

For immediate release

## **BookTrust gifts over 235,000 books to children across England, Wales and Northern Ireland to help families impacted by lockdown**



BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity, has been helping families across the country to engage with books and storytelling during the Covid-19 pandemic, offering support, advice and free books to disadvantaged families who have been hardest hit by lockdown. Reading can be an important escape for many children, and shared reading supports language development, confidence, communication skills and resilience. However, with schools and libraries having been closed for many weeks, many children are at risk of missing out.

Working in partnership with 168 local authorities and councils, who have told us how challenging it is in the current environment for children and families to get physical books, BookTrust is distributing ready-to-ship 'care packages' of books, tailored for early years, primary school-aged children (0-10 year olds). Partners can use these books as gifts left on doorsteps, presents for children in their care or to use in settings which remain open at this time. These book packages are being distributed across children's centres, schools, libraries, foodbanks, refuge centres, SEN schools and more, helping to close the gap caused by the pandemic and support families over the summer. To date we've sent out over 237,269 books to every region of England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"We are all in this together, and yet the impact of this pandemic is not shared equally," **said Diana Gerald, BookTrust CEO**. "Reading, and shared reading not only enables children to escape to fantasy worlds; it also supports language development, communication skills and confidence, and can be hugely reassuring in a world that for many is now very challenging. Getting books to families has always been important; now, getting them to families in struggling circumstances is absolutely mission critical."



Rochdale Borough Council is one that is committed to improving the lives of children and families in the community and are continuing to get books and resources to families to get even more children reading. They have already begun distributing BookTrust care packages across their networks of foodbanks and family learning services and will be including additional primary school provisions in their Fit, Feed and Read Programme in partnership with Link4Life over the summer.

**Councillor Janet Emsley, Rochdale Borough Council cabinet member for libraries, said:** “We are delighted to be working in partnership with the BookTrust to deliver this visionary idea. Hundreds of young people across the borough will now have even more access to books and learning opportunities over the school holidays. I am proud of our work across the borough of Rochdale to provide children with the best possible start in life, through inspiring initiatives like Fit, Feed and Read. This pioneering project builds on that success story, ensuring our drive to raise standards and improve literacy levels continues.”

**In Northern Ireland, Keith Cullen, Family Support Worker, Splash Sure Start said:** It was not only the quantity of books we received but the quality of the stories and their messages, such as Happy in Our Skins, which our families loved. Our families have been sending us images of their children reading these books and telling us how much they look forward to and adore the stories being told. If there has been one positive for us out of the present situation it is in the increased in reading amongst our children, of every age and this would not have been possible if not for the BookTrust NI supplying us with such fantastic books and resources.

#### Notes to editors

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#### About BookTrust

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. We work to inspire a love of reading in children because we know that reading can transform lives. Each year we reach **3.9 million children** across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading. Every parent receives a BookTrust book in their baby's first year. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early years' practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. Reading for pleasure has a dramatic impact on educational outcomes, well-being and social mobility, and is also a huge pleasure in itself. We are committed to starting children on their reading journey and supporting them throughout.

[booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk)