Read Write Now TV Series 3

Evaluation Report

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Feedback
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NALA

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Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations

1. Description of Read Write Now Series 3

Read Write Now, TV Series 3 is the most recent production in a distance education initiative which is designed to provide support for adults who want to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. This is part of a *Literacy through the Airwaves* project which began with a pilot radio series in 1999 and comprises radio, TV and print materials. For the last three years the Department of Education and Science (DES), Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) and the National Adult Literacy Agency have combined resources and expertise to produce and disseminate three 12-part TV series complemented by learner workbooks and support from adult literacy tutors available through a freephone telephone helpline. The series targets adult literacy 'improvers' rather than complete beginners: that is, people who already have some reading and writing skills which they need to develop.

Given the significant input of time and effort needed to tackle a reading or writing difficulty, it would be unrealistic to expect independent learners to learn to read and write from a TV series. However, they can improve specific skills and receive information about adult literacy in Ireland and the support available to them. They will also be encouraged to engage with the learning process and get help in setting personal learning goals.

Read Write Now Series 3 continued the integrated approach to literacy work which was adopted for the first two series, by covering literacy and numeracy learning points in the context of topics of general interest. In Series 1 and 2, these were lifestyle topics and in Series 3, the focus was on the learning process. Each programme included three or four learning points, one of which addressed a numeracy skill, plus one spelling tip. (See Appendices 2-4).

The format of the programmes in *Read Write Now 3* comprised: presentation by Derek Mooney and Teri Garvey; learning points, by graphic and voiceover; the learner's story, when a different learner was profiled in each programme; and Ian's machine, a mini-lecture explaining key aspects of the learning process delivered by Professor Ian Robertson of the Department of Psychology, Trinity College, Dublin.

Programmes were transmitted on Monday evenings at 7.30 pm and repeated on Thursdays at midnight, from October 7th 2002 – January 6th 2003.

2. Freephone Support Line and Telephone Mentoring

The freephone support line was staffed by a total of seven telephone tutors who were available from 10am – 4pm, Monday to Friday and also on Monday evenings from 6.30pm – 9.30 pm. The support line tutors provided specific tutorial support for viewers as well as general guidance on literacy support available; it was also the contact point through which viewers ordered the learner workbook; and the tutors also gathered and recorded basic data supplied by callers such as age, their age on leaving school and their educational history.

During Series 3 a small-scale telephone mentoring system was set up. This meant that telephone tutors made regular support telephone calls to a number of volunteers during the series, to offer help on specific or general literacy queries.

3. Participation in Read Write Now 3

Participation levels in the *Read Write Now* project are gauged (1) by the ratings which describe the general viewing audience and (2) by the number of people, either individual viewers or groups other than adult literacy schemes, who telephoned the freephone helpline to ask for learner workbooks to be sent out to them.

Viewing figures were steady throughout the series and tended to increase as the series progressed, ranging from 119,000 to a high of 218,000. The average audience for the whole series was 130,000 which is 10% of the TV audience for that time. The average audience for the repeat broadcast on Thursdays at midnight was 11% of the audience share for that time. The greater part of the *Read Write Now* audience was composed of the over 35s and over half of the Monday audience (52%) were over fifty-five years of age. This is consistent with other research findings which identify a higher level of reading and writing difficulties among older people. At the same time, there is still a large number of young viewers and even some very young people, among the Read Write Now audience.

The overall gender balance of viewers of *Read Write Now Series 3* was uneven, but not dramatically so. Five men and seven women were profiled in the weekly 'learner's story' slot and although there was no evidence that the sex of the learner who was profiled influenced viewing figures among men and women, **it would nevertheless be advisable to even up the representation of male:female learners who are profiled in the future to 50:50.**

The second series of *Read Write Now* in 2001 had a very large audience for a programme of this kind. Ratings for the third series were much lower, showing a decrease of almost one third on the audience for *Read Write Now 2*. A number of contributing factors were identified: (1) the nature of educational programming, which does not usually achieve the usual peak time viewing figures; (2) the fact that unlike this year's series, *Read Write Now 2* last year did not clash with popular programmes on other channels. Furthermore, despite the decrease in the audience for this year, the figures are still matching or even exceeding the size of regular audiences on Network 2, TV 3 and TG 4. Weekday evenings are peak viewing time and **it would be beneficial if RTÉ continued to give the series the same high profile as before by maintaining an evening transmission. Repeat broadcasts at favourable times such as Sunday mornings would help to minimise the impact of this series clashing with other popular programmes on other channels.**

A total of 31% (7,140) of the learner workbooks which were distributed went out to individuals. Adult literacy centres received 39% (8,800) of all workbooks distributed and the remaining 30% (6,811) were sent to 606 other groups which either work with people who want to improve their reading and writing, or else come into contact with them.

Over 60% of all orders placed by the independent learners came in during the two weeks prior to transmission and the first two weeks of the series. A similar pattern emerged in relation to requests from groups other than those working in adult literacy schemes. **Promotion and direct advertising are therefore very important in informing potential independent learners about the series.**

Among the groups and organisations other than adult literacy centres whose staff ordered learner workbooks, there was a very high level of interest from organisations which cater for people with special needs; from primary, post-primary and special schools; and from foreign

nationals. Although the *Read Write Now* programmes and workbook were not specifically intended for these audiences, it is worth noting that they find the materials useful.

4. General Profile of Individual Callers

Not all of the 7,140 individuals who telephoned the freephone helpline to ask for a learner workbook gave personal information about themselves. Some questions were answered more widely than others. A total of 1,808 people said how they had heard of the series. Over 61% of those who answered heard about *Read Write Now Series 3* from the radio and a further 34% got the information from the television.

The majority of requests for the workbook came from women but at 59.5%, this is not a very large majority. Only 17% of the callers gave their age. Of these 1,196 respondents, a large proportion were in their 40s (23.3%) and 50s (21%) with many also in the thirties (17.2%). However, a substantial number, over 23%, were younger than 30 with 8.5% aged 18 or younger and a further 15.8% who were in their 20s.

Very few callers - just 9% - said anything about their educational history or the age at which they left school. Just over a fifth of those who did answer left school at the age of 13 or younger and a further 34.2% left when they were 14. Just under 30% were still in school at the ages of 15 or 16. Only about 22% of this cohort had achieved qualifications of any kind in the course of their schooling. Over 70% of this group indicated that they left school with no qualifications, although a small proportion of just over 5% mentioned 'other' unspecified educational experiences.

These figures reinforce findings that a very high proportion of people who have reading and writing problems are adults who left school early – some of whom did not progress to post-primary level – with no qualifications. The fact that over 25% were still in their 20s or even younger and must therefore have left school in the last ten to fifteen years indicates that reading and writing problems are not solely a product of a much earlier generation of schooling.

Very few people agreed to be referred to an adult literacy scheme. Telephone tutors offered to supply each caller with contact details of a scheme in their locality but only 357 or just 5% of the total 7,140 accepted the offer. A small number were already in contact with an adult literacy scheme.

5. Overview of feedback on Read Write Now 3

Evaluation participants were asked to comment on the relevance and usefulness of the literacy and numeracy content of the series to their particular needs. Most of the learning points were identified as being useful and some were mentioned by almost everyone. Spelling tips were highlighted by people at all stages in their reading and writing. Word building skills such as breaking up words and identifying vowels and syllables were also important for a large number of people. Adding prefixes, suffixes and paying attention to word endings are all word-building skills which were of particular interest to many viewers of *Read Write Now 3* who were at different stages.

The learning process or 'learning to learn' content was covered in each programme by the two presenters and also in the slot known as 'Ian's Machine' – the 'machine' being the brain – in a mini-presentation to camera on the topic of the week.

Feedback on this area of the programme content was generally very positive. People were encouraged by the concept of learning styles and ways of learning. The theory of multiple intelligences struck some people as being a positive approach to the notion of intelligence and also offered an explanation for some of their past difficulties in learning. Exploring the learning process also gives people a realistic indication of how learning works and the kind of effort which is needed to make real progress. This section also included practical strategies for learning and these were very positively received, especially those connected with memory.

A small number of people had reservations about the 'learning to learn' content. Some were learners who were more focused on the reading and writing topics and did not want to be distracted from these. Some tutors and more advanced learners were worried that the 'learning to learn' content made *Read Write Now 3* more difficult than the first two series and that it could be too advanced for most adult literacy students, especially those who were working at home on their own. However, independent learners who were interviewed had very positive reactions to this aspect of the programme and said that they enjoyed the challenge.

Ian's Machine

Reactions to the Ian's Machine slot were mixed but for the most part, positive. Many of the specific memory strategies came from this section of the programme and the most practical ones were those which made the greatest impact, especially when people were given a small task, such as remembering a group of items shown, which was revisited and analysed. **This interactive approach could be explored and developed in the future.**

A small number of people thought that the content was too abstract and difficult. This may have been more to do with the production and presentation, which was very plain and unadorned, than the content. Overall, Ian's Machine was well-received and provided a worthwhile context for adult literacy students' learning experiences. In a future similar slot it would be helpful to:

- **Assist the speaker by providing a more visually supportive production style;**
- **Emphasise concrete strategies in relation to different learning processes;**
- **Integrate this component more closely with other parts of the programme.**

Presentation

The presentation style of *Read Write Now 3* was different from that of the first two series in that: Series 3 included two presenters, whereas in Series 1 and 2 the learning content was presented by voiceover and graphics; and the 'learning to learn' content was situated in external locations such as a driving school, a gym and a college. The overall effect of these two innovations was the creation of a more documentary-style programme than the format for the two previous series.

Overall, the views expressed about the presenters were very positive. The presence of two speakers was well-received, as was the fact that one of them was well-known from another popular TV programme. This caught people's interest and moved the series from a specialist, 'niche' market into a more mainstream audience. It is likely that the documentary-style format featuring familiar presenters was beneficial in retaining a wide range of different types of viewers. Some people found the presenters too dominant and a few people thought that the presenters sometimes spoke too quickly. For most learners, the outside locations and

the analogies they provided for the topics being addressed, created an effective context for learning.

Learner Profile

Each of the three *Read Write Now* TV series has included in every programme a profile of an individual learner. This person describes how they embarked on learning as an adult and the impact that addressing their reading and writing difficulties has had on their lives. This was an extremely popular element of the series. Almost all of those interviewed for the evaluation mentioned the learner's story as being one part of the series which reassured them that others had overcome their literacy problems and that they could do the same. The only criticism came more from experienced learners who said that there could be more of an emphasis on the amount of time and effort which is needed to make progress. Some people suggested that it would be beneficial **to show a learning in a one-to-one or even a group setting, in order to give viewers who had never experienced literacy tuition, an idea of what they might expect and reassure them that this was not a traditional classroom.** Others suggested that **the same learner or group could be followed for the duration of the series**.

Structure of Programmes

The construction of a programme is a key factor which contributes to the accessibility of the content for people working at different stages in their reading and writing. The most frequent criticism which learners made of the programmes was that they 'went too fast'. This probably relates to the rapidity of the changes from one part of the programme to another, that is, to the number of different elements contained in the half hour and how these were slotted together. It is likely that the pace was a little too fast for that part of the audience who were using it as a learning resource.

The presentation of the learning points was successful to a considerable degree. Learners enjoyed the graphics which illustrated the voiceover, found these helpful and thought that the points were clearly explained. However, the individual learning points were covered too quickly. Some learners video-taped the programmes and watched them at their own pace. **This highlights the importance of making the series available in video and perhaps DVD formats after the transmission period.**

In the future, **one half hour programme should contain no more than two or at most three learning points. There should also be a more integrated structure which would create each programme as an organic whole.** This approach would also make demands on production processes and would require sufficient time for planning and **collaboration at an early stage in the design process between all of the partners and all those involved in the design or production of any aspect of the project.**

Learner Workbook

The learner workbook for Series 3 was the first element of the *Read Write Now 3* materials to be developed. Decisions about which 'learning to learn' topics would be included were made by NALA, whereas the learning points which would be covered were decided largely by the three workbook writers, in consultation with NALA.
Overall, the general feedback about the workbook was very positive. Learners who were at a more advanced stage in their literacy work and who were beginning to think about progression from adult literacy work to other more advanced options, found it to be a useful and interesting resource.

The practical exercises, such as letter writing and form-filling, attracted very positive responses. People also enjoyed the readings in each chapter and certain exercises which explored 'learning to learn' topics, such as the questionnaire investigating learning styles, were new and interesting for learners. There was a lot of interest from learners also in the word puzzles contained in every chapter. There is also a client group for the workbook among learning support teachers at both first and second level, and also, among teachers of special needs learners, even though this was not designed as a resource for these groups. Some people wanted it to be more widely distributed or even offered for sale.

In designing the learner workbook, the writers were conscious that the workbook would be used both by learners in adult literacy schemes as well as by those working at home on their own, and knowing that the chosen category of 'improvers' comprises a very wide variety of specific strengths and weaknesses. For these reasons there are activities which are accessible to people at different stages in their reading and writing, in order to cater for a very large, unknown, mixed ability audience.

Feedback from learners at different levels indicate that this strategy was successful in reaching learners at different stages in their reading and writing with a variety of different needs. However, some people who were working completely on their own found that it was rather difficult. Those who had the support of a telephone tutor said that the help they got made the workbook more accessible. Therefore, although the workbook includes basic learning points, this is a resource which is more suitable for people who have already made some progress in their reading and writing but who still have specific gaps to fill.

A small number of criticisms were made. Some people thought that there should have been a stronger connection between the book and the TV programmes. Although the approach was never intended to provide a minute-by-minute correspondence between the TV and the book it would be possible to integrate the work of the two media more closely. This would mean that **the writers of the workbook and the producers of the TV programmes would need to work together from the beginning.**

Level and Target Group of Read Write Now 3

The target group for the *Read Write Now* project has always been somewhat complex. Reading, writing and numeracy encompass a very varied set of knowledge and skills, Furthermore literacy work is highly individualised, which makes it difficult to target adult literacy learning for any large group such as a television audience.

People agreed that *Read Write Now 3* was at a higher level than the first two series. Some people thought that the 'learning to learn' content and some of the 'Ian's Machine' material made the programmes more difficult. Another contributing factor was the pace, which some people found to be rather fast. Nevertheless, even though the series was more difficult than *Read Write Now 1* and *2*, learners noted a wide variety of levels which could cater for people at different stages. A few of the more advanced learners said that some of the learning points in the programmes and workbooks were too easy for them. There was general agreement that in relation to the target group of 'improvers', *Read Write Now Series 3* catered very well for learners at the more advanced stage in this category but that in every programme and chapter of the book there was material which could be relevant to people at a more basic stage.

The *Read Write Now* project is trying to do a great deal in addressing a target audience which includes: independent learners, people in groups, learners at different levels and also,

the general public. So far, this strategy has been successful. However, **it may be time at this stage in the project for the programme designers to revisit the programme aims and intended target group,** with a view to exploring how the experience of the these three series can influence the long-term development of the project. In particular, **new technologies such as the new literacy tools website which provides literacy learning and tuition materials on the Internet, may open up new directions for future development.**

6. Use of Freephone Tutor Support Line

Telephone support for this series involved a more structured system of tutoring or mentoring which involved regular contact calls initiated by the tutor, rather than by the learner. Five of telephone tutors between them provided this structured mentoring support service to a total of sixty independent learners, from the last week in October until mid-December. Once contact had been established, one of the first tasks of the telephone tutor was to establish the needs of the learners. They found that eight of these sixty learners (just over 13%) were at a very early stage in their work on reading and writing. The *Read Write Now* TV series was not actually aimed at people working at such a basic level. Nevertheless, the telephone tutors did work through some of the most basic points with the small number of learners who fell into this category and some of these independent learners were indeed able to make progress in very specific areas, even though they found the overall standard too high for them.

For learners who were at a more advanced stage, there is evidence that the help of the telephone tutor really did enable them to learn specific literacy and numeracy points which they had previously found too difficult or else had never previously encountered. Clarifying the nature of their problem was an important first step in the process as was being supportive of people working at home on their own.

Almost everyone mentioned spelling as being a problem and for some people, this was the only real difficulty they had. In some cases there were gaps in learners' phonic knowledge which could be remedied fairly easily. Word-building skills such as adding prefixes and suffixes and especially, breaking up words, were particularly mentioned as being areas where the tutors' help was valuable.

Some people noted that they now had the confidence to tackle daily tasks which would otherwise have been very difficult for them. Specific life tasks which people were able to carry out as a result of working on the programme content included form-filling and letter-writing. Most of the participants in this structured telephone mentoring found the 'learning to learn' component of the TV programmes and workbooks to be very valuable, especially multiple intelligences, learning styles, memory and planning.

Not all of the learning which people achieved as a result of the telephone tutorials was directly related to the learning points or the topics covered in the series. Some people asked the telephone tutor for help in tasks arising from their daily lives such as writing notes and Christmas cards. On the basis of feedback from this short period of telephone tutoring, it is evident **that the telephone really does have potential to facilitate learning in specific literacy and numeracy items, as well as helping people to work on particular life tasks.** For learners working at the very broad stage of 'improvers', quite a lot of literacy work can be done over the telephone. Because of the absence of visual cues on the telephone, it is not so easy to work in this way with people who are at a very early stage in their reading and writing.

One frequently-mentioned benefit of the telephone support was the encouragement it gave learners to continue with their learning and to follow the process to the end. Although *Read Write Now* project allows learners privacy, the disadvantage of this is the isolation which people can experience as a result of the lack of social contact with other learners and with tutors. The telephone tutor provided a point of contact with the outside word and was a source of guidance, information and encouragement, as well as support for particular questions about detailed reading and writing points.

The individuals who staffed the freephone support line carried out a range of important functions for the whole *Read Write Now TV* project. They were the first point of contact, they gathered and managed information, they provided general guidance and specific tutorial support. Many of these tasks, including the apparently administrative business of getting people's names and addresses, need to be handled with great caution and sensitivity in order to reassure people the privacy of their details and the confidentiality of the service.

The provision of tutorial support on a regular basis is a demanding activity. Participating in and managing telephone support calls requires certain communication skills on the part of both tutor and learner and these need to be developed. On one hand, tutors need to follow good adult literacy practice by adopting a learner-centred approach. On the other, they need to allow for the **erratic nature of people's participation in a distance education support initiative.** This needs to be viewed as a legitimate factor in the learning process for adults, which the system should take into account. This is a rather different view of more traditional programmes, which assume full attendance and participation : **the design of course content and methodology must be planned taking this into account. The provision of learner supports such as telephone tutoring systems can help to individualise the experience for learners and help them to stay motivated – and to continue with their learning.**

It is important to keep a record of the content of each support call, in order to facilitate the next one. It is also important for telephone tutors to have a support system for themselves, where they can discuss their experiences and exchange ideas for strategies and ways of working.

An on-going part of the work of the telephone tutors was dealing with queries and comments which viewers made to the freephone line. Viewers' reasons for calling the support line varied. Some were administrative and some gave general or specific feedback. Most comments were very positive. People commented particularly on the usefulness of the support for spelling and also, for some aspects of the numeracy work such as measurement. A small number of viewers thought that the literacy and numeracy learning points were covered too quickly. 'Learning to learn' content was well received, with the topics of multiple intelligences, memory work and learning styles attracting particular interest. At the same time, a small number of people said that they found this part of the programmes difficult to understand. There were also requests for help on specific learning points, with people asking for clarification on learning points covered in the television component so that they could complete a related exercise in the workbook. Also, some of the most concrete queries came from people who wanted help with specific life tasks, such as filling in a form or spelling particular words, which were not directly related to the programme content at all. There were also calls from people who wanted general information about the adult literacy service.

Some of the people who rang in were not part of the original target group but the fact that they were interested in the series and had comments to make about it, suggests possibilities

for future development. For example, some callers did not themselves have a problem with reading and writing but had a friend or relative who did. There were also calls and comments from parents, teachers, people with disabilities including those working with the deaf who would like to see sub-titles and now, people from other countries whose first language is not English. A large number of queries related to dyslexia.

7. Future Developments

All of the learners and tutors who were interviewed for the evaluation were invited to make suggestions which they would like to see implemented in future series of *Read Write Now*. Some ideas related to the practical application of literacy work to daily tasks, others to work-orientated topics and some addressed general knowledge. Other suggestions for development which emerged in the course of this series were: information about dyslexia; guidance for friends and relatives of people with literacy difficulties; show the same individual working through the whole series, including one-to-one sessions in action; show a group working through the whole series, including group sessions in action.

The choice of which direction should be followed is a policy issue which now needs to be debated by all of the stakeholders.

The following specific recommendations relating to the operational level of the series, emerged in the course of the evaluation:

- **Provide an interactive learning experience for viewers.**
- **Cover fewer learning points and give more time to each.**
- **Address learning to learn content in a concrete way.**
- **Harmonise the different components of the TV programmes.**
- **Harmonise the content – and design – of the workbook and the TV programmes.**
- **Involve all of those working on the TV and print element of the project in the planning stage and allow time for the two sets of resources to be developed in tandem.**

Development of Support Services

The main focus of the *Read Write Now* project to date has concentrated on the development of the programme materials: the television programmes and the learner workbooks. It would be possible to support future transmissions of *Read Write Now* with telephone tutoring using the same model as that which operated during this stage of the project. **A range of potential support strategies should be explored for the next stage in the project, including the provision of contact meetings at local level which would provide support networks for independent learners who feel ready to make use of them.**

It is strongly recommended that the immediate future of the project should allocate significant resources to the expansion of the student support element.

There is now a need for all of the stakeholders to come together, in order to revisit priorities, re-establish aims and the target group and generally create a long-term strategy for the project.

There should be an assurance of funding for this distance education programme, including learner support, for a minimum of three years. This would allow all of the stakeholders to enter into commitments based on a coherent, long-term plan which would ensure that the best value and support are achieved for the maximum number of people.

Section 1: Introduction and Overview

1.1 Overview of Literacy through the Airwaves Project

Read Write Now TV Series 3 is the most recent production in a distance education initiative which is designed to provide support for adults who want to improve their reading, writing and numeracy skills. The project, which began in 1999, has facilitated the development and dissemination of adult literacy learning resources in television, radio and print media as well as providing student support through a freephone support line. It is the result of a partnership between the Department of Education and Science (DES), Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ) and the National Adult Literacy Agency. For the last three years these organisations have combined resources and expertise to produce and disseminate a broadcast and print programme which aims to support people who want to improve their reading and writing skills in the privacy of their own homes.

Since the production of the first pilot radio series in 1999, the *Literacy through the Airwaves* project has generated the following resources:

- November 1999:   pilot local radio series
- September 2000:   12-part adult literacy TV series (*Read Write Now Series 1*) plus accompanying learner workbook.
- March 2000:   Video pack based on TV series 1 and learner workbook.
- March 2001:   10-part adult literacy radio series (*Read Write Now*) plus accompanying learner workbook.
- September 2001:   12-part adult literacy TV series (*Read Write Now Series 2*) plus accompanying learner workbook.
- November 2001:   10-part adult numeracy radio series (*Time 4 Learning*) plus accompanying learner workbook.
- March 2002:   Video pack based on TV series 2 and learner workbook.
- September 2002:   12-part adult literacy TV series (*Read Write Now Series 3*) plus accompanying learner workbook.
- March 2003:   Video pack and DVD pack based on TV Series 3 and learner workbook.
- April 2003:   Cassette pack of Read Write Now Radio Series
                     Cassette pack of Time 4 Learning Radio Series

All three TV series and both of the radio series were supported during their transmission periods by a freephone support line which allowed viewers and listeners to seek clarification about specific topics covered in the programmes and also, to get general information about the availability of literacy support in their area.

The third *Read Write Now* TV series which is the subject of this report, is therefore one element of an extensive, long-term initiative aimed at supporting the large cohort of people whose reading and writing skills are insufficient to cope with the regular demands of daily and working life.

1.2 Rationale, Aims and Target Group of Read Write Now Project

The original aim of the *Read Write Now* project was to develop and disseminate a distance education programme in basic skills which would allow adults to improve aspects of their reading, writing and numeracy in the privacy of their own homes. This is a very broad aim and the target group, thus defined, is similarly very broad, given that such a wide category may include learners ranging from those whose reading and writing skills are at the most basic level, to those who are almost able to function independently but still have specific gaps to fill.

From the beginning of the *Literacy through the Airwaves* project it was agreed that the two radio series in reading, writing and numeracy would be aimed at learners whose skills were at the most basic level. This is reflected in the programme content for those two series, which start with the alphabet and with basic counting strategies. However, from the outset the TV project was intended for 'improvers': that is, people who already have a basic range of skills but who need to practise and develop these. *Read Write Now 3*, like the first two series, is aimed at this target group. The inter-related questions of how the programme aims should be articulated and how the target group should be defined are, in the context of adult literacy and distant education, rather complex. These questions and related issues are discussed in general terms in this section and at a more detailed operational level in Section 3.5 below.

Experience of adult literacy work in this country and also international comparisons indicate that only a very small proportion of people who have reading and writing difficulties ever access the literacy services which are designed to support them. It is estimated that this proportion may be as small as 7% - 10%.[1] If these estimates are even partly true, the vast majority of people who need help with reading and writing never seek it.

The results of the OECD International Adult Literacy Survey of 1997 found that a quarter of the adult population of this country were operating at a level of reading which was inadequate for many of the demands of daily and working life[2]. This amounts to half a million people. In order to address this problem, the level of resources allocated to adult literacy and the number of people being reached as a result has been greatly increased during the last five years. The Taskforce on Lifelong Learning[3] notes that since 1997 the number of adults receiving literacy support annually has increased from 5,000 to 22,733 and that

> *Since publication of the IALS survey the provision in the education sector for adult literacy has increased from a base of €1.1m in 1997 to €16.46m in 2002. €98m has been committed to this area in the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 with a target of reaching 113,000 clients.*

The *Literacy through the Airwaves* project should be understood in the context of these developments: as one support strategy among a range of support services which aim to reach the greatest number of people.

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[1] source: NALA

[2] Morgan et al (1997) *International Adult Literacy Survey: Results for Ireland* Dublin : An Roinn Oideachas, page

[3] Government of Ireland (2002) *Report of the Taskforce on Lifelong Learning* Dublin: Stationary Office page 24.

Returning to learning for an adult who has a difficulty with reading or writing is not an easy thing to do. When asked to describe their route back to learning, many adult literacy learners report that they had difficult experiences at school and were initially afraid to return to a situation which they expected would replicate these negative early experiences. Some people said that they did not even know that help for reading and writing was available. Almost everyone referred to the stigma which is attached to literacy problems, to the embarrassment and the loss of privacy which are risked when people do disclose a need for help with reading and writing. In this respect, television and radio programmes can provide a valuable introduction to literacy work for people who are not yet ready to access the more formal services.

At the same time, it should be noted that *Read Write Now* was never intended to replace the face-to-face adult literacy services. Rather, the TV series and learner workbooks provide a resource which can complement other services and encourage people who might not otherwise have done so, to access these. A distance education programme in adult literacy can indeed give people the opportunity to improve specific skills and inform them of the help which is available to them. In fact, the potential for television to assist adult literacy learners in this way is supported by another interesting finding of the 1997 International Adult Literacy Survey, which reported that people with the lowest level of literacy skills tend to watch a great deal more television than people who have the highest skills:

> *This is especially true for high levels of viewing...nearly one fifth of people who are at level 1 (Prose) watch more than five hours per day compared to only 4.5% at levels 4/5.*[4]

This suggests that with the necessary support such as promotion and a relevant and high-quality product, television may be a good medium for reaching people who have the most severe reading and writing difficulties.

That said, it is important to bear in mind that a significant input of time and effort is necessary on the part of those learners who do decide to work on overcoming a reading and writing difficulty. It would therefore not be realistic to expect that an open learning television programme which provides no tutorial support or follow-up for learners and operates over a period of just twelve weeks for half an hour each week, will actually teach people to achieve mastery in reading and writing. It is important to bear this in mind, when considering programme aims and the impact which the series can realistically be expected to make on learners' reading and writing.

In the early days of the Open University in the UK, project and evaluation staff[5] found that educational television was good for: encouraging individual interpretation, stimulating creative thinking, providing an overview or synthesis, narrative, modelling learning processes and raising awareness; and that it was bad for: mastery learning, feedback, analysis, reflection and abstract thinking.

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[4] Morgan et al (1997), op. cit., page 72.

[5] see Bates, Tony (1984) *Broadcast Television in Distance Education: A World-Wide Perspective* in Bates (1984) (Ed) *The Role of Technology in Distance Education* London, Sydney, New York: Croom Helm/St. Martin's Press page 33

The findings of the evaluation of *Read Write Now 2* were fairly consistent with the earlier research and indicated that a distance education programme can supply significant help to people who need to improve their reading and writing by supporting:[6]

- Improvement in or development of some specific skills and the ability to perform new tasks in daily life.
- Information about the extent of the adult literacy problem in Ireland and about support available to people.
- Encouragement to engage with a culture of learning and the learning process.
- Clarification about how to set personal learning goals.

1.3 Development and Production of Read Write Now Series 3

Following the success of the first two *Read Write Now* TV series, the Department of Education and Science agreed to fund a third series for production and transmission in the autumn and winter of 2002. Invitations to tender for a twelve-part series were sent out in April 2002 and in June 2002 the contract was awarded to AV Edge, the same production company which produced the first two series. RTÉ agreed to provide transmission time in the autumn schedule and two broadcast slots were allocated: Monday, 7.30pm and Thursday, midnight, with a starting date of Monday, 7th October.

During the same period the National Adult Literacy Agency commissioned the production of the learner workbook. In common with the first two series, this workbook, which provided the basis for the learning content addressed in the TV programmes, was developed during the summer of 2002 and the production of the TV programmes followed the content of the workbook. Each chapter corresponds to one TV programme and is built around a topic into which the reading, writing and numeracy content is woven.

Roles and responsibilities for *Read Write Now TV Series 3* maintained the same pattern as that which had been established in the partnership already: the DES funded the programmes, which were produced by AV Edge in consultation with NALA. NALA had responsibility for the educational content while RTÉ provided transmission time and some promotional facilities. The development of the project was overseen by the Media Advisory Board[7] which was composed of representatives of RTÉ, the DES, NALA and the Vocational Education Committees.

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[6] McSkeane, L.(2002) *Read Write Now TV Series 2* Dublin: NALA *Evaluation* Dublin: NALA page 75
[7] A list of members of the Media Advisory Board is given in Appendix 1.

1.4 Promotion of Read Write Now Series 3

There were two main strands to the promotional strategy devised for *Read Write Now Series 3*. The first of these addressed the known population of learners who were already engaged with some form of learning activity, either in an adult literacy centre or in another group such as a FÁS workshop, a centre for people with disabilities, a Youthreach centre or a school – indeed, any learning situation where adult literacy work is being carried out.

NALA initiated contact with these groups by post. On September 23rd, 2002, two weeks before the first programme in the series was transmitted, a total of 8,800 learner workbooks were distributed by post to 132 adult literacy schemes. At the same time information leaflets and order forms were sent out to a total of 2,247 other organisations or groups - including FÁS centres, prisons, health centres, community groups, libraries and credit unions - whose staff come into contact with adults who may want to improve their reading and writing. Between September 2002 and January 2003, a total of 6,811 learner workbooks were ordered by and distributed to these groups.

The second strand of the promotional strategy was directed at the potential population of independent learners, that is, people who want to improve their reading and writing skills but who have not yet made contact either with the adult literacy service or with any other service which would support them in their efforts. Because of their lack of connection with existing services this is a difficult group to access. However, given that the original aim of the *Literacy through the Airwaves* project was to provide help for precisely this cohort of learners, promotion of the series with the potential audience of independent learners was very important. One of the approaches selected was direct advertising and for the promotion of *Read Write Now Series 3* NALA engaged a public relations company to design and implement an advertising campaign which would disseminate information about the series as widely as possible in the weeks preceding the start of the series.

The PR company which was commissioned to do the job was *Chemistry*. This company produced a radio advertisement which was transmitted on RTÉ Radio 1, 2 FM and 19 regional radio stations throughout the country. In addition, RTÉ produced a short TV promo based on material supplied by AV Edge and this was shown, at no cost, during the lead-up to the series. From 23rd September until 7th October, the following schedule of advertising was implemented:

RTÉ Radio1	30 advertisements
Regional radio	519 advertisements
2 FM	15 advertisements
RTÉ TV	15 advertisements

The total cost of the campaign amounted to €40,000, which is €8,000 higher than the cost of the publicity for Read Write Now 2 in 2001. This covered the cost of the production and transmission of the radio advertisements, production and postage of an information leaflet.

1.5 Content and Format of Read Write Now Series 3

The methodology adopted for all of the literacy work in the *Literacy through the Airwaves* project follows good adult education practice, in that skills and knowledge are dealt with in situations which are meaningful for the learner and of intrinsic interest to adults. The challenge for the programme designers at this stage in the initiative was to find a way of covering the most important and useful reading and writing skills, many of which had already been addressed in the first two series, in contexts which would be appropriate for learners and would maintain the interest of viewers. In relation to the skills elements, the fact that a topic such as form-filling or punctuation had been addressed in an earlier series did not necessarily mean that work on it should be considered finished. Rather, the challenge was how to provide opportunities to reinforce and extend these areas in ways which did not involve covering identical ground and which would maintain learners' interest.

In *Read Write Now 3* this challenge was addressed in two ways: by means of strategies developed for the programme content and in those which related to the programme format.

In *Read Write Now TV Series 1 and 2*, the topics which provided a context for the literacy content were drawn from day-to-day activities such as shopping, travelling and cooking or general interest such as DIY and first aid. In *Series 3*, the practice of integrating literacy work into a broader topic of general interest was maintained. However, the range of topics chosen to provide this context focused on the learning process itself, rather than on the more general lifestyle themes contained in the first two series. Thus, the reading, writing and numeracy topics were woven into subjects such as motivation, memory and learning styles.

The twelve 'learning to learn' topics addressed in the course of *Read Write Now 3* were as follows:

> Programme 1:   The Learning World – different ways of learning
> Programme 2:   How We Learn – learning styles
> Programme 3:   Learning Experience – family learning
> Programme 4:   Use Your Learning – learning styles
> Programme 5:   Different Types of Intelligence – multiple intelligence
> Programme 6:   Memory
> Programme 7:   The Drive to Learn – motivation and goal-setting
> Programme 8:   Know Your Strengths
> Programme 9:   Learning and Planning
> Programme 10: Ways of Learning –learning alone and in groups
> Programme 11: Manage Your Learning
> Programme 12: Reviewing Your Learning.

In the course of exploring these different aspects of the learning process, a wide range of reading, writing and numeracy skills were introduced and developed. Each programme included three or four learning points, one of which addressed a numeracy skill, plus one spelling tip. The range of knowledge and skills covered in this way for all three *Read Write Now* series, in both the TV programmes and the workbooks, is listed in Appendices 2 - 4.

The introduction of the 'learning to learn' component was one of the main innovations into Series 3 of *Read Write Now*. The rationale for choosing this set of topics was the interest

which many adult learners have in the learning process and how to manage it. This area was addressed briefly at different stages in the first two *Read Write Now* series and the concrete strategies to support learning which were covered in *Read Write Now 1 and 2* were well-received. This suggested that a more in-depth exploration of how learning works and how adults can reflect on and support their own learning, would be a useful context for literacy work in the new series.

The format of the programmes in *Read Write Now 3* is quite different from the first two series, although some components have been retained. In the first two series there were three elements: the learner's story, where an adult literacy learner explained how they became involved in learning and the impact which this made on their lives; a drama section where characters were shown dealing with daily situations which required some literacy input; and the 'learning points' which were conveyed visually through graphics explained by a voiceover.

In *Read Write Now 3* the learner's story and the learning points with graphics remain but the drama slot has been dropped. Furthermore, there are two new elements: firstly, two presenters who introduce the 'learning to learn' topics in a variety of locations where learning occurs such as a college, a gym or a driving school; and secondly, 'Ian's machine' which is a mini-lecture from a professor of psychology on the learning to learn topic of the week, the 'machine' in question referring to the brain.

The twelve programmes in *Read Write Now 3* therefore contain the following components:
- Presentation: by Derek Mooney and Teri Garvey.
- Learning points: by graphic and voiceover.
- Learner's story: a different learner is profiled in each programme.
- Ian's machine: a mini-lecture explaining key aspects of the learning process delivered by Professor Ian Robertson of the Department of Psychology, Trinity College, Dublin.

The way in which the programmes move between each of these elements can be seen in the outline of one full programme in the series, which is given in Appendix 5. The structure of the programmes and the impact of this on the accessibility of the content for learners at different stages in their reading and writing, are explored in some detail in Section 3.3.3 below. The impact of each of the programme components was explored in the course of this evaluation.

1.6 Freephone Tutor Support Line and Telephone Mentoring

The freephone support line was staffed by a total of seven telephone tutors who were available from 10am – 4pm, Monday to Friday and also on Monday evenings from 6.30pm – 9.30 pm, that is, during and after the programmes were transmitted. Outside these times an answering service took callers' addresses and arranged for workbooks to be sent out to them.

The freephone support line and the tutors who staffed it carried out several functions. Their most public role which was most actively promoted during the TV programmes and also in the learner workbook, was the provision of tutorial support for viewers. This meant that if learners had a difficulty with a question related to reading or writing either while they were watching the programme or afterwards when working through the learner workbook, they could telephone the support line and ask for assistance. This resource was provided specifically with independent learners in mind, given that these viewers would not have the guidance of an adult literacy or other tutor which would be available to people in adult literacy schemes or other learning groups.

The freephone support line was also the contact point through which viewers ordered the learner workbook. Therefore, the telephone tutors were the first point of contact for callers, many of whom were taking their first ever step in addressing their reading or writing problem by asking for this resource to be sent to their homes. For many people this was a very significant action.

Another aspect of the telephone tutors' role was administrative, in that the initial telephone call from independent learners provided a contact name and address and also personal details such as the caller's age, their age on leaving school and their educational history – that is, for those people who were willing to talk and to give this information.

Telephone tutors also gave general guidance to callers who had previously never heard of the literacy service and who needed general information about literacy provision. A large part of this work involved listening to callers' own stories and often reassuring them that there was private, confidential help available for people who wanted to work on their reading and writing.

The evaluations of the first two series revealed that while the freephone support line was an important resource in providing callers with general guidance and also for the administration and evaluations of the project, it was not used very much by independent learners as a support for their learning. Consequently, for Series 3 of *Read Write Now*, it was decided to experiment with a more systematic approach to the provision of telephone support for people who wanted to make use of it and so a small-scale telephone mentoring system was set up.

At the initial point of contact, when viewers rang in to order the learner workbook they were asked:

- Would you be willing to give feedback on the series?
- Would you like one of the telephone tutors to ring you during the series to give you help with the work?
- Would you like to call us back if you need help?

People who agreed to give feedback were contacted later and asked to take part in the evaluation. People who said that they would like to receive a support call were allocated a

telephone tutor who contacted them at agreed intervals in order to help them with their work on reading and writing. Some people said that they would like telephone support but that they would prefer to make the call themselves rather than have a tutor calling them.

The operation and impact of this telephone mentoring system is discussed in some depth in Section 3.6 below, with the aim of exploring ways in which the *Read Write Now* resources may be used in the future to maximum effect.

1.7 Evaluation Purpose and Strategy

The *Literacy through the Airwaves* initiative has by now generated a substantial body of material resources: three television series, two radio series and five learner workbooks. As well as this, the development and impact of all of these programmes have been documented in four evaluation reports, not including this one.[8] As a result of the experience of these productions and also of the feedback they attracted, both the content and format of the TV programmes have evolved over the years and the scope of the telephone support service has been expanded. Therefore, although the main focus of this evaluation report is the third Read Write Now TV series which was transmitted on RTÉ 1 from October 2002 – January 2003, this would be a good point at which to reflect on the project as a whole, to consider how the resources generated could be used in the immediate future and also, how the process could be advanced.

This evaluation report therefore sets out to:
- Assess the impact of *Read Write Now Series 3* on learners' knowledge and skills, in relation to the content of the programme.
- Identify areas of success in the series and those in need of improvement.
- Document the implementation of the telephone support system and assess its effectiveness.
- Make recommendations about future directions for the project and how best to use the existing resources.

Section 1 of this report has already described the development and design of *Read Write Now*, *Series 3* and highlighted the differences in content and format between this and the earlier series. **Section 2** gives an overview of the audience and a short profile of participating learners. In **Section 3** the impact of the project is explored, key issues in relation to targeting and levels are discussed and the telephone mentoring system is reviewed.

The information on which the conclusions and recommendations arising from this report are based was drawn from a number of sources:
- Analysis of statistical data: programme ratings, level of participation and learner profiles.
- Face-to-face interviews with independent learners and with learners in literacy schemes and other groups, and also their tutors.
- Telephone interviews with independent learners.

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[8] For example, see Grummell, B. (2001) *Evaluation of Read Write Now TV Project* Dublin: NALA; McSkeane, L. (2002) *Read Write Now TV Series 2* Dublin: NALA *Evaluation* Dublin: NALA; McSkeane, L. (2003) *Read Write Now and Time 4 Learning: Evaluation of the Radio Literacy and Numeracy Series* Dublin: NALA

- Face-to-face interviews with project staff: telephone tutors, NALA staff and producers of TV programmes and workbook.
- Analysis of comments to the freephone support line.

Statistical data on programme ratings and learner participation were supplied by RTÉ and by NALA. Face-to-face interviews were held with 22 independent learners in the course of three focus group meetings held in Dublin which brought together volunteer learners; 46 learners from adult literacy schemes and other groups were interviewed in their place of learning, along with 8 of their tutors; and 21 individuals were interviewed on the telephone.

Section 2: The Read Write Now Audience

2.1 Overview of Participation

Participation levels in the Read Write Now project can be gauged by two different sets of data. The TV ratings supplied by the Audience Research Department of RTÉ describe the general viewing audience for the duration of the series. Some of the variables included in this information are examined in detail, in order to explore the different factors which may have influenced viewing levels.

The second source of information describes a more limited audience, but one which is probably more focused on the learning potential of the series than the general public. This is the number of people, either individual viewers or groups other than adult literacy schemes, who telephoned the freephone support line to ask for learner workbooks to be sent out to them. These figures give an indication of the number of people who were following the series with the intention of improving their reading and writing although of course there were no doubt people who had similar intentions but for various reasons did not make contact through the freephone support line. All of the information which is available on independent learners comes from these orders for learner workbooks, which were placed by telephone. In some cases, telephone tutors were able to obtain limited personal details from callers. This information provides a general profile of this sample of Read Write Now learners.

2.2 TV Ratings for Read Write Now Series 3

The audience ratings for the twelve programmes in *Read Write Now Series 3* are summarised in Figure 1 below. Table 1 shows the total audience for each programme, both for the Monday evening slot and for the repeat which was transmitted on Thursday nights/ Friday mornings shortly after midnight and includes a breakdown of the figures for the two weekly transmissions and also the audience share. The audience share is the percentage of the total number of people who were watching television at that time.

Figure 1 Viewing Figures for *Read Write Now 3*
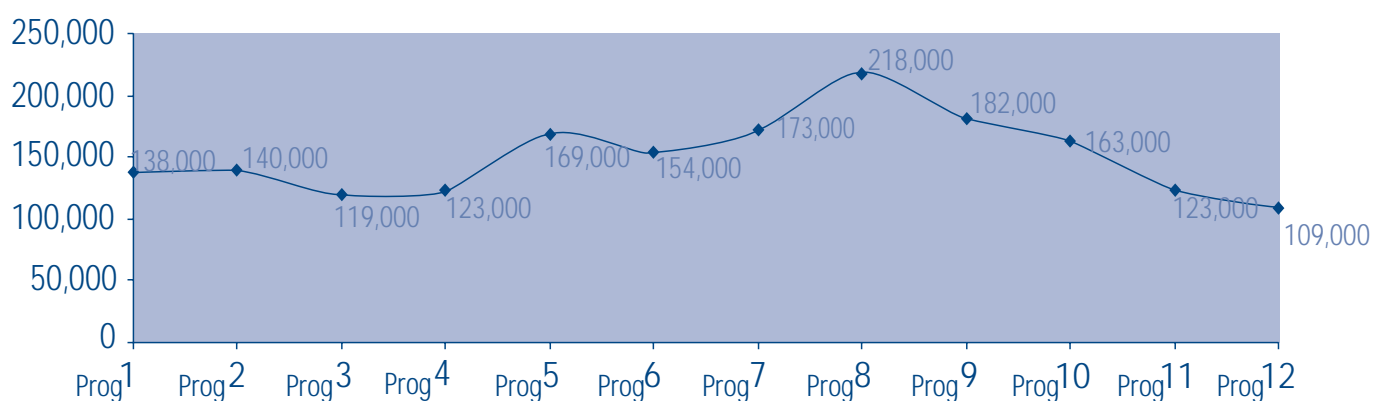
This general summary shows that the viewing figures remained fairly steady throughout the series and indeed, tended to increase as the series progressed. Taking into account the number of viewers for both the Monday transmission and for the repeat broadcast on Thursdays, the audience ratings for individual programmes ranged from 119,000 to a high of 218,000.

Although there was a dip in the number of viewers for Programmes 3 and 4, which on the Monday transmission attracted an audience of 97,000 and 85,000 respectively, there was a good recovery with a peak viewing figure for the series of 193,000 for Programme 8 followed by 161,000 for Programme 9. This amounts to between 10% and 15% of the audience share for that time. When viewing figures for the whole series are averaged out the mean emerges at 130,000 which is 10% of the TV audience for that time. The audience for the repeat on Thursdays at midnight, not surprisingly, is much smaller, with an average of 35,000 viewers for the series, or 11% of the audience share for that time. Nevertheless, this is quite a substantial audience for a late-night viewing slot.

Table 1 Viewing Figures for *Read Write Now 3*

Programme Details	Individuals Monday 7.30	% Audience Share Monday	Individuals Thursday	% Audience Share Thursday	Total viewers
Programme 1: 7/10/2002	117,000	10%	21,000	10%	138,000
Programme 2: 14/10/2002	118,000	10%	22,000	12%	140,000
Programme 3: 21/10/2002	97,000	7%	22,000	8%	119,000
Programme 4: 28/10/2002	85,000	6%	38,000	8%	123,000
Programme 5: 4/11/2002	136,000	10%	33,000	16%	169,000
Programme 6: 11/11/2002	123,000	9%	31,000	12%	154,000
Programme 7: 18/11/2002	152,000	12%	21,000	9%	173,000
Programme 8: 25/11/2002	193,000	15%	25,000	10%	218,000
Programme 9: 2/12/2002	161,000	12%	21,000	10%	182,000
Programme 10: 9/12/2002	144,000	11%	19,000	9%	163,000
Programme 11: 16/12/2002	123,000	9%	87,000	12%	210,000
Programme 12: 6/12/2002	109,000	8%	75,000	12%	184,000
Average for 12 programmes	130,000	10%	35,000	11%	165,000

Figure 2 below shows the age distribution of the audience and it is clear that *Read Write Now* attracts older, rather than younger, viewers. The greater part of the *Read Write Now* audience was composed of the over 35s, with an average for the series of 102,000 viewers in this age group who watched on Monday nights and a further 26,000 in the same age range who viewed the programme on Thursdays. Furthermore, over half of the Monday audience (52%) were over fifty five and 40% of the Thursday audience were in the same age group.

Figure 2 Age Distribution of Viewers of *Read Write Now 3*
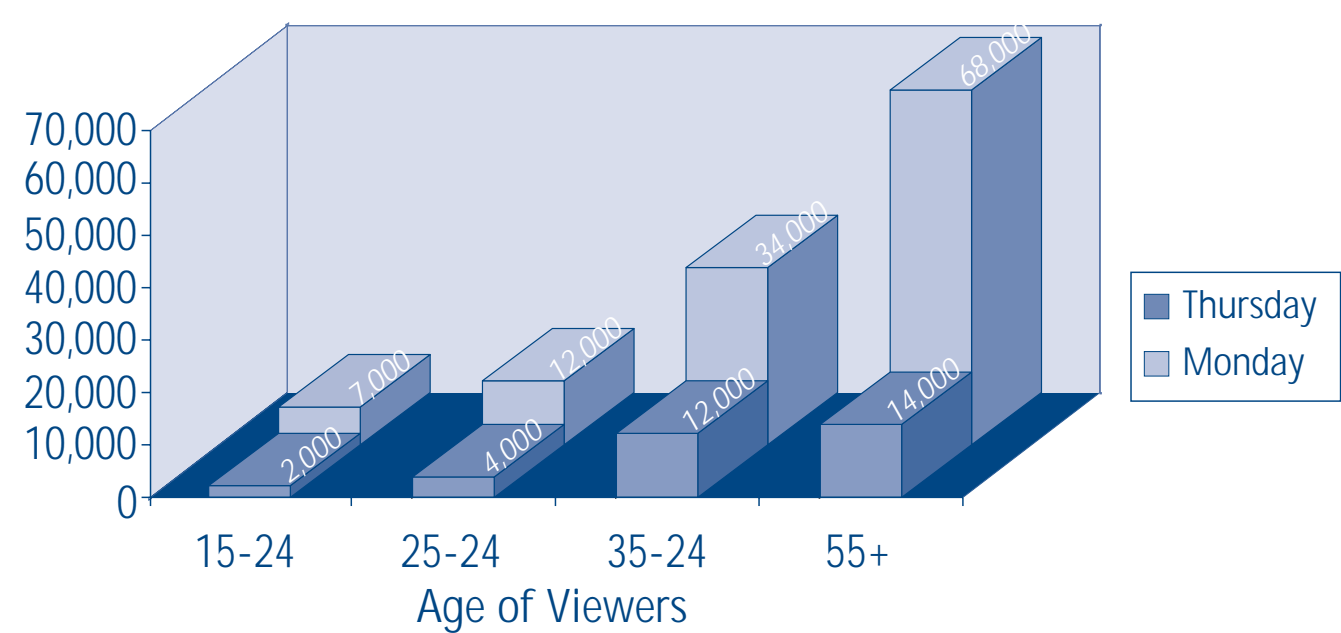
Table 2: Age Distribution of Viewers of *Read Write Now 3*
Averages for 12 Programmes

	15-24	25-34	35-54	55 +
Monday	7,000	12,000	34,000	68,000
Thursday	2,000	4,000	12,000	14,000

This is consistent with other research findings which identify a higher level of reading and writing difficulties among older people. For example, the IALS found that among young people in the 16 – 25 age range, 17% were at the lowest level in reading whereas 44.1% of those from 55 – 65 scored at that level.[9] At the same time it is worth noting that there is still a large number of young viewers and even some very young people, among the Read Write Now audience.

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[9] Morgan et al. (1997) op. cit., page 47.

2.3   Gender Balance of Read Write Now Audience

The overall gender balance of viewers of *Read Write Now Series 3* was uneven, but not dramatically so. The average adult male audience for the whole series was 42.3% and Table 3 below shows how this was distributed across each individual programme.

Table 3: Gender Balance of *Read Write Now* Audience

Sex of Learner Profiled in Programme	Adult Male	Adult Female	Children	Programme	Adult Male	Adult Female	Children
P.1 Woman	43.6%	53%	3.4%	P. 7 Man	36.1%	55.9%	8%
P.2 Woman	40.6%	52.5%	6.9%	P.8* Woman	48.2%	41.5%	10.3%
P.3* Man	49.5%	45.4%	5.1%	P.9 Man	42.2%	55.3%	2.5%
P.4 Woman	34%	58.8%	7.2%	P.10 Woman	35.4%	56.3%	8.3%
P.5 Man	36%	55.9%	8.1%	P. 11 Woman	46.3%	51.2%	2.5%
P.6* Woman	48.8%	39.8%	11.4%	P.12* Man	48.6%	47.7%	3.7%

Average Adult Male: 42.3% Adult Female: 50.8% Children: 0.9%
* Male viewers exceeded female viewers

Two thirds of the programmes had a larger female than male audience, which means that conversely, for four of the twelve programmes – 3, 6, 8 and 12 – male viewers slightly exceeded females. In relation to the gender balance in literacy levels and participation in adult literacy work, the IALS found that there was very little difference reported in literacy levels between men and woman[10] in Ireland and also in the other countries surveyed. Furthermore, for the period June 2001 – 2002, which provides the most recent figures currently available, the total number of people accessing the literacy services was 23,973 of whom 9,486 were men and 14,487 were woman: that is, 39% men and 61% women. [11] Therefore, the gender balance of the *Read Write Now* TV audience, although somewhat favouring women for two thirds of the programmes, is generally quite similar to the proportions who access adult literacy services already.

Nevertheless, given the potential role of television to encourage new learners to access the literacy services it is important to take this opportunity afforded by the *Read Write Now* project to reach as many men as woman and also to explore the factors which might influence viewing patterns among men and women. It was suggested that one such factor might be the sex of the learner profiled in each programme. Although it is difficult to prove causal relationships between such variables, if the gender breakdown of the audience were to correlate with the presence of a man or a woman in the learner profile slot this would at least indicate the possibility that the sex of the learner may contribute to the level of interest in men and women in different programmes in the series.

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[10] Ibid., page 45.
[11] Source: DES

The programmes for which male viewers exceeded females are asterisked in Table 3 above. There were four of these: programmes 3, 6, 8 and 12. However, only two - programmes 3 and 12 - featured a man in the learner profile slot. Conversely, the other two programmes which attracted more male viewers – programmes 6 and 8 - featured women. It is therefore not possible to draw any conclusions about the impact of the sex of the learner profiled on male/female viewing patters: if anything, these data weaken such a connection. Although the gender balance across the whole series is not very skewed, with five men and seven women in the learner profile slot, it would nevertheless be advisable to even up the representation of male:female learners profiled to 50:50.

2.4 Comparison of Ratings, Read Write Now 1, 2 and 3

Given that this is the third consecutive year of a TV series which is designed to cater for adults who want to improve their reading and writing, it may be useful to compare the size of the audience across the three years of transmission and identify any conclusions which may be drawn as a result.

Table 4: Comparison of Viewing Figures for *Read Write Now 1, 2 and 3*

	2000 Tuesday, 11.05 pm Wednesdays, 10 am	2001 Wednesday 7.30 pm Sundays, 10.30 am Tuesdays, midnight	2002 Mondays, 7.30pm Thursdays, midnight
Peak Rating	193,000 (25%) 28,000 (25%)	270,075 (23.4%) 18,005 (5.9%) 32,409 (10.5%)	193,000 (15%) 25,000 (10%)
Totals	221,000	320,489	218,000
Average ratings for series	136,000 (19%) +19,000 (repeat-13%)	188,452 (16.2%) +26,407 (Sun-8.5%) +29,168 (Tues-9.5%)	130,000 (10%) +35,000 (repeat-11%)
Totals	155,000	244,027	165,000

% = percentage of viewing public

Audience viewing figures for the three years are summarised in Table 4. This shows the peak rating, which is the largest audience for one single programme in the series. Also shown are the average figures for the whole series. Audience shares are given in brackets. The number of viewers and audience share for the repeat broadcasts are also given.

The most striking fact to emerge from this summary is the very large audience for the second series. Viewing peaked with programme 4 on the Wednesday evening slot on October 3rd, 2001 when 270,000 people tuned in. A further 50,000 people saw one of the repeats shown that week, which gives a total audience of over 320,000 for that one programme. Audiences for the other programmes were also high, giving an average audience for the series which exceeded 244,000. It is clear that even allowing for the second repeat transmission of *Read Write Now 2* - whereas Series 1 and 3 were repeated only once - that the audience for 2001 was very substantial indeed for a programme of this kind.

Ratings for this year's series were much lower than last year's. The average audience decreased by 79,027 and the number of viewers for the programme with the highest number of viewers went down by 102,489 – a decrease of almost one third on the audience for *Read Write Now 2*.

It is worth asking at this point whether the viewing figures for *Read Write Now 3* give cause for concern. Indeed, this question was raised by NALA half-way through the series when it became clear that this year's ratings were lower than those for the second series. RTÉ's Independent Production Unit responded by outlining the variables which contributed to these viewing patterns and concluded that notwithstanding the reduction in the audience size, RTÉ takes a positive view of this year's figures. The following factors were mentioned[12] and are worth highlighting here:

- The nature of educational programming: this is not expected to achieve the usual peak time viewing figures.

- Scheduling: *Read Write Now 2* benefited from the fact that the scheduling of popular programmes on other channels last year did not clash with the series and as a consequence the viewing figures were exceptional.

- Despite the decrease in the audience for this year, the figures are still matching or even exceeding the size of regular audiences on Network 2, TV 3 and TG 4.

If last year's figures are considered exceptional, then it is worth noting that the peak audience for *Read Write Now 3* is very close to the figures for the first series and that the average audience is actually greater than the same figure for *Read Write Now 1*. Considering that this year's series was transmitted at the same time as 'Coronation Street', this may be considered as something of an achievement.

Weekday evenings are peak viewing time and since the start of the *Read Write Now* project, RTÉ has given the series a remarkably high profile, both in the timing of the slots and the provision of repeat broadcasts. Obviously, given the very wide target audience it would be impossible to identify a slot which would be convenient for everyone. That said, the fact that the series clashed with 'Coronation Street' did present an obstacle to learners. Almost everyone interviewed for the evaluation mentioned this and many pointed out that even if they themselves wanted to watch *Read Write Now*, in a busy household it was easy to be over-ruled. As one person joked,

> *When the soaps come on, the boss takes over. I'm out.*

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that an early evening slot is extremely favourable to the project and it would be most desirable to retain this. The importance of what Bates[13] called 'quality transmission times' in gathering and maintaining audiences for distance education programmes was noted almost thirty years ago, in relation to viewing figures for Open University programmes in the UK. If a repeat showing could be transmitted some time before midnight, or best of all if there could be two repeats as there were for the second series, possibly including a Sunday morning slot, the impact of competition from very popular programmes on other channels would be less acute and access to the series would be maximised.

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[12] Source: RTÉ Independent Productions Unit

[13] Bates, Tony (1984) *Broadcast Television in Distance Education: A World-Wide Perspective* in Bates (1984) (Ed) *The Role of Technology in Distance Education* London, Sydney, New York: Croom Helm/St. Martin's Press page 36

2.5 Distribution of Learner Workbooks

The distribution of the learner workbooks to adult literacy schemes, to other educational groups and to individual callers gives an overview of the extent to which the series and workbook were used by learners who were working in an educational setting and also, those who were studying in their own homes.

Figure 3 Distribution of Learner Workbooks

7,140   8,800

■ Adult Literacy Schemes
■ Other Groups
■ Individuals

6,811
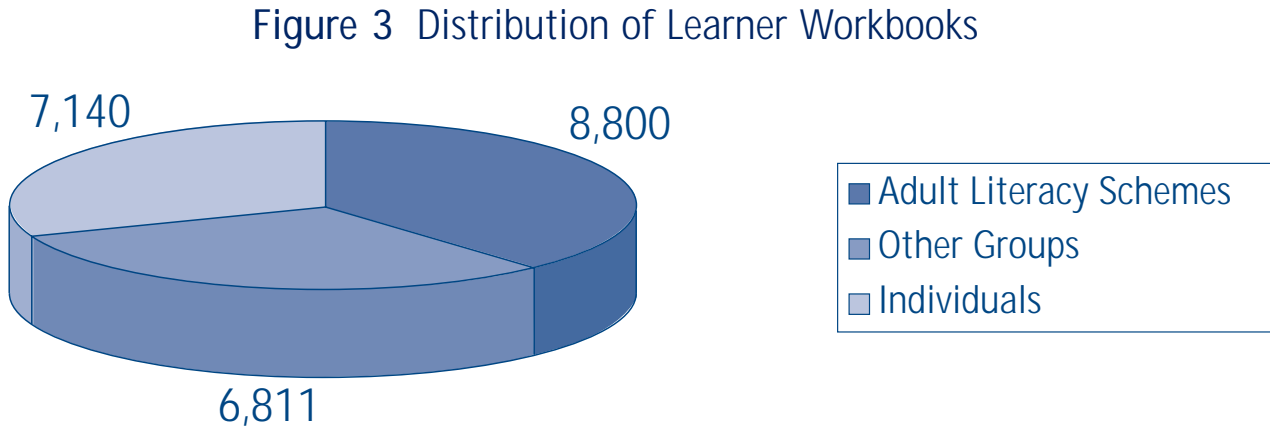
Figure 3 shows that 31% of the learner workbooks which were distributed went out to individuals, that is, to people who were working on their own rather than in an adult literacy centre. These centres received 39% of all workbooks distributed and the remaining 30% were sent to 606 other groups which either work with people who want to improve their reading and writing, or else come into contact with them.

Orders for the workbook from individuals peaked during the first two weeks of the series: between 7th and 18th October there were 2,397 requests from independent learners and a further 1,982 in the two weeks before that. Therefore, over 60% of all enquiries made by the independent learners came in during that four-week period. After that, the level of requests fell but a steady stream was maintained until the start of December, two thirds of the way through the series, when orders from independent learners diminished

The pattern of requests from groups other than those working in adult literacy schemes is even more pronounced. In the two weeks before the series started, 3,022 workbooks were sent out on request and a further 2,062 were ordered during the first two weeks of the series. This amounts to just under three quarters of all of the workbooks which were distributed to such groups.

This indicates the importance and effectiveness of both strands of the publicity strategy: the direct advertising, which informed potential independent learners about the series; and the mail shot to a large number of groups and organisations who come into contact with potential and current adult literacy students.

2.6 Profile of Group Type

Almost 7,000 of the learner workbooks which were distributed were ordered by 606 groups and organisations other than adult literacy centres. Figure 2 below shows the range of settings such as community groups and centres for people with disabilities, where tuition is provided for adults working on reading and writing or other organisations such as credit unions whose staff may come into contact with adults who have literacy problems.

The most striking aspect of the types of groups represented here is the high level of interest from schools, which accounted for 29%: 17% post primary schools, 9% national schools and 3% special schools. A small number of the orders made by schools were intended to be used with parents but many were being used with the young people as well. The disability sector was strongly represented by organisations such as NTDI, CRC, and Enable Ireland among others, which cater for people with special needs. Including both physical and intellectual needs, this sector accounts for 14% of the groups represented. This continues a pattern which was established with the two earlier series, which also attracted a lot of interest from the disability sector.

Although the Read Write Now programmes and workbook were not specifically intended for people with special needs or for young people in schools – it is worth noting that the materials are considered useful by those who work with them. Because of this, learners and tutors in these sectors were interviewed for this evaluation and their comments are given in section y below.

Figure 4 Participating Groups

Legend:
- Adult Ed. Group
- Disability
- PP Schools
- Nat Schools
- Special Schools
- Youth
- FÁS
- Community Services
- Travellers
- Social Services
- Business
- Unemployed Orgs
- Foreign Nats
- Prisons, Drugs
- Further Education
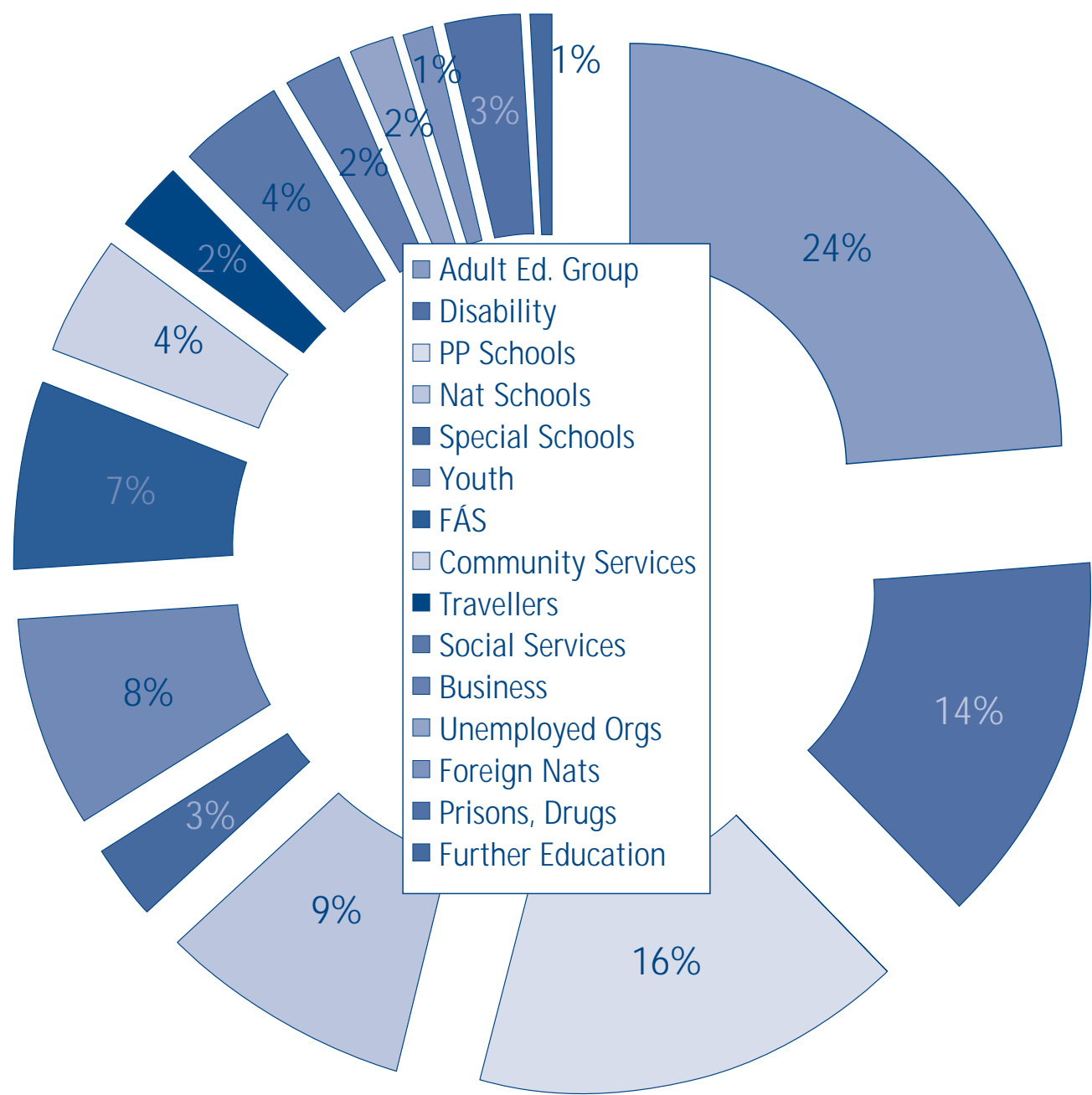
Not surprisingly, many of the groups who ordered packs are from adult education or community education centres or projects – 24% of the total – and a further 7% were ordered for centres and programmes such as Return to Education run by FÁS.

The grouping entitled 'Community Services' comprises branches of the national networks of Citizens' Information Centres and the MABS financial advice centres plus branches of local libraries. This sector accounts for 4% of the total number of participating groups. 'Social Services', which make up a further 4% of the total, include the probation services, social work departments, counselling and therapy services. Interestingly, a small percentage of orders for the learner workbook (2%) were placed by business and enterprise centres.

It is clear from this general overview of the range of groups whose staff placed orders for the *Read Write Now* learner workbook that adult literacy work is being carried out in a very wide variety of settings outside the education sector; and that the need for literacy work is recognised and addressed in many community, business and social settings.

2.7 General Profile of Individual Callers

Not all of the 7,140 individuals who telephoned the freephone support line to ask for a learner workbook gave personal information about themselves. Everyone was asked to supply an address and where possible, other details were recorded either as these emerged in general conversation with the telephone tutor or in response to direct questions. The information which was actively sought included the following:

- Caller's age
- Age left school
- Educational history
- Whether the caller was already working with an adult literacy scheme
- Whether the caller had followed the last TV series and if so, whether or not it suited their level
- Whether they would like to be referred on to an adult literacy scheme
- How they heard about the series.

The extent of information which was obtained in response to each of these questions varies, depending on how many people were willing to engage in conversation with the telephone tutor at this stage and the areas on which they were willing to supply personal information. Some questions were answered more widely than others. For example, 1,808 people said how they had heard of the series. Although this is not a very personal question, this is the item which attracted the highest number of responses: just a quarter of the total number of independent learners who called the freephone helpline to ask for a learner workbook. Figure 5 below shows that the great majority of these callers, or just over 61% of those who answered, heard about *Read Write Now Series 3* from the radio and a further 34% got the information from the television. Just 2.3% heard about it from a friend and a further 2.2% got details from an adult literacy scheme. A very small proportion, just under 0 .3% of these respondents, read about the series in the newspaper.

The majority of requests for the workbook came from women but at 59.5%, this is not a very large majority.

Figure 5 How People Heard About *Read Write Now 3* N=1,808

- TV
- Radio
- Newspaper
- Scheme
- Friend

1108
5
38
40
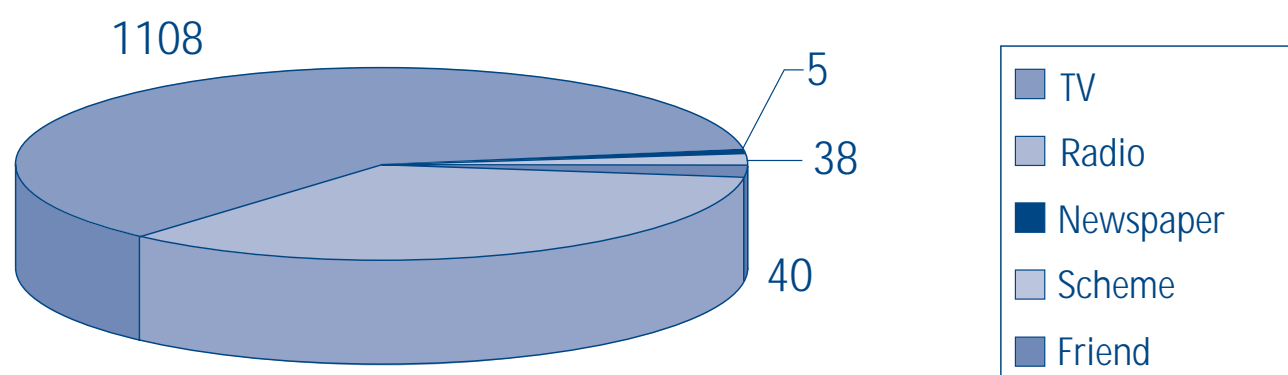
Only 17% of the callers gave their age. Of these 1,196 respondents the majority were in their 40s (23.3%) and 50s (21%) with a large proportion also in the thirties (17.2%). However, a substantial number, over 23%, were younger than 30 with 8.5% aged 18 or younger and a further 15.8% who were in their 20s.

Table 5: Age of Individual Callers N=1,196

	≤18	19-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Number	102	189	206	279	250	170
%	8.5%	15.8%	17.2%	23.3%	21%	14.2%

Very few people said anything about their educational history or the age at which they left school: only 636 answered the first of these and almost identically, 635 answered the second. This is just 9% of all of those individuals who rang in to ask for the workbook.

Table 6: Age Individual Callers Left School N=635

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Number	7	49	77	217	90	98	48	44	5
%	1.1%	7.7%	12.1%	34.2%	14.2%	15.4%	7.6%	6.9%	0.8%

Figure 6 Age Individual Callers Left School N=635
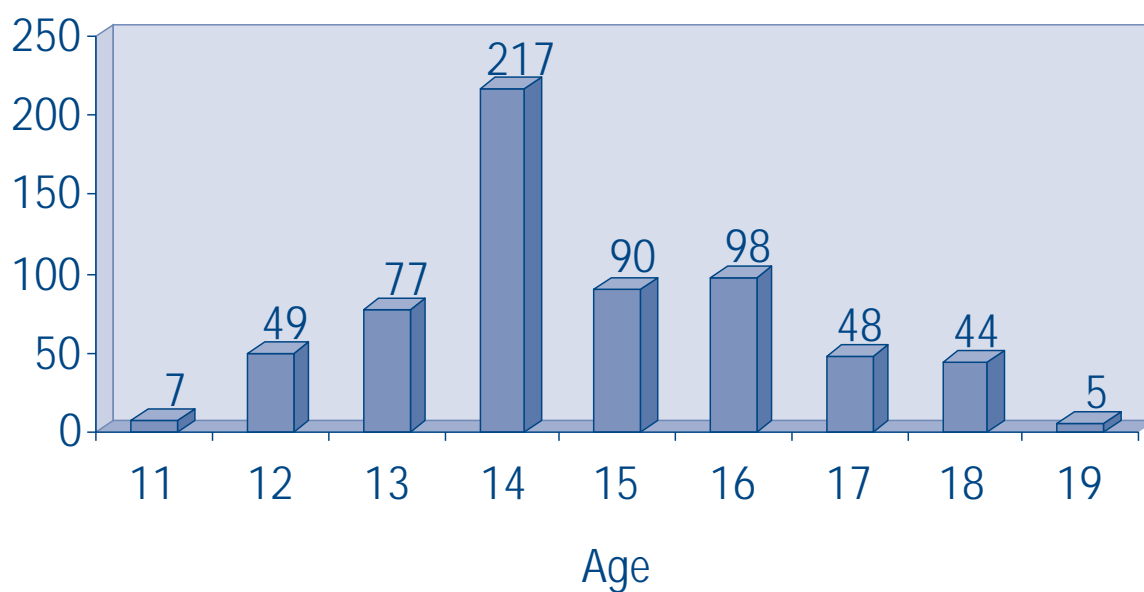
Over a fifth of these callers, or 20.9%, left school at the age of 13 or younger and a further 34.2% left when they were 14. Just under 30% were still in school at the ages of 15 or 16 and about 15% of these learners stayed in the education system longer than that.

Table 7: Educational History of Individual Callers N=636

	Primary	Secondary	Inter/Jun	Leaving	FAS	VEC	Other
Number	288	165	87	56	1	8	31
%	45.3%	25.9%	13.7%	8.8%	0.2%	1.2%	4.9%

Figure 7 Educational History of Individual Callers N=636
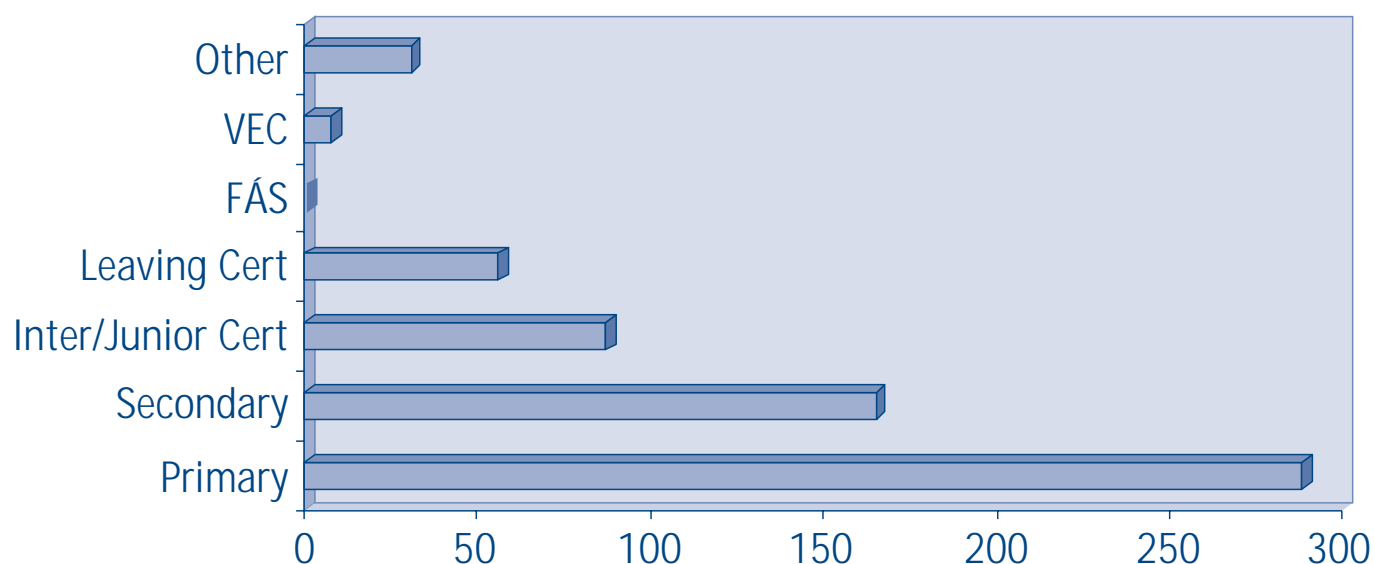
Only about 22% of this cohort had achieved qualifications of any kind in the course of their schooling, 13.7% of these who gained one of the Junior Cycle awards: the Intermediate or Group Certificate, or the Junior Certificate in the case of younger people. Over 70% of this group indicated that they left school with no qualifications, although a small proportion of just over 5% mentioned 'other' unspecified educational experiences.

It is important to remember that these figures do not describe a profile of all 7,000 plus independent learners who rang in to order the workbook but rather refer to a much smaller sample of less than 10% of this cohort. Nevertheless, these figures indicate that a very high proportion of people who have reading and writing problems are adults who left school early – some without progressing to post-primary level – and have no qualifications. The fact that over 25% were still in their 20s or even younger and must therefore have left school in the last decade indicates that reading and writing problems are not solely a product of a much earlier generation of schooling.

One further significant fact in relation to the individual callers to the freephone support line, is that very few of them agreed to be referred to an adult literacy scheme. Telephone tutors offered to supply each caller with contact details of a scheme in their locality but only 357 of the total 7,140 accepted the offer. A small number were already in contact with an adult literacy scheme.

Figure 8 Number of Referrals

357   90

6,695

- Agreed to referral
- Already in contact with scheme
- Did not agree to referral

2.8 Comparison of Workbook Distribution for TV Series 1, 2 and 3

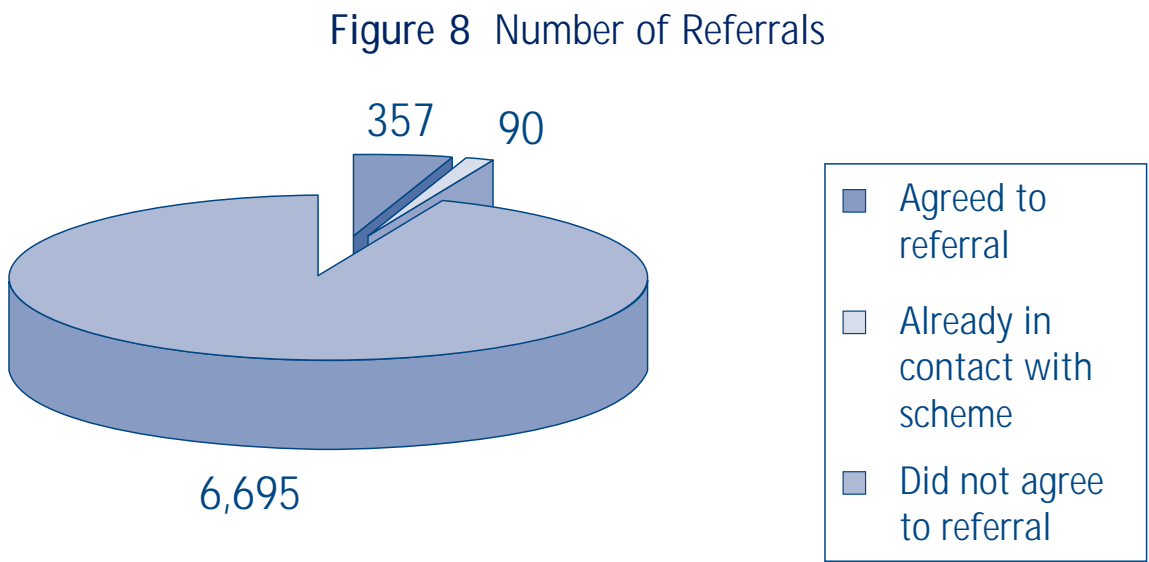The number of orders for the learner workbooks which came from individuals and from groups other than adult literacy centres over the three years gives some indication of the level of interest among independent adult literacy learners or potential learners. Workbooks are routinely posted to adult literacy schemes by NALA and as the number sent out to those centres is determined by the number of clients for whom they cater, the level of distribution to that sector gives no indication of independent expressions of interest.

Figure 9 shows the number of workbooks which had been distributed at the end of each series. The first series which was transmitted in 2000 generated a great deal of interest among groups and independent learners: a total of 28,171 workbooks were sent out and over 10,000 of these went to independent learners. However, the picture for series 2 is very

different. Although the audience ratings for the second series were 45% higher than for series 1, the number of requests for the learner workbook during the second series actually *decreased* by over a quarter (28.9%). Most of this loss was due to a substantial fall in orders from individuals: orders for the workbook for the second series were about half of the number which were requested in the previous year.

Figure 9 Comparison of Workbook Distribution *Read Write Now 1, 2 and 3*
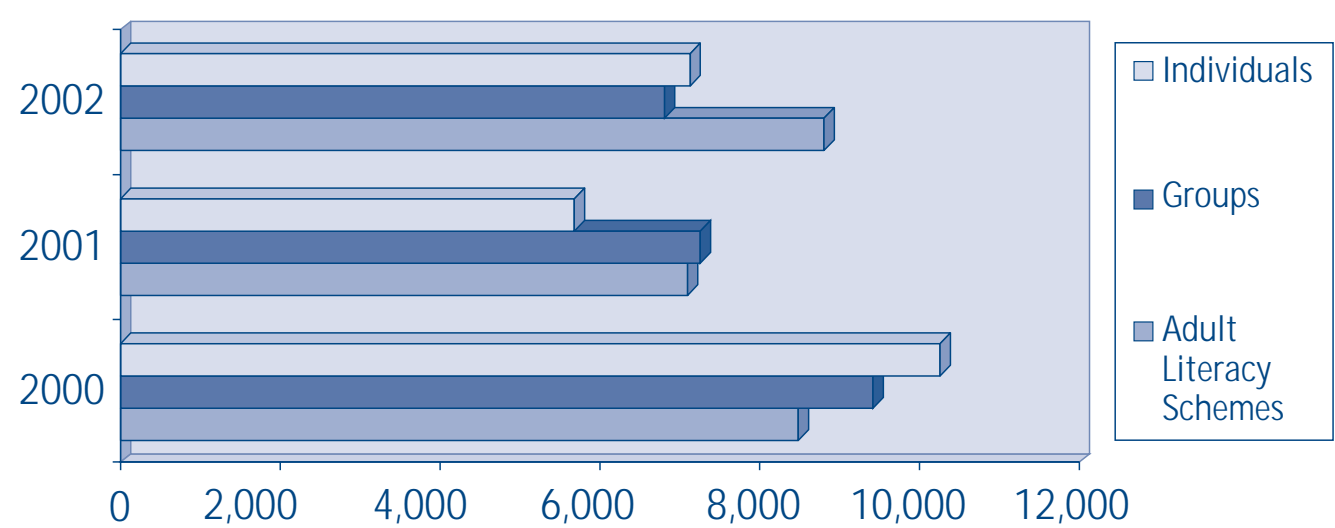
Table 8: Comparison of workbook distribution, *Read Write Now 1, 2 and 3*

	2000	2001	2002
Adult Literacy Schemes	8,486	7,100	8,800
Other Groups	9,427	7,249	6,811
Individuals	10,258	5,672	7,140
Totals	28,171	20,051	22,751

In 2002, for *Read Write Now Series 3,* the overall distribution of learner workbooks increased by just over 13% on the number sent out in 2001: from 20,051 to 22,751 which is an increase of 2,700. Of these, 1,700 were accounted for by additional copies which were sent to adult literacy schemes. This therefore reflects an increase in the number of clients in those centres rather than indicating an increase in the general level of interest. Furthermore, the number requested by groups other than adult literacy schemes actually dropped slightly, from 7,249 to 6,811 year, a decrease of 438. However, the number of workbooks requested by independent learners increased from 5,672 in 2001 to 7,140 this year, an increase of 1,468 or just over 25%.

Although the number of requests for workbooks for series 3 has not matched the initial surge of interest in series 1 - which was supported by a great deal of media attention in the lead-up to the first programme in September 2000 - this increase in orders from independent learners is positive news. The total number of independent learners reached represents a cohort of over 7,000 people, many of whom may never have previously acknowledged their need to improve their reading and writing and who may be motivated in the future to seek out the help of the literacy services or other available support.

3

Section 3: Feedback on Read Write Now 3

3.1 Overview

This section analyses the feedback which was obtained from individuals who followed *Read Write Now 3* in a variety of learning situations. Those who participated in the evaluation included:

- learners in adult literacy schemes and other groups who were working through the series with a tutor;
- learners who were working on their own at home, with no support other than the TV programmes and the book;
- and other learners, also working in their own homes, who were supported by a series of semi-structured telephone tutorials delivered on a regular basis by a team of telephone tutors.

Experience of the first two *Read Write Now* series indicated that adult literacy schemes and other educational groups were using the TV programmes and also the learner workbook; and that this material was generally found to be a useful resource. In order to access the views of this client group, for this evaluation a total of 46 learners and 8 tutors were interviewed in their group setting. Three of these were adult literacy groups and three were in other educational settings: one centre for people with disabilities, one Health Board Workshop and one special school.

Independent learners, that is, people working on their own at home, were accessed through their initial contact with the freephone support line. A total of 7,140 people called the support line to order workbooks, of whom about 4,500 placed their order before Programme 3. All callers in these first three weeks were asked if they would be willing to take part in the evaluation in some capacity, either by giving feedback by telephone or by attending a focus group meeting. In the end, only a small proportion of those who had initially expressed a willingness to participate in the evaluation did in fact take part and at first just eighteen individuals said that they would be willing to come to Dublin to discuss their experience of the series. The number of participants in these meetings, which were held in Dublin in November and December, 2001, later increased to twenty two. The agenda for the three meetings is given in Appendix 6.

Evaluation participants from adult literacy schemes and other groups and independent learners were interviewed on a common set of topics which included: programme content, pace and level; programme format and presentation; any learning which occurred as a result of the series; and suggestions for future developments. These are the main areas which are reported and discussed in this section. The learning which was reported by participants in the telephone mentoring system is summarised separately in section 3.6.

3.2 Programme Content

As described in Section 1.5 above, series 3 of *Read Write Now* differed from its predecessors in that the topics for each programme which provided a context for the learning points in reading, writing and numeracy, dealt with the process of learning itself. This is often referred to as 'learning to learn' and includes goal-setting, techniques for motivation and for managing learning. There were therefore two separate, if inter-related areas of content to explore, in relation to learners' needs: the literacy/numeracy content and the 'learning to learn' content.

3.2.1 Literacy and Numeracy Learning Points

A learning point is a small area of knowledge or skill, selected for its importance in facilitating overall development of learners' competence and confidence in reading and writing. Here are some examples of learning points, in this case those which were covered in Programme 7:

- Verbs
- Distance and speed
- Reading signs
- Capital letters

Each TV programme introduced a total of three or four learning points, one of which related to numeracy and one which was a spelling tip. These in turn correspond to the relevant chapter in the learner workbook, where there are worksheets and other exercises which expand and develop the same points. As there are twelve programmes, this gives a total of forty eight learning points covering key areas of reading, writing and numeracy.

One of the main questions addressed to evaluation participants was the relevance and usefulness of the literacy and numeracy content of the series to their particular needs.

Responses naturally varied, depending on the stage people were at in their literacy work and on their specific interests and requirements. In fact, most of the learning points were mentioned by participants, although some were referred to more frequently than others. Writing skills were mentioned a lot by this cohort of learners. Particular writing and spelling tips allowed people to carry out tasks that they had previously found difficult. For example, one person who runs a small business and is obliged to get a colleague to pay the bills said:

> *It meant that I was able to start writing cheques for myself. I'd never done that before, it was great. It's not everyone you can trust with a cheque book...*

The spelling and writing tips which helped this learner are examples of very specific gaps which can be filled with rather short and simple interventions, which nevertheless have considerable impact on the competence and independence with which people can manage routine tasks.

The writing of letters and notes of different kinds was covered explicitly in two of the programmes and other writing skills which would help with letters, such as writing sentences and proof-reading, were addressed in four of the other programmes. When asked whether they had carried out any new reading or writing tasks as a result of the programmes, letter

and note-writing was mentioned by a number of people, for example one woman who answered

..sending a letter to school – which I had to do this morning!

Other people said that they had either filled in forms, or expected to do so and thought that they would find the work covered in the programmes useful for this.

Some of the learning points, or groups of learning points, were mentioned by almost everyone. These areas are of particular interest here because they give an indication of the range of content which is relevant to people who are at different stages in their reading and writing skills. Given the very wide and varied target group which is the audience for a distance education programme in adult literacy, this is useful information which can facilitate the selection of future content and programme design.

Spelling tips
Spelling tips were highlighted in each chapter of the learner workbook and covered weekly in the programmes. People at all stages in their reading and writing found these useful. For those with more basic skills, the spelling tip provided a specific chunk of learning:

That's the part I tended to home in on.

Others whose skills were more advanced had specific gaps which the series was able to address:

I found it helped to get the sound of the words.

The 'shun' sound and the different ways to spell it – that was new for me.

I never knew that 'ph' sounded like 'f'.

This is important because it shows that very specific learning points, such as particular phonic knowledge, can have a significant impact on learners' wider literacy skills.

In fact, many of the learners who followed the series said that the only real problem they had in relation to reading and writing, was spelling. Of course, there are spelling conventions which are very basic – such as c-a-t – and more complex ones, such as the 'shun' sound and some of the spelling rules. Those which were covered in this series tended to be advanced, rather than basic. Nevertheless, the fact that so many people with such a wide variety of reading and writing skills identified help for spelling as being one of the main benefits which the series provided, indicates that spelling is a topic which crosses all levels of literacy and is therefore a useful area for further development.

Breaking up words (including vowels and syllables)
One of the problems reported by people who have reading problems is the absence of a strategy for handling unknown words. People reading at a basic level may be able to read a limited number of words on sight – that is, by recognition – but if they come across a word which is unfamiliar, especially a long word, they do not know how to approach it.

The strategies which can help people with this area are called 'word-building' skills and many of the learning points covered in *Read Write Now 3* explored such skills. Readers have to know how to break up words into smaller chunks and for this they need to know about syllables, vowels and consonants.

> *I'd never heard of syllables before.*

Many people who have difficulty reading longer words say that they had never learned how to approach an unknown word in this way.

> *You can break the words down and put them together again*

Learning to do this for some people was a revelation. Adding prefixes, suffixes and paying attention to word endings are all word-building skills which were of particular interest to many viewers of *Read Write Now 3*. This is another important area for development in future projects.

3.2.2 Learning to Learn Content

In each of the twelve programmes, the 'learning to learn' content was covered using two different strategies. The topic for the week such as memory or multiple intelligences, was introduced by the two presenters, Derek Mooney and Teri Garvey in an external location such as a museum, a driving school or a gym. This was reinforced and deepened later in the programme by the slot known as 'Ian's Machine' – the 'machine' being the brain – when Professor Ian Robertson of Trinity College, Dublin gave a mini-presentation to camera on the topic of the week.

Evaluation participants were asked their views on the focus on the learning process as a context for the literacy and numeracy learning points and on the relevance of this for their own learning.

Feedback on the 'learning to learn' content of the programme was generally very positive. Several people had previously thought that learning was something that some people could do and others – such as themselves - could not and that this was the source of their problems in reading and writing:

> *I always thought I couldn't learn but this shows that learning is just a process. It was very positive and very good because it makes you think about what you are doing and shows that there are different ways of learning.*

People were encouraged by the concept of learning styles and ways of learning, as it helped them to identify their own preferred methods and styles and offered a strategy for their future learning:

> *It's interesting to find out what kind of learner you are.*

The theory of multiple intelligences struck some people as being a positive approach to the notion of intelligence and also offered an explanation for some of their past difficulties in learning:

If I'd known this earlier it could have made such a difference.

Some tutors in adult literacy groups thought that the learners they had met often enjoyed reflecting on how they learned. Consciously exploring the learning process also gives people a realistic indication of how learning works and the kind of effort which is needed to make real progress. One learner confirmed this explicitly:

You begin to see that coming in to a tutor for an hour once a week is not enough.

When I got the book I went through it. I was hours at it – and I could see my writing getting better. Then he said about how you need to practise – that really clicked with me.

The 'learning to learn' component of the series included practical strategies as well as general information about the learning process and these were very positively received. Some learners observed that the process of learning had never been addressed in their own previous learning experiences and that the information and suggestions in this part of the series made practical sense:

It helped you with knowing how to study.

The most frequently-mentioned practical benefits were those connected with memory. Many adult literacy students have never developed strategies for remembering and may assume that this is an ability which one either does or does not have when in fact this is a skill which can be developed and learned. Concrete advice on how to go about this, such as linking the known with the unknown, and examples showing how to do this, were greatly welcomed:

It gave me specific tips on how to remember things.

How to retain spellings, that was good.

A small number of people had reservations about the 'learning to learn' content. Some were learners who were more focused on the reading and writing topics and did not want to be distracted from these:

There was too much on this and too little on reading and writing.

Although it was a minority view, it is worth exploring and this remark is revisited in the context of considering the balance and structure of the programme in Section 3.3.3 below.

Some tutors and more advanced learners were worried that the 'learning to learn' content made *Read Write Now 3* a good deal more difficult than the first two series and that it could be too advanced for most adult literacy students, especially those who were working at home on their own. However, it is important to mention that the groups of independent learners who were interviewed had very positive reactions to this aspect of the programme, even those who were working at quite a basic level. Nevertheless, the comments about the level of

difficulty and also about the balance of the programme are worth taking seriously and are revisited in Sections 3.3.3 and 3.5 below.

3.2.3 Ian's Machine

Reactions to the Ian's Machine slot were mixed but for the most part, positive. Many of the specific memory strategies came from this section of the programme and the most practical ones were those which made the greatest impact. In one programme Professor Robertson showed viewers a group of objects and invited people to look at them with attention and try to remember them. Near the end of his slot he returned to the objects and asked viewers to think about how many they recalled and what strategies they had used for doing so. The combination of being given a small task which was revisited and analysed was attractive to people and created an immediate interaction between viewers and the programme which caught their attention and – most importantly – one which they remembered several weeks later. This interactive approach could be explored and developed in the future. How this might happen is discussed in more detail in Section 3.7 below, Long-term Planning.

Some learners were happy to see the learning process included in a programme which was designed to support adult literacy students because it indicated that their situation was being taken seriously. One independent learner put it like this:

> *I regard him [Prof. Robertson] as an intellectual and the other guy [Derek Mooney] as a friend, someone who's trying to help out. I think it's of benefit to think that an intellectual would care about people in our situation.*

Nevertheless, there were some reservations about the slot. A small number of people, including both learners and tutors, thought that the content was too abstract and difficult. In some cases, when their concerns were probed these were more to do with the production and presentation of the slot rather than with the content itself, as one learner stated:

> *The content was very interesting but the presentation was too abstract.*

The presentation was indeed very plain and unadorned: a head-and-shoulders shot of the speaker talking to camera for about two minutes. The rest of the programme, by contrast, was visually stimulating and varied, which perhaps highlighted the starkness of this slot. A number of people remarked on the absence of visual supports to illustrate the points which the speaker was addressing:

> *There were no graphics so it'd be hard enough to remember.*

For some people, especially those at an earlier stage in their learning, Ian's Machine contained a lot of food for thought which was difficult to take in all at once, especially in the given format:

> *I found it hard to follow. You'd have to be really tuned in.*

Learners also thought that this slot could have been more closely integrated with the rest of the programme. In fact, the actual topic addressed by the speaker always did correspond to the programme topic but there were potential connections and cross-references with the detail of other components, such as those presented by Teri Garvey and Derek Mooney, which were not exploited:

It could have linked in more with the rest of the programme.

Overall, Ian's Machine was well-received and provided a worthwhile context for adult literacy students' learning experiences. That said, this slot, or a similar one covering related material, offers room for further development in the following ways:

- Assist the speaker by providing a more visually supportive production style;
- Emphasise specific, concrete strategies in relation to different learning processes;
- Integrate this component more closely with other parts of the programme.

3.3 Format and Presentation of Programmes

3.3.1 Presentation

The presentation style of *Read Write Now 3* differed from that of the first two series in two important respects:

- Series 3 included two presenters, Derek Mooney and Teri Garvey, who explained the literacy and numeracy learning points and explored the 'learning to learn' content, whereas in Series 1 and 2 the learning content was presented by voiceover and graphics;
- Secondly, the 'learning to learn' content was situated in external locations such as a driving school, a gym and a college. This replaced the drama segments which had provided the learning context in the earlier programmes.

The overall effect of these two innovations was the creation of a more documentary-style programme than the format for the first two series. In order to probe the impact of these changes, evaluation participants were therefore asked to give their views on the presenters and on the use of the external locations as a context for learning.

Overall, the views expressed about the presenters were very positive:

They made it very easy and pleasant to listen to.

Some people who had also followed *Read Write Now 2* were able to compare the previous approach, where the explicit presentation of learning content was mostly done through graphics and voiceover. The literacy and numeracy learning points in this series were conveyed in the same way, with the difference that there were two speakers who were visually present for large sections of the programme which dealt with 'learning to learn' work. Learners liked this approach:

When you have a face to put to a voice it makes it easier to follow, it keeps your attention.

The fact that one of faces, Derek Mooney, was well-known from another popular programme (Winning Streak) caught people's interest and moved the series from a specialist, 'niche' market into a more mainstream audience:

> *A face like Derek Mooney was excellent. Teri was excellent too but a strange face.*

Eight of the people who took part in the evaluation of the last series were available to participate this time around and it was interesting to compare their views of the programme format for Series 2 and Series 3. Not many people missed the drama – although there was some indication last time that this component of the second series may have been entertaining for the more general audience. For this admittedly small number, and also for those who were new to *Read Write Now*, the style of a fast-paced, lively documentary was attractive:

> *It kind of makes it more like a TV programme – it comes across just like any other show.*

It is rather difficult to bridge the gap between the different potential audiences for a series on adult literacy in a way which accommodates learners at different levels and is also of interest to a more general audience. It is likely that the documentary-style format featuring familiar presenters was beneficial in retaining these different viewers.

Some people were critical of specific aspects of the presentation.

> *There was too much talking.*

> *The presenters were a bit dominant.*

This view was expressed by a significant number of people and a few people thought that the presenters sometimes spoke too quickly. However, rather than being a criticism of the presenters specifically, this probably reflects more directly on the balance of the programme, that is, the amount of time which was allocated to the different components: presentation, graphics and voiceover, learner profile, Ian's machine. This area is analysed in more detail in Section 3.3.3 below, Structure of the Programmes.

One of the strategies which was used to enhance the presentation of the learning content was the use of outside locations: topics were introduced in an environment which was relevant to the area being explored. Most interviewees found that this worked very well:

> *That was excellent. By using people in real situations, it keeps your attention focused.*

For example, a museum provided the backdrop for the subject of planning and organisation, which allowed the process of classification to provide an analogy for planning of learning; motivation was discussed in a gym and goal-setting, which emphasised the importance of approaching learning in small steps, was discussed in a driving school.

For most learners, these analogies provided an effective context for the learning to learn material. A few people did not see the settings as analogies but rather were hoping, for example, to get more information about the driving test when the setting was a driving school. These were learners who were working on their own at a fairly basic level. For most of the target group, this presentation method worked well.

3.3.2 Learner Profile

Each of the three *Read Write Now* TV series has included in each programme a profile of an individual learner. This person describes how they embarked on learning as an adult and the impact that addressing their reading and writing difficulties has had on their lives.

This was an extremely popular element of the series. In the first place, it performs an important function in informing the general public who have not hitherto been aware of the extent of the literacy problem in Ireland:

> *That keeps the programme fresh. It has a fierce value in making people aware that there are people with problems [reading and writing].*

As well as this, the learner profile highlights some of the reasons why so many adults have such difficulties and the fact that these are not primarily rooted in lack of intelligence but rather, arise because of circumstances and lack of opportunity.

For viewers who have literacy problems but who have not yet made contact with the adult literacy services and who may never even have acknowledged their difficulty, seeing the learner profile was a significant affirmation:

> *What I found good about the programmes was other people telling their story. The minute you see that you say, yes, there are other people, I'm not alone.*

Almost all of those interviewed for the evaluation mentioned the learner's story as being one part of the series which reassured them that others had overcome their literacy problems and that they could do the same.

> *You really relate to him or her, you're on the same wavelength. It gives you that little bit more encouragement.*

Some people were particularly impressed by the courage these individuals showed in discussing their experiences in such a public way, especially as they themselves were for the most part very concerned about maintaining their privacy.

> *It took a bit of guts to do that.*

The only criticism of the learner profile section of the programme, which came more from experienced learners who had been working on their reading and writing for some time, was

that there could be more of an emphasis on the amount of time and effort which is needed to make progress:

> *Some weeks they give you the impression that you have to go over things only twice and you know it. Some people take longer.*

Some people suggested that it would be beneficial to show a learning in a one-to-one or even a group setting, in order to give viewers who had never experienced literacy tuition, an idea of what they might expect and reassure them that this was not a traditional classroom. Others suggested that the same learner or group could be followed for the duration of the series and that this would give viewers the opportunity to share the person's progress and to see how they overcame obstacles. Both of these ideas have potential for future development and are revisited in Section 3.7 below.

3.3.3 Structure of Programmes

The structure of the programme refers to the way in which the different components are put together, the connections between these and the balance of time which is allocated to each. The construction of a programme is a key factor which contributes to the accessibility of the content for people working at different stages in their reading and writing.

There were four main components to the programmes in *Read Write Now Series 3*:

- Presentation (Teri Garvey and Derek Mooney) of 'learning to learn' content
- Presentation (Professor Ian Robertson) of learning to learn and specific strategies
- Learning points (reading, writing, spelling, numeracy) – graphics and voiceover
- Learner profile.

Added to these were the 'housekeeping' aspects which every programme in this series must contain. These included: an introduction, instructions on how to order the learner workbook, graphic and musical accompaniment, links between sections, wrap-up and final credits.

This is a lot to fit into a twenty-six minute programme and judging from the responses of learners and also from tutors, it may have been too much.

The most frequent criticism which learners made of the programmes was that they 'went too fast'. When questioned more closely about what they meant by this, in many cases people were referring to the rapidity of the changes from one part of the programme to another, that is, to the number of different elements contained in the half hour and how these were slotted together.

> *There are too many sections. It was a bit disjointed.*

Appendix 5 gives a general outline of Programme 1, showing the architecture of the programme and the many changes of scene which took place during the half hour. The effect of this was to create viewing which was varied and fast-moving, with the aim of thereby retaining viewers' interest. However, it is likely that the pace was a little too fast for that part of the audience who were using it as a learning resource. The result of this was to limit the overall accessibility of the programmes, even in relation to learning points which were inherently quite basic.

The presentation of the learning points was successful to a considerable degree. Learners enjoyed the graphics which illustrated the voiceover, found these helpful and thought that the points were clearly explained. However, it was also felt that the individual learning points were covered too quickly, that is, that not enough time was allocated to introducing and developing them:

> *You need a pause after the learning points, maybe to ask some questions about them.*

Some learners solved this problem by video-taping the programmes and watching them at their own pace, a strategy which highlights the importance of making the series available in video and perhaps DVD formats after the transmission period.

In relation to the programme structure, the timing for the learning point sections given in Appendix 5 shows that each of these outcomes – rounding off, scanning and word-building using prefixes and suffixes – were covered in a voiceover of just 45 seconds each and that there was a summary of these at the end of the programme which took about a minute and a half.

The programme makers rightly point out that a learning point which can be covered in a few lines of printed text needs a lot more development when translated to the medium of television and there is always pressure of time to cover everything which needs to be included. Indeed, it is therefore probably over-ambitious to try to cover four different learning points in each half-hour programme. In the future, one half hour programme should contain no more than three items. This would allow more time for more in-depth development and reflection on each, which would in turn make the literacy and numeracy content more accessible, especially to learners working on their own.

One other strategy which would assist in this regard would be to aim for a more integrated structure which would create each programme as an organic whole. This is not to say that there is currently no connection between the different components of the programmes, for there is indeed a common topic in all of the *Read Write Now* programmes in Series 3.

However, there is a lot more potential for integrating the different elements of the programmes. For example, one of the learning points in Programme 1, scanning, was illustrated by Derek Mooney when he looked up the Independent Directory in search of a locksmith and the same point was reinforced by graphics and voiceover. This item could easily be reinforced in the other parts of the programme. For example, the learner featured in that week's profile could be shown looking up a telephone directory or some other reference book in order to explain some part of her story, thereby revisiting the same learning point in a new context. This could be reinforced yet again by one of the three presenters in the course of another part of the 'learning to learn' section. And so on. In this way the same point would be addressed several times in several different ways. This would ensure that the literacy and numeracy learning points were woven into many parts of the programme and not covered mainly in separate, rather short slots.[14]

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[14] That is, in the region of four and a half to six minutes, including the summary at the end – see Appendix 5.

It is important to recognise that in order to accomplish this, it would be necessary to map out every component of every programme in the series well in advance in a lot of detail. This would allow connections to be established which could be written into the script, addressed by a learner and seamlessly woven into whatever situation provided the context for each programme. This approach would also make demands on production processes: for example, knowing in advance that in a certain programme a learner needs to consult a timetable, it would be possible to harmonise this with the addition of hours and minutes in the same programme.

It should be emphasised that the three *Read Write Now* series were indeed extremely well-planned in advance and that the quality of communication between the different parties involved in the design and production processes – NALA and AV Edge – was praised by both sides. It is likely that the time available for the planning and design processes for the first three series made it difficult to harmonise these elements to any much greater degree, given the very short time – from mid-June to mid-September - between the awarding of the contract for the production of the series and the transmission date of the first programme.

However, the tendering process for Series 4 is expected to be completed several weeks earlier than in previous years. The level of advance planning which is now being recommended should therefore be possible for this next stage in the project.

Time is only one of the conditions which is needed to achieve this goal. The other is collaboration at an early stage in the design process between all of the partners and all those involved in the design or production of any aspect of the project. This means that the selection of learning points, topics for context and the production of the learner workbook and other design features would need to be worked on by all parties together. The rationale for this and some of the practicalities arising from such an approach is discussed in more detail in Section 3.7 below.

3.4 Learner Workbook

In all three of the *Read Write Now* TV series, the learner workbook has provided the basis for the development of the TV component in that each programme takes as a starting point the topic and learning points which are covered in one chapter of the workbook. The learner workbook for Series 3 was therefore the first element of the *Read Write Now* materials to be developed. NALA commissioned writers to start the project in mid-May, 2002 and provided guidelines on the content which would be covered in the third series. The general area of 'learning to learn' had already been chosen as the main theme which would provide a context for the delivery of the literacy and numeracy learning points. Decisions about which 'learning to learn' topics would be included were made by NALA, whereas the learning points which would be covered were decided largely by the three workbook writers, in consultation with NALA.

Overall, the general feedback about the workbook was very positive. Learners who were at a more advanced stage in their literacy work and who were beginning to think about progression from adult literacy work to other more advanced options, found it to be a useful and interesting resource:

> *It's excellent. It's a way of revising everything.*

The practical exercises, such as letter writing and form-filling, attracted very positive responses. People also enjoyed the readings in each chapter and certain exercises which explored 'learning to learn' topics, such as the questionnaire investigating learning styles, were new and interesting for learners. There was a lot of interest from learners also in the word-puzzles contained in every chapter.

In addition to adult literacy learners, there is no doubt that there is a client group for the workbook among learning support teachers at both first and second level, and also, among teachers of special needs learners, even though this was not designed as a resource for these groups. Some people wanted it to be more widely distributed or even offered for sale.

The workbook was of course widely used in adult literacy schemes and in other groups where reading and writing tuition was carried out, sometimes in conjunction with the TV programmes and sometimes without them. Tutors of adult literacy groups were especially enthusiastic:

> *It's a great help – good for homework, good for vocabulary.*

> *It gives you a basis, a platform to work from.*

There has never been a direct correspondence between the printed materials and the work covered in the TV programmes which would demand that both resources be used together in order to be useful, which means that both the TV programmes and the learner workbook can be used independently. The TV presenters usually refer at least once or twice in each programme to activities contained in the workbook which illustrate and expand on the areas they are discussing. Nevertheless, the connection between the two sets of resources – print and television - is found more in the themes and the learning points which are common to both media.

In designing the learner workbook the writers were faced with the same questions in relation to the target group and level which arose for the *Read Write Now* project as a whole. Being conscious of the fact that the workbook would be used both by learners in adult literacy schemes as well as by those working at home on their own, and knowing that the chosen category of 'improvers' comprises a very wide variety of specific strengths and weaknesses, the writers adopted the strategy of including exercises in every chapter which would be accessible to people at different stages in their reading and writing. In effect, the workbook writers had the challenge of catering for a very large, unknown, mixed ability audience.

> *I think they'd have to pick and choose. Not every bit would be relevant to everyone but I think there's enough variety in the chapters.*

Feedback from learners at different levels indicate that this rather intricately-planned strategy was successful in reaching a learners at different stages in their reading and writing with a variety of different needs:

> *The level is mixed – some things are easy, others not.*

There are specific sections in each chapter which were found to be useful even by people working at an basic stage in their reading and writing. For example, some of these learners said that vowels, consonants and syllables were new to them and that they found these sections helpful and accessible. Others mentioned the abbreviations which are used for weights and measures. Plurals and the spelling rule for making plurals in specific cases were also of interest to the learners at the most basic stage.

However, some people who were working completely on their own found that it was rather difficult. Those who had the support of a telephone tutor said that the help they got made the workbook more accessible. Therefore, although the workbook includes basic learning points, this is a resource which is more suitable for people who have already made some progress in their reading and writing but who still have specific gaps to fill.

A small number of criticisms were made. Some people thought that there should have been a stronger connection between the book and the TV programmes. Although the approach was never intended to provide a minute-by-minute, page-by-page correspondence between the TV and the book it would be possible to integrate the work of the two media more closely, in much the same way that the different elements of the TV programmes could be harmonised, as recommended in the last section. This would mean that the writers of the workbook and the producers of the TV programmes would work together from the beginning.

3.5 Level and Target Group of Read Write Now 3

One of the first decisions which has to be made at the design stage of any educational project, is the intended target group and the level of the content which will be covered. From this, other decisions about specific content, methodology and pacing naturally flow. However, due to a number of factors which relate partly to the nature of adult literacy learning and partly to the demands of using the television medium for the purpose of distance education, the target group for the *Read Write Now* project has always been somewhat complex.

Reading, writing and numeracy encompass a very varied set of knowledge and skills, some of which are technical and others which are process-oriented, such as the independence and confidence with which an individual carries out certain tasks. It is therefore extremely difficult to capture learners' abilities in terms of pre-defined standards. Furthermore, because the range of existing knowledge and skills which makes up students' learning profiles is so varied, most literacy work is highly individualised and is carried out in one-to-one sessions or in very small groups. All of this makes it difficult to target adult literacy learning for any large group and even the smallest television audience is a very large group for the purpose of learning.

Participants in the evaluation of the *Read Write Now Series 3* were asked to give their views on how they experienced the level at which the programmes and workbook were pitched and how easy or difficult they found the series, in relation to their own abilities and needs.

Among those viewers who had seen one or both of the previous TV series the most frequent observation in relation to the level was that *Read Write Now 3* was at a higher level than the first two series:

Series 1 and 2 ran together but Series 3 has taken a bit of a jump.

This represented the general consensus, which was expressed by learners and also by tutors who were familiar with both series. A number of factors, some of which have already been mentioned, contributed to this. For example, although this was by no means an uncontested view, as the comments already reported show, some people thought that the 'learning to learn' content and some of the 'Ian's Machine' material made the programmes more difficult:

> *A lot of people just want to get by.*

That said, some of the learners who noted that the programmes were at a higher level than Series 2 welcomed this and said that they enjoyed the challenge. Another factor which raised the overall level of the programmes was the pace, which, as has already been reported, some people found to be rather fast.

Nevertheless, even though the series was more difficult than *Read Write Now 1 and 2,* learners did note that there was a wide variety of levels which could cater for people at different stages:

> *Some things were easy and also there were things in it you wouldn't understand.*

> *The level is very varied. Some things are difficult and some are easy.*

A few of the more advanced learners said that some of the learning points in the programmes and workbooks were too easy for them:

> *The level was mixed. Some of it was very basic.*

> *Some of it was a bit basic but we agreed that it had to be there.*

In other words, some of the learning points such as word endings and some of the spelling tips which are basic literacy skills, were accessible to most people whereas others areas, such as letter writing or learning styles, were more complex and were therefore accessible to more advanced learners or to people working with a tutor.

There was general agreement that in relation to the target group of 'improvers', *Read Write Now Series 3* catered very well for learners at the more advanced stage in this category but that in every programme and chapter of the book there was material which could be relevant to people at a more basic stage:

> *It wasn't for beginners. The topics are interesting and there are bits in it that could be used by beginners but as a whole, it's not for beginners.*

In the context of a distance education programme in adult literacy and especially taking into account the unevenness of the strengths and weaknesses of most adult literacy learners, this may be regarded as a strategy which was successful in maximising the range of the audience. Indeed, it has already been noted that the workbook designers identified the selection of

material of different levels as a key strategy in catering for the needs of what amounts to a very large, mixed-ability group.

> *You have to keep it as broad as possible – you just don't know who is going to be out there.*

That said, it is clear that *Read Write Now* is trying to do a great deal in addressing a target audience which includes: independent learners, people in groups, learners at different levels and also, the general public. So far, this strategy has been successful. However, the information and experience gained from the three *Read Write Now* series have suggested additional possibilities, regarding the potential of the project to support adult literacy learning. It may be time at this stage in the project for the programme designers to revisit the programme aims and intended target group, with a view to exploring how this experience should influence the long-term development of the project. In particular, new technologies such as the new literacy tools website which provides literacy learning and tuition materials on the Internet, may open up new directions for future development.

3.6 Use of Freephone Tutor Support Line

3.6.1 Process and Range of Options

Telephone support for adult literacy learners and potential learners was provided for the first two *Read Write Now* TV series in the form of the freephone support line. Viewers were invited to use this service to order a learner workbook for the series and also, to seek help on specific points of reading and writing arising from the programmes or indeed any other related questions.

The evaluations of both series indicated that the freephone support line was extremely important in certain respects: in providing the initial point of contact with participants; in providing and recording information about the profile of the people following the series; and in giving general information about help available for people who want to improve their reading and writing. However, it was used very little by learners for supporting the actual learning of reading and writing.

It was agreed that for the third series there would be some attempt to explore in a systematic way the potential of the telephone for providing structured tutorial support to learners who were willing to use such a service. Telephone support for series 1 and 2 invited viewers themselves to take the initiative in calling the support line with their questions. By contrast, one element of the telephone support which was offered for Series 3 was a more structured system of tutoring or mentoring which involved regular contact calls initiated by the tutor rather than by the learner.

All individual callers who rang in to order a workbook for the two weeks before the series began and the first two weeks of transmission were offered this tutorial service. After that date people were informed that they could call the support line if they needed assistance but were not offered the more structured mentoring system. This was to ensure that this service would be operating for a sufficient length of time for learners and tutors to build up a relationship; and also, to gain an understanding of how it worked and the extent of its impact on learners. However, the lines were still open for people who wanted to initiate calls themselves, which over two hundred people did. Their questions and comments are documented in section 3.6.6 below.

3.6.2 Level of Use

During the period 19th September and 18th October a total of 4,379 independent learners rang the support line to order the learner workbook and of these, 176 or 4%, said that they would like to receive a support telephone call on a regular basis. All of these people were subsequently contacted by one of the seven telephone tutors who were employed for the duration of the series. In addition to their other roles, tutors spent weeks two and three of the series ringing these learners to agree times when it would be convenient for people to take a support call.

In the end, five of telephone tutors between them provided this structured mentoring support service to a total of sixty independent learners, from the last week in October until mid-December. Therefore, about one third of those who had originally expressed an interest in the service actually took up the offer. However, many of those who declined to continue said that they appreciated the call and might consider following up their interest in the future.

Of these sixty people, twenty-seven were men and thirty-three were women, a gender breakdown of 45%/55%, which is close to the proportions of men and women who access the adult literacy services generally.

Each of the tutors took responsibility for a particular group of learners, who received a call from the same tutor every two or three week depending on the arrangements which had been agreed between them. Some learners dropped out at an early stage for a variety of reasons, mostly connected to the demands of their daily lives. A small number of people decided when they saw the first few programmes that they did not want to receive a call after all.

The sixty people whose experiences and feedback inform this section are those who accepted two or more support calls during the series. Some took three calls and a few even took four:

Table 9 Number of calls taken by mentored learners N = 60

Two calls	Three calls	Four calls	Total
21	27	12	60

The description and analysis of the telephone mentoring system which was provided during *Read Write Now Series 3* is based on information gathered in three different ways:

- Feedback from learners in the course of focus group meetings held in Dublin towards the end of the series.
- Feedback from learners in the course of telephone interviews held after the series was over.

- Comments from the telephone tutors at group meetings held with the evaluator and the project officer during the series.

3.6.3 Telephone Support for Specific Learning

Once contact had been established, one of the first tasks of the telephone tutor was to establish the needs of the learners. Part of this involved

> *getting a sense of their level – you ask them about real-life tasks and how they manage those.*

From the information supplied to the telephone tutors in the course of the series of calls, it seems that around eight of the sixty learners (just over 13%) who participated in this structured mentoring system, were at a very early stage in their work on reading and writing. These were people who, for example, made mistakes in writing their own name and address or who were unfamiliar with the correspondences between common letters and word sounds:

> *He didn't realise there were different pronunciations for different letter combinations.*

Strictly speaking, the *Read Write Now* TV series was not aimed at people working at such a basic level. Nevertheless, the telephone tutors did work through some of the most basic points with the small number of learners who fell into this category.

Some of these independent learners were indeed able to make progress in very specific areas, even though they found the overall standard too high for them:

> *The tutor helped to make the book accessible, otherwise I couldn't keep up with the book or the TV.*

However, it is not very easy to use the telephone to work with learners who are at an early stage in their work on reading and writing. This may be due to the absence of visual cues. This difficulty was noted, once again in the context of early Open University educational programmes:

> *While providing a satisfactory means of teaching or tutoring for a wide range of subjects and groups, the medium of audio alone imposes some limitations in terms of the use of graphic or visual material.*[15]

The writer goes on to suggest ways in which this difficulty can be managed but for adult literacy students who are working, for example, on letter formation or basic formatting, it is hard to imagine effective communication between tutor and learner without the support of the visual medium. That said, for participants in this project who were at a more advanced stage, there is evidence that the help of the telephone tutor really did enable them to learn

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[15] Robinson, B. (1984) *Telephone Teaching* in Bates (1984) (ed) op. cit., page 130.

specific literacy and numeracy points which they had previously found too difficult or else had never previously encountered:

My problem was the vowels.

She showed me how to break up the words.

Clarifying the nature of a problem is the first step in seeking a solution to it and part of the difficulty which adult literacy learners can experience is a general sense of being unable to manage a wide range of situations, when sometimes their difficulty is quite specific. At an early stage in the learning process, new adult literacy students are usually invited to identify their learning goals and this naturally involves identifying specific gaps in their knowledge. People working on their own at home do not have the assistance of a tutor in clarifying their needs in this way and this was one of the ways in which the telephone tutor was able to help learners:

I find it extremely hard to get the sounds. It's kind of a mental block. I'd be explaining that to her and yes, I did find that helpful.

Some people found it more difficult to describe the specific nature of the difficulty they are experiencing than others. Getting help from the tutor in explaining this was a useful and significant process in itself:

It took a lot of the shyness out of me. I found that when I was trying to express what I wanted in my spellings she helped me with that.

Almost everyone mentioned spelling as being a problem and for some people, this was the only real difficulty they had. In some cases there were gaps in learners' phonic knowledge which could be remedied fairly easily:

When we spelled out the word with the 'ph' sound it made sense to me, it all fell into place.

Word-building skills such as adding prefixes and suffixes and especially, breaking up words, were particularly noted as areas where the tutors' help was valuable:

I felt I was learning to sound out words and simple little tips.

Some people noted that they now had the confidence to tackle daily tasks which would otherwise have been very difficult for them:

There was a couple of things I was kind of stuck on and she helped me with them...I actually wrote a bit of a letter to my solicitor. Before it would have been a nightmare. Today I had it done in half an hour.

I did out a shopping list. She helped me with it.

Other specific life tasks which people were able to carry out as a result of areas covered in the learner workbook and the TV programmes were mentioned such as form-filling and letter-writing. One learner said that she did out a formal letter for the first time.

The tutor gave me tasks over the phone and then checked them the following week.

It is interesting that most of the learners who took up the offer of this structured telephone mentoring found the 'learning to learn' component of the TV programmes and workbooks to be very valuable:

The learning slant was very good. Multiple intelligences was great. People who've any difficulty are more inclined to knock themselves than anybody else.

It's the most informative part. It's like getting a code, it's like saying, 'this is how you can crack this thing called learning'.

The most frequently-mentioned topics of interest to learners were multiple intelligences, learning styles, memory and planning.

Not all of the learning which people achieved was directly related to the learning points or the topics covered in the series. Some people took the opportunity to ask the telephone tutor for help in tasks arising from their daily lives. For example, one woman who had never before sent Christmas cards said that some members of her family who did not know about her reading and writing difficulties thought that she had forgotten or not wanted to send them. During the support calls for the *Read Write Now* programmes the telephone tutor coached her in how to address an envelope and how to write a greeting on a card. Clearly, this woman had some writing skills as she was able to take instructions on spelling and format over the telephone. She sent the tutor a Christmas card, perfectly written and said that this year for the first time she was sending her own cards to her family.

Another learner found that his reading and writing problems were most noticeable when he was called on to spell people's names, for example at work or when he was helping with his children's football team and had to write lists of players' names. This caused him a great deal of stress. During the telephone support calls, he asked his tutor to help him with the spelling of the names he came across most frequently. Later, the tutor wrote:

The other day a workmate asked him to fill in a sheet for him as he had forgotten his glasses. He was able to write the name – M. Carty – but can't help wondering if the workmate has literacy problems too!

These experiences indicate that there are two possible approaches to the direct tutoring of literacy work using the telephone: addressing specific learning points from the programmes

in which the learner expresses an interest or a need to improve; and focusing on real-life tasks which the learner needs to carry out in their daily lives.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive and indeed, the telephone tutors reported using both approaches with the same learner. Some of those tutored for this short period showed that working on specific literacy points such as certain sounds or spellings, did help them to tackle real-life tasks which they had not done before or only with difficulty. On the basis this short period of telephone tutoring, it is evident that the telephone really does have potential to facilitate learning in specific literacy and numeracy items, as well as helping people to work on particular tasks. Essentially, it introduces a feedback mechanism for learners which people working at home on their own would otherwise lack.

3.6.4 Telephone Support as Motivation

The most frequently-mentioned benefit of the telephone support was the encouragement it gave learners to continue with their learning and to follow the process to the end. Participants who worked through all or most of the series saw the support calls as a focus for their work:

I think if it hadn't been for the call I think the book might have stayed in the press...

I felt, here was somebody trying to help me. You felt good in yourself when she rang you, you wanted to go on.

I got encouraged – I knew she was going to be ringing me.

For some learners working at home on their own, the content of the television programmes and the book may have seemed daunting at first. The telephone tutor was able to assist people in focusing on those parts of the series which were relevant to them and most accessible for the stage they were at:

The book wasn't as hard as it looked. The call got you going.

In addition to the reading and writing outcomes which learners achieved, contact with the tutor helped to remind them of their undertaking and to prioritise it in their schedule. Indeed, some people could not quite believe that there was a literacy service available to help people with reading and writing difficulties which many people thought they were the only person to experience. Although a large number of callers declined the offer to take part in the structured mentoring system, others who did make use of it said that that they themselves probably would not have taken the initiative to call the freephone line with a question, even if they did need help:

I didn't want to be tormenting her on the phone. She said she'd ring me and she did. I couldn't believe it.

Although one of the strengths of the *Read Write Now* project is the privacy it allows learners who want to take a first step in addressing their reading and writing difficulty in their own

home, the disadvantage of this - and indeed of any distance education programme - is the isolation which people can experience. In fact, student isolation is frequently noted in the literature on open and distance learning. Simpson[16] observes that

> *...studying through ODL is often a very isolating experience; students are isolated from other students, their tutors, the institution and sometimes their own family and friends. Such isolation must inhibit if not prevent entirely any possibility of dialogue...Yet education....is essentially a process of dialogue.*

For these adult literacy students, many of whom had never before discussed their wish to improve their reading and writing, the telephone tutor provided a point of contact with the outside word. The tutor was also a source of guidance, information and encouragement, as well as support for particular questions about detailed reading and writing points:

> *It's good to have an outside link. It's not easy at times to ask your family.*

The telephone tutors confirmed that for some people, especially those who were disclosing their reading and writing difficulty for the first time, the thing they needed most of all, at least at the start, was someone in whom they could confide their own story:

> *Some people didn't need specific support, they just needed encouragement. All 176 people got that when we rang them to ask if they wanted us to help.*

This is not to say that these individuals had no specific needs in relation to reading and writing issues but rather, before they were ready to address these directly they first needed reassurance and general information about how the support service worked.

Naturally some people were more motivated learners than others. For some people the series and the support of the telephone calls were taken very seriously:

> *He is always by the phone, waiting.*

> *She loves the programmes and every day does thirty minutes on the exercises by herself.*

Not everyone is able or willing to make this kind of commitment and indeed high drop-out rates are a feature of many adult education programmes, especially distance education and open learning programmes. According to some research, this can be as high as 70% or even 80% [17] and is highest among people who have low educational qualifications or none at all.

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[16] Simpson, O. (2002) *Supporting Students in Online, Open and Distance Learning* London: Kogan Page page 10
[17] Woodley, A. (1987) *Understanding Adult Drop-Out* in Thorpe, M. and Grugeon, D. (1987) *Open Learning for Adults* Harlow: Longman pages 57 – 63.

Maximising retention of learners is in fact one of the factors underpinning the rationale for providing support for students which complements the course materials. [18]

For *Read Write Now* participants, there is no doubt that the combination of encouragement and the provision of help for specific learning points made a considerable impact. Tutors and a few learners acknowledged that they did not want to go to an adult literacy centre until they had at least started making progress in their learning:

> *Some people are using it as preparation for going to a class.*

In fact, five people did enrol for a class either during the series or shortly after it finished.

One strategy which both learners and tutors reported as being particularly successful in motivating people was giving particular tasks for learners to complete in the week or weeks between telephone calls – in effect, setting them homework. Tutors found that this gave the next call a focus. As well as this, learners were very happy to get feedback about a particular piece of work which they tried to carry out on their own, knowing that the telephone support would be there to help them:

> *It was marvellous to see him able to do it. He just didn't believe it.*

> *It was like a tonic to be able to say, now I've got six sentences done out.*

For learners working at the very broad stage of 'improvers', quite a lot of literacy work can be done over the telephone. Successful tasks which tutors and learners worked through together included: reading sentences and longer passages, sounds, letters, spellings, breaking up words and lay-out of letters and envelopes.

At the same time, it is important to recognise that the process of participating in and managing telephone support calls requires certain communication skills on the part of both tutor and learner which may need to be developed. For example, this experience has shown that some people need help in articulating what they need and what they find difficult. Tutors reported that the most difficult aspects of this part of their work were the lack of visual cues, which meant that tone of voice and the two-way conversational dynamic were very important. Managing this dynamic is one of the many functions of the telephone tutor.

3.6.5 The Role of the Telephone Tutor

The individuals who staffed the freephone support line carried out a range of important functions for the whole *Read Write Now* TV project. These may be summarised as follows:

- Taking the first telephone call from independent learners who want to order the learner workbook, and therefore acting as the initial point of contact for many people who have never before tried to access the literacy services;
- Placing these orders and entering learners' personal details (where available) into the database;

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[18] Simpson (2002) op. cit., page 9.

- Where necessary, giving general information about the adult literacy services and offering the option of referral to an adult literacy scheme and also, of systematic telephone support;
- Providing telephone support tutorials on a regular basis for those who agree to this;
- Answering people's questions and comments on an ad hoc basis;
- Keeping records of telephone tutorials and comments to the freephone support line

The role of the telephone tutors was therefore extremely varied and involved administration and record-keeping, tutoring and guidance and counselling. Many of these tasks, including the apparently administrative business of getting people's names and addresses, needs to be handled with great caution and sensitivity in order to reassure people the privacy of their details and the confidentiality of the service.

The provision of tutorial support on a regular basis is a demanding activity. On one hand, tutors need to follow good adult literacy practice by adopting a learner-centred approach. In this case, the telephone tutors spent some time trying to establish what those needs were:

People's needs are different.

This applied not only to the content of the work which would covered in the course of the calls, but also, how the calls would be managed: when they would be made and how often. Clearly, this has to be negotiated and this is a process which takes some time at the early stages of the contact. For example, lack of privacy in the home is an issue for people at certain times and tutors sometimes had to be ready to abandon or reschedule a call to accommodate an unexpected event in the learner's home. This is to be expected in a telephone tutoring system and should be considered a normal factor in the work, rather than a lack of commitment on the part of the learner.

Similarly, the progress which people make and the work they do from week to week varies, is bound to be influenced by the current demands of their everyday lives. Telephone tutors found that sometimes people had not been able to do the work as planned. It was important for tutors to acknowledge that the demands of daily life are an important part of the individual's learning context:

I think she appreciated that I didn't put pressure on her.

Once again, the erratic nature of people's participation in a distance education support initiative needs to be viewed as a legitimate factor in the process, which the system should take into account. This is a rather different view of more traditional programmes, which assume full attendance and participation and design course content and methodology accordingly. Distance education programmes, especially open learning systems, cannot be designed with such expectations in mind. The provision of learner supports such as telephone tutoring systems like this one are therefore especially important as they can help to individualise the experience for learners and help them to stay motivated – and to continue with their learning.

Some people benefited from a directive approach, where most of the discussion was tutor-led. Such sessions typically focused on a part of the TV programmes or the books which the tutor and learner then worked through together.

You have to show people how to use the service – narrow it down, focus on a particular page. Or else establish something the person wants to do.

Other people were more willing to take the lead.

You have to be flexible – sometimes you discard what ought to be covered, what's on the TV or in the book – and concentrate on what the learner wants.

The telephone tutors involved in this project emphasised the need to keep a record of the content of each call, in order to facilitate the next one. It is also important for telephone tutors to have a support system for themselves, where they can discuss their experiences and exchange ideas for strategies and ways of working.

3.6.6 Calls to the Comment Line

An on-going part of the work of the telephone tutors was dealing with queries and comments which viewers made to the freephone line. The freephone service was extensively promoted during every programme and the volume of calls always increased during and immediately after each of the Monday night transmissions, when there were always at least three tutors on duty. Telephone lines were also staffed from 10am – 4pm, Monday to Friday and an answering services was switched on outside those hours.

Viewers' reasons for calling the support line varied. A detailed record of the content of each conversation was kept for about 230 of these calls and although this is a small proportion of the total number which were made during the three months when the lines were open, it may be useful to examine the type of queries and comments which were made. These may be categorised as follows:

Administrative: these were calls addressing practical issues, for example enquiring when the workbook would be sent out.

Feedback on key aspects of the programmes – content, presentation: Some of these calls referred to the literacy learning points, others addressed the 'learning to learn' focus. A small number of people rang in to make a comment about the presentation.

Feedback on each of these areas was generally very positive. People commented particularly on the usefulness of the support for spelling and also, for some aspects of the numeracy work such as measurement. A small number of viewers thought that the literacy and numeracy learning points were covered too quickly and therefore found them hard to follow. This concurs with responses from the learners who were interviewed for the evaluation.

Learning to learn content was well received, with the topics of multiple intelligences, memory work and learning styles attracting particular interest. At the same time, a small number of people said that they found this part of the programmes difficult to understand. Some people rang specifically to ask for clarification on multiple intelligences.

Requests for help on specific learning points: About 41% of the logged calls were from

people who had a particular question about reading, writing or numeracy. Most of these related to the content of the workbook or the programmes, with people asking for clarification on learning points covered in the television component so that they could complete a related exercise in the workbook.

However, a number of the most concrete queries came from people who wanted help with specific life tasks, such as filling in a form or spelling particular words, which were not directly related to the programme content at all. One man rang in to ask for help in sending a text message on his mobile phone. A few wanted help with writing Christmas cards or letters. This echoes the experience of the structured tutorial work, when people used the system to support the literacy tasks which arose from their daily lives.

General queries: These calls were from people who wanted general information about the adult literacy service, how it works and where they themselves could get help. Telephone tutors were able to give people a contact number for the adult education centre in their locality.

General comments: Some of the calls to the helpline gave general feedback on the programmes without specifying any of the particular components. These amounted to about 20% of the logged calls and for the most part, were very positive. Here is a selection of some of them:

> *Absolutely fantastic. Congratulations.*

> *It's the best production in years.*

> *It's such a useful programme for helping with everyday tasks*

> *Congratulations to all involved. This is very, very good.*

A small number of people made comments which were more critical. Some people thought that the programmes went too fast or that they did not give enough time to the reading and writing content. Once again, these criticisms are in keeping with those which were made by evaluation participants.

Issues for future consideration: Some of the people who rang in were not part of the original target group but the fact that they were interested in the series and had comments to make about it, suggests possibilities for future development.

For example, telephone tutors reported that some people who called them did not themselves have a problem with reading and writing but had a friend or relative who did. Occasionally these callers asked for the learner workbook to be sent to that person. This suggestion was always refused. Instead, the caller was asked to give the freephone number to their friend or relative and suggest to her or him that they should order the workbook themselves. This was essential in order to safeguard the privacy of individuals who may themselves not be ready to acknowledge their literacy difficulty, despite the efforts of well-meaning relatives.

In fact, a number of callers were already actually helping their friends or relatives with reading and writing. Some of these people rang in specifically to ask for guidance in how

they could be of most assistance. In some cases, telephone tutors were able to suggest particular methods and materials which the helpers could use and a few people called in regularly to get more ideas. These individuals are effectively working as volunteer tutors for their friends and relatives and it would seem that there is potential for the telephone helpline and indeed, the *Read Write Now* project, to support them in this.

This was confirmed by some of the learners themselves who said that their relatives were not always as helpful as they thought they were. A few learners reported that their friends and relatives did not really know how to help them, even though they were willing to do so. Often, the easiest option was to actually carry out the reading or writing task instead of working through it with the individual. One woman who often got her sister to do any writing she needed said:

> *Usually she'd take it off me and do it for me. Sure, the letter gets done or whatever but I know deep down that I should be trying myself.*

The evaluations of *Read Write Now 1 and 2* reported an unexpected level of interest in the series among people who were not part of the original target group. This trend has continued, with calls and comments coming in from parents, teachers, people with disabilities including those working with the deaf who would like to see sub-titles and now, people from other countries whose first language is not English.

At one stage in the series, telephone tutors reported that

> *Every third call is about dyslexia.*

A lot of calls to the freephone line were from people who either thought they were dyslexic, or had a friend or relative, often a child, who they thought might be. Very few of these people had ever been formally assessed for dyslexia. Some callers did not know how to go about having this done whereas others knew that there were very long waiting lists and that having assessments done privately is very costly.

There is no way of knowing whether these callers were in fact dyslexic. However, this does indicate that there is a need for information about what dyslexia is and is not, and about how to access assessments and support services.

Foreign nationals are another group represented in the cohort of telephone callers. Many people whose first language was not English called to order the workbook and to seek support for their work on learning or improving their English language skills. Although these resources were not designed for that purpose, this highlights one of the key needs of this diverse community.

3.6.7 Conclusions on Telephone Support

This experience of providing a telephone mentoring service gives some indication of the practical potential of the telephone for providing support to adult literacy students in the specific context of *Read Write Now* and also, in a more general context.

In the first place, it clearly is possible to give people effective help with specific questions on reading and writing using the telephone. The absence of face-to-face contact, while

presenting a challenge, is not an insurmountable obstacle. For certain learning points such as spelling and word-building, the telephone worked particularly well during this project.

The learners who benefited most from the telephone tutorials were those who already had some reading and writing skills which they needed to improve, although those at a more basic stage were able to make particular gains such as practising certain spelling rules. However, in-depth work on the technical aspects of reading and writing would not really be possible using the telephone with complete or near beginners, at least with the materials which were available for this part of the project. It is possible that more basic programme content and support material would provide a more suitable stimulus for learners at this stage.

It is also clear that some people would be willing to accept help with reading and writing which arises more from tasks in their daily lives, than to designated programme content. This suggests the potential for a general adult literacy support line which would complement the distance education programme.

In addition to the technical aspects of reading and writing, the provision of guidance and encouragement were significant supports for people working at home on their own. In some cases this meant giving general information about the literacy services and providing referral details whereas in others people needed reassurance that it was worthwhile to work on their reading and writing.

It is true that the number of participants who agreed to take part in the telephone tutorial part of the *Read Write Now* project was a very small proportion of the independent learners who placed orders for the workbook, just 4%. About a third of these followed through on this, which gives a final participation rate of less than 1.5% of all of the independent learners who rang in during the four weeks when the service was being offered. Telephone tutorials, obviously, are not for everyone. Some people do not have the privacy at home to use the service in this way, others simply prefer face-to-face contact or indeed may not be ready to interact with a tutor at all.

However, for those who do embark on the process, this is one strategy which can help to retain people's interest and motivation. It should not be regarded as a potential replacement for any of the existing services, but should rather be explored as an additional resource to enhance learners' experience of *Read Write Now* and thereby add value to the project; and also, a channel of communication with a cohort of potential learners who might otherwise take no action to address their literacy problem.

3.7 Future Developments

3.7.1 Suggestions on Programme Content

All of the learners and tutors who were interviewed for the evaluation were invited to make suggestions which they would like to see implemented in future series of Read Write Now, or indeed in any other programmes aimed at adult literacy learners which might be developed in the future.

The strategy of weaving reading, writing and numeracy into topics of general interest attracted widespread support and learners identified several other areas which could provide a focus for future literacy work. These are listed below under three general headings: topics

which apply to task arising in daily life; those which relate to activities and work; and those concerned with knowledge or awareness of social issues of current interest.

Practical application of literacy work to daily tasks

- Financial services: using laser cards and credit cards
- Reading and checking bank statements.
- Checking bills
- Calculating and checking loan payments

- Using mobile phones in different ways
- Using Information Technology, especially sending emails

- Work to support the theory test for the driving licence

Work orientated topics

- Health and Safety topics as these arise in different work contexts e.g. office, construction industry (Safe Pass certificate which is provided by FÁS to indicate that the individual has an awareness of safety issues)

- Trades and crafts

General knowledge

- Current affairs such as global warming, the environment
- Citizenship
- Consumer Awareness
- Knowing your rights

The potential for other topics and processes, as well as the refocusing of the target group for the project, has already been noted throughout this report. It may be useful to summarise these suggestions here:

- Provide information about dyslexia.
- Provide guidance for friends and relatives of people with literacy difficulties, both in general awareness and in concrete ways of helping with reading and writing tasks.
- Show the same individual working through the whole series, including one-to-one sessions in action.
- Show a group working through the whole series, including group sessions in action.

It is likely that any or all of these suggestions would attract a wide and interested audience. The choice of which direction should be followed is a policy issue which now needs to be debated by all of the stakeholders. This point is elaborated in the final section.

3.7.2 Development of Support Services

The main focus of the *Read Write Now* project to date has concentrated on the development of the programme materials: the television programmes and the learner workbooks. Learner support for the first two years consisted of the freephone support line and the evaluations show that in fact, the telephone was not used very much by learners for that purpose. However, the experience of the telephone mentoring system which was implemented during

Series 3 has shown that there is potential for using the telephone in a concrete, structured manner to support literacy work; and that there are learners who are willing to experiment with this. In fact, the learners who were supported in this way were disappointed to hear that the service would end with the ending of the TV series.

It would be possible to support future transmissions of *Read Write Now* with telephone tutoring using the same model as that which operated during this stage of the project. In practical terms, there is no reason why this system, and an open-ended adult literacy support line, could not operate for all or most of the year and not only during transmission periods. These possibilities should be explored for the next stage in the project. In theory, the operation of such a system could be devolved to operate at a local level. However, in the interests of assuring quality and standardisation of the service, it would probably be preferable to maintain the centralised implementation model, at least for the next stage.

One other strand of activity which needs to be mentioned in the context of learner support, could operate well at a local level. Feedback from independent learners following *Read Write Now* was obtained, among other ways, in the course of focus group meetings which were held in Dublin. These meetings were conducted along the lines of experiential group work, where participants were introduced to the NALA staff working on the project and to the evaluator, and invited to take part in large and small group discussions. As well as giving their views on key aspects of the programmes almost all of the participants in these sessions took the opportunity to give an account of their own learning journey and the ways in which their lives had been affected by their reading and writing difficulties.

Whilst providing learner support was not the original purpose of these focus group meetings, there is no doubt that participants found the occasions very valuable. For some people, this was the first time they had ever met others with similar difficulties and this in itself was a relief to many of them. After every meeting telephone tutors and the evaluator received calls and cards thanking the staff for the opportunity to meet and to talk about their situation. Many people said that although they had initially been nervous and afraid of the idea of coming to such a meeting – and considering the risk and exposure involved, it is surprising that people did agree to come at all – they found it very rewarding and were glad that they had attended.

Learners who work on their reading and writing through an adult literacy scheme already have the benefit of the social contact and indeed, the moral support, which a tutor or peers can provide. Independent learners have no such support networks. The experience of the evaluation participants who attended the focus group meetings shows that it is possible to create such networks for independent learners who feel ready to make use of them.

During the course of the evaluation interviews, all participants were asked whether or not they would be willing to take part in one or two contact meetings with tutors and other learners if these were provided at key points during the series. Not surprisingly, responses were mixed. Some people said that they definitely would not, that they preferred to work on their own and in any case did not want to meet other learners yet. Often, these individuals were concerned that their privacy would be invaded. However, some people said that they would welcome the opportunity to meet others who were following the series, especially if meetings were held in a location which was convenient for them.

It would be worth enhancing the next stage of the *Read Write Now* project by considerably expanding the student support element. The model of telephone tutoring which was

implemented for *Read Write Now 3* could easily be expanded if more tutors were recruited and, most significantly, if the support line were kept open throughout the year. As well as this, the provision of contact meetings designed to support independent learners should be piloted for the next series. Support meetings should be organised for a range of different venues which could be decided when the level of interest among learners in different locations is determined. Ideally, there should be two meetings in each location for these independent learners, one before or near the start of the series and one close to the end. This would provide a structure for learners and encourage their continued participation.

3.7.3 Long-term Planning

The experience of learners, tutors and project staff in *Read Write Now Series 3* has provided insights into how the project may be enhanced in the future. The following general strategies should be adopted:

- Provide a learning experience for viewers which is interactive, for example, by engaging them during and between programmes in specific tasks and activities which then provide material for reflection and analysis.
- Cover fewer learning points and give more time to each.
- Address learning to learn contact but in a concrete way which is related to literacy work, for example, address memory in the context of learning spellings.
- Harmonise the different components of the TV programmes.
- Harmonise the content – and design – of the workbook and the TV programmes.
- Involve all of those working on the TV and print element of the project in the planning stage and allow time for the two sets of resources to be developed in tandem.
- Consider the specific suggestions for new topics which might be covered in future programmes. Section 3.7.1 above

Given the amount of time and energy which has been devoted to the production and dissemination of these very high-quality and successful resources in recent years, and considering the range of possibilities for future directions, this is a good time for the project partners to take a step back and reflect on what has been achieved, and what should happen in the future. In relation to the overall balance between attention to resources and attention to learner support, it is strongly recommended that the immediate future of the project should allocate significant resources to the expansion of the student support element.

However, this leaves the question of what direction the materials production should take. Section 1 summarised all of the materials resources which now exist and it would be possible to make creative use of these in a number of ways. Here are some examples:

- The production company (AV Edge) suggests creating DVDs based on the television material which could be used as a systematic learning resource.
- One or more of the existing series could be repeated in the autumn schedule.
- A fourth series could be developed addressing a new or more closely-defined target group.
- TV resources could be developed in tandem with radio resources and transmission schedules negotiated to allow both mediums to support each other.

There is now a need for all of the stakeholders to come together, in order to revisit priorities, re-establish aims and the target group and generally create a long-term strategy for the project.

In order to accomplish this, planning should not be confined by a year-by-year funding arrangement. There is only so much which a project can achieve under these circumstances and it is almost impossible to create a cohesive programme over an extended period when the continuation of the project is uncertain. For these reasons. there should be an assurance of funding for this distance education programme, including learner support, for a minimum of three years. This would allow all of the stakeholders to enter into commitments based on a coherent, long-term plan which would ensure that the best value and support are achieved for the maximum number of people.
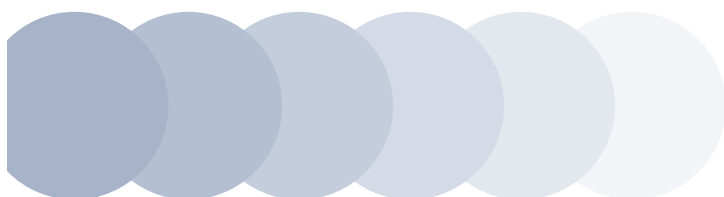
Appendices

Appendix 1

Members of Media Advisory Committee, 2002-2003

Department of Education and Science:
Des O'Loughlin: Assistant Principal Officer, Further Education Section

Radio Telefís Éireann
Grainne McAleer: Independent Productions Unit

National Adult Literacy Agency
Inez Bailey: Director
Helen Ryan: Project Co-Ordinator
Peggy Murphy: NALA Executive

Vocational Education Committees
Frances Ward: Adult Literacy Organisers' Association
Pat Stanton: Adult Education Organisers' Association
Rodger Curran: Chief Executive Officers' Association

Appendix 2

Themes Covered in Read Write Now Series 1, 2 and 3

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
1	Going to a Concert	First Aid	The Learning World
2	Buying a Video Recorder	Cooking	How we learn
3	A Day at the Races	Football	Learning Experiences
4	The Birthday Party	Gardening	Use your learning
5	A Promotion	Wedding	Different types of intelligences
6	A New Job	Accommodation	Memory
7	Applying for the Driving Test	Information Technology	The drive to learn
8	Going to the Hospital	DIY	Know your strengths
9	Saturday at the Pictures	Healthy Lifestyle	Learning and planning
10	Family Life	Interview for a Job	Ways of learning
11	Booking a Holiday	Pets	Managing your learning
12	Trip to Newgrange	Trip Away	Reviewing your learning and moving on

Appendix 3

Learning Points in Read Write Now Series 1, 2 and 3

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
1	**Going to a Concert** 1. Reading a label 2. Taking down numbers from radio 3. Writing a note 4. Times - 24 hour clock	**First Aid** 1. Dealing with a burn - do's & don'ts 2. Sun protection cream – what does the factor mean? 3. Reading + understanding dosage instructions 4. Spelling - word-ending 'ing'	**The Learning World** 1. Reading an ad - scanning 2. Making new words – word endings –ful and –joy + two small words come together. 3. Shopping – rounding off and adding up 4. Improving your writing – looked at key words and put them in a sentence.
2	**Buying a Video Recorder** 1. Reading a Recipe 2. Writing a cheque 3. Filling in a form 4. Taking down instructions from the phone	**Cooking** 1. Alphabetical order – first and second letters 2. Abbreviations 3. Reading food labels – best before and use by date 4. Spelling – word endings –ing, -ed, -er	**How we learn** 1. Working out averages 2. Writing a formal letter 3. Syllables 4. Doing a crossword
3	**A Day at the Races** 1. Writing a betting slip 2. Scanning the newspaper 3. Filling in a competition form 4. Shortening or abbreviating words	**Football** 1. Using teletext 2. Looking up contents page 3. Capital letters 4. Compound words	**Learning Experiences** 1. Volume 2. Suffixes 3. Constructing sentences 4. Reading a timetable

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
4	The Birthday Party 1. Writing a short letter 2. Reading a calendar 3. Writing a note for yourself 4. Looking up the telephone book 5. Writing invitations	Gardening 1. Spelling – vowels and consonants 2. Scanning for key words 3. Reading Instructions 4. Filling in forms	Use your learning 1. Vowels and consonants 2. Reading a map 3. Making a poster 4. Keeping a learning journal
5	A Promotion 1. Reading small pieces of text - scanning 2. Compound words 3. Writing sentences 4. Keeping a personal dictionary	Wedding 1. Using a diary 2. Writing a wedding invitation 3. Looking up an index – golden pages 4. Spelling – spelling nos	Different types of intelligences 1. 2D and 3D shapes 2. Writing an informal note 3. Using a dictionary 4. Reading a seating plan
6	A New Job 1. Alphabetical order 2. Reading a notice 3. Writing a note 4. Reading a menu	Accommodation 1. Reading Advertisements 2. Time – am/pm 3. Filling in forms – some key areas to note 4. Spelling – apostrophe	Memory 1. Memory aids 2. Weight - kilograms 3. Filling in an application form 4. Remembering spellings
7	Applying for the Driving Test 1. Filling in an application form 2. Reading road signs 3. Writing a greeting card 4 Recap on hints from driving instructor	Information Technology 1. International Dialling Codes 2. Writing an email 3. Writing a cheque 4. Spelling - syllables	The drive to learn 1. Verbs 2. Distance and speed 3. Reading Signs 4. Capital letters
8	Going to the Hospital 1. Reading a formal letter 2. Writing an informal note 3. Signing an admissions form 4. Reading dosage instructions	DIY 1. Reading signs 2. Measuring area 3. Reading safety information on labels 4. Introduction to Euro notes and coins	Know your strengths 1. Reading a payslip 2. Reading signs & symbols 3. Spelling 'shun' words 4. Skills & qualities

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
9	Saturday at the Pictures 1. Scanning the cinema listings 2. Booking tickets over the telephone 3. Reading a bus timetable 4. Using the ATM 5. How to find your seat 6. Reading a menu	Healthy Lifestyle 1. Reading Food labels in Supermarket 2. Making a list 3. Per cent 4. Spelling - word endings -er -ed -ing	Learning and planning 1. Doing a mindmap 2. Reading an ad 3. Wordsearch 4. Budgeting
10	Family Life 1. Value of reading to your children 2. Reading things around u 3. Tips about reading 4. Value and encourage reading to your children	Interview for a job 1. Reading & understanding advertisements 2. Filling in a Job application form 3. Writing a formal letter 4. Spelling - homonyms	Ways of learning 1. Pie charts 2. Prefixes 3. Internet Search Engines 4. Word Wheel
11	Booking a Holiday 1. Using a calendar 2. Filling in a form 3. Reading a holiday brochure 4. Reading notices	Pets 1. Spelling - prefixes 2. Filling in a dog licence form 3. Reading a contents page 4. Doing a crossword	Managing your learning 1. Ph sounds 2. Reading food labels 3. Filling in timetables 4. Proof-reading
12	Trip to Newgrange 1. Reading directions using a map 2. Looking up number in a phone book and making the call 3. Writing a letter	Trip Away 1. Reading road signs 2. Euro Zone 3. Reading a map 4. Doing a wordsearch	Reviewing your learning and moving on 1. Synonyms 2. Reading travel tickets 3. Changing money 4. Reading weather maps

Appendix 4

Learning Points in Read Write Now Workbooks 1, 2 and 3

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
1	**Going to a Concert** 1. Reading the time: 24 hour clock 2. Reading timetables 3. Train signs 4. Reading a poster 5. Word Building	**First Aid** 1. Reading Leaflets 2. Reading instructions 3. Writing a List 4. Writing a Conversation 5. Reporting an Accident 6. Taking down instructions 7. Reading 8. Spellings:Word ending-ing 9. Crossword	**The Learning World** 1. Reading and exercise 2. Reading Labels 3. How do you learn? 4. What is learning? 5. Shopping for DIY 6. Writing a List 7. Reading an Advertisement 8. Writing a Conversation 9. Working with Words 10. Spellings 11. Word Puzzle
2	**Buying a Video Recorder** 1. Following instructions 2. Taking down instructions 3. Phone Book 4. Writing a Cheque 5. TV Listings 6. Spelling of Numbers	**Cooking** 1. Reading recipes 2. Alphabetical Order 3. Reading an Index 4. Sentences 5. Writing a list 6. Ordering 7. Reading 8. Spellings: Word endings 9. Wordsearch	**How we learn** 1. Reading and exercise 2. Filling in forms 3. What sort of learner are you? 4. Averages 5. Reading an Index 6. Formal Letters 7. Spellings: Syllables 8. Spellings: kind of speller 9. Crossword

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
3	A Day at the Races 1. A Day at the Races 2. Placing Bets 3. Filling in Forms 4. Creative Writing 5. Shortening Words	Football 1. Reading Football Table 2. Capital Letters 3. Reading an Index 4. Reading – cloze exercise 5. Working on words 6. Writing a football report 7. Reading 8. Spellings: Compound words 9. Crossword	Learning Experiences 1. Reading and exercise 2. Filling in forms 3. Learning Experiences 4. Volume 5. Writing a Note 6. Reading a Timetable 7. What is a Sentence? 8. Spellings: Suffixes 9. Spellings: Plurals 10. Word Puzzle
4	The Birthday Party 1. Writing a Letter 2. Writing a Note 3. Birthday Invitation 4. The Calendar 5. Alphabetical Order 6. Breaking up Words	Gardening 1. Sowing Pansies 2. Locating Information 3. Making Compost 4. Taking notes 5. Filling in forms 6. Reading 7. Word building + revision 8. Wordsearch	Use your learning 1. Reading and exercise 2. Reading a Timetable 3. Learning Styles 4. Learning a Spelling 5. Reading an Index 6. Reading an Advertisement 7. Reading a Map 8. Learning Journal 9. Spellings vowels + consonants 10. Spellings: Long Vowels 11. Crossword
5	A Promotion 1. The Sentence 2. Writing Sentences 3. Using your Word Diary 4. Reading Leaflets 5. Crossword 6. Creative Writing 7. Building Words	Wedding 1. Reading a Leaflet 2. Choosing Menus 3. Using a diary 4. Wedding Invitations 5. –tion words 6. Capital letters and full stops 7. Writing a cheque 8. Reading 9. Spellings: spelling of no's 10. Crossword	Different types of intelligences 1. Reading and exercise 2. Multiple Intelligences 3. 3 D 4. Giving Instructions 5. Writing a Letter 6. Reading a Plan 7. Dictionary Work 8. Wordsearch

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
6	A New Job	Accommodation	Memory
	1. Reading the time: am/pm	1. Looking for a flat	1. Reading and exercise
	2. Writing a Note	2. Reading am and pm	2. Filling in forms
	3. Reading Instructions	3. Reading the Property Section	3. Short and Long term memory
	4. Reading a Menu	4. Moving into a new flat	4. Remembering a Shopping List
	5. Locating Information	5. Filling in forms	5. Weight
	6. Locating CD	6. Writing Directions	6. Test your Memory
	7. The Full Stop	7. Writing	7. Using a Diary
		8. Reading	8. Silent Letters
		9. Spellings: Apostrophe	9. Mnemonics
		10. Wordsearch	10. Spelling: Remembering
			11. Crossword
7	Applying for a Driving Test	Information Technology	The drive to learn
	1. The Driving Test	1. Computers	1. Reading and exercise
	2. Rules of the Road	2. The E-mail	2. Filling in Forms
	3. Word Puzzle	3. Writing an E-mail	3. Motivation
	4. Road Signs	4. International Dialling Codes	4. Distance & Speed
	5. Creative Writing	5. Working on Words	5. Reading Signs
	6. Writing a Card	6. Reading	6. Reading a Football Table
	7. Word Building	7. Spellings: syllables	7. Capital Letters
		8. Crossword	8. Spelling: Verbs
			9. Crossword
8	Going to the Hospital	DIY	Know your strengths
	1. Letter from the Hospital	1. Reading Instructions	1. Reading and exercise
	2. Writing Notes	2. Working on Words	2. Filling in forms
	3. Filling in Forms	3. Alphabetical Order	3. Skills and Qualities
	4. Understanding Signs	4. Finding Information	4. Reading a Payslip
	5. Reading Labels	5. Reading Signs	5. Health and Safety at work
	6. Capital Letters	6. Building sentences	6. Reading Signs
	7. The Full Stop	7. Writing	7. Preparing for an Interview
		8. Reading	8. Spellings: 'shun' sound
		9. Spellings: Revision Sheets	9. Word Puzzle
		10. Wordsearch	

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
9	Saturday at the Pictures 1. ATM 2. The Cinema 3. Writing 4. The Bus Timetable 5. Reading a Menu 6. Breaking up Words	Healthy Lifestyle 1. Changing your Lifestyle 2. Reading Food Labels 3. The Food Pyramid 4. Vitamins 5. Per cent 6. Reading 7. Spellings:–er, -ed,-ing 8. Crossword	Learning and planning 1. Reading and exercise 2. Filling in forms 3. Learning and Planning 4. Budgeting 5. Driver Theory Test 6. Reading an Advertisement 7. Reading Road Signs 8. Car words 9. Spellings: cover-look check 10. Wordsearch
10	Family Life 1. Writing Lists 2. Reading Lists 3. Reading Signs 4. Crossword 5. Reading the Paper 6. What's your opinion? 7. Recommended child's books 8. Spelling: mix	Interview for a Job 1. Writing Letters 2. Reading Job Adverts 3. Filling in Forms 4. Proof reading 5. Using the Dictionary 6. Questions & Answers 7. Reading 8. Spellings: Homonyms 9. Wordsearch	Ways of learning 1. Reading and exercise 2. Filling in forms 3. Ways of learning 4. Pie Charts 5. The Internet 6. Reading Labels 7. Dictionary Work 8. Spellings: Prefixes 9. Word Wheel
11	Booking a Holiday 1. The Calendar 2. Reading Notices 3. The Signature 4. Filling in Forms 5. The Algarve 6. Lanzarote 7. Capital Letters 8. The Full Stop	Pets 1. Reading Notices 2. Talking to a Vet 3. Locating Information 4. Filling in Forms 5. Plurals: Changing -y to -ies 6. Reading Signs 7. Keeping a Pet 8. Reading 9. Spellings: Prefixes 10. Crossword	Managing your learning 1. Reading and exercise 2. Reading a Recipe 3. Managing learning 4. Managing your own learning 5. Hidden Sugars 6. Reading Labels 7. Interpreting Images 8. Proof Reading 9. Spellings: Consonant blends 10. Word Puzzle

Prog No.	RWN 1	RWN 2	RWN 3
12	**Trip to Newgrange**	**Trip Away**	**Reviewing your learning and moving on**
	1. Writing Letters	1. Following directions	1. Reading and exercise
	2. Writing a Postcard	2. The Map of Ireland	2. Weather
	3. Finish the Story	3. Reading a Map	3. What have you learned?
	4. Looking at a Map	4. Road Signs	4. How do you know if you are making progress?
	5. Giving Directions	5. Making a List	5. Changing Money
	6. Creative Writing	6. Writing a Postcard	6. Reading an Airline Ticket
	7. Reading	7. Reading	7. Capital Cities
		8. Spellings: Revision	8. Reading a Map
		9. Wordsearch	9. Where do our words come from?
			10. Spellings: Synonyms
			11. Word Puzzle

Appendix 5
Outline of Programme 1, Read Write Now Series 3

1. Introduction Teri Garvey and Derek Mooney, outside Maynooth. **10 seconds**

2. Graphics and voiceover – how to order workbook. **30 seconds**

3. Derek Mooney/Teri Garvey: street scene, intro to what the series is about. **45 seconds**

4. Derek: voiceover/graphic on ordering workbook. **15 seconds**

5. Derek: many environments and experiences are learning opportunities. **1 minute**

6. Learner's story – voiceover from Bernie as camera shows her sewing. She describes her experiences of being ignored at school and her more recent positive learning experiences. **1 minute 30 seconds**

7. Teri Garvey in Maynooth College, Zen garden. Learning takes time and practise. Personal experience as a resource for learning. **1 minute**

8. Derek Mooney in O Bhuachalla's shop in Maynooth buying DIY items – illustrates setting realistic goals and also learning point – scanning down an alphabetical list. **1 minute**

9. Sting – graphic. **5 seconds**

10. Graphics, voiceover (Derek) for learning point in numeracy – handy tip – rounding off. **45 seconds**

11. Graphics and voiceover (Teri) , how to get workbook. **15 seconds**

12. Learner's story. Bernie revisits her adult learning centre and meets her tutor. They recall her first visit, her fears and discuss her progress. **2 minutes**

13. Teri Garvey in Maynooth Zen garden reflects on how we learn, 4 stages, - example - learning to use mobile phone. **1 minute 20 seconds**

14. Ian's machine. Professor Ian Robertson explains the importance of life experience in learning, linking the unknown with the known and illustrates this by learning the freephone number with the help of a well-known tune (which he sings.) **1 minute 30 seconds**

15. Derek Mooney in shop again reflecting on the importance of setting achievable goals. **1 minute 10 seconds**

16. Sting – graphic **5 seconds**

17. Voiceover (Derek) scanning independent directory. **45 seconds**

18. Graphics and voiceover, how to get workbook. **15 seconds**

19. Learner's story again: Bernie going through her scrapbook. **2 minutes**

20. Teri: in Maynooth garden. Importance of learning throughout life. **45 seconds**

21. Sting – graphic – **5 seconds**

22. Graphics and voiceover (Teri) : word puzzle; learning point – prefixes and suffixes and blends. **45 seconds**

23. Graphics and voiceover– how to get workbook. **15 seconds**

24. Teri Garvey in Zen garden in Maynooth again reflects on learning from mistakes. **50 seconds**

25. Learner's story: Bernie talks about her writing and gives information about the effect of going back to learning. **50 seconds**

26. Derek Mooney: factors which affect learning such as confidence, motivation. **50 seconds**

27. Derek and Teri. **25 seconds**

28. Voiceover (Teri) and graphics to recap on learning points and learning to learn content: scanning/index/word building/ rounding off. **40 seconds**

29. Voiceover (Derek) recap learning points. **50 seconds**

30. Wrap-up: next week's location and details of helpline which is now open. **45 seconds**

	Breakdown of Time
Time: Learner profile	6 minutes 20 seconds
Learning to Learn/presenters, Ian's Machine	9 minutes 25 seconds
Learning points	4 minutes 30 seconds

Housekeeping: Introductions, links, how to order book, graphic/sting, wrap up and closing credits: Total 3 minutes 50 seconds	**Learning to Learn:** Derek 4 minutes Teri: 3 minutes 55 seconds Ian's Machine: 1 minute 30 seconds Total: 9 minutes 25 seconds
Learner Profile: 6 minutes 20 seconds	**Learning Points:** Derek: 1 minute 30 seconds Teri: 1 minute 30 seconds Derek and Teri recap: 1 minute 30 seconds Total 4 minutes 30 seconds

Appendix 6

Agenda for Evaluation Focus Group Meetings

10.30am – 3.30pm

Session 1   10.30 am – 11am
- Introductions
- Background to Read Write Now
- Purpose of evaluation and focus group

Session 2   11am – 12.00
- Small group work: learning achieved
- General discussion

Session 3   12.00 – 1pm
- Small group work: feedback on programmes
- Large group work: general discussion and brainstorm

Lunch   1pm – 2pm

Session 4   2pm – 3.30pm
- Large group work: suggested improvements and future needs
- General progress and review of last year
- Evaluation of day and close

References

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Notes