



Bookbug Before Birth Evaluation – Family Nurse Partnership Focus Group 2022

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Background

Following a fundraising campaign and successful pilot Scottish Book Trust were able to offer all Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) teams across Scotland a picture book (*The Snail and the Whale* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler) and the Bookbug Before Birth leaflet to gift to families during pregnancy.

The aim of the project was to encourage parents to sing, rhyme and talk to their babies before birth.

The launch of this project was delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions but got underway in January 2021. Further to the [Bookbug Before Birth evaluation that was published in October 2021](#), a focus group was facilitated by Scottish Book Trust staff with the NHS Fife FNP team in November 2022. There were approximately 7 Family Nurses present from across Fife.

The aim of the focus group was to gather feedback specifically on the book chosen for the project ('The Snail and the Whale' by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler) and determine whether it was suitable for Family Nurse clients. Overall, the feedback received via the practitioner survey and parental feedback form had been positive about the book, but there were several negative comments from those who found it too lengthy and difficult to read so it was felt that further consultation would be useful.

Key findings from FNP Focus Group

Broad overview

Overall, the feedback was varied and depended on the family and their own literacy skills. Many clients did find the book too long – literacy issues were cited as well as concentration span issues.

However, even with those who struggled with it, the Family Nurses unanimously said that they were able to work around these with their clients (e.g. by talking about what's happening by looking at the pictures; suggesting that the whole book didn't need to be read in one go; counting the snails etc). That drip feed messaging and encouragement really worked. Because Family Nurses have so much more time with their clients this was possible where it would be more difficult for a Health Visitor.

There were many positive comments about the impact of the book:

- One Family Nurse reported that she found the **dads were less embarrassed** and more confident in reading to bump.
- The Family Nurses talked a lot about how **special** the book was and how it felt like a gift. So many of the parents were really excited to receive it.
- One Family Nurse said that receiving this gift made the young mums and dads feel accepted; it felt like an **acceptance of being pregnant**.
- The book was a great **conversation opener**, and a gateway to access other things (e.g., the Bookbug app, or just talking about their baby or their own experiences with reading and school).

- The book provided a **useful focus** and was a **great tool** to facilitate what they are doing in their roles anyway. It linked especially well to 'brain building' discussions. Many clients did not realise that baby could hear your voice so early so the book provided a great way of talking about that and the benefits of it.
- Some Family Nurses also mentioned reading as **self-care** for the parents as a positive

One Family Nurse shared a story of one client who was generally quite disorganised and usually put stuff given to her to the side but had really engaged with 'The Snail and the Whale', reading it over and over again.

A shorter book?

We asked the Focus Group whether they thought Snail & Whale was still appropriate in their eyes and whether they would prefer a shorter title instead. They were overwhelmingly positive about it and did not want to change. They felt that the book we had allowed for "growth" - i.e., it could last a while and they were in a good position to help those with poorer literacy skills to make the most of it too.

We asked whether it would help if we could offer an alternative, shorter book that they could gift to some clients, but overwhelmingly the Family Nurses said that they would not want to be making that judgement or assumption. They had been surprised with how positively some of their clients have engaged with the book and would not want that option to be removed from them. It also shows that with the support of their Family Nurses, clients are able to overcome barriers to engaging with the book.

Library link

The group also discussed signposting to libraries. Family Nurses do already mention libraries to families, but it would be perfect to link in the book with promoting libraries and even taking their clients along to libraries – they have much more time before baby is born so it is a great opportunity. This way expectant parents can get comfortable with the library environment (and maybe a Bookbug Session) so that they come back with their baby.

Conclusion

The group of Family Nurses were overall very happy with the choice of book and would like to continue giving it to their clients. They noted that their opinions were representative of other teams they were in contact with. Therefore, Scottish Book Trust will continue to provide 'The Snail and the Whale' to Family Nurses to gift to their clients.

More can be done to pass on suggestions to Family Nurses of ways in which they can help their clients engage with the book – tips will be included in any resources and information sessions for Family Nurses from now on.

Scottish Book Trust will also explore the option of including a link to Every Child A Library Member on the book or within the accompanying leaflet.