



Neath Port Talbot  
**LIBRARIES**  
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Pick 'n' Mix Book Club  
for babies & toddlers  
at NPT libraries

## Pick 'n' Mix club

### Aims

The Pick 'n' Mix club is a scheme devised by NPT libraries to encourage parents to borrow books from the library for their babies/toddlers. The club allows library staff to market junior book collections at a specific library community and to also encourage reader development. The main aim of the Pick 'n' Mix club is to provide a hassle free book selection service for parents and grandparents who attend baby/toddler activities in NPT libraries.

### The Scheme

The Pick 'n' Mix club is offered to parents/grandparents who attend regular baby/toddler activities at NPT libraries and it offers a hassle free way for parents/grandparents to choose and borrow books from their local library. Parents complete a form which provides staff with the following information:

- Their child's library card number and age
- How many books they would like, what type of book (board/paperback)
- If they would like Welsh or English
- If they would like staff to become responsible for their child's Book Crawl rewards card.

Prior to a baby/toddler activity (e.g. Song & Rhyme or Baby Massage) library staff will issue the requested books to each Pick 'n' Mix club member and label the selection with the child's name. Before the activity begins the books are made available for collection in a convenient location, therefore allowing parents/grandparents to pick up and return their child's books without having to wait by the main issue desk. Every child that joins the Pick 'n' Mix club receives their very own book bag.

Those books that are not collected are returned immediately after the event and all books are issued for a three week loan period (parents/grandparents are then responsible for the library books issued via the club). The role of library staff is to aid parents by selecting and issuing the books.

### The Pilot

The Pick 'n' Mix club was originally created by staff at Port Talbot Library. Port Talbot hosts a weekly Book Crawl 'Song & Rhyme' session for babies and toddlers; every week 35-45 children attend this activity. However library staff struggled to encourage parents to borrow books. Previous attempts to increase book borrowing and an interest in the junior stock had

included book displays, talks by the library staff and constant reminders by the Book Crawl co-ordinator who led the Song & Rhyme sessions.

The staff at Port Talbot library and the Book Start co-ordinator Pam Lawson created the Pick 'n' Mix club to provide hassle free book selection for parents which would encourage them to borrow books on a regular basis and thereby promote the activity of reading to babies/toddlers at home.

The Pick 'n' Mix club was introduced to the Song & Rhyme group in April 2012 and initially only three parents signed up to take part, however rapidly the numbers increased as more parents could see how the scheme worked. Library staff provided gentle reminders about the club once every fortnight and monthly prize draws promoted the club without pressuring parents to join. By August 2012 the Pick 'n' Mix club had 26 members and while some members have left, there are always new members who wish to join the club and by December 2012 the Pick 'n' Mix club had 36 members.

## **Current Expansion**

The success of this scheme encouraged Port Talbot staff and the Book Start co-ordinator to introduce the Pick 'n' Mix club at different library location. Another successful 'Song & Rhyme' session was held at Cwmafan library (community branch) where staff were experiencing the same problems as Port Talbot. Cwmafan library had very high attendance figures for their Song & Rhyme sessions but could not encourage parents to borrow books. Cwmafan Library began their club in June 2012 and saw an immediate uptake. This library currently has 25 members.

Originally the Pick 'n' Mix club was created for babies/toddlers attending Book Start Song & Rhyme sessions; however the marketing was altered in October 2012 to allow the club to be used with any baby/toddler events taking place in NPT libraries.

In November 2012 Sandfields library began using the Pick 'n' Mix club to provide books for babies/toddlers who attend Flying Start 'Baby Massage', 'Babbling Babies' and 'Talking Toddler' sessions in the library. Library staff have found that this scheme has allowed them to engage and help parents choose books for their babies/toddlers without creating unnecessary pressure on this group. Sandfields Pick 'n' Mix currently has 27 members but staff believe this number will increase over time.

## **Marketing**

The main marketing materials that are used to promote the scheme are leaflets and registration forms. These marketing materials are used to promote the scheme to parents/grandparents attending the baby/toddler activity. The marketing materials main aim is to explain the scheme and encourage parents to join their children up to the club.

The above marketing material has been altered recently to allow the Pick ‘n’ Mix club to be used with any baby/toddler activity not just Song & Rhyme sessions.

Pick ‘n’ Mix club members are also featured on the libraries Facebook page; Port Talbot library provide photographs of their monthly prize draw winners. Cwmafan and Sandfields library also provide photographs of their club members. This form of promotion not only encourages an interest in the Pick ‘n’ Mix club but in the baby/toddler activities being held at NPT libraries. By using Facebook as a promotional tool it also encourages parents/grandparents to join NPT libraries online library community.

## Cost

Staff time is the largest expenditure. As club members increase it will take staff an increased amount of time to choose issue and package the books ready for collection. Leaflets are created and produced in-house, book bags are provided by the Book Crawl co-ordinator and prizes are provided by library staff.

## Benefits

The most important benefit is that it encourages parents to borrow books and read to their babies/toddlers. The Pick ‘n’ Mix club has allowed three libraries in NPT to promote their junior book collections among parents which has increased junior loans among pre-school children in all three libraries:

	Sep 2011	Sep 2012	Oct 2011	Oct 2012	Nov 2011	Nov 2012
<b>Cwmafan</b>	174	320	97	264	118	250
<b>Port Talbot</b>	269	1443	242	837	20*	1252
<b>Sandfields</b>	262	325	139	307	151	314

\*Closed for refurbishment during November 2011

Members of the Pick ‘n’ Mix club have to be members of the library; therefore the club has encouraged parents to create library memberships for their children. There has also been an increase in the Book Crawl certificates allocated to children attending ‘Song & Rhyme’ sessions.

The flexibility of the club allows library staff to use the basic guidelines of the scheme to create a system that works for them and helps them promote their own junior books collections to their library members.

The Pick 'n' Mix club has encouraged both library staff, Book Start co-ordinator and Flying Start co-ordinators to work more cohesively when promoting reading among pre-school children.

## **Future Plans**

In 2013 the Pick 'n' Mix club will be introduced in Pontardawe, Briton Ferry and Neath library in conjunction with their weekly Song & Rhyme sessions.

Port Talbot library will be introducing the Pick 'n' Mix club to their monthly TWF Song & Rhyme group. There are also plans in Port Talbot to pilot a Story Hour session for 5-9 year olds to support the 'Make Time to Read' literacy campaign and when these sessions begin a Junior Pick 'n' Mix club will be introduced to those that attend (the junior version will also be made available to all NPT libraries).

## **Conclusion**

The Pick 'n' Mix club has allowed three libraries in Neath Port Talbot to successfully encourage parents to borrow junior books on a regular basis for their babies/toddlers. The aim of the scheme is to promote reading and junior library books by providing a hassle free book selection service for parents/grandparents. The benefits of the club have included an increase in pre-school members, junior book loans and it has promoted a pro-active relationship between library staff, Book Start and Flying Start co-ordinators.

## Feedback

### Book Start Co-ordinator

'I have certainly seen an increased enthusiasm from both children and parents in terms of taking books home. The parents obviously like the convenience of having the books ready but also appreciate the selection of books. Obviously the library staff are more familiar with the books and also know which are the latest. This means the children are getting a good variety of suitable books which when the parents are picking them, they don't always have the time to read through the books.

The children also like to have the books selected for them and almost look upon them as presents. They all really like having the special bag to put their books in and carry it round quite proudly. It certainly enhances their visit to the library.

Great idea, lots of work for staff I know but well worth it!

**Pam Lawson** Book Start co-ordinator

### Staff

'I believe it is a good idea because it helps and encourages mothers and children to choose and read books in a number of ways: 1. It helps mothers who are uncertain about which books to choose for this age of child, 2. It helps busy mothers, 3. It encourages regular reading as books are chosen weekly, 4. It's fun with the chance of a prize'

**Hilary Smith** (Branch Librarian at Port Talbot Library)

'Since the Pick 'n' Mix club has been in Cwmafan it has proved a wonderful success as mums & dads with young children have not got the time to stop and look for books, the feedback we have had that they all think it's a wonderful idea to walk in the library and the books are ready to be picked up and they now can sit down in the evening and enjoy reading with the children'

**Ellen Mason** (Branch librarian at Cwmafan Library)

'Pick 'n' Mix' allows us to use an available resource to satisfy a large untapped market. Most of the mums using the flying start classes held here did not have the time (or inclination) to look for books after sessions, but by providing them using 'Pick 'n' Mix' this problem was solved'

**Ceri Greenway** (Branch librarian at Sandfields Library)

## Parents/grandparents & guardians

'...saves a lot of time because the books are ready to collect on a Wednesday for storytime. An excellent selection of books are provided each week...'

'Excellent scheme to introduce children to a variety of books and they benefit from other people's ideas not just your own'

'It provides a varied selection and it's always ready when you arrive'

'Very good service, saves a lot of time and good choice of books for all ages'

'...an excellent service, books are always ready and clearly labelled...the variety is excellent and always age appropriate, my son especially enjoys the sound books. This service is well run and helps out busy parents as it would take a long time to find and choose books especially with a very busy 6 month old'

'Saves time, books are always ready, good variety of books, kids love it'

'My grandchildren love the Pick 'n' Mix club, they cannot wait to open the bag every week. The librarians are brilliant and always manage to pick the perfect books...Thank you so much to everyone involved for a brilliant service and encouraging children in their love of books!'

'We think the Pick 'n' Mix club is great for getting babies interested in books and it saves time in choosing books as well. Also there is always a good selection available'

'It help me in choosing a variety of books for my baby, I love watching my baby turning the pages of books that makes us happy'

'I'm always happy with the books we have, always a good selection and fun to look at. Also, I never have time to find books so it's nice that it's all done for us. Thank you'

'We highly recommend the Pick 'n' Mix club, the books chosen are perfect and saves us a lot of time'

'I like the Pick 'n' Mix club because it saves me time looking around the library. It gives my son a varied selection of books which is good because it helps me help him with his learning development'

'...it makes things easier, having the books chosen for you every week also we have a good selection and variety of books'

Promotional Material

Registration Forms

Original Forms

**Book Crawl Pick 'n' Mix club**  
This is a pilot scheme that we hope will make choosing books for your baby/toddler a lot easier.

Every week a selection of books will be chosen for your child and scanned out onto their card.

These books will be ready for you to take when you attend the song and rhyme session every Wednesday.

All members of the Pick 'n' Mix club will also be entered into a prize draw once a month.

If you are unable to attend or wish not to take the books that week, we will automatically remove any books from your child's card and provide a new selection the following week.

We can also take responsibility for your book crawl sticker cards to ensure your child receives all their certificates and if you wish us to choose books for any older siblings please just fill in an extra request card.

**It will be your responsibility to return the books to the library after 3 weeks if you do not attend anymore Song & Rhyme sessions and you may opt out of this scheme at any time.**

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact:  
Leah Hayes (01639) 763490/1.l.hayes@npt.gov.uk  
Pam Lawson (01639) 860015 p.lawson@npt.gov.uk

**Book Crawl Pick 'n' Mix club Request Card**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Library Card No: 5000 \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pick 'n' Mix**

Number of books: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Type:

Board Only \_\_\_\_\_

Paperbacks Only \_\_\_\_\_

Board & Paperbacks \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Crawl Certificates**  
If you would like us to keep and stamp your child's Book Crawl card please indicate below:  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Current Form

**Book Crawl Pick 'n' Mix club**  
We want to make choosing books for your baby/toddler hassle free!

Every week a selection of books will be chosen for your child and scanned out onto their card.

These books will be ready for you to take when you attend any song and rhyme session or a baby/toddler activity at a participating NPT library.

If you are unable to attend or wish not to take the books that week, we will automatically remove any books from your child's card and provide a new selection the following week.

We can also take responsibility for your book crawl sticker cards to ensure your child receives all their certificates and if you wish us to choose books for any older siblings please just fill in an extra request card.

**It will be your responsibility to return the books to the library after 3 weeks if you do not attend anymore sessions at your library or if you opt out of this scheme at any time.**

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact your local library or:

Leah Hayes (01639) 763490/1.l.hayes@npt.gov.uk  
Pam Lawson (01639) 860015 p.lawson@npt.gov.uk

**Book Crawl Pick 'n' Mix club Request Card**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Library Card No: 5000 \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pick 'n' Mix**

Number of books: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Type:

Board Only \_\_\_\_\_

Paperbacks Only \_\_\_\_\_

Board & Paperbacks \_\_\_\_\_

Welsh books \_\_\_\_\_

**Book Crawl Certificates**  
If you would like us to keep and stamp your child's Book Crawl card please indicate below:  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_



## Leaflets

### Book Crawl Pick 'n' Mix dub

We want to make choosing books for your baby/  
toddler hassle free!

Every week a selection of books will be  
chosen for your child and scanned out onto  
their card.

These books will be ready for you to take  
when you attend any song and rhyme  
session or a baby/toddler activity at a  
participating NPT library.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to  
contact your local library or:

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[l.hayes@npt.gov.uk](mailto:l.hayes@npt.gov.uk)

Pam Lawson (01639) 860015

[p.lawson@npt.gov.uk](mailto:p.lawson@npt.gov.uk)



# Facebook

(5) The Pick 'n' Mix monthly winners - Windows Internet Explorer

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File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

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### The Pick 'n' Mix monthly winners

By Neath Port Talbot Libraries (Albums) · Updated about 3 months ago · Taken at Port Talbot Library

Port Talbot Library - the Pick 'n' Mix monthly winners

Unlike · Share

You, Irene Cronin and Claire Merrill like this.

1 share

- John Powell** Where my Photo.  
5 September at 11:45 · Like
- Leah Hayes** can't wait to see all my 'Pick n Mix' club members next week - our song & rhyme sessions at Port Talbot library are fab thanx to Pam!  
5 September at 22:26 · Like
- Donna Holmes** *NeeFisher* What day & times r the song & rhyme sessions

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23:09

Photos













*Entry submitted by Leah Hayes (Senior Library Assistant Port Talbot Library)*