**PRESS RELEASE**

**Embargoed to 1pm on Wednesday 21 June 2023**

**New Projects Remember Bookstart Founder**

Three legacy projects are announced today in memory of **Wendy Cooling MBE**.

Wendy Cooling was a pioneer and the founder of Bookstart,the BookTrust programme which gets books into the hands of millions of babies and toddlers each year in the UK and which inspired equivalent programmes around the world.

On 21 June, the three new projects were officially announced at the Yoto Carnegies award ceremony.  Chair of Judges, Janet Noble, shared the news, noting that:

*“Exactly three years ago, the children’s book world lost one of its most loved.”*

Janet Noble invited the audience (both physical and virtual) to remember Wendy for her vision, her passion, her energy and her legacy.

The three projects are:

A [Bookstart](https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/programmes-and-campaigns/bookstart/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) travel bursary, funded by [BookTrust](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank), will be awarded to an organisation or individual from the global south who is looking to set up a Bookstart-style programme in their country.  A pilot project, initiated by Jo Williams, is installing an aptly named “Wendy’s House” in a library Malaysia and a school in India. And finally, a tactile book for babies, written and researched by Alex Strick, will be published by [Child’s Play](http://childsplay.com/).

The three projects are all inspired by Wendy’s lifelong belief in giving **all**children the right to access great books. Wendy said: ‘*If you can read*, *you can do anything.*’

Wendy Cooling spent a career transforming lives.  She was a teacher, author and anthologist, before developing the concept that would become Bookstart.  After leaving BookTrust in 1993, Wendy remained as adviser to Bookstart as she embarked on a 25-year freelance career during which she was a friend to libraries, bookshops, families, organisations, authors, illustrators and publishers alike.  She informed and inspired numerous audiences at conferences and enjoyed a valuable role with[IBBY UK,](https://www.ibby.org.uk/)[Outside In World,](http://www.outsideinworld.org.uk/) [Little Rebels Children’s Book Award,](https://littlerebels.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)[Bookaroo Festival of Children’s Literature](https://www.bookaroo.in/) and many others. She received the Eleanor Farjeon Award and in 2009, she was awarded YLG honorary membership and the MBE for Services to Children’s Literature. All the while, Wendy (humbly) described herself simply as a “book dabbler”.

Diana Gerald, Chief Executive of BookTrust, said:

*‘Wendy was one of life’s true visionaries. Without her passion and commitment, there simply wouldn’t be a Bookstart, not just in the UK but in so many different countries around the world. We are delighted to be able to offer this travel bursary in honour of Wendy and her commitment to children’s reading everywhere to help a country from the global south set up a Bookstart-style programme.’*

Her family have expressed thanks to the children’s book world for demonstrating a deep and lasting affection for Wendy and their excitement in seeing new projects develop in her memory.  They said of the news:

*“We remain overwhelmed by the level of affection the book world has for Wendy and are so thankful to the people taking their own time and effort to remember her and her contribution. It has been a source of huge support for us all to know she is loved and missed by so many.”*

The Wendy Cooling Legacy Group welcomes any further approaches from parties wishing to link activity or projects to Wendy.   Contact: thebookdabbler@gmail.com

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**About the Wendy Cooling Legacy Group and Projects**

An informal [Legacy Group](http://thebookdabbler@gmail.com/) was established in 2020 to encourage legacy activity and provide a link between children’s book world and Wendy’s family. Each of the three projects has been set up by a different organisation or individual, as follows:

**About BookTrust and the Bursary project**

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 over 2 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 flagship Bookstart programme has been running for more than 30 years and has distributed more than 60 million baby books in that time [booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk/)

**About Child’s Play and ‘Time to Play’**

Child's Play is an independent publisher, specialising in whole child development, focused play, life skills and values. Child's Play products bring out the best in children (and adults) of all levels of ability, enabling them to work and play together. Their programme consists of books, games, toys and associated materials.

10 years ago, Wendy Cooling and fellow freelancer Alex Strick worked with Child’s Play to research and create an innovative tactile book called *Off to the Park*, uniquely based on the ideas, experiences and needs of blind and partially sighted children. This successful book was then followed by two more, also featuring carefully researched tactile elements - *Off to the Beach* and *Getting Ready.  Time to Play* will build on these books.

**About Jo Williams and the ‘Wendy’s House’ project**

Jo Williams, past chair of the Federation of Children’s Book Groups and joint co-ordinator of the Red House Children’s Book Award for 10 years, became one of the founders of the award-winning Bookaroo, India’s first Children’s Literature Festival, after moving to India. Her ten year tenure not only involved taking Bookaroo around India but also to Kuching, Sarawak.

Wendy’s Houses have been set up in Taktse School in Sikkim in India – *a school that loves to read –*and the State Library in Kuching, Sarawak.   These represent fitting locations for the pilot project since Wendy spent time at Taktse School, under the protection of the imposing Mt Khangchendzonga, inspiring students and teachers alike.  After listening to Wendy talk about Bookstart, the staff at the State Library in Kuching decided to set up their own scheme, entitled *Reading Seeds,*which has been so successful, it has been adopted across Malaysia.

**About the Yoto Carnegies**

The Yoto Carnegies celebrate outstanding achievement in children’s writing and
illustration respectively and are unique in being judged solely by librarians.

 The Yoto Carnegie Medal for Writing is awarded annually to a children’s book
author whose writing creates an outstanding reading experience. It was
established in 1936 in memory of the Scottish-born philanthropist, Andrew
Carnegie (1835-1919). The Yoto Carnegie Medal for Illustration, established in 1955, is awarded annually to a children’s book illustrator whose artwork creates an outstanding reading experience.

Each year thousands of reading groups in schools and libraries in the UK and overseas get involved in the Awards, with children and young people ‘shadowing’ the judging process. They read, discuss and review the books on the shortlists, get involved in reading related activities in groups, and vote for their favourite books to win The Yoto Carnegie Shadowers’ Choice Medals for Writing and Illustration.

To find out more about this year’s winners, please visit: [yotocarnegies.co.uk](https://yotocarnegies.co.uk/)

**Additional quotes:**

On the news of her death in 2020, Malorie Blackman said:

*‘Wendy was passionate about putting books in the hands of all our children. Meeting her made me feel I could have a place and a space as an author in the world of children’s books.’*

Tony Ross described how he was always overwhelmed by her irrepressible energy:

*“Every time I met her, she was either returning from a distant trip, or embarking on one.  When we met, I always felt idle in comparison. The world changes, but sometimes not for the better.  It was better when she was with us.”*

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*--- Notes to Editors end----*