

Embargoed: 00.01am, Thursday 8th September 2016

PRESS RELEASE

BookTrust, launches first ever *Time to Read* national campaign to encourage families to break out of their ‘bubbles’

New research reveals parents’ concern around lack of shared family time, as technology and time-squeezes cause family members to live separate lives under the same roof

- Almost **two thirds** of parents are concerned that their family spend too much time in their individual ‘bubbles’ at home, rather than interacting with each other
- On average **86%** of parents read with their 5 year old every night or every other night, compared to just **38%** to 11 year olds
- **More than half** of parents with children age 11 feel they spend less time talking with their child as they get older
- **Nine out of ten** parents would like their family to do more shared activities together and increase quality family time

New research has been released this week by BookTrust, the UK’s largest children’s reading charity, to announce the launch of *Time to Read*, a national campaign which encourages families to read together more, even when children are ‘too old for a bedtime story’. The research shows that parents of primary school children worry about family members increasingly living in their own ‘bubbles’ as their children get older. They want to spend more time doing things together but admit they read with their children less and less as they age.

Almost two thirds (65%) of parents surveyed are worried about family members spending too much time isolated within their own ‘bubbles’ in the home, with social media, technology, and school homework all cited as reasons why parents are spending less time interacting with their children than they would like. In addition, nearly nine in ten (89%) say they would like to do more shared activities in order to increase quality family time together.

The study, which polled 2,000 parents of children 5- 11, highlighted how these concerns appeared to grow as children get older, as just 53% of parents of 5 year olds said they were worried about their family ‘bubble’, compared to 72% of parents of 11 year olds. This is reflected in the amount of time parents spend reading with their children as they grow older; on average 86% of parents with a child age 5 read with them every day or every other day, but this falls to 38% of parents of 11 year olds.

A 2015 study by BookTrust with Ipsos MORI¹ supports these findings and suggests that the frequency of reading with children begins to drop off around age 5 or 6, with a noticeable reduction in the number of parents reading to their children every day or several times a week

from age 7. Research from Egmont Publishing² earlier this year also points to 7 as the age when children and parents start swapping their nightly reading habit for tech-based entertainment such as visiting YouTube or other social media channels.

Many of those surveyed (40%) in the latest research from BookTrust said they spend less time reading with their child as they got older because they have begun to read on their own. However academic research indicates that shared reading between parent and child benefits the emotional health and well-being of young children³. This means families could be missing out on quality time spent together with books and the emotional benefits that go with this as their child gets older.

Diana Gerald, BookTrust chief executive, comments: *“When children get older and start to learn to read for themselves, it can be tempting for parents to step back and let them continue their reading adventures alone. However, research shows the enjoyment of reading, developed through shared reading time with parents or carers, has a significant positive impact on a wide range of life outcomes including social, personal, health & well-being and educational.*

“It is now widely acknowledged that children who enjoy reading will read more often and this helps them do better at school, even in subjects like Maths. Indeed, reading for pleasure regularly has more of an impact on a child’s educational achievement than having a parent with a degree.

It is the combination of skills and a love of reading that enables children to achieve academically and in life. We know that this lifetime love of reading is sparked by reading together, and the shared adventures that books can offer well beyond the nursery school years”.

The study shows that parents are also aware of the many benefits of reading with their children; 65% stated that increased bonding and physical closeness with their child was the top benefit, followed by enjoying a shared experience (61%) and having fun together (60%). With more than half of parents surveyed with children age 11 admitting that they spend less time talking to them as they have grown older, shared reading could be the perfect way to increase quality family time, open children up to new conversations and help burst the family ‘bubble’.

Professor Peter Fonagy, head of the Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology at UCL, and Chief Executive of the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, said:

“A strong, lasting bond between families and children is founded on shared interests, excitement, and wonder - all of which can be achieved by reading for pleasure, which opens doorways to safely explore new worlds and concepts that fire their imaginations. Children have a multitude of developmental needs that can all be served simultaneously by reading together with parents or carers they love and trust. The long term cognitive and emotional benefits are clear – reading together promotes optimal interpersonal, developmental and educational functioning in later life”.

As part of the first *Time to Read* campaign BookTrust will be giving a book to every reception age child across the country (that's 700,000) – launching this year with Faber & Faber's 'Kitchen Disco' by Clare Foges and Al Murphy. The BookTrust website will also host booklists for reluctant readers alongside tips on how to get your child loving books. These can be found at www.booktrust.org.uk/timetoread

ENDS

For more information and interview requests contact Amy Franck on 0207 403 2230 or Amy@forster.co.uk

Notes to Editors

1. Research was undertaken in November 2015 by Ipsos MORI on behalf of BookTrust and surveyed 2500 UK parents about how often they read with their children. The findings show that shared reading drops off around age 5/6 with 89% of parents of 5 year olds saying they read with their child every day or several times a week, compared to 33% of parents of 11 year olds.
2. Egmont Publishing, BookTrust's official publisher research partner, produced a report in May 2016 which includes insights in to the leisure time habits of children age 17 and under. The report shows that both boys and girls dramatically reduce the amount of time they spend reading to themselves and the amount of time that they are read to by others from age 7 onwards. On average 78% of children age 5-7 read to themselves at least once a week, compared to 38% of 14-17 year olds.
3. Research by Professor Yvonne Kelly (2011) suggests that if five year old children who are read to less than daily were instead read to on a daily basis, there would be a substantial reduction in the proportion of five year olds with socio-emotional difficulties. Kelly, Y., Sacker, A., del Bono, E., Francesconi, M. and Marmot, M. 2011 'What role for the home learning environment and parenting in reducing the socioeconomic gradient in child development? Findings from the Millennium cohort study', *arch dis child*, 96(9): 832-7 available at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/parenting-style-influences-child-development-and-social-mobility/parenting-style-influences-child-development-and-social-mobility-part-3/>

Summary of research

- The research was carried out by Censuswide in August 2016. 2000 parents of children aged 11 or under were surveyed, alongside a further 1000 adults in the UK.
- On average, respondents read with their child every 4 days
- Almost 1 in 5 (18%) respondents read with their child once a week or less
- Almost 7 in 10 (69%) respondents find they have less time in the evenings than they would like to spend with their family
- Of those that feel that they have less time in the evening than they would like to spend with their family, three quarters (75%) state that this is because of the number of chores and life admin they have to do
- Parents said they spend an average of 15 minutes reading to their child each time. In contrast, UK adults say they spend an average of 26 minutes per day 'wilfing' on a phone or computer (WILFING is the common phenomenon of surfing the net for no discernible purpose)
- Bedtime is the most popular time to read with children; 71% of parents said they generally read with their children before bed on weekdays and 50% on weekends

- 6% of parents say they spend less time reading with their child because they read at school so there's no need to do it at home
- 1 in 20 (5%) say they are prevented from spending more time reading with their children because they don't enjoy it

BookTrust is the largest children's reading charity in the UK. We work to inspire a love of reading in children because we know that reading can transform lives. Funded by the Arts Council, corporate supporters, the Welsh government and individual donations, we give out over five million carefully chosen books to children throughout the UK; every parent receives a BookTrust book in their baby's first six months. Our books, guidance and resources are delivered via health, library, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. Reading for pleasure has a dramatic impact on educational outcomes, well-being and social mobility, and is also a huge pleasure in itself. We are committed to starting children on their reading journey and supporting them throughout. www.booktrust.org.uk

Time to Read is a new campaign from BookTrust that aims to raise awareness amongst the public, opinion formers and decision makers about the importance of children's reading for pleasure. The campaign will promote the value of shared reading, its role in developing reading enjoyment and the impact of both on children's life chances.

In the UK, **Egmont Publishing** is a leading specialist children's publisher for babies to teens, inspiring children to read through more than 25 million award-winning magazines, books and eBooks sold each year. We're proud to be home to many of the world's favourite stories and best-loved authors and illustrators and characters such as Thomas & Friends, Disney Princess, Disney Frozen, Star Wars™, LEGO®, Teletubbies, Michael Morpurgo, Enid Blyton, Julia Donaldson, Lemony Snicket, Michael Grant, Andy Stanton, Kevin Brooks, Jim Smith, Winnie-the-Pooh, Tintin, Mr Men, Stampy Cat and Minecraft.