



**Libraries  
Connected**

# **Regional support offer – business case summary**

**by Activist Group**

## Executive summary

1. Public Libraries reach more people than the rest of the cultural sector combined at around 250m visits per year. Their audience is recognised as being more diverse than for other forms of arts and culture participation. The public sector is increasingly realising that public libraries offer a sustainable model of delivering a range of public service programmes and outcomes. Yet despite the threats to their core funding, it is striking that in contrast to other parts of the ACE portfolio or local government services, public libraries lack a co-ordinated support programme which would accelerate change in the sector and deliver greater benefits to councils and the public.
2. There is a strong commitment among sector leaders to and offer an ambitious vision for the future, and avoid mere retrenchment in the face of continuing threats to core funding. However after a decade of cuts and continuing uncertainty about future core funding, they need additional strategic support to ensure that all library services can position themselves politically within local government and have the tools to manage transformation and change.
3. Libraries Connected commissioned Activist Group to develop a business case for a new support offer for public libraries. This summary plan identifies a new model of support, and investment model and offers.
4. The current library sector landscape is complex and library managers find it difficult to navigate. In recent years public library services have received significant benefit through the Libraries Taskforce, ACE's support for Libraries Connected's new status as Sector Support Organisation, and investment from other funders including Carnegie Trust UK. Yet public library services still can't easily access the type of expert support they need when they are under pressure or trying to think outside the box.
5. Public Library leaders need access to expert advice to manage critical projects, combined with facilitation of collaboration and innovation. The myriad toolkits, case studies and collaborative tools also needs to be streamlined through one portal as much as possible.
6. There is a striking contrast between the support available to public libraries and comparable sectors of the ACE portfolio or other local government services, who have dedicated programmes of tailored support.
7. The new support offer recommended in this business case blends fast access to expertise with regional facilitation of collaboration and sharing. It is a model to support library leaders' ambition to be self-sufficient and confident leaders. The support offer would require investment over three years of £1.7m. Some of this could be realised through reallocation of existing investment between partners, but a funding strategy to make the case for new investment should start now.
8. Libraries Connected, as Sector Support Organisation is best placed to lead the development and delivery of the support offer in partnership with other sector stakeholders.

# 1. The Vision

1.1 The challenges facing public library services and the scale of their current capacity combine to make a powerful case for change.

**Table 1.1: Drivers for change**

Drivers for change
<b>'Financial cliff'</b> : Library services are under continuing under pressure to give up more savings.
<b>Speed of other changes</b> : Technology, public health, high street foot-fall, community safety, which public libraries can't address alone.
<b>Lack of capacity</b> : Library services lack capacity or influence to lead transformation or change, and existing regional networks' capacity and plans are highly variable.
<b>Lack of regional support</b> : Public libraries have access to less support than other sectors have, e.g. archives/museums, leisure or local government housing.
<b>Low visibility</b> : Compared to statutory services with more influence in local government.

1.2 In order to meet these challenges we have sifted a number of alternative support models according to their potential to deliver the following benefits.

**Table 1.2: Evaluation criteria for potential support models**

Will the support model...
<b>Encourage sharing of learning</b> - Will the model promote the circulation and pooling of experience and good practice?
<b>Energise and Mobilise</b> - Will self-confident and collaborative sector leadership be stimulated?
<b>Quality and timely support</b> - Will services be able to access advice of appropriate expertise at the point when it is most needed and useful?
<b>Speed to market</b> - Will the set up time and costs be appropriate and enable services to access support quickly?
<b>Sustainability</b> - Will the model be affordable, make best use of existing resources, and be able to demonstrate value for money/ROI?

1.3 We have also considered a number of relevant comparator support programmes in the cultural sector and beyond.

**Table 1.3: Comparator Sector Support Schemes**

Sector	Support programme functions	Delivery model
<a href="#">Museum Development Network – supporting local museums outside ACE National Portfolio</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support and mentoring for Museum Accreditation</li> <li>• Sign-posting</li> <li>• Advice on funding streams</li> <li>• Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regionally based in sponsor museums</li> <li>• Team of Museum Development Officers</li> <li>• National programme funded by ACE</li> </ul>
<a href="#">TNA Sector Development Team - Archives</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing national expertise at TNA</li> <li>• Intelligence gathering and Horizon-scanning</li> <li>• Supporting collaborative networks/projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationally supported, regionally located Engagement Team.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">LGA - Local Government Housing Services</a>	Advising on housing strategy projects including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scoping out the project</li> <li>• identifying skills need</li> <li>• technical expertise</li> <li>• relationship development</li> <li>• advising on delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fund to provide independent specialist advice to Councils</li> </ul>

1.4 Each of these support programmes has similarities and differences with the needs and structure of the public library sector. What is striking is the wide availability of direct support through each service, lacking in relation to public libraries.

### **A tailored programme of national and regional support**

1.5 The business case assessed three potential support models using different national and regional structures. Public library services need fast access to expertise and longer-term facilitation and brokering. This combination of needs suggested the model which we're calling a 'hybrid' model would be the optimal choice. This blends a small team of regional engagement managers network with sector-led expertise and externally commissioned advice.

**Table 1.4: Hybrid Model workstreams**

Support resource	Function
National Programme Manager & Regional Engagement Team	Brokering support and advice. Facilitation of collaboration and networking. Access to Innovation Fund.
National Subject Expertise Bank	Commissioned external specialist advice from libraries and external advisors covering - Indicative list (not within Universal offers) service re-configuration and transformation, income generation, place-shaping, Delivering ambition. Mentoring.

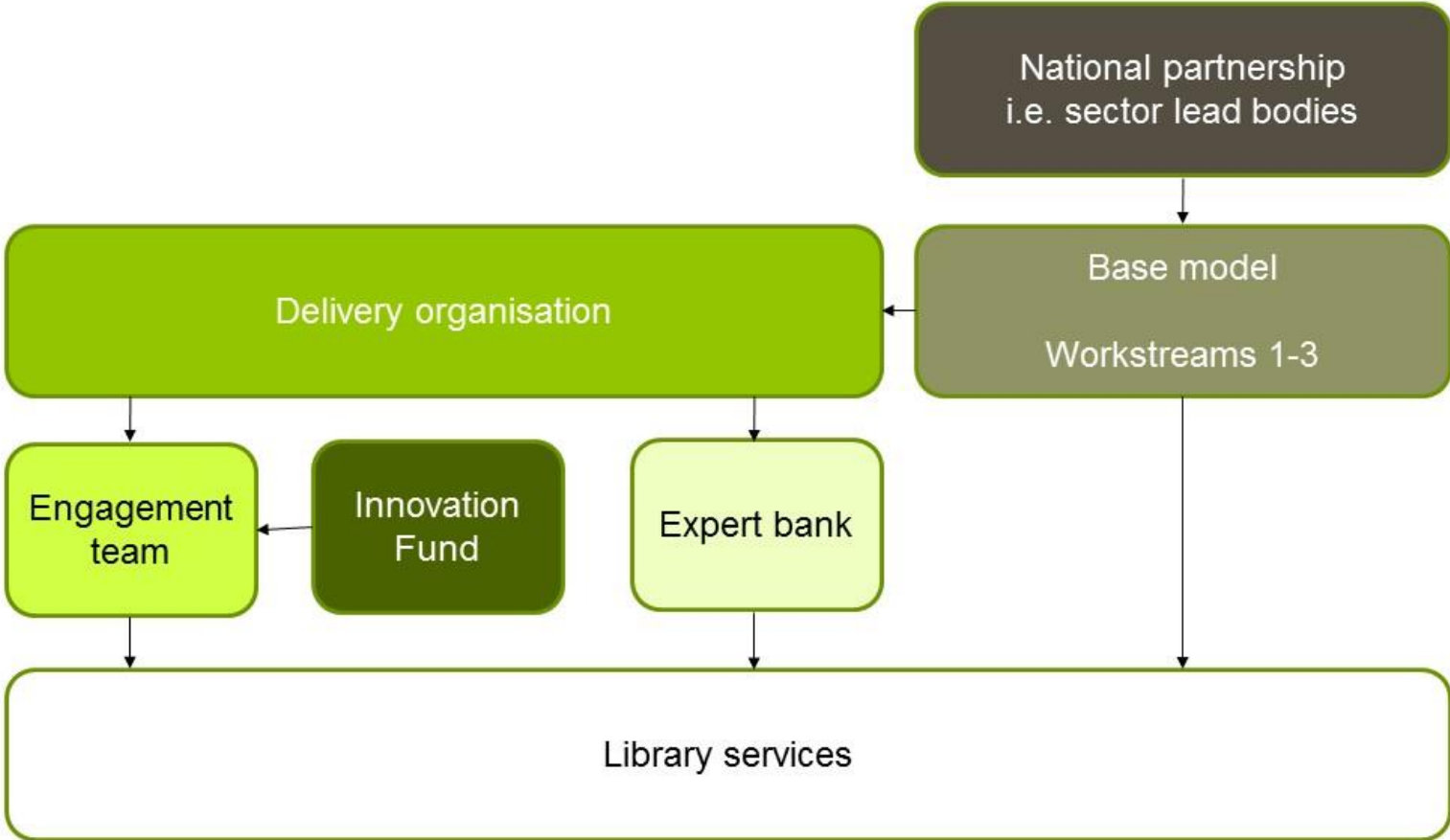
- 1.6 The Hybrid model offers a balance between providing the highest quality advice which library leaders say is needed, with a mechanism for facilitation and sharing to target need and ensure the sustainability of learning.
- 1.7 However, the needs analysis suggests there are a number of strategic priorities which need national leadership, which are necessary to underpin support of public libraries at local and regional level. In this report, we call this the Base Model workstream.

**Table 1.5: Base Model workstreams**

Support Activities
<b>The 'Library Library'</b> - The trusted 'go-to' portal for evidence, advice and sharing, and templates and tools for managing transformation and innovation projects locally.
<b>An engine for evidence</b> - Piloting and testing of new library standards. Commissioning research on public libraries' impact.
<b>Raising the banner</b> - Leading an advocacy campaign which focuses on the contribution of public library services to key local agendas and communities. Providing consistent horizon-scanning for the sector.

- 1.8 This Base Model would represent an important aggregation and acceleration of work being done by Libraries Connected and other partners which would be necessary to provide the support programme with data and evidence, energy and political profile to generate momentum. However, without brokering or facilitation it would be too passive to satisfy the needs of the sector locally.
- 1.9 Together, the Hybrid Model and Base Model form the total future support programme which this business envisages for the public library sector.

Figure 1.1: The support offer workstreams



## 2. What difference would it make?

2.1 One of the outcomes sought for the support offer is to ensure that 'change within the sector is managed cost-effectively'. The principal benefits will be that local authorities will be able to achieve change more efficiently, but there are also likely to be financial benefits nationally and, potentially at a macro-economic level.

- **Local government:** local authorities will be better able to manage change in their library networks through improvements in the way that reliable information and advice can be accessed. This can be expected to be faster; deliver more effective change projects; and reduce the risk of abortive projects. This will result, in part, from faster and more effective projects that will cost less and deliver any savings faster. The reduction in project costs will be due in part to reductions in the extent of routine consultancy support needed.
- **National agencies:** a more streamlined support offer at national level could reduce the risk of duplication by the various agencies supporting the library sector. It could also reduce the burden on the DCMS's officials and the Secretary of State. For example, better conducted reviews of library networks could reduce the need for intervention.
- **Macro-economic:** a high-performing library sector is recognised to make a worthwhile impact on skills and employability and on health and well-being. A library estate that integrates complementary public and voluntary sector services will make more efficient use of the public service estate and can release other buildings for alternative uses (eg for commercial or housing purposes).

### Cost of support offer

**Table 2.1: summary of estimated cost of hybrid model over three years**

Programme element	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Base Model	£261,563	£221,563	£221,563	£704,688
Hybrid Model	£351,563	£351,563	£351,563	£1,054,688
Programme total	£613,125	£573,125	£573,125	£1,759,375

2.2 It is useful to compare the scale of this potential new investment with the other comparator schemes.

**Table 2.2: investment in comparator schemes**

Comparator scheme	Budget
Museum Development Network	£4.3m over three years
TNA Sector Engagement Team	c. £700K per annum
LGA Housing Advisors Scheme	TBC

## Realising the financial benefits

- 2.3 The financial benefits to local authorities are likely to be substantial and will help to preserve the value of libraries to localities, regions and the nation, although it would be difficult to establish a fair and reliable method of aggregating and harvesting those benefits at a national scale in order to fund the support offer.

**Table 2.3: Financial Benefits of support programme**

Category	Financial benefits
Local	<b>Improved efficiency:</b> better access to reliable and verified research and models will enable local authorities to ensure they are maximising the value for money of their library services.
	<b>More successful transformation projects:</b> better access to research and specialist advice will improve the quality of analysis, planning, decision-making and execution, thereby improving the success of projects and maximising efficiencies and the sustainability of library services.
	<b>Reduced cost of transformation projects:</b> better access to research and specialist advice will ensure that authorities can avoid reinventing the wheel; reduce their project overheads and use of consultancy support; and accelerate project completion.
National	<b>Efficiencies in national support:</b> a high quality, curated evidence base, access to specialist advice and facilitation of peer learning could help to provide greater focus for support agencies and reduce the risk of duplication.
	<b>Reduced burden of DCMS intervention:</b> better designed library transformation projects should reduce the likelihood of an individual library service review requiring regulatory intervention.
Macro-economic	<b>Beneficial impact on nation:</b> the preservation and enhancement of the library sector will have beneficial impacts on skills and the economy; on health and well-being; and on the cost of public and social provision.

- 2.4 We modelled the financial impact of 50 library services taking advantage of the 'Expert Bank' strand of support to improve the delivery of efficiency and transformation projects. This suggests a substantial net return on investment at a national level, with pay-back commencing in the first year of operation of the support offer. This projection just takes into account the impact on the 50 authorities benefiting from the support from the expert bank and only takes into account the financial return on service review and efficiency projects. It does not take into account the financial impact of the overall support offer on all 152 library authorities.
- 2.5 Additionally public library services can expect to see benefits in efficiency and increased income generation from the support offer, from better collaborative projects, and from quicker access to resources through the 'Library Library'.



## **Macro-economic health and well-being benefits**

- 2.6 Significant impact on the rate of library usage and the quality of experience which users receive across the scope of the Universal Offer are implicit in the benefits which the support offer would bring through these improvements to service reviews and efficiency projects. The overall service offer will bring particular benefits in allowing library services to contribute more effectively to regional and local place-making as part of transformation programmes; culture-led regeneration; and the rationalisation of the public estate.
- 2.7 These also include reduced costs to the NHS and the benefits system, anti-social behaviour and crime, as well as positive benefits community benefits, attainment by children and young people, and greater participation in the arts. Current research methodologies and data on the impact of public libraries require further refinement, and the impact would vary considerably depending on the public services outcomes affected across the support offer nationally.

### 3. How should the support offer be delivered?

- 3.1 It is a strength of the sector that there are so many partners that have assets and materials that could help form the basis of the support offer. However, this is also a symptom of one weakness that has been identified by stakeholders: the need for a clearer sector landscape.
- 3.2 The recommended support offer is made up of a number of specific functions which are responding to the gaps identified. While they address the gaps, there are aspects of the work of partner agencies in the sector that could be drawn upon or that indicate that a particular agency may be best placed to deliver that function. For example, while a single trusted portal is needed for support resources, Libraries Connected, ACE, DCMS, CILIP and the British Library each hold sets of resources that could form the basis for that trusted portal.
- 3.3 We assessed seven organisations according to the appraisal criteria for the support offer and judged that Libraries Connected is best-placed to lead its delivery. While other organisations have valuable resources and assets that could be built upon, the principal differentiator is that Libraries Connected is an organisation that is peer-led by library service leaders in the field, so strengthening the sector's ownership of the support offer. More importantly, Libraries Connected is already the designated Sector Support Organisation for libraries, reflecting its leadership role and strengths. Our evaluation has found nothing to contradict that status. To introduce different arrangements for the support offer also risks muddying further the sector landscape.
- 3.4 Libraries Connected is a membership body for senior library practitioners. It is funded by ACE as the Sector Support Organisation for libraries. It operates regional peer-led support networks across the country; has developed the Universal Offers; and runs a range of conference and learning opportunities. Its paid staff organisation is relatively small and relies on the time and expertise of its active membership. It already has a framework in place upon which the support offer could build and so our assessment is that Libraries Connected is well-placed to deliver the support offer.

**Table 3.1: Option 5: Libraries Connected**

Delivery model appraisal criteria	Rating	Rationale and commentary
<b>Encourages sharing of learning</b>	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track record of commissioning and sharing practical research.</li> <li>Active peer practitioner networks, seminars and conferences.</li> </ul>
<b>Will energise and mobilise sector leadership</b>	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designated sector lead body.</li> <li>Member-led and managed organisation.</li> </ul>
<b>Provides quality and timely support</b>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer-led mutual support and advice networks in place.</li> <li>Limited capacity to provide specialist advice and support.</li> </ul>

Delivery model appraisal criteria	Rating	Rationale and commentary
<b>Speed to market</b>	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing framework upon which the support offer could be built.</li> <li>Regional networks and mutual support already in place.</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-standing organisation supported by membership.</li> <li>Resourcing could be vulnerable to funders' policy changes.</li> </ul>

## Formal partnership arrangements

- 3.5 While we recommend that the support offer is delivered by Libraries Connected, it cannot do so alone. As other partners will continue to deliver strategies and programmes including support activities for public libraries, particularly around workforce development and specific subject areas, it will be important to harness knowledge across the sector and avoid further duplication.
- 3.6 There is evidently scope to reallocate resources from partner organisations to contribute to the capacity of the support offer and improve efficiency of the overall investment in the sector, for example through secondments or redeployment of staff to Libraries Connected. Alternatively, providing the programme maintains a unified brand and clarity for users in public library services, some functions and roles could be distributed between partners or devolved to public library services or networks.

## 4. How much will it cost?

### Revenue funding available

- 4.1 We have indicated that although there may not be direct financial benefits that can be harvested from these new models of support to libraries, a number of tangible indirect benefits can realistically be forecast to arise.
- 4.2 There is currently no identified funding available specifically for the implementation of the preferred model. However, in the context of the benefits that each model would offer there may be potential to reallocate resources from within the existing Arts Council England spend on libraries, and perhaps also by refocusing some of the albeit limited resources available to Libraries Connected. Clearly in both instances this would be dependent on the potential of the model replacing, enhancing, and delivering more cost effectively, elements of the support currently offered by these organisations.
- 4.3 We have also considered whether some element of subscription or co-funding by local authorities would be beneficial and feasible. It would recognise the principle that a contribution incentivises the correct behaviours for delivering success. However, given the current state of local government finance, this may be unrealistic. A requirement for co-funding might also disadvantage library services with most need. However, if it offered them some of the less tangible problem-solving benefits, or represented a fee for purchasing additional advanced level support when needed, these risks could be mitigated.

### Revenue operating costs

- 4.4 The table below indicates the estimated costs associated with each model under the broad headings of Staff Costs and Non-Staff Costs. In the case of Staff Costs we have included an indication of the staff resource on which these estimates are based. We have included staff on-costs (NI and pensions) and organisational overheads (governance, accommodation etc).
- 4.5 Similarly, we have indicated the areas of expenditure on Non-Staff costs that would be required to effectively implement each model.

## Revenue operating costs

**Table 4.1: Base Model**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total programme costs
<b>Staff costs</b>				
Research/Evidence Manager	£58,500	£58,500	£58,500	
Digital Content Manager	£58,500	£58,500	£58,500	
Overheads	£5,850	£5,850	£5,850	
<i>Total staff costs</i>	£122,850	£122,850	£122,850	
<b>Non-staff costs</b>				
Technology	£50,000	£10,000	£10,000	
Research	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	
Marketing/events	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	
Evaluation	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	
<i>Total non-staff costs</i>	£150,000	£110,000	£110,000	
<b>Total costs</b>	£272,850	£232,850	£232,850	£738,550

**Table 4.2: Hybrid Model**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total programme costs
<b>Staff costs</b>				
Programme Manager	62500	62500	62500	
Regional Engagement Manager x3	43750	43750	43750	
Overheads	5313	5313	5313	
<i>Total staff costs</i>	£111,563	£111,563	£111,563	
<b>Non-staff costs</b>				
Expert Bank	140000	140000	140000	
Collaboration Fund	100000	100000	100000	
Travel	5000	5000	5000	
<i>Total non-staff costs</i>	£245,000	£245,000	£245,000	
<b>Total costs</b>	£356,563	£356,563	£356,563	£1,069,688

## Conclusion

- 4.6 The high level financial scenario table below does not attempt to put a figure on the income available to a support offer. However, given the current capacity within partners including LC, ACE, DCMS, BL and CILIP, a prudent forecast would suggest the potential to release 50% of the annual costs of the national activity in the Base Model and the staffing costs of the Programme Manager for each of the support offer models.
- 4.7 At this stage we have not attributed any earned income from potential co-funding or subscription until the potential has been further explored.

## Outline funding strategy

- 4.8 As suggested above, developing a funding strategy for the new support offer will require further discussion among partners about current deployment of resources, and potential to redeploy some activities. However, given the scale of investment required it is envisaged a new case for support will need to be presented to one or more public or voluntary funders. Given the proximity of the next spending review, it will be impossible for partners to commit existing budgets beyond 2020. Below we give a high level assessment of the prospect of key funders appetite for investment in the programme according to the range of benefits it offers.

**Table 4.3: assessment of funder fit**

	Reductions in C&E challenges	Better delivery of efficiency projects	Improved macro-economic benefits
DCMS	H	M	M
ACE	M	H	H
LGA	M	H	M
Carnegie Trust	L	L	H
Research Councils	L	L	H

- 4.9 In conclusion a co-ordinated approach should be made to ACE, DCMS and the LGA for a three-year programme of support for public library services, based on the current gap in provision and the potential return on investment.
- 4.10 Further consideration should be given to approaches to voluntary funders and research councils for elements of the programme which support greater impact on public service outcomes, and importantly developing the evidence base.

## 5. What are the next steps?

- 5.1 At the scale of operation required, the support offer will require significant new investment and planning. Yet public libraries are in need of these additional resources urgently. We therefore outline some of the key issues and actions for implementing the support offer which can help prioritisation and ensuring that some activities can be piloted or initiated more quickly. Many of these are necessary to optimise current resources and plans, for example better co-ordination of partner resources and programmes and activity by Libraries Connected regional networks. Such actions would assist in making a case for sector appetite and readiness for further investment.
- 5.2 Importantly these issues should be discussed in a further phase of engagement with partners to ensure that the principles of sector leadership and co-production are carried through in funding propositions and partner strategies.
- 5.3 A first step should be further refinement of the support offer scope and methodology through a stage of testing and piloting, deploying the resources already granted by ACE for work with LC Regional Networks. As argued earlier in the business case, it is clear that some of the support activities will be deliverable at a regional level, but others may require alternative configurations. This testing phase should therefore engage a range of networks and services to assess which will benefit most from support envisaged through the programme.

**Table 5.1: implementation plan - issues to be addressed**

Issues / risks	Implementation plan - actions
Definition of support offer requires further clarification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme structure needs to be informed by further discussion about ROI from different programme activities and funder priorities, and testing in Phase 2.</li> </ul>
Programme methodology and evaluation framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding applications and programme planning need to be supported by robust methods of evaluation which will significantly improve the evidence base about the impact of public library services on outcomes.</li> <li>• This should be developed in partnership with leading academic researchers.</li> </ul>
Mapping programme governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme governance should be shared by sector partners involved in supporting library services.</li> </ul>
Developing support offer branding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarify with partners where and how public library services will access support offer services. Partners will need to be clear what current activities will be within scope and align with other programmes including Universal Offers and Blueprint project.</li> </ul>
Marketing and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that communication strategy enables public library services to take advantage of support offer in a timely fashion and share learning easily.</li> </ul>

Issues / risks	Implementation plan - actions
Assessing technology requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess the suitability of current LC and partner platforms for delivering support offer activities to judge the level of investment necessary for systems upgrades.</li> </ul>
Creating staffing structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Depending on the resource level of the programme, assess whether a unified structure within LC will be preferred over a degree of distribution of staffing between partners.</li> </ul>

## Summary timetable

- 5.4 Libraries Connected and partners will start immediately to pilot and test the new support offer with Libraries Connected regional networks and other collaborative groups, and develop a funding strategy to make the case to ACE, DCMS and other stakeholders for investment in a long-term support offer for public libraries.

Programme development phase	Schedule / milestone
Business Case refinement	2019 Q3
Phase 2 Testing and Piloting	2019 Q3 – 2020 Q1
Funding applications progression	2019 Q3-Q4
Programme Mobilisation	2020 Q1
Programme Initiation	2020 Q2



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