

Head Start

The Social Impact of Boots Books for Babies

September 2004

With Thanks

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Introduction

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre were appointed in January 2004, to evaluate the social impact of the Boots Books for Babies scheme.

The Boots Books for Babies scheme, in the five years since its inception in 1998, has delivered 42,791 bags of books and literacy related materials to babies in the City of Nottingham and County of Nottinghamshire.

The project is a public-private partnership between the Library Services of Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council, the county's Health Trusts and The Boots Company. The packs are delivered by Health Visitors and the scheme is hosted by local libraries.

The principle aim of the Boots Books for Babies scheme is to develop a love of books in young children and encourage a lifetime of reading by encouraging parents to share books with their children from nine months onwards. Additional aims include highlighting the benefits of early learning; encouraging library use and raising literacy levels of both children and adults. It was also anticipated that the scheme would contribute to cross-sector objectives relating to life-long learning, neighbourhood renewal and social cohesion.

Research Objectives

The aim of the research was to evaluate the social impact of the Boots Books for Babies scheme in relation to the specific project aims as expressed by the City and County Councils, the Library and Health Services and the Sponsor.

The significant quantitative outputs of Boots Books for Babies are already known – over 90% of all babies born within the City of Nottingham and County of Nottinghamshire have received a Boots Books for Babies pack over the last five years and there has been a significant increase in library membership and usage by babies and young children.

The impact and value of early reading has been comprehensively established already through prior evaluation, both

of this scheme and of Bookstart, so while this has been considered in this research, it was not central to the evaluation.

The primary objective of this research was therefore to explore the wider social impact of the scheme, to establish what difference Boots Books for Babies has really made to people's lives, to children and parents as individuals, as families and as communities.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach was chosen to allow us to explore the multiple contexts in which BBfB operates; the effect of multiple interventions due to the range of support mechanisms offered in addition to the book bag; the full range of agendas on which BBfB might have impacted; the varied levels at which the project had an effect: individual; familial; societal and the effect of the initiative over time to reflect the fact that at the point of the research, some families had first participated in BBfB some five years previously, while for others their involvement was less than one year. We also recognised that these contexts and consequently the range of possible impacts were likely to be interconnected, not mutually exclusive.

The multiple contexts and levels of impact described above illustrate that the Boots Books for Babies initiative is operating in a complex and political context which needed to be encompassed within the evaluation.

Overall the evaluation approach can be described as both summative and naturalistic. It is summative in the sense that we examined the effect or outcomes by describing what happened subsequent to the delivery of the initiative. It is also naturalistic in its recognition of both the multiple contexts in which the initiative was delivered and the potential multiple realities arising from the social construction of meanings as a result of the research methodology relying on parental recall and consequent interpretation.

You'd never think of reading a book to a nine-month-old baby, you don't think they are going to understand it.

Sampling and Methodology

At the point of undertaking this research it was estimated that BBfB was penetrating over 90% of all children born within the City of Nottingham and County of Nottinghamshire and was penetrating all sectors of society.

The research sample was consequently constructed to be demographically representative. A range of urban/rural locations were covered, based on an analysis of population density. A spectrum of affluence and deprivation was covered based on the *Index of Multiple Deprivation* and other measures including Neighbourhood Renewal priority neighbourhoods, EU Assisted Areas; Rural Priority Areas; Sure Start areas and areas in receipt of Single Regeneration Budget funds. Research was undertaken with specific ethnic minority groups including Indian, Pakistani and Black Caribbean parents. Research participants were split according to their degree of engagement with the library service encompassing non-users; infrequent and frequent users. Families who had been involved

with the scheme at the start and newer participants were consulted. It was ensured that particular 'hard-to-reach' groups were researched including families of children with disabilities; single parent families; hard-to-reach Afro-Caribbean and Asian families; families with children living in hostels; Asylum Seekers and Refugees and Travellers.

A total of 129 BBfB participants were consulted through 14 focus groups, 45 individual depth interviews and ten written responses. The participants included parents, carers and specialist support workers. The discussions were framed by a Discussion Guide, encompassing the range of issues identified and also allowing for open-ended input. Where groups had specific needs which either necessitated or it was felt would benefit from specialist support, including interpretation, this was provided. These included Traveller Groups which were co-facilitated by Beverley Smeeton, of the Nottinghamshire County Council Travellers Education Service and consultation with refugees and asylum seekers which were facilitated and interpreted by Bilfer Echin of Refugee Action.

How to read this report

The report is presented in 4 sections:

The Project

Project content and aims; delivery; and costs.

Context

The broad context in which the project is delivered: individual, family, community, early years, literacy, education, cross-sector.

Conclusions

Summary findings from the research.

The Future for Boots Books for Babies

Implications for future development of the project.

The **full version** of the report presents detailed findings on each area of impact:

- Personal development
- Health and well-being
- Vision and aspirations
- Family interaction and relationships
- Literacy
- Early learning, education and skills development
- Social and community
- Library use
- Sponsor perceptions

Copies of the full report can be obtained from Christina Dyer, Nottingham City Council, or Roger Jones, Nottinghamshire County Council.

The Project

The Scheme

The scheme delivers early reading materials including books, action and word/picture cards and advisory materials to children born in the City of Nottingham and County of Nottinghamshire.

Although the scheme operates on a broadly similar model to the Bookstart schemes, which began in Birmingham in 1991, a significant difference is that in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire the scheme aimed to reach every child born during the period of the scheme. Bookstart has historically been targeted at areas of deprivation although it is now being developed as a universal scheme. This universal distribution of the scheme is felt by participants to be an important benefit of the scheme as it alleviates any sense of stigma associated with targeted provision.



At the same time, BBfB also recognises the need for additional support in areas of specific need and this is provided through the three-outreach workers attached to the scheme. The outreach workers are located in Radford and Bulwell in the City of Nottingham and Worksop in the County.

Babies are given a high-quality cotton bag containing:

- Two hard-back books
- A tactile 'touch-feely' book
- A laminated card of action rhymes
- A laminated card of animal pictures and names
- Information about the benefits of sharing books with babies
- Information about libraries and a membership card for their local library
- A rhyme tape was included in the pack for those parents who were felt by the health visitors to need non-written materials due to their own low literacy levels

Particular resources are provided for babies and children with specific physical or cultural needs including:

- A book about Traveller children
- A Braille Book for partially sighted and blind children
- A book with accompanying video for hearing impaired and deaf children
- Bi-lingual books in Urdu, Punjabi, Somali, Arabic, Turkish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Farsi, and other languages on demand

The scheme is supported and enlivened by a range of activities and events delivered with the library service and with the BBfB outreach workers. These include:

- Launch parties at local libraries as the scheme was rolled out in new areas
- Follow-up coffee mornings
- Storytelling and activity sessions for children and parents
- Interactive rhyme-time sessions using musical instruments and other tools

- Toy provision for all participating libraries, provided by Boots
- Special events for groups with specific physical, cultural or social needs
- Linked events with Sure Start and other organisations

Additional services include:

- Liaison between health visitors and librarians about library parenting collections
- A Boots Books for Babies website

Project Aims

With multiple stakeholders there are overall project aims, agreed by the project partners as well as stakeholder specific aims.

The overall aims, agreed by the project partners, were to:

- Develop a love of books in young children
- Encourage a lifetime of reading and thirst for knowledge
- Show families how young children can get pleasure from books
- Encourage parents to use books with babies from nine months onwards²
- Illustrate the benefits of early learning to families, not just in terms of reading ability but also wider benefits including speaking, listening and writing
- Introduce children and families to library use
- Achieve universal penetration of children born during period of scheme

Library Service Aims⁴

The Library Services identified their specific aims as being to:

- Highlight the benefits of sharing books with babies
- Increase awareness in the community as a whole of the value of books to young children
- Increase awareness of parents and carers of how books, rhymes and stories can contribute to early learning

- Introduce children and families to library use
- Create and heighten awareness of the services offered to babies, children, parents and carers by the libraries in the city and the county
- Encourage parents and carers to register babies as members of the library and to continue to use the service offered
- Help raise literacy levels across the county for children and adults

Health Service Aims¹³

The broad aims of the health service, which includes the extent to which the project has contributed to the achievement of their objectives in terms of learning and language. The specific objectives are identified as being to:

- Emphasise to parents and carers the fact that sharing books with babies is beneficial to development in speech and language, motor actions and social skills, as well as providing an enjoyable experience for adult and child

- Increase the uptake of babies' hearing tests in areas where current uptake is poor
- Identify and help parents with literacy difficulties

Cross-Sector Aims

While cross-sector aims were not translated into specific targets it was also anticipated that the scheme would contribute to wider cross-sector objectives arising from the broader aims of the project partners relating to:

- Life-long learning
- Neighbourhood and civil renewal
- Social cohesion

Sponsor Aims

Books for Babies is one of several Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects that Boots fund, several of which have a literacy focus. This is in the context of Boots' broader concern for social and environmental wellbeing, which underpins their business. Boots specific objectives are cited as being to:



- Boost early learning and literacy levels across the city and county
- Support the principles of lifelong learning
- Reinforce the company's reputation as a leader in corporate community investment
- Develop strategic relationships within the community
- Provide a positive profile for Boots in its home county of Nottinghamshire

Delivery

For the first five years between October 1998 until April 2003 the packs were given to babies by Health Visitors when they attended their nine month hearing checks at their health clinic. Since then these hearing tests have been undertaken at the hospital so the packs have been distributed by the Health Visitors at the Development Check.

The packs are assembled in partnership with Nottinghamshire Probation Service with the help of offenders sentenced to community service orders.

The scheme was launched in Radford, Lenton and Bulwell in Nottingham in October 1998 and was rolled out over three years prioritising deprived areas of the city and the county.



Context

This section essentially 'sets the scene', highlighting the key contextual environments in which BBfB is delivered and from which the evaluation approach and research analysis framework were developed. The extent to which the BBfB initiative impacted within each of these contexts is explored in the Conclusions section of the report.

At its simplest this evaluation is an attempt to analyse if Boots Books for Babies achieved what it set out to

do. It also aimed to be a learning, tool to inform the future development of the scheme. However we can only determine if Boots Books for Babies has worked by understanding the context in which the initiative was planned and delivered.

Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, in a seminal piece of research into the needs and motivations of children and young people in 2002¹⁶, reviewed a range of theories child development and learning which underpin our society's current concept of childhood. The most persuasive theories recognise that development is influenced by a combination of 'inside-out' factors where motivations and behaviour stem from within the child such as intelligence or personality and 'outside-in' factors, which explain development in the context of external influences.

***Quality time –
rather than them
being sat in
front of the telly
and mum's busy
– whatever –
it's quality
time when I just
used to sit with
– sit on my knee
– snuggle up
together and ...
definitely
quality time.***

The psychological model that encapsulates this most appropriately is Urie Bronfenbrenner's *Ecological Model of Child Development*⁵. This places the child in the centre of a complex environment of interacting factors all of which, to a greater or lesser extent, impact on behaviour.

In their simplest form these contexts reflect the levels of engagement of the child in society, encompassing individual, family, community and societal contexts. The following model reflects this ecological view of child development and illustrates the people,

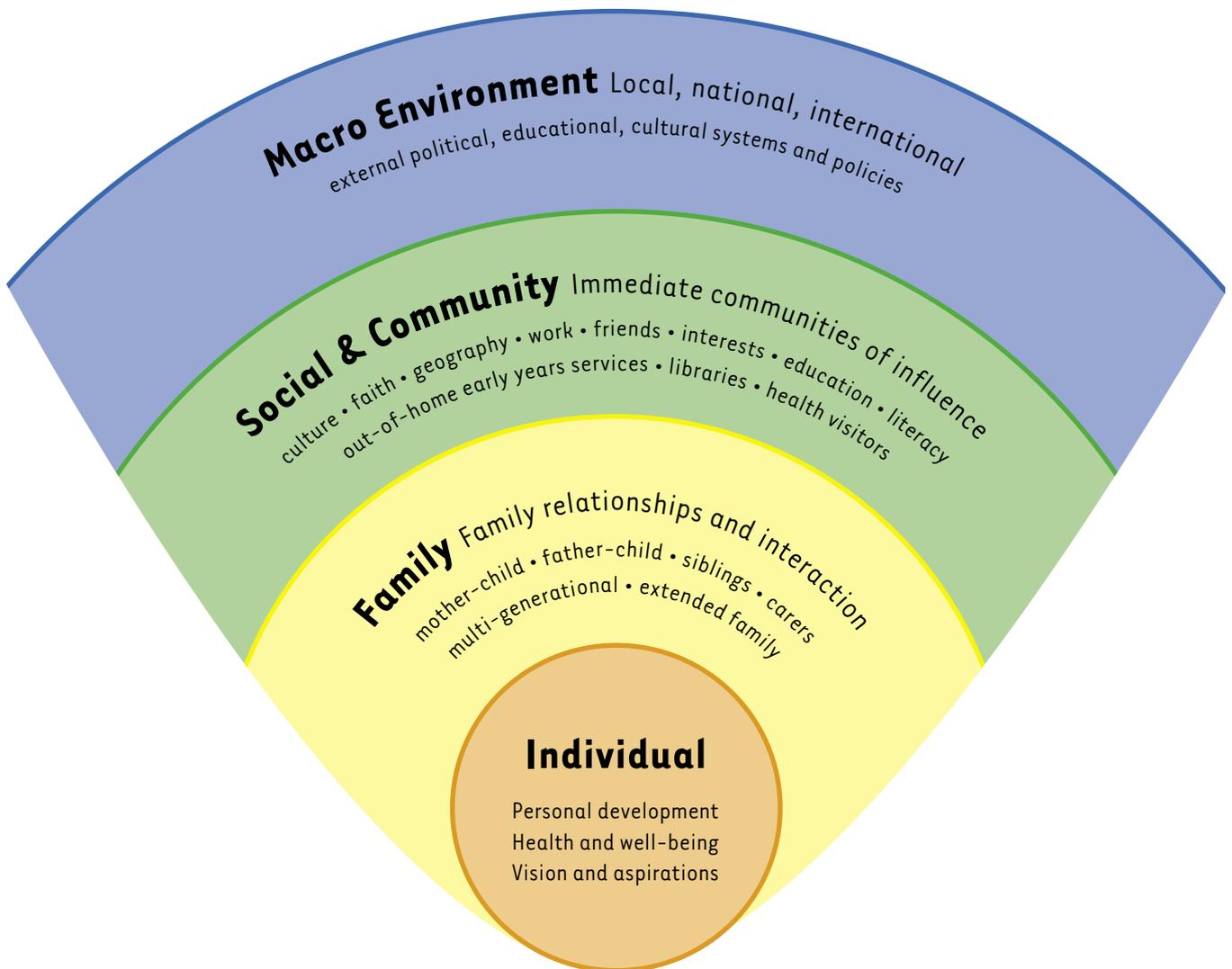
institutions and agendas influencing the child's world at each of these levels.

Clearly the impact of any of these contexts will not be the same for every child – each child will also be shaped by the own personal, familial, cultural, socio-demographic and economic circumstances.

The starting point of our approach to the evaluation of the Boots Books for Babies initiative was to acknowledge these multiple contexts.

Post World War II there was an increasing focus on the needs and rights of children, culminating in the publication of the UN Declaration on Children's Rights in 1959. Successive UK government's have not only intensified this focus significantly but also translated it into dedicated governmental structures, policies and initiatives aimed at giving children the best possible start in life. Initially concentrating on the formal education system, there is now also considerable emphasis on early development from birth to five years.

Multiple Contexts of Boots Books for Babies



This is based on the undoubtable premise that investment in children from birth will benefit not only themselves as individuals but through this, society as a whole.

The government's consultation for *A Strategy for Young People*, in 2001²⁸ defined the government's overall aspirations for children and young people as being to enable them to fulfil their full potential through community and multi-cultural integration; appreciation of and participation in cultural activities; decision-making capacity about identity, relationships, education and careers.

By 2004 with the publication of the *Every Child Matters* Green Paper⁹ the government's aspirations for children and young people were still described as having the opportunity to fulfil their potential but with five specific key outcomes identified as being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and economic well-being.

These aspirations have been provided with a framework for delivery in the creation of the Children and Young People's Unit, now merged into the Children, Young People and Families Directorate, within the Department for Education and Skills and the appointment of a dedicated Minister for Children, Young People and Families. This brings together children and family policy into one department and underpins the governments' increasing desire for an holistic approach to early years support.

These strategies recognise that while the focus is on children, particularly in their earliest years, the support must be targeted through those people and organisations with whom babies and young children engage – families and carers; health-services and organisations providing early-years childcare, play and education.

The Children's Bill, introduced in March 2004, proposed to receive Royal Assent by November 2004, enshrines the principle that these outcomes should be produced by all agencies working together by creating a statutory basis for partnership working. The Bill also proposes the introduction of a Children's Commission to be a champion for children to ensure that their interests continue to be at the heart of policy making¹².

The principles of partnership working to provide holistic early years support is one of the guiding principles of Sure Start, the government programme to support young children in deprived neighbourhoods. Sure Start is based on the premise that investment in early childhood can ensure that children are ready to learn when they arrive at school and can help later performance in school; prevent truancy and reduce the risk of unemployment, drug abuse and crime. Sure Start aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by increasing the availability of childcare for all children; improving health, education and emotional development for young children and supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment.

Within Sure Start there is a particular emphasis on the earliest years, birth to three. The framework for this support⁸ focuses on the personal development, communication skills, learning competence and emotional and physical health of young children.

Boots Books for Babies also embodies the principles enshrined in the new DfES *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners*³¹, published in July 2004 as well as specific early years education and literacy strategies such as the Foundation Stage Curriculum.

It's hard work at home isn't it so I think it's nice to come to an environment like this and listen to everybody else's moans and groans and ups and downs to realise that it's the same as yours

The *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* attempts to integrate children's services, education and lifelong learning policies. Five key principles of reform are proposed to underpin this integration:

- Greater personalisation and choice so that systems are more flexible in meeting the needs of individuals rather than individuals having to fit to less flexible systems
- Opening up services to new and different providers and ways of delivering services
- Freedom and independence for those at the frontline of service provision
- Major commitment to staff development
- Partnerships with parents, employers, volunteers and voluntary organisations to maximise the life chances of children, young people and adults

Particular initiatives identified for early years support include expanded provision of Children's Centres, providing one-stop support in childcare, education, health, employment and parenting support with the ultimate aims that all children in England will have access to a Children's Centre and the shorter-term aim that by 2008 all children in the 20 percent most deprived wards will do so. This universal support for all children rather than just those suffering deprivation echoes BBfB's unique strength in reaching all children.

The articulation of the concept of 'educare' in the *Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners* is also important for BBfB, recognising that particularly in the earliest years, children learn best through play and exploration and that distinguishing between childcare and education is unhelpful. The vision is consequently to bring together childcare and nursery education wherever possible.

More directly, the impacts of BBfB clearly contribute to the early learning goals in the Foundation Stage Curriculum²² which encompass personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development and creative development.

Extensive evaluation of many early literacy and early learning initiatives has been undertaken including Boots Books for Babies and comprehensively with Bookstart. Through these the impact and value of early learning, particularly through early reading has been thoroughly established. The success of these initiatives is illustrated by the fact that Bookstart, having been initiated by an independent charitable trust and funded through sponsorship, will be centrally funded by the Sure Start Unit from 2004/05.

Consequently the benefits of early reading and literacy schemes did not need covering extensively in this research. Clearly however, the literacy aims were fundamental and the impacts of previous evaluation have been confirmed through this research. The early learning and literacy impacts from BBfB are presented in the context of the findings available from previous evaluation.

Increasingly government is taking an all-encompassing approach to policy developing cross-sector strategies and initiatives designed to impact on many aspects of society and at multiple levels, individual, family and community, thereby having an effect on society as a whole.

In practice this means that individual initiatives such as Boots Books for Babies are required to contribute to a wide range of agendas, including Civil Renewal,

I haven't always been in to books ... and what the Boots pack does for me and reading with my daughter is that I want to see her read more. So, for me, at my time in life, education is very important to me. But before, it wasn't so important to me.

Neighbourhood Renewal, community development, social cohesion and inclusion, lifelong learning and skills development.

The most comprehensive of these cross-sector policies is Civil Renewal, defined as 'the government's overarching philosophy to bring about regeneration and social inclusion'³. The three ingredients identified as crucial to civil renewal are active citizenship; strengthened communities and partnership in meeting public needs. Achievement of these are seen as an effective way of bringing about sustainable change and improving the quality of people's lives. Government's key strategies for achieving civil renewal include Neighbourhood Renewal; Sure Start; lifelong learning strategies; community development programmes and the Learning and Skills Council.

Within this, Neighbourhood Renewal, an initiative of the Government's Social Exclusion Unit⁶ is a national strategy designed to address the increasing concentration of poverty in individual neighbourhoods which consequently become excluded from mainstream society. This encompasses several strands including, among others, the New Deal programmes for unemployment and communities; the National Childcare Strategy; Education Action Zones and the work undertaken by the Regional Development Agencies such as sustainable economic development; social and physical regeneration and Health Action Zones.

At a local level, Nottingham's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, implemented through extensive community development, has the overall aim that within ten to 20 years, no-one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live²⁰. Complementary to this, Nottingham's Community Strategy aspires to a vision of Nottingham as 'a cosmopolitan, sustainable and healthy city that values learning, creativity and enterprise ... a city that

celebrates the diversity of our citizens and provides opportunities for all to prosper'.

The Learning and Skills Council's strategic priority is described as 'playing an active role in building the capacity of people living in deprived neighbourhoods and to promote equality and social inclusion'⁷. Their remit includes 'widening participation and building capacity for learning, particularly among hard-to-reach groups; to provide both formal and informal learning, accredited and non-accredited, particularly



with community and voluntary groups which can reach deeper into communities than more traditional institutions, and meet untapped demand'³.

The importance of literacy as the foundation stone for all education including lifelong learning is recognised by the government in *Skills for Life*⁸ – their strategy for improving adult literacy and numeracy skills. This stems from research, which suggests that the personal cost of poor literacy and numeracy to individuals is incalculable and that people with low basic skills earn less over their working lives, and are more likely to have health problems or turn to crime. There is also

a significant generational cost with the children of people with low basic skills more likely to underachieve themselves.

For libraries particularly, BBfB has been delivered in the context of radical re-thinking of the future roles for libraries, particularly in terms of their contribution to cross-sector agendas.

The government's ten year vision for public libraries, enshrined in *Framework for The Future: Libraries, Learning and Information in the Next Decade*³² published by DCMS February 2003 identifies three essential roles for libraries, the promotion of books, reading and learning; encouraging access to the digital age and developing community and civic values.

The promotion of books, reading and learning recognises that knowledge, skills and information are at the heart of economic and social life and that in an informal, supportive and stimulating environment, libraries can encourage reading and provide access to learning for everyone. Particular aims within this are identified as the promotion of literacy skills and developing an appetite for reading and widening the participation of libraries in a national programme of support for basic skills.

Libraries are seen to be uniquely placed to achieve the government's ambitions for Digital Citizenship as they can provide access to more information and electronic government than ever before through the internet.

Libraries are perceived as safe, welcoming, neutral spaces open to all the community and as such are well placed to foster the development of community and civic values, particularly with hard to reach groups.

In this libraries are identified as being able to contribute to social cohesion and reducing social

exclusion by bringing people together, celebrating a shared culture, heritage and diversity.

The Future Library Project³⁵ has emerged from the challenges inherent in libraries enshrining these core roles. The essence of this is placing of libraries 'at the heart of the community', as providers of:

- An open resource of culture, information, knowledge and technology to feed and stimulate the mind
- The best human values of respect, care, culture and public services
- Remarkable people providing a remarkable service
- Changing lives, strengthening communities
- Unique, active public spaces, open to all

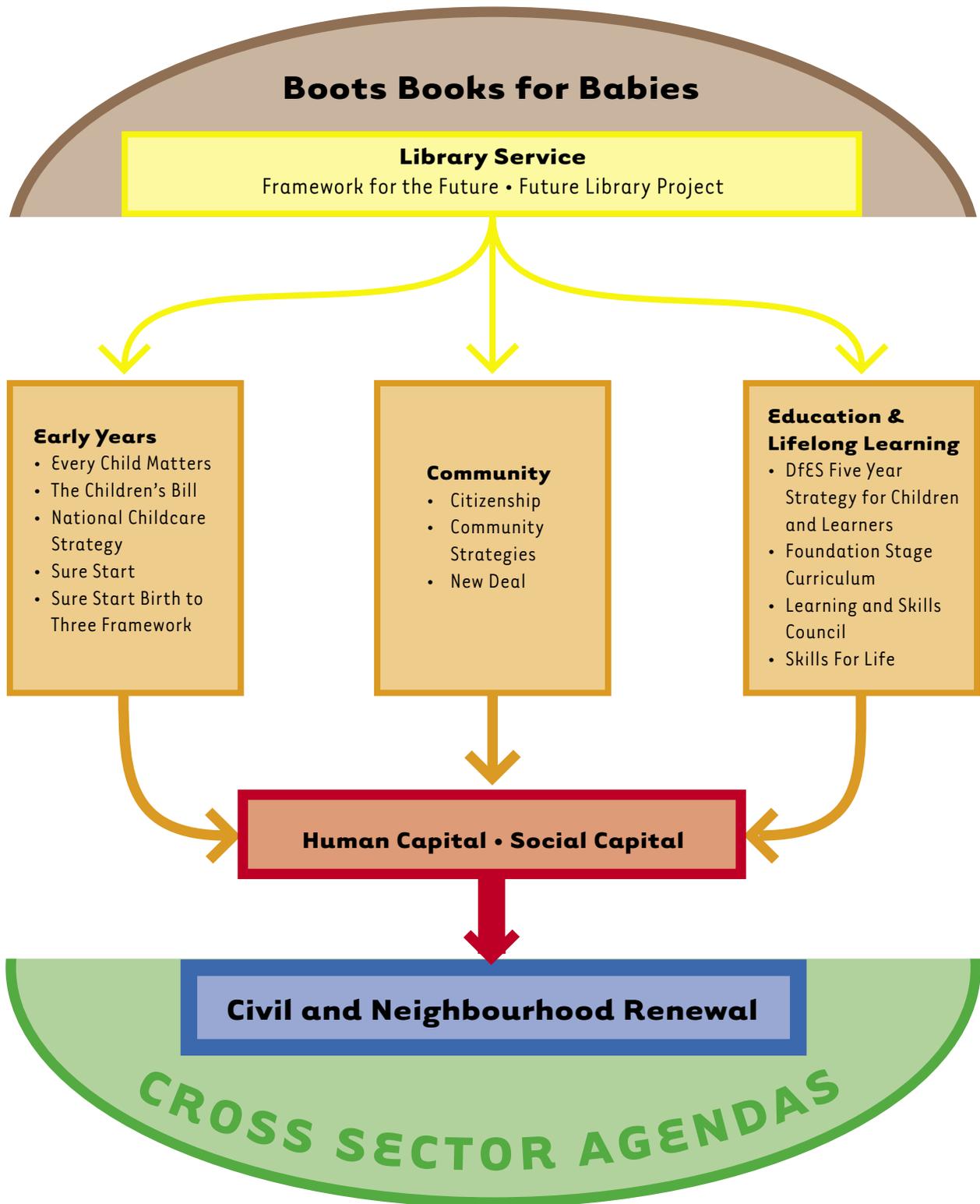
Certainly I feel since I've had my little boy – I know far more people in the community and it has been through things like this, getting out and about.

The potential for libraries as unique public spaces is echoed in Building Future's 2004 publication: *C21st Century Libraries: Changing Forms, Changing Futures*³⁰ which also looks to the future of libraries and also suggests that there are many opportunities for libraries to play an increasingly significant role in social, intellectual, cultural and civic life, becoming important third community spaces beyond home and the institutions of education and work. Building Futures confirm that key to effective delivery of this is imaginatively designed and responsive services based on an equilibrium between people (both providers and users); programmes, partners and the physical place. These themes relate closely to the Museums, Libraries

and Archives Council's framework for its programme Inspiring Learning for All, based around People, Places, Partnerships and Plans.

It is evident from both central and local government policy that not only are initiatives like Boots Books for Babies expected to contribute to multiple agendas but that they clearly do.

Cross Sector Agendas



While many of these policies have strategic, often qualitative outcome aims and objectives these are frequently translated into quantitative target outputs. This means that while initiatives like Boots Books for Babies can illustrate a clear, direct impact on the broad aims or objective of a range of cross-sector policies, it is less easy to show a direct contribution to the quantitative target output. If an outcome can't be measured can't be easily claimed as effective by policy makers, whose initiatives are usually required to be specific, quantifiable time-defined, and able to be subject to cost-benefit analysis. In addition, many initiatives are usually required to be specific, quantifiable time-defined, and able to be subject to cost-benefit analysis. In addition, many government initiatives are time-limited and as such expected to show they have been effective within a short to medium term time-scale whereas many of the outcomes of participation in schemes such as BBfB may have a longer term, multi-generational impact.

Put another way, a person's involvement in a scheme such as Boots Books for Babies may result in increased self-confidence about their own abilities or skills which leads to them feeling empowered. This may have a range of further impacts from their becoming a more engaged parent or to wanting to develop their own skills. However, it is more difficult to provide the evidence for this impact in terms of hard outputs.

This dilemma is not particular to Boots Books for Babies. The need to find ways of evidencing the impact of interventions whose key benefits are as qualitative as they are quantitative or whose quantitative outputs arise on the back of qualitative outcomes is a subject of much current debate, at a policy level and particularly in the field of community development.

Human Capital and Social Capital theories provide a useful conceptual framework from which to develop measures for longer-term impacts and outcomes.

Human capital is the notion that the knowledge, skills, personal attributes and experience of individuals are

valuable resources which can provide both personal and economic returns. Human capital is created in a diverse range of settings including the family and home, communities, workplace and social settings. Human capital is recognised as offering a range of non-economic benefits primarily stemming from education and including improved health; greater happiness; improved education for the next generation and higher civic participation¹⁹.

Social capital is defined as 'the networks, norms, relationships, values and informal sanctions that shape the quantity and co-operative quality of society's social interactions'²¹. In practice it might be described as social oil, facilitating co-operation within or between groups. Research¹⁹ links access to social capital with improved health; greater well-being; better care for children due to the social connectedness of mothers; lower crime through increased neighbourhood trust and improved government due to higher levels of social trust and engagement. The OECD suggests that some aspects of social capital appear to have positive economic impacts such as social networks helping people find jobs; co-operative attitudes within firms being linked to output and profitability and regional clusters of innovative industries depending on local social networks to spread and share tacit knowledge.

Clearly the development of human capital and access to social capital is likely to have a strong impact on an individual's chance to fulfil their potential. However as this BBfB research has shown, the impact is difficult to quantify. What is clear is that early years education, particularly literacy, when delivered through schemes such as BBfB in partnership with Libraries and the Health Service can contribute significantly to the development of both human and social capital.

The extent to which Boots Books for Babies impacts on these contexts is assessed in the Impact Analysis sections of the report.

Conclusions

Boots Books for Babies has undoubtedly had a significant impact.

It makes them see life in a much bigger way without them leaving their living room or their bedroom. They can gain a wealth of knowledge, they can see things...

Key to the success of BBfB is that it is distributed universally. Since its inception in 1998 it has delivered 42,971 bags of books and is now achieving over 90% penetration of all children born in the City of Nottingham and County of Nottinghamshire. The effectiveness of universal penetration is validated by the recent announcement that Bookstart will now be distributed universally.

If the overarching agenda is to give every child the best possible start in life then BBfB is certainly contributing to this. The scheme has stimulated young children, physically, intellectually and creatively; encouraged an interest in books; enriched and inspired them and shown them a wider world. Importantly, many parents involved in the scheme believe it encouraged early learning and ensured their children are more ready to start school. Parents too have benefited, developing their own parenting skills and learning how to support and enthuse their children.



The research powerfully demonstrates how effective BBfB is being in helping Nottingham City Council and Nottingham County Council achieve multiple cross-sector agendas.

Project Aims Achieved

BBfB has achieved almost all the aims originally envisaged. For some aims, such as the desire to encourage a lifetime of reading, the scheme has not been in existence long enough to be sure if the impact is of this duration but the indications are that the foundations for such longevity have been built. In summary, Boots Books for Babies has achieved:

Universal Penetration

One of the unique tenets of Boots Books for Babies is that the scheme aimed to achieve universal penetration of children born during the period of the scheme, in contrast to Bookstart which was targeted at children living in areas of deprivation. Of the 56,738 children born between October 1998 and February 2004 and estimated 90% received the pack. The importance of universal penetration has been affirmed in the Chancellor's 2004 Spending Review which announced that the scheme would be extended to provide free books universally for every child.

Love of books

- Developed a love of books in young children
- Encouraged a lifetime of reading and thirst for knowledge
- Encouraged parents to use books with babies from nine months onwards

Value of books

- Highlighted the benefits of sharing books with babies
- Shown families how young children can get pleasure from books
- Shown that books can provide an enjoyable experience for adult and child
- Increased awareness in the community as a whole of the value of books to young children

Development

- Shown that sharing books with babies is beneficial to development in motor actions and social skills
- Increased the uptake of babies' hearing tests in areas where current uptake is poor

Literacy

- Helped raise literacy levels across the county for children and adults
- Shown that sharing books with babies is beneficial to development in speech and language
- Identified and helped parents with literacy difficulties
- Supported the principles of lifelong learning

Early Learning

- Illustrated the benefits of early learning to families, not just in terms of reading ability but also wider benefits including speaking, listening and writing
- Increased awareness of parents and carers of how books, rhymes and stories can contribute to early learning

Library Use

- Introduced children and families to library use
- Created and heightened awareness of the services offered to babies, children, parents and carers by the libraries in the city and the county
- Encouraged parents and carers to register babies as members of the library and to continue to use the service offered

Cross-Sector

Contributed to wider cross-sector objectives arising from the broader aims of the project partners

Sponsor Aims

- Reinforced the company's reputation as a leader in corporate community investment
- Provide a positive profile for Boots in its home county of Nottinghamshire
- Developed strategic relationships within the community

How The Project Aims Have Been Achieved

The key impacts, which illustrate how these aims have been achieved are summarised below according to the ten key impact themes identified:

- Personal development
- Health and well-being
- Vision and aspirations
- Family relationships and interaction
- Literacy
- Early learning, education and skills development
- Social and community
- Libraries
- Sponsor Perceptions
- Cross-sector impacts

Personal Development

BBfB has contributed to personal development in the following key ways:

For children:

- Development of motor-actions
- Increased self-esteem, particularly multi-cultural
- Multi-sensory stimulation
- Development of self-confidence
- Sense of empowerment



For adults:

- Emphasising that sharing books can aid development of motor-actions in children
- Increased awareness of child development, physically and intellectually
- Increased parental confidence
- Increased personal self-confidence
- Increased self-esteem
- Sense of empowerment

I think it promotes their independence. With their books, their books are kind of more accessible because the pictures sometimes tell the stories. And so even if they can't read the words, from the pictures they can actually make their own story. It sort of encourages creativity a little bit, as well.

Library registered parent, deprived area

She knew what she was doing when other people are just starting to learn ... she used to come home really happy. She's still confident now.

Hard-to-reach parent

They hit a next stage and you're kind of – oh, they're at this stage now, and you're catching up with where they are. And I think that actually helped jump the gun, I didn't even realise he was at that stage that he'd appreciate that.

Library registered parent, affluent area

Health and well-being enhance a child's personal development and give them a greater chance of fulfilling their potential. The research identified several health and well-being impacts to which BBfB contributes:

For children:

Emotional well-being through the development of quiet times and routines leading to emotional security

For adults:

- Enjoyment and pleasure from sharing books and the pride in their child's achievements
- Reading positioned as important for health and well-being of child
- Stress release from being able to get out of the house and share problems

- Distribution of the packs by Health Visitors ensured that the scheme was taken seriously by parents.

I think getting it from the health visitor really sort of condones the you know how important it is. Because a health visitor to my mind isn't going to give you something if it's not good for your child, are they?

Library registered parent, deprived area

I said to Miss Baker 'where is William in this class' because obviously I was a bit worried that he would be at the bottom. Especially as the other children's parents know more than we know like educated and can teach them more. And she said he's not by far she said he's not at the bottom and that to me. I thought oh God that's lovely. The exact words she said to me, she said 'he's at the top of the middle'.

Traveller parent



You just get joy. They're happy. That thing she did earlier, you're happy because the kids are enjoying it.

Hard-to-reach parent

So if you're stuck in the house, and you're getting annoyed with them, at least you can say right, get your coat on, let's get down to the library.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

It's hard work at home isn't it so I think it's nice to come to an environment like this and listen to everybody else's moans and groans and ups and downs to realise that it's the same as yours
Hard-to-reach parent

Having **aspirations and vision**, both personally and in terms of how one fits into the world lays the ground for achieving self-fulfilment. BBfB contributes to the development of aspirations and vision in several ways:

For children:

- Wider world view
- Understanding the world
- Development of imagination and creativity
- Foundation for self-fulfilment
- Aid to inter-cultural understanding and integration
- Contribution to development of human capital

For adults:

- Increased parental aspirations
- Raised personal aspirations in order to help children
- Enhanced personal vision and aspirations for some
- Contribution to development of human capital

It makes them see life in a much bigger way without them leaving their living room or their bedroom. They can gain a wealth of knowledge, they can see things. They can you know. They are introduced to different things be it language, be it different cultures,
Afro-Caribbean Parent

And given them as much chance as every other child, but if I don't send them then it's my fault. If my children when they get older can't read and write, can't spell, can't do anything for themselves, that's my responsibility.
Traveller parent

It's more creative....It's more your mind working as well. It's visual so you've got to make your mind work.
Teenage mother

She knew it as soon as you started talking about that book and she was feeling it. She could recognise a ball anywhere. Didn't have to be that red colour that it was in the book. She just knew what a ball was. So that's how it helped her and in no time at all she was pointing.
Traveller parent

I wanted to go and do a basic ... English ... again. Because my friend's little girl ... she's 10 ... and she's doing spellings, and I'm like ... got a spelling sheet in front of me and I am ... do you know what I mean? And I'm like ... can't even read half of these words, never mind spell them ... I really wanted to ... they don't start until September and then that's West Bridgford. That's not relevant to me.

Parent of disabled child



The research reveals that BBfB has a positive impact on **family relationships and interaction** in the following key ways:

- Enhancing parent-child bonding
- Increasing the quality of parent-child interaction
- Providing foundations for good family behaviours
- Illustrating ways of releasing family tension

But it's nice to spend maybe five or ten minutes in the evening, or maybe five or ten minutes in the morning – just – you know – just sitting her on your knee and – you know – she looks at – and it is, it's just nice – that sort of quiet time that you get – it just feels as though you're sharing something with them. It's rewarding, actually. Not just for the child but for the parent as well. I think.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

Spending time with their parents. And – you know – their time. Quality time.

Hard-to-reach parent

Quality time – rather than them being sat in front of the telly and mum's busy – whatever – it's quality time when I just used to sit with – sit on my knee – snuggle up together and ... definitely quality time.

Library registered parent, deprived area

But I think also I really didn't sing that many nursery rhymes with Lucy before I started doing this ... it's just remembering them all and we have loads of nursery rhymes and when she's throwing a paddy at home we end up singing nursery rhymes to get her out of it and it's all these things and it really does help you.

Hard-to-reach parent

You have to find a strategy which ... I've been learning with Linda ... strategies are the main thing that we cope with life ... now, normally, I'm a rigid person, so ... if I say no, it's no ... you're not going over there. Well now, I've had to bend and ... find a strategy that fits for that hole. You know ... maybe the round peg can't go in there ... squeeze it in a little bit

Parent of disabled child

Literacy, the ability to communicate fluently through reading and writing is recognised by all as the key basic skill required to enable people to fulfil their own potential and to contribute to society in a meaningful way. The research reveals that BBfB does indeed have a positive impact on literacy, particularly development of early literacy, by contributing to:

For children:

- A love of books shown in increased reading and reading a wider range of books
- Helping children feel ready for and integrating more easily into school, particularly for Travellers
- Improved literacy through earlier reading
- Contribution to broader literacy including speaking and writing
- Laying the foundations for a lifetime of reading

Between 1998 and 2004, the duration of BBfB to date, literacy at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, in both Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire have increased significantly and more than the average for the East Midlands Government Office Region overall. At Key

Stage 1 children achieving Level 2+ in reading increased from 65% to 75% in the city and from 78% to 86% in the county. At Key Stage 2, children achieving Level 4+ in English increased from 47% to 69% in the city and 62% to 77% in the county. Given the extensive focus on improving literacy from central and local government, these increases cannot be attributed BBfB alone but the research suggests that BBfB has clearly made a significant contribution.

For adults:

- Encouraging booksharing behaviour which showed parents what a love of books in children means
- Proactively developing a love of books in their children by buying and borrowing more and a wider range of books and the provision of relevant materials for specific cultures including Afro-Caribbean families and Travellers
- Increasing parental awareness of the value of books
- Fostering a desire for improved literacy in hard-to-reach groups including Refugees, parents of disabled children and Travellers



Just got me back into the mind-set of picking up a book and reading it – by reading it to – you know – to a child. But certainly I’ve purchased more books in the last three, four years – whatever – you know. I’ve certainly done that. So – I’m sure it’s had a positive effect.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

Yeah, it’s educational, isn’t it. I think that’s the reason why. And, like I say, the touchy feely things – different texture books and ones for the children. Obviously this is progress, isn’t it.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

It did make her interested in books and now she absolutely loves a book. She’s got quite a lot.

Traveller parent

It encourages you to buy more books.

Hard-to-reach parent

I think a lot of people think books are wall to wall writing and these books show that they’re not. They can be a picture and children do enjoy them and the textures.

Hard-to-reach parent

I knew of such things but I didn’t really think they was available to like everybody ... like you could go in the shop and buy them ... which I’ve got a couple now ... because ...

she’s very in to touching... she likes to lick and touch and feel everything, and smell everything. So ... she’ll just sit there ... could be watching telly but she’s having a little feel, [the] book’s there with her.

Parent of disabled child

He left Nursery and he went perfect.

I couldn’t believe it and he learnt. How he’d come on because me and his father is not very good scholars as you call it. His dad is quite good his dad can do his numbers and whatever, but I can’t spell very good.

I can read anything but I’m not a very good speller. So I thought he needs that little bit of push which Beverley provided.

Traveller parent

But I didn’t really bother with the joining the library until I got the form ... and then I thought well, I might as well give it a go. Because ... the book what was in it, he liked the texture ... you know ... the feel of it ... the fur and everything. And I thought I might as well.

Parent of disabled child

You don’t think to sit down and read with a child of nine months. But when you get that reaction from that touchy feely book, you think – well, yeah, I should be.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

It kick-started me into reading with my son at that point. You think oh yes, he’s at that stage.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

No didn’t think to sit. I didn’t think, silly really, first child ... I never really, well you have conversations with your kids,

I never did it with Amy. I just spoke when I had to speak and we played and we made noises, but I never spoke. So she was a very late talker. Jess has been very early. Amy is struggling at school with reading. She's not interested in books and Jess she'll sit on her own, she's nearly three and she sits and that's all because of these.

Hard-to-reach parent

You'd never think of reading a book to a nine-month-old baby, you don't think they are going to understand it.

Pakistani parent

Education, in its widest sense, brings with it enormous personal, social and economic benefits. It gives individuals a greater chance of achieving personal fulfilment and provides them with the tools to engage with the wider world effectively and meaningfully. It also reaps significant economic benefits. The research reveals that BBfB impacts extensively on early learning and education:

For children:

- By establishing a learning disposition and readiness for school
- Providing a kick-start to or boosting participation in early learning

For parents:

- By illustrating the value and benefits of early learning
- Increasing awareness of the range of early learning opportunities
- Showing parents how they can help with their child's early learning

Being able to help their children was the prime driver for most of the skills development aspired to by parents in the research. The skills parents were most keen to develop in order to help their children were core literacy skills. Other education related skills were how to help their children with early learning and specific learning strategies for disabled children. A concern,



again for some of the hard-to-reach mothers, is that their ability to engage in skills development was constrained by lack of childcare options.

For some of the hard-to-reach participants and some of the teenage mothers, the outreach workers delivering the BBfB scheme provide inspiration and role models for future work, most likely in childcare.

To help the kiddies with their education because the first step is getting them onto books, and then everything else takes off from there.

Library registered parent, deprived area

It makes spelling, writing, all sorts of different things that you do at school so much easier because you can learn everything if you can read you can do quite a lot can't you. You can write, you can spell. There's a lot of things you can do.

Teenage mother

He does get books and attention whatever, but he didn't get the books like Beverley got him. A nursery rhyme is one thing and singing the alphabet, but Beverley taught him colours and shapes which I think it all helped where he is now.

Traveller parent

I haven't always been in to books ... And what the Boots pack does for me and reading with my daughter is that I want to see her read more. So, for me, at my time in life, education is very important to me. But before, it wasn't so important to me.

Library registered parent, deprived area

I don't want him to be a mathematical genius. I just want him to learn to read and write and spell. Just do the normal basic things so that he can get on in life without worrying about that sort of thing.

Traveller parent

She explained about it's good to start showing books and things to babies at this age ... No I didn't think about it until I spoke to Sarah.

Hard-to-reach parent

I know now through seeing Beverley with William, I know how to do it. Instead of reading the book. She was explaining to me yesterday how I needed to help him do his homework. Learning his words which if I hadn't been told I wouldn't know.

Traveller parent

The **social and community impacts** of BBfB are highly significant. In effect, all the impacts previously identified – on personal development; health and well-being; family relationships and interaction; literacy and early learning and education all contribute directly or indirectly to the social and community impact of BBfB. BBfB also creates social and community impact through:

- Development of people's social skills
- Aiding community integration
- Enabling social cohesion

The value of these impacts is clear when presented in the context of Human and Social Capital Theories which give us a framework to describe the wider effects of effective personal development as a foundation stone for being able to connect to the world and the value of those connections including community interaction and the importance of trust and belonging.

BBfB aids the development of social skills in children and their parents by:

- The teaching of social skills through stories
- Practicing communication skills through the process of sharing books
- Opportunities to learn and practice these skills at BBfB events

Community integration, the involvement of all in the community on an equal basis, is a key aim for central and local government. BBfB aids community integration by:

- Giving children opportunities to learn and experience social codes, values and morals
- Providing books that are representative of multiple cultures and which consequently position those cultures alongside each other while retaining culturally specific identity

- Providing opportunities for integration for excluded groups including teenage mothers; parents of disabled children and hard-to-reach groups
- Enhancing the self-esteem of some excluded groups such as teenage mothers or Travellers by the scheme being universal so that inclusion is non-stigmatising
- Raising awareness of the literacy as a route to community integration for Travellers and Refugees
- Providing dedicated materials and outreach support for excluded groups including Travellers, disabled children and bilingual books for Indian and Pakistani families

Social cohesion, the 'connectedness' of people within society is also a key aim for government to which BBfB contributes by:

- Providing opportunities for people from different social, cultural and economic backgrounds to meet on neutral territory thereby enabling social mobility
- Providing bilingual books which enable intra-community cohesion
- Providing culturally representative books which aid inter-cultural awareness, understanding, tolerance and trust
- Reducing the sense of isolation felt by communities whose limited literacy constrains their engagement in society such as refugees

Building their communication skills. It starts from ... it's important because you're getting the social interaction as well, between children, their parents and with other children. Books are a good sort of way of getting children to communicate with other children and with other adults as well.

Library registered parent, deprived area

I'd never seen one before and I mean she can look at it. She's not an outcast ... she's not different, but there's something that belongs to her that she can look at.

Traveller parent

It teaches them – well, depending what stories you're reading to them, it teaches them values and morals.

Hard-to-reach parent

It means more to me that he's being accepted and it means it's so important that such as Beverley and the people behind Beverley and yourself and the people behind you. You are recognising that they are children. They've got to learn. They need to learn and I know we are Travellers and we live differently and we go away, but they really take an interest in our children and I think that is very very important and it's lovely to know that you care because when I was a child they didn't care.

Traveller parent

I like it because usually I'm stuck indoors on my own just watching television and coming to places like this gets me out of the house and talking to other mums and just seeing how the children behave. With Sarah within the group I sometimes have little chats with her and she gives me advice and things to make or do so that's helpful.

Hard-to-reach parent

It shows you that people care doesn't it? These books are like £5 each. It just shows you that people do actually care about getting children to learn to read.

Teenage mother

Certainly I feel since I've had my little boy – I know far more people in the community and it has been through things like this, getting out and about and – children's groups, and using the facilities within the community.

Library registered parent, affluent area

All the other children know that William is a Traveller they know he lives in a trailer. It's made it accepted to the other children.

Traveller parent

That's why I tend to like to come to these sort of places because it's usually just me and her on our own and I like her to bond with other children.

Hard-to-reach parent

BBfB has illustrated how libraries already are and have significant further potential to contribute to the future vision of libraries espoused in *Framework for the Future*³², *The Future Library Project*³⁵ and *C21st*

*Century Libraries*³⁰ as libraries being 'the heart of the community' in terms of:

- Being unique provider of books, reading and learning
- Encouraging access to the digital age
- Developing community and civic values
- Being an open resource of culture, information, knowledge and technology
- Offering the best human values of respect, care, culture and public services
- Changing lives, strengthening communities
- Providing unique, active public spaces, open to all



The impacts of BBfB in relation to **libraries** include:

- Changing libraries image and positioning
- Establishing the positive and negative perceptions held by users and non-users
- Establishing motivations and barriers to use
- New enrolment in/use of libraries
- Earlier enrolment in/use of libraries
- Increased awareness/use of the range of services offered

BBfB has undoubtedly helped to change the image and positioning of libraries in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Libraries have a unique positioning in user's minds in their ability to combine education,

leisure and community activities on an equal footing. From a wider education perspective it makes them accessible in a way that formal education institutions are not.

BBfB has contributed to more positive perceptions of libraries by many of the new users introduced to the service overall, but particularly for hard-to-reach groups including teenage mothers. These perceptions include:

- A less 'hush-hush' ambience than envisaged
- More welcoming and engaging staff
- Being welcoming to children
- Offering an improved range of services particularly access to computers and the internet
- Some, but not universal, perception of increased/more accessible opening hours

Use of libraries has increased significantly as a result of BBfB:

- A 1182% increase in 1-2 year olds and 290% increase in 3-4 year olds registered as library members in the city and county between 1998, when BBfB started and 2004
- Babies enrolled who otherwise would not have been, particularly amongst hard-to-reach groups including teenage mothers
- Adult use as a result of visiting the library with their children
- Earlier enrolment from all different sectors of the community – many parents would not envisage enrolling their children in a library until they were nearer school age
- Use of a wider range of services including attending activities for children and use of the internet

However there are still some negative perceptions of libraries although it must be stressed that these are based on historic, intrinsic perceptions rather than on experience of visiting libraries.

While libraries are changing, it seems the message has not reached all sectors of society. These negative perceptions which translate into barriers to people engaging with libraries include:

- Places where you have to be quiet
- Unwelcoming, inaccessible staff
- Limited opening hours which do not reflect an increasingly 24 hour society
- Libraries as inappropriate/unwelcoming places for babies and particularly for disabled children
- Not as relevant or welcoming as they could be to particularly communities such as the Afro-Caribbean community in terms of range of stock; display of stock; representative staffing
- Both perceptions and experience of libraries being physically inaccessible to people with small children through too many stairs or difficult access for pushchairs
- Lack of wider promotion

From our perspective, libraries are about education. You know, that's the key. It's about leisure, and it's about social aspects as well, but mainly it's about education. That, to me, is a very good partnership. Because children don't just learn by reading books. They learn by hearing you know they learn by re-enacting things, by being in that kind of environment. It's a community space, isn't it?

Library registered parent, deprived area

It's time for libraries to expand because they're bringing out the whole idea of education for everybody that's one of the key things. Health, well-being, everything. So, it's something that needs to be linked together.

Library registered parent, deprived area

It looked a lot different to how things used to be. And people just generally looked a lot more relaxed. It wasn't as hush-hush, people were chatting and nobody was telling them off.

Library registered parent, deprived area

Libraries are about education. It's about leisure, and it's about social aspects as well, but mainly it's about education. That, to me, is a very good partnership. It's a community space, isn't it?

They've always been really helpful whenever I've asked them – and been really friendly, and very approachable, actually – more approachable than perhaps I thought they would be.

Library registered parent, affluent area

I know that the library is an appropriate place for children because I can put them in the children's corner and they'll sit on a mat and get a book out and read, I know that they're safe, and I know that you know the end product is that we're all going to go home with a book that we're going to enjoy, and we're going to come back.

Library registered parent, deprived area

I've found this library particularly very good for under fives. Because of the actual children's area here. And it's more encouraging. On rainy days when you couldn't think of anything to do, it was actually quite nice to come down here and they could actually play and read. So, they associated a library with sort of more fun not just sitting and being quiet.

Library registered parent, deprived area

But I was just quite amazed how they usually help you, I didn't think they'd come over and help you choose and tell you which books to go for, and – what ages they are.

Hard-to-reach parent

I used the Library when I was pregnant after I'd seen Sarah and I came here and got books out on pregnancy and things like that and now the other week I had a book about play development for babies. It was just a book about things to make for them and activities to do so I get things like that that gives you information and helps you think of things to do with her.

Hard-to-reach parent

We're a 24 hour society, but the library is not in tune with that. Because you know by seven o'clock, your libraries are closed. But I've got to factor that in between finishing work, picking the children up you know that kind of slot. And sometimes, the library doesn't fit in with the way that I need to do things.

Library registered parent, deprived area

I think that's one of the things that they could do is to really reconsider the selection of books. Are they catering for everyone in the community in which they are based and nine times out of ten I think that answer is no.

Afro-Caribbean parent

They're just boring. The staff are all ... behind the counter and ... They don't come out to you, do they ... this is my area ... I love my area, please keep it clean ... And again, I feel uncomfortable because I've got a child ... oh, dear ... it's a long time since I've been in there ... it's like making that gap, isn't it ...

Parent of disabled child

Cross Sector Impacts

This broad range of impacts contributes to multiple cross-sector objectives:

Development of Human Capital

- Contribution to personal knowledge, skills, experience
- Empowerment as a core life skill
- Literacy as a core life skill

Creation of Social Capital

- Establishment of social networks, norms and values
- Laying the foundations for the development of trust and co-operative behaviour outside the family which contribute to bonding and bridging types of social capital, enabling understanding and creating links between communities
- Literacy aids community involvement
- Provision of social networking opportunities

Civil Renewal

- Active citizenship which is more likely to be engaged in by empowered people
- A wider view of the world prepares the ground for active citizenship
- Facilitating community cohesion

Neighbourhood Renewal

- Creating strengthened communities
- Facilitating community integration
- Improved literacy among adults and encouraging parents into literacy development
- Increased parental involvement in children's learning
- Addressing low parent expectations
- Family learning
- Crime reduction



Sure Start

- Improving health
- Improving social and emotional development
- Strengthening families and communities
- Improving learning
- Children's readiness for school
- Parental aspirations to employment

Sure Start's Birth to Three Framework

- Helping children realise their own individuality
- Becoming able to trust and rely on their own abilities and being able to make choices
- Children should experience and seek closeness
- Providing children with emotional well-being
- Providing children with knowledge and understanding of the world
- Children acquiring social confidence and competence.
- Enabling creative development
- Children should become skilful, sociable and effective communicators; competent learners; competent and confident language users; be able to listen and respond to the language of others and to understand and be understood

- Children connecting and understanding the world creatively
- Children connecting and understanding the world with marks and symbols

DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners

In either offering now or showing how BBfB and libraries have significant potential to offer:

- Greater personalisation and choice in learning
- Informal, flexible, de-institutionalised learning
- Effective partnerships with other education providers
- Unique ability to provide 'educare' for children in their early years.

Foundation Stage Curriculum

- Personal, social, emotional and physical development
- Developing social skills
- Language and communication, reading and writing
- Positive attitude and disposition to learning
- Development of attention skills and persistence
- Creative development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world

Learning and Skills Council

- Promoting equality and social inclusion

Building capacity of individuals through:

- Individuals feeling empowered
- Development of creative confidence
- Widening participation in learning
- Promoting informal as well as formal learning

Nottingham's Community Strategy

- Increased awareness of diversity
- Increased stakeholding from some excluded communities including Travellers and teenage mothers
- Celebration of diversity
- Creating a stronger and more cohesive community

Skills for Life

- Breaking a generation cycle of underachievement in literacy for hard-to-reach groups
- Acquiring skills for active participation in society

Sponsor Perceptions

Boots, as the sponsors of the Boots Books for Babies Scheme, shared the project aims of boosting early learning and literacy levels across the county and supporting the principles of lifelong learning.

Boots specific objectives were cited as being to:

- Provide a positive profile for Boots in its home county of Nottinghamshire
- Reinforce the company's reputation as a leader in community corporate investment
- Develop strategic relationships within the community

The BBfB research suggests that Boots has an existing positive profile and to this end, sponsorship of BBfB has served to reinforce this profile.

I think it's a big company. It's good that they've supported something like this.

Library Registered Parent, Affluent Area

But it's nice that it's a Nottingham based company to me, because I thought well ... you know ... it shows that ... yeah,

okay, Boots is a profit-making company but they're also willing to put back into the community.

(9) Parent of disabled child

Boots are perceived to:

- Care about the community, particularly their 'local' community of Nottinghamshire
- Be concerned to 'put something back', not just about profit which meets the company's objective of being known for community corporate reinvestment

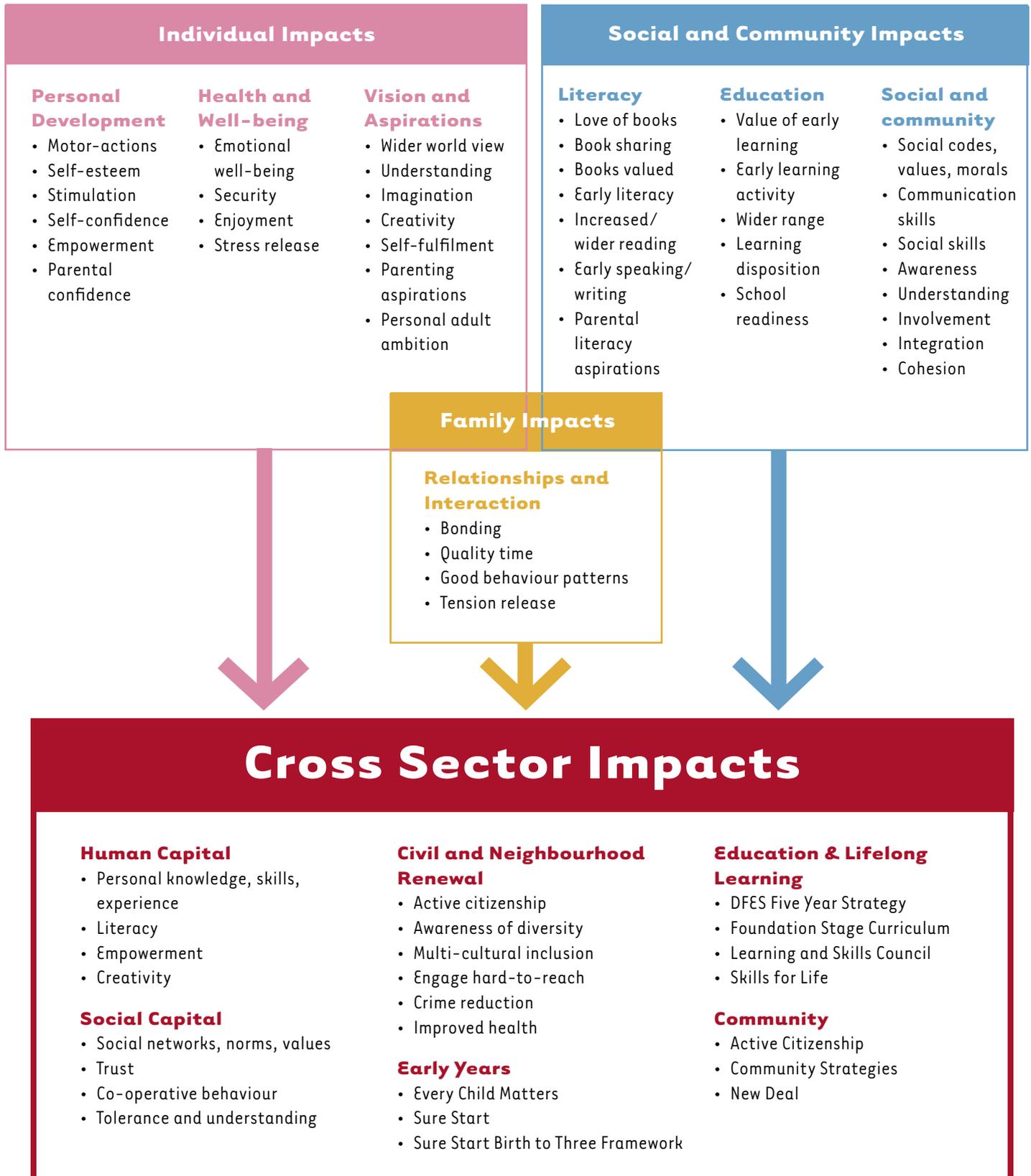


Boots believe that BBfB has helped them develop strategic relationships within the community, stating that:

Boots has valued the Boots Books for Babies partnership very highly. We extended our initial three year commitment to the project based on the difference the project was making to the local community and we have been proudly associated with the scheme over six years. The partnership has made a positive impact on our relationships with the other partners and has enabled us to reach a network of other contacts.

Sarah Smith,
Community Health Promotion Manager, Boots plc

Impact of Boots Books For Babies



The Future for

Key implications for the future of Boots Books for Babies emerge from the research.

Continue universal penetration

The universal penetration of the BBfB scheme is undoubtedly a key reason for its success. Distribution of the pack to all children means that the scheme is socially inclusive and non-stigmatising. While the impact of the scheme is greatest among hard-to-reach groups it has impact on all sectors of society, now confirmed by the Government in its decision to extend Bookstart universally.

She knew what she was doing when other people are just starting to learn ... she used to come home really happy. She's still confident now.

Retain a non-didactic approach

A key reason for BBfB's success is that it is delivered in a non-didactic way. While the packs are positioned as important for child development and early learning, they, and the associated events are also positioned as fun activities for children and parents.

Further develop multiple aspects of the scheme

The enhancement of the scheme through the provision of associated events and outreach activity in addition to the packs contributes significantly to the wider social and community impacts, especially of social and cultural integration. BBfB has significant potential to increase these impacts, which contribute directly to overarching government agendas on social inclusion.

Provide subsequent intervention

The pack is distributed at around nine months. Parents felt they would benefit from subsequent interventions at around two years and pre-school. The need for this has been reinforced by Bookstart research and the consequent extension of that scheme to provide books not only at nine months but subsequently at 18 months and then at age two.

Books for Babies

Expand the degree of intervention

The impact of the scheme is greatest where the degree of intervention is deepest. Parents and children benefit most when they engage with others through the scheme and where they are supported by outreach workers. Aims such as encouraging fathers to read with their children would benefit from this particularly.

Increase dedicated support for BBfB within libraries

Many libraries deliver support activities effectively; others have access to BBfB outreach workers. However the effectiveness of the scheme would be enhanced if there was greater dedicated support for BBfB activities in libraries.

Greater transparency about the wider social impact objectives

Most research participants felt that the wider social impact objectives of the scheme could be presented more transparently within the scheme, but that this must not detract from the non-didactic delivery of the scheme.

Enhance role in promoting inter-cultural awareness and understanding

Dedicated materials for specific cultures were welcomed but it was also felt that BBfB could play an important role in the delivery of materials which enhance inter-cultural awareness and understanding between all cultures.

Build on libraries unique positioning in hosting BBfB

Libraries' unique positioning as an educational/leisure/community resource makes them uniquely positioned to deliver this scheme, as identified in DCMS' *Framework for the Future*³² and the *Future Library Project*³⁵. Key to this positioning is that they are not perceived as institutions in the same sense as formal educational institutions or commercial retail and leisure.

This positioning is enhanced by the extent to which BBfB contributes to wider central and local government cross-sector agendas including:



- The development of human capital
- The creation of social capital
- Civil Renewal
- Neighbourhood Renewal
- Community Strategies
- Sure Start, particularly the Birth to Three Framework
- DfES Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners
- The Foundation Stage Curriculum
- Learning and Skills Council aims
- Skills for Life

Formalise and promote partnerships

BBfB would benefit from articulating these cross-sector impacts and contributions more concretely to use as a tool to develop more formal delivery and possibly funding partnerships with the agencies responsible for delivering these policies. Partnerships with Children's Centres will be critical in this with the Chancellor's announcement in the 2004 Spending Review that an additional £100m is being allocated to increase the number of Children's Centres from a planned 1700 to 2500 by 2008 and ultimately to ensure that all children have access to Children's Centres.

Enhance Health Visitor Partnership

The partnership with Health Visitors is vital but delivery could be enhanced. Delivery of the packs through Health Visitors does achieve the aim of positioning reading as important for the development, health and well-being of children. If Health Visitors were enabled to devote dedicated resources to delivery of the pack the distribution would be equally effective in all cases.

Address child-care constraints on the wider education impacts

Parents with low skills identified that a lack of appropriate child-care constrained their ability to take part in skills-development activities. Partners could address this through joined-up delivery.

Challenge historic negative perceptions of libraries

While the perception of libraries has changed significantly for those with recent experience of using

them, libraries ability to deliver BBfB to deliver it with greatest effectiveness is constrained by historic negative perceptions including:

- Libraries as irrelevant to 21st century life particularly in the face of an increasingly consumerist culture
- Libraries as quiet places with unwelcoming and inaccessible staff
- Perceptions of a lack of stock, display and staffing relevant to multiple cultures

The BBfB research reinforces the relevance of the messages identified in *The Future Library*³⁶ to challenge people's historic perception of libraries:

- It's not what you think
- Opening new worlds
- If you don't go you won't know what you're missing
- Your library/there for everybody
- The key to information

Create appropriate and responsive physical environments

The research confirms that many libraries having less than ideal spaces for delivery and physical access limitations, constraining their ability to attract people in and to deliver schemes such as BBfB. This echoes the findings in *C21st Century Libraries*³⁰ which argues that public libraries need to be imaginatively designed and responsive to enable them to play a pivotal role at the heart of the community.

Recognise the emergence of an increasingly 24/7 society

The research reinforced the perception that library opening times still don't reflect an increasingly 24/7 society.

Wider marketing and communication is needed

Both BBfB and libraries would benefit from a more strategic approach to marketing and pro-active communication with potential users. For many BBfB participants, their awareness of and involvement with BBfB ends with receipt of the initial pack or the

first visit to the library. Unless they become regular library users they are unaware of multiple events and activities taking place and which enhance the impact of the scheme.

Outcome Measurement

As with all projects where many of the outcomes are qualitative in nature, BBfB would benefit from establishing ways of measuring these outcomes to provide quantifiable evidence of the impact and contribution to cross-sector agendas particularly that the research shows are being achieved. The generic measures developed for the *Inspiring Learning for All*³³ framework would be an appropriate model.

Develop in-built monitoring and on-going evaluation

There is scope for BBfB to build in monitoring alongside delivery of the scheme and activities and consequently to evaluate penetration and effectiveness on an on-going basis.

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