

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, YOUTH, FAMILIES AND CULTURE

SUMMER READING CHALLENGE 2015

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Members on the Summer Reading Challenge 2015 reading initiative.

Information and Advice

2. The Summer Reading Challenge is the UK's biggest national reading initiative which is aimed at children aged 4 – 11 years old. The Challenge is an annual event, now in its 17th year, and involves 98% of UK local authorities and is led by public libraries. It is co-ordinated nationally by voluntary sector partner The Reading Agency.
3. Children are invited to read six books of their choice during the summer. They join at their local library and a themed membership pack gets them started. There are stickers and rewards to collect along the way with a medal and certificate if they read six books. The Challenge is designed for children of all reading abilities. They can read any books they like – fact books, stories, joke books, picture books – it is up to them.
4. Each year the Summer Reading Challenge has a different theme. The 2015 theme was Record Breakers bringing together the worlds of fact and fiction and challenging young readers to explore some of the astonishing real-life achievements and world records featured in the Guinness World Records Books.
5. The combination of fun, freedom and creativity impacts significantly on children's reading levels, range, motivation and confidence. Taking part in the Summer Reading Challenge helps prevent the 'summer reading dip' in achievement when children without reading opportunities at home over the long summer break from school traditionally lose ground in their reading.
6. The Summer Reading Challenge directly supports the Reading for Pleasure element of the new Primary Curriculum through this sustained encouragement of reading through the summer holiday.
7. In order to keep children motivated library staff and volunteers are on hand to provide advice, encouragement and support and there are linked activities to encourage families into libraries during the summer. There is also an interactive Summer Reading Challenge website full of activities to keep children engaged and motivated to keep reading.

8. Libraries work closely with schools and each year library staff promote the Challenge to schools in the summer term. Invitations are provided for children to take home to encourage families to take part.
9. The Challenge was run in all Nottinghamshire libraries from 11 July – 6 September 2015.
10. Key achievements include:
 - **10,419** children took part in this year's Challenge, a considerable increase on last year's number of participants (9,611)
 - **5,699** children completed the Challenge by reading six books (**55%**) matching last year's completion rate
 - the highest number of children taking part was in the 4 - 7 years age group (**52%**); the second biggest age group was 8 - 11 year olds (**41%**)
 - boys accounted for **41%** of children signing up for the challenge and 40% of children completing
 - **228** children joined as library members in order to take part
 - an estimated **38,200** books were read as part of the Challenge
 - Over **200** activities for children were held in libraries throughout the six week holiday
 - **4,726** children attended activities
 - **100** volunteers helped in **21** libraries giving **1513** volunteer hours
 - **66** volunteers were aged 24 years and under
 - children borrowed over **230,000** books between 11 July and 6 September.
11. The countywide breakdown of Nottinghamshire children participating in the Summer Reading Challenge this year was:

Ashfield	1,438 children
Bassetlaw	1,056 children
Broxtowe	1,404 children
Gedling	1,070 children
Mansfield	1,149 children
Newark	1,846 children
Rushcliffe	2,456 children
12. The number of children registering for the Challenge rose by **8%** compared to last year (**9,611 children took part in 2014**) and the total number of finishers rose by **9%** (**from 5,239**). Completion rate was 55 % matching the 2014 figure.
13. Evaluation was overwhelmingly positive. Parents and carers thought that the incentives were motivational; children loved the stickers, wristbands and medals. It encouraged children and families to borrow more books and reminded children and families to use the library more. It has also encouraged children to read a wider range of books and motivated children who already enjoy reading to read more. Comments received from parents and carers include:

"Fantastic idea. The children would never have read 6 books over the summer holiday without this incentive. The challenge and reward of a medal & certificate worked wonders" (parent of children aged 6 & 7)

"Both boys came home from school fired up about doing the reading challenge. First time we have done it and it was great really engaged the boys with reading and the library experience was great. Very friendly, helpful staff" (parent of children aged 8 & 9)

"Great way of encouraging children to read. Eldest child was also pleased that she could use this towards getting Brownie Book lovers badge" (parent of children aged 4 & 9)

"One child enjoyed it and liked having a challenge. The other didn't like the pressure, but once her sister read all 6, she was inspired to finish. It's the first time we have managed to complete it. Their reading has improved as they were consistently reading!" (parent of children aged 6 & 8)

"My 6 year old daughter loves reading, so this challenge was perfect for her, she loved coming in and choosing her books and receiving the stickers and gifts, especially the medal!" (parent of child aged 6)

"The challenge has encouraged us to visit the library as a family more frequently than usual. The children have been engaged and have enjoyed participating. This is the first year that we have managed to complete it and the children are obviously proud of themselves, as am I" (parent of children aged 8 & 10).

14. Comments received from children include:

"I really liked this challenge as it gave me chance to find my new favourite book. I hope more challenges like this take place!" (child aged 9)

"Me and lots of my friends are doing this, it makes me want to read more, even in my own time, can't wait for next year!" (child aged 10)

"I enjoy the summer reading challenge. I have learnt lots of record breaking facts" (child aged 8)

"I had too much fun, I really want to do it again next year. Thankyou for helping me" (child aged 7)

"I Felt Happy Reading" (child aged 6).

15. Nottinghamshire County Council Vice Chairman, Councillor Yvonne Woodhead, presented a Summer Reading Challenge awards event at Mansfield Central Library on 18 October, where some of the successful children from across the County who took part this year were invited to receive awards and represent their library. Presentations were also made to volunteers, thanking them for their time and effort. Children and volunteers were entertained by a performance by Johnny and the Raindrops and enjoyed a Record Breakers celebration cake.

16. Using The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge enables the Library Service to deliver a high quality, well developed reading product which is evaluated on a national scale. The scheme benefits from economies of scale as it involves the majority of UK local

authorities which makes it a cost effective means of delivering a reading scheme in libraries.

17. The Challenge is now a prioritised programme within the Universal Reading Offer strategy developed with the Society of Chief Librarians which Nottinghamshire has signed up to.
18. The Summer Reading Scheme is a successful way to encourage children to read for pleasure. The Department for Education in 2012¹ stated that research shows the benefits of reading for pleasure are numerous and include:
 - children who say they enjoy reading for pleasure are more likely to score well on reading assessments compared to pupils who said they enjoyed reading less
 - regularly reading stories or novels outside of school is associated with higher scores in reading assessments
 - there is some evidence to show that the activity is a more important determinant of children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status
 - it can have a positive impact on pupils' emotional and social behaviour
 - it can have a positive impact on text comprehension and grammar
 - positive reading attitudes are associated with reading more later in life and having increased general knowledge.

Other Options Considered

19. The report is for information only.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. The report is for information only.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

22. The Summer Reading Challenge is a reading scheme that is available to all children of the target age via Nottinghamshire's public library network. Customer satisfaction with the scheme is excellent.

¹ Education Standards Research Team (2012). Evidence for Reading for Pleasure. ESARD

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That the update on the Summer Reading Challenge 2015 reading initiative be noted.

Derek Higton
Service Director, Youth, Families and Culture

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

Carol Newman
Team Manager, Library Development
Tel. 0115 982 9040
E: carol.newman@nottsc.gov.uk

Constitutional Comments

23. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

Financial Comments (SS 05/10/15)

24. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

C0709