

Report to Lowestoft Town Council AGM

The importance of literacy

Lacking vital literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life. As a child they won't be able to succeed at school, as a young adult they will be locked out of the job market, and as a parent they won't be able to support their own child's learning. This intergenerational cycle makes social mobility and a fairer society more difficult. People with low literacy skills may not be able to read a book or newspaper, understand road signs or price labels, make sense of a bus or train timetable, fill out a form, read instructions on medicines or use the internet.

Low levels of literacy undermine the UK's economic competitiveness, costing the taxpayer £2.5 billion every year (KPMG, 2009). A third of businesses are not satisfied with young people's literacy skills when they enter the workforce and a similar number have organised remedial training for young recruits to improve their basic skills, including literacy and communication.

Based on this research, the National Literacy Trust has, over the past decade, been exploring how place-based solutions could be developed to raise literacy levels. The first National Literacy Trust Hub was launched in Middlesbrough in 2013 and now we have 14 areas of place-based work across the UK. In 2022 NLT launched the hub Get Suffolk Reading focussing on 3 areas Haverhill, Stowmarket and Lowestoft.

Hubs are a long-term commitment to working in an area, bringing together everything we have learned about place-based working and literacy and making it available to the communities we work with. Each Hub is local and tailored but based on the principles of collective impact. It is developed in partnership with local organisations, communities and individuals and is made up of a combination of interlinking projects, interventions, volunteering programmes, media campaigning and behaviour change initiatives which work to meet the unique needs of each place.

Get Suffolk Reading inspires families across the county to read together, and helps parents to support their children's literacy skills. Our key aims are influencing wellbeing, aspiration and the home learning environment.

We are currently funded by Suffolk county Council up till next spring and looking for continuation funding now. National Literacy Trust have committed to working in Lowestoft for 10 years. Our partners are Suffolk Libraries, Suffolk MIND and Homestart in Suffolk.



Get Suffolk Reading in Lowestoft a few highlights

Since March 2022 we have gifted:
14,308 books (1000 of them pre-loved) and 358 magazines across Lowestoft
15,462 resources (e.g. activity sheets, booklet and crafty bits)

Launch event



On Wednesday 20 April 2022, Get Suffolk Reading was officially launched its activity in Lowestoft, with the storytelling trail. Over 200 families took part in the event, which saw eight storytellers read a range of children's stories throughout the day. All attendees received a goodie bag and free book of their choice from the Get Suffolk Reading marquee after hearing the tales. Over 300 books were gifted to members of the public on the day!

A parent who attended with their family in fancy dress said: "We have loved the event today, we have seen more people in town than usual and recognising other families from school!"

Queen's Jubilee



Queen's Hat Jubilee Celebrations – 16 packs were distributed to street parties and voluntary groups with 260 families reached. The activities included trails, story reading, drawing challenge and colouring and design along the theme of the Queen's Hat. The sheets included a link to the author Steve Anthony reading his book The Queen's Hat. Feedback was positive that they engaged families in the activities

"They were great, the kids loved doing it and several parents were planning on using the QR code to read to the children at home especially bedtime"

Storytelling Chairs and Community bookshelves



We have set up and are supporting a number of community bookshelves in the town including Waterlane Leisure Centre, Eat Point pavilion, Kirkley Pantry, Marina Theatre and many other local businesses and locations.

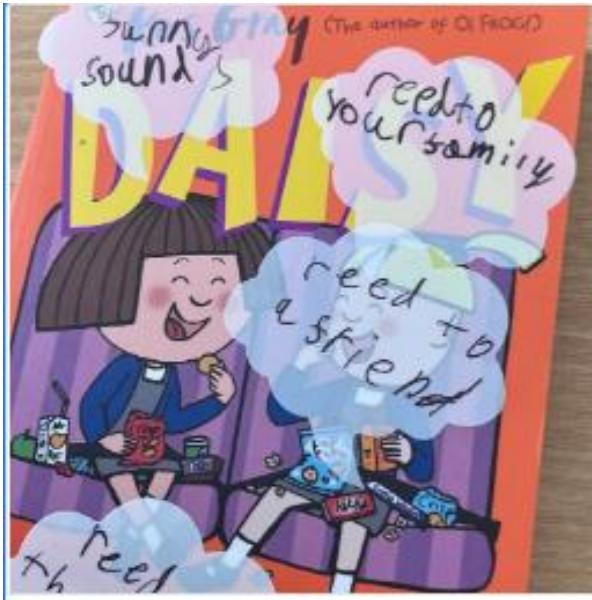
We also support the social action group Leave a Little Library which are helping get books out there across the community.

With funding from Get Suffolk Reading, East Suffolk Council and Morrison's, we have installed along with Greener Growth 7 storytelling chairs.

They are at Carlton Colville Graylings, Pakefield Church, Red Oak Primary, Kensington Gardens, The Ark Family Hub, Carlton Marshes Suffolk Wildlife Trust (temporary).

These chairs provide wonderful locations for storytelling and community activity and we look forward to events being hosted at them particularly during warmer months.

F.I.S.H and the Lowestoft Foodbank



We have supported their F.I.S.H (Food in School holidays) through our Love reading programme. The success and learning from this activity has helped us to develop hyper-local contacts with faith groups and an understanding of where there is need and opportunity.

"I just wanted to thank you for all your help and support during the holidays – I had feedback from servers and punters that you guys and gals were amazing! What we particularly liked was the bringing of adults and children together and how friendly and encouraging the facilitators were for Love Reading"

We gifted 700 'back to school packs' to the foodbank to be distributed to families in need.



Big Green Weekender

We were pleased to support the Lowestoft Town Council led event The Big Green Weekender, running an eco themed trail around Sparrows Nest. We gifted books to children who completed the trail. We look forward to supporting more Lowestoft Town council events

Ukrainian Families



Ukrainian families were supported by a special storytelling event at the Kirkley Centre. A wonderful session was led by a Ukrainian family – stories were read in both languages. Activity packs were distributed to the Ukrainian network. They were also able to meet a local author and receive a signed book.

"It was great to have an author read to the children, was interesting to have some stories read in another language"

Holiday Activity and Food Programme



We have extended our reach with delivery through the HAF with some great literacy projects over the Christmas holidays. We are now working with Inspire Suffolk as well as Everybody Active. During the summer we helped children create their story book based on local heritage (Swan Car, Pakefield Man and the Unsinkable Boat)! Over 70 children enjoyed our Christmas themed activities. We used local professionals to deliver our sessions (authors, teachers and artists) to ensure quality activities. All children were able to take home books with them as well as a fun out of the classroom experience with literacy.

With funding from Suffolk County Council we are developing a suite of 'off the shelf' resources that HAF providers across the county can use to include a literacy element in their provision.

Warm Hubs



A grant from Lowestoft and Northern Community Partnerships supported the 10 activity packs we put together for the Warm Hubs in Lowestoft. The activity packs have been so well received that more have been requested. Conversations have started to how we can bring literacy activities to the hubs for adults and children.

Stories by the Sea



Following on from our successful Halloween story time delivered by Waterstones and hosted by East Point Pavilion, we have launched Stories by The Sea. The partnership will provide an opportunity for families to enjoy stories led by 2 regular Literacy Champions and guest readers each time. The guest readers will be local businesses and charities who can use stories to help promote their messages. We plan that these sessions will encourage diversity and inclusion by giving space and opportunity to groups supporting marginalised groups.

Work in Schools and Libraries

Love Reading parental engagement programme



Our 6 week parental engagement programme - Love Reading is now being delivered on a rolling basis. We deliver via our external facilitator Nigel Lungenmuss Ward. We are targeting the 6 focussed primary schools first. Roman Hill and Northfield St Nicholas with delivery currently at Poplars.

Women's Euros



We celebrated the Women's Euros with a project that we delivered to 6 schools. Picture Book World Cup was for up to 30 of the schools identified 'reluctant readers'. The idea being to engage children who were interested in the world cup and creating a challenge for them using knock outs to find the best book out of a selection of 12!

"The children engaged well and enjoyed it. The delivery was very good too. It encourages children to think differently about stories"

Panto in a box project with Marina Theatre



We ran a wonderful project in partnership with Marina Theatre and Lowestoft Cultural Education Partnership where we brought the Panto experience into the school. We created a panto digital trail with activities that the schools could use in a way that suits them. This project was a direct response to the challenge that schools expressed to the partnership around lack of funding to do Christmas traditions.



The environment in which children read has an impact on their ability to enjoy a book. To address this we created the Nook 4 a Book project. We gifted to the school a large selection of books and 40 little bags with blankets along with literature that promotes parental engagement and reading for pleasure for wellbeing.

“Children are now more engaged with reading. Target pupils who ordinarily would not read have been keen to read to staff at after school clubs. Positive feedback on Facebook from parents.” Teacher at Northfields

“I can’t wait to read with my blanket” pupil

“I love my blanket I read with it last night” pupil

Suffolk Libraries



We have been pleased to support the 3 local libraries Lowestoft, Oulton Broad and Kessingland. Helping to bring new members to the libraries and increasing the number of children enjoying the events and summer reading challenge. We have been able to support them with free books that they can use as prizes.

Businesses

We have been incredibly lucky to have been supported by a number of local businesses, this has been either by taking part in town centre trails (e.g. Hughes, The Works, Bon Marche, Aldreds, Uncle Sids), offering staff to volunteer (Northumbria Water), hosting community bookshelves (e.g. Farrons, Water Lane Leisure Centre, Seagull and Other Birds) or getting involved with delivering activities such as Stories by the Sea (Waterstones and East Point Pavilion).

Volunteers

We have recruited over 50 local people as Literacy Champions, providing flexible volunteering.



We are proud of our young literacy Champions, in particular a year 8 from a local high school. She is brilliant at our public events, handing out maps, and running errands. She finds school very difficult and her mum has expressed her thanks at her daughter volunteering with Get Suffolk Reading.

We are keen to recruit more local people to support the project, particularly people that are able to

make a difference due to their current local connections or activity through work or volunteering,

Call to Action

Volunteers: we need more Literacy Champions to support the project this includes very low level commitment roles to opportunities to lead on literacy in your local community. We are particularly keen to hear from people who will embed literacy within their offer and also from individuals who are keen to help their local community/neighbours to read for pleasure.

Events: Tell us about your events. Could we gift you some books as prizes, or could you include a storytelling corner? Maybe we have some literacy based resources (like trails, scavenger hunts) that we can share with you? Have you got a project that we could work on together?

Promotion: Help us promote our events by signing up to our newsletter and also Facebook page. getsuffolkreading@literacytrust.org.uk

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