

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE IMAGINATION LIBRARY

1. OBJECT & KEY FINDINGS IN THE REPORT

- 1.1 To note and endorse the outcomes achieved in relation to the Imagination Library in North Lincolnshire (Annual Report attached).
- 1.2 To brief Cabinet on the imminent gifting of the one millionth Imagination Library book in North Lincolnshire.
- 1.3 The impact of the Imagination Library is evidenced through the educational outcomes achieved by children and young people across North Lincolnshire.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In March 2024, North Lincolnshire is celebrating 11 years of investment in the Imagination Library.
- 2.2 The Imagination Library is a universal intervention as part of the council's approach to prevention, enabling local children to have the best start in life through access to a high quality home learning environment.
- 2.3 The universal intervention is aligned to the council operating model 'One Council, One Family, One Place and achieves positive outcomes for children, families, carers, community groups, early years settings and schools.
- 2.4 Currently there are 6891 children registered with the Imagination Library in North Lincolnshire. This equates to nine out of ten children under the age of 5 who are receiving a free book every month. Overall, 17,681 children have graduated from the scheme, since it launched in 2013.
- 2.5 North Lincolnshire Council is recognised as a leader in its approach to maximising the investment. The bespoke programme enables parents and carers to access a wide range of home learning and community activities developed to enhance children's early development, health and wellbeing, communication and language skills.
- 2.6 During the last 11 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.
- 2.7 By March 2024, over 940,000 books will have been provided to children across North Lincolnshire. It is projected that by December 2024, the one millionth Imagination Library book will have been accessed.

- 2.8** The Imagination Library programme is more than a free book through the door, it supports the council's NL One Family Approach by working directly with families and children in targeted communities through modelling book engagement, quality dialogue and activity around books. One example is 'Book Chatter', which takes place in family and community hubs and schools and provides resources for parents to enhance the use of books in the home learning environment. In addition to this, weekly 'Library Explorers' sessions for families are delivered in community hubs and 'Reading Together' workshops and courses are delivered in schools. In 2024 all staff delivering these sessions have completed the PEEP 'Learning Together' training, which coaches early years practitioners on how they can further support families by guiding parents/carers on how they can develop child's learning, from birth to starting school. This intervention focuses on strategies for parents to develop their child's communication, language and literacy skills.
- 2.9** By working in partnership and embedding the NL One Family Approach, a pathway of expertise and easily accessible resources are in place to enable families to build and extend their children's home learning environment. The North Lincolnshire Imagination monthly newsletter is accessed by 4,600 residents to share ideas and inspiration. Professional development and training opportunities are also provided to support and upskill the current and future early years workforce to maximise learning, attachment and engagement opportunities related to reading. Examples include utilising book resources, training on literacy themes such as Songs & Rhymes, and developing support and intervention strategies. All these examples are designed as part of a place based approach in partnership with stakeholders across North Lincolnshire (such as North Lincolnshire Children's Literacy Trust, North Lindsey College, UCNL and including businesses and charities such as Wrendale Designs, The Rotary Club, Tesco, Asda & Morrisons), which continues to build a legacy of reading once children have graduated from the Imagination Library.
- 2.10** The success of the Imagination Library programme is 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.
- 2.11** Through the work across the system, parents are made aware of the Imagination Library scheme and the added value 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.
- 2.12** In 2024, the monthly Imagination Library ideas sheets will be more localised in terms of their content to enable local initiatives and campaigns to be communicated, such as those linked to Public Health messaging.
- 2.13** It is well evidenced 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 the family home. Sharing books means so much more than a love of reading. Time together enjoying books promotes secure attachment which encourages confidence and self-esteem, promotes positive health and wellbeing, supports communication and early development, alongside laying the foundations of good literacy, including health literacy.
- 2.14** From January 2023 to January 2024, the success of the North Lincolnshire Imagination Library has been celebrated by facilitating a local 'Year of Reading'. The year started with

a Dollywood UK 10th Birthday conference at Normanby Hall. This was followed up with over 100 reading/book themed events, activities and projects held across North Lincolnshire, inspiring children, young people, and families to take part and enjoy reading for pleasure. The North Lincolnshire 'Year of Reading' has reached over 20,000 beneficiaries.

Some of the highlights of the year included:

- Imagination Library Extravanzas in each locality with local families.
- Early Years Nature Trail Workshops with poet Benjamin Zephaniah
- Draw along workshops with IL author Nick Sharratt
- Author workshops with IL authors Rachel Morrisroe and Louise Yates.
- Plus numerous free family theatre and storytelling sessions.

Funding from external partners including The Foyle Foundation, Bookmark, Booktrust, Wrendale Designs, SSE Windfarm and SSE Sustainable, Tesco, Rotary, Morrisons and many more has enabled the delivery of high-quality diverse literacy opportunities for local children and families.

2.15 In 2023/2024 North Lincolnshire was also invited to participate in the Imagination Library Parliamentary Briefing at Westminster and the Imagination Library 2024 Book Launch at Penguin Random House, providing opportunities to share successes.

2.16 Plans are being developed to celebrate the delivery of the one millionth Imagination Library book, expected in December 2024 and encourage future sign-up. Proposals include a promotional advertising campaign in the Spring edition of 'News Direct' raising awareness that the one millionth book is expected within the year and to encourage all eligible children and families to sign up to Imagination Library in North Lincolnshire. Incentives such as prizes will be publicised to further encourage engagement and access. Throughout the Summer, plans are in place to facilitate Imagination Library author visits to North Lincolnshire to further promote sign-up and positive engagement. In addition to this and in the lead up to the one millionth book delivery, the physical book will be tracked from packaging to delivery to the child, capturing the process and the journey.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 For Cabinet Member to recognise the impact and success of the North Lincolnshire Imagination Library programme.



Imagination Library
Annual Report 2023_2

3.2 A link to the report can be found

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 The report demonstrates the impact of North Lincolnshire's investment in the Imagination Library universal intervention in achieving positive outcomes for children and families in North Lincolnshire.

4.2 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 impact and is achieving positive outcomes health & wellbeing and educational attainment.

- 4.3 Children in the initial cohort who registered with the Imagination Library when it was launched in 2013 reached the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in 2016.
- 4.4 Since 2016, data has been collated and analysed and demonstrates that children registered with the Imagination Library outperform their unregistered counterparts each year. In 2023, 68.2% of children who registered with the Imagination Library achieved a good level of development at the end of the EYFS, compared to 58.1% of children who were not registered.
- 4.5 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, *, 2022 & 2023 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. (*Standard assessments did not take place in 2020/2021 due to the Covid pandemic)
- 4.6 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, children whose first home language is not English and children who live in the 30% most deprived SOA. A plan is in place to ensure that all children in North Lincolnshire access our Imagination Library scheme.

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

- 5.1 The investment in the Imagination Library equates to £26 per child per year for a high quality book through the door each month from birth to age five. The universal offer forms part of the Council's community literacy offer with levels of investment for 2023-2024 expected to be £221k delivered through the Public Health Grant.

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

- 6.1 Equalities issues under the Equalities Act 2010 are considered as part of the book selection process. The UK Imagination Library Book Selection committee, use the CLPE '**Reflecting Realities**' research study to support showing and selecting diversity in books.
- 6.2 The Imagination Library investment is supporting council priorities and is aligned to North Lincolnshire's 'One Family Approach' (OFA). OFA, as endorsed by the Integrated Children's Trust, underpins the values, principles and how we collectively respond to the needs of Children and Families in North Lincolnshire. Working together, to create a system that works for all children and families to achieve our ambition for children to thrive in their families, achieve in their schools and flourish in their communities. This ensures that support is provided at the right level by the right person using the fewest, best interventions.

- 6.3** Contributing to the NL A Green Future Strategy, Imagination Library North Lincolnshire, Dollywood UK, and Central Mailing Service (CMS) continue to look to ways to reducing the environmental impact of programme delivery. The Imagination Library book delivery packaging is now fully carbon neutral and fully compostable. In addition to this, local awareness of the importance of book recycling is promoted via the Love Your Books campaign.
- 6.4** Over recent years the IL book selection committee have ensured books are included in the programme which raise awareness of improving the environment, reinforcing messages for children about the importance of reducing waste and helping create a greener environment.
- 6.5** The programme is underpinned by the strong North Lincolnshire Public Health enhanced population health and prevention approach. This enables public health messages to be delivered through partnership working, resulting in better outcomes for North Lincolnshire residents. The 2022 Imagination Library Impact report showed an improvement in the following outcomes of families who accessed the Imagination Library: -
- Improved health
 - Improved wellbeing
 - Improved skills and education
 - Improved employment opportunities and prosperity
 - Improved overall life chances

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 That Cabinet note and endorse the impact and success of the North Lincolnshire Imagination Library programme.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

1) Impact of the Imagination Library 2023 Data Report

<https://northlincsgovuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/ImaginationLibrary/EaVBeJXobqdEsYT8x5KX9U8BJq4mzLsVLFMhSV9qZ7po4w?e=WjKcp1>

2) **BBC News Report January 2024** – Children’s Laureate Urgent Call for Investment in Reading
[Michael Morpurgo leads call for urgent children's reading investment - BBC News](#)

3) **Booktrust UK Report** – Call for investment in Early Years Reading
[Reading Together: BookTrust teams up with all 12 Children's Laureates to call for investment in early years reading | BookTrust](#)

4) **Children’s Reading Habits in the Early Years**
[Family Survey Briefing: Reading in the Early Years \(booktrust.org.uk\)](#)

5) **IL Parent/Carer Feedback** Survey Sample Summary
<https://northlincsgovuk.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/ImaginationLibrary/EcUaENFyPrVEg0AjeMKDEAQB81CxQoL9959CIXLG8bMlKA?e=VIJ8eQ>

6) **IL Ideas Sheet** – Sample February 2024
https://northlincsgovuk.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/ImaginationLibrary/Ed-9KtQudYNIjFMQVMZ5yd0BU2-WvAT-z0nuZKn1M_UOAQ?e=6faotT

7) **IL Monthly Report Power BI** – Sample January 2024
https://northlincsgovuk.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/ImaginationLibrary/EWS51q21ke5IkPqTsLp6xscBIBNE_1h9fZ6img55tPhrJg?e=8kSlqz

8) **Getting the Best Start Plan 2021:** NL Family Approach to improving outcomes for children in their early years
[Strategy & Insight Sharepoint Documents - Getting the Best Start Plan 2021.pdf - All Documents](#)

9) **NLC Green Strategy**
[Strategy & Insight Sharepoint Documents - A Green Future 2021-30.pdf - All Documents](#)

10) **Central Mailing Service** – Sustainability Report PPT
<https://northlincsgovuk.sharepoint.com/:p:/s/ImaginationLibrary/Eaa2MLFNyLdAkUYTq6x6tFwBJUdVWuuTrQawYsjYHAV60g?e=A0A4rH>

11) **CLPE Reflecting Realities** Research Study
[Reflecting Realities Research | Centre for Literacy in Primary Education \(clpe.org.uk\)](#)

12) **North Lincolnshire ‘Year of Reading’** Capturing the Best Bits PPT & Video
https://northlincsgovuk.sharepoint.com/:p:/s/NorthLincolnshire-YearofReading2023/EXnLyAJtUoRMsNo_vyMlfdMBiV_LIUc-Ut8sqVJX0-PbNw?e=RWUIPK