

## Engaging children with disabilities in Chatterbooks

In 2012, Kerry Brookes, Children's Librarian for West Sussex Libraries, told us about a [Chatterbooks project she ran in Chichester](#) aimed at children with disabilities. The project was supported by the 'Short Breaks' funding programme which is designed to ensure that disabled children and young people have greater access to services and activities in their local and wider community.



This year, Kerry tells us how they used a similar model to continue this fantastic work. The project is in another special education needs school in the Chichester area, working with a specific class over six sessions. The children have different types of disabilities including: being on the autistic spectrum, Down's syndrome, selective mutism and mobility impairment.

### Using multi-sensory stories

Kerry shared multi-sensory stories with the children each week. Multi-sensory stories, also known as [Bag Books](#), are designed to be used with children who have profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD) or visual impairment. Boxes contain a script and a series of interactive 'pages' for children and young people to share with a parent, carer or sibling. These stories are fantastic for engaging children with PMLD and are a way for parents with multiple children to share stories as a family.



The group also shared other stories and did a craft related activity. These included modelling characters out of clay, creating a washing line of pants and making superheroes and monsters out of potatoes.

The final session was a celebration event at Chichester Library, where children and their parents were invited to share what had been done in the sessions.

### Continuing the work

Kerry said: "Working with special needs children and young people is an ongoing project for West Sussex Libraries. We have multi-sensory storytimes called 'Story Magic' once a month at two of our biggest libraries and are hoping to increase this capacity later in the year.

"Through our work with the Chatterbooks programme we have increased the valuable links with our local special educational needs schools and hope to build on these relationships."

To find out more about The Reading Agency's Chatterbooks children's reading groups visit [www.readingagency.org.uk/children](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/children)

Alternatively get in touch at [info@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:info@readingagency.org.uk) we are happy to answer any questions you might have about running Chatterbooks children's reading groups.



Supported using public funding by  
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