

08 September 2023

## **BookTrust and St Christopher's Fellowship champion family-focused reading this summer**

**BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, announces a collaboration with foster families from St Christopher's Fellowship - a sector-leading charity which has supported children and young people in care since 1870.**

BookTrust and St Christopher's are partnering on a series of workshops which will inform the design of a new reading programme for children in and on the edge of care. Throughout the summer, a series of joint activities encouraging and celebrating reading together have been taking place with St Christopher's foster carers and the young people they look after.

Families have been given bespoke resource packs developed by BookTrust, which help facilitate fun and interactive reading experiences in the home. The packs include age-appropriate books, engaging activities related to the stories for children to do with their foster parent and further book recommendations to encourage continued shared reading. The packs are based on BookTrust's extensive success in designing reading experiences for children and young people.

A regular reading habit can help children build bonds, strengthen their relationships with others, improve wellbeing, educational attainment and significantly improve their life chances. For children from vulnerable family backgrounds, these benefits can be transformative.

Reading stories which reflect children's own lives and the world around them, strengthens their sense of identity and belonging, while also supporting social, emotional and mental wellbeing. Such stories can also help facilitate difficult conversations. The closeness of reading together helps create deeper bonds and builds trust, while supporting a sense of familiarity and security – all of which are vital for children who have experienced and are overcoming challenges.

### **Annie Crombie, Deputy Chief Executive at BookTrust said:**

*"Working with St Christopher's in this way is brilliant for us because we are dedicated to providing effective and valuable interventions for young people in care. Getting this direct input from them and their carers ensures our resources and programmes truly fulfil our aims.*

*"This collaborative approach is key, because we know that the children who read regularly are more likely to overcome disadvantages caused by inequalities. They are happier, healthier and experience better mental wellbeing and self-esteem which is what we want for every child - but for children who have had a more difficult start in life, reading really can help bridge gaps and give access to a world of opportunities."*

### **A sentiment echoed by Pauline Griffith, Acting Head of Fostering at St Christopher's in the UK, who similarly stated:**

*"We were extremely happy to see the young people in our care so engaged and excited by the books and educational games they had the opportunity to enjoy. We look forward to further workshops with BookTrust, both in person and online."*

This recent collaboration is part of an ongoing relationship between the two charities, who are working together to help create brighter futures for children and young people through innovation and joint initiatives.

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## Contact

Picture provided with press release.

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## **Notes to Editors:**

### **About St Christopher's Fellowship [www.stchris.org.uk](http://www.stchris.org.uk)**

- For over 150 years St Christopher's has transformed the lives of young people in care, on the edge of care, or leaving care.
- The charity successfully worked with 612 children and young people last year
- With donations of money and time from grants, corporate supporters and the general public, St Christopher's continues to innovate to create a brighter future for children and young people.  
For more insight into why young people may need support explore <https://www.stchris.org.uk/faqs>
- Young people with a care experience may have experienced disruption to their schooling as a result of having to move home. This can impact on their reading age or relationship with reading for pleasure.
- The impact of adverse childhood experiences has a profound effect on young people who have grown up in care confidence.

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### **About BookTrust**

We are the UK's largest children's reading charity. We get millions of children reading, especially those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds. We do this because research shows that children who read regularly are happier and healthier. They form stronger bonds and relationships. They do better at school, are more creative and enjoy more success in life. This is why we work with families, supporting them to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age.

Some of our key activities include:

- BookStart programmes for babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers which provides families with books and resources to help foster a love of shared reading from the earliest age.
- Our writer-in-residence programme which gives a platform to some of the best children's writers and illustrators in the country to champion the power of books. Past writers in residence include Michael Rosen, Nick Sharratt, Onjali Q. Raúf and Dapo Adeola.
- Supporting the work of the Children's Laureate. The current Laureate, Josep Coelho, is on a marathon to join a library in every local authority in the country and launches a new children's poetry prompt video every week. Former Laureates include Jacqueline Wilson, Malorie Blackman, Anthony Browne and Quentin Blake.

BookTrust has long-term partnerships in place with every local authority in England and with the national government in Wales and works with thousands of local partners.

Our approach is deeply grounded in research, and we have conducted significant quantitative and qualitative studies including our latest Family Survey of 2,148 parents and carers of children aged 0-7 living in low-income households in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and over 450 low-income and vulnerable families engaged in research, evaluation or design and development projects in 2022-23.

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