

learning to love books

Children aged between seven and 13 are being invited to join up to an exciting book project.



Lemn Sissay, patron of Letterbox Club

The Letterbox Club, which aims to provide enjoyable educational support for looked-after children, is also available for children placed for adoption and for post-adoption support.

The programme has achieved significant improvements in reading and numeracy for many of the children who have been members, and has had considerable influence in encouraging children and their families to read and play games together at home.

The Letterbox Club is a programme managed by Booktrust in partnership with the University of Leicester. Each child enrolled by participating local authorities is sent a parcel of books, maths activities, stationery and other materials once every month for six months, from May to October.

Brightly coloured parcels are sent directly to the child's home.

They also receive number games and a range of stationery items.

Over the six-month period the parcels will also include other items such as a library joining card or information about how to join a library, name plates, bookmarks and letters from a selection of children's authors.

After being a member of the Letterbox Club for six months the child will have built up their own small library of books, a collection of number games and a variety of stationery items.

Letterbox Club research

Research shows that children in care underachieve in education, but evaluation from pilots of the Letterbox Club has shown that providing parcels designed to encourage fun learning has had a demonstrable impact. Many children began to make more significant changes in their standardised score in reading.

- Booktrust received support from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to extend the programme to 1,600 children in 2007-08
- In 2009, the Letterbox Club opened to every local authority in the United Kingdom, with over 4,500 children enrolled across the 129 authorities
- 2010 saw further expansion, with 4,545 children and 140 local authorities involved
- In 2011, there were again more than 100 local authorities involved with 4,500 children enrolled
- 2012 saw a record level of sign up, with 120 local authorities and over 5,000 children enrolled

Funders and Supporters

Siobhan Dowd Trust

The Siobhan Dowd Trust is the legacy of one of the UK's most talented children's writers, Siobhan Dowd, who died in 2007 at the age of 47.

Siobhan founded the Trust shortly before her death, bequeathing the royalties from her books to bring the joy and delight of reading to disadvantaged children who have little or no access to books.

Supporting the pilot of Letterbox Green, for looked-after children aged 11-13, was one of the very first grants awarded by the Trust.

Reading Fund

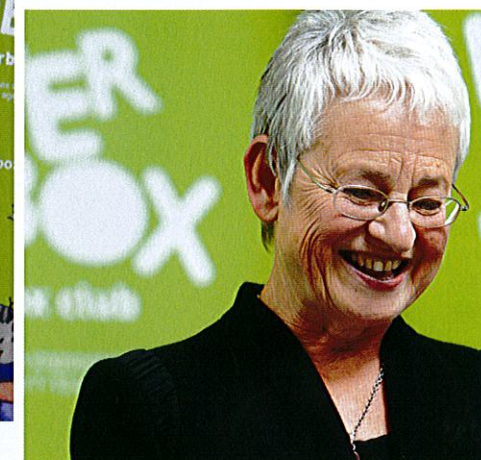
Also, we would like to let you know about Children's Reading Fund – a new Booktrust Reading Fund launched to 'Change the Story' for Disadvantaged Children, which links directly to Letterbox Club. We are requesting donations to help fund parcels for children who have never received them before. The Fund is supported by our celebrity ambassadors Cerrie Burnell, James Patterson, Gaby Roslin, Lemn Sissay, Dan Snow and Joanna Trollope, as well as a number of beloved children's characters including Matilda, Tracy Beaker and Zog. You can read more on the Booktrust website: www.booktrust.org.uk

Fostering Network

We work in partnership with Fostering Network Northern Ireland to deliver Letterbox Club via its Fostering Achievement programme. This successful partnership was recognised in 2011 with a Third Sector Excellence Award in the Charity Partnership category.

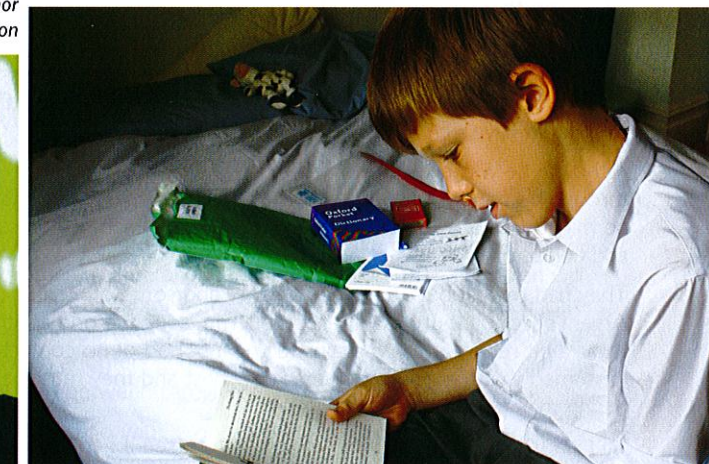
Fostering Network CEO, Robert Tapsfield, said: "We know that all too often children in care struggle in school and fall behind their peers in terms of academic achievement. Access to the fun and inspiring materials that the Letterbox Club sends out is helping young fostered children to meet their potential at a key stage in their development."

Author
Dame Jacqueline Wilson



Rose Griffiths,
University of Leicester,
Letterbox Club founder

"We arrived back from holiday last night and Tyler was absolutely thrilled to receive his first letterbox parcel... many thanks – what a brilliant scheme!" Jill, adoptive parent



Josie, a full-time mum, and her husband, a teacher, are parents to adopted siblings, Billy, aged nine, and Alexis, aged eight. Billy has struggled with reading for some time. "Billy is a very active boy and just not interested in sitting down and reading a book. He doesn't see the point of it, has quite a lot of anxiety around reading and is quite intimidated by it," Josie explains.

After seeing an advert in *Adoption Today* magazine about Booktrust's Letterbox Club Josie decided the programme could be of benefit to Billy. "I thought the idea of Billy receiving a package personally addressed to him would fill him with anticipation and excitement and give him a positive message about books. So I applied for it but didn't tell him, so when

the first pack arrived it was a complete surprise. He was really excited and loved getting the packs which are really well done with a selection of fiction and non-fiction books, games, and pens."

Josie explains that while Billy still struggles with reading the book packs have helped him to have a more positive view of books. "They haven't been a magic remedy to his reading but they have built his enthusiasm for books. For example, he now loves having books in his room and loves being read to; both children really engaged with *Oliver Twist* and the story of the abandoned child which I read to them and once Billy gets over his fear I'm sure he will become much more comfortable with reading."

Billy is also now more confident around books and despite his fears about reading has gone on to participate in and complete his local library's Book Track programme. "He read 100 books and then had to go and talk about them to the librarian. That has really helped him with confidence, especially at school as some of his classmates are voracious readers and he finds that intimidating. Now though he feels proud he's done something they haven't done. I'm really proud of him and feel that Booktrust has made a difference to him. It's incredibly worthwhile as an organisation and I'm glad I discovered it. After all, reading is absolutely essential to the future of not just my children but all children."

If you are an adoptive parent and you think your child would benefit from receiving the parcels then please contact Leanne Cobb on 020 8516 2993.