

Who we are

Bag Books is a registered charity established in 1993 to enhance the lives of children and adults with learning disabilities through the use of multi-sensory books. We are the only organisation in the world publishing multi-sensory stories for people with profound learning disabilities.

What we do

Our main activities are:

- the design and production of a range of multi-sensory books. *We have 40 titles covering a wide range of age-appropriate stories and new titles are written each year.*
- providing specialist multi-sensory storytellers. *Each year around 1,400 children and teenagers take part in one of our 200 storytelling sessions.*
- training others (parents, carers, librarians and teachers) in multi-sensory storytelling technique. *Each year we train in the region of 500 people.*

In total, we estimate that our stories reach an estimated 15,000 children and adults with severe learning disabilities each year.

Who we help

Our primary audience is children and adults with severe or profound learning disabilities. All have language delay; many have autism; and the majority also have severe physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy. The number of people with severe and profound learning disabilities in the UK has increased by 62% since 1975 whilst the general population increased by just 7% over the same period. This large increase is mainly due to medical advances.

How the books help

Take Rebecca, for example: she cannot speak and because she cannot understand words or pictures on a page, she is deprived of many learning opportunities which come naturally to other children. But she can appreciate rhythmic, tuneful “sound phrases”, sustained sensory stimulation and emotional and physical contact with her Mum. Multi-sensory books use these to reach her and she responds to them.

The stories are told from separate page-cards, each with a sensory element: an interesting shape or texture; a sound; a movement; a smell. Each page-card can be used by Rebecca, hand-over-hand with her Mum, in a sequence devised to tempt her interest and hold her attention. Rebecca experiences the story’s emotion through her Mum’s voice: is it funny, scary, exciting?

She can respond to the story with a change of position or facial expression, a gesture, a smile or vocalisation. By acknowledging her efforts, and immediately encouraging more interaction, her Mum can show her the power of communication.

“It’s really difficult to buy a birthday present or a Christmas present for Andrew but he just loves his [Bag Books] stories. My friend came over the other day and Andrew was desperate to tell her something and we couldn’t think what it was. Then I realised that he wanted her to see his new book. When I brought it out he was beaming, absolutely delighted and really excited.”

In a survey of teachers, 95% of them thought that the children with learning disabilities in their class had benefited from a Bag Books storytelling session.

Telling one of our stories - Charmaine’s Bonfire Adventure



“Alf!” shouted Winston, “a dog’s got the sausages!”



“Come on, Charmaine, we’d better catch him” and the pair gave chase.



But the dog was cunning. It dived through the rubbish bins...



...squeezed through a hole in the hedge...



...ran straight through a line of washing... and with a pair of socks round its neck, it disappeared into the night!



But Alf was laughing, “The dog’s got his supper,” he said, “and you two can have the biggest sparkler in the box.”

