Planning a storywalk
A guide for libraries

This toolkit is a TRIAL version. Please email your feedback to **libraries@covi.org.uk**

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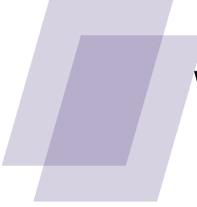
What is a storywalk?

A storywalk is an outdoor trail for families, which combines reading children's books with a physical activity, and sometimes other activities too. Families follow pictures left as clues or "checkpoints" along the trail that relate to characters or elements from the book that have been hidden around the outdoor space. The whole event could take place in a park, or the pictures could be along the route between the library and another community venue.

Storywalks have a number of objectives, such as:

- Promoting reading and libraries in a non-traditional environment
- Encouraging physical activity and use of local outdoor assets
- Combining literacy skills with play, games or craft activities

Special thanks to
Kirklees
COUNCIL

Family storywalks have been running in Kirklees Libraries for over nine years. In this time, they've developed from simple picture hunts during a walk, to a tool we've used to build relationships with communities, deliver high-quality events at low cost and engage with hard to reach groups. Read more here:
https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/2017/06/16/family-storywalks-in-kirklees/

Who takes part in a storywalk?

Storywalks are an opportunity for families to learn together – about reading or books, new activities, or places in the local community. Because both adults and children take part in the storywalk, they also learn about interacting with each other and may repeat these behaviours at home.

Storywalks are suitable for children of early years or primary school age. The children's book used for the storywalk trail will be determined by the age group you want to attract. However activities can be framed so that older siblings can join in too.

Designing a storywalk with partners

Storywalks are fairly simple for libraries to design and run but you may want to work with partner organisations in order to reach out to new families or create and deliver bespoke resources or activities for your storywalk.

For example, the libraries service in Kirklees worked in partnership with a children's centre located on a nearby council estate. Library and children's centre staff joined together to lead a series of walks through the summer holidays from one venue to the other, alternating the starting point and encouraging groups to access both services.

What you will need to plan a storywalk

1   **The story** - Choose a children's book that relates to the place you are exploring or the additional activity. The storywalk may start or end by reading the whole story. Or you could read a section of the story at each "checkpoint".

2   **The route** – Plan where you are going, and where you will stop along the way. The storywalk could take place within one outdoor space such as a park, or between two places, such as the library and the children's centre.

3   **Storywalk leader(s)** – The people leading the storywalk could be library staff or volunteers. Some storywalks may be suitable for families to follow on their own.

4   **Activity materials** - Materials will depend on the age of the children, the theme of the trail, and whether you will have a storywalk leader or whether families will be doing activities independently.

Planning your Storywalk – the activities

When	Where	Picture clue	Read book/ sections	Activity (e.g. drawing, craft, checklist, answer a question...)	Led by	Notes
Before the walk	e.g. the library	n/a	Section 1	Give out worksheets		
Checkpoint A	e.g. outside the library	e.g. illustration of the bicycle	Section 2	e.g. Worksheet – tick if you can see the clue		
Checkpoint B	e.g. park entrance	e.g. illustration of the mouse	Section 3	e.g. Worksheet asks for drawing		
Checkpoint C	e.g. by the pond	e.g. illustration of the frog				
Checkpoint D						
Checkpoint E						
Checkpoint F						
After the walk	e.g. the children's centre			e.g. Craft session		

Choose a children's book that relates to the place you are exploring or the additional activity. The storywalk may start or end by reading the whole story. Or you could read a section of the story at each "checkpoint". Include as may checkpoints and activities as you like.

Planning your Storywalk – the route
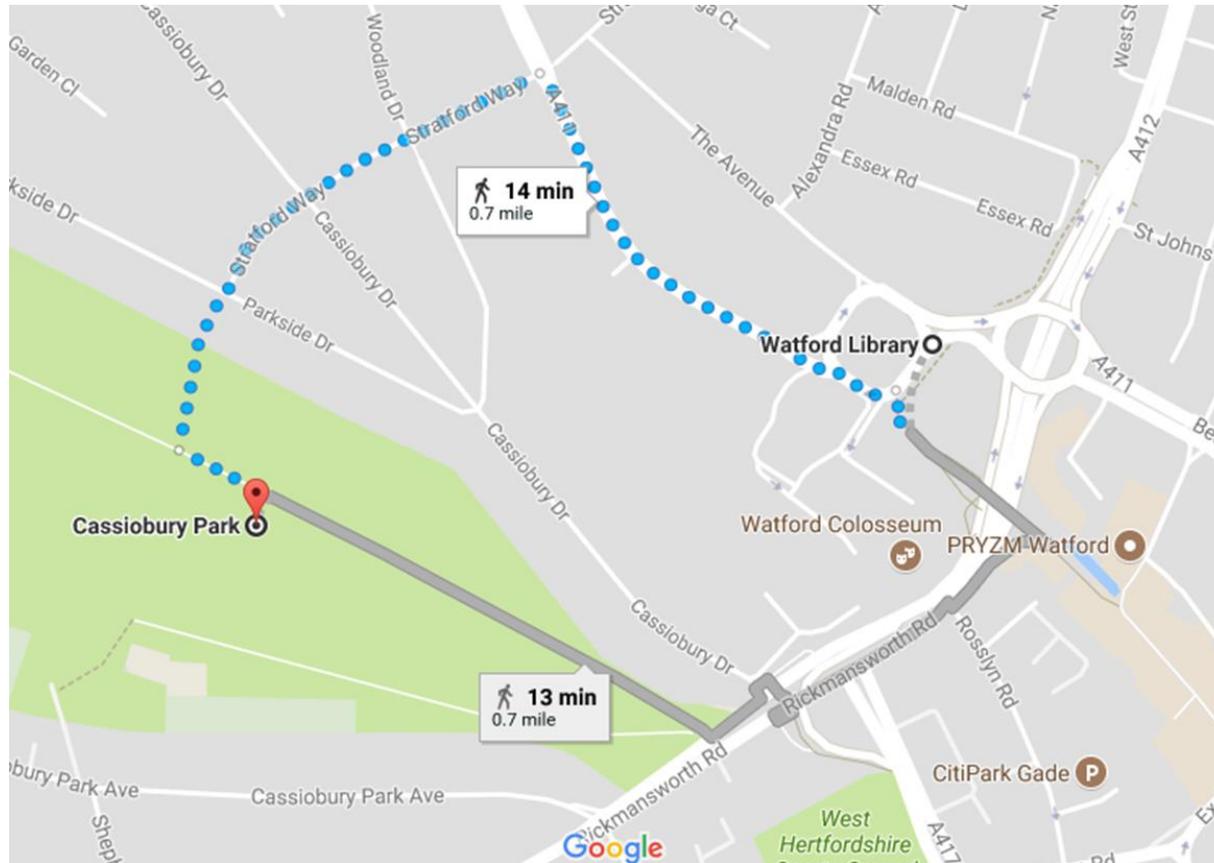
You will need to plan the trail which participants follow, either on their own or with a Storywalk guide. The storywalk could take place within one outdoor space such as a park, or between two places, such as the library and the children's centre. The routemap could be given to parents or just to the Storywalk guide.

Materials for a storywalk (picture trail)

The picture clues – at each stop or "checkpoint" on the storywalk trail you will need to leave a picture clue in advance for families to discover. This could be a picture or character from the book. Or if using the book illustrations is not feasible, use a license-free image or icon to represent a scene from the book.

An activity sheet - At its most simple, this could be a checklist for finding each picture clue. Or at each "checkpoint" you could include a different activity. The activity sheet could also include an evaluation exercise so you can receive feedback from families.

An additional activity? Along the route or at the end of the picture trail there may be a further activity. For example Kirklees organised a storywalk based around 'Bog Babies', a picture book about the importance of wildlife being left in their own habitats. During the walk around the park, families collected natural materials to make their own Bog Babies. At the end of the walk they were asked to find a spot in the park that would make a nice habitat for the bog baby family and leave them to live there. Your activity could be an arts or craft session around the theme of your story, a game, or a more informal picnic!

Example worksheet

We're going on a Storywalk!

Name of book

Your names

C. Our next stop is where frogs live. Can you draw the place?

A. Go to the library exit. Can you find the Witch hiding by a door? What colour is the door?

D. If you had a magic wand, what would you do?

B. Are there any birds outside today? How many can you find on the trail?

E. What foods do squirrels eat? Can you see any in the park?

You can find activity materials based on children's books from a variety of sources. Two examples include:

http://www.tallstories.org.uk/play-and-create

http://roomonthebroom.com/activities/

Remember to observe the copyright and usage rights of these materials.

Promoting your storywalk

We're going on a storywalk!

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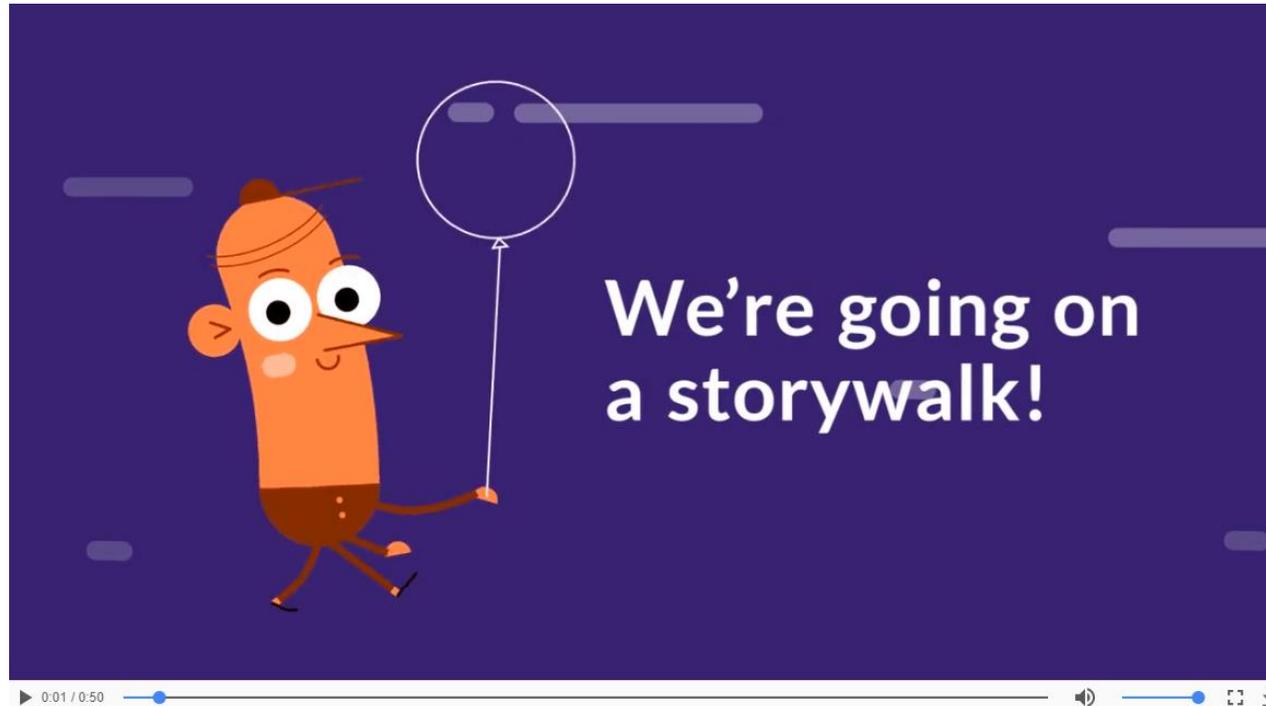
The Society of Chief Librarians has commissioned a short explainer animation, suitable for promoting your storywalk both within the library and on social media, regardless of the specific storywalk theme or activity. You could also play the video at the introduction of the storywalk itself.

Download the video here: https://vimeo.com/242319482
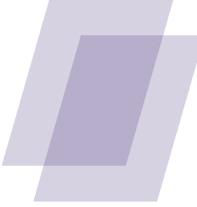
Evaluating your storywalk

Storywalks are a family learning activity. Family learning is when learning outcomes are aimed at both adults and children, so that both generations learn new things together (even if they learn different things). In advance of the activity think about objectives of your storywalk, and determine how you will measure whether these objectives have been successful.

For example:

- Have families learned new things about reading, books, or what the library offers?

- Has the activity encouraged them to do more physical activities or exercise in future?

- Have the learning activities helped confidence, self-esteem, and motivation to learn of adults and children?

- Have parents picked up parenting techniques and practices?

- Has the walk encouraged understanding of the local area, and/or a sense of community belonging?

- Have adults and children mixed with other families who they may not have met otherwise?

- As a library, have you engaged new borrowers, hard to reach families or addressed a specific need in the community?

Not all of these questions will be appropriate to ask directly of families, but you could ask about some of these things and also gather information from partner organisations.

Example feedback form

Storywalk family feedback form

Name of storywalk _____

Date _____

	CHILDREN			ADULTS		
Did you enjoy the storywalk today?	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No
Where did you go and what did you learn about?						
Did you visit somewhere you haven't been before on the storywalk trail?	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No
Do you think you will come back again to the places we visited?	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No
Do you think you will read the book, or another book like it, again?	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No
Would you like to come to another event like this again?	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No	☺ Yes	😕 Maybe	☹ No
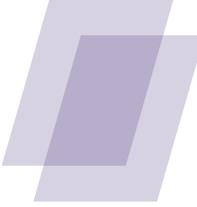
Find out more…

Nature trails: Guide and materials
Nature trails are a type of Storywalk based on non-fiction children's books about habitats and animals.

Family learning: A toolkit for libraries
We have also created a toolkit for public libraries interested in delivering family learning activities as part of their commitment to the Society of Chief Librarian's Universal Offers. It contains information, ideas and inspiration about family learning, and a seven-step plan for your activities and events.

The Experiential Library: The future of family learning
Common Vision conducted a research and consultation exercise with a number of library practitioners in early 2017, and drew on academic and policy literature, case studies, qualitative interviews and impact studies to identify different types of family learning activities and where libraries can provide highlighted some of the social outcomes which can be achieved by applying a family learning approach to the design and delivery of existing and activities.

Access other materials and resources via this link: http://eepurl.com/dbKW8X

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