



Using Bookstart with families: our programme best practice guidance

Jen Luk, Senior Programme Developer,
BookTrust, UK

Who we are

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. We are dedicated to getting children reading.



Each year we reach **3.4 million children across the UK** with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading.

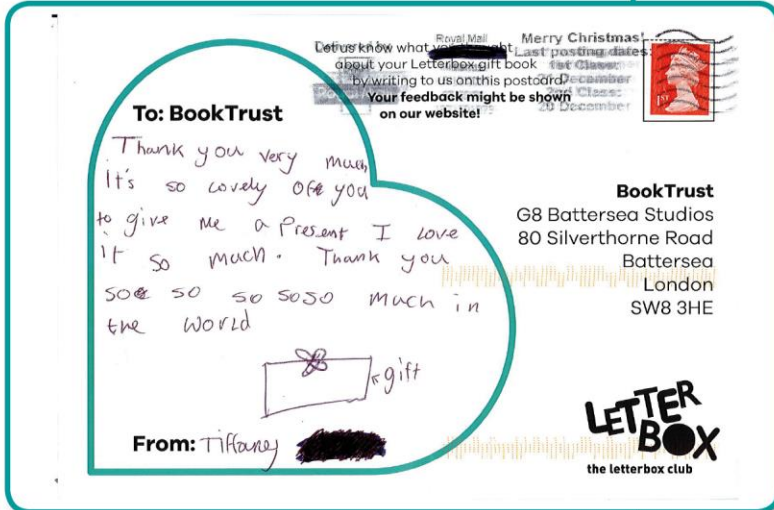
Scale

We are national in scale, working in every region in England, Northern Ireland and Wales.



Impact

BookTrust exists to get children reading, and children reading more.



Our universal programmes reach families across the country to get them started on their reading journeys, whilst our targeted programmes provide extra help to families who need more support.

Partnerships

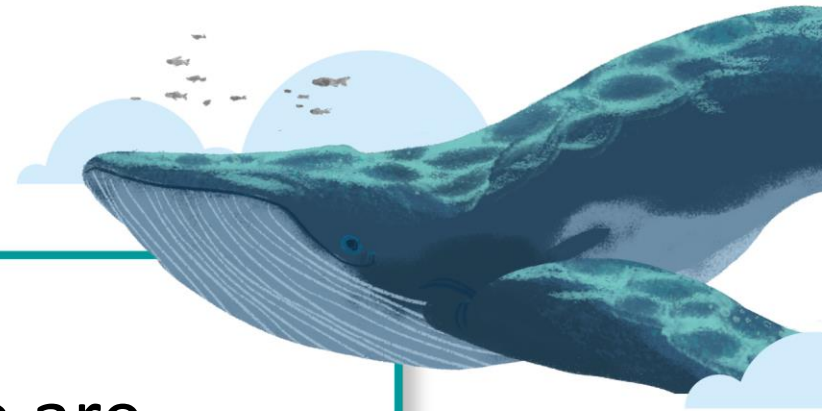
We rely on an incredible alliance of partners to get children reading. From our Local Government delivery partners to the individual health visitors who deliver our packs.



We are enormously grateful for this support which enables us to **make such a difference to children's lives.**

Beneficiaries-led

As a Programmes team, we are transitioning from programme management to design and development to make sure that supporting families is at the heart of what we do.



Context for Bookstart Baby

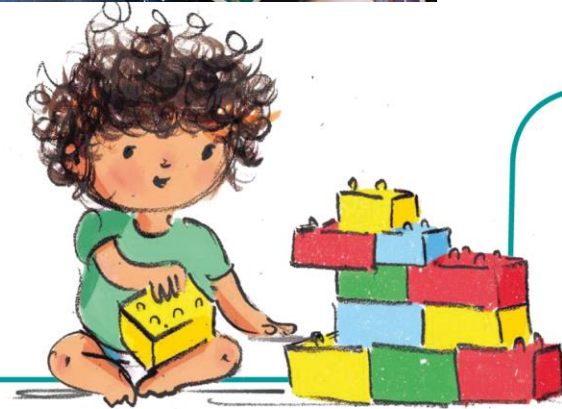
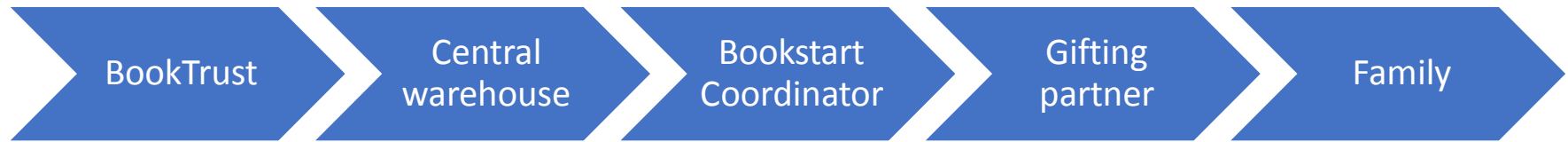


Bookstart Baby

- The Bookstart Baby programme began 27 years ago as a small pilot in one city with 300 babies
- Bookstart Baby packs now go out to every baby aged 0-12 months in England and Wales
- Contains
 - 2 books
 - Guidance booklet
 - Rhyme sheet

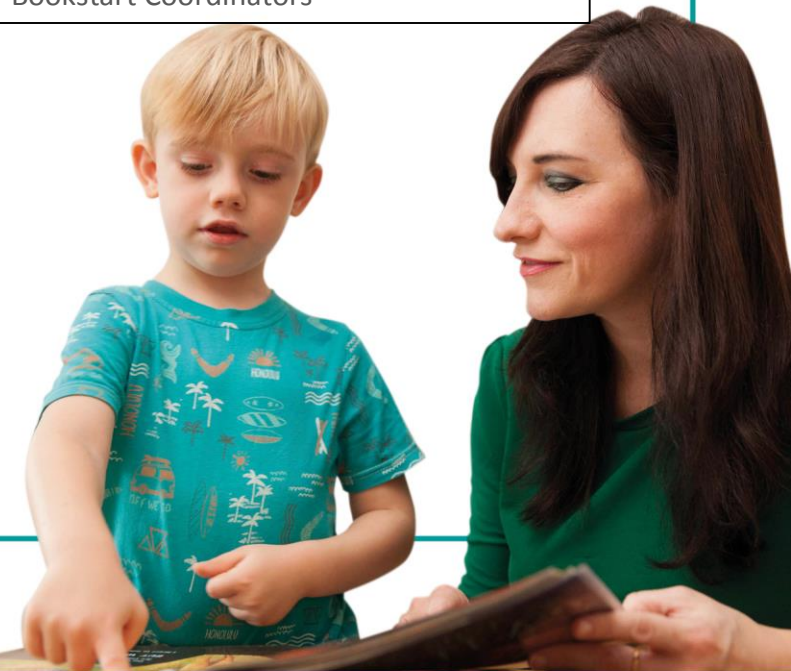
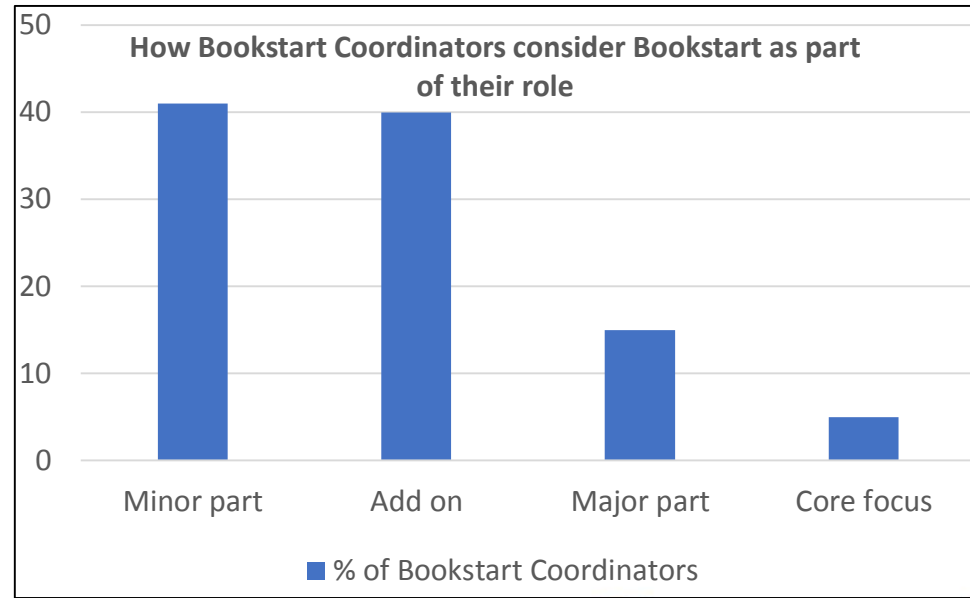


Complexities of the journey of our resources

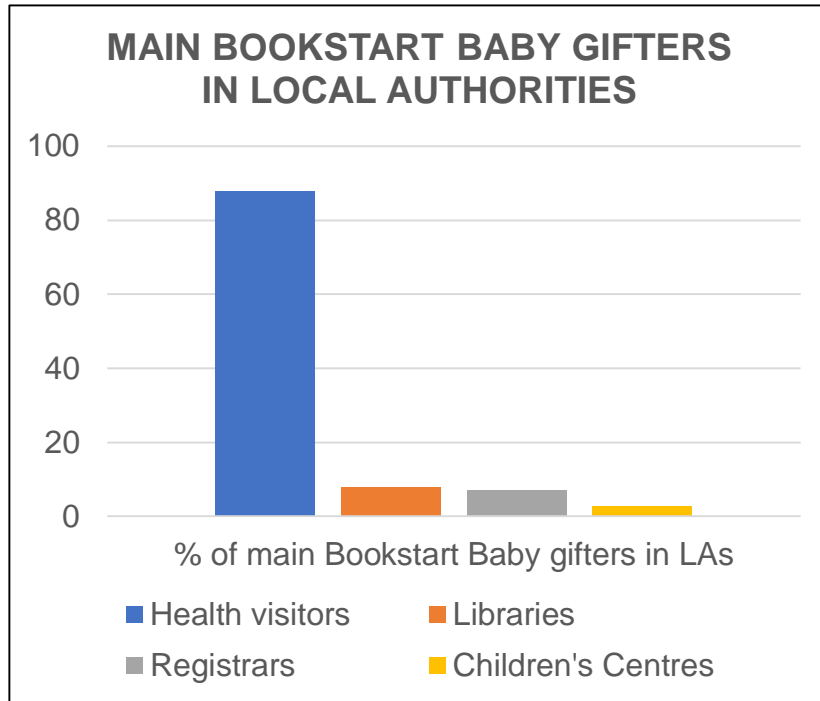


Bookstart Coordinators

- At least one Bookstart Coordinator is employed by each of the 152 local authorities in England
- Responsible for the onward delivery of Bookstart Baby packs.
- Should also build relationships with gifters to ensure high quality messaging for families
- Due to funding cuts, their capacity is rapidly decreasing



Gifting Partners



- The most common words they used to describe how they feel about giving Bookstart packs is “pleased”, “grateful” and “passionate”
- Our partners’ professional backgrounds vary greatly, which affects their pre-existing knowledge of why sharing books, stories and rhymes is important
- Their overall objectives in their roles also vary so our messaging has to adapt to fit



The gifting process

- Practice varies widely from those that give the pack with no messaging, to those who give detailed messaging and model how to share the book with the baby
- On average, partners report they spend about 5 minutes giving messaging
- The challenges of gifting (major or moderate challenge), reported by the highest proportion of practitioners were:
 - Must prioritise other information (47%)
 - Lack of time (41%)
 - Concerns about information overload for parents (37%)



What makes bookgifting effective?

- Making families feel as though they are taking part in something special, and receiving a gift
- Using age-appropriate resources that will engage children and their parents alike.
- Giving families upbeat, positive messages about the joys associated with shared reading (rather than negative messages about the risks of not reading to young children)
- Highlighting that booksharing is one of many ways in which adults can support their children's reading and literacy

(Chu & Eliot, 2017)



What makes bookgifting effective?

- Ensuring partners understand the benefits of shared reading, and can drip feed these messages to parents
- Getting reading resources to families within the first year of a child's life and, ideally, within six months
- Tailoring the support offered to families according to their needs (such as the parents' confidence in reading)

(Chu & Eliot, 2017)



Transforming our Bookstart Baby offer



Our aims

We want our programme to stay relevant for families today and be tailored to their needs.

We want to...



Engage



Empower



Inform



Excite

families and partners about sharing books, stories and rhymes



Step 1: Refreshing our gift for families



Storytelling

- Bookstart has the opportunity to be more than ‘a reading initiative’
- It’s a club you join when you become a parent
- It’s less about books and reading, and more about moments of connection through the act of **storytelling**



The Storyteller Starter Kit

Good for babies

To be practical for a newborn, the bag contents should be:

- Safe
- Simple
- Tactile
- Interactive

Good for parents

To be stimulating and useful for parents and carers, the bag contents should be:

- Accessible
- Simple
- Intuitive
- Practical



Bag and the roles parents play



Guidance for parents with development stages

sharing stories with your baby

Your journey starts here

Before birth
Did you know your baby has been comforted by your voice since before they were born?
You can start reading to your baby from the earliest age, even while pregnant.

0-3 months
Your baby loves cuddling up close and listening to you sing nursery rhymes. As their eyes are still developing, they only see high contrast things about 20-30cms away.
Try sharing books with black and white pictures together.

3-6 months
At 3-6 months, their eyes are better at focusing on pictures and recognising faces.
They may enjoy books with pictures of babies or mirror books.

6-9 months
From 6-9 months, they might be more confident with grabbing pages and giving books a good nibble!
Cloth books and sturdy books with flaps are perfect for them to enjoy.

9-12 months
From 9-12 months, they begin to understand language a bit more.
Try sharing books with simple sentences together and help them learn their first words.

BookTrust
Getting children reading

FRONT PAGE



Guidance for parents with tips

Bookstart Baby is a free reading initiative from **BookTrust**, the UK's largest reading charity. We're dedicated to getting every child reading from the youngest age.

Visit www.booktrust.org.uk for book suggestions at every age, and tips to make reading together rewarding.

#ShareYourStory on social media:
@booktrust
facebook.com/booktrust

We'd love to understand how we can best help you make the most out of reading with your baby. Take our quick five minute survey at www.booktrust.org.uk/baby-survey to help us improve our Bookstart Baby bag.

Supported by public funding from **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**
Charity number 313343

Start your reading journey
Sharing books, stories and rhymes with your baby is one of the most rewarding ways to spend time together.
You can start from the earliest age. We're here to help you make the most of story time, with our Bookstart Baby Storyteller kit.

Pop along to your local library and discover more great books to share together. Join a Rhymetime session, where your baby can have fun and you can meet other parents and carers.

Bonding through books
Sharing books, stories and rhymes helps you:

- Feel close to your baby from the earliest age
- Support your baby's development with social, language and learning skills
- Build a bedtime routine to help you both get a good night's sleep

Making reading rewarding
You can enjoy reading together anytime, anywhere. Try reading together throughout your day, and ask family and friends to join in!
Your baby loves the sound of your voice, however you read or sing! You don't need to stick to the story.
Try talking about the pictures in your own words, with silly noises and gestures.

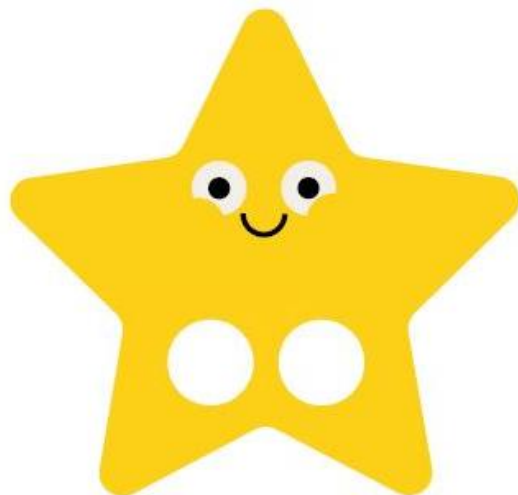
Bring the rhymes to life using the finger puppets in this bag!
download more at:
www.booktrust.org.uk

BookTrust
Getting children reading

BACK PAGE



Rhyme finger puppets



Step 2: Best practice guidance for professionals



Best Practice Messaging Objectives

We want to...



Engage



Empower



Inform



Excite

our gifters about
sharing books,
stories and rhymes



Key features

- Conducted focus groups, phone interviews and surveys to understand their priorities in their roles and how Bookstart can support them
- Using the same language that partners use so they can easily see the clear link with their objectives



Understanding our partners' needs

Our partners have limited:

- Time (to read detailed documents or commit to lengthy training)
- Storage space (to keep hold of bulky documents)
- Resources (e.g. to print documents)
- Bandwidth/data or firewalls (e.g. to watch videos as part of online training)

Their background knowledge of child development can also vary greatly



Key themes

Apps not suited to professionals

- “Digital is better for parents than gifters”
- Gifters don’t necessarily have a work mobile phone so don’t want to download on their personal ones

Keeping it simple

- “We need factsheets that are focused on what’s in the box... less words!”
- “Please don’t make any training long winded!”



Key themes

Content

- “It would be great to have more details about the key reading development stages of babies and children”
- “Real life videos and stories work best to share key messages

Gifter reward or recognitions

- “Gifters want to be gifters, they enjoy it. The packs are a useful tool to help them gain access to the families”
- “Having rewards is seen as competition, people want to be treated equally, rewards can cause more problems than they are worth”



Our best practice guide

Show the parents what's inside the pack

- This is a gift from BookTrust, the charity that wants to get every child reading.
- It contains free books that have been carefully chosen by experts for babies just like yours.

Explain the benefits of sharing books, stories and rhymes

- Help you to bond with your baby
- Support your baby's growing brain and help develop their social, language and learning skills
- Build a bedtime routine perfect for a good night's sleep



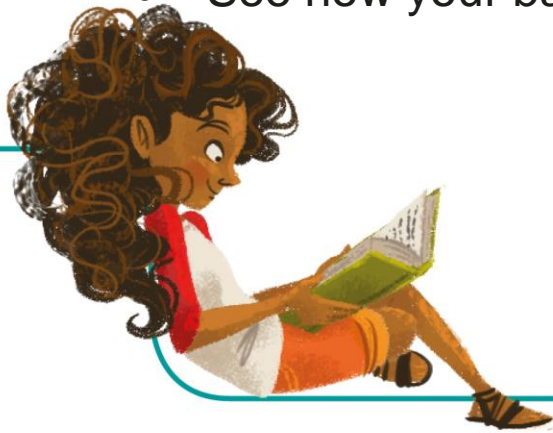
Our best practice guide

Give tips on sharing books, stories and rhymes

- It's never too early to start sharing books, stories and rhymes. They've been able to listen to your voice even before they were born!
- You can enjoy reading together anytime and anywhere. Why not ask friends and family to join in!
- You don't need to stick to the words - just talk about the pictures however you feel most comfortable

Share a book with the baby if you can

- See how your baby reacts – can you see them concentrating on the page?



Our best practice guide

Suggest where parents can go on the next step of their reading journey like the library

- Go to the library to borrow even more great books or join a fun rhyme time session
- Visit the BookTrust website for more book suggestions and tips
- They may be eligible for additional resources such as bilingual books or packs specially for children with additional needs



Our next steps

- Streamlining the website
- Producing guidance information that is inserted into every box of packs
- Prototyping other resources for different gifting settings (e.g banners)
- Supporting Bookstart Coordinators in disseminating information to gifting partners (e.g. newsletter templates)
- Producing short videos with real life examples



This is just the first step of journey.

We are continuing to use co-creation, piloting, prototyping and insight- led design to help review our overall portfolio

If anyone has experience of similar approaches, please do get in touch!



booktrust.org.uk



Follow us

 [@booktrust](https://twitter.com/booktrust)

 facebook.com/booktrust

Charity number 313343