

Rotherham Library and Information Service

A modern, vibrant, library service – developing a new service model for Rotherham

Assessment of local need: Executive summary, key findings & conclusion

Executive Summary:

The Council has to provide a Library and Information Service:

- “It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. The duty arises in relation to persons who are resident, work in or are in full time education in the Borough. (Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964, section 7)

Rotherham Library and Information Service aims to:

- Promote a love of reading and help to improve literacy.
- Provide a space where people can engage in informal learning, develop skills and improve their lives.
- Provide children and young people with a safe, inspiring place to learn, explore their creativity and find their talent.
- Support businesses and contribute to the sustainability and regeneration of our local communities.
- Provide welcoming spaces, open for all to use to improve their lives and their communities
- Offer information and reading services that can improve the health and well being of customers.
- Bridge the digital divide and become, for many people, an essential point of access to online knowledge resources.

This summary of the assessment of local need sets out the key findings arising out of the data relevant to Rotherham’s Library and Information Service, building on the work and plans set out in the Library Strategy (2011-2015). Each of the findings is based on evidence presented later in the report, and comprises a range of data to establish:

- the demographic composition of our communities
- the way that communities use their local libraries
- their management by the Council, and
- what our residents tell us about the service

Need is being considered in the broadest sense, based on the circumstances, habits and preferences of local communities. Each section of the assessment details a different aspect of need based on :

- social conditions and access
- demand, service usage and performance
- resident feedback

After consideration of all the data available, we have concluded that there is a need for access to a library service in every community in Rotherham. However, we also recognise that every community is different so have considered if the service could be delivered differently in some places, as appropriate, within the overall aim of delivering a modern, vibrant and efficient library service across the Borough, bearing in mind the resources available.

Key Findings:

THE BOROUGH – COMMUNITY PROFILE

- About half the population live in and around the main urban area of Rotherham. The remainder live in smaller towns such as Swinton, Dinnington and Maltby as well as smaller villages.
- Rotherham has more people aged over 50 (1 in 3) than people under 16 (1 in 5). The over 50s comprise 36.3% of the population and this percentage is rising. The figure is projected to increase by more than half by 2028.
- The number of people aged over 85 years is projected to increase by 96% between 2008 and 2028.
- The service is planning to extend our services in the future to cater for the aging population trend through working with various groups such as the Alzheimer's society and taking part in events such as Dementia awareness week.
- The number of people with a serious visual impairment will probably increase slowly over the next 17 years particularly within the 55-64 age group.
- The service is already working with older people and with people with visual and other impairments through the stock of Large Print, Talking Books, e-audio books, our co-ordination of the RNIB Talking Book Service locally, our mobile and home visit services and through our general service which is universal to all ages. We are already committed and signed up to working towards the national six-step guide to help

support people with sight loss, working with organisations such as RNIB, books in audio format, organisations and groups of visually impaired people, to find out what they want from public libraries.

- 7.5% of the population is estimated to come from BME communities (2009). The largest BME community originates from Pakistan and Kashmir and comprises 3% of the population.
- 52% of BME school pupils live in Rotherham South which comprises mainly deprived areas close to the town centre. As may be expected the libraries experiencing the highest use by BME communities tend to be Central Library and Mowbray Gardens Library.
- The different communities of interest in Rotherham are represented and reflected in the range of stock we hold. Services to BME communities from Libraries also include ethnic home library service, support to foreign language speakers wishing to improve their English, cultural events organised and supported aimed at children and young people, families, asylum and refugee groups often in conjunction with other council departments and other partners under the banner of 'Rotherham- one town, one community.'
- In 2008 projections indicated that the number of households is likely to increase by 11% by 2021 but the average household size is likely to decrease. An estimated 5.9% of the population live alone. The figure is expected to increase by 17% by 2025. This is likely to mean that there will be a greater need for community engagement, development and capacity building work and therefore an ever greater need for all year round local community meeting places and learning hubs. Libraries already fill both these roles and this can be developed further.
- There is approximately 1 car per household with 30% of households having no car (2007). This is above the national average but below the regional average. Rotherham has relatively good access to housing and services with over 88% of households who do not have access to a car able to access a GP surgery within 15 minutes and 100% within 30 minutes. There is good access to Library services in Rotherham and we will continue to aim to provide a library within a 2 mile radius of every resident, as stated in the Library Strategy.
- Between 2000 and 2006 there was significant job creation in Rotherham but this has fallen sharply since the recession of mid-2008. The latest forecasts predict that employment levels in Rotherham may not recover to pre-recession levels until 2020. Educational and skills levels in Rotherham are lower than national levels and than in Rotherham's neighbouring authorities. In times of recession, there is an even greater need for

access to the free services on offer at local Libraries - information, venues for information, events e.g. Credit crunch roadshows run by the Council, free books and opportunities for learning, work clubs and other activities with partners, IT classes and assistance in equipping local people with the skills and knowledge to get back into work.

- There is a close correlation between income deprivation and multiple factors explaining deprivation. The Borough is ranked 48th out of 326 English Districts for income deprivation. Rotherham ranks 53rd out of 326 English Districts on the index of multiple deprivation. The factors contributing to this are health and disability, education, training and skills and employment.
- A third of Rotherham's population live in areas which are amongst the most deprived 20% in England and 97% of the population live in the most deprived 50% of England. The main area of deprivation is Central Rotherham but there are significant outliers in Rawmarsh, Wath, Maltby and Dinnington.
- We have Libraries in all these areas with one of our most successful libraries (Mowbray Gardens Library) in the most deprived area in the Borough. Local libraries offer a place to spend time, access books, information, activities, learning and skills without having the cost of travel or any entrance charge. Local libraries also offer the learning, skills and guidance to help local people find jobs.
- Literacy is the combination of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills that people need to gain in order to function well in modern society. These life skills are essential to the happiness, health and wealth of individuals and wider society. Rotherham has a long history of low literacy levels which is reflected in the low levels of adult qualifications and in low attainment by children and young people. It is widely recognised by the Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the NHS and others that the development of communication, language and literacy skills in the early years is an essential building block and lays a foundation for life. Poor levels of literacy impair employability and increase the risk of failure to engage in education, employment or training post 16. They also inhibit the development of a highly skilled and diverse workforce - and employment generally - as nowadays even the lowest skilled jobs require reasonable literacy and communication skills. Investment at this stage is a cost effective investment for the long term.
- One of the library service's key priorities is to improve adult literacy levels by providing support for reading through involvement in national initiatives such as Quick Reads and the Six Book Challenge.

- We also work with the Imagination Library to help to address low reading levels by providing one book per month to 85% of children under 5 in the Borough. In addition, Libraries are also helping to address the low reading levels by instilling a love of reading from an early age: babies are being offered the chance to register for library membership from birth (via the Registrar's 'Tell us Once' service); Bookstart provides services to babies from 7 months to toddlers of 4 years; and Chatterbooks reading groups are where children aged 8 to 11 are encouraged to read and talk about books. These regular activities are supported by reading initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge and Reading Agents.
- 6.45% of the population had a serious physical disability in 2010. This percentage is likely to increase by 2025. All our libraries have been adapted to be accessible to all people with all kinds of disabilities. Staff are trained to be helpful with all our customers and offer assistance as appropriate to each situation. The 6 new libraries built or refurbished since 2007 have had accessibility built into the design.
- Libraries also offer large print books, audio books on CD and Cassette, sight impaired readers groups, e-audio books, audio described videos, computers with magnifying and speech reading software, big keyboards and trackball mice, electronic magnifier for printed items in Central Library, hearing loops, access and rollator aids.
- There is also a Mobile Library and a Home Library Service for those living within rural areas and those who have difficulties visiting a library.
- Within the areas of deprivation younger people use the Internet more than might be expected but those over 65 living in these areas are the least digitally engaged.
- The Service is committed to the digital inclusion agenda, and is signed up to national campaigns such as [Race Online](#) (now [Go ON UK](#)) to help provide the access and skills citizens need to take advantage of our online society. All libraries provide free access to computers and the internet, staff are all skilled to deliver basic IT classes and we have partnered with external organisations to deliver more in-depth IT courses, including job search sessions. We also provide free 24 hour access to online information resources and the library catalogue via the website www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries

THE PRESENT ROTHERHAM LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE

- The Library and Information Service Strategy 2011-15 states that the service aims to provide a library within 2 miles of every resident, based on the former Library Standard.
- Rotherham's Library and Information Service comprises: the Central library; 15 community libraries; 2 mobile services; services to children and schools; services to vulnerable communities
- The priorities for the service are linked to all the corporate objectives, but in particular the following:
 1. Making sure no community is left behind
 2. Providing quality education; ensuring people have opportunities to improve skills, learn and get a job
 3. Helping to create safe and healthy communities.
- *Aston:* In June 2010 the library moved from its location in a secondary school to share a new building with a Health Centre and Customer Service Centre. The library has an active membership of 18% which is the third highest in the Borough and has the highest number of children's loans. Since the move the active membership has increased by 35%, issues by 37% and IT usage by 6%.
- *Brinsworth:* 1.7% of the catchment population are active members. There has been a decline in active membership and visitors over the past 3 years. The building is small and this mitigates against any expansion of usage. Proposals being considered include replacing the current structure or to move to a new location working in partnership with the Parish Council.
- *Central:* In April 2012 the library moved to Riverside House sharing the space with Heritage and Arts services. It provides a flagship service for a wide variety of tastes and needs. 16% of the catchment population are active members of the library – a high proportion of these are from BME communities. The new location has brought it closer to communities in Canklow, Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park and we expect that the new location, facilities and services will help to reverse the trend in declining visitor figures.
- *Dinnington:* The library shares premises with a community resource centre and there is potential to extend the range of Council services offered from the building. There are many well attended activities. 18.5% of the catchment population are active members which is the second highest percentage. Usage increased by 5.1% between 2007 and 2011.

- *Greasbrough:* The library is located close to a small shopping centre and offers free car parking and has good access to bus routes. There is a meeting room available for community groups. Within a two mile radius are Kimberworth and Kimberworth Park. 2.4% of the catchment population are active members, and usage is generally low, but its good location suggests scope for reversing these trends. The Local Development Framework has identified Greasbrough library as having potential to house co-located services.
- *Kimberworth:* The library is located near a small row of isolated shops but has good access to bus routes. Only 1.4% of the catchment population are active members and there is a low level of activity. There has been a 21% decline in visitors between 2007 and 2011. The next closest library is Kimberworth Park (1.3 miles) and now the Central Library at Riverside House (1.4 miles).
- *Kimberworth Park:* This comprises a detached building in the middle of a large housing estate. Despite this, just 1.6% of the catchment population are active members. A small shopping precinct is nearby. The level of activity is low with a 55.4% decline in visitors between 2007 and 2011. The next closest libraries are Kimberworth (1.3miles) and Greasbrough (1.6 miles).
- *Kiveton Park:* The library is located in a detached building close to housing, shops and bus routes. The level of activity is relatively low although 8.8% of the catchment population are active borrowers which is above average for the community libraries. Between 2007 and 2011 usage increased by 6.1% and contacts have been made recently with educational providers in an attempt to sustain this development
- *Maltby:* The building is located close to housing, shops and bus routes. There is a community meeting room office space on the first floor and in recent years substantial improvements have been made to the structure and surrounds. The range of library activities is low but 19.5% of the catchment population are active borrowers which is the highest percentage in the Borough. Despite this overall usage declined between 2007 and 2011.
- *The Mobile library:* The vehicle visits locations throughout the Borough serving areas where there is a geographical gap in static library provision or a lack of access to services. 28 villages are served with a least one stop in each (a total of 69 stops a week). Between 2007 and 2011 there was a 38.9% decline in the number visitors and issues (2341 fewer issues) which indicates a need for a review of stops/locations.

- Mowbray Gardens:* The building has been extended and refurbished using Big Lottery funding and reopened in 2009. The local community is heavily involved in the management and delivery of services under the banner of 'Our Library Our Space Our Community'. 2.3% people within this catchment area are active members of the library which, although low, represents an increase since the new library opened. Conversely, the library has higher than average visitor figures suggesting that members of the community are accessing the library for other reasons than borrowing books. The library delivers a wide range of activities in partnership with other organisations designed to improve standards of literacy, health and wellbeing in the area.
- Rawmarsh:* The library is located within an area of social deprivation and has recently moved from the 1905 Carnegie building to new premises within the Joint Service Centre on Barbers Avenue (April 2012). 2% of the catchment population are active members and usage is low, although recent figures since the move indicate that usage is increasing as it has when other libraries in the Borough have been rebuilt or refurbished. The library is a pilot site for joint delivery of library and customer services.
- Swinton:* The library is located within the town's shopping precinct. 8% of the catchment population are active borrowers. There are excellent links with local partners and many well attended activities.
- Thorpe Hesley:* This is a new library located within a community centre built by the local church and replaced previous mobile library halts. Issues have increased significantly since opening and active membership rose by 26% by April 2011.
- Thurcroft:* This library is located within Thurcroft Junior school and was refurbished in 2003. The level of activity is low and a major factor in explaining this could be that many residents may view it as is a school library. 6.1% of the catchment population are active members. The library has the highest ratio of loans to members of any of the Borough's libraries, although the majority of these are a result of class visits from the school.
- Wath:* The library is adjacent to the town's transport interchange. It has the second highest visitor figures although a modest active membership (11% of the catchment population). There are good links with local schools and other organisations. Proposals being considered for this library include the location of additional Council services within the library.
- Wickersley:* The library opened in the summer of 2008 and is located within a community building owned by the Parish Council. The library is well used and has the highest number of issues of any of the community libraries. 7.7% of the catchment population are members of the library.

- *Book Stock*: A survey of Rotherham's users and non-users during 2010 indicated that the public regarded access to a wide range of books as an essential requirement. The Service's commitment to this is evident in the Service Strategy and the Stock Policy
- *Book Link*: This is a vehicle based service introduced in 2011 and was an amalgamation of the Home Library Service (delivery service for the housebound), a walk-on service for residents in sheltered housing (known as Bookability) and a deposit service to nursing homes
- *Services to children and young people*: These comprise library services to children through the network of libraries and a subscription based Schools Library service. Services to children begin at birth and 31% of library members are under the age of 16. All libraries offer a range of activities, the successful Summer Reading Challenge, for example, and the overall aim is to raise literacy levels.
- *Services to BME communities*: The Library service has a central role in co-ordinating and facilitating learning activities to our most vulnerable communities, reducing exclusion and encouraging participation, including services targeted at ethnic minority communities, those with visual and other impairments, the elderly, looked after children and those who need help to improve life chances. Support is given to foreign language speakers and to those who wish to improve their proficiency in English. Cultural events are organised and supported and this work is undertaken with children and young people, asylum and refugee groups and often in conjunction with other Council departments under the 'Rotherham – one town, one community' banner.
- *Ethnic Home Library Service*: This was established in 2004 and provides a delivery service for hard to reach BME communities. The recipients may have disabilities or experience language or cultural barriers which prevent them from accessing static service points easily. The service currently delivers to 145 individuals across the Borough.

EXPENDITURE, STAFFING & BUDGETS

- At £7.21 Rotherham's cost per book is below the average amongst comparator authorities
- The Borough has the second lowest cost per employee in a table of comparator authorities
- Rotherham has the second lowest number of staff with professional qualifications in a table of comparator authorities

- Rotherham is in mid position in a table showing the number of other library posts in comparator authorities
- Rotherham has the third highest number of volunteers and volunteer hours amongst comparator authorities
- At £3.60 the cost per library visit is below the average cost amongst comparator authorities
- At £3.70 the cost per issue is below the average amongst comparator authorities.
- The Library service always looking for ways to run the service more efficiently.

PERFORMANCE & COMMUNITY VIEWS

- Initial Active People survey data and Best Value Survey data indicated 43% to above 50% of adult (16+) residents using libraries at least once a year. The most recent Active People Survey data collected in support of recent national performance frameworks indicates that around 36% of Rotherham adult (16+) residents use libraries at least once a year
- Disaggregated Active People Survey data suggests roughly comparable levels of usage across broad demographic groups including some (e.g. BME, disabled) normally identified as experiencing barriers to access
- Rotherham's library service tends to perform at or just above average for key indicators related to physical visits, borrowing and satisfaction
- Relative to its comparator authorities Rotherham library service is currently delivering value for money particularly against costs per visit This is evidence that the service is fulfilling that part of its statutory duty related to efficiency.
- There is a large disparity between levels of resident satisfaction and user satisfaction with the latter tending to be much higher.
- The large disparity between the percentage of residents using libraries at least once a year and the much smaller percentage actively borrowing items suggests that community usage of and need for libraries is not limited to book borrowing. This data support the findings of the 2010 Library Strategy consultation in which many residents put an emphasis on services additional to book borrowing such as inquiry and information services, internet access and activities.

- The Survey of Rotherham's library users/non users conducted in 2010 highlighted the priorities for the Service.
 - Approachable and knowledgeable staff
 - Good range and choice of books
 - Relaxed environment/atmosphere
 - Choice to access services including ICT and internet access, without charge
 - A library situated conveniently with other local facilities
 - Activities for children
- The Adult Public Library User Survey 2009: Rotherham's score of 93% (very good and good scores combined) is the Median score within a table of 15 comparator authorities.
- Children's Public Library User Survey 2007 (under 16 years): Rotherham's score of 83.8% - those who viewed their library as good- is below the median score within a table of 15 comparator authorities
- Value For Money: In a table including Rotherham and its nearest statistical neighbouring authorities Rotherham has the fifth highest number of visits to libraries and the second lowest total spend on the library service per library visit.

Conclusion:

The assessment of need considers the local needs in Rotherham for a Library and Information Service, including the general and specific needs of adults and children who live, work and study full time in the borough.

The needs assessment draws on a wide range of data to establish the demographic composition of communities, the way that communities in Rotherham use their local libraries, how those libraries are managed by the Council, and library users' and non-users' views of the Library and Information Service.

Each substantive section of the assessment details a different aspect of need as follows:

- the borough: need based on social conditions and access; and
- the current service model: need as demand, service usage and performance.

It also draws on other data such as surveys of users and non-users and performance indicators. It identifies key areas where the library service could have greatest impact and it considers resources available, including staff, buildings and stock.

There is clear need and demand for libraries to:

- **Promote a love of reading and help to improve literacy.**
- **Provide a space where people can engage in informal learning, develop skills and improve their lives.**
- **Provide children and young people with a safe, inspiring place to learn, explore their creativity and find their talent.**
- **Support businesses and contribute to the sustainability and regeneration of our local communities.**
- **Provide welcoming spaces, open for all to use to improve their lives and their communities.**
- **Offer information and reading services that can improve the health and well being of customers.**
- **Bridge the digital divide and become, for many people, an essential point of access to online knowledge resources.**

The council's duty in relation to libraries is set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, section 7 which states;

"It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof...."

The duty arises in relation to persons *"whose residence or place of work is within the library area of the authority or who are undergoing full time education within that area... In fulfilling its duty a library authority shall in particular have regard to the desirability*

- *of securing... that facilities are available for borrowing of, or reference to books and other printed matter..., sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children.....*
- *of encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it"*

It should be noted that although this service must be 'comprehensive and efficient' there is currently no agreed test of this description. However, as library authorities across the country consider options for future service delivery, further research and guidance is emerging. The core responsibilities as detailed above do not include a specification, for example, for specific numbers of buildings and

indeed they may be met and actively promoted through other mechanisms, such as home visits, mobile services, outreach collections and online services.

The authority has a statutory duty to provide a library service; the Library & Information Service has a clear, adopted strategy which will continue to shape the delivery of a modern, vibrant service in the future; there is a need across Rotherham for the support which a Library Service can offer in improving literacy, education, employment and life chances, health, cohesion and digital literacy. The needs assessment concludes therefore that there is a need for access to a library service in every community in Rotherham.

However, it is clear when analysing usage and performance of the service that there are opportunities to improve in terms of delivering a “comprehensive and efficient service”.

Every community is different, whether geographic or community of interest. Each community will use their library in a different way, depending on their individual local needs – whether that is as a source of information, a welcoming place to meet, a place to learn, a place of enjoyment, excitement and inspiration or a place to curl up with a good book.

There are a number of areas which merit consideration in terms of improving access, delivering a consistent, high quality service which demonstrates value for money:

The nature of services delivered:

Consultation undertaken as part of the development of the Library Strategy clearly demonstrates those areas which are most important to customers – approachable and knowledgeable staff; a pleasant library environment; a good range and choice of books; activities for children; choice to access services, including ICT and internet, without charge; a library situated conveniently with other local community facilities. Services in the future will need to reflect the changing demographic of the population (e.g. increase in number of people over 65, which could lead to increased demand for services to individuals or care establishments) and priorities for the Borough as a whole (e.g. literacy levels, where the library service can play a key role, particularly in support for adult and family literacy).

Library Services nationally are considering fundamental challenges to the nature of the service as books, film and other media become available in new and alternative formats. Current customers tell us that books in sufficient range, numbers and quality are still important to them. However, changing digital

technologies are opening up content and offering new and exciting ways to deliver services to new audiences. Consideration will need to be given to continuing to improve the procurement and management of stock and making the most of new developments (e.g. e-magazines) whilst making more efficient use of existing stock.

The location, design and accessibility of libraries:

The library strategy recognises the Service's aim to deliver a library within 2 miles of every resident. Investment in library buildings has clearly demonstrated that a well designed, attractive, accessible building will lead to increased take up of services. Some libraries, such as Wath and the Central Library attract customers from across the Borough. Others, such as Kimberworth, Thurcroft, Kimberworth Park and Brinsworth, are visited predominantly by those who live around a mile or less from the library. Customers of those libraries may also use the larger service points e.g. the Central Library, Greasbrough, which deliver a wider range of services, for longer. Proximity to other services, shops, transport links and other public buildings is a distinct advantage. A number of successful shared buildings – e.g. Thorpe Hesley, Wickersley, Aston – demonstrate the principle that increased co-location with other Council and partner services could improve mutual accessibility to those services. As communities grow and change, the location of buildings and services within those communities will need to be reviewed. Consideration may also be given to reviewing the focus of the mobile library service, particularly where usage of a library building is relatively limited.

When services are available:

It is clear that some services and libraries are busier, receive more visitors and issue more books than others. Some days, or times of day, or seasons, may be more attractive, more effective and more efficient than others. Opening hours need to be determined based on actual and potential usage, taking into account the range and level of services available. For example, a busy, well located library attracting usage from around the Borough, with a wide spread of opening hours across the week and offering access to varied library and partner services will deliver services effectively and efficiently to a large audience. Equally, a smaller library with relatively limited services may still be effective and efficient if its hours and services are targeted clearly at its local audience.

It is therefore appropriate to consider if the service could be delivered differently in some places, as appropriate, within the overall aim of delivering a modern, vibrant and efficient library service across the Borough, bearing in mind the resources available.