**Under embargo until 00.01 on Wednesday 25 August 2021**

**New books to be shared with families to inspire them to start reading with their babies as early as possible**

BookTrust, the UK’s largest children’s reading charity, has today announced the new books it aims to give to *all* children born in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as part of a newly revitalised Bookstart Baby bag, designed to encourage families to start reading with their children as early as possible and enjoy the transformative benefits this can bring.

A picture containing text

Description automatically generatedIcon

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

One of the two new books to be included in the Bookstart Baby bag in England and Northern Ireland *is Tummy Time!* from Mama Makes Books, a black and white fold-out board book designed to ensure babies get their daily tummy time, critical for their sensory, motor and visual development. The new Bookstart Baby bag in Wales will contain a bilingual book as an alternative to *Tummy Time!* The second title, *Space Baby: Zoom to the* Moon, illustrated by Kat Uno and published by Hachette Children’s Books, offers children and families a striking multisensory experience with bold visuals and simple sound-prompting text that is perfectly suited to encourage interaction with curious babies.

Thanks to BookTrust’s partnership with every one of the local authorities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the books and bag are given to children via a health visitor, registrar, early years' professionals or through libraries. For many children, it provides the first books they will own. Families receive two engaging and age-appropriate books selected by an independent panel of experts, finger puppets and a fun information sheet that explains to families the benefits of sharing stories and rhymes with their babies. The contents all come in a handy and bright tote bag and are funded by Arts Council England in England, the Welsh Government in Wales and Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

With a new strategy that is focused on supporting children from disadvantaged families to enjoy reading from the earliest opportunity, BookTrust has been listening to families who have received Bookstart Baby and the early years practitioners who support them, to understand what drives families to share books with babies in the first 12 months of life.

The new books and revitalised bag and contents have been informed by this insight - designed to appeal to families from different backgrounds and circumstances, to inspire them to celebrate the joy of sharing stories with their babies as early as possible.

**Jill Coleman, Director of Children’s Books at BookTrust** said: ***“****Reading together with children can have profound benefits affecting their health, wellbeing, sleep and social development. At BookTrust we believe that all children should be able to reap these life changing benefits and our new strategy is focused on finding innovative ways to ensure children from disadvantaged families are not left behind. Sharing stories with babies in their first year is a crucial step on that journey. Young babies will enjoy the bonding time that comes when families sit and read, share stories or rhyme together and these latest books are expertly placed to support families to create an engaging, multisensory and fun experience that we hope will kickstart a lifelong love of books and reading.”*

**Penny Worms from Mama Makes Books said:**

*“We are delighted that BookTrust has chosen Tummy Time! for Bookstart Baby. As a new publisher, it’s fitting that our first book is for a newborn baby. Why not encourage a book-loving habit from birth? We wondered what should a book for a newborn look like? It needed simple images with high-contrast colours to attract and hold their attention. A fold-out panorama of images gives them something to look at when doing tummy time or during a nappy change. We added photographs and a mirror to amuse them as they get older and there’s rhyming text too, to encourage active shared reading. As parents and now grandparents of a large, blended family, we know reading is a special bonding time when you both relax, communicate and connect, one-to-one. Happy times. And that is what Bookstart is all about.”*

**Hachette Children’s Books said:**

*“The Pat-a-Cake team are absolutely delighted that so many families will have their very own copy of Zoom to the Moon to share with their newest arrivals. Reading books with babies is very important as it helps them to hear different words and sounds from a very early age. Babies love to reach for shiny textures on the pages of books, the colours and sparkle really grab their attention which helps them practise their hand-eye coordination as they interact with the book. The story of some brave little astronauts in Zoom to the Moon is also perfect to read before bed as part of a bedtime routine. It is never too soon to share books with little ones and to encourage them to take their very first steps on a lifelong journey and love of reading, learning and play.”*

Speaking about the bag, **Ruth, a new mum** from Somerset who received Bookstart Baby for her baby Florence, said. *“There are so many families who are really struggling financially, especially at the moment and its lovely to know Bookstart is there, for everyone. It’s such a lovely little pack that I wasn’t expecting.* *The books from the Bookstart baby pack are very age specific, very tactile and of a lovely quality. It’s nice to get into a routine of reading to Florence especially at night-time. It’s something pleasurable and relaxing for us both. She’s enjoying looking at pictures and colours and I think she also likes listening to my voice when I read, it’s a nice time to have a bit of bonding. She loves it when I turn pages. It’s so tactile, a sense of something real for a child. Reading is an activity that doesn’t take a lot of organising, especially for a busy mum. You can pick up a book and put it down if you need to and pick it up later.”*

A further book, *123 Do the Dinosaur* by Michelle Robinson, illustrated by Rosalind Beardshaw and published by Farshore has also been selected for Bookstart Treasure, a programme in England that sees nurseries, playgroups or libraries gift a book pack to all three-four year-olds, designed to encourage families to continue their reading journey through their child’s early years.

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Media Contact**

For further information please contact Lizzie Hubbard, Communications Officer, at [press@booktrust.org.uk](mailto:press@booktrust.org.uk)

**About BookTrust**

BookTrust is dedicated to getting children reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Their early language development is supported and they also do better at school. We are the UK’s largest children’s reading charity; each year we reach 3.9 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives. We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it. Our books are delivered via health services, libraries, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. [booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)