

His for Harry

A VISION FOR CHANGE

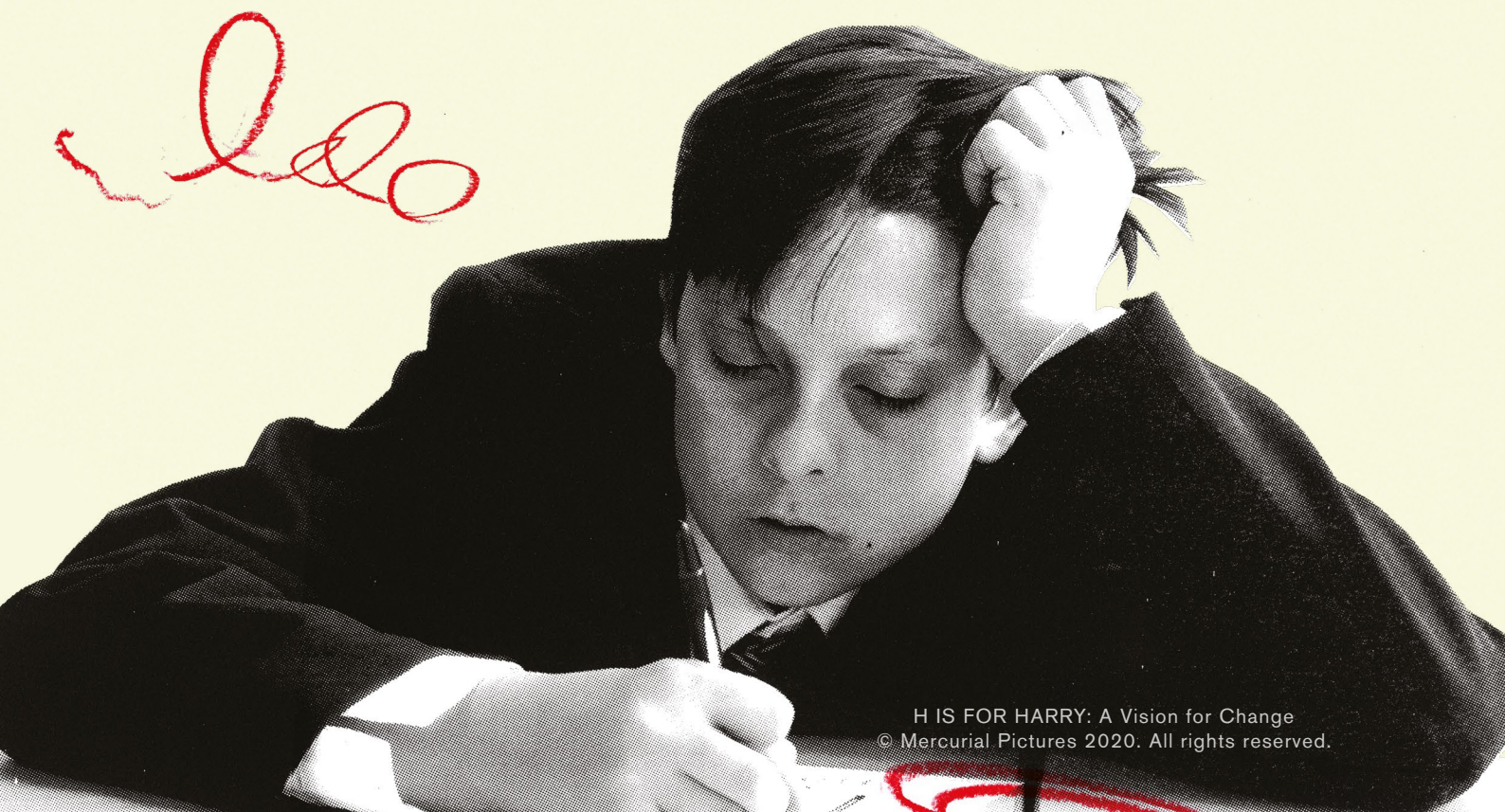
What does it take to change a child's life?

H IS FOR HARRY is an inspirational documentary which charts the progress of 11 year old Harry who arrives at secondary school in suburban London unable to read or write. It was released in the UK to great acclaim in 2019. The film follows Harry over two years as he fights to improve academically, overturn the illiteracy in his family and begin to believe in a different future for himself.

Harry and his family's experience of disadvantage and illiteracy is far from unique. Similar stories are unfolding in towns and cities all around us, fuelled by poverty and inequality.

H IS FOR HARRY is one story that shows that the change we need for our children is possible. Together we can help make a difference to thousands of children and young people like Harry.

Children and young people's experiences and perspectives are too often omitted from debates about education and wider society. How can this be right when they are living and breathing the critical issues that schools and educational settings are facing today?



**“What are you going to be doing
when you’re 25, Harry?”**

- Sophie, Secondary School Teacher

“Trying to stay alive...”

- Harry

A VISION FOR CHANGE

The H IS FOR HARRY **Vision for Change**, and wider campaign supported by the **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**, is a call for action to unlock opportunities for all our children.

The film tells a new story about:

- The impact of illiteracy on children’s futures;
- The complex issues that lock families in poverty and hold children back from achieving their potential;
- The need for schools, education and communities to work together to drive change;
- The need to listen to children and young people.

**Help make a difference by joining our
growing community of activism.**

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is an independent social change organisation whose vision is for a prosperous and poverty free UK. We believe that people with direct experience of poverty should be at the heart of our influencing efforts and the design of policy solutions. We are working with the media, filmmakers and other storytellers to improve the representation of people and places trapped in poverty, in order to expand public understanding of the issues and build public and political support for action on poverty.

For more information visit: www.jrf.org.uk

A - Abolish illiteracy

“It’s just repeat, repeat, repeat. My dad’s had it, I had it, and now my son’s gonna have it.”

- Grant, Harry’s Dad

Illiteracy that is experienced within families is more widespread than we realise. It is ingrained in the fabric of British society with whole families being held back from achieving a better life.

Illiteracy helps to perpetuate unemployment, homelessness, crime – and can drastically lower life expectancy.

Real social change cannot happen without confronting this core issue in schools, at home and with families, freeing future generations from illiteracy’s grip.

- **1 in 5** children in England cannot read well by the age of 11.¹
- **1 in 8** disadvantaged children in the UK don’t own a single book.²
- **18% of 15 year olds** in England and Scotland, **15% of 15 year olds** in Northern Ireland and **21% of 15 year olds** in Wales do not have a minimum level of literacy proficiency.³
- **Only half** of children in the UK enjoy writing.⁴
- Children born into communities with the most serious literacy challenges have some of the **lowest life expectancies**.⁵
- Children with reading difficulties are at greater risk of developing **mental health problems** later in life, including depression, anxiety, behavioural problems, anger and aggression.⁶

1 The Reading Agency, Reading Facts: <https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1/>

2 National Literacy Trust Report December 2017: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/news/1-8-disadvantaged-children-uk-dont-own-single-book/>

3 The Reading Agency, Reading Facts: <https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1/>

4 National Literacy Trust website: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/information/what-is-literacy/>

5 National Literacy Trust website: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/information/what-is-literacy/>

6 The Reading Agency, Reading Facts: <https://readingagency.org.uk/about/impact/002-reading-facts-1/>

B - Begin with the voice of children, young people and families



“When I’m older, I don’t want to be the person who’s left out, living on the streets. Basically the aim is for me to have a better life than my dad.”

- Harry

As a society, we believe that every child counts. Yet the narrative around educational disadvantage and poverty is too often negative.

Children like Harry don’t want to lag behind their peers. They want progress, positive futures and a job they can be proud of. We must ensure that important debates at national and grassroots levels do not become disconnected from the direct experience of children.

A politician in Westminster, a business owner in Southampton or a parent in Bolton will engage more with this topic by hearing directly from children and young people themselves. Stories like Harry’s resonate powerfully and can be profound catalysts for change.

4.1 million children are living in poverty, a rise of 500,000 since 2011/12

In 2017/18, there were 14 million children in poverty after housing costs. Of these:

- **8.6m children** were in working households (i.e. someone in the household is in work)
- **7.8m children** were in working families (i.e. a resident parent or guardian is in work)

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

C - Champion early intervention

“We have had children come to us this year in Year 7 [aged 11] who can’t tell the time, can’t tie their own shoelaces and struggle to spell their own name.”

- Rebecca, Secondary Headteacher,
Reach Academy Feltham

All children deserve the best start. Our background should not dictate how well we do in life. It’s not right that children growing up in poorer communities do not achieve the same educational outcomes as those who do not. It doesn’t have to be this way.

Early intervention transforms children’s lives and such services need investment given the crucial role they can play supporting families and identifying children with developmental difficulties.

The 2019 House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology report on Early Intervention stated: “The Government should make early intervention and childhood adversity a priority, and set out a clear national strategy to empower and encourage local authorities to deliver effective, sustainable and evidence-based early intervention.”⁷

However, a recent National Children’s Bureau (NCB) open letter highlighted that in the past decade, spending on early intervention services fell by 49% while spending on statutory late intervention services rose by 12%.⁸

7 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee Evidence-based early years intervention report, 2018: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/506/506.pdf>

8 NCB, Open letter to political party leaders from 147 children’s charities and organisations, 2019: <https://www.ncb.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/attachment/news/Open%20letter%20to%20party%20>

D - Deliver support all-through a child's life

**“Dunno what’s gonna happen next year.
Doesn’t matter where I go. Where I don’t go.
Life is just life.”**

- Harry

A lack of social mobility hinders children and young people in many different ways, not just academic achievement.

A 2020 poll from the Social Mobility Commission highlighted that young people have a particularly pessimistic outlook.⁹ Only a third of 18 to 24-year-olds believe that everyone in Britain today had a fair chance to progress, compared with almost half of those aged 65 and over.

We need a collective vision for continuously unlocking opportunities for every child and young person, no matter what their age or circumstances.

We can unlock opportunities for children and young people trapped in poverty through focused and specialised support, defining them by their potential, rather than their poverty.

⁹ Social Mobility Commission, Social mobility barometer poll results 2019 report:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-barometer-poll-results-2019>



E - End the blame narratives and show compassion

“If I didn’t fight to get him in that school, he would have gone down the road of not good.”

- Grant, Harry’s Dad

Significant, lasting societal change takes time and effort. We face a complex, systemic issue to which there is no easy answer.

It is common to look for a scapegoat: the parent, the school, the local authority, central government or even the child. Vilifying individuals or organisations is not going to make the difference that is needed and offers no sustainable solutions.

What is required is a nuanced debate about the issues and deep thinking about why the system is having these tragic outcomes.

Constructive public debate and the making of good policy happens best through showing compassion with those who experience the impact of public policies.



Join our community

With more and more families being swept into poverty because of low pay, high housing costs and cuts to social security, we need to ensure all our children have the best chance to get on in life, whatever their circumstances.

The H IS FOR HARRY outreach campaign is a call to action for parents, carers, teachers, children, young people, community leaders and policymakers to help make the changes needed to improve educational disadvantage.

It aims to ignite discussion, drive social action and inspire thousands of 'Harry's' and their families so that they CAN succeed at school with the right support.

What you can do to make a difference

1. ATTEND A H IS FOR HARRY SCREENING OR HOST YOUR OWN

Screen **H IS FOR HARRY** at your organisation, school, theatre, local authority, library, university or community centre to raise awareness. Why not invite key individuals in your area such as local MPs, councillors, mayor etc.?

Download the H IS FOR HARRY screening guide and CPD toolkit from our website here: www.hisforharry.com/takeaction

This toolkit accompanies the film and is jam-packed with tips and advice to help you spark debate and action following the screening.

H IS FOR HARRY continues to screen at a myriad of cinemas, conferences and festivals, both nationally and internationally. Find out more at: www.hisforharry.com/watch

2. RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT H IS FOR HARRY AND THE CAMPAIGN

Share the Vision for Change with local schools, community groups, churches, local leaders as well as charities that focus on education, poverty and improving life chances.

Contribute your learnings and insights by completing a short online form at: www.hisforharry.com/takeaction

This will help us make more impact at national and grassroots level.

Spread the word on **Facebook** and **Twitter** @HisforHarryFilm #hisforharry

3. KEEP UP-TO-DATE WITH H IS FOR HARRY ACTIVITY

Make sure you are the first to hear about our work by [signing up to receive email updates](#).

Over 2020 we will be driving forward a range of activities including:

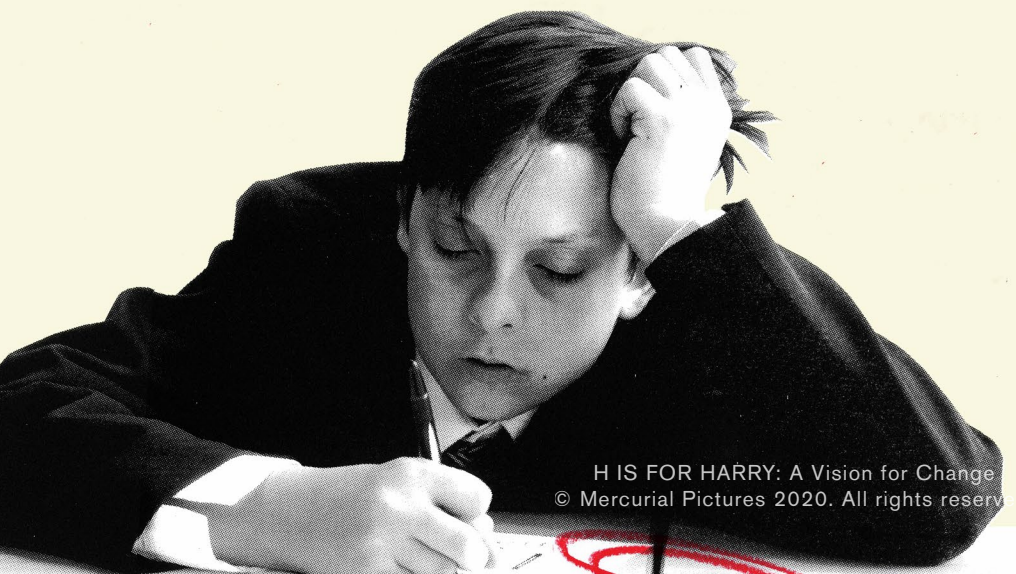
- Growing partnerships with charities, community initiatives, think tanks and research organisations around key H IS FOR HARRY themes, including early intervention, literacy, inclusion and SEND etc.
- Seeking a UK broadcasting partner to show the film and partner on outreach and advocacy. This follows successful international screenings in Sweden, Canada and Spain.
- Engaging with MPs, parliamentarians, committees and All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) to further prioritise children and young people's lived experiences in policy-making. This builds on an Early Day Motion and mention in a House of Commons debate alongside the film being used as a training resource within the Department of Education.

Sign up for email updates: www.hisforharry.com/takeaction

Contact the team at info@hisforharry.com

Find out more about Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Talking About Poverty project, run in partnership with the Framework Institute, at: www.jrf.org.uk/our-work/talking-about-poverty

Help make a difference by joining our growing community of activism.



H is for Harry