

### Why Gift Books?

Book gifting is an important work programme for Let's Talk Reading, to date we have **gifted over 2,300 books**. Many children in Ipswich do not own books of their own. Cressida Cowell, The Children's Laureate in her charter says every child has the right to...



But the facts are that there is a 'Book Gap' and many children do not grow up in a house full of books. 1 in 11 disadvantaged children in the UK don't OWN a SINGLE BOOK. Rising to 1 in 8 children on Free School Meals. As many as 1 in 4 disadvantaged children across the UK has fewer than 10 books of their own at home.

The NLT Annual Survey in 2019 found that 44,575 children in the East of England don't have a single book of their own. However, the survey found that children who do own books are:

- 6x more likely to read above their age expected levels
- 3x more likely to enjoy reading

BookTrust found that even in lockdown, despite a surge in families reading together, 14% of families are not reading with their children (April 2020).

### BookBags for 2-year olds

Since Autumn 2017 Let's Talk Reading (LTR) has **gifted over 1,500 BookBags** to funded 2-year olds across Ipswich Town, distributed through our links with early years settings. We wanted to ensure good quality books reached children who might not have a book, or many books, of their own at home. We started in the areas that had the most deprivation, since then we have been able to gift the bookbags to 2-year-olds across the Town from south to north and east to west. Ensuring every 2-year-old child entitled to a free childcare place will receive a pack in their first term at nursery. The bespoke packs include:

- a quality new picture book from authors such as Julia Donaldson, Emily Gravett or Giles Andreae
- a rhyme card with active rhymes on one side and lullabies on the reverse side
- a visual list of more good books to share with your child and links to website offering book recommendations
- leaflets with tips for reading with your toddler and why reading is important
- localised information such as local Suffolk Libraries newsletters, children's centre and Realise Futures support
- a leaflet about free adult literacy support from our partner charity Read Easy Ipswich
- all wrapped up in a reusable child friendly cotton bag



At a community event in Chantry Library we were approached by a lady whose son had received a 2-year old BookBag. She said, he's always bringing me the dinosaur book asking me to read it and so we let her choose another book to share together. Another mum and her daughter approached the stall, she said she had seen us at a Storytime at the local primary. Her son was happy that he could share the stories and activities with his mum, especially as it was his birthday. The daughter chose a book and they chose another one together for the son at home.

The BookBags complement our Storytime sessions delivered at over 40 pre-schools across Ipswich Town. Enabling families to continuing reading at home after the Storytime session and ensuring they have a book to start finding that enjoyment of sharing reading with their child.

With further funding we hope to expand the Bookbags for all 2-year olds across Ipswich.

## Book Gifting at Community Events

Let's Talk Reading attends community events to gift books directly to children, parents, carers, grandparents and more recently adults. We know that a free choice of reading materials encourages lifelong habits in reading for pleasure. So LTR takes boxes full of books along to community events to gift to children across the age range from birth through to young adult.

Through these events we have many wonderful conversations with children and parents about reading. At the Gainsborough Fun Day in July 2019 we gifted over 150 books in one afternoon, so many we lost count! We often talk to parents who do not know that their children are never too young to be read to, so we helped baby Bentley discover his first book and saw the joy on his face as he swiped the brightly coloured felt flaps. Many children that afternoon could not decide between one book or another and so we let the children pick up the books, read the blurb and talk to our volunteers to help make their choices. Sometimes children chose a book and then changed their mind, returning to the stall to swap their book. Lots of children returned dragging their friends or family members along to choose a book of their own to take away too. We are thrilled to be able to gift so many books to children as we know that reading is important for children's life chances, their well-being and their happiness.

Often, we meet parents with their older children at community events whose younger siblings have received a 2-year-old BookBag. We are delighted to be able to gift a book to the older child and always let them choose a book for the siblings back at home too. At times it might be a grandparent or a godparent visiting the stand and they always get to choose a children's book to gift all wrapped up in our reusable child friendly cotton bags.

We know that sometimes one book isn't enough and so we have been able to regift good quality preloved books. Many of which have been kindly donated by the residents of Ipswich after a call out from Councillor Carole Jones.

**Over 360 books have been gifted at community events**, mostly new books, some preloved and some copies of Teach a Friend to Read to help adults who struggle with their reading.



## Family BookBags

Since December 2019 we have been able to expand our Family BookBags work programme. This works on a referral basis with referrals coming from a variety of sources including Suffolk County Council Children's Services, schools, charities working with vulnerable families and children's centres. LTR receives anonymised information to put together a BookBag with a quality new book for each member of the family, including the adults. Sometimes we can pop a few extra books in from our preloved selection. The books are package up in a jute bag that can be reused for shopping around Town.

In the first quarter LTR has distributed **Family BookBags to over 180 families, gifting more than 250 books**. Including books gifted to vulnerable families alongside vital food boxes during the Covid-19 Lockdown.

Let's Talk Reading provided a wonderful selection of books for children of all ages during the first Chantry Partnership event in the summer of 2019. The staff were very engaging and chatty and to the delight of children and parents, they had a wide selection of well-known books to choose from. Last December, they also provided batch of book bags filled with amazing stories which were donated to some of our most deprived families in Ipswich alongside Christmas hampers. Needless to say, families were over the moon and so were we!

Claudia Parrino, Building Community Capacity Officer – Ipswich, Suffolk County



Hannah Brunning from the Raedwald Trust: We know the transformative impact of being lost in reading, and together we want to give as many children as possible the chance to experience that, especially at a time when many are feeling isolated and are missing friends and normal routines. We created The Community Shelf as a vehicle for our community to share the resources it has in support of young people and their families who are at a disadvantage, socially and economically, not just during this crisis but in the future too. This includes sharing resources such as books, writing and art materials, culture and experiences as well as essential food and toiletries. We'd like to say a huge thanks to Let's Talk Reading and Greenfields Education for helping us to realise this ambition and making a really positive difference to the experiences of our children and their families.