



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Gloucestershire Libraries Annual Report

April 2023 - March 2024

The Library

Library Strategy 2023-2028

Annual Report on progress

1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

Introduction

Our new library strategy was adopted unanimously at full Council in February 2022 and outlines ambitious plans demonstrating how Gloucestershire libraries will continue to support the changing needs of our local communities throughout the county.

The strategy is based around our 5 C's and this report demonstrates how we have made progress in delivering against our ambitions within our first year.

July 2023 saw the launch of our Library Challenge. The theme for 2023 was Music. 7,944 children took part over the school summer holidays. 2024's theme is Sport, to tie in with the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles for children during the summer holidays and the Olympics.

In 2023/24 we have delivered our first year of activity as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and seen a 10% increase in visitor numbers to our libraries over the previous year.

We have created a new workplan for 2024/25 to further build on the success of our first year's delivery of our new Strategy.

Jane Everiss

Head of Libraries and Registration





“

Wonderful event. My children loved all the activities. Welcoming and engaging staff.

”

Let's Celebrate

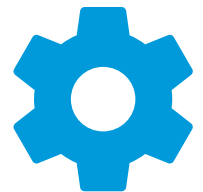
1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

32 Libraries
8 Community Libraries
193 Members of Staff



FREE WiFi in
Every Library

Lab's in Cheltenham, Chipping
Campden, Coleford, Gloucester,
Stroud and Tewkesbury



1,381,108 Library visits



1,860,457 Items of Stock Issued
597,966 Items of e-Stock Loaned
464,319 Items of Library Stock Available

1,388 Children's Learning
Activities & Events

154 Adult Learning
Activities & Events



112,263 Virtual Visits



Over **10,592** hours
of Volunteer Support

179 Public Computers
88,302 Hours of Public Use



THE 5 C'S

CORE

CLIMATE

COMMUNITY

CONNECT

CREATIVITY

CORE

Strategy Ambition 1

Equip staff and volunteers with the skills to deliver a progressive service and encourage development at all levels.

What have we done?

- New induction course format has been trialled and feedback gathered from attendees to inform future courses.
- Training for new Library Manager and Assistant Library Manager roles identified with series of refresher training being delivered.
- Rolling out series of online training in customer service
- Upskilling staff around promotion and income generation in line with needs for the Arts Council and development of the service
- Held an all staff awayday with a keynote speaker about the “art of brilliance” empowering staff in their roles and aspiring to deliver brilliance.

Strategy Ambition 2

Commit to investing further skills and training opportunities through work experience, apprenticeships and volunteering.

What have we done?

- Volunteer process reviewed with current volunteer experiences being captured.

Strategy Ambition 3

Further develop and expand customer self-service options enabling easier and extended access to library services.

What have we done?

- Five libraries identified as first tranche of Open+ rollout. Customer engagement surveys undertaken at each library for customer and staff feedback prior to going live.
- E-Newspaper and e-Magazine provision moved to Press Reader with additional trial on our existing eBook platform Borrow Box.

CORE

Strategy Ambition 4

Become more inclusive and better reflect the equality and diversity of our communities through our book stock, accessible events and recruitment of staff and volunteers.

What have we done?

- £3,000 has been spent on dedicated book stock specifically aimed at Equality, Diversity and Inclusion collections and foreign language.
- Our Arts Council National Portfolio (NPO) funding has enabled us to provide accessible and diverse events. All events are now publicised in our regular what's on guides and have events specifically aimed at equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Recruitment has been reviewed with new situational questions embedded into the interview process. Written questions are now provided at interviews to ensure inclusivity. Jobs are being promoted through local job fairs thereby reaching those that might not engage with the Council's website.

Strategy Ambition 5

Develop a strong marketing strategy that promotes the relevance of libraries and encourages greater use.

What have we done?

- We have launched a new website to enable our services to be marketed in a more attractive and interactive way. Our Social Media presence has been expanded with clear marketing messages going out regularly. Over the past year footfall across the county to our libraries has increased by 11%.
- A new and attractive "What's On" guide has been created to collectively promote events and activities in all 32 libraries.
- New branding has been created to refresh our library look. This has been updated in Bishops Cleeve, Oakley, Matson, Tewkesbury and Stroud.

CORE

Strategy Ambition 5 continued...

Develop a strong marketing strategy that promotes the relevance of libraries and encourages greater use.

What have we done?

- Developed our Library Lab membership model
- Introduced our inhouse summer Library Challenge, developing a new brand, marketing and identity to make it Gloucestershire specific.
- Promoting our key themes around Ageing with Creativity, Space to Create and Family Focus, each of which has very specific target audiences.

Strategy Ambition 6

Develop a programme of income generation to support the delivery of the NPO ambitions.

What have we done?

- We have been successful in achieving grant funding for:
 - A programme of creative and cultural events – funded by Arts Council England.
 - A new library website funded by a successful LibraryOn bid.
 - Successful smaller level applications to trusts and foundations to enhance service delivery including successful funding through Sports England to support the delivery of the Library Challenge event programme.
 - A new donations strategy has been introduced with QR codes used in our marketing for those who may wish and be able to donate.
 - Attracted income to support and enhance our climate and sustainability offer including the introduction of a Library of Things.

CORE

Strategy Ambition 7

Work with Schools to support class visits to local libraries to promote reading for pleasure to children.

What have we done?

- We are part of “working together” in Gloucestershire.
- We are part of the “Reading for Pleasure” forum, working with partners to promote reading in schools across Gloucestershire.
- Our new Library Challenge has enabled us to work closely with Schools through the assembly visits last year. 140 assemblies were undertaken reaching over 26,000 individual children.
- We have hosted high profile author visits for World Book Day



“

“I liked being a mermaid because we got to have our flapping fins.”

”

Magical Movement Dance workshop at Gloucester Library 2024

CLIMATE

Strategy Ambition 1

Roll out successful local initiatives that support climate and sustainability across our network of libraries.

What have we done?

- Introduction of Library Green workbooks – 22 libraries have achieved Silver status as at end March 2023.

Strategy Ambition 2

Explore more sustainable travel options for people wishing to visit libraries including a review of cycle parking provision and exploring car e-charging points in libraries.

What have we done?

- Review of cycle parking undertaken, and additional cycle parking installed at Fairford library.

Strategy Ambition 3

Explore the provision of free water re-fill points in libraries.

What have we done?

- 5 free water re-fill points installed in Bishops Cleeve, Charlton Kings, Cirencester, Coleford and Gloucester libraries.

Strategy Ambition 4

Offer local recycling points at libraries for residents

What have we done?

- Introduced battery recycling at Charlton Kings, Prestbury, Up Hatherley, Gloucester, Hucclecote, Coleford, Churchdown, Cheltenham, Cirencester, Lydney and Tetbury Libraries.
- Printer toner recycling at Coleford and Lydney.
- Milk bottle top recycling at Coleford and Lydney.
- Recycling food waste at Gloucester, Cheltenham, Cirencester and Churchdown Libraries.
- Recycling soft plastics at Cirencester.

CLIMATE

Strategy Ambition 5

Review and reduce the carbon footprint of our library van deliveries.

What have we done?

- 1300 annual miles saved so far off ran route – roughly 1.5 tonne CO₂.
- Successful trial of electric van.

Strategy Ambition 6

Explore the provision of a Library of Things to enable people to borrow useful items rather than having them buy them.

What have we done?

- Library of Things launched at Charlton Kings library in October with 195 items loaned to date

Strategy Ambition 7

Develop a programme of Environmental events to be delivered through the network of libraries.

What have we done?

- Held 131 Greener Together events with 1,200 people attending and working with 17 new partners.
- Formed partnerships with local forest schools and outdoor learning provider 'Wild and Green' to host specific workshops across our library sites.
- Held Greener Together week (16th-23rd March). A specific festival programmed and promoting 22 events, 11 author events with 325 people attending.

Strategy Ambition 8

Partner with local community groups to enhance and expand the use of the outdoor spaces - creating community gardens to support healthy living.

What have we done?

- Hosted a mini gardening festival in March at Churchdown, Fairford and Quedgeley libraries. This focussed on a range of activities for children and young people about the natural world with 202 people engaged with over three days.



“

“I really enjoyed doing yoga with my friends and relaxing”

”

COMMUNITY

Strategy Ambition 1

Explore targeted expansion of the community library access points where people cannot access a library building.

What have we done?

- Three Community Access Points have launched in the past year at the following locations:
 - Northleach in Westwoods Community Centre
 - Staunton in the Community Pub, The Swan
 - Frampton In the Cadbury Hall

Strategy Ambition 2

Create a programme of library refurbishment to ensure libraries align with community needs and to provide a modern accessible library service.

What have we done?

- Refurbishments undertaken at Bishops Cleeve and Longlevens libraries.
- Working with local architects we have introduced a new 'look book' to support with the delivery of library refurbishments.
- Formed new partners to upcycle high quality second-hand furniture from suppliers instead of always buying new products.
- Re-located Stroud Library to a newly refurbished space within the Five Valleys Shopping centre.

Strategy Ambition 3

Work with the University of Gloucestershire on the relocation of Gloucester Library to the new City Campus building.

What have we done?

- Worked with University of Gloucester on agreed floor plan.
- Worked with interior designer on new library layout.

COMMUNITY

Strategy Ambition 4

Work with developers to ensure new library provision is considered within identified strategic allocation sites and continue to review library provision in the light of new housing developments ensuring growing communities have access to public library services.

What have we done?

- Using developer contributions, we have supported libraries with digital equipment to increase access to services and skills.
- At Bishops Cleeve library we have partnered with the Roses Theatre and undertaken a refurbishment to increase access to cultural events



“

“Really enjoyable and worthwhile. Fantastic to find something like this at a library. More of the same please! ”

CONNECT

Strategy Ambition 1

Connect people with skills and opportunities by partnering with Adult Education and Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Hub.

What have we done?

- Hosted veterans PC skills courses at Longlevens Library.

Strategy Ambition 2

Hosted veterans PC skills courses at Longlevens Library

What have we done?

- New meeting room created in Stroud library with wi-fi and digital teleconferencing technology.
- Used the library lab spaces as creative spaces that can be hired.
- Undertaken a review and audit of our sites on space and provision for the use of future hires.

Strategy Ambition 3

Continue a programme of modernisation introducing new digital services such as Wi-Fi printing and improving digital access to library buildings.

What have we done?

- Wif-fi printing pilot introduced into Stroud library to be evaluated and rolled out if successful.
- Hublets (digital devices) introduced at Cheltenham and Stroud libraries.
- Digital art screens introduced into Stroud library.
- External digital display screens introduced into Stroud library.
- Automated pick up and drop off lockers introduced into Stroud library to enable collection and drop off of books outside of opening hours.
- Open access infrastructure installed in Quedgeley Library.

CONNECT

Strategy Ambition 4

Continue to develop the provision of library services, including digital engagement with the development of reading and literacy. This includes using provisions such as Immersive Reality to provide new and engaging interaction.

What have we done?

- We have used Oakley Immersive Centre to host:
 - 5 school visits totalling 217 school children to use the immersive room for
 - 4 preschool visits totalling 60 children.
 - 37 high need children from the ridge school.
 - 73 children to fortnightly Saturday Storytimes.

Oakley Immersive centre had 4330 visitors between July 2023 and March 2024 and issued 4,107 items of stock.



“

An informative and lively evening.
Thoroughly enjoyed meeting my
favourite author.”

”

CREATIVITY

Strategy Ambition 1

Deliver a programme of activities and events which are accessible to all as an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.

What have we done?

In 2023-24 Gloucestershire Libraries hosted a broad variety of events and projects, engaging the county's diverse communities to celebrate our cultural heritage and provide educational opportunities for all. Highlights included:

- Open Arts Evenings - International Women's History Month
- Story Times for Ukrainian Families - Gloucester Library
- Partnership with GARAS - Gloucester Library
- Gypsy Roma Traveller Month Exhibition - Gloucester Library
- Sensory Story Time and Play Sessions - Matson Library
- African Drumming Workshops
- Dementia Awareness Information Sessions
- Children's Mental Health Week - Events with Bliss by Robin

2023-24 also saw the launch of The Library challenge (TLC) – a summer celebration of our libraries, themed around music and featuring over 300 events as well as self-guided challenges for the children to complete. A total of nearly 8,000 children signed up to the challenge.

Excerpts from the 2023/24 Arts Council annual progress report stated the following:

Gloucestershire Libraries have had a successful first year as a National Portfolio Organisation, putting all the governance, internal systems and staffing team in place to deliver their planned programme of activity.

CREATIVITY

Strategy Ambition 1 continued...

Deliver a programme of activities and events which are accessible to all as an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.

What have we done?

Gloucestershire Libraries also successfully introduced Saturday Clubs in 31 libraries, with a total of 611 events and just under 7,000 people attending over the year.

The organisation has delivered well against their Investment Principle Plan actions. For Ambition & Quality, a key outcome has been the development of customer care standards and full training on governance for the advisory group.

Progress in Environmental Responsibility has been strong, led by the Greener Together team, who have set up green workbooks and have developed a specific Green Strategy for libraries. The organisation has launched 'The Library of Things,' and they are contributing to Cheltenham Zero and supported the Greener Together Festival in March 2024.

Gloucestershire Libraries have delivered well against Dynamism: successfully carrying out a digital skills audit, setting up digital Ambassadors to work across the organisation and working with technology industry partners on the Space to Create programme.

For Inclusivity & Relevance the organisation has made progress in setting up an EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) working party and looking at processes and training to encourage more diversity in recruitment. They are ready to carry out accessibility audits of library sites. They have achieved a more user-friendly digital presence with their new website.

In summary, Gloucestershire Libraries are in a good position to continue building on the systems they have set up and the experience they gained during 23/24.

CREATIVITY

Strategy Ambition 2

Develop creative and flexible uses of library services when closed to the public to offer cultural activity.

What have we done?

- Used Longlevens library to host the first Library choir.
- Partnered with the Roses theatre at Bishops Cleeve library in order to programme cultural events when the library is closed.
- Programmed events in libraries when they are not open to the public.

Strategy Ambition 2

Further promote Gloucestershire libraries as spaces to trial local creative talent, including creative businesses.

What have we done?

Gloucestershire Libraries have collaborated and formed partnerships with local creative businesses to deliver digital bootcamps to 16–24-year-olds, supporting young people in developing their creative and entrepreneurial skills:

Stop-Motion Animation: we partnered with SAND Visuals, to host stop-motion animation workshops. These workshops were aimed at young people aged 16-24, teaching them the art of stop-motion animation using their mobile phones. These bootcamps were designed to be accessible and engaging, offering hands-on experience with animation techniques and tools. The initiative helped foster a creative environment within the libraries, encouraging young people to explore digital arts.

Entrepreneurship and 3D Modelling Workshops: Gloucestershire libraries collaborated with Phoenix Consultants to foster entrepreneurship among the 16-24 age group. These workshops introduced participants to industry-standard 3D modelling software.

