

Northumberland Schools Library Service

Newsletter 79

March 2026

Another successful conference

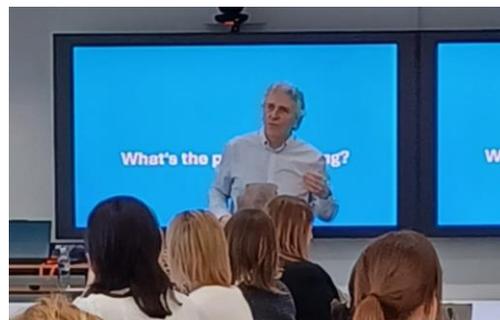
The third SLS conference took place early in February and this year's theme was 'Building a Reading Culture' in your school.

The team at SLS started planning this conference long before the government announced that 2026 would be a 'National Year of Reading' - so we were well ahead of the game!

We were delighted to welcome two keynote speakers this year – acclaimed children's author, Ross Welford and local author & storyteller, Richard O'Neill.

Ross is also a member of The Magic Circle and entertained us with some sleight of hand, as well as delivering a thought-provoking address on the writer's craft and how to inspire children to read for pleasure.

Richard shared powerful stories from his colourful early life in the travelling community, reflecting on how these experiences shaped both his own reading journey and his passion for encouraging children to become enthusiastic readers..



We also heard from Dr Kate Hope, speech and language therapist and enjoyed three brilliant presentations from Eastlea Primary School, Swarland Primary School and Swansfield Park Primary School each showcasing the successful strategies they use to foster a love of reading within their school communities.

As with all our conferences, delegates had the opportunity to explore the wide range of high-quality resources available through SLS. The day was expertly opened and closed by our valued colleague, Damian Burke from the School Improvement Team.



The entire SLS team invested significant time, energy and dedication into delivering this event, and we are thrilled that it was so warmly received.

"Well delivered. Engaging speakers. Lots of great ideas to draw on."

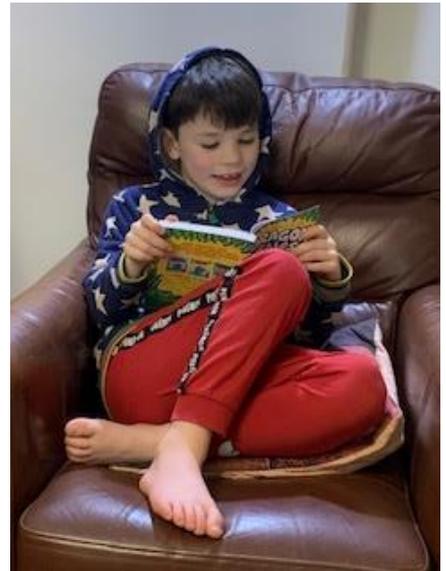
"I've had a great day. I feel inspired and have lots of takeaway ideas."

"Thank you it was really positive and inspiring."

National Year of Reading 2026 : Go All In

The National Year of Reading campaign is now well underway, and momentum is building across the country. If your school has not yet registered on [the official website](#), we strongly encourage you to do so as soon as possible.

A wide range of events are being planned throughout the year, complemented by an extensive range of resources and practical ideas to support reading across all phases — from Early Years through to Secondary School. It's a fantastic opportunity to strengthen your school's reading culture and be part of a nationwide celebration of reading.



The website [Authorfy](#) is offering **free access** throughout the year. This is a fantastic resource – the largest library of children's author videos in the world with thousands of book extracts and fantastic resources.

Shaping the Future of Northumberland Libraries

Northumberland's **Public** Library Service is currently being redesigned, and a consultation is now underway to gather the views of residents across the county, **especially** those of children and young people.

[There is a specific children and young people consultation survey here](#)

For older pupils, perhaps as part of a PHSCE lesson, you may wish to encourage them to take some time to read the [background information and proposals](#) before completing the [consultation](#)

If you would like a member of library staff to introduce the consultation to pupils, you are welcome to arrange a visit to your local library, or we will make every effort to attend school.

For printed copies of the consultation or copies in an alternative format please email libraries.consult@northumberland.gov.uk

The consultation closes at 11.59pm on Monday 13th April

NCC Portal is open for business!

Once again, it is that time of the year when the NCC SLA portal is open and schools can fill their baskets with the services they wish to purchase.

The Schools Library Service SLAs can be found in the Curriculum Support section.

We offer SLAs for **First, Primary, Special, Middle, Secondary** and **High Schools** as well as **Nurseries, Childminders** and other **Educational Settings**.

Please contact us directly at generalsls@northumberland.gov.uk if you require any additional information about what is included in our packages. We'd be happy to arrange a no obligation visit to your school to assess your library and classroom resources. Alternatively, give us a call on 01670 620072 if you would like to discuss your requirements.

Our SLAs are very flexible, and we are sure to have a package which meets your needs...and your budget!

Goodbye to Jackie

At Easter, we will be saying a fond farewell to Jackie Barnes as she retires from her role as Librarian at SLS.

Jackie has been a valued member of the team for almost 18 years. During that time, she has made an enormous contribution to the service, supporting schools with dedication, expertise and warmth.

As she begins this exciting new chapter, Jackie is looking forward to spending more time with her family — as well as enjoying plenty of walks with her dogs and time with her horse.



We are pleased to share that Deborah Whinney will be stepping into the role of SLS Librarian. She will be supported, as always, by the wider SLS team to ensure a smooth transition and continued high-quality service for our schools.

And finally.....

We welcome any comments and feedback about our service. Please contact us by email at generalsls@northumberland.gov.uk and keep up to date with all our latest news follow us on Facebook & Instagram @NLandSLS

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