

MARK FREEMAN PRESIDENT



It feels like yesterday that I was at the first Libraries Connected seminar, introducing the new organisation to our members. I remember speaking about how honoured I was to be the first ever President of this new charity and about all we hoped to accomplish for libraries across the country.

Over a year on from then, and I am so proud of all that we've achieved and all that we have planned for the future. We were incredibly fortunate to recruit a brilliant team who have delivered an astounding amount of work in such a short period of time, over and above what we had planned.

Our first significant piece of work, our Universal Offers Review, has resulted in a honed set of four clearly defined offers that will help libraries to articulate what they do and plan their services around a range of outcomes.

Our first major commercial partnership with Sopra Steria was challenging from the outset and took an enormous amount of time to get right. However, now libraries are finally beginning to see the rewards from this project and we've had great feedback from customers who tell us how much they value the service.

Our membership is the reason we exist and their involvement in the management of Libraries Connected is vital to ensuring that our work remains relevant and reflects their priorities to help protect and develop services. So I'm delighted that they continue to dedicate their time and expertise via our regional networks and governing boards.

I'd also like to acknowledge the support of Arts Council England, who have not just funded our work but have been real partners and provided valuable advice and support as we've navigated our first year as a Sector Support Organisation.

It's been an amazing time for Libraries Connected, complete with all the twists and turns you'd expect from a new born! My sincere thanks go to our team, our members, our trustees and our partners who have worked so brilliantly together to carve out the support that libraries need to continue to engage communities and change lives.



ISOBEL HUNTER CHIEF EXECUTIVE

My first year at Libraries Connected has been a steep learning curve during such a challenging time for public services. Even those with long careers behind them say it is the toughest time they have known, as local authority budgets continue to dwindle and demands increase.

However, across the library network I continue to be amazed by the level of determination and creativity that library leaders and staff bring to their roles and by their commitment to delivering high quality services tailored to the needs of their communities.

Over the last decade, libraries have evolved enormously, to deliver an ever-wider range of services and take their place at the centre of their communities. Highlighting this work, we have begun to make the case that libraries are an essential part of the infrastructure of a modern society but that they need adequate resourcing to deliver these services effectively.

We kicked off our work as an Arts Council Sector Support Organisation with an ambitious plan to set up a new charity. This included recruiting our brilliant team of staff and trustees, who have helped us to achieve an enormous amount in our first year, and reviewing core areas of work such as our Universal Offers (P8).

Securing additional project funding for libraries will continue to be important but we also need to look at the long-term, structural issues facing libraries. To drive change, and better support individual libraries, we developed our blueprint project to improve the structural environment for libraries (P7), we created a model for regional support (P6) and are beginning to explore a national accreditation framework for libraries.

If we manage to deliver on the ambition of these key pieces of work, it will mean a more sustainable framework for libraries; a team to support each library service to not only survive change but to develop to its best potential; and a tool to help libraries define how to deliver a good service in their local context.

These are tough goals, at a time of significant political turmoil, but it's essential that we work to keep libraries on the public agenda and provide them with the resources they need.

Thankfully, we have a wonderful group of dedicated members with the expertise to guide us through these changes and to make sure that we deliver a strong and sustainable future for public libraries in the UK.

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ROUND UP OF THE YEAR

4959
Learning Pool modules
completed

98%
of attendees would
recommend the seminar
to a colleague

1 in 4
members attended our
AGM

721
messages and
comments posted on
the network

11,836
visa applicants were
helped in libraries

Learning Pool

Five courses are available free of charge to people working in public libraries in England on Learning Pool and we are hoping to extend access to Wales. Since the launch of the first course in 2014, over 22,000 learners have accessed the e-learning. This year, the module 'Universal - full credit', has been the most popular with 1240 completions.

Annual seminar

We launched Libraries Connected as a new organisation at the 2018 seminar to 144 of our members, policy makers and partners. The seminar explored the ways that public libraries are embracing the ever-changing digital world in order to engage with a rapidly developing audience. Michael Ellis, then Libraries Minister, gave the keynote speech.

AGM

We established the AGM as an annual event in Birmingham every December. The event included a seminar that explored how libraries can position themselves with key decision makers. Senior figures from libraries around the UK shared their analysis of the future and their insights on how library leaders can advocate for their services.

Innovation Network

This year we took over the management of the network from Shared Intelligence with support from our members. The 2019 gathering took place in April at Leeds Central Library where members were able to share their practice and projects and hear about the development of the Oodi library in Finland. The network now has over 400 members.

Commercial activities

We aim to help libraries to deliver valued support for local residents and to generate additional income. We recruited 54 libraries as centres for applicants to submit their supporting documents and biometric data for our visa project with Sopra Steria. Initial feedback showed that applicants valued the local and welcoming service from libraries.

REGIONAL SUPPORT

The current library sector network is complex, and services often struggle to get the support and advice they need at the right time.

We secured funding from Arts Council England to help library services to position themselves politically within local government and to make sure that they have the tools to manage transformation and generate income.

We worked with Activist Group to develop a model for a support offer for libraries, through an exercise of consultation with the sector and key decision makers and funders.

'The public sector is increasingly realising that public libraries offer a sustainable model of delivering a range of public service programmes and outcomes.'

Regional Support Offer: The Business Case, 2019

The consultation report highlights five elements that will deliver effective strategic support to libraries:

1. A national programme manager and regional engagement team to broker support and improve collaboration between services
2. A national subject expertise bank to provide specialist advice on topics such as service transformation, income generation and mentoring
3. An online 'Library library' that shares evidence and advice and has tools to help manage transformation and innovation locally
4. An 'engine for evidence' to pilot standards for new library standards and commission research on the impact of services
5. An advocacy campaign to highlight the contribution of libraries to local priorities and communities.

We will now seek funding to test these proposals and further develop the proposed model of support. We are grateful to Libraries Taskforce and Arts Council England for providing an additional grant to support this work.

LIBRARIES BLUEPRINT

We produced the blueprint report with CILIP in the response to growing pressures faced by public libraries in England. The report details seven key strands of work that will lead to long-term and co-ordinated improvements in the structural support for the sector. Work on some of these has already begun:

- Nationally organised and funded infrastructure and creative programmes
- National standards and accreditation to help define a quality service (currently being explored by us)
- Nationally co-ordinated monitoring and evaluation (currently being explored by DCMS)
- National digital public library service (led by British Library)
- Regional development and support programme (led by us)
- Nationally co-ordinated workforce development (led by us and CILIP)
- Support for local authorities to explore new governance and delivery models for public libraries.

The research, funded by the Carnegie UK Trust, explored different options and identified priorities for action. The aim is to improve the structural support for public libraries to ensure a confident and dynamic library network.

We believe that each of the above elements will only be successful as part of a coherent programme. We will now work together with CILIP and other Library Taskforce partners to provide a clear plan to deliver this national, coordinated programme of support for libraries.

'There is a need for cohesive evidence at the national level about the effectiveness of public libraries in addressing big social challenges that they, in fact, help alleviate.'

Scoping study towards a blueprint for public library development, 2019

UNIVERSAL OFFER REVIEW

The Universal Offers are central to the support that we offer to libraries across the country. This review gives us the opportunity to clarify and strengthen this support to ensure that libraries can clearly articulate their services and demonstrate their impact.

- Reading
- Health and Wellbeing
- Culture and Creativity
- Information and Digital.

The Universal Offers have been incorporated into many library service strategies and as a result, it was critical that we engaged with library services as widely as possible. Our stakeholders were also vital as many of them are integral to the Universal Offers' delivery programme. The resulting framework is based on extensive consultation with the sector and with key stakeholders.

The new framework streamlines the number of offers from six to four:

The Children's Promise and the Six Steps Promise underpin this new framework and learning is now part of the overarching mission.

For the first time, the new model also includes a draft mission statement which pulls all the offers together with measures that reflect the seven Ambition outcomes. These can be replaced with local outcomes so that library services can articulate what they do in terms of responding to local need.

The review confirmed that the Universal Offers have been welcomed by libraries and funders over the last six years. They have provided a powerful strategic tool to demonstrate the core impacts libraries make and have supported partnership development and funding proposals. They have also created a valuable collection of practical tools and guidance to help staff to deliver high quality events and activities to the public.

71%
of library staff agree or strongly agree that the Universal Offers help them respond to local need

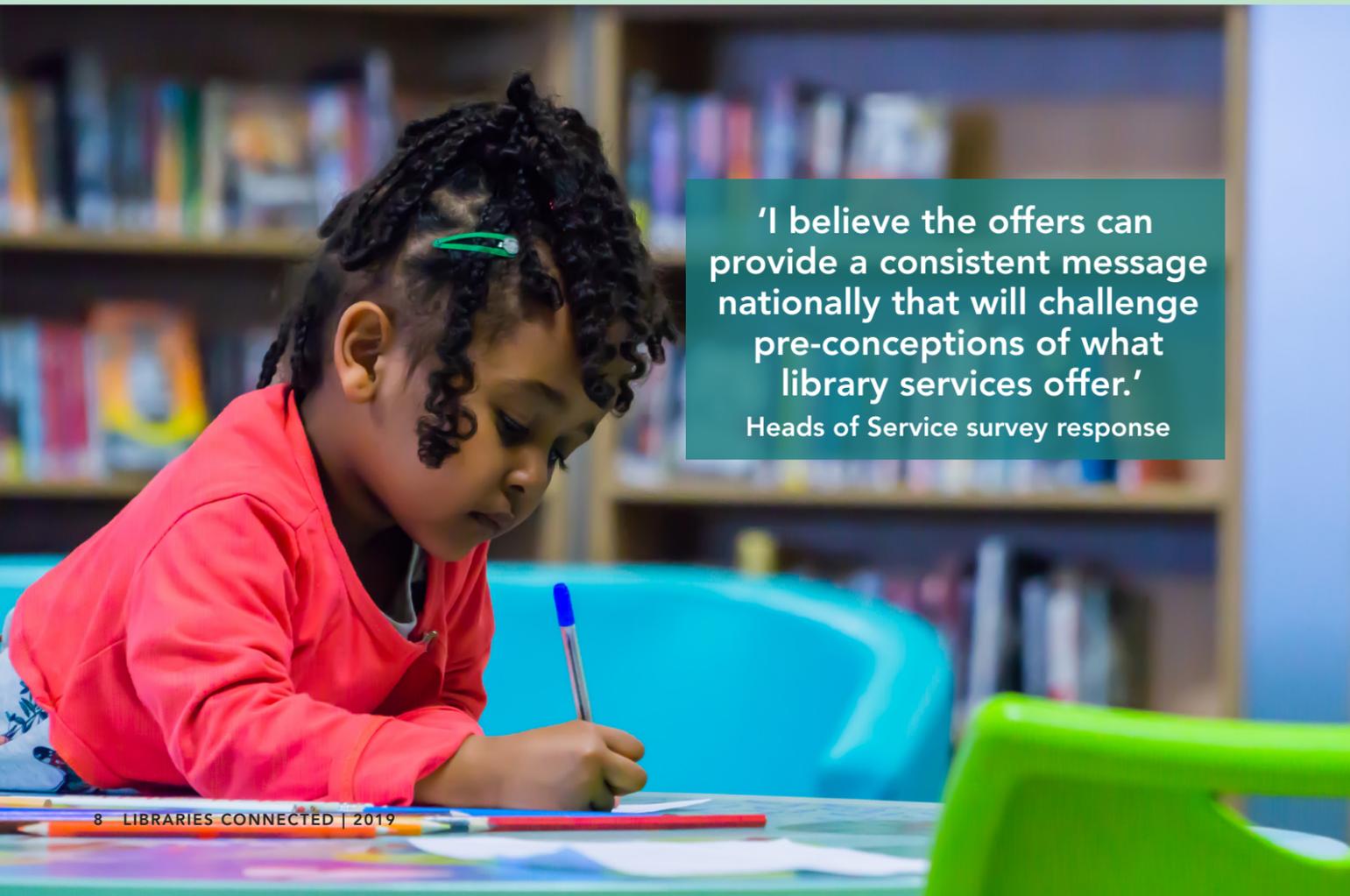
We hope that the new framework will give us a robust means to articulate, celebrate and demonstrate the crucial and life-enhancing role of library services now and into the future.

1285
library staff responded to our survey

We are hugely grateful to the library staff, heads of service and stakeholders who have given their time to take part in the consultation, which was led by Shared Intelligence.

'If there is a greater need for a particular service, we can use the Universal Offers to help create that service for our users'

All staff survey response



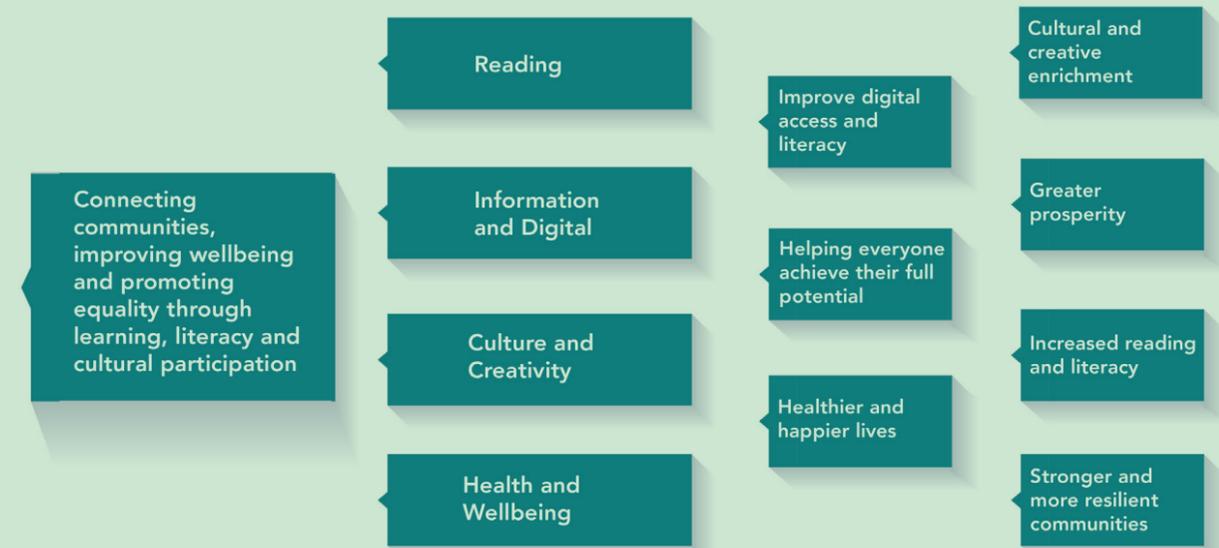
'I believe the offers can provide a consistent message nationally that will challenge pre-conceptions of what library services offer.'
Heads of Service survey response

Universal Library Offer Framework

What societal needs do libraries meet - mission

What libraries do - Universal Library Offers

What libraries offer - outcomes/measures



UNIVERSAL OFFERS UPDATE

The Digital Offer:

- Reviewed the Digital Library Online service
- Began to look at what a modern, flexible library management system should deliver.

The Learning Offer:

- Expanded digital making, creative tech and informal science learning opportunities in libraries
- Developed the Ada's Army Festival of STEAM activity which will take place in 2019
- Investigated ways to strengthen informal learning for adults in public libraries and making sure that libraries are included in community learning partnerships.

The Reading Offer:

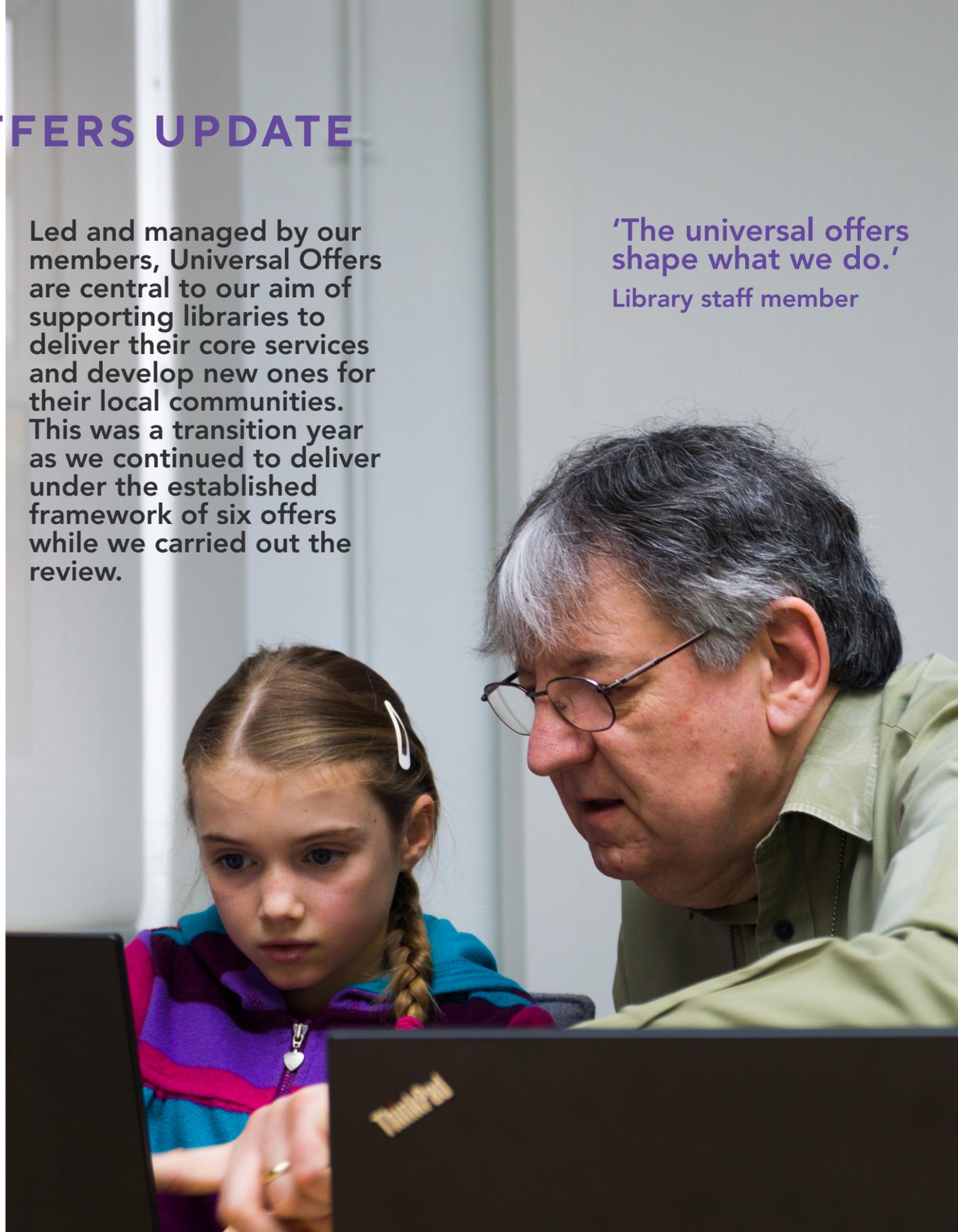
- Helped libraries to celebrate World Book Night in April, Empathy Day in June, National Poetry Day in October and World Book Day and Shakespeare Week in March, all of which had a language and literacy theme
- Supported research on whether library-based rhyme times could be a large-scale platform for supporting maternal mental health with Essex Libraries, funded by Arts Council England.

The Health Offer:

- Launched the adult mental health reading list in June with Minister Michael Ellis
- Created the Reading Well for Dementia in Wales in July in collaboration with SCL Cymru and the Welsh Government
- Developed the Growing Well toolkit to help combat child obesity, funded by Libraries Connected and Arts Council England.

Led and managed by our members, Universal Offers are central to our aim of supporting libraries to deliver their core services and develop new ones for their local communities. This was a transition year as we continued to deliver under the established framework of six offers while we carried out the review.

'The universal offers shape what we do.'
Library staff member



The Information Offer:

- Managed the Learning Pool for library workers. In 2018, there were 6894 enrolments and 4695 courses were completed.
- Led on the development of commercial contracts within the government's digital framework. Set up and installation has been complex, involving multiple IT systems and venue requirements as well as liaison with Sopra Steria and contractors.

The Culture Offer:

- Promoted Fun Palaces Weekend, Banned Books Week, The BBC ICONs Festival and the Get Creative festival. Get Creative delivered 1400 events with 500 in libraries.
- Created and launched a film highlighting 10 top tips for cultural programming with the support of Libraries Unlimited.
- Supported the BBC VR tour of over 60 libraries which began in 2018 and is still on tour around the UK.

Children's Promise

- Created the Libraries Love Families pledge with ASCEL which grew out of a report commissioned by Libraries Connected and ASCEL to examine how libraries could become more family friendly.

Six Steps Promise

- Supported Make A Noise in Libraries Fortnight which gained good national and international social media coverage
- Reviewed the Six Steps Training module on Learning Pool
- Developed library guidelines in partnership with The Network, that set out basic information on providing library services for visually impaired people.

SCL CYMRU

SCL Cymru supported the launch of Welsh Library Authorities' Reading Well Wales dementia scheme in July 2018. A key element of the project was securing funding from the Welsh government to translate titles into Welsh.

They are also offering the Reading Well for Mental Health books in Wales and running a marketing campaign to highlight the role libraries play in promoting public health within Wales.

Welsh libraries have worked with the Welsh government to develop a joint approach to the delivery of e-books, e-audio and e-zines. All 22 authorities now share access to a single system and a combination of authority and Welsh government funding made over 20,000 new e-book and e-audio items available during 2018-19.

LIBRARIES NI

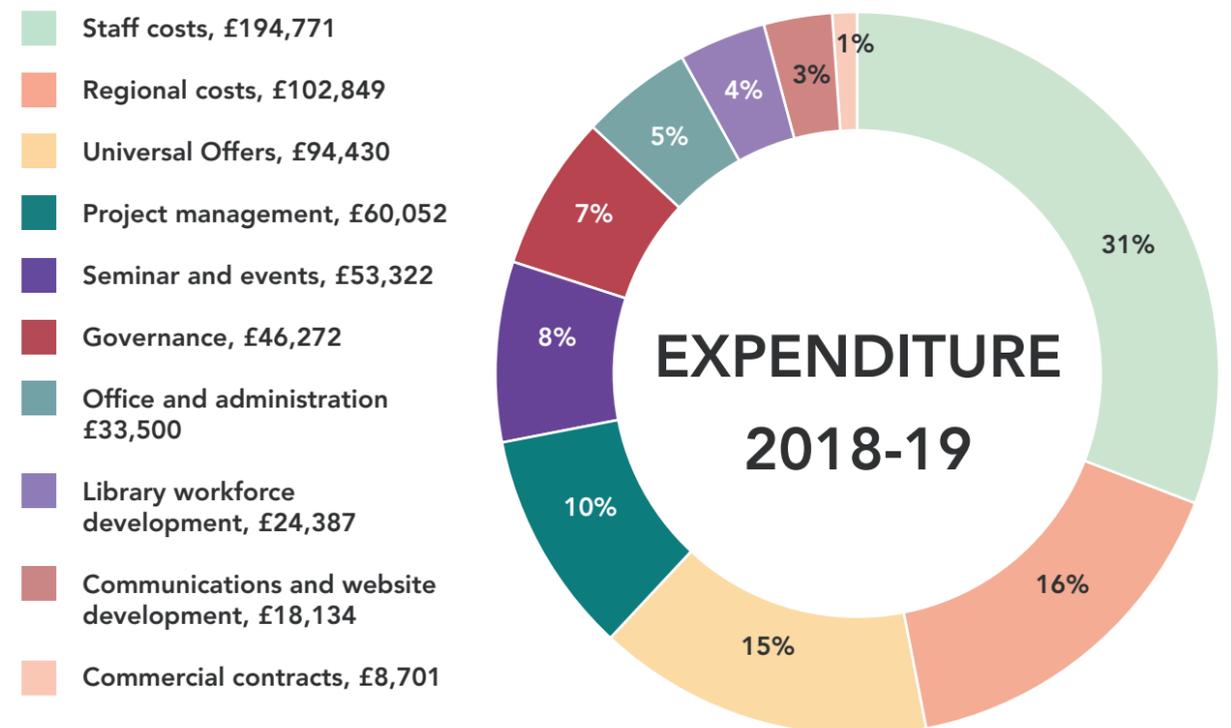
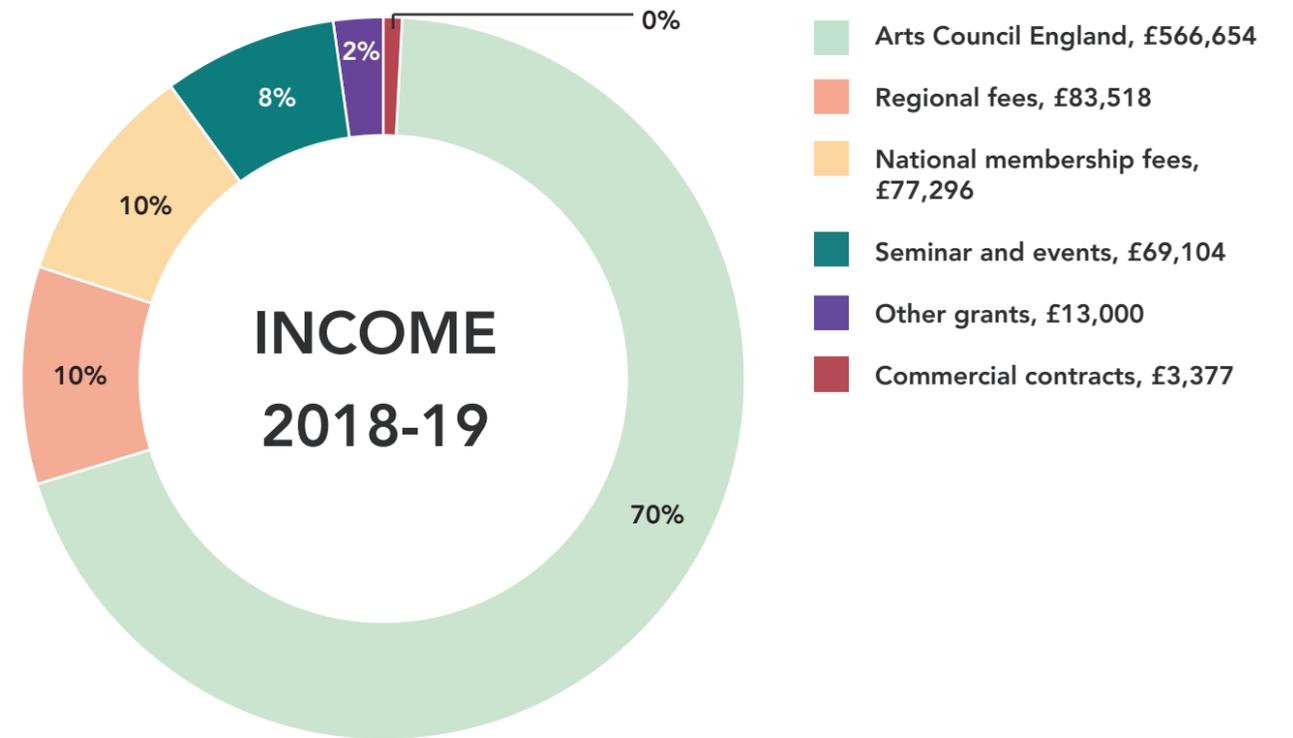
Libraries NI's successful partnership with the BBC continued with the rollout of BBC Rewind, the continuation of the Biggest Book Club in the Country and the third Book Week NI. This included A Box of Delights, a performance of music and readings with the Ulster Orchestra.

An out of hours service was introduced in six rural libraries to improve access to broadband in rural areas.

The Libraries NI Storyteller in Residence initiative, funded by The Armstrong Storytelling Bursary, provided 116 storytelling events in libraries for 5635 people.

Libraries NI also took part in the Boardroom Apprentice programme, which provides individuals who wish to become board members the opportunity to gain practical experience, training and support through a non-voting placement with a host board.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION



LIBRARIES CONNECTED: THE BENEFITS

Libraries Connected exists to advocate for the power of libraries, to demonstrate their importance to individuals and communities, and to support library leaders.

Our members benefit from being part of a national body that advocates for their services, secures funding to support their work and provides a forum to share best practice and key learning.

At the same time our regional network offers members support from their peers and a space to share experiences and practice outside of their local authority.

We are committed to working alongside our members to broker partnerships that help develop informed, practical, long-term solutions to the challenges faced by library services across the country. Key member benefits include:

National funding opportunities

As a national membership body, Libraries Connected can secure funding to support library leaders, staff and projects around the country. These include programmes such as the year-long BBC Novels reading campaign, Leading Libraries which aims to drive diversity in library leadership, and the consultation on an accreditation scheme for libraries.



National advocacy platform

Membership of Libraries Connected means that our members are part of the national voice for libraries, with improved access to government decision makers. Our Advisory Group, which involves members from each region and our Universal Offer chairs, also gives members the chance to inform and influence our national activities.

Training and development

Learning Pool is our flagship training portal, offering free courses to our members in England. We provide bursaries to library staff to attend national events such as Mozfest and our annual seminar (in partnership with Carnegie UK). We also curate member events such as the Innovation Network gathering to share learning and practice.

National and regional network

Our national annual seminar brings together library leaders and key partners to network and learn from leading professionals working in the UK and abroad. Our Innovation Network and our regional meetings give our members the chance to share information and work across local authority lines and are a valuable support network of fellow professionals.

Income generation

Libraries Connected is committed to ensuring that libraries are sustainable in the long term by brokering national relationships with a wide range of organisations and bidding for contracts to develop new services and improve our existing offer. These opportunities enable libraries to continue to expand the service they provide to their local communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We could not have accomplished all that we have this year without the efforts and expertise of many organisations and individuals.

We would like to thank the following partners for their support:

- Arts Council England
- The Association of Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL)
- BBC
- Booksellers Association
- Booktrust
- The British Library
- Carnegie UK Trust
- CILIP
- DCMS
- Jisc
- Libraries Taskforce
- LGA
- The Reading Agency
- Share the Vision
- Wellcome Trust

We would like to thank our Advisory Board for their expert guidance during our first year:

- Adrienne Adair, Libraries NI
- Sue Ball, Staffordshire County Council
- Dawn Beaumont, Birmingham City Council
- Medi Bernard, Bournemouth and Poole Libraries
- Lindy Elliott, Portsmouth Libraries
- Jane Everiss, Gloucestershire County Council
- Peter Gaw, Inspire Culture, Learning & Libraries
- Subnum Hariff-Khan, Oldham Libraries
- Kathryn Harrison, Wakefield Libraries and Information Service
- Jan Holden, Norfolk Library and Information Service
- Anthony Hopkins, London Borough of Merton
- Dave Lloyd, Coventry City Council
- Mark McCree, Blackpool Libraries
- Catherine Mann, Staffordshire County Council
- James Pearson, Kent County Council
- Kate Pitman, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Nicola Pitman, Cardiff Library
- Alun Prescott, Newport City Council
- Caroline Rae, London Borough of Newham
- Claire Robe, Arts Council England
- Julia Robinson, South Tyneside Council
- Stella Thebridge, Warwickshire Library Service
- Fiona Williams, Explore York Libraries and Archives

We would like to thank our Board of Trustees for their strong and committed leadership:

- Martin Burton
- Tony Durcan
- Jane Ellison
- Julie Griffiths
- Ayub Khan
- Ilona Kish
- Joanne Launder
- Vera Owen
- Lesley Sim
- Carol Stump
- Liz White

We would also like to thank:

- Medi Bernard, who led the work to establish our commercial activities and then worked tirelessly to launch them, with valuable support from Bev Rice
- Our colleagues in Northern Ireland and Wales, who generously share their experiences of developing library services
- Member local authorities and library services for their co-operation in releasing officers to carry out work on our behalf.

Finally, huge thanks go to our President Mark Freeman and our Past President Neil MacInnes for the vast amount of time and effort that they've dedicated to helping us successfully make the leap to Libraries Connected. Their work and expertise on our Trustee and Advisory Boards were vital to ensuring that we laid the groundwork in our first year to be the strong and sustainable sector support organisation that libraries deserve. We would also like to welcome our new President Elect, Carol Stump, who was elected in December. We know she will be a wonderful addition to the team!