

# Impact report

2024/25





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## Thank you and references



Case study

### Reading from the earliest moments

Martha\* lives with her husband, who she cares for full time, and her daughters Anna (15), Emily (2) and Georgia (1). Money is tight and her support is limited, but reading has become a daily highlight in their home.

Although Martha has always enjoyed books, she didn't begin reading with her older children, now in their teens and twenties, until they were around 18 months old. That changed when she received a Bookstart Baby pack for Emily. From three months old, Emily began exploring books. Martha told us:



I've always read with my children, but I wouldn't have ever thought about doing tummy time with a book for example... I probably wouldn't have started reading with them realistically 'til they were about 18 months. I did try it earlier and it did work – because Emily now absolutely loves her books. She loves her stories. Probably more so I would say than [her older siblings]."

Martha believes that starting so early is the reason Emily is so engaged with reading.



We'll read the book and then she'll go back over it and look at the pictures and tell me what's happened. She is speaking so well, I mean she can hold a full conversation with you. She remembers the story and she reads to her little sister, which is very, very sweet."

For Martha, Bookstart turned reading from an occasional activity into a valued routine, supporting her children's development and creating moments of connection in a busy household.



I think she enjoys the time. Just us, no distractions. It gives your brain and everything [else] a little chance to calm down from a busy day, you know?"

\*Names have been changed

# Introduction

At BookTrust, 2024/25 marked the end of one strategy period, paving the way for our 2025-2030 strategy: **Reading for a brighter future**. Building on our progress, this new chapter sets out a renewed five-year vision. We aim to help more children and families build a regular reading habit and experience all the benefits this brings, through building and strengthening reading support across the networks that surround children and families.

Childhood has transformed in the last decade and it's now harder than ever for families to share books and stories, despite many of them knowing it is key for their children's development and future success. This means many children are missing out on vital opportunities to build a lifelong love of reading.

That's why we are partnering with Frank Cottrell-Boyce, Waterstones Children's Laureate 2024–26, on the Reading Rights mission. This is a call to action for leaders everywhere to ensure every child can benefit from shared reading. Our **Reading Rights** report sets out a shared vision for early childhood reading, shaped by experts, leaders and professionals across the political, education, literacy, early years, arts, health and children's social care sectors. To make this vision a reality, we must work together.



**95%**  
of families  
know that reading with  
their child is important



But only  
**42%**  
of 0–7 year olds  
get a bedtime story<sup>1</sup>



And only  
**25%**  
of 11 year olds  
say they love reading<sup>2</sup>

“

Too many children miss out on the life-changing benefits of reading. We, alongside librarians, childcare workers, health visitors, teachers and many more, are working to change this. We are deeply thankful to all our partners, who we will keep on working with to make a difference. And to our funders who make it all possible.”

Diana Gerald, Co-CEO BookTrust

“

Through our trusted partnerships, we remain deeply embedded in the support systems for early years families and children from vulnerable family backgrounds. As part of the National Year of Reading, and through our leading role in the early years, we are committed to driving lasting change for children, families and partners.”

Annie Crombie, Co-CEO BookTrust



Reading supports children to:



Overcome inequalities before they deepen



Bond with their caregivers and experience better mental wellbeing



Meet early development milestones and do better at school



Develop empathy, creativity and imagination





## About BookTrust

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. Each year we reach over 1.4 million children and families across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We work with every local authority, delivering evidence-informed reading programmes that make a measurable difference to children's reading behaviours.

Our work is rooted in the belief that every child, especially those from low-income or vulnerable family backgrounds, deserves the chance to enjoy reading and all the lifelong benefits it brings.

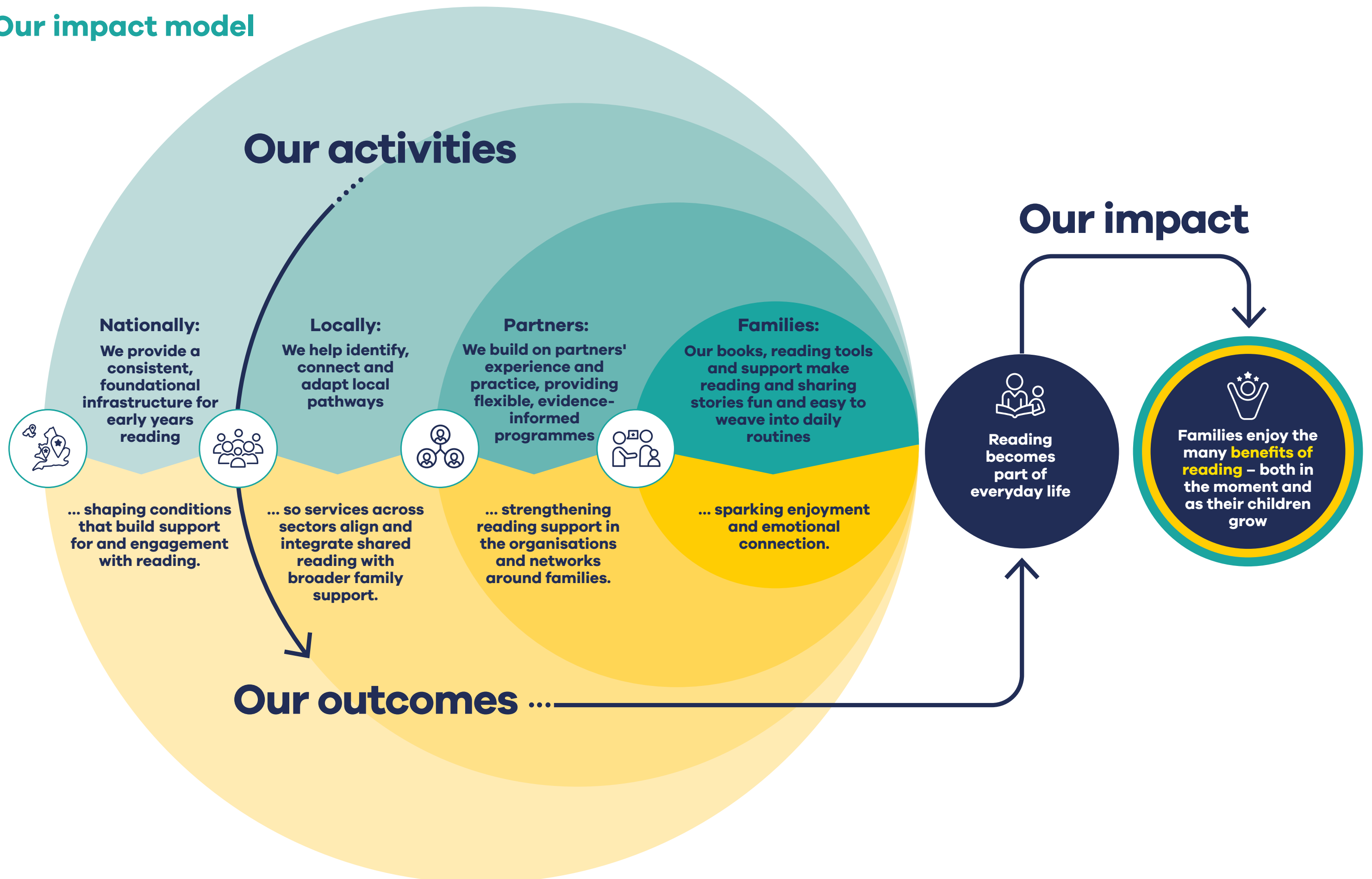
Reading is for all children. Our work focuses on children and families in greater need of our support, who stand to benefit most.

Reading can help children overcome inequalities before they deepen, giving them the strongest start in life. That's why we design our support and build our networks around these families.

Our work is deeply woven into the wider support system for children and families, enabling our partners to integrate reading support into their services. Together, we respond to local needs and reach families wherever they are, especially in communities where our support can make the greatest difference.



## Our impact model







## Our approach

We work with over 19,200 settings and an estimated 34,000 individual partners in education, libraries, health, children's social care and early help.

The landscape across these sectors is increasingly complex. Workforce and funding pressures are growing. At the same time, services face rising demands, driven by the scale and complexity of the needs of children and families.

Engaging communities and families can be challenging. For the people we work with – those on low incomes, foster families, kinship care families, adoptive families – there are often many competing priorities for their time. Levels of trust or involvement with services vary, and many people will be navigating their own challenges. 89% of our early years partners report concerns about a lack of engagement from families.<sup>3</sup>

This context is why our approach – building long-term local partnerships and continuously shaping our support around the needs of partners and families – is so vital to achieving impact.

Children and family engagement in reading is in decline. Our partners need our support now more than ever to help reverse this trend. Because, while reading might not solve all the problems families face, it makes a real and immediate difference in childhood and beyond.

Our programmes span from ages 0 to 14, providing support at each step of children's journeys through reading.



**BookTrust is such an important guide for us. The research that you produce is so informative and you know your target audience. With well-informed, evidence-based programmes that are relevant to parents as well as staff, and the situations that we find ourselves in... I find BookTrust is a reminder of what we have forgotten that we know. It also supports best practice and sharing ideas, skills and knowledge. I think [it] is phenomenal. I've never seen that anywhere else."**

Penny Ambrose, Manager, Beechmount Sure Start, Belfast



## Our programmes



Our programmes provide a blend of high-quality books, practical information and engaging activities for families, alongside resources and guidance that help professionals to deliver effective reading behaviour change support.

We know the importance of finding the right book, the ones families and children

enjoy most and that bring the greatest benefits. Our expertise in children's books, from early years to early teens, is central to the impact of our programmes.

By combining the appeal of these books with the ability of our partners to provide positive messaging, practical guidance and guided modelling\*, we create

meaningful behaviour change. These partner-led elements are essential to the success of our programmes, which is why we continuously support their practice with our evidence-informed tools and information.

Our **research and evaluation** ensures everything we do drives impact for

children and families. Our **Theory of Change**, and our deep understanding of the mechanisms of change, help guide us. We draw on the best available evidence and work closely with families and partners to develop innovative approaches that build on strengths, reduce barriers and fit within the realities of everyday practice and family life.

\* Modelling is a process where partners use our books and resources to demonstrate how to share stories in ways that resonate with parents and carers. This helps families observe, understand and replicate these approaches, enriching the interactive and emotional experience of reading together at home.





## Our impact in 2024/25

In 2024/25 we set out to:

1

Embed reading into the early years of children in families on low incomes

2

Bring enjoyment and stability to children in adoption, foster and kinship care, through reading and sharing stories

3

Support schools to foster a love of reading





## Focus area one: Early years

### Embedding reading into the early years of children in families on low incomes

Getting families reading together from their child's earliest moments brings joy, comfort and connection. **Hundreds of research studies** demonstrate that reading is a key driver for children's development. It helps them achieve a good level of development, be ready for school and creates benefits that last into adulthood. BookTrust's work in the early years connects across sectors and settings to embed shared reading support into family life. We work with a range of settings and organisations to deliver our early years work including:

- Early years education (almost 5,700 settings)
- Early years health (around two-thirds of health visitors)
- Libraries (over 2,600 settings)
- Multi-agency settings that support families (over 1,000 settings and organisations, including over 180 family hubs)
- Charities and community organisations (over 170 organisations)

**Our research** shows that families who start sharing books and stories together early are more likely to develop a long-lasting shared reading habit.<sup>4</sup> Parents' and carers' own experiences and norms around reading can shape early shared reading habits – either reinforcing or discouraging it.<sup>5</sup> When shared reading is explained or modelled by someone families trust or can relate to, it helps them see its relevance and importance.<sup>6</sup> Partners use our Bookstart packs and Storytime resources to open up these conversations and create memorable, celebratory moments that engage families in positive ways. The books, activities and supportive messaging emphasise ways to create closeness and interaction, and help build parents' and carers' confidence to read with their child.

By providing books that make story times engaging, either in libraries or at home, we are able to encourage parents to try reading more with their child. When they see their child's interest and growth firsthand, this becomes a powerful motivator to continue reading.<sup>7</sup>



**We really enjoy our partnership with BookTrust. We have been really motivated to improve our offer to families and ensure the fantastic BookTrust packs are reaching the correct families. We have developed the way we gift the packs and have some key partners now gifting packs to families with fantastic events modelling storytelling and using the resources to maximise the impact."**

Bookstart Coordinator, London, England



**In 2024/25, we reached over half a million families – around 90% of all families with new babies – with Bookstart Baby.**

**Bookstart Baby** is our programme for families with children aged 0 to 1. Every child is eligible for a free book pack designed to help them start reading and sharing stories from the earliest possible moment.



**Her little feet would start going and her hands would wave – she'd get so excited because she knew what was coming on that page. Seeing her reaction made it all worthwhile."**

Parent on a low income in Fermanagh, talking about Bookstart Baby



**65%**  
**of parents/carers**  
say the books were among the first they owned for their child



**78%**  
**of parents/carers**  
say the pack prompted them to read or share books and stories more with their baby<sup>8</sup>

**This early impact makes the programme an important introduction to a lifelong investment in their child's future.**



**94%**  
**of partners**  
say Bookstart Baby is effective in supporting families to start reading with their children as early as possible



**82%**  
**of partners**  
say Bookstart is very important to their organisation<sup>9</sup>



**Case study**

**Professor Sam Wass is a developmental cognitive neuroscientist who runs the Institute for the Science of Early Years (ISEY) at the University of East London.**

ISEY is generating fascinating insights into how shared reading supports children to learn:



Face-to-face book sharing is dialogic, active and child-led, which promotes effective learning. When we're sharing a book, we go at the child's pace and follow the child's interest, repeating words that might be new and talking about the things that interest them. We might stay on a picture for a long time, or go backwards and skip ahead, rereading some pages or the entire book. Babies' brains process information much more slowly than adults', and pictures in books depict emotions that are "frozen" in time. When a baby is staring at a picture, they are absorbing information at the speed they need to learn. Crucially, reading together is child-led, matching the pace at which children's brains work, whereas the speed of content presented on screen can't be so easily controlled by the child.

Brains are rhythmic: individual cells talk to each other through coordinated patterns of firing known as oscillations. Language is rhythmic too, and speech rhythms 'piggyback' on naturally occurring brain rhythms, which helps us to produce and understand language. Children's brain rhythms are naturally weaker, and there is evidence that child-directed language, which naturally has exaggerated rhythms through features such as metre and rhyme, can help to 'nudge' a child's brain into strong, stable rhythmic activity. This helps the developing brain to detect patterns and meaning in language." - Professor Sam Wass



**Sam explains more of the science and shows us inside ISEY – find the research and watch the video here.**



**We reached 417,400 children aged 1 to 4 through our Bookstart Toddler and Pre-schooler programme. This includes 313,100 children from families on low incomes – one-third of all 1 to 4-year-olds living in low income households.**

**Bookstart Toddler and Pre-schooler** is our programme for families with children aged 1 to 4. The partner resources and support, alongside book and activity packs for families, are designed to provide extra support to families on lower incomes, helping them make shared reading a regular part of their lives.

“

**We'll go through the Bookstart Pre-schooler packs with parents... They've seen what we can do through modelling during our session, now it's over to them. Parents need to understand there's different ways to do this, and they can do it their way. Parents will come back to us and say: 'We drew this picture,' or 'We used the pack to make a model.' ... We encourage this kind of play with parents. It might be how they find their interest into sharing stories."**

Jyoti Johal, Nursery Manager,  
Beeches Day Nursery, Walsall



**76%**

**of parents/carers**

learned something new about different ways they can read and share stories with their child



**71%**

**of parents/carers**

believe more strongly in the benefits of reading for their child



**76%**

**of parents/carers**

agree the pack prompted them to read or share stories more with their child<sup>10</sup>



**96%**

**of partners**

agree the programme helped them engage families in reading



**81%**

**of partners**

say Bookstart Toddler/Pre-schooler is very important to their organisation<sup>11</sup>

“

**It felt like a helpful toolkit for making reading time more engaging and meaningful. I enjoyed using the various tips and materials provided, such as suggestions for expressive reading and ideas for involving my child in the storytelling process. These tools made reading sessions more interactive, and I could see my child becoming more interested in stories."**

Parent on a low income, Bristol, talking about Bookstart Toddler



**2,600 libraries – around 90% of all libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – took part in BookTrust Storytime, reaching an estimated 60,000 children aged 5 and under.**

**BookTrust Storytime** is our national library programme, providing libraries with books and resources to support families with children aged 0 to 5 to build positive reading habits through enjoyable story sharing experiences.



**Off the back of what we did with BookTrust Storytime, we’ve now got weekly story time sessions at Nottingham Central Library. In the school holidays, we also make story times include craft sessions. BookTrust Storytime really helped us understand what we could do and what worked well. We’ve also seen families who came along to BookTrust Storytime come into the library and sit down together and tell stories out loud in such a way that they gather groups of children around them. It’s really great to see.”**

Hannah Clover, Senior Library Customer Advisor and David Beer, Library Customer Advisor, Nottingham Central Library



**84%**  
**of partners**

say BookTrust Storytime helped support their library’s work with children under five



**77%**  
**of partners**

believe the programme helped early years families to build shared reading routines



**70%**  
**of partners**

see the programme as effective in supporting families who are new, or wouldn’t normally use the library, to have a positive experience<sup>12</sup>



**In Wales, 49,600 Nursery and Reception-aged children engaged with **Pori Drwy Stori**, our bilingual programme.**

This provides every child in Reception with bilingual book and supporting activities to keep helping them to develop literacy, numeracy, speaking and listening skills. As part of **Bookstart Early Years**, 30,100 packs were distributed, and over 25,300 children across more than 550 settings took part in Big Welsh Rhyme Time.

Looking to the future, we will continue to support families with new babies and expand our Bookstart Toddler and Pre-schooler programme to reach even more children, particularly those from families on low incomes. We will also strengthen support for our early years delivery partners, using our knowledge of the key drivers of impact to help even more children develop a love of reading.



**As a nursery class we love receiving our Pori Drwy Stori packs each year, we plan lots of activities around each rhyme and the children get very excited to be taking home their own folder. This offer has helped with parental engagement, children joining in and sharing with their family and friends.”**

Pori Drwy Stori partner, Denbighshire



Focus area two:

# Children from vulnerable family backgrounds

## Bringing enjoyment and stability to children in adoption, foster and kinship care, through reading and sharing stories

Positive caregiver relationships play a huge role in children's development from the early years onwards. But when children experience vulnerability, these supportive relationships can be disrupted. Sharing stories is a simple yet powerful way to build and nurture bonds. By fostering a love of reading, we can also support children's wellbeing, strengthen their sense of security and identity, and unlock their potential as learners.

**Our research** shows that reading can act as a protective factor when children face adversity, but reading support must be designed around the child. Emphasising playfulness and enjoyment makes reading more appealing and reinforces a sense of agency and ownership. When children receive their own books and parcels, they make their own decisions about how to use them. Regular provision of books and parcels not only supports more equal access to resources, it also builds anticipation and excitement, drawing children into reading in a way that feels personal and empowering.



**The Letterbox Club book parcels started arriving when Reggie\* came into our care. They're sent regularly in a way that feels really exciting. All children love getting things in the post. The fact that they're in a different home, in a different address, but the parcel has got their name on it, it really helps that feeling of belonging in that home. It's quite special to see that. It's such a nice gift, and a way to make reading exciting."**

Foster carer, talking about Letterbox Club  
(\*name changed)



**I love the games, especially when I'm bored. Every morning when someone knocks on the door I'm always shouting, 'My Letterbox is here!'"**

Child, talking about Letterbox Club



**We reached over 10,500 children in foster care or from families on low incomes with Letterbox Club.**

**Letterbox Club** is our long-standing programme for children aged 3 to 13 who are in foster care or from families on low incomes. It supports local authorities and schools to bring the joy of reading and numeracy into these children's lives, helping to build confidence and engagement through a series of carefully curated books, resources and activities.



**96%**  
of children  
say they like or love  
Letterbox Club



**73%**  
of children  
say they are reading  
more after receiving  
Letterbox Club<sup>13</sup>



**We partnered with Kinship, the leading kinship care charity in England and Wales, to share books and provide information and support to over 1,000 kinship carers.**

For kinship families, the relational value of books is central. Through a series of roadshows and workshops, we provided books, booklists and guidance to help families use story sharing to explore complex topics such as identity, emotions and loss.



**[Reading together] gives her the encouragement and the confidence to be able to talk about other things that are going on at school as well. Because we can sit down and she knows that she's in a safe space and we can talk about anything."**

Kinship carer, Croydon



**Amy Mercer from Hull and East Yorkshire Children's University explains how books and stories can build children's sense of safety and security – watch the video here.**



“

He wants to come and sit with you... he didn't at the beginning... They are conversation starters and even the props, they encourage spending more time together. And talking more to each other, it's about sharing and communication.”

Foster carer, talking about Story Explorers

**We launched Story Explorers, providing over 700 subscriptions to kinship, foster and adoptive families.**

**Story Explorers** is our pilot programme of monthly kits with books and resources to support joyful story sharing experiences at home for children in kinship, foster or adoptive families.

Insights from our early-stage evaluation show promise. The introduction of the kits has sparked new reading behaviours, empowering children to engage with books and stories. They have also helped families build shared rituals around playful reading experiences, building trust, familiarity and security.



## Our development journey for Story Explorers: centring children and families

Our Story Explorers co-design journey began in 2023 by understanding the needs of children, carers and professionals. We found that adults wanted to foster belonging and security, and children valued playfulness and autonomy.

In 2024/25, we piloted the programme and continued to learn and iterate with families and professionals. Children's voices remain central to this. Inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy, we see children as active participants in our learning. We embrace the 'Hundred Languages of Children' and use the Mosaic Approach<sup>14</sup> to listen to the voices of young children through speech, drawing, writing and action.



“  
Me count!”



Case study



“

**I [want] to [read] it again and again”**

In the next phase of our pilot, we will further refine the programme to enhance its impact. We will co-design additional support for professionals and carers, and continue learning from partners to help grow our reach.

BookTrust has been supporting children in contact with the social care system for over 20 years. Looking to the future, we will work to increase recognition of the role reading can play in supporting children from vulnerable family backgrounds, so it can be built into their support systems. As we reach increasing numbers of children and grow our network of advocates, experts and partners, we will continue to learn with families to deliver the support they need.





Focus area three:

# Schools

## Supporting schools to foster a love of reading

Children who enjoy reading tend to read more often, for longer and become more skilled readers, but children’s reading enjoyment is in decline. **Our research** shows a concerning trend – enjoyment of reading starts to drop from around ages 5 to 7 and continues to decline as children progress through primary school. Schools play a vital role in reversing this trend by providing children with access, support and inspiration for reading. Yet schools face a number of challenges – 81% of primary teachers report multiple barriers in encouraging children to read for enjoyment. These barriers include lack of time to let children read (36%) and limited access to books that children enjoy (18%).<sup>15</sup>

To motivate school-age children to read, it is essential to make reading feel meaningful, through books and experiences that are personally and socially engaging.<sup>16</sup> In the early years, building families’ positive connection to reading lays the foundation for lifelong enjoyment. As children grow, continuing to nurture their ability to connect with books and make their own choices about what to read helps them develop a strong, self-sustaining reading habit.<sup>17</sup>

“**Reading for pleasure in children is in decline, but the reasons are really complex. One of the biggest things: access to text, particularly for underserved communities. This is where schools and nurseries and other settings become really, really important, because they are the place in which children are going to encounter texts, encounter books. That access to high-quality text needs to be a real focus.**”

Matthew Courtney,  
Director of Wandle Learning Partnership



## Primary schools

Across primary and secondary schools, we reached 47,800 children from 1,600 schools with our BookTrust Represents programme.

**BookTrust Represents** is our programme of virtual author visits and teacher support. Each half term, 60 of these schools in the areas of highest deprivation were given free books for children to keep, providing 18,000 books in total across the year.

Through our **Northern Ireland author tours**, more than 1,800 children met and were inspired by celebrated authors and illustrators and took home a book to keep.



### Case study



**Serena Patel is an award-winning children's book author and took part in the BookTrust Represents Virtual Author Event series.**

She talks about the importance of children seeing themselves and others represented positively, and the important role books can play here:

“I grew up feeling very much the odd one out, at school and at home. There was so much I didn't understand and couldn't control. But books offered comfort, a place to escape, a place of hope, adventure, mystery and fun. I think I was also looking for answers, connection, wanting to feel understood, seen somehow. And I did connect with characters in stories, but I never read about a South Asian main character, I never saw a South Asian child on the cover of any of the books I read. I sometimes wonder what that might have felt like and how that might have changed my perception of myself and the world I was growing up in. I believe books can act as a mirror, offering a reflection of a child's life, making them feel seen, their experience validated. Books can also act as a window into the world of someone different to the reader, creating an opportunity for learning, empathy and understanding. Both are so important.

When I was asked to do a virtual visit with BookTrust, I was delighted to accept. I never had the opportunity to meet a real-life author as a child, I know that would have meant so much to me. I hoped that children watching would see that if I can be a published author, then so can they.”



As part of our 'Reading and Wellbeing' assembly resources, author Michael Rosen explained how books can build empathy – watch the video here.

Our **Great Books Guide** went out to every primary school in England and Northern Ireland, with a carefully chosen selection of recommendations to help teachers find every child a book that excites them. We continued to share our knowledge of books that inspire and engage through book reviews and recommendations, sharing 365 new reviews across the year.

We expanded our webinar programme, hosting five sessions throughout the year to share insights from research and practice with educators. This included findings and practical support from two BookTrust research reports highlighting the **vital role teachers play in supporting children's love of reading** and **the role of reading in supporting children's wellbeing**.



## Secondary schools

We launched **Bookspark\***, a new programme with books and resources to help schools develop sociable reading experiences through shared reading sessions. It gives Key Stage 3 students, particularly those less engaged in reading, a boost to start or maintain a reading habit.

**Bookbuzz** is our programme supporting secondary schools to get pupils excited about reading during this key transitional period. Bookbuzz gives students the chance to choose and keep a book they'll love, and schools receive tools to deliver engaging sessions that scaffold students' choices and allow them ownership of what they read.



**242,700**  
**children**

**in Years 7 and 8**  
took part in Bookbuzz



**98%**  
**of teachers and librarians**

agree Bookbuzz supports them to encourage reading for pleasure in their school<sup>18</sup>



**Probably the biggest challenge of my role is trying to encourage reluctant readers to engage with the library – getting them in... Bookbuzz can sometimes really break the ice with those students. I think the most effective way to encourage students to read in secondary school is to give them a lot of choice and to let them have a say in what they want to read."**

Louise Henley, Library Manager,  
Bluecoat Aspley Academy, Nottingham

Looking to the future, we will continue to support teachers with our resources, particularly our book reviews and recommendations. We will also grow our support to children across both primary and secondary schools with our reading programmes, including expanding our Key Stage 2 offer.



\* Bookspark was initially launched under the name Spark Reading.



# Other highlights from 2024/25

During the year we collaborated across multiple sectors and countries to share learning, raise awareness and advocate for the importance of sharing books and stories from the earliest moments in childhood.

## April 2024

As convenors of the Global Network for Early Years Reading – a forum for sharing best practice and research across the international community – we met with our international counterparts to discuss aligning early shared reading with health priorities.



## September 2024

We hosted the second Biodiversity Storytelling Summit through our RENEW partnership with the University of Exeter and the National Trust. The summit brought together experts across publishing, science, schools and libraries to create new biodiversity narratives and visual storytelling in children's literature.



## November 2024

We hosted a parliamentary reception, where sector leaders, parliamentarians, policy makers and professionals came together to discuss how to embed sharing stories into support for children from vulnerable family backgrounds.



## January 2025

Together with Waterstones Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce, we hosted the Reading Rights Summit. Bringing together expert voices and policy makers in local authorities, health, education, early years, literacy and arts sectors to take the first steps towards creating a roadmap for making the life-changing benefits of reading accessible to every child.



## June 2024

Joseph Coelho's Children's Laureateship came to an end. Over the course of his time as Laureate, Joseph visited over 70 libraries across England, Wales and Northern Ireland as part of his marathon Laureate Library Tour. Frank Cottrell-Boyce was appointed as the new Laureate.



## October 2024

We launched our research briefing on **the role of reading for children experiencing vulnerability**.



## December 2024

We established our **Learning Oversight Group** to provide expert input on our research and evaluation approach. We continued to work with our learning zones in Blackpool, Brent, Leeds, Leicester, Hartlepool, Sandwell and Somerset, and began planning for our new place-based pilots.



## March 2025

We launched our **Reading Rights Report**, calling for national provision so that every child has access to books and reading from their earliest years.





## Case study

**Waterstones Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce's opening speech at the Reading Rights Summit:**

“When I became Laureate, I made a speech in which I talked about the fact that so many of our children are arriving at school without having been read to. If your first encounter with a book comes when you're tucked up with someone who loves you, or is at least responsible for you, then you're being given a huge invisible privilege. A hug that will last the rest of your life.

If your first encounter with a book is in school, when it sits dumbly in front of you, while you are asked to make it speak, then you've been left with a massive, possibly insurmountable, disadvantage – particularly for the 4.3 million children growing up in poverty. It's not right or fair that children who could benefit the most, are deprived of a life that is rich in reading, with all the benefits that brings.

That inequality obviously expresses itself in lower educational attainment and life chances. But I have a feeling that something else – something more fundamental – is being lost. Something harder to measure. Happiness. Every child needs the opportunity to begin to build the apparatus of happiness within themselves. Shared reading – especially in early years – is an essential component of that apparatus. That our children seem to be experiencing some kind of happiness recession at the moment is not surprising. They've borne the brunt of a series of crises. I believe that the decline in reading too has played its part in this. The good news is that we can fix that. Starting from today.”



As part of our Reading Rights campaign, Frank and our early years partners explained how books can build a brighter future – watch the video here.



# Thank you

**We are deeply grateful to our partners for their continued commitment and collaboration. Thank you to:**

Our Patron, Her Majesty the Queen, for her ongoing patronage and support for the cause of reading, and our President, Sir Michael Morpurgo, for his long-standing support and inspiration.

Our network of Bookstart Coordinators and delivery partners, operating in every community in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These partners are supporting families in libraries, community organisations, early years settings, health visiting services, local authorities and schools, helping us make a lasting impact for children and families.

Our partners in publishing, including authors and illustrators, whose work is at the heart of our mission to inspire children and families on their reading journeys.



**If I had never had the lady come over and give me the Bookstart stuff when my son was born, I wouldn't have known. And you've helped play a big part in my son's life because if I didn't show him them books... he wouldn't have had that experience from such a young age and be where he is now. So, I thank you guys!"**

Parent on a low income, Hertfordshire, talking about Bookstart

**We are grateful for the generous support we receive from those who share our mission to get children and families reading for pleasure:**

- Arts Council England
- Arts Council of Northern Ireland
- Department for Education – England
- Department of Education – Northern Ireland
- Llywodraeth Cymru – Welsh Government

**We also would like to thank some of the many individuals, companies, trusts and foundations who generously supported our work in the past year including:**

- Bhim Ruia Foundation
  - Bloomsbury Publishing
  - Bookshop.org
  - Browns Books
  - Build-A-Bear Foundation
  - Emerald Publishing Limited
  - Enterprise Mobility
  - Eric Hieltes Stiftelse
  - Gapper Charitable Trust
  - Garfield Weston Foundation
  - George Cadbury Trust
  - Gigglemug Charitable Trust
  - Harris Poll
  - J&H Orlander Trust
  - Lincoln Business Improvement Group Elmer Trail
  - Marigold Trust
  - MarketingTwentyOne
  - Mercury Engineering
  - Mintaka Trust
  - MM Wealth
  - Mohn Westlake Foundation
  - Mrs M A Lascelles Charitable Trust
  - Mushens Entertainment
  - Pan Macmillan
- PDT Partners
  - Pension Insurance Corporation
  - Peters Ltd
  - Princeton University Press
  - Promote Your School
  - RSM UK Foundation
  - Sevenoaks Literary Festival
  - Simon And Philip Cohen Charitable Trust
  - Slightly Foxed
  - Sweet Cherry Publishing
  - The Elizabeth Frankland Moore and Star Foundation
  - The Eranda Rothschild Foundation
  - The Folio Society
  - The Haremead Trust
  - The Sir Ralph Pendlebury 1880 Charity for Stockport's Neediest Residents
  - The Tanlaw Foundation
  - Vision Architectural Glazing Installations Ltd
  - Waterstones
  - Westminster Abbey
  - Wilmington Trust

And all those who wish to remain anonymous.



# Notes and references

All reach figures in this report are rounded to the nearest hundred, or to two significant figures for figures over a million or under a thousand. Throughout, we have highlighted where we do not have precise figures and reach numbers are based on estimates using best available data.

We receive survey responses from a wide range of partners and families but cannot be certain they are fully representative of our partner network or the families we support.

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3. BookTrust (2025) Online survey of 668 BookTrust early years partners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, conducted between February and April 2025. **BookTrust Partner Survey | BookTrust.**
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9. BookTrust (2025) Online survey of BookTrust early years partners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, conducted between February and April 2025. **BookTrust Partner Survey | BookTrust.**
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11. BookTrust (2025) Online survey of BookTrust early years partners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, conducted between February and April 2025. Figures based on 468 Bookstart Toddler/Pre-schooler partners. **BookTrust Partner Survey | BookTrust.**
12. BookTrust (2025) **BookTrust Storytime 2024-25 evaluation findings.** Leeds: BookTrust.
13. BookTrust (2024) **Letterbox Club Impact Report 2024.** Leeds: BookTrust.
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# Further information

Find out more about our approach and financial statements in our **2024/25 Annual Report**.

Find out more about our future vision and ambition in our **2025-2030 Strategy: Reading for a brighter future**.

To discuss how you can work with BookTrust, contact us at **[queries@booktrust.org.uk](mailto:queries@booktrust.org.uk)**



## Contact us

[impact@booktrust.org.uk](mailto:impact@booktrust.org.uk)

[booktrust.org.uk](https://booktrust.org.uk)

Follow us on social: @BookTrust

