



Case Study

The Shah Family

“Since Bookbug started, at night time they usually come to me and ask me to read a book” (Mandeep Shah, parent)

NB: Names have been changed to protect the families’ anonymity.

The Shah family

Mandeep and Raj Shah live in Renfrewshire with their daughter Narinder (7) who goes to school and twin sons Harbir and Gurpreet (3) who attend nursery. The family is of Pakistani origin and normally speaks Punjabi at home. Raj works full time and Mandeep works one day a week. Mandeep experiences some health difficulties including depression. The twins were born premature and are now experiencing some developmental and behavioural problems. The case study was completed by interviewing the mother and the Home Worker who leads the Bookbug sessions with the family after they had undertaken five sessions.

How did the Shahs get involved in Bookbug?

The Shahs involvement with Bookbug came after the twins’ nursery referred the family to a local authority family support service for support with the twins’ behavioural and developmental difficulties, which include biting, problems with turn-taking and language difficulties.

The Home Worker from the service, who also delivers Bookbug sessions at the twins’ nursery, felt that it would be beneficial to incorporate Bookbug activities into her work with the family, both to address the twins’ problems and to help the parents to learn stories and rhymes in English, which is their second language.

Mandeep said that she was keen to introduce the children to activities that are more educational than watching television or playing computer games and this was another reason for taking part in Bookbug.

What did Bookbug set out to achieve with this family?

The Bookbug sessions aimed to:

- help the parents to learn rhymes and stories in English;
- develop a stronger bond between the parents and the children;
- improve the behaviour of the twins; and
- improve the parents’ confidence in telling stories.

How is Bookbug delivered?

The Home Worker normally delivers the sessions with Mandeep and the three children. Raj has also been involved in a couple of sessions despite working long hours.

The Worker said the sessions have been rather “sporadic” due to other pressures on the family’s time, such as a recent house move, but the sessions are continuing.



The Worker always incorporates a book, singing and finger puppets into the session and activities with the Lycra are often included as well. The Worker takes a bag to each session with various resources which the children take it in turns to select toys from. This helps to engage the children in the session and allows them to influence the content of the session.



What works well about Bookbug sessions with the Shahs?

The fun and informal nature of Bookbug activities has allowed the Worker to support the family in a fun and relaxed atmosphere; she noted that Bookbug is a *“good way of getting families to bond together without being preachy”*.

The Lycra has worked well with this family because it is something they can all get involved with and use together at the same time.

The Worker also noted that it was helpful that she already knew the twins from delivering Bookbug sessions at their nursery.

How has the family benefitted?

Bookbug has had several benefits for this family.

Interest in reading

Mandeep said that the children really enjoy the Bookbug sessions and that they have helped them to learn to like books more. She said that *“since Bookbug started, at night time they usually come to me and ask me to read a book”*, which is something they did not do before. The Worker said that the Mum *“reads them stories at bedtime which I don’t think she did before”*.

Mandeep said that the sessions had also made her more interested in reading. She said that she was not very interested in reading before but the sessions have *“encouraged me to read a book”*.

Family relationships

The Worker reflected that, while the family go on days out together, they did not spend much time together as a family at home before Bookbug and often Mandeep was too busy with household tasks to play with the children. However, Bookbug sessions have provided an enjoyable activity for all members of the family to take part in. The sessions, and increased time spent reading together in between sessions, have led to the family spending more quality time together.

Parents’ knowledge of and confidence in stories and rhymes

Bookbug sessions have increased the parents’ knowledge of, and confidence in stories and rhymes. The Worker explained that, because English is not the family’s first language, the parents were unfamiliar with songs and rhymes in English. However, the Worker observed that Bookbug sessions have provided *“a good way to introduce them [the parents] to the songs and rhymes the children learn at nursery and school”* and have *“definitely helped [Mandeep’s] confidence in telling them stories”*. Mandeep confirmed that she now reads more to the children as a result of Bookbug sessions.

Twins’ behaviour

The Worker and Mandeep felt that the twins’ behaviour has improved. Mandeep described the children as *“more calm”* when reading books and they have improved their ability to sit nicely and attentively as a result of Bookbug sessions. The Worker also observed that the twins had got better at taking turns at choosing toys from her bag as the sessions progressed.



Changes in use of local services

The family did not tend to visit the local library before Bookbug sessions but now visit once or twice a week to borrow books, prompted by the family's increased interest in reading.

What impact has Bookbug had on the Worker?

The Worker is very positive about Bookbug and noted that it has had a positive impact on the relationship between her and the families she works with. She says Bookbug *"makes things jollier and brings you closer together"* with families through shared participation in Bookbug activities.

The Worker noted a lesson learned from her experience of delivering Bookbug with this family: it is important to consider the timing of a Bookbug session. She said that delivering sessions when the children have just got home from nursery is not so effective because they are tired, so she tends to deliver sessions earlier in the day where possible.

The Worker also noted that it helps to have established a relationship with the children before delivering a Bookbug session. This helps the Worker to predict the children's response to certain activities and to anticipate any potential behavioural challenges.

Case study reflections

This case study is an example of Bookbug for the Home supporting parents to develop knowledge and confidence of stories and rhymes in a setting where English is not the family's first language. This is significant as the parents were then able to learn songs and rhymes which their children will learn at nursery. It means that they can then

engage with their children on this level, which they would otherwise be detached from.

The case study also shows how Bookbug for the Home offers families new ways of spending time together, and provides examples of children developing an interest in reading which then leads to the library being used, and of children's behaviour being more positive as a result of calming and sharing activities. This is a significant set of new and positive opportunities which are a direct result of the Bookbug intervention.

The practitioner's experience in this case was that Bookbug for the Home has offered a way of creating a fun and relaxed atmosphere which resulted in a closer working relationship with the family. In this situation, knowing the children from another setting also helped the practitioner to pitch the Bookbug sessions appropriately.

It is clear that the informality of the Bookbug approach was key to the success of this case, and enabled a different and positive way of communicating. Bookbug also provided a means of breaking down some of the barriers resulting from English not being the parents' first language.