

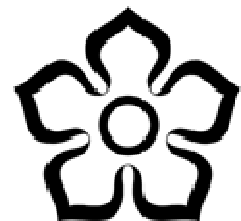
Report to Scrutiny Commission

Neighbourhood Services and Community
Involvement

Date of Commission meeting: 9th March 2015

Libraries Summer Reading Scheme Impact Report

Report of the Director of Culture and Neighbourhood
Services



Leicester
City Council

Useful Information:

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Adrian Wills: Head of Neighbourhood Services
- Author contact details 39 3541 adrian.wills@leicester.gov.uk

1. Summary

The library service's annual summer reading scheme is a key building block in the city's strategy to encourage children and young people to enjoy reading and through reading to improve their life chances. The impact that the scheme makes has been building over a number of years, particularly since it has been delivered in partnership. Our key partner in delivering the scheme is Whatever It Takes (WiT).

WiT is a partnership which was formed in November 2009 to make a concerted effort to improve reading skills amongst the city's children. It was formed in partnership with the Schools Forum, Leicester City Council's Children's Services, City Primary Heads, Education Improvement Partnership, Trade Unions and others. The initiative was set up and led by the Strategic Lead of City Primary Headteachers and the Director of Leicester Secondary Education Improvement Partnership.

In addition, we have also worked closely with Museums, Sports and Community Services. The support of WiT enables the scheme to be better targeted through schools and enriches the offer with extra elements that make it even more attractive for children and young people. This report outlines the real successes of the 2014 national scheme in Leicester, which had the theme of "Mythical Maze".

Large numbers of children participated and as the figures show in the main report, the impact that Leicester's efforts made were the best in the region for its population size. Details below at 3.2.

Further to the successes of 2014, this report brings the programme for 2015 to the attention of the Scrutiny Commission. The theme for 2015 nationally is "Record Breakers" based on the Guinness Book of Records idea. Its aim is to encourage more boys and reluctant readers through challenges which will involve family members. This is going to be an exciting summer for the programme.

2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny

- To note the success of the partnership approach, particularly with Libraries and Whatever It Takes (WiT) in the promotion of the enjoyment of reading amongst Leicester's children and young people
- To note the success of the scheme at a regional level through the annual summer reading scheme
- To support the experimental approach being taken in 2015, aimed at encouraging more boys and vulnerable readers to join in

3. Supporting Information

3.1 Summer Success with the Summer Reading Challenge 2014

3.1.1 The Numbers Joining In

A grand total of 7084 children joined the reading challenge to read six books this summer meeting the 2014 Leicester Libraries' target of 7000 Mythical Maze participants. All Leicester Libraries staff contributed to this full team effort.

Significantly, 59.7% (4226) completed the challenge, an important measure of children building a habit of library use and evidence of a longer lasting motivation to read. 43% of those finishing the challenge were boys.

These statistics show Leicester families maintaining a very strong commitment to their children's reading and to libraries as an educational resource within their local community.

The hard work of library staff and strong, creative local partnerships have enabled Leicester Libraries to more than meet the challenges' aims and key elements:

Aims:

- To encourage children to be confident, enthusiastic and independent readers.
- To develop a reading habit and regular library use.
- To prevent the 'summer reading dip'.

N.B. The reading dip is a recognised phenomenon of an on average drop in children's reading abilities in the autumn term compared with their skill level at the end of the summer term. This is due to the children not being involved in school encouraged reading. The Summer Reading Scheme helps to bridge that gap and help prevent that drop in skill levels by engaging children in reading in exciting ways outside school.

Key elements:

- Motivation – through reading incentives and promotional programmes
- Opportunity – community access to books and activities.

3.1.2 The Books Borrowed

The number of children's books borrowed over the summers rose dramatically over July and August showing a rise of 76% in comparison to June 2014. This is consistent with the rise shown in 2013 (75%) and reflects the commitment families make to their children's reading over the summer and the interest raised by Leicester Libraries summer programme.

3.1.3 The New Library Members

The importance of this summer period as a time to engage with families is also reflected in the rise in new junior library members. Both July and August had significantly more new children joining the library service. Over the summer of 2014, the figures were; June 416, July 601, August 591.

3.1.4 Particularly Successful Libraries

Notable libraries were Beaumont Leys, Belgrave, Highfields, Knighton, Central, Rushey Mead, Southfields, St Matthews and Westcotes for increasing the percentage of children completing the reading challenge. Belgrave and Braunstone also performed well in the number of children taking part as a whole.

The new Aylestone Library and St Matthews libraries opened in 2013 and membership and issues dramatically increase across the board. These community resources continued to excel in 2014 with 10 events ranging from craft activities and a story workshop to play scheme sessions at Aylestone Leisure Centre focussing on reading and library membership. Key to this was the positive partnership between library and leisure centre staff.

St Matthews Centre played an important role in encouraging children to compete the 6 book summer reading challenge with an event in September that was part of a national reading drive by charity Save the Children and the TV programme Good Morning Britain. The library had 368 visitors as a result of this family event that included free copies of the best-selling 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid' book for children and Mythical Maze giveaways for children working on completing their 6 book reading challenge.



Diary of a Wimpy Kid event at St Matthews Library.

3.1.5 The Role of Partnerships

Once again, partnerships were a strong feature of the summer's work. Spark Arts for Children acted as key partners with Leicester Libraries in the delivery of the year long Imaginative Spaces project. The 2 artists in residence at Southfields and the Brite Centre developed a uniquely creative programme to support the delivery of the Mythical Maze summer reading challenge.



The Brite Centre's 1st summer reading challenge completer receives his certificate.

Libraries and Museums (Heritage) have worked together for many years. This summer consolidated 2013's pilot project exploring ways that language and reading could be used to promote Leicester's historical settings and heritage. The partnership was extended to include work with a key community based school (Mellor Primary) with links to the Cross Corners arts workshops at Belgrave Hall.

The resulting 'Bel the Giant' project celebrated one of Leicester's local legends explaining the origins of local place names including Belgrave. It involved all of Mellor school's key stage 2 children in a performance for parents and families, a launch day at Belgrave Hall attended by 686 people and 2 summer workshops for children at Aylestone Leisure centre and Beaumont Leys Library.

Library summer workshops in the news.



Lisa Lolly event at Evington Library. Centre.



Bel the giant at Aylestone Leisure Centre.

Another part of the summer events programme that always results in a packed audience is the Lisa Lolly shows for under 5's. This year the show was aptly titled 'Amazing!'. Every library in the city played host and all were well attended. Under 5's also had the option of taking part in the reading challenge by collecting stickers on a Mythical Maze card every time they borrowed books to share at home.

3.1.6 The Special Impact of the Partnership with WiT

Whatever It Takes (WiT) continues to provide significant funding to enable much of this creative work to take place in libraries. WiT enabled contact with 180 vulnerable readers and their parents/carers through the Whatever It Takes supported summer reading programme. In addition the transition stage children are provided with a targeted summer book list to encourage reading throughout the summer holidays. WiT also provides, through their Reading Champions, an effective network of school contacts to promote library initiatives such as Mythical Maze.

In 2014 the funding allowed Libraries to offer schools the opportunity to win a visit from popular children's authors Steve Barlow and Steve Skidmore. It is clear that this incentive has increased the impact and participation from Leicester schools. The winning schools, Medway Primary in Highfields and Braunstone Community Primary, were thrilled that all their key stage 2 children could experience the 2 Steves' high energy show and took the opportunity to buy the authors books as well.



Children's authors at Braunstone

Primary School with the Children's Bookbus.

The library summer events programme, with support from Whatever It Takes, exceeded 2013 results and 2014 targets with 110 events citywide. Almost 4000 children participated in the programme, a significant figure demonstrating libraries role at the heart of the community, supporting families during the school summer break. Volunteers worked alongside library staff in delivering a wide range of activities that enhanced the impact of the reading challenge.

3.1.7 The Part the Bookbuses Play

A full programme of promotional visits by the Bookbuses and storytellers throughout the summer to festivals, events and play schemes included the City Festival and local events across the city such as Saffron Fete, Charnwood Gala Day and Braunstone Carnival. These visits provided active reading experiences directly to families in Leicester communities.

Mythical Maze delivered a real reading summer providing, through committed staff and effective partnerships, the basis for children's language and literacy development in Leicester.

3.2 Regional Reading Scheme Statistics

The data below is extracted from the regional statistics for take up and completion of the summer scheme reading challenge in a number of authorities. It can be seen that the partnership work has made a significant difference to outcomes in Leicester.

Lib. Authority	Starters	Completers
Derby	3751	1771
Leicester	7084	4226
Nottingham	3687	1828

3.3 Summer 2015 and Record Breakers

Working closely with WiT, this theme will help to involve more boys and more vulnerable readers in the scheme who have traditionally been harder to reach with reading programmes. The scheme will involve all sorts of challenges to break old and make new records. The sort of books that will be promoted this year will be information and non-fiction books, including the Guinness Book of Records itself. The appeal of books packed with interesting facts and subjects will help the scheme to reach a different audience from the traditional approach using fiction.

The style of the scheme for 2015 will widen its appeal, giving an opportunity to involve other family members in the challenges. Libraries and Community Services will work closely together to include and encourage other groups and members of the community to become involved in the challenges alongside their children. This will provide an excellent chance for librarians and community engagement officers to work together to deliver on one of the key goals for the emerging neighbourhood service, which is to foster and encourage the enjoyment of reading.

4. Financial, legal and other implications

4.1 Financial implications

“The core costs are met from the Libraries budget, with support from Whatever it Takes for enhancements such as story tellers.”

Colin Sharpe, Head of Finance, ext. 37 4081

4.2 Legal implications

“Legal services can provide any advice requested concerning the partnering and funding arrangements referred to in this report.”

Greg Surtees, Legal Services, ext. 37 1421”

4.3. Climate Change implications

“There are no climate change implications arising from this report.”

Louise Buckley, Graduate Project Officer (Climate Change), 372 293.

4.4 Equality Impact Assessment

“From the perspective of equality outcomes, the summer reading scheme contributes directly to education and learning – one of the main equality outcomes identified by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in their equality measurement framework. If a more detailed profile of the protected characteristics of the children taking part, and the proportionate take-up of the scheme by libraries across the city was produced and then compared to known trends in regard to educational attainment, then the effectiveness of the summer reading scheme in tackling educational inequalities would be more explicit.”

Irene Kszyk, Corporate Equalities Lead, ext 374147.

4.5 Other Implications

None.

5. Background information and other papers:

None.

6. Summary of appendices:

None.

7. Is this a private report?

No.