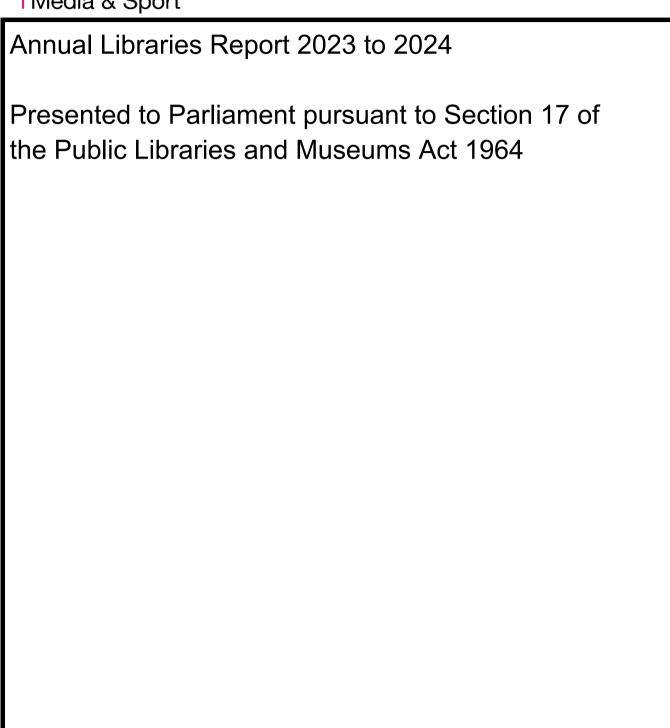


September 2024



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Department for Culture, Media & Sport



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Ministerial Foreword

I was delighted to be appointed as Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism and to take on responsibility for public libraries on 8 July 2024, not least because I use libraries all the time and I know how important they are. Because this report describes the activities of the previous government and major library stakeholders between April 2023 to March 2024, it obviously refers to events before I was in post, but I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the importance of libraries and the very significant challenges they face.

Libraries matter to people. They provide inspiration, education, entertainment and a safe haven for many thousands every week. In addition to the traditional role of providing books to lend or consult, they provide digital services, audio recordings, archives and local information that can be vital to building a local business. Strengthening and modernising our libraries is therefore a vital part of ensuring we have a strong economy that works for everyone.

Libraries have risen to the challenge in many different ways. Many libraries have become 'warm banks' to provide support through the colder months for those struggling to pay heating bills. Others have simply provided a place for people to meet. Many promote healthy living through self-management support and effective signposting to reduce health, social and economic inequalities. The British Library's national network of Business and IP Centres in public libraries supports small business owners and entrepreneurs with access to free resources, training and events. By providing space and support for a wide range of community events, libraries also play a vital role in promoting social cohesion.

This is all in addition to their core function: to encourage reading and provide a range of reference materials. We cannot shy away from the challenges that libraries have faced. The amount councils are spending on public libraries in England has fallen by almost half in real terms between 2009/10 and 2022/23. I do not have an easy answer for this. Money is in short supply and councils face many competing urgent needs. But I will work across local and central government to support libraries and promote their vital role in delivering strategic objectives: to break down barriers to opportunity and to unlock economic growth. This includes working with my colleagues in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to get local government back on its feet by doing the basics right, providing councils with more stability through multi-year funding settlements and ending competitive bidding for pots of money.

As a joint Minister of State with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, I am especially delighted to champion the vital role our public libraries play in digital inclusion; providing free access to WiFi and public PCs, loaning ebooks and audiobooks, and offering assisted digital support to a range of essential

services. As we develop a more coherent and effective strategy for digital inclusion, I will ensure that libraries form a central part of how we bring about change.

I look forward to supporting the Secretary of State in her statutory role to superintend and promote the improvement of public library services provided by local authorities in England. The DCMS Libraries team continues to speak with councils and offer guidance on local issues including proposed changes to public library provision. These conversations are invaluable to help the Department help the library sector and I would encourage library services to keep us informed of their work.

I look forward to visiting many libraries in the months and years to come and seeing first-hand how they deliver for their communities. In particular, I look forward to meeting the dedicated and passionate staff and volunteers who keep our library network thriving, and to thank them for their hard work and dedication.

Chris Bryant MP - Minister for Creative Industries, Arts and Tourism

Introduction

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (section 17) requires the Secretary of State to lay annually before Parliament a report on the exercise of their functions under this Act. Those function are to:

- superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England; and
- secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them as library authorities by or under the Act.

The report therefore focuses on the exercise of these functions and also the work of the DCMS Libraries team in supporting the sector.

It covers the period April 2023 to March 2024. This aligns with the annual reporting periods for other relevant libraries sector organisations and bodies, including Arts Council England, the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians, Libraries Connected and the British Library. More information on the work of these 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 in their statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to superintend and promote the improvement of local authorities' provision of public library services in England. For the reporting period the DCMS Secretary of State was the Rt Hon Lucy Frazer MP, KC. Additionally, the team worked with the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Libraries to support the Secretary of State with those duties. For the reporting period the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Libraries was Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay.

The team also leads on policy areas including the Public Lending Right Scheme, and sponsorship responsibility for the <u>British Library</u> and <u>The National Archives</u>. We work across government departments, on behalf of the sector, to promote public libraries' contributions to a range of important agendas and encourage a "libraries first" approach to delivery of government projects and policies.

Library Use and Funding

The use of public libraries across the reporting period increased from 24% to 30%, representing nearly one in three adults in England (around 13.7 million) using public libraries in the last twelve months. 25% of adults had engaged with libraries physically in the previous 12 months to being surveyed, a 6 percentage point increase from 2022/23 (19%). The corresponding figure for digital engagement was 14%, a 1 percentage point increase from 2022/23 (13%) (Participation Survey 2023-24, DCMS). This appears to continue the trend of re-establishing people's habits and patterns of use after the Covid-19 pandemic significantly disrupted these.

Although direct comparisons cannot be made due to methodological differences, DCMS's previous Taking Part survey showed a declining trend in library use prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019/20, 31% of respondents reported having used a public library service in the last 12 months, a long-term fall from 48% of respondents in 2005/06.

Local government is statutorily responsible for the provision of public library services. Library authorities do this alongside the other duties for which they are responsible as well as the wider role they play in local place-making. Many councils face financial constraints which continue to add pressure to local choices around the delivery of services, including high cost, high profile statutory areas such as adult social care and children's services. In total, net expenditure by local authorities on public libraries has fallen by 47% in real terms between 2009-10 and 2022-23, from £1.2 billion to £673 million in 2022-23 prices (DCMS analysis of LA revenue expenditure and financing, MHCLG). The Local Government Association's survey of Council Chief Executives undertaken January to February 2024 found that even with modest budget increases for the 24/25 fiscal year, nearly half (48%) of respondents reported that they believed further cost savings would be needed within their library services.

Superintendence

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 places a duty on the Secretary of State (in practice, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport) to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by local authorities in England and to secure the proper discharge of the statutory duties placed on local authorities as library authorities under that Act. The 1964 Act also places a duty on local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service. Library authorities are upper-tier councils (in the reporting year these were 59 unitary authorities, 36 metropolitan districts, 33 London boroughs (including City of London) and 24 counties).

Public libraries are funded by these local authorities and each local authority is responsible for determining how best to meet the needs of its communities and deliver its statutory duties within available resources. If the Secretary of State is satisfied, following the holding of a local inquiry, that a local authority has failed to carry out its duties under the 1964 Act, the Secretary of State may make an order directing it to take steps to rectify the breach. The Secretary of State may take this action following receipt of a complaint that the local authority is failing to carry out its duties, or of the Secretary of State's own volition.

DCMS officials monitor and keep under review any proposals by library authorities to make changes to their library service provision, and any complaints made under the Act, 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

There are 152 library authorities in England. We encourage these councils to engage with the DCMS libraries team at an early stage about any proposals to make significant changes to their library services. This provides an opportunity for councils to inform the libraries team about proposed changes to their service provision; or to learn about good practice from other library services. It also provides an opportunity for the DCMS libraries team to gather insights on each council'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 its responsibilities, and the guidance documents that are available.

In this reporting period DCMS directly engaged with 55 local authorities, involving 99 conversations - either in person or virtually. In addition, representatives of the DCMS libraries team attended, in person or virtually, and participated in a number of well-attended sector stakeholder events. This included: the Libraries Connected southeast region quarterly meeting on 12 April; Norfolk libraries staff conference on 27 April: Camden libraries staff conference on 8 June; Libraries Connected annual seminar on 20 - 21 June; Libraries Connected south-east quarterly meeting 11 October; Libraries Connected section 114 support group meetings 23 - 24 November; Libraries Connected Yorkshire & Humber region meeting on 8 December; and a Libraries Connected webinar on Honours and Points of Light awards held on 7 February.

Formal complaints

Superintendence also involves the consideration of formal complaints that library authorities are not carrying out their duties under the 1964 Act. Any representations received by DCMS that a local authority may be failing to meet its statutory duties in respect of the provision of library services are carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. Information about the <u>statutory duties</u> 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.

We consider a complaint in two stages. The first stage is a thorough analysis of the background and evidence relating to any complaint that the local authority is not meeting its statutory duty to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service. The analysis will consider 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. We also examine information provided by the local authority relating to these issues. 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 letter is sent to the council and the complainant, and is also published on GOV.UK. It gives the opportunity for anyone to make further representations in relation to 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.

Over the period of this annual report, the previous Minister for Arts, Heritage and Libraries issued a <u>"minded to"</u> and <u>final decision</u> letter on a formal complaint in respect of Calderdale Council.

Public Lending Right Scheme

The Public Lending Right (PLR) is the right for authors and other eligible rights holders to receive payments from a central fund in respect of their books that are lent out to the public by local library authorities in the United Kingdom. The PLR applies to the lending of books, audiobooks, e-books and e-audiobooks from public libraries. The central fund is provided by the Government, and the PLR Scheme is administered by the British Library Board.

PLR payments are made annually by the British Library to eligible authors who register their books with the British Library's PLR Office. This was particularly challenging this year because of the effects of the wider cyber attack on the British Library; but payments were still made by the statutory deadline.

PLR Scheme changes

The Government made some technical changes to the PLR Scheme during this reporting period following a positive response to a public consultation between 28 June to 6 August 2023.

The specific changes made were:

- to amend the Scheme so that it is less prescriptive regarding designation of sampling points, enabling the British Library to increase the sample size with the option to move to collecting comprehensive loans data from all library authorities in the UK; and
- to remove the requirement, in certain circumstances, for an application for registration of a posthumously eligible book to be made by the deceased author's personal representatives.

The changes were brought into force by statutory instrument on 31 October 2023.

PLR Rate per loan

Funding allocated by the British Library to PLR for the 2022/23 Scheme year (July 2022 to June 2023) was £6.92 million - with £6.29 million available for payments to authors and other rights holders and £0.63 million for Scheme running costs. The 'Rate Per Loan' was calculated in the normal way by dividing the PLR fund by the previous year's national public library loans figures. This reporting year the new rate per loan was 13.69p (down from the previous rate of 30.53p). This arose from an increase in the number of loans during that year, as the number of book loans returned to levels of loans more consistent with the pre-pandemic period. This had a minimal impact on the overall distribution of earnings and this year the central fund was distributed to 22,698 authors (compared to 21,119 in respect of the 2021/22 Scheme year).

Byelaws

Section 19 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 enables local authorities to make byelaws regulating the use of library facilities provided by them under the Act.

It is not mandatory for a local authority to put in place such byelaws; however, if a local authority wants to introduce them or amend their existing byelaws, the byelaws must be confirmed by the Secretary of State before they can come into effect.

DCMS has published <u>model byelaws</u> which local authorities may adopt if they decide to introduce byelaws, or amend existing byelaws, regulating the use of their library services. The model byelaws were last updated in 2017, and during the reporting period DCMS worked with Libraries Connected to revise and update the model byelaws.

Other public libraries developments and advocacy

During this year DCMS has worked with colleagues across government on a wide range of issues – examples are:

- <u>Creative Industries Sector Vision</u>: published in June 2023, this is a joint plan to drive growth, build talent and develop skills to realise the growth potential in creative clusters, create opportunities for young people and others, and enrich lives and strengthen pride in place across the UK. The CISV references the work of the British Library's <u>Business and IP Centre</u> national network which provides entrepreneurs and businesses with business support and advice on IP and their <u>Get Ready for Business Growth</u> programme, which includes teaching businesses how to maximise their Intellectual Property.
- With the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs on its '<u>Unleashing Rural Opportunity</u>' publication this included an action for DCMS, Arts Council England and the Local Government Association to work with the libraries sector to identify and share best practice on rural libraries.
- With the Department for Education in relation to its <u>Reading Framework</u>. This now references public libraries as an important resource for teachers, parents and children. DfE spoke on 10 November 2023 at the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians Conference exploring how public libraries and schools library services can listen to the children and young people in their communities and put them at the heart of their service. The Head of DCMS Libraries Team was a member of the expert panel and answered questions raised by attendees.

Libraries featured strongly on the government's <u>Help for Households</u> map, highlighting free events taking place in public libraries. The website provided information on what support was available to help with the cost of living and save money.

Strategic Approach

Baroness Sanderson was appointed by Lord Parkinson in September 2022 to undertake an independent review of public libraries, to contribute ideas to work towards a future government public libraries strategy. In the previous reporting year she held six roundtables to consult with the sector and others interested in public libraries, focusing on public libraries' contribution to cultural and creative enrichment, healthier and happier lives, stronger and more resilient communities, improved digital access and literacy, helping everyone achieve their potential, and greater prosperity.

Similar sessions undertaken during this reporting year covered increased reading and literacy, governance and blue-sky thinking. These were in addition to individual meetings and discussions with people or groups who had approached her. Baroness Sanderson and the Minister also participated in a Q&A Session at the Libraries Connected annual seminar on 21 June 2023 which covered support for libraries and progress towards a future government libraries strategy.

On 28 July 2023 Baroness Sanderson submitted her independent review to the Minister, so he could consider which of her recommendations he might wish to take forward into the drafting of a new government public libraries strategy. The <u>review</u> and the <u>government response</u> was published on GOV.UK on 18 January 2024.

Following the publication of the Review the Minister approached other Government Ministers, and the DCMS Libraries team met officials in other government departments, to seek active engagement and commitments from them in developing a strategic approach.

Libraries data

Arts Council England published an updated basic dataset of static public libraries in England on 5 June 2023. The information was provided by library services and the details covered the number of static libraries in England (statutory and non-statutory) as at 31 December 2022. It also collected data covering libraries as at 31 December 2023 during this reporting period, which was <u>published</u> on 9 July 2024.

CIPFA published its annual library statistics for the period April 2022 to March 2023 on 19 December 2023. For this period around 61% of library services in England responded. CIPFA is not commissioned by DCMS to collect and publish annual library data, nor are library services required to complete the questionnaire.

DCMS needs robust data about public libraries in order to carry out its statutory superintendence functions and also to promote the contribution public libraries can and do make to other policy makers across government. The Libraries Team has been working with ACE and other libraries stakeholders to consider how to collect and use a range of timely and accurate data about public libraries.

On 20 July 2023 Libraries Connected began initial collection of a retrospective dataset relating to Financial Year 2022/2023. This initial request was for basic quantitative data on the number of events; loans; active borrowers; physical visits; visits of people into library premises; lending method and PC use. The dataset will be published later in 2024.

An ACE-led working group on library data is also working towards the possibility of increased automated collection of data from public libraries in future, and establishing a suitable place for this to be published. During this period consultants conducted a discovery phase project to explore various options. This work will continue in the coming year.

Research

DCMS commissioned independent research to understand more about why people may not use their library at present, and what would make them reassess this position. This supports the Secretary of State's statutory duty to promote the improvement of public libraries, and our commitment to make better use of the data we have available. This work (done by Ipsos for DCMS) will provide qualitative insights about the visibility of public libraries, the services they provide and people's use of them. It will be published later in the year following ministerial clearance.

DCMS Funding

The Libraries Improvement Fund

A further 43 successful projects benefited from £10.2 million of public funding in the third round of the Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF), which was <u>announced on 25 March 2024</u>. This builds on the 52 successful projects and £9.9 million that was awarded in the first and second rounds of the Fund to help libraries across England to continue to adapt to the changing needs of users.

Examples of some of the LIF projects from Rounds 1 and 2 that completed within the period of this report are included at Annex B.

Know your Neighbourhood Fund

The Know Your Neighbourhood Fund (KYN) is a Government funded package designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in disadvantaged areas across England. Over £2.3 million of funding was distributed by Arts Council England via Libraries Connected to 26 library services to create more volunteering opportunities in libraries and support people experiencing, or at risk of, chronic loneliness.

In September 2023, as part of KYN, Libraries Connected hosted a <u>knowledge sharing event</u>, and hosted further <u>webinars</u> showcasing the projects that are underway.

Private Finance Initiatives

A library PFI is where private sector investment is used to fund library projects, run and managed by the library authority.

The Department currently has PFI arrangements with:

Bournemouth – Central Library and community library ICT system

Brighton – Jubilee Library

Liverpool – Central Library and Archive Redevelopment

Newcastle - City Library and High Heaton Community Library

Oldham - Oldham Library & Lifelong Learning Centre

Worcester - Worcester Library and History Centre

These arrangements will be coming to an end over future years. Government is

starting to work with the relevant library authorities on a rolling basis to ensure they conclude appropriately.

New Year's and HM The King'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:

Order of the British Empire (OBE)

HM The King's Birthday 2023

Phil Spence. Chief Operating Officer, The British Library. For services to Libraries

Catherine Courtney. Project Director, Artists' Lives, British Library. For services to Oral History.

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

HM The King's Birthday 2023

Christine Myhill. Libraries and Heritage Manager, Gateshead and Chair, Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) For services to Public Libraries during Covid-19.

Caroline Thomson Rae. Libraries and Community Assets Manager, London Borough of Newham. For services to Public Libraries.

Janet Sally Zmroczek. Former Head, European and Americas Collections, British Library. For services to Literature and Heritage.

New Year 2024

Dr. Alasdair Bruce, Boston Spa Renewed Programme Manager (British Library). For services to Libraries.

Carol Stump former Chief Librarian Kirklees' Council and former President, Libraries Connected. For services to Public Libraries.

The British Empire Medal (BEM)

HM The King's Birthday 2023

Kimberly Bryans. For services to Community Managed Libraries in the London Borough of Bexley.

Karolynne Hart. Cultural and Arts Programme Manager, Gateshead Libraries. New Year 2024. For services to Public Libraries and to the Arts.

Julia Robinson. Principal Librarian, South Tyneside Council. For services to public libraries and to the community in the North East of England.

New Year 2024

Richard Fowler, Library Lead, Harbury Community Library, Warwickshire. For services to Libraries.

Christine Mellor, General Manager, Library Service, North Yorkshire Council. For services to Public Libraries.

Annex B

<u>Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF) - Round 1 and 2 Completed Projects</u>

A number of library services in England have completed projects to upgrade their buildings or improve digital infrastructure using funding from Round 1 and Round 2 during the reporting year. Examples of these projects include:

North Yorkshire

Scarborough Library was officially reopened by the Minister for Arts, Heritage and Libraries on 3 November 2023. The library has been reconfigured within a Grade II Listed Building creating a modern, multi-use space to meet a variety of community needs, improve access and create better working environments for partners, staff and volunteers.

Barnsley

Dodworth Library was publicly reopened on 22 May 2023 following a refurbishment of the library, which included the installation of a new heating system, windows, doors, flexible shelving and an accessible toilet, and new furniture. In addition, there are upgraded IT services, with enhanced Wi-Fi, new computers and the relocation of a large IT data box to enable a dedicated children's library and improved space for staff and volunteers through the redevelopment of a back-office area.

City of London

Artizan Street Library & Community Centre project completed in July 2023. It is a bespoke maker/work/study space that reflects and celebrates the local area's history and culture. It serves as a hub for digital design, craft and learning and is accessible outside of library opening hours. Visitors can print in 3D and, by using other equipment, including electronic sewing machines and laptops, gain computer programming and textile skills. There is a new children's library, improved study space and new shelving and furniture throughout. Improved 'bring your own device' provision has been incorporated into new public computer desks in the centre of the library.

Gloucestershire

Oakley Library project completed in June 2023. The project included a new, more accessible and inviting entrance to the building, alongside internal alteration to accommodate an open, flexible space for community-use. An immersive reality room. The space offers the latest digital technology for all ages, with free facilities, training and support to help with literacy and learning skills, as well as digital exhibitions hosted and curated by the community.

Salford

Height Library project reopened to the public on 22 May 2023. The LIF investment provided the creation of an accessible toilet; a new kitchen facility; a more accessible

and welcoming entrance and front elevation to the library, including automatic doors and an Intercom system repairs, and refurbishment of windows, fascias and brickwork, as well as improved lighting and signage; flexible exhibition boards, and creation of a small meeting space.

Sefton

The project was completed at the end of May 2023 with the provision of four new pods in three libraries. Each pod is equipped with cameras, microphones, speakers and smart screens plus laptops if or when required. These are soundproof booths of single or dual occupancy and their primary function is to offer high-quality virtual meeting spaces, where digitally excluded residents have the opportunity to reconnect with family and friends; facilitate specialist language learning for refugees and asylum seekers and to support local businesses and home workers by providing digitally enabled meeting/workspaces.

Library sector partners

Organisations with which DCMS engages regularly, and which undertake activities to support the public libraries sector, include Arts Council England, the British Library, Libraries Connected and the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians. These organisations provided a summary of their activities during the year.

Arts Council England (ACE)

ACE is the national <u>development agency</u> for libraries in England. It works with library services that operate within a wider framework of library provision and local and national government services and those that do not. Its national role means that it is well-placed to stimulate debate and offer support to the development of public libraries through funding, advocacy, and collaboration.

ACE continues to <u>support libraries</u> to develop their practice; advocates for their value, impact and public benefit; and invests in projects and infrastructure across the public library sector that reflect their strategy, <u>Let's Create</u>. The Libraries Director and Team are important sector advocates and use ACE's convening power to foster partnership working to maximise libraries' potential locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

Advocacy and Leadership

ACE convenes and chairs the <u>English Public Library Strategic Working Group</u> (EPL), bringing together stakeholders across the sector to develop policy and partnerships to target resource and investment in issues of significant impact on the library sector. EPL works with councillors and Heads of Library Services.

Working with partners to develop policy frameworks and infrastructure ACE has:

- Commissioned an options appraisal for a public libraries data platform
- Undertaken the annual refresh and publication of <u>English Library Basic Data</u> Set
- Supported a <u>Regional Development</u> Programme to establish strategic objectives in 9 regions with Libraries Connected to continue to deliver a regional support programme across 2023-2026. The new posts were created with Libraries Connected working with each of the 9 regions to establish priorities and to work alongside Arts Council Library Relationship Managers.
- Worked with the Association of Senior Childrens and Education Librarians (ASCEL) to <u>develop research</u> on the number, reach and location of school library services in England.
- Funded CILIP to develop <u>Future Libraries</u> guidance and a toolkit to support libraries to horizon scan and develop strategies based on futures literacy.
- Agreed a framework for, explored capacity to deliver, and commenced the programme build of an accreditation scheme.

 Signed a refreshed <u>collaboration agreement</u> with The National Arxhive to promote a comprehensive cultural public offer foregrounding the rich diversity of arts, museums, libraries and archives.

Investment to strengthen digital scope, capacity and access

This is achieved by:

- Supporting <u>LibraryOn</u>, an evolving single digital presence to drive up online and physical library footfall, increasing discoverability and access to services and collections. This includes a grants programme for public libraries in England to improve online presence.
- Exploring e-licensing models, aiming to increase affordability and availability of digital content to public library services

Investing in specific projects to strengthen library delivery

These include:

- <u>Get Ready for Business Growth</u> a BIPC national programme developing the sustainability of SMEs in the creative industries.
- Support for The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge cross-authority business model.
- Future Funding building local capacity to diversify income streams.
- Managing Safe and Inclusive Libraries guidance and toolkit.
- Guidance on Seeking and Securing Developer Contributions for Library and <u>Archive Provision in England</u>, supported in partnership with The National Archives.

Supporting workforce and place-based initiatives

These include:

- Supporting CILIP and Libraries Connected to strengthen workforce skills, including an <u>induction pack</u> for new public library staff and a <u>digital skills</u> programme.
- Funding a <u>Peer Challenges and a cross-cultural Senior Officer programme</u> of leadership essentials and networking, with the introduction of a <u>New and</u> <u>Emerging Library Leaders</u> programme. delivered by the LGA.
- Investing in <u>The Europe Challenge</u>, enabling a number of libraries in England to develop place-based projects addressing local social challenges.

Programme funding

Libraries within the 2023-26 National Portfolio delivered a first year of activity including:

- Gloucestershire Libraries' Ageing with Creativity choir, helping to combat loneliness and isolation among the over-65s;
- Sefton Libraries' 'Dreams of Jasmine' poetry project working with women with experience of migration.

National Lottery Project Grants, tailored to the four Universal Library Offers, continues to fund significant library projects. 2023/24 funded projects include:

 Hackney Libraries' Art at Heart programme which places creativity, community engagement and skills development at the heart of local libraries;

- Blackpool Libraries' tech project offering aspirational digital opportunities to young people using VR (Virtual Reality) and cutting-edge technology to tell stories; and Staffordshire Libraries' young readers and writers' programme;
- ACE held National Lottery Project Grant roadshows for libraries across England, highlighting the funding available for projects focussing on the four Universal Library Offers;
- ACE funded Libraries Connected to distribute grants to the 152 library services for activities that were reflective/celebratory of the King's Coronation, and which incorporated any of the coronation's themes of 'youth, community, diversity, and sustainability'. Some services joined up regionally and used the investment for the whole region while others used the investment locally. Examples included:
 - Yorkshire & Humber Playboxes for a nominated library within each service (fun and engaging self-serve activities for children under five and their families to enjoy in the library).
 - Southwest #readtoyourseeds, partnering with Eden Project and the National Wildflower Centre to procure wildflower seeds for distribution through libraries.
 - Leicestershire worked with Babygigs (music and instruments for early years).
 - Camden worked with a visual artist based in Kentish Town to explore themes such as king making and commemoration.
 - o Islington Rub a Dub social event, focused on older age groups.
- ACE has administered 3 rounds of the LIF (Libraries Improvement Fund) programme; evaluation of round 1 will be available August 2025.
- The first year of activity in the ACE-commissioned Know Your Neighbourhood programme has commenced, focussing on volunteer recruitment to deliver activities to reduce social isolation and loneliness; an example is Middlesbrough's Residents in Bloom activity which aimed to reduce loneliness amongst care home residents.

Libraries Connected

Libraries Connected is a membership organisation and charity open to every library service in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies. Part of its core funding in England comes from Arts Council England to help libraries embed their Investment Principles.

In this reporting year its focus was on supporting library services as they navigated the local government funding crisis. A support programme for heads of service facing Section 114 notices or significant budget cuts was established in January. So far over 40 services have joined the scheme, which offers a confidential peer support network, resource library, tailored training and communications support.

Other major programmes and strands of work in 2023/24 included:

Rural libraries

Following on from the Defra publication <u>Unleashing rural opportunity</u>, Libraries Connected convened a roundtable to identify the major challenges and opportunities

facing rural library services. This led to the appointment of a rural libraries representative to the Arts Council's rural stakeholders group, a webinar with the Rural Services Network and engagement with Action with Communities in Rural England, among other rural organisations. A briefing with policy proposals will be published in the next reporting year.

New guidance notes: Creating Safer Libraries and Open Access Libraries

Libraries Connected published new guidance notes addressing two important emerging issues within the sector. <u>Creating Safer Libraries</u> offers clear, concise guidance on preventing, managing and responding to disruptive behaviour in public libraries, while <u>Open Access Libraries</u> sets out best practice and advice in using self-service technology to extend opening hours.

Regional Development Programme

Libraries Connected's <u>Regional Development Programme</u> was formally launched in November, with the appointment of an expert team. The programme will develop the charity's nine regional public library networks into strategic partnerships that can deliver social impacts at scale, funded by investment from national, regional, and sub-regional sources. Arts Council England has provided a grant of £450,000 over the next three years, with an additional grant of £90,000 from The Combined Regions.

Warm Welcome Campaign

Libraries Connected was again a partner of the <u>Warm Welcome Campaign</u>, a network of public spaces offering warmth and friendship during the winter months. Research by Libraries Connected found that 93% of its member libraries offered a warm spaces scheme in the winter.

Elicensing

Libraries Connected, with funding from Arts Council England, began a new project with the aim of increasing the affordability and availability of ebooks to public libraries. Working with publishers, library services and their digital content platforms, it is piloting a range of simpler, more flexible licences. Alongside this pilot Libraries Connected commissioned market and audience research into library users' book buying and borrowing habits. The pilot and research are due to be completed in late 2024, after which a report with recommendations will be published.

University of East Anglia research

Libraries Connected East, the eastern regional network of Libraries Connected, commissioned the University of East Anglia to produce a research report and develop an evaluation tool aiming to help measure, manage, and evidence the impact of social connections in libraries. The project was funded by library services in the East of England, together with a £30,000 contribution from Arts Council England and published in a report titled Libraries for living, and for living better.

Ready to Learn

The Ready to Learn campaign highlighted the crucial role libraries play in helping young children settle in and succeed at school. As part of the campaign, Libraries Connected commissioned a poll of primary teachers, 90% of whom agreed that visiting a public library regularly can help young children prepare for starting school.

Know Your Neighbourhood

2023/24 saw the launch of the 26 projects that received funding through Know Your Neighbourhood, a £29 million package from DCMS designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. Libraries Connected is one of three delivery bodies working in partnership with Arts Council England to deliver £5 million of the KYN Fund to arts and culture organisations.

Workforce Development

Libraries Connected continued to offer online and physical training and events to public library staff. The online courses remained popular with over 2500 online module enrollments. The most popular course, with over 600 enrollments, was *'Key Digital skills'* which was funded by the DCMS and links to the Online Media Literacy Strategy.

Libraries Connected also ran over 50 webinars which saw more than 3,000 people registered to attend, an in-person Annual Seminar for senior library managers attended by over 200 people which explored community growth and the contribution of public libraries, and an Innovation Gathering which brought together more than 70 library staff in Birmingham to showcase innovative work, create new connections, and think collectively about how to improve their services to local communities.

The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL)

ASCEL is the membership organisation and charity that supports library leaders delivering public library services for children and young people and School Library Services (SLS). It successfully bid to become an Arts Council England Investment Principles Support Organisation and will receive £200,000 a year from 2023 to 2026.

ASCEL's focus in 2023/24 was to amplify youth voice across the sector, developing career pathways and creating training opportunities, working closely with members through Regional Groups and National Committee. It continues to work in partnership with Arts Council England, Libraries Connected, Local Government Association, The Reading Agency, BookTrust and others to develop and promote the library offer for children and young people.

ASCEL's major programmes included:

• Youth Engagement Network: Eight library services were involved during the 2023-24 pilot phase, working with young people aged 11-13 from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds who identify as LGBT+ and disabled and D/deaf.

- <u>Training Programme</u>: ASCEL's training programme is tailored to reflect the specific needs of the library workforce delivering services for young people and families across the country.
- <u>Annual Conference</u>: ASCEL's annual conference 'Back to the Future' explored the evolving landscape for children's and school library services.
- <u>Schools Library Service Research</u>: ASCEL commissioned University of Leeds to commence research on current SLS provision across England.

ASCEL's Member Network highlighted successful local delivery and partnerships to spread good practice that contributes to key national agendas including:

- Family Hubs and support for children and families in their earliest years
- Holiday Activity and Food programmes
- Reading for pleasure and literacy programmes delivery including the Summer Reading Challenge and Bookstart
- School readiness, speech, language and communication development
- Reducing inequality and improving economic wellbeing
- Inclusive services for children with special educational needs
- Supporting mental wellbeing of children, parents and carers
- Reducing digital inequality through digital skills and access to technology
- Culture and creativity opportunities outside of school settings
- Boosting confidence through volunteering and apprenticeships
- Tackling rural isolation.

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.

Although the British Library is not governed by the Secretary of State's duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, it plays an important and active role across the public libraries sector, including administration of the Public Lending Right scheme.

The Public Lending Right Scheme

The British Library administers Public Lending Right (PLR), the scheme through which authors are remunerated by the government for loans made by public libraries. This is covered in more detail in the body of this report.

Partnerships with public libraries

The British Library continued to work closely with public libraries in England and across the UK, through a number of key collaborations.

The Library's network of <u>Business & IP (Intellectual Property) Centres</u>, based in libraries across the country, provides entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized

enterprises (SME's) across the UK with free access to databases, market research, journals, directories and reports. This year saw the publication of evaluation research into the network's impact over the three years it received DCMS funding (£13m over the period 2020-23).

Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0 revealed that the BIPC national network:

- Supported 62,900 individuals, 43% of whom were accessing business support services for the first time.
- Helped to establish 18,175 new business (24 per working day),
- Assisted both new and existing business to create an additional 6,124 jobs and £248m in turnover.
- Generated £158m of Gross Value Added, with a payback of £6.63 for every £1 spent on the service.
- Delivered a uniquely diverse model of business support: 72% of new business owners were women, 26% from a black and Asian minority ethnic background, 10% had a disability and 25% were previously unemployed.

The <u>Living Knowledge Network</u> was launched by the Library and its partners in 2019 as a UK wide partnership of over 30 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.

A record 80 partner libraries participated in a shared exhibition linked to the Library's <u>Fantasy: Realms of Imagination show</u> in St Pancras, reaching over 750,000 people across the UK. Each partner showcases a set of display panels produced by the Library, that are then brought to life with local and regional collection items, interpretation, and events programming. Examples included a 'FantasyCon' at Exeter Central Library, Dungeons and Dragons sessions at Sheerness Library, and a talk at the Royal Armouries in Leeds focusing on the region's film and television heritage. The programme also included around 90 live or archive streams of British Library events, to partner libraries.

The Library continues to work with Arts Council England and public library partners to develop the <u>LibraryOn</u> digital platform, to connect people with their public libraries. This includes piloting tools such as an interactive map of locally available services, engaging user-stories, increased integration across systems and a national marketing campaign to reach more people. During 2023/24 as part of the project the Library delivered two rounds of grants to local authorities. 81 services have received funding of around £1.6m to improve or innovate in local library online offers.

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