



Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub

Better Start Imagine Final Report January 2025

This is a report provided by the Better Start Bradford Innovation Hub (BSBIH) for Better Start Bradford and the Better Start Imagine project. This report provides an overview of project performance and findings from an implementation evaluation. The report is based on data collected by the project provider from 1st October 2016 to 30th November 2024. The design of this evaluation is described in more detail in the Evaluation Plan Summary, which was approved by key stakeholders from the BSBIH and BSB. Previous reports were produced for Better Start Imagine in May 2019 and March 2022.

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Produced for Better Start Bradford

Executive Summary

Project background

Better Start Imagine (BSI) is a key project within the 'Loving Language' theme of Better Start Bradford. It has two components; a book gifting service that delivers a free book every month to children living in the Better Start Bradford area from birth to their 4th birthday, and wrap-around sessions aimed at supporting families to feel confident in sharing books and stories with young children.

Both the book gifting service and wrap-around sessions have been delivered by service providers BHT Early Education & Training, with the book gifting element part of the international Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL). The project partnered with other organisations in an attempt to ensure efficient recruitment into the book gifting programme to reach as many families as possible. Book gifting began in October 2016, with the final families registered to the service in May 2024. Final books were delivered in September 2024, meaning that the last children signed up for BSI should have received 5 books before the end of the programme.

Wrap-around sessions, including Story Time, Rhyme Time, and Baby Club, were delivered for parents in community venues to help them get the best out of the books that were delivered. Delivery of the sessions evolved considerably during the first contract in order to best meet the needs of the Better Start Bradford community. Sessions were intended to be delivered face to face, however, during the second contract, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, attempts were made to deliver content online as a temporary measure. Following easing of restrictions face to face delivery resumed.

This report provides an overview of the evaluation of the project covering the entire delivery period of eight years between 01.10.2016 - 31.10.2024.

Aims of the evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation was to understand how both components of Better Start Imagine were implemented and received by the community. Specifically:

- To provide a clear picture of project delivery, implementation, reach, and engagement for both the BSI book-gifting and wrap-around services.
- To understand whether parents value the book gifting service, and report that it supports reading in the home.
- To understand what parents report that they gain from the wrap-around services, and to identify facilitators and barriers to parents' engagement with these services.

An implementation evaluation of the whole delivery period was undertaken with some additional qualitative work with families completed during the first contract. The project provides a summary of findings from all elements of the evaluation.

Executive Summary

Key findings

Book Gifting

Recruitment

BSI has consistently registered a large proportion of the eligible population to the book gifting service. In total 6840 children were registered with the service, approximately 87% of those eligible. Strong rates of registration alongside low rates of withdrawal suggest BSI has been a valued service within the Better Start Bradford community. The importance of establishing a strong referral pathway via partnership with the Health Visiting service has been clearly demonstrated and the high number of self referrals also suggests a good level of community awareness of the project.

Reach

Ethnicity data shows that those registered for book gifting are largely representative of the wider Better Start Bradford community. Of all parents/caregivers of registered children, 44% are recorded as having a main spoken language other than English.

Implementation

In total, 275,614 books were delivered to registered children, an average of 40 books per child.

Wrap-around sessions

Recruitment

Engagement with wrap-around activities has taken time to establish and has never reached anticipated levels, but have increased over time. In total, nearly 3,500 child attendances at sessions were recorded although it is not possible to confirm whether these are unique children.

Reach

While 44% of the parent and caregivers of children registered for book gifting have a main spoken language other than English, available data for wrap-around sessions shows that 33% of those attending fall into that category which may suggest barriers to engaging or a lack of appetite for sessions amongst these families. Similarly families from Asian/Asian British: Pakistani and White Other backgrounds are slightly under-represented.

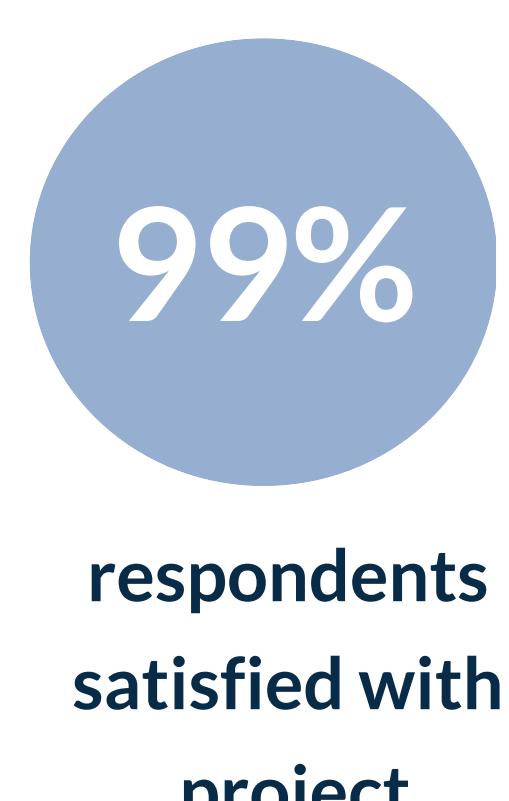
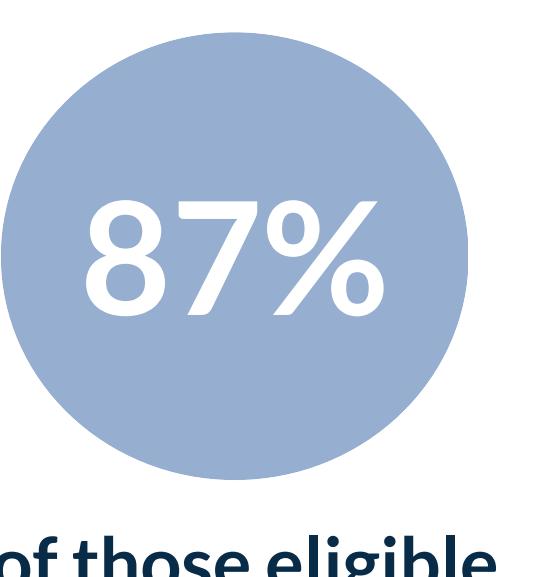
Implementation

1,062 wrap-around sessions were recorded and 816 of these were Story & Rhyme time sessions (75% of anticipated). Actual numbers of sessions delivered increased over the second and third contract, but did not meet the targets set by BSB.

Community perceptions

Satisfaction scores and comments provided by families on project satisfaction questionnaires, suggest that families who attend the sessions find them beneficial and help to establish an early 'love of books' and promote bonding between parent/caregiver and child.

In addition, analysis of these comments suggest the community struggles to differentiate between BSI and Better Start Bradford making BSI a flagship project for engagement within the programme.



Executive Summary

Recommendations

Recommendations for practice

- As an engagement activity, BSI book gifting is highly impactful as demonstrated by the level of project reach and how recognisable it is as a part of the Better Start Bradford programme.
- Book gifting is only effective if it is delivered in combination with activities that support families to engage with the gifted books in age appropriate ways and build confidence in their use at home are necessary to promote impact on children's language development.
- Any future commissioning of book gifting must include wraparound services, that take on board the learning on implementation from BSI. Efforts should be made to ensure these activities reach families with languages other than English to ensure equity and reduce the potential for exacerbating inequalities.

Recommendations for evaluation

- The evaluation of BSI completed by the BSBIH has provided a detailed understanding of the delivery of the project, its feasibility and acceptability to the BSB community.
- Evidence of the effectiveness for book gifting remains mixed, but suggests that activities to promote engagement with books is necessary to change outcomes.
- Options for effectiveness evaluation of book gifting services are limited and include a number of challenges. However, discussions with DPIL should continue to explore how evaluation could be incorporated into the book gifting service itself.

Project background

Project purpose and function

Better Start Imagine (BSI) is a key project within the 'Loving Language' theme of Better Start Bradford. It has two components; a book gifting service that delivers a free book every month to children living in the Better Start Bradford area from birth to their 4th birthday, and wrap-around sessions aimed at supporting families to feel confident in sharing books and stories with young children.

Both the book gifting service and wrap-around sessions have been delivered by service providers BHT Early Education & Training, with the book gifting element part of the international Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL). The project partnered with other organisations in an attempt to ensure efficient recruitment into the book gifting programme to reach as many families as possible, as early as possible. Book gifting began in October 2016, with the final families registered to the service in May 2024. Final books were delivered in September 2024, meaning that the last children signed up for BSI should have received 5 books before the end of the programme but will not receive books up until their 4th birthday.

Wrap-around sessions, including Story Time, Rhyme Time, and Baby Club, were delivered for parents in community venues to help them get the best out of the books that were delivered. Delivery of the sessions evolved considerably during the first contract in order to best meet the needs of the Better Start Bradford community. Sessions were intended to be delivered face to face, however, during the second contract, which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, attempts were made to deliver content online as a temporary measure. Following easing of restrictions face to face delivery resumed.

This report provides an overview of the evaluation of the project covering the entire delivery period of eight years between 01.10.2016 - 31.10.2024.

COVID-19: Impact on the project

As for many Better Start Bradford projects, the impact of COVID-19 on BSI was significant. While book gifting was able to continue, the reduction in contacts between referring organisations and families led to a reduction in referrals. Wrap-around sessions were paused due to social restrictions and closures of community venues. Baby Club and Story and Rhyme time sessions were adapted to be delivered online with a similar format, as 'live' sessions on Facebook. In-person socially distanced sessions resumed in September 2020 with online sessions also delivered. Wrap-around delivery had returned to fully in-person by Year 6.

YEAR 5

October 2020 - September 2021

Baby Club sessions returned to in-person socially distanced sessions with the option to join via Zoom until the second lockdown. Sessions were then delivered via Zoom until restrictions lifted. Story and Rhyme time sessions were also delivered in-person and socially distanced, with weekly Facebook 'lives' continuing to facilitate the craft activity that had to be paused during COVID-19

YEAR 4

October 2019 - September 2020

Baby Club sessions moved online, maintaining a similar format. Story and Rhyme time sessions were initially paused and then delivered 'live' via Facebook. Storytelling sessions stopped indefinitely due to setting closures and restrictions.

YEAR 6

October 2021 - September 2022

All in-person delivery resumed.

Project background

Aims of the evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation was to understand how both components of Better Start Imagine were implemented and received by the community. Specifically:

- To provide a clear picture of project delivery, implementation, reach, and engagement for both the BSI book-gifting and wrap around services.
- To understand whether parents value the book gifting service, and report that it supports reading in the home.
- To understand what parents report that they gain from the wrap-around services, and to identify facilitators and barriers to parents' engagement with these services.

An implementation evaluation of the whole delivery period was undertaken with some additional qualitative work with families completed during the first contract. The project provides a summary from findings from all elements of the evaluation.

Data quality



BHT have always worked closely with BSBIH to improve data quality, but there have been some significant challenges throughout delivery.

The project has worked hard to rectify data issues within their control, but issues within SystmOne (i.e. challenges linking parents and children), challenges due to incomplete data from BDCT, and issues linking and understanding discrepancies across different data systems (DPIL, BDCT) have presented barriers to evaluation. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic and a need to move to online delivery created additional challenges to collecting identifiable data from participants of wrap-around sessions so figures presented for contract two are best estimates based on SystmOne and spreadsheet data.

Across the delivery period, the project has corrected data quality issues found earlier in the process and explained the gaps in data which can't be retrospectively filled. Data has always been provided in a timely manner and significant progress has been made. Overall, the rating for data from Better Start Imagine is **AMBER**.

Implementation findings

Book Gifting

How many families were signed up to receive book gifting?

It was anticipated that the project would register 70% of babies born in the Better Start Bradford area for the book gifting service each year. Although it should be noted that children could be registered with the service at any point between birth and their 4th birthday.

Across the full evaluation period 6840 children were registered on SystmOne to receive book gifting. This averages at 855 children per year, but actual annual figures are provided in Figure 1. If we exclude Year 8, when children were only registered for 8 months of the year, the annual average increases to 901.

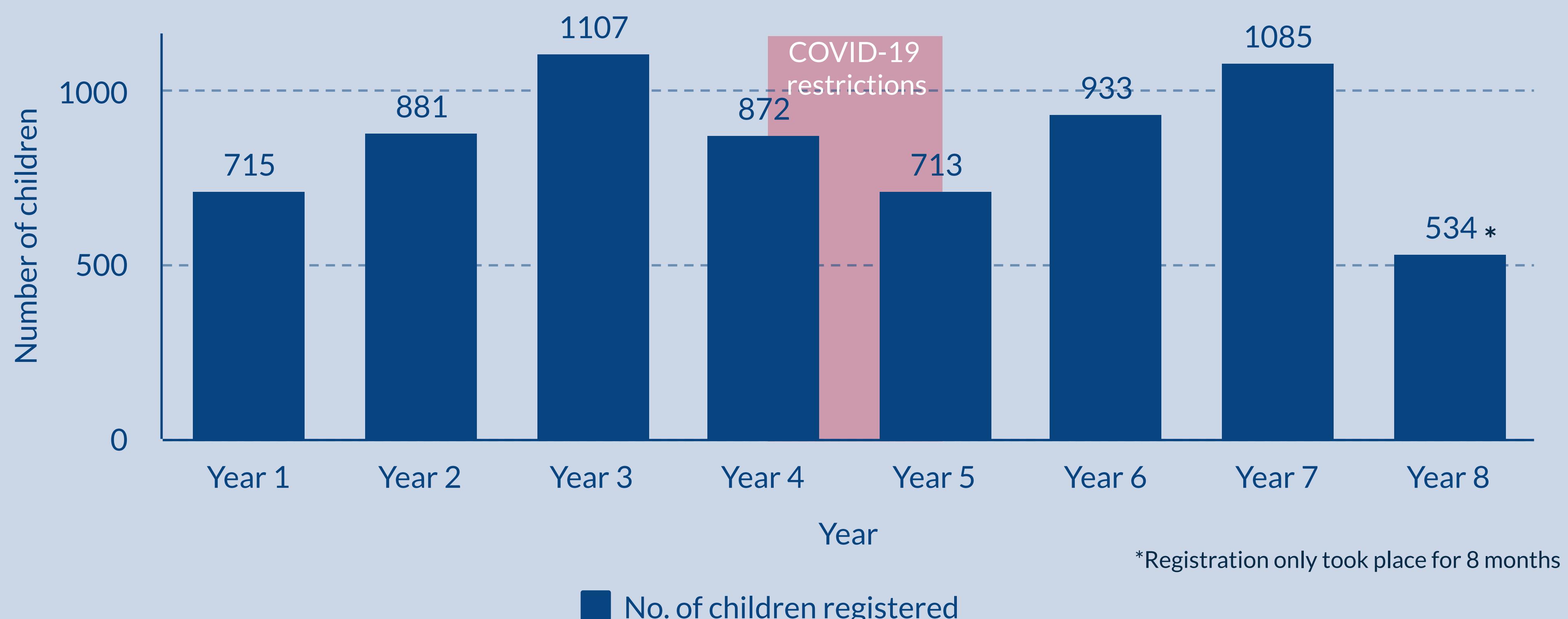
Annual birth rates in the Better Start Bradford area fluctuated between 2016 and 2024.

Given that effective recruitment pathways were not established until 2017 and recruitment slowed in Year 8 as the project was closing we have used birth rates between 2017 and 2023 to establish performance against this overall target. Approximately 6398 babies were born during this time, and 5591 children were registered suggesting an overall registration rate of 87%.

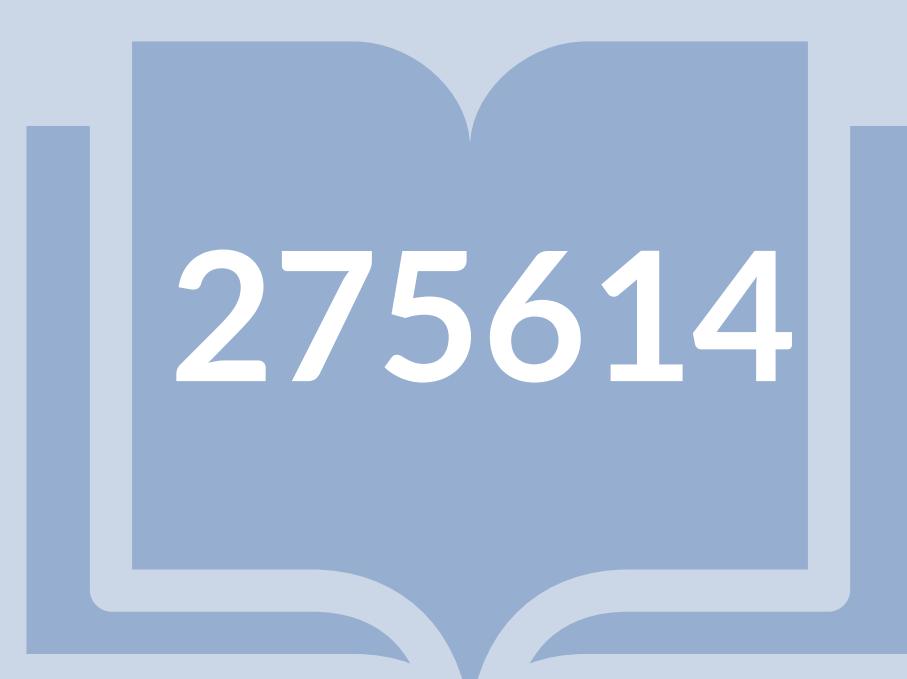
6840

children registered for
book gifting

Figure 1: Number of children signed up to book gifting each year



How many books were delivered to children?



books delivered to
Better Start Bradford
children

Across the evaluation period, a total of 275,614 books were recorded as being sent out to children. This averages at 40 books per child, although some children will have received more or less dependent on when they registered with the service.

Please note an error in previous reporting means books were double counted in end of contract reports.

Implementation findings

Book Gifting

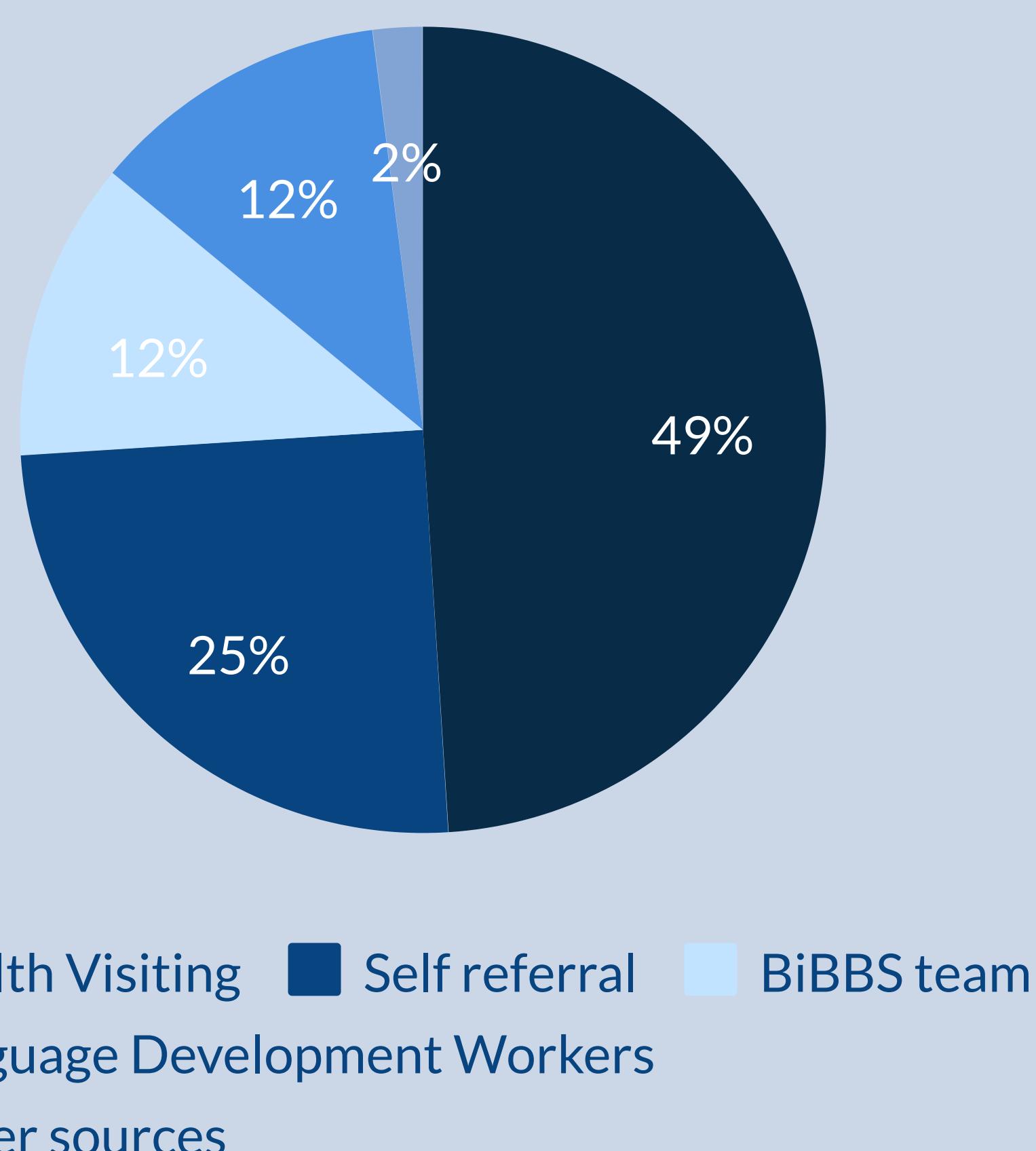
Where did referrals to the service come from?

Referral source data was available for 5868 of registered children.

As previously stated, it took some time to establish effective referral pathways for the book gifting service. During the first part of the first contract, recruitment to BSI was undertaken by the BiBBS Community Research team through contact with pregnant women. This was considered an interim solution, and later the BHT team partnered with the Health Visiting service to develop a more sustainable pathway.

The BiBBS team finished recruitment at the end of Year 2 and in that time made 713 referrals (making up 12% of all referrals where referral source was recorded). Health Visiting accounted for nearly half of all referrals (49%) and from Year 3 onwards they made up 57%. A quarter of referrals (25%) came from families themselves, and were recorded as self referrals, and a further 12% were made by Language Development workers. Other recorded referral sources included Children Centres, other BSB projects (including the Perinatal Project Coordinators), GPs and Nurseries.

Figure 2: Referral Source

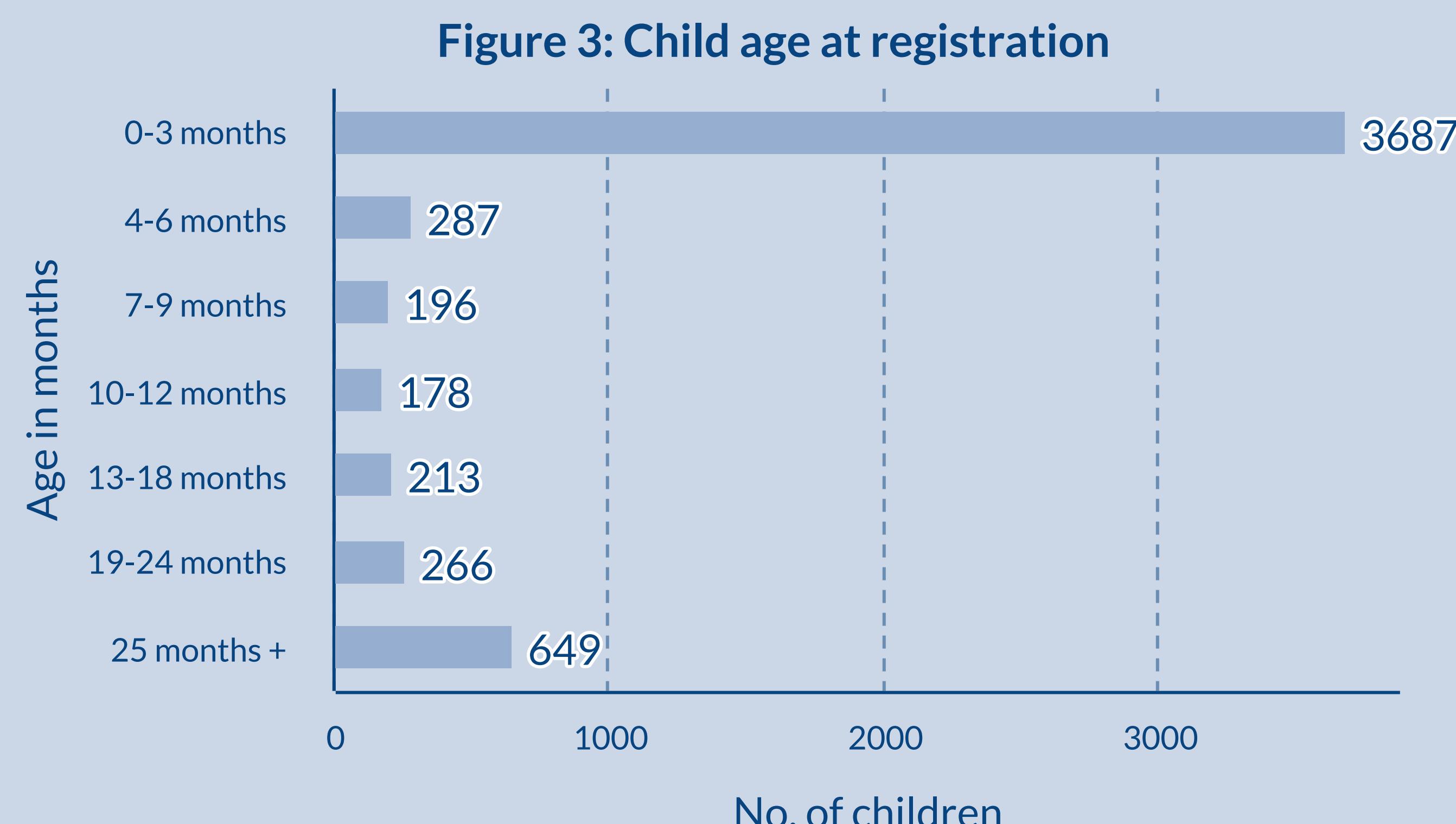


The importance of establishing a strong referral pathway for a project like BSI is clearly demonstrated in the data. There is an increase in referrals once the partnership with Health Visiting was well established (Figure 1), as well as the drop in Year 5 (during COVID-19) when statutory contacts with families were challenged and opportunities to refer into the service were reduced. The high number of self referrals into BSI may also suggest that there is a good level of community awareness of the project, and this is likely to reflect effective signposting to the service by organisations working with families.

Implementation findings

Book Gifting

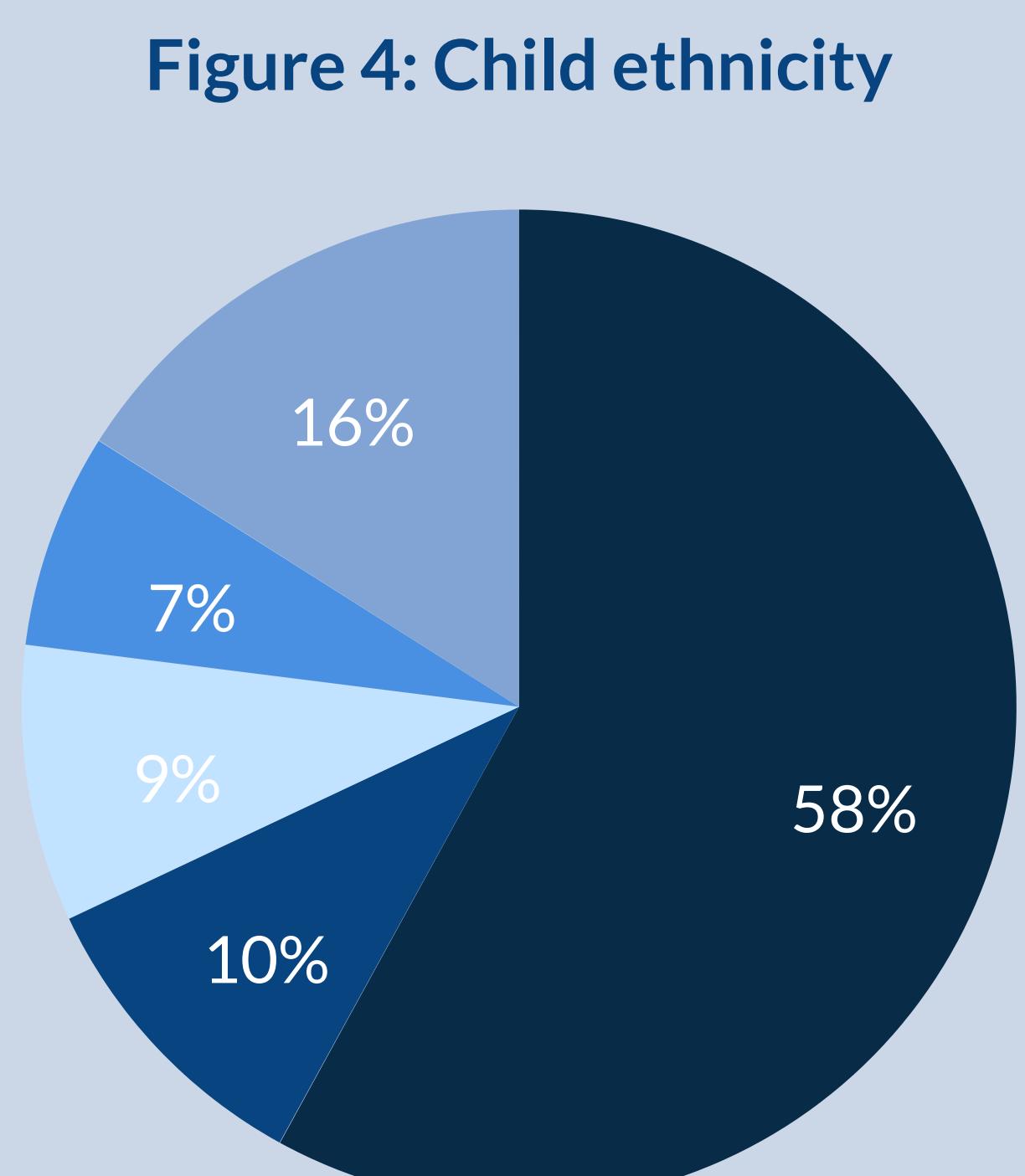
What were the characteristics of the families who received book gifting?



The vast majority of children (67%) were registered before 3 months of age, which aligns with the project's aim of delivering books to children from birth. However, a further third (33%) were registered from 4 months onwards, with nearly half of these registered when they were over 2 years old. This likely reflects the efforts made by BHT's Language Development workers to refer families who were accessing their other services.

Ethnicity data was available for 4947 of the children registered with the book gifting service (Figure 4) and was compared to all children born between 2016 and 2024 in the Better Start Bradford area. Based on this, children are broadly representative of the overall population. Asian/Asian British: Pakistani and Asian/Asian British: Other backgrounds are very slightly over represented amongst registered children (58% and 10% vs 57% and 9%), and those of White British and Other backgrounds are very slightly under represented (9% and 7% vs 10% and 9%).

Language data was available for 3190 parents and caregivers of registered children. More than half (56%) of those reported English as their main spoken language. Other commonly recorded languages are shown in Table 1.



■ Asian/Asian British: Pakistani
 ■ Asian/Asian British: Other □ White: British
 ■ White Other □ All Others

Table 1: Parent/caregiver main spoken language

Language	% recorded
English	56%
Urdu (including Hindi)	16%
Punjabi	9%
Pashto	4%
Bengali	4%
Slovak	2%
Polish	2%
Other language	7%

Implementation findings

Book Gifting

Why did families withdraw from the service?

The vast majority of families left the service when their child reached the maximum age (80%) with a further 18% recorded as moving out of the area. A very small number became uncontactable and even fewer requested to withdraw.

Interviews with BiBBS mothers

As part of interviews collected for wider evaluation purposes, in 2018 22 new BiBBS mums were asked about whether they were receiving the BSI book gifting, and how they felt about the project. Key recurring elements of mothers' responses included the following:



While overall responses from BiBBS mums were positive about book gifting, the reluctance of some to read with their baby suggests a potential lack of understanding of how reading with babies from an early age can support their brain and future language development.

Implementation findings

Wrap-around Sessions

How many wrap around sessions were delivered?

Contract 1: Years 1-3

The wrap-around activities delivered as part of BSI have evolved since the start of delivery. During the first contract, a 6 week course (Owlets) was delivered, aiming to encourage sustained engagement with sessions. Following low levels of engagement, BHT changed the focus of the course to Sign, Rhyme and Bonding time which saw attendance increase. Alongside this, BHT ran Storytelling sessions and Rhyme time sessions which also saw lower than anticipated recruitment. Further adaptation was undertaken, with Storytelling and Rhyme time sessions combined which saw engagement increase. At the start of the contract it was anticipated that 78 Storytelling sessions would be delivered each year. This was expanded to include Story and Rhyme time sessions when they merged. 28 sessions were delivered in Year 1 (36% of anticipated), 90 sessions were delivered in Year 2 (115% of anticipated), and 74 sessions were delivered in Year 3 (95% of anticipated). Overall, 82% of anticipated Story & Rhyme time sessions were delivered placing the project in **AMBER**. Overall delivery figures are reported below. In total 367 sessions were delivered in the first contract.



Contract 2: Years 4-6

During the second contract BHT offered Story and Rhyme time, and Baby Club (also known as Sign, Rhyme and Bonding time). During COVID-19, all wrap-around activities were paused in line with social restrictions. Some sessions were then adapted to be offered online, using Facebook Live and Zoom, however, the nature of these platforms meant levels of engagement (specifically the number of individual children 'attending') were impossible to gauge. As soon as restrictions were lifted delivery moved back to in-person. It was anticipated that the project would deliver 78 Story and Rhyme time sessions per year (234 in total). A total of 366 sessions were recorded during this contract. 259 of these were Story and Rhyme time (111% of anticipated) placing the project in **GREEN**.



Implementation findings

Wrap-around Sessions

How many wrap around sessions were delivered?

Contract 3: Years 7-8

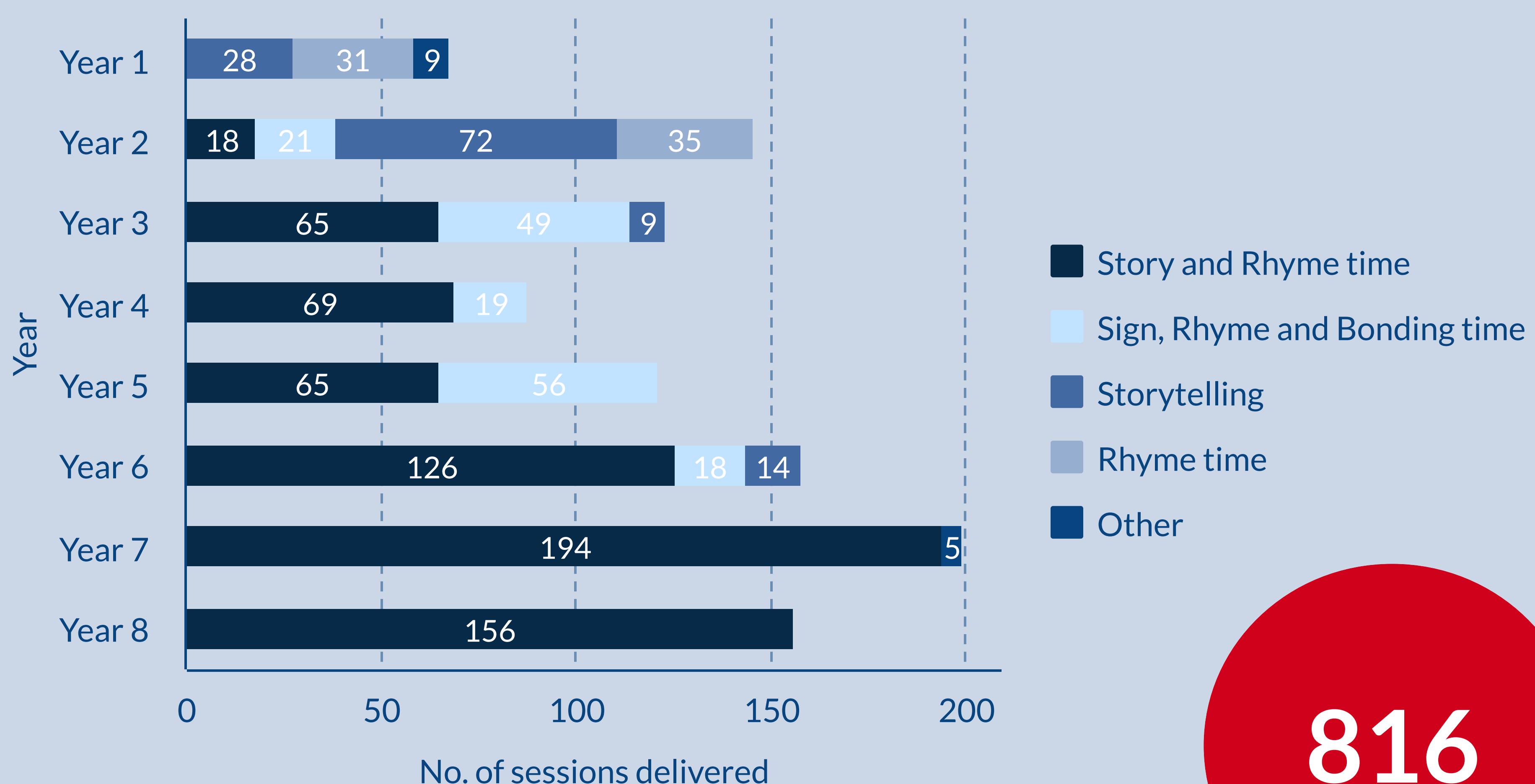
Targets for implementation of wrap-around sessions were adapted again in the final contract. It was anticipated that the project would deliver 312 Story and Rhyme time sessions per year, 624 in total. 194 sessions were recorded in SystmOne in Year 7, with an additional 5 Baby Club sessions. 156 sessions were recorded in Year 8. In total, 355 sessions were delivered, 350 of which were Story and Rhyme time (56% of anticipated) placing the project in **RED**.

Overall

In total 1,062 wrap-around sessions were recorded across the entire delivery period. Overall, it was anticipated that the project would deliver 1,092 Storytelling/ Story and Rhyme time sessions in that time. 816 were delivered (75% of anticipated). While performance against targets worsened over time, actual numbers of sessions delivered increased over the second and third contract.



Figure 5: Number of sessions delivered per year per session type



Please note that the total number of sessions held reported here may be slightly under-reported (meaning the number of actual sessions held may be higher) due to the way in which sessions are inputted to SystmOne

Storytelling/ Story & Rhyme time sessions delivered

Implementation findings

Wrap-around Sessions

How many children attended wrap-around sessions?

Contract 1: Years 1-3

In the first contract recruitment was assessed by the number of children who attended Storytelling and Story & Rhyme time sessions. The anticipated figure was 6 children for each session (across 78 sessions), for an annual total of 468 (1,404 overall). In the first year, 82 children were recorded as having attended a session (17% of anticipated). However, this improved considerably by Year 2, when they reached 93% of the target (437 children). 373 children attended in Year 3 which represents 80% of the target. Overall the project achieved 64% of the anticipated figure placing them in **AMBER**. Across all sessions delivered in the first contract, 1265 children were recorded as attending sessions.

Contract 2: Years 4-6

In the second contract recruitment was assessed by the number of children who attended Story & Rhyme time sessions. The anticipated figure remained the same as Contract 1. As previously stated, online adaptations during COVID-19 meant collecting accurate data around attendance was impossible and so a combination of in-person attendances and online views are reported. In addition, data related to in-person attendance was collected via spreadsheet in addition to SystmOne as it was not always possible to register people on the SystmOne so the figures presented don't necessarily represent unique children.

In Year 4, 214 attendances were recorded across 43 sessions (averaging at 5 children per session) with 169 online views across 26 sessions. In Year 5, 95 attendances were recorded across 27 sessions (averaging at 4 children per session) with 174 online views across 38 sessions. In Year 6, 691 attendances were recorded across 126 sessions (averaging at 6 children per session). 1000 attendances at Story & Rhyme time sessions were recorded (71% of anticipated) placing them in **AMBER**. Across the whole second contract, 1198 attendances were recorded across all wrap-around sessions.

Contract 3: Years 7-8

Given the increase in anticipated delivery, annual recruitment targets increased from 468 to 1872. In Year 7, 685 attendances were recorded (37% of anticipated) and in Year 8, 777 attendances were recorded (42% of anticipated). Overall this is 39% of anticipated placing them in **RED**. Across the whole third contract, 1,491 attendances were recorded.

Contract 1
892

child attendances at
Story & Rhyme time

Contract 2
1000

child attendances at
Story & Rhyme time

Contract 3
1462

child attendances at
Story & Rhyme time

While performance against recruitment targets has worsened, the number of child attendances at sessions has increased over time

Implementation findings

Wrap-around Sessions

Who were the families who attended sessions?

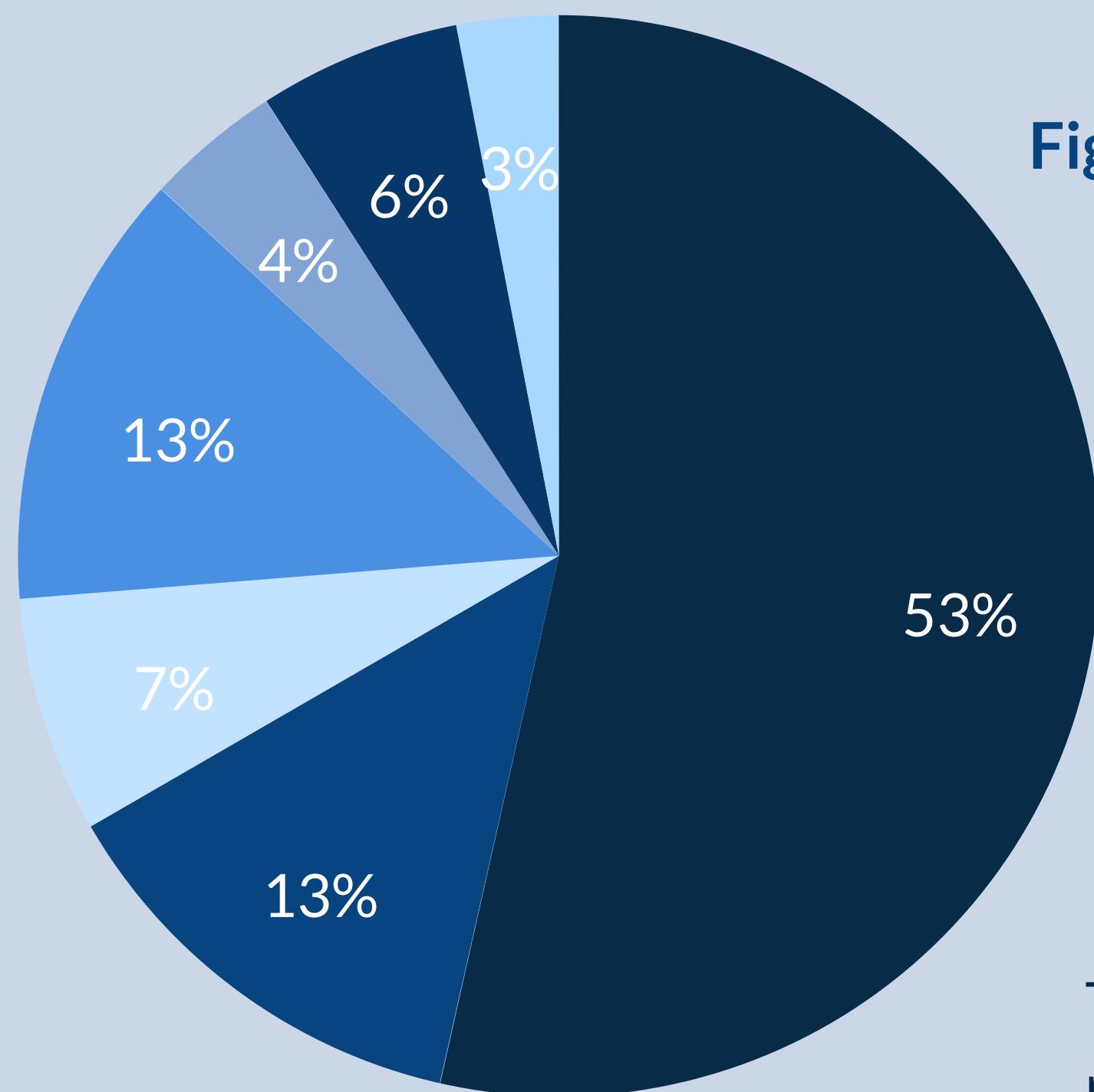


Figure 6: Parent/ Caregiver ethnicity

- Asian/Asian British: Pakistani
- White British
- White Other
- Asian/Asian British: Other
- Black
- Mixed Ethnicity
- Other Ethnic Group

Only those families attending in person sessions and who were registered on SystmOne had ethnicity recorded. This means the data presented here is representative of in-person sessions only. Most attendees were Asian/Asian British: Pakistani (53%), White British (13%), or Asian/Asian British: Other (13%).

This means that Asian/Asian British: Pakistani families are slightly under-represented as are those of White Other backgrounds. White British families are slightly over represented as are those from other Asian backgrounds. However, overall families attending wrap-around sessions are fairly representative of the wider BSB population.

Who were the parents and caregivers of participating children?

Table 2: Parent/caregiver main spoken languages

Home Language	% recorded
English	67%
Urdu (including Hindi)	14%
Punjabi	8%
Bengali	2%
Pashto	2%
Central and Eastern European languages	5%
Other	2%

Again, only those families attending in person sessions and who were registered on SystmOne had main spoken language recorded. This means the data presented here is representative of in-person sessions only.

More than two thirds (67%) of parents and caregivers reported English as their main spoken language. Given the data reported for parents and caregivers registered for the book gifting service, this suggests that families who speak English as their main language are more likely to attend wrap-around sessions than those with other languages recorded, who are under represented. However, when interpreting this we need to be mindful that it's likely that some families who attended were never recorded on SystmOne.

Implementation findings

Wrap-around Sessions

Community perceptions

In 2022 comments taken from the project satisfaction questionnaires completed by families at wrap-around sessions, were analysed (n=63). Below are some key findings that illustrate how the community see Better Start Imagine as a whole. The vast majority were highly positive, although one respondent requested less forms to fill in.

1. BHT have a good rapport with the community

The community was highly positive about BHT staff, who are described throughout as "fantastic", "nice", "lovely", "wonderful", "very enthusiastic and accommodating", "very good", "non-judgmental", "friendly", "welcoming", and "supportive". The majority of comments praised and thanked BHT staff by name for the sessions.

3. Project activities help children to love books

One parent reported "my daughter enjoys reading books as a result", and others find the project (both book gifting and wrap-around) helpful in encouraging their children's love of books.

5. Both parents AND children enjoy sessions

Parents repeatedly described their children as "enjoying", "loving", or being "very happy with" the wrap-around activities. Parents also described the sessions as "an amazing experience", "enjoyable for mums as well as kids"; "me and my child really like this story time".

7. Appetite for more and/or longer sessions

Some parents reported that they enjoyed the sessions so much that they wish there were more of them offered. Some ask for longer sessions.

2. The community doesn't always differentiate between Better Start Bradford and Better Start Imagine

Some parents mention the Better Start Bradford programme when describing Better Start Imagine, or use 'Better Start Bradford' and 'Better Start Imagine' interchangably, suggesting they may see the book gifting and wrap-around sessions as synonymous with Better Start Bradford as a whole.

4. Wrap-around activities are helpful for mental health & bonding (as well as literacy)

Some parents commented that the wrap-around sessions promoted parent-child bonding, helped with maternal anxiety, and /or were motivating and supportive.

6. Desire to increase the reach of Better Start Imagine

Some parents reported wanting both book gifting and wrap-around sessions to be made available to more areas in Bradford (i.e. outside of the Better Start Bradford), so that more people could benefit.

"Better Start Bradford project is very useful for our community. We will get chance to take our children out and it helps in children's pre school learning and give parents opportunity to socialize as well learn better ways of up bringing their children."

Satisfaction

What did families say about the support they received?



A total of 202 families completed satisfaction questionnaires at the BSI wrap-around sessions. These covered both book gifting and the wrap-around activities.

99% of respondents had a median score of 4 or more

99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project was helpful to them

99.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the support they received

99.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project gave them useful information

97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project was easy to access

99% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the project to family or friends

96% of respondents were happy with the project overall

"We have really enjoyed the sessions. Staff really friendly, helpful and welcoming. Thank you."

"My son enjoys the story telling session a lot and we always look forward to it. It helped with his speech development and his interest on books. Big thank you."

"I think these sessions are great for mums who are struggling, I wasn't aware they existed until my health visitor told me. I know a lot of parents who would benefit massively."

"Really pleased with how my daughter has developed coming to these sessions."

"XXX has been amazing and has taught us so much over the last few weeks. We have seen a big improvement in our child since starting the sessions."

Evidence Review

A review of the evidence for book gifting programmes was conducted as part of the initial Service Design of BSI in 2017. It concluded that specific evidence of effectiveness of DPIL was limited and generally based on poor quality studies. Most studies were from the US, and although the programme was delivered in a very similar manner to the programme in England, its effects on children may differ depending on the setting. For example, one of the two studies from the UK was conducted with families who had English as a first language (Pahl, Lewis et al. 2010), and a US study found that Imagination Library was less effective for ethnic minorities and those with learning- or language barriers (Beckett). The most robust evaluation of Imagination Library at that time found very limited evidence of impact on short-term outcomes, and no evidence of impact on long-term child outcomes. For this reason the project was assessed as EIF NL2 (see Figure 7).

The review of evidence was refreshed in 2022, and included a meta-analysis of evaluations of book gifting (de Bondt et al. 2020) as well as a number of other studies. It concluded that the evidence for book gifting schemes remains mixed but suggests book gifting is more likely to be successful if paired with additional activities, such as multiple personal contacts and added parental support. Evidence generally suggests that there may be a small improvement in child and parent literacy behaviour that correlates with book gifting schemes, but the literature requires further research and more robust designs. Evidence also suggests that surrounding support in using the books, such as the approach taken by BSI, is important and there remains a gap in evidence relating to families with English as an additional language.

The evaluation of BSI completed by the BSBIH has provided a detailed understanding of the delivery of the project, its feasibility and acceptability to the BSB community. External evaluations of DPIL have produced findings with promise of positive changes in child and parent literacy behaviour and for this reason the BSBIH now suggest a rating of EIF Level 2 for book gifting and wraparound services combined.

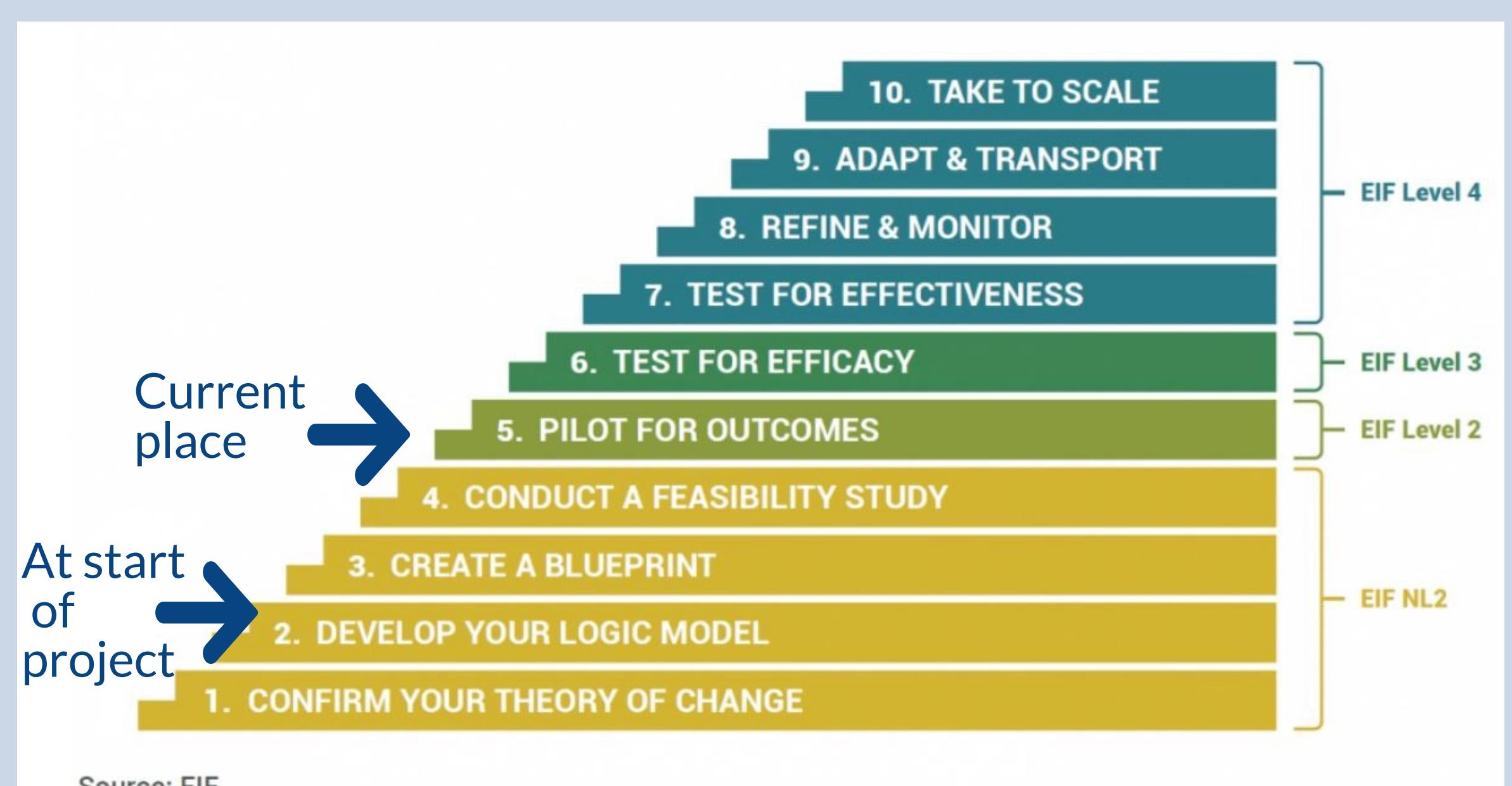
Figure 6: Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) Levels of Evidence

The figure on the right displays the EIF evidence ladder.

At the beginning of delivery the project was NL2

The project is currently Level 2

With funding secured for continued delivery and further evaluation, the project has the potential to move to Level 4



Conclusion of findings

Over the life of the project, BSI has consistently registered a large proportion of the eligible population to the book gifting service. Strong rates of registration alongside low rates of withdrawal suggest BSI has been a valued service within the Better Start Bradford community. Analysis of comments provided by families on project satisfaction questionnaires suggest the community struggles to differentiate between BSI and Better Start Bradford making BSI a flagship project for engagement within the programme.

Evidence suggests that in order for book gifting services to have impact for families there is a need for further support to facilitate the use of the books, and this has underpinned the BSI approach. Engagement with wrap-around activities has taken time to establish and has never reached anticipated levels. However, it is worth noting that targets were significantly increased in the final contract, and actual figures have increased over time. Satisfaction scores and comments also suggest that families who attend the sessions find them beneficial and responses specifically refer to BSI helping to establish an early 'love of books' and promoting bonding between parent/caregiver and child.

While 44% of the parent and caregivers of children registered for book gifting have a main spoken language other than English, available data for wrap-around sessions shows only a third of those attending fall into that category which may suggest barriers to engaging or a lack of appetite for sessions amongst these families. Similarly families of Asian/Asian British: Pakistani backgrounds and White Other backgrounds appear to be slightly under-represented.

The project have provided nearly 7,000 children and their parents and caregivers with more than 275, 000 books over the last 9 years as well over 1,000 wrap-around engagement activities. Further evaluation would be needed to understand what impact, if any, BSI has on children's longer term outcomes, but evaluation options for the service remain limited.

Recommendations for Practice

- As an engagement activity, BSI book gifting is highly impactful as demonstrated by the level of project reach and how recognisable it is as a part of the Better Start Bradford programme.
- To be effective, book gifting needs to be delivered alongside activities that support families to engage with the gifted books in age appropriate ways and build confidence in their use at home. This should be a part of any future commission of book gifting.
- Efforts should be made to ensure such wraparound activities reach all communities to ensure equity and reduce the potential for exacerbating inequalities.

Recommendations for Evaluation

- Options for effectiveness evaluation of book gifting services are limited and include a number of challenges. However, discussions with DPIL should continue to explore how evaluation could be incorporated into the book gifting service itself.