



NORTHERN IRELAND LIBRARIES
ANNUAL BOOKSTART REPORT
APRIL 2008 – MARCH 2009



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1. The National Bookstart Programme

Bookstart – The Concept

Bookstart is based on the principle that every child in the UK should have the opportunity to enjoy book sharing from as early an age as possible. It is about quality time spent between parent/carer and child with no distractions from the TV or radio. It is about listening to stories, talking about the pictures and learning how to turn the pages. Bookstart is about pleasure, not learning to read, though it has been proven to have a positive effect on early literacy.

Bookstart – The Partnership

Bookstart is a multi-agency public/private partnership between the public services of libraries, health and education. Commercial sponsorship comes from Red House Books and over 26 children's book publishers.

The education charity, Booktrust, initiated and administrates the programme and Bookstart is funded in England by the DfES and by the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The programme is delivered by local authorities and Primary Care Trusts working with a number of other local partners.

All partners in Bookstart make the following commitment:

Bookstart in the UK is the first, national, books for babies programme in the world. As Bookstart partners we aim to provide every child in the UK with Bookstart packs of free books and guidance materials. We are committed to promoting the idea of early book sharing and seek to give every baby the opportunity to develop a life long love of books.

Bookstart – The Research

Bookstart has been thoroughly researched since it began in Birmingham in 1992. Longitudinal research conducted in Birmingham by Barrie Wade and Maggie Moore has produced a wealth of information regarding Bookstart outcomes. For example, children who had received Bookstart were shown to be clearly ahead in both literacy and numeracy upon entering school (Wade and Moore, 1998). Further research (2000) showed that this head start was maintained through Key Stage 1 as Bookstart children did significantly better than their counterparts in both teacher assessment and test results.



When Bookstart became a national programme in 1999 with sponsorship from Sainsbury's plc, the University of Surrey Roehampton undertook evaluation of the programme. Their research, published in August 2001, showed that, Bookstart families had better book-sharing skills and ways of extending reading as an activity. They read more with babies and young children, were more likely to join the library, more confident with regard to reading to children and more aware of the role reading can play in speech/language development.

The 2005 University of Surrey Roehampton study of the programme, Planting a Seed for Life, demonstrated how regular reading with babies and toddlers had a positive effect on young children's literacy development. Much of the benefits identified with Bookstart, the study suggested, derived from the fact that the programme was home-based and directed by a parent. The study highlighted the distinctive contribution Bookstart can make to developmental outcomes.

Bookstart – International Links

Booktrust is committed to spreading the ideals of Bookstart throughout the world and international interest in the programme continues to grow. Japan and Thailand have both developed national Bookstart programmes and are affiliated with Bookstart in the UK. Bookstart in Japan is closely based on the UK model. Three locally based programmes in Australia are also affiliated. Further interest and enquiries have come from other countries such as Chile, Italy, Mexico, Poland, South Africa and the USA. Booktrust now offers free international affiliation which comes with the benefits of use of Bookstart logos, access to materials for purchase, information on research, the Bookstart Partners Newsletter and a link on www.bookstart.org.uk

National Bookstart Sponsors for 2008/09

Booktrust is supported nationally by the following sponsors and organisations:

Red House Books, who have provided a free book for every Bookstart baby pack.

Department of Children, Families and Schools (DCSF)

A range of publishers who donate books or supply books at cost

Bookstart in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales is supported through the devolved administrations.



Booktrust Details

Booktrust is the national administrator of Bookstart. It co-ordinates the programme nationally by producing and distributing Bookstart packs and support materials. Booktrust is responsible for researching and evaluating the scheme, disseminating good practice and further developing the programme.

Booktrust is a national, independent charity, which aims to bring books and people together, fostering a love of reading in people of all ages. The reader is at the heart of everything we do. Booktrust activities include the administration of major literary awards such as the Booktrust Early Years Awards and the Teenage Prize, the provision of information and resources to schools, libraries and parents, and the development of national book-related projects such as Booktouch, National Children's Books Week and Booktrust Letter Box.

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2. Bookstart in Northern Ireland

Library Services in Northern Ireland have long supported and developed services to families and young children. Our aims mirror those of Bookstart in encouraging book sharing from as early an age as possible, recognising the need to provide equality of opportunity through access to high quality resources and the need to model best practice in terms of books sharing. Bookstart remains an integral part of the package of services which we offer to parents, carers and children which also includes free access to books, Rhythm and Rhyme sessions and initiatives like Play and Learn Centres and Chatterpacks.

In Northern Ireland, Library Services co-ordinate Bookstart and work in partnership with Health Visitors and Early Years professionals to gift packs to children and their families. In England, Central Government funding is provided by the Department for Children, Schools and Families for all three Bookstart packs. Here the Bookstart programme has received funding on an ad hoc basis from the Department of Education and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure for two of the three packs. During 2008/2009 the Bookstart baby bag and My Bookstart Treasure Chest were funded through the Department of Education Numeracy and Literacy Steering Group. Bookstart + packs have been purchased by 31 Sure Start projects as part of their programme for two year olds.

The Bookstart co-ordinators in each of the five Education and Library Boards have worked together to ensure consistency of approach and delivery during the year. This process will strengthen and continue as a single Library Authority, Libraries NI, was established in April 2009. A National Development Manager was appointed in August 2008 and has worked closely with the Bookstart co-ordinators and a wide range of partners to increase the number of packs gifted and to raise the profile of Bookstart in Northern Ireland over the last year.

The overall aim has been to ensure that the Bookstart programme is securely funded and strategically embedded in Northern Ireland. It is hoped that current funding secured through the Department of Education will be continued by the Education and Skills Authority which is to be established in January 2010.

During the year Bookstart has lobbied MLAs for mainstream funding for all three packs which would give children in Northern Ireland parity with the rest of the UK. In December 2008 Bookstart was invited to present to the Education Committee. The committee wrote to the Minister of Education, the Committee for Health, Social Services & Public Safety and the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure *'regarding the benefits of long term funding, co-ordination between Departments and the potential for strategic partnerships with Health Trusts.'*



Further to this, DCAL pledged continued support for delivery of the scheme through staff resources across the Public Library Service and the Minister of Education advised that consideration to the proposal would be given as part of the overall review of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

Delivery of the Bookstart baby pack is dependent on Health Visitors gifting the resources and reinforcing the importance of sharing books from a very young age. Although there has been only limited response from the Department of Health at a ministerial level there have been significant developments in the partnership between Health and Bookstart since August 2008 on several fronts. Presentations have been made at strategic and operational levels which have resulted in Bookstart being incorporated into the Child Health Guidelines due to be published in January 2010. The revised document and increase in the frequency of health checks will ensure a more consistent gifting of the packs across the whole region and the Bookstart programme strategically embedded in health policy.

Angela McLernon, Nursing Officer has commented recently;

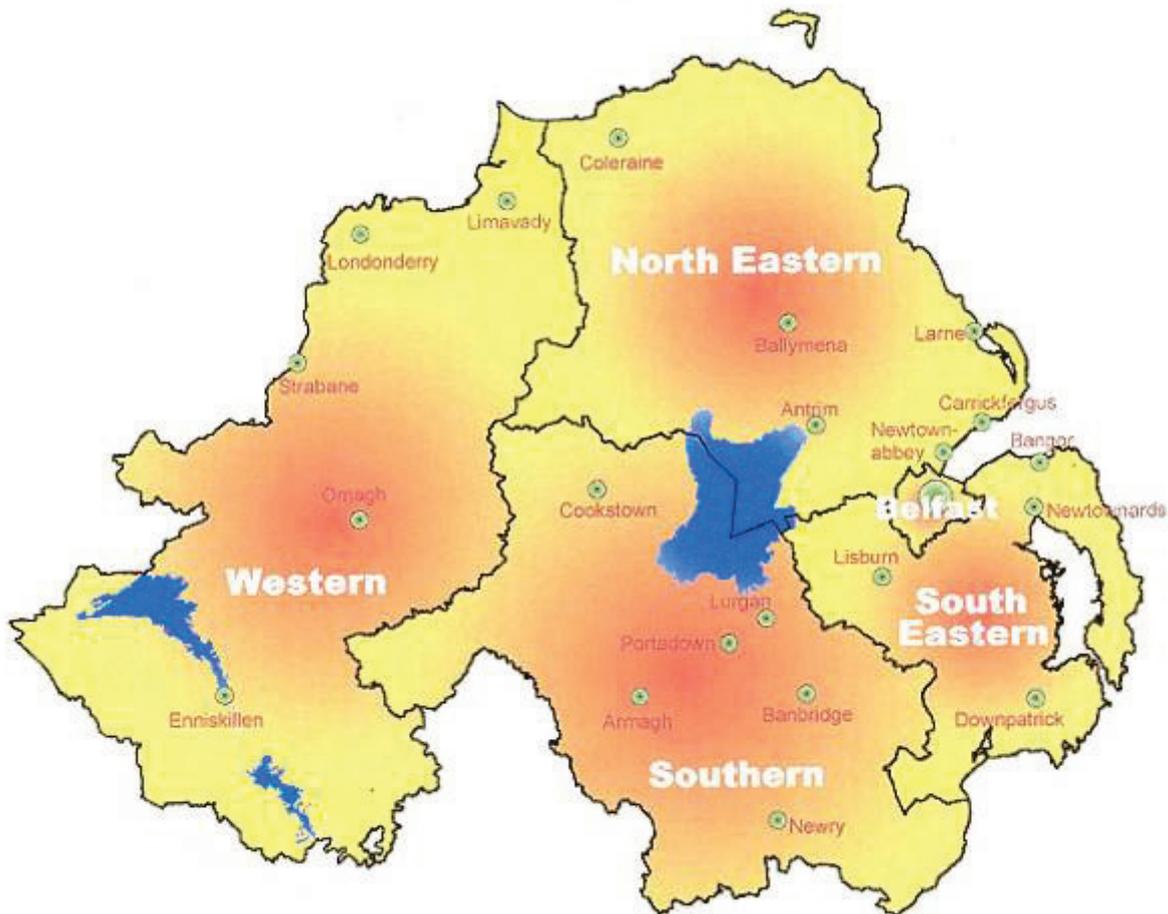
“Early discussions have taken place with the department of Health and Social Services with a view to including the Bookstart programme in the health visiting service to all mothers and babies within the first year of life. Health professionals already work with library services in many areas to gift the Bookstart baby bags. These packs support parent – child relationships, social development and help to develop a child’s speech and language. It is hoped that a pilot of the Bookstart+ pack for two year olds will take place in the Northern Trust area in the next year.”

This planned Bookstart + pilot will operate from January 2010 to June 2010. This will involve close collaboration between Libraries, Health Trusts and Sure Starts in the area and the impact will be independently evaluated.



3. The Co-ordinators Report

Northern Ireland libraries operate within 5 Education authorities as outlined on the map below. The entire area is serviced by a total of 109 libraries as well as 29 mobile libraries.



Libraries are set in a mixture of both rural and urban communities and provide a service to a number of large ethnic minority groups who have settled in the area. According to census information the largest ethnic minority group is from the Chinese community of which there are currently 8,000 settlers mostly located around Coleraine and Belfast. This is followed by people of mixed race (3320) and Irish travellers (1710). Many other smaller groups include Indian, Filipino, African, Pakistani, Romanian, Sikh and Iranian to name but a few.

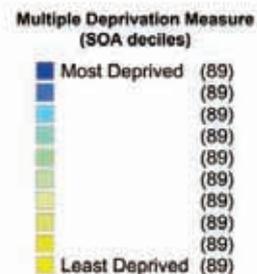
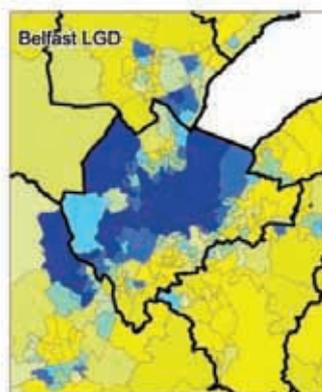
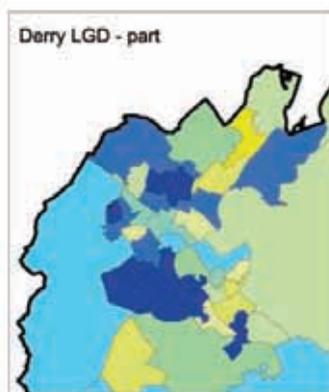
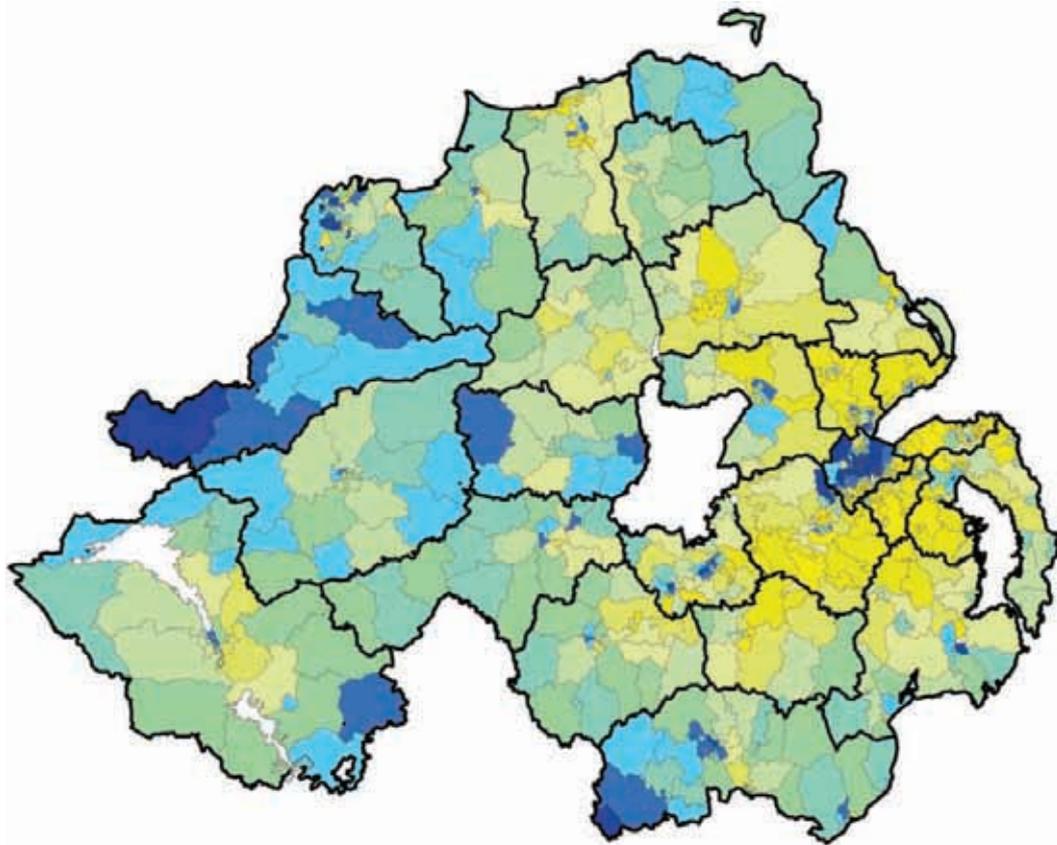
We have also found that in the last few years that there are increasing numbers of eastern European families settling in Northern Ireland from countries including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland. Families tend to use libraries predominantly for the free internet and email access rather than to borrow books and other resources.



bookstart
est. by booktrust 1992

As with any country there are pockets of deprivation right across Northern Ireland. These were first detailed in the Noble report in 2001 and have been updated in 2005 in a report entitled "Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure May 2005." The results have been used to determine ideal locations for Sure Start projects.

(www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/archive/NIMDM2005FullReport.pdf.)



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In total there are 33 designated Sure Start areas across Northern Ireland. Links with the Library Service have been made with many of these groups and activities are detailed later in the report.



The latest statistics for 2008 from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) show that the current birth rate stands at 25,631 births across Northern Ireland, an increase of 6% from the previous year. These babies are eligible for the baby Bookstart pack delivered in the main by Health Visitors at the 4 month immunisation visit. There are approximately 350 health surgeries across Northern Ireland and the majority, if not all, are involved in delivering the baby Bookstart pack. Figures for children eligible for My Bookstart Treasure Chest this year reached 22,328 an increase of 0.04% from 2007.

This year there have been many exciting and pleasing advances with Bookstart in Northern Ireland. First and foremost was the appointment of a National Bookstart Development Manager in August 08. Liz Canning brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of early years work from her previous employment and has said *"I was delighted to take up the newly created post of National Development Manager for Bookstart in August 2008 and to become part of the enthusiastic team that works so hard to promote book sharing throughout Northern Ireland. So much had already been achieved and it has been a privilege to work in partnership with existing partners and make new contacts at both strategic and operational levels. However there is much more to do and throughout the next period we will continue to lobby for sustained funding for a full Bookstart programme and work with our partners to promote the benefits of sharing stories and rhymes with babies and young children."* She has been invaluable in giving Bookstart that strategic focus in Northern Ireland and has initiated and developed links with departmental bodies, MLAs, Early Years professionals and voluntary and community organisations. Northern Ireland now has a voice at all national Bookstart discussions and for the first time has an identity on the Bookstart website. With Library staff, she made a presentation to the Education Committee at Stormont and submitted a bid for consistent, dedicated funding for Bookstart in Northern Ireland – we are awaiting a decision on this matter. During the year the profile of Libraries has been significantly raised because of the advocacy work begun by the Bookstart Development Manager and practically supported by Library staff on the ground.

A Bookstart working group, made up of Early Years Library professionals and the National Bookstart Manager, met four times during the year to discuss how Bookstart operates on a practical level and how it seamlessly fits with other Library provision for young children and their families. These meetings have also been invaluable in standardising services and procedures ahead of the transition to a single Library Authority in Northern Ireland, Libraries NI, in April 09. Information is gathered and projects and programmes evaluated on a Northern Ireland wide scale. All data is now available on a single location on our electronic Library system so that all Early Year's workers have access to it. This work will continue as we aim for a more effective and efficient way to gather and disseminate good practice as the new Library Authority is developed.

As mentioned previously many new links with other organisations have been created during the year. These include the Department of Health, the Department of Education, Homestart, Lifestart, Fostering Network, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY), the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA), Parents Advice Centre, Barnardos and the Educational Guidance Service for Adults (EGSA). All of these bodies are now more aware of the Bookstart scheme and also of the benefits that Libraries have to offer to families with young children. These contacts are only a starting point and the team hopes to develop services and programmes with many of these groups.



With Bookstart launches in Cookstown, Banbridge and Portadown we now have 100% coverage of Bookstart in Northern Ireland. Health Visitors in each of these areas were delighted that Bookstart, which strongly supports their work, now had a presence in their local community.

This year Northern Ireland was delighted to acquire its very own Bookstart bear. A countrywide competition was launched as part of National Bookstart Day 2008 to name the bear and "Bookster" was selected to represent Bookstart in Northern Ireland. The lucky winner was Eoin Ward who is pictured below with Liz Canning in Chichester library clutching his very own Bookstart bear.



4. Bookstart A Gift of Books for Every Child

Bookstart baby pack

Bookstart baby packs are delivered to Health Centres on demand or by standing order by Library Service delivery drivers. In some areas deliveries are made directly to each Health Centre and in others the delivery is made to a hub and then sent out to small centres from there. This issue is something which will be discussed during the coming year with a view to standardising procedures. A leaflet/card about services available for families with young children throughout the Education authority is included in the pack along with an invitation to join to library. This year a total of 21,550 packs were distributed to families, 85% of all those eligible, an increase of 26% on last year.



Bookstart + pack

There is currently no Bookstart + provision in Northern Ireland except where individual Sure Starts provide funding for the pack for families within their boundaries. Some Sure Start schemes link up with libraries and hold Bookstart + days where Library staff host a rhymetime and the packs are given out to eligible families. This year a total number of 1,750 packs were distributed to families by Sure Start.

My Bookstart Treasure Chest

The provision of My Bookstart Treasure Chest has changed dramatically this year. The requirement to join the library in order to access the pack has been removed and all children in their preschool year were entitled to receive the gift. Letters were sent out to all nursery schools, playgroups, special schools, reception classes and day nurseries to inform them of the provision and the method by which they could obtain the Treasure Chest. In total 1000 settings were contacted by Library staff regarding the availability of Treasure Chests. Younger children in the setting were offered the Bookstart drawing books with the assurance that they would receive their Treasure Chest the following year.



In the main, Nursery schools were given 3 ways to receive their Treasure Chests

1. They could visit the library for a story and rhyme session and pick up their Treasure Chests
2. They could request a member of Library staff to come to their setting for stories and rhymes and distribution of Treasure Chests
3. Treasure Chests could be directly delivered to the setting with no involvement from Library staff

Playgroups, where possible and the distance was small, came to the library but in the majority of cases Treasure Chests were delivered directly to the setting. This was also the case, in the main but with a few exceptions, for special schools, reception classes and day nurseries. Feedback for Early Years practitioners was very positive this year again. One playgroup leader from Belfast commented, *"All the children have now received their Treasure Chest and are very excited and thankful for this excellent resource. This will give them a great start in their education and will enhance early literacy awareness at this young age. Thank you again."*



In all cases a leaflet was included with the Treasure Chest stating where the funding for the packs had come from along with an invitation to come to the library. In total 19,703 Treasure Chests were gifted during the year, almost 89% of those who were eligible and an increase of 47% on last year. Although the percentage increase, especially for Treasure Chests, was noteworthy there was a huge amount of administration needed to ensure that the delivery of the packs ran smoothly. This will also be an issue for Bookstart co-ordinators to consider for next year.



Booktouch and Bookshine packs

The Booktouch and Bookshine packs for children with partial sight and partial hearing respectively, were an exciting addition to the Bookstart family. During the year a total of 62 Booktouch packs and 60 Bookshine packs were distributed to families across Northern Ireland. These parents were very grateful for the added provision for their children with one mum commenting *“It’s lovely that this resource has been specially put together for children like Amy. We’re so often forgotten about and it’s great to have something to share with Amy that will heighten her enjoyment of books and reading.”*

Bookstart Bookcrawl

During the 2008-2009 year three of Northern Ireland’s Education Authorities took part in the Bookstart Bookcrawl. In total 323 children under 4 years old took part with 19 children becoming library members in order to take part.

Other languages

It should also be noted that Bookstart information and resources were distributed in other languages, primarily Polish and Portuguese with 55 and 13 books or leaflets being gifted respectively. A Health Visitor from Ballyowen recently called one of the co-ordinators to request a Polish pack and later phoned to say how delighted the parent had been to receive a book in her native language that she could share with her child. As she put it *“The expression on both their faces was wonderful to see.”*

Supporting activities

There are many activities held in libraries underpinning our Early Years strategy which also complement the Bookstart programme. Each Education Authority has its own version of a rhymetime which is open to all preschool children and their parents or carers. Groups meet weekly, fortnightly or monthly and sessions last from 20 minutes to 1 hour. The programme includes stories, rhymes and songs and musical instruments, puppets and props are used to make the sessions more exciting and interesting for those attending. During the year around 1754 rhymetime sessions took place in libraries across Northern Ireland. Many parents and carers value these events not only for the educational opportunities they present but as an opportunity to meet with other mums and dads, to relax and to enjoy the company of other adults and socialise in a supportive community environment.





One lady who brought her young son Joshua to a Rhythm and Rhyme session in Belfast recently said;

"We'd like to say a big thank you for running these sessions in the library. It gave us a great opportunity to get to know other mums and babies, and also make new friends. My son, Josh, developed a lot in the last few months. He's become very sociable and I think it will help him to find his place in our new home in Hungary. We really enjoyed the time we've spent here. Thank you very much."



5. Why we love Bookstart

Quotes from:

Parents

My son is lucky because I was brought up to enjoy books and so Joshua has developed the same love of books my mum developed in me – however as a single mum the free books in the Bookstart pack were very welcome and 'Happy Dog, Sad Dog' is still a firm favourite in our home

He is wild about books and just loved the pack (Treasure Chest). I read to him every night. We used to go all the time but he wasn't a member but now he borrows all the time

The Treasure Chest gave him hours of entertainment. He now asks to go to the library and has encouraged his younger brother with books

Librarians

Library staff who attended promotional events outside the library said that gifting such a high quality pack gives them an excellent opportunity to spread the word about rhymetimes and library membership for babies and toddlers.

When I was telling the children about the library I mentioned that I was giving them a little note home and maybe someone from home might bring them along to visit the library. One little girl immediately said "My mummy won't bring me to the library". The playgroup leader said afterwards "that's one child who wouldn't have got a Treasure Chest under the old system".

It's a good way to get new parents to come into libraries and an opportunity for staff to let them know about other activities

Early Years professionals

Treasure Chests are really beneficial in encouraging children who are not into books

Treasure Chests are a great idea that will strengthen the link between the library and school

Sure Start staff

You can tell within days which children have been exposed to books before joining the group – they welcome the introduction of books, know what to do with them, are more confident and have longer concentration spans



6. Bookstart – Working in Partnership

Health partners

This year there have been many advances in the relationship between Library Services and Health Trusts in Northern Ireland. This has been due in the most part to the fact that there is now a dedicated National Bookstart Development manager for Northern Ireland. This has enabled us to formalise links at a strategic level with Departmental bodies where previously only an operational partnership was in existence.

During the year Liz Canning has presented to Angela McLernon (Assistant Chief Nursing Officer), Health Visitor leads, Nurse Managers, Fergal Bradley (Head of Childcare policy), Valerie Heron (Community Manager) and the Speech and Language team. This has greatly raised the profile of both Bookstart and the Library Service and has enabled us to move forward as partners in the delivery of the Bookstart gift.

There has now been an agreement that Bookstart will feature in the Red Book which parents receive when their child is born. This outlines the Bookstart message and gives information about the two packs available in Northern Ireland. Plans are also being developed to pilot Bookstart + in one Health Trust with a view to evaluating the process and rolling out, when funding becomes available, to all areas across the country.

Booktouch and Bookshine packs have been advertised with health partners and many are now accessed at a local level, a total of 122 distributed during the year. Many Health Visitors are now aware that Bookstart materials are available in other languages and so many dual language books have been added into the packs and parental information disseminated.

One other very useful link was made with the Royal Children's Hospital Playwork Team. The Bookstart Development Manager presented to all 18 staff and there are plans to hold an event in the hospital to celebrate Bedtime Reading week in May 2009.

Early Years groups

Links with Early Years groups this year has led to articles being submitted for inclusion into their parental information and newsletters. This year these have included:

- Twins and Multiple Births Association TAMBA
- The Early Years newsletter
- Belfast Telegraph Parents Supplement
- NEELB Library News
- Fostering Network newsletter
- Northern Ireland Childminders (NICMA) newsletter
- Tots magazine

Some of these articles are included in Appendix 3



Sure Starts

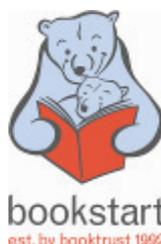
Much has been accomplished this year with the thirty three Sure Start schemes around Northern Ireland. Members of library staff continue to sit on some of the groups as Directors, committee members or subgroup members helping to lead local Sure Starts at a strategic level. Much of the work involves supporting Sure Start staff on the ground with training, resources, displays, talks to parents and carers, attending Baby Fairs and leading rhymetime sessions with the children.

Some Library Authorities have able to offer additional services such as accredited and non accredited courses for parents, a programme of visits to every nursery school within the Sure Start area, additional book packs for preschool children and programmes with dental and dietetic Health professionals.

A small group of ladies from the travelling community this year attended an activity called My Family Book led by the Early Years Support Officer in Ballymena. The ladies collected photographs and memories of their children and put them together into a Family Book to share together. One of the ladies could neither read nor write but was able to talk about the photographs with her children and celebrate their own unique culture.



This year the Library Service also launched Chatter Packs in partnership with Coleraine Sure Start. Library staff put together packs which included a picture book, an information book, prop or puppet and ideas for the parents to use with the resources specific to the title. In total Sure Start paid for ninety packs to be made up with thirty of these to be located in Coleraine library and the remainder to be used in playgroups and parent and toddler groups. These have been so successful that some money has been allocated to devise Chatter Packs with special needs children in mind.



Play and Learn Centres

Play and Learn Centres continue to thrive in the Western Education and Library Board area in eight locations; Strabane, Limavady, Shantallow, Strabane, Castlederg, Fintona, Lisnaskea and Enniskillen. Some of these centres have been set up and operate in partnership with local Sure Starts.

Play and Learn Centres are spaces which are designated for use by children under 5 and their parents/carers. Toys (free play), books, story times and rhyme times are accessible during opening hours and membership of it and the library is free to all, as is the case in all libraries across Northern Ireland. The aim is to encourage parents and carers to share books with their children, to encourage active use of the library and to introduce children to books in a fun, friendly way so they view them as another toy!



One parent said *“William truly enjoys rhyme time on a Wednesday morning and I have noticed him knocking on a box at home that his toys are kept in just as he does in here to get the farm animals out.”* Staff in the various libraries involved are equally enthusiastic and have noticed a change in the behaviour of the children who visit the Play and Learn centres. One librarian said *“They are growing in confidence as they mingle with children their own age and are sharing more readily. Their listening and observing skills are rapidly developing and they are learning to interact with other children and adults. Children who were too shy at the start are now coming forward and gaining in confidence. Their vocabulary is improving and they are gaining a great sense of rhythm.”*



7. Our Bookstart Year

The following gives a flavour of events and activities that took place across all 5 Education and Library Board areas of Northern Ireland during the year.

Bookster

Bookster the Bookstart bear make numerous guest appearances across the country during the year. He not only attended regular rhymetimes but appeared at Bookstart launches in Banbridge and Cookstown. Numerous babies met Bookster when he visited the Big into Baby exhibition in the Odyssey Arena in September and he was Captain on a cruiser for a day and helped tell stories to children on board.



National Bookstart Day

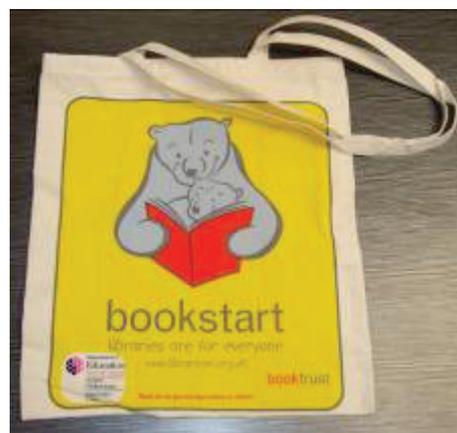
This year the theme of Pirates was really well received in libraries and the excellent resources distributed by Booktrust helped to make it a memorable day. Lots of rhymetimes were held in libraries and children took the opportunity to dress up for the occasion. Staff in many locations didn't need much coaxing to don a beard, eye patch and scar! Some events were billed as "Pirates and Princess" so that little girls didn't feel left out. Name the Northern Ireland Bookstart bear competition culminated in Bookster being formally named at an event in Belfast.



Marketing

The profile of Bookstart in Northern Ireland has significantly increased this year due in some part to the fact that Northern Ireland specific resources such as posters and leaflets for parents have been produced. These have been used in various locations e.g. Health Centres, corporate events, training sessions and meetings with other partners. For the first time parents and carers have accurate information about which packs are available and where they can be accessed. Northern Ireland has now also a presence on the Bookstart website which means that local events and programmes can be advertised.

Another important marketing opportunity for us has been the creation of a Northern Ireland Bookstart bag to replace the generic pack at 4 months. This bag includes the logos of funders and the Libraries NI website. This will give Bookstart in Northern Ireland a new recognisable identity and the new Library Service, Libraries NI, hopes to launch this pack during the next financial year.



Big into Baby

This year all 5 Bookstart co-ordinators along with Development Manager Liz Canning manned a Bookstart/ N.I libraries stand at the Big into Baby exhibition which was held in the Odyssey Arena in Belfast on 20th – 21st September. This was a wonderful opportunity to engage with parents who had children up to 10 years old. Over the two days we handed over 550 Bookstart baby packs to grateful parents and chatted to many others about Library Services applicable to them and their children. It was also very encouraging to speak to some mums who had already had received the pack and who were full of praise for the idea and the contents. Big into Baby gave us the opportunity to engage with a new audience who wouldn't routinely come into libraries. The consensus from co-ordinators – the Library Service should be doing more of the same!



The Library Service also featured in the shows advertising campaign and had a presence in the Big into Baby magazine.



Feedback for parents in a telephone survey following the show was very positive. Every person surveyed agreed that the N.I libraries stand made a valuable contribution to the show. One parent commented *“The library stand had valuable information and the pack was great”* and another said *“The staff manning the stand were lovely, very approachable.”* One hundred percent of respondents who had received a pack had made use of it. Of people surveyed, 88% loved the books and 32% commented on the value of the rhyme mat. One lady said *“Brilliant bag. It’s great to have books specific to that age. I loved the placemat with the rhymes. I have already explored the Bookstart website.”*



8. Conclusion

This has been an exciting and eventful year for Bookstart in Northern Ireland. The Library Service has seen the profile of Bookstart raised amongst parents and professionals through the hard work of the National Bookstart Development Manager and Early Year's staff in libraries. The numbers of Bookstart baby packs and My Bookstart Treasure Chests gifted to families has increased dramatically from last year and events held in libraries to support this gifting have resulted in more young children than ever becoming library members.

Many new partnerships have been formed in the last twelve months and the Library Service is hopeful that these links can be sustained and developed with the formation of the new single library authority, Libraries NI, in April 2009.

Marketing for Bookstart in Northern Ireland has moved to a new level with the production of promotional materials developed specially for this region. There is also a Northern Ireland section on the Bookstart website which can be regularly updated with new information for parents, carers and other professionals. This will remain a work in progress as we move into a new financial year. The Library Service eagerly awaits the production of our Northern Ireland Bookstart bag which will be launched later this year. There are also plans to have a Bookstart TV campaign with voice overs from local people to increase the impact.

Although the Library Service has been delighted with many aspects of Bookstart development this year there are still some concerns and problems. Staff involved with promoting and delivering the Bookstart programme desperately require administrative support to ease the day to day burden of the work on the ground. Bookstart is well integrated into our Early Years agenda but growing links and partnerships places an increasing pressure on staff time.

Libraries NI, which came into operation on 1st April 2009, will afford us many opportunities to enhance not only the Bookstart provision but the entire Early Years programme. However, until systems, procedures and staff are in place there will be many difficulties to overcome during the coming months.

The formation of Libraries NI will also, on the other hand, present many new opportunities to develop Early Years services. The Library Service hopes to see these activities, including Bookstart, fully integrated into the new business plans for the organisation. It is also anticipated that there will be fresh opportunities to integrate Library Services with other departmental bodies and government targets.

Libraries NI will give Early Years staff the chance to consolidate the good practice already in operation in Northern Ireland and streamline procedures and practices across the region.



Following the latest discussions with Health professionals around the pilot scheme for Bookstart + Libraries NI hopes to use the evaluation to inform thinking about pack distribution and aim for a more standardised, efficient programme for delivery. It will also be beneficial to have comments from parents about the quality, usefulness and value of the Bookstart + pack.

Libraries NI also hopes to have a Booktrust conference in Northern Ireland next year to promote not only Bookstart but other literacy initiatives such as Booktime and Letterbox club. This again is a great opportunity to showcase partnership working at its very best with libraries in a co-ordinating role.

We look forward to Bookstart in 2009 – 2010!





How Bookstart can support policy in Northern Ireland

The Government is determined to improve the life chances for children and young people to ensure that everyone irrespective of race, gender, religious belief, age, sexual orientation, disability, background or circumstances gets the best start in life and the ability to fulfil their potential.

In Northern Ireland the key driver is the OFMDFM's Children's Strategy for Northern Ireland – '*Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge – A 10 Year Strategy*'. It sets out a common vision, high level outcomes, performance indicators and actions to fulfil the vision. Most importantly it recognises that parents, carers and communities are key partners in improving the lives of children and young people. This overarching strategy will ensure a coordinated approach to the development of policies which impact on children.

Support for children and families cannot be provided by government alone and an integrated inter-departmental and cross sectoral approach is the government's vision for enhancing the way in which professionals work together to support children and families. Bookstart is an excellent example of a programme which works with health, education, libraries, voluntary and community organisations to deliver on policy and support children to achieve their potential.

As a nation emerging from conflict all policy developments in Northern Ireland are set against the vision of a shared future. The policy – A SHARED FUTURE - Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland was published on Monday 21 March 2005 by way of a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) in the House of Commons by the Rt Hon John Spellar MP.

How Bookstart supports 'Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries'

Principles and priorities for the development of public libraries in Northern Ireland are laid out in this document published in July 2006.

The public Library Service exists to make available to all, free at point of use, books and information which provide opportunities for learning, knowledge and inspiration. It is therefore very fitting that Bookstart, a bookgifting programme available to all families in Northern Ireland, is co-ordinated by libraries. The Bookstart books and support material for parents make an important contribution to realising DCAL's vision of a "confident, creative, informed and vibrant community".

The core activities of libraries are fundamentally to do with books and information provision and the Bookstart programme is one of the tools which libraries use to achieve objectives such as promoting literacy, creative reading and lifelong learning.

This document sets out guidelines and policy direction for the Library Service for the sort of service people want to use. Libraries provide a service which helps people learn to help themselves and library staff are increasingly requiring skills which build confidence and competence among users. The relationship between staff and customers is paramount. This is evident through the coordination of the Bookstart programme where staff are '*outward-looking, innovative and creative*' as they deliver regular and successful story and rhyme sessions

Bookstart materials including dual language books, parent support material and packs for blind and deaf children can contribute to the following key elements identified within the document:

- lifelong learning, both formal and informal
- addressing social exclusion and inequality
- facilitating development of informed and responsible citizenship
- building communities and fostering good relations
- promoting creativity.

Thus libraries are supporting educational, social, economic and artistic endeavour, and contributing to the achievement of thriving communities; all of which are central to government policies and priorities.

As a universal home based scheme which works in partnership with libraries, health and education to gift packs of free books and resources to all families, Bookstart is an excellent example of innovation, efficiency and partnership working and is cited as such within the section on Achieving Change.

How Bookstart supports the Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government, 2008 – 2011 ‘Building a Better Future’

The Executive’s first Programme for Government sets out plans and priorities for 2008-2011 as well as some longer term aspirations and intentions. The Assembly aims to harness the talents of all the sectors – public, private, voluntary and community – to build a shared and better future for all.

To support the key priorities and help realise the goal of a shared and better future a framework of 23 Public Service Agreements (PSAs) has been developed.

The Bookstart programme supports the following PSAs through the **universal** gifting of books and support material to children and families:

PSA 6 Children and family

Aim: To ensure that children are cared for, live in safety, are protected from abuse, receive the support they need to achieve their full potential, become more independent and grow into well adjusted adults, taking their place in the community

PSA 7 Making people’s lives better

Aim: Drive a programme across Government to reduce poverty and address inequality and disadvantage

PSA 9 Promoting access to culture, arts and leisure

Aim: Contribute to Northern Ireland’s economic, health and educational goals by increasing participation and access to Culture, Arts and Leisure activities

PSA 10 Helping our children and young people to achieve through education

Aim: Encourage all our children to realise their potential by improving access to formal and non formal education and provision tailored to the needs of disadvantaged children and young people

PSA 19 Raising standards in our schools

Aim: Educate and develop our young people to the highest possible standards to deliver improved outcomes for all young people, including measurable reductions in the gap in educational outcomes between highest and lowest attainers

How Bookstart Supports the Ten Year Strategy, 2006-2016 (OFMDFM) 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge'

The overall pledge is to deliver on a shared vision for all children and young people. The success will be measured by improved outcomes in key areas of children and young people's lives.

Bookstart contributes to each of these six outcomes:

Healthy

- Sharing books reinforces the emotional bond between parent and child and provides opportunities to share thoughts, ideas and feelings.
- Book sharing promotes an active and enquiring mind and manipulating a book by turning pages and lifting flaps helps to develop fine motor skills and coordination.

Enjoying, learning and achieving

- Bookstart supports the development of spoken language by encouraging parents and children to share books together.
- Achieve education standards at primary school. Research has demonstrated that Bookstart children were ahead in both literacy and numeracy on starting school, and that this head start was maintained through Key Stage 1.
- Achieve personal development and enjoy recreation. Sharing books from an early age helps children develop their imagination, interests and confidence.

Living in safety and with stability

- Bookstart encourages a secure start by supporting a parent and child to bond and from that comes an opportunity to share knowledge and information.

Experiencing economic and environmental well-being

- By encouraging early book sharing Bookstart supports children to become lifelong learners and will ultimately enhance their future prospects.

Contributing positively to community and society

- Joining the library can be a child's first act of citizenship, opening up access to a wide range of books and resources, including ICT, to support them throughout life. Confident readers make confident people.

Living in a society which respects their rights

- Sharing a wide range of inclusive books and stories helps children to understand and develop respect for their own and other people's culture.

How Bookstart Supports 'Families Matter: Supporting Families in Northern Ireland' (DHSS&PS)

As a universal home based scheme which works in partnership with libraries, health and education to gift packs of free books and resources to families, Bookstart fits well with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's proposals on a Regional Family and Parenting Strategy.

The aim of this strategy is to create confident, responsible and empowered parents, through access to support and information; to develop the ability and skills of parents and to support their children so that they can reach their full potential and become active citizens within their own community and society.

The promotion of integrated partnership working to develop and deliver services for families and children is central to the strategy and the Bookstart programme is an established and successful example of this way of working.

How Bookstart supports the Department of Education strategy for raising achievement in literacy and numeracy – 'Every School a Good School' (DENI)

The need for more effective partnership with parents and local communities is recognised within this document. Some factors influencing an improvement in standards are not wholly within the control of schools and in taking forward this strategy it is advised that schools work to address those influences that lead to a lack of parental engagement with schools and schooling.

Bookstart is named as one such scheme which aims to provide a free pack of books to every child born in order to stimulate a love of reading encourage parent child interaction and give children a good start in life.

How Bookstart supports Foundation Stage Practice in Northern Ireland (DENI)

The revised (2006) pre-school curricular guidance states that all children should have the opportunity to follow a pre-school curriculum that enables them to make appropriate progress in learning and to achieve their full potential.

The gifting of the Bookstart Treasure Chest will support Early Years practitioners to encourage parents to share books at home, promote reading for pleasure and improve outcomes for children across the following six areas:

The Arts:

Introducing children to books helps their creative development and encourages them to use their imagination and communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Personal, social and emotional development:

Sharing books is an excellent way of developing good relationships with adults and peers.

Physical development and movement:

A range of stimuli including stories, drama, action rhymes and songs give children an opportunity to respond creatively. Physical play when linked to stories and rhymes can develop balance, control, coordination and an awareness of space and direction.

Language development:

Bookstart encourages children to enjoy listening to spoken and written language and use it in their play and learning. Sharing books helps children listen with enjoyment, use language to imagine and recreate experiences, and retell narratives in the correct sequence.

Early mathematical experiences:

By sharing books children are introduced to vocabulary that describes the shape and size of solid and flat objects and are helped to recognise numerals.

The world around us:

Books help children to understand and develop respect for their own and other people's culture.

Liz Canning, August 2009

APPENDIX 2 – Links established

booktrust



Links established with:

Northern Ireland Assembly:

Letter to all MLAs by September 08

Meeting with Mervyn Storey **and** Presentation to Education Committee

Department of Education:

Contacted Will Haire, Katrina Godfrey, John Caldwell, Maralin Warren, Louise Warde-Hunter, John Caldwell and ETI regarding Bookstart programme and funding

Literacy Steering Group – Paddy Mackey

Department of Health:

Meeting with Angela McLarnon, Assistant Chief Nursing Officer

Presentation to all Health Visitor leads and nurse managers

Fergal Bradley, Head of Childcare Policy

Bookstart presentation to Valerie Heron (Community manager) and Speech and language therapist team.

New appointment – Patricia Blackburn, Chief Professional Adviser of Allied Health Professionals – meeting arranged for May

Health and safety Executive:

Kevin Toner, Ass Director re Farm safety Book project

Health and Social Services Trusts:

Contact made with all Early Years team leaders in 11 trust localities, August 08 – regarding all pre-school settings for Treasure Chest gifting

Briege Coyle – NI representative for CPHVA

Royal Children's Hospital – Playwork Team. Presentation to 18 staff – plan for Bedtime Reading event May 09

NICCY:

Very positive response from Patricia Lewsley, Children's Commissioner

Sure Start Projects:

Contact made with all Sure Starts to ensure that there is a single message with regard to funding and universal provision of Bookstart packs.

Sure Start Impact evaluation planned for June 2009 with a view to lobbying for universal Bookstart+ funding

Voluntary Sector:

Homestart - Meeting with Heather Knox, Director

Presentations to Homestart scheme coordinators at S&E and N&W area meetings.
Volunteer's day presentation agreed for May 09

Lifestart -Meeting with Executive Director and project manager.

Fostering Network – Kate Lewis, Director. Coordinating Letterbox. Bookstart presentation for Development workers planned for Sept 09

CiNI – attended participation network

Early Years – Bookstart sponsor at All Ireland Awards

NICMA – Rhymetime events planned for May 2009

Parent's Advice Centre – contact made – interested in working with Dads

Barnardos – Bookstart presentation to PIP manager and senior practitioner group – particularly increased interest in Dual Language books

EGSA – meeting with Ann Osborne, Communications manager – keen to work with Bookstart / joint representation to Committee for Employment and Learning.

Liz Canning June 2009

APPENDIX 3 - Press

BELFAST TELEGRAPH PARENT SUPPLEMENT EDITORIAL

Never too young to share a book!

Sharing a story or rhyme at bedtime is a **chance to relax and enjoy a special moment** together with your baby. Used as part of a bedtime routine they will love having a cuddle and hearing your voice and they will know it is time to wind down ready for sleep. Spending 10 happy minutes a day, reading aloud and singing to your baby will be the best investment you'll ever make in their future happiness. Make it something to look forward to — and remember to have fun!



'I wouldn't have thought of reading to her as early. It has made me buy quite a few books since and think more about reading' (Mother)

Sharing stories, songs and rhymes with your child helps to forge loving relationships, supports the acquisition of language and literacy skills and helps to develop confident learners. Bookstart encourages every family to value books and reading as a means of expressing wonder about the world.

'I really enjoyed introducing my baby to books. He loves the books that we received in the pack and it has spurred me on to buy more books to share with him. It has already encouraged us to visit our local library and borrow books' (Father)



The critical importance of good parenting skills and a positive home environment is well researched and eminently self evident. A child who enjoys books with their family is enriched in a broad range of ways and gains skills, attitudes and competencies that will pay dividends in later life. These include psychological and emotional development, cognitive skills, and family relationships all of which are essential for a strong and competent child.

'My son is lucky because I was brought up to enjoy books and so Joshua has developed the same love of books my mum developed in me – however as a single mum the free books in the Bookstart pack were very welcome and 'Happy Dog, Sad Dog' is still a firm favourite in our home' (Mother)

The Bookstart packs are a home based intervention designed to support a love of books in every family and will promote whole-child development . **Bookstart** is the national bookgifting programme that encourages all parents and carers to enjoy books with children from as early an age as possible. We want every child to develop a lifelong love of books.

TAMBA NEWSLETTER

Bookstart is run by **Booktrust**, an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. It is a public and private partnership and is generously sponsored by children's book publishers and central funding is provided through the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.



Northern Ireland Libraries coordinate the programme and work closely with health professionals and pre-school settings to give free books to babies and young children along with guidance materials for parents and carers. Our aim is to foster a love of books through a range of fun activities, Story times and Rhymetimes which are run by local libraries and Sure Starts.

'I had no idea that babies could join the library from birth' (Parent)

For more tips and advice on great rhymes and books to share with your child visit our website at www.booktrust.org.uk





bookstart
est. by booktrust 1992

Press Release

Childminders love to share Books and Rhymes!!

Over 200 children and the childminders that care for them will enjoy sharing stories and rhymes together at **Rhymetime** events during **NICMA** week which commences on Monday 11th May. **NICMA** have linked up with **Bookstart** and **Libraries NI** to invite Childminders and their minded children to a number of special Rhymetime sessions run by library staff either in their local library or as part of a community event.

Rhymetime sessions are activities designed to encourage parents and carers to share rhymes and songs with babies and young children. Sessions incorporate a mix of songs, rhymes, rhythm and movement and provide an opportunity for adults to interact with children and promote language and movement in an enjoyable way.

Liz Canning, Bookstart Manager said ‘ We are delighted to welcome childminders and children to these events and hope that they will continue to attend the regular Rhymetime sessions held at libraries across Northern Ireland. Sharing rhymes together is fun in the library, in the home, out walking or in the car and so these events fit very well with the **NICMA** childminding week theme of **Promoting children’s language in a home based environment**’

Quote from NICMA / Libraries / Childminder

More info on your local event to go to your local paper:

Date, time, venue, who attended, special attractions...

-Ends -

Notes to Editors

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Bookster the Bookstart Bear (if attending), Children, childminders and library staff will be available for photographs

- > Bookstart is the national programme that encourages all parents and carers to enjoy books with children from as early an age as possible. We want every child in the UK to develop a lifelong love of books. Working through locally-based organisations, Bookstart gives the gift of free books to

- > children at around eight months, 18 months and three years, along with guidance materials for parents and carers. Bookstart also aims to foster a love of books through a range of fun activities.
- > Bookstart is run by Booktrust, an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. Amongst Booktrust's other projects are the Orange Prize for Fiction, National Children's Book Week, the Children's Laureate and the Booktrust Teenage Prize.
- > Bookstart is a public and private partnership and benefits from sponsorship from over 20 children's publishers, Red House Books and funding from DENI.
- > Parents wishing to receive a pack should speak to their Health Visitor or contact their local library.

**For more information, please contact Liz Canning on
E: liz.canning@booktrust.org.uk
T: 07827 345 085**

**For more information on Booktrust and the national Bookstart programme,
contact Katherine@booktrust.org.uk or see www.bookstart.org.uk**



> **Press Release**

Babies in Northern Ireland love Books!

'I did not think babies could enjoy books so much' was the comment from one delighted mum after receiving a Bookstart pack and sharing the books with her child. Bookstart is the first national books for babies programme in the world and the Northern Ireland library service act as partners in gifting every child with packs of wonderful free books and useful guidance materials for parents. The overall aim is to promote early book sharing and give every baby the opportunity to develop a life long love of books.

Bookstart is based on the principle that every child should have the opportunity to enjoy book sharing from as early an age as possible. It is about that quality time cuddling up with a parent / carer to listen to stories, talk about the pictures and learn how to turn the pages. Bookstart is not really about learning to read but about pleasure and enjoyment. The research however does show that this approach has very positive effects on early literacy as it develops positive dispositions to language and learning.

The Bookstart programme is administered and coordinated nationally by the independent charity, Booktrust which aims to bring books and people together and foster a love of reading in people of all ages. Bookstart is a multi agency public / private partnership which is heavily sponsored by children's publishers and funded by the libraries and education in Northern Ireland. Health visitors give out the Bookstart Bay bag during a child's first year and the Treasure Chest is given to three year olds either through nursery, playgroup or the library. Both packs contain carefully selected age appropriate books, activities and guidance for parents on how to share and select children's books.

In each Bookstart pack is an invitation to join the library and we are delighted that whole families benefit in this way. As one parent said after her baby received the first Bookstart Bag

'It was lovely to get the new books and handy bag, focuses the mind on joining the library and the importance of books'. Another parent commented that she rediscovered the library through her child and many are unaware of the full range of books available for very young children. Libraries also compliment the Bookstart packs by providing enjoyable and interactive Rhymetime sessions for families and children. *'I found this half hour session each week very good for both my toddler and my baby. Both were stimulated by the singing, musical toys and other children'* (mum to 3 year old boy and 6 month old girl)

Notes to Editors

- > Bookstart is the national programme that encourages all parents and carers to enjoy books with children from as early an age as possible. We want every child in the UK to develop a lifelong love of books. Working through locally-based organisations, Bookstart gives the gift of free books to children at around eight months, 18 months and three years, along with guidance materials for parents and carers. Bookstart also aims to foster a love of books through a range of fun activities.
- > Bookstart is run by Booktrust, an independent national charity that encourages people of all ages and cultures to discover and enjoy reading. Amongst Booktrust's other projects are the Orange Prize for Fiction, National Children's Book Week, the Children's Laureate and the Booktrust Teenage Prize.
- > Bookstart is a public and private partnership and benefits from sponsorship from over 20 children's publishers, Red House Books and central funding from Sure Start. [Replace with Scottish details if necessary]
- > Parents wishing to receive a pack should speak to their Health Visitor or contact their local library.

For more information, please contact Liz Canning, National Development Manager, Northern Ireland. liz.canning@booktrust.co.uk T: 07827 345 085

BOOKSTART + LAUNCH

Bookstart Plus Launch

A total **of 54 Parents and 70 children** attended 3 successful Bookstart Launch events

Rainbow Surestart provided free Bookstart plus packs to children in Castlederg, Newtownstewart and Drumquin. The pack aims to encourage a love of reading for reading's sake; and to help children in the earliest stages of their development to associate books with pleasure.

There was a special launch party where parents and children enjoyed a special rhyme time provided by Rainbow Surestart staff, and a very entertaining performance of the popular children's story "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by Eric Carle narrated by Mary Jo Curran Early Year Librarian WELB

Rainbow Surestart in partnership with Castlederg Library aims to remind every family to make book sharing a regular part of their daily routine. Enjoying stories, songs and rhymes is a wonderful way to encourage children to be confident communicators and eager learners and children who enjoy books every day. All the family can join in, including carers, mums, dads, grandparents, brothers & sisters and share the fun that books can bring."

Also attending the events was Liz Canning, national Development Manager, and Northern Ireland who explained to parents that there are no designated funds for universal Bookstart programme in Northern Ireland as there is in the rest of the UK. Over recent years some funding has been found via under spends for Baby Bags and Treasure Chests and only that Surestarts promote the Bookstart plus packs children could not avail of this excellent pack. Therefore parents are encouraged to contact www.bookstart.org.uk who has set out a strategic vision to lobby government to commit to provide the Bookstart Plus back to 100% of young children in Northern Ireland.