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## Great end of year results for The Reading Agency and libraries

As the National Year of Reading draws to a close, The Reading Agency is delighted to announce major 2008 successes in its mission to inspire more people to read more. It congratulates its library partners on making big strides in developing powerful national reading programmes.

“Analysis of our 2008 work is showing really exciting results for the national reading programmes we run with public libraries,” says Miranda McKearney, Director of The Reading Agency. “Lives are being changed out there.”

### Summer Reading Challenge 2008

This summer’s *Team Read* sporting theme helped generate a big increase in Summer Reading Challenge participants. 690,000 children aged four to 12 years took part across the UK, compared with 650,000 last year.

The Reading Agency runs the Summer Reading Challenge annually with libraries and support from children’s publishers. Children are challenged to read six books during the summer. Other key results:

- 290,000 boys participated – 23,500 more than in 2007
- Libraries loaned 17.6 million children’s books over ten weeks, 10% up on last year
- 47,000 children joined as new library members
- The Team Read website had 3.4 million page views, three times as many as in 2007

“I love every bit of the Summer Reading Challenge. I like reading the books and doing the quizzes and puzzles, and it teaches me that I need to read lots of books to know different types of things.” Fizzah Malak, aged ten, from Luton.

In 2009 the Summer Reading Challenge celebrates its tenth year with a fantasy-adventure *Quest Seekers* theme, a national conference and new research.

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## **Chatterbooks**

Chatterbooks is a UK-wide network of reading groups for four to 12 year olds in libraries. Launched in 2001 with just three groups, Chatterbooks encourages children to read adventurously, talk about books and visit libraries with their families.

- There are now 7,625 children involved, compared to 6,000 children in 2007
- There are now 455 Chatterbooks groups, compared to 350 in the previous year
- 99% of the children involved are reading more, 56% are reading a lot more
- 99% of the children are more confident about reading, 48% are a lot more confident

“Before I started at the Chatterbooks club I wasn’t a keen reader, but now I read lots more. I feel happy to have met all the people and share with them what I like about books,” Jacob Burnitt, aged nine, Chatterbooks group, Plympton.

Children from Chatterbooks groups are currently road testing new-look illustrations for posters and packs. These will be available from March 2009.

## **Adult literacy: Six Book Challenge in association with Costa**

The Six Book Challenge is an incentive scheme for adults who are improving their literacy skills and just getting into reading for enjoyment. The Reading Agency launched the national Six Book Challenge in 2008 in association with Costa following successful piloting in Yorkshire. It runs through public libraries working with a wide range of partners such as colleges, trade unions, community learning organisations, prisons and other learning providers. Recent evaluation shows this new national scheme has had a big impact in its first year:

- 7,000 adult emergent readers took up the challenge to read six books
- The Challenge made many participants realise that they could enjoy reading - 61% said they enjoyed reading “a lot” compared with 41% at the start
- 60% of participants reported literacy gains – a benefit endorsed by tutors
- 75% said they would be increasing reading-related activities in the coming year

“For me the sense of achievement was like having my first child, it was as big as that! After the first book, the second one was easier and now I’m on to reading big thick books. Completing the Challenge gave me the confidence to get the qualifications I need: I am qualifying as a teaching assistant.” Mary Jarvis, West Sussex.

More than 200 organisations have signed up to run the Six Book Challenge in 2009 and there is still time to buy materials.

## **New vision of teenage library services: HeadSpace**

HeadSpace is a Reading Agency project with libraries to put young people's input and ideas at the heart of creating cutting edge library environments for teenagers. It is funded by the Big Lottery. This year 11 HeadSpaces have opened in places as diverse as Bolton and Lyme Regis and nine more are due to launch in 2009/10. Young people's volunteering roles, including being 'book waiters', can be recognised and accredited through schemes like the Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

"HeadSpace is a great idea because it looks towards teenagers for their views rather than always allowing adults to make decisions for them. It encourages teenagers to pick up a book, but not in a pushy way. It makes areas in libraries for teenagers feel comfortable, and if they feel comfortable they are more likely to look toward reading as something they might like to do." Stacey Boorman, aged 16, Swindon.

Recent evaluation shows the HeadSpace scheme now involves 1,000 young people in deprived areas. Over 500 of them have taken up leadership roles, and 125 young people have got involved in regular volunteering. Young people say being involved with HeadSpace has given them more confidence and new skills.

HeadSpace training and site licenses are now available to library authorities wanting to take a new approach to developing young people led services.

"In the National Year of Reading it's great to celebrate these successes," says Miranda McKearney. "These are examples of the green shoots of libraries' 21st century role as vibrant community centres for reading. Let's build on them."

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### **Notes to editors**

The Reading Agency is an independent charity working to inspire more people to read more. It is funded by the Arts Council and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. ([www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk))

Evaluation references, and contact details for more information:

- **Summer Reading Challenge:** statistics taken from The Summer Reading Challenge 2008 report on *Team Read*. Copyright The Reading Agency 2008, using data supplied by 170 out of 190 participating UK local authorities (87% response rate). The report will be sent to UK local authorities in January, along with order forms for the 2009 Summer Reading Challenge. A copy of the report will also be made available on The Reading Agency's website

- **Summer Reading Challenge contact:** Anne Sarrag: [anne.sarrag@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:anne.sarrag@readingagency.org.uk) or visit: [www.readingagency.org.uk/children/summer-reading-challenge](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/children/summer-reading-challenge)
- **Chatterbooks:** statistics taken from a summary of the data from the 2007-2008 annual Chatterbooks survey. A full report is due to be available in Spring 2009. **Chatterbooks contact:** Tricia Kings [tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:tricia.kings@readingagency.org.uk) or visit: [www.readingagency.org.uk/children/chatterbooks](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/children/chatterbooks)
- **Six Book Challenge:** *Six Book Challenge 2008: The Impact on Readers*, by Sarah Grylls, Learning for Learning. Copyright The Reading Agency and The Vital Link, December 2008. Available to download at: <http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/vitalink/evaluation.html#sbc>  
**Six Book Challenge contact:** Genevieve Clarke: [genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:genevieve.clarke@readingagency.org.uk) or visit: [www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk](http://www.sixbookchallenge.org.uk)
- **HeadSpace:** statistics taken from HeadSpace Project 2008 report. Copyright The Reading Agency 2008, using data supplied by 11 out of 20 Big Lottery-supported local authority project partners. The full report will be available in March 2009 on The Reading Agency's website. **HeadSpace contact:** Liz Roberts: [liz.roberts@readingagency.org.uk](mailto:liz.roberts@readingagency.org.uk) or visit: [www.readingagency.org.uk/young/headspace](http://www.readingagency.org.uk/young/headspace)
- HeadSpace locations due to open in 2009/10: Bristol, Corby, Crawley, Halton, Knowsley, Manchester, Medway, Southampton and Worksop.
- The 2008 National Year of Reading is a year-long celebration of reading in all its forms. It aims to build a greater national passion for reading – for children, families and adult learners alike. The Year will encourage people to read in businesses, homes and communities around the country, providing new opportunities to read and helping people to access help and support through schools and libraries. To get involved and sign up to National Year of Reading activities in your area, log on to: [www.yearofreading.org.uk](http://www.yearofreading.org.uk)