



**Libraries  
Connected**

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

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## MARK'S FOREWORD



When I became President of Libraries Connected, I was clear on what I hoped to achieve for libraries during my two years. I wanted to help our organisation to find our place in the library world, to establish ourselves as a continued support to our membership, but also as an agency which could work in partnership with others, to look forward and to develop our services for the future.

We have made great progress towards these goals. When the Arts Council announced their new strategy, Let's Create, libraries were at the heart of it. A key indication of the recognition of libraries as creative agencies in their own right is that they are now able to apply for National Lottery Project Grants to deliver on all four of our Universal Library Offers.

Arts Council England have been a tremendous source of support and encouragement throughout our first two years as a sector support organisation. Their commitment to libraries has been unwavering, not only as a funder but as a partner in helping libraries to improve their services and as a national advocate.

When the new Social Prescribing Academy launched in the Spring of 2019, we were instrumental in promoting the role that libraries already play in connecting patients to community services

to help them to improve their health and wellbeing. In January 2020 we also became a member of the Expert Panel of the High Street Taskforce – a key forum to advocate for the importance of libraries as local institutions.

Our new Heads of Service network has been hugely important to library leaders across the country as a source of friendship, support and guidance. This became a critical forum to share information and advice between government, public health and library services as the pandemic rapidly evolved.

As my time as President draws to a close, I know that we have developed a strong team with a brilliant leader in our Chief Executive, Isobel Hunter. Carol Stump takes over the reins from me in June at a time of considerable turmoil in our sector, and in our society, but I know that she'll do a fantastic job steering us through it all.

We have become a vital part of the library landscape and that is entirely down to the vision and commitment of our members, our staff, our trustees and partners. I look forward to seeing Libraries Connected continue to be the voice and support that our sector, and our communities, need.

## ISOBEL'S INTRO



This year was a transformative one for Libraries Connected as we began to make clear our ambition for libraries and to expand the support and leadership that we provide to the sector.

Our work included the introduction of a range of new projects to support libraries as well as successfully introducing the revised Universal Library Offers (p10) and trialling a regional support model (p8). This year we:

- Expanded our work by securing grants totalling £983,500 to deliver major programmes to develop the sector's capacity in reader engagement (p6), diverse leadership (p7), income generation (p8), and to scope a new accreditation framework for libraries (p9)
- Doubled the size of our team, from six to 12 people, to help deliver these pieces of work, with new team members based around the country
- Grew our relationship with our members, especially through the development of the Heads of Service network (p5), the enhanced AGM and a series of sector-led events

- Strengthened our relationships with key agencies such as DCMS, LGA, CILIP and Arts Council England and carved out a stronger position within the network of library leadership.

As a result, we were well placed to respond with agility and determination to the crisis caused by the COVID pandemic.

We were able to rapidly establish that libraries could no longer operate safely within the government guidelines on social distancing and we publicly wrote to government ministers in March to request that they close. Two days later, the government issued this advice.

As a team, we then refocused on helping libraries to develop and promote a digital offer to their communities and to work closely with our members and government to plan for the safe and effective recovery of library services.

We know that the year ahead will bring unprecedented challenges to libraries as they work to adapt their offer in the midst of a pandemic. We are determined to do all we can to help libraries to support their communities through this current crisis and beyond.

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# ROUND UP OF THE YEAR

**100%**  
of people who completed evaluation would recommend our seminar to a colleague

**1776**  
learning modules completed this year

**91%**  
of Heads of Service from England, Wales and NI have joined the network

Almost  
**1 in 3**  
members attended our AGM

over  
**700**  
posts on the network this year

**£880,625**  
raised for libraries by the visa service

## Annual Seminar

Our annual seminar took place from 13–14 June at the University of Warwick, and was attended by 180 library leaders, policy makers, sponsors and key partners. The event focused on the ways in which local libraries are working with partners and communities to create spaces where people want to live and work.

## Learning Pool

We offer five courses, free of charge, to public library staff in England via our Learning Pool platform. Conversations are still taking place to agree a way to widen access to include Wales and Northern Ireland and we plan to update the course content next year.

## Heads of Service Network

We created a new community of practice specifically dedicated to Heads of Library Service using the online platform Basecamp. The forum launched in November and aims to encourage members to actively participate and share knowledge.

## AGM

Our December AGM was held in Birmingham and we were joined by speakers from CILIP, the BBC, Black Country Living Museum and Tortoise Media to help us explore how ethics are an essential tool in our work.

## Innovation Network

The network has 577 members from library teams around the country. The annual gathering took place in April and was attended by over 45 library workers. Projects presented during the day included tablet lending schemes, recycled robots and self-access libraries.

## Commercial activities

We appointed two members of staff to take this work forward, a Commercial Director and a Commercial Projects Coordinator. This year, 60,000 people used the Sopra Steria visa service in libraries.

# BBC NOVELS THAT SHAPED OUR WORLD

develop We unveiled an exciting new programme of library activities, events and partnerships designed to celebrate the novel and promote the joy of reading. Aimed at new and diverse audiences, we launched in October as part of the BBC's The Novels That Shaped Our World festival.

With £253,000 from Arts Council England's National Lottery Project Grants programme, and additional support from BBC Arts, this year-long multi-platform engagement collaboration marks 300 years since the birth of the English language novel.

Libraries Connected worked with the BBC and libraries to deliver a programme of innovative activities for all communities. Libraries commissioned artists, creatives and local partners who specialise in working with vulnerable groups, including refugees, young people at risk of knife crime and adults with dementia. The programme is supported by the BBC's local radio stations and is scheduled to run from January to September 2020.

**'Bringing communities together and getting people talking about the books that mean the most to them is what The Novels That Shaped Our World Festival is all about. The activities and events led by Libraries Connected and BBC Arts, are designed to achieve just that.'**

**Stephen James-Yeoman, Digital Commissioning Executive, BBC Arts**

**In February, Liverpool Libraries ran a series of Robinson Crusoe themed events including workshops using digitised watercolours, Sonic Pi sessions to create sound effects, and 3D animation. They hosted a multi-cultural arts performance at Liverpool Central Library and worked with BBC Radio Merseyside, local artists and digital agencies to deliver the series.**



# LEADING LIBRARIES

People who use public libraries come from all parts of the community. However, our workforce, at almost every level, simply fails to reflect this diversity, especially when it comes to people from the global majority and women in leadership roles.

In August, we launched a new initiative to drive diversity in library leadership. Leading Libraries aims to harness the talent of these underrepresented groups in a 30-month learning and mentoring programme to develop their talents and skills.

We want to support innovative, entrepreneurial library workers who will have the confidence and the vision to lead teams in tough times and who actively represent the communities they serve.

Leading Libraries has recruited 15 emerging leaders from 15 library services for a programme that combines professional training with practical delivery. The Birmingham Leadership Institute has designed the learning programme for the group as well as leadership development training for their heads of service. Each emerging leader will also mentor two members of staff from their own service.

The project is funded by Arts Council England as part of their National Lottery Transforming Leadership programme and supported by CILIP.

**'Transforming Leadership will support the development of diverse, effective leaders that are crucial to the sustainability of the cultural sector.'**

**Sue Williamson, Director of Libraries, Arts Council England**



## FUTURE FUNDING

We were awarded £150,000 by Arts Council England in December to plan a programme of training and mentoring to help library services to develop strategic approaches to income generation.

We will design and deliver the Future Funding in partnership with expert partners from the public, third and commercial sectors. The programme will help libraries to generate income in new ways by using the skills and resources they've built up as centres of knowledge and information.

**'Future Funding has been developed to support library services in identifying and responding to the challenges they currently face. It will help services to use their existing skills and to develop new resources while exploring options for becoming more resilient.'**

**Francis Runacres, Executive Director  
- Enterprise & Innovation, Arts  
Council England**

## LIBRARY ACCREDITATION

We announced a vital new initiative in October to clearly define what a high-quality library service looks like. We aim to develop and deliver an authoritative, sector-led scheme to help libraries in England to meet the needs of their local communities.

We secured a grant of £128,456 from Arts Council England and will work closely with them and CILIP to develop the new framework. The British Library and The National Archives are also supporting us to ensure that we develop a practical, user focused scheme that supports service development and advocacy.

**'CILIP believes that public libraries are strongest when led locally, supported regionally and developed and promoted nationally. The golden thread which connects all of these elements is standards – ensuring that everyone has a clear definition to work from.'**

**Nick Poole, CEO, CILIP**

## REGIONAL SUPPORT OFFER

We launched a new support model for public libraries in September that will be a game changer in how they face future challenges. This was funded by 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 have now secured additional funding from Arts Council England and Libraries Taskforce to pilot and test part of the model. This work will focus on building the capacity of regional groups to work as peer networks and to deliver strategic partnerships.

**'Through this programme, Libraries Connected will be able to deliver strategic support at a local and regional level that will help libraries to meet the structural challenges they face.'**

**Mark Freeman, President, Libraries  
Connected**



# UNIVERSAL LIBRARY OFFERS UPDATE

Led and managed by our members, the Universal Library Offers are central to our aim of supporting libraries to deliver their core services to their local communities.

In the spring and summer, we focused on implementing the new Universal Library Offers including a handbook for Heads of Service and supporting tools for library staff.

The Universal Library Offer groups partnered with the BBC for mental health awareness week focusing on how reading can boost mental health as part of the Novels that Shaped our World festival. We also began new partnerships with Family Arts, Art UK, public health agencies and the Every Mind Matters Campaign.

## Reading

- We re-ignited the partnership with National Poetry Day in October and actively promoted it to libraries
- In February, we joined The Reading Agency to support and celebrate the relaunch of Quick Reads, funded by author Jo-Jo Moyes.

## Information and Digital

- The group actively contributed to The Reading Agency's successful learning Science project bid, Reading Sparks
- We are supporting the DCMS Open Data project and the British Library's work on the Single Digital Presence.

**'[The universal offers] have been vital to us in developing our library strategy and communicating that effectively to our councillors, the general public and partners'**

## Health and Wellbeing

- We celebrated the launch of Reading Well for children – the new books on prescription service supporting young children's mental health. Reading Well launched in Wales in June and an evaluation of the programme found that 1.2 million people borrowed 2.3 million Reading Well books from libraries since 2017.
- The Reading Friends pilot, focused on social isolation, was rolled out to 44 library services this year.

## Culture and Creativity

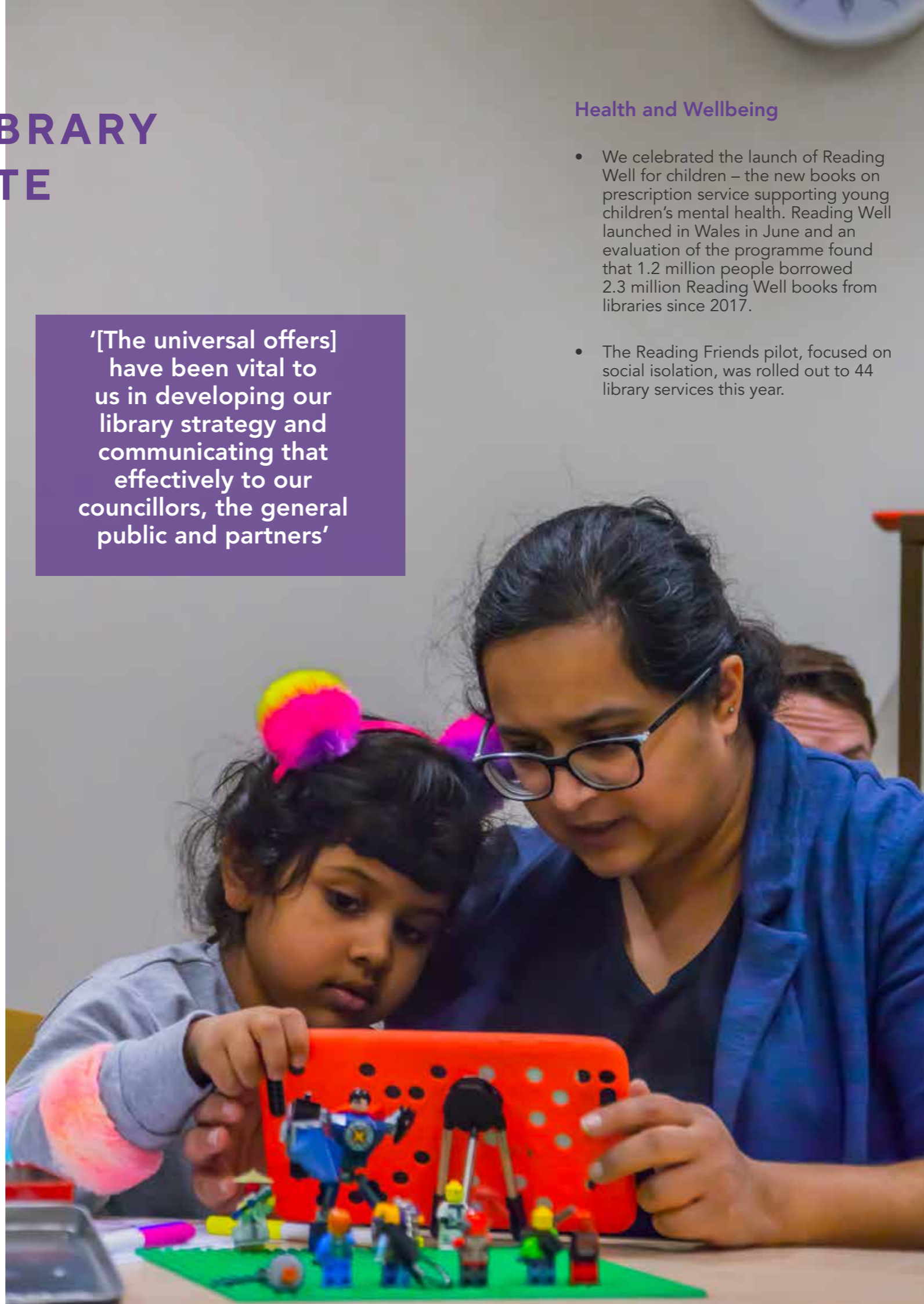
- We are part of the BBC's Get Creative Partnership and encouraged library services to contribute to Get Creative. There were almost 1000 events in libraries (over half of all events) during Get Creative week in May 2019.
- We began work on an online training course on the practical aspects of delivering a cultural programme and selected Creative Arts East to design this.

## Children's Promise

- ASCEL delivered a successful conference on Diversity, Empathy and Wellbeing: Libraries as a place of nurture in November
- ASCEL members took part in the LGA peer challenge throughout the autumn reviewing local authority early years services.

## Six Steps Promise

- Share the Vision are in the final stages of agreeing a three-year strategic partnership with The Ulverscroft Foundation to fund a programme of activity and resources to help libraries to be more accessible to visually impaired people.
- We made further improvements to the Reading Sight website ([www.readingsight.org.uk](http://www.readingsight.org.uk)), following user feedback.



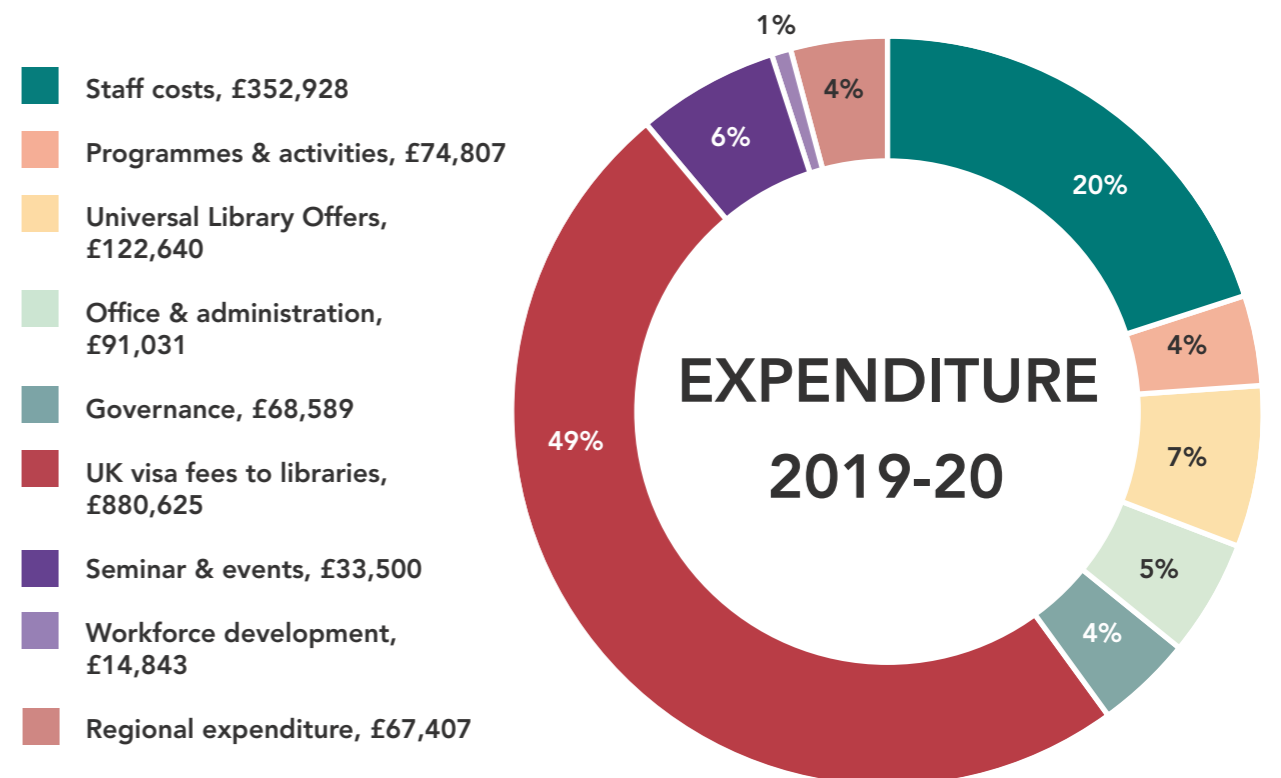
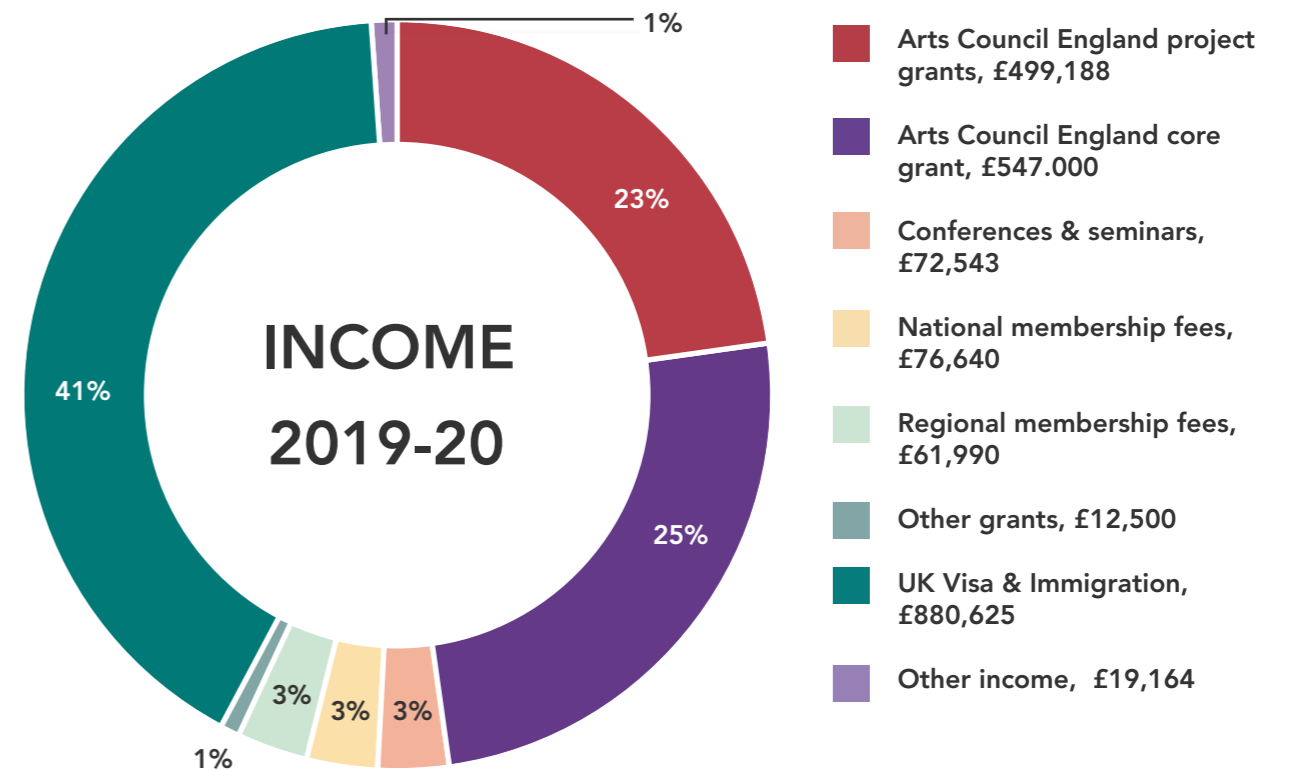
# SCL CYMRU

- The implementation phase of the All-Wales Library Management System (LMS) was completed in March 2020 when the last two authorities went live. Twenty-one of the 22 Welsh Library Authorities are now using the All-Wales LMS and we are exploring how we can work together to take full advantage of this shared resource.
- We further developed the Reading Well Wales scheme with the launch of the Wales Dementia list in June. A vital part of the success of this project has been our partnership with the Welsh Books Council to commission Welsh language translations of the texts with funding from the Welsh Government. We have also been able to include many of the translations on the All-Wales ebook platform.
- Library managers in Wales worked closely with the Welsh Government through 2019 to develop a co-ordinated library plan for Wales to be included in a wider Welsh Culture strategy. Workshops were hosted by the Welsh Government and we anticipate the new plan will be available soon.

# LIBRARIES NI

- This year saw a number of firsts for Libraries NI which began the year in an extremely challenging budget situation. However, extra funding resulted in the highest ever level of expenditure on stock and achievement of the public library standard of £2.25 per head of population for the first time.
- Highlights included the 'Festival of Learning'; the month long 'New Year, New You' celebration; 'Decade of Commemoration' events to mark the centenaries of the ending of World War One and the Home Rule crisis; and the Digital Citizen Project, a targeted IT skills outreach project funded by Neighbourhood Renewal and the Department for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs which appeared in the government's Outcomes Delivery Plan.
- Libraries NI also received funding from the Department for Communities to demonstrate how the existing network of libraries and IT infrastructure can be used more effectively to provide community-based gateways to other public services.
- Jillian McFrederick from Carrickfergus Library became Public Library Champion 2019, the first time this award has been won by someone from Northern Ireland.

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION



# LIBRARIES CONNECTED: THE BENEFITS

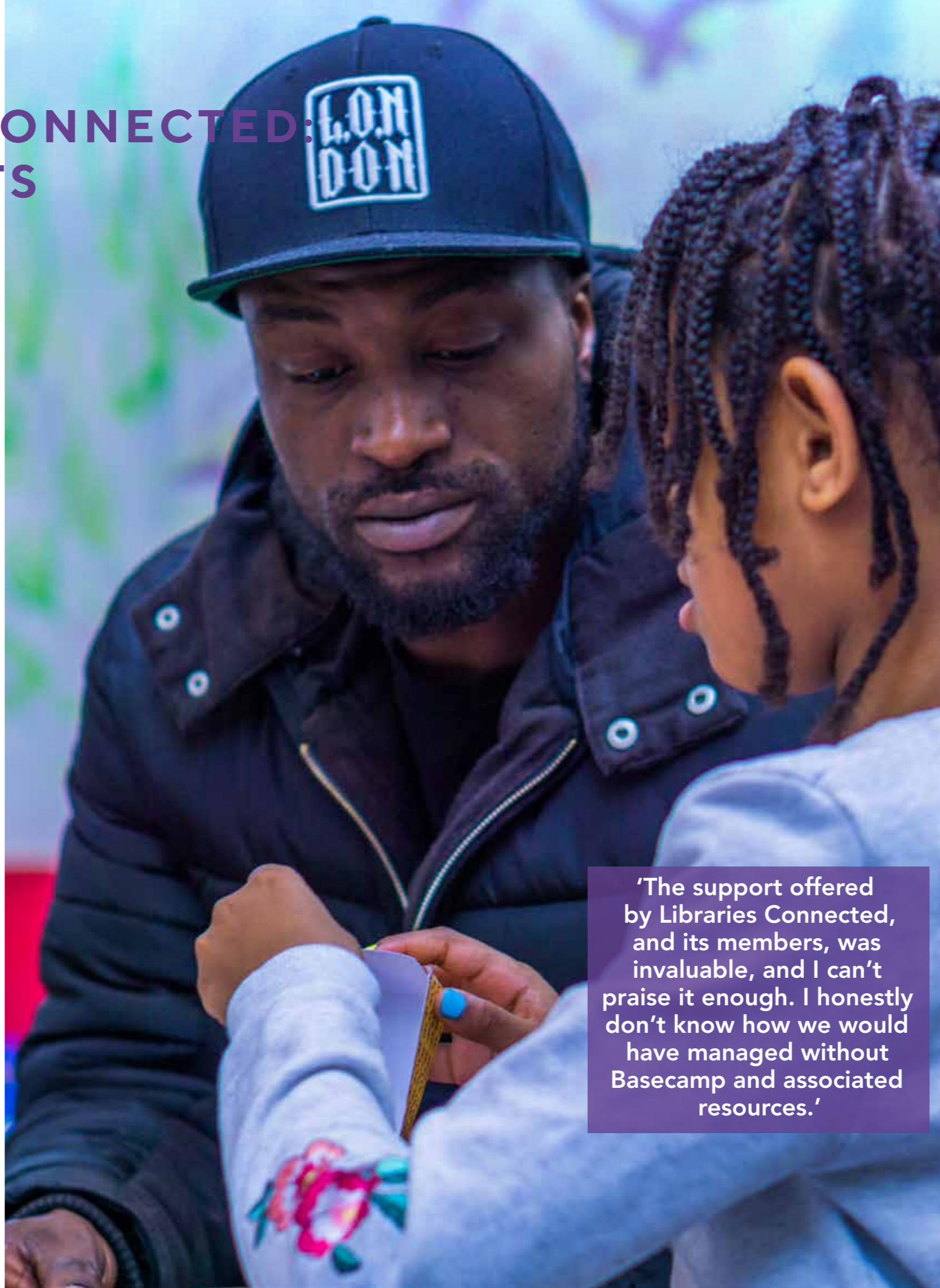
Libraries Connected exists to advocate for the power of libraries, to demonstrate their importance to individuals and communities, and to support library leaders.

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 forum 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 in England such as Leading Libraries which aims to drive diversity in library leadership, the year-long BBC Novels reading campaign and the consultation on an accreditation scheme for libraries.



**'The support offered by Libraries Connected, and its members, was invaluable, and I can't praise it enough. I honestly don't know how we would have managed without Basecamp and associated resources.'**

## 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 and funders. Our advisory group, which involves members from each region and our Universal Library Offer chairs, also gives members the chance to inform and influence our national agenda.

## Training and development

Learning Pool is our flagship training portal, offering free courses to our members in England. We also provide bursaries to library staff to attend national events such as Mozfest and our annual seminar (in partnership with Carnegie UK), and 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 new Heads of Service Network, 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.

## Commercial funding

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 grants to develop new services and improve our existing offer. These opportunities enable libraries to continue to expand the service that they provide to their local communities.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We could not have accomplished all that we have this year without the efforts and expertise of so many organisations and individuals. We would like to thank the following partners for their support this year:

- Arts Council England
- The Association of Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL)
- BBC
- Booksellers Association
- Booktrust
- The British Library
- Carnegie UK Trust
- CILIP
- The Local Government Association
- The Reading Agency
- Share the Vision

We would like to thank our Advisory Board for their dedication and expert guidance this 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
- Jan Holden, Norfolk Library and Information Service
- Anthony Hopkins, London Borough of Merton
- Sean Kelly, Arts Council England
- Dave Lloyd, Coventry City Council
- Mark McCree, Blackpool Libraries
- Catherine Mann, Staffordshire County Council
- James Pearson, Kent County Council
- 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

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

- Martin Burton
- Jane Ellison
- Julie Griffiths
- Kathryn Harrison
- Anthony Hopkins
- Ayub Khan
- Ilona Kish
- Neil MacInnes
- Vera Owen
- Lesley Sim
- Carol Stump
- Liz White

We would also like to thank:

- Our colleagues in Northern Ireland and Wales, who generously share their own 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 President Elect Carol Stump and our Honorary Treasurer Ayub Khan for the vast amount of time and effort that they've dedicated to helping us to establish Libraries Connected as a sector support organisation. We would also like to thank Joanne Launder and Tony Durcan who retired from our board this year.