

# Vision for Literacy Business Pledge

2018



Businesses taking action to drive up literacy levels, boost the economy and improve social mobility

# Vision for Literacy

## Business Pledge 2018

As UK business leaders, we know that low literacy undermines our economic competitiveness and sustainability and creates obstacles to a fairer society.

Research for Read On. Get On. estimated that if every child left primary school with the reading skills they need, our economy could grow by more than £30 billion by 2025<sup>1</sup>. Businesses are also concerned about young people's basic skills, with nearly a third of employers saying that are not satisfied with young people's literacy and use of English.<sup>2</sup> As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, these skills will become more important as we forge new economic alliances in a competitive global market.

It is also an issue of social justice. Adults with functional literacy earn 16% more than those without<sup>3</sup>, and in the UK's most deprived wards up to 35% of the adult population lack the literacy skills expected of an 11-year-old.<sup>4</sup> These adults lack the confidence and skills to help their children with reading and writing and struggle to help them learn the skills they need to succeed.

Despite 20 years of government efforts to improve social mobility in England, the Social Mobility Commission

recently highlighted the significant achievement gap between our country's richest and poorest children.<sup>5</sup> At the current rate of progress it will take 15 years before all children are school ready by the age of five, and it will take a staggering 40 years before the attainment gap between the rich and poor at that age is closed.

Children from poorer backgrounds in England start school at the age of five already 18 months behind their wealthier peers in terms of school readiness.<sup>6</sup> What's more, 60-70% of gaps in attainment at age 11 are due to inequalities present at age five.<sup>7</sup>

We need to act now to ensure that all children in the UK have an equal start in life. Early childhood is the crucial time for addressing social mobility, so we will emphasise what action can be taken to boost early years literacy in 2018. This will complement the range of activities taking place in schools.

Fifty-one businesses signed up to the Vision for Literacy Business Pledge 2017 and committed to taking practical action to drive up literacy levels. We are calling on more businesses to join the national literacy campaign in 2018.

We pledge to elevate the literacy issue within our business and take practical action (commensurate with size) to close the literacy gap and create a fairer society by:

- ▶ Engaging our employees in the literacy challenge
- ▶ Supporting the drive to raise literacy levels in our local community
- ▶ Contributing to the national campaign to raise literacy levels

1 Read On. Get On. (2014) *How reading can help children escape poverty*. Published by Save the Children on behalf of the Read On. Get On. campaign

2 CBI (2016) *The Right Combination: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2016*. London: CBI.

3 S McIntosh and A Vignoles (2001) Micro-analysis of the Effects of Literacy and Numeracy. In: Bynner et al. 2001, *Improving Adult Basic Skills: Benefits to the individual and to society*. London Centre of Longitudinal Studies

4 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) *Skills for life survey: small area estimation data*. London: DfBIS.

5 Social Mobility Commission (2017) *Time For Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017*. London: Social Mobility Commission.

6 P Sammons, K Toth and K Sylva (2015) *Subject to Background: What promotes better achievement for bright but disadvantaged students?* The Sutton Trust and University of Oxford.

7 The Sutton Trust (2016) *Research Brief: International inequalities*. Available at: [http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/International-inequalities\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/International-inequalities_FINAL.pdf)

8 From the April 2017 survey of businesses.

You are joining 38 charities and organisations that have come together to commit to ambitious goals across several high-profile campaigns, including Read On. Get On., the Fair Education Alliance and the Vision for

Literacy. These goals were met with cross-party support, but we recognise that this ambition cannot be fulfilled by charities, teachers, families and Government alone. The whole of society must play its part.

## Impact so far

### ► Improved employee morale, motivation and engagement<sup>8</sup>

67% of businesses said that employee engagement had improved due to their literacy activities and over 50% said morale and motivation had improved

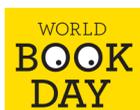
### ► Increased take up of volunteering opportunities

KPMG saw an increase of 78% in the number of volunteers supporting literacy activities, and volunteer hours increased by 60% in 2016

### ► Increased customer engagement

In 2016, Boots Opticians focussed on the link between children's eye health and literacy and saw a 17% increase in visits to their practices' children's clinics

Developed by members and supporters of the National Literacy Forum



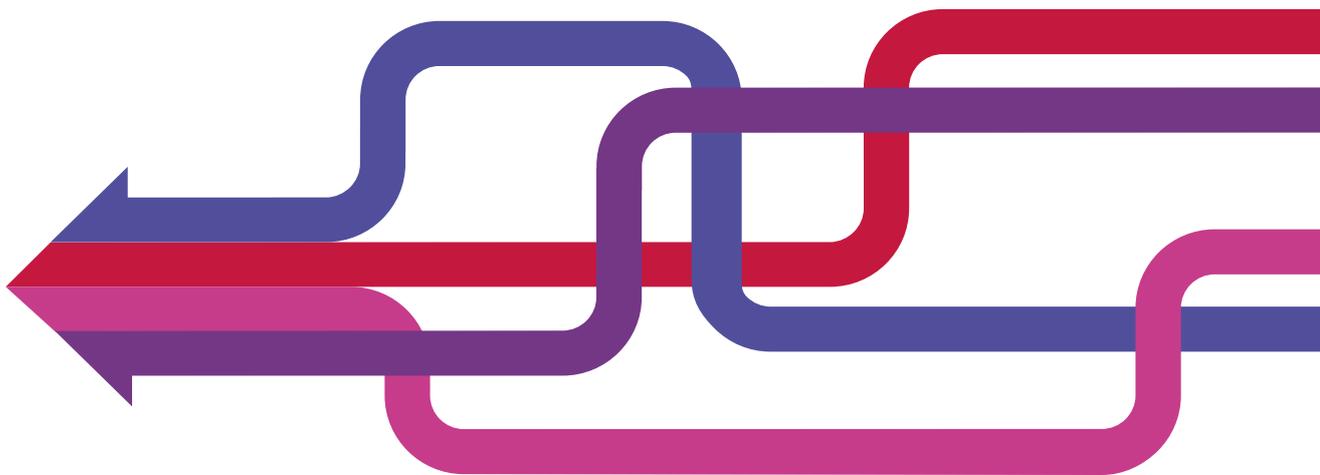
## Our pledge in more detail

| Pledge   | Practical Action (at least one action to fulfil each pledge)   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Engage our employees in the literacy challenge by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Raising the profile of literacy in the workplace</li> <li>✓ Engaging employees as parents</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Equip parents we employ with information on how to develop their child's literacy and communication skills at home, signposting to tips, activities, organisations, resources and support available, with a particular focus on the early years.</li> <li>➤ Raise awareness of the importance of reading for enjoyment within our workplace and regional offices e.g. by communal book spaces.</li> <li>➤ Commit to understanding staff needs in terms of literacy skill development and providing opportunities for developing these, where appropriate.</li> <li>➤ Work with employees to determine a specific practical action to promote the importance of literacy within our business.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Support the drive to raise literacy levels in our local community by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Working with local schools, libraries and partners</li> <li>✓ Promoting volunteer and fundraising opportunities to staff</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Build links with local schools and libraries and encourage regional offices (where applicable) to engage with their local community.</li> <li>➤ Include literacy development opportunities and reading for pleasure within all relevant community outreach activities.</li> <li>➤ Provide work-experience opportunities to young people in our local community from disadvantaged backgrounds.</li> <li>➤ Promote opportunities for staff to volunteer to support literacy and reading-based activities in their schools, communities and libraries.</li> <li>➤ Promote fundraising opportunities to staff to help raise language and literacy levels in disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>➤ Embed early literacy resources in product design to support improved literacy outcomes through nudge activity</li> </ul>                               |
| <p><b>Contribute to the national campaign to raise literacy levels by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increasing the evidence-base</li> <li>✓ Raising awareness of the issue</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Contribute to the development of the research base through funding educational research.</li> <li>➤ Increase the evidence base through evaluation of your literacy and reading for pleasure programmes and activity, and by providing case studies.</li> <li>➤ Disseminate the latest research and messaging through our communication channels to a range of audiences, including the public, clients, and policy makers.</li> <li>➤ Utilise existing relationships with policymakers to progress the literacy agenda.</li> <li>➤ Utilise all appropriate networks (e.g. clients, suppliers, charity partners) to raise awareness of and build support to tackle the literacy challenge.</li> <li>➤ Join meetings with key policymakers to provide thought leadership and support policy development with a focus on early years literacy</li> </ul> |

For more information and to pledge your support visit [www.literacytrust.org.uk/businesspledge](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/businesspledge) or contact [businesspledge@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:businesspledge@literacytrust.org.uk)

2018 signatories

[INSERT YOUR LOGO HERE]



For more information and to pledge your support visit  
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or contact [businesspledge@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:businesspledge@literacytrust.org.uk)

**#LiteracyPledge**

The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity no. 1116260 and a company limited by guarantee no. 5836486 registered in England and Wales and a registered charity in Scotland no. SC042944.

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In support of

