



Dorset  
Council

**INSPIRE**

**Dorset Council Library  
Strategy 2023-2033**

DRAFT

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Foreword– Cllr Miller

Foreword to be added ahead of phase two consultation

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## Introduction

As Dorset Council, under the Public Libraries and Museums Act, 1964 we have a statutory duty<sup>1</sup> to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for all those who live work or study in the authority area.

Our statutory library service is made up of: 23 council run libraries, a 24/7 online library service and a home library service, which delivers services to house bound residents.

In Dorset we also have a proud history of community managed libraries. We support<sup>2</sup> eight community managed libraries who provide library services outside of the statutory service, resulting in a rich network of 31 libraries across the Dorset Council authority area. We value our community managed libraries as key stakeholders and community-based delivery partners.



Figure 1. Map of libraries network in Dorset Council area, including council run and community managed libraries. A list of libraries within the Dorset Council area [is available here](#). **Map to be replaced with improved version ahead of phase two consultation.**

The work of the library service is currently guided by the Universal Library Offers<sup>3</sup>:

- culture and creativity
- health and wellbeing
- information and digital
- reading

These aim to connect communities, improve wellbeing, and promote equality through learning literacy and cultural activity.

A new Dorset Council Library Strategy will guide how we develop and deliver our statutory library service over the next 10 years; shaping our services around local need and Dorset Council’s strategic priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> DCMS, 2022 [Libraries as a statutory service - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> DCMS, 2016 [Community libraries in Dorset - Case study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

<sup>3</sup> Libraries Connected, 2019 [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#)

## Our journey

Our approach to developing a new library strategy has been community led, evidence based, and partnership focused.

We are developing this library strategy based on two phases of public consultation. Analysis of phase one consultation survey responses have been brought together with the findings from engagement workshops and evidence around local need, to inform this draft library strategy.

### Phase one Let's Talk Libraries

We ran an extensive phase one Let's Talk Libraries consultation in October 2021 – January 2022. This open conversation with our communities, stakeholders and partners allowed us to hear what library customers valued, what would encourage non library users to use the service in the future and what opportunities there are to work collaboratively with partners. We received over 7,500 responses to our phase one survey.

To complement the surveys and to help add depth to the consultation, we ran a range of targeted workshops and research interviews with those groups who are traditionally underrepresented during library consultations: Dorset residents who do not currently access library services or individuals and communities with protected characteristics. This allowed us to better understand the barriers individuals face when trying to access our services and how we can better meet their needs in the future. The findings of this work, in terms of identified need and recommended action, is presented in a research [report available here](#) and its [accompanying appendix here](#).

The results and analysis of the three phase one consultation surveys are [available to read here](#):

- ages 5 to 15 public survey
- 16 years+ (main) public survey
- employee, partner, and business survey

A list of phase one engagement activity can be found at Appendix 1, we extend our thanks to all phase one participants.

### Evidence: local need

Dorset Council are committed to working in partnership with communities and stakeholders, placing residents at the heart of service design and delivering services around local need. This approach is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Library Strategy for England<sup>4</sup>.

Development of this library strategy will enable the repositioning of the library service as a strategic delivery partner for a range of council priorities. Libraries can work within strategic partnerships to deliver outcomes which help to: close the education attainment gap, help break the cycle of poverty and reduce inequality, tackle the mental health crisis, close the digital divide, tackle social isolation, improve wellbeing, and promote environmental awareness. Activity in these areas are all part of our core library offer<sup>5</sup>, but we can amplify our impact by delivering in closer partnership with others.

As we continue to work with services and partners during the development of this strategy, we are encouraging them to think "libraries first" when considering service delivery within Dorset's communities. Our customer focused library teams adapt our community-based services to help

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<sup>4</sup> DCMS, 2018 [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Libraries Connect, 2018 [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#).

respond to issues of the day, for example we will support communities with managing everyday cost of living, food insecurity and fuel poverty through advice; access to services and signposting to partners or agencies.

To understand the picture of local need across Dorset, we have looked at an array of data. In recognition of the broad range of interventions which a library service can help support, we have taken a series of measures which indicate need across the breadth of society and an individual's life course. These measures are set out below and are grouped in themes of need:

### **Education**

- percentage of reception age children reaching "Good" general level of development
- percentage of children passing KS1 assessment (reading, writing and maths)
- percentage of children passing KS2 assessment (reading, writing and maths)
- children with education, health and care (EHC) plan
- unemployment support claimants aged 18 to 21 as a proportion of all 18 to 21 year olds

### **Demographic**

- overall population
- percentage of population aged 0 to 4
- percentage of population aged 0 to 18
- percentage of population aged 65+
- population projections (dwelling led projections)

### **Deprivation**

- index of multiple deprivation
- deprivation affecting children
- claimant unemployment rate (as a proportion of the population aged 16-64)
- percentage of households with no car or van

### **Health**

- indices of deprivation: mood and anxiety disorders
- indices of deprivation: years of potential life lost
- percentage of population with a health condition where day to day activity is limited a lot
- conception rate for women under 18 years
- percentage of children in year six who were obese
- social isolation loneliness (across the life span)

### **Crime rate**

- crime deprivation indices

### **Digital exclusion**

- digital exclusion

### **Local economy**

- number of micro businesses
- number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) businesses

### Library demand

- number of active borrowers in the year
- number of issues in the year
- event participation in the year
- number of public access computer sessions
- number of public access computer user hours
- service isolation (proximity to other libraries)

A detailed draft Strategic Needs Assessment supports this library strategy and is available [here](#) [insert link when available].

The Strategic Needs Assessment presents the assessment of need geographically via heat maps and it also presents the assessment of need based on library catchment areas. Table 1 presents the tiers of library catchment areas based on overall need, which combines all themes of need together. Please refer to the full Strategic Needs Assessment for more detail, which provides a breakdown of catchment need across the different themes and looks at library demand trends over time.

Table 1. Summary of Dorset Council Library catchment areas, placed in tiers of overall need. Tier 1 (red) indicates greatest overall need and Tier 5 (blue) indicates least overall need in catchment.

Library Catchment	Overall Need
Weymouth Library & Learning Centre	Tier 1
Bridport Library	
Portland Library	
Littlemoor Library	
Dorchester Library & Learning Centre	
Swanage Library	Tier 2
Wareham Library	
Ferndown Library	
Sherborne Library	
Blandford Library	
Gillingham Library	Tier 3
Shaftesbury Library	
Sturminster Newton Library	
Beaminster Library	
Lyme Regis Library	
Wimborne Library	Tier 4
Crossways Library	
Wyke Regis Library	
Upton Library	
West Moors Library	Tier 5
Verwood Library	
Lytchett Matravers Library	
Corfe Mullen Library	

In developing the library strategy, we have given due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't
- foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't

A draft equalities impact assessment (EqIA) has been developed and is available for review [here](#) [insert link when available].

The EqIA and accompanying action plan will remain in draft and will be refined by feedback received during the next phase of public consultation.

### Phase two Let's Talk Libraries consultation

We are now entering the second phase of Let's Talk Libraries public consultation, which will run for 12 weeks, during the autumn of 2022.

We want to hear your views on our draft library strategy.

- do you support our strategic aims?
- what do you consider to be the most important aim?
- what opportunities are there for effective delivery of our aims in your community?

Consultation questions will be embedded throughout the draft strategy, seeking feedback after each section. We will also run a range of engagement activity including workshops to allow us to collaboratively refine the strategy and design delivery plans with our communities.

### Next steps

Following the close of the phase two consultation we will reflect on the feedback and refine the strategy and develop delivery action plans. The resulting strategy will be put before Dorset Council's Committees and Cabinet for endorsement in spring 2023.

## Our values

As part of the strategy development process the service have explored our values and beliefs.

We believe libraries can change lives through access to free, trusted, information and human help. We can open doors to new worlds, new skills, and opportunities. We stimulate aspiration and empower people to fulfil their potential.

*Library services are one of very few council services that are there for you at every stage of your life.*

We see you bounce to your first rhyme time, pick your first books, and read your first stories. We are there to entertain you after school, to help you study and to get your first job. We are there if you want to re-train, learn how use the latest technology, develop your skills, or when your family grows and you want to help give your children or those that you care for the best start in life. We are also there for you if feel lonely or need connection, providing safe spaces to get advice, to talk or make new friends.

The services you need from us may change, but we remain a trusted source of information that delivers a range of outcomes for Dorset's communities.

Our values which shape the activities and ambition of the service, as well as guide the way we work within our communities, with our partners and with each other, are presented below. When you combine our service values with Dorset Council employee behaviours, we generate these exciting outcomes for our service and communities.

*Values + behaviours = outcomes*

Dorset Council Library Service Values	Dorset Council Employee Behaviours	Outcome
<b>Welcoming.</b> Inviting and welcoming all visitors to our services.	Respect	Everyone feels at home at the library
<b>Inclusive &amp; Equitable.</b> Valuing all voices and supporting varying needs of our communities	Recognition	Increased creativity and innovation
<b>Enabling.</b> Supporting positive change for our residents	Collaboration	Improved life chances
<b>Responsive.</b> A customer focussed, evolving, adaptable service	Responsibility	We remain relevant and well used

## Our vision

Effective delivery of this strategy will make our vision for the future a reality.

Our vision is:

### **Trusted community spaces for everyone, with services to inspire your future**

The vision was developed in collaboration with Let's Talk Libraries phase one consultees, library employees, Dorset Council services and Dorset Councillors.

## Our mission

Our library service mission will support our delivery of this vision and comprises of three key themes. It strikes at the core of our existence and reflects what motivates our teams each day.

### **To Inspire, Connect and Enable our communities through our services**

We listened to our communities during the phase one Let's Talk Libraries consultation; reflecting on what our residents want our service to deliver. The mission statement evolved during service engagement and workshops; three key themes emerged:

#### **Inspire**

**To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning and literacy**

#### **Connect**

**To connect with and meet the needs of our communities**

#### **Enable**

**To create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use**

**To invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet future community needs and exceed customer expectations.**

These three strategic themes provide a framework for the strategy and for the delivery of our services.

## Strategic themes

Across the three strategic themes, there are 19 strategic aims, which sets out our transformational plan for the library service from 2023-2033. The aims are supported by an initial set of opportunities, the opportunities listed are not an exhaustive nor definitive list, we wanted to give a sense of our direction and seek your feedback on the opportunities which matter most to you. Please also share any new opportunities which would help to deliver the strategic aim in your community.

Phase two consultation will gather feedback on the strategic aims and opportunities.

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## Inspire

To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning and literacy.

**What does it mean to Inspire?** We aim to inspire more people to read, gain knowledge and share their enjoyment of learning with others. Strong literacy skills provide long term social and economic benefits and libraries are at the forefront by providing free access to books and other reading materials, IT, events, and activities. We acknowledge and celebrate the difference that a great learning experience makes to all, because everything changes when we can read.

This set of aims will bring structure to our role and provide opportunity for us to be creative in how we support reading, literacy and bridge the digital skills gap. We want to help to improve life chances, by supporting residents to pursue their personal goals to find a job, or by supporting their business to grow. Libraries create inspiration and innovation which can generate significant economic benefits. We also have a role in supporting the response to the council's climate and ecological emergency; inspiring and informing positive actions which individuals and communities can take to help us become a carbon neutral council and county.

<h1>Inspire</h1>	<p>To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning and literacy</p>	<p><b>Strategic aims</b></p>	<p><b>Opportunities which an action plan will explore:</b></p>
		<p>1.1 Support language and literacy for everyone through lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills and pursuing personal goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) partner with Dorset's speech and language service to support early years language and literacy programmes and deliver shared outcomes</li> <li>b) promote the range of free adult education provision available within Dorset</li> <li>c) pursue opportunities under the "Multiply" programme in collaboration with Skills and Learning, offering libraries as venues for "Maths Cafes"</li> <li>d) targeted events which improve literacy levels and builds confidence for English language learners and adults with low literacy skills</li> <li>e) careers promotions for priority areas of employment in Dorset Council's Economic Growth Strategy including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) especially in underrepresented groups</li> <li>f) improve use of business intelligence data to inform allocation of resource budgets, dynamically responding to customer trends and demand across physical and digital resources</li> </ul>
		<p>1.2 Host and deliver events &amp; activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) contribute to the delivery of the Dorset Cultural Strategy by employing artists, creating activities, and working with partners to bring cultural events to our communities</li> <li>b) pursue cultural funding opportunities from a range of partners including the Arts Council under their Let's Create Strategy</li> <li>c) connect communities and improve wellbeing and inclusivity through creative and cultural participation</li> <li>d) an engagement platform which allows the service to seek regular resident feedback on what events they would like to see, allowing us to co-create library activity and events programmes</li> </ul>
		<p>1.3 Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) host digitally engaging and accessible events and activities for all ages</li> <li>b) increase the digital champion support available at our libraries</li> <li>c) lending digital tablets to residents, allowing them to trial digital devices for access to employment</li> <li>d) Upgrade to full fibre internet connection at all library sites, utilising our library network to help spur on the roll out in local neighbourhoods</li> <li>e) work with partners to support them in signposting their clients / customers to our digital champion sessions for digital support</li> <li>f) roll out WIFI printing at libraries</li> <li>g) review public access computer provision to ensure it meets customer needs</li> </ul>
		<p>1.4 Support an innovative and thriving Micro and Small Medium Enterprise business network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Build relationships with local business networks and look to host networking and relevant events at libraries</li> <li>b) provision of free fast WIFI (e.g. full fibre) along with work and study spaces at our libraries</li> <li>c) explore opportunities under The British Library Business and Intellectual Property (IP) Centres. A Dorset centre could provide advice to micro and SMEs to help start up, protect and grow your business. The centre would also provide free access to business research databases and IP advice</li> </ul>
		<p>1.5 Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) role model behaviour change as a library service and support Dorset Council to become a carbon neutral council by 2040</li> <li>b) support community engagement on the declared climate and ecological emergency</li> <li>c) provide outreach for Dorset Council's waste service. Facilitate customer collection of new containers from local libraries and provide advice on recycling practices and reducing waste</li> <li>d) provide outreach sessions for Dorset Council's partner agency providing residents with advice on energy efficiency and green grants</li> <li>e) look to scale up existing waste reduction initiatives such as Win on Waste</li> <li>f) explore opportunities and partnerships to launch a Library of Things, Repair Café, or Toy Libraries at feasible library sites</li> </ul>

## How will we know we have delivered?

Performance measures will be developed following phase two consultation. They will form part of the final library strategy.

### Inspire

#### Business support

An Economic Impact Analysis of the British Library Business and the Intellectual Property Centre National Network carried out in 2019 highlighted the unrivalled value for money and return on investment that libraries deliver, standing at £6.95 generated for every £1 of public funding.

**Source:** British Library (2019) Demonstrating Entrepreneurship: Libraries as Engines of Economic Growth: A three-year economic impact analysis 2016-2018 [9715 BIPC report v20b single\\_0.pdf \(arts council.org.uk\)](#)

### Inspire

#### Digital support

Dorset libraries offer weekly volunteer and employee led digital champion sessions, where residents can drop in and request digital assistance.

Many library employees have completed an embedded digital champion training programme offered in the Council. This training builds staff confidence when supporting those ad hoc customer queries where the customer may not necessarily require specific one to one digital champion support. Customers that visit the libraries with digital enquiries outside of the drop in sessions will receive support from embedded digital champion staff or will be offered one to one digital support sessions.

When the pandemic forced the libraries to close due to lockdown legislation, some library colleagues were trained to take calls from customers and continued to offer digital support through the advertised Digital Hotline. Following the reopening of the libraries, libraries continue to support the Digital Hotline, 5 days a week.

#### Impact:

Library teams have reported examples of how they have digitally supported residents to keep in contact with friends and family, apply for work, access government and organisational resources, find local information and more. In many cases, the customer has learnt new skills and have recommended the support to friends.

## Inspire

### Libraries as Cultural Hubs

The Libraries as Cultural Hubs is an Arts Council England National Lottery funded cultural development programme. The programme was supported by The Friends Groups of Corfe Mullen, Sturminster Newton, Weymouth, Wimborne and Wyke Regis Libraries and our partner The Arts Development Company.

As part of the second phase of this programme, an event was held to focus on Bali Rai's latest book 'Mohinder's War' - a thrilling World War II adventure set in occupied France, featuring an Indian RAF pilot. Children and young adult author, Bali Rai, has written over 50 books, including titles for Barrington Stoke, a publisher particularly aimed at children who are reluctant, under-confident and dyslexic readers. The event was promoted to schools, highlighting the diversity aspect of broadening childrens' reading to include books featuring diversity, inclusion, and identity.

Another programme initiative included transformative creative writing workshops 'Rewriting Your Script', which was aimed at adults with a lack of mental well-being and those diagnosed with mental health conditions. These workshops were organised by libraries in collaboration with our partners The Arts Development Company, and led by Weymouth Library Writer in Residence, Chris Jury.

The course was supported by Weymouth and Portland Community Mental Health team, who provided a practitioner for every session to support participants. The workshops were evaluated using a self - assessment questionnaire based on the Short Warwick- Edinburgh-Mental Wellbeing Scale at the start and at the end of the course.

#### Impact:

- The book event was attended by approximately 850 children from 20 different schools. Feedback received from the schools included:
- "Children are very keen for us to now get copies of his books - they loved how his knowledge of history tied in so well with their current learning. "
- "The children loved making the connections with their own learning and love of reading."
- "We LOVED this session!"
- 29 people booked onto the writing workshops, 25 attended 1 or more workshops and 14 people went on to complete the entire course. 93% of participants underwent a statistically significant positive change in their mental wellbeing, 14% went from low mental wellbeing to high mental wellbeing and 57% were lifted from low mental wellbeing to moderate mental wellbeing. Comments included:
- "The support from the rest of the group and their perspective on my main issue...has been incredibly liberating and therapeutic. And the teaching which has been extraordinarily stimulating has changed so much of my perspective in an amazing way."
- "The script technique that Chris takes you through enables you to step out of your locked-in way of thinking, out of repeated patterns of thought and behaviours...and galvanises you into DOING. Through the doing of the script you begin doing the changes that transform your life."

## Connect

To connect with and meet the needs of our communities.

**What does it mean to Connect?** We believe that the library service is more than just a place to borrow books, it is a service which brings people together to interact and connect with other members of their community, fosters culture and creativity, and helps people to learn and develop lifelong skills. Participation in library events and activities is proven to improve mental wellbeing and helps to reduce social isolation and feelings of loneliness. Libraries are also a place where residents come to access trusted information and support from all council services, public sector partners and a range of other organisations.

<h1>Connect</h1>	<p>To connect with and meet the needs of our communities</p>	Strategic aims	Opportunities which an action plan will explore:
		2.1 Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) review and update our core offer in line with the new strategy and clarify what services are available at each library site</li> <li>b) develop a marketing strategy, to include the re-branding of the service</li> <li>c) promote the library service offer to council services and strategic partners and support them in training to ensure their teams are signposting residents to use the library services</li> <li>d) identify new groups, partners, and communications routes to ensure all demographic parts of our communities understand what libraries offer them</li> </ul>
		2.2 Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) listen to and focus our service delivery plans on areas of most need in communities</li> <li>b) share community needs with partners and work collaboratively to address them</li> <li>c) co-create a calendar of events with communities and partners</li> <li>d) generate connections amongst event participants; to enable networks and friendship groups based on shared experiences</li> <li>e) explore the creation of friendship corners in libraries</li> <li>f) work with Armed Forces Covenant programme to develop the library service's role in supporting members of the Armed Forces and their families in Dorset</li> <li>g) establish a role for libraries within the refugee resettlement programmes, welcoming refugees/asylum seekers into their community and providing relevant resources in their language.</li> </ul>
		2.3 Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) manage strategic partnerships centrally on behalf of the whole library service</li> <li>b) create a framework for localisation which library managers can use to tailor their activity to meet local needs</li> <li>c) provide time and space for the service to share best practice and learn from each other, partners, and the broader libraries sector</li> <li>d) collaborate with the Friends of Library Groups, both individually and collectively</li> <li>e) review and update Community Managed Libraries Service Level Agreement to ensure it remains relevant and keeps pace with library service development</li> <li>f) provide an open platform and framework for communities to propose delivery of new community managed libraries</li> </ul>
		2.4 Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) standardise our operating model and opening hours, reflective of community needs.</li> <li>b) deliver outreach activities and events outside of our buildings, taking the library to new places to engage with new customers who don't currently use the library, to include underrepresented groups and protected groups under the Equalities Act.</li> <li>c) expand access to autism friendly rooms and sensory equipment</li> <li>d) develop a SEND offer for children, young people, and their families e.g. hosting stay and explore sessions at the libraries</li> <li>e) invest in accessible technology so that our services can be accessed more easily by those residents with disabilities</li> <li>f) work closely with the Dorset Council equality, diversity and inclusion groups, networks, and governance</li> <li>g) find new ways to promote the Home Library Service offer and work with partners to ensure those eligible for the service are made aware and are encouraged to sign up</li> </ul>

		2.5 Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) provide comprehensive customer service support at all libraries including dedicated customer access points in line with identified need and the customer transformation strategy</li> <li>b) provide booked appointment system, so residents can access different council services for a face-to-face or video/virtual meeting at library sites</li> <li>c) promote and role model the access of council services online by our communities</li> </ul>
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**How will we know we have delivered?**

*Performance measures will be developed following phase two consultation. They will form part of the final library strategy.*

**Connect**

**Knit & Natter participant, Weymouth Library**

**What's your favourite thing about Knit and Knatter?**

"I didn't know anyone before I came to Knit and Natter. But you get to know different people and might see them outside and in the street and stop and have a natter with them outside. So you know, just getting to know different people"

**Would you recommend Knit and Natter?**

"You don't have to do knitting, some crochet, some do cross stitch. Whatever you can bring and do here because it just, especially if you live on your own, is meeting with different people, so you are not as lonely"

**Source: Dorset Council, [Let's Talk Libraries YouTube Video](#)**

**Connect**

**Customer Service Support at Libraries**

A customer arrived in Dorchester Library to return his son's library books and was pleasantly surprised to find a customer access point located within the building, with Dorset Council Customer Service employees available to assist customers with accessing other council services.

The customer took the opportunity to collect a replacement food waste bin while he was there. In conversation with the Customer Services Officer, he spoke around the rising cost of living and difficulties he had recently experienced with regards to paying his council tax, rent and bills.

The Customer Services Officer was able to directly offer information and advice about council tax discounts, as well as make a referral to Citizens Advice, (also situated within the same building), for further support and guidance around any potential benefits that he or his son may be eligible for, to maximise his income. He was also sent a link to the Revenues & Benefits pages on the Dorset Council website, so that he could review information later that day or book an appointment for a conversation with a specialist Revenue & Benefits Officer.

**Impact:**

- The customer was provided with access to the library, waste collection, Citizen's Advice and Revenue and Benefits services, all in one short meeting, saving him considerable time and effort. He was able to attain a product he needed and helpful information that may go on to boost his income and facilitate him to go on to achieve financial stability.

## Enable - our communities

To create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use

**What does it mean to Enable our communities?** Delivering a modern, sustainable, and responsive library service, that meets the expectations of our communities requires facilities that are inspiring, fit-for-purpose and reflect the quality of services being delivered. Our future spaces need to be appropriate and welcoming with facilities, equipment and technologies which support a range of uses – for example: study spaces, assistive technologies, innovation spaces, digital suites, and flexible workspaces.

We will think differently about how we work with other services & organisations to ensure we are responsive to our communities on wider issues. We will develop welcoming and inclusive library spaces that enable services and partners to locate with us and deliver their services for the community in which they are based.

<b>Enable</b>	To create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use	Strategic aims	Opportunities which an action plan will explore:
		3.1 Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) work with the Dorset Council Assets and Property team to develop an Asset improvement plan for our libraries network, pursue both local and national investment opportunities</li> <li>b) invest in moveable fixtures, fittings and equipment which look inviting and open up our library spaces for broader community use</li> <li>c) design library spaces around customer need, starting with review of children and young people use of the space</li> <li>d) revamp room bookings arrangements and invest in building security to increase hiring of library buildings out of hours, increasing its use and community value</li> <li>e) dispel the myth that libraries are silent spaces through both our marketing and libraries outreach and activities and events held at the library</li> <li>f) explore feasibility of a social enterprise cafés at library sites</li> </ul>
		3.2 Provide safe trusted spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) work with partners to design safe spaces at our libraries</li> <li>b) establish what role libraires can play in offering refuge and supporting vulnerable members of our communities</li> <li>c) carry out an audit of all aspects of accessibility in our buildings and look at library layouts and service delivery points</li> <li>d) redesign library signs to meet all accessibility &amp; design standards</li> <li>e) explore quiet zones or quiet times to ensure all customer needs are catered for</li> </ul>
		3.3 Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) work with Dorset Council Planning team to feed in community need within local planning decisions</li> <li>b) utilise developer contributions and other sources of funding to invest in our libraries in areas of community growth and explore opportunities to ensure buildings remain in line with community need</li> <li>c) influence the Art's Council planned review of standard developer charges for public libraries expected in 2022/23</li> <li>d) ensure our library network is strategically located to support our communities in highest need, informed by local need assessment analysis</li> <li>e) work with Dorset Council Assets and Property team to pursue local and national funding opportunities to install low carbon solutions on our library network e.g. installing solar panels and improving heating systems</li> </ul>
		3.4 Library services form part of community hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) work with Assets and Property colleagues to input, engage and shape Dorset community hub initiatives</li> <li>b) collaborate with services, partners &amp; providers to help shape Dorset's hub initiatives around local need, to deliver appropriate spaces and places that incorporate our library services and support needs of our communities</li> <li>c) explore co-location with partners, at feasible sites, enhancing the support offered at our library buildings and developing hubs.</li> <li>d) reclassify library buildings to make it easy for customers to know what services are available where</li> <li>e) be more commercially minded about delivery of and use of library spaces</li> </ul>
		3.5 Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) partner with Public Health Dorset and LiveWell Dorset to deliver outreach sessions at libraries connecting with communities in most need, guided by Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy outcomes</li> <li>b) deliver events and work with partners to improve health and wellbeing and tackle social isolation across the lifespan</li> <li>c) create connections with Dorset's primary care networks and promote library's social prescribing offer. Work with Patient Participation groups to develop services which meet their needs</li> <li>d) develop central link to health visitors to deliver co-ordinated and complimentary sessions while engaging the same cohort e.g. baby weigh ins followed by rhyme times</li> <li>e) libraries host assistive technology "care lounge" and adult social care road shows to help people to live at home for longer.</li> <li>f) develop effective stakeholder network of those working on health and wellbeing in Dorset, with the view to signposting to key partner's services</li> <li>g) explore opportunities for libraries to provide community-based non-clinical setting for health-related service delivery</li> <li>h) support community led self-help and well-being groups through use of the library space</li> </ul>

## How will we know we have delivered?

*Performance measures will be developed following phase two consultation. They will form part of the final library strategy.*

### Enable

Public libraries deliver significant economic benefits on preventative spend and return on investment. The health and wellbeing offer from libraries is estimated to bring a cost saving to NHS England of £27.5 million each year.

**Source:** Arts Council (2015) The Health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries. [The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries.pdf \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications/the-health-and-wellbeing-benefits-of-public-libraries.pdf)

### Enable

#### LiveWell Dorset

The LiveWell Dorset Engagement Team were part of a 'Healthy Half-Term' promotion in conjunction with the local GP Practices of Blandford Forum, for which some activities had been designed to centre around Blandford Library. The library employees spoke with various members of the public, who were interested to know more about who Livewell Dorset were and what support was available for people's health and wellbeing.

#### Impact:

- One resident stated that she was keen to go home and use the LiveWell Finder to help her become more active and link up with local groups in her area.
- Other local services were highlighted and library employees were able to signpost a client to Active Dorset for more information about outdoor activities in nature.

## Enable – our library teams

Invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet future community needs and exceed customer expectations.

**What does it mean to Enable our library teams?** Our service is underpinned by a committed and passionate library and volunteer workforce who see their role as essential in inspiring and empowering their communities. We know that to respond well to the future needs of our communities, and to deliver high quality, modern and transformational services, our individuals need the right skills and opportunities to develop and achieve their future potential.

<h1>Enable</h1>	<p>Invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet future community needs and exceed customer expectations.</p>	Strategic aims	Opportunities which an action plan will explore:
		3.6 Each employee feels valued and empowered, with career opportunities in the library service and Dorset Council more broadly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) invest in a new Workforce Development Plan which supports and empowers all employees in their employment pathway in the library service and Dorset Council</li> <li>b) workforce planning to include development time, providing time for staff to complete apprenticeships and to facilitate whole service development</li> <li>c) work with regional and national library bodies to learn from other authorities and pursue development opportunities for library employees</li> <li>d) maintain up to date library service guides and provide rolling re-fresher training to ensure operations and partner signposting is current and relevant</li> <li>e) update the recruitment process to ensure we are recruiting employees in line with our service values and strategy</li> </ul>
		3.7 Flexible resourcing across our library network, allows employees to develop a range of skills and experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) celebrate the diverse talent in the library service via a skills audit, by utilising library employees' strengths to deliver services, we maximise individual's contributions to the service</li> <li>b) teams to foster an environment where individuals are encouraged to take ownership and responsibility of areas in which they are skilled</li> <li>c) rotate employees around library network and roles to share experiences, develop skills and share best practice</li> <li>d) review our operating and resourcing model across the network to ensure we can deliver a consistent and appropriate service in line with community need</li> </ul>
		3.8 We offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via apprenticeship programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) develop rolling programme of apprenticeship opportunities to retain existing and attract future talent</li> <li>b) support Dorset Council's pathway to employment programme and care leaver apprenticeships</li> <li>c) develop library employees via apprenticeship programmes which build relevant skills for the service and for careers within the council</li> </ul>
		3.9 We have a strong partnership with, and wholly value the contribution of, our volunteers to the library service. We have a framework in place for supporting future partnerships to build on their success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) review &amp; improve the application process for volunteer library service roles</li> <li>b) co-ordinate promotion of volunteer opportunities across the library network</li> <li>c) update volunteer role requirements to keep pace with service changes</li> <li>d) work with our volunteer and partner network to share news, updates and an annual meeting which recognises successful partnership achievements and future joint ambitions</li> <li>e) promote use of Dorset Council employee's volunteering days in libraries</li> </ul>

### How will we know we have delivered?

Performance measures will be developed following phase two consultation. They will form part of the final library strategy.

## **Enable**

### **Kick Start Programme**

In September 2021, the Library Service advertised four Library Digital Assistant placements (25 hours per week, based at Dorchester, Ferndown, Gillingham and Weymouth Libraries) under the Department of Work and Pensions' Kickstart scheme. The scheme offered a six-month paid work opportunity for 16-24 year olds in receipt of universal credit, with the aim of helping participants gain confidence and work skills, leading to future employment.

Dorset Chamber acted as a gateway to the Kick Start scheme and four successful candidates took up their role as Library Digital Assistants in December 2021.

The Kick Start training programme was put together in collaboration with colleagues from across the Council, to ensure that the Kickstart participants would gain a wider understanding of digital services and Dorset Council. Specific training on on job applications was delivered towards the end of their placements, to support them in pursuing their next role.

The Kick Start participants were supported by their managers and teams in their role, to assist library customers with their digital queries, prepare social media posts and organise and deliver digital events such as the Digital Open Day at Dorchester Library and Learning Centre in March 2022, where they introduced customers to Ozobots, Makey Makey and other digital devices.

### **Impact:**

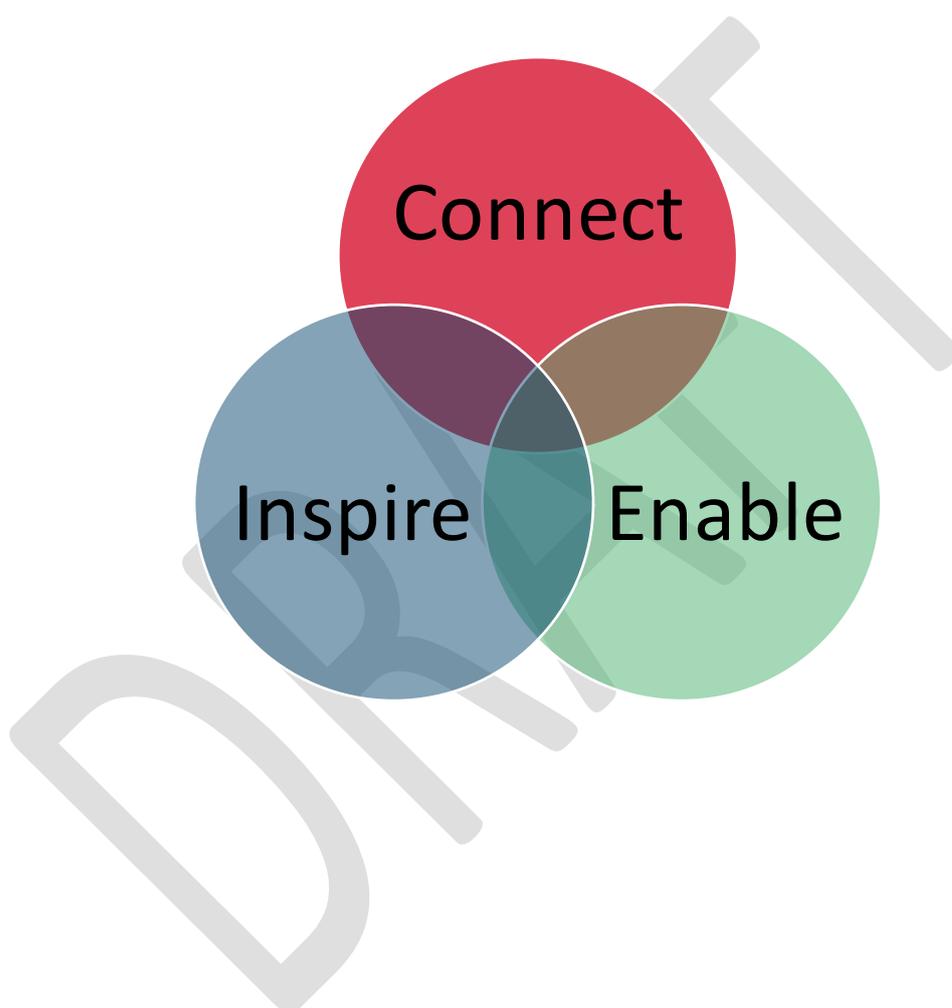
- One Kick Start participant reported that their confidence has grown, they have learnt new skills, learnt a lot about themselves, including what they would like their career path to be.
- All four Kick Start participants would consider taking part in future opportunities within the service.
- Three out of the four Kick Start participants have gone on to secure job roles within the Council.

## How we fit in

Development of this library strategy will enable the repositioning of the library service as a strategic delivery partner for a range of council priorities. Libraries can work within strategic partnerships to deliver a range of positive outcomes.

We have identified where we can support delivery of Dorset Council (and national) strategic priorities under the themes of our strategy.

Policy framework currently presented in table form p.19- plan for this to be designed in more visually interesting way (e.g. Venn diagram) ahead of phase two consultation.



	<b>Dorset Council Library Strategy</b>	
<b>Inspire</b> <i>To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning and literacy.</i> <b>(Blue)</b>	<b>Connect</b> <i>To connect with and meet the needs of our communities</i> <b>(Red)</b>	<b>Enable</b> <i>To create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share &amp; use</i>  <i>To invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet future community needs and exceed customer expectations.</i> <b>(Green)</b>
<a href="#">Universal library offers<sup>6</sup></a>	Dorset Council: <a href="#">Diversity and inclusion strategy 2021 to 2024 *</a>	Dorset Local Plan (in development)
<a href="#">Arts Council Let's Create</a>	Dorset Council: <a href="#">Homelessness &amp; Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026</a>	Dorset Council Family Hubs Strategy (in development)
Dorset Council <a href="#">Digital strategy: Our digital vision</a>	<a href="#">Dorset Armed Forces Covenant</a>	Dorset Council: <a href="#">Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy</a>
<a href="#">The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days</a> , Department for Health & Social Care		<a href="#">Dorset Council: Property Strategy &amp; Asset Management Plan</a>
Dorset Council: <a href="#">Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-23</a>		Dorset Council: Accessibility Strategy (in development)
Dorset Council: <a href="#">Dorset SEND strategy 2018 to 2021</a>		UNHCR: Refugee resettlement
Dorset Council: Pre-birth -5 strategy (in development)		UK Government: Levelling Up White Paper
NHS Speech and Language Strategy (in development)		<a href="#">Dorset Council: People Strategy</a>
Dorset Council: <a href="#">Cultural strategy 2021 to 2026</a>		Dorset Council: <a href="#">Diversity and inclusion strategy 2021 to 2024*</a>
Dorset Council: A better life		DC Commercialisation strategy (in development)
Dorset Council: <a href="#">Economic growth strategy 2020 to 2024</a>		Dorset Council Workplace Strategy
<a href="#">Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 – 33</a>		Dorset Council Stronger Neighborhoods
<a href="#">Joint Archive Service Plan 2018-2021</a>		Dorset Council: Customer Strategy (in development)
<a href="#">Dorset Council: Climate &amp; ecological emergency priority</a>		<a href="#">Dorset Council: Climate &amp; ecological emergency priority</a>
<a href="#">Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021</a>		
Dorset Council Communities Strategy (in development)		
<a href="#">Dorset Council Joint health and wellbeing strategy 2020-2023</a>		
Dorset's Integrated Care Partnership Strategy (in development)		
Dorset Council: Stronger, healthier communities		

<sup>6</sup> Updated Libraries Connected Strategy expected April 2022.

## Partnership working

We engaged with a range of strategic partners during the collaborative development of this strategy, this work identified a number of partnership opportunities. We will fully explore these opportunities and incorporate these within delivery action plans as appropriate.

Dorset library service will develop a business partner model to work centrally with strategic partners, to establish a consistent offer across the network. Via central co-ordination we can also facilitate targeted engagement in line with strategic aims and local need.

A list of some of the library service's key strategic partners, identified during phase one consultation (this will be developed further during phase two consultation):

- Libraries West Authorities
- Community Managed Library's
- Friends of Dorset Libraries Groups
- Royal Voluntary Service
- other Dorset Council services
- Children's Services Local Alliance Groups
- Public Health Dorset
- Town and Parish Councils
- NHS
- CCG (soon to be Integrated Care System)
- primary care networks
- speech and language therapy service, Dorset HealthCare
- Citizens Advice
- Arts Council
- Skills & Learning Adult Community Education
- Department for Work & Pensions & Job Centre Plus
- Armed Forces Covenant
- voluntary and community sector
- Dorset LEP, Dorset Chamber, Dorset Growth Hub, Dorset Gateway

Whilst we want to harness the power of the library network, we also want to empower our libraries to respond to their local needs.

## Acting local

Libraries are part of the social fabric of their communities, and they should reflect the local needs of their community. This strategy sets our strategic aims for the library service and provides a framework for localisation. It may not be feasible to deliver everything at each of our library sites, but it allows teams to draw down the services they require. Accessing the skills and expertise which the strategic library network provides, ensuring that Dorset's residents experience a consistent quality of our core services across the network.

In addition to work with our strategic partners. It's important that local libraries can develop local partnerships which deliver against our aims. Libraries may wish to work with a range of local stakeholders including:

- Business Improvement District Boards
- nurseries
- education settings

- registered childminders
- local businesses and sponsors
- faith groups
- community notice board owners and local newspapers

## Implementation and strategy monitoring and review

Once a library strategy and accompanying delivery actions plans are endorsed by Dorset Council's Committees and Cabinet, we will design a strategy performance monitoring framework, which will include impact analysis and outcome measures. Our performance monitoring will be embedded in our service planning and will integrate within the wider corporate performance monitoring framework.

This strategy will be a living document, guiding every aspect of service delivery. It will be embedded within service planning, employee's individual objectives and progress will be regularly reviewed by senior managers.

Performance and progress reporting will be transparent, and we are committed to continuous service improvement. Strategy delivery reports will be provided to the Council's Scrutiny Committees, and we plan to hold a mid-point review of the strategy in 2028-29.

## Appendix 1 Phase one Let's Talk Libraries engagement

The Dorset Council Library Service would like to thank all residents, stakeholders and partners who participated in the phase one Let's Talk Libraries consultation.

Whether you participated in one of our surveys or attended one of our engagement events. We thank you for your contributions.

During phase one we held a range of engagement workshops to compliment the survey data. This important work supported our ambition to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including those in our community who do not currently use libraries and communities with protected characteristics.

- workshop with library employees
- workshop with Dorset Councillors
- focus group with existing library users
- interviews with parent/carers at two pre-school nurseries
- outreach workshop in area of socio-economic deprivation
- business network meeting
- street intercept interviews with 30 non-library users
- ethnographic research<sup>7</sup> with 10 non-library users
- equalities focused workshop
- disabilities focused workshop
- 'Speaking Up' session with People First Dorset and Dorset Abilities
- three primary school workshops
- three secondary school workshops
- Dorset Council services and external partner 3-part workshop series
- three library service led strategy development Task and Finish Groups

The findings of this work, in terms of identified need and recommended action, is presented in a research [report available here](#) and its [accompanying ethnographic<sup>7</sup> research appendix here](#).

We will be continuing the conversation with our communities, stakeholders, and partners in phase two Let's Talk Libraries consultation and look forward to hearing your views.

During phase two consultation we will also work through community networks to broker new connections and continue to seek our communities' views on how the library service can better meet their needs now and in the future.

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<sup>7</sup> Ethnography is a type of research that gathers rich, detailed data from individuals in their everyday environment. This normally involves the researcher meeting the research participant in a place that is natural for them, but this research can also be undertaken virtually. The research involves observing the participant's behaviour as they interact with their environment and the researcher asking questions to understand the participant's thoughts, feelings, and experiences.