



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

21 June 2024

Ministers O’Gorman and Humphreys launch the My Little Library Book Bag 2024

Minister Roderic O’Gorman and Minister Heather Humphreys have today (21 June) launched My Little Library Book Bag 2024, which will provide every child starting school with free books and inviting them to join their local library.

The focus of the My Little Library – an initiative under First 5 - is to build strong links between young children, their families and their local library. For the past two years, children leaving the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) pre-school programme and starting primary school were invited to visit their local library to pick up a My Little Library book bag and take the opportunity to join the library.

This has resulted in tens of thousands of children collecting their book bags and joining their local library. In addition to My Little Library, younger children and their families were also invited to their local library pick up a bedtime story book to keep and join the library under the Little Book at Bedtime initiative.

The launch this year follows a successful pilot project in 2023. From 21 June 2024, all children completing the ECCE pre-school programme and starting school this September are invited to visit their library, pick up a My Little Library Book Bag, in Irish or English, and join the library if they are not already members. Book bags are available at the library throughout the summer. All families are welcome to join the library too, if they aren’t already members.

In making the announcement, Minister O’Gorman said:

“I am delighted to announce this new Little Libraries initiative, offering free books to all children starting school, and encouraging them to join their local library. My hope is that this initiative supports children to take those first steps towards a lifelong love of reading.

“We know from the pilot project that 99% of parents and library staff supported the book gifting from the library becoming an annual initiative. The strength of this response coupled with my own belief in the importance of stories and books for young children means I am pleased to ensure My Little Library will now be run every year.”

Minister Humphreys said today:

"I am pleased that my Department is providing support for the continuation of My Little Library. I know that the library staff across the country share my enthusiasm for connecting young families with our excellent national library service.

"The gift of reading to and with children cannot be overestimated. It not only supports connection between parents and their children but also promotes early language and literacy development which is crucial for children's success in early learning and beyond."

Offaly Chief Executive and Chair of the Libraries Development Committee, Anna Marie Delaney said:

"Local authority public libraries look forward to welcoming all children starting school and their families into their local libraries to collect their book bags and discover the delights of being a library member. Reading is so beneficial for children's development and for supporting them as they grow. We hope that our Little Library members and their families will come back regularly to refill their book bags and take part in all the events and activities we have on offer."

This initiative was originally a pilot funded by Dormant Accounts Funding. The mainstreaming of the Little Library Initiative fulfils a commitment in *First 5: a Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019-2028)*.

My Little Library was independently evaluated with the results showing extremely positive feedback from children and their families and from library staff and early years educators. Parents reported that the book bag supported their children's transition to primary school and gave them a new reason to visit and join the library.

-ENDS-

Note for Editors:

- The My Little Library book bag is now available in local libraries for all children starting primary school in September.
- The initiative will be available annually.
- Books are available in Irish and English.
- Videos of the Irish books being read are available on Libraries Ireland website.

First 5 (published in 2018) is a ten-year Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families. This Strategy works to enhance early childhood and make a significant contribution to the lives of young children, their families and society over the short, medium and longer term. More information can be found on the First 5 website at: www.first5.gov.ie/

This initiative is an action of the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3f341-towards-a-new-literacy-numeracy-and-digital-literacy/>

And: The Library is the Place: Information, Recreation, Inspiration - National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027. <https://www.gov.ie/en/news/e6d8e-the-library-is-the-place-new-five-year-strategy-for-public-libraries-unveiled/>

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