

**Universal Library Offer**

**Handbook**

**Sept 2020**

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**Introduction**

The Universal Offers were launched in 2013 to demonstrate the power of public libraries to enrich the lives of individuals and their communities. Two of the Offers (Reading and Health) are delivered in partnership with The Reading Agency. The offers were reviewed with the public library sector and stakeholders in 2019 and relaunched to create a new streamlined and consistent framework. The framework will ensure that the offers remain central to Libraries Connected’s aim to support the core public library offer and to stimulate library innovation and development.

This toolkit introduces the new framework and provides guidance notes to help library leaders maximise the impact of the offers.

**Section 1: The 2019 Universal Library Offer Framework**

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* The ‘mission’ is the statement that drives the development of the offers, rooted in community, expressing libraries role in promoting an equal society and highlighting the essential role that learning plays within all four offers.
* The interests of children and those with visual and print impairment represented through the Children’s Promise and the Vision and Print Impaired People’s are woven through the offers – see Section 3.
* Public Library Services may choose to replace the outcomes in the framework(from Libraries Deliver [[1]](#footnote-2)) with their own local strategic outcomes.

**Section 2: A set of strategic statements describe each offer**

These statements for each offer (a long description, a short version and three summary words) may be used by libraries for advocacy, strategic planning and marketing campaigns.

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| **Reading** ***Engage, Imagine, Discover*** | **Information and Digital** ***Inform, Inspire, Innovate*** |
| **Short version**  To build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries | **Short version** To ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online. |
| Through the Reading Offer, libraries support the growth of a literate, empathetic and confident society.  The offer provides diverse and inclusive reading resources, support programmes and experiences for children and adults to create excitement around reading.  Libraries encourage individuals of all ages to read for pleasure and purpose to increase their understanding of the world, stretch their imaginations and think differently. | Through the Information and Digital Offer libraries provide quality information and digital support.  Libraries enable individuals and communities to develop learning skills to find answers and to inform life choices.  The offer helps children and adults to engage and feel safe online. It ensures resources and opportunities are accessible and it embraces creative and innovative technology. |
| Health and Wellbeing ***Healthier, Happier, Connected*** | Culture and Creativity ***Explore, Create, Participate*** |
| **Short version**  To support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage and connect. | **Short version**  To enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries. |
| Through the Health and Wellbeing Offer, libraries promote healthy living, provide self-management support and engagement opportunities for children and adults supported by welcoming spaces; effective signposting and information to reduce health, social and economic inequalities.  They offer a range of creative and social activities which engage and connect individuals and communities, combat loneliness and improve wellbeing. | Through the Culture and Creativity Offer, libraries work with cultural providers to spark curiosity, imagination and fun.  Libraries enable new creative skills to flourish and enrich the lives of children and adults by providing arts and cultural experiences in local settings.  The offer celebrates diversity, promotes inclusivity, values identity and contributes to an active local cultural economy. |

**Section 3: How the Children’s Promise and the Vision and Print Impaired People’s Promise are embedded within the Universal Library Offers**

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| **Children’s Promise vision** | **Delivered through** | **Examples** |
| Every child and young person visiting a public library is inspired by an exciting accessible environment which makes reading for pleasure irresistible. | Reading Offer  Vision and Print Impaired People’s Promise | Books and reading focused promotions, events and displays in a child-friendly, age appropriate environment that responds to children’s changing needs as they grow and are available in a range of formats. |
| They have the opportunity to engage with imaginative digital opportunities through public libraries, building their skills, knowledge and creativity. | Information and Digital Offer  Culture and Creativity Offer | Opportunities to explore new technology and build skills – e.g. code clubs, maker spaces, digital arts, e-safety (new NSPCC workforce development), etc. |
| They will find a range of inclusive and diverse fiction and non-fiction books and other information resources to support growing confidence in literacy and formal and informal learning. | Reading Offer  Information and Digital Offer | Space and resources for formal and informal learning, support to develop information literacy.  Stock selection policies and promotion ensures children have access to a diverse range of reading. |
| They are able to take part in a wide range of literacy and cultural experiences including reading and book-based activities | Reading Offer  Culture and Creativity Offer | Book-based and cultural events around the Universal Library Offer calendar spikes and the Children’s Library Journeys – rhyme times, class visits, Summer Reading Challenge, Pyjamarama, Children’s Book Festivals, Empathy Day, SLS book awards and other reading promotions. |
| They are actively involved in decisions about service developments and are offered opportunities to volunteer | Health and Wellbeing Offer | New ASCEL/TRA Principles for working with children and young people.  SRC volunteering.  Other YP volunteering offers through libraries, e.g. youth councils. |
| They are supported through library services and activities to improve their health and wellbeing | Health and Wellbeing Offer  Culture and Creativity offer  Reading Offer | Bump booster, Growing Well,  parent’s collections, etc.  Health information and support for children’s wellbeing, social and emotional development and children and young people’s mental health lists through Shelf Help and Reading Well. |

(Draft – new version in preparation)

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| **Vision and Print Impaired People’s Promise vision** | **Delivered through** | **Examples** |
| Everyone visiting a public library is inspired by an exciting accessible environment which makes reading and seeking information a pleasure. | Reading Offer | Providing safe and accessible spaces with clear signposting and a range of formats. |
| They have the opportunity to engage with libraries and reading through imaginative digital opportunities with support to build their skills, knowledge and creativity. | Information and Digital Offer  Culture and Creativity Offer  Reading Offer | Accessible digital equipment, opportunities to take part in digital skills development and activities. |
| They have access to a range of inclusive and diverse books and other information resources in accessible formats which allow them to engage with reading both for pleasure and for daily living. | Reading Offer  Children’s Promise  Information and Digital Offer | Books and reading-focused promotions for people who engage with reading through alternative formats of all kinds including large print, ebooks and audio.  Access to information in accessible formats and signposting to other provision. |
| They are able to take part in a wide range of reading and cultural experiences, including book-based and digital activities, which are accessible to all. | Reading Offer  Culture and Creativity Offer  Information and Digital Offer | Equality Impact Assessments are in place for all cultural events in libraries, a range of formats are available and access needs for people with sight loss have been recognised and built into event planning. |
| They are actively involved in decisions about service developments | Health and Wellbeing Offer | Libraries consult with people with sight loss and also work through national and local partnerships with organisations supporting people with sight loss. |
| They are supported through library services and activities taking place both in library buildings and in the community to improve their independence, health and wellbeing | Health and Wellbeing Offer | Health Information and support for people in accessible formats and the provision of advice and signposting for people who are experiencing sight loss.  Events take place in the library that enable people with sight loss to connect with others and reduce feelings of isolation. |

**Section 4: How to use the offers locally and regionally**

The Universal Library Offers are not designed to be prescriptive. The review strongly recommended the development of a framework which enables libraries to shape delivery directly in response to local need, whilst giving a consistent national message about the four library offers.

The offers are both **a strategic tool** and **a mechanism for creating practical resources** and programmes such as Code Green and Reading Well Books on Prescription.

**A: Local strategic tool**

Libraries services use the offers in the following ways:

* To set the strategic direction and demonstrate how the service will meet local outcomes
* For advocacy - a straightforward way to explain and potentially safeguard the library service to colleagues, directors and politicians
* To design a structure for the service
* To plan workforce development
* To identify and build local partnerships
* For funding applications and proposals
* To plan the library year.

**B: A practical delivery tool**

The offers encompass both nationally delivered programmes and all the locally created partnerships and projects that can be badged under the offer themes. For example – *all local health work can be badged under the Health and Wellbeing Offer* - not just the national work around Reading Well Books on Prescription.

The offers also allow us as a sector, to build both regional and national pictures of the services libraries provide and the impacts they have. For example, gathering together everything that happens in a region under the Health and Wellbeing Offer starts to create a very powerful story about the role of the region’s libraries in improving the health and wellbeing of the region. It provides more robust evidence to create regional and national campaigns, partnerships and funded programmes.

Section 5: Promoting the Universal Library Offer Framework to staff

This handbook is accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation to support library managers to introduce the new framework to library staff.

**Section 6: The national role and management of the Universal Library Offers**

The Universal Library Offers are core to Libraries Connected business plan as a Sector Support Organisation, enabling national project development and workforce development, as well as advocacy, impact measurement and partnership building. Libraries Connected maintain a strategic overview of the offers, ensuring consistency and a strong communications strategy.

**A: The offer framework is overseen by the Programme Manager**

**B: Leadership and composition the offer groups**

* Every offer will have a **national lead** drawn from the wider Libraries Connected membership on a two-year term of office (see Role Profile appendix 1).
* Each region/participating nation will appoint a **regional representative** for each offer (see role profile Appendix 1). Role Descriptions for reps specifically include the requirement for engaging with and reporting back to the region.
* Within each library service if is recommended that there is a **champion** for each Universal Library Offer (See role description Appendix 1).
* Leads and reps may be drawn from a wider pool of senior library managers building capacity and providing development opportunities.
* The national offer meetings will take place two to four times a year. They will operate as task and finish groups, co-opting other people as required and cutting across offers if appropriate. Meetings may sometimes be virtual e.g. use of Basecamp to talk about offers.
* Each group should appoint or co-opt a Children’s Promise champion (through ASCEL national committee) and a Vision and Print Impaired People’s Promise champion

The role of the champions is to:

* Represent their specialty within each offer
* Contribute specific expertise and connections to relevant partners
* Connect the work of the Vision and Print Impaired People’s Promise and The Children’s Promise with the Universal Offer workplans.

**C: Annual planning cycle**

* There will be one annual planning to develop an integrated workplan. Regional leads may be involved in this meeting.
* The offer leads will engage with their regional reps beforehand to share ideas about the workplan to bring to this national meeting. Libraries Connected and funders will feed into strategic priorities for the year.
* The Advisory Committee sets the workplan and it is signed off at the Board of Trustees meeting.

**Planning cycle proposed**

Planning/  
Implementation

**Section 7: Outcomes and impact**

The Universal Library Offer framework will be accompanied by a set of outcomes, which will be developed over the coming months. The outcomes will enable us to tell a national story but will also contribute to demonstrating library impact on local strategic outcomes.

**Appendix 1:**

**Role Profile Universal Library Offer Lead**

**Dimensions**

* Two-year term of office, plus a ‘past Chair’ handover period to support the new Chair.

**Attributes**

* To be a senior leader within your service
* To have skills, knowledge, experience or interest in the subject of the offer
* Recognition of the need to maintain a national and impartial overview of library services in relation to the offer
* Where the offer lead is shared with another partner, to build an effective collaborative relationship.

**Practical**

* To convene and Chair a meeting of the Universal Library Offer regional representatives 3-4 times a year
* To set the agenda
* To ensure a venue is secured
* To ensure the meeting is recorded
* To ensure there are representatives from each region and that the interests of Wales and Northern Ireland are also recognised
* To support new regional representatives when there is turnover
* To recognise the contribution of the regional representatives.
* To produce and circulate an update report before each Advisory Committee meeting.

**Advocacy**

* To be an advocate for the Universal Library Offer Framework
* To champion the Universal Library Offer you lead.

**Workplan**

* To ensure the Universal Library Offer annual plan is delivered and evaluated
* To participate in the planning cycle for the offers
* To appoint specific task and finish groups from the reports to deliver elements of the workplan
* To liaise with the other Universal Library Offer Leads around shared/cross-offer projects.

**Strategy**

* To attend the Advisory Group meeting four times a year
* To provide written updates for the Advisory Group meeting
* To ensure the offer is represented at meetings as required (occasional)
* To provide Information for Libraries Connected’s annual report
* To respond to information requests from Libraries Connected and to contribute to the development of the offers
* To identify and build partnerships linked to the offer.

**Role profile Universal Library Offer Regional Representative**

Regional representatives are nominated by their regional Libraries Connected group and attend the national Universal Library Offer meetings on behalf of the region. There is no set term of office for the regional representatives. However, the Offer Lead will review with each rep when they have served three years.

**Attributes**

* To be a senior leader within a service and to have the support of the Head of Service
* To have skills, knowledge, experience or interest in the subject of the offer
* Recognition of the need to maintain a regional perspective on library services in relation to the offer.

**Communication**

* To identify regional library colleagues and maintain regular communication with them around the offer work
* To consult with regional colleagues to provide regional updates and seek regional perspectives to share at the national offer meetings
* To provide written feedback to the region within two weeks of the national offer meeting and/or to provide verbal feedback at the regional Libraries Connected meeting
* To circulate the minutes and any information/documents from the Universal Library Offer meeting to each of the library services in the region via the Universal Library Offer Champion

**Practical**

* To attend a Universal Library Offer meeting 2-4 times a year (These usually take place in London as reps will be attending from all over the country)
* To ensure the offer is represented at meetings as required (occasional)
* To actively contribute to the meeting

**Advocacy**

* To be an advocate for the Universal Library Offer Framework
* To champion the Universal Library Offer you represent.

**Workplan**

* To contribute ideas and information to the annual workplan
* To participate in task and finish groups as required
* To actively participate in regional projects as part of the Universal Library Offer workplan
* To support the offer lead as required.

**Role Description Universal Library Offer Champion**

Library services are encouraged to nominate members of staff to become named champions for each of the Universal Library Offers.

The Champion will

* Proactively keep their knowledge of the subject of the Offer up to date
* Demonstrate enthusiasm for the subject area
* Liaise with the Regional Rep, receive and disseminate information, respond to consultation requests, and feed updates from their service relevant to the offer they champion to regional reps prior to each national universal library offer meeting and as requested
* Be an advocate for the Offer and ensure that their service is aware of news and updates
* Ensure that their Head of Service is briefed before each Libraries Connected Regional meeting
* Deputise for the regional rep on occasions as required
* Join occasional task and finish groups to deliver regional or national projects linked to their offer.

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)