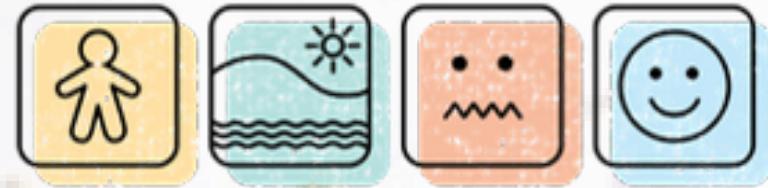


# IMPACT REPORT 2025



## Tales Toolkit



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# From the Founder

“

Since 2016, Tales Toolkit has been all about children's stories. The laughter, the silliness, the dancing, the wild ideas, and the freedom to explore and create. That joy, playfulness, and creativity is at the heart of everything we do.

We're always trying to learn, adapt and improve and this impact report was a fantastic opportunity to affirm that we're going in the right direction and help guide us in our next steps.

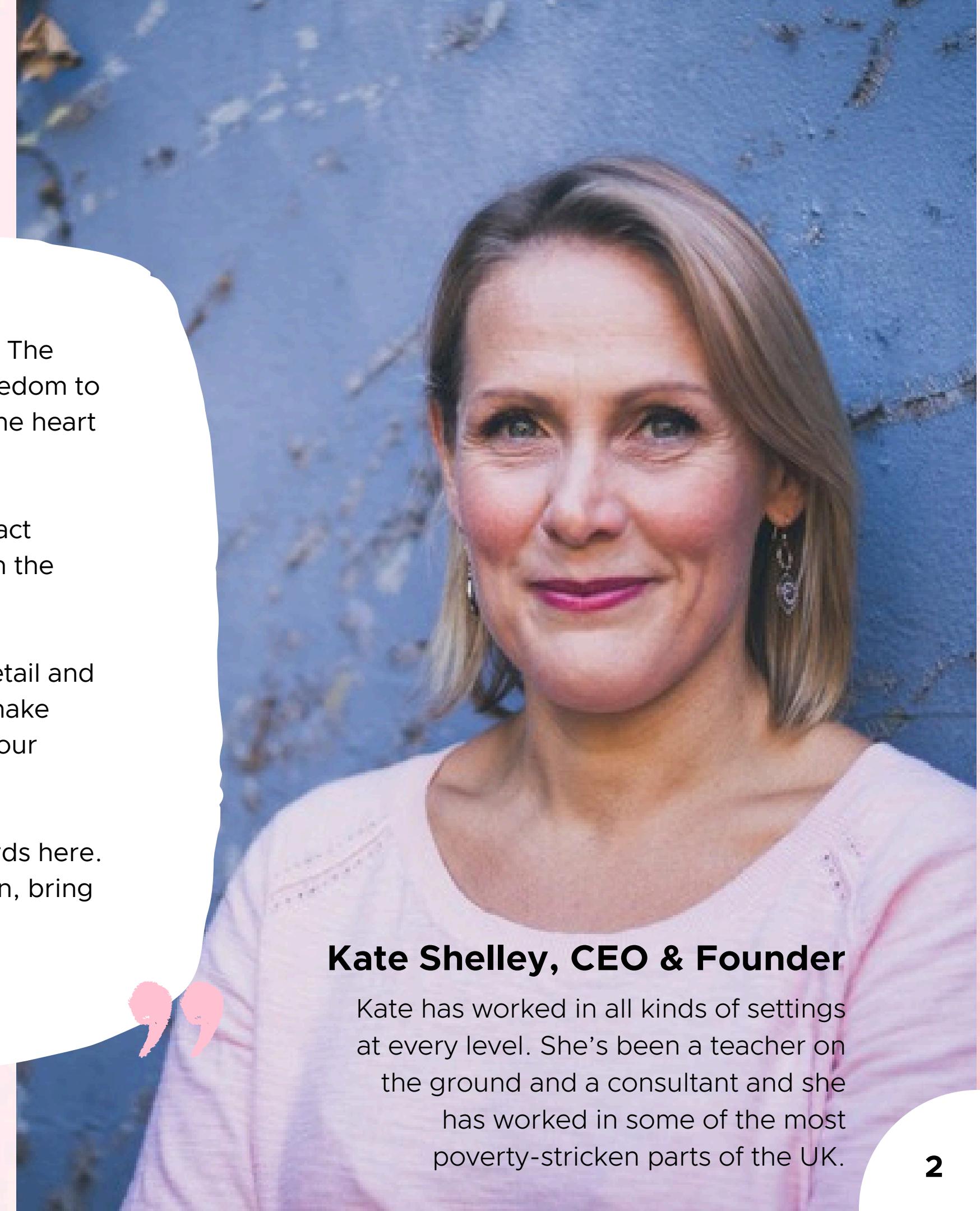
We've read the survey replies, reflections, and feedback in detail and put together the data to share with all of you. Whilst we make plans for improving in the future, this report shines a light on our successes.

To the practitioners using Tales Toolkit, you are the true wizards here. Your dedication and creativity has helped to spark imagination, bring joy, and shape children's lives in ways that will matter forever.

Thank you for making magic happen.

## **Kate Shelley, CEO & Founder**

Kate has worked in all kinds of settings at every level. She's been a teacher on the ground and a consultant and she has worked in some of the most poverty-stricken parts of the UK.



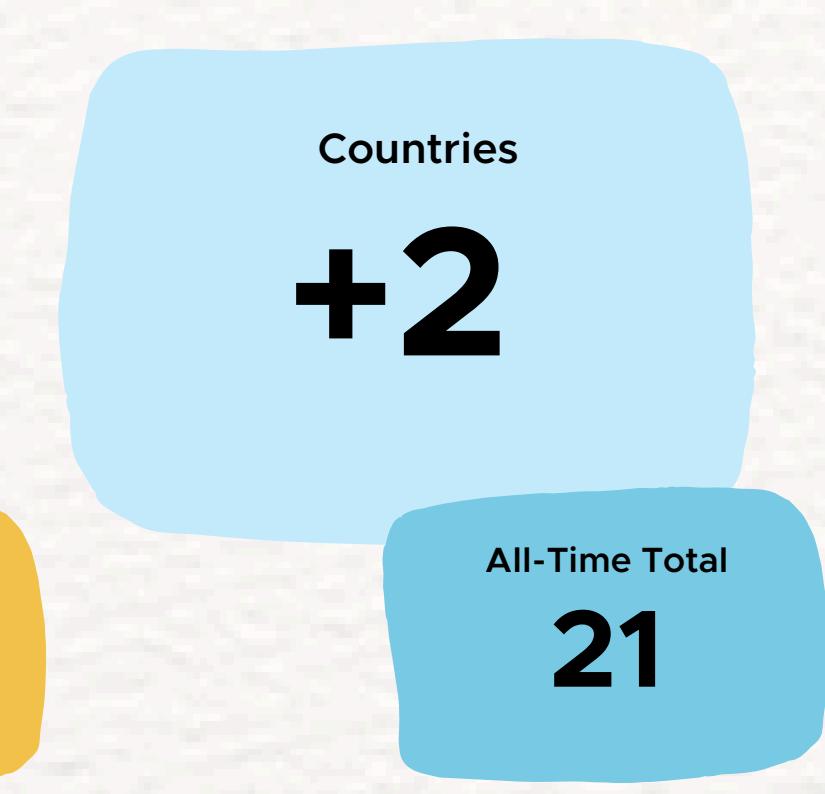
# INTRODUCTION

# My, how we've grown . . .

It's been a big year for us at Tales Toolkit! We've gained almost a 100 new settings and reached more countries than ever before.

We've completed big projects with the Education Endowment Foundation and Chickenedshed. We've improved our services by offering termly drop-in sessions and added many new webinars to our library.

We conducted our first ever internal impact survey, to find out exactly how our members are feeling about using Tales Toolkit.



Stats refer to dates from 1 Sep 2024 - 31 Aug 2025

\* Estimated 60 children per setting

\*\* Estimated 8 staff per setting

# MEMBER SURVEY



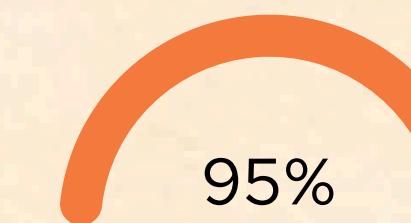
From staff confidence in using it, the ease of setting it up, the way the children engaged and responded to it and the development we've seen outside of Tales Toolkit sessions - it has been fantastic.

*Assistant Headteacher @ Children's Centre, Southeast England*

# Member Survey

In March 2025, we conducted our first internal impact survey to understand how our members are getting on with Tales Toolkit. The survey was open to every setting who has been through our all or part of our training, including those who were just starting out or completed their training years ago. 49 settings replied and the results were overwhelmingly positive. We are grateful to our practitioners and indebted to their passion that makes Tales Toolkit a success.

## % PRACTITIONERS AGREED THAT ....\*



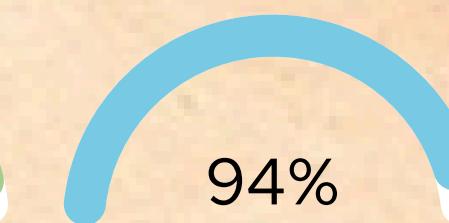
STORY SESSIONS  
ARE FUN!



THE TRAINING IS  
BRILLIANT!



PREPARATION IS  
A BREEZE!



ALL CHILDREN  
ARE INCLUDED

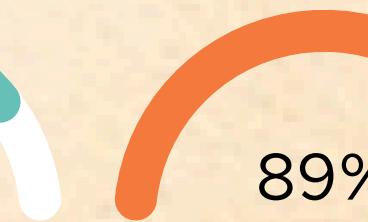
## % PRACTITIONERS AGREED THAT TALES TOOLKIT SUPPORTED...\*



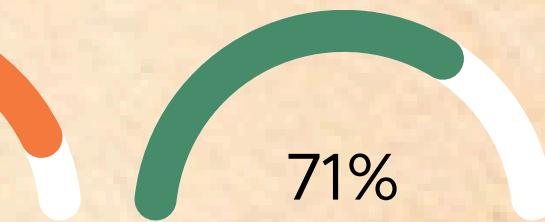
COMMUNICATION  
& LANGUAGE



SOCIO-  
EMOTIONAL



CREATIVITY



PROBLEM  
SOLVING



## “Exceptional” Training

Practitioners were hugely complimentary of the training quality. 98% of settings rated the training experience as 4 or 5 out of 5. They told us it was easy to follow, effective and fun!

“  
Staff looked forwards to the sessions and participated with enthusiasm, even at the end of a long day! As the facilitator, the sessions were so well planned, I found it easy to be fully prepared to run smooth and successful training

Assistant Headteacher @ Primary School in Southeast England

## Running story sessions is fun and easy!

A huge majority of practitioners agreed that running a Tales Toolkit session with the children was enjoyable and easy to prepare. 95% agreed that sessions were fun to run (77% strongly agreed) and 96% agreed that preparation was easy (71% strongly agreed)

“

Using Tales Toolkit is minimum preparation with maximum results.

EYFS Lead @ Primary School in Northeast England

”

## Easy to Embed and Implement

Practitioners tell us that Tales Toolkit slots easily into timetables and **integrates with established interventions, including Talk for Writing, Drawing Club and Helicopter Stories**.

“

The resources and ease of use meant that it was quickly established as an important part of our curriculum.

Assistant Headteacher @ Children’s Centre, Southeast England

# chatty children



## Improved Communication, Language and Literacy

91% agreed that Tales Toolkit helped children improve their language and communication skills. Particular areas of improvement were seen in **vocabulary** and **understanding of story structure**. Many also saw Tales Toolkit as a **valuable precursor to literacy**.

“ Tales Toolkit has particularly helped with teaching and extending vocabulary. This was recently observed by an Ofsted inspector who was impressed with vocabulary children were using.

Mandy Collier-King, Headteacher @ Ilminster Avenue Nursery

## High Motivation and Engagement

Practitioners who filled in our survey frequently mentioned how strong engagement was from the children. These observations were also made by Ofsted Inspectors and members of their management team.

“ The children were ALWAYS telling stories! In reception, we used to have queues of children wanting to use the story aprons and share their stories at the end of the day.

Sara Butler, EYFS Lead @ Lanchester EP Primary School

## Engagement of Boys

Some practitioners specifically mentioned the impact Tales Toolkit had on the engagement of boys. Some who typically struggled with attention were “waiting on every word during Tales Toolkit sessions”. These observations build on the data we already have from our study with Goldsmiths University that showed Tales Toolkit supported boys in catching up with girl and **closing the literacy attainment gap**.

“ The boys who are always reluctant absolutely love story telling time. We are a read a lot, talk a lot nursery.

SENDCo @ Primary School in Northwest England

## Empowered Learners!



### Problem Solving

72% agreed that Tales Toolkit helped the children with problem solving. Practitioners discussed the stimulation of creative thinking with solution generation in storytelling sessions and opportunities for conflict resolution.

“ Our Nursery team use the resources really well to support discussions around sharing or a disagreement, to try to identify a solution together. Seeing our youngest children start to do this independently has been incredible.

Assistant Head @ Primary School in Southeast England

### Socio-Emotional Skills

82% agreed that Tales Toolkit helped to improve social and emotional skills. Skills most frequently mentioned were **turn-taking, confidence and emotional regulation**. Practitioners also identified Understanding the World (73%) and Understanding Emotions (71%) as additional skills that were supported by Tales Toolkit.

One practitioner described “**that sense of ‘I can’**” as something fostered by the freedom and safety that comes from telling a Tales Toolkit story, where there are no wrong answers.

Some practitioners also commented on how Tales Toolkit stories provided an opportunity to discuss challenging topics and **explore themes of “violence” safely**:

“ Quite often familiar themes are acted out with the resources particularly around fighting, bashing, kicking, dying etc. [Tales Toolkit] gives children a safe space to act out these big themes and an opportunity for practitioners to talk about how the characters may feel and what else could be done instead. This fosters empathy and emotional intelligence.”

Nursery Teacher @ Primary School in West Midlands

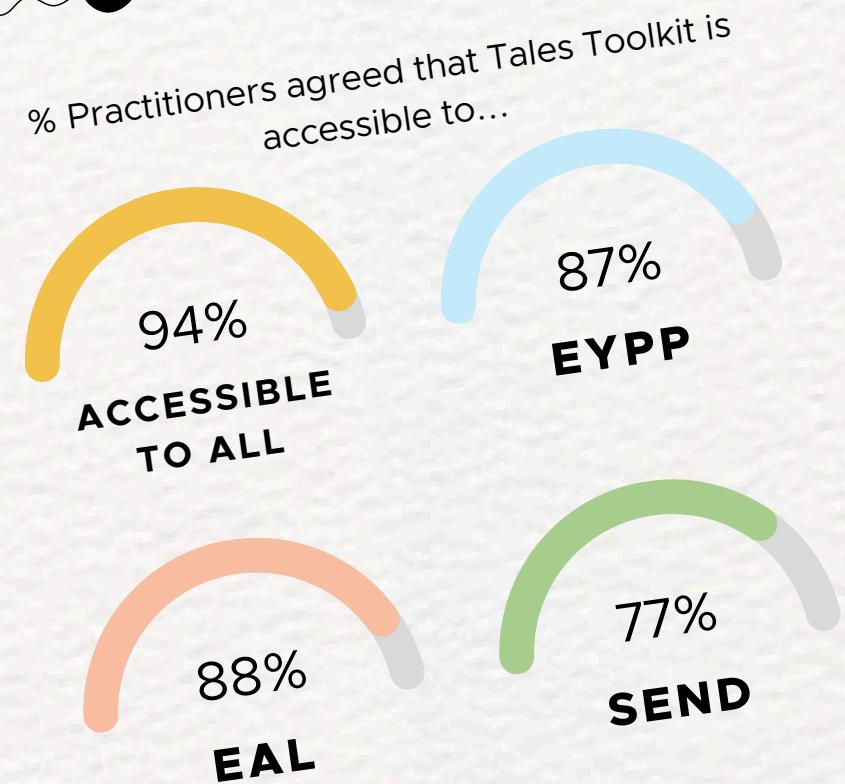
### Creativity

89% agreed that Tales Toolkit helped the children to improve their creativity with many specifically commenting on imagination.

“ Children have taken full ownership of their stories, leading storytelling with their own ideas, where anything is possible and their ideas are valued.

EY Phase Co-ordinator @ Primary School in Southeast England

## Every child included!



## Inclusion and Accessibility

94% agreed that TTK was accessible to all the children in the setting, with 62% strongly agreeing.

“It is accessible for all! It can be tailored to suit the needs of differing cohorts

Liz Adie, EYFS Lead @ Cale Green Primary School

## Supporting SEND

77% agreed that TTK was accessible to children with SEND.

“Many of our ASD students find creativity tricky. Tales toolkit is gives extra opportunities to expand ideas. Offering choices ... first without the pressure of coming up with the initial ideas.”

Nikki Gray, Literacy Lead @ Foreland Fields SEND School

## Supporting EAL

88% agreed that TTK was accessible to children with EAL. An ECT in one setting did a research project using Tales Toolkit and focused on EAL children in the cohort:

“The improvement for these children in their communication and language skills as well as their literacy skills was significant and helped them to achieve GLD at the end of the year.

Samantha Hughes, Principal @ Cheam Common Infants Academy

## Supporting Pupil Premium

87% agreed that TTK helped to support children eligible for EYPP.

“The success that we have within our school with these children has encouraged another school within the Trust to adopt the Tales Toolkit programme to support their higher numbers of EYPP children.”

Samantha Hughes, Principal @ Cheam Common Infants Academy

# Changed for Good

Our online portal is constantly growing! We're constantly looking for ways to bring more value to our members.

## Termly Drop-in Sessions

Brought in for the start of the 23/24 school year, these hour-long online sessions cover new topics to help members improve their practice.

## More Downloadable Resources

- Illustrations for diverse families from Laura Henry's illustrator, Giovana Medeiros.
- Resources and templates to manage your own Loan Library (read more about this project under 'ChangeX Loan Libraries' on page 11)
- Teacher training planner

## Increased Webinar Library

9 new webinars were added to our library, with experts including Jenny Mosley, Ben-Kingston-Hughes, Sue Palmer and Helen Lumgair.

## Free Account Launched

In January 2025, we launched our free account! This gives practitioners the opportunity to understand how our approach works before joining us and there are webinars shared for free as well!

**Drop-In Sessions**

Subscribed members are invited to join us once a term for an online session to help you upskill and embed your practice further. Below you'll find recordings from these sessions and any associated resources to support your learning. [Get in touch](#) to find out more about attending future drop-ins or to make requests for topics you'd like covered.



Engaging Boys (Autumn 2025)



Using Tales Toolkit in KS1 (Summer 2025)



Teamwork and CPD with Tales Toolkit (Spring 2025)



Creating Opportunities for Socio-Emotional Development (Summer 2024)



Using Tales Toolkit Outdoors (Spring 2024)



Julie Fisher  
Starting From The Child?



Ben Kingston-Hughes  
The Power of Play – Changing Children's Lives



David Wright  
Where's the Joy? Discussing the EYFS Profile



Illustrations  
Diverse Families and Individuals Illustrations (Laura Henry-Allain)



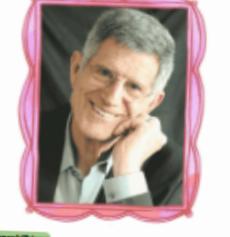
Sue Palmer  
Build Your Own Village



Laura Henry-Allain MBE  
The Voice of the Child in Story



Helen Lumgair  
Storytelling As a Powerful Tool For Hope



Kendall Haven  
The Science of Story



Evan Kidd  
How Symbolic Play Boosts Language



Jenny Mosley  
An Interview with Jenny Mosley

*More for you money!*

# Research Results

## EDUCATION ENDOWMENT FOUNDATION PILOT

We worked with the Education Endowment Foundation and the DfE Early Years Stronger Practice Hubs throughout the last 2 years to facilitate a pilot study. The EEF and DfE also subsidised a further 60 settings in other parts of the UK to get full access to Tales Toolkit but these settings were not involved in the research.

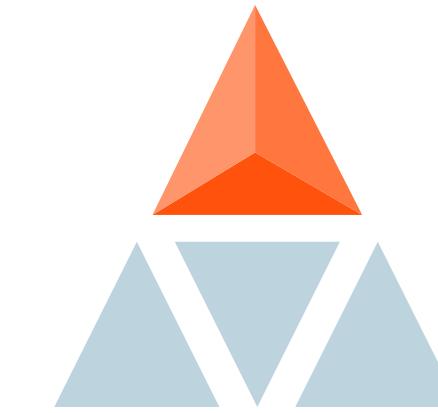
In July 2025, the pilot results were published. The results showed that practitioners were highly motivated to deliver Tales Toolkit and they observed improved outcomes across several areas, including CLL and PSED. It was also noted that Tales Toolkit was especially positive for children with SEND and EAL.

*“I think it's a really good structure and as you go on into schools, they're able to tell, write their stories because they've already got that structure.”*

*Nursery Teacher, Standalone Maintained Nursery*

*“ lot of boys are doing more, like marking and writing. Particularly boys that I didn't think would be doing it.”*

*Practitioner, Standalone Maintained Nursery*



Education  
Endowment  
Foundation

“

Most practitioners who responded to the endline survey self-reported being highly motivated to deliver the intervention and reported increased confidence and changes in practice regarding supporting children's language, quality interactions, collaborative play, storytelling, and child-led learning. Practitioners also reported perceived positive outcomes for children in CLL and PSED, including creativity, storytelling, writing, vocabulary, speech, problem-solving skills, turntaking, and sharing. Some practitioners reported especially positive outcomes for children with SEND and EAL.

*Tales Toolkit Pilot Report. Education Endowment Foundation. July 2025.*

”

While there were many positives to the pilot, several settings failed to fulfil the expectations of the pilot due to difficulties with capacity. Staff shortages and increased demands on their time (partly attributed to the recent increase in contact hours) lead to unfortunate circumstances for some - especially the smaller settings such as PVIs.

# Completed Projects & New Partnerships

## MERCERS

Thanks to funding from the Mercers' Company, we were able to fund 83 settings in some of the most deprived areas of London. The project included the gathering of impact data over 3 years and the conclusion was marked in the summer of 2025, with the sharing of our findings at a symposium at Mercers Hall in London.

## CHANGEX LOAN LIBRARIES

We have received funding from ChangeX and The Lego Foundation three years running as part of their commitment to play. This inspired the creation of "Loan Libraries" to help extend learning and play into the home environment. Settings were supported to create a bank of props and a lending system so parents could take Tales Toolkit home and play with their children.

## SUMMER INTERNSHIPS

Two students from Reading University joined us over the Summer. They supported us across marketing, sales and administrative tasks

## CHICKENSHED THEATRE

Throughout the Spring and Summer of 2025, producers at Chickenshed Theatre's "Tales From The Shed" were working closely with Tales Toolkit founder, Kate Shelley. In August, *Totally Tales* was performed live and children were invited to take to the stage and create their very own show!

Our work with Chickenshed continues to develop, with plans to take the show into settings, as well as running storytelling workshops using our story symbols.



## NEW LOCAL AUTHORITIES

St Helens Borough Council and Oldham Council have joined the Tales Toolkit family. Early Years advisors for the local authorities have made the decision to support the delivery of Tales Toolkit throughout their areas.



# Tales Toolkit

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2025  
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