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The Contribution of Early Years Bookgifting Programmes to Literacy Attainment: A Literature Review

Final report

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Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

Over the last 20 years, a large number of bookgifting programmes have been introduced worldwide to promote reading through the distribution of free books to children and their families. Many have been very well-received and studies have repeatedly found that parents rate these programmes highly (e.g. High Scope, 2003; Goldfield et al, 2012). Funded through governmental bodies, charities and commercial organisations, and often working closely with publishers, programmes include long-established and wide-ranging schemes such as *Reach Out and Read* (USA) as well as local or regional programmes such as *Better Beginnings* in Western Australia or *Books for Babies* in Newfoundland (Canada). Programmes sit along a continuum from pure book distribution schemes, such as the *Imagination Library* (USA), to those that combine bookgifting with an extended programme of guidance for parents on booksharing[1], such as *Bookstart Corner* (UK). Schemes also vary in terms of:

- ages and groups targeted;
- duration;
- processes and criteria for book selection;
- number and range of resources provided;
- the context for implementation;
- the process of gifting books;
- services and institutions involved in implementation.

This review is concerned with bookgifting programmes designed for families with children aged 0-5, particularly those that distribute books directly to babies and young children alongside guidance for parents. It is recognised that other studies have found positive impacts from evaluations of bookgifting programmes aimed at older children (e.g. University of Leicester, 2010; Griffiths and Comber, 2011; Winter et al, 2011).

The review was commissioned by Booktrust to inform the development of their bookgifting programmes and to establish the evidence base for their work in this area. In the UK, Booktrust has played a leading role in developing and implementing bookgifting programmes (Bundy, 2004) and currently manages a series of programmes for different age phases. Aimed at babies and children under 5, Booktrust's *Bookstart* programme encourages parents to engage in book-related activities with children from the earliest years by providing books and guidance on reading for every child in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Bookstart Baby Pack, a bag including books and guidance on booksharing for parents, is given by health visitors during a baby's first year and the Treasure Pack, containing books, paper and crayons, is given in early years settings when the child is aged 3-4. *Bookstart* also provides suggestions for activities and books to share via the Booktrust website and supports libraries and early years settings to hold Rhymetime

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[1] Also referred to as 'shared book reading', 'story book reading,' 'reading aloud' and 'daily reading.'

and Storytime sessions. The Bookstart programme has been used as a model for bookgifting programmes for infants and their families worldwide, such as *Bookbug* in Scotland, *Bookstart Japan*, *Bookstart South Korea*, *Bookstart Holland*, *Boekbabies* in Belgium and *Bogstart* in Denmark.

Many international bookgifting programmes have been subject to evaluation and the findings of some evaluations have been included in reviews of research into children's early literacy development, for example, those considering the contribution of early literacy programmes (Shoghi et al, 2013) or children's access to print material (Lindsay, 2010). Others (Hines and Brooks, 2005) have summarised the findings of small-scale local evaluations, reviewed all the evaluations for specific types of programmes (Needlman and Silverstein, 2004; Ogg et al, 2012), or drawn on prior evidence to arrive at judgments about the social return on investments in bookgifting schemes (Just Economics, 2010). This review seeks to complement this prior work by drawing on international evidence to examine how far bookgifting programmes lead to changed behaviours in parents reading to their children and draws on wider evidence to consider how, in the longer term, such programmes are likely to lead to improvements in literacy attainment.

1.1 The Structure of this Review

The results of this review are presented in two strands: 'The Case for Bookgifting' and 'The Impact of Bookgifting.'

In designing the specification for this review, Booktrust identified three dimensions of children's literacy experience that are promoted through the *Bookstart* programme:

- reading for pleasure;
- book ownership;
- regular booksharing from an early age.

Following an outline of the review methodology in Section 2, Section 3 considers literature in each of these areas to examine the extent and nature of their contribution to reading attainment and consequently the 'case' for bookgifting. Section 4 draws on descriptions of four sample programmes and synthesises the findings from relevant studies to consider the 'impact' of bookgifting, with a particular focus on how far they are likely to lead to changed behaviours associated with reading for pleasure, book ownership and booksharing. Section 5 explores the implications of these findings and includes recommendations for developing bookgifting schemes and further research.

2. Methodology

2.1 Outline of approach to each strand

In describing the methodology for this review, it is important to distinguish between our approaches to addressing the two strands: 'The Case for Bookgifting' and 'The Impact of Bookgifting.' In addressing the first strand, we have been selective. The significance of reading for pleasure, book ownership, and booksharing have been widely researched and, in investigating these areas, we have drawn on existing reviews, seminal research and recent studies. For the second strand, a systematic search was conducted to identify evidence related to bookgifting since 1992 when *Bookstart* was piloted in Birmingham, England (Wade and Moore, 1998b). All available evidence relating to bookgifting schemes for babies and children under 5 was reviewed by the authors. Relevant literature was located from a range of sources, including websites, books, conference proceedings and peer-reviewed journals. Given the nature of this search, we relied heavily on grey literature, with a particular focus on reports on evaluations conducted or commissioned by organisations delivering bookgifting schemes.

2.2 Search strategy

A series of web-based search tools and electronic databases were used to conduct this search. These were selected to generate sources representing research in a range of paradigms and disciplinary areas and included: British Education Index, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, Web of Knowledge, PsycINFO, ERIC, Educational Research Abstracts Online (Taylor and Frances), the White Rose repository, Australian Education Index, SCOPUS, MLA International Bibliography and the Sheffield Hallam University Library database. A search for relevant conference papers was conducted using Education-line. Google Scholar was also used to access the most recent research. A range and combination of search terms were used to locate potentially relevant sources in the public domain. These include the names of a large number of international bookgifting programmes and are listed in Appendix 1.

Where sources were not readily available, attempts were made to locate these via document supply systems, inter-library loans and author websites. A small number of sources were not possible to access within the time-frame for the review. These reports tended to be local evaluations of projects that were no longer available.

These findings were supplemented in several ways. Reference lists of located articles, including some that were screened out, were scrutinised for other articles relevant to the search. Results were supplemented by responses to an email request from Booktrust to affiliates and follow-up emails from the research team to academics and organisations for further evidence. We used internet searches to identify unpublished or less widely circulated reports and papers. The contents of the following key international journals from the last 10 years were also searched for relevant articles: *Journal of Research in Reading*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, *Literacy*, *Journal of Literacy Research, English in Education, International Journal of Early Years Education, Early Years*.

2.3 Screening process

Database searches yielded 6640 sources. These were screened to eliminate any that were clearly not relevant. The abstracts or summaries of the remaining 255 were examined, and those deemed relevant were then scrutinised in more depth.

Sources were only included if they were based on empirical studies and if the methodology was transparent and judged to be significantly robust to generate valuable insights. In making such judgments, it was recognised that there are different conceptualisations of 'impact' and that exploratory qualitative research could make an important contribution to this review. It is also worth noting that the review highlighted a number of challenges associated with designing methodologies to assess the impact of bookgifting, which are explored in Section 4.2.1.

Booktrust identified that they were most interested in studies providing hard evidence of impact, or which documented changes in reported behaviours captured through successive questionnaires. In this report we have therefore foregrounded studies which have adopted these methodologies whilst also drawing on studies reporting softer evidence, where for example these reveal important qualitative findings. In addition, we include some references to less robust quantitative evaluation studies, for example, those which are small-scale, based on single questionnaires of reported behaviours or non-stratified samples. Whilst such results should be treated with caution, our judgment was that these studies have generated patterns of results that are worth reporting. Brief summaries of the methodologies of all studies cited are provided in Appendix 3 to provide transparency.

Exclusions were typically: reports on postgraduate studies that lacked sufficient rigour; articles written for professional audiences (e.g. programme summaries on organisation websites, magazine/newspaper articles, policy statements); and reports or executive summaries of evaluations which provided insufficient detail on the study conducted. In these cases, reference lists were scrutinised to identify any primary sources that might be relevant.

We also located a number of reports written in languages other than English. In some cases, summaries were available in English but details of methodology were not and so it was not therefore possible to judge the extent to which they met our criteria for robustness. Given the prohibitive cost of translation, we sought to gain insights into the findings of these evaluations through a series of interviews with representatives from a selection of the organisations that had conducted these evaluations.

2.4 Interviews with international bookgifting schemes

Representatives from 4 organisations were interviewed about their experiences of bookgifting. They were nominated by their organisations as those best placed to provide information about their projects and relevant evaluations. The purpose of these interviews was to gain information about evaluation activities that had taken place, the results of those evaluations, and ways in which programmes had developed as a result of evaluation. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix 2. The interviews, conducted in English, generated insights into evaluation activities and the impact of programmes. As might be expected, it was not possible

to explore the detail of these during interviews and not all interviewees felt best placed to supply information about evaluation methodologies. The interviews therefore were most valuable in gaining an overview of the general achievements and future directions of programmes being described. The interviews are summarised in Section 4.1 and these provide useful contextual information for Section 4.2 which considers the findings from studies we were able to access in English. It must be emphasised that the exclusion of reports unavailable in English is a limitation of this review.

2.5 Analysis

Following the systematic search and screening process, we identified 59 sources associated with 21 programmes. Of these: 32 were from peer reviewed journals; 18 were independent evaluation reports commissioned by bookgifting associations; and 2 were reports from studies conducted by organisations themselves. Sources also included: 1 conference paper; 5 reports produced by regional organisations; and 1 article under review at the time of writing. The majority of reports were associated with *Bookstart* (UK), *Reach Out and Read* (USA) and *Imagination Library* (USA and UK).

Findings of these were interrogated and the quality of the evidence considered in relation to: aims of research/evaluation; scale of study; methodology; evidence; findings; and nature of impact. We also noted key dimensions of programmes evaluated e.g. age phase, target population, country, nature of intervention, integration with other programmes and services. Analysis identified a series of common themes in relation to the impact of bookgifting schemes. These findings were presented to colleagues from the Language and Literacy Research group and the Centre of Education and Inclusion Research at Sheffield Institute of Education during a seminar in December 2013. This enabled an opportunity for peer review and discussion of key findings which informed our final recommendations.

3. The Case for Bookgifting

In this section we focus on research relating to three principles that underpin the case for early years bookgifting programmes:

1. Reading for pleasure is an important experience to develop in early childhood that has benefits in terms of later educational success.

2. Early literacy learning is enhanced through booksharing with parents and carers.

3. Book ownership is associated with literacy attainment.

Below we consider each in turn.

3.1 What does evidence suggest about why reading for pleasure is important?

3.1.1 Reading for Pleasure in England

A focus on reading for pleasure is particularly pertinent in the context of recent findings on reading in England and the UK. International surveys have raised concerns about the extent to which children and teenagers in England read for pleasure compared to those in other countries. In the 2006 PIRLS study, just a third of 10 year olds surveyed reported reading for pleasure every day (Twist et al, 2007) and the 2009 PISA study found that about 40% of 15 year olds said they only read when obliged to do so (Bradshaw et al, 2010). Whilst the 2010 PIRLS study suggested that a similar or slightly higher proportion of primary children enjoyed reading than in 2006, a fifth of children stated that they did not like reading (Twist et al, 2012). The annual National Literacy Trust survey of pupil attitudes and engagement in literacy provides a further reference point for gauging the extent to which children and young people in the United Kingdom read for pleasure. The 2012 survey suggested that whilst levels of reading enjoyment had remained stable, children and young people were reading less out of class and more felt embarrassed to be seen reading (Clark, 2013). This apparent reluctance to read was correlated with low student performance in reading tests. The recently released results from the 2012 PISA report have reinforced concerns about reading achievement in England compared to other countries (Wheater et al, 2013) and may lead to an intensified focus on promoting reading amongst children and young people.

Particular concerns have been raised about specific groups of children and young people. A large number of studies have explored differences in attitudes to reading in relation to gender, suggesting girls have more positive attitudes to reading than boys (McGeown et al, 2012). Previous studies of children's reading attitudes in England have suggested that boys seem to read less for pleasure (Bradshaw et al, 2010; Clark and Foster, 2005; Maynard et al, 2007; Twist et al, 2007; Clark and Douglas, 2011), and this may have a relationship with a persistent pattern of underachievement in boys. Petscher (2010) argues that many such studies are inconclusive and the picture is certainly complex: boys and girls may have different reading preferences (Millard, 1997) and gender binaries can distract from those girls who do not read for pleasure (Graaf, 2009; Moss, 2000). Ethnicity and socio-

economic status may also be significant to the extent and nature of reading for pleasure at home and how this relates to reading as encountered at school (Heath, 1983; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000).

3.1.2 How do we understand 'reading for pleasure'?

Reading for pleasure can be understood in terms of a variety of different activities. It is perhaps most commonly associated with individual immersion in print fiction, with 'getting lost in a book.' However, reading for pleasure may involve non-fiction as well fiction and digital, as well as printed, texts and encompass a broad range of practices, including some in which it serves an extrinsic purpose. Apperley and Walsh (2012), for example, show how children often engage in the close reading of paratexts, such as forum discussions and cheat sites, during computer game playing. Moreover studies of enthusiastic readers of different ages (Mackey, 2002; Robinson and Turnbull, 2005; Brown et al, 2012) have described how successful readers do not just read books but engage with a 'rich repertoire of texts' (Collins and Svenson, 2008) including popular media texts such as films, websites, games and so on. Indeed The National Literacy Trust's 2010 survey of 8-17 year olds found that those less likely to say they liked reading books were also less likely to engage in other kinds of reading, e.g. through social networking, reading websites or exchanging emails (Clark and Poulton, 2011). It is worth emphasising then that although this review focuses specifically on books and book-related practices these are often linked to a variety of play-based and leisure time activities and that a large body of research has explored the possibilities for language and literacy development presented by digital media.

3.1.3 Why promote reading for pleasure?

There are many reasons why we choose to read: to find things out, to broaden our horizons, for amusement or entertainment, or simply to escape. Reading can be personally fulfilling or simply the means to an end, allowing us to pursue interests and different purposes. Focusing specifically on why people choose to read and write literature, Cliff Hodges (2010:65) suggests that,

> *writing and reading literature, if nothing else, are acts of imagination to explore possible worlds; […] writing and reading literature are specifically human activities which have at their heart what it means to be human in all its diversity and commonality.*

Whilst many would argue that reading for pleasure is important for its own sake, others have considered its benefits in terms of educational outcomes and found strong relationships between reading for pleasure and achievement. Indeed, in 2002, the OECD concluded that reading for pleasure is the most significant predictor of future economic success and that, 'finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change' (Kirsch et al, 2002:3). Reading for pleasure has been seen to have positive benefits for personal and social development, as explored in studies of children's and teenagers' perspectives on reading (Howard, 2011). A recent study has provided evidence that it is associated with progress in mathematics as well as vocabulary and spelling development (Sullivan and Brown, 2013). Others have explored relationships between reading for pleasure and writing (Grainger et al, 2005) creativity (Schafer and Anastasi, 1968) and general knowledge (Ravitch and Finn, 1987; Cunningham and Stanovich, 1991).

Given the premise of this review, the particular focus of this section is the relationship between reading for pleasure and reading attainment. Clark and Rumbold (2006) provide a useful synthesis of research in this area, concluding that reading for pleasure is correlated with text comprehension, grammar and breadth of vocabulary as well as attitudes to reading and confidence as a reader. Krashen (2004) in his summary of research into the benefits of 'free voluntary reading' also links reading for pleasure with achievement in writing and spelling. In Section 3.1.4 we draw from research to investigate the relationships between reading for pleasure and reading attainment in more depth.

3.1.4 Investigating the relationship between reading for pleasure and attainment in reading

Studies which help us understand the impact of reading for pleasure on attainment include those that have focused on enjoyment, attitudes, interest, motivation and engagement. It is beyond the scope of this review to explore how these different dimensions are understood, but it is worth emphasising that reading for pleasure is complex and hard to measure and that different research tools have yielded different results (Clark and Foster, 2005; Sainsbury and Clarkson, 2008; Schiefele et al, 2012).

Several studies have found an association between **attitudes to reading** and reading attainment (Clark and De Zoyser, 2011; Petscher, 2010). Those who enjoy reading do so more often and seem to read more widely, although the direction of causal relationships is hard to prove (Cambria and Guthrie, 2010; Guthrie and Cox, 2001; Guthrie and Wigfield, 1997): it is difficult to determine whether those that enjoy reading read more and are consequently better at it, or whether those that are good at reading enjoy it more. Petscher's meta-analysis of studies of reading achievement and attitudes to reading from the last 30 years concluded that there is a moderate relationship between reading attitudes and achievement and that this is stronger for students in elementary school (Petscher, 2010). These conclusions are reflected in more recent work. Kirby et al (2011) also found that the link between reading interest and reading ability is particularly strong for younger children and Clark and DeZoysa (2011) suggested that **reading enjoyment** is linked to reading behaviour and attainment, although different studies have arrived at different conclusions regarding correlations. Like Baker and Wigfield (1999) who surveyed grade 5/6 children in the USA (1999), Clark and DeZoysa identified a stronger relationship between **reading motivation** and *reading behaviour* than between reading motivation and *reading attainment*. Becker et al (2010) found that those most motivated to read in grade 4 read more and were more likely to achieve well at grade 6. Becker et al concluded, however, that those who read for pleasure were those that were good at reading anyway and consequently that reading competence may be more significant for reading attainment than reading motivation.

In Belgium, De Naeghel et al (2012) also found that children did better on measures of comprehension when they chose to read, enjoyed reading and saw reading as personally relevant to them. It is worth noting however that De Naeghel et al distinguished between autonomous and controlled motivation: they found a greater correlation between motivation and performance when this was considered in terms of recreational (autonomous) rather than school (controlled) reading. Moreover, children who lack **interest** in reading are not necessarily those that find reading

difficult. As Moss (2000) has argued, we need to be concerned not just about motivating those children who can't read, but also motivating those children who can read but choose not to.

Studies have suggested that extrinsic motivation – such as reading to achieve results or achieve rewards - has only a small or indeed negative impact on reading behaviour and reading competence in terms of reading skills and comprehension (Schiefele et al, 2012; Schaffner et al, 2013). A synthesis of research from the last 20 years supports the significance of **intrinsic motivation** to reading behaviour and comprehension, although definitions of motivation vary widely and a number of dimensions have been identified (Schiefele and Schaffner, 2012) and reading is often associated with both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Wang and Guthrie, 2004). Others have emphasised the diverse reasons why children and young people choose to read by focusing on **reading engagement**, associating this with high levels of achievement. Reading engagement has been described as 'multi-dimensional' (Baker and Wigfield, 1999: 469), involving a range of orientations to reading including a sense of self-efficacy, purpose, and social function. Children may choose to read because of the enjoyment of reading itself, but also because of what is made possible through reading, or the social interactions mediated through and around reading. Different students may be motivated to read for different reasons (Baker and Wigfield, 1999; Lockwood, 2012). This perspective shifts our attention from the individual reader to thinking about reading as embedded within wider social relationships and purposes.

Studies of teenage readers have suggested that they engage more deeply with reading when it is **'self-selected and personally meaningful'** (Ivey, 2013:1). Ivey and Johnstone (2013) describe how teenagers read dialogically, empathising with characters and treating them as people they know. Focusing on a younger age-group, Lysaker and Miller (2013) arrived at similar conclusions through detailed analysis of one child's meaning-making with a wordless picture book. They argue that,

> *reading helps children develop their capacity for relationships in varied and flexible ways by exercising, and thus building up, social imagination – the ability to think about the thoughts, feelings and intentions of others – as they encounter characters in books.* (Lysaker and Miller, 2013: 148)

Cliff Hodges (2010) describes this kind of engagement with literature as 'both dynamic and reflexive' (p.63) as readers make meaning not from but with texts. Ivey suggests that,

> *Students are engaged with the reading while the book is in their hands, but also, when they put the book down, the characters do not leave their minds, and they continue to have conversations with them out of the presence of the book.* (Ivey, 2013: 9)

For Lysaker and Miller, this means we need to see 'reading, and other literary activity, as **relational processes** integrally implicated in the development of the child' (Lysaker and Miller, 2013: 170).

Important relationships however are not just those that young readers develop with characters in books. Ivey and Johnston (2013) argue that **reading is deeply social** and notes how the teenagers they researched, through reading and talking with others, developed and sustained relationships and better understandings of one another. Their talk around texts reinforced social bonds, and in turn, social relationships prompted more reading, as reading choices were motivated by others' recommendations, or by hearing others discuss a book. As these teenagers were provided with more opportunities to discuss their reading and share thoughts and opinions, they read more books. Reading was associated with retaining and making friendships. Similar patterns have been identified in studies of young children. Collins and Svenson (2008) for example focused on *Bookstart* recipients who had later been identified as competent readers. They noted how these children integrated the stories they read into their play, making connections between the books they knew and narratives from other kinds of texts. Children played through and with the stories they had read, 'lifting the story off the page through re-enactment and imaginary play' (Collins and Svenson, 2008: 83).

Summary

- Reading for pleasure has been correlated to reading attainment and to success in later life (although the direction of causality is unclear).

- Intrinsic motivation appears to be more significant for reading attainment than extrinsic motivation.

- Intrinsic motivation seems to be particularly important for younger pupils.

- Reading engagement is 'multi-dimensional,' e.g. relating to a sense of self-efficacy, purpose, and social function.

- Reading literature for pleasure involves entering into a dialogue with the text and this can have a strongly affective dimension.

- Reading for pleasure is associated with talking to others about reading, or integrating stories into play.

- Reading for pleasure is often social: relationships are important for engaged reading, just as talking about reading can reinforce relationships.

- Motivated readers are likely to engage with a rich repertoire of texts, including those that are digitally mediated.

3.2 The benefits of booksharing

Understanding the relationship between booksharing in the home and the language and literacy development of young children has been a significant focus for research over the past three decades. In this section, we begin by summarising key findings on the benefits of booksharing (3.2.1-3.2.4) before considering some important issues around the relationship of booksharing to families' diverse language and literacy practices (3.2.5).

3.2.1 The relationship between booksharing and language and literacy development

Shared book reading is perhaps the most studied phenomenon in young children's literacy development (Kim and Anderson, 2008). Whilst it is important to recognise that there are many kinds of home literacy practices that may be valuable for language and literacy development, there appears to be consistent agreement that for young children booksharing is an important early experience in the home and it is widely suggested that this is a practice in which families should engage. Whilst studies have drawn from differing research paradigms and focused on different aspects, they have repeatedly found that there is a significant positive relationship between booksharing in the home and early language, literacy, and cognitive development as promoted and assessed in school.

A substantial body of research highlights the significance of the home learning environment for children's development of language and literacy. In the UK, the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) project report recognised that for all children 'the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income' (Sylva et al, 2004:10). The report acknowledges that 'what parents do is more important than who parents are' (Sylva et al, 2004: 10), and that this makes a real difference to young children's development, noting also that children experiencing home learning activities were less likely to be identified as having special educational needs. It is widely recognised that becoming literate starts at an early age, long before formal instruction in reading and writing begins; Purcell-Gates (1996) emphasises that a young child's **home environment** is a contributor to their emergent literacy since this is where language and literacy are first encountered.

Booksharing in the home has long been recognised as making a positive contribution to the home learning environment and studies have identified stories as the most common text genre adults choose to read to preschool children (De Temple and Snow, 1996; Dickinson et al, 1992). The EPPE project found that reading with children, along with teaching them songs and rhymes and playing with letters and numbers, was associated with higher **intellectual and behaviour scores** in the school setting. Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) linked parent/child booksharing to increased language and literacy skills, and Bus et al (1995) found that reading to pre-schoolers is related to **language growth, emergent literacy and reading achievement**. Specifically, Mol and Bus (2011) found that children who are read to more frequently at an early age enter school with larger vocabularies and more advanced comprehension skills, and Blewitt et al (2009) noted that the vocabulary size of 3 year olds is reliably associated with frequency of shared book reading at home. What is more, longitudinal studies have found that the effect of home learning activities during the pre-school period, including booksharing, continues to impact on children's **developmental profiles in later years** and is associated with greater reading for pleasure (Senechal and LeFevre, 2002).

A number of studies have focused on identifying the skills and knowledge that booksharing in the home promote in order to explain how this contributes to language and literacy development. Dickinson and Smith (1994), for example, note that the experience of 'being read to' supports young children in constructing **knowledge about print** and the development of **specific oral language skills**

associated with literacy. Some studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between booksharing and specific emergent literacy skills: for example, Bus et al (1995) found that the frequency of shared book was positively related to **phonological skills, phoneme blending and receptive vocabulary**, whilst Leseman and de Jong (1998) identify relationships between home literacy and the development of phonemic skills, vocabulary, conceptual knowledge and comprehension.

3.2.2 The frequency of book-sharing and children's early language and literacy development

The literature suggests a strong correlation between the **frequency** of book-sharing in the home and young children's language and literacy development. Bus et al's (1995) meta-analysis of studies into the early literacy development of pre-school children found that frequency of joint book reading has a positive effect on child literacy, and Raikes et al (2006) found that there were concurrent and cumulative relationships between how often parents and children engaged in book reading and children's cognitive and language skills in the first years of life.

A recent longitudinal study in Australia (Kalb et al, 2012) studied 4000 children aged from 4-5 through to age 10-11. Investigating relationships between parents reading to young children and their children's later reading and cognitive skills, the study found that the frequency of reading to children at a young age has a strong relationship with their schooling outcomes regardless of family background and other aspects of the home environment. The study found that reading to children at age 4-5 every day has a significant positive effect on their reading skills and cognitive skills in later life. The study also showed that,

> *reading 3-5 days per week has the same effect on the child's reading skills at age 4-5 as being six months older. Reading to children 6-7 days per week has the same effect as being almost 12 months older.* (State Department Victoria/University of Melbourne: 2012b:1)

3.2.3 Booksharing and talk

A further strand in the literature highlights the importance of the talk occurring between adults and children during booksharing. Vandermass et al (2009) found that regardless of income or education, parents provide high levels of support to sustain children's interest and engagement in storybook reading. Teale and Sulzby (1986) identified three broad categories of literacy experienced by the child in the home that can be instrumental in nurturing early literacy skills. These included activities during which children: explore print independently; observe adults modelling literacy behaviour; and interact with adults around text during booksharing. Sulzby and Teale (1991) show that reading storybooks with young children exposes them to advanced language and concepts that they might not otherwise encounter and that shared book reading was the most significant activity in supporting early literacy skills. This is consistent with the findings of Adams (1990) and Scarborough and Dobrich (1984) who concluded that the amount of time that a carer spends reading with their child *as a direct participant* [our emphasis], has an influence on their child's language development. In short the **parent/child talk** about the book appears highly significant to the role of booksharing in early language and literacy development. Further to this, Leseman and de Jong (1998) have shown how talk during

booksharing is related to children's literacy outcomes and Raikes et al (2006) showed how maternal book reading practices were positively related to growth in receptive and expressive vocabulary in children aged from 14 to 36 months.

Given the significance of talk, a number of researchers have considered the **quality of parent/child interactions**, with a focus on how adults structure conversational exchanges to meet the needs of children (Bus et al, 1995). Price et al (1997) noted how parents mediate texts for young children, scaffolding their comprehension through interactions about the content and illustration helping children to participate in more sophisticated ways than they could independently. Mol et al (2008) noted how **extratextual** comments which extend and invite children to become involved were supportive. When booksharing, parents not only engage in talk with children that relies on the immediate physical environment, but also talk about things that are not immediately present, physically or temporally. This may involve recalling past experiences, comments or questions about general knowledge, drawing inferences and making predictions (De Temple, 2001). Extratextual talk also includes the sharing of knowledge about book conventions and knowledge about print (Price et al, 1997), and these in turn support the learning of emergent literacy skills, concepts and knowledge.

Torr (2007) examined how preschool children make **connections between texts** as they interact with caregivers during shared reading. She explored how 13 4-year-old children made connections with their lives and other texts during shared reading with their parents and pre-school teachers. Torr (2007) draws on the work of Heath (1983) which describes how parents foster their children's ability to de-contextualise, hypothesise and predict as they encourage them to relate their own everyday experiences to the characters and events in picture story books. This interaction between adult and child, according to Torr (2007), provides a rich opportunity for emotionally satisfying engagement. Children draw upon their individual interests as they make connections between the text and memories of past events, feelings, judgements, behaviours and material objects, preferences, wishes and desires. Adult interaction can encourage children to make connections between the fictional world of the text and the child's experiences in the 'real' world (Torr, 2007). These text-to-text connections draw on a child's knowledge of genre conventions and experience of a range of texts and Torr states that these may be early manifestations of the type of abstract, educational knowledge which children are required to use and develop throughout formal education.

This focus on shared experience also highlights a further important dimension of booksharing: the **socio-emotional context**. Bus (1997), for example, found that from an early age, literacy experiences around books are related to broader relationships and that young children's engagement and disengagement in book reading depends on the socio-emotional context of adult support. Burgin (2001) similarly demonstrated the relationship between the affective quality of parent/child relationships and reading fluency and positive attitudes towards reading, noting how parents may contribute negatively to the fluency and attitude of beginning readers if joint reading is not a pleasurable experience.

In summary, this analysis highlights two key dimensions of booksharing that appear to explain why it has been correlated so positively with literacy attainment: the 'instructional' and the 'socio-emotional' dimension as described above. The

instructional dimension relates to the quality of adult-child interaction with a particular focus on 'extra-textual talk, or conversation that moves beyond a narrow definition of reading the text and takes off in directions of interest to the child or parent' (Cline and Edwards, 2013: 1216). The emphasis on these two dimensions reflect the findings of the EPPE project (Sylva et al, 2004) which found that adult/child verbal interaction was associated with better outcomes for children when it: supported sustained shared thinking; was co-operative; and had both an instructional and social-emotional quality.

3.2.4 The cultural/familial context for early language and literacy

A significant body of research has correlated educational disadvantage with socio-economic status and explained this in terms of what is often referred to as the 'home literacy environment' (HLE) (e.g. Payne et al, 1994; Park, 2008), although some of this work has suggested such relationships are more nuanced and variable (Lonigan and Phillips, 2009). Indicators such as numbers of books in the home, frequency of parent/child booksharing, and attitudes to reading, are used to arrive at assessments of home literacy environment. Improving the HLE, by implication, involves making changes in these areas. This work has been critiqued in a number of ways, partly because it ignores dimensions of a child's literacy environment beyond the home (Neuman and Celano, 2001) but also because it sidesteps what we know about the important diversity of language and literacy practices in families. A recent scrutiny of reviews of family literacy research, for example, found that consideration of the culture, class, racial, gender, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of people served by family literacy programs is often omitted (Compton-Lilly et al, 2012).

Studies of literacies in diverse communities have highlighted that there are many ways in which families may support children's language and literacy development (e.g. Gonzalez et al, 2005; Heath, 1983; Anderson, 2010). Billings (2009b) for example, highlighted how Latino families engaged in a variety of language and literacy-related activities as part of family life - particularly story-telling, singing and rhymes - which have been associated with positive developments in language and literacy. Her work also highlighted the role played by family members other than parents - siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts.

Children may be disadvantaged in the education system, therefore, not because of a 'poor' home literacy environment but because their home literacy practices do not match those of school (Gregory, 1994; Levy, 2010). Moreover, families may increasingly interact around digital rather than print texts, and various studies have begun to explore how these interactions are supporting language and literacy development (Wolfe and Flewitt, 2010; Marsh and Thompson, 2001), including new ways of storysharing around tablet computers (Kurcicova et al, 2012) and ebooks (Bus et al, 2010). Against this background, the promotion of booksharing could be seen as an example of the 'one-way traffic' by which families are invited to adopt practices that children will later encounter in the education system (Marsh, 2003; Cairney, 2002).

Given these considerations, it may be more appropriate to see booksharing as one of a number of ways in which families may support language and literacy development. Importantly, though, the evidence presented in sections 3.2.1-3.2.3 does suggest that adult/child interaction is critical to children's language and literacy

development and that texts - including books - can provide important media for supporting this. What appears to be particularly significant about booksharing in the home, as distinct from booksharing in the classroom or pre-school, is that it takes place between an adult and a child who know each other well, share the same cultural context and therefore share understandings, interests and experiences. Learning to read through booksharing with adults can involve the 'pleasure of recognition' (Torr, 2007: 90) where children spontaneously make links between some aspect of a text and their lives and can share these with a familiar adult.

Summary

- Booksharing in the home impacts positively on children's communication, language, literacy and cognitive development, regardless of socio-economic background.

- Frequency and quality of booksharing are associated with language and literacy development and later attainment in school.

- The interactions that happen around books are central to the contribution made by booksharing.

- Booksharing has an emotional and social as well as a cognitive significance.

- Supportive interactions during booksharing encourage children to make intertextual and extratextual connections.

- Family booksharing therefore has strong potential to make a contribution to language and literacy development because of the emotional and social dimension and the knowledge of the child that makes it possible to make intertextual and extratextual connections.

- There are diverse ways, in addition to booksharing, through which children may interact with adults and texts in the home environment, and there are diverse ways in which families may interact around books.

3.3 The impact of book ownership

In this section we consider studies that have investigated the possible correlation between book ownership and children's attainment in literacy. Access to books has long been associated with later attainment in reading. In an influential study, for example, Weinberger (1996) claimed that there are two key experiences in children's lives which can support their development as readers: having a favourite book at the age of 3 and being a member of the library. Indeed, repeated studies have identified correlations between access to books and literacy proficiency or attainment. Clark and Poulton (2011) concluded from a large scale survey of 8-17 year olds in the UK that those that have access to books read more and are more positive about reading, and Burgess (2011) found evidence to suggest that those with access to books were more likely to engage in the kinds of behaviours associated with early literacy development. Other factors are of course significant here. Davidse et al (2011), for example, investigated the relationship between book exposure, cognitive

control and early literacy skills, and found that children who had been exposed to books were more likely to have better vocabulary and letter knowledge, but that differences in vocabulary gains could also be partly explained in terms of differences in short-term memory.

Clark and Poulton (2011) found a particularly strong correlation between book ownership and attainment in reading amongst children aged 8-17: of those children who owned books, 80.4% read above age-related expectations whereas of children who did not own books, 58.2% read below age-related expectations. Clark et al (2011) found that those who had never been given a book or been to a library or bookshop were more likely to be attaining below what might be expected in reading at their age. Those that owned books, conversely, had higher reading attainment, enjoyed reading more, read more books, read more often, and read more material other than books. As with reading for pleasure, the direction of causality here is hard to determine: are children likely to be given more books because of their interest in reading, or to generate an interest because books are present? Clark et al concluded that:

> *Our study has shown that receiving a book as a gift is clearly linked to children's reading abilities and having books of one's own is associated with more frequent reading. Young people who have their own books are twice as likely as their peers who don't have books of their own to say that they read every day. In turn, book ownership is also directly linked with attainment in reading.* (Clark et al, 2011:5)

Longitudinal studies have charted relationships between book ownership during childhood and attainment and achievement. Such longitudinal studies are problematic not least because the literacy environment for many families and young children has changed so substantially in the last 10-15 years. Nevertheless it is worth noting that Judge (2013) conducted a longitudinal study of 1280 children from kindergarten to 8th grade and found that the number of books at home could be correlated to reading proficiency. Evans et al (2010) drew on the recollections of adults in 27 countries and measures of socio-economic status in later life to conclude that those with access to books, and who were encouraged to interact with them, achieved more even when initial socio-economic status was taken into account.

Meta-analyses of studies of access to print have arrived at slightly different results. Petscher's (2010) meta-analysis of studies highlighted the importance of children's access to print resources for emergent literacy skills, writing performance and general academic achievement, and specifically linked children's *ownership* of print materials to attitudes, motivation, reading behaviour, language abilities, and reading performance. Lindsay's (2010) meta-analysis of studies addressing access to print arrived at slightly more modest claims. Focusing specifically on studies designed to explore causal relationships between access to print and specific behaviours and skills, he concluded that access to books has a positive impact on attitudes to reading among children and that providing books and other printed materials is important for children's emergent reading skills and reading performance. His analysis however did not identify a link between access to printed material and writing or language. He also found different effect sizes in studies analysed: those in the USA, for example, were greater than those from elsewhere.

These correlations between book ownership and attainment may be partly explained in terms of reading for pleasure. Morrow (1983) for example found a correlation between kindergarten children from 21 classrooms with a high interest in literature and those who had access to books and were read to at home. We might also highlight the importance of having constant access to books and of re-visiting single texts on repeated occasions. Blewitt et al (2009), for example, emphasise the value of reading *familiar* books to children, describing how re-reading books provides opportunities for repeated exploration of the same new words, which is important for vocabulary development and comprehension.

Summary

- Book ownership, as part of a broader literacy environment, is associated with language and literacy development and later attainment, although the direction of causality is unclear.

- Receiving books as gifts and visiting libraries and bookshops are positively correlated with reading attainment.

- Book ownership is associated with reading for pleasure.

- Book ownership allows books to be re-visited which has important implications for language and literacy development.

4. The Impact of Bookgifting Schemes

In this section we begin with descriptions of 4 bookgifting programmes based on telephone interviews with representatives from international organisations delivering bookgifting programmes. Following this, in Section 4.2, evidence is presented on the impact of bookgifting, synthesising the findings from our review of available research.

4.1 Examples of book gifting schemes

The bookgifting programmes described here are:

- *Buchstart Hamburg* (Germany);
- *Lesestart* (Germany);
- *Buchstart Schweiz* (Switzerland);
- *Nati per Leggere* (Italy).

It is worth re-iterating that this is not a random sample of programmes. These programmes were selected as they had been identified as having been subject to evaluation reported in languages other than English. Some evidence from these evaluations is included below. However, it is emphasised that this is evidence reported from telephone interviews. Some further citations are included for reports on these programmes in languages other than English where these were provided by interviewees. In places, interview evidence is supplemented by information from organisation websites and by additional information provided by a researcher.

4.1.1 *Buchstart Hamburg*, Germany

Buchstart Hamburg operates under the roof of Seiteneinsteiger e.V., a Hamburg-based non-profit organisation specialising in the promotion of children's literature. In 2005 an international congress in Hamburg introduced a number of cultural projects from around Europe – one of which was *Bookstart*. This provided the initial 'spark' of an idea for setting up a similar project in Hamburg. The project was accepted by the Cultural Ministry in Hamburg and seen as '*like a clasp or a clip'* connecting education and childcare.

Providing funds has been the responsibility of the Cultural Ministry right from the beginning; Buchstart is financed through a mix of public and private funding. Key support comes from commercial organisations: the Gruner & Jahr publishing house provides free print runs for printing bags and posters, and local chemist Budnikowsky company provides free warehouse storage space. This process was described by our interviewee as, '*a constant struggle - every year it is a great adventure to find the money!*'

Buchstart Hamburg, in place since 2007, is aimed at all infants aged 0-3 and their parents. Buchstart bags contain 2 picture books, a library voucher and suggestions for parents. These are distributed via pediatricians at an obligatory health check-up at 10-12 months ("U6"). This involves some language checks for the child, so is seen as an appropriate time to distribute books. Bookbags are given by the doctor or their assistant and include a voucher for free library membership, a leaflet advertising a *Rhymetime*-style group (see below), as well as free books. There are approximately

18 000 births per year in the state of Hamburg and all Hamburg doctors have been involved in the project from the beginning.

Our interviewee reported that pediatricians were very enthusiastic about this provision:

> *They were just absolutely delighted. They said, 'yes, wonderful!'... They explained to us that reading promotion is basically health promotion. From their point of view the best thing you can have in a patient is the ability to speak and to really say what is wrong with them, to have the vocabulary and the language sensitivity to actually be able to describe their situation.... It's all about communication. Health and language are very closely connected... also psychologically because when you can interact and communicate with people better it is better for your life.*

Books are purchased from the Carlsen and Oetinger publishing houses, both located in Hamburg, at cost price. Each year the publishers offer a choice of board books for *Buchstart Hamburg* to select from. In the first year they took advice from experts (including pediatricians and academics) about the most appropriate books to choose. Books change each year to ensure siblings receive different books. They are aimed at children of approximately 18 months old, the idea being that children '*grow up with these books.*'

As it was felt that giving one book package was not enough to establish '*good relationships with books,*' Seiteneinsteiger introduced a programme called "*Gedichte für Wichte*" (*Poems for Little People*) which is similar to the *Rhymetime* sessions run through *Bookstart*. Children attend a group with their parents and join in with rhymes, actions and poems. Board books are also available for children to read with their parents. "*Gedichte für Wichte*" groups are organised in libraries, community centres, reading groups and classes for new parents. In order to encourage attendance, groups are free and participants do not have to register. In 2007, Seiteneinsteiger funded twelve groups. However, word soon spread and there are now 60 groups, funded by local institutions. Seiteneinsteiger provides training for group leaders free of charge, training more than 50 persons a year in Hamburg, plus additional training in partner cities like Bremen or Vienna. The project management is also responsible for the promotion of groups via print leaflets and a website. In December 2013, Buchstart Hamburg won the *Rudolf Stilcken Prize for Cultural Communication* for its outstanding campaigning efforts.

The driving aim of *Buchstart Hamburg* is to '*promote good relationships with books*' or '*to share a love of books,*' but it is also seen as a tool for promoting education in general and for improving '*cultural education*' in the community. "*Gedichte für Wichte*" provides the additional benefit of bringing families together. The team devote considerable energy to promoting *Buchstart Hamburg* and our interviewee told us that there is a very good level of awareness about the project.

An evaluation of the programme (Kuhlmann, 2013), which sought the perspectives of 829 parents, experts and those involved in implementation, concluded that the project was high quality, well designed to support early language and well-received by all those involved. It also found that some of the children involved in the project showed a significantly higher rate of language gains than the children in the control

group, and that the project appeared to lead to changes in behaviour among some parents, for example increases in booksharing and library visits.

At the time of writing, *Buchstart Hamburg*'s plans for the future include:

- cooperating with Stiftung Lesen's *Lesestart* project (see below) to give books to children aged 3 via libraries;
- working with kindergarten teachers to train them to deliver "*Gedichte für Wichte*" as more children are now attending kindergarten from age 1;
- promoting booksharing amongst migrant families;
- continuing with their existing work, reaching out to as many people as possible and continuing to add new dimensions.

4.1.2 *Lesestart*, Germany

Lesestart, funded through the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and run by the organisation Stiftung Leisen, aims to support parents in understanding the importance of reading aloud to their children. The project has its origins in a smaller project in Saxony (2006 – 2009) and a Germany-wide project (2008 – 2010) supported by the print industry. Following low PISA results in 2010, the German Federal Ministry of Education became involved in bookgifting as a method of improving early literacy outcomes, and the current project was established.

Lesestart is for parents and their children aged 1, 3 and 6 years and covers more than 50% of the population. At each age, bookbags are given that include: an age-appropriate book, information leaflets for parents about reading, a poster for the child's wall, and advice on other good books for children. Pediatricians distribute the books at compulsory check-ups: 80% of doctors across Germany are involved. At the first check-up at one year old, the doctor talks to parents about supporting early literacy and gives them the first bookbag.

There is a formal process for choosing books for the project and all children's book publishers are offered the chance to be involved. A commission of 20 people (including academics, book sellers, educationalists, reading experts) choose the books for each bag. *Lesestart* provides a selection of 3 or 4 different books for each year-group. Regional groups choose from this selection and can then buy further sets of books to increase coverage in their areas.

The project is evaluated independently and has evolved in response to evaluation findings. For example, the pack originally included a DVD providing guidance on reading with children, but this was later omitted following parent feedback that this was unnecessary.

At the time of writing, *Lesestart*'s plans for the future include:

- extending the project beyond the initial eight-year funding limit to ensure its continuation in the longer term;
- increasing networking to motivate librarians and pediatricians to work together in the regions;
- incorporating digital and new media into the project, e.g. apps. Our interviewee stated, '*All these things are part of modern living and they should be part of our work as well*.'

4.1.3 *Buchstart Schweiz* (Switzerland)

Buchstart Schweiz was introduced as a national programme in 2008. It is run through a partnership between the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media and the library service Bibliomedia, and also involves the National Union of Pediatricians. After 5 years of operation, the program currently reaches about 50% of the children in Switzerland. This number is growing. *Buchstart Schweiz* aims to reach every child, but our interviewee noted that this is a very ambitious target as 70 000 - 80 000 children are born per year. The project aims to support parents in understanding the importance of early literacy and language development using books.

The project design was based on models from other countries, like *Bookstart* in the UK. All children receive a free bookbag prior to their first birthday but the process of gifting varies across regions. Originally the project was intended to be provided by pediatricians. However *Buchstart Schweiz* was contacted by other health professionals who wanted to be involved. Each region has its own approach, developed by local people and the exact timing of gifting varies. Books may be distributed by pediatricians, librarians or health workers working with young mothers. Sometimes the pediatrician provides a voucher and the bookbag is collected from the library, whereas sometimes the pediatrician or health worker gives the bag directly. Children can also attend 'animations' in libraries which involve, for example, book reading, storytelling, and singing rhymes. In some regions, boxes of books are provided for health carers to use in their settings.

Books are chosen by the *Buchstart Schweiz* project team which includes representatives of each of the two partner groups involved in the project. The team aims to include Swiss books, but this is difficult as not many Swiss publishers produce board books for children. Bookbags also include: free library membership for babies; an invitation to the library-based events; and a leaflet with brief guidance for parents on how to support children's language development. The leaflet is available in 16 languages to be as inclusive as possible. The books themselves, however, are only available in the three main languages of Switzerland.

Financing the project is challenging, although in some places it seems to be easier to find funding for the library-based activities. The project was initially subsidised by the National Cultural Department, but this funding has subsequently come to an end. Money is therefore being sought to buy books for the project as the team want to ensure these remain free to families. It is possible that they may reluctantly have to reduce the number of books included in bags from 2 to 1. Our interviewee told us that debates around early literacy are rather new in the German speaking part of Switzerland. There has been a framework for early years education since 2012, but this is not yet established.

Implementing the project involves a number of further challenges for local groups, such as identifying when children have been born and developing new ideas for library activities. *Buchstart Schweiz* is keen to reach those parents who do not engage with the programme and to find out why this is the case. Some families, for example, take the voucher but do not collect the bookbag. *Buchstart Schweiz* are particularly keen to involve migrant families in the project and those families who do not currently engage with libraries.

As there are different solutions in the different parts of the four language regions of Switzerland, the following deals only with the German speaking region of Switzerland.

Two other projects run by the Swiss Institute for Children's and Youth Media complement Buchstart Schweiz: a '*reading animator project*' which trains librarians and early years workers to work with parents and groups of children in libraries, and a second project supporting families with children aged 2-5 who have home languages other than German. They work to support the first language, premised on the notion that a good first language provides an excellent foundation for learning another language.

There have been two small evaluations of *Buchstart Schweiz*, both conducted in 2010 at the early stages of the project and designed to inform the implementation (see Kovalik, 2010).

One study, a Masters thesis, investigated the work of 250 libraries, 40 librarians, 40 pediatricians and 10 parents. Data collection was mainly through written questionnaires. An interview was also conducted with the head of the library service. This evaluation highlighted the importance of involving health workers in the project and found that following implementation of *Buchstart Schweiz*:

- parents' views and behaviours changed: they had not all previously realised the importance of reading with babies and passing on verses and rhymes;
- parents enjoyed the project and the help it gave them in supporting their children.

One of the most significant impacts related to changed perceptions about and use of libraries in Switzerland. Only 20% of the Swiss population use libraries and previously they had not been considered places for babies and young children. Our interviewee told us that, initially, library staff had not liked the idea of attracting babies and that libraries were not resourced for this, for example they did not stock board books. Given that library membership usually costs money, the inclusion of free library membership in the bookbags was a highly significant part of the *Buchstart Schweiz* gift and the study showed an increase in library membership. Since then, library membership by young children has continued to increase and there has been a significant cultural shift. Libraries are now seen as places where babies and young children are welcome. After five years, almost every public library in Switzerland stocks board books, has 'animations' for babies, and participates in *Buchstart*.

The second study investigated the process of establishing and conducting *Buchstart Schweiz* in three communities around a large city: a very small community, a large rich community, and a community with a high migrant population. It was found that the project did not reach families with a migrant background or those who did not visit the library. Some possible ways of connecting with these groups were identified, which included:

- supporting (or working together with) other local/regional early childhood projects;

- providing multilingual book boxes for health workers' consulting sessions with parents;
- providing appropriate and regular booklists.

At the time of writing, *Buchstart Schweiz*'s plans for the future include:

- finding funding to continue beyond the next two years;
- continuing to develop networks of people involved in early literacy to keep it on the political agenda - '*a growing voice for young children's needs*';
- focusing on families they do not yet reach;
- working with the booksellers union and publishing a list of books for children from 0-6 years old;
- setting up national and regional meetings with participants at all levels to strengthen opportunities for participants to learn from each other;
- strengthening media work to increase understanding of the work being done;
- maintaining and expanding the website as an important source for all involved;
- supporting regional work from a national level.

4.1.4 *Nati Per Leggere* (Italy)

Nati Per Leggere (NPL) (translated as *Born to Read*) was introduced in 1999 by pediatricians and libraries in a range of regions and municipalities in Italy. Government funding only covers secretarial work – fundraising provides money locally to purchase books, and the work is carried out by volunteers. The project has continued to grow significantly and now reaches 30% of children born.

The project brings together health, cultural and children's services and other professionals involved in childcare. This involves a partnership between health operators and librarians which makes it possible to reach families that do not normally read or attend libraries and bookshops. It was introduced following evidence of the positive impact of initiatives such as *Bookstart* and *Reach Out and Read*. The project is developed locally by networks of local stakeholders, such as healthcare professionals, librarians, teachers, caregivers, non-profit organisations and individual volunteers. The programme is adapted at a local level to suit the needs and circumstances of particular areas or communities.

A national committee coordinates local activities but encourages responsiveness to regional contexts. This committee also co-ordinates public relations and communication, for example through a website, mailing list and other literature. Funding at national level comes largely from the sale of books and other resources to promote reading. Some support is received from the Ministry of Culture, through funding and as payment for providing training.

NPL is aimed at children from birth to age 5 and their families. The programme promotes early literacy through using '*quality literature'*, to motivate children to read and ultimately contribute to their intellectual, social and emotional growth. *NPL* highlights the role of families in supporting reading and stresses the importance of booksharing. The project provides training for professionals on interacting with

children and reading promotion, including guidance on books to use with children. *NPL* publishes a catalogue of *'high quality, age appropriate bo*oks' and offers these to *NPL* local promoters at a discounted rate (€3 – €3.5 euros). They also work alongside publishers to provide books free to families. Books are generally given to children at the age of 1.

By involving pediatricians, *NPL* endeavours to reach families who do not usually attend cultural services, e.g. libraries. The professionals work on a voluntary basis to promote reading through their day-to-day activities with children and families, providing guidance on how to engage with daily reading and which books to use: pediatricians do this during periodic checkups; librarians through the provision of reading aloud sessions; and early years educators are encouraged to create small libraries. *NPL* aims to promote reading with children from all social or cultural backgrounds and does not select families on grounds of social and economic status. However NPL is particularly keen for the scheme to reach the most disadvantaged, identified by our interviewee as *'migrant families and families in disadvantaged urban areas.*'

NPL is under continual review; our interviewee told us, '*We are always open… to improve what we do through others' experiences'* and it is felt that, *'progress has been constant in quality and quantity.'* A series of evaluations have been conducted, although it can be difficult to collect data as participants are volunteers. These include:

- A survey of professionals involved in the project conducted every 4-5 years (2003, 2008, 2012). The most recent survey focused on the activity of 696 pediatricians (9% of Italian pediatricians) and1036 libraries (15% of Italian public libraries).

- A randomised controlled trial tracked 208 children (227 control) children to 5 years old. This found that there was an impact for those parents who had begun the project with less positive attitudes towards reading aloud, and that increased vocabulary and comprehension were associated with reading frequency (Toffol et al, 2011).

- A pre/post intervention questionnaire with 2615 parents found that, 'A doctor's anticipatory guidance and the use of specific materials on books and reading is correlated with an increased reading aloud and attitude', and that 'families attend libraries more often, and earlier' after participation in the project. (Ronfani et al, 2006)

- A study with 30 Romanian families which concluded there was a need to support migrant families with specific interventions (Velea, 2011).

At the time of writing, *Nati per Leggere*'s plans for the future include:

- increasing the number of participants in the project (currently about 30% of target population);
- reaching more parts of the country, particularly in Southern Italy;
- gaining additional funding for training;
- developing further interventions;
- establishing a more thorough system of survey and evaluation, perhaps including questions on early literacy as part of other national surveys;

- reaching more migrant families and disadvantaged families;
- increasing the profile of the programme, for example, through use of a video (http://www.natiperleggere.it/index.php?id=188);
- highlighting early literacy on the local and national political agenda and involving more regions in the programme;
- disseminating literacy skills to other professionals who work with children;
- networking more widely with other European programmes (NPL has so far influenced a Catalan project and collaborated with a Croatian programme).

4.1.5 Summary

These descriptions of bookgifting schemes serve to contextualise the findings from studies of bookgifting (reported in the following section) in a number of ways:

- They highlight the **diversity** of programmes in terms of: the nature of the gift(s); the process and context for gifting; as well as variance in organisation, funding, delivery and scale. *Bookstart* (UK) and *Reach Out and Read* (USA) have been important influences in terms of vision and implementation. Common features include the provision of guidance to parents as well as books, and the involvement of different service-providers.

- Sources of **funding** vary between programmes and for one programme without state funding, a failure to secure adequate funds is likely to lead to a reduction in the quality of the offer.

- All interviewees spoke of the central importance of **partnership working** amongst service providers and the necessary steps to promote and develop such partnerships: networking and/or training for service providers is cited by all organisations as a priority for the future. This focus on partnership working between education, health, childcare and cultural services (specifically libraries) emphasises the multi-disciplinary nature of bookgifting programmes and the potential this offers for developing relationships with families that focus on the child, rather than on isolated language and literacy skills.

- Interviewees chose to highlight different aims for their programmes. Taken together, however, they address a **broad range of aims**, many of which reflect those associated with the three areas discussed in Section 3: interviewees cited intentions to impact on social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of children's development as well as language and literacy gains and generating enthusiasm for reading. In supporting such aims, programmes work to: encourage greater library use: convince parents of the benefits of booksharing; and enthuse families about books and reading. Bookgifting is not a one-off event, but is seen as the stimulus for developing a wide range of attitudes and behaviours important both to language and literacy and to more broadly conceived notions of child development.

- Programmes are working in various ways to **integrate bookgifting with wider developments in the promotion of early literacy** and two interviewees explicitly aligned their work with the broader early years agenda.

- The outcomes of evaluation described were inevitably selective, as was to be expected from telephone interviews. Despite this, it is clear that ongoing evaluation is an important part of the work. Claims were made about the impacts of bookgifting in terms of **changes in parent behaviour** and

language development. Some successes relate to what appear to be **cultural shifts** stimulated by such programmes. A particularly striking example was the perceived change in attitudes amongst librarians and the wider population towards the suitability of libraries for babies and young children in Switzerland.

- All interviewees spoke of the **inclusivity** of their programmes, which were available for all families, and were working to involve those groups who had engaged less fully to date, with three interviewees keen to encourage more participation by migrant families. In some cases flexibility was encouraged so that programmes could be **adapted to suit different local contexts**.

- Other **plans for the future** focused on strengthening relationships between different partners, extending programmes where possible, sharing experience with early years settings, broadening the offer to include digital resources, and maintaining a high profile for the work.

4.2 The Impact of Bookgifting Schemes

In this section we synthesise the findings of studies of bookgifting schemes. Before proceeding however it is important to acknowledge, as others have done (Ogg et al, 2012), some of the specific challenges faced in conducting a review of this kind. The following section outlines firstly those challenges associated with researching bookgifting schemes and secondly those associated with synthesising findings for reviews such as this one.

4.2.1 The challenges of researching bookgifting programmes

*First it is difficult to isolate the **specific** impact of bookgifting schemes given the many variables at play.* Children's language and literacy development and the extent and quality of parental support will be influenced by a wide range of factors including those associated with family, economic and local circumstances, as well as availability of other resources and services within the home and community. Synthesising the findings from international studies generates particular challenges as the economic, social, political and cultural context is likely to vary considerably. An approach that has a considerable impact in one country may be less effective in another. Moreover, many schemes run alongside other literacy interventions making it difficult to isolate the particular contribution of an individual programme. NCRCL (2001) for example noted the difficulties associated with evaluating *Bookstart* when it was implemented alongside a more general and widespread campaign to promote reading through the National Year of Reading.

Second the length of studies varies considerably from studies conducted over a short period to those lasting several years. Each has its drawbacks. Some studies reported below have attempted to measure impact over relatively short periods of time, whereas routines may take some time to evolve: Vanobbergen et al (2009), researching the *Boekbabies* programme in Belgium for example, found that changes of behaviour following participation happened over longer periods. Such changes may not be recorded if studies occur over too short a period. Longitudinal studies are also problematic given the number of changes that are likely to be significant for a child's language and literacy. These include: macro changes linked for example to changes in early years facilities in the light of funding reductions or changes in

reading patterns associated with new technologies; meso changes linked to changes within local settings, such as library closures; or micro changes in children's lives such as moving house, gaining siblings, and so on, as well as simply growing older when their parents may be more likely to read with them anyway. Moreover, as a programme becomes more established, its impact may appear less, and this may be a direct result of the programme's success. Parents interviewed in recent studies for example may be more likely to know about the benefits of reading before receiving the *Bookstart* pack and consequently impacts of the study on behaviours may be less marked. However, this very awareness may have been raised *because* of the existence of the scheme in the first place: through their experience with older siblings (Hashimoto, 2012) or through conversations with other parents. As Demack and Stevens (2013a) noted in their report on a randomised controlled trial of the impact of the Bookstart Treasure Pack, 'ceiling' effects may be evident,

> *where responses were already as positive or frequent as they could feasibly be.This meant that across many measures, room to 'improve' was limited or completely impossible for a large proportion of the sample. […] This means that, in terms of change over time, the only outcome for this majority of respondents would be to continue reading daily (i.e. remain static) or for the frequency of reading to reduce.* (Demack and Stevens, 2013a: 5)

Demack and Stevens also note that impacts of bookgifting may be underplayed in randomised controlled trials as practitioners exposed to the programme are likely to work more effectively with all parents, not just participants.

Third, attempts to gauge the impact of programmes over time rely on the willingness of parents to participate in research activities on multiple occasions. High levels of attrition can lead to misrepresentation of certain groups. Those parents who respond may well be those who are most enthusiastic about reading with their child. NCRCL (2001), for example, found that only a third of parents in a group being studied agreed to a follow-up questionnaire and the remaining sample was unrepresentative. Other factors may also be significant that are not captured by tools used. As Hall et al (2001) argue, this can lead to misleading results. In an evaluation of the Newcastle *Books for Babies* scheme, for example, they initially found little impact on library registrations. After further investigation, however, they concluded that the low numbers of registrations were linked to high levels of family mobility: many families who had not registered had moved from the area. The lack of registrations was not a failure of the project but a result of other factors.

Fourth, whilst large scale studies can provide persuasive findings, they do have limitations and these may be particularly pertinent to bookgifting programmes. Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) for example rely on a high degree of standardisation in the programme being delivered. However, as Demack and Stevens (2013a) found through a RCT of the Bookstart Treasure Pack, modes of delivery can be wide-ranging across different settings. Coldwell et al (2012) similarly found that the implementation of programmes can vary considerably, due to different levels of training for practitioners, timing of bookgifting, and the level of guidance offered to parents.

Large scale studies also tend to use questionnaires which rely on *reported behaviours* and key indicators which may miss aspects of the booksharing

experience and its significance for children and their families. Furthermore social desirability bias may undermine the reliability of results: parents may be more likely to report booksharing behaviours, knowing that this is deemed 'appropriate', particularly if their perspectives are collected by those involved in the projects (e.g. health workers or librarians) to pass on to researchers. Receiving more books may not actually make them more likely to read with children, but more likely to realise they should, and to say they do. As Needlman and Silverstein (2004) explore, other dimensions of bias may be associated with convenience sampling or the attitudes and beliefs of those participating in programmes in the first place, which may differ from those who choose not to do so. Qualitative studies complement these large-scale studies in important ways by providing more detailed and nuanced perspectives on families' responses to bookgifting programmes. Pahl et al (2010a;b) for example used video to capture booksharing practices and began to chart the diversity of ways in which parents and young children share books together. Headline figures may cloud insights into the richness and variety of children's experiences at home that may be central to understanding the contribution bookgifting programmes make and the features of those programmes that are most effective.

A further set of challenges arises through attempting to synthesise findings from research and evaluation conducted in *different contexts* and focused on *different programmes*. These include the challenge of diversity. As is evident from the four case studies in the previous section, schemes range widely in terms of scope, nature and groups targeted, and approaches to evaluation also vary considerably. Moreover, whilst some programmes have been evaluated extensively, others are very new and have received only light-touch reviews. Evaluations range from impact evaluations designed to measure changes in relation to language and literacy measures, to those designed to chart changes in parent/child behaviour or attitudes, predominantly captured through questionnaires of reported behaviour. Needlman and Silverstein (2004)'s review of studies of the *Reach Out and Read* programme highlights the complexities involved in synthesising the findings of studies relying on different measures. As they explore, measurements used to assess impact, such as the Child Centred Literacy Orientation (CCLO) (High et al, 1999), all build on certain assumptions which can fade into the background when studies are summarised for the purposes of a review such as this one.

In addressing these challenges, we have adopted an inclusive approach. We draw primarily on large-scale or longitudinal studies but also on smaller scale studies that seem to present 'promising' findings' and on qualitative studies that explore programmes' qualities in more depth and highlight themes worthy of further investigation. In doing so, we juxtapose studies that would be accorded different levels of 'worth' in different research paradigms. However, given that this is a relatively under-researched field, we feel that this approach is appropriate. It has allowed us to identify recurrent themes and highlight promising areas for future investigation. In the commentary below, we have signalled key information about scale and methodology where we feel this is particularly important in interpreting the results being presented (for example where the study is very small scale or the methodology is particularly rigorous). However, tagging detailed information to all results would make this review very difficult to read. We have therefore summarised key information on each study cited in Appendix 3. This includes brief details of each

scheme, the scale and methodology of studies conducted, main findings and sources used.

4.2.2 Introduction to impact summary

This section summarises findings from our review of studies of bookgifting programmes for children aged 0-5:

- Section 4.2.3 explores evidence that has made direct correlations between bookgifting and language and literacy development.

- Sections 4.2.4-4.2.6 presents findings from studies that have worked on the assumption that increased opportunities for sharing books are beneficial for literacy attainment. These evaluations have focused on the impact of bookgifting on parent/child behaviours and attitudes associated with increased booksharing.

- Section 4.2.7 presents findings regarding relationships between bookgifting and book ownership and access to books through library membership.

- Section 4.2.8-4.2.9 considers booksharing behaviours associated with bookgifting programmes and considers evidence of the emotional and social dimension.

- Section 4.2.10 explores broader impacts.

- Section 4.2.11 considers what the evidence has suggested about what contributes to the efficacy of programmes.

It is worth noting that four RCTs identified very limited impact from bookgifting schemes. As explored in the previous section, the use of RCTs to evaluate bookgifting programmes may be problematic and the results need to be treated with caution. However, it is important that the findings of studies summarised in sections 4.2.3-4.2.10, which demonstrate more positive evidence of impact, are read alongside these less encouraging results. An RCT of the *Bookstart* Treasure Pack (Demack and Stevens, 2013a) identified no statistically significant difference in change over time between parents in intervention and control settings in relation to a number of indicators. These included: perceptions of parents on reading with their child; perceptions of parents on their child's engagement with books, stories and rhymes; use and membership of a public library; and child book ownership. A statistically significant difference was identified related to fathers reading with children, although differences in the baseline for the control and intervention group may have partly accounted for this. A previous RCT of the impact of the *Bookstart+* pack in Northern Ireland (O'Hare and Connolly, 2010) identified a slight improvement in parental attitudes to their child reading, but this was not statistically significant. A small negative effect was identified in terms of library use, although O'Hare and Connolly suggested that this may have been short-term. A further RCT of the *Booktime* programme for children aged 5 years (Connolly et al, 2012) similarly found no evidence of impact although the programme was very well received. Finally an RCT of *Let's Read*, which studied the impact of the programme for families in 'disadvantaged' areas of Melbourne, Australia (Goldfield et al, 2011; Goldfield et al, 2012), suggested there had been no statistically significant impact of the programme in terms of children's language or early literacy development at 2 years or 4 years. It is worth noting here that researchers concluded that parents entering the trial were

'among the more advantaged in their regions' (Goldfield et al, 2012: 1051). Below we summarise the findings of studies that have identified more positive impacts.

4.2.3 Impact on language and literacy development

Studies of two bookgifting programmes in the UK have suggested a positive impact on the development of children's language and literacy skills. Wade and Moore (2000) tracked children from the *Birmingham Bookstart* pilot study and matched their progress against children not participating in the study. Tracing 28 of the original 300 children, they measured their language and literacy development at 3 points: at age 2.5/3 years, on starting school, and again at 6/7 years as they participated in end of Key Stage assessments (SATs). At 2.5/3, children were showing more interest and participating more actively in interactions around books. At age 5, baseline assessments of 41 of the original children suggested that they were ahead of a comparison group in speaking and listening, reading and writing, and also performed better in some mathematics assessments (Wade and Moore 1998a). 2 years later, average scores of 43 children from the original *Bookstart* cohort were at a higher level on all teacher assessments than non-*Bookstart* children. This was statistically significant for 7 out of 10 items assessed, and *Bookstart* children did even better in tests taken at this time (Wade and Moore, 2000). Wade and Moore conclude from their study that participation in *Bookstart* generated an advantage to children which was maintained at least until the end of Key Stage 1.They hypothesised that the impact on mathematical development may have been associated with the focus and attention developed through booksharing and/or from early engagement with counting rhymes through picture books, and this reflects recent findings that children who read for pleasure do better in mathematics (Sullivan and Brown, 2013). As Bailey et al (2002) argue, these results need to be treated with caution: the sample was small and there could be other reasons for these differences. Nevertheless the results are important as promising indicators of the potential impact of bookgifting programmes.

Hines and Brooks (2005) conducted a further longitudinal study as part of the *Sheffield Books for Babies* scheme with 46 children, half of whom had engaged with the *Bookstart* programme and half of whom had not. Teachers reported that the *Bookstart* group had gained more skills on entering reception than the non-*Bookstart* children (average 12.5 compared to average 10.3), with the biggest difference in speaking and listening and the least in writing. Hines and Brooks presented their analysis of individual children, highlighting that whilst the impact for some children was minimal, for others it was substantial. Hines and Brooks suggest that a possible reason why some Bookstart children did not make greater gains was that they visited the library 'only minimally' but also emphasise that many other factors could have been significant here. It is worth noting here that this study relied on behaviours reported by teachers and that, as in other studies (Bean 1990), children's language and literacy development may have been rated differently through standardised tests.

The bookgifting programme subject to the most systematic and sustained programme of research is *Reach Out and Read* in the USA, although many studies have used relatively small samples. *Reach Out and Read* is delivered through pediatricians' surgeries at regular health checks: pediatricians give books to babies and children during each surgery visit and also provide advice on booksharing.

Further guidance is provided by health workers in waiting rooms. Experimental studies have found that children who participated in the programme scored more highly than others in tests of expressive and receptive language (High et al, 2000; Mendelsohn, 2001; Sharif et al, 2002). A study by Diener et al (2005) tracked 40 children into kindergarten and concluded that the literacy skills of those participating were more advanced than others and also that their home literacy environment was richer.

Van den Berg and Bus (2013a) found that whilst there was little impact across the group of *BookStart Holland* participants, participation was associated with a boost in language skills amongst children of families who had changed their reading behaviours in response to the programme. They also found a moderately strong effect for those children identified as 'temperamentally highly reactive' who may give 'negative responses arising from their proneness to sadness, anger or frustration' (Van den Berg and Bus, 2013b: 42). Indeed these children scored as well as their less temperamentally reactive peers. Van den Berg and Bus explain this by arguing that whilst parents may generally be less motivated to interact with temperamentally highly reactive children, booksharing provides a pleasurable and calm context for talk and consequently parents interact more with their children once they start sharing books. They conclude that when,

> *…their parents receive* BookStart *materials and suggestions and persevere to read to their infant, tell stories or recite rhymes, despite their child's negative responses, infants score at the same level on language skills as their less reactive peers […].* BookStart *may set in motion a pattern of reciprocal influences that may "snowball" later language and cognitive development (Raikes et al., 2006). The pleasure derived from activities such as book reading is assumed to increase children's interest in books and thereby the frequency of shared book reading in the years to come.* (Van den Berg and Bus, 2013b: 61)

Samei et al (2013) also identified statistically significant differences in terms of 'kindergarten readiness' (as measured by local baseline assessment activities) for children who participated in the *Imagination Library* programme compared to non-participant children, and Becket (2009) identified statistically significant differences between 1778 Imagination Library participants and 1574 non-participants in their performance in reading and language arts assessments. These differences were sustained for most sub-groups within the sample.

4.2.4 Impact on parents' attitudes to the role of sharing books with babies and young children

As noted earlier, an RCT of the *Bookstart* Treasure Pack in England (Demack and Stevens, 2013a) found no statistically significant difference in terms of parents' change in perceptions about reading with their child. However, successive studies have suggested that bookgifting programmes can have an impact on parents' attitudes to booksharing. Repeated studies have found that parents and carers had greater awareness of the importance of sharing books with babies after involvement in a bookgifting scheme than they did beforehand. This included greater awareness of the role of booksharing in language development and the value of interacting with children around books. For example:

- The NCRCL (2001) study found that more parents were more aware of the value of reading books to babies after their experience of *Bookstart* (an increase of 9% to 100% after receipt of the pack).

- In Western Australia, a review of the *Better Beginnings* programme found that 79% of mothers who returned a survey said that the programme had influenced their beliefs about the importance of booksharing with babies (Barratt-Pugh and Allen, 2011)

- In the *Derbyshire Books for Babies* scheme, there was an increase of c.25% in those parents who recognised the appropriateness of sharing books with babies during their first year (Millard, 2000).

For some, the change in attitude related to their own confidence in reading with their child:

- The number of parents who stated that they looked forward to reading with their child increased from 78% to 94% following participation in *Bookstart* Corner, which involves a series of visits to homes to provide guidance to parents (Demack and Stevens, 2013b).

- NCRCL (2001)'s study of *Bookstart* and Barratt-Pugh and Allen (2011)'s study of *Better Beginnings* both suggested that an increase in confidence amongst parents following participation in bookgifting.

- High Scope (2003) found that parents of children registered for the *Imagination Library* stated that their 'comfort' in booksharing had increased (from between 54.3% and 68.1% in the 3 areas surveyed) and a case study of the Central Minnesota *Imagination Library* scheme arrived at similarly positive findings (UODC, 2013).

4.2.5 Impact on babies'/children's interest in books and booksharing

Findings from a number of studies have suggested that children are more interested in books following participation in bookgifting programmes:

- A series of experimental studies of *Reach Out and Read* suggested that children exposed to the programme are more likely to see reading as a favourite activity than non-participants (High et al, 1998; High et al, 2000; Mendelsohn, 2001; Silverstein et al, 2002; Needlman 2005).

- Parents involved in the *Reach Out and Read Taiwan* programme are more likely to identify booksharing as a favourite activity for their child than non-participating parents (Wu et al, 2012).

- An evaluation of Bookstart Corner found that parents reported an increase in their child's interest in talking about stories and rhymes from 72% before the intervention to 84% after the intervention (Demack and Stevens, 2013b).

- At the first post-programme survey, 60% of mothers involved in the evaluation of *Better Beginnings* in Western Australia reported an increase in their child asking to read (Barrat-Pugh and Allen, 2011).

- A follow-up study two years after receiving the *Bookstart* pack suggested that children in Birmingham *Bookstart* families showed greater interest in looking at books than non-participants (Wade and Moore, 1996a).

- Surveys using single questionnaires of reported behaviours during evaluations of the *Imagination Library* scheme found that parents reported that children were significantly more interested in books after taking part in the scheme (High Scope 2003; Wichita County, 2008; Gordon, 2010; Seitz and Capuozzi, 2010; UODC, 2013).

It is important to note here that the majority of these findings are based on parent reporting rather than observation of child behaviours.

4.2.6 Impact on frequency and length of time spent booksharing

A number of studies have suggested that more parents share books with children following participation in bookgifting programmes. Given evidence presented in Section 3.2.2, it is significant that a series of studies recording the frequency and length of time spent booksharing have had positive results:

- An evaluation of Bookstart Corner found that parents reported an increase in booksharing from 78% before the intervention to 94% after the intervention (Demack and Stevens, 2013b).

- Barratt-Pugh and Allen (2011) found that whilst 51% mothers said they did not share books with their baby at the beginning of the programme, 85% said they did following receipt of the *Better Beginnings* pack. Their comments suggested that the contents of the pack had contributed to this change of behaviour.

- The NCRCL (2001) found that 70% parents said they had increased the frequency of reading with their child following receipt of the *Bookstart* pack.

- Wade and Moore (1993) found an increase in sharing books following participation in the Birmingham *Bookstart* programme. Some were already using books with babies prior to receiving the pack, but only a few did not report any difference. A follow-up study two years after receiving *Bookstart* pack suggested that *Birmingham Bookstart* families shared books more frequently than a comparison group (Wade and Moore, 1996a).

- Experimental studies of *Reach Out and Read* in the USA have repeatedly suggested that those exposed to the programme are more likely to read more often than non-participating families (Golova et al, 1999; High et al, 1998; Sanders et al, 2000; Mendelsohn, 2001; Silverstein et al, 2002; Weitzman et al, 2004; Needlman, 2005).

- An evaluation of *Reach Out and Read Taiwan*, found that parents in the programme read more frequently with their child than non-participating parents (Wu et al, 2012).

- An evaluation of *Read to Me Nova Scotia*, aimed at newborn babies and their parents, concluded that mothers in receipt of books spent significantly more time reading with their babies than those in a comparison group (5 minutes a day) (Veldhuijzen Van Zanten et al, 2012).

- Tsuji (2013) found that those parents with experience of *Bookstart Japan* read more often with their baby than those without.

- An ICM (2010) survey for Booktrust found that parents who have received a *Bookstart* pack are more likely to share books with babies (49% compared with 34% of non-*Bookstart* families).

- Fong (2007) noted that those enrolled in the Hawai'i *Imagination Library* scheme for a year were more likely to read with their children than those just registered, and of families who said they read once a week before the scheme, 52% said they had increased to reading daily. The High Scope (2003) study of *Imagination Library* found that 67.5-78.5% parents surveyed in 3 areas reported an increase in the amount of time that they spent reading with children, with 85% of the total sample reading almost every day or more. Similar findings have been generated through other surveys focusing on the *Imagination Library* scheme (Wichita County, 2008; Gordon, 2010; Seitz and Capuozzi, 2010; UODC, 2013).

- In a small scale longitudinal study, Bean (1990) found that a greater proportion of families who had participated in the *Beginning with Books* scheme in the USA read daily than non-participants, 3-4 years after books had been given to babies.

Whilst most studies of booksharing have tended to focus on the sharing of books between mothers and children, some studies have noted increases in booksharing with other family members:

- An RCT of the Bookstart Treasure Pack found that there was a statistically significant difference in the frequency of fathers reading with their child, although this may have been because there was less of a ceiling effect for the intervention than control group (Demack and Stevens, 2013a).

- The evaluation of *Better Beginnings* concluded that almost three-quarters of mothers who read to their child following receipt of the pack said that fathers also read to the child (compared to 43% beforehand), and that 23% of fathers did so on a daily basis.

- A number of studies have highlighted that booksharing happens amongst various family members (Hall, 2001; NCRCL, 2001; Billings, 2009a).

Some more recent evaluations of bookgifting schemes for babies and toddlers (Booktrust 2009; O'Hare and Connolly, 2010) have suggested less of an impact on reported behaviours and this is worthy of some comment. As noted earlier, this could be explained by the past success of programmes in establishing the importance of booksharing with babies. Booktrust (2009) have suggested that participation in the programme is most significant for those they described as 'less active families', i.e. those that had engaged less in booksharing prior to the scheme. Booktrust found that, prior to the programme, the most that this group read was 'a few times a week.' Afterwards, 37% of these families read once or twice a day.

4.2.7 Book ownership & library membership

As explored in Section 3.3, access to books has been positively associated with literacy attainment. A number of studies have highlighted relationships between participation in bookgifting schemes and increased book ownership:

- Experimental studies of *Reach Out and Read* have suggested that those exposed to the programme are more likely to own more books than those not exposed to the programme (Golova et al, 1999; Silverstein et al, 2002; Needlman 2005; Billings, 2009a).

- The *Better Beginnings* project found that average numbers of suitable books for young children in homes increased from 18 to 125 by the time the child was 3 years old, and that book ownership more generally increased (Barrat-Pugh and Rohl, 2011). Comments suggested that the booklist provided through the scheme had been influential in this regard (Barratt-Pugh and Allen, 2011).

- Pre/post questionnaires suggested that families participating in the *Beginning with Books* programme had more reading material in homes (Bean, 1990).

- A follow-up study two years after receiving the Birmingham *Bookstart* pack suggested that participating parents were more likely to buy books for their children as presents than previously (Wade and Moore, 1996b).

- In the *Derbyshire Books for Babies* scheme, there was an increase of 38% in those who said they had bought books for their baby following the programme (Millard, 2002).

- Parents involved in Bookstart Corner felt more confident in choosing suitable books for their child following participation in the programme (an increase from 45% to 70%).

Bookgifting programmes have also been positively associated with library registrations and levels of borrowing:

- During the *Boots Books for Babies* scheme in Nottingham (1998-2000), there was an increase of 54% in numbers of babies under 2 registered at local libraries (compared with 6% in a comparison group).There was also a high level of borrowing. It is unclear whether these families would have registered at a later point. However the project also did seem to promote early registrations for non-project families, perhaps due to publicity around the project (Bailey et al, 2002).

- Library membership amongst families in the *Better Beginnings* project increased: 84% were members by the end of the project (Barratt-Pugh and Rohl, 2011).

- 55% *BookStart Holland* families visited the library compared to 8% of families in a control group (Van den Berg and Bus, 2013a).

- NCRCL (2001)'s evaluation of *Bookstart* found that library membership for babies increased and that there was an increase of those visiting the library from 64% to 85%.

- ICM (2010) found that 28% said they had visited a library because of *Bookstart* whilst 20% had joined a library.

- A National Impact Evaluation of *Bookstart* (Booktrust, 2009) showed an improvement in library membership of 76% to 83%.

- In Birmingham, numbers using libraries increased (Wade and Moore,1993), and 2 years after the programme, *Bookstart* families were still more likely to visit the library than non-Bookstart families (Wade and Moore, 1996b).

- Pre/post questionnaires with families participating in *Beginning with Books* in the USA suggested that they engaged in more library visits following the programme (Bean 1990).

- An evaluation of *Derbyshire Books for Babies* found that the scheme had encouraged more library membership (Millard et al, 2000).

The repeated finding that bookgifting programmes are associated with increased library attendance is reflected in one of the key outcomes of the *Buchstart Schweitz* programme described in the previous section. This change in patterns of use may be associated, as it seemed to be for the Swiss programme, with a change in attitudes. Millard (2002) for example, through her evaluation of the *Derbyshire Books for Babies* scheme, noted parents' worries about entering libraries, as they were concerned they would not be welcomed or that children might damage books or incur fines. The decision to enter a library was a major step. This suggests that bookgifting schemes can provide significant opportunities to change such perceptions and present libraries as fun and accessible places to be.

It is worth noting, however, that the RCT of *Bookstart+* in Northern Ireland found a small negative effect in terms of library use following participation in *Bookstart+* as responses from *Bookstart+* families suggested that they were slightly less likely to use their local libraries than others (O'Hare and Connolly (2010). The research team argued that this may have been a short term effect. Parents in receipt of books may have been in less immediate need of the library and these parents may have been more likely to use the library later.

4.2.8 Change and diversity in the nature of booksharing

As explored earlier, it is important to consider not just the frequency but the *nature* of interactions around booksharing. The quality of talk and the relationship between adult and child are central to the value of booksharing. Studies have suggested that bookgifting programmes can encourage parents to share books in ways that are particularly conducive to language and literacy development. Wade and Moore (1996b), in a study of 29 parents of children aged 2.5/3, concluded that when sharing books, *Bookstart* parents were more likely to: read the whole text, talk about the story and link it to the child's experience, encourage participation, encourage the child to make predictions and trace the direction of print. Children in *Bookstart* families meanwhile were more likely to show an interest in the text and interact more during booksharing. An evaluation of Bookstart Corner found that parents were more likely to use toys and puppets when sharing books following the intervention – an increase from 33% to 65% (Demack and Stevens, 2013b).

At the same time, Pahl et al (2010a) warn against arriving at prescribed ideas about what constitutes booksharing. In their study of use of the *Imagination Library* books in Rotherham, they invited nine families to use flip cameras to record their

booksharing practices. This allowed insights into the varied ways that families share books, and how this differs within as well as between households. As well as the booksharing opportunities generated with friends, siblings, and other members of the extended family, dyads may share books in different ways. In a second study, Pahl et al (2010b) argued that booksharing practices could be placed along a continuum from those that were 'connected' to other activities - drawing, playing, singing and outdoor experiences - and those that focused more on booksharing as an individualised activity. In the first, parents tended to emphasise enjoyment whereas the second was more associated with the development of skills. Vanobbergen et al (2009) observed that whilst mothers and fathers involved in the *Boekbabies* project in Belgium read in an interactive way, they typically had different styles: fathers more lively and mothers more 'scholarly'. Tsuji (2013) focused on the different responses given by infants, correlating some variations in infant behaviour to gender and temperament. Wray and Medwell (2013) highlighted the variety of ways in which parents and children used the books provided: some reading, some telling stories around the books, some talking about the pictures. Whilst all these activities were valuable for early language and literacy development, the focus was on enjoyment and fun rather than using the book as a focus for literacy instruction. Given the summary of research presented in Section 3.2.4, this would seem to be an important emphasis.

4.2.9 The emotional and social impact of booksharing associated with bookgifting schemes

A number of studies (Hall, 2001; Hardman and Jones, 1999) have highlighted that booksharing associated with bookgifting schemes is deeply entwined with affect and emotion and noted how booksharing sits within and perhaps reinforces close relationships. Pahl et al (2010 a; b) highlight the emotional dimension of booksharing and the significance of touch, gesture and physical closeness as well as talk. The focus on love and warmth validates the particular contribution that parents make and emphasises the social and emotional dimension of booksharing. Hardman and Jones (1999: 227) noted the 'special closeness of baby and mother' as parents held books for their babies to see. Booksharing events were then not just about sharing stories but 'employed as situations for manipulating books, teething, distracting and calming and also as part of social interaction and social rituals.' The book was important not just as a book but as a shared object:

> *Our observations suggest that whilst some of the contexts and activities were specific to the development of book reading conventions, there was very little evidence that the mothers were following a storyline from beginning to end or marking the event as special relative to any other activity. Indeed, much of the observed learning and interaction could have been based around any object, not necessarily a book, and its value in facilitating social interaction is emphasised.* (Hardman and Jones: 1999:227)

As Pahl et al (2010b) noted, the giving of books was important here: parents let their children chew, throw and carry round the books because they knew they did not have to be returned to libraries. Vanobbergen et al (2009) also found that parents emphasised the affective dimension of booksharing when talking about their experience of the *Boekbabies* project. They felt that booksharing had strengthened

their bond with their babies. Being close, with babies sat on laps and kissing and cuddling, was central to booksharing. Pahl et al (2010b) develop this theme:

> *We would like to argue from the films that the range of positive outcomes relating to book sharing is much wider than simply enhancing literacy skills. The films show children singing, narrating, tracing with their finger, sharing laughter and cuddles and enjoying quiet moments with a book away from adults. The range of experiences coming from the books, including drawing, storytelling, singing, cuddling, and the wide affordances of the books in providing sensory and emotional comfort as well as a way of being, and a shift in the habitus of the homes, indicates that these objects, that is 'books' with words and pictures, are worth investing in. Books are connective artefacts and their link to other activities such as drawing, dancing, singing and bouncing up and down could be further stressed in future advice to parents.* (Pahl et al, 2010b:30)

4.2.10 Broader impacts

Whilst the majority of studies have explored the impact of bookgifting schemes on specific outcomes and within specific families, others have charted the unexpected, broader or less quantifiable consequences of bookgifting schemes (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2004). Interventions do not take place within laboratory conditions but are introduced to ecologies or networks of existing practice and experience. In the case of bookgifting programmes we can identify a number of impacts that go beyond encouraging daily reading but that may ultimately be highly significant for children's emotional, social and intellectual wellbeing, and consequently may also be important for later literacy attainment.

First the bookgifting process has been seen as the starting point for ongoing discussions between professionals and parents about language and literacy. In their evaluation of *Better Beginnings*, Barratt-Pugh et al (2013) found that the reach of the programme went beyond sharing books with babies. The gift of the book set the precedent for discussions about language and literacy more generally, not solely in terms of books. This, they concluded, encouraged parents and children to become involved in a broad range of literacy activities, with different family members reading with children, talking about books and visiting libraries. It also encouraged librarians to strengthen links with others working to support children's early development and care. Similarly, Coldwell et al (2012) found that practitioners and stakeholders felt that the process of bookgifting was the catalyst for long-lasting changes linked for example to parents' confidence in reading, parents' participation in literacy or mathematics classes, and access to other services, such as libraries or workshop activities. The bookgifting process provided the opportunity to have conversations that could strengthen relationships and enable collaboration between practitioners and parents that, in turn, could have long-reaching effects:

> *The* Bookstart *programme was being used as a tool to help practitioners bond with parents and support conversations around issues such as their child's development which may be more difficult otherwise due to the potential for the parent or carer to feel stigmatised.* (Coldwell et al, 2012: 52)

Involvement in such schemes has also had implications for the professional expertise of service providers. Various studies have charted the positive responses from health workers and librarians about their role in bookgifting schemes (Moore and Wade, 2003; Barratt-Pugh et al, 2013; Coldwell et al, 2012) and the impact on their understanding of children's language and literacy development (Millard, 2002). These opportunities for professional development have sometimes had important side-effects in other areas. Wade and Moore (2003), for example, noted how nursery workers were able to use the booksharing promoted through *Birmingham Bookstart* as a model for their own interactions with young children in early years settings.

Researchers have also charted how bookgifting programmes have mediated changes in relationships or attitudes that have had even broader implications. Health workers interviewed by Wade and Moore (2003) noted how interactions around the bookpack had made it easier to discuss other issues with parents, and following participation in the *Reach Out and Read* programme, parents were more likely to rate their pediatrician as helpful and pediatricians were more likely to rate parents as receptive to guidance on supporting their child (Jones et al, 2000).

In some cases, parents' participation in bookgifting schemes has been associated with more positive attitudes about their own reading (Connolly et al, 2012) or prompted parents to seek support for their own literacy (Millard, 2000; Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2004). In others, schemes have provided a way of accessing literacy-related experiences that parents had found difficult or disempowering as children. Vanobbergen et al (2009: 285) cite one parent's words:

> *I used to hate it that my mother did not read to me. I always had difficulties reading at school. The teacher would write in my school diary that I had to read more, but as a child, you don't really read on your own, you need a bit of a push.*

Finally it is worth noting that bookbags themselves have featured strongly in families' experiences of bookgifting schemes. Wray and Medwell (2013), evaluating the *Booktime* project, noted how parents told them that bags were frequently integrated into everyday life, used by children to store toys and sometimes books, or by parents when they went shopping. As one parent interviewed by Wray and Medwell commented, 'It was the bag as much as the book, you know.' Other studies too have highlighted how the books, bags and other objects distributed in the pack circulated and re-circulated around households (Barratt-Pugh and Allen, 2011; NCRCL, 2001; Pahl et al, 2010b). These artefacts of bookgifting schemes (books, bags and other objects) remain in households long after the bookgifting event and are often used and re-used for years, showing how booksharing can enter into public life and items become part of the lasting legacy from a particular initiative.

4.2.11 What contributes to the efficacy of programmes?

This review has highlighted a number of features that seem to be associated with effective bookgifting programmes as well as a series of issues for consideration. These relate to: the focus of booksharing; the bookgifting event; the importance of strong partnerships; relevance to families; book selection; and repeated bookgifting.

a) Focus
It is important to emphasise that effective bookgifting programmes have been underpinned by a focus on promoting enjoyment and enthusiasm for books rather than using books to explicitly teach specific skills or letter/sound correspondences. Given the evidence presented in Section 3.2, this focus seems highly appropriate. Effective bookgifting programmes play an important role in promoting the enjoyment of reading, encouraging dialogue around books and the establishment of reading as a valuable shared and social activity. As Section 3.1 illustrates, encouraging pleasure in reading may well have important implications for reading attainment in later life.

b) The bookgifting event & form of guidance
Many programmes use the process of gifting as an opportunity to raise parents' awareness of the significance of sharing books with children and evaluations have repeatedly emphasised the importance of this. Jones et al (2000), for example, found that families provided with professional guidance during the *Reach Out and Read* programme were more likely to report that they enjoyed reading with their child than those that did not. This reflects findings from Lindsay's meta-analysis that interventions that provided guidance showed stronger relationships between access to print and reading development than those that did not (Lindsay 2010). In light of points explored in Section 3.2, it would seem that this guidance is likely to be most effective if it focuses on reading for pleasure, encouraging talk around books, and modelling early reading behaviours.

Many schemes provide such guidance in the form of leaflets or booklets. However, the nature, quality and tone of this guidance is important. Parents in the *Boekbabies* scheme told researchers that they often ignored the guidance as it was not specific enough for their child and Vanobbergen et al suggest that the guidance set up expectations against which parents judged themselves:

> *These "how to read to children" tips were considered as part of the "Am I doing well?" idea, in which parents as well as the children need to meet certain standards.* (Vanobbergen et al, 2009: 283-284).

Schemes appear to be most successful when service providers (e.g. librarians, health workers, doctors) are confident and well-prepared to discuss children's early language and literacy development and to support parents with booksharing.

Some schemes (*Derbyshire Books for Babies* and *Reading is Fundamental*) organised special events for book distribution. Whilst these may generate excitement around the process, they lack the possibility for universal reach. The majority of schemes therefore plan to maximise coverage by timing bookgifting to coincide with key events in all children's lives, typically regular health checks or, in the case of *Read to Me Nova Scotia*, in the maternity ward soon after birth. Others have arranged activities to promote and complement the bookgifting initiative, such as Booktrust's National Bookstart Week or workshops and other activities. In some cases, organisers believe schemes are most effective when complemented by such activities and events although parents may see these as less central (Coldwell et al, 2012).

c) The importance of strong partnerships

A common and significant feature of bookgifting programmes is the focus on multi-disciplinary partnership working and, as explored in Section 4.1., universal bookgifting programmes rely on organisations and individuals at local level to make gifting a successful experience. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those most successful in implementing their programmes appear to be those who work most effectively in partnership, show most commitment to their communities and enthusiasm about their work (King et al, 2009). As many evaluators have noted (Bailey et al, 2002; Wade and Moore, 2003; Barratt-Pugh et al, 2013) liaison between all parties (e.g. library staff and health visitors) is key to the success of bookgifting projects. The findings from successive evaluation studies suggest that this work needs to be supported by effective training for professionals (e.g. Millard, 2002; Barratt-Pugh and Allen, 2013).

d) Relevance to families

One area of debate surrounds the relative value of universal schemes and those designed for specific groups. Proponents for universal schemes argue that all families can benefit from such programmes: O'Hare & Connolly (2010), in their evaluation of *Bookstart+*, for example, found similar effects across all sub-groups of parents and argued that it cannot be assumed that only certain groups will benefit; and an evaluation of a scheme in Sheffield found that the families in a 'disadvantaged' area who participated in the scheme, engaged in more valuable and frequent booksharing experiences than those from a comparison group in a wealthier part of the city (Hines and Brooks, 2005). As Coldwell et al write,

> *…even children from homes full of books may not feel the benefits of booksharing if their parent or carer does not hold the knowledge around the most advantageous ways to use books with their child. This further emphasises the need to gift the packs with a high level of support and advice, and therefore the necessity to train early years practitioners appropriately about Bookstart.* (Coldwell et al, 2012:75)

Others argue that universal schemes are important to avoid the stigma that might be associated with targeted schemes and that might ultimately discourage participation (Morris Hargreaves McIntyre, 2004). Some have noted however that the impact of certain schemes appears to have been greater for particular groups. The High Scope (2003) evaluation of *Imagination Library*, for example, found that the programme was most effective for those with fewer educational qualifications and lower socio-economic status, most likely because they had fewer books and less access to libraries to begin with.

A number of studies have concluded that it is those projects that are most closely geared to the local community and developed in partnership that are most successful (Ghelani, 1999; Barratt-Pugh et al, 2013). As Billings (2009b) argues, much evaluation activity around bookgifting focuses on impacts or parental responses to the programme itself and not the perspectives and experiences of families. Billings suggests that this perspective starts from a deficit assumption that ignores the diverse ways in which families may support children's literacy. She argues that,

> *there is a concern that literacy promotion programs such as ROR* [Reach Out and Read] *draw on a one-size-fits-all model of promoting literacy among*

poor, often immigrant, populations. The implication here is that such a model may bring with it cultural biases and assumptions about the literacy values and practices of the people it serves—people who are likely very different from those implementing the program (in this case, the doctors). Thus, the program potentially might assume that many of the poor, ethnically and linguistically diverse parents it serves are not engaged in, or not engaged in enough, literacy practices in the home (Billings, 2009b:264).

As explored above, there would seem to be a need to ensure that bookgifting programmes do not focus solely on mother/child relationships with books, but acknowledge a wide variety of booksharing practices as well as valuing other kinds of home language and literacy practices. Singh et al (2013) described a programme for Burmese refugee families in the USA which used the *Imagination Library* scheme alongside opportunities for parents to explore booksharing through 'story circles.' Singh et al recognise the tension here between valuing existing language and literacy practices whilst introducing practices likely to be significant for later educational success. The examples provided in Section 4.1 suggest that there is considerable interest in designing bookgifting programmes to meet the needs of specific groups. However, as explored in Section 3.2.4, there is also a need to recognise and value diverse family literacy practices. This may be an area for future research.

e) Book selection

Linked to the above, one challenge faced by universal book-gifting programmes concerns the selection of appropriate books and providing support and guidance that works for all. This is a complex task. As Merchant (2012) argued in an expert review of the *Bookstart* resources, it is almost impossible to address all possible quality criteria within the small selection of books and guidance typically gifted through these programmes. The extent to which criteria for book selection by bookgifting organisations are transparent varies. There is surprisingly little focus on the reasons for book choices on organisations' websites, although evaluation and research sources do provide some information. Criteria vary from global descriptors – such as 'colorful and culturally and age appropriate' (*Reach Out and Read*) - to detailed lists of criteria for content, format, and textual features for specific age groups, such as those used by *Imagination Library*.

The quality and choice of books, however, has been seen as highly relevant to the success of bookgifting schemes. The provision of board books and dual language books, for example, is an important and well-regarded feature of various schemes and the lack of books in languages other than English can be problematic in a number of ways. Practically, it means that families who do not speak English cannot engage in the programme. It also has unfortunate implications for perceptions of the relative value and status of different languages. As Merchant et al (2012) argue, the costs of providing dual language books in all languages and books for different interests would be prohibitive and logistically very difficult. Some schemes have, however, sought to introduce greater diversity into their gifting collections in terms of linguistic and cultural relevance, and to avoid siblings receiving duplicate books (Barratt-Pugh, 2013). *Bookstart*, for example, issues guidance in 27 languages and alternative dual language books in 29 languages and is piloting use of a book written in English that is accompanied by a CD with readings of the story in 26 languages.

Finally, it would seem important to promote the reading of books alongside the reading of other kinds of texts and to consider the inclusion of book reading via digital platforms, on tablets or other mobile devices. The National Literacy Trust's latest survey suggested that in 2012 only a small proportion of children and young people were accessing books in this way (Clark, 2013), but that this proportion had grown considerably since 2011. Use is likely to grow further given the recent rapid rise in sales of tablet computers.

f) Sustained bookgifting
There is some evidence to suggest that schemes are most successful when bookgifting is not just a one-off event. Repeated bookgifting (as in *Reach Out and Read* and *Imagination Library*) or bookgifting at key moments in children's lives (as in Booktrust's current diet of programmes) may be more effective. Theriot et al (2003), in a small-scale study, identified what they called a 'dose effect,' for *Reach Out and Read*, finding that the effect on receptive and expressive language scores for highest for those receiving more books and who had received more guidance. Ridzi et al (2011) found that effects on booksharing in the home were greatest for those families who had participated for longest in *Imagination Library*, which gifts books monthly for the first five years of a child's life. The impact of sustaining guidance over time is also evident in positive outcomes from the evaluation of the *Booktrust Corner* programme, through which families receive 4 home visits linked to the gfting of books and other resources (Demack and Stevens, 2013b). The perceived value of sustained bookgifting may also be evident in reactions when a scheme is withdrawn. A study of stakeholders' views on the impact and organisation of *Bookstart*, for example, generated a large number of non-elicited comments on the withdrawal of the *Bookstart+* scheme for two year olds in England. Comments suggested stakeholders felt that *Bookstart+* had provided a timely opportunity to reinforce and develop important understandings about language and literacy development (Coldwell et al. 2012).

5. Conclusions

This review has drawn on international evidence to examine how far bookgifting programmes lead to changed behaviours around parents reading to their children and how far, in the longer term, such programmes are likely to lead to improvements in literacy attainment.

Bookgifting programmes, through the simple act of giving books to parents and their babies and young children, aim to impact on three areas: the promotion of reading for pleasure; the incidence and quality of booksharing; and the extent of book ownership. As Section 3 of this review illustrates, there is compelling evidence of the important contribution made by these three areas to children's long-term literacy attainment. In this section, therefore, we consider what the evidence presented in Section 4 suggests about how far bookgifting programmes are likely to lead to the changed behaviours associated with these three areas. We conclude by making recommendations for future research and summarising a series of considerations that we suggest, based on the evidence presented, remain important in the planning and implementation of effective bookgifting programmes.

This literature review does not attempt the rigour of a systematic review or meta-analysis and as such is unable to arrive at definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of bookgifting schemes. It is possible that such a piece of work would be useful to the field, but currently there are insufficient studies of bookgifting of an appropriate scale and robustness to generate useful findings. Moreover, given the caveats explored above in relation to 'gold standard' RCTs, such a meta-analysis may neglect other rich and varied evidence of the value of bookgifting. In this review, the scope of programmes, the quality of methodologies and the nature of findings varies. By bringing together the evidence generated from a wide range of studies, however, we are able to arrive at a series of tentative conclusions.

First we would suggest that whilst evidence on the impact of bookgifting is mixed, there is promising evidence that bookgifting is linked to later improvements in reading. We see the strongest evidence of this in evaluations focused on populations who have had little experience of booksharing in the past. Mounting evidence from evaluations suggests that bookgifting programmes can impact on: parental attitudes to sharing books with young children; children's enthusiasm for looking at books; the frequency and extent of booksharing; and book ownership and library membership. Some evidence would also seem to suggest that bookgifting schemes are likely to be most effective when based on repeated gifts rather than one-off events.

As booksharing with babies and young children has become more widespread in certain countries, however, and book ownership has increased, the impact of bookgifting schemes is much harder to evidence and this perhaps accounts for the less positive results of recent RCTs. This does not necessarily mean that universal bookgifting programmes are no longer needed. It may be, for example, that bookgifting reinforces rather than changes behaviours, and that programmes make a valuable contribution by reassuring parents that booksharing is worthwhile.

The focus on having fun with books may provide an important counter-balance to pervasive messages conveyed through advertising about the value of 'educational' toys and other resources that promote a more overtly instructional approach to supporting early literacy in the home (Merchant, 2014). Carpientieri (2012:130), for example argue that *Bookstart*, as a long-established and respected programme,

> *…has established an institutional place in the national psyche. Such cultural resonance helps encourage views of shared reading as normal, natural and suitable for all types of families, not just those with a predilection for formal education.*

If, as studies have suggested (Hardman and Jones, 1999; Lareau, 2001), parents of all socio-economic groups want to support children's literacy and involve children in a range of literacy related activities, then effective guidance that encourages pleasurable practices such as booksharing are highly important. In England, such work may have a particularly important role to play given recent trends in library closures that reduce families' access to books.

It is also worth noting that the significance of bookgifting schemes is not just associated with the initial gift and how this may impact on reading within the family. The impact may be far-reaching in terms of economic and social wellbeing. Indeed a SROI analysis (Just Economics, 2010:1) concluded that 'the value to the state represents a value of £4.19 for every pound of public money invested in the programme.' In describing the impact of the Reading is Fundamental bookgifting programme in the UK, Ghelani (1999:122) noted that the programme appeared to have a 'ripple effect,' which moved through the positive response generated through initial and subsequent distributions, to a longer term change in attitudes by parents and service-providers, which strengthened as the programme became increasingly established over time. The evidence presented here suggests that bookgifting is not just likely to have a positive effect on child/parent reading behaviours, but can be associated with increased partnership, better community resources, and increased awareness and improved confidence amongst early years workers in supporting early language and literacy development.

That said, the impact of bookgifting may be more effectively seen in relation to other early years provision, as suggested by two of our interviewees. Carpientieri et al (2012: 90) highlight that bookgifting programmes are typically evaluated, 'without reference to their place and role in a broader landscape or ecosystem of family literacy provision.' The reasons for this are understandable: bookgifting organisations need to evaluate the particular contribution of their programmes to justify continued funding and inform ongoing review. However, it may be that in better understanding the contribution of bookgifting, it is useful to look ecologically and investigate how bookgifting intersects with the broad range of provision for early years development and care.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that the studies considered in this review vary considerably in methodological robustness and that further research is needed before we can make generalisations about the effectiveness of bookgifting and make definitive judgments about the distinctive features that make programmes successful. Given pressures on funding, it is likely that organisations delivering bookgifting programmes will be under continued pressure to demonstrate the impact

they are having on children's early literacy. As there is such a large body of evidence suggesting that booksharing has positive benefits, research might well focus on how best to build confidence in the intrinsic benefits of book ownership and booksharing, rather than attempting to trace specific effects in terms of literacy attainment. As Pahl et al explore (2010b), for example, families will take up books in different ways and may want different kinds of guidance and it would be particularly valuable to know more about the relationship between bookgifting and the range of home literacy practices in which children engage. In this regard, there is a need to know more about different groups' experiences and perspectives in relation to bookgifting programmes, particularly families from different socio-economic and ethnic groups. Large-scale methodologically robust quantitative studies of changes in behaviour could usefully be implemented alongside qualitative studies into families' experiences of bookgifting and how they integrate booksharing with other language and literacy practices. Such research could provide important insights not just into whether bookgifting works and for which groups, but how it is, or is not, effective in different circumstances and over different timescales.

5.1 Recommendations

On the basis of this review, in developing bookgifting schemes, we suggest that Booktrust should:

- Ensure guidance is accessible and encourages family members to read together for enjoyment, and to make connections between books and other texts and experiences.

- Ensure guidance values a diversity of booksharing and other joint language/literacy practices and recognises the possible role of different family members.

- Provide books which are culturally appropriate, ensure appropriate dual language books are available where possible, and ensure books are regularly 'refreshed' to avoid children in one family receiving duplicates.

- Provide effective training for all those involved in supporting bookgifting programmes, e.g. health workers, pediatricians, early years workers, librarians.

- Nurture effective partnership between all those involved in bookgifting, including consultation with parents.

- Provide opportunities for effective networking between partners and between organisations.

- Continue to support sustained bookgifting schemes.

- In view of changing habits around accessing books and emerging booksharing practices around tablet computers, investigate ways in which bookgifting might be mediated and supported through the use of different formats.

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Appendix 1 Search terms

The table below lists search terms and combinations of search terms used in the data-base search. It is important to note that not all searches were conducted in all databases. If an initial search (eg. 'book gifting') produced a manageable set of results, then these were filtered manually. Searches were conducted using one or more secondary search terms where initial results were very large.

Sources were identified that included search terms in any part of the text. In order to maximise search results, truncation was used where appropriate. For example 'distribut*' was used to generate articles indexed under 'distribute' as well as 'distribution'.

Primary search terms	Secondary search terms
Book	Free
Bookgifting	Child
Book gifting	Children
Bookgiving	Babies
Book giving	Early Years
Distribution	Impact
	Evaluation
	Project
	Scheme
	Intervention
	Program*

Searches were conducted for each of the following programmes, listed by Booktrust as affiliates:

Babies Love Books	Bookstart Falkland	"English Kindergarten" Budapest
Beginning with Books	Bookstart Japan	Fundação Nacional do Livro Infantil e Juvenil
Better Beginnings	Bookstart Korea	
Better Beginnings Plus	Bookstart Thailand	Fundacion Papiamente
Beokbaby	Born To Read	Hsin Yi Foundation
Beginning with Books	British Embassy Chile	Il-Ktieb Tezor
Boekstart	Buchstart	Leer En Familia
Bogstart	Buchstart Schweiz	Lesestart
Books for Babies	Butterfly Wings Child	Moreland Bookstart
Bookstart	Crecer a Ler	Nati per Leggere
Bookstart Canberra	Creston Public Library	

NCI Early Learning Centre

123 Read With Me

Preparing for Life

Raise a Reader

Reach Out and Read

Reading for development (Nigeria)

Read to ME

Read to me - I love it

Tasmanian Early Years; Born To Read

The Art of Reading

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Education and Inclusion Research

Bookgifting Literature Review for Booktrust

Interview Schedule

The programme
- What is your role?
- Please describe [the programme]. (E.g. When was it introduced? What age are the babies/children involved? Is it aimed at particular groups? If so, which groups and why? What happens? When and how are books distributed? Who is involved – e.g. librarians, health workers? How are books chosen? What guidance is given for parents? How is it given? How is it funded?)
- What did [the programme] aim to achieve?
- Why did you introduce [the programme]? What informed the decision?)
- How has it changed since it started? Why?
- Do you run any other programmes for babies/infants/children under 5? If so, how do they fit with [this programme]?
- Do you run any programmes for older children? (If so, how do they fit with [this programme]?)

Implementation
- What has gone well? Why?
- What have been the main challenges in implementing [the programme]?
- Do you think it has been implemented consistently? Why/why not?

Evaluation methodology
- Which evaluations or research studies have been conducted? (How many? When?)
- Who conducted each evaluation or research study? (name of evaluator-independent/non-independent)
- What did you want to find out through your evaluation/s? (e.g. improvements for children in language or literacy, changes in behaviour, suggestions for improving the programme, view of participants, how programme is used.) Did you aim to find out anything else through your evaluation? (e.g. how programme has been used by different families? Parents' views on perceptions of any guidance provided?)
- Did you measure impact or change for families who had participated in the programme - if so, what kind of impact or change? (e.g. parents' attitudes to reading with child, parent behaviours, child behaviours, book ownership, library registrations and/or loans, improved skills in language or literacy, views of parents, librarians, health workers, etc)
- How did you measure the impact or change? (Did you use methods before and after, or a trial? Which methods did you use, e.g. questionnaire, interview with parents/librarians/doctor/health worker, focus group, observation, language/literacy test/screening. If tests, which were used?)

- Were changes measured over time (e.g. repeated questionnaire/screening of language and/or literacy)? If so, how often? Over what time period?
- What was size of sample? How was the sample selected?
- Was a control group used? If so, what size control group? And how selected?
- What were the advantages of the methodology? Any drawbacks?

Outcomes of evaluation
- What did you find out from your evaluation? (What are the most positive findings for you? Any negative findings? Anything surprising? What impact has [name of programme] had? How far has it achieved its aims?
- Did the evaluation tell you what you wanted to know? If not, why not? And what else would you like to know? Are there any findings which are inconclusive?
- What do you think has contributed to the impact? (Or what do you think has limited the impact?)
- Were there any differences in impact for different groups? If so, which groups have benefited most/least?
- What feedback has been provided by programme providers? (e.g. organisers, health workers, librarians, volunteers)
- How have the findings/outcomes been used (e.g. to improve/develop the programme)? Have you made any changes- if so, which changes? What has been the impact of any changes? Have these been evaluated?
- Are there any other reports available in English based on this work?

Future plans
- What are your future plans for [the programme]?
- Do you have any future plans for evaluation?
- Do you have any future plans for dissemination of the outcomes of evaluation? (If so, what? E.g. conference, journal article, report? And in which language)

Appendix 3: Table of Sources

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
Beginning with Books	Pittsburgh, USA	Parcels of books given to infants/toddlers 1-3 years via well baby clinics, Given 3 books, and voucher for 4th, & advice on reading with child	Compared children of 27 families who received books with 14 families in control 3 or 4 yrs after gift, conducted variety of language and literacy measures Asked teacher to rate language/literacy Pre/post questionnaire to parents	Greater proportion of programme participants read daily & with more expression Visited library more often and had more reading material in homes Greater frequency of child choosing to read Perceived by teachers as having higher reading ability than comparison children, although performance on literacy tasks was similar	Bean et al (1990) (CP)
Better Beginnings	Western Australia	Reading pack/literacy toolkit Given by health visitor at 6-8 wk health check Resources in libraries; Website for parents	179 (59%) from 300 study participants completed pre & 1st annual postal survey response	51% parents said they did not read with child before programme; afterwards 85% said they did Range of book sharing practices engaged in reflected those promoted in brochure Suitable books in home rose from av.18 to av.49. 70% said they had increased frequency of reading with child 75% of mothers reported fathers read with child after receiving pack (increased from 43%) 60% reported increase in child asking to read 62% reported increase in confidence in booksharing 79% said the programme had influenced attitudes to importance of reading (96% felt it was important)	Barratt-Pugh & Allen (2011) (PRA)
			4 annual questionnaires: 84 mothers (28% original sample) 19 case studies Interviews: health visitors, librarians	81% of parents said BB had supported increased confidence in reading to child Suitable books in home rose from av.18 to av.125. Library membership increased; by end of project 84% mothers h/ad become members Range of book sharing practices engaged in	Barratt-Pugh, & Rohl (2011) (CR)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
				reflected those prompted in brochure	
			Interviews with librarians	Over 4 years, librarians developed a sense of ownership and commitment; had developed and increased library activities and created 'family spaces'	Barratt-Pugh et al (2013) (PRA)
Boekbabies	Flanders, Belgium	Selection of books gifted at 3 points with voucher, guidance, list of books	Questionnaire to 270 parents Of these 82 selected for 3 interviews (between baby age11-18 mths)	Parents stressed affective dimension Variety of booksharing practices and locations- more routine over time Parents would have welcomed more support, liked booklists, although ignored 'how to' tips For some, with bad experiences of literacy learning, the programme 'opened a door'	Vanobbergen et al (2009) (PRA)
Birmingham Bookstart	Birmingham, England	Baby pack (book, library card, poetry card, guidance in 3 languages) gifted to babies by health visitor	2 questionnaires- one at 1st health check, one 6 months later In-depth interviews with 2 families 63 returns from 151 families	More parents reported sharing books (38/63) Some were already using books with babies; only few did not see significance More families reported using library because of Bookstart (23/63) Cooperation between library staff & health workers led to other shared initiatives	Wade and Moore (1993) (IR)
			Compared 28 families who received BS pack with comparison group when child aged 3. (Gps comparable on most variables, although more boys than girls in comparison group) Conducted interviews, home-based observations, talk with child.	BS group experienced more booksharing; & interacted more during booksharing	Wade and Moore (1996a) (PRA)
				Children showed more interest in looking at books; parents more likely to say they bought books for child as present, more likely to visit library, more frequent booksharing with child & interacted more during booksharing	Wade and Moore (1996b) (PRA)
			Matched 41 pupils who received BS pack at 9 mths with a comparison group. Compared progress as measured	On each baseline assessment the BS group achieved at a higher average than the non-BS group. In particular the cumulative score for English was highly significant for maths significant.	Wade and Moore (1998a) (PRA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
			through baseline Assessment at age 5		
			Matched 43 pupils who received BS pack at 9 mths with a comparison group. Compared results at KS1 SATs	Higher average scores on teacher assessments for English, maths and to a lesser extent science (statistically significant differences for 7/10 teacher assessments & highly significant for reading) Comparatively higher average scores on all 8 test items in English and Maths were highly significant	Wade and Moore (2000) (PRA)
Bookstart	England	Baby Pack gifted to babies by health visitor Treasure pack gifted to 3-4 year old children via early years setting	2 pre/post questionnaires 1806 returns Focus on: 75 families (intervention); 30 families (control) 2 observations – within 3 months of receiving pack; and 3mths later (in agreed location- e.g mother and baby group)	More were aware of value of reading books to babies after scheme More reading and more often across all groups (e.g. amount rose from78% reading prior to BS to 91% after scheme; 47% said reading more & those reading daily rose 47% to 60%) Increased library membership & those visiting libraries rose from 64% to 85% Higher value placed on books with babies (number seeing value of sharing books with babies rose from 9% to 100% after receipt of pack) Better skills/confidence in book-sharing (31% more confident by 2nd interview; more than control showed book 3 mths after receiving pack, and more still did after 6 mths) Fathers and siblings also reading with babies	NCRCL (2001) (CR)
			2 interviews: 694 at point of receiving pack of which 440 completed 2nd 3 mths later Random sample	Fairly static patterns across the sample on most measures Significant improvement in library membership (76% to 83%) More sig Significant improvement for 'Less active' reading families (started with few books and read less frequently): 37 % reading once or twice a day (before the most was 'a few times per week')	Booktrust (2009) (IR)
			503 carers of babies aged under 12 mths	Greater number of families who reported receiving pack said they share books with babies (49%)	Fatherhood Institute/ICM

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
				compared to those that did not report receiving pack (34%) 28% said they had visited a library because of *Bookstart* whilst 20% had joined a library	Survey (2010)(CR)
			Ethonograhpic approach: FLIP cameras given to 8 families to record booksharing practices; 4 interviews with each family	Variety of booksharing practices recorded on continuum from 'connected' to individualised'	Pahl et al (2010) (CR)
			2,494 survey responses Interviews with: 10 early years practitioners; 10 health visitors;9 strategic stakeholders	Very positive response from respondents Valued opportunity for wider discussions Variation in implementation (timing of gifting; training for practitioners; guidance given) Dual language books well-received but still don't reach all languages spoken in community	Coldwell et al (2012) (CR)
Bookstart+	Northern Ireland	Bag of books and reading materials given to 2 year old by health visitor	RCT (462 families): 235/227 Control- high level of attrition (43%) although - control and intervention group remained well-matched. Pre-test/post-tests 3 mths apart May	Slight improvement in parental attitudes to their child reading, After receiving pack, parents slightly less likely to visit library.	O'Hare and Connolly (2010) (CR)
Bookstart Treasure Pack	England	Treasure pack gifted to 3-4 year old children via early years workers	Randomised control trial 138 matched questionnaires	93% parents agreed pack prompted enjoyable way of spending time with child 70% agreed that the Pack had increased their child's interest in and enjoyment of books. 96% practitioners felt pack had positive impact on relationships with parents Statistically significant difference identified related to frequency of fathers reading with their child (although may have been less of ceiling effect with intervention group). No statistically significant difference in change	Demack & Stevens (2013a) (CR)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
				over time between parents in intervention and control settings in: perceptions of parents on reading with their child; perceptions of parents on their child's engagement with books, stories and rhymes; use and membership of a public library; child book ownership. Ceiling effects likely to be important.	
Bookstart Corner	UK	4 visits to home by EY practitioner during which explore using books, puppets, toys and pack of resources given	Randomised pre/post intervention surveys with parents; and practitioners 151 initial surveys 65 matching post test surveys	Increase in using toys and puppets to support storysharing from 33% to 65% Increase in time spent reading books from 78% to 94% Increase in child's interest in talking about stories/rhymes from 72% to 84% Increase in parents' confidence in choosing suitable books from 45% to 70%	Demack and Stevens (2013b) (CR)
BookStart Holland	The Netherlands	Pack given at libraries up to 3 mths: Voucher for baby book, CD-Rom with children's songs, flyer on booksharing, free library subscription	Questionnaire for parent when child c.8 mths and then 7 & 14 mths later Results from 640 parents considered who completed 1st questionnaire plus 2nd and/or 3rd. Focused on: shared reading frequency, attitudes, library use, language devt	No main effects on attitudes, booksharing or language skills for all parents, but where BS parents did change views on booksharing & visited library there was impact on frequency of book sharing and language skills. This was also often associated with more booksharing in subsequent years. More BS (55%) visited the library compared to 8% in control group	Van den Berg and Bus, 2013a (CR)
			Questionnaire for parent when child c. 8mths and 7mths later 359 (intervention gp) 225 (control) Focus: see above	Differences in language development between 2 groups at 15 months were small but moderately strong for children identified as temperamentally highly reactive group Parents of children in this group initiate more verbal interactions despite child's negative responses.	Van den Berg and Bus, 2013b (CR)
Bookstart Japan	Japan	Pack given at 4mths plus modelling of booksharing	261 parent child dyads	Significant correlation between home book reading environment and reports of having	Tsuji (2013) (PRA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
				experienced BS Linked different behaviours to gender and temperament	
Booktime	Northern Ireland	Bookbag given to 5 year olds in first year at school	Review of resources Telephone interviews RCT: 15 intervention & 15 non-intervention schools 475 Pre-test/ 275 post-test questionnaires returned	90% parents valued pack No evidence of any effect on parents/children in terms of frequency of booksharing, parents/children's attitudes, library use V. little follow up by schools	Connolly et al (2012) (CR)
	England		Interviews with parents/carers & informal talk with child in 25 homes	Children positive about bag as well as books Book shared in variety of different ways, but focusing on enjoying shared experience Parents felt there had been a positive effect on child's enthusiasm for reading and possibly expertise in reading	Wray and Medwell (2013) (PRA)
Boots Books for Babies	Nottingham, UK	Pack gifted at 9 mths at hearing checks by health visitor: board books, nursery rhymes guidance on literacy development & library use Dual language books and rhyme cards were available.	Data on library registrations & loans in local area	Total number of babies under 2 years old registering as library members rose by 54%, compared to 6% in a comparison group of 7 libraries.	Bailey et al (2002) (PRA)
			129 BBfB participants consulted through 14 focus groups, 45 interviews; 10 written responses. Participants included: parents, carers support workers; Traveller groups, asylum seekers	Identified range of possible impacts of BBfB: - Enthusiasm for books and recognition of value of books for babies and children, as well as other early learning opportunities - Increased uptake in hearing tests - Support for parents' literacy difficulties - Increased library use - Positive benefits for children's personal development and emotional wellbeing	Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (2004) (CR)
Derbyshire Books for Babies	Derbyshire, UK	Books for babies gifted at health checks; and later scheme for toddlers at age 2	Interviews with 22 parents	Gift of book identified as memorable event in itself Parents engaged in more booksharing with baby at younger age, bought more books Increased library membership, although concerns from some parents about entering libraries Other family members drawn into library	Millard (2002) (CR)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
				Professional expertise developed	
			Repeated questionnaire with 196 families at 8mths and 18mths checkup	Change in parents attitudes to sharing books with babies with c.25% more seeing this as appropriate for children in first year Increase of 38% said they had bought books for baby by 18 month check	Millard et al (2000) (PRA)
Imagination Library	Tennessee, South Dakota, Georgia, USA	Books sent in post to child from 0-5	Single questionnaire survey of 821 parents of participating families from 3 sites- random sample/ no comparison	82-87.2% parents (in 3 areas studied) reported that participation in the program made children more interested in books 67.5-78.5% parents reported spending more time reading with children 54.3-68.1% parents reported greater 'comfort' in book sharing Changes appeared to be most marked for families with lower education levels and fewer children's books; education level was not related to quality of reading practices.	High Scope (2003) (CR)
	Hawaii, USA		Single questionnaire survey of 747 parents of participating families (42.3% response rate) Parents asked to report behaviours before & after receiving books	Large majority reported increased frequency of booksharing, e.g. -an increase of 29.6% parents reported reading once a day or more -of families who read once a week before, 52% increased their reading to at least once a day. -comments on scheme were overwhelmingly positive	Fong (2007) (LO)
	Wichita Country, USA		Single questionnaire survey of 187 parents of participating families (62.3 % response rate)	82.9% of parents reported increase in frequency of booksharing. 86.7% reported increase in child's interest/enthusiasm for books	Wichita County (2008) (LO)
	Knox County, USA		Compared attainment at 3rd grade for 1778 IL participants and 1574 non-participants	Statistically significant difference between the performance of participants and non-participants in reading/language arts (varied for different sub-groups)	Becket (2009) (LO)
	Ohio, USA		Single questionnaire survey of 89 parents of participating families	81.8 % reported increase in frequency of booksharing Changes appeared to be most marked in low	Gordon (2010) (LO)

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Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
			(25% response rate)	income households 89.4% parents reported their child asked to be read to more often 96.5% reported increase in child's interest in books	
	Alaska, USA	Books sent in post to child from 0-5	Pre questionnaire to participating families/post test after one year Survey 1 (509) Survey 2 (258)	Parents report reading more frequently, e.g. 10% more report reading daily 17.55% parents reported child was more enthusiastic about reading	Seitz & Capuozzu (2010) (CR)
	Syracuse, NY,USA		Paper/phone questionnaire of 170 families from the Imagination Library Program Compared results for those enrolled in scheme for different lengths of time scheme	Statistically significant difference in association between length of time in program and more frequent child-directed reading and discussion of the story.	Ridzi et al, (2011) (LO)
	Minnesota, USA		Questionnaire of 303 participating families in 2006	93% parents reported increase in frequency of booksharing 93% reported increase in child's interest in books 80% reported being more 'comfortable' reading with their child	UODC (2013) (CR)
	New York, USA		IL used alongside story circle activities Ethnographic study of Burmese refugee families (observation & interviews 12-15 families)	Did have an effect on booksharing with IL books, modelling behaviours explored at sessions	Singh et al (2013) (PRA)
	Tennessee, USA		Early mathematics & language skills of 263 children assessed through Kindergarten Readiness Indicator, an	Statistically significant differences were identified in terms of 'kindergarten readiness' in relation to English & Maths	Samei et al (2013) (UA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
			assessment of scores were correlated with parent self-report of family reading habits, and children's participation in IL		
Imagination Library	Rotherham, UK	Books sent in post to child from 0-5	Gave flip cameras to 9 families to record their booksharing practices	Noted diversity of ways in which families interacted around books and engaged with stories and other content. Highlights social and emotional dimension & involvement of different family members and peers	Pahl et al (2010) (CR)
Kirklees Babies into Books	England	Gifted books, guidance on reading; library card; invited to baby book group	20 caregivers interviewed twice to assess impact Videoed mother/baby group sessions: focus on mother/baby interactions	Noted social and emotional value of bookgifting: books as artefacts around which parents and children interacted Parents reported more book ownership & booksharing at 2nd interview	Hardman and Jones (1999) (PRA)
Let's Read	Melbourne, Australia	At 4–8, 12, & 18 months, nurses modelled shared reading activities to parents at health checks; provided guidance & and free books.	630 participant parents. RCT At 2 years retained 324 intervention & 228 control families Questionnaire focused on: language and communication; home literacy environment; measures of expressive vocabulary At 4 years, retained 563 parents Focused on home literacy environment; emergent literacy; core/receptive/expressive language	No difference between groups in terms of: vocabulary, communication, home literacy environment at 2 years, or language and literacy measures at 4years; home literacy environment seen as similar for both groups Programme aimed at children living in relatively 'disadvantaged' areas, but study participants represented most advantaged in those areas 95% parents said they would recommend scheme to others	Goldfield et al, (2011) (PRA) Goldfield et al (2012) (PRA)
Newcastle Babies	Newcastle, England	Bag of books & guidance gifted via health centres,	Analysis of library records	Booksharing seen in terms of relationships and routines as well as literacy	Hall (2001) (PRA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
Need Books		baby clinics, etc	Telephone interviews with 22 parents Pre/post questionnaires (44 families returned both)	Stories shared with other family members Less positive re-library use: only 26% of babies were library users, and over half had never used library (article identifies problems with data collection)	
Reach Out and Read	USA	Books and guidance given by pediatricians at regular health checks (well child visits)for children from infancy to 6 mths to 5 yrs (although age range of intervention varies across studies) Books and volunteers engage in reading activities in waiting room	22 children (15 in comparison group) Semi-structured interviews	More likely to have books in home (both groups had range of literacy materials) Books used by siblings and interactions with other relatives	Billings (2009a) (PRA)
			As above	Both participants/non-participants reported large amount of oral storytelling by different family members; talking, singling, reciting poems & 99% did read with child Spanish/English books only available for Latino families in some clinics- varied according to child age and book supply All families open to new practices and recognised own role in supporting their child's literacy development.	Billings (2009b) (PRA)
			40 Latino mothers and their children Interviews with mothers Emergent literacy skills assessed before and at end of kindergarten using tests and teacher report	Those who had greater exposure had significantly greater print and phonemic awareness before kindergarten entry Literacy skills of 77% of participants assessed as 'average'/'far above average' compared to all students of the same grade	Diener et al (2012) (PRA)
			RCT 135 parents interviewed (65 intervention/ 70 control) 130 parents re-interviewed 10 mths later	Intervention parents more likely to report reading at least 3 times a week (10 times greater in intervention families). There were also significant differences in book ownership, but not in reporting of reading as one of child's favourite activities, library membership or oral language skills	Golova et al (1999) (PRA)
			352 children & parents: all received guidance; intervention group (181) received book	Those given book more likely to be receptive to reading with child likely to rate physician as helpful 2 years later, mothers in programme more likely to report enjoyment of reading with child	Jones et al (2000) (PRA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
			(171 control) Parents completed questionnaire after each visit rating physicians' helpfulness Follow-up questionnaire during home visit to parents after 2 years including items on about reading attitudes/behaviours	Mothers perceived their physicians as more helpful than those not in program	
			Compared 100 children who had received program for 3 years with 51 in control group Structured interview including questions on home reading attitudes and behaviours	Significantly difference in frequency of booksharing and listing of booksharing as one of child's 3 favourite activities.	High et al (1998) (PRA)
			Compared 106 children who had received program with 99 in control group after av.3.4 visits Structured interview to parents before/after Measured child's expressive/receptive language	40% increase in Child Centred Literacy Orientation, compared to 16% in control group (i.e, read aloud at bedtime & booksharing a favourite activity) Receptive & expressive vocabulary scores higher in older intervention toddlers (18-25 mths old; n = 88), not in younger intervention toddlers (13-17 mths old; n = 62) Linked increases to increases in booksharing	High et al (2000) (PRA)
			Compared 49 children who had received program for 3 years with 73 just starting Structured interview to parents Measured child's	Participants read one more day a week than comparison group; more likely to have read in 24 hrs; reading as preferred activity Increased scores on expressive & receptive language Level of impact increased when accounted for differences between the groups	Mendelsohn et al (2001) (PRA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
			expressive/receptive language		
			Compared 730 intervention families with 917 comparison	Participants more likely to read 3 times or more a week; book ownership; reading aloud as favourite activity	Needlman et al (2005) (PRA)
			Compared 122 Hispanic parents (66 had received intervention; 56 had not)	High levels of frequent book sharing (more than 3 days a week) reported by parents who had participated in programme.	Sanders, et al (2000) (PRA)
			Compared 100 children who had received program for 3 years with100 just starting Structured interview to parents Measured child's expressive/receptive language	Participants had increased scores on receptive language Significantly higher scores in composite measure of Home Literacy Orientation (frequency of reading, books in home, carer reads to self, child lists reading as one of 3 favourite activities, library cards, library visit)	Sharif et al, (2002) (PRA)
			Compared baseline (95) and post-intervention (85) groups Structured interview before/after intervention	Differentiated between English/non English speaking families Post intervention, statistically significant increases were recorded for: - reporting reading as a favourite activity for child - reading to child at least once a week There were also significant increases for Non-English speaking families who had more than 10 books	Silverstein et al (2002) (PRA)
			64 children Parental surveys	Positive correlation between numbers of books at home (ROR and other books) and expressive and receptive language scores Outcome scores higher for those who had made greatest number of clinic visits- - 'dose effect'	Theriot et al (2003) (PRA)
			100 families Waiting room interview Observation during home visit	Small but significant increase in Child Home Literacy Index (measuring family reading behaviours, booksharing) for those families that had received most input from ROR (i.e. more guidance; more books)	Weitzman et al (2004) (PRA)

Name of programme	Country	Outline of programme	Methodology	Headline Findings	Source
Reach out and read Taiwan	Taiwan		Compared questionnaires from parents at 9mths & follow up at 12-18mths for intervention group (205) and control (210)	Significantly greater increase in frequency of shared reading; child's interest in reading; child listing reading as one of 3 favourite activities	Wu et al (2012) (PRA)
Read to Me, Nova Scotia	Nova Scotia, Canada	Package given containing books, music CD, guidance leaflet, educational DVD, library guide and coupons for local bookstores. Given in maternity ward, soon after birth	Outcomes from questionnaire of 1051 recipient mothers compared with 352 mothers in control group	Recipient mothers reported spending significantly more time reading to their babies (5 minutes)	Veldhuijzen Van Zanten et al (2012) (PRA)
Sheffield Bookstart	Sheffield, UK	Bookbag given alongside range of book-related activities/workshops/events	Matched 23 pupils who received bookbag with a comparison group of 23. Compared progress as measured by teacher questionnaire based on language and literacy section of Foundation Stage Profile on entering reception classes	BS group assessed as having developed 287 skills, compared with 236 for non-BS children. Are of most difference between 2 groups was speaking and listening. Area of least difference was writing.	Hines and Brooks (2005) (CR)

CP = Conference Paper
CR = Commissioned Report from external organisation
IR = Internal Report
LO = Report produced by local/district organisation/authority
PRA= Peer reviewed journal article
UA = Unpublished Article, e.g. article currently under review