

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016–2021

LIBRARIES
TASKFORCE



Libraries are free and open to everyone. They bring people together in vibrant community hubs, provide a shared sense of place for their users and play a vital role in helping public services reach out into communities.

Stronger, more resilient communities

Libraries should be acknowledged and celebrated as an essential part of community life, promoting independence and resilience, where the profile of local library users reflects the makeup of their community. Councils and other commissioners should consider libraries first when planning to provide access to a range of public information and services.

“The love that I get here and the help that I can give to other people; it’s the first time I feel wanted and it’s absolutely excellent.”

Customer comment at Mowbray Gardens Library.

CASE STUDY

Communities flourish in Rotherham

A library project in a deprived part of Rotherham is giving residents with mental health issues a vital way to share their experiences, gain strength from each other and feel “normal” again.

Based at Mowbray Gardens Library, ‘Flourish’ uses art-based activities such as storytelling, creative writing, poetry and painting to allow people to come together and develop friendships.

In collaboration with guest poets and artists, who have the experience of working with those with mental health issues, ‘Flourish’ challenges the stigma about mental health.

More importantly, it creates an empowering, safe space for participants where their experiences can be shared and help others to recover.

Library users at Mowbray Gardens enjoying crafts and conversation.



COMMUNITIES

Libraries Deliver

Places where diverse communities can integrate

Events to suit a variety of needs

A welcoming space for all

Activities for all ages to enjoy

Safe, non-judgemental spaces for social interaction

Opportunities to reduce loneliness



LIBRARIES:

- Reach and support the whole community regardless of age, gender, socio-economic status or educational attainment.
- Provide space where groups can come together and enjoy activities that are co-designed with local people, to meet their needs.
- Offer local services available through 'community hubs', bringing together different partners' offerings in a seamless way.
- Are safe, welcoming and accessible physical and virtual environments freely open to all, which encourage participation, creativity and mutual learning and support.
- Are uniquely placed to help local government and its partners deliver their strategic objectives, whether linked to community cohesion, health and wellbeing, economic growth, promoting independent living or increasing life chances.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Councils to integrate library strategies more closely into their broader strategic planning.
- Consider how partnerships with other public services can work better for people in the trusted setting of a local library.
- Encourage people who commission central and local government services to regard libraries as one of their natural first choices to deliver services to local communities.
- Help to reduce digital exclusion by bringing people together through access to free technology and innovation.

35.6% of people living in the most disadvantaged areas visit their library.

Taking Part Survey: England 2016/17.

“Libraries can connect communities and change lives. They provide safe spaces in the heart of their communities, and provide many services targeting people who are living on a low income, people who are lonely, unemployed, or elderly, and people with long term medical conditions or disabilities.”

Carnegie UK Trust.

CASE STUDY

Finding sanctuary in libraries

Thimblemill Library in Sandwell is the UK's first 'library of sanctuary', which recognises the role the library plays in welcoming refugees and migrants into the local community.

The library is a focal point for refugee support work in the local community. It plays host to Bearwood Action for Refugees – a local voluntary group which raises money for refugees in Europe and supports people seeking sanctuary in the local area. It also runs training courses in befriending refugees, and holds monthly community lunches to welcome people seeking sanctuary in the local area.

In addition, it offers several local services, including ESOL (English as a Second Language) classes, health walks and community tea-and-toast sessions.



CASE STUDY

Making new friends in the City

Workers in the heart of London are making new friends and finding support networks thanks to weekly activities held in a local library.

Shoe Lane Library is situated in the business heart of London and is the only community facility in the area. Weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions offer a vital meeting place for parents – many of whom are living and working in the City but far from family and friends.

The City Corporation's Social Wellbeing Strategy has now been approved and includes a commitment to adopt the 'Libraries First' approach outlined in *Libraries Deliver: Ambition*.



“We want to see vibrant communities in which everyone plays a part and for people from all backgrounds to have access to, and make use of, community hubs such as libraries.

“We support the use of libraries and other community hubs to support integration and challenge them to maximise their contribution to building integrated communities.”

Integrated Communities Strategy, Green Paper 2018, HM Government.

“Libraries are more than just repositories for books – they play a broad and valuable role in their communities. Public libraries are trusted spaces, free to enter and open to everyone. In them, people can explore and share reading, information, knowledge and culture.”

Arts Council England.

**Libraries
Deliver**

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Follow progress on our Action Plan via:

Our website www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce

Our blog libriestaskforce.blog.gov.uk

Twitter @LibTaskforce

Contact the Libraries Taskforce team:

Email: libriestaskforce@culture.gov.uk

NEXT STEPS

- Get in touch with your local libraries to see how you can work together
- Read the Libraries Deliver: Ambition report
- Talk to local groups and organisations who might want to work with libraries
- Liaise with other service providers to share learning and best practice around working with library services