

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR YOUTH, FAMILIES & CULTURAL  
SERVICES****SUMMER READING CHALLENGE 2014****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Members on the Summer Reading Challenge 2014 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 2014 theme was Mythical Maze where children were challenged to find their way around a labyrinth that introduced them to fantastical creatures from the world of legend and mythology.
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 12 July – 7 September 2014.
10. Key achievements include:
  - 9,611 children took part in this year's Challenge
  - 5,239 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 43% of children signing up for the challenge and 43% of children completing
  - 99 children joined as library members in order to take part
  - an estimated 35,958 books were read as part of the Challenge
  - 190 activities for children were held in libraries throughout the six week holiday
  - 3,900 children attended activities
  - 103 volunteers helped in 19 libraries giving 1,752 volunteer hours
  - children borrowed over 250,000 books between 5 July and 13 September.
11. The countywide breakdown of Nottinghamshire children participating in the Summer Reading Challenge this year was:
 

Ashfield	1,193 children
Bassetlaw	1,058 children
Broxtowe	1,314 children
Gedling	1,188 children
Mansfield	1,103 children
New	1,656 children
Rushcliffe	2,099 children
12. The number of children registering for the Challenge was down slightly compared to last year (6%) and the total number of finishers was down by 7%. However the completion rate was comparable to last year at 55%.
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:
 

*"The reading challenge is a great help and encourages my children to read more often – last year my daughter moved up in her reading group at school as a result of the challenge" (parent of children aged 4 & 7)*

*"A fantastic opportunity to inspire kids to read. My children are already keen readers but this took them to the next level – sneaking off early to bed so they could read under the covers and complete the challenge!" (parent of children aged 7 & 8)*

*"What a brilliant way to encourage children to enjoy reading and get rewards. My children have loved coming to the library" (parent of children aged 2, 5 & 7)*

*"The mythical maze was fantastic. It really inspired my little boy to read even more and try out some new and different books. I'll be recommending it to everyone" (parent of child aged 7)*

*"We love doing the Summer Reading Challenge – finding, exploring and sharing new books together. Thanks!" (parent of children aged 5, 8 & 10)*

14. Comments received from children include:

*"I think Mythical Maze was an awesome experience for me and my brother and sister. It helped them to read more. We really enjoyed collecting the cards" (child aged 9)*

*"It was brilliant! It made me read a lot more than I do usually. My favourite book was dinosaurs; because I learnt loads of facts I didn't know" (child aged 9)*

*"I enjoyed it because it got me to read new authors" (child aged 10)*

*"I thought the Mythical Maze is AMAZING because I don't normally finish books but this has made me finish loads of books. I really enjoyed reading over the summer! (child aged 10)*

*"It was cool – getting to six books was the best bit, because it felt good to finish" (child aged 9)*

15. Nottinghamshire County Council Chairman, Councillor Pauline Allan, presented a Summer Reading Challenge awards event at Mansfield Central Library on 19 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 author and poet John Dougherty and enjoyed a Mythical Maze 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 2012<sup>1</sup> 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.
19. The Summer Reading Challenge theme for 2015 will be linked to Guinness World Records™ (GWR), the global authority in record breaking achievements and publishers of the annual Guinness World Records™ book. GWR's mission is around inspiring and celebrating achievement and personal best, which reflects the ethos of the Summer Reading Challenge. With a strong appeal to boys, the theme will also help encourage information skills, engage reluctant readers and inspire wider reading.

### **Other Options Considered**

20. The report is for information only.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

21. The report is for information only.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

22. 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**

23. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Standards Research Team (2012). Evidence for Reading for Pleasure. ESARD

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the update on the Summer Reading Challenge 2014 reading initiative be noted.

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### **Constitutional Comments**

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

### **Financial Comments (KLA 31/10/14)**

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

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

None.

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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