

**National  
Literacy  
Trust**

Change your story

ThirdSector  
**Business  
Charity  
Awards**

**Winner**  
2022

# Vision for Literacy

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Business Pledge 2024



# Literacy changes everything.

## Without good literacy skills, it's hard to live the life you want.

**The award-winning Vision for Literacy Business Pledge, now in its ninth year, is backed by 105 businesses who are all committed to changing lives through literacy.**

Our country's future prosperity will be driven by the productivity of the next generation. As businesses, we therefore have both a social responsibility and a commercial incentive to empower children and young people with the literacy skills they need for school, work and life. This support needs to start at birth and continue through to GCSE level and beyond. Targeted early language interventions to assist in the development of language, communication and literacy skills are critical for social mobility and can help set up a child for life.

**The disadvantage gap in early literacy skills is costing England £830 million every year.<sup>1</sup>**

This support throughout a child's life needs a firm foundation from an early age. Shockingly, over 185,000 five-year-olds started school last year without the literacy, communication and language skills they needed to thrive.<sup>2</sup> Without this fundamental base, not only will their learning, confidence and wellbeing suffer in their early school days, but they are much more likely to struggle with their GCSEs and be unemployed by their 30s.

Children experiencing poverty are most likely to be affected. Sadly, in the UK, where you are born and how wealthy your family is still often determines where you end up in life. This is particularly evident in the uneven access to school libraries: 1 in 7 primary schools in England do not have a library, rising to 1 in 4 in disadvantaged areas. This means that over three-quarters of a million children in the UK do not have access to books that we know enable better educational outcomes and greater wellbeing, further perpetuating the cycle of inequality.<sup>3</sup>

Businesses have a unique role to play to address this complex issue. As business leaders, we are committing ourselves to putting support for children from the most disadvantaged communities at the heart of a national conversation, as well as pledging to empower our employees and customers by providing them with the necessary tools, resources, and support to drive tangible progress in this crucial area.

Together, we can empower families with opportunities and advice to nurture their child's development. This will pave the way for a future where every child has the foundation they need to thrive academically, professionally and personally.

**We pledge to take action (commensurate with size) to close the literacy gap and safeguard children's futures. We will do this through:**

- 1. External reach.** Engaging our customers, partners and suppliers to help children across the UK change their story.
- 2. Colleague engagement.** Engaging our internal networks to raise awareness and funds for the National Literacy Trust.
- 3. Leadership.** Using our voice and local influence to help raise awareness of the importance of literacy and make it a priority for politicians, businesses and parents/carers.

<sup>1</sup> Pro Bono Economics, National Literacy Trust, KPMG UK (2024) Early literacy matters: Economic impact and regional disparities in England

<sup>2</sup> Pro Bono Economics, National Literacy Trust, KPMG UK (2024) Early literacy matters: Economic impact and regional disparities in England

<sup>3</sup> Primary School Library Alliance (November 2022) Working Together Towards a Library In Every Primary School

# Our pledge in more detail

| <b>PLEDGE</b>  | <b>SUGGESTED ACTIONS</b><br>(at least one from each area)   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1. External reach.</b></p> <p>Engaging our customers, partners and suppliers to help children across the UK change their story.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donate free high-quality and diverse books to children and families who might not be able to afford their own, through National Literacy Trust programmes and in local communities.</li> <li>• Drive customer engagement and empower parents and carers with access to high-quality resources and tips to boost their child’s language skills.</li> <li>• Promote National Literacy Trust fundraising opportunities to help boost language and literacy levels in disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>• Encourage partners and suppliers to get involved and support the Vision for Literacy Business Pledge and National Literacy Trust campaigns.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>2. Colleague engagement.</b></p> <p>Engaging our internal networks to raise awareness and funds for the National Literacy Trust.</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support parents/carers to develop their child’s literacy and communication skills at home.</li> <li>• Sign up to employee fundraising opportunities to support the National Literacy Trust.</li> <li>• Encourage staff volunteering opportunities to support literacy and reading-based activities in schools and the wider community, e.g. through the National Literacy Trust’s Literacy Champions programme.</li> <li>• Promote the Vision for Literacy Business Pledge internally to show the importance of the campaign to employees.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>3. Leadership.</b></p> <p>Using our voice and local influence to help raise awareness of the importance of literacy and make it a priority for politicians, businesses and parents/carers.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the company’s support for the 2024 Vision for Literacy Business Pledge on website/social media channels.</li> <li>• Support nationwide campaigns that support literacy initiatives across National Literacy Trust channels.</li> <li>• Attend roundtable events where relevant, to promote the importance of literacy and drive change.</li> </ul>   |

# 2024 signatories



Akin



ANDERSEN PRESS

Ashurst



BARNES COACHES



BEANO STUDIOS



BLOOMSBURY



BONNIER Books UK



Browne Jacobson

Browns Books

BCLP



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS & ASSESSMENT



CHASE

Chiltern railways

CLEARY GOTTLIEB



DC THOMSON



ESTÉE LAUDER COMPANIES



experian.



faber

FirstNews NEWS KIDS CAN TRUST

four

Good Housekeeping



GREGGS Everyday tastes good



HarperCollins

IOP Institute of Physics



irwinmitchell



LANCÔME

LAURA DEVINE IMMIGRATION

LEXONIK

LoveReading 4 KIDS BUY BOOKS CHANGE LIVES



Mishcon de Reya

Morrison's FOUNDATION

moto

MOTT MACDONALD

mylahore BRITISH ASIAN KITCHEN



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

PAN MACMILLAN

Pearson

Peters

PILOT



Publishers Association

The PwC Foundation

raintree a Capstone company - publishers for children

RAPPORT EDUCATIONAL MARKETING



Renaissance See Every Student.

REY Paper in motion



SIEMENS



the skills network

SLAUGHTER AND MAY/

small wardrobe

EST. 1867 SMYTHSON OF BOND STREET

SPRINGER NATURE GROUP

Sumitomo Corporation Europe Limited

THE DAY Turning news into lessons

TikTok

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trianglefire SYSTEMS

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tts

Turner & Townsend



VANQUIS Banking Group

Vercity

THE VERY GROUP



WESLEYAN we are all about you

whistle PR

WHSmith EST. 1792

WICKED

THE WORKS





# Audible

Audible first joined forces with the National Literacy Trust five years ago. Since then, Audible has been championing the National Literacy Trust's mission to empower children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds with the literacy skills they need to reach their full potential.

In 2019, we launched Inside Stories with Audible, a project that brings podcast and audio production skills to young people in custody, supporting them to improve their wellbeing and confidence, build communication skills, and raise aspirations, through sessions centred around audio content creation. We've delivered podcast-making sessions in HMP/YOI Isis, in partnership with Prison Radio Association. We've also hosted the cast of the Kurupt FM podcast and partnered with Finding Rhythms at HMYOI Feltham. The project enables all young people in HMYOI Feltham to access Amazon Kindle Fire tablets, which feature a wide range of audiobooks to support their learning and enjoyment of books.

Together, we support schools with a high percentage of free school meals to develop literacy projects for their reluctant writers. Between 2019–2022, we supported 4,848 young people from schools in London and Birmingham to engage with poetry through Young City Poets. We enable pupils to engage with literacy on their terms by creating memorable experiences to help bring writing to life.

Since 2022, we've reached 1,050 pupils from 30 secondary schools across the UK through The Power of Voice, which empowers young people to tell the stories that matter to them, harnessing the power of writing to explore their civic identities and use their own voices to drive change.

Whether it's sponsoring ground-breaking research into the effects of audiobooks on children's imaginations, delivering marketing campaigns, recommending the best audiobooks for families to share stories together, or delivering creative poetry workshops for vulnerable young people, Audible is helping children and young people find their voices and build aspirations for their future.



## Lancôme

Since our partnership launched in 2018, Lancôme and the National Literacy Trust have supported over 6,000 young people through our Words for Work: Women in Leadership programme. The programme gives young women in post-16 education the literacy skills, leadership abilities and confidence they need to achieve their full potential in the workplace.

Through the partnership, students meet with inspirational Lancôme employees in person and through online business masterclass sessions, where volunteers share key insights to the application of literacy skills in their roles, and their experiences as women in the workplace. We also run teacher-led workshops to further develop these skills, as well as other employability skills such as presenting and interview practice.

We also run panel events throughout the year, which bring together inspiring women such as authors including Sophia Thakur, and women from a range of different sectors and job roles. The panels are an opportunity for students to hear about the women's journeys to success, as well the challenges they face and how they use literacy skills to overcome them. Students are also able to further their own communication skills through the Q&A element of the panels.

We have identified key areas of need to deliver the programme in Nottingham, Manchester, Dublin and London. We focus partnership activity on key dates such as Lancôme's firmwide volunteering Citizens' Day, and International Women's Day.

*"I thought the programme was very insightful and I actually realised that the literacy we do at school is as important as my teachers have said for when I leave school and start my career!"* - feedback from student participant



## WHSmith

WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust have a long-established partnership spanning nearly two decades and rooted in a shared passion for literacy and life-long learning. The partnership spans many varied touch points, including fundraising through WHSmith stores, book donations and campaign activity, as well as funding for our Young Readers Programme. So far, our partnership has supported over 31,500 primary aged children, provided over 120,000 books to children that otherwise would not have had them, and raised over £500,000 for the National Literacy Trust. Last year, the impact of our partnership was recognised at the Corporate Engagement Awards, where we were delighted to win a Gold award for Best Education Programme and a Bronze award for Best Collaborative Approach.

WHSmith are also a key founding partner of the National Literacy Trust's Early Words Matter campaign, and launched the campaign in 113 stores last summer by sharing book recommendations and reading tips with parents. They also fund a community programme in the most deprived area of Swindon that helps parents support their children's early literacy and communication; without this programme children would start primary school up to 19 months behind their more fortunate peers.

Our partnership continues to expand to change the life stories of children across the UK.

**National  
Literacy  
Trust**

**Change your story**

Working with



The Vision for Literacy Business Pledge was established in 2015 and is run by the National Literacy Trust with the support of KPMG UK. The Pledge provides a framework for business action to help close the literacy gap between disadvantaged young people and their more affluent peers.

For more information on the  
**Vision for Literacy Business Pledge 2024**,  
visit [literacytrust.org.uk/businesspledge](https://literacytrust.org.uk/businesspledge)  
or contact [pledge@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:pledge@literacytrust.org.uk)