



playtalkread

# Annual Report 2021 - 2022



# Project Summary

**PlayTalkRead (PTR)** is the national programme and roadshow campaign for the Scottish Government's Parent Club initiative. PTR Roadshow a practical programme of delivery working directly with families and using our bespoke vehicles. It showcases, demonstrates and delivers key messages to support parents and families with young children to play, talk and read together more.

Our vehicles play a unique role in the success and delivery of PTR. These three highly attractive and enticing vehicles offer a multifunction, flexible solution to reaching all 32 Local Authorities at multiple, targeted locations within. In addition, on the road, the vehicles (whether delivering sessions, packs or just going from A to B) act as a mobile visual billboard, reaching thousands of people daily with the PTR and Parent Club messages.

**Smart Play Network (SPN)** is the national organisation supporting the development and delivery of play opportunities in Scotland. We have been the delivery partner managing the roadshow on behalf of Scottish Government since June 2017.



## Main Aims

For this year, and particularly considering the ongoing uncertainties during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, we set out to achieve the following outcomes;

1. Parents increase their confidence to engage with their children through playing, talking and reading.
2. Increased awareness and engagement with Parent Club across all 32 local authorities of Scotland.
3. Children's health, wellbeing and development are supported by parents' ability to engage with them through playing, talking and reading more.
4. Sustainability (building family capacity) with tools, ideas and confidence to play, talk and read to their children more.
5. Building partners organisation's capacity by supporting their activity, showcasing their work and signposting to their services.
6. Stronger networks of partners/building the sector.
7. Building capacity of policy makers.

In early 2021, there was growing evidence from across society on the adverse effect on young families from the Covid-19 pandemic. We studied a range of research emerging including that of Public Health Scotland (Nov 2020) 'The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people - 2-4 year olds'. This supported us to shape our delivery and to work with partners that would be on the frontline. Particularly when engaging with families with young children not only born during or just before the pandemic, but who had missed over a year of vital early years support.

# Project Overview

We continued to recognise that families considered to be vulnerable prior to the pandemic may now be in even more need due to its impact. We are also aware that the term “vulnerable” now applied to a greater demographic in Scotland than previously considered. As a result, our priority target groups were families that fall within the Scottish Government’s Children and Families Covid-19 Leadership Group’s definition of “vulnerable” children and young people.

This report will discuss the key activities of the PTR roadshow in the year between 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022. It will highlight the main achievements and developments with a focus on the impact on families in the past year.

During this period the grant has enabled us to:

- Offer all 32 Local Authorities in Scotland age-appropriate Play Activity Packs.
- Deliver virtual sessions to groups in the Scottish Borders, East Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire.
- 102 face to face sessions delivered across 20 Local Authorities.
- Delivered events in 7 Local Authorities – totaling 17 events.
- Delivered 6 Practitioner workshops across 5 Local Authorities.
- Increase our social media engagement by more than 50%.
- Engage with 677 children and 654 parents directly at booked sessions.

- Engage with an additional 525 children and 492 parents at events.
- Deliver 9 Online sessions with 45 families (54 children).
- 5,286 play activity packs delivered directly to children across Scotland.
- Promote the benefits and ethos of PTR to professionals in all authorities we have engaged with and to the wider play sector through the Scottish Play Council Forum.
- Worked with 41 partners to reach families who needed us most.
- 100% of families who completed our survey stated that they had been given new ideas for activities to do with their child at home.
- 100% of families stated that following the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic, attending their session had helped them and their family to feel uplifted.
- 89% of our Play Activity Packs were distributed to families living in a SIMD decile of 5 or below.
- 68% of our family play sessions took place areas within SIMD decile 1-5 areas.

1,256  
children  
at  
sessions

1,146  
families  
at  
sessions

5,286  
activity  
packs  
delivered

# Play Activity Packs

Our **Play Activity Packs** encourage parents to interact with their children developing verbal and social skills. They also promote low-cost play and story ideas to be replicated at home. Packs were extremely well received with many families telling us that they had encouraged them to try new play activities that they would otherwise not have.

Our **Sensory Packs** are full of items and suggestions to give families who have children with additional support needs confidence to try new ideas. Often, also reducing the need for expensive sensory toys and books.

Packs have been handed out in person at events and family sessions, as well as being distributed by partner organisations in areas of demand in advance of our visit or to those families that are unable to attend our sessions. 89% of our Play Activity Packs were distributed to families living in a SIMD decile of 5 or below.

Families were asked for feedback on the Play Activity Packs that they received. 100% of respondents stated that they explored and used the pack together. 96% of respondents stated that the packs helped to reduce stress and boredom that was caused during the periods of being restricted to their homes.

“We thought the pack was brilliant and interactive with lots of good experiences to try. The activities were easy to adapt to both my 20 month old and 5 year old.”

- Parent (feedback form)

“We really enjoyed the resources in the pack and enjoyed the play ideas and used them to connect and play with our daughter. Thank you!”

- Parent (feedback form)

5,286 families received packs





# Play Activity Packs

Sharlene Mclean

Hi it's sharlene Grace's mum Grace love's the bag off stuff she love it so thank you for having us hope we get to meet you all again next time

Care Reply 43 w



Author

Play with PTR

Sharlene Mclean We are so glad she loves her bag of goodies. Thankyou for coming along, we hope you both had a lovely time!

Like Reply Commented on by Siobhan Duncan 43 w

“Absolutely loved this pack. Who knew ribbons and a silver blanket could be so much fun. The books were lovely too, we were getting fed up with the ones we had. It was nice to spend some quality play time together”

- Parent (feedback form)



# Online Activity

## Virtual Outreach Sessions

As we moved out of a period of restrictions we delivered our final Virtual Outreach Sessions to families in The Scottish Borders, East Renfrewshire, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire. Our virtual sessions were a fantastic way for us to stay connected with families and to help our partner organisations improve their confidence in delivering parent and child play sessions online whilst unable to meet in person. We used either Zoom or Microsoft Teams to deliver these sessions, depending on the preference of our partner organisations. Sessions were delivered in block of three weeks and followed the same routine – welcome song, new activity such as arts and craft, new story and goodbye song – each week. This consistency helped families to understand what to expect each week and grow confident to get involved! Prior to sessions we posted activity packs to the families booked to attend so that everyone had access to all the resources needed as our partners had informed us that some families would not have basics such as pencils and paper at home.



## Virtual Sensory Tours

Two virtual sensory tours were delivered (Shetland and Renfrewshire) over the year as this was the preference of the schools and groups supporting children with additional support needs. Sessions were offered weekly for three weeks, allowing them to schedule sessions into existing timetables each week. Children who had yet to return to school were able to join in from home. Schools and groups were given a list of materials to have ready prior to each online sessions and feedback from our partners was extremely positive.

## Virtual Events

Our final Virtual Events were with NSPCC for the online Easter Event and Home-Start North Lanarkshire for their family Easter EGGstravaganza. Both events were for families to take part in a variety of fun online workshops over the course of the day. We made sure our activities were inclusive and used everyday low costs items commonly found at home.



# Roadshow Delivery

Family play sessions have replaced the local authority drop in sessions from our old delivery model. Working with partners to identify families most in need, we send out links to pre bookable sessions to families in the local area. Attendances are limited to four families per sessions, lasting 45 minutes, and have been conducted outside during restrictions and since July 2021, back on the vehicles. After families attend, we ask for feedback on the session and whether they will play more or do something different at home in the future. They are also given a play activity pack to take home so they can continue to play together access additional ideas and positive messages about the importance of playing, talking and reading with their child.

From our exit surveys, 100% of families stated that they had been given new ideas for activities to do with their child at home. As expected, families have struggled during the last year and 100% of families stated that following the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic, attending a PTR session had uplifted them. Parents said they were grateful to chat to play professionals and also for their children to be able to socialise and access opportunities that they don't have locally anymore.

"It's so refreshing to get little ones out of the house to something different."

- Parent (Feedback form)

20 local  
authorities  
visited

"I loved the variety of activities on offer and they are so easy to do."

- Parent (Feedback form)

Our sessions build confidence in families to play, talk and read more to their children. Our sessions are engaging and showcase easy ideas. We get parents involved and discuss with them their child's interests and needs. We demonstrate songs, rhymes and read stories and break down barriers of embarrassment and perceived lack of skill in parents. We show how much a child responds to positive engagement and help parents understand how these activities support child development over a range of milestones including speech and language, socialisation and wellbeing.

**Highlight:** We were delighted to be able to take our smaller vehicle Bonnie to the Highlands and the Western Isles for our first official tours since early 2020. Families and practitioners in these rural locations were so happy to see us and explained that they had felt so isolated from the mainland during the pandemic. Families with children under 2 told us the we were the first parent and child group that they had attended since the birth of their child and were very grateful for the opportunity to attend our facilitated play sessions with other families.



# Roadshow Delivery



“This was a huge deal for my family getting to play together at these groups, I took my 6 year old to these type of things all the time, but my 2 year old never has, so was nice to give him some of the same life”.

- Parent (Feedback form)



102 face to face sessions





# Sustainability and Capacity Building

## Practitioner Workshops

As a follow up to last year's online practitioner workshops, we developed these bespoke sessions to be delivered face to face at the workplace of the practitioners. We have worked with staff from Barnardos, Cairn Project and staff from various Action for Children sites including the early years team in Tullibody and the Special Education team in Glasgow. Many practitioners, realising the value of play in the recovery process post pandemic, requested our support to build confidence in engagement and for new ideas.

Staff who attended the workshops were asked to give their feedback on the information provided during the session and how relevant it was to them and the families that they support. 100% of respondents stated that the content of the workshop was very relevant, with 100% of them agreeing or strongly agreeing that the workshop gave them new ideas to support the families that they were interacting with. All staff who completed the survey would like to learn some more and attend another workshop.

The longer term impact of these workshops is significant as these practitioners are the people who will be engaging with families beyond our visit. As new families join their services, they will have the skills and knowledge to provide our activities going forward, but also the confidence to explore new ideas together with the families they work with. Most practitioners after the workshops have followed us on social media for further support and networking.

"The team enjoyed the training, the trainers were very engaging and gave lots of ideas on how to play with the young people in our service, adapting things to suit their needs".  
- Parent (Feedback form)



"The simplicity of producing interesting objects by use of basic items...great new messy play ideas"  
- Parent (Feedback form)



# Sustainability and Capacity Building

6  
workshops  
delivered



82  
practitioners  
trained



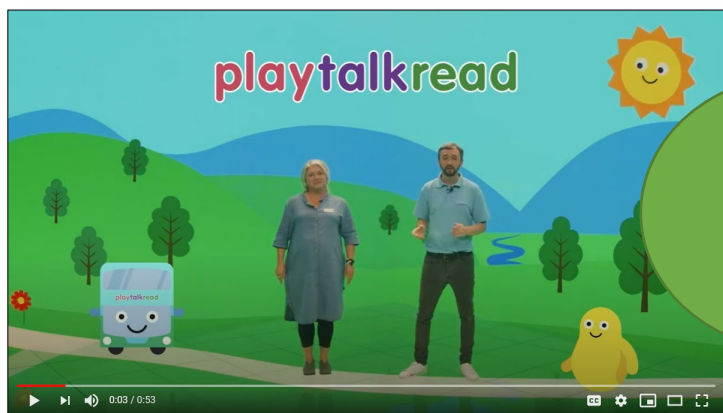
# Promotion and Campaigning

## Social Media

We use Social Media to connect with families, filming our own activity ideas for low cost play to encourage positive engagement between parents and their children. Our engagement levels have significantly increasing following our face to face delivery resuming over the summer. We have had very positive feedback from families who attended our sessions. We also use social media to promote the work of our partners and the messages/campaigns of Parent Club.

We utilise the Eventbrite platform to allow families to book onto our sessions – easy links to follow to all the slots available throughout the day. This allows us to manage numbers, ensure we are reaching the people we want to reach and also allows our partners to distribute a booking link to families that they know would benefit from attending.

We have also created content for the Parent Club website and continue to promote our series of short promotional videos throughout the year.



4,986  
miles  
travelled



## Our Play Vehicles

Highly visible and appealing, Benji our double decker delivers messages about playing, talking and reading on the move. Our Sensory Lorry Bertie and our smaller vehicle Bonnie have similar branding. Parent Club is featured heavily and there is no missing that our delivery is free, fun, for everyone and all about young children and families. Between our three main vehicles, we travelled nearly 5,000 miles on Scotland's roads over this funding period spanning from the Western Isles, across the Highlands and down through Dumfries and Galloway.

Each bag we hand out or deliver is branded and full of promotional materials with our campaign messages.



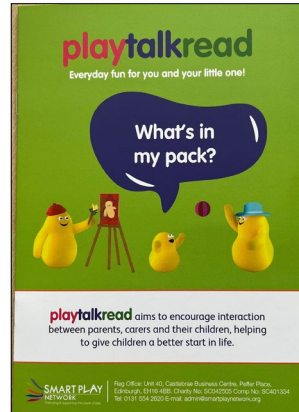
# Promotion and Campaigning

Our **Play Activity Packs**, **Promotional Packs** and **Sensory Packs** play a really important role in promoting the key messages of PTR. The contents of each pack revolves around the theme of low cost play to encourage parents and caregivers to play, talk and read with their child. Although the contents of each pack varies according to the demographic they are intended for, each pack comes with an activity book created by the PTR team to inspire early child and care-giver engagement at home.

Our pack also contain leaflets signposting local services such as bookbug groups, parent and toddler groups, library services etc as well as online support tools such as the Parent Club, website and Bookbug app.

These play packs have reached nearly 11,000 of families from March 2020 to April 2022.

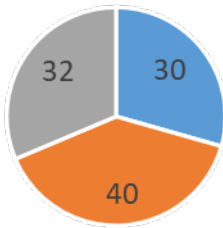
We have been delighted to be able to attend small, local community **events** over the last year hosted by partners including Home-Start, Visibility Scotland, Gorgie Farm, Falkirk Farmers Market, Dads Rock, FIFE Children and Families Team, NSPCC, Craigmillar Community Group and Craigmillar Refugee Toddler Group. Events are an important part of our promotional delivery as they allow us to meet large numbers of families, practitioners and potential partner organisations all in one place. Many families we meet at events have returned to see us with younger children. Many also often tell us that they had seen advertised that we were there and it was the reason they came along. This is encouraging as it indicates that our promotions are working and could also explain why we are invited back year after year by organisers who know that our presence is a key attraction for families to attend.



# Infographics: Our Beneficiaries

## No. Session Locations by SIMD Ranking

70 out of 102 locations took place in decile 1 or 2 of SIMD



■ Decile 1 ■ Decile 2 ■ > Decile 2

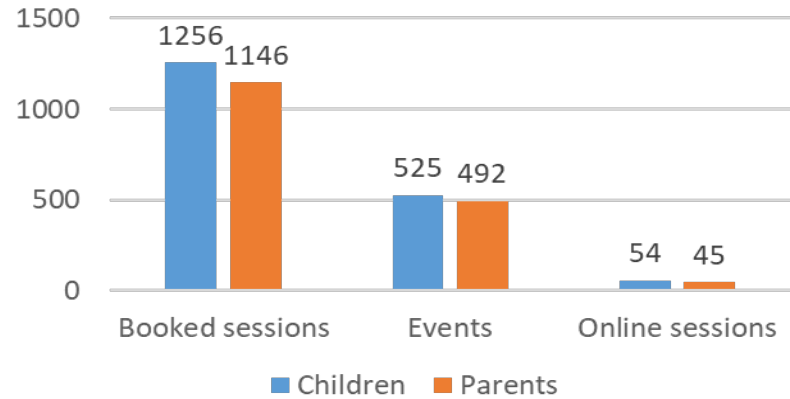
“What a brilliant thing, thank you so much and for the gift bag too. It makes the parents play & that’s what it’s all about. Well done!”

- Parent (feedback form)

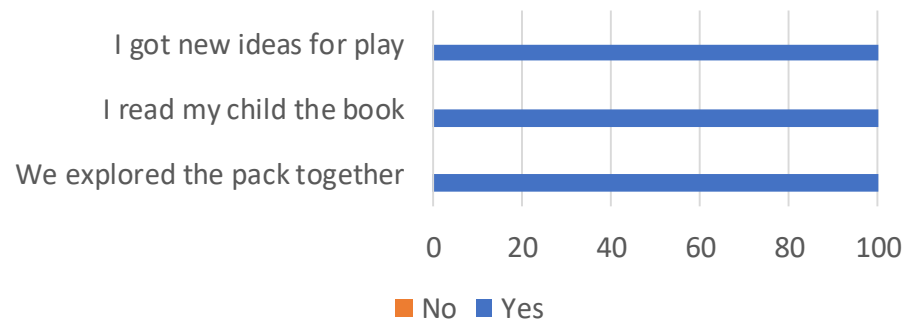
“All activities are amazing. Thanks for providing us stuff and teach us how to use it with kids to make them happy and play.”

- Parent (activity pack and zoom session)

## Beneficiaries



## % Feedback from Packs



# New Partnerships

Partnership working has been a key factor in the success of our programme of work this year, from supporting the distribution of packs, hosting our sessions and events and helping us reach our most vulnerable or isolated families. We have continued to work with a range of partners across Scotland listed in our acknowledgements section at the end.

We have developed strong links with two new partner groups to support Refugee families arriving Edinburgh as a result of the Afghanistan crisis: Re-Act and New Scots. Before refugees arrived in Edinburgh, we met with these groups and offered to create a fun and inviting play space within the hotel in Edinburgh that became temporary housing for refugee families. This was such a success that we were asked to replicate this in more hotels who were supporting Afghan families and more recently hotels offering short term accommodation to Ukrainian refugees. From this, we have developed our “Play room in a box” a number of these can be set up at very short notice. These can quickly set up play spaces for hotels hosting families with young children who have arrived Scotland as refugees.



We continue to work with the **Parent Club** team to provide content for the Parent Club website and social media channels as well as offering support for campaigns. Parent club branding is visible on all of our resources, literature and leaflets as well as signposts to the website and social media channels.

We filmed some short “hints and tips” videos for families with young children to help demonstrate ways that playing, talking and reading can be used to boost family wellbeing for a new Parent Club campaign. We repost social media posts, distribute relevant campaign and marketing materials across Smart Play Network 400+ members and to our PTR contacts.

## Partner Feedback: Visibility Scotland



“We had a fantastic day and the families who took part absolutely loved it! A huge thank you to Alison and Stephanie for their amazing input. One young mum in particular got a huge amount out of the session. Alison and Stephanie really helped build her confidence and reassured her she was doing a great job as mum. This was her first event with us and she was anxious about coming along so it was just wonderful to see her leave with a spring in her step.

I’d like to also thank the Team for researching a little about children who have a VI before the event and adapting activities to suit. I have no doubt that this is common practice for PlayTalkRead staff but it really does make a big difference. Part of our job at Visibility is to raise awareness of VI and how you can include the children we support. It was just so lovely that on this occasion it felt really inclusive from the start. We’re really looking forward to working with you guys again!” - **Nicola, Visibility Scotland.**



# Looking Ahead 2022 - 2023

## Our outcomes:

1. Parents increase their confidence to engage with their children through playing, talking and reading.
2. Increased awareness and engagement with Parent Club across all 32 local authorities of Scotland.
3. Children's health, wellbeing and development are supported by parents' ability to engage with them through playing, talking and reading more.
4. Sustainability:
  - a. Building family capacity - with tools, ideas and confidence to play, talk and read to their children more.
  - b. Building partners organisations' capacity – supporting their activity, providing training/workshops showcasing their work and signposting to their services.
  - c. Stronger networks of partners / building the sector.
  - d. Building capacity of policy makers.

**Our main areas of activity** combine an adaptable suite of delivery mechanisms and have been developed to both support families directly and to build the capacity of our partner organisations. We listened to our families and partners and developed an enhanced, adaptable model to take us through and out of Covid-19 restrictions. In particular, over the last year it has been clear that families benefit most from the smaller bookable sessions rather than a drop in model.

*“Wonderful bonnie bus! The small numbers made it brilliant & was a cosy fun experience. My son loved it & will remember it for a long time”.*

*“Would not have got so much from it if was full of people but because just a few in was just perfect”.*

We are also delighted to be **extending our programme of activity** this year to highlight specific activities that encourage early speech and language development. To do this we will further develop the existing PTR model, so that parents and carers receive evidence-based information, guidance, tips about ages and stages of early language and communication development. In this sense this PTR2 Programme will take a more targeted approach to service delivery. PTR2 will place an additional emphasis on reaching families who have been negatively impacted by Covid-19 restrictions and will target lower income families who are facing multiple barriers to accessing resources. The continued focus on play is essential to this work, placing the emphasis on fun, which is key to engaging with families who may be less motivated by an attainment message or a message that is solely focused on the benefits of learning and education. This approach will deliver simple messages about incorporating activities that support children's language development into everyday routines and introducing fun games and activities that families can play together at home. We will promote activities that encourage a child's natural curiosity with a strong emphasis on the sharing of stories, rhymes, and songs. If a parent or carer is concerned about their child's speech, language, and communication needs, they will be given information about how to access additional help and support.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the brilliant partners that we have worked with this year and for organisations who have supported our delivery, found us parking spots and brought us endless cups of tea during our busy delivery sessions:

Action for Children – Barnardos- Home Start – NSPCC - Orkney Leisure - Shetland Leisure - Dounby Surgery - Dundee Contemporary Arts - Mitchel Street English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Dundee - Health and Social Care North Lanarkshire - Peerie Foxes – SPELL, South Lanarkshire - Shetland Library Bookbug - Family Centre Merkinch Inverness - Fife Community Education - Dads Rock – Play Plus Toy Library - Douglas Community Centre Dundee - Made at 94 – Scottish Book Trust (Bookbug) – Dolly Parton Foundation - Grampian Autistic Society - Blairgowrie Library - Dundee International Women's Centre - Visibility Scotland - Falkirk Farmers Market - Craigmillar Community Festival- Hecklegrith Nursery – New Scotts Refugees Support- Craigmillar Refugee Parent and Toddler Group - Our Kirkcaldy - Elgin Cupar Parent – Elgin Children and Families Team – Matrick Library – Middlefield Community Project – Fraserburgh Family Centre – Prestronpans Community Centre - Whitecraig Primary School – Glasgow City Mission Child and Family Centre – Quarriers, Re-Act, New Scots and many more!

A special thank you to our policy team at the Scottish Government during challenging times of restrictions on travel. You have supported us enormously, by allowing us to be creative with delivery mechanisms and develop new ways to reach families who needed us most. Our ability to adapt has allowed us to create new ways of working, develop innovative activities and embed this into our overall programme for increased positive impact on families.

