



Media Release

EMBARGO: 17:00, Tuesday 14th October 2025

The Queen hosts BookTrust's 100-year reception as new Peter Rabbit - *Four Happy Bunnies* - book revealed as Bookstart Baby title

Her Majesty The Queen has hosted a star-studded celebration of BookTrust's centenary featuring the launch of an exclusive Peter Rabbit book which will be given to babies as part of the charity's Bookstart Baby programme which introduces every baby to the joy of books and reading.

The 14 October Clarence House event saw The Queen, who is BookTrust's Patron, meet a host of authors, celebrities, politicians and those working with families across the country. She also had the chance to meet Peter Rabbit himself.

Peter Rabbit – a character who has remained hugely popular with families since he first appeared in 1902 - features in *Four Happy Bunnies*, a new story created exclusively for BookTrust's Bookstart Baby programme. Each year, health visitors introduce over half a million families to story sharing, using the programme to bring families together and create, for every child, a sense of stability, well-being and connection through reading.

Bookstart Baby has supported families with newborn babies for over 30 years. Health visitors, registrars, and many other early years partners take part in the programme, which reaches 90% of all newborn babies. The programme provides books to families along with help and advice on early reading, often given at one of the health checks in the first nine months of a baby's life.

Peter Rabbit: *Four Happy Bunnies* is the first bespoke book to be created for Bookstart Baby. Featuring felt flaps, bright colours and rhymes to engage even the youngest readers, it was developed by BookTrust in collaboration with publisher Penguin Random House Children's.

BookTrust research shows that reading from the earliest years has a powerful impact at a critical stage of children's development, helping them build strong bonds with caregivers and develop important life skills, beyond literacy, as they grow.

Her Majesty was joined at the centenary reception by authors including Waterstones Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce, Julia Donaldson, Malorie Blackman, Richard Osman, Floella Benjamin and Sir Michael Morpurgo.

Alongside hearing about the book, the event was a chance for The Queen to celebrate the impact made by BookTrust since it was first founded 100 years ago. Each year the charity gets millions of children reading, especially those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds. It has grown over the decades to become the UK's largest reading charity and now works with 30,000 local partners, reaching 1.4 million children each year across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Alongside designing impactful programmes that encourage children and families to experience the lifelong benefits of shared reading, BookTrust is a leading source of evidence on the impact of reading on young children, particularly those from more disadvantaged backgrounds. BookTrust and Waterstones Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce launched the Reading Rights report this year, highlighting inequalities in reading and access to books and calling for national leadership at local, regional and national level to tackle the problem.

Diana Gerald MBE, Co-CEO of BookTrust, said: *"We were honoured that Her Majesty The Queen has hosted this event marking 100 years of BookTrust. We've come a long way since 1925, and we have so much to be proud of – but the need for BookTrust is now clearer than ever. Sharing stories with young children can have transformative effects on bonding, happiness and wellbeing – but so many children are still missing out.*



“That’s why the Bookstart Baby programme is so vital. Peter Rabbit is an instantly recognisable character many new parents will fondly remember from their own childhoods. Together with Penguin Random House Children’s, we’ve developed an engaging book that’s perfect for families to share.”

Sir Michael Morpurgo, BookTrust’s President, said: *“BookTrust’s work is an essential part of the fabric of society. BookTrust makes stories and reading a part of every family life and creates a shared cultural heritage for our children. This has never been more important.”*

Waterstones Children’s Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce said: *“The only thing we know for certain about what the future holds for our children, is that they’ll need to know how to be happy. Shared reading – especially in the early years – helps create this apparatus of happiness in ourselves; it gives us the opportunity to live rich and fulfilling lives. But right now, there is a risk this privilege is enjoyed by a lucky few – and that’s not fair. BookTrust has been working for 100 years to make the joy of reading something for everyone, so that every child is given this life-long hug. I’ve seen first-hand the ways in which they support everyone on the front line of family life – including the astonishingly brilliant professionals, the librarians, educators, community workers, health visitors - to bring reading to life in the most incredible ways, sparking a lifetime of opportunity, and happiness. BookTrust’s work is more vital today than ever before.”*

Francesca Dow, MD Penguin Random House Children’s UK, said: *“We are incredibly proud to have partnered with BookTrust to create this very special Peter Rabbit board book. It is more important than ever that we encourage a love of reading – the joy of reading! - from the earliest days of a child’s life. And who better as a friend at the start of your reading journey than Peter Rabbit, with his natural curiosity and playfulness? We are honoured that our very own Peter Rabbit met Her Majesty The Queen, to celebrate this wonderful milestone, along with leading authors, illustrators and other champions of children’s literacy. We are thrilled and proud that many new parents will be receiving this book in 2026 which marks the 160th anniversary of Beatrix Potter’s birth.”*

-ENDS-

Press contact

For images, further information and interview requests, contact BookTrust Media Manager Mark Chandler on mark.chandler@booktrust.org.uk or 07762 781295.

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 children who read regularly experience better mental well-being. They form stronger bonds and relationships. They do better at school and are more creative. This is why we work with families, supporting them 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 Peter Rabbit™ and Beatrix Potter

The Tale of Peter Rabbit is one of the world’s best-loved children’s books and was originally written by author and illustrator, Beatrix Potter in a picture letter in 1893. It was first published by Frederick Warne & Co. (today an imprint of Penguin Random House) in 1902 and the story has never been out of print since, selling in excess of 46 million copies worldwide. Today over 2 million of Beatrix’s books are sold globally every year, whilst Peter Rabbit has appeared on books and merchandise in more than 110 countries throughout the world.

In 2026, we will be celebrating 160 years since Beatrix Potter’s birth. This will closely be followed in 2027 by the 125th anniversary of Peter Rabbit (marking 125 years since we first published Beatrix Potter’s *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*).



PETER RABBIT™ © Frederick Warne & Co. 2024. PETER RABBIT and BEATRIX POTTER are trademarks of Frederick Warne & Co., a Penguin Random House Company. All rights reserved.