

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016–2021

LIBRARIES
TASKFORCE



In 2016–17, public libraries in England received over 200 million physical visits. They are viewed as trusted and safe spaces, and as a result, are well placed to help people self-manage their health by giving access to reliable health information, and a place for activities.

Healthier and happier lives

Libraries offer a wide range of health information, both online and through quality-assured reading lists dealing with the more common health conditions. In their role as community hubs, libraries also offer non-clinical spaces in localities where health and wellbeing groups can work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue.

Loneliness is as bad for physical health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, or moderate alcohol abuse.

Wellbeing and Policy Report, Legatum Institute, 2014.

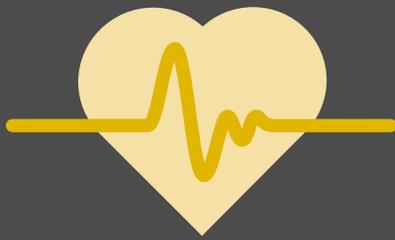
CASE STUDY

Martham healthy eating campaign

Staff at Martham library and their local Public Health colleagues identified high levels of obesity in their area. Working with their local children's centre, they responded by setting up a range of health and wellbeing activities, like healthy eating and nutrition advice, and family fun days. One involved a smoothie bike, using pedal power to whizz up healthy drinks. This has increased the local community's knowledge and awareness of healthy lifestyle choices.

Part of Norfolk library service's Healthy Libraries initiative.





LIBRARIES OFFER:

- A trusted community space with expert staff who can help to support individuals to achieve their health and wellbeing goals.
- Through the SCL/TRA* Universal Offer, a consistent approach to delivering health information nationwide.
- Reading Well Books on Prescription – accurate and useful information in a variety of areas including mental health, long term conditions, and dementia.
- Social and support groups to reduce isolation and help individuals connect with the community.
- Volunteering opportunities to help keep people active and engaged.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

- Seek different ways to empower communities in managing their own health and wellbeing.
- Develop existing schemes, such as Reading Well Books on Prescription, to cover more health conditions.
- Increase awareness of the role that public libraries can play in health and wellbeing through targeted publicity.
- Encourage health organisations to ‘think libraries first’ as community hubs for delivering services in localities.
- Expand health-related equipment borrowing schemes to more areas – from reading aids to blood pressure monitors or activity trackers.

The Reading Well Books on Prescription service, a self-help reading scheme endorsed by health professionals, has reached over 778,000 users.

“The SROI (social return on investment) ratio generated by the [arts on prescription] programme shows that for every one pound input into it, a total of £11.55 is returned in social value”

Evaluation of the St.Helens Libraries Creative Alternatives arts on prescription programme (2015-2016).

CASE STUDY

Open Space drop-in sessions

Suffolk Libraries have worked in partnership with their local NHS Trust and the mental health charity Julian Support to develop and offer Open Space. Open Space is a relaxed group run by library staff with the help of mental health professionals for people to drop in and discuss mental health in a non-judgemental and safe environment.

Sessions are planned around user feedback and can range from simple discussions, to planned activities. Open Space has a no pressure policy allowing people to come along and engage to the level they feel comfortable with. User-based feedback has shown these sessions to be incredibly helpful for people in the local community.

Suffolk Libraries in partnership with Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Trust and Julian Support.



*SCL – Society of Chief Librarians / TRA – The Reading Agency.

**Libraries
Deliver**

NEXT STEPS

- Get in touch with your local libraries to see how you can work together
- Read the Libraries Deliver: Ambition report
- Talk to local health interest groups and see what they think could work
- Liaise with other service providers to share learning and best practice around working with library services
- Read more about the SCL Universal Offer: goscl.com/universal-offers/health-offer

“NHS England want everyone to have greater control of their health and wellbeing and to be supported to live longer, healthier lives. Public libraries are a source of trusted information which can help people self-manage their health, connect people with community support groups and take advantage of initiatives like Books on Prescription which has helped young people dealing with anxiety, stress or bullying.”

Simon Stevens, Chief Executive of NHS England.

“Libraries are a natural hub of the community, a place for people to gather and socialise and where they can enjoy reading and learning through all the ages of life.

“Providing internet access to those who are unable to afford this means libraries can also help get people back into work which is one of the best ways to improve their health.”

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England.

Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021

Follow progress on our Action Plan via:

Our website www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce

Our blog librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk

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