



Hello and welcome to Northern Ireland's annual Newsletter. We've got plenty to share with you in this issue including the announcement of our new Writing Fellow and Children's Laureate, as well as key author and illustrator visits that have taken place across Northern Ireland. We hope these updates will keep you informed of the various ways in which BookTrust is dedicated to getting children excited about books, rhymes and stories.

Liz Canning.

Sector leaders at our 'On the Same Page' conference



In March 2019 policy influencers, corporate partners, authors and sector leaders came together to discuss early children's book sharing across the health, education and arts sectors in Northern Ireland.

BookTrust hosted the 'On the Same Page' conference as a celebration of cross-departmental working as well as a discussion about the impact that early book sharing has on children across Northern Ireland. Speakers covered the impact of early children's book sharing as well as strategies to diversify funding. The main outtakes of this included:



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(From left to right): NI Commissioner for Children Koulla Yiasouma, author Dan Freedman, BookTrust's Diana Gerald and Arts Council NI's Damian Smyth.

- The importance of the right of a child to flourish, and working in close partnership to ensure all children enjoy and achieve
- The importance of collaboration and cooperation to ensure that every child gets the best start in life
- The importance of early shared reading in supporting language and literacy skills, brain development, bonding, socio-emotional development and wellbeing.

Not all parents and children have access to books, which is why the work of BookTrust is so important. That the charity reaches 3.9 million children across the UK with books, resources and support every year is testament to the hard work and dedication of the organisation and its many supporters. 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, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

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.

Belfast Harbour

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Babies Need Books

Bookstart Baby packs are gifted to families across Belfast by Sure Start workers 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 setting routines and bonding with their child.



(From left to right): Liz Canning, Sarah Crossan and Jenni Barkley at Ormeau Baths

Sarah Crossan

The Irish Children's Laureate, Sarah Crossan, inspired 200 young readers at a special event at Ormeau Baths in November, supported by Belfast Harbour. The award-winning author spent the day discussing her books with 200 Year 10 and 11 students from Ashfield Boys, St Dominic's Girls, St Joseph's and Victoria College, and each student received a free, signed copy of *Moonrise*.

Belfast Harbour has been supporting the work of BookTrust in Northern Ireland for over four years and we're delighted to welcome the Irish Children's Laureate to Belfast. An enjoyment of reading and literature is a gateway to educational success, and BookTrust consistently delivers inspirational initiatives for both primary and secondary school-aged students.

Jenni Barkley, Belfast Harbour's Marketing & Corporate Responsibility Manager

SONI continues partnership with BookTrust for a third year

This partnership has already seen

6,000 books
gifted to families

BookTrust is in the third year of its charity partnership with SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland). The partnership has already seen 6,000 books gifted to families across Armagh City, Dungannon, Crossmaglen, Kilrea and Garvagh, and this year will be further developed to include the Kells and Connor communities that SONI are working with. Plans for this year include a visit to local children from author and illustrator Paul Howard. Paul will run interactive and creative sessions looking at some of his work, including *I Went Trick or Treating* and *The Owl Who Was Afraid of the Dark*, demonstrating how to draw some of the books' illustrations step by step. Every child taking part will receive a book to take home and share with their families.



Belfast International Airport

Belfast International Airport and BookTrust NI are continuing their partnership to provide book-sharing activities and events for children in the area by bringing well-known authors to local schools.



Nick Sharratt

Nick Sharratt spent a day at Maine Integrated Primary School working with children of different ages, with each child receiving one of Nick's books to take home and share with their family. After each workshop Nick signed the children's books and created drawings to make the books even more personal. He also took the time to chat to staff and students, admire their work and take part in a Q&A with the older children.



We were so delighted to have an author of Nick's stature visit the school and work with the children. All the children had a fantastic day and gained inspiration from seeing Nick in person and listening to him speak. For us anything that sparks their interest in reading and illustrations is a bonus and Nick's visit has certainly done that!

Julian Costelloe, Principal of Maine Integrated PS

(From left to right): Belfast International Airport's Jaclyn Coulter, author Nick Sharratt and BookTrust's Liz Canning



(From left to right): Liz Canning, author Dan Freedman and Belfast International Airport's Kerry Coulter.

Dan Freedman

Dan Freedman visited St Genevieve's High School and Belfast Boys' Model School in March. He spoke to 130 children over four workshops, answering questions they had about his books, including settings, characters and how an idea can become a published novel. Dan also reinforced how reading can make you a better writer and equip you with the words to improve your life.

We were delighted to be involved in the reading project that Belfast International Airport made available. Encouraging our students to read is a very important goal for us and these experiences produce so much more interest in reading than we as teachers ever could do alone.

Noreen Lyttle, Head of English, St Genevieve's High School

Arts Council NI Author Tour



LOTTERY FUNDED

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 2018/19 tour we held 21 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.

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Artist visits like this are a fantastic opportunity for students to meet a successful writer or illustrator and gain an insight into their creative process. Research shows that the earlier the reading experience begins with children, the better the prospects for future educational and quality of life benefits. The Arts Council is pleased to support BookTrust NI in promoting the value of reading to young people across Northern Ireland.

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



Sarah McIntyre

Author and illustrator Sarah McIntyre visited five primary schools in schools in Belfast, Portaferry and Portavogie, with over 300 children participating in her workshops. Students eagerly whipped out their pencils, paper and books for her interactive sessions. Sarah helped students to think creatively and come up with ideas for their own books by thinking of animals and different jobs they could do, from spider teachers, lion astronauts and beetle spies! Sarah talked about how she created her books and taught the students to draw Dipsy the Diplodocus from *Dinosaur Firefighters*.



Joseph Coelho

During his visit to the North West, award-winning poet Joe Coelho spent time with over 200 students from four schools. Students received a personally signed copy of Joe's book, *Overheard in a Tower Block*, and also took part in a poetry writing competition around sharing and giving.

'This is my first trip to Northern Ireland, and it's been such a delight. I've had so much joy meeting students and teachers from primary schools and secondary schools across the Derry area. What I've found in 16 years of working in schools is that students are hungry to not only read poems, but also to have the opportunity to write poetry, to express their feelings and emotions.' **Joe Coelho**, author

Nick Sharratt

Nick visited schools in Glengormley and Ballinderry, reading his book *Shark in the Park on a Windy Day* and showing students how to draw characters from the book. He also paid a visit to the Mencap NI centre, facilitating several small workshops for families.

It's not every day you get to meet an author and receive a very personalised gift of a signed book. It was such an inclusive event and let many of the children's siblings become involved too. I felt personally touched by the parent who showed Nick their very 'loved' book and thanked him for the endless hours of joy her family have had from his books.

Christine Muldoon, Mencap Family Support Worker



(Left to right): Nadia Shireen and Liz Canning at Ballyhenry PS

Nadia Shireen

Author and illustrator Nadia Shireen delighted 380 children from five schools with her interactive drawing and story sessions. Every child received a special BookTrust Time to Read pack with Nadia's book, *The Bumblebear*, and a guidance leaflet for their parents and carers about the importance of shared reading, with some practical tips and advice to help them bring the story to life at home. Events took place at Seaview PS and Ballyhenry PS, and three East Belfast schools came together at the Skainos Centre with Eastside Learning.

New Children's Laureate announced!

On 9 July, Cressida Cowell, the international bestselling author and illustrator of the *How to Train Your Dragon* and *The Wizards of Once* series, and the author of the *Emily Brown* picture books, was crowned the Waterstones Children's Laureate 2019-21.

We look forward to welcoming Cressida to Northern Ireland as part of the Arts Council NI Author Tour 2019-21.

Books are transformative because of their unique ability to develop three key magical powers: intelligence, creativity and, most importantly, empathy. Words are power; let's take magic seriously.

Cressida Cowell, author and illustrator



Bedtime stories for all!

Pyjamarama

Children from McArthur Nursery School celebrated BookTrust's inaugural Pyjamarama campaign with former NI Children's Writing Fellow Myra Zepf with stories and rhymes in June 2019.

During this special week over 6,000 children across Northern Ireland took home their very own copy of *Car, Car, Truck, Jeep*, written by Katrina Charman and illustrated by Nick Sharratt, to share with their family and friends, through libraries and Sure Starts.



During this special week, over **6,000 children** took home their very own copy of *Car, Car, Truck, Jeep*

Primary One children to receive free BookTrust pack

BookTrust NI is working in partnership with the Education Authority School's Library Service to gift over 25,000 children starting school this September a Time to Read pack. The pack provides an excellent link between school and home and is specially designed to encourage parents to read with their child at

home. *Little Monkey*, written and illustrated by Marta Altés, is exactly the kind of fun and interactive book to get children and families excited about reading, and the hints and tips for parents and carers will help maximise the impact of the packs. Marta will be visiting Northern Irish schools in October 2019 to celebrate this fantastic partnership.



Working in partnership to deliver **25,000** Time to Read packs this September

BookTrust becomes Children's Partner of Belfast Book Festival



BookTrust NI was delighted to work with the Belfast Book Festival as the Children's Partner, delivering a series of events to children, schools, families and practitioners. We are committed to building on the impact and goodwill that has been generated in Belfast and beyond through the Belfast Book Festival over the last nine years, and would like to further develop these projects to provide an increased and established children's offering as part of the programme for years to come.

Paul Howard

The Belfast Book Festival and BookTrust Schools' Tour offered children access to well-known local writer and illustrator, Paul Howard. School visit days create a real buzz and have the power to inspire creativity and to promote reading for all children involved. For the Belfast Book Festival Tour, we engaged three Belfast schools in communities that would not typically engage with the arts and delivered three sessions per school. All the participating children received a book to take home, treasure and share with their families.



The children couldn't wait for Paul's visit; they were familiar with his work as the school received his books in advance, and really looked forward to his arrival. Paul was excellent, he had a great rapport with the children, and they were sorry to see him go! They talked about him for days after the visit. I think it is extremely important that the children realise that authors and illustrators are real people and that this is something they can aspire to as well.

Daniel Armstrong, Holy Trinity Primary School



Alex T Smith

BookTrust NI organised a ticketed family event at the Crescent Arts Centre with well-known children's author and illustrator Alex T Smith, the creator of *Claude* and *Mr Penguin* series. Alex taught the whole audience how to draw *Claude* before screening a never before seen episode of the *Claude* series made by Sixteen South, and all children attending the event received a personally signed book to take home.

Personalised parcels inspire a love of reading

This year, through partnership with The Fostering Network, BookTrust delivered Letterbox parcels to 250 children in care across Northern Ireland. Each child received their own colourful parcel of books, number games and stationery once a month for six months, May to October. For many children, it's the first time they have had a letter or parcel through the post, and for some it's the first time they've had books of their own.

**LETTER
BOX**
the letterbox club

**The
Fostering
Network**



This year **250** children in care received Letterbox parcels

Support reading for pleasure with Bookbuzz!

Bookbuzz

Bookbuzz is a reading programme from BookTrust that aims to help schools inspire a love of reading in 11 to 13 year olds.

Spending time reading for fun is an excellent way to help students relieve stress and improve their mental wellbeing, self-esteem and ultimately, their happiness. Exploring complex stories and characters also helps students increase their levels of empathy and social mobility, as well as their communication skills.

With an early bird registration, starting at £1.40 per book, you can give your students the opportunity to choose their own book to keep. Let them pick from a list of 17 titles including a variety of genres, fiction and non fiction.

Registration opens in March 2020 – visit our website for the latest updates, including this early bird offer.

booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzz

NI Children's Writing Fellow announced!

Award-winning writer Kelly McCaughrain has been revealed as the new Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland. The Fellowship was created as part of Queen's University Belfast and Arts Council of Northern Ireland's joint ten-year Seamus Heaney Legacy Project, supported by Atlantic Philanthropies.

BookTrust NI are so excited to work with Kelly over the next two years!



I feel so honoured to have been invited to be the next Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland. Reading offers so many benefits to children's development, and therefore to our whole society.

Kelly McCaughrain, author

BookTrust NI on Twitter



The Northern Ireland team have launched a BookTrust NI Twitter account, where we'll be sharing all of our events and news from BookTrust NI HQ and tweeting all things books! Come join in the conversation and follow us

[@BookTrustNI](https://twitter.com/BookTrustNI)

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