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Executive summary

Introduction

Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) is a programme hosted by Nottingham CityCare Partnership and supported by the National Lottery Community Fund's A Better Start Initiative. The programme operates across four wards in Nottingham: Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's. It aims to improve outcomes for 0-3-year-old children in the areas of: diet and nutrition, social and emotional skills, and language and communication skills. It also aims to bring about system change by 'tipping the system on its head' and empowering parents, communities and workforces to coproduce services and achieve together. Small Steps Big Changes commissions a range of services and activities (for further details please see: www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk) to achieve these aims and those that are going be evaluated within the first year of the evaluation are detailed below.

The Nottingham Centre for Children, Young People and Families (NCCYPF) commenced its evaluation and learning partnership with SSBC in May 2018. This report details the first year of the evaluation, focused on the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) and the Small Steps at Home programme, and commencing the economic costs benefit exercise.

Aims and objectives of the SSBC evaluation

Aim: To undertake a process, impact and economic evaluation of SSBC. This will be achieved through meeting the following objectives:

- Examining the functions of SSBC including service description, aims, services provided and target population;
- Identifying strengths and areas of development, i.e. what works and what does not work, for whom and why;
- Measuring changes and improvements in children in the following indicators and how these are attributed to approaches adopted by SSBC:
  - social and emotional skills
  - language and communication skills
  - diet and nutrition

- o other positive outcomes
- Exploring how SSBC has empowered parents, communities and workforces to co-produce together; and
- Providing recommendations on how SSBC can be enhanced for the benefit of children, families, professionals and other stakeholders.

Methodology

A process, impact and economic evaluation is being undertaken. The process evaluation involves exploring the mechanisms through which the service is delivered. The impact evaluation examines the outcomes for the children engaging in SSBC. Through the economic evaluation the team will investigate the costs benefits of SSBC.

The peer research methodology has been utilised. Four parents who live and/or work in Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, or St Ann's have been appointed as Parent Peer Researchers. During the first year of the evaluation the Parent Peer Researchers worked with the evaluation team to evaluate the Small Steps at Home programme through developing the interview guide, undertaking interviews, analysing interview data and contributing to the report.

In addition, work is being undertaken with a group of twelve 8-11-year olds at a primary school in St Ann's. All the children have younger siblings who receive the DPIL books. Together they have devised a recording booklet for the children to record book sharing events with their younger siblings in the family context, including what books are being shared, the younger children's reception of the book, and when and where book sharing takes place. At time of writing, data is still being collected by the children.

Data collection

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Literature review

A literature review was undertaken to identify studies examining the DPIL book gifting scheme. The aim of the literature review was to examine whether the DPIL scheme has had an impact on children's language and communication, and parents and children's reading routines.

Interviews with staff

Only a small number of staff at SSBC are involved in the DPIL due to the nature of intervention (i.e. books are mailed to children registered with the scheme). These members of staff were invited to take part in an interview that aimed to examine the challenges and strengths of the scheme. Two members of staff took part in an interview.

Reading Routines Questionnaires

Two Reading Routines Questionnaires were developed by the evaluation team based on surveys designed by Funge et al., 2017; Harvey at al., 2016; Ridz et al., 2014; and Fong, 2007. The aim was to compare the reading routines of parents whose children are registered with the DPIL with those whose children are not registered with the scheme. It explored frequency of sharing books with children, frequency of songs and rhymes with children, number of non-DPIL books at home and frequency of visits to the library.

The questionnaires were made available online from January to May 2019. Links to the online questionnaires were posted on SSBC'S Facebook page and tweeted from the Nottingham Centre for Children, Young People and Families account and SSBC twitter account. To increase the sample size some questionnaires were also completed face-to-face with parents attending SSBC: Story Time and Messy Makers; and, by Family Mentors with families they visit as part of the Small Steps at Home programme. In total 269 questionnaires were completed, and this includes 81 completed by parents whose children are registered with the DPIL and 188 whose children are not. Please note the questionnaire

is still live, and efforts are being made to increase the sample size. As such the data will be re-analysed at a later date with a larger sample size.

Preschool Language Scale (edition 5) (PLS-5)

The Pearson's Pre-School Language Scale Fifth Edition (PLS-5) was used to assess the vocabulary of children who are registered with the Imagination Library. Parents were recruited through the Reading Routines Questionnaires. Forty parents were contacted, and this resulted in 15 children taking part in the PLS-5. The PLS-5 was undertaken in the parents' homes and administered by NTU researchers.

Dialogic Reading Observations

Dialogic Reading Observations were undertaken with 13 of the 15 children that took part in the PLS-5s and were receiving free books through the DPIL. The Dialogic Reading technique is a reading intervention that uses a set of standardized prompts to target children's oral vocabulary and listening comprehension skills (see Morgan and Meier, 2008). The Dialogic Reading Observation Form developed by Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina was used. It explores whether the parent, during book sharing, introduces the book, prompts their child to say something about the book, evaluates their child's response, and repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

Small Steps at Home

Interviews and focus groups with staff

Seven interviews were undertaken with seven individuals from the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team at The Toy Library, Home-Start Nottingham and Framework and two other individuals involved in Small Steps at Home (roles anonymised to ensure anonymity). Four focus groups and one group interview was undertaken with 31 Family Mentors, and two other members of staff (roles anonymised to ensure anonymity) involved in the Small Steps at Home programme. The aim of the interviews and focus groups was on the implementation and delivery of Small Steps at Home and in particular challenges and strengths, and outcomes for children.

Interviews with parents participating in Small Steps at Home

The Parent Peer Researchers undertook interviews with 15 sets of parents (17 parents in total) who have participated in the Small Steps at Home programme. Parents were recruited in the first instance by Family Mentors who asked if they were interested in being invited to take part in an interview as part of an evaluation by NCCYPF. Parents interested provided their contact details. Twenty-nine parents provided their contact details, and all were contacted and invited to participate in an interview about Small Steps at Home. The interviews explored parents' experiences of Family Mentors and Small Steps at Home.

Data analysis

Focus groups and interviews with staff and parents

Focus group and interview data was thematically analysed to identify patterns through a process of data familiarization, data coding, and theme development.

Reading Routines Questionnaire

The chi-square test for association/independence was used to test whether the status of participation in Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) book gifting scheme (as a dichotomous variable) and (a) child interest and parent confidence in reading and singing songs and rhymes, (b) reading routine (as nominal variables), and (c) the status of participation in other SSBC activities were associated. If a statistically significant association was found, the strength of association was reported indicated by Cramer's V Phi values). Since the relationship between more than three variables cannot be examined using the chi-square test for association, the logic specification of the statistical modelling was undertaken to investigate whether parents whose children were registered with the DPIL differed from parents whose children were not registered with the scheme concerning socio-economic characteristics of children and parents and reading routine.

Preschool Language Scale (edition 5) (PLS5)

The Expressive Communication (EC) scale in the Preschool Language Scale (5th edition) was used to assess the language development of children who were registered with the DPIL. The EC scale includes 67 numbered items. Each item has a pass criterion. If the child's

response meets the pass criterion, the assessor gives the child credit by circling the 1 next to the item description, otherwise circles the 0 (Zimmermen et al., 2011). Each child's raw score for EC was calculated by recording the number of the last item administered and subtracting the number of 0 scores from this item number. Following that, the raw scores were recorded on the Score Summary box in the PLS-5 Record Form to visually see the children's performance in terms of EC. Scores from 85 to 115 were considered to be within the normal range. Scores of 116 and above reflected above-average performance, and scores of 84 or lower reflected below-average performance (Zimmermen et al., 2011).

Dialogic Reading Observations

Thirteen parents and their children, registered with DPIL, took part in Dialogic Reading Observations and results were calculated. A more comprehensive analysis will be conducted with a larger sample size at a later date.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Nottingham Trent University College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. The evaluation has also been registered with Research and Innovation, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust with permission to proceed provided.

Informed participant consent

Verbal and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were assured that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not want to and could withdraw from the evaluation, without giving a reason, at any time up until publication of the findings.

Anonymity

All data was anonymised as soon as possible after collection. Participants were assigned a unique identification number and data was stored against this number rather than against the names of the participants.

Digital audio recordings, notes, transcripts of interviews and focus groups, and questionnaire data were saved securely in a Nottingham Trent University secure and restricted folder. Transcription of interviews and focus groups was carried out by an authorised university transcriber who is fully aware of requirements of confidentiality. The PLS5, dialogic reading observations, and all consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Findings

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

The DPIL is a book gifting scheme that mails free age appropriate books to registered children. They receive one book a month delivered to their home right up until their 5th birthday. The aim of this book gifting scheme, under SSBC, is to support children to develop communication and language skills, and a deep love for reading. Under SSBC, children in Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's are entitled to receive free books through this scheme.

Literature review

A review of the literature was undertaken with the aim of examining whether the DPIL book gifting scheme has an impact on children's language and communication, and reading routines. A wide range of databases were searched for studies and 74 documents identified. Journal articles and reports were included where they measured the impact of the DPIL book gifting scheme on reading routines, and/or children's language and communication; had clearly stated aims; and sufficient information on study design and the participant group and comparison group (where applicable). This included eight peer reviewed journal articles and eight reports. All studies were undertaken in the USA and published between 2003 and 2019. Of the 16 studies, four studies measured both children's language and communication, and reading routines (Anderson et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2017; Dick et al., 2016; Waldron, 2019). The remaining 12 studies either examined children's language and communication alone (n=5: Harvey, 2018; Westine, 2009; Ridz et al., 2017; Embree,

2009; Samiei at al., 2015) or reading routines only (n=7: Fung et al., 2017; Harvey, 2016; Ridz et al., 2014; Fong, 2007; Gordon, n.d; Smith, 2003; Upfront, 2013).

Findings: Reading routines

Frequency of reading varied. All four studies that compared reading pre and post registration with DPIL reported an increase in how often parents read to their child after receiving DPIL books with most parents reporting reading to their child daily or more (Harvey, 2016, Fung, 2007; Gordon, n.d; Fung et al., 2016). For those studies that explored reading frequency after children had registering with the DPIL, the frequency of reading varied with 85% of parents in Smith's (2003) study reporting reading to their child daily or more, but only 52% in Dick et al. (2016) study and just 48.2% in Ridz et al. (2014) study. Findings in relation to household income were conflicting with one study finding that parents in higher income households were more likely to read to their child more frequently than parents from lower income households (Anderson et al., 2018) and another (Gordon, n.d.) reporting the opposite. Anderson and colleagues (2018) also found that parents who had remained in education for longer were more likely to read to their child, than parents with lower levels of education. The age of parents was found to be related to time spent reading, with older parents (aged 35-44) reporting spending more time reading to their child than younger parents (Upfront, 2013). The same study also found that parents from larger families spent less time reading with their child and where both parents were working the child was read to less than where one adult was not working (Upfront, 2013). Length of time also appeared to impact on frequency of reading, with parents whose children have been registered with DPIL for longer, more likely to read to their child daily (Ridz et al., 2014).

The DPIL appeared to have an effect on children's excitement and interest in books with four studies finding that children were excited for the arrival of their DPIL books and/or more interested in reading since registering with the book scheme (Harvey, 2016; Gordon, n.d; Smith, 2003; Fong, 2007).

Findings from four studies (Anderson et al., 2018; Smith, 2003; Ridz et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2017) suggest that parents whose children are registered with the DPIL interact with their child during book sharing, such as asking their child question, pointing out pictures and

talking about the story. Furthermore, one study found that parents whose children were registered with DPIL interacted more with their child during book sharing than parents whose children were not receiving books from the DPIL (Thompson et al., 2017).

Findings: children's language and communication

The data is promising with the studies showing that the DPIL cohorts generally performed better on assessments than non- DPIL cohorts. The exception to this was in Thompson and colleagues' (2017) study which found that students registered with DPIL did not differ from a matched cohort of students not registered, in terms of Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K) scores. In addition, Anderson and colleagues (2018) found that under half of participants in their study scored at or above proficient in Text Reading and Comprehension and had lower Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) total scores than scores for typically-developing kindergartners. There was evidence from one study (Dick et al., 2016) to suggest that DPIL contributes to closing the gap of attainment between males and females and between students from lower and higher socioeconomic households.

Quality of the studies

The majority of studies (n=9) that explored reading routines were observational studies (Anderson et al., 2018; Fung et al., 2017; Harvey, 2016; Ridzi et al., 2014; Embree, 2009; Fong, 2007; Gordon n.d., Smith, 2003; Upfront, 2013) with just three adopting a quasi-experimental study design (Thompson et al., 2017; Dick et al., 2016; Waldron, 2019). Seven of the studies that explored literacy skills were quasi-experimental (Dick et al., 2016; Westine, 2009; Harvey, 2018; Ridz et al., 2016; Samiei et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2017; Waldeon, 2019) with the remaining two studies being observational (Anderson et al., 2018; Embree 2009). As such, none of the participants in any of the studies were randomly assigned to the DPIL programme (due to the nature of delivery of this books scheme) to ensure that samples represented the target population. In addition, all data was gathered post intervention meaning that there were no pre intervention/baseline scores to compare against. This ultimately limits the generalisability of the findings and makes conclusions of causal relationships between the DPIL and reading routines and performances difficult.

The DPIL was viewed positively due to its provision of free books, however a number of recommendations are suggested. This includes developing a system whereby SSBC are notified when a child registered with the DPIL changes address and amending the criteria for registration under SSBC so that that children that move into the area, aged up to five have access to the DPIL.

Reading Routines Questionnaire

The majority of children registered with the DPIL are excited to receive books from the scheme; ask their parents to be read to; and look at books by themselves every day or more than once a day. Both children registered with the scheme and those that are not enjoy reading and looking at books quite a lot or very much and it seems that there is no difference between the two groups. In terms of parent-activities, both parents whose children are registered with the scheme and those who are not read to their children every day or more than once a day and it seems that there is no difference between the two groups.

Children who are registered with the DPIL have longer reading sessions. Whilst 9% of parents whose children are registered with the DPIL read to their children over 30 minutes, only 3.2% of parents whose children are not registered with the scheme do so. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How long does a reading session last?'. However, there was no statistically significant association between the two.

Parents whose children are registered with DPIL were more likely to always talk about what is happening in the story than parents whose children are not registered with the scheme. Whilst 43.4% of parents whose children registered with the DPIL always talked about what is happening in the story, only 28.9% of parents whose children were not registered with the scheme did so. Indeed, there is statistically significant association between talking about what is happening in the story and participation in DPIL. In other words, participation in the DPIL makes it more likely that parents will talk about what is happening in the story (Chi-square (3df)=13.968, p=0.003). In addition, most parents always or usually asked their

children questions to see if they understood the story (43.4% of parents whose children were registered with DPIL and 48.1% of parents whose children were not). There is also statistically significant association between asking questions to see if children understand the story and participation in the DPIL (Chi-square (3df)=17.295, p=0.001). Meaning parents whose children are registered with the DPIL are more likely to ask their child questions to see if they understand the story.

Parents are confident reading to their children (96.2% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 95.8% of parents whose children were not) and singing songs and rhymes with them (92.2% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 94.1% of children who were not).

Parents whose children are registered with the DPIL visit local libraries with their child more often than parents whose children are not registered with the scheme. The majority of parents took their child to their local library once or twice a month (42.9% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 48.9% of parents whose children were not). However, parents whose children were registered with the DPIL visited their local libraries more often as 20.8% of them visited their local library once or twice a week whereas only 9% of parents whose children were not registered with the scheme did so. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and frequency of visiting a local library. There was a statistically significant association between the status of participation in the DPIL and frequency of visiting a local library, χ^2 (3)=10.516, p=.015.

Receiving books from the DPIL per se does not mean that children's active participation with books will substantially increase. Parents play a crucial role in increasing children's engagement with shared book reading (Ridzi, 2014). Previous research (Reese et al., 2010) suggests that there are socioemotional and literacy advantages of training parents in shared book reading and conversations (see also Elley, 2000).

Recommendations:

- Parents whose children are enrolled with the DPIL may need further support to ensure that their children are actively engaging in shared book reading. They might

be provided with further guidance on how to engage children in reading sessions in the form of group work (e.g. family reading events) or information leaflets.

Preschool Language Scale (edition 5) (PLS5)

The Pearson's Pre-School Language Scale Fifth Edition (PLS-5) was used to assess the vocabulary of 15 children who are registered with the DPIL. The results in relation to the EC Standard Score suggest that five children (33%) had EC scores that reflected below-average performance. Eight children (53%) had EC scores and Age Equivalents that were considered to be within the normal range. Two children (13%) had EC scores and Age Equivalents that reflected above-average performance. In sum, the performance of the majority of children in relation to EC was within or above the normal range (66%, n= 10).

Dialogic Reading Observations

Twelve parents and their children took part in a Dialogic Reading Observation and all were registered with DPIL. Whilst most parents introduce the title of the book to their child before reading it aloud, they did not in general introduce the author of the book. Overall parents did not ask their child many questions, that could be considered CROWD (Completion Questions, Recall Questions, Open-ended Questions, Wh- Questions, and Distancing) prompts, during the observation of their book sharing. However most did ask their child 'why questions', i.e. question about the story that begins with what, where, who, or why. In addition, almost half of parents created an incomplete sentence to prompt their child to fill in the blank. Closure of the book was quite abrupt in most cases with parents generally not asking their child a question at the end. These findings suggest that parents are trying to encourage their child to actively participate during book sharing. However, whilst based on very small numbers the findings do suggest that parents may require further guidance to support their child to engage further, in particular in recalling the story, relating the story to their own life and ending the story with further questions to maintain their child's interest. A more comprehensive analysis will be conducted with a larger sample size at a later date.

Small Steps at Home

Small Steps at Home is a home visiting programme delivered by Family Mentors and starts at 20 weeks pregnancy and runs until the child's 4th birthday. Each visit focusses on a range of topics, which are relevant to the child's age. The aim of the programme is to improve child development outcomes.

Interviews and focus groups with Family Mentors, members of Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team and other keys staff involved in Small Steps at Home

Findings detailed below are based on Family Mentors and Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team members experiences and perceptions of the Small Steps at Home programme and Family Mentor role.

Several strengths and challenges to the Small Steps at Home programme were identified. Family Mentors viewed their role very positively. They enjoyed their work and could see the difference it was making to families including not only improved outcomes for children (confidence and improvements in language and communication) but for parents also (confidence and increased knowledge/support).

The feedback about relationships between Family Mentors and parents was very positive and a consistent family mentor throughout receipt of the Small Steps at Home programme was identified as of key importance. The complex nature of being a friend to parents but also a worker was not lost on the Family Mentors. They recognised that this was difficult to balance.

The parenting experience of Family Mentors was deemed as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme. The Family Mentors being a community workforce was recognised as an important aspect of the programme. It was deemed particularly important that the Family Mentors were recruited from the community rather than professionals being brought in. Providing employment opportunities in local communities was also identified as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme along with opportunities for training and development of knowledge and skills.

Family Mentors were very positive about the Small Steps at Home Handbooks overall. Some suggested improvements were made including up-dating the handbook, having streamlined copies and creating an electronic version.

There was a perception that the adverts for the Family Mentor role did not fully convey the role of the Family Mentor or the level of responsibility and administration work. The interview and assessment days for the role of Family Mentor were viewed very positively but recognised as a big commitment for those in work or with child care responsibilities.

The role of the Family Mentor has evolved since its inception, and they have taken on additional responsibilities where families are in crisis. Such as providing food bank vouchers, supporting families around housing issues and referring families to other services for support when necessary. Some wished to be recognised as a skilled workforce and wanted a salary in line with the level of responsibility their job entails and the work they undertake.

Where families have disengaged from the Small Steps at Home programme it was often due to time constraints (returning to work or child entering nursery), because they did not need support anymore or had moved out of ward, or due to the Family Mentor being on sick leave or leaving the service and their refusal to accept another Family Mentor.

Interviews with parents participating in the Small Steps at Home Programme

Parents received the Small Steps at Home programme quickly and were happy with the frequency of visits from their Family Mentor. They were pleased that the programme was delivered at home where they felt relaxed and it also meant that they did not have to venture out when they were adapting to the arrival of a new addition to the family. All parents were extremely positive about their relationship with their Family Mentor and valued the support they provided. Consistency of Family Mentor was of key importance. They described the contact with Family Mentors as akin to having someone like them to give advice and be on hand in an informal way. Parents valued the topics covered in the handbook but also liked the opportunity to discuss other areas of their lives. The Small Steps at Home programme made a difference to children and parents in a number of areas including improvements in wellbeing and building confidence in both parents and children, children eating healthy food options, and improved sleeping routines and behaviour. Many

parents valued the tip sheets finding them useful for reference and found the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) reassuring in terms of their child's development. However, whist completing activity sheets during visits were optional some parents were put off by completing this paperwork.

Recommendations

- Consider discussing the Family Mentor advert with Family Mentors and the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team to explore whether it requires revising.
- Examine whether the current Family Mentor salary reflects their role, skills and responsibilities.
- Consider up-dating the Small Steps at Home handbooks and the possibility of providing an electronic version.
- Consider having the Small Steps at Home tip sheets available in other languages.
- Consider introducing a transition period when a Family Mentor is leaving the service and new Family Mentor is being introduced to a family.
- Consider formally introducing the opportunity for Family Mentors to spend time discussing and meeting families' other needs.
- Ensure that Family Mentors reiterate to parents that completing activity sheets is optional. Where parent would like to complete the activity sheets - offer support.

Conclusion

The first year of the evaluation of Small Steps Big Changes focused on the DPIL and the Small Steps at Home programme. The aim of DPIL, under SSBC, is to support children to develop communication and language skills, and a deep love for reading. Findings from the Reading Routines Questionnaire show that children are excited to receive DPIL books. Both parents whose children are registered with the scheme and those who are not, read to their children every day or more than once a day and it seems that there is no difference between the two groups. Yet, children who are registered with the DPIL have longer reading sessions and their parents are more likely to talk to them about aspects of the book they are reading such as asking questions about pictures in the book and the story. Parents whose children are registered with the DPIL visit local libraries with their child more often than parents whose

children are not registered with the scheme. This might indicate that their awareness of the importance of reading books with their child has increased. It is too early to draw conclusions from the Dialogic Reading Observations and PLS5 assessments, however results for the PLS5 show that the performance of most children in relation to Expressive Communication is above or within the normal-level (65%, n= 10). Results from the Dialogic Reading Observations suggest that parents are trying to encourage their child to actively participate during book sharing.

The Small Steps at Home programme aims to improve children's communication and language, social and emotional development, and nutrition. It also aims to ensure there is a good relationship between Family Mentors and parents. Findings from interviews with staff about Small Steps at Home and parents suggest that some children's confidence, language and communication, and behaviour had improved because of participation in the Small Steps at Home programme and there were instances of children eating healthier food options and sleeping better. The relationship between Family Mentors and parents was very good and a consistent Family Mentor throughout receipt of the Small Steps at Home programme was identified as essential. Further work is planned to examine the impact of Small Steps at Home on children's outcomes (i.e. children's communication and language, social and emotional development, and nutrition), in particular analysis of the results of the ASQs, Key stage 1 results for children aged 5 and children's weight at reception year (aged 4 to 5).

Family Mentors being a community workforce and having parenting experience were recognised as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme. The role of the Family Mentor has evolved since its inception, and they have taken on additional responsibilities. Consequently, they wished to be recognised as a skilled workforce and a salary that reflects this. Family Mentors were very positive about the Small Steps at Home Handbooks overall. Some suggested improvements were up-dating the handbooks and creating electronic versions.

Introduction

The Small Steps Big Changes (SSBC) programme hosted by Nottingham CityCare Partnership and supported by the National Lottery Community Fund's A Better Start Initiative. The programme operates across four wards in Nottingham: Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's. It aims to improve outcomes for 0-3-year-old children in the areas of: diet and nutrition, social and emotional skills and language and communication skills. It also aims to bring about system change by 'tipping the system on its head' and empowering parents, communities and workforces to coproduce services and achieve together. Small Steps Big Changes commissions a range of services and activities (for further details please see: www.smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk) to achieve these aims and those that are going be evaluated within the first year of the evaluation are detailed below.

The Nottingham Centre for Children, Young People and Families (NCCYPF) commenced its evaluation and learning partnership with SSBC in May 2018. This report details the first year of the evaluation, focused on the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) and the Small Steps at Home programmes, and commencing the economic costs benefit exercise.

Aims and objectives of the SSBC evaluation

Aim: To undertake a process, impact and economic evaluation of SSBC. This will be achieved through meeting the following objectives:

- Examining the functions of SSBC including service description, aims, services provided and target population;
- Identifying strengths and areas of development, i.e. what works and what does not work, for whom and why;
- Measuring changes and improvements in children in the following indicators and how these are attributed to approaches adopted by SSBC:
    o social and emotional skills
    o language and communication skills
    o diet and nutrition
    o other positive outcomes

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- Examining how SSBC empowers parents, communities and workforces to co-produce together.
- Providing recommendations on how SSBC can be enhanced for the benefit of children, families, professionals and other stakeholders.

Methodology

Throughout the evaluation lifecycle, three strands of work will be investigated. The process evaluation involves exploring the mechanisms through which the service is delivered. The impact evaluation examines the outcomes for the children engaging in SSBC. Through the economic evaluation the team will investigate the costs benefits of SSBC. A mixed method approach has been adopted whereby both quantitative and qualitative data will be collated and analysed. Further details are provided in the Data Collection section.

The peer research methodology has been utilised. Four parents who live and/or work in Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, or St Ann's have been appointed as Parent Peer Researchers. The Parent Peer Researchers are now paid members of staff at Nottingham Trent University. During the first year of the evaluation the Parent Peer Researchers worked with the evaluation team to evaluate the Small Steps at Home programme. They attended group training and a one-to-one training session, where they were trained in evaluation methods and undertaking interviews. This involved learning about interview techniques and processes, gaining informed consent from participants, confidentiality and safe data storage, and researcher safety. They also worked with the evaluation team to develop an interview guide for parents who have participated in the Small Steps at Home programme. Following training the Parent Peer Researchers undertook interviews with parents participating in the Small Steps at Home programme and attended a two-day analysis session where they undertook thematic analysis of the findings, with the evaluation team, to identify key messages for this report and recommendations. They have since shared these findings at a SSBC/NCCYPF Learning Event and contributed to this report.

In addition, work is being undertaken with a group of twelve 8-11-year olds at a primary school in St Ann's. All the children have younger siblings who get the DPIL books. Together they have devised a recording booklet for the children to record book sharing events with

their younger siblings in the family context, including what books are being shared, the younger children's reception of the book, and when and where book sharing takes place. At time of writing, data is still being collected by the children. It is intended to attempt to run the same project in collaboration with schools in the other three wards, over the next two years. Although data collected by children is only partially reliable, it will give us some indication of how book sharing takes place in the family setting, which would be hard to obtain by other means.

Data collection

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Literature review

A literature review was undertaken to identify studies examining the DPIL book gifting scheme. The aim of the literature review was to examine whether or not DPIL has had an impact on children's language and communication, and parents and children's reading routines.

The standard approach to systematic reviews was used and a review protocol established that included inclusion and exclusions criteria, search strategy, study selection, data extraction and quality assessment (University of York, 2008). Further details are provided in the Findings section.

Interviews with staff

Only a small number of staff are involved in the DPIL due to the nature of the intervention (i.e. books are mailed to children registered with the scheme). These members of staff were invited to take part in an interview that aimed to explore the challenges and strengths of the scheme. Two members of staff took part in an interview.

Reading Routines Questionnaire

Two Reading Routines Questionnaires were developed by the evaluation team based on surveys designed by Funge et al., 2017; Harvey at al., 2016; Ridz et al., 2014; and Fong, 2007. The aim was to compare the reading routines of parents whose children are registered with

DPIL with those whose children are not registered with the scheme. It explored frequency of sharing books with children, frequency of songs and rhymes with children, number of non-DPIL books at home and frequency of visits to the library.

The questionnaires were made available online using Qualtrics (a subscription software for collecting and analysing data) from January to May 2019. Links to the online questionnaires were posted on SSBC'S Facebook page and tweeted from the NCCYPF account and SSBC twitter account. To increase the sample size some questionnaires were also completed face-to-face with parents attending SSBC Story Time and Messy Makers; and also by Family Mentors with families they visit as part of the Small Steps at Home programme. The questionnaires took 10 minutes to complete and were anonymous. Only parents whose children were registered with the DPIL in the wards covered by SSBC were asked to complete the intervention questionnaire and parents from Nottingham with children under five only asked to complete the comparison questionnaire to ensure it was a comparable sample. In total 269 questionnaires were completed, and this includes 81 completed by parents whose children are registered with the DPIL and 188 whose children are not. The parents who completed the questionnaires were 18 and over with most aged between 25 and 34 years old (56.8%), White British (83.2%), in part-time employment (43.8%) and female (96.4%). Their children were all under five years old with most aged between one and three years old (73.6%) and there was an even split between males and females (52.1% and 47.9% respectively). Further details are in the appendices (appendix 3, table d). The questionnaire is still live, and efforts are being made to increase the sample size. As such the data will be re-analysed at a later date with a larger sample size.

Preschool Language Scale (edition 5) (PLS-5)

The Pearson's Pre-School Language Scale Fifth Edition (PLS-5) was used to assess the vocabulary of 15 children who are registered with the DPIL. The PLS-5 took on average 60 minutes to complete, with items that ranged from pre-verbal, interaction-based skills to emerging language and early literacy. The scale comes with objects that are used as part of the assessment enabling pointing or verbal response to pictures and objects. Parents were recruited through the Reading Routines Questionnaires. Parents were asked to provide their contact details if they were interested in participating in further research. The evaluation

team contacted all parents who provided their contact details to invite them to take part. Forty parents were contacted, and this resulted in 15 children taking part in the PLS-5. The PLS-5 was undertaken in the parents' homes and administered by NTU researchers. The children that took part were aged between 10 months, and three years and eight months old and had been registered with DPIL for between six months, to three years and seven months. Six were female and nine male. The children participating were from Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's. The PLS-5 assessments were undertaken between February and May 2019.

Dialogic Reading Observations

Dialogic Reading Observations were undertaken with 13 of the 15 children that took part in the PLS-5s and were receiving free books through the DPIL. The Dialogic Reading technique is a reading intervention that uses a set of standardized prompts to target children's oral vocabulary and listening comprehension skills (see Morgan and Meier, 2008). The Dialogic Reading Observation Form developed by Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina was used. It explores whether the parent, during books sharing, introduces the book, prompts their child to say something about the book, evaluates their child's response, and repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion. The observations took no longer than 30 minutes and were undertaken in the parents' homes. The children that took part were aged between 10 months, and three years and eight months old. Five were female and eight male. The children participating were from Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's. Children had been registered with DPIL for between six months, and three years and seven months. The Dialogic Reading Observations were undertaken between February and May 2019.

Small Steps at Home

Interviews and focus groups with staff

To understand the implementation and delivery of Small Steps at Home seven interviews were undertaken with seven members of the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team at The Toy Library, Home-Start Nottingham and Framework and two other individuals involved in Small Steps at Home (roles anonymised to ensure anonymity). Four focus groups and one

group interview was undertaken with 31 Family Mentors, and two other members of staff (roles anonymised to ensure anonymity) involved in the Small Steps at Home programme. The aim of the interviews and focus groups was on the implementation and delivery of Small Steps at Home and in particular challenges and strengths, and outcomes for children. The interviews and focus groups took place in offices and were approximately one hour long. Interviews and focus groups were recorded and notes taken throughout. Audio was transcribed for thematic analysis.

Interviews with parents participating in the Small Steps at Home programme

Parents were recruited in the first instance by Family Mentors who asked if they were interested in being invited to take part in an interview as part of an evaluation by NCCYPF. Parents interested provided their contact details. These were then passed onto the NCCYPF evaluation team. It is recognised, by the evaluation team, that asking Family Mentors to approach parents could result in 'selection bias' with Family Mentors purposefully selecting parents likely to give positive feedback. This could ultimately bias the findings. To prevent this Family Mentors were asked to ensure that they approached a diverse range of parents in order to guarantee that a wide range of views would be collected. They were also asked to ensure that a wide cross section of parents was approached including young parents and older parents, first time parents and parents with older children, parents from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, parents with differing socio-economic backgrounds, single and two-parent families, and parents in both opposite sex relationships and same sex relationships. The evaluation team also asked the Family Mentors to approach parents who had ceased involvement with the Small Steps at Home programme and parents who had been with the programme for various lengths of time. Demographic data suggests that the Family Mentors followed these instructions and provided the evaluation team with the contact details of a wide range of parents.

Twenty-nine parents provided their contact details, and all were contacted and invited to participate in an interview about Small Steps at Home. The parent peer researchers undertook interviews with 15 sets of parents (17 parents in total) who have participated in the Small Steps at Home programme. The interviews explored parents' experiences of Family Mentors and Small Steps at Home. The interviews were mainly undertaken in the

parents' homes except for one interview that took place in one of the buildings where the Family Mentors are based. The interviews took no longer than 45 minutes and were undertaken between April and May 2019. The parents that took part in the interviews were from Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's. Most participants were female (n=15) with two fathers[1] also participating in interviews with two of the mothers. Parents were aged between 21 and 41 years old. Seven parents identified as White British, three of mixed heritage, six other ethnicities (anonymised to ensure anonymity), and the ethnicity for one participant was not recorded. Their children were aged between six weeks old and three years old.

Data analysis

Focus groups and interviews with staff and parents

Focus group and interview data was thematically analysed to identify patterns through a process of data familiarization, data coding, and theme development. A deductive approach was undertaken whereby data coding and theme development was directed by the research questions. Where quotes are used, participants are anonymised to ensure anonymity.

Reading Routines

Questionnaire

The Reading Routines Questionnaires are still open and further analysis will be conducted at a later date with larger sample size. Copies of the questionnaires are in appendices (Appendix 1 and 2). The methodology first used crosstabulations (chi-square test of association/independence) to test whether participation in the DPIL was associated with selected socio-demographic characteristics of parents (e.g. parent age, ethnicity, employment status, marital status) and children (e.g. children age, ethnicity, sex) and reading routine (Field, 2018). The sample size was 293 respondents (85 was completed by parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 208 by parents whose children were not registered with the DPIL). The sample size varied from crosstabulation to crosstabulation due to missing cases (see Tables a, b, c, d, e and f in the appendices).

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[1] All parents called were asked if they had a partner who wished to participate in an interview.

Although the sample sizes were unequal, it is not one of the assumptions of chi-square test of association which include (a) having two categorical variables (b) independence of observations and (c) cells with expected counts greater than five (Laerd Statistics, 2016). Please bear in mind that, the relationship between more than three variables cannot be examined using this method.

The problem in relation to using crosstabs was addressed through conducting statistical modelling which allowed examining whether an effect (dependent variable) was the result of more than two explanatory variables (causes). The dependent variable of the current study had two values: participation in the DPIL (1) or non-participation in the DPIL (0). Therefore, the logit specification of the statistical modelling was used (Long, 1997). In sum, the statistical modelling was used to separate the effects of independent variables on the dependent variable. The sample size for the statistical modelling reduced to 236 respondents after the missing cases are deleted. The Hosmer-Lemeshow statistics (where a good model produces a nonsignificant chi-square) were used to evaluate goodness of fit (Tabachnic and Fidell, 2013).

The questionnaires included mostly qualitative variables, which make sense with words rather than numbers. If a regression model is based on data with more than one qualitative variable, each such variable must have a reference category (Johnson, 1984). The set of all reference categories gives a fictitious individual: the Reference Individual (RI). The RI in this study (please note this is used for standard comparison purposes):

1.   is the mother;

2.   speaks English as the first language;

3.   is aged 25-34;

4.   white;

5.   employed;

6.   married/has a civil partner/co-habits;

7.   has a child aged over 3 years old;

8.   has a female white child;

9.   reads to her child every day or more than once a day;

10.   sings with her child every day or more than once a day;

11.   has a child who asks her to read every day or more than once a day;

12.   has a child who spend looking at books by themselves every day or more than once a day;

13.   reads to her child at least 15 minutes when she reads to her child;

14.   always/usually asks her child to read with her;

15.   always/usually asks her child about the pictures in the book;

16.   always/usually talks about letters;

17.   always/usually talks about what specific words in the book mean;

18.   always/usually talks about what is happening in the story;

19.   always/usually asks questions to see if her child understands the story;

20.   has a child who enjoys reading quite a lot/very much;

21.   has a child who enjoys joining in with songs and rhymes quite a lot/very much;

22.   is confident reading to her child;

23.   is confident singing songs and rhymes with her child;

24.   has more than 20 children's books that are not from the DPIL at home;

25.   visits library one or twice a week.

Limitations

There are some limitations of using self-report questionnaires, such as 'social desirability bias' and 'response bias'. 'Social desirability bias' is a tendency to answer questions that will be viewed favourably by others. 'Response bias' is respondents' tendency to answer questions in a certain way regardless of the question. As a result, respondents might provide invalid answers or exaggerate the answers (Arnold and Feldman, 1981, Bryman, 2012). It is difficult to measure the possibility of 'social desirability bias' in response to the questions in the Reading Routines Questionnaire. With regards to 'response bias', parents did not see the questionnaire a second time as in a pre-test post-test model. Avoiding a pre-test post-test model might have reduced the inflation of parents' reports of reading frequency (routines) (Rindzi et al., 2014).

Further analysis with the larger sample will include controlling for the effect of other SSBC commissioned services and activities, that are related to children's language and communication development, and attended by children and their parents. However, it must

be acknowledged that we can never know the full extent of other services and activities, children and their parents may be participating in that could have an effect on their reading practices. Consequently, it is difficult to say for sure that the DPIL is responsible for improvements in reading routines (see Ridzi et al., 2014 for a similar discussion).

Preschool Language Scale (edition 5) (PLS5)

There are two types of scales in the PLS-5 Record Form: (1) the Auditory Comprehension (AC) scale and (2) the Expressive Communication (EC) scale. This preliminary analysis is concerned with the latter. The EC scale includes 67 numbered items. Each item may include one or more sub-items. Each item has a pass criterion. If the child's response meets the pass criterion, the assessor gives the child credit by circling the 1 next to item description, otherwise circles the 0 (Zimmermen et al., 2011).

The sample size is 15 children who receive books from the DPIL. A more comprehensive analysis will be conducted with a larger sample size in due time. Each child's raw score for EC was calculated by recording the number of the last item administered and subtracting the number of 0 scores from this item number. Following that, the raw scores were recorded on the Score Summary box in the PLS-5 Record Form to visually see the children's performance in terms of EC. Scores within the shaded areas (85 to 115) were considered to be within the normal range. Scores of 116 and above reflected above-average performance, and scores of 84 or lower reflected below-average performance (Zimmermen et al., 2011). Age equivalents were also determined by converting raw scores for the EC scale using tables provided in the Administration and Scoring Manual (Zimmermen et al., 2011). A more comprehensive analysis will be conducted with a larger sample size at a later date.

Dialogic Reading Observations

Thirteen parents and their children, registered with DPIL, took part in Dialogic Reading Observations. The results were calculated and are detailed in the findings section. A more comprehensive analysis will be conducted with a larger sample size at a later date.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the Nottingham Trent University College of Business, Law and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 21st November 2018. The evaluation has also been registered with Research and Innovation, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust with permission to proceed provided on 3rd December 2018. Nottingham CityCare Honorary contacts have been given to the following members of staff: Clare Lushey, Professor Carrie Paechter, Dr Becky Thompson and Dr Ferhat Tura.

Informed participant consent

Verbal and written informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants were assured that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not want to and could withdraw from the evaluation, without giving a reason, at any time up until publication of the findings.

Anonymity

All data was anonymised as soon as possible after collection. Participants were assigned a unique identification number and data was stored against this number rather than against the names of the participants.

Data security

Digital audio recordings, notes, transcripts of interviews and focus groups, and questionnaire data were saved securely in a Nottingham Trent University secure and restricted folder. Transcription of interviews and focus groups was carried out by an authorised university transcriber who is fully aware of requirements of confidentiality. The PLS5, dialogic reading observations, and all consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet.

Findings

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL) launched in 1995 and is a book gifting scheme that mails free age appropriate books to registered children. They receive one book a month delivered to their home right up until their 5th birthday. The DPIL coverage in the UK includes England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. The aim of this book gifting scheme, under SSBC, is to support children to develop communication and language skills, and a deep love for reading. Under SSBC, children in Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's are entitled to receive free books through this scheme. A total of 3890 children in the four wards are signed up to receive books through this scheme which has been in operation since April 2015.

Review of the literature

Review question

Does the DPIL book gifting scheme have an impact on children's language and communication, and reading routines?

Identification of research evidence

A literature review was undertaken to identify studies examining DPIL book gifting scheme. A wide range of databases were searched for studies and this included:

- Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews;
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence;
- Campbell Library of Systematic Reviews;
- Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) Centre;
- DoPHER;
- ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts);
- Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) Centre;
- ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) (EBSCO);
- PsycINFO;

- Academic Search Complete;

- Child Development and Adolescent Studies;

- Science Direct;

- Scopus;

- Google Scholar; and

- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library database.

Seventy-four documents were identified, and this included peer reviewed journal articles as well as grey literature such as reports, summaries and survey results.

Study selection

Journal articles and reports were included where they measured the impact of the DPIL book gifting scheme on reading routines, and/or children's language and communication; had clearly stated aims; and sufficient information on study design and the participant group and comparison group (where applicable). All documents merely summarising results or displaying survey results only were automatically excluded from the review due to insufficient information. In total 16 studies were included in the review. This included eight peer reviewed journal articles and eight reports.

Studies included in the review

Of the 16 studies included in the review, seven were quasi-experimental studies and nine observational studies. All studies were undertaken in the USA and published between 2003 and 2019. Of the 16 studies, four studies measured both children's language and communication, and reading routines (Anderson et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2017; Dick et al., 2016; Waldron, 2019). The remaining 12 studies either examined children's language and communication alone (n=5: Harvey, 2018; Westine, 2009; Ridz et al., 2017; Embree, 2009; Samiei at al., 2015) or reading routines only (n=7: Fung et al., 2017; Harvey, 2016; Ridz et al., 2014; Fong, 2007; Gordon, n.d; Smith, 2003; Upfront, 2013).

Reading routines

All 11 studies that measured reading routines used surveys to collect data. Whilst some surveys were developed by the teams undertaking the research (Anderson et al., 2018; Harvey, 2016; Ridzi et al., 2014; Fong, 2007; Gordon, n.d; Smith, 2003; Upfront, 2013; Waldron, 2019), others administered previously developed surveys including: the Family Reading Survey (FRS; Thompson et al., 2017) and a questionnaire developed by High/Scope Educational Research Foundation (Dick et al, 2016). In addition one study, included questions taken from the National Household Education Survey (Anderson, 2018) and another questions taken from the 10-item FACES Family Communications Scale (Funge et al., 2017).

Sample sizes and participant characteristics

For those studies that measured reading routines the survey sample size ranged from 89 to 1,456 respondents with a mean of 496. The surveys exploring reading routines were completed by parents not children. The level of detail provided with regards to the demographics of parents varied. Some provided full data on gender, age, ethnicity and socio-economic status and others minimum information. Only four studies provided details on the gender of parent respondents (Anderson et al.; 2018; Ridzi et al., 2014; Aaron et al., 2017; Upfront, 2013). For two of the studies the number of females and males responding were even (Anderson et al.; 2018; Ridzi et al., 2014), however for the remaining two studies the number of females was over 80% in both studies, meaning that approximately 20% were male respondents. Only one study provided the age range of parent respondents in their study (Upfront, 2013) and the majority were aged between 25 and 44. Information on ethnicities, socio-economic statutes and family types (e.g. two parent or one parent families) was limited and due to differences in recording it was not possible to compare.

Similar to demographic information for parents, recording demographic information for children also varied between studies. Not all studies provided details on the age of children at the time their parent completed a survey. Of the seven studies that did provide details, the children were, as expected, aged from birth to five years old. Six provided the average age of children and this ranged from two years and six months old to five years and six months old (Anderson et al., 2018; Ridzi et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2017; Dick et al., 2016; Gordon, n.d; Smith, 2003). The remaining seventh study did not provide an average age but

did reveal that 43.4% were aged birth to 25 months and 56.5% were 36 months or older (Fong, 2007). Only two studies provided details of children's ethnicity and due to differences in recording it was not possible to compare. Three studies provided information on gender of children and there appeared to be even number of males and females.

Frequency of reading

Ten studies explored how often children registered with the DPIL were read to. Four of these studies examined whether there was an increase in how often a child was read to since receiving books from the DPIL book scheme.

Harvey (2016) reported that prior to engagement in the DPIL 49.46% of parents read to their child once a day or more (24.73 once a day; 24.73 more than once a day). After receiving DPIL books this went up to 80.61% (37.63 once a day; 43.01% more than once a day). Similarly, Fong (2007) reported that before receiving DPIL books, 52% of parents reported reading to their child once a day or more (25% once a day; 27% more than once a day). After receiving DPIL books, this increased to 81% (32% of the families reported reading once a day; 49% reported reading more than once a day). Gordon (n.d) also reported that the majority of parents in his study read to their child once a day or more (75.3%) with 81.8% reporting that their frequency of reading to the child increased after DPIL books began arriving in their home. Funge and colleagues (2016) asked parents to indicate how often they read to their child on a five-point Likert scale from Never (0) to Every Day (5) and found that after participation in the DPIL programme parents reported a significant increase in time spent reading to their child. Before the programme, the mean was 4.35, which increased to 4.59 after receiving DPIL books. Whilst Smith (2003) did not explore changes in frequency of reading patterns pre and post receiving DPIL books, he did find that over 85% of parents in his study currently read to their child almost every day or more. Two studies (that also did not explore changes in frequency of reading patterns) found smaller numbers of parents reading to their child every day with Dick and colleagues (2016) reporting that the number of parents in their study reading to their child every day was 52%. Ridz and colleagues (2014) that 48.2% of parents in their study read to their child every day.

Some studies did not explore how often parents read to their child but instead whether they had read to them in the last week, how many times in the last week or amount of time-spent reading. Anderson and colleagues (2018) reported that 35% of parents in their study had read to their child in the past seven days. Waldron (2019) found that 37% of parents in his study reported reading to their child at seven or more times a week. Upfront (2013) study found that parents on average spent between one and two hours per week reading to their child.

Anderson and colleagues (2018) found that household income and parent education level were positively associated with frequency of reading (Anderson et al., 2018.) Parents from higher income households and parents who had remained in education for longer were significantly more likely to read to their children more often than those from lower income households and with lower levels of education. Conversely, Gordon (n.d.) found that more parents from lower income families increased the frequency with which they read to their child after registering with Imagination Library, with 98% increasing the frequency with which they read to their child compared to 69% of middle-to-upper income households.

Upfront (2013) found that the age of parents had some impact on time spent reading with parents aged between 25 and 34 reporting statistically significantly less time reading than parents aged between 35 and 44 years old. They also found that parents with larger families spent significantly less time reading with their child. Although not significant, where both parents were working the child was read to less than where one adult was not working.

Length of time registered with the DPIL also had an impact on frequency of reading (Ridz et al., 2014) with parents whose children had been registered with DPIL for four months or more, more likely to read to their child daily. Length of enrolment continued to be significant even after controlling for age of the child at the time of the survey, parental education level, ethnicity, gender, and whether English was the parents' first language.

Children's excitement and interest in books

The DPIL programme appeared to have an effect on children's excitement and interest in books. Seventy-five percent of parents in Harvey's (2016) study reported that receiving books from the DPIL had made their child more interested in books. Similarly, Gordon's (n.d.)

study found that 92% of parents felt that their child's excitement and enthusiasm about books increased after DPIL books began arriving in their home. Smith (2003) found that three quarters of parents in his study felt that their child looked forward to the arrival of their books from the DPIL. Fong's (2007) analysis of addition comments in their survey revealed that children and their families looked forward to receiving and reading the books they received from DPIL.

Interactions during reading

Only a small number of studies surveyed parents and children's interactions whilst reading books and differences in recording made it difficult to compare studies. Most parents (98.5) from Anderson et al. (2018) study 'sometimes' or 'usually' stopped to talk about pictures in a book; 91.1% 'sometimes' or 'usually' stopped to ask about a word or letter on the page; 82.6% 'sometimes' or 'usually' asked their child to read along with them; and 97.1% 'sometimes' or 'usually' talked about the story and asked their child questions about the story. Smith (2003) reported that over 70% of parents in his study asked their child questions about the book and over 80% asked their child to point out objects or words in the book. Ridzi and colleagues (2014) found that only 36% of parents whose children had been registered with the DPIL for four months or less 'usually' talked about the story and asked their child questions about the story, compared to 55% of parents whose children had been registered with the books scheme for longer. An examination of the responses to this question yielded statistically significant differences. Thompson and colleagues (2017) study found that parents whose children were registered with DPIL scored significantly higher on literacy interactions with their child than parents whose children were not receiving books from the DPIL.

Summary

Frequency of reading varied. All four studies that compared reading pre and post registration with DPIL reported an increase in how often parents read to their child after receiving DPIL books with the majority of parents reporting reading to their child daily or more (Harvey, 2016, Fung, 2007; Gordon, n.d; Fung et al., 2016). For those studies that explored reading frequency after children had registering with the DPIL, the frequency of

reading varied with 85% of parents in Smith's (2003) study reporting reading to their child daily or more, but only 52% in Dick et al. (2016) study and just 48.2% in Ridz et al. (2014) study. Findings in relation to household income were conflicting with one study finding that parents in higher income households were more likely to read to their child more frequently than parents from lower income households (Anderson et al., 2018) and another (Gordon, n.d.) reporting the opposite. Anderson and colleagues (2018) also found that parents who had remained in education for longer were more likely to read to their child, than parents with lower levels of education. The age of parents was found to be related to time spent reading, with older parents (aged 35-44) reporting spending more time reading to their child than younger parents (Upfront, 2013). The same study also found that parents from larger families spent less time reading with their child and where both parents were working the child was read to less than where one adult was not working (Upfront, 2013). Length of time also appeared to impact on frequency of reading, with parents whose children have been registered with DPIL for longer, more likely to read to their child daily (Ridz et al., 2014).

The DPIL appeared to have an effect on children's excitement and interest in books with four studies finding that children were excited for the arrival of their DPIL books and/or more interested in reading since registering with the book scheme (Harvey, 2016; Gordon, n.d; Smith, 2003; Fong, 2007).

Findings from four studies (Anderson et al., 2018; Smith, 2003; Ridz et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2017) suggest that parents whose children are registered with the DPIL interact with their child during book sharing, such as asking their child question, pointing out pictures and talking about the story. Furthermore, one study found that parents whose children were registered with DPIL interacted more with their child during book sharing than parents whose children were not receiving books from the DPIL (Thompson et al., 2017).

Children's language and communication

In total nine studies examined children's language and communication and a range of measures were used, including:

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) (Anderson et al., 2018, Harvey, 2018; Dick et al., 2016; Westine, 2009);

- AIMSweb Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) test (Ridz et al., 2017)

- TRC (Anderson et al., 2018);

- Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) (Anderson et al., 2018);

- Kindergarten Readiness Indicator (KRI) (Samiei et al., 2015);

- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K) (Thompson et al., 2017);

- Scott Foresman Reading Street Baseline Test (Embree, 2009); and

- An Observation Survey of Early Literacy (Waldron, 2019).

For those studies that examined children's language and communication the sample size ranged from 40 to 2,749 respondents with a mean of 715. Of the nine studies, five provided details on the age of their sample which ranged from an average of 2.8 to 5 years old (Samiei et al., 2015; Dick et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2017; Ridzi et al., 2014; Anderson et al., 2018). Only four studies provided details of children's ethnicity and due to differences in recording it was not possible to compare (Anderson et al., 2018; Samiei et al., 2015). Five studies provided information on gender of children and there appeared to be even number of males and females (Embree, 2009; Samiei et al., 2015; Dick et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2018).

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

The DIBELS are a set of procedures and measures for assessing early literacy skills and reading outcomes. Each measure has been demonstrated to be a reliable and valid indicator of early literacy development. DIBELS subtests measure critical skills and abilities that are necessary for reading success. Four studies analysed DIBELS scores for kindergarten students.

Dick and colleagues (2016) analysed at the DIBELS results of 228 children registered with DPIL and 342 children not registered with the DPIL. They examined the number of Kindergarten students on the benchmark in the fall and spring. Dick and colleagues (2016) combined the scores into two categories which were: Core (on the benchmark or above the benchmark) and Below the Benchmark (below the benchmark or well below the benchmark). In the fall the non- DPIL group were more likely to be on or above the benchmark (47.3%)

compared to the DPIL group (43.4%). However, this was not statistically significant. In the spring the DPIL group were significantly more likely to be on or above the benchmark (73.7%) compared to the non- DPIL group (64.9%). Among students who were below benchmark in the fall, the DPIL group were significantly more likely to be on the benchmark in the spring assessment (63.7%) compared to the non- DPIL group (47.9%). In the spring statistically significantly higher number of males (70%) in the DPIL group were on or the benchmark compared to 54% in the non- DPIL group, with 79% of females in the DPIL group on the benchmark and 72% of females in the non- DPIL group closing the reading achievement gap. In the spring, a statistically significant higher number of African American students (72%) were on the benchmark level compared to African American students in the non- DPIL group (54%). The difference between the white students with benchmark levels were similar (76% for the DPIL group and 69% for the non- DPIL group) indicating a step towards closing the gap.   In the spring, 76% of students in the DPIL group in poverty (defined as participating in the free or reduced priced school meals programme) were on the benchmark level compared to 63% in the non- DPIL group. The difference between the students not in poverty with benchmark level scores were similar (78% for the DPIL group and 74% for the non- DPIL group) indicating a step towards closing the gap.

Westine (2009) analysed scores for the DIBELS Initial Sound Fluency and Letter Naming Fluency tests that were administered in the fall semester for kindergarten students. Nine hundred and sixty-seven scores were available for the Initial Sounds Fluency test and 972 for the Letter Naming Fluency test. Of 967 Initial Sounds Fluency records, 246 were for children registered with the DPIL and 721 were for children not registered with the DPIL. Of the 972 Letter Naming Fluency records, 247 were registered with the DPIL and 725 were not. Regression analysis found that registration with the DPIL was positive and statistically significant. However, the model did not explain the variance in scores and as such, the results of the statistical tests were inconclusive.

Harvey's (2018) study examined the DIBELS results of 20 randomly selected students who were registered with DPIL and 20 randomly selected students who were not registered with the DPIL. Results were available for Kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2. The sub-tests administered included: Letter Naming, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, Oral Reading Fluency, Accuracy, and Retelling. Results were provided for each

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subset rather than a total score. The students in the DPIL group scored statistically significantly higher than those not receiving DPIL books on the Nonsense Word Fluency. This continued into grade 1 with the DPIL group scoring statistically significantly higher on the Nonsense Word Fluency test. In Grade 2 the DPIL scored higher but not significantly higher. The Imagination Library students scored consistently higher, but not significantly, on all 32 DIBELS subtests except three (this includes Letter Naming, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency 1 and 2, Oral Reading Fluency 1, Oral Reading Accuracy 2, Oral Reading Retel 3 - all measured at the beginning, middle and end of kindergarten, grade1 and grade 2).

Anderson and colleagues (2018) examined DIBELS scores at kindergarten entry for 152 children registered with the DPIL (there was no comparison group). However, they only looked at Letter Naming Fluency and First Sound Fluency results as it was part of the mCLASS®: Reading 3D™. Scores for the DIBELS showed that the majority (n=90, 59.2%) met the benchmark or were above it (benchmark: n=22, 14.5%, above benchmark: n=68, 44.7%), with the remaining 40.7% (n=62) either below the benchmark (n=39, 25.7%) or well below the benchmark (n=23, 15%). Anderson and colleagues (2018) looked at whether there was a relationship between parental report of shared book reading frequency and scores on the DIBELS and found that it was not statistically significant.

AIMSweb Letter Naming Fluency

Ridz and colleagues (2016) examined the AIMSweb Letter Naming Fluency test scores of 2,731 kindergartners. The AIMSweb Letter Naming Fluency test involves asking children to say the names of visually presented letters for one minute. A score is produced that comprises the number of letters named correctly. It is the same test included in the DIBELS assessment. Analysis showed that a statistically significantly higher percentage (61.11%) of those registered with the DPIL scored 13 or above, when compared with those not registered with the DPIL (47.38%). Ridz and colleagues (2016) also found that having a home language other than English, being eligible for special education reduced the likelihood of scoring 13 or above. Being white and female increased likelihood of scoring 13 or above. Despite taking these factors into account, children who registered with DPIL were still more likely to score 13 or above compared to those not registered.

Kindergarten Readiness Indicator (KRI)

Samiei and colleagues (2015) analysed the Kindergarten Readiness Indicator (KRI) language scores of 263 new kindergarten students enrolled in the fall. Of the 263 students, 143 were registered with DPIL and 120 were not. The KRI Language scale is comprised of 86 items addressing receptive vocabulary, expressive vocabulary, pre-literacy skills, and speaking/listening skills. Children registered with DPIL scored statistically significantly higher KRI language scores (mean score 64.2) than those not registered (mean score 54.88).

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K)

Thompson and colleagues (2017) analysed the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K) scores of 893 students, 189 of which were registered with DPIL and 704 who were not. The PALS-K measures phonological awareness (i.e. rhyme awareness; beginning sound awareness) and emergent literacy tasks (i.e. alphabet knowledge, knowledge of letter sounds spelling, word concept). Students registered with the DPIL did not differ from a matched cohort of students not registered, in terms of PALS-K scores.

Scott Foresman Reading Street Baseline Test

Embree (2009) examined the Scott Foresman Reading Street Baseline Test scores of 90 children, which included 45 that were registered with DPIL and 45 that were not. The test assesses letter recognition, phonological awareness, listening comprehension and concepts of print. The mean for the DPIL group (M = 72.80) was higher than the mean for the non-DPIL group (M = 66.11).

An Observation Survey of Early Literacy

The Observation Survey of Early Literacy (Clay, 2013) was used by Waldron (2019) to assess print awareness and book handling skills, including book concepts, text directionality, concepts of letters and words, and concepts of punctuation. Three hundred and ninety-four kindergarten students completed this survey and this included 114 children that were registered with the DPIL and 280 who were not. Each child was assessed using Clay's (2013) CAP and Letter Identification tasks from The Observation Survey of Early Literacy. Children in the DPIL group performed statistically significantly better on Clay's Letter Identification

task (mean score 41.55) compared to those in the non- DPIL group (mean score 36.13). Children in the DPIL group performed better on the CAP task (mean score 11.43) than the non- DPIL group (mean score 10.70) also, however there was no significant difference.

Text Reading and Comprehension

Anderson and colleagues analysed the Text Reading and Comprehension (TRC) results of 152 kindergarten children registered with DPIL (there was no comparison group). The TRC is a measure of print concepts and reading behaviours. The scores for the TRC showed that under half (n=62, 40.8%) were proficient or above (proficient n=57, 37.5%; Above Proficient n=5, 3.3%). The remaining 59.3% (n=90) were below proficient or far below proficient (Far Below Proficient n=70, 46.1%; Below Proficient n=20, 13.2%). Anderson and colleagues (2018) looked at whether there was a relationship between parental report shared book reading frequency and scores on the TRC and found that it was statistically significant. Nearly half (46.3%) of children whose parents reported reading to them three or more times per week scoring above the state-designated benchmark, compared to 32.1% of children whose parents reported reading to them two times per week or less.

Narrative Scoring Scheme

Anderson and colleagues (2018) examined Narrative Scoring Scheme (NSS) results of 152 kindergarten children registered with DPIL. The NSS is a measure of narrative structure based on story grammar analysis. Stories were scored using a 5-point rubric addressing seven characteristics of narrative stories: introduction, character development, mental and emotional states, referencing/listener awareness, conflict/resolution or event/reaction, and cohesion. Children in their study, on average, had lower NSS total scores and scored lower on each of the seven characteristics of narrative structure than scores for typically-developing kindergartners in the SALT NSS database. Anderson and colleagues (2018) looked at whether there was a relationship between parental report of shared book reading frequency and scores on the NSS and found that it was statistically significant. The mean score for children whose parents reported 'Not At All' sharing books their child was 4.20 compared to was significantly different than the mean score for the children whose parents

read to them 'Every Day' was 2.20. Indicating an improvement in NSS score with increases in shared book reading frequency.

Summary

The data is promising with the studies showing that the DPIL cohorts generally performed better on assessments than non- DPIL cohorts. The exception to this was in Thompson and colleagues' (2017) study which found that students registered with DPIL did not differ from a matched cohort of students not registered, in terms of PALS-K scores. In addition, Anderson and colleagues (2018) found that under half of participants in their study scored at or above proficient in Text Reading and Comprehension and had lower NSS total scores than scores for typically-developing kindergartners. There was evidence from one study (Dick et al., 2016) to suggest that DPIL contributes to closing the gap of attainment between males and females and between students from lower and higher socioeconomic households.

Quality of the studies

The majority of studies (n=9) that explored reading routines were observational studies (Anderson et al., 2018; Fung et al., 2017; Harvey, 2016; Ridzi et al., 2014; Embree, 2009; Fong, 2007; Gordon n.d., Smith, 2003; Upfront, 2013) with just three adopting a quasi-experimental study design (Thompson et al., 2017; Dick et al., 2016; Waldron, 2019). Seven of the studies (Dick et al., 2016; Westine, 2009; Harvey, 2018; Ridz et al., 2016; Samiei et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2017; Waldeon, 2019) that explored literacy skills were quasi-experimental with the remaining two studies being observational (Anderson et al., 2018; Embree 2009). As such, none of the participants in any of the studies were randomly assigned to the DPIL programme (due to the nature of delivery of this books scheme) to ensure that samples represented the target population. In addition, all data was gathered post intervention meaning that there were no pre intervention/baseline scores to compare against (this is due to children receiving books from birth). This ultimately limits the generalisability of the findings and makes conclusions of causal relationships between the DPIL and reading routines and performances difficult.

Only a small number of staff participated in interviews about the DPIL (n=2). They identified several strengths and weaknesses and these are detailed below.

The DPIL programme was viewed positively due to the provision of free books to families in deprived areas.

> *I think the fact that you know, children from the poorest communities are having access to the… to free books is a fantastic offer* (SSBC staff member).

Under SSBC, children are registered for the DPIL through SystmOne (an electronic system) but other services in Nottingham that offer DPIL use paper-based forms. On occasion children are signed up to the DPIL through the incorrect service which results in delays.

> *No, I just think there is a lot of mistakes, and I just think because obviously it's different… I think because there are a lot of other schemes running which quite a lot of the teams will use, I think it does get confusing. Where obviously we do it differently. So, imagination library… SSBC will make the offer differently and have it all on SystemOne and you have to follow a process whereas another scheme will do a paper version. And I don't know, I've got no idea what the paper version is, but I know it's different to how we do it. So it… and then obviously because they're not in our wards and they get signed up wrong and then we have to tell the children that you can't… or the family, no you can't have the book through us so we're going to have to take you off the system, but we'll put you on this system. But then it takes a few months for the book to be sent anyway (*SSBC staff member*).*

When families move home, they do not always notify SSBC and consequently the books continue to go to their former address. It would be helpful if there was a system in place whereby SSBC were notified when a child registered with the DPIL changes address.

> *And obviously the family's not always going to think, oh I've just moved house but you know what I'm going to do, I'm going to ring up and cancel this book that I get. Because they've got everything else going off haven't they? But yeah, I think if there was a… some sort of way that like, it could be a task that come up on SystmOne Like*

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a… this child's moved address, they're not in the city… that would be good (SSBC staff member).

It was recommended that children that move into the area, aged up to five, also have access to the DPIL. Currently children moving into the wards must be under one years old to receive the books.

Sometimes we get parents or families that move into the city with like maybe a two-year-old. And they're not really eligible under our funding criteria. And it's kind of like; well you've missed two years of the books. And I kind of feel that's a bit of a shame, because they would still really benefit. So, I'd like… and it is a funding issue, because you can't fund everybody for everything. But I do think that would be ideal (SSBC staff member).

Summary and recommendations

The DPIL Library was viewed positively due to its provision of free books, however a number of recommendations are suggested:

- Consider developing a system whereby SSBC are notified when a child registered with the DPIL changes address;
- Consider amending the criteria for registration under SSBC so that that children that move into the area, aged up to five have access to the DPIL.

Reading Routines Questionnaire

The results below are preliminary findings from the Reading Routines Questionnaire completed by 85 parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 208 parents whose children were not. The questionnaire is still open and further analysis will be conducted later with a larger sample size.

The majority of the children were excited to receive the DPIL books. Whilst 56.4% of the children were very excited, 30.8% of the children were somewhat excited. Only one child (1.3%) was not excited at all (see Table 1 for further details).

Table 1: Children's excitement at receiving books from the DPIL

	Sample Size	%
	85	
Very excited	44	56.4
Somewhat excited	24	30.8
Neutral	9	11.5
Not at all excited	1	1.3
Total	**78**	**100.0**

Most children registered with the DPIL (68.4%) asked their parents to read to them every day or more than once a day. However, 11.8% of children did not ask to be read to at all. Similarly, of the children not registered with the DPIL, 75.2% asked their parents to read to them every day or more than once a day, whilst 9.1% did not ask to be read at all. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How often does your child ask to be read?'. There was no a statistically significant association between the two (see Table 2 for further information).

Table 2: Child-reading activities

	Child is registered with the DPIL									
	Yes			**No**			**Total**			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
How often does your child ask to be read?										
Not at all	9	34.6	11.8	17	65.4	9.1	26	100.0	9.9	NS*
1 to 2 times a month	1	14.3	1.3	6	85.7	3.2	7	100.0	2.7	
1 to 2 times a week	1	11.1	1.3	8	88.9	4.3	9	100.0	3.4	
3 times a week	13	46.4	17.1	15	53.6	8.1	28	100.0	10.7	
Every day or nearly every day	30	25.2	39.5	89	74.8	47.8	119	100.0	45.4	
More than once a day	22	30.1	28.9	51	69.9	27.4	73	100.0	27.9	
Total	**76**	**29.0**	**100.0**	**186**	**71.0**	**100.0**	**262**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
How often does your child spend looking at books by themselves?										
Not at all	4	50.0	5.3	4	50.0	2.2	8	100.0	3.1	NS
1 to 2 times a month	0	0	0	4	100.0	2.2	4	100.0	1.5	
1 to 2 times a week	6	31.6	7.9	13	68.4	7.0	19	100.0	7.3	
3 times a week	11	25.6	14.5	32	74.4	17.2	43	100.0	16.4	
Every day or nearly every day	32	26.7	42.1	88	73.3	47.3	120	100.0	45.8	
More than once a day	23	33.8	30.3	45	66.2	24.2	68	100.0	26.0	
Total	**76**	**29.0**	**100.0**	**186**	**71.0**	**100.0**	**262**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

* Both analyses with full sample size and excluding children below 3 gave insignificant results.

Table 2: Child-reading activities (continued)

	Child is registered with the DPIL									
	Yes			No			Total			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
How much does your child enjoy reading and looking at books?										
Not at all	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100.0	0	NS
A bit	7	36.8	9.1	12	63.2	6.4	19	100.0	7.2	
Quite a lot	16	24.6	20.8	49	75.4	26.1	65	100.0	24.5	
Very much	54	29.8	70.1	127	70.2	67.6	181	100.0	68.3	
Total	**77**	**29.1**	**100.0**	**188**	**70.9**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
How much does your child enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes?										
Not at all	3	50.0	3.9	3	50.0	1.6	6	100.0	2.3	NS
A bit	4	17.4	5.2	19	82.6	10.2	23	100.0	8.7	
Quite a lot	15	28.8	19.5	37	71.2	19.8	52	100.0	19.7	
Very much	55	30.1	71.4	128	69.9	68.4	183	100.0	69.3	
Total	**77**	**29.2**	**100.0**	**187**	**70.8**	**100.0**	**264**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Seventy-two per cent of children registered with the DPIL looked at books by themselves every day or more than once a day. However, 5.3% of did not look at books by themselves at all. Likewise, most children who were not registered with the DPIL (71.5%) looked at books by themselves every day or more than once a day. A small proportion of them (2.2%) did not look at books at all. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How often does your child spend looking at books by themselves? There was no a statistically significant association between the two (see Table 2 for further details).

The majority of children enjoyed reading and looking at books quite a lot or very much (90.9% of children registered with the DPIL and 93.7% of those not registered with the DPIL). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How much does your child enjoy reading and looking at books?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 2 for further details).

The majority of children enjoyed joining in with songs and rhymes (90.9% of children registered with the DPIL and 88.2% of those not registered with the DPIL). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How much does your child enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 2 for further details).

The majority of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and parents whose children were not read to their children every day or more than once a day (88.4% and 88.3% respectively). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How often do you read to your children?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 3 for further details).

Half of the parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and whose children were not registered with DPIL read their children less than 15 minutes. However, more parents whose children were registered with DPIL read to their child for over 30 minutes a day compared to those whose children were not (9% and 3.2%, respectively). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'How long does a reading session last?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 3 for further details).

Table 3: Parent reading activities

	Child is registered with the DPIL									
	Yes			No			Total			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
How often do you read to your children?										
Not at all	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100.0	0	NS
1 to 2 times a month	2	22.2	2.6	7	77.8	3.7	9	100.0	3.4	
1 to 2 times a week	2	28.6	2.6	5	71.4	2.7	7	100.0	2.6	
3 times a week	5	33.3	6.4	10	66.7	5.3	15	100.0	5.6	
Every day or nearly every day	43	33.6	55.1	85	66.4	45.2	128	100.0	48.1	
More than once a day	26	24.3	33.3	81	75.7	43.1	107	100.0	40.2	
Total	78	29.3	100.0	188	70.7	100.0	266	100.0	100.0	
How long does a reading session last?										
Under 15 minutes	39	28.5	50.0	98	71.5	52.1	137	100.0	51.5	NS
15 to 30 minutes	32	27.6	41.0	84	72.4	44.7	116	100.0	43.6	
Over 30 minutes	7	53.8	9.0	6	46.2	3.2	13	100.0	4.9	
Total	78	29.3	100.0	188	70.7	100.0	266	100.0	100.0	
Ask your child to read with you?										
Always	28	36.8	36.4	48	63.2	25.9	76	100.0	29.0	NS
Usually	11	18.0	14.3	50	82.0	27.0	61	100.0	23.3	
Sometimes	24	28.2	31.2	61	71.8	33.0	85	100.0	32.4	
Never	14	35.0	18.2	26	65.0	14.1	40	100.0	15.3	
Total	77	29.4	100.0	185	70.6	100.0	262	100.0	100.0	

Half of the parents whose children were registered with DPIL and whose children were not registered with the DPIL ask their children to read with them always or usually (50.7% and 52.9%, respectively). However, 18.2% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 14.1% of parents whose children were not, never ask their children to read with them. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'Ask your child to read with you?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 3 for further information).

Whilst 66.2% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL always asked their child questions about the pictures in the book, 46.2% of parents whose children who were not registered with the DPIL did so. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'Ask your child questions about the pictures in the book?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 3 for further details).

Most parents talked about letters in books sometimes (34.2% of parents whose children were registered with DPIL and 34.9% of parents whose children were not). However, around quarter never talked about letters (23.7% of parents whose children were registered with DPIL and 23.1% of parents whose children were not. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'Talk about letters?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 4 for further details).

Whilst 35.5% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL talked about what specific words in books mean, 41.4% of parents whose children were not registered with the DPIL do so. When parents who never talked about the meaning of specific works were compared, the proportion of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL was higher than the proportion of parents whose children were not registered with the DPIL (30.3% and 24.2%, respectively). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'Talk about what specific words in the book mean?'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (see Table 4 for further details).

Table 4: Interactions during reading activities

| | Child is registered with the DPIL | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | No | | | Total | | | |
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
Ask your child questions about the pictures in the book?										
Always	51	37.2	66.2	86	62.8	46.2	137	100.0	52.1	NS
Usually	12	15.6	15.6	65	84.4	34.9	77	100.0	29.3	
Sometimes	11	26.2	14.3	31	73.8	16.7	42	100.0	16.0	
Never	3	42.9	3.9	4	57.1	2.2	7	100.0	2.7	
Total	**77**	**29.3**	**100.0**	**186**	**70.7**	**100.0**	**263**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Talk about letters?										
Always	20	33.9	26.3	39	66.1	21.0	59	100.0	22.5	NS
Usually	12	23.5	15.8	39	76.5	21.0	51	100.0	19.5	
Sometimes	26	28.6	34.2	65	71.4	34.9	91	100.0	34.7	
Never	18	29.5	23.7	43	70.5	23.1	61	100.0	23.3	
Total	**76**	**29.0**	**100.0**	**186**	**71.0**	**100.0**	**262**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Talk about what specific words in the book mean?										
Always	14	30.4	18.4	32	69.6	17.2	46	100.0	17.6	NS
Usually	12	27.3	15.8	32	72.7	17.2	44	100.0	16.8	
Sometimes	27	26.0	35.5	77	74.0	41.4	104	100.0	39.7	
Never	23	33.8	30.3	45	66.2	24.2	68	100.0	26.0	
Total	**76**	**29.0**	**100.0**	**186**	**71.0**	**100.0**	**262**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Parents whose children were registered with the DPIL did better in terms of talking about what is happening in the story. Whilst 43.4% of parents whose children registered with the DPIL always talked about what is happening in the story, only 28.9% of parents whose children were not registered with the scheme did so. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and talking about what is happening in the story. All expected cell frequencies were greater than five. There was a statistically significant association between the status of participation in the DPIL and talking about what is happening in the story, χ^2 (3)=13.968, p=.003. The association was small (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's V=.230 (See Table 5 for further details).

Most parents always or usually asked their children questions to see if they understood the story (43.4% of parents whose children were registered with DPIL and 48.1% of parents whose children were not). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and asking questions children to see if they understand the story. All expected cell frequencies were greater than five. There was a statistically significant association between the status of participation in the DPIL and asking questions children to see if they understand the story, χ^2 (3)= 17.295, p=.001. The association was small (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's V=.257 (See Table 5 for further details).

The majority of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident reading to their children (96.2% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 95.8% of parents whose children were not). Likewise, the majority agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident singing songs and rhymes with their children (92.2% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 94.1% of children who were not). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'I am confident reading to my child' and 'I am confident singing songs and rhymes with my child'. There was no statistically significant association between the two, respectively (see Table 6 for further details).

Table 5: Interactions during reading activities

	Yes			No			Total			Chi-sq (df) p-value
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
Talk about what is happening in the story										
Always	33	37.9	43.4	54	62.1	28.9	87	100.0	33.1	13.968
Usually	15	20.5	19.7	58	79.5	31.0	73	100.0	27.8	(3df)
Sometimes	13	18.6	17.1	57	81.4	30.5	70	100.0	26.6	0.003 Cramer's V=0.230
Never	15	45.5	19.7	18	54.5	9.6	33	100.0	12.5	
Total	**76**	**28.9**	**100.0**	**187**	**71.1**	**100.0**	**263**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Ask your child questions to see if they understand the story?										
Always	24	39.3	31.6	37	60.7	20.0	61	100.0	23.4	17.295
Usually	9	14.8	11.8	52	85.2	28.1	61	100.0	23.4	(3df)
Sometimes	21	23.1	27.6	70	76.9	37.8	91	100.0	34.9	0.001
Never	22	45.8	28.9	26	54.2	14.1	48	100.0	18.4	Cramer's
Total	**76**	**29.1**	**100.0**	**185**	**70.9**	**100.0**	**261**	**100.0**	**100.0**	V=0.257

Table 6: Parents confidence in reading and singing songs and rhymes with their children

	Child is registered with the DPIL									
	Yes			No			Total			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
I am confident reading to my child										
Strongly agree	64	30.0	82.1	149	70.0	79.3	213	100.0	80.1	NS
Agree	11	26.2	14.1	31	73.8	16.5	42	100.0	15.8	
Neither agree nor disagree	3	27.3	3.8	8	72.7	4.3	11	100.0	4.1	
Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100.0	0	
Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100.0	0	
Total	**78**	29.3	100.0	**188**	70.7	100.0	266	100.0	100.0	
I am confident singing songs and rhymes with my child										
Strongly agree	59	29.5	76.6	141	70.5	75.0	200	100.0	75.5	NS
Agree	12	25.0	15.6	36	75.0	19.1	48	100.0	18.1	
Neither agree nor disagree	3	30.0	3.9	7	70.0	3.7	10	100.0	3.8	
Disagree	1	25.0	1.3	3	75.0	1.6	4	100.0	1.5	
Strongly Disagree	2	66.7	2.6	1	33.3	0.5	3	100.0	1.1	
Total	**77**	29.1	100.0	**188**	70.9	100.0	265	100.0	100.0	

The majority of parents took their child to their local library once or twice a month (42.9% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 48.9% of parents whose children were not). However, parents whose children were registered with the DPIL visited their local libraries more often as 20.8% of them visited their local library once or twice a week whereas only 9% of parents whose children were not registered with the scheme did so. Some of the families did not visit their local library at all (22.1% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 16.5% of parents whose children were not. A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and frequency of visiting a local library. All expected cell frequencies were greater than five. There was a statistically significant association between the status of participation in the DPIL and frequency of visiting a local library, χ^2 (3)=10.516, p=.015. The association was small (Cohen, 1988), Cramer's V=.199.

Table 7: Library visits and book ownership

	Yes			No			Total			Chi-sq (df) p-value
	Sample Size	**% between groups**	**% within group**	**Sample Size**	**% between groups**	**% within group**	**Sample Size**	**% between groups**	**% within group**	
	85	29		208	71		293	100.0		
How often do you visit your local library?										
Not at all	17	35.4	22.1	31	64.6	16.5	48	100.0	18.1	10.516
Once or twice a year	11	18.6	14.3	48	81.4	25.5	59	100.0	22.3	(3df)
Once or twice a month	33	26.4	42.9	92	73.6	48.9	125	100.0	47.2	0.015
Once or twice a week	16	48.5	20.8	17	51.5	9.0	33	100.0	12.5	Cramer's
Total	**77**	**29.1**	**100.0**	**188**	**70.9**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**	**100.0**	V=0.199
Number of books that are not from IL										
None	0	0	0	1	100.0	0.5	1	100.0	0.4	NS
1 to 5	3	30.0	3.8	7	70.0	3.7	10	100.0	3.8	
6 to 10	4	30.8	5.1	9	69.2	4.8	13	100.0	4.9	
11 to 20	7	50.0	9.0	7	50.0	3.7	14	100.0	5.3	
More than 20	64	28.1	82.1	164	71.9	87.2	228	100.0	85.7	
Total	**77**	**29.3**	**100.0**	**188**	**70.7**	**100.0**	**266**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

The majority of parents had more than 20 books that are not from the DPIL (82.1% of parents whose children were registered with the DPIL and 85.7% of parents whose children were not). A chi-square test for association was conducted between the status of participation in the DPIL and 'Number of books that are not from IL'. There was no statistically significant association between the two (See table 7 for further details).

Modelling

Modelling was undertaken to investigate whether parents whose children were registered with the DPIL differed from parents whose children were not registered with the scheme in relation to: socio-economic characteristics and activities that parents do with their children such as going to a local library. Hosmer and Lemeshow Test gave a p-value of .234 which indicated that the model fitted the data.

The analysis showed that parents whose children were registered with the DPIL were similar to parents whose children were not, with respect to parent age, ethnicity, employment status and child ethnicity. Conversely, parents whose children were registered with the DPIL were distinct in relation to parent marital status and child's age. Further details are proved below and in tables e, f and g in the appendices.

Parents who were either separated, divorced, widowed or single were 316% more likely to have a child registered with the DPIL, than parents who were married, had a partner or co-habiting. Parents who had a child aged under three years old were 249% more likely to register with the DPIL than parents who had a child aged over three years old. Finally, parents who visited a local library with their child once or twice a year were 66% less likely to register with the DPIL than parents who visited a local library with their child once or twice a week.

Summary and recommendations

The analysis of the questionnaires employed two methods: (a) cross tabulation (chi-square test of association/independence) and (b) statistical modelling as the relationship between more than three variables cannot be examined using cross tabulation.

The majority of children registered with the DPIL are excited to receive books from the scheme; ask their parents to be read to; and look at books by themselves every day or more than once a day. Both children who are registered with the scheme and those who are not enjoy reading and looking at books quite a lot or very much and it seems that there is no difference between the two groups.

In terms of parent-activities (reading routines), both parents whose children are registered with the scheme and whose are not, read to their children every day or more than once a day, and it seems that there is no difference between the two groups.

Children who are registered with the DPIL have longer reading sessions. Whilst 9% of parents whose children are registered with the DPIL read to their children over 30 minutes, only 3.2% of parents whose children are not registered with the scheme do so. Although half of the parents ask their children to read with them, 18.2% of the parents whose children are registered with the DPIL and 14.1% of parents whose children are not, never ask their child to read with them. A around a quarter of parents never talk about letters and or about the meaning of specific words in the book. Parents whose children are registered with the DPIL are more likely to always talk about what is happening in the story than parents whose children are not registered with the scheme (28.9%). Indeed, there is a statistically significant association between talking about what is happening in the story and participation in DPIL. In other words, participation in the DPIL makes it more likely that parents will talk about what is happening in the story (Chi-square (3df)=13.968, p=0.003). There is also statistically significant association between asking questions to see if children understand the story and participation in the DPIL (Chi-square (3df)=17.295, p=0.001). Meaning parents whose children are registered with the DPIL are more likely to ask their child questions to see if they understand the story.

Parents are confident reading to their children and singing songs and rhymes with them. In addition, parents whose children are registered with the DPIL visit local libraries with their child more often than parents whose children are not registered with the scheme. This might indicate that their awareness in relation to reading books has increased.

Receiving books from the DPIL per se does not mean that children's active participation with books will substantially increase. Parents play a crucial role in increasing children's engagement with shared book reading (Ridzi, 2014). Previous research (Reese et al., 2010) suggests that there are socioemotional and literacy advantages of training parents in shared book reading and conversations (see also Elley, 2000). Therefore, the following recommendations can be made:

- Consider providing parents whose children are enrolled with DPIL further guidance on how to engage children in reading sessions in the form of group work (e.g. family reading events) or information leaflets.

Preschool Language Scale (edition 5) (PLS5)

The Pearson's Pre-School Language Scale Fifth Edition (PLS-5) was used to assess the vocabulary of 15 children who are registered with the DPIL. The results in relation to the EC Standard Score (see Table 11, Column 2) and the Age Equivalents (see Table 11, Column 4) suggest that five children (33%) had EC scores that reflected below-average performance. Eight children (53%) had EC scores and Age Equivalents that were considered to be within the normal range. Two children (13%) had EC scores and Age Equivalents that reflected above-average performance (see Table 8).

Table 8 PLS-5 Expressive Communication Assessment Results

Child's ID	Expressive communication: standard score	Child's age on PLS-5	Age equivalent for expressive communication	Expressive communication score summary
A	78	10 months	6 months	Below average
B	81	3 years, 7 months	2 years, 10 months	Below average
C	63	16 months	6 months	Below average
D	64	1 year, 11 months	1 year	Below average
E	72	1 year, 10 months	1 year	Below average
F	100	3 years, 8 months	3 years, 9 months	Normal

G	96	2 years, 6 months	2 years, 7 months	Normal
H	110	2 years, 4 months	2 years, 6 months	Normal
I	109	2 years, 3 months	2 years, 6 months	Normal
J	103	2 years, 1 month	2 years, 4 months	Normal
K	98	3 years, 1 month	3 years, 3 months	Normal
L	108	3 years, 7 months	4 years, 1 month	Normal
M	88	2 years, 5 months	1 year, 9 months	Normal
N	116	2 years, 10 months	3 years, 3 months	Above average
O	119	1 year, 11 months	2 years, 4 months	Above average

Summary

In sum, the performance of the majority of children in relation to EC was within or above normal-level (66%, n= 10). However, five of the children's performance was below-average (33%).

Dialogic Reading Observations

Dialogic Reading is a validated shared book sharing intervention that enhances children's oral vocabulary skills (Morgan and Meier, 2008). It is a technique that uses a set of standard prompts to target children's oral vocabulary and listening skills. The reader asks the child open-ended questions about the story, evaluates the child's response; prompts the child to say something about the book, expands the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it; and repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion (Morgan and Meier, 2008). The standardized set of procedures used are known as PEER (Prompt, Evaluate, Expand, and Repeat) and CROWD (Completion Questions, Recall Questions, Open-ended Questions, Wh- Questions, and Distancing) and ensure that the child is actively participating, rather than just listening, during book sharing. Further details of these CROWD prompts and the PEER sequence are provided below alongside the results of the observations. Twelve parents and their children took part in a reading observation

and the results are detailed below and all were registered with DPIL. A more comprehensive analysis will be conducted with a larger sample size at a later date.

During the observations the majority of parents told their child the title of the book before reading it aloud (n=12, 92.3%), however only 1 parent out of the 13 (7.7%) told their child the author of the book. Less than half of the parents (n=4, 30.8%) asked their child at least one question before beginning to read the book - to build the children's interest in the story. See table 11 below for further details.

Table 11: Introducing the book

	Yes	No	Total
The reader says the title of the book to the child before beginning to read aloud	12 (92.3%)	1 (7.7%)	13 (100%)
The reader tells the children who the author of the book is before beginning the read aloud	1 (7.7%)	12 (92.3%)	13 (100%)
The reader asks the children at least one question before beginning to read the book to build the children's interest in the story. (e.g. What do you think this book is about?)	4 (30.8%)	9 (69.2%)	13 (100%)

Almost half of parents (n=6, 46.2%) created an incomplete sentence to promote their child to come up with the appropriate response, however the remaining seven (53.8%) did not. The majority of parents did not ask the child a question to help them recall elements of the story, or a question or statement that required the child to describe part of the story in their own words (n=11, 84.6% and n=10, 76.9% respectively). However, most parents did ask their child lots of 'wh' questions, i.e. questions about the story that begin with what, where, who, or why (n=8, 61.6%). The majority of parents did not ask their child questions to help them make connections between events that happen in the story to those that occur in

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their own lives (n=10, 76.9%). Most parents also did not evaluate or expand on their child's responses to questions or repeat a question to provide another opportunity for the child to respond (n=10, 76.9%). See table 12 for further details.

Table 12: Reading the book (CROWD prompts used)

	Number of times each CROWD prompt is observed				
	Zero	1 to 2	3 to 4	5 or more	Total
Completion – the reader creates an incomplete sentence to prompt the child to come up with the appropriate response (i.e. fill-in-the-blank). (Ex. To open the mailbox Sam will need to use a_.)	7 (53.8)	1 (7.7%)	4 (30.8%)	1 (7.7%)	13 (100%)
Recall – the reader asks a question designed to help the child remember key elements of the story (Ex: Can you remember what happened to Sam and Ellen on the way to the mailbox?)	11 (84.6%)	2 (15.4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
Open-Ended. The reader asks a question or makes a statement that requires the child to describe part of the story in their own words beyond just a "yes" or "no" response. (Ex: Tell me what	10 (76.9%)	1 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	2 (15.4%)	13 (100%)

you think is happening in this picture.)					
Wh-questions – The reader asks a question about the story that begins with what, where, who, or why. (Ex: What kind of shoes is Sam wearing?)	5 (38.5%)	3 (23.1%)	3 (23.1%)	2 (15.4%)	13 (100%)
Distancing – The reader helps the child make connections between events that happen in the story to those that occur in their own lives. (Ex: Sam is big enough to go by herself to get the mail. What do you do all by yourself to help mum and dad?)	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
PEER Sequence (Prompt-Evaluation-Expansion-Repetition). The reader uses a CROWD prompt, then evaluates and expands on the child's responses, and then repeats the prompt to provide another opportunity for the child to respond.	10 (76.9%)	3 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)

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Upon finishing reading to their child most parents did not ask their child a question to maintain their interest in the story or to see how the story relates to their everyday lives (n=10, 76.9% and n=12, 92.3% respectively).

Table 13: Closing the book

	Yes	No	Total
After finishing the book, the reader asks the child at least one question to maintain their interest in the story (Ex: Which do you like better, caterpillars or butterflies? Why?)	3 (23.1%)	10 (76.9%)	13 (100%)
After finishing the book, the reader asks the child at least one question that relates the story to their everyday lives (Ex: How do you feel when you eat too much food at dinner?)	1 (7.7%)	12 (92.3%)	13 (100%)

Summary and recommendations

Whilst most parents introduce the title of the book to their child before reading it aloud, they did not in general introduce the author of the book. Overall parents did not ask their child many questions, that could be considered CROWD prompts, during the observation of their book sharing. However most did ask their child 'why questions', i.e. question about the story that begins with what, where, who, or why. In addition, almost half of parents created an incomplete sentence to prompt their child to fill in the blank. Closure of the book was quite abrupt in most cases with parents generally not asking their child a question at the end. These findings suggest that parents are trying to encourage their child to actively participate during book sharing. However, whilst based on very small numbers the findings do suggest that parents may require further guidance to support their child to engage further, in particular in recalling the story, relating the story to their own life and ending the story with further questions to maintain their child's interest.

Small Steps at Home

Small Steps at Home is a home visiting programme delivered by Family Mentors and starts at 20 weeks pregnancy and runs until the child's 4th birthday. The programme contains advice, information and activities. Each visit focusses on a range of topics, which are relevant to the child's age. The aim of the programme is to improve child development outcomes. Sixty-six Family Mentors deliver Small Steps at Home in the four wards and since April 2016 1,600 children's parents have participated in Small Steps at Home.

Interviews and focus groups with Family Mentors, members of Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team and other keys staff involved in Small Steps at Home

The interviews and focus groups with Family Mentors, the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team and other key staff involved in the Small Steps at Home programme focused on:

- Implementation of the Small Steps at Home programme in Aspley, Bulwell, Hyson Green & Arboretum, and St Ann's;
- Role of the Family Mentor within the Small Steps at Home programme;
- Community workforce;
- The Small Steps at Home handbooks (content and delivery);
- Perceived outcomes and impact of Small Steps at Home on children and parents;
- Retention of parents participating in the Small Steps at Home Programme; and
- Wider workforce issues.

Findings detailed below are based on Family mentors and the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team's experiences and perceptions of the Small Steps at Home programme and Family Mentor role:

Implementation and delivery of the Small Steps at Home programme

Discussions around the implementation of the Small Steps at Home programme focused on the recruitment of Family Mentors and in particular the job advert, the interview and assessment days, and the Family Mentor salary.

Family Mentors are not selected for employment based on their educational qualifications or previous experience of employment. The advert (including job description and person specification) for the position focuses on parenting experience, local knowledge and personal qualities such as good communication skills and the ability to build trusting relationships.

> *What we were looking for were people who understood the communities, who understood parenting, lived experience of parenting. And it was not necessarily to know anything about child development. What need… necessary was to show that you could gain the trust of families and be listened to. And you had that approach that you were non-judgemental; you could go in and be accepted. That the central characteristic of… the successful characteristic of a Family Mentor is not to know everything, but it is to be able to communicate and to gain trust* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

> *We're not bothered about your qualifications, is all about your personal qualities* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

There is a perception that the advert for the Family Mentor position is vague and potentially more suited to a befriending role. Some staff perceive their actual role to be very different to the Family Mentor position advertised.

> *Participant 1: I think the job description is somewhat stretched… sort of like what we actually do, and what is in the job description, sort of like, sometimes don't really match.*
> *Participant 2: It's a bit basic, isn't it?*
> *Participant 3: The job, yeah, the job description is quite basic.*
> (Family mentors).

> *It [the job advert] kind of gives the impression that you are able to go into a family home, sit there, drink tea, help hoover up and wash the pots, and have a natter. It doesn't say that, but that's the impression that it gives. So, it needed to remove that,*

take away that whole befriending. I know we do professional boundaries when we start, which takes that away, but it needs to be there in the advert (Family mentor).

Furthermore, some staff believe the advert does not convey the full extent of the role, particularly in terms of safeguarding children, administrative tasks and the expectation that Family Mentors are also be required to organise and deliver group activities under Small Steps at Home.

It doesn't mention anything about any potential, there's a lot of safeguarding and things like that, and it doesn't mention sort of like, dealing with that (Family Mentor).

And that we'll have to, that was running groups as well, because we didn't know about the groups, did we (Family Mentor).

For one participant, the administrative responsibilities associated with the role might have changed her mind about becoming a Family Mentor:

What they should have done [during the recruitment process], certainly for me, is sat us down in an office environment and chucked a load of administration forms at me. (Family Mentor).

It is worth noting that the previous and current adverts do mention that Family Mentors are expected to run groups. They also refer to ensuring the safeguarding of children and that the post involves the completion of reports. However, the level of details with regards to groups, safeguarding and administration tasks is minimal.

Interview and assessment days

Staff were positive about the Family Mentor interview and assessment days as part of the recruitment process. Only two issues were raised. The first is the length of the interview and assessment days, which range from three to four days and were considered a lot to commit to if you have work and/or childcare responsibilities. The second issue was group interviews. Some members of staff would have liked the opportunity to participate in a one-to-one interview so they could convey their personal qualities and experiences in more detail.

I think it was, it was a lot. I think the commitment of three or four days is a lot, a lot to ask of people. That if you've already got a job, to actually take three- or four-days annual leave to attend it, for a job that you might not get is quite a big commitment (Family Mentor).

It is a commitment, particularly if you're already working or have got childcare (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Role of the Family Mentor (within the context of delivering the Small Steps at Home programme)

Family mentors viewed their role very positively. They enjoyed their work and could see the difference it was making to families:

I'm speaking for everybody here. But on the whole, we love our jobs. We love our roles (Family Mentor).

I think the difference for me is I used to work at [name of former place of work removed] as a [job title removed] on good, really good money. Like this, the difference, I'm so much happier doing this. I go home at night and you feel like you've made a difference (Family Mentor).

The parenting experience of Family Mentors was seen as being a key strength of the Family Mentor role. Family Mentors were able to relate to parents participating in the Small Steps at Home programme and they could see the value in this:

You know, if the mum's sitting in front of you looking like, you know, because she's nodding off and it's like baby hasn't slept all night, you think yeah, I can understand, you know. Rather than somebody sitting there who's, I suppose not had children or whatever, you know. You can actually say oh god, yeah, I really relate to how exhausting a new baby is, sort of thing (Family Mentor).

It was apparent that Family Mentors had taken on additional responsibilities during delivery of the Small Steps at Home programme. This included supporting families around additional needs such as issuing food bank vouchers and supporting families around housing issue and making referrals to other services where required.

We issue food bank vouchers, that's a big thing now, which we probably wouldn't have done, done at the beginning, or not as much as what… and obviously if the people can't get to the foodbank, for whatever reason, you know, then we go and fetch it and deliver it and, you know, sort of thing (Family Mentor).

So, it's going out there [visiting families to deliver the Small Steps at Home handbooks] and it's finding families that have other priorities. And I say other priorities, they are priorities, so they have, you know, we could enter a home and they might have housing issues, they might have just been served an eviction, they may not have any food. So, it's not really a challenge, it's a wonderful opportunity because then we can signpost them, and we can refer them to food banks (Family Mentor).

The Family Mentors wished to be viewed as a skilled workforce due to the amount of responsibility they had in relation to the families they supported.

We're constantly told we're not professionals, and I think a lot of the jobs, a lot of the things we're doing with families, are professional roles (Family Mentor).

Family Mentor salary

A number of staff questioned whether the salary of Family Mentors reflects their responsibilities and the complex needs of the families they are working with. For some the level of responsibility in terms of the additional support they provide to families and referrals they make regularly to other services merited higher pay.

Participant 1: We're being called support workers, and we are not support workers. So, in a way yes, you could say yes, of course we support the family, of course we do. But support workers are a completely different role, and work very, very differently from us, very different training, very different hours.
Participant 2: Very different pay!
Participant 1: I was going to say, you beat me to it. Yeah. Very different pay (Family Mentors).

> *I think if it was a case of just delivering the Handbook and that was it, yeah, then possibly not [a higher salary]. But everything else that comes with it… [the additional needs of families]* (Family Mentor).

An example was shared of a member of staff who left because she could no longer afford to live on the Family Mentor wage. The Family Mentor salary has also made people reluctant to apply for the role:

> *I actually know two people that were going to apply for this [Family Mentor] job and decided against it because they're on better money where they are now. And that is doing shop work* (Family Mentor).

However, it was highlighted by a member of staff that the salary is based on the understanding the Family Mentor role is a peer role. Yet during the course one focus group it was noted that the role of the Family Mentor has changed and there was a view that the salary should reflect this.

> *Because I'm sure you've picked up that the salary was not, and is not, particularly high. But that was very much because we didn't want qualified, necessarily want qualified people. We were looking from within that community, people who had other qualities rather than paper qualifications* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

> *And I think as the [Family Mentor] role has evolved as well, it's not what it was. It's changing massively, and circumstances [salary] have to adapt to take that into consideration. Or I think staff will continue to be lost* (Family Mentor).

Community workforce

The Family Mentors being a community workforce was recognised as a key strength of the programme. It was deemed particularly important that the Family Mentors were recruited from the community rather than professionals being brought in. There was an emphasis on parents being supported by their peers and not by professionals that are viewed by parents as part of the 'authorities'.

I am hugely of the opinion that community-based provision is the way to make a difference. That it is motivating and building capacity of people within the community to support each other that is the answer. It is not parachuting in professionals… They're the authorities; they are the people who represent the local authority… (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

And for people saying, well yeah, you're one of us, you're not you know, somebody coming in. Again, as I go out, and I talk to parents, and they'll say, well this consultation, this service has been designed you know, in conjunction with parents as a consultation. And this is what they said they wanted and you know, they didn't want professionals and they wanted peer relationship and you know (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Providing employment opportunities in local communities was also identified as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme along with opportunities for training and development of knowledge and skills:

Obviously, it's mostly local people on the team. So, it's employment, its' building you know, the knowledge of the community (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

So, I think that has been… so in terms of employment for people from the community, but also giving the community additional kind of responsibilities and training (Family Mentor).

Volunteering opportunities with the services providing the Family Mentor service (i.e. The Toy Library, Framework and Home-Start Nottingham) had led to paid employment as a Family Mentor. A number of parents have gone onto to deliver the Small Steps at Home programme as an employed Family Mentor after receiving the service themselves previously.

Volunteers, that's a huge strength of the service. And that links into our recruitment as well. So, for instance, we've just recruited; they start on the 11th February. 50% of the people who were shortlisted were volunteers. And it was done anonymous, so we didn't know who it was that we were short listing. So, it was completely confidential (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Another success of this recent campaign is that we've had two families who've come through, who applied and have been given a Family Mentor role. So, I suppose it's recognising the value in you know, it's not only just changing the lives of the babies that we're working with, it's the families and the communities. So, whether it you know, for somebody receiving the service to actually come through and want to then deliver it, you know, it's a huge statement (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Small Steps Big Changes handbooks

Content of the handbook

Family Mentors were very positive about the Small Steps at Home Handbooks overall:

It's clear, it's set out really well in that it, it follows the journey of the child, the child's development. So, it's all applicable to the stage at which that child is (Family Mentor).

Content of the handbook is excellent (Family Mentor).

Topics in the Small Steps at Home handbooks that the parents particularly liked and found useful, from the perspective of the Family Mentors, were: weaning – the process of gradually introducing an infant to solid foods; sleep routines; toilet training; managing behaviours; keepsakes and hands on activities such as handprints and footprints, tea parties, and the fruit box and shoe box activities; facts and statistics included throughout the handbooks; and the tips sheets.

There's some really positive feedback about weaning, and they'll say, families with consecutive children, this baby eats far better than the others, because I've had this support, and I didn't know I could give him this and, you know, the instructions, things like baby-led weaning and the selection of foods that you can give. And I've had that quite a lot, people saying it's really worked this time (Family Mentor).

They [parents] tend to like the doing, don't they, the hands-on. We would do a handprint, we do ink footprints when [their children are] little (Family Mentor).

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Mine [parents] always want the tea party, the tea party one. And the fruit in the box, the hiding the fruit, that goes down a storm, doesn't it (Family Mentor).

The shoe box with all different sensory bits and pieces in. And the majority of the time you're taking these things and introducing them as a game or as a learning tool, and the next time you go they've got one, they've made one, they've put one together (Family Mentor).

I think they, like the, like facts and statistics, and I think some people find that quite interesting. It varies on different families, but some quite sort of like that, because they can relate that, and they can... you know, see how that works (Family Mentor).

I think the parents like the tip sheets [information sheets]. Especially for dads that have been at work all day, and they're like, they might look down and oh, shall I give it a read (Family Mentor).

It's, the thing that come up are sleep, fussy eating, weaning, toilet training, and disobedience, socioemotional development (Family Mentor).

Concerns were raised about a small number of topics covered in the handbooks: 'tips for dads' section, the sections on 'arguments' and 'relationships', the amount of content on sugar, the 'three kittens' scenario', and the 'temperament quiz'. The 'tips for dad's' section was considered by some as sexist towards the male sex and stereotypical in terms of father's behaviours and circumstances. It was also deemed irrelevant to single parents.

Tips for dad is sexist... Help mum clean, praise her... he could be a stay at home dad (Family Mentor).

The section on arguments was considered as not realistic in terms of the examples provided and there were concerns that it could be viewed as patronising.

I always feel, do you know when I read it, I always feel the parents are looking and thinking well my arguments sound nothing like this, you know (Family Mentor).

You've got to be careful not to be patronising and condescending as well, because you say how do you argue, do you argue nicely, you know. You don't want to sound ridiculous as well (Family Mentor).

There were mixed feelings about the relationship section with some Family Mentors of the opinion that it was not their place to approach parents about their relationships and others finding it useful:

If we're just talking about what they don't want, it's the whole relationship, I don't think they feel it's our place to come in and say to them about relationships (Family Mentor).

I did it not too long ago, and I was really dreading it because this family had had particular problems at this time. And actually, it worked really, really well. And at the end, you know, by the end of it, you know, they came to the sort of conclusion that, dad said, well actually, I've never admitted this to her but there's something that I do that I know that really annoys her, and maybe I should stop doing it (Family Mentor).

The amount of information on sugar was questioned by one Family Mentor who recommended condensing this section. She was also of the opinion that this section could be viewed as lecturing families on their diet.

But the sugar content, there is such a lot of overload on sugar. I can see why we need to do it, and I tend to tailor that a little bit as well, because again, that can be one where you feel like you're going in and almost preaching. Think that one can do with splitting up a little bit. I think it almost needs to be maybe condensed just a little bit (Family Mentor).

There were mixed opinions about discussing diet with mothers who have only recently given birth. Some Family Mentors felt it was not the right time and others stressed that it depends upon how the topic is delivered:

Participant 1: I always feel really crap saying that to mothers because they've like, given birth about six weeks ago, they're probably already feeling really crappy about

the size that they are, and everything changing in their body.   And then I'm sitting there telling them how they should be eating a bit healthier and, you know like, it is a bit of a, you know, it could be a really touchy subject for some women. And one of the ladies in particular that I visit, and she'd like talked about how she's always sort of struggled with her weight. I could tell when we were talking about things, she was finding it like, a bit uncomfortable
Participant 2: Maybe it's about how it's delivered, how it's put down. It could be like changed from what are you eating, to how are you looking after yourself? (Family Mentor).

The 'three kittens' scenario' and the 'temperament quiz' were divisive topics. Whilst one Family Mentor valued the 'temperament quiz', another did not and another Family Mentor did not fully understand the quiz.

Participant 1: I like the temperament quiz.
Participant 2: No, I don't like that one.
Participant 3: I don't understand that one.
(Family Mentors).

There were varied views about the 'three kittens' scenario. Some Family Mentors liked using this scenario to explain attachment styles whereas others found it patronising. There were also issues around getting across the message behind the 'three kittens' scenario to parents from different cultures and where English is not their first language.

I really, really like three little kitten story (Family Mentor).

I don't like the one with the three kittens. My families look at me as though it's patronising. I'd take it out, personally (Family Mentor).

Can I just say something as an English, as a second language speaker, it is language, linguistical barrier I think, but also cultural barrier. For myself, sometimes I cannot understand the subtlety of English culture. It's not as straightforward as my culture. And it's hard to read, so I think there is that as well. So, we know what the story's

about, but it, in some cultures like mine, you're told as it is. Yeah, black and white. You don't have these sort of, you know, metaphor (Family Mentor).

Try doing that [the 'three kittens' scenario] with an interpreter (Family Mentor).

It was suggested that some parents do not particularly like completing tasks that require them to record information likening it to giving them 'homework'. It was also highlighted that parents whose first language is not English do not complete forms.

Sometimes the written parts, some of the families, you know, I will say it's up to you if you want to write it, I can write it, you don't have to write it, we could talk about it. I always make that clear. But sometimes, when they're writing, it feels like school. Like homework (Family Mentor).

Trends to be only English families that complete forms (Family Mentor).

*Participant 1: They don't, they don't want to do the written work. So, the sheets, for me, I feel have been… the Book's fantastic, in a sense that it gives us an area, a guide. Whereas the sheets with the Books, I don't think they're necessary.
Participant 2: I second that motion, yeah* (Family Mentor).

It was suggested by a number of participants, that some information contained in the Small Steps at Home handbooks is out of date and that the handbooks require updating:

I think there's a sense that the handbook needs updating. We need to get, we need to… I think there's been some evaluation, but literally it's the same handbook from three years ago. It's just about keeping it up-to-date in the experience (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Stuff on welfare and benefits in the handbook is out of date (Family Mentor).

Delivering the Small Steps at Home Handbooks

An issue raised by some Family Mentors was how families' other needs often take priority over delivery of the content of the Small Steps at Home handbooks, particularly where families are in crisis.

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> *I think half my visit is, you know, I go in, probably have 15 minutes of how you doing, what have you been up to? And then that's when it hits. I ask that question. What can I help you with, food bank vouchers, and sort that out. There's 10 minutes of doing the Handbook* (Family Mentor).

> *Because it's difficult, because if somebody is in crisis, and hasn't got any money, and hasn't got any gas, for you to sit there and say, sort of like, oh well, I've come, I've got your book* [Small Steps Big Changes handbooks] *here* (Family Mentor).

Family Mentors would like the freedom to use their judgment in relation to when some of the topics included in the handbooks are discussed, tailoring visits to according to families' circumstances.

> *I think some of the things, we need the freedom to drop in where we feel it's appropriate. So, it's not so structured. Flexible* (Family Mentor).

The section on relationships was a prime example of a topic Family Mentors would like the flexibility to introduce at a later point. In this instance the opportunity to introduce it to coincide with the length of time they have been working with the family:

> *Sometimes, if that's the first visit, or whatever, if we've received the referral late, to actually go in on a first visit and say oh, by the way, I'm here to talk about your, what your relationship's like?* (Family Mentor).

> *Participant: It [relationship section] comes in within the first six months, but we don't, unfortunately we don't always get to go into the home when a baby's just born, or antenatally either.*
> *Interviewer: And what would you suggest could be a solution to that?*
> *Participant: Just talking about it at a later time* (Family Mentor).

There was a perception that some of the topics covered were not relevant to all families. A few Family Mentors were of the opinion that they were telling some parents what they already knew. As a result, some Family Mentors took the decision to tailor the delivery of the Small Steps at Home handbooks according to the parent's level of understanding, whether they already had children, and their circumstances at the time.

The activity sheets within the handbooks, you know, they can be a little bit tongue in cheek when you're like, am I seriously delivering this to somebody that's on their sixth baby… And it can be that, where they [parents] will just say, do you know what, I don't need this (Family Mentor).

So, we tend to tailor that, because all our families are so very different. The girls [Family Mentors] are probably the same as well, that you know if it's a family that they're already doing those lovely things with baby. You don't need to get the sheet out and oh, I've got this one but I'll leave it here with you, I'm not going to go over it because you do all these things anyway (Family Mentor).

A streamlined second set of Small Steps at Home Handbooks were suggested for parents who already had children prior to accepting the Small Steps at Home programme. This may also be useful for those that have already participating in the Small Steps at Home programme with their first child but have accepted the service for their second child.

If you visited antenatal [during pregnancy] and then they've had one child, and then the next year they've had another child, and you go back you're going back to antenatal [during pregnancy] again, you're going over the same… But I suggested that, can you remember, a couple of years ago. I said they could have done with a handbook for a second child (Family Mentor).

Because we visit, I visit personally myself, somebody with six, seven children, you know. I'm sitting there, sort of like, with my little handbook thing, thinking she probably knows more than what I do, through the six, seven, children (Family Mentor).

I mean yesterday was a typical day; I went to see a 20-year-old on her first baby and a 36-year-old on her 5th baby. You know, two totally… both wanted totally different sort of information (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

A need for an electronic copy of the Small Steps at Home handbook and having it on tablet when visiting families was also suggested. Forms could then be completed online, and Family Mentors would not have to carry a set of heavy handbooks with them on each visit.

> *Would like an online handbook and online forms for the parents. Have the handbook on a tablet* (Family Mentor).

> *I just think having the Handbook in some kind of digital format would be amazing especially for people that walk. The handbooks can be quite heavy, particular if you've got three visits in a day, and you've got the handbook, and you've got all the sheets that you need to take as well, and you're carrying ASQs, and all your other bits from your groups. And it's like, you've got this big, heavy rucksack on your back, and it's, it's hard. I'm not asking that we all be given an iPad, but if it's an option to put it on to your own tablet, or media. Just so it's there, you can click on [hand]book two visit* (Family Mentor).

It was suggested that the tip sheets be available in other languages:

> *I suppose for the feedback or the challenge that I am aware of with handbooks is not being available in different languages. Even if it was just some… perhaps some tip sheets or some… just something you know. And it's like the flyers you know, having those available* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

> *I mean particularly when you're doing things, like talking about improving communication and language, and the tip sheet of reading with your children and things like, I just, I think it's just that it would be so much better if you could give something in their… I know there's a lot of languages, I'm not suggesting we do all of them. But certainly, some of the main ones that we need* (Family Mentor).

Relationships between Family Mentors and parents

The feedback about relationships between Family Mentors and parents was very positive with parents on occasion even going to see their Family Mentor at their offices, i.e. outside of the home where the Small Steps at Home programme is delivered.

> *I hear it back all over the place from partners particularly. So, and so said this, so and so said that you know, they love their Family Mentor* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

I mean some will even come and knock on the office door (Family Mentor).

It was suggested that parents trust Family Mentors more than other professionals and staff from other agencies noting that some families have felt let down by other services in the past.

> *Participant 1: They trust us. They trust us more than they would possibly trust another agency.*
> *Participant 2: A lot of them have been let down by some agencies, a lot of them are very weary of… Or they feel judged* (Family Mentors).

Parents like to have a consistent Family Mentor throughout receipt of the Small Steps at Home programme. Where a parent, who is in receipt of Small Steps at Home, has another child they often wish to have the same Family Mentor, they have for their current child, when offered the service again for a subsequent child. Long-term sick leave proved to be a problem in terms of the importance of having consistent Family Mentor. There were instance of parents, whose Family Mentor was on sick leave, deferring involvement in the programme until their Family Mentor returned, or ceasing involvement all together.

> *In fact, that goes back to the thing you was talking about continuity. There's a lady I spoke to on Saturday actually, and she said, well if I have a second baby, I do want… I want [name of Family Mentor removed] and I say, that's fine. And we've got some people that are on baby number three, and still going for it [taking part in the Small Steps at Home programme]* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

> *We've had a couple of our Family Mentors who have been on long term sick leave. Very unfortunate. And it's been quite interesting that their families have either said I don't, you know, I don't want anybody else, so I'll decline the service. Or, I'll wait until they come back. And that is a testament to the relationship they've built with that individual. But again, you asking that question is making me think about it from a sort of critical perspective. And I'm thinking that not, the important thing for them is the relationship, not the programme* (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

It was suggested by one Family Mentor that some parents remain involved in the programme even where they do not necessarily require further support through the Small Steps at Home Programme. This is because they have a developed a relationship with the Family Mentor and wish to continue seeing them.

> *I find that, because of the time, and that they've got to know me that well, they just want me to keep coming. The fact that I'm trying to deliver the Handbook, and they've done all that at nursery* (Family Mentor).

The complex nature of Family Mentors living in the same neighbourhood as the parents they are supporting through Small Steps at Home was highlighted. In particular, where safeguarding concerns arise and the perceived pressure to act as a role model to parents. The difficulty Family Mentors face when having to make a referral to social services, due to child safeguarding concerns, was mentioned in terms of how it is difficult not to continue to worry about the family when living in such proximity.

> *I suppose one challenge came up recently, one of our Family Mentors live a few streets away. And she did tell her [parent], we had to make a safeguarding referral. And she stated that she, she didn't feel as though she could you know, shut off. And she's actually started to think about moving away… For those of us that don't live in the ward, we drive off and then we, there's that cut off point. When we [Family Mentors who do not live close to the families they work with] cross the barrier it's almost as though we then leave everything behind us. Whereas for that individual, she's still in the mix, she's living in the mist of it. And she said she just didn't feel, she didn't feel like she could shut off from that* (Family Mentor).

The pressure for Family Mentors to act as role models to families was apparent. This pressure appeared to cross over into their personal life and affected their daily routines in terms of grocery shopping and the behaviour of their own children.

> *We talk a lot about healthy eating, so when she [Family Mentor] goes shopping she goes to the local supermarket. She says that if she buys a bottle of wine, or she buys food that is not healthy, she hides it, she hides it, and she's always very conscious… But I suppose that, personally I think that is, putting wine in your basket, it is role*

modelling, and unhealthy foods as well. Because what we also need to be teaching is everything in moderation. So, yeah, but it is, it can be hard for people (Family Mentor).

It's pretty much; please don't judge me when I'm screaming at me kids in Tesco (Family Mentor).

It was also acknowledged that this was in some ways a two-way street with families also potentially concerned that their Family Mentor may judge them and their child's behaviour if they see each other outside of the programme:

Their child has been having a tantrum in a supermarket and you can tell they feel awkward. And I've avoided them so I don't make them feel uncomfortable, because we've all been in that situation where our child has had a tantrum in the supermarket (Family Mentor).

The complex nature of being a friend to parents but also a worker was not lost on the Family Mentors. They recognised that this was difficult to balance.

You've been seeing somebody for that period of time; you become a friend, don't they. So it's very, very difficult. I think we're all, we all keep a very professional boundary when we're in there. But obviously, it's a professional boundary, but you've, you've got to give a certain amount to gain that person's, and that family's, trust (Family Mentor).

It is important to note that despite these complexities, Family Mentors being local to the area was a key strength of the programme in terms of the relationship between the Family Mentors and parents who saw them as 'one of their own'.

But then the flip side to them living in the area that we work in is that some parents love it, and they… she's a normal person, she's not come… [in from another area]. Her children have tantrums too (Family Mentor).

Outcomes, from participating in the Small Steps at Home programme, included not only improved outcomes for children but for parents also. There was a perception that the programme had led to developments in children's confidence, language and communication, and improved English for children whose parents first language is not English.

> *And the nursery in which they [one of the families] attend, who are seeing lots of their children, had actually commented and said look, you know, I'm pretty sure it's probably the work that you guys do at home [Small Steps at Home programme], but the difference in this child to their other children has actually been amazing, you know. That the communication and the language development, their social skills and things like that* (Family Mentor).

> *The children a lot more confident, a lot more happier* (Family Mentor).

> *I think children sort of like, are more I think, you know, their language skills are maybe starting to develop a bit earlier, a bit earlier than what they would* (Family Mentor).

> *Children's improvement in English where it is not their parents first language* (Family Mentor).

The programme had also led to improvements in parent's confidence also.

> *I'm just thinking the confidence in parents we experience. Just thinking about the feedback that we receive, you know, parents feel as though they've got a professional friend to bounce off ideas with. Again, they feel more manageable and more informed, you know, as to where to go for additional support. They feel more confident, not everybody engages with other services well, so they feel more confident, especially when they can come back and have another conversation with their Family Mentor about how things have gone* (Family Mentor).

> *Leads to them [parents] feeling more confident with their babies, which hopefully will lead to confident toddlers* (Family Mentor).

There was also a view that participation in the Small Steps at Home programme had led to better relationships between child and parents and more interactions, and parents being more safety conscious.

> *It's all that sort of soft qualitative stuff, isn't it? I, you know, I feel better, I've got a, you know, a really good relationship with my baby, I understand what, I think I'm a better parent. You've listened to me on the days I didn't know what I was doing, I didn't feel good, you were there. It's that stuff. Spending time with their children. Because we think that is giving them that healthy, emotional start in life… thank you for showing me how to play with my children, or whatever it is, is the impact. And that's great* (Family Mentor).

> *I think parents are more aware, just because of some of the stuff that we do in the Handbook. Especially trying to prevent injuries and we do the one on the chemicals and just keeping it… so I think they're a bit more aware of keeping small items and things like chemicals [away from children]* (Family Mentor).

There was a view that parents felt more supported and equipped as a parent since participating in the Small Steps at Home programme.

> *I think it makes parents a little bit more, feel a bit more supported* (Family Mentor).

> *I think for some mums that do really well, and those that really just want to engage and all the rest of it, I think it gives them confidence to know that actually they are doing it right. For those that might not be getting it right, equipping them with the tools and the skills to actually, if they choose to, make that difference* (Family Mentor).

Retention of parents participating in the Small Steps at Home Programme

The Small Steps at Home programme is in its infancy with the first set of families not yet reaching the point where the programme comes to end, i.e. on their child's 4th birthday. As such is not possible to say how many families remain involved in the programme until it is completed. However, interviews and focus groups with Family Mentors, and members of the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team suggest that to-date not many families have

withdrawn from the programme. Where families have disengaged from the Small Steps at Home programme it is for several reasons including:

- When a Family Mentor has gone on long-term sick leave and parents do not wish to have a different mentor (as discussed earlier in the 'relationships between Family Mentors and parents' section):
- When a child has started nursery;
- When a mother returns to work;
- When a family move out of ward (this was particularly common in Arboretum which was noted to be a transient area where families live temporarily before finding more permanent accommodation); and
- When parents feel they no longer require additional support.

We definitely have those that withdraw, but I think the retention is far more, we don't have that many withdrawing, not really (Family Mentor).

I think that becomes an issue, trying to fit the visits in when they're at nursery (Family Mentor).

I think, when she's gone back to work, I'm not going to say your priorities change. Your baby's still your priority, but you've got different… your entire focus is that you're trying to fit everything in. And we do offer Saturdays and evenings, but if that's your day off, that's your family time, you don't necessarily want somebody [visiting you at home]. Unless you are struggling with something (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Quick turnover of families in Arboretum. Lots of temporary accommodation so they start on the Small Steps at Home programme and then move out of ward and they don't understand why they can't have the service [when they move to a different area] (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Some people feel as though they've had enough support, and so they are ready to just move on (Family Mentor).

It was suggested that visits to parents to deliver the Small Step at Home programme became difficult once the child starts nursery[2] or the mother returns to work due to less time to accommodate a Family Mentor home visit. Support over the telephone or support groups were suggested as alternatives where families wished to remain involved but struggled to find the time.

> *So, mum's going back to work, or taking up the two year offer of child care. So, one of the things that we looked at was doing phone support, to do the ASQs and things. And having a group set, like a little taster session of one of our groups and have Family Mentors involved in that. So, then the parents will come and they'll be able to ask off the cuff questions and things, and have it delivered in that way* (Family Mentor).

It was evident that Family Mentors found it difficult to say goodbye to families when they ceased involvement in the Small Steps at Home programme. It was recognised that as the children, of the first cohort of families participating in the programme, approach their 4th birthday this will become more common. The emotional impact that this will have on the Family Mentors and families participating in Small Steps at Home was highlighted and it was noted that this stage of the programme is unchartered territory.

> *Participant 1: One of the first families I worked with, so from September 2015, moved out of the area just before Christmas. So, their little girl was over three. And obviously the programme finishes at three years eleven months, and so we were hoping that we could have seen it right through to the end. And I still do have families that hopefully that will happen. But it was my surprise at the feelings I had, and the family had, when those visits stopped. And it completely sided, I can't think of the phrase, you know, took the wind out…*
> *Participant 2: Side-swiped?*
> *Participant 1: Yeah, side-swiped me. I was not prepared, at all, for that. That was very, very hard* (Family Mentor).

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[2] Please note in the original specification for the Small Steps at Home programme it was outlined that there would be a different delivery model for those children entering nursery at two years old those who are not. As such it is expected that the number of visits would reduce at this time point.

It was really, really difficult [saying goodbye to a family], yeah. and I think that,
there was no sort of network in place to deal with that. Because again, it was brand,
brand new, and it probably hadn't even been thought about, had it, how to support,
not the families, us, you know (Family Mentor).

Wider workforce issues

Initially there were challenges introducing the Family Mentor service, and in particular the
Small Steps at Home programme, into the existing workforce (e.g. health service, children's
services). The issue apparently centred on their view that the Family Mentors were not
experienced and trained sufficiently to work with families. There was also discontent due to
the introduction of this new workforce at a time when there were financial cuts across other
services which had led to uncertainties around job security.

There were conversations that the existing workforce understandably, both health
visitors and children's centres at that time who had faced cuts. They were
demoralised, they were insecure and in comes this well paid you know, big pot of
money with lots and lots of new people who weren't qualified and they weren't
trained, potentially in their eyes, taking over and putting them out of a job. So, you
had an awful lot of resistance (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

However, this has since been rectified through engaging with the wider workforce to
improve their understanding of the Family Mentor service, establish a good working
relationship and stressing that the Family Mentor service is a complementary service to
support the wider workforce.

We've worked through them by talking… by just talking to people and reassuring
people and trying to bring workforces together to… and stressed all along, we're a
complementary service, we're not taking it over. This is to support and enhance the
work that you're doing (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

How did we get past it? We started to set up meetings, and we had these lunches
where we could talk and showcase bits of our work. We invited them to our [name of
meeting removed], SSBC set up a few other training sessions that we could all attend.

The Hot Topics, they're called. Lots of opportunities to just really meet up with one another and discuss our roles. As I say, there were meetings here, there were meetings at SSBC as well, to just really raise that understanding (Family Mentor).

But, you know, I think, I certainly feel, and I've had a conversation with the managers of health visiting, that we have got that sort of level of respect for each other now at our level. And I would say that the, I've not heard anything contrary from our Family Mentors, or health visitors that I know, in terms of their working relationship. It feels really good at the minute (Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team).

Summary and recommendations

To summarise, several strengths and challenges were identified.

- Family Mentors viewed their role very positively. They enjoyed their work and could see the difference it was making to families.
- The parenting experience of Family Mentors in particularly was deemed as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme.
- The Family Mentors being a community workforce was recognised as a key strength of the programme. It was deemed particularly important that the Family Mentors were recruited from the community rather than professionals being brought in.
- Providing employment opportunities in local communities was also identified as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme along with opportunities for training and development of knowledge and skills.
- The interview and assessment days were viewed very positively but recognised as a big commitment for those people in work or with child care responsibilities.
- The feedback about relationships between Family Mentors and parents was very positive and a consistent Family Mentor throughout receipt of the Small Steps at Home programme was identified as of key importance. The complex nature of being a friend to parents but also a worker was not lost on the Family Mentors. They recognised that this was difficult to balance.

- Family Mentors were very positive about the Small Steps at Home Handbooks overall. Some suggested improvements were made including up-dating the handbooks and creating an electronic version.

- Outcomes, because of participation in the Small Steps at Home programme, included not only improved outcomes for children (confidence and improvements in language and communication) but for parents also (confidence and increased knowledge/support).

- Where families have disengaged from the Small Steps at Home programme it was often due to time constraints (returning to work or child entering nursery), because they did not need support anymore or had moved out of ward, or due to the Family Mentor being on sick leave or leaving the service and their refusal to accept another Family Mentor.

- There was a perception that the adverts for Family Mentor roles did not fully convey the role of the Family Mentor or the level of responsibility and administration work.

- The salary was perceived as not in line with the level of support Family Mentors provide to families and the responsibility that this entails.

- The role of the Family Mentor has evolved since its inception, and they have taken on additional responsibilities where families are in crisis. Such as providing food bank vouchers, supporting families around housing issues and referring families to other services for support when necessary. Consequently, they wished to be recognised as a skilled workforce.

Recommendations:

- Consider discussing the Family Mentor advert with Family Mentors and the Family Mentor Senior Leadership Team to explore whether it requires revising.

- Examine whether the current Family Mentor salary reflects their role, skills and responsibilities.

- Consider up-dating the Small Steps at Home Handbooks based on comments above and the possibility of providing an electronic version.

- Consider having the Small Steps at Home tip sheets available in other languages.

Relationships with family mentors

All interviewees described high levels of satisfaction in terms of the relationship that they had with their Family Mentor. Parents described their Family Mentors as 'nice', 'lovely', 'down-to-earth', trustworthy', 'respectful' and 'helpful' and the relationships as 'really good':

> *Fantastic. She's amazing. I mean she is the third Family Mentor that I was [allocated]. And after, when that lady left me, I said I'm not, I'm going to leave … I'll give my space to somebody else. But then again, they were very persistent, and I'm glad they were because my current family mentor… I can't ask for somebody better* (Semira).

> *My Family Mentor's great, she's awesome. Like I look forward to when she's coming, and she's ever so like… I don't know if she's just happy, like her persona. It's like when she comes, she's just happy. Like she just makes me feel happy just being there, do you know what I mean? So, I do look forward to it.* (Magdalena).

> *Life would not be the same without our family mentor* (Caroline).

Parents described their relationships as being different from those they had with other professionals. They described the contact with Family Mentors as akin to having someone 'like us' to give advice and be on hand in a more informal way:

> *It's just like having a family friend* (Kerry).

> *I don't feel like she's a mentor, I can talk to her … she's very kind* (Jamila).

> *You know you've got that support, whether it's like a text message away, or anything like that. Like sometimes it's hard to go to the doctors and stuff that you don't really want to go to anyone too official* (Magdalena).

For one participant, the close bond they had developed with the Family Mentor contributed to their need for keeping the same Family Mentor throughout:

We've grown that familiar, is it familiar bond… because I know her now, and I'd love to have her, she's just part of my family, let's say. And especially for my son, because I'd like to see people that he's familiar with, to see around him, instead of changing, so that's really helpful (Jayla).

Consistency of the Family Mentor was really important, and parents were keen to keep the same Family Mentor throughout even when moving to a different area:

Because of the housing situation, we were placed in emergency, temporary accommodation and obviously it was out of the range where [name of Family Mentor removed] could have come to. So, we did try and meet up at my mum's once (Jayla).

The importance of being able to simply 'talk to someone' was highlighted by a large number of participants as the cornerstone of the relationship. One parent found value in being able to:

.. ask questions to that you wouldn't necessarily… that's sounds awful, you wouldn't necessarily want to ask you friends because they might turn around and go what? (Karen).

She's been brilliant. If I need any advice and you know, and just to, yeah, just to chat about things in generally. Yeah, she's been really good (Sarah).

Often an advantage afforded to Family Mentors was the opportunity to spend more time with parents:

They take a bit more time and talk to you about things and you know (Sarah).

When she comes, she stays longer, instead of doing everything quick and then go. And yeah, so if we do it like longer time, we have time to chat a lot about the Programme and what is on schedule (Jayla).

Parents described the value of having someone affirm their daily experience of parenting, offering reassurance and ultimately building their confidence:

Both [Family Mentors] were very nice, like very encouraging, and any way I was struggling they were daily helping me and encouraging me, and telling me oh, you're doing a great job, that was something … every mother wants that, yeah. And they're telling you yeah, you're doing a great job, look, the baby's alright, everything's is perfect (Kareena).

I feel like I can, I feel like I can you know, open up to her and talk to her and you know, about his development… (Sarah).

I think having someone to… that's kind of seeing the progress we're making has been the most useful part (Rose).

So it's like a little, little chat really, just another person to talk to, see how she's been [and] how I do (Penny).

One parent described the importance of feeling reassured in times of particular distress:

It's just, she just, she doesn't make you feel like you're asking any stupid questions, which you obviously always do, and she just put me at ease straight away. And I was very ill with post-natal depression at the beginning, and she was very, very good with me (Karen).

As a result, parents felt able to talk about a range of issues, not simply those covered by the Small Steps at Home handbooks:

She's just very welcoming, when she's here, we just talk. We talk about the Small Steps but also like, I feel like I could say anything to her (Magdalena).

The fact that they're there and they support you and they will come and see you was more helpful than anything else for me (Karen).

So, having somebody that's, you know that's just there if and when needed. It could be for any advice really, like that's nice to know, like that gives me comfort (Magdalena).

In a few cases, parents commented specifically on the relationship between the Family Mentor and the children in the house, a positive aspect that parents valued:

> And the thing is, my Family Mentor has an amazing relationship with my older children, because they recognise her when, if she's, if there's ever a home visit they will recognise her, and they, they know who she is. And yeah, they, they actually do ask, if there's a home visit, that the children could be around...She, yeah, she gives activities for them. And then we can focus on what we're doing (Semira).

> She's really good with the girls, both of them love her (Penny).

> She actually made a car for my daughter, a cardboard car (Kareena).

> She loves seeing [name of Family Mentor removed]. I think there was a period, probably about a month ago; everyone she met was called [name of Family Mentor removed] (Karen).

Frequency, duration and location of contact

The majority of parents received support from their Family Mentor very quickly after being approached about the Small Steps at Home scheme, with most participants suggesting first visits occurred within one to two weeks. One parent however, was under the impression that the programme was for first time mums only.

> Oddly enough I, I didn't want to participate in their group, because I understood it to be help for, say, on the lines of new mothers. But obviously the child that I was pregnant with is, was my fourth. So it didn't, I didn't see, I didn't think it was relevant for me. But they were very insistent, and I'm glad that they were persistent, because I've learned so much through them (Semira).

Participants appreciated the frequency of visits and recognised the need for visits to reduce as time went on, and examples were offered where the reduced contact was seen as beneficial to parents:

> I think they're just right actually. Because at the beginning, it was nice to have someone every week, because … well I had loads more questions. And now it's

monthly, you can kind of get your own routine with life, and it's not too invasive now as such (Karen).

I think it drops to a month, a monthly visit. And that's fine, because obviously you don't need as much support (Semira).

One parent however felt that the initial weekly visits was too much:

At the beginning it was a bit too much...I mean every week, like around a new born as well, it's like trying to make sure you've got enough time. It was a bit too frequent (Kerry).

The experience of having Family Mentors visit in the home was broadly seen as a positive experience by participating parents. When coupled with positive relationships, the home was seen by some as a relaxed environment:

Yeah, it just, it's that comfort, and the advice I'm getting. And as well, with it being in the home environment, you know you're so much more relaxed (Semira).

For some, this was about the convenience of not having to venture out during inclement weather, or with a new born baby:

That was the most comfortable thing because before that I didn't have a car, and like sometimes it's really cold and wintry weather. So, you can't take out the kids, and you have to make up your mind before leaving the house. And I feel really nice when somebody is coming to my house, and I'm happy to have them in my house more. It's more comfortable for me, to be honest (Kareena).

Yeah, especially with a new born, because you don't always want to leave the house. And you probably wouldn't get to the appointments on time, and yeah, much easier than coming here. Even for just things like feeding her, because I'm not that confident feeding her out in public at the minute so… or in new places. So, if she needs a feed and we're here, then it's less nerve wracking (Rose).

One parent identified the benefits for scheduling visits around the emerging routines of parenthood:

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The advantages, I can work around my time and get her in, so knowing that I'm in in the morning, so we schedule everything in the morning for her to come. So, by the time she gets in, we will finish having our shower, having our feed, and we're just waiting for her so that we can have that play day talk (Jayla).

In some cases, Family Mentors provided an important source of social contact, helping parents to overcome social isolation:

It's just having someone that you can ask all these questions to who's had kids and are older, so they've been through it. And at the beginning, we moved up like three weeks before I had her and I didn't know anyone up here, because my husband's family are up here (Karen).

I think it would help a lot of struggling parents, even just for a small chat, it's… when I first had my daughter and when I was pregnant, I did not want to leave the house. So, it was nice to have somebody to come and to talk to, other than my two-year-old (Penny).

Another valued the privacy of meeting in the home:

I prefer it because I don't like to be around… how people… and everybody's listening to your business, I don't like it (Penny).

Parents recognised that the home provided a 'real' environment both in terms of asking questions related to making a house safe but also to ensure that children felt settled during the visits:

I think it's good because you then… the questions you want to ask are more relevant because you can like… do you think this is safe or you know, we do this over here. And then there's all her stuff to keep her amused (Karen).

Others were happy to go out to meet the Family Mentor, valuing the opportunity to have contact outside of the home, made possible by the local nature of the programme:

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Literally at the drop of a hat, because she's so close for me to be able, her office is close enough that I can just drop in if I need her. Yes, she does. She does do home visits (Semira).

As we have identified elsewhere in this report, Family Mentors were seen as demonstrating high levels of flexibility and responsiveness to the lives of the parents they were working with. In one case, this involved adapting a programme, normally delivered in a group setting, to be delivered in the home:

I mean at one point they offered Triple P...And they were quite, because of my schedule I couldn't get to the sessions that they were holding. My family mentor was kind enough to offer that for me at home...And she brought a colleague with her, which is really great. Because then it helped, it meant that someone had to watch the children so I could focus on the actual Triple-P course (Semira).

Views on impact

Building confidence in parenting

So being first time mum and everything, I was quite unsure of how much I should be trying to get her to do....So it's given me you know, areas to work towards and you know, no you don't have to do too much, just you know (Rose).

Parents identified a number of different ways in which they felt the Family Mentors had helped them in building confidence and skills in parenting. They also identified aspects of impact in relation to their child's development. Parents commented on how they had been supported to 'see things differently':

But it's also gave me the chance to see all the different things that I would have missed if I didn't have her coming. So, it is definitely something that I'm grateful for (Magdalena).

I mean a lot of the stuff was eye-opening. Even though, yeah, I've been through it before, sometimes you miss stuff that you wouldn't think (Semira).

Things that you wouldn't really look at, like her confidence or her emotional growth and things like that. So obviously having that, it kind of… I can kind of see that growing. Where before, in like other children, I didn't really look for that (Magdalena).

Gaining confidence in parenting arose throughout the interviews, with some parents feeling reassured that what they were doing was the right approach. In other cases, new techniques or approaches to addressing aspects of child development or behaviour led to an increase in confidence:

I'm not doubting myself for no reason. So that's where I think it's the best, they encourage you and they support you. They make you a more confident mum, they don't doubt you (Kareena).

Confidence that we're doing alright (Rose).

We've been more confident with her [child] (Mark)

One participant shared their experiences of being able to access groups and activities for the first time as a result of engaging with the Family Mentor:

… like I never used to take my children to the Health Visitor or owt like that. So, it's me, kind of including myself into these types of things really. Like having the confidence and not being too invert within myself to like join in (Magdalena)

The same parent made the link between her own growing confidence and the confidence of her child:

As you see, she's getting more confident. Like when the Mentor first came, she was having none of it. But now, you've seen it, she's quite confident (Magdalena).

Parents described trying new things with their children, broadening their experiences and interactions as a result of picking up tips or suggestions from the Family Mentor. One parent described increasing the amount she talked to and sang to her child. She also described taking part in everyday activities that broadened experiences for her child:

We took her outside and got her to put her feel on the grass, and she loved it… well she's experiencing more things that… like with, like some of the activities of show her new things and stuff. Things that we didn't think about (Rose).

The link between trying out new activities and building parental confidence was evident in this example, with one parent gaining confidence in playing with her children:

…she's helping me with how to find activities for the kids inside the house, during holiday time, because I was really struggling with her, with these things, because I didn't know how to play with my kids (Kareena).

Supporting positive development

Parents were positive about the range of approaches used by the Family Mentors to support them. They were able to identify a number of different ways in which they felt they had been helped with parenting strategies or could see a change as a result of what they had learnt.

Helping with routines was seen as positive, both in terms of supporting a child's development but also the connectedness in the family, as this case shows:

…like when we get together like, eating routine, sitting together at the dining table so she can learn how to eat with the family (Jamila).

Yeah, so one of the activities was to kind of note down their usual routine during the day...And you can see that it has improved into more of a routine rather than just yeah, all over the place (Rose).

There were examples aplenty of testing out what had been learnt during their interactions with the Family Mentor, including trying out techniques to assist with sleeping routines and behavioural challenges:

I was really struggling about how to make this boy sleep at night...So every time I leave his teddy bear with him, hug, and then yeah, he falls asleep. I point at him. There's a little fight and then he goes to bed (Jayla).

We do the terrible two's, like with the distraction. Like when she gets mad and things like that, we kind of try and figure out what's frustrating her and kind of come at it a different way… she gets frustrated, but then she calms down as well, like quicker than she would normally (Magdalena).

Parents recognised that Family Mentors drew on different strategies to support families including using the handbook, drawing on their own experiences of parenting and where possible, giving hands-on demonstrations of techniques that could be used in everyday situations. Family Mentors provided 'tips' for addressing parenting challenges:

But sometimes it is, like prunes, I knew it, that they help the constipation. But I forgot it, and that's why, here comes a reminder, like when they come, they tell you, they're reminding you of something that you already knew, but you forgot for some reason (Kareena).

One parent described the important impact of regular visits from a Family Mentor on her own wellbeing during her period of depression:

It was quite bad with depression at the beginning, and it was just a bit of a lifeline for me for someone to come around and just be there for an hour, once a week is just… I couldn't even put a price on how much that made a difference to me (Karen).

Another recognised that the programme had strengthened her own emotional wellbeing as well as her child's:

…Because obviously, I can easily be overwhelmed. So that is for the kids as well as me, yeah (Semira).

Many parents found help with feeding and weaning to be most beneficial. There were examples offered where parents reflected on putting what they had learnt into practice:

Food and nutrition, because all added things like carrots, your broccoli and everything, but there's a lot more food that I could give to my child that I didn't know I could give. So that really helped. Because now she eats better than my 2½ year old eats (Penny).

Using techniques to record the child's reactions to food was identified by one participant as helpful:

> *…you could make comments as well along the different foods. You know, as to his reaction, what was his reactions and things like that? So, I found that really helpful, because we followed that, you know we followed that book as a guide, so that was really good* (Sarah).

For most participants, it was the advice, suggestions and general reassurance on a range of issues that mattered, with parents able to seek support for different challenges relating to parenting:

> *The weaning was good, she was really helpful. We're just starting to talk about the sleeping, like moving onto a bigger bed. And I think my husband talks to her a lot about toilet training. The kind of just stuff to do with her is always helpful because I was a bit clueless at the beginning on what I'm meant to do with a new-born. You spend ages trying to get pregnant and I was like, oh my god I've got a child, what am I meant to do with the thing? So, she gave us loads of like helpful things at the beginning for that* (Karen).

There was just one case of a participant identifying very limited impact from the programme and the feeling that the service was perhaps not needed for them:

> *I feel like somebody else could do with the help more than I do, but I just feel quite rude to say, I don't want you to come to my house anymore. But I do think the help, the support and everything, all the information you give is great. And I think it's all very good. But I feel somebody else could benefit from it more than I could* (Penny).

Small Steps at Home Handbooks

The most useful topics, discussed during home visits and detailed in the Small Steps at Home handbooks, and identified by parents were:

- Foods (moving onto solid foods and dealing with fussy eating)
- Sleeping routines

- Household safety
- Interactive play
- Baby massage
- Bathing

Some parents found the tip sheets (information sheets given to parents by Family Mentors) useful as they allowed parents to refer to topics discussed during home visits at a later date and refresh their memory. Others did not use them on a regular basis.

> "Factsheets [tip sheets] were brilliant from the beginning (Mark)

> Yeah brilliant weren't they, because it's something that you can refer back to as well (female) (Caroline)

> Tips sheet, I hardly used the tip sheets… I used the dietary one, the one in which you, about the weaning. So, I used that, but the rest, I don't really remember if I used any other tip sheet (Kareena).

Many parents also found the ASQ useful as they felt reassured them that their child's development was on schedule. However, a small number of parents worried when their child did not meet the stages of development for their age.

> "Brilliant [ASQs]. It is that peace of mind I think, knowing that she's doing all the right things and where she should be" (Caroline).

> I enjoyed it [ASQ] because it was nice to know where she was, because I'd got to a point where I thought she wasn't as forward, or I thought she might be a bit behind and like no she's well… she's on target and it's just nice knowing that (Chantelle).

> I they they're ok [ASQs]. I think in some bits, if she doesn't meet them, I'm like "oh god what am I doing wrong?" (Karen).

Although completing activity sheets during visits were optional some parents were put off by completing this paperwork:

[In terms of less helpful] I'd probably go with the activity sheets, just because I haven't been able to write anything on them. Just because of being busy with her (Rose).

Probably all the sheets that you fill out on your own, because I don't go and fill them out (Karen).

Sometimes she'll like sit there, and she'll have to ask these questions. And then I'm trying, I'm answering and I'm trying to think like, oh, what should the answer be. And it's like 'I'm not at school (Kerry).

Signposting

Participants were able to identify a number of examples where Family Mentors had signposted to other services, both those offered by SSBC and others outside of it. Parents had been told about groups, play centres, clubs and swimming lessons, and were encouraged to attend by the Family Mentor:

Yeah, she often leaves a timetable, she keeps raving about the cook and plays (Karen).

She emails and WhatsApp pictures of any groups and things like that, so she does keep in regular contact through the phone, of the activities that go on (Magdalena).

…it was just a play centre for children, they just run around. She even goes out of her way to show me the map and how to get there and stuff (Nala).

In one case, this meant responding to a particular point of crisis for one parent:

There was one point I was struggling, I know, through benefits. I had to, there was a, there was a gap where there was just no, no income. So, they supported me, support, they pointed me in the right direction for food bank, to get food bank vouchers… they now work, I believe, with other charities who offer food parcels, which they steered me to as well. They've helped me to get a referral to [Place], because with the amount of clothing I will need for all of them. So yes, they have pointed me in the right direction to get more, to access more help (Semira).

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Attendance at other Family Mentor delivered groups was mixed with the majority of parents being signposted to them but not all attended them. Reasons given for not attending SSBC groups were time constraints, distance from the home, and other commitments:

> [Go to] Messy Play and we do other things as well, but they are a bit far away, or maybe because I have other things on as well, so I can't go to every single session (Kareena).

> I don't have much time unfortunately [to attend SSBC groups (Nala).

> Now I'm back at work again, they don't [SSBC groups] don't seem to fit in for us (Karen).

Feedback from parents who did attend SSBC groups was positive.

> I go to the Cook and Play sessions. I enjoy that (Kareena).

> I've been to their Cook [and Play], I've been to several of them and I've even brought the older ones to it, which was fantastic. Messy Madness is fantastic, but I hate the messiness. But the whole point is that the kids get messy somewhere else and I don't have to worry about it! (Semira).

> Bump, Birth and Baby… it went more into detail if you know what I mean because they have the bath there and you know they're demonstrating things like that which was really good (Sarah).

Summary

Parents received the Small Steps at Home programme quickly and were happy with the frequency of visits from their Family Mentor. They were also pleased that the programme was delivered at home where they felt relaxed and it also meant that they did not have to venture out when they were adapting to the arrival of a new addition to the family. All parents were extremely positive about their relationship with their family mentor and valued the support they provided. They described the contact with Family Mentors as akin to having someone like them to give advice and be on hand in an informal way. The Small

Steps at Home programme made a difference to children and parents in a number of areas including improvements in wellbeing and building confidence in both parents and children, children eating healthy food options, improved sleeping routines and behaviour. Many parents valued the tip sheets finding them useful for reference and found the ASQs reassuring in terms of their child's development. Parents were signposted to other support and many attended SSBC groups.

Recommendations

- Consider introducing a transition period when a Family Mentor is leaving the service and new Family Mentor is being introduced to a family.
- Consider formally introducing the opportunity for Family Mentors to spend time discussing and meeting family's other needs.
- Ensure that Family Mentors reiterate to parents that completing activity sheets is optional. Where parents would like to complete the activity sheets - offer support particularly where their first language is not English.

Further progress

Data collection tools (i.e. surveys, interview schedules and observation guides) and accompanying information (i.e. information sheets and consent forms) have also been developed for Group Triple P. Work has also been undertaken to access data held by SSBC including outcomes for families participating in projects and interventions under Small Steps Big Changes. In addition to the above, work has commenced on the cost-benefit analysis, which will be undertaken to assess whether an intervention generates an increase in social welfare. This will be achieved through a detailed analysis of the costs of the intervention, the associated benefits and the difference between the two - if benefits outweigh the costs then the project can claim to be making a positive contribution to welfare.

Conclusion

The first year of the evaluation of Small Steps Big Changes focused on the DPIL and the Small Steps at Home programme. The aim of DPIL, under SSBC, is to support children to develop

communication and language skills, and a deep love for reading. A review of the literature suggests that children registered with the DPIL are excited and interested in books, are read to more frequently by their parents and interact more during book reading compared to children not registered with the scheme. Parental education and age also appear to impact on book sharing with parents who have remained in education for longer more likely to read to their child, and older parents more likely to spend longer reading to their child. However, children from larger families and from families where both parents work are read to less. Length of time also appeared to impact on frequency of reading, with parents whose children have been registered with the DPIL for longer, more likely to read to their child daily. In addition, the DPIL cohorts generally performed better on language and communication assessments than non- DPIL cohorts. However, these findings need to be interpreted with caution as they are based on a small number of studies and none of the participants in any of the studies were randomly assigned to the DPIL programme (due to the nature of delivery of this books scheme) to ensure that samples represented the target population. This ultimately limits the generalisability of the findings and makes conclusions of causal relationships between the Imagination Library, and reading routines, and language and communication performances difficult.

Findings from the Reading Routines Questionnaire also show that children registered with the DPIL are excited to receive books from the scheme indicating a love of books. The majority, of both parents whose children are registered with the scheme and those who are not, read to their children every day or more than once a day and it seems that there is no difference between the two groups. Yet, children who are registered with the DPIL have longer reading sessions and their parents are more likely to talk to their child about aspects of the book they are reading such as asking questions about pictures in the book and the story. Parents whose children are registered with the DPIL visit local libraries with their child more often than parents whose children are not registered with the scheme. This might indicate that their awareness of the importance of reading books with their child has increased. Parents whose children are enrolled with the DPIL would benefit from further support to ensure that their children are actively participating in shared book reading. This could be provided through further guidance on how to engage children in reading sessions in the form of group work (e.g. family reading events) or information leaflets. The

questionnaire is still live, and efforts are being made to increase the sample size. As such the data will be re-analysed at a later date with a larger sample size.

It is too early to draw conclusions from the Dialogic Reading Observations and PLS5 assessments and analysis with a larger sample size is planned before full conclusions can be drawn and recommendations provided. Results from the Dialogic Reading Observations suggest that parents are trying to encourage their child to actively participate during book sharing. However, whilst based on very small numbers the findings do suggest that parents may require further guidance to support their child to engage further.

The administration of the Imagination Library could be improved through and developing a system in place whereby SSBC are notified when a child registered with the Imagination Library changes address. The reach and impact of the Imagination Library could be enhanced by amending the criteria for registration under SSBC so that that children that move into the area, aged up to five, have access to the Imagination Library.

The Small Steps at Home programme aims to improve children's communication and language, social and emotional development and nutrition. It also aims to ensure there is a good relationship between Family Mentors and parents. Findings from interviews with staff and parents about Small Steps at Home suggest that some children's confidence, language and communication, and behaviour had improved because of participation in the Small Steps at Home programme. There were also instances of healthier eating and better sleeping routines. The relationship between Family Mentors and parents was very good and a consistent Family Mentor throughout receipt of the Small Steps at Home programme was identified as essential. Further work is planned to examine the impact of Small Steps at Home on children's outcomes (i.e. children's communication and language, social and emotional development, and nutrition), in particular analysis of the results of the Ages and Stages Questionnaires, Key stage 1 results for children aged 5 and children's weight at reception year (aged 4 to 5).

Family Mentors being a community workforce and having parenting experience were recognised as a key strength of the Small Steps at Home programme. The role of the Family Mentor has evolved since its inception, and they have taken on additional responsibilities.

Consequently, they wished to be recognised as a skilled workforce and a salary that reflects this. The Family Mentors have experienced challenges integrating into the children's wider workforce. Family Mentors were very positive about the Small Steps at Home Handbooks overall. Some suggested improvements were up-dating the handbooks and creating electronic versions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Imagination Library (Small Steps Big Changes): Parents and carers questionnaire

1. Do you have a child that receives books from the Imagination Library book gifting scheme?

Yes	
No	

If you answered 'No' please do not continue to complete questionnaire as it has been created for children that are part of the Imagination Library book gifting scheme.

2. Are you the child's:

Mother	Father	Other (e.g. relative, friend)

2a. If other please provide details below:

3. Do you live in Nottingham?

Yes	
No	

If you answered 'No' please do not continue to complete this questionnaire as has been designed for parents and carers of children that are part of the Imagination Library book scheme in Nottingham only.

4. Please provide the first four characters of your postcode (e.g.NG1 2):

5. How many of your children receive books from the Imagination Library?

1	2	3	4 or more

Please answer the following questions in relation to one child. If more than one of your children receives books from the Imagination Library please complete a separate questionnaire for each child.

6. How long has your child been receiving books from the Imagination Library?

Less than 6 months	6 to 11 months	12 to 18 months	19 to 24 months	25 months to 3 years	More than 3 years

7. How excited is your child to receive books from the Imagination Library?

Very excited	Somewhat excited	Neutral	Not very excited	Not at all excited

8. Time spent reading can vary amongst families. Please tell us about reading routines in your home.

	Not at all	1 to 2 times a month	1 to 2 times a week	3 times a week	Every day or nearly every day	More than once a day
How often do you (or someone else in your household) read to your child?						
How often do you (or someone else in your household) and your child sing together?						
How often does your child ask you to read to them?						
How often does your child spend looking at books by themselves?						

9. If you do read to your child, how long does a reading session usually last?

Under 15 minutes	15 to 30 minutes	Over 30 minutes

10. All adults read with children in different ways. Please tell us how often you (or someone else in your household) do the following things when you share a book with your child.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Ask your child to read with you?				
Ask your child questions about the pictures in the book (e.g. Who is that? What are they doing?)				
Talk about letters (e.g. Ask your child what a letter is and what sound it makes, point out letters in the book that are in your child's name)?				
Talk about what specific words in the book mean?				
Talk about what is happening in the story (e.g. Ask your child what they think will happen next before turning the page or lifting a flap)?				
Ask your child questions to see if they understand the story?				

11. Children's reading interests vary. Please tell us how much your child enjoys reading books and joining in with songs and rhymes.

	Not at all	A bit	Quite a lot	Very much
How much does your child enjoy reading and looking at books?				
How much does your child enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes?				

12. Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am confident reading to my child					
I am confident singing songs and rhymes with my child					

13. How many children's books that are not from the Imagination Library do you have at home? (So these can be books you bought, books from the library or ones bought for your child by friends and family).

None	1 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 20	More than 20 books

14. How often do you visit your local library?

Not at all	Once or twice a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week

15. In the last 12 months has your child gone to any of the following groups or services run by Small Steps Big Changes?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Stories, Songs and Rhymes			
Jiggle and Wiggle			
Story Time			
Chatterpillars			
Boogie Tots			
FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day)			

16. Have you seen books from Imagination Library being used in a group setting (e.g. Stories, Songs and Rhymes) such as a library?

Yes	No	Not sure

16a. If yes, have you picked up any tips or ideas for using Imagination Library books at home after seeing them used in group a setting such as a library?

Yes	No	Not sure

17. If you go to any other reading groups or activities please provide details below:

18. If you have any further comments about the Imagination Library please provide them below:

Below are some questions about you and your child, which we ask to ensure that we get the views of a wide cross-section of people.

19. Is English your first language?

Yes	
No	

20. How old are you?

17 or under	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 40	41 or over

21. What is your ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	
Mixed / Multiple ethnic background	
White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	
Other ethnic group	
Prefer not to say	

21a. If other please provide details below:

| |
| |

22. What is your current employment status?

Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Not in employment	Student	Homemaker (i.e. stay at home parent or carer)

23. What is your marital status?

Married	Civil partnership	Co-habiting	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single

24. How old is your child?

Under 1 years old	1 years old	2 years old	3 years old	4 years old	5 years old

25. What is your child's ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	
Mixed multiple ethnic background	
White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	
Other ethnic group	
Prefer not to say	

25a. If other ethnic group please provide details below:

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26. What sex is your child?

Male	Female	Other

Appendix 2: Children not receiving Imagination Library Books (Nottingham Only): Parents/carers questionnaire

1. Do you have a child that receives books from the Imagination Library book gifting scheme?

Yes	
No	

2. How old is your child?

Under 1 years old	1 years old	2 years old	3 years old	4 years old	5 years old	Over 5 years old

3. Do you live in Nottingham?

Yes	
No	

4. Please provide the first four characters of your postcode (NG1 2):

5. Are you the child's:

Mother	Father	Other (e.g. relative, friend)

5a. If other please provide details below:

6. Time spent reading can vary amongst families. Please tell us about reading routines in your home.

	Not at all	1 to 2 times a month	1 to 2 times a week	3 times a week	Every day or nearly every day	More than once a day
How often do you (or someone else in your household) read to your child?						
How often do you (or someone else in your household) and your child sing together?						
How often does your child ask you read to them?						
How often does your child spend looking at books by themselves?						

7. If you do read to your child, how long does a reading session usually last?

Under 15 minutes	15 to 30 minutes	Over 30 minutes

8. All adults read with children in different ways. Please tell us how often you (or someone else in your household) do the following things when you share a book with your child.

	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Never
Ask your child to read with you?				
Ask your child questions about the pictures in the book (e.g. Who is that? What are they doing?)				
Talk about letters (e.g. Ask your child what a letter is and what sound it makes, point out letters in the book that are in your child's name)?				
Talk about what specific words in the book mean?				
Talk about what is happening in the story (e.g. Ask your child what they think will happen next before turning the page or lifting a flap)?				
Ask your child questions to see if they understand the story?				

9. Children's reading interests vary. Please tell us how much your child enjoys reading books and joining in with songs and rhymes.

	Not at all	A bit	Quite a lot	Very much
How much does your child enjoy reading and looking at books?				
How much does your child enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes?				

10. Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am confident reading to my child					
I am confident singing songs and rhymes with my child					

11. How many children's books do you have at home? So these can be books you bought, books from the library or ones bought for your child by friends and family.

None	1 to 5	6 to 10	11 to 20	More than 20 books

12. How often do you visit your local library?

Not at all	Once or twice a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week

13. In the last 12 months has your child gone to any of the following groups or services run by Small Steps Big Changes?

	Yes	No	Not sure
Stories, Songs and Rhymes			
Jiggle and Wiggle			
Story Time			
Chatterpillars			
Boogie Tots			
FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day)			

14. If you go to any other reading groups or activities please provide details below:

15. If you have any further comments please provide them below:

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Below are some questions about you and your child, which helps to ensure that we get the views of a wide cross-section of people.

16. Is English your first language?

Yes	
No	

17. How old are you?

17 or under	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 40	41 or over

18. What is your ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British	
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	
Mixed / Multiple ethnic background	
White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	
Other ethnic group	
Prefer not to say	

18a. If other please provide details below:

19. What is your current employment status?

Employed full-time	Employed part-time	Not in employment	Student	Homemaker (i.e. stay at home parent or carer)

20. What is your marital status?

Married	Civil partnership	Co-habiting	Separated	Divorced	Widowed	Single

21. What is your child's ethnicity?

Asian or Asian British	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	
Mixed multiple ethnic background	
White English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	
Other ethnic group	
Prefer not to say	

21a. If other ethnic group please provide details below:

22. What sex is your child?

Male	Female	Other

Appendix 3: Descriptive statistics for parent and child socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests

Table a: Descriptive statistics re parent socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests

| | Child is registered with the DPIL | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | | | No | | | Total | | | |
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100		
Parent										
Mother	80	29.9	96.4	188	70.1	96.4	268	100.0	96.4	NS
Father	1	14.3	1.2	6	85.7	3.1	7	100.0	2.5	
Other (e.g. relative, friend)	2	66.7	2.4	1	33.3	0.5	3	100.0	1.1	
Total	**83**	**29.9**	**100.0**	**195**	**70.1**	**100.0**	**278**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Parent Employment Status										
Employed full-time	16	23.9	20.8	51	76.1	27.1	67	100.0	25.3	NS
Employed part-time	35	30.2	45.5	81	69.8	43.1	116	100.0	43.8	
Not in employment	7	53.8	9.1	6	46.2	3.2	13	100.0	4.9	
Student	0	0	0	5	100.0	2.7	5	100.0	1.9	
Homemaker (i.e. stay at home parent or carer)	19	29.7	24.7	45	70.3	23.9	64	100.0	24.2	
Total	**77**	**29.1**	**100.0**	**188**	**70.9**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table b: Descriptive statistics re parent socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests (continued)

	Child is registered with the DPIL									
	Yes			**No**			**Total**			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100		
Parent Ethnicity										
Asian or Asian British	1	6.7	1.3	14	93.3	7.5	15	100.0	5.7	NS
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	4	80.0	5.3	1	20.0	0.5	5	100.0	1.9	
Mixed / Multiple ethnic background	5	50.0	6.6	5	50.0	2.7	10	100.0	3.8	
White British	59	27.1	77.6	159	72.9	85.5	218	100.0	83.2	
Other ethnic group	6	54.5	7.9	5	45.5	2.7	11	100.0	4.2	
Prefer not to say	1	33.3	1.3	2	66.7	1.1	3	100.0	1.1	
Total	**76**	**29.0**	**100.0**	**186**	**71.0**	**100.0**	**262**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

* The analysis was run with the following two categories: Married, Civil Partnership and Co-habiting were merged (1); Separated, Divorced, Widowed, Single were merged (2)

Table c: Descriptive statistics re parent socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests (continued)

	Child is registered with the DPIL									
	Yes			No			Total			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100		
Parent Marital Status										
Married	31	19.9	40.3	125	80.1	66.5	156	100.0	58.9	17.322 (1df) 0.000 *
Civil partnership	5	62.5	6.5	3	37.5	1.6	8	100.0	3.0	
Co-habiting	20	30.8	26.0	45	69.2	23.9	65	100.0	24.5	
Separated	2	33.3	2.6	4	66.7	2.1	6	100.0	2.3	
Divorced	0	0.0	0.0	1	100.0	0.5	1	100.0	0.4	
Widowed	0	0.0	0.0	0	100.0	0.0	0	100.0	0.0	
Single	19	65.5	24.7	10	34.5	5.3	29	100.0	10.9	
Total	**77**	**29.1**	**100.0**	**188**	**70.9**	**100.0**	**265**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Parent Age										
18 to 24	4	36.4	5.3	7	63.6	3.7	11	100.0	4.2	NS
25 to 34	48	32.0	63.2	102	68.0	54.3	150	100.0	56.8	
35 to 40	16	20.5	21.1	62	79.5	33.0	78	100.0	29.5	
41 or over	8	32.0	10.5	17	68.0	9.0	25	100.0	9.5	
Total	**76**	**28.8**	**100.0**	**188**	**71.2**	**100.0**	**264**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
English First Language										
Yes	69	28.3	90.8	175	71.7	93.1	244	100.0	92.4	NS
No	7	35.0	9.2	13	65.0	6.9	20	100.0	7.66	
Total	**76**	**28.8**	**100.0**	**188**	**71.2**	**100.0**	**264**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table d: Descriptive statistics for children socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests

Child is registered with the DPIL	

	Yes			No			Total			Chi-sq (df) p-value
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	
	85	29		208	71		293	100		
Ward										
Hyson Green and Arboretum	5	35.7	7.5	9	64.3	4.8	14	100.0	5.5	81.362 (4df) 0.000
Aspley	15	38.5	22.4	24	61.5	12.7	39	100.0	15.2	
Bulwell	32	66.7	47.8	16	33.3	8.5	48	100.0	18.8	
St Ann's	13	33.3	19.4	26	66.7	13.8	39	100.0	15.2	
Not SSBC Ward	2	1.7	3.0	114	98.3	60.3	116	100.0	45.3	
Total	67	26.2	100.0	189	73.8	100.0	256	100.0	100.0	

Table e: Descriptive statistics for children socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests

	Child is registered with the DPIL	

	Yes			No			Total			
	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100		
Child Ethnicity										
Asian or Asian British	1	6.3	1.3	15	93.8	8.0	16	100.0	6.1	3.997 (1df)
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	5	83.3	6.5	1	16.7	0.5	6	100.0	2.3	0.046 *
Mixed multiple ethnic background	13	48.1	16.9	14	51.9	7.5	27	100.0	10.2	
White British	54	26.2	70.1	152	73.8	81.3	206	100.0	78.0	
Other ethnic group	3	50.0	3.9	3	50.0	1.6	6	100.0	2.3	
Prefer not to say	1	33.3	1.3	2	66.7	1.1	3	100.0	1.1	
Total	**77**	**29.2**	**100.0**	**187**	**70.8**	**100.0**	**264**	**100.0**	**100.0**	
Child Sex										
Male	42	31.1	56.0	93	68.9	50.5	135	100.0	52.1	NS
Female	33	26.6	44.0	91	73.4	49.5	124	100.0	47.9	
Total	**75**	**29.0**	**100.0**	**184**	**71.0**	**100.0**	**259**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Table f: Descriptive statistics for children socio-demographic characteristics and Chi-square tests (continued)

	Child is registered with the DPIL			
	Yes	No	Total	

	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Sample Size	% between groups	% within group	Chi-sq (df) p-value
	85	29		208	71		293	100		
Child Age										
Under 1 years old	10	47.6	13.0	11	52.4	5.5	21	100.0	7.6	20.652 (6df) 0.002
1 years old	22	38.6	28.6	35	61.4	17.5	57	100.0	20.6	
2 years old	24	33.8	31.2	47	66.2	23.5	71	100.0	25.6	
3 years old	17	22.4	22.1	59	77.6	29.5	76	100.0	27.4	
4 years old	4	9.5	5.2	38	90.5	19.0	42	100.0	15.2	
5 years old	0	0	0	9	100.0	4.5	9	100.0	3.2	
Over 5 years old	0	0	0	1	100.0	0.5	1	100.0	0.4	
Total	**77**	**27.8**	**100.0**	**200**	**72.2**	**100.0**	**277**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Appendix 4: Table e: Estimated fixed effects of socio-demographic characteristics and parent-child activities for the prediction of the participation in the Imagination Library

	Model 1	Model 2
Socio-demographic characteristics	exp(B)	exp(B)
Is English your first language (Yes)	0.71	
Are you the child's? (Mother)	3.53	
What is your ethnicity (White)	1.53	
How old are you? (25 to 34)		
Under 24	1.88	
Over 35	0.81	
What is your current employment status? (Employed full-time)		
Part-time	1.55	
Unemployed	0.95	
What is your marital status? (Married/Civil partnership/Co-habiting)		
Separated/Divorced/Widowed/Single	3.88**	4.16***
What is your child's ethnicity? (White)	2.09	
What is your child age? (Over 3)	4.23***	3.49***
What sex is your child (Female)	1.44	
Activities that the parents do with their children		
How often do you read to your child? (Every day or more than once a day)	0.43	
How often do you and your child sing together?(Every day or more than once a day)	0.99	
How often does your child ask you read to them? (Every day or more than once a day)	1.42	
How often does your child spend looking at books by themselves? (Every day or more than once a day)	0.79	
How long does a reading session usually last? (Over 15 minutes)	0.66	
Do you ask your child to read with you? (Always/Usually)		
Sometimes	1.05	
Never	0.66	

Appendix 5: Table f: Estimated fixed effects of socio-demographic characteristics and parent-child activities for the prediction of participation in the Imagination Library (Continued)

	Model 1	Model 2
Activities that the parents do with their children	exp(B)	exp(B)
Do you ask your child questions about the pictures in the book? (Always/Usually)		
Sometimes	1.03	
Never	2.41	
Do you talk about letters? (Always/Usually)		
Sometimes	0.96	
Never	0.39	
Do you talk about what specific words in the book mean? (Always/Usually)		
Sometimes	0.90	
Never	1.07	
Do you talk about what is happening in the story? (Always/Usually)		
Sometimes	0.71	
Never	1.00	
Do you ask your child questions to see if they understand the story? (Always/Usually)		
Sometimes	1.02	0.70
Never	3.19*	1.43
How much does your child enjoy reading and looking at books? (Quite a bit/Very much)		
Not at all	1.00	
A bit	1.16	
How much does your child enjoy joining in with songs and rhymes? (Quite a bit/Very much)		
Not at all	3.69	
A bit	0.61	
I am confident reading to my child (Agree/Strongly agree)		
Neither agree nor disagree	0.80	

Appendix 6: Table g: Estimated fixed effects of socio-demographic characteristics and parent-child activities for the prediction of participation in the Imagination Library (Continued)

Activities that the parents do with their children	Model 1	Model 2

I am confident singing songs and rhymes with my child (Agree/Strongly agree)	exp(B)	exp(B)
Neither agree nor disagree	0.52	
Disagree	2.08	
How many children's books that are not from the Imagination Library do you have at home? (More than 20)		
None	1.00	
1 to 20	0.98	
How many children's books that are not from the Imagination Library do you have at home? (Once or twice a week)		
Not at all	0.62	0.81
Once or twice a year	0.29*	0.34*
Once or twice a month	0.50	0.54