

19th October 2009

Every Child Counts, a campaign to help tackle children's numeracy difficulties, estimated to cost Britain's taxpayers £2.4 billion annually, is being backed by one of the country's leading banks.

Barclays PLC has become one of the first businesses to sign up to this initiative aimed at improving numeracy abilities amongst primary school children. It has pledged £1.4 million to help encourage local businesses to support at least 150 schools and over 6,000 children aged seven improve their maths.

Every Child Counts was being promoted today in Wolverhampton at a reception attended by Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools and Learners, Diana Johnson who is keen to encourage other businesses to get involved in supporting their local school. Diana Johnson commented, "We are fully supportive of any initiative which motivates and engages children to learn and gets results through raising their aspirations. By contributing their time and financial resources, local businesses have the opportunity to put something back into the community by supporting children and their families to reach their full potential."

Barclays' investment will fund specialist teachers who will work with the lowest achieving 5% of seven year olds so that they can catch up with their peers. The 2,600 children taught in the first year of the new national programme made on average 14 months progress on a standardised test of early numeracy, in just over 20 hours of one-to-one teaching over a three month period – that is, over four times the 'normal' rate of progress.

Barclays' support comes after a KPMG report highlighted that the long-term costs of so many children leaving school innumerate could be as high as £44,000 per individual up to the age of 37, making a total bill to taxpayers of £2.4 billion every year. It is part of a £6 million campaign by the Every Child a Chance Trust, an educational charity set up in 2007 to help socially disadvantaged children. This early intervention programme aims to tackle the problem at an early stage, make maths more fun, and to try and avoid young people leaving school without having acquired basic numeracy skills.

Mike Amato, Chief Distribution and Product Officer of Barclays, said: “Every child needs basic numeric skills for survival. Banks in particular are very conscious of this, which is why Barclays has committed to this national campaign in support of Every Child Counts. It also makes good economic sense to invest in our children at an early age so that the gains made can enhance learning and avoid any costly interventions later on in life. We strongly believe that by matching schools with our local retail branches, we are making a significant investment in children’s futures, as well as in the future of our company and of the national economy. I am particularly pleased that the programme will give our employees an opportunity to volunteer and serve as business role models for children at such a formative age.”

Jeanette Grose, Director of Operations and Development at the Every Child a Chance Trust added, “We are delighted that both Government and Barclays have seen the value of our work by making an investment in the Every Child Counts programme. The West Midlands is our first regional business pilot and we will be taking the learnings to create a model that we can then roll out to other areas. The government wants every school to have its own business partner. We are calling on all companies in the West Midlands to join with us to help improve numeracy for the most disadvantaged children and give them the best start in life.”

The Every Child a Chance Trust’s new local business support programme aligns well with the recommendations unveiled earlier this year by the National Council for Educational Excellence (NCEE), calling on school and colleges to establish stronger links with local businesses. The recommendations point to the significant contributions that businesses can make in raising the aspirations and achievements of young people, particularly in the areas of basic literacy, numeracy and life skills including knowledge of the world of work.

(ends)

Notes for Editors

Barclays Money Skills

Barclays Money Skills is Barclays new UK flagship community programme which allows us to use our financial skills and expertise to help people work towards financial independence and security. We believe that by aligning our community investment to our core business, we can make the maximum positive impact. Not only are we giving money but also bringing the power and wherewithal of our organisation to tackle financial capability issues.

Our employees are encouraged to take part in this initiative and we already have a number of staff involved with projects in the UK. This support can consist of branch tours, delivering Barclays Money Skills workshops in schools and colleges, as well as working with specific charity partners, helping to break down some of the barriers of money management for young people. These skills are what our staff use everyday – we are trying to utilise this expertise in the local communities where we operate.

All our projects are led by community needs. Investing in the community is an important part of Barclays sustainability strategy. We believe our business will benefit from contributing to the development and sustainability of the communities where we operate.

Every Child a Chance Trust

The Every Child a Chance Trust aims to unlock the educational potential of socially disadvantaged children through the development and promotion of evidence-based, early intervention programmes. The Trust was established in 2007. It grew out of the outstandingly successful *Every Child a Reader* project, which showed that with the right intervention it is possible to tackle the literacy difficulties which blight many children's lives. This three-year £10m scheme was funded by a partnership of businesses and charitable trusts with matched funding from government. *Every Child Counts* is a similar partnership, between the Trust, government and Edge Hill University.. For more information please visit: <http://www.everychildachancetrust.org/>

Every Child Counts provides skilled, specialist one-to-one or small group 'Numbers Count' teaching for the lowest achieving children in school Year 2. Children are taught for half an hour a day, every day, for around 12 weeks. Children exiting from the specialist teaching programme benefit from the help of business volunteers, who play number games with them and help raise aspirations.

For further information on how businesses can lend their support, please contact:

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