

Under strict embargo until Wednesday 11th November 2020 at 00:01

Representation in children's books still not reflective of society, says BookTrust and CLPE

- *3% growth in the number of authors and illustrators of colour published in the UK in the last two years*
- *7% of the children's books published in the UK over the last 3 years feature characters of colour*
- *CLPE and BookTrust announce partnership to drive long-term and systemic change in representation in children's literature and publishing*

11 November 2020 - Today, children's reading charity [BookTrust](#) and the [Centre for Literacy in Primary Education](#) (CLPE) are calling on the publishing industry and those who work with children's books to improve the representation of characters in children's books and of the authors and illustrators responsible for them.

Findings from BookTrust Represents Interim Research and CLPE's Reflecting Realities Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children's Literature, both report some positive progress over the past three years (2017-2019), but there remains a long way to go for representation in children's books and publishing to mirror UK society:

- **The number of children's books published in the UK over the last three years** (2017-19) featuring characters from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background has **increased to 10%** in 2019, rising from 4% in 2017, 7% in 2018 to 10% in 2019, according to CLPE.
- CLPE's research shows that **characters from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background remain significantly under-represented** in comparison to the UK primary school population where 33.5% of children are from a minority ethnic background.
- **The number of authors and illustrators of colour published in the UK in the last three years has grown to over 8%**, an increase of 3%, rising from less than 6% in 2017.
- According to BookTrust's findings, **the number of British debut creators of colour has increased from 12 in 2017 to 24 in 2019**, but nearly half of these are self-published or published by a hybrid publisher.

The CLPE report, which identifies and evaluates representation within picture books, fiction and non-fiction for ages 3–11, provides a benchmark to track and understand progress and a toolkit to support both producers and consumers of children's literature to be more critically reflective in the move towards a more inclusive future.

BookTrust Represents has two clear aims; to increase the number of published creators of colour of children's books and for children to have access to and to read more books by creators of colour. The latest findings from BookTrust's interim results show that whilst there has been an increase, there is still a long way to go.

Both reports have made a significant contribution to the wider conversation about representation in children's books and publishing, by ensuring consistent evaluation and supporting publishers to maintain momentum. However, the figures from each update illustrate the significant extent of under-representation across the board in children's publishing and literature and the challenge that remains for the wider industry.

Jill Coleman, Director of children's books at BookTrust said: "Books play an important role in shaping children's lives : these stories and characters will affect how they see themselves and the world around them, their motivation to read, and their aspirations to become authors and illustrators of the future. We are pleased to see that there has been slow and steady progress in the representation of authors and illustrators of colour since 2017: but we are ambitious to achieve more. We have now revised our targets and want to challenge ourselves and the publishing industry to increase the number of creators of colour in the UK to 13% by 2022."

CEO of CLPE Louise Johns-Shepherd, welcomed the findings but cautioned against complacency said: "We began this work in 2017 and we know that since the publication of the first statistics work has been done across the charity, arts and publishing sectors to put in place a range of measures designed to institute real change. This change will take time because we also know that the structures and systems in place are entrenched and societal. Whilst the third year of data shows a continued increase from the first and second year of this work, we believe that there is still much to be done."

Sarah Crown, Director of Literature, Arts Council England said: "The CLPE and BookTrust's respective research into the diversity of characters in children's books, and the representation of writers and illustrators of colour across the children's literature sector, has been crucial in helping to address historic imbalances and lack of opportunities. While it's encouraging to see consistent improvement over the past three years, there is significantly more work to be done, to ensure all children can see themselves in the books they read and that the children's publishing industry reflects the diversity of twenty-first century Britain. I'm pleased that we're able to continue to support both these organisations, working with them to identify actions and foster collaborations to increase the rate of change."

The partnership between CLPE and BookTrust aims to drive forward the meaningful and long-term systemic change needed to bring about a shift in behaviours and practices across the industry. In 2021, they will announce a major new collaboration to reach more children in schools. As part of this, both organisations are calling on publishers and other partners to work with them to help redress the balance and make long overdue radical changes to ensure that children across the UK can see themselves and their world reflected in the books and authors they read and for the children's book industry to finally reflect the society we live in.

To view **CLPE's Reflecting Realities Survey of Ethnic Representation within UK Children's Literature** [click here](#). Available on Wednesday 11th November.

To view **BookTrust Represents report *Representation of people of colour among children's book creators in the UK*** [click here](#). Available on Wednesday 11th November



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Notes to editors

About the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) is an independent UK charity dedicated to raising the literacy achievement of children by putting quality children's literature at the heart of all learning. It is a charity with a national and international reputation for excellent literacy training, teaching resources and research. The charity was the 2019 winner of the Eleanor Farjeon Award. Visit www.clpe.org.uk for further information.

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About BookTrust

BookTrust is dedicated to getting children reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Their early language development is supported and they also do better at school.

We are the UK's largest children's reading charity; **each year we reach 3.9 million children** across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives.

We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it. Our books are delivered via health, library, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. booktrust.org.uk

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About Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. www.artscouncil.org.uk

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million Emergency Response Package, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of several bodies administering the Government's Culture Recovery Fund and unprecedented support package of £1.57 billion for the culture and heritage sector. Find out more at www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19

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