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PRESS RELEASE

## **READING FORCE HITS THE ROAD TO REACH SERVICE CHILDREN**

**Reading Force, the fun shared reading initiative for Armed Forces families in the UK and overseas, is pleased to announce its first travelling Roadshow, with a dynamic duo – award winning children’s author Tom Palmer, and Jim Sells of The National Literacy Trust.**

The Roadshow will bring Reading Force to Service children and their families, visiting ten schools across the country from Plymouth to North Yorkshire during April and May. Each of the ten schools has a majority of Service children. Tom Palmer, the award winning football and rugby author, will entertain and involve children in a fun-filled event including a penalty shoot-out. This will be followed by an after school action-packed fete for Service children and their families. Every child will be given a signed Tom Palmer book and a Reading Force scrapbook. Fete activities will include a ‘reading selfie’ competition, Great Book Swap, Story Challenge, and the chance for parents and children to speak with Tom, Jim, and Reading Force staff about reading and sharing books within the family.

Families who take part in Reading Force are encouraged to read the same book, talk about it, and complete a scrapbook with thoughts about the book. Whether families are together at home or separated by deployments and training, taking part in Reading Force helps to improve communication, keep family members close, and help mitigate the stresses of Service family life. Best of all, it’s fun and free for all Service families to take part.

Tom Palmer came up with the idea for the Reading Force Roadshow:

‘Service men and women – and their children – make great sacrifices for me and my family. I feel it is my duty to do something that might help them. I read with my daughter several times a week. We talk about what we read. It is a major part of our relationship. If I can help other families do this – in person and via the internet – it is the least I can do.’

Joining Tom on the Roadshow is Jim Sells, manager of Premier League Reading Stars:

‘I’ve spent over 15 years working in literacy, and until recently was a TA soldier serving with 7 Rifles. The Reading Force Roadshow gives me the chance to bring these two together and I can’t wait to get stuck into delivering these sessions with Tom! I’m sure it’s going to bring a lot of fun to families at these schools with so many children from the Armed Forces, as well as giving parents some great ideas about how they can support their children’s education. Reading together is one of the best ways to help your children, plus it provides really special family time. So we really want to help parents to get involved, and the Reading Force Roadshow is just the right vehicle!’

Schools with Service children nationwide were invited to submit a 100 word bid saying why the Roadshow should come to them. The winning bids highlighted the resilience of Service children in response to the challenges they can face and the benefits they will get from the Roadshow and Reading Force. The Roadshow will entertain and inspire over 1,700 Service children and their families to share books and talk about them.

Each Service child will receive a signed Tom Palmer book, published by Barrington Stoke. Titles include *Combat Zone*, *Over the Line*, *Ghost Stadium*, and *Secret F.C.*

The Reading Force Roadshow is supported by the Arts Council, England and the Armed Forces Covenant LIBOR Fund.

Notes to editors:

1. Reading Force was founded by Dr Alison Baverstock and piloted in Aldershot in 2011. Baverstock was an Army wife for over 30 years, is a mother of four, author, and course leader of the Publishing MA at Kingston University.
2. Reading Force became a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2014.
3. Reading Force is supported by the Armed Forces Covenant LIBOR Fund and Hampshire County Council.
4. Reading Force gives participants a free book to get them started, and has posted them to families all over the UK and overseas. To date, Reading Force has given over 2,000 books.
5. Tom Palmer is the author of football and rugby books for children, published by Puffin Books and Barrington Stoke. He has been short-listed for the Blue Peter Book Award, won the Solihull Children’s Book Award, and the 2014 Leicester Libraries Our Best Book Award. He visits hundreds of schools and libraries every year with his unique Football Reading Game or Rugby Reading Game. [www.tompalmer.co.uk](http://www.tompalmer.co.uk)
6. Jim Sells is the Manager of The National Literacy Trust’s Premier League Reading Stars. Working with the Premier League he invented the high-profile Premier League Reading Stars which has worked with thousands of young people. Jim has developed over 10 years of specialist experience on how to encourage children, particularly boys, to develop a love of reading. In 2012 Jim was shortlisted for the Astrid Lindgren prize for exceptional work to promote reading on the part of children and young people.
7. Quotes from a Reading Force family (more quotes are available on request):

*“When we received our Reading Force scrapbook we thought it was a great opportunity to get together as a family and share a book. Annabelle was very excited about it and we spread it out over a few weekends when Daddy was working away and he joined in using face-time which made it really special.”*

Mummy

*“I enjoyed being able to share a book with my family even though I wasn’t at home. It really made me feel included and I enjoyed hearing Annabelle reading a very tricky book.”* Daddy

8. For more information and to arrange an interview with Tom Palmer, Jim Sells, and/or Alison Baverstock, please contact Hattie Gordon, Communications Manager and Liaison on 07719298333, or email [hattie@readingforce.org.uk](mailto:hattie@readingforce.org.uk)
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