Media Release

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BookTrust launches UKRI-funded project to help families in temporary accommodation share stories and stay connected

BookTrust is launching a new UKRI-funded project to help young children in temporary accommodation enjoy the connection, comfort and continuity of shared reading.

The 12-month Stories that Connect project will provide support, book packs and story sessions for families whose housing situation can make everyday routines, access to books and early years activities harder to maintain.

Funded by UKRI through the Research and Development Missions Accelerator Programme (R&D MAP), the project will be shaped with families, practitioners and local partners, so the support reflects what families in temporary accommodation say they need and what works in real settings.

It will be tested in two local authority areas where families will receive packs with books and simple activities, including dual-language resources, alongside books for older children so the whole family can take part.

Storytelling sessions will take place in temporary accommodation or in trusted community spaces such as family hubs or libraries, with dedicated outreach work, making it easier for families to join in.

The project builds on BookTrust's existing Department for Education-funded work in Birmingham with its Reading Rights Ambassador Frank Cottrell-Boyce, taking books and story support to families in temporary accommodation through trusted local services.

BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, brings decades of experience helping families share stories from the earliest years, delivered through 30,000 local partners across early years, health, libraries, family hubs and local authorities.

The initiative will help BookTrust understand how to make reading support easier to access for families facing some of the greatest barriers. This is vital, as reading together in the earliest years has lifelong benefits for a child's wellbeing, development and future prospects.

Diana Gerald, Co-CEO at BookTrust, said: *"Shared reading offers children so much more than just a story and, for that reason, it's something every child should have access to. But for families living in temporary accommodation, it can be hard to find the space, time or resources to make stories part of everyday life. This project is about listening to those families and the people who support them, then testing practical ways to make books and story sessions easier to access and enjoy. We hope it will help more children feel the joy and reassurance of reading with someone who cares for them."*

The project will be evaluated to understand what works, what families and practitioners find useful, and what difference it makes. This will include looking at parent and carer confidence, how often families share stories, how children respond, and the partnerships needed to make the approach work.

By generating new evidence about what works, the project will help inform future policy, practice and partnerships, creating more opportunities for children and families facing some of the greatest barriers to experience the benefits of shared reading.

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Press contact

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About BookTrust

We get children reading from their earliest days, especially those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds. As the UK's largest children's reading charity, we know that sharing books builds language, belonging and connection, and shapes how children think, feel and connect as they grow. That is why we design reading programmes for every stage of childhood, supporting families to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age. We work in every community in England, Wales and Northern Ireland through over 30,000 local partners to reach 1.4 million children every year.

About UKRI

This project is funded by the Research and Development Missions Accelerator Programme (R&D MAP), delivered by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as part of the Opportunity mission. R&D MAP is investing at least £500 million by 2030 in research and development to tackle major problems facing society and the economy.

The programme's Opportunity Mission focuses on ensuring that every child and young person in the UK can succeed, regardless of their background. It aims to raise school standards, improve the quality of education, and strengthen support for families.