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## **Right from the start: a study of provision for under-fives in two Leicestershire libraries**

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**RIGHT FROM THE START**

**A study of provision for under  
fives in two Leicestershire Libraries**

**by**

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**A Master's Dissertation, submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the  
Master of Arts degree of the  
Loughborough University of Technology**

**February 1991**

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## ABSTRACT

Improving services for under fives at two Leicestershire libraries is considered within the wider context of how a child's development can be enhanced by the provision of appropriate services and facilities.

It is argued that the first five years are the most crucial in a child's life and that the library is potentially in a position to have some impact at each developmental stage. Examples of good practice are looked at in relation to many of the major aspects of the service from encouraging membership to evaluation. These are used with the survey findings from Evington and Oakham to make recommendations for the two libraries.

It is concluded that although Leicestershire as a county incorporates many aspects of good practice, in order to enable individual service points to be more effective the authority to revise some of its policies especially as regards charges, the allocation of time allowed for under fives work and looking towards a greater involvement of support staff in this work. The recommendations for Evington and Oakham have deliberately been kept to what is hopefully realistic given economic and other constraints posed for example by the size or structure of the building. For funding purposes it is recommended that the two libraries should actively seek sponsorships from businesses and look to local community groups to fund specific projects.

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## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this project, which was suggested by senior staff involved with children's work in the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service, is to consider how services to under fives can be made more effective in two specified branch libraries, Evington and Oakham.

Children develop most rapidly in the first five years of life. The library is in a position to have a direct and positive influence on this development - intellectual, emotional and physical. The aim of library provision for under fives is not necessarily to teach the child to read but to stimulate the child's interest in books and to encourage the desire to read [1].

Reading can be the basis of much human development:

Reading provides experiences through which the individual may expand his horizons; identify and intensify his interests, and gain deeper understanding of himself, of other human beings and of the world [2].

Introducing children under five to books and libraries and their carers to a wealth of knowledge about educating and entertaining their children, is potentially one of the most exciting and rewarding aspects of public library work today. Under fives librarians, like other children's librarians, do however tend to be undervalued, suffer from a lack of status and are to some extent marginalised [3]. One wonders though if the growing realisation of the importance of this work for the future public support of libraries may help to change this. There is much support for the notion that the earlier the 'library habit' is created the greater the likelihood that it will continue into adulthood [4]. Or to quote one director of a public library, 'We may not realize this but our futures are in the hands of our children's librarians' [5].

So for whatever reason an authority decides to make provision for under fives - whether it is for educational or cultural reasons or whether it is purely for political reasons to secure their own future, for that provision to be effective ✓ it needs to be made within the framework of a knowledge of the ✓ needs, interests and the abilities of that group. Chapter one, then, looks in some detail at the development stages of children from nought to five and attempts to outline some library materials and activities that are suited to a given age. Chapter two examines some of the major aspects of library ✓ work with under fives and outlines some considerations that ✓ could enhance good practice. ✓

Chapter three looks at the status quo in Evington and Oakham within the context of Leicestershire's services to under fives in general. The next two chapters outline the methodology used in the project and the findings of the surveys conducted in the two areas. The final chapter draws ✓ together the work of the dissertation in the form of ✓ recommendations for the two libraries. The recommendations are ✓ made with due consideration to what would be practical given ✓ the size, location, social context, financial constraints etc. ✓ in each library and not what would make the service 'ideal' in a universal sense.

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## CHAPTER ONE.

### CHILD DEVELOPMENT FROM BIRTH TO FIVE.

#### 1.1 Introduction

The pre-school years are the magic years when the helpless new born baby grows into an active, sturdy, well established little person. Never again in his whole life span will his brain, his personality or his skills develop so rapidly, so much or so fundamentally. Never again will his environment, no matter how sophisticated it may become later in life with its people, its things, its sounds, its smells, its spaces, influence him so profoundly. It is a terrifying thought, but there is now agreement that by and large the five year old has become the person he will always be. The foundations are complete and will to a considerable extent dictate the nature of the building [1].

What this means is that the early childhood years are most powerful for the development of human personality and intelligence. It is play however and not formal "education" as such that is most influential in helping a child to learn. As Brierly says:

...there is much to be learned about play in all its forms but all appear to be essential for intellectual, imaginative and emotional development of the child and may well be necessary steps to a further stage of development [2].

Children of different ages play doing different things which leads to an increase of skill or power or understanding. The one year old practices over and over the sounds which will in due course become words. The older child loves to climb, jump, run, skip and repeat endlessly the movements which will develop strength and agility of legs, arms and fingers.

A child's senses - sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell - bring information about the child's surroundings and its knowledge of the world. The degree to which these senses are developed determines the amount of information we can obtain.

Children need many experiences with all these senses; otherwise their perceptions will be dulled, their vocabulary growth limited and their creative instincts will be uninspired. A narrow environment, few books and toys and a restrictive attitude to children's natural exploratory activities may permanently retard mental development by creating an unsatisfactory state of mind due to poor motivation and the child learning to expect little out of life. On the other hand there are certain conditions under which exploratory learning can be maximized. These are:

- 1) a secure and familiar territory
- 2) a friendly, relaxed and cheerful atmosphere.
- 3) adults knowing when to join in a child's exploratory play and when to hold back so as not to hamper the child's progress.
- 4) an environment which invites exploration [3].

It will be useful to bear these in mind as we go through the different stages of child development and the provision that is best suited to a particular level of maturity.

## 1.2 Birth to One Year

A brief summary of the development of the young child during this period is given by Gesell:

In the first quarter of the first year the infant gains control of twelve muscles which move his eyes.

In the second quarter (16-28 weeks) he comes into command of the muscles which support his head and moves his arms. He reaches out for things.

In the third quarter (28-40 weeks) he gains command of his trunk and hands. He grabs, transfers and manipulates objects.

In the fourth quarter (40-52 weeks) he extends commands to his legs and feet; to his fore-finger and thumbs. He pokes and plucks. He stands upright [4].

Clearly a child in the first three months is doing other things than controlling his eye muscles - for example from the

earliest days a child reacts to sound in various ways, being soothed by a rhythmic human voice and at around six weeks he gives his first social smile [5]. It is through his eyes however that the child can gain the greatest stimulation and information about his surroundings. Even at birth the new born can fix his eyes on an object held in front of him and follow it for a short distance. From the first weeks he can recognize light from dark and may turn towards diffuse light. Brierley illustrates the importance of visual stimulation even for a tiny baby when he writes that a baby of six weeks shown a picture of a face repeatedly looks just as hard at the 15th or 16th time of showing as he did at the first. At about eight weeks he becomes bored and soon looks away. If a checkerboard replaces the face the child's interest increases markedly. Brierley goes on to say:

The brain thrives on variety and stimulation, monotony of surroundings...displays kept for too long, are soon disregarded by the brain [6].

One possible function for the library for even this youngest age group may be the provision of colourful posters and other pictures stuck on cards which can be used by parents to place around the baby's room or cot and can be changed quite regularly.

As a baby begins to react to sound from the earliest days too, it is important for the child to be spoken to, read to or sung to. There is a clear role for the library as regards stimulating the sense of hearing whether it be in the provision of audio tapes and books of nursery rhymes or any other books. As the child can only look and listen at this stage, the contents, format and style of books is really quite unimportant - as long as it provides something bright to look at and listen to. More important at this stage is the promotion of the fact that these things are available and important for babies in their first few months. Ante-natal clinics, maternity wards and baby clinics are the ideal

promotion places.

The next few months bring rapid development and there is an insatiable urge for exploration. The child not only begins to grab at objects but also to manipulate them, passing them frequently from hand to hand. Using books from now on may prove a great challenge for the parent as the child constantly tries to grab the book and attempts to chew it. Parents who do venture to use the library need to be reassured that this type of handling is quite normal and acceptable to the library. 'Board' books certainly come into their own at this stage as they are able to withstand this type of treatment.

Board books however should only really be used with babies and not toddlers and older children who should be learning to manipulate and getting to know the feel of 'real paper' books. Books for babies should then only explore themes pertinent to babies and as babies can be left alone with them they should be satisfying to a baby without adult guidance - they should be brightly coloured and use an art style that is clear and uncluttered. This is also the time when one could really start to use 'action rhymes'. Books such as Round and round the garden compiled by Sarah Williams which consists of various popular rhymes with descriptions and illustrations of actions to help the adult, can be very useful. The actions help to hold the baby's attention and later to convey the meaning of words. They also enjoy the physical and social interaction involved and learn to anticipate the actions [7].

Towards the end of the first year the child sits alone easily, crawls, pulls to stand and walk around furniture or even walks by himself. He will begin to know his own name, say a few everyday words and understand simple questions or commands. Much development of understanding begins to take place through actions such as putting items in containers and taking them out again. He enjoys repetition - discovering and confirming the cause and effect. He begins to show an

enthusiastic response to simple songs or nursery rhymes and if already introduced to action rhymes in the previous months will clap hands and play pat-a-cake or respond to 'round and round the garden' for example [8]. This is also the beginning of the time when sharing books with a baby who is already used to them becomes an enjoyable experience. The baby will love sitting on the parents' lap and listening to them talk about what is on the page. He is obviously too young for a story but enjoys looking at books of real things where pages are turned quickly and the commentary is lively. Simple fact books such as those on colours, animals or the alphabet and numbers can be very useful mainly because they have simple naming objects and are often very colourful. 'Noise' books too go down well with children who love to see adults perform and who may well be able to imitate noises before they can say proper words. It is not necessary, however, to always use 'baby' books for babies as long as the books fit or can be made to fit the criteria suited to babies, ie. that they should bear some relationship to reality so that a child can identify with what he sees with his own experience. This is not to say that new objects are not introduced which stimulate the imagination and build vocabulary but that illustrations should contain elements of the familiar for reassurance and reinforcement of learning whilst introducing those that will enrich and extend the child's background knowledge for his own development of speech and understanding over the coming months. The colours and pictures should be strong, clear and complete in themselves.

### 1.3 One to Two Years.

The age between one and two is most marked by the child's increased mobility and his increasing use of speech. In terms of physical development he can walk well and is constantly exploring his environment with increasing understanding. He loves toys that he can pull, push or ride on although he can not yet use pedals. He will hold a pencil in mid shaft grasped



by the palm and make spontaneous to and fro scribbles and dots. He enjoys picture books, often recognizing and touching the boldly coloured items on the pages which he will turn several at a time [9].

He jabbars loudly and continually to himself whilst playing, employing a wide range of pitch with 'conversational' tones and inflections. He attends to communication addressed directly to himself and uses twenty or more words but understands many more. He enjoys nursery rhymes and tries to join in and attempts to sing. Emotionally he is very dependent upon a familiar adult [10].

Tucker argues that by one and a half years children will generally have developed the ability to recognize familiar objects in picture form and once this stage has been reached, further development can be quick. He goes on to say that at this early stage children find some artistic styles easier to understand than others. Pictured objects can be seen more clearly if they stand out distinctly from their background and if whole objects are illustrated rather than parts of objects. Overlapping objects can confuse the child as can the profusion of detail in illustrations [11].

In terms of the child physically handling the books for himself, which he should be allowed to do as much as possible, Butler states:

'Little books for little hands' is a maxim worth testing. It is almost impossible for a baby to turn a large page without some damage, whereas a small, squarish leaf seems to flip over safely.

Butler mentions the Pienkowski and Bruna titles as 'heaven sent for beginning book handlers' [12].

Children of this age are not ready for a story as yet - they are too young to carry information from page to page. Butler draws a distinction between 'theme' books and

'descriptive' books which may be used, the former as a progression from the 'naming' books and the latter as a 'launching pad for the story proper' [13]. A 'theme' book depicts objects and activities that are connected in some way but the reader does not need to know what went before it to make sense of any one illustration or text. Descriptive books try to put everyday pursuits into words and pictures such as 'going shopping', 'bath time', 'in the park' etc. which allow the child to follow the sequences of the story from his own experiences.

Books that allow for the involvement of the child, such as those with lift up flaps, manipulative holes to put fingers through etc can prove very popular although they may need to be used under supervision for the younger children to avoid irreparable damage.

There are very few library programmes for this age group although some, for example the San Francisco library, have initiated what they call 'LapSits' for babies and toddlers. These are designed to help parents introduce literature to their children aged up to three [14]. For these events to be successful various points have to be considered in their preparation:

- since children of this age have such short attention spans the programme has to be brief, quickly paced and must include a variety of activities.
- parents' attendance is a must. At the beginning they are given a sheet with a list of activities. They are expected to participate and assist the child.
- variety in activities is stressed in order to acquaint participants with the many types of literature that young children can enjoy.
- activities follow a definite formula upon which the structure of the programme is built. One possible arrangement may be - theme song, name song, finger game, bouncing rhyme, song, tickle, closing song.

- at the end of the 'lapsit' books are selected, usually from a display of books arranged to facilitate selection.
- 'lapsits' should be expected to be noisy and disruptive affairs with babies crawling around and toddlers inevitably wandering off.

#### 1.4 Two to Three Years.

The "terrible two's" label for this age group is applied with some justification. The two year old is constantly demanding attention and has no idea yet about sharing or taking turns. He will happily play near other children, rather than play with them although he may well occasionally experiment with them by poking, pulling, pushing, biting or scratching them. He may have temper tantrums when frustrated which can happen frequently as he has no understanding of the need to defer or modify immediate satisfaction of his own wishes [15].

The two year old however is continuing to develop rapidly in terms of his speech and fine movements. He has a vocabulary of 200-300 words and can understand much more. He is constantly asking questions about objects and people and joins in nursery rhymes and songs. He can hold a pencil and can make spontaneous scribbles as well as to and fro scribbles and dots. He enjoys picture books, but what Tucker says about children's understanding about pictures probably best applies to this age group:

...Younger children usually have the ability to focus either on the details of a picture or on its overall theme and shape, but they can not always fuse these two perceptions into one, comprehensible whole...they may focus their attention randomly, thereby occasionally attributing quite undue importance to details that have little significance to the main actions [16].

A child of this age begins to be able to follow a story

through the book. The story will nevertheless have to be simple, focusing on one main character with plenty of repetition. The story needs to be short, told in a minimum of language with clear illustrations which add to the story and complement the text whilst giving the reader and child plenty to talk about. Ideally the stories should reflect the child's life and be believable. Two year olds do however assume that moving objects such as trains and elephants have human characteristics. So a 'believable' story may in fact be quite a fantastic one as long as the plot is uncomplicated with clear cut motives and actions of the main characters.

Given some of the characteristics of the 2 year old, it is not surprising that most libraries set a lower age limit of three to three and a half for children attending story time programmes. Some brave librarians however do feel that a literary experience for this age group is valuable enough to risk a 'story time for toddlers'. Juliet Kellog Markowsky says:

A child's experience of enjoying literature in a group does not happen overnight, at whatever age it is begun. It may take several sessions to establish, but it does happen even at age two [17].

She argues that there are some characteristics of toddlers which lend themselves to the management of two year olds in groups for a short period of time. These are:

- the tendency in a group, to relate primarily to an adult rather than to other children.
- the tendency to imitate each other in a group situation rather than interact.
- the tendency to want rituals and sameness as a form of self directed order in their lives.

It is not enough just to make the story time a shorter version of a pre-school story hour. Expectation and criteria for success must also be adjusted. Libraries must offer short, lively programmes that do not demand that the story teller

maintains control over the group. Parental involvement is crucial as "separation anxiety" on part of the child is probably at its peak in this age group. Parents also need to understand that a rapt, attentive and silent audience is not necessary or realistic at these events.

Clearly it is not easy to make in-library provision for babies and toddlers since both 'lapsits' and story time for toddlers require a great deal of planning and expertise on the part of the staff undertaking these activities. It is worth bearing in mind however that this is the only age group for which there is no public service or state provision. So even in libraries where there is a lack of time and other resources to devote to the planning of such activities, it may still be possible to bring children aged up to three and their parents into the library to join in a parent and toddler group or under fives mornings/afternoons. These sessions offer the adults, who may otherwise be quite lonely and isolated, an opportunity to meet together and chat while their children are entertained by books, stories, rhymes and other simple activities. To consider and implement programmes for these youngsters may well lead to a whole new segment of the market being introduced into most libraries.

### 1.5 Three to Five years.

It has been decided to take a wider age range in this section as this is often the age group referred to as 'pre-school' and for most intents and purposes activities and events are often organised for them collectively. Within this context however, it is useful to examine some of the major differences between the three and four year olds.

#### Three Year olds

The three year old child begins to seem like a 'civilized' being. Conformity, co-operation and eagerness to please is often the hallmark of this age group. They begin to

play with other children and take turns. They enjoy floor play with bricks, boxes, toy trains, dolls etc. They also join in active make-believe play with other children including invented people and objects. They begin to remember things and show some appreciation of differences between present and past and of the need to defer satisfaction of wishes to the future [18].

In terms of vision and fine movements they begin to match and name colours. They can copy certain letters and begin to draw and enjoy painting. They can thread beads, and cut with a scissors. The child now has a larger vocabulary intelligible even to strangers, can carry on a simple conversation and is able briefly to describe present activities and past experiences. He can count by rote up to ten or more but may have little appreciation of quantity beyond two or three. Three year olds will know and be able to repeat nursery rhymes. They will listen eagerly to stories and demand favorite ones over and over again [19].

#### 4 year olds.

The general behavior of four year olds is more independent and strongly self willed. They begin to show a sense of humor in talks and activities. They love dramatic make believe play and dressing up. They need the companionship of other children with whom they will alternately be co-operative and aggressive but they understand the need to argue with words rather than with hands and fists. The four year old begins to show concern and sympathy for other children but may for the first time begin to hide his own feelings and deny them even to himself [20].

The four year old's vision and fine movements are further refined and he will enjoy threading small buttons and beads. Drawings are now more recognizable and the child will draw on request or spontaneously, beginning to name drawings before production.

The four year olds have mastered speech. It is grammatically correct and completely intelligible. They can give a correct account of recent events and experiences. They listen to and tell long stories, sometimes confusing fact and fantasy. They are for ever asking what, when, why questions and the meanings of words. They begin to enjoy jokes and verbal incongruities. Several nursery rhymes can now be repeated or sung correctly [21].

The three year olds through to rising fives are the years usually catered for by library story time. This gives children the opportunity to come into contact with increasing numbers of books and stories for which they can get a real feel if told by an experienced story teller who can use the correct tone of voice and facial expressions to make the story come alive. Story time also provides practice in the ability to concentrate, while increasing the child's vocabulary and stimulating the imagination which is beginning to take off in this age range.

Story-time normally consists of a story and other related activities. A variety of activities not only help to hold the interest of the child but although the children attending story time have come a long way in every sphere of development, most of their skills still need much practice and refinement. Activities involving painting for example will improve eye-hand coordination, give experience in symbolizing, introduce new vocabulary - red, white, pink etc. Giving children the opportunity to interact will encourage social development in relation to the peer group.

Activities for this age group can also include pre-reading activities. The Bullock report, having stressed that books should be seen as a source of pleasure, also says:

There seems to us no obvious reason why they should be denied opportunities to become familiar with the

letters of the alphabet before they start school [22].

Both reality and fantasy fulfill a need in terms of the development of this age group. Real life stories in familiar settings are important for the child to come to understand himself and others. As they become older however they are able to enjoy longer and more complex stories. Whilst they have a taste for realism - what is going on, how things work - the central characters can take any form or shape - human or otherwise.

Reality for young children can also sometimes mean facing difficult or frightening situations. These can include starting school, going to hospital, the arrival of a new baby, adoption, separation of parents, bereavement etc. etc. 'Situation books' can successfully be used for this age group to help them to try and adjust to particular circumstances.

Fairy tales, being quite short and usually very direct, are another genre of literature that can be used for these children. It is true that some of these tales can be quite frightening and upsetting to children who are just beginning to understand empathy. Exercising a little caution in the choice of certain tales however should be sufficient to overcome this barrier. The stories selected for young children should be those in which the motive can be understood by the child, ie those motives the child is familiar with such as fun or curiosity and not, for example, motives such as revenge, obsession and power which are the basis of the more sophisticated tales. Dorothy Butler recommends starting off with tales such as the Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood, The Three Little Pigs, The Gingerbread Man, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, and The Little Red Hen [23].

Many reports on reading and literature have often commented on the lack of appeal of poetry to most school children and adults [24]. This has perhaps to do with the way



poetry is introduced and used in schools - for dissecting and analysing in a way that minimizes any poetical impact. Much of this could be overcome if poetry were introduced in the right manner at a younger age, the pre-school age. It should be a relatively easy progression from nursery rhymes and songs. Librarians could certainly use poetry at story time by linking a poem to the theme of the story.

Information and fact books can be very satisfying to those pre school children who often develop fascinations with particular subjects - from dinosaurs to space ships etc. Very often it may be necessary to resort to books for older children to find suitable materials to help maintain and develop these interests.

#### **1.6 Special needs.**

The above section on child development from birth to five is a very rough outline of some of the stages of development that the 'average' child can be expected to pass through at a certain age, give or take a few months. Any provision made for young children, library or otherwise, on the basis of such guidelines can be expected to meet at least some of the needs of a given group. There are many children however who cannot benefit as much from mainstream provision made for the majority - because of a mental or physical handicap, a deprived home or social environment or because they have different cultural and linguistic needs, for example. It can be argued that it is these children with special needs who could most benefit from any form of provision. On the other hand however, it is most likely that these children will not benefit from any provision unless special efforts are made to reach them. The onus then is on each library to discover the special needs within its community and ensure adequate provision is made to meet those needs. Often this will entail great efforts in consultation and liaison with outside organizations such as social services, minority ethnic groups

etc. as the expertise on what is appropriate for certain special needs may not be available within the library service.

## Conclusion

The above chapter has attempted to outline some of the important stages of a child's development from birth to five years that may be taken into account when discussing provision for that age group. Making appropriate provision for Under Fives, however, does not just mean stocking the library with suitable materials - it is necessary to ensure that carers are made aware of what is available and the importance of those resources in the child's life. It is necessary to ensure that once under fives and their carers do arrive at the library that they have easy access and appropriate facilities provided for them. It is necessary to ensure that the service is adequately monitored and evaluated so that it keeps up with the changing environment, both political and social, and with changing expectations. These are some of the factors that will be considered in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### LIBRARY SERVICES TO UNDER FIVES - TOWARDS GOOD PRACTICE

#### 2.1 Library Membership and charges

... all libraries should make special provision for children and should do all they can to ensure that children are encouraged to use the library [1].

It is now common practice in most public libraries to accept members from their earliest days. This fact however is not always widely publicised. Even in the 1990's many parents and carers still believe that children cannot join the library until they have started school.

In terms of encouraging children to join the library, there may be factors, other than a lack of awareness, which work against families joining the library or using it as frequently as they might. Fines and charges for example could be a deterrent. Ideally no charges should be made for overdue or damaged materials. Reservations and the borrowing of sound recordings etc. on children's tickets should not carry charges. Charges for reservations are especially a barrier in smaller libraries which have a limited shelf stock. Many authorities, such as Sandwell, Nottingham and Camden have no charges or fines for any of their under fives services.

#### 2.2 The building

A well sited and attractive building...has a considerable influence on the public response to the facilities which are offered [2].

Unfortunately most libraries are not in a position to do anything about their siting and external appearance. There may however be some scope for improvement as far as attracting potential users is concerned. Cohen argues for example that the entrance is all important:

The idea of movement and a certain dynamism around the entrance is important for all types of libraries. Evidence of this can be seen at favourite bookstores where window displays and entrance areas are designed to attract customers [3].

Clearly the library has in mind users other than under fives but it must be possible to have some space in a large entrance or the whole of a small entrance for a part of the year/season devoted to attracting young children and their parents. Displays relating to commonly recognised book and nursery characters are an obvious choice for inviting closer inspection.

These ventures will however be worthless if the library building poses problems of physical access. Ideally for users with prams and push chairs, all buildings should have wide, automatically opening doors; no steps or stair cases either at the entrance or inside, no security barriers and no split level designs [4]. Where these are not practicable, then at least the staff should be seen to be willing to lend a hand wherever needed. O'Rourke for example reports that on their regular Thursday Mother and Baby Mornings at Minet library they provide assistance in lifting prams up the library steps [5].

## 2.3 Facilities and Accommodation

Ideally all public places should provide facilities such as mother and baby rooms, creches, public toilets etc. Unfortunately, few libraries have the resources to make such provision but these factors should be given serious considerations when building new libraries or extensions. In terms of accommodation, there may be scope in most libraries for some improvement.

Lushington, speaking specifically of the pre-school child says:

Ideally, the child's first impression of the library should be of a magical, colourful world of variety and activity offering creative freedom. The children's area should be open and light, full of colourful shapes, spaces and places with a variety of activities...as the pre-school child probably cannot read, the room should feature strong visual experiences, some familiar and some totally new and exotic [6].

Child size furnishings - low seating, bean bags and floor cushions, kinderboxes, low bookshelves and work surfaces all make the library appear child centred. To help their creative urges, children need to be able to alter their environment so the more moveable objects/furniture, the better [7]. Young children spend a lot of time on the floor so the area should be carpeted and give a warm and pleasant feel to the library. Pictures, friezes and other displays, especially of children's work, at child height as well as mobiles suspended from ceilings and high walls/shelves will enhance the feeling of the library as a happy, stimulating place and make the children feel that it belongs to them. Any area set aside for young children should include, at the very least, seating for adults. If possible the area should include other items for the convenience of parents. Sandwell for example has play pens and changing mats in all branch libraries which have the space.

The following is a checklist of what the under fives area should be and include:

it should be

- on ground level or be easily accessible through ramps or lifts.
- bright and colourful
- carpeted
- spacious
- clean
- safe ie. corners must be rounded, materials free from splinters, no uncovered electrical sockets, trailing wires etc.

- supervised, for safety rather than control.
- allowed a reasonable level of noise with acoustics dulled as much as possible.

it should include

- low/slanting shelves allowing face forward displays
- child size furniture/moveable furniture
- cushions/bean bags
- a play pen
- toilet/changing facilities
- a reading/quiet corner
- seating for carers
- a parking space for buggies
- displays, friezes, posters at child height.
- low counter/issue desk
- toys
- helpful and sympathetic staff

## 2.4 Materials

### A. Books

The selection of library materials should of course take place within the context of the needs and interests of the groups for which they are intended. These were discussed at some length in chapter one. To meet the needs of the users adequately, each library needs to be aware of the make up of its community and ensure that its needs - mainstream as well as special - are being provided for [8].

The library should be concerned with the all round development of young children and as part of this, 'special needs' provision need not be only for children with special needs - other children need to be prepared for meeting and accepting people who are different [9]. There is a case for including some books in all libraries that depict people who are 'different' even if there is no apparent need for such stock. The provision of books showing multi-racial scenes and



dual-language books in mono-cultural areas for example, have the benefit of bringing an awareness to very young children of the existence of other groups, languages and scripts.

Books for under fives must be available in appropriate quantities. Too small a shelf stock will obviously fail to meet needs, whilst too large a stock may be overwhelming. Guidelines in the form of book lists and guides may in any case be required by carers to help them to make appropriate choices for their children. Moreover the stock should be displayed in a manner that facilitates easy selection. Kinderboxes are one solution and are widely used for picture books but there is a tendency to shelve other books for young readers in the usual manner, with the spine of the book facing outwards. As many books as possible should be displayed face forward on sloping shelves or racks as the main criteria for selection by this age group will be the appeal of the cover and the book's overall impact.

#### B. Non-book materials

Non-book materials for young children can include 'talking books', audio or video tapes, comics and magazines, toys and games, posters and even computer software, either for use in the library or for borrowing. All of these can of course play some part in child development and their provision may help the child to see the library as a place of enjoyment. Provision of non-book materials, however, is very haphazard - almost non-existent in some places and seeming to predominate over books in others. In the United States for example, the literature provides many examples of 'multi media libraries', 'parent child centers' etc. which concentrate on the value of play as a means of education and learning [10 and 11]. In Britain there has been the recent mushrooming of toy libraries but these tend on the whole not be linked to public libraries. It is of course a waste of public resources to duplicate services but libraries should always be aware that:

play is the chief learning activity of pre-school children; toys and games are the first reading tools [12].

Bearing this in mind, branch libraries should determine whether there is a need for providing toys for lending in the library. The Camden Toy Library for example is the most popular service the authority provides for children and it attracts more under two's than any other Camden library. Issue statistics also show that users of this service do go on to use the full range of library services [13]. Even if toy lending is not considered appropriate in some libraries, all libraries should consider the provision of toys and games for use in the library for the following reasons:

- Through play a child learns about life just as he does from books and they make a considerable contribution to a child's development.
- They provide enjoyment for children and parents.
- They can add to the interest in books with the provision of established storybook characters eg, Spot the dog's jigsaw, Postman Pat's van etc.
- They reinforce the value of play.
- They can help to break down institutional barriers. They are a sign to library users - parents and others, as well as library staff, of the need for children to play and enjoy themselves even in the library.
- They help make children's visits to the library more memorable.

Toys should be selected for a reason - to stimulate imagination or socialization, for cognitive development or physical coordination. Shannon lists basic characteristics such as durability, versatility, safety and attractiveness that a toy must possess in order to be considered for her library [14].

It is usually better to contact educational suppliers of toys and games rather than ordinary high street retailers. The

former are usually able to give advice and more of their materials are probably suitable for special needs as well as main stream. Co-operation with local toy libraries can be useful for advice and support. Nottinghamshire libraries for example found that they were able to make a much better selection of toys for use in libraries after consultation and advice from the toy library with which they have now developed regular contacts.

Once toys/games have been introduced, either for in-library use or lending, it is essential that maintenance and cleaning of these materials is built into the library's schedule to avoid unnecessary damage or unhygienic conditions.

Another type of non-book material worthy of consideration is the provision of puppets which demand active participation of children and can often lead them to express themselves creatively [15]. Apart from the fact that puppets should be available at reasonable costs, it may be possible to find a volunteer in the locality who will actually make up specified puppets - characters from books will no doubt add to the appeal of some books and vice versa. It may also be possible to find a volunteer to mend and clean the puppets as the need arises.

## **2.5 Library Activities**

The aim of any activity in which the library is involved must be to promote the enjoyment of reading and use of books and libraries [16].

Any activity undertaken by the library depends on the facilities and resources available in the library. Priorities also need to be based on the needs of the community and the cost effectiveness of an activity.

#### A. Storytelling

For the purpose of cost effectiveness, there may be sense in moving the present emphasis on activities for 3-5 year olds to 0-3 years olds. Activities for the younger age group necessarily entail parental involvement which actually improves the effectiveness of the activities. It has also been noted that parents who are involved in library activities with their children actually take out books themselves [18].

For the 3-5 year olds in formal under fives groups the emphasis should be moved to training their carers in the art of storytelling and the use of other literature with the children.

One factor to be taken into account for reasons of cost effectiveness is which members of staff are used for children's activities. There must be many imaginative and creative library assistants who could, through in-service training programmes, become qualified to organize and run many such activities. Nottinghamshire for example encourage all library assistants from scale 2 upwards to run children's events if they are interested in doing so. They also hold sessions for such staff on various other aspects of children's work such as the use of toys. Sandwell too has a similar policy whereby depending on the interest of the library assistant and with the agreement of the branch librarian, some assistants are practically in charge of day to day services to under fives and their carers.

#### B. Other activities

Smardo, in an attempt to discover the types of activities that would be most valuable to children from infancy to six years of age and could be run by libraries, carried out a research project involving leading early childhood educators to discover their opinions and recommendations for such activities. The following is a summary of the findings:

Programmes recommended by over 80% of the early childhood

educators:-

- sessions on making books with the child dictating as the adult prints it (88.64%).
- puppet shows and storytelling at shopping centres and local pre-school centres (86.64%).
- Opportunities to meet authors and illustrators of children's books (84.9%).
- Parent education courses and discussion sessions in such areas as child development, storytelling etc.(81.82%).

Programmes recommended by 50-75% of early childhood educators:

- A library reading club in which parents read a selected number of books to a child and are awarded paperback books (75%).
- Parent and child field trips (70.45%).
- Birthday parties with story telling by librarians (63.64%).
- Programmes regarding situations which could produce anxiety.

The least recommended were infant stimulation programmes (36.36%) and formal reading instruction (13.64%)[18].

In addition, interview data indicated that the majority of these experts recommended that the public library provide parent/toddler programmes and suggested focusing on play with educational toys and musical rhythm activities. Parent participation in any type of activity was also advocated.

## 2.6. Outreach

There are many children who will never come into the library - parents do not see the library as relevant, they live too far away, they are unaware of what the library has to offer etc. etc. It is essential that librarians should be prepared to take both books and activities out to these members of the community rather than expect them to come to

the library.

Story telling sessions can be held wherever the children are - in parks, playgrounds, play groups, family centres etc, and this also gives the opportunity of meeting their carers on an informal basis [19].

Many authorities have approached the whole problem of low library use through taking books to under fives. In Portsmouth for example the 'Family Library Link' aimed to raise awareness of the importance of books to the child's development and to take quality books for the under fives into the community to encourage children and adults to enjoy books and to provide a link with the branch library. In addition to serving pre-school groups through lending books, storytelling, showing films and giving advice, they try to reach non-group children through clinics, telling stories in waiting rooms and hold a regular 'Community Day' at the local community centre, offering book lending, stories, films and activities [20].

In Gloucestershire a very successful mobile 'Share-a-book Scheme' has been in operation since 1983. Apart from the usual round of play groups/family centres, the scheme also lends a collection of picture books for use by Adult Basic Education staff working in a school. This aims to help adults who at present feel unable to become involved in their child's early education because of their own lack of reading skills. The children should benefit in two ways - directly by having more books at home and more involvement by their parents in their reading, and indirectly in that the parents, it is hoped, will take more interest in books themselves.

At the request of Secondary school teachers, the staff also visit schools and talk to child care students and others about the importance of reading with a child, whether it be a younger sibling or their own future offspring [21].

## 2.7 Services to Parents/Carers

We believe that a priority need is to introduce children to books in their pre-school years and to help parents recognize the value of sharing the experience with their children.... Potentially the most important source of help is the children's librarian [22].

Clearly, if the library is to be effective in serving under fives, it needs to make parents aware of its importance in child development and what the library has to offer in that respect. It is the responsibility of the librarian to ensure that as many parents as possible are reached, however formally or informally.

There is a need, not only to reach carers but all those who are involved with carers in a professional capacity - starting with staff at ante-natal classes through to schools and colleges offering child care courses. Regular contact with midwives, health visitors, tutors etc and the provision of collections of books for loan or display - books on child birth, baby care, maternity rights etc as well as picture books, nursery rhyme cassettes - could be an excellent way of promoting library services to those individuals who may be looking for ways of entertaining young children in the near future. At the very least, posters and other publicity materials should be available in as many strategic places as possible - baby clinics, health centres, doctors surgeries etc.

Many libraries now have under fives mornings/afternoons held in the library which can be of great value for mothers normally isolated in their homes [23]. Even events as informal as these can be beneficial by making parents aware of what is available in the library and helping them to overcome any inhibitions they may have about just going into the library with young children.

Nottinghamshire has a library bus serving under fives during the day and often invites other organisations to address parents on topics of interest such as healthy eating, road safety, the work of P.P.A. etc. Apart from being a direct service to parents, this should also serve as an awareness raising exercise in that the parents will think of the library as a place for obtaining a whole host of information other than book borrowing. The librarian too should take every opportunity to participate in events organised by other under fives organisations, not only to talk about the role of the library/books but also to make informal contacts with parents, inviting them to come to the library with their children.

Some libraries offer open days or more formal discussion sessions or even courses for parents which are relevant to children's needs. For example, Birmingham Library Service, at one of its libraries, recently ran a series of courses for parents and carers on topics such as, 'Books for babies', 'Books for 3-5 year olds', 'Books for parents' and 'Activities from and with books'. The sessions were well attended and well received and found to be very useful by parents. The biggest disappointment to the organizers, who felt they had absolutely saturated the locality with publicity, was that every single one of the participants was an existing library user! [24]. Perhaps there needed to be greater emphasis on word of mouth/informal publicity and it may have been useful to hold the course in, for example, a community centre, rather than the library.

Exhibitions can be set up in places where parents are likely to be - community centres, places of work, health centres, shopping centres.

For parents who do use the library there needs to be appropriate facilities and materials. Seating for parents in the children's area is important if parents are to feel comfortable and encouraged to share books with their children



in the library. The 'Parents collection' needs to be available ideally in the children's area but alternatively it needs to be at least publicised there. Magazines relating to under fives are a good idea for parents who do not really want to take the time looking at books but there may be articles or features of interest which may tempt them to explore further. Some form of 'community information' is usually held at most libraries. This is an important service for parents so it needs not only to be extensive but also accessible. Too often the information is in a file on the librarian's desk with little indication that it is available. If it can not be displayed, it certainly needs to be well publicised.

### Childminders

One important group of carers are childminders. Many authorities do in fact offer them membership with special conditions. Usually they have to be 'registered' childminders and need to show evidence of this when joining. It is necessary to work with social services and childminder advisers for the area to ensure that information about the library is passed on and use made of the service. Ideally the librarian should try to participate in any childminders' courses organised by social services. Services for registered childminders do however rule out all those unregistered childminders of whose charges the Bullock report says:

In the nature of things it is hard to arrive with precision at either their numbers or extent to which they are properly cared for. Nevertheless, there is every indication that they run into many thousands and the quality of care is often very poor, not simply because of unsatisfactory physical conditions but because of the absences of stimulation and attention to the child's development needs [25].

So once again, unwittingly, many libraries are failing to reach those who could benefit most from their services. There is a need, through cooperation with other health and welfare organisations, to devise local schemes in an attempt to reach these children. Perhaps a revision of the membership criteria

for childminders is also necessary.

## **2.8 Inter-agency/Community co-operation**

Within any given locality there are usually several organisations concerned with children under five. Lack of adequate liaison and co-operation with these could result in the wasteful duplication of some services and a complete absence of others. The librarian should be familiar with the objectives of these organisations and co-ordinate library activities accordingly. At the same time it must be ensured that other organisations are familiar with the objectives and resources of the library. As Fearn says:

Our society has so fragmented its provision for those in greatest need that the most urgent and deep seated problems are no longer capable of direct or single handed action.

She goes on to recommend that:

Not only should libraries work through the community, but within the community, as one of the many agencies attempting to satisfy the needs of the child [26].

All concerned should work together and decide which needs can be met by which organisations thus ensuring that the overall needs of young children are being met. Libraries, like all other public organisations, should complement rather than compete with other institutions which provide for the needs of children.

## **2.9 STAFF TRAINING**

It is particularly important that library services to children should be the responsibility of specially trained librarians, and that all members of staff engaged in general services to the public should be aware of the special needs of children and be able to assist them in the library [27].

In spite of the seemingly common sense approach of the above statement, all the evidence suggests that librarians are not trained to serve children, especially the younger ones [28].

In Britain research has shown that only six library schools include the study of children's and/or school librarianship, in their core courses, and even this is sometimes limited to a couple of hours per year [29]. The fact that there is a trend towards general rather than specialist posts, makes it more important that all public library staff should have knowledge of children's work, as Pain argues:

As children's librarianship and literature become the responsibility of a team of non-specialists, it is important that they all have a basic understanding of the children they serve, their literature, and children's librarianship [30].

Other researchers have advocated that prospective children's librarians be trained in interacting with children, early language development, learning and play theory and the sociology of childhood [31].

Those librarians working with children should be given opportunities both formal and informal at post qualification level, to increase their knowledge and expertise. Certainly in-service training is to be recommended for all librarians and library assistants in the field of children's work who have not had previous formal training. There are many skills where practice improves performance such as storytelling and craft activities that are in any case better acquired as part of in-service training rather than as part of initial theoretical training at library school.

Information which will enable all staff who come into contact with children in the library to do an effective job must be passed on regularly through news letters. Certainly in smaller libraries where there is not always a qualified member

of staff available, information to help other staff give guidance needs to be readily available, eg what special situation books are available, which dual language books are available, the suitability of certain books for a given age group etc. Sandwell for example have a one day course planned for library assistants which will include child development and the role of books and activities for under fives [32].

## 2.10 Marketing

Marketing, according to Kottler, a leading authority on marketing for non-profit making organisations, is above all about meeting customer needs and wants. Marketing is increasingly being discussed in the context of public library provision where it involves the adoption of techniques and strategies designed to match library resources and capabilities with the needs of consumers in the most cost effective way [33].

As a first step in marketing, the library needs to ask 'where are we now? where do we want to/have to go? how should the library and its resources be organised to ensure that we get there? There is a need to take into account staff skills, stock turnover, services, opening hours, access, cost effective areas of service, neglected areas of service, staff/user relations etc. Then it needs to consider opportunities and threats which could include, for example, demographic changes and employment patterns in the community, decreasing budgets, lower staff ratios, reduced capital expenditure programmes, and very significantly in the 1990's, threats to the principle of a free public service [34].

The above type of analysis should form the basis of the full marketing plan which will include elements such as customer and market analysis, the service audit, pricing plans where appropriate (but certainly costs vis-a-vis prices/benefits), promotion plans, distribution and

forecasting [35].

In order to illustrate some of the considerations a library may have to make to implement a marketing strategy, the following is a case study of a fictitious children's library. The scenario describes the status quo and the problems that exist in marketing terms. The possible solutions are some of the ways in which the problems may be attempted to be overcome.

## CASE STUDY

### Scenario

- The present objectives to do with children's work are too vague to guide day to day working and do not provide benchmarks against which the effectiveness of the service can be measured.
- The library may be losing potential customers by not knowing the actual needs of its users.
- There is a need for the highly trained librarians and library assistants to be given the opportunity for personal and professional development. Qualified staff need to be less involved in routine tasks which are not only demotivating but also not cost effective.
- The library generally has a low profile within the community.
- There is a lack of strategic information to help the library plan and develop its services eg. lack of a proper community profile, inadequate knowledge of level of present library use in general or by age groups etc. ✓

### Possible solutions

#### 1. Aims and objectives of work with under fives

The objectives should be formulated through a thorough understanding and insight of the development needs of under

fives and the library needs of groups and individuals dealing with under fives in the community. Consideration will also need to be given to those needs that are being adequately met in the locality and those that are not.

## 2. Needs analysis

The aims of the exercise should be to:

- a) discover the unmet needs, both explicit and implicit, of the users of the under fives service to enable the library to respond to those needs.
- b) form the basis of user profiles (eg. according to type of group served, their particular needs etc.)
- c) give the library insights into factors affecting the performance of the library service in general.
- d) help evaluate present services and set priorities for the future.

## 3. Role of the under fives department

- a) The present blanket information/publicity disseminated by the library should be replaced by more strategically targeted materials aimed at meeting the needs of specific groups/individuals. This way the starting point is consideration of the users' needs rather than trying to publicize the services currently offered. An attempt should be made to sell the benefits of the service rather than the service itself.
- b) The library, according to its size, should set aside a number of hours the library assistant/s will spend on under fives work and they will be responsible for displays, updating community information, and the dissemination of relevant information to groups and individuals involved with under fives in the community. There will need to be a short in-service training programme to equip staff for this role. The contents of the programme may include the basics of child development, books for under fives, working

with carers etc.

- c) The children's librarian should spend a considerable amount of time in the community. The continuing and regular flow of communications and information about developments and changes within the community are of utmost importance if the service is to anticipate and respond to the community's constantly changing needs.
- d) The librarian, along with other staff designated for under fives work, should broaden links with other people and organisations who have knowledge/information that has an actual or potential impact on the service such as educational experts, social services etc.
- e) The department needs to promote its work in order to increase awareness of what it is able to offer the community. This can include descriptive brochures, introductory guides to services, strategically placed eye-catching posters - in play groups, children's clinics, doctors' surgeries etc. In addition the librarian should participate in induction and other training events/seminars for as many professionals/volunteers involved with under fives.
- f) The librarian needs to market him/herself. The above activities will to some extent lend themselves to this but there also needs to be a conscious effort to raise the profile and status of the librarian in the community so that other professionals and individuals automatically think of turning to the librarian for help/advice/consultancy/training in relevant issues. The image of the librarian as a knowledgeable professional will also enhance the image of the library.
- g) The library building itself must be adapted to give the impression that it can deliver its promises.

The interiors, the furnishings and equipment

within a library modify the ability of that institution to adequately utilize and display its wares. A poor space layout is disruptive to proper library functioning. It lacks that certain sparkle that entices potential users into the facility in the first place [35].

Care must be taken to ensure that the stimulation, interest and safety needs of young children are taken into account in the layout of the library in general and children's area in particular. The library can be used to attract the children themselves - by displays of their work, by offering enjoyable and memorable experiences etc.

- h) As much evidence as possible of the effectiveness of the campaign needs to be collected, in particular any increased demand for services, in an attempt to ensure increased/continued funding. The two discernable measures of the effectiveness of children's services are the number of children served and the number of children who remain users as adults. The latter measure is essentially long term so evidence may well have to include that from other authorities or countries which have tried similar strategies.

## 2.11 Evaluation

In the present climate of financial restraint and demands to demonstrate 'value for money', libraries are under pressure to use management techniques, including measurement and evaluation, and to illustrate the validity of the services they offer. Evaluation can be defined as consisting of the comparison of performance with the objectives of the agency in order to determine:

- a) whether there has been any change in performance for a time period.
- b) if so, whether the change is in the desired direction and



c) if so, to what extent [36].

Thus the theory of evaluation is quite simple:

You need to have specific and clear objectives and you need to have measurement tools which are easy to apply and are adequate for the purpose [37].

There are however some problems with this simple theory, not least of which is the absence of "specific and clear objectives". Library objectives are often broad and vague and one reason for this may be that, as regards children's work, a multiplicity of goals are often assigned to children's services [38]. Secondly the notion of evaluation has to take into account: a) efficiency, which concerns resource deployment and staff activity and b) effectiveness which concerns the delivery of service to users, including the concept of the benefit and value of the service to the user community [39]. The problem is that whilst the first may be quantifiable, the latter is essentially qualitative. How does one quantify, even if we assume that one gets to hear about it, the book or story that makes a difference in the life of a child or a family?.

So what should the objectives of library service to underfives be?. Smardo argues that they should be based on the objectives stated for any other group of users, the most important being to develop a life long interest in and enjoyment of reading [40]. Gault considers the possibility of identifying one basic concrete objective for children's services based on a general library objective that would allow the development of general performance measures:

A library exists as an interface between a particular user population and the universe of bibliographic resources. The objective of the library is to maximize the accessibility of these resources...[41].

The overall objective then is to "maximize the accessibility of information resources to the user or the exposure of the user to the resources". In order to measure effectiveness then, we have to measure 'exposure' ie. the amount of use as 'the more effective the library the more it will be used' [42].

The charts on the following pages outline some of the information required and how it can be used as an indication of effectiveness in relation to work with under fives.

Evaluation of use of under fives services

| Information required (at library, area and county levels)                                                                                                                                                              | Indication of Use                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Use by individuals</b><br><br>a) Under fives population in the catchment area.<br><br>b) Number of under fives registered as current users.<br><br>c) Number of under fives visiting the library.                   | 1) Under fives membership as a percentage of total under fives population.<br><br>2) Under fives membership as a % of total library membership.<br><br>3) Number of under fives visiting the library as a % of total under fives population |
| <b>Use by Groups</b><br><br>a) Number and types of under fives groups eg. play groups, Mother & toddler groups, childminders and parents groups etc.<br><br>b) Number of under fives groups using the library by type. | 1) Number of under fives groups served through outreach work as percentage of the total.<br><br>2) Number of groups visiting the library by type.                                                                                           |

#### Use of Materials

- a) Number of resource items for under fives
- b) No. of items on loan.
- c) No. of under fives issues.
- d) total under fives resource figure.

#### Service Promotion

- a) Number of under fives activities.
- b) Number of under fives attending activities

- 1) Under fives issues per 1000 of under fives population.
- 2) Stock on loan for 1000 under fives population.
- 3) percentage of under fives materials on loan.
- 4) Issues per item per annum.
- 5) Expenditure on stock per 1000 under fives population.

- 1) Changes in stock circulation following activities.
- 2) Staff evaluation of events.
- 3) Parents' evaluation of programmes.  
Please see example 1.

### Example 1

The following is an example of an evaluation which asked parents of participating toddlers not only to observe their children at and between story hours to record their impressions of the process of the programme but also to observe the programme's impact on their children over time.

#### Wolfsohn Memorial Library Pennsylvania Toddler Story Hour Parent's Evaluation

We would appreciate your comments about this program in order to help evaluate its worth and to help determine whether it should be continued.

Time of day: Too early\_\_\_\_\_ Too late\_\_\_\_\_ OK\_\_\_\_\_

Length:  
(each program) Too short\_\_\_\_\_ Too long\_\_\_\_\_ OK\_\_\_\_\_

Length:(series) Too short\_\_\_\_\_ Too long\_\_\_\_\_ OK\_\_\_\_\_

Place: Too small\_\_\_\_\_

Too many distractions\_\_\_\_\_ OK\_\_\_\_\_

Size of group: Too large\_\_\_\_\_ OK\_\_\_\_\_

#### Program and materials used:

Not enough planned\_\_\_\_\_ Too much planned\_\_\_\_\_

Child not interested in stories\_\_\_\_\_

Child not interested in activities\_\_\_\_\_

Stories, activities too old for child\_\_\_\_\_

Stories, activities too young for child\_\_\_\_\_

Stories, activities OK\_\_\_\_\_

Would you attend this program again\_\_\_\_\_

Why or why not ? \_\_\_\_\_

Continued ...

Example 1 continued ...

Would you recommend this program to a friend or neighbor? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Did you find this program helpful in selecting library materials for your child? YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Since you both began participating in this program, have you noticed any change in your child:

Longer attention span YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Greater interest in looking at books YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Greater interest in listening to stories at home YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Greater interest and enjoyment in coming to the library YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Greater rapport with other children YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Greater rapport with adults outside the family YES\_\_\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any comments you would like to add?\_\_\_\_\_

---

[43]

In conclusion then the above are some examples of the types of performance indicators that may be used in order to assess more or less objectively whether the library is reaching the children of the community with information and materials that they need. These measures are essentially intended to relate the library's goals and objectives to what is being achieved at any given time. They are not intended for meeting externally imposed prescriptions that may have little to do with local history, resources and needs. Criteria such as comments of users, staff observations and the social case for provision for under fives are as important for evaluating the service as the traditional one of counting numbers.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### EVINGTON AND OAKHAM WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF LEICESTERSHIRE LIBRARIES

#### 3.1 Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service provision for under fives.

The stated objectives of Leicestershire Libraries' work with children and young people are:

To assist in improving the lifestyle of children in the community and therefore indirectly of the adults of the future.

To support the overall policies of the county council in this regard and particularly those policies of the Education Committee specifically in relation to language and literacy [1].

Under the sub heading of Work with under fives this document recognises the rapid development that occurs in the child's first five years and states that the library service can play a key role by:

- ensuring that local groups are supported by the loan collection of books.
- encouraging involved adults to see the relevance of books and story-telling with young children by supporting training schemes for helpers locally and story telling where the group meets or in the library. This will also help the children to associate libraries and librarians with pleasurable use of books.
- helping and encouraging the establishment and use of toy libraries relating to books and libraries [2].

In 1989-1990 the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service (LLIS) conducted an in-depth study of the needs of under fives [3]. It aimed to provide an analysis of the present service, evaluate current practice and provision and to present costings and options for service development to this age group. This document illustrates that this library authority has gone to considerable lengths to serve under

fives. There are no age restrictions on library membership, there are special membership conditions for childminders and deposit collections are offered to under fives groups. Storytelling sessions are held on many library premises and as part of outreach activities in play groups and through the Book buses that operate in the inner city areas of Leicester.

For carers the service has been involved in training sessions through organisations such as the Pre-school Play Groups Association, The Workers Educational Association and the National Nursery Examination board classes. Most of the larger libraries and increasingly the smaller ones, hold 'Parents Collections' and there are also book lists and guides to children's books and storytelling for use in training sessions and for distribution to other carers. In addition there have been several Under -Fives open days and a video, Growing Into Reading, on the stages of children's reading and language development, is available to carers.

In terms of materials, all service points, mobile or static, hold books for under fives although the provision of non book materials such as story and music cassettes is more variable. Most libraries have a specific area identified for children's services and some have special shelving and seating for under fives, but the space available to present and promote under fives resources differs considerably between libraries.

LLIS does impose fines and charges for some under fives materials. There are mandatory fines for overdue items and discretionary ones on damaged materials. Charges are also made for reservations, loan of sound recordings and for replacing lost membership cards. Very few libraries have toys and games for children and none have comics or magazines.

#### Under fives project.

In 1988/89 an additional post was funded to investigate and develop work with under fives in the Eastern division of the county. A report of the project is expected to be produced towards the end of 1990.

#### The libraries of Oakham and Evington.

These two libraries fall within the Eastern Division which is divided into two areas - Melton and St. Barnabas, the former being essentially rural and the latter is to a large extent urban and multi-racial. As the structure chart below illustrates, the two areas are further sub-divided into groups, Melton and Rutland in one area and St. Barnabas and Highfields in the other. Oakham library, which is also the group headquarters, falls into the Rutland group and Evington is in the Highfields group. There are four senior librarians in the eastern division whose primary responsibility is to co-ordinate and contribute to the management of a specific aspect of the service in up to three areas such as stock, information, children's services and special services, for the whole of the division [4]. There are eleven team librarians whose role is to:

provide professional services to identified communities in the area and to specialise in one or more aspects of professional work [5].

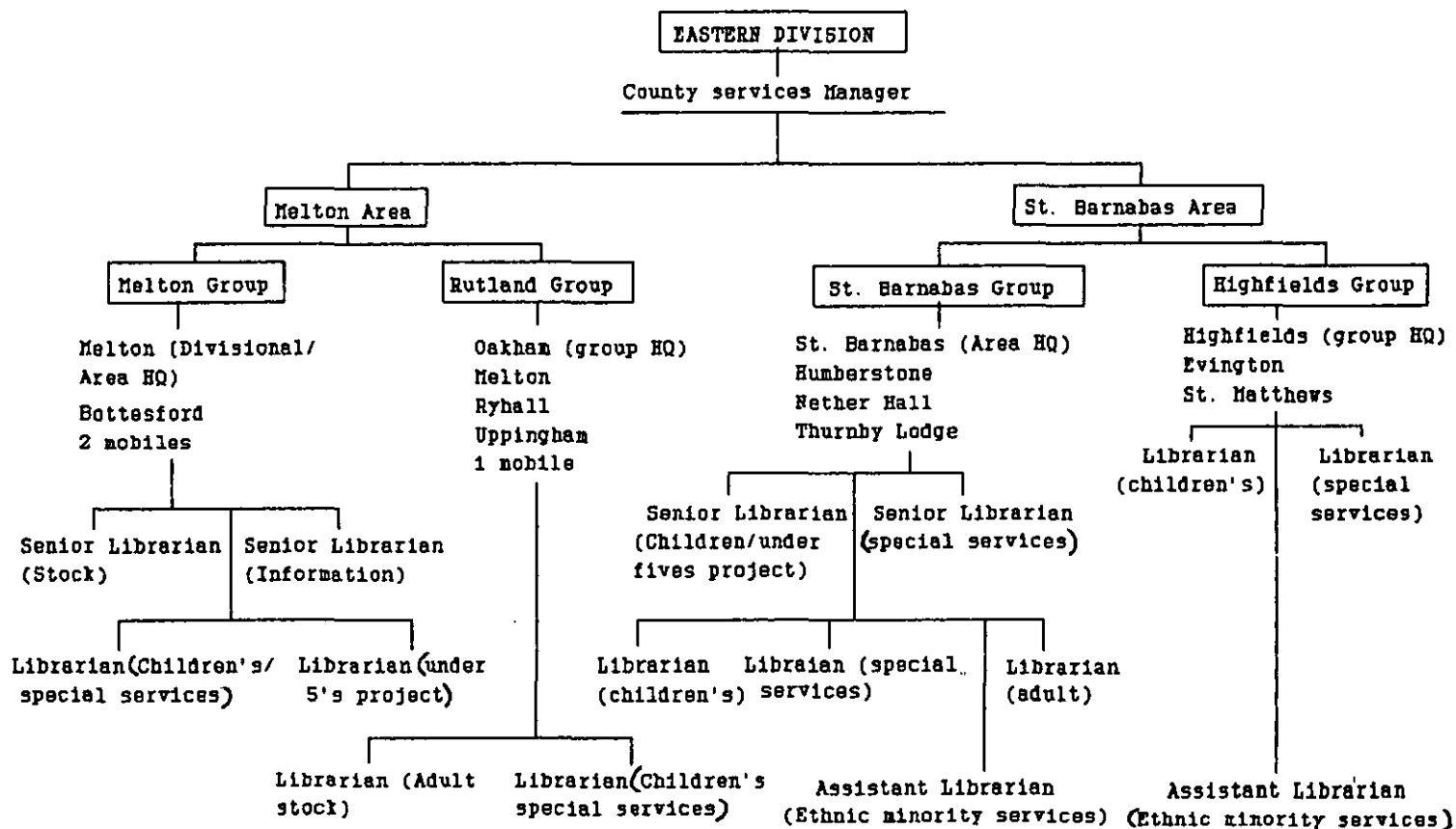
In addition the St. Barnabas area has two assistant librarians with special responsibility for ethnic minority services.

### **3.2 OAKHAM**

#### The area

Oakham is a country town in the district of Rutland. It has a population of just under 10,000 which is an increase of about 20% since the 1981 census [6]. Compared with the city it has a very low rate of unemployment - 2.7% compared with 9%.

Organization chart for the Eastern Division of  
Leicestershire Libraries.



Although it is only 4.4% for the county as a whole, unemployment in Rutland is only 1.7% [7]. In respect of the age structure the only figures available are from the 1981 census - 14.89% of its population was of pensionable age compared with 16% in the county. The under 16 age group made up 24.67% of the Oakham population compared with 23.4% for the county [8]. It has proved notoriously difficult to find a breakdown of the population by area so as to give any indication of numbers of under fives in the Oakham area. The closest figures available are the Census figures for Rutland which show the 0-4 population as 6.1% which was slightly lower than for the county at 6.5% [9]. Although there are no figures available for the ethnic origin of residents in Oakham it is clear that the population is almost entirely white although a number of these will be non-British due to the siting of several RAF bases in the Rutland area.

In terms of pre-school provision, in September 1990 there were only two play groups and three mother and toddler groups actually in Oakham. If one considers the nearby villages which are served by the town and the library, the total numbers are six play groups and four mother and toddler groups. There were 24 registered childminders in and very near to Oakham. In addition there are several nurseries, two attached to local infant schools, one private day nursery and one attached to the public school in the town.

### The Library

Oakham library, opened in 1972, is positioned just at the edge of the main shopping area in the town. The open plan layout gives the library interior the impression of plenty of space, being well lit and airy. The recently fitted carpets and service counter add to the attraction of the library. There is a main lending and reference area which adjoins the children's area, a large study area and a small study area which houses the local history collection. All these spaces can be expanded or reduced by the use of sliding folding

screens or by moving display cases. Shelves, apart from those fixed to walls, are mobile and can be moved aside to provide space for activities or exhibitions.

The library is open from 9.30 am to 7.00 pm every day except Thursday and Saturday when it closes at 1.00 pm. Its staff consist of two librarians, four full time library assistants and several part time assistants, although additional help can be obtained from the area headquarters if required. It presently operates on the photo charging method of circulation control but is due to be automated in the near future.

Based on Leicestershire's mid 1985 population estimates the Oakham library has a catchment population of 15,000. In the March 1990 stock census the library had a total shelf stock of 15,428 books of which 3763 were junior books. Of the latter 1,195 were non fiction and 2568 were fiction. In addition there were about 670 under fives books. Issues per month for the first quarter of 1990 averaged at 13,397 for adults and 1,792 for juniors. Unfortunately, junior issues are not sub-divided into other age categories, so it was not possible to obtain figures on issues for under fives.

Under fives at Oakham Library.

#### Access

There are no steps or stairs in the building that could cause problems for carers bringing in small children. There are however two sets of non-automatically opening doors which, unless left open, do cause some difficulty for prams and buggies. They are wide enough however to allow access to double buggies as is the security barrier at the entrance. There are no restrictions on push chairs being brought into and used in the library.



### Accommodation

The children's area is situated just to the right of the main entrance and the service counter. The fairly large space (measuring about 470 square feet) is partially separated from the rest of the library by a free standing shelf of teenage fiction. Most of the under fives picture books are kept in the three kinderboxes in the centre of the children's area. Next to these kinderboxes are large but low cushioned stools which are suitable for both children and adults to use whilst browsing through the kinderboxes. Folk and fairy tales are shelved in the usual way just to one side of the kinder boxes. There are a few posters stuck on one wall - some of them at child height.

### Facilities

There are toilets available to users but they are kept locked to avoid misuse - users are expected to ask for the key at the service desk. There are no feeding or changing facilities for younger children.

### Materials for under fives

The book stock consists of a whole range of different books for children such as board books, picture books, nursery rhymes, alphabet and counting books etc. There are no books in languages other than English and no dual language books. Story and music tapes are available although the latter carry a borrowing charge in accordance with county policy. There are no videos, comics or magazines, toys, games or puzzles for under fives.

The under fives materials are not listed or catalogued separately from the rest of the library stock. ✓

### Materials for carers

There is a 'Parents' collection' which is kept in the children's section. This consists of various materials to do with children and their development needs. There is also a 'Help section' in the main library which deals with practical

information of a legal/social security nature some of which obviously relates to children. The library also keeps community information relating to child care such as times and venues of baby clinics, play groups etc. This is not displayed but kept in a file and referred to as the need arises. There are very few publicity and promotion leaflets displayed on open shelves for parents to take away.

### Activities/Outreach

Story sessions with follow up activities in the library over the last year have only taken place over christmas and as part of the summer scheme over the school holidays. These activities are essentially organised and run by the librarian although she can get other staff to help if required.

In terms of outreach work with under fives, the children's librarian tries to contact and promote the library service to any group she becomes aware of. Because of time restraints there is no regular schedule for visiting groups but she tries to respond to all invitations to go and read a story or hold a book display etc. Visits to groups are generally timed so as to allow the librarian to meet and introduce herself and the library to parents as well as the staff and children in the group. Most of her contacts have however, been with the 3-5 age group and not with groups for 0-3 year olds. Other contacts over the last twelve months have included a number of talks, both formal and informal, to under fives groups and a talk at a prison for prisoners' wives attending a course. The librarian also attends meetings organised by social services 3-4 times a year, which she finds useful for finding out about what is going on in the area in relation to under fives.

### Staffing

The librarian responsible for children's work at Oakham also deals with special services, music and readers advisory work. She has 355 hours per annum allocated to children's work

of which she estimates 27-30 are spent on under fives work with another 2-3 hours for promotional activities. Given the rural nature of the area, travelling times are a considerable restriction on what can be achieved in the allocated time.

### Training

The children's librarian took a children's literature option as part of her librarianship course and has attended a one day county - organised course on children's work. Most of the other staff have had training on 'customer care' which has an element of work with children eg. talking to parents. She would welcome training in children's work for all new staff and feels strongly that staff working with children should have some first aid training.

### Future developments for under fives at Oakham

Lack of time and money and the consequent need to always prioritise services often means fewer new ventures whilst trying to keep present ones functioning. In the Oakham area travelling times pose restrictions on what can be achieved in the given time.

## 3.3 EVINGTON

### The area ✓

✓  
Evington is a thriving, affluent suburb in the district of Leicester. Its population according to mid 1988 estimates is just under 10,000 [10]. Traditionally a middle class area, it has a relatively low rate of unemployment - 5.9% compared with 9% for the city in 1990 [11]. It also has a sizeable older population - 11.8% are between the age of 65-74 years compared with 8% for the city. Conversely its 0-4 population is less than 4% compared with 7.6% in the city [12]. These are, however 1983 statistics and the population overall has increased by about one thousand since then. Although there are no statistics available, it is well known that there has been quite an increase in recent years in the Asian population in

the area (in 1983 it was 3.3%). It is likely that the proportion of the under fives has increased as more ethnic minorities, being younger than the white population, will also have younger families. For example while the overall 0-4 population of Evington was only 4%, 15% of the Asian population in the area was aged 0-4 [13].

It is worth noting that the areas that boarder onto Evington and which form part of its catchment area i.e Stoneygate, Crown Hills and Coleman, are very different in terms of their socio-economic characteristics. Unemployment in these areas has been more than double that in Evington (13.7%, 14.9% and 15% respectively) and they are ethnically more mixed. Compared to a 95.5% white population in Evington, the white population is 34.2% in Crown Hills, 64.7% in Stoneygate and 78.9% in Coleman [14].

In terms of provision for under fives, in July 1990 there were seven play groups listed by social services (but two of these had been disbanded), two mother and toddler groups, one family centre, one private day nursery and one nursery attached to a local infant school. As some of these groups are located bordering onto other areas surrounding Evington, several groups serve predominantly ethnic minority children. There were also 26 registered childminders.

### The Library

Evington library, like the Oakham one, stands just at the edge of the main shopping parade in the village, in a plot of land just set off the main road. Opened in 1969, it is actually very small for the population it serves. Although it was constructed so that 'a worthwhile extension of about 50% could easily be made at any future time' [15] this has not come to pass due to financial constraints. Although it is agreed that an extension is needed, this is usually put aside as other priorities arise within the service. Measuring just 40' 6" by 43' 3", Evington is a one room library with only the tiny staff room separated from the library. The atmosphere is

very functional with very little space for easy chairs and relaxed reading.

The library is open from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm and then from 2.00 pm to 7.00 pm every day except Saturday when it closes at 1.00 pm. Evington library does not have a full time librarian and was in fact without a permanent professional member of staff for several months until a new Community Librarian was appointed in July 1990. This post is for approximately 20 hours a week and duties include the overall supervision of adult and junior stock, readers advisory duties, promotion of the library in the community and children's work. Other staff include two full time and five part time library assistants. It operates on an automated circulation control system.

Based on Leicestershire's mid 1985 population estimates it has a catchment population of 23,500. At the 1990 stock census the library had a total shelf stock of 10,679 of which 2740 were junior books. Of the latter about 930 were non-fiction and about 1810 were fiction. The junior stock also included about 480 books for under fives. Issues for the first quarter of 1990 averaged at about 11,882 per month for adults and 2,620 per month for juniors.

#### **Under fives at Evington**

#### **Access**

There are no steps or stairs inside or outside the building. There is quite a small entrance lobby with 3 sets of non-automatically opening doors - one from the outside and the other two as entrance to and exit from the lobby to the library, which have to be negotiated by visitors with push chairs. Theoretically push chairs are not allowed in as they could pose safety problems in such a restricted area. In practice they are not objected to although one can imagine larger buggies and prams posing manoeuvring problems especially in the tiny children's area.

### Facilities

There are no facilities for under fives as such. The only toilet in the building can be used by children in an emergency.

### Accommodation

The children's area is to the right of the entrance into the library and a few feet away from the service counter. There is a small, rather dull piece of carpet in the middle of this area. There are three boxes for picture books, whilst other story books for under fives are shelved on one side of the area. Other books such as Asian language books, folk and fairy tales, stories in author alphabetical order etc. are arranged on low level shelves on three sides of the children's area. There is one free standing shelf and swivelling rack of materials for young adults which includes paper-backs and magazines. There are a couple of small stools and a bench for children to work on but this is not really suitable for under fives. There are a few posters on the walls.

### Materials for under fives

Materials consist of a whole range of books including mother tongue and dual language books for under fives but there is little else apart from a few sound recordings which are kept with similar adult materials.

### Materials for carers

The 'Parents collection' is just beginning to be built up and will be placed in the children's section. There are no child-care magazines or videos available to adults. Community information relating to child care such as information on day nurseries, play groups and mother and toddler groups is kept in boxes and folders at the librarian's desk and is not publicised in the children's area. Neither are publicity and promotion materials and book lists available other than by request.

### Activities/Outreach

No story sessions or activities for under fives are held in the library. Most play groups that were operating in late 1989 received or collected materials for use with the groups and the librarian made termly visits to these groups for story sessions which lapsed when the librarian left and no permanent replacement was made for quite some time. The new librarian has nine under fives groups on her list who will be contacted and the activities with them resumed. Over the last twelve months there has been no real promotional/training contact with under fives groups in the area but the librarian feels this is something she will become involved with in the future.

### Staffing

The Community Librarian who is at Evington part time is allocated 625 hours per annum for children's work which includes work with schools. She has 20 hours a year for work with under fives.

### Training

The children's librarian has attended one-day courses on story telling and reading development. She has also recently attended a workshop on working with carers in helping them to select materials.

The other library staff attend a two hour bi-monthly meeting of library assistants where there is usually an input from a librarian on various topics of interest which could include work with under fives/dealing with parents etc.

The librarian would welcome training on practical aspects of activities for under fives, especially services to multi cultural communities and meeting special needs.

### Future development of work with under fives at Evington

The librarian saw the size and physical structure of the library as a restriction on the services that could be developed for young children. Given the nature of Evington, traditional expectations of a library service could also pose

barriers. Inadequate professional time available for this work was probably the biggest obstacle to any great developmental work with under fives.



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## CHAPTER FOUR

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The aim of this project, as stated in the introduction, was to look at two Leicestershire branch libraries to see how services to under fives could be made more effective.

Apart from the literature survey, the research for the project consisted of three main elements:

- a) an analysis of what was available in the Leicestershire area in general and how the two libraries in the study, Evington and Oakham, were prepared and equipped to serve under fives.
- b) investigating what was happening in other nearby authorities with regard to provision for under fives.
- c) a survey of users and potential users of services for under fives in Evington and Oakham.

#### Leicestershire, Evington and Oakham

The information on Leicestershire libraries was gained mostly through the authority's unpublished literature and unstructured interviews and meetings with two of the main people involved in children's work: the Children's Services Librarian for Leicestershire and the Senior Children's Librarian in the Eastern Division of the authority, which is the division in which Evington and Oakham belong.

The information on the branch libraries was gained through an informal survey which consisted of a checklist of questions for the Librarians with responsibility for children's work, other staff, especially the senior library assistants, and personal observations. The checklist includes questions related to, for example, access, facilities, library

materials, outreach and promotional activities, staff training etc. It also includes questions on area profiles, number of registered users, proportion of budget spent on children's services etc. Often the information to answer these questions was not available at the branch and approaches had to be made to other members of staff either at divisional or central headquarters.

#### Other Library authorities

Several different authorities were contacted by telephone to ascertain whether they had any special programmes for under fives. Some, such as Warwickshire, Northamptonshire and Bradford had the standard story hour/activities for 3-5 year olds held in libraries or as part of outreach activities. Others such as Camden and Gloucestershire did have various schemes in operation and were asked to send details. The two nearby authorities that did have more on offer were Sandwell and Nottingham to which visits were made to talk to staff responsible for the services and in the case of Sandwell, this ✓ included a tour of several branch libraries for personal ✓ observation and informal meetings with the staff. Ideally, it ✓ would have been useful to visit more library authorities but ✓ time and travelling costs were a restriction.

#### 4.2 The Survey

This was an important aspect of the research for this ✓ project and is therefore discussed in some detail. ✓

Leicestershire, as part of its in-depth study of services for under fives, had conducted a survey of several groups in the county who were involved with under fives in order to assess customer reaction to its services [1]. Whilst being a very informative process for the service as a whole, it was felt that the two areas in the study - Evington and Oakham - had their own communities with their own special circumstances and needs which would not have been addressed by

a general survey (these two areas were not specifically targeted by that survey). Although the questionnaires in the Leicestershire survey were studied, no attempt was made to necessarily link the two surveys as the aims of the present study were not intended to be general but specific to the two libraries concerned.

The decision was made to study three different groups involved with under fives - group leaders ie. heads of play groups, mother and toddler groups, nurseries etc, registered childminders and adults who come into the library for or with under fives. The last group was different from the first two in the sense that the questionnaires would only be received by those actually using the library, although of course they may well be in the library for their own rather than their children's use.

#### Limitations of the survey. ✓

The limitations of surveying the above mentioned groups are obvious. First of all in Leicestershire in 1986 there were 382 play groups providing sessional care for up to 8,000 children. In national terms these groups are thought to be catering on average for only about 13% of the under fives [2]. Secondly, although there are many children cared for by registered childminders (up to 3,700 in Leicestershire in 1986) many more children are cared for by unregistered childminders, for which figures are inevitably difficult to obtain but they are thought to run into many thousands [3]. Thirdly, most children under five in the U.K are still cared for at home; regardless of whether or not the parent is in paid employment, they are more likely to be looked after by a parent or relative than in any formal child care provision [4].

Ideally, it is those children who are cared for at home and by unregistered childminders, whose library needs should be explored; not only because they form the greatest numbers

but also because they are the ones who are most likely to be missing out on book contact, story telling and other activities which are generally available to children in formal child care provision. A study of these children would be most useful and yield the greatest knowledge of the non-use of libraries by families with under fives. Unfortunately, such a survey was beyond the means - financial, time and contacts - of the present study.

#### Aims of the survey

The main aims of the survey were to:

1. Assess library use and discover some of the reasons for non-use by groups and individuals involved with under fives in the Evington and Dakham areas.
2. Examine the effectiveness of the service and assess the extent to which it met the needs and expectation of the users.
3. Discover the extent of use of various types of children's literature and determine the extent to which books were actually getting into the homes of children.
4. Use the survey, along with information gathered from other authorities and the literature survey, to make suggestions for improvement that may be considered in each library.

#### Questionnaire design

Interviews and questionnaires intrude as a foreign element into the social setting they would describe, they create as well as measure attitudes, they elicit atypical roles and responses, they are limited to those who are accessible and will co-operate, and the responses obtained are produced in part by dimensions of individual differences, irrelevant to the topic at hand [5].

Bearing in mind the types of limitations of questionnaires and interviews outlined above, it was decided that given the aims and the time scale allowed for this

project, it was the only viable method of data collection.

There was a need to prepare three separate but related questionnaires for the groups to be studied - parents, childminders and group leaders. Although they were intended to be quick and easy to complete, it was felt that as the aim was to collect opinions and attitudes as well as facts, the questionnaires necessarily had to contain a mixture of structured and semi-structured questions where the respondents replied in their own words. Instructions for the structured or multiple choice questions indicated whether the respondent was expected to tick just one box or as many as were applicable. An attempt was made to allow the respondents, in answering closed questions, to expand the categories with the instruction 'Other. Please specify'. They were given the opportunity also to give reasons for a choice as in 'please say why you think ...'.

As the aims of the survey were, amongst others, to discover the reasons for non-use and possible improvement to the service, it was very tempting, rather than to leave the question open, to clarify the alternatives that might be considered off-putting, such as "libraries charging for damage to materials by young children" or "libraries charging for the loan of materials such as music tapes" etc. as these considerations could be a genuine deterrent to potential users. It was decided however that such questions would be irrelevant to the two branch libraries as these are county/political decisions over which individual service points have little control. There would be the danger of raising expectations which could not in reality be fulfilled.

In the covering letter an attempt was made to motivate respondents - in the parents' questionnaire the possible benefit to the child of an improved service were stressed and in the childminders' and group leaders' covering letter stress was laid on the value of their knowledge and experience with

children in helping the library to provide a better service.

#### 4.3 Fieldwork

##### Parents' Questionnaire. (Appendix 1).

This was intended as an in-library survey of adults coming into the library with under fives or taking out materials for them. After discussion with the senior library assistants, an agreed number of questionnaires were left at each library (90 at Oakham and 40 at Evington). To help maintain confidentiality envelopes were also provided, some were stamped and addressed to enable those who did not have the time to complete them in the library to return them through the post. Each library was given a set of instructions for distributing the forms, these were as follows:

- 1) Please hand a questionnaire to anybody who comes into the library with children under five or takes out materials for them.
- 2) Encourage the parents to complete and hand in the form during that visit.
- 3) If they seem interested but do not have the time to complete the form, offer a stamped addressed envelope and ask them if they could possibly try to return the completed questionnaire within one week.

The questionnaires were distributed over a two week period. With hindsight however, it was realised that another week would have been preferable as books are issued for three weeks and users keeping materials for the maximum period may not have come into the library during that fortnight.

It would probably have been better not to have called it 'parents' questionnaire' as clearly some children may well come with other relatives and friends who may have felt the questionnaire was not intended for them.

### Group Leaders' questionnaire (Appendix 2)

In each area social services were contacted for lists of under fives groups. These were then matched with the library's own lists in its community information file to double check that none had been missed off. In some cases, the library's information was more up to date as for example in Evington where a new private nursery had opened nearby and did not yet appear on the social services list. Discrepancies also arose because some groups had stopped operating and others had restarted. Social services do not officially keep information on mother and toddler groups so these were discovered through the personal knowledge of the social services advisers, librarians, library assistants etc. Information about nursery schools was obtained from the 'Yellow Pages' directory.

A problem arose in working out geographical boundaries. ✓  
Oakham library, for example, serves not just the town but other villages in the Rutland area, so decisions had to be made as to which groups should be contacted. Finally, those that appeared on the map to be closer to Oakham library rather than any other library in the area were approached.

It was anticipated that the group leaders' questionnaire ✓  
would be used as an interview schedule. The reasons for this were:

- a) In each area there were relatively small numbers of under fives groups so it should have been possible to visit each group in person.
- b) a better response rate would be achieved by personal visits.
- c) it may be possible to gain extra information through respondents expressing themselves verbally rather than in writing and by the interviewer being able to interact and probe further as and when the need arose.

One problem in the Oakham area, however, was that due to



the rural nature of the area, some groups were geographically very dispersed. Added to this was the problem that most groups only operate on certain days of the week for just a couple of hours. This entailed considerable practical difficulties of getting from one group to another in the limited time available. Due to this the questionnaire was designed to be just as simple for self completion as for use in a structured interview. In the end however, in order to ensure the best possible response rate, those groups that could not be visited were interviewed on the telephone.

#### Childminders' questionnaire (Appendix 3)

Lists of childminders in each area were obtained from social services. In both libraries the information was considerably out of date compared with social services who update their lists relatively frequently.

The only realistic method of contacting the childminders was by post, although it was anticipated that the response rate may well be very low. Social services were contacted again to find out whether there were any childminder groups in the area which could be used to help distribute the questionnaires. Evington did have a group which was visited but the number of regular attenders was only 3-5. These childminders were given questionnaires to complete. Two separate visits yielded 5 completed responses. The Oakham area did not have a formal childminder group although one particular childminder was thought to have a lot of informal contacts. She agreed to help with the survey and twelve questionnaires were returned through her. The remaining childminders in each area were sent questionnaires through the post with stamped addressed envelopes to encourage them to respond.

## References

1. Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service. Services for children under five in-depth study. Unpublished report, Feb. 1990.
2. Leicestershire Social Services. A review of services for children under five in Leicestershire. Unpublished report, 1989, p. 9.
3. Department of Education and Science. Report of the Committee of Enquiry under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock. A Language for life. London: H.M.S.O., 1975, p. 197.
4. Ref 2. p. 9.
5. Webb, E.J. et. al. Quoted in Bookstein, A. Questionnaire research in a library setting. The Journal of Academic Librarianship. 11 (1), March 1985, pp. 24-28.

## CHAPTER 5

### SURVEY RESULTS

#### DAKHAM

##### 5.1 UNDER FIVES GROUP LEADERS

###### Responses to Questionnaires

Initial contact was made with fifteen groups operating in and around Dakham. One of these was temporarily disbanded, two others had alternative libraries they could use at the RAF base in Luffenham. Responses were gained from all 12 remaining under fives groups known to be operating in the Dakham catchment area in September 1990.

###### Non-users.

Of the twelve groups contacted, 5 did not use the library for their groups - two nurseries and three mother and toddler groups. Reasons for non use are summarised in table 1.

| <u>Number of mentions</u> | <u>Reason for not using the library</u>                       |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2                         | Sufficient supply of own books.                               |
| 1                         | Most children use library with parents.                       |
| 1                         | Risk of damage to materials                                   |
| 1                         | Lack of time.                                                 |
| 1                         | Irrelevance of library to the group i.e. they were too young. |
| 1                         | Lack of awareness of what the library had to offer the group. |
| 1                         | The thought of using the library had not occurred to them.    |

Table 1: Reasons for non use of library by groups in Dakham

## Users' responses

### A. Introduction

7 groups reported using the library. The numbers of children in their groups ranged from 8 to 85 per week although the average attendance per session was about 15-20. Six groups were play groups which catered for children from around two and half years to four plus, one was a private day nursery which had an age range of eighteen months to four years. Only two of these groups were full time, the rest met for 2-3 hour sessions 3 to 5 times a week.

### B. Use of library service by groups.

All seven groups used the library for borrowing books, two of them had story telling sessions and had used the library to display the children's work.

### C. Quality of service received.

Six groups rated this as being 'good' and one as 'satisfactory'.

D. Reasons why the service was considered good.

| No. of mentions | Reason                                                        |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5               | Good selection of books.                                      |
| 1               | Recent improvement in materials.                              |
| 1               | Librarian aware of needs of under fives.                      |
| 1               | Books can be kept for long periods.                           |
| 1               | Availability of specialised/theme books.                      |
| 1               | Staff tolerant about late/damaged books.                      |
| 1               | Access to modern books/characters children are familiar with. |

Table 2: Reasons why service was considered 'good' by Oakham groups.

E. Use of books by type.

Story books with pictures were used most frequently by all groups:

- Board books were often felt to be unsuitable for children in play groups although 1 group did use them often.
- Books with lift up flaps were used by all groups and two groups complained that these were not always available in the numbers their popularity warranted.
- One group never used picture books without words and another group never used nursery rhyme/poetry books.

F. Other types of book required by groups.

Four groups had nothing to add. The others mentioned the following:

- more large sized story books with pictures for use with story telling in large groups.

- more books with 'seasonal links' eg. christmas, easter, autumn etc.
- more resource materials for staff use eg. books on activities etc.
- more lift up flap books.

G. Use of library books.

- None of the groups allowed the children to take the books home.
- Two groups used the books only for story telling by the staff.
- Five allowed the children to use them during group sessions although three of these qualified this by saying 'only in small groups', 'not by the small ones' and 'only if supervised'.
- One group also used the books for preparation of activities.

H. Group visits to the library.

Only one group currently visits regularly. The only 'problem' faced was that there were not enough seats when they took a group to the library (total of nine children) and as they liked to share a story at the library they would appreciate a few more seats - cushions would be sufficient.

I. Reasons for groups not visiting library.

- Library too far away
- Inadequate staff for supervision of trips
- Children not insured off play group premises.

J. Other comments/suggestions for improvements.

Four respondents had nothing to add, the others made the following comments:

- need more story and nursery rhyme tapes.
- more seating in the children's area.
- displaying children's work in the library encourages parents/children to visit the library.

- Oakham needs the children's librarian to spend more time on under fives - ideally there should be a full time children's librarian.
- the mobile library serving a nearby school (in Langham) should visit the local play group.

#### K. Ethnic origin of children.

Five groups were 100% white although not necessarily all British. Of the remaining two, one had a mixed race and a Chinese child and the other had one mixed race child. The groups who had other than white British children were at pains to stress that these children were not treated any differently. The group leaders claimed that they did not use 'ethnic materials' as parents wanted their children to learn English and 'fit in' with other children.

### 5.2 Oakham Childminders

#### Response to questionnaires

There were twenty-four childminders in the approximate Oakham library catchment area. The childminder's contact managed to return 12 of the 13 questionnaires she had agreed to distribute ( 92% response rate ). Of the eleven postal questionnaires 6 were returned (54% response rate). Thus a total of 18 out of 24 questionnaires were returned giving an overall response rate of 75%. Three of the childminders were not looking after children at the time of the survey and so did not complete the forms. Two of these did however include their experiences of using the library with their own children. These responses have been included in the parents' survey analysis. The analysis presented here is based on 15 responses from childminders in the Oakham area.

#### Non Users

Of the 15 responses analysed 10 (66%) reported not using the library for the minded children. Their reasons for non use are listed in table 3.

| No. of mentions | Reason                                        |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| 3               | Lack of time.                                 |
| 2               | Library not relevant to their needs.          |
| 2               | Risk of children causing damage to materials. |
| 1               | Inconvenient location of library.             |
| 1               | Library unwelcoming to young children.        |
| 6               | Other.                                        |

The 'other' reasons for non-use, included the availability of books in the childminders home (5 mentions), 2 childminders mentioned that they did not use the library as the children did this with their own parents.

Table 3: Reasons for non use of library by childminders in Oakham.

#### Factors that may encourage childminders to use the library.

4 childminders did not respond:

- 2 restated that the only reason for non use was the supply of books at home.
- day time story telling activities would encourage three of the respondents to use the library.
- One, who lived outside Oakham, said she would use a mobile library if it was available in her village.

#### Users' responses

##### A. Introduction

The analysis that follows is based on 6 completed questionnaires. The total number of children minded was 16 with an age range of 9 months to 5 years.



B. Use of tickets/materials.

Of the six childminders using the library,

- 4 used a childminder's ticket,
- 1 borrowed on the child's own ticket,
- 1 used 'some one else's ticket'.

Most of them borrowed 3-4 books per child which are changed every fortnight by 4 of them and every week by the other 2.

C. Types of Books selected

Most of the childminders used most of the types of books available, but

- 4 did not use fact and information books.
- 2 did not use books with lift up flaps.
- 2 did not use situation books.
- 1 did not use nursery rhyme/poetry books.

D. Use of library books.

- None of the books were taken home by children.
- 4 of the childminders allowed the children to use the books by themselves.
- 2 of them used them for story telling to the children but did not allow children to use them by themselves.

E. Visits to the library with children.

One childminder did not take the children to the library as she thought they were too young to do this yet (aged 9 months and 2 years). Of the five visiting 2 made no suggestions for improvements. The other three mentioned the following:

- children's books need to be displayed better.
- somewhere for the baby (9 months old) to play while the childminder chose the books.
- a rail around the children's area to stop the smaller ones straying too far.

E. Usefulness of materials for loan.

The only materials unanimously thought to be very useful or useful by all respondents was the provision of toys and games. Further indication of the usefulness of other materials is given in table 4.

|                  | Very<br>Useful | Useful | Not very<br>Useful | Useless | Total<br>Responding |
|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Story cassettes  | 3              | 1      | 1                  |         | 5                   |
| Music cassettes  | 3              | 1      | 1                  |         | 5                   |
| Poetry cassettes | 2              | 1      | 2                  |         | 5                   |
| Video cassettes  | 1              | 1      | 1                  |         | 3                   |
| Toys and Games   | 4              | 2      |                    |         | 6                   |

Table 4: Oakham childminders' responses to the usefulness of materials for children.

G. Usefulness of materials for childminders.

The number of respondents selecting each option is given in the appropriate box in table 5.

|                                                                | Very<br>Useful | Useful | Not very<br>Useful | Useless | Total<br>Responding |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------------------|
| Books on child care and development.                           | 1              | 1      | 4                  |         | 6                   |
| Magazines relating to young children                           | 1              | 3      | 2                  |         | 6                   |
| Videos relating to child care                                  | 2              |        | 4                  |         | 6                   |
| Community information eg, 'what's on for children' in the area | 4              | 1      | 1                  |         | 6                   |
| Guides to storytelling and using books with children           | 2              | 1      | 2                  | 1       | 6                   |

Table 5: Usefulness of materials for childminders in Oakham.

H. Other comments/suggestions for improvements.

3 did not respond to this question. Others made the following suggestions,

- a play pen to keep young babies occupied was suggested by 2 respondents.
- a weekly story-telling session was suggested by 2.
- the provision of cloth books for babies.
- separation or sound proofing of the children's area to avoid children distracting others.

### 5.3 OAKHAM PARENTS' SURVEY

#### Response rate.

19 of the 40 questionnaires distributed were returned giving a response rate of 47%. A local play group leader suggested distributing questionnaires to parents who she knew were library users. She was given 12 forms of which 9 were returned. The overall response rate was then over 53%. The analysis presented below however is based on 31 completed forms as the responses of three childminders who did not use the library for the minded children but used it for their own children have been included here.

#### A. Introduction.

41 children under five were represented in the survey and materials were borrowed for 37 of them. 25 children (67%) had their own library tickets.

#### B. Factors that may discourage library use.

Most did not feel there was anything that stopped them encouraging their children to use the library but the travelling distance to the library was inconvenient for 2 respondents while another two mentioned the need to keep children quiet a little off putting.

C. Quality of service.

| No. of mentions |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 4 (13%)         | Excellent    |
| 16 (52%)        | Good         |
| 9 (29%)         | Satisfactory |
| 1 ( 3%)         | Poor         |
| 1 ( 3%)         | No response  |

Table 6: Quality of service reported by Oakham parents.

D. Reasons for service being considered excellent or good.

| No. of mentions | Reason                               |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 13              | Excellent/good selection of books.   |
| 4               | Friendly staff.                      |
| 2               | Good quality/standard of books.      |
| 2               | Suitable seating.                    |
| 2               | Spacious/pleasant area for children. |
| 1               | Easy access to books for children.   |
| 1               | Summer activities.                   |
| 1               | Availability of toilets.             |

Table 7: Reasons for service being considered excellent or good by parents in Oakham.

E. Reasons for service being considered satisfactory or poor.

- Poor selection of books/unappealing books.
- Books are not those most popular with children eg. Postman Pat, Thomas the Tank engine.
- Books should be categorised according to type and suitability for age groups.
- Not enough books for 4 to 5 year olds.
- Not enough activities.
- Lack of displays to attract young children.
- Overdue notices sent when books have been returned.

Table 8: Reasons for service being considered poor or satisfactory by parents in Oakham.

F. Services/facilities that parents felt should be provided by the library.

Just over half of the parents responded to this question. Their suggestions were as shown in table 9.

| No. of mentions |                                                                                              |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6               | Regular story time/activity hour.                                                            |
| 3               | Videos for children.                                                                         |
| 2               | A toy corner/play area.                                                                      |
| 2               | A toy library.                                                                               |
| 2               | Wider range of story tapes.                                                                  |
| 2               | Jigsaw/puzzles.                                                                              |
| 1               | Children's area positioned away from main library.                                           |
| 1               | Better display of books.                                                                     |
| 1               | Changing facilities for babies.                                                              |
| 1               | A reading scheme.                                                                            |
| 1               | A place for quiet reading.                                                                   |
| 1               | Music cassettes.                                                                             |
| 1               | Low counter/foot stool to allow children to join in 'ritual' of issuing and returning books. |

Table 9: Services/facilities that parents felt should be provided at the Dakham library.

G. Ways in which staff could be more helpful.

There were 3 responses to this question.

Staff should:

- put on more activities and displays
- be more involved in the community by taking books and activities to children in groups.
- offer parents more help and guidance in choosing books.

#### H. Types of books selected

As table 10 illustrates all parents who borrowed books (30 out of 31) chose story books with pictures. Board books and special situation books were the only books selected by less than 50% of the respondents.

| No. Choosing book | Type of book.                                                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 24                | Picture books without words or with very few words.              |
| 30                | Story books with pictures                                        |
| 14                | Board books                                                      |
| 19                | Books with lift up flaps etc.                                    |
| 20                | Alphabet/counting books                                          |
| 19                | Nursery rhyme/poetry books                                       |
| 14                | Special situation books eg. moving house, going to hospital etc. |
| 16                | Simple fact or information books.                                |

Table 10: Types of books selected by parents in Oakham.

#### I. Usefulness of children's materials.

Taking the 'Very useful' and 'Useful' columns together in table 11 we can see that the provision of story cassettes was considered the most useful followed by music cassettes. Although the provision of videos and toys and games would also be popular, these materials also had the greatest 'opposition' with the largest number stating that they would not be useful.



|                  | Very<br>Useful | Useful | Not very<br>Useful | Useless | Total<br>responding | % in favour |
|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------|
| Story cassettes  | 18             | 8      | 2                  |         | 28                  | 93%         |
| Music cassettes  | 12             | 11     | 3                  |         | 26                  | 88%         |
| Poetry cassettes | 5              | 14     | 8                  |         | 27                  | 70%         |
| Video cassettes  | 12             | 10     | 4                  | 1       | 27                  | 81%         |
| Toys and Games   | 16             | 6      | 4                  | 3       | 29                  | 76%         |

Table 11: Oakham parents' response to the usefulness of children's materials.

J. Usefulness of materials for parents

Table 12 shows that 'Community information' was clearly thought to be the most useful service. Books on child care and guides to storytelling were also considered useful by the majority. Magazines and videos, although popular also had the greatest 'not useful' and 'useless' votes.

|                                                                 | Very Useful | Useful | Not very Useful | Useless | Total responding | % in favour |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|---------|------------------|-------------|
| Books on child care and development                             | 5           | 18     | 3               |         | 26               | 88%         |
| Magazines relating to young children                            | 6           | 14     | 6               | 1       | 27               | 74%         |
| Videos relating to young children                               | 4           | 12     | 8               |         | 24               | 67%         |
| Community information eg. 'what's on for children' in the area. | 23          | 5      |                 |         | 28               | 100%        |
| Guides to storytelling and using books with children            | 12          | 11     | 2               | 2       | 27               | 85%         |

Table 12: Usefulness of materials for parents in Oakham.

K. Comments/suggestions for improvement.

Just over a third responded to this question with the following:

- The need for a regular story hour and for the children's area to be partitioned was reiterated by several parents.
- The children's area needed to be more appealing to under fives especially with pictures and posters of nursery characters, novelty kinder boxes and toys and games.
- The library should be open all day on Saturday to allow working parents more time to use it.
- Books should be arranged into categories according to age/special interest/reading with parents etc. to aid selection.

- The need for a section on 'teaching children to read'.

## EVINGTON

### 5.4 UNDER FIVES GROUP LEADERS

#### Response to questionnaires.

Of the eleven under fives groups listed for the Evington area two, both mother and toddler groups, were no longer running. Contact with all the remaining nine groups was made, seven in person and two on the telephone. Thus a response rate of 100% was gained of the groups known to be operating in the area in August 1990.

#### Non-users.

Of the nine groups contacted, two did not use the library for their group. Both of them gave a lack of awareness that the library offered services to the under fives groups as the main reason for non-use but one of them also mentioned the risk of damage to materials as a potential deterrent. However, both group leaders were very keen to find out more and felt they would use the service in the future.

#### Users' responses

##### A. Introduction

Of the groups using the library, the number of children attending ranged from 16 per week to 60 with the average per session being about 15-20. Four of the seven groups were play groups who had children aged between two and half to five, one was a nursery school that took children from three to five, the family centre had children from birth to five and the private day nursery took children from six weeks to five years. The day nursery, nursery school and the family centre are open full time although the nursery school and the family centre, like all the other groups take children on a sessional

basis ranging from two to five morning or afternoon sessions per week. Two of the groups, although listed in Evington library's catchment area, border on to the inner city and are therefore also served by the Book Bus that operates in the area.

B. Use of library service by groups.

All 7 groups used the library for borrowing books and five of them had also had story telling in the past.

C. Quality of service received.

All 7 groups rated the service as 'good.' One respondent complained about the irregularity of book bus visits and another complained that the previous librarian who did the story telling had a strong accent that none of the children could understand.

D. Reasons for service being 'good'

- good selection of books
- helpful staff
- children enjoyed storytelling

E. Groups' use of books by type.

- Picture books with or without words were the most frequently used by all groups.
- All but one group felt that their children were too old for board books.
- Lift up flap books were used often by one group and sometimes by five groups.
- Alphabet/counting books, nursery rhyme/poetry books and special situation books were used by all groups sometimes.
- two groups used dual language books and one of these two used mother tongue books when appropriate staff was available. Although all groups had at least 25% of children from minority ethnic backgrounds, the

leaders dismissed the use of these books on the grounds that parents sent children to the groups to learn English.

- Simple fact or information books were used sometimes by five groups and never used by two.

F. Other types of books required by groups.

Three groups did not respond to this question, the other four mentioned the following:

- more books portraying single family situations
- more books portraying multi-racial situations
- greater variety of dual language books.
- situation books especially dealing with bereavement, road safety etc.
- very simple interest books eg. transport.

G. Use of library books.

- None of the groups allowed the books to be taken home.
- All groups used library books for story telling and let the children use them by themselves during sessions.
- Two groups used them for display purposes - one of them with the specific aim of trying to illustrate to the children that they were 'more special' than other books in the centre and thus encourage better care.

H. Group visits to the library.

Of the two groups that did take children to the library, one felt there were no real problems. The other group, which visited more frequently, thought:

- the attitude of staff was off putting and they felt pressure to keep the children quiet.
- the books on shelves were very difficult for children to sort through by themselves.

I. Reasons for groups not visiting the library.

| No. of mentions | Reason                                  |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 2               | Library too far away.                   |
| 2               | Insufficient staff to supervise visits. |
| 2               | It had never occurred to them.          |
| 1               | Fear of noise and disruption.           |

Table 13: Reasons for groups not visiting Evington Library.

J. Other comments/suggestions for improvements.

Two group leaders made no suggestions as they were quite happy with the service. The others made the following comments:

- the display of books does not encourage browsing.
- the need for somewhere to sit and look at books with children
- the lawned area around the library could be used to attract children.
- paper back books (eg. song books) should be made more durable.
- story time in the library.
- a story teller to visit the group would be useful, especially for mother tongue stories.
- a more welcoming attitude by staff.
- the children's area should invite relaxation with books, eg. be more colourful, with cushions and bean bags etc.

K. Ethnic origin of children

The three groups that were nearest to the library had between 25-30% of children from ethnic minority backgrounds,

mainly Asian. Others a little further away had between 80-95% again mainly Asian but also some Afro-Caribbean and mixed race children.

### 5.5 Evington Childminders.

#### Response to questionnaires.

12 of the 26 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 46%.

#### Non-users

Of the 12 completed questionnaires returned 8 (66%) did not use the library for the minded children. Their stated reasons for non use are listed in table 14.

#### Factors that may encourage childminders to use the library.

3 childminders did not respond to the question about what would encourage them to start using the library, the other five mentioned factors listed in table 15.

| No. of mentions | Reason                                                          |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5               | Risk of children causing damage to materials.                   |
| 2               | Library not relevant to their needs.                            |
| 2               | Lack of awareness of what the library offers to young children. |
| 2               | Library unwelcoming to young children.                          |
| 1               | Not enough relevant materials                                   |
| 4               | Other.                                                          |

Of the 'other' responses, 2 mentioned their own supply of books - one of them obtaining them from jumble sales and school fetes. One stated that the minded child (15 months old) was 'not old enough to appreciate and understand' the use of the library while another stated that she only minded children during summer holidays when 'reading material is not necessary as the children have plenty to occupy themselves with the company of each other'.

Table 14: Reasons for non-use of library by childminders in Evington.

|   |                                                                |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| - | more facilities and activities for children up to three years. |
| - | a separate room to sit and read with a child.                  |
| - | greater awareness of what was available.                       |
| - | very durable books for under fives.                            |
| - | a 'tot club' to just enjoy books in the library.               |

Table 15: Factors that may encourage Evington childminders to use the library.



## Users' responses

### A. Introduction.

4 childminders reported using the library for the minded children. They minded a total of nine children aged between one and four.

### B. Use of tickets/materials.

All respondents had a childminder's ticket and borrowed between one or two to eight books per visit. One childminder changed the books every week, another fortnightly. Two changed them every three weeks.

### C. Types of books selected.

- Fact and information books were not selected at all.
- All chose from the whole range of books with the exception of mother tongue and dual language books which were selected by one childminder who was herself of Arabic origin.

### D. Use of library books.

- One allowed the books to be taken home
- All allowed the children to use the books by themselves.
- All used them for storytelling.

### E. Visits to the library with children.

One did not take the children to visit the library. Of the three who did one found no problems. The others mentioned;

- Lack of toilet facilities.
- Separate children's area needed to avoid noise problems.

F. Usefulness of children's materials.

Story and poetry cassettes and toys and games were thought to be useful by all respondents but opinion was more divided as regards the provision of music and video cassettes. For the other materials the number of chilminders selecting each option is given in the appropriate box in table 16.

|                  | Very<br>Useful | Useful | Not very<br>Useful | Useless |
|------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|---------|
| Story cassettes  | 4              |        |                    |         |
| Music cassettes  | 2              | 1      | 1                  |         |
| Poetry cassettes |                | 4      |                    |         |
| Video cassettes  | 2              | 1      |                    | 1       |
| Toys and games   | 3              | 1      |                    |         |

Table 16: Evington chilminders' response to the usefulness of materials for children.

G. Usefulness of materials for childminders.

As table 17 shows, apart from one respondent who thought the provision of videos would be useless, all other types of materials were considered to be either very useful or useful by all respondents.

|                                                                      | Very<br>Useful | Useful | Not very<br>Useful | Useless |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|---------|
| Books on child care<br>and development.                              | 3              | 1      |                    |         |
| Magazines relating to<br>young children                              | 1              | 3      |                    |         |
| Videos relating to<br>child care                                     | 1              | 2      |                    | 1       |
| Community information eg,<br>"what's on for children"<br>in the area | 4              |        |                    |         |
| Guides to storytelling<br>and using books<br>with children           | 2              | 2      |                    |         |

Table 17: Usefulness of materials for childminders in  
Evington.

#### H. Other comments/suggestions.

One did not respond to this question, the others suggested the following:

- a separate room for children ( 2 mentions )
- the provision of toys and videos.

### 5.6 Evington Parents' survey.

#### Response rate.

13 of the 27 questionnaires distributed over a two week period were returned giving a response rate of 48%. The analysis presented here however is based on 14 completed forms as one childminder who did not use the service for the minded children but did so for her own children is included here.

#### A. Introduction.

18 children were represented in the survey and materials were borrowed for all of them. 14 children (77%) had their own library tickets.

#### B. Factors that may discourage library use.

3 responded to this question, all of them being conscious of the noise made by children. One also mentioned the unsuitability of the date labels which children were often tempted to rip out.

#### C. Quality of service.

13 of the 14 respondents rated the service as 'good', the reasons for this being:

- the choice and quality of books.
- a separate children's area with books at low level.
- tolerant staff.

The following points were also raised:

- the presentation of materials did not facilitate easy selection by children.
- there was a lack of adequate seating and displays.
- there was a short supply of the most popular books eg. Postman Pat.

D. Services/facilities that parents felt should be provided.

| No. of mentions | Services/facilities               |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 4               | Toys and Games.                   |
| 2               | Stools/chairs for toddlers.       |
| 2               | Displays at child height.         |
| 2               | Activity/story sessions.          |
| 2               | Toilets.                          |
| 1               | Toddlers club.                    |
| 1               | Story cassettes.                  |
| 1               | Video cassettes.                  |
| 1               | Learning to write books.          |
| 1               | Information sessions for parents. |
| 1               | Play area.                        |

Table 18: Services/facilities that parents felt should be provided at Evington library.

E. Ways in which staff could be more helpful.

There were 2 responses:

It would be helpful if the staff,

- could keep an eye on the child while the parent chose own materials.
- actually helped the parent locate a book rather than just point to the shelf it might be on.

F. Types of books selected.

Table 19 illustrates the number of parents out of 14 choosing each type of book. Apart from one parent who only selected simple fact and information books, all others chose story books with pictures while most chose the first category in the table below. Over half chose most of the other types of books apart from dual language and mother tongue books.

| No. choosing book. | Type of book                                                     |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11                 | Picture books without words or with very few words               |
| 13                 | Story books with pictures                                        |
| 8                  | Board books                                                      |
| 9                  | Books with lift up flaps                                         |
| 9                  | Alphabet/counting books                                          |
| 8                  | Nursery rhyme/poetry books                                       |
| 8                  | Special situation books eg. moving house, going to hospital etc. |
| 2                  | Dual language books                                              |
| 1                  | Mother tongue books (other than English eg. Gujarati/Punjabi)    |

Table 19: Types of books selected by parents in Evington.

G. Usefulness of children's materials.

As table 20 illustrates, the majority of parents were in favour of the provision of all types of materials, toys and games being the most favoured.

|                  | Very Useful | Useful | Not very Useful | Useless | Total responding | % in favour |
|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|---------|------------------|-------------|
| Story cassettes  | 7           | 5      | 1               |         | 13               | 92%         |
| Music cassettes  | 3           | 7      | 2               |         | 12               | 83%         |
| Poetry cassettes | 4           | 4      | 3               | 1       | 12               | 66%         |
| Video cassettes  | 6           | 3      | 3               |         | 12               | 75%         |
| Toys and Games   | 8           | 6      |                 |         | 14               | 100%        |

Table 20: Evington parents' response to the usefulness of children's materials.

H. Usefulness of materials for parents.

As table 21 shows, 'Community information' was regarded as useful by all respondents. Books on child care and guides to story telling were also considered useful, with videos and magazines slightly less so.

|                                                                             | Very<br>Useful | Useful | Not very<br>Useful | Useless | Total<br>responding | % in favour |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------------------|-------------|
| Books on child<br>care and<br>development                                   | 6              | 7      | 1                  |         | 14                  | 92%         |
| Magazines relating<br>to young children                                     | 3              | 6      | 3                  | 1       | 13                  | 69%         |
| Videos relating<br>to young children                                        | 5              | 4      | 4                  |         | 13                  | 69%         |
| Community<br>information eg,<br>'what's on for<br>children' in the<br>area. | 11             | 3      |                    |         | 14                  | 100%        |
| Guides to<br>storytelling and<br>using books<br>with children               | 7              | 4      | 2                  |         | 13                  | 84%         |

Table 21: Usefulness of materials for parents in Evington.



I. Other comments/suggestions for improvements.

9 parents responded to this question, their suggestions were as listed in table 22.

| No. of mentions | Comments/suggestions.                                     |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 2               | Provision of all the materials listed in the above table. |
| 2               | Story sessions.                                           |
| 2               | Toys and games.                                           |
| 1               | Drinks and biscuits.                                      |
| 1               | 'Under fives' days.                                       |
| 1               | Toilet and baby changing facilities.                      |
| 1               | Area for sitting and browsing.                            |

Table 22: Parents' comments/suggestions for improvements at Evington Library.

## 5.7 Summary of findings

### Under fives groups.

Library services appear to be reaching the majority of under fives groups in each area although the 3-5 year olds are better served than the 0-3.

The quality of the service was rated as being 'good' by the vast majority with the availability of a good selection of books being the main criteria on which this judgement was based.

On the whole most types of books in stock were being used by most groups with the exception of dual language and mother tongue books which are greatly under utilized in Evington despite significant numbers of ethnic minority children in the groups. The books borrowed from the library are definitely not getting into the homes of children and in some cases, especially in Oakham, not even into the hands of children. Reasons for children not visiting the library were generally due to practical difficulties of distance and supervision but clearly a lack of promotion of the idea is also a factor as some groups reported that the idea had never occurred to them.

Suggestions for improvements included the need for the children's area to be more conducive to sharing books in the library and to include more displays etc. More activities would be welcome either at the library or on the groups' premises.

### Childminders.

In both areas it is apparent from the questionnaires returned that 66% of childminders did not use the service for the minded children. More activities for under fives in the library was suggested as a way of encouraging greater use. Most childminders did select from the whole range of books available but the books were only used in the childminders

homes and even there the children were not always allowed to use them by themselves.

The vast majority of respondents were in favour of the provision of toys and games and community information but opinion was more divided with regard to the provision of video cassettes and magazines. Suggestion for improvements included the provision of toys and games, both for lending and in-library use and more activities for under fives.

### Parents

The vast majority of parents using the library rated the service as being satisfactory or good, the predominant reason for this being the availability of a good selection of books. Of the materials listed in numbers 11 and 12 of the questionnaire, story cassettes for children and community information for parents were stated to be the most useful. Although opinion was more divided on other materials, eg, video cassettes and toys and games, all materials were stated as being useful by over 50% of the parents. Suggestions for improvements included a more welcoming children's area with appropriate seating, more story/activity sessions and the provision of toys and games for young children.

## CHAPTER SIX

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to bring together the findings of this report in the form of recommendations that may be considered for implementation by the libraries in Oakham and Evington. It was not originally the intention to make recommendations for Leicestershire as a library authority. It does seem necessary however, to highlight some considerations that have to be made by the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service and the Eastern Division which would be conducive to improving the effectiveness of services to under fives at the two libraries under consideration and indeed within the library service in general.

#### 6.2 Considerations for Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service and the Eastern Division.

- A. LLIS should give serious consideration to making all materials and services to under fives free of charge, including no fines for damaged and overdue items.
- B. There is a need to reassess the time allocated for under fives work, which should bear some relationship to the number of under fives in each catchment area. It should be borne in mind that this is the only group of children who have no access to an alternative library system. Specific time should be made available just for promotional work with carers of under fives.
- C. All staff, especially library assistants coming into contact with children should receive some form of training relating to the needs of under fives and should

be fully aware of what is available to them in the library service. More of the support staff need to be encouraged to 'specialise' in under fives work and be allowed to take a much more active part in organising and running activities for this age group. Additional training will of course be required for staff wishing to become involved.

- D. There is a need for more statistical information on the use of libraries to be collected and made readily available. The lack of adequate community profiles, statistics on total library membership and issues for particular age groups etc. at each service point makes the task of evaluating and monitoring projects very difficult, if not ineffective as no benchmarks are available by which to judge progress.
- E. More research is needed into the non-use of libraries by families and especially those children who are not in formal day care provision but are looked after by relatives and unregistered childminders.
- F. More publicity materials need to be made available for dissemination by all groups that branch libraries have contacts with. Some group leaders for example expressed a willingness to be involved in the process of promoting library use. Publicity packs could also be produced for specific groups/purposes, Camden for example, has a 'Pregnancy Pack' which highlights the best books, videos and cassettes available in its libraries [1]. These can then be promoted and distributed by other professionals in the field, in the above case by midwives, health visitors etc.
- G. In the light of the survey findings, funding should be made available for the provision of more story and sound cassettes and at least a few toys and games at each

library.

- H. Some thought should be given to designing 'baby friendly' stationary. 'Peel off' date labels that cannot be torn easily by children for example are currently being considered by Nottinghamshire libraries.

### **6.3 Considerations for both Evington and Oakham.**

#### **6.3.1 Membership**

- A. 'Joining packs' should be introduced as a means of encouraging membership. The contents, all depicting a particular character, could include membership card/certificate, book marks, a badge, guide to the library, a picture to colour or a message from a children's author/book character.

It may be possible to secure sponsorship for such a scheme. Redbridge for example received funding for the printing cost of a similar project from a building society [2].

- B. The libraries should pilot a 'birthday card' scheme whereby one year olds, for example, are sent a card on their birthday inviting them to join the library and collect their joining pack made up of appropriate contents for the age group. It should not be too difficult to keep a register of new born/young children for the scheme with the help of community midwives and health visitors for the area.

#### **6.3.2 Accommodation**

- A. The windows in or nearest to the children's area should be used exclusively for outward facing displays relating to under fives, whether it be posters of nursery characters or general 'Toddlers welcome' type of materials. In addition, in both libraries, one section of

the entrance lobby should be designated for community information relating to under fives, including indications of other information available inside the library/on request.

- C. Novelty kinderboxes are reported as being very popular in all libraries that use them and serious consideration should be given to acquiring one in each library. It may be possible to enlist the help of the woodwork department in the local secondary schools or other community project organizers, to design and produce such an item to meet the needs of the library.
- D. The existing kinderboxes should be enlivened by being painted in bright colours and sticking appropriate pictures onto them. Discarded books may be useful for this purpose.
- E. There was a general demand in the survey for the children's area to be brighter and more welcoming. Consideration should be given to all ways in which mobiles, posters, book jackets, friezes and displays of children's work can be used for this purpose.
- F. In each library the need for additional seating was mentioned on several occasions in the survey. Oakham has the space to accommodate floor cushions, bean bag etc. but worthy of consideration in both libraries are pouffes or brightly coloured foam blocks which are not only easy to move around but are equally suitable for use by adults and children. They can also be tucked away under other shelves and tables when not in use.

### 6.3.3 Publicity/Promotion.

- A. Publicity materials should be made available to under fives workers and other professionals working with parents and carers, for them to display and disseminate.

The more strategically targeted the publicity according to the needs of the groups the better.

- B. There was evidence of less library use by the younger under fives, not only in groups but also by parents and childminders. More publicity and promotional activities are required targeting the 0-3 year olds.
- C. In order to encourage the 'library habit' groups need to be urged to visit the library with children. It may be possible to enlist the help of volunteers from the community who could help with transport and supervision of the visits.
- D. A time should be set aside for a regular under fives morning/afternoon when carers can visit the library without too much fear of noise and disruption. Other users would also become aware of this and accept the situation or avoid using the library for those couple of hours.
- E. More information leaflets and publicity materials should be displayed and made available to take away in each library.
- F. More use should be made of the local papers, especially the local voluntary papers such as 'The Evington Echo' not only to publicize events, new materials and services but also for regular competitions for children, for example.

#### 6.3.4 Outreach.

The following should be given consideration:

- A. Contact with and, if possible, the provision of deposit collections to local adult literacy and English as a second language classes to encourage parents to use the materials with their children at home.



- B. Contact with local ante/post natal clinics, children's clinics, health centres etc. to raise awareness of library services.
- C. Contact with all tutors on any courses in the area dealing with under fives whether these be courses for childminders, social workers, nursery nurses, parents, secondary school pupils etc. with a view to raising awareness and the possibility of having an input into the courses.

#### 6.3.5 Inter-agency co-operation.

- A. Personal contacts should be developed with the following people in each area:
  - Social services advisers for under fives.
  - Childminder/play group advisers.
  - Health visitors/community midwives.
  - Local childminders' groups/ influential individuals with large numbers of contacts.
  - Community groups eg. parents' organisations, ethnic minority groups etc.
  - Any individuals or professionals involved with the special needs of under fives.
  - Organizers of toy libraries especially with a view to setting up joint toy/book lending schemes in each area.

#### 6.3.6 Materials.

- A. More thought should be given to making the books, other than those in kinderboxes, more accessible. In Oakham more under fives books could be displayed face forward on slanting shelves. Evington could use the wire rack in the children's area to display books which should be changed regularly and the rack kept fully stocked.
- B. There should be more novelty books, especially for children with special needs for whom tactile experiences

are especially important.

- C. More story cassettes are required not only to meet the demands of carers but again they are more useful for children with special needs, especially visual handicaps.
- D. Children's exposure to books. There is a need to emphasize, especially to group leaders and childminders, that the books are meant for children and that they are loaned on the understanding that children should handle them and be allowed to take them home as much as possible. Authorities that have tried this approach have reported that losses and damage are not significantly greater than in normal use [3].
- E. Materials such as booklists and other guides should be on display and available to take away.

#### 6.3.7 Staff.

- A. At least one member of the support staff in each library should be given the overall responsibility of dealing with under fives work on a day to day basis. It would be their responsibility to notice omissions and keep the children's stock/displays in good condition and be fully aware of the materials and services that are available either directly or indirectly through the system [4].
- B. The librarians need to promote themselves as experts on children's books and their use and not just as suppliers of books. They need to be in a position to be able to advise and assess the materials owned by groups and organisations. The survey found many of these resources to be acquired second hand or collected over many years so they may be totally inappropriate for use with children today.

- C. Consideration should be given to the use of suitably qualified volunteers to work with children, for example for story telling, helping groups to supervise visits to the library, clean and mend toys, deliver deposit collections and, where necessary, provide a library service to those carers who cannot visit the library. It may be possible to find volunteers for some activities from nursery nursing schools, library schools etc, giving the students the opportunity for valuable practical experience.
- D. Many carers in the survey reported that they felt guilty or were always conscious of the noise made by the children. Staff need to be aware of this and reassure parents, through posters and verbally that a certain amount of noise is expected and quite acceptable.

#### 6.4 Considerations for Evington.

##### 6.4.1 General

- A. Outside the library the possibility of using the ground surrounding the library to attract children should be considered. For example, with the co-operation of publishers, book suppliers or other organisations, it may be possible to erect a display of popular book characters. Alternatively the area could be used for activities for under fives. Wigan for example has a play area attached to Standish library on the theme of Winnie the Pooh. It was created by the Landscape Sector of the authority's Department of Leisure.
- B. Inside the library, the shelf and paperback rack for 'older readers' should be relocated closer to the adult section. The kinderboxes can then be placed together in that spot. Foam blocks or pouffes, preferably those that can fit under the kinderboxes or shelves when not in use, can be used as seating around the boxes.

- C. Use of the small table top and chairs in the children's area should be monitored to measure the extent of use and the age of children using them. If they are not well or appropriately used they can be replaced by a toddler height table which can fold down when not in use. Accompanying this could be a couple of toddler chairs and a wall rack holding a few table top toys, drawing materials, puppets etc.
- D. Wall mounted activities are another possibility eg, a wipe clean drawing board or a wall mounted 'Lego' set.
- E. The library could also, or at the very least, alternatively, have a box of 'toys on request', which could normally be kept under the counter or in the staff room but clearly publicised in the children's area.
- F. Some of the bi-monthly meetings for library assistants should be set aside for training staff for work with under fives.

#### 6.4.2 Work with minority groups.

- A. The survey illustrated a clear under utilization of dual language and mother-tongue materials. These materials should be promoted through parents and ethnic minority organisations. Consideration should be given to the loan of collections of these materials to English as a second language classes, factories employing a predominantly minority work force, community groups etc.
- B. The library has a role in the promotion of bilingualism, as the Bullock report states:

Their bilingualism is of great importance to the children and their families, and also to society as a whole...we should see it as an asset, as something to be nurtured [5].

Most groups in the survey showed a lack of awareness of

the importance of this and the same would probably apply to other professionals and many parents themselves who need to be made aware of the importance of the mother tongue for the development needs of the child.

- C. Awareness of library services is generally low, especially amongst some minority groups. A survey in Birmingham showed that only 39% of Asians, compared to 79% of the general population were aware of books for young children [6]. There is a need to promote the library service through direct contact with ethnic minority groups as well as through specifically targeted publicity.
- D. The library needs to reflect the multi-racial context in which it operates. Posters, displays, materials etc. clearly need to take this into consideration.

#### 6.5 Considerations for Oakham.

- A. Because of the relatively spacious area available to children in Oakham, there is a greater potential for offering more facilities. Serious consideration should be given to acquiring a play-pen and/or a baby chair, more cushions and bean bags and a toddlers' corner with a play house and some toys, for example. The provision of drawing materials such as chunky crayons and paper, chalk or wipe clean boards would be useful.
- B. A regular under fives story time, with carer participation, would be a viable proposition in Oakham especially if some of the library assistants could be trained to organize and run these events.
- C. A slight variation of the above would be a simple creche every fortnight or so to allow carers to choose materials while their children were looked after and if possible

entertained with stories and rhymes or other activities.

- D. For cost effectiveness in outreach story telling it should be possible to bring together two or more groups that operate close to one another to share the sessions.
- E. The library needs to be more actively promoted to under threes in the area.
- F. Oakham, like other libraries in mono racial areas, should promote the multi racial role of the library [7]. The children's stock should include not only books depicting multi racial scenes and characters but also English translations of stories and a few dual language books.
- G. The display of children's work in the library can help to promote the library. Consideration should be given to doing this on a regular basis giving all under fives groups in the area the opportunity to participate.

#### **6.6 Funding Implications.**

An attempt has been made, to put forward only those proposals that can be considered realistic within the context of present economic constraints. Nationally many types of alternative funding have been talked about, from charging at economic rates to privatization, from external funding to joint ventures. Most of these, being policy decisions, would be out of the hands of individual branch libraries. One means of funding however that should be open to consideration by individual libraries is to seek contributions and sponsorships from community organisations, local or national businesses and charitable trusts. There are many examples throughout the country where money from such sources has been used to meet the library needs of under fives, from the supply of books and toys by a neighbourhood committee [8] to a children's librarian being sponsored by a local charitable trust in

Cirencester, to work specifically with under fives and their carers for 12 hours per week for three years [9].

In soliciting funding, the library must stress the public relations benefits to the organization, pointing out that the sponsor's name will appear on all publicity and printed materials. Other points to bear in mind would be the need to,

- be as specific as possible about the programme's potential to benefit children, parents, the library, the community etc.
- suggest an actual amount required and be able to itemize in a general way what the contribution will buy.
- Suggest some public relations ideas, press releases and other publicity that can be organised by the library.
- be persistent but also flexible in the amounts asked for or by suggesting alternative approaches [10].

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APPENDIX 1 - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

1) How many children in your family are under the age of 5?

-----

2) How many of these children borrow materials from the library?

-----

3) If they do borrow materials do they

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

a) have their own ticket

b) use someone else's ticket

4) If they have their own tickets, at what age did they join the library?

-----

5) Is there anything that stops you from encouraging your children to use the library? Please specify.

-----

-----

-----

6) What do you think of the range of services available to children in this library?  
Please tick one box.

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

EXCELLENT

GOOD

SATISFACTORY

POOR

7) Could you please say why they are excellent, good satisfactory or poor

-----

-----

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-----

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8) Please list any services or facilities not provided in this library that you feel should be provided.

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-----  
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9) Are there any ways in which staff in this library could be of more assistance to you?

☐ YES / NO ☐

If YES, could you please say how.

-----  
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-----  
-----

10) Please tick any of the types of books listed below that you have ever selected for your children.

|                          |                                                                 |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Picture books without words or with very few words              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Story books with pictures                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Board books                                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Books with lift up flaps etc                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Alphabet/counting books                                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Nursery rhyme/poetry books                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Special situation books eg moving house, going to hospital etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Dual language books                                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Mother tongue books ( other than English eg Gujarati/Punjabi )  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Simple fact or information books                                |

11) Could you say how useful it would be to have the following materials for lending in the library. Please tick one box for each type of material.

|                  | Very Useful | Useful | Not very Useful | Useless |
|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|---------|
| Story cassettes  |             |        |                 |         |
| Music cassettes  |             |        |                 |         |
| Poetry cassettes |             |        |                 |         |
| Video cassettes  |             |        |                 |         |
| Toys and games   |             |        |                 |         |

12) Could you say how useful it would be to have the following services for parents in the library. Please tick one box for each type of material.

|                                                                 | Very Useful | Useful | Not very Useful | Useless |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|---------|
| Books on child care and development.                            |             |        |                 |         |
| Magazines relating to young children.                           |             |        |                 |         |
| Videos relating to child care.                                  |             |        |                 |         |
| Community information eg, "what's on for children" in the area. |             |        |                 |         |
| Guides to storytelling and using books with children.           |             |        |                 |         |

13) Do you have any comments of suggestions for improvements in services or facilities for young children in this library.

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14) Finally, in order to assess how representative this survey is of the groups in this area could you please say what your ethnic origin is:

European

Asian

Afro-Caribbean

Other. Please specify.

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY



APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GROUP LEADERS

Name of group

-----

1) How many children attend the group?

-----

2) What is the age range of the children in the group?

-----

3) Do you use the library service for your group?

☐ YES / NO ☐

If you answered YES to the above please go on to question 6.

If you answered NO please continue with question 4.

4) If you do not use the library service for your group could you say why this is. You may tick as many boxes as applicable.

|                          |                                                                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Lack of time                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Library not relevant to my needs                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Inconvenient location of library                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Lack of awareness of what the library offers to young children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Fear of charges                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Risk of damage to materials                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | g. Joining procedures are off-putting                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | h. Not enough relevant materials for children                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | j. Library unattractive to young children                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | k. Other. Please specify                                          |

-----

5) Could you please say if there is anything that would encourage you to start using the library for your group.

-----

-----

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Please go onto question 14.

IF YOU HAVE USED THE LIBRARY SERVICE PLEASE CONTINUE HERE.

6) Which of the following library services have you ever used for your group

- |                          |                                           |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a) borrowing books                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | b) storytelling by library staff          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | c) special events eg christmas activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | d) other please specify.                  |

7) On the whole, what has been the quality of these services?

☐ Excellent    ☐ Good    ☐ Satisfactory    ☐ Poor

8) Could you please say why they were excellent, good, satisfactory or poor.

Please answer the following questions if you borrow books for your group from the library.

9) The library collection consists of various types of books. Could you say which type you use most with the children by ticking the appropriate boxes.

|                                                               | Use<br>Often | Use<br>Sometimes | Never<br>Use |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|
| Picture books without words or<br>very few words              |              |                  |              |
| Story books with pictures                                     |              |                  |              |
| Board books                                                   |              |                  |              |
| Books with lift up flaps etc                                  |              |                  |              |
| Alphabet/counting books                                       |              |                  |              |
| Nursery rhyme/poetry books                                    |              |                  |              |
| Special situation books eg going<br>to hospital, dentist etc. |              |                  |              |
| Dual language books                                           |              |                  |              |
| Mother tongue books<br>(other than English eg Punjabi)        |              |                  |              |
| Simple fact or information books                              |              |                  |              |

10) Are there any other types of books you feel are required to meet the needs of your group. Please specify.

-----  
-----  
-----

11) How are the books that you borrow from the library used?

|                          |                                             |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Taken home by children or their parents     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Used by children during play group sessions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Used by play group staff for storytelling   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other. Please specify.                      |

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12) Have you ever taken groups of children to visit the library?

☐ YES / NO ☐

If you answered YES could you indicate any problems you faced when doing this or make suggestions for improving the quality of the visits.

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-----  
-----  
-----

If you answered NO could you say why you do not take the children to the library.

-----  
-----  
-----  
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13) Do you have any comments or suggestions for improvements in the library services available to children.

-----  
-----  
-----  
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14) Finally, in order to enable us to assess the extent to which various groups are being reached by the library service, would you mind indicating the make up of your group in terms of ethnicity? Roughly what percentage are

White European

-----

Asian

-----

Afro-Caribbean

-----

Other

-----

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY

### APPENDIX 3 - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHILD MINDERS

1) How many children under the age of five are you looking after at present?

-----

2) What are their ages?

-----

3) Do you borrow materials for these children from the library?

☐ YES / NO ☐

If you answered YES please go on to question 6.  
If you answered NO please continue with question 4.

4) Could you please say why you do not use the library service for borrowing materials for the children in your care. You may tick as many boxes as applicable.

|                          |                                                                   |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Lack of time                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Library not relevant to my needs                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Inconvenient location of the library                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Lack of awareness of what the library offers to young children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Fear of charges                                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | f. Risk of children causing damage to materials                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | g. Put off by joining procedures                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | h. Not enough relevant materials                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | i. Library un welcoming to young children                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | j. Other. Please specify.                                         |

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-----

5) Could you please say if there is anything you can think of that would encourage you to start using the library for the children in your care.

-----  
-----  
-----

Could you now please turn to question 16.

IF YOU DO USE THE LIBRARY PLEASE CONTINUE HERE.

6) Do the children who use the library

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

- a. have their own ticket
- b. use someone else's ticket.
- c. use a childminders ticket

7) How many books do you borrow at a time for the children?

8) How often are the books changed?

9) Ideally, how often would you prefer to change them.  
Please specify.

-----

10) The library collection consists of various types of books. Please tick any of the types you have ever selected for the children

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> |

- Picture books without any words or with very few words
- Story books with pictures
- Books with lift up flaps etc
- Alphabet/counting books
- Special situation books eg, going to the dentist, hospital etc.
- Dual language books eg English/Punjabi
- Mother tongue books (other than English)
- Fact or information books
- Nursery rhyme/poetry books

- 11) How are the books that you borrow from the library used?  
Please tick all applicable boxes.

Taken home by the children or their parents

Used by the children whilst with you

Used by yourself for storytelling

Other. Please specify.

-----

-----

- 12) Do you take the children to the library to choose books?

☐ YES / NO ☐

If you answered YES could you indicate any problems you face when doing this or make suggestions for improving the quality of the visits.

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-----

-----

If you answered NO could you say why you do not take the children to the library.

-----

-----

-----

- 13) Could you please say how useful it would be to have the following for borrowing from the library by ticking the appropriate box for each type of material.

|                  | Very Useful | Useful | Not very Useful | Useless |
|------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|---------|
| Story cassettes  |             |        |                 |         |
| Music cassettes  |             |        |                 |         |
| Poetry cassettes |             |        |                 |         |
| Video cassettes  |             |        |                 |         |
| Toys and games   |             |        |                 |         |

- 14) Could you say how useful it would be to have the following for your own use in the library

|                                                           | Very Useful | Useful | Not very Useful | Useless |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|---------|
| Books on child care and child development                 |             |        |                 |         |
| Magazines relating to young children                      |             |        |                 |         |
| Videos relating to child care                             |             |        |                 |         |
| Community information eg what on for children in the area |             |        |                 |         |
| Guides to storytelling\ using books with children.        |             |        |                 |         |

- 15) Do you have any comments or suggestions for improvements in services or facilities for young children in the library

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- 16) Finally, in order to assess how representative this survey is of the groups in this area, could you please say what your ethnic origin is

☐ European

☐ Afro-Caribbean

☐ Asian

☐ Other. Please specify

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY.



