

MLA EAST OF ENGLAND LEARNING NETWORK PROJECT

Background Information

Service name	Suffolk Libraries
Description of activity / project	Bookstart & Baby Café in Felixstowe Library
Timescale (or ongoing)	Ongoing
Main audience / user focus	Young families and in particular young mums
Partners	Suffolk Libraries (Felixstowe Library), Suffolk PCT and Suffolk Children's Centres
Project / programme objectives	<p>To provide a relaxed informal environment, where in the safe space of a public library, young families can access high quality services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health advice for mums and their young children, • Peer support with breast feeding issues • Babybounce rhyme activities for babies and toddlers • Books for and about babies and toddlers • Café offering first class refreshments and a place to meet friends • Inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.
GLO and GSO piloting objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To evaluate and act on user satisfaction 2. To provide evidence for future funding 3. To create a template for use by staff involved in other library projects 4. To model partnership evaluation techniques
Contact details	Jo Dixon 01473 264 735; 07921 944 378; jo.dixon@libher.suffolkcc.gov.uk

1. **What** were the key outcomes measured

Stronger and Safer Communities (SSC)	1. Improving group and inter group dialogue
	2. Supporting cultural diversity and identity
	3. Encouraging familial ties and relationships
Health & Well- Being (HWB)	1. Encouraging healthy life styles and contributing to mental and physical well-being
	2. Supporting care and recovery
	4. Helping children and young people to enjoy life
Strengthening Public Life (SPL)	1. Encouraging and supporting awareness and participation in local decision making and wider civic and political engagement
	2. Building the capacity of the community and voluntary groups
	3. Providing safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces
	5. Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders

2. How you measured the extent to which the outcome / outcomes were met
(Include any of the following developed for your project: questionnaires; interview or focus group guides; observation schedules)

A questionnaire, designed after consultation with Felixstowe library staff and with partners in the PCT, was given to customers attending the Baby Café, and the results were analysed on a spreadsheet. Evidence from group and individual interviews with customers and staff was added as raw data, then analysed using the same spreadsheet. Percentages and majority responses were summarised to measure the extent to which outcomes were met.

Anecdotal comments derived from both interviews and questionnaires, were also written up in tabular form, and the number of responses for calculated for each outcome.

My own observations have also been incorporated into the final results.

3. Who you collected evidence from

On the day of measurement, 57 children were registered at Babybounce accompanied by 55 adults, and 30 sets of parents consulted the health visiting team. Most of the adults attended both Babybounce and the health teams. All the adults were invited to participate. Only one set of parents declined, because their very young baby had only just been released from hospital and they were “off their heads with worry and lack of sleep because the baby wasn’t feeding”. However, my own observation of their behaviour has been included as relevant evidence.

Questionnaire: 30 handed out, 25 of which were returned and analysed. The questionnaire included graded responses to statements and some open-ended questions eg “What would you miss” and “How could we improve our service?”

Interviews: group 4 groups of customers. One large group (9 adults) were asked a series of questions whilst others were assembling for Babybounce; a small group of 1 dad and 2 mums were asked questions whilst waiting to see the health visiting team, and a further 2 groups of friends were asked whilst in the café. The large groups, in the Babybounce room and in the café, displayed a great social cohesion and evidently knew each other well. Questions were answered by almost everyone in the group, who seemed to take turns to answer, and then concurred noisily with the others. There was a lot of teasing and merriment throughout all of these joint interviews, except for the group waiting to seek health advice.

Interviews: 1-1 Several customers were asked the same questions singly, and similar questions were asked of the library and health staff and the peer support volunteer.

Observation: My own observations have been included where they captured evidence that would not otherwise have been recorded.

4. Who collected the evidence

The Early Years Librarian collected all the evidence in this pilot.

5. How you analysed the evidence

Data from the questionnaires was entered in binary form onto a spreadsheet and responses analysed to give %s. Soft data from the questionnaires and interviews was tabulated then entered onto a spreadsheet according to the outcomes they evidenced. In all there were 39 statements showing evidence of positive social outcome.

6. How you presented the findings

Tables, graphs, spreadsheets and summaries have been compiled. .
Below is a table linking outcomes to objectives:

**MLA ILFA Pilot: Generic Social Outcomes
Felixstowe Library Baby Café Feb/March 2008**

GSO	Objective	Outcome and Evidence
SPL 3	To provide a safe space for families:	88% felt comfortable or very comfortable
SPL5	To work in close partnership with the PCT:	HV team and library staff all welcome pattern of working
HWB 1, 2, 4	To offer health advice for families, particularly mums and their children:	88% strongly agree it's a good idea to have health advice at the library. "It's very convenient as I work and can't get to my surgery clinic"
HWB 1,2	To offer peer support with breast-feeding issues	"It helped when the baby was new. It helped me get a routine"; "It's very nice to find somewhere in Felixstowe where you can breastfeed and feel comfortable doing so."
SSC 1 HWB 1, 2 SPL 3	To provide a relaxed friendly atmosphere	19 respondents commented on friendly atmosphere "It's a friendly relaxing morning meeting others"
HWB1 SPL 2, 5	To provide an excellent book stock tailored to their needs:	44% borrowed books that week
SSC1 HWB1 SPL 1, 2, 3, 5	To increase confidence in a responsive community based library:	88% agreed strongly that the Baby Café in the library was a good idea.
SPL 1, 5	ACS Visions: strong & safer communities; be safe and healthy; high quality care and community services.	"You can get your baby weighed when you want to and you don't have to make an appointment so you're more likely to drop in if you have any queries"
SSC 2 HWB 1 SPL 1, 5	To provide an inclusive space	: "When I move here, the staff made me feel very welcome" "We get to know all the babies names and sometimes they're really hard to say. But we sing them every week and get to know them that way" "It's the only place in town you can breastfeed" "I'm glad it's free. I couldn't afford to go if you had to pay"; staff at Café Libra, a social enterprise, enjoy seeing the babies every week
SPL 1	To raise the public profile of the Library Service:	(a) Baby café listed on several websites – PCT; The baby café; local community web sites (b) media interest – interviews on Radio Suffolk;

		SGR; Felixstowe TV; (c) press reports in local papers
SPL 5	To pilot partnership working:	Shared outputs and outcomes
SPL 1 HWB 4	To increase membership of library:	60% of children were members of the library 92% of adults attending health & BB that day, had recommended it to friends
HWB 4	To increase issues:	44% reported issuing books that day
SSC 1, 2, 3, HWB 1, 2, 4 SPL 1, 2, 3, 5	To consolidate success of Bookstart Babybounce:	100% have recommended Babybounce to friends; 76% had attended more than 6 months; 84% strongly agreed they looked forward to coming; observational evidence from group discussions, that the service is now regarded as the norm
SSC 2 SPL 3, 5	To encourage use of Café Libra:	Manager reports increased use on Friday mornings
SPL 3 HWB 1	To model the library as a place to meet:	52% meet friends there and 52% use the café every week; most adults had been coming for more than 6 months
SSC 3 HWB 1, 2, 4 SPL 3	To increase the skills and confidence of young mums in the care of their children:	“It’s much better than a mother & toddler group because you’re not just sat around chatting” Mums waiting to see the health visitor, or weighing their own babies exchanged advice and sympathy, and engaged positively with very new parents
SSC 3	To increase inter generational communication:	“It’s brilliant to meet mums and other babies”; “Grannies don’t feel out of place here” “I bring my grandchildren when my daughter works”
SSC 1, 2 HWB 1, 2 SPL 1, 2, 3, 5	To provide opportunities for social interaction	: “The children love hearing their names, even when they’re little babies”; “You can sit with other mums and enjoy a coffee and a conversation” 52% reported meeting friends here Dads waiting to see the health visiting team, swapped anecdotes about sleepless nights
SPL 5	To share best practice with colleagues across the county:	The evidence gained will be networked throughout the HV teams of the PCT and to the Children’s Centres
SSC 1, 2 HWB 4 SPL 5	To integrate library services into core provision across the county:	““We identified a real need and we’re meeting it week after week” (staff member); “We come because J is an only child so here she can mingle with children of all ages before she goes to school. She can’t do that anywhere else” “We can see the health visitor first, then pop upstairs for a

Outcomes

The Baby Café is very highly valued by users, library staff and health visiting teams and Library and health staff display very high morale. The provision has already become accepted as the norm and the profile and image of the library service have been enhanced. The centrality of the location and the variety of service provision is important to the success of the project. Felixstowe Library really is perceived to be safe, relaxed, inclusive and welcoming and is a place where friendships have developed and flourished, where grandparents who are also carers of small children, feel welcomed by the group. There is a great feeling of cohesion and sense of community responsibility. High noise levels in the library are now welcomed and perceived to be vibrant.

Families say they prefer this model of service provision - both of health and libraries and for Suffolk Libraries and the LAI, this continues to be a successful partnership.

Café Libra increased takings when Baby Cafe started and their staff have increased their self-esteem and sense of community. Their manager reported that staff were “thrilled by seeing all the babies each week”.

There were several unexpected negative outcomes too.

Many families are not joining the library – only 60% of those questioned had library cards for their babies

Many families are not borrowing books each week – only 44% of those who filled out a questionnaire, also borrowed books

One respondent still thinks her child is too young to share books

Café is now too small – families and management want more space

Safety of toddlers is an issue – babies grown up and now running off – self -opening doors

Need large static toys in Café to engage toddlers – already done

Need more toilets to cope with the volume of toddlers, many of whom are being potty trained and can't be expected to wait in a queue.

7. How you used, or plan to use, the findings

(For example to inform service development or for advocacy)

To inform service development:

1. To use the questionnaire as a model for use by library staff
2. To emphasise the need to promote library membership amongst families using our libraries
3. To emphasise the need to promote sharing books with (and issuing books to) babies and young children
4. To include generic social outcomes in staff training for Bookstart

5. To highlight health and safety issues for future developments eg number of toilets; doors; capacity issues
6. To model good practice in service provision
7. To model an example of successful partnership working
8. Has already been used to provide large static toys in café area on Friday mornings

For advocacy:

Outcomes will be used to advocate the public library service and to demonstrate the social benefits to **adults** of library services nominally aimed at babies and small children.

Outcomes will be shared with PCT colleagues and may be used by them to advocate further co-operation with the library service, a drop- in model of clinic provision, self-weighing at all their clinics and a continuing involvement in the Baby Café at Felixstowe Library.

Outcomes will also be shared with CYP to inform Children's Centre management of the positive effects of partnerships with Suffolk Libraries and to illustrate our positive contributions to the new breastfeeding targets for babies to be launched in April 2008.

Outcomes from Babybounce will be shared with Bookstart to help maintain the currency of their data bank.

Some outcomes will be included in a press release during National Breastfeeding Awareness Week 11th – 17th May 2008

Some outcomes will be shared with The Baby Café for their own advocacy use.

To celebrate:

Testimony from formerly antagonistic staff will be shared with other library staff running Bookstart, to celebrate conversion.

Evidence of very positive service impact will be added to the professional development reviews of the staff at Felixstowe Library

8. Comments on the piloting process (Including what you learned, what went well and any challenges or problems)

My main challenge was to create a user friendly model for monitoring and evaluating the generic social outcomes of library services for families with young children. The model had to be easy to adapt for use at other settings and for other activities, and had to include a standard format for a questionnaire as well as a simple tool for codifying evidence collected from that questionnaire, from interviews and from anecdotal evidence.

Design of the questionnaire took much longer to finalise than expected because of the delays inherent with partnership working. In consequence, the coding process was not properly trialled before the evidence was analysed, and I have therefore presented 2 different layouts, one numeric and one binary, on worksheets in the same spreadsheet. I will have to decide the most useful of these before mainstreaming the procedures. Unexpected negative outcomes include lower than expected library membership and book issue rates amongst families who regularly use and like our services. We will start to address this immediately, both in practice and in

staff training sessions. A fault has emerged with the design of the questionnaire. Question 12 “How could we improve the service” may have set up an expectation of change that we can’t meet eg the number of toilets or the size of the Café. The wording of that question will have to be reconsidered before it is mainstreamed. We have yet to explore the cost of collecting and analysing increasing volumes of data, or the cost and security implications of storage of questionnaires.

Overall, discovering such high levels of user satisfaction about Felixstowe Baby Café has been a rewarding and a pleasurable experience. I hope the evidence gathered will provide a persuasive advocacy tool to be used with our service commissioners. The Learning Network has provided a useful forum for discussion and I have learnt a lot from colleagues from other organisations.

9. Finally, give details of anything that surprised you about the piloting process.

- We already had a large body of evidence – DVD, radio and TV interviews, website reports, outputs demonstrating high volume of continued use, photos and anecdotes, yet the outcomes of this pilot were not all as I predicted.
- The difficulty of interpreting “soft “data and the danger of over-claiming
- I thought my question “How can we improve services to families like yours?” was open and inclusive. Now I know that I should be more cautious about including questions that invite changes I can’t effect.
- That soft data collected met more GSOs than the hard data: reasons for this still to be investigated
- That Generic Social Outcomes really are just that, and are relevant and applicable to many public services
- The project I still regard as a pilot is already perceived as core provision by families using the service.

Appendices:

1. Blank Questionnaire (see ideas bank)
2. Evidence from Informal Conversations and Evidence from Interviews (below)
4. Summary of Answers to Questionnaire: written (below)
5. Summary of Generic Social Outcomes: graphs (see excel sheet)

Full spreadsheet analysis of hard and soft data available on request

Generic Social Outcomes

Felixstowe Baby Café Evidence from Oral and Written Data

Key		<p>Int = Interviews Feb March 2008</p> <p>Wr = Written Answers to Open Ended Questions: Questionnaire Feb/March 2008</p> <p>Q6 “What’s Special about the Baby Café?”</p> <p>Q8 “What would you miss if Babybounce didn’t happen?”</p> <p>Q12 “How could we improve the service to families like yours?”</p> <p>Inf = Informal Conversations Dec 2007</p>
Stronger and Safer	1. Improving group & inter group dialogue	<p>Int</p> <p>This is much better than a Mother and Toddler because you’re not just sat around chatting. And we like it cos there’s a man here!</p> <p>My husband always comes if he’s off work and he feels part of it because it’s so friendly and there’s a library man too sometimes.</p> <p>You can sit with other mums and enjoy a coffee and conversation with others in the same situation as yourselves</p> <p><i>It’s a friendly and relaxing morning meeting others</i></p> <p>It’s very social for me and my baby. We love it!</p>
		<p>Wr</p> <p>Q8: Meeting people</p> <p>Q8: Interaction with babies and mums</p> <p>Q8: the company of other mums</p> <p>Q8: I enjoy meeting up and having a cuppa after</p>

		Inf	<p>"It was nice to meet the mums from the 10 o'clock session. We're all mixed up together today cos it's Christmas."</p> <p>"The Café Libra is great. We meet there for coffee when we've seen the Health Visitor and the people who work in it love seeing all the babies. It's good buying coffee here and knowing we're making their lives happier too". Mum</p>
2. Supporting cultural diversity & identity		Int	<p>I'm Polish so when I moved here, the staff made me feel welcome. They tell me about the sessions on a Friday. I didn't know the English rhymes, but now we can sing them at home. I like it very much.</p> <p>The staff at Café Libra think it's brilliant to see the babies every week</p> <p>We get to know all the babies' names and sometimes they're really hard to say. But we sing them every week and get to know them that way.</p>
		Wr	<p>Q6: I work and can't get to my surgery clinic</p> <p>Q6: conversations with others in the same situation as yourself</p> <p>Q6: it's nice to find somewhere in Felixstowe where you can breastfeed and feel comfortable</p> <p>Q6: Comfortable place to feed children</p>
		Inf	<p>"It's made Felixstowe different having all this here"</p> <p>The Café Libra is great. We meet there for coffee when we've seen the Health Visitor and the people who work in it love seeing all the babies. It's good buying coffee here and knowing we're making their lives happier too". Mum</p>
3 Encouraging familial ties & relationships		Int	<p>I retired last year and I hadn't been near a library for years, but I bring my grand children here when my daughter works, and it's such a good thing to do with them. I've joined here myself now too!</p> <p>Grannies don't feel out of place here like they can do if they go to Mother and Toddler Groups.</p> <p>My daughter came here before she went back to work. She made good friends here and now I do the looking after, I love coming too.</p> <p>I like the chance to sing with my baby.</p> <p>We love looking at books together.</p>

		Wr	<p>Q8: Group singing for my child and me Q8: Interaction with my child Q8: Singing with him and watching him interact with others Q8: the general chance to sing with your baby</p>
		Inf	<p>“My husband could come today cos he’s finished for Christmas, and there’s lots of other dads here too this week” mum at Babybounce</p>
Health & Well-Being	1. Encouraging healthy lifestyles & contributing to mental & physical well-being	Int	<p>It’s great for interaction with other babies and other mums too! Those (toddlers) that attend for a long time, change. They come all shy then towards the end, they open up and they are everywhere (staff FE) (“I’d miss”) being able to breastfeed when we’re in town It’s the only place you can breastfeed when you’re out in Felixstowe It’s good for her to join in (mum about toddler) We come because J is an only child so here she can mingle with children of all ages before she goes to school. She can’t do that anywhere else. It’s brilliant to meet other mums and babies. It’s very nice to find somewhere in Felixstowe where you can breastfeed and feel comfortable doing so.</p>
		Wr	<p>Q6: Able to breast feed whilst in town Q6: Allows you to get your baby weighed when you want to and not to have to make an appointment and you’re more likely to pop in if you have any queries Q6: Friendly staff Q6: The breast feeding café! Q8: socialising with friends Q8: very social for both me and my baby</p>
		Inf	<p>“It’s great running the baby clinic here because we can send new mums straight up to Babybounce to meet other people” HV</p>

<p>2. Supporting care and recovery</p>	Int	<p>It's very convenient as I work and can't get to my surgery clinic. We always make a point of introducing them (new comers) to the staff and the other mums (staff FE) It's great if you're feeling low. It helped when the baby was new. It helped me get a routine to get out of the house and get here early and at the same time. You can get your baby weighed when you want to and you don't have to make an appointment so you're more likely to drop in if you have any queries.</p>
	Wr	<p>Q6: support; advice; atmosphere Q6: you can sit with other mums and enjoy a coffee and conversation with others in the same situation as yourselves Q6: everyone is friendly and helpful Q6: the friendly welcoming atmosphere Q8: friendly morning out meeting others and relaxing Q8: having a good sing-song</p>
	Inf	<p>"I've seen tired young mothers arrive with their worries and this place is so nice and friendly. It makes them feel cared for. Just what they need." HV</p>
<p>4 Helping children & young people to enjoy life and make a positive contribution</p>	Int	<p>It's great for my children. They enjoy the songs and I enjoy it too. E. enjoys seeing the other babies The children love hearing their names, even when they're little babies. it makes them feel special. ("I enjoy") watching the faces of the little babies and watching them come alive with a little song. And it could be a different song with each child. You never know which it will be! (Library staff)</p>

		Wr	<p>Q6: Babies and children meet each other</p> <p>Q6: allows toddlers to socialize</p> <p>Q6: love the baby groups and interacting with other babies</p> <p>Q8: fun atmosphere</p> <p>Q8: playing with other children</p> <p>Q8: the fun and my children missing out on the enjoyment</p> <p>Q8: Grace would miss singing</p> <p>Q8: The singsong! Evie enjoys seeing the other babies</p> <p>Q8: weekly library visit; learning opportunity</p>
		Inf	<p>“Just look at all those little babies – aren’t they loving it!” Elderly customer</p> <p>“It’s great bringing my baby to the Baby Café here. My little girl, she’s 3 and she can look at the books or join in the songs while I’m talking to the Health Visitor.” Mum</p>
Strengthening Public Life	1 Encouraging & supporting awareness and participation in local decision making and wider civic & political engagement	Int	<p>You don’t have to book</p> <p>It sounds awful but I’m so glad it’s free. I couldn’t afford to go to a music group where you have to pay. Usually Bev chooses the songs, but we all chip in and can shout, “Lets sing this one!”</p> <p>It’s a nice area to wait in and the people are friendly</p>
	2 Building the capacity of community and voluntary groups	Int	<p>We’d like a larger café area with more seating and more high chairs.</p> <p>More sessions please</p> <p>It’s got much busier.</p> <p>We want bigger groups.</p> <p>We couldn’t get a ticket today so we’ll come earlier next week.</p>

		Wr	<p>Q12: would like a larger café area with more soft seating Q12: bigger Babybounce groups Q12: More sessions please Q12: keep on doing Babybounce, Café and weigh in Q12: more toilets</p>
		Inf	<p>“We’ve had to issue tickets now because we just can’t get everyone in the room upstairs even running 3 sessions. But we can’t turn people away –they rely on it to cheer up their Fridays, so sometimes we run an extra session too.” Library staff</p>
	<p>3 Providing safe, inclusive and trusted public spaces</p>	Int	<p>It’s a comfortable place to feed children. The breast-feeding café (is special). It’s the only place in Felixstowe you can take double buggies! We spend more time here now and in the café after. You can stay ages it’s so relaxed. It’s definitely very easy to join because they say the names of all the children to welcome them. I don’t have to worry about them like at playgroup.</p>
		Wr	<p>Q6: Only place in Felixstowe that can take 2+ buggies Q6: easy to get to, nice area to wait in, people friendly Q6: it’s a nice place to bring my son Q6: all of it being in town with a café Q6: clean baby change Q8: good place to meet friends Q8: a nice space Q12: keep doing what you’re doing. It’s great</p>
		Inf	<p>“We’ve made it too popular. We’ve had more than 70 babies today for Babybounce. And I know all their names!” “I always greet the children by name and have a little chat. That’s why the mums keep coming back.” (Library staff)</p>

<p>5 Improving the responsiveness of services to the needs of the local community, including other stakeholders</p>	Int	<p>“Along with Top Time, it’s the best thing this library has ever done. Because we identified a real need and we’re meeting it week after week.” (Library staff)</p> <p>“Allows you to get your baby weighed when you want to”</p> <p>“I don’t have to go to my surgery”</p> <p>“I can come when I’m in town”</p>
	Wr	<p>Q6: Very convenient as I work and can’t get to my surgery clinic</p> <p>Q6: Very good value</p> <p>Q6: I can go before Babybounce so I don’t have to travel round lots</p> <p>Q12: keep it anarchic and unstructured</p> <p>Q12 more loos; more café space; more buggy parking; more sessions</p>
	Inf	<p>“We’re really pleased we can run the Baby Café here in the Library. It’s in the centre of town so it’s easy for mums to get to”. HV</p>

Felixstowe Baby Café Summary of Answers to Questionnaire

Based on the results of 25 questionnaires that were completed and handed in Feb/March 2008
The Baby Café at Felixstowe Library has been run as a partnership between Suffolk Libraries and Suffolk PCT for the past year. A double-sided questionnaire was therefore designed to help evaluate generic social contributions of both partners, with questions devoted to the services of each, and one summary question applicable to both.

Results:

Questions 1 – 5 Were concerned with the work of Suffolk PCT's health visiting team and peer support volunteers. The first two questions helped identify who was using the service.

Q1. The average age of children attending was 13 months. This figure seems to have distorted by the age of children attending Babybounce that day, but whose parents sometimes sought health advice too. The observed average age looked to be under 8 months.

Q2. Mostly first-time mums who visited with only 16% having more than 1 child

Q3. The greatest majority (76%) had been coming for more than 6 months, with a further 16% who had been visiting for between 1- 6 months. No first timers filled in the questionnaire.

Q4. The majority, 52%, waited for less than 10 minutes to see the health visiting team: 20% waited between 10-15 minutes. 8% had to wait longer than 15%

Q5 Measured the value and enjoyment that families felt about the health support and advice they received at the Baby Café, and the results were consistently good or very good:

76% strongly agreed and a further 12% agreed that they **enjoyed coming**

76% strongly agreed & 12% said that they **felt comfortable** here

88% of respondents strongly agreed that it was a **good idea to hold The Baby Café in the library**

72% strongly agreed and 12% agreed that a **drop-in session works well** for them

56% strongly agreed, 24% agreed and 4% neither agreed nor disagreed that the **health visiting team answered their questions**

44% strongly agreed, 8% agreed, 20% neither agreed nor disagreed and only 12% disagreed they should be able to **weigh their babies themselves**

Q6 Was the summary question in which families were invited to write additional comments about what is special for them about coming to the Baby Café. We had anticipated that most people would leave this blank, but in fact 19 of the 25 chose to fill it in. As 2 respondents ignored that side of the questionnaire, believing it to be only for those who saw the health visiting team regularly, the proportion filling it in, 21/25 or 84% is even more surprising. Their responses are listed in full in the GSO qualitative evidence table.

Questions 7 – 12 were concerned with Suffolk Libraries' input to the Baby Café, ie: Bookstart Babybounce, the books, the venue in general and with the social enterprise café, Café Libra.

Q7 Measured the value and enjoyment families felt about Babybounce, and as with the health advice, the results were very positive. 84% said it was very easy to join in. The 3 mums who thought it was easy, but not very easy, commented that they could not always get in. 88% agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed sharing books with their babies and toddlers, 96% agreed or (majority) strongly agreed that they looked forward to coming and 92% that their child loved coming.

Q8 asked families what they would miss if Babybounce weren't running and needed a written response. Once again, a very high 84% of respondents filled this in, listing socialising for themselves and their children, singing together, the friendly welcoming atmosphere and weekly library visits.

Q9 was about why families attend, and so the answers can be used to see if we are meeting the objectives we had in mind when the service began. The answers demonstrate a very high correlation with "what they would miss",

52% listed meeting friends; 36% get out of the house; 40% because of the staff, 52% to use the café, 76% to visit the health visiting team and an astonishing 88% who came chiefly to sing songs.

Just 56% ticked "meeting friends" as the reason they have come, but as "socialising for myself and my child" or "the friendliness" was the main answer given to the previous question, the wording clearly needs to be altered in future questionnaires, and we can assume that the social aspects of the sessions are valued and are attracting repeat attendance.

Only 44% said they had come to take out books that day. This fact must inform our future service delivery.

Q10 23 parents, 92% of the sample, and 96% of those filling in this side of the questionnaire, said they already had recommended Babybounce to friends.

Q11 Only 15 children (60%) whose parents filled in the questionnaires were members of the library.

Q12 Asked how we could improve the service. 56%, 14 parents filled this in, however 7 of those wrote, "Don't change it at all" or "Just keep doing it". Of the 7 (28%) who said they wanted changes, 2 mentioned buggy parking, 3 asked for more toilets, 3 asked for more sessions and 1 wanted a bigger cafe.

Summary:

Most of the respondents were first time mothers who had been visiting for more than 6 months and valued the service very highly. Most very much enjoyed their visits, felt comfortable and liked the drop-in nature of the sessions. 80% thought the health visiting team had answered their questions. More than half of the respondents welcomed the opportunity to weigh their babies themselves, although

this was the most contentious question, with 12% of mums disagreeing. The question “What’s special about The Baby Café?” drew very positive responses about the friendly relaxed atmosphere which encouraged breast feeding, the support and advice, the convenience and the opportunity to meet others. 88% thought the library was an excellent place to hold The Baby Café. The families who attend thoroughly enjoyed coming, enjoyed that their children were mixing with others and really loved singing songs together. They were more than willing to complete the questionnaires or to be interviewed, because they felt this would help to guarantee the continuation of a service they value very highly and now rely on. Several parents came to find me if I was in another part of the building because they wanted to make sure their voice was heard. Several others asked if I would ask interview them instead, because they “didn’t have a hand free, but really wanted to take part”. For them, the very act of participating in this pilot really did “encourage and support awareness and participation in local decision making and civic engagement”.

Jo Dixon
March 2008