

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

LIBRARIES  
TASKFORCE



**Libraries support lifelong learning, self improvement and social mobility. They are places where communities and individuals can share ideas and learn, offering facilities and practical support to help people get online and develop their digital skills.**

# Helping everyone achieve their full potential by offering improved digital access and literacy

Libraries play an important role supplementing formal learning through activities such as book groups, homework and code clubs, discussion groups and events for children and families. They also provide opportunities for adult learning at all stages and levels, giving everyone opportunities to learn new skills and explore a range of subjects, either independently or in groups.

Libraries provide digital access and support the improvement of digital literacy, which is critical to central and local government strategies around economic development, channel-shift, reducing social isolation and creating community cohesion.

## CASE STUDY

### Hour of Code with the over 60s

You're never too old to learn something new. Leeds libraries are using digital technology to promote the health benefits that mentally-stimulating activities have on older people.

The workshops covered an introduction to coding, avoided any unnecessary jargon, and provided examples of coding the audience could relate to.

*Older people coding clubs in Leeds  
© Rachel Benn/Leeds libraries.*







## LIBRARIES OFFER:

- Online access including free wifi and over 40,000 computers.
- The opportunity to borrow devices such as tablets to extend digital access beyond library buildings.
- A wide range of digital initiatives, including code clubs, and the innovative Make It Digital in partnership with the BBC.
- Makerspaces, FabLabs, studios and Innovation spaces, and other physical places where people can use cutting-edge digital equipment. They are inspiring the younger generation to engage with the STEM agenda (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), exploring new ideas to build their creativity and confidence.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Work closely with the Department for Education to consider how learning in libraries could further complement the role of schools, colleges and universities.
- Develop ways to deliver the legal entitlement to free publicly-funded training in basic digital skills for people in England aged 19+ who need it.
- Extend makerspaces to more libraries in England.
- Work with private sector partners for mutual benefits in giving communities the opportunities to learn.

**“Access to Research provides free access to over 15 million academic research papers through local libraries”**

[www.accesstoresearch.org.uk](http://www.accesstoresearch.org.uk)

**“In 2017, nearly half of public libraries saw an increase in the number of customer requests for help with digital skills and resources”**

*Lorensbergs' netloan customer survey 2018.*

## CASE STUDY

### Idea Stores

One of the most visible illustrations of the natural partnership between libraries and learning can be seen in the concept of Idea Stores. The first was set up in 2002, when Tower Hamlets came up with the concept of putting a library, cafe, adult education classes and computer access under one roof. “Idea Stores are more than just a library or a place for learning. As well as library services, they offer a wide range of adult learning courses and an extensive activities and events programme.”

Idea Store library spaces and learning spaces are totally integrated: all classrooms or ‘Learning Labs’ are in the main body of the store; and the continuum between informal and formal learning opportunities is clear to all.

[www.ideastore.co.uk](http://www.ideastore.co.uk)

*Idea Store Watney Market, Tower Hamlets.*



## CASE STUDY

### Kent libraries Digital Dens

Recognising that digital skill development is a vital area to address, Kent started with a Code Club in one of their libraries. This was oversubscribed, proving there is an appetite, and Kent were successful in winning funding to set up 5 digital clubs in locations of deprivation in the county. The aim of which was to tackle disadvantage among children (ages 8-11) by providing access to technology that they might not otherwise have.

Training on all of the equipment and an introduction to coding has been provided to staff and current volunteers, who in turn can pass on that knowledge to anyone who joins at a later date.

*Digital Den in Gravesend © Kent libraries.*



**“Libraries have an important role to play in making sure everyone, in every part of the country, makes the most of the digital economy... Libraries are also increasingly helping people develop higher level digital skills.”**

UK Digital Strategy, 2017, HM Government.

**“People are increasingly being directed by other agencies to the library, such as job seekers from the Department of Work and Pensions. There’s definitely the expectation now that the library is where to go to if you want free internet access, or if you need support in filling out online forms.”**

More short stories from the People’s Network. Lorensbergs/CILIP.

**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](http://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](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce)

**Our blog** [libriestaskforce.blog.gov.uk](http://libriestaskforce.blog.gov.uk)

**Twitter** @LibTaskforce

### Contact the Libraries Taskforce team:

Email: [libriestaskforce@culture.gov.uk](mailto:libriestaskforce@culture.gov.uk)

## NEXT STEPS

- Read the *Libraries Deliver: Ambition* report
- Talk to local learning providers and see how you might be able to work together
- Look at the support and training offered by CILIP and Libraries Connected around digital skills and literacy
- Look at national initiatives such as digital skills partnerships and see who you might be able to work with locally