

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES & CULTURE  
BOOKSTART PROGRAMME UPDATE AND WORK WITH EARLY YEARS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on the Bookstart programme in Nottinghamshire and work with Early Years.

**Information and Advice****Context**

2. Bookstart is a national early intervention literacy programme which offers the gift of free books and parental guidance materials to babies, toddlers and pre-school children to inspire a love of reading that will give children a flying start in life.
3. The programme is administered by Booktrust, an independent charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and cultures to engage with books. It is a public/private, multi agency partnership sponsored by over 25 children's publishers and is the largest corporate social responsibility partnership of its kind in the UK. Central funding is provided by the Department for Education in England. The Government provides catalyst funding (20%) which is used to enable corporate support from children's publishers and the book sector (80%).
4. Bookstart is coordinated and delivered in local authorities by colleagues in libraries, health and early education and other specialists working directly with disadvantaged families and groups and those with multiple problems.
5. Bookstart in England was the first national bookgifting programme in the world, starting originally in 1992 working with libraries and health visitors in Birmingham and gifting to 300 babies. Today over a million children receive a free Bookstart pack every year.
6. Since 2004 funding has been provided to enable universal provision of free books to every child at two key stages: Bookstart Baby Pack for children up to 12 months and Bookstart Treasure Pack for 3 year-olds. Families obtain their Bookstart Baby Pack from the family health visitor or other health professional, and Bookstart Treasure Pack from nursery, play group or other early years settings. Both Bookstart packs are also available from Nottinghamshire public libraries.

7. Each pack contains two books (either board books or picture books), tips and guidance about sharing books and a book bag.

8. For children with additional needs the following packs are available:

- **Bookshine packs for children who are deaf**

Children are entitled to this pack in addition to the two standard Bookstart packs. There are two Bookshine packs available: Bookshine Baby (0-2 years old) and Bookshine (2-4 years old). Both packs contain two board books, a booklet of advice about sharing books with deaf children, a book guide listing more high quality books, as well as useful organisations and resources and a nursery rhyme place mat featuring two rhymes and photographs of babies signing. The Bookshine pack also includes a book suitable for older children and a special bookmark that uses British Sign Language to sign key words from the story.

- **Booktouch packs for children who are blind or partially sighted**

Children are entitled to this pack in addition to the two standard Bookstart packs. There are two Booktouch packs available: Booktouch Baby for babies (0–2 years old) and Booktouch for older children (2 - 4 years old). Both packs contain two touch and feel books, a booklet of advice about sharing books with blind and partially sighted children, a book guide listing lots more books, a leaflet listing useful services related to reading and a Rhymetimes CD and booklet. The Booktouch pack also includes a book suitable for older children, a noisy touch-and-feel book with a fun, interactive story.

Both Bookshine and Booktouch packs are available from health visitors, local health clinics, early years settings and libraries.

- **Dual Language books**

Children who speak English as a second language are entitled to free dual language books in Bookstart packs. The following dual language titles are available: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese Traditional, Chinese Simplified, Croatian, Czech, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Nepalese, Panjabi, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

9. Health visitors can arrange for books in another language as part of the Bookstart packs and libraries make similar arrangements for Bookstart Treasure packs.

## **Nottinghamshire Bookstart**

10. The Library Service is responsible for co-ordination of Bookstart in Nottinghamshire including:

- receiving the delivery of packs from Booktrust
- distribution of the packs to Health Centres and children's settings
- monitoring and evaluation of pack take up.

11. This is managed within the Library Service by the Early Years Library Team which comprises an Early Years and Bookstart Officer (full time), an Early Years Development Worker (26 hours per week) and a Bookstart Clerical Worker (30 hours per week).
12. Library membership forms are added to the packs and are completed by the Health Visiting Team when they are with families of under-fives and returned to the Library Service.
13. The Library Service pays for the delivery of Bookstart Baby to Health Centres. Early Years and the Early Intervention Service pay for the Bookstart Treasure packs delivery to Early Years settings.

## Key Statistics

14. Key Statistics 2012/13:
  - Bookstart baby percentage reach - 100% of all babies
  - Bookstart Treasure bag - 96% of all 3 year olds
  - Baby bag library membership forms received back via Health visiting team: 6,540.

## Research

15. Research has shown the positive role that Bookstart can play in early child development as the programme aims to promote and encourage the sharing of books in the home:
  - **Promotes secure attachment**  
Reading to and sharing books with babies helps emotional bonding. Sharing stories, books and rhymes promotes strong and loving relationships and secure attachment.
  - **Supports development of confidence and self esteem**  
Sharing books with children helps to develop a child's social skills and confidence both of which are essential for emotional health and wellbeing.
  - **Aids cognitive development**  
Linguistic, social, emotional, and cognitive development are complementary processes that ultimately work together to shape a child's literacy growth. Sharing stories helps a child to develop across all the domains.
  - **Supports the development of speech and language**  
Encouraging parents and carers to share stories, books, and rhymes can radically improve a child's language and communication skills. Each Bookstart pack contains two books to help begin their reading journey as well as information on how speech and language can be incorporated into daily life.
  - **Aids socio-emotional development, good mental health and wellbeing**  
Sharing books together in the home can provide a valuable platform for discussions, debate, play and fun activities. Stories and talking about books helps develop empathy and encourages children to recognise and talk about their feelings.

- **Helps to lay foundations of good literacy skills and prepares the way for school**  
To be ready for school, children need to have a good vocabulary, understand how books work and have the curiosity, imagination and eagerness to know about the world around them. Sharing books, stories and rhymes helps develop these skills, making the transition to school more successful.
- **Supports the development of fine motor skills, listening and concentration**  
Sharing books from birth supports the development of physical coordination through page turning, lifting flaps and pointing at images. By regularly listening to a parent or carer share stories a child will develop skills in listening and concentration.
- **Breaks cycles of low achievement and poverty**  
Encouraging parents to start sharing books, stories and rhymes with their baby is the first steps towards breaking inter-generation cycles of low achievement and poverty.

16. Research has also shown how Bookstart boosts families' use of books and libraries:

- **Children more likely to enjoy books and visit library**  
Research shows that children who receive Bookstart packs are more likely to regard reading as their favourite activity. Also their parents are more likely to buy books as presents for their children, and families also share books and visit the library more often too.
- **Children more likely to borrow books from libraries**  
In a major survey of young people's reading habits, researchers from Roehampton University found that, at Key Stage 1, children borrowed more books from the library in 2005 than in 1996.

The authors of the study suggest the possible influence of the Bookstart programme; 'The first babies to benefit from the [Bookstart] scheme might now be beginning to show in the reading survey and at the same time older siblings might well have been unwitting beneficiaries of this scheme, joining the library, and possibly attending Bookstart related events there, in the company of their baby brothers or sisters.'

- **Increased book purchases and time spent sharing books**  
Researchers found that of families who received Bookstart packs, 71% of parents bought more books for their children, and 28% spent more time sharing books with their children
- **Have more engaged reading**  
Researchers who have observed Bookstart parents sharing books have found that they are more likely to read the whole text, talk about the story and encourage their child to link the story to their own experiences. These all help children to develop into stronger, more confident readers.

17. Co-ordination of the Booktrust's Bookstart programme enables the Library Service to deliver a high quality, well developed early literacy programme which is evaluated on a national scale. The Library Service strategy states a commitment to exploiting national reading initiatives such as Bookstart to encourage reading for pleasure as a key intervention to improve literacy levels.

## **Work with Early Years**

18. In addition to managing and co-ordinating the Bookstart Scheme, the Early Years Library Team is also responsible for working with vulnerable under-fives to promote shared reading and the Library Service. This includes contact with Children's Centres, refuges, Homestart, voluntary groups, day nurseries, LA nurseries, playgroups and health centre baby groups. The Early Years Library Team work with all Early Years professionals across the County demonstrating best practice, promoting the Bookstart scheme and the Library Service. Areas of need are targeted working in line with the foundation stage data.
19. In 2012/13 the Early Years and Bookstart Officer and Early Years Development Worker provided 78 sessions to 61 Early Years settings across the County and 55 library sessions provided at 13 different libraries.
20. They are part of the 'Language for Life' steering group and were involved in the 'Every Child a Talker' (ECAT) programme providing information and training. They also provided training for Health Visitors during this period in partnership with the Speech and Language Therapy Service on Bookstart and the Library Service.
21. The Early Years Library Team provides training for library staff members ensuring best practice when working with children and families, especially during the under five's sessions in libraries.
22. The team also co-ordinates the Bookstart Bear Club which is a library membership incentive scheme whereby Bookstart resources are used to increase library membership and usage by families with young children. Free resources are provided to the Local Authority, with postage and packing and administration costs paid for by the Local Authority. Practitioners and families can also join the online Bookstart Bear via the website. Nottinghamshire runs the Bookstart Bear Club in all libraries.

## **Other Options Considered**

23. The report is for noting only.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

24. National research demonstrates the positive effect of the Bookstart programme on participants' early literacy skills.
25. Participation in the scheme contributes to Nottinghamshire's Closing the Educational Gaps Strategy.
26. Uptake of Bookstart is a target in the Nottinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

27. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, the public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service

and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty Implications**

28. As the Bookstart programme is a national, universal scheme specifically aimed at children aged under five years, there are no specific equality implications for protected groups.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the update on the Bookstart programme in Nottinghamshire and work with Early Years be noted.

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### **Constitutional Comments**

29. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

### **Financial Comments (KLA 19/02/14)**

30. There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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