

# How parents shape the reading habits of their children

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This research was conducted by **Sabine Wollscheid** at the **Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services, Norway**

## Summary

This paper explored the impact of parents' reading patterns on their children's reading habits. Drawing on a sample of 757 school-aged children living in two-parent households in Germany, the research demonstrated that parents' reading had a strong impact on how much their children read, and particularly on how much their daughters read. These findings have consequences for reading policy.

## Mothers (in particular) make a difference to younger children

The relationship between younger children's reading and mothers' reading habits can be explained by the fact that women often undertake the main care-giving role at this stage in children's lives. However, this may change as the child-care and paid work roles become more equally apportioned between men and women. Fathers have a stronger influence of the reading habits of older children, and on sons more than daughters.

## Children may also influence parents

The association between the reading behaviour of parents and children is because parents provide a model for their children. However this influence may also be reciprocal – with parents reading more because their children do.

# Policy should look beyond the family to influence the reading behaviour of boys

Many reading programmes focus on the family as a key place for reading development, and this may mean that these interventions are less successful for sons. Youth clubs might be a better alternative setting for successful programmes focusing on male reading development.

This summary was written by **Ruth Craggs, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

## Keywords

parents reading families survey Germany children

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