

Hello!

Welcome to our annual newsletter where we take the opportunity to celebrate this year's fantastic book sharing activities across Northern Ireland (NI). Whilst we continue to develop funding streams for our work we have focused this year's resources on areas of disadvantage. However, we still believe that NI children should have the same opportunities as the rest of the UK and so Bookstart packs for all NI families remains a priority. I'd also like to say a big 'thank you' to our partners who continue to provide support and hope you enjoy reading about the great work we've been doing this year.



Liz Canning.

'Every child should have access to literature and creativity,' say Children's Laureates



BookTrust launched this year's Northern Ireland Author Tour in spectacular style, with not one, but two Children's Laureates. Lauren Child, the UK Children's Laureate, and Sarah Crossan, Laureate na nÓg, discussed their roles, books and creativity with educators, creatives and book lovers alike.

On 21 September, Lauren was joined by illustrator Bruce Ingman and the first Northern Ireland Children's Writing Fellow, Myra Zepf, for a discussion on creativity, chaired by Marie-Louise Muir at Queen's University Belfast. The aim of this evening was to open up a conversation about how to inspire children's creativity and love of reading, writing and drawing.

The next day at Verbal in Derry, Sarah Crossan joined Lauren to discuss their Laureate roles with Julia Eccleshare. Among other topics they spoke about how children's books can help children to understand the world around them, often providing solace from the darkness they may be facing.

Lauren is a champion of the imagination and she believes that in order to inspire children's creativity: *'Boredom and staring into space must be allowed. These spaces are the beginning of the imagination.'*

Sarah said:

'It feels appropriate given my strong family ties to Donegal and Derry that my first public event as Laureate na nÓg should be here at Verbal. Northern Ireland is in a fortunate and unique position: it has two Children's Laureates. This is a great opportunity for myself and the UK Laureate Lauren Child to share not just a stage, but our joint conviction that every child should have access to literature and to creativity.'

The events were hosted by BookTrust Northern Ireland in partnership with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Young and Art and Verbal, and the author tour is funded by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's National Lottery funds.

Working with our corporate partners

Belfast Harbour

Thanks to Belfast Harbour's award-winning partnership with BookTrust NI, over 20,000 children have been supported with books to ensure that they have the best start in life.



We were delighted to win the Cultural Engagement Award in the Allianz Arts & Business NI Awards 2018 for our partnership with Belfast Harbour.

Spirit of the Titanic

Students from across Greater Belfast had the chance to delve into the story behind Spirit of the Titanic, by Irish author Nicola Pierce.

One hundred and fifty students from Malone College, Strathearn School and Hazelwood Integrated College attended the event at the Belfast Harbour Commissioners Office, where they met Nicola to discuss her novel and ask her about her experience as a writer.

Jenni Barkley, Communications and Corporate Responsibility Manager at Belfast Harbour, spoke about the importance of developing young readers:

'Regular reading helps children of all ages in many aspects of their development and we're committed to helping encourage this as much as possible through our work with local communities and organisations such as BookTrust NI.'

Babies Need Books



Bookstart baby packs are gifted to mothers across Belfast through Sure Starts during home visits and parent-and-baby groups. Parents get to know about the benefits of reading to their child from birth – including speech, language and brain development – and its importance in bonding with their child and in setting routines.

Parents from East Belfast Sure Start gave feedback about sharing books with their babies. Several parents have now created an area in their living room especially for baby books.

One young mum commented that her 18-month-old daughter,

'Loves the wee books she got. She loves looking at the pictures and I would never have thought of getting books for her so young.'

National Bookstart Week: a flying success

Children from Ravenscroft Nursery celebrated BookTrust's National Bookstart Week 2018 at RSPB Belfast's Window on Wildlife in Belfast Harbour on 4 June.

During this special week over 6,000 children took home their very own copy of *A Busy Day for Birds* to share with their family and friends.



Kate Finnegan, SONI External Affairs, spoke about the event:

'We're delighted to be into our second year of partnership with BookTrust NI. It's our vision as a company to make sure our own communications are clear and accessible, which very much mirrors BookTrust NI's vision to encourage development of important literacy skills.'



Free books for toddlers as BookTrust NI and SONI celebrate their partnership to get more children reading.

Lucky children in Garvagh enjoyed a morning of storytime and rhymes and received a free Bookstart pack to take home.

The event, held at Appletree Childcare included an interactive performance led by A Place to Wonder. Children were treated to a Rockin' Robin-themed story and sensory singing session, full of laughter, fun and feathers!



Belfast International Airport and BookTrust NI have launched a new partnership to provide book-sharing activities and events for children in the area.

Jaclyn Coulter, Head of HR at Belfast International Airport, is enthused by the partnership:

'Education is a key component of our corporate responsibility strategy and we're delighted to have teamed up with BookTrust to get more children reading, which in turn boosts their creativity and language skills. Over the next few months we have several events planned, including a day with Nick Sharratt, celebrated author and animator. This is a really exciting partnership which we look forward to developing.'

And Liz Canning, Head of BookTrust NI, agrees:

'We're delighted to welcome Belfast International Airport on board as a new corporate partner. Getting books into the hands of children is vital, and we're excited to begin our journey working together to ensure as many children across Northern Ireland can enjoy the lifelong benefits of reading for pleasure.'

Arts Council NI Author Tour

The Arts Council NI Author Tour is a project offering children and young people access to well-known poets, authors and illustrators. All participating children receive a personally signed book to take home, treasure and share with their families.

During the 2017/18 tour we held 18 events featuring five different authors and illustrators, bringing joy and books to over 1,000 children across Northern Ireland.

These events, supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland Lottery Fund, encourage literacy, promote a love of reading for pleasure and support reader development.

'Artist visits like this are a fantastic opportunity for children to meet a successful writer and hear a story brought to life in the author's own voice,' said Damian Smyth, Head of Literature and Drama, Arts Council of Northern Ireland. *'These events are not only great fun for young audiences but hugely valuable, inspiring the imagination, and perhaps even encouraging children to start thinking about developing their own stories. The Arts Council is pleased to support BookTrust NI in promoting the value of reading to young people across Northern Ireland.'*

Alex T Smith



The creator of the adorably funny *Claude* series of books had pupils in stitches with hilarious anecdotes about his very naughty dogs, Mr Bongo, Coco and Lucy Locket. Alex also read from his

latest novel *Mr Penguin* and then gave the children a crash course on how to draw Mr Penguin themselves.

Siobhan McTaggart, Principal of St Therese Lisieux, said: *'The children were extremely excited with the prospect of meeting a "real life author", and that excitement has inspired lots of creative writing in our class.'*

Paul Cookson



Poet, performer and football enthusiast, Paul Cookson entertained students from Carrickfergus and Belfast with his interactive poetry and ukulele-filled session.

This was the first time that the NI Author Tour has featured a poet and we were delighted with Paul's impact, described by Nuala Hall, Carrickfergus Central Primary School: *'The children howled with laughter and teachers tried to keep a straight face as Paul read his Disgusting Poems. Mums and dads had a treat that night when the children took*

home their signed books and shared the rhymes with them.'

Sarah Crossan



Schools in Lisburn, Ballynahinch, Castlewellan and Portadown welcomed Sarah Crossan.

At her lively workshops, Sarah entertained over 450 students, reminding them that they loved nursery rhymes as children and

encouraging them to enjoy poetry again through verse novels. She read extracts from her new book, *Moonrise*, about a teenage boy whose brother is on death row, and emphasised how important it is to talk and write about difficult subjects.

Sarah also enjoyed herself: *'I'm absolutely delighted to have been able to tour schools in Northern Ireland and meet new young readers and writers. I was there reminding everyone that poetry belongs to us all.'*

Year 10 student Annie McWilliams attended a workshop: *'It was really inspiring to hear that Sarah was once shy and she conquered her fears and became a writer.'*

Chris Riddell



Chris Riddell – author, illustrator and former Waterstones Children's Laureate – paid a visit to primary school students in East Belfast.

Chris, author of the *Goth Girl* series, shared stories, illustrations and sketches in a workshop with 90 P5 students.

Leza Dunlop, Elmgrove Primary School Literacy Coordinator, described the workshop's effect: *'We were all very excited*

about learning from such a gifted and prize-winning writer. The children were so inspired by Chris's visit; he left them bursting with ideas which they're excited to develop.'

Chris also met with literacy coordinators in the EastSide Visitor Centre and addressed teachers and school librarians in Queen's University Belfast at the Schools Library Association Conference.

He said of his trip: *'I had a wonderful visit to Northern Ireland, full of highlights. Talking and drawing with the children of Elmgrove School in East Belfast was a pleasure... I also loved meeting Aslan, the Witch, and Mr Tumnus in CS Lewis Square and talking with literacy coordinators in the beautiful centre overlooking it.'*

Paul Howard



This early years' family event was arranged in partnership with EastSide Learning and East Belfast Sure Start.

Illustrator and author Paul Howard entertained the children with sketches and memory games from his book, *I Went to See Santa*. All the children were given a robin or penguin finger puppet, so they could join in the actions in the story.

Mencap Early Years Centre encourages families to share books



The Mencap Children's Centre provides an Early Development Support programme to 52 children aged 2 to 3 with a learning disability or significant developmental delay. Services include a parent-and-toddler group, workshops to help parents to support their child's early learning and development, information sessions, one-to-one and peer support, and family fun days.

The BookTrust and Mencap teams in NI have been working together to encourage early book sharing using Bookstart Star packs which contain two board books, puppets and guidance sheets.

The Bookstart Star packs – gifted during a special storytelling session – give Mencap another positive and non-threatening way of supporting parents with their child's home learning. Practitioners thought the packs were engaging, tactile and durable, and the finger puppets and sensory book were particular favourites with families. The Mencap team felt that a high-quality gifting session increases the likelihood that parents will use the packs.

'Using Bookstart Star was just another way to show parents how to support their child through home learning, without it being too complex or mindboggling, to show them the simple joy of reading and how important that is even if your child is non-verbal or unable to sit for long, and to show them how you bring stories to life. I think we're always looking for ways to support communication and language development, and behaviour support in very straightforward ways.'

The partnership will continue with a Family Fun Day in May 2019, when author and illustrator Nick Sharratt will draw and read with Mencap families.

Additional support



BookTrust's vision is to get **every** child reading for pleasure and we want every child in Northern Ireland to have the opportunities and support to experience this from a very early age. We know that some children benefit

from additional layers of support and where possible, BookTrust NI will support different

organisations with resources to promote and encourage reading for pleasure. One such event was a Parents' Day on Education organised by Shine, the spina bifida and hydrocephalus support charity.

At the event Shine's Education Lead spoke to parents on supporting their child's learning and development at home and the importance of early shared reading experiences. The families were gifted books for their children and also got to take home other resources, such as nursery rhyme booklets, parental guidance leaflets and book guides from BookTrust.

Do you know about the Letterbox Club for children in care?

BookTrust and the Fostering Network have been working in partnership for ten years to ensure that children in care receive these colourful Letterbox parcels.

Each parcel contains books, maths games, stationery and a personalised letter. Children usually receive their parcels from May to October, to give them support over the summer holidays as well as helping them transition to the next school year.

For many children it's the first time they've had a letter or a parcel through the post, and for some it's the first time they've had books of their own.

Each year an independent panel of experts aim to select the most appropriate, best-written, illustrated and designed books for the parcels – books that capture the interest and imagination, and that stimulate a dialogue between children and their carers/parents. The panel, which



always includes a representative from Northern Ireland, also tries to select books that reflect the diversity of life in the UK.



Key benefits of the Letterbox Club

- ✓ Children feel 'remembered' and are excited about receiving their parcels.
- ✓ Carers/families and their children spend more time together reading and playing games.
- ✓ Children have increased confidence in reading and using numbers.
- ✓ Parcels give each child continuity as they're delivered despite placement moves.
- ✓ Letterbox Club children in Northern Ireland receive two parcels and can take part in exciting Letterbox Club Fun Days.

Get your students buzzing about books!

Bookbuzz

Bookbuzz is a reading programme that aims to help schools inspire a love of reading in Year 8 and 9 students.

It's also fantastic value for money: for just £3 they can each student gets to choose their own book to take home and keep, from a list of 17 titles suitable for 11 to 13-year-olds.

What do staff and students at St Joseph's Boys' School say about Bookbuzz?

Mrs Jacqueline Brady,
Head of English:

'I've been involved for a number of years with the Bookbuzz project. Our school faces ongoing budgetary constraints and this scheme represents really good value for money.

I love the fact that we can get the boys engaged in novels that are so varied, and the element of choice is a bonus. The students are encouraged to investigate the books before deciding, and that empowers them to read as they've taken an active role in choosing.'



'I also appreciate the inclusion of more graphic novels and non-fiction titles that suit our special needs students.'

Year 8 student comments

Pierce Greene
(*The Blood Guard*):

'I like that there's mystery in this book. I chose it because it looked and sounded cool.'

Gerard McGinley
(*The Bad Guys*):

'This is a book about "bad guys" who are sick of being villains and try to change their lives by busting 200 dogs out of a pound!'

Registration opens in March 2019 – visit our website for the latest updates, including this year's Early Bird offer:

booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzz

Stop press!

Blue Peter Book Awards: Leaney Primary School students to judge Blue Peter Book Awards. Since 2000, BookTrust has administered the enormously popular and influential Blue Peter Book Awards. This year 19 Northern Irish schools submitted very strong applications to be on the judging panel, and we're delighted to announce that P6 and P7 students from Leaney Primary School will be reading the books and casting their votes.

Save the date: BookTrust NI Reading for Pleasure Conference, Tuesday 5 March at The Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast. More details to follow in early January 2019.

BookTrust early years resources are available:

please contact Lucy at lucy.lewis@booktrust.org.uk for further information and to place your order.