

Connecting through reading



# Stories Together

The Forest of Dean  
Children's Opportunity Centre

## **What is "Stories Together"?**

With the aim of combatting isolation and connecting generations Stories Together matches volunteers in the community with preschool settings, to read to young children via video call.

The project is organised by The Forest of Dean Opportunity Centre. Volunteers who we refer to as "Storytellers" will be able to read or tell a story to children under 5 via a video link, whilst the storyteller is at home and the children are at nursery or preschool. Working with Storytellers and Preschools, The Opportunity Centre will make the arrangements to match everyone up, give advice on how to make a video call and provide the story books.

## **I would love to be a Storyteller; how do I get involved?**

To be a storyteller you will need to be able to either read or tell a story suitable for children under 5 years old. You will need to know how to make a video call via facetime, skype or zoom on your own device. If you're not confident in making a video call, we can offer support and guidance, with the aim of getting as many people reading and telling stories as we can. We provide the story books too, these are available to collect from either The Opportunity Centre, the Library at Coleford, Lydney or Cinderford or for those who are isolating or have limited transport we can deliver the book to you through the libraries volunteer programme.

## **What equipment do I need?**

We offer video calls through Facetime, Skype and Zoom, you will need a smart phone, ipad, tablet, laptop or desktop pc that is able to make a video call. You will also need a reliable internet connection. If you are using a phone or ipad/tablet we recommend this is on a stand, allowing the children to see your face and for you to hold the book.

## **What information do I need to provide?**

We will need: Name, phone number and email address

Availability to read

Preferred type of video call: Zoom, Facetime or Skype

If you would like to collect the book or have it delivered.

If you require any support or assistance.

This information is only used for the purpose of Stories Together. We share you email address with the preschool that you are reading to.

### **How does it work?**

Once we receive your details, we will get in touch by phone or email to confirm which day and time you will be reading. We will make the arrangements for you to collect or have the book delivered.

On the day, a member of staff from the preschool will video call you at the arranged time and introduce themselves and then introduce you to the group of children you will be reading to. The member of staff will have a copy of the book you are reading to show the children the pictures, leaving you to read. It is understandable if you feel a little nervous, however just be yourself and read as if you were in the same room as the children. Once the story is over, you are very welcome to chat with the children. The member of staff will encourage them to talk about the story or what they have been doing.

### **I have additional needs; can I join the project?**

Absolutely yes! Stories Together is about connecting everyone. Being inclusive is at the heart of everything we do at The Opportunity Centre. If there is any support we can offer you please let us know, from getting a book to you, to giving advice on making the video call

### **What about Safeguarding?**

Regarding safeguarding, we have taken advice from Professionals Online Safety Helpline which is recommended by gov.uk. It is deemed that a virtual visitor to a Preschool would pose no more of a risk than an actual visitor. The activity will always be supervised by an adult member of staff and you would never be left alone with the children. If behaviour from either party was unacceptable, then the call should be terminated immediately.

### **Can I choose which stories to read or tell?**

Yes, if you have favourite books that preschool children will enjoy then please let us know and the library will help us get a copy. Alternatively, if you would like to tell a story from memory, perhaps using props then this is also encouraged.

### **How many times can I be a Story Teller**

As many as you like! We recommend you try it first and if you find it rewarding, we can plan for you to read on a regular basis.

### **Anything else I need to know?**

Because this is a community funded project, we would be grateful if you can provide us with feedback from time to time, advising us on how you feel the project is working and if you have any ideas to improve the experience.

Thank you for taking an interest in Stories Together, if you have any further questions please call Helen on 01594 837552 or email [storiestogether@childoc.org.uk](mailto:storiestogether@childoc.org.uk)

