### BOOK TRUST: STORIES

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<th>Round</th>
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<tr>
<td>Artform</td>
<td>Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>£299,487</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time period</td>
<td>September 2012 to August 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant</td>
<td>Book Trust</td>
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<td>Producers</td>
<td>Book Trust</td>
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| **Venues**  | Ashiana Community Project, Birmingham  
 |  | Batley Library, Kirklees  
 |  | Bengali International, Waltham Forest  
 |  | Blakenhall Healthy Living Centre, Wolverhampton  
 |  | BRG Communities First, Cardiff  
 |  | Canton Library, Cardiff  
 |  | Capehill and Windmill Children's Centre, Sandwell  
 |  | Central Library, Cardiff Libraries  
 |  | Central Library, Coventry  
 |  | Central Library, Middlesbrough  
 |  | Central Library, Wolverhampton  
 |  | Community Languages Project, Wolverhampton  
 |  | Dewsbury Library, Kirklees  
 |  | Durnig Hall, Newham  
 |  | Farnham Road Children's Centre, Bradford  
 |  | Foleshill Library, Coventry  
 |  | Frizinghill & Heaton Village Children's Centre, Bradford  
 |  | Golden Hillock Children's Centre, Birmingham  
 |  | Hillsfield Library, Coventry  
 |  | HMP & YOI ISIS, Greenwich  
 |  | HMP Birmingham, Birmingham  
 |  | HMP Cardiff, Cardiff  
 |  | HMP Featherstone, Staffordshire  
 |  | HMP Holme House, County Durham  
 |  | HMP Leeds, Leeds  
 |  | HMP Oakwood, Staffordshire  
 |  | HMP Pentonville, Islington  
 |  | Huddersfield Library, Kirklees  
 |  | Kobi Nazrul Centre, Tower Hamlets  
 |  | Laistersyke Library, Bradford  
 |  | Leabridge Library, Waltham Forest  
 |  | Leyton Library, Waltham Forest  
 |  | Library of Birmingham, Birmingham  
 |  | Manningham Library, Bradford  
 |  | Mellons Hub, Cardiff  
 |  | Middlesbrough International Community Centre, Middlesbrough  
 |  | Newham NDP, Newham  
 |  | Newport Community Hub, Middlesbrough |
INTRODUCTION

The objectives were: To create a new storytelling show and event that would be of high artistic quality, and relevant and engaging for the target audiences, which were Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Somali families. These audiences were chosen because they were identified in Arts Council England’s Taking Part survey as least likely to be engaged in the arts. The project was a new venture for Book Trust, which had never before carried out touring, other than a tour of libraries initiated by a Children’s Laureate. The project took place in community centres, libraries and prisons in 10 local authority areas across the UK: three London boroughs, three areas in the West Midlands, Bradford, Kirklees, Middlesbrough and Cardiff. As well as the funding from Arts Council England, Book Trust raised an additional £30,000 from corporate sponsorship and individual giving.

CONCEPT

There were three assumptions behind the project, that:

- **Sustainability would be higher if families saw themselves as storytellers.** The play and workshops modelled different ways of telling stories. The activity packs and resources helped to build families’ confidence in storytelling.

- **Actors would bring cultural sensitivity to the heart of the project.** Actors were recruited from the target groups, commented on the cultural appropriateness of elements of the presentation, and interacted with the audience before, during and after the performance. This was seen as a better model than having specialists advising on culture separate from the artistic vision.

- **Partner venues would form a bridge to target audience groups.** Audience members came from community centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and were new to the arts. Working with these existing groups in familiar settings was seen as more sustainable than trying to bring completely new audiences into the centres.

ACTIVITIES

The project activities were:
- **New commission.** Book Trust commissioned children’s author Irfan Master to write a new short story about storytelling, *Once Upon a Time*. Irfan is the author of *A Beautiful Lie*, a novel set in Pakistan during Partition that was nominated for the Branford Boase award and the Waterstones Children’s Book Awards.

- **Performances.** Rather than working with a theatre company, Book Trust decided it wanted to take the lead on the creative product. It appointed a producer, who then recruited a director, designer, musical director, musical assistant, director’s assistant and stage manager. The artistic team produced an interpretation of Irfan’s story with a strong visual appeal that transcended cultural or language boundaries. The play was half an hour in length. Wrap-around activities were: an introduction, storytelling activity led by a local storyteller and/or author in each locality, time for refreshments, and time for families to look around the venue.

- **Resources.** In the community centres, the actors gave the children a choice of two different books for children aged three to six. In the prisons, fathers passed on a personalised gift pack with a choice from four books suitable for children up to the age of 16. Audience members were given a CD of the original story in five languages, activity sheets based on the story and tips for parents. The intention was that these would encourage families to continue talking about the show and engaging with storytelling after the show. The CD included a link to listen to the stories online. Website analytics show that this was used more than 600 times.

- **Training.** Book Trust worked with a prison specialist organisation, Pact, which employed a part-time development worker to negotiate access to the prisons, deal with the security arrangements, adapt materials so they were suitable for prisons, and train the artists in issues such as professional boundaries and child protection.

- **Workshops with prisoners.** At Pact’s recommendation, Book Trust included a morning workshop before the performance so that prisoners could meet the actors, make gift bags for their children and think about how to make the best of the experience with their families. The workshop also further developed the interactive elements of the show: workshop facilitators produced soundscapes using participants’ voices to create a spooky atmosphere for relevant parts of the play.

- **Evaluation.** The University of Sheffield was commissioned to produce an evaluation. The methodology consisted of sample interviews with each of the stakeholder groups: artistic team, Pact, venues, and audience members. Seven venues were analysed in greater detail and written up as case studies. In addition, actors collected feedback before and after the show.

### LESSONS

Lessons from the project were:

- **Venues need to be prepared for the visit.** Book Trust gave venues a checklist that included marketing, signage, consent forms, briefing staff, laying out the room, risk assessment, providing space for the artists and evaluation.

- **Partnership agreements need to consider the time period beyond the project.** Book Trust greatly valued the involvement of Pact and might have liked to have involved them in the legacy meetings, applications for awards and evaluation.

- **Artists are important ambassadors for the project.** It might be assumed that venue staff would be the right people to introduce the event, but their confidence to do this varies. Book Trust learnt that the show had a better start and engaged the audience more when actors made the introduction. The introduction evolved over the course of the tour to include a more explicit invitation to parents to sit with their
children, requests that mobile phones were not used during the performance, and an announcement that actors would be available for photos at the end to discourage photography during the show.

**IMPACT**

Book Trust exceeded its audience targets. The targets and actual figures for the shows were:

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<th>Target</th>
<th>Actual</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of performance days</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Live audience</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>3,069</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online audience</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>36,000</td>
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The tour comprised 57 events: 13 in community centres, six in children’s centres, 18 in prisons and 20 in libraries. In addition, the show was invited to the Coventry Mysteries festival where Book Trust held an additional four shows in libraries, which reached 197 people, not included in these figures. The prison workshops, which were additional to the work in the application form, reached 187 men.

Book Trust was not able to apply its targeting in prisons because of institutional regulations. In libraries and community centres, where it had more control, 72% of participants came from the target groups, and 90% of audience members did not identify as white British.

A survey of partners found that 95% said they would like to run more events like the Stories Tour in the future; 95% said the event was a success and had been worthwhile; 82% of the venues said the event was different from their usual events. 78% said the audience turnout was higher than for the venue’s usual events.

Stories was Book Trust’s first large-scale touring project, its first multi-lingual live literature project targeting speakers of community languages and its first live literature project involving prisons. The organisation built its network of storytellers across the country and learnt about theatrical techniques. Book Trust learnt lessons about live literature, including the value of having workshops before performances.

The Stories tour was shortlisted for the Nursery World Award for Inclusive Practice and the Children and Young People Now Award for Arts and Culture. The work in prisons was also recognised as an example of good practice in family learning by NIACE and OFSTED.

**LEGACY**

Book Trust included six months of legacy work in its project plan. The Project Manager of the tour gave a presentation at the Reading in Prison Day conference at the University of Roehampton, which was attended by prison librarians, charities, prisoners and ex-offenders. Book Trust delivered training in 18 areas including nine areas not involved in the tour but with statistically similar profiles and demographics, with an average of 10 people attending in each. This included training in fund raising. In evaluation 98% of attendees said all aspects of the training were useful or very useful. Book Trust created a toolkit (http://www.bookstart.org.uk/professionals/get-involved/stories-tour/toolkit/), which was sent to 1,000 contacts (library staff, Bookstart Coordinators, arts/cultural officers at every local authority and each prison in the country as well as Bridge organisations and other literature and arts organisations).

Book Trust held an event at Walthamstow Library, filming experienced storytellers telling stories in front of a live audience. This was then developed into storytelling training, which was delivered in the 10 tour areas. In
evaluation 97% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they learnt some practical storytelling techniques that they could use; 99% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the training session gave them good ideas on how to trouble-shoot if they ran into difficulties; and 100% of respondents thought that the trainer prepared them very well or quite well for running a storytelling session.

Book Trust held a celebration and sharing event for the Stories Tour at the FreeWord Centre in London to share best practice with the charity and arts sectors. 20 students, literature organisations and arts organisations attended. The event was introduced by Book Trust author in residence Phillip Ardargh and screened the films made about the tour (available at http://www.bookstart.org.uk/professionals/get-involved/storiestour/video). Project Manager Lizzie Poulton led the event which included a panel discussion with Producer Elgiva Field, Pact Project Manager Jo Stewart-Nash, author Irfan Master and actor Wendy Richardson.