

Vision for Literacy Business Pledge 2020

The Vision for Literacy Business Pledge is now in its fifth year and 79 businesses have committed to working to improve literacy levels in the UK in 2020.

As business leaders, we know the economic and social cost of low literacy levels. Research estimates that if every child left primary school with the reading skills they need, our economy could be more than £32.1 billion bigger by 2025.¹ As businesses, we are also concerned about young people's basic skills, with 25% of employers not satisfied with school and college leavers' literacy and numeracy skills,² affecting our productivity as a nation.

This is also a matter of social justice. In the UK, the link between socioeconomic status, educational attainment and basic skills is stronger than in any other developed country³ and the prevalence of language delay and difficulties increases as the level of social disadvantage increases.⁴



To address this we need to consider the localised nature of the literacy challenge. 86% of constituencies in England contain at least one ward at risk of serious literacy problems.⁵ This requires local and coordinated solutions. The effect of Brexit on the UK makes this local approach more important than ever. We must work together with other businesses, and across sectors, to understand the needs and concerns of our local communities and work to address them.

The Vision for Literacy Business Pledge 2020 emphasises the importance of businesses taking action in their local community and the National Literacy Trust will provide support for businesses to help them identify local areas of need and target activity most effectively.

We pledge to elevate the literacy issue within our business and take action (commensurate with size) based on the needs of our local area to close the literacy gap.

We will do this by:

- Engaging our employees in the literacy challenge
- Supporting the drive to raise literacy levels in our local community
- Contributing to the national campaign to raise literacy levels



Our pledge in more detail

PLEDGE	PRACTICAL ACTION (at least one action to fulfil each pledge)
<p>Engage our employees in the literacy challenge by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Raising the profile of literacy in the workplace ✓ Engaging employees as parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip parents we employ with information on how to develop their child's literacy and communication skills at home • Raise awareness of the importance of reading for enjoyment within our workplace and regional offices e.g. starting a communal book space, introducing a book club or book swap and encouraging staff to use the local library • Commit to understanding staff needs in terms of literacy skill development and providing opportunities for developing these, where appropriate
<p>Support the drive to raise literacy levels in our local community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Working with local schools, libraries and partners ✓ Targeting outreach work to the communities most in need of literacy support ✓ Promoting volunteer and fundraising opportunities to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build links with local schools and libraries and encourage regional offices (where applicable) to engage with their local community • Include literacy development opportunities and reading for pleasure within all relevant community outreach activities • Provide work-experience opportunities to young people in our local community from disadvantaged backgrounds • Promote opportunities for staff to volunteer to support literacy and reading-based activities in schools, communities and libraries • Promote fundraising opportunities to staff to help raise language and literacy levels in disadvantaged communities
<p>Contribute to the national campaign to raise literacy levels by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increasing the evidence-base ✓ Raising awareness of the issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the development of the research base through funding educational research • Increase the evidence base through evaluation of our literacy programmes and activity, and by providing case studies • Disseminate the latest research and messaging through our communication channels to a range of audiences • Utilise existing relationships and networks to raise awareness of and build support to tackle the literacy challenge (e.g. clients, suppliers, policymakers, charity partners)

2020 signatories



ALLEN & OVERY



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Impact

Engaging employees in the literacy challenge

Provident Financial: They mobilised over 100 volunteers to support the National Literacy Trust's Words for Work programme and hosted a local primary school for the day at their head office.

The Literacy Project: In Glasgow, employees from HarperCollins UK volunteered on the Early Words Together programme, which has given over 170 disadvantaged parents in the city confidence to support their child's language development.

Raising literacy levels in the local community

British Land: They supported the reading skills and enjoyment of 8,234 primary school children across the UK, distributing over 24,700 free books and running 84 events in schools and across British Land places.

The Literacy Project: Penguin Random House has committed to gifting 150,000 books to children and families in disadvantaged communities as part of their Charity of the Year partnership with the National Literacy Trust.

Contribution to the national literacy campaign

McDonald's: The National Literacy Trust worked with McDonald's for their sixth Happy Readers campaign, which supports families reading together by having free books in every Happy Meal™ over five weeks. Since 2013, the campaign has provided 90 million books to UK children.

Premier League: The Premier League Writing Stars competition inspired more than 25,000 primary school children to write poetry on the theme of diversity.

Developed by members and supporters of the National Literacy Forum



Changing life stories

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THE READING
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For more information on the **Vision for Literacy Business Pledge 2020** visit literacytrust.org.uk/businesspledge or contact businesspledge@literacytrust.org.uk

1 Read On. Get On. (2014) How reading can help children escape poverty. Published by Save the Children on behalf of the Read. On. Get On. campaign

2 CBI / Pearson (2018) Education and Skills Annual Report: Educating for the modern world

3 OECD (2012) Equity and Quality in Education

4 Law, J. et al (2017) Language as a wellbeing indicator, Early Intervention Foundation

5 National Literacy Trust and Experian (2017) Literacy Vulnerability Score

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