

BOOKSTART: Investing in the future of all our children

Social Return on Investment 2009/10

Booktrust commissioned Just Economics LLP to conduct a forecasted Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis in order to quantify the social, environmental and economic value created by Bookstart in England for the 2009/10 financial year. Just Economics LLP conducted the analysis using the Cabinet Office process for assessing SROI.

SROI KEY RESULTS:

- **Bookstart creates significant social value for parents, children and the state. For every £1 the state invests Bookstart returns a total £25 of value to society.**
- **£614m of social value is generated by using £9m of Department for Education funding to leverage support from private sector partners, local authorities & Primary Care Trusts.**

Outcomes from the SROI were forecast based on existing research and recognised that Bookstart creates value for parents, children and the state by:

- increasing quality time that children and their parents/carers spend together¹
- improving literacy and learning for children in households where there is low, or no, reading activity²
- reducing the spend on remedial education services in primary and secondary schools for children who would otherwise have fallen behind²
- reducing the incidence of negative long-term outcomes that can result from low levels of literacy³
- increasing individual well-being due to calming effect on children through reading⁴

The underlying research on which the SROI is based was collected from a high percentage of active readers and therefore the SROI has underestimated the social value created. The findings should therefore be treated as highly conservative estimates of the difference made by the programme.

Independent research⁵ undertaken to supplement the SROI found that in households with babies aged 11-30 weeks:

- 64% of respondents said that they never share books with their babies
- 57% of respondents said that their baby does not have any board books

This suggests that for nearly two-thirds of households, the Bookstart pack may introduce the first baby books into the home and be the first encouragement for parents/carers to read with their child.

FUNDING:

Through our innovative public/private partnership we are able to use relatively small amounts of public money as a catalyst for releasing a much larger contribution from the private sector. For every £1 invested by the Department for Education, we generate an additional £4 in support from our private sector partners.

1 Booktrust National Impact Evaluation 2009 (London: Booktrust)

2 Moore, M & Wade, B (1993) (1998) and (2000) Bookstart: The First Five Years

3 Every Child a Chance Trust 2009

4 Booktrust National Impact Evaluation 2009 (London: Booktrust)

5 Booktrust: Family Reading Activity Survey 2010 (Fatherhood Institute & ICM Research)

The Bookstart Programme

Booktrust is an independent UK-wide charity dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and cultures to enjoy books. Booktrust initiated the Bookstart programme in 1992 using an innovative public/private funding approach which secures significant contributions from children's publishers.

Bookstart is a national programme which encourages all parents and carers to share books, stories and rhymes with children from as early an age as possible. To inspire every child to develop a lifelong love of reading, Bookstart provides free packs of books and guidance material for parents and carers at three key developmental stages in the early years.

Bookstart works with all local authorities to reach over two million babies and children every year. Our shared aim is to encourage reading for pleasure because this is a more important indicator of future success than any socio-economic factor.⁶ We recognise that all children deserve to flourish and achieve.

Bookstart recognises the importance of the home learning environment⁷ and works with local library staff, health visiting teams and early years practitioners to support parents by encouraging them in their role as their child's first and most enduring teacher. Enjoying books, stories and rhymes together creates educational, social, cultural and emotional capital. These benefits are life-enhancing and far-reaching.

To ensure that all families can enjoy these benefits, we make sure that our approach is warm, friendly, empowering and non-stigmatising. We also work closely with front line practitioners to provide additional, tailored resources offering everyone access to books and the written word. These resources are drawn down locally according to the differing needs of individual communities and their families. Examples include:

- dual language books and guidance to encourage every family to share books
- specialised packs for children who are blind/partially sighted or deaf/hearing impaired
- resources and support for teenage pregnancy practitioners and projects including the Family Nurse Partnership
- resources for charities and voluntary organisations who engage with families and children from a range of backgrounds, including: HomeStart, Prisoners Advice & Care Trust & Action for Prisoners Families and KidsVIP
- resources for children's centres and Early Years settings to help practitioners promote speech and language development
- opportunities for targeted work with Gypsy, Roma Travellers
- resources for children's hospital schools and children's hospices
- resources to promote library joining and regular access to many more books for free

In 1999 Bookstart became the first national book gifting programme in the world. Considered to be one of the most important early intervention programmes, it has now been adopted by more than 24 different countries across the world with Bookstart in England hailed as a world leader in the field of reader development.

The full technical report is available on request from: louise.chadwick@booktrust.org.uk

6 OECD (2002) Reading for Change – Performance and Engagement Across Countries

7 The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Findings from Pre-school to end of Key Stage1(2004)