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**MEDIA RELEASE**  
SUNDAY 16 MAY 2021

**WHSmith, National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books,  
supported by Marcus Rashford MBE, partner in UK wide scheme to  
ensure every child has access to their own book at home**

- Over 380,000\* children in the UK do not own a book of their own
- WHSmith, National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books have partnered to enforce change and reach these children with the support of Marcus Rashford MBE
- Alongside its ongoing work to champion literacy, WHSmith will gift a copy of Marcus Rashford's book *'You are a Champion: How to Be The Best You Can Be'* to a disadvantaged child for every copy sold
- WHSmith stores across the UK and via its website will become a donation point to raise money for the National Literacy Trust to provide books and additional vital support for children and families in disadvantaged communities throughout the UK
- Studies from the National Literacy Trust have shown that children who enjoy reading are three times more likely to have good mental wellbeing

WHSmith today announces it is accelerating its commitment to champion literacy across the UK with a new partnership with the National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books. Working with the National Literacy Trust and Macmillan Children's Books, WHSmith will become the exclusive retail donation point for customers to raise money to support children's literacy and deliver a shared goal to reach every child in the UK that does not own a book.

From today [Sunday 16 May], WHSmith will gift a copy of Marcus Rashford's book, *'You are a Champion: How to Be The Best You Can Be'* for every copy pre-ordered or sold, to accelerate getting more books into the hands of children that need them. These gifted copies will be distributed through the National Literacy Trust's hubs where they work to tackle literacy issues in communities at a local level across the UK. This is Marcus's first book, written with Carl Anka. It is an inspiring, empowering and practical guide to life for children aged 10 years plus and is the book which Marcus wishes he had been able to read as a child.

In addition, customers will be able to donate money at any WHSmith store across the UK\*\* at the till point or online at [www.whsmith.co.uk](http://www.whsmith.co.uk). All monies will go to registered charity the National Literacy Trust to reach the 380,000 children who do not own a book. This will support the charity's ongoing work with schools and disadvantaged children in socioeconomically deprived areas in the UK.

Marcus Rashford MBE is fully supportive of the campaign and commented: *"Enjoying reading can't just be a privilege; all children should be able to access books, no matter what their background. Having good literacy skills supports children to succeed in life and everyone should have the opportunity to discover a love of reading."*

*"This last year has shown us just what we can achieve when we work together. By joining forces with WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust we are giving everyone the best opportunity to get involved in supporting getting every child reading. There's a WHSmith on*

*nearly every high street in the UK, they're online and also in major travel hubs so we're making this really accessible and would encourage everyone who is able to, to get involved. Everyone can play a role, big or small."*

WHSmith have a long legacy of championing children's literacy, having partnered with the National Literacy Trust for over 15 years. Through their programmes and support for the National Literacy Trust, WHSmith have already gifted over 76,000 books across the UK through school and instore events which have supported children with their reading and writing. The donations made through WHSmith that support this latest campaign will fund resources, including free books for those children who are unlikely to own one, and interventions to help improve their reading skills.

Lucy Swinburn, Head of Books at WHSmith commented: *"At WHSmith, we share Marcus's vision to ensure every child in the UK has access to their own book at home. We have championed literacy over many years through our partnership with the National Literacy Trust, donating over 76,000 books to date to disadvantaged children. However, we know there is more work to do and the events of the past year have increased the gap in children's literacy levels even further. As a result, we're now even more driven to continue on our journey to tackle this issue and ensure every child has the opportunity to immerse themselves in a great book. The donations we raise across our UK store estate and online will enable this to happen and we'd like to thank all our wonderful customers in advance for their support."*

Jonathan Douglas CBE, Chief Executive at National Literacy Trust added: *"Marcus Rashford is an extraordinary campaigner of the societal imbalances that can have a lifelong impact on disadvantaged children. We hope this brilliant WHSmith initiative, in partnership with Macmillan Children's Books and the National Literacy Trust, will make essential steps in addressing one of the key barriers to literacy and learning. We're hugely grateful to both organisations for the opportunity to gift children in our Hub areas with copies of 'You Are A Champion: How to Be The Best You Can Be' – for some, this may be the first book they'll ever own."*

Belinda Ioni Rasmussen, Managing Director, Macmillan Children's Books said: *"Macmillan Children's Books is absolutely thrilled that our collaboration with Marcus Rashford and its shared vision of reaching children without books in the UK will now be amplified through this phenomenal campaign with WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust. We are confident that this powerful partnership will have impact and bring change to the lives of children who need this support more than ever."*

WHSmith will also be hosting a digital event for the launch of 'You Are a Champion: How to Be The Best You Can Be' on Thursday 27 May\*\*\*, with an exclusive interview with Marcus Rashford MBE hosted by co-author of the book, Carl Anka. WHSmith and the National Literacy Trust will distribute 1,500 free tickets to schools in deprived areas across the UK to stream the interview and will also donate 1,500 copies of the book to these schools for their libraries. WHSmith customers will also be able to get a ticket to watch the interview on demand when they buy a copy of the book instore and online at [www.whsmith.co.uk](http://www.whsmith.co.uk).

**-ENDS-**

\* A survey of 57,000 children aged from 9 to 18 undertaken by National Literacy Trust in early 2019 estimated that more than 380,000 children in the UK do not own a single book of their own.

\*\*WHSmith branded high street and travel stores, excluding WHSmith franchise stores and concessions.

\*\*\* This event will be available to ticket holders to stream from Thursday 27 May at 19.00 until Monday 28 June at 23.59.

### **Enquiries:**

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### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **About WHSmith**

WHSmith is a leading global retailer in news, books and convenience for the world's travelling customer. With more than 1,700 stores across over 30 countries worldwide, WHSmith offer customers a wide range of books, newspapers & magazines, travel and digital accessories and food and drink.

The Company has a growing international business with over 580 stores primarily across the world's leading airports. In November 2018, WHSmith acquired InMotion, a leading digital accessories retailer in US airports, with over 115 stores. In December 2019, WHSmith acquired Marshall Retail Group, a leading and fast-growing US travel retailer with over 170 stores.

WHSmith's High Street business comprises over 560 stores across the UK and customers can shop online 24/7 at [www.whsmith.co.uk](http://www.whsmith.co.uk).

Follow WHSmith on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

#### **About the National Literacy Trust**

Our mission is to improve the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of those who need it most, giving them the best possible chance of success in school, work and life. We run Literacy Hubs and campaigns in communities where low levels of literacy and social mobility are seriously impacting people's lives. We support schools and early years settings to deliver outstanding literacy provision, and we campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians, businesses and parents.

Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy and drive our interventions. Literacy is a vital element of action against poverty and our work changes children and young people's life stories. Our new site [Words for Life](#) provides simple, fun and educational activities for children and young people aged 0-24 to support learning at home and help them feel more confident.

Visit [literacytrust.org.uk](http://literacytrust.org.uk) to find out more, donate or sign up for our free email newsletter. You can also find us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

The National Literacy Trust is a registered charity no. 1116260 and a company limited by guarantee no. 5836486 registered in England and Wales and a registered charity in Scotland no. SC042944. Registered address: 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL.

#### **About Pan Macmillan**

Pan Macmillan is the UK general book publishing arm of the Macmillan Group, which operates in over 70 countries. Its imprints include Macmillan, Mantle, Pan, Picador, Bluebird, One Boat, Tor, Macmillan Children's Books, Macmillan Collectors Library, Kingfisher, Campbell Books and Two Hoots. Pan Macmillan was named Publisher of the Year at The Bookseller Industry Awards in May 2015, May 2017 and again in June 2020.

[www.panmacmillan.com](http://www.panmacmillan.com)

## **About Marcus Rashford MBE**

Marcus Rashford MBE is an England International footballer and child food poverty campaigner from South Manchester, UK. In the Summer of 2020, Marcus began a campaign, named #endchildfoodpoverty, that would see 1.7 million vulnerable children supported via a £520M Government investment, in a quest to eradicate child hunger from across the UK. Along the way, Marcus has formed a Child Food Poverty Taskforce and launched 'Full Time Meals' - a nationwide food education and cooking project designed to equip all children with a vital life skill, building confidence in the kitchen. In the year working alongside Marcus and the Taskforce, food distribution charity FareShare have distributed 130M meals to the most vulnerable across the UK. In the early stages of the relationship, Marcus was able to raise £20M in financial and food donations for the charity. In July 2020, Marcus received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Manchester becoming the youngest person to receive the accolade in the history of the establishment. In October 2020, he was appointed MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours. In addition, he won a Special Recognition Award at Pride of Britain 2020, was a recipient of the City of Manchester Award, was the inaugural winner of the FIFA Foundation Award, recipient of a Special Award at BBC's Sports Personality of the Year, a recipient of the Football Writers' Association Tribute Award, and was listed on TIME Magazine's '100 Next' list, as well as Forbes 30 Under 30 list. Today, Marcus continues to fight for a better future for the next generation, equalling the playing field for all.

## **About Carl Anka**

Carl Anka is a London-born journalist and broadcaster who believes that everything deep down is a wrestling storyline. He has written for BBC, the Guardian, VICE, NME, GQ and BuzzFeed among other publications online and in print and specialises in writing about pop culture, video games, films and football. He is currently a reporter for sports media group The Athletic.