

Taonga mō ngā Tamariki Pilot Programme Evaluation

For Young Parents in Teen Parent Units

July 2026

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For many pregnant young women, young parents and dads, traditional parenting programmes can feel uncomfortable or judgemental and are often avoided. Having this programme delivered within the Teen Parent Unit creates a familiar and supportive environment, where young parents can engage without fear of judgement.

Having dedicated time within their own space allows young parents to focus on their relationships with their tamariki, at whatever stage they are at. Learning together, asking questions, sharing ideas and trying new approaches plays an important role in breaking down barriers to accessing parenting information and support that are often present in mainstream services.

We acknowledge and value the trust young parents placed in this process, and their contribution to strengthening understanding of how programmes like this can better support young families.

Storytime Foundation also wishes to acknowledge the Biddulph Group for granting permission to use the Early Reading Together® resources within this pilot.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa

Executive Summary

Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is a Storytime Foundation pilot programme designed to support young parents attending Teen Parent Units (TPUs) to build strong early language and literacy foundations with their tamariki. The programme focuses on strengthening parents' confidence to create warm, responsive, and language-rich interactions through everyday activities such as talking, reading, singing, and storytelling.

This evaluation examined how the programme was experienced by young parents, the difference it made to their knowledge, confidence, and everyday parenting practices, and the conditions that supported successful delivery. The pilot involved 18 young parents across two Teen Parent Units, alongside feedback from Head Teachers, Teen Parent Unit staff, and facilitator reflections.

Key Findings

Strengthening knowledge and confidence

The programme strengthened young parents' understanding of how early language and literacy develop and increased their confidence in their role as parents. Participants described learning new ways to support their tamariki through everyday interactions and gained a clearer understanding that early literacy is about connection and communication, rather than formally teaching children to read. This reduced pressure and supported a more positive and confident approach to parenting.

Changing everyday interactions with tamariki

Learning translated into meaningful changes in daily parenting practices. Young parents described reading more often, talking and singing more intentionally, using richer language, and creating more opportunities to connect with their tamariki. Importantly, these changes were integrated into existing routines, making early literacy feel achievable within the realities of balancing parenting and education.

Learning in ways that work for young parents

The programme's delivery approach was central to its effectiveness. Practical, hands-on activities, a safe and welcoming learning environment, opportunities to learn alongside other young parents, and high-quality resources all supported engagement. These elements enabled young parents to not only understand key concepts but apply them in their everyday lives.

Supporting aspirations for tamariki and extending to whānau

The programme created space for young parents to reflect on their hopes and aspirations for their tamariki and their role in supporting their children's futures. Participants described aspirations centred on wellbeing, confidence, and opportunity. Many also shared their learning, books, and resources with whānau, indicating that the programme's influence extended beyond individual participants and into wider family contexts.

Conditions that supported successful implementation

The evaluation identified several conditions that supported effective delivery. Strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units provided a trusted and reinforcing environment for learning. High-quality books and take-home resources enabled parents to apply their learning at home. Resources and

guidance for use were provided to all young parents within participating Teen Parent Units, extending the reach of the programme beyond workshop attendance. Skilled facilitation, together with an ongoing commitment to reflection and continuous improvement, enabled the programme to respond to the needs of expectant wāhine and young parents while maintaining its core intent. Learning from Group 1 was incorporated into Group 2, strengthening delivery and responsiveness across the pilot.

Recommendations Summary

The evaluation recommends:

- continuing delivery through Teen Parent Units
- maintaining the programme's practical, strengths-based approach
- continuing investment in high-quality resources
- strengthening practical ideas that fit into everyday routines
- maintaining strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units
- developing an implementation guide to support future delivery
- ensuring future delivery is supported by highly skilled facilitators.

Conclusion

Overall, the Taonga mō ngā Tamariki pilot demonstrated strong evidence of positive impact. The programme strengthened young parents' knowledge, confidence, and everyday parenting practices, while making early literacy accessible, practical, and relevant to them and their aspirations for their children. It also supported young parents to reflect on their hopes and aspirations for tamariki, strengthen learning within whānau, and build confidence in their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

Strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units, high-quality resources, skilled facilitation, and a responsive approach to delivery created the conditions for successful implementation and positive outcomes for participants.

The findings provide a strong foundation for continued delivery, refinement, and future growth.



Introduction

About The Pilot Programme

Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is a Storytime Foundation pilot programme developed for young parents attending Teen Parent Units (TPUs). It aims to strengthen early language and literacy by supporting parents to build warm, responsive, and language-rich relationships with their tamariki from a young age. The programme is grounded in the understanding that parents are their child's first and most important teachers, and that everyday interactions; reading, talking, listening, singing, and storytelling provide the foundation for learning, wellbeing, and future educational success.

The programme recognises that many young parents are balancing parenting with education and may have experienced disrupted schooling or limited access to books. Rather than teaching parents how to teach children to read, it builds confidence to create positive, enjoyable literacy experiences through everyday interactions.

Delivered over three interactive workshops, the programme combines practical activities, discussion, facilitator modelling, and take-home resources. It focuses on oral language, shared reading, songs and rhymes, aspirations for tamariki, and ways to integrate literacy into everyday family life. The approach is strengths-based, relationship-centred, and grounded in participants lived experience.

The programme incorporates resources from the Early Reading Together® programme (developed by the Biddulph Group), adapted for this context and designed to support young parents to build confidence, connection, and positive early reading practices with their children.

Delivery in partnership with Teen Parent Units was a key feature of the pilot. This enabled young parents to learn in a familiar environment alongside trusted staff and supported the reinforcement of programme messages through everyday interactions across the wider TPU setting. Learnings from Group 1 were integrated into the design of Group 2 of the pilot programme.

Pilot Evaluation

Point and Associates was commissioned to undertake an evaluation to understand how the programme was experienced by young parents and the difference it made to their knowledge, confidence, and everyday parenting practices that support early language and literacy. It also identified the conditions that supported effective delivery and generated learning to inform future refinement, scale-up, and expansion.

Programme Participants

A total of 18 young parents aged 15–22 years participated across two Teen Parent Units (9 from He Puaawai and 9 from He Wero), including 17 young mothers and one young father. Head Teachers and Teen Parent Unit staff also participated in programme delivery, supported implementation, and provided feedback that informed the evaluation.

The group reflected the cultural diversity of the Hamilton and West Auckland TPUs. Thirteen participants identified as Māori, 11 as NZ European/Pākehā, and 3 as Pacific. Eight of the 18 participants identified with more than one ethnicity.

Participants included expectant parents and those caring for pēpi, toddlers, and school-aged tamariki, with a small number of pepi also attending the workshops alongside their parents. Attendance varied across workshop sessions, with some participants attending one session but not the other; however, a total of 18 individual young parents engaged across the pilot.

This provided insight into the experiences and support needs of young parents at different stages of early parenting.

Evaluation Approach

This evaluation examined how the Taonga mō ngā Tamariki pilot was implemented and the difference it made for young parents participating in the programme. The evaluation explored changes in young parents' knowledge, confidence and everyday parenting practices that support early language and literacy development, while also identifying the implementation conditions that contributed to successful delivery. A mixed-methods approach was used to bring together quantitative and qualitative evidence from multiple sources, providing a rich understanding of both programme outcomes and implementation learnings.

Data Sources

Evidence was collected from five complementary sources:

- Pre- and post-workshop surveys with young parents (n=18), measuring changes in knowledge, confidence, and intended practices
- Semi-structured interviews with young parents (n=7), exploring experiences, reflections, and changes made at home
- The Hopes and Dreams activity, providing insight into parents' aspirations for their tamariki
- Feedback from Teen Parent Unit staff (n=4), offering observations on engagement and delivery
- Facilitator reflections (2 reports), capturing implementation learning, adaptations, and participant engagement

Together, these sources enabled the evaluation to draw on the perspectives of young parents, Teen Parent Unit staff, and the programme facilitator.

Analysis

Quantitative survey responses from young parents were analysed descriptively to identify patterns and changes between the beginning and end of the programme. Qualitative information from interviews, the Hopes and Dreams activity, staff feedback and facilitator reflections was analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns and key insights.

Findings were developed by triangulating evidence across the different data sources. This approach enabled findings to be cross-checked and strengthened by examining whether similar patterns emerged across surveys, interviews, facilitator observations and staff feedback. Direct quotations are included throughout the report to illustrate participants' experiences and bring the findings to life.

Strengths and Limitations

Using multiple sources of evidence strengthened confidence in the findings by enabling comparison across surveys, interviews, facilitator reflections, and staff feedback. While the pilot involved a small number of participants across two Teen Parent Units, the consistency of evidence across sources strengthens confidence in the conclusions.

As a pilot evaluation, the focus was on understanding early outcomes and generating implementation learning to inform future delivery, rather than measuring long-term impacts for parents and tamariki.

Findings

Finding 1: Growing knowledge and confidence as parents

The programme strengthened young parents' knowledge and confidence to support their tamariki early language and literacy through everyday interactions. Across surveys, interviews and facilitator reflections, young parents described new learning about the importance of reading, talking, singing and using rich language from the earliest years. Importantly, the programme also helped reduce pressure. Young parents came to understand that their role was not to formally teach their child to read, but to create positive, enjoyable experiences with books, words, songs and stories.

1.1 What Changed For Young Parents

All post-workshop survey respondents identified at least one new learning from the programme. Common learnings included the importance of reading from an early age, expanding children's vocabulary, using descriptive language, and supporting learning through everyday interactions. This was reinforced in interviews, where almost all young parents described gaining knowledge that changed how they thought about supporting their child's development.

"I was happy about learning... you're meant to teach kids a lot of words before they go to school... they were telling us different ways you can include new words in your sentences. I didn't know any of that. I liked it because it taught me that so I could use that when I have my kid." (pregnant wāhine)

Another young mother described how the programme helped her understand that reading is not only about books or words, but about connection and interaction:

"That reading to your baby is important. It can develop learning skills such as talking more and getting them to recognise words. It's not just reading the book, it's talking and interacting with them more." (young parent)

1.2 Reducing Pressure and Making Literacy Feel Achievable

A key shift was that young parents felt less pressure to teach their children to read. Almost all post-workshop survey respondents reported gaining "a lot" of confidence from the programme. In interviews, most young parents described feeling reassured that they could support early literacy through every day, enjoyable interactions rather than formal teaching.

"The main thing was that we aren't our baby's teachers. So with reading, we just have fun, and when they go to school, the teachers will teach them how to read. Before that, I felt pressure I was trying to teach her words and get her to say things. But this helped me take that pressure off and just enjoy it." (young parent)

This pattern was also observed by the facilitator, who noted that once young parents understood their role was to create relaxed, enjoyable experiences with stories and songs rather than formally teaching reading, they became more confident and engaged.

1.3 Recognising Existing Strengths

The programme also helped some young parents recognise the strengths they already brought to parenting. This was particularly evident in the interviews, where participants described reflecting on what they were already doing well and feeling more confident in themselves as parents.

"I never took a step back and thought about what I'm proud of." (young parent)

The facilitator also noted that participants responded positively to the strengths-based approach, valuing the positive and affirming tone of the programme.

1.4 Making Early Literacy Accessible

For some young parents, the programme was particularly important because of their own experiences with reading and literacy. Rather than assuming that parents needed to be confident readers, the programme showed that early literacy could include talking about pictures, singing songs, telling stories, using everyday words, and enjoying time together.

"When I was younger, I used to read a lot, but I tend to struggle with pronouncing words. So when I read for my son, it's hard for me to do that. I do singing instead because it's easier... I'm trying to read more at home because I've struggled a lot with reading... It's kind of like overcoming the bits that you find difficult about reading and doing it anyway." (young parent)

This made early literacy feel more accessible for parents with different literacy experiences and confidence levels. The programme helped young parents see that they did not need to be expert readers or teachers to support their child's learning, but could build language, connection and confidence through simple, everyday interactions.

These findings show that the programme strengthened young parents' knowledge, confidence and understanding of early language and literacy. By reducing pressure and building on parents' existing strengths, early literacy was experienced as practical, enjoyable and achievable, supporting young parents to feel more capable in their role as their child's first and most important teacher.

Finding 2: Changing everyday interactions with tamariki

The programme supported young parents to translate their learning into everyday parenting routines. Across surveys, interviews and facilitator observations, young parents described making intentional changes to how they engaged with their tamariki, including reading more often, talking and singing more, using a wider range of language, and creating more opportunities to connect in daily routines.

2.1 What Changed For Young Parents

Almost all post-workshop survey respondents (17 of 18) described changes they had made, or intended to make, following the programme. These changes were evident in how young parents incorporated reading into daily routines, increased conversations during everyday activities, and made more intentional time to engage with their tamariki.

Reading became a more regular part of everyday life for many young parents. Almost all interviewed participants (6 of 7) described introducing books into existing routines, such as bedtime or after school, or following their child's interests during the day.

"Now it's come to school, go home, have a snack, maybe read to baby, do some activities, and then go to sleep. So I'm adding that time in, being more intentional about interacting with her." (young parent)

"When we got the books, I went home and read them to my daughter... Before, I'd be on my phone and she'd be playing. Now I put my phone down and interact with her more like sitting down and reading a book with her." (young parent)

The facilitator also observed that participants were keen to apply these ideas at home, including increased intention to read regularly.

2.2 Expanding Language Through Everyday Interactions

Young parents also described becoming more aware of how language develops through everyday conversations, not only through books. Most survey respondents identified using more words, describing everyday experiences, and talking more with their children as key practices they intended to continue.

Mums who were interviewed shared

"Reading to them... because of the words that we don't use in everyday life, it questions their mind. They ask me, 'What does that mean?'" (young parent)

"Just really how important it is to read, sing, and talk to your kids. We just talk to him a lot try to get him involved in the conversations." (young parent)

The facilitator similarly observed that young parents were actively experimenting in the workshops with new language and ways of communicating with their tamariki.

2.3 Using Resources To Support Practice At Home

The books and resources provided through the programme played an important role in supporting these changes. Many young parents described using books, cards, games, and other materials soon after the workshops.

"We play memory cards... I got a book for my son, like Where's Wally, and we sit together looking for things." (young parent)

"She had given us these little letter cards with pictures on them... I've definitely started using them at night-time when we read together." (young parent)

The facilitator noted that participants were highly engaged with the resources and motivated to use them with their tamariki:

"The students were really excited by the quality of the resources." (facilitator)

2.4 Weaving Early Literacy Into Everyday Routines

A key shift was that young parents did not experience these changes as additional tasks. Instead, they described integrating reading, talking, singing, and storytelling into the routines they were already doing as both parents and students.

"More interactions, more reading. Using the goodies Linda gave, like where baby can scribble, look at pictures and things like that." (young parent)

Reflecting on what she would share with others, one young parent summarised this shift simply:

"Just do your normal routine but try add reading into there." (young parent)

Some participants also identified a desire for more practical ideas that could be used across different parts of the day, including mornings, after school, evenings, and weekends.

These findings show that the programme supported young parents to move beyond knowledge into action. Changes reflected a broader shift towards more intentional, language-rich interactions across everyday family life, rather than isolated behaviours. By building on routines that were already in place, these changes felt achievable and sustainable.

Overall, the programme resulted in meaningful changes to everyday parenting. Young parents described reading more frequently, using richer language, talking and singing more intentionally, and making greater use of resources to support their child's learning. Early literacy was not experienced as an additional task, but as something that could be woven into daily life, strengthening parents' confidence to create positive, language-rich interactions that support their child's learning, development, and connection.

Finding 3: Learning in Ways that Work for Young Parents

The evaluation found that how the programme was delivered was as important as what was delivered. Young parents consistently described the programme as practical, engaging, and relevant. Across surveys, interviews and facilitator reflections, the delivery approach supported young parents to actively engage with the content and apply their learning.

3.1 What This Looked Like For Young Parents

All post-workshop survey respondents identified aspects of the programme they found valuable. Hands-on activities, take-home resources, and the relaxed learning environment were most frequently mentioned.

A key feature was the emphasis on practical, activity-based learning. Across interviews, all young parents spoke positively about learning through doing, rather than listening to presentations. Activities such as creating sentences, scrapbooking, and working with resources helped make concepts more accessible and easier to apply with their tamariki.

"I think I enjoyed the activities they provided... the word activity where we had to make the sentence more descriptive for our babies. We also did scrapbooking... I just liked the whole thing overall, to be honest." (young parent)

The facilitator also observed that hands-on activities supported understanding and engagement:

3.2 A Safe And Supportive Learning Environment

Young parents also valued the welcoming, non-judgemental environment created during the workshops. Most participants described feeling comfortable to take part, ask questions, and share their ideas.

"Very informing but also fun. There are lots of activities, and the space is calm and inviting. No one feels pressured to do or say anything. It's relaxed, but you still learn a lot of new things for your baby." (young parent)

Participants also responded positively to the facilitator's approach, which was described as warm, supportive, and encouraging:

"Linda was excellent. She made us feel comfortable... She was very welcoming." (young parent)

The facilitator also emphasised the importance of creating an environment grounded in empathy and understanding, recognising the challenges young parents navigate in their everyday lives and their efforts to support their tamariki.

3.3 Learning Alongside Other Young Parents

The group-based delivery was another important aspect of the programme. Young parents described learning alongside others in similar situations as valuable, creating opportunities to share ideas, hear different perspectives, and build on each other's thinking.

"We were all talking together, throwing ideas out... It was so good. I enjoyed it. I loved it." (young parent)

The facilitator observed that these discussions supported deeper engagement and reflection, with young parents actively considering their aspirations for their children and sharing ideas with one another.

3.4 The Role of High-Quality Resources

The books, games, and learning materials were consistently identified as a key strength. Many young parents described using these resources at home soon after the workshops, supporting continuity between learning and practice.

"It was one thing that I definitely really enjoyed was getting resources... She kind of gave us everything that we needed and more." (young parent)

"All the little goodies she gave... books based on our baby's age... things she can touch with different textures." (young parent)

The facilitator and staff both noted strong engagement with the resources, with young parents showing enthusiasm for selecting books and responding positively to the quality of materials provided

These findings show that how the programme is delivered is critical to its effectiveness. Practical, hands-on learning, a safe and supportive environment, opportunities to learn alongside others, and high-quality resources supported young parents to engage and apply their learning.

Together, these elements created a learning environment that was accessible, relevant and responsive to the realities of young parents' everyday lives. This supported young parents to build confidence and apply their learning in ways that were meaningful for them and their tamariki.

Finding 4: Supporting Parent Aspirations for Tamariki

The programme encouraged young parents to reflect on the future they hoped to create for their tamariki and the kind of parent they wanted to be. Through the Hopes and Dreams activity, interviews and facilitator observations, participants described aspirations centred on their children's wellbeing, happiness, belonging and future opportunities. Many also described sharing their learning with whānau, extending the programme's influence beyond the workshops.

4.1 Reflecting On Hopes And Dreams

The Hopes and Dreams activity created a structured opportunity for parents to pause and consider what mattered most for their children. Common aspirations included children being happy, healthy, confident, kind, and loved, and being supported to achieve their own goals. These aspirations were reflected throughout the Hopes and Dreams activity, where parents described wanting their tamariki to know they were loved, stay curious, achieve their goals, and grow into confident and caring people.

The activity also supported young parents to think more intentionally about the role they wanted to play in helping their tamariki achieve these aspirations.

"I loved the goals and dreams activity. I said I want my kids to be healthy, and I'll cheer them on in whatever they do I'm not going to force them." (young parent)

"To always know how loved you are." (Hopes and Dreams activity)

Many parents then extended these reflections through the scrapbook activity, creating keepsakes that captured their hopes, aspirations, and messages for their tamariki.

"I was doing the front pages... introducing him so he knows his name, who his family is and what he likes... I was going to gift it for his second birthday and just keep adding to it." (young parent)

The facilitator also noted the significance of both activities across the two groups, observing that young parents engaged deeply in reflecting on their hopes for their tamariki and documenting these aspirations in meaningful and personal ways

4.2 Extending Learning to Whānau

A key finding was that learning did not remain with individual parents. Most interviewed young parents described sharing ideas, books, and practices with whānau, particularly with their own parents and close family members.

"I told my mum how important it is, and so she's now started reading every now and again to the kids when she can." (young parent)

"I've shared with my cousins, and two friends with babies. I've shared with my parents... She likes it, and she's starting to read to baby slowly." (young parent)

The facilitator also observed that learning extended into the peer group, with young parents reflecting on their aspirations for their children and sharing ideas with one another.

4.3 Looking Towards The Future

The programme also supported young parents to see themselves as active contributors to their children's futures. Rather than focusing only on immediate parenting demands, participants described wanting to build positive routines, create lasting memories, and support their children's interests and aspirations over time.

"I wanted to change the cycle, you know, like try something nobody has ever done for me in my childhood." (young parent)

These reflections suggest that the programme encouraged young parents to think more broadly about their role in shaping their children's development and experiences.

These findings show that the programme supported young parents to connect everyday parenting practices with longer-term aspirations for their tamariki. By creating space to reflect on hopes, goals and values, the programme strengthened parents' sense of purpose and reinforced their role in supporting their children's futures.

Learning also extended beyond individual participants, with many parents sharing ideas, books and resources with whānau. This demonstrates that the programme's influence reached beyond individual parents, contributing to wider family engagement and support for early literacy.

Finding 5: Conditions that supported successful implementation

The evaluation identified that successful implementation depended on a set of interconnected conditions rather than programme content alone. Strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units, high-quality resources, and an ongoing approach to learning and refinement all contributed to effective delivery. Together, these conditions created an environment where young parents could engage with the programme and apply their learning in practice.

5.1 Partnership With Teen Parent Units

A key condition supporting implementation was the partnership between Storytime Foundation and Teen Parent Units. Teen Parent Unit staff participated alongside young parents and contributed to creating a supportive and familiar environment for delivery.

Staff also valued the collaborative approach and responsiveness of the programme:

"The kaiako was ready to learn and pivot to make the programme more tailored to our girls." (staff)

The facilitator described strong collaboration with staff, noting that staff were highly connected and encouraging of young parents, provided consistent support during delivery, and reinforced learning by engaging with participants who were not present, extending the impact of the programme beyond the workshops.

5.2 High-Quality Resources Supporting Learning At Home

The books, games and take-home resources were consistently identified by young parents, staff and the facilitator as a major strength of the programme. These resources supported parents to immediately apply their learning with their tamariki and enabled learning to continue beyond the workshops.

Resources were provided for all young parents attending the Teen Parent Units, including those unable to attend a workshop session, together with guidance on how they could be used to support early language and literacy development at home.

"Great resources, reinforcing ideas that have been discussed. Great take home pieces." (staff)

The facilitator noted that the availability of high-quality, age-appropriate resources was highly valued and played an important role in supporting young parents to apply their learning in everyday parenting at home.

5.3 Continuous Improvement Strengthened Delivery

The pilot was characterised by an ongoing process of reflection and adaptation. Facilitator reflections, staff feedback and participant input were used throughout delivery to improve the programme in real time. Learnings from Group 1 were integrated into the design and delivery of Group 2 of the pilot programme, enabling the programme to evolve in response to participant experiences and delivery insights.

Adjustments included:

- replacing lengthy introductions with practical, interactive activities
- allowing more time for creative activities such as scrapbooking

- adapting activities for different ages and expectant parents
- increasing opportunities for participation
- using recap activities to reinforce learning
- using simple, clear language to support understanding and participation
- ensuring activities are relevant for tamariki at different developmental stages
- maintaining inclusive approaches for both expectant parents and those with children of different ages
- continuing to provide high-quality, varied resources that can be used at home
- refining evaluation processes to respond to attendance patterns

This iterative approach enabled the programme to become increasingly responsive to the needs of young parents while maintaining the integrity of its core intent. Participant feedback and facilitator reflections were closely aligned, indicating that the programme evolved in ways that reflected young parents' experiences and priorities.

Together, these findings show that effective implementation relied on more than programme design. Strong relationships, practical resources, and a responsive approach to delivery particularly through partnerships with Teen Parent Units created the conditions for young parents to engage, build confidence, and apply their learning in everyday interactions with their tamariki.

5.4 Skilled Facilitation Supported Engagement and Learning

The evaluation found that skilled facilitation was a critical condition supporting successful implementation. Participants consistently described the workshops as welcoming, engaging, and non-judgemental, while staff highlighted the facilitator's ability to adapt delivery in response to participant needs and feedback. The facilitator demonstrated the ability to work effectively with both expectant wāhine and young parents at different stages of their parenting journey, creating a learning environment that was accessible, strengths-based, and responsive.

Facilitation extended beyond delivering programme content. It involved creating psychological safety, encouraging participation, adapting activities for different ages and stages of parenting, and helping young parents build confidence in their role as their child's first and most important teacher. These skills contributed significantly to participant engagement and supported the successful implementation of the programme.

Recommendations

1. Continue delivering the Taonga mō ngā Tamariki programme through Teen Parent Units

Continue delivering the programme through Teen Parent Units as a core delivery setting. The evaluation found strong evidence that the programme strengthened young parents' knowledge, confidence, and everyday parenting practices that support early language and literacy.

Teen Parent Units provide a supportive and familiar environment where learning can be reinforced through ongoing relationships with staff and integrated into everyday parenting and school life.

2. Maintain the programme's practical, strengths-based, and relationship-centred approach

Maintain the programme's practical and interactive delivery model. Hands-on activities, discussion, demonstration, and opportunities to apply learning immediately as a group were consistently identified as key strengths.

The programme should continue to build on parents' existing strengths, recognising their role as their child's first and most important teacher, and supporting positive, enjoyable early literacy experiences.

3. Continue investing in high-quality books and take-home resources

Continue investing in high-quality, age-appropriate books and take-home resources. These resources were highly valued by young parents, staff, and the facilitator, and played an important role in supporting learning beyond the workshops.

Providing resources that can be used immediately at home enables parents to put new ideas into practice and strengthens continuity between learning and everyday routines.

4. Further strengthen practical ideas that fit into everyday routines

Further strengthen the programme's focus on practical strategies that can be incorporated into everyday routines. Young parents valued learning that could be integrated into the routines they were already managing as both parents and students.

Future delivery should expand examples of how reading, talking, listening, singing, and storytelling can be woven into morning routines, after-school time, evenings, and weekends, making early literacy achievable within everyday family life.

5. Maintain strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units

Maintain strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units as a critical implementation condition. Staff participation enables programme messages to be reinforced through ongoing conversations and everyday interactions across the wider Teen Parent Unit environment.

Future delivery should continue to prioritise active collaboration with staff to strengthen continuity of learning beyond the workshop sessions.

6. Develop an implementation guide to support future delivery

Develop an implementation guide to capture key learning from the pilot and support consistent, high-quality delivery. The guide should document effective facilitation strategies, practical learning approaches, partnership with Teen Parent Units, and adaptations that support delivery across different groups while maintaining the programme's core intent.

7. Ensure future delivery is supported by highly skilled facilitators

Ensure future delivery is led by facilitators with strong skills in working alongside expectant wāhine and young parents. The pilot highlighted the importance of facilitation that is warm, strengths-based, non-judgemental, and responsive to participants' diverse experiences, confidence levels, and stages of parenting.

Future delivery should prioritise facilitators who can build trust, create safe learning environments, adapt content and activities to participant needs, and support meaningful engagement while maintaining the programme's core intent.

Conclusion

This evaluation found that the Taonga mō ngā Tamariki pilot made a meaningful difference for young parents and their tamariki. The programme strengthened parents' knowledge, confidence, and understanding of how early language and literacy develop through everyday interactions. Young parents described gaining new knowledge, feeling less pressure to teach their children to read, and developing greater confidence in their role as their child's first and most important teacher. These changes translated into more intentional reading, talking, singing, and language-rich interactions within everyday family life.

A key strength of the programme was that learning felt practical, relevant, and achievable. The programme supported young parents to weave reading, conversation, songs, and storytelling into routines they were already managing as both parents and students. Early literacy became part of everyday family life, making it easier for young parents to apply their learning in ways that felt realistic and sustainable. The practical activities, welcoming environment, opportunities to learn alongside peers, and high-quality resources all contributed to strong engagement and supported participants to apply their learning beyond the workshops.

The programme also created valuable opportunities for young parents to reflect on their hopes and aspirations for their tamariki and the kind of parent they wanted to be. Through the Hopes and Dreams and scrapbook activities, participants reflected on the values, opportunities, and experiences they hoped to provide for their children. These reflections reinforced their sense of purpose as parents and encouraged them to think about the long-term future and wellbeing of their tamariki. Learning frequently extended beyond individual participants, with many parents sharing ideas, resources, and learning with whānau and peers.

The evaluation also demonstrated that successful implementation relied on more than programme content alone. Strong partnerships with Teen Parent Units, high-quality resources, skilled facilitation, and an ongoing commitment to reflection and continuous improvement created the conditions for success. Delivery was strengthened through collaboration with Teen Parent Unit staff, facilitation that was responsive to the needs of expectant wāhine and young parents, and a willingness to adapt delivery based on feedback and learning from earlier implementation.

As a pilot, the evaluation focused on early outcomes and implementation learning rather than long-term impacts. However, the consistency of evidence across surveys, interviews, participant activities, staff feedback, and facilitator reflections provides strong confidence that the programme is achieving its intended outcomes and has established a strong foundation for future delivery.

Overall, Taonga mō ngā Tamariki provides a practical, strengths-based, and evidence-informed approach to supporting expectant wāhine and young parents. By building confidence, strengthening everyday interactions, nurturing aspirations for tamariki, and creating supportive conditions for learning, the programme has demonstrated its value as an approach for supporting early language and literacy development, positive parenting, and whānau wellbeing. The findings provide a strong foundation for continued delivery, refinement, and future growth.