

**National
Literacy
Trust**

Change your story

Impact Report 2022/23



Letter from the Chair



At the end of my first year as chair of the National Literacy Trust, I am acutely aware that our work is addressing a very immediate challenge. Our own research is documenting the painful choices that parents are increasingly having to make. Sadly, but understandably in many households, books are losing out to fuel and food. This negative impact on children's reading and literacy runs the risk of creating lifelong consequences.

In the context of the cost of living crisis, I am immensely proud of the National Literacy Trust's immediate and practical response to this challenge. By distributing hundreds of thousands of books, magazines and writing materials to families who are finding it impossible to buy them, by creating hundreds of new libraries in the primary schools where poverty is highest and literacy lowest, and by supporting new parents with the resources and skills that will give their children the best literacy start, we are ensuring that every child has a childhood rich with stories and develops the literacy skills to succeed in life.

In this work, our Literacy Hub teams are on the front line. I have seen for myself how our teams in places like Bradford are bringing national resources to partnerships with foodbanks, faith communities and community organisations to address local literacy needs.

The National Literacy Trust is working alongside the families who need help most and we are making a profound difference. The work of the Trust is only possible because of the generous support of our many funders. The growing number of partnerships with the business community is a sign of their understanding of the importance of literacy skills to economic growth and sustainability. As a publisher myself, I am proud that 44 publishers are now working in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, with the support of the Publishers' Association. I am very grateful for all their support.

I also wish to express the gratitude of the whole of our charity to our Patron, Her Majesty the Queen. For over a decade, the whole literacy and reading community has benefited from Her Majesty's commitment to promoting the cause of literacy and we are thrilled and grateful that this commitment continues following the Accession of Their Majesties.

The National Literacy Trust has grown its reach and impact significantly in the last decade but has retained its ability to respond with agility and focus to new challenges. I am excited by the opportunities that new partnerships offer us to make a difference, by the commitment of our talented staff team, dedicated trustees and passionate volunteers, and ultimately by the life stories we can change through the power of literacy.

Joanna Prior

Our mission is to give children and young people from disadvantaged communities the literacy skills to succeed.

Literacy changes everything. It gives you power to shape your future. It's the key to knowledge, confidence and inspiration. It's better results at school and leads to better jobs. If you grow up without the tools to communicate, without books to read or the skills to write, it's harder to get where you want to go.

We are a charity helping people overcome these challenges and change their life chances through the power of words – reading, writing, speaking and listening – from first words, through school days, to training, jobs and beyond. This is a big issue; 1 in 6 adults have very low levels of literacy in the UK today. Low Literacy is also concentrated in the poorest communities. We support these communities by building strategic partnerships, delivering programmes and driving behaviour change campaigns.

As well as the foundation of personal success, literacy is also a national priority. It sits at the heart of our nation's economic success and sustainability, driving social mobility, and is at the heart of the challenge

around regional inequality. The National Literacy Trust leads the national campaign to raise awareness of the issue and find solutions. We aim to break the relationship between low literacy and poverty to give a new generation the skills to fulfil their opportunities.

We are proud to be a dynamic and fast-moving organisation, and we think creatively about how to inspire and engage people with literacy. Partnerships of all kinds are at the heart of our approach and they're how we have most impact. We are proud to work in partnership with over 8000 thousand schools and over 90 businesses, and are grateful for the support of writers, illustrators, poets and the skilled teams of 44 publishers.

We base everything we do on sound evidence and we aim to provide cutting-edge research on all aspects of literacy, from exploring the relationship between technology and literacy, to investigating the impact of role models on reading, to understanding the impact of the pandemic on young children's language skills.

Our values and beliefs

The National Literacy Trust's values are well understood and embedded in our charity's culture, induction, appraisals and staff development, and are the guiding principles of the way in which we are effective.

- We are **focused** – understanding and addressing literacy need and how it relates to poverty, committed to effectiveness, evidence and impact.
- We are **enterprising** – eager to innovate, willing to take risks and entrepreneurial in spirit.
- We are **connecting** – successful through partnerships, empowering individuals and communities by connecting them to the skills that will transform them.
- We are **respectful** – welcoming, working in partnership with communities and families, helping people to find their own voice, creating programmes and a workplace where everyone feels valued

Underpinning all our work is the charity's commitment to **equity, equality, inclusion and diversity**. Our mission to increase literacy levels is fundamentally about addressing inequality. We know that **becoming a more diverse and inclusive charity, better at listening to and working with communities is key to increasing our impact**.

We take this challenge seriously: we have an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan which is discussed by our trustees at each board meeting. We monitor and set targets to improve the diversity and inclusivity of staff and trustees. Our CEO chairs our EDI working group. There is regular training for staff in recognising and addressing unconscious bias.

Working in partnership with communities is a powerful driver to boost diversity and inclusion in all our work. All 17 of our priority communities now have community consultation groups. They are all in areas of high need and rich diversity; in a recent pupil survey in these areas, 37.7% of pupils were in receipt of free school meals (national 22.7%) and 44.5% were white (national 65.5%). The role of these groups is to concrete our local strategy. All our school, community and adult literacy programmes are developed in collaboration with the people who will participate in the programmes. A national team of Youth Ambassadors, drawn from our 17 areas, now meet with our CEO and advise the Board on our strategy.

We ensure that all our programmes work with a diverse range of authors (representing the socio-economic, cultural and faith identities of the communities we work with) and we are keen to promote books which all readers can recognise themselves represented in.



Our strategy

Poverty leads to low literacy; by the time a child is 10.5 months old, the impact of poverty on communication development can already be detected. This lays the foundation for a lifelong pattern of literacy inequality impacting on earnings, health and wellbeing. But this is not inevitable – with support for children, families, schools and prisons, this pattern can be broken. But we need to act now. If we can respond promptly and at scale, we can stop childhood experiences of poverty from having a lifelong and even intergenerational impact. We can create new opportunities, allow individuals to fulfil their potential and create new dynamics of social mobility.

The pandemic exacerbated the challenge. Its impact on literacy was worst for disadvantaged pupils in deprived areas (where secondary pupils suffered a learning loss of 2.7 months in reading) and on preschool children's early language development.

The cost of living crisis and the legacy of the pandemic increases the scale of need for the National Literacy Trust's work and its urgency.

But it also increases our potential impact.

Our three year strategy is in response to this challenge:

We will work directly with children and adults, especially those who live in the poorest communities, are suffering most as a result of the economic downturn, and those who are in the criminal justice system. We will ensure that books, reading and writing, and literacy itself do not become luxuries by giving free access to reading and writing for the most vulnerable, enabling them to find their voices.

We will work with schools, early years settings, colleges, libraries and prisons so that they can meet the needs of everyone growing up and living in poverty, ensuring that everyone has the rich reading and literacy experiences they are entitled to, which will develop their literacy skills and their appetites for language and story.

We work through partnerships, enabling us to achieve deep change in the communities where the challenge is greatest, and increasing the breadth of our impact through powerful brands, partnerships and policy influence.



Delivering our strategy in 2022/23

1,337,673
children and young
people reached

528,303
books distributed

600
active literacy
champions

9834
parents with children
under 5 reached

17
areas
worked in

8013
schools
worked with

The National Literacy Trust working directly with children and their families

We are a charity that works directly with those people who need our support most. Through our teams working on the ground in 17 communities, our work in prisons and young offender institutions, our 600 community literacy champions, and our online support for families (accessed by almost 2 million users last year), we offer direct literacy support to those who need it most, when they need it most.

In 2022/23, we put **528,303 books into the hands of the most disadvantaged children, young people and adults**. 284,044 books were distributed through frontline partnerships (foodbanks and community charities) in our priority places. Each book was accompanied with support, to ensure that it becomes a vital part of a reading journey.

In response to the arrival of refugees from the war in Ukraine, we launched an appeal, and between April and October 2022, 6687 Welcome Reading Packs containing over 22,000 books were distributed to **Ukrainian children newly arrived in the UK**.

The Marcus Rashford Book Club is delivered by the National Literacy Trust with Macmillan Children's Books and supported by KPMG. The initiative gave 50,000 copies of books to children in 2022/23, along with resources for teachers and parents. It was an honour to welcome our Patron, Her Majesty Queen Camilla, to a meeting of the club attended by local children in Wythenshawe in January 2023.

Directly addressing book poverty

National Literacy Trust research published in 2022 and early 2023 demonstrated that amongst 5–8-year-olds, 1 in 5 say they don't have a book of their own at home, while 1 in 5 (20%) parents were also buying fewer books because of the cost-of-living crisis.



I like the fact that I came to early years activity because I didn't know any of the tips that were needed to be shared with our child. We loved the books as we had not got any books at home.



Our digital reach to learners

Our digital platforms give us direct reach to thousands of young people and parents through our **online author events**, virtual internships and online support groups and activities for parents. 40,000 young people participated in our Holocaust, Memorial Day live online event and 380,000 attended our streamed Remembrance Day assembly which we held with the British Legion.

Working with parents

By supporting parents from disadvantaged areas to support the early literacy of their children, we are heading off long-term literacy issues at the earliest possible moment. With this in mind, we are a key partner delivering the Government's Start for Life parenting campaign. During the year, to support the campaign, we delivered 272 events, reaching 9834 participants with face to face support that was integrated with digital engagement and Facebook Live events.

In Cambourne and Redruth in Cornwall, we are focused on how early language development is holding back literacy across a whole community. Our team on the ground has already supported 800 families and are working with 160 of these on an ongoing basis.

Working with prisoners

Our direct work with people in the criminal justice system has powerful impact on literacy and on confidence, helping many participants to find their voice. **New Chapters** supports young people in prisons, young offender's institutions and other secure settings through the power of creative writing. Creative writing workshops are led by authors with lived experience of the issues the young people face.



She was very excited and loved the two hours we spent there (at Camborne Library) reading books and colouring. We then brought 7 books home for 7 bedtime stories - thank you for pushing me to take her - I have a feeling this may become part of our weekend routine!

Parent



New Chapters is so good! Thank you so much for what you have done by bringing inspiration to us all, letting us know we're capable if we try. [...] Please keep coming back, you are changing our lives through inspiration.

New Chapters participant



92%

of participants in the Readconnect programme – which supports people in prison to build and maintain relationships with children and family members through storytelling – said they wanted to be more involved in their child's learning going forward.

82%

of participants said that their experience of New Chapters made them feel more confident about expressing themselves through creative writing.

The National Literacy Trust working with schools, early years settings, colleges, libraries and prisons

In 2022/23, the National Literacy Trust worked with 8013 schools to help them improve literacy levels. Our partnerships with publishers and the business community sit at the heart of this work. Frequently, it is their resources, assets, volunteers and investment which bring literacy alive in classrooms, colleges, nurseries and prison libraries and engaging and inspiring learners.

Creating primary school libraries

14% of primary schools in the UK do not have a school library. The levels are higher in the more economically disadvantaged areas - 6% of schools in the South East don't have a library, increasing to 18% in the North East. The National Literacy Trust has worked with Penguin Random House to bring together an alliance of publishers, funders and library experts (including Chase, Oxford University Press and Arts Council England) to take practical action. Having identified 1000 primary schools in disadvantaged areas without a library, The National Literacy Trust has now created **500 new libraries benefitting 135,000 children**, with refurbished and newly stocked library space and a specially trained member of staff.

The new library is absolutely beautiful! It is well stocked with new and current books, there is huge variety of different books and it has something for everyone.

Teacher



I like going because I find myself relaxed and when I need a book there's always something I can read and laugh to.

You can relax and get all your worries out and whisper with your friends.

Pupils



The new libraries mean children without books at home can access books in their school library, boosting reading for enjoyment and literacy skills. Evaluation has also shown how the new libraries and training for teachers are helping more teachers to access and promote books that deal with diversity and inclusion (20.5% before to 81.4% after.)

Our Patron, Her Majesty Queen Camilla, celebrated her 75th birthday by launching our new library at Millbrook Primary School in Newport in July 2022.

The Primary School Library Alliance is now leading the largest school library development programme ever undertaken in the UK.

Training and inspiring teachers

The National Literacy Trust's most important partners are teachers. We want to support and inspire them and learn from their expertise and insight. **21,493 teachers are National Literacy Trust members**, giving them access to our training, resources and opportunities to take part in our research programmes.

Literacy interventions and programmes for schools

A high point of the year was the 25th anniversary of our highly respected Young Readers Programme, the UK's first reading for pleasure programme, which has now worked with 450,000 young people in disadvantaged communities. During the autumn and winter school holidays of 2022, the Programme worked with "warm spaces" initiatives, so that children who were suffering from the impact of fuel poverty could keep reading.

Our Reading Champions Quiz has proved powerful in incentivising and recognising young readers, and also in building engagement and confidence.

Our conferences provide a focal point for our relationships with professionals. After being held online during the pandemic, it was wonderful to welcome hundreds of practitioners to our Talk To Your Baby Conference in Birmingham in February 2023 and our Secondary Conference in Salford in July 2022.



One of our pupils struggled to attend school due to health issues. She had very low attendance. She tried out for our school's Reading Champions team and did so well we couldn't not let her take part. When we put her on the team her attendance picked up and she's now in all day every day. She has gained so much confidence and we are starting to see her bubbly character come through.

Teacher



Over

30,000

pupils took part in National Literacy Trust evaluated programmes in schools across the UK

and an additional

150,000

pupils took part in National Literacy Trust schools activities.

The National Literacy Trust's Sport and Literacy programmes, delivered in partnership with the Premier League and football and rugby clubs, are now embedded in thousands of schools. A new development is Game Changers, specifically designed to engage excluded students. The impact of the programme on some of the UK's most vulnerable children is profound: 62% of pupils said they felt more confident in school/setting after taking part in Game Changers and 74% felt that after taking part they could be more successful in life.



The Writing for Wellbeing club was a fantastic opportunity for students to develop their writing skills. I felt the tasks opened a creative space and helped young people find new ways of expressing themselves which will enhance their writing skills.

Teacher



Working in criminal justice settings

Our work with criminal justice settings continues to grow. **Books Unlocked** (our reading programme with the Booker Prize Foundation) grew by 12% to reach 102 settings with reading groups and author visits. National Prison Radio broadcasts nightly serialisations of books promoted through the programme across the prison

system. 1470 copies of featured books were requested and distributed to prisoners. Our New Chapters programme takes our work into Young Offender Institutions, where we deliver a combination of reading groups, wing libraries, author visits, reading champions, CPD for staff, audiobooks, activities and Creative Writing Groups.

Evaluation has highlighted the impact of Books Unlocked:

61%

of prisoners taking part said their reading skills have improved since taking part in the programme

67%

of participants reported they now talk more about reading

63%

said they were more confident with their reading since taking part in Books Unlocked

The National Literacy Trust working through national and community partnerships

By working in partnership we can unlock new resources for our mission, we can reach audiences and, crucially, we can work collaboratively with communities to understand what's required at a local level, and empower people to take active roles in shaping and delivering our projects.

Community Literacy Hubs

We have 17 partner communities – places with extremely low levels of literacy and high levels of poverty – where we work for a minimum of a decade on raising levels of literacy through sustained partnerships. We know that one size of solution will not fit such a diverse range of places. So, in each place, the National Literacy Trust has co-created with the community a unique Literacy Hub, developing approaches that are evidence-based but also bespoke to local needs and assets.

National Literacy Trust Partner Communities

Middlesbrough, Peterborough, Bradford, Stoke-on-Trent, Swindon, Nottingham, Hastings, the North Yorkshire Coast, Manchester, Birmingham and Doncaster, Blackpool, Dundee, the Black Country, Cornwall, Suffolk, and the North East



At the heart of the Literacy Hubs are **more than 600 people who volunteer as our Literacy Champions**, taking literacy into the heart of their communities in a huge range of ways – from creating community libraries to supporting the reading of women and their children in domestic violence refuges. Together they have **contributed more than 125,000 hours to engage and encourage readers and writers**, and promote literacy.

In 2022/23, we launched two new Literacy Hubs, in Camborne and Redruth in Cornwall in September and in Dundee in November where we launched our first Hub in Scotland, building on a strong track record of programme delivery across the country and working with a committed network of local partners.

Connecting Stories

Connecting Stories was our largest national project which activated our Hub network.

Funded by Arts Council England and **supported by 43 publishers, we enlisted the support of 700 community organisations in our Hub areas** that previously did not have literacy as a core part of their work.

Over 18 months, **Connecting Stories reached more than 500,000 people**, directly engaging over 180,000 people through local projects and activities in their own communities.

Connecting Stories has had a striking, measurable impact on children in the most deprived communities within our Hubs. When compared to the national average, among children from our high-priority groups who took part in Connecting Stories:

37%

more write daily in their spare time

40%

more use their public library

22%

more enjoy reading at school

Working with the business community

The National Literacy Trust believes that businesses are a key stakeholder in the national literacy challenge – it both bears the cost of low levels of literacy and holds the key to unlocking higher levels of skills.

The momentum associated with the **Vision for Literacy Business Pledge** shows how many businesses now understand the importance of raising literacy levels and are committed to taking action. **93 businesses are now signatories of the Pledge**. In February 2023, a gathering of business leaders was held at KPMG's London offices

to celebrate the achievements of the signatories and to recommit to the Pledge's mission.

In 2022, the National Literacy Trust launched the **Literacy and Business Council**, a leadership group driving the strategy of the Business Pledge and providing a focus for national advocacy from the business community on literacy issues. The Council is chaired by the Trust's Vice President, Dame Julia Cleverdon, and is leading on the development of a multi-year early years campaign.



Funders

The charity's work is funded primarily through donations from charitable trusts, foundations, businesses and individuals. Our core activities, including Literacy Hubs, education programmes, research and advocacy, are supported principally by a number of key funders. These include:

- Amazon
- Arts Council England
- Audible
- Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society
- Bloomsbury
- Booker Prize Foundation
- British Land
- Bupa Foundation
- Chase
- Department for Education
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- Dulverton Trust
- Enterprise
- Estée Lauder
- Experian
- Foyle Foundation
- Hachette
- Harper Collins
- Julia and Hans Rausing Trust
- Kindred Squared
- KPMG
- Lancôme
- McDonald's
- Ministry of Justice
- Money & Pensions Service
- Morrisons Foundation
- Mousetrap Productions
- Oxford University Press
- Penguin Random House
- Premier League
- Rank Foundation
- Rothschild Foundation
- Siemens
- Slaughter and May
- Vanquis Bank (previously Provident Financial)
- Wesleyan
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Poetry
- WHSmith

Legal information

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2022.

The financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006, the trust deed and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).



Reference and administrative details

The Trustees and advisers currently in office or who served during the year were as follows:

TRUSTEES

Joanna Prior (Chair)

Matthew Bradbury (from 20 July 2022)

Louise Doughty

Luisa Edwards

Ben Fletcher (resigned 9th Feb 2023 and reappointed on 8th March 2023)

Natasha McMullen

Professor Michelle Shaw (from 26 May 2022)

Neil Sherlock CBE

Lara White (Treasurer)

Professor Clare Wood

PATRON

Her Majesty The Queen

PRESIDENT

Baroness Prashar of Runnymede

VICE PRESIDENTS

Amanda Jordan OBE

Julia Cleverdon DCVO CBE

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