

Sheffield Babies Love Books:
An Evaluation of the Sheffield Bookstart Project

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November 2005

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1. Project team

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2. Commissioners of the Research Project

The project was commissioned by Kath Navratil, Early Years Librarian and Books for Babies Co-ordinator, and Diane Kostka, Young People's Services Manager, on behalf of Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services.

3. Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the people who contributed to this research project, including:

Kath Navratil, Early Years Librarian and Books for Babies Co-ordinator, Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services
Diane Kostka, Young People's Services Manager, Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services
Dr. Janet Chaplais, Consultant Community Paediatrician, Sheffield Children's N.H.S.Trust.
Angela Ford, Child Health Team Leader, North Sheffield Primary Care Trust.
David Bownes, Data Protection and Security Officer, Sheffield City Council
Alan Marshall, Information Systems Manager, Sheffield Education Directorate.
Janice Pinder, Health Visitor, South East Sheffield Primary Care Trust; Health Visitor Representative, Sheffield Bookstart Working Party
Clare Hardwick, Bookstart Project Worker
Head teachers, Deputy head teachers and Early Years staff at 13 schools in the Sheffield L.E.A.

In particular we wish to thank the nine parents who took part in individual interviews and the parents who took part in a group discussion at one of the schools.

4. Rationale

The Sheffield Bookstart Project is part of the national Bookstart Project. The Sheffield Project was initiated in July 1999. Since then, the programme has been offered to every baby born in the City. The Bookstart Team had undertaken a wide range of initiatives and had completed a series of internal evaluations of its work. The Team then wished to supplement its achievements by means of an external research project, which would further the analysis of progress and would contribute towards establishing the way forward.

5. Aims

The aims of the research project were to produce:

- a summative report outlining the initiatives undertaken so far by the Sheffield Bookstart team
- a comparative study of the literacy achievements of a group of children who were involved in the Sheffield Books for Babies project and a group who did not take part
- recommendations for the way forward in terms of further development and research.

These aims would be achieved by means of a small-scale, informal and qualitative research project, which would focus on a specific area within the city of Sheffield.

6. Background

The national Bookstart programme was initiated by Booktrust, an independent educational charity, in 1992, in conjunction with Birmingham Library Services, South Birmingham Health Services and the University of Birmingham School of Education. The project has since been instigated nationally and is administered by Booktrust. It aims to 'promote a life-long love of books and is based on the principle that every child in the U.K. should enjoy and benefit from as early an age as possible' (Booktrust, 2003).

Several evaluations of Bookstart projects have been undertaken. Some examples are as follows:

The Birmingham longitudinal study by Maggie Moore and Barrie Wade, at the University of Birmingham:

This research, which followed the development of the initial Bookstart project in Birmingham between 1992 and 2000, was in four parts.

The first part of the study was a survey of '[...] 300 inner city families who received free books when their children were 7 – 8 months old and advice on book sharing from health visitors' (Moore and Wade, in Educational Review, vol. 55, No. 1. 2003). The survey was conducted by means of questionnaires completed by the parents, with the help of health visitors, on receiving the book pack and again six months later. The researchers reported that 'Comparisons showed that, as a result of receiving the pack, 71% of parents bought more books for their children, 28% spent more time sharing books with their children, 57% of parents had book club membership and 29% had enrolled as library members for themselves and for their babies' (Moore and Wade, 2003).

The second part of the study was concerned with the impact of Bookstart at age 2 to 3. The research is outlined in the report, 'A Gift for Life. Bookstart, the First Five Years,' published by Booktrust (1998). The researchers compared 'a random sample of original Bookstart families with a comparison group.' (Booktrust, 1998).

The research was based on interviews with 29 parents and also observations of them sharing a book with their children. Examples of the findings from the interviews were that:

- '68% of Bookstart parents said that looking at books was among their child's three most enjoyable activities, compared with only 21% of the comparison group.
- 75% of the parents said they usually bought their children books as presents, compared with just 10% of the comparison group.
- 43% said that they took their children to the library at least once a month, compared with only 17% of the comparison group.'

The findings from the observations were that '[...] all parents drew attention to items in the story and asked their children questions' (Booktrust, 1998). However, many more parents in the Bookstart group were seen to:

- Read the whole text (83% compared with 34%).
- Talk about the story (64% compared with 24%).
- Relate the story to the child's experience (43% compared with 21%).
- Encourage the child to join in (43% compared with 17%).
- Encourage the child to make predictions (68% compared with 28%).
- Trace the direction of print (68% compared 10%).

Similarly it was reported that the children in the observations 'displayed more positive behaviour [...] and took a more active interest in books than their counterparts' (Booktrust, 1998). Many more of the Bookstart children were seen to:

- Show a keen interest in the text (100% compared with 34%).
- Point frequently to the text (68% compared with 21%).
- Frequently tried to turn the pages (54% compared with 10%).
- Join in with the story (82% compared with 31%).
- Ask questions (61% compared with 21%).'

The researchers summarised their findings as follows: 'The results clearly demonstrated that attitudes and book-sharing behaviour in families with 2 to 3 year old children were much more positive among those who had received the Bookstart pack two years earlier' (Booktrust, 1998).

Bailey, Harrison and Brooks (2000), however, cautioned that Wade and Moore's (1998) conclusion that ' "These positive behaviours [...] were likely to be the results of regular and repeated experience of book sharing stimulated by the Bookstart pack" [...] rest on the undemonstrated assumption that Bookstart families did in fact engage in "regular and repeated experience of book sharing," that this, if it occurred, was "stimulated by the Bookstart pack", that no other difference in experience could have accounted for the observed differences, and that the two groups of families did not differ in some relevant respect in the first place. Moreover the sample size was very small' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

Moore and Wade (2003) extended this research to form the third part of their longitudinal study. The performance of Bookstart children was studied on entry to primary school, when they took part in the baseline assessment in 1997. The research involved 41 Bookstart children from the original 1992 cohort, the 41 children being all those who could be traced. A comparison group was formed, these children being matched according to five criteria: date of birth, gender, home language, ethnic group and nursery experience. Both groups were different from those in the previous follow-up.

The findings from this follow-up were that the Bookstart children were ' [...] frequently ahead on assessment for Speaking and Listening, Reading, and Writing, and performed

better on assessments of Using and Applying Maths, Number and Shape, Space, and Measures.’ The team concluded that, ‘Children who had Bookstart were clearly ahead in both literacy and numeracy’ (Moore and Wade, 2003).

Bailey, Harrison and Brooks (2000) analysed the findings of this research as follows: ‘The Bookstart children had significantly higher average scores than the comparison group in reading, number, English total, mathematics total, and Baseline total, but not in speaking and listening, writing, using and applying mathematics, or shape, space and measurement’ (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks 2000).

They expressed the following view: ‘Given the pattern of results, it seems likely that the significant differences in English overall, mathematics overall and Baseline overall were due to more specific significant differences in reading and number.’ (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000) They also considered that the conclusion of Wade and Moore (2003) that the positive results in number were attributable to Bookstart was again subject to the caveats previously expressed, though ‘[...] here the sample is more satisfactory’ (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

In the final part of their longitudinal study, Wade and Moore (2003) compared the end of Key Stage 1 assessments of a random sample of 41 pupils who had received Bookstart, with a comparison group who had not. The groups were matched according to the same five criteria used in the Baseline study. Data were collected from results of teacher assessments for English, Mathematics and Science, as well as the results of standard assessment tests in English and Mathematics. They reported that:

- the scores for the teacher assessments showed that ‘ [...] the Bookstart children were significantly ahead in all assessments [...]’
- the objective tests ‘also showed that differences between Bookstart children and their classmates were all highly significant [...] with the Bookstart children being superior.’
- ‘[...] although teacher assessments had placed the Bookstart children higher, test results had placed them even higher’ (Moore and Wade, 2003).

The researchers concluded that ‘[...] in each area of research the Bookstart children have been consistently superior in all observed elements at preschool [...] in reception baseline, and in Key Stage 1 SATs’ (Moore and Wade, 2003).

‘Bookstart. A Qualitative Evaluation,’ by Wade and Moore.

This study was undertaken by Moore and Wade, following their Birmingham study and was published in ‘Educational Review’ (Vol.55/1, February 2003). It was ‘[...] designed to ‘investigate whether there are similar observable effects using qualitative measures.’ (The researchers were referring to the findings obtained from the previous studies of Baseline and SATs assessments.)

Unlike the longitudinal study, this study was based on one borough in the West Midlands:

'The number of targeted families within the designated area was approximately 150, that being the average number of live births per year' (Moore and Wade, 2003).

The study took the form of a series of semi-structured interviews with professionals: library staff, health visitors, nursery staff and the Bookstart project co-ordinator for the Borough. The researchers pointed out other differences between this study and their previous one: 'The Bookstart initiative in this borough differed in two respects from that of the Birmingham study. First, the initial meeting with mothers was during the 36th week of pregnancy, and, second, parents received four gifts, rather than one, from the local Bookstart project' (Moore and Wade, 2003). These were received at four, eight, 20 and 42 months.

The researchers found that the interviews with the professionals were 'all overwhelmingly positive about the value of giving books to parents and their role in the process.' Examples of specific findings were that:

- the library staff demonstrated their firm commitment to the role that book sharing has to play in children's early development
- the library staff who run the 'Cradle Club' were committed to supporting parents in book sharing
- other benefits were the social interactions and learning opportunities that parents and children were able to enjoy
- the role of the health visitor was crucial in introducing and explaining the pack
- Bookstart was seen as a facilitating factor in the work in which the health visitors were engaged
- nursery nurses commented on how Bookstart helped not only children but also other members of the family
- nursery nurses were able to develop the literacy beginnings made by Bookstart
- nursery nurses were able to use the project as a model to help and engage those children from families who had not benefited from the project
- the project co-ordinator felt that efforts had still to be made to involve and engage hard-to-reach-families. The health visitors, who already had heavy work loads, nevertheless expressed a willingness to make contact with these families, and to see Bookstart as a mainstream aspect of their work.

The researchers concluded that 'The views of professionals working in one borough provide complementary dimensions of support to what we already know about Bookstart's effectiveness in laying the foundations of literacy in the early years' (Moore and Wade, 2003).

The Bookstart organisation confirmed the view that the study 'contextualises the quantitative evaluation that has taken place regarding Bookstart and presents qualitative information representing views of professionals working on Bookstart. The implication is

that 'both the quantitative and qualitative evaluations point to the effectiveness of the programme and its ability to facilitate early literacy learning' (Bookstart website, 2005).

'Evaluation of Derbyshire Books for Babies and Books for Babies 2 Project', by Elaine Millard at the University of Sheffield:

This research (2002) was a longitudinal study of the Derbyshire and Derby City Books for Babies project, initiated in 1997 as part of the 'Read on – Write Away! Literacy Initiative'. The research was concentrated on one specific area: '[...] an impoverished community of North East Derbyshire, which has been hit by contraction of major local industries' (Millard, 2002). The aim was to monitor the effects of the implementation of the project over its first five years.

The scope of the research was as follows:

- Data were recorded of babies in the target area who had received the book bag, and the subsequent borrowing records of the families
- 'A questionnaire was completed with the parents/carers by the health visitors at the eighteen months check up for a control group of 45 babies who were born a year earlier than the initial group.'
- Questionnaires were distributed to 196 parents at their child's eight months health check up and again at the eighteen months check up
- further information 'was collected through follow up contacts at the two local playgroups and by visits to the staff at two nursery classes [...]'
- eight mothers of babies over the age of eight months were interviewed at a walk-in baby clinic
- twenty-two parents/carers were interviewed at playgroups
- interviews were carried out with four health visitors, six staff at the branch library, two librarians at other libraries, a driver of a mobile library and two nursery teachers.

The research findings covered a range of specific issues for which progress could be identified. The conclusion was that the community had 'clearly benefited from Derbyshire's emphasis on providing scope for inter-disciplinary liaison and the sharing of different professional knowledge' (Millard, 2002). A significant feature of the report was the emphasis on wider implications for the family: 'It is this inter-connectedness that allows the influence of the project to spread beyond the needs of the babies themselves to provide for the interests and needs of other family members' (Millard, 2002). The researcher also reported that she had 'found strong evidence of a cultural shift in the community, which enables parents and carers from all backgrounds to understand the value of early literacy and to benefit themselves from the new provisions' (Millard, 2002). The researcher did however warn of the need for sustained effort on the part of the professionals and for continued funding, to ensure the continuation of the project's benefits.

'Babies Need Books: Young Children's Early Literacy Experiences Explored', by Elaine Hill, Joan Santer and Donna Middleton at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne

This report (2004) outlines research carried out by the Early Childhood Research Group in the Department of Education at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The research was based on the 'Babies Need Books' scheme and had been initiated in 1998 by the Children and Young People's Library Services 'involving the dedicated time of project officers (1996 – 1997)'.

The scheme was initially targeted at the areas of Howden and Wallsend. The researchers studied 'the impact of the 'Books for Babies' initiative on children and their families in the North East of England' (Hill, Santer and Middleton, 2004). The aims of the research were:

- 'to explore families' use of the library service
- to explore how parents and children were using books together
- to examine the impact of the 'Babies need Books' scheme' (Hill, Santer and Middleton, 2004).

The research consisted of two strands:

The first strand consisted of 'An analysis of the records held by the library service, tracking the pattern of book borrowing on the babies' library cards and exploring the responses to the two questionnaires.' The questionnaires were those distributed by the project officers, the first in 1996/7 to 'about 147 of the pilot families in the Howden and Wallsend areas [...] one at the time of registration (103 families responded)' and 'a postal questionnaire in 1998 (44 families responded)' (Hill, Santer and Middleton, 2004).

This first strand also included an analysis of telephone interviews: 'A total of twenty-two telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of parents (51)' (Hill, Santer and Middleton, 2004).

The second strand involved '[...] observations of seven children in their homes, drawn from the library data set and from different backgrounds.' 'Further observations [...] carried out at in toddler groups'(Hill, Santer and Middleton, 2004).

The research findings were wide ranging, some examples being that:

- 'There has clearly been a positive response to the 'Babies Need Books' initiative. Most parents felt that it had increased their awareness either of reading with babies or of the library service.'
- After three years 'close to half of the families were using the library.'
- Library users praised both the children's areas and the book collections.
- 'Most children had a favourite book.'
- 'After contact with Babies Need Books, all parents [...] were using a greater number of sources for books than before.'

- 'Many parents reported that grandparents and other relatives bought books for children or took them to the library while the parent was at work.'
- 'Younger children shared the books brought home from school by their siblings' (Hill, Santer and Middleton, 2004).

The 'Boots' Books for Babies Project Evaluation', by Mary Bailey and Colin Harrison at the University of Nottingham and Greg Brooks at the N.F.E.R.:

The 'Boots Books for Babies' project was based in Nottingham. It was a three year rolling programme starting in October 1998. This evaluation of the project was published in 2000. The intentions of the research team were to 'concentrate on the project delivery and impact.' Their aims were to:

- '[...] identify and recognise the achievements of the *Boots Books for Babies* project, and to report on the range of activities undertaken as part of the project;
- to evaluate the project's impact on parents, especially in relation to their book usage and confidence in relation to literacy issues;
- to monitor library-related activity, especially membership and borrowing;
- to make recommendations for further improving the effectiveness of the project's activity' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

The evaluation included 'both a qualitative, case study strand, and a quantitative strand, and was based on a targeted area of the city' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

The qualitative strand involved semi-structured interviews with two health visitors, one health care assistant and one nursery nurse. In addition the team interviewed a community librarian, a children's librarian and two library assistants. Nine parents/carers were also interviewed, four of these via face-to-face interviews, and five by telephone.

The quantitative strand was based on data provided by the County Library Service relating to baby registrations and book loans to babies.

Positive findings were reported in relation to both strands:

- 'The case study and interview data [...] support the view that the project has been very successful' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

This was confirmed by the findings, for example that:

- health care staff had been very supportive of the project
- the project had made some of them '[...] more aware and more confident in the goal of early book use'
- all health centre staff reported a positive response to the packs
- library staff were very supportive of the project's role and its community focus
- staff in a number of libraries had noted a rise in infant book borrowing

- there was some evidence that the project was encouraging a minority to use the library more
- the links between health and library staff were seen as very important by both groups
- many respondents stressed the very important part played in the project's success by the project co-ordinator
- parents who were interviewed were very positive about the project's impact, though there was some evidence that parents who were willing to be interviewed were not representative of all who received packs.

Findings for the quantitative strand showed that ' [...] the goals of significantly increasing new baby registrations and loans to babies have been met' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

The conclusions of the evaluation were that '[...] the Books for Babies project has been very successful' and that 'Clearly this evaluation is very positive in its overall findings' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

The team however reported: 'Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the scope of the evaluation was constrained in a number of respects.' In this respect, the team explained that it '[...] would have been preferable to have had access to fuller data on library borrowings,' and '[...] it would have been useful to have been able to make case study comparisons between different areas, and to look for possible differential effects of enthusiasm of health visitors or library staff for the project' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

A further key question posed by the team was '[...] Were parents who responded positively to the project already likely to be doing such things, but simply began a little earlier than they might otherwise have done?' Finally the team addressed the issue of sustainability and long-term impact, asking '[...] do babies who began to read earlier as a result of this project go on to be better readers, and if they do what can be said about the long-term gains?' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2000).

The Boots Books for Babies project: Impact on library registrations and book loans, published by Bailey, Harrison and Brooks.

This article was published in 2002, in the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*. It refers to the Nottingham project and its evaluation outlined in the previous section. In the article the team stated:

'In the view of the evaluation team, the *Boots Books for Babies* project has been very successful. The statistical data show that the goals of significantly increasing new baby registrations and loans to babies have been met.' The team concluded: '[...] one very direct result of the project was that it received significant funding from a number of sources for continuation and extension work. To those involved in delivering Books for Babies provision, there can hardly be a more tangible indicator of perceived success.

This will enable the good practice developed in this project to continue and be disseminated further' (Bailey, Harrison and Brooks, 2002).

'Evaluation of the Bookstart Programme', by the National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, at the University of Surrey, Roehampton

This research (2001) was an in-depth evaluation of the Sainsbury's Bookstart programme from January 1999 to April 2001. The aim of the research was to 'assess the initial impact and effectiveness' of this nationwide programme. Three indicators were identified that would suggest that the Bookstart programme was being effective:

1. An *initial* increase in reading and reading-related activities in Bookstart families.
 2. A *subsequent* increase (that is after the first three months) in such activities, attributed by parents/carers to Bookstart.
 3. A *sustained* increase in these activities over a period of at least three months.'
- (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001).

The scope of the research was geographically wide, covering the North, East, South (including London), and the Midlands.

Observations and interviews were carried out by teams of local researchers, who interviewed a total of 105 parents/carers twice. The first observations/interviews were conducted within three months of the receipt by the family of the Bookstart materials. The second ones were conducted a minimum of three years after the first.

The research had followed on from that already undertaken in Birmingham. The team incorporated data already commissioned by the previous team and generated by a market research organisation. These data had been collected via two sets of questionnaires, the first having been completed by parents/carers at health centres, at the time of their child's 7 to 9 months health check, and the second sent by post to those who had completed the first and had agreed to complete a further questionnaire. The data generated by these questionnaires were used by the Surrey-Roehampton team as a '[...] pseudo-control from which to measure change' (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001).

Thirty of the 105 parents/carers constituted the control group. These were drawn only from areas where the Bookstart programmes had not yet been initiated and were all in the South and the West of the country.

The report acknowledges the fact that because 'The Sainsbury's Bookstart programme took place during, and was part of, a period of unprecedented national activity in the area of literacy, the resulting heightened public awareness of issues relating to literacy and reading with children undoubtedly diluted the measurable impact of the scheme.' However the findings were that '[...] both quantitative and qualitative data collected showed that parents and carers who received the Sainsbury's Bookstart pack on behalf

of their babies were influenced by Bookstart' (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001).

The following findings were detailed:

- 'Widespread awareness of and receptivity for the Bookstart message
- Increased reading with babies and young children
- Increased library membership for babies
- More parents/carers valuing reading with babies and young children
- Changed attitudes to the role of reading in child development and personal interaction with children
- Improved confidence in reading to babies and young children
- Better book-sharing skills and ways of extending reading as an activity
- Increased awareness of the role reading can play in speech/language development' (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001).

The researchers recommended that there was a need to rethink the place of Bookstart as part of a national strategy for literacy:

'At the beginning of this nation-wide roll-out of the project, it was assumed that Bookstart was an independent programme which had to keep its identity visible and distinct to give maximum exposure to the sponsor and the programme. The need to prove its educational value was also thought to be paramount. In the course of the evaluation it has become clear that a) the educational benefits of such a scheme are widely accepted and b) that the role of Bookstart is no longer to teach parents/carers about the value of sharing books with babies but to convert that knowledge into action' (National Centre for Research in Children's Literature, 2001).

The Sheffield Bookstart Project was initiated in 1998. The initial stages of the Sheffield project are outlined by the Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Department in its progress report for January 1999 to August 2000. The agencies constituting the partnership are identified as:

'Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information
Community Health Sheffield
Manor and Castle Development Trust Ltd.
The Sheffield College
The Book Trust
Sainsbury's' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000.)

The report recorded that bids were made for funding from the Single Regeneration Budget, rounds 3 and 4, and that, allied to the government's National Year of Reading Initiative, in 1998/1999, funding was also made available by Sainsbury plc.

The report also recorded: 'A part-time Senior Librarian was given the remit to get the project started [...]' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000) that the Sheffield scheme became operative in June 1999, and that in November 1999, a Books for Babies Co-ordinator was appointed on a contract of 30 hours per week.

The report outlines the aims of the Sheffield project in the following terms: 'To work together to promote life long learning, literacy and enjoyment for babies and their parents/carers by providing books and support for sharing them.' One of the objectives was to 'provide every baby born in Sheffield with a Bookstart pack by the end of 2000' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

In addition, the key role of the health visitors is indicated as follows: 'Health Visitors were identified as key partners who would have contact with babies at their assessment checks, usually between 6 and 9 months old. Families and babies were identified who would be eligible for the project' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

The Manor and Castle area of the City was one of the areas targeted for the initial development of the Sheffield project, as outlined by the Manor and Castle Development Trust:

'The area is one of high social and economic deprivation with a history of poor attainment at school and unemployment running at one of the highest levels in the city. There was also evidence that local children started school at a huge disadvantage, as shown in the baseline assessments of school entry. Bookstart was seen as a way of trying to break the cycle of low achievement by giving local families the materials and support to develop their children's language from an early age' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

The procedures adopted in the Manor/Castle areas were outlined as follows: 'Health visitors give parents a letter explaining the project, or a Bookstart letter is sent out with hearing test appointment letter. If they wish to take part, the parent completes a referral slip and sends it to the Bookstart Project Officer. Appointments are made and parents visited in their own homes. The Project Officer completes a questionnaire before handing over the Bookstart Bag that contains 2 board books, a wipeable place mat and information on encouraging early language and literacy with their child. Parents are contacted approximately six months later and asked their opinions on the project via a second questionnaire. Results are monitored through these questionnaires. Parents are encouraged to join the library (a ticket is left with them) and make use of story times and other activities. Some Health Visitors hold Hearing Clinics at the Health Centre/Surgery at which they are based. In these cases the project officer also attends these clinics and parents who are resident in the area are given their Bookstart bags at this time' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

At a meeting in January 2004, of the researcher and Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, represented by the Young People's Library Service Manager and the Books for Babies Co-ordinator, it was agreed that the report would have two strands:

STRAND 1 would be a summative report of initiatives undertaken to date by the Sheffield Bookstart Team.

STRAND 2 would be a comparative study of the literacy achievements of a group of children who had been involved in the Sheffield Books for Babies project and a group of children who had not taken part. Recommendations would be made in this section in order to lend support to the Bookstart Team in terms of further development and research.

It was further agreed that the focus area for strand two of this research project would be the Manor and Castle areas of the city, because of the early inclusion of these areas in the Sheffield project, and the need for continued monitoring, leading to continued input and support into this community in particular, as envisaged by the commissioners of the research project.

Initial data would be requested from three main sources: The Primary Care Trust, The Libraries, Archives and Information Services and the Local Education Authority.

Fifty children would be targeted. Half of these children would have taken up the Bookstart programme, and would comprise the sample group, while half would not have taken up the programme. These 'non-Bookstart' children would become the comparison group.

The reception class teachers of all the children would be asked to complete questionnaires to establish the levels of literacy of the children on entering school. The number of teachers to be contacted would depend on the distribution pattern of the 50 children across the schools and reception classes.

The information gathered would be based on teacher perceptions. Literacy levels would be defined in terms of the skills of communication, language and literacy, with reference to the Q.C.A/DfEE guidelines for the Foundation Stage. (QCA/DfEE, 2000) Comparisons would be made between the levels of achievement of the two groups.

Findings would be recorded in terms of the whole groups. No families, children, schools, teachers or medical centres would be identified individually.

7.2 Sampling strategy for Strand 2

It was decided that the children in the target group would be those who had been born between 1st September, 1999 and 29th February, 2000 and had been registered at seven medical centres in the Manor and Castle area at the time of their 6 to 13 months reviews. In addition, the children would have been registered with the library service at May 2004. These children would all have entered reception classes of schools in the Autumn term, 2004.

A conscious attempt would be made to outline the target area as a specific geographical area within which the medical centres were situated and in which most of the children would reside. The rationale for this was to attempt, as far as possible, to limit the study to areas with similar socio-economic profiles, in order to gather information from families that would probably be subject to similar environmental influences on levels of early literacy development, for example, families with similar access, or lack of access, to facilities such as nurseries, playgroups, mother and toddler groups; families with similar levels of income/ employment.

The researcher would attempt to define the target area in this way by some of the following means:

- initially studying a map to identify the location of the medical centres in relation to the last known addresses of families on the medical and library lists, and the location of the libraries, schools with nurseries, nursery schools
- visiting the area
- seeking background information from the Books for Babies Co-ordinator, a Bookstart project worker, a health visitor, and several parents
- studying the information regarding the postcodes and electoral wards provided by Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information Services.

It was recognised, however, that the families who did or did not choose to take up Bookstart in the first place may have been different to start with, for example more versus less motivated, more versus less educated, more versus less literate, and that there might be pre-existing background differences which might account not only for taking up or not taking up Bookstart but also for any differences in the attainment of the two groups of children on entering school.

7.3 Plan for Strand 2 and for additional strands

After some re-definition in the light of local circumstances, the following plan for Strand 2 was adopted:

Request would be made to the Health Authority to release data on all children who had been born between 1st September 1999 and 29th February 2000 and had been registered at eight medical centres in the Manor, Castle and Arbourthorne districts at the

time of their 6 to 13 month hearing checks. (The target area would be extended to include the Arbourthorne area of the City, in order to increase the numbers of potential target families).

The Libraries, Information and Archives Department would be asked to provide data of all children born between the target dates who had registered with the Library Service.

The L.E.A. would be asked to provide a list of schools to which the target children who appeared on the Library lists would be admitted in September 2004. The L.E.A. data would provide a list of schools that the target children on the library lists were attending, thus identifying the 'Bookstart' group.

With the co-operation of the schools, the 'Bookstart' children could be matched in the following way, to identify a potential comparison group: For each 'Bookstart' child, another child would be chosen, who was in the same class as the Bookstart child, who was of the same gender as the Bookstart child, and whose date of birth was the closest to that of the Bookstart child. Children would also be matched according to whether or not they were in receipt of free school meals. Wherever possible, they would also be matched according to whether their first language was English, whether they had attended a nursery and whether they had a disability that might have impeded their early literacy development.

The reception class teachers of all the target children would be asked to complete questionnaires in order to establish the levels of literacy of the children on entering school.

The Health Authority's data held information that was potentially useful to the Bookstart Team in identifying the level of take-up of library services in the early years, as well as the comparative rates of take-up in the various districts within the target area. It was decided to include an analysis of the data in these terms, as Strand 3 of the report.

An initial interview with a parent provided much information that could be usefully included in the recommendations to the Books for Babies Team for their further development. It was therefore decided that further interviews would be carried out and that any findings would be included as Strand 4 of the report.

Information obtained from the Bookstart project worker and the health visitor would also be included in this strand.

7.4 Data collection and analysis

These aspects of the methodology are included in each of the sections 8 to 11 below, dealing specifically with the four strands.

8. Strand 1: A summative report of initiatives undertaken to date by the Sheffield Bookstart Team.

8.1 Data collection

The data for this strand were obtained from various sources including the following progress reports produced by the Bookstart Team:

Books for Babies Bookstart Progress Report January 1999 – August 2000. (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000)

Bookstart and Books for Babies Report 2002 – 2003. (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004)

Information was also gathered from discussions that took place with the Books for Babies Co-ordinator, a health visitor, a Bookstart project worker, and parents of some of the target children.

8.2 Findings

The Sheffield Bookstart Team produced a clear and comprehensive review of the progress of the project, including the planning stage in 1998, the implementation of the project in June 1999, and initiatives undertaken to 2004.

The documentation produced by the Team included two progress reports and several other reports relating to specific initiatives.

A clear picture emerged, not only from reading the documentation, but also from speaking to the Books for Babies Co-ordinator, other professionals, and parents, of the particular nature and strengths of the Sheffield Books for Babies project:

- 8.2.1 the high profile given to the target areas relating to this research project
- 8.2.2 the breadth of the project
- 8.2.3 the role of the book bag initiative as pivotal to a wide range of Bookstart initiatives
- 8.2.4 the commitment of the Bookstart Team to maintaining funding for the project
- 8.2.5 the partnership between the Bookstart Team and the Health Visitor representative
- 8.2.6 the commitment to extending the Bookstart project to encompass adult learning
- 8.2.7 the thread of self evaluation running through the documentation of the project and the awareness of external evaluations in the field.

These aspects are detailed on the following pages.

8.2.1 The high profile given to the target areas relating to this research project

It is evident that the Sheffield Project was devised with consideration for the particular needs of its varying communities, including the needs of the target area of this research project:

In the Report on the Manor and Castle Bookstart project (June 1999 – March 2003), which was contained in the Bookstart & Books for Babies Report, 2002 – 2003, it was stated that ‘the aim of the project was to introduce book sharing to young families, especially those where this would not be a natural activity’ (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

In this report the Team also outlined their concern to adapt the delivery methods of the Books for Babies pack to the needs of the area: The Team described the basic method of delivery, where ‘Health visitors [...] agreed to give out vouchers to parents at the babies’ nine-month hearing tests. The parents would then exchange the voucher for a bag in their nearest library and time would be spent with the family showing them books which they might like to borrow and making them feel generally welcome’ (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). In considering an additional method ‘It was decided that in Sheffield the bags would be delivered via community and mobile libraries’ (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

It was recognised, however, that ‘[...] although this would work well in parts of the City where there was a tradition of book sharing and library use, there needed to be additional support in other areas of the City’ (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

At the onset of the project, not every area of the city had a Bookstart Project Worker. However the Bookstart Team ensured that there was a Project Worker assigned to the Manor and Castle area.

Part of the remit of the Manor and Castle Project Worker was to ‘visit the families in their own homes, or at their local clinic, giving out the bag to babies of the appropriate age and generally promoting book sharing with young children. Although this meant that families were not required to visit a library to collect their bag, it was felt that many of the families would not do this anyway’ (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). To counteract this, sessions would be set up at the two libraries in the area. These sessions were to be called ‘Crawl and Climb’: ‘The Project Worker was present at these sessions, and the provision of toys and refreshments made for a welcoming atmosphere’ (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

The role of the Project Worker, particularly within the target area, was considered vital to the effectiveness of the project. As the Bookstart Team highlighted in their report, ‘The project worker was able to give individual support to families who struggle with literacy issues or have families with special educational needs. Her role also enables her to

approach hard to reach and excluded groups of parents such as refugees and teenage mothers [...] for all families to take advantage of the materials and services provided by the library, a project worker is a vital element of the Bookstart scheme [...] without her input children already facing multiple deprivations will not be in a position to benefit from the project' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information). The difficulty faced by the Team was in carrying out these objectives due to lack of continuity in the funding of the project worker, as discussed in section 8.2.4 below.

The report recorded that the Bookstart Team began to work with a basic skills tutor within MATREC, the training division of Sheffield College, whose aim was to 'tackle the basic skills problem at the very start of the learning process, breaking the cycle of low educational attainment in the Manor and Castle areas' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). Through this co-operation, the Bookstart Team 'obtained a Community Chest grant to fund a project worker to target families in this area' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

Evidence of the Bookstart Team's inclusion of ethnic minority families in their provision is also found in its progress reports: In the Books for Babies Bookstart Progress Report January 1999–August 2000, the Team recorded that publicity material was produced in languages other than English, for families for whom English was their second language: 'Information packs are now available in Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujurati, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

The materials, in the English versions as well as the versions in minority languages, were produced with clear layouts, combining the printed messages with illustrations, using colour for both text and illustrations.

Further evidence of this provision is contained in Section 8 of the report, entitled 'Family Learning'. In discussing the courses set up, the Team made the following statement: 'Courses took place at three libraries. All three are located in areas of deprivation in the city of Sheffield, two in inner city areas with high minority ethnic populations [...]' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

8.2.2 The breadth of the project

The extensive documentation produced provided evidence of in-depth provision of the Sheffield Books for Babies Project over several years:

'Books for Babies Bookstart Progress Report January 1999 – August 2000' was the first progress report of the project. It set the Sheffield initiative within the wider context of the national Bookstart initiative, dating from 1992. It outlined the structure of the national Bookstart team, the partnerships involved in the project and the sponsors.

Information was given on the method of administering the Book Bag scheme itself.

The report also contained detailed records of the associated events organised during the first year and a half, with examples of the many publicity leaflets produced, cuttings from the local press, articles and photographs. (Many of these events are detailed in section 8.2.3.)

In addition to information directly related to the Bookstart project, there were also references to wider services available in the City for adults, for example publicity regarding Adult Education Classes, and the Sheffield Information Service.

The document also included reports by the Bookstart Co-ordinator and a Health Visitor, and details of evaluations undertaken. (The latter are discussed in section 8.2.7.)

'Bookstart and Books for Babies Report 2002 – 2003' documented in detail the further development of the Sheffield Books for Babies project. The development of the role of the Books for Babies co-ordinator was outlined. Some examples of this development included further work on securing funding such as funding for the specific project entitled 'Baby Book Week'; the development of links with other organisations; attendance at conferences and training courses, and the presentation of training courses.

The development of the project officer's post was also detailed in this report. In this report, the Bookstart Team reiterated its aims and objectives, confirmed its procedures for the administration of the Book Bag scheme, and, as in the previous report, outlined the many events and initiatives that were organised during the period of this second report. (A sample of these is included in section 8.2.3.)

One section of the report contained an outline by the Team of its recent achievements. These included the links made with the Sure Start agencies, and the initiatives associated with this partnership, for example, collaborative work with a family literacy officer, as well as a project entitled 'Bookstart Plus', for children aged 2 years. Evidence was also provided of the achievements of the Team in the description of the 'waiting room collection of baby/toddler books in the Jessop Wing and Child Health Services reception areas (of the hospital)' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

Information was also included regarding further internal evaluations undertaken. (See section 8.2.7 for discussion of these.)

8.2.3 The role of the book bag initiative as pivotal to a wide range of initiatives

While the provision of book bags for babies is pivotal to the Sheffield Project, it is an initiative that, from its inception, has been embedded in a wide range of activities provided by the Bookstart Team for Sheffield families with young children. The two progress reports, as well as the reports on individual initiatives provided evidence of the wide range of events organised by the Team, some of which have already been cited in the above section. The following are a further selection of the many examples:

From the first report, 'Books for Babies Bookstart Progress Report January 1999 – August 2000':

- Books for Babies Workshops May 2000, for 'Library staff, Sainsbury's Staff, Health Visitors, Sainsbury's Managers, Bookstart regional officer, Representative (from Sheffield College.'
- Books for Babies Promotion Month June 2000, organised 'in order to raise awareness of the importance of the parent/carer's role in children's literacy development. Included were events and activities for families across the City, beginning with a launch day in a local park, which included a story telling session led by a professional author and illustrator. This was followed by a variety of events held at libraries throughout the City, for example '[...] family craft time, music and rhythm, crawl and climb sessions.' Plans were made to integrate these activities with '[...] talks aimed at families with babies and young children, with a wide range of subjects, including vaccinations, swimming safety, alternative therapies for babies with health problems such as colic, cranial osteopathy – and even a food tasting session with a home economist from Sainsbury's' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

From the second report, 'Bookstart and Books for Babies Report 2002 – 2003':

- Story reading and issuing of Book Bags via the mobile library service.
- The crawl and climb initiative. The remit of the project worker was to '[...] visit families in their homes or at their local clinic, giving out the bag to babies of the appropriate age and generally promoting book sharing with young children. Although this meant families were not required to visit a library to collect their bag, it was felt that many families would not do this anyway.' This accepted, the crawl and climb club was therefore introduced to encourage library use. It was introduced by the project worker at the two libraries in the target area of this research project and has since become standard provision. It still takes place to date, one session having been in progress when the researcher made an unconnected visit to one of the libraries. In its initial stages, the project worker was present at the sessions. Toys and refreshments were provided. Importantly, 'This was seen as a first step in promoting family learning, empowering parents to become involved in very informal but crucial pre-literacy skills.'
- Fathers' day story reading session. This took place in June 2004. This was an initiative specifically designed to encourage fathers and grandfathers to become involved in literacy events. This session was observed by chance by the researcher on a visit to one of the two libraries in the target area.

- Babies Love Libraries Month held in March 2003. This event aimed to encourage parents to use their Bookstart library card to 'borrow a children's book at any Sheffield Library or Mobile library and receive a free gift with this voucher.'
- Sheffield Baby Book Award. This was an event in which publishers submitted books and 'Parents, Carers, Babies and Toddlers review them for shortlisting.' It was also reported that this event is 'now in its 3rd year' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and information, 2004).

8.2.4 The commitment of the Bookstart Team to maintaining funding for the project

The Bookstart Team remained committed to the project in spite of the ongoing difficulties of funding. This fact is reflected in the accounts of the efforts firstly to secure additional funding to meet the additional needs of the communities, and then to obtain even basic funding: 'In the two following years we were successful in obtaining SRB and NRF funding and then last year a combination of SRB and NRF money specifically to pay for a worker' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

In spite of their considerable efforts, the uncertainty of funding has remained. The original source of funding from the Sainsbury's sponsorship ended, and thereafter the team had to look to a variety of piecemeal sources, backed up by in-kind funding provided by the Library Service, with the knowledge that 'There has never been sponsorship or mainstream funding available to pay for a project worker but in some areas of the city this is an essential element of the scheme in tackling inequality' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

The level of provision of project workers appeared to be adequate at the outset. The Bookstart Team reported that between July 1999 and August 2000 a total of 3,276 babies had been enrolled in libraries and that 3,300 Bookstart bags had been given out in libraries. The conclusion was drawn that 'The Sheffield method of administering its Bookstart project (issuing vouchers to families through Health Visitors and redeeming them in local libraries) has only been partially successful from the viewpoint of ensuring that Bookstart bags reached relevant families. However, in terms of increased library membership and continued usage, this method has been very successful' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). This conclusion probably referred to the city as a whole: even though there was a project worker for the Manor and Castle area from the outset and procedures were set out whereby this person would work closely with the health visitors in the area to ensure that most parents were included in the 'Books for Babies' initiative, this did not in fact go according to plan, as outlined in section 9.2.5.

Unfortunately the Bookstart Team have not always been able to maintain the initial level of support, even in the target area, due to the lack of continuity in the funding for the project. They confirmed that 'We failed to secure any grant money for the Manor and Castle Bookstart project worker for the year 2003/4' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). They also explained that there was no money available from the library budget to finance a project worker and that the Sure Start organisation would not

be funding a Bookstart worker in 2003. This fact may well have had an impact on the effectiveness of the project.

Certainly evidence from the health visitor representative indicated that the initial plan, whereby the project worker would be actively involved in the contact with the parents, a plan which was not actually implemented due to data protection issues, would have resulted in a more effective outcome. This fact was confirmed by the project worker (see sections 11.3.2 and 11.4.2).

The Health Visitor representative also indicated that the need for a project worker would be even more urgent in the near future: 'New procedures would have to be put in place', because there were plans to discontinue the present system of checks at 7 to 13 months for all babies, and Primary Care Trusts would instead be required to target areas according to health needs. Her view was that these changes would seriously limit the ability of Health Visitors to continue to attempt to distribute Bookstart vouchers to all families. She further stated that the view of the Primary Care Trust was that the health visitors would 'do it as far you practically can.' (See also sections 11.3.1 and 11.4.1.)

8.2.5 The partnership between the Bookstart Team and Health Visitors

The close working relationship between the Bookstart Team and the Health Visitors in relation to the Books for Babies initiative is reflected in the Team's reports.

A representative of the Health Visitors was a member of the Bookstart Liaison Group.

In an interview with the researcher this representative confirmed the ongoing working partnership: 'The liaison with the Books for Babies Co-ordinator is excellent. The Co-ordinator will come and tell you [...] (she) is enthusiastic, genned up, competent, she has sorted out some guidelines. There is always an excellent supply of vouchers and sample packs' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). The Health Visitor continued by explaining that newsletters were produced which kept them informed of developments and that 'representatives of the health visitors have been invited to attend national Bookstart conferences as well as the local meetings' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

In spite of the efforts of the Bookstart Team and the health visitors to work closely together, these efforts were not entirely successful. This was confirmed by the Health Visitor representative. She explained that the Bookstart project workers were originally given data on the children born into the area, including names, addresses and dates of birth. The project workers were planning to work through these lists and contact all the parents. However, due to data protection concerns, these data were withdrawn, with the result that the health visitors themselves were asked to give out the vouchers to parents at a six months hearing test. When this test was withdrawn, the health visitors attempted to give out the vouchers at a health check that took place when the baby was between 6 and 13 months. Despite their best efforts, this system would most likely have led to a less efficient means of offering the Books for Babies initiative to parents, compared with

the original plan of direct contact by a Bookstart Project Worker. (These issues are reported in detail in section 11 below.)

8.2.6 The commitment to extending the Bookstart project to encompass adult learning

A commitment by the Sheffield Bookstart Team to a wider provision is suggested in the first progress report, in the description of some of the activities planned as part of the Books for Babies Promotion Month in June 2000, which is also cited in section 8.2.3 above and which concerns '[...] talks aimed at families with babies and young children, with a wide range of subjects, including vaccinations, swimming safety, alternative therapies for babies with health problems such as colic, cranial osteopathy – and even a food tasting session with a home economist from Sainsbury's' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

This commitment is also confirmed in section 8 of the second progress report, entitled 'Family Learning', in which the Team discussed the creation of the post of Family and Adult Learning Co-ordinator. The Books for Babies Co-ordinator explained: 'I had for some time been interested in extending the Bookstart project into further learning activities for parents and children based on sharing books.' In setting out the aims of this initiative, it is made clear that the aim was to support children's learning. Equally clear, however, is the aim to 'offer parents and carers an opportunity to link this first step learning to further courses and guidance in Basic Skills and other areas of learning' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

8.2.7 Evidence of self evaluation and awareness of external evaluation

Evidence of evaluation from the first report, 'Books for Babies Bookstart Progress Report January 1999–August 2000'

Chapter 8 of the first report is entitled 'Evaluations – Monitoring our Performance.' Reference is made to 'The following documents supporting our performance during the period under review' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000). The documents consist of various forms of data, including copies of letters of support for the Bookstart initiatives, evaluations of workshops held, photographs of events, copies of the publicity produced and feedback from parents and staff regarding events held. The following statistical data were also included:

- A section entitled 'Under 5s new borrowers' consisting of tables and graphs entitled 'New Borrowers under 5 Monthly Analysis' and 'Under 5s by age.' (This information presumably refers to the total figures for all libraries across the City.)
- A table of attendance figures at The Manor and Castle 'Crawl and Climb' sessions.

- A table of the numbers of children who joined the library and who attended events in June 2000. These figures may include children of all ages. Within this information, there is a breakdown of figures for all libraries, including the ones in the target area for this research project.

Of particular interest to this research project is the information recording the views of parents in the Manor district on the 'Books for Babies Month' held in June, 2000. The comments made by this group of parents were positive, and, interestingly, were in sharp contrast to the response from a group of parents in a more affluent district of the City, which caused the Bookstart team to be 'disappointed with the lack of interest' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

The letters of support included, for example, one from a professional storyteller who took part in an event, one from a local sponsor (a Co-operative Store) and one from a parent who wrote, 'I am writing to let you know what a wonderful service is provided for the pre-school age children in my village [...] by the library staff [...] I have twins who are almost 3 and a half years and they, as well as mum and dad, thoroughly enjoy the Thursday afternoon session [...] The houses [...] are adorned with beautiful works of art [...] From talking to other parents, I know that they feel the same way [...]' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

Although this parent does not live in the target area for this research project, she does refer to the library in the project area when she writes, 'Could you please extend our thanks to (Julie at the library) and her two assistants' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2000).

There are also examples of two questionnaires designed for use with parents to establish the impact of the Bookstart Project.

The report includes reference to future research and evaluation. For example, in section 9.3 of Chapter 9, which is entitled 'Plans for the Future', along with the outlines of future initiatives, there are plans to 'Look at ways we deliver Bookstart Bags and how we reach the retrospective babies. Examine what other local authorities are doing with this age group.'

Evidence of evaluation from the second progress report, 'Bookstart & Books for Babies Report 2002 – 2003'

There is evidence that, even before they were approached by the Bookstart organisation, the members of the Sheffield Team were already using evaluations of previously established projects which were likely to be relevant to its own work, in order to inform its decisions. This is highlighted in the 'Review of the Work of the Bookstart Project Officers' under the subtitle 'Report on Manor and Castle Bookstart project June 1999 – March 2003' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). However the Team was concerned to meet the needs of the communities which they were supporting, and to this end they modified their decisions in the light of their own evaluations of the local situation.

The monitoring process of the Team is clearly recorded in the report on 'Achievements' in section 7 of the second progress report. A variety of initiatives are recorded. For example, in evaluating the effectiveness of the publicity for events organised, the Team acknowledged that 'We need to make efforts to publicise and promote ourselves further.' The Team then described one of the strategies to improve publicity, which was to further the links with the Sure Start programme: 'New Sure Start areas have begun and Sure Start Home visitors are assisting us in promoting Bookstart' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

Several of the parents interviewed for this research project also highlighted the need for improved publicity. This issue is discussed in sections 11.3.3-4. Comments made by some of the participants of courses organised by the Bookstart Team were recorded to form an evaluation of the events. Some examples, relating to a training course for Sure Start workers were as follows:

- 'I've got lots of ideas from today that have come about from knowing a bit more about the project. It's been a great morning, very inspiring.'
 - 'It has given me a much better understanding of the Bookstart project and how we might develop working with parents and home visits.'
 - 'Everyone was so enthusiastic and keen. Excellent to see everyone working together to achieve what is an excellent strategy.'
- (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004)

Evaluation of a Family Learning course took place by inviting feedback from parents, for example:

- 'I want to build upon the start they are making with books.'
- 'Luke and I made up stories about the animals in this book. It was a book without words.'
- 'It was a nice, relaxed session, good to be in a friendly atmosphere.' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004)

Evaluation was also facilitated by recording feedback from the 'Babies Love Books Week in 2003, including feedback from a professional who took part:

'I was moved and touched by those struggling mums and by the evident pleasure of the children and babies. You've done an extremely important job to open up opportunities for so many under privileged and uninformed people' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

Feedback from parents was also collected. For example, in response to the scheme whereby children receive a card from the Bookstart Co-ordinator on their first birthday, one parent wrote: 'My daughter Julia was one last week and she received a birthday card. It was a delightful surprise and I really appreciated it' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

It is evident that the Team has closely followed the research carried out in the field and has been motivated to persevere in its own efforts by the research findings. In section 5

of the second progress report, the Team summarised the work of Wade and Moore at the University of Birmingham, as well as that carried out at the University of Surrey, Roehampton.

The Books for Babies Co-ordinator also consolidated her knowledge of these research projects when she attended the National Bookstart Conference in London in 2004, at which the researchers from both projects presented their findings.

It is clear that the Team was conscious of the need to carry out ongoing evaluations and that they collated information towards evaluation processes. Some examples of the information collected are as follows:

- The number of Bookstart bags given out during April 2003 - January 2004
- The number of live births between 1st January and 31st December 2003
- The population in 1993
- The number of community libraries, hospital libraries and mobile libraries
- Total population of the city based on the 2001 census
- The number of 0 to 4 year olds at the time of the 2001 census
- The composition of the population in terms of ethnic groups.

Furthermore, the Team showed a growing awareness of the need to consolidate its own internal evaluation by means of an external project. In section 12 of the second progress report, the Team stated: 'Our own record keeping and monitoring is ongoing and we have had discussions with University of Sheffield to carry out some research into the effects of Sheffield Bookstart.' The Team included an outline of the plan that eventually led to this research project.

The Bookstart Team has monitored its own work with reference to the national context. The Books for Babies co-ordinator has followed national developments, for example by attending the national Bookstart conferences. She has also made efforts to share her knowledge with her colleagues. In addition to distributing the regular national Bookstart newsletters and her own Sheffield Bookstart newsletters to her colleagues, and to parents via the local libraries, she invited representatives of the Primary Care Trust to attend the National Bookstart Conference with her. The aims of the national Bookstart programme were set out in section 5 of Sheffield Bookstart's second progress report.

An international perspective is also evident. Developments in other parts of the world were described in section 5, in the sub-section entitled 'Bookstart – International Links', in which the Team stated: 'Bookstart is committed to spreading the ideals of Bookstart throughout the world and international interest in the programme continues to grow' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004).

Some of the latest developments were described, for example: 'Japan and Thailand have both developed national Bookstart programmes [...]' (Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information, 2004). The report included information on developments in other countries, for example Australia, Chile and Mexico.

9. Strand 2: A comparative study of literacy achievements of a group of children who had been involved in the Sheffield Books for Babies project and a group of children who had not taken part

9.1 Data collection

The Community Paediatric Service provided spreadsheets with data that included children who had been born between 1st September, 1999 and 29th February, 2000 and had either been registered at eight medical centres in the Manor, Castle and Arbourthorne districts at birth, or had transferred to these centres. All the children on the lists were still registered at the centres at the time the data were produced, that is, May/June 2004. Included in the data were the names, addresses, dates of birth and gender of the children, and, for those who had not been registered at birth, the dates of transfer into the target area. The data were presented for each medical centre separately. The data were provided on the condition that the researcher would only contact those families that were also on the Library Service's register.

The Libraries, Information and Archives Department provided data of all children born between the target dates, who had registered with the Library Service at one of the city's libraries. This information included the names, last known addresses, the last date on which the child had used the service and the 'user count', which indicated the total number of times that the child had used the service. The data referred to those children still registered with the library service at the time the data was provided, that is 11th May, 2004.

The Libraries, Information and Archives Department also provided lists of postcodes of the Manor and Castle areas.

Information was obtained via Sheffield City Council's website regarding the composition of the wards and the districts of the city, and was used to identify individual streets.

Initial data regarding the L.E.A.'s lists of cluster schools were obtained via the Council's website. This information provided the names and addresses of the schools in the target area, and the educational phases they each covered.

The number of children within the target areas who appeared on both the Health Authority's list and the Library list had now been reduced to 28: The researcher discovered from visiting one house and speaking to a neighbour that the family had moved out of the Sheffield area.

A request was made to the L.E.A. for the names of the schools to which these 28 children had been admitted in September 2004. This request was referred to the Data Protection and Security Officer of the Council, who considered this request at a meeting in September 2004. He asked the Library representative to provide a copy of a contract, which would include data protection issues. This was carried out.

The information needed was obtained via the Information Systems Manager for the L.E.A. The schools of 26 children were identified. There was no record of the other two children.

The 26 children were spread out over 14 schools. An initial letter was sent to the head teacher of each school. This was followed up by a phone call to arrange a visit to the schools, to deliver the questionnaires and to explain the procedures for selecting the comparison children and for completing the questionnaires (see Appendix A.1). The staff who became involved were head teachers, deputy head teachers, foundation stage coordinators and reception class teachers. In almost all the schools the head teacher took an active part in the process.

The schools were asked to match each Bookstart child to a comparison child (see Appendix A1.1). Teachers then completed language and literacy questionnaires for each Bookstart and each comparison child (see Appendix A1.2).

The profile of the area had proved to be more diverse than anticipated. Within the area, which had traditionally been an area composed mainly of council housing, there had been a considerable change to the profile over recent years, with more homes becoming owner-occupied due to the sale of council houses and the building of new homes. In addition, the area of the Park Hill Flats, traditionally rented from the council predominantly by families whose first language was English, had more recently become a focus of housing for refugee families. In addition, parts of the complex had been vacated and the premises boarded up, awaiting renovation.

To compensate for the lack of homogeneity in the socio-economic profile of the target area, the children were also matched according to their entitlement (or otherwise) to free school meals, this being an accepted criterion for the assessment of socio-economic levels. This would hopefully minimise the variability factors of the two groups, in terms of opportunities and influences on the early development of language and literacy skills.

Where possible, children were also matched according to whether their first language was English, whether they had attended a nursery and whether they had a disability that might have impeded their early literacy development.

Whilst it was evident that the staff at the schools had heavy workloads, some schools even undergoing major building works or relocation to new premises, they nevertheless were very helpful in agreeing to complete the questionnaires and indicated their support for the Books for Babies scheme and for the research project.

Responses were received from 13 of the 14 schools. There were 2 target children on the register of the school that did not respond. At this stage it was also discovered that one child, whilst on the library register, had a user count of 0. The final sample was therefore reduced to 23 pairs of children.

9.2 Data Analysis

The questionnaires, which were an adaptation of the language and literacy section of the Q.C.A.'s Foundation Stage Profile (Q.C.A/DfEE, 2000), identified the levels of language and literacy development of the children on entering the reception classes in September 2004. The questionnaires identified achievements in the following categories of language and literacy skills:

Listening and Speaking
Linking Sounds and Words
Reading
Writing.

Each of the above categories included nine skills, encompassing 3 stages of development (see Appendix A1.2).

9.3 Findings

It was found that, on entering reception, the Bookstart group of children had gained more skills than the non-Bookstart children: The Bookstart children had in fact developed a total of 287 skills, compared with the non-Bookstart children who had developed 236 skills. Details of these figures are outlined in the following table.

Comparative Literacy Scores

more = Bookstart Child has acquired more early language/literacy skills than the comparison child

less = Bookstart Child has acquired more early language/literacy skills than the comparison child

equal = Bookstart Child has acquired the same number of early language/literacy skills as the comparison child

CHILD	User Count	Listening and Speaking	Linking Sounds and Letters	Reading	Writing	Overall
A	377	equal (9/9)	more (9/6)	more (7/3)	more (5/3)	more (30/21)
B	188	less (2/4)	equal (2/2)	less (2/3)	equal (2/2)	less (8/11)
C	176	less (2/3)	less (1/3)	less (1/2)	less (1/4)	less (5/12)
D	168	more (4/3)	more (3/1)	more (4/2)	more (4/3)	more (15/9)
E	93	more (7/3)	more (3/2)	more (4/2)	equal (4/4)	more (18/11)
F	49	equal (6/6)	less (1/2)	less (1/2)	less (1/2)	less (9/12)
G	28	more (7/3)	more (3/2)	equal (3/3)	more (4/3)	more (17/11)
H	27	more (6/1)	more (2/0)	more (3/2)	more (4/1)	more (15/4)
I	16	more (9/6)	more (7/2)	more (5/3)	more (7/3)	more (28/14)
J	12	equal (4/4)	more (3/1)	equal (2/2)	equal (1/1)	more (10/8)
K	10	more (4/1)	more (2/1)	more (2/1)	equal (1/1)	more (9/4)
L	9	equal (5/5)	less (2/3)	less (2/5)	less (2/6)	less (11/19)
M	9	more (5/3)	more (3/1)	more (3/2)	more (4/1)	more (15/7)
N	9	more (7/2)	more (2/1)	more (3/1)	more (5/1)	more (17/5)
O	8	more (6/2)	less (4/6)	equal (5/5)	equal (6/6)	more (21/19)
P	8	more (4/3)	equal (1/1)	equal (2/2)	more (2/1)	more (9/7)
Q	7	less (0/4)	less (0/1)	equal (1/1)	less (0/1)	less (1/7)
R	6	equal (3/3)	more (2/1)	more (4/2)	less (1/2)	more (10/8)
S	5	less (6/7)	equal (2/2)	equal (1/1)	equal (1/1)	less (10/11)
T	5	more (5/4)	equal (3/3)	equal (4/4)	more (4/3)	more (16/14)
U	3	less (2/4)	equal (1/1)	equal (1/1)	less (0/2)	less (4/8)
V	3	less (1/2)	less (0/2)	equal (2/2)	equal (1/1)	less (4/7)
W	1	less (4/6)	equal (1/1)	equal (0/0)	equal (0/0)	less (5/7)
Totals		(108/88)	(57/45)	(62/51)	(60/52)	(287/236)

The average number of skills acquired by the Bookstart children was 12.5, compared with average number of skills developed by the non-Bookstart children, which was 10.3, a difference of 2.2 skills.

The following table shows the comparative number of skills acquired by the two groups in terms of the four areas of skills.

	Bookstart children		Non-Bookstart children		Difference
	Total	Average	Total	Average	
Listening and Speaking	108	4.7	88	3.8	0.9
Linking Sounds And Words	57	2.5	45	2.0	0.5
Reading	62	2.7	51	2.2	0.5
Writing	60	2.6	52	2.3	0.3
<hr/>					
Totals	287	12.5	236	10.3	2.2

Because the sample was so small it was not practical to undertake statistical testing.

The greatest comparative achievement by the Bookstart group was in Listening and Speaking. This gain suggests that the Bookstart programme may have had an impact on this key area of development in the pre-school years. The area with the least difference between the two groups was writing, suggesting that both groups may have had less impact in this area.

Both groups had achieved between 9 and 18 skills, which took them both into the second stage of the literacy programme, but the Bookstart children were on average 2.2 skills ahead within the second stage of development. They had achieved an average of 3.5 of the 9 skills associated with the second stage, compared with the non-Bookstart children who had achieved an average of 1.3 of the skills associated with the second stage.

It was also found that 14 of the 23 Bookstart children had acquired more skills than the non-Bookstart children

There were, however, 9 Bookstart children who had acquired fewer skills than their comparison children by the time they entered reception. It is a cause for concern that this number of children, in spite of having been introduced to the opportunities offered by the Library Service during their pre-school years, had not progressed as well as children who had not had the benefit of these additional opportunities.

One contributing factor may be that 6 of these 9 Bookstart children had used the library service only minimally. While two of the 9 children had a relatively high user count (188 and 176), and a third child had an average user count of 49, 6 children had used the service fewer than 10 times up to May 2004.

If a larger sample group could have been obtained, which would have been the case if more of the 141 children born into the target area within the target dates had registered with the library service, then further relevant comparisons could have been made, for example target children and comparison children could have been matched according to position in the family. Given the limited number of potential Bookstart children and the relatively few reception classes involved, it was not possible to attempt further matching.

The fact has to be taken into account, when considering the results of this research, that it is not known to what extent the children and families were more or less motivated towards the development of literacy skills by other factors than the Bookstart programme, factors which could have negated any impact that the programme might otherwise have had.

As previously stated, whatever similar influences can be matched across the two groups, there may be social, environmental and hereditary differences that cannot be easily identified without in-depth discussion taking place with each family.

It also has to be reiterated that any findings from this research are conditional on the fact that the research was small-scale and based on a specific geographical area. The results therefore are not readily generalisable to other situations.

However, the results do show that Bookstart was, on average, successful for the specific group of children who had received it in this particular area of Sheffield in 2004.

10. Strand 3: A comparative study of take-up of the project in different areas

10.1 Data Collection

The information needed for this strand was contained in data that had already been collected for Strand 2.

10.2 Data Analysis

An analysis of the data collected produced the following information:

- 10.2.1 From the data provided by the Community Paediatric Service 8 medical centres were found to be situated within our target area. A further analysis of the data relating to these centres identified the number of babies who had been born between 1st September 1999 and 29th February 2000 and had either been registered at medical centres in the Manor, Castle and Arbourthorne districts at birth, or had transferred these centres before they were 13 months old and who were still registered there at May/June 2004.
- 10.2.2 The data provided by the Libraries, Archives and Information Services revealed the number of children registered with the library service at May 2004.
- 10.2.3 The data also identified the take-up in the target area and also the take-up in respect of the three districts in the target area.
- 10.2.4 An analysis of the data also revealed comparative figures of take-up of library services in terms of the eight medical centres.
- 10.2.5 In the process of extracting the data for the target area, additional data were found, revealing the total number of children registered at the 8 medical centres and born within the target dates. This information included families resident in the areas of Intake, Woodthorpe, Darnall, Lowfield, Sharrow, Highfield, Heeley and Norfolk Park, as well as the families in the target area.
- 10.2.6 The Libraries, Archives and Information Services had also provided 'user count' data, which was a record of the total number of times that children who were registered with the Library Service had actually used the service up to 11th May 2000. This 'user count' information was analysed to ascertain the levels of involvement of our target group.
- 10.2.7 Data had also been provided giving dates on which the children had first registered with the library services. An analysis of these dates in relation to the timing of the 'Books for Babies' initiative might indicate a correlation.

10.3 Findings

It was found that 141 children had been born between 1st September 1999 and 29th February 2000, had either been registered at the target medical centres in the Manor, Castle and Arbourthorne districts at birth, or had transferred to these centres before they were 13 months old, and were still registered there in May/June 2004.

It was further found that of these 141 children, 28 (20%) had been registered with the library service at 11th May 2004. The following table gives the total figures and also the figures relating to the three districts comprising the target area:

District	No. of children registered at medical centres	No. of children registered with library service	Percentage
Manor	56	11	19.6%
Castle	49	8	16.3%
Arbourthorne	36	9	25.0%
	—	—	
Totals	141	28	20%

This information could be useful to the Bookstart Team in setting future targets for increasing take-up of services, or as a basis for future research to establish the reasons for the difference in take-up in the three districts.

The comparative figures in terms of the eight medical centres were found to be as follows:

Medical Centre	No. of children registered at medical centre	No. of children registered with the library service
1	24	7
2	30	6
3	23	0
4	27	8
5	20	4
6	11	2
7	2	0
8	4	1

It was found that a total of 289 children born within the target dates had been registered at the 8 medical centres, including families in the target areas as well as those resident in the areas of Intake, Woodthorpe, Darnall, Lowfield, Sharrow, Highfield, Heeley and Norfolk Park. Of these 289 children, 41 were registered with the Library Service at 11th May 2004, that is 14.2%. This information could be useful to the Bookstart Team as a baseline against which to set future targets.

The 'user count' data revealed substantial differences in the levels of usage, ranging from 0 to 377:

User Count	No. of children
0 to 10	15
11 to 50	8
51 to 100	1
101 to 200	3
201 to 300	0
300+	1
Total	28

All the children had registered at some stage but had since used the service to such varying degrees. Moreover, more than half had used the service only marginally. (The 0 to 10 figure even includes one child with a user count of 0, even though this child had initially registered.) Very few children had used the service substantially.

The Bookstart programme nevertheless had an impact despite the low attendance of the children at the libraries. It may be that the Bookstart children took advantage of the many events that the library service organized around the City, even though many of them did not visit the libraries frequently. Some of them, for example, may have attended the Crawl and Climb sessions organised regularly at the libraries in the target area, the annual events at the central library or the events that took place in open spaces. The Bookstart programme as a whole relied for its impact not only on library attendance, but on the wide-ranging activities and events provided by the Bookstart Team.

The contra-indication to this theory, however, is the fact that, because the events were predominantly advertised in the libraries, the children were unlikely to see advertisements for the events unless they actually attended the libraries.

A comparison of the dates on which the children had first registered with the library services with the timing of the distribution of the 'Books for Babies' vouchers by the health visitors suggested that there was a correlation between the two. This is illustrated by the following table.

Age of registration	Number of children
Before 6 months	2
6 – 15 months	9
16 – 23 months	6
2 years – 2 years 11 months	4
3 years – 3 years 11 months	1
4 years +	1

(This table represents 23 of the 28 target children. There was no record of registration dates for 5 children.)

The above table shows that nine children registered at around the same time as the health visitors' promotion of the 'Books for Babies' initiative, which was between 7 and 13 months, suggesting that the voucher system operated by the health visitors and the promotion of the Books for Babies pack was effective in encouraging the families to register their children with the library service.

11. Strand 4: Perceptions of users and professionals

11.1 Data collection

The data for this strand were initially collected in order to gain background knowledge about the target areas and about procedures of the Books for Babies project. The researcher interviewed a health visitor who had been involved in the Books for Babies project from the outset. The questions were mostly open-ended, and the interview was carried out flexibly, leading to a wide-ranging discussion which lasted for approximately one and a half hours.

As well as providing the required background information, this interview also produced some key information, which would contribute towards recommendations for future development of the service. It was decided, therefore, to include these findings along with those from the parents' interviews, in an additional strand.

An interview also took place with the second project worker to have been appointed for the target area. This interview centred around the project worker's experience of the early stages of the project, and discussion took place about the difficulties that arose at that stage of the project.

The researcher initially interviewed one parent. The questions were mostly open-ended, and were based on the children's early literacy development and the parents' experiences of the Books for Babies project. The interview was carried out flexibly, giving opportunity for conversation to develop. The interview took place in the parent's home and lasted approximately one hour.

As a result of the comments and suggestions made by the parent in terms of useful feedback for the Bookstart Team and in terms of the way forward, it was decided to incorporate this information into the additional strand of the project. Following this interview, families of six more children were interviewed, on a one-to-one basis, using the same format but a revised questionnaire (see Appendix A.2), based on the original, which had become the trial questionnaire.

These interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. This length of time was partly influenced by the fact that most of the parents were looking after their children at the same time as they were taking part in the interviews, but was also due to the positive attitude of most parents towards being interviewed and offering their views.

In one case a parent was initially hesitant about revealing information. This parent made some searching questions as to why the information was required, and how the information would be used. After accepting the researcher's explanations, she became willing to participate and made an excellent contribution.

Data were collected from a total of seven families. In five cases, the mothers took part in the interviews. In two cases both the mother and father took part.

On a visit to one of the primary schools in the target area, the researcher incidentally met some of the members of the Parents' Group, who were having a meeting in school that morning. Some of them had just produced copies of a newspaper article entitled, 'How to make reading interesting for children'. They brought out a copy for the researcher. This article included a section on developing reading skills in babies and pre-school children. Following this, the researcher returned and interviewed some of the parents who had children in nursery or reception classes.

11.2 Data Analysis

An analysis was made of the information gathered at the interviews with the health visitor with parents in their own homes and with the group of parents attending a meeting in school. The findings are recorded at 12.3 below, and the interviews are recorded separately in detail at section 12.4 because it was thought that it would be useful for the Bookstart team to have a more complete picture of the health visitor's and each family's interview.

11.3 Findings

11.3.1 Findings from an interview with a health visitor

There was an excellent working relationship between the health visitor and the Bookstart Team.

At the outset of the project there was a Bookstart project worker for the target area. However, funding was subsequently withdrawn, with the result that the target area no longer had a project worker. Despite the fact that the project continued due to the commitment of the Bookstart Team and the health visitors, the lack of a specific project worker may have impacted on the effectiveness of the project in the target area.

The Bookstart Team did not have authorisation to handle data that were subject to data protection controls. Consequently the health visitors, who did have such authorisation, found that their workload in relation to the Books for Babies project considerably greater than anticipated. A further possible consequence would be that the project workers were less able to establish contact with the families and affect the development of the children's language and literacy.

The new procedures planned by the Primary Care Trust to target support according to need would be likely to impact on the ability of health visitors to distribute the Books for Babies vouchers. The Bookstart Team would have to consider different methods for their distribution.

The effectiveness of the Bookstart programmes in different areas might vary according to the commitment of individual health visitors to the project.

Bookstart project workers were often inexperienced in dealing with the social problems encountered when working with some families in their own homes, for example where there were child protection issues. There was a lack of training for Bookstart workers in this area. As a result some workers felt vulnerable.

Additional support was needed for 'hard to reach' families, as the attempt to engage these families and to effect any change was a long-term process.

There were additional difficulties in engaging young fathers in the process of aiding their children's development.

11.3.2 Findings from an interview with a project worker

The project worker did not have access to a database of families due to data protection issues, which made it more difficult for her to contact families, to target the support towards those families in greatest need of support and to monitor the effectiveness of the project.

In spite of the difficulties, the project worker managed to contact families at venues such as clinics, toddler groups, and centres for asylum seekers, as well as at the libraries themselves, working with parents in groups and on an individual family basis.

In addition to supporting the parents in the development of early language and literacy skills, she was also able to offer computer courses for some parents in conjunction with Sheffield College.

There was no continuity of provision due to the withdrawal of funding, one result being that the parents felt let down.

The project workers did not receive training on the issues of lone working and dealing with difficult situations, for example if they found themselves in the presence of an aggressive parent.

Some of the library staff were not sufficiently pro-active in relation to parents who were unaccustomed to using the library services.

Mobile libraries did not have the specific role that they might have had in relation to the Bookstart programme.

Insufficient work was carried out with young mothers.

Funding was not targeted at families with the greatest need of support.

There was no funding available to allow the project worker to provide a creative or innovative project.

The approach of a community worker needed to be incorporated into the project worker's role, but the project workers did not always have the appropriate skills.

11.3.3 Findings from interviews with parents

These findings are based on interviews with seven families. Where indicated, comments by the parents attending the school parents' group are also included.

- *Five of the parents interviewed received a Book Bag. These parents spoke positively about it*

Several parents interviewed thought that the Book Bags were an incentive to join the library. This view was also expressed by most of the parents in the school group.

Most parents who received the Book Bag stated that the nursery placemat was useful. One parent said that her child used to read the rhymes on the mat and another stated that her child still used it. Only one parent thought that the placemat was not very useful.

One parent who remembered the leaflets enclosed in the Book Bag said that she found the information about library opening times very useful.

- *The procedures of receiving the voucher, collecting the Book Bag and registering with the library varied considerably*

One of the parents interviewed stated that they had received the voucher from the health visitor and had collected the Book Bag from the local library. Several parents in the school group stated that they had also followed this procedure.

One parent collected the Book Bag herself from the central library, where she was already a member.

Another parent collected the Book Bag when she went to the library with her older child.

One parent received a voucher from the child's nursery but did not collect the Book Bag. This parent felt that the nursery could have also given her the Book Bag. The child's grandmother registered him when he was between one and two years old.

- *Two parents interviewed stated that they would have registered their children at the library at a very early age even without the incentive of the Book Bag initiative*

One of these parents stated that she had an older child who attended the library and that she would have registered the younger child at about 7 to 12 months.

The other parent said that the Books for Babies initiative highlighted the importance of registering at a very early age and that without the initiative she would have waited until the children were about one year old.

One school group parent also explained that she would have enrolled her younger children early in spite of the Book Bag because the Book Bag received by her older child had already given her the incentive to do so.

- *Three of the parents stated that they had not registered their children at the library until very recently*

One of these parents couldn't remember the involvement of the health visitor but thought that she had collected the Book Bag directly from the library. This parent also stated that she would not have taken her child to the library at an earlier stage because she felt that children had to be a certain age to handle books carefully.

Another said that she had received the voucher and the Book Bag but then thought that the library had closed.

Another parent stated that she did not receive a voucher or a Book Bag. She thought that this might have been because her baby had been born prematurely and she therefore attended the hospital rather than the clinic.

It is a concern that there were as many as three out of the seven families interviewed who were not influenced by the Bookstart project to register early, even though six of them had received the Book Bag. All these children however did have books at a very early age.

- *All the parents expressed positive attitudes towards introducing children to books at an early age*

Some of the statements expressing these attitudes are quoted or reflected below.

'If they had been introduced to books later, they would not have got into good habits (associated with) handling books.'

'Having books at an early age has helped Daniel. He knew most of the colours, numbers and textures by the time he started nursery.'

'It helps them when they go to school and pick up different books. It helps with the bedtime routine, settles them down at night. Interacting with other people – they talked early, had a good vocabulary.'

'It helps to develop their understanding and it prepares them for school, with spelling and copy writing, and bringing her along with everything.'

'It's a focus for learning. It helps language development.'

It was beneficial for Callum to have had books at an early age because he '[...] was used to looking at books (and) would have done it at nursery.' He would also be '[...] getting used to reading and looking at books', in readiness for entering school.

It prepared the child for school: 'It's not such a shock when she gets her reading book. She knows some words before she gets to school. She loves to read her school book.'

- *All the parents who used the local libraries reported that the staff there were welcoming, friendly and helpful*

One parent said 'Other people you meet are nice. There is a friendly atmosphere.'

Another parent stated that she had friends who went to the local library, and that 'they all speak highly of it and they think that it's one of the main benefits of living in this area.'

- *Most parents stated that the library was well stocked*

One parent stated that she hardly ever bought books from shops because the library service was so good.

One parent reported that although there was a good variety of books they were not always the titles that the children were looking for. Another parent however pointed out that the library staff would order books that were not in stock and would phone to let her know when they were ready for collection.

- *Other positive comments made by the parents included the following*

The children were allowed to choose their own books.

The library had recently been painted.

There was a nice comfortable area for the under fives, which had low boxes for the children's books and a soft play area.

There was a supply of video games and D.V.D.'s to borrow: 'Everything you are looking for [...] and computers available for people to use.'

One parent thought that the library was conveniently situated near the shops.

- *Most parents reported that there was easy access to the local libraries for pushchairs or wheelchairs*

One parent however stated that access at the central library was difficult.

- *Two parents who had attended the Bookstart 'Crawl and Climb Club' spoke positively about this event*

'It wasn't too structured. It allowed for parents to chat, have a coffee. There was just the right number of children, about 10. The parents chose books while the children played.' The parent reported that she met new people as well as people whom she had already met at the playgroup. She added that 'most people who went would have looked at books anyway.'

Another parent commented that the Crawl and Climb session 'is very good [...] there is the ball pool, toys, instruments, leading into book activities.' She also stated that 'drinks for the mums are appreciated.'

(One parent in the school group also cited a magician's show at the library which had been very good. Her child had sat for about an hour watching the show.)

- *All the parents interviewed and most of the parents in the school group reported that they had seen very little publicity about the library services and the Bookstart project. Most parents made suggestions for increasing publicity*

Most parents stated that they had only seen notices in the libraries themselves, and that if they had known about them they would like to have attended.

One parent stated: 'Only the converted read the leaflets in the library,' and suggested that more people would find out about the events if they were advertised in the local Post Office, Chemist or Doctor's surgery.

One parent had seen a leaflet advertising an event at her child's nursery but thought that most parents were too busy when they were taking or collecting their children from nursery and that it would be better to receive a letter to take home from nursery or a leaflet sent through the post or delivered by hand.

Another parent, on the other hand, stated that she had not received any leaflets or other information about the Bookstart project when her child attended pre-school. She had also visited the central library, but hadn't noticed any events advertised there. She stated that would have taken him if she had known about them. She thought that 'They could have come into the pre-school and nursery with leaflets.' She didn't think that there were any events in her area: 'There were none in the Arbourthorne area.'

One parent who stated that she had only registered her child 'recently' said: 'I'd have liked to take Daniel to a library', and added that she would have found out about the services if a leaflet had been 'posted through the door.'

One parent suggested that that library service could help by sending leaflets home with older siblings via schools and by having posters in all schools, whichever the phase of school.

One parent suggested that posters could be displayed at bus and tram stops, on the buses and trams and at local petrol stations.

One parent stated that she had taken her child to the Norfolk Park Fun Days, which included looking at books, but that she did not know whether these sessions were connected to Bookstart and hadn't heard of any Bookstart events. She added that she might have taken him if she had received a 'letter through the post.'

One parent stated that she did not attend the 'Crawl and Climb Club' with her child because she attended nursery at the same times. She would like to have taken her to some of the other events but she hadn't heard of any. She felt that if some events were held on Sundays she would be able to attend. She thought that if the libraries were open on Sundays rather than Saturdays, parents would be able to attend more easily. She also thought that if events for very young children could be organised as part of the summer activities for older children, then parents would find it easier to take all the children along together.

One parent suggested that there could be a mobile library just for pre-school children. He said that there was a play bus in the area but 'it had nothing to do with books.'

- *Suggestions to encourage parents to attend the library more often were made by some parents*

One parent suggested that if the library were open every day, there would be more choice for parents, which could increase attendance.

One parent felt that it was difficult to remember the date of the 'Crawl and Climb Club,' which was held once a month, but she felt that if it were held every week parents would get into the routine of going regularly.

Another parent stated that she would go more often if the library were nearer.

One parent suggested that the videos, which were available to rent at 50p and had to be returned in one week, served as an incentive for people to go more frequently and borrow more books than they might otherwise do.

Another parent however expressed the view that 'taking your child to the library is not an easy option. You have to engage in the process and put in an effort, compared with taking your children to a friend's house where you can let them play with other children.'

- *There were few negative views expressed by the parents*

The negative comments expressed were as follows:

One parent who visited the central library stated that there was a good selection of books, but that it was disorganised and that she felt that they were intruding because there was a crèche in session.

One parent reported that she had put her child's name down for the crèche at the local library but had not received a reply.

One set of parents expressed the view that the choice of books at their library was good for the younger children, but that there was not enough to choose from for children over the age of 7 years. (The target child in this family had a younger and an older brother.)

One parent stated that on one visit the area for the under fives was 'panelled off' but not accessible.

- *All the parents identified language and literacy development that they felt had taken place as a result of their early experiences of books*

The following statements reflect some of the skills identified by the parents.

'He knew most of the colours, numbers and textures by the time he entered nursery.'

'He looks at pictures and asks what's happening.'

'He pretended to read to himself.'

'It helps them when they go to school and pick up different books. It helps with the bedtime routine, settles them down at night. Interacting with other people – they talked early, had a good vocabulary.'

'If I read a book Louise would memorise the pictures and read the story back.'

'She would ask questions if she didn't understand.'

'She would sing nursery rhymes to her brother when she was still a baby.'

'I didn't have to force him (because the books were appropriate) and he had learned most of them at home or at nursery.'

John's parent stated that John and his sister would take it in turn to choose a story every night at bedtime, that John remembered phrases from video programmes more than from books and that when listening to a story he would ask questions, make predictions and respond positively.

'Callum would ask for a story. He also liked nursery rhymes and learned some of them.'

Katy explained how she would read the stories and Callum would repeat them. Callum liked looking at books, compared with his younger brother, who was 'less inclined'.

‘She liked to make up her own stories. She asked questions about the stories being read to her, asking “what’s happening in the story, why is someone doing a certain thing?”.’

‘She knows some words before she gets to school. She loves to read her school book.’

11.4 The interviews

11.4.1 A Health Visitor’s perspective

The Health Visitor interviewed testified to the positive working relationship between herself and the Books for Babies Co-ordinator: ‘Liaison is excellent. She will come and tell you....she is enthusiastic, genned up, competent, she has sorted out some guidelines. There is always an excellent supply of vouchers and sample packs.’ The Health Visitor continued to explain that the liaison was strengthened by receipt of regular Bookstart newsletters, by her membership of the Bookstart Liaison Group, which involved attendance at local meetings and national conferences.

At the outset of the Bookstart project, the target area had its own project worker. The intention was for the health visitors to work closely with this project worker. However the Health Visitor explained that ‘The first project worker left and another was appointed.’ Subsequently, ‘... the funding ran out.’ The target area was left without a project worker. The Health Visitor stated that this ‘stop-start nature of funding caused uncertainties.’ However, the close working relationship, as previously outlined, with the Books for Babies Co-ordinator allowed the project to continue in the target area.

It was explained that the Bookstart project workers in the target area were initially given data regarding the children born into the area, and that the project workers aimed to work through the data in order to contact the parents directly. However it was found that due to data protection restrictions, this information was withdrawn. As a result the input of the health visitors became considerably greater than previously envisaged. They were asked to give out the vouchers themselves to parents at the 6 month hearing check. This revised system may have made it more difficult for the project worker, without so much direct contact, to have an impact the families.

The Health Visitor highlighted a further amendment to the system, which occurred when the 7 months hearing test was withdrawn. Instead they aimed to give out the vouchers at the health checks that took place between 7 and 13 months. The need for further amendments was also highlighted. The Health Visitor explained that there were plans to discontinue the present system of providing checks for all babies at 7 to 13 months. Instead the Primary Care Trusts would target areas according to health needs. The health visitors had, to date, held a demonstration Bookstart pack and a supply of vouchers; they had introduced the pack to the families, at the same time advising them of the importance of introducing babies to books at an early age, and encouraging them to take the voucher along to the library. The Health Visitor highlighted that ‘New

procedures will need to be put into place,' and that the view of the Primary Care Trust was that 'You will do it as far as you can.'

The attitude of health visitors was thought to have an impact on the success of the delivery of the Bookstart programme. Many health visitors had a positive attitude towards the programme. However, attitudes did vary. The Health Visitor interviewed confirmed this by stating that 'Some consider that it's part of our job. Others say, "What's it got to do with me?".' Furthermore, she explained that even for those who wanted to support the initiative, there was a time factor: 'They're interested but it's one of five jobs.'

The Health Visitor highlighted the difficulties sometimes encountered by project workers. She felt that they often felt vulnerable visiting families in their own homes, due to lack of experience and training: 'They were not experienced in going into homes where they are social problems, sometimes they went into a home and suspected child abuse, but they didn't know about referral procedures. I don't think even the Library Service knows that (these problems) exist. They are not prepared (for) child protection issues, visiting flats.'

The Health Visitor expressed her concern regarding 'hard to reach families.' She felt that these families needed additional support and explained: 'It is difficult to engage these families. It's a long process to try to engage them. The ones who are hard to get to are hard to get to for everything – health issues, nursing issues, education. They have got lots of other priorities. They live from week to week. If you say that this (Books for Babies) will put you in good stead they just gloss over. They have their own perceptions of themselves. It's difficult.'

The Health visitor also highlighted the fact that there were additional difficulties in relation to teenage parents, stating 'Young men haven't got some of the social skills.' She indicated that young mothers tended to be more responsive, whereas young fathers tended to be 'on the periphery.'

11.4.2 A project worker's perspective

The person interviewed was the second Bookstart project worker to have been appointed for the target area.

The project worker explained that the original plan had been for the workers to become actively involved in making contact with the families and work directly with them. A database of families had initially been provided but due to data protection concerns this was subsequently withdrawn. As a result it became difficult for her to make contact with the families with whom she needed to work.

She was able to contact some families at certain centres, for example at clinics, toddler groups and centres for asylum seekers. In some cases she was able to obtain the families' permission to follow up with home visits. The health visitor, with the permission of the families, also made some referrals to her. In these cases she was able to model the processes of sharing books with the babies and young children. The project worker

was also able to support the parents through group sessions such as the mums and babies groups and special events such as 'Baby Book Making'. She was also able to offer computer courses to the parents in conjunction with Sheffield College.

The project worker however stated that the funding overall was poor: no funding was provided for 'anything other than staff time and travelling expenses', which made it 'difficult to provide an innovative and creative project with absolutely no funding.'

One major problem was that there was no definitive list of children. If the project worker had been able to access a database she would have made more efficient use of her time: she would have been able to target families and offer individual support to those families in most need of support. A database would also have enabled her to monitor the effectiveness of the project in terms of which families had been reached.

There was no continuity in staffing, and therefore in provision, due to the withdrawal of funding. The project worker felt that because of this lack of continuity, the parents had felt 'lifted up then let down', for example in the support they began to receive in introducing books to their children, or, in some cases, in relation to the adult education courses.

The project worker thought that training should have been given in the issues of lone working, and dealing with difficult situations, for example where a project worker found herself in the presence of an aggressive parent.

The project worker expressed the following views:

- The project could not work on a short-term basis, particularly in areas such as the target area
- The project needed a long-term commitment to have any chance of impacting on the language and literacy development of the families.
- The presence of a project worker was essential, particularly in areas of social deprivation; the receipt of a Book Bag was not enough to change attitudes.
- A special type of person was needed to fill the role: the nature of the work called for a community worker, working in liaison with the library service.
- Staff in the libraries should be trained to be pro-active towards those parents who are unaccustomed to coming into libraries.
- Mobile libraries should have a more specific role in relation to the Bookstart programme.
- Work should be undertaken to involve younger mothers.
- Sure Start organisations throughout the city should provide funding in order to offer equality of provision in all areas of deprivation across the city.
- Sufficient funding should be provided above and beyond the funding of actual contact time and travelling expenses, to enable the project worker to provide an innovative and creative project.
- With the creation of the new Children and Young People's service, the Bookstart Co-ordinator might experience an increased workload in a bid to forge links with the

many different groups of people and decision-makers. However the funding of localised project workers 'could be an ideal way of getting quickly to the professionals working in a specific area (and) provide a way for parents and professionals to have a voice with regard to the services provided in local areas. It may mean that services could be accurately targeted at families and areas where increased input is needed.'

11.4.3 The Parents' perspectives

HELEN, TOM and EVE

Helen moved into the target area when her twins Tom and Eve were a few months old. She had been aware of the Book Bag scheme and had asked the health visitor in the previous area for a voucher. This health visitor did not have any details. Helen was already a member of a library, so she collected the Book Bags from the Central Library.

Helen thought that the Book Bags were very useful for taking on trips to the library and shopping. The family used them for years. She thought that the nursery placemat was not very useful, but that the information leaflets were very useful, giving dates and times of the library openings.

Helen started attending the target area library when she moved into the area and she attended every two or three weeks.

She stated that she would still have got books for Tom and Eve even if there hadn't been the Books for Babies initiative, but the initiative highlighted the importance of taking them to the library at a very early age. Without the initiative she would have waited until they were about one year old.

She used to read books to them as babies, and leave books in the cot for them to play with.

She highlighted the importance of the books being age-related, for example the flap books. She considered that all the books that she got from the library were suitable. The children responded well to them.

Helen considered that having books at a very early age had helped Tom and Eve. Staff at their nursery had commented that they were very keen on books and that they are used to sitting and looking at books. She believed that if they had been introduced to books later, they would not have got into good habits associated with handling books.

She hardly ever bought books from shops because the library service was so good. However the children had books bought for them by relatives as presents.

Some of the family's favourite books were 'I went to the Zoo', 'Peekaboo' and 'The Gruffalo'.

Helen found out about other events via the notices in the library. Tom and Eve attended the Crawl and Climb Club in the previous year, but not recently. Helen felt that it was difficult to remember the date of this event. It was held once a month, but she felt that if it were held every week parents would get into the routine of going regularly. Helen thought that the Crawl and Climb session 'is very good.... There is the ball pool, toys, instruments, leading into book activities.' She stated that 'drinks for the mums are appreciated.'

She had also seen the notice for the Father's Day story telling event, but did not mention this to her husband because she thought that he would not be interested. She felt that men were less motivated than women.

Helen explained that the days that the library was open often clash with other commitments, and suggested that if the library were open every day, there would be more choice for parents, which could increase attendance.

She believed that 'Only the converted read the leaflets in the library,' and suggested that more people would find out about the events if they were advertised in the local Post Office, chemist or doctor's surgery.

Helen stated that the staff at the local library were very helpful and that 'Other people you meet are nice. There is a friendly atmosphere.'

She stated that the library was well stocked and added that the videos, which were available to rent at 50p, and had to be returned in one week, served as an incentive for people to go more frequently and borrow more books than they otherwise might.

Helen pointed out that there was easy access for parents with pushchairs at the local library, but that this was not the case at the central library.

Helen considered that 'Taking your child to the library is not an easy option. You have to engage in the process and put in an effort, compared to taking your children to a friend's house where you can let them play with other children [...] less effort for the parents.' She felt that these factors would deter some parents from attending the library.

Helen stated that she had friends who went to the local library and that '[...] they all speak highly of it and they think that it is one of the main benefits of living in this area.'

JANE and DANIEL

Jane received the Book Bag for Daniel when he was approximately one year old. They used it to keep other books in. Daniel liked the books that were included in the pack. He used the nursery rhyme placemat. Jane could remember the guidance leaflets and the library information leaflet.

She received the Book Bag before she attended the library. She intended to register Daniel at this age, but she lost the registration form. However Daniel did have books at this age, for example bath books, feely books, squeaky books, ABC books. Jane found it easy to interest Daniel in books at this early age. The books appealed to him.

Jane had visited the local and central libraries and she liked books but she wasn't a member of a library. Daniel only joined recently, when he began school. Jane was not aware of the facilities offered at the libraries. She thought that the local library had closed and hadn't re-opened.

She would have liked to take Daniel to a library. She thought that she would have found out about the services if a leaflet had been posted through the door.

Jane bought books for Daniel from Smith's, Woolworth's, the supermarket and the market. Sometimes she bought books for both her children, as presents. Sometimes their granddad bought books for them. There were about 20 to 25 books in the house at the time.

Daniel was about one year old when he first began to have books. Jane stated that Daniel loved books, but Jane couldn't remember the titles of any particular favourites. Jane read to him about twice a week, but Daniel usually read to himself. Daniel liked nursery rhyme books and he knew some nursery rhymes. Daniel also liked looking at magazines and play station books. When he looked at books, he looked at the pictures and asked what was happening. Daniel often persuaded his older brother to look at books with him.

Jane thought that having books at an early age had helped Daniel. He knew most of the colours, numbers and textures by the time he entered nursery.

Jane and Daniel had not attended any of the Crawl and Climb sessions, or any of the other special events. Jane would have liked to take him to these events if she had known about them. She had noticed leaflets on a table when he was at nursery, but she didn't have time to look at them. She did see a poster for the Fathers' Day event, but 'Daniel didn't go to that because his dad is away a lot.'

She thought that most parents were too busy to notice the leaflets when they were taking or collecting their children from nursery and that it would be better to receive a letter or leaflet sent through the post or delivered by hand.

SUE and MATTHEW

Sue got the Book Bag for Matthew at the local library. It was offered to her by the library staff. Sue had already registered Matthew at the library because they went there with his older brother. The health visitor didn't mention it.

The Book Bag was still being used, for keeping toys in. Sue could remember Matthew playing with the nursery placemat. The books were still being used. Sue can't remember the information leaflets in the pack.

Sue was also a member of the library herself. They used to go about once a month when Matthew was about one year old. Since Matthew started school, their attendance had been less frequent.

Sue thought that the local library was convenient, being near the shops. The children were allowed to choose their own books. There were a lot of books to choose from. The staff were very helpful. They would order books that were not in stock and would phone to let her know when they were ready for collection.

Sue liked the provision for very young children, which had low boxes for the children's books and a soft play area. There was a ramp for easy access for wheelchairs or pushchairs. There was a crèche, and Sue had put Matthew's name down, but she didn't have a reply.

Sue bought books for the children from Waterstones and Asda. Their grandma was in a book club, and she often bought books as presents. They currently had more than 40 books in the house.

Matthew was a few months old when he was introduced to books. He was influenced by the fact that his older brother had books.

Sue could remember some of his favourite books, which included 'Ducky Dives In', 'How Much I Love You', 'Giraffes can't Count' and the Kipper books. When he was a baby he likes the books that made noises, the ones with bright pictures, Big Books, poems or rhyming books. Matthew knew lots of nursery rhymes.

Sue explained that she read to the children every night, asking them which parts of the story they liked. Matthew pretended to read to himself. He remembered some phrases. Sometimes his aunty, his grandma or his dad read to him.

Sue felt that it was easy to introduce books to Matthew because they were introduced at an early age and they were part of the routine that had been set with the older brother.

She stated that it had been useful for the children to have had early experience of books: 'It helps them when they go to school and pick up different books. It helps with the bedtime routine, settles them down at night. Interacting with other people – they talked early, had a good vocabulary.'

Sue didn't take Matthew to any of the other library events. She didn't receive any leaflets or other information about them when he attended pre-school. 'There were none in the Arbourthorne area.' She had visited the central library, but hadn't noticed any events advertised there. She would have taken him if she had known about them. She thought that 'They could have come into the pre-school and nursery with leaflets.'

KAREN, STEVE and LOUISE

Karen thought that she probably collected the Book Bag for Louise from the local library. She couldn't remember any involvement by the health visitor. They still use the Book Bag, for storing toys. Louise enjoyed the books in the pack, especially 'Miss Splash,' which they still read. Louise also enjoyed the nursery rhyme placemat, which she still used.

Karen couldn't remember the information leaflets contained in the Book Bag. She didn't register Louise at the Library as a result of the receipt of the Book Bag. In fact she only registered her approximately twelve months previously. However, Louise was introduced to books when she was a baby. Her parents bought books for her, for example from Waterstones and Wilkinsons.

Louise's parents also bought books for themselves. Karen estimated that they had over a hundred books in the house.

Karen said that she would not have taken Louise to the library any earlier because she felt that children had to be a certain age to handle books carefully. She found that when she took Louise to the central children's library there was a good selection of books, but she felt that it was disorganised and that they were intruding because there was a crèche in session. She felt that the adult department was better organised. She also felt that the staff were more helpful to adults than to children.

Karen stated that Louise had a lot of favourite books, that some of her favourites were Mr. Messy and Beauty and the Beast, and that she enjoyed any story and liked a variety, including nursery rhymes. She knew a lot of nursery rhymes before she was one and knew most by the time she went to school. Karen explained: 'If I read a book she would memorise the pictures and read the story back.' Louise would also ask questions if she didn't understand. She would read books at any time of the day. Louise's dad, and her older brother and sister also read with her. Louise would sing nursery rhymes to her brother when she was still a baby.

Karen considered that it was helpful for parents to introduce books to children at an early age, that it helped to develop their understanding and that it prepared them for school, for example with spelling and copy writing, and 'bringing her along with everything.'

Karen and Louise did not attend any of the events organised by the Bookstart Team. Karen explained that she had not seen any leaflets or posters advertising the 'Crawl and Climb' sessions. She thought that library service could help by sending leaflets home via schools and by having posters in schools. Louise's dad also suggested that posters could be displayed at bus and tram stops, on buses and trams and at local petrol stations.

KATY and JOHN

Katy remembered receiving a voucher from her health visitor and redeeming the voucher for a Book Bag at the local library. The Book Bag itself was still in use; Katy used it in her own work, to take books into schools. Katy felt that the books in the pack were well designed for the under one age range. John used the placemat and would read the rhymes on it.

Katy explained that she would have registered John at the library at about 7 to 12 months of age even without the impetus of the Book Bag initiative because John's older sister was already a member when John had been born. The family attended the library at least once a month.

Katy was appreciative of the library. It had easy access for pushchairs and a nice, comfortable area for the under fives. She said that there was a good variety of books but that there were not always the titles that the children were looking for. Katy said that the library had recently been painted and that computers had been installed. The staff were welcoming and helpful.

Katy said that she didn't often buy books because of the expense, but that when she did, she bought them from W.H. Smith's at Meadowhall or at Asda. The family had about 50 to 100 books in the house, some of which had been passed on by friends. She confirmed that the children received books as presents from their parents, from other relatives and from friends.

John was introduced to books at less than one year of age. He started to take an interest in them at around 18 months. Katy found this process easy and enjoyable. She explained that she didn't force him but that the books were appropriate. John didn't have a particular favourite. He liked to 'have different books, he liked a change.' John also liked factual books, and books with excitement and adventure. He also liked nursery rhymes and had learned most of them at home or at nursery. He also liked 'silly rhymes'. Karen described how John and his sister would take it in turn to choose a story every night at bedtime. John remembered phrases from video programmes more than from books. Katy stated that when listening to a story, he would ask questions, make predictions and respond positively.

Katy considered that introducing books to very young children was beneficial: 'It is a focus for learning. It helps language development.'

Katy and John had attended the Bookstart 'Crawl and Climb Club.' Katy thought that this was a good event: 'It wasn't too structured. It allowed for parents to chat, have a coffee. There was just the right number of children, about 10. The parents chose books while the children played.' Katy added that she met new people as well as people whom she had already met at the playgroup. She considered that 'Most people who went would have looked at books anyway.'

Katy had first seen the notice for the 'Crawl and Climb Club' in the library. She had not seen any other events advertised. Katy had taken John to events other than Bookstart: They had attended the 'Jolly Tots' crèche in Norfolk Park and he had attended a local playgroup.

Karen would have taken John to more Bookstart events if she had known about them. She thought that the library service could have advertised these by posting leaflets through people's doors or placing posters in the corner shop or the Post Office.

STACEY and CALLUM

Stacey received a Bookstart voucher from the nursery that Callum was attending at the time, but she did not collect a Book Bag. She thought that perhaps the nursery could also have given out the Book Bag.

Callum's grandma registered him at the library when he was between one and two years old. They attended occasionally, sometimes in the holidays. They had last visited about 2 months previously. Stacey would go more often if the library were nearer.

Stacey thought that the choice of books at the library was good for Callum and for children younger than him, but that there was not enough to choose from for children over the age of 7 years (Callum has a younger and an older brother). She stated that, on one visit, the area for the under fives had been 'panelled off' and was not accessible.

Stacey sometimes bought books from town, Meadowhall or Crystal Peaks. She sometimes bought them from Bookworks. She sometimes bought them as presents. Callum had about 20 books.

Stacey couldn't remember which had been Callum's favourite books at a very young age, but she remembered that he liked books about witches. He also liked books about tractors, or 'whatever he's particularly interested in (at the time.)' Callum would ask for a story. He also liked nursery rhymes and learned some of them. Katy explained how she would read the stories and Callum would repeat them. Sometimes his nanna read books to him. Callum liked looking at books, compared with his younger brother, who was 'less inclined.'

Stacey thought that it was beneficial for Callum to have had books at an early age because it would help him at nursery: 'He was used to looking at books (and) would

have done it at nursery.’ He would also be ‘[...] getting used to reading and looking at books’, in readiness for entering school.

Stacey and Callum didn’t attend any of the Bookstart events. Stacey didn’t know about them. She stated that she might have taken him if she had received a ‘letter through the post.’

Stacey took Callum to the Norfolk Park Fun Days, which included looking at books, but did not state whether these sessions were connected to Bookstart.

Stacey considered that the library service should ‘[...] write to parents to get them to join (the library).’

CHARLOTTE and AMANDA

Charlotte did not receive a voucher or a Book Bag for Amanda. She wondered whether this was because she did not attend the clinic. Amanda was born prematurely and they attended the hospital instead. The health visitor did visit, however.

Amanda joined the library with the school. Charlotte found that the library was clean and there was good access (only one step) for pushchairs. The staff were friendly and helpful. She felt that there was a wide choice at the library, with video games and D.V.D.’s as well as books to borrow: ‘Everything you are looking for.’ There were also computers available for people to use. She found, however, that it was difficult to find time to attend the library.

She thought that the area for the under fives was good, with a wide choice of appropriate books for the pre fives, but not for the slightly older children.

Charlotte bought books from Woolworths, W.H. Smiths, Waterstones or Asda. She also bought books for presents, from World Books, via the internet. Sometimes Amanda’s grandma bought her books as presents.

Amanda was first introduced to books in the form of ‘bath books’ at the age of 6 months. It was easy to introduce her to (the next level of) books at such an early age. She liked them straight away. Bed time was the main time for looking at books. Later, Amanda liked sets of books, for example ‘Sully Strawberry’ and other fruits, from Asda and the Beatrix Potter collections. She loved these stories. Snow White was also one of her favourite books. She also liked ‘read along’ books with C.D.’s. She liked colourful, animated stories. Amanda also liked nursery rhyme books. She knew most of the well-known nursery rhymes. She liked to make up her own stories. She asked questions about the stories being read to her, asking ‘what’s happening in the story, why is someone doing a certain thing?’ Amanda’s mum and dad would usually read to her. Occasionally her grandma would also look at books with her.

Charlotte believed that it was beneficial for children to have access to books from an early age, one reason being that it prepared the child for school: 'It is not such a shock when she gets her reading book. She knows some words before she gets to school. She loves to read her school book.'

Amanda did not attend the Crawl and Climb Club, because she attended nursery. Charlotte didn't hear of any other Bookstart events. She would have liked to have taken Amanda to some of them. She felt that if there were events held on Sundays she would be able to attend. She thought that if the libraries were open on Sundays rather than Saturdays parents would be able to attend more easily. She also thought that if events for very young children could be organised as part of the summer activities for older children, then parents would find it easier to take all the children along together.

THE PARENTS' GROUP

Some of these parents said that they had received their Bookstart vouchers from their health visitors when their children were babies and had collected their Book Bags from the library.

One parent said that she had taken her child to a magician's show at the library, which had been very good. Her child had sat for about an hour watching the show.

Some parents said that they had seen leaflets at the library advertising Bookstart events. One parent suggested that leaflets could be placed in other places than the libraries to inform parents who didn't go to the libraries about the Bookstart initiatives.

One parent suggested that there could be a mobile library just for pre-school children. He said that there was a play bus in the area but '[...] it had nothing to do with books.'

Several parents thought that the Book Bags were an incentive to join the library.

One parent explained that she would have enrolled her younger children early in spite of the Book Bag because the Book Bag received by her older child had already given her the incentive to do so.

12. Implications of recent Government initiatives

Since its inception the Bookstart programme has aimed to distribute a Bookstart pack to every child once after birth. However, in December 2004, the Government announced that it would support the Bookstart programme by funding the provision of a Book Bag for every child each year for the first three years of its life. As from September 2005 each child will receive three Bookstart gifts instead of one.

This initiative has many implications for Bookstart teams nationally in terms of the logistics of delivering a substantially enlarged programme in the future. However the Sheffield Bookstart team has already taken on board the challenge and have accordingly devised many initiatives, some of which are detailed below.

The first pack will be distributed to babies between the ages of 0 and 12 months. It will be available via libraries, health visitors and childminders.

A second pack will be made available to children at age 2. This pack will also be available via libraries, health visitors and childminders. In addition, the Sheffield Books for Babies team will seek the help of Sure Start and children's centres in the distribution of packs to hard to reach families. Included in this group would be traveller families, young parents in care, and teenage parents. Sure Start Plus, the branch of Sure Start that specifically works with teenagers will be asked to support the Books for Babies team. In addition the team plans to seek the help of small support groups, for example Scoop Aid, which runs educational courses to engage teenage mums by means of informal situations.

The third pack will be made available to all children at the age of approximately 36 months. The Sheffield Bookstart team has gained the agreement of the Early Years Child Care Partnership that they will distribute this pack.

Storage of the increased amount of materials has been of considerable concern to the team. They have managed to gain the co-operation of the Early Years Child Care Partnership, who have agreed to help with storing the materials.

The team plans to produce guidelines for Sure Start and other workers involved in the distribution. Helpful hints for parents on how to use the packs effectively will be included in the packs.

All relevant library staff will be made aware of the new initiatives, and library students, whose course now has an early years element, will be contacted.

All four Primary Care Trusts in Sheffield have agreed to include a Bookstart voucher in their parent-held record book, 'Born in Sheffield', along with information about the three packs available at the various stages.

The practice of sending Birthday cards at the age of 1 year, including an invitation to join the library, will be continued, and will be repeated at age 2.

The Sheffield team has decided to keep the voucher system, because this will enable them to make contact with the majority of families in the libraries.

The role of the health visitors in the distribution of Bookstart vouchers has hitherto been pivotal. The team is, however, aware of the changing role of health visitors within their own practice, and of the need for their role in relation to Bookstart to be adapted in the light of this change. It has been agreed that there will be additional health visitor representation on the Bookstart Working Party.

The team would like to see the role of library staff extended to allow them to go out into the community.

The team is already developing links with the L.E.A's Early Education Committee, Sheffield Hallam University, Child Health and the N.H.S. Support Unit for staff in Sheffield who have young children or who are pregnant. At this organisation's Open Day, the Bookstart team plans to make available parent packs in order to promote Bookstart. They are also hoping to develop more opportunities to work with the Sure Start agencies.

Information on Bookstart will be made available to council employees via the Council's payslips, and is to be posted on the local DfES website. It has also been agreed nationally that W.H.Smith will promote Bookstart.

The Bookstart team in Sheffield have undoubtedly shown a positive approach to the challenges ahead and have made an excellent start to adapt to the changes. They are however aware of the difficulties ahead.

One of the greatest reservations concerning the effectiveness of the project for the future is centred around staffing. The number of staff available to deliver this greatly enhanced programme is limited. The Early Years Librarian will continue to be the co-ordinator of the Bookstart project. This, however, will be only one of her roles within the library service, as previously.

An Early Years Project Development Officer has been appointed. This post, however, is for only 25 hours and is temporary. There is also administrative support of 10 hours per week from a library information assistant based in the school libraries department.

There will be only three 'Family Reading Workers' for the whole of the city. Two of these workers will be employed by the library service and funded by Sure Start and one by Burngreave New Deal for Communities. Furthermore, these staff will be employed on short-term contracts.

Of particular relevance to this research project is the fact that, at the start of the extended project, there will be no worker assigned to for the target area.

13. Key Findings

13.1 Strand 1: A summative report of initiatives undertaken to date by the Sheffield Bookstart Team

The Sheffield Bookstart team has, since its inception in 1998, developed a wide-ranging programme of initiatives for the city. The task was enormous but in spite of setbacks and uncertainties regarding funding and staffing over the years, the team, through its commitment to the project and its conscientious approach, has produced, in partnership with the health visitors, a sound basis from which to move to the next phase involving the government's planned national expansion of the project.

13.2 Strand 2: A comparative study of the language and literacy achievements of a group of children who had been involved in the Bookstart programme and a group of children who had not taken part

The Bookstart programme was, on average, successful for the specific group of children who had received the programme in the target area of Sheffield in 2004: by the time they entered reception, the majority of 'Bookstart' children had acquired more language and literacy skills than the comparison children.

A large minority of the Bookstart children, however, in spite of having been introduced to the opportunities offered by the Library Service at some stage during their pre-school years, had not acquired as many language and literacy skills as the comparison children, who had not had the benefit of these additional opportunities. Most of these Bookstart children had, in fact, used the service only minimally.

13.3 Strand 3: A comparative study of take-up of the project in different areas

20% of children who met the target criteria were registered with the library service in May 2004.

Take-up was greater in the Arbourthorne district than in the Manor or Castle district.

At one medical centre where there was a substantial number of target children, no children were registered with the library services at May 2004.

The percentage of children registered in the target area compared favourably with that for a wider area. The wider picture, including families resident in surrounding areas as well as the target areas, showed that 14.2 % of these children were registered, compared with 20% in the target area.

The 'user count' data revealed substantial differences in the levels of attendance at the libraries. While all the target children had registered at some stage, more than half had

used the service only marginally and very few children had used the service substantially.

Findings suggested that the voucher system operated by the health visitors and the promotion of the Books for Babies pack was effective in encouraging the families to register their children with the library service.

13.4 Strand 4: Perceptions of users and professionals

Many of the issues raised in the interviews with the health visitor and the project worker were interconnected. For this reason the key issues from these sources are combined in section 13.4.1 below.

The issues arising from the parents' interviews understandably have a different aspect and these have been reported separately in section 13.4.2

13.4.1 Key issues from the perspective of the professionals

At the outset of the project there was a project worker assigned to the target area.

There was an excellent working relationship between the Bookstart team and the Health Visitor Representative, who played a pivotal role in the development of the project in the target area.

In addition to supporting the parents in the development of early language and literacy skills, the project worker was also able to offer computer courses for some parents in conjunction with Sheffield College.

When funding for a project worker was withdrawn, the project continued, due to the commitment of the Bookstart Team and the health visitors. Nevertheless, the lack of a specific project worker may have impacted on the effectiveness of the project in the target area.

When the database of families was withdrawn from the project worker due to data protection controls, the health visitors' workload in relation to the Books for Babies project increased considerably.

The withdrawal of the database also made it more difficult for the project worker to contact families, to target the support towards those families in greatest need of support and to monitor the effectiveness of the project.

One result of the lack of continuity in the provision of courses for parents was that the parents felt let down.

The effectiveness of the Bookstart programmes in different areas might have varied according to the commitment of individual health visitors to the project.

There was a lack of training for Bookstart workers in the area of child protection, as well as issues regarding their own safety, as a result of which some workers felt vulnerable.

Additional support was needed for 'hard to reach' families, as the attempt to engage these families and to effect any change would be a long-term process.

Funding needed to be targeted at families with the greatest need of support.

Additional work needed to be done to engage young fathers and mothers in the process of aiding their children's development.

Library staff needed to take a pro-active approach in relation to parents who were unaccustomed to using the library services.

Mobile libraries could have a specific role in relation to the Bookstart programme.

The project worker's role needed to be undertaken by a person who could incorporate the role of a community worker into her work as Bookstart worker.

The new procedures planned by the Primary Care Trust to target support according to need would be likely to impact on the ability of health visitors to distribute the Books for Babies vouchers. The Bookstart Team therefore would need to consider different methods for their distribution.

13.4.2 Key issues from the parents' perspective

All but one of the seven parents interviewed had received a Book Bag. These parents had welcomed the receipt of the Book Bag and spoke highly of it.

Not all parents who received a Book Bag registered their children at an early stage. Two of the parents did not register their children at the library until very recently. Their children, however, did have books at a very early age.

All the parents expressed positive attitudes towards introducing children to books at an early age and all identified aspects of their children's language and literacy development that they felt had taken place as a result of their early experiences of books.

All the parents who used the local libraries reported that the staff there were welcoming, friendly and helpful, and that the service for parents and the facilities for pre-school children were very good.

Those parents who had attended the 'Crawl and Climb Club' and one parent who had attended a magician's show spoke highly of these events.

In spite of the wide range of Bookstart initiatives in Sheffield, all the parents interviewed and most of the parents in the school group reported that they had seen very little publicity about the library services and the Bookstart project outside the libraries themselves and that they were unaware of the extent of the project.

Whereas the provision of books for the pre-school children was very good, there was not enough choice for the children in the family who were over the age of 7 years and were visiting the library along with the pre-school children.

At the central library, access for pushchairs was difficult because of the many steps down to the basement.

14. Recommendations

The following recommendations are written with the acknowledgement that the initiatives already planned by the Bookstart Team, and outlined in Section 12 above, may encompass some of the recommendations:

- The Bookstart team should continue to provide the wide-ranging initiatives that make up the Sheffield Bookstart project.
- The Team should continue to work closely with the community libraries and health visitors, and at the same time develop a wider network, linking with other agencies including professional and voluntary groups, for example Sure Start, the L.E.A. Early Years Committee, playgroups and childminders' organisations.
- Through the wider links with professionals and voluntary groups, the localised project workers should be deployed in working with the local organisations in their specific geographical area such as schools, playgroups, nurseries, children's centres, and childminders.
- The Bookstart Team should encourage a wider representation of these organisations onto the early years steering group.
- Funding should be sufficient for project workers to work effectively with the local organisations to support the families within the target area, as well as other such areas of social and economic disadvantage.
- The presence of a project worker is essential for the project to have a real impact in the target area. A permanent full-time project worker should be appointed for the target area.
- The project worker in the target area should possess the appropriate skills needed to fulfil the dual role of a community worker and early years language and literacy specialist.
- The whole range of initiatives developed by the Bookstart Team should be presented in the target area.
- An inter-agency approach to administration in the Library, Health and Education services should be developed to enable the Bookstart Team to access the database of children in the target area.
- Training for project workers should be made available regarding child protection issues and in issues regarding their own safety
- A certain amount of joint training should be undertaken by project workers, library staff and health visitors.

- Funding should be made available for project workers to have non-contact time to enable them to devise an innovative project.
- The Team should feel that its efforts have been rewarded by the success of the majority of Bookstart children in the target group in their acquisition of language and literacy skills. In order to inform future planning, the Team should now consider ways in which the remaining Bookstart children could have been supported in order to increase their skills, for example by following up children who initially received the Book Bag but subsequently only used the service minimally.
- Specific support should be given to young mothers and fathers.
- The Team should continue to work with the adult education service in the provision of courses for parents in the target area.
- Mobile libraries should be developed with a specific role in relation to the Bookstart programme; for example, a 'Book Bus' could be created.
- Publicity for the Bookstart initiatives should involve a wider range of strategies.
- Data collected on the level of take-up of the library services within the target area could be used as a baseline for setting targets or for monitoring future progress of the project in the target area or as comparative data for evaluating progress in other areas of the city.
- Systems for the collection of data needed for use in future monitoring and evaluation of the Bookstart project should be devised in advance.
- Ongoing evaluation of the project should be integrated into the work of the Bookstart team and the project workers.
- Success of the project depends on input from Government, from Bookstart and from internal management; sufficient support, financial and otherwise, from all these agencies should be available to enable the Bookstart Team to manage the project successfully. This support should be monitored to ensure that it remains at an appropriate level.
- In order for the project to have a lasting impact on the language and literacy development of the children in the target area, there needs to be a long-term commitment to the project. The Team should urge all the agencies to provide continuity in support.

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www.sheffield.gov.uk/education.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council

16. Appendices

Appendix 1. Teachers' questionnaires

A1.1 Comparison checklist

University of Sheffield, School of Education. Bookstart Research Project

Checklist for choosing a comparison child:

The child chosen for comparison should:

- be in the same class as the listed child
- have the nearest birth date and be in the range from
1st Sept. 1999 to 29th Feb. 2000
- be of the same gender

In addition -

If the listed child is on Free School Meals, the comparison child should also be on F.S.M. On the other hand, if the listed child is not on F.S.M the comparison child should not be on F.S.M

If the first language of the listed child is English then the comparison child should also have English as a first language. Similarly, a child with E.S.L. should be matched accordingly.

If the listed child attended a nursery before entering reception, then the comparison child should also have attended a nursery, and vice versa.

If the listed child has a disability that may have affected her/his language/literacy progress, then the child chosen for comparison should also be one who has a disability. For example, a hearing difficulty, a sight problem, E.B.D.

The ideal is when all these criteria can be matched up, but the aim is to make as many matches as possible.

(LEVELS OF ATTAINMENT FOR THIS EXERCISE SHOULD NOT BE A CONSIDERATION)

The listed child is called Child A. The comparison child is called Child B

Comparison Checklist for

School

Child A 1

Child B 1

Name
Class
D.O.B.
M or F
FSM (yes or no)
English as 1st or 2nd
language
Nursery (yes or no,
if yes, state name)
Disability (yes or no,
if yes, state nature of
disability)

Child A 2

Child B 2

Name
Class
D.O.B.
M or F
FSM (yes or no)
English as 1st or 2nd
language
Nursery (yes or no,
if yes, state name)
Disability (yes or no,
if yes, state nature of
disability)

Completed by: Signature:

Print Name:

A1.2 Language / literacy questionnaire

Bookstart Research Project

Communication, language and literacy skills check-list (based on the Q.C.A's Foundation Stage Document). Please tick if the child was competent in the skill when she/he entered the reception class in September 2004.

Name of child.

D.O.B.

Language for communication and thinking

- Listens and responds
- Initiates communication with others
- Talks activities through, reflecting on and modifying actions.

- Listens with enjoyment to stories, songs, rhymes, poems,
 - Sustains attentive listening and responds with relevant comments, questions or actions.
 - Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences.
 - Interacts with others in a variety of contexts, negotiating plans and activities and taking turns in conversation.
 - Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events, exploring the meanings and sounds of new words.
 - Speaks clearly with confidence and control, showing awareness of the listener
- *****
- Talks and listens confidently and with control, consistently showing awareness of the listener by including relevant detail.
 - Uses language to work out and clarify ideas, showing control of a range of appropriate vocabulary.

Linking Sounds and Letters

- Joins in with rhyming and rhythmic activities.
- Shows awareness of rhyme and alliteration.
- Links some sounds to letters.

- Links sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet.

- Hears and says initial and final sounds in words.
- Hears and says short vowel sounds within words.
- Uses phonic knowledge to read simple regular words.
- Attempts to read more complex words using phonic knowledge.
- *****
- Uses knowledge of letters, sounds and words when reading and writing independently.

Reading

- Is developing an interest in books.
- Knows that print conveys meaning.
- Recognises a few familiar words.
- *****
- Knows that, in English, print is read from left to right and top to bottom.
- Shows an understanding of the elements of stories, such as main character, sequence of events and openings.
- Reads a range of familiar and common words and simple sentences independently.
- Retells narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on language patterns of stories.
- Shows an understanding of how information can be found in non-fiction texts, to answer questions about where, who, why and how.
- *****
- Reads books of own choice with some fluency and accuracy

Writing

- Experiments with mark-making, sometimes ascribing meaning to the marks.
- Uses some clearly identifiable letters to communicate meaning.
- Represents some sounds correctly in writing.
- *****
- Writes own name and other words from memory.
- Holds a pencil and uses it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Attempts writing for a variety of purposes, using features of different forms.
- Uses phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.
- Begins to form captions and simple sentences, sometimes using punctuation.

-- Communicates meaning through phrases and simple sentences with some consistency in punctuating sentences.

Comments:

Completed By Signature:

Print Name:

A.2.1 Introductory Letter

TO The parents or guardians of:

The Library Service would like to find out what parents and carers thought about the Books for Babies project, and the other activities that have been organised for young children since your child was born.

Even if you did not take part in the Books for Babies project, or the other activities, we would still like to hear your views on how the Library Service could help the families in your area.

Would you be willing to take part in this survey?

I am Margaret Hines, from Sheffield University, and I am organising this survey for the Library Service. I will be calling to ask parents to complete a short questionnaire.

The questionnaire will take about 30 minutes. If you are in when I call, I would be very grateful if you could spare the time.

If you would prefer to arrange a definite date and time for me to visit you, please ring me on If I am not available, please leave a message and your phone number, and I will ring you back.

If you do not want me to visit you, please let me know by ringing

Yours Sincerely

Margaret Hines, University of Sheffield, Dept. of Educational Studies.

A2.2 The questionnaire for parents

Bookstart Questionnaire

Date:

Name of Child

Date of Birth

Address

Name of Parent/Guardian

Clinic at birth

Clinic attended now

Nursery attended previously

School in Sept.

Siblings

First language

Second language

Questions:

1. Did you receive the book bag? (*If yes, go to question 2, if no, go to question 3*)

2. (*if yes to question 1*)

How old was your child?

Who gave it to you?

Could this have been organised better?

Which parts were useful

bag

books

'Babies Love Books' guidance leaflet

nursery rhyme place mat

library information

Did you register at a library as a result of the Book Bag

or were you already a member of a library?

or didn't you register?

Without the Book Bag, would you have introduced her/him to books so early?

If not, at what age?

3. (*If no*)

Why do you think you didn't get a book bag?

What could the library have done to help?

4. (*All parents*)

Are you a member of the library now?

(*if yes*)

Which branch?

Which other branches do you visit?

How often? once a week once a month 3 or 4 times a year not at all

What do you like about your library?

What don't you like about it?

eg. area for under 5's

book collection

staff - welcoming / helpful / unhelpful

premises eg. welcoming / accessible for pushchairs

(If no)

Would you have liked to take your child to a library when she/he was a toddler?

How could this have been made possible for you?

5. (All parents)

Do you buy books from

shops supermarket bookclub

Do you buy books for presents?

Does your child get books for presents?

How many books have you got - roughly speaking?

How old was he/she when you introduced him to books?

Does your child like books?

Which were her/his favourite books when she first started looking at books?

Which have been her favourite books since?

What does she/he like about them?

Does your child ask for stories to be read?

Does he/she like nursery rhyme books?

Does she/he know any nursery rhymes?

Does he/she pretend to read the book to her/him self?

Does he/she remember phrases?

Do you look at the pictures, talk about them, ask questions? How does the child respond?

Does any one else in the family look at the books with her/him?

**Do you think it was easy or difficult to share the books with your child as a baby/toddler.
(How / why was is easy or difficult)**

Do you think it helps you and your child to have books at an early age? How?

**6. Have you attended any of the other activities organised by the Library Service? eg.
The Crawl and Climb Club Which ones?**

(If Yes)

How often?

How did you find out about them

What is good about them?

Could these have been organised better? How?

(If no)

Would you like to have taken your child to one of these events?

How could this have been made possible for you?

7. Did you know about any other events? Which ones? How?

8. Have you attended any other non-library events, eg. Sure Start?

Which?

How often?

Since when?

9. Do you think that having books when they are very young helps them when they get to school? How?

10. How do you think the Library Service could help families more when their children are very young?

A.2.3 Consent Forms

*Bookstart Research Project
Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information / University of Sheffield.*

Name of child

Name of respondent (print):

Relationship to child

I agree that the information recorded on the questionnaire can be used for the above research project.

I understand that any information will be held confidentially and that no names of participants, families, children or any other persons will be recorded in the final report.

Signed:

Date:

I give my consent for the researcher to ask my child's school about her/his language/literacy progress at school.

I understand that any information will be held confidentially and that no names of families or children will be recorded in the final report.

Signed:

Date:
