



ROTHERHAM'S LIBRARY STRATEGY

2020-25

DRAFT

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WELCOME TO OUR DRAFT LIBRARY STRATEGY

Rotherham Council is extremely proud of its libraries. Customers tell us what a great service is being delivered and our partners tell us that they enjoy working with us.

Rotherham Libraries are successfully adapting to the changing needs of customers and in 2018/2019 more people visited libraries and borrowed both books and digital resources when compared to the previous year.

We want Rotherham Libraries to be a modern, relevant and innovative service which meets the needs of people from all sections of the community, as well as ensuring that the service remains financially sustainable. We want to build on the strong community spirit which exists throughout the Borough, placing libraries at the heart of community life.

Throughout our public engagement, residents have told us how they use their library service and what is important to them in the service offered. Residents who do not use the library service have also told us what would make them more likely to visit. This feedback has been used to shape the priorities within this strategy.

In Rotherham we are dedicated to ensuring that our libraries are in the right location, allowing access to all with good links to transport and parking facilities. We are committed to investing in our buildings to ensure they are welcoming, modern and vibrant, and we will continue this piece of work as we move forward with this new Library Strategy.



Councillor Allen

Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for people who want to use it.

In this Strategy we present a vision and framework for our Libraries service over the next five years, which we believe will meet the needs of people in Rotherham.

There are 15 libraries located across the borough. Currently 98 % of Rotherham residents are able to access a library within two miles of their home.

As part of a commitment to widening access, the library service provides vehicle-based services, mainly to older people who might otherwise be unable to get to a library, and a Schools' Loan Service, which offers resources to support reading, literacy and the wider curriculum in schools.

There is also a digital library provision, which enables people to access the service online. Users can join the library, download e-books and other digital resources.

In order to produce a strategy to meet the future needs of the community the service has:

- ✓ carried out consultation with the public, members of library staff and partners
- ✓ examined usage, performance and demand for the service
- ✓ assessed the Service's contribution to corporate outcomes and priorities
- ✓ taken into account key national, regional and local strategies

- ✓ benchmarked the service against other local authorities: taking account of innovation, good practice and lessons learned
- ✓ reviewed available resources, including staff, buildings and stock

What will the strategy achieve?

For our communities:

- ✓ more people will enjoy the benefits of reading
- ✓ more people will get active and creative, taking part in library activities and groups as a way to stay healthy and well
- ✓ more people will have the opportunity to volunteer and become employment ready
- ✓ more people will feel part of their community and be proud to live, work or study in Rotherham
- ✓ more people see libraries as essential community and cultural hubs, a first point of contact for Council services

For our service:

- ✓ there will be increased financial sustainability, ensuring that libraries have a bright future at the heart of our towns and neighbourhoods
- ✓ our staff and volunteers will be proud to work for us
- ✓ other organisations will want to be our partners because of our great reputation



BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The way that people use their library is changing, and with it, their expectations and demands of their library service.

Nationally, traditional usage of libraries is generally on the decline however, in 2018/2019 Rotherham saw an increase in both the numbers of people who borrowed books and who visited libraries across the borough.

Our offer of digital resources is also showing a positive increase in usage with March 2019 showing our highest ever issues for eBooks and eMagazines. For the 2018- 2019 year we had an increase of over 70 % in total e-resource downloads which is reflective of the national trend of moving towards digital services, as more and more people have access to technology and the internet.

Not only are attitudes to technology changing, but also the needs of the people of Rotherham. With more children coming from lower-income families and increasing social isolation and loneliness across all ages, our library service must play a vital role in reaching out to every single person in the Borough regardless of age, gender or social and economic background.

The library service needs to offer something for everyone, whether this is a space for quiet study or reading, or exciting activities, events and groups which bring people together.

The strategy identifies improvements and efficiencies in order to tackle the challenge of providing more modern and sustainable services in the face of increasingly complex demand and reduced Government funding.

Locally, there are clear opportunities for this library strategy to provide a framework for cross-council work in the following areas:

- ✓ Rotherham's School Improvement Service (RoSIS), by improving reading and literacy attainment levels for children;
- ✓ Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, by giving opportunities for people to come together, to get involved in their local neighbourhood and to participate in interesting, enjoyable and creative events and activities;

- ✓ Cultural Strategy, by offering a programme of cultural and artistic activities and events that provides everyone with the opportunity to enjoy some form of creative experience;
- ✓ Economic Growth Plan, by supporting individuals to become job-ready;
- ✓ Delivery of the Building Stronger Communities action plan, by providing opportunities for neighbourhood engagement and a visible, well-used and vibrant community hub;
- ✓ Children and Young People's Plan, by providing opportunities for informal and intergenerational learning in a safe, attractive space;
- ✓ Health and Wellbeing Strategy, by reducing social isolation and maintaining good mental health, using the Five Ways to Wellbeing as a framework for activities;
- ✓ Supporting Adult Social Care and Housing in providing safe, trusted community-based places for service users and increasing opportunities for independent living.
- ✓ Supporting the Customer Access Strategy through providing free wi-fi and digital assistance, so that customers who need help feel supported and able to access the services they need



National Priorities for Libraries

Library services across the country are delivered in different ways as services are shaped by local policy, customer need and available resources.

Libraries Connected (a membership organisation advocating for the power of libraries, representing heads of library services in England, Wales and N. Ireland) has developed a package of Universal Offers which helps to underpin national and local priorities, providing

a framework for future service developments around the key areas of:

- ✓ Reading
- ✓ Digital and Information
- ✓ Culture and Creativity
- ✓ Health and Wellbeing

Rotherham's Library Strategy takes account of our commitment to implementing these Universal Library Offers.

Also, the Libraries Taskforce 2016 report "Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021", presents a vision of excellence including **seven key outcomes** which our Library Strategy supports.

The four Universal Library Offers are closely linked to the seven Libraries Deliver outcomes:

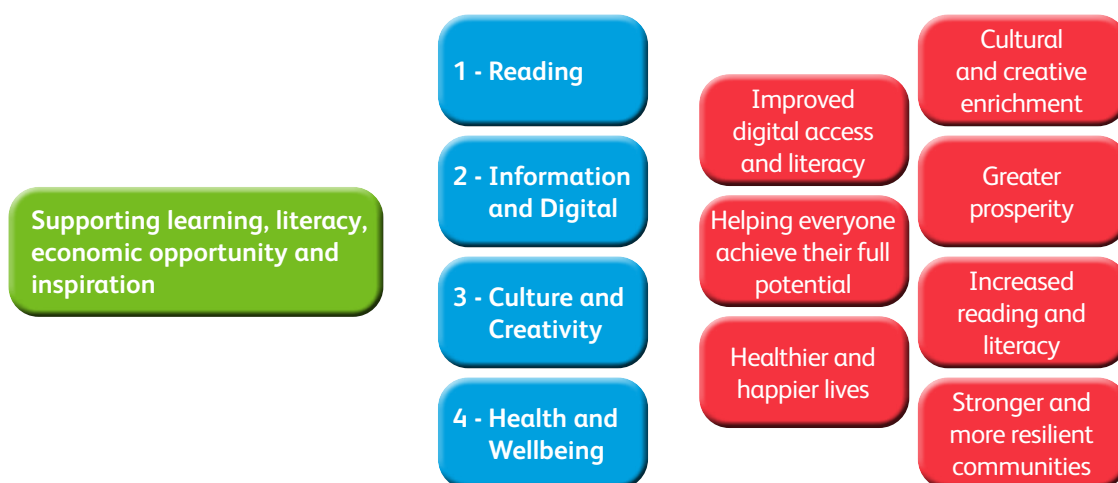
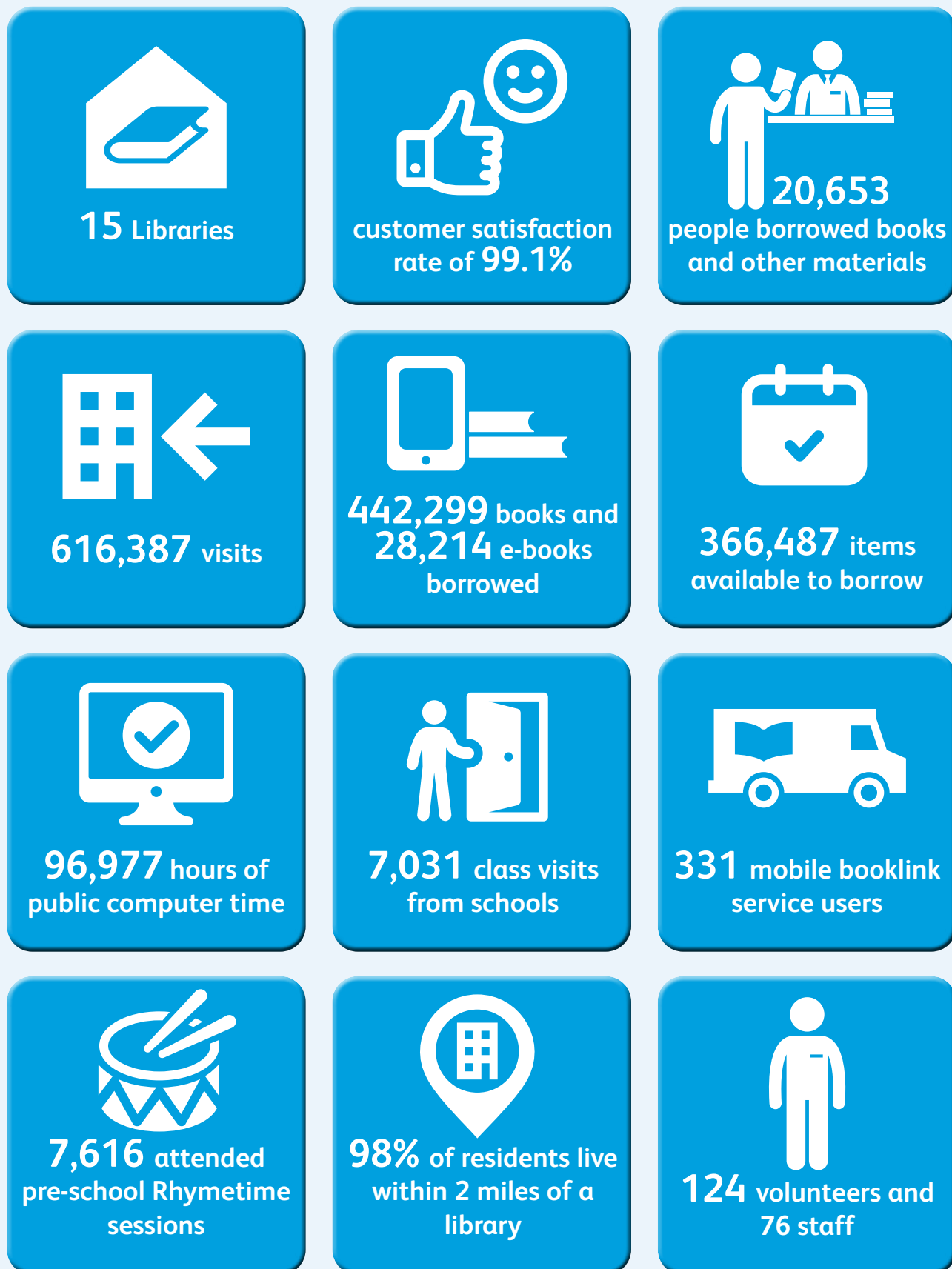


Figure 1: **Key facts** about Rotherham Library Services 2018/19



SHARED READING

Rotherham Libraries partnered with Sheffield and Doncaster in the 'Shared Reading' project, led by 'The Reader' and funded by Arts Council England.



Reading groups met to improve connection and wellbeing, especially among people feeling isolated or vulnerable, through sharing thoughts, memories and stories inspired by reading aloud. Several volunteers became Reader Leaders to run groups themselves and the project is expanding from the initial six groups to new locations in the Borough.

Some of the people attending groups have shared how it benefits them with the following comments:

- *"It's a way of making new friends"*
- *"It welcomes people from all walks of life and also provides a good cuppa and nice biscuits!"*
- *"It encourages people not to be afraid to read out loud"*

LIVE WELL

This project worked with local communities and partners to improve the general health and mental wellbeing of local people.

"Cuppa and a Chat" sessions took place in three Libraries, where around 60 local people and school children chatted about how the ways we communicate have changed. Further events were delivered in partnership with local organisations including "Get Healthy Rotherham" and "Places for People" at five libraries. Topics covered included healthy eating and weight management, relaxation and stress management, exercise and fitness.

Yoga taster sessions were delivered in four libraries, and the response was excellent: *"Yoga was fantastic! Would love to see this being put*

on regularly". "Would be nice to have more Yoga weekly, or some other form of exercise."
"Excellent, really good"

More books to support healthy living, mental health and well-being have been added to library stock and a "Dark Den" has been provided at Kiveton Park Library to offer a quiet, calm place for children who may be on the autistic spectrum and overwhelmed by the noise and bustle in the library.



Figure 2: **Services and facilities** delivered by Rotherham Libraries



READING PICTURES, SEEING STORIES

“Reading Pictures, Seeing Stories”, a regional visual literacy project funded by the Arts Council, was delivered in autumn 2018 at Wath library. It focussed on the power of illustrations in books with Michael Morpurgo’s book “War Horse” as the theme in commemoration of the end of the Great War. Library staff delivered the Arts Award to school-children and Wath Central Junior School created an exciting exhibition in the Library.

Children’s author and illustrator Liz Million led workshops to inspire children in their own art work on the Great War theme.

Over 300 children were involved, and the exhibition in Wath Library was visited by nearly 100 people. One visitor commented: “What a fantastic exhibition. You can clearly see a lot of hard work has been undertaken by the children of Wath Central to create such a thought-provoking display. Well done to all!”



FUN PALACES

Fun Palaces is an ongoing campaign celebrating culture at the heart of community, using arts, science, craft, tech, digital, heritage and sports activities as a catalyst for community engagement. 2019 saw the third year of Fun Palaces in Rotherham Libraries with successful events over the first weekend in October at the Central Library in Riverside House, Wath and Maltby libraries.



Since the first year Rotherham took part in this national initiative, interest and enthusiasm has grown with a steady year-on-year increase in those taking part and visiting the

events. Everyone who attended said they would recommend the events to others; they generated a sense of community and pride in where they lived, as well as a positive mood-boosting benefit.

Activities have been wide-ranging, with community groups and individuals coming to share their skills and pastimes with great enthusiasm. Indian dancing, Morris dancing, music and singing, papercraft, book-folding, painting, stamp-collecting and much more. One little girl who had made a paper flower returned to show her friend how to do it. This is what Fun Palaces are all about, learning something new and passing it on!

In April 2019 the central Fun Palaces team announced National Lottery funding which will support the work of the Fun Palaces campaign over the next 5 years. As a part of this, Rotherham Council will be included in the expanded programme with a Rotherham Fun Palaces Ambassador to help create and lead local cultural and community activities.

WE LISTENED - WHAT DID YOU TELL US?

During 2019 Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council ran a public engagement consultation to find out what people in Rotherham think about libraries, what is most important to them and what their priorities are for library services in the future. A summary of the research and engagement is published as a supporting document to this strategy.

Top four public priorities



Key points from the consultation were as follows:

- **Books and reading** are the top priority for both adults and children, including audiobooks and e-books.
- Libraries are seen as a great **benefit to children**, with many users seeking a wider range of facilities and services catering to children and families.
- For **children and young people**, a wide range of modern and appealing books is a priority. They also want a more vibrant environment, with more activities, events and clubs available.
- People approve of recruiting **more volunteers** in their local library service, though paid **staff are viewed as skilled and knowledgeable**, and crucial to the service.
- People value having an **easily accessible** local library, close to home or easy to get to on public transport. Those who do not use libraries report that they would be encouraged to use them if they were in more convenient locations.
- People want libraries to be the social hub of the community, and consider it important that library buildings are **modern, clean and welcoming** with improved convenient opening hours.
- Library users agree that **technology**, should be used to enhance what is offered by the library, and to reduce costs and offer greater choice
- People agree that **moving or sharing buildings** with organisations can help to increase usage and make libraries more sustainable in the community.
- Those who do not use libraries feel that they do not offer any services or facilities that they want to use. Many **people buy their own books and access information online** at home.

VOLUNTEERING TO SUPPORT THE LIBRARY SERVICE

Laura was appointed as a Library Volunteer at Riverside House. Having done her own family tree, she was enthusiastic to help other people by starting a weekly family history group. With the support and help of Library staff, she produced flyers and distributed these to local businesses in the town centre. The group started with just a couple of members but grew as word spread and it now sees up to eight people on a regular basis and meets twice a week in the Library.



Following this, Laura then helped with an event for The Big Read, when the author Mari Hannah came to Riverside Library to run a book group

as part of Harrogate International Festivals Programme. During the summer she helped to promote volunteering at the annual Volunteers Walk organised by Voluntary Action Rotherham and then in autumn worked at Rotherham College during Freshers Week, promoting both volunteering and library services' public consultation.

As part of the annual Fun Palace event in October, Laura introduced adults and children to playing the ukulele and it was so popular that she is starting a ukulele group once a month in the central Library at Riverside.

After applying for a post as a library assistant, she has been successfully appointed and will now be working across the borough in all fifteen libraries - a good news story both for Laura and the library service.

Laura says: "Volunteering with the library has opened up so many opportunities for me. Not only has it led to a paid job with the library, but I've also had the chance to start a ukulele group and a family history group which will be great experience to further my career. I have managed to work my volunteering around my studies as well."

LEGO CLUBS

Thurcroft Library started a regular Lego Club for families in spring 2018 and it proved so popular that clubs were quickly extended to all our libraries. Library staff encourage children to use their imagination in creating and sharing stories using their models and to work together on projects.

The sessions are suitable for young people with all levels of ability and the overall response is excellent, particularly with children who have special educational needs and disabilities.

Some of those attending, children and their parents/carers, have shared what they think about the Lego clubs:

- *"All of my friends come now to the Library, we had never been until the Lego club started!"*
- *"It's a great way to do something free as a family, we love it"*
- *"I forgot how much I loved Lego, now my son and I can enjoy it together like I did with my father when I was younger".*



VISION

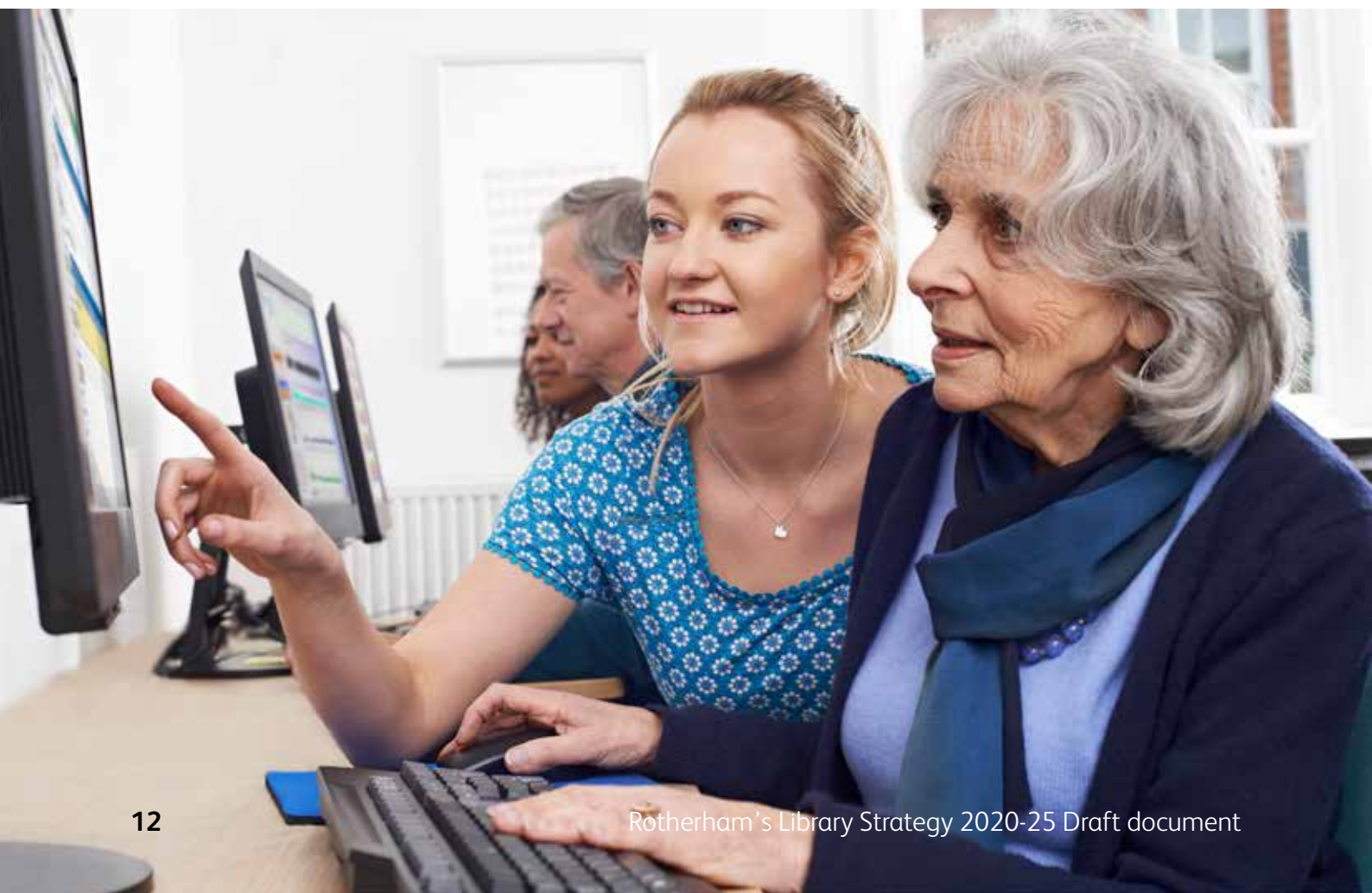
Libraries are a friendly and welcoming gateway to a world of reading, information, learning and creative activities, at the heart of our neighbourhoods.

We seek to build on the strong community spirit that exists throughout the borough and to place libraries at the heart of community life as a modern, relevant and innovative service that meets the needs of people from all sections of the community.

MISSION

Our mission is to utilise our libraries to help people to get active and creative, more often.

(Rotherham Cultural Strategy 2019-2026)



CORE OFFER

Our Libraries

- Located in the heart of Rotherham's communities, our libraries will be recognised as neighbourhood hubs that are welcoming, safe and places to access information along with recreational, cultural and learning activity.
- Our library buildings will bring together Council services and partners in order for people to access a range of services at a local level.
- Our Libraries will carry an up-to-date and wide selection of books and reading material, including e-books, e-magazines, spoken word and large print.
- Our libraries will be easily accessible. Offering ease of access for people with disabilities. They will be well used, with up-to-date facilities and be responsive to changing requirements, using available technology and resources effectively.

Our Service

- We will provide a level of service which is enjoyed and valued by those who visit the library, so they want to come again and tell others about their experience.
- We will engage with library users and partners in meaningful ways, automating processes where possible to release time for genuine co-working with community groups, voluntary organisations and internal departments to deliver more efficient and better services.
- Our staff are our most valued resource: we will invest in their knowledge and skills and give them opportunity to develop and apply their expertise with regular reviews of training needs, a programme of workforce development and specialist development where appropriate.

- Volunteers play a vital role in supporting and enhancing Rotherham libraries and will continue to do so in the future. The service recognises the added value that volunteers bring by offering their time, skills, experience and commitment. We will ensure our volunteers feel valued and get something worthwhile from the time they give us. In order to do this, we will continue to work closely with Voluntary Action Rotherham to ensure their interests and skills are well matched to our opportunities and that they are fully trained and properly supported by our paid staff.

Our Activities

- **Reading:** this is key to taking advantage of opportunities in life, so we will inspire Rotherham's children, young people and their families to enjoy reading, enabling them to improve their quality of life and realise their full potential.
- **I.T.:** we will encourage and support people to help themselves wherever possible, equipping them with the knowledge and means to get online using up-to-date I.T. equipment, and access information and services independently.
- **Activities:** we will provide a wide range of activities, events, groups, clubs and courses which inspire and enable people to get more active and creative, more often.
- **Learning and Information:** we will provide support, advice and resources to enable people to learn, develop skills and enjoy healthy lifestyles.
- **Community:** we will be genuine neighbourhood hubs, bringing people and services together and encouraging people to build the support networks and partnerships they need to thrive.

OUR STRATEGY – WHAT WE WILL DO?

The seven outcomes presented in Libraries Deliver 2016-2021 by the Libraries Taskforce are incorporated within our goals as a Library Service and also have a broader application in the priorities presented in the Rotherham Council Plan. This strategy aligns closely to the Rotherham Cultural Strategy in order to support its key goal to enable everyone to get active, get creative and get outdoors, more often.

Our Action plan follows the seven key themes of the Libraries Deliver report:

1. Cultural and creative enrichment

- ✓ We will offer a programme of cultural and artistic activities and events that provides everyone with the opportunity to enjoy some form of cultural experience. This will be supported through our partners, such as the Arts Council and Rotherham Open Arts Renaissance.
- ✓ We will seek funding to extend our cultural offer and engage with a wider range of interests, in particular supporting the local and regional cultural sector.
- ✓ We will seek to bring art, dance, music and theatre into the library space, with particular emphasis on bringing stories to life.
- ✓ We will improve our communication about library activities, especially those which are free and low cost.

2. Increased reading and literacy

- ✓ We will encourage and support everyone, especially children and young people, to develop a life-long love of reading; for example, through continuing our partnership work with places where children go and organisations which work with them, such as schools and Grimm & co.
- ✓ We will offer a wide range of reading items, including e-books, large print, audio-books, newspapers and magazines, to support the personal literacy development of individual readers.

- ✓ We will continue to develop readers' groups, including online, themed and targeted groups.
- ✓ We will participate in national and regional reading events that encourage participation, especially among children, such as the Summer Reading Challenge.

3. Improved digital access and literacy

- ✓ We will continue to offer free Wi-Fi access in all our library buildings and we will offer customers the facility to print from their own devices.
- ✓ We will provide up-to-date computer equipment for people to use free of charge.
- ✓ Through trained staff, volunteers and partners we will support people getting online and using I.T. with confidence.
- ✓ We will encourage digital literacy among children through developing such things as makerspaces and code clubs.

4. Helping everyone achieve their full potential

- ✓ We will continue to offer a wide-ranging stock of materials for loan or reference in various formats, both traditional and digital.
- ✓ We will ensure library staff are trained to support customers to make the best use of the full range of library resources, along with encouraging the take up sector specific qualifications.
- ✓ We will increase the number of new apprenticeships available within the service.
- ✓ We will support children with homework, students with their studies and adults with access to online information in relation to such things as jobs and benefits.
- ✓ Supported by Voluntary Action Rotherham, we will offer a range of volunteering opportunities to individuals and community groups in supporting delivery of the library service.

5. Healthier and happier lives

- ✓ We will promote reading for pleasure as a positive benefit to health and mental well-being.
- ✓ We will host events, activities and groups whose purpose is to encourage and support a healthier, happier lifestyle.
- ✓ We will provide and support the use of information on physical health and mental well-being, through our own resources and in partnership with others.
- ✓ We will actively seek to reduce social isolation and loneliness through the organisation of reading groups and activities in which people can come together.
- ✓ We will offer a service to those who are potentially lonely and vulnerable through our Booklink and Home Library Services.

6. Greater prosperity

- ✓ We will offer work clubs in conjunction with partners.
- ✓ We will offer assisted digital support and beginners I.T. sessions to support people getting online and becoming confident computer users.
- ✓ We will work with partners to offer space for Information, Advice and Guidance particularly for those seeking or offering employment and training.

7. Stronger, more resilient communities

- ✓ Our libraries will function as friendly and welcoming community hubs, freely accessible to all. This will include reviewing: if buildings are in the right location; if they can be co-located with other services/partners; if the buildings require refurbishing/ modernising; if the service can host wider cultural and heritage activity.

- ✓ Work with appropriate partners and the community to create a new community hub in the town centre in order to increase engagement and increase footfall. The hub will be a landmark feature for the community: a bright, welcoming, aspirational hub, aimed at encouraging people to explore the environment and what it has to offer to Library members. It will offer a state-of-the-art book display and digital technology and dynamic social space in which to meet and learn.
- ✓ Where partners express an interest in running a community library, a feasibility study will be undertaken. In cases where there is support from the local community and a sound business case to do so, the Council would look to transition the management of the service over to the community. A comprehensive support package from the Council would be put in place.
- ✓ Our staff and volunteers will be trained to provide excellent customer service to all those who wish to use our services.
- ✓ We will review our opening hours in line with customer and staff feedback and statistical information, and engage with local community groups and seek to implement automated solutions, in order to keep libraries open for more people, for more of the time.
- ✓ We will host a wide range of diverse events and activities that build community identity and cohesion.
- ✓ We will work with local people to shape our future services, extending ownership, responsibility and pride.
- ✓ We will generate an income through charging for elements of the service provision such as: hiring of library space and delivery of chargeable services, activities and events.
- ✓ Continue to use the Community Infrastructure Levy to support the provision of library services.

MEASURES – HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE DELIVERING AGAINST OUR AIMS?

In order to test if the service is delivering against the strategic aims we will expect to see the following:

By 2025 we will:

- ✓ Increase the numbers of people who borrow books by 10 %
- ✓ Increase the number of visits by 10 %
- ✓ Increase reading for pleasure amongst young people by 25 %
- ✓ Increase the number and range of activities and groups by 10 %
- ✓ Increase the number of people using I.T. facilities by 10 %
- ✓ Increase self-service take up such as online renewals and online requests by 20 %
- ✓ Increase the number of volunteering hours by 50 %.
- ✓ Maintain our levels of customer satisfaction above 95 %
- ✓ Increase income through sales or grant funding by 20 %
- ✓ Trial technology which will allow customers to access libraries without staff being present in order to increase opening hours
- ✓ Be a financially sustainable service, which remains high quality
- ✓ Be able to evidence the impact and value that libraries bring to communities through case studies and testimonials

