

Plymouth Bookstart Highlights April 2008– March 2009

Introduction

Bookstart is based on the principle that every child in the UK should have the opportunity to enjoy book sharing from an early age. It is about quality time spent between parent/carer and child, listening to stories, talking about the pictures and learning how to turn the pages. Although Bookstart primarily promotes reading for pleasure, rather than learning to read, it has been proven to have a positive effect on literacy and strengthening bonds in families.

Booktrust are the national administrators of Bookstart. They co-ordinate the programme nationally by producing and distributing Bookstart packs and support materials. Booktrust is responsible for researching and evaluating the scheme and further developing the programme.

Bookstart in Plymouth is co-ordinated by Plymouth Library Services in partnership with Health Visitors and the Early Years Team. We aim to gift Bookstart packs containing free books and information on sharing books to every baby, toddler and pre-school child in Plymouth.

Bookstart baby packs and Bookstart + packs are gifted by Health Visitors, Libraries and Children's Centres. My Bookstart Treasure Chests are gifted by Early Years Settings and Libraries.

Between April 2008 – March 2009:

3316 babies received Bookstart baby packs (100% of eligible children), compared with 94 % nationally

2822 toddlers received Bookstart + packs (98% of eligible children), compared with 92% nationally

2784 3 year olds received Bookstart Treasure Chests (100% of eligible children), compared with 97% nationally

We supplied 17 Booktouch packs to children with visual impairments and 16 Bookshine packs for children with hearing impairments.

420 Dual language packs were gifted, with Polish, Chinese and Portuguese being the most popular languages.

Bookstart Bookcrawl continued to be very successful this year, with 10560 children taking part and with 1782 receiving Bookcrawl certificates.

Highlights from our Bookstart year!



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Bookstart Bear was a star attraction at our National Year of Reading Launch at the Drake Circus Shopping Mall in Plymouth.

He participated in a very noisy Rhymetime session, met the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress and gifted Bookstart packs to our youngest readers, joining many to the library on the day.



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We also launched our fabulous new “Rhymetimes Rock” bookmarks and booklets, with author/illustrator and Plymouth resident Simon James. He gave us permission to use his Baby Brains character and we borrowed the wording from the Bookstart new baby cards as we thought it was just perfect!

We held a fun morning with a large group of parents with babies. Simon told us that he didn't usually work with children quite so young, but he entered into the spirit of things, presenting his books to the parents, despite babies crawling up his legs occasionally! All the parents enjoyed a Starbucks coffee and every child also went home with a free Simon James book.



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We support the Family Nurse Partnership programme in their work with vulnerable young parents, by supplying them with Bookstart packs and also a collection of books on parenting. The nurses have given books for parents to read to their bumps as a way of promoting attachment and to start them on their book sharing!



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The Bookstart co-ordinator has begun visiting children who go to nursery at Hamoaze House, a facility that support families and provides support for those trying to break away from drug and alcohol abuse. At each session we provide a book collection of board and picture books, read stories and encourage the children to take part in Bookstart Book Crawl.



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Last year we delivered the Book Ahead project, which enabled libraries to loan collections of good books to Early Years Settings. This was really successful in Plymouth and we had an increase of settings visited from 50 the previous year to 109 last year; almost doubling the amount of books issued to nurseries and playgroups.

The success of Book Ahead and inspired us to link Bookstart more closely to Early Years outcomes and we saw an opportunity to do this by joining the **Communication, Language and Literacy programme**. The CLLD supports schools and their linked early years settings to develop early reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, aiming to ensure a smooth transition between settings and reception. We support 10 selected Early Years Settings by supplying them with books and half-termly visits, modelling storytelling and encouraging the children to share books by joining in with the Bookstart Book Crawl.

The Bookstart Co-ordinator provided training with the leaders from the settings, in which she talked about the Bookstart programme, the ethos behind it and how the settings linked in with delivering the Treasure Chests. She also recommended great books for storytime, including “Noisy Picture Books”, a collection based on Jill Bennett’s excellent piece in Books for Keeps magazine (November 2008). She also demonstrated best practice and also how not read stories to children!

With special permission from Kath and Kay at the Booktrust, we asked if we could do Bookstart Bookcrawl in these particular 10 settings. We supply books and stickers to the settings and when we next visit, any child who has read 4 or more books are presented with a Bookcrawl certificate. Some are given out in settings and some children visit their local library to be presented with their certificates.



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As part of the Family Learning festival in October, we held a family Learning Fun Day in Central Library. A big top tent was set up in the car park where families could try their hand at various circus skills, such as walking on

stilts and juggling. The Bookstart Bear met the ringmaster....and lots of children! In the main library there was a Big Picture Party with storytelling, creating your favourite book and a find the picture treasure hunt. Children could also try their hand at also science experiments and play with robots!



The theme of National Bookstart Day was “Pirate Parties”. Parties were held at all libraries and children’s centres throughout Plymouth and it was widely considered to be the most successful National celebration so far. We held a special party at the National Marine Aquarium, where we invited children from one of our Surestart area and also families from Plympton Library, which had unfortunately burnt down a few months earlier. We didn’t want the children to miss out on all the fun and excitement of a party!



The idea for **Bookstart Bear’s blog** came from Bookstart Bear himself. For a few years he has been the star of our Flickr account as he journeys around the world promoting Bookstart accompanied by library staff and their families.

For National Year of Reading we decided to start a blog aimed at families in Plymouth, and Bookstart Bear presented himself as the perfect host, as he is mascot, brand and loveable character all in one!

It is primarily aimed at the under 5s and their families in Plymouth. All the news and events are aimed at Plymouth based families and are suitable for this age group.

The blog is promoted on the children’s pages of our website and makes frequent appearances on the homepage. Library staff have been encouraged to sign up to receive updates by email and promote the blog to their borrowers.

Postcards have now been printed which go into each Bookstart pack given out in Plymouth. We have run competitions via the blog and more are planned for the New Year. It’s still early days, but we are starting to build a readership. The most important thing is regular and relevant entries

To see more of Bookstart Bear on his travels visit:

<http://plymouthbb.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/plymouthlibraries/>

For more information about Bookstart, please contact the

Bookstart Co-ordinator, Sue Mills, Tel 01752 305974
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Comments from our partners in Plymouth

Bookstart Packs are extremely well received with parents always being very pleased with the quality of the books. Parents seem more prepared to receive the packs, as the information about Bookstart and **when** the children will receive them is shared right from the start at our 'Talk to your bump' session and groups including Chatterbox, where we give out the majority of Bookstart plus packs.

We are very proud to have permission for use of the logo on our programme. It is a pleasure to be able to 'gift' the packs, and we go through the contents, suggesting book sharing tips.

We always tell parents of our new babies, at the new baby reunion that babies can join the library, and have their own ticket too; one baby joined the library at 6 weeks! So we were very proud (is this a record?)

The Bookstart resources for National Bookstart Day are fantastic, the children love the activities and songs, and the activities really are very creative, particularly the Pirate theme.

Cherie Pryce, Communications Co-ordinator, DELL Children's Centre

My name is Joanne Bullard and I am a community public health nurse at Plympton. Part of my role is to undertake the 6-12 month development checks. This is where I give out the Book start packs to the family. I just wanted to share with you the delight and pleasure that is expressed when I show them what is included within the bag. I explain and talk about everything that is included in the book start pack and usually give the child one of the books. The children always love the book on babies, it really appeals to them and their attention is certainly taken with the baby faces.

Parents are generally really pleased with the packs and are usually surprised that they are given out for free.

So on behalf of the families and children in Plympton, a BIG thank you for the packs.

Joanne Bullard, Community Public Health Nurse at Plympton Clinic

Its Claire here from Keystone Children's Centre. When I was given the Bookstart packs I was told that I could give them to parents of 2 yr olds that hadn't received them from their health visitor. This is what I have been doing, so when in groups I've been promoting the fact that I have these packs and that they can collect them off of me if needed.

I have been doing the Talk to your bump part of the antenatal and have been promoting the packs within that session, with samples for the parents to browse through. They all say how fantastic it is to be given something so lovely and how useful that they look.

I think that the Bookstart packages are excellent; working with 0 to 5s it is lovely to see the children with their books. A lot of parents do not realise how stimulating it is for the little ones or be read to and to look at the books with them but Bookstart brings this to their attention.

Here are a few quotes from parents I have spoken to:

Holly loves the mirror in the back of one of her books and I have got her lots of touchy feely books. This is down to Bookstart as I did not realise she would show an interest in books this young.

Did not realize how early babies start to love books until I came along to first babies group and the topic was Bookstart. I now read with Josh every day as part of his bedtime routine.

Since receiving Bookstart pack I have now added to Ashton's bookshelf the whole series of That's not my... and also the Peekaboo books he really enjoys them.

Claire Ford, Early Years Foundation Stage Manager, Keystone Children's Centre

We started the Family Nurse Partnership programme in Plymouth in September 2008 , as part of a National pilot for the Dept of health. Plymouth is now one of 50 sites around the country delivering this intensive programme to first time younger parents from early in pregnancy through to their child's second birthday. We have over 60 families currently receiving the programme here in Plymouth . We are still signing families up! The aims of the programme are to improve health outcomes for both parents and child and also link families into employment, education or training. An outcome in the USA where the programme originated was that children were better prepared for school entry. We also aim to promote positive attachment between parents and their children . One of the key ways we do this through the programme is to encourage fun activities between parent and child such as sharing books, nursery rhymes and accessing local facilities such as libraries and children's centres.

One of the earliest useful contacts we made for our site was the local Book start co-ordinator. Sue Mills has been an incredible source of help , not just providing us with our book start materials, but also lending us a book collection. Some of our young women have been keen to read more about their pregnancy with the books Sue has loaned us and may lack the resources to purchase them , or just not be confident enough to go into a library. Sue

has also helped us with our clients who have poor literacy skills and where English is not the first language with dual language books. We would hope to further develop links with the library and run a celebration event as many of our babies are now arrived!

Anne Dixon, Family Nurse Partnership Supervisor, NHS Plymouth