ROTARY BOOKS4HOME NATIONAL IMPACT DAYS
PROJECT REPORT, JULY 2026

1. Background

Rotary GB&I's first national Impact Day initiative was based on the existing successful Rotary Books4Home project which has been running for the past decade in Staffordshire, Shropshire and parts of the West Midlands. Over 230,000 good quality pre read books had already been donated to school children - see Rotary Books4Home | Rotary 1210 Alumni – and this national pilot project was intended to expand activity more widely across Great Britain and Ireland.

With the decrease in children's reading habits and considering nearly one million children do not have a book of their own (National Literacy Trust), the key objective was to spark children's enjoyment of reading at home and support literacy in the National Year of Reading. By using good quality pre read children's books, this kept the project environmentally friendly which is a core principle of Rotary Books4 Home - 13 million books are sent to landfill each year in the UK.

"Rotary Books4Home is doing something truly powerful addressing an issue that often goes unseen. In parts of our city, over one in four children leave primary school without the expected level of reading skills, and many don't have a single book of their own at home. That's why initiatives like this matter so deeply" (Wolverhampton youth organisation working with Tettenhall Rotary Club).

2. Project overview

The initiative was launched on World Book Day (5th March) 2026 and Rotary clubs and members were asked to collect 200+ good quality pre read books, which would be delivered to a local school. An Impact Day would then be held, at which children could choose a book of their own to take home and keep. Members would also provide schools with Rotary stickers for them to add to the books to confirm they were age appropriate and of good quality. Several clubs also built Rotary book boxes or provided branding for book shelves or other storage in schools.

Rotary GB&I ran a nationwide campaign to promote the launch webinar and project registration, via newsletters and social media, as well as further posts during the project term. The webinar recording and project materials, including a project guide and communications guide, were hosted on the members website at Rotary Books4Home - Rotary GB&I Members Area, with information also posted on Rotary GB&I's public Impact Days page.

It was anticipated that Impact Days would take place in the last two weeks of June, but some were delayed until July for reasons including busy school timetables, the heatwave, illness and at least one Ofsted inspection. Others were run earlier due to school timetabling constraints and lots of activities already planned for the summer term. A few clubs/groups found there was not enough time to complete their activity by then and decided to move their event into the following school term. Several clubs requested more flexibility in when events are held to accommodate such issues.

As this was a pilot national project, it was difficult to gauge the potential level of participation. The launch webinar was well attended and it was hoped that children from 40 – 50 schools would be supported, which would result in approximately 8,000 – 10,000 books being donated by Rotarians. All those who participated were sent a short survey form to complete and return, which was used for evaluation and project learning purposes. Reminders were sent out after the end of the summer term, with a final deadline for data evaluation of 28th July 2026.

Not only was this number of schools involved and books donated exceeded, but encouragingly there has also been considerable interest from clubs and members in continuing to run Rotary Books4Home Impact Days and activities after the end of this initial national pilot. Materials and resources on the RGB&I website are being updated and clubs and members can continue to use them to support their own ongoing and future Rotary Books4Home Impact Days projects.

Key findings

- Clubs and members from **22 out of 24 Rotary districts** initially registered to take part. Out of a total number of 67 clubs and members who expressed an interest in participating during the pilot, **41** provided feedback of completed activity, **three** confirmed they were deferring their event to September, and a further **six** confirmed they had planned, or were interested in running, activities in schools from September onwards.

- At least **73 schools** were provided with books by Rotarians during this period. The majority of these (approximately three quarters) were schools in urban areas, followed by rural schools, along with a handful of schools supporting children with special needs, other institutions and those not initially identified by clubs. School size ranged considerably, from over 500 pupils down to 30 pupils.

- The **total number of books** donated to children to date is **16,017**. Based on an average sale price of £6.47* per new children's book, this equates to a **total equivalent value of £103,630**. With cuts in schools' budgets and library resources often being limited, such support has been welcome for many of the schools involved.

- Rotarians said they did not have an existing relationship with almost half of the potential schools targeted. Despite this, **over three quarters** of respondents advised they would continue to work with their local school and/or new schools in their area going forwards.

- The majority of clubs collaborated with one, or possibly two, local primary schools. Leven, Burton upon Trent and Walsall Rotary Clubs supported **five** schools each. Wrexham Erddig Rotary Club supported **nine** schools (although these did not wish to run Impact Day events at this stage) and is planning to reach out to donate books to the remaining ten schools in their area from next term onwards.

- The number of volunteers involved per club varies considerably, ranging from one to 15, and with the most common group size being **five to six** members.

* Average Sales Price, The Bookseller, September 2025

- Clubs found it difficult to estimate the total number of volunteering hours for the project, largely because there were so many different tasks (including initial contact with schools, collecting and sorting books (which could take the most time), organising Impact Days and promoting the club's project online/in local press, etc. There was a very wide variance in figures received from respondents, with an estimated average amount of **30 hours** volunteering per school.

- Based on the above figure, the total number of **volunteering hours** spent supporting all schools is estimated at **2,190**. This equates to a volunteer value index figure of **£37,230****. It is possible that the total figure may be higher if all volunteers' hours were tracked throughout the project, which could give a more accurate figure of project impact in terms of volunteering value. This could be considered by Rotary GB&I and members for future activities.

- Respondents felt the three most significant areas of project impact were: **supporting children to read more** at home, **raising awareness** of Rotary, and **building relationships** with schools. Attracting new members was the least significant area in the short term, but this may be supported in the longer term by clubs and members raising awareness and building relationships via ongoing Rotary Books4Home activity.

- Respondents were generally satisfied that no significant changes needed to be made to project setup and delivery. However, several wanted **more flexibility** in terms of timing, possibly running events at the start of the Autumn term or around World Book Day, etc.

- Most clubs and schools welcomed **Impact Days** and used them effectively. But not all schools were receptive to the idea, largely due to time and staffing constraints. Clubs supporting these schools were still able to deliver books and create project impact without running Impact Days - though maybe to a slightly lesser degree – and so any such activity in this pilot programme was still included in the evaluation.

4. Project feedback

(i) Working with community partners

Most Rotary clubs worked with existing, or developed new, local community partners to help them collect books. These included local shops and markets, businesses, community centres, other schools and clubs, WI groups, Soroptimists, U3A clubs, hospices, parish councils, church groups, charity shops, libraries, book shops, and even Literacy Trust Scotland. Not forgetting extra pairs of hands from Friends of Rotary, corporate members, family members and neighbours, and many more supporters!

Burton upon Trent Rotary Club, who donated over 1,500 books to five local schools, commented: *"This new exciting initiative is a brilliant project. It has involved so many members of the community in encouraging children to develop a love of reading, especially in their own homes."*

** Based on Be Collective/Impact Portal's Volunteer Value Index calculation

The project was appealing for corporate members community rail Penistone Line Partnership (Stainborough Rotary Club) and Donegal based the Kernan Group (Letterkenny Rotary Club). Both organisations worked closely with fellow Rotarians to deliver hundreds of books to local schools. Letterkenny club also shared a short video with the Headteacher explaining how well this works with their current school "reading for fun" project, which has seen more children coming in with a book under their arm and choosing to read on their own initiative.

And partnerships work both ways, of course. Plymouth Rotary Club donated left over books from their Impact Day to a local GP practice and community centre with a preschool. In Scotland, as well as donating nearly 1,400 books for five schools, Leven Rotary Club discovered books they could pass on to Ukranian teenagers living nearby. They also managed to access free toothbrushes and toothpaste from the same source, which they gave to pupils at all 11 local schools in their local community!

Members of the Rotary Club of Wrexham Erddig, who donated over 750 books, acknowledged the breadth of community involvement: *"The time and effort put into implementing this wonderfully simple idea has benefited multiple parties, the charities from whose shops the books have been acquired, schools in [our] local area and, not least, the children whose imagination and interest in reading might be boosted by having better access to great stories."*

For the majority of those involved, getting to grips with this community partnership project has given them opportunities to raise awareness of Rotary, as well as building and strengthening relationships with schools, and positioning themselves at the heart of this children's reading initiative.

(ii) Targeting deprivation

According to the National Literacy Trust, the links between poverty and low literacy are profoundly strong and intergenerational but they are not inevitable. Some participants, such as Burton upon Trent and Gravesend and Meopham Rotary Clubs, researched which of their local schools had a high percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meal, had a high level of SEND, and/or were in deprived catchment areas. School performance tables are available on the gov.uk website.

Other members were already in established relationships with schools in areas of deprivation. Boscombe and Southbourne Rotary Club have a longstanding relationship with a school in one of the most deprived areas of the South West, where a large percentage of pupils don't have English as their first language. Working closely with the Assistant Head/English Lead, they donated 270 books with more to come next month. The school has also agreed to give a talk to club members later in the year.

The Headteacher of a primary school supported by Rugeley Rotary Club welcomed the Impact Days reading initiative, describing it as *"an adrenaline boost for children, they can choose a book without fear or favour, and can keep it for ever."* His school has over 60% of pupils who are eligible for free school meals, and encouraging reading enjoyment is a high priority. The school will be benefiting from not one Rotary Book box but two, as another one is being donated by the club to support a new school reading room for parents and babies to enjoy reading together.

At the start of this pilot project, clubs without an existing school connection may have targeted any schools where they, or a family member/friend, have a connection. As they became more confident with running Rotary Books4Home activity, many are now looking to develop their new relationships and/or reach out to other schools who may have additional need of book donations due to the impact of economic and social deprivation.

Some schools struggle to get any books at all, and in such cases clubs may have had to adopt a pragmatic approach to donating books and work with the school to understand the best way to support pupils' reading: "*The school had no budget for books for their library … we will continue working with the school and when they have sufficient books in their library we will extend the scheme to books for home" (Gravesend and Meopham Rotary Club).*

(iii) Impact Day events

Impact Days varied in presentation from school to school, but without exception all Rotarians who attended enjoyed these events. They appreciated the enthusiastic response of children (and teachers) across the board and the *"buzz"* created by these events: *"It was great to see the excited faces of the children when they came to the library [to] … choose a book that they could take home and keep forever" (Burntisland & Kinghorn Rotary Club).*

Prior to Impact Days taking place, the books, branded stickers, and Rotary book boxes (where created) were delivered to local schools by members. Hull Rotary Club had a small photo session with their members handing books over to school pupils and the incoming Headteacher, thereby creating a "two stage" event!

Events took place in school halls, libraries and classrooms. Despite the summer heat wave, a few Impact Days were still able to be held outside, with one of the primary schools supported by Bradgate Rotary Club holding theirs after school sports day. This allowed parents to join in with their children, choosing and chatting about books displayed on outdoor trestle tables. Mercia & Marches Rotary Club joined pupils at a local small village primary school for a "Book-nic" in the shade, where they were delighted to open the school's new Reading Den and provide a Rotary book box, crafted at Oakwood Prison's workshop in Wolverhampton.

Some children found it hard to believe they were "really" being allowed to choose a free book to take home and keep, especially if they had attended previous book fairs hosted by commercial organisations where they could look at the books but couldn't afford to buy one. Teachers were also very appreciative of Rotary's support: *"A huge thank you to you and all the Rotarians for your efforts and generosity in ensuring every single child at [our school] received a book of their choice today" (primary school supported by Bolton with le Moors Rotary Club).*

Some clubs in Staffordshire ran Rotary Books4Home book fairs for their Impact Days. At one event supporting a school for children with special needs, Kidsgrove and District Rotary Club ensured pupils and families would have a day to remember: *"[They] were gifted book cushions to store their reading books in. Parents were delighted their children were gifted a book to take home and keep. This has never happened before!"*

Walsall Rotary Club has been involved with Rotary Books4Home for a while in District 1210, but found running Impact Days helped them boost their project work. They engaged with five new schools, all of whom received Rotary book boxes to keep. The club found this worked well for

engaging not only schools but also club members who had not previously been involved. This illustrates that running Impact Days can be motivating for all involved, and a great way to celebrate both volunteers' achievements and children's enjoyment of reading.

I think it's an amazing initiative and feel privileged to be able to provide 320 books for one of our local primary schools ... I've also made arrangements for another 50 books for September's intake of reception class children" (Portishead Rotary Club).

"The Impact Day was a great success, the school's business manager was 'blown away' with the generosity of [your] club. Our SEND coordinator was extremely grateful for the wonderful books" (Rotary Club of St Ives - feedback from one of their two partner primary schools).

(iv) Areas of project impact

Respondents who completed survey forms felt that the three most important areas in which the project had made an impact were supporting children to read at home, raising awareness of Rotary, and building relationships with schools. Other important areas included providing members with new project activity and helping with school literacy programmes, followed by helping with school budgets, attracting new members and supporting the environment. As mentioned previously, it is hoped that new members may join Rotary as a result of the project in the longer term as awareness of Rotary's educational and community work continues to grow.

- **Supporting children's enjoyment of reading**

This was a fundamental aim of the Rotary Books4Home Impact Days initiative, and was a primary reason for clubs and members to get involved. It was also likely to be the most compelling reason for schools' engagement:

"As a school, we are passionate about developing a lifelong love of reading, and this wonderful donation will help us place more books directly into the hands of our children. We know that reading opens doors, sparks imagination and has the power to change lives" (Assistant Head at one of the two primary schools supported by Rotary Club of Kings Hill Kent).

Many Rotarians described the excitement and enthusiasm (and good manners, with lots of "thank yous") shown by children collecting their books at Impact Days. They enjoyed the opportunity to chat to children about the books they liked best and why they read, with reasons including: *"It keeps me busy", "It makes me smarter and want to reach further", "It helps me escape reality",* and *"My little brother will love reading this book with me!".* As one child added, *"If I wasn't reading, I'd just be playing more Minecraft!"*

"There was a real "buzz" about reading around school today and that was through your kindness and generosity. The children were so excited at home time to take their books home and share them. The event was well executed and very much appreciated. Thank you so much!" (primary school working with Bolton with le Moors Rotary Club).

We had a wonderful morning right at the end of term where the children came to choose their very own book for the holiday - it was lovely to see their excitement and enthusiasm about reading ... as they compared and chatted about the books on offer" (Misbourne Matins Rotary Club).

Henllys Rotary Club adopted a slightly different approach to the project, adapted to suit their local community needs. One in five children in Wales do not own a book and the club runs two outdoor community "book stops" to help tackle this. Children are welcome to help themselves to a free book to take home. Their Impact Day was planned to be a book themed scavenger hunt *"to celebrate literacy, stories and the joy of reading!"*

Bradgate Rotary Club summed up the positive feeling of the project for all those involved: "*It was a feel-good, enjoyable moment to see the pile of books slowly diminishing and as the pupils and parents started to leave it felt like a great job completed.The Books4Home had gone home!"*

- **Promoting awareness of Rotary**

Impact Days provided a range of opportunities for clubs to promote Rotary's work to parents/carers, teachers and the children themselves. Some were already aware of Rotary because of existing unrelated activities: *"[they had heard of Rotary because of the Christmas collections and donations that we are involved with" (Great Aycliffe Rotary Club).*

Rotary Club of St Helens, who donated over 500 books to a local school in a disadvantaged area, promoted Rotary's breadth of involvement as follows: "*The week before we engaged our RotaKids from the school to help sort out the books, putting them into.year order. All the children received a book and a special assembly was held … which our Mayor and five Rotarians attended including our Club President".*

Several events took place at "lively" school assemblies, with Bradgate, Misbourne Matins and Westhoughton Rotary Clubs speaking about the project and Rotary's work, and some curious children getting to try on the Club President's chain at Stainborough club's Impact Day! Burton upon Trent Rotary Club suggested that members could take in flyers and produce an age appropriate talk about Rotary's work.

This approach was shared by the Rotary Club of Plymouth who displayed branded posters and handed out leaflets on Rotary membership. Parents who attended their Impact Day at a jam packed assembly were very appreciative of the project and also interested in making donations as a *"thank you"* for the books.

Impact Day stories appeared across Great Britain and Ireland, in school newsletters, local press and social media accounts, particularly on Facebook. Barnstaple Link Rotary Club were interviewed on local radio, and like many other clubs used the opportunity to promote Rotary membership as well as this project. *"A great initiative, little outlay for such a success and social media response from the community was amazing!" (Burntisland and Kinghorn Rotary Club).*

In the longer term, providing schools with Rotary book boxes or book houses was also a useful way for clubs to continue promoting their association with this project. Printing off club branded quality book stickers was another, inexpensive way for clubs to build awareness. Leven Rotary Club advised they ended up putting the stickers on themselves as their schools' teachers would not have had time to do this, but added they did have a former Headteacher and teacher on their team of volunteers to check books were age appropriate and of good quality.

Several clubs also suggested it would be helpful to create more national awareness of the project as well as that which is being built at local level. Having the feedback and data from participating clubs and members can now support Rotary GB&I to promote the Rotary Books4Home Impact Days initiative.

- **Building relationships with schools**

It was encouraging to see how many Rotarians became "hooked" by this project following their initial involvement in the pilot, with over three quarters of respondents saying they planned to continue working with their existing schools and/or reaching out to new schools to expand their project impact. Several members are already storing books at home ready to donate to children in the new school year!

At first some clubs found it difficult to connect with the key contacts in schools where there wasn't any previous relationship, and it was not necessarily clear which staff would be responsible. Schools also did not always respond to clubs' approaches, even after repeated attempts. Making the "right" connections helped to increase project impact. "*Visit and talk to the children in person. Work more closely with teachers rather than just senior management" (Jedburgh Rotary Club).*

As relationships were built within schools, clubs understood how they could better support teachers to help children's enjoyment of reading. Mercia and Marches Rotary Club explained how they would be supporting their local school on an ongoing basis:

"The books not initially chosen were added to the BookSwap Store [Rotary book box] which will open after school each day. Resources are limited in such a small school, and they were able to invest in their school's new Reading Den in the knowledge that Rotary's Books4Home scheme was able to provide not only a set of books for the children to have on the Impact Day but also … a regular supply each term in future".

Maldon Rotary Club advised building relationships with other schools, who could help to support the project for younger children. The Deputy Head of the local secondary school asked their Year 7 pupils to get involved, which "worked wonders" as they donated 300 books in addition to the 200 already collected by the club. Other clubs also suggested asking local schools to put out donation boxes to support Rotary Books4Home.

Being able to build long term, mutually beneficial relationships with local schools is an important outcome of this project. As Havant Rotary Club explained: *"We have collected books and built a bookstore. We have now delivered 440 books and have just signed up our second school … For us [this] has been less about the impact day and more about establishing an ongoing project."*

(v) Next steps

- Following this successful national pilot Rotary Books4Home Impact Days programme, Rotary clubs and members will be responsible for setting their own timescale for future events and activities. Although Rotary GB&I will not be asking for regular project feedback initially, it may be helpful to request (in advance) occasional feedback from

clubs and members to help assess national project impact in the future. If you would like to tell us about Impact Days you will be running, please contact pr@rotarygbi.org.

- Rotary GB&I will update the project materials and resources on the website for use and adaptation by all members. A final copy of this report and at least some of the images of Impact Days provided by respondents will also be added to the website (Note: as confirmed at the start of the project, consent must have been provided for all images supplied by respondents. If you have any concerns or wish to remove any photos, please email impactdays@rotarygbi.org immediately).

- The Rotary Books4Home project has been added to the Impact Portal as a national volunteering opportunity. For further information on adding or applying for volunteering roles for this project, please email membership@rotarygbi.org.

- If you have any questions about running Rotary Books4Home Impact Days in your area, please email the Rotary GB&I team at impactdays@rotarygbi.org. For more specific advice on developing your project, you can contact Beverley Ricketts at alumni1210@btinternet.com.

- Other related Rotary Books4Home activities are also running in District 1210. Beverley Ricketts organises reading book supplies for school libraries and Alan Jasper runs Rotary Books4Home activity in prisons across Staffordshire. Both are members of Alumni 1210: The Alumni Association of Rotary District 1210, and can be contacted for further information at alumni1210@btinternet.com.

Rotary GB&I would like to thank all Rotary clubs and members who have been involved with the Rotary Books4Home Impact Days national pilot, and whose feedback has provided the basis for this report. We would also like to thank Beverley Ricketts, along with her team of Rotary Books4Home volunteers in District 1210, for helping Rotary GB&I to develop this successful national initiative.

PARTICIPATING ROTARY CLUBS

Barnstaple Rotary Link
Bolton with Le Moors
Boscombe and Southbourne
Bradgate
Bridgnorth
Brighton and Hove Soiree
Burntisland and Kinghorn
Burton upon Trent
City of Wolverhampton
Colchester
Colchester Centurion
Gravesend and Meopham
Great Aycliffe
Havant
Henllys
Hull
Jedburgh
Kidsgrove and District
Kings Hill Kent
Leek
Letterkenny
Leven
Maldon
Mercia and Marches
Penny Bridge Wallasey
Plymouth
Portishead
Roundhay (Leeds)
Rugeley
Stafford Castle
Stainborough
St Helens
St Ives
Tettenhall
Uttoxeter
Walsall
Wednesfield
West Derby
Westhoughton
Wrexham Erddig

Please note: this list includes all clubs who provided project feedback to Rotary GB&I by the end of the evaluation period. It may not be a complete list of all those carrying out project activity, as it is possible that other clubs and members have participated and not yet provided feedback.