



The Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister 10 Downing Street  
London SW1A 2AA

CC:  
Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE, Secretary of State for Education

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re: The role of business in the national literacy recovery strategy**

Disruptions to education over the past year risk reversing the past decade's progress in closing the attainment gap. The need to address the nation's declining literacy rates is clear.

Lockdown saw business playing an unprecedented role in working with teachers and community partners to maintain the reading of young people: Publishers came together to help donate 500,000 books to our most disadvantaged communities; British Land used its unique community reach to activate local reading activities and KPMG led the way in creating a national online reading platform for children who couldn't access public or school libraries. We estimate that over 3 million children benefited from the support of business to keep the nation reading during lockdown.

The business community must be included as a vital element of the UK's renewed focus on literacy. Whether it is through the engagement of hundreds of thousands of young readers through the Premier League Reading Stars and WHSmith Young Readers programme, the 90 million books distributed through McDonald's Happy Readers Programme or the training of staff and re-stocking of hundreds of primary school libraries by Penguin Random House, the business community knows at first hand the economic and social cost associated with low literacy and is playing an important role by working with us to address the challenge. **Literacy failure costs the UK economy £2.5 billion each year and, if every child left primary school with the reading skills they needed, our economy could expand by over £32.1 billion by 2025.**

The time for action is now. While we welcome the news that a "catch-up strategy" will soon be announced, we ask that you recognise the role of the business community in this strategy. Literacy recovery is a complex problem that will require the coordination and support of organisations across the public and private sector to develop the multi-layered solution needed to:

**National Literacy Trust, 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL**  
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- **Focus on the disadvantaged communities** where the impact of lockdown on learning has been most damaging and where the levelling up challenge is now even more pressing.
- **Take a holistic approach to literacy**, enabling children to recover skills, but to also experience the social and cultural activities - whether it be language play or enjoying a visit from a professional author – that are crucial to their development and have also been disrupted by lockdown.
- **Embed a long-term perspective**, acknowledging emerging evidence of the impact of the pandemic on the language development of babies and toddlers under the age of two and the sustained support for literacy recovery that school-aged children need.

We are united in the belief that literacy is a foundational skill that empowers individuals to take full advantage of opportunities life can offer and ensures that businesses have access to the skills they need. We therefore look to the UK Government, and you as Prime Minister, to recognise the role and needs of business in the education recovery strategy.

We would also like to extend an invitation for the Secretary of State for Education and Department for Education Ministers to attend a business summit that will take place in early July, when the National Literacy Trust will bring together representatives from across the community and business sectors to discuss these issues and potential solutions.

Yours sincerely,

**Jonathan Douglas CBE**

Chief Executive Officer  
National Literacy Trust

**Dame Julia Cleverdon DCVO CBE**

Chair  
National Literacy Trust

**Barbara Hayes**

Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
ALCS

**David Guppy**

Chief Executive Officer  
Beano Studios

**Perminder Mann**

Chief Executive Officer  
Bonnier Books UK

**Richard Medd**

Managing Partner  
Browne Jacobson LLP

**Alex Cole**

Chair  
Bupa Foundation

**Colin Grieves**

Managing Director  
Marketing Services, UK&I  
Experian

**Ian Wright**

Chief Executive Officer  
Food and Drink Federation

**David Shelley**

Group Chief Executive Officer  
Hachette Publishing Group

**Claire Warnes**

Partner and Head of Education,  
Skills and Productivity  
KPMG

**Giovanni Valentini**

General Manager  
Lancôme UK & Ireland

**Paul Drechsler CBE**

Chair  
London First

**Andrew Moys**

Vice President of Communications and  
Corporate Affairs  
McDonald's Restaurants Ltd

**Ken McMeikan**

Chief Executive Officer  
Moto Hospitality

**Julie Dakin**

Metros & Civils Regional Director  
Mott MacDonald

**Rebecca Dibb-Simkin**

Global Director Product and Marketing  
Octopus Energy

**Jane Harley**

Policy and Partnership Director  
Oxford University Press

**Tom Weldon**

Chief Executive Officer  
Penguin Random House

**Jo Prior**

Managing Director  
Penguin Random House

**John Moore**

Managing Director, UK & Australia  
Renaissance Learning

**Malcolm Le May**

Chief Executive Officer  
Provident Financial Group

**Rachel Denwood**

Managing Director  
Simon & Schuster, Children's Books

**Dominic Robertson**

Managing Partner  
Slaughter and May

**Joyce Lorigan**

Global Head of Corporate Affairs  
Springer Nature Group

**David Walker**

Interim Chief Financial Officer  
The British Land Company PLC

**Helen Dickinson OBE**

Chief Executive Officer  
The British Retail Consortium (BRC)

**Ben Fletcher**

Chief Financial Officer  
The Very Group

**Lucia Kreuzer**

General Manager (UK and IE)  
Tonies

**Patricia Moore**

Managing Director, UK  
Turner and Townsend

**Ed Ripley**

Marketing Director  
Walker Books

**Carl Cowling**

Group Chief Executive  
WHSmith