



Right to Read Campaign

Supporting Literacy
in the Local Authority



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil
Environment, Community and Local Government



Curann na mBainisteoirí Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Managers' Association



AN GHNÍOMHAIREACHT BAINISTÍOCHTA RIALTAS ÁITIÚIL
LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Right to Read Campaign – Supporting Literacy in the Local Authority

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Foreword

Literacy is essential for individuals to realise their personal, social, and educational potential. Improving literacy standards is a national priority to ensure this basic right is afforded to all individuals. The *Programme for Government* and the action plan for effective local government, *Putting People First*, seek to deliver more systematic literacy support at local level through the most effective programmes to strengthen and build on current activities.

In Ireland, the further development of literacy skills is critical across all ages, as recognised by several international reports including the OECD's PIAAC 2013 survey and PISA 2012 survey. Strong connections have been identified between levels of literacy skills and social, health and education outcomes, quality of life, employment, and the overall well-being of society.

Delivering on this commitment to support and advance literacy levels sustainably into the future will require a collaborative approach between local authorities, community organisations and education bodies. A shared understanding of the service practices and structures which most effectively enable new and strengthened services is required. This will ensure that the support offered through this programme produces tangible outcomes for people and can generate long-term social, educational and economic benefits both within local communities and nationally.

My Department has a firm commitment to the support and development of literacy skills through local government. The Right to Read Campaign offers a cohesive, workable and measurable support structure for literacy development in all local communities. "Right to Read" is a new approach designed to embed the development of literacy into the lives of communities via the local government system. It will bring benefits to those who provide the services as well as to those who use them. By changing our approach in small ways, we can make a big difference not only to individuals, but also to our neighbourhoods, and to the economy and society as a whole. I look forward to seeing the benefits of "Right to Read" in the months and years to come.



Jan O'Sullivan, T.D.

Minister for Housing and Planning

Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government

Preface

The provision of effective support for the literacy needs in our local communities is an important and immediate objective of local government. The Right to Read Campaign is a very welcome opportunity for local authorities to demonstrate our firm commitment to literacy skills' development and strengthen our active engagement in literacy support.

The Right to Read Campaign will benefit from the collective knowledge and experience of skilled staff in our local authority services and local agencies. Through its solid support structure, the programme will invigorate existing relationships and strengthen the partnership approach in delivering literacy support.

As local champions of literacy support and development, public libraries will take a leading role for local government in delivering the aims of the Right to Read Campaign. Libraries have the experience and resources to develop and enhance literacy activities in cooperation with other key agencies. Their position as a central service within communities, while operating within a country-wide network, makes libraries valuable catalysts for consolidating literacy support and activities throughout local government services. Indeed, the public libraries' strategy, *Opportunities for All*, represents a new era for libraries to deliver national objectives locally through a collaborative approach.

Local government aims to support the development of current and future generations as self-sufficient individuals with high levels of well-being, self worth and strong basic skills to take advantage of employment opportunities. The Right to Read Campaign offers a practical and achievable route to support the diverse spectrum of literacy needs in our communities more effectively, collectively and sustainably and strengthen the delivery of high quality services for literacy skills development.



Tom Coughlan

Chair, Libraries Development Committee, Local Government Management Agency

Introduction

The Right to Read Campaign is being developed to provide a nationally coordinated framework for literacy support and development through all local authorities in line with the *Programme for Government*.

The *Programme for Government 2011-2016* provides that: “Local authorities will be supported in developing Right to Read campaigns involving community supports for literacy, from within existing budgets such as more spacious housing, longer opening times for libraries, homework clubs and summer camps that improve literacy through sport and games.”

The Right to Read Campaign will build on the new strategy for public libraries 2013-2017, *Opportunities for All: the public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development*, published by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in December 2013. This strategy positions libraries as a key resource in local communities, delivering a broad range of services more effectively to meet the diverse spectrum of people’s needs as well as business and leisure activities.

The Right to Read Campaign looks to complement and support existing programmes and initiatives including Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) and early childhood strategies, providing continuity and reinforcement outside of formal education, supporting children, parents and adults with low levels of literacy and developing a locally cohesive, integrated and sustainable approach which is standard across the country. The Right to Read Campaign will be fully consistent with the Department of Education and Skills’ National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: the national strategy to improve literacy and numeracy among children and young people 2011-2020*.

“Right to Read” will be delivered through a national framework managed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and local authorities, who will implement and maintain standardised literacy services and supportive environments to individuals and communities throughout the country.

Literacy fulfils a crucial function that goes beyond the techniques of reading and writing. Literacy is the key to enabling individuals to participate effectively in society in a variety of roles, be it as private individual, citizen, employee or parent. Indeed, radical changes in Europe over the past few decades mean that we now live in an increasingly literacy-dependent society. A lack of such fundamental skills thwarts more than just learning and employment opportunities – it also exacerbates poverty, reduces self-esteem, inhibits ambition, limits civic participation and, ultimately, hinders economic growth.

Final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy, 2012

Public Libraries

The public library service is crucial to delivering the Right to Read Campaign. Today's public libraries provide a wide range of services in information, learning, creativity, culture and community activity, with reading and reader development remaining the fundamental objectives, delivered through the libraries' skilled workforce. The library service, accessible and community-orientated with user-friendly opening hours, will be essential to promote a learning rich environment. The existing public library culture of cooperation will be particularly valuable in facilitating local authority services to engage more directly with the literacy needs of the community. In further strengthening their commitment to literacy support and development through *Opportunities for All*, public libraries will deliver a literacy programme nationally for all age groups. The programme will build on existing good practice and initiatives already underway.



Wexford County Council

Housing

The *Programme for Government* identifies the provision of managed study facilities to support literacy and learning. The national framework will examine existing provisions and options for further development in association with the relevant local authority sections and local agencies, and will incorporate strategies for implementation in the national framework.

Sport and Recreation

The *Programme for Government* identifies the potential for enhancing literacy through incorporating literacy initiatives into sport and recreational activities. While literacy is not traditionally regarded as a core objective of sporting activity, various initiatives to enhance literacy through sport are being implemented by Local Sports Partnerships independently or in collaboration with other organisations in various parts of the country. The national framework will establish a strategy to increase awareness among Local Sports Partnerships. It will also develop the mechanisms for synergy and co-operation of the literacy activities of local sporting bodies with other organisations supporting literacy locally.



The Irish Sports Council

Did you know?

In a recent OECD survey, it was found that 17.9% of adults in Ireland lack basic skills in literacy, ranking Ireland 17th out of 24 participating countries. The same survey reveals that 25.6% of adults in Ireland lack basic numeracy skills, ranking Ireland in 19th place.

OECD, 2012

National Framework for Right to Read

National Coordination

The national framework for the Right to Read Campaign will be managed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Libraries Development, LGMA and local authorities. A national steering group will be established with representation from other key stakeholders including the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

Review of Existing Best Practice

Public libraries coordinate a variety of literacy initiatives in addition to their core services supporting literacy skills' development on an ongoing basis. Some initiatives have also been undertaken in the area of sport and recreation and in the context of housing. This element of the framework will map the type and extent of literacy support initiatives in public libraries, sports and recreation centres and housing services, and identify those which are successful, sustainable and suitable for replication.

UNESCO: Literacy for All

The annual UNESCO International Literacy Prizes have been highly successful in promoting excellence and innovation in the field of literacy through effective and innovative programmes throughout the world.

What people can do with literacy often depends on how they learned it. Well designed programmes provide the best opportunities for learning sustainable literacy skills and using them meaningfully.

UNESCO, 2014

Identification of Appropriate Services

The establishment of a core programme of literacy support services across all authorities is necessary to provide the same opportunities for everyone, regardless of their location. This element will look to build on the existing services and pilot new initiatives, and develop a programme to implement a core range of age-defined and level-defined services across the country.

Provision of Appropriate Resources

Local authorities are already actively engaged in literacy support and reader development and public libraries regard this as one of the core functions of the library service. The range and type of resources provided varies across library services. This element will identify a core range of materials in libraries, online through libraries, in sports and recreation facilities and in housing services. It will develop a standard approach to the exploitation of the resources and to the guidance provided in the library service through its skilled workforce.

Reaching the Right People

Identifying and reaching children and families, young people and adults with literacy difficulties is a challenge in itself. This element of the framework will examine existing national and local literacy support structures and liaise with relevant agencies and community-based social inclusion groups, schools and other educational bodies with a view to establishing a sustainable cooperative mechanism for reaching individuals with low levels of literacy at all life stages.

Bridging the gap between home and school

Students spend an average of 30% of their waking hours in formal education. Statistics show that, outside of this time, many children are not exposed to learning opportunities in the home. Local authorities are uniquely placed to bridge this gap through a range of existing structures and through cooperation with other agencies.

Providing Access at the Right Times

Opportunities for All provides that local authorities offer optimum, user-friendly library opening hours. This element will investigate the most effective library opening hours to meet the needs of the diverse community of people with low levels of literacy.

This element of the framework will also investigate the availability of reading, study and learning areas in public libraries and will seek to maximise the provision of such dedicated spaces.

This work will also investigate the availability of managed study facilities based in community services and the optimum alignment of suitable literacy support with recreation and sport activities.



Roscommon County Council

Developing Guidelines for a Literacy Action Plan

The successful implementation of a programme to create a literacy support framework across local authorities will require each authority to implement and maintain a literacy action plan. This element of the framework will identify the essential components of a local literacy action plan and develop guidelines for implementation and ongoing sustainability at local authority level.

Developing a Literacy Support Structure

To ensure the successful implementation of a literacy programme and to provide for its sustainability into the future, a support structure is required at local and national level. At national level, a steering group consisting of key stakeholders will oversee the development of the framework, the roll-out to local authorities, the instigation and ongoing continuance of an awards programme and will monitor the programme performance. At local level, a Right to Read literacy network will be established in each local authority to collaborate on the support activities and ensure effective implementation and programme delivery.



Cavan County Council

Right to Read Champion Awards Programme

A national awards programme will be developed and implemented. It will recognise local authorities achieving a supportive and responsive literacy programme to an agreed level. The “Right to Read Champion” status will be awarded to local authorities which meet the set of defined stages.

Awareness-Raising

The Right to Read Campaign provides an opportunity for local authorities to coordinate and increase awareness of their activity in the field of literacy. This element of the framework will promote the potential of the local authority as a leader in the enhancement of literacy, the library as a welcoming, universally available, free service, sport and recreation activities as fun learning environments and opportunities for community-based spaces as safe and freely available locations for study.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Local authorities, with the City/County Librarian as coordinator, will review and evaluate the effectiveness of local activities and programmes and will report on an annual basis to ensure continual qualification for the award. The national steering group will oversee the ongoing performance and progress of the framework at national level by ensuring that requirements continue to be met. The group will monitor developments in the area of literacy with a view to ensuring that the programme develops in line with international best practice.

Local Programme for Right to Read

1. Incorporating Right to Read into Local Authority Plans

An overarching commitment to the Right to Read Campaign in both the City/County Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan provides a very powerful statement of intent and will bring together the strands that the different sections of the authority undertake to support increased levels of literacy in the community.

Each relevant sectoral plan will incorporate specific initiatives to promote individual and family literacy and community-based learning which will be monitored to highlight the progress.

Public library development plans already set targets for literacy support and adult learning and these will now incorporate targets for implementing the literacy programme.

2. Literacy Action Plan

With reference to the national guidelines, each authority will implement a literacy action plan for the local authority which is easily adapted in local contexts. The action plan should outline the nature of engagement from all local authority services, championed by the City/County Librarian, and address support for and involvement with local communities, early childcare settings, primary and secondary schools, adult education, local sports organisations and other key sections in the community.

3. Right to Read Literacy Network

A local Right to Read literacy network will be established within the local authority with representatives from local authority services and key local stakeholders to collaborate on the support activities and ensure effective implementation and programme delivery. The City/County Librarian will act as the literacy champion for the authority and the literacy network and will lead on the action plan and its implementation.

4. Cooperation and Partnership

The literacy network will work with senior management in the local authority, education bodies, community groups, local business and organisations and other key local actors in literacy development to develop a systematic approach for capacity building. Overall, the process will strengthen the capacity of stakeholders involved in literacy support and development, both at individual and institutional levels. It will ensure effective and sustainable policy development and programme-delivery collectively, in line with national policy and linked to national objectives.

5. Action Plan Implementation

The authority-wide action plan will be implemented in each local authority, based on the national guidelines, to create and maintain an environment aware of literacy needs and one which supports and leads on literacy development throughout the local authority.

6. Right to Read Champion Award

As part of the action plan, each authority will apply for the Right to Read Champion Award. Annual renewal of the award will be achieved by means of a report submission outlining continuing compliance with the requirements.

7. Communication/Promotion

A key element will be awareness-raising of local authority literacy support and programmes for literacy skills development across the local authority, local communities, education bodies and other key groups, agencies and organisations. This will establish an enhanced profile for the local authority as a city/county leading in literacy support and development.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of programme objectives, outputs and outcomes will be introduced and a report indicating compliance with the literacy award requirements will be compiled annually. This will identify tangible benefits to local communities, early childcare settings, schools, adult education, local sports organisations and other key sections in the community.



South Dublin County Council

Right to Read Champion Award

What is the Right to Read Champion Award?

The Right to Read Champion Award is a national initiative which recognises efforts by individual local authorities to support and promote literacy skills development actively and provide responsive literacy programmes throughout the authority.

The award particularly recognises activities which involve:

- a high level of citizen engagement
- enhanced access to services
- collaboration between the local authority, local communities and key agencies and organisations involved in literacy support
- efforts to respond to the needs of people experiencing literacy difficulties at all life stages
- innovation in the design and delivery of programmes to support and promote literacy development
- expanded opportunities for children's literacy development and family literacy support through community programmes.

Award Accreditation

Seven key stages are identified for a local authority to achieve the Right to Read Champion Award, including the inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes. The application and award accreditation will be based primarily around the implementation of the seven key stages. Each application, coordinated by the City/County Librarian, will also include evidence that each of the stages has been achieved.

A national steering group appointed by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government will review each application for achievement of the award to ensure that all key stages have been met. On receipt of the award status, the local authority will be required to report on an annual basis to ensure the authority continues to qualify for the award remaining in place.

Seven Key Stages

1. Review of existing programmes

Undertake a study of existing programmes and local literacy support structures with a focus on current activities and resources, and responsiveness to specific literacy needs. The review should take account of activities in public libraries, early childcare settings, primary and secondary schools, youth and community centres, homework clubs, sports clubs, summer camps, housing initiatives, community crèches and adult education, as well as other literacy programmes and initiatives within the authority. The current levels of impact of these programmes should also be assessed.



2. Literacy Action Plan

Establish best practice and implement a literacy action plan for the local authority which is easily adapted in local contexts. The action plan should outline the nature of engagement from all local authority services and address support for and involvement with local communities, early childcare settings, schools, adult education, local sports organisations and other key sections in the community.

3. Literacy Network

Establish a Right to Read literacy network across the local authority to collaborate on the support activities and ensure effective implementation and programme delivery. Appoint the City/County Librarian as the literacy champion for the authority to lead the literacy network, the action plan and its implementation. Develop and deliver awareness programmes for staff to communicate effectively with people who experience literacy difficulties.

4. Cooperation and Partnership

Work with senior management, education bodies, community groups, local business and organisations and other key local actors in literacy development to develop a systematic approach for capacity building. Overall, strengthen the capacity of stakeholders involved in literacy support and development, both at individual and institutional levels. Ensure effective and sustainable policy development and programme-delivery collectively in line with national policy and linked to national objectives.

5. Action Plan Implementation

Implement an authority-wide programme, based on the action plan, to create and maintain an environment aware of literacy needs and which supports and leads on literacy development throughout the local authority.

6. Communication/Promotion

Raise awareness of local authority support and programmes for literacy skills development across the local authority, local communities, education bodies and other key groups, agencies and organisations. Establish an enhanced profile for the local authority as a city/county leading in literacy support and development.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

Engage in ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programme objectives, outputs and outcomes, including tangible benefits to local communities, early childcare settings, schools, adult education, local sports organisations and other key sections in the community.



Offaly County Council

