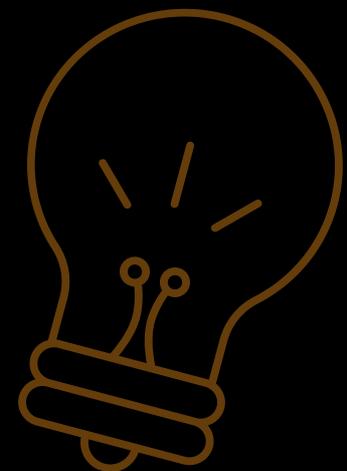


Gloucestershire Libraries Strategy



2023 - 2028

The Library

WELCOME TO THE LIBRARIES STRATEGY

Gloucestershire Libraries are welcoming, vibrant safe places at the heart of our diverse communities and as such are an integral part of the County Council helping us deliver our Council Strategy - Building Back Better in Gloucestershire.

The library service has changed significantly since the last strategy was written in 2012 and I'm pleased that our new library strategy provides a forward-thinking vision and ambition for library services in Gloucestershire.

Our libraries are far more than a place to borrow books – their core purpose is still to provide free access to a wide range of physical books and information, but this also now extends to e-books that can be accessed from your own home, place of work or study. We have introduced library innovation labs, located within each of our 6 districts, which are designed to build confidence and skills and connect businesses, schools, and entrepreneurs with the digital technology of the future.

We are committed to keeping our libraries open and delivering a high quality and constantly evolving service across our 31 locations. We continue to support our 8 community run libraries and would like to recognise the hard work undertaken by these communities who have been running their libraries successfully since 2011/12.

This Strategy sets out our ambitions for the next five years under the 5 C's which are:

- Defining and enhancing our **CORE** Service
- Responding to the **CLIMATE** emergency
- Ensuring our libraries continue to meet the needs of their **COMMUNITY**
- **CONNECTING** people
- Using **CREATIVITY** to enhance people's lives

Gloucestershire Libraries will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the people who wish to use them and our new strategy outlines how our buildings and services will continue to develop to meet these ever changing demands whilst still retaining libraries core purpose.



Councillor Dave Norman MBE

Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries



“

I use my library daily, lovely friendly staff and a great selection of books. I don't know what I'd do without it! ”

INTRODUCTION

Gloucestershire Libraries have changed significantly in the last 11 years since the last strategy was produced in 2012. Libraries contribute to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of communities and are a key factor in driving early years literacy.

Public libraries have long been one of the most important shared civic spaces. Our libraries continue to be trusted spaces in local communities that are accessible to all who wish to use them and for many the doors to the library open a world of exploration, escape, learning and research.

“

Libraries are the lifeblood of the community, what would we do without them? ”

Since inception, library spaces have flexed to meet the needs of the surrounding communities. The ability to adapt and develop has never been more important as services have emerged from the challenges of physical closures. Public libraries were historically designed to house books; however, a modern library not only offers books to read, but the future is also firmly focussed on welcoming people both physically and in the digital world.



Libraries in Gloucestershire support and facilitate education and skills development, they complement mainstream education and provide a space for adults and children to learn and develop. They support economic development and the delivery of important local services and work in partnership supporting businesses, enterprise, and employment creation. The network of Growth Hubs and Innovation labs link people with jobs by developing employability skills and sharing job seeking support. They support the development of digital skills and literacy and provide a cultural programme that empowers communities, reduces isolation, and opens Art and Culture to all.

Co-design where libraries listen and learn from communities is crucial to success. Libraries need to re-build confidence in physical spaces, level-up the digital space and make the library visible in the community. The place-making role libraries play in communities brings vital social benefit: a sense of **belonging, companionship, support, and inspiration.**



The global COVID-19 pandemic saw library services in Gloucestershire respond quickly to develop an enhanced digital offer to support people during lockdown. Creativity and innovation flourished as services introduced new models of delivery such as “reserve and collect”, “ring and read” and “off the shelf”, extended digital business support and virtual programmes to address social isolation. This response has brought about a longer-term change in how people wish to access services which are addressed through this strategy.



The enforced closure of libraries exacerbated existing issues, such as digital exclusion and social isolation, and brought new challenges into sharp focus. The closures significantly disadvantaged those who could not access reading and digital services.

Libraries will continue to adapt and respond to emerging social issues ensuring that appropriate services are inclusive and accessible at a local level.

BACKGROUND

The Legal Framework

Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (PLMA) Gloucestershire County Council, as a library authority, has a statutory duty (not a discretionary power) to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all people working, living or studying full time in Gloucestershire who wish to make use of it.

The PLMA does not define what is meant by “comprehensive and efficient”. However in providing this service, Gloucestershire County Council must, amongst other things:

- Have regard to encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library space and provide advice as to its use.
- Lend books and other printed material in sufficient quality and quantity free of charge to those who live, work or study in the area;
- Secure co-operation between the library authority and others exercising public functions within the county

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

In formulating the new library strategy, the Council must also comply with the statutory duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act, known as the public sector equality duty. This requires the council, and Cabinet Members as decision makers in particular, to have due regard to the needs to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- 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.

The relevant protected characteristics referred to in section 149 are:

- **age**
- **disability**
- **gender reassignment**
- **pregnancy and maternity**
- **race; religion or belief**
- **sex**
- **sexual orientation**
- **marriage and civil partnership**



LET'S CELEBRATE

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020

31 Libraries
8 Community Libraries
179 Members of Staff



FREE WiFi in Every Library

An **Innovation Lab** in Coleford



1,992,468 Library visits



1,860,457 Items of Stock Issued

193,479 Items of e-Stock Loaned

561,123 Items of Library Stock Available

3,912 Children's Learning Activities & Events

2,009 Adult Learning Activities & Events



180,548 Virtual Visits



Over **12,000** hours of Volunteer Support

261 Public Computers

161,844 Hours of Public Use



How Libraries link with the County Council's Strategy

Building Back Better in Gloucestershire

Our core services and ambitions assist in the delivery of the County Council strategy in the following ways:

GETTING OUR OWN HOUSE IN ORDER

ICT

- Investing in digital skills for library staff
- Using digital innovation through our network of Labs to improve customer experience

Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- Seek to increase diversity within our workforce
- Review our strategies & policies to ensure they are inclusive to all
- Participating in equality and inclusion learning and development
- Providing a range of stock that reflects the diversity of the Gloucestershire population

Maximising the use of our estate

- Explore further opportunities for co-location or re-location of library services
- Demonstrate how libraries can offer additional social, economic, and environmental benefits for local people and communities through the delivery of services, events and activities

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

- Work with partners to introduce wildlife and tree planting in library gardens and encourage participation in conservation activities
- Explore installation of electric vehicle charge points in identified library car parks
- Work with communities and partners to increase local recycling opportunities
- Education and information – we will raise awareness of the things we can all do to reduce our impact on the environment, providing 'Greener Together' collections in all our Libraries and actively promote key messages and events

SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND LEVELLING UP OUR COMMUNITIES

- Connect businesses, schools, and entrepreneurs with the digital technology of the future through our network of Innovation Labs
- Support individuals to develop new skills, confidence and understanding in digital technology through our network of Innovation Labs
- Partner with Adult Education and Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Hub to ensure skills, training and education are directly accessible in local communities
- Shape our library services to make sure they adapt to the needs and aspirations of local residents

TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE

- Explore whether Family Hub services can be delivered from identified library locations
- Provide children's library services that support literacy, learning and confidence
- Deliver an inclusive immersive storytelling experience from our Oakley centre
- Deliver a programme of events aimed at reducing social isolation in both younger and older people
- Deliver a programme of events aimed at supporting those with Dementia
- Explore how the digital technology within our Innovation Labs can support the county councils Technology Strategy to support people to live independently

IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

- Signpost customers to right part of the County Council so they can get the advice or support they need
- Refresh library customer service and presentation standards
- Train and support staff and volunteers to deliver a consistently positive/fair experience for all customers



Vision for the Library Services in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Libraries are **welcoming, inclusive, innovative, and inspiring.**

Vibrant **safe spaces** at the heart of our diverse communities, they **encourage connections** and creativity, providing **equality of access to reading, culture, technology, trusted information,** and **learning opportunities.**

Working with and for their communities, libraries will continue to adapt and respond to their changing needs, **championing sustainability and promoting health & wellbeing.**

The Library

THE 5 C'S

CORE

CLIMATE

COMMUNITY

CONNECT

CREATIVITY

KEY AIMS & OBJECTIVES



**HEALTH &
WELLBEING**



**DIGITAL &
INNOVATION**



**CHILDREN &
FAMILIES**



**GREENER
TOGETHER**

The Library



**EQUALITY &
DIVERSITY**



**BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT**



CREATIVITY



**READING &
LITERACY**



**WORKFORCE &
VOLUNTEERS**

CORE

A comprehensive and efficient Library Service for Gloucestershire



Free access to reading through physical and electronic book stock. Access to information through the network of Gloucestershire Libraries, the Virtual Reference Library (VRL) and Ask Us.

Promotion of the benefits of reading for pleasure and support basic literacy skills to adults and children.

Provide access to local studies collections within libraries.

Support Home Educators through the provision of resources and spaces.



A trained workforce who can signpost to partner and other council services.

Free access to books that support mental and physical health and wellbeing including books on prescription.



Provide home delivery services to housebound residents.

Providing welcoming, accessible, inclusive, safe spaces for all and a positive experience for people using library services or volunteering with us.

Provide self service options so that customers can access the services they want when they want.



Provide access to the internet, printing and Wi-Fi through our network of buildings

Support people to build digital skills and confidence.



Offer a core programme of events and activities including those that aim to reduce social isolation.

Work with housing developers to secure contributions so libraries can continue to meet the needs of residents of new developments.



Libraries are more than just books, my local library is full knowledge and support. ”

AMBITION we will...



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

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

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



Work with Adult Education to expand access to basic reading and other training opportunities.



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

Strengthen support and accessibility to reading for reluctant readers and those in local communities whose first language is not English.



Ensure libraries physical and digital services are fully accessible to all, including use of digital platforms such as 360-degree virtual tours.



Develop opportunities for library membership at each stage of a child's development and reading journey.

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

Develop further opportunities to deliver the County Council's 'Build Back Better in Gloucestershire' strategy.

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

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



Libraries store the energy that fuels imagination, they open windows to the world and inspire us to explore



Sidney Sheldon

CORE CASE STUDY

CHELTENHAM CARE HOME DELIVERY SERVICE

Cheltenham Library provided a full service to the most vulnerable and isolated in the community called the Care Home Delivery Service. From June 2020 the library staff have been delivering books and their time to local care homes.

This project has been such a success, following the pandemic the aim is to support care home residents to physically visit the library and choose books.

"I am always very pleased to have books delivered, without this very helpful service my life would be greyer without a selection of books".



A SAFE SPACE FOR ALL

Libraries are safe spaces, designed for community use:

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you to your kind staff who allowed six staff and seven disabled children to have lunch in the library when our alternative plans fell through and had nowhere to go in the rain. We didn't feel rushed at all and there was a lovely clam atmosphere which was exactly what our children need whilst they are eating.

Many thanks to the staff and volunteers".

- Karen Childs from St Roses School, Stroud



CLIMATE

Borrow Don't Buy



Provide Greener Together stock collections and initiatives that promote Information and resources related to sustainable living, the environment and wildlife so that people can make informed choices.

Plant trees and wildlife gardens within our library outdoor spaces.

Engage communities in activities, events and conversations that address the climate crisis to promote and affect change.

Provide local access in communities- avoiding the need for people to travel to access wider council services.

Work with Gloucestershire County Council partners assisting with the delivery of the Council's Climate Strategy.

Choose suppliers and partners who demonstrate environmental integrity and sustainable work practices.

Deliver initiatives that encourage and promote swaps, re-use and repair.



Invest in book stock and e-lending to promote re-use rather than single use.



Libraries by their nature are recyclers - reuse is the way forward ”

AMBITION we will...



Challenge and adapt our behaviours to embrace positive change in respect of climate and sustainability.

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

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

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

Offer local recycling points at libraries for residents (i.e batteries).

Strengthen policies and procedures to address climate issues and sustainability.

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

Work with property colleagues to ensure the environmental impact of future library refurbishments are considered and libraries, where possible, become carbon neutral.

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



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



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



Develop outdoor spaces to provide library activities and events in a garden environment, encouraging better health and wellbeing.



Work with suppliers to ensure our book stock has the lowest possible environmental impact.

Explore and implement more sustainable work practices in libraries.

CLIMATE

CASE STUDY

GREENER TOGETHER

In 2021 the library service created a sub-group of a cross section of staff to form the Greener Together committee, this group take on responsibility for thinking about how the library service can promote re-use and the climate change agenda through book stock, events and partnerships.

COSTUME SWAP

One of the biggest achievements, so far, has been the costume swap initiative promoted by individual libraries. The concept is that residents bring in unwanted costumes for children into the library and swap it with another size or theme of costume.

This initiative has worked really well around halloween and World Book Night, with an emphasis that children will dress up to promote the occasions .

In 2022 we included free sewing workshops alongside the swaps, to try and encourage customers to make and mend. We held supportive sessions of the elements of sewing and the positive impact it can have on the environment if clothes are mended not thrown away.



COMMUNITY



Provide open and accessible library buildings which sit at the heart of our diverse communities.

Encourage community use of library buildings.

Communicate and consult with all residents when changes to library services are planned.

Support the network of community run libraries.

Provide a network of community library access points in local venues where there is sufficient demand from people unable to access a static library.

Provide temporary and ad hoc pop up libraries in targeted areas.

Use developer contributions to ensure local libraries can continue to meet the needs of growing and changing communities.

Provide local access to partner organisations and wider council services.

Work with local partners to attract funding and deliver community projects.

Launch and embed the new Stroud Library within the Five Valley's Shopping Centre.



Provide volunteering opportunities for local people to provide skills, experience and reduce social isolation.



Provide activities and events that are aimed at the individual needs of the residents.



I am passionate about my local library space. I help out where I can in this essential space for the community ”

AMBITION we will...



Explore how the pop up library programme can reach people who do not use libraries, through increased use of local venues.

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

Co-create library services which reach the heart of communities and engage with new audiences.

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

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

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



Advocate for public libraries role in the regeneration of high streets and explore further relocation opportunities that will enable easier access to library services.



Set up a youth advisory board to ensure young people are able to influence how the services can meet the needs of customers.



These dynamic and modern institutions and the librarians who staff them add immeasurably to our quality of life ”

George W Bush

COMMUNITY

CASE STUDY

POP UP LIBRARIES

During the refurbishment of Matson Library in 2021, Gloucestershire Libraries provided a continued service for the community at four different sites around Matson.

This was a great time for the Library Service to reach out to pockets of communities and rebuild relationships with customers. At the pop up sites customers are able to join the library, borrow and return items, request stock, talk about book choices as well as having a general chat.

The four sites included: Matson Baptist Church, The Phoenix Centre, The Venture and The Redwell Centre. The venues were welcoming and accomadating. Each pop up, due to it's location had a different emphasis and characteristic and it has been an uplifting opportunity to talk directly with communities, many of which hadn't been in the library.

Due to the success of this project pop up libraries have been integrated into core activities as an excellent way to reach hard to reach groups.

In 2021 this project won the David Vaisey Prize.

THE IMPACT - POP UP LIBRARIES

For non library users, recreating the library experience in an external setting has done away with some barriers that have prevenyed them in the past from coming through the doors of Matson Library.

The mission of creating the pop up was generated by countering customer comments like:

"I wouldn't borrow a book, I might lose it" or "There's so much going on in my life, I'll never remeber to bring it back".



Member of staff manning a pop up library

Mural at the newly refurbished Matson Library



CONNECT



Provide access to ICT and language courses through Adult Education.

Deliver STEAM and code clubs in local libraries.

Connecting people with digital technology.

Offer digital device surgeries.

Partner with businesses and deliver school workshops through Innovation Labs to spark interest in STEAM.



Connect children and young people with library services through liaison with early years, schools and education providers.

Connect new parents with library services providing membership and BookStart packs at birth registration appointments.



Provide access to information that supports businesses through Growth Hub access points and Ask Us.



Connect people with stock through the inter library lending services.

Connect people to reduce social isolation through clubs and activities.



Connecting people with information and providers through signposting to wider council information and partners.

“

The Lab space is such a treasure trove of tech!

”

AMBITION we will...



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

Expand the provision of meeting spaces within libraries.



Explore the expansion of the network of Innovation Labs and continue to invest in up-to-date equipment that supports business start-ups and entrepreneurs.

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

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



Develop partnership which support more resilient, fairer and healthier communities.

Introduce an ask a librarian service.

Explore 'Human Lending libraries' with the aim of reducing social isolation by giving people someone to talk to.



Libraries promote the sharing of knowledge, connecting people of all ages with valuable information and resources. ”

George W Bush

CONNECT

CASE STUDY

YOUR BOOK CLUB FACEBOOK GROUP

An online area on social media for users of the library service to connect. This was formed during Covid-19 as a way of connecting people through discussions of books and reading.

As at April 2022, the book club has over 1.7K members.

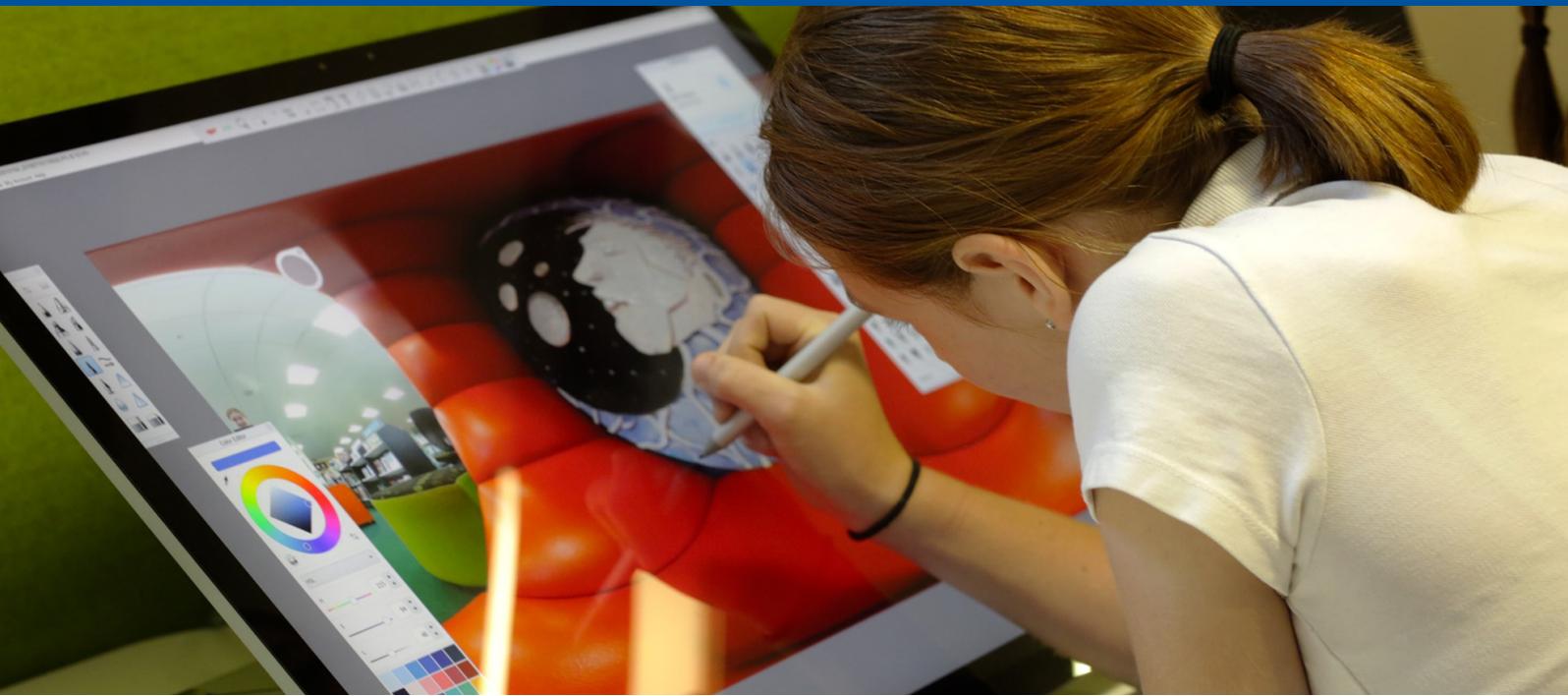
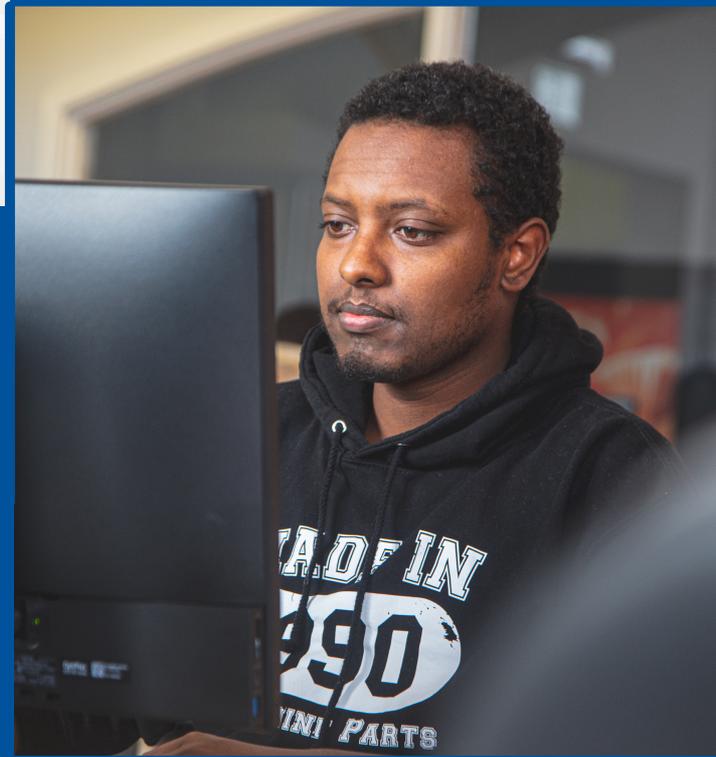
AWARD WINNING LAB

An Innovation Lab run by Gloucestershire Libraries has achieved national recognition for a series of school workshops it delivered in partnership with SPP Pumps. The Contribution to Skills and Training Award was given to SPP Pumps at the Pump Industry Awards 2020, recognising its work with the Innovation Lab at Coleford Library.

It was among four finalists in that category at the awards, which were held recently after being postponed last year due to Covid.

The STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) based workshops took place at the lab throughout 2019 and were aimed at primary aged children from local schools, to raise awareness of local job opportunities and to inspire future careers.

The sponsorship and support from SPP Pumps enabled more than 300 children to get hands on with digital technology including 3D printing, virtual reality, digital design and 360° photography.



CREATIVITY



Develop and promote reading through initiatives like the David Vaisey Prize, which is an internal competition designed to encourage libraries to work with partners on encouraging reading and literacy.

Use librarian blogs and social media to promote reading.



Use creativity within the library workforce and volunteers to deliver activities and events.



Provide Innovation Labs as spaces for customers to try new and emerging technology and gain skills and confidence.

Creation of an Immersive Reality centre to encourage digital and creative engagement - Oakley digital immersive and storytelling centre.

Deliver a programme of online events and activities.



Use creative ways to tackle social issues.



Work with partners on a creative use of library spaces to develop and highlight new and emerging talent.



Creativity and community equals libraries of the future ”

AMBITION we will...



Embed Gloucestershire Libraries at the forefront of existing cultural groups and activities.

Develop and deliver a programme of touring events to library sites.

Expand and further develop creative writing workshops and activities, supporting local talent.

Expand the network of our creative partnerships and identify existing creative talent within the local community.

Challenge ourselves to come up with a creative approach to the promotion and marketing of our services.

Create a skills camp to develop talent within the library team and wider community.

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

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



Use the network of libraries to deliver the Arts Award.



Reflect the rich and diverse communities in library programming to make events accessible to all.



Expand and develop social prescribing.

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

“ Libraries are all things to all people ”

CREATIVITY

CASE STUDY

ART OF LIBRARIES TOOLKIT

The toolkit marks the culmination of Art of Libraries, a three year pilot project to re-imagine libraries as a first place for creativity, discovery and play for children, families and young people.

The pilot was led by Create Gloucestershire with Gloucestershire Libraries, with investment from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and support from Real Ideas and The Barnwood Trust.

During these uncertain times, libraries play a vital and tangible role in the local cultural, social and economic recovery. As trusted spaces in the community, libraries are needed more than ever; helping children and young people reconnect in a safe, local space, supporting their physical and mental wellbeing and engaging those individuals and communities who are most isolated or disadvantaged.

This toolkit is designed to inspire anyone working with libraries whether as a librarian, artist, arts company or library user. It shares our learning about how to incubate creative and innovative approaches and partnerships.

