

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

Background to The Book Magic Project

The Book Magic Project was established in April 2019 by the Active and Healthy 0-6 years Subgroup of Mayo Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) to support more parents in County Mayo to read to their children. The Children and Young Peoples Services Committee's (CYPSC) focus is on:

"Giving children the best start in life is one of the most effective ways of making sure that children and their families for good health and quality of life."¹

The Book Magic Project provides families with 'a bag of books' that have been carefully selected by the Mayo Library Service. The books deal with a range of topics focusing on emotional wellbeing, all in the form of easy-to-read stories with eye-catching illustrations. Funded by the Dormant Accounts Fund, Mayo CYPSC, and Healthy Ireland, The Book Magic Project task a range of family support agencies across Mayo to lead the implementation of this initiative.

The aim of The Book Magic Project is to strengthen the parent-child relationship through a concrete, accessible and warm activity like reading/sharing books, and:

"To promote good attachment between parents and young children, and which has long been evident to the frontline workers."²

By giving the books directly to families, instead of putting the onus on them to come into libraries or bookshops in search of these books, it was felt the promotion of attachment would be made accessible to all.



Books should "be given to other boys and girls... to make them feel better".

***– The Book Magic Project
Child Participant***

¹ Mayo Children and Young People's Services Committee and Health Services Executive (2018). Mayo Health and Wellbeing Plan 0-3 Years (2018-2022).

² The Book Magic Project Dormant Accounts Proposal (2019).

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Evaluation Outcomes

Evidence gathered through the evaluation process indicates that the Book Magic Project has ignited increased awareness of the importance of attachment and emotional wellbeing through the use of books as well as supporting literacy and language development.



Key outcomes of the evaluation process that included children, parents and support practitioners include:

- ★ The Book Magic Project is an illustration of interdependence between support services in the county and how CYPSC has facilitated agencies to develop an impactful, relevant and cost effective programme of support.
- ★ Parents and practitioners recognise that attachment and support from another (e.g. parent-child relationship) is central to the development of emotional wellbeing, parental empowerment language development.
- ★ The benefits that parents derive from being involved in their children's emotional development through shared book interactions has started the process of building greater resilience, greater mental health, improved relationships, greater social competence and less stressful experiences.
- ★ The Book Magic Project helps to eliminate negative feelings about services for parents and contributes to relationship building with services.

"All available practice and research shows the many benefits of parents reading to their children. Reading to young children can help them to organise their feelings and can comfort them if they're struggling with difficult emotions. It also helps cement the parent/child bond, which is a key component of healthy child development."

– The Book Magic Project Launch (April 2019)

Success factors that contributed to the impact of The Book Magic Project include:

- ★ The Mayo CYSPC Active and Healthy 0-6 years Subgroup collectively identifying needs of families, sharing learning and "building avenues to get to families". The interagency synergy created by Mayo CYPSC allowed good practice to happen, through a flexible process of discussion, identification of need and creating a relevant set of actions.
- ★ The expertise of each member of The Book Magic Project Working Group demonstrates the value of partnership and highlights the strategic use of relatively minimal resources "that works well together to implement a vision". Sub group members stated a contributing factor to the success of The Book Magic Project was "the right people at the right time delivering a simple idea but the facilitation structure through CYPSC was there".

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- ★ In line with CYPSC's focus, The Book Magic Project further implements the importance of children voice in initiatives ensuring child-led actions were central to the initiative e.g. supporting a child picking the book to read.
- ★ The Book Magic books "were well chosen" by the library service and this aspect of the Project should not be under-estimated as was identified throughout the evaluation process by both families and support service practitioners. Picture books, some with no words, supported not only traditional and emotional literacy but ensured accessibility for both the child and the parent especially where adult literacy was an issue.
- ★ The involvement of the public library service remains a significant plank in the success and continuation of The Book Magic Project. The conscious and deliberate participation of Mayo County Library service added status and significance to the project. Situating the project in a community environment that has reach to multiple communities across the county gave parents and children an opportunity to come into a venue that they may never previously have visited. This support to the parent/child through the process of joining the library and meeting library personnel who are familiar with The Book Magic Project has significant potential to embed the project in the communities across the county.
- ★ The Book Magic Project is clearly becoming a resource for practitioners as part of their "scaffolding approach" for families and support enhanced communication and allows for a "softer" approach to family support – "supported by a trusted agreement with families - no pressure to return 'honesty thing' handing over trust and responsibility to people".



Parent stated that previously not being "equipped to deal with what she [child] was feeling – all I got was that she was sad – but with the book, I understood the sadness and she talked about it through the book".

Future Directions

- ★ To establish The Book Magic Project in the education environment
- ★ To pilot a book project with a focus on older children
- ★ To increase Book Magic practical resources
- ★ To develop a Book Magic operational plan for 2021–2023
- ★ Establish on-going support, evaluation and learning documentation

