



# The Magic of Reading

Monday 7 to Friday 11 July 2025



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# Introduction.



Welcome to an inspiring week of reading-themed sessions designed for our dedicated educational professionals and enthusiastic pupils!

We're thrilled to bring you a series of exciting events that celebrate the power of stories and the joy of shared reading. Throughout the week, we'll explore best practices and the latest research on how reading together can enrich learning, strengthen relationships, and spark imagination.

We're incredibly fortunate to be joined by a number of esteemed local and national experts who have generously offered their time and insights. Their passion for reading is sure to inspire and energise us all. A special highlight for our primary-aged pupils will be a live-streamed author visit from the brilliant Rashmi Sirdeshpande on Tuesday 8 July - an event not to be missed!

We're all aware of the concerning decline in reading habits and enjoyment among both children and adults. Yet, we also know that children who read regularly and by choice are more likely to thrive across many areas of life. Research consistently shows that reading can help bridge gaps caused by inequality, boost mental health and wellbeing, and lead to better long-term outcomes.

While many families understand the importance of reading, they may not always know how to begin, how to fit it into busy routines, or how to support their children when facing their own literacy challenges. That's why this week is about more than just celebrating reading—it's about equipping our families and professionals with practical ideas and inspiration to bring the magic of books into every home and classroom.

From reading with babies to fostering a love of shared reading in schools, and from building family reading habits to using stories to nurture empathy and wellbeing, our sessions will cover the full journey of reading at every age and stage. Let's come together to reignite a love of reading across our communities - one story at a time.

This week is the start of long-term initiative to help professionals and parents navigate the wonderful sources of support that are available both locally and nationally to help develop a love for reading and enable our children and young people to flourish and shine.

If you miss any of the sessions, then all the resources can be accessed on this [dedicated area of the website](#).

## Sara Tough OBE

Executive Director of Children's Services and  
Chair of the Children and Young People's Strategic Alliance (CYP SA)

# At a glance timetable of the week.

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Morning sessions</b>	No sessions	<b>10:00 – 11:00</b> Rashmi Sirdeshpande author visit at The Forum Norwich (available as a live stream for all Norfolk schools)	No sessions	<b>11:00 – 11:30</b> How can you inspire a love of reading and make it a habit? Annette Norton, Alex Sykes and Kay Burnett-Kiernan  <b>11:30 – 12:00</b> Bringing the Magic of Reading into Every Corner of the Classroom. Stephanie Brighton	No sessions
<b>Lunchtime sessions</b>	<b>12:30 – 12:50</b> Book Trust Keynote	<b>13:00 – 14:00</b> Rashmi Sirdeshpande author visit at The Place Great Yarmouth (in person event for ticketholders only)	<b>12:15 – 13:00</b> Choice and Voice. Apryl Markham-Uden and Adam McGee  <b>12:15 – 13:00</b> Supporting the Home Learning Environment. Charlotte Bennett	<b>12:30 – 13:00</b> The Magic of Reading and SEND. Sarah Gentle and Carrie Miller  <b>12:30 – 13:00</b> Bringing the beach into a Portage home visit Mel Warren	<b>12:15 – 13:00</b> Reading Challenges: The Challenge of getting more children to read more books! Laura Mouland with closing remarks from Councillor Margaret Dewsbury
<b>Afternoon sessions</b>	<b>15:30 – 16:15</b> <b>The Greatness of Graphic Novels</b> <b>Richard Ruddick</b>	<b>14:00 – 14:30</b> Book Dispensary: prescriptions for happier, more confident readers. Em Kuntze  <b>15:30 – 16:15</b> Reading as a way to support attachment and connection. Helen Peck  <b>15:30 – 16:15</b> Impactful reading events. Nick Oram	<b>14:15 – 15:00</b> Connecting across cultures – the power of oral storytelling. Robert Coyle  <b>14:15 – 15:00</b> Building Babies' Brains, Books and Story Sharing. Book Trust  <b>15:30 – 16:15</b> Read for Empathy. Sarah Mears	<b>14:15 – 15:00</b> What does it mean for Norwich to be a UNESCO City of Literature – and how to get involved. Alice Kent  <b>15:30 – 16:00</b> What a difference a dad makes; reading for pleasure and positive outcomes. Mark Osborn  <b>15:30 – 16:15</b> Building a whole school Reading Culture. Jon Biddle and Jenna James	No sessions
<b>Evening sessions</b>	No sessions	<b>18:30 – 19:00</b> How PEEP Talk groups support shared reading for pleasure Lindsey Symington	<b>18:30 – 19:00</b> Babies - positive relationships with story books Julia Jacka and Gemma Lane	<b>18:30 – 19:00</b> Supporting a Love of Reading in Community Groups Tracey Andrews	No sessions

# Monday

## 7th July

### **Book Trust – Keynote**

Time: 12.30 to 12.50  
Presenter: Diana Gerald MBE,  
Chief Executive BookTrust

Join BookTrust in this welcome to a wonderful week of joyful reading for our Norfolk professionals and communities. The keynote will outline BookTrust's journey to make shared reading and storytelling a part of all children's lives.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **The greatness of graphic novels**

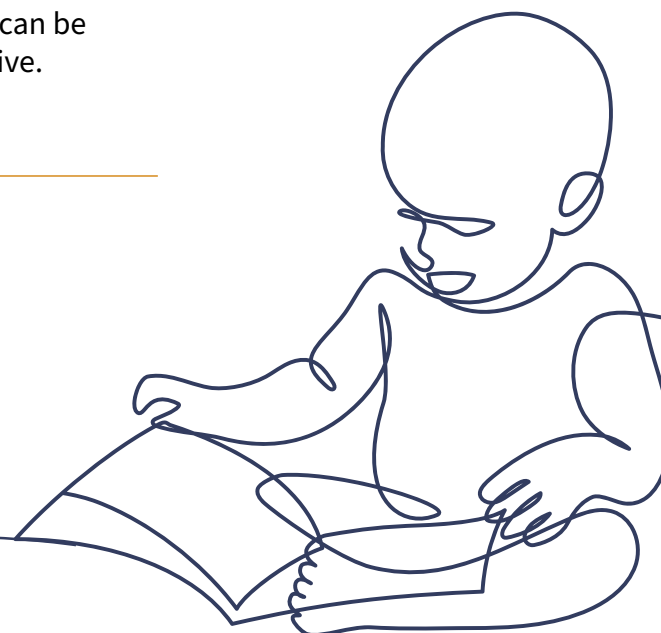
Time: 15:30 to 16:15  
Presenter: Richard Ruddick,  
Avenue Junior School

Suggested audience:  
Primary school professionals

Richard will look at how using graphic novels in the classroom and having them available in libraries can help to develop more confident readers. He will explore how he has used them himself and offer practical ideas that can be easily implemented and highly effective.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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# Tuesday

## 8th July

### Author visit

Time: 10:00 to 11:00 at the Forum Norwich (live stream and in person ticket holders only) and 13:00 to 14:00 at The Place, Great Yarmouth (in person ticket holders only)

Presenter: Rashmi Sirdeshpande

Suggested audience:  
Primary aged pupils and their teachers and teaching assistants

Rashmi Sirdeshpande is an award-winning children's author who loves taking big ideas and making them accessible and exciting for young readers. Rashmi writes non-fiction picture books that ignite children's curiosity, as well as fictional stories that crackle with imagination.

Join Rashmi for an uplifting session where you can discover how books can shape you, where book ideas come from, and five ways to supercharge your creativity.

[Click here to join the live stream at 10:00 – 11:00 at the Forum Norwich](#)

### Book Dispensary: prescriptions for happier, more confident readers

Time: 14:00 to 14:30  
Presenter: Em Kuntze, Kett's Books

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues who want to inspire young people to embark on their own reading adventures.

There's nothing better than seeing a child getting really invested in a book. But finding the book that grips them isn't always easy - and with the percentage of children saying they enjoy reading for pleasure at an all-time low, it feels like an urgent problem.

In this session, Em Kuntze, director at community bookshop Kett's Books in Wymondham, will present 'prescriptions' for common reading dilemmas: from moving beyond the Gruffalo and the Wimpy Kid, to engaging reluctant readers, and much more besides. She'll share the initiative they're pioneering, and you'll leave with a toolkit to help inspire your young people in their own reading adventures.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

### Reading as a way to support attachment and connection

Time: 15:30 to 16:15  
Presenter: Helen Peck, Virtual School NCC

Suggested audience:  
Parents/carers, education professionals and social care professionals - those with an interest in understanding how reading can support the development or repair of attachment.

This session will look at the importance of early attachment experiences, the importance of emotionally available adults for young people who have experienced developmental trauma, and how reading can be used as a supportive activity.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### Impactful reading events

Time: 15:30 to 16:15  
Presenter: Nick Oram,  
The National Literacy Trust

Suggested audience:  
Primary and secondary colleagues

Join Nick to find out more about the reading for pleasure events that Young Readers Programme schools have delivered across the UK. Nick will share and discuss what makes an impactful reading event for children.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

## How PEEP Talk Groups support shared reading for Pleasure

Time: 18:30 to 19:00  
Presenter: Lindsey Symington,  
Early Years NCC

Suggested audience:  
Early years and pre-school colleagues

PEEP TALK groups are supporting parents all over Norfolk to support their children's speech, language and communication development. PEEP TALK focuses on 'everyday interactions; and 'sharing stories anytime, anywhere' and their 'Learning together programmes' support transitions into school. Come along to this session where you can learn more about PEEP, find out how running a group in your school or setting can enhance relationships between parents and nursery and reception staff, and lead to positive impacts on children's outcomes.

**[Click here to join the meeting](#)**

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# Wednesday

## 9th July

### Choice and Voice

Time: 12:15 to 13.00  
Presenter: Apryl Markham-Uden and Adam McGee,  
Children's Librarians NCC

Suggested audience:  
Early Years, primary and secondary colleagues

Using our experience as Children's Librarians, we will talk about the importance and benefit of letting children make their own reading choices by allowing them to read what they want.

We'll share book recommendations based on what's popular in our libraries, and what we hear about directly from children during our school visits.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### Supporting the home learning environment

Time: 12:15 to 13.00  
Presenter: Charlotte Bennett,  
The National Literacy Trust

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues with an interest in pre-school reading

Join Charlotte Bennett, Early Years Project Manager at the National Literacy Trust, for a session on the Better Health Start for Life – 'Little Moments Together' campaign. This initiative encourages families to chat, play, and read with their 0–5-year-olds. The session will cover the campaign's aims, the National Literacy Trust's work, and free digital resources for families and professionals to support the home learning environment.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### Building babies' brains, books and story sharing

Time: 14:15 to 15.00  
Presenter: Katy McNamara and Lisa Eldret, BookTrust

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues with an interest in reading from its very beginnings

In this session we will examine why reading for pleasure with babies is important and what difference it can make to children and families lives.

BookTrust has delivered the BookStart baby programme to every baby born in England for over 25 years. Our work is research based and impact focused and in this session we will share what we know about the positive impact sharing stories and books with babies has on children and families lives.

We will demonstrate why shared reading moments matter, offer insight on how you can best support parents and carers to feel confident to engage in story sharing from the earliest age possible and give examples of excellent local BookTrust programme delivery that is making a difference within Norfolk communities.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### Connecting across cultures – the positive power of oral storytelling

Time: 14:15 to 15.00  
Presenter: Robert Coyle, Learning and Inclusion NCC

Suggested audience:  
Educational professionals wanting to learn more about oral storytelling

This session will examine how oral storytelling can develop an understanding of story, character and sequence and can be used to encourage children to discover new stories through reading. Focusing on the story alone, rather than the mechanical skills of reading, allows the children to enjoy, play with and participate in the story and learn key transferable reading and writing skills. We will also look at stories as a tool for learning about other



cultures and traditions and how traditional stories have travelled through place and time!

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **Read for empathy**

Time: 15:30 to 16.15

Presenter: Sarah Mears, Empathy Lab

Suggested audience:

Primary and secondary professionals and anyone with an interest in using books for empathy

EmpathyLab is a charitable social enterprise whose mission is to raise an empathy educated generation, inspired to build a better world for everyone. Our strategy is based on scientific research showing that empathy is a learnable skill, and that books are a practical, powerful tool to build it. In this session:

- Discover how reading builds empathy, supporting children and young people's reading for pleasure, wellbeing, and active citizenship
- Explore four key empathy skills that can be built through reading
- Learn practical ways to be an empathy builder and harness the power of reading for a more connected school or local community

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **Babies – Positive relationships with story books**

Time: 18:30 to 19:00

Presenter: Julia Jacka and Gemma Lane,  
Early Years NCC

Suggested audience:

Colleagues who want to know more the power of books and babies

Discover how story books can nurture emotional bonds and early communication in babies. “Babies – Positive Relationships with Story Books” explores how simple, shared book experiences support social development, build trust, and create joyful routines. With practical ideas and real-life examples, this session will inspire you to make books a meaningful part of babies’ everyday worlds.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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# Thursday

## 10th July

### **How can you inspire a love of reading and make it a habit?**

Time: 11.00 to 11.30  
Presenter: Annette Norton, Alex Sykes and Kay Burnett-Kiernan, Adult Learning NCC

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues with an interest in sharing stories in a fun and interactive way

Story Sacks are an ideal way to inspire reading. They encourage conversations about books, characters, settings, locations, costumes and much more!

Story Sacks inspire exploration and further reading opportunities, encouraging children to read regularly for pleasure. Reading becomes more enjoyable and less of a chore – great for parents and children!

In this session Adult Learning will share the secrets of Story Sacks and let you know about other ways the service can support parents to read regularly with their family. Adult Learning have a range of courses supporting literacy skills,

helping to break down barriers and supporting adults to improve their own literacy skills, so they can inspire others to read too.

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### **Bringing the magic of reading into every corner of the classroom**

Time: 11:30 to 12:00  
Presenter: Stephanie Brighton, Lingwood Primary Academy

Suggested audience:  
Primary school practitioners

Stephanie will talk about how to make reading a part of every aspect of learning right from the start of school. She will share practical ideas drawn from her experiences as a reception teacher

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **Bringing the beach into a Portage home visit**

Time: 12:30 to 13:00  
Presenter: Mel Warren, Portage team NCC

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues with an interest in sensory stories

Discover the power of sensory stories to bring the world of books to life for children and young

learners. Join Mel on a trip to the seaside with the wonderful interactive book Off to the Beach!

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **The magic of reading and SEND**

Time: 12:30 to 13:00  
Presenter: Sarah Gentle and Carrie Miller, Education Psychology and Specialist Support NCC

Suggested audience:  
Primary and secondary colleagues

We will share practical experiences and real-life examples of how to engage non-readers in a love of book and stories. We will explore possible barriers and share practical ideas on how to light the spark of reading for pleasure in all children and young people.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **What does it mean for Norwich to be a UNESCO city of literature – and how to get involved**

Time: 14.15 to 15:00  
Presenter: Alice Kent, UNESCO City of Literature Manager

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues who want to find out more about UNESCO City of Literature

Have you noticed the UNESCO City of Literature signs on the way into Norwich and wondered what it all means?! Join us for this Interactive, informal session to find out more about why Norwich is a UNESCO City of Literature, what it means and how you can get involved. Also, hear more about the National Centre for Writing based here in Norwich and the opportunities and resources available to support reading for fun in and out of the classroom.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **Building a whole school reading culture**

Time: 15:30 to 16:15  
Presenter: Jon Biddle and Jenna James, Moorland Primary School

Suggested audience:  
Primary practitioners

Jon and Jenna will talk about the importance of building a school reading culture. As well as

briefly exploring the evidence around the impact of Reading for Pleasure, they will share practical and sustainable ideas that can be implemented across the whole school.

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### **What a difference a dad makes: reading for pleasure and positive outcomes**

Time: 15:30 to 16:00  
Presenter: Mark Osborn, Partnership, Inclusion and Practice NCC

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues interested in finding out about male role models and reading

This session will look at what recent research evidence tells us about fathers reading with their children and the impact this has on their outcomes. We will also hear from local dads about their experiences and consider how all services working with families can make small changes to encourage and promote fathers reading with their children every day.

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

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### **Supporting a love of reading in community groups**

Time: 18:30 to 19:00  
Presenter: Tracey Andrews, Early Years NCC

Suggested audience:  
Colleagues interested in finding about more about shared reading experiences with toddlers

This session will explore the vital role that Parent and Toddler groups play in the lives of young children and their families. It will focus on the importance of nurturing a love of stories from an early age and highlight a range of resources available to help group leaders promote shared reading experiences. The session will also provide an overview of Norfolk's targeted approach to distributing Bookstart packs to children aged 1–4, ensuring every child has the opportunity to enjoy books at home.

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# Friday

## 11th July

### **Reading challenges: The challenge of getting more children to read more books!**

Time: 12:15 to 13.30

Presenter: Laura Mouland, Community Librarian NCC with closing conference remarks from Councillor Margaret Dewsbury

#### **Suggested audience:**

Colleagues with an interest in developing reading for long-term pleasure habits

Some reading challenges are successful, some not. This session explores what makes a difference and how to keep children engaged. The ultimate aim? A long-term reading for pleasure habit that has significant wider benefits for children

**[Click here to join the meeting](#)**

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# About the presenters.

## **Rashmi Sirdeshpande**

Rashmi Sirdeshpande is a lawyer turned children's author who loves taking big ideas and making them accessible and exciting for young readers. Rashmi writes non-fiction picture books that ignite children's curiosity, as well as fictional stories that crackle with imagination. An official World Book Day author for 2022, her journey into writing began in 2017/18, she was selected as one of 11 Penguin Random House mentees on the WriteNow programme for underrepresented voices in publishing. Her first picture book, *Never Show a T-Rex a Book*, illustrated by Diane Ewen, won the 2021 Society of Authors Queen's Knickers Award and the Anna Dewdney Read-Together Award in the USA and was shortlisted for the Lollies 2022. The sequel was shortlisted for the Sainsbury's Children's Book Award 2021. Her non-fiction book, *Good News*, illustrated by Adam Hayes, was shortlisted for the Blue Peter Book Awards in the Best Book with Facts category.

## **Diana Gerald MBE:**

Diana Gerald MBE has been BookTrust's Chief Executive since 2015. She is a Trustee of the Mohn Westlake Foundation – one of the UK's largest grant givers in supporting disadvantaged children and young people in the arts, culture and education. She is Deputy Chair of Creative Education Trust, a network of schools in disadvantaged areas of the Midlands and East of England, and also Chair of the Bentley Wood Trust, an outstanding school in Stanmore.

## **Sarah Mears**

Sarah Mears is a director and co-founder of EmpathyLab, a charitable social enterprise promoting the proven power of books to build children's empathy. We work with schools and public libraries, and in partnership with academics and publishers. We use a creative character-based approach through high quality contemporary children's literature to help children develop the key empathy skills that are fundamental to social and emotional learning and sustaining positive relationships. Sarah's day job is as Programme Director at Libraries Connected supporting public libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

## **Charlotte Bennett**

Charlotte has over 15 years of experience in early years settings and schools, including roles as a teacher and early years leader. She is currently the Early Years Project Manager at the National Literacy Trust, where she collaborates to deliver initiatives such as the Better Health Start for Life – 'Little Moments Together' campaign.

## **Nick Oram**

Nick is Programme Manager for the Young Readers Programme, the National Literacy Trust's longstanding reading for enjoyment and book choice programme which works with primary schools across the UK.

He has 15 years of experience working on education initiatives in the third sector, and was a co-writer on the National Literacy Trust's recent report 'Children and young people's reading in 2024', which highlighted the continued decline in children and young people saying they enjoy reading in their free time.

## **Katy McNamara and Lisa Eldret**

Katy McNamara and Lisa Eldret are both senior partnership managers for BookTrust. They work with communities and local authorities in Central England to deliver Book Trust programmes designed to reach more children, particularly those who are disadvantaged.

## **Em Kuntze**

Kett's Books is a not-for-profit bookshop located in Wymondham, Norfolk. It was founded by the community in 2013 and is dedicated to growing a love of reading through its shop, outreach, and partnerships with schools. Em brings her experience in teaching, writing and storytelling to her role at Kett's, and is also at work on her first novel for middle grade readers.

## **Mark Osborn**

Mark works for Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership as the Safeguarding Intelligence and Performance Coordinator and also delivers "Caring Dads" a programme for domestic abuse perpetrators. Mark has worked with fathers for over 25 years during which he has regularly presented at local, regional national and international conferences and has a body of published articles on fathers, safeguarding practice and social inclusion in international academic and practice journals. Mark completed his PhD in 2007 focused on young fathers and their experience of social exclusion.

### **Lindsey Symington**

Lindsey Symington is an Early Years Adviser in the Family Information and Home Learning team at NCC. She is a PEEP trainer.

She has worked as a reception teacher, the teacher in a children's centre, and worked in early years settings and stay and play groups. She volunteered at a refugee camp in Dunkirk.

In all of these job roles, she has observed the vital importance of partnerships with parents and how different groups support this.

### **Alex Sykes**

Alex is the Curriculum Manager for Family Learning within Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning. He and his team of qualified tutors can work with schools around Norfolk to support and guide parents with modern teaching expectations, methods, language and equipment – essentially not just what pupils are taught, but how they are taught it. This not only supports home-learning but empowers parents and families.

Before working in Adult Learning, Alex has taught in schools ranging from Primary to Secondary and Further Education college; including specialised SEND provision. Prior to working in education, Alex worked for various media corporations, including the BBC. He is passionate about the joys of learning and the power of supporting families and young children from an early age to create a lifelong love of learning.

### **Annette Norton**

Annette is Norfolk Adult Learning's Curriculum Manager for English. Courses include Functional Skills, GCSE English and non-accredited English Skills Booster courses, supporting adults with their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in relaxed, friendly and supportive sessions, online and in venues across Norfolk.

### **Kay Burnett-Kiernan**

Kay is the curriculum manager for Early Years and Education within Norfolk County Council's Adult Learning. Kay and her team of tutors and assessors, support adult learners to gain qualifications to begin, or enhance, their careers within early years settings and schools. We help to inspire an enthusiasm for reading, ensuring that our learners know how to foster a love of books from the outset.

### **Laura Mouland**

Laura Mouland is a Community Librarian for Children and Young People. She has coordinated the annual Summer Reading Challenge in Norfolk for the last four years. This has included running a partnership pilot looking at improving the effectiveness of the challenge in schools.

### **Apryl Markham-Uden and Adam McGee**

Apryl Markham-Uden and Adam McGee, Library Service Co-ordinators at the Millennium Library, Norwich. Apryl and Adam oversee the buying and stock for one of the busiest libraries in the country and have an amazing knowledge of children and young people's stock.

### **Jon Biddle**

Jon is an experienced primary school teacher and English lead. He currently teaches at Moorlands Primary Academy. Jon is a passionate advocate of Reading for Pleasure, winning the 2018 RfP Experienced Teacher of the Year award and the 2021 RfP School of the Year award. He coordinates the national Patron of Reading initiative, which is focused on schools and authors developing long term relationships, is an advisor for Empathy Lab and is part of the UKLA national council. Jon writes a regular column about Reading for Pleasure for Educate magazine, where he shares practical ideas that can be introduced into the classroom, and regularly contributes to other publications. He is also part of the editorial team for English 4-11 magazine. Jon loves reading children's books, and is a particular fan of graphic novels.

### **Richard Ruddick**

Richard is a year 6 teacher and reading lead, who currently teaches at Avenue Junior School in Norwich. He is passionate about helping children to develop a love for reading and creating positive attitudes towards it through the use of graphic novels. Richard has written several articles and examples of practise about the importance of graphic novels and speaks regularly at conferences on this subject.

### **Robert Coyle**

Robert Coyle is an EAL (English as an Additional Language) Adviser at NCC. He has previously worked as a teacher in Europe, Africa and the Middle East and has long held a fascination in traditional tales and how they evolve across the globe. He is the author of 'Telling Tales', a collection of stories for oral storytelling and a number of other children's books. He has run storytelling workshops for parents, teachers and children.



### **Sarah Gentle**

Sarah is a Specialist Teacher for the SEMH SRBs in Norfolk. She is a highly experienced teacher and SENCO who has worked in a wide range of educational settings, from mainstream schools to Pupil Referral Units (SSSfN), and across all key stages. Prior to her current role, Sarah was a Specialist Teacher within EPSS. She uses Therapeutic Story Writing, play, art, books and story to help children make sense of difficult experiences. Sarah is also an accredited Therapeutic Story Writing practitioner and trainer.

### **Carrie Miller**

Carrie is a Specialist Teacher and Senior Adviser within Education Psychology and Specialist Support (EPSS). She is an experienced teacher and SENCO and is qualified to assess and identify literacy difficulties. She currently works with children and young people across all key stages, supporting them to access learning (particularly reading and writing) in school. She is currently working with colleagues to develop the Norfolk Literacy for All strategy, with the aim of promoting the right to literacy for all and fair access to effective support for all children and young people.

### **Tracey Andrews**

Tracey is an Early Years Improvement and Inclusion Officer with Norfolk County Council's Early Years Team. In her role as a Community Offer Lead, she supports Parent and Toddler group leaders across the county to provide high-quality experiences for children and families. Tracey has also played a key role for several years in Norfolk's delivery of BookTrust's Early Years Targeted Offer, using data and local insights to ensure that Bookstart packs reach the families who will benefit most.

### **Mel Warren**

Mel works in Norfolk's portage service as the team lead. Portage is a free home visiting educational service for pre-school children with additional needs, supporting parents and carers to help their children to enjoy better outcomes. Mel has worked in Portage for 24 years now and is passionate about bringing books to life for children who may find it difficult to access areas/activities that other children can.

### **Helen Peck**

Helen works as an adviser for Norfolk Virtual School, offering advice, guidance and training to schools to support the educational outcomes of children in care, previously in care, kinship care and those with a social worker. Before joining the Virtual school Helen worked as primary school teacher for 10 years and as a County Moderator for writing for five years. Her favourite children's book – currently – is The Koala who Could by Rachel Bright

### **Stephanie Brighton**

Stephanie is a teacher at a Lingwood Primary Academy in Norfolk. Initially starting her career in a city school Stephanie has been teaching for over 17 years, with most of her experience in Early Years. Stephanie is passionate about getting children to love books and stories and has far too many of her own (according to her husband). Each year she runs a 'Book Club' for children in Reception in Year 1 and loves finding ways to make reading fun and inviting for all. Stephanie will be sharing ways in which she encourages children and their families to embrace a love of reading.

### **Councillor Margaret Dewsbury**

Councillor Margaret Dewsbury is a dedicated and passionate councillor with more than 25 years' experience of local government in Norfolk. Since joining Norfolk County Council in 2013, her portfolio has grown to include Chair of the Communities Committee and the Norfolk Arts Forum along with involvement in a wide range of additional council work. Margaret's career was in Early Years, tutoring courses for parents and playgroup staff and then working as an Early Years Ofsted Inspector. She knows developing the ability to read and a love of books and reading at an early age is essential as it is the basis of all future learning, employment, and future prospects.

### **Jenna James**

Jenna is an experienced early years teacher. She has worked across a range of early years settings over the past thirteen years and currently teaches across two federated schools as part of their EYFS team. Jenna's aim across both schools is to encourage a love of reading by fostering a positive reading environment, sharing the benefits of reading with parents and promoting a lifelong love of books from an early age.

### **Julia Jacka**

Julia is an Early Years Intervention Officer for the Learning and Achievement Service at NCC. She delivers training to the early years workforce across Norfolk providing professional development in areas such as EYFS, Safeguarding and the National Professional Qualification (NPQEYL) for leaders and managers. Julia has recently been involved in the DfE's Education Recovery Programme as an expert supporting managers across Norfolk and Suffolk. Previously, she has therapeutically supported families through a Children's centre partnership role, owned and managed a PVI Early Years nursery & managed her own childminding business. Julia is passionate about looking after our youngest children and has leadership responsibility delivering a Baby Project that champions quality practice within nursery baby rooms & childminder learning environments. She is Elklan trained and part of the team who deliver the Peep TALK training in Norfolk.

### **Gemma Lane**

Gemma Lane is an Early Years Intervention Officer for the Learning and Achievement Service at NCC. She delivers training to the early years workforce across Norfolk providing professional development in areas such as EYFS, Safeguarding, Level 3 Setting SENCo and the National Professional Qualification (NPQEYL) for leaders and managers. Gemma has recently been involved in the DfE's Education Recovery Programme as an Area Lead, supporting settings in Norfolk and Suffolk. Previously, she managed a PVI early years setting and has been a teacher with senior management responsibilities for ten years. Gemma's passionate about wellbeing and delivers Yoga and Mindfulness training with the wider team at NCC. She is a trainer for the Peep TALK programme supporting parents and children to learn together.

### **Alice Kent**

Alice works with the National Centre for Writing (NCW) part-time to help shape conversations around Norwich as a UNESCO City of Literature - working towards a shared city-strategy. If you love Norwich and are interested in how books, reading and writing can help shape positive change in the city, then drop her a message. She also works as Head of Communications for a think-tank - the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) – which is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, to improve data to support the inclusive and sustainable growth of the creative industries across the UK. She's also a non-fiction writer and has twice been longlisted twice for The Observer / Burgess Prize for Arts Journalism. She edited the book Walking Norwich: The Real and Imagined City.



# Thank you.

It remains overwhelming to see the level of support and commitment from all those involved in the planning and delivery of these exceptional learning events. Growing from strength to strength, it is a true testament to our universal ambition to work more closely together and bring about better outcomes for the children and families we serve. As always, a special thank you goes to all the young people involved, no matter how big or small your input. We really do appreciate it.



