



Children in foster care to receive free Penguin books

London, 12 April 2007: Over the next two years, Penguin will be donating £40,000 and free books to the Letterbox Club, a project managed by Booktrust which focuses on improving the educational outlook for children aged 7-11 in foster families by providing them with a parcel of books, maths activities and educational materials every month for six months.

Research shows that children in care underachieve in education but evaluation from Letterbox's pilot showed a demonstrable impact with the majority of children improving their standardised score in reading. Penguin will be working with the Department for Education and Skills and Booktrust who administer the scheme, to extend the programme to over 1,200 children over the next two years with a view to involving all children in this age range in foster care from 2009 onwards.

John Makinson, Penguin CEO and Chairman, commented: "We are delighted to have found the Letterbox Club which is a very special programme. We believe that providing a child with access to books is one of the best starts you can give them in life so it is a real privilege to share the joy of reading with children in foster families around the UK."

Rose Griffiths, University of Leicester, said "We are extremely pleased to be working with Penguin. Their involvement will help us include a wider range of books and activities in the parcels sent to children. Their support is extremely valuable." Rose Griffiths initiated the project.

Penguin has a proud history of supporting good causes, be it through raising awareness of social issues through its publishing or financial donations and employee volunteering. Most recently, Penguin's recent partnership with Comic Relief helped to raise around £1 million



through the sale of its special titles *Jamie's Little Book of Big Treats* and Lauren Child's Charlie and Lola book *But I Do Know All About Chocolate*.

- Ends -

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Notes to Editors:

For more information about Penguin's charitable activities around the world, log on to the Pearson CSR report at: http://www.pearson.com/community/csr_report2006/

About The Letterbox Club:

The Letterbox Club was devised to improve the situation of looked-after children within Leicester local authority, responding to reasons why children in care underachieve in education identified by the Social Exclusion Unit in 2003. It seeks to provide personalised resources directly to children through the post, with the aim of improving their confidence in learning, and also to increase the confidence of the carers helping them at home. Three cohorts of children were involved in the initial pilot over three years, with results indicating that the intervention had a significant effect. More than half of the children showed significant progress in their attainment.

With new investment from the Department for Education and Skills and Penguin, Booktrust and the University of Leicester's School of Education plan to extend this pilot to benefit over 1,200 children nationally from 2007-2009, with a view being able to involve all children aged between 7 and 11 in the care of their local authority from 2009 onwards.

- At any one time, about 60,000 children are in care in England (about 0.5% of all children under 18), of whom about 40% (24,000) are aged 10 or under.
- At Key Stage 2 (age 11) less than half as many children in care reach the national target level of performance as their peers (Social Exclusion Unit 2003). In 2001/02, only 8% of pupils in Year 11 (aged 16) who had spent at least one year in care gained five or more GCSEs graded A* to C, compared with 50% of all Year 11 pupils.

About Booktrust:

Booktrust is an independent charity dedicated to promoting books and reading to people of all ages. Booktrust is responsible for a number of successful national reading promotions, sponsored book prizes and creative reading projects aimed at encouraging readers of all ages to discover and enjoy books. These include the Orange Prize for Fiction, the Children's

Press Release

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Laureate, the Get London Reading campaign, Booktime and Bookstart, the national programme that works through locally based organisations to give a free pack of books to young children, with guidance materials for parents and carers. www.booktrust.org.uk