

# National Literacy Trust Hubs



A place-based response to tackling low literacy

# Introduction

## THE LITERACY CHALLENGE IN THE UK

In the UK, one person in six lives with poor literacy.<sup>1</sup> This is a problem that is aligned with poverty, reduced access to employment opportunities and a lack of aspiration. In the country's most deprived areas, more than a third of adults lack the literacy expected of an 11-year-old. This undermines their wellbeing and can hold them back from making a full contribution to the economic and social life of our nation. Parents with low literacy lack the confidence to support their child's learning. Children from disadvantaged areas are half as likely to attend an outstanding primary school<sup>2</sup> compared with children from more affluent boroughs, further reinforcing the cycle of disadvantage.

Every community faces different challenges. We need local solutions. Significant government investment and a national educational policy have not achieved results in the most deprived areas. Local services, from schools to libraries to public health, need support to make the most of the opportunities they have to raise literacy levels. Research carried out with local authority teams revealed that around 75% of frontline staff regularly meet parents with poor literacy skills but half of these never or rarely signpost them to literacy support.<sup>3</sup>

The National Literacy Trust believe that if we take coordinated action at a local level to drive up literacy levels, we can support increased educational attainment and employability skills and improve health outcomes and social capital. The National Literacy Trust Hub model helps communities to achieve these aims.

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## ABOUT THE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST

We are an independent charity working with children, young people and families. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions to improve language and communication skills in disadvantaged communities. We campaign to make literacy a priority and support schools to transform their teaching.

1 DfES (2003) The Skills for Life survey

2 Teach First (2016). Available at <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/news/national-primary-offer-day-schools-low-income-areas-face-challenges-recruiting-teachers-provide>

3 McCoy, E & Mottram, E. (2010). Partners in Literacy Survey 2009: A snapshot of local support for Literacy: National Literacy Trust

## WHAT ARE NATIONAL LITERACY TRUST HUBS?

Since 1995, the National Literacy Trust has worked to address low literacy in disadvantaged communities by developing place-based solutions. These pilot projects provided the blueprint for National Literacy Trust Hubs.

In 2013 we launched our first Hub in Middlesbrough with funding from the Booker Prize Foundation. The following year, we secured funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to continue our work in Middlesbrough and develop Hubs in Peterborough and Bradford, working in partnership with the local authorities.

National Literacy Trust Hubs are a place-based solution to intergenerational low literacy. The Hubs harness community assets to address poverty and joblessness through campaigning, influencing and supporting attitudes and behaviours around literacy. We target wards, groups and communities most at risk of low literacy. This work is being delivered where community resources are under threat and local charities and the public sector are “doing more for less”. The National Literacy Trust brokers innovative partnerships between local authorities, libraries, sporting and cultural organisations, faith and voluntary community groups, as well as businesses, health and education organisations. We then work together to identify and implement support that improves literacy by focusing on the people who need help most.

National Literacy Trust Hubs have been established in areas where at least three wards are within the most deprived 30% of the UK, in communities with low early years attainment and low adult literacy, and where schools have not been achieving national averages at Key Stages 2 and 4.

### IMPACT



Working with **300+** schools each year



**Over 75 partnerships** created to take action on low literacy



**7.3 million** opportunities to view key messages generated



**500,000+** free books distributed



**£200,000+** literacy programmes delivered



Messaging to parents on Bradford city centre's Big Screen



HRH The Duchess of Cornwall distributes books at the launch of the Middlesbrough Hub

# National Literacy Trust Hubs

## Five-pillar model



### Pillar 1: Audit

Analysis of data, identification of key stakeholders and priority areas.



### Pillar 2: Strategy

Strategy developed with long-term goals and resources needed.



### Pillar 3: Campaign

Local marketing and media campaign targeting parents and niche demographics.



### Pillar 4: Partnerships

Partnerships created with organisations from a range of sectors, including public sector, business, voluntary and more.



### Pillar 5: Implementation & interventions

Programmes and interventions to address priority areas, such as designing new approaches to literacy, commissioning interventions, increasing training and securing resources.



### Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation of the Hub identifies successful work and partnerships, areas in which to improve and new priority groups and wards.



Stories in the Dales, dads' day out

## IMPACT



### School readiness

- More children in Middlesbrough are achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of the EYFS, closing the gap with the national average from 22.6 percentage points in 2013 to 6.27 percentage points in 2015.<sup>4</sup>



### Writing

- In 2015 more of Bradford's children and young people aged 11-14 write every day or a few times a week outside of school (52.6%), compared to their peers regionally (39.7%) and nationally (44.1%).<sup>5</sup>



### Reading

- The number of KS2 pupils who enjoy reading in Peterborough has increased by 23.4% between 2014 and 2015, rising from 59.8% in 2014 to 73.8% in 2015.<sup>6</sup>



Storytelling event on World Book Day aboard a Grand Central train

4 Comparing Early Words Together pilot settings in Middlesbrough with the national average

5 Anne Teravainen, Children and Young People's Writing in Bradford 2015

6 Anne Teravainen, Children and Young People's Literacy in Peterborough in 2015

## Pillar 1: Audit

The first step in developing a new National Literacy Trust Hub is to collect and analyse data at local and ward level, including demographics, behaviours (drawing on pro bono work by Experian), attainment levels in early years and in schools, plus basic adult skills and deprivation. We look at overall literacy in communities and investigate what influences and reaches people so that we can identify opportunities and weaknesses in literacy provision.

The data is also compared with the footprint of public sector services, voluntary stakeholders and business partners to assess how they can be involved to help address low literacy. We build on existing strengths and find partners who can support the Hub and reach priority communities.

Partners come from many sectors – community, religion, public or private.

At the audit stage we start to identify the key priorities for action. Developing school readiness was identified as a priority across all three current Hubs, along with improving boys' literacy skills in Bradford and Middlesbrough.

In Peterborough, transition from Year 2 to Year 3 for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) was also identified as key priority.

### CASE STUDY

#### IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES IN PETERBOROUGH

In Peterborough, analysis of Early Years Profile data showed underperformance in communication, literacy and language for the previous three years. Deeper analysis at ward level indicated that there were specific pockets of underperformance, with one school demonstrating a 38% gap in reading compared to national levels. This led to a pilot project to develop school readiness, delivered in partnership with St Thomas More Primary School and Nursery and the Barnardos Children's Centres. A bespoke programme of sessions was designed to improve parental engagement and support better transition to school.

Emerging evidence shows 50% of children made significant progress and 100% of parents involved in the pilot have maintained their engagement with the school.



Peterborough United's Kyle Vassell visits a local school

## Pillar 2: Strategy

The National Literacy Trust forms a Hub steering group, often with the local authority, education and public health partners. A partnership group is created to bring together other partners from a range of sectors such as transport, housing associations, culture and business. Hubs are coordinated by Hub Managers, often seconded from the local authority partner. The Hub team is supported by a central team at the National Literacy Trust which supports programme delivery, campaigning, fundraising, partnership development, communications, research and policy. A strategy is agreed to tackle the priority issues with

supporting actions around campaigning and awareness raising. For the strategy to be successful, good partnership working, communication and regular feedback is essential to assess the Hub's impact.

National Literacy Trust Hubs are evaluated by scrutinising pupil progress data (where applicable), collating case studies, collecting information from focus groups and using proxy indicators – including the reach of associated media campaigns.

### CASE STUDY

#### SHARED PUBLIC HEALTH AND LITERACY AGENDA IN MIDDLESBROUGH

The Middlesbrough Hub works closely with Public Health to drive awareness of the importance of early years literacy and language development in the most deprived communities at risk of low literacy and poor health outcomes.

A major public campaign promotes reading and talk with babies and children, with posters displayed on Middlesbrough's public screen and bus shelters around the town. More than 16,000 flyers have been distributed to families and supporting information is included in every baby's personal child health record.

Working with James Cook University Hospital and premature baby charity Bliss, we have supported parents of premature babies with book packs and given literacy training to nursing staff. On the general children's wards we have trained staff and 53 therapeutic care volunteers to be literacy advocates and highlight the importance of reading to children and parents. More than 1,500 reading packs have been distributed so far. The neonatal project was Highly Commended by the Third Sector's Business Charity Award in 2016 and feedback from parents demonstrates the value of the project:

*"I never thought to read to her in the unit until I was given a book and the benefits were explained to me by the nurse. I think she enjoys me reading. I know I do."*



Book packs at James Cook University Hospital's neonatal ward



Posters in Middlesbrough town centre

## Pillar 3: Campaigns

Each National Literacy Trust Hub delivers a local media campaign to increase awareness of the importance of literacy and to engage parents to improve their home learning environment. Campaigns are delivered by partnerships with local broadcast, print, online and social media outlets and by working with local businesses, cultural organisations, housing associations and sporting partners to distribute messaging. As well as broad campaigns targeting families we also deliver targeted campaigns to specific priority groups, working with community radio or led by relevant cultural and sporting role models.

Our Father's Day "reading selfie" campaigns which ran in 2014 and 2015 were supported by sporting role models in all three Hub areas, including the Chief Executive of the Bradford Bulls rugby league club, players from the Peterborough Phantoms ice hockey team and Middlesbrough Football Club. We published lists of local celebrities' favourite books on World Book Day, and professional boxer Tasif Khan visited a Bradford school to talk about his favourite story.

We work with local newspapers to secure coverage of our success stories, events and competitions, and to generate excitement about the Hub work in the community. Our school library makeovers in Bradford and Peterborough, free book giveaways, reading initiatives in local barbers, events to engage boys with reading and writing, and school visits from sports stars are just a few examples of the activities covered by local press.

Campaigns are evaluated using standard industry measures of equivalent advertising value and reach. So far, Hub campaigns have delivered 7.3 million opportunities to view positive messages about literacy online, and the coverage has an advertising equivalent value of £400,000.

Each Hub has a dedicated web presence to raise awareness of its activities and provide information on how the local community can engage with literacy. The sites have generated more than 25,000 page views and include tips for parents, information about local libraries, plus a regular blog from a local personality or author.

Hub campaigns also benefit from National Literacy Trust marketing reach. We share campaign news with our 40,000 Twitter followers, our 8,000 Facebook fans and our 60,000 newsletter subscribers. Hub campaigns generate a genuine buzz on social media; for example, when we supplied books to local barbers and hairdressers the story received more than 800 interactions on Facebook and over 100 retweets and favourites on Twitter.



Bradford City FC's James Hanson and boxer Tasif Khan at the Bradford Hub launch



Middlesbrough FC's George Friend reads with his daughter



## CASE STUDY

### MEDIA PARTNERSHIP IN BRADFORD

The *Telegraph & Argus* is the principle media partner of the National Literacy Trust Hub in Bradford. At the launch of the Hub in June 2014, we offered the paper exclusive interviews and photo opportunities with sports stars, authors and Bradford Council's councillors, which resulted in 22 pieces of coverage with positive messaging on the importance of literacy to building a bright future for the district. We have worked with the paper on a Father's Day "reading selfie" campaign and run a joint *Love Bradford* poetry competition in partnership with Kirkgate Shopping Centre and First Buses. Over two years the partnership has generated 103 articles with an advertising equivalent value of £80,000 and provided 2.6 million opportunities to view literacy messaging.



Bradford hairdresser supports reading initiative

**SUBMIT A  
READING  
SELFIE, DADS**

**Hairdressers  
helping boost  
literacy levels**

**Walk and talk  
trail to help  
literacy**

**Book pack encourages  
new parents to read**

**Raising literacy  
levels is key to  
better life for all**

**Reading to son is vital  
goal for Boro star**

**HRH The Duchess  
of Cornwall visits  
Peterborough to  
celebrate literacy**

**CVFM**  **Radio**  
104.5FM | Online | Mobile



**Telegraph & Argus**

Peterborough  
**Telegraph**

tuned in to bradford  
**(bcb 106.6 fm)**  
www.bcbradio.co.uk

**The Gazette**

## Pillar 4: Partnerships

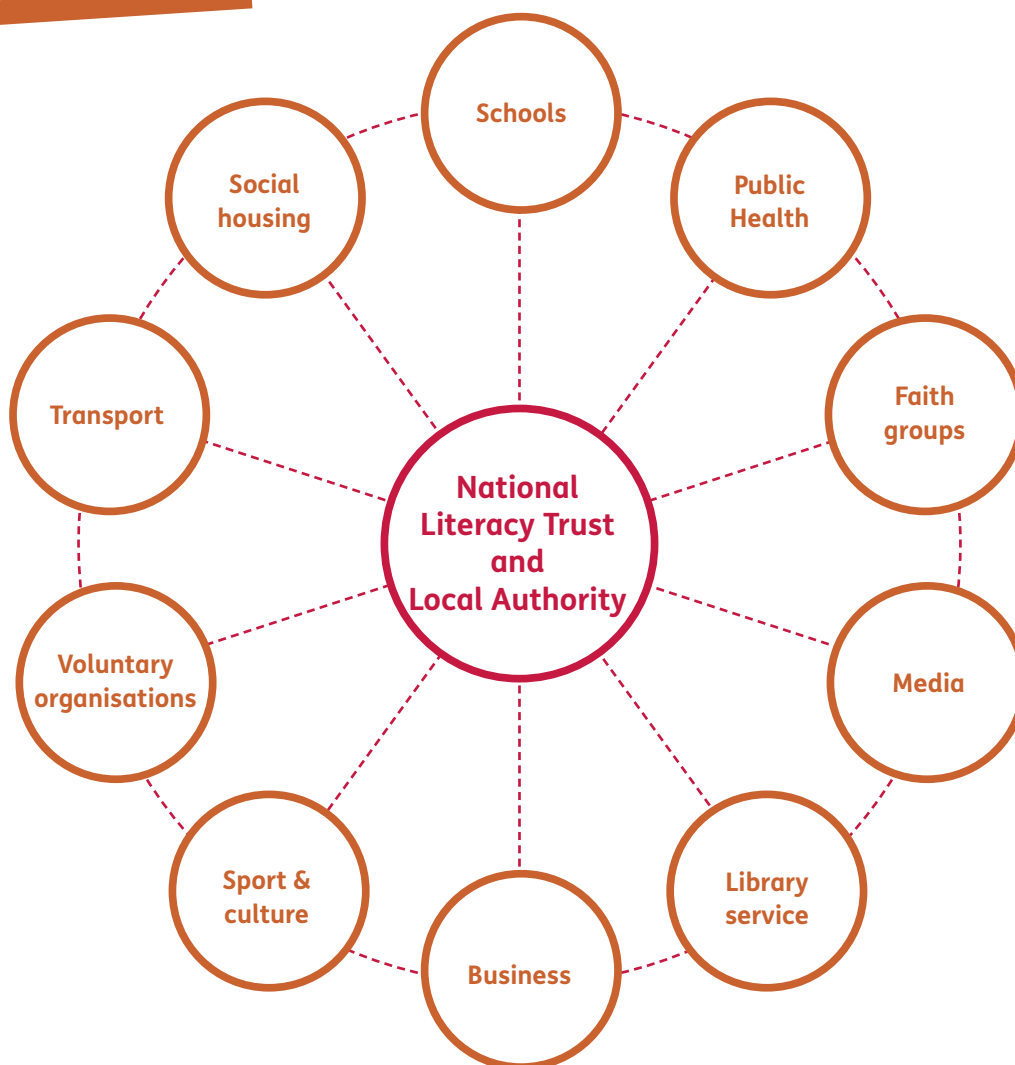
National Literacy Trust Hubs have become a blueprint for multi-agency cooperation by bringing public, private and voluntary organisations together to tackle the challenge of improving literacy at a time of significant public service funding cuts.

The Hub model maximises local community assets, broadens the reach of existing services and develops bespoke solutions to the literacy challenges each area faces. The National Literacy Trust has developed partnerships with local authorities, schools, businesses, media partners, event organisers, sports teams, healthcare professionals, libraries, art galleries, museums, voluntary organisations and community faith groups. The goal is to make literacy a priority for everyone and increase the frequency and quality of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

By co-creating activity and campaigns in partnership with a range of local organisations, we ensure that the Hub is responding to local need and reaching our target audiences most effectively. For example, in Middlesbrough we partnered with Middlesbrough Football Club to help reach teenage boys through a social media-based #BoroBookClub “reading selfie” campaign, whilst in Bradford we work alongside the Fatherhood Institute to encourage dads to read with their children.

Between 2013 and 2015 we have created over 75 partnerships across our three Hub areas.

### Our partners



## CASE STUDY

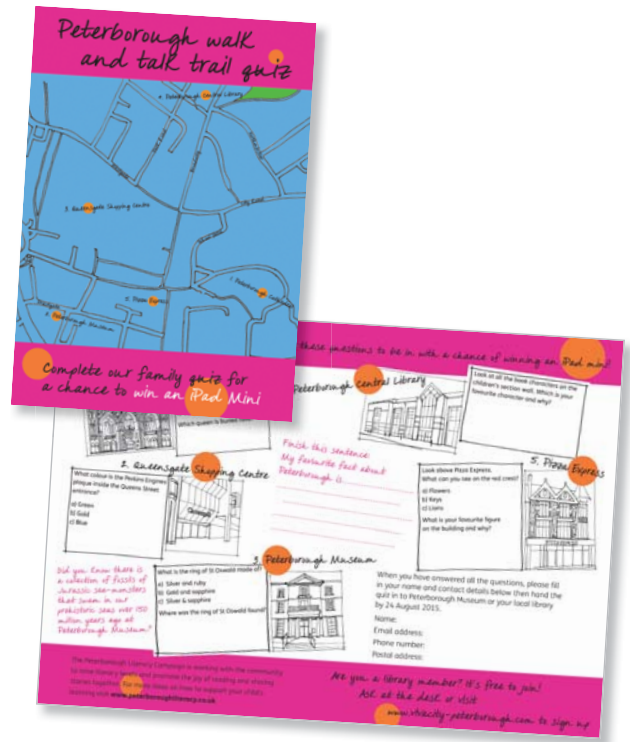
### OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH VIVACITY

We work with Peterborough's library and cultural trust, Vivacity, to expand its learning and community engagement programmes. As part of the annual Peterborough Heritage Festival the Hub helped Vivacity engage five primary schools in a day of history-themed literacy activities. We have also provided Vivacity with targeting data to focus resources and programmes on schools and areas with the most need.

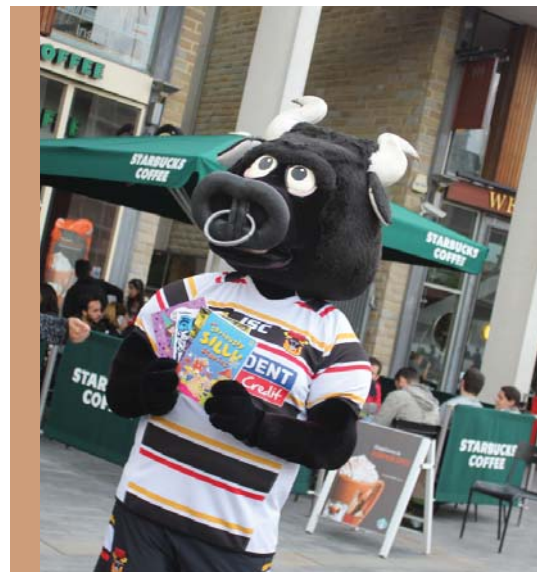
In summer 2015, 3,000 copies of a free Peterborough *walk and talk trail quiz* were distributed through schools, children's centres and by Vivacity staff. The walking trail sparked family conversations about local landmarks and cultural buildings and ended at the central library to encourage library membership.

The Hub also supported the Museum Education Service to redevelop their schools learning offer, strengthening the links to the English curriculum and aligning their offer to the needs of literacy coordinators and teachers.

Clare Hardy, Head of Cultural Development at Vivacity Peterborough said: "Involvement in the campaign launch gave us opportunities to highlight and improve our literacy offer which have widened our appeal to schools."



Father's Day "reading selfie" campaign



Rugby League's Bradford Bulls club mascot hands out books in the city centre

## Pillar 5: Implementation and interventions

Priority issues, such as early years literacy, support for EAL children or the reading and writing attainment of teenage boys, need specific interventions to make a difference. The Hub commissions programmes or enhances existing activity. This can include support and lesson plans for teachers, increasing the literacy focus of museum education programmes, skilling up hospital staff and volunteers in literacy awareness and supporting family reading.

Awareness training, signposting, changing delivery and content, cross-promotion across services, and collaboration are just a few examples of how services have increased their reach and efficiency to meet literacy needs. Using the National Literacy Trust's profile, we also leverage significant support from publishers and other national partners, such as Boots Opticians, British Land and WH Smith, to provide books, volunteers and resources.

The National Literacy Trust and other charities have a range of evidence-based interventions to address the specific

literacy priorities of a local area. We also create bespoke programmes to meet need. In Bradford, the Hub established links between schools and the Saif-ul-Malook international festival. Members of the community gave workshops to children to prepare them to perform part of a revered work of Punjabi poetry in front of international judges to promote performance in their mother tongue. 12-year-old student Ismail Hussain said, "I'll never forget this experience - from seeing the tears in the eyes of the judges when I recited at the audition to the praises from a giant like Sanam Marvi. I feel encouraged and inspired!"

The National Literacy Trust also provides local support to schools by giving teachers access to the National Literacy Trust Network. This database of resources, such as literacy guides for schools and annual literacy reviews, helps school literacy coordinators and literacy leaders provide outstanding literacy teaching. The Network also provides specialist knowledge and advice on effective strategies to improve literacy.

### CASE STUDY

#### EARLY YEARS SUPPORT IN MIDDLESBROUGH

Between 2013 and 2015 we worked with children's centres which are feeders for 11 priority primary schools in the town. The schools are in wards in the most deprived 15% nationally, with four in the most deprived 4%.

Around 200 families took part in Early Words Together, a six-week programme where trained volunteers from the community work 1:1 with parents and young children in an early years setting to promote good early literacy practices. Pupils who had been through Early Words Together showed a marked improvement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage compared to other children in Middlesbrough and the national average. Between 2013 and 2015:

- The number of children reaching the expected level in Communication and Language increased by **20.1 percentage points** (pp) vs. an increase of 12.4pp for children in settings that did not receive Early Words Together and a national average increase of 5pp.
- The increase in children reaching the expected levels in literacy was even greater, with a **20.9pp** increase vs. a 9.1pp increase for children in settings that did not receive Early Words Together and a national average increase of 5pp.
- The percentage of children achieving an overall Good Level of Development increased by **24.3pp** vs. a 17.8pp increase for children in settings that did not receive Early Words Together and national average increase of 8pp.



Stories in the Dales, dads' day out

## CASE STUDY

### KEY STAGES 2 & 3 - USING POETRY TO RAISE ATTAINMENT

*Our Stories* is a creative writing and performance poetry programme developed by the Bradford Hub to engage pupils with low literacy, especially boys. A teacher's resource pack was developed for use with 10 to 13-year-olds, offering a wide range of poetry activities for the classroom. Local poets and spoken word artists donated their poetry to be included in the pack. The programme was enhanced through a partnership with Bradford Museums and Galleries, the Music and Arts Service and the Bradford Literature Festival, who offered opportunities for pupils to engage with creative writing and performance poetry. The programme is being piloted by one primary and three secondary schools with the resource pack being made available district wide.

Data from the pilot primary school shows that over the course of the programme the percentage of Year 6 pupils at the expected level in writing **increased from 46% to 92%** with **36% of pupils now above the expected level**. Results from the first secondary school to submit their impact data show that pupils' writing levels have increased significantly. At the start of the programme just 17% of pupils were at the expected level in writing and no pupils were above this. After the programme **40% of pupils were at the expected level and 14% were above** the expected level in writing.



Museum visit in Bradford to inspire poetry writing

# National Literacy Trust Hubs:

## Looking forward

The National Literacy Trust Hub model is tried, tested and adaptable. The model promotes cooperation between stakeholders, and has the potential to deliver effective and efficient measurable long-term results across all communities.

Are you interested in working with us to develop a National Literacy Trust Hub in your area? The five-pillar model is flexible and we can work with you to design a Hub that is responsive to your needs. Contact [hubs@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:hubs@literacytrust.org.uk) for more information.

We are looking to establish Hubs in areas where we can have the greatest impact. We target our work in areas where at least three wards are within the most deprived 30% in the country and where adult skills, school attainment and early years attainment are low.



Outdoor performance poetry in Middlesbrough

## In the words of...

### **Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive of Peterborough City Council**

“The National Literacy Trust Hub has brought together and focused the talents and drive of a wide range of local partner organisations to raise literacy levels within the community. Most important is that the National Literacy Trust’s work has helped identify and respond to the specific literacy priorities of Peterborough in a genuine partnership.”

### **Edward Kunonga, Director of Public Health at Middlesbrough Council**

“Public Health has been behind the National Literacy Trust Hub in Middlesbrough from the very start. Literacy skills are incredibly important to health and well-being outcomes and the programmes in James Cook University Hospital have had a real impact on the lives of families, helping to shape communication patterns from birth. I look forward to what we will deliver through the Hub in the years to come.”

### **Helen Ede, Deputy Headteacher at Newham Bridge Primary School, Middlesbrough**

“The National Literacy Trust has brilliant resources for schools and we have benefited from the ideas, best practice examples and audit tools from the Network for several years now. Having a National Literacy Trust Hub here in Middlesbrough gives schools many additional advantages such as author visits, tailored competitions... and sometimes free books!”

### **Osman Riaz, dad who visits St Edmund’s Children’s Centre in Bradford with his daughter**

“Children’s centres can be quite intimidating for dads but at St Edmund’s we’re made to feel so welcome. Me and my daughter really enjoy all the fun activities and it’s a great chance to meet other dads and talk about any problems.”

### **Zoe Paget, Operations Director, Stagecoach East, Peterborough**

“At Stagecoach we strive to be active members of our local communities, so partnering with the Peterborough Literacy Campaign to inspire a love of writing in the area and celebrate all that this city has to offer has been a great opportunity. We hope that the winning poems make our customers smile and we’re looking forward to further supporting this important initiative.”

### **Umar Khatab Khokar, Hairdresser, Bradford**

“I’m supporting the Bradford Literacy Campaign because I believe that reading is important for a child’s education. Getting a haircut is a good opportunity for kids to practise reading aloud and I encourage other barbers and hair salons to get kids reading too!”

**Gillian Beasley,**  
**Chief Executive of Peterborough City Council**

“The National Literacy Trust’s work has helped identify and respond to the specific literacy priorities of Peterborough in a genuine partnership.”

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