

# Supporting carers to read with their children

## Practitioner guidance



[booktrust.org.uk](http://booktrust.org.uk)

 **BookTrust**  
Inspire a love of reading

## About BookTrust

BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. We aim to transform lives by getting children and families reading.

**Reading for pleasure** is about choosing to read for the purpose of enjoyment and entertainment. It can involve reading of any kind and in any format, as well as talking about books.



## Why is reading for pleasure important?

Reading for pleasure is important for the children and young people you work with, not just because of the enjoyment that they can experience through it, but because **it can improve educational outcomes, wellbeing, and social mobility.**

**Reading for pleasure is more strongly linked to children's progress and achievement in school than their background and parental factors.\***

It is vital that these families are supported to read for pleasure.



## The wider benefits

Research has shown wider benefits of reading for pleasure that are important for the children you work with:

- Shared reading can provide opportunities for interaction between a child and their carer, which is important for developing their communication.\*
- Young people who read for pleasure are more likely to report high levels of self-esteem and happiness.\*
- Carers involved in a research project said that **reading together had made a positive difference in their relationship with their child.\***



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**Being a good role model in reading is one of the best things you can actually do.**

Foster carer

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## Reading in foster families: a national survey

A research project was carried out by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) on behalf of BookTrust, to find out more about reading in foster families. This included a UK-wide survey and some interviews with foster carers and children.

The research found:

- Carers are important reading role models for the children they look after.
- Carers with lower educational attainment felt less confident about reading aloud and discussing books.
- Further support around reading for pleasure would benefit carers and their children.

**Feedback from the project highlights the importance of reading for pleasure for the relationship between carers and their children.**

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**“I think the good things are that I get a big opportunity to try and, like, try and show her what I have learnt at school and like, new words.”**

Child

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**[Reading] helps to build a relationship, to build trust, to show them that people do want to spend time with them.**

Foster carer

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## How can you support carers to read with their children?

We know that helping a carer to incorporate shared reading into their daily lives can take time. For some carers, the idea of reading with their child may seem daunting, and it is worth thinking about the barriers that they may face before discussing reading with them. Some common barriers might be:

- They do not have time.
- Their child struggles to concentrate.
- Their child has a negative view of reading.
- They are not sure where to find appropriate books for their child.
- They do not feel confident reading with their child.

### **There are some simple ways that you can support carers and increase their confidence.**

Remind carers that spending time reading together can be a good opportunity to build their child's confidence by focusing on the enjoyment of the book - it's about having fun together.

It can be a good idea to talk about reading as part of wider conversations, for example when you are discussing the child's progress at school. These discussions are a good opportunity to remind carers about the benefits of reading for pleasure with their child and simple ways that they can make this part of their daily routine.

**Explain to carers that reading does not have to be time-consuming. Just ten minutes a day spent reading with their child and talking about books, can make a big difference.**

## Reading for pleasure and your role

Your role is crucial in providing support and guidance to a range of families.

Either directly as part of your role, or by encouraging other practitioners you work with, you could:

- Discuss reading for pleasure as part of Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings. This is a good opportunity to talk about the importance of reading, and discuss any worries carers and children might have about this.
- Talk about the advice in the *Reading Together* booklet with carers. The booklet is available here: **[booktrust.org.uk/supporting-carers-and-foster-families](https://booktrust.org.uk/supporting-carers-and-foster-families)**
- If possible, bring along a fun, age-appropriate book to a home visit – this will help show the type of book that carers could read with their child. You and the carer could even spend a few minutes reading together with the child.
- Consider books that might help a carer talk about a difficult topic with their child. Reading books that children can relate to may help the child to realise they are not alone and can open up discussions about worries or fears in a less pressured way. For example, a story about making new friends might help a child who is struggling socially, or who is about to start a new school.
- Encourage other children or siblings in the house to be involved in reading together – this can help take the pressure off the carer, and make the child realise that reading can be sociable and fun.
- Encourage carers to access their library service and where possible, give them the information they will need. This could include advice about their local library, how to register themselves and their child, and any events that the library might be running.



## Where to find out more:

- Find books for a range of ages, and on a range of topics by using BookTrust's book finder: [booktrust.org.uk/books/bookfinder](https://booktrust.org.uk/books/bookfinder)
- Themed book lists are also available on the BookTrust website: [booktrust.org.uk/books/booklists](https://booktrust.org.uk/books/booklists)
- Further resources are also available to help you support the families you work with. Please visit: [booktrust.org.uk/supporting-carers-and-foster-families](https://booktrust.org.uk/supporting-carers-and-foster-families)



## The Letterbox Club

The Letterbox Club aims to inspire a love of reading and engagement with numeracy in children aged 3-13 who are looked after across the UK. Each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery and other high-quality materials once every month for six months.

For information about the Letterbox Club, please visit [booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club](https://booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club)



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\* The information in this booklet is informed by a range of research, as well as wider evidence and evaluation. All references can be found at [booktrust.org.uk/supporting-carers-and-foster-families](http://booktrust.org.uk/supporting-carers-and-foster-families)