

An Evaluation of the Bookstart Corner Programme

Parents' Survey

Final Report

prepared for

Booktrust

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1. Introduction and Objectives

Introduction

Booktrust is an independent reading and writing charity, which delivers learning and literacy programmes through a unique public/private partnership that involves health, children's services and libraries. Its range of literacy programmes for children and adults of all ages and cultures focuses predominantly on children of school age and below.

The flagship programme in Booktrust's portfolio of children's book gifting initiatives is Bookstart. Every baby and pre-school child receives free book packs, guidance and support via health visitors, library services and early years settings in England. The programme is currently in its twenty-second year, having first started in 1992, and, to date, over 30 million books have been gifted to children. By encouraging parents and carers to share books, stories and rhymes with their children, Bookstart aims to help families to adopt enduring reading habits throughout a child's lifetime.

In March 2012, Booktrust set up a new, targeted programme called Bookstart Corner for babies and young children, which was targeted specifically at disadvantaged families.

Background to Bookstart Corner

Bookstart Corner is a learning and literacy programme delivered through children's centres across England and originally designed for babies and children of 12-30 months. The programme is designed to encourage parents to share stories and rhymes with their children, especially those who, through lack of confidence or other reasons, find it difficult to read with their child/children. The programme also seeks to enhance existing outreach work and provide new outreach opportunities in the local communities served by each children's centre.

Bookstart Corner aims to impact on the following aspects of reading between families and children:

- The number of families regularly sharing books
- The confidence of parents in sharing books and stories with their children
- Practitioners' confidence and ability to share books/stories and working with families to help them do this
- Parents' propensity to join public libraries and attend story-time with their children
- The number of families engaged with the children's centre and local services.

The programme targets the most disadvantaged families and provides a comprehensive package to enable children's centres to offer guidance and support to parents and carers to promote reading and sharing of books, stories and rhymes. It was originally intended that the initiative would be delivered through a series of four home visits to families with children between the ages of 12 and 30 months. However, in practice, a range of delivery methods have been used by centres; one of which is home visits.

During the home visit delivery, parents receive different resources, including picture books, DVDs, a finger puppet, rhyme sheets and guidance materials, as well as direct support from a children's centre practitioner.

Each of the sessions has a different focus, and relevant resources are gifted at each of the visits to encourage parents/carers to develop positive reading behaviours in the home. The first visit gives the practitioner the opportunity to get to know the family and has an emphasis on the importance of rhymes. At the second visit the Bookstart Corner pack itself is gifted and the practitioner models the contents, with a focus on picture books and daily reading. The third visit, is all about establishing a bedtime routine and uses finger puppets and a small booklet to help bring the story to life. The fourth and final visit places an emphasis on early mark making and provides an opportunity to signpost the family to the children's centre and/or library. All visits offer practitioner support and encouragement to children and their families.

Booktrust has recently reduced the top age of targeted ages for Bookstart Corner from 30 to 24 months, and has just introduced a new pack for two year olds, which is available to families eligible for the two-year funded early learning places.

There have been two independent evaluations of the Bookstart Corner programme since it started in spring 2012. The first, an initial preliminary qualitative evaluation, was carried out during the first three months to review the Bookstart Corner resources, and ActionPoint conducted initial feedback on the programme. The second, an impact evaluation, was conducted by Sheffield Hallam University, and assessed how the programme was impacting the reading behaviour and attitudes of the families who participated in the programme. The results of this second evaluation indicated that the programme improved parents' confidence around sharing stories and rhymes with their children for those who completed the 'before and after' evaluations.

Booktrust has also conducted its own internal audit, with 1,500 participating children's centres in March 2013, to which 69 per cent of centres responded. This showed that, on average, each of these centres received 54 packs to gift to parents between April 2012 and March 2013, with an average of 26 packs given out per centre.

Although the previous research evaluations have provided insight on the effectiveness of the programme, they were conducted at an early stage in its development and have provided relatively limited insight into parents' and practitioners' views and perceptions of the programme over a longer period. ActionPoint Marketing Solutions has been commissioned to undertake a two-part, mixed-methodology evaluation of the programme to address these issues.

The main part is a quantitative survey with parents who have completed Bookstart Corner at least one month prior to the interview. This is complemented by a smaller scale qualitative evaluation, which will aim to understand practitioner views of the programme and its benefits to parents. It will also look at the issues encountered in delivering it within the children's centre environment.

The reporting for this work is in two parts: a report on the parents' survey report and a separate practitioners' report.

Bookstart Corner Parent's Survey – Objectives

The parents' survey focused on the views of parents who have completed the Bookstart Corner programme at least one month previously.

The specific objectives of the evaluation were:

To determine:

- How the programme was delivered to parents e.g. via home visits or the children's centre
- Parents' views of the programme overall
- Changes in reading habits as a result of the programme
 - Parent usage of the Bookstart Corner material and their views on the quality of service, resources and books within the programme
 - Whether the programme has increased their knowledge of books and reading with their child
 - The types of reading and reading activities parents are doing with their child
- The post-programme engagement of parents who have participated in the programme.

2. Parents' Survey – Methodology

The parents' survey was completed using a mix of face-to-face or telephone interviews with parents who had completed the Bookstart Corner programme at least one month prior to the interview.

The survey comprised four stages:

Stage 1 - Finding children's centres willing and able to assist in 'providing' parents

Stage 2 - Setting up an interviewing session or providing telephone numbers of parents

Stage 3 - Interview fieldwork; face-to-face or telephone interview

Stage 4 – Processing, analysis, reporting of findings

Overview of Research method

The Bookstart Corner programme is delivered only through children's centres in England; therefore, eligible parents could only be reached through those children's centres that were operating the Bookstart Corner Programme.

Since children's centre practitioners are already stretched for resources, it was unrealistic to expect them to distribute questionnaires to parents or to interview parents themselves. Indeed, either way could lead to some level of interviewing bias.

To limit the level of bias and optimize quality of completion, our core methodology involved professional interviewers visiting the children's centres to interview eligible parents face-to-face at the children's centre.

We had hoped that most centres would be in regular contact with eligible parents (i.e. those who had completed the programme at least one month before), and run existing sessions attended by these parents. However this was the situation only in a small minority of cases. We therefore also suggested the option of a telephone interview, and asked practitioners to supply telephone numbers of eligible parents. Some practitioners were able to do this once they had obtained the parent's agreement. Since every children's centre that was contacted for this research was in a different situation; particularly regarding the level of disadvantage in their catchment area and level of contact with eligible parents, offering two options rather than one enabled us to widen the range of children's centres included and thus improve the representativeness of the sample.

Sample

The sample of children's centre contacts was provided by Booktrust, initially, a sample of just over 100 children's centres which had replied to their audit the previous year, and then later to increase the sample base, a full list of centres who were participating in the Bookstart Corner programme around the country.

There were many centres where it wasn't possible to interview or where the Bookstart Corner contact had changed. It was therefore necessary to contact approximately four times the number of centres to achieve the final sample of 47 children's centres from which our parent interviews were achieved.

Number of interviews completed

Over the 11 week fieldwork period, mid-November 2013 to early February 2014, ActionPoint interviewers completed 272 interviews with parents, with an average of six interviews achieved per centre. Of these 147 were completed by telephone and 125 by the face to face method.

There was a wide geographic spread, with interviews covering most parts of England except the south west and north east. The regional profile of the sample can be seen in Appendix 2. Further details on the parents' profile and background can be seen in Section 3.

Incentives

In order to increase the likelihood of a children's centre agreeing to participate, it was necessary to offer incentives. Booktrust offered a prize draw incentive of five prizes of 10 children's books to all participating centres. In addition, ActionPoint also offered the data from each centre's participating parents (assuming they agreed) and a copy of the questionnaire, to those centres where five or more interviews were achieved.

3. Parent's Background and Profile

Profile characteristics

Age and gender

The parents interviewed for this Bookstart Corner evaluation were mainly in the 25-34 year age group (54 per cent of the sample), with three-quarters aged between 25 and 44 years. There was a small minority in the 55-64 year age group; either grandparents or child minders who had completed the course with the child rather than their parents.

Almost all those interviewed were women; this was as expected since it is mainly the mother who completes the Bookstart Corner programme (with their child) rather than the father. In keeping with this, our sample comprised 94 per cent women and six per cent men.

A quarter of the group were single parents (26 per cent) and just less than three quarters were living with a partner or husband (71 per cent). Just one per cent were living with other family.

The table below shows the age of parent split by home living situation.

Figure 1: Age of parents by living situation

Age of parent In years	Living with partner	Single parent
	%	%
18-24	12	21
25-34	58	47
35-44	27	21
45-54	2	10
55-64	1	1
Base	(198)	(71)

Children

The parents interviewed were most likely to have either one or two children (71 per cent) at home, whilst just over one quarter (27 per cent) had three or more children. The ages of their children ranged from under 12 months to over 18 years, with 54 per cent between two and four years.

Employment

The majority of the parents were looking after their children full time at home. Only 29 per cent were employed and only 10 per cent of these were working full time. Sixteen percent were unemployed.

English as a second language

The sample also included a minority of parents for whom English is a second language. Seventy-five parents, just over one quarter of the sample (28 per cent), spoke English as a second language.

Lack of confidence in reading

Twenty three per cent of the sample were not confident in reading, these parents were most likely to be in the 16-24 year age group.

4. Methods used to deliver Bookstart Corner to parents

This survey reviews how 272 parents and their young child/children completed the Bookstart corner programme. It represents 47 children's centres in over 19 counties in England as highlighted in Section 2. It therefore gives a good indication nationally on how children's centres were delivering the programme in 2013 and to a lesser extent in 2012. (Only a small proportion had completed in 2012 – see section below 'When was the programme completed?'). It also shows the spread of ages of children who completed the programme and the numbers of sessions they completed. This should provide a valuable insight for Booktrust's development of the programme going forward.

Parent and child background

As mentioned briefly in section 3, in the majority of cases, Bookstart Corner is completed by the mother rather than father in the family, and in 92 per cent of cases in this research it was the child's mother rather than a father or carer who completed the programme. In seven per cent and one per cent of instances, the father and child minder respectively had participated in the course.

In just over one quarter of cases (28 per cent), the parent had used Bookstart material previously (not specifically Bookstart Corner); this was most likely to be in the south/south east region.

When was the programme completed?

Eighty per cent of the parents in the sample completed the programme in 2013 compared to only 14 per cent in 2012. In a small minority (six per cent) of cases, parents attended a group at the children's centre on an ongoing basis, and had completed the programme during this group.

Contact had ceased between the children's centre and the majority of parents who were involved in the programme in 2012, and therefore re-engagement was considered too difficult.

Since the majority of parents had completed the programme in the last 6 months, this was advantageous for memory recall when they were being interviewed.

Ages of children completing the programme

Children completed the programme from the age of 12 months to over 30 months. There was a fairly even spread across the four age categories: up to 18 months, 18-24 months, 25-30 months and over 30 months, with marginally higher numbers in the 18-24 month category. The table below summarises the spread of age.

Figure 2: Age of children completing Bookstart Corner

	Up to 18mths	18-24mths	25-30mths	Over 30 mths
	%	%	%	%
Age of child completing the BSC	22	31	25	22
Base	(52)	(74)	(59)	(53)

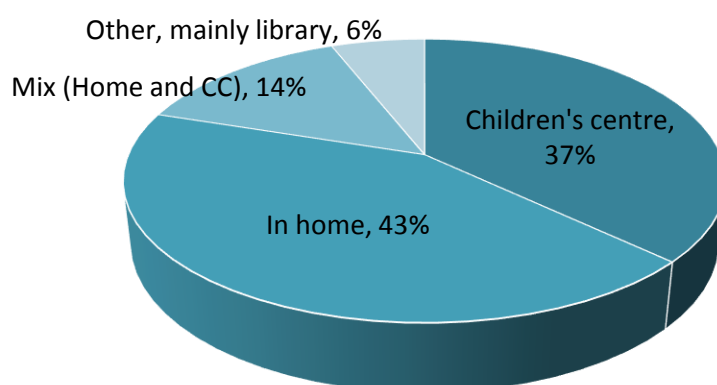
'No answers' (34) have been removed from the above figures

Duration and location of the programmes completed

Parents completed the Bookstart Corner programme via a range of different delivery methods. The two main methods were in-home visits one-to-one with a practitioner (the recommended route), or through sessions held at the children's centre. From the figures below, it is clear that, although the in-home route is the single most used, overall the majority of the Bookstart Corner courses did not take place only in-home. This is mainly due to lack of staff resources and time available to deliver via this method.

The chart below shows the differences between the main routes used for delivering Bookstart Corner in percentage terms. This highlights that, although two fifths of parents participated in an in-home programme, the remaining three-fifths of parents' sessions were held either fully or partly in the children's centre or another location - this was mainly in the library.

Figure 3: The different delivery methods used for Bookstart Corner



Base: 272 parent interviews

Parents linked to children's centres in the north/north west were much more likely to complete the Bookstart Corner in-home than via other methods. Fifty-four per cent of the interviews based in the north/north west region were carried out in-home only, compared to 31 per cent and 33 per cent in the midlands and south/south east regions.

In contrast, significantly more sessions were held in children's centres in the south/south east than in other regions, with 48 per cent in the south/south east compared to only 28 per cent per cent in the north/north west.

Those who went only to the children's centre for their course were more likely to complete a course of one month or less, whilst for those solely on an in-home programme, the duration was more likely to be between one-two months. Where a parent participated in a course in the children's centre supplemented by one-two visits, this was most likely to be two months or more.

Number of sessions completed

There are typically three sessions completed by parents for their Bookstart Corner programme. The number of sessions did not vary greatly by the location of their course; for in-home or in-centre the figures were not significantly different, as shown below.

Figure 4: Number of sessions completed by the two main delivery methods

No. of sessions	In home	In children's centre
	%	%
3 or below	39	43
4	32	27
5 -8	28	22
Over 8	1	8
Base	(165)	(129)

Note: the above figures cover programmes completed solely in children's centre or in-home, not mixed methods

5. Parents' views of the Bookstart programme

Parents' thoughts on the programme as a whole

Parents were very positive about their participation in the Bookstart Corner programme. Ninety eight per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they, and their child enjoyed taking part, with 83 per cent strongly agreeing. Similarly, 99 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the programme was worthwhile and 98 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that their child will benefit.

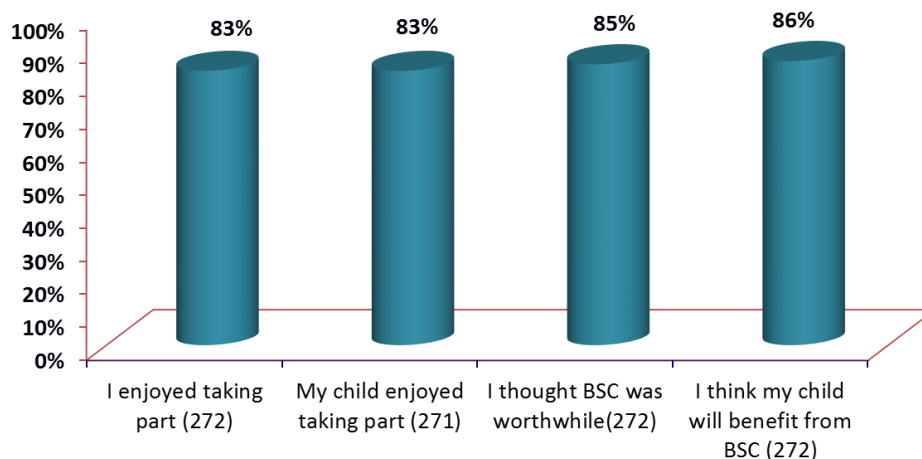
All groups were very positive with very little differences between parent ages, parents with English as first or second language, and child ages (over 80 per cent strongly agreed with each of the above four aspects). The comments below demonstrate how parents enjoyed the programme.

The experience was wonderful. East London

[I]think it is brilliant; it encourages the children to read especially at the centre using the rhymes. Hampshire

The chart below shows the percentage of those who strongly agree with different statements about the programme.

Figure 5: Parents overall view of Bookstart Corner
Percentage of parents who strongly agreed with each statement



Thoughts on the Bookstart Corner Materials

The Bookstart Corner resources are gifted at no charge to parents during the programme. The resources can be categorised into two parts: a) the books and b) the additional resources e.g. puppets, DVD and Crayons etc.

Parents overwhelmingly agreed that these resources were of high quality. Eighty-one per cent strongly agreed that the books in the pack are of high quality, and 74 per cent that the puppets, DVD and crayons resources are similarly high quality.

The books are of a very good quality, I was quite surprised, impressed with the books. Lancashire

I like the way the books are done. Bright and colourful. [The] sentences [are] not too long so [the children] don't get bored. Lancashire

Ninety seven per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the the other resources were of a high quality. Those with slightly older children were, however, slightly less emphatic about the high quality of the additional resources. The table below shows that parents with younger children much more strongly agreed with the statement: ‘The other resources e.g. DVD puppets etc. are of high quality’ than those with children over 30 months.

Figure 6: Level of agreement with the statement...The other resources are of high quality (puppets, DVD, crayons)

	Total	Up to 18 mths	18-24 mths	25-30 mths	Over 30 mths
	%	%	%	%	%
Strongly Agree	74	83	77	73	60
Agree	23	13	22	24	36
Neither	3	4	1	3	4
Base	(272)	(52)	(74)	(59)	(53)

Significant differences at the 95% level are shown in red

Opinion on how the children’s centre ran the programme

The vast majority of parents were in agreement that their children’s centre had done a good job running the Bookstart Corner Programme. Eighty-nine per cent strongly agreed that the centre had run the course very well; nine per cent agreed and only two per cent neither disagreed nor agreed.

There was a high level of consistency across the different groups, which were all in strong agreement that the centre had done very well in delivering the programme, this is shown in the comments from parents below.

*Staff are so friendly and good- even helped with my problems-always willing to listen. **Nottinghamshire***

*It was really good, [the children’s centre practitioner] was really helpful and friendly. **Huntingdon***

Interest in a refresher course

Many parents are keen to participate in some sort of refresher course – 85 per cent agreed that they would like a refresher session/course and 55 per cent strongly agreed. Those with children up to 18 months, and those from centres in London and the south, showed the most interest.

6. Changes in reading habits and use of books

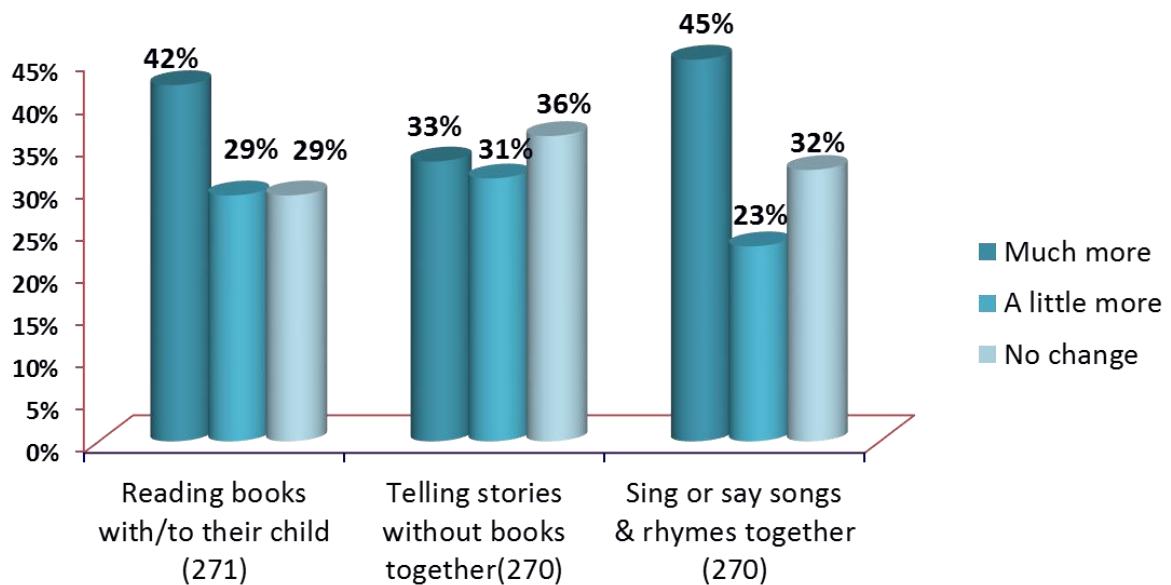
The survey also looked at whether parents were reading with their child more or less since completing the programme. They were asked whether they had completed different types of reading activity much more, a little more, no change or a little less, as well as the current frequency of their activities.

A total of just under three quarters (71 per cent) said they were reading books more with their children than before the programme (42 per cent were reading much more, 29 per cent were reading a little more). No parents were reading less often than before they completed the programme.

This theme is continued when looking at the other aspects of reading and rhyming: telling stories without books and singing songs and rhymes together. In each case, two thirds of parents say they are doing this activity more, with over one third much more than before they completed the programme. Only one per cent of parents indicated they were telling stories and singing rhymes/songs less than before Bookstart Corner.

The chart below shows the overall picture for each of these reading activities.

Figure 7: Percentage of parents reporting changes in reading activities



Impact on reading activity for different groups

Parents with English as a second language

For the above three types of reading activities, the programme appears to have had a greater impact on reading frequency with those for whom English is a second language compared to those for whom English is their first language.

There were significantly more parents in the former group who said they were reading much more compared with the time before the programme. As many as 56 per cent of the English as second-language parents feel they are reading much more compared with only 36 per cent of native speaker parents.

This is encouraging and indicates that the programme has a relatively greater impact on reading activities with children when the parent has English as a second language even though all resources for the programme are in English.

The table below shows statistically significant differences in reading activity between those with English as first or second language. The table shows three different types of activities: reading books with or to the child, telling stories without books together, and singing songs and rhymes together. Significant differences are highlighted in red, and are significant at the 95% level.

Figure 8: Comparing changes in reading activity since completing the Bookstart Corner programme between those for whom English is first and second language

	Read books with or to your child		Tell stories without books together		Sing or say songs & rhymes together	
	Eng 1 st language	Eng 2 nd language	Eng 1 st language	Eng 2 nd language	Eng 1 st language	Eng 2 nd language
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Much more	36	56	28	47	39	57
A little more	28	35	33	27	23	26
No change	36	9	39	24	37	17
A little/lot less	-	-	-	2	1	-
Base	(196)	(75)	(195)	(75)	(195)	(75)

Parents who are not confident with reading

For those parents who say they are not confident when reading, the activity 'reading books much more' is 54 per cent compared with only 38 per cent for those who are confident with reading. The programme appears to have an impact across the spectrum, but more so with these minority groups.

Have parents been using the Bookstart Corner materials since completing the programme?

After completing the programme, over 90% of parents continue to use the materials at least some of the time. As many as 39 per cent say they 'use it a lot' and only 4 per cent 'don't use it at all'. The younger parents (under 34s) who have younger children are using the pack more frequently than the older parents (over 44s).

Just under one third (30 per cent) say they use the pack every day, whilst a further 27 per cent use it 3-4 times a week. Those with children under 18 months (the age of the child when he/she did the programme) appear to be using the materials more frequently than those with older children. Seventy three per cent of parents with children up to 18 months old use the Bookstart Corner materials 3-4 times a week or more often, whereas the equivalent figure for children 18-30 months and over 30 months is 57 per cent and 36 per cent respectively.

Has Bookstart Corner impacted on parents' reading confidence, knowledge and attitudes?

Parents are a lot more confident about reading with their child as a result of Bookstart Corner. Over three quarters (85 per cent) agree or strongly agree that the programme has given them more confidence. Similarly, 84% agreed or strongly agreed that they knew more about reading with their child following participation in the programme.

Continuing this positive theme, 87 per cent of parents say they have spent more quality time with their child since taking part in the programme. The table below shows the strength of agreement for each of the areas.

Figure 9: Percentage of parents reporting change in confidence and knowledge in reading activities

% agreement with each statement	I feel more confident about reading with my child	I know more about reading with my child	I have spent quality time with my child as a result of the BSC pack
	%	%	%
Strongly Agree	47	47	50
Agree	38	37	37
Neither agree/disagree	8	9	8
Disagree	6	5	3
Strongly Disagree	1	2	2
Base	(272)	(271)	(271)

There were some very positive comments from parents on how the programme has helped parents to read with their child:

It was really good, gave more confidence with reading, helped him with speaking as well **West Midlands**

It has taught me a lot. Before I didn't know how to introduce my child to any books or know any rhymes
Warrington

Spending quality time with their child since the programme has had a significantly greater impact for those for whom English is a second language (ESL). Sixty five per cent of ESL parents strongly agree that they have spent more quality time with their child since the programme compared with 45 per cent of native speaker parents.

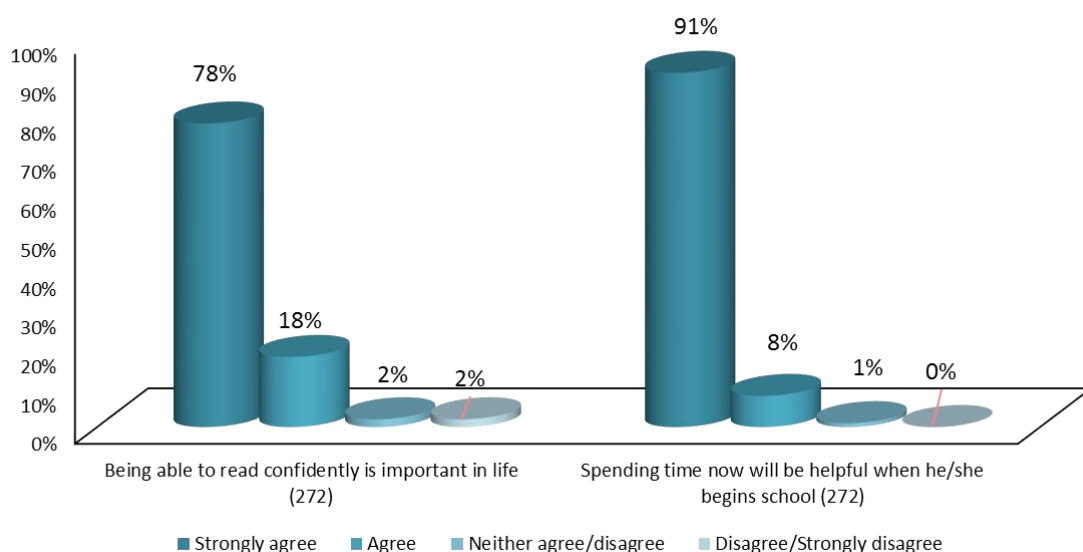
Although further explanation on this point is beyond the scope of the survey, it can't be assumed that the programme materials alone achieved this positive outcome amongst ESL families. It is likely that practitioners spend additional time with these families which embeds the benefits of continuing reading and story telling activities.

In addition to this, parents who completed a longer programme (i.e. over two months) were more likely to agree that they spent more quality time with their child than parents who completed a shorter programme.

Parents recognise the importance of being able to read confidently and 78 per cent of them strongly agreed that being able to read confidently is important in life. There were marked significant differences between confident and under confident readers; 81% of confident readers agreed strongly that being able to read confidently is important in life, compared with 68% of under-confident readers.

Encouragingly 91 per cent strongly agreed that spending time reading with their child now will be helpful when their child begins school. There were significant differences in terms of language spoken, in which 93% of ESL parents strongly agreed, compared to 84% of native speaker parents..

Figure 10 : Parents' views on the importance of reading since Bookstart Corner



The comments below show how the programme has helped build parents' confidence in general as well as specifically with reading.

It helped me be more confident. We read a lot every day, unlike before. London

Reading books together, it has helped my reading as well. London

Have parents sought help for reading or writing?

Six per cent of parents had looked for help since completing the Bookstart Corner programme, whilst 13 per cent were already doing so before they started.

In the sample overall there were 23 per cent of parents who were not confident with reading. Of these a significant minority (30 per cent) were seeking help with reading or writing (excludes those answering 'not applicable'). Most of these were already seeking help before they completed the programme, but in six instances (10 per cent) they had sought assistance since taking part in the Bookstart Corner programme.

Unsurprisingly, parents for whom English is a second language were also much more likely to be seeking help with reading or writing than those with English as their first language.

Figure 11: Parent groups who have sought help with reading or writing

Have sought help with reading or writing				
	English 1 st language	English 2 nd language	Confident in reading	Not confident
Seeking help with reading...	%	%	%	%
For the 1st time	3	13	5	10
Already seeking help	10	19	10	20
No not done this	87	68	85	70
Base	(152)	(62)	(155)	(59)

All 'not applicable' and 'don't knows' have been excluded
Significant differences shown in red

7. Engagement in activities as a result of Bookstart Corner

Our parents’ survey also looked at whether parents had engaged in any more groups and activities related to reading and literacy as a result of the programme.

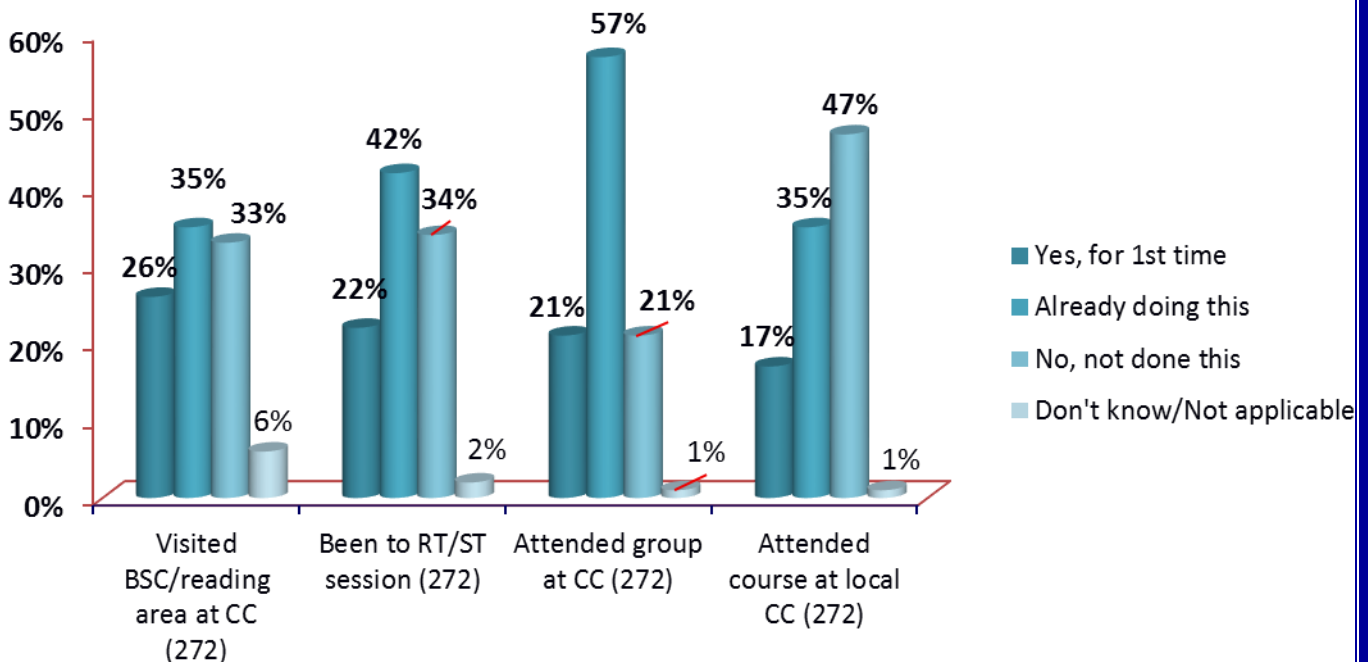
Most children’s centres run a range of different sessions and groups related to speech, language and literacy, including story and rhyme time sessions. The survey looked at whether parents were more likely to engage in these as a result of doing the programme. As well as aiming to increase reading in the home, a secondary aim of the programme is to encourage families to access other services.

We looked at five specific areas of activities to see whether parents had been to them for the first time since completing the course, were already doing the activity before the course or hadn’t done the activity at all. These were:

- Visited the Bookstart Corner/reading area at their local children’s centre
- Been to a rhyme time/story time session
- Attended a group at their local children’s centre
- Attended a course at their local children’s centre
- Been to other play sessions with their child, not at their local children’s centre.

The chart below shows how likely parents were to have done each of these activities for the first time since taking part in Bookstart Corner.

Figure 12: Children’s Centre activities completed since Bookstart Corner



RT= Rhyme-time session , ST= Story-time session, CC= children’s centre, BSC Bookstart Corner

Of the engagement areas in the chart on page 21, the activity most likely to have been done as a result of the Bookstart Corner programme was visiting the Bookstart Corner/reading area at the parent's local children's centre; just over one quarter (26 per cent) had done this for the first time. There were 22 per cent of parents who had been to a rhyme time session for the first time and 21 per cent had attended a group at their local children's centre for the first time since completing the programme. Seventeen per cent of parents had attended a course at their children's centre for the first time since the programme, although this is a lower proportion there are likely to be fewer courses available compared to group sessions e.g. stay and play.

Twenty one per cent of parents who completed the programme in home had visited the Bookstart Corner reading area for the first time. Those completing the programme via a mix of in-home and in-centre sessions or only in centre, were much more likely to have visited the Bookstart Corner reading area at their local children's centre.

It is not possible to conclude whether this relates to the delivery method of the programme, or the existing characteristics of the parents that take part in the different delivery models. However, it seems logical to suggest that parents who take part in the programme in the children's centre will need less encouragement to access other services there.

Similarly accessing the centre for rhyme time sessions and groups and courses is lower for the in home method. However for parents who have completed the Bookstart Corner course this way there is a greater barrier to visiting the children's centre than for a parent who is already familiar with this environment. The purpose of Bookstart Corner is to help break down the barriers to accessing the children's centre, and this finding suggests that more work may need to be done to address this.

The age of parent appears to have little impact on the likelihood of parents to access the centre, other than visiting the Bookstart Corner reading area. The 35-44 year old parents are most likely to be already using the reading area, whereas the younger parents (16-24s) tended not to have visited the reading area at all. This can be seen in the table below. These figures highlight that extra encouragements may be required for this age group

Figure 13: Likelihood of visiting the Bookstart Corner area since the Bookstart Corner programme

Visited the Bookstart Corner reading area	16-24s	25-34s	35-44s
	%	%	%
Yes for first time	21	30	24
Already doing this	31	32	49
No not done this	46	34	21
Not applic/Don't know	3	4	7
Base	(39)	(148)	(68)

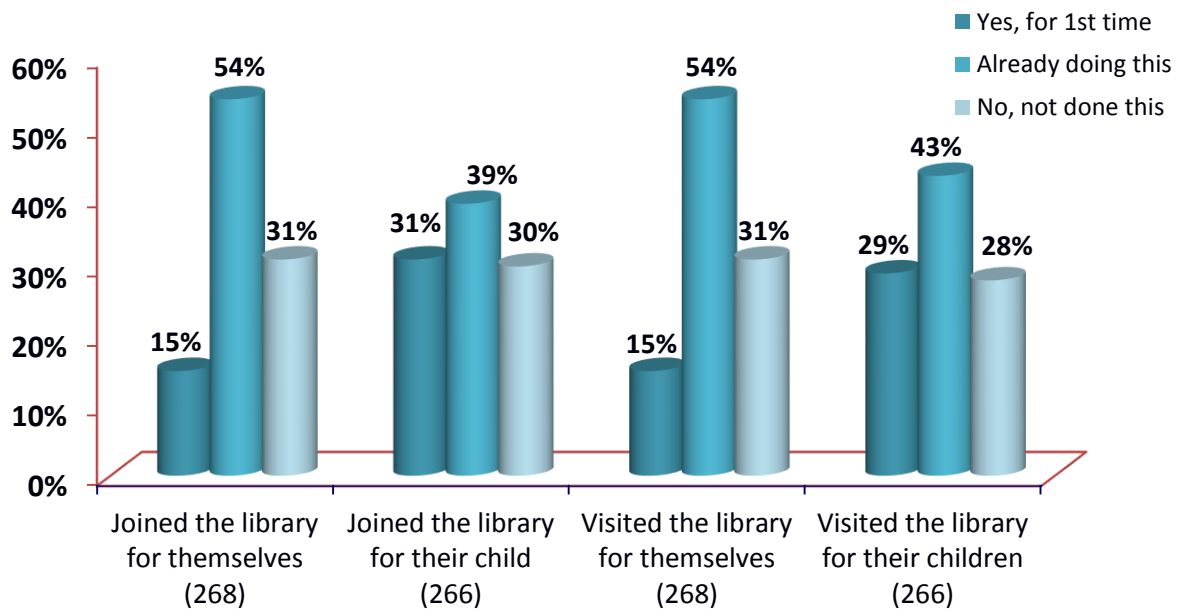
Note: over 44s have been excluded due to a very low sample size. Significant differences shown in red

Visiting and joining the library

The programme has had some impact on parents joining the library for the first time since the programme, but appears to have had more impact on them joining the library for their child. Thirty-one per cent of parents had joined the library for their child for the first time since they had completed the programme and 29 per cent had visited for the first time for their child since completing the programme.

The chart below clearly shows these differences.

Figure 14: Visiting and joining the library since taking part in the Bookstart Corner programme



Note: Not applicable and don't know have been removed from the above figures

Those parents who were under confident in their reading were significantly more likely to join the library for themselves for the first time than parents who are confident readers. Twenty five per cent of parents who were under confident readers had joined the library (for themselves) for the first time since the programme, compared to only 13 per cent of confident readers, who were more likely to already be a member.

Parents with children over 18 months were also more likely to have joined the library for themselves than those with children under 18 months.

Engaging in other activities

Bookstart Bear club

Just less than one quarter of parents had joined the Bookstart Bear club for the first time (23 per cent), and just six per cent of parents said they had already joined. There were 69 per cent of

parents who had not done this, which may be because there wasn't the opportunity or because they had decided not to. Further investigation on this was outside the scope of this survey.

Taking up the two year free nursery entitlement

There were 193 parents (within the total sample of 272) who were eligible for the state offer of free nursery entitlement for two year olds. Of these, 30 per cent had taken up the offer since completing the programme, whilst 19 per cent were already doing so.

There were significant differences by region with parents in the north and north west being more likely to take this offer up for the first time compared to the south east/south and east where fewer parents were eligible.

The table below highlights the significant differences by region on those who had taken up the free nursery entitlement for the first time since completing the programme.

Figure 15: Differences in taking up the free nursery entitlement by region

Have you taken up the two year offer for your child?	Total	South & South East	East	Midlands	North & North West
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes for the first time	30	16	19	33	39
Yes but already taken up	19	22	19	11	20
No, not done this	5	62	62	56	40
Base	(193)	(67)	(58)	(50)	(96)

Note: Only those eligible for the two year offer are shown above- those ineligible or who didn't know have been removed from the figures

8. Conclusions

Delivering the programme

- There is a true mix of delivery methods being used for the Bookstart Corner programme, rather than a focus on in-home, which is the method for which it was designed. This verifies the findings of our practitioners' research.
- However, at 43 per cent, home delivery is the single largest delivery method for the Bookstart Corner programme.
- Most programme participation comprises of three or four sessions, whether delivered in the children's centre or in-home.
- Programme participation is on average between three and six weeks' duration. In-home programme participations tended to be longer – between one-two months – whereas children's centre programmes are one month or less.
- In this research in-home delivery is more prevalent in the north west/north region, whereas centre sessions are more common in the south/south east region.
- The Bookstart Corner programme was aimed at children between 12 and 30 months at the time of reporting. The core age range of children who are completing the programme is between 18 and 30 months, however, in this survey, children as young as seven months and as old as 48 months had completed the programme.

Views on the programme

- Parents were very positive about the programme. Ninety eight per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they and their child enjoyed taking part, with 83 per cent strongly agreeing.
- Ninety nine per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the programme was worthwhile and 98 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that their child will benefit.
- Children's centres are thought to be delivering the programme very well. Ninety eight per cent agreed or strongly agreed that the centre 'had done a good job'.

Encouragement in reading and story telling

- The findings of this research show that the programme does appear to impact on reading activities. Over 65 per cent of parents report they are doing more reading, and telling stories and rhymes, whilst 30-45 per cent are doing these activities much more.
- The impact on reading activities is greatest with those for whom English is a second language. Fifty six per cent of the English as second-language parents feel they are reading much more compared with 36 per cent of native speaker parents.
- Those who lack confidence in reading also show similarly high increases compared with those who say they are confident in reading. Fifty four per cent of parents who are not confident with reading report reading more with their child, compared with 38 per cent of parents who are confident with reading.
- Parents continue to use the Bookstart Corner materials after the programme, with over 90 per cent saying they still use them. Young parents are more likely to use the resources than older parents.

Increase in confidence and knowledge of reading

- The survey has increased parents' confidence and knowledge of reading and storytelling. Eight five per cent feel more confident around reading, 84 per cent feel more knowledgeable and 87 per cent of parents say they have spent more quality time with their child. Since taking part in the programme, 97 per cent of parents think that reading confidently is important in life, and 99 per cent think that spending time reading with their child will benefit them when they start school.
- Parents are more aware since completing the programme that reading confidently is important in life and that it will benefit their child when he/she starts school. One quarter (23 per cent) of parents were not confident in reading and, of these, 10 per cent had sought help with this. Those with English as a second language were also more likely to seek help with reading, and 11 per cent had done so.

Engagement in children's centre activities and take up of nursery offer as a result of the programme

- The children's centre activity that parents were most likely to do as a result of the programme was visiting the Bookstart Corner reading area at the children's centre. Twenty-six per cent had done this for the first time.
- Participating in a rhyme time session or course was completed by 20 per cent of parents as a result of the programme. However, it was those already familiar with the children's centre environment, i.e. those who had completed in centre sessions rather than in home, who were more likely to be engaged in these activities.
- Just under one third of parents had for the first time joined the library for their child after the programme (31 per cent), and a similar proportion (29 per cent) had visited with their child for the first time. There was little difference in the likelihood to do this between parent age groups.
- Thirty per cent of those eligible for the two year nursery entitlement had taken up the offer since completing the programme.

Overview

- Parents were very positive towards the Bookstart Corner programme and feel that there were very positive impacts for both themselves and their child.
- It is particularly encouraging that there are marked benefits in reading related activities for those with English as a second language and for parents who are not confident readers.
- Although the programme is being delivered in a variety of ways, these positive perceptions are evident from parents experiencing covering each of the different types of delivery, in home, in centre and mixed sessions. Indeed this is verified by the positive comments received from parents who had experienced the programme across all delivery methods.
- A clear majority of parents report they are reading much more with their child as a result of the programme, telling stories and in particular singing songs and rhymes together. Parents appear to be a lot more confident in reading with their child and realising the benefits of doing so has encouraged them to maintain their new habits.

- Engagement activities have increased for some parents. One fifth of parents are attending rhyme time sessions and children's centre groups for the first time, and one quarter have visited the Bookstart Corner area for the first time.
- Nearly one third had joined the library for their child as a result of the Bookstart Corner programme, whilst thirty per cent of those eligible for the two year nursery entitlement had taken up the offer since completing the programme.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Notes to this report

Appendix 2 – Geographical spread of parent interviews

Appendix 1

Notes to this presentation

1. Statistical Significance

- We have highlighted figures in red which are statistically significant to 95% level. This means that we are 95% sure that there would be a real difference between the groups highlighted here, in the real population
- The margin of error of the full sample i.e. 272 is +/-6% based on an answer of 50% (the point of widest variability) therefore we can be confident that the actual figure in the real population of parents who have completed the Bookstart Corner programme is +/- 6% i.e. between 44% and 56%. Where a survey answer is much lower or higher than 50% the margin of error will be smaller.

2. No answers

- Those who did not answer have been excluded from calculations which is why some base sizes based on the total sample of parents are below the 272 total sample size

3. Rounding

- Where percentage figures add to 99/98 /101 due to rounding of figures within a question we have rounded up or down to 100

Appendix 2

Geographical spread of parent interviews

A list of the counties covered, and the numbers of interviews in each, are shown in the table below.

County	Region	No. of ints	%	County	Region	No. of ints	%
Berkshire	South	4	1	London	South East	39	14
Cambridgeshire	East	12	4	Merseyside	North West	14	5
Cheshire	North West	6	2	Middlesex	South East	8	3
Derbyshire	East	16	6	Norfolk	East	9	3
Essex	East	10	4	Northants	East	3	1
Manchester	North West	20	7	Nottinghamshire	Midlands	11	4
Hampshire	South	11	4	Suffolk	East	5	2
Hertfordshire	East	21	8	West Midlands	Midlands	25	9
Kent	South East	5	2	Yorkshire	North	14	5
Lancashire	North West	39	14	TOTAL		272	98