



## **Are You Ready to get seriously silly this summer?**

Sunderland Libraries Services is encouraging 4 -11 year olds to read six or more books over the summer holidays for the national Summer Reading Challenge.

This year the annual event has gone digital due to social distancing, but it will launch earlier than usual to keep children reading over the summer and support parents and carers with children already at home.

This year's Summer Reading Challenge will run from June to September, launching on Friday 5 June and the theme for this year is "Silly Squad" - a celebration of funny books, happiness and laughter, featuring bespoke artwork from award-winning children's author and illustrator, Laura Ellen Anderson.

The challenge will launch with a virtual 'Let's Get Silly' programme, featuring special silly readings, family activities and draw-a-longs from guest celebrities and authors.

Over the summer, Sunderland Libraries Services will continue to run the Challenge in partnership with The Reading Agency, delivering it via virtual services and e-lending platforms, and adapting their delivery if social distancing measures develop and change.

Councillor John Kelly, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture at Sunderland City Council, said: "This is a great initiative to keep children reading while schools are closed, and it's fantastic to see that they can have fun with a virtual programme over the summer holidays too.

"Sunderland Libraries and their partners are working hard to ensure everyone can access books even while libraries remain closed, and I am delighted that this can also include the brilliant Summer Reading Challenge."

The challenge kicks off on Friday 5 June, when guest celebrities and authors will take part in a whole host of virtual events on the Summer Reading Challenge Facebook page.

The Challenge website will be free to access and a place for children to rate and review their books and work towards their reading goal. It will also feature video content, games, quizzes, and digital and downloadable activities to incentivise and encourage children and their families to take part in the Challenge at home.

Children's author Jacqueline Wilson is a Summer Reading Challenge Ambassador, she said: "I feel the Summer Reading Challenge is extra important this year! How sensible to have a Silly theme. We've all had to deal with serious and scary issues, so it's time for a bit of fun. There are so many comical and crazy children's books to cheer us all up. Let's get reading and get happy!"

**The following virtual events have been confirmed:**

- CBBC's Sam and Mark kick-off the party with their unique brand of 'silly' fun.
- Readings and jokes from authors including David Baddiel, Ben Fogle, Philip Ardagh, Paul O'Grady, Konnie Huq and Samantha Baines.
- Silly Time with the BBC's Katie Thistleton and Hacker T Dog.
- Draw-a-Longs with official Summer Reading Challenge illustrator Laura Ellen Anderson, and Rob Biddulph.
- Magic Tricks and Mind-Bending Maths with Mr Bates from The Shed School.
- Poetry with performance poet and playwright Joseph Coelho.
- Crafts, colour and creativity with the original queen of colouring, Johanna Basford.
- Bedtime Reading session with actor Charlie Condou reading from *This is Gus* by Chris Chatterton, published by Macmillan Children's Books.
- Unveiling of the official 'Let's Get Silly!' theme song by Harry Baker and Chris Read.

For more information on the Summer Reading Challenge visit [www.sunderland.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/libraries)

Follow the Summer Reading Challenge at [www.facebook.com/SummerReadingChallengeUK](https://www.facebook.com/SummerReadingChallengeUK) and on Twitter @readingagency #summerreadingchallenge

Refer to the website: <https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/> for more details