**EMBARGOED until 00:01am on Friday 13th September 2024**

**Independent bookshops are a vital part of England’s cultural and social landscape, finds new report from the Booksellers Association and Arts Council England**

* New research delivers powerful evidence of scale & reach of cultural activities delivered by indie bookshops
* Indies are powerhouses of cultural enrichment and community engagement nurturing **readers and writers** alike
* Survey finds indies are strongly committed to turning **children** into enthusiastic and confident readers
* Indies provide growing support to writers from **Black and Ethnic Minorities** and other minority groups like **LGBTQ+ communities**
* Indies play a key role in providing affordable and inclusive access to culture with **92%** of them running **activities and author events**, and one in two organising +**20 events a year**
* **65%** of indies support local **literary & arts festivals**
* Grants still seen as a major enabler, but easier access and resources could improve impacts

**London. Friday 13th September 2024.** The Booksellers Association (BA) has today published the results of a new report commissioned by Arts Council England, about the cultural and social impact, and value of England’s independent bookshops.

The aim of the research project was to determine how independent bookshops enrich the cultural and social lives of their communities, as well as identifying enablers and barriers, so that this contribution can be strengthened across the bookselling cohort. The research sought to measure and record the ways in which bookshops deliver the key aims of Arts Council England’s *Let’s Create* 10-year strategy. Central to that is maximising the opportunities for communities in every part of the country to experience, enjoy and celebrate culture.

The key findings of the Booksellers Association Arts Council Report are:

* **92%** of indies run **activities and events** for their local communities, including author events
* **1 in 2 indies** organise **20 plus events** per year
* **48%** of indies organise **book fairs at schools**
* **45%** organise for **authors to go into local schools**
* **65%** support local **literary, music and arts festivals**
* Nearly **4 in 10** bookshops organise **creative writing/writing workshops**
* **78%** see **grants and funding as a key enabler** to sustain their role in the community
* **71%** would like **straightforward access** to funds for events and activities
* **71%** would like **more support from publishers** to run events

**James Urquhart, Interim Director, Literature, for Arts Council England**, said: *“I’m delighted that we awarded a grant of £20,000 to the Booksellers Association to conduct this in-depth consultation and research. The robust data and findings in its report backs up what we anticipated – that bookshops up and down the country make a great contribution to creativity and culture in their local communities. Bookshops are a buoyant presence on high streets nationally; and the case studies in this report give inspiring examples of the many different ways in which bookshops host and get involved with cultural activities both in and beyond their shops.”*

**Meryl Halls, Managing Director at the Booksellers Association, said:** *“We have been delighted to work on this major research piece commissioned by Arts Council England, and I’d like to thank our researcher, Howard Davies, who embraced the project with rigour and dedication. What the research – based on an impressive +20% response rate from indie booksellers in England – showed was much that we already knew, but did not have evidenced data to illustrate. Building on the work we did in 2021 with Manchester Met University, this research puts some significant meat on the bones. The breadth of the research cohort was enhanced by a series of deep dive interviews with booksellers across England, giving us an unparalleled perspective on the range and depth of bookshop contributions to our culture and society. It’s really quite moving to read some of the case studies, and to know that our members are making real and meaningful contributions to the events, children’s, literary, reading and writing landscapes across England. I’m immensely proud of what bookshops do every day – they are micro businesses, who are animated by a driving purpose to serve and benefit their communities.*

*There are some practical takeaways from the research, and the BA will be working with Arts Council England and other partners to identify ways in which we can share good practise across bookselling, to bring the skills, know-how, inspiration and confidence to raise all booksellers to the level of the best. There is also an important role for national and local government to play their part in ensuring the contribution of bookshops to the nation’s cultural and social wellbeing can be secured and enhanced. The BA will be using this research to bolster its advocacy with government, for example around ensuring any new system of business rates reflects the cultural amenity of bookshops.*

*We are also committed to conducting equivalent research in Scotland and Wales, and have already embarked on the same exercise in Ireland, where 10% of BA members are located. It seemed urgently required to prove the same point in the Republic of Ireland, given the arrival of Amazon to the Irish market next year, and we look forward to releasing the Irish report very soon.*

*Most of all, I’d like to congratulate our bookseller members for the passion and dedication they bring to their jobs and their shops, and their high streets. They are the hard-working engine of the book industry, and we are glad to be able to shine a light on all their achievements – knowing that the Indie contribution is echoed across the sector, and amplified by the same work done across the specialist bookselling chains.”.*

Overall, 163 independent bookshops in BA membership and based in England took part in the survey. The research was commissioned by Arts Council England in December 2023 and took place in February 2024.

**…Ends…**

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**Notes to Editors**

**About The Booksellers Association (BA)**

The Booksellers Association is the membership organisation for booksellers in the UK & Ireland, and represents over 95% of booksellers. The BA exists to support, advise and work with its members to provide business-critical products and services for booksellers. These include National Book Tokens, our gift card which prompts increased footfall and keeps gift spending in the book trade; Batchline and Batch, our award-winning EPOS, stock management and payments service, which saves time, money and hassle when settling invoices and organising returns; a full range of money-saving affinity deals; a free Business Support Helpline; Booktime magazine; government lobbying and representation work across the nations and regions; networking opportunities and events; and Books Are My Bag, our range of consumer-facing activity and campaigns, which include Indie Book of the Month, Independent Bookshop Week, Bookshop Day, Irish Book Week, the Books Are My Bag Readers Awards, Christmas Books and Summer Books catalogues and more.

**About Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let’s Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £467 million of public money from Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.artscouncil.org.uk&c=E,1,nP8Qq59uYHl6ZsJvv_AbTvUfZmv4CIdk1Viwfv3_cBohUFkUy0h-cwjuPYq6SPlqJRuFz0ce7sS2SnuVFX6DaAoOy7nITCoIiNMuoNJVBg,,&typo=1&ancr_add=1)