

# The health and wellbeing benefits of reading with children:

## Research evidence

Booktrust has produced a theoretical framework outlining the wider health benefits of reading with children, available here:

[www.bookstart.org.uk/framework](http://www.bookstart.org.uk/framework)

The evidence suggests that reading with children has the following impacts:

### ✓ Promotes secure attachment

Parent-child attachment is related to the frequency of reading at home: Bus et al found that three-year-old children who were read to frequently were more likely to be securely attached than children who were read to infrequently (Bus et al (1995) *Mothers Reading to Their 3-Year-Olds: The Role of Mother-Child Attachment Security in Becoming Literate, Reading Research Quarterly*).

### ✓ Reduces socio-emotional difficulties

Professor Yvonne Kelly (Professor of Lifecourse Epidemiology, UCL) states that if children were read to on a daily basis there would be a substantial reduction in the proportion of five-year-olds with socio-emotional difficulties (Kelly et al (2011) - *What role for the home learning environment and parenting in reducing the socioeconomic gradient in child development? Arch Dis Child*).

### ✓ Assists with speech and language development

DfE research shows that the communication environment in the child's first two years impacts on early language development and attainment at school. Book ownership and library usage are positively related to language development: the number of books available to the child at six months has a significant impact on the child's expressive vocabulary at 24 months (Roulstone et al (2011) *Investigating the role of language in children's early educational outcomes, DfE*).



### ✓ Improves the Home Learning Environment

The EPPE Project highlights the key importance of the home learning environment for a child's intellectual and social development. Reading books with children is one of the activities that helps create a positive home learning environment (Sylva et al (2004) - *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-School to end of Key Stage 1, DfE*).

### ✓ Improves educational outcomes

Reading to a 4-5 year-old child more frequently leads to higher reading, maths and cognitive skills at age 8-9. Reading to children every day, or almost every day instead of twice a week or less had the same effect on the child's reading skills as being almost 12 months older (Kalb & van Ours (2013) *Reading to Young Children: A Head-Start in Life? Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research*).

### ✓ Reduces health inequalities

Sir Michael Marmot has stated that 'giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reducing health inequalities across the life course', and he has highlighted the importance of reading on a daily basis as one way to give children the best start in life (Marmot et al (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review*).

# Bookstart Corner: a reading programme with proven impacts

## About Booktrust

Booktrust is a national reading charity that changes lives through books. We give millions of books to children, run prizes and offer advice to readers and writers.

## Bookstart Corner

Bookstart Corner is one of Booktrust's targeted reading programmes, aimed at families with children aged 12-30 months. It supports children's centres across England to work with families with the greatest need, encouraging them to develop a love of stories, books and rhymes. It is delivered through a series of four home visits enhanced with carefully selected resources including books, rhymes and finger puppets.

An independent evaluation of Bookstart Corner was recently carried out by Sheffield Hallam University. It involved parents and practitioners at 60 children's centres completing surveys at the start and end of the programme about their reading behaviours and attitudes to reading. The research found that the programme significantly improves the parental engagement of families that are not accessing services, across a number of outcomes related to reading behaviours in the home.



[booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk)

The full evaluation report (Demack and Stevens (2013) *Evaluation of Bookstart England: Bookstart Corner*, Sheffield Hallam University) is here:

[www.bookstart.org.uk/cornerevaluation](http://www.bookstart.org.uk/cornerevaluation)

## Key research findings

### Increased reading frequency

Before the Bookstart Corner sessions, 54% of mothers/female carers reported reading with their child every day, increasing to 67% after the programme. For fathers/male carers the increase was even sharper: rising from 5% to 22%.

### Improved home learning environment

Responses from practitioners showed a marked change in views about the home learning environment following Bookstart Corner. The number of practitioners reporting that the family was playing and engaging as a normal part of daily life, more than doubled from 23% before the programme, to 62% after the programme.

### Reaching families that are not accessing services

Practitioner feedback suggests that the programme is a great way to work with families with the greatest need, and offers an opportunity to encourage use of services. The research indicates that parents/carers were more likely to visit the library or the children's centre following the programme.

“ The Bookstart Corner programme has been a fundamental tool in reaching the most hard to reach families in our area. The programme has not only enabled workers to explore the habits of book sharing, songs and rhymes but it has also enabled workers to extend and discuss issues around routine, speech and language etc. This has subsequently led to families exploring other programmes in the home or at the centre. A very simple but effective tool. ”

### Bookstart Corner Practitioner

