



# Blether

Adult learning materials

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Book Week Scotland 2019

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Resource created by Gowan  
Calder

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**Scottish  
Book Trust**  
inspiring readers and writers

# Blether: resource pack for adult learners

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## Background

As part of Book Week Scotland 2019, Scottish Book Trust are inviting members of the Scottish public to submit short personal stories, poems, letters, diary entries and comic strip illustrations inspired by the theme Blether.

What do you think of when you hear the word Blether? For some, it's a comforting chat with a good pal. For some, it's someone spraffing a lot of nonsense. For some, it's a noun and a person who's prone to endless chatter or a bit of a gossip. But to the Scots a blether is above all a means of communicating with our community at large and rarely seen as something to avoid...

Have you ever formed a lasting friendship that began with a wee daily blether across the fence, on your dog walk or at the water cooler? Have you ever had a chat that has changed your life? Are you a blether? Has your love of a natter ever landed you in hot water or has it led to something rather lovely? Or has there been someone in your life that you used to blether with who is no longer here? What would you tell them if you had the chance?

We read to know we are not alone, so why not share your blethers with us and allow us to smile, laugh or cry a little in recognition and maybe have a wee blether about it too? We would like to help you encourage your learners to write their stories down and share them on our website. These guidance notes are here to help you to help them submit their work in whatever form they feel comfortable with – verbatim dialogue, letters, prose, poetry or even comic strips. We believe everyone has a voice and a story to tell and are actively seeking pieces of every length and form which highlight the human need to communicate with one another.

We welcome entries in Gaelic and Scots as well as English. If any of your learners would like to submit in a different language, please get in touch with Nyla at [nyla.ahmad@scottishbooktrust.com](mailto:nyla.ahmad@scottishbooktrust.com) to discuss how to go about this.

Our favourite pieces of writing will be published in a print book for Book Week Scotland 2019 as part of our national celebration of books and reading. The resulting book will showcase the different ways that the people of Scotland have chosen to respond to the theme.

We wish to encourage people to respond to the theme in whatever way they find it inspires them and are aware that life experiences can be complex and challenging as well as humorous or light-hearted. We would like to include a range of tone in the submissions we receive but may choose not to include any work that may prove hurtful to others, difficult for our readers to engage with or includes language or opinions that some may find offensive.

All pieces of writing submitted will appear online at Scottish Book Trust and a selection will be published, alongside commissioned authors' work, in an e-anthology entitled Blether. Please refer to [scottishbooktrust.com/reading/blether/submit-a-blether-story](http://scottishbooktrust.com/reading/blether/submit-a-blether-story) in advance of submitting your entries. Entries can be submitted online or by post. All entries must be received by the closing date of 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019. For further details about how to enter, go to page 24.

## Supporting adult learners to write creatively

At The Scottish Book Trust we believe that everyone has a voice and a story to tell – regardless of background or experience. This year's theme, *Blether*, is particularly inclusive as conversation and communication is at the heart of all our interpersonal relationships. We hope to enable adult learners to create pieces that will 'speak' to our readers about the human condition and how important even the slightest of conversations can prove to be. We hope that the writing submitted will evoke laughter, gasps and perhaps even tears in our readers and encourage them to share their own stories of conversations they have had or wished they had had. As befits the theme, we hope the following guidance notes and writing activities will inspire lively conversations and encourage adult learners share their experiences in writing.

We are fully aware that some learners may find the task of writing daunting or challenging and would encourage less confident or able participants to share spoken stories and complete the exercises verbally. In these instances, a scribe can be assigned to any learner who is not able to write their stories directly for any reason.

Inclusivity is at the heart of this project and we have previously included pieces that celebrate the adage 'less is more'! A post-it note or a concisely worded text can tell a whole story and we welcome short submissions as well as lengthier pieces.

We also hope that participants will enjoy the process so feel free to use the guidance notes and activities in a way that is most relevant to your learners. Use them as a jumping off point, encourage digressions, adapt them if necessary or choose not to use some. The activities are devised to inspire participation in whatever way appeals to the users and to encourage everyone to share a story that will inspire many further conversations and *blethers*...

## Activity ideas for adult learners



### Warm up exercises

#### 1) Getting the Blethers Started

Is there a difference between a 'blether' and a 'catch-up'? A 'gossip' and a 'quick word'? The words people use to begin a conversation can fill us with anticipation, (*Have I got news for you!*), or strike fear into our hearts, (*Mrs Matthews, can I have a word?*) As a group, have a discussion about all the different words there are to describe a conversation and how your learners feel when they hear particular words.

Eg; Blether = a warm and friendly catch-up

A talk = something serious and possibly unwelcome needs to be discussed

Split your learners into pairs and ask them to think about the following descriptions of conversations;

- a) A catch-up
- b) A gossip
- c) A blether

d) A word

Ask them to consider what kind of situations might arise from someone suggesting the words above and to jot down anything they find interesting, funny or intriguing. Eg;

*'Ah, Miss Brown – may I have a quick word please...'*

*'Oh lordy, we need a catch-up! I haven't seen you since John...'*

*'Now, I'm not one to gossip but...'*

Once each pair has had a chance to discuss the questions with each other, they can then share some of their answers with the rest of the group if they are happy to do so. Make notes to refer back to or supply post-its and ask the group to write down their words and 'definitions' to share on a collective wall or board.

Eg; **Chin-wag** – a gossipy, informal chat.

**Deep and meaningful** – an important, necessary conversation



## 2) It Takes Two

Once your group have had a chance to discuss the different *tones* that are suggested by different words for a conversation, challenge them to create an a/b dialogue of ten lines or more. They may want to pursue an idea of their own or they may find it more interesting to tackle an idea suggested by another pairing. (If you have a post-it wall, they could select an option from there) They may wish to work alone or see what happens when you cannot predict, (as is often the case in life), how the other person might respond. You may also wish to add texture by getting the learners to suggest unusual or interesting places or situations where a dialogue might take place and to post these ideas too.

Eg; **A lift, a funeral, a toilet cubicle, the cinema, a windy heath etc**

How does the physical space further affect the conversation?

Eg; A CATCH -UP at a FUNERAL

- a) (*whispering*) Hiya... how are you?
- b) (*whispering*) No bad, aye. You?
- a) Aye, no bad. Did you hear, I won two grand on the lottery?
- b) Naw!
- a) Sssssshhhh! Aye, we're getting a conservatory done.
- b) Nice
- a) Aye. And going to Lanzerote for two weeks...
- b) *Our father who art in heaven...*
- a) I'll tell you later, at the hotel. *Let it be done on earth...*

The learners may then wish to share their work but the exercise may also be used to promote further discussion. Have you had a life-changing conversation in an unusual setting? Has an important moment or conversation been disrupted by something entirely unexpected or outwith of your control? Or have you had a beautiful or meaningful exchange in the unlikelyst of situations?

Learners may wish to submit a piece detailing a meaningful conversation they have had in their own lives. Encourage them to describe the context – the geography or setting, the atmosphere and the people involved – as well as re-creating the dialogue.



### **3) It Could Happen to You**

Though we wish to encourage the writers to be descriptive and creative in their depictions of events, it is important that submissions to Blether are true stories with the writer at the heart of them. Some learners may be interested in submitting a piece in the first person – as a monologue, a diary entry or a short story.

As a group encourage your learners to think about memorable conversations they have had, the people they most like to blether with or even a telephone call that has stayed with them.

If the learners are happy to share, ask them to tell the group to describe a moment inspired by one of these jumping off points.

- **When the phone rang I was...**

*in the bath. I jumped out to grab my mobile and when they told me I had got the job, I was standing butt naked in my hallway.*

- **The nicest thing anyone ever said to me...**

*was when I was sitting on a bus feeling terrible because my boyfriend had just dumped me. This old lady smiled at me and said, 'goodness, aren't you beautiful'? It absolutely made my day.*

- **The worst thing anyone ever said to me...**

*was 'they've asked not to be put on shift with you because you're such a downer since your dad died'*

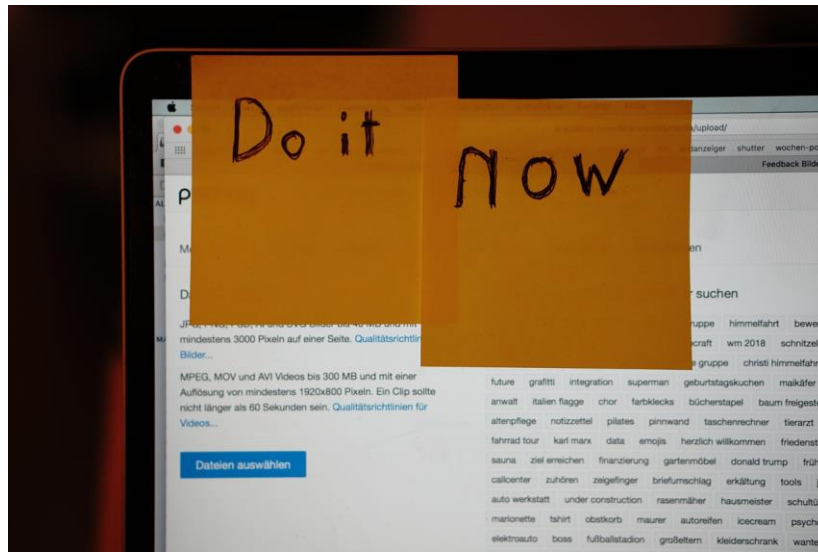
- **My favourite person to blether with is...**

*My best friend because she never goes home until she's made me laugh and cry!*

Encourage brevity rather than lengthy stories – a brief precis or description of a conversation or a moment. If anyone is inspired by a recollection or memory and wants to develop it into a piece for submission you can then ask them to consider the conversation in more detail – again considering creating a sense of setting, atmosphere and tone for the reader.

Some elements of this exercise might contain triggers for your learners and cause them to remember upsetting or unpleasant incidents. If you know of any sensitivities you might wish to focus only on positive jumping-off points or create others that have the similar effect of encouraging participation or inspiration.

#### 4) It's Good to Talk



We've all done it - avoided a difficult conversation by leaving a passive-aggressive post-it on the fridge. These notes can tell a whole story in a few words or can escalate into epic dramas. Have you ever conducted a conversation / navigated a relationship by text, fax, email or note that has lost something in translation or led to a misunderstanding? All the hash tags and winky faces in the world can't quite convey hurt, anger, love or humour as well as a human face can. Perhaps it would have been better to actually talk...?

a) Write a single post-it or 'monologue' that tells a whole story. What does it tell us about the person who wrote it and why they wrote it?

*To Whoever ate my salted caramel cheesecake. Thank you. Just because Slimming world allows me a treat from time to time doesn't mean I should have it. A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips! #shakira #yourhipswon'tlie*

b) Write a series of post-its or 'dialogue' that spans the arc of a relationship or event. (This can be done as or solo exercise or in pairs)

*To Whoever ate my salted caramel cheesecake. Thank you. Just because Slimming world allows me a treat from time to time doesn't mean I should have it. A moment on the lips, a lifetime on the hips! #shakira #yourhipswon'tlie*

*Hey, you're welcome. I saw you browsing party dresses at your desk the other Day while I was actually working. I like the slinky red one. Happy to help you Fit into it.*

- c) Have each member of the group write an anonymous post-it. Stick them up and then discuss what possible narratives lie beneath the seemingly banal comments.

*Hey gang – I'm not your servant. Love Mum.*

- d) Give each member of the group an anonymous post-it and challenge them to write the story behind it.

*I'm sorry – I had to go.*

These exercises are intended to help with the discipline of writing – choosing words or phrases that convey meaning succinctly and learning the art of distilling language down to a potent punch of emotion or insight.

It might also be useful for learners who are daunted by the thought of writing something longer – encouraging them to create a piece, however brief. Or be an opportunity for those learners who might wish to write in partnership by enabling them to inspire each other or share their skills.

## 5) Tiny Dynamite



When we're blethering, we don't necessarily consider the words we use or think of their impact. Some words are like little 'bombs'. They may seem innocuous but they can cause sudden explosions of meaning or emotion or detonate a whole new conversational journey.

As a group – discuss words or phrases that evoke particular emotions or thoughts. Words that can wound or heal, depress you or uplift your soul.

We are not all blessed with the ability to pack our conversation with witty rejoinders or profound wisdom but when writing we have the luxury of time to consider the words that lit the fuse that led to an explosion or to fill our work with tiny dynamite.

**Word Bombs:**



***'DEVASTATING'***

***'fuming'***

***'OVER'***

***'vindicated'***

***'DELIGHTED'***

***'overwhelmed'***

***'MOODSWINGS'***

***'cancer'***

***'JOYOUS'***

***'NEWS'***

***'Beginning'***

## Phrase or Fuse?

### Tick tock, tick tock...

*'I saw you with out with the kids the other day.'*

*'I know – I waved!'*

*'Yeah – I thought to myself, **Not Waving but Drowning**, hahahaha.'*

### BOOM!

Acting as a scribe, write down favourite words or phrases that the group might want to share with each other. Some of the best descriptive words and phrases are personal to an individual or family and many of these might be Scots or slang.

*'We used to enjoy a guid blether bit she pure dingied me in Tescos the ither day...'*

Some great words or phrases can be also 'invented' by an individual or family and become part of their lexography even if they draw confused looks from those outside the circle.

**Eg; I love you to a Graham.** (*A Graham, named after Ronald Graham, is an immense number – too big to write down and therefore the most you can love anybody!*)

**Funpire.** (*Someone who sucks the fun out of a room or occasion. 'Oh, don't invite, Graham, he's such a funpire'.)*

This might be a good opportunity to discuss metaphor and simile too. Why say someone is crazy when you could describe them as 'mad as a box of frogs'?

Help the group create a dictionary or glossary of terms that inspire them to be imaginative and brave in their word choices when writing their stories for the Book Trust. It's worth noting that there is no definite way of spelling certain words in differing Scots' dialects and if they choose to write in one, all that matters is consistency and context! Challenge them to surprise and delight their readers with words and phrases they find so irresistible they start using them themselves...

## What to write



### 1) Our Words

Tell us the story behind a word or phrase that is unique or special to your family. How did it become part of your family lexicon? Did a child mispronounce a name or word? Did someone mishear something and make you all laugh so hard that you still tell the story or use the word or phrase with one another to describe perfectly a feeling or a situation that needs no explanation and is instantly understood by your nearest and dearest.

*My son came to live with us when he was five. He had lovely foster carers before us who used many terms of endearment and words to ensure that he knew he was loved. But somehow they felt insincere when we used them - as if they were in quotation marks. It's hard to explain but 'I love you to the moon and back' felt awkward and the words seem to fall like dusty bricks from my mouth. As time went on and my feelings for my child became more profound, I couldn't resist tinkering with the formula... Trying little variations that still emphasised my love but felt more personal to me and him. It sounds ridiculous, I suppose, but the words we had already didn't seem enough somehow. It's like technically creating a nickname for someone instead of it organically emerging... We might not like our nicknames but we can't deny them because they are not 'chosen' they just somehow form out of the porridge of life. Anyway, my son is a competitive little soul and when I told him prosaically that he simply couldn't love me more than I loved him, he announced he 'loved me to infinity'. Ha! My other half then, equally prosaically, told our boy there was a number so immense it couldn't really be described or written down. It was called a Graham after the mathematician who had 'discovered' it. Nothing gives me greater joy in life than the sight of him speeding off*



*on his scooter – late for school again - and tossing a casual, ‘Bye mum, love you to a Graham’ over his shoulder as he goes. Bonkers to the passersby. Beautiful to me.*

Or

*Nothing makes us laugh harder in my family than the tale of how Dad walked up behind a woman that he thought was me on a busy railway platform and scared the crap out of her by whispering, ‘Herro Baruney’ ... What on earth does that mean? Why did he say it? Well, it’s a long story...*



## 2) Wish You Were Here

Is there someone who you used to tell everything to that is no longer around to talk to? Or someone who you simply *can't* talk to - out of fear or love, anger or embarrassment?

What would you tell them if you could? Why not write them a letter? Perhaps it's a best friend who is no longer nearby;

*Dear Ellie,*

*I know I said I was thrilled for you and I am glad that you are finally getting to live your New Zealand dream but I should also have told you how much I'd miss you. The other day Derek was telling one of those godawful off-colour jokes to Sheena and I turned round to catch your eye and you weren't bloody there. It's pretty miserable without you, TBH, and some days when I'm sitting there at my desk I want to kill you for leaving...Angus asked me out the other day. Yes – **that** Angus!!!! And all my mum said was, 'well don't go out with him if you don't like him'. I mean, whuuuuuut?*

Or a beloved friend or relative that is no longer with us;

*Dear Nana,*

*Remember when I used to come round after school and you would say, 'Hello honey-bun', what's the goss?' And I'd go 'nuthin'" and then somehow you'd make me talk and be telling you all the gross, embarrassing things that were going on with like how Robbie in P5 called me a Fae China and I said 'it's **vag-ina, you idiot**' and he near died! I can't believe it's ten years since you've gone. I've got so much goss you wouldn't believe. Like how I met Robbie in a pub in the Grassmarket and he's dead nice now and laughed his head off at the 'Fae China' story and how he asked me out and how we're talking about moving in together and I don't know how to tell mum in case shes freaks after everything that happened with Tommy...Which reminds me - I **have** to tell you about Tommy..*

Or an ex someone or other that still makes you seethe when you think of them;

*Dear Alan,*

*Know what? You were right, I was a nag. I can see that. But you know what else? I'm not one now and that is because I live with someone who doesn't think they're a total hero for washing the dishes once in a blue moon...*

Enjoy the luxury of getting it all out without interruption or telling someone what you *really* think or simply re-connecting and remembering someone dear.



### 3) Life-changing Chats

Has a seemingly simple chat changed your life? Has a casual daily blether with an acquaintance grown into a meaningful friendship? Has a piece of gossip ever been so revelatory that nothing will ever be the same?

Tell us the story of a conversation that has literally changed your life or describe the moments that led up to the most important thing someone has ever said to you.

*He was guddling in the fridge, trying to find a beer and he was acting weird. He didn't even look up – he just said, 'listen Dawn, we need to talk'. I thought, 'great, here we go again' and I felt that familiar lonely chasm yawn at my feet but just as I was about to fall into it he said, 'I love you and I think we should get married'. I honestly didn't mean to laugh but his head was still in the fridge and all I saw was his bum asking me to marry him! We both laugh about it now – twenty years later.*

Or

*The first time I met Paula, her dog and mine were having a square go. We both had rowdy dogs but over the weeks they became the best of pals, tearing around the field behind the new houses like a couple of mad things. So I ended up walking less and less and standing around more and more with Paula laughing at their nonsense. God, she had a hard time of it in life but she was a right giggle. We had absolutely nothing in common bar our two loony dogs and a need to laugh at something or we'd cry...I felt strangely nervous the day I casually suggested we should swap phone numbers so we could text when we were taking the dog out...*

Or

*The day I decided to stop gossiping once and for all was when I saw Karen's face when I idly mentioned that Anne was having an affair with a mysterious married man...*

#### 4) Life is Happens in Dialogue



***‘Dialogue is absolutely life. The whole of life happens in dialogue.’ Ali Smith***

In *True Short Story*, Ali Smith recounts a conversation she overhears in a cafe;

*I listened to what they were saying. They were talking about literature, which happens to be interesting to me, though it wouldn’t interest a lot of people. The younger man was talking about the difference between the novel and the short story.*

*The novel, he was saying, was a flabby old whore.*

*A flabby old whore! the older man said looking delighted.*

*She was serviceable, roomy, warm and familiar, the younger was saying, but really a bit used up, really a bit too slack and loose.*

*Slack and loose! the older said laughing.*

*Whereas the short story, by comparison, was a nimble goddess, a slim nymph. Because so few people had mastered the short story she was still in very good shape.*

*Very good shape! The older man was smiling from ear to ear at this.*

And then goes on to remember an ensuing phone call with her friend;

*Hi, I said. It’s me.*

*Are you on your mobile? she said. Don't, Ali, it's expensive on this system. I'll call you back.*

*No worries, I said. It's just a quickie. Listen. Is the short story a goddess and a nymph and is the novel an old whore...? I told her about the conversation I'd overheard.*

*I was thinking of Diana because she was a bit nymphy, I suppose, I said. I can't think of a goddess who's like a nymph. All the goddesses that come into my head are, like, Kali, or Sheel-Na-Gig. Or Aphrodite, she was pretty tough. All that deer-slaying. Didn't she slay deer?*

*Why is the short story like a nymph? Kasia said. Sounds like a dirty joke. Ha.*

*OK, I said. Come on then. Why is the short story like a nymph?*

*I'll think about it, she said.*

Do you have an ear for dialogue? Write a True Short Story with dialogue at the heart of it. Great dialogue gives the reader a sense of different voices, allowing us to visualise the speakers and determine who is speaking with only small references to who is speaking at any given time. (Many writers do not write dialogue in inverted commas but rely on a well-placed *I said* or *he was saying*.)

Tell us about an overheard conversation. Paint the scene. Where were you? Did you see who was speaking or did you have to picture them? What were *you* doing when this conversation caught your ear and why did it resonate with you? Was it funny or sad or did it somehow capture a wee snapshot of the human condition?

Or

Write about a conversation you have had that has stayed with you. Focus on the words that were spoken - setting the scene and helping us to visualise the speakers as much as possible through dialogue.

Or

Allow us to 'overhear' a memorable conversation you have had by create a dialogue entirely in the present tense without any reference to who is speaking when or to whom.

*You're being impossible.*

*I'm being impossible?*

*You always cast this up – every time I talk about going on holiday...*



## 5) Two-voice Poetry

Why not create a Blether together in the form of a two-voice poem? Two-voice poems are designed to be performed or spoken aloud but could also be submitted as a written piece. The format is simple. Voice one appears in one column, voice two in another and a central column denotes any lines that are intended to be spoken in unison. There can also be moments of ‘disagreement’ or conflict when the two voices speak at once but *not* in unison.

| #Voice 1                     | Spoken Together     | #Voice 2                     |
|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| I love                       |                     | I hate                       |
| We should perform something  | Speaking in Public! | We should write something    |
| As long as I am centre stage | Together.           | As long as it is on the page |
|                              | It'll be fun.       |                              |

There are many great examples of two-voice poems being performed on You Tube for anyone who would like to perform the pieces and record them for the online use. For those - like voice two in the example above – who'd rather not be ‘seen’, consider;

- 1) Submitting in text form alone
- 2) Record your own voices or those of friends and use illustrations, pictures or simple images of the words rather than a video of the speakers.
- 3) Create a cartoon of yourselves. There are a variety of free downloads available online such as Comic Life which allow people to upload images to storyboard a comic.  
[comiclife.com](http://comiclife.com).

## Submission guidelines

We would like your learners to submit their short writing on the theme of Blether. Writing can take the form of a story, letter, poem, diary entry or comic strip. Pieces of writing should be no more than 1,000 words in length although we welcome much shorter pieces too. We would like your learners to respond to the theme in any way that they feel inspired – from a story related in dialogue to a conversation no longer than a haiku or a post-it note.

Scottish Book Trust may publish some of the submitted writing in the book we are compiling to celebrate Book Week Scotland 2019. We hope to discover voices that inspire and embolden others to write too. There are also a few loose rules - and some hard and fast – that will unify the work and best illustrate the aims of the project.

- The story should be true.
- It should be personal to the storyteller.
- The theme Blether is designed to inspire the writer to communicate with the reader and engage them with a story that is meaningful, funny or memorable. However, the very word infers that the true story might involve people other than the writer so we encourage sensitivity and discretion in these instances.
- We wish to engage as wide an audience as possible with this project so, though we hope to see a wide variety of writing styles and tones, we ask that you consider our readership. 'Bad language' is not frowned upon per se but certain words are alienating to many readers!
- Any literary format is encouraged. We welcome entries in Scots and Gaelic as well as English. If one of your learners has written their piece in a different language, please contact us before submitting so that we can discuss how best to proceed.
- Entries must be *strictly* no more than 1,000 words.
- One entry per person.

Please encourage learners to submit their writing to the project. They might be selected to feature in the e-book we compile for Book Week Scotland. Workshop leaders/tutors/support workers are encouraged to prepare their own piece for inclusion in the project as well.





### **How to submit:**

Entries can be submitted on Scottish Book Trust's website or by post. All entries must be received by the closing date, 5 June 2019. Visit [scottishbooktrust.com/reading/blether/submit-a-blether-story](http://scottishbooktrust.com/reading/blether/submit-a-blether-story).

Complete the online form and submit it to us electronically or print it out and post it to us at the following address:

FAO Nyla Ahmad, Scottish Book Trust, Sandeman House, Trunk's Close, 55 High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1SR.

## Other things to consider

### **Mental health and wellbeing**

As always with our annual campaign, people will interpret the theme in a wide range of ways. You should be aware that this theme may lead people to share very personal and emotionally affecting stories and it is important to be prepared for this. Being prepared to listen to what someone wants to tell you is a very powerful supportive act in itself, however you may also need to be prepared to point people towards organisations that provide specific, professional support.

We will be providing links to a range of support organisations on the Rebel section of our website – this will be a useful resource for anyone who might need more support than you are able to provide. Please ensure that you deal sensitively with any information that is shared with you, and remember that there is a possibility that this is the first time your learner has told anyone else their story. Always be honest, open and clear about your role as a literacy support worker.

### **Ground rules**

Because we specifically ask participants to share true, personal stories, it is important that your learners feel their experience is valued and heard. As with any wide-ranging theme, you may find that a variety of experiences and very different perspectives are discussed. In order to ensure that everyone's contributions are heard and respected, you may wish to establish some agreed ground rules before the group begin the activities. These rules may include:

- Respect – give undivided attention to the person who has the floor (permission to speak)
- Confidentiality – what we share in this group will remain in this group. If someone wishes to share their story further, for example by submitting it to Rebel, that is their decision
- Non-judgmental approach – we can disagree with another person's point of view without putting that person down
- Sensitivity to diversity – we will remember that people in the group may differ in age, race, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender

expression, ability, and/or parental or relationship status and we will be careful about making insensitive or careless remarks

Of course, if you have your own Group Agreement which the learners are familiar with, it's fine to stick with those guidelines. Or you can feel free to create your own, new Group Agreement that suits your learners.

Have a good time – when sharing stories it's fine to have a good time!