



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

Report pursuant to Section 17 of the Public
Libraries and Museums Act 1964 for 2021/22

July 2022

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Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport



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FOREWORD

I was delighted to be appointed as Minister for Arts on 30 September 2021, especially as this responsibility includes public libraries. Having spent many happy hours in libraries and archives of all shapes and sizes, I fully recognise the vital part they play in the lives of so many people, and the pleasure they bring to people of all ages. I have been very pleased to visit a number of public libraries and to meet some of the dedicated people who work in them during my time as a Minister so far, and I look forward to visiting many more and seeing how they provide services to their communities.

This has been a challenging time for library services. Libraries have been a lifeline for so many during the pandemic, which has underlined the vital role they play in improving people's life chances as well as being trusted and valued places at the heart of communities. I am delighted that library branches in England are now back in business, open for browsing, study and public PC use, and with opening hours returning to pre-pandemic levels. Important activities and events are being reintroduced, and many libraries are continuing to operate services introduced during the pandemic, such as 'click and collect' services and online events. Thanks to the skills and enthusiasm of library staff and volunteers, libraries continue to play an important part in their communities and meet the needs of a diverse range of people.

I was pleased to provide a video message to the Libraries Connected Annual Seminar on 14 October 2021 which gave me the opportunity to recognise the hard work, dedication, and flexibility from library staff and volunteers who continued to deliver much needed library services to support communities and to help make the difficult period of the pandemic more bearable for so many people. The effort by these excellent individuals is rightly recognised in the biannual honours lists.

I was also delighted to see the £5 million Libraries Improvement Fund launched in June 2021 – and to see 25 successful projects (benefiting around 80 public library branches) announced in March 2022. We have invested all over England in buildings and digital enhancements, to help libraries meet the changing needs of their users.

Libraries have been recognised by the High Streets Task Force as important players in town centre regeneration and through a number of Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities initiatives such as Future High Streets Fund, the Levelling Up Fund and Town Deals. This demonstrates the importance of libraries to the whole Government and I will continue to work with colleagues across local and central government to encourage a 'libraries first' approach to delivering public services. I also take seriously the department's role to superintend and promote the improvement of public library services provided by local authorities in England.

As always, library services have to meet the needs of the people they serve within available resources. During this period we have spoken to a number of local authorities to assist and provide guidance on issues like public consultations, new library openings, local authority restructuring, or new local service offerings. These conversations are invaluable for the department to continue to provide the support needed, and I would encourage library services to keep us informed of their work. This report describes what we have done this year.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay - Minister for Arts

Introduction

This report is on the exercise of the Department's statutory functions under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (1964 Act). It covers the period April 2021 to March 2022. It aligns with the annual reporting periods for other relevant libraries sector organisations and bodies, including Arts Council England, Libraries Connected and the British Library. More information on the work of these individual sector organisations during the period covered by this report is available in Annex C.

Government engagement with libraries

The DCMS Libraries team supports the Secretary of State by assisting her in delivering the statutory duty under the 1964 Act to superintend and promote the improvement of local authorities' provision of public library services in England. Additionally, the team works with the Minister for Arts to support the Secretary of State with those duties. The team also leads on policy areas including the Public Lending Right Scheme, and sponsorship responsibility for the British Library. The libraries team works across government departments, on behalf of the public libraries sector, to promote libraries' contributions to a range of important agendas and to seek a "libraries first" approach to government projects and policies.

The continuing COVID-19 pandemic restricted the opportunities for ministers to physically visit libraries and stakeholder events. The Minister for Arts visited Manchester Central Library on 5 October 2021 which also included being shown the regional Business and IP Centre. He also visited the two British Library sites in Leeds, at Boston Spa and Temple Works, on 17 February 2022 and the Start-Ups In London Libraries event at the British Library St Pancras on 25 March 2022. He also visited Cambridge Central Library on 10 March 2022 and discussed how their Libraries Improvement Fund award would be used to enhance the library's work. He had meetings with Libraries Connected and The Reading Agency. The Minister spoke at the Libraries Connected virtual annual seminar on 14 October 2021. He also met Ann Cleeves OBE in Whitley Bay to discuss the importance of literacy and public libraries in extending life chances.

The former Minister for Culture and Digital (Dame Caroline Dinenage MP) launched the Online Media Literacy strategy at Battersea public library 14 July 2021 and visited Wakefield One Library on 23 July 2021. She delivered the closing speech at the CILIP Working Internationally for Libraries virtual conference on 25 June 2021 and also provided a pre-recorded contribution to support the launch of The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge on 9 July 2021.

In addition, the former Minister for Civil Society, Baroness Barran visited Beeston library, Nottinghamshire on 3 June 2021.

The Health Secretary, The Rt Hon Sajid Javid attended the opening of the Bromsgrove Business & IP Centre (BIPC) at Bromsgrove Library on 20 July 2021. The Minister for Business, Energy and Corporate Responsibility, Lord Callanan, visited the British Library site at Boston Spa on 26 November 2021 to discuss the decarbonisation work being funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy,

the Rt Hon Kwarsi Kwarteng visited the British Library Business and IP Centre at St Pancras on 13 December 2021.

Superintendence

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 places a duty on the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by councils in England and to secure the proper discharge of the statutory duties on local authorities. The 1964 Act also places a duty on local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. Councils fund library services, assess the needs of their local communities and design library services to meet those needs.

DCMS officials monitor and keep under review any proposals by library authorities to make changes to their library service provision, and provide relevant advice to ministers accordingly. The process of superintendence involves informal active engagement by the DCMS libraries team with local authorities as well as consideration of formal complaints.

Engagement with local authorities

Local authorities are encouraged to engage with the DCMS libraries team at an early stage about proposals to make significant changes to their library services. This provides the opportunity for local authorities to inform the libraries team about proposed changes to their service provision; raise concerns they may have about their service provision; or to learn about good practice from other library services. It also provides the opportunity for the DCMS libraries team to gather insight about each local authority's policy on libraries, to follow-up on media stories or public correspondence about changes to library services, and to remind the local authority of their responsibilities, and the guidance documents that are available.

In this reporting period DCMS directly engaged with 29 local authorities, involving 53 conversations to discuss their library service provision. In addition, DCMS presented at two Libraries Connected webinars, one on 26 July 2021 about the department's duty of superintendence (which was attended by around 70 local authority representatives), and another on Green Book evaluation standards and processes on 4 November 2022. DCMS libraries team also presented on its superintendence role to around eight library stakeholder colleagues (library relationship managers and others) at Arts Council England on 16 September 2021.

Formal complaints

Superintendence also involves the consideration of formal complaints. Any representations received by DCMS that a local authority may be failing to meet its statutory duty are carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. Information about the [statutory duties](#) on local authorities and the Secretary of State, and how the department will consider formal complaints under the 1964 Act is published on GOV.UK.

The process of consideration of a complaint is in two stages. The first stage is a thorough analysis of the background and evidence relating to a complaint that the local authority is not meeting its statutory duty to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service. The analysis will consider the representations submitted by the complainant, including the specific issues which they believe makes the library service provision not comprehensive and efficient and the local authority not delivering its statutory duty under the Act. The analysis also involves consideration of detail provided by the local authority relating to the agreed changes to the library service provision. Following this the DCMS libraries team puts advice and recommendations to ministers, resulting in a ministerial “minded to” letter; this indicates whether or not the minister is minded to order an inquiry on the basis of the evidence considered. This is sent to the council and the complainant, and published on GOV.UK. It gives the opportunity for anyone to make further representations to support the complaint.

The second stage follows careful consideration of any further representations from library users or other interested persons (which are new and or additional or bring up to date previous detail submitted in relation to the complaint) before a final ministerial decision letter is issued. All decision [letters are published on the libraries pages on GOV.UK](#).

DCMS Libraries team began investigating a complaint made to the Secretary of State in September 2021 about whether a council was meeting its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service; and will take further action if necessary.

Public libraries during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

In March 2021, the Government set out a roadmap for restoring services hit by the COVID-19 restrictions. From 12 April 2021, Libraries were allowed to open their doors again for socially distanced activity including browsing and access to reading rooms (only events, other than exceptions for critical support purposes, were precluded). Reading room access also applied to the British Library. In May 2021, quarantining of books was removed, allowing more efficient loan operations for libraries. With the removal of all national restrictions on 19 July 2021, libraries could restore services fully – the extent to which and speed this happened varied locally and decisions were left to libraries based on their own risk assessments.

To promote reopening, DCMS launched the ‘[Rediscover Summer](#)’ campaign and libraries featured in the ‘Reading’ themed week. Libraries were also promoted in a range of COVID-19 recovery plans including:

- April 2021, libraries referenced in [COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing action plan](#)
- May 2021, libraries referenced in [Graduate Employment and Skills Guide](#)
- June 2021, DCMS held conversations with Skills for Care and DHSC about the social care workforce and the National Academy for Social Prescribing in relation to promoting ‘[Reading Well](#) Books on Prescription’. In 2020 to 2021 DCMS funded the roll out of all three mental health collections - quality assured reading material selected by professional experts and those with

lived experience to help people to understand and manage their mental health and wellbeing - to all public library branches in England.

The removal of restrictions over the summer of 2021 meant that DCMS reviewed its superintendence role to reflect a phased return to previous service delivery levels. This was supported by a joint letter from DCMS and Local Government Association to local authorities. On 6 September the previous Minister for Digital and Culture, Dame Caroline Dinenage MP and Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the Local Government Association Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, jointly wrote to ask councils to share their plans for restoration of their library services following the lifting of national restrictions. Of the 151 local authorities in England, 136 responded to this request. On 1 April 2022, all of the previous adjustments relating to superintendence were removed. These changes were all communicated through the [Libraries as a statutory service](#) page on the GOV.UK website.

The emergence of the Omicron variant at the end of 2021 led to the reintroduction of some national restrictions, which meant that public libraries had to reintroduce safety measures such as social distancing, mandatory face-coverings and restricting attendance at events. Libraries were well placed to introduce these measures quickly, and exemptions secured for previous phases of restrictions for example, use of public computers and library workers being considered as essential workers, were reinstated. With the removal of final restrictions in January - February, libraries were once again allowed to return to previous service levels.

DCMS worked closely with Libraries Connected to keep the Toolkit providing guidance for libraries updated. As restrictions were lifted, this detailed guidance was pared down to signpost to general government COVID-19 guidance.

DCMS continues to meet regularly with main library organisations to gain an understanding of how the sector is faring in the move towards longer-term living with COVID-19.

Public Lending Right Scheme

The Public Lending Right Act 1979 provides a right for authors, known as the “public lending right”, to receive payments from a central fund in respect of such of their books (physical books, e-books and audiobooks, as well as the remote lending of e-books and e-audiobooks) that are lent out to the public by local library authorities in the United Kingdom. The central fund is provided from government grant-in-aid, and the PLR Scheme is administered for DCMS by the British Library.

DCMS funding for Public Lending Right remained unchanged for the PLR year 2020 to 2021. The basis of the calculation of the Rate Per Loan remained unchanged. However, borrowing figures from sample libraries recorded between 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 were lower than previously because of the impact of the pandemic on physical access to UK public libraries. The variance from the previous year was greater than usual in 2020 to 2021 with library loans data from sample libraries falling from 27.8 million to 15.3 million. The reduction in the total number of loans led to an increase in the 2020 to 2021 Rate Per Loan to 11.26p with £6,041,225 distributed to 20,475 rights holders within the payment threshold as compared to

20,911 in 2019 to 2020.

These figures also reflect a drop in physical loans of books and an increase in e-loans. The increase in loans of e-book, audiobook and e-audio books meant that books available in all formats registered the highest number of loans. Overall, the reading patterns of 2020 to 2021 remained largely in line with previous years with thriller writers remaining popular. James Patterson topped the list of most borrowed adult authors again. The Long Call by Anne Cleeves was the most borrowed ebook and The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman, a newcomer to the PLR list, was the most borrowed title in all formats. Similar consistency is reflected in children's books: Julia Donaldson features as the most borrowed children's author and J.K Rowling's Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets as the most borrowed children's title.

A new PLR operating system has been in operation since May 2021. Feedback from staff and users has been extremely positive with users praising the improved user experience and the intuitive user interface. This has resulted in a substantial increase in registration by authors and creators. In 2021 there were approximately 48,000 new book registrations by 6,391 different users. This compares to an average over the previous 10 years (2010 to 2020) of 23,503 book registrations per year by an average of 5,451 users per year.

In June 2021, DCMS laid legislation in Parliament to extend the PLR Scheme to include remote e-lending from public libraries in Northern Ireland which came into force on 1 July 2021. This change provided consistency across the whole of the United Kingdom (following its introduction in England, Scotland and Wales in 2018).

Other public libraries developments and advocacy

During this year DCMS has worked with colleagues at the Department for Education (DfE) on a range of issues;- these included

- Inserting reference to libraries and particularly the investment in Reading Well and Reading Friends projects into the [COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan - GOV.UK](#) (April 2021).
- Securing reference to the role of libraries in the Office for Students [Graduate employment and skills guide](#) (May 2021).
- Exploring ways to highlight both the potential use of libraries' resources (e.g. virtual rhymetimes and storytimes during pandemic) to complement more formal early years channels, and also how public libraries provision can complement the work undertaken in the school setting.
- Hosting a discussion between library sector colleagues and DfE to share experiences and help inform understanding about how libraries can add to DfE's Digital Skills agenda (October 2021).
- Engagement through DfE with the Anna Freud Centre to encourage links between public libraries and Family Hubs.
- Facilitating an introduction in November 2021 between DfE and the DCMS publishing team to discuss the licensing issues of ebooks for university libraries and the cost of textbooks.

DCMS also had positive engagement with the Department for Health and Social Care around the social care workforce; the Reading Well programme is now included in the Skills for Care [Wellbeing resource finder](#).

DCMS contributed to the Government's [Levelling up White paper](#), on the importance of public libraries and how they can contribute to the Levelling up agenda.

DCMS has brokered introductions between the Home Office and various public libraries working on services to help refugees and asylum seekers for example [Libraries of Sanctuary](#). In addition, DCMS has worked with colleagues in DLUHC and DHSC to ensure that information about services offered by public libraries is available to those arriving from Ukraine.

We have also continued to engage with BEIS with regard to business support to ensure awareness and understanding of the British Library's BIPC network and offer through public libraries. Funding for business support offers (which would encompass the network) is included as an intervention within the UK Shared Prosperity Fund [Interventions list for England](#).

New Libraries Strategy

The current Government strategy for public libraries, [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England](#), ran from 2016 to 2021. The department is aware of sector interest in the development of a new Libraries Strategy. We started internal work in 2021 to determine our approach, and will be undertaking further work during 2022 to 2023 to develop a strategy document which will look afresh at the new landscape public libraries sit within, and how the government can most effectively oversee, support and advocate for the sector. We will engage a wide range of people (the sector, and also partners or thought leaders who are interested in what libraries could offer) to discuss what barriers still remain to maximising the value of libraries, and how the Government might play a role in addressing those.

Libraries data

CIPFA published the provisional annual library statistics for the period April 2020 to March 2021 in February 2022. CIPFA is not commissioned by DCMS to collect and publish annual library data, nor are library services required to complete the questionnaire. Data was provided by around 60% of library services in England. The limited data reported relates to a particularly challenging period when lockdowns and other significant restrictions were in place.

ACE published a [basic dataset](#) of static public libraries in England on 18 August 2021. This provided information from all library services on the number of static libraries in England (statutory and non-statutory) as at 31 December 2019. A further update was due to be published in July 2022 relating to the number of static libraries in England (statutory and non-statutory) as at 31 December 2021.

Libraries Improvement Fund

The Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF) is part of the Cultural Investment Fund (CIF).

It is targeted at upgrading buildings and technology so public libraries across England are better placed to respond to the changing ways people are using them. The £5 million capital fund was launched in June 2021 - 147 expressions of interest were received from over 100 library services, resulting in 54 full applications. On 12 March 2022 the successful 25 projects (benefitting around 80 public library branches) receiving LIF funding were announced. Details are available on the Arts Council England [website](#).

New Years and Queen's Birthday Honours list

Congratulations to the following library sector people on being awarded Honours during this reporting year in recognition of their contribution to libraries:

OBE

New Year 2022

Ann Cleeves. Author. For services to reading and libraries.

MBE

New Year 2022

Karen Napier, Chief Executive Officer, The Reading Agency. For services to reading and public libraries.

Rob Perks, Lead Curator for Oral History, British Library. For services to libraries and national archives during COVID-19.

David Smith, Chair, Community Managed Libraries Network. For services to libraries.

BEM

Queen's Birthday 2021

Gillian Barker, Gloucestershire Libraries, for services to public libraries

Leathea Lee, British Library Reading Room Operations Manager, for services to librarianship

Barbara Swinn, Head of Strategy and Engagement, for services to York Explore Library and Archive and the community in York

New Year 2022

Zoinul Abidin, Head of Universal Services, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. For services to public libraries.

Lesley Davies, Senior Development Manager, Communities, Sefton Library Service. For services to public libraries and the community in Sefton, Merseyside.

Stewart Parsons, Director, Get it Loud in Libraries. For services to the music and library sectors.

Nick Partridge, Head of Libraries, Sheffield City Council. For services to public libraries.

David Rowe, Founder, Libraries Hacked. For services to public libraries.

Nina Simon, Manager, Redbridge Schools Library Service. For services to education in the London Borough of Redbridge.

Darren Smart, Strategic Manager (Operations) Libraries, Registrars & Archives, Kent County Council. For services to public libraries.

Krystal Vittles, Innovation and Development Manager, Suffolk Libraries. For services to public libraries.

Fiona Williams, Chief Executive Officer, York Explore. For services to libraries.

Andrew Wright, Library Development Manager, Kirklees Council. For services to public libraries.

New and refurbished libraries

Local authorities in England continued to invest in their library services. There are a number of examples of councils investing in new libraries and the refurbishment of others to provide modern services and facilities. Some examples include:

The Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library (Southwark) - officially opened on 19 April 2021. The library is co-located on the ground floor of a new residential development on the Walworth Road and offers a lending library with 20,000 new books to browse, bookable public PCs for adults and children, designated quiet study spaces and a mix of comfortable and casual seating.

Padgate Library (Warrington) - officially opened on 28 June 2021 following a £142,000 renovation undertaken as part of the Borough Council's Library Modernisation plan. The refurbishment included the removal of the building's canopy and porch area, the replacement of windows and glass panels in the roof and improved external lighting. The interior was repainted and remodelled with a new space for activities and community use.

Birkby and Fartown Library (Kirklees Council) - a community library officially opened on 14 August 2021 following £799,000 funding from the Council. The library serves as a hub for the community. It is a vibrant, flexible, inclusive dementia friendly space that is open for all, and it also provides a safe and welcome space for migrants.

Knighton (Leicester City) - officially reopened on 17 January 2022 following improvements as part of a £75,000 investment by the city council as part of its Transforming Neighbourhood Services programme. Changes include a new reception area and free-standing shelving units, energy-efficient LED lights, new public computer workstations, plus desk space for customers to plug in their own devices. The library has been extensively decorated inside, making it more flexible for community use.

Needham Market Library (Suffolk) - officially opened on 9 February 2022, funded by Mid-Suffolk District Council the new library building offers a bigger and more modern space for library events and activities, a new children's area, with a special sensory wall and more dedicated space for children's events and activities, bookable meeting rooms for the local community.

Woughton Library (Milton Keynes) - officially opened on 29 March 2022. Working with the Community Council, the Council contributed £80,000, as part of its continued investment in library services. The library includes a children's reading corner and hundreds of physical titles to browse, as well as offering visitors the opportunity to reserve any book from Council's library service, and with modular shelving the whole layout can be changed in seconds to create a flexible community space.

Library sector partners

Organisations with which DCMS engage regularly and that undertake activities to support the public libraries sector include Arts Council England, Libraries Connected and the British Library. These organisations have provided a summary of their activities during the year:

Arts Council England

Arts Council England (ACE), is the development agency for libraries in England and invests in public libraries, through strategic and other funding programmes.

Reflecting its strategy, [Let's Create](#) and in its role as national development agency, ACE [supports libraries](#) as venues where arts and culture happen through their national portfolio funding, project grant funding and a grant in aid budget.

ACE continued its leadership role, chairing its English Public Library Group (EPL) to deliver support for developments in the sector. The EPL has developed two sounding boards (for Heads of Library Service, and Councillors) to support its work.

Examples of work undertaken by ACE during this year include:

- A £1,000 grant to each library service in England, to be used to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- Working with sector leadership bodies and its internal data team to produce the [basic data set](#) for libraries in England. In addition, ACE worked in collaboration with partners to develop an Assessment Strategy for the sector. This presents a vision of how robust and trustworthy data can be used to provide evidence to support advocacy for the sector.
- Continuing to integrate libraries in ACE's work on place and cross-cutting agendas e.g. health, well-being and social justice. Including contributing to work on the loneliness agenda, with the [National Academy for Social Prescribing](#). Signing a compact with [Health Education England](#) and sector stakeholders to develop health literacy.
- On 3 June 2021 it [announced](#) funding of £3.4 million, continuing to support the British Library's development work on a [Single Digital Presence](#) for public libraries.
- Holding a virtual conference in November 2021 to help library services understand the application process and obligations in becoming National Portfolio Organisations.
- Promoting reading for pleasure with literacy, well-being, leisure, civic and social outcomes e.g. working with its literature and library National Portfolio Organisations on projects such as [Reading Friends](#), [Reading Sparks](#), and [Reading Well](#), [Puffin World of Stories](#) and the [Big Jubilee Read](#).
- Working with DCMS to deliver and administer the [Libraries Improvement Fund](#)
- Supporting digital creativity, aligning five public libraries with [Digital Schoolhouses](#) to transform them into digital learning hubs.

ACE's Grant in Aid budget also supports research and development. Examples include work on: public library accreditation; staff skills; international work; [peer challenges \(with LGA\)](#); and an [advocacy film](#) about the importance of public libraries.

The British Library

The British Library is a non-departmental public body sponsored by DCMS. As a legal deposit library, the British Library is required by law to receive, preserve and maintain copies of all books produced in the UK. Since 2013, these legal deposit requirements have extended to maintaining copies of non-print works, including e-books, e-journals, and the UK web archive. The British Library is also the national repository for recorded sound.

The British Library plays an important and active role across the public libraries sector.

The Library's network of Business and Intellectual Property Centres, based in libraries across the country, provides entrepreneurs and SMEs across the UK with free access to databases, market research, journals, directories and reports. With £13m Government funding, the Library continued to progress toward its aim of 20 regional centres and 90 local centres by 2023. [New regional hubs](#) opened in Tees Valley, Bristol, and Oxfordshire, while new local sites were opened in locations including Barnstaple, Bradford, Blackpool and Berwick. This year, nearly 24,000 entrepreneurs have been supported either online or through the gradual return of face-to-face workshops, 1-1s, and networking activities.

The Library also continued to deliver its [Reset.Restart](#) programme to help small businesses navigate the pandemic; covering subjects from product and service innovation, to marketing, finance and business models.

With support from DCMS the British Library continued its work (funded by ACE and Carnegie UK) to scope the potential for a single digital presence for UK libraries. In June 2021, the British Library and Arts Council England [announced](#) the next phase of the project running between June 2021 to March 2024, which will see the development and testing of a public-facing version of a platform to connect users with local, national and online library offers. This phase will also include a £1.1m grant programme to support libraries in England with their own digital offers.

The Living Knowledge Network (LKN) launched in 2019 is a UK wide partnership of national and local libraries which enables collaborative working to increase their impact – creating unique services and memorable experiences for the Network's audiences, improving knowledge exchange, and sharing skills and resources for professional development. By March 2022, the network had grown to 31 with six new library authorities (Jersey, Coventry, Nottinghamshire, Kent, Bristol, and Surrey) joining in this period.

During the reporting period, the LKN hosted a series of skill sharing [webinars](#), (covering all sorts of topics such as climate change and sustainability, events and marketing, digital engagement and personal skills) that reached 170 other services

beyond the 31 LKN members, including libraries, universities, schools and museums, including as far as Australia, China, and the USA.

Due to COVID-19 interruptions, the Library's [Unfinished Business: The Fight for Women's Rights exhibition](#) was extended into this reporting year, closing on 1 August 2021. During the period, 17 LKN members displayed their own *Unfinished Business* exhibitions using panels produced by the British Library and adding their own collections and programming to reach local audiences. Others ran digital events or exhibitions, and this enabled 237,000 people across the UK to engage with the exhibition, either in person or online.

In February 2022, a similar programme launched for the Library's most recent exhibition [Breaking the News](#). For the first time, LKN partners launched their local shows ahead of the British Library in St Pancras, across 31 public library services from Aberdeen to Portsmouth.

Libraries Connected

Libraries Connected is a membership organisation and charity open to heads of every library service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is primarily funded by Arts Council England (ACE) as a National Portfolio Organisation, commissioned to work as a Sector Support Organisation for libraries.

Throughout 2021/22 Libraries Connected continued to fulfil its mission as a membership body and as the Sector Support Organisation for libraries. Whilst its key focus was on providing support for libraries to adapt their services during the pandemic, it also continued to deliver its core programme of work including major development projects addressing leadership, service improvement and financial resilience.

Pandemic response

- Libraries Connected continued to work closely with DCMS to develop and revise the Public Library Service Recovery Toolkit in line with changing government regulations and guidance from UK Health Security Agency and the Health and Safety Executive. It was able to react swiftly thanks to its online network of heads of library service which enabled changes in regulations to be quickly cascaded and for queries to be raised with the government. It also established a monthly survey of libraries to track service recovery by measuring footfall, book lending, service provision and IT use. Towards the end of the year it worked with the DCMS team to prepare guidance in line with the emerging Living with COVID Guidance. Throughout the year it curated [LibrariesFromHome](#) to showcase online library programmes as a source of inspiration and good practice.

Libraries Connected major development programmes included:

- [Leading Libraries](#) - funded by ACE, with match funding from Libraries Connected, CILIP and library services. This programme was delivered by the Birmingham Leadership Institute and was designed to foster more diverse and confident leadership, with a focus on supporting women and people from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic Background. The programme supported 15

library services using an innovative “whole service” approach to foster leadership skills in heads of service, emerging leaders and rising stars, and to identify and tackle barriers to progression. Programme methodology and materials were adapted to deliver a short leadership course to early career professionals, as the first step in their leadership journey. Libraries Connected also launched its first national library staff awards, in six categories linked to the [Universal Offers](#). It received over 100 nominations and the awards were presented at its annual seminar in October.

- [Future Funding: programme](#) - to develop libraries' income generation capacities. The programme delivered a course of taught modules, mentor sessions and action learning to a second cohort of library services. In addition, the programme delivered a series of webinars for the whole library sector and established a community of library practitioners interested in income generation to share good practice and to be alerted to opportunities. The programme also worked with West Yorkshire libraries to pilot how to secure regional funding opportunities.
- [Novels that Shaped Our World](#) - funded by Arts Council England and run in Partnership with the BBC, the British Library, The Reading Agency, The Publishers Association and CILIP. It was inspired by the launch of the BBC 100 Novels that shaped our world list and aimed to inspire communities to read with enjoyment. 55 library services participated and delivered 250 events with theatre groups, authors and illustrators, dance companies, and a huge range of visual and digital artists. Reprogramming the festival due to the constraints of COVID was a complex task and testament to the flexibility and determination of libraries.
- Accreditation - funded by Arts Council England, Libraries Connected concluded a project to scope, develop and test an accreditation framework for English public libraries to support the development of good quality services that meet the needs of their communities. The framework was developed in consultation with the library sector and key stakeholders including Local Government Association, CILIP, and The British Library. Discussions about implementation will be taken forward in the coming year.
- [Marketing the Library](#) - funded by Arts Council England, Libraries Connected ran a pilot project with two networks of libraries to explore how to develop library skills in delivering targeted marketing campaigns, and to identify the most effective marketing channels. The project also delivered a series of webinars to the wider sector which Libraries Connected has published as a learning resource.
- [Digital learning modules](#) - funding from DCMS is supporting the development of a new learning module for library staff which will introduce the five principles of the DCMS Online Media Literacy Strategy and will equip library staff with the skills and knowledge to share with library users on how to use the internet safely and make informed decisions.
- Libraries Connected annual seminar, in October 2021, brought together over 150 library leaders to explore the theme “Libraries: an essential part of recovery”. The Minister for Arts, Lord Parkinson, joined the virtual seminar as the keynote speaker.



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