

Evaluation of Bookstart England

Review of Resources - July 2012

Contents

Contents	1
Research team	2
Introduction	3
1.1 The current research	4
1.2 Methodology	4
1.3 Background for developing the criteria	5
a. Research Literature	5
b. Policy	7
2.1 Findings	9
a. Introduction to the scoring criteria	9
b. Scoring the packs	11
2.2 Discussion.....	11
2.3 Issues and recommendations	13
References	15
Appendix 1 Members of the Expert Panel.....	18
Appendix 2 Checklist for the Baby Pack	20
Appendix 3 Checklist for the Treasure Pack	22

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Introduction

Booktrust is an independent charity, established in 1920s, with the aim of building a literate, connected and creative society through encouraging engagement with books. The charity runs a number of national book-gifting programmes, one of which is the *Bookstart* programme. *Bookstart*, piloted in 1992, has developed over the last twenty years to become a universal programme in England. The initiative provides two sets of materials or book packs aimed at:

- Babies aged between 0 and 12 months - known as 'The Baby Pack'
- Young children aged between 3 and 4 years - known as 'The Treasure Pack'

The 'Baby Pack', received in the baby's first year, is usually given by a health visitor or other health professional, whereas the 'Treasure Pack' is usually distributed via a nursery, pre-school or other early years setting.

The *Bookstart* packs aim to promote an interest in literacy in general, and reading in particular, at two crucial points in the early years. Firstly the materials referred to as 'The Baby Pack' provide resources and support materials designed to engage parents and care-givers in shared literacy activities at a very early stage, and secondly, 'The Treasure Pack' provides similar contents to promote adult-child interaction at, or just before the initial stages of formal literacy instruction. In general terms, the *Bookstart* initiative aims to:

- encourage all parents and carers to enjoy books with children from as early an age as possible
- inspire a love of reading through providing free books and supporting materials

Each pack comes in an attractive bag and contains a range of age-appropriate resources. In the current 'Baby Pack' there are two board books for shared reading, a shape booklet with black and white images and a rhyme poster. In addition there is a guidance booklet with advice on sharing books, further book recommendations and a £1 book token. The 'Treasure Pack' consists of a red and blue messenger bag with two picture books, a pad and coloured pencils for mark-making, and a booklet giving advice and guidance on supporting the literacy development of 3-4 year olds.

1.1 The current research

In March 2012 Sheffield Hallam University was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the *Bookstart* programme on behalf of Booktrust. Booktrust has identified the need to ensure that this programme and its resources fit the needs of children, families, practitioners and stakeholders. In collaboration with Booktrust the research team identified three key research questions.

1. To what extent are *Bookstart* resources fully aligned with current Early Years and family engagement practice and policy?
2. What are the views of practitioners and stakeholders on the role of *Bookstart* at both a strategic and operational level?
3. What is the impact of *Bookstart* on a range of key outcomes?

This review of resources addresses the first of these research questions.

1.2 Methodology

To address the question ‘To what extent are *Bookstart* resources fully aligned with current Early Years and family engagement practice and policy?’, the research team convened two expert groups, one to look at Early Years/Family Engagement Policy and the other to look at the relevant research literature in relation to good practice in early literacy. The policy group was led by Gwyn Fields, a Sure Start Programme Manager, who worked alongside Dr Ros Garrick (who specialises in Early Years Policy research) and Karen Daniels (an Early Years academic), and the research group was led by Guy Merchant, Professor in Literacy in Education who worked with Dr Cathy Burnett, a literacy researcher, and Dr Claudine Bowyer-Crane, a psychologist who specialises in early literacy development.

The two expert groups used these sources to draft a set of criteria against which the *Bookstart* resources could be judged. This was developed into two checklists (see Appendices 1 & 2), which were used to assess one Baby Pack and one Treasure Pack (containing representative books and resources)¹.

Given the impressionistic nature of this data, it can only provide a starting point for considering the ways in which the *Bookstart* materials are aligned with current Early Years and family engagement practice and policy. In the time available the research team could not assess how robust the judgements were, and of course, no clear comparisons can be made. However, the checklists do provide an approach to evaluation and have formed the basis for some lively discussion about the *Bookstart* offer. The findings are further limited by the fact that the expert panels were only able to look at one version of each pack.

The results are outlined in section 2 below.

¹ There are number of different versions of both packs. Here we used a single version of each pack on the assumption that it was indicative of the *Bookstart* offer.

1.3 Background for developing the criteria

a. Research Literature

The EPPE Project, in an extensive study of early childhood provision, concluded that: 'For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income.' (Sylva et al., 2004:ii). The project concluded that reading books to children was one of a range of factors in the home learning environment that was associated with higher intellectual and social/behavioural scores (2004:25). This adds to an established body of research on the impact of book-sharing on literacy development, with a large number of studies demonstrating how such activity in the preschool years contributes to the development of receptive and expressive language abilities and emerging early literacy routines (e.g., Adams, 1990; Bus, 2002; Crain-Thoreson & Dale, 1992; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Wells, 1985). In reviewing this work, Sonnenshein & Munsterman (2002) argue that the accumulation of evidence points to the fact that it is the dialogue and adult-child interaction that occurs around the book that is as important as the actual reading of the text. This dialogue typically focuses on story events, predictions about what is going to occur, and how issues in the book relate to aspects of everyday activities. Some of the literature points to the importance of sharing books with babies and very young children and this has been reported in a number of important studies (Bailey et al., 2002; Bus, 2002; Deloache & Demendoza, 1987; Wade & Moore, 1993). For example, Wade & Moore's (1993) study focused on 300 families with babies at approximately 9 months. In this study book-gifting resulted in positive attitudes to books, and increases in book ownership and library membership.

Whilst current debate is concerned with understanding the relative effects of the frequency of book-sharing and the quality of adult-child interaction, there is broad agreement that through sharing books young children are able to describe pictures, label objects, explain events, ask questions, and relate stories to their everyday life experience (e.g. Flood, 1977; Hammett et al. 2003; Kaderavek & Sulzby, 1998). Recently it has been suggested that early exposure to print may be more significant than Social Economic Status in accounting for individual differences in literacy attainment (Bailey et al, 2002) and that the communication environment is stronger than the influence of social background on early language development in general (Melhuish, 2010; Roulstone et al 2011). Melhuish (2010) identifies activities that are significant for children's literacy achievements at age 5. The key activities reported are "frequency of being read to, going to the library, playing with numbers, being taught letters, being taught numbers/songs/poems/rhymes" (Melhuish 2010: 61). In their study, Roulstone et al (2011) suggest that the number of books available to the child, and the frequency of visits to the library are important indicators of a positive communication environment.

Despite this, it is still the case that social class and ethnicity have an impact on children's success within the educational system, and their attitudes towards reading. Research has, for instance, suggested that children from middle class backgrounds are more likely to be successful in literacy than children from working class backgrounds (van Steensel, 2006). Children from middle-class homes often present skills and abilities that are valued in the schooling system - in contrast to children from working-class homes who may not (Tudge et al, 2003). Evidence also

suggests that school attainment is correlated to development from as early as 22 months (Feinstien, 2003). By age five, children from non-disadvantaged families who had low cognitive ability at age two had almost caught up with high ability children from disadvantaged families.

It has also been documented that children from certain cultural backgrounds may experience disadvantage in the education system, as their home learning activities may not align closely with the aims of the school (Brooker, 2002a). Drawing on this work, Brooker's (2002b) comparative case study carefully details the differences between the early literacy experiences of a Bangladeshi and English child and shows how these experiences are differently recognised in school. Such research not only underlines the importance of home literacy practices, but also demonstrates that factors such as social class and ethnicity may have an impact on children's attitudes and motivations for reading. Finally, further research indicates that a disparity between school and community literacy practices may also cause disruption for some children (Heath, 1983; Gregory, 1994; Pahl, 2002; Levy, 2010;), particularly given the recent influence of changing technologies upon children's out-of-school literacy and reading practices (Anning, 2003; Marsh, 2004; Carrington, 2005; Merchant, 2010). For example, Marsh's (2004) study of 44 children between two and half and four years of age found that the majority used a range of digital texts and artefacts, engaging in kinds of literacy practices which were not represented in educational contexts.

Early intervention programmes focusing on book-sharing have been shown to have a significant impact on some of the inequalities referred to above (Bus et al. 1995; Bus, 2002). As a result of this work, it seems that book-gifting is likely to play a key role in contributing to a vibrant reading culture in the early years, and that book-sharing is important for all children. Given the significance of book ownership (Clark & Poulton, 2011), and the benefits of adult-child interaction with shared texts (Hannon & James, 1990), a national programme, such as *Bookstart*, has much to offer, particularly if it includes relevant and high quality materials and appropriate guidance for adults.

There is very little in previous studies that focuses on the resources used in book-sharing. Most work in the field draws on widely-accepted notions of book quality, drawn from the study of children's literature (Merchant et al, 1999) and focuses instead on how parents and caregivers share materials with their children and the impact this has on children's engagement with books and on early literacy development. However, a number of evaluations of *Bookstart* have stressed the issue of resource quality. These include the Roehampton Study, which reported on how nursery and reception children enjoyed the range of books provided and how their parents agreed that the offer included 'good quality books' (Collins et al, 2005: 45).

A number of recommendations concerning quality have been made in the previous studies. For instance Moore and Wade (2003) stressed the importance of selecting appropriately simple books to meet the interests of babies. They, like Collins et al (2005), also emphasise choosing books that are culturally relevant. In addition, there has also been considerable debate around the ways in which resources do or do not relate to popular culture (Marsh, 2003). Whilst Collins et al (2005) report that children particularly liked books with connections to popular culture (for example, those with links to television and film), they acknowledge possible limitations in a reading diet

limited to such books. In the light of this, it is helpful to acknowledge that early literacy resources 'construct rather than represent childhood and children's experiences of the world.' (Luke et al., 2003).

Finally a number of other issues were identified in the literature. Firstly, there is evidence that suggests how stories that include a focus on number and sequence as well as books with number rhymes can introduce very young children to numbers and counting in interesting and interactive ways (Wade & Moore, 1998). Secondly, in line with work on rhyme, language patterning and early phonological awareness (for example, Goswami, 2007), these evaluations reported that both girls and boys enjoyed books that included traditional nursery rhymes (Collins et al, 2005; Moore & Wade 2003). Thirdly, it seems clear that the *Bookstart* initiative is favourably received by parents (O'Hare & Connolly, 2010), not simply because of the quality of the books but also because of the quality of the guidance materials (Just Economics, 2010).

b. Policy

The emerging national framework for early years and families is encapsulated in the policy document, 'Supporting Families in the Foundation Years' (DfE, DofH, 2011). This document, which summarises the Government's vision for the foundation years, draws on Frank Field's Independent 'Review on Poverty and Life Chances' (Field, 2010) and Graham Allen's 'Independent Review on Early Intervention' (Allen, 2011) and highlights the importance of good, joined-up support at the start of life and how parents and families should be placed at the heart of services. Taking account of Dame Claire Tickell's 'Review of the Early Years Foundation Stage' (Tickell, 2011) and Professor Eileen Munro's 'Review of Child Protection' (Munro, 2011) it sets out the importance of early intervention and the role of different services and agencies in working together to ensure that children and their families receive early help where needed.

A reformed and slimmer Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum document will be implemented from September 2012, and this will place a stronger focus on engagement with parents, and an emphasis on promoting child development and 'school readiness' with seven areas of learning and development informing curriculum planning for education in early year's settings. The 'Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage' (DfE, 2012) identifies the three prime areas of Communication and Language, Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development. These reflect the 'key skills and capacities all children need to develop and learn effectively, and become ready for school' (Early Education, 2012) and are identified as the focus of early years education and care. The relevant areas from this document are:

1. *Communication and language development*: involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment, to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations.
2. *Mathematics*: involves providing children with opportunities to develop their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems, and to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.

3. *Literacy development*: involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write.

2.1 Findings

a. Introduction to the scoring criteria

The research team worked with the expert panels to generate two checklists; one for the Baby Pack and one for the Treasure Pack. Given the general nature of the relevant Early Years Foundation Stage statements, there was considerable overlap with what had been gleaned from the research literature and policy documentation.

The checklist items for the Baby Pack were as follows:

Phonological Awareness

- incorporates rhythmic patterns and rhymes
- includes pictures of animals and objects that make distinctive sounds e.g. animal noises, vehicle noises

Language and Literacy

- include stories, songs and rhymes
- includes stories with repetitive phrases or structures, supporting particular vocabulary or language structures
- includes repetitive number and counting rhymes from a range of cultures
- includes pictures of familiar objects and actions that can be labelled e.g. teddy, going to bed

Physical and multi-sensory experience

- invites interaction by prompts for actions, finger play and/or sound-making
- invites interaction through sensory experience (e.g. pages with different textures; flaps to lift, holes and pop up features)
- are sufficiently sturdy to allow for physical exploration e.g. board books, cloth books

Social and Emotional Development

- includes picture books and stories that focus on a range of emotions; show people helping and supporting others
- represents the diverse backgrounds, home cultures and languages of families, while avoiding stereotypes
- provides positive images of children with diverse physical characteristics, including disabled children

Guidance for Parents

- should provide guidance on book-sharing for the adult who is using the book
- should provide guidance on phonological awareness (e.g. rhyme)
- guidance should be clear, simple and accessible
- should encourage a variety of responses and suggest various opportunities for reading
- offer clear contact point for further support
- should offer ideas that fit varied relational patterns and family settings

- book sharing as fun and advantageous should be a key message.

The checklist items for the Treasure Pack were as follows:

Phonological Awareness

- includes rhymes , songs, stories to support phonological awareness
- includes rhyme, rhythm and/or alliteration

Literacy and Language

- contains words of high frequency in children's early reading
- invites early mark making
- story includes memorable /predictable language structure (i.e. repeated refrains)
- clear narrative structure/promotes prediction of events
- opportunities for extending conversation beyond the text e.g. invites the posing of questions, using vocabulary in different contexts
- invites reading with expression or rhythm
- invites counting, estimating, positional language
- include play with language/humour
- any conversational representation to reflect natural language pattern
- pictures need to be engaging and to encourage interaction with adults/contain opportunities for discussion

Social and Emotional Development

- story invites empathy with character/s
- invites emotional response/ depict character emotion
- represent the diverse home cultures and languages of families using resources
- provides positive images of children with diverse physical characteristics, including disabled children
- content / theme relevant to child's experiences

Guidance for Parents

- should provide guidance on book-sharing for the adult who is using the book
- should provide guidance on early phonological awareness (e.g. rhyme)
- guidance should be clear, simple and accessible
- should encourage a variety of responses and suggest various opportunities for reading
- offer clear contact point for further support
- should offer ideas that fit varied relational patterns and family settings
- book sharing as fun and advantageous should be a key message

Each item on the checklist was ranked 1- 4, with 1 representing no coverage; 2 limited coverage, 3 significant coverage and 4 complete coverage. The two panels then looked at each pack separately and then aggregated their scores (see Appendices 1 & 2).

b. Scoring the packs

These items were then conflated into larger categories by the expert panels, based on an identification of the major themes in policy and research. These themes were *language and literacy; phonological awareness; physical and sensory experience; social and emotional development; guidance for parents*. The scores for these are shown in the table below.

Figure 1: Aggregated scores against the categories (maximum scores are shown in parentheses)

	Baby Pack	Treasure Pack	Total
<i>language and literacy</i>	14(16)	34(40)	48(56)
<i>phonological awareness</i>	7(8)	8(8)	15(16)
<i>physical and sensory experience</i>	10(12)	11(14)	21(26)
<i>social and emotional development</i>	8(12)	12(20)	20(32)
<i>guidance for parents</i>	21(28)	19 (28)	40(56)
<i>Total</i>	60 (76)	84 (110)	

These results provide an impression of how experts in the field view the resources in the *Bookstart* offer, but have no wider empirical validity. They suggest that the two packs provide excellent coverage of language and literacy and phonological awareness, which together address the central aims of this Booktrust initiative. There were no key differences between the packs in these core areas. Similarly, both packs scored highly on physical and sensory experience and this again shows the care that has been taken with selecting the resources.

Given the emphasis on social and emotional development in the national framework for the early years, the panels paid close attention to this aspect of the book content. Although coverage of this area was good, it was felt that this is an area that Booktrust could develop. Guidance for parents and carers had clearly been given careful consideration by Booktrust and this is to be commended. However, it was not always as clear and accessible as it could be and this was identified as an issue for future development with the Bookstart packs. Policy documentation is quite explicit about the importance of the high quality of adult intervention, and this is certainly a key finding in the literature on book-sharing. The panels felt that *Bookstart* would benefit from enhanced materials for parents and carers, as well as for early years professionals. This could take the form of guidance on how adults might encourage children to reflect on their own experience through empathising with book characters. Examples might be provided along with suggested strategies, such as probing questions ('How would you feel if...?'; 'What could she have done...?'; 'Can you remember how you felt when...?')

2.2 Discussion

Members of the expert panels were very impressed by both the *Bookstart* Baby Pack and the Treasure Pack, considering them both in terms of their individual merits and

as part of 'an offer' to the growing child. They recognised that the criteria they had devised represented an ideal picture, and that no individual, small collection of materials could possibly excel on all criteria. Specific issues were highlighted in the discussion of each of the packs and these are included here to illuminate some of the judgements made, and to identify further issues.

Initially, the bags themselves provoked plenty of comment. Members of the panels were keenly aware of the importance of what is often referred to as the 'environmental print' that is found on objects, labels and signs. Some also had anecdotal evidence of the significance of previous *Bookstart* packaging in the daily lives of children and families. The zip-up bag provided for the Baby Pack was considered to be attractive with its appealing graphic and 'We love books' slogan. Although absolutely necessary, the health warning on this was seen as potentially off-putting. The Treasure Pack messenger bag was also greatly appreciated, although similar concerns about the safety messages were noted.

The contents of the Baby Pack were of a consistently high quality. The panels felt that the board books would have considerable appeal and they matched the criteria well. Although the material design of one of the books promoted tactile exploration, some panel members were looking for more interactive and multi-sensory opportunities in the materials. Most felt that the black and white shape book wasn't sufficiently robust for this age-group and there was some discussion about the applicability of the underlying research in this area. Studies in the development of visual perception now offer a more complex view than that popularised through the work of Frantz (1963) and Frantz & Fagan (1975). Frantz used similar patterns in laboratory conditions to investigate 'natural preferences'. It is now widely accepted that very young babies are sensitive to a wide range of pattern and colour (Cohen & Cashon, 2003).

Given the general consensus of opinion on the significance of rhyme in the development of phonological awareness, the rhyme poster was felt to be a useful inclusion, but issues of diversity and representation were raised in relation to this. Finally, the guide for parents 'Babies love Books' was seen as an important element. Panel members felt that the cartoon-style speech bubbles communicated some important messages in an accessible way. However, the summary points provided on the inside back cover are also important and might be lost amongst the recommendations and supplementary material.

The panels identified more criteria for the Treasure Pack than the Baby Pack, particularly in the Language and Literacy cluster, and as a result it was even harder for a small collection to achieve a high score. Despite this the pack scored very well on this and other sets of criteria. The books themselves were certainly fit for purpose. A low score was recorded against 'conversational representation' due to limitations within the particular books in the pack. Issues of diversity and representation of cultural difference could also have been strengthened. The inclusion of materials for mark-making was welcomed. Some concerns were expressed about the guidance for parents. It was felt that this was unnecessarily complex and would benefit from better design.

Several over-arching issues provoked extended discussion amongst panel members. These included:

- The extent to which a universal programme can address themes that are relevant to children's experience, which by its very nature is diverse;
- The extent to which a relatively small collection of materials can represent social and cultural diversity (including language, ethnicity, disability and family variation);
- The dominance of anthropomorphic elements in children's books, and the extent to which this may be culturally patterned (as in the popular representation of pigs and dogs, which are in some contexts considered to be unclean). Although members of the panel were all familiar with this issue, some with recent experience of working in culturally diverse settings felt that this was not always a significant issue. Clearly further research is needed in this area. In the meantime book collections should aim for variety, by including stories with human characters;
- The desirability of including materials with a link to popular culture. Whilst panel members agreed on the importance of drawing on children's interactions with media, they were also aware of different patterns of media consumption and variations in parental attitude to popular culture.

2.3 Issues and recommendations

As previously stated in the methodology, there are some limitations to this resource review, due to the impressionistic nature of the data and the fact that the expert panels were only able to look at one version of each pack. In developing the checklists the expert panels were well aware that it would be virtually impossible to achieve complete coverage of all items in a single pack, and in fact it would be unrealistic to attempt to do so. As a result, when the packs were judged against the criteria, the research team were impressed with the high degree of fit.

Taking into account the limitations of this exercise, the comments below emerged from the evaluation exercise.

- It is evident that Booktrust have expended considerable thought and effort in selecting appropriate selections of resources and it is unlikely that a single collection could address all the criteria listed in Appendices 1 and 2. However, in order to support this process, Booktrust may wish to use or develop this list of criteria to help guide future selections.
- There is a need to consider robustness of resources to ensure that all can withstand handling by young children and babies. In some instances the panels questioned the durability of the materials.
- The bag itself was considered to be an important element of the offer. It signals the Booktrust logo and will play a part in initial book sharing between parent/carer and child. If possible, it would be helpful to source a bag which does not raise health and safety issues.
- Given the prioritisation of emotional development within the EYFS and the significance of secure emotional development for effective learning (Whitebread 2012), it would be appropriate for the pack to give greater recognition of the potential of book packs as support for emotional development (Zambo and Hansen 2007). Examples might be provided along

with suggested strategies, such as the use of probing questions ('How would you feel if...?'; 'What could she have done...?'; 'Can you remember how you felt when...?')

- The clarity of guidance for parents using the Treasure Pack could be improved. There is a considerable amount of information on each page, not all of which seems directly relevant to book sharing. The amount of written text on each page could be reduced by including only the most salient information and it may be preferable to introduce book sharing practices through use of images, e.g. cartoons.
- Booktrust may wish to review the guidance for the two packs in order to ensure that they complement one another and are clearly focused on supporting parents and carers with book-sharing.
- Given the significance of popular culture to young children's lives, Booktrust may wish to consider including texts or artefacts linked to popular characters.
- As digital media play an increasingly important role in the lives of new families, Booktrust may wish to consider how web-based materials or mobile apps might support and enrich the offer, in addition to the current Bookstart website and the Bookstart Bear Club, an online club to encourage the sharing of books, stories and rhymes.

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Appendix 1 Members of the Expert Panel

Dr Claudine Bowyer-Crane

Claudine is a member of our Psychology Research Group whose work on young children's reading and language development provides us with expertise and experience in the theoretical underpinnings, and practical design and analysis, of Phonics teaching and assessment. Claudine's research has focused on the development and evaluation of evidence-based reading and language interventions for children at the early stages of 18 reading instruction who have oral language difficulties. Her work has involved designing theoretically-driven interventions that incorporate activities focused on supporting wordlevel reading skills such as phonics and phonological awareness, as well as activities that focus on the broader aspects of language i.e. grammar and vocabulary. This work has involved training and supporting Teaching Assistants in the delivery of phonics-based instruction as well carrying out detailed assessments of children's emerging literacy skills. Claudine recently acted as a consultant on the Phonics Screening Check Pilot Process Evaluation.

Dr Cathy Burnett

Cathy is a Reader in the Department of Teacher education where she leads the Language and Literacy Research Group. She has a strong professional background in literacy education and expertise in literature review methodology. Cathy is co-editor of the international peer-reviewed journal *Literacy*, and has conducted a number of projects in this field She has written a textbook, *Teaching English 3-11*, chapters on literacy for a variety of international handbooks and articles in a range of key journals including *Journal of Research in Reading, Language and Education, Journal of Early Childhood Literacy and English in Education*. Her current research focuses on new technologies and literacy education with particular interests in relationships between learning within and beyond formal educational contexts .

Karen Daniels

Karen Daniels is a Senior Lecturer in Primary and Early Years English at Sheffield Hallam University. She has led the development of provision for early reading within courses of initial teacher education at Sheffield Hallam University and contributed to ongoing professional development in Early Years language and literacy for practising Early Years practitioners. Her recent research focuses on children's language and literacy learning within Early Years settings with a focus on children's identity as literacy users. Prior to working at Sheffield Hallam Karen worked as an Early Years teacher and outreach teacher/area SENCO. She has worked as a children's centre Lead Teacher where she focused on supporting settings in developing their early literacy provision. Karen led Family Learning in her previous school and worked with parents and carers supporting them with their child's early literacy development.

Gwyn Fields

Gwyn is an experienced Children's Centre Manager and has worked for over 20 years as a Senior Manager in Children's and Families Social Care and Early Years Services. Gwyn has experience of leading and managing two Sure Start Local Programmes and delivering services in 5 Children's Centres. She has over 10 years experience of providing the Children's Centre Core Offer and has worked closely

with Bookstart Coordinators and Early Years practitioners , including providers from the Local Authority, Health Service and voluntary organisations to support children's early learning, language and development Gwyn has been a lecturer on the Yorkshire and Humberside National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre Leadership programme and as part of her interest in this field Gwyn has undertaken several pieces of work including action research in 2006 to look at the shift from SSLPs to Children's Centres and an evaluation of the impact of Health managed Children's Centres in Sheffield in 2008.

Dr Ros Garrick

Ros is Principal Lecturer in Early Years at Sheffield Hallam University. Ros has more than 20 years of professional experience as an Early Years teacher and Teacher Adviser. She currently teaches Early Years professionals on a range of courses, including FdA/BA Early Years, Masters Early Years Education and research degrees. Ros undertook doctoral research into the mathematical development of 3 and 4 year olds while lead teacher of a large, inner city nursery class, developing innovative methods for researching with young children in play contexts. Recently she co-directed a study of young children's experiences of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for the DfE, a study that informed the Dame Tickell's review of the EYFS. She was also Assistant Director for the evaluation of the National College for School Leadership programme Multi-agency Team Development and has directed an evaluation of the children's centre teacher role for a Local Authority. Ros has a specialist interest in play in early childhood education and care and has written for Early Years students and professionals, with several publications in this area.

Guy Merchant

Guy is Professor of Literacy in Education at SHU, Research Excellence Framework (REF) coordinator and research lead for the Department of Teacher Education. He specialises in research into digital literacy and is particularly interested in the inter-relationships between children and young people, new technology and literacy. He is research convenor for the United Kingdom Literacy Association and a member of the association's Executive Committee and National Council. He has been a core-group member of number of Economic and Social Research Council-funded seminar series and recently co-directed 'Children and Young People's Digital Literacies in Virtual Online Spaces'. He is a founding editor of the Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, and a member of the Editorial Board of Literacy. He is also active in literacy education and professional work, including writing curriculum materials and professional publications.

Appendix 2 Checklist for the Baby Pack

Quality indicators Books & Resources for Babies	1 = no coverage 2 = limited coverage 3 = significant coverage 4 = complete coverage
<i>Phonological Awareness</i>	
incorporates rhythmic patterns and rhymes	4
includes pictures of animals and objects that make distinctive sounds e.g. animal noises, vehicle noises	3
<i>Language and Literacy</i>	
include stories, songs and rhymes	4
includes stories with repetitive phrases or structures, supporting particular vocabulary or language structures	4
includes repetitive number and counting rhymes from a range of cultures	2
includes pictures of familiar objects and actions that can be labelled e.g. teddy, going to bed	4
<i>Physical and multi-sensory experience</i>	
invites interaction by prompts for actions, finger play and/or sound-making	4
invites interaction through sensory experience (e.g. pages with different textures; flaps to lift, holes and pop up features)	3
are sufficiently sturdy to allow for physical exploration e.g. board books, cloth books	3
<i>Social and Emotional Development</i>	
Includes picture books and stories that focus on a range of emotions; show people helping and supporting others	3
represents the diverse backgrounds, home cultures and languages of families, while avoiding stereotypes	3
provides positive images of children with diverse physical characteristics, including disabled children	2
<i>Guidance for Parents</i>	
Should provide guidance on book-sharing for the adult who is using the book	3
Should provide guidance on phonological awareness (e.g. rhyme)	2
Guidance should be clear, simple and accessible	2
Should encourage a variety of responses and suggest various opportunities for reading	3

Offer clear contact point for further support	3
Should offer ideas that fit varied relational patterns and family settings	2
Book sharing as fun and advantageous should be a key message	4
Total	

Appendix 3 Checklist for the Treasure Pack

Quality indicators Books & Resources for 36/40 months	1 = no coverage 2 = limited coverage 3 = significant coverage 4 = complete coverage
<i>Phonological Awareness</i>	
includes rhymes , songs, stories to support phonological awareness	4
includes rhyme, rhythm and/or alliteration	4
<i>Literacy and Language</i>	
contains words of high frequency in children's early reading	4
invites early mark making	3
story includes memorable /predictable language structure (i.e. repeated refrains)	4
clear narrative structure/promotes prediction of events	4
opportunities for extending conversation beyond the text e.g. invites the posing of questions, using vocabulary in different contexts	4
invites reading with expression or rhythm	4
invites counting, estimating, positional language	3
include play with language/humour	3
any conversational representation to reflect natural language pattern	1
pictures need to be engaging and to encourage interaction with adults/contain opportunities for discussion	4
<i>Social and Emotional Development</i>	
story invites empathy with character/s	3
invites emotional response/ depict character emotion	3
represent the diverse home cultures and languages of families using resources	2
provides positive images of children with diverse physical characteristics, including disabled children	2
content / theme relevant to child's experiences	2
<i>Guidance for Parents</i>	
Should provide guidance on book-sharing for the adult who is using the book	3
Should provide guidance on early phonological awareness (e.g. rhyme)	2

Guidance should be clear, simple and accessible	2
Should encourage a variety of responses and suggest various opportunities for reading	3
Offer clear contact point for further support	3
Should offer ideas that fit varied relational patterns and family settings	2
Book sharing as fun and advantageous should be a key message	4
Total	