



LOTTERY FUNDED



# On The Same Page

Early book sharing across health, education and the arts

Tuesday 5th March 2019, Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast

# Introduction

**On The Same Page** brought together 125 policy influencers, corporate partners, authors and sector leaders to discuss early children's book sharing across the health, education and arts sectors in Northern Ireland.

The conference was a celebration of cross departmental working and discussion about the importance of early book sharing, and the impact that it is having on children across Northern Ireland. Speakers from the Department of Education, Public Health Agency, BookTrust, The Arts Council of Northern Ireland and children's authors and illustrators shared policy and practice showing how working together towards a common goal can positively impact a child's reading journey.

BookTrust's vision is to get every child reading for pleasure. BookTrust wants every child in Northern Ireland to have the opportunities and support to read for pleasure and to experience the benefits of reading for pleasure from a very early age.

The conference was organised by BookTrust with support from Arts Council Northern Ireland.



# The benefits of reading for pleasure and early book sharing

The day began with a welcome from Koulla Yiasouma, the NI Commissioner for Children & Young People. She referenced Article 31 from the Convention on the Rights of the Child - that children have the right to relax and play, and noted how the work of BookTrust contributes to this.

Liz Canning, BookTrust's Head of Country in Northern Ireland, took the opportunity to thank all of BookTrust Northern Ireland's partners, without whom our work would not be possible. Northern Ireland does not have the universal funding that government provides in England and Wales so we identify diverse pots of funding to reach disadvantaged families who need us most.

BookTrust Head of Research Kelly Walsh presented research around early book sharing, giving delegates an overview of the benefits of reading for pleasure and early book sharing, which include supporting language and literary skills, brain development, bonding, social-economic development and well-being. She showed how this research informs different programmes that BookTrust run, such as Bookstart Baby, Time to Read and The Letterbox Club.

Helen Wales, BookTrust Cymru presented the reading journey available to children in Wales aged 0-5, comprising of Bookstart and the Pori Drwy Stori programme. She discussed how oracy is the term used in Wales within schools for speaking and listening, encompassing speaking, listening, language development and communication. Helen shared the new Pori Drwy Stori programme for children in Nursery, which supports oracy development through sharing rhymes and quality shared reading experiences. This programme has 3 specific aims:

- 1) to improve oracy-related outcomes for children.
- 2) to increase parent/carer's engagement with their child's learning, specifically in relation to activities which support oracy outcomes.
- 3) to increase practitioner's knowledge and understanding of how they can improve oracy outcomes for children, especially by engaging parents and carers.



***“A love of reading helps children to get the best start in life so it is critical that our children are given every opportunity to enter the world of literature.”***

**Koulla Yiasouma, NI Commissioner for Children & Young People**

***“Our vision is to have every child reading for pleasure. Everything else follows.”***

**Liz Canning, BookTrust's Head of Country in Northern Ireland**



# Keynote Speaker: Dan Freedman

Dan spoke to our delegates about his reading journey, and how his passion for football naturally led to a love of reading for pleasure.



*“Reading brings us so much joy and understanding. It was a great opportunity to meet the teachers, librarians, policy makers and practitioners who are helping to ensure that the young people in Northern Ireland can enjoy the pleasure of books from an early age - something they and the whole of society will benefit from.”*



**CurriculumNI**  
@curriculumni

Following

@DanFreedman99 keynote  
#OnTheSamePage19 he remembers the teacher reading to him #powerofteaching



**Diana Gerald**  
@DianaBookTrust

Following

#onthesamepage19 @DanFreedman99 talking about importance of author school visits for kids & reading. Despite terrible 1st visit (but he has done 2000 schools since ...) and stories help kids talk about the hard stuff - divorce, money worries, problems with parents @Booktrust

1:29 AM - 5 Mar 2019

8 Retweets 10 Likes



**ACNI Writing**  
@ACNIWriting

Following

Writer @DanFreedman99 has played the very moving audio of BBC's Peter Jones after the Hillsborough tragedy, here at #onthesamepage19 conference #Belfast. How writing and football and hurt and storytelling connect as other difficult subjects can. #ACNISupported @Booktrust

1:09 AM - 5 Mar 2019

2 Retweets 5 Likes



# Policy and Practice : Health, Education, Arts

Siobhan Slavin from the Public Health Agency discussed the Early Intervention Transformation Strategy (EITP), notably how it aims to equip parents with the skills to give their child the best start in life, and the role that books and shared reading plays in the EITP.

**EITP aims to transform ways of embedding early intervention knowledge and evidence based approaches to commissioning and delivering services for children, young people and families in order to achieve better outcomes.**

Cathy Galway, Director of Youth, Education and Childcare, Department of Education, shared strategies that contribute to improving the educational outcomes of children in Northern Ireland, including the EITP, and highlighted the importance of early reading:

***“Research shows that the earlier the reading experience begins with children the better the prospects for future educational and quality of life benefits. The fact that reading is also enjoyable, inspirational, memorable, life-enhancing and, in many cases, life changing, is an added and wonderful bonus.”***

**Damian Smyth, Head of Literature and Drama, Arts Council Northern Ireland**

**Kathleen Toner**  
@tfn\_kathleen Following

Siobhan Slavin from @publichealthni emphasising the importance of reading from the very start #onthesamepage19



**Terri Downey**  
@TerriDowney6 Follow

Amazing opportunity to present some of the work we're doing in the Reading Rooms at the @Booktrust NI conference yesterday. A great event #onthesamepage19 #booktrust #readingrooms #verbal



# Creativity In Practice

Myra Zepf curated an entertaining and informative session as she brought local talent together to give some insight into the creative process:

- Myra spoke about how choosing the right book can make all the difference and had everyone involved as she read *I say Ooh You say Aah* by John Kane.
- Andrew Whitson demonstrated the importance of visual literacy and led a draw along of *Rita*, the character he created for the book written by Myra Zepf.
- Kelly McCaughrain showed us how to make black-out poems with a page from her novel, *Flying Tips for Flightless Birds*.

**Myra Zepf is the first Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, based at the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry at QUB. As Children's Writing Fellow, she is on a sworn mission to inspire children to write their own stories.**

Speaking after the conference Myra Zepf said *'This conference saw a gathering of minds and wills and sectors, as people from across health, education, arts and the world of children's books came together.'*

*All in all, it was a very important day – bringing together so many different people and their area of expertise. But what shone through was that we really are and need to be 'On the Same Page' in working for a better start for our people.'*



**ACNI Writing**  
@ACNIWriting Following

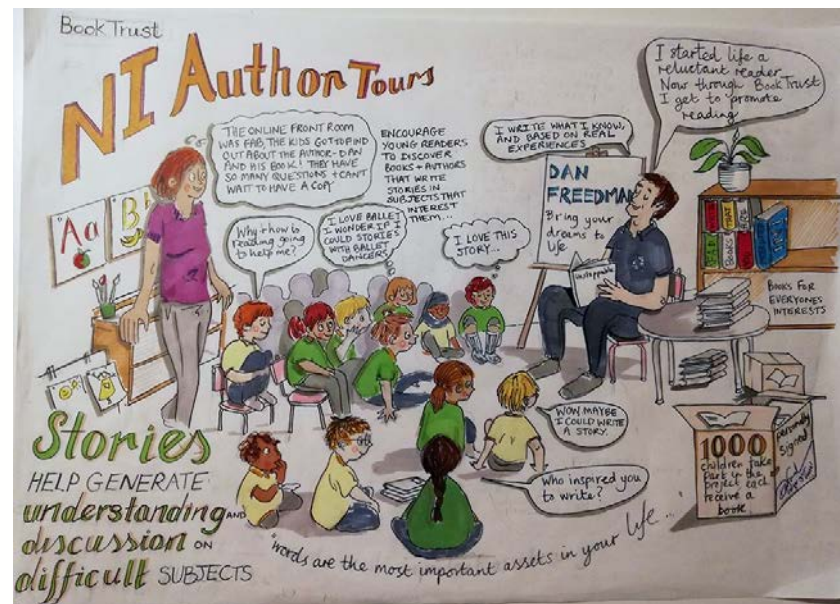
Andrew Whitson @An\_tSnathaid & @MyraZepf's terrific creation Rita, here expressing her trademark quote #onthesamepage19 @Booktrust NI @LizCanning2 Aaaaaaargh! #ACNISupported

3:35 am - 5 Mar 2019

**Ramona**  
@momoreihill Follow

We were all changed into big kids today at the @Booktrust conference thanks to the magic of @MyraZepf @An\_tSnathaid and @KMcCaughrain #onthesamepage19 #weareallwritersillustratorsreaders

# Live Creative Minutes by artist Beth McComish



# Evaluation Feedback

Of those delegates who completed and returned evaluation forms to us...

100% strongly agreed or agreed the conference had increased their understanding of the value of reading for pleasure

92% strongly agreed or agreed that the conference had increased their understanding of how organisations, departments and agencies can work together to promote early book sharing

100% stated that the conference has increased their understanding of BookTrust's work in Northern Ireland

92% strongly agreed or agreed that the conference had increased their understanding of the impact that rhymes and early book sharing has on children's development

100% strongly agreed or agreed that the conference had increased their understanding of how BookTrust uses knowledge and expertise to develop programmes



**BookTrust believes that all babies and young children in Northern Ireland should have access to books - 100% stated that they are On The Same Page!**



# Highlights from #OnTheSamePage19



**Diana Gerald**  
@DianaBookTrust

Following

Koulla Yiasouma kicks off our BookTrust NI conference #onthesamepage19 - rights of the child. All rights matter - meeting full potential and right to broad education. Wanting to read matters - "a book is a dream that you hold in your hand" quoting Neil Gaiman



**Jill Dunn**  
@jilledunn

Follow

PGCE Early Years students at the BookTrust conference in Belfast today and meeting the author of the Jamie Johnson series, Dan Freedman. Great to be a part of #onthesamepage19 @stranbelfast @ydmcc1



9:04 AM - 5 Mar 2019



**Colin Dardis**  
@purelypoetry

Follow

Many thanks to @BookTrust NI for an engaging and informative #onthesamepage19 conference today. Great to see so much affinity across the charitable and health sectors. Glad to be there to support my colleagues from @VerbalArtsDerry.



**ACNI Writing**  
@ACNIWriting

Following

Partners from @BookTrustCymru here in #Belfast this morning sharing insights & strategies in early reading at the #onthesamepage19 conference #ACNISupported



12:39 AM - 5 Mar 2019



**kathrynmakesthings**  
@katmakesthings

Koulla Yiasouma - "I am grateful for the resilience and determination of @booktrust in NI for getting books to children" #onthesamepage19

12:02 am - 5 Mar 2019



**EastSide Learning**  
@EastSide\_Learn

Follow

@LizCanning2 talks about the importance of reading to children. @BookTrust put books directly in the home and partnerships are key to targeting families who will benefit the most. #onthesamepage19



**kathrynmakesthings**  
@katmakesthings

Head of @BookTrust NI, @LizCanning2 thanks all our incredible partners, who are integral to our work in Northern Ireland #onthesamepage19



# Diving deeper...

Our research and evaluation helps us to continually learn about how to inspire children to read for pleasure. For further information on the research that BookTrust does, visit:

[www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/impact-and-research](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/impact-and-research)



Pori Drwy Stori is the bilingual programme aimed at supporting children's literacy and numeracy as they start reception class in all maintained schools in Wales. For further information on this programme, visit:

[www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/poridrwystori](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/poridrwystori)

To find out more about our keynote speaker Dan Freedman's work, visit [www.danfreedman.co.uk](http://www.danfreedman.co.uk)

The Children and Young People's Strategy can be found here:

[www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2017-2027](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/children-and-young-peoples-strategy-2017-2027)

Keep connected with our speakers and BookTrust NI on twitter:

[@BookTrust](https://twitter.com/BookTrust)  
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[@Education\\_NI](https://twitter.com/Education_NI)



EastSide Learning  
@EastSide\_Learn

Follow

Great conference today by @Booktrust NI. Looking forward to continuing to work in partnership. We are most definitely #onthesamepage19 !

## Going forward...

We hope that everyone who attended On The Same Page increased their knowledge around reading for pleasure, and will be able to work towards inspiring a love of reading in every child in Northern Ireland. Some of our delegates noted on their evaluation forms what attending the conference has inspired them to do going forward...

**Making important contacts & working on partnerships to improve children's ability to learn**

**Promote reading for pleasure more in daily life, especially reading as a family. Be more conscious of my use of devices e.g. smart phone. Try and set a better example to children in my life as they learn more by imitation.**

**Change approach to encouraging boys to read about their passions - focus on visual imagery**

**Support my activities more prominently with the research**

**Allow more choice for child**



We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our speakers and delegates for supporting On The Same Page. By working together we can encourage the next generation to read for pleasure and benefit from all that this brings.

