

# *Give me a Break*

## Evaluation of the first national public library book promotion in Wales

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*On behalf of*

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## Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>Page</u>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Research aims and objectives</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Preliminary data</b>	<b>7</b>
Peer Review and Support exercise	<b>7</b>
Give me a Break book issues	<b>16</b>
User exit surveys	<b>20</b>
<b>5. Estyn Allan &amp; Give me a Break staff survey</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6. Qualitative fieldwork</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>7. Summary of key findings and recommendations</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
User questionnaires ( <i>Estyn Allan</i> )	<b>49</b>
Staff survey questionnaire (CPLIS)	<b>53</b>
<i>Give me a Break</i> user interview questions (CPLIS)	<b>57</b>
<i>Give me a Break</i> website statistics and analysis	<b>58</b>

## 1. Introduction

This report includes findings related to the evaluation of *Give me a Break*, the first national public library book promotion in Wales supported by the *Estyn Allan* initiative, a national training programme for reader development in Wales. The promotion was evaluated by the *Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society* (CPLIS), Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield.

*Give me a Break* is the first national reader-centred promotion undertaken by all public library authorities in Wales and managed by the participating *Estyn Allan* librarian within each authority. Supported by the first Welsh and English language reader-centred website, the promotion recognises the ways in which people use reading to 'take a break' or as a form of escapism and offers a range of titles to meet a variety of reading needs and preferences. The promotion consists of a mixed stock-list of Welsh and English language contemporary fiction and poetry with professionally produced promotional materials designed to offer a different approach to readers in public libraries. It has been specifically designed to target the 18-40 age group, including the following specific target audiences/ existing public library user groups:

- ICT users who don't usually borrow books
- People who don't have time to browse shelves
- Carers/parents who don't usually borrow books for themselves
- Students
- Avid female readers who have lost faith in public libraries (age 20-40)

*Estyn Allan* is managed and coordinated by the Society of Chief Librarians in Wales, along with the reader development organisation *Opening the Book*, and is supported by the Arts Council of Wales. Each of the 22 public library authorities in Wales have nominated one *Estyn Allan* librarian to participate in the project over a three-year training period. Training has included the development of reader-centred aspects of librarianship and the requisite skills, including reading promotions and displays; stock selection; library design and layout; project management; ICT and training skills; managing reader groups.

The central aim of *Estyn Allan* is:

*To develop the skills needed for libraries in Wales to reach more readers.*

Specific *Estyn Allan* aims and objectives include:

- a. To increase access to the rich diversity of contemporary writing in Welsh and English by using the popular base and extensive networks of the public library service
- b. To offer new opportunities for readers to take an active role in their own development and to share reading experiences with others

- c. To develop imaginative projects which increase people's enjoyment of reading and take the pleasure of reading to new audiences
- d. To promote contemporary writing in Welsh and English

The project aims to reach new audiences including people isolated in their enjoyment of reading by geography, cultural background or disability; people intimidated or excluded by 'traditional' literary culture; people discouraged to read by negative school or formal education experiences; people restricted in their reading choices by a lack of confidence, access to and awareness of the range of reading choices available to them.

## **2. Research aims and objectives**

The central aim of the *Give me a Break* evaluation research was to:

*Discover how a national promotion reaches readers in Wales*

The research sought specifically to examine:

- Whether or not the promotion has attracted the desired target audience
- Have *Give me a Break* library displays successfully attracted new readers?
- Are some promotions more effective than others? Why?
- The role and usage of the *Give me a Break* website
- The relationship between website and library promotion use
- The impact of the promotion upon participating readers

## **3. Methodology**

### *Preliminary data*

As part of the *Estyn Allan* training programme and *Give me a Break* management schedule, Estyn Allan librarians themselves have undertaken three evaluation activities during the *Give me a Break* promotion period. The data collected by participating librarians were given to CPLIS by responding authorities for external analysis and evaluation of the promotion.

The three 'preliminary' evaluation activities include:

- The collection of issue statistics for a sample of *Give me a Break* titles
- Peer Review and Support exercise (an observation-based activity similar to 'mystery shopper' approaches used in the retail sector)
- *Give me a Break* user exit surveys

Issue statistics for a sample of titles used in the promotion help to give a 'snapshot' statistical indication of how the promotion has worked at service level in terms of borrowing figures. Where possible, *Estyn Allan* librarians were asked by CPLIS to provide issue statistics for the four months *preceding* the promotion (if copies had been held prior to the promotion) to help establish a cause and effect relationship between the promotion and increased issues. The qualitative Peer Review and Support data help to provide a narrative description of how the promotion and relevant displays work within individual authorities and libraries in terms of visibility and accessibility; user interaction with the promotion; user and staff interaction; significant display strengths and weaknesses.

Two separate user exit questionnaires were designed and used by the *Estyn Allan* team. The first questionnaire was distributed by library staff to users who were borrowing or returning a book from the promotion. The aim of this specific research instrument was to establish whether or not the *Give me a Break* promotion had encouraged users to try a new author (i.e. an author they had never read before). The second questionnaire was designed to be distributed to specific target groups with the aim of drawing their attention to the promotion, including young mums attending 'under fives' story times with their children, computer users and reading groups. The objectives of the second questionnaire were to establish whether or not the promotion was attracting new readers from targeted groups. Both questionnaires are short with a maximum of four 'tick box' questions and a 'comments' option.

### *CPLIS research methods*

As specified in the original research proposal, the CPLIS team undertook two data collection exercises. The first involved a questionnaire-based survey of all participating *Estyn Allan* librarians. The Staff survey objectives included:

- The collection of quantitative and qualitative feedback on the *Estyn Allan* staff training programme in relation to running the *Give me a Break* promotion
- The investigation of *Estyn Allan* librarians' practical experiences of running the *Give me a Break* promotion including their enjoyment of the experience; confidence in reader development abilities and skills; problems encountered and subsequent recommendations
- The investigation of staff perceptions of the impact of the promotion upon library users and *Give me a Break* readers

The original CPLIS proposal included planned focus groups with known *Give me a Break* readers to be co-ordinated with a sample of six 'case study' participating authorities and the relevant *Estyn Allan* librarians. The objectives of this stage of the research included:

- The investigation of the impact of the promotion upon *Give me a Break* readers in terms of less tangible outcomes such as personal enjoyment, confidence levels etc

- To assess the impact of the promotion upon reading habits and library use
- To assess ethnographically whether or not the target audiences and readers had been reached
- To establish level of website usage and the relationship between promotion book borrowing
- To gain qualitative promotion feedback

Unfortunately, it did not prove possible to arrange the proposed reader focus groups with participating authorities and *Estyn Allan* librarians within the specified evaluation time frame. Reasons cited by staff who responded to the request included a lack of interest amongst library users and borrowers; a lack of established reader groups or other groups that could have taken part; lack of available staff time to co-ordinate the group. As an alternative, the researcher made observation visits to three participating authorities, which included staff interviews and user exit interviews where possible. As a result it has not been possible to gain 'retrospective' data from *Give me a Break* users concerning the impact of the reading experience and the role of the promotion website. Qualitative data included in the report offer a 'snapshot' of the immediate impact of the relevant displays upon a small sample of library users during their actual library visit; it is not possible to extrapolate data and subsequently make assumptions concerning the impact of the reading experience as whole. It is felt by the researcher that a vital qualitative component of the evaluation is subsequently missing which all *Estyn Allan* key stakeholders should acknowledge.

#### 4. Preliminary data

The following chapter presents an analysis of evaluation data collected by *Estyn Allan* librarians during the *Give me a Break* promotional period within each authority. It is important to stress that analysis of preliminary data relates to the data supplied by *responding authorities only*, and not the *Estyn Allan* population as a whole (response rates are indicated at the beginning of each 'section'). Specific evaluation exercises undertaken and included in this chapter include:

- Peer Review and Support Exercise
- *Give me a Break* book issues
- User exit surveys

##### ***Peer Review and Support exercise***

As part of the evaluation undertaken by participating librarians whilst the promotion was running, a peer review and support exercise was undertaken, during which each librarian was asked to visit a neighbouring authority to observe the promotion, make notes and feedback to the *Estyn Allan* librarian within the visited authority. Neighbouring authorities worked in pairs to visit each other. Using a similar approach to the 'mystery shopper' system used within the retail sector, the visiting librarians did not make themselves known to counter staff, and tried to remain as anonymous as possible. Using a standardised peer review observation form and guidelines produced by the *Estyn Allan* management team, the object of the exercise was *'to offer an outsider's objective viewpoint of what's working well and less well with the promotion... and to offer suggestions and support for any improvements'*.

A total of 10 completed peer review and support forms<sup>1</sup> from ten authorities have been received and analysed by the CPLIS team (45% response rate). The remaining authorities have been unable to complete their peer review visits due to a lack of available time. The visited authorities discussed within this chapter include:

- Caerphilly –Bargoed Library
- Monmouthshire – Abergavenny Library
- Cardiff – Ryderpennau Library
- Ceredigion – Lampeter Library
- Newport – Newport Central Library
- Neath Port Talbot – Briton Ferry Library
- Carmarthenshire – Llanelli Library<sup>2</sup>
- Pembrokeshire – Haverfordwest Library
- Swansea – Clydach Library
- Powys – Welshpool Library

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<sup>1</sup> The 10 peer review exercises included in this chapter are discussed in terms of the libraries /authorities *visited* during the exercise, rather than the *visiting* authority.

<sup>2</sup> Self-completed by Estyn Allan librarian within Carmarthenshire as 'peer' unable to visit

In terms of the *Give me a Break* evaluation as a whole, the exercise helps to create a narrative description of how the displays worked in practice, and of their physical presence within participating libraries. The Peer Review and Support Guidelines have been designed to investigate and comment on:

- The physical location of the display and additional display materials
- The visibility of the display and materials
- Quality of the display in terms of stock content, volume and visibility
- User interaction with the display
- User and staff interaction in relation to the display
- Staff attitudes to the promotion
- Positive feedback
- Suggestions and recommendations as to how the display could be improved

#### *Caerphilly – Bargoed Library*

*Give me a Break* in Bargoed Library consisted of a counter-top display at the time of the peer review visit, with no ‘additional’ materials on display. The display was clearly visible from the main entrance and was noticed by the reviewer as soon as they entered the door. The display was positioned well and facing users as they entered. It was felt by the reviewer that ‘*just the right amount of books*’ were included in the display and that it had been well maintained in terms of stock content and volume.

The reviewer did not observe any user interaction with the display during the visit, and subsequently no interaction between users and staff with reference to the display. It is worth noting that no record has been made of the number of users actually in the library during the visit. This would perhaps provide a more useful observation of user interaction with the display; it is difficult to establish whether or not there were any users *to* interact and browse the titles. The reviewer did not have the opportunity to chat to counter staff about their knowledge, skills and attitude towards the promotion, so no comment has been made on this aspect of the observation.

The reviewer felt that the reader’s notice board (situated in the library foyer) was a very positive aspect although doesn’t explain why. Perhaps *Give me a Break* publicity or general reader development information had been displayed which complemented the promotion. In terms of suggestions and recommendations, the reviewer observed that where *Give me a Break* posters had been displayed around the library, there was no indication given as to where to look for the books and find the display. It was recommended that another poster be produced and displayed which directs users to the promotion and the physical display itself.

#### *Monmouthshire – Abergavenny Library*

The promotion was situated near the Adult Fiction collection and within easy access to the teenage and junior library when visited. It was felt by the reviewer that this was a good location with clear visibility for users looking for fiction titles. Additional material was stored '*in a box*' near to the display. Display material was not visible from the main entrance or on or near the counter. The display was however positioned well and facing outwards towards on-coming users.

In terms of display content, the range of titles was good, including some Welsh language titles and talking books, which were all in good condition. It was felt that the display could have been 'topped up' in terms of volume of titles. The reviewer didn't observe any user interaction with the display, although it was observed that the relatively small number of users visiting that day had been visiting the '*baby crawl launch*' (i.e. a specific event). As a result the reviewer did not observe any staff-user interaction concerning the promotion and was not approached herself.

It was felt by the reviewer that the choice of display promotional materials by Abergavenny made the display look a little '*old fashioned*' (wallpaper, teapot, cup and saucer). This was considered to be too fussy; the box used to contain additional materials was also distracting as it gave the display a messy appearance. However, the reviewer did comment that the overall position was good and that some of the promotional materials were effective (a poster of 'the Scream'). It was recommended that the background of the display (containing the wallpaper etc) be changed to something that would appeal more to the 18-40 target age group; something plain but colourful, or just be left bare. It was also felt by the reviewer that the additional materials should be stored behind the counter or '*out of vision*'.

#### *Cardiff – Ryderpennau Library*

The promotion was situated '*near to the entrance*' in Ryderpennau using a 'book displayer' and table which were clearly visible from the main entrance. There was no additional display material and no visible *Give me a Break* materials on the counter. It was thought by the reviewer that the display was positioned well, kept 'topped up' and that it contained appropriate titles.

The reviewer did not observe any user interaction with the display, and no user-staff interaction concerning the display. The reviewer did not gain any perspective on staff knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the promotion. There is no information provided about the number of users visiting the library as a whole, which could be used to help inform the possible reasons for non-user interaction. On a positive note it was felt that the display was as prominent and well stocked as it could be within the physical confines of the library. It was recommended that promotional materials be displayed on notice boards and walls in the library foyer.

#### *Ceredigion – Lampeter Library*

*Give me a Break* was displayed on a specific shelving unit within Lampeter Library (face-out on four shelves), which was situated along the exit rather than entrance wall due to the limitations of physical space. A counter-top display, with A4 poster, was displayed on top of the shelving unit at shoulder height. It was thought by the reviewer that the display worked well in this particular location, despite being closer to the exit rather than entrance, for the following reasons:

“The location near the counter is ideal for people with little time to wander round the library looking for a suitable book... the display was sited next to a box of children’s picture books, ideal for parents/carers [accompanying] children”

Additional promotional materials included three A3 posters (three different designs) placed alongside the display of books; pile of website business cards on top of display shelf next to counter top unit; two A3 posters on foyer door approaching library entrance; one A3 poster on the front door (front of building) visible from street. No promotional material was visible however on/near the counter. The books on the display were all positioned face-out and the display was considered to be accessible to all. The display was well stocked in terms of quantity and volume of titles. The quality of the titles was also commended:

“All of the books had the *Estyn Allan ‘break’* stickers on the label... I did see a couple of books that weren’t from the collection but they seemed appropriate and in keeping with the promotion... all the books were new paperbacks and in good condition... there was a good range of books appealing to both men and women”

The reviewer of Lampeter Library provided more detail concerning the volume and activities of users during the visit, and also the *duration* of the visit, which helps to put user interaction with the display in to perspective. The reviewer stayed in the library for two hours (pretending to study) during which time one female user (aged between 25-30 years) accompanying a small child browsed the display and borrowed one *Give me a Beak* title. It was observed that ‘many’ users visited the library but to use the computers – only a ‘few’ people in comparison visited the library to borrow or return books. The one *Give me a Break* borrower did not discuss the promotion with issuing staff, so no user-staff interaction was recorded. It was felt by the reviewer however that a conscious effort had been made by Lampeter staff concerning *Give me a Break* in the pro-active and noticeably different approach to displaying the promotion:

“Although the library was small and had little display space, the staff sited the promotion in a prominent space thereby endorsing the importance and value of the promotion... by displaying the books face-on, in a library of heavily stacked with spine-on books, the staff were consciously making a bold statement by treating the display of these books differently from all the other titles... which was very inviting; especially in comparison to the rest of the library”

*Newport – Newport Central Library*

Newport Central Library has a combined museum and library entrance; the *Give me a Break* display was situated within direct vision from the main entrance to the library during the peer review exercise, which was considered to be the most effective position by the reviewer:

“Excellent placement of promotion – difficult to miss for anyone visiting the library!”

Posters had been placed in and around the actual display (within the library ‘space’), but none upon entrance to the main building. No promotional materials had been placed on the counter, but it was felt that the close proximity of the actual display to the counter negated the need to include display materials at the issue/return desk itself. The promotion had been positioned well within its location and had been displayed upon purpose-built furniture, which looked “superb”! In terms of content the display was full, appropriately stocked and ‘topped up’ by a member of staff during the peer review visit. The reviewer made the comment that the specialised furniture made a great deal of difference in terms of promotion impact, but added that cost would affect other library’s abilities to provide such a resource:

“Excellent display furniture! It shows that for the best results, purpose built furniture is unbeatable (if only we all had the money)!”

The reviewer observed that ‘many’ users stopped to look at the display during the visit, with one user borrowing a *Give me a Break* title – there is no indication of the length of the visit. There was no identified interaction between users and staff concerning the promotion, and the reviewer made the following comment about staff knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the promotion:

“Difficult to say – but staff were certainly aware of the promotion, and keeping the display topped up was definitely a priority!”

#### *Neath Port Talbot – Briton Ferry Library*

Briton Ferry Library ran the *Give me a Break* promotion using a counter display situated on the ‘corner of the counter’. Extra materials had been displayed in the windows of the adult library, which are visible from the road, although the display itself was not immediately noticeable upon entrance to the library:

“Didn’t spot it when entering the room which is very ‘busy’ with stacks, display cases, tables and chairs, PCs, spinners etc”

The display stand was supplemented by ‘piles’ of promotion titles stacked around the display (approximately 20) which the reviewer assumed were used to top-up the display. The display was stocked appropriately and all books were in good condition. The reviewer spent approximately one hour visiting the library, and in that time one middle-aged male browsed the promotion but did not borrow a title. There was no noticeable user-staff interaction concerning the display. Staff did try to draw attention to a *New Books* display,

which was also by the counter – the reviewer commented that they might have previously tried the same tactic with *Give me a Break*. The reviewer posed as a new borrower interested in the display; the staff member at the time engaged in conversation about the display and explained that it was about promoting ‘new authors’. The reviewer observed that the staff were very friendly and happy to chat and thought that this was a very positive element of the library. It was felt that the counter area needed to be significantly ‘de-cluttered’ for the display to have maximum effect.

#### *Carmarthenshire – Llanelli Library*

The peer review of Llanelli Library was self-completed by the Carmarthenshire *Estyn Allan* librarian himself as the allocated peer for this authority had been unable to visit. As such, the same objective attention to detail has not been applied, but the data is still useful in establishing the physical presence of the promotion and the attitudes of colleagues.

The *Estyn Allan* librarian describes that the promotion was located in the lending library adjacent to the counter, and was visible from ‘one entrance’. Additional materials had been displayed on the wall/notice board on either side of one entrance (although it is not clear whether this is the same entrance or not!). It was confirmed that the display was visible from the counter, was positioned well and was ‘topped up’ with appropriate titles. Borrowers were interacting with the display, although there is no indication of how many and a specified time-period for the observation has not been given. It is noted that staff generally hand out questionnaires when titles are selected from the display, but that they may have started to forget to actively promote the display and draw attention to it, suggesting that the display had been in place for some time. It was thought that more display material was needed in other areas of the library; perhaps space was limited.

#### *Pembrokeshire – Haverfordwest Library*

The promotion in Haverfordwest Library was situated at the far end of the library near to ‘paperback stands’; it was felt by the reviewer that this would not be generally visible to customers unless they were actually in/near this specific part of the library. There were no other visible display materials other than (presumably posters) on and between the doors leading in to the lending library. There were no display materials visible on the counter, but it was felt by the reviewer that the main display was positioned well, and topped up appropriately with listed titles.

The peer review visit lasted for 30 minutes, and the reviewer did not notice any user interaction with the display during that time. The library was ‘quiet’ during the visit and subsequently there was no user-staff interaction concerning the display. The knowledge and skills of the staff concerning the promotion were ‘not tested’ by the reviewer but it was felt that an obvious effort had been made to maintain the appearance of the display despite the

fact that it was not visible from the counter. It was felt that the promotion's strengths in Haverfordwest were that the display was very neat and tidy and well presented, but that it could have been put in a better position closer to the counter.

#### *Swansea – Clydach Library*

Clydach Library displayed the promotion using a dump bin along with a counter top display stand, with extra display material in the window adjacent to the entrance and 'behind the door as you come in'. Display materials are visible from the front entrance and from the counter. It was felt that the dump bin was positioned 'reasonably well' but was competing with too many other items for user attention; the reviewer suggested changing the location of the dump bin on a frequent basis to improve the chances of it being noticed by users. It was also felt that the counter display materials were not especially appropriate:

"The counter is quite high at Clydach so the stand appears to be high. I don't think the furniture is appropriate for all counters. Also with it being a busy counter in terms of other materials available it does blend in perhaps too much."

The reviewer again did not observe any user interaction with the display, or staff-user interaction in the time spent visiting the library (duration not specified). Although unable to comment specifically on staff knowledge, skills and attitude, the reviewer felt that the physical presence of the display proved a positive staff attitude towards the promotion:

"The fact that the display was topped up, there was a mix available and promotional material was available showed a good positive attitude and knowledge of what the promotion is about."

#### *Powys – Welshpool Library*

The *Give me a Break* promotion in Welshpool Library was situated to the 'left of the main entrance in the middle of the large lending section' using a table for the display. The reviewer believed this to be the most effective position for the promotion, as the physical layout of the building made it impossible to position the display by or near the entrance. The reviewer did not identify any additional materials but stressed that she was a 'first time visitor' with little time to observe the library 'extensively'. There were no display materials visible on the counter, but again the reviewer stressed that there were certain space limitations.

The reviewer considered the display to be well organised with good poster presentation and an effective use of additional promotional materials 'downloaded from the internet'. It was felt that too many titles had been included in the display; it is suggested that two separate displays may have been more effective and encouraged a greater browsing of titles. The display was well stocked with appropriate titles however.

The reviewer did not observe any user interaction with the display, but stressed that the library was very quiet in general. No real information is given concerning the number of users (if any) or the duration of the visit, only that it had taken place in 'late morning/early afternoon'. No user interaction with staff concerning the promotion was observed, although the reviewer stressed that this would have been more noticeable if the display was situated closer to the counter. The reviewer stated that there were many different displays within Welshpool (described as a very 'bright and attractive library') at the time of the visit, which indicates a positive and pro-active attitude towards book promotion amongst staff – however it was felt that the volume of displays might have detracted attention away from *Give me a Break!*

### ***Peer Review and Support exercise*** **Summary of key points**

- Differing impact of the promotion at library level can be explained by the differences in physical and cultural library provision between authorities and branches; for example, the promotion had a strong visual impact in Lampeter, where the majority of book stock is stacked traditionally in Dewey sequence. Alternatively, the promotion had little visual impact in the “bright and attractive” Welshpool library where lots of books were on display, and library users will be accustomed to seeing book promotions
- The location of the promotion and display is central to its impact and user-friendliness. The entrance display of the promotion in Newport was perceived to have maximum impact. Another good example is the display in Lampeter by the children’s books which encouraged a young mum to borrow a *Give me a Break* title – evidence of the promotion reaching the desired target audience
- The quality of display materials also has an effect on impact. The purpose-built furniture used in Newport for example was perceived to be extremely attractive, whereas the ‘dated’ display background used in Abergavenny encouraged a much more negative response, especially when considering the promotion’s potential for attracting the 18-40 age group
- When considering user interaction with the promotion, the Peer Review and Support exercise would have been more effective if information concerning the number of general library users and their behaviour, along with the duration of each visit had been consistently provided
- The relative inconsistency in terms of approaches to the exercise also limits the extent to which data can be compared, and thus conclusions can be drawn about the differences in promotion impact between authorities. The differences in attention to detail and information provided by each reviewer can be justified by the difference in quality and volume of the displays themselves, and a lack of available time for some reviewers, which would hinder their attention to detail. Such a lack of time on behalf of the librarians themselves should be acknowledged when designing approaches to evaluation and the relative research instruments; it is not always appropriate to expect librarians to undertake effective evaluation themselves.

### **'Give me a Break' book issues**

*Estyn Allan* librarians were asked to provide issue statistics for a sample of 30 *Give me a Break* titles, which included all Welsh language titles in the promotion. Book issue statistics were returned by a sample of 19 authorities (86% response rate). For a summary of responding authorities and their total *Give me a Break* book issues, please see table 1.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Total copies</b>	<b>Average issues per title</b>	<b>Total promotion book issues</b>
Ceredigion*	43	3.3	100
Vale of Glamorgan	n/a	4.4	133
Denbighshire*	38	2.06	62
Torfaen	n/a	2.3	68
Gwynedd	n/a	2.4	73
Flintshire*	43	4	119
Caerphilly	31	1.6	49
Merthyr Tydfil	28	1.6	49
Isle of Anglesey*	n/a	2.4	71
Newport	n/a	3.2	97
Blaenau Gwent	30	2.7	81
Neath Port Talbot*	31	4.6	139
Pembrokeshire*	74	3.1	94
Swansea**	n/a	10.8	323
Monmouthshire	n/a	1.8	53
Bridgend*	n/a	2.6	79
Conwy	23	1.2	35
Powys**	83	6.9	208
Carmarthenshire	30	2.2	66
<b>Total</b>			<b>1899</b>

**Table 1**

\*Indicates the promotion was run in 2 libraries within that particular authority; total issue statistics therefore include 2 libraries

\*\*Promotion run in 3 libraries (included in total issues)

Book issue statistics are intended as a 'snapshot' of promotion activity and impact only; no real confidence can be placed in the data received due to the relative inconsistency between responding authorities (for example, missing data concerning numbers of copies, and totals given for joint promotions run simultaneously in different library branches). A total of 1899 *Give me a Break* book issues (of the 30 sample titles) was made across the 19 responding authorities. Generally speaking, it is reassuring to see that there has been at least one issue per sample title on average throughout the responding branches (although this doesn't suggest or confirm that *each* title used in the sample has been issued at least once!). The most issues within a single library promotion are in the Vale of Glamorgan; unfortunately no Peer Review data or user exit surveys have been received from this authority to help explain and substantiate their relative book issue successes. Newport, which

was commended during the peer review exercise because of its excellent location of the promotion and the quality of the promotion materials, has the second highest number of book issues for a single-library promotion which illustrates the importance of visual impact when it comes to successful book promotions and displays.

It is important to note that where issue statistics have been supplied for single library promotions, the display may have moved to another library since the data were collected and passed on to CPLIS, for example, the *Give me a Break* promotion is currently running in Treharris Library in Merthyr Tydfil, but only book issue statistics for Merthyr Tydfil Central Library have been included in the table above.

For a breakdown of the total number of issues for each of the 30 sample *Give me a Break* titles, please see table 2 (totals and averages correspond to the 19 responding authorities and not the *Estyn Allan* population as a whole).

Author	Title	Average promotion book issues	Total promotion book issues
Alvtegen, Karen	Missing	5.8	110
Bagliettee, Valerie-Ann	Fresh as a Daisy	5.5	105
Barry, Dave	Tricky Business	4.3	81
Brooke, Simon	2coll2btrue	3.2	61
Carew, Alexandra	Getting Away from it All	7.2	136
Corbett, Alexandra	The Witch Bag	1.4	27
Crummey, Michael	River Thieves	5.6	106
Davies, Elgan Philip	Cleddyf Llym Daufiniog	1.4	27
Edwards, Sonia	Elain	1.7	32
Ferguson, Will	Hokkaido Highway Blues	4.9	94
Fowler, Christopher	Demonised	3.1	59
Garcia, Eric	Matchstick Men	3.8	72
Granelli, Roger	Resolution	2.6	49
Gwanas, Bethan	Gwrach y Gwyllt	2.7	52
Gwanas, Bethan	Tri chynng i Blodwen Jones	3.3	63
Hughes, Tristan	The Tower	1.9	36
Jones, John Sam	Fishboys of Vernazza	2.1	40
Kowalski, William	The Adventures of Flash Jackson	4.5	85
Lewis, Caryl	Dal hi	1.4	26
Lewis, Geraint	Daw eto Haul	1.7	32
Lynch, Sarah Kate	By Bread Alone	7.9	151
Martell, Owen	Dyn yr Eiliad	1.3	24
Miles, Gareth	Ffatri Serch	1.3	25
Moon, Debbie	Falling	3.2	61
Pelecanos, George P.	Soul Circus	5.1	96
Price, Angharad	O! Tyn y Gorchudd	0.6	11
Reed, Robert	Down the Bright Way	3.1	59
	Stwff y Stomp	1.6	31
Tessaro, Kath	Elegance	4.3	81
Whitehead, Stephen	The Many Faces of Men	3.5	67
<b>Total</b>			<b>1899</b>

**Table 2**

The most popular of the 30 sample *Give me a Break* titles amongst the 19 relevant authorities was 'By Bread Alone' by Sarah-Kate Lynch, which generated a total of 151 issues. The least popular is the Welsh language title 'O! Tyn y Gorchudd' by Angharad Lynch with a total of 11 issues. Where Welsh titles have been issued, this has predominantly taken place in the Welsh speaking authorities of North Wales including Denbighshire, Ceredigion, Gwynedd and Conwy. Pre-promotion issue statistics were kindly provided by nine authorities (for titles already in stock during the four month period immediately before the *Give me a Break* promotion). Pre-promotion issue statistics for authorities including Powys and Newport indicate that the most popular sample *Give me a Break* titles (including 'By Bread Alone' and 'Getting Away from it All' by Alexandra Carew) had already proven to be popular with borrowers, with double-figure pre-promotion issue statistics. Previous issues in authorities including Carmarthenshire, Conwy and Pembrokeshire also indicate that the relevant Welsh language titles had also been issued consistently prior to the *Give me a Break* promotion. Thus it is difficult to establish a 'cause and effect' impact of the promotion upon borrowing figures and subsequent reading habits using issue statistics alone.

It is important to note that book issue statistics do not necessarily reflect the popularity of a promotion, for example, if a library only has one copy of a title which is borrowed for a maximum 3 week loan period, then realistically that title will only generate a possible 2 loans/issues per month. Thus a complimentary qualitative approach to evaluation is necessary to assess the true impact of the promotion upon users and reading habits, and the levels of interest and attention the promotion has generated.

**“Give me a Break’ book issues  
Summary of key points**

- Based on data supplied by 19 participating authorities concerning a sample of 30 *Give me a Break* titles, the promotion has generated 1899 book issues
- Newport Central Library, which was commended during the peer review exercise for the visibility and quality of the *Give me a Break* display, had the second highest borrowing figures for a single library promotion, suggesting a relationship between the visibility and attractiveness of a display and increased book issues
- Welsh language titles are perhaps non-surprisingly more frequently issued in the Welsh language speaking authorities of North Wales. The smallest numbers of Welsh language issues occurred in Merthyr Tydfil (1) and Blaenau Gwent (2) in South Wales
- Pre-promotion book issue statistics indicate that the most popular *Give me a Break* titles generated a high quantity of issues *prior* to the promotion, and that Welsh language titles were also consistently issued in relevant authorities prior to the promotion, thus it is difficult to establish a *cause and effect* relationship between the promotion and issue statistics
- It is important to note the limitations of using book issue statistics as an appropriate evaluation tool when looking at the impact of a promotion such as *Give me a Break*. Interest shown in a promotion may exceed the maximum number of issues a single-copy can have. Book issue statistics do not reflect the impact of a promotion in terms of reader enjoyment and experience, and should thus be treated as a ‘snapshot’ of promotion impact at service level only. A more qualitative approach to evaluation is necessary to fully understand the impact of a promotion

## ***User exit surveys***

The following discussion relates to analysis of the two separate user exit questionnaires designed and distributed by the *Estyn Allan* team. As discussed in the methodology section of the report, the two questionnaires were designed to assess the extent to which the promotion had encouraged the reading of new authors amongst *Give me a Break* borrowers, and the extent to which the promotion had attracted specific target groups. For questionnaires used during user exit surveys, please see appendix 1.

### ***'Give me a Break' borrower survey***

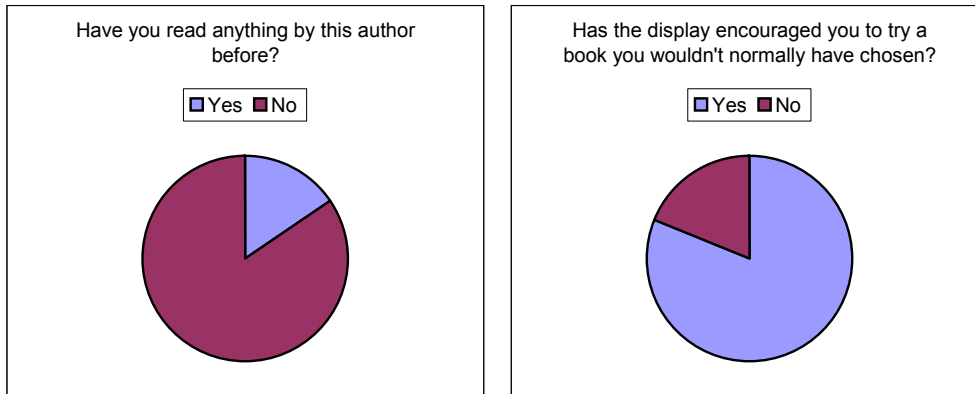
A total of 264 completed *Give me a Break* user exit questionnaires have been received by CPLIS from a total of 12 authorities (55% response rate from *Estyn Allan* librarians). For a breakdown of the total number of completed questionnaires received from each authority, please see table 3.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>No. of completed GMAB user questionnaires</b>
Pembrokeshire*	32
Caerphilly	5
Carmarthenshire	12
Neath Port Talbot*	19
Merthyr Tydfil*	59
Conwy	3
Blaenau Gwent	5
Monmouthshire	20
Isle of Anglesey	1
Gwynedd	2
Powys*	76
Swansea*	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>

**Table 3**

\*Questionnaires completed in more than one library

When *Give me a Break* borrowers were asked if they had read anything by the selected author before, 41 answered 'yes' and 223 answered 'no', therefore 85% of *Give me a Break* borrowers had chosen to read an author from the display that they had never read before. When asked if it was the display specifically that had encouraged them to try a book which they 'wouldn't normally have chosen', 214 users answered 'yes' and 50 answered 'no'; 81% of users borrowing from the display therefore had felt encouraged to try something new. We can perhaps assume that the 41 readers who had previously read books by the borrowed author before did not think that they were trying something new and may have normally chosen to read that author anyway.



The majority of respondents chose to leave brief but positive remarks such as 'eye-catching', 'nice display' or 'good idea', which are too numerous to include and comment on within this report. Some examples of comments from individual authorities are given below which have been chosen to represent the general feedback from all of the responding 12 authorities.

Respondents generally welcomed the display for providing an accessible opportunity to try something 'different', even if it wasn't to their particular taste; respondents agreed with the philosophy and objectives of *Give me a Break* in attempting to encourage different reading habits:

"It was very helpful. Caught my eye straight away. Chose some books that I might not have done otherwise" *Knighton Library, Powys*

"I didn't find these books were to my particular taste, but I *do* think it's a good idea to encourage people to extend their reading field" *Hay Library, Powys*

Readers in Pembrokeshire noted that they would now consciously look for authors discovered in the promotion, which illustrates a positive outcome in terms of changing reading habits and broadening literary perspectives. The active promotion of Welsh language titles was also acknowledged and appreciated:

"An interesting assortment of books which I probably wouldn't have searched for on the library shelves – but will do in future"

"I think it's an excellent idea and I'll certainly go to that display again. I tend to go for 'tried and tested' modern novelists; it's good to read something different and start on another path for a change"

"Well portrayed... easy access... new authors... pleased *some* novels are in Welsh!"

The Estyn Allan librarian in Merthyr Tydfil undertook a rather proactive approach to user survey data collection. Borrower history details for each *Give me a Break* title in Merthyr Tydfil Central Library were collected, and the user questionnaire was posted out to each borrower with a pre-paid return envelope. A total of 48 questionnaires were completed and returned, which proves the effectiveness of such an approach. Of the Merthyr Tydfil Central

Library user sample, 41 (85%) had not read anything by that particular *Give me a Break* author before, and 38 respondents (79%) had been encouraged by the display to try something new. Comments given by respondents illustrated an enjoyment of the display and a desire to read more *Give me a Break* titles; the effectiveness of the display in helping readers to make new and informed reading choices; the accessibility of the display in helping readers to make selections in limited available time:

“I think that it is an excellent idea. The book that I selected was outstanding and I look forward to reading more from the display”

“Eye-catching display. I really enjoy seeing displays in the library and I make an effort to look at the books... encourages me to read different topics and authors, because I never really know what I am looking for in a book so these displays really help”

“I like the idea of the display as I can look for new books and authors easily. I am a heavy reader and a serious science fiction reader so it was good to find something new”

“I have used the displays in the past as I like to see suggested authors. I wouldn't know where to look and I don't have the time to enjoy a browse”

#### *Target group survey*

A total of 95 completed target group questionnaires have been received by CPLIS from 8 authorities (36.4% response rate from *Estyn Allan* librarians). For a breakdown of the total number of completed questionnaires received from each authority, please see table 4.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>No. of completed target group questionnaires</b>
Monmouthshire	12
Conwy	12
Blaenau Gwent	3
Merthyr Tydfil	10
Neath Port Talbot	9
Carmarthenshire	12
Caerphilly	12
Swansea*	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>

**Table 4**

\*Questionnaires completed at 3 separate libraries

*Estyn Allan* librarians were advised to distribute the target group questionnaire to specific groups that meet in the library such as young mums attending under fives story sessions, computer users and reading groups. The questionnaire opens with the question *Have you seen our Give me a Break' display?* Of the total 95 target group questionnaire respondents, 63 replied 'yes' (66%). Respondents that *had* seen the display were directed to the next question, which asked whether or not they had selected a book from the

promotion. Of the 63 respondents that had noticed the display, 38 (60%) had taken a book.

The remaining 32 respondents that had indicated that they *hadn't* previously seen the *Give me a Break* promotion were directed to the third survey question, which sought to investigate whether or not respondents would be interested in borrowing a *Give me a Break* title now that their attention had been brought to the relevant display. 17 (53%) of the 32 respondents indicated that they *wouldn't* be borrowing a title from the display on that occasion; 15 respondents did borrow a title.

In total, 53 (56%) of the 95 library users surveyed *did* borrow a *Give me a Break* title. In order to establish the extent to which the promotion was attracting new readers from targeted groups, respondents were asked whether or not they had borrowed an adult fiction title from the library in the preceding 3 months. 62 respondents (65%) indicated that they had, suggesting that the majority of respondents were 'existing' readers and adult fiction borrowers anyway, irrespective of the promotion. The fact that the number of previous borrowers exceeded the number of *Give me a Break* borrowers amongst respondents suggests that the promotion may not have appealed to all adult fiction readers within the sample.

Only 4 of the responding *Estyn Allan* authorities have indicated the 'type' of group that was used/approached for completion of the target group questionnaire. The survey was undertaken with 12 members of the *Colwyn Bay Library Reading Group* in Conwy. Of these 12 respondents, 5 had seen the display with 1 user borrowing a title. Of the remaining 7 library group members, 4 stated that they would be borrowing a *Give me a Break* title now that they were aware of the promotion. A total of 5 borrowers out of a possible 12 from an established reading group may seem a little low given that 11 out of the 12 relevant respondents *had* borrowed an adult fiction title in the preceding 3 months – as suggested above, the *Give me a Break* titles may not have been to the taste of this particular group. One comment given by a Conwy respondent offers an alternative explanation:

"Sorry – I'm swamped with reading commitment at present and cannot take on more"

'Psychology' and ICT groups in Bargoed Library completed the 12 questionnaires returned by the *Estyn Allan* librarian in Caerphilly. 4 of the 12 respondents had seen the display, with 1 of these respondents subsequently borrowing a title. Of the remaining 8 respondents who hadn't previously been aware of the display, only 2 felt encouraged to borrow a *Give me a Break* title. Of the total respondents, 9 out of 12 had *not* borrowed an adult fiction title in the preceding 3 months, which illustrates a low impact upon non-readers. Unfortunately no comments were given by respondents to justify or explain the relatively low impact of the promotion upon this particular group of library users.

Parents of children attending the Chatterbox<sup>3</sup> group completed the three questionnaires in Blaenau Gwent. One parent had seen the display but had not borrowed a title. The two remaining parents had not felt encouraged to borrow a *Give me a Break* title once they were aware of the promotion. One out of three had borrowed an adult fiction title in the preceding three-month period. Comments included:

“No time to read with 2 young children!”

“I don’t read books”

Parents at an Under Fives Story time event in Chepstow Library completed nine of the completed questionnaires provided by the *Estyn Allan* librarian in Monmouthshire. None of the parents had already noticed the display, but five stated that they would be borrowing a *Give me a Break* title after becoming aware of the promotion. Only three of the nine parents had borrowed an adult fiction title in the preceding three-month period, which shows a positive effect in terms of the increased number of adult fiction readers amongst this particular group.

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<sup>3</sup> Chatterbox is a group for children with speech and language difficulties and their parents, many of who have low literacy levels themselves. Group membership changes every two-three months with varying levels of attendance.

**User exit surveys**  
**Summary of key points**

- 85% of *Give me a Break* borrowers surveyed had chosen to read an author which they had never previously read
- 81% of *Give me a Break* borrowers surveyed felt that the promotion and display had encouraged them to try something that they 'wouldn't normally have chosen'
- Respondents welcomed the 'attractive and accessible' opportunity to try something new, which overcame barriers such as lack of awareness of different authors and genres, and lack of available time to browse the shelves
- 63 out of 95 'target group' respondents had noticed the *Give me a Break* display, with 38 borrowing a title
- Less than half of the remaining respondents elected to borrow a *Give me a Break* title once their attention had been brought to the display
- 65% of target group respondents *had* borrowed an adult fiction title within the 3 month period preceding the survey, suggesting a strong existing reading culture amongst some targeted groups
- Respondents from targeted groups within some individual libraries with low previous adult fiction borrowing figures were not significantly encouraged to borrow *Give me a Break* titles, suggesting a low impact upon non-readers
- The relatively low response rates and sample sizes included in the user survey section of the report should be acknowledged. A greater response rate from the remaining participating authorities is needed in order to make any valid assumptions about the impact of the promotion amongst the *Estyn Allan* population as a whole. Supplementary information such as the types of group surveyed using the target group questionnaire, and more qualitative data from survey respondents would also help to provide a more thorough analysis.

## 5. Estyn Allan & Give me a Break staff survey

A questionnaire was distributed electronically to all 22 participating *Estyn Allan* librarians in January 2005 (for the staff survey questionnaire, please see appendix 2). The objectives of the staff survey questionnaire were to seek feedback and comments on:

- *Estyn Allan* staff training in relation to running the *Give me a Break* promotion
- *Estyn Allan* librarians' practical experiences of running the *Give me a Break* promotion
- Staff perceptions of the impact of the promotion upon library users and readers

A total of 15 completed questionnaires were received (68% response rate). One of the remaining seven librarians had just taken up the post of *Estyn Allan* librarian (maternity leave cover) and felt unable to make a full and effective contribution to the staff survey. No reasons have been given for the remaining six non-responses. The questionnaires were completed anonymously, thus responses and comments are not directly linked to specific authorities. It was felt by the researcher that assured confidentiality would ensure the most honest and open responses. It is important to note that the discussion that follows relates to the 15 survey respondents only, and not the *Estyn Allan* librarian population as a whole.

### *Estyn Allan staff training*

It was considered important to examine staff reactions to and opinions on *Estyn Allan* training as a whole to establish how the programme has helped to develop reader development awareness and skills, and the participating librarians' confidence in running promotions and events with particular reference to the *Give me a Break* promotion. The 'staff training' section of the questionnaire contained a list of statements concerning the *Estyn Allan* training programme; respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with the given statements. For a full list of staff training questions and the number of responses given in each category, please see table 5.

<b><i>Estyn Allan staff training:</i></b>					
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I have felt able to share ideas and express my opinion during staff training events			1	6	8
<i>Estyn Allan</i> staff training has improved my stock selection awareness and skills			1	7	7
The national co-ordination of <i>Estyn Allan</i> staff training has been a success				8	10
My marketing skills in terms of book promotion and publicity have been improved by <i>Estyn Allan</i> training				11	4
My expectations have been met by <i>Estyn Allan</i> staff training			2	9	4

Estyn Allan training has encouraged greater communication and collaboration between libraries and authorities		1		7	7
Estyn Allan has contributed significantly to my continuing professional development				7	8
I have learnt a lot about how to get the most out of physical book displays and promotions through Estyn Allan training			1	8	6
My knowledge and awareness of the potential for working with external partners has been improved by Estyn Allan training		1	2	9	3
Estyn Allan training has increased my awareness of the role of book promotions and reader development within the wider public libraries remit				9	6
I have enjoyed the Estyn Allan training experience and would welcome an opportunity to partake in a similar project in the future				4	11
Estyn Allan staff training has raised my awareness about the impact and benefits of reader development projects and promotions upon library users				7	8
My confidence in undertaking successful reader promotions has been improved by Estyn Allan staff training			1	7	7
Estyn Allan training events have been organised, facilitated and managed to a high standard				9	6
Further to Estyn Allan training I feel I have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage a book promotion under my own initiative				8	7

**Table 5**

Some of the questions in the staff survey section of the questionnaire were designed to assess general responses to *Estyn Allan* training in terms of staff expectations and enjoyment; the contribution made to participants' continuing professional development and awareness; their professional relationship with other organisations, libraries and authorities. Such elements of the programme will have an implicit effect on staff approaches to reader development activities and promotions that are attached to the *Estyn Allan* experience as a whole including *Give me a Break*. This helps to provide the professional context for respondents' attitudes towards and experiences of running the promotion itself.

All staff survey respondents either agree or strongly agree that the national co-ordination of *Estyn Allan* has been a success and that training events have been organised, facilitated and managed to a high standard. 9 respondents agree that their expectations have been met by the relevant staff training (4 strongly agree) and 11 respondents strongly agree with the statement that they have enjoyed the *Estyn Allan* staff training experience. All respondents agree or strongly agree that the experience has contributed significantly to their continuing professional development.

The positive response to staff training as a whole implies a strong basis for successful reading promotions and events building upon the knowledge and confidence gained via the training programme. The opportunity to network with other authorities and organisations, and the subsequent opportunities for discussion and debate, has proven to be valuable. 8 respondents strongly agree that they have felt able to share ideas and express their opinion during staff training events (6 agree). 7 respondents equally agree and strongly agree that the training has encouraged greater communication and collaboration between libraries and authorities. 9 respondents agree that their

knowledge and awareness for the potential of working with external partners has been improved.

Building upon this foundation, the survey has shown how *Estyn Allan* staff training has helped to develop specific and practical reader promotion skills and awareness. 7 respondents equally agree and strongly agree that the experience has improved their stock selection awareness and skills. 11 respondents agree and 4 strongly agree that their book promotion marketing and publicity skills had been improved. Apart from one 'undecided' respondent, all either agree or strongly agree that that they have learned to make the most of physical displays and promotions. To support such practical skills and awareness, participants have also developed an understanding of the role of reader development and book promotions within the wider public library remit (9 agree with this statement), and of the impact and benefits to library users (all agree or strongly agree). In terms of *Estyn Allan* librarians' confidence in reader development activities, 7 respondents equally agree and strongly agree that their confidence has been improved, all agree or strongly agree that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage a book promotion under their own initiative.

When asked to describe aspects of the training programme that have been of most benefit to them, respondents repeatedly commented on the value of increased awareness of the importance of reading promotions and activities which can then be cascaded to managers and colleagues within their authorities. This illustrates the importance of peer and staff support when running a reading promotion, and of the need to justify reader development activities to managers and decision makers. The training has clearly been important at the foundation level of planning and running a promotion. Other comments reflected the benefits of networking with other authorities and libraries and the extent to which individual confidence levels had been raised:

“Raising the whole profile of reader development and libraries for staff and managers”

“Network days were extremely valuable as they gave ‘authority’ to the issues raised, and reinforced the reader development ‘message’ to peers/managers”

“Reader development doesn’t work in isolation, the more staff that take ownership the more effective the results. Through the *Estyn Allan* training, I have developed confidence to cascade information and report back at library meetings”

“Working with neighbouring authorities and the network of *Estyn Allan* librarians and the opportunity to ask advice”

“Stock selection – I’ve always selected a wide choice of fiction, but it gave me the reasons for doing so, the facts to back it up, and the courage to select even wider. Promotions – the part of library work I’ve enjoyed most. It gave me a huge range of ideas for new promotions, and the facts to support my asking other staff to participate”

“Not afraid to spend money on stock that’s a ‘little different’”

### *The practical Give me a Break experience*

The second part of the staff survey covered the practical experience of running the *Give me a Break* promotion specifically and its impact upon staff. Questions covered how this specific promotion has affected staff attitudes towards reader development and book promotions in general; confidence levels in promoting the type of contemporary, alternative literature and Welsh language titles used in the *Give me a Break* promotion; general library staff and user reactions to the promotions. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with a list of 11 given statements concerning the promotion. For a full list of questions and the numbers of responses given in each category, please see table 6.

<b>Your practical 'Give me a Break' experience:</b>					
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
'Give me a Break' has inspired me to be more proactive with book promotion initiatives in the future	1	4	1	5	4
I feel that 'Give me a Break' could have been more successful under different circumstances		1	4	9	
I received full co-operation from my colleagues and peers with respect to the 'Give me a Break' promotion			1	10	4
The 'Give me a Break' promotion was well received by library users		2		9	4
'Give me a Break' has improved my confidence in my own book promotion skills and expertise		6	1	6	2
I have enjoyed the experience of running the 'Give me a Break' promotion		1	5	4	5
'Give me a Break' has only appealed to existing readers and not the intended audience	2	2	7	4	
'Give me a break' has helped me to develop an interest in reader development	1	5	2	7	
'Give me a Break' has increased my awareness of diversity and choice in book collections and their promotion	1	3	1	10	
I feel more comfortable with suggesting alternative titles and authors to readers and justifying my recommendations further to 'Give me a Break'	1	3	2	7	2
'Give me a Break' has improved my confidence in promoting Welsh language titles	2	7	2	4	

**Table 6**

The most immediately noticeable aspect of this set of results, and difference from the first section of the questionnaire is that there is much more disparity between the sample in terms of the extent to which they agree with given statements, with more 'disagree' and 'undecided' selections. This suggests a greater difference in the experience of running a promotion at ground level between different authorities than the shared experience of the *Estyn Allan* training as a whole.

Building upon the most significant aspects of *Estyn Allan* commented on by respondents in the previous section, 10 respondents agree and 4 strongly agree that they received the full co-operation of colleagues and peers when running the *Give me a Break* promotion. 7 respondents agree and 2 strongly agree that the promotion has made them more comfortable with suggesting

alternative titles to readers and justifying their recommendations. Equal numbers of respondents (6 each) agree and disagree that the promotion has improved their confidence in their book promotion skills and expertise. 10 respondents agree that *Give me a Break* has increased their awareness in promoting a *diverse* book collection. 7 respondents however *disagree* with the statement that the promotion has improved their confidence in promoting Welsh language titles; this is a significant finding as the promotion of Welsh language titles and authors is a major objective of the *Estyn Allan* project as a whole.

9 respondents agree that the promotion was well received by library users, but 4 agree (and 7 are 'undecided') that the promotion has only appealed to existing readers and not the intended audience. The central aim of *Estyn Allan* is to reach people who are generally excluded from the reading experience and literary culture through geographical, cultural or physical barriers, or feel intimidated by negative formal education experiences and a lack of confidence. If participating librarians feel that only regular and known library users and existing readers are taking advantage of the promotion this may be another significant finding and cause for discussion between *Estyn Allan* organisers and participants.

Some respondents included comments in this section of the questionnaire, which go some way to explain the perceived disparity in responses. One respondent noted that the training as a whole had helped them to feel confident rather than running a specific promotion. The individual characteristics of *Estyn Allan* staff and their respective skills and experiences, along with the nature of the authority to which they belong, help to explain some of the disparities. Another respondent stated that where services regularly have similar book promotions, *Give me a Break* had no discernible impact:

"The EA initiative had already boosted my confidence and ability to promote books etc, so by the time the GMAB promo was put in to libraries I already felt positive and confident hence some of the 'disagree' answers above"

"I have marked disagree a number of times because those are areas that I was happy about before GMAB. It's not a negative on the promotion. I can't say I enjoyed it because I never felt much belonging to it"

"In this authority, there was nothing new in the concept of a stock promotion with graphics, face-on display and a wide choice of books. We've done this for some time, so Give me a Break didn't have much of an impact. The stock was borrowed, but it would have been anyway if it was displayed prominently"

Although most respondents stated that they had the full support of colleagues and peers when running the promotion, one comment highlights the difficulties of moving promotions to branch libraries where staff may not have the same expertise or interest in book promotions and reader development activities:

"The promotion was moved from its original position by the branch librarian and with the exception of books in counter stand shelved spine-facing"

Not all *Estyn Allan* librarians shared this problem in moving the promotion to branch libraries however. One respondent noted that although their own skills and experience hadn't necessarily benefited from the *Give me Break* promotion specifically, branch library staff had become more interested in book promotions in general, and had helped *Give me a Break* to be a success:

"It hasn't increased my interest in promotions for the simple reason I was already very interested in them, but I think it has furthered the interest of the staff in [branch library]... I chose to run it in a different branch initially as I didn't want to be seen to be having all this new stock added to my branch – I wanted to be distanced from it. So when it was a success (which the issues proved) it wasn't because I had done anything... it was all due to the staff in [branch library]"

The perceived problem with promoting Welsh language titles is explained by the very 'niche' user audience for these titles and the obvious dependence upon the reader's ability to speak/read Welsh! Welsh speaking communities as such have been more successful in promoting Welsh titles, and it would clearly be difficult for mainly English speaking authorities to have similar successes in promoting Welsh titles. One respondent observed that Welsh title borrowing might improve further to the formation of a Welsh language reading group, which again may mainly consist of established readers who would have the confidence to participate to begin with. The same principles are applied to difficulties in promoting poetry, a genre with an established readership, which is difficult to promote to new readers.

"It was particularly difficult to get people to borrow poetry and Welsh language material, although I think it would be different now (as far as Welsh language material is concerned) as we have just set up an enthusiastic Welsh language reading/discussion group"

"Promoting Welsh language titles has never been a problem here [in this authority]. Many of our users are readers of Welsh language books and all staff are bi-lingual"

"The Welsh language material didn't issue at all well"

One respondent observed that a physical display in a library is not the most effective way to appeal to non-users, and that more time to perhaps devote to outreach work with the promotion would have been valuable in order to fulfil this particular objective. It was observed that the physical *Give me a Break* display had some limitations in terms of its transparency and appeal to users, particularly to users who are used to seeing book promotions and displays, or even non-readers who are not 'looking out' for displays and their relevant recommendations. One respondent noted that although the promotion hasn't attracted new readers, it had opened up more choices for existing readers, which relates to another key *Estyn Allan* objective of increasing access to a 'rich diversity of Welsh and English contemporary literature':

"I feel that the promotion would have been more successful if I had the time to promote it to non-users"

"The counter-top display wasn't a success in the two libraries I tried it in. Customers are used to bigger and more eye-catching displays"

“As far as I’m aware, we have had no new borrowers, however it has ‘opened the eyes’ of existing ones”

*Impact of Give me a Break promotion upon library users and readers*

The third and final part of the *Estyn Allan* staff survey sought to investigate respondents’ opinion on the impact of the *Give me a Break* promotion upon library users and readers. Again, respondents were presented with a number of statements relating to user impact and value, and asked to state the extent to which they agreed with each statement. Questions include users’ responses to and interaction with the physical display; relationship between promotion website usage and book borrowing (if any); user response to Welsh language titles; interaction between users and library staff in response to the promotion. For a full breakdown of questions asked within this section of the survey and the numbers of responses given within each category, please refer to table 7.

<b>Your library users &amp; readers: impact and value:</b>					
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
'Give me a Break' has encouraged greater reading for pleasure amongst our users		2	8	5	
Users like to have recommendations made for them, such as Surprise Break			8	7	
There has been a positive relationship between GMAB website usage and book borrowing	2	4	9		
The 'Give me a Break' promotion has encouraged more general browsing of titles amongst our users		4	3	8	
Users have found the promotion attractive and appealing		2	3	9	1
Users have developed an interest in new authors thanks to the Give me a Break promotion		2	5	5	3
Give me a Break has increased the profile of welsh language titles amongst users	3	2	7	3	
Some readers are more confident in making selections because of the Give me a Break promotion	1	2	8	4	
The Give me a Break promotion has encouraged more dialogue between staff and users concerning stock selection and availability	1	3	5	6	
Users would welcome more promotions and campaigns similar to Give me a Break		1	3	9	2

**Table 7**

Similarly to the previous section, the responses are quite wide-ranging and less uniform than those given to questions concerning the staff-training element of the *Estyn Allan* programme. What is most noticeable is the increased number of ‘undecided’ selections, which suggests a lack of a thorough knowledge or understanding of the impact upon readers and users. As discussed within the ‘preliminary data’ chapter, the user exit surveys distributed within participating libraries merely offer ‘snapshot’ data concerning users’ borrowing habits. To gain a fuller understanding of the impact of the promotion (or any similar initiative) upon users, a more

qualitative approach to evaluation and data collection is necessary (for instance, user interviews or focus groups). It is worth noting however that 6 respondents believe that the promotion has encouraged more dialogue between staff and users concerning stock selection and availability. In terms of future evaluation of similar *Estyn Allan* projects, it may be worth noting contact details of proactive, communicative users who may be contacted at a later date and invited to take part in evaluation research.

Significant results in the user impact table include both questions concerning the *Give me a Break* website. 9 respondents are undecided as to whether there has been a positive relationship between website usage and book borrowing, whilst the remaining respondents disagree or strongly disagree. However, 7 respondents agree with the statement that users like to have (reading) recommendations made for them such as *Surprise Break*, as featured on the *Give me a Break* website (although the remaining users are undecided on this question!). This suggests a lack of clarity on the role and usage of the website which should be taken in to consideration when designing future promotions and initiatives. Respondents believe that general user responses towards the promotion have been positive, with 8 agreeing that it has encouraged more general browsing of titles and 9 respondents agreeing that users have found the promotion attractive and appealing.

The majority of respondents (8) agree or strongly agree that the promotion has encouraged an interest in new authors amongst borrowers (a positive impact which is supported by user exit survey findings, preliminary data chapter), although 7 respondents are undecided as to whether the promotion has increased the profile of Welsh language titles amongst borrowers (with 2 respondents disagreeing with this statement and 3 strongly disagreeing). The issues surrounding Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking communities are of course relevant here. 9 respondents agree that users would welcome more promotions and campaigns similar to *Give me a Break*.

Some of the comments given by respondents within this section of the questionnaire again help to rationalise the suggested implications of the survey. Where the promotion has been run in branch libraries it is difficult for *Estyn Allan* librarians to closely observe and assess user reaction and impact. One respondent who selected 'undecided' to each of the user impact questions noted that they had received no feedback or encouragement from branch library staff so was unable to comment:

“As promotion was not pushed by [branch] staff difficult to answer the above. I spent the launch day in the library and the display did attract peoples' attention”

Other branch librarians were more enthusiastic about the promotion, and paid attention to user behaviour and how well the display worked, as the following quote from a branch librarian repeated by one respondent illustrates:

“The public enjoyed the display. I feel that the book covers were the drawing factor rather than the 'take a break' poster display. People seemed to enjoy browsing the selection and looking for new titles. We didn't notice anyone taking an interest in the posters, but [they] were definitely attracted to the book covers”

One respondent noted that where Welsh titles are popular amongst Welsh speaking users and communities, the promotion of new and specific Welsh titles has been well received. Another respondent thought that it was ineffective to promote the *Give me a Break* website and the display(s) simultaneously and that the website could have been more actively promoted, suggesting that the displays became the priority within libraries once the promotion was up and running in terms of marketing the promotion to users. General comments indicate that users expect to see promotions and that they are generally valued and well-used by all demographic groups, which illustrates the importance of book promotions and the contribution they make to the public library service and reader development:

“Some Welsh readers have liked the Welsh [titles] being brought to their attention”

“I don’t think we did enough to promote the website. Promoting a display and a website didn’t work – better to focus on one or the other. The website was the original part and we (i.e. all Estyn Allan) should have put more effort in to that – adding more titles and promoting it heavily with links and publicity”

“Readers do generally like promotions, and books are borrowed more if part of a promotion. Since promotions in some form or other are used regularly in libraries these days I think users get used to checking the books regardless of what the promotion is about. Feedback, by word of mouth was good, many users like to have a quick choice and are willing to try something new if it’s included in the selection”

“Readers comments have been positive generally and highlighted the fact that even if you are older (50+) you’re not necessarily going to have a limited reading range”

## ***Estyn Allan & Give me a Break staff survey***

### **Summary of key points**

- *Estyn Allan* librarians agree that their book promotion skills have been significantly improved by *Estyn Allan* staff training and all have the confidence to manage book promotions and reader development initiatives independently
- The support of managers, peers and colleagues is **essential** when running reader promotions in individual authorities. *Estyn Allan* librarians feel able to cascade all relevant information to such colleagues and justify their reader development initiatives and choices
- *Estyn Allan* librarians have very different experiences of running a promotion in practical terms based on their own expertise and experience; their 'type' of authority and chosen library to hold the promotion; levels of co-operation and enthusiasm for the promotion amongst colleagues
- The main users of the *Give me a Break* promotion have been existing readers, and it is felt that more outreach work is required to attract traditional 'non-users'. Existing readers have however been successfully introduced to new authors and genres
- It is still perceived as difficult to promote Welsh titles and poetry to users not already familiar with such choices
- A more thorough qualitative approach to evaluation and data collection is essential to fully analyse the impact of the promotion (or any promotion) upon users
- The relationship between the *Give me a Break* website and displays is very unclear – it is suggested that the display aspect of the promotion has been prioritised by *Estyn Allan* librarians and not enough attention has been paid to the role and value of the website
- Book promotions are perceived to be a valuable and important public library service for all library user groups and demographics

## 6. Qualitative fieldwork

As an alternative to the planned but unavailable user focus groups, the researcher visited three authorities in March 2005 in order to undertake observation, branch library staff interviews and where possible, *Give me a Break*/book promotion user exit interviews<sup>4</sup>. The three authorities included:

- Merthyr Tydfil – Treharris Library
- Gwynedd – Bangor Library
- Conwy – Colwyn Bay library

Each library was visited for between 1-3 hours. For a list of user interview questions please see appendix 3. Where branch library staff were interviewed, the same questions were slightly rephrased in order to discuss their experience of running *Give me a Break*, and their perceptions of user responses to the promotion.

### *Merthyr Tydfil – Treharris Library*

Treharris is a small branch library with two members of staff. At the time of the visit *Give me a Break* was displayed prominently to the left hand side of the main library counter, immediately facing the library entrance. The counter display included 19 *Give me a Break* titles, and was promoted with an A4 poster, rows of business cards and takeaway carrier bags. *Give me a Break* titles (17) were also displayed face-out within the main book stock on 6 display shelves, which was also well signed with an A4 poster and specially designed 'surprise break' A4 leaflets. 5 Welsh language titles were included in this display. A large A3 *Give me a Break* poster was also prominently displayed above the library counter.

Out of a total of five adult users/visitors to the library during the observation period, one user spent time looking at the *Give me a Break* display and borrowed a title from the promotion (*Notes on a Scandal – Zoë Heller*), and subsequently agreed to be interviewed. When asked their immediate impressions of the display, the user stated that they hadn't actually noticed the promotion until the branch librarian had pointed it out! The user justified this by explaining that they hadn't really been looking for fiction titles anyway, as they generally only borrow non-fiction from the library. In this respect the promotion had encouraged a change in borrowing habits and reading choices. The user hadn't been encouraged to borrow a Welsh language title, as they were unable to read Welsh.

This particular user was not aware of the *Give me a Break* website, but agreed that it could have the potential to encourage promotion book borrowing, similar to bookselling internet sites; the user indicated that they

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<sup>4</sup> Only users that had voluntarily looked at the promotion and selected a book were approached to be interviewed

usually buy fiction titles from such sources and that the use of such websites is entirely dependant on publicity and awareness:

“Yes I suppose it would [encourage book borrowing]... I usually buy paperback fiction books though and use the library for non-fiction... I use websites like Amazon to help me choose what fiction to read... so I suppose it's a similar thing... you'd have to be aware of it in the first place though”

The user agreed that promotions like *Give me a Break* are a good idea for ‘drawing your attention to things’ and said they would like to see more promotions and displays in their library. It was perceived as a good idea for users to become more involved in the type and range of promotions that are run in branch libraries:

“It would be useful to ask library users what they think... what kinds of things they like... some people might like to help with the actual display... you could have user reviews of the books on display when they've read them”

This particular user didn't have any specific ideas for promotions and wouldn't choose to be actively involved, but stressed that they wouldn't mind providing feedback by completing questionnaires etc. The *Estyn Allan* librarian and Treharris branch staff agreed that the promotion had been generally well received by users, and there had been many returning borrowers even if they hadn't particularly enjoyed their first selection from the display. The branch librarian acknowledged that the titles included in the *Give me a Break* display are quite different to the usual borrowing habits of their particular users, but the change had been welcomed by readers and in some cases caused a cultural change in reading habits and related hobbies. Merthyr Tydfil is not generally a Welsh-speaking community; so Welsh titles have not been borrowed:

“It's been here [Treharris] for about 3 weeks... and considering its a different 'style' of book for us I would say its gone reasonably well... we have had a couple of comments from people saying its nice to try something different... a lot of borrowers are very set in their ways so they need to be pushed to try something new, but they will do it!”

“What I did find is that some of the most unlikely people took books from the display and thoroughly enjoyed them... I'm being very stereotypical here but we have one lady who always takes out Mills and Boons... but now she goes to the display and tries something different, and she's even joined the Book Chain and comments on the books she's read... this has only come about because of something like Give me a Break which to me is really good”

“I don't think we've issued any Welsh titles... it's not a high Welsh speaking area... they didn't issue in central library either”

The *Give me a Break* website has had no tangible impact in Merthyr Tydfil. There is still very much a traditional approach to library usage in the region, as on-line public library services are relatively new both to staff and users. The libraries themselves have a strong physical community presence, with well-known users who visit regularly and would still prefer to physically browse the shelves/collection themselves and speak to staff in person rather than rely on web-based services. It was noted that the website is a useful tool in marketing the promotion and web-based services when doing outreach and community work, and staff stressed the fact that it is still early days for this

kind of service in the region which has the potential to grow and become more widely-used in the future.

“I haven’t had any feedback about the website... I think we’ve had one person use it... it just hasn’t taken off... it’s quite a new thing for us, the service has only been automated for about 3 years, so it’s quite a new thing for the public as well”

“It depends on the user as to whether the website will ever really take off... its very much an individual thing... we still have people who would never buy a book off Amazon because they’re worried about credit card security... The website is a useful tool to have when you’re out and about doing community talks, school talks... when you’re out in the community you’ve got something you can show to people... like I said it’s all very new to us, doing outreach and showing people how to use the library service at home... Prism and Tallis, things like that, it’s very, very new to them... you may have authorities that have been on-line for 10+ years”

It was felt by library staff that promotions in general are highly valued within the region and are seen as an important part of the public library service in promoting the available stock and making available new and different reading choices. There is a strong culture of user consultation and feedback within the Merthyr Tydfil region (as demonstrated by the proactive approach to the distribution of *Give me a Break* user questionnaires shown by the *Estyn Allan* librarian, discussed in the ‘preliminary data’ chapter). It is felt that users play a key role in future planning and that this will also apply to future reading promotions and events:

“If you observe people when they come in to the building, a lot of the time the first thing they do is go to a display shelf... they do like their displays and promotions definitely, they associate displays with new stock and something different”

“Our head of libraries is very keen in taking user comments and doing something with them... so yes it is important for us to have their contribution and opinion”

Staff noted both the informal and formal benefits of running a national promotion such as *Give me a Break*. Informally the promotion has encouraged greater conversation between staff and users, with the result of staff borrowing and reading books from the promotion themselves following recommendations from users. Formally, a national promotion with external funding has had professional benefits in terms of the quality of promotional materials and art work and other key elements such as access to Welsh language translation which are all too costly for independent libraries and authorities. Staff felt it was important to note that book issue statistics do not offer a fair reflection of how well a promotion has been received in terms of user browsing and attention. This is particularly true where branches only have single copies of titles and longer loan periods such as three weeks; in reality such a title can only be issued once or twice a month. It was felt that it is very important to sustain the partnership aspect of *Estyn Allan* at the end of the funded period, which will help to overcome problems in terms of reading promotion budgets and spending power.

“Staff have tried the books themselves following recommendations from readers... it’s all word of mouth but has a really positive ‘knock-on’ effect... branches can be a bit different because they are quite isolated at times and it can all be a bit ‘in house’ for them”

"It's [*Give me a Break*] had good artwork with it, which is eye-catching and modern... libraries normally just don't have the money to produce something like that for a one-off promotion... if the funding's there to produce it you try your best but it's a very time-consuming process... to have everything translated in to Welsh was a big help for this promotion as well, it costs a lot of money to have a translation done"

"Three months is the longest I've had a promotion on and the interest shown by users was sustained throughout the period... it's a shame but book issues don't really reflect how popular a promotion has been... it doesn't show how much attention a promotion has received... it's a shame because people think issues are the be all and end all and they're not"

"When *Estyn Allan* finishes the project needs to be sustained... three years is a long time just to stop, a lot of money and staff time has been put in just for it all to fall apart... for that you need the support of your heads of service... if you can do something like *Give me a Break* in 4 branches, that's 4 people who can share the cost of having some good art work etc... the good thing about Wales and the 22 authorities is that we're all near someone else"

### *Gwynedd – Bangor Library*

At the time of the visit to Bangor library, the *Give me a Break* promotional period had ended but a similar display of contemporary Welsh and English titles was in place. A total of 27 Welsh and English language contemporary fiction titles were displayed face-out on a plain black dump bin, immediately opposite the main library entrance in a visible and noticeable spot. A 'quick pick' spinner was situated next to the dump bin, which contained 3 well-stocked tiers of similar contemporary titles. The library itself is bright, immaculately presented and very reader-centred, with other adult displays including short stories and lots of displays for children including the *Horrible Histories* series and 'scary books'. All notices and promotional materials for the displays are well presented and attractive.

During the observation, 3 users looked at the contemporary fiction display and selected an item to borrow – all agreed to be interviewed. It is important to note that user comments made and quotes included in the Gwynedd section mostly refer to the contemporary literature display described above and *not* the *Give me A Break* promotion; the data is still very useful in considering the role and value of such a display as very similar (and some of the same) titles are used as in the *Give me a Break* promotion.

The first user was a regular visitor to Bangor library and already an avid reader of contemporary fiction. She remembered the *Give me a Break* promotion and thought that it contained '*a lot of good books*'. She didn't think that such a promotion would encourage them to try new authors and genres as they already read so much anyway. Welsh was her first language and although she did read Welsh titles she said she was more likely to choose English language authors. She thought that book promotions in general are a good idea and that they provided '*nice browsing opportunities*' but that she was confident in her own ability to find what she wanted from the shelves.

The second user to take advantage of the promotion was a new library member who had just joined that morning. She thought that the display was attractive and this was what had inspired her to browse the titles on display. The display had also encouraged her to select a different type of book to her usual reading choices, and she thought that reading promotions in general are valuable for highlighting alternative genres and authors, books that otherwise she may never come across:

“I usually only read biographies or true crime... the book I have chosen from the display is a crime-related story, and its set in my home town, so I'm quite intrigued enough to read it! It's good to have the chance to browse different types of books... I would never have found this one on the shelves, simply because I wouldn't have been looking for it in the first place”

The third person to browse the contemporary literature display was a young Mum who was visiting the library primarily to allow her daughter to access the children's library. She had noticed the display on her way in and came back to have a look at the titles once her child was safely playing in the children's area. The location of the display next to the children's library was especially convenient, which reinforces some of the comments made about display location within the '*peer review and support*' chapter (Preliminary Data). The user could not speak/read Welsh but thought the display would encourage her to try new English language authors and genres and stated that she wouldn't normally be aware of such titles:

“I thought the display looked interesting and it gives me something to do whilst [daughter] is doing her own thing... I can only flick through so many children's books without going mad! The position of the display is good as I can still see what she's doing... It's difficult to browse the main adult section and still keep an eye on her... also I can quickly choose a few books to take with me to flick through properly if she decides she needs me with her”

“It's a very good way of bringing your attention to different things... you just wouldn't see them or know about them otherwise unless you're a very bookish person and like that sort of thing anyway... which I'm not particularly. I've heard of this book before and thought it looked good, but the display has jogged my memory and I'll give it a go. I had forgotten about it until seeing it here today”

None of the users borrowing titles from this particular display had heard of or used the *Give me a Break* website. It was agreed that such a resource would be a good promotional tool for book promotions, but its effectiveness would be reliant upon strong marketing and promotion; adequate internet access amongst potential borrowers and readers; an aptitude for and an interest in such websites and resources:

“I wasn't aware of it... if people don't have access to the internet then something like that would be a bit pointless... it's a good idea to help promote book displays and books on offer but you would need to know about it in the first place”

“I wouldn't really be interested in it when I come in to the library anyway – it wouldn't make any difference. It might appeal to busy people or people that like to spend lots of time researching what they want to read, reading book reviews, that kind of thing”

“I wouldn't think to look for such a website linked to the library... I would have to be told about it then I might take a look out of curiosity”

The *Estyn Allan* librarian in Gwynedd believed that the *Give me a Break* promotion had helped to bring about cultural and professional changes in regular users *and* staff within the library, and the promotion had been very popular with both users and staff. Some users had read all the books in the promotion and were now making recommendations for future promotions and displays; it was felt by the *Estyn Allan* librarian that such users would prefer there to be some kind of book promotion and display in the library at all times. Staff have even changed their reading habits further to engaging with the promotion and have begun to share in the user's readers experiences and the benefits of such promotions. Such changes have encouraged a more flexible staff attitude to the ways in which books are displayed and have encouraged greater conversation and sharing of ideas and reading experiences between staff and users. The *Estyn Allan* librarian in Gwynedd reiterated that it is such on-going cultural changes that are more indicative of the success of a promotion than book issue statistics.

"A lady started work here approximately 3 months after I did... she has a degree in English literature and her [preferred] reading material is very classical shall we say... modern classical as well as the old ones... that was good reading for her and that's what she would recommend that people read... with the [Give me a Break] promotion she really did interact with people and started to read these books herself and thoroughly enjoyed them... she even joined a Book Chain which helped her to get out of the habit of just reading the classics"

There are plans within the authority to establish library-based reader groups (initially a Welsh language reading group) to help build upon the culture of change concerning attitudes towards reading within the libraries. It is believed that this is the way forward to develop the promotion of reading and ultimately borrowing figures and statistics. Adequate marketing and publicity are essential – for example the famous media-assisted *Richard and Judy* book club has proved to be very popular in Gwynedd and books included in this event are permanently on loan. At the beginning of the *Give me a Break* promotion in Gwynedd the website was quite popular and generated 11 enquiries. This was believed to be through word-of-mouth as library staff encouraged friends and family to visit the site! Interest in the site however was not sustained. The only feedback (all positive) concerning the surprise break option came from a reading group within the locality (not directly linked to the library) who used the website to generate new ideas for reading materials.

#### *Conwy – Colwyn Bay library*

Colwyn Bay library was still running the *Give me a Break* promotion when the research fieldwork visit took place. Only the counter-top display was present however, and the *Estyn Allan* librarian commented on how the display had been moved from its original place on top of the main issues desk, to the enquiries desk on the other side of the library. The display had been moved by branch staff and was not 'looked at' by any users during the observation period. The display contained 5 *Give me a Break* titles, promotional business cards and A4 posters. The user exit questionnaires were also visibly stacked

beside the display stand for self-completion. The date labels indicated that none of the books in the display had been issued since December, though all had been issued at least once a month from September/October.

The library in Colwyn bay is a very reader-centred physical space where *Estyn Allan* in general and *Give me a Break* have a strong promotional presence. There is a specific attractive and comfortable readers seating area that includes a reader's notice board that advertises the Colwyn Bay readers group which meets in the library once a month. The *Estyn Allan* librarian along with the community librarian responsible for the mobile public library service has compiled two lever-arch A4 folders full of individual reader reviews (including colour photocopies of relevant books under review) of *Estyn Allan* and *Give me a Break* titles, which are available in the seating area for users to read. With over 200 book reviews from local residents, this is a valuable community resource, which provides some evidence of the impact of *Give me a Break* titles upon readers in terms of the variety of reading material made available to them and the extended reading experience:

"The first modern poetry I have read and I enjoyed it a lot. A book to dip in to" (Poems: 1960-2000 – Fleur Adcock)

"Well, I read every word; a feather in Robin's cap. But at 85 years I'm not interested in the sordid lives of those who've made a packet... At least it proves man needs woman...the only decent person was Kate, dead on page one... Very well written and despite the critic's blurb I didn't find it amusing, but very easy to read" (Childish Things – Robin Jenkins)

"There's no pleasure quite like discovering a 'new' author. One of those can't-put-down books, I'd got the tang of the river within the first few pages... I liked the way he handles words and dialogue, blending fact with fiction, making its storyline really come alive"  
(The Lazarus Widow - Bill Knox)

Laminated examples of the book reviews are also wall-mounted in the library, along with *Opening the Book* branded posters and other reading-related promotional material. On the wall next to the open access PCs in the library a huge *Give me a Break* URL display has been mounted to advertise the promotion's website. In such a strong reader-centred library it would have been beneficial to the evaluation of *Give me a Break* to include a Conwy user sample, and it is felt by the researcher that the lack of *Give me a Break* users in such a short observation period is by no means indicative of user response to the promotion as a whole. The valuable evidence in terms of the user reviews collected by library staff suggests that the promotion has been very well received, and the outreach work involved in taking new reading materials to users via the mobile library service provides a worthy example of what can be done to reach desired *Estyn Allan* target audiences who are otherwise excluded by physical barriers to the public library service.

## ***Qualitative fieldwork***

### **Summary of key points**

- The cultural differences between individual authorities and their respective library services and users should be acknowledged when considering the success of the promotion at regional level. Such cultural differences may help to explain why some promotions appear to have been more successful than others. The obvious example is the difference between Welsh speaking and non-Welsh speaking authorities. Other examples include the extent of ICT access and awareness and established attitudes towards reading habits and choices, especially for smaller branch library users in isolated areas
- The *Give me a Break* website has had a limited tangible effect and appeal due to a lack of sustained marketing and promotion, and the subsequent lack of awareness and/or interest amongst library users. Factors such as internet access, skills and aptitude (which will vary between authorities) will have consequences for the successful use of the website
- A sustained qualitative approach to gathering user feedback and evaluation data is essential when evaluating promotions and services. Authorities visited during research fieldwork realise the importance of gathering feedback both formally and informally; it is important that this is emulated by all participating authorities
- The *Give me a Break* promotion has been very successful in widening reading choices and experiences, both for library users and staff
- It is considered that the long-term cultural changes achieved by promotions such as *Give me a Break* provide greater evidence of impact than standardised approaches to promotion evaluation such as book issue statistics. Examples of long-term cultural changes include changes in user and staff reading habits and the subsequent changes in branch library staff attitudes toward reader development initiatives
- It is felt that book issue statistics do not adequately reflect levels of interest shown in the *Give me a Break* promotion and the extent to which such promotions are received and welcomed by library users

## 7. Summary of key findings and recommendations

In conclusion it is important to consider the previously summarised 'key findings' (according to individual chapters) with reference to the original research aims and objectives:

*Has the promotion attracted the desired target audience?*

Of the relatively small sample of 'target groups' surveyed by *Estyn Allan* librarians (including parents accompanying children to story time events, IT user groups and reader groups), the relevant *Give me a Break* display had little impact on non-readers amongst survey respondents; a greater response from the *Estyn Allan* population as a whole with respect to this particular survey, with higher sample sizes, would have been beneficial in establishing the true impact upon target groups. Staff survey responses indicate that the main users of the *Give me a Break* promotion have been existing library users who are already borrowers and readers of adult fiction, and that promotions and displays are not necessarily effective in attracting traditional 'non-users' or readers. It was suggested by one staff survey respondent that more outreach work is required to achieve this objective, although it should be noted that outreach work was never included in the original brief for the *Give me a Break* promotion. Such an objective was too demanding for the first national promotion; outreach work however has been included in other partnership-based *Estyn Allan* projects. There is incidental evidence to suggest that the displays have attracted target audiences such as young mums accompanying small children. A more qualitative approach to project evaluation and data collection is necessary to understand the true cultural background of promotion users and readers.

*Have Give me a Break library displays successfully attracted new readers?*

Based on evaluation research findings there is strong evidence to suggest that the *Give me a Break* promotion (and its relevant library displays) has undoubtedly attracted new readers to modern contemporary adult fiction and literature. Of the 264 *Give me a Break* borrowers surveyed by *Estyn Allan* librarians, 85% had chosen to read an author they had never read before, with 81% stating that the promotion and display had encouraged them to try something that they 'wouldn't normally have chosen'. It is felt by *Estyn Allan* librarians that *existing* readers and fiction borrowers have been successfully introduced to new authors and genres. Comments made by *Give me a Break* readers indicate that reading habits have been changed as respondents indicate a desire and commitment to read *more* similar titles, authors and alternative genres.

The promotion of Welsh language titles and modern poetry is still perceived as difficult, particularly to user communities not already familiar and confident with such choices. *Estyn Allan* librarians have referred to changes in reading habits amongst library staff themselves, and an increased dialogue between library staff and users concerning their reading experiences and choices. This

shows a commitment to the on-going development and expansion of literary culture and perspective within Welsh public library services.

*Are some promotions more effective than others? Why?*

There is evidence to suggest that the usual and existing culture and presentation of public library services and their relative library branches will affect how reading promotions and displays are received by their users. Displays will have a higher visual impact and thus attract more user attention in libraries where book promotions are relatively rare, and where there is limited space to accommodate unusual approaches to stock presentation and display. Users of larger and perhaps more modern libraries in Wales have become accustomed to book displays; comments made within the Peer Review and Support and Staff Survey chapters by *Estyn Allan* librarians themselves suggest that *Give me a Break* has not had a noticeable effect under such circumstances.

The physical location of the display in terms of its visibility and accessibility will have an effect upon usage and effectiveness; for example there is evidence to suggest that where the promotion has been displayed next or near to children's library services, this has encouraged *Give me a Break* borrowing amongst the target sample of young mums accompanying their children (Lampeter example in Peer Review chapter, and Bangor library user interviewed during Qualitative Fieldwork). The quality of *Give me a Break* promotional materials has also had a more positive impact in some authorities, for example the purpose-built furniture used in Newport Central Library (Peer Review and Support chapter). Newport was highly commended by its peer reviewer for the visual impact of the display, and also had the second highest number of sample *Give me a Break* book issues within a single library promotion.

Cultural differences between individual authorities and their library users will also affect how the promotion has been received. This is particularly true when considering Welsh language title borrowing statistics and other established attitudes towards reading habits and choices, especially for branch libraries and their regular library users.

*Estyn Allan* librarians themselves have had different experiences of running the promotion in terms of their own expertise and previous experience, the limitations and boundaries in terms of their own library authority and physical library space, and the co-operation received from colleagues and branch library staff. It is suggested that where staff and colleagues have enthusiastically received the promotion, the more effective the display has been in terms of user attention and user-staff interaction.

*The role and usage of the Give me a Break website and the relationship between website and library promotion use*

The evaluation has not revealed any significant findings concerning the role and usage of the *Give me a Break* website and the subsequent relationship between website and promotion usage. The preliminary data collection methods were not designed to investigate the role of the website, so no indication is given in preliminary data analysis. With reference to the staff survey, respondents are undecided or in disagreement that there has been a relationship between website usage and promotion book borrowing, and staff comments indicate that a simultaneous approach to website and display promotion has been unsuccessful. Qualitative fieldwork and data analysis indicate that the display element of the *Give me a Break* promotion has been more appropriate and successful; this complements accepted and established norms of library usage and patronage in some authorities, particularly branch libraries where ICT usage levels in relation to the public library service are relatively low. Users interviewed during the qualitative fieldwork stages of the evaluation demonstrated a lack of awareness of the promotion website, and felt that such a resource would be dependent upon appropriate marketing and publicity, and user aptitude, access and ability.

Website usage statistics (please see appendix 4, page 58) provided by *Estyn Allan* further to the *Give me a Break* evaluation indicate the following average website page views for the period between September 2004 and March 2005:

- *Give me a Break* – 1709
- *Cyfle I ddianc* – 1008

If assuming that each user visited an average of 3 pages this would give us 570 users per month on the English site and 336 users per month on the Welsh site. The Welsh language site is thus proportionately very well used in comparison to book issue statistics for example. Such statistics provide positive evidence of the use of the virtual library service, and the impact of the promotion outside the library building, but there is no evidence to suggest a relationship between website usage and promotion book borrowing within the relevant libraries. They do however provide a useful added illustration of the popularity of the promotion as a whole, particularly as an online tool for opening up reading choices, and providing a contemporary extension to traditional library services.

A more enriched approach to qualitative fieldwork with a larger sample of *Give me a Break* borrowers and website visitors may have provided a greater insight in to this aspect of the promotion, in particular the impact of the website upon adult fiction borrowing and reading choices. Similarly an on-line feedback form, which perhaps investigates user responses to reading suggestions made, would help to establish the impact of the website upon reading habits. It is possible that website visitors chose to buy recommended titles as opposed to borrowing them from their library - this would still represent a positive outcome in terms of promoting contemporary fiction.

### *The impact of the promotion upon participating readers*

Comments received from *Give me a Break* borrowers and *Estyn Allan* librarians indicate that the promotion has had a strong impact in terms of broadening literary perspectives and reading choices amongst established fiction borrowers and readers within Welsh public libraries. The promotion has been well received by library users and has helped to change staff perspectives on reading promotions and their own individual reading choices, encouraging a greater dialogue between library staff and users. A more qualitative approach to data collection with a larger sample of *Give me a Break* readers would have more effectively established the true impact upon participating readers. This should be acknowledged when planning the evaluation of future *Estyn Allan* initiatives and reading promotions.

## **Appendices**

1. Estyn Allan/Give me a Break user exit survey questionnaire and target group survey questionnaire
2. Staff Survey questionnaire (CPLIS)
3. User exit interview questions (CPLIS)
4. *Give me a Break* website statistics and analysis

## **Appendix 1:**

### **Give me a Break Evaluation - Questionnaires for Readers**

#### **Questionnaire 1 – see next page**

Aim: to find out if the *Give me a break* promotion is encouraging customers to try new authors.

Method: very simple questionnaire to be used by front-line staff at issue/return desk. Staff can hand the questionnaire to anyone borrowing or returning a title from the promotion (books identified by stickers). Where there isn't a queue, they can also offer to fill it in for someone and just ask the questions orally. Some borrowers may prefer this.

How to get the staff to use the questionnaire:




- Explain to everyone the reasoning behind the questionnaire – could influence future promotions and displays.
- Ask for their input – how do they think we could do this in their library?
- Set a reasonable target
- Discuss how to get a balance of people to do it, not all one type.
- Make sure there is space for customers to fill out the forms and somewhere for them to return them
- Discuss how to encourage people to fill them in and how to offer to ask the questions instead of requiring a written form
- Ask the managers to add it to the rota – for example, if someone is on the out counter it is their responsibility to hand out the questionnaires (or to encourage the customers to take them)
- Explain how the results could be used – could get some press coverage for their library

#### **Questionnaire 2 – see page 3**

This is designed to be used with key target groups, for example:

- Young mums attending Under Fives story times and baby rhyme times  
As part of the introduction to the story time/baby rhyme time the staff could mention the *Give me a break* promotion and give out questionnaire (perhaps a small collection of the books could be available in the Under Fives area for mums to look at as the story time comes to an end).
- Computer users - small collection of books and web cards left at computers. Library assistants give out a questionnaire as people book computer sessions
- Reading groups - part of the session could be an introduction to the promotion with a chance to look at some of the books on display with a general discussion about covers etc. They could then be given a questionnaire to complete at the end of the meeting.


**Let us know what you think! We are trying out different ways to help you find the books you want. It's only 3 questions – thanks for your time.**

One of the books you have chosen today is from our <i>Give me a break</i> display. We'd love to know what you think about it:	
	<input type="checkbox"/> You read anything by this author before?
Yes	
No	
	<input type="checkbox"/> The display encouraged you to try a book you wouldn't normally have read?
Yes	
No	
	Any comments you would like to make about the display?

Many thanks for letting us know your views and helping us improve our service to you.

Office Use: Library -----

Month -----

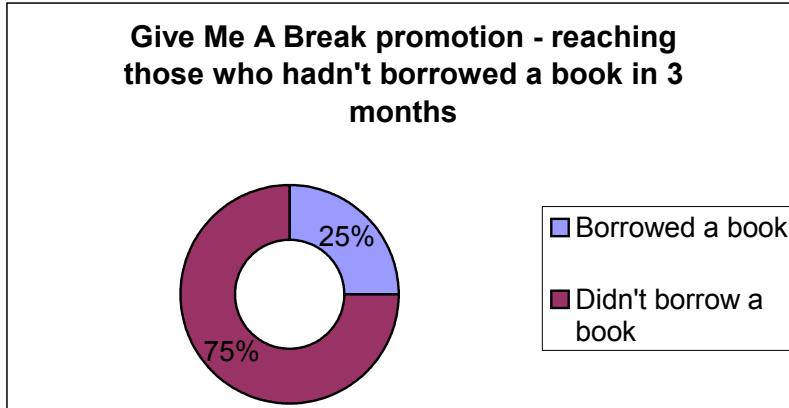
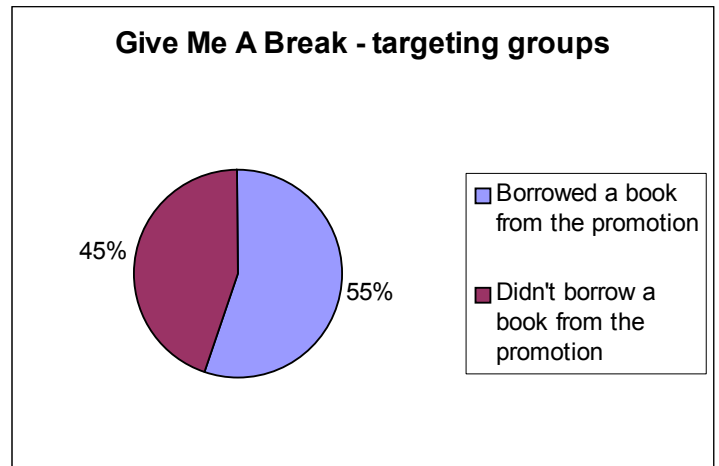
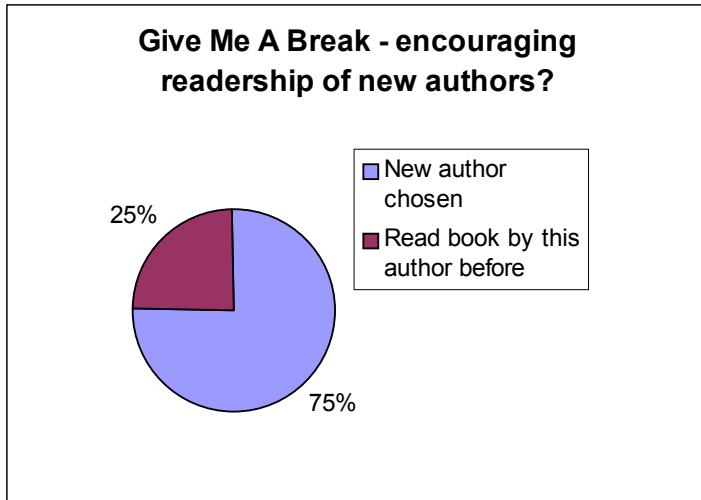
<i>Give me a break</i> display – we want to know what you think!	
1) Have <input type="checkbox"/> seen our <i>Give me a break</i> display?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Please go to question 2	
No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Please go to question 3	
2) Have <input type="checkbox"/> taken a book from the display?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
Please go to question 4	
No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Please go to question 4	
3) Now <input type="checkbox"/> you are aware of <i>Give me a break</i> display will you borrow a book from the <input type="checkbox"/> today?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
No <input type="checkbox"/>	
4) Have <input type="checkbox"/> borrowed an adult fiction book from the library in the last 3 months <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
No <input type="checkbox"/>	
 Any comments you would like to make about the display?	

**Library .....** **Group.....**

**Date .....**

*How to use the results of your questionnaires*

- Use positive comments for press releases and displays when promotion is moved onto new libraries
- Produce charts for reports internally within the Council.
- Use results to show that we reached certain groups:



**Appendix 2:**



U N I V E R S I T Y   O F   S H E F F I E L D

**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION STUDIES  
CENTRE FOR THE PUBLIC LIBRARY & INFORMATION  
IN SOCIETY**

**Project supervisor:** Briony Train 0114 222 2653 [b.train@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:b.train@sheffield.ac.uk)

**Researcher:** Kerry Wilson 0114 222 6345 [k.m.wilson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.m.wilson@sheffield.ac.uk)

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**Fax:** 0114 278 0300

**Web:** <http://cplis.shef.ac.uk>

***'Give me a Break' evaluation research: Staff Survey***

Dear Estyn Allan colleagues

The following questionnaire relates to the staff survey element of the evaluation of the Estyn Allan 'Give me a Break' promotion currently being undertaken by the Centre for the Public Library and Information in Society at the University of Sheffield.

**Please consider each question carefully and provide as much information as possible**

The questionnaire can be completed electronically and returned to Kerry Wilson by e-mail at the following address:

[k.m.wilson@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:k.m.wilson@sheffield.ac.uk)

Alternatively, the questionnaire may be printed out and returned by post to the following address:

Kerry Wilson  
Researcher  
Department of Information Studies  
Regent Court  
211 Portobello Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4DP

*Should you have any queries regarding the questionnaire or the research as a whole, please don't hesitate to contact one of the research team (full contact details listed above)*

**Please return your completed questionnaire no later than  
Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2005**

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND CO-OPERATION**

## Estyn Allan staff survey questionnaire

### *Section 1 – Estyn Allan staff training*

1.1 Please consider the following statements concerning the Estyn Allan staff training and tick the response that you identify with the most. Please use the ‘comments’ box if you wish to provide more detail.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
I have felt able to share ideas and express my opinion during staff training events					
Estyn Allan staff training has improved my stock selection awareness and skills					
The national co-ordination of Estyn Allan staff training has been a success					
My marketing skills in terms of book promotion and publicity have been improved by Estyn Allan training					
My expectations have been met by Estyn Allan staff training					
Estyn Allan training has encouraged greater communication and collaboration between libraries and authorities					
Estyn Allan has contributed significantly to my continuing professional development					
I have learnt a lot about how to get the most out of physical book displays and promotions through Estyn Allan training					
My knowledge and awareness of the potential for working with external partners has been improved by Estyn Allan training					
Estyn Allan training has increased my awareness of the role of book promotions and reader development within the wider public libraries remit					
I have enjoyed the Estyn Allan training experience and would welcome an opportunity to partake in a similar project in the future					
Estyn Allan staff training has raised my awareness about the impact and benefits of reader development projects and promotions upon library users					
My confidence in undertaking successful reader promotions has been improved by Estyn Allan staff training					
Estyn Allan training events have been organised, facilitated and managed to a high standard					
Further to Estyn Allan training I feel I have the necessary skills and knowledge to manage a book promotion under my own initiative					
<b>Comments:</b>					

1.2 Please list three aspects of Estyn Allan staff training which you have found to be most beneficial to you. Please use the ‘comments’ box if you wish to provide more detail

1.
2.
3.
<b>Comments:</b>

1.3 Please use the following space(s) to list any changes or recommendations that you

would make to Estyn Allan staff training, for example, if you think there was anything missing in terms of content, or if you would like to have gone in to more detail on any specific aspect of the training. Please use the 'comments' box if you wish to make any extra observations

1.
2.
3.
<b>Comments:</b>

**Section 2 – Your practical ‘Give me a Break’ experience**

2.1 Please consider the following statements concerning your personal experiences of running the ‘Give me a Break’ promotion and the impact it has had upon you, and tick the response which you identify with the most. Please use the ‘comments’ box if you wish to provide more detail

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
‘Give me a Break’ has inspired me to be more proactive with book promotion initiatives in the future					
I feel that ‘Give me a Break’ could have been more successful under different circumstances					
I received full co-operation from my colleagues and peers with respect to the ‘Give me a Break’ promotion					
The ‘Give me a Break’ promotion was well received by library users					
‘Give me a Break’ has improved my confidence in my own book promotion skills and expertise					
I have enjoyed the experience of running the ‘Give me a Break’ promotion					
‘Give me a Break’ has only appealed to existing readers and not the intended audience					
‘Give me a Break’ has helped me to develop an interest in reader development					
‘Give me a Break’ has increased my awareness of diversity and choice in book collections and their promotion					
I feel more comfortable with suggesting alternative titles and authors to readers and justifying my recommendations further to ‘Give me a Break’					
‘Give me a Break’ has improved my confidence in promoting Welsh language titles					
<b>Comments:</b>					

2.2 If you encountered any significant problems when running the ‘Give me a Break’ promotion, please describe your experiences using the space(s) below. Please use the ‘comments’ box for any extra observations

1.
2.
3.
<b>Comments:</b>

**Section 3 – Your library users & readers: impact and value**

3.1 Please consider the following statements concerning the impact of ‘Give me a Break’ upon your library users, and tick the response which you identify with the most. Please use the ‘comments’ box for any additional information

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
‘Give me a Break’ has encouraged greater reading for pleasure amongst our users					
Users like to have recommendations made for them, such as Surprise Break					
There has been a positive relationship between GMAB website usage and book borrowing					
The ‘Give me a Break’ promotion has encouraged more general browsing of titles amongst our users					
Users have found the promotion attractive and appealing					
Users have developed an interest in new authors thanks to the Give me a Break promotion					
Give me a Break has increased the profile of welsch language titles amongst users					
Some readers are more confident in making selections because of the Give me a Break promotion					
The Give me a Break promotion has encouraged more dialogue between staff and users concerning stock selection and availability					
Users would welcome more promotions and campaigns similar to Give me a Break					
<b>Comments:</b>					

3.2 If you have received any specific feedback concerning the Give me a Break promotion (positive and/or negative) from your library users which you would like to draw attention to, please provide details using the space(s) below

1.
2.
3.
<b>Comments:</b>

**THANK YOU**

### **Appendix 3:**

#### **Estyn Allan/Give me a Break user focus group/interview questions**

##### **GMAB promotion**

*What are your impressions of the GMAB promotion?*

*Does the promotion encourage you to try new authors/genres... books you haven't read before?*

*Does the promotion encourage you to try Welsh language titles?*

##### **GMAB website**

*Have you seen/are you aware of the GMAB website? What are your impressions of the site?*

*Would/did a book promotion website encourage you to come in to the library to borrow suggested titles?*

##### **Book promotions in general**

*Do you think book promotions such as GMAB are a good idea? Why?*

*Would you like to see more promotions and displays in the library?*

*Do you think library users and readers should contribute, e.g. be asked about ideas for promotions?*

*Do you have any suggestions/ideas for future promotions (content, marketing and promotion, duration etc)?*

**Appendix 4:**

**Give me a Break website statistics and analysis**

Month	Site	Total visits	Average visits per month	Increase/decrease
Sept 04	www.givemeabreak.org	1,593	1,159	+180
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	652	505	+44
Oct 04	www.givemeabreak.org	1,286	1,159	-307
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	561	505	-91
Nov 04	www.givemeabreak.org	1,118	1,159	-198
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	807	505	+246
Dec 04	www.givemeabreak.org	980	1,159	-168
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	761	505	-46
Jan 05	www.givemeabreak.org	1,310	1,159	+330
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	976	505	+215
Feb 05	www.givemeabreak.org	1,848	1,159	+538
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	967	505	-9
Mar 05	www.givemeabreak.org	2,123	1,159	+275
	www.cyfleiddianc.org	1,324	505	+357

**Average no of page views per month Sept 04 - Mar 05**

Give me a Break - 1709

Cyfle i ddianc – 1008

Site use declining month by month from Oct to Dec, except Cyfle had a boost in November, up by 246 page views

Since Jan 05 site use steadily increasing by 381 page views per month (GMAB) and 193 (Cyfle)