



Dorset Library Strategy

2023-2033

June 2023



Dorset
Council

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Welcome Statement Councillor Laura Beddow

Portfolio Holder for Culture and Communities

I am delighted to introduce our new Library Strategy, which has been created in collaboration with our customers, our local communities, employees, businesses, partners and councillors.

Shaped by positive community conversations and public consultation, we have developed a new Dorset Council Library Strategy. Our mission: “To Inspire, Connect and Enable our communities through our services.”

Our strategy sets out our key priorities for the next 10 years. It outlines the library service’s contribution to Dorset and how it will support individuals and communities to be more connected, healthier, empowered and less isolated.

We want our communities to feel proud of Dorset’s library service and its place in our communities as an inclusive and accessible service, which supports [Dorset Council’s vision](#) to make Dorset a great place to live, work and visit.

Our new Dorset Council Library Strategy sets out how we will deliver and develop services in line with the needs of our communities and Dorset Council’s strategic priorities.

June 2023

1. Introduction: why do we need a new library strategy?

We are proud of our library service and want to go further and be more ambitious. Library services are at the heart of our communities and have been a support to people during challenging times, in recent years, as well as providing exciting, new opportunities, especially through the changes in how we use smart technology. Our customers now value being able to use Library services both online, via 24-hour self-service, and through in person services for the personal, inclusive approach available at times which suit most.

It is the right time to look to the future of Dorset's libraries and how they can best meet the needs of our customers and communities, now and over the next ten years.

1.1 The Dorset Council Context

In April 2019, Dorset Council was formed, bringing together 6 former councils into one new unitary council. The recently refreshed [over-arching council plan](#) outlines 5 strategic priorities:

- Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology
- Creating stronger, healthier communities
- Creating sustainable development and housing
- Driving economic prosperity
- Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council

These priorities are supported by a [clear delivery plan](#) towards making Dorset a great place to live, work and visit. In addition, there is a longer-term transformation programme to improve services for Dorset residents to 2029 and beyond which focuses on:

- Being more commercial
- Putting our customers first
- Delivering climate and ecological priorities
- Making the best use of our assets and leading economic growth
- Implementing a digital, intelligent, data led approach
- Working with the Integrated Care System

1.2 The regional and national library context

In recent years the wider context for libraries has also changed.

Libraries West: In 2015 Dorset Libraries joined the regional consortium [LibrariesWest](#), a group of 7 local councils working together to share resources, add value and deliver a better library experience. Through LibrariesWest Dorset customers can enjoy free access to a huge range of joint shared e-resources 24/7 and a joint catalogue of approximately 2.5 million books and other materials, which you can seamlessly borrow and return across the geographic area of LibrariesWest, including Bournemouth, Christchurch, Poole and Somerset councils.

Libraries Connected: In 2018, Libraries Connected was created as the national sector support organisation for public libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, partly funded by Arts Council England (ACE). Dorset council is a member organisation. In 2019 Libraries Connected refreshed the [Universal Library Offers](#) which guide the work of local councils and aim to:

- connect communities
- improve wellbeing
- promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity

National Government: Libraries are a statutory service and under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, [Dorset Council has a duty](#) to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service for everyone who lives, works or studies in the area.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published the [2014 Independent Library Report for England](#), set up the Libraries Taskforce and published the strategy [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021](#).

The strategy describes libraries as “vital community hubs – bringing people together, and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better”. It states that “To achieve these ambitions, library services contribute to 7 Outcomes that are critical to the individuals and communities in their areas:

- cultural and creative enrichment
- increased reading and literacy
- improved digital access and literacy
- helping everyone achieve their full potential
- healthier and happier lives
- greater prosperity
- stronger, more resilient communities

1.3 Summary of context

The Dorset library strategy aims to align our library service to take account of changes regionally and nationally. The common themes of connecting and strengthening communities, inspiring through culture and creativity and enabling customers to achieve their potential run throughout the wider context.

1.4 Public Consultation and Needs Assessment

Whilst strongly influenced by the local, regional and national contexts, the Dorset Library Strategy is mainly shaped by the 2 phases of public consultation in 2021-2022 and by the Needs Assessment which was updated in 2023.

2. Our vision and mission

Our vision is:

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

Our mission is:

To Inspire, Connect and Enable our communities through our services.

Inspire: To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning, literacy, and culture

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 current and future community needs and exceed customer expectations.

What does this mean?

Libraries are places where you can enjoy the cultural experience, pleasure and health benefits of reading by yourself or with others. Through our diverse range of books and materials you can enrich your experiences and see life from different perspectives. Libraries also change lives through access to free, trusted information and in person support from trained staff and volunteers. Libraries can open doors to new worlds, new skills and opportunities. We help to inspire you, to spark your creativity and to empower you to fulfil your potential.

Library services are one of the few council services that are there for you at every stage of your life, where you can have fun for free.

We see you bounce to your first Rhymetime, pick your first books, and read your first stories. We are there to entertain you after school, to feed your imagination, to help you study, and to get your first job. We are there if you want to re-train, to learn how to use technology and to develop your skills and knowledge. We are there when your family grows, and you want to help give your children, or those you love and care for, the best start in life. We are also there for you if you feel lonely, need a connection or wish to escape into another world to recharge your batteries. We provide safe spaces to support your health and wellbeing, to get advice, to talk, to socialise, to make new friends and to enjoy moments of calm reflection.

We are a community space for all which promotes understanding and tolerance, a refuge where you can be yourself and where all members of the community are welcome. Our 24/7 online services are always there for you and we also reach out beyond our buildings through our [Home Library Service](#). You may even choose to volunteer with us to contribute to your local community.

The services you need from us may change, but we remain a trusted source of information and cultural activity to support you throughout your life, part of Dorset Council's goal to make Dorset a great place to live, work and visit.

3. Our values and behaviours

Our values shape our activities and ambitions. They guide how we work within our communities, with our partners, and with each other.

Our values:

- **Welcoming:** inviting and welcoming all visitors to our services
- **Inclusive & impartial:** valuing all voices and supporting varying needs of our communities
- **Enabling:** supporting positive change for our residents
- **Responsive:** a customer focused, evolving, adaptable service

Our employee behaviours:

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Recognition
- Collaboration

[Read more about our employee behaviours](#)

Combining our service values with our employee behaviours, creates exciting results. For example, by combining:

- “Welcoming” with “Respect” everyone feels at home at the library
- “Inclusive & impartial” with “Recognition” we accept the need to change and innovate
- “Enabling” with “Collaboration” we create better life chances
- “Responsive” with “Responsibility” we remain relevant and in tune with customers

4. Strategic themes

Supporting our 3 strategic themes Inspire, Connect, Enable are 19 strategic aims. The aims bring structure to the role of libraries, set out how we intend to transform the library service from 2023 to 2033 and form the basis of our Action Plan.

Case studies illustrating each theme can be found in Appendix 1.

Theme 1: Inspire

Enriching lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning, literacy and culture. Inspiring and supporting people, learning, businesses, and the response to climate change.

What does inspire mean?

Everything changes when you can read. Strong literacy skills provide long term social and economic benefits. We celebrate the difference that reading for pleasure makes to health and wellbeing, confidence and empathy. We recognise the difference that access to free, trusted information makes to all.

Libraries are probably the most informal and welcoming cultural venues in Dorset. We offer a unique safe space to allow everyone to experience art and culture. Working in libraries enables artists to reach diverse audiences from across the whole community.

Libraries create inspiration and innovation and can generate significant economic benefits. We also have a role in supporting the response to [the climate and ecological emergency](#). We can help to inspire and inform actions that can help Dorset become a carbon neutral county.

We aim to inspire more customers to improve their life chances by supporting you to:

- read and to share your enjoyment and the benefits of reading with others
- gain knowledge and to share your learning with others
- pursue your personal goals to find a job
- start and grow your business
- be part of an active cultural scene, supporting the cultural economy
- improve your digital skills and feel confident using information technology (IT)

Libraries support these aims by providing free access to:

- books and other reading materials
- events and activities
- in person support from trained staff and volunteers
- Information Technology (IT) – public access computers and public Wi-Fi

Inspire Theme Strategic Aims:

1. Support language, literacy and reading for pleasure for everyone through lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills and pursuing personal goals
2. Host and deliver events & activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences
3. Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence
4. Support an innovative and thriving Micro and Small Medium Enterprise business network
5. Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions

Theme 2: Connect

To connect with and meet the needs of our communities by linking people together with each other and with services from libraries, Dorset Council and partners.

What does Connect mean?

The library service is more than just a place to borrow books. It is a service which brings people together. Libraries allow people to connect with other members of their community. They foster culture and creativity.

Libraries also help people to learn and develop lifelong skills. Taking part in library events and activities improves mental wellbeing. They help to reduce isolation and feelings of loneliness. Libraries are also a place to access trusted information and support from:

- all council services
- public sector partners
- a range of other organisations

1. Customers and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer
2. Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection
3. Local libraries thrive as part of a coordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries
4. Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free
5. Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door

Theme 3a: Enable - our communities

To create welcoming library buildings which are accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use in many ways.

What does Enable our communities mean?

We want to deliver a modern, sustainable, and responsive library service. To do this, we need facilities that are inspiring and fit for purpose. Our spaces need to be appropriate and welcoming. They need to have facilities, equipment, and technologies which support a range of uses. For example, we want to provide study spaces, assistive technologies, innovation spaces, digital suites, and flexible workspaces. We want to provide spaces which are busy and energetic as well as spaces which are quiet and reflective.

We will work with other services and organisations to be responsive to our communities on wider issues. We will develop welcoming and inclusive library spaces that services and partners can use. This will enable more services to be delivered locally within communities.

1. Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces
2. Provide safe trusted spaces
3. Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth
4. Library services form part of community hubs
5. Provide space where customers can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities

Theme 3b: Enable – our library teams

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

What does it mean to Enable our library teams?

Our service relies on a committed and passionate library and volunteer workforce who are essential in welcoming, inspiring and empowering our communities. Our employees and volunteers provide access to free, trusted information and the in person support many customers rely on to make the most of our services.

We wish to continue delivering high-quality services. We also wish to respond to the future needs of our communities. To achieve our Inspire Connect Enable aims, we will support the individuals in our teams to develop the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their potential. We will provide opportunities for our teams to continue to develop and improve. By employing those whose values, behaviours, knowledge and skills reflect the strategy, we can reach the standards our communities expect from the library service.

1. Each employee feels valued and empowered, with career opportunities in the library service and Dorset Council more broadly
2. Flexible resourcing across our library network, allows employees to develop a range of skills and experience
3. We offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via apprenticeship programmes
4. 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

5. Where does the Library Strategy fit in?

Our strategy supports us to be a strategic delivery partner for a range of council priorities. We have identified where the Library Service can work within strategic partnerships to support multiple council and national strategic priorities and deliver a range of positive outcomes.

Strategies are listed under our 3 themes Inspire Connect and Enable. Where strategies fit multiple themes, the themes have been combined to illustrate the overlap:

Inspire

- Libraries Connected: [Universal library offers](#)
- Arts Council: [Let's Create](#)
- Dorset Council [Digital strategy: Our digital vision](#)
- Department for Health & Social Care: [The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days](#)
- Dorset Council: [Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-23](#) (new strategy in development)
- Dorset Council: [Dorset SEND strategy 2021 to 2024](#)
- Dorset Council: Best Start in Life Strategy (in development)
- NHS: Speech and Language Strategy (in development)
- Dorset Council: [Cultural strategy 2021 to 2026](#)

- Dorset Council: [A better life](#)
- Dorset Council: [Economic growth strategy 2020 to 2024](#)
- Dorset Council: [Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Dorset 2008 – 33](#)
- Joint Archive Service: [Development Plan 2021-2026](#)
- Dorset Music Hub: [Inclusion Strategy](#)
- Dorset Council: [Attendance Strategy and Plan 2022](#)

Connect

- Dorset Council: [Diversity and inclusion strategy 2021 to 2024 *](#)
- Dorset Council: [Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026](#)
- Dorset Council: [Dorset Armed Forces Covenant](#)
- Dorset Council: [Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)

Enable

- Dorset Council: [Dorset Local Plan](#) (in development)
- Dorset Council: Family Hubs Strategy (in development)
- Dorset Council: [Dorset Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- Dorset Council: [Asset Management Plan](#)
- Dorset Council: [Accessibility Strategy](#)
- UNHCR: [Third Country Solutions for Refugees: Roadmap 2030](#)
- UK Government: [Levelling Up White Paper](#)
- Dorset Council: [People Strategy 2021-2024](#)
- Dorset Council: [Diversity and inclusion strategy 2021 to 2024](#)
- Dorset Council: [Commercial Strategy](#)
- Dorset Council: Workplace Framework
- Dorset Council: [Data and Business Intelligence Strategy 2023 to 2028](#)
- Dorset Council: [Dorset Children’s Services Accessibility Strategy 2022 to 2025](#)

Inspire and Connect

- DCMS: [Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021](#)
- Dorset Council: [Joint health and wellbeing strategy 2020-2023](#)
- Our Dorset: Looking Forward (Dorset’s Integrated Care Partnership Strategy) ([in development](#))

Inspire and Enable

- Dorset Council: [Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy](#)
- Dorset Council: [Commissioning for a Better Life for Adults in Dorset](#)
- Dorset Council: [Low Carbon Travel Strategy](#)

Connect and Enable

- Dorset Council: Customer Strategy (in development)

6. Partnership working

Key strategic partners

We have worked with a range of partners during the development of the strategy. This has helped us to find many partnership opportunities, which are explored further in our action plans.

We will develop a business partner model that will allow the Library Service to work consistently with strategic partners. Key library service officers will provide a central lead and work with library teams to develop consistent offers to be delivered across the network of local libraries. This approach will allow us to target our work to be in line with our strategic aims and local needs.

See Appendix 2 for details of key strategic partners.

Local partners

Libraries are at the heart of our communities, aiming to deliver services that meet local need. This strategy sets out how the library service will work with partners and communities at a strategic and a local level to continue to meet local need.

It may not be possible for individual library teams to deliver everything at all our library sites that every community may wish. However, by working together within the overarching county strategic framework, library teams can access Dorset wide library resources and expertise. Such resources can be used to ensure that customers experience a consistent quality of core services, which meet the specific needs of local communities.

In addition to the key strategic partners listed above, it is important that local libraries develop local partnerships within their communities. Working with local partners allows libraries to be part of local initiatives and be part of the solution for local issues. Libraries may wish to work with a range of local stakeholders, including:

- business improvement district boards
- community notice board owners and local newspapers
- education settings
- faith groups
- local businesses and sponsors
- nurseries
- registered childminders

7. Our evidence base – consultation and needs assessment

Our consultations

We developed our library strategy by being:

- community-led
- evidence-based
- partnership-focused

The strategy and action plan were developed following 2 phases of public consultation and analysis of:

- over 12,500 survey responses
- the findings from 21 engagement workshops
- 40 research interviews with non-library users
- evidence around local needs

Consultation reports from both phases are available

- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries Children's Survey: Phase 2 Public Consultation Response Report](#)
- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries Main Survey \(16years+\): Phase 2 Consultation Response Report](#)
- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries Staff and Partners Survey: Phase 2 Consultation Response Report](#)
- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries Appendix to Consultation Reports](#)
- Shared Intelligence Report: [Dorset Library Strategy Phase 2 Engagement Report 2023](#)
- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries ages 5-15 Consultation Response Report](#)
- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries Main Survey \(16 years+\) Consultation Response Report](#)
- Dorset Council: [#LetsTalkLibraries Employees, Partners and Businesses Consultation Response Report](#)
- Shared Intelligence: [Research to inform a new library strategy for Dorset Council](#)

Our Strategic Needs Assessment

A detailed [Strategic Needs Assessment](#) updated in Spring 2023 was developed to support the library strategy and the operating model. It shows our assessment of need geographically by library catchment area, using heat maps. It gives a breakdown of catchment need using a series of measures.

Library Catchment areas ranked in order of need, from highest need to lowest need:

1. Weymouth Library
2. Bridport Library
3. Portland Library
4. Littlemoor Library
5. Dorchester Library
6. Swanage Library
7. Wareham Library
8. Sherborne Library
9. Blandford Library
10. Ferndown Library
11. Gillingham Library
12. Shaftesbury Library
13. Lyme Regis Library
14. Crossways Library
15. Wimborne Library
16. Sturminster Newton Library
17. Upton Library
18. Beaminster Library
19. Wyke Regis Library
20. West Moors Library
21. Verwood Library
22. Lytchett Matravers Library
23. Corfe Mullen Library

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

Whilst developing our strategy, we have paid attention to the need to fulfil our [public sector equalities duties](#) to:

- “eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it”

An equalities impact assessment (EqIA) and accompanying action plan have been developed, reviewed and revised and is [available here](#). Actions from the EqIA action plan are included within the strategy action plan.

9. Our Operating Model

Dorset Council run libraries

In July 2023, our statutory (legally required) Library service is made up of:

- 23 council-run libraries
- a 24/7 online library service
- a home library service which delivers services to residents

Community Managed Libraries (CMLs)

There are also 8 community managed libraries that are additional to our legally required service. Community managed libraries are supported by, but not run by Dorset Council.

The 8 libraries are run by volunteers from within their communities. The services available at these libraries are shaped by their management board and volunteers and responds to the needs of their communities. We support these libraries to deliver the following services:

- books and resources catering from early years to adults (including summer reading challenge resources)
- ability to browse, reserve and return stock from the Libraries West catalogue
- 24/7 access to e-resources (e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers, e-magazines, e-comics)
- access to free WIFI
- access to free public access computers
- printing and scanning facilities (for a charge)
- digital Champion volunteer sessions

[A 2016 case study 'Community Libraries in Dorset' is available via the DCMS* website.](#)

The 8 community managed libraries are: Burton Bradstock, Charmouth, Chickerell, Colehill, Corfe Castle, Puddletown, Stalbridge and Wool.

The strategy does not consider changes to the CML network and they are a fourth type of library, in addition to the 3 types detailed below.

*Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2016)

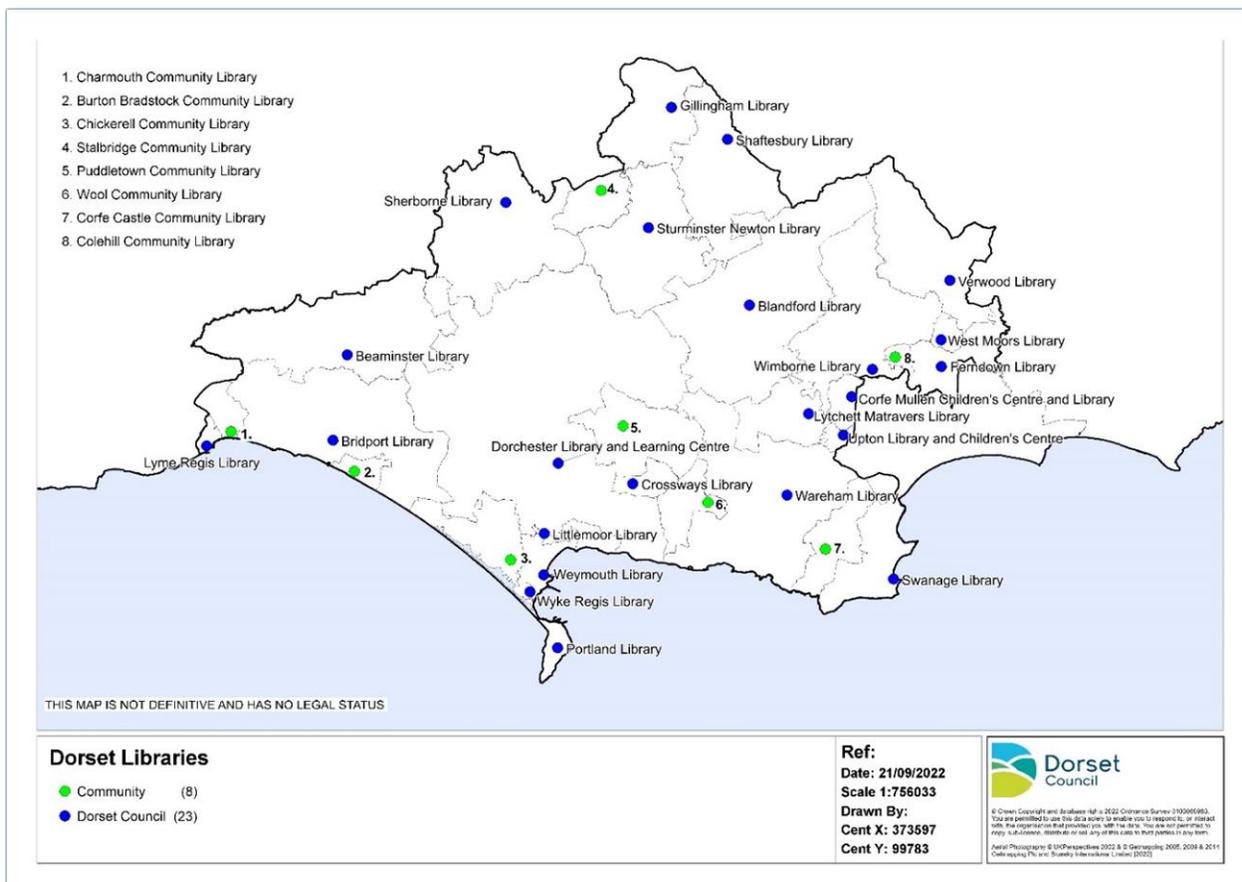


Figure 2: Map of libraries network in the Dorset Council area, including council-run and community-managed libraries. A list of libraries within the Dorset Council area [is available here](#).

See [an interactive version of the Dorset libraries map on our website](#).

Proposed Operating Model

The new proposed library model informs how we will develop our service over the next ten years. We anticipate moving to this model around April 2024, following consultation with employees.

We propose 3 types of Dorset Council run libraries:

1. **Library:** a library which delivers our core library offer
2. **Library Plus:** a library which delivers an enhanced core library offer
3. **Library Connect:** a library hub which delivers an enhanced core library offer including co-located partner services

10. Our Library Services offer

We aim to provide a consistent core library offer at all 3 types of Dorset Council run libraries. Most services are currently available at all libraries. Footnotes explain where some services need development to become available to all.

The core offer available at all libraries is enhanced by extra services available at Library Plus and Library Connect. Some additional services are aspirational. They will require feasibility studies and investment over the next 10 years to support our aims and vision. Footnotes explain where current provision is limited.

All libraries are available for community groups and partners to hire. Services offered by groups may enhance the offer beyond the standard core offer.

We anticipate that needs and demands will alter during the lifetime of the strategy. We intend to flex the provision of services where possible to match changing needs and demands. These changes will be subject to available resources.

Services available at Libraries, Library Pluses and Library Connects:

Inspire: To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning and literacy and culture

Resources, reading and literacy

We offer:

- trained library teams support access to our services
- free access to diverse range of books and resources, catering from early years to adults. These are available to browse and reserve in libraries
- accessible and inclusive resources available to browse and reserve in libraries (charges may apply). These include: large print, audio books, picture journeys
- ability to browse and reserve books and resources from the [LibrariesWest catalogue](#)
- ability to request items from outside of the LibrariesWest catalogue via inter library loans service (for a charge)
- 24/7 access to e-resources. These include e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers, e-magazines, e-comics and e-reference
- signposting to local studies library at Dorset History Centre for local and family history expertise including access to archives

Events and Activities

We offer:

- in person activities, events and groups in libraries for adults
- in person activities, events and groups in libraries for schools, early years, children and young people¹
- online activities, events and groups for adults
- online activities, events and groups for schools, early years, children and young people

Digital

We offer:

- access to free WI-FI
- access to free public computers
- access to digital family hub service via public access computers
- printing and scanning facilities (for a charge)
- digital support available at library
- library teams signpost and book customers onto digital champion support session

Learning: Library teams able to signpost customers to adult learning opportunities in Dorset

Business Support: Signpost customer to business support available in Dorset

Climate Advice and Support: Library events or displays which promote the climate and ecological emergency

Connect: To connect with and meet the needs of our communities

We offer:

- a network of library buildings which are free to visit and free to join
- access to [Home Library Service](#) *(if customer meets eligibility criteria)*
- a notice board for council promotions and community events
- signposting to support available for resettled refugees in Dorset
- signposting to support available to members and families of the Armed Forces under the Armed Forces Covenant

¹ In person activities for 'older' young people (teenagers) is an area for development, based on need and demand

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

We offer:

- flexible, accessible library spaces (including moveable furniture and fittings)
- bookable rooms / library spaces (for a charge)
- in person wellbeing events
- online wellbeing events
- signposting to trusted health and wellbeing agencies, organisations and resources
- signposting to information and advice about a range of partner services
- outreach by third-party agencies in response to local need which relate to the library strategy themes and aims
- signposting to online and telephone access to Dorset Council customer services
- customer support for basic questions about a range of council services

Further services available at Library Plus and Library Connect:

We offer:

- local studies and Dorset History Centre exhibitions
- in person events in libraries for children or young people with special education needs and disabilities²
- in person events in libraries for adults with special education needs and disabilities³
- sensory equipment for use in libraries⁴
- space for art displays or spaces for artists to perform
- business support events and/or advice available at library
- outreach events by partner agencies providing advice on energy efficiency and green grants

Additional Services available at Library Connect:

We offer:

- regular adult learning classes available at the library⁵
- co-working library spaces
- customer collection of recycling containers
- library of things/repair café (*subject to feasibility assessment*)

² All library events are accessible, our aspiration is to offer additional specific targeted activities

³ All library events are accessible, specific activities are currently offered at Dorchester, Ferndown and Gillingham

⁴ Currently available at Blandford, Bridport, Dorchester, Gillingham, Swanage, Wareham, Weymouth, libraries and may be shared between libraries to deliver sessions

⁵ Dorset Skills and Learning offer currently available at Dorchester, Gillingham, Wareham, Weymouth

- autism friendly rooms⁶
- dedicated customer services team co-located at the library site⁷
- co-located partner agencies at library sites
- café at library (*subject to feasibility assessment*)

11. Our Library Network

We propose to organise the Dorset Council run libraries into the 3 library types as below.

*Note that Blandford and Ferndown both require investment in buildings to be able to deliver the full range of Library Connect services:

| Library (10) | Library Plus (8) | Library Connect (5) |
|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Beaminster | Gillingham | Blandford* |
| Corfe Mullen | Littlemoor | Bridport |
| Crossways | Portland | Dorchester |
| Lyme Regis | Shaftesbury | Ferndown* |
| Lytchett Matravers | Sherborne | Weymouth |
| Sturminster Newton | Swanage | |
| Upton | Wareham | |
| Verwood | Wimborne | |
| West Moors | | |
| Wyke Regis | | |

Libraries will continue to be managed as a county wide service across the whole of Dorset. For practical operational purposes we will manage libraries in geographical clusters. This allows us to share resources at a local level. Each cluster has a combination of library, library plus and library connect.

| East (9) | Mid and North (7) | South and West (7) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ferndown* | Blandford* | Bridport |
| | Dorchester | Weymouth |
| Swanage | Gillingham | Littlemoor |
| Wareham | Sherborne | Portland |
| Wimborne | Shaftesbury | |
| Corfe Mullen | | Beaminster |
| Lytchett Matravers | Crossways | Lyme Regis |
| Upton | Sturminster Newton | Wyke Regis |
| Verwood | | |
| West Moors | | |

⁶ Currently available at Dorchester and Gillingham, further expansion dependent on building developments.

⁷ Customer Access Points currently available at Bridport, Dorchester, Wareham, Weymouth, Wimborne.

12. Library opening hours

Dorset Council Offer

Following analysis of the phase 2 consultation and engagement responses, we propose the following standard Dorset council funded hours for each type of library. In the consultation we presented a range of hours for each type of library: 15-22 hours for libraries, 25-32 hours for library pluses and 40-48 hours for library connects.

Following financial modelling to ensure that we can deliver a balanced budget, we propose the following hours for Dorset council funded libraries:

Library: 18 hours a week

Library Plus: 30 hours a week

Library Connect: 42 hours a week

Pattern of opening hours per library

Consultation feedback from the survey and workshops indicates that communities wish to see:

- standardised hours so that customers know when the library is open
- opening hours throughout the week Monday to Saturday
- mornings for pre-school children and their carers, retirees, those who do not work, those who work from home / remotely
- Saturdays and afternoon opening, for school age children and young people
- Saturdays, lunchtimes and evenings for those who work
- a spread of hours amongst a geographical group of libraries, so that not all libraries are closed on the same weekdays
- times when the library is available for hire by community groups

As part of the implementation of the strategy, we propose a model of hours per library that offers access to the range of services across the geographical area. We propose a spread of opening hours and weekdays so that each cluster has late nights throughout the week until 6pm and Saturday opening until 4pm.

We propose a model of 'standard shifts' per type of library. However, the precise pattern of shifts per weekday varies from library to library to match local need and to ensure a spread of hours across geographical clusters of libraries on different weekdays. [See website for detailed proposals per library.](#)

Community Support

We wish to give organisations a way to approach us to express an interest in enhancing the proposed Dorset Council funded opening hours. We are not asking communities and organisations for contributions. However, we wish to offer the 5 communities which

currently enhance Dorset council library services a route to continue with these arrangements, if they choose, and for any further communities who may wish to explore similar arrangements to do so.

Options include:

- providing a financial contribution towards running costs
- following the volunteering model used at Beaminster, Crossways and Sturminster Newton to identify whether there is a desire to volunteer amongst the local community to enhance the Dorset Council funded opening hours. If there is sufficient local interest, to work with the Library Service to identify a volunteer coordinator and volunteers and to train volunteers
- working with Dorset Council to offer financial support to explore the use of technology to extend opening hours and enable customers to access libraries in a safe, secure way when buildings are unstaffed

13. Implementation and strategy monitoring and review

Implementation

Once Dorset Council's Committees and Cabinet have endorsed our library strategy and delivery action plans, we will start to work towards implementation.

We anticipate implementing the new operating model and revised opening hours in financial year 2024-25, following engagement on a 1:1 basis with those communities which may wish to engage further with us on our proposals. Where requested, we will listen to concerns and explore potential options to reduce the impact on communities that may need further support, within the financial constraints of the service.

This strategy is a living document guiding every aspect of service delivery. It will be embedded within service planning and employees' individual objectives. Progress will be regularly reviewed by senior managers.

Performance Monitoring and Review

We will design and develop a new performance monitoring framework for the strategy. This will include measures relating to impact and outcomes. As part of the delivery action plan, we will:

- explore and pilot potential measures during 2023 to 2025
- embed performance monitoring into our service planning
- integrate the measures within the corporate performance monitoring framework

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 to 2029.

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Inspire Case studies

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 \(artscouncil.org.uk\)](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/9715/BIPC_report_v20b_single_0.pdf)

Inspire - Digital support

Dorset libraries offer weekly volunteer and employee led digital champion sessions, where customers 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 library buildings, the service evolved into in person support in libraries whilst the online support transferred to the customer service contact centre.

Impact: Library teams have reported examples of how they have digitally supported customers 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 children’s 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 Case studies

Connect: Knit & Natter participants

What’s your favourite thing about Knit and Natter?

“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](#)

What does Knit and Natter mean to you?

"Knit and natter is my lifeline. I work as a farmer in my profession, and the job can be very stressful. My 2 hours on a Thursday is my time. It's a very special group of people who come to the group, and I couldn't manage without it"

Source: Health and Wellbeing survey

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 Case studies

Enable: Health and Wellbeing

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)

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 customer 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 Case studies

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 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.

Appendix 2: Key Strategic Partners

Some of our key strategic partners, identified during the 2 phases of consultation are:

- Armed Forces Covenant
- Arts Council England
- [The Arts Development Company](#)
- Children's Services Local Alliance Groups
- Citizens Advice
- Community Managed Libraries
- Department for Work & Pensions & Job Centre Plus
- Dorset Chamber
- Dorset Council services
- Dorset Gateway
- Dorset Growth Hub
- Dorset LEP
- Friends of Dorset Libraries Groups
- LibrariesWest Authorities
- NHS
- Our Dorset Integrated Care System
- primary care networks
- Public Health Dorset
- Royal Voluntary Service
- Speech and language therapy service, Dorset HealthCare
- Skills & Learning Adult Community Education
- Town and Parish Councils
- Voluntary and community sector