

Public Libraries Universal Culture Offer



v 4.0
28.03.2017

March 2017

Prepared by MetaValue on behalf of Society of Chief Librarians.



Acknowledgements

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) would like to thank all those who worked with us to create the Public Libraries Universal Culture including the following people and organisations:

- Alison Millar, Reader and Culture Development Manager, Leeds Library Information Service
- Andrew Bignell, Head of Libraries and Heritage Services, Hertfordshire County Council and SCL Executive, East of England Regional Lead
- Andy Brisley, Libraries, Information and Customer Service Manager, North Somerset Council
- Andy Ryan, Chief Executive, Cityread
- Arts Council England Bridge Organisations including ArtsWork and ArtsConnect
- Attendees and speakers: Libraries, Bridges and Cultural Education Partnerships Seminar, Monday 27 February 2017
- Attendees and speakers: North East Regional Culture Offer Workshop on 7 February 2017, Newcastle City Library
- Attendees and speakers: South East Regional Culture Offer Workshop, Monday 13 February 2017, Portsmouth City Library.
- Attendees and speakers: South West Regional Culture Offer Workshop, Thursday 9 February 2017, Exeter Central Library.
- Attendees and speakers: West Midlands Regional Culture Offer Workshop on 3 February 2017, The Core, Solihull
- Brian Ashley, Director, Libraries, Arts Council England
- Caroline Bray, Arts Award Associate (Museum, Heritage and Libraries)
- Ciara Eastell OBE, Chief Executive, Libraries Unlimited and SCL Executive Past President
- Cllr Annette Mackenzie, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Cllr Tony Ludlow, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- Diana Edmonds, Head of Libraries, GLL
- Dorcas Taylor, Festival Director, East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Elizabeth Elford, SCL Executive Communications Lead
- Fiona Atkinson, Community Services Manager, Bracknell Forest Council
- Fiona Talbott, Head of Museums Libraries Archives, Heritage Lottery Fund
- Helen Drakard, SCL Executive Officer
- Jo Heaton, Library Service Group Manager, Telford and Wrekin Council
- Julie Bell, Head of Libraries Museums, Culture and Registrars, Lancashire County Council
- Julie Spencer MBE, Head of Library and Museum Service, Bolton Central Library and SCL Executive, Health Lead.
- Kathy Kirk, Strategic Libraries, Learning and Arts Manager, Worcestershire County Council
- Katie Peckacar, Independent Mind
- Krystal Vittles, Libraries Innovation and Development Manager, Suffolk Libraries
- Lesley Sim, County Librarian, West Sussex County Council and SCL Executive South East Regional Lead
- Liz White, Head of Strategy Development, British Library.
- Mandy Macdonald, Service Manager (Libraries), Customer Service, Plymouth City Council

- Marie Brett, Head of Library Services, Sunderland City Council and SCL Executive North East Regional Lead
- Mark Freeman, Libraries and Heritage Services Manager, Stockton Borough Council
- Mark Taylor, Head of Culture, Libraries and Registration, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Medi Bernard, Services and Strategy Manager, Bournemouth, Bournemouth Borough Council and SCL Executive South West Regional Lead and Information Lead
- Mike Clarke, Director of Libraries and Archives, London Borough of Hammersmith and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Director of Libraries and Culture and Proper Officer for Registration Services, Westminster City Council.
- Neil MacInnes, President, SCL and Strategic Lead - Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council.
- Sarah Mears, SCL Executive and Team Manager: Library Strategy and Performance, Essex County Council.
- SCL Executive
- SCL Regional Executive East of England
- Stella Duffy, Co-Director Fun Palaces
- Sue Ball, Stock, Services & Activities Manager at Staffordshire County Council, ASCEL, Children's Promise Lead
- Sue Wilkinson CBE, Chief Executive, Reading Agency
- Sue Wills, SCL Executive and Library Services Manager, Borough of Poole.
- Survey respondents (105 library services responded to the survey).
- Susan Williamson, Head of Libraries, Metro. Borough of St Helen
- Tracey Cox, Head of Libraries, Solihull Borough Council, and SCL Executive West Midlands Regional Lead
- Victoria Barton, Arts Council England
- Zoe Williams, Culture Lead, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council.

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Summary Report

Background

1. In June 2016 SCL announced its intention to create a sixth universal offer focused on culture to “bring the contribution that libraries make to the cultural landscape to the fore and provide a platform for future development of the cultural offer of the public library sector.”¹
2. A research project was carried out between November 2016 and March 2017 to scope current activity taking place in libraries and to articulate how libraries can uniquely support a vibrant cultural life in local communities through a new Universal Culture Offer.

“Public libraries are already very involved in arts and culture, and this offer will give libraries the resources to expand their partnerships with local culture organisations and provide more ways for customers to get involved. We want to attract new library customers through arts and culture, and help people who don’t engage with art to develop a love and appreciation of it.”

Libraries and culture

3. People can enjoy a quality and diverse cultural experience in every library service in the UK. All library services provide the space for culture and enable creative enrichment. Library staff are catalysts for activity, empowerment and exploration.
4. The Culture Offer recognises public libraries as welcoming places where children and adults can immerse themselves in every form of art: learn from local artists; create their own art; watch theatre, music and dance performances; and learn about art and culture through books and reading. Libraries are often the first place that children and young people experience art and culture, through books, free taster sessions, opportunities to work with artists, and library events.
5. Whether it is a rhyme time session with a group of children and their parents, an arts or crafts session with an emerging artist, a performance or storytelling workshop with an established practitioner or author, a national or regional exhibition touring to local libraries, a hackathon or creative coding session with young people, a live music concert in a city centre library, or a

Neil MacInnes, President, SCL and Strategic Lead, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council.

94 % of library services who responded to SCL’s culture survey said that they provide the space for people to experience cultural activities in their libraries.

community-led Fun Palace – libraries understand what it takes to facilitate and create a quality and diverse cultural experience, and the lasting impact that has on people’s lives and the communities they live in.

6. No other public body has the same reach into and across the UK’s diverse local communities, or the networks, economies of scale and flexibility to respond to local needs. There are over 3000 public libraries in England and people make more than 225 million visits per year². The cultural activities and experiences that libraries offer reach people who do not normally participate in arts and culture and help them to develop a love for and appreciate them. Libraries are perfectly placed to help more people access great art and high quality participatory activities, helping to spark a lifelong interest in or pursuit of arts, culture and creativity.

Leeds Library WordPlay Arts Programming Project

“As a result of Leeds Library Arts Council funded arts programme over 6,000 people have: Drawn on the walls and the floor, painted, sung, created sounds from everyday objects, written stories and poems, delved into imaginative worlds, listened to music, sung songs, talked about art, philosophy, heritage and books. Watched plays and works in progress, rolled on the floor, chilled on cushions, played in the dark, crocheted snowflakes, gone on story walks, been in photos and watched films, rummaged in our archives, admired pottery, hand stitching, sculptures and illustrations, explored Feminism, Race, giving birth and owning pugs, built sheds and tents, a labyrinth and an Imaginarium. Shared ideas, challenged each other, collaborated and marvelled at how all of this has taken place in Leeds Libraries.”

There are over 3000 public libraries in England and more than 225 million visits per year to libraries and 98 million visits to library websites².

Many libraries are co-located with or work in partnership with museums, art galleries and other cultural destinations.

£6.6 million has been invested in 141 projects through Grants for the Arts Libraries Fund since 2013².

7. Public libraries are a gateway to a community or region’s wider cultural offer, including museums, galleries, theatres, heritage projects, and the creative industries. Regional Bridge Organisations and local Arts Development Officers and Agencies help libraries make the links to arts and culture organisations, while libraries provide a means for arts and culture organisations to reach local communities and people less likely to access the arts. 81 per cent of library services who responded to SCL’s culture survey said that they partnership arrangements in place with the arts, museums and galleries sector. To find your local Bridge organisation visit:
<http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/children-and-young-people/bridge-organisations>

8. Libraries have a strong track record in supporting the development of emerging artists and providing ongoing opportunities for more established artists and authors.

Public libraries are becoming more confident at securing external funding and commissioning creative projects, while arts and culture organisations and artists feel that libraries are becoming more receptive cultural partners.

9. National arts and culture organisations see the benefits of strategic partnering and investing outside of London – the success of the British Library’s Living Knowledge programme is an

example – and they could work with public libraries to extend their reach and impact into local communities.

Literature review

10. Public libraries are part of the fabric of British life and deliver a wide range of cultural³⁴, social⁵, economic⁶ and even environmental⁷ benefits for people and local communities across England.

- Participation in culture contributes to community cohesion, reduces social exclusion and isolation, and makes communities feel safer and stronger.
- Those who attend a cultural place or event are more likely to report good health compared to those who do not.
- Businesses in the UK arts and culture industry generated an aggregate turnover of £12.4 billion in 2011.
- Libraries are often the first place that children and young people experience art and culture, through RhymeTime sessions, books, free taster sessions and library events.
- Taking part in drama and library activities improves attainment in literacy.
- Taking part in structured music activities improves attainment in maths, early language, acquisition and early literacy,
- Libraries offer people and communities opportunities for 'betterment' or 'social mobility'.

Libraries enable people to celebrate and showcase their own arts and culture – and learn about the diversity within their communities.

Art of Libraries, Gloucestershire

The overall aim of Art of Libraries is to develop the creative skills of children and young people and develop new working relationships between libraries, arts venues, galleries and museums to sustain the offer when the pilot funding comes to an end. Creative skills have been shown to improve children's educational achievement, health and wellbeing and in later life their employability. It is a prototype project to test a new recipe for cultural education in six "early adopter" libraries. Storytelling and reading will be at the core of this new cultural offer, which will be firmly rooted in each community.

11. Library services who responded to SCL's culture survey⁸ prioritised the following benefits and outcomes of their library service's cultural offer: health and wellbeing (including reducing isolation); education and lifelong learning; community engagement and cohesion; connecting people and communities (social interaction, wellbeing and human connection); a shared sense of place; and enjoyment.

12. Libraries are cultural hubs within communities, as well as gateways to wider cultural activities locally. In and through libraries, people identify with, experience, participate in, create as well as lead culture at a range of different levels; from excellent and inspirational, international, national and regional arts and culture, to brilliant local and community arts and projects inspired by people's place, culture and heritage. Libraries encourage people to explore their own culture, self-expression and creative enrichment. All this happens through a diverse range means and activities.

- a. *Cultural space* for creativity such as computer labs and study areas, exhibition space, and providing or hiring out space for groups and artists
- b. *Cultural resources* including free books, multimedia collections, newspapers and supplements, history and ancestry, access to computers and free Wi Fi, information and signposting to culture and cultural activities, and in many libraries, music lending services (scores and playlist), music downloads and business support for local creative businesses.
- c. *Cultural activities* including parent and toddler sessions, group reading, music, arts, crafts, creative writing, and in some libraries performance film-making and photography.
- d. *Cultural programmes* consisting of book talks and workshops, artistic exhibitions, film-screenings, dance, plays and drama, and, in some libraries, regular theatre and concert seasons.
- e. *Cultural events* for high days, holidays and calendar spikes including World Book Day, Summer Reading Challenge, and, in many libraries, Get Online Week, celebrating Shakespeare, and literature festivals, as well as wider national programmes such as World Mental Health day and World Autism Awareness Day, Black History Month, Fun Palaces, and Family Arts Festivals.
- f. *Cultural leadership and volunteering* for example through Fun Palaces, which empower people and communities to have fun and create and lead cultural activities events and experiences.

“Libraries have a sense of ‘possibility’ and ‘discovery’ about them. They are places of transformation, both individually and communally. [...] Libraries are democratic spaces where knowledge is there to be explored. You can either choose where to go to find something specific, or you can let serendipity lead the way. Libraries allow for social mobility; they are places of possibility, opening doors in later life for many people for whom school didn’t work. The librarian is there to make sense of the information overload, to be a front of wisdom, advice and guidance.”

~ Darren Henley (2016) ‘The Arts Dividend: Why Investment in Culture Pays’

- g. *Cultural partnerships* such as cultural education partnerships or joint work with the arts and culture sector and local history and heritage organisations. Some libraries are part of music hubs working together with local authorities, schools, other hubs, arts organisations, community or voluntary organisations to respond to local need, provide access to culture for young people, and fulfil the objectives of national plan for Music Education.

Arts Award

The Arts Award's unique qualifications support anyone aged up to 25 to grow as artists and arts leaders, inspiring them to connect with and take part in the wider arts world. Arts Award is growing fast in libraries: between April 2014 and March 2015 almost 2,000 young people achieved Arts Awards through library based projects. More than 100 libraries are Arts Award centres and 169 are Arts Award Supporters.

Libraries Live

Manchester Libraries has a cultural programme consisting of popular and classical music concerts, dance classes, opera, film screenings, exhibitions and prolific author events. Over 4,000 audience and participants have engaged with Manchester Library Live at Central Library since 2014.

Sandwell Libraries is in its 4th year of hosting jazz and blues concerts as part of the 32nd Birmingham and Solihull Jazz and Blues festival. In 2016 eight concerts took place over the two-week festival attracting 659 people to libraries. The library service has increased the number of concerts, improved the venues layouts/Jazz club feel ambience and strengthened support from a friends group who are financing more of the events.

13. Libraries act as enablers and catalysts for wider cultural and creative enrichment. Some of the innovative ways libraries are working with partners to facilitate and create cultural activities and events include:

- a. Opening up the library space for culture and creative activities to happen with library staff acting as a supportive, hands-on facilitator-host to artists and organisations.
- b. Creative Commissioning. Working with arts and cultural professionals to cultivate a culture of experimentation, proto-typing, piloting, taking risks and 'trying things out'. Empowering staff to commission culture.
- c. Libraries as cultural hubs and creative making spaces.
- d. Broadcasting. Providing a high profile cultural experience in a central library that is streamed or toured to a network of smaller local libraries.
- e. Touring. A wider regional cultural experience made available for local libraries.
- f. Creative leadership and volunteering. Empowering artists, Friends' groups and other organisations to lead and co-ordinate cultural events and activities.

14. Creative commissioning and a culture of experimentation leads to a quality cultural experience which is sustainable, especially where people and communities are empowered to create and lead cultural events and activities (e.g. Fun Palaces, literature festivals). This type of cultural enrichment should be pursued for its own sake, but it also contributes to a

wider range of benefits for people and communities including health and wellbeing and social mobility.

15. Measuring the success of the Public Libraries Universal Culture offer should involve a combination of traditional performance indicators (library visits and issues) with metrics for audience participation (in particular repeat participation as an indicator of success), partnership and collaboration (number of artists supported and groups using the space creatively) and Arts Council England core quality principles and metric statements⁹ (including excellence: “it is one of the best examples of its type that I have seen”) – that are proportionate to the library service’s cultural offer and capacities to deliver.

Celebrating Shakespeare 2016

The festival marked the bard’s 400th anniversary with library events and activities over several months. It built on the previous year’s successful Shakespeare Week pilot project and was funded by Arts Council England.

More than 11,000 children, young people and adults attended 572 sessions run by 388 libraries - a three-fold increase in engagement on the previous year. Shakespeare Selfie Saturday in April generated more than 6,000 tweets to #shakespeare16 and was shortlisted in two categories of the Public Sector Communications Awards 2016. A total of 47 different artists or groups received 95 commissions to work on arts events in 716 libraries over the Summer and Autumn - attracting 12,024 people.

A context for partnerships

16. Libraries are trusted by the public and have extremely high levels of satisfaction and confidence. However, the number of people using public libraries has decreased over the last decade and there are on-going concerns about the impact of reductions in expenditure on library services. The largest decrease in the proportion of adults who use the library has been among 16 to 24 year olds: 51 per cent of adults aged 16 to 24 used a public library in 2005/06, but only 25.2 per cent did so in the year October 2014 to September 2015¹⁰.
The largest decrease in the proportion of adults who use the library has been among 16 to 24 year olds
17. There is a risk of a two-tier offer as libraries respond in different ways to reductions in expenditure on library services. However, reductions in funding also provide a greater incentive to engage in new partnerships to find ways to deliver the culture offer. Regional Bridge Organisations and local Arts Development Officers and Agencies can help libraries make the links and connections to arts and culture partners, while libraries provide a connection for arts and culture organisations into the UK’s diverse local communities.
18. Arts Council England’s investment approach for 2018-22 offers opportunities for libraries to apply directly to the development agency’s three main funding streams: the National Portfolio, Grants for Arts and Culture, and strategic funds. Although Grants for the Arts and

Culture will no longer be ring-fenced for public libraries, the open access funding stream will see an increase in budget of £10 million per annum to £87.5 million during this investment round. The Heritage Lottery Fund continues to offer a range of open and targeted grant programmes that are relevant for libraries, and is actively encouraging libraries to apply, even if they have been unsuccessful on their first attempt. National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) are well placed to support public libraries and build capacity in the sector.

British Library – Living Knowledge Network.

The British Library has launched the Living Knowledge Network, a nationwide partnership between the Library and 21 major libraries in cities and towns across the UK. The Network will combine local expertise and national organising power to share knowledge, resources and activities.

The Living Knowledge Network aims to strengthen libraries' collective ability to deliver world-class library services to diverse communities, develop joint offerings for library users, and work together on funding applications to share programmes of activity with a combined audience of 13 million. At the heart of the Living Knowledge Network is a simple aspiration – to create value by sharing ideas, and sparking connections between libraries, collections and people across the UK.

Audiences

19. There is an opportunity for public libraries to collaborate with the arts sector to attract new library customers through arts and culture, and for the arts sector to realise benefits by bringing their audiences to libraries. Analysis reveals four broad audience profiles for public libraries¹¹:
- a. *People who participate in libraries only.* Slightly more likely to be 75+, non-white and in the lower socio-economic group.
 - b. *People who participate in both libraries and the arts sector.* Slightly more likely to be female, and in the upper socio economic group.
 - c. *People who participate in the arts only.* Slightly more likely to be in the 16-24 age bracket, in the upper socio-economic group, white, working and not to have a long-standing illness or disability. A key audience that libraries could work with the arts sector to attract, through a stretch cultural offer.
 - d. *People who do not participate in the arts or libraries.* Slightly more likely to be in the 75+ age group and not working, in the lower socio-economic group and more likely to have a long-standing illness or disability. An audience that libraries should seek to support through partnership working and targeted projects and programmes.
20. In addition, libraries outside of London could seek to collaborate with the arts and cultural sector to reach what the Audience Agency categorises¹² as 'Dormitory Dependables' and 'Commuterland Culturebuffs', for whom being entertained is important. Libraries in London should ensure their culture offer appeals to a younger audience identified, as 'Metroculturals', for whom visual art is important.

21. In terms of participation in cultural activities, reading for pleasure or buying a novel/book or stories/poetry/plays remains the UK's top activity across the age ranges, followed by original and textile crafts, painting and drawing, playing a musical instrument, photography and dance. In terms of attendance, going to the cinema and attending live music are the top events, followed by attending a play/drama, musical or public exhibition¹³. The Warwick Commission found that there is a "passion for music" in the UK¹⁴.

Brighton and Hove Libraries: Evolving in Conversation

124 artists involved | 1,059 participants | 303,397 audience members

Evolving in Conversation particularly targeted 13 - 34 year olds and adult learners, due to a drop-off in library card holders within this age group. The theme 'How Can Individuals Make Society Change' was explored through free photography, writing and dance workshops and artist commissions, which led to a showcase event at the end of each phase. There was also a professional day for staff, artists and facilitators at each stage to contribute to the development and evaluation of the project.

Evolving in Conversation has brought lots of different people and audiences together to share new experiences and find out more about the libraries. The opportunities for participants to share their skills with others has helped develop confidence and leadership ability. An unemployed gentleman took on a leadership role within one of the groups and has now found employment. Some young people have received Arts Award accreditation through involvement in the project. Young people and adults continue to be engaged with libraries and have created their own groups or attend groups that meet in the library.

Survey findings

22. A survey was carried out with SCL's library service membership in December 2016 to identify and validate the core and stretch cultural services. The headline findings are as follows:

- e. *Space*: 94 per cent of library services provide or hire out space for people to experience cultural activities in their libraries
- f. *Activities*: Over 80 per cent of library services provide the following cultural activities at least monthly or quarterly: group reading activities, music activities, digital, arts and crafts, board games, and creative writing.
- g. *Events*: Over 80 per cent organised events connected with books such as talks and workshops with authors and writers, at least monthly or quarterly, while over 60 per cent organised the following events yearly or more than once a year: film screenings, events involving digital, video or electronic art, dance performances, theatre performances and concerts.
- h. *Programmes*: Over 80 per cent of library services offered the following specific programmes: Summer Reading Challenge, World Book Day and Night, Get Online

81 % of library services who responded to SCL's culture survey said that they had a partnership in place with the arts, museums and galleries sector

Week, and Celebrating Shakespeare. An emerging number of libraries, around 40 per cent, said they were offering Fun Palaces.

- i. *Partnerships*: 81 per cent of library services had some form of cultural partnership in place with the arts, museums and galleries sector, and 82 per cent did so with the heritage sector. An emerging 40 per cent of library services have cultural education partnerships and digital partnerships in place, while 34 per cent have partnerships in place relating to sport and physical activity and 26 per cent reported economic partnerships with creative businesses.

Telephone interviews and regional workshops

- 23. Telephone interviews were carried out in January 2017 with a geographic sample of survey respondents to gain a more in-depth insight. In February, regional workshops to develop the culture offer were facilitated with local library services and partners in four regions – West Midlands, North East, South East and South West. The table below shows the key themes from this phase of the research.

No.	Line of enquiry	Theme
1	Audience development	Communications, branding and marketing, and having a clear programme
2	Partnerships	Partnership working with the arts and cultural sector
3	People and skills	A 'creative commissioner' skillset
4	Partnerships	Cultural education (schools, FE, HE, and Adult Learning sectors)
5	Partnerships	Partnership working [general comment about the importance of this]
6	Ways of working	Opening up the library space for culture.
7	Audience development	Responding to local demand and trends, and needs analysis
8	People and skills	Training support (confidence)
9	Outcomes and benefits	Increased reading and literacy
10	Audience development	Children, young people and their families
11	People and skills	Advocacy, profile, public engagement and communications
12	Partnerships	Partnerships with national and regional organisations

- 24. Comments focussed on the opportunities for collaboration with arts and cultural organisations, working with the Bridge organisations to connect with children and young people, and the importance of an arts 'co-ordinator'/development role to help libraries make the links to galleries, museums and theatres.
- 25. *Communications and marketing* were key themes in relation to audience development. Comments centred around the need for a clear and consistent quality core programme that is accessible and grounded in libraries unique selling point: books, reading and lifelong learning. Linked to this, stakeholders emphasised the importance of 'getting the basics right'; being tuned in to what people want, their needs and aspirations, as well as 'what's on' locally, and then delivering a programme around that. Making the offer familiar but interesting with something unique and interesting and surprising was also seen as important. After communications and branding, and responding to local demand and trends, the next most common comments in relation to audience development were the importance of supporting children and young people and their families, outreach work, and leveraging partnerships.

26. The importance of *creative commissioning* was another key theme, often made in relation to workforce development and the need to support staff to be able to experiment, pilot ideas and projects, and take risks, as well as providing the broader role of the library as an enabler and facilitator of culture and creativity. Bridge organisation Arts Connection have arrived at a helpful definition of Creative Producers: “Librarians as enlightened commissioners, capable and confident of offering inspiring briefs for artists in the future”.

**“Library service as the
“commissioner-curator”.
Being able to take risks is key
to delivering quality, getting
the project up and running and
then evolving it, and creating it
in a way you can’t always
predict.”**

Lit Up, East Riding Libraries

Over the last 16 years, East Riding Libraries, through its Wordquake project, has developed a reputation for bringing the best in literature to the East Riding of Yorkshire through their flagship festivals, Beverley Literature Festival and Bridlington Poetry Festival, thanks to the continuing support and commitment of East Riding of Yorkshire Council. The Festival on the Run has seen the library service take pop-up poetry and pop-up theatre out on the road to libraries across the county. The project has put poetry on buses, on prescription and even mashed poetry up with parkour.

27. In addition to specific cultural activities and events, stakeholders emphasised the importance of capturing the practices and ways of working that enable libraries to deliver cultural and creative enrichment. Key among these was *opening up the library space for culture* as part of the core offer and *creative leadership and volunteering* as part of the stretch offer; empowering artists, Friends’ groups and other organisations to lead on cultural events and activities.

28. Library services are generally maximising their core budgets by sharing services with other council partners or moving to fully integrated teams and services, e.g. with arts services, museums, galleries, archives and heritage. Alongside that libraries are becoming more confident at applying for external funding. Some library services have developed some aspects of their services as self-financing. The physical space of a library is an important part of its cultural offer. Stakeholders identified the importance of a flexible, attractive and welcoming space, and the benefits of performance and gallery space.

29. Challenges and barriers reflected the survey findings: capacity, funding, staffing and resources; developing an audience; physical environment of libraries / continuing to provide suitable space; staff skillset and confidence; and marketing and publicity capacity.

The Hive, Worcestershire

The Hive is the first integrated public/university library, archaeology service and County archive in Europe. With nearly a million visitors and book issues a year it is maintaining its popularity and has a thriving arts/culture offer. The most recent season’s highlights include more author talks, the return of The Royal Photographic Society and a full programme of business workshops and courses.

Culture offer

30. The accompanying Public Libraries Universal Culture Offer has been developed alongside and in response to the findings from this research project.
31. The Culture Offer complements SCL's existing universal offers for public libraries, in particular the Reading Offer which includes tools to help libraries promote creative reading among its objectives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed in conversation with the Culture Offer Project Steering Group and the SCL Executive on 22 March 2017, and act as a menu of options.

Positioning the Culture Offer

1. SCL to complete the design, branding, and communication of the Culture Offer publication appropriate to target audiences (the public, partners and funding bodies).
2. Develop a culture outcomes and evaluation framework. SCL and Arts Council England to co-create a shared definition of culture that is formally recognised by ACE classifiers. Define what quality looks like and how we gather data for evidence of impact.
3. Branding and communications. SCL to work with national organisations on a national marketing campaign for public libraries. Linked to Single Digital Presence Strategy.

Workforce

4. Cultural champions. Library services should ensure that *all* staff see themselves as advocates for culture in libraries, while also ensuring there is a staff champion role with responsibility for culture in libraries.
5. Support workforce development by providing a toolkit owned and developed by SCL and library service champions to provide support materials and promote good practice. Develop a matrix of national arts and culture organisations and their regional offers, links and partners.
6. Modula online training package on the creative commissioner skillset (including bid writing skills and support in securing external funding) to promote diversity, quality, ambition and success. Arts development professionals have a strong track record at supporting public libraries in this area and are well placed to develop this support package further. Possible collaboration between SCL and Arts Development UK on this recommendation.

Partnerships and building capacity

7. SCL to develop the relationship with Arts Council England to build capacity in the library sector and ensure that libraries are positioned and supported to participate in funding opportunities and make successful grant applications. Identify the role and position of NPOs in the sector as key partners for libraries. Develop the interface between the Bridge Organisations, Cultural Education Partnerships, and public library services.
8. A possible briefings service for each local authority library service on the needs and opportunities in their local area drawing on work by the Audience Agency and Arts Council England.
9. Raise awareness to SCL network of the opportunities for libraries to reach children and families via partnering with school libraries services and libraries in schools.
10. Creative industries. National advocacy between libraries and the creative industries.

Regional activity

11. SCL regions to work with a national arts and culture organisations and each deliver a pilot project.

Accreditation

12. Accreditation. Raise awareness of the Arts Award and benefits of the supporter package.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Objectives

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) is a local government association made up of the head of each library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL takes a leading role in the development of public libraries, through sharing best practices, advocating for continuous improvement on behalf of local people, and leading the debate on the future of the public library service.

SCL and its partners including The Arts Council and The Reading Agency are committed to keeping library services relevant and accessible. Together they have created the Public Libraries Universal Offer Framework to articulate what libraries do ambitiously and positively. The framework covers the key areas of service which library customers and stakeholders see as essential to a 21st century library service: Health, Reading, Information, Learning and Digital.

In June 2016 SCL announced that it will create a sixth Universal Offer focused on culture to “bring the contribution that libraries make to the cultural landscape to the fore and provide a platform for future development of the cultural offer of the public library sector.” The Culture Offer recognises public libraries as welcoming places where children and adults can immerse themselves in every form of art: learn from local artists; create their own art; watch theatre, music and dance performances; and learn about art and culture through books and reading.

“Public libraries are already very involved in arts and culture, and this offer will give libraries the resources to expand their partnerships with local culture organisations and provide more ways for customers to get involved. We want to attract new library customers through arts and culture, and help people who don’t engage with art to develop a love and appreciation of it.”

Neil MacInnes, President, SCL and Strategic Lead, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council.

Public sector consultants MetaValue were appointed and commissioned in November 2016 to work with and on behalf of SCL to undertake a research project with the library sector to develop the Culture Offer. The project was overseen by a project steering group led by Neil MacInnes, President, SCL and Strategic Lead, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council, and Sarah Mears, SCL Executive and Team Manager: Library Strategy and Performance, Essex County Council.

The objectives of the research brief were:

- To scope current activity taking place in libraries
- To articulate how libraries can uniquely support a vibrant cultural life in local communities through a new Universal Culture Offer.

In addition, the project steering group identified the importance of developing an offer which reflects and builds on what libraries already do, with a focus on audience development opportunities and

partnership working. These lines of enquiry were further refined with the project steering group in January 2017 to respond to the findings of the first phase of research and inform the second phase (see below).

The end product is this report and the accompanying Offer (to be officially launched later in 2017) which together acts as a proposition that SCL can take to potential partners, funders and decision makers, and which sets out the unique role libraries play in the cultural landscape.

As with SCL's existing universal offers - Information, Health, Reading, Digital and Learning – the Universal Cultural Offer has two elements:

- The Core Offer: which describes succinctly what is currently taking place in all library services across England
- The Stretch Offer: an optional set of activities and aspirations that library services can selectively adopt

1.2 Approach

The research was carried out in three phases: a baseline literature review between November 2016 and January 2017, qualitative research and stakeholder workshops between January 2017 and February 2017, and an appraisal and write-up in March 2017.

1.2.1 Phase 1 (November 2016 to January 2017)

A baseline literature review was carried out through secondary and desk-based research, supported by consultation with a small handful of stakeholders with overarching knowledge of the cultural landscape. An initial understanding was reached of the many and varied cultural activities and services that libraries deliver up and down the country. *The main findings are in Section 2 of this report.*

A survey was carried out with SCL's library service membership in December 2016 to identify and validate the core and stretch cultural services that libraries deliver, as well as to identify the outcomes and benefits of these services, and the challenges/barriers to delivering culture offers locally. 102 library services responded to the survey out of 177 (58 per cent response rate), of which 90 completed the majority of the questions in the survey. *The main findings are in Section 3.1 of this report.*

1.2.2 Phase 2 (January 2017 to early February 2017)

Telephone interviews were held with a geographic sample of library services who responded to the survey, supplemented by stakeholders identified by the project steering group to gain a more in depth qualitative insight. Three stakeholders also volunteered themselves to speak to the researcher about a specific library project and were included in this phase of the research. 18 telephone interviews were conducted in total, including three test interviews with members of the project steering group. The sample and the key points from the interviews have been recorded in

Appendix 2. The main findings have been analysed alongside the feedback from four regional workshops, and are reported in section 3.2. of the report.

Table 1. Telephone Interview Sample

Region	Name	Library Service
East	Sarah Mears	SCL Executive and Team Manager: Library Strategy and Performance, Essex County Council.
East	Krystal Vittles	Libraries Innovation and Development Manager, Suffolk Libraries
London and East Midlands	Diana Edmonds	Head of Libraries, GLL. Representing Greenwich and Lincolnshire Library Services.
London	Mike Clarke	Director of Libraries and Archives, London Borough of Hammersmith and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Director of Libraries and Culture and Proper Officer for Registration Services, Westminster City Council
North East	Mark Freeman	Libraries and Heritage Services Manager, Stockton Borough Council
North West	Sue Williamson	Head of Libraries, Metro. Borough of St Helens
North West	Julie Bell	Head of Libraries Museums, Culture and Registrars, Lancashire County Council
North West	Julie Spencer	Head of Library and Museum Service, Bolton Central Library and SCL Executive, Health Lead.
North West	Zoe Williams	Culture Lead, Libraries, Galleries and Culture, Manchester City Council.
South East	Mark Taylor	Head of Culture, Libraries and Registration, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
South East	Fiona Atkinson	Community Services Manager, Bracknell Forest Council
South West	Sue Wills	SCL Executive and Library Services Manager, Borough of Poole
South West	Mandy MacDonald	Service Manager (Libraries), Customer Service, Plymouth City Council
South West	Andy Brisley	Libraries, Information and Customer Service Manager, North Somerset Council
West Midlands	Jo Heaton	Library Service Group Manager, Telford and Wrekin Council
West Midlands	Kathy Kirk	Strategic Libraries, Learning and Arts Manager, Worcestershire County Council
Yorkshire	Alison Millar	Reader and Culture Development Manager, Leeds Library Information Service
Yorkshire	Dorcas Taylor	Festival Director, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Fact-finding and information telephone conversations were also held with the following stakeholders to understand partners' perspectives about the culture offer:

- Andy Ryan, Chief Executive, Cityread
- Brian Ashley, Director, Libraries (Nottingham office) Arts Council England

- Caroline Bray, Arts Award Associate (Museum, Heritage and Libraries)
- Ciara Eastell OBE, Chief Executive, Libraries Unlimited and SCL Executive Past President
- Fiona Talbott, Head of Museums Libraries Archives, Heritage Lottery Fund
- Katie Peckacar, Independent Mind
- Liz White, Head of Strategy Development, British Library
- Stella Duffy, Co-Director Fun Palaces
- Sue Ball, Stock, Services & Activities Manager at Staffordshire County Council, ASCEL, Children's Promise Lead
- Sue Wilkinson CBE, Chief Executive, Reading Agency

In early February, regional workshops to develop the Culture Offer were facilitated with local library services and partners in four regions – West Midlands, North East, South East and South West – kindly co-ordinated by the respective SCL Executive Regional Chairs. A session on the culture offer was also held as part of the East of England's SCL Executive Quarterly Meeting. And at the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) Libraries, Bridges and Cultural Education Partnerships Seminar on 27 February, delegates focussed on the theme of the culture offer.

- East of England SCL Executive Quarterly Meeting, 24 January 2017
- West Midlands Regional Workshop, 3 February 2017, The Core, Solihull
- North East Regional Workshop, 7 February 2017, Newcastle City Library
- South East Regional Workshop, 13 February 2017, Portsmouth City Library.
- South West Regional Workshop, Thursday 9 February 2017, Exeter Central Library.
- Libraries, Bridges and Cultural Education Partnerships Seminar, Monday 27 February 2017

The following lines of enquiry were agreed with the project steering group for phase 2 of the research. Lines of enquiry 1 to 3 and 7 were prioritised for the group discussions in the regional workshops.

Table 2. Research lines of enquiry

	Theme	Line of Enquiry
1	The core and stretch offer proposition	What should be in/out of the core and stretch offers?
2	Audience development	How can libraries a) attract new audiences to libraries through art and culture, and b) help people who don't engage in art and culture develop a love and appreciation of it?
3	Partnership working	Which partnerships are most important for the culture offer? Which could be developed?
4	People and skills	What skills and competencies are needed to deliver the culture offer? What are the gaps and workforce development needs?
5	Resilience/Sustainability and Funding	How are libraries maximising their core budgets? How can libraries using their cultural footing and high footfall to attract/diversify funding streams?

6	Physical space of libraries	How can libraries physical space be maximised to promote the participation and experience of cultural outcomes?
7	Support	What support do libraries and staff need to implement the core and stretch offer

1.2.3 Phase 3

In March 2017 MetaValue worked with the Project Steering Group to appraise the findings, and produce the final report and recommendations, and accompanying offer.

1.3 How to read this report

Section 2 of this report sets out the context for the Public Libraries Universal Culture offer drawing on the findings from the literature review.

Section 3 sets out the main findings of the research.

Section 4 provides a link to the accompanying offer

Section 5 sets out the conclusions and recommendations from the research project

2 Literature review

Public libraries are part of the fabric of British life and deliver a wide range of cultural^{3 4}, social⁵, economic⁶ and environmental⁷ benefits for people and local communities across the UK. They are trusted by the public and have extremely high levels of satisfaction and confidence. No other public body has the same reach into and across the UK's diverse local communities, or the networks and economies of scale and flexibility to respond to local needs.

The libraries sector is a major element of the arts and cultural sector; the majority are local authority led but the sector is also comprised of community and privately led libraries. 80 per cent of library services who responded to SCL's culture survey in 2016 said they had some form of cultural partnership in place with the arts, museums and galleries sector, and 82 per cent did so with the heritage sector. Figure 1 below shows the elements of the arts and cultural sector (not to scale).

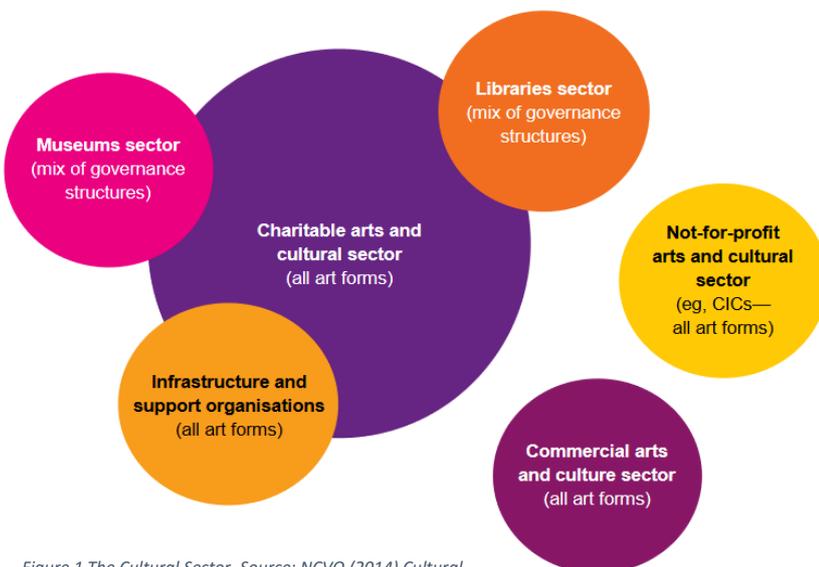


Figure 1 The Cultural Sector. Source: NCVO (2014) Cultural Commissioning Programme: Opportunities for Alignment.

There are over 3000 public libraries in England and more than 225 million visits per year to libraries and 98 million visits to library websites².

Many libraries are co-located with or work in partnership with museums, art galleries and other cultural destinations.

£6.6 million has been invested in 141 projects through Grants for the Arts Libraries Fund since 2013².

However, the number of people using public libraries has decreased over the last decade and there are on-going concerns about the impact of reductions in expenditure on library services. Net local authority expenditure on library services has reduced from £1.2 billion in 2005 to £736 million in 2015¹⁵. Library services who responded to SCL's culture survey identified funding and capacity challenges as the top barrier to delivering their culture offer.

2.1 Libraries culture offer

Libraries are cultural hubs within communities, as well as gateways to wider cultural activities locally. In and through libraries, people identify with, experience, participate in, create as well as lead culture at a range of different levels; from excellent and inspirational, international, national and regional arts and culture, to brilliant local and community arts and projects inspired

94 per cent of library services who responded to SCL's culture survey said that their library service provides or hires out space for people to experience cultural activities in their libraries.

by people's place, culture and heritage. Libraries encourage people to explore their own culture, self-expression and creative enrichment. All this happens through a diverse range means and activities

- **Cultural space** for creativity such as computer labs and study areas, exhibition space, and providing or hiring out space for groups and artists
- **Cultural resources** including free books, multimedia collections, newspapers and supplements, history and ancestry, access to computers and free Wi Fi, information and signposting to culture and cultural activities, and in many libraries business support for local creative businesses.
- **Cultural activities** including parent and toddler sessions, group reading, music, arts, crafts, creative writing, and in some libraries performance film-making and photography.
- **Cultural programmes** consisting of book talks and workshops, artistic exhibitions, film-screenings, dance, plays and drama, and, in some libraries, regular theatre and concert seasons.
- **Cultural events** for high days, holidays and calendar spikes including World Book Day, Summer Reading Challenge, and, in many libraries, Get Online Week, celebrating Shakespeare, and literature festivals, as well as wider national programmes such as World Mental Health day and World Autism Awareness Day, Black History Month, Fun Palaces, and Family Arts Festivals.
- **Cultural leadership** and volunteering for example through Fun Palaces, which empower people and communities to have fun and create and lead cultural activities events and experiences
- **Cultural partnerships** such as cultural education partnerships or joint work with the arts and culture sector and local history and heritage organisations. Some libraries are part of music hubs working together with local authorities, schools, other hubs, arts organisations, community or voluntary organisations to respond to local need and fulfil the objectives of national plan for Music Education.

“Public libraries are free to enter, open to all as spaces where people can explore and share reading, information, knowledge and culture. Those spaces of quiet study and reflection can also be places of wonder, excitement and creativity. They are traditionally storehouses of the world’s knowledge, and they are increasingly making spaces too.”

~ Brian Ashley, Arts Council England

“Libraries have a sense of ‘possibility’ and ‘discovery’ about them. They are places of transformation, both individually and communally. [...] Libraries are democratic spaces where knowledge is there to be explored. You can either choose where to go to find something specific, or you can let serendipity lead the way. Libraries allow for social mobility; they are places of possibility, opening doors in later life for many people for whom school didn’t work. The librarian is there to make sense of the information overload, to be a front of wisdom, advice and guidance.”

~ Darren Henley (2016) ‘The Arts Dividend: Why Investment in Culture Pays’

This is a reflection of the contribution that libraries make to cultural and creative enrichment in local communities, and the wider benefits that come with that including social mobility and health and wellbeing, as Darren Henley¹⁶ and William Sieghart¹⁷ have contributed in their thought leadership.

Libraries' culture offer recognises public libraries as welcoming places where children and adults can immerse themselves in every form of art: learn from local artists; create their own art; watch theatre, music and dance performances; and learn about art and culture through books and reading. Libraries are often the first place that children and young people experience art and culture, through books, free taster sessions and library events. Library staff are catalysts for activity and exploration, often making suggestions that customers wouldn't have thought of on their own.

2.2 Outcomes and benefits and the value of culture

In 2014, drawing on the Department for Culture Media and Sport's 'Culture and Sport Evidence Programme' (CASE)¹⁸, Arts Council England identified the value of culture to people and society¹⁹. Businesses in the UK arts and culture industry generated an aggregate turnover of £12.4 billion in 2011. Those who had attended a cultural place or event in the previous 12 months were almost 60 per cent more likely to report good health compared to those who had not. And taking part in drama and library activities improves attainment in literacy.

The review found strong evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation, and/or make communities feel safer and stronger. In addition, the review highlighted the benefits of cultural education, an agenda which has since been taken forward as part of Arts Council England's Cultural Education Challenge²⁰, and the formation of Cultural Education Partnerships, as well as SCL's joint work with the reading agency on the Universal Reading Offer²¹ and reader development²².

- Taking part in drama and library activities improves attainment in literacy
- Taking part in structured music activities improves attainment in maths, early language, acquisition and early literacy,
- Participation in structured art activities increases cognitive abilities

The Government in its national strategy for libraries² acknowledges that libraries deliver the following outcomes:

- providing spaces and opportunities for people to do, dream and create
- enrichment to the lives of individuals and communities
- art and culture as part of local 'placemaking'
- contributions to the social and economic role of arts and culture
- vibrant local creative economies

Working with a range of partners, libraries offer writing workshops, drama and musical events. Taking part in cultural activities provides cross-cutting benefits and contributes to a number of priorities; health and wellbeing, developing well/living well and vibrant economy.

~ Libraries Shaping the Future (2016)

The health and wellbeing benefits of cultural activities have been well evidenced in academic studies⁵ and there is a trend towards the social prescription of arts and culture. Libraries have adopted the Reading Well Books on Prescription²³ for dementia initiative and the Public Library Dementia Offer.

Libraries are well placed to tackle disadvantage and promote social mobility. Save the Children's research report *The Lost Boys*²⁴ observes how a quarter of five-year-old boys are falling behind in their early years, an agenda that libraries are well placed to help tackle and are doing so already through their programmes and reading offers for children and young people, and their families.

The reading agency has highlighted the important role of prison libraries in rehabilitating offenders (48 per cent of prisoners are estimated to have low reading skills), and the agency's Six Book Challenge and World Book Night programmes demonstrate that the capacity to read and enjoy books contributes to reducing re-offending and giving prisoners another chance in life²⁵.

Libraries also lend themselves to the principles of youth work and engagement with young people 13-19 to promote personal and social development. For example, Reading Hack is a programme led by young people aged 13 to 24 who do reading activities and volunteering, called hacks, to gain skills and experience²⁶.

Library services who responded to SCL's culture survey prioritised the following benefits and outcomes of their library service's culture offer: health and wellbeing (including reducing isolation); education and lifelong learning; community engagement and cohesion; connecting people and communities (social interaction, wellbeing and human connection); a shared sense of place; and enjoyment.

2.3 Measuring impact

Measuring the success of the Public Libraries Universal Culture offer should involve a combination of traditional performance indicators with metrics for audience participation, partnership development and core quality metrics – that are appropriate and relevant to the library service's culture offer. Libraries should aim to ensure that they are measuring the impact of their cultural projects and activities against the following areas:

1. *General performance indicators*. Number of library visits. Number of book issues.
2. *Audience participation*. Participation and repeat participation in a specific cultural experience that the library service offers. Repeat participation acting as an important indicator of success and quality.
3. *Partnership development*. Number of emerging and established artists supported by the library. Number of groups and organisations using the library space creatively.
4. *Arts Council England quality principles*. Excellence and innovation, authenticity, being exciting, inspiring and engaging, ensuring a positive and inclusive experience, activity involving children and young people, enabling personal progression, developing belonging and ownership.
5. *Arts Council England quality metrics*.
 - a. *Self, peer and public*
 - i. Concept: it was an interesting idea

- ii. Presentation: it was well produced and presented
 - iii. Distinctiveness: it was different from things I've experienced before
 - iv. Challenge: it was thought-provoking
 - v. Captivation: it was absorbing and held my attention
 - vi. Enthusiasm: I would come to something like this again
 - vii. Local impact: it is important that it's happening here
 - viii. Relevance: it has something to say about the world in which we live
 - ix. Rigour: it was well thought through and put together
- b. *Self and peer only quality metrics*
- i. Originality: it was ground-breaking
 - ii. Risk: the artists/curators really challenged themselves
 - iii. Excellence: it is one of the best examples of its type that I have seen

2.4 Case Studies

Appendix 1 highlights examples of public libraries which have developed an enhanced culture offer. These examples have been gathered and analysed through a combination of library services directly submitting case studies as part of the project, secondary research, sign-posting and through word of mouth during the second phase of the research. They include:

- 32nd Birmingham and Solihull Jazz and Blues festival 2016
- Art of Libraries, Gloucestershire
- Brighton and Hove Libraries Services: Evolving in Conversation
- Central Bedfordshire Council Cultural Projects
- Creative Libraries, Wiltshire
- Cultural Hubs in St Helens Council
- Derbyshire Rhythm and Rhyme
- Dudley Libraries and Dudley Little Theatre
- Exeter Fab Lab, a creative making space
- Fantastical Feats, a regional dance and digital project involving the 15 library authorities in South West England
- Leeds Library and Information Service
- Leeds Library Arts Programming Project
- Lit Up, East Riding Libraries
- Live at the Library, Oldham
- Manchester Libraries Live Programme
- Norfolk dance and early years project
- Oxfordshire's 'find your voice' initiative
- Shropshire Libraries Creative Arts Summer Programme video
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Library Service, various case studies
- South Gloucestershire Discover Festival
- The Deptford Lounge
- The Green Library of Birmingham
- The Hive, Worcestershire, the Hive
- Warwickshire's creative reading festivals
- Westminster Made in Libraries Project
- Wigmore Lectures, Medway Libraries and Medway Arts Team

Key success factors underpinning these examples include:

- Partnership working (e.g. with arts, history, education and science)

- Creative commissioning
- Clearly defined offer and programme of events with signposting to groups and providers. Offer is consistent and familiar but also offers a hook and a 'surprise'. Includes targeted projects with specific groups.
- Library as a place for live events: Live at the Library
- Engaging with local providers, groups and artists, giving them a reason and purpose to bring their talents to the library.
- Maximising the location and space in libraries for people to "do, dream and create"
- Developing connections into the local community
- Delivering the health and wellbeing agenda
- Clearly defined targeted offer
- The use of dance and music linked to reading development and storytelling.
- Use of audience analysis and market insight, using local data in the context of the national picture.
- Capital investment in a modern, attractive, flexible and integrated physical space that promotes exploration and discovery.

International research commissioned by the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)²⁷ in 2016 found in its review of practice that "although public libraries in some countries have experienced a decrease in the number of loans over the past few years, they have intensified their role as central cultural and public spaces. In many countries libraries – and mainly public libraries – are the most frequented cultural institutions, sometimes having more visits than the national football leagues."

2.5 Challenges

The number of people using public libraries has decreased over the last decade and there are concerns about the impact of reductions in expenditure on library services. Net local authority expenditure on library services has reduced from £1.2 billion in 2005 to £736 million in 2015¹⁵. Library services who responded to SCL's culture survey identified funding and capacity challenges as the top barrier to delivering their culture offer.

Library services who responded to SCL's Culture Survey identified funding and capacity challenges as the top barrier to delivering their culture offer.

DCMS estimated that 110 static public libraries closed in England between January 2010 and January 2016 while at least 77 new public libraries had opened. CILIP points to figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) of a net reduction of 178 libraries in England between 2009-10 and 2014-15. CIPFA define a library as one which is open for at least 10 hours per week¹⁵.

All local authorities are facing the same challenge of keeping these valuable services open while responding to substantial financial pressures, and demand pressures in adults and childrens social care. The Local Government Association has estimated that local government faces an overall funding gap of £5.8 billion by 2020.

There is a local appetite for developing a more integrated approach to services with partnerships being established between libraries, heritage (museum and arts) adult and community learning, apprenticeships, community development, links with Higher Education and Further Education provision.

Survey respondents identified the following barriers to delivering their culture offer:

- Capacity, funding, staffing and resources
- Developing an audience
- Physical environment of libraries / continuing to provide suitable space
- Staff skillset and confidence
- Marketing and Publicity Capacity

2.6 Participation trends and challenges

DCMS taking part data released in April 2016 reveals that in the year ending September 2015, 33.9 per cent of all adults had used a public library service in the 12 months. This is a significant decrease since data collection began in 2005/06¹⁰. The survey also finds that:

The largest decrease in the proportion of adults who use the library has been among 16 to 24 year olds

- Over the same time period, 94.2 per cent of adults who had used a library were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their library experience. This is a significant increase from 2010/11 when the question was first asked
- The largest decrease in the proportion of adults who use the library has been among 16 to 24 year olds: 51.0 per cent of adults aged 16 to 24 used a public library in 2005/06, but only 25.2 per cent in the year October 2014 to September 2015.
- Significantly more women used the library than men
- Significantly more non-working adults used a library than adults who are working
- A significantly higher proportion of adults from the black and minority ethnic (BME) groups used a library in the year ending September 2015 than adults from the white ethnic group
- Significantly more adults from the upper socio-economic group used a library than adults from the lower socio-economic group

In terms of participation in cultural activities, reading for pleasure or buying a novel/book or stories/poetry/plays remains the UK's top activity across the age ranges (62 per cent said they had done so in the last 12 months) followed by original and textile crafts, painting and drawing, playing a musical instrument, photography and dance. In terms of attendance, going to the cinema and attending live music are the top events (56 per cent and 31 per cent respectively said they had done so in the last 12 months), followed by attending a play/drama, musical or public exhibition. The Warwick Commission found that there is a "passion for music" in the UK. The Warwick Commission found that there is a "passion for music" in the UK. In a MORI survey, 70 per cent of adults and 84 per cent of under 25s said that music was important to them¹⁴.

2.7 Policy objectives

In its vision for a 21st public library network, the Government acknowledges the role that libraries play in: enriching the lives of individuals and communities, placing art and culture at the heart of 'placemaking', promoting the social and economic role of arts and culture, and creating vibrant local creative economies.

The Government has set out its ambition for 2021 in which it expects public libraries to play a key role in delivering the following three outcomes:

- more people (children and adults) having access to cultural experiences and events through libraries (especially from disadvantaged backgrounds)
- people see libraries as local creative hubs where exploration, experimentation, pursuing of cultural interests, and making are encouraged
- libraries are seen as active partners with professional and amateur cultural and arts organisations to provide cultural experiences and activities within libraries

Libraries also have an important role to play in supporting the aims of the Government's Culture White Paper²⁸ and Art Council's England's strategic goals in its ten-year strategy 'Great Art and Culture For Everyone'²⁹.

Table 3: Strategic Goals

Culture White Paper (2016) Strategic Goals	Art Council England (2013) Strategic Goals
Helping to increase participation in culture and providing opportunities for everyone to access culture regardless of background.	Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries
Enabling culture to be integral to communities and contribute to the transformation of places.	Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
Promoting the contribution of cultural sectors to improved health and wellbeing	The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
Supporting the development of new cultural partnerships at national and local levels.	The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable

The Government's new investment approach for 2018-22 offers opportunities for libraries to apply directly for all of the Government's funding proposals including the open access Grants for the Arts (GftA) fund, and applying for longer-term investment as National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs). The Libraries sector is showing increasing confidence and ability to secure external funding. The success rate of applications for Grants for Arts was 76 per cent in 2015/16 up from 70 per cent in 2013/14.

In 2013 Arts Council England carried out in depth research through its Envisaging Libraries project and identified the following priorities:

- Developing the Library as a community hub
- Better use of digital technology and creative media
- Resilient and sustainable libraries
- Delivering the right skills for library workers

2.8 Partnership perspectives and opportunities for collaboration

Arts Council England continues to invest money from Government and the National Lottery in great art and culture for everyone. In October 2016 the development agency set a budget of £622m per year across lottery and grant in aid for our three main funding streams: the National Portfolio, Grants for Arts and Culture, and strategic funds.

Although Grants for the Arts and Culture will no longer be ring-fenced for public libraries, the open access funding stream will see an increase in budget of £10 million per annum to £87.5 million during this investment round.

It is intended that the increase will help support the integration of museums and libraries, who will now be able to apply to this funding stream for museums' activity for the first time. Unlike other funding programmes Fund, the Grants for the Arts and Culture will continue to be uniquely open to individual artists, as well as community and cultural organisations. Support for applicants is available on the Arts Council England website. Among other factors and criteria, libraries applying for the fund will be expected to demonstrate artistic quality, public engagement, a clear business case and evidence, and partnering.

The Heritage Lottery Fund continues to offer a range of open and targeted grant programmes that are relevant for libraries³⁰. In particular, the development agency has been encouraging libraries to explore the 'Our Heritage' fund. HLF funding is confirmed to 2019. At the end of 2017, HLF will begin to consult on its future funding programmes and will be working with Society of Chief Librarians. HLF are seeking to broaden who gets involved in heritage as part of a wider commitment to diversity and inclusion. Libraries are well placed to help new audiences participate in local history and heritage, and work with local volunteer networks. A key message from HLF to libraries, based on their analysis of applications, is that if libraries have been unsuccessful in their first attempt at applying for funding, they should apply again.

National arts and culture organisations such as the British Library and the Tate are increasingly moving towards strategic partnering and investing resources outside of London through strategic touring and providing offers that libraries can sign up to (e.g. The British Library's Living Knowledge). This helps with perception and branding and also gives people who do not usually visit London a sense that they are participating in a wider cultural offer or institution such as the British Library, in their own locality.

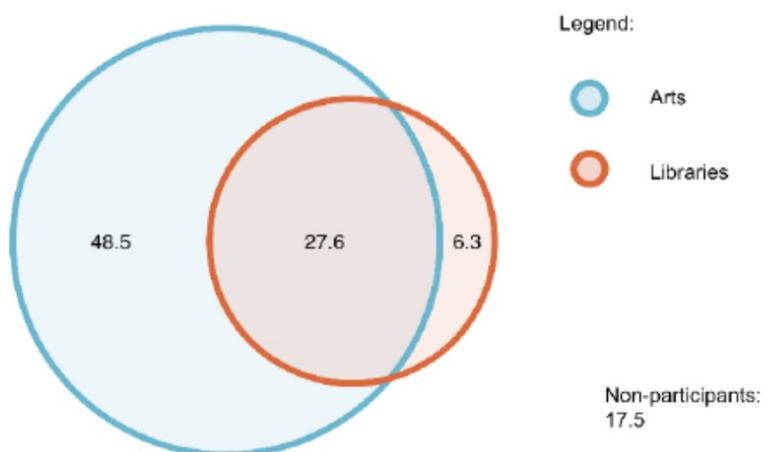
The CILIP Library Fund is implementing a UK-wide crowdfunding campaign for individuals and companies to build up the Fund with the aim of creating a new Grants Programme from 2018³¹. The intention is to support a range of projects and activities that improve access to information and knowledge, literacy, health, digital inclusion and life chances. The CILIP Library Fund will be open to applications from all parts of the information, knowledge and library sector. Applications will open in early 2018.

“We’ll increase investment outside London without damaging the capital; fund more new, small and diverse organisations. And museums, libraries and arts organisations will apply to us on a more level playing field.”

Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England.

2.9 Audience development and opportunities for collaboration

There is an opportunity for the public libraries sector to collaborate with the arts sector to attract new library customers through arts and culture, and for the arts sector to realise benefits by bringing their audiences to libraries and making use of library space. Libraries' culture offer has a core audience of 27 per cent of people who both attend libraries and participate in the arts sector. In the year ending September 2015, 48.5 per cent of people engaged in the arts sector, but did not engage in public libraries, while 17.5 per cent of people did not engage in the arts or public libraries. This contrasts with greater synergies between the arts sector and museums and heritage, where there is closer alignment of audiences. By collaborating with the arts sector, public libraries can in turn reach audiences who visit museums and heritage sites and activities.



Source: DCMS (April 2016) 'Taking Part focus on: cross-sector participation'.

Figure 2. The graph shows the overlap in participation between the arts and public libraries sector in the year to September 2015 (October 2014 to September 2015).

2.9.1 Audience opportunities

This analysis identifies four key audiences for public libraries. These audiences are made up of a range of different groups of people, but there are some observations that can be drawn out from DCMS cross-participation data.

- **People who participate in libraries only.** Slightly more likely to be 75+, non-white and in the lower socio-economic group. A core audience that libraries should look after with a familiar and consistent offer.
- **People who participate in both libraries and the arts sector.** Slightly more likely to be female, and in the upper socio economic group. A second core audience that libraries should look after with a familiar and consistent offer.
- **People who participate in the arts only.** Slightly more likely to be in the 16-24 age bracket, in the upper socio-economic group, white, working and not to have a long-standing illness or disability. A new audience that libraries could work with the arts sector to attract, through a stretch cultural offer.
- **People who do not participate in the arts or libraries.** Slightly more likely to be in the 75+ age group and not working, in the lower socio-economic group and more likely to have a

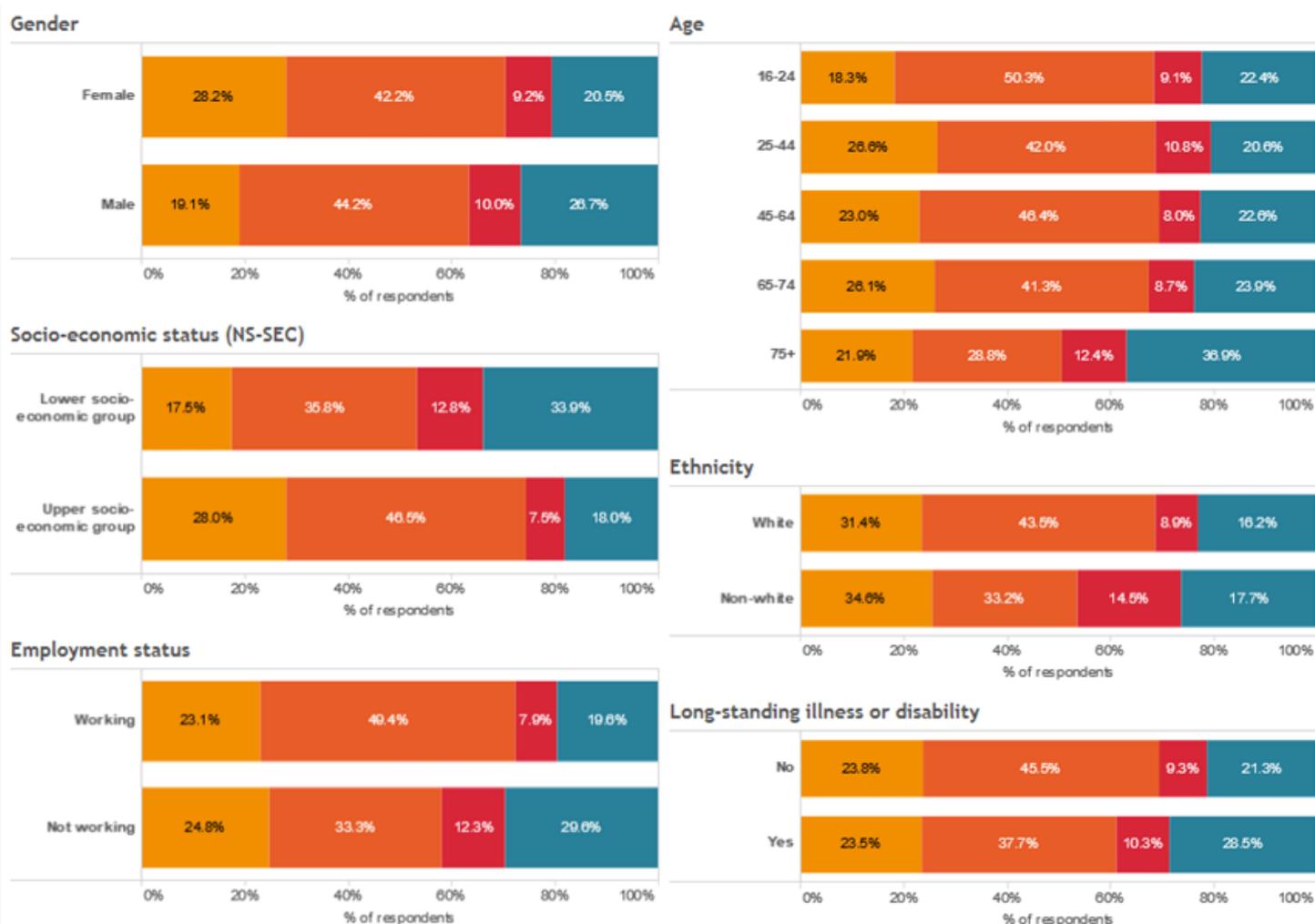
long-standing illness or disability. An audience that libraries should seek to support through partnership working and targeted projects and programmes.

Figure three below shows the DCMS data on which these observations have been drawn. In addition, drawing on the Audience Agency’s analysis of Box Office Data for 2015-16, libraries outside of London should seek to collaborate with the arts and cultural sector to attract what the agency segments as ‘Dormitory Dependables’ and ‘Commuterland Culturebuffs’ as part of a stretch offer. See section 2.8.2. below for a description of these market segments. While libraries in London should ensure their culture offer appeals to a younger audience segment identified as ‘Metroculturals’.

Figure 3: Participation between the arts and public libraries sector in the year to September 2015 (October 2014 to September 2015).

Key:

	Attends art events/activities AND libraries
	Attends art only
	Attends libraries only
	Does not attend art or libraries



2.9.2 Participation in culture and community expectations

Audience Finder Box Office Data for 2015-16 reveals a significant divide in the way people consume and experience art and culture in London compared to the rest of the UK ¹².

The dominant audience type in London is what the Audience Spectrum segments as 'Metroculturals' (49 per cent of box office sales), typically a young audience aged 25 to 34, followed by 'Kaleidoscope Creatives' (16 per cent):

Metroculturals: "Prosperous, liberal urbanite group. Often choose a city lifestyle for the broad cultural opportunity it affords. Interested in a very wide spectrum of activity, but many tend towards their own preferred artform or style. Apt to be active museum attenders, but tend to be more engaged with the arts and many on a weekly basis. Represent good prospects for new, innovative work. Likely to be working in demanding but rewarding professions, including arts professionals, they are highly educated and have a wide variety of other interests."

Kaleidoscope Creatives: "A group characterised by low levels of cultural engagement. Often living in and around city areas where plenty of opportunities are within easy reach. Mix of ages, living circumstances, resources and cultural backgrounds. For many low incomes and unemployment can present barriers to accessing some cultural provision. Two thirds annually engage with more popular and accessible culture, some of this in the local community and outside the mainstream. Free, local events like outdoor arts, festivals and carnivals may appeal, and so might popular offerings like musicals and music events."

This contrasts with regions outside of London where the dominant audience type was identified as 'Dormitory Dependables', followed by the 'Commuterland Culturebuffs' and 'Trips and Treats', and typically an older age profile and families.

Dormitory Dependable: "A significant proportion of arts audiences are made up of this dependably regular if not frequently engaging group. Most live in suburban or small towns and show a preference for heritage activities alongside popular and more traditional mainstream arts. Many are thriving, well off mature couples or busy older families. Lifestage coupled with more limited access to an extensive cultural offer mean that culture is more an occasional treat or family or social outing than an integral part of their lifestyle."

Commuterland Culturebuffs: "Affluent and settled group with many working in higher managerial and professional occupation. Keen consumers of culture, with broad tastes but a leaning towards heritage and more classical or traditional offerings. Often mature families or retirees, living largely in leafy provincial suburban or greenbelt comfort. A group willing to travel and pay for premium experiences, their habits perhaps influenced by commuting. Motivations are multiple, ranging from social and self-improvement, to the pursuit of learning opportunities for older children. Tend to be frequent attenders and potential donors."

Trips and Treats: "While this group may not view arts and culture as a passion, they are reasonably culturally active, despite being particularly busy with a wide range of leisure

interests. Tend to be comfortably off and living in the heart of suburbia. Children range in ages, and include young people still living at home. With a strong preference for mainstream arts and popular culture like musicals and familiar drama, mixed in with days out to museums and heritage sites. This group are led by their children’s interests and strongly influenced by friends and family.”

The dominant age category of London attenders was 25-34 compared to a much older age profile of 45 and over in the UK regions.

‘To be entertained’ was the top motivation for attending arts and culture in the majority of the regions, with the exceptions of London, where ‘visual art as an important part of who I am’ was a greater motivator, and North East where ‘spending time with friends/family’ was more important.

Table 4: Audience Finder Box Office Data for 2015-16 extracted from Audience Finder

Area	Total Box Office Income	Total Households	Total Population	Top Attender Category	Top Second Attender Category	Dominant Age Category	Top motivation
London	£103,719,872	3,370,205	8,433,333	Metroculturals (49%)	Kaleidoscope Creativity (16%)	25 - 34	Visual art is important part of who I am
South East	£83,393,831	3,633,478	8,806,191	Commuterland Culturebuffs (33%)	Dormitory Dependables (24%)	65 or older	To be entertained
West Midlands	£41,610,506	2,328,156	5,681,877	Dormitory Dependables (23%)	Commuterland Culturebuffs (21%)	55 - 64	To be entertained
South West	£36,926,329	2,308,473	5,386,018	Dormitory Dependables (24%)	Commuterland Culturebuffs (20%)	55 - 64	To be entertained
East Midlands	£32,669,750	1,929,712	4,608,978	Dormitory Dependables (26%)	Trips and Treats (22%)	55 - 64	To be entertained
North West	£28,496,661	3,042,819	7,116,059	Dormitory Dependables (23%)	Commuterland Culturebuffs (19%)	65 or older	To be entertained
Yorkshire & H	£21,193,966	2,256,172	5,356,346	Dormitory Dependables (23%)	Trips and Treats (19%)	65 or older	To be entertained
Wales	£14,393,472	1,319,178	3,087,338	Dormitory Dependables (26%)	Commuterland Culturebuffs (22%)	65 or older	To be entertained
East	£13,499,625	2,478,583	5,966,396	Dormitory Dependables (25%)	Trips and Treats (19%)	55 - 64	To be entertained
North East	£10,779,857	1,140,827	2,615,925	Dormitory Dependables (24%)	Trips and Treats (18%)	65 or older	To spend time with friends/family
Scotland	£2,002,937	2,386,233	5,327,599	Commuterland Culturebuffs (30%)	Dormitory Dependables (18%)	55 - 64	To be entertained
NI	£1,754,728	712,079	1,833,853	Dormitory Dependables (29%)	Trips and Treats (23%)	45 - 54	NA

Regions and local authority libraries are encouraged to explore their own area profiles using national tools such as the Audience Agency’s Audience Finder and Spectrum as well as a local understanding of need. As an example in practice, Manchester Libraries have used Audience Finder and Spectrum to analyse their local data in the context of national box office data as part of their cultural programme Libraries Live, to evaluate impact and identify opportunities for cultural engagement. Audience data sharing is also a requirement for organisations applying for NPO status.

3 Main Findings

3.1 Survey with library services

A survey was carried out with SCL's library service membership in December 2016 to identify and validate the core and stretch cultural services. 102 library services responded to the survey out of 177 (58 per cent response rate), of which 90 completed the majority of the questions in the survey. Responses have a 7 per cent +/- margin of error at an industry standard 95 per cent confidence interval.

3.1.1 Outcomes and benefits

Library services prioritised the following as the top outcomes and benefits delivered by their culture offers:

- Health and Wellbeing (including reducing isolation)
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Community Engagement and Cohesion
- Connecting people and communities (social interaction, wellbeing, human connection). A cultural community hub.
- Shared sense of place
- Enjoyment, experience and widening participation
- Making culture accessible
- Access to local events, particularly for disadvantaged groups.
- Family connections (connects families, bonds parents and children)
- New audiences
- Understand local history
- Free access, affordable
- Broadening people's experiences
- Exposure to local art and culture (local artists, local history)
- Stimulates creativity
- Range, Diversity and vibrancy

3.1.2 Challenges and barriers

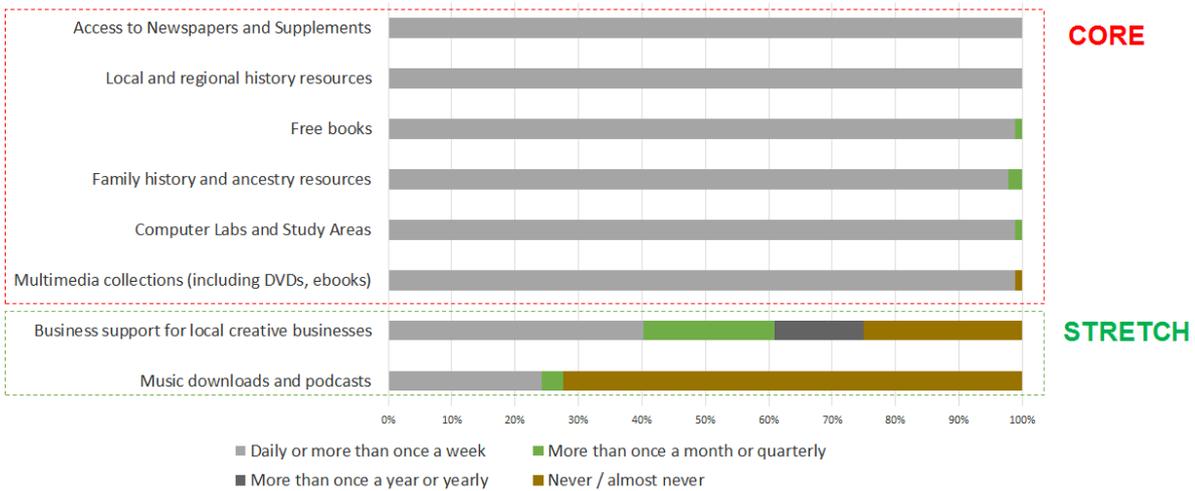
Library services identified funding and capacity challenges as the top barrier to delivering their culture offer:

- Capacity, funding, staffing and resources
- Developing an audience
- Physical environment of libraries / continuing to provide suitable space. Size and space limitations. Buildings not always appropriate.
- Staff skillset and confidence
- Marketing and Publicity Capacity
- Costs and budgeting for culture, and practicalities of being able to pay artists
- Perceptions and attitudes towards public libraries

3.1.3 Cultural resources and products

Over 80 per cent of library services provides the following cultural activities at least monthly or quarterly: group reading activities, music activities, digital, arts and crafts, board games, and creative writing. Business support for local creative businesses and music downloads and podcasts were provided less frequently identifying them as proposed 'stretch' resources.

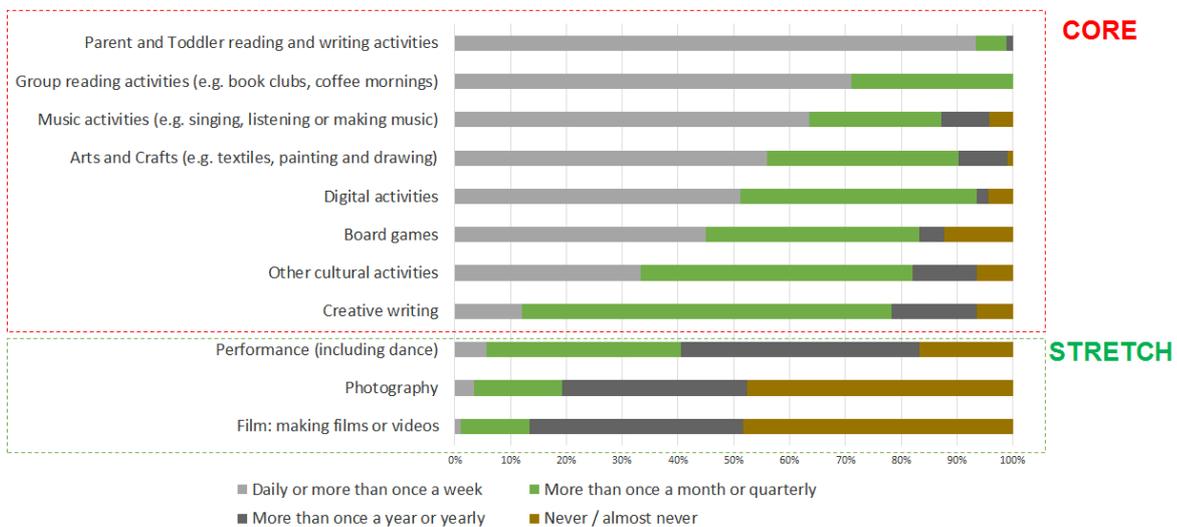
How frequently does your library service as a whole provide the following products / resources?



3.1.4 Cultural activities

Over 80 per cent of library services provide the following cultural activities at least monthly or quarterly: group reading activities, music activities, digital, arts and crafts, board games, and creative writing. Performances, photography and film-making were provided less frequently and identified as stretch activities.

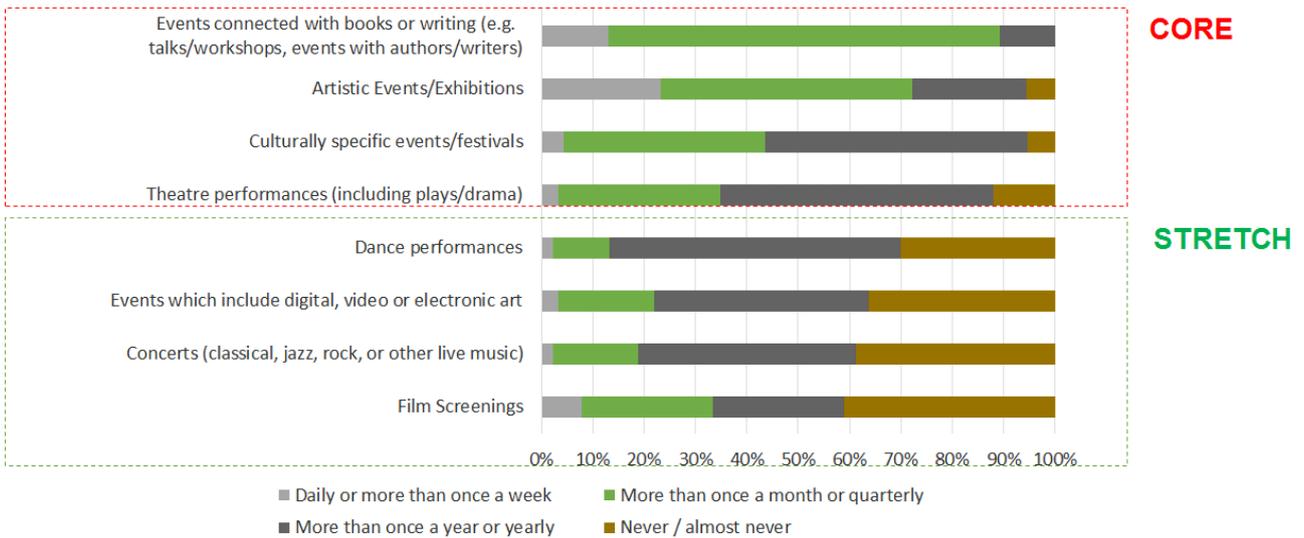
How frequently does your library service as a whole provide the following activities?



3.1.5 Cultural Events

Over 80 per cent of library services said they organised events connected with books such as talks and workshops with authors and writers, at least monthly or quarterly, while over 60 per cent organised the following events yearly or more than once a year: film screenings, events involving digital, video or electronic art, dance performances, theatre performances and concerts.

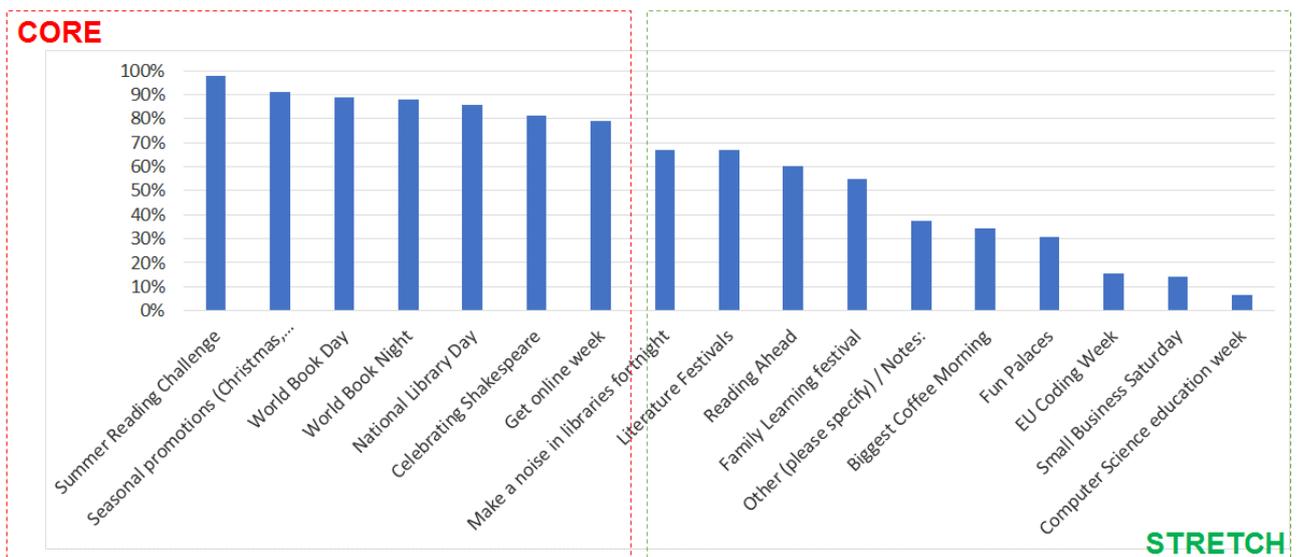
How frequently does your library service as a whole provide the following events?



3.1.6 Cultural Programmes and Calendar Spikes

Over 80 per cent of library services offered the following specific programmes: summer reading challenge, world book day and night, get online week, celebrating Shakespeare. While an emerging number of libraries, around 30 per cent, said they were offering innovative programmes such as Fun Palaces.

Does your library service offer the following specific programmes?



3.1.7 Cultural Space

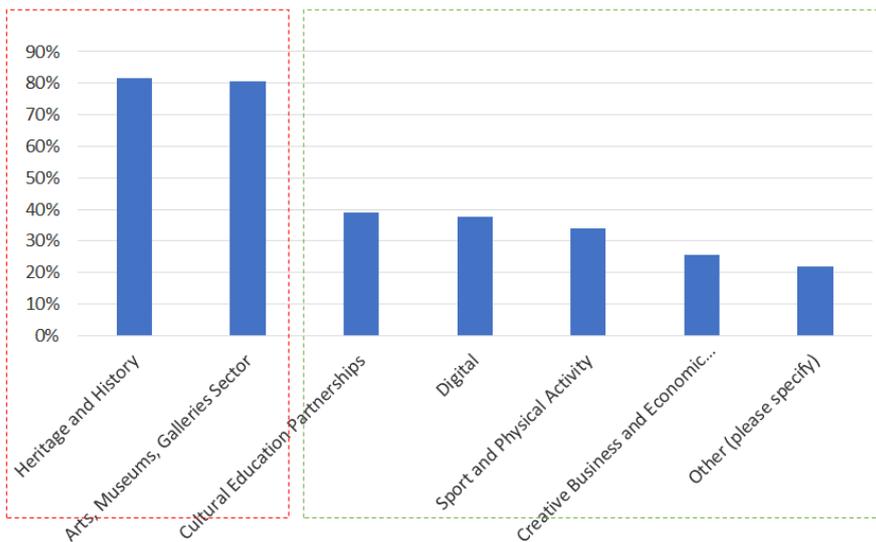
94 per cent of library services provide or hire out space for people to experience cultural activities in their libraries.

3.1.8 Cultural Partnerships

81 per cent of library services had some form of cultural partnership in place with the arts, museums and galleries sector, and 82 per cent did so with the heritage sector. An emerging 40 per cent of library services have cultural education partnerships and digital partnerships in place, while 34 per cent have partnerships in place relating to sport and physical activity and 26 per cent reported economic partnerships with creative businesses.

Does your library service have cultural partnership arrangements in place?

CORE



STRETCH

3.1.9 Regional Observations

Library services in the Midlands and East of England appear to offer music downloads less frequently than nationally, although this is generally not frequently provided by libraries.

Library services in London appear to provide concerts, film-screenings and events which involve digital, video or electronic art more frequently than other regions. Film-making and photography is provided more frequently in London than other regions, and less frequently than nationally in the South of England.

Fun Palaces appear to be more frequently provided in the North of England, than in London and the South. Cultural Education Partnerships appear to be more established in the Midlands and East of England, and less developed in London, while digital partnerships appear to be more developed in the South.

3.2 Qualitative research findings

This section of the report summarises the key themes from the telephone interviews conducted with library services and the four regional stakeholder workshops. A coding approach was taken to ensure that the data (notes from the interviews in Appendix 2 and flip-chart notes from the workshops in Appendix 3) were analysed consistently against the key lines of enquiry, and to avoid researcher assumptions and generalisations. The information and key themes emerging from the telephone interviews were similar to those raised in the regional workshops and therefore the analysis has been amalgamated in this section of the report, with a section on some of the variation and regional observations.

3.2.1 Key Themes

The table below shows the top 50 key themes from qualitative points and comments made in both the telephone interviews and regional workshops.

No.	Line of enquiry	Theme	No.
1	Audience development	Communications, branding and marketing, and having a clear core	55
2	Partnerships	Partnership working with the arts and cultural sector	55
3	People and skills	A 'creative commissioner' skillset	42
4	Partnerships	Cultural education (schools, FE, HE, and Adult Learning sectors)	37
5	Partnerships	Partnership working [general comment about the importance of this]	34
6	Ways of working	Opening up the library space for culture.	34
7	Audience development	Responding to local demand and trends, and needs analysis	32
8	People and skills	Training support (confidence)	29
9	Outcomes and benefits	Increased reading and literacy	28
10	Audience development	Children, young people and their families	27
11	People and skills	Advocacy, profile, public engagement and communications	27
12	Partnerships	Partnerships with national and regional organisations	25
13	Offer	Cultural events (e.g. performances and plays)	23
14	Audience development	Audience development [as a general point]	21
15	Partnerships	Economic partnerships and working with businesses	21
16	Funding	Bid-writing and applying for external funding	20
17	Offer	Resources: history and ancestry	20
18	Partnerships	Consortiums and regional approaches	20
19	Ways of working	Community leadership and volunteering	19
20	Offer	Activities: reading and group reading	18
21	Partnerships	Voluntary and community organisations	18
22	Outcomes and benefits	Happy, Healthier Lives	17
23	Audience development	Outreach work	16
24	Audience development	Leveraging partnerships to reach audiences	16
25	Offer	Activities: digital, photography	16

No.	Line of enquiry	Theme	No.
26	Ways of working	Cultural leadership (e.g. fun palaces)	16
27	Ways of working:	Cultural hubs and 'hub and spoke' model with a culture offer in a central	16
28	Funding	Charging and income generation	15
29	Offer	Calendar spikes: literature festivals	15
30	Offer	Music and live music	15
31	Offer	Events: events connected with books and reading	14
32	Other	Stronger, more resilient communities	14
33	Ways of working	Targeted approaches and projects with groups in need	14
34	Audience development	Developing a clear, core, consistent, quality, accessible offer, that is	13
35	Challenges & Barriers	Capacity and resources	13
36	Outcomes and benefits	Improved digital access	13
37	Physical space	Flexible space	13
38	Funding	Funding: general comment	12
39	Offer	Performance and exhibition space	12
40	Offer	Programmes (including Summer Reading Challenge)	12
41	Offer	Activities: writing, creative writing and poetry	12
42	People and skills	Entrepreneurial, experimental 'trying things out' and 'taking risks'	12
43	People and skills	Soft selling and signposting	12
44	Offer	Activities: arts and crafts	11
45	Audience development	Offer a high quality experience	10
46	Challenges & Barriers	Perceptions of libraries	10
47	Partnerships	Health and social care and public health	10
48	Audience development	Surprise people, and 'keep it interesting'	9
49	Funding	Partnering and delivering shared priorities. Demonstrating value and	9
50	Offer	Community led activities (e.g. community led theatre, performances,	9

It is not unsurprising to see *partnership working with the arts and cultural sector* as the joint top theme, alongside *communications, marketing and having a clear core programme*, as this was a particular focus of the research project and a theme that featured in the introductory presentations in the regional workshops. Comments focussed on the opportunities for collaboration with arts and cultural organisations, working with the Bridge organisations to reach children and young people and their families, and the importance of an arts 'co-ordinator' role to help libraries make the links to galleries, museums and theatres. The following comments are reflective of the wider set of comments made on this theme.

- *Libraries move to Arts Council England represents a huge opportunity to engage with arts sector leaders. Libraries sector can develop its understanding of arts and culture, and ACE can develop its understanding about libraries reading and literature offer.*
- *Working with bridge organisations and wider cultural partners – e.g. Performing arts, music service, NPOs, education*
- *Proud of our service – lots of creative people – breaks down barriers – that libraries are good venues for this- cultural organisations not always aware of us. We've created good working relationships so they want to work with us*
- *We have a good relationship with our local arts manager who is key to creating links and pulling people together.*
- *Co-creating programmes with Arts Council – (cf. Roald Dahl project)*

- Challenge: *Working with Arts Council England has seen some very positive benefits although it does sometimes feel as though the emphasis is on the other arts services, rather than the benefit that public libraries services bring to that sector.*

Communications and marketing was a key theme in relation to audience development. Comments centered around the need for a clear and consistent quality core programme that is accessible and grounded in libraries unique selling point: books, reading and lifelong learning. Linked to this, stakeholders emphasised the importance of ‘getting the basics right’; being tuned in to what people want, their needs and aspirations, as well as ‘what’s on’ locally, and then delivering a programme around that. Making the offer familiar but interesting with something unique and interesting and surprising was also seen as important.

- *Important to understand the local demographics and the needs of local communities and tailoring services and activities.*
- *Providing the services that people actually want.*
- *Key is being relevant to what people want. Reading groups aren’t for everyone, but they are a chance for people to come and see and have a chat about something.*
- *Need to hitch onto the latest trends, e.g. Minecraft, adult colouring. Need to horizon scan and produce what people want / need. E.g. Pokémon craze. Local advertising.*
- *Identify what people want to access – use social media, staff engagement – ask customers what they want. Conversations. Feed back mechanisms for existing audience*
- *Using accurate analysis/data/demographic. Marketing – social media*
- *Importance of outreach work, going out to families and children and young people not waiting for them to come to us.*
- *Identify what local demand is – make culture relevant and accessible*

The importance of *creative commissioning* was another key theme, often made in relation to workforce development and the need to support staff to be able to experiment, try things out, pilot ideas and projects, take risks as well as the broader role of the library as an enabler and facilitator of culture and creativity.

- *Going beyond glue sticking offer and generating funding and income. Bringing together teams and groups of people to be able to apply for funding and strengthen the application.*
- *Commissioning, and knowing how to commission and co-ordinate a local project. Having the confidence to do that.*
- *Building teams around funded projects. Very flexible staffing structure. When we have a project we say “who is interested” and then free people up and build a team around the project.*
- *Libraries have always played an enabler / facilitator role. We can promote and develop activities and events.*
- *Being able to bring in artists and event specialists, and going out of the way and beyond just hosting them to actually supporting that person.*
- *Commissioned John Godbar to deliver a theatre touring project across the region. Staff directly involved in planning and delivery. Partnerships were crucial to success. We gave the artist carte blanche to create the programme working in partnership with University of Hull.*

Library service as the “commissioner-curator”. Being able to take risks is key to delivering quality, getting the project up and running and then evolving it, and creating it in a way you can’t always predict. The tour was phenomenally successful. People would travel to attend the performances. We rolled this out to North Yorkshire. Important to work across boundaries not just your area.

- *“Everything we do is a pilot”. Importance of staff being able to experiment, pilot and develop the programme and projects.*

Partnership working was a key theme often made as a general point as the means to attract new audiences, but also specifically in relation to *cultural education* and the importance of the relationships with schools, further and higher education and universities.

- *Cultural Education Partnerships – everyone brings something different to the table. Smaller partnerships are important for opening it up. Arts Council England are starting to see the impact in terms of footfall.*
- *We have an important partnership and relationship with our schools. It is important to be linked up with schools to bring children into libraries. We have run digital roadshows with schools.*

The importance of ‘*opening up*’ the library space for culture and creativity to happen was also a key theme and reflects the survey findings.

- *A space for audiences. A space for things to happen.*
- *Building creatively a space: Welcoming, accessible, need to proactively promote offer.*
- *Importance of exhibition space. Creative spaces.*
- *Important to do things in public ‘space’ rather than a ‘closed’ room*

3.2.2 The core and stretch offer proposition (including stretch practices and ways of working)

Offer - Stretch	Cultural events (e.g. performances and plays)	23
Offer - Core	Resources: history and ancestry	20
Offer - Core	Activities: reading and group reading	18
Offer - Stretch	Activities: digital, photography	16
Offer - Core & Stretch	Calendar spikes: literature festivals	15
Offer - Stretch	Music and live music	15
Offer - Core	Events: events connected with books and reading	14
Offer - Core	Performance and exhibition space	12
Offer - Core	Programmes (including Summer Reading Challenge)	12
Offer - Core	Activities: writing, creative writing and poetry	12
Offer - Core	Activities: arts and crafts	11
Offer - Core	Community led activities (e.g. community led theatre, performances, board)	9
Offer - Core & Stretch	Programmes: arts award	8

History and ancestry resources and *reading and group reading* were among the top core activities while *cultural events* and *music and live music* were the top stretch activities. For example:

- *Kensington and Chelsea’s Black Archives and Refugee project and memory wall, Notting Hill Carnival.*
- *Stockton War Memorial project. WW1 Centenary Project in partnership with youth service, engaging young people through digital experiences.*
- *Poole’s library events programme has reached 6,000 new library users. Includes a core offer of film nights, author visits, but also linked with a wider set of services, including health information, advice and guidance. Recording studio as a stretch element of this programme.*
- *Core: Music gigs and spoken word gigs. Headline act with a warm-up act, promoted locally. Adults don’t mind paying a small amount. Last gig in Ipswich reached 250 people.*
- *Get it Loud in Libraries live programme as an example of a national stretch offer that has been taken up and had a real impact locally in Lancashire. Links to children and young people and enabling them to explore new skills. Team and leadership skills developed.*

In addition to specific cultural activities and events, stakeholders involved in the project emphasised the importance of capturing the practices and ways of working that enable libraries to deliver cultural and creative enrichment. Key among these was *opening up the library space for culture* as part of the core offer and *creative leadership and volunteering* as part of the stretch; empowering artists, friends’ groups and other organisations to lead on cultural events and activities.

Ways of working	Opening up the library space for culture.	34
Ways of working	Community leadership and volunteering	19
Ways of working	Cultural leadership (e.g. fun palaces)	16
Ways of working	Targeted approaches and projects with groups in need	14
Ways of working	Cultural programming and 'producing'	8
Ways of working	Broadcasting and touring	6

- *Use Friends groups to promote & deliver offer – can enthuse local community*
- *Service has engaged young people 16-24 by developing a volunteer base of over 250 young people through the Summer Reading Challenge. Working closely with schools, children’s service to reach looked after children. Poet Laureate scheme has been successful. No fines for under 18 year olds.*
- *Volunteering and user led activities to attract people to libraries*
- *Cultural leadership through fun-palaces and connecting with multiple groups and organisations. Original project used a bit of funding from our arts pot which give us flexibility, but moving to being self-sustainable.*

Cultural programming, producing a clear consistent and accessible programme of events and activities, and *targeted approaches* with groups in need were examples of ways of working that straddled both the core and stretch offers.

3.2.3 Audience development

Audience development	Communications, branding and marketing, and having a clear core	55
Audience development	Responding to local demand and trends, and needs analysis	32
Audience development	Children, young people and their families	27
Audience development	Audience development [as a general point]	21
Audience development	Outreach work	16
Audience development	Leveraging partnerships to reach audiences	16
Audience development	Developing a clear, core, consistent, quality, accessible offer, that is	13
Audience development	Offer a high quality experience	10
Audience development	Surprise people, and 'keep it interesting'	9
Audience development	Be brave, bold, value our service, stronger negotiating position	7

After *communications and branding*, and *responding to local demand and trends*, (highlighted above), the importance of supporting *children and young people and their families*, *outreach work*, and *leveraging partnerships* were the next most common comments in relation to audience development.

- *Family experience is key*
- *Reach adults through parents/dads who are coming in with their children (parent only sessions to visit library)*
- *Start early – nursery and school visit to cultural venues*
- *Importance of outreach work, going out to families and children and young people not waiting for them to come to us.*

The importance of cultural programming and having a clear ‘what’s on’ programme of events and activities was also considered important to attracting and retaining audiences.

3.2.4 Partnership working

Partnerships	Partnership working with the arts and cultural sector	55
Partnerships	Cultural education (schools, FE, HE, and Adult Learning sectors)	37
Partnerships	Partnership working [general comment about the importance of this]	34
Partnerships	Partnerships with national and regional organisations	25
Partnerships	Economic partnerships and working with businesses	21
Partnerships	Consortiums and regional approaches	20
Partnerships	Voluntary and community organisations	18
Partnerships	Health and social care and public health	10

After *partnership working with the arts and cultural sector*, and *cultural education partnerships* (highlighted above), *partnership with national and regional organisations*, *consortiums* and *economic partnerships* were the next most common themes in relation to partnership working.

- *Importance of a regional focus of cultural offer – working together as a region with local providers to deliver cultural offer, working with schools, drama groups, artists and theatre groups.*
- *Regional partnership is important. E.g. Success of Time to Read in the North West, driven by a cultural co-ordinator applying for funding and delivering projects such as Shakespeare project.*

- *Importance of regional offer (e.g. The Word in South Shields, National Centre for the Written Word). Brings people together through an exhibition template that can be developed and adopted in local libraries.*
- *[Idea/option] SCL to apply for national funding on our behalf to cascade down regionally i.e. Shakespeare project*

Economic partnerships were most often cited in related to partnership working with the creative tourism industry as part of local regeneration strategies.

- *Working with council as part of its 2030 Vision to improve the town, attracting tourism and economic regeneration. Library as a contribution to the cultural economy. Recognition of role of libraries in contributing to a sense of pride and place.*
- *We have an important partnership with the local creative tourism industry and have brought them in with partners. Stretch offer: taking risks when creating projects and activities.*
- *Working with Lambeth Cultural Exchange bringing universities and employers together to engage more people in creative art.*

3.2.5 People and skills

People and skills	A 'creative commissioner' skillset	42
People and skills	Training support (confidence)	29
People and skills	Advocacy, profile, public engagement and communications	27
People and skills	Entrepreneurial, experimental 'trying things out' and 'taking risks'	12
People and skills	Soft selling and signposting	12
People and skills	Training: confidence	9
People and skills	Evaluation of projects	8
People and skills	People and skills (general)	7
People and skills	Networking, relationships and being 'outward' facing'	6

In addition to *creative commissioning* highlighted above, the importance of support to build staff *confidence*, and *advocacy, profile and public engagement* were the next most common themes, as well as the importance of specific skills such as *soft-selling and sign-posting, evaluation*, and an *outward facing relations* skillset.

- *Regional training to build confidence (Reading, Libraries, and the Arts)*
- *Workforce development – staff need to understand what culture is as well as what the offer is; build staff confidence to promote libraries cultural offer.*
- *Staff training, guidance, toolkits including training on how to apply for funding*
- *Take the message out and enthuse and facilitate plus a need to draw in money.*
- *Local ambassadors – attract others*
- *One-off visit doesn't develop love/app – needs to be on-going dialogue*
- *Developing some of the basic skills around public engagement – being pro-active, cultivating opportunities.*
- *Staff skills that are important: building relationships and connecting people and making the links. Networking at a more strategic level, and digital up-skilling.*

- *Brokerage role between library staff and artist. (e.g. English is Everywhere and Digital Light Project took over the whole library and staff to be able to support that)*

3.2.6 Resilience/Sustainability and Funding

Funding	Bid-writing and applying for external funding	20
Funding	Charging and income generation	15
Funding	Funding: general comment	12
Funding	Partnering and delivering shared priorities. Demonstrating value and	9
Funding	Funding: shared services and integrated services	8

Libraries are generally maximising their core budgets by sharing services with other council partners or moving to fully integrated teams and services, e.g. with arts services, museums, galleries, archives and heritage. Alongside that libraries are becoming more confident at applying for external funding. Some libraries have developed some aspects of their services as self-financing by charging.

- *Things we could do more of: drawing in additional funding*
- *Applying for funding opportunities, slightly outside staff comfort zones. Need to become better at this.*
- *We do go for grants but don't just chase the money. Needs to be right for the project and what we want to deliver.*
- *When grant funding comes to an end we are positioning ourselves to self-direct the programme and continue to deliver great quality art.*
- *Maximising core budgets in Essex through co-locating services in libraries and sharing services*
- *An integrated workforce across Library and Museum services with shared delivery team.*
- *Sharing services and good practice through neighbourhood hubs model, with libraries part of a wider prevention agenda: early health, tackling isolation.*

intervention, mental

3.2.7 Physical space of libraries

Physical space	Flexible space	13
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A common theme against this line of enquiry was the important of flexible, attractive and welcoming space. Some library services also shared about the benefits of new technologies such as digital tables and 'pods'.

- *Needs to be accessible and give people the opportunity to try things out. Stage and performance space is important.*
- *Using module spaces*
- *One public estate – integrating culture within library. Buildings*
- *Importance of performance space and flexible space.*

- *Newer libraries have performance and gallery space.*
- *Libraries can learn from supermarket and retail sectors when thinking about how to plan and organise their space.*
- *Digital tables to show the community library history*
- *Accessible opening hours. Central library open 7 days with a late night opening on one day to 7.30pm.*

As part of the regional workshops, the research team visited Exeter Central Library, Newcastle City Library, the Core in Solihull and Portsmouth City Library. Key success factors in these libraries was the importance an open, attractive and welcoming space, including a cafeteria that enabled people to explore and discover, and in the case of Solihull an integrated box office and theatre.

4 Culture Offer

The Public Libraries Universal Culture Offer is set out as an accompanying publication to this report and has been developed in response to the findings in this report alongside on-going development with stakeholders and the project steering group.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This research has identified the many and varied cultural activities and services that libraries deliver up and down the country, as well as the innovative practices and ways that libraries work to co-create culture and creative enrichment, and the sectors views on the strengths and opportunities of a universal culture offer.

Whether it is a rhyme time session with a group of children and their parents, an arts or crafts session with an emerging artist, a performance or storytelling workshop with an established practitioner or author, a national or regional exhibition touring to local libraries, a hackathon or creative coding session with young people, a live music concert in a city centre library, or a community-led Fun Palace – libraries understand what it takes to facilitate and create a quality cultural experience, and the lasting impact that has on people's lives and the communities they live in.

Key themes include the importance of two-way collaboration with the arts and culture sector, with a recognition that Bridge organisations can help libraries make the links and connections to arts and culture partners, while libraries provide a connection for arts and culture organisations into the UK's diverse local communities. The research has identified the importance of creative commissioning or 'creative producing' and other practices such as opening up the space for culture to happen, libraries as culture hubs, broadcasting and touring, regional and consortium approaches and creative leadership and volunteering. The research has also identified some gaps around communications and marketing.

The following recommendations have been developed in conversation with the Culture Offer Project Steering Group and the SCL Executive on 22 March 2017.

Positioning the Culture Offer

1. SCL to complete the design, branding, and communication of the Culture Offer publication appropriate to target audiences (the public, partners and funding bodies).
2. Develop a culture outcomes and evaluation framework. SCL and Arts Council England to co-create a shared definition of culture that is formally recognised by ACE classifiers. Define what quality looks like and how we gather data for evidence of impact.
3. Branding and communications. SCL to work with national organisations on a national marketing campaign for public libraries. Linked to Single Digital Presence Strategy.

Workforce

4. Cultural champions. Library services should ensure that *all* staff see themselves as advocates for culture in libraries, while also ensuring there is a staff champion role with responsibility for culture in libraries.
5. Support workforce development by providing a toolkit owned and developed by SCL and library service champions to provide support materials and promote good practice. Develop a matrix of national arts and culture organisations and their regional offers, links and partners.
6. Modula online training package on the creative commissioner skillset (including bid writing skills and support in securing external funding) to promote diversity, quality, ambition and success. Arts development professionals have a strong track record at supporting public libraries in this area and are well placed to develop this support package further. Possible collaboration between SCL and Arts Development UK on this recommendation.

Partnerships and building capacity

7. SCL to develop the relationship with Arts Council England to build capacity in the library sector and ensure that libraries are positioned and supported to participate in funding opportunities and make successful grant applications. Identify the role and position of NPOs in the sector as key partners for libraries. Develop the interface between the Bridge Organisations, Cultural Education Partnerships, and public library services.
8. A possible briefings service for each local authority library service on the needs and opportunities in their local area drawing on work by the Audience Agency and Arts Council England.
9. Raise awareness to SCL network of the opportunities for libraries to reach children and families via partnering with school libraries services and libraries in schools.
10. Creative industries. National advocacy between libraries and the creative industries. Possible partnership between SCL and the Creative Industries Federation.

Regional activity

11. SCL regions to work with a national arts and culture organisations and each deliver a pilot project.

Accreditation

12. Accreditation. Raise awareness of the Arts Award and benefits of the supporter package.

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