



BookTrust Storytime

Summary of key findings from
2022-23

July 2023



About BookTrust

As the UK's largest children's reading charity, we want every child to read regularly and by choice. We reach millions of children and families every year, especially those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds, inspiring them with books and resources to get them started on their reading journey.

Children who choose to read and who read regularly are happier and healthier. They form stronger bonds and relationships. They do better at school and are more creative. They 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.

Our carefully selected books and well-researched programmes are delivered by thousands of local partners, bringing the magic of reading to children in every local community in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Bookstart

In the last year alone, our Bookstart books and resources reached over 700,000 families with children in their early years in over 5,000 different community settings across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Introduction

About BookTrust Storytime

BookTrust is committed to bringing the benefits of reading to children and achieving long-lasting impact through developing reading habits and behaviours. We offer more targeted support to families from low-income and vulnerable backgrounds – particularly in the early years – because we know that these children stand to benefit the most from the wide-ranging benefits of reading.

BookTrust Storytime is designed to support library staff to inspire families with children under five to share stories together and make visiting their local library part of everyday life. BookTrust Storytime is open to all families, but it is specifically designed to engage lower-income families who would not usually use library services, whether they are first time visitors or families who aren't regular users.

BookTrust Storytime was developed in collaboration with local authorities, libraries and families. The initiative has now completed its second year, and is supported by library partners including the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians ([ASCEL](#)), [Libraries Connected](#) and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals ([CILIP](#)). The programme culminates with the [BookTrust Storytime Prize](#), where votes from families and library staff are tallied to find the best book for sharing with children under 5.

BookTrust Storytime provides six books to participating libraries, as well as a wide range of digital resources. You can read more about what BookTrust Storytime involves on page 6.

Following a successful year one pilot in 2021, BookTrust partnered with 2,378 libraries in England and Northern Ireland to deliver BookTrust Storytime for the second time in 2022. We listened to feedback from libraries and families on the first year of the pilot to shape this year's offer and ensure BookTrust Storytime continues to be designed with the needs of our families and partners at its core. You can read all about the key lessons from the first year of the pilot [here](#).

Research methodology

The findings are based on 160 responses to our online survey that ran towards the end of BookTrust Storytime 2022-23 (April to June). We are committed to robust evaluation approaches and sought involvement from all participating practitioners. 160 responses gives us a base from which we can draw strong conclusions.

There are limitations given this is a national programme, involving a diverse library population, and as such we recognise that any projections will involve a degree of estimation. We will continue to invest effort in improving our evaluations across all our scaled interventions in the Early Years, and are committed to sharing findings with our immediate partners, funders, and the wider Early Years sector.

We would like to say a heartfelt **thank you to all our library partners for their work on BookTrust Storytime and to those who have shared their views and experiences with us!**



BookTrust Storytime's impact this year

BookTrust Storytime's reach

Overall, we estimate that **50,000** children under five used or engaged with BookTrust Storytime this year. Responses to our survey tell us that...

31%

of families who engaged with BookTrust Storytime were new to the library

45%

of families who engaged with BookTrust Storytime were low-income families

70%

of participating families returned to the library after their initial visit

BookTrust Storytime's impact

We're really pleased to see our library partners telling us that BookTrust Storytime is making a difference in their libraries.

34%

of libraries told us that new families came to their libraries because of BookTrust Storytime.



60%

of libraries said that new families then signed up to their libraries as a result of attending BookTrust Storytime sessions or using the resources.

71%

of libraries told us that BookTrust Storytime had helped support their library's work with children under 5 and **35%** agreed it had helped them to better support low-income families and children.

Library staff's views on BookTrust Storytime



83%

of library staff **liked or loved** working on BookTrust Storytime this year, up from **72%** last year.



79%

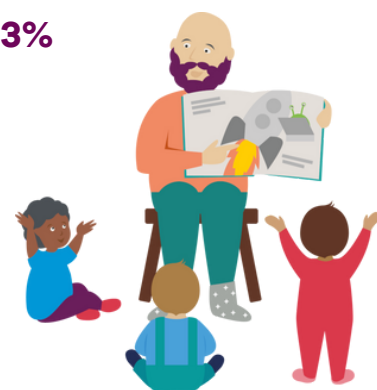
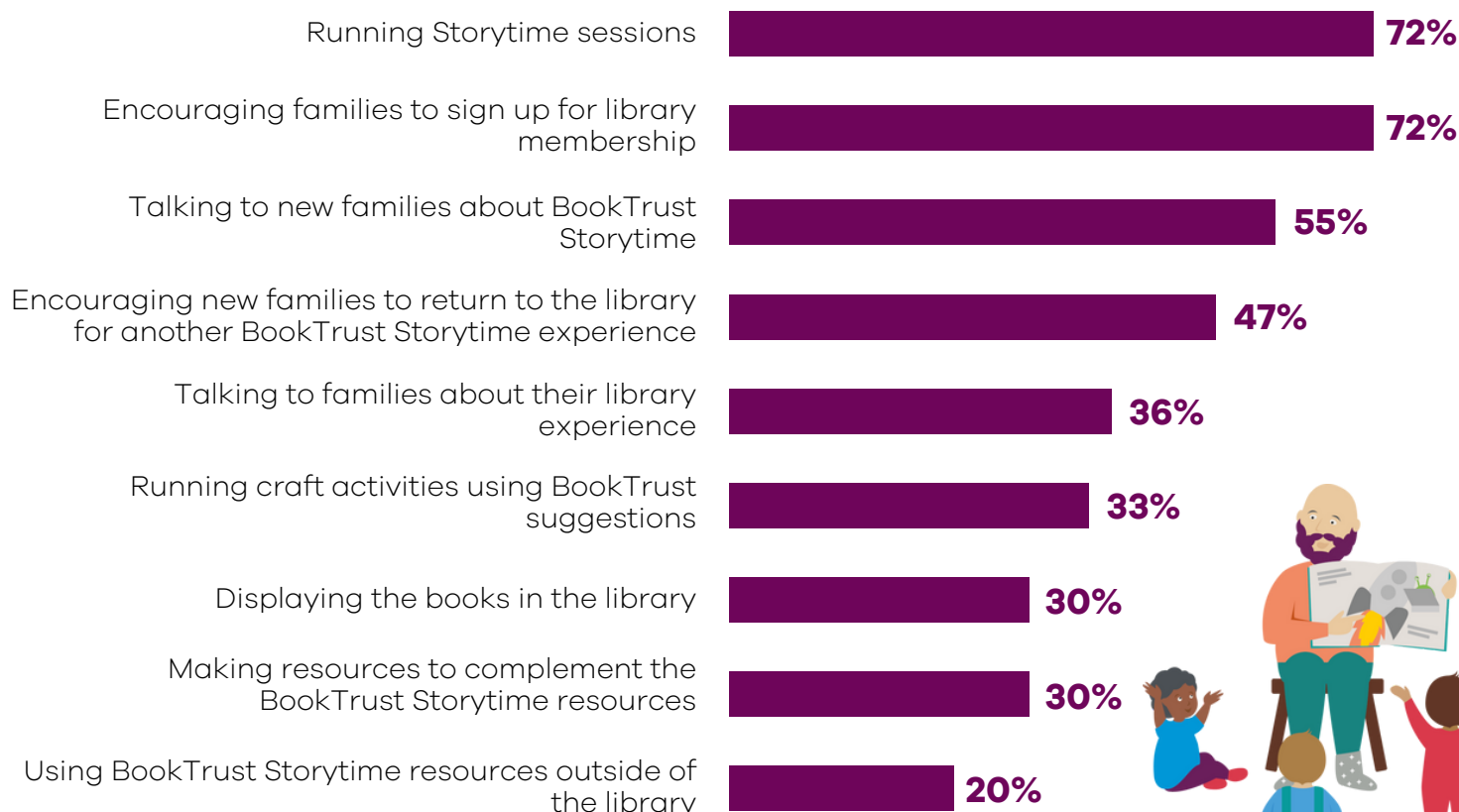
of library staff told us our **online resources supported** them in their work with families.



68%

of library staff rated the resources at least **four out of five** in terms of suitability for the families who used them.

Our library partners have used the BookTrust Storytime resources in a variety of ways to engage children and families



More about BookTrust Storytime

In 2022, BookTrust partnered with 2,378 libraries in England and Northern Ireland to deliver BookTrust Storytime. BookTrust Storytime represents a continuation of our long-term work with libraries across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

As part of BookTrust Storytime, in 2022/23 all libraries receive one standard copy of each of our six books (overleaf), specially chosen by a panel of families and libraries as the best books for sharing with children under five.

At the end of the programme, families and library staff vote for their favourite book as part of the BookTrust Storytime Prize. The [Prize](#) aims to find the best book for sharing with children under five.

Libraries also have access to a wide range of digital resources to make the BookTrust Storytime stories come alive throughout the year.

This year, we worked with Local Authorities to identify a group of libraries in areas of high deprivation that would receive our 'enhanced' offer. They not only received the standard books, but also larger copies, perfect for sharing with bigger groups. They also received additional physical resources to make their libraries a more welcoming and interactive space, and activities to keep families coming back to the library.



BookTrust Storytime aims to build longer term reading outcomes and impacts for families through:

- Building BookTrust Storytime partnerships with libraries, supporting them in their work with early years families.
- Delivering engaging experiences which support families on their shared reading journeys.

What's next for BookTrust Storytime?

We're really excited to share the new BookTrust Storytime 2023-24 resources with libraries in September. We'll also be sharing an update to this report, summarising more of what we've learnt this year and the improvements we'll be making based on feedback.

The six books shortlisted for Storytime 22-23 were:



Can You Tickle a Tiger?

Bobbie Brooks,
Carrie Hennon

Storytime
Prize winner 



Red Lorry, Yellow Lorry

Michelle Robinson,
Jez Tuya



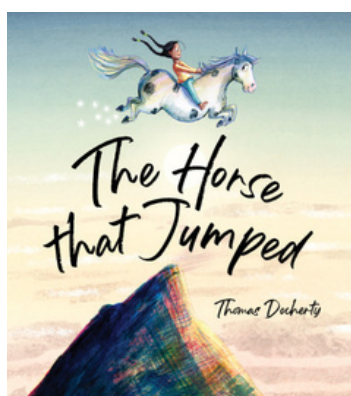
Nature Trail

Benjamin
Zephaniah,
Nila Aye



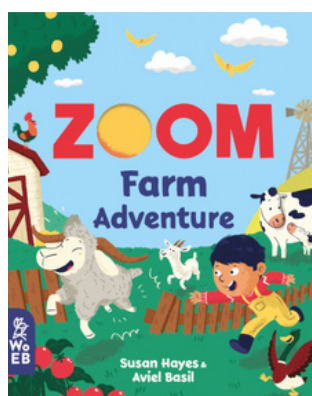
The Duck Who Didn't Like Water

Steve Small



The Horse That Jumped

Thomas
Docherty



Zoom: Farm Adventure

Susan Hayes,
Aviel Basil

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Why is early shared reading important for children?

At a time when families are facing multiple and competing pressures on their time and finances, why is it so important to invest in supporting families to share books and stories?

Reading and sharing stories is proven to bring children profound and wide-ranging benefits that can impact their health, wellbeing, progress at school and their creativity. Shared reading brings immediate benefits to families too. It supports bonding between children and their parents, carers or other family members, boosts parental positivity and improves children's sleep.

Children's brains experience the most growth in their first five years. In these early years, stimulation from books, and using books, stories and rhymes as a focus for playing, talking, and singing enhances the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth and development of children that extends far beyond childhood.

We know that if children experience early shared reading they are more likely to continue to read as they grow up. Reading for pleasure in the early years has four times more powerful an impact on a child's progress across the curriculum at age 16 than parental education or socioeconomic status.

Children from low-income backgrounds stand to benefit even more from the immediate and longer-term benefits of early shared reading. Evidence shows that children from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve highly at the end of primary school are twice as likely to have been read to at home in their early years, compared to their peers. In the long-term, reading has the potential to transform children's future life chances. A child growing up in poverty who is read to at age five has a significantly higher chance of economic success in their 30s than their peers who were not read to.

It is essential that children from low income and vulnerable family backgrounds do not miss out on the transformative benefits of early shared reading. That's why at BookTrust, we provide extra support to these families; ensuring our books, resources and support reach and engage children and families who need us the most.



Read our research into the **Benefits of Reading**

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The growing disadvantage gap between children from low-income families and their more affluent peers starts in the early years and persists throughout childhood. As a matter of urgency, any discussion about supporting children in their early years needs to include measures that will motivate and encourage children and families to share stories together so they can experience both the immediate and longer-term benefits of reading. BookTrust is committed to supporting families with impactful and cost-effective interventions so they can enjoy shared reading experiences. Will you join us?

Diana Gerald, Chief Executive, BookTrust

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