



Special Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date **Wednesday 20 December 2023**
Time **9.30 am**
Venue **Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham**

Business

Part A

**Items which are open to the Public and Press.
Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chair's
agreement and if registered to speak.**

1. Apologies
2. Substitute Members
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Any items from Co-opted Members or interested parties
5. Strategic Leisure Delivery Framework - Update
 - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth (Pages 3 - 46)
 - b) Presentation by the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism (Pages 47 - 58)
6. Library provision - Update
 - a) Report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth (Pages 59 - 174)
 - b) Presentation by the Head of Culture, Sport and Tourism/ Strategic Manager Culture (Pages 175 - 192)
7. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chair of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Helen Bradley

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall
Durham
12 December 2023

To: **The Members of the Environment and Sustainable
Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor B Coult (Chair)
Councillor J Elmer (Vice-Chair)

Councillors M Abley, E Adam, P Atkinson, L Brown, R Crute,
C Kay, C Lines, B McAloon, I McLean, D Nicholls, D Oliver,
J Purvis, A Reed, P Sexton, A Simpson, T Stubbs,
D Sutton-Lloyd, S Townsend and R Yorke

Co-opted Members

Mr T Cramond and Mr P Walton

Contact: Jill Hogg

Tel: 03000 269711

Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee



20 December 2023

Strategic Leisure Framework

Report of Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members with an overview of the Strategic Leisure Framework for the Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure (WS&L) section within Culture, Sport and Tourism.

Executive Summary

- 2 The evidence to support physical activity as a key component in achieving a good standard of both physical and mental health is overwhelming. Unfortunately, in modern society people are battling priorities that often don't include keeping active and there are no quick solutions to changing people's behaviour.
- 3 Some people face more challenges than others to include physical activity into their daily lives and although an average of 59% of adults in County Durham are active (150 mins per week), this increases to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreases to 49.5% in our most deprived areas *Sport England: Active Lives Survey 20/21*.
- 4 As the main provider of sport and leisure services across County Durham, the Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure (WS&L) section within Culture, Sport and Tourism has a huge part to play in supporting residents to become and remain physically active.
- 5 The service provides 14 indoor and one outdoor leisure facilities, a county wide community wellbeing programme, free digital support to be

active in the home and positive lifestyle messaging to encourage people to access the places and spaces that make it easier for them to be active and the reasons why it's important.

- 6 WS&L has reviewed our approach to ensure that we are maximising our resources, that we are having a positive impact on physical activity levels and that we are reaching those that are the most in need. This review has formed the basis of the Leisure Framework (Appendix2) which sets out the principles to support the people, places, systems, and enablers to improve the health of our communities. This framework will be part of the Culture, Sport & Leisure Service Plan 2024-2027, which is currently in the final stages of development. This will incorporate the cross-cutting wellbeing agenda within our Culture section through access to positive experiences such as drama, art, dance, and social activities in libraries.
- 7 The ways that we enjoy being active can be different for each of us and the leisure framework acknowledges this, ensuring that traditional organised sport and exercise is offered and encouraged, alongside informal recreational opportunities for people during their free time.
- 8 This embodies a cultural change within the WS&L service area which was perceived as a traditional sport and leisure provider that prioritised programmes for 'fit and healthy' people. The framework reflects a service commitment to support our residents throughout their life course, breaking down barriers and stigmas to reflect the importance of physical activity, and providing a service offer that is appropriate and accessible to everyone.
- 9 The framework also embraces a partnership approach to encompass the county's wider infrastructure to get people moving, linking initiatives with internal and external partners to maximise the impact of our facilities, and our natural assets within County Durhams unique landscape utilising our green and blue spaces.
- 10 In 2023 Culture, Sport & Tourism restructured and realigned resource within WS&T to ensure that we provide a leisure offer for all ages and ability levels, incorporating the health and wellbeing agenda into everyone's role to ensure that we act as service advocates and ambassadors for healthy lifestyles.
- 11 The framework will reflect a more targeted approach to our service provision to ensure that we are reaching those the most in need. Barriers to activity are complex and interrelated and our priority will be to focus on selected communities that experience the greatest disadvantage, and the groups of people who face the greatest barriers to being active (i.e., long-term conditions/disabilities, minority ethnic

groups, lower socio-economic status) *Sport England Active Lives Survey 21-22*.

- 12 WS&L has developed a framework rather than a strategy, as 'Moving Together' (Appendix 3) has recently been developed as the county wide Physical Activity Strategy aiming to tackle inactivity levels (agreed at the Health & Wellbeing Board 28 July 2023).
- 13 WS&L will be part of this whole systems approach to address inequalities, and to develop effective and sustainable solutions. This strategy sets out a social movement to get people moving and the leisure framework will be intrinsically linked to this network, identifying our role and responsibilities within this collective, complex and ever moving system.
- 14 The Moving Together partnership has identified four key priority action areas:
 - Children and Young People
 - Inclusive Communities
 - Active Environments
 - Health and Social Care settings
- 15 The Moving Together action plan (Appendix 4) has identified a number of short, medium and long-term priorities within these themes and WS&L will be represented on the working groups that will support this work. WS&L actions and team plans will sit alongside this to ensure that our service contributes to this bigger agenda, allocating resource where it is needed the most, and ensuring that we make improvements and changes as a partnership and not in isolation.
- 16 The WS&L team will provide a community-based staff resource that can be utilised by all Moving Together partners to increase their capacity work with communities to develop sustainable 'place based' solutions to get people moving.
- 17 WS&L facilities will be reinvented as 'physical activity hubs', centred at the heart of local communities breaking down perceptions of leisure centres by offering something for everyone. Individuals and communities are unique, as are the experiences and challenges that shape them and the facilities and programmes will be more focused on creating the right offer, the right environment, and upskilling our staff to support people to develop the motivation, confidence, knowledge, and capacity to move more.

- 18 This will be complimented by a community offer outside of the leisure centres, led by local people for local people, to utilise the spaces and places on their doorstep.
- 19 The 'Moving Together' strategy will launch in the new year, as will the first community pilot 'Moving Together in Peterlee' which will support local stakeholders, and residents to have their say and to drive forward positive lifestyle changes in the town. This is a two-year pilot funded by Sport England in partnership with WS&L and will hopefully lead to additional investment to develop similar approaches across the county.
- 20 WS&L offers walking, running, and cycling support to local communities to set up and safely run organised sessions. Going forward this will be the 'Active Environments' action group within Moving Together to raise the profile of the environmental and the health benefits of Active Travel and using our local landscape for recreational use. It will also ensure that WS&L continues to proactively support the use of our cycle paths, rights of way etc. in line with improvements and infrastructure investment.
- 21 WS&L is part of the County Durham Together Partnership, and the leisure framework is underpinned by the County Durham 'Approach to Wellbeing' to ensure that communities are involved in the decisions that affect them. This also ensures that our agenda to improve access to inclusive opportunities to be active, is linked to the work streams that are working alongside local communities to improve engagement, resilience, housing, poverty and place, which are all potential barriers to participation.
- 22 The framework also supports the County Durham Plan and all outcomes will be connected to the aspirations for:
- More and better jobs
 - People live long and independent lives
 - Connected communities
- (County Durham Vision 2035)*
- 23 The framework links to a number of additional strategies and policy strands that will bring together wider expertise to deliver real change to our local communities:
- Uniting the Movement - Sport England
 - UK Active
 - Get Active: A strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - Active Together

- Durham County Inclusive Economy Strategy
- Durham County Poverty Action Plan
- Northeast Active Travel Strategy
- Durham Strategic Walking & Cycling Delivery Plan
- Durham County Rights of Way Improvement Plan

24 The leisure framework will define our service and ensure that CS&T links with networks, partners, and communities to embed the value of our services into everyday lives, adapting our approach, and finding solutions to make it easier for those facing the greatest challenges.

Recommendations

25 Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment upon the information provided in the report.

Background

26 There is a huge disparity in the health and life expectancy of County Durham residents depending on where you live, those living in the most affluent parts of the county can expect to live around 8.5 years longer than those living in our most disadvantaged communities. 63,000 County Durham residents have a long-term condition or disability, and the average person in County Durham is expected to live in good health until they are 59 years old, 4 years less than the national average.

27 59% of adults in County Durham are active (150 mins per week). This increases to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreased to 49.5% in our most deprived areas, leaving a gap of 19% in activity levels.

28 36.9% of children and young people in County Durham are active (average of 60+ mins per day) *Academic year 21/22*. 31.7% are active for less than 30 minutes per day, this increases to 37% for children and young people living in our most deprived areas and decreases to 27.7% for those living in our least deprived areas.

Sport England: Active Lives Survey, Adult data and Children and Young People Activity Data, 2023

- 29 The Leisure framework (Appendix 2) is therefore focused on a more targeted approach to our service provision to ensure that we are reaching those the most in need. Barriers to activity are complex and interrelated and our priority will be to focus on selected communities that experience the greatest disadvantage, and the groups of people who face the greatest barriers to being active.
- 30 CS&T has developed a framework rather than a service strategy, as 'Moving Together' (Appendix 3) has recently been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, as the county wide strategy aiming to tackle inactivity levels. WS&L will be part of this whole systems approach to address inequalities, and to develop effective and sustainable solutions. The Moving Together strategy sets out a social movement to get people moving and the leisure framework will be intrinsically linked to this network, identifying WS&L roles and responsibilities within this collective, complex and ever moving system.
- 31 Moving Together has identified four key priority action areas:
- Children and Young People
 - Inclusive Communities
 - Active Environments
 - Health and Social Care settings
- 32 The partnership has developed an action plan (Appendix 4) and WS&L is represented on the working groups that will support these priority themes. This work will begin in January 2024 and will determine the WS&L actions to ensure that our service contributes to this bigger agenda, allocating resource where it is needed, and ensuring that we make improvements and changes as a partnership and not in isolation.
- 33 The WS&L team will also be better placed to develop programmes and good practice, adapting a more localised and targeted approach to our service delivery to potentially have a much greater impact. Current programmes that are already integrated into the Moving Together actions, led by WS&T are:

Children and Young People

- ❖ 'Ready Sett Go' offered to all Early Years providers in the county by the WS&L Community wellbeing team to develop physical literacy.
- ❖ 'Fun and Food' providing free holiday activities, funded by the Department of Education, WS&L offers activities to all children and young people within the leisure centres. This will be linked to more innovative long-term approaches to support families on low incomes.

- ❖ Play areas introduced as part of leisure transformation to support a fun, informal, recreational way to get your child, teenager or your family moving together. This will be linked to family hubs, public transport partners, Thrive Kitchen to offer a healthy family food offer.

Inclusive Communities

- ❖ Moving Together in Peterlee will launch in January 24, a place based pilot under the umbrella of Moving Together to support local stakeholders, and residents to have their say and to drive forward positive lifestyle changes in the town. This is a two-year pilot funded by Sport England in partnership with WS&L and will hopefully lead to additional investment to develop similar approaches across the county.
- ❖ A new recognition from partners that leisure centres are a valuable and underutilised asset will help us to increase inclusive participation and engagement.

Active Environments

- ❖ The Rights of Way Improvement Plan (currently out to consultation) covers Empowering Communities to 'own' their Public Right of Way Network. This is linked with the WS&L community wellbeing resource to raise awareness and maximise the local environment that supports physical activity.
- ❖ WS&L is intrinsically linked to the Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan 2019-2029 to make cycling and walking part of Durham's culture and to make them safe, affordable, enjoyable, everyday modes of transport.
- ❖ WS&L works closely with the Sustainable Transport team on the 'Borrow a Bike' scheme in local communities and this area of joint working has huge potential to impact communities.

Health and Social Care settings

- ❖ WS&L will continue our tested pilot 'We are Undefeatable' which was part of a national programme to support people with long term health conditions, increasing knowledge and confidence of individuals and professionals to remain active.
- ❖ The 'Move hub' offers a dedicated gym with power assisted equipment (pilots at Abbey in 2023 and Louisa and Teasdale in

2024), introductory level classes, low level team games (walking netball, football etc.) and a 1:1 advice and support programme at all facilities. This scheme will have the biggest impact to reach those that will benefit the most with the support of our NHS, health and social care providers.

- 34 County Durham has a number of purpose built and natural assets which can support the framework. WS&L manages 14 leisure centres, one outdoor sports facility, and develops programmes across a range of parks, open spaces, football and multi-use pitches. Moving Together will bring wider partners that manage parks, community venues, and countryside and coastal spaces around this shared agenda, which should have a massive impact on the usage figures and support potential investment and the long-term future of these assets.
- 35 CS&T leisure facilities will be reinvented as physical activity hubs, centred at the heart of local communities offering 'something for everyone'. Individuals and communities are unique, as are the experiences and challenges that shape them and the service will be more focused on creating the right offer, the right environment, and upskilling our staff to support people to develop the motivation, confidence, knowledge, and capacity to move more.
- 36 The leisure framework covers the following priorities that will make our outcomes deliverable:
- **People** - Support and develop physical activity programmes led by local people for local people. CS&T to act as physical activity ambassadors to inspire and support every person to move more.
 - **Places** - Providing a high quality and safe physical environment, integrating the wellbeing approach with mainstream leisure and sport provision. Maximizing the places and spaces that make it easier for people to be active.
 - **Society** - Using local champions to raise the importance and the profile of physical activity towards achieving a healthy lifestyle. Supporting those who are the least active through targeted interventions.
 - **Enablers** - Develop a suitably trained workforce. Use insight to understand local needs, making improvements by learning and adapting what we do. Providing a robust Marcoms plan to reach and engage people in a more innovative way.
 - **Systems** - Working with networks, partners, and communities to embed physical activity into everyday lives. Removing barriers and

finding solutions to make it easier for those facing the greatest challenges.

- 37 Any movement contributes to a healthier life and being physically active is easier for some people than it is for others. WS&L wants to contribute to changing this, connecting with Moving Together to give priority to our most vulnerable groups, geographical areas of social and health deprivation and to remove barriers for those facing the greatest challenges.

Contact:

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None.

Finance

None.

Consultation

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Human Rights

None.

Climate Change

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

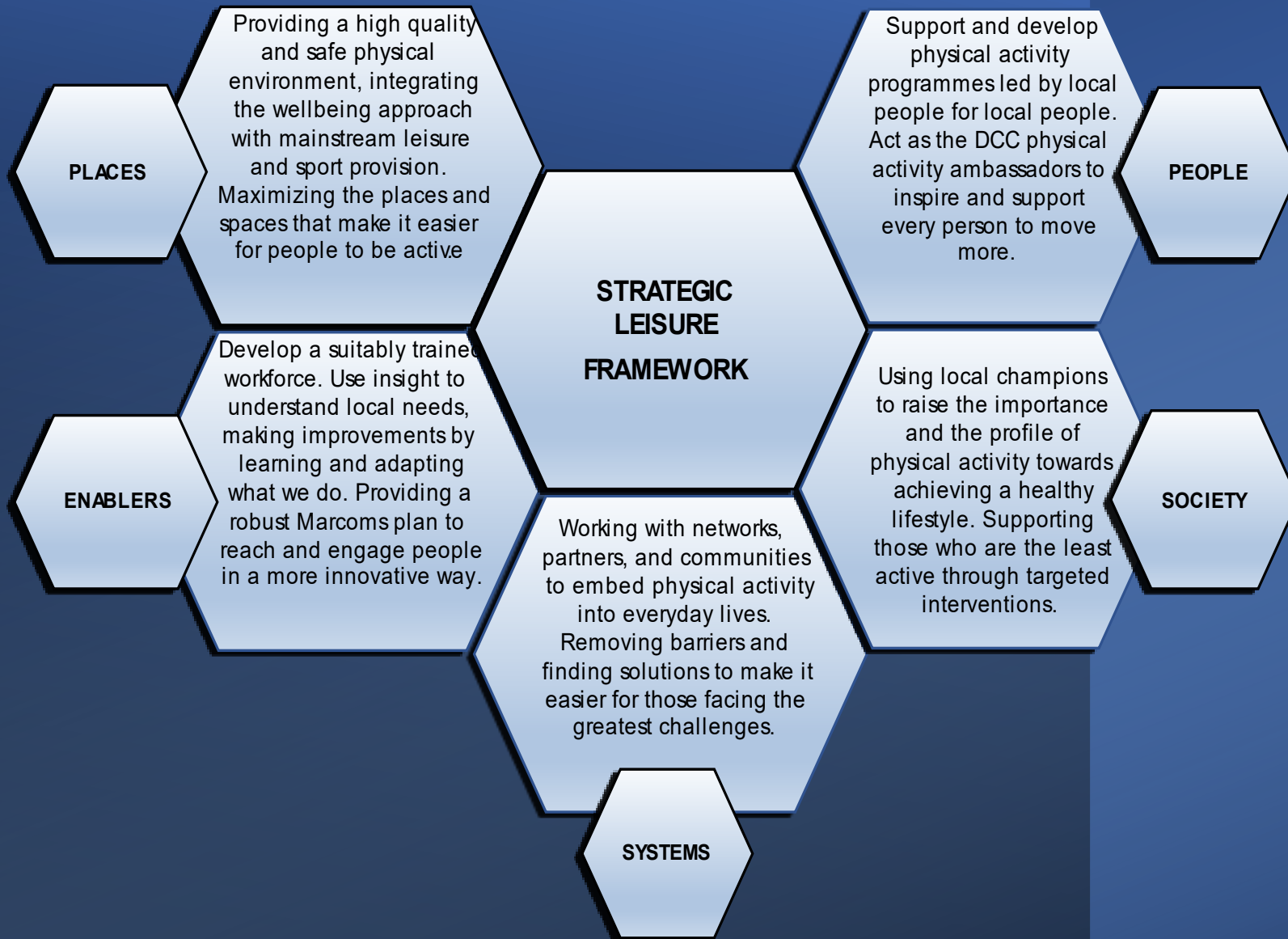
None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.



**Appendix 3 - Moving Together in County Durham Strategy
Accessible** *(Under separate cover)*

Appendix 4 -- Moving Together in County Durham Action Plan –
(Under separate cover)

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Moving Together

in County Durham



Our Physical Activity Strategy 2023–28





Acknowledgements

Moving Together in County Durham has been developed in close collaboration between:

Public Health Team, Durham County Council

County Durham Sport

Wellbeing, Sport and Leisure Service, Durham County Council

The strategy and its action plan could not have been produced without valuable contributions made by the people and communities in County Durham, as well as many local stakeholders from a range of public, private and community sector organisations including:

County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

North East and North Cumbria ICS

Durham University

Youth Voice Durham

The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, North East

Association of Directors of Public Health North East Sector Led Improvement

Wellbeing for Life

County Durham Area Action Partnerships

Investing in Children

Food Durham

Sport England

Age UK County Durham

We Are Undefeatable

County Durham Housing Associations

VCS Alliance

Durham Community Action

Living Streets

OASES

There are many other members of our developing Moving Together Champions Network whose insight and perspectives have been crucial to this strategy's development.

Thank you to the students at East Durham College for their hard work and creativity in designing the 'Moving Together in County Durham' logo that is displayed throughout the strategy and associated documents.

Forewords

Welcome to 'Moving Together in County Durham' – our strategy to develop and promote a culture of moving for all who live, work, study in and visit County Durham.

Regular activity is not just about physical fitness, it also includes a wide range of benefits that extend to our general wellbeing. Increased activity not only reduces the risk of many physical health conditions, but it also helps to boost self-esteem, reduce stress, and increase energy. It is also a great way to meet other people and bring communities together.

Furthermore, we must not forget the beneficial effect that moving more can have on our environment. Durham County Council is now in the second phase of its Climate Emergency Response Plan, which is committed to reaching Net Zero by 2030. One of this strategy's priority action areas is active travel, which can make a significant positive impact on carbon emissions.

We have a lot to be proud of in County Durham. Our history, landscapes, scenery, people, and sense of community make this a really unique place. Whether visiting our countryside, dales, coastlines, or parks, there is a tonne of opportunity to get together with family, friends, and neighbours to reap the benefits of moving more outdoors.

Whilst many people across our county live active lives, engaging in physical activity is more difficult for some people than others. A key objective of this strategy is to ensure that everyone has a chance to move more, and that we are all motivated to do so, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, social situation, or health status.

A central theme of this strategy is 'working together;' calling for collaboration and collective action to effect real change. Many of you have told us how we can work towards an inclusive, active County Durham, and you have taken time to tell us how we can best achieve this goal. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude for your contribution to this important work.

My call to action is that we let this strategy serve as a catalyst for change. That we recognise the role we can play in making County Durham a place where everyone is empowered to build more movement into their daily lives. I call on communities and organisations across the county to become Moving Together Champions – to join our movement to build activity into our day-to-day lives.

Let's get together to make County Durham a place that thrives on moving more for healthier and happier lives!

**Councillor Chris Hood,
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult & Health Services,
Durham County Council.**



Councillor Chris Hood,
Cabinet Portfolio Holder for
Adult & Health Services,
Durham County Council.



Working collaboratively to change the range of environmental and social factors that stifle the development of a healthy and active nation runs through all our partnerships in County Durham. However, as a County, we face persistently stubborn health inequalities. This new strategy offers us the chance to have a greater impact by challenging our principles and approaches to physical activity policy making - by seeing it as a part of everyone's agenda and not only about attracting more people into existing sport and leisure opportunities.

The innovation that can come from such an integrated partnership approach offers us all an exciting opportunity to explore what works and to learn from communities about how local resources can be better utilised to support improved health and wellbeing.

Whilst we are all aware that eating well, socialising and exercising are helpful to improved health, Moving Together is not simply about individual responsibility and behaviour change. It is a recognition that housing, green spaces, poverty and the availability of good quality food, social connections and accessible opportunities for leisure all play their part. This strategy encourages a collective commitment from communities, professionals and policy-makers to work together to change the way things are done; ensuring that the different parts of the system work in harmony to make moving an easy choice.

By being open to new ways of working, listening to communities and by tackling obstacles to a healthy and active life in a holistic way, we can ensure that everyone in County Durham can find physical activity opportunities that are fun, free, friendly and close to their neighbourhoods- supporting their ambitions for a healthy lifestyle.

As the local Active Partnership (supported by Sport England to tackle inequalities in sport and physical activity), County Durham Sport looks forward to the opportunities for learning and improvement that this strategy offers us.

**Maxine Rhodes,
Managing Director, County Durham Sport.**



Dr Maxine Rhodes,
Managing Director,
County Durham Sport.



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Introduction

We call our strategy 'Moving Together in County Durham' to show that every way we move counts towards our physical and mental health and wellbeing. Whether by walking, wheeling, or cycling to the shops, doing domestic chores, gardening, walking by the sea, playing in the park or playing football, it is all movement that contributes to a healthier life.

Daily activity can help us feel good in many ways, and now more than ever we see the importance of moving more each day. Findings from the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, showed us that physical activity is not only important for wellbeing but can lower the risk of ill health, and support recovery from illness.

So many people in County Durham are already active. In 2021/22, around 60% (260,200) of adults across the county were active for at least 150 minutes each week (Active Lives Survey 2022, Sport England). It remains, however, that some people face more challenges than others to include physical activity into their daily lives. The ways we enjoy moving can be different for each of us; whether participating in chair exercises, taking gentle steps, enjoying walking programmes, accessing gym facilities, engaging in competitive sports or meeting with friends and taking activity in the open air. We want these opportunities to be accessible to all.

County Durham is a great place to be active! Communities across the county have many assets that help us to be physically active, including green and blue spaces, clubs, and walking and cycling routes, as well as a wide range of local leisure centres, sports clubs, and organised activities. Our communities and visitors enjoy our unique countryside and coastal landscapes, and benefit from them when undertaking a range of outdoor active pursuits. Moving Together in County Durham will show how we can work together to ensure that we can all make the most of what the county has to offer.

We all have a role to play!

We want County Durham to be a place where everyone who lives, works, studies, or visits can take the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of living an active life. We also want to ensure that those who are least likely to be physically active are supported to move more.

No one organisation in County Durham can achieve this strategy alone, so this work is a partnership approach which places our people and communities at its heart. It is underpinned by the [County Durham Approach to Wellbeing](#); involving communities in decisions that affect them, to ensure that people of all ages across County Durham are motivated to move more, and have access to inclusive opportunities to be more active.

“ I'm now steadier walking and have more stamina, this is all thanks to the Gentle Walks programme. ”

Gordon Ridpath, Member of Gentle Walks



Note

For the purposes of this strategy, activity or movement are used to refer to all kinds of physical activity, including active living (e.g., stair climbing, walking, and wheeling), sport, planned structured exercise and informal, incidental activity.

The word 'system' is used to refer to the many people, organisations and factors which influence physical activity and is defined in the strategy. The ['Building blocks of good health'](#) show how many factors impact on our ability to be active in our daily lives.

Our vision, mission, and core principles

Our Vision:

County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier, and happier lives.



Our Mission:

Bringing people and organisations together with a shared purpose of helping everyone in County Durham.

- **County Durham is a wonderful place to live with unique beauty**, but many of us are not active enough for good health
- **Building activity into all parts of our lives** will help us connect with our communities to be healthier, happier, and stronger



Community

The heart of 'Moving Together'
People and places are our greatest power



Collaborate

We are stronger together
Every individual, community and organisation sharing the vision



Engage

Thinking big together
Creatively engaging and joining people together at every place and level



Focus

Creating equal chance together
Together removing challenges to make sure everyone has an equal chance to have better health



Celebrate

Recognising success together
Sharing and nurturing our community's success across the County



Learn

Changing and learning together
Listening and adapting to the needs of all our people and communities

You can read more detail about our core principles in Appendix One.

Moving Together to reduce health inequalities



Fairness for all

Our health (and our healthy life expectancy) can be determined by the circumstances in which we are born, where we grow up, our education, and our work. Any unfair or avoidable differences in health across our populations, and between different groups are known as 'health inequalities' or 'health disparities.'

We all have a right to live long, healthy, happy, and productive lives; however, there are some significant gaps in the number of years some of us will live compared to others. Those living in the most affluent parts of the county can expect to live around 8.5 years longer than those living in our most disadvantaged communities. There is also inequality in how healthy those years will be. For example, men and women born in County Durham can expect to live in good health for about 4 years less than the England average.

Whilst our behaviours, such as what we eat, how often we are physically active, and whether we smoke, all have a huge effect on our state of health and wellbeing, achieving and maintaining a healthy lifestyle can be challenging for many within our population. We know that there are many positive health benefits associated with moving more and being physically active; however, many people do not meet national [physical activity guidelines.pdf](#).

Being physically active will be easier for some people than it is for others, and we want to change this. Everyone in County Durham should be able to be more active, and we want to ensure that our homes, communities (including our community assets), schools, colleges, and workplaces help everyone to move more.

The Sport England Active Lives Survey (Nov 2021-22) shows there are differences in individual's physical activity levels from different groups (i.e., long-term conditions/disabilities, Black, Asian, minority ethnic groups, socio-economic status).



% population inactive (less than 30 mins per day) by other inequalities: Nov 2021 – 22

| Characteristic | Least deprived (IMD* 1-3) | Most deprived (IMD 8-10) |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Socioeconomic group | 20.5 | 38.9 |
| Disability/long-term condition | 36.8 | 47.1 |
| Asian (excluding Chinese) | 23.0 | 38.4 |
| Black | 28.7 | 34.3 |
| Chinese | 26.9 | 27.1 |
| Mixed | 16.3 | 23.1 |
| Other ethnic group | 26.3 | 40.2 |
| White (British) | 20.2 | 32.9 |
| White (Other) | 19.1 | 27.0 |
| Higher education | 15.2 | 22.5 |
| No qualifications | 44.6 | 57.8 |
| Employed | 15.9 | 27.7 |
| Unemployed | 28.2 | 41.9 |
| Long term sickness | 52.1 | 62.0 |

*Indices of multiple deprivation

Around 63,000 County Durham residents have a long-term condition or disability, and the average person in County Durham is expected to live in good health until they are 59 years old. Increasing movement can help people live healthier for longer, so a key objective of this strategy is to ensure that everyone is afforded the opportunity to move more in their everyday lives.

Every minute of movement counts towards better health. Whilst many of our residents incorporate some physical activity into their days, nearly a third are active for less than 5 minutes per day. This can be seen in the table below which shows the difference in inactivity levels according to age and socioeconomic status:

% population Inactive (less than 20 mins per day) by age: Nov 2021 – 22 (Sport England Active Lives)

| Age group | Least deprived (IMD 1-3) | Most deprived (IMD 8-10w) |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 5-15 | 27.2 | 34.2 |
| 16-34 | 14.7 | 27.3 |
| 35-54 | 15.3 | 33.0 |
| 55-74 | 20.0 | 38.3 |
| 75+ | 42.0 | 57.0 |

Opportunities for physical activity must be fair and accessible to all, giving everyone an equal chance to be active.

This strategy recognises that this not solely a result of individual choice. Moving Together in County Durham is a framework for partnerships to give priority to our most vulnerable groups. Striving to remove barriers to moving more and making it easier for those facing the greatest challenges to improve activity levels and contribute to improved mental and physical health and wellbeing. Through this approach, together we will reduce inequalities.

Physical activity is about more than just health, it should be fun, enjoyable, and help bring people and communities together. We understand the positive impact that can be achieved by helping everyone to be more active, and we are working together to help build active communities by promoting the benefits of moving more, and constantly striving to remove any barriers to participation at all levels.

Increased activity levels for our most disadvantaged people can not only contribute to reducing inequalities in healthy life years, but it can also improve general wellbeing and contribute to work readiness and increased productivity in the workplace. We will consider how this can be achieved in our ‘priority action areas’ later in this strategy.

“ Being active has many benefits not only physically, but mentally. Having a strategy like Moving Together ensures structure and outlines what should or will happen to have a definite impact.

Moving Together isn’t just for sporty people, it’s for everyone and aims to fight the stigma stopping everyone from exercise, – allowing us to move together. ”

Durham Youth Council



We are County Durham

County Durham is one of the biggest counties in England, with a diverse geography comprising many locations in which we can reap the benefits of outdoor activity. Indeed, our county attracts many visitors for this purpose. We are well known for our natural assets, including stunning [countryside and landscapes](#), hills, dales, rivers, waterfalls and coastline. These are such an important part of our current and future physical activity environment. Our public rights of way span around 3,500km, we have three country parks, 25 nature reserves, 150 miles of accessible railway paths, and 285 square miles of accessible green space.

Where we live:

- 14,565 businesses
- 12 green flags for parks and open spaces
- 2 in 5 residents living in rural areas
- 12 miles of coastline
- 150 miles of former railway path
- Durham world heritage site

Our Services:

- 223 early years and primary schools, 31 secondary schools, 4 colleges
- 9 enhanced mainstream schools and 11 special schools
- 1 university
- 15 council owned leisure centres
- 63 GP practices
- 124 pharmacies

Our Communities supporting each other:

- 411 sports clubs accessing support
- 59 active community champions
- Around 115 active volunteer leaders in walking, running and cycling
- 600 people attending sessions ran by the Cree* network last year
- Over 3,000 Voluntary and Community Sector organisations

*A Cree is County Durham's version of Australia's Men's Shed. Crees aim to engage with those at risk of suicide by tackling social isolation and self-harm through skill-sharing and informal learning to promote social interaction. Although Crees were originally aimed at men, some have developed for women and young people.

Spending time outdoors in our parks, woodlands or on the coast can improve our wellbeing, and it is recognised that 'green environments' are linked to reduced levels of depression, anxiety and enhanced energy and quality of life at all ages. Those who access outdoor leisure activities regularly benefit from reduced blood pressure, less chance of heart disease and are more likely to maintain healthier weight (Green space review OHID, 2020). Here in County Durham, we have many opportunities for such outdoor activities on our doorstep!

There is an abundance of evidence to support the role of such natural assets to increase activity levels, improve our physical health and wellbeing, and increase social connections.

Walking is the most popular activity in County Durham. In 2020/21, the average adult spent 249 minutes walking for leisure or travel per week.

Source: Sport England Active Lives Adult Survey 2020/21

How active are we?

Physical activity can hold different meanings for different people, based on their individual circumstances, goals and preferences. For example, many may engage in physical activity for health and fitness reasons, whilst others may be motivated by recreation and enjoyment of the outdoors. Some may exercise as a form of stress relief, whilst others might use activities as an opportunity for social interaction and connection.

It is important to realise that any amount of movement is better than none, and of course, more is better! We will look at this later in this strategy.

What do we know about physical activity levels in County Durham?*

Active (adults) at least 150 minutes a week

- 59% met this minimum guideline
- This increased to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreased to 49.5% in our most deprived areas
- Gap of almost 20% between least and most deprived areas of County Durham

Inactive (adults) less than 30 mins per week

- 30.8% were inactive
- This increased to 38.9% in our most deprived areas and decreased to 20.5% in our least deprived areas
- Gap of just over 18% between our most and least deprived areas.

Active (children and young people) on average 60+ mins per day

- 36.9% of children and young people met this minimum guideline
- Academic year 21/22

Active (children and young people) on average less than 30 mins per day

- 31.7% are active for less than 30 minutes per day
- This increases to 37% for those children and young people living in our most deprived areas and decreases to 27.7% for those living in our least deprived areas.
- Academic year 21/22

Opportunity (adults Nov 20/21)

- In County Durham, around 73% of people either agreed or strongly agreed with the assertion that they had the opportunity to be physically active.
- This dropped to 68.5% for those living in our most deprived areas and increased to 83.4% of those living in our least deprived areas.

*Sport England: Active Lives Survey, Adult data and Children and Young People Activity Data, 2023.



Why moving matters?

Some is good, more is better!

Being active has so many benefits to our health and our environment. Moving, physical activity and sport can change lives, not only by supporting good physical health, but also by making us feel happier, helping us to be more productive in our personal and working lives, and even by improving quality of sleep.

Around 8.5% of those living in County Durham have a diabetes diagnosis, whilst 17.2% live with high blood pressure. Furthermore, 15% of the population have heart disease, whilst 2.4% have suffered a stroke event. Moving more can reduce the risk associated with many of these conditions, and where there are opportunities for all groups to move together, communities can thrive, and this brings many benefits. Moving with others, for example, can prevent social isolation, which in turn can reduce the risk of both cardiovascular disease and dementia.

Moderate or strong evidence for health benefit

The infographic is divided into three vertical panels, each with a colored background and a list of health benefits. The 'Children' panel (light blue) lists: Bone health, Cognitive function, Cardiovascular fitness, Weight status, and good mental health. The 'Adults' panel (light green) lists: All-cause mortality, Stroke and heart disease, Hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, 8 cancers, Improved mental health, Cognitive function, Dementia, Quality of life, Sleep, and Weight status. The 'Older Adults' panel (light blue) lists: Falls, Frailty, Physical function, and Social isolation. Illustrations of people in various active poses (running, jumping, swimming, meditating) are placed around the text.

| Children | Adults | Older Adults |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Bone health | All-cause mortality | Falls |
| Cognitive function | Stroke and heart disease | Frailty |
| Cardiovascular fitness | Hypertension | Physical function |
| Weight status | Type 2 diabetes | Social isolation |
| good mental health | 8 cancers | |
| | Improved mental health | |
| | Cognitive function | |
| | Dementia | |
| | Quality of life | |
| | Sleep | |
| | Weight status | |

Movement is good for all, and we know that some of the greatest benefits will be achieved by supporting those who are currently inactive. Regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, economic status or ability, we want all residents of County Durham to have accessible, safe, and convenient choices to help them move more. This strategy supports everyone to be active, whilst recognising that some barriers to increased activity may not be within an individual's own control.

While there are [recommended levels of physical activity for adults and children](#), even 5-10 minutes of movement at a time can be effective as a long-term goal for people starting from low levels of movement. In today's society, where people's lives are busy with many competing priorities, even small amounts or bursts of movement throughout the day will be of benefit. For example, taking the stairs instead of the lift or walking to the local shop instead of driving.

Our communities are at the heart of Moving Together

Benefits for the whole community

Walking, cycling, group activities, sport and play bring a whole host of benefits to our communities (OHID, 2020).



Physical wellbeing

- Longer and healthier life years



Mental wellbeing

- Feel good
- Helps memory and long term mental health



Individual development

- School readiness
- Productivity and independence



Social

- Better quality of life
- Sense of belonging and togetherness
- Road safety
- Reduced loneliness



Economic

- Improved employment
- Community
- Wealth building
- Work productivity
- Reduced sickness absence



Environment

- Cleaner air
- Suitable travel and places
- Reduced CO2 emissions
- Healthier environment

Our people and communities are County Durham's biggest assets. We have worked together to understand and recognise diverse needs, and to identify those local assets that help people to be more active. We will continue to ensure that local environments support people to move more – whether that is where they live, work or play - as well as by supporting communities to become more connected to better enable this to happen. We call this a 'whole systems approach' and will consider this in more detail later.

'The more an environment consistently promotes healthy behaviour, the greater the likelihood that such behaviour will be adopted and continue'

World Obesity Federation

We have used local data, insight from our communities, and evidence-based approaches will help us to focus our efforts on those with greatest need - supporting those who move least to move more. Building on consultation and co-production of this strategy, we will expand on the good work already taking place across our communities to encourage people to become more active.

Making it easier to be active every day and achieve healthy weight is everyone's business, which can be better achieved by making changes together. Local businesses, Health and Social Care organisations, education providers, early years settings, children services, VCS organisations, libraries, employment services and programmes, can all make positive change.



Moving Together with a purpose

This strategy sets out a vision and mission that encourages everyone to join a movement and make a change. It is not simply a list of actions, because we recognise it is time to think differently and listen to the changing needs of our communities. Those actions needed to achieve our goals are driven with, and by, our residents and communities, and this strategy highlights how we can and will make change together.

Moving Together is everyone's business

Engaging leadership across the system is important to the success of the Moving Together vision. A key focus of this strategy is to collaborate with partners in all sectors who support people to live healthier lives, whether that is in workplaces, schools, play, or community support groups. Our aim is to ensure all partners are equipped to help those they work with to move more.

“ Blue Gym is an activity programme designed to get participants active in blue space to benefit their physical and mental health. Being in coastal and river environments offers the opportunity to reduce the amount of ‘noise’ in people’s minds and focus on the environment around them rather than their own problems ”

Sarah Campbell,
Community and Volunteer Manager,
National Trust



Healthy weight for all

We know obesity cuts lives short and contributes to many conditions including type 2 diabetes, depression, anxiety, and cancer. Having excessive body fat not only increases disease risk, but can also impact on mobility, work productivity, social engagement, the enjoyment of healthy relationships.

In County Durham 24% of reception age children, and 40% of children in Year 6 are living with overweight including obesity. Among adults, this figure increases to 71%. (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022).

It is important to understand that our surroundings have a huge impact on our ability to achieve and maintain a healthy weight, and it can be misleading to believe that obesity is an individual problem, as more than one hundred factors contribute to a person having obesity (Lawrence et al 2022). Willpower and people have not changed, but our environments, the systems we live in have. For example, fewer of us are active at work, as technology encourages us to sit for longer periods. It can be easier to rely on the car for short journeys or take the lift rather than the stairs. This is why we must continue to work together to ensure that where possible, our physical environment shapes our individual behaviours – maximising all opportunities to increase activity levels and levels of healthy weight.



“ We build and nurture our physical literacy throughout our lives, forming our initial love of movement in the early years and through our school life. It is important that we know and understand the barriers that increase disengagement, reduce motivation, and prevent our children and young people from accessing movement. Where we can reduce barriers and improve inclusive opportunity we can build and empower individuals to self-select to be active, however that may look. Every movement counts!

From parents, school leaders and business managers, to politicians and policy makers, every stakeholder can contribute to the societal shift overall and a journey to reducing sedentary behaviour. ”

Kate Stephenson

Education Durham, Education Advisor and Specialist Physical Education,
School Sport and Physical Activity Advisor



Supporting change through a whole systems approach

Opportunities to move during the course of our daily lives have changed a lot in the past few decades. Compared to times when people walked and cycled to their workplaces or school, we now see more reliance upon cars and personal transport. Rapid developments in digital technology mean that we can now buy almost anything online and have it delivered to our homes. More people now work from home, so it seems more challenging than ever before to make movement part of our daily lives.

This means that is now more important than ever to look at how we can work together as a system to make it easier to build more physical activity into our daily lives.



Our system is built upon relationships between our people, our communities, our organisations, and our infrastructure. We live and work in communities that are rich with assets and resources, and by working together we can all use these to develop effective solutions to improve our health and wellbeing and make moving more a part of our lives.



How we will work together to achieve our goals

We have collaborated with local people, communities, and a range of organisations in County Durham about how we can improve opportunities to increase movement and physical activity in County Durham. Feedback has helped us to produce a framework that shows how we will work together to achieve our goals.

Moving Together Framework for Change

Vision

County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier and happier lives

Our core principles



Our priority action areas



Focus on 'the asks'

1. Create accessible, enjoyable, and inclusive opportunities for play, recreation, and physical activity for children and young people at home, school, and community settings.
2. Build a 'Moving Together in County Durham' culture that increases opportunities for everyone to move more and ensure the benefits of physical activity are promoted across all settings.
3. Increase accessibility to active travel for all who live, work/study in, and visit County Durham, and ensure active principles are considered in all local policies concerning the built and natural environment

Our framework for change is informed by the Moving Together vision and mission. It is based upon what you have told us is important, and how we should focus our joint resources to effect the biggest change.

Moving Together Champions

We cannot do this alone! We are creating our goals with the help of Moving Together Champions who represent our local communities, and a wide range of County Durham organisations who are invested in combatting inactivity and promoting the benefits of moving more. These include education, health and social care providers, a range of voluntary and community sector organisations, as well as those from our local institutions of further and higher educations.

A Moving Together Champion is a person, community, group, business, or organisation who is committed to supporting those they can influence to move more each day. They:

- Understand the importance of being more active to improve health outcomes of all those who they may influence
- Take specific actions to embed the 'Moving Together' core principles into their everyday practices
- Promote the benefits of being active, by sharing consistent messages to all who will benefit, with a particular focus on those who face biggest challenges to move more

Champions will share resources and insight, promoting good practice and celebrating success as the movement develops. As the network grows, so will our progress towards a healthier and more active County Durham.

“ *OASES (Outdoor and Sustainability Education Specialists) is a charity based in Esh Winning that works with young people, schools and families to support global sustainability and outdoor learning, encouraging young people to get outside, get active and enjoy nature in their local environment. We are consequently delighted to be part of Moving Together, and we offer lots of programmes that will support this agenda, from family gardening to orienteering, Forest schools to Active Learning.* **”**

Joanne Appleby,
OASES CEO



Growing



Active Learning



Orienteering

Our priority action areas

Local people, organisations and physical activity stakeholders gave their views through a variety of consultations, surveys, roundtables, and focus groups, and identified the following priority areas for action:

- Children and young people
- Inclusive communities
- Active environments
- Health and social care settings

You will find more detail on each group in our action plan, including our ambitions and key priorities.

How do we know we have made a difference?

Measuring outcomes in systems and behaviour change can be challenging; however, County Durham has very well-established collaborations that are well placed to ascertain and monitor system connectivity, growth in our common purpose, and achievement of our joint Moving Together ambitions.

Local consultation has informed our action plan. As well as measuring quantitative performance through national indicators and datasets (Sport England Active Lives, Office for Health Improvement and Disparities Public Health Outcomes Frameworks), local stakeholders will monitor cultural and systems change through existing and developing networks such as the Physical Activity Strategy Committee, the Healthy Weight Alliance, the County Durham Children and Young People's Partnership, the Early Years Framework, the Active Environments Partnership, the County Durham Care Partnership, as well as through other health improvement initiatives that are focussed on improving levels of physical activity and healthy weight.

Data and information will be reported on an annual basis through the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board.

What can we do?

The strategy encourages individuals, organisations, community groups, clubs, and wider partners to collaborate by creating a plan that will help more people in County Durham to be active. This is why we have developed some key core principles to help focus and support individual and organisational action.

We have also identified key priority areas that, as a network, we will focus upon. They have been informed by local evidence and feedback from partners from across the system. These priority areas will help our key partners to coordinate and align approaches towards helping people to move more.

Making it easier to be active every day and achieve healthy weight is your business, our business, and everyone's business, and this can be better achieved by making changes together!

We can all work to make County Durham a place where there are lots of opportunities to move more. Our people, our communities, our local businesses, our health and social care providers, our education providers, our VCS organisations – indeed, any organisation in County Durham - can all make positive changes to help us move together!

Our core principles



Community



Collaborate



Engage



Focus



Celebrate



Learn

Community

Our people and communities are County Durham's biggest asset. We will collaborate with communities to support and empower our most disadvantaged and vulnerable, helping them to live healthier, longer, more active lives. We will help people develop the motivation, confidence, knowledge, and capacity to move more, and explore why regular movement is important.

Working with our communities is a central driver to the success of the strategy. What drives this work is building on community strengths and empowering people to understand what matters to them in the context of increasing activity levels. Communities have been involved in developing the principles of the strategy through consultation, and we have co-produced an action plan to agree how change will be achieved.

The key is a bottom-up approach with the emphasis on 'people, organisations, community groups, and clubs working together.' Close work and engagement with local communities will add to our existing knowledge, so that we can develop new insight on the issues and barriers people face in relation to moving more. We will co-produce solutions with local people and partners so that we can create meaningful ways to help people move more and increase their activity levels.

Sport England's Sport Outcomes Evidence Review (2017) demonstrated the impact of building stronger communities by bringing people from diverse backgrounds together via participating, volunteering and spectating, improving community links, levels of cohesion, and social capital. Improving residents' sense of belonging, increasing levels of social trust, and feeling more connected to neighbourhoods and communities are also recognised as key factors in building a strong sense of community.

Collaborate

Key to creating system change is a focus on people and local communities, supported by close collaboration and shared decision-making with County Durham organisations.

County Durham will adopt and continually develop a whole systems approach to increasing movement and physical activity. This will help our people and communities work with local organisations to better understand their needs and ideas, help identify where the need is greatest, identify opportunities for change that will support regular movement, and build upon the existing vibrant physical activity culture across the county.

The strategy encourages partners from all sectors to work as a network, so that they can use their experience and expertise to make progress and achieve long-term, positive, and sustainable change.

This strategy will encourage people of all ages to move more. This 'life course approach' acknowledges that people have different levels of movement throughout different stages of their lives, and that these stages can be influenced by many internal and external factors. We want to collaborate with partners, communities, and organisations to help people overcome any such barriers and make positive lifestyle changes.

Engage

There is no single answer or solution to help all ages move more across County Durham. In order to increase movement and promote physical activity, partners need a shared sense of purpose and an alignment of resources so they can work together.

There are many ways to become involved with the implementation of this strategy so that you can maximise its impact:

- Share it with the organisations, groups, clubs, and people you work or collaborate with
- Adopt and embrace its key principles
- Help others to move more. Ask someone else (a neighbour, family, colleague, friend, patient) what matters to them, how they would like to get moving more, and find out how you can best support them
- Be an advocate or role model for change – help to grow the momentum of this strategy and build regular movement into your day
- Consider how regular movement features into your organisation's policies, and put it on the agenda in your work or community
- Connect with partners – whether in person, virtually or through social media to access resources and share information



Focus

Encourage and support those within our communities who are least active to move more to help address the inequalities that currently exist

We know that life chances and health are determined by the conditions which a person is born, grows, lives, works, and ages. Social and physical environments are known to directly influence the opportunity to move more and do more physical activity, so we need to work together to reduce barriers to active lifestyles.

Safe transport environments, for example, influence how children integrate walking and cycling into their daily routines, and enable older aged adults to maintain their autonomy. So, without such systems, the opportunity for active travel could be much more limited.

Although everyone, regardless of age, gender, language, ethnicity, economic status, or ability, should have accessible, safe, convenient opportunities to be active we know this isn't always the case. We will focus efforts where the need is greatest to reduce those inequalities that impact upon activity and health. Our data tells us that some of our communities experience worse health outcomes than others and we want to support all residents to live more active, healthier lives.

Celebrate

Inspiring everyone in County Durham by sharing the passion, opportunities, and assets

We want this strategy to help identify and celebrate progress and success and inspire others to join in and take action. By being asset-focused we will acknowledge the different strengths and nurture movement leadership across the County

Learning

Using evidence supported by local conversations

Capturing what is working well across the county, and learning from elsewhere, is very important. We must focus on positive change – no matter how big or small, and always consider where such change is possible.

Creating long term change takes time. A combination of data (such as the number of people active) and local engagement will help us to measure the impact of this strategy. However, learning about the experiences of our people, and our network of partners, will also help us to monitor progress. A combination of data, case studies and practical examples from communities across the county will be key to continually improving and maximising our current physical activity opportunities.

This strategy will be monitored and reviewed through the creation of a strong network across County Durham, we will capture and share learning so that we can best understand what motivates our communities and helps our people to become more active. We will focus our efforts on working together to create the best possible environment that will help people to move more.

Partners and communities are encouraged to regularly share case studies to highlight success and learning. A partnership approach to evaluation will involve celebrating and sharing when things go well, and learning and trying again when things aren't so successful.

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format:



Braille,



Audio,



Large print.

العربية Arabic, (中文 (繁體字)) Chinese, اردو Urdu,
polski Polish, ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi, Español Spanish,
বাংলা Bengali, हिन्दी Hindi, Deutsch German,
Français French, Türkçe Turkish, Melayu Malay.

Telephone: 03000 264 109

Email: PublicHealth@durham.gov.uk

54548 AHS

Moving Together

in County Durham



Our action plan 2023–28

Children and Young People

| Key priorities | How do we know we have made a difference |
|--|--|
| <p>Enable children and young people to move more every day, increasing levels of physical activity at home, school and in the community</p> <p>Ensure equitable physical activity opportunities for children and young people</p> <p>Build and strengthen networks and partnerships to support physical activity capacity building</p> | <p>Increased percentage of Children and Young People (CYP) engaging in physical activity (Sport England Active Lives Survey)</p> <p>Increased engagement in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leisure programmes i.e. free swimming, free targeted youth gym membership DCC 'learn to ride a bicycle and safety' programmes Early years framework and training Fun and food activity Active Travel initiatives in schools Active 30 <p>Increased engagement with the Moving Together champions network</p> |

Partnership identified actions

Short-term

- Children and Young People Moving Together Network will create new (and strengthen existing) relationships with those who deliver, fund or support programmes or services to children and families to maximise physical activity opportunities
- Children and young people partnership to develop support, and streamline resources, for school and community programmes for families
- Develop ways to creatively engage with children, young people, and families to co-produce the design and communication of programmes/interventions
- Develop consistent messages to be shared throughout the children and young people Moving Together partnership network across all sectors and community groups

Medium-term

- Support the Fun and Food and leisure delivery to ensure that all organisations who deliver sessions have the tools and training to promote healthy movement and physical literacy principles for life
- Support Family Hubs to ensure movement is an embedded part of practice in all hubs, linking with maternal healthy weight and early years, exploring peer support in all communities
- Encourage primary schools to sign up to the free 'learn to ride' bicycle programme
- Engage secondary schools to provide opportunities for vulnerable and inactive students to attend the wellbeing leisure programmes, and identify and share learning from the targeted youth project delivered by Culture, Sport and Tourism





Long-term

- Using the Early Years Framework, strengthen relationships, support, and engage early year's settings (including childminders) to embed physical literacy principles, and identify actions to ensure physical activity opportunities are maximised in all settings
- Work with County Durham Youth Council and academic partners to understand and identify where change can be made to address the youth consultation findings (equal chance of participation in physical activity, gender inequality, accessible activity, and sport for those with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and equity in access to swimming from early years)

- Engage schools in a review of the School Health and Wellbeing framework to support, further incorporate and promote enjoyment of physical activity e.g., Physical literacy, Active Schools, Heart project, Wellbeing leaders, Life Skills through Sport, Active Travel and Outdoor learning



Inclusive Communities

| Key priorities | How do we know we have made a difference |
|--|--|
| Empower children and adults to move more every day, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage in physical activity | People are moving more and rates of physical activity increase (Sport England Active Lives survey data/PHOF) County Durham Physical Activity Strategy Committee feedback |
| Improve knowledge about 'why,' and signposting to 'how' to move more in community settings | Increase in local physical activity community initiatives |
| Support the development of an 'active place-based' approach to moving more, including local communities, education providers, health and social care providers, and workplaces | Evidence from Moving Together Champions (showing increased movement amongst those who currently move less) Service level evaluations (i.e., Cree movement, We Are Undefeatable, County Durham Community Growing and Food Network) |

Partnership identified actions

Short-term

- Increase physical activity levels across all communities and settings in County Durham by strengthening engagement, commitment, and collaboration with partners across all sectors and settings
- Local partners and communities to work together to create more local, accessible and enjoyable opportunities to be active.

- Using evidence-based behaviour change models, co-produce targeted communications to promote fair access to opportunities to be active every day

Medium-term

- Using evidence-based behaviour change models, promote, and communicate increased movement and physical activity to our communities by providing good quality, co-produced information on the importance of physical activity, how to access opportunities
- Increase inclusive participation and engagement with County Durham leisure facilities
- Support voluntary sector organisations to have the tools they need to improve and promote the benefits of, and access to, physical activity opportunities
- Work with communities to make outdoor spaces and facilities accessible for all, particularly those from vulnerable groups (gender inclusive, unemployed, people with long term conditions and disabilities, and older people, including dementia friendly environments)
- Support community-led programmes that are designed by local people, using evidence-based behaviour change approaches to better understand capability, opportunity, and motivation to move more
- Work with communities and the voluntary sector to maximise community growing and gardening opportunities
- Continue to build on Sport England Active Partnerships 'place based' work to test and evaluate 'whole system approaches' to increasing activity levels on a small area level to inform wider rollout across County Durham

Long-term

- Work together to remove systemic inequalities to strengthen opportunities to move more in our communities, ensuring everyone understands how and where they can both engage in physical activity and participate with others to do so
- Strengthen partnerships between physical activity stakeholders and workplaces through local workplace health initiatives and the County Durham Better Health at Work Award BHAWA, supporting businesses and other organisations to create conditions which make it easier for employees to move more
- Work with local workplace health initiatives and the County Durham BHAWA to ensure a workplace physical activity offer is both accessible for smaller business and targeted to those organisations where need is greatest
- Develop and share case studies from local businesses that have successfully incorporated moving more into their day-to-day working environments
- Engage and support local employability programmes and services so that they have a better understanding of the role moving more can play in helping people back into employment



| Key priorities | How do we know we have made a difference |
|---|--|
| Increase active travel and opportunities for walking, wheeling, and cycling | Increase in numbers of residents walking, wheeling/cycling: as measured through national surveys (i.e. Sport England Active Lives and Government active travel statistics) |
| Engage communities, NHS, social care providers, schools, and workplaces in Active Travel programmes | Increased sign up from schools to Healthy Weight framework, County Durham Better Health at Work Award (BHAWA) and Active Travel priorities |
| Build active urban design into planning policies | Health impact assessment completed for all relevant planning applications |
| | Improvements to paths via the 'Rights of Way Improvement Plan' deliverables |

Partnership identified actions

Short-term

- The Active Environment Moving Together network will create new (and strengthen existing) relationships with those who plan deliver, fund or support improvements to infrastructure and active travel initiatives to help incorporate daily movement into travel plans
- Build Active urban design into planning proposals
- Support and promote delivery and engagement with programmes to increase cycling (i.e. bicycle training, borrow a bike and recycle bicycle programmes)

Medium-term

- Deliver the actions within the Durham County Council Local Walking and Cycling Delivery Plan
- Support the delivery of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan ensuring inclusive accessibility of paths for all ages and abilities
- Work with local communities to co-produce community-led sustainable Active Travel programmes and messaging
- Adopt a test and learn approach to play street schemes with County Durham Sport Active Partnership (supported by Sport England)

- Develop and share consistent messaging to progress a citizen's approach that reinforces the importance of looking after our natural assets when using them for physical activity

Long-term

- Review and deliver a renewed Strategic Cycling and Walking Delivery Plan
- Maximise uptake of Active Travel by encouraging organisations in County Durham to contribute to local policy development
- Influence decision-makers in the design and creation of green spaces and accessible community facilities



Health and Social Care Settings

| Key priorities | How do we know we have made a difference |
|--|---|
| <p>Increase knowledge and confidence of Health and Social Care professionals regarding physical activity benefits to patients and health outcomes</p> <p>Embed 'Green social prescribing' across County Durham</p> <p>Embed Active Travel plans with local NHS colleagues in line with England NHS sustainability policy</p> | <p>Increased uptake of training amongst health and social care staff</p> <p>Increase in GP and health professionals joining Moving Together champions network</p> |

Partnership identified actions

Short-term

- To increase movement for health, strengthen and develop existing and new relationships between health and social care settings and the wider physical activity network in County Durham
- Promote physical activity awareness and training as a standard part of health and social care practice

Medium-term

- Support approaches to '[Green Social Prescribing](#)' across the county to ensure that more people explore County Durham's natural assets to help them move more.
- Support local mental health services to increase movement and physical activity with both inpatient and community services
- Support all health and social care settings to share consistent and appropriate physical activity messages targeting all patients ages and groups
- Work with academic partners and health and social care colleagues to develop the local evidence base on 'what works well' in County Durham

Long-term

- Health and social care staff to develop knowledge to enable them to build strength-based conversations about movement and physical activity into their practice, and ensure they can signpost patients to a range of opportunities in the local community
- Work with NHS colleagues to embed Active Travel plans in line with NHS England sustainability policy
- Develop and share case studies showing our residents from varying backgrounds, ages and groups enjoying and benefitting from local physical activities

Environment & Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 December 2023



Outline of Presentation

Strategic Leisure Framework

- Overview
- Partnership work
- Next Steps

The average person in County Durham is expected to live in good health until they are 59 - 4 years less than the national average.

59% of adults are active (150 mins per week). This increases to 68.5% in our least deprived areas and decreased to 49.5% in our most deprived areas

36.9% of children and young people in County Durham are active (average of 60+ mins per day) *Academic year 21/22*. 31.7% are active for less than 30 minutes per day, this increases to 37% for children and young people living in our most deprived areas and decreases to 27.7% for those living in our least deprived areas.

Sport England: Active Lives Survey, Adult data and Children and Young People Activity Data, 2023



Sport and Leisure Provision

14 indoor leisure facilities

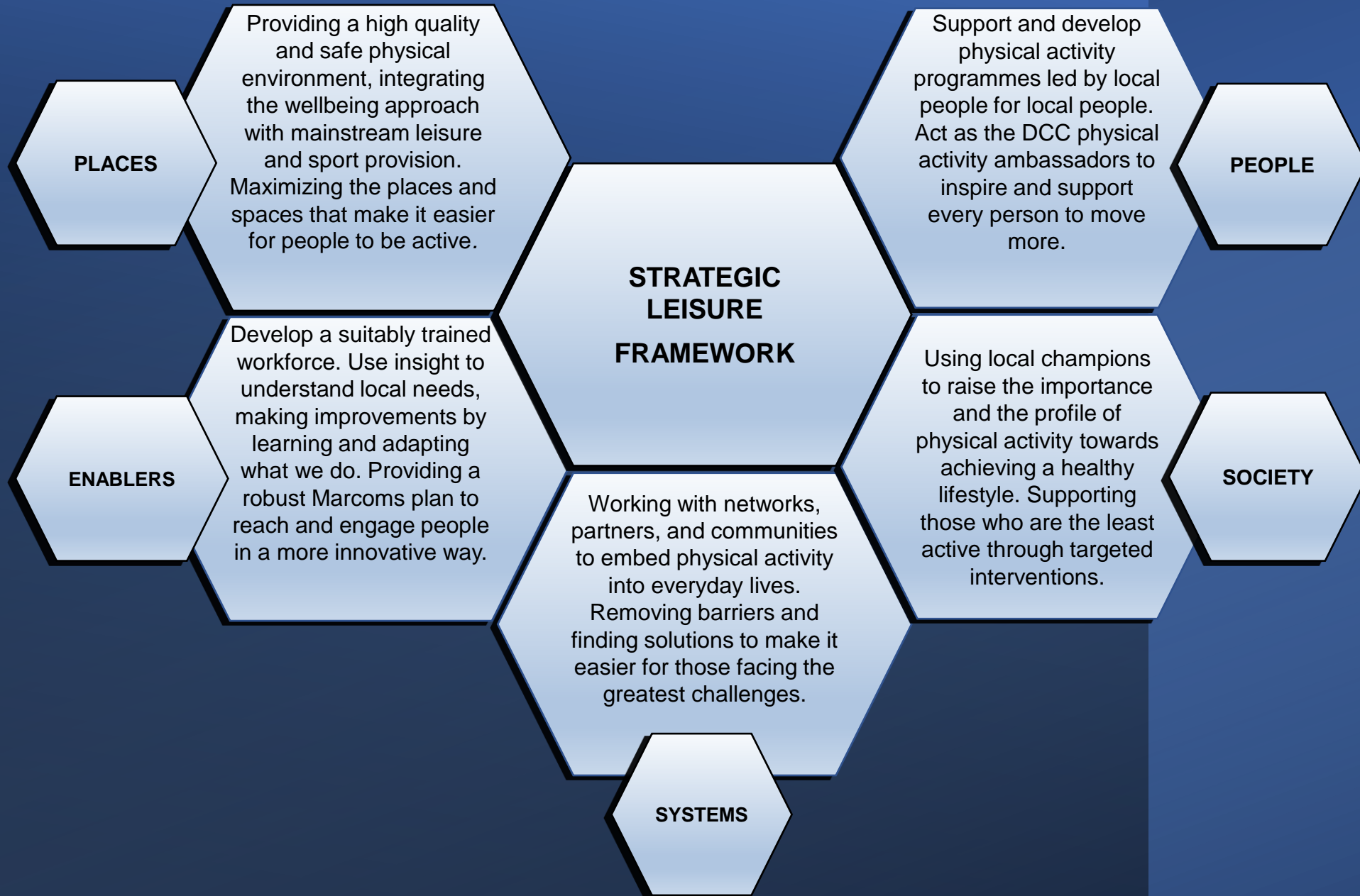
One outdoor leisure facility

Community wellbeing programme

Free digital support 'My Wellness' to be active in the home

Picture - Move Hub - Abbey Leisure Centre





'Physical Activity hubs'

Leisure Centres at the heart of local communities breaking down perceptions of leisure centres by offering something for everyone.



Walking Netball and Sofa to Cycle - Shildon Sunnydale Leisure Centre/athletics track





A strengthened partnership approach encompasses the county's wider infrastructure to get people moving



Moving Together

in County Durham



Moving Together in County Durham is our strategy to make it easier for every person to move more each day.

We have a shared purpose set out in our vision and mission. Our core principles guide collective actions, and four priority action areas will help us over time coordinate our approach and achieve our vision.

Our Vision:

County Durham residents will be more active, enabling them to live longer, healthier, and happier lives.



Our Mission:

Bringing people and organisations together with a shared purpose of helping everyone in County Durham.

- County Durham is a wonderful place to live with unique beauty, but many of us are not active enough for good health
- Building activity into all parts of our lives will help us connect with our communities to be healthier, happier, and stronger

Moving just a little more each day will benefit us at every stage of life

Starting Well

Balance and coordination
Concentration and behaviour
School ready

Living Well

Feel good and sleep better
Energised and productive
Improved immunity and mental health

Aging Well

Strength and Independence
Longer and healthier life years
Healthy brain and memory

Being active benefits our community



Cleaner air and healthier environment



Sense of togetherness and healthy relationships

Our priority areas for action



Our Core Principles



Six core principles will help guide individuals and organisations to take steps to empower, enable and support everyone in County Durham to move in ways that will help us be healthier, happier and stronger together.



Community

The heart of 'Moving Together'
People and places are our greatest power



Engage

Thinking big together
Creatively engaging and joining people together at every place and level



Collaborate

We are stronger together
Every individual, community and organisation sharing the vision



Focus

Creating equal chance together
Together removing challenges to make sure everyone has an equal chance to have better health



Celebrate

Recognising success together
Sharing and nurturing our community's success across the County



Learn

Changing and learning together
Listening and adapting to the needs of all our people and communities

children aged
years and under during school holidays



Moving Together has identified four key priority action areas:

- **Children and Young People**
- **Inclusive Communities**
- **Active Environments**
- **Health and Social Care settings**

FUN & FOOD

Half day activities
with healthy food

Funded by the Department
for Education





Active Environment

Active travel, road safety, traffic reduction, access and rights of way, healthy build planning and design, climate change, behaviour change

- DCC
- Durham Community Action
- Living Streets
- Bluescapes
- Local Access Forum
- National Trust
- NHS England Sustainable Travel lead
- Sustrans NE
- Walk and Talk Trust

Next Steps

- Outcomes Logic Map
- Research and Insight
- Wellbeing Approach
- Moving Together in Peterlee



Any movement contributes to a healthier life and being physically active is easier for some people than it is for others. WS&L wants to contribute to changing this, connecting with local communities, partners and removing barriers for those facing the greatest challenges.



Environment & Sustainable Communities

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

December 2023

County Durham Libraries -

Library Transformation Update



Report of Amy Harhoff, Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy and Growth

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the development of the library service and an update on Library Transformation.

Executive Summary

- 2 This briefing report focuses on updating the committee on the development of the library service focussing on addressing the recommendations Phase One Libraries Transformation Programme.
- 3 Public libraries are a statutory service, as defined under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 with an obligation on upper tier authorities (County Council's) to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient service'.
- 4 Libraries are seen by many who currently use them as welcoming, free, safe, inclusive, and non-judgemental spaces that belong to everyone. They are recognised and valued as community hubs for a range of services, activities, events, and social interaction, at the heart of both rural and town communities.
- 5 The County Durham Library Service consists of 39 libraries including: a city centre library, eleven town centre venues and 27 community-based libraries. As well as outreach and peripatetic services. The library service is also contracted to provide Prison Library services to Deerbolt YOI, HMP Durham, and HMP Frankland.

- 6 In 2022/2023 almost half a million in-person visits were made to County Durham library venues with just under 43,000 active borrowers. This is a 52% increase in visits and a 22% increase in active borrowers compared to 2021/2022 usage.
- 7 The Phase 1 Library Transformation Needs Assessment identified nine key elements/actions for change in order to develop County Durham Libraries Service in line with public and staff feedback. These nine key elements are now informing the development of an innovative, modern and sustainable Library Service that meets the needs of communities within County Durham.
- 8 Work has begun on addressing and responding to the recommendations outlined in the Phase 1 Needs Assessment report. As a result of savings requirements, available resource to effect the entirety of the recommendations are very limited. Therefore in the short/medium term we will focus on the areas which can be undertaken within current budgets;
 - 1) desktop review of physical library network,
 - 2) digital content and infrastructure,
 - 3) stock policy review,
 - 4) development of strategic outreach and participation delivery.
- 9 Library venues cost £3.2 million in financial year 2022/2023. On average across the 39 libraries, staffing costs accounted for 70% of expenditure. In 2022/2023, the cost per in person visit across all libraries was £6.48. However, there is significant variation in cost per visitor between individual libraries.
- 10 Condition surveys for almost all library venues have been carried out between 2021 and 2022. The condition surveys grade the condition of each building; all of our library venues are graded between satisfactory and poor.
- 11 Further review to ensure value for money and impact are being delivered by the existing estate is required.
- 12 In Summer 2023, CounterCulture Partnership LLP were commissioned to carry out a detailed review of the challenges, issues and opportunities facing the Library Service as it works to understand how digital, in all its forms, can be used to transform the service offer and the way it is delivered.

- 13 The Library Transformation Digital Review report, included as Appendix 2, considered how our library services can experiment with and expand the digital offer.
- 14 The report describes and outlines what the library service plans to achieve and deliver in the next five years to meet its digital vision and goals and suggests what a set of digital goals for County Durham Libraries might look like pending further work on establishing a clear set of values and priorities.
- 15 12 recommendations were made for the development and delivery of a digitally transformed and forward-looking library service:
 - 1) Invest in core infrastructure and staff skills and training
 - 2) Develop and set a limited number of initial goals and priorities
 - 3) Review staff capacity for delivering the transformation and plan for contingency.
 - 4) Invest time in reviewing and discussing value and approach tools.
 - 5) Ensure the digital strategy is tied into the wider library strategy
 - 6) The library digital strategy should support the Council's wider digital ambitions.
 - 7) Measure the success of digital platforms and resources and Establish consistent and regular monitoring of KPIs
 - 8) Seek investment to enable and sustain change.
 - 9) Be bold, ambitious and proactive in digital thinking.
 - 10) Keep updated on market and sector developments.
 - 11) Consider moving away from developing in-house solutions
 - 12) Produce and promote clear guidance for staff about the processes, tools and templates for digital communications with customers.
- 16 The report proposes a digital framework and five year plan for digital transformation in our libraries. An early outcome of the digital review has been an application to the Arts Council England Libraries Improvement Fund to support the modernisation and introduction of essential and key digital library infrastructure.

- 17 Work on drafting a revised stock policy is underway. As part of the review and development of our stock policy we will be looking to sector best practice, learning from colleagues across the UK to take the best from good practice in the library, bookselling and publishing sectors. We will also be inviting sector experts to act as 'critical friends' to review our work in this area.
- 18 The phase 1 needs assessment recommended the development of vibrant and sustainable outreach, participation and partnership working. In response to this and as part of the wider Culture, Sport & Tourism restructure, a new Libraries Outreach & Participation team has been established with dedicated cultural and learning engagement roles.
- 19 The new team will manage and develop all aspects of library outreach & participation, including peripatetic library services, to deliver innovative library programmes and events with the aim of creating experiences that are intriguing and inspiring, widening participation and supporting audience development ensuring that our library service develops the capacity and agency of local communities to participate, meeting the current and future expectations of users and stakeholders
- 20 The Know Your Neighbourhood (KYN) Fund is a £30 million package of funding from the DCMS and the National Lottery, designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England, of which County Durham is one. The Library service was successful in securing the maximum available grant (£88k) from this fund for an 18 month programme of work using reading for wellbeing to address chronic loneliness for residents served by the Stanley Library Cluster.
- 21 The project will work within the community, encouraging engagement with books, reading for pleasure, chatting/ meeting new friends, building relationships, social inclusion, improving wellbeing.

Recommendations

- 22 Members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided in the report and during the presentation.

Background

- 23 Public Libraries are a statutory service, as defined under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964¹, with an obligation on upper tier authorities (County Councils) to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient

¹ [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#)

service'. They must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available². What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area Councils therefore have the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs. Decisions made by councils about library services may also be subject to legal challenge by way of judicial review.

- 24 The County Durham Library Service consists of 39 libraries including: a city centre library, eleven town centre venues and twenty-seven community-based libraries. In addition, there are three types of outreach service: books on wheels; book bus; and the mobile library service. In addition, the library service is also contracted to provide Prison Library services to Deerbolt YOI, HMP Durham, and HMP Frankland. These services are fully funded by the National Offender Management Service of central government.

Key Insight Data

- 25 In 2022/2023 almost half a million in-person visits were made to County Durham library venues with just under 43,000 active borrowers. This is a 52% increase in visits and a 22% increase in active borrowers compared to 2021/2022 usage. Although the trend is upward, we are still some way from the number of in-person visits and active borrowers recorded at our libraries pre-pandemic; 44% and 85% respectively of 2019/2020 figures.
- 26 Quarter 1 & 2 data for the current financial year also suggest that growth in the number of in person visits is slowing with half year data for 2022/2023 at 51% of full year figures for 2021/2022.
- 27 Book issues, however, are growing with Q1& Q2 issues already at 105% of full year issues in 2022/2023. This shows that although the numbers of individuals borrowing from the service is not growing, active borrowers are borrowing significantly more items than last year.
- 28 In 2022/2023 7,679 public events and programmes were delivered across the library network engaging with 70,155 service users. These included exhibitions, creative workshops, digital support sessions, reading groups, formal learning, and school visits. As well as core weekly or monthly events such as toddler rhyme times, knit & natter groups, reading group meetings, "Chatterbooks" (children's reading group) sessions and digital support sessions, the library service have worked in partnership with both internal and external organisations to deliver events on a bigger scale and/or across multiple libraries or other venues including for example, Holiday

² [DCMS Guidance on Libraries as a statutory service update April 2022](#)

Activities with Fun & Food, World Book Day, the summer reading challenge, HiVIS fortnight (for library users who are visually impaired) with Sunderland & Durham RNIB, and the Durham Book Festival.

National Context – Government Libraries Strategy

- 29 In September 2022, Baroness Sanderson of Welton was appointed by government to chair an independent panel to help inform the development of a new national libraries strategy, and to help generate new ideas to improve library service and provision.
- 30 As part of this work, Baroness Sanderson visited a number of library services across the country to find out about their work. She has also undertaken a series of deep-dive discussion sessions at libraries around the country, attended by representatives from Arts Council England (the arms-length government body with responsibility for libraries), Libraries Connected³, and the cross-party Local Government Association, themed on different aspects of library services. The sessions covered culture and creativity, health and wellbeing, resilient communities, digital access and inclusion, learning, prosperity, reading and literacy, as well as exploring governance and blue-sky thinking and were completed in June 2023.
- 31 The report and recommendations from this independent panel will form part of a new government public libraries strategy to succeed the previous strategy which came into force in 2016. The report, which was expected in Summer 2023, will be considered by Lord Parkinson, the Libraries Minister following which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) libraries team will draft a new Government strategy for public libraries. The draft strategy will then undergo further consultation with the sector prior to expected publication in 2024.

Re-cap of Library Transformation Phase 1

- 32 The purpose of the 'Needs Assessment' was to carry out an engagement exercise to gain a clear evidence-based understanding of how the library service within County Durham can better respond to the needs of the modern community and to inform the shape of service provision for future users, as Phase One of the Transformation Programme.
- 33 A comprehensive engagement exercise to engage with library users, residents, community groups, focus groups and stakeholders took place between 7th January 2022 and 1st April 2022. An External Reference

³ <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/about-us>

Group was also set up as an expert panel to provide guidance and advice on the delivery of the Needs Assessment.

- 34 The Needs Assessment identified nine key elements/actions for change in order to develop County Durham Libraries Service in line with public and staff feedback; summarised as follows:
- 1) A strategic review of the existing physical library network.
 - 2) A review of library opening hours
 - 3) Alignment of library outcomes with Council plans and priorities.
 - 4) Investment in technology, and digital content and infrastructure
 - 5) A workforce skills review and associated training
 - 6) A review of communications and marketing
 - 7) Develop and deliver a compelling, and accessible events programme
 - 8) Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships.
 - 9) A review of the current stock and content policy
- 35 The outputs of the engagement exercise and the nine key elements are now informing the development of an innovative, modern and sustainable Library Service that meets the needs of communities within County Durham.
- 36 Work has begun on addressing and responding to the recommendations outlined in the Phase 1 Needs Assessment report. As a result of savings requirements, available resource to effect the entirety of the recommendations are very limited. Therefore, in the short/medium term we will focus on the areas which can be undertaken within current budgets;
- 1) desktop review of physical library network,
 - 2) digital content and infrastructure,
 - 3) stock policy review,
 - 4) development of strategic outreach and participation delivery.

Physical Library Network

- 37 The Phase 1 Needs Assessment recommended a strategic review of the physical library estate that should feed into a wider capital investment strategy and transformation programme for library buildings,

to create modern, accessible, inclusive, and attractive buildings, encouraging people to visit, challenging current perceptions of County Durham Libraries as outdated and off-putting. This review of the existing physical library network should take into consideration the potential and current benefits of co-location and the need for capital investment.

- 38 A key point for discussion in relation to this recommendation is in challenging economic times what could, and should a modern transformation of our physical library estate look like?
- 39 An initial appraisal of the existing physical library network has been carried out. This desktop review considered data from the last full financial year (2022/2023) and looked at the full costs for each library building and onsite services, venue condition surveys, including repair and maintenance cost estimates, and library usage, both active borrowing and those visiting the library for other reasons/ uses.
- 40 Library venues cost £3.2 million in financial year 2022/2023. On average across the 39 libraries, staffing costs accounted for 70% of expenditure, however, in some venues this was as little as 36% (Pelton) and in others as high as 93% (Seaham).
- 41 For financial year 2022/2023, across the full library estate, the cost per in person visit was £6.48. However, there is significant variation in cost per visitor between individual libraries, from the lowest at £3.25 per visit (Newton Aycliffe) to the highest at £23.03 (Shotton). Although in general terms, the highest costs per visitor are seen in our least visited libraries, there is no direct correlation between the number of visits and cost per visit (Figure 2a.). There is however a weak correlation between the number of in-person visits and the overall annual expenditure of library venues (Figure 2b.). This suggests, that broadly speaking library venue expenditure is proportionately higher where our venues serve more residents, but also that the significant variation in value per in-person engagement in our less visited libraries deserves review to ensure value for money and impact are being delivered by the existing estate.

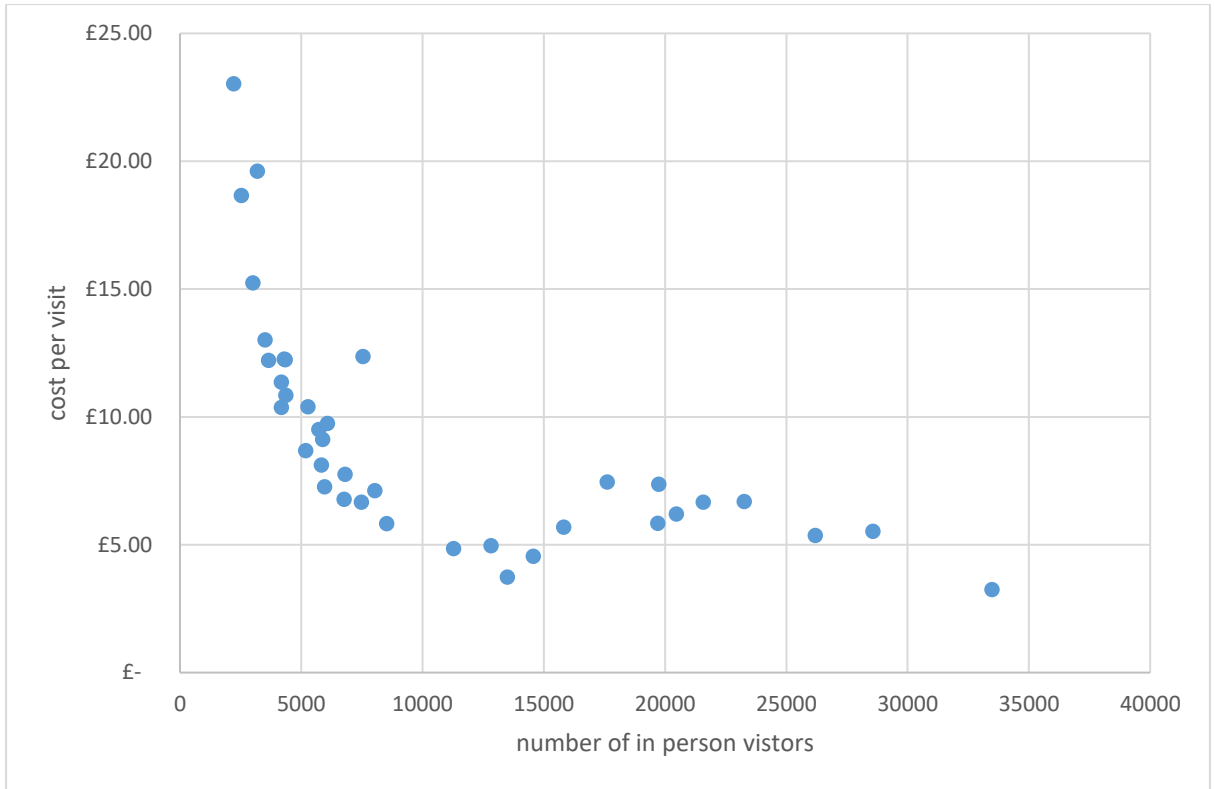


Figure 1a. cost per visit vs. total in person visits to library venues (excluding Durham Clayport). No linear correlation is observed; although the majority of the most expensive libraries per visit are generally those with the lowest overall visits the lack of a direct correlation indicates that other variables are influencing the overall value per user. N.B. data for Durham Clayport are excluded as a significant outlier, annual in person visits to Clayport totalled 96,109 in 2022/2023 with a cost per visit of £4.55.

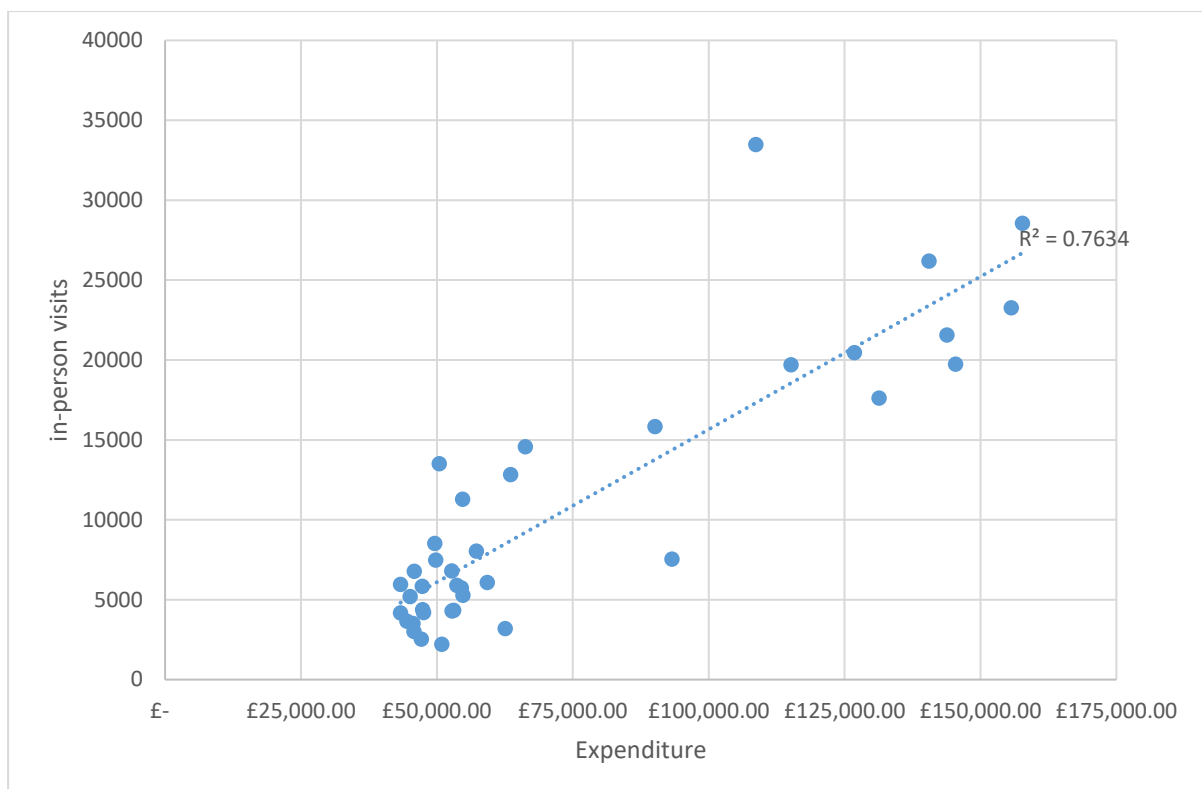


Figure 2b Total library expenditure vs. annual in-person visits (excluding Durham Clayport). A weak linear correlation is observed between the overall cost of each library venue and the number of visitors. N.B. data for Durham Clayport are excluded as a significant outlier, annual in person visits to Clayport totalled 96,109 in 2022/2023 with an annual expenditure of £437,154.

- 42 The review also explored the physical condition of the library estate. Condition surveys for almost all library venues have been carried out between 2021 and 2022, with the exception of Peterlee and Newton Aycliffe libraries which are co-located with leisure centres. The condition survey grades the condition of each building between A = Good, B = Satisfactory, C = Poor & D = Bad. All of our library venues are graded between B and C.
- 43 There is a need to consider, where it is appropriate, co-location with other Cultural, Sport & Tourism venues and/or other community assets/buildings. At the meeting of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in December 2022, Members recognised that the co-location of the library at the Louisa Centre, and at Peterlee and Newton Aycliffe leisure centres had worked well, however, this approach would not be acceptable to every community where a Leisure Centre is located. It was also acknowledged that there are opportunities to take advantage of community assets in those areas where there are no library buildings to expand provision where access to books and other learning materials is

needed. Table 1. summarises current and future co-locations of libraries.

44

| Library | Co-location | notes |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Peterlee | Leisure centre | The first library to be co-located with a leisure centre. Co-location delivered through leisure transformation programme. This is the 5 th most visited library in the network (23,261 in-person visits 2022/23) |
| Newton Aycliffe | Leisure centre | Second most visited library after Clayport with 33,477 in-person visits in 2022/23 |
| Spennymoor | Leisure centre | The most recent co-location delivered by the leisure transformation programme. The new library includes significantly improved provision for community programmes with a dedicated and well-equipped community room. |
| Stanley | Leisure centre | |
| Bishop Auckland | Bishop Auckland Town Hall | 11277 library visitors were recorded in 2022/23, this equates to 14.6% conversion rate for visitors to the town hall. |
| Clayport (Durham City Library) | Customer Access Point | |
| Barnard Castle | Customer Access Point | |
| Future co-locations | | |
| Woodhouse Close | Leisure Centre | Construction work will begin in early 2024 as part of the leisure transformation programme |

| | | |
|---------|-----------------------|--|
| Consett | Customer Access Point | Feasibility work is underway to look at options to create space within the library at Consett for the Consett Customer Access Point. |
|---------|-----------------------|--|

Table 1. Co-located libraries across County Durham.

Digital Content & Infrastructure

- 45 The Phase 1 Needs Assessment identified a need to develop a clear digital strategy for the library service which encompasses both operational and service delivery needs and digital content. The report recommended that such a strategy should identify the investment needed for digital infrastructure that enables the modernisation, transformation and expansion of provision and access to services.
- 46 In Summer 2023, CounterCulture Partnership LLP were commissioned to carry out a detailed review of the challenges, issues and opportunities facing the Library Service as it works to understand how digital, in all its forms, can be used to transform the service offer and the way it is delivered.
- 47 CounterCulture Partnership LLP's scope of work included a review of the use of technology and the online presence for County Durham Libraries, and production of a digital framework for the service, including a clear digital framework for the next five years encompassing both operational and service delivery needs and digital content. The specific objectives of this work were to identify:
- 1) The investment needed for a digital infrastructure to enable the modernisation, transformation and expansion of provision and access to DCC library services
 - 2) The investment needed in digital operational technology including but not limited to a Library App, Self-Service options, online payments.
 - 3) The requirements and options for a library website so that the service is brought up to the same standard as other library services across England
 - 4) Production of a framework strategy to ensure a vibrant digital offer, providing increased relevance to existing customers and an understanding of how to attract new customers.
- 48 The Library Transformation Digital Review report, included as Appendix 2, considered how our library services can experiment with and expand the digital offer. Underpinning this was consideration of the staff and

customer skills needed to support an enhanced and ever-changing digital environment. A long-term approach to digital infrastructure and innovation was taken in this work, moving towards platforms and ways of working that can continue to develop and adapt as technologies and needs change.

49 Counterculture carried out an analysis of the current digital services and infrastructure. This included:

- 1) Reviewing existing policies and strategies, including DCC's Digital Strategy, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Digital Strategy 2022⁴, the Digital Universal Library Offer⁵, DCMS Culture is Digital⁶ policy and recommendations.
- 2) Reviewing data on digital use, digital needs and recommendations identified in County Durham Libraries Needs Assessment report, as well as updated or other relevant data and documentation produced since this work was completed. This included reports on computer use and Wi-Fi use in County Durham Libraries.
- 3) Producing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) matrix based on user feedback that focuses on operational and service delivery needs, as well as customer needs and content.
- 4) Mapping and reviewing the digital platforms, tools and services in use, suppliers and contract arrangements, and an options analysis for alternatives where appropriate.
- 5) A comparator analysis within the libraries sector to provide a benchmark of potential digital solutions and activities and the investment needed.
- 6) Reviewing digital marketing, communications and brand building with existing and new customers in mind.
- 7) Understanding existing staff skills and reviewing of sector evidence for digital skills in libraries.

50 Desk research accompanied an online focus group with customers and one with staff, as well as online one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders including library users, staff and sector leaders in digital development of libraries. These activities built on the engagement carried out during the Phase 1 Needs Assessment.

⁴ [UK's Digital Strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/uk-digital-strategy)

⁵ [Information and Digital | Libraries Connected](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/information-and-digital-libraries-connected)

⁶ [Culture is Digital - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/culture-is-digital)

- 51 After a period of stasis in digital development and progression, introducing any change will be transformative for staff and customers. It will improve operations, interaction, visibility, promotion and experience across physical, digital and peripatetic services.
- 52 The report describes and outlines what the library service plans to achieve and deliver in the next five years to meet its digital vision and goals and suggests what a set of digital goals for County Durham Libraries might look like pending further work on establishing a clear set of values and priorities. It proposes the following digital goals:
- 1) Expand access
 - 2) Improve and enhance services
 - 3) Deliver innovation and improvements
 - 4) Optimise investment and resources
 - 5) Maximise data to inform decision making and drive change
- 53 With these goals in mind the report makes 12 recommendations for the development and delivery of a digitally transformed and forward-looking library service:
- 1) **Invest in core infrastructure and staff skills and training** - Focus on the foundations and getting the basics right for improved customer experience and greater effectiveness for staff. This means acquiring, implementing and using with confidence hardware and software that will deliver a good modern standard of service, at the same level as other library services in the UK.
 - 2) **Develop and set a limited number of initial goals and priorities** as part of a phased approach that will be reflected upon and iterated over the next five years. Prioritise the core needs of service delivery, and focus on how digital tools and technology can improve internal systems and processes and external engagement, as well as bring efficiencies and cost savings or other benefits.
 - 3) **Review staff capacity for delivering the transformation and plan for contingency.** It will require a lot of time in the preparation and implementation of new ways of working and, at the same time, there will be expectations for business as usual.
 - 4) **Invest time in reviewing and discussing value and approach tools** such as the *Digital Culture Charter*⁷ and the *Guide to Digital*

⁷ <https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/charter>

*Transformation in Cultural Heritage*⁸ to agree a shared set of underlying principles that will frame the digital approach across the service now and in the future.

- 5) **Ensure the digital strategy is tied in to the wider library strategy** and contributes to delivery of the overall vision for the service.
- 6) The library digital strategy should **support the Council's wider digital ambitions**. There are opportunities for County Durham Libraries to play a role in delivering other digital strategies and policies by working with partners or managing initiatives, such as Digital Champions, to help achieve DCC's vision for the County and for particular libraries to help target the people and communities who need more support with digital inclusion. County Durham Libraries should look across other Council digital services to ensure alignment with the broader digital offer.
- 7) **Measure the success of digital platforms and resources**. Establish consistent and regular monitoring of KPIs such as user journeys on webpages, social media activity, eResource popularity, public PC and Wi-Fi use, and other online operations in and for each library.
- 8) **Seek investment to enable and sustain change**.
- 9) **Be bold, ambitious and proactive in digital thinking**. Consider how County Durham Libraries could lead the way within DCC in the approach and application of digital activities. This might be through training opportunities for staff and communities, responding to customer needs in new ways, or seeking funding and partnerships that will enable change and deliver new services.
- 10) **Keep updated on market and sector developments**. Visit some of the case studies, suppliers and services highlighted in this document and learn from their experiences; build relationships with suppliers to understand how to make the most of the equipment and resources; attend conferences and training to build and share knowledge and to learn what technology is available now and what may be available in the near future; participate in networks to share knowledge across DCC and beyond and to discover funding opportunities.
- 11) **Consider moving away from developing in-house solutions** as these do not benefit from supplier updates or support and may

⁸ <https://digipathways.co.uk/resources/guide-to-digital-transformation-in-cultural-heritage/>

omit the specialist features that other library services use. In-house solutions will take longer to develop and implement than readily available packages and are likely to reach end of life earlier. Technologies designed for the sector can offer several integrated systems, allowing for a single supplier to provide several platforms working together seamlessly, for example an LMS, an app and a front facing platform or website.

- 12) **Produce and promote clear guidance for staff about the processes, tools and templates for digital communications** with customers. These guidelines should clarify when and how corporate communications and other teams should be involved, how to use content effectively to engage and grow audiences across different platforms, and how to use branding and tone of voice to build trust and recognition for County Durham Libraries.

- 54 The report proposes a digital framework and five year plan for digital transformation in our libraries. The first part of which is the development of a roadmap to align thinking. This will form the basis of service planning and digital work for the library service in the coming year. This work will include considering where initial 'quick wins' might be developed to build confidence of customers and staff. Reviewing staff skills, structure and capacity for the transformation and designing a change management plan, and communications plan for staff and customers. Building the business case for digital investment and identifying opportunities to seek external funding as appropriate. Reviewing supplier frameworks and soft market testing products with a view to agreeing the specifications for new digital offers. Exploring opportunities for partnership working both internally and externally and continuing to review excellence in the sector and opportunities for learning and development.

Libraries Improvement Fund

- 55 An early outcome of the digital review has been an application to the Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF) to support the modernisation and introduction of essential and key digital library infrastructure. The LIF is provided by the DCMS and administered by Arts Council England. The aims of the fund are to:
- 1) Enable libraries to develop more flexible, more commercial spaces.
 - 2) Increase and improve digital access within communities.
 - 3) Connect libraries to their communities.
 - 4) Increase potential for transformation.

- 5) Increase library use.
- 6) Increase sustainability of libraries.
- 56 An application to the LIF has been submitted by the service to support the development of our digital library infrastructure including procurement of a new Library Management System and new digital products and services.
- 57 One of the core issues affecting the digital aspirations of our current library offer is the age and specification of the current LMS. The service relies upon a bespoke, in-house constructed LMS, which while forward looking at its creation, now suffers from significant limitations and chiefly is at risk due to its age, compliance to modern standards and ability to adapt and interface with the speed and pace of digital opportunities that a more modern LMS might offer. The service requires a new LMS which will address these limitations and provide increased resilience.
- 58 A new LMS will also serve as a catalyst for more radical digital innovations and a more holistic review of our digital offer improving the service, we are able to deliver. A more modern LMS will enable the development and integration of other technological upgrades which would benefit both our staff, through efficiency of back-office process, but also deliver improvements to front end users, for example, it will improve the access and visibility of our library collections and services through user self-service interfaces, Web and application-based access. This approach will ensure our library services are fit for the future, can be accessed via a greater range of options, particularly outside traditional operating hours, that our services will be more diverse and more attractive to a wider range of audiences, and will support our library offer especially in the more rural west of the County.
- 59 A more mature digital offering will also support a more inclusive offer. With a more modern array of systems to support our library offer, we can take our collections and services into schools, community groups and rural communities. For example, through the use of tablets, kiosks, and pop-up library provision. Improved digital systems will also give us increased access to relevant data supporting us to make more informed, evidence-based choices about service delivery.
- 60 If successful, the bid will deliver match funding of £499,999 towards a programme of capital and digital works totalling £1.974 million which include the procurement of a new Library Management System (LMS), introduction of digital self-serve options in library venues, and costs associated with the co-location of Woodhouse Close Library in the new leisure centre being delivered through the Leisure Transformation programme.

Stock Policy

- 61 In addition to digital transformation the Phase 1 Needs Assessment also identified a need to review the stock policy of the service; the current stock policy being last reviewed in 2012. The Needs Assessment identified that an attractive and wide-ranging selection of books and other resources is a fundamental part of the service offer and it recommended that a review of the current stock and content policy should be carried out to respond to feedback about the need for book stock to be 'bigger and better', with a wider selection of books across all ages and categories.
- 62 Work on drafting a revised policy is underway. The aim of the revised policy is to outline and direct how we choose the books and other materials stocked in our libraries. How we maintain, promote and facilitate access to those materials. How we circulate stock across the library estate and peripatetic services to ensure the widest choice of reading. As well as why and how we decide to keep some items and withdraw others. It will also describe our position on censorship and explain how we will measure the performance of stock and library resources. The objectives of the Stock Policy are to:
- 1) Promote a unified approach in stock selection and management.
 - 2) Improve and develop our stock.
 - 3) Enable increased efficiency and effective management of our bookfund.
 - 4) Present, provide and improve the stock which is relevant and attractive to library users.
 - 5) Increase the use of our stock.
 - 6) Promote literacy and reading.
- 63 The policy will ensure we are able to successfully support access to reading, literature, information and learning for everyone in line with the primary aims of the Durham County Council Vision, of more and better jobs, long and independent lives, and connected communities.
- 64 These objectives are set within a wider context for the development of the library service to attract and retain library users by providing the

best possible choice of materials in a wide variety of formats, which reflect the different interests and tastes of the whole community. They will help us to ensure we consider and protect the requirements of special or minoritized groups, maximise the funds available by obtaining the best value in contracting arrangements, maximise the use of stock through a structured approach to stock management and maximise access to resources by cataloguing and circulating them in an organised way.

- 65 As part of the review and development of our stock policy we will be looking to sector best practice, learning from colleagues across the UK to take the best from good practice in the library, bookselling and publishing sectors. We will also be inviting sector experts to act as 'critical friends' to review our work in this area.

Outreach & Participation

- 66 The Phase 1 Needs Assessment recommended the development of vibrant and sustainable outreach, participation and partnership working. In response to this, and as part of the wider Culture, Sport & Tourism restructure, a new Libraries Outreach & Participation team has been established with dedicated engagement roles to help to ensure our venues are recognised and valued as community hubs for a range of services, activities, events, and social interaction, and that our programmes are at the heart of both rural and town communities in County Durham.
- 67 The new team will manage and develop all aspects of library outreach & participation, including peripatetic library services, to deliver innovative library programmes and events with the aim of creating experiences that are intriguing and inspiring, widening participation and supporting audience development, ensuring that our library service develops the capacity and agency of local communities to participate meeting the current and future expectations of users and stakeholders
- 68 The team includes a specialist Reader Development role to lead on a countywide reader development and literacy programme delivered as part of the year round Durham Reads initiative linked to the Durham Book Festival. This new role is tasked with managing the development and delivery of high-quality, comprehensive library programmes which develop literacy skills, acting as a lead advocate for reading, including development and support for grassroots reading groups, literature festivals and family reading programmes. They will work with colleagues in the wider service to establish creative, contemporary, enjoyable and community-focussed programmes that meet the current and future expectations of users and stakeholders.

- 69 New dedicated Library Engagement Support Officer roles have also been created to support and deliver engagement activities across the life course. These roles will develop, deliver and contract high-quality, engagement activities and events across the county and support and contribute to engagement activities and audience development working closely with employees in individual libraries, community partners and the wider library sector.
- 70 The team will embed Libraries Connected's Universal Library Offer⁹ which is focussed around four key areas: Reading, Health and Wellbeing, Digital and Information, and Culture and Creativity.
- 71 The creation of this team will ensure we have a strategic approach to programming that both recognises both the need for a more targeted universal offer across the county's library service while also being mindful of individual library demographics and the needs of the individual community our libraries serve. This approach will enable the service to encourage sharing of best practice, provide greater opportunity for professional development within our teams, and sharing of resource and staff capacity for coordinated delivery of programmes.
- 72 An early target for the engagement team's work is increasing our reach to target low literacy levels. Development of key partnerships has begun to address this including work with Family Hubs, NHS Foundation Trust and Early Years Team to get BookTrust toddler, pre-schooler, additional needs and dual language packs into homes and settings across the county. The team have also begun working with the Literacy Trust to contact teachers from across the county about the library offer, and to look at ways libraries can work in partnership with local schools to increase the reach of The Reading Agency's Summer Reading Challenge 2024.

Know Your Neighbourhood

- 73 The Know Your Neighbourhood (KYN) Fund is a £30 million package of funding from the DCMS and the National Lottery, designed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England. The target areas were identified using data on:
- 1) people and local economy factors (for example, household incomes, local labour markets, economic and multidimensional deprivation)

⁹ [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#)

- 2) strength of civil society and community factors (for example, depth and breadth of local VCSE activity and funding, level of volunteering and community participation)

County Durham is one of the 27 target areas.

- 74 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. The other organisations are the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) and Creative Lives.
- 75 The funds allocated to libraries in target areas under Strand One are being managed and distributed through Libraries Connected. Applications for grants up to £88k were assessed in summer 2023 with projects delivering for the remainder of the 2023 to March 2025.
- 76 The County Durham Library service was successful in securing the maximum grant for a programme of work using reading for wellbeing to address chronic loneliness for residents served by the Stanley Library Cluster. The proposal builds on a successful pilot programme delivered in Stanley in 2022/23 that highlighted issues of loneliness and was funded by Public Health and local author Ann Cleeves.
- 77 During the pilot a common issue for participants were feelings of isolation and depression. Feedback has shown that engaging with the project reduced loneliness and improved wellbeing.
- 78 Understanding of the community has also grown through the development of the pilot. The 2022/2023 work focused on connections with local organisations, building an understanding of the needs of the locality where library participation is low. We worked closely with many local groups, including LGBTQIA+ group, older people with mental health issues and families visiting the local food bank.
- 79 The areas included in the Stanley library cluster are all areas of high deprivation. Large parts are in the top 10-20% most deprived LSOA's nationally for overall, employment, health and income. Recent DCMS research 'Investigating factors associated with loneliness in adults in England' has found that people with disabilities/longstanding health conditions were three times more likely to experience chronic loneliness as those without. These are all significant problems across the area. Additionally, Age UK data shows that people living within the Stanley areas are at high risk of loneliness.
- 80 The KYN funded project will target vulnerable groups within the community, working with community centres, nursing homes and foodbanks. The project aims to reduce the proportion of chronically lonely people by enabling them to engage in activities and build social

connections. The project will take an intergenerational approach, tackling loneliness by embedding the principles of Community Wellbeing, through engagement with libraries and participatory arts. It will also work closely with healthcare providers to ensure that it is part of Social Prescribing offer locally.

- 81 The project will work within the community, encouraging engagement with books, reading for pleasure, chatting/ meeting new friends, building relationships, social inclusion, improving wellbeing. It will also promote the wide range of activities we offer in libraries and community spaces, reaching people who will gain the confidence to visit their local library/ or community space to access services, and hopefully signpost to volunteering opportunities.

Summary

- 82 Work has begun on addressing and responding to the recommendations outlined in the Phase 1 Needs Assessment report, with initial areas of focus including:
- 1) desktop review of physical library network,
 - 2) digital content and infrastructure,
 - 3) stock policy review,
 - 4) development of strategic outreach and participation.
- 83 As a result of savings requirements, available resource to effect the entirety of the recommendations are very limited. Therefore, in the short/medium term we will focus on the areas which can be undertaken within current budgets. However, good progress is being made where possible and external funds have been secured from the national Know Your Neighbourhood programme to deliver outreach and participation work in the Stanley Library cluster. It is hoped that a funding application to the ACE administered Libraries Improvement Fund will bring in an additional £500k of external funding to support digital improvements and co-location of Woodhouse library.
- 84 Libraries continue to be seen by many who currently use them as welcoming, free, safe, inclusive, and non-judgemental spaces that belong to everyone. They are recognised and valued as community hubs for a range of services, activities, events, and social interaction, at the heart of both rural and town communities.

Background papers:

None

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Covered in report

Finance

Covered in report

Consultation

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Any proposals will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment

Human Rights

Not applicable

Climate Change

Although not specifically detailed in this report, climate change and sustainability will be key considerations in further review of the physical library estate.

Crime and Disorder

Although not specifically detailed in this report, it is still expected that libraries will have a positive contribution to overall social value, which will include crime and disorder, but also a much broader and holistic impact across a number of dimensions.

Staffing

Not impacted at this stage

Accommodation

Not impacted at this stage

Risk

Not applicable

Procurement

Any procurement in relation to this programme will be undertaken under the Council's contract procurement rules and with advice of the corporate procurement team

Appendix 2 Counterculture Library Transformation (Under Separate Cover)

Library Transformation Digital Review

Durham County Council

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Counterculture Partnership LLP

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12 September 2023

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1. Executive summary

This report sets out the challenges, issues and opportunities facing Durham County Council (DCC) as it works to understand how digital, in all its forms, can be used to transform County Durham Libraries' service offer and the way it is delivered internally. This document is written within a landscape of wider organisational changes and uncertainties including an ongoing library staff restructure and the absence of a current library strategy.

The report offers four phases that cover the next five years and begins in Phase 1 with the development of a comprehensive roadmap. This roadmap and the digital transformation it will bring must be considered in response to an overarching strategy for the libraries which needs to form a key component of activity during this phase. The new strategy will need to be guided by a shared set of values, serve the Council's and County Durham Libraries' priorities and reflect the needs of the residents and communities the libraries serve.

County Durham Libraries' digital goals are to:

- Expand access
- Improve and enhance services
- Deliver innovation and improvements
- Optimise investment and resources
- Maximise data to inform decision making and drive change

County Durham Libraries will do this by:

- Developing a solid digital and technological infrastructure for our libraries.
- Building digital confidence, literacy and skills for our staff.
- Being ambitious and applying best practice in our digital work.
- Bringing the library to our users through technology.
- Building connection and interaction with our communities.

- Supporting our users to bridge the digital poverty divide.
- Supporting innovation, testing and learning through appropriate technology for staff and communities.
- Using data to inform a review of services and resources and responding to communities' needs.

Like many library services, the digital capacity of DCC and its staff teams are a work in progress. Building the digital confidence, literacy and skills of the team and its leadership are a vital foundation for the scale of change this report sets out.

Breaking activity into phases allows for an iterative approach, with the commissioning and building of new services not taking place until Phase 2 when the roadmap is complete. Phase 3 is for implementation and embedding of the new systems and Phase 4 for reviewing the impact and progress and prioritising the next steps.

Phase 1: 2024

Phase 2: 2025

Phase 3: 2026

Phase 4: 2027-29



The approach suggested places an emphasis on getting the digital basics right first, as this will provide the necessary technical infrastructure, understanding and evidence that will provide a robust foundation for the future. Critical to this foundation is the simultaneous development of new digital tools and faculties, alongside the development of the staff to ensure people have the skills and confidence to master the new systems and workflows that will be created.

The report draws on best practice from within the library sector and is informed by a small staff and customer consultation. Each phase builds on the existing evidence and data so that the library team can work together to understand and build the right measures of success against their own strategy and priorities.

The potential positive impact of the transformation this report covers will make it possible for County Durham Libraries to offer its communities a digital library service for the future.

Summary of phased approach

| Phase 1: Develop a roadmap | |
|--|---|
| <p>Timeframe: <i>Six months to one year</i></p> | <p>Actions, inputs, outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Develop values and priorities that sit alongside the new library strategy</i> • <i>Consider where initial 'quick wins' might be developed to build confidence of customers and staff</i> • <i>Review staff skills, structure, and capacity for the transformation</i> • <i>Design a change management plan and communications plan for staff and customers</i> • <i>Build a business case for investment</i> • <i>Explore opportunities for partnerships, internal and external</i> • <i>Agree the specifications for a new LMS</i> • <i>Examine supplier frameworks</i> • <i>Carry out soft market testing of products</i> • <i>Continue to review excellence in the sector and opportunities for learning and development.</i> |
| <p>Focus: <i>Aligning thinking. Plan and prepare for delivery of the transformation, focus on the priority areas.</i></p> | |

| Phase 2: Commission and build | |
|--|---|
| <p>Timeframe: <i>one year</i></p> | <p>Actions, inputs, outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Secure funding and investment</i> • <i>Build the specifications required for new systems</i> • <i>Undertake a procurement process</i> • <i>Commission supplier(s)</i> • <i>Implement a programme of staff training across digital systems and services</i> • <i>Develop partnerships, internal and external.</i> |
| <p>Focus: <i>Making things happen. Commission and build the infrastructure for transformation and launch a programme of staff digital skills development.</i></p> | |

| Phase 3: Implement and embed | |
|---|---|
| <p>Timeframe: <i>Nine months to one year</i></p> | <p>Actions, inputs, outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Test, implement and embed the new technology and services</i> • <i>Deliver staff training on the new LMS</i> • <i>Launch the new LMS and front facing platform.</i> |
| <p>Focus: <i>Implementing new systems and technology and embedding the change with customers and staff across the service.</i></p> | |

| Phase 4: Review, evaluate and refresh priorities | |
|--|---|
| <p>Timeframe: <i>One to two years</i></p> | <p>Actions, inputs, outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pause, review and evaluate progress to date</i> • <i>Analyse data and other reporting methods to aid evaluation</i> • <i>Revisit values, purposes and priorities of the library strategy and ways in which further digital developments can support delivery and outcomes</i> • <i>Celebrate successes and achievements to date</i> • <i>Review data collection methods and KPIs to ensure fit for purpose</i> • <i>Refresh, reframe and establish priorities for remaining one or two years</i> • <i>Plan for next digital strategy.</i> |
| <p>Focus: <i>Depending upon staff skills and capacity, as well as partnership working and funding, further phases should look to bring additional innovation in customer experience and services.</i></p> | |

2. Introduction

In 2020-22 Counterculture carried out a libraries' needs assessment for Durham County Council (DCC) and produced a clear evidence-based understanding of how the library service within County Durham could respond to the changing needs of the community and better shape provision for future users, in line with best practice. This commission formed the first phase of the Council's extensive consultation on libraries. One of the key recommendations from the needs assessment was for a review of the digital services and to develop a digital strategy. In Summer 2023 Counterculture was commissioned to deliver this second phase project, to review the use of technology and the online presence for County Durham Libraries, and to produce a digital framework for the service which includes a clear digital strategy encompassing both operational and service delivery needs and digital content.

2.1 Objectives

The specific objectives for this phase were to identify:

- The investment needed for a digital infrastructure to enable the modernisation, transformation and expansion of provision and access to DCC library services.
- The investment needed in digital operational technology including but not limited to a Library App, Self-Service options, online payments.
- The requirements and options for a library website so that the service is brought up to the same standard as other library services across England.

The strategy should ensure a vibrant digital offer, providing increased relevance to existing customers and an understanding of how this can attract new customers. The review and strategy should consider how library services can experiment with and expand the digital offer. Underpinning the strategy should be a consideration of the staff and customer skills needed to support an enhanced and ever-changing digital environment.

This work must take a long-term approach to digital infrastructure and innovation, moving towards platforms and ways of working that can continue to develop and adapt as technologies and needs change.

The technology should also respond to the opportunity for data collection and communications that will enhance customers' experience of the library service.

2.2 Scope

The digital strategy encompasses all software, devices and equipment that can be used to access, deliver, record and communicate library services, within and out with the physical library spaces. This includes but is not limited to Library Management Systems (LMS), Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology, self-service machines, Open+ technology, computers, printers, photocopiers, loanable devices, public access Wi-Fi, contactless and online payments, eBooks and eResources, library apps, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) tools, technology repair, digital skills learning, maker spaces, virtual events, websites, social media, digital screens, and data collection.

The strategy is designed to support digital transformation across all library services in County Durham. As the first digital strategy for County Durham Libraries, it has been created with a five-year term in mind to set the direction of travel for the future.

3. Methodology

3.1 Desk research

Counterculture carried out an analysis of the current digital services and infrastructure. This included:

- Reviewing existing policies and strategies, including DCC's Digital Strategy, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Digital Strategy 2022, the Digital Universal Library Offer, DCMS Culture is Digital policy and recommendations.
- Reviewing data on digital use, digital needs and recommendations identified in County Durham Libraries Needs Assessment report, as well as updated or other relevant data and documentation produced since this work was completed. This included reports on computer use and Wi-Fi use in County Durham Libraries.
- Producing a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) matrix based on user feedback that focuses on operational and service delivery needs, as well as customer needs and content.
- Mapping and reviewing the digital platforms, tools and services in use, suppliers and contract arrangements, and an options analysis for alternatives where appropriate.

- A comparator analysis within the libraries sector to provide a benchmark of potential digital solutions and activities and the investment needed.
- Reviewing digital marketing, communications and brand building with existing and new customers in mind.
- Understanding existing staff skills and reviewing of sector evidence for digital skills in libraries.

3.2 Stakeholder engagement

Desk research accompanied an online focus group with customers and one with staff, as well as online one-to-one interviews with key stakeholders. These activities built on the engagement carried out during the needs assessment, which included a survey, seven in person and five online sessions with the public, and two sessions with staff. During this earlier engagement, respondents were asked which digital services they use and what they would like to see offered in the future. The feedback was presented in the needs assessment report (pages 54-57) and should be read in conjunction with this document. Further discussions in this phase of work, although limited to a very small sample, were designed to inform understanding of best practice, expectations, aspirations and potential issues for the digital strategy and ensure relevance of the proposed framework.

Customer focus group

An online customer focus group was promoted through libraries to encourage users to share their thoughts on the current digital offer and how it could be strengthened. Only one person joined the discussion and was asked about the digital library services that they, their families and communities are aware of and use most often, which digital services work well, what improvements could be made, other digital services County Durham Libraries should consider, and what digital skills customers might need.

Feedback was collected from customers who declined the invitation to join the session. They explained that they were not comfortable using QR codes, weblinks, nor videocall platforms to access the virtual focus group. They said that they would like more support in libraries for customers struggling to use technology.

Staff focus group

A similar session was held for library staff to share their experiences and views on the digital services currently available and the potential for an expanded offer in the future. Staff were asked about the current strengths and weakness of the digital services, what improvements could be made, customers' and communities greatest digital needs, other inspiring digital assets that County Durham Libraries should consider, the skills and support staff might need to be able to make the most of an improved digital offer, the challenges in delivering a vibrant digital offer, and their vision for the digital services in 5 to 10 years. 11 library staff members attended the session.

Stakeholder, sector and supplier interviews

Interviews were carried out with a range of external stakeholders leading prominent work in digital developments and skills in public libraries. These included:

- Dave Lloyd, Lead for the Universal Library Offer: Digital & Information and Service Development Manager, Coventry Libraries
- Jill Brown, Digital Grants Manager, Library On
- Jo Cornish, Chief Development Officer, CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals)
- Amy Hearn Digital Inclusion Manager, 100% Digital Leeds
- Greg Stringer, Principal Librarian: Development, Leeds Libraries
- Liam Garnett, Senior Libraries for Digital, Leeds Libraries.

Research and conversations focussed on examples of best practice and innovation, funding opportunities, skills and training for staff and the public.

Internally, DCC's corporate marketing and communications lead shared insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current digital communications tools and practices and the libraries project team were interviewed individually as needed and provided additional data, insights, and information.

In addition, interviews and conversations took place with a range of suppliers including Axiell, SirsiDynix, Innovative, ESS, Civica, Nexbib and Lyngsoe.

4. National context

"Public libraries are helping people with no or low digital skills access essential services every single day."

Isobel Hunter, CEO, Libraries Connected

4.1 Universal Library Offers

The Universal Library Offers, developed by Libraries Connected, demonstrate the power of public libraries to enrich the lives of individuals and their communities as a streamlined and consistent framework. The framework ensures that the offers remain central to the role and aim of Libraries Connected to support the core public library offer and to drive library innovation and development. A valuable range of practical tools, guidance and resources are available on the Libraries Connected website which link to each individual offer. The current Universal Library offers are centred on:

- **Reading** - Engage, Imagine, Discover.
- **Information and Digital - Inform, Inspire, Innovate.** Through the Information and Digital Offer libraries provide quality information and digital support. Libraries enable individuals and communities to develop learning skills to find answers and to inform life choices. The offer helps children and adults to engage and feel safe online. It ensures resources and opportunities are accessible and it embraces creative and innovative technology.
- **Culture and Creativity** - Explore, Create, Participate.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Healthier, Happier, Connected.

Two additional offers underpin all four of the Universal Offers:

- **The Children's Promise**, developed with The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL), ensures that children are actively involved in decisions about the services that affect them as well as being offered opportunities to volunteer.
- **Vision and Print Impaired People's Promise**, developed with Share the Vision, ensures public libraries offer a fully accessible library service, comprising a collection of accessible reading materials and information in physical or digital forms.

4.2 Digital Inclusion

Defining digital inclusion

The University of Liverpool defines the Minimum Digital Living Standard as:

"A minimum digital standard of living includes, but is more than, having accessible internet, adequate equipment, and the skills, knowledge and support people need. It is about being able to communicate, connect and engage with opportunities safely and with confidence." ¹

Communications and Digital Committee report on Digital Exclusion

A [report from Parliament's Communications and Digital Committee on Digital Exclusion](#), published in June 2023, found that:

"there are significant geographical variations in digital access. Despite progress on broadband and mobile rollout in recent years, rural areas remain more likely to face difficulties accessing a decent internet connection." The report recognised that "the shift towards digital by default public services has not been accompanied by commensurate support for those who struggle with digital access. Libraries and community organisations have taken on additional responsibilities to fill these gaps, but without sufficient resources and training. And that "The Government's digital inclusion strategy refresh should include support for place-based in-person initiatives to help those who cannot navigate online access to essential services. This could include boosting the role of libraries, community centres and local amenities as inclusion hubs, in partnership with businesses."

[The Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index](#) 2022, commissioned by the bank on behalf of the Department for Education, shows that the North East has the second lowest digital capabilities but was the region that had made the most progress in the previous 12 months. 10% of adults who cannot do any of the 26 Life Tasks (the tasks are based around Communicating, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, Problem Solving and Being Safe and Legal Online) are likely to live in the North East. Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) from 2019 classified 12.2 per cent of the population in the North East as "internet non-users", compared with 7 per cent for London.

¹ Minimum Digital Living Standard www.mdls.org.uk

Digital inclusion in libraries in England

A report from the Good Things Foundation in collaboration with Libraries Connected in June 2023 on [Digital inclusion in libraries in England](#) found that in the UK, around 10 million adults lack foundation level digital skills, around 2 million households have no home internet access, and at least 2 million households struggle to afford broadband or mobile data connectivity. (Sources cited in Digital Nation 2022). The report highlights the vital role that libraries play in *“the ecosystem of digital inclusion support in communities”* but that *“provision varies between and within library services.”* Limited staff, volunteers, funding and outdated IT infrastructure were seen to limit what libraries can offer and over half of library services did not have a digital inclusion strategy. Partnerships and collaboration are seen as key to reaching communities or meeting specific needs.

The report makes several recommendations for national and local government, for library services, for the Good Things Foundation and for Libraries Connected.

The recommendations for library services were to:

- Use the [Framework for Digital Inclusion in Libraries](#) to identify whether / how to evolve the service’s digital inclusion offer.
- Develop a digital inclusion strategy – if not already in place – to set a clear direction for delivery and partnerships.
- Use funding opportunities (such as Arts Council England’s (ACE) National Lottery Project Grants programme) to evolve and embed digital inclusion provision.
- Partner with community organisations and others – locally and nationally – and coordinate efforts on digital inclusion, playing to respective strengths.²

² <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/digital-inclusion-in-libraries-in-england/>

Framework for thinking about digital inclusion strategy and delivery

The framework describes five areas of library services' and branches work on digital inclusion. It aims to support libraries in their strategic thinking about, and advocacy for, the role they play alongside others in closing the digital divide. For each of the five areas, there is a practice note that looks in more depth at what's involved.

Local ecosystem – place-based partnerships

e.g. relationships/partnerships with local authority, with voluntary and community sector, referrals/signposting, providing space, convening/being willing to convene with others

Digital Inclusion Support Offer

e.g. skills provision, digital support, access to connectivity and devices in the library/outside

Skills & Empowerment

- Independent learning in the library
- Bespoke learning: 1-2-1 support or drop-ins
- Supported learning in groups and classes
- Training library staff in core digital skills
- Training volunteers to be digital champions
- Training staff and public in safeguarding, privacy and security online
- Employability support
- Financial inclusion
- Health and wellbeing
- Referrals and signposting to services
- Support for small businesses

Data Connectivity

- Use of public WiFi while in the library
- Free mobile data (National Databank)
- Info, help or provision with mobile data and home broadband ('mesh networks')
- Able to connect with services that are inaccessible or clunky to use on mobile phones
- Up-to-date library computers with latest browser
- Computers and software that assure safeguarding, privacy and security

Devices

- Use of desktops or tablets while in the library
- Loaned devices for home use
- Gifted devices for home use
- Access to specialist kit (e.g. for designing games, video editing)
- Charging points for people's own devices
- Safeguarding, privacy and security measures to make loaned and gifted devices safe

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Ensuring equity, diversity and inclusion is embedded in work on skills, connectivity, devices

5. County Durham context

5.1 Library network

County Durham Libraries provides a physical and digital offer across 39 libraries, 12 of which are town centre-based, 9 of which are co-located in other venues, including leisure centres, and 27 are smaller community-based, a full list of libraries can be found [here](#). In addition to the physical buildings an accessible and inclusive service is provided into communities via the Mobile Library service, Book Bus and Books on Wheels. Each library has a range of resources available including books, computers, printing, Wi-Fi, events and activities, local history, and health zones. Membership of the library is free and open to all and almost all services are free at the point of access.

5.2 Current digital services

Current infrastructure and offer

County Durham Libraries' current digital and technology infrastructure consists of several core and add on systems either built in house or from sector suppliers.

The Library Management System is central to the infrastructure. The current system, Halcyon, is an inhouse solution which has now reached its limits. Other in-house infrastructure includes self-service machines, in operation at two libraries, which staff report is poorly used, and an in-house PC booking and print solutions system. Typically, library services adopt these technologies via service specialist suppliers who offer advanced or additional functionality than County Durham Libraries' current systems, and support with maintenance.

County Durham Libraries' public digital offer, Library Online, enables customers to join the library, browse the library catalogue, request items, check for new titles and reading recommendations, purchase second-hand book stock, access their library accounts and book a public access internet PC in any library. In addition, it provides access to a wide range of digital resources including eBooks, eAudiobooks through Bolinda's BorrowBox; eMagazines, eNewspapers and eComics, which have been provided through Overdrive's Libby but are now being trialled on BorrowBox; as well as a range of eResources including Ancestry, British Standards Online, Encyclopaedia Britannica Online and Oxford Online. County Durham Libraries' current offer in respect of eBooks and eResources is consistent with comparators within the sector and there is a good range of content available.

In addition to the software, every library also offers free access to computers, currently ChromeBoxes, Wi-Fi, and printing and photocopying for which users are charged a small fee. Printing procedures are designed to ensure confidentiality of the documents.

The closure of libraries during the pandemic saw a surge in access and demand for digital resources and services. In response, the budget for digital materials, eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines was increased and a new subscription to eNewspapers was introduced. Providers also enabled customers to access services from their home devices and with a temporary library card that were previously only available on library computers, such as Ancestry. The library service pivoted its events and activities offer online from Summer 2020 onwards, and delivered author talks, crafts and artist sessions, quizzes, and an online reading group through online platforms. Local creatives were supported and a new digital suite of online professionally curated activities such as craft and storytelling sessions were created.

In 2023, there is only one online book group and all other activities and events have reverted to in person delivery. County Durham Libraries continues to trial new digital programmes for its customers. Most recently it tested Featherbed Tales, a digital story sharing service. Public take up has been very low, however, and the licence will not be renewed.

Digital use

Library use data in Figure 1 below shows an overall decline in computer use across County Durham Libraries, although the last two years show the number of users increasing after the drop off during the pandemic.

Figure 1: Number of computer users in County Durham Libraries, data from DCC

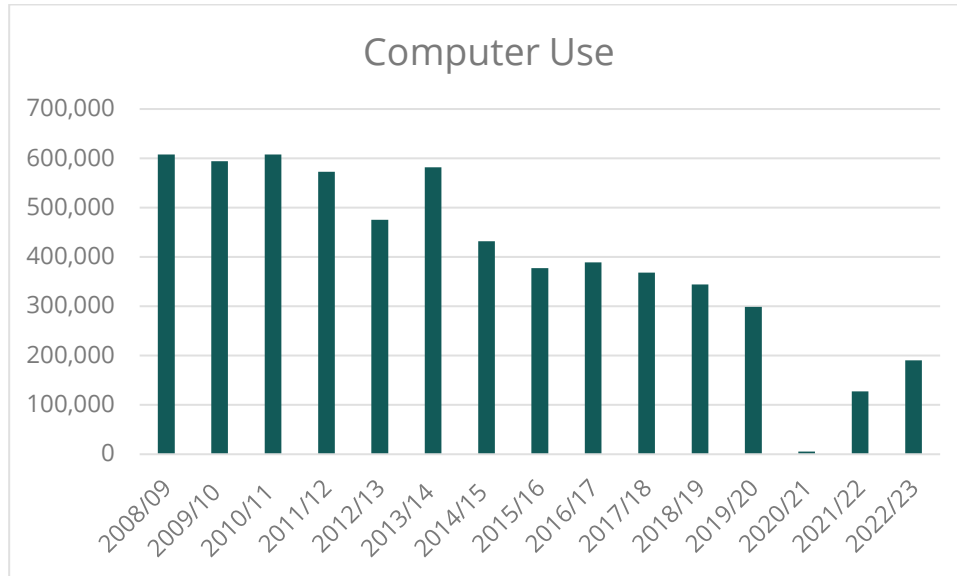


Figure 2 shows an example of the maximum number of client users of DCC's public Wi-Fi in several libraries. This snapshot records use at 14:00, a popular time, on 4 July 2023. This captures an average number of people using their own devices in the libraries. It would be worth comparing this data for a number of days over several months or at different times of the day to better understand trends and needs.

Figure 2: Snapshot of public Wi-Fi use, data from CommScope Ruckus

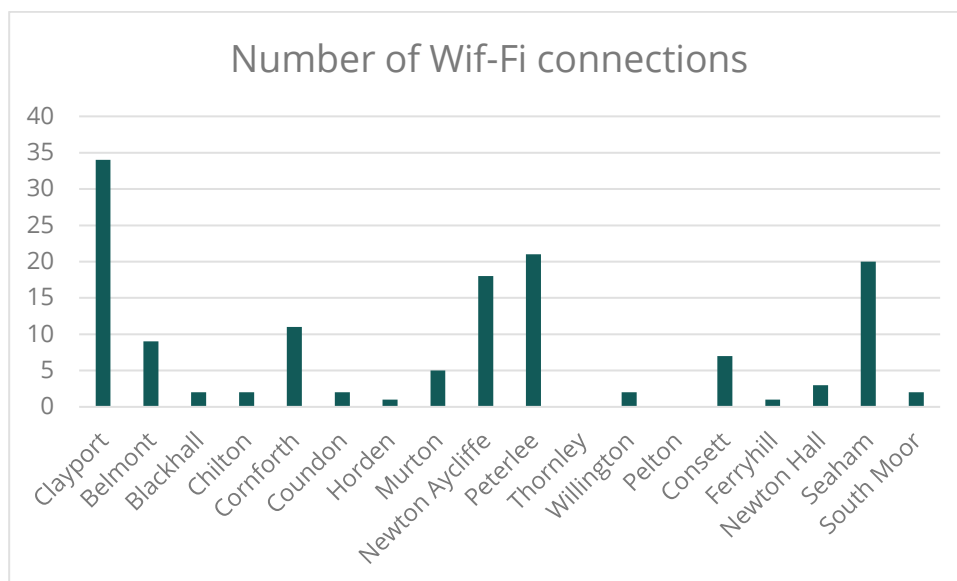
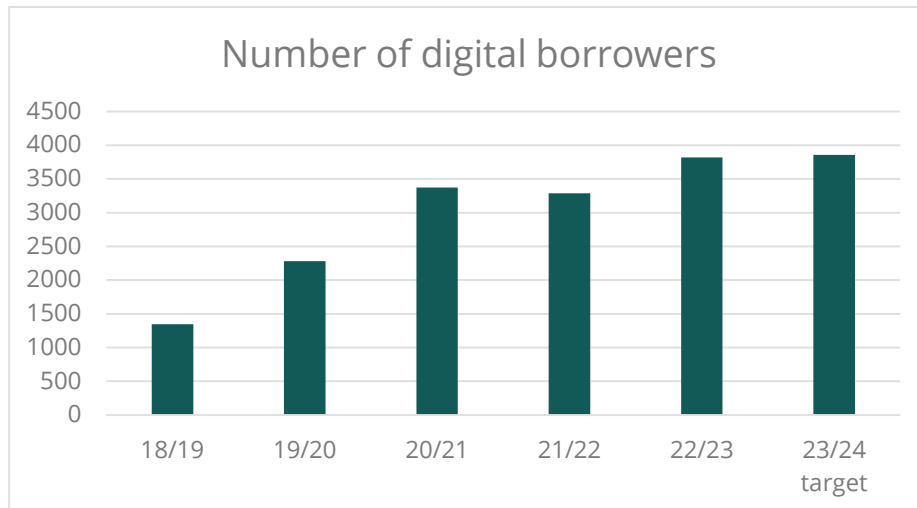


Figure 3 shows the actual number of users of Borrowbox's eBooks and eAudiobooks over the last five years and County Durham Libraries target for 2023-24. It reflects a general increase in digital borrowing.

Figure 3: Number of borrowers of digital resources, data from DCC



Year-on-year figures below show customer use of BorrowBox is increasing across all areas.

Figure 4: Year-on-year customer use of BorrowBox, data from Bolinda

| eAudio loans | | | eBook loans | | | ePress Loans | | | Total loans | | |
|--------------|--------|----------|-------------|--------|----------|--------------|--------|----------|-------------|--------|----------|
| Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance | Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance | Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance | Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance |
| 7,470 | 8,856 | 19% | 7,854 | 8,233 | 5% | 0 | 3679 | 100% | 15,324 | 20,768 | 36% |

| Total registered users | | | Active users | | | Average loans per active user | | |
|------------------------|--------|----------|--------------|--------|----------|-------------------------------|--------|----------|
| Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance | Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance | Jul-22 | Jul-23 | Variance |
| 13,050 | 15,990 | 23% | 3,250 | 4,043 | 24% | 4.72 | 5.14 | 9% |

It is difficult to compare use across eResources due to the way the different providers count 'uses', 'hits', 'sessions', 'views' and 'unique access' but rough comparisons of annual figures show that Ancestry and eMagazines are the most popular with Who's Who and Oxford Reference the least used. As recent additions to the BorrowBox suite, more robust data on eNewspapers and eMagazines will be available within the next year.

5.3 Digital communications

Internal communications

DCC uses Microsoft Outlook and Teams to communicate amongst staff.

Website

The <https://www.durham.gov.uk/libraries> webpages provide information about how to access all the physical and digital library services, activities, learning and resources. Every library has its own page with information about opening hours, events and activities, the resources available and how to find the library. DCC uses Google Analytics to monitor use and performance of these pages.

The webpage content is managed by DCC's corporate communications team, and each library sends ad hoc requests to the central team with the updates and information they would like published.

Short videos are posted on occasion on the County Durham Libraries' Facebook pages and the [Council's YouTube channel](#) or [Libraries Online channel](#). The corporate communications team acknowledged the benefit of using videos to provide important information for the public, particularly when trusted and knowledgeable librarians are speaking. The informational videos average 100-300 views each.

Social media

In early 2020, County Durham Libraries launched their own Facebook and Twitter accounts, ensuring they were able to provide up to date information on their services during the pandemic and to launch new initiatives, online events and activities.

The library service continues to use Facebook predominantly and has 1.8k followers (population 522k). It also uses X (formerly Twitter) and has 254 followers. This is lower than other local authority library services on Facebook, for example, Lancashire Libraries has 8.3k followers (population 1.5m), Suffolk Libraries has 6.2k (population 760k) and Norfolk Libraries 9.1k (population 916k).

The content on Facebook is frequent and varied, with contributions from all 39 libraries. It also links with the social media accounts of partners such as Durham Book Festival and Lumiere Festival. Library staff manage the social media activity, outside of corporate communications.

There needs to be further clarity and communication across corporate and library teams to ensure a shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and permissions

when managing library social media accounts as there is some uncertainty amongst library staff about what can be done.

Despite this, corporate communications considers libraries' social media accounts as a "beacon" for the rest of DCC. *"They do it really well: the tone of voice, the understanding of the offer. They show expertise. They're the best example of a Council service."*

Digital screens

Library staff can request for information to be displayed upon digital screens in their library. Requests should be directed to DCC's Culture, Sport and Tourism digital screen manager but often are sent to corporate communications instead. There is some confusion about which digital communications need to be approved or actioned centrally and which can be arranged directly.

Templates are available for the digital screens and other communications, but they are reported to be *"successful and not successful with equal measure"*.

Data collection

DCC has approximately 15,000 email addresses on a bespoke marketing platform, similar to Mailchimp. The Council is in the process of acquiring a bespoke event booking system, modelled on Eventbrite. These new systems are expected to enable DCC to store data more securely and to target communications to specific interest groups.

Currently, an organisational review of how data is captured and analysed across a range of hardware, software, systems and online platforms is underway with an ambition to establish a central repository of data for DCC and the creation of a dashboard of reporting.

5.4 Libraries and digital deprivation

[County Durham's Poverty Action Plan 2022-2026](#) recognises that:

"The ability to interact digitally is essential to addressing social and economic inequalities and levelling up our communities. Many of the cheapest ways of accessing goods and services are only available online. Mainstream banking has been removed from many of our highstreets, especially in rural areas, and many educational courses and job applications are restricted to online access. In addition, people who are not using online services can lack a voice and visibility

in the modern world, as government services and democracy increasingly move online.

However, some people can afford neither the equipment nor the broadband required to get online. When the pandemic hit in March 2020, around 51% of households with an income of less than £10,000 had home internet access, compared to 90% of households with an income of more than £40,000. Even when poorer households were physically able to access the internet, they were less likely to have the skills to utilise it. In rural areas levels, digital inclusion may be further reduced by poorer quality broadband and mobile connections."³

The Council's Action Plan sets the objective to identify interventions that will develop digital skills, provide access to connectivity and access to devices.

In addition, County Durham's Inclusive Economic Strategy reports that:

There is currently a lack of fast and reliable broadband in the county, where 53.1% of premises have access to ultrafast broadband compared to 71.5% nationally, with poor connectivity particularly in rural areas. There is high risk of digital exclusion in parts of Chester-le-Street, Seaham, Peterlee, Newton Aycliffe, and south of Barnard Castle.⁴

There may be a greater community reliance on libraries' connectivity in these areas. This could explain the high use of the Wi-Fi in these libraries shown in Figure 2 on page 14 of this report.

Table 1 overleaf has been taken from the needs assessment report and indicates for each of Durham's 63 wards: its total population; the percentage of that population living in LSOAs (Lower-Layer Super Output Areas) that fall within the top 10% and 30% most deprived nationally; and the libraries located within that ward (if any). These are also ranked with 1 being the ward(s) with largest population / highest levels of overall deprivation. This may give an indication of areas with the greatest digital deprivation.

³ <https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s153930/Poverty%20Action%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20-%20Cabinet%20-%20April%202022.pdf>

⁴ <https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/County-Durham-Inclusive-Economic-Strategy-2022-2035-2.pdf>, p34

Table1: Ward profiles. Source: ONS data via Durham Insight.

| Ref | Ward | Total estimated population - persons all ages (2020) | | % of resident population living in top 10% most deprived areas nationally | | % of resident population living in top 30% most deprived areas nationally | | Libraries in Ward |
|-----|-------------------------------|--|---------------|---|---------------|---|---------------|------------------------------|
| | | Value | Ranking Order | Value | Ranking Order | Value | Ranking Order | |
| 1 | Annfield Plain | 8,227 | 30 | 0.00% | 26 | 78.30% | 15 | Annfield Plain |
| 2 | Aycliffe East | 8,281 | 28 | 0.00% | 26 | 49.10% | 28 | Newton Aycliffe |
| 3 | Aycliffe North and Middridge | 10,717 | 13 | 20.20% | 12 | 20.20% | 49 | - |
| 4 | Aycliffe West | 7,969 | 39 | 45.20% | 4 | 100.00% | 1 | - |
| 5 | Barnard Castle East | 8,532 | 25 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | Barnard Castle |
| 6 | Barnard Castle West | 8,539 | 24 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | - |
| 7 | Belmont | 14,730 | 2 | 12.30% | 22 | 27.40% | 43 | Belmont |
| 8 | Benfieldside | 8,200 | 32 | 0.00% | 26 | 10.40% | 53 | - |
| 9 | Bishop Auckland Town | 7,861 | 43 | 0.00% | 26 | 59.60% | 21 | Bishop Auckland, Woodhouse C |
| 10 | Bishop Middleham and Cornfo | 3,669 | 61 | 0.00% | 26 | 65.50% | 19 | Cornforth |
| 11 | Blackhalls | 7,871 | 41 | 31.10% | 9 | 74.50% | 16 | Blackhall |
| 12 | Brandon | 10,300 | 14 | 0.00% | 26 | 30.70% | 41 | Brandon |
| 13 | Burnopfield and Dipton | 8,193 | 33 | 0.00% | 26 | 19.40% | 50 | - |
| 14 | Chester-le-Street East | 3,909 | 59 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | - |
| 15 | Chester-le-Street North | 3,899 | 60 | 0.00% | 26 | 42.40% | 33 | - |
| 16 | Chester-le-Street South | 7,516 | 47 | 0.00% | 26 | 22.80% | 46 | - |
| 17 | Chester-le-Street West Centra | 7,931 | 40 | 20.20% | 12 | 81.30% | 13 | Chester le Street |
| 18 | Chilton | 4,441 | 55 | 0.00% | 26 | 44.80% | 31 | Chilton |
| 19 | Consett North | 7,868 | 42 | 0.00% | 26 | 36.60% | 36 | Consett |
| 20 | Consett South | 5,610 | 53 | 0.00% | 26 | 33.00% | 38 | - |
| 21 | Coundon | 4,417 | 56 | 32.40% | 8 | 68.90% | 18 | Coundon |
| 22 | Coxhoe | 12,514 | 8 | 0.00% | 26 | 44.70% | 32 | Bowburn |
| 23 | Craghead and South Moor | 8,428 | 27 | 16.30% | 16 | 100.00% | 1 | - |
| 24 | Crook | 12,374 | 9 | 12.60% | 21 | 50.10% | 26 | Crook |
| 25 | Dawdon | 8,826 | 20 | 0.00% | 26 | 69.30% | 17 | Seaham |
| 26 | Deerness | 12,803 | 7 | 14.00% | 18 | 39.40% | 34 | Esh Winning |
| 27 | Delves Lane | 8,638 | 22 | 0.00% | 26 | 25.50% | 45 | - |
| 28 | Deneside | 7,085 | 51 | 36.80% | 6 | 79.60% | 14 | - |
| 29 | Durham South | 2,200 | 63 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | - |
| 30 | Easington | 7,629 | 45 | 13.90% | 20 | 63.20% | 20 | Easington Colliery |
| 31 | Elvet and Gilesgate | 12,245 | 10 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.40% | 54 | Durham Clayport |
| 32 | Esh and Witton Gilbert | 8,172 | 35 | 0.00% | 26 | 22.20% | 47 | Langley Park |
| 33 | Evenwood | 8,208 | 31 | 0.00% | 26 | 47.10% | 30 | - |
| 34 | Ferryhill | 10,798 | 12 | 11.50% | 23 | 88.90% | 10 | Ferryhill |
| 35 | Framwellgate and Newton Hal | 14,597 | 3 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | Newton Hall |
| 36 | Hornden | 7,397 | 48 | 61.70% | 2 | 100.00% | 1 | Hornden |
| 37 | Lanchester | 7,620 | 46 | 0.00% | 26 | 22.00% | 48 | Lanchester |
| 38 | Leadgate and Medomsley | 8,866 | 19 | 0.00% | 26 | 50.00% | 27 | - |
| 39 | Lumley | 7,280 | 49 | 0.00% | 26 | 19.30% | 51 | - |
| 40 | Murton | 8,017 | 37 | 20.80% | 11 | 57.30% | 23 | Murton |
| 41 | Neville's Cross | 16,042 | 1 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | - |
| 42 | North Lodge | 3,464 | 62 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | - |
| 43 | Passfield | 4,338 | 57 | 32.90% | 7 | 36.10% | 37 | - |
| 44 | Pelton | 13,062 | 6 | 0.00% | 26 | 37.60% | 35 | Pelton |
| 45 | Peterlee East | 7,209 | 50 | 70.30% | 1 | 100.00% | 1 | Peterlee |
| 46 | Peterlee West | 8,187 | 34 | 0.00% | 26 | 83.40% | 12 | - |
| 47 | Sacrison | 7,697 | 44 | 0.00% | 26 | 27.00% | 44 | Sacrison |
| 48 | Seaham | 7,011 | 52 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.00% | 56 | - |
| 49 | Sedgefield | 8,239 | 29 | 0.00% | 26 | 16.10% | 52 | Sedgefield |
| 50 | Sherburn | 8,500 | 26 | 14.00% | 18 | 31.50% | 40 | - |
| 51 | Shildon and Dene Valley | 13,364 | 4 | 37.40% | 5 | 100.00% | 1 | Shildon |
| 52 | Shotton and South Hetton | 9,394 | 16 | 16.30% | 16 | 100.00% | 1 | Shotton |
| 53 | Spennymoor | 11,273 | 11 | 17.60% | 14 | 54.80% | 25 | - |
| 54 | Stanley | 8,968 | 18 | 16.90% | 15 | 89.20% | 9 | South Moor |
| 55 | Tanfield | 8,057 | 36 | 0.00% | 26 | 32.50% | 39 | Stanley |
| 56 | Tow Law | 4,687 | 54 | 0.00% | 26 | 100.00% | 1 | - |
| 57 | Trimdon and Thornley | 13,207 | 5 | 9.50% | 24 | 88.90% | 10 | Thornley, Trimdon |
| 58 | Tudhoe | 9,398 | 15 | 8.80% | 25 | 58.00% | 22 | Spennymoor |
| 59 | Weardale | 7,980 | 38 | 0.00% | 26 | 0.20% | 55 | Wolsingham |
| 60 | West Auckland | 8,821 | 21 | 0.00% | 26 | 48.90% | 29 | - |
| 61 | Willington and Hunwick | 9,000 | 17 | 30.60% | 10 | 30.60% | 42 | Willington |
| 62 | Wingate | 4,332 | 58 | 0.00% | 26 | 57.20% | 24 | Wingate |
| 63 | Woodhouse Close | 8,542 | 23 | 54.20% | 3 | 100.00% | 1 | - |
| | TOTAL | 533,149 | | 10.60% | | 46.90% | | |

5.5 County Durham Libraries strategy and vision

This digital strategy will complement the development of other local and national strategies.

DCC is in the process of writing a strategy for County Durham Libraries, building on the work which took place in Phase 1 of the libraries needs assessment. The following principles have been identified as key components of the service they will deliver.

County Durham Libraries are:

- People-centred
- Inclusive and diverse
- Place-based and relevant
- Improving and widening engagement
- Improving literacy and the joy of reading
- Celebrating their role as community assets

Durham County Council Digital Strategy 2023-2028

The [five-year strategy](#) sets out the Council's commitments to connect County Durham's communities and shows DCC's recognition of the importance of digital assets in community cohesion, health and wellbeing, partnerships and service delivery.

Vision

Digital Durham: innovative technology, customer focused, empowered communities.

Ambition

To be a modern digital Council, by putting technology and information at the heart of everything we do understanding the community we serve and supporting the achievement of Council Priorities.

This will be delivered through three themes:

Digital Customer: improve access to our services and information through technology and be responsive to customers' needs.

Digital Council: equipping staff with the digital skills and technology to deliver services effectively and efficiently.

Digital Community: improving digital infrastructure and connectivity, providing people and businesses with the skills and technology needed to enhance their lives.⁵

The strategy includes a commitment to 'equipping staff with the digital skills and technology required to deliver services effectively and efficiently' and another commitment 'to facilitate and support a programme of digital inclusion initiatives for residents to gain digital skills, confidence and motivation'. These plans could benefit both library staff and customers and there is a potential role for County Durham Libraries in delivering structured digital inclusion programmes for its communities.

The County Durham Vision 2035

DCC's Digital Strategy supports [The County Durham Vision 2035](#) which sets out shared ambitions for the county, including the economy, safety, the environment and health and wellbeing.

The [Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-35](#), [Climate Change Strategy 2022-2024](#), and [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25](#) all reference the importance of digital technology in delivering efficient and secure services to Durham County residents, including creating digital community hubs, developing skills for employment and ensuring residents can access health and wellbeing support digitally. County Durham Libraries are well placed to provide significant support for these initiatives.

6. Library staff and customer SWOT analysis

During the focus groups conversations, library staff and customers set out their perception of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for County Durham Libraries' digital offer. The contributions made by these groups gave an insight into their direct experiences, awareness and perspectives and helped to identify gaps in shared understanding about the digital services.

⁵ <https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/42162/Digital-Strategy-Consultation/pdf/DigitalStrategyConsultation.pdf?m=638188752503730000>

Strengths

- Booking PCs, logging on and off and clearing data is done with ease.
- BorrowBox is well used and liked.
- Printing, photocopying and scanning is good quality.
- Email and text notifications about reservations are appreciated by customers.
- Ancestry subscriptions are well used.
- Library Online can be easily accessed with only the borrower number and surname.

Weaknesses

- Chromebox PCs are unfamiliar to most and customers need a lot of support using them. Staff have not received training on Chromebox. There is limited knowledge of how to access Microsoft applications and using the Google Suite is challenging for those who don't use it regularly. It requires people to have a Gmail account, which, in turn, requires a mobile phone for authentication. Chrome extensions cause many problems for document saving, sharing and printing and staff have to find work arounds, which is time consuming and creates a poor customer experience.
- Printing from the PCs is perceived as not user friendly, with too many steps. Customers can't print directly from their phones or tablets.
- The multifunctional devices (MFDs) that print, scan and photocopy are not known to be serviced. Staff have not received training on the MFDs and recognised that there are some faults they don't know how to fix and many functions they are not using to their full potential.
- There are no facilities for contactless or online payments. Customers expect digital payments now and many don't carry cash.
- Some staff commented on the unreliable Wi-Fi and poor phone signal in a few libraries, which can mean that services are slow and systems crash. This is frustrating for both staff and customers.

- Each of the 39 libraries has a separate webpage which makes it difficult for customers to find and compare library information or activities and events.
- BorrowBox's author search isn't optimised which means the search results are broad, making it difficult for users to find a specific author. There are also some popular authors and titles missing from the app.
- There is limited use across social media platforms beyond Facebook. More use would help libraries reach new audiences and keep updated on trends and influential digital communities, such as BookTok.

Opportunities

- Provision of **staff training and development** was the predominant theme. Staff would like training on ChromeBoxes, Ancestry and other eResources, Microsoft Teams, and any new devices, equipment, systems and programmes. Customers frequently ask for help using their own devices and staff feel a knowledge of all operating systems across PCs, Macs and smartphones would be beneficial, as well as how to access the Microsoft suite of applications. The training should extend to casual staff as well as permanent staff.
- **Training for the public** on different operating systems and devices would help them use their own technology, as well as build confidence on digital basics such as searching and navigating websites and digital banking, and widely used platforms such as Zoom. The training should also include promotion and use of the libraries' digital services and eResources.
- **An automated system for customers to book PCs**, log on using their library card, and have a time limit, would make it easier to manage and monitor computer usage.
- **Wireless printing** would enable people to print directly from their phone without needing to log on to a computer, set up a Gmail account or remember their passwords. There is also interest in 3D printers and training on how to use them. Libraries could offer high quality printing of photographs, as Boots does. GDPR compliant use of generic library email addresses would allow people to send documents to library staff to print if other options are not functioning.
- **A library app** for people's phones and tablets could allow people to access their account, make reservations, make payments and link to BorrowBox. A member of staff commented, "it would keep people in mind of their library."

Staff access to data collected by the apps would support reporting.

- **All digital systems should be integrated and self-service** where possible so that customers can confidently use platforms and devices without support from staff. They ought to be user-friendly, intuitive and secure.
- **Touchscreens** should be installed, where possible. Many people are more comfortable with using touchscreens than keyboards and mice. A touchscreen with apps for the eResources would enable and encourage more people to access them. Adding an app for Council services could also provide customers with easy access to information, bus timetables and local events.
- **Staff could carry a tablet** as they move about the library to deal with enquiries or order books. This could help manage queues at the desk.
- **Administrative forms could be digitised.** For example, new customers could accept the library Terms and Conditions on a digital form and submit it via the LMS. This would save time, postage, paper and storage for paper copies sent to Seven Hills.
- **An LMS that supports a family membership card** would make it much easier to link family members and copy relevant details, such as their address.
- **A single events calendar** covering activities at all 39 libraries would allow customers to easily search for events in any library. If one activity is fully booked or at a time that doesn't suit, they could find the same activity at another library nearby. Having an integrated booking system would also allow customers to reserve places at author talks or other popular activities.
- **Better promotion of eResources** through communications tools and platforms would increase their use.
- **Phone charging points** would make it easy for people relying on their phones to stay in touch, for example, young people who need to contact home or rough sleepers contacting emergency housing.
- **Reviewing the quality of the technology accessories for sale** (USB sticks, phone chargers, headphones etc) could bring in more income but it is likely to be modest due to other available sources for these items.

- **In five years, staff would like to see** more virtual events; a broader range of eBooks and eAudiobooks; AI generated personalised recommendations; gaming or learning equipment that brings more young people into the library.

Threats

- Keeping up with constantly changing technology and digital environments.
- Protecting budget for staff training when finances are stretched.
- The staff capacity needed to engage with, train and deliver the transformation, and to keep up with sector developments.
- Securing the additional capital and revenue investment needed to deliver digital transformation.
- Meeting the digital divide and digital inclusion challenges faced by residents of County Durham.

7. Benchmarking, innovation and case studies

The examples and case studies provided in this section are from a broad range of rural and urban library services across the UK and offer ideas and information from across the sector. The library services referenced serve differing population sizes with varying needs and provide services across a range of libraries in terms of size, number and mixed models of community and local authority run. Whilst it is acknowledged that some of these may not be direct comparators for County Durham Libraries it is hoped that they provide a useful source of information when considering where investment and innovation are most needed and best placed.

7.1 Basic digital offers case studies

Sutton Libraries

As a member of the Libraries Consortium, Sutton Libraries uses [Discover LMS](#) for customer-facing services. The pages are customisable so customers can set their preferences for the type of information and reading materials they would like to see. There are several search filters so that results can be more specific and books in a series are linked. AI is integrated to make personalised reading recommendations. Customers are also able to book, pay for and share events online and they can opt-in

to library marketing and access blog posts.

Newcastle Libraries

[The Discover platform](#) has an extensive search which accesses information in other resource lists and from the internet. It also allows more customer account functionality such as linking family accounts and displaying library card numbers as barcodes which can be stored on a smartphone.

Gateshead Libraries

[Digital activities](#) are integrated throughout activities for all ages at Gateshead Libraries. Their schools' offer is designed for students and teachers at Key Stage 1 and 2 and include sessions on coding Green Screen, Microbits and Raspberry Pi. An early years' offer is also available for under-fives using interactive play with electronic toys. Life Skills sessions help people of all ages get the most from their time online, including guidance on shopping online securely, using comparison websites for switching utilities, and booking online appointments. Libraries also provide practical sessions on using apps that can help with mindfulness and relaxation.

7.2 Innovation case studies

These examples and case studies show innovative digital services operating in libraries across the sector, alongside information on services which are being adapted more widely as part of a core library service delivery offer.

Piloting, testing and trying some of these examples would enable County Durham Libraries to evolve and develop their digital offer, enabling the service to meet customers' needs and expectations and move closer towards a sector wide standard for delivery.

Digital Making

The Lab – Gloucestershire Libraries

Gloucestershire Libraries has introduced library innovation labs and located them in each of their six districts. The Labs are described as *“friendly community spaces, offering accessible digital skills development for all ages and abilities and are designed to build confidence and skills and connect businesses, schools, and entrepreneurs with the digital.”* They provide access to a range of kit, equipment and experiences including:

- 360° immersive film
- 3D design, print, scanning and prototyping
- Coding and micro-computers
- Virtual and augmented reality
- Advanced digital design and animation
- Full Adobe Creative Suite
- A design studio for digital design, 3D modelling and animation
- Oculus Quest VR headsets
- Podcast recording equipment
- 360° cameras and editing software
- Micro-computers and programmable robots

The new Gloucestershire Libraries Strategy 2023-2028 highlights the services commitment to digital and to growing their network of innovation labs so that libraries can continue to support customers to grow their skills and confidence around digital and technology.

Creator Spaces, Hertfordshire Libraries

Hertfordshire Libraries has introduced [CreatorSpaces](#) at six libraries across the country. These are promoted as a "*Space in the library to get creative. From coding to knitting - learn a new skill or practice an old one*".

Customers are offered a range of equipment and software to test, try and experiment with, including:

- iMacs, PCs, Chromebooks and tablets
- 3D printer and rendering software
- digital cutter for craft projects

- digital sewing and embroidery machines
- Adobe Creative Cloud suite, Final Cut Pro and Logic Pro
- colour printer, photocopier, laminator and digital screen
- VR (Oculus Rift)
- Green Screen

Taster sessions are offered, for a small fee, to introduce customers in an informal way to using the equipment and to give people the opportunity to learn new skills and practice in a supported environment. In addition, they also run craft groups for adults for a small fee.

CreatorSpaces also provide volunteering opportunities and support small businesses and entrepreneurs looking to prototype, develop products, access design software and host meetings.

A smaller scale *CreatorSpace Out of the Box* offer enables some aspects of the offer around technology and fun to be delivered in other libraries who don't have a permanent CreatorSpace.

Fab Lab Devon – Imagine, Invent, Create.

The Fab Lab at Exeter Library was the first to open in a public library in the UK in May 2014. A second Fab Lab was opened in Barnstaple Library in 2018. [Fab Lab Devon](#) delivers digital making courses for the public, schools and businesses with the aim of the widening awareness of digital making techniques, processes and opportunities for everybody. Through hands on learning, using open-source tools and by providing open access the Fab Labs enable staff and customers to enhance their digital skills, try new technologies and change digital consumers into digital makers.

Digital Spaces, Coventry Libraries

Coventry Libraries developed a [Digital Spaces at Coventry Libraries](#) offer across libraries. Immersive audio and VR experiences are available for everyone to try new technologies and explore the future of how people will connect, create and share. Supported with funding from ACE and working in partnership with the BFI and The Space, the library service has worked with local artists and creatives to develop projects with digital at their heart, producing podcasts, audio and visual creations, running digital photography sessions and audio recording workshops with residents

around projects focused on their local communities. Other projects have produced blogs, short films, feature length radio documentaries and immersive exhibitions.

7.3 Digital skills

Leeds Libraries Digital Support programme

To ensure those with low digital engagement aren't left behind, to provide equity of access to technology and skills development, and to inspire next generations, Leeds Libraries has developed a nationally recognised digital programme, [Learn in the Library](#), that supports the computing curriculum, develops people's digital skills, provides free access to technology and the internet through public PC access, tablet lending and sim gifting, and helps people to self-manage their health and wellbeing.

A summary of Leeds Libraries free #Digital121 support programme

- telephone helpline for support with any digital enquiries
- access to computers and Wi-Fi in all 34 libraries
- tablet lending at selected libraries
- data gifting at selected libraries as part of the [National Databank](#)
- skills development sessions, including weekly *Digital Drop-ins* at several community libraries and *First Steps with Digital sessions* for complete beginners
- support from staff trained as Digital Champions
- The Leeds Libraries Online Learning Platform supports users to develop their digital skills, whether they are getting to grips with going online or just wanting to take the next step in developing essential digital skills for life or for work. Staff can also access training through the platform to make sure they are up to date with support for the digital offer.

Leeds Libraries Creative digital offer includes:

- **Studio12** a digital media project for people aged 16–30. It provides free access to a production studio, training, accredited qualifications and an Industry Panel of creative professionals. Studio12 is run by Leeds Central Library, the space houses a fully equipped studio with a wide range of multimedia, video, photography, music equipment and software packages. People accessing Studio12 are encouraged and supported to work towards attaining an

accredited qualification though NOCN and Arts Award in Audio Visual Media Production. Studio12 work is showcased at live events in the city centre and to a global audience on the web.

- **Code Clubs** offer easy-to-follow projects which will help young people to learn a variety of coding languages by making games, robots, animations, and websites in a supportive environment.
- A community **Creatorspace** based at Compton Road Community Hub and Library.

LIBRARIES AT THE CENTRE OF A COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH

| BARRIER | MODEL | ACTION | INPUT | OUTPUT |
|------------|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Motivation | Identifying need | Identifying when a person would potentially benefit from digital inclusion support | 300+ Digital Champions across the network: | Digitally enabled, engaged and inspired Leeds citizens |
| | Signposting to support | Telling people about digital inclusion support available. | All staff across community hubs and library sites cross referring for digital support – blue badge, school place applications, NHS app, etc. | |
| | Championing digital | Positive conversations, person centred, looking for easy wins, focussed on benefits, modelling –motivation. | Targeted support, e.g. health | |
| | Embedding digital | Maximising opportunities for exposure to and opportunities to engage with digital –confidence. | Every service has a digital component that adds value to the library experience; some are only available digitally | |
| Skills | Providing skills support | One-to-one or group, planned sessions or ad hoc, formal or informal, workforce or peer support. | #Digital121: Help line Digital drop ins First steps / Next steps Niche academy tutorials | |
| | | | Access | |

The community hub and library is:

- already working with and in the community
- the community's trusted place, where the community already go to get support

The community hub and library staff team are:

- people who the community trust
- trained to support the needs of the community
- understand the needs and issues of the community
- already support digital inclusion in the community

100% Digital Leeds

The [100% Digital Leeds](#) programme is led by the digital inclusion team in the Integrated Digital Service (IDS) at Leeds City Council and Leeds Health and Care Partnership NHS West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board. Their remit is to work with partners across the city – third sector, public sector, health and care – to strengthen digital inclusion infrastructure in communities and increase access, engagement, and participation so that everyone in Leeds can have equal opportunity to use digital tools, technology, and services in the right way for them.

The service has a close relationship with libraries as one of their main delivery partners across the city. Over the last year, the 100% Digital Leeds team has invited library colleagues to join digital inclusion workstreams, networks and steering groups for Arts in Care Homes Day, Digital Health Hubs, Arts and Culture Digital Inclusion Network, Older People's Digital Inclusion Network, and more.

The 100% Digital Leeds team were funded by the Local Government Association's Digital Pathfinders Programme to produce [Digital Inclusion Toolkit](#), a community-based approach to digital inclusion model that can be adopted by any local authority to create their own digital inclusion programme.

As part of the [Leeds Digital Festival](#) in September 2023 they will be hosting a number of events including [Tackling data poverty in Leeds: a community-based approach to gifting SIMs](#).

The Glass Box, Somerset Libraries

[The Glass Box](#) is a digital skills hub in Taunton and part of Somerset Libraries. It was set up in 2016 to showcase new technology, help the community to develop digital skills and provide space for learning and collaboration. With funding from Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and with support from organisations such as Digital Taunton and Code Club South West, The Glass Box works with education, business and community groups to offer workshops, events and a Digital Skills Academy. It also offers 3D scanning and printing, a library podcast, a range of information and storytelling videos on YouTube, device loaning, software test and try, and a databank scheme.

7.4 Digital reader development and audience engagement

Bookflicks

Facilitated by Rural Media, [BookFlicks](#) is a youth-led project helping young people make & share creative content about the books they love and upskilling and inspiring libraries to use social media as an innovative way to engage with younger audiences nationally. The project worked directly with those aged 13-30 years old, watching and understanding the way they interact with social media, both as users and as content creators. It has engaged with library staff across the country to understand the ways their communities interact and the unique challenges they face. A toolkit has now been produced outlining different ways to engage with the BookFlicks project. The aim of the toolkit is to enable libraries to understand how to promote books and the love of reading via social media, how to cultivate new audiences and inclusivity, and how to inspire readers to share their book suggestions. It offers tried and tested

techniques to get started. The team has also run 'how-to' workshops in libraries across the UK, teaching participants to create TikTok content and get it seen by the biggest audiences.

BookTok

Library services are using BookTok channels to engage with customers around reading and promotion of reading for pleasure. BookTok users create engaging content which discusses, reviews, promotes and recommends books across different genres and age groups. Libraries include links to the books on their online catalogues or through their eBook providers, encouraging customers to reserve the books they are interested in. East Riding, Middlesbrough and Cambridgeshire Libraries are some of the services engaging with BookTok.

7.5 Self-service library systems

A range of new technologies are available to improve efficiency, accuracy and security in libraries.

Self-Service Checkout

Self-service technology which supports customers to access core library functions such as issuing, returning, renewing and reservation of stock as well as checking accounts and paying charges is a well-established part of core operational delivery across UK public libraries. The market has changed and developed considerably in recent years with several suppliers providing similar products such as standalone self-service kiosks and desktop self-service technology. Some systems and suppliers also offer integration with websites, library management systems and other digital suppliers which enables customers to access events, receive reading recommendations, pay charges and find and download digital titles. Suppliers include: Nexbib, Bibliotheca, d-tech, Lyngsoe.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) software technology

RFID technology improves the speed and accuracy of circulation and shelving functions, freeing library staff to provide direct service to customers. Investment in RFID technology is a prerequisite of a modern self-service offer in libraries. Library stock suppliers will provide RFID tagging to new stock at an additional cost per item. A project to retrospectively make current DCC stock RFID compliant would be needed if

this were to be adopted alongside self-service technology in County Durham Libraries.

Smart returns shelves

This technology uses RFID software to instantly return items placed on them as customers enter the library. Customers simply place the item/s directly onto the shelf and their items will automatically be discharged from their account without the need to queue or for staff intervention. Books are then immediately available to be shelved or borrowed by the next customer.

Smart reservations shelves

Management of reserved stock is a key part of the day-to-day activities in libraries. Currently staff intervention is required to manage the process of notifying customers, administrating and arranging items for collection. RFID technology is used with smart reservation shelves which enable staff to place items onto the shelves and customers will be notified without the need for staff involvement that their item is available for collection. The need for paper-based administration is removed, and items no longer need to be placed on shelves in alphabetical order or collection date order. Customers are automatically informed of the location of their item for collection and by scanning their library card upon collection the item is automatically issued to their account.

7.6 PC and printing solutions

Self-Service printing, scanning and copying

Increasingly customers want an easy way to print, scan and copy their documents without the need for staff support or to log on to public access PCs. As a result, cloud based self-service printing solutions are more in demand and more common in libraries across England. Technology such as [Princh](#) and [Surfbox](#) allow customers to print, scan and copy without the need for accounts or passwords and enable customers to use their own devices. They require no additional apps or software and offer integrated ePayment facilities.

PC booking and printing solutions

Access to public access PCs remains a core part of the public library offer. Management and supporting customers to book, log on, use and print from public access PCs takes up a considerable amount of staff time. There are a range of software solutions available which support libraries to administer and manage access,

bookings and session control, offer printing solutions, and enable CIPFA compliant admin and reporting. The market leader is Netloan which is, for example, used by Kent, Newham and Hertfordshire Libraries. Other suppliers include [Insight Media](#).

7.7 Device loaning

Hublet is a self-service tablet solution, which delivers digital content to customers within library buildings, increasing digital access safely and securely. It offers fast and secure loaning and returning of tablets with content which has been tailored to the library service offer, with no personal data stored.

A docking station holding three or six tablets is located in the library which simultaneously charges the devices and clears data post use. Customers scan their library card to release a tablet which has been preloaded with content including the library website, eBooks, eMagazines and other eResources. The tablets can only be used within the library and are locked down if removed from the library building.

Some library services are offering Hublets as a way of increasing access to digital resources, freeing up space as they can be taken anywhere within the library building and providing more privacy than traditional PCs.

Middlesbrough, Newcastle and Northamptonshire Library services are current users of Hublets. In the UK the exclusive supplier of Hublets is Lyngsoe systems.

7.8 Extending library access

Open Library, Open+, Open Access, Extended Access Technology

Open Access technology, also known in the sector as Open+, Open Library, or Extended Access Technology is a system that allows libraries to provide more flexible hours, making them more accessible to the community without the need for staff to be present. Designed to complement staffed library hours, it can be implemented in different ways to meet various library service models, from extending access to an entire library or only a section of it, providing full self-service resources, or reservations / book collection only. It supports libraries to have the flexibility to extend access in the way that best meets the needs of their community and space.

The market leader is [Bibliotheca](#) who have a fully customisable solution already in use at over 850 libraries. First introduced in libraries in Scandinavia, in the UK it is used extensively in Peterborough, Leicestershire and Barnet Libraries and a growing number of other library services. Other suppliers include [Nextbib](#).

Libraries Connected will be running a webinar on this topic early in October 2023.

LibCabinet

Lyngsoe offers a product called the LibCabinet™ which has been used by some library services to bring a library offer to locations which don't have a permanent library. For example, Aberdeenshire Libraries have placed them in rural locations around the county. The Cabinet holds up to more than 200 items for a 'mini library' offer with 24/7 access. Transparent doors are equipped with an electronic lock that can be opened by presenting a library card to a card reader (or using a touch screen). A customer then takes a book, closes the door and receives a receipt telling them when the item needs to be returned. Books can be returned following a similar process.

7.9 Intelligent data driven visitor counting

Understanding who is visiting your library and when is an integral part of customer delivery data. Typically, libraries have relied on unsophisticated technology to monitor and support this data, which is unable to differentiate between adults and children, for example, or where groups are entering a building. This means that visitor data is often inaccurate and unreliable. Examples of more reliable solutions include Nexbib's [Nex.Count](#), currently in operation at Merton Libraries, which adopts technology from retail and claims to offer 99% accuracy. It enables differentiation between adults, children and groups visiting buildings and provides data in real time so that an accurate picture of usage hour by hour can be clearly seen. As a cloud-based system visitor data can be accessed locally and centrally, indicating the busiest and quietest time which could help to inform strategic decisions about opening hours and staffing rotas. A similar example is [CountIT](#) from D-tech.

8. A digital approach: tools, values and principles

8.1 The value of digital literacy in supporting change

The digital infrastructure is one aspect of a digital strategy, but a successful digital transformation relies on people. Building a digitally fluent workforce and a digitally mature relationship with an audience requires a leadership team that is informed, reflective, responsive and active around digital. To achieve this, it is necessary to build the digital confidence and literacy of the whole staff team and leadership.

Digitally literate leadership is the foundation of digital maturity for any organisation and is necessary in any digital transformation plans. It is vital in helping understand what to act on and what to reject. These decisions should always relate back to the libraries mission, vision and objectives in specific ways. Digital literacy is about

understanding the many new ways of doing things, new business models, new ways of working and new ways of delivering services. It is about libraries' processes as much as their systems, and about people as much as any hardware/software.

Digitally literate leaders do not need to learn digital skills, they don't need to know how to code, livestream or structure a database. They need to understand the value of having a team who can do these things; a team who can create digital products and services that are fit for purpose, who can manage the digital systems needed to sustain those products and services, and who can use them in smart ways that illustrate impact. They need to value digital enough to understand that it touches all areas of their organisation's activities, internally and externally, from its financial systems to its collection management, from its social media to its educational events.

Through both valuing and understanding digital, the leadership teams can begin to question and explore the most appropriate way for their libraries to exploit digital technologies to fulfil their mission and objectives. It is also invaluable in allowing them to map out the resourcing requirements needed to support their ambitions and plans.

The impact on organisational rhythms and workflow brought about by digital transformation should not be underestimated. Significant time and resources will need to be set aside to implement the changes being considered and to support staff. Key to this will be building the digital literacy and confidence of the whole team.

It can be useful to think about digital transformation and capacity building as a journey: beginning with little and learning and developing as progress is made. There are always unexpected events, and the environment is constantly shifting but, as understanding (and literacy) grows, so does confidence. Building the digital capacity of libraries through the development of its staff is the most sustainable way to improve the impact of the libraries digital output, support the positive digital change needed and become fitter for the future.

Culture24 and Europeana produced [a Guide to Digital Transformation in Cultural Heritage](#). The Guide offers definitions, recommendations and starting points that could be useful to help frame an approach to digital transformation. These can be worked through with County Durham Libraries staff and used to frame workshops or to form discussion and strategic planning with leadership.

8.2 Shared values as a foundation for change

County Durham Libraries may find it useful to work through and apply [The Digital Culture Charter](#). The Charter is one part of The Digital Culture Compass, a useful

online resource to help cultural organisations approach, assess and improve their digital activities. It was commissioned by ACE and The National Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the UK Government's *Culture is Digital* initiative. It was developed by a partnership of organisations who understand and work with digital and culture every day.

The Charter is a set of guiding principles designed so that cultural leaders – directors, trustees or senior managers – can make and communicate a commitment to approaching digital activities in ways that are led by core values, centred on people's needs and responsive to change.

The three principles in the charter are:

- **Be values-led**
 - Be purposeful so we better serve our mission
 - Be inclusive so we widen participation
 - Be ethical so we protect everyone's interests
- **Be people-centred**
 - Understand people so we can better meet their needs
 - Collaborate and communicate so we widen our reach and impact
 - Grow skills and confidence so we empower people
- **Be responsive to our context**
 - Focus so we are effective
 - Adapt and evolve so we are resilient

Across DCC and County Durham Libraries there are various existing policy and strategy documents that also contain values and principles. It could be useful to consider how those in the Charter relate, with a view to harmonising them into a simple set of shared values to help steer this strategy.

Shared values that are understood and articulated across a team are a necessary foundation for any kind of change or transformation. It is recommended that they are

used as the foundation for the proposed approach and actions outlined in this report.

8.3 A digitally focussed organisation

Digital basics first

Any kind of digital capacity building should be focussed on getting the basics right. Through our conversations with library staff and sector specialists, along with our research into the current state of play, there is still some way to go in getting these basics right for County Durham Libraries.

These basics could be defined to include:

- A responsive, up-to-date website that is fully accessible to AAA standards and covers the basic visitor information needed by most web visitors.
- An active, conversational social media presence that has personality to match County Durham Libraries brand on the most relevant platforms.
- A flexible content management system able to catalogue, search, retrieve and manage digital assets.
- Regular collection and interrogation of web and social analytics and agreement about the fundamental goals of each and their value.
- Basic Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) around name, key visitor attractions or online content.
- Claiming and monitoring County Durham Libraries on [Google Business](#)
- A system for email newsletter sign-up and management that is GDPR compliant.
- Internal communications system for team members and volunteers that can support home and office working.

Many organisations are excited about and attracted to the idea of innovating with the latest technologies despite having little understanding of the complex skills and competencies needed to use, manage and create with them. But innovation digitally does not have to mean new. The simpler aspects of managing digital systems and infrastructure, or the commitment and resources necessary to ensure staff have the skills and capacity to use digital technologies and systems, can often take second

place but are significant when done well. For many it would be transformative to simply get the digital basics right.

Digital can often be fetishised as a solution to the cultural sector's problems, promising more innovation, increased revenue, better business models and wider audience reach. This digital dream is far more nuanced for cultural organisations who lack the digital skills, infrastructure and capacity to know how to understand the value of the latest technologies to their organisation. Over the last ten years, the pursuit of digital innovation amongst cultural organisations is littered with more failures than successes. When considering any kind of investment in a technology driven project (such as the current trend of AI or VR work in the sector), County Durham Libraries needs to ask, if a particular digital experience is the answer, what was the question?

A Digital Basics First approach might include sharing and interrogating the analytics of the current Council website pages, along with data from Library Online, plus auditing social channels to discover what is and isn't working and what are people saying. Using data already available will help to make more informed decisions and identify areas for improvement.

Benchmarking digital maturity

Alongside the Charter, the [Digital Culture Compass](#) also has the digital progress [Tracker](#) which is a self-assessment tool that can help identify how digitally mature an organisation is and how it is adapting to and integrating digital assets. Building use of the Tracker into workflow on a regular basis can help plan and develop digital activities in a more strategic way.

The Tracker divides an organisation's activities into 12 areas which include Strategy and Governance; Cultural Programme; Places and Spaces; Marketing and Communications; HR; IT; and Finance and Operations. The user can select which areas are applicable and then, in each area, assess the digital elements of between five and 10 different activities, using a consistent five-point scale. These activities might include use of technology, creative content, data, processes or ways of working.

The comprehensive scale of the Tracker means it can look daunting, but it is easy to look at one area at a time, such as Governance or Enterprise. If County Durham Libraries can commit to working through those areas that are relevant, it will increase understanding of where the organisation needs more resources and skills and, as such, can inform training strategies.

Assessing current skill level and the role of digital champions

Alongside the Charter and the Tracker, County Durham Libraries can better understand how its staff and volunteers currently use digital, audit their digital attitudes and skills, and identify opportunities for improving the digital confidence, skills and capabilities of the staff more fully. The [DASH Survey](#) is a free service, developed by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) that allows organisations to gather this information to identify strategic priorities and future funding requirements. It can reveal gaps where training or confidence building activities can be brought in and may also reveal strengths and skills that County Durham Libraries may not know already exist within the team.

Existing skills within the team may not be anything to do with someone's formal role at a library but come from their private life (gamer, vlogger, ancestry expert, artist, selling online etc). They could they be invited to share their digital expertise with others as part of a general digital confidence building session. This can be a great way to open opportunities for skills sharing sessions that can help to boost confidence and understanding.

Understanding digital culture, the changes in user behaviours, keeping up with new technologies and platforms and analysing data takes time. It can be difficult for staff to know where to start. A digital champion can be a person from any role in an organisation, regardless of organisational structure, who can display their own good digital leadership. It may be one person or a small group who become the champions to tackle the changes needed in digital skills, mindsets and systems inside the organisation.

Digital Champions are already included in the Council's own digital strategy and so would be an obvious extension for the libraries. The Digital Buddies scheme already in place in many libraries is similar but is designed to provide help to members of the public rather than staff (see section 9.4).

Digital Champions or buddy schemes are powerful ways to utilise existing staff or volunteer expertise. They also help to build a more robust digital capacity inside the library and develop a more structured community library offer.

9. Identified needs and potential solutions

9.1 Mapping, research and options for digital tools, platforms and services

The following table provides information, suggestions and indicative costings for consideration in relation to the development or replacement of existing solutions, as well as information on some of the current range of innovative tools and technology available. This links with the information provided in section 7.

A selective range of suppliers were interviewed as part of the research and mapping stage. Information contained in this table will need to be tested further through DCC’s existing procurement frameworks and soft marketing testing options which will provide a more detailed range of costings from a more extensive range of suppliers.

| Description | Current status | Suppliers | Costs | Notes and considerations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Library Management System. Acts as the CRM, stock database and collections catalogue for whole service. Supports essential delivery functions including stock management (issues, returns, renewals). Essential to the day to day running of the service. | Current system is Halcyon, an inhouse system. Halcyon is now at end of life creating a need to procure a new modern system with additional services and benefits. | Axiell Civica ESS – Library Management Cloud Innovative SiriDynix | ESS Library Management Cloud. Illustrative costs: Annual LMC subscription c.£25-£30k per annum. Deployment package of professional services to set up the environment, transfer-in data and provide onboarding training c. £30-£40k, depending on the volumes of data, skills analysis for training purposes etc. ESS offer a packaged price, | Considerations include procurement fees, implementations fees, ongoing maintenance, data cleansing costs, training costs (supplier and DCC costs to release staff for a comprehensive training programme) project management fees (specific PM role for overseeing PM and implementation to go live stage |

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|--|--|--|--|---|
| | | | <p>no surprises and complete confidence for no project cost overruns.</p> <p>Innovative Product is called Polaris. No price given. Indicated pricing would be based on population.</p> <p>Axiell Products are Spark and Arena, with Arena the front facing platform. Indicative pricing is c.£15k for initial capital costs and annual costs of c.£24k to £34k depending on exact specification and requirements.</p> <p>Current clients include Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, Darlington Borough Council, East Riding, Plymouth and Coventry Libraries.</p> | <p>and beyond for a period of 6 to 12 months).</p> <p>Most suppliers offer managed services and access to an App as well as a front facing platform (website) for customers.</p> <p>Frameworks: Suppliers are on different frameworks and not all suppliers appear to be on a single framework. Frameworks referenced by suppliers include ESPO, YPS, CCS, G-Cloud.</p> |
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| | | | <p>SirsiDynix – Costs are based on annual issues and number of staff users. Indicative one-off costs for implementation are c. £30,000 depending on the options chosen. Annual costs: c.£65,000 based on all options being chosen and annual issues of 1-2million, plus 100 staff users or c. £45,000 based on 50 staff users and annual issues of 500k to 1 million. Current customers include Sunderland, London Libraries Consortium, Inspire Nottingham, Rutland and Derbyshire. They are the largest LMS provider in the UK.</p> <p>Civica – Product is called Spydus. A new version in development will mean that clients will automatically receive updates as released. Costings are based on</p> | |
|--|--|--|---|--|

| | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------|---|--|
| | | | <p>population and their framework pricing. £63,000 p.a. with a £38,000 one off set up cost. This is an SAS style price so would include all upgrades, full cloud hosting and support. This is off-the-shelf pricing so is open for negotiation depending on actual needs.</p> <p>Currently the second largest LMS supplier in England. Stockton, Northumberland and Hartlepool are customers.</p> | |
| <p>Library App</p> <p>A fully LMS integrated app which supports push notifications for reservations, marketing, and loans, eBook and eResources content integration, library service information, integrated social media feeds, reading trackers, and can also act as a self-</p> | <p>Currently no provision.</p> | <p>Solus</p> | <p>Solus App</p> <p>Appears to be the market leader and most used. £2,500 implementation and £2,500 annual fee excluding the cost for self-service. The Self-service functionality is an additional £2,500 annually for the first 5 branches, and then £400</p> | <p>Most commonly used is the Solus App as a number of LMS providers partners with Solus including Axiell and SirsiDynix.</p> <p>SirsiDynix are looking to develop their own app independent of Solus.</p> <p>Some library services have the self-service functionality at larger branches only or at</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p>service app for the issuing and returning of items and removal of RFID tagging.</p> | | | <p>annually for each additional branch.</p> | <p>branches which may have Open Access hours in place.</p> <p>Services currently using library apps include Sunderland, West Sussex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Merton and Cambridgeshire.</p> |
| <p>Self-Service Checkout. Self-Service Kiosks/Stations which enable customers to borrow, return, and renew items. Additional functionality allows customers to check library accounts, make payments (cash/card). Can use RFID, EM or barcode technology.</p> | <p>In house system which offers the option for issue and return only via a barcode scanner linked to a standalone terminal. Currently available in 2 locations - Chester Le Street and Crook libraries.</p> <p>Anecdotally considered to be poorly used due to position in libraries (hidden), lack of customer awareness, prominence of customer desks. Data on actual usage since 2020 is unavailable. From 2018-</p> | <p>Lyngsoe Nexbib D-Tech Bibliotheca</p> | <p>Lyngsoe <i>Phoenix Kiosk</i>- £4500 + VAT plus install £950 per day, depends on quantity & locations. These are in use at Halton, Middlesbrough, Worcestershire, Oldham and Cambridgeshire Libraries</p> <p><i>Tabletop Kiosk</i>- £3600 + VAT plus receipt printer if required at £690 + VAT, plus install £950 per day.</p> | <p>Pricing will vary depending on quantities purchased. Some suppliers will offer additional discounts on multiple purchases.</p> <p>Other supporting kit and equipment may be required, e.g., return bins, trolleys etc.</p> |

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|--|---|--|--|--|
| | <p>2020 usage was mainly below 10% of overall transactions.</p> | | <p><i>Classic Self-Service Unit- £4250 + VAT plus install £950 per day.</i></p> <p>Nexbib <i>Standalone Kiosks - £3000-£3,500 per kiosk.</i></p> <p><i>Desktop model – under £3000 per unit.</i></p> <p>Plus, maintenance and support contract at £390 p.a.</p> <p>Bibliotheca <i>RFID standalone kiosk with touchscreen and item detection (cash and card payment) - £7,995.</i></p> <p><i>RFID standalone kiosk with cash payments only. £6495.</i></p> <p><i>RFID standalone kiosk with card payment only. £5,495</i></p> | |
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| | | | <p><i>RIFD desktop terminal with card and cash payments - £6,995</i></p> <p>Tiered maintenance costs, depends on number of kiosks: £650 (standard), £900 (advanced), £2,500 (premium).</p> <p>Additional costs for training, project management and supplementary hardware.</p> | |
| <p>RFID technology Improves the speed and accuracy of circulation and shelving functions, thereby freeing library staff to provide direct service to customers. Investment in RFID technology is a prerequisite of modern self-service offers in libraries.</p> | <p>Not currently adopted. No current supplier.</p> | <p>Nexbib Bibliotheca Library stock supplier</p> | <p>Bibliotheca RFID Tags for books - £0.16 (depending on quantities) RFID tags for CDs - £0.20 Average price for a staff tag pad £545.00</p> | <p>Library stock suppliers will provide RFID tagging to new stock at an additional cost per item. A project to retrospectively make current stock RFID compliant would need to be considered. Suppliers of self-service kiosks also provide RFID technology and additional kit which</p> |

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| | | | | support tagging of books and other resources. |
| <p>Self-Service Printing Cloud based self-service printing solutions enables customers to print, scan and copy without the need for accounts or passwords and to use their own devices. They require no additional apps or software and offer integrated ePayment facilities.</p> | Not currently available. Printing solution is managed inhouse by DCC IT department. Staff commented that they are frequently called upon to support printing and release prints. | Princh Surfbox Insight Media | <p>Surfbox Three different kiosk types ranging from £1,650 to £2,400 per kiosk. Plus £495 annual subscription for software, £300 commissioning and set up fee and £200 annual maintenance fee. NAYAX card payment charges £10 per month and 2.95% processing fee.</p> | Surfbox is in widely in use across Irish libraries, In York, Blackburn and East Riding. |
| <p>Hublet Hublet is a self-service tablet solution, which delivers digital content to customers within library buildings, increasing digital access safely and securely. It offers fast and secure loaning and returning of tablets with content which has been tailored to the library service offer, with no personal data stored.</p> | n/a | Lyngsoe | £11950 + VAT plus install £950 per day | |

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| <p>Wi-Fi Publicly accessible Wi-Fi</p> | <p>Available free of charge in all libraries. Currently managed in house by IT services. Some libraries opt to limit Wi-Fi overnight when the library is closed to prevent people lurking outside and anti-social behaviour.</p> | | | |
| <p>Public Access PCs</p> | <p>Chromebooks are used for the free public access PC provision. This is managed in house by DCC IT department. Bookings are currently managed inhouse via the Library Online webpage/website</p> | | | |
| <p>PC booking and print solutions. Software solutions which support libraries to administer and manage access, bookings and session control, offer printing solutions, and enable CIPFA compliant admin and reporting.</p> | <p>Current inhouse solution.</p> | <p>Netloan Insight Media</p> | | <p>The market leader is Netloan which is, for example, used by Kent, Newham and Hertfordshire Libraries. Other suppliers include Insight Media which is used in Devon Libraries.</p> |

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| <p>Open Library / Open Plus / Open Access / Extended Access technology</p> <p>Open Access technology allows libraries to provide more flexible hours, making them more accessible to the community without the need for staff to be present.</p> | n/a | <p>Lyngsoe Nexbib Bibliotheca</p> | <p>Lyngsoe Product is called <i>Self Operated Library</i>. Indicative cost for a small Library approx. £10-15k, large Library approx. £20-30K-site surveys would need to be conducted to confirm detailed costing.</p> <p>Nexbib Product is called <i>Open Library</i>. Indicative cost is £8k per single story library. Subject to site survey.</p> | <p>Already in use at over 850 libraries including a number in the UK - Kent, Gloucestershire, Barnet, and Northern Ireland libraries all use this solution.</p> |
| <p>Collection Management Tools.</p> <p>Collection /Stock Performance Management tools which supports libraries in the selection, promotion, cataloguing and management of stock.</p> | <p>County Durham Libraries was an early adopter of Collection HQ (previously SmartSM) and have been using collection management tools and software since approx. 2003. The service was previously a Collection HQ development</p> | <p>Collection HQ</p> <p>Nexbib - Nex.Inventory</p> <p>A mobile solution for up-to-date stock management and precise inventory directly at</p> | <p>Collection HQ £15,000 p.a. Multiyear discounts available</p> | <p>Collection HQ is the most widely used tool on the market. Other products are available which help with the day-to-day housekeeping and management of stock.</p> |

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| | <p>partner which enables a direct influence on iterations in design and functionality with the supplier. The team is keen to become a development partner again. Collection HQ is currently used as standalone product and does not make use of integration with the current LMS. Service does not currently use dynamic stock.</p> <p>Bibliographic tools are subscribed to including: Unity used for searching for inter-library loan books. It also feeds into worldcat.org, £3,000 p.a.</p> <p>Bookdata, a comprehensive bibliographic data provider for books, used to trace new books and add records to the catalogue in the correct MARC format, £3,000.</p> | <p>the shelf.</p> <p>Lynsgoe – Intelligent Materials Management Solution</p> | | |
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| | Catalogue metadata is through BDS Ltd, £5,300 p.a. | | | |
| Intelligent data driven visitor counting. Hardware and software solutions which support accurate real time data counting of visitors to library buildings. As a cloud-based system visitor data can be accessed locally and centrally. | All libraries were fitted with digital counters in the mid-2000s with the exception of Clayport which has a digital door counter. They are no longer used due to the significant margin of error in the data. Libraries currently rely on manual counts. | Nexbib D-Tech Bibliotheca | Nexbib Product is called Nex.Count – circa under £1,000 per library | Nexbib’s Nex.Count , currently in operation at Merton Libraries. |
| Smart return shelves. Uses RFID software to instantly return items placed on them as customers enter the library. | Not applicable. | Lyngsoe | Lyngsoe £12,850 + VAT plus install £950 per day. | |
| Smart Reservation Shelves. RFID technology with smart reservation shelves to enable staff to place items on the shelves and customers will be automatically notified. | Not applicable. | Lyngsoe Nexbib | Lyngsoe Intelligent Hold Shelf - £12,850 + VAT plus install £950 per day. | |
| LibCabinet | Not applicable. | Lyngsoe | Lyngsoe | |

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| <p>brings a mini library offer to locations which don't have a permanent library. Transparent doors are equipped with an electronic lock that can be opened by presenting a library card to a card reader (or using a touch screen).</p> | | | <p>£15,995 + VAT per cabinet plus install £950 per day.</p> | |
| <p>eBooks</p> | <p>Current provider is Borrowbox/Bolinda. Approx. 9467 E-Books, 5751 e-Audiobooks form part of the current offer.</p> | | | <p>Borrowbox/Bolinda and Overdrive/Libby are the market leaders in the UK with most library services subscribing to content supplied by either or both suppliers.</p> |
| <p>eMagazines</p> | <p>Currently in the process of moving supplier from Overdrive/ Libby to Bolinda/Borrow box following the trial of a small amount of magazine subscriptions taken with Bolinda from September 2022.</p> | | | <p>Borrowbox/Bolinda and Overdrive/Libby are the market leaders in the UK with most library services subscribing to content supplied by either or both suppliers.</p> |

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| | Currently approx. 5000 titles available. | | | |
| eNewspapers | <p>Currently considering moving supplier from Overdrive/Libby to Borrowbox/Bolinda.</p> <p>Taking a six-month trial with Borrowbox from September 2023.</p> | | | Borrowbox/Bolinda and Overdrive/Libby are the market leaders in the UK with most library services subscribing to content supplied by either or both suppliers. |
| eResources. | <p>Current offer is mainly focussed on reference resources following a decision to remove printed reference collections and move to online delivery.</p> <p>Current resources: Oxford online Encyclopaedia Britannica, British Standards Ancestry library edition, Featherbed tales</p> <p>Current suppliers: OUP, EB, BSI, ProQuest.</p> | | | Most library services continue to provide an E-Resources offer to sit alongside their print collections. The number of subscriptions and range of databases varies from service to service depending on available budgets, service priorities and community usage and need. |

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| | Annual subscriptions. | | | |
| Events online | Events moved online during COVID-19. Provision has now primarily stopped as events return to being delivered in libraries. | | | |
| ePayments (online and in libraries) | Currently no provision to take payments online via the website or LMS. Currently no provision to take card payments in libraries. | | | <p>The introduction of self-service kiosks could facilitate payments for reservations and other charges when added to library accounts on the LMS.</p> <p>Other solutions could include card payment machines at library desks facilitated by staff and linking with existing systems within other DCC services for receipt of payments online.</p> |

9.2 Skills and training

In its Digital Strategy, DCC has an ambition to be a Digital Council who will equip staff with the digital skills and technology to deliver services effectively and efficiently. County Durham Libraries has an opportunity to tap into opportunities offered across the Council as its Digital Strategy is recognised and to ensure that a comprehensive training and support programme is put into place which builds on the work recommended in Section 8 of this document.

Specific training on new digital technology and systems will be a vital part of the evolving digital strategy and framework for libraries in the coming months and years and will be key to ensuring the strategy's success, building customer confidence in new technologies and services, delivering a good modern standard of customer service, and in bringing the service to the same level as other library services in the sector.

The introduction of a new LMS, for example, and the move across to a windows-based cloud-based system will require a significant in-house training programme, working with the supplier, and could be an opportunity to test the Digital Champions model and train the trainer type approach to cascading training and development opportunities.

9.3 Digital skills for staff

As previously outlined, it is essential that existing staff are trained and confident in all aspects of digital service delivery from the LMS to guiding someone in the use of the latest technology. Training in the use of new technologies will be a priority area and will have a significant impact across all libraries.

A workstream to consider how a mixture of in-house, partnership and outsourced training and development activities can be delivered needs to be taken forward. For some staff this may be a requirement to refresh or update existing skills, for others it will be a fundamental shift in developing new skill sets. There is potential to develop a resource pack of induction and training materials for the libraries team which can be used for both existing and new staff.

Some training and development opportunities outlined below are available at nil or small cost. There are other cost-effective ways in which training and development could be delivered. These include:

- Utilising the training and development opportunities available within DCC.

- Working in partnership with others to share skills and costs.
- Building training costs into funding applications as part of a wider bid.
- Working with other libraries in the North East to share their training resources and costs.

Sector support and training

There are lots of sector training and development programmes and resources provided at low or nil cost. Both CILIP and Libraries Connected provide online training and development platforms with a range of modules encompassing topics including digital, media and information skills.

CILIP can also be commissioned to provide bespoke training programmes for library services and can also carry out training needs analysis. Examples of some of the current programmes and opportunities are set out below.

Digital Leadership for Libraries – CILIP

CILIP is a good source of training and development workshops and programmes, most recently launching [Digital Leadership for Libraries](#). Digital Leadership for Libraries is a free, online learning course comprised of five open-access, modules created for public library workers, volunteers and apprentices. The modules are intended to create engagement with the principles and values of being a digital leader in public libraries, unlocking the potential for all public library workers, and their services, to be confident digital leaders. Modules include Digital Leadership, Digital Creativity, Data Stewardship, Digital Impact and Digital Marketing. The modules are designed as short bursts of training with further links and resources which can continue to be explored in more depth as required. There is a strong focus on building staff confidence and playfulness around digital, and although it is titled Digital Leadership it has been designed for staff at all levels. There is no need to be a CILIP member to access the course.

CILIP Libraries Rewired Conference: Libraries, knowledge and information in a time of disruptive change - Friday 10 November 2023, London

CILIP is hosting a new conference dedicated to exploring digital transformation in the sector. It is designed to connect tech-curious colleagues, solutions providers and thought-leaders on all things digital and to explore and encourage innovation in the sector, offering staff the opportunity to have a play with what's on offer. The

programme will explore data, AI, digital creativity, library technology, digital rights and the skills, leadership and change management processes required to keep pace with fast-moving developments in the digital landscape. Further details are here: - <https://librariesrewired.org.uk/>

CILIP specialist skills and knowledge training for library staff

CILIP is currently running [a series of online training sessions](#) for Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL) staff in 2023. The programme has a limited number of places available for non GLL staff. Remaining topics include social media for public libraries, supporting customers to discover their past using online ancestry tools, and eBooks and eMagazines. CILIP has a full range of [events and training opportunities](#).

Libraries Connected e-learning platform

Libraries Connected is committed to ensuring that people who work in libraries have access to the skills and information they need to deliver a high-quality service for their local community. The LC [online learning platform](#) offers a range of courses including modules on Digital, Media and Information Skills. These modules have been developed by the Information and Digital Universal Library Offer group as part of their work on media literacy and digital skills development. They aim to give library staff and volunteers the skills and knowledge needed to provide effective digital and media literacy support to communities and library users.

Key Digital skills - This module enables staff to refresh and update their knowledge to support customers in developing their digital skills. It has been designed around the Government's Essential Digital Skills framework and the recently identified learning needs of library staff. It gives resources and guidance on how to search effectively and work confidently with users whose digital skills are low.

Media and Information Literacy - This module introduces the five principles of [DCMS' Online Media Literacy Strategy](#) and focuses on understanding how to use the internet safely and make informed decisions, equipping staff with skills and knowledge to share with library users.

LibraryOn development opportunities

A Community of Practice is being developed by the LibraryOn team in relation to the £1.1m LibraryOn grants programme in England that supports public libraries to improve their online presence and discoverability. The Community of Practice will share learnings from the successful projects in the coming months with opportunities

for all library services to take part and hear more about individual projects. There will also be workshops and sharing from practitioners on related topics. An unconference at the British Library in March 2024 will present projects, keynote speakers and practical hands-on sessions all related to digital technology. Further details of opportunities will be published in the LibraryOn newsletter which has a free sign up via their [website](#).

Digital Unite

[Digital Unite](#) is a social enterprise focused on supporting organisations with issues linked to digital inclusion. It uses a digital champions model to provide structure and frameworks which help deliver digital inclusion strategies. The Digital Champions programme trains staff and volunteers in organisations to get the confidence, skills and resources they need to support digital skills development. The Champions then cascade the learnings. Digital Unite currently offers a free digital essentials course so staff and volunteers can test the training. They also offer a range of free technology guides which can be embedded into an organisational website.

NLHF Digital Heritage Hub

Although designed to target the most pressing digital questions asked by small/medium sized heritage organisations, this resource hub was created as part of NLHF's Digital Skills for Heritage initiative and has a lot of useful free resources. The section on [Digital Engagement](#) may be of particular interest as it offers support around:

- digital marketing and communications
- websites, email and social media
- fundraising and eCommerce
- recruiting and working with digital volunteers
- online events and activities
- accessibility, inclusion and sustainability
- analytics, visitor data and segmentation

9.4 Digital skills offer for the public

The needs assessment revealed that over 40% of non-users of libraries thought that it was important for County Durham Libraries to help people to get online and improve their digital skills. They wanted to see libraries offering more digital literacy and skills classes. For example, how to use various software, programming for young people and how to stay safe online. There was a sense that more technology-based events would attract young people and an overall feeling that there is lack of awareness about digital and online services.

The needs assessment also showed that for existing customers the library service should be considering how it can better respond to customer needs (particularly those not currently using the service) as technology shifts and changes. Customers wanted to be able to test and try new technologies in libraries and develop and expand their skills in these areas.

Signposting

Signposting to available resources support could be a valuable way of supporting customers. As a starting point, the County Durham Libraries website could provide a specific section with details of authorised sources of information and links for people looking to develop their digital skills. [Lancashire Libraries](#) would be a good model.

Delivery through partners and volunteers

There is an opportunity to work with volunteers and partners to support customers on their digital inclusion journey. ACE commissioned the Good Things Foundation to put together a practical checklist, [Promoting Digital Inclusion with the Arts and Cultural Sector and Beyond](#) which can be used to help organisations identify what more they could be doing to promote digital inclusion and includes a section on building capacity and working in partnership.

Learn My Way

[Learn My Way](#) from the Good Things Foundation is a website of free online learning for beginners, helping to develop digital skills to make the most of the online world.

Volunteers

Volunteers can provide additional skills and capacity and are used by library services across the country to extend opening hours, provide additional services and enhance customer experience.

There is an opportunity for County Durham Libraries to grow an exciting volunteer offer focussed around digital and technology. The current volunteer scheme, Digital Buddies, is run in Newton Aycliffe, Consett, Belmont, Coundon, Chester le Street, and at Clayport (supported by Durham University students). Some libraries recently lost their digital volunteers, some report that they are not required, and other libraries recognise the need for volunteer support and are in the process of recruiting. Previous partnerships with AGE UK to provide basic digital support at Belmont Library ended when the charity wanted to introduce a nominal charge to customers.

Digital Buddies assist library customers with any basic IT queries, for example setting up emails, helping to print or shop online, using Microsoft Office, applying for jobs or accessing websites. Some customers are supported to use the public access computers and other customers bring in their own laptops, mobile phone or tablets. Library staff report that they are very grateful when support from a digital volunteer is available as they can spend more time supporting the customer.

DCC is undertaking a volunteer audit for the entire service to ensure that up-to-date statuses of volunteers are recorded.

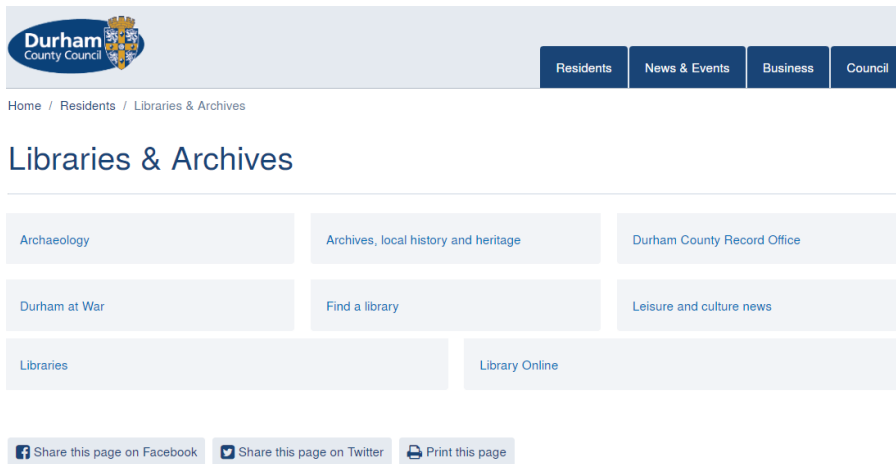
Similar Digital Buddy schemes are in place across a number of library services in England, including [Surrey Library](#), [North Somerset](#), [Woking Library](#), [Cambridgeshire County Council](#) and [North Yorkshire Libraries](#).

9.5 Online user experience

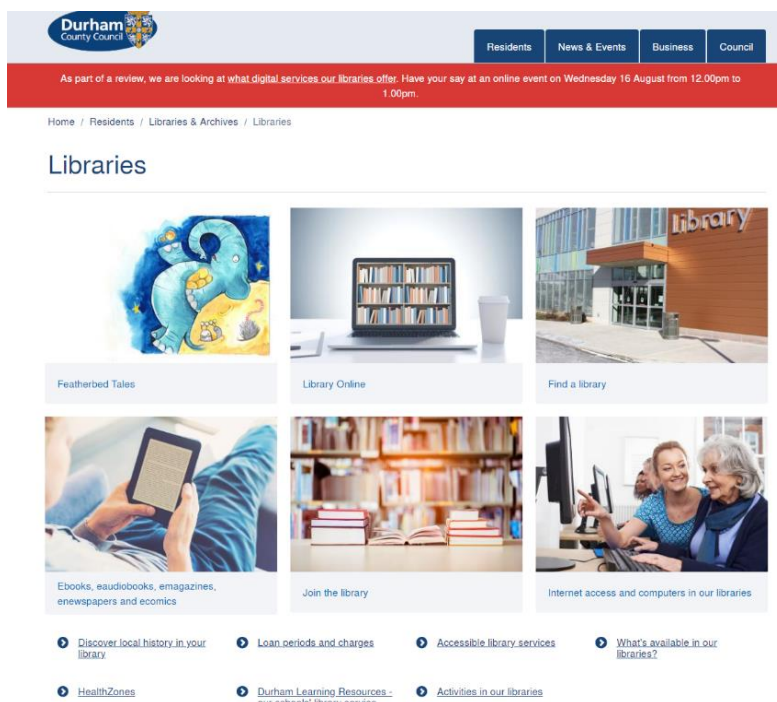
County Durham Libraries does not yet have a clearly defined online brand, logo or style and there is little consistency across the various platforms. There is also confusion when doing an internet search or on social platforms for 'County Durham Libraries' due to the existence of libraries in Durham in the USA and the Durham University Library in the UK.

The main library website sits under Durham County Council's site and shares the branding and corporate style. These pages on the various library/archive sites and services provide up-to-date information and good functionality but generally lack images and personality.

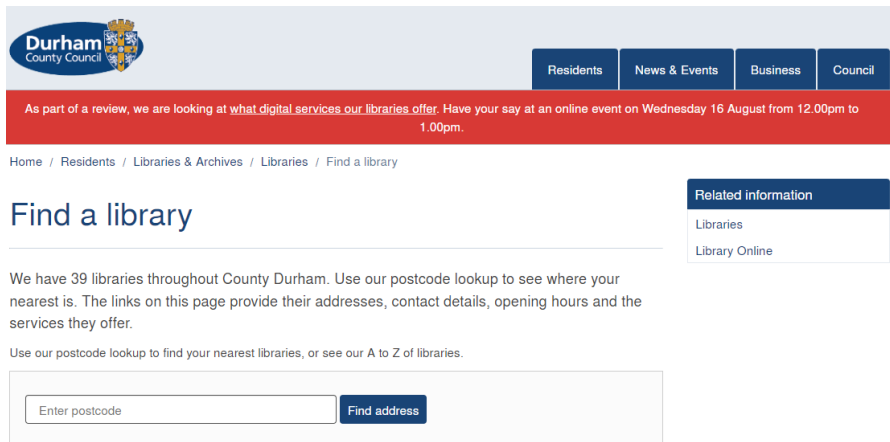
For visitors to this [top-level page](#), access to information requires numerous clicks through different levels of navigation. In addition, there may be potential confusion around what kind of content to expect when you click on terms such as 'find a library', 'libraries' or 'libraries online'.



There is also another [landing page for libraries](#) but this functions as another navigation tool rather than a compelling destination. Some of the images feel like stock photographs and there is a missed opportunity to create a personality unique to County Durham Libraries.



There are individual pages for each library with useful information about location, opening times and regular activities but these are all uniform and without much individual personality or editorial.



Durham
County Council

Residents | News & Events | Business | Council

As part of a review, we are looking at what digital services our libraries offer. Have your say at an online event on Wednesday 16 August from 12.00pm to 1.00pm.

Home / Residents / Libraries & Archives / Libraries / Find a library

Find a library

We have 39 libraries throughout County Durham. Use our postcode lookup to see where your nearest is. The links on this page provide their addresses, contact details, opening hours and the services they offer.

Use our postcode lookup to find your nearest libraries, or see our A to Z of libraries.

Enter postcode

Related information

- Libraries
- Library Online

A to Z of libraries

- [Annfield Plain Library](#)
- [Barnard Castle Library](#)
- [Belmont Library](#)
- [Bishop Auckland Library](#)
- [Blackhall Library](#)
- [Bowburn Library](#)
- [Brandon Library](#)
- [Chester-le-Street Library](#)
- [Chilton Library](#)
- [Consett Library](#)
- [Cramforth Library](#)

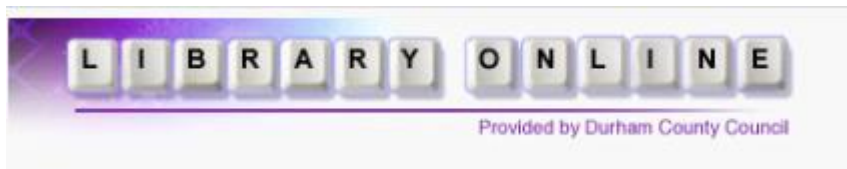
A good example of how County Durham Libraries might simplify their user journey can be seen by looking at [Norfolk Library's main landing page](#). They combine information and links to all of their services into one destination page that uses simple language such as 'Borrow', 'Visit', 'Join', 'What's On', 'Libraries newsletter', 'Follow us on social media' etc. Their use of imagery is also personalised, local and feels authentic.

In any future redesign, it would be worth testing the use language and navigation with the public and using images that resonate with local communities. Providing visitors with more individualised editorial about the different library sites would be worth exploring, with consideration given to the resources required to create and update the content.

There is a nice example from [Manchester University Library of a 'Find a library' search page](#) that combines different ways to search or discover the various different locations such as a list, photographs of each specific location and a map.

9.6 Branding

Branding across online assets lacks a single, recognisable identity. Library Online has neutral, underdeveloped branding, unconnected to DCC's corporate branding.



The two social media platforms used by County Durham Libraries use a different branding again. The black, white and yellow palette is used on printed materials in the physical libraries but not yet reflected on library webpages.



The adoption of a new LMS and website offers County Durham Libraries a perfect moment to rethink its online branding. The opportunity exists to create an identity that reflects its values, is rooted in its purpose and has user clarity and appeal.

The [Government's design principles](#) offer an excellent place to start when planning any online service and has examples of how the principles have already been put into practice by other public bodies.

The ambition for branding should be to create a consistent look and feel across all online platforms (web and social) and ensure that this ties in with any physical branding on site, and in email communications or marketing. Production of a brand guideline document to be shared across all library sites could be a useful tool here. Libraries Connected have a [good example of a comprehensive branding guideline document](#).

9.7 Social media content

Once work on the brand has been completed, it would be useful to work on a simple social media strategy that can reflect the brand guidelines and values and help staff across all library sites to create appropriate and compelling content and increase followers.

A nice example of an actively engaged Facebook page can be seen from [Norfolk Libraries and Information Service Facebook page](#) (9.1k followers). This page adopts the usual informational style posts about library activities and what's on (similar to what can be seen on Durham County Libraries Facebook page), but it combines this with more playful content and questions.

Whilst informational based broadcast style posts can be useful, more comments or interactions are elicited from users through open questions. For example, Norfolk posts regularly on a Friday asking followers creative questions like "which fictional world from a book would you most like to visit?" They also link in with current events such as the women's world cup or the release of the new Barbie film to draw users into more conversational comments and interactions.

9.8 Data capture

As the digital transformation progresses it will be critical for County Durham Libraries to review and analyse data across the digital assets regularly and systematically and to implement a set of KPIs, linked with the library strategy and its priorities, and a robust reporting procedure. This will identify where digital services are being well used and those that are not, which will inform programme and service decisions as well as targets, KPIs and ambitions. This will also ensure that data will be readily available as an evidence base for identifying need and for use in funding applications and business cases.

Most digital systems provide access to a significant amount and range of data. The key is to be able to identify and understand what is most useful to County Durham

Libraries to be able to demonstrate success against priorities, alongside where systems and services may be underperforming or having less impact.

The goal should be to be data informed, with a balance of being data driven, as not all measurements matter. For County Durham Libraries this means focussing on counting what counts and on being clear about the outcomes for a particular product or service. For example, simply counting the number of people following Facebook is a measure of reach, but if the priority is engagement with an audience then the real measure of success is to track conversations, interactions and comments. These numbers may be much lower than the total number of followers, but they are a better reflection of a qualitative response. Investment in a new Library Management System should ensure access to a better range of data to be collected (e.g., customer profile data) and more sophisticated reporting systems. Ongoing problems with current suppliers in respect of access to data (e.g., Overdrive) will be harder to resolve and will need a sector wide approach.

10. Funding and opportunities

In order to achieve the ambitions, set out in this report County Durham Libraries will require:

Capital investment funding – significant investment is crucial to replace dated hardware and software and to acquire and install the future facing infrastructure needed to support operational and delivery functions at the modern sector standard and continue be responsive and agile in a rapidly changing digital landscape.

Project funding – additional funding from external sources will support implementation of tools and equipment, increased digital presence, development of staff skills and digital inclusion services.

Additional recurrent funding – increased revenue to support maintenance and ongoing development of any new digital infrastructure and services may be required.

10.1 Internal council funding

Working with other parts of the council to deliver digital outcomes for customers and clients

As outlined in the needs assessment, decision makers often misunderstand the role and contribution of libraries to wider Council priorities and policies. Advocacy work undertaken by Kirklees and Suffolk Libraries demonstrates the potential for library

services to articulate how they are contributing to key agendas, including social isolation, children's aspiration and attainment, and economic and skills development. Libraries remain in a unique position, often as the last remaining DCC asset and presence within communities, where staff connect with local residents on a daily basis. Library staff have an insight into the needs of residents and communities of County Durham that is unparalleled elsewhere within the Council services. There is an opportunity for libraries to work in closer collaboration with other commissioners, colleagues and departments to seek funding and partnerships to support residents in the use of digital and technology to deliver services and initiatives.

10.2 Project funding

Arts Council England

[Let's Create \(2020-2030\)](#) outlines ACE's commitment and actions towards culture and creativity responding to two key areas: the benefits of creativity and culture, particularly among children and young people, and improvements to talent development and retention.

Public libraries are described as a 'vital resource', delivering on the four national Universal Library Offers of reading, health and wellbeing, digital and information, and culture and creativity.

ACE is committed to increasing investment in public libraries over the next decade, recognising in *Let's Create* that public libraries are the "*most widespread and well-used cultural spaces, sitting at the heart of communities and often providing the first point of access to cultural activity.*"⁶

Priority Places 2021-2024

As part of its [delivery plan for 2021-2024](#) ACE has identified 54 priority places across England in which investment and engagement is too low, and the opportunity to effectively increase investment and engagement is high. County Durham is identified as both a Priority Place and a Levelling Up for Culture place.

Libraries Improvement Fund – supporting local innovation

The Libraries Improvement Fund has provided two rounds of funding to successful library services seeking to upgrade digital infrastructure and library buildings so they

⁶ [Let's Create \(2020-2030\), pg 22](#)

can respond to the changing ways people use them. The funding is provided by the DCMS and administered by ACE. The aims of the fund are to:

- Enable libraries to develop more flexible, more commercial spaces.
- Increase and improve digital access within communities.
- Connect libraries to their communities.
- Increase potential for transformation.
- Increase library use.
- Increase sustainability of libraries.

An initial round of successful bids, totalling £5 million, was announced in March 2022 with maximum bids of up to £500,000. A second round of successful bids was announced in February 2023 with a third round of bids closing in September 2023 with announcements due in March 2024.

Successful digital bids included:

- **Sefton Libraries** awarded £68,000 to create technology rooms at three libraries, designed to help refugees and isolated residents within the borough. The rooms will enable refugees and asylum seekers to access language courses, while also helping isolated residents connect digitally with distant family members. The Tech Rooms will also be available to small business owners and students across the borough.
- **City of London** awarded £230,000 to enable Artizan Street Library and Community Centre to incorporate a Maker Space, a special hub for digital design, craft and learning. Visitors will be able to print in 3D and, by using other equipment provided including electronic sewing machines and laptops, gain computer programming and textile skills. The project will also reshape the library space to enable local people to develop their own business ideas, learn new job skills and create networks. A new children's library, improved study space, and new shelving and furniture throughout will also be included.
- **Gloucestershire Libraries** awarded £250,000 to develop a flagship digital storytelling centre in a building currently not open to the public in Cheltenham. The new space will feature a digitally immersive reality room, outdoor sensory storytelling garden, a central hub for home educators in Gloucestershire and

flexible opening times using 'Open+' technology. They will also be offering the latest digital technologies for all ages with free facilities, training and support to help with literacy and learning skills.

- **Middlesbrough Libraries** awarded £240,000 to implement Wi-Fi Authentication and Wireless Cloud printing across the library network so that users can print direct from their own devices.
- **Wirral Libraries** awarded £145,000 to redevelop Birkenhead Library into a modern, flexible digital hub, providing a multi-purpose community space to learn, connect and work. The project will involve upgrades to Wi-Fi coverage, Wi-Fi printing, charging points, loanable tablets and improved self-service functionality to improve the overall user experience.
- **Reading Borough Council** awarded £62,000 for Tilehurst Library to enable the purchase of a tablet-lending kit for use within the library; setting up a digital device lending scheme so items like laptops can be borrowed for home use; investing in CCTV and intelligent systems to maximise access to the building and improving community meeting facilities.

National Lottery Project Grants

National Lottery Project Grants is the ACE open access programme for libraries, arts and museum projects. Typically, ACE receives a low level of applications from libraries and would welcome and encourage more libraries to submit applications for funding.

Applications can be made for grants for under £30,000 with decisions made in six to nine weeks, and for over £30,000 with decisions made within 14 weeks.

All libraries can apply to National Lottery Project Grants for new creative and cultural projects that focus on any of the disciplines that come under the Arts Council's remit: literature, visual arts, theatre, music, dance, and combined arts. In addition, local authority library services (as defined by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964) can apply to National Lottery Project Grants for new activities that help them to deliver any of the four Universal Library Offers in a developmental way, including projects that do not focus on any of the disciplines in ACE's remit, listed above.

Project Grants for Libraries in support of the universal library offers, including digital and information, might look at areas such as staff skills, digital inclusion projects and testing and trying new technology and partnerships in libraries.

LibraryOn

The £1.1m [LibraryOn grants programme](#) offered funding for public libraries in England to improve their online presence and discoverability. The overall aim is to increase physical and digital footfall to public libraries by making it easier for the public to find, explore and access the range of services libraries offer. Projects could include:

- Upgrading existing websites
- Upgrading other online offers or services
- Piloting something brand new

Grants ranged from £10,000 to £70,000. In the North, 11 projects were funded including a new website for Sunderland Libraries to revitalise customer experience; a digital advertising campaign in Sefton; an animation and VR project working with young people in North Lincolnshire; a new library app in Kirklees and upgraded events booking for Gateshead.

Another round of funding is not certain, though it is possible and worth exploring.

10.3 Non-funding opportunities

Good Things Foundation

[Good Things Foundation](#) is a charity with a mission to “Fix the Digital Divide – For Good”. A number of library services across the UK are working with them as part of the National Digital Inclusion Network and the National Data Bank initiatives.

[National Digital Inclusion Network](#) is made up of thousands of community partners in the UK, all working to tackle digital exclusion by delivering data, devices and digital skills training.

[National Data Bank](#) is providing free mobile data, texts and calls to 500,000 people in need via Good Things Foundation’s network of community partners, in collaboration with Virgin Media, O2, Vodafone and Three. Community organisations, including libraries, can apply to access the databank, enabling them to provide data to people in their communities who need it. Current library services offering this include Coventry and Camden through [LOTI](#).

The National Databank is open to community organisations who are members of Good Things Foundation's Online Centres Network, of which County Durham Libraries is already a part.

Recipients of data through the National Databank must be over 18 years old and from a low-income household. Additionally, they must meet at least one of the following: have no access or insufficient access to the internet at home, and /or have no or insufficient access to the internet when away from the home, and/or cannot afford their existing monthly phone contract or top up. A person can then be given access to data for up to 12 months.

Invitations to community organisations to join the Data Bank are open now and there are a series of monthly Q&A sessions where organisations can find out more about what is involved.

In County Durham, [Livin](#) in Spennymoor is currently offering the service.

Digital Culture Network

The Digital Culture Network is part of ACE and is an initiative to increase the digital skills and capability of the arts and cultural sector. It provides practical help to the arts and culture sector with a focus on digital skills and leadership development.

Support available includes:

- Practical workshops and webinars to improve skills and engage with peers.
- Signposting to resources and training.
- Support with technology related funding opportunities.
- National and regional training days delivered with technology partners.

They also offer one-to-one support from a team of Tech Champions in a number of areas relevant to libraries including digital strategy and marketing, digital content creation, data analytics and insights, social media, email marketing, websites, digital accessibility and more. Free support is available to all creative and cultural organisations who are eligible for funding from ACE.

11. Digital framework

11.1 Overview

Digital technology enables the library service to connect with its users, to expand their horizons, skills, and knowledge, to sustain and expand access to services and to collaborate with partners on the delivery of services. In public libraries as in wider society, now and in the future, digital will drive more of what is done and delivered. Balancing a digital and physical library offer, which remains important to both customers and communities is going to be key.

This digital strategy describes and outlines what the library service plans to achieve and deliver in the next five years to meet its digital vision and goals. After a period of stasis in digital development and progression, introducing any change will be transformative for staff and customers. It will improve operations, interaction, visibility, promotion and experience across physical, digital and peripatetic services.

The following framework suggests what a set of digital goals for County Durham Libraries might look like pending further work on establishing a clear set of values and priorities, as set out in section 8. It should also be seen in the context of a wider County Durham Libraries Strategy which is currently in development.

County Durham Libraries' digital goals are to:

- Expand access
- Improve and enhance services
- Deliver innovation and improvements
- Optimise investment and resources
- Maximise data to inform decision making and drive change

County Durham Libraries will do this by:

- Developing a solid digital and technological infrastructure for our libraries.
- Building digital confidence, literacy and skills for our staff.
- Being ambitious and applying best practice in our digital work.
- Bringing the library to our users through technology.

- Building connection and interaction with our communities.
- Supporting our users to bridge the digital poverty divide.
- Supporting innovation, testing and learning through appropriate technology for staff and communities.
- Using data to inform a review of services and resources and responding to communities' needs.

11.2 Proposed priorities

The suggested priority areas for the digital strategy in the first five years are:

- A clear focus on building a solid infrastructure for the service including acquiring and implementing a new LMS and front facing platform, with a comprehensive training programme for staff on how to maximise the new system for improved systems and processes and benefits to customers.
- Acquiring, implementing and promoting self-service technology and equipment.
- Developing and delivering a comprehensive plan for staff training and development.
- Supporting customers to develop their digital skills and bridge the digital divide.
- Improving social media presence and audience reach and engagement.

Using the goals as a working framework alongside the research and findings outlined in this report, the proposed priorities have been structured into a set of clear recommendations and a number of phases for development and delivery.

11.3 Recommendations for next steps

1. **Focus on the foundations and getting the basics right** for improved customer experience and greater effectiveness for staff. This means acquiring, implementing and using with confidence hardware and software that will deliver a good modern standard of service, at the same level as other library services in the UK. Invest in core infrastructure and staff skills and training.

2. **Develop and set a limited number of initial goals and priorities as part of a phased approach** that will be reflected upon and iterated over the next five years. Prioritise the core needs of service delivery, which have been identified in this document. Focus on how digital tools and technology can improve internal systems and processes and external engagement, as well as bring efficiencies and cost savings or other benefits. Seek feedback from staff and customers at intervals to ensure changes are having the desired impact and that challenges are being addressed.
3. **Review staff capacity for delivering the transformation** and plan for contingency. It will require a lot of time in the preparation and implementation of new ways of working and, at the same time, there will be expectations for business as usual.
4. **Invest time in reviewing and discussing value and approach tools** such as the *Digital Culture Charter* and the *Guide to Digital Transformation in Cultural Heritage* with leaders and staff to agree a shared set of underlying principles that will frame the digital approach across the service now and in the future. This will inform strategic discussions and decision-making. The outcomes should align with wider values and principles applied across DCC's services.
5. No strategy stands alone. For overall success of the service, **the digital strategy should be tied to the library strategy** and contributing to delivery of the overall vision for the service. As the library strategy is developed, the digital strategy should be updated to reflect how it will enable and impact the key objectives for County Durham Libraries overall and key objectives for individual libraries.
6. Similarly, the library digital strategy should **support the Council's wider digital ambitions**. There are opportunities for County Durham Libraries to play a role in delivering other digital strategies and policies by working with partners or managing initiatives, such as Digital Champions, to help achieve DCC's vision for the County and for particular libraries to help target the people and communities who need more support with digital inclusion. County Durham Libraries should look across other Council digital services to ensure alignment with the broader digital offer.
7. **Measure the success of digital platforms and resources**. Establish consistent and regular monitoring of KPIs such as user journeys on webpages, social media activity, eResource popularity, public PC and Wi-Fi use, and other online operations in and for each library. This will give a clear indication of

what customers want and respond to and will inform decisions about what changes to make to optimise the digital offer.

8. **Seek investment to enable and sustain change.** This could come from within the Council by getting buy-in to goals and showing how the digital strategy supports wider priorities, as well as from local and national external providers highlighted in this document. Consideration should also be given to the need for investment in well-equipped and appropriately furnished spaces in physical libraries where digital services are offered.
9. **Be bold, ambitious and proactive in digital thinking.** Consider how County Durham Libraries could lead the way within DCC in the approach and application of digital activities. This might be through training opportunities for staff and communities, responding to customer needs in new ways, or seeking funding and partnerships that will enable change and deliver new services.
10. **Keep updated on market and sector developments.** Visit some of the case studies, suppliers and services highlighted in this document and learn from their experiences; build relationships with suppliers to understand how to make the most of the equipment and resources; attend conferences and training to build and share knowledge and to learn what technology is available now and what may be available in the near future; participate in networks to share knowledge across DCC and beyond and to discover funding opportunities.
11. **Consider moving away from developing in-house solutions** as these do not benefit from supplier updates or support and may omit the specialist features that other library services use. In-house solutions will take longer to develop and implement than readily available packages and are likely to reach end of life earlier. Technologies designed for the sector can offer several integrated systems, allowing for a single supplier to provide several platforms working together seamlessly, for example an LMS, an app and a front facing platform or website.
12. **Produce and promote clear guidance for staff about the processes, tools and templates for digital communications** with customers. These guidelines should clarify when and how corporate communications and other teams should be involved, how to use content effectively to engage and grow audiences across different platforms, and how to use branding and tone of voice to build trust and recognition for County Durham Libraries.

11.4 Phases for development and delivery

Phase 1 - Develop a roadmap

Phase 1 should align thinking to plan and prepare for delivery of the transformation, focussing on the priority areas.

This would involve:

- Developing values and priorities that sit alongside the new library strategy.
- Considering where initial 'quick wins' might be developed to build confidence of customers and staff.
- Reviewing staff skills, structure and capacity for the transformation.
- Designing a change management plan and communications plan for staff and customers.
- Building a business case for investment.
- Exploring opportunities for partnerships, internal and external.
- Examining supplier frameworks.
- Soft market testing products.
- Agreeing the specifications.
- Continuing to review excellence in the sector and opportunities for learning and development.

Expected timeframe: six months to one year.

Phase 2 - Commission and build

This phase progresses to making things happen, to commissioning and building the infrastructure needed for transformation and sees the launch of a programme of staff digital skills development.

It involves:

- Securing funding and investment.

- Building the specification.
- Undertaking a procurement process.
- Commissioning supplier(s).
- Implementing a programme of staff training across digital systems and services.
- Developing partnerships.

Expected timeframe: one year.

Phase 3 – Implement and embed

This phase will focus on implementing new systems and technology and embedding the change with customers and staff across the service.

It involves:

- Testing, implementing and embedding the new technology and services.
- Delivering staff training on the LMS.
- Launch of new LMS and front facing platform.

Expected timeframe: nine months to one year.

Phase 4 – Review, evaluate and refresh priorities

Depending upon staff skills and capacity, as well as partnership working and funding, further phases should look to bring additional innovation in customer experience and services.

This would involve:

- Time to pause, review and evaluate progress to date
- Analysis of data and other reporting methods to aid evaluation
- Revisiting values, purposes and priorities of the library strategy and ways in which further digital developments can support delivery and outcomes

- Celebrating successes and achievements to date
- Reviewing data collection methods and KPIs to ensure they are fit for purpose
- Refreshing, reframing and establishing priorities for the remaining one or two years
- Planning for next digital strategy

Expected timeframe: one to two years.

12. Costs

Investment is needed to support County Durham Libraries digital transformation. In particular, investment in digital operational technology, infrastructure and training.

The table in section 9 provides information on indicative costs for a range of digital tools, platforms and services that County Durham Libraries might consider adopting to enable the modernisation, transformation and expansion of digital provision and access to DCC Library services.

Other areas for consideration to a cost plan for the implementation of the digital strategy include:

- **Capacity** – staff time to lead, spec, prepare, commission and implement new systems and technology and to build business cases and write funding bids.
- **Project management** – internal library and wider DCC project management support.
- **Procurement and soft market testing** – internal library and wider DCC cost for procurement or soft market testing of products and suppliers.
- **Training and development** – including costs to release staff to attend training and develop their skills.
- **Branding, marketing and communications**

We recognise that some budgets will be held by the service itself, whilst others will be held centrally or by other DCC department.

13. Conclusion

This report has set out the needs, goals and actions for County Durham Libraries to develop a robust digital strategy for the next five years and into the future. The library strategy, yet to be developed, will underpin the digital approach and decisions about equipment and resources. Focussing on the core systems and changes will build a solid foundation for the development of a good quality digital presence and offer going forward. The recommendations, development and delivery phases and tools have been proposed in this context and should be considered to support development and delivery of the digital strategy.

14. References

14.1 Resources

Arts Council England Delivery Plan 2021-2024

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/delivery-plan-2021-2024>

Arts Council England Let's Create

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create>

Arts Council England and Good Things Foundation Promoting Digital Inclusion with the Arts and Cultural Sector and Beyond

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/strategy-2020-2030/investment-principles/investment-principles-resource-hub/promoting-digital-inclusion-arts-and-cultural-sector-and-beyond>

County Durham Climate Change Strategy and Emergency Response Plan 2022-2024

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/40220/Climate-Change-Strategy-and-Emergency-Response-Plan-2022-24/pdf/ClimateChangeStrategyAndEmergencyResponsePlan2022-24.pdf?m=637925305338470000>

County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy 2022-35

<https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/County-Durham-Inclusive-Economic-Strategy-2022-2035-2.pdf>

County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-25

<https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/JointHealthAndWellbeingStrategy.pdf>

County Durham Vision 2035

<https://countydurhampartnership.co.uk/>

Coventry City Council, Digital Spaces at Coventry Libraries

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/libraries-1/digital-spaces-coventry-libraries>

Culture Hive, Digital Heritage Hub

<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/digital-heritage-hub/digital-engagement/>

Dash Survey, Digital Attitudes and Skills for Heritage

<https://www.timmuslimited.co.uk/dashsurvey/>

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Culture is Digital?

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital>

Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, UK Digital Strategy

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-digital-strategy/uk-digital-strategy>

Department for Education, Essential Digital Skills Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework/essential-digital-skills-framework>

Digital Culture Compass

<https://digitalculturecompass.org.uk/>

Durham County Council Digital Strategy 2023-2028

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/42162/Digital-Strategy-Consultation/pdf/DigitalStrategyConsultation.pdf?m=638188752503730000>

Durham County Council Poverty Action Plan 2022-2026

<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s153930/Poverty%20Action%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20-%20Cabinet%20-%20April%202022.pdf>

FabLab Devon

<https://fablabdevon.org/>

Gateshead Council, Gateshead Libraries Digital Services

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/9650/Digital-services>

Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Libraries Strategy 2023-2028

<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s82950/DRAFT%20Lib%20Strategy%2026%20May%20-compressed.pdf>

Good Things Foundation, National Databank

<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/databank/>

Good Things Foundation, Digital Inclusion in Libraries in England

<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/digital-inclusion-in-libraries-in-england/>

Hertfordshire Council, Hertfordshire Libraries CreatorSpace

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/other-library-services/creatorspace/creatorspace.aspx>

Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Libraries Digital Skills

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/libraries/digital-library/digital-skills/>

Leeds City Council, 100% Digital Leeds

<https://digitalinclusionleeds.com/>

Leeds City Council, Digital Inclusion Toolkit

<https://digitalinclusionkit.org/model/>

Leeds City Council, Learn in the Library

<https://www.leeds.gov.uk/libraries/learn-in-the-library>

Libraries Connected, Brand Guidelines

https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/sites/default/files/Libraries%20Connected_Brand%20Guidelines_final.pdf

Libraries Connected, Universal Library Offers Information and Digital

<https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/universal-offers/information-digital>

Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index

<https://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.html>

Newcastle Libraries Discover

<https://libraries.newcastle.gov.uk/whatisDISCOVER>

Rural Media, Bookflicks Toolkit

<https://www.ruralmedia.co.uk/BookFlicks>

Somerset Council, Glass Box Taunton

<https://glassboxtaunton.co.uk/>

UK Government Design Principles

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-design-principles>

UK Parliament Communications and Digital Committee Digital Exclusion

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5803/ldselect/ldcomm/219/21902.htm>

University of Liverpool, Minimum Digital Living Standard

www.mdls.org.uk

14.2 Suppliers

The following is a list of suppliers referenced in this document. Contacts have been provided where known and all suppliers indicated they would welcome direct contact from County Durham Libraries. Existing procurement frameworks may include additional library suppliers to those provided and should supplement the list below.

Axiell <https://www.axiell.com/uk/solutions/library-software/>

Contact: Rebecka Höjeberg, Sales Manager. t. +44 115 900 8014, m. 07973628521, rebecka.hojeberg@axiell.co.uk

Bibliotheca <https://www.bibliotheca.com/en-gb/solutions/extended-access/>

Civica <https://www.civica.com/en-gb/> Contact: Neil Barker, Account Manager, neil.barker@civica.co.uk. Tel: 07500866564

D-Tech <https://d-techinternational.com/products/people-counting-2/>

ESS Library Management Cloud

https://www.ess-readingcloud.co.uk/library-management-solution?utm_source=google&utm_medium=ppc&utm_campaign=brand+awareness&gclid=Cj0KCOjwi7GnBhDXARIsAFLvH4nn3yDR2M4puHaV_Yb8odG_ve41pZR64sNn_CljFz_jGf1kOfkeomwaAnLyEALw_wcB

Contact: Susan Wignall, Business Development Manager, 44 (0) 7842 617921, Susan.Wignall@librarymanagementcloud.com

Innovative <https://www.iii.com/products/polaris-ils/>

Contact: James Baker, Sales Consultant UK & Ireland. james.baker1@clarivate.com

Insight Media <https://www.insight-media.co.uk/>

Lyngsoe <https://lyngsoesystems.com/>

Contact: Lynn Spokes, Account Manager, lys@lyngsoesystems.com, 07957354912.

Nexbib <https://www.nexbib.com/en-US/open-library.html>

Contact: Simon Peacock, Commercial Director UK and Ireland. Mobile: 07495602577, s.peacock@nexbib.com

Princh <https://princh.com/library-printing-solution/>

SirsiDynix <https://www.sirsidynix.com/>

Contact: Gary Martin, Business Development Director, SirsiDynix, Direct: +44 (0)1923 202918, Mobile: +44 (0)7712 196446, Gary.Martin@sirsidynix.com

Solus <https://wp.sol.us/the-library-app/>

Surfbox <https://www.surfbox.ie/>



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Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

County Durham Libraries

20 December 2023



Purpose:

To provide members of the Environment and Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee with an overview of the development of the library service and an update on Library Transformation.

Outline of Presentation

1. Overview and context of the Library Service
2. Library Transformation – update
 - a) Physical library network
 - b) Digital – content & infrastructure
 - c) Stock policy review
 - d) Outreach & participation
3. Summary and next steps





“Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve and contribute to improving our quality of life. Libraries change lives for the better.”

Sidney Sheldon

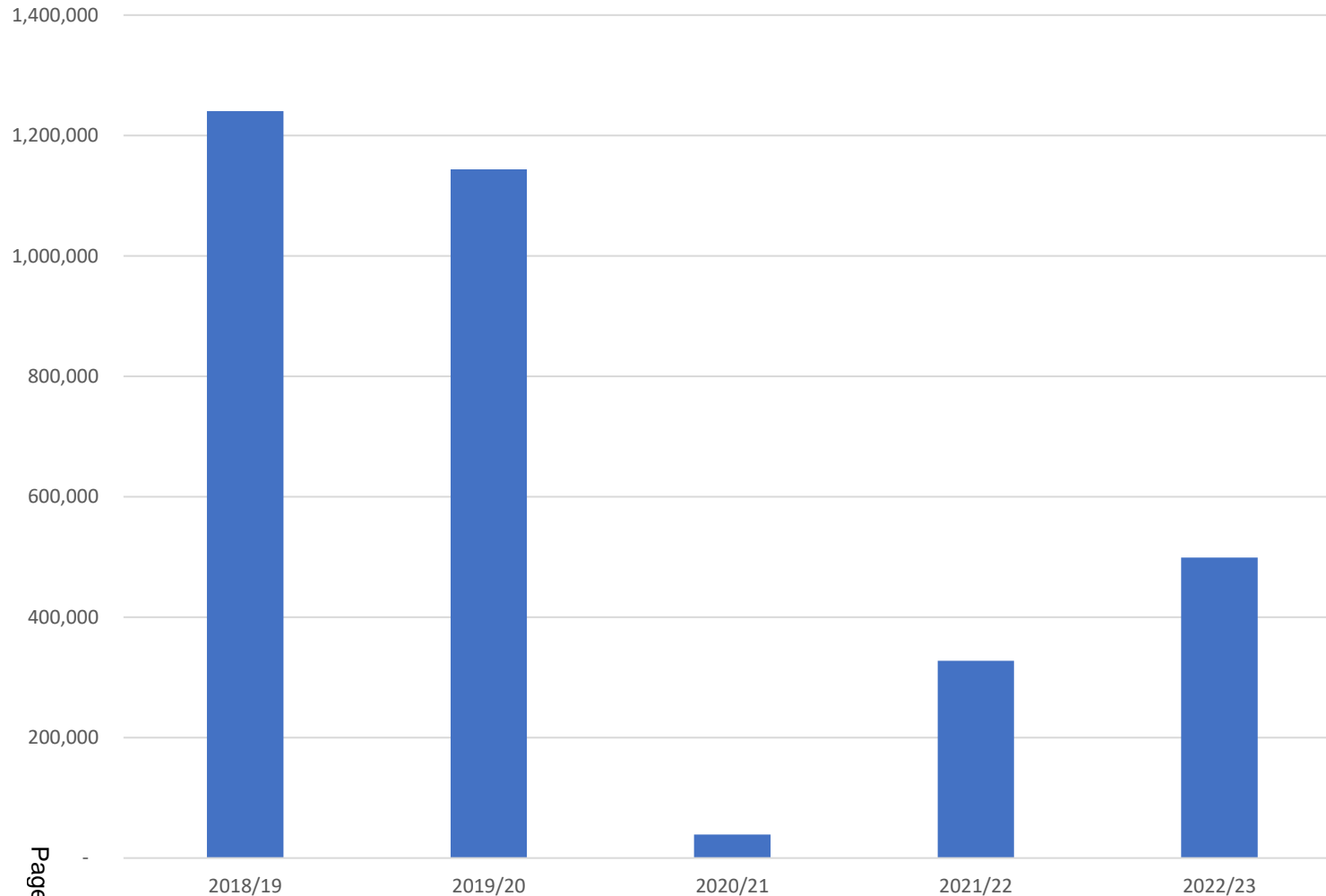
Public Libraries are a statutory service, as defined under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

Upper tier authorities have an obligation to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient service'.

County Durham Libraries – an overview

- **39 libraries** - City Centre (1), town centre (11), community (27)
- **Books on wheels** – delivered services to over 150 clients own homes
- **Book bus** – vehicle calling at care homes to enable clients to choose their own books
- **Mobile library service** - delivering to over 80 settlements across the largely rural west of the county
- **Sevenhills – library HQ** - shared building with CYPS, from which stock support is managed, vehicles housed and distribution takes place, prison library service base, county bookstore, and Growing and Learning team base.
- **Online presence** – access to e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines, online book ordering and renewal

Total in person library visits to County Durham libraries in the last 5 years



2022/2023

- **500,000** in-person visits to libraries
- **43,000** active borrowers
- **106,000** books issued
- **7679** public events, workshops, groups and activities

Phase 1 Needs Assessment recommendations

1. A strategic review of the existing physical library network
2. A review of library opening hours
3. Alignment of library outcomes with Council plans and priorities.
4. Investment in technology, and digital content and infrastructure
5. A workforce skills review and associated training
6. A review of communications and marketing
7. Develop and deliver a compelling and accessible events programme
8. Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships
9. A review of the current stock and content policy

Initial areas of focus

1. Desktop review of the existing physical library network
2. Review of technology, digital content and infrastructure
3. Review of the current stock and content policy
4. Develop an ambitious plan for outreach and partnerships, and development of a compelling and accessible events programme



“When in doubt, go to the library.” JK Rowling, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets



Physical Library Network

Desktop review looked at:

- Venue costs
- Building conditions
- Repairs and Maintenance
5- year projections

Headlines:

- Venues cost £3.2 million in 2022/2023
- Cost per visit £3.25-£23.03
- Condition of library venues graded as satisfactory or poor

In challenging economic times what could, and should a modern transformation of our physical library estate look like?

Digital Content & Infrastructure



- Counterculture LLP commissioned to review digital challenges, issues and opportunities
- 12 recommendations and a framework to take forward digital transformation over the next 5 years
- Application made to ACE Libraries Improvement Fund for £500k to support digital work – outcome expected March 2024



Key digital tasks 2023/2024

- Considering where initial ‘quick wins’ might be developed to build confidence of customers and staff.
- Reviewing staff skills, structure and capacity for the transformation and designing a change management plan, and communications plan for staff and customers.
- Building the business case for digital investment and identifying opportunities to seek external funding as appropriate.
- Reviewing supplier frameworks and soft market testing products with a view to agreeing the specifications for new digital offers.
- Exploring opportunities for partnership working both internally and externally
- Continuing to review excellence in the sector and opportunities for learning and development.

Stock Policy Review

Objectives of the Stock Policy are to:

- Promote a unified approach in stock selection and management
- Improve and develop our stock
- Enable increased efficiency and effective management of our bookfund
- Present, provide and improve stock which is relevant and attractive to library users.
- Increase the use of our stock
- Promote literacy and reading



'How to Survive an Agatha Christie Novel'

A "choose your own adventure" journey with author Kate Jackson

Durham Clayport Library
Monday 27th November 2.00pm

Imagine waking up in the universe of Agatha Christie's mysteries. Would you have what it takes to survive? You, the audience, will vote on which location to visit next and which actions you wish to take. Some of these decisions will have immediate effects, whilst others will have delayed consequences. Will you make the right decisions and reach a happy conclusion or will your journey end in murder?

This is no ordinary author talk!
Free. Please book your place 03000 265524

Signed copies of Kate's new book, 'How to Survive a Classic Crime Novel' will be available for purchase



Outreach & Participation

- New outreach and participation team created in CST phase 2 restructure
- Embedding the Libraries Connected Universal Library Offer
- Developing strategic approach to programming
- Better linkages to DBF through year round Durham Reads initiative
- Secured £88k (maximum available grant) from DCMS Know Your Neighbourhood programme



Be Scam Aware

FREE Scam Aware Information Event

Protect yourself or your loved ones from the dangers of scams with a little help from Home Instead and our public education programme, which helps educate older people and their families on how to avoid falling victim to fraud.

We will raise awareness of the types of scams that are targeted towards older people online, by phone and unsolicited mail.

Home Instead Durham are holding **FREE Scam Aware Talks** for older people, family members, family carers and people throughout the community, who may be vulnerable themselves, or know or work with people who may be a target for scammers. Come along and find out how to keep safe.

Thursday 30th November
10.30 - 11.30am
Chester le Street

To find out the date and location of the next session in your area and to reserve



Summary

- Work has begun on addressing the recommendations outlined in the Phase 1 Needs Assessment report
- Initial areas of focus are:
 - (a) desktop review of physical library network,
 - (b) digital content and infrastructure,
 - (c) stock policy review,
 - (d) development of strategic outreach and participation.
- External funding has been secured from the KYN fund (£88k) and an application has been submitted to the ACE LIF (£500k) with an outcome expected in March 2024.

Next Steps

- Explore further opportunities for co-locations to ensure the most efficient use of physical assets and staffing resource
- Take forward work on implementing recommendations and year 1 key tasks from the Digital Review, noting that some of this work is subject to external funding bids
- Complete works to co-locate Woodhouse Close library with the leisure centre as part of leisure transformation
- Complete stock policy review
- Embed the universal library offer in outreach and participation programmes
- Deliver Durham Reads linked to our NPO funded Durham Book Festival
- Explore further funding opportunities to deliver against Phase 1 recommendations



“You want weapons? We're in a library. Books are the best weapon in the world. This room's the greatest arsenal we could have. Arm yourself!”

The Tenth Doctor