

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

THE IMAGINATION LIBRARY TEN YEARS ON

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the outcomes achieved over the ten years of the Imagination Library in North Lincolnshire. The attached report highlights the key successes.
- 1.2 The Imagination Library forms part of the Council's commitment to children having the best start in life through the investment in Children's Literacy and the offer that supports and enables the home learning environment.
- 1.3 The impact is evidenced through the educational outcomes achieved by children and young people over this period, especially those who do not have the same opportunities as their peers or are at risk of underachieving.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In January 2023, North Lincolnshire will be celebrating ten years of investment in the Imagination Library. North Lincolnshire is recognised as a national and world leader in its approach to utilising the books gifted. The bespoke programme enables parents and carers to create a wide range of home learning and community activities to enhance children's early development, health and wellbeing, communication, and language skills. North Lincolnshire Council are passionate about literacy and promoting the best start in life for every child and developing a love of reading is core to our aspirations and ambition for all our children.
- 2.2 During the last ten years, the council's investment and commitment to children's literacy has had a proven impact on children and young people's learning and wellbeing outcomes. By the anniversary date it is anticipated that over 22,500 children have participated and over 835,000 books issued. The programme underpins the council values and provides a very visible, and tangible range of positive outcomes for children, young people, families, carers, community groups, early years settings and schools. The offer is a core element of our One Family approach and plays a key role in enabling parents to readily access high

quality information advice and guidance as part of Best Start offer for our youngest children.

- 2.3 National research identifies the importance of enabling parents to support their children's early learning and providing the best start in life. North Lincolnshire's Imagination Library Programme has long-lasting impacts, such as positive outcomes on future wellbeing, achievement, and later training and employment.
- 2.4 Children who first registered with the Imagination Library when it was launched in 2013 reached the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in 2016. Since 2016, data has been collated and analysed showing that children registered with the Imagination Library outperformed their unregistered counterparts each year. In 2022, 67.1% of children who registered with the Imagination Library achieved a good level of development at the end of the EYFS, compared to 52.6% of children who were not registered.
- 2.5 The impact of the Imagination Library is not confined to the EYFS and continues to evidence itself on a child's journey throughout school. Children registered with the Imagination Library have achieved higher Key Stage 1 outcomes in 2019 and 2022 for reading, writing and maths. This is evidenced further as children who were registered achieved a higher standard/ greater depth of understanding for the core subjects of reading, writing and maths than their unregistered peers. This trend is mirrored for Key Stage 2 outcomes, both for achieving the expected standard, and for achieving a higher standard/ greater depth of understanding.
- 2.6 The extensive reach of the Imagination Library across North Lincolnshire makes the biggest impact on some of our most vulnerable families and young children. In North Lincolnshire the Imagination Library makes a real difference to our children who do not have the same opportunities as their peers or are at risk of underachieving - most notably for summer born children (boys in particular), children with special educational needs and children whose first home language is not English.
- 2.7 The Imagination Library programme is more than a free book through the door, it supports the council's One Family Approach by working directly with families and children in targeted communities on modelling book engagement, quality dialogues and activity around books. One example is 'Book Chatter', which takes place in community hubs and schools, and provides ideas sheets for parents to enhance the use of books in the home learning environment.
- 2.8 By working in partnership and embedding the One Family Approach we have created a pathway of expertise and resources that are easily accessible, creative, and simple which enable families to build and extend their children's home learning environment. The North Lincolnshire Imagination Monthly newsletter is accessed by 3,500

residents and shares ideas and inspiration. Continuous Professional Development and training opportunities have also been provided to support and upskill the current and future early years workforce in maximising the learning, attachment and engagement opportunities related to reading. Examples include utilising book resources, training on literacy themes, and developing support and intervention skills. All these examples are supported in a Place based approach, through community partners, colleagues across the whole of North Lincolnshire (such as North Lincolnshire Children's Literacy Trust and the Rotary Club), and businesses who enable the legacy of reading once children have graduated from the Imagination Library (such as Wrendale, Tesco and Asda).

- 2.9 The success of the Imagination Library programme has been achieved through close collaborative working with key partners, including early years settings, schools, and health professionals, to ensure that every child can participate in the Imagination Library. Parents are made aware of the Imagination Library scheme and to use the further benefits that the books can provide. As a result, parents have access to further information on themes such as health and wellbeing, good hygiene, school readiness, family matters, bereavement, and diversity.
- 2.10 It is recognised that book ownership is important, but in North Lincolnshire we know that it is how books are used in the home learning environment that has the greatest impact on outcomes for children. The wider work around each book is invaluable in maximising the learning opportunities made possible by children receiving high quality books into their family home. Sharing books means so much more than a love of reading. Time together enjoying books promotes secure attachments, which encourages confidence, self-esteem, health, and well-being. Having those special times together builds communication, listening, understanding, and talking skills, and helps to lay the foundations of good literacy.
- 2.11 In recognition of the effectiveness of the programme in North Lincolnshire and successful partnership working with the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library the Dollywood Foundation are hosting a celebration event at Normanby Hall on 20 January 2023.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 For Cabinet to note the impact and success of North Lincolnshire's Imagination Library programme over the past 10 years. The attached report celebrates the many achievements that have been enabled for children and families, and positive outcomes as they progress through their future learning journey.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 The report demonstrates the impact of North Lincolnshire's investment in the bespoke Imagination Library Programme in supporting positive outcomes and contributing to the council's ambition for enabling the Best Start for all our young children, especially those who do not have the same opportunities as their peers or are at risk of underachieving.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g., LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

5.1 The investment in the Imagination Library equates to £25 per child per year for the book through the door from birth to 5. The programme forms part of the Council's Community Literacy Offer investment with a budget in 2022-23 of £334k.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g., CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

6.1 There are no other relevant implications.

6.2 Equalities issues under the Equalities Act 2010 are considered as part of the book selection process.

6.3 This plan is closely linked to the Council Plan, supporting the ambition to be the #BestPlace for our residents and the #BestCouncil we can be.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

7.1 N/A

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

8.1 No conflicts of interest have been identified.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 To receive the report that celebrates 10 years of North Lincolnshire's Imagination Library programme and note the difference made to young children's early learning outcomes.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

- 1) Public Health Grant Review- E765 Children's Literacy (October 2022)
- 2) North Lincolnshire Literacy Offer 2022/23
- 3) Local Parent Feedback Summaries (Reading and Child development, Wellbeing Focussed)
- 4) North Lincolnshire data and international research led by Swansea University on behalf of Dolly Wood UK.
- 5) Getting the Best Strat: A One Family Approach to improving outcomes for children in their early years
- 6) Impact of the Imagination Library 2022 with KS2