

**To what extent does the Bookstart scheme affect the role of the
public librarian?**

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Nicola F M Conway

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Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which involvement in the Bookstart scheme has affected the role of the public librarian. A review of the literature revealed a gap in research concerning the role of public library staff in Bookstart, even though they play a significant role in the partnership which administers and delivers the scheme. Extensive research has been carried out by Wade and Moore (1993, 1998 and 2003) on the positive effects Bookstart has on child development and both Sorby (2002) and Morris (2004) analysed the impact Bookstart has on parents/carers. The following four objectives of this research were therefore identified:

- To explore if the Bookstart scheme has created any new duties for library staff.
- To investigate if library staff are sufficiently equipped to run the Bookstart scheme.
- To analyse if the input of the library staff contributes towards the success of the project.
- To identify if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the service than the library.

The research takes an inductive approach based in 'Grounded Theory', to let the results determine the concepts and theories. The triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods is utilised, however due to the nature of the project qualitative data is more prominent. Questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with the main stakeholders involved in Bookstart in Sheffield; parents/carers, health visitors, librarians and Bookstart officials, are analysed.

The findings reveal that: most staff in public libraries are involved in Bookstart in some way, even if they are not appointed specifically to children's librarianship; the major issues affecting those directly involved in Bookstart include funding, training, time and staff support, which look set to be

exacerbated with the oncoming expansion of Bookstart+ and Bookstart Treasure Boxes; the lack of library and Bookstart knowledge amongst health visitors inhibits promotion and partnership working; and finally, most parents/carers, health visitors, librarians and Bookstart officials are satisfied with the scheme and despite the limitations regarding space and child facilities, all view the library as the best place to deliver Bookstart.

Recommendations include; improvements in promotion, training, funding, staff support and partnerships, highlighting the need for further outreach work, co-operation via partnerships and an increased appointment of dedicated Bookstart workers. Ideas for further research include; an investigation into the reasons why some parents/carers who have received the pack do not attend the Bookstart sessions, an evaluation of library staff indirectly involved in Bookstart but who are affected by the sessions and a study into the effects Bookstart has on other partners.

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Contents	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background to Bookstart	1
1.2 Delivering Bookstart	2
1.3 Subject for investigation	3
1.4 Aims	3
1.5 Objectives.....	3
2. Literature Review	4
2.1 The role of the public library	4
2.1.1 <i>Current issues facing the public library service</i>	4
2.1.2 <i>The public library role in reader development</i>	7
2.1.3 <i>The public library role in education</i>	9
2.2 The role of the government in early years	9
2.2.1 <i>The EPPE project</i>	9
2.2.2 <i>Sure Start</i>	11
2.3 Early years and reading.....	11
2.4 The effect of Bookstart	11
2.4.1 <i>On very young children</i>	11
2.4.2 <i>On parents/carers</i>	13
2.4.3 <i>On partnerships</i>	15
2.5 The role of library staff in Bookstart.....	16
3. Methodology.....	18
3.1 Sampling	19
3.2 Ethical Issues	20
4. Methods of Investigation.....	22
4.1 Questionnaires	22
4.2 Interviews and focus groups.....	24
4.3 Data analysis.....	26
5. Location of research.....	28
5.1 Bookstart in Sheffield	28
5.2 Area profile	29
5.2.1 <i>Library A</i>	29
5.2.2 <i>Library B</i>	29

6. Findings	30
6.1 Objective One: To explore if the Bookstart scheme has created any new duties for library staff	30
6.2 Objective Two: To investigate if library staff are sufficiently equipped to run the Bookstart scheme.....	32
6.2.1 <i>With regards to funding</i>	32
6.2.2 <i>With regards to training</i>	35
6.2.3 <i>With regards to time</i>	37
6.2.4 <i>With regards to staff support</i>	40
6.2.5 <i>Are targets realistic?</i>	42
6.3 Objective Three: To analyse if the input of the library staff contributes towards the success of the project	43
6.3.1 <i>Satisfaction with the Bookstart scheme</i>	43
6.3.2 <i>Perception of library staff</i>	44
6.3.3 <i>Promotion of the library service and the Bookstart scheme</i>	45
6.3.4 <i>The success of partnership working</i>	48
6.3.5 <i>Parental use of libraries as a result of Bookstart</i>	53
6.4 Objective Four: To identify if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the service than the library	55
6.5 Further findings	61
6.5.1 <i>The voucher system</i>	61
6.5.2 <i>Continuity of the Bookstart sessions</i>	63
6.5.3 <i>Lack of knowledge of nationwide and citywide Bookstart schemes</i> ..	64
7. Conclusions	65
7.1 Objective One: To explore if the Bookstart scheme has created any new duties for library staff	65
7.2 Objective Two: To investigate if library staff are sufficiently equipped to run the Bookstart scheme.....	66
7.2.1 <i>With regards to funding</i>	66
7.2.2 <i>With regards to training</i>	67
7.2.3 <i>With regards to time</i>	67
7.2.4 <i>With regards to staff support</i>	68
7.2.5 <i>Are targets realistic?</i>	68
7.3 Objective Three: To analyse if the input of the library staff contributes towards the success of the project	69
7.3.1 <i>Satisfaction with the Bookstart scheme</i>	69
7.3.2 <i>Perception of library staff</i>	69
7.3.3 <i>Promotion of the library service and the Bookstart scheme</i>	69
7.3.4 <i>The success of partnership working</i>	70
7.3.5 <i>Parental use of libraries as a result of Bookstart</i>	71
7.4 Objective Four: To identify if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the service than the library	72
7.5 Further Conclusions	73

8. Recommendations	74
8.1 Library promotion	74
8.2 Staff Training	74
8.3 Funding	75
8.4 Staff Support	75
8.5 Partnership Working.....	76
8.6 Suggestions for further research	76
Bibliographic References	77
Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet	81
Appendix B: Questionnaires	83
1. Parents and carers	83
2. Public librarians and Bookstart officials	85
3. Health visitors	87
Appendix C: Interview Consent Form	89
Appendix D: Interview and Focus Group Schedules	90
1. Parents and carers	90
2. Public librarians and Bookstart officials	92
3. Health visitors	94

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to Bookstart

The aim of the Bookstart scheme is to introduce all babies to books to promote a lifelong love of reading. By offering free books to every young child and advice to adults, sharing books is encouraged from as early an age as possible, providing children with an advantage that can last throughout life. Initiated in Birmingham in 1992 by the Booktrust charity and involving only 300 families, the Bookstart scheme has grown tremendously over the last ten years; by 1998 there were 60 schemes nationwide and by 1999, with the securing of Sainsbury's funding, Bookstart had grown to national status reaching 92% coverage within 15 months (Bookstart, 2005).

Although "by March 2000 Bookstart in the UK had become the first, national, baby book-giving scheme in the world" (Bookstart, 2005:1), Sainsbury's sponsorship ended in 2001, leaving the programme in crisis. By autumn 2001 Booktrust launched a new model of funding based on partnerships with suppliers, publishers, manufacturers, artists, designers and printers (Bookstart, 2005). This model of partnerships is reflected in the current delivery of the scheme, via library services, health professionals and the education sector. The expansion of Bookstart, due to roll out in October 2005, offers Bookstart+ packs to toddlers and Bookstart Treasure Boxes to 3 year olds, supplementing child development, which is sure to affect partnerships as well as increase the amount of young children reached.

Although now on the national agenda, due to the fragmented public library system in the UK, with 149 Library Authorities running over 3,000 libraries (DCMS, 2003), delivery of a national co-ordinated scheme is challenging and consequently regional schemes have arisen, each with their own policies and initiatives, but which still follow the basic premise of introducing babies to books and encouraging family reader development. The Department for Culture Media

and Sport (DCMS) confirmed support for Bookstart in England with a £500,000 grant in 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 (Booktrust, 2003). In Northern Ireland Bookstart is funded via the Department for Culture, in Scotland the Scottish Executive allocates funds via the departments of Health and Education and the National Assembly for Wales funds it as part of the Basic Skills Strategy for Wales (Booktrust, 2003), exemplifying complete governmental backing of the project.

1.2 Delivering Bookstart

The public library is vital to the Bookstart scheme, providing a venue and staff for the sessions. Used effectively the scheme can attract more library users and promote the library as a welcoming service for everyone, no matter how young or old they are.

The Bookstart co-ordinator is described as the 'linchpin' in managing an effective Bookstart scheme, as an administrator and communicator with partners (Booktrust, 2003) and 86% of Bookstart co-ordinators are public library staff (Booktrust, 2002). Library staff play crucial roles in developing the atmosphere of a library and their attitude can affect the success of initiatives like Bookstart. With the oncoming expansion library staff will be pressed further for time, funding, storage, training and support, yet will have to remain actively and efficiently involved to provide a successful scheme. Bookstart relies on library staff to be involved in promotion, outreach work and learner support, and to do this effectively partnership work is vital.

Partnerships are one of the key successes of the Bookstart scheme, uniting the government, health authority and education sector with the library service. In the initial pilot of Bookstart in Birmingham "library staff considered the overall experience of cooperation with Health Centre Managers and Visitors was extremely positive" (Wade and Moore, 1993:11). However, recommendations included the employment of a Bookstart co-ordinator to ensure adequate levels

of communication were met (Wade and Moore, 1993), a concern particularly relevant with the oncoming expansion.

1.3 Subject for investigation

Extensive research has been carried out by Wade and Moore (1993, 1998 and 2003) on the benefits Bookstart has on children involved in the scheme. Also, evaluation of the effects Bookstart has on parents/carers attending the sessions has been investigated; Sorby (2002) analysed parental use of the library as a learning venue after Bookstart, and Morris (2004) examined the enhancement of parent/carer reader development as a result of Bookstart. However the previous research demonstrates how library staff tend to be overlooked, receiving a minor mention, even though they play a significant role in the partnership which makes up Bookstart, along with the government, education sector, health service and parents/carers. Although library staff are recognised as an important part of the scheme, their views and perceptions of their involvement are overlooked.

1.4 Aims

To investigate to what extent the Bookstart scheme has affected the role of the public librarian.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- To explore if the Bookstart scheme has created any new duties for library staff.
- To investigate if library staff are sufficiently equipped to run the Bookstart scheme.
- To analyse if the input of the library staff contributes towards the success of the project.
- To identify if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the service than the library.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The role of the public library

2.1.1 Current issues facing the public library service

The public library is the home of the Bookstart scheme, providing the venue and the staff essential for the service. The public library is a neutral, safe, inclusive institution, providing the community it serves with access to the world's resources and opportunities for life-long learning. However, major issues facing the public library service could affect its provision, including; an inadequate book stock, declining issue and visitor figures, lack of funding, professional staff shortage, poor access and dilapidated buildings.

Despite 290 million visits being made to public libraries and 400 million items being loaned in 2000/01 (Audit Commission, 2002), some have declared "Britain's public libraries are in serious trouble" (Leadbeater, 2003:10). Although £780 million was invested into English public libraries in 2004, approximately 1-2% of local government expenditure (Daines, 2004), spending in public libraries has fallen by a third since 1992/93, with book purchasing declining from £118 million in 1990/91 to £80 million in 2000/01 (Audit Commission, 2002), thus affecting the range of items available to users. "Books and information are the heart of a good library service" (Audit Commission, 2002:5) so it is worrying that 56% of Audit Commission (2002) inspections raised concerns over the general quality and range of stock available in public libraries. Despite consumer book expenditure increasing by a quarter in the last 10 years, since 1992/93 visits to public libraries have fallen 17% and loans by almost a quarter (Audit Commission, 2002), indicating that although an interest in reading remains, people are looking elsewhere for books. With only 59% of users finding the books they came into the library for (DCMS, 2003), those who can afford it are turning to the better equipped book stores.

Although book stock is an important part of the public library “libraries do not just provide a store of books: they help people experience and enjoy the pleasure of reading” (DCMS, 2003:25). Outreach work, information literacy teaching and learner support are all key aspects of the public service and cannot be judged via quantitative indicators. There are approximately 7 million adults in England who are illiterate and libraries “should not be judged by their book issues but by their role as agents of cultural change” (Leadbeater, 2003:18). Coates (2004), possibly influenced by his background in retail, seems to have an unrealistic vision of what public libraries, which rely on funding rather than creating profits, can offer, portraying them as a bookstore rather than a community venue and by focusing specifically on quantitative information, overlooks the positive outreach strategies libraries have implemented. Two thirds of Audit Commission (2002) inspections found good reader development work being carried out in libraries and initiatives such as Bookstart enable libraries to successfully promote lifelong learning.

“If there is a common factor in all public libraries, it is that they are all prowling ceaselessly for funding” (Shuman, 1991:16). Since the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act prohibited the levying of charges for borrowing books and reference services (Astbury, 1994) public library revenue has been reliant on local government and national investment. However, public libraries can often be viewed as soft targets by local authorities and services such as education and social services tend to receive more government investment than public libraries, obtaining higher Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) weighting and funding from within the Revenue Support Grant (Daines, 2004). Although new initiatives are encouraging, such as the National Lottery funded People’s Network, which provided 32,000 computers into English public libraries in 2003 (Daines, 2004), these facilities can only be sustained with continued funding. Promotion also suffers as a consequence of funding, as a national survey in 2000 revealed a lack of money was the main reason for poor promotion of libraries and reading (Denham, 2000).

Framework for the Future clearly supports the potential of public libraries and exemplifies the government's backing for its services, particularly the promotion of reading across the ages, but it provides no separate funding stream with which to carry out the suggested initiatives (Daines, 2004). Although the government provides additional funding to libraries in deprived areas, via schemes such as Sure Start and the New Deal Opportunities Fund, this is not available to everyone and thus some rely solely on their restricted local authority budgets to provide initiatives such as Bookstart.

Library buildings also need modernising as the location and appearance of many public library buildings prevent many potential users from entering them. Coates (2004:7) declares "they [public libraries] have short opening hours and they are often inconveniently situated, dilapidated and, even, unsafe to work in" and the Audit Commission (2002) results support this, finding 9% fewer libraries open for more than 30 hours in 2002 than in 1992/93 and more than half of library services utilising buildings which are poorly located or in poor condition. Unsightly buildings fail to attract people and thus valuable resources are neglected, suggesting that better promotion outside of libraries is vital to reach non-users and show what services are on offer, but this all relies on sufficient funding.

Library staff have a crucial role to play in the successful running of the public library service, however, only a minority of professional graduates go on to be employed in the public sector. Higher wages from private institutions and more opportunities for career progression cause some to think twice about the battles for funds and recognition awaiting them in the public sector. Although some may be attracted to community and outreach work, "the negative image of the profession, and the downbeat representation of the public library as a preferred choice of employment, [are] all too real" (Usherwood et al., 2001:7).

The value of knowledgeable library staff is emphasised by the DCMS (2003:16), declaring them one of the four key strengths of the public library service and asserting that “the more that libraries deliver through added-value services, partnerships and outreach into the community, the more success will depend on the outlook, skills and attitudes of the library workforce.” However, for the five years leading up to 2001 there was only one professional children’s librarian for every 16,000 children in Wales and English unitary authorities, only 1 for every 7,000 in London boroughs, and 10% of children’s public library authorities did not employ specialist children’s staff (Mynott, Denham and Elkin, 2001). The lack of professional staff and new recruits does not bode well for the future of the public library or indeed initiatives such as Bookstart which rely on enthusiastic, qualified individuals to provide an effective service.

The issues facing the public library service could affect the success of initiatives like Bookstart, especially with regards to staff shortages. However, qualitative research into staff attitudes employed in the public library service and the benefits of working on successful initiatives such as Bookstart could help implement a strategy to encourage new recruits and promote best-practice.

2.1.2 The public library role in reader development

One of the public library service’s main responsibilities is reader development which can benefit both adults and children. Falling issue figures reaffirm the fact that libraries need more than books to attract the public and “although literature development activities can take up a lot of staff time and effort, they can lead to wider and better use of stock” (Goulding, 2002:2). “Reaching new readers is extremely important for the survival of library services” whose highest proportion of readers are over 65 years old (Spencer and Mathieson, 2003:391) and the growth of reader development activities in the last 10 years, with the National Year of Reading and the creation of the DCMS/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund, aims to ensure that libraries remain at the heart of reading.

From 1998-2001 the 'Branching Out' programme combined the resources of 33 public library authorities, the National Library for the Blind and other commercial partners, to create reader development projects aimed at 18-30 years olds (Thebridge and Train, 2002). "A key element of the programme was core training for library staff in reader development" thus recognising the important role staff have to play and the value of training (Thebridge and Train, 2002:132), yet research into this training fails to analyse staff opinions and therefore possible ways to improve and promote best-practice. The 'Branching Out' project also highlighted the benefits of partnership working, echoing the Bookstart structure, stating "promotion with partners from other sectors can increase the markets both for buying and borrowing" (Thebridge and Train, 2002:134).

Utilised effectively, "reader development can be used as a positive strategy for reversing the decline in library borrowing statistics" as the book, reader and librarian can all be interlinked (Forrest: In Thebridge and Train, 2002:138). The Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), and the early years Bookstart Book Crawl, aim to encourage the reader development of young people throughout the summer and have proved both successful and popular; 85% of library authorities participate in the SRC (CILIP, 2002), 96% of children want to do it again the year after and 78% feel that it makes them better readers (McKearney, 2003). A recent interest in book clubs also indicates that users are keen to discuss ideas and broaden their horizons, with the popularity of the Oprah Winfrey book club and the Richard and Judy Summer Read, and initiatives such as The Reading Agency have capitalised on this, establishing approximately 4,500 library-based reading groups and cementing the library at the heart of reading (Daines, 2004).

2.1.3 The public library role in education

As a neutral, non-judgemental venue the library can play an effective role in learning for both adults and children. The government highlights the importance of the public library's role in education in *Framework for the Future*, specifying 3 main areas for the public library to focus on; early years, school pupils and older students (DCMS, 2003). *Start with the Child* (CILIP, 2002) reiterates the importance of the public library to children's education, and stresses the importance of hiring appropriate staff, as well as having relevant and responsive services. From 2001-2003, 130 early years posts were created, strengthening the provision for very young children (DCMS, 2003) and demonstrating governmental commitment to early years. However, despite recognising the important role library staff have to play in child development there is no specific research carried out on how staff perceive their role and whether they feel sufficiently equipped to deal with the responsibility given to them, which is an area that needs investigation to ensure that grievances are avoided, the best service possible is being offered and that examples of best-practice are disseminated.

2.2 The role of the government in early years

2.2.1 The EPPE project

The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project investigated the effects of pre-school education and care on children's development from the ages of 3-7 years. Information was collected on over 3,000 children from a range of providers, including day nurseries and playgroups, across 5 regions and results were compared to a sample of children with no or minimal pre-school experience (Sylva et al., 2004).

Pre-school education was shown to enhance all round development in children and "an earlier start (under age of 3) is related to better intellectual development" (Literacy Trust, 2005:1). EPPE also found that pre-school attendance does not just improve educational attainment, but also helps with "all

children's cognitive development and aspects of social behaviour, such as independence, concentration, cooperation, conformity and relationships with other children" (Sylva et al., 2003:1), however the benefits on educational attainment were judged to be more long lasting as social development is largely influenced by peers and the classroom climate (Sylva et al., 2004).

Disadvantaged children were shown to benefit significantly from pre-school education as it helped combat social exclusion, offering them an equal start at primary school (Sylva et al., 2004). Also, children in the project who were judged to be 'at risk' fell from 1 in 3 at the start of pre-school, to 1 in 5 at the start of primary school, associating pre-school with a reduction in special educational needs (Sylva et al., 2003).

The six areas considered particularly important with regards to child development included; the quality of adult-child interactions, knowledge about how young children learn and adult skills to support children (Literacy Trust, 2005). Qualified staff were judged to be essential in effective pre-school learning as "having qualified trained teachers working with children in pre-school settings...was linked specifically with better outcomes in pre-reading and social development" (Sylva et al., 2003:2). Also, staff warmth was associated with the improved behavioural outcomes of children (Sylva et al., 2003), indicating that a friendly, welcoming atmosphere is more conducive to learning and is something that libraries have to ensure is put into practice at all branches. Home learning also contributed to intellectual and social development, through reading with children and sharing nursery rhymes, and was deemed more important than parental occupation, education or income. The influence of adults on young people's development is clear and thus trained library staff and knowledgeable parents/carers are vital to effective child development. However, the existing studies overlook the training given to staff involved in pre-school learning, as well as staff opinions on the teaching strategies implemented, neglecting ways to improve provision and suggesting an area for further investigation.

2.2.2 Sure Start

Sure Start is an intervention for children aged 0-4 years, their families and communities, in an effort to change and enhance existing services and improve co-ordination between early years' agencies (Barnes, et al., 2003). Sure Start initiatives represent the foundation of government policy to tackle child poverty and social exclusion, as young children in Sure Start areas experience more health problems and achieve lower academic scores in schools (Barnes, et al., 2003). Sure Start fund some local library Bookstart schemes in deprived areas to help libraries reach out to those who need learning resources most, however the funding streams are not available to all libraries and applications can be time-consuming.

2.3 Early years and reading

“From the moment a baby first opens her eyes, she is learning” as sight, sound and sensation begin the life-long learning process (Butler, 1995:1). During the early years of life learning develops at such a fast pace that initiatives to manipulate and improve growth, such as Bookstart, are essential. The role of adults in this development is vital and as well as educating the child, reading to children can also encourage the parent/carer to learn more and cement the parent-child relationship. “Access to books, through parents and other adults, greatly increases a child’s chances of becoming a happy and involved human being” (Butler, 1995: xi) and thus Bookstart plays a pivotal role in child development.

2.4 The effect of Bookstart

2.4.1 On very young children

Two years after the original Bookstart pilot a qualitative controlled study was carried out on 29 of the original families and revealed that Bookstart families gave a higher priority to looking at books and were more likely to give books as presents than a comparison group, they also visited libraries more often and engaged more in sharing books with their children, clearly

demonstrating a positive impact on adult-child reading interaction (Wade and Moore, 1998). The benefits were also evident on children, as “Bookstart children showed more interest in and concentration on the book and were more active in pointing to the text and pictures and trying to turn pages” (Wade and Moore, 1998:137).

A five year review investigated the long term effects of Bookstart on a group of 41 children, focusing on speaking and listening, shape, space and measurement, reading, writing, applying mathematics and number scores. In all assessments Bookstart children fared better, with significant performances in number and reading tests (Wade and Moore, 1998). As Wade and Moore (1998:142-143) conclude, “the trend of these results indicates that the Bookstart group, who had all received the Bookstart pack in infancy, had been better prepared for school by their early childhood experiences”, which is reiterated in the findings from the EPPE project. The success of the assessment scores were echoed at Key Stage 1 as Bookstart children, again, received higher teacher assessment scores and test results (Moore and Wade, 2003). The findings also highlight the importance of adults in early years learning, through sharing books and interacting with very young children, yet evaluation of this adult interaction is overlooked as there is no research carried out on adult opinions of the scheme and the role they had to play in its success.

Research has also been carried out by Davis (2000) on the impact of Bookstart on children’s literacy levels, highlighting the importance of the library in promoting and aiding literacy. However, although “the library is seen as an important resource by parents” (Davis, 2000:92), as some children use it for homework and fiction materials, the children do not seem to be using it to a great extent. 69.2% of Bookstart children in the data base had never borrowed, only 19.4% borrowed in the last year and 44 Bookstart babies were not even registered with the library (Davis, 2000). Although, this may be as a result of parents taking books out on their own cards, the babies should still be registered

with the library to promote the Bookstart message that the library is for everyone, indicating a lack of initiative from the librarians. Also, many parents were concerned about fines and damages, despite the library policy waiving fines for under-fives, suggesting that better library promotion is needed. The Bookstart scheme is a positive initiative and has demonstrable results with regards to child development, but as Davis (2000) shows, it clearly needs to be supplemented with pro-active library staff and partners to promote it to its full extent and ensure that reading continues throughout a child's life. However, Davis (2000) fails to capitalise on this information by neglecting to analyse library staff attitudes towards the scheme and their role in its promotion and development.

The Derbyshire 'Books for Babies' campaign, launched in 1995, focuses on how literacy is encouraged in young children. The research recognises the importance of the library staff in delivering Bookstart and the necessity of supplementary training "which has made them aware of how to support both parents and children" (Millard, Taylor and Watson, 2000). The value of the project librarian in developing adult learning is also emphasised, providing a link in the community between the library and education. However, views from library staff about their role, training and funding are again overlooked, as well as user perception of the library and its staff, which could provide vital information to improve the service.

2.4.2 On parents/carers

Sorby (2002) describes how learning initiatives for family literacy in libraries emerged as a result of Bookstart, encouraging parents to use the library as a learning centre. The library was viewed as a comfortable neutral place to attend courses and learn, however, "over and over again came comments from previous non-users that they had seen libraries as having no relevance to them before their experiences via activity with young children" (Sorby, 2002:42). This suggests that although Bookstart is helping to draw people into the library that

had previously not used it, better promotion outside the library is needed. By promoting the library as a learning venue Bookstart has contributed to increased partnership working, with various agencies, including education, social services and health. However, the success of libraries as adult learning centres relies on the training and willingness of library staff, which is something Sorby (2002) neglects to analyse.

Morris (2004:57) discovered that “many parents who bring their children to the library as a result of Bookstart begin to borrow themselves”, boosting their reader development. 39% of parents joined the library as a result of receiving the Bookstart bag and “some parents felt that they had been introduced to new books through their children” (Morris, 2004:30). The importance of the public library and staff in reader development and assisting adult literacy is recognised, as Morris (2004:50) asserts “potentially the most important factor that affects the impact of Bookstart on parent/carer reader development is the attitude of staff and how welcoming parents find the library.” However, by focusing on the impact of Bookstart on parents/carers, Morris (2004) fails to evaluate the new role of library staff as learning providers.

The Derbyshire ‘Books for Babies’ project clearly shows the benefits Bookstart has on raising parental awareness of reading to children. The number of parents/carers who bought books specifically for their baby rose from 60% at the 8 month check to 98% at their 18 month health check, and library enrolment was significantly higher for the ‘Books for Babies’ group at 42%, compared to a control group at 18% (Millard, Taylor and Watson, 2000). The National Centre for Research in Children's Literature (NCRL) (2001) report reiterates this finding as respondents who saw sharing a book with a baby as valuable increased from 9% to 100% within 3-6 months of receiving the Bookstart pack, and those who read to their baby increased from 78% to 91% post-Bookstart. This exemplifies how adult involvement in early years, which is so crucial to child development, is boosted by Bookstart. However both the Derbyshire ‘Books for Babies’ project

and the NCRL report overlook the views of library staff involved in the schemes, who would have played a major role in raising awareness, and thus a chance to promote best-practice is lost as well as opportunities to review areas for improvement.

2.4.3 On partnerships

“Partnership working is based on a sense of collective ownership and responsibility between government and sponsors and the local delivery of Bookstart by professionals in library, health and education services and of course by the Charity Booktrust that administrates the programme” (Clarke: In *Community Practitioner*, 2004:290).

Ten years after the pilot study in Birmingham qualitative data exemplified the success of Bookstart partnerships, through interviews with librarians, health visitors, nursery nurses and project co-ordinators (Wade and Moore, 2003). All partners were viewed to be essential in contributing to the scheme’s success and improving child development; librarians promoted the library sessions helping to encourage an interest in books and boost library membership, health visitors gave packs to parents, nursery nurses initiated projects to help non-Bookstart children and the Bookstart co-ordinator provided a role model for parents and a contact point (Moore and Wade, 2003).

The Derbyshire ‘Books for Babies’ campaign also highlights the importance of partnerships to early years’ initiatives. “The role of the librarians and the role of health visitors work to complement each other, with a focus on creating well-balanced partnership and a shared concern for the development of both child and parent/carer” (Millard, 2002:2). The health visitors contact babies at the 8 month health check and provide them with the Bookstart bag, whilst librarians publicise the scheme and demonstrate to parents how to share books with their children. However, by 2002 445 families in the Staveley area had received a book yet only 120 (27%) babies were enrolled in the library, as some parents felt their children were too young to join (Millard, 2002). This supports

Davis's (2000) research and reiterates the importance of supplementing literacy projects with pro-active library initiatives. Although Millard (2002:7) suggests "those who had overcome their inhibitions had been impressed both by the positive atmosphere of the interior of the library and the welcome they had received from staff", clearly more partnership work is vital to highlight the library's lenient early years' policy and destroy the negative image of libraries some still hold.

The partnership model clearly shows library staff at the forefront of delivering Bookstart and their views on the running of the scheme are vital, to promote best-practice, encourage new members into the profession and to highlight areas for improvement. However, these areas are largely overlooked in the research.

2.5 The role of library staff in Bookstart

The Bookstart Partnership Report (Booktrust, 2003) highlights 7 areas of importance to the Bookstart scheme, including the Bookstart Co-ordinator who is deemed vital to its administration and development of partnerships. The Bookstart Audit (Booktrust, 2002) shows that 85% of Bookstart co-ordinators are library staff, exemplifying the influence that public librarians have on the scheme. Also, 72% of co-ordinators are not initially appointed to cover early year's provision and 68% have no job structuring to allow them to work specifically on Bookstart (Booktrust, 2002), highlighting possible issues of discontent. This problem is reiterated in the Bookstart Partnership Report (Booktrust, 2003:10) which stresses,

"Many schemes report that without dedicated time to work on the programme, nearly all efforts go towards getting packs out. Many had very little time to invest in activities that would identify needs and implement improvements, much less develop and maintain strong multi-agency partnerships, evaluate and promote the programme and build on the Bookstart message."

This suggests that a review regarding the allocation of time to the scheme is vital, however, increased consultation with librarians' could also highlight further areas for improvement.

Roehampton University has analysed the views of professionals involved in the Bookstart scheme, and "all of the librarians saw Bookstart as promoting reading enjoyment, developing links to the library, developing the initial concepts about print and the way a book works" (Roehampton, 2005:94), highlighting the importance of partnership working to life-long learning. Suggestions to improve the service include the constant need to reinforce a lenient early years' library policy and the continual promotion to parents/carers to join the library for themselves and their children, despite already attending Bookstart sessions (Roehampton, 2005), reaffirming the importance of supplementary library action. However, the report largely overlooks the attitude library staff have towards their role in the delivery and promotion of the scheme, and areas where it and they can develop, which could help to overcome concerns, improve service provision and boost the professional development of staff.

3. Methodology

This research takes an inductive approach, as it does not test a hypothesis but is based in 'Grounded Theory', to allow the results to determine the concepts and theories. Conclusions are drawn from the empirical data, preventing any preconceptions from corrupting the retrieved information. As Silverman (2000:1) explains, "the choice between different research methods should depend upon what you are trying to find out", qualitative research is flexible and speculative, where as quantitative studies rely on facts. As some critics claim, "quantitative research ignores the differences between the natural and social world by failing to understand the 'meanings' that are brought to social life" (Silverman, 2001:4) where as "qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena" (Silverman, 2004:8). Both methods have their respective advantages and disadvantages and "there is often no one correct method by which to undertake specific pieces of primary research" (Futureskills, 2002:8).

To ensure the most productive research, quantitative and qualitative approaches are adopted, however due to the nature of the project, which relies heavily on the opinions of those involved with the Bookstart scheme, qualitative data is more prominent. "Qualitative methods attempt to capture and understand individual definitions, descriptions and meaning of events. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, count and measure occurrences" (Burns, 2000:388). Factual data is analysed, including what resources the library has/receives, what training library staff are given, how much time library staff have to prepare for Bookstart sessions, what initiatives the library offers as part of the Bookstart scheme and how frequently they run. Opinions of the service, including staff, funding, time and training issues, are also evaluated, analysing the views of parents/carers, library staff, health visitors and Bookstart officials.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods means that the research is methodologically triangulated, allowing for a greater understanding of the subject than if just one method had been adopted. As Burns (2000:390) explains, “the best way is triangulation, in which we can argue that if different methods of assessment or investigation produce the same results, then the data are likely to be valid.” Quantitative methods are useful for discovering what happens and qualitative methods analyse why it happens, providing a bigger picture. The methods of investigation aim to produce results that show to what extent the role of the librarian has changed as a result of the Bookstart scheme, as well as why, and how successful these adaptations have been. Where the qualitative and quantitative data are complementary each methods findings are strengthened, but where there are discrepancies, issues are highlighted which may have otherwise been overlooked. As Patton (2002:248) explains “using multiple methods allows inquiry into a research question with an arsenal of methods that have no overlapping weaknesses as well as complementary strengths.”

3.1 Sampling

“Sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical nor purely personal: it is, or should be, theoretically grounded” (Silverman, 2000:105). Theoretical sampling should embody three features; choosing cases in terms of your theory, choosing deviant cases and changing the sample during the research (Silverman, 2000). To allow for an effective sample a wide range of participants were used in the research to represent the partnership which makes up Bookstart, including parents/carers, library staff, Bookstart officials and health visitors. Two separate schemes in Sheffield libraries were analysed to provide different perspectives and Bookstart sessions were attended on 3 separate occasions by the researcher to distribute questionnaires. Health visitors from across the 4 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in Sheffield were consulted to provide an accurate city wide perspective. Meetings with health visitors, librarians and Bookstart officials were arranged for distributing questionnaires, as well as using

email and post. However, interview participants were reliant on those who had responded to the questionnaire and were willing to participate, which allowed for more in-depth research into the responses, but also limited the sample; no deviant cases were chosen and the size of the sample remained constant. Also due to time restraints interviews were not carried out with librarians and Bookstart officials nationally, instead Sheffield was focused on as a case study.

3.2 Ethical Issues

As the research involved human participants and data relating to humans, ethical issues had to be taken into consideration. However, by following the University's Ethics Policy (The University of Sheffield, 2005), potential problems were avoided.

A participant information sheet was given to all prospective participants (see Appendix A) to keep for their own reference, outlining the aims and objectives of the project; describing what their participation would involve, including any inconveniences and benefits; providing details of where the findings would be publicised; providing contact details of the principal researcher and supervisor for any queries or concerns they might have; giving information on how to make a complaint if necessary; highlighting that participation was purely voluntary and that they could withdraw at anytime without consequence; and reassuring them that all data was confidential and would be treated with anonymity. All information provided by the participants was also made available to them on request.

To ensure that informed consent was obtained a note at the top of each questionnaire explained that by completing and returning the form they were agreeing to participate in the research. However the note also reminded them that they could withdraw at anytime without consequence, and that all answers would be confidential, only being read and analysed by the researcher. Also, the first question in each questionnaire asked them to confirm that they had read

and understood the participant information sheet. This was deemed preferable to obtaining signed consent, due to the investigatory nature of the project, which could have prevented some from feeling comfortable answering the questions or returning the survey.

At the beginning of each interview and focus group signed consent was requested via the interview consent form (see Appendix C) and verbal consent was recorded to reaffirm participation and comfort with tape recording. The participants were again reminded that participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any stage without consequence, that the data would only be listened to and transcribed by the researcher, and that all information would be treated anonymously.

4. Methods of Investigation

Commencing research involved meeting with the Early Years Librarian for Sheffield and deciding which schemes to attend as well as collecting contact details of the health visitors involved in the project. National Bookstart librarians and co-ordinators were also emailed and asked to participate in the research, to place findings in a wider context. The researcher met with one of the health visitors via a unit meeting, contacted another on a visit to the health centre and spoke to the other two on the telephone to arrange questionnaire distribution. The two libraries were also visited before research began, and Bookstart sessions were attended. Concurring with Sorby (2002:37) the researcher discovered “there was much to be gained by getting to know the participants in advance of the interviews, to enable them to feel comfortable and talk freely about their experiences”, familiarising them with the researcher and the project and thus encouraging participation.

All questionnaires were anonymous, with the names only being revealed to the researcher if they wished to participate further in the research, ensuring there was no reason for participants to feel uncomfortable in providing information. However, there is a possibility that participants may have been concerned that their comments could have consequences on their employment or the running of the Bookstart sessions, but the participant information sheet distributed to and read by all participants explained the research in detail and such confusion should have been avoided.

4.1 Questionnaires

The first phase of the research involved distributing and analysing the questionnaires sent to the three groups under investigation; the parents/carers, librarians/Bookstart officials and health visitors.

The researcher distributed 25 questionnaires to parents/carers in Library A and got 100% return, which could have been as a consequence of the researcher remaining in the library whilst surveys were completed. 20 questionnaires were distributed at Library B via the Bookstart Project Worker, due to time constraints, and thus questionnaires had to be returned by post. This may have accounted for the initial low response rate of 4, which was doubled when the researcher attended the next Bookstart session and all attending parents/carers filled in the questionnaires, resulting in 40% return. Overall the response rate was 33/45 (73%), with a bias towards library A. However the response rates reflect the average attendance to the sessions, with library A averaging 50 adults and children per session and library B only averaging 6-10 adults and children per session.

The researcher distributed 5 questionnaires to library staff at Library A and got 100% back. 6 questionnaires were handed out to library staff and the Bookstart worker at Library B and 4 were returned resulting in 67% return. The questionnaire was sent to the Youth Libraries Group (YLG) mailing list and got 14 responses from national librarians and Bookstart officials. Finally the questionnaire was sent to 3 specified librarians, including the Early Years Librarian for Sheffield, and 3 were returned (100%). Without including the YLG list, as the number of people subscribed to the list is unknown by the researcher, the overall response rate was 12/14 (86%).

Questionnaires were distributed to health visitors across the 4 PCTs in Sheffield: 6 were given out at the South West PCT unit meeting and 2 were returned (33%); 10 were posted to the West PCT and 5 were returned (50%); 10 were posted to the South East PCT and 7 were returned (70%); and finally 10 were given out at the North PCT via a meeting with the Bookstart Representative and 4 were returned (40%). Overall 18/36 (50%) responded, the lowest response rate of the three groups, despite the different methods of distribution adopted.

The questionnaires collected facts and opinions through open and closed questions. The variety of questioning was designed to prevent the reader from losing patience, falling into a pattern of answering or getting bored (see Appendix B). Although open questions require more time and effort to analyse “the information gathered is more likely to reflect the full richness and complexity of the views held by the respondent” (Denscombe, 2003:156). Also, by asking participants to give details to their answers they could voice their opinions even if they did not wish to contribute further in the research via an interview or focus group. The questionnaire had the same format for all participants, to enable accurate analysis of answers, however, there was a slight deviation with regards to some questions concerning their role in the Bookstart scheme.

4.2 Interviews and focus groups

The second phase of the research involved setting up, carrying out and analysing the interviews and focus groups. One to one interviews were carried out with 3 library staff, a Bookstart Project Worker, the Early Years Librarian for Sheffield, 4 Health Visitors from the 4 PCTs across Sheffield, and 2 (one each from library A and B) parents who wanted to participate but were unable to attend the focus groups. Focus groups were conducted with a sample of 3 parents/carers from both library A and B. One to one interviews were deemed preferable for librarians, Bookstart officials and health visitors, to allow participants to feel comfortable with participation and talk feely, without feeling intimidated by colleagues who may have different opinions or a greater knowledge of the scheme. However, focus groups were chosen for the parents/carers, to provide a more relaxed interview structure to encourage participation and also to stimulate discussion. Although focus groups could intimidate some and be dominated by others, the researcher ensured that all parents/carers were comfortable with the group structure and throughout the interview encouraged all participants to remain involved.

The interviews and focus groups were semi-structured to allow for flexibility and for the interviewee/group to develop ideas, whilst still following a format of important questions (see Appendix D). As Patton (2002:343-344) explains, “a guide is essential in conducting focus group interviews for it keeps the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge” and the researcher found this was also beneficial for the one to one interviews. The questions followed the same format for all candidates, progressing from simple closed questioning to more complex open-ended questions, easing them into the interview. As Patton suggests (2002:352), “opinions and feelings are likely to be more grounded and meaningful once the respondent has verbally ‘relived’ the experience”, so questioning began with their opinions of, and their role in, the scheme and developed into their opinions on the library, library staff and partnerships.

Different questions were asked with regard to the varying roles in Bookstart, and occasionally supplementary questions were added to develop issues raised by the participant. The researcher remained neutral but welcoming throughout the interview, not passing judgement, remaining attentive, sensitive and tolerant of silences. However, in the case of the focus groups the researcher did encourage all participants to remain involved. The presence of the researcher will undoubtedly have had some impact on the participants, despite anonymity being guaranteed. The researcher was asked to reassure a number of participants that the data would be confidential and that all names would be omitted, indicating a concern about the impact the research may have on the scheme or their employment. This could have caused some to try and impress the researcher by exaggerating their role in the scheme, or could have prevented others from voicing their true opinions as they were concerned about job loss and stopping of the scheme. However, important issues were revealed in the interviews, especially with regards to funding and training, indicating that participants were not afraid to let researcher know their concerns, possibly feeling that the research may be able to improve their situation.

As interviews with parents/carers and library staff were conducted within the library, this could have affected the reliability of answers, with participants not wishing to offend colleagues, friends or staff. However, library staff were limited with time and unable to meet outside of their working hours and a neutral, well known venue was essential in ensuring participation, and the safety and comfort of both participants and the researcher.

All the one to one interviews and focus groups, were recorded, with permission, to ensure a complete permanent record of the information, and “when used sensitively the audio tape does not pose too much of a disturbance to most interviewee situations” (Denscombe, 2003:176). As well as recording the data, field notes were made to assess non-verbal communication. As Oppenheim (1992:67) emphasises,

“Depth interviews must, as the saying goes, ‘listen with the third ear’. They must note not only what is being said but also what is being omitted; must pick up gaps and hesitations and explore what lies behind them; and must create an atmosphere which is sufficiently uncritical for the respondent to come out with seemingly irrational ideas, hatreds or misconceptions.”

4.3 Data analysis

Quantitative data was stored using *Excel*, and converted into pie charts and graphs using the ‘Chart Wizard’.

“Developing some manageable classification or coding scheme is the first step of analysis” (Patton, 2002:463) so qualitative data was recorded, transcribed and then analysed, looking for concurrences and discrepancies between groups and individuals. To enable an accurate analysis of data the questions were divided thematically, following the objectives of the research. As Silverman (2000:90) explains, “the problem of credibility that arises here is how such a researcher goes about categorizing events or activities described”. By

remaining neutral when transcribing and analysing data the researcher endeavoured to ensure reliability of results, however “the researcher’s own identity, background and beliefs have a role in the creation of data and the analysis of data” (Denscombe, 2003:281) and therefore 100% reliability cannot be achieved.

The objectives of the research were considered alongside the transcripts and all relevant information was highlighted. Respondents’ beliefs and feelings were analysed and any key themes which arose throughout the questionnaires or interviews were evaluated to see if a generalisation of results could be made. As Davis (2000:29) explains “generalising from qualitative research is difficult” but it does not always have to be the objective of a research project. As this research is only from a sample in Sheffield and reliant on those who responded to the questionnaires to agree to participate in interviews, the results cannot be generalised.

5. Location of research

5.1 Bookstart in Sheffield

Bookstart is firmly established on the Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information agenda and has been operating since the national scheme was launched. The Bookstart sessions are known as 'Babytimes' and run varyingly across the city, some weekly and others monthly.

“We’ve got about 21 groups now across the city and there’s just 3 or 4 that we’ve still got to start” **Early Years Librarian.**

The aims of the Sheffield scheme echo national initiatives; to promote lifelong learning, literacy and enjoyment of books, provide parents/carers with support, boost library usage, raise awareness of the importance of adults in child literacy development and build solid partnerships throughout the city (Sheffield City Council, 2004).

The Sheffield scheme employs the voucher system, where parents/carers receive a voucher from the health visitor at the 6-13 month health check, which they take to their local library and redeem for the Bookstart bag; which includes story books, rhymes, library details and information on sharing books with babies. “Sheffield Books for Babies is now established as a cost effective scheme and is recognised as a model of ‘Best Practice’ within the libraries department and the council” (Sheffield City Council, 2004:38).

5.2 Area profile

5.2.1 Library A

Library A is situated in the South of the city with a predominantly white (96.59%) population of 1,698, of which 49% are male and 51% are female (National Statistics, 2005). With an average age of 44.6 years, the region has a higher than the average age than England and Wales, which is 38.6 years (National Statistics, 2005). Library A suffers from minimal deprivation based on income, employment, education, health, skills and training, barriers to housing and crime, and has only 1.76% unemployment, compared to 4.18% in Sheffield as a whole (National Statistics, 2005).

The Bookstart scheme is run monthly by one full-time children's librarian and two part-time library assistants.

5.2.2 Library B

Library B is situated close to the city centre with a high ethnically mixed population of 1,589, of which 48.65% are white, 15.17% are Asian/Asian British and 26.18% are Black/Black British (National Statistics, 2005). With an average age of 32.6 years, the region has a lower than average age than England and Wales and has a 53% male and 47% female mix (National Statistics, 2005). Library B suffers from massive deprivation and has 10.51% unemployment (National Statistics, 2005).

The Bookstart scheme is run monthly by a part-time Bookstart Project Worker, funded by the New Deal Opportunities Fund, and is supported by a part-time children's library assistant (children's champion).

6. Findings

6.1 Objective One: To explore if the Bookstart scheme has created any new duties for library staff

The questionnaires revealed that most staff in public libraries are involved in Bookstart in some way, from giving out packs to delivering sessions, and are generally very positive towards the scheme. However, there is evidence that improvements can be made as 11/26 said they could recommend changes and the main areas of concern highlighted were; funding, distribution, training and storage. 10/26 were not sure if they could recommend improvements, demonstrating positive feedback towards partnerships but stressing concerns about the expansion with regards to storage and distribution.

The interviews revealed that Bookstart does not seem to have affected library duties at branch level, with all 3 branch librarians stating that their role had not really changed with the introduction of Bookstart.

“This was just sort of a little, an extra initiative really.”
Librarian A

“It’s how my other library duties affect Bookstart...if [the Bookstart Project Worker]...wasn’t here doing it as well, it would be very different, because I’d feel I had to do Babytime.” **Librarian C**

However, the Bookstart project worker and the Early Years Librarian for Sheffield spend most of their time on Bookstart and although the project worker is employed specifically for Bookstart the Early Year Librarian indicates that it has taken over her other duties.

“Well Bookstart has kind of taken over my life, *[laughs]* in more ways than one...but it’s at the core of what I do.”
Early Years Librarian

Bookstart does not seem to have encouraged any other early year's initiatives to emerge in libraries. Neither of the libraries analysed provide general recommendations for services to parents with very young children and the only other specific, regular, early years initiative mentioned is the Bookstart Book Crawl. The libraries do offer under 5s story times and work with nurseries, but this is not in a regular time slot. This is clearly an area which needs developing as the Bookstart sessions offer a perfect opportunity for supplementary initiatives, based at the same age group, to encourage increased library usage.

Overall the interviews reaffirm the questionnaire data that librarians are positive towards Bookstart. The Early Years Librarian is extremely enthusiastic about the scheme, despite the extra work involved in administering it, declaring

"I love it, it's the best thing I ever did." Early Years Librarian

However, although it is suggested that all staff are involved in Bookstart to some extent,

"all of the service points promote Bookstart" Early Years Librarian

there are areas of concern with regards to whole staff support.

"Some people know quite a lot about Bookstart and sort of say to any new mothers who come in 'ooh did you know...about this?' and sort of explain it and show them the books and invite them to Babytime, others will just sort of not mention it unless...the mother's mention it." Librarian B

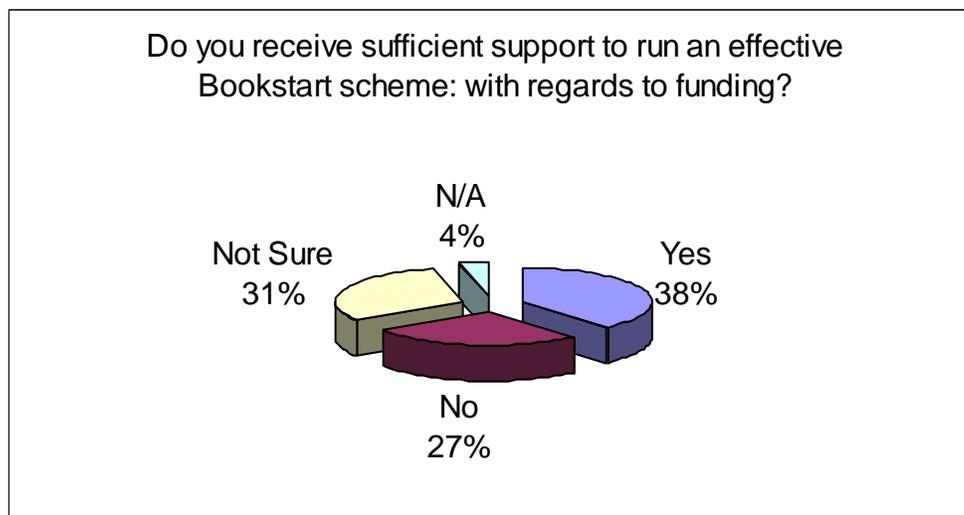
This lack of support clearly contradicts the Early Years Librarian's belief that all staff are involved and could simply be due to a lack of knowledge however, there could be deeper issues which need investigating and solving.

6.2 Objective Two: To investigate if library staff are sufficiently equipped to run the Bookstart scheme

6.2.1 With regards to funding

The questionnaires revealed mixed responses regarding funding of the Bookstart scheme (see Figure One). Although 10/26 librarians and Bookstart officials felt they received enough funding to carry out the scheme successfully, 5 (out of the 8 Bookstart officials who responded) were Bookstart Officials which could cause misrepresentation of results, as they are employed directly for Bookstart and in some cases receive extra funding via Sure Start and the New Deal Opportunities Fund. 7/26 said they did not receive enough funding and although 2 were Bookstart officials, one was from Northern Ireland and therefore exempt from English funding streams. 8/26 were not sure if they received enough funding and the expansion emerged as the key issue questioning appropriate funds. So despite most respondents declaring they receive sufficient funding, data seems to be fairly negative towards funding in general, supporting the history of public libraries which tend to have tight budgets.

Figure Oneⁱ:



ⁱ All percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number

The concerns regarding funding were reiterated in the interviews, and indicate that there are consequences on staff morale.

“We don’t really receive any funding here, apart from I think we were given some money to buy a few toys [from the Early Years Librarian]...it’s not good really for staff morale. Yeah it’d be nice just to have your own budget wouldn’t it, and then you don’t feel sort of pressured.” **Librarian A**

Libraries’ own measures to boost revenue reiterate the issue of insufficient funding and could further decrease morale, causing some to justify the scheme’s worth.

“We have a coffee morning, once a week and we use the money that we raise from that to buy craft things and also the juice and biscuits.” **Librarian A**

The Bookstart project worker suggests that one of the main improvements to the scheme is mainstream funding.

“A more regular source of funding...would take away some of the uncertainty about the future...because you just end up spending an awful lot of brainpower thinking about exit strategies and other sources of funding.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

Although the Bookstart worker currently works at a library which receives New Deal Funding for her post it can restrict development of the scheme; it only pays for a part-time position, it sets targets for the Bookstart project worker to meet and it relies on constant monitoring and evaluation of progress. Funding from the New Deal Opportunities Fund is also supplemented by the library service, so even when libraries do receive additional funding for Bookstart workers, it is not a complete relief on their existing budgets.

“The library services offers sort of in kind support ...office space and things like photocopying and postage and telephone and travel expenses.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

Applications for funding also affect staff morale as they can often be uncertain and last minute bids.

“I’ve got to the stage, before this bid, where I was in the process for redeployment...and it came down to about the last two weeks before we got New Deal funding...we had other project workers in other parts of the city who’s jobs had gone and who’ve seen a project that they’ve built up over 1, 2, 3, years, whatever, come to an end with nothing to replace it.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

A lack of training with regard to funding bids is also evident, taking time and effort away from the Bookstart scheme.

“It’s a whole new world out there and if you don’t know who to approach and how to pitch projects...you just waste a lot of time thinking ‘can we access this, are we eligible for that?’...finding you’re not, going back to square one, and you think ‘well this is not really kind of what I should be doing.’” **Bookstart Project Worker**

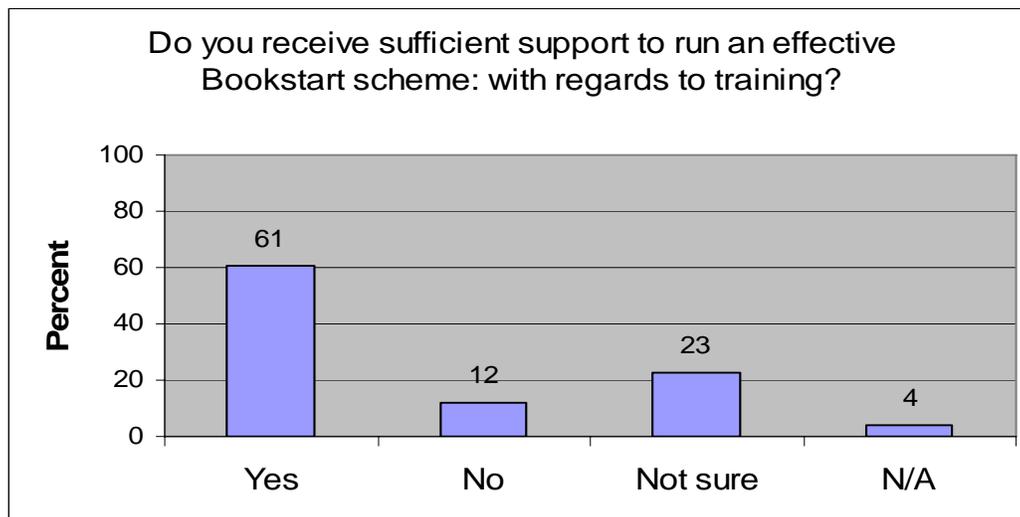
The approaching expansion looks set to exacerbate funding constraints, despite securing national funding as part of the July 2004 Spending Review (Bookstart, 2005), as “local delivery of the programme via the library, education and health services will entail costs which will need to be met by schemes” (Booktrust, 2005:2).

6.2.2 With regards to training

The questionnaires revealed that the majority of librarians and Bookstart officials felt they received enough training to carry out the scheme effectively (see Figure Two). However, all 8 of the Bookstart officials who participated answered that they received sufficient training and as dedicated Bookstart workers they can receive additional training to regular librarians, with one having an assistant to help with the expansion and another receiving training updates via a scheme Liaison Officer, suggesting that this finding might not be conclusive. Also, libraries with Bookstart workers were found to receive extra assistance in the scheme, with dedicated workers answering specific Bookstart queries. However, public librarians can also receive training, as one receives training as part of Children and Young People's services and another via a steering group.

Overall, there seems to be a lack of training in Bookstart for public librarians, despite only 3/26 saying they did not receive adequate training, as 'not sure' responses tended to focus on negative areas, such as the difficulty in connecting with staff who have not received Bookstart training, clearly linking a lack of knowledge with a lack of scheme support.

Figure Two:



The interviews demonstrate a variety of opinions with regards to training, emphasising the lack of a formal, nationwide training routine. The Bookstart worker and the Early Years Librarian are more pro-active in attending training sessions but may have more flexibility without the restriction of desk duties, and can even incorporate career progression into their Bookstart training.

“I do get... the chance to go on lots of courses and further my own career, if you like.” **Early Years Librarian**

“I did also go on a 10 week...Urdu course which gave me a good insight into the language and the culture...”
Bookstart Project Worker

The Early Years Librarian indicates that sufficient training is provided for library staff in Sheffield.

“We try to do that [training] by having children’s awareness sessions and people can get the opportunity to shadow what I do as well.” **Early Years Librarian**

However, this does not appear to be sufficient for some of the branch librarians.

Librarian A admits to having no formal training, except observation of the Early Year’s Librarian delivering the Babytime sessions, and this could have, along with the large attendance the library receives, contributed towards the lack of confidence felt in delivering the sessions.

“There’s so many coming it’s making us a little nervous of, you know, performing in front of so many people.”
Librarian A

However, Librarian A has a background in children’s librarianship and it is just the Babytime session structure and large attendance which are posing problems. Librarian B on the other hand would like more training despite the basic children’s awareness training given to all staff in Sheffield, as only 1 ½ hours are

dedicated to early years, and this lack of training is exacerbated by a lack of experience with children and the high attendance to sessions.

“Because I don’t have anything to do with young kids in my own life... [Bookstart sessions are a] bit daunting I suppose for myself and also there’s so many that turn up...it’s like crowd management.” **Librarian B**

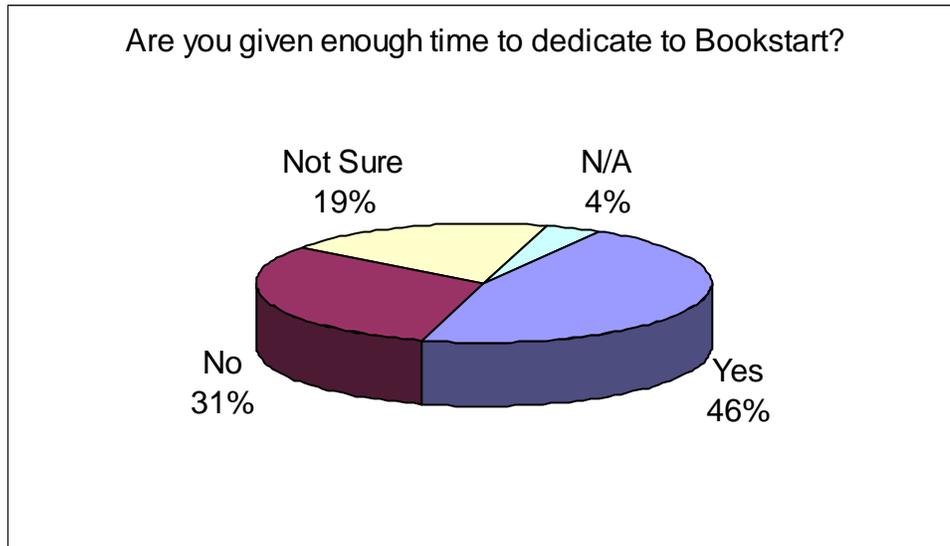
Despite declaring satisfaction with the training received, the Bookstart project worker only has to deal with a low attendance to the sessions (averaging 6-10 adults and children), which could make delivery easier. However, during the interview another library was mentioned by the project worker that was not being analysed by the researcher, which began delivering sessions and had 40 adults and children turn up on the first day. The librarian in charge had had no training and was extremely daunted by the numbers and the situation was exacerbated as the Early Years Librarian was held up, leaving the librarian to deliver the session alone. This suggests that there are serious issues with regards to training at various libraries and that large attendance, although encouraging for library usage statistics, exacerbates the difficulties.

6.2.3 With regards to time

The responses from questionnaires revealed that there were almost an equal number of librarians and Bookstart officials who felt they had enough time to dedicate to Bookstart with those who did not (See Figure Three). 7 of those who felt they had enough time were Bookstart officials, one having 27-30 hours a week to dedicate solely to it plus an extra 8 hours administration help and two having full-time posts solely for Bookstart. None of the participants who felt they had insufficient time were Bookstart workers, suggesting that Bookstart officials have enough time to concentrate on Bookstart. However, in direct contrast, some librarians did not receive any time for Bookstart at all and there were suggestions that the expansion may affect the time currently being dedicated to the scheme.

“Not really given any ‘time’ to do Bookstart. If any Bookstart enquiries occur as part of the job, we do our best to answer them.” **Participant 20: Librarian/Bookstart Official**

Figure Three:



Coupled with the issues concerning time is the discovery that most participants have other responsibilities besides Bookstart. Only 4/26 had no other duties besides Bookstart and 3 of those were Bookstart officials, reiterating the suggestion that Bookstart workers have more time to concentrate specifically on Bookstart than general public librarians. 21/26 had other responsibilities, ranging from general library duties to family learning and tutoring adult learning courses. A few even admitted,

“Bookstart doesn’t get much of a look in!” **Participant 8: Librarian/Bookstart Official**

“I do everything from babies to teenagers – hence Bookstart is only a small part of my job” **Participant 18: Librarian/Bookstart Official**

It is, however, interesting to note that 5 of those with other duties were Bookstart officials, which is surprising as their primary role is to focus specifically on Bookstart. Although, the additional roles could be other aspects of family learning which link into Bookstart, as is the case with the Bookstart project worker interviewed.

The interviews revealed mixed comments with regards to time and raised the issue of whole staff support further. Even though the Bookstart project worker is employed directly for Bookstart, other aspects of family learning are also part of the job remit and due to the part-time post, which is all the funding will allow, time restraints are evident.

“You could always use more time really...you’re never going to see everybody and I suppose I always feel that it’s the people who perhaps will benefit most that are the hardest to reach people, but I don’t get the time perhaps to go out and see.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

However the project worker still manages to go to clinics, playgroups and events for promotion and outreach, emphasising the increased pressure put on those libraries without Bookstart workers to promote the scheme effectively whilst carrying out their other duties.

The Early Years Librarian dedicates most of her 30 hours per week to Bookstart and is grateful for the time given to spend solely on it.

“I think that I’m very lucky that...from day one, I was given hours to be able to deliver Bookstart as part of my role. There are a lot of...Bookstart schemes where Bookstart is just added on to the rest of their work.” **Early Years Librarian**

This would have been interesting to compare with other schemes nationwide but was unfortunately beyond the scope of this research. However, the Early Years Librarian still has a lot of duties besides Bookstart, supporting the whole of Early Years in the community and although content with the set up and extra time possibly being dedicated due to the forthcoming expansion, other duties could be being neglected due to an insufficient time to attend to everything.

Although Librarian C only dedicates a morning a month to preparation, as the Bookstart project worker is responsible for the sessions, there is still an element of pressure concerning time.

“If there’s a meeting or if there’s only two of us and I’ve got to be on counter, I just don’t get to do it [Bookstart] at all.”

Librarian C

This emphasises the staff shortages affecting the public library service and restraints on dedicated children’s workers who should be able to get involved in the sessions.

There are indications that time pressures on librarians involved in Bookstart could be eased, especially those without dedicated workers to help them, if all staff were involved.

“If we had more staff time and more staff who were willing to get involved in Babytime then we could do more sessions, which would be good.” **Librarian B**

6.2.4 With regards to staff support

Despite the questionnaire results suggesting that most staff were involved in the scheme in some way, the information does not provide details of their support or participation, and the interview data disputes whether acceptance of the scheme is universal.

“There are some staff who sort of really are into it and then there are other staff who really want nothing what so ever to do with it [and]...they are a bit vocal sometimes.”

Librarian A

This lack of support was evident from 2003-2005 when library A had to stop running the scheme as there were not enough staff willing to run the service when the Early Years Librarian could no longer conduct the sessions, as other libraries across the city were being set up. No new initiatives were developed in its place, just an ongoing under 5s storytime, highlighting a lack of initiative from the children’s library staff, understaffing issues in the public library service and limited staff support from those employed in the library.

“The problem we’ve got here...is that there are some people who don’t do children’s work and there’s some people who do...the people who don’t do children’s work, I think they hate it...I mean if we cancelled it they’d be very happy about it. I mean if we suggested that we want to do one every week [*laughs*] there’d be a riot, they’d not be happy about it.” **Librarian B**

In contrast to Librarians A and B, the Bookstart project worker, Librarian C and the Early Years Librarian feel that all staff are supportive and are essential to the Bookstart scheme’s success, indicating that improvements are needed to ensure that all services are receiving the same benefits. However, staffing issues in the public library service are again touched upon as a limitation to the scheme, as busy periods can force some staff to think of Bookstart as an extra initiative rather than an integral part of the library service.

“When you’re working in a library service that’s as understaffed as ours...obviously something’s are sometimes not going to happen.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

6.2.5 Are targets realistic?

The Early Years librarian has a specific target from library management to set up a Bookstart Scheme in every local library and seems pleased with this, indicating that because it is in writing it will eventually be met. The Bookstart project worker has targets as part of the New Deal Opportunities Fund but seems content with them also (See Figure Four).

Figure Four (from Library B's End of Year Report, March 2005):

Criteria	Target	Actual	% Met
Bookstart Bags Delivered	175	364	208
Parents/Carers Attending Babytime	90	80	89
Parents/Carers Attending Family Learning	28	26	93

As Figure Four demonstrates the Bookstart project worker is almost meeting all of the targets and is even exceeding in one. However, despite finding them motivational, there is a warning against solely focusing on targets as qualitative data is also important.

Although Librarian C only has general library targets to meet with regards to issue figures, the importance of qualitative indicators are again highlighted in the public library service,

“We do get a lot of people coming in, it’s just some of our borrowers don’t take books out.” **Librarian C**

and this information should be taken into account when analysing data concerning the falling issue and visitor figures of public libraries, highlighted by the Audit Commission (2002) and Coates (2004).

6.3 Objective Three: To analyse if the input of the library staff contributes towards the success of the project

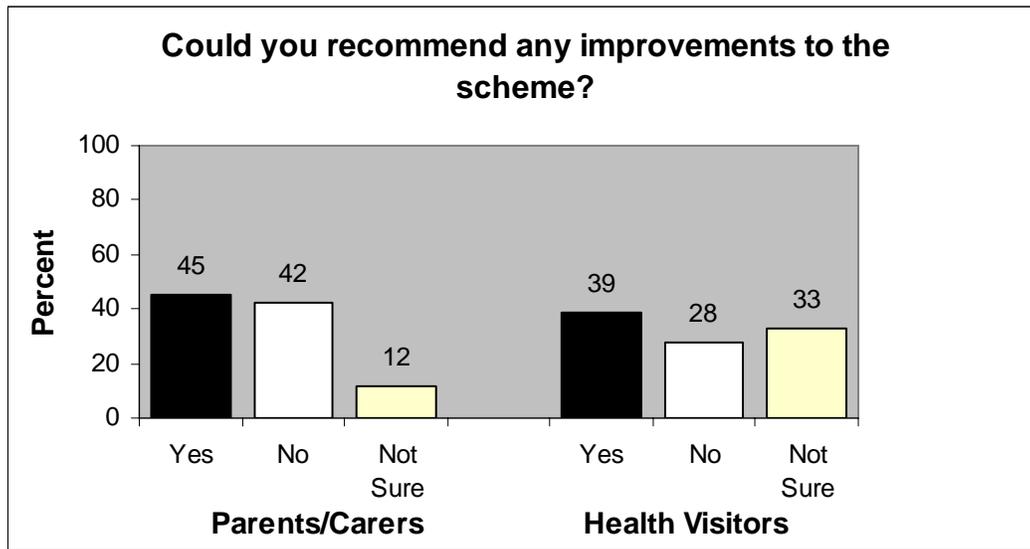
6.3.1 Satisfaction with the Bookstart scheme

The questionnaire responses from parents/carers revealed that a large majority (94%) were satisfied with the Bookstart scheme, with comments ranging from being content with a free service, to praise for a well organised scheme with great facilities. Only 6% answered that they were not sure if they were satisfied with the scheme as it was their first time to the Babytime sessions. The responses from health visitors' reiterated parental content as 16/18 declared they were satisfied with the scheme and the comments praised the dedicated Bookstart workers. Only 1 health visitor was not satisfied and 1 was not sure, both attributing their feelings towards the withdrawal of their Bookstart workers due to a lack of funding, reaffirming the concerns raised by the Bookstart project worker interviewed.

Despite an overwhelming majority of parent/carers and health visitors expressing satisfaction with the scheme they also indicated that they could recommend improvements (see Figure Five). Recommendations from parents/carers ranged from more sessions, to better promotion and tips on reading to children, and suggestions from health visitors focused on the employment of more Bookstart workers.

The focus groups and interviews reiterated parental satisfaction with the scheme and content of the sessions, even without their recommendations being met. Regular attendance was evident from all parents/carers, only missing sessions due to other commitments or forgetfulness. All of them also declared that they would recommend sessions, which in turn benefits library promotion.

Figure Five:



6.3.2 Perception of library staff

The questionnaire responses from parents/carers portray library staff in a very positive light, with comments ranging from friendly and welcoming, to good with children, enthusiastic and fun. The focus groups and interviews reaffirm this positive view of library staff as parents/carers do not say a negative comment about staff, however this is possibly due to the meetings taking place in the library itself or concerns that their comments might lead to staff being reprimanded. Also, although parents/carers use staff for a variety of book retrieval tasks they do not seem to understand the true capabilities of librarians, highlighting a gap in service provision.

The interviews with health visitors revealed little about their perception of library staff as most have limited contact with them, indicating a failing in the library-health service partnership.

“I personally have no dealings with the library at all.”
Health Visitor A

6.3.3 Promotion of the library service and the Bookstart scheme

94% of health visitors felt that they promoted the library service when distributing the Bookstart vouchers, by giving the times and days of sessions and encouraging library membership. Only 6% were not sure if they promoted the library when delivering the Bookstart vouchers, but said they did promote general library use.

However, despite an overwhelming claim to promote the scheme and the library service, the interviews with health visitors reveal that actual promotion is not as positive, suggesting the response may have been to impress the researcher or to prevent job loss. Although all claim to promote the scheme and the library service at the 6-13 month developmental check when they give out the Bookstart voucher, there is evidence from this unconvincing response that this may not always be the case.

“Sometimes obviously they [parents/carers] come to clinic for other things and Bookstart is not something we’ll have spoken about. But if we *possibly* can we’ll *try* and mention it” [Emphasis added by researcher.] **Health Visitor A**

The lack of knowledge of the library and its staff inhibits the promotion health visitors can devote to Bookstart, even when time is dedicated to it.

“I do promote the library service, but I don’t deal with them directly...I have been to one of the Babytime sessions when they *first* started up.” [Emphasis added by researcher.] **Health Visitor A**

Attending the sessions demonstrates pro-activity, however a more recent visit would be more beneficial and could introduce the health visitor to the library and its staff, thus boosting partnership work. This lack of library knowledge is not limited to one health visitor, but is evident across the 4 PCTs in Sheffield.

“If we had some information on local libraries and knew exactly what groups they’ve got set up and what times they run, it would make, well we would be able to promote it better.” **Health Visitor C**

There is also some uncertainty about how much time individual health visitors dedicate to the scheme as the Bookstart Representatives feel that they might do more.

“I wouldn’t like to say that all the health visitors do as much as me...it all depends on workload though.” **Health Visitor B**

“I wonder if health visitors are doing kind of generally the bare minimum...it obviously goes beyond giving out the green vouchers and maybe health visitors need to explore with the Bookstart scheme to see how they can promote it better.” **Health Visitor C**

However, Health Visitor D is not a Bookstart Representative and feels that it is promoted well.

Recommendations by parents/carers were found to help library and Bookstart promotion.

“I’ve given leaflets to lots of other women from the playgroup that I go to.” **Parent/Carer E**

“In fact several people come because I recommended them [Bookstart sessions].” **Parent/Carer G**

There are also indications from parents/carers that library and Bookstart promotion is already successful.

“I think the people I know already know about it, already have the information.” **Parent/Carer F**

However, the lack of promotion outside of the library, regarding the suitability of the building for young children, is also highlighted, emphasising the importance of staff who can work outside the library building and concentrate on outreach work.

“To be honest I hadn’t been in a library for years and I was very surprised at how easy it was for the kids...I think the idea of somebody going out to...introduce the thing is a really good idea, because I wouldn’t have thought to have come here with an 18 month old child.” **Parent/Carer H**

Although parents/carers indicate that some adults already know about the scheme, library staff could be doing more to promote the library and the Babytime sessions. The interviews revealed that there was a heavy reliance on word of mouth and in-library promotion, which will not reach those reluctant to use libraries. The lack of time, already mentioned, does compromise outreach, with branch libraries relying on central library management and the Early Year’s Librarian to promote services.

“I don’t have anything to do with the publicity part, other than giving out the leaflets in the library...the publicity outside I don’t tend to have a lot to do with...I don’t get time to do any outreach work at all.” **Librarian C**

Promotion is evidently better in libraries with Bookstart workers who can leave the library to promote scheme, and the extra funding received by some libraries also contributes to better promotional activity.

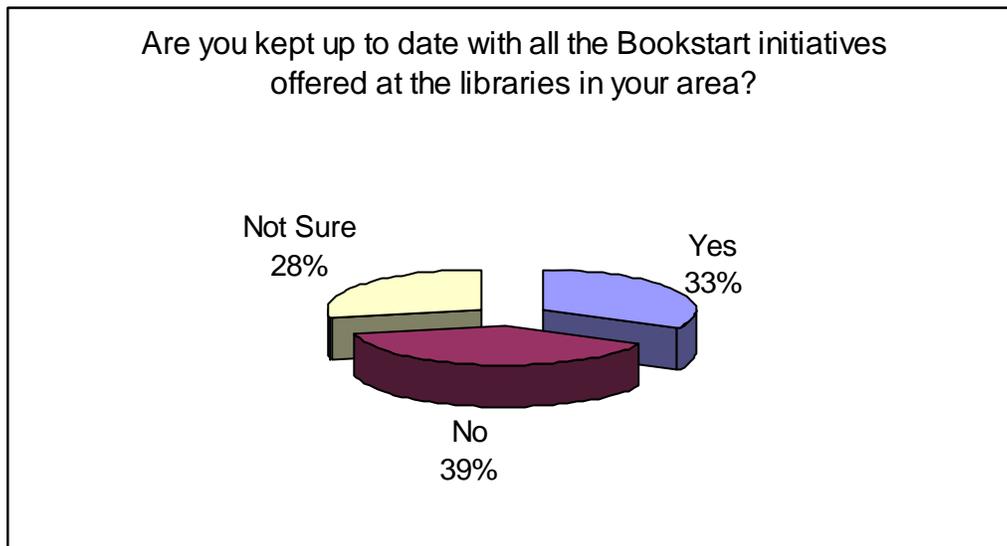
“I know a lot of other libraries it’s just the librarian doing Babytime and they’ve got more extra work as well, and we’ve got...[the Bookstart Project Worker] as well who’s part-funded by New Deal she can also run initiatives. She did one... that anybody who came in and used the Bookstart card got a free book, for each child. And she

showed me the figures for that the other day and some people taken quite a lot of books out, as well as come in for the free books so we can do initiatives like that, and you tend to get people coming from just outside the area... So we do get quite a few extra things really because of that.”
Librarian C

6.3.4 The success of partnership working

There is a distinct lack of communication between the health visitors and the library service revealed in the questionnaires (see Figure Six). Only 6/18 health visitors were kept up to date with local Bookstart initiatives, which is extremely worrying considering 17/18 claimed they promoted the scheme, suggesting that they could be providing misleading or incorrect information to potential library users.

Figure Six:



Health visitors also indicate that they are reluctant to spend any more time on Bookstart, even if it was available, which questions their dedication to the scheme and their role in the partnership, especially as three of those interviewed (health visitors A, B and C) were Bookstart Representatives.

“I’m pulled in so many different directions to do things and I think I dedicate as much as I can...I enjoy what I do enormously but I don’t think I’m in a position to offer anymore to the project.” **Health Visitor A**

“I don’t think I’ve got the time to dedicate anymore, unless we’re actually instructed to” **Health Visitor D**

Health visitor D’s response suggests that although there may be time available, there are other duties which are receiving a higher priority. All four spend only 5-10 minutes per health check explaining the scheme and giving out the voucher and there is no evidence that is expanded on in later checks by asking if parents are attending the sessions.

Although Health Visitor B clearly demonstrates a keen interest in Bookstart, attending both the Sheffield and national Bookstart conferences, there is evidence of discontent towards the scheme and its demands, exemplifying the strains of partnership working.

“Well at the moment we just can’t put any more time into it... the issue is that there’s lots of work coming out from Bookstart, and more packs and things that need delivering and promoting, and that does actually need a major... discussion, and look at how that’s going to be delivered, because we’re not their [Bookstart’s] workforce,...it’s a small part of our work. I feel it’s important but when it comes to prioritising it will be lower down on other people’s priorities, and because it all acts on goodwill... people do say all the time, ‘well, if education or libraries, or whoever’s, sponsoring it, feel it’s such a good project, why aren’t they completely... backing it up with workers and things, why are they relying on other organisations to do the work?’, which they have always done. So you can be sort of generous to a point, but after that you have to say ‘...what we can do is give the vouchers out and promote it but it’s actually your scheme you need workers to do it’.”
Health Visitor B

There is only Health Visitor C who declares that she would like to be more involved if there was time available and her recent promotion to Bookstart Representative exemplifies this dedication to the project. However, more time seems unlikely without extra staff, echoing the problems facing the public library service.

The health visitors interviewed have little knowledge of the library, staff and new initiatives which is worrying if they are to promote the scheme accurately and positively. Only one health visitor knew the library staff, opening times and information available in their local library and this could have been as a consequence of the library being situated next door to the health centre. However, there is a suggestion that improvements in this area could develop the Bookstart service.

“Information on that kind of thing [library open times and initiatives], readily available in the duty practice setting would be quite useful.” **Health Visitor C**

Bookstart Representatives are kept up to date with initiatives via the Early Years Librarian, rather than branch library, and information is disseminated to other health visitors in the PCT via unit meetings. However, as the researcher was unable to attend one of these meetings, it is unconfirmed how much time is dedicated to this. Also, by relying on the city’s Early Year’s Librarian to promote the scheme the local partnership is undermined, which could focus specifically on the district of the city, highlighting their individual events and library service. It is also worrying to discover that one PCT did not even have a local library, exacerbating the problems of health visitor library knowledge, and relies on the Bookstart Representative promoting the library service they use, which would not be possible if they did not use a public library or if they lived at a distance from the area where they worked.

Where there is a Bookstart project worker, communication between the library and health centre is successful, as leaflets about one-off library sessions are posted to clinics and the library's early years' policy is well known.

“Using a Bookstart worker, I think, is one of the keys to making the scheme a success...I wish there was funding for workers in all areas of the city” **Health Visitor A**

However, this reliance on Bookstart workers again indicates that health visitors do not see the improvement of the schemes' promotion and outreach as relating to their working schedule.

There are varied responses from librarians and Bookstart officials regarding the partnership working and as branch librarians have no contact with health visitors, networking tends to be left to the Early Years Librarian and Bookstart project workers. Although Librarian's A and B see contact with health visitors as an area for improvement, they are currently unaware of any of the health visitors in their area, and as those primarily responsible for the Bookstart scheme in their library are missing a great opportunity to promote the scheme and develop outreach strategies. The main problem with establishing contact with the health visitors is the restrictions placed on branch library staff unable to leave the counter.

“Unless people come here I don't get to know them.”
Librarian C

The Bookstart project worker, on the other hand, is very positive towards the partnership with the health visitors, possibly as a result of having more flexibility to network.

“I mean Bookstart wouldn't work without the health visitors. In most parts of the city they're kind of like the front line in delivering Bookstart. Here, I work very much in partnership with them, they all point out particular families to me that

they think, you know, I might have missed, or have just moved into the area, or they would benefit from coming to a particular course.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

The Bookstart worker also has time to dedicate to networking with other agencies, particularly useful in an area with a high ethnic population, aiding session content and advocating social inclusion.

“It can make it difficult for me, not speaking any community languages sometimes...that’s something I’ve tended to work with a lot of other agencies with, a lot of link workers and community workers, who’ve got those skills.”

Bookstart Project Worker

This positive outlook is reiterated by the Early Years Librarian who is able to utilise the health visitor PCT briefings and unit meetings to encourage feedback and update them with initiatives, but this is again related to greater flexibility of time.

Partnership working in general is seen as vitally important to scheme, uniting parents/carers, health visitors, and the library service, as well as other early years partners across the city such as Sure Start, and is even acknowledged by parent/carers as successful.

“I think it’s quite good how things like that feel co-ordinated now, it’s not just like, there’s some events in the library that you find out about at the library... Bookstart tell you about the library and they tell you about Sure Start and everybody seems to tell you about each others events...so you’re not scraping round for information all over the place.” **Parent/Carer F**

However, there is room for improvement as some libraries even fail to ask parents/carers for feedback on the sessions;

“We just sort of run it and then everyone goes at the end.”
Librarian A

This indicates a lack of initiative on the behalf of the librarians, neglecting to implement a simple, yet potentially effective method to review the service. The lack of formal, structured feedback means that only passing comments are considered, which could easily be misheard or forgotten. This is reiterated by Librarian C suggesting that it is not a problem isolated to library A and is something which needs improving.

Partnership working is emphasised as a major contributor to the previous growth of the scheme and the way forward for future progression.

“It’s grown and grown over the years, and that’s the way forward really...[we’re] very lucky that we’ve got our 4 reps for the Primary Care Trust, that I work closely with Sure Start and all the other partners, particularly child health, the NHS child Health.” **Early Years Librarian.**

Communication is essential to partnerships and although considered effective by the Early Years Librarian, this may be slightly naïve given the health visitor’s interview revelations of their lack of knowledge of the library service.

6.3.5 Parental use of libraries as a result of Bookstart

The research revealed a mixed response to library usage before Bookstart but indicates that all parents/carers use the library more as a result of the scheme and will continue to use it after their children grow up, reiterating Morris (2004) that Bookstart can encourage parental reader development. Library staff are considered a key factor in this decision, highlighting the important role they play in Bookstart and perception of the public library service.

Although some parents/carers had used the library previously, others were using it solely as a result of Bookstart, and even dedicated library days have emerged, often on the day the sessions are usually held.

“Tuesday is library day” **Parent/Carer A**

“They [parents/carers] make it part of their weekly routine now, going down to the library to change their books and make use of other library services as well.” **Health Visitor A**

It would appear that library staff have helped to destroy the stereotype of libraries as unwelcoming places, especially for children, which has boosted library usage.

“When I used it [when younger] it was really quiet and really not at all like they are now-a-days.” **Parent/Carer B**

However, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that all staff make users feel welcome in the library, overcoming the staff divide on early years' services and capitalising on the opportunity for the scheme to promote the library to adults as well as children.

“I don't get to go in there [the adult library] because K [participant's daughter] likes to re-arrange the books, so we tend not to go in...” **Parent/Carer G**

6.4 Objective Four: To identify if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the service than the library

Questionnaire responses from parents/carers reveal that they all had a positive first impression of the library, with comments ranging from good, to warm, friendly, gorgeous and welcoming.

“It is a place my child really likes to visit.” **Participant 32: Parent/Carer**

The questionnaires also demonstrate that a majority of participants feel the library is the best place to deliver Bookstart (see Figure Seven), providing an independent and appropriate venue for introducing children to books.

“Only a library caters for all members of the community without prejudice.” **Participant 8: Parent/Carer**

However, the 8/33 parents who were not sure if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the scheme highlighted the importance of partnership working and liaison between agencies, indicating a good awareness of the Bookstart network structure.

Concerns were raised by the health visitors that they could not dedicate as much time to the scheme as libraries, echoing previous comments from the interviews and declaring they had

“Too much to do as it is.” **Participant 14: Health Visitor**

Only 2/18 health visitors said that another agency would be better equipped, specifying Sure Start and more Bookstart project workers to roll out the scheme, overlooking themselves as a possible service provider.

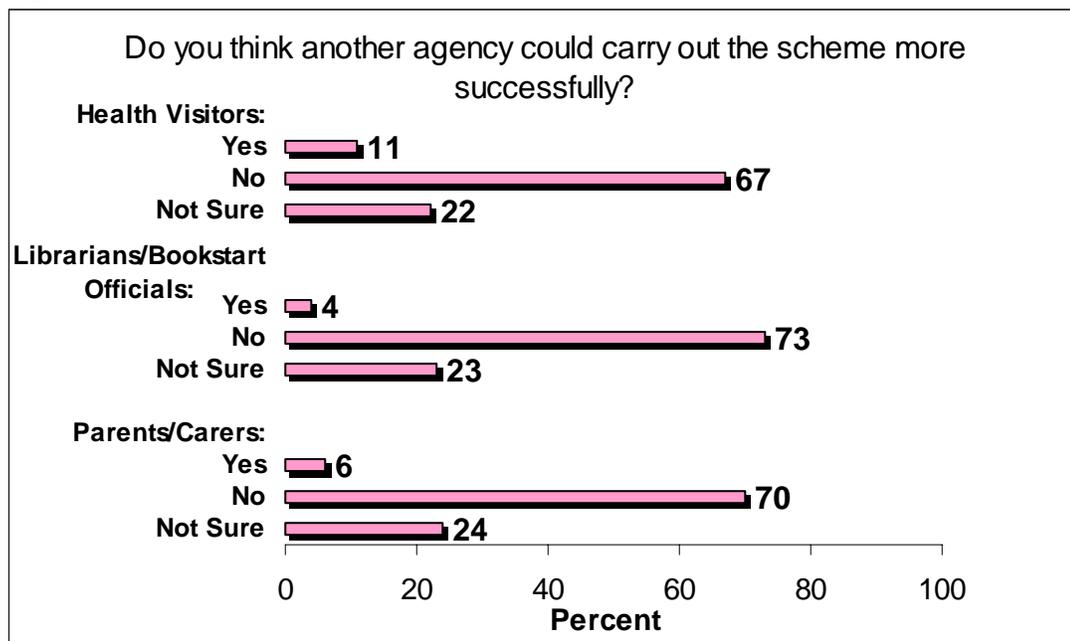
Despite the majority of librarians/Bookstart officials believing the library is the best agency to deliver the Bookstart scheme, with comments reiterating parents/carers of an independent space, and health visitor's of dedicating a higher priority to the scheme than other agencies, the key theme which emerges is that Bookstart

“...needs to be delivered in partnership” **Participant 11:
Librarian/Bookstart Official**

with the library at the hub of activity.

Even though only 1 librarian/Bookstart official said another agency would be better equipped to deliver the scheme, mentioning one of the other partners, it is a surprising admittance from someone involved in the scheme and exemplifies how the anonymity of questionnaires ensured participants felt comfortable with all responses.

Figure Seven:



Interviews with all the groups reiterate the survey findings that the library is the best venue to deliver the scheme. The Babytime sessions help families to become more familiar and comfortable with libraries, enhancing life-long learning and the regular attendance from parents/carers demonstrates satisfaction with the scheme and venue.

“Oh I try to come to every one...we give up something else to come to them” **Parent/Carer G**

“I know that the kids enjoy it. It’s a nice environment for them...Sometimes in libraries you feel like you should be keeping a really close eye on them, but here it’s quite relaxed” **Parent/Carer A**

However, the negative stereotype of libraries is still emphasised, which needs to be overcome so that child friendly libraries become the norm.

By separating itself from a mother and toddler group the library also encourages men to attend.

“It’s friendly and supportive but it’s not sort of really mumsy.” **Parent/Carer D**

However, out of all 33 parents/carers who responded to the questionnaire only 1 was male and the same male was the only father/male carer to attend the Bookstart sessions when the researcher was there, reiterating Morris’s (2004) findings of a female-bias in the Babytime sessions.

The parents/carers are extremely positive towards the scheme operating in the library as the benefits are seen as educational as well as fun.

“It encourages the child not to be afraid and to use the library.” **Parent/Carer B**

“They [children] enjoy the stories and just getting used to books really.” **Parent/Carer E**

The Bookstart themes also help to destroy the negative library perceptions some people hold, exemplified when the springtime theme in library B brought baby animals into the library, including a goat.

The parents/carers interviewed expressed concern about another agency delivering the Babytime sessions as they did not think they would dedicate as much time and effort to them as a library.

“If a school did it I think that, you know, if they’ve got a budget cut or whatever, they’ll say ‘what can we cut first?’, it’d be the sessions.” **Parent/Carer E**

Also, as the sessions are seen to open up the library to everyone and destroy the stereotypes, passing the responsibility onto another agency would have a detrimental affect on library usage, in an already unsettling time for public libraries.

Although generally positive about the venue, there are drawbacks to holding the sessions in the library. Over attendance is a main issue at library A, which is seen to affect library staff as well as those attending the sessions.

“It gets a bit silly sometimes doesn’t it? Falling over things and people” **Parent/Carer C**

“The people who don’t do children’s work, I think they hate it [*laughs*], with prams in the hallway, screaming kids, there’s always someone who wets themselves, there’s juice and biscuits everywhere, and it’s too much hassle for them.” **Librarian B**

However, the large attendance is not viewed as a major difficulty by parents, and provides a good social base for children and adults.

“It’s only an hour, so you can cope with it for that long, can’t you.” **Parent/Carer C**

Also, the lack of space is not necessarily isolated to libraries as other venues, such as health clinics and nurseries, could also struggle to entertain 50 adults and children at once.

By holding an early years group in the library there is the issue of disaffecting other library users, especially with those groups that receive a higher attendance. Again, however, the low frequency of the sessions and the need to resurrect the library image as a place for everyone in echoed.

“I think the general public get to know when it’s the Babytimes, when it’s the noisy times and... library staff will point out that it’s perhaps an hour a month or an hour a week... I think you’ve got to get away from libraries being quiet places... we’re not shushy people anymore ... there’s been a big change.” **Early Years Librarian**

The difficulty in overcoming the negative stereotype is reaffirmed by parent/carer attitudes prior to attending the Babytimes.

“I wouldn’t have believed it at first, a friend of mine said ‘oh, they’re really great at the library and they don’t mind if your children run around’ and I thought, I didn’t believe it.” **Parent/Carer D**

“I wouldn’t have thought to have come with an 18 month old child...but when, you know, I found out elsewhere that there’s something to do, then we did it.” **Parent/Carer H**

Health visitors and library staff also recognise the importance of destroying the old library image.

“They see when they go into the premises that it’s not like perhaps they imagined.” **Health Visitor A**

“We’ve worked very hard to be baby friendly. But obviously there’s a whole legacy of people considering libraries as intellectual, quiet, serious places that you’re sort of working against in a way.” **Bookstart Project Worker**

This emphasises the importance of developing outreach and promotional strategies, to get people into libraries to see what they have to offer and realise the lenient early years policy, and this is an area where libraries and health services could work together more. Promotion and partnerships could improve with dedicated Bookstart workers at each library, especially in deprived areas where attendance is viewed as more difficult to secure, but this relies heavily on funding.

Although librarians and Bookstart officials are generally positive towards holding sessions in the library, reiterating advantages of boosting library usage and promoting reading for pleasure, they do highlight more drawbacks than parents/carers and health visitors. As well as the complaints from other users and the negative library image, the problems include limited child facilities.

“We haven’t got a children’s toilet...we haven’t really got changing facilities...we haven’t got enough room for pushchairs.” **Librarian B**

However, there was not a single complaint about this from the parents/carers who participated, suggesting that it is either an issue affecting staff more than parents/carers or that the attendees are so pleased with the service that they can overlook such difficulties.

6.5 Further findings

6.5.1 The voucher system

As Sheffield operates a voucher system, in which parent/carers receive a voucher from the health visitor at the 6-13 month developmental check, which they redeem at the library for the Bookstart pack, it was extremely interesting to discover that all of the parents/carers interviewed did not seem aware of the vouchers, suggesting the voucher system is not successful.

“There’s no vouchers, you get the pack.” **Parent/Carer D**

“I didn’t get anything from the health visitor.” **Parent/Carer G**

However, in direct contrast to the parents/carers, the librarians interviewed generally seemed positive about the vouchers, suggesting that they encourage more families to come into libraries.

“It seems to work...most people seem to have them [vouchers] and if they don’t then they know they’ve lost it, they know they should have one.” **Librarian B**

This suggests that either: the librarians were being naïve; that the sample of parents/carers interviewed was unique; or that another system had been adopted to supplement the vouchers. Some of the health visitors were also positive about the vouchers, but time constraints may have influenced this.

“That’s actually the best we can do at the moment...we can only just, sort of, you know, promote it with the vouchers really.” **Health Visitor B**

However, the voucher system was viewed in a different light to the librarians by the Bookstart project worker and some of the other health visitors interviewed, and their comments suggest that the system on its own is insufficient.

“It’s worked to reach large numbers of people...and perhaps the problem with the voucher scheme, and not having anything else, it leaves an awful lot up to the individual family to actually take that voucher, go to their local library, get their Bookstart pack, get the library ticket there and...you know families being disadvantaged in this area, and perhaps more likely to be socially, sort of, on the margin, makes them less likely to come and do that.”

Bookstart Project Worker

“I think it’s very dependent on parental motivation...we do have some families where I know that they don’t take the vouchers to the library...they don’t have good literacy, don’t value books or don’t see the importance of books, the library is not somewhere they’ve ever been and vouchers do not get redeemed.” **Health Visitor A**

“There is a group of people that you hand them out to that will, you know, that will never actually set foot in a library, and then you’re feeling, well it would be great to be able to actually hand them a pack really.” **Health Visitor C**

The difference in opinions highlights an interesting issue of whether it is more important to ensure library attendance or to get materials to those who need it most and suggests that a combination of methods is vital to reach more adults and children. As areas of the city have begun to distribute the packs directly to parents/carers via the health visitors and the Bookstart project worker, this clearly explains the reason why some parents/carers have not heard about the vouchers.

6.5.2 *Continuity of the Bookstart sessions*

The Bookstart sessions in both of the libraries analysed are held on the same day, date and time each month and the research revealed that it is mainly the same people returning to each session, which is a concern if the sessions are to continue after the current children grow up. Also, some parents mix up the dates, as the second Monday or Tuesday of the month is not always easy to remember, especially for those with very young children, and as sessions are only monthly they can be frustrating to miss. This suggests that better promotion of the sessions is vital, both inside and outside of the library.

Although librarians and the Bookstart project worker realise the drawbacks of holding sessions at the same time and date each month, neither library has tried other dates, although occasionally supplementary initiatives are put on at the weekend across Sheffield, specifically for fathers and carers who cannot attend the library during the week. The understaffed public libraries are in part to blame for this, as sessions rely on willing staff to conduct them and also, as the Bookstart project worker suggests, you can never please everyone and by holding sessions on different dates,

“You might get a different group of people, but you would end up with the same issues of getting the same regulars.”

Bookstart Project Worker

Although weekly sessions might be more beneficial in helping parents/carers to remember the time of the sessions, and could also ease over attendance difficulties, this is heavily reliant on staff time and support which is not always given.

Despite the drawbacks, regularity of the sessions seems to help some parents, allowing sufficient time to rearrange work schedules to attend the sessions.

“I can get to most of them, because the dates for the Babytime, Bookstart sessions, are actually known quite a long time in advance, there a regular time...Because I work, I need to book the nursery quite ahead, it's like useful because I know that they're going to be the second Monday of the month or whatever, and...and well some of the other things I've had problems with because I've only known two or three weeks in advance” **Parent/Carer D**

Even Parent/Carer F who now works on the days of the sessions is happy with the continuity, declaring it best to know where you stand in order to look for an alternative.

6.5.3 Lack of knowledge of nationwide and citywide Bookstart schemes

There is a distinct lack of knowledge from parents/carers about the national Bookstart scheme and other Babytime sessions in the local area, demonstrating a key area where library staff could improve promotion.

“I didn't realise it was called Bookstart. I thought it was like a play group.” **Parent/Carer C**

The sessions are known as Babytimes to associate them with the library rather than the national scheme but this does mean that few parents are aware of the scope of the scheme. On more than one occasion the researcher was asked by a parent/carers what Bookstart was and if it was the same as the Babytimes. City wide schemes are also overlooked by parents/carers which could be an area to encourage increased library attendance, especially for those unable to make it to the regular time slot at their nearest library. This idea was reinforced when the researcher was met with enthusiasm about other Bookstart sessions in the area,

“It'd be nice to know about them, especially for the second half of the week” **Parent/Carer F**

“I don't know about any others...but if they did them...and it was convenient then I would go.” **Parent/Carer G**

7. Conclusions

7.1 Objective One: To explore if the Bookstart scheme has created any new duties for library staff

The research revealed that most staff in libraries are involved in Bookstart to a certain degree. However, at branch level Bookstart does not seem to have affected library duties to a great extent, as sessions are incorporated into the normal working week, with an extra hour spent on preparation and a morning dedicated to delivery a month. This lack of change is possibly due to time, funding and support constraints present in library A and due to the employment of a Bookstart project worker at library B, rather than a lack of enthusiasm for the scheme, as all those involved are extremely happy with and proud of what they produce. However, with the oncoming expansion existing duties may be affected more, as storage and distribution techniques are being reviewed.

The Bookstart project worker and the Early Years Librarian have more responsibility for administering the scheme and thus spend more time on preparation and delivery, as well as promotion and outreach. Although having dedicated time to spend on the scheme there are indications that Bookstart can take over other duties, especially with the expansion bringing more work and responsibility. Again, however, the dedication to the scheme is evident suggesting that all new duties are treated enthusiastically.

Bookstart has extended the early years' provision in libraries and provided a regular time slot for under fives, with only minor disruption to the working schedule of local librarians. However, as all staff are involved in some way in the scheme, Bookstart has created extra duties for those not normally involved in children's librarianship and this has produced mixed responses, which are evaluated later in the conclusion.

7.2 Objective Two: To investigate if library staff are sufficiently equipped to run the Bookstart scheme

7.2.1 With regards to funding

There are concerns raised in the interviews with regards to a lack of funding and suggestions that it could affect staff morale. Although all the librarians and the Bookstart project worker perceive the scheme in a positive light, the lack of money given to libraries specifically for Bookstart could cause some to justify whether the scheme is worthwhile, especially those not directly involved, and could contribute to some libraries not receiving whole staff support.

“For those who don’t think Bookstart’s very important, they don’t like to see money disappearing on any children’s activities.” **Librarian B**

Thus, justifying Librarian A’s suggestion for a separate Bookstart budget.

For all the benefits of funding, provided via agencies such as Sure Start and the New Deal Opportunities Fund, there are many drawbacks, including the amount of time it takes to place a bid and the uncertainty of projects when the funding is due to run out. The Bookstart scheme, to be successful, needs a regular supply of income which can only be obtained via true support from the library service and its partners.

Although the Early Years Librarian suggests that library staff are sufficiently supported by her funds, this only offers short term relief and does not tackle the long term problems encountered by the Bookstart project worker. Those libraries without a dedicated worker to focus on funding applications are at an even worse disadvantage, having to cope with the funds they have, set up their own initiatives to raise money, or dedicate more time specifically to the funding of the scheme, thus taking time away from other duties.

7.2.2 With regards to training

The questionnaires from librarians and Bookstart officials revealed a negative outlook towards training in the Bookstart scheme, however discrepancies arise in the interview responses, highlighting the lack of a formal, regulated, training initiative for those involved in Bookstart. Specialised Bookstart staff, such as the Bookstart project worker and the Early Years Librarian, have better opportunities to attend training sessions, which could be influenced by time issues, as they are not restricted by library desk duties. However, librarians at branch level have limited opportunities for training, with provision including observation of the Early Years Librarian at the Babytimes and attendance to a compulsory basic children's awareness session. The lack of confidence from Librarian A could be remedied with better training opportunities and the lack of children's experience from Librarian B, could be built upon with courses specifically designed for those new to children's librarianship. Also, basic Bookstart awareness sessions to all library staff could help unite all staff to support the scheme, providing a better service and opening up opportunities for further development.

7.2.3 With regards to time

The findings suggest that either those librarians and Bookstart officials who feel they have enough time to dedicate to Bookstart are able to focus specifically on it, are minimally involved (only distributing the packs or basic information), or feel that they dedicate enough time to it by simply delivering the sessions. However, incorporating Bookstart administration into an already busy schedule puts pressure onto public library staff, especially those without any Bookstart workers, and limitations with regards to funding bids, outreach and publicity are evident, which are sure to be exacerbated with the expansion. Whole staff support could ease time issues, but this is not prevalent in all libraries.

7.2.4 With regards to staff support

Although not evident in all libraries a lack of whole staff support creates more problems for library staff involved in Bookstart, who are already battling for money, time and training. The reluctance from staff could be due to the large attendance to the sessions and more frequent sessions could reduce the numbers, but as Librarian B points out this is not a possibility in some libraries.

“The people who don’t do children’s work, I think they hate it...if we suggested that we want to do one every week
[laughs] there’d be a riot, they’d not be happy about it.”
Librarian B

This is a frustrating situation to discover as instead of being happy that sessions are successful some are complaining about the library being used, in a time when issues figures and visits to libraries are dwindling, exemplifying part of the unwelcoming library stereotype that needs to be abolished. As staff support is seen to contribute to the success of the scheme at library B, any staff grievances should be evaluated and remedied where possible, to ensure that each library receives equal assistance when delivering Bookstart.

7.2.5 Are targets realistic?

Targets vary per library and there are no specific targets with regards to Bookstart for normal public library workers, however the Bookstart project worker and Early Years Librarian do have set targets which are viewed as manageable and motivational.

Overall the public library staff manage to role out the scheme effectively despite the pressures from funding, training, time, staff and targets. However, there is a need to ensure continuity of assistance is received by all schemes, especially as the expansion looks set to exacerbate existing pressures.

7.3 Objective Three: To analyse if the input of the library staff contributes towards the success of the project

7.3.1 Satisfaction with the Bookstart scheme

Although health visitors and parents/carers expressed their satisfaction with the scheme, recommendations offered indicate that the scheme still has a long way to go. Through formal feedback and discussions with partners, libraries could build on the recommendations and ensure the service remains relevant and responsive to community needs.

7.3.2 Perception of library staff

The positive feedback from parents/carers about library staff is encouraging as they are an essential aspect of the library service and thus the Bookstart scheme. However, the lack of knowledge from health visitors about the library staff is worrying as it affects the success of partnership working and therefore Bookstart.

7.3.3 Promotion of the library service and the Bookstart scheme

All health visitors seem positive towards the promotion of the scheme and recognise the benefits it can have for adults and children. However, the indication that some health visitors are doing less than others could be detrimental to the Bookstart scheme and is perhaps an area that should be regulated and monitored by each PCT's Bookstart Representative. A set standard of promotion via partners is something the Bookstart scheme must capitalise on to get people into libraries who would not normally enter a library building. As a researcher it would have been useful to attend one of the developmental health checks to see if promotion is as good as they claim or if the responses were merely to impress the researcher, but this contravenes patient confidentiality and thus proved impossible.

There is limited promotion from library staff, as they mainly focus on internal displays and posters. External promotion is something that needs improving and could benefit the scheme greatly. However, this will only be possible with more time, support and funding for regular library staff to leave the building and hold visits in the library, or with the employment of more dedicated Bookstart workers.

7.3.4 The success of partnership working

Better communication is clearly needed between the Bookstart partners, especially with the oncoming expansion. The main difficulties include the questionable dedication from all health visitors, including the Bookstart Representatives, which is something that needs reviewing by the Early Years Librarian and monitoring by the Bookstart Representative for each PCT. Closer liaison with libraries could ease the situation, as attending the Babytimes could enlighten them to the immediate benefits the sessions have and how much those attending appreciate them, as well as introduce them to the library and its staff to enable better promotion of the services offered.

Networking will be essential with the oncoming expansion as no extra support is currently being given to deal with materials, storage and distribution, suggesting that Health Visitor B's earlier concerns may become a reality as Bookstart will increasingly expect more from partners to help deal with its growth. Bookstart+ is to be delivered via libraries and health centres and the Bookstart Treasure Box via early years' settings and libraries (Booktrust, 2005:31).

“With the other Bookstart materials coming online [the expansion] it's going to be essential that we work more in partnerships...because there's no extra support given, really, to deliver these materials, so it's going to have to be done with the health visitors, the nurseries, the schools, the play groups, the Sure Starts...” **Bookstart Project Worker**

Partnership working is considered vital to the scheme, improving the content of library initiatives and reaching areas otherwise overlooked, thus helping with promotion, time, staffing and funding issues. However, the responsibility for this success is mainly divided between the Bookstart project workers and the Early Years Librarian and therefore those libraries without a Bookstart worker are at a disadvantage as they lack the extra time and staff to promote outside of the library. Although some deem the partnerships a success there is room for improvement, from both the health visitors and the library service, and more commitment could improve promotion and outreach work to boost library usage and reach more non-users.

7.3.5 Parental use of libraries as a result of Bookstart

The research revealed that all parents/carers used the library more as a result of Bookstart, indicating the first step in reader development and is something that should be capitalised on to ensure life-long family use. However, the negative library image still prevents some from using the library to its full capacity, which is an area that all library staff can help to improve. It would have been useful to analyse the reasons why some parents/carers who received the Bookstart pack do not use the library, as this could further improve library usage, but this was unfortunately beyond the scope of the research.

Library staff are an essential partner in the Bookstart network, having a major impact on the success of the scheme, creating a welcoming library atmosphere and encouraging family reader development. However, the lack of contact with the health visitors undermines partnership working and promotional techniques vital to Bookstart and is an area which needs improvement.

7.4 Objective Four: To identify if another agency would be better equipped to deliver the service than the library

The lack of space, limited child facilities, initial reluctance from some parents/carers to go into the library due to the negative perceptions they held, the poor location of some public libraries, inconvenient opening hours and the worries about noisy children disaffecting other library users, caused some to question the suitability of the library as the appropriate venue for the Babytime sessions.

However, despite the challenges faced, the library is still viewed as the best place to hold the Bookstart sessions as it can demonstrate emphatically that the library is for everyone, no matter how young or old they are, helping to abolish the negative library image so many still have. It is also a neutral non-judgemental venue which can provide the perfect facilities for introducing babies to their first books, without worries about damage costs and late return fines and can dedicate a higher priority to book sharing than other venues. Although the lack of facilities could improve, for an hour a month it is possible to cope without too much inconvenience and many other venues would face similar space issues. However, if the library service wanted to expand the sessions to weekly, or fortnightly, then facilities would need reviewing for the sake of parents/carers and library staff.

7.5 Further Conclusions

The voucher system is clearly deficient on its own as it does not necessarily reach those non-users who need it most. There is good awareness from the Bookstart project worker and the group of health visitors about the need to supplement the vouchers with actual distributing of the packs and closer liaison could ensure that more families receive the information vital to child development. The satisfaction from the librarians and some of the health visitors with the voucher system could be in part due to limited time to employ outreach strategies, which is clearly something that needs reviewing to reach more families.

Although there are some drawbacks with the continuity of the sessions, including a limited variety of attendees, most parents see it as a benefit, helping them to remember the date and time, allowing sufficient time to book days off work to attend the sessions and assisting with the weekly routine some have mapped out. However, there might be a different story for those not attending, with the exception of Parent/Carer F, and this is an area which needs further research.

The Bookstart sessions offer an opportunity to promote the national and local schemes but this is overlooked by both libraries analysed. Promotion of other city wide schemes could boost library usage, especially for those unable to attend the regular time slots at their nearest library. Also, although the local Babytime sessions are successful and can focus specifically on community needs, by incorporating the wider aims of Bookstart they also represent part of the national network. National promotion could encourage parents/carers to recommend sessions to people who live outside the area and if users themselves have to move out of the city, knowledge of the national scheme would enable them to search for their new local scheme, providing a familiar base for socialising in an unfamiliar district.

8. Recommendations

8.1 Library promotion

- Local events, including school fêtes, could benefit from library stalls to attract new users and advise on the lenient early years' policies. Also, regular visits from nurseries and infant schools to the library could help introduce young children, who may not have heard of Bookstart, to books. However this is heavily dependent on staff willingness to be involved in outreach work, as well as sufficient time to leave the library or conduct sessions.
- Despite posters advertising the sessions, better in-house promotion of the actual dates and times is vital and leaflets which parents can take away could be a cost-effective way to remedy this problem.

“I tried to come to the one before but got the dates mixed up so missed it.” **Parent/Carer B**

- The advertisement of local schemes could boost library usage across the city and widen the service provision for early years.
- Libraries could utilise the brand of Bookstart to promote the national scheme, with logos on posters and leaflets so that word of mouth promotion is not limited to the city.
- Bookstart Representatives could monitor promotional strategies throughout their PCT and distribute packs at clinics to supplement the vouchers.

8.2 Staff Training

- A city wide training initiative could ensure all staff involved in Bookstart are trained in reading stories, rhyming, interacting with parents and dealing with large crowds, thus easing concerns of librarians and produce better

sessions. However this relies on funding and time and is therefore more of a long term aim for the scheme.

- The teaching of general children's issues could help those with little experience of dealing with children feel more comfortable in interacting with young ones and parents, and libraries could utilise in-house training to disseminate best-practice and keep costs low.

8.3 Funding

- A long term aim for Bookstart is adequate funding to all branches, but in the public library service this may never be attainable.
- Better training in funding applications could help save time and improve the standard of funding bids; learning from best-practice across the profession, via meetings, mailing lists or events; and holding training sessions with agencies such as Sure Start to ensure libraries understand exactly what is looked for in their applications.
- The allocation of separate funding packages specifically for Bookstart could ease tensions in libraries with little staff support, as budgets could be managed by the dedicated children's worker and morale would be boosted as the scheme's value is clearly recognised.

8.4 Staff Support

- Whole staff training in early years could help bridge the divide between those involved in the scheme and those who are not and could also improve the standard of service provision to users. Due to understaffed public libraries in-house training could save time and money, however, city-wide training could provide different library perceptions and providing a united Bookstart front. However time and staffing issues may cause some restraints.

- Staff support should be regulated by the Early Years Librarian or Bookstart project worker, to ensure that any grievances experienced by staff are remedied so that all libraries receive equal assistance with Bookstart.

8.5 Partnership Working

- Increased attendance to the Babytimes sessions from health visitors would improve communication with the library service and their knowledge of the scheme and thus benefit promotion. However, this will rely on increased commitment from health visitors who are already strained for time.
- An increased number of Bookstart workers across the city could improve partnership working and outreach with partners, but this relies heavily on funding.
 - ❖ This should be a top priority for Bookstart development as the dedicated workers can spend more time and effort on the scheme.

8.6 Suggestions for further research

The research has revealed a number of areas for further analysis. The researcher originally intended to analyse why some parents/carers who received the Bookstart pack did not attend the sessions, but due to data protection issues and time restrictions was unable to pursue this. It would also be interesting to evaluate the impact location of the library has on Bookstart attendance, especially relevant for the PCT without a branch library. Reiterating Morris (2004), further investigation on male attendance to the Bookstart sessions could prove useful, revealing why figures are so low. Research into the opinions of library staff not directly involved in the scheme could highlight grievances and reveal ways to boost whole staff support. Finally, as this research evaluated the affect Bookstart has on librarians it would also be useful to compare the findings with the affect the scheme has on other partners, such as the health visitors, to get a broader analysis of the Bookstart network.

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Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research project for the University of Sheffield. Before you decide whether or not to participate please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. Please do not hesitate to ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information.

Title:

To What Extent does the Bookstart Scheme Affect the Role of the Public Librarian?

Aims:

Previous research on Bookstart tends to overlook the role of the public librarian yet they are essential to the partnership which makes up Bookstart. This project aims to investigate what new roles, if any, the Bookstart scheme has created for librarians, if they receive enough support to cope with developments, and if they are the most suitable agency to deliver the scheme.

Participation:

It is up to you to whether or not to take part. Refusal to take part will involve no penalty. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time, without consequence, and without giving a reason. All data received will be strictly confidential, only being viewed by the researcher, and anonymity will be ensured.

Questionnaires should only take a few minutes to fill in and if there are any difficulties the researcher will be available to answer queries. Should you wish to participate further by agreeing to attend a discussion group or an interview, a bit more of your time will be taken up, but this will be no longer than 10 minutes.

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those participating in the project, your contribution will be essential to the research and any comments will be gratefully received. All data collected from the research will be stored safely by the researcher and used solely for the purposes of the dissertation, which will be stored electronically by the University and made available for use by students and staff.

Complaints:

You will receive a copy of this participant information sheet to keep for your reference and should there be any reason for complaint, the University's Registrar and Secretary is the designated person responsible for receiving complaints.

Contact Details:

Should you have any concerns or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me:
Miss Nicola Conway, Flat 2 Room 3, 22 Endcliffe Crescent, Broomhill, Sheffield, S10 3ED. lip04nfc@shef.ac.uk .

Or if you would prefer, you can contact my supervisor:

Ms Briony Train, Department of Information Studies, The University of Sheffield, Room 325 Regent Court, 211 Portobello Street, Sheffield, S1 4DP. (0114) 222 2653. b.train@sheffield.ac.uk .

Thank You Very Much for Your Time and Participation in this Project.

Appendix B: Questionnaires

1. Parents and carers

You have been invited to participate in a student dissertation for the University of Sheffield. By completing and returning this questionnaire you are agreeing to participate in the research. However, this is purely voluntary and should you decide to participate, you can still withdraw at any time without consequence.

Please circle the answers that apply to you

1.) Have you read and understood the 'Participant Information Sheet'?

Yes No

2.) What is your connection with the Bookstart Scheme?

Parent/Carer Other Relative Health Visitor Librarian
Bookstart Official Other (please specify)

3.) Sex

Male Female

4.) Are you satisfied with the Bookstart service provided at you local library?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain your answer:

5.) What were your first impressions of the library when you collected your Bookstart pack?

6.) What are your impressions of the library staff involved in the Bookstart session?

7.) Could you recommend any improvements to the scheme?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain your answer:

8.) Do you think another agency could carry out the scheme more successfully, such as the Health Service or local school? Please specify.

Yes:

No:

Not Sure:

I am extremely interested in finding out more about your opinions on the Bookstart scheme. Would you be prepared to give me 10 minutes of your time to talk more about them? Please note that any information you give will be treated with the strictest confidence and all data will be anonymous.

9.) Are you willing to be contacted further for research purposes?

Yes No

Please give contact details below if you wish to participate further – please note that if it is more convenient for you, a meeting can be held at the end of next Bookstart session you intend to go to.

Name:

Telephone Number (if applicable):

Email Address (if applicable):

I will be at the Bookstart session on (if applicable) ...

Thank You Very Much for Your Time and Participation.

Nicola Conway, the University of Sheffield.

Telephone: Email: lip04nfc@shef.ac.uk

2. Public librarians and Bookstart officials

You have been invited to participate in a student dissertation for the University of Sheffield. By completing and returning this questionnaire you are agreeing to participate in the research. However, this is purely voluntary and should you decide to participate, you can still withdraw at any time without consequence.

Please tick the answers that apply to you

1.) Have you read and understood the 'Participant Information Sheet'?

Yes No

2.) What is your connection with the Bookstart Scheme?

Parent/Carer Other Relative Health Visitor

Librarian Bookstart Official Other (please specify)

3.) Sex

Male Female

4.) Do you receive sufficient support to run an effective Bookstart scheme?

(a) With regards to funding:

Yes No Not Sure

(b) With regards to training:

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain your answer:

5.) Do you have other responsibilities or jobs besides Bookstart?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain:

6.) Are you given enough time to dedicate to Bookstart?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain:

7.) Who is involved in delivering the Bookstart Scheme at your library?

8.) Could you recommend any improvements to the scheme?

Yes No Not Sure

Please give details:

9.) Do you think another agency could carry out the scheme, such as the Health Service or local school, more successfully? Please specify.

Yes:

No:

Not Sure:

I am extremely interested in finding out more of your opinions of the Bookstart scheme. Would you be prepared to give me 10 minutes of your time to talk more about them? Please note that any information you give will be treated with the strictest confidence and all data will be anonymous.

10.) Are you willing to be contacted further for research purposes?

Yes No

Please give contact details below if you wish to participate further.

Name:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time and Participation.

Nicola Conway, the University of Sheffield.

Email: lip04nfc@shef.ac.uk

3. Health visitors

You have been invited to participate in a student dissertation for the University of Sheffield. By completing and returning this questionnaire you are agreeing to participate in the research. However, this is purely voluntary and should you decide to participate, you can still withdraw at any time without consequence.

Please tick the answers that apply to you

1.) Have you read and understood the 'Participant Information Sheet'?

Yes No

2.) What is your connection with the Bookstart Scheme?

Parent/Carer Other Relative Health Visitor

Librarian Bookstart Official Other (please specify)

3.) Sex

Male Female

4.) Are you satisfied with the Bookstart services in your area?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain your answer:

5.) Do you promote the library service when distributing the Bookstart vouchers to parents and carers?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain your answer:

6.) Could you recommend any improvements to the way the scheme is promoted?

Yes No Not Sure

Please explain your answer:

7.) Are you kept up to date with all the Bookstart initiatives offered at the libraries in your area?

Yes No Not Sure

If so, please explain how you are informed:

8.) Do you think another agency could carry out the scheme more successfully, such as the Health Service or local school? Please specify.

Yes:

No:

Not Sure:

I am extremely interested in finding out more about your opinions on the Bookstart scheme. Would you be prepared to give me 10 minutes of your time to talk more about them? Please note that any information you give will be treated with the strictest confidence and all data will be anonymous.

9.) Are you willing to be contacted further for research purposes?

Yes No

Please give contact details below if you wish to participate further.

Name:

Telephone Number:

Email Address:

Thank You Very Much for Your Time and Participation.

Nicola Conway, the University of Sheffield.

Email: lip04nfc@shef.ac.uk

Appendix C: Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Title of Project: "To What Extent Does the Bookstart Scheme Affect the Role of the Public Librarian?"

Name of Researcher: Nicola F M Conway.

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for the research team to have access to my anonymous responses.

4. I agree to take part in the above project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

One copy for the participant and one copy for the Principal Investigator / Supervisor.

Appendix D: Interview and Focus Group Schedules

1. Parents and carers

Introduce project and go over the information already handed out on the participant information sheet. Ask participant(s) to confirm that tape recording is ok and to fill in the interview consent form.

Questions to structure interview:

1. How did you find out about the Bookstart scheme?
 - a. What do you think about the voucher scheme?
2. How did you find out about the Bookstart sessions?
3. How often do you attend the sessions?
 - a. What prevents you from attending more?
 - b. What encourages you to attend so much?
4. Would you recommend the sessions to anyone?
 - a. Why/Why not?
5. Do you attend other Bookstart sessions in Sheffield?
 - a. Why/Why not?
6. How do you find the library for general use?
 - a. Do you use it other than for Bookstart?
 - b. How has attending Bookstart sessions affected your/your child's library usage?
7. How do you find library staff?
 - a. Are they available during sessions?
 - b. Are they available outside of sessions?
 - c. What do you use them for?
 - d. Do you need them?
 - e. Do they provide general recommendations for services to parents with very young children?
8. What are the benefits of holding Bookstart sessions in the library?
9. What are the drawbacks of holding Bookstart sessions in the library?
10. How do you find the continuity of the sessions i.e. the same time, same place, same date every month?
11. Are you satisfied with the content of the sessions?

12. Are you satisfied with parental attendance to the sessions?
 - a. What would an ideal number of attendees be?

13. Are you satisfied with child attendance to the sessions?
 - a. What would an ideal number of attendees be?

14. **For Library A:** How did you find 2003-2005 when the scheme was not running?
 - a. Did you still use/take your child to the library?
 - b. Did the library provide any alternative?

15. Before you joined Bookstart how did you use the library?

16. Will you continue to use the library after your child/children grow(s) up?

2. Public librarians and Bookstart officials

Introduce project and go over the information already handed out on the participant information sheet. Ask participant(s) to confirm that tape recording is ok and to fill in the interview consent form.

Questions to structure interview:

1. How long have you been involved in delivering Bookstart?
2. How much time do you devote to Bookstart?
 - a. Preparation?
 - b. Delivery?
3. Do you have enough time to run Bookstart successfully?
 - a. What are your other duties?
 - b. Are you full/part time (hours per week)?
4. What did you do before you were involved in Bookstart?
5. Are you involved in other Early Years initiatives?
6. How has Bookstart affected other library duties? (If you have any.)
7. How well do you think your library carries out the Bookstart scheme?
 - a. How well do you carry out:
 - i. Publicity
 - ii. Outreach
 - iii. Partnerships?
 - b. Can you recommend any improvements?
 - c. What do you think of the voucher scheme?
8. What does your regional scheme offer to parents/carers and their children?
9. How does continuity affect the scheme i.e. the same time, date, place every month?
 - a. Is it the same people returning to each session?
 - b. Have you tried holding sessions on other dates?
10. Is the Bookstart scheme supplemented with other initiatives?
 - a. When do these run?
 - b. Are they regular?
 - c. What is attendance like?

11. Is there any pressure on you with regards to attendance figures?
 - a. If so, from whom?
 - b. How does this affect staff morale?
 - c. What is your average attendance to sessions?

12. What funding do you receive to run the Bookstart scheme?
 - a. From whom?
 - b. Is it sufficient?
 - c. Is this supplemented with other initiatives?
 - d. How does this affect staff morale?

13. How do you feel about being involved in Bookstart?

14. Do you think you receive adequate training to deliver Bookstart successfully?

15. What is the attitude towards Bookstart like from other library staff?
 - a. Involved in the scheme?
 - b. Not involved in the scheme?

16. What are the benefits of holding Bookstart sessions in the library?

17. What are the drawbacks of holding the Bookstart sessions in the library?

18. How do you find communication with the other partners?
 - a. Parents/carers:
 - i. Are they up to date with initiatives?
 - ii. Is feedback encouraged?

 - b. Health Visitors:
 - i. Are they up to date with initiatives?
 - ii. Is feedback encouraged?

19. Are you satisfied with the content of the sessions?

20. Are you satisfied with attendance to the sessions?

21. **For Library A** - why did the scheme stop for 2 years (between 2003-2005)?
 - a. How did this affect the libraries Early Years role?
 - b. How did this affect attendance to the children's library?
 - c. Did the library develop any alternative initiatives?

3. Health visitors

Introduce project and go over the information already handed out on the participant information sheet. Ask participant(s) to confirm that tape recording is ok and to fill in the interview consent form.

Questions to structure interview:

1. How do you perceive your role in the Bookstart scheme?
 - a. What specifically do you do?
2. What do you think about the voucher scheme?
3. How long have you been involved in the Bookstart scheme?
4. To what extent do you and your colleagues promote and publicise the Bookstart scheme?
5. What proportion of your time do you dedicate to Bookstart?
 - a. Could you dedicate more?
6. If you had more time would you like to be more actively involved in Bookstart?
7. How do you find your partnership with the library?
 - a. Are you familiar with library staff?
 - b. Do you attend the library or Bookstart sessions?
 - c. Do you know library opening times?
 - d. Are you aware of early year's initiatives at the library?
8. What are the benefits of holding Bookstart sessions in the library?
9. What are the drawbacks of holding Bookstart sessions in the library?
 - a. Is there any aspect of the service that you think they should change?