

Bookstart Bump

1 Case studies

The following twelve case studies arose following interviews with Practitioners and Bookstart Bump participants. They are not intended to be representative of the spectrum of mothers targeted with Bookstart Bump but provide insight into the many and varied ways in which Bookstart Bump impacted its target audience and how Practitioners nationwide variously leveraged the initiative to support their own objectives.

Note that all participant names have been changed.

1.1 Parent case studies

- Helping to overcome anxiety around parenting through books and rhymes
- Improved self confidence to interact with bump and baby
- Helping to engage an emotionally absent expectant mum with her bump and baby
- Practical tools to support ESOL mums to share books, rhymes and stories
- Using Bookstart Bump resources to give Dad an active role during pregnancy
- Overcoming feelings of embarrassment about interacting with bump

1.1.1 Mum One: Helping to overcome anxiety around parenting through books and rhymes

Sarah's wasn't a planned pregnancy. That, and her own life experiences meant that she was struggling to come to terms with herself as a mum. She lived alone and lacked the support systems to help her connect better with her pregnancy. Her isolation and anxiety were contributing to emotional disconnectedness from her unborn baby.

The Family Engagement Officer in X identified Sarah as a potential Bookstart Bump participant, talking informally within an antenatal clinic about her situation as a lone parent. An appointment was made to visit Sarah at home; this wasn't a family support visit but an opportunity to engage with Sarah informally and on her terms.

From the outset Bookstart Bump helped Sarah to engage with her baby and feel supported. Conversation with the practitioner around the contents of the pack and how Sarah might use them with her unborn baby helped bring the baby to life for Mum. Shared discussion around the value of talking, singing and reading to her bump helped Sarah to visualize herself as a parent and prepare for the baby's arrival. She commenced and continued singing Twinkle Twinkle to her baby each evening and placed his scan picture in the Bookstart Bump frame to sing to, and connect with.

The prompts in each pack helped Sarah to understand what she was able to offer her baby and helped her to prepare herself for parenting. The visual nature of materials engaged her and acted as reminders throughout pregnancy of how she might interact with Baby. She

sang frequently to her bump in the bath and acknowledged that this was prompted by the tangible link the bath book gave her to her baby.

Since giving birth Sarah has been moved by housing to another area. However telephone contact was sustained initially and in these calls Sarah confirmed that she has continued to sing and talk to her baby.

During the course of three visits Sarah shared freely with the practitioner her concerns about motherhood and her experiences of isolation. Concerns highlighted were followed up with the appropriate support but the Practitioner observed the inherent value in being able to spend time with Mum without any hidden agenda. As well as helping Sarah to identify more strongly with her unborn baby and herself as a parent, Bookstart Bump acted as a vehicle to open up broader conversation around parenting and permitted the Practitioner to signpost other services available in the area.

1.1.2 Mum Two: Improved self-confidence to interact with bump and baby

Jo had waited to become pregnant for so long – she wanted everything to be right. She was shy and socially withdrawn. Bookstart Bump provided her Children's Centre Practitioner with the tools to reach out to her during pregnancy and support her. Encouragement to interact with her bump showed Jo how her bump could respond to touch and sound and gave her greater confidence in both her baby's welfare in utero and in her parenting skills, even during pregnancy.

Through one to one gifting sessions Jo and the Practitioner explored ideas for engaging with mum's bump. Dad was resistant to messaging but mum enjoyed thinking about ways of interacting with her bump and trialing these. Ideas for engaging with baby fascinated her; without a support network to draw on or emulate many of these ideas were new and not instinctive.

During pregnancy Jo explored the CD, putting it on the television and singing along. Feeling a response from baby spurred her on to further efforts.

Her Practitioner reflects on appropriate times for gifting and acknowledges the particular value to Jo of gifting just before the birth of her baby. The relationship between the two of them by that stage ensured that Jo was receptive to messages, and the gift of a bath book supported discussion around talking to both bump and baby.

Bump sessions provided the opportunity for Practitioner and mum to develop rapport and through this for mum to become sufficiently comfortable to join the Centre's postnatal group. Mum joined Bumps to Babies just after birth and has become a confident participant. She expresses delight at baby smiling in recognition of songs on the CD and though tired, acknowledges that she is more vocal with baby than she would have been without the influence of Bookstart Bump and that in turn this has had a positive impact on her baby's responsiveness.

1.1.3 Mum Three: Helping to engage an emotionally absent expectant mum with her bump and baby

Aiysha's pregnancy was a period of stress and uncertainty. Unsure whether she would be able to keep her baby after birth and having to attend numerous court hearings she kept herself separate from fellow mums in the residential centre where she lived, even after birth. She self-harmed, was isolated and presented to the Bookstart Bump Practitioner working with her as being in an emotional bubble.

Though she received one to one support from a key worker, Aiysha was young, lacking in self confidence and felt judged. She was deterred from voicing thoughts to the professionals supporting her, withdrew and became self-conscious. She was invited to participate in workshops within her setting, but largely resisted. The Bump Practitioner working with her sought to engage her in creative tasks but it was difficult to engage her for any length of time or to concentrate. She voiced no anticipation of her baby and had no excitement about her pregnancy.

However Aiysha's pregnancy had a positive outcome. Shortly after birth she showed signs of bonding with her baby. She joined in rhyme time, holding up her baby to her face and interacting. She enjoyed her baby's wakefulness and engaging with her.

The Bookstart Bump Practitioner acknowledges the impact of extensive interventions and support that enabled Aiysha's positive outcome. However she also reflects on the value of Bookstart Bump in helping to engage Aiysha with what she could personally offer her baby and the interest Aiysha showed on receiving her third pack (gifted after birth). With the baby in Aiysha's arms the Practitioner read through all of the books with her. She used humour to engage mum with the enjoyment babies gain from repeated reading of the same text. She modeled how the books might be read, emphasizing the value of hearing mum's voice, regardless of the words used.

Aiysha's Practitioner recognises the difficulties that mum had in engaging with her bump under stressful circumstances. However Bookstart Bump successfully demonstrated to mum what she was capable of achieving, giving her tools and ideas to interact with her baby once born.

1.1.4 Mum Four: Practical tools to support ESOL mums to share books, rhymes and stories

Adya had three children already and was enjoying her fourth pregnancy. She was approached by her local Children's Centre to participate in Bookstart Bump due to her limited English language skills and perceived isolation, however her partner preferred her not to attend group gifting and individual gifting sessions were arranged at home.

In discussion with her Bookstart Bump practitioner it became apparent that she was unaware of the value she could bring to her children through talking, singing and reading with them. She did talk with her older children as they grew older and read with them when they brought home activities from school but poor English language skills limited the amount of shared reading she felt she was able to support. Culturally she had not been brought up in a

household that sang or read Hindi music or texts and she had not tried to share these. She had no awareness of the value she could bring to her children during their early childhood through speaking her own language and lacked confidence in speaking English.

At each of the gifting sessions the Bookstart Bump Practitioner stressed the importance of communication with baby in whichever language feels most comfortable to mum. The Practitioner praised Mum's early attempts at bonding with bump and modeled reading aloud from the bath book to demonstrate that it wasn't necessary to read texts.

Bookstart Bump had enormous impact on Adya and when her child was born she confidently demonstrated verbal and visual interaction with her baby, responding to his cues and building on these. The Bookstart Bump materials had been hugely influential to Mum; though Adya was unable to read English her oldest daughter was acting as mentor, had read all of the literature aloud and had championed new approaches. The Practitioner reflects on the moment when Mum fully understood the value of her own actions; she saw Adya's body language and facial expressions alter during the third gifting and realised that this understanding would now translate into behavioural change.

1.1.5 Mum Five: Using Bookstart Bump resources to give Dad an active role during pregnancy

Holly and Darren separated during Holly's pregnancy and Darren was absent through much of that time. Holly's previous relationship experiences were negative; she had had a previous child taken away from her and her ability to parent her unborn child was questioned. Child Protection Services became involved, seeking to establish both parents' ability to care for the child. Mum was targeted by numerous interventions during her pregnancy as a result, and it was in this context that she was invited to join Bookstart Bump.

On realising that the father was absent the Practitioner gifting Bookstart Bump identified the potential value to both parents of giving Dad a tangible role in pregnancy and following birth. She gifted to Darren individually and encouraged him to consider how he might address the distance between himself and Holly in order to bond with the bump.

Darren's initial response was one of disinterest and he chose not to engage with messages in the first pack. However when backed up by similar messaging from Holly he engaged and took specific messages on board. Bravado was replaced by genuine interest in the science of baby development and he opened up to conversation about how he might remain involved in the pregnancy despite living separately to Mum. He was empowered by the knowledge that baby might recognise his voice on being born and identified for himself the security and developmental benefits he could bring the child.

The lead Practitioner working with Holly and Darren welcomed this change and noted that it represented his growing maturity. She recognises that Bookstart Bump gave her the means to facilitate the interaction between parents and child and to give Dad a role. She acknowledges the importance of Dad identifying for himself how he was going to bond with the bump and the value of both parents receiving the same materials but selecting their own routines. Creative resources, facts around development of the brain and props were most helpful in helping Dad to visualise his child.

The extent of interaction improved further still after the child was born. At the third gifting attended by both Mum and Dad together, the Practitioner noted dad turning baby towards him, talking and responding to baby's cues. Dad was keen to play with the black and white book and voluntarily offered information communicated in the first two packs, satisfying the Practitioner that Dad had engaged properly and understood the significance of the key messages imparted.

1.1.6 Mum Six: Overcoming feelings of embarrassment about interacting with bump

Adia, a first time teenage mum still living at home with her own mum and brother, was quick to object to the notion of talking to her bump when the concept was suggested at her first Bump gifting. She confirmed it would make her feel silly, was blasé throughout much of the gifting and on her phone. Her attitude implied disengagement from her peers and from her pregnancy, almost to the point of denial.

However further conversation at subsequent gifting sessions revealed relatively strong identification with her bump as an individual. She reflected on her experiences at the 12-week scan and voluntarily spoke of her boyfriend playing the Bookstart Bump CD at high volume in the car. Again she said it made her feel silly, but then commented on singing nursery rhymes to her bump at home with her little brother.

Bookstart Bump resources appeared to have provided an outlet for Adia to bond with her bump without apparently appearing to take her pregnancy seriously. Recognition by the Practitioner that she had also felt silly when talking to her bump was positively received. The Practitioner noted the importance of informal sharing of experiences and supporting Mums in establishing the routine that feels right for them.

By the time the third pack was distributed a considerable change was observed in Adia. Having perceived initially that Adia would rely on her own mum for support it was apparent that Adia had applied herself to bonding with her baby and had gained considerable confidence. She opened up in the group and talked about her experiences.

It was in this final session that the Practitioner observed that Bookstart Bump gave young mums something positive to talk about, in the context of considerable interventions and scrutiny. She observed 'We're not telling them they have to do it. We're telling them why it's nice to have a good idea for themselves.'

1.2 Practitioner case studies

- Croydon: Supporting the argument for joined-up provision
- Croydon: A unique opportunity to target first time mums
- Medway: The incremental value of gifting in a group setting
- Darlington: Success with teenage mums
- Lambeth: Delivering Bookstart Bump alongside family literacy messaging
- Weston Super Mare: Considerations on hard to reach audiences

1.2.1 Croydon: Supporting the argument for joined-up provision

Bump was delivered in Croydon via three Children's Centres that each support hugely disparate communities. Many families in the area experience isolation; there are few local amenities and the population is relatively transient.

Bump was offered to 30 vulnerable mums, comprising 40% first time mothers and approximately 20% EAL households. Practitioners from both Health and Family Engagement attended the initial briefing with recognition given to the likely difficulties in accessing the most hard to reach women outside of their antenatal appointments. Family Support workers would run the Bookstart Bump initiative through the Children's Centre's, exploring targeting opportunities local to each area.

In practice, data sharing concerns hampered the ability of Practitioners to discretely target individual mums to be. Healthcare professionals perceived Bookstart Bump to offer real value, but were unable to provide contact information and had insufficient resource to signpost the initiative themselves.

Alternative approaches were adopted which did successfully achieve the recruitment objectives of the pilot. These included experienced Practitioners talking to women as they exited antenatal appointments, joining antenatal classes to present to groups of mums and approaching known second-time mums.

However these approaches were resource-intensive and their success was reliant on the self-confidence and approachable manner of the Practitioner since the lack of prior relationship with Mum or relevant context for targeting contributed to some uncertainty and defensiveness amongst the most vulnerable mums. However informal conversation and the perceived value of the Bump materials overcame these and the response overall was hugely positive.

Addressing barriers to reaching first-time mums in Croydon has underlined the local need for integrated approaches that put parents at the heart of all services and which support the fullest experience for the most hard to reach audiences. Since commencing the Bump pilot the authority has commenced development of its Best Start strategy, which will see Early Intervention teams working alongside Health to deliver a parent-led approach and data shared across all parties. This in turn will support more effective recruitment to any similar

initiative long-term and support early assessment for mums based on the widest understanding of their lives.

1.2.2 Croydon: A unique opportunity to target first time mums

In Croydon (South East London), Bookstart Bump was delivered to mums via Early Intervention practitioners based out of Children's Centre's. These practitioners have individual case loads but their remit does not ordinarily include working with first-time expectant mums. Antenatal services are delivered via Health.

Working with first-time expectant mums via the Bump project gave Practitioners the opportunity to develop an understanding of the family and their needs, and to offer support previously lacking. They were able to signpost further support such as ESOL classes and Family Learning programmes in interpreting medical advice and to discuss parenting skills.

Most valuable of all, Practitioners were able to make an informal assessment of each mother's emotional needs and to use Bump as a vehicle for conversation and support. Bump gifting sessions were conducted one to one and in group settings, with the latter providing the unexpected benefit of offering friendships and contact to sometimes isolated women.

1.2.3 Medway: The incremental value of gifting in a group setting

Playworker and Under 1's Lead at Kingfisher Children's Centre in Medway, Tracey Reynolds runs universal baby groups and has additional responsibility for supporting the Under One's Pathway alongside the health visiting team. The team signposts all relevant offerings to pregnant women, supporting them ante-natally with parenting skills and helping socialise baby and mother post birth.

Recruitment to Bump was less targeted than had been planned. Despite effective links between Health and Education, few mums that met the targeting criteria presented during the pilot period. Medway instead elected to target a broader cross-section of women, yielding valuable results.

Despite none of the Bump participants being classified as vulnerable, literacy levels were low amongst the mums recruited and very few had been brought up with books. Their awareness of the *value* of talking or singing to baby was very limited, even amongst second-time mums. Value was ascribed to books but only when baby could hold them himself. None understood the benefit of sharing books from an early age.

Interest amongst mums was high. There was real appetite for information and practical ideas that could be implemented from the outset. One mum to whom Tracy had spoken about Bump was keen to schedule her first gifting as early as possible. She was as interested in acquiring new skills and understanding as in the Bump pack itself. These sessions lasted fifteen minutes.

After conducting the first gifting 1:1 with eight mums, Tracy opted for group gifting of the second Bump pack, recognizing that the opportunity to build rapport with mums in the previous 1:1 sessions would help secure the attendance amongst of even the most withdrawn.

Confident that the session would give her opportunities to signpost to other services Tracy hadn't anticipated the incremental value that gifting in a group setting would have in terms of mums' engagement with the topic and subsequent recall.

The session revealed the impact of group discussion on mums' understanding of the topics discussed and the value of exploring with their peers practical ideas for bonding with their Bump:

- Acknowledging that not all mums would be well suited to joining such a group, particularly those presenting anxiety or other social issues, Tracy used flip-chart, video and discussion to bring points to life, modeling reading aloud and exploring other ways of bonding with Bump. Mums related well to the Eastenders You Tube video and this sparked extensive conversation. A second video modeling reading to three babies of different ages provoked interest and an appreciation of the role that shared reading can play from birth
- The second gifting lasted an hour and Tracy recognized the value that participants gained from the shared experience and from hearing one another's perspectives. It emphasized the personal nature of bonding with Bump or baby and permitted mums to identify interaction opportunities with which they were most comfortable.

1.2.4 Darlington: Success with teenage mums

Teenage pregnancies in Darlington are referred to Heather Lazenby in the Early Intervention Team, who conducts a home visit and introduces the 'Mams and Dads To Be' programme teaching parent craft. Sessions are delivered in the local Children's Centre, but anxiety, resistance to the concept of parenthood and employment or training can present barriers to attendance in which case sessions are delivered 1:1 in the home.

The ethos behind Bump dovetails well with messages already conveyed to teenage mums and dads in Darlington. The importance of talking to Bump is stressed to mums from the first booking in appointment and bonding, early communication using music and stroking the bump are all explored within the course. Heather and the Midwifery team were keen to explore the impact of the Bump resources on parents' engagement with key messages but also their wider impact on teenagers' views of themselves as parents.

Teenage mums are largely focused and though sometimes in denial about imminent motherhood, are inclined to gaining the required skills. Delivery of any messages should be straightforward and accessible; mums may want to acquire knowledge but it must be easily accessed. The team uses various techniques including props and video for greatest impact, and takes into account shorter attention spans and greater demand for entertainment.

Heather acknowledges that teenagers can take a lot in but don't give a lot back, and that this can pose problems when seeking to understand what is being absorbed. Where possible messages are most impactful if communicated more than once on different platforms: video can work for one teenage parent and social media for another. Heather avoids printed written material since this doesn't resonate.

Bookstart Bump was gifted within the context of the Mams and Dads To Be course and was unique in offering parents something tangible to take home. All participants commented positively on the perceived quality of the books and CD within the packs and a number of parents spontaneously voiced how they had been placed ready in the bathroom or space set aside for baby. These comments imply a positive response from an ordinarily reticent audience.

From the outset Heather noticed the positive impact of the packs on parents' engagement and willingness to participate in the groups. She recognized barriers to discussion about parenthood coming down amongst both mums and dads and real interest in the resources, particularly the CD. The team identified parents without access to a CD player and sign posted equivalent YouTube links to considerable success. They emphasized the value of tone of voice and contact over the need for particular content and demonstrated how the black and white and bath books could be used as pillars for conversation with baby.

Dads were of particular interest, with Bump given to both parents where a relationship had broken down. Dads placed value on being given tangible ideas for remaining involved after the baby is born, as some felt pushed to one side. Being encouraged to talk to the Bump had a positive impact on Dads' inclination to subsequently read books to Baby and share bath time routines. Dads were disinclined to read to Bump but were comfortable with ideas for informal interaction.

When asked to reflect on the value of Bookstart Bump to teenage parents participating in the pilot, Heather commented on the startling contrast of her parents to older parents in the town at similar stages in their pregnancy. Her parents had a better grasp of talking to their Bumps than women that had planned their pregnancies and whilst older, more affluent mums engage proactively with parenting messages she perceives her younger mums to understand the *importance* of talking to the Bump and bonding early on in their pregnancy.

1.2.5 Lambeth: Delivering Bookstart Bump alongside family literacy messaging

The Early Years Literacy Development Worker in Lambeth, South London works with children aged 0-5 offering Rhyme Time sessions across the borough, a One O'Clock Club and families library sessions. She also conducts weekly visits to The St Michael's Fellowship which works with parents across Lambeth to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and delivers the REAL¹ programme targeting deprived or vulnerable children that may qualify for a two year old place but that haven't accessed their funding. Her team identifies these families, conducts literacy work at home and signposts local services.

¹ Raising Early Achievement in Literacy for two year olds

Bookstart Bump was offered to mums meeting the necessary criteria that the Practitioner encountered in the process of delivering her wider role. Though her participants were primarily second time mums she was pleased to see the immediate benefit that Bump brought to families with older children, bringing them closer together and reinforcing messages around shared reading delivered in other contexts.

Being able to gift to mums within the context of literacy-based events and sessions has given the Practitioner opportunities to build relationships further and to deepen conversations around parents' ability to influence baby's outcomes.

In her opinion the gifter and the packs work hand in hand. Talking to a mum about reading to her baby is brought to life when the black and white book is pulled out and reviewed together. Likewise the bath book has high-perceived value but mums respond to its potential quite differently when she demonstrates the impact on bump of knocking on the side of the bath².

The Practitioner used imagery alongside delivery of the packs to bring key messages to life. Her most vulnerable mums are visual learners; she gifts to them in groups where possible and encourages them to discuss the pictures and the messages within them. These mums responded extremely well to the tangible nature of Bookstart Bump: they like things they can touch and hold.

Delivering Bookstart Bump alongside other literacy messages targeting older children gave her the opportunity to comment positively on parents' existing behaviours. It afforded discussion of interaction with bump within the context of a wider family, with both mums and dads revealing considerable interest in the science of baby's development.

1.2.6 Weston Super Mare: Considerations on hard to reach audiences

A lower number of antenatals than anticipated undermined Weston Super Mare's ability to easily target vulnerable expectant mothers. A family needs' assessment is conducted by the Heath Visitor prior to birth from 24 weeks onwards for targeted first time mothers. Further services are introduced and signposted as appropriate. There is currently no engagement with mums until after birth from the Community Nursery Nurses unless referred by a midwife for Smoking Cessation support in the home. Post birth Community Nursery Nurses support breast-feeding, sleep and feeding issues and perform one-year checks.

In light of the existing structure Weston Super Mare recognized that Bump might provide a useful vehicle for engaging mums earlier ante-natally for the first time, exploring what value this might bring. It was anticipated that Bump could offer a vehicle for conversation with mums facing numerous pressures including anxiety, housing concerns and issues with their partners and help address some of the isolation they report.

² Some Practitioners encourage mothers to tap on the side of the bath while bathing in order to see and feel the response from their baby to the noise and vibrations this creates.

In order to support targeting, Community Nursery Nurse's discussed the information supplied to the Health Visiting team by Midwives at booking at around 12 weeks with a Health Visitor and determined who could benefit from this intervention and met the Bookstart Bump criteria. In practice, this was harder than anticipated. Staff did not enjoy approaching families without a prior relationship; they wanted parents' first contact with the Health Visitor service to be positive and were unconvinced how Bump might be perceived. Staff also had reservations about making home visits without a prior understanding of the home setting and the mother's situation.

However the team persevered and successfully recruited 11 expectant mums to Bookstart Bump, the majority meeting the required targeting criteria. Staff sought out mums with whom they had an existing relationship whether through a previous child or attendance at a Stop Smoking clinic, and found recipients to respond positively to the initiative.

The main benefit Bump was perceived by Practitioners to bring in Weston Super Mare is its ability to help build relationships with expectant Mums, and later on in pregnancy with Dads too. However some of the social issues faced by parents in the area are perceived to dominate their concerns and undermine their ability to absorb messaging around bonding with Bump. The families that might benefit by a closer relationship with Community Nursery Nurses appear to distance themselves from potential support.

On reflection Lisa Meehan, Community Nursery Nurse in Weston Super Mare agrees that there may be further targeting opportunities in the area that fall outside of her scope to which Bookstart Bump may be suited. These may provide a relevant context for gifting to the most needful and isolated mums.

Lisa herself runs Nurture Group for mothers of babies aged 8 weeks to 5 months and acknowledges that extending this downwards to reach expectant mums late in their pregnancies could present considerable value. She recognizes the value inherent in the visual nature of Bump materials and the immediate opportunities the resources give parents to interact with Baby. She would welcome a more joined-up approach in the region that would give her team further opportunity to target expectant needful mums and welcomes the imminent introduction of an Under 5s pathway across the region.