



A strategic approach to developing reading

THE BACKGROUND

Wiltshire Libraries has 30 branch libraries and three mobile libraries. They have created a library strategy and worked with The Reading Agency to develop a reading strategy for Wiltshire, both of which were recently published. Wiltshire Libraries' vision is for libraries to be trusted spaces at the centre of their local community, with a clear purpose to promote reading for pleasure to deliver better health outcomes, enable people to meet, access books, information and culture, use digital services, and develop their skills to improve social mobility.

THE APPROACH

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND POSITIONING

Wiltshire Libraries used the process of developing both the library and reading strategies as an opportunity to build partnerships with other agencies and promote the strategic value of the library service.

"we see a direct correlation with the level of stock fund and issues achieved. If one is increased the other follows."

FUNDING

Wiltshire libraries have seen a 36% increase in the stock budget since 2019-20, although the budget is still lower than in 2010.

They received funding from **Multiply** to invest in stock to support maths literacy. They received **£30,000 project grant funding in 2023-24 from Arts Council England** to support 'reading roadshows' which encouraged non-readers and non-library users to read and visit the library.

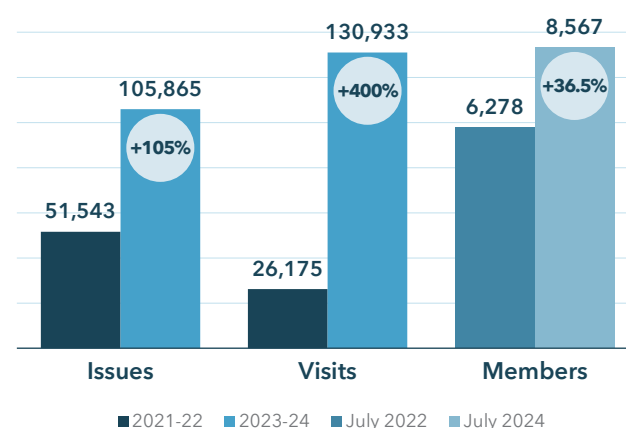
They have **used increased stock budgets to invest in collections** that they know will be popular with residents, which cycle through the branch libraries on a rolling basis. These include e.g. fantasy and sci-fi, manga, non-fiction collections relating to cooking and crafts/hobbies. Stock is selected by qualified librarians based on their community knowledge, alongside supplier selection.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MEETING THE NEEDS OF USERS

Infrastructure, access and service offer

Two libraries, which are based in leisure centres, are **open seven days a week** from 7.30am – 10pm (some self-service hours). They ensure that **all residents have access to a library service** (building or mobile) within three miles of their house. The service has invested in **two new mobile libraries** and they hosted celebratory musical events at the mobile library in the places where they visit to raise the profile of the service.

Melksham library statistics since opening



Melksham library reopened in 2022. It is based in a leisure centre and offers seven-day-a-week service and is out-performing other similar libraries in terms of visits and issues.



Image: Melksham library refurbishment – children's corner

They have also:

- maintained **late-night opening** in all of their libraries (until 7pm)
- removed fines for children's stock**
- removed reservation fees for physical audiobooks** as they know they are serving a smaller readership and they only have a limited amount of stock
- introduced **wifi printing** in larger libraries, which has proven popular especially with traveller and boater communities.

"[with the mobile libraries] you're putting on events and activities in villages and communities that wouldn't normally see things."

Events and activities

Wiltshire libraries maintained a **strong offer through the pandemic**, including online rhyme-times and click-and-collect services which raised the profile of the service and maintained positive relationships with the customer base.

They offer **eight children's and young people's reading groups** in libraries across the county as well as c. 370 adult reading groups supported by the library service. The adult reading groups receive direct marketing and promotions for activities and events.

They have introduced '**Story Sharers**' which is an initiative to get parents reading with children aged 0-4 at the same time as their older children do the Summer Reading Challenge.

The Arts Council England funding for '**Reading Roadshows**' led to many successful author and community events in the library, including:

- two crime writers panel discussion sessions
- high profile and well-known authors including Kate Rhodes, Libby Page, Tammye Huf and Louise Doughty
- 600+ attendance at events, hosted 18 author events, 1,600+ downloads of eBook and eAudio books by Roadshow authors
- hosted three Reading Group days and created six new groups, which received the following feedback: "Being 80, with Parkinson's I find it's hard to know what to say, to find the right works. I've struggled with reading but to join a group and to be able to share my thoughts, with people listening not cutting in has been new for me. A big thing in my life."

Try something new



THE IMPACT

The library service has bucked the trend of declining issues overall when epress is not considered – seeing a 2% increase in loans, compared with a 19% reduction across the sample. Children's loans have actually **increased by 21%** since the baseline year of 2019-20.

The Reading Roadshow event evaluation found that 69% attendees were motivated to read more while 38% reported and improvement in their wellbeing. Data shows that new audiences were attracted to use the library service through these events.



Investment in libraries grows library loans

CASE STUDY

THE BACKGROUND

Gloucestershire Libraries are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. They have 32 branch libraries across the county. Although the stock budget has reduced by 18% since 2019-20, the library service has sourced other funding to ensure they are able to invest in new stock and capital development.

THE APPROACH

USING SECTION 106 FUNDING TO REFURBISH LIBRARIES AND REPLENISH STOCK

In Gloucestershire, Section 106 funding is allocated to libraries on an annual basis. This results in regular refurbishments of libraries, which always includes an allocation for new book stock. In the past year five library spaces have been renovated/refurbished.

“Any time and we have s106 money, we use some of that to enhance the stock and the children's stock.”

RELOCATING AND OPENING NEW KINDS OF LIBRARY SPACES TO INCREASE VISITS

Stroud library has moved from an older, out-of-centre location to a shopping centre in the middle of the town as part of a Local Authority properties project. This new library has increased both visits and loans:

- footfall went up by 100% from the first week and it has stayed at that level
- issues have increased and that increase has been maintained. Annual total in 2023-2024 was 71,327 issues and in 2024-2025 was 108,252

Using Libraries Improvement Fund investment of £250,000, the library service has opened a new library called The Oakley Centre which includes an immersive Virtual Reality lab. This space is well used by schools and library staff who offer e.g. immersive story times for pre-school children.

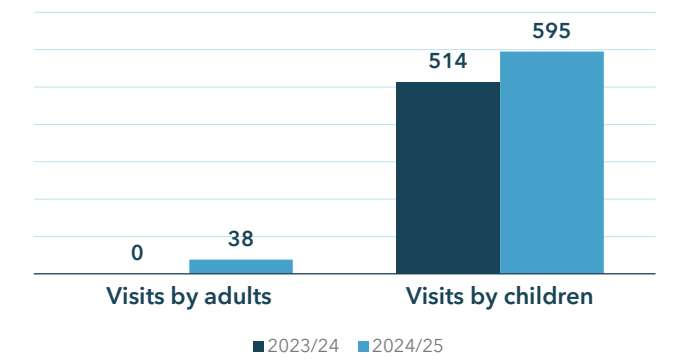


The Oakley Centre



The Oakley Centre

The Oakley Centre events engagement between 2023-25



The library service has six maker-labs across the county which include 3-D printing, fabrication tools and business support which has helped to drive footfall in the library and attract new users to their spaces.



Entrance to Stroud library

The library service has also used its investment in stock to create new themed areas based on different reading genres that appeal to its audiences. For example, Gloucester Library is currently being refurbished and will have a “cosy crime” section with comfortable seating.

“Having all of the different activities - they're hard work, but they're worth it because then you've got that you're getting people through the doors”

USING NPO FUNDING TO TEST AND DEVELOP NEW APPROACHES TO ENGAGEMENT

Since 2022, Gloucestershire Libraries have received £250,000 per annum as part of their Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation funding. This funding has supported a range of outreach and engagement activities across Gloucestershire, including:

“Library Littlies” an activity programme with children aged 0-5 that moves beyond bounce and rhyme (which they have also maintained) into other creative activities. 2024-2025 - 1,044 attendees of which 546 were children and 498 were adults:

- a vibrant and well attended programme of author events, building on the large number of authors who live locally
 - average of 15 events annually with 15 people attending on average per event
- three choirs for over-60s in the library, some of which are in areas with traditionally low library engagement, with more choirs in development
 - Longlevens - weekly attendance on average: 30
 - Coleford - weekly attendance on average: 27
 - Tuffley - weekly attendance on average: 22
- a new, independent library website which has increased annual website engagement by 160% since launch
- investment in staff training in creative activities with children from expert practitioners



Lydney library children's area and PNPC desk

“I think the new stock coming in and having the new libraries isn't just about the money coming in, it invigorates the staff and enthuses the staff.”



Tetbury library children's area after refurbishment

THE IMPACT

The library service has managed to increase loans overall by 64% since 2019-20 compared with a 14% increase across the sample.

This includes an increase in loans of physical stock by 16%, compared with a 19% reduction across the sample.

Loans of physical fiction stock have grown by 30%, compared with an overall decline of 17% across the sample.



CASE STUDY

Adopting new approaches post COVID-19

THE BACKGROUND

Norfolk Library Service consists of 47 libraries, including the flagship Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, and five mobile libraries. Since the COVID-19 pandemic the library service has worked hard to rebuild services and recover book issue levels.

Key factors driving borrowing and visits include:

- a strategic and comprehensive approach to Under 5's engagement
• multi-channel approaches to reader engagement (online and in the library)
• community and data-driven stock selection and management
• library relocation, refreshed stock display and refurbishment



"The new library at The Place in Great Yarmouth has seen a dramatic change in the usage of the library since moving to the high street. The figures really do speak for themselves. Since we opened on 6 May 2025 we have joined 1,372 new customers, issued 17,522 books and seen a footfall of 51,893." Libby Morgan Stock and Reader Development Manager

THE APPROACH

UNDER 5'S ENGAGEMENT



Bounce and Rhyme at Great Yarmouth Library

"Although many people turned to online services during the pandemic - and some digital activities continue, especially for older and adult audiences - our physical library spaces remain at the heart of our community offer." Alison Thorne Community Librarian

A particular focus has been on re-engaging families with children under 5. Each library offers a core programme of activities, which continues throughout the school holidays, providing a reliable and free service for families. Libraries have developed additional facilities and services, including:

- 'Stay and Chat' sessions, after 'Bounce and Rhyme' time, with refreshments
• the introduction of 'Reading Well and Parenting' collections
• enhanced spaces to read, relax, and engage
• the development of 'Getting Ready for School' bags
• birth registration services, where starter book packs are offered to parents registering a birth, and babies are signed up to the library service
• 'Story Explorers Reading Club': This scheme, which launched post-COVID has about 6,000 children currently signed up to it. It's a reading club for children 0 to 5 years old with the target of reading 1,000 books before they start school

MULTI-CHANNEL APPROACHES TO READER ENGAGEMENT

The service supports reading through county-wide initiatives such as an annual countywide 'Big Norfolk Read', non-fiction circulating collections, and reading group offers, all of which continue to be well used. In addition, each library is encouraged to run at least one regular adult reading activity, helping to attract users back into library spaces.

Collaborations with the Reading Agency, particularly through the Reading Friends programme, have played a key role in increasing adult engagement. What began as a single session has expanded to three, due to high demand. These sessions are offered via phone and Zoom have helped build digital confidence, which is especially valuable in rural areas where physical access can be a barrier. Feedback from a Reading Agency survey highlighted positive mental health impacts, particularly in communities targeted by the initiative.

"The Zoom book club has changed my borrowing habits a fair bit. Yes, I do borrow more books and renew more books too. The book club reading list encourages me to try, and borrow, from new authors." Vicky

In addition, the library service offers a thriving monthly Zoom book club. Offering titles in both digital and print formats, the sessions have encouraged participants to explore books beyond their usual preferences.

COMMUNITY AND DATA-DRIVEN STOCK SELECTION AND MANAGEMENT

The service selects its own stock, with staff responsible for purchasing adult fiction and non-fiction books, and a team of children's book buyers:

- Staff go out to meet with students and young readers to talk about stock selection—ensuring decisions are grounded in real community needs. This customised approach allows the team to respond quickly to trends, seasonal themes, and local events
• The Reading Group collection gives reading groups easy access to quality reads and enables the library service to repurpose popular stock once demand reduces

"I've taken out four titles since joining, previously not being a library user!" Janaka, Reading Friends participant

LIBRARY RELOCATION, REFURBISHMENT AND STOCK DISPLAY

Great Yarmouth Library has seen a significant spike in visitors and issues thanks to its brand new, improved facility, which opened in May 2025.

In addition to targeted engagement activity a focused effort has been made to refresh library layouts and improve stock management, ensuring that services remain responsive to community needs. For example, on the ground floor at the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library, marketplace-style book displays are constantly refreshed with new stock, and issue figures have steadily increased over recent years.

THE IMPACT

As a result of these initiatives:

- Junior book borrowing has returned to pre-COVID levels
• Picture book borrowing is particularly strong
• The service is also seeing people returning to libraries and staying longer
• The service has increased investment in adult non-fiction stock, which is still seeing issues increasing year on year since the COVID pandemic
• Performance data and issue figures help guide decisions about what to purchase, display and promote. Each library is now given a loans target based on the previous year's borrowing data, encouraging staff to think more mindfully about stock use, selection, and displays



Libraries as gateways to reading and more

THE BACKGROUND

Staffordshire Libraries noticed a significant growth in library visits and loans at three of their libraries due to their participation in the 'Know Your Neighbourhood' (KYN) project, funded by the Department for Communities, Media and Sport (DCMS) between 2022-25. These activities offset a reduction in footfall in a large town centre library due to construction projects in the area and supported service development and strong growth in visits and loans in community managed libraries.



'Know Your Neighbourhood' library decorations



THE APPROACH

KYN activities ran in three libraries across the authority:

- Brereton and Heath Hayes (community-managed libraries)
- Cannock Library - a District Library which sits in the town centre. At the time of the project, work had commenced on major construction projects in the area and this had resulted in a significant decrease in footfall in the town

KYN targeted individuals who were chronically lonely or disengaged from library services, aiming to encourage use of community spaces. Activities in Staffordshire libraries were co-designed with communities following a programme of 'taster' sessions. They included:

- a Dementia Café in partnership with local care homes. Those who took part in sessions were gradually introduced to other library services such as Reading Friends for dementia.
- Cinema Club (e.g. Peter Rabbit, Willy Wonka)
- jigsaw afternoons
- baby sensory sessions
- Brereton Library opened the library at specific times for a Home School group
- Heath Hayes reinstated baby bounce sessions, and 'Summer Reading Challenge' and started a new art group

WHAT MADE THIS WORK?

- listening to the community, asking them what they want and being responsive was vital –especially in recruiting volunteers who felt invested
- building relationships through repeated engagement led to eventual increases in book borrowing, even among audiences initially disengaged with reading
- well-resourced activities, including:
 - a project co-ordinator role operating across all participating libraries
 - a cohort of volunteers who played a crucial role in the delivery of activities
 - training to staff and volunteers which built their confidence to try new things
- long-term sustainability of the project was a core consideration of the project, ensuring that new relationships developed would be maintained beyond the funded period

WHAT HAPPENED?

In total, 837 people were directly involved in events and sessions, this does not include those attending the cinema clubs and other unregistered activities. 28 volunteers were recruited through the project, with some forming a 'Friends Group' to support ongoing activities and marketing. Significant impacts were observed across all three participating libraries.



History Hunters at Cannock library

"We wanted to spend the least amount of money on activities as we wanted it to be sustainable"

Kerry Hutchings
Library Development Manager, Staffordshire Libraries

Cannock

- the library service had predicted a drop of 18% in visits as a result of development work in the town. As a result of KYN activities the library saw only a 2% decrease in visits and a 5.3% decrease in book issues
- a 'Friends Group' was formed which supports ongoing activities and marketing, they now act as a voice in the community

Heath Hayes

- 70% increase in visits (approx. 10,000)
- 'Book pillow' initiative resulted in a 19.5% increase in book issues

Brereton

- visits increased by 36.2%; issues rose by 13.7%

THE IMPACT

The project fostered closer collaboration between county-managed and community-managed libraries. The co-ordinator acted as a bridge between staff, volunteers, and library users. Staff became more innovative, and library teams developed a clearer sense of shared purpose. The work is continuing beyond the initial funding, with additional funding secured for continued activity in the three libraries.



Outreach and engagement

THE BACKGROUND

St Helens Libraries has reframed its operations to focus on outreach and engagement following a major restructure which saw the service reduce from 13 branches to seven.

THE APPROACH

Through innovation, partnership building, and targeted community work the service has been successful in maintaining strong library use and increasing book loans. In 2024-25 St Helens saw total loans rise by 27%. adult stock loans rise by 45% and children's loans rise by 6% compared with the baseline year of 2019-20. All of these statistics are better than the average for this study. In addition, active borrower numbers in 2024-25 had increased by 74% compared with the baseline year.

Following a restructure some communities around St Helens were left without a physical library branch. This created risks of disengagement and loss of trust. At the same time, COVID-19 had significantly disrupted usage patterns, particularly among children and families who had previously used libraries heavily after school.

The key challenges facing the service included:

- maintaining and growing loans despite reduced library sites
- engaging communities who were unhappy about branch closures
- addressing budget pressures while protecting investment in stock
- bridging the digital divide while meeting growing demand for online access and eBooks
- reconnecting with young people and adapting to their changing habits



VE celebration in a community cafe

OUTREACH TEAM

Three key roles oversaw the implementation of the new way of working:

- Library Support Manager – responsible for home delivery, school library service, the digital catalogue and infrastructure
- Libraries Operations and Archives Manager – responsible for the outreach team, front of house staff, archives and heritage and the operational running of the library service
- Senior Outreach Officer – responsible for four outreach officers, operational delivery, and engagement in communities, family hubs and reading groups

Former library officers were appointed into the roles of outreach officers. Their mission was to maintain visibility in communities without branches and to extend the library's reach to new groups. They focused on engaging families, children and young people and older adults.



Family Hub fun day event

In practice this included having a community presence through the running of regular activities in family hubs, schools and community centres. There was an expansion of the home delivery service to families with children with SEND and adults with mobility challenges. Digital services were promoted more, highlighting the range of eBooks, audiobooks and e-magazines on offer. The team also worked in collaboration with ESOL groups, adult wellbeing programmes and spearheaded local reading initiatives such as the 'Book Awards St Helens' (BASH), which encourages children to read for pleasure and is one of the few book awards in which children choose the winning book.

St Helens Libraries have also introduced a Community Library Grant Scheme which aims to support groups to establish a library offer within their community.

The library service has also been supporting the delivery of the 'Arts in Library Project', one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations (NPO). The project which aims to bring culture to all delivers a range of events including exhibitions, music, drama, workshops, and family events across the borough. It has received funding to deliver the work over three years from 2023 to 2026.

"The children who attended the event really enjoyed the experience and parents were overjoyed that the children got to experience this alongside their nursery session. We also had a child with additional needs who will be attending a mainstream school in September and the event provided him with opportunities to be with other children of his own age and also to be in a group event... which was an important part for his own school readiness."

Nursery Manager

STOCK DEVELOPMENT

St. Helens are part of a North West consortium for physical stock and the Greater Manchester consortium for digital stock, with support from suppliers and Collection HQ for data-driven collection management. The team take a data-driven approach to collection management and stock promotion, which is led by what communities want.

Their focus is on dynamic stock development, diversity and accessibility (e.g. dyslexia-friendly collections). A strong social media presence is used to promote new titles and trends (e.g. BookTok-driven demand).

COLLABORATION

Having a dedicated outreach team with a clear brief to serve communities has been a significant shift for the service. Through cross sector training and collaboration, the library service has successfully extended its offer. This has included working with family hubs and taking part in joint training in areas including speech and language, oral health and sexual health. This means the teams are better placed to support families. They have also worked with local nurseries to deliver events which support school readiness.

The service has received partnership funding from Libraries Connected and Right to Succeed to support local programmes such as 'Cradle to Career'.

FUTURE PLANS

St Helens Libraries are exploring further development of outreach programmes, strengthening accessible collections, and continuing to evolve digital services. Plans are also in place to locate the town centre library back into a civic town centre building, ensuring visibility and centrality for the service.



Family activity delivered by library staff

THE IMPACT

In addition to the increase in loans per person the service has seen the following trends across the service:

- **Digital growth:** The service identified an increase in demand for e-books and e-press. They transitioned to Borrow Box as the sole e-platform which has simplified access and boosted digital borrowing.
- **Community trust:** Strong public backing during the restructure and a commitment via outreach and engagement reinforced the perception of libraries as trusted and essential.
- **Behavioural change:** The service noticed that anti-social behaviour reduced after COVID, with libraries becoming more family orientated.
- **Visibility and access:** Outreach activity ensured that residents in areas without branches continued to access library services.



Data-driven interventions

THE BACKGROUND

Lewisham Libraries operate a network of 12 libraries, including eight community-run sites and four council-managed branches, alongside a home library service. Despite the temporary closure of Lewisham Central Library for refurbishment, the service has achieved significant growth in lending.

Since 2021, Lewisham has adopted a data-driven approach to stock management, programming, and community engagement.



"Deptford Library is hands down my favourite library in London - as a supporter of independent publishing, I'm always glad to see presses like Prototype, strangers press, Another Gaze Editions, etc... prominently featured in your curation."

THE APPROACH

DATA-DRIVEN STOCK MANAGEMENT

The Stock Manager who was appointed in 2023 brought about a change in the way in which data was being used, from passive reporting to a proactive analysis of lending data. They started to analyse trends in lending and identify where there were opportunities to increase loans. Data insights are used to diversify stock and bring in a more representative collection. There has also been an introduction of demand-led acquisitions and frontline staff have an active role in influencing purchasing.

"It was great to connect with the local community and felt like a genuine sharing of a love of poetry."

Insights from the data on lending trends are shared with staff through regular INSET days. This increases morale and a sense of ownership. Feedback from library users highlights the value they place on having a wide range of varied books on offer.



LGBTQ+ book display

REMOVING BARRIERS

In 2021, auto-renewals were introduced as well as stopping taking fines. This created a safety net for all residents. Further, holds are now free of charge. In addition, families now benefit from increased borrowing allowances, with children able to borrow up to 20 books at a time.

TARGETED EVENTS AND OUTREACH



Event at Deptford Library

A varied and rich programme of literary and cultural events are offered by the service. This includes poetry evenings, author talks, independent publisher forums and the Arts Council England funded 'Imagined Worlds', a month-long celebration of sci-fi and fantasy, which ran in 2025 and will run again in 2026. The series of events which included music performances attracted new readers into the library and boosted membership by 42%.

"Really good event and it did bring me back to library after many years of not coming at all."

Children's programming has been extended from weekly craft activities and story times to sensory Storytime for SEND families. There has been a 32% increase in 'Summer Reading Challenge' participation through strong school partnerships, reaching 60% of local schools.

Increased visibility at community festivals, fun days and parks has ensured the library remains central to community life.

LESSONS LEARNED

One of the key lessons was that 'it is not enough to just look at a spreadsheet'. Data needs to be interpreted, shared and acted upon to make a real impact. Staff engagement has proved to be essential with regular communication, transparency, and the involvement of frontline staff in decisions which has helped to build commitment.

Removing fines played an important role in reducing barriers and ensuring libraries remained inclusive, especially in deprived areas. Combining stock insights with targeted events further maximized impact, keeping collections relevant and well-used.

"Really interesting music and great to learn more about the Middle Ages too! It was amazing, please do more things like this, it was so cool."

THE IMPACT

Since adopting a data-led approach, digital and physical loans across the service have increased by 63% with a 30% increase in physical loans by 2024-25 compared with the baseline year of 2019-20. Children's borrowing has shown the strongest growth, with audio formats expanding rapidly. Adult non-fiction lending has also significantly risen and has been supported by curated stock as well as events.

This growth in engagement can be linked to strengthened relationships with schools, families and under-represented communities. In recognition of these achievements, Lewisham Libraries were named Library of the Year for London which raised their profile and boosted staff morale.



Joined-up services and community-focused engagement

THE BACKGROUND

The development of a new Central Library in a shared cultural space with Doncaster Museum & Art Gallery, Archives and Local Studies and a Rail Heritage Centre provided a unique opportunity for Doncaster Libraries to enhance and expand its offer to local communities.

Doncaster Library Service operates three branch libraries and twenty community libraries, which are supported by around 400 volunteers. The Central Library is housed in the Danum Gallery, Library and Museum (DGLAM), a landmark cultural building in the Civic and Cultural Quarter of Doncaster. Danum, which opened to the public in May 2021. The building brings together the Central Library, Museum and Art Gallery, Archives and Local Studies and Rail Heritage Centre.



Black History Month display at DGLAM

"We have books in every place, everywhere across DGLAM."

THE APPROACH

SPACE FOR ALL

Within the new Central Library, separate spaces were created for children and young adults. It was identified in the process of developing the new library that having designated spaces which are designed to be age-appropriate was essential to meeting the different needs of these groups.

Being within a shared space with other cultural providers where there is also a museum café means that families can spend a full day at DGLAM. It makes it a destination. The children's library has a fully accessible changing space and the spaces offer ways for people to connect.



Enchanted forest rhyme times at Mexborough Library

In addition to the new Central Library the library at Mexborough was transformed into an enchanted forest with funding support from Arts Council England through the library improvement fund, Libraries Connected and matched Levelling Up funds. Siobhan Murphy of interior curve designed the space to be joyful and engaging, a space dedicated to young readers.

STOCK MANAGEMENT

The management of stock is done through supply and selection via Askews and a pot of money is set aside for specific requests from the learning team. The learning team work across DGLAM and engage in activities which provide opportunities for children to read for pleasure. This has included the placement of books throughout gallery and exhibition spaces which tie in with displays.

While they do have classic books and a core collection in the last few years the team have worked to diversify the stock. They work to ensure there is wide representation of their communities within the collection and a range of different language books on offer. They want their local communities to see themselves reflected in the books they hold. Every new book on offer goes to DANEM Library, which is open every day.

Staff who work in the children's section of the Central Library read the children's and young adult's books that come in so they can respond to questions about them and make informed recommendations. There are no longer fines issued on loans and children can borrow up to 12 books.

E-books have been a big success for the service. They have reduced what they spend on physical books and increased spend on digital books.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The service started seeing a decline in loans and to address this they focused on developing their engagement work. Starting with interventions which aimed to help young people engage in libraries. This included library familiarisation sessions which highlight what a library is and what you can expect from a library service. In addition, library card registration is encouraged during school visits and craft activities are themed to books, such as *The Gruffalo* and *Oi Frog!*. There are also themed displays throughout the year which link with national topics and trails lined to books.



In addition to children's activities the service has developed literary programme for adults, encouraging them to read for pleasure.

PEOPLE MAKING IT WORK

Within the team there is strong educational expertise among staff. This includes a number of ex-teachers who are keen to engage and know how to best communicate with children and young people. They also know and have strong relationships with the schools.

"It's a safe and friendly atmosphere. Everyone feels wanted and staff enjoy working in this way."

A key challenge for the learning team is that they can be a victim of their success. They have waiting lists for activities. They would like to offer these at branch/volunteer libraries, but they are hitting the limit of how many people we can work with.

THE IMPACT

The creation of new spaces and commitment to providing engaging, inclusive and community-focused experiences for children, young adults and families the service has led to a noticeable increase in book loans, including a 14% increase in children's stock loans compared with the baseline year of 2019-20 and an increase in both fiction and non-fiction children's stock issues.