

Story Power National Family Learning Conference

Thursday 3 July 2025 | In-person | 10am - 4pm

Mercers' Hall, Ironmonger Lane, London, EC2V 8HE

Discover how the power and magic of storytelling, sharing stories and reading can transform and enrich learning within families





Stories make us human. We need stories to make sense of our experiences, to grow our understanding of others and their experiences, and to learn, problem-solve and imagine new ways of doing things.

With help from our speakers, we'll be exploring themes, including:

- boosting wellbeing, engagement and optimising learning by reading together for pleasure
- learning maths, science and other subjects through storytelling
- diffusing difficult situations or talking about challenging topics through storytelling
- dialogic learning and co-creating stories, including with props and multisensory resources
- identity and culture formation
- what do stories do: storytelling and cognition

Campaign for Learning thanks The Mercers' Company for their generosity in support of this family learning conference.

Join our national conference for:

-  inspiring keynote and speakers
-  information rich workshops
-  opportunities to connect and share with other professionals
-  resources and practical tips you can use in your practice

Feedback for the national family learning conference
"This invaluable event was constructive, practical and challenging in the best way. The quality of the speakers was exceptional and I learned a huge amount in a very short time."

Helen Jacobs, Head of Learning & Engagement, RWA Bristol

Standard Ticket £180+VAT

10% discount for NCFL members (free to join)

Additional discounts available - see the website!

Book your tickets:

bit.ly/StoryPowerFamilyLearningConference



Story Power

National Family Learning Conference

3 July 2025, Mercers' Hall, Ironmonger Lane, London, EC2V 8HE

Programme: Morning

- 10am** Juliette Collier and Miranda Baxter, Campaign for Learning
Welcome and overview
- 10:10am** Keynote: Cally Poplak, HarperCollins Children's Books and Farshore
The power of reading and being read to
- 10:30am** Katie Bareham, Doorstep Library
Shared storytime: Opening doors and empowering young lives
- 10:40am** Nicola Wallis, Fitzwilliam Museum
Playtime with Books at the museum
- 10:50am** Olivia Richards, The Story Project
Integrating wellbeing and literacy through stories
- 11:00am** Liz Fraser-Betts & Lucy Webber, The Story Museum
The Story Exchange: Storytelling and emotional literacy for teachers
- 11:10am** Break
- 11:30am** Workshops 1, 2 and 3, delivered by:
- Jeszemma Howl, Fatherhood Institute
FRED: Fathers Reading Every Day
 - Dr Sabine Little, University of Sheffield
Traditional Tales, Untraditionally Told: Embedding multilingualism and making into storytelling
 - Usifu Jalloh, Connection with Wonder
Music and movement in storytelling
- 12:30pm** Q&A + Feedback
- 12:50pm** Lunch

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Programme: Afternoon

- 1:40pm** Nicola Pomery and Mariam de Haan, British Library
Story Explorers at the British Library
- 1:50pm** Shauni Sanderson and Arwenna Davis, BookTrust
Sharing stories from the start: The power of shared reading in the early years
- 2:00pm** Gem Smith, Take A Part
Using creative approaches to engage families in storytelling, creative writing and oracy
- 2:10pm** Break
- 2:30pm** Workshops 4, 5, 6 and 7, delivered by:
- Vanessa Woolf, Connection with Wonder
Keeping focus with multisensory storytelling
 - Emma Leeson, SAPERE (becoming Thoughtful)
Stories, books and beyond: Opening up philosophical conversations
 - Dr Alastair Daniel, The Story Tent, University of Roehampton
Oral storytelling as playful pedagogy
 - Anna Harriott and Ian Williams, Stories in the Dust, Southampton University
Stories in the Dust: When arts and science join forces
- 3:30pm** Break
- 3:35pm** Q&A + Closing remarks

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Keynote



**Cally Poplak, Managing Director of
HarperCollins Children's Books and Farshore**

The power of reading and being read to

Cally Poplak, Managing Director of HarperCollins Children's Books and Farshore has a mission to make every child a proud reader. In her keynote, Cally draws on 13 years of research with children's, families and schools to share insights into the barriers and enablers of reading for pleasure amongst children and families. She explains why there is urgent need to change the atmosphere around reading and offers actionable solutions, so that no child misses out on experiencing the transformative power of reading and stories.

About Cally Poplak

Cally's mission is to make every child a proud reader by publishing a broad and diverse portfolio for all ages that offers multiple ways into reading and by investing in research into the barriers and motivators of children reading for pleasure. Cally has over thirty years of experience in children's books across Fiction, Picture Books, Non-Fiction, Heritage, Media Brands & Licensing and magazines. Cally has been a Director of the Publishers Association and Chair of the World Book Day committee.

Websites: harpercollinschildrensbooks.co.uk | farshore.co.uk

LinkedIn: HarperCollins UK Publishers Instagram: @HarperCollinsCh | @FarshoreBooks

YouTube: HC Children's Books Facebook: Farshore Books

X: @HarperCollinsCh | @FarshoreBooks

Continue for speakers

Speakers

Katie Bareham, CEO, Doorstep Library

Shared storytime: Opening doors and empowering young lives

Doorstep Library transforms children's lives through the power of storytelling. As a community-driven reading charity, they work to break the cycle of poverty and low literacy by supporting children's education both inside and outside school. Katie will talk about how their programs build essential reading skills through regular, engaging reading sessions within the comfort of children's homes. Through a hands-on, multifaceted service, children improve key life-skills including literacy, love of reading, confidence, concentration and aspiration. This, in turn, supports better life chances and healthier outcomes for their futures.

About Katie Bareham



Katie has overseen the expansion and development of the charity since 2010, taking the team from 4 to 130 volunteers, employing 12 members of staff and expanding the number of projects, with more in the pipeline for 24-2025. Katie has always had a passion for reading, and since co-founding Doorstep Library has been determined to share that passion with as many children as possible.

Website: doorsteplibrary.org.uk LinkedIn: Katie Bareham | Doorstep Library

Instagram: @DoorstepLibrary YouTube: Doorstep Library

Facebook: Doorstep Library Network X: @DoorstepLib

Nicola Wallis, Practitioner Research Associate: Collections & Early Childhood, Fitzwilliam Museum

Playtime with Books at the museum

Nicola will share insights from recent early years workshops at the Fitzwilliam Museum, created in partnership with PEDAL, University of Cambridge. Adapting their 'Playtime with Books' initiative to a museum setting, they explored how dialogic storytelling techniques—usually used with picture books—can be applied in cultural spaces. Families were invited to respond to their children's lead engaging with artworks and museum spaces, deepening parent-child interaction and curiosity. The workshops were part of the 'Festival of Stories' run by Talking Together in Cambridgeshire, which seeks to address inequalities in early communication development locally. Nicola will share reflections, exploring how museums can learn from book sharing techniques to support attuned, playful learning experiences.

About Nicola Wallis



Nicola Wallis is a Practitioner Research Associate in Early Childhood and Collections at the Fitzwilliam Museum, where she previously worked on developing the early years programme. She uses participatory research methods to explore how the Museum can support babies, young children, and everyone who cares for them, with a particular focus on those facing barriers to participating in arts and cultural activities.

Website: fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk LinkedIn: Fitzwilliam Museum

Instagram: @Fitzmuseum_UK YouTube: The Fitzwilliam Museum

Speakers

Olivia Richards, CEO and Founder, The Story Project

Integrating wellbeing and literacy through stories

This session will provide an overview of The Story Project's approach to using stories to teach children about their wellbeing and literacy. Olivia will look at the evidence base behind the use of stories to teach children about their wellbeing and some ways this can be implemented practically.

About Olivia Richards



Olivia Richards is the founder of The Story Project, a social enterprise dedicated to improving children's wellbeing and literacy through stories. Olivia is completing a PHD at St Mary's University looking into teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of stories and The Story Project in PSHE education. Olivia's work is built upon her years of practice as a teacher and leader in English and PSHE education and her international research into the use of stories to support children's wellbeing.

Website: story-project.co.uk LinkedIn: The Story Project CIC
Instagram: @TheStoryProjectUK X: @Story_ProjectUK

Lucy Webber, Acting Head of Learning, The Story Museum, and Liz Fraser-Betts, Project Manager, The Story Exchange, Oxygen

The Story Exchange: Storytelling and emotional literacy for teachers

Exploring Oral Storytelling's impact on emotional literacy, this presentation illustrates how arts-based learning can be meaningfully integrated into the curriculum. The Story Exchange is a two-year collaborative project that brought together 14 primary school teachers and professional storytellers to develop new approaches to support emotional literacy in the classroom. We will share our creative journey, highlighting how storytelling has been a central thread—from pedagogical strategies to evaluation methodology. Through creative means, we will showcase the professional development of all participants and how their collaboration as co-learners has reshaped the way schools and museums engage with learning and the arts.

About Lucy Webber



Lucy is Acting Head of Learning at The Story Museum in Oxford. She has worked as a storyteller and workshop leader in Oxfordshire since 2020. She has told stories at The Cheltenham Literature Festival and delivered sessions to staff and students from dozens of state and independent primary and secondary schools. Lucy spent thirty years as a primary school teacher in Oxfordshire and Sussex.

About Liz Fraser-Betts



Liz Fraser-Betts is a coach and consultant who has led The Story Exchange as Project Manager for Oxygen (OXCEP) since 2023. With over 20 years' experience in leading learning departments in museums and galleries, she specialises in developing programmes that support arts for wellbeing. She is also Director of Dot Dot Dash Coaching, supporting leaders in the arts, recently working with organisations including the National Trust, London Transport Museum, Royal Opera House, Engage, and GEM.

Website: storymuseum.org.uk Instagram: @TheStoryMuseum

Speakers

Nicola Pomery, Co-curator of Story Explorers and Family and Community Programmes Manager, and Mariam de Haan, Lead Curator of African Collections, British Library

Story Explorers at the British Library

Join us, the curatorial team of Story Explorers, to discover how this family exhibition was developed with local families. We will present the co-curation methodology and detail how this creatively and meaningfully occurred in practice. Enjoy hearing how we chose to focus on an overarching theme of stories, and how we activated the space to support story building, make-believe, and play, all through working collaboratively with our Family Co-creation Group. Finally, we will discuss the selection of collection items, and how 'everything in the Library has a story to tell, and so do you.'

About Nicola Pomery



Family and Community Programmes Manager at the British Library, as well as co-curator of Story Explorers (2025) and past exhibition Marvellous and Mischievous: Literature's Young Rebels (2019). Previously, she was the Education Programmer at Parasol unit for contemporary art, a Visiting Lecturer at the University for the Creative Arts and, at Camden Arts Centre, ran the 'Get the Message' programme for young people with severe and profound learning difficulties.

About Mariam de Haan



Lead Curator of African Collections at the British library and a co-curator of Story Explorers (2025). Within her role, she works to connect the African collections of the British Library to diaspora and academic communities of all ages. Previously, she served as the Curator of African collections at the British Library and has conducted research in African cultures, literatures, economics, histories, and politics for nine years, with a specialisation in East Africa.

Website: [bl.uk](https://www.bl.uk)

LinkedIn: [British Library | Nicola Pomery](#)

Instagram: [@BritishLibrary](#) Bluesky: [@BritishLibrary](#)

Facebook: [British Library](#) X: [@BritishLibrary](#), [@BL_Learning](#)

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Continue for speakers

Speakers

Shauni Sanderson, Partnership Manager, and Arwenna Davis, Head of Research and Impact, BookTrust

Sharing stories from the start: The power of shared reading in the early years

Discover how shared reading from birth can transform children's lives: strengthening relationships, enhancing wellbeing and laying strong foundations for lifelong learning. Drawing on BookTrust's research, programmes and expertise, this session explores the wide-ranging benefits of early reading: from cognitive development and school readiness to imagination, empathy and emotional security. With practical strategies and insights for engaging families from the earliest days, and a special contribution from BookTrust Writer in Residence, Camilla Reid, we'll explore joyful, interactive ways to bring stories to life for babies and toddlers – equipping and inspiring you to champion the power of stories for every family.

About BookTrust



BookTrust is the UK's largest children's reading charity. Each year we reach millions of children with our programmes, which are designed to support changes in reading behaviours, especially for those from low-income families or vulnerable backgrounds. Focusing on the key developmental years, from birth to primary school, our work is grounded in evidence showing that reading together from the earliest age supports children's development and has profound and lifelong benefits.

Website: booktrust.org.uk LinkedIn: BookTrust Instagram: @BookTrust
Bluesky: @BookTrust YouTube: BookTrust Facebook: BookTrust X: @BookTrust

Gem Smith, Head of Communities Programme, Take A Part CIO

Using creative approaches to engage families in storytelling, creative writing and oracy

In this presentation, Gem Smith will share insight into how using arts as a 'way in' developed opportunities for hard to reach families to develop skills and confidence around literacy and oracy. Case studying collaborations with Plymouth Sound National Marine Park, Engage and the MaxLiteracy Awards, Gem will share how the use of creativity across a number of projects supported families to grow their confidence, develop their own storytelling voice and co-create a publication. In sharing these approaches, she'll consider the methodologies and context for the work and offer some tips and entry points for developing these type of projects for yourself.

About Gem Smith



Gem heads up Take A Part's communities programme, with a focus on Plymouth and a skillset around community engagement, creative education and work with families. Gem has received a Marsh Award for Excellence in Visual Arts Engagement and, on behalf of Take A Part and in collaboration with Prince Rock School, a MaxLiteracy Award. She was part of the Extend Leadership cohort in 2023 and Plymouth Culture's Creative Leadership Programme in 2024.

Website: takeapart.org.uk YouTube: Take A Part
Instagram: @Take_A_Part_Plymouth Facebook: Take A Part CIO

Workshops

Jeszemma Howl, Head of Training, Fatherhood Institute

FRED: Fathers Reading Every Day

Run by the Fatherhood Institute, FRED (Fathers Reading Every Day) is a fun and simple reading challenge from the Fatherhood Institute that gets dads and kids reading together at home—and loving it. Over one month, dads dive into anything from storybooks to sports pages, car manuals to comics—whatever sparks interest. It's all about reading for pleasure, making it easy, relaxed, and a great excuse for quality time. It's also been a big hit with boys, helping boost their reading and their bond with dad.

About Jeszemma Howl



Jeszemma develops, designs and coordinates the Fatherhood Institute's nationwide fatherhood training offer, including workforce development and parenting programmes, and consultancy services. Jeszemma is a Churchill Fellow, completing her travelling fellowship in Trinidad and the USA on engaging fathers in breastfeeding support. Prior to the Fatherhood Institute in 2007, Jeszemma supported fathers and families in early years and safeguarding services.

Website: fatherhoodinstitute.org LinkedIn: [FatherhoodInst](#)

Instagram: [@FatherhoodInst](#) YouTube: [FatherhoodInst](#) Facebook: [FatherhoodInst](#)

Dr Sabine Little, Senior Lecturer in Languages Education, University of Sheffield

Traditional Tales, Untraditionally Told: Embedding multilingualism and making into storytelling

The Traditional Tales, Untraditionally Told project uses the power of traditional stories from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and the pull of making pedagogies, to embed multilingualism in formal settings, such as libraries and classrooms. Working with parents and children, families find new ways to use their home and heritage language, and engage in creative storytelling through cardboard construction, electronics, and/or stop motion animation, creating a multilingual artefact that helps celebrate and normalise multilingualism.

About Dr Sabine Little



Dr Sabine Little is Senior Lecturer in Languages Education at the University of Sheffield, where her research focuses on multilingualism, identity, and belonging, specifically by creating both physical and metaphorical space for multilingualism in society. Her work has been used by the National Literacy Trust, the National Education Union, the International Baccalaureate Organisation, and World Book Day.

LinkedIn: [Sabine Little](#) Bluesky: [@SabineLittle](#) X: [@SabineLittle](#)

Workshops

Usifu Jalloh, Storyteller, Connection with Wonder

Music and movement in storytelling

Rhythm and music are integral to the telling of an African story, expressing the story through the body to the mind and heart. This workshop will combine a performance and hands-on experience, teaching you simple techniques to colour your stories using beats and movements. You will leave this workshop informed, uplifted and very inspired!

About Usifu Jalloh



Usifu Jalloh is a master storyteller, TEDx speaker and award winning educator who combines music, movements and song into warm, enchanting storytelling performances for all ages. He has worked with countless schools, nurseries and cultural organisations across the world including projects with The Obama Foundation, The World Health Organisation and BBC Radio 4. He has an extraordinary ability to captivate and motivate an audience of any age, to get them up on their feet, smiling, laughing and joining in.

LinkedIn: Usifu Jalloh Instagram: @UsifuJalloh YouTube: UsifuJalloh2026

Vanessa Woolf, Storyteller, Connection with Wonder

Keeping focus with multisensory storytelling

Our workshop will focus on the relationship between speaker and listener - the heart of storytelling. We will explore safe, fun and impactful ways to use sensory props to enhance communication. We will find out how to change technique when your audience grows in number or changes in age or ability. We will also explore new objects and creative ways to activate all the senses while always keeping focus. We will finish with a section on troubleshooting and an opportunity to share top tips, leaving participants informed, energised and empowered.

About Vanessa Woolf



Vanessa is a full time professional storyteller and TEDx speaker with 15 years' UK and international experience. She has developed and told multisensory stories in dozens of settings for many different purposes. She often works in schools, libraries and museums but you might find her working in unexpected places too: on a Pullman steam train, next to a shark tank or onboard the London Eye!

LinkedIn: Vanessa Woolf Instagram: @ConnectionWithWonder
Bluesky: @LondonDreamtime Facebook: Connection With Wonder

Workshops

Emma Leeson, Training and Resources Lead, SAPERE (becoming Thoughtful) **Stories, books and beyond: Opening up philosophical conversations**

This session will enable people to experience the power of story as a vehicle to open up compelling, philosophical conversations with children, young people and adults. Stories can come from our experiences, minds, books, film, images and objects, but all have the potential to act as a provocation to speak, listen and think more thoughtfully.

About Emma Leeson



Emma has worked in various schools as a teacher and Deputy Headteacher and is now a SAPERE Level 1 and 2 P4C Trainer. She has facilitated philosophical enquiry for over 20 years in schools and the community, including P4C in the pub, at a community art hub and for parents. She has just had an article published in the English Association's 'Use of English' Journal, entitled 'The Philosophical Reader'. In September, SAPERE will become Thoughtful.

Website: sapere.org.uk LinkedIn: SAPERE Instagram: @SAPEREP4C
Bluesky: @SAPEREP4C YouTube: SAPEREP4C
Facebook: SAPEREP4C X: @SAPEREP4C

Dr Alastair Daniel, Performance Storyteller, Consultant and Independent Scholar, The Story Tent, University of Roehampton

Oral storytelling as playful pedagogy

Classroom oral storytelling is a social activity between teller and listener(s) that, in a playful and supportive context, can provide learners with the opportunity to shape and reshape their own tales, drawing on (and developing) their own understandings of the world as they do so. Exploiting the characteristics of play in this way, learners connect with others and explore shared histories, attitudes and values. In this workshop, having distinguished oral storytelling from other spoken word practices, participants will engage in supportive and playful activities that emphasise oral storytelling as a process of meaning-making.

About Dr Alastair Daniel



Dr Alastair Daniel is an artist educator specialising in oral storytelling (and related fields). As well as telling for both children and adults, Alastair teaches (and is published in the areas of) storytelling and its application in educational contexts. He advises organisations on the strategic use of storytelling and narrative communication, and as a former classroom teacher and university-based teacher educator, Alastair's work is often focused on storytelling as pedagogy.

Website: storytent.co.uk LinkedIn: Alastair Daniel Bluesky: @AKDaniel
YouTube: Story Tent Facebook: Alastair Daniel

Continue for workshops

Workshops

Anna Harriott, Co-Director, Stories in the Dust, and Ian Williams, Professor of Applied Environmental Science, Southampton University

Stories in the Dust: when arts and science join forces

Stories in the Dust is a theatre company that work extensively alongside the Applied Environmental Science Department at Southampton University. Their show, of the same name, is a musical, family eco-fable made of 90% reclaimed and recycled materials. Funded by Art Council England and the Sustainability & Reliance Institute, they are currently delivering their show and accompany outreach programme across the UK. Join the team as they discuss their journey and share of the challenges they've faced since their two very different worlds unexpectedly collided, as well as what successes and opportunities can arise when the arts and science figure out how to truly join forces.

About Anna Harriott



Anna Harriott is the Co-Creator of Stories in the Dust, a forward-thinking Southwest company reimagining sustainable touring. Their work blends live music, puppetry and bold storytelling to explore themes of displacement, environmental awareness and hope. Stories in the Dust launched their slow touring model in 2023. This model of touring serves to embed their work into communities, developing longer term engagement through the delivery of accompanying workshops and projects.

About Ian Williams



Ian Williams is Professor of Applied Environmental Science at the University of Southampton. A qualified schoolteacher, he is an experienced university academic and research leader. He has published extensively on carbon/waste management, resource efficiency, behaviour change, pollution, and sustainability. Ian, alongside Stories in the Dust, is the co-author of the published paper 'The Arts As A Medium To Communicate Climate Science Research', which evidences that theatre can be used as a tool to inspire social change.

Website: storiesinthedust.co.uk LinkedIn: Stories in the Dust
Instagram: @Stories_in_the_Dust Bluesky: @StoriesintheDust
Facebook: Stories in the Dust

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Campaign for Learning

For events, news and views:

www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk

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X: [@CForLearning](#)

National Centre for Family Learning

The National Centre for Family Learning is free to join.

www.nationalcentreforfamilylearning.org

LinkedIn: [national-centre-for-family-learning](#)

Bluesky: [@FamilyLearning](#)

X: [@FamilyLearning_](#)

Campaigns and Awards

Family Learning Festival: www.familylearningfestival.com

Parent Powered Learning: www.parentpoweredlearning.org.uk

Family Learning Awards: www.nationalcentreforfamilylearning.org/family-learning-awards

Get in touch

Email: info@cflearning.org.uk