most-notorious-prisons/>

¹⁶ We had sent books for the staff, mindful of the severe pressure they were under.

¹⁷ Maternity leave for the first project manager meant that oversight was handed to a colleague.

¹⁸ An open prison, usually with periodic or day release.

¹⁹ A ‘showcase’ is a parent–teacher event, run once a term. The parent (or other supporter) brings the child (or children) to the prison along with their teacher (or teachers). The children can then sit with their father as their progress at school and some sample schoolwork are discussed. Helen Morgan comments, ‘Due to Covid this has not been possible in 2020/21. However, Parc has still been able to offer the father the opportunity to have school reports and encourage Dad to do the same project so that we can in turn send a report back to the child to say how Dad is doing.’

²⁰ Coincidentally, and without evident linking to the Parc project, in June 2020, Reading Force received the following message from the largest operational prison in the UK:

Good Morning I am employed as Head of Learning and Skills at HMP Berwyn in North Wales. We have a wing solely for veterans, many of whom receive visits from their partners/children. I would be very grateful if you would kindly advise if your initiative could be offered to the men in Berwyn and promoted to them, or whether you would be content for us to display your posters in our visits hall to encourage families in attendance to link in with you themselves. At the moment all visits are suspended and I have been offering books from the library for the men to read over the phone to their children and made colouring pages of some characters for the men to colour and send out to their children. Anything to promote maintaining family ties and literacy is incredibly powerful for our group of men, more so given current circumstances. I would be grateful to hear from you. Kind regards Allison Head of Learning and Support, HMP Berwyn



Figure 1. Corin Morgan-Armstrong (extreme left) and General Sir Nick Carter (second from the right), during the latter's visit to Parc in March 2016.



Figure 2. Training event at Parc Prison, November 2019.

Table 1. Reading Force book distribution: April/May 2020

<i>Book title</i>	<i>Allocated to</i>	<i>Book type</i>
<i>Dinosaurs Love Underpants</i>	3	Picture book
<i>Pirates Love Underpants</i>	4	Picture book
<i>Goat Goes to Playgroup</i>	3	Picture book
<i>The Snail and the Whale</i>	3	Picture book
<i>Twinkles, Arthur and Puss</i>	3	Picture book
<i>Revolting Rhymes</i>	7	Age 7–11
<i>The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark</i>	9	Picture book
<i>George’s Marvellous Medicine</i>	4	Age 7–11
<i>Stories of Witches and Witches</i>	2	Young reader 6+
<i>Icarus Was Ridiculous</i>	2	Confident reader 8+
<i>Toto the Ninja Cat and the Great Escape</i>	2	Confident reader 8+
<i>Cosmic—One Giant Leap for Boykind</i>		Confident reader 8+
<i>How to Train Your Dragon</i>	2	Confident reader 8+
<i>Holes</i>	2	Confident reader 8+
<i>The Explorer</i>		Confident reader 8+

<i>Varjak Paw</i>	2	Confident reader 8+
<i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night- Time</i>		Age 14+
<i>Wonder</i>		Age 14+
<i>George's Marvellous Medicine</i>	2	Age 7–11
<i>The Book Thief</i>	2	Age 14+
