



Changing life stories

National Literacy Trust Hub in Middlesbrough

January 2020 Newsletter

Overview

The National Literacy Trust Hub in Middlesbrough was established in June 2012 thanks to funding from the Man Booker Foundation. Following its successful rollout, the National Literacy Trust has since developed Hubs in Bradford, Peterborough, Stoke-on-Trent, Swindon, Nottingham, the North Yorkshire Coast, Hastings, Doncaster, Birmingham and Manchester.



The Middlesbrough Hub is known locally as Middlesbrough Reads.

The Middlesbrough Hub Manager post is funded by Public Health. Together, both parties share the aim of improving school readiness and, ultimately, the attainment outcomes of the young people of Middlesbrough. The Hub Manager, Allison Potter, has presented at conferences across the country, driving interest from both the UK and around the world.



A strengthened partnership moving forward

Acknowledging and building on the work of the Middlesbrough Hub, Middlesbrough Council launched the 'Middlesbrough Promise' aimed at further galvanising a wide range of partners to take action to improve reading, similar to the work undertaken in the Peterborough Hub to produce their 'Vision for Reading'. Senior staff from the National Literacy Trust have facilitated workshops and discussions to help formulate the vision of the Middlesbrough Promise. Moving forward, the Middlesbrough Promise will support the consistent delivery of the Literacy Pathway, helping to make sharing books and stories a priority for all Middlesbrough families.



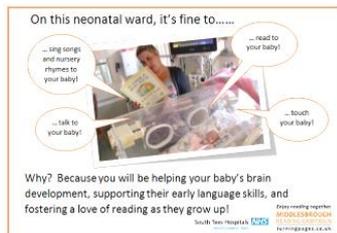
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Key activity to date

James Cook University Hospital neonatal packs

Parents on the neonatal ward at James Cook University Hospital continue to



receive copies of *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney to read to their premature babies. *'I was only able to spend the first 8 nights at the hospital. One of the things which helped leaving him was to have a routine. Before I left, we had a story together, then I said goodnight. The books and stories were an important part of my time in James Cook.'*

The Middlesbrough Hub initiative, which has resulted in books becoming an important part of daily life on the ward, has been replicated



on other neonatal wards, including Stoke-on-Trent, Bradford and, following a visit to James Cook University Hospital, in Scarborough from Autumn 2019.

To date over 850 families have received a pack.

Paediatric patient activity packs

The paediatric patient packs for young people admitted to James Cook University Hospital, as well as those visiting family members on a regular basis, have continued to be assembled and distributed by the Therapeutic Care Volunteers (TCVs) at the hospital. To date over 1,350 packs have been gifted. The Middlesbrough Hub benefited from a large donation of books from Penguin Random House to celebrate the National Literacy Trust's charity of the year status. One of the many books included in the donation was the festive title *The Christmasaurus*, written by popular children's author Tom Fletcher. One hundred copies (RRP £700) were gifted to young patients at James Cook hospital leading up to Christmas 2019. Thanks to the



generosity of local partner WHSmith, a Christmasaurus cuddly toy was gifted to mum Alec who was spending time in the paediatric ward over Christmas. Materials to continue this initiative are being delivered to JCUH in spring 2020.

Literacy Pathway

The Hub has worked closely with the School Readiness team since the beginning. Seeds were sown to develop a Literacy Pathway, mapping the opportunities for early literacy messages to be shared with new parents. In 2016 the Literacy Pathway was included in the

Middlesbrough Early Years Universal Literacy Pathway



Middlesbrough School Readiness Model and, together, have been working to raise the profile of its importance alongside trying to ensure a consistency of delivery. Key statutory contact points with Health provided the vehicle and partnerships with publishers, including Penguin Random House, has enabled book gifting to support the messages. Data is being gathered on the number of gifts/messages being given on a quarterly basis and the renewed focus of the Middlesbrough Promise should further raise awareness of the importance of these consistent messages.

Antenatal messaging

Through a partnership with the Middlesbrough Hub, the Stronger Families School Readiness team and health visitors,



expectant parents are informed that singing, talking and reading to their baby will help brain and language development. Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond antenatal classes. At the first session, parents choose a book funded by



Public Health to read to their bump. A dad commented *'It's my job now, it gives me a role, and it's a way of me spending time with our bump'*

Around 200 mums attend Pregnancy, Birth and Beyond antenatal classes a year – at the fourth session they receive a Baby Record book (thanks to PRH) and encouraged to look out for and record early literacy behaviours.

Sing with me



The Hub has continued to work with the Stronger Families School Readiness team, developing the effective implementation of the Literacy Pathway. The Middlesbrough Hub designed a nursery rhyme booklet to be gifted to families at the 6 to 8 week health visitor check, along with messaging to encourage singing to their baby.

The Education secretary reiterated the importance of singing nursery rhymes from an early age, confirming the importance being placed on this activity within Middlesbrough. Approximately 200 copies are gifted each month.



Bath, Book, Bed

Work continued throughout 2019 with Middlesbrough libraries and the Stronger Families School Readiness team to promote bedtime routines through 4 separate Bath, Book, Bed weeks.



Bags containing books and the BookTrust's Bath, Book, Bed booklet were gifted to parents at baby weighing clinics to let them know about the importance of

routines and reading stories.

During 2019 over 450+ parents/carers were spoken to and gifted a bag of books. Parents are reporting how receiving the messages has impacted on family life, with bedtime stories becoming part of daily routine, how stories are helping create a calm environment and how they did not realise the benefits of sharing stories. *'We are now making stories part of bedtime routine.'*

Early Words Together

The Early Words Together has continued to be delivered in several Middlesbrough schools through 2019, with positive impact reported.

Children at a Middlesbrough Academy who participated in EWT demonstrated a particular

interest in the sharing of stories. This has impacted positively on their listening and attention skills and, as a consequence, resulted in a greater percentage of EWT pupils achieving a Good Level of Development at the end of reception (74%) compared to all pupils (65%). The children had also developed a love of reading.

Another school reported the impact EWT had on both parent and child. Following the sessions there was a noticeable increase in the parent's confidence and self-esteem, but also in the quality of interaction with their child. The parent reported use of the home learning activities which has helped to create a shared language and positive focus at home. The parent now instigates meetings with school and attends meetings when requested



Donor Funding Secured

The NLT Northern Funding team secured funding from an anonymous donor, through the Tees Valley Community Foundation, to run 7 EWT programmes in Middlesbrough EYFS settings. A briefing session was held at Easterside Academy, showcasing the work and impact EWT has had over the past three years. Beech Grove, St Alphonsus, Hemlington Hall, Thorntree, Berwick Hills,



Corpus Christi and Whinney Banks attended training in autumn 2019 and several settings are already seeing the impact.

Child A is a twin. Their sibling is very outgoing, confident and chatty whereas child A is withdrawn and selective mute. The family have been attending Early Words Together with child A to have some valuable bonding time. As a result, they are now whispering to their mum in sessions and is beginning to be much more confident in nursery.

Child B is Polish and attends with their dad who is not confident with communicating in English. EWT has been invaluable for both parent and child to learn together in a fun way. As Child B reads aloud, they translate for dad which helps his English skills too.

Child C has recently been put into the care of their grandparent, who they had only met a handful of times before the arrangement was put in place. EWT is providing a way for them to bond and build a new relationship away from a very noisy and busy household.

'EWT has fostered a love of reading with our youngest children and has sparked a realisation in our parents of how important and pleasurable reading together can be. It has provided a valuable, safe and nurturing space for bonding over a book - As a school, we are extremely grateful!'

Attending the Celebration Event at Thorntree Primary was a privilege – to see parents interacting with their children while engaging in literacy activity as fantastic. All 3 parents



reported how much they had enjoyed the sessions and were doing more

together with their children, a sharing books regularly.

Little Ladybird Library

Additionally, the Tees Valley Community Foundation secured funding to provide ten EYFS settings with a Little Ladybird Library, each comprising of 30 books that fit into different themes (fairy tales, exploring and animals, wordplay, and



adventure). Little Ladybird Libraries have been donated to Beech Grove, St Alphonsus, Hemlington Hall, Thorntree, Berwick Hills, Corpus Christi, Whinney Banks, Easterside, Acklam Whin and Caldicotes. *'The books are delightful, and the children are really enjoying exploring them – thank you so much for letting us benefit from the opportunity.'*

New Middlesbrough Reads collateral

The Middlesbrough Reads team has been working on new campaign leaflets and posters aimed at expectant parents, families with babies and families with early years to primary school children.



The collateral identifies the behaviours we want our target audience to adopt and addresses the barriers from preventing them doing this already. The final design incorporated the Middlesbrough Promise logo to reinforce the partnership.

Stagecoach North East/Bin Wagons

Stage Coach NE agreed, in Summer 2019, to display the new Middlesbrough reads collateral on all the Middlesbrough buses,



both as posters and banners. The Hub is currently awaiting sign-off to display the 'Read 10 minutes a day' message on the side of the Recycling Bin Wagons that operate across Middlesbrough.

BBC Radio Coverage

The Hub manager has been interviewed on local and national radio, including BBC Tees and BBC Radio 4, discussing current literacy issues, and has been able to showcase locally and nationally, Middlesbrough initiatives, showcasing the work being developed and promoting the Middlesbrough Promise. This has generated positive interest in Middlesbrough.



NEPACS

The Middlesbrough Hub has been supporting the work of NEPACS, the North East prisoner family support charity, with book donations and information about the importance of sharing stories for several years. Books are now part of family visits to prisons.



In December 2019, the Middlesbrough Hub gifted 100+ books to NEPACS. The Dads wrote a personalised message for their child in their carefully chosen book. The NEPACS family support worker, from HMP Holme House, reported that the prisoners were so grateful to be able to feel they were giving something to their child for Christmas. *'Being able to sit and read my daughter a story was really special - thank you'*.

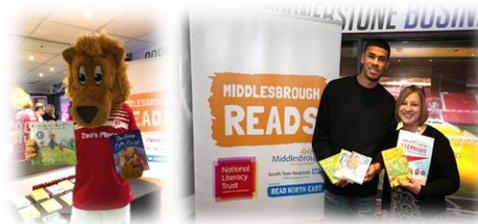
Middlesbrough Football Club

Over the past five years, the Middlesbrough Hub has developed a strong partnership with Middlesbrough Football Club. The Hub has regularly gifted books to young fans in the Generation Red Family Zone at the Riverside Stadium, talking to them about what they like to read and encouraging parents or carers to read with their children.



The Nott's County Fan Engagement Officer visited MFC and subsequently contacted the new Hub in Nottingham to replicate the partnership relationship in Middlesbrough, and talks are underway with Bradford City.

Each Christmas the Hub Manager is invited to attend the Champion Children Party, gifting a



book to each child. *'Just want to say a huge thank you for your support with our CC Party and making it a huge success. We made a lot of people happy and be able to forget the difficulties in their lives during the party. Thank you for all your support not just with this but throughout the season.'*

Feast of Fun

Following a meeting with the Bishop of Whitby, the Hub has continued to support the 'Feast of Fun', holiday clubs across Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland, with donations of books. The clubs, running in churches, schools and community centres, provide activities including arts, crafts sports, games and music based around themes, with all serving healthy food, during school holidays. Thanks to the Hub's partnership with Penguin Random House, 1,500 books were gifted in summer 2019 to the young people



attending the sessions. *'Parents and children alike were delighted with the free books. It encouraged good, quality family time over reading. They couldn't believe the books were a gift.'*

HomeStart Teesside



After a meeting with HomeStart Teesside, it was arranged that the Hub

Manager would train their volunteers to be Literacy Champions. The Home-Start volunteers help families with young children deal with the challenges they face. Training has been delivered, to 8 volunteers and 2 staff members, who are reinforcing the key literacy messages.

In addition, the Hub secured funding to enable HomeStart Teesside to establish weekly 'Sing, Rhyme and Read' sessions, hosted by Caldicotes Academy.

The Hub Manager trained the staff and volunteers running the sessions, and provided a range of board and picture books to be used within the sessions. The aim of the sessions was to give advice on the benefits of reading and singing nursely rhymes from birth

onwards, hopefully encouraging a life long love of books. The sessions exceeded expectations with 23 families supported over the year. One young mum grew in confidence and went on to become a HomeStart Volunteer, adding experience to her CV.

Book Donations

Thanks to ongoing partnerships with Penguin Random House and other publishers, the Middlesbrough Hub has benefitted from generous book donations over 2019. The NLT is PRH's Charity of the Year until the end of 2020 which will see circa 16,000 books



donated into Middlesbrough. This has enabled the Hub to help support UCA and Acklam Grange in providing new stock to their school library. *"The books gifted by the NLT Hub have been invaluable when targeting reluctant readers and those with weaker literacy skills. There is also potential to use some of the books with EAL students and larger sets with form groups to promote a love of reading across the whole school."*

We're Going on a Bear Hunt

Middlesbrough Reads teamed up with Walker Books to provide families with free special edition copies of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* by Michael Rosen, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. The book appears in the 100 Middlesbrough Reads list, as voted for by school children in the town.

Around 500 copies of the much-loved



picture book were gifted, alongside an interactive booklet with additional prompts to

encourage families to engage with the images and bring the story to life, at the Town Meal.

Literacy Champions

Literacy Champions are volunteers in the local community who will help encourage Middlesbrough to engage with reading. A Literacy Champion can be anyone from the local community who wants to inspire young people, and improve their life chances. They may be child minders, youth workers, sports coaches, students, or professionals, but they are all committed to taking action on literacy.

Over 30 expressions of interest have been received and 8 volunteers were able to attend the first training session in November 2019. A second training session is taking place in early 2020. The Literacy Champions will be establishing Reading Groups, distributing information material, volunteering at a local school, youth club, or care home to give reading support, displaying Middlesbrough Reads posters in their workplace, sharing campaign activity on social media channels and talking to their local communities about the importance of reading and sharing stories.

Adele Parks Ambassador

Bestselling author Adele Parks has taken on a new role as ambassador of Middlesbrough Reads, following a day visiting various hub activities. Adele started off visiting and Early



Words Together session at Easterside Academy, participating in fantastic outdoor storytelling activities with a group of nursery children, their parents and volunteers. Next Adele visited Newham Bridge Primary School who had taken part in the National Literacy Trust's Young Readers Programme and Puffin World of Stories. Finally, she visited the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at James

Cook University Hospital where she met Nurses Sue Walker and Sue Thompson who support the book gifting.

Adele said: *"I am thrilled to be an ambassador for Middlesbrough Reads. The work the campaign is doing to help children and families discover the magic of stories, while also giving them the skills and confidence they need to read, is vital. I believe reading is a basic human right that ought to be available to everyone. In my role, I will do everything I can to spread a love of reading to children and families throughout my home town."*

Words for Work & Dream Big

£14,500 was secured for the NE through Provident Financial, to run a Primary W4W, a KS3 and a post-16 W4W and Middlesbrough was chosen to benefit.

Words for Work: Dream Big develops literacy skills, raises aspirations and challenges stereotypes with children in Key Stage 1. Through a variety of interactive play and skills-building activities, the programme provides an authentic way to practise language and literacy. Words for Work: Dream Big helps young children imagine their futures and how they will use the skills they are learning at



school when they are older. Abingdon Primary and Newport primary schools are currently participating, visiting restaurants, the Central Library and BBC Tees. *"It was exciting finding out about all the jobs at Scrann Restaurant"*



“The children really enjoyed visiting the library and seeing ‘backstage.’ The detective theme was good to hook the children in. It was just a shame we ran out of time!”

In Spring 2019, 28 more vulnerable Y8 UCA students participated in Words for Work, working with members from local business/employers. *“W4W was one of the best experiences of my life I would recommend it for others.”* Students developed in confidence and were much more informed about future prospects. There was a visible positive shift in their behaviours and attitudes. *‘The W4W programme improved our students’ awareness and confidence of communicating in the workplace.’*

Our Stories –Middlesbrough

The ‘Our Stories’ programme was developed through the National Literacy Trust Hub in Bradford, and is a creative writing and performance poetry initiative that encourages



pupils to cultivate a curiosity about poems and how they work, a willingness to play with language and a desire to communicate ideas.

The schools that participated this year were Archibald Primary School, Beech Grove Primary School, Hemlington Hall Academy, North Ormesby Primary Academy, Viewley Hill Academy, Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Primary School – the inaugural winners of the competition. All the schools had learnt how to craft different poetry styles such as kennings and riddles and taken part in workshops led by Bob and Andy, focusing on local places and landmarks pertinent to each of them.

The programme culminated in the grand final, held at Middlesbrough Town hall on 11 July

and attended by more than 130 pupils. A total of 60 competed in 12 teams from all of the six schools. The winning team 2019 was Battling Boro Bards from Archibald Primary School. Pre/post data indicated a 13% increase in perceptions

towards enjoyment of reading, a 16% increase in enjoyment of writing and an 8% increase in perceptions towards improving at writing. *‘It was fantastic to experience being on stage and performing from our imagination! It expanded my vocabulary and taught me how to read, write and say poetry aloud professionally.’*



Young Readers Programme

Due to Middlesbrough being a Hub, seven schools have been able to participate in the National Literacy Trust’s Young Readers Programme, as a result of national funding



being secured through British Land and WHSmiths. Children’s survey responses indicated that those who started the project with the lowest levels of reading enjoyment showed particularly positive reading outcomes. Teachers reported that participation in the programme had a positive impact on reading attainment and on reading enjoyment. 240 pupils attended a celebration event at MFC in July 2019 and attended book readings by authors. *“Before taking part in the Young Readers Programme there was an apathy towards reading and books in my class. Now there’s a real buzz!”*

Puffin World of Stories

The Puffin World of Stories programme gives primary schools the books, materials, training and resources they need to champion reading for pleasure throughout the whole school and breathe new life into their libraries and

reading spaces as hubs of creativity and imagination. Through being an NLT Hub, 17 Middlesbrough schools were given the opportunity to participate in this fabulous opportunity. St Alphonsus, Ayresome, Newport, Thorntree, Beech Grove, Newham Bridge, Berwick Hills & Breckon Hill were



trained in 2018/19 and Easterside, North Ormesby, Whinney Banks, Archibald, Brambles, St Joseph's, Hemlington Hall, Green Lane & Abingdon completed their training in January 2020. *"Excellent and inspirational training – lots of practical ideas to enhance reading and foster a love of reading – thank you so much!"* The impact has been recognised by Ofsted. *"The Ofsted inspector commented on the 'buzz about reading' and noted that the pupils spoke enthusiastically about the books, the library and reading in general."*

Reading Logs

The Reading Logs, developed from the Middlesbrough 100 Reads, were distributed to every primary school in the town, and made available online for Educated at Home pupils.



The feedback from schools was incredibly positive *"Thank you for the Reading Logs – they're fantastic! They've given staff some more ideas for whole class reading books as well!"* Reading Log displays in school libraries have added to the Reading for Pleasure



agenda. Over 500 book reviews were returned with Ameera Naas, age nine from Newham Bridge, winning the iPad Mini, kindly donated by Stagecoach North East.

NewsWise National Launch

Children and their parents from Abingdon Primary School in Middlesbrough were invited to Riverside Stadium, the home of Middlesbrough FC, to take part in the first ever

NewsWise family festival, an extension of



the award-winning NewsWise project, launched in 2018 by The Guardian Foundation, the National Literacy Trust and the PSHE Association, and funded by Google, to equip children from disadvantaged communities with the skills and knowledge to engage with, challenge and enjoy news. The NewsWise programme teamed up with the MFC Foundation to bring families a series of activities and games to teach them how to spot fake news, how photos are faked and how clickbait is generated. Local journalist Ian McNeal, Digital Editor at Teesside Live, also



showed families how to identify trustworthy news sources online. *'I really enjoyed speaking to Gordon*

Cox from the MFC Foundation about the players. I enjoyed learning about how fake photos are created and how we can be tricked into thinking they are real news.'

Dave Cousins' Crime Writing Tour



The National Literacy Trust teamed up with children's author Dave Cousins and the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) to bring an exciting crime writing tour (celebrating the Ruth Rendell Award) to eight different primary schools across the Hub areas, visiting Newham Bridge in October. He gave pupils

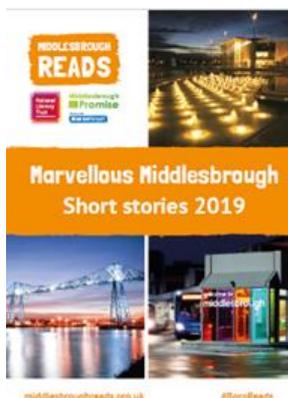
from year 6 an insight into the world of creative crime writing by helping them plan a fictional robbery!



'This workshop was so funny but it's given me some good ideas to plan my writing.'

Marvellous Middlesbrough Story anthology

In December of 2018, The Middlesbrough Promise, in partnership with the National Literacy Trust, launched their 'Marvellous Middlesbrough' competition.



This was an open invitation for schools in Middlesbrough to showcase their creative talents. Inspired by Racheal Wong's book, *The Bridge that George Built*, the pupils were asked to write a story set in their hometown. Their pride and love for Middlesbrough was plain to see, and the effort the pupils made was brilliant. Unfortunately the funding to publish the book was withdrawn, so the NLT Hub has been working to ensure the winning pupils see their stories in print. (Copies were delivered to winners January 2020)

Share a story live – World Book Day



Middlesbrough has been chosen as one of only four places in the country (along with Glasgow, Manchester and Hastings) to host 'Share a Story Live' event on March 2nd 2020. It is billed as being the biggest, bookiest

nationwide live tour and is bringing 7 fabulous

authors and illustrators to entertain and inspire 1,000 Middlesbrough Y5 & Y6 pupils, from 28 schools, to enjoy reading for pleasure. Visiting the Town Hall will be Sibeal Pounder, Jamie Littler, MG Leonard & Sam Sedgman, Sam Copeland, Katie & Kevin Tsang, whilst the Host for the event is author Steve Butler. The authors will be visiting Abingdon, Ayresome, Archibald, Green Lane and Linthorpe on the afternoon to inspire an additional 1200+ KS2 pupils.

Penguin Random House Secondary Partnership

Penguin Random House approached the Middlesbrough Hub as they were looking to trial long term partnerships with secondary schools (that have a 6th Form), starting in September 2019. The idea is that PRH will tailor the support to each school depending on the need and what is required, but their aim is to offer a menu of different options including careers workshops, donations to their libraries, author talks or tickets to live events. Kings Academy were selected and are in the process of selecting books for their library or to use as class sets. Discussions are underway regarding careers workshops in the summer term.



In December, every student and member of staff received a copy of *Our Planet* (just over 1,000 books).

On World Book Day (Thursday 5 March),

volunteers from PRH Audio & Audience department will be visiting King's to help inspire a love of stories and reading for pleasure, and highlight that reading, writing and storytelling do not start and end with a physical book. Working with year 7 students, PRH will introduce students to the world of audiobooks – from listening to narration and writing their own scenes to reading aloud and recording speech and sound effects, leaving students with their very own mini 'audiobook'.