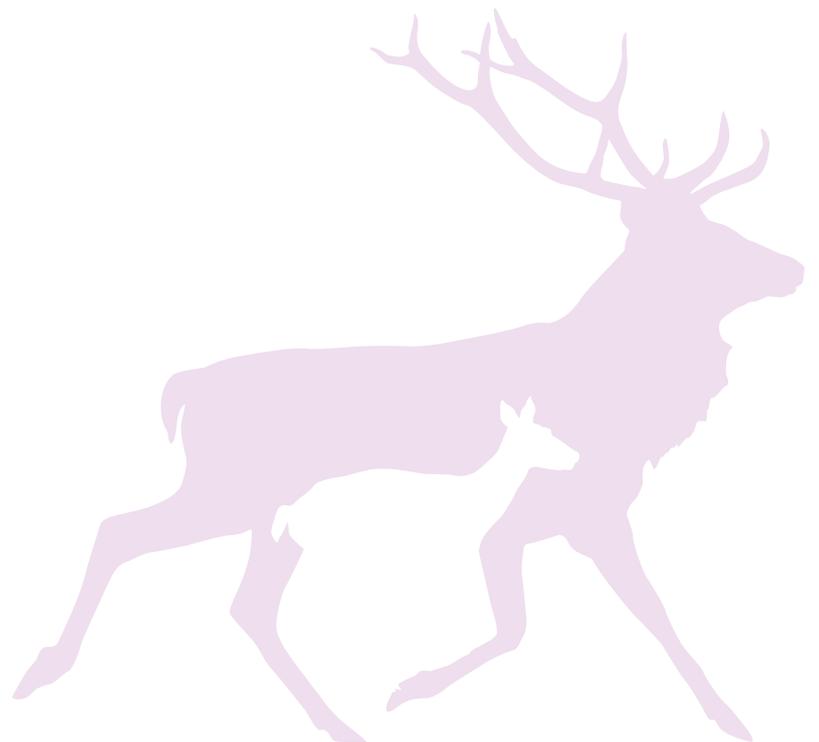




YEAR OF THE DAD



**'BOOKBUG' JOINS FORCES
WITH DADS FROM 'JUST PLAY'
IN ANGUS**



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Just Play offers regular focus play sessions for families in Angus who have had some involvement with the police. By joining forces with Bookbug, Just Play has greatly increased the confidence of dads to engage with their children.

"When dads share books and sing with their children they have a profound impact. There are the immediate benefits of sharing an experience, eye contact, closeness and building the bond with their son or daughter. But perhaps more important is the long term impact on helping shape a child's understanding of the world and laying the building blocks to communication and learning. For many of us our earliest memories are of listening to a story or being sung to sleep by the significant adults in our lives. We want this experience for all children, and for all dads to know that they are extremely important when it comes to reading and singing! Just Play are doing some truly ground breaking things with dads in Angus and we're delighted that they have been able to use the Bookbug approach in a creative way – Bookbug Sessions on the bus could be the next big thing!"

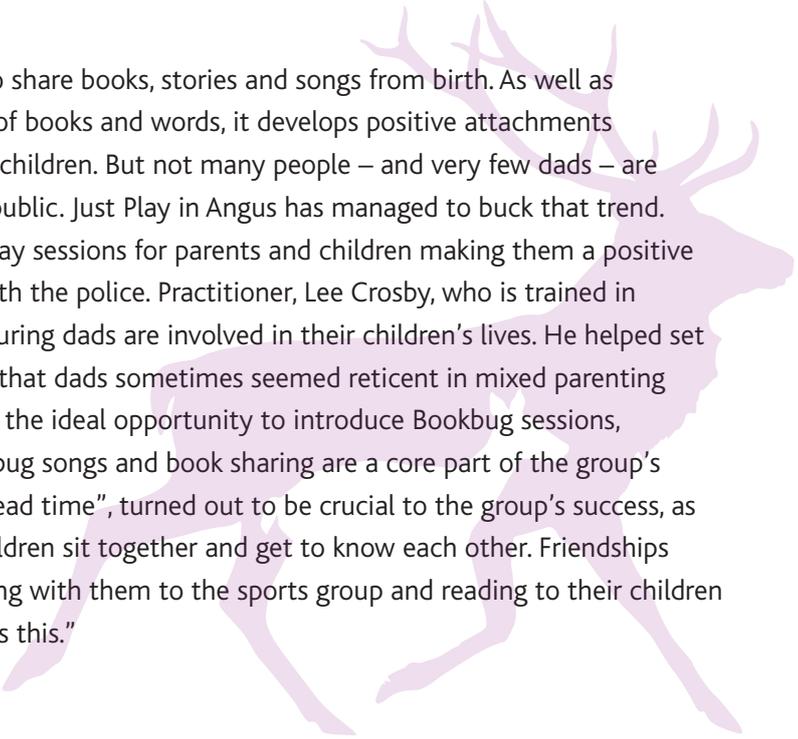
Catriona Wallace, Head of Early Years, Scottish Book Trust

THE AIMS

Just Play is funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. It is an early intervention partnership between Angus Council and partner agencies which offers specific sessions for fathers, to provide additional support, activities and ideas to ensure children from those families get the best possible start in life. Bookbug is an initiative of the Scottish Book Trust which trains early years professionals on how to introduce talking, singing, cuddling and book sharing into the homes of vulnerable families with young children. Bookbug aims to encourage quality interaction between parents and their children. Just Play aims to build greater confidence amongst dads about their own parenting skills and to encourage them to have greater involvement in their young child's life and learning through introducing Bookbug sessions.

THE PROJECT, THE PEOPLE

Bookbug supports parents and young children to share books, stories and songs from birth. As well as encouraging early learning by promoting a love of books and words, it develops positive attachments and a shared frame of reference for parents and children. But not many people – and very few dads – are confident enough to sing with their children in public. Just Play in Angus has managed to buck that trend. The programme builds on the value of regular play sessions for parents and children making them a positive pathway for families who have been involved with the police. Practitioner, Lee Crosby, who is trained in 'Bookbug for the Home' is passionate about ensuring dads are involved in their children's lives. He helped set up dads' groups as part of Just Play after noting that dads sometimes seemed reticent in mixed parenting groups. Sharing a minibus between venues was the ideal opportunity to introduce Bookbug sessions, including singing songs, to the dads. Now Bookbug songs and book sharing are a core part of the group's activities. Travelling to venues, far from being "dead time", turned out to be crucial to the group's success, as Lee explains, "People sit together on the bus, children sit together and get to know each other. Friendships develop. Fathers have started to bring books along with them to the sports group and reading to their children on the bus journey, we were delighted to witness this."



THE DIFFERENCE

"A lot of people say that dads are hard to engage with, but to be honest we've not really found that. We've had no drop off rate at all in our groups." Lee Crosby, Just Play, Angus Council

"Every dad should be involved in their children's growing up. Why would you not be? It's been the best thing I've ever done." James Davidson, father of 2-year-old Haiden

Shared transport proved to be the perfect setting to introduce songs and early language sessions to the dads who attended Just Play. As relationships strengthened between the dads and their children, and among families, their confidence as parents also developed too. Using Bookbug sessions as part of Just Play activities with dads has proved a winning combination in engendering the confidence in fathers to engage with their young children at home and in public. The success of the partnership is summed up by the experience of Scott Smith, 28, who described the project as a huge source of support after he gained custody of his son Steven. After giving up work to be 2-year-old Steven's full time carer, Scott found himself feeling isolated and lacking in confidence. Just Play has connected him with other dads in similar situations and he feels both he and Steven have benefited. Not only does he feel more confident in his own parenting skills, he believes Steven is getting more chances to mix with other children ahead of nursery and school. A great result for everyone involved.

More information

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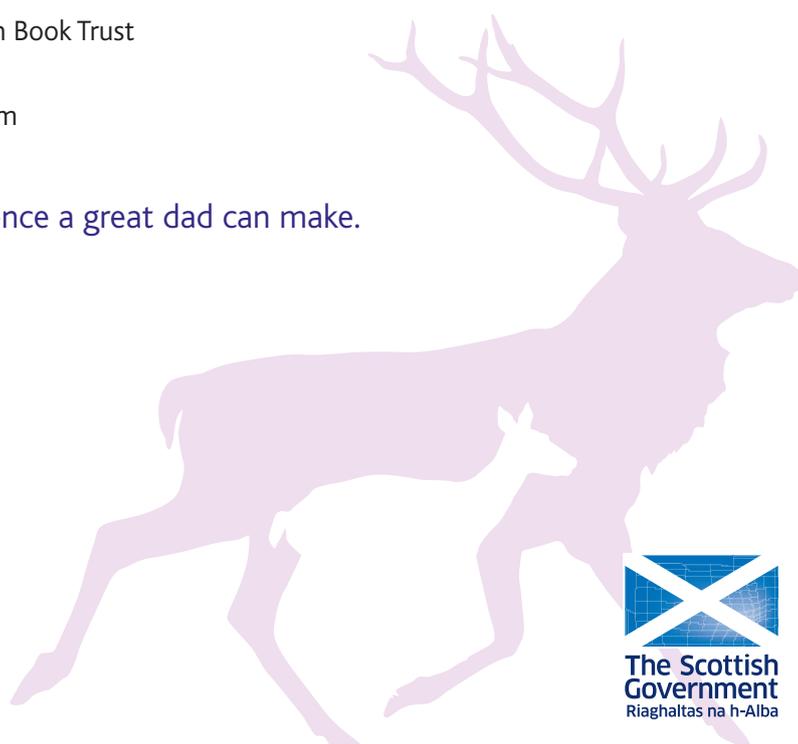
Year of the Dad – Celebrating the difference a great dad can make.
Find out more at www.yearofthedad.org

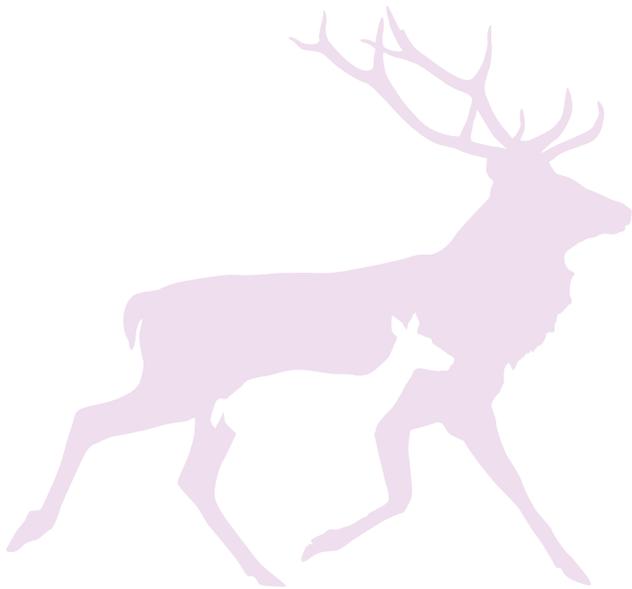
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