

## All Aboard



Many thanks to the team from Kingston upon Thames Rotary Club who took part in the Great River Race on our behalf. They rowed 21.6 miles along the Thames from London Docklands to Ham in Surrey raising over £1,150 for us. A fantastic effort.

## Overseas orders

Our multi-sensory books are in demand from around the world. UK prices are subsidised through UK fundraising but overseas customers pay the full cost and freight costs are calculated on volume so they are pretty high too but it still doesn't deter orders.

We often receive orders from Ireland but we have recently received an order for four books from Malibu School in Safety Bay, Western Australia. We are also expecting some orders from the USA now that our new insurance policy covers us to export multi-sensory books there.

*Storyline is published two or three times a year and is available in email and print versions. If you would like to change the format you receive in future please contact us. Similarly, please let us know if you'd rather not receive future editions.*



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## Penny Lacey

We were sad to learn of the death of Dr Lacey who was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Birmingham specialising in the learning and development of children with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

We were honoured that her family decided to ask that donations in her memory be made to Bag Books.

An obituary from *The Telegraph* can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/kpepz5b>

## Autism Storytime

Last year we ran a pilot storytelling scheme, visiting Special Schools which cater specifically for pupils severely affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder. We received very positive responses:

*"One child is quite difficult to engage in some literacy activities, however, he was very interested and motivated by both stories! Fantastic to see. Thank you!!"* The Pines School, Birmingham.

*"The children were completely engrossed. One was able to tell me about all three stories afterwards. The lower ability child loved the noises and smells especially and laughed with pleasure during the ghost train story (unusual for him)."* Springhallow School, Ealing, London

We are grateful to Clifford Chance for providing funding for five London based sessions over the next few months. We are now fundraising to roll the project out across the whole of the UK.

# Storyline

June 2015

Multi-sensory stories for people with learning disabilities



## A Pirate Adventure

The development of a new multi-sensory book is now almost complete. Last year, Bag Books was shortlisted to benefit from a donation from the Yorkshire Building Society Lasting Legacy Fund. There was a public vote and we were one of the charities with the most votes – many thanks if you voted for us. The funding has enabled us to develop a book about a birthday party to fit in with the theme of 150 years of the Building Society being in business.



*A Pirate Adventure* tells the tale of a surprise pirate-themed birthday party thrown by Harry for his friend Jake. They follow a map and have an adventure before finding a wooden chest but what's in it?

The funding will also enable us to send a free copy of the multi-sensory book to 47 Special Schools in Yorkshire. We'll then start making some for general sale and they should be available to order in September.



## Build-a-Book

We have now visited 16 Special Schools and 8 Adult Day Centres across London with our very popular *Build-a-Book* project. One of our Storytellers and a Craft Artist spend a day at each venue and help a small group of people with learning disabilities to make their own copy of a book. The feedback has been fantastic and we are now looking for funding to enable us to scale up the project and offer it nationwide.

*"The pupils were fully engaged in building their Bag Book. The sounds and sensory side of the various processes, such as the hammering, were stimulating, and they enjoyed them immensely. Lots of laughter and smiles, and each process brought a positive reaction from each child."* The Village School, Brent

*"A real eye-opener into what our service users could do for themselves. One person used the equipment as good as anyone which is something I need to feed back to other staff."* The Landmark, Lambeth.



## Tall Stories

We have now completed two years of our Tall Stories project where we visit adult day centres and care homes, training staff in multi-sensory storytelling. We visit each location three times and gradually hand over the storytelling to let the trainees practice whilst our Storyteller observes and then offers advice. We have trained staff in 280 locations across the UK and as well as obtaining feedback at the sessions we run we also contact the locations 6 months after our final visit to find out how the multi-sensory storytelling is going.

Results so far indicate that all of the locations are still using the books, with the frequency of multi-sensory storytelling sessions ranging from one per month to daily with an average of just over 10 sessions per month.

All the locations have cascaded the training and they report that there are now an average of 7.2 people storytelling at each location (compared with an average of 2.8 people trained by us initially).

The average number of service-users benefitting from the regular storytelling is reported as 28 per location.

*“One gentleman who is usually averse to having his head touched allowed the storyteller to touch his hair during a telling of “The Haircut” story. This has made it easier for staff to cut his hair. Another resident who had difficulty in keeping still would be very attentive during story telling sessions.”*  
The Mayflower, Mariner Road Day Centre, Newham.



## Another good year



2014 was another record-breaking year for Bag Books. We increased multi-sensory book production yet again to cope with increased demand. Each book takes around 8 hours to construct and with the help of a record number of volunteers we were able to make 1,457 books – it’s hard to believe that in two years our production has increased by 81%.



The number of people with severe learning disabilities participating in one of our storytelling sessions also increased to 7,076. Most of our storytelling sessions are in Special Schools and over the past five years our storytellers have visited 80% of the 699 schools for children with severe learning disabilities across the UK. During 2014 we received feedback from 555 Special Needs teachers who collectively observed over 4,000 of their pupils. The teachers judged that 99.2% of those children benefitted from the Bag Books multi-sensory storytelling session.

## Our oldest volunteer

For International Inner Wheel Day, the Kingston upon Thames club, invited us along to run a craft day on a Saturday at one of their members’ homes.

12 club members spent the day sewing leaves onto shoots for *The Little Seed*, cutting out Oyster card readers for *Lost in London* and sewing snouts onto elephant trunks for *What Am I?*

We were particularly pleased that Betty, who is 97, found it therapeutic for her arthritic



fingers to stuff rubber gloves with cotton wool for *Andre’s Night Out*.

## National Multi-Sensory Storytelling Day Wednesday 23rd September 2015

### The importance of training

The simple truth is that, when told properly, Bag Books stories are more than just a bit of fun, they’re an incredibly useful educational tool. A few years ago we carried out a survey of teachers familiar with Bag Books asking them which skills they believe Bag Books help to develop. We received high scores (80/90% or higher) for those skills associated with improving exploration, social interaction, anticipation, turn-taking, motor skills, and attention. It must be stressed however, in order to really get the best results in all these areas, it is important to use the stories as they were designed to be used. Of course, there may be some benefit to using the resources for something like straightforward sensory exploration, but that’s unlikely to give you the same sort of results in terms of social interaction for example.

A 2014 evaluation of our stories by the University of Northampton revealed a great deal of inconsistency in the way that Bag Books were used in schools, and identified a lack of training amongst school staff. Some schools had received training some time ago,

but with staff leaving and new staff coming in, very few remained who had taken part in it.

There are quite a number of schools who may have ordered hundreds of pounds worth of Bag Books stories several years ago, but no longer have anyone who knows how they are supposed to be used. As a result, we are keen to encourage more schools (and other services) to get us in to run some training sessions. We believe that our training works best alongside storytelling, so that trainees can see the benefits of multi-sensory storytelling first hand with their own pupils (or service users). As a result our standard training package comprises a combination of storytelling and training. We also include a training DVD and set of accompanying training notes, both of which are due to be updated over the summer. Days of just storytelling are also available. Information on all our services as well as the books themselves is available at [www.bagbooks.org](http://www.bagbooks.org)

**Our next open Training Day will be in London on 5th November. [Book Now.](#)**