

the reading agency

Libraries and reading - what next?

Dear Colleagues,

We wanted to share with you the conclusions of a recent SCL Executive meeting at which we reviewed the learning from the National Year of Reading, looked at the emerging 2009 picture and agreed next steps.

1. Overview

- Major opportunity to push libraries' work with reading forward, building on momentum of NYR and other significant 2009 developments. Potential to take big leap as a sector.
- The Creative Reading Charter group is proposing a new overarching library transformation campaign, linked to library review and drawing in partners like the Arts Council and NESTA
- Tony Durcan is leading this work, as Chair of Books Reading and Learning after May, working with The Reading Agency through joint workplan and bringing together MLA, SCL, The Reading Agency and ASCEL plans

2. What SCL and The Reading Agency learnt about the sector in NYR

- The power and value of national/local marketing mix and importance of positive campaigning and a clear library offer to the public
- The hobbling effect of a lack of a national on-line presence for libraries
- The importance of working together to achieve more – e.g. creating a shared approach to membership requirements
- What a long way there is to go before all library authorities are using membership data and evaluation effectively – the need for peer support
- Under-exploited potential for reading strategies/steering group working across the authority, and for libraries to use reading work as basis for getting into local authority planning/targets
- The need to clarify the meaning and importance of targeting (using attitudinal and well as demographic data) to reach new audience groups, and the need to develop sector's marketing skills
- The value of established national programmes and partnerships for reaching out to new audiences and telling a national story about the library offer. Major potential to enrich local reading offer by pushing forward on national publisher and other partnerships.



www.readingforlife.org.uk

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3. Next steps

3.1 Five suggested next steps for library authorities

SCL and The Reading Agency have reflected on the learning and successes of the NYR and suggest five things all library services might do next.

- Use NYR momentum to establish cross cutting local authority reading strategy, supported by high level steering group and co-ordinator and including data sharing
- Renew the push to get library reading work/outcomes featuring in Local Area Agreements. (The Reading Agency is introducing new training to support this - contact liz.dubber@readingagency.org.uk).
- Use Reading For Life resources, including the new research base and local authority support materials, to target audiences most in need of support. (www.readingforlife.org.uk)
- Review use of established national reading programmes to reaching priority audiences
- If still requiring proof of address, work with the SCL Executive to agree simpler membership systems, and open the way to universal membership

3.2 National goals for SCL and The Reading Agency, 2009 on

- Create new Creative Reading Charter campaign with ACE, MLA and other major partners to reinvigorate the role libraries play in celebrating and championing the value and pleasure of reading
- Linked improvement plan commissioned by DCMS as follow on from Library Review.
- Campaign acting as umbrella for other library reading work including developments linked to Informal Adult Learning White Paper, Reading For Life, SCL/Reading Agency health work etc
- Take first steps towards national brand/ consumer presence for libraries. Push for national on-line library presence
- Fundraise for annual national membership campaign, in 2009 linked to recession. Explore links to booktrade partners. Continue use of national membership form; ask whole sector to drop membership requirements, using evidence from arrangements for NYR and traveller children. Continue NYR data collection arrangements.
- Use Reading for Life brand partnerships (Iceland + Marmite) to push library membership
- Work with Reading for Life to get a target 50 authorities doing cross cutting reading strategies
- Establish improvement forum/training to support sector with using management information to inform service development, planning and marketing, and using reading work to get into LAAs
- Create map of national reading programmes, partnerships and training to help library services and wider local authorities plan better.

4. National Year of Reading results and successor Reading for Life campaign

Everyone who worked to make the National Year of Reading a success should be proud. The results speak for themselves:

- Nearly 13 million individuals in target social groups C2DE were reached through the campaign, 57% of the total C2DE adult population (only 75% of this segment of the population can be reached through the media)
 - A significant increase in library membership among C2DE parents and their children; 70% of these children are now members, compared with 58% before the campaign
 - An increase in library membership nationally; 2.3million new library members recruited between April and December 2008
 - A significant increase in the proportion of C2DE parents reading to their children every day (from 15% to 20%).
 - Among C2DE fathers who read to their children, over a quarter say they now read every day compared with 19% at the baseline survey
 - A significant increase in children saying they read with their mothers every day (32% up from 17%)

You can download a copy of Reading: The Future at www.readingforlife.org.uk/finalreport/

Reading for Life

Reading for Life is a new campaign to continue the work of the National Year of Reading by improving the life opportunities of people in most need through reading. It is led by the National Literacy Trust and The Reading Agency with a wide range of partners and aims to improve the reading opportunities of people in most need. The campaign is based on a belief that reading sits at the heart of social justice.

The campaign has the following strands:

- Online tools and support materials developed in the NYR and available via the Reading for Life website at www.readingforlife.org.uk, including support for local authorities to develop cross cutting reading strategies.
- Messaging campaigns with major corporates to promote the value of reading direct to the target audiences. Following on from the support from Wiseman Dairies and Marmite, Reading for life is next being featured in a Horrid Henry promotion in 660 Iceland stores. The family give-away pack will include the national library membership form.
- National and local development and badging of reading projects and programmes used to target and reach the key audience groups.